**Activities at Dead Creek**

**Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping**

Upland hunting for squirrel, deer, rabbit, grouse, and woodcock can be enjoyed in season. Dead Creek also provides fishing opportunities for bulhead and yellow perch. Check with the current Vermont law digests for season dates and bag limits.

**Boating**

Dead Creek is a popular canoeing and kayaking area. In general, most of the Creek is too shallow for motors. There are several creek access points for boats, which allow easy access to almost any section of the WMA. Please respect refuge and goose management area boundaries. To minimize disturbance of nesting birds from April through June, avoid approaching shorelines along narrow wetland channels.

**Bird Watching**

Because of the great diversity of habitat types and active management, the WMA offers some of the best birding in Vermont. In spring, many species of waterfowl and songbirds stop on their way north. From May to July, most birds are nesting and raising young.

Keep your distance from all nests and nesting structures; use binoculars to observe from a distance. Look for duck and goose nesting structures, as well as osprey nest platforms along the creek. Wading birds, especially great blue herons, may be seen throughout the summer. In late summer and early fall, mud flats are good places to find shorebirds during their long migration south.

**Walking**

The maintenance roads of the East and West Branches offer pleasant walking just beyond the gates. Along the West Branch, you will encounter a clapboard forest. Walking down the East Branch, you will see a clapboard forest interspersed with old fields. Botanists may enjoy studying the plants in the forests, while wildlife enthusiasts may encounter turtles, snakes, frogs, salamanders, and a variety of songbirds. Progessing on the refuge and goose management area without a permit, for any reason, is strictly forbidden.

**Waterfowl**

Waterfowl migrations begin in late September and continue through November. While the WMA once attracted around 20,000 snow geese during migration. Now provides a source of high-energy food for geese, deer, turkeys, and many small mammals. Where there is prey, there are predators such as coyotes and northern harrizes, taking advantage of the open fields.

**Habitat Management Activities**

**Water Control Structures**

You may see concrete structures at some of the dams along Dead Creek. The structures increase our ability to manage wetlands for different wildlife. Annual schedules are created for water level changes at each impoundment. In some years, the changes are very subtle and reduced by only 25%. In other years, the water is lowered completely and the area looks dramatically different. With the help of rain and sun, water level management can be a success.

**Moist Soil Management**

Water levels are raised and lowered at different times of the year to enhance nesting and rearing habitat, promote the establishment of desirable plants, create muddles, and flood seasonal areas for migrating water birds. When water levels are lowered in early summer, the aim is to create mud flats. This attracts hundreds of shorebirds that feed on invertebrates in an event dubbed “the Addison phenomenon.” Plants, such as smartweed and nutseed, sprout in the mud flats and provide a critical food source in the autumn when the area is flooded again. Many invertebrates remain on the stems and leaves over winter and provide an important source of protein and calcium for waterfowl the following spring. Protein and calcium are needed by female birds for egg development.

**Artificial Nest Structures**

Nest boxes for cavity-dwelling waterfowl, such as wood ducks and hooded mergansers, have been constructed around the WMA. You may also see nesting tubs for Canada geese. Nesting structures boost reproductive success.

Welcome

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area

966 Route 17, Addison, VT 05491

Office: (802) 759-2398

Visitor Center: (802) 759-2397

www.vtfishandwildlife.com

Your purchase of a Habitat Stamp supports conservation in Vermont.

DEAD CREEK Wildlife Management Area

Dead Creek is a slow, northerly-flowing stream draining a 50 square mile basin in the towns of Bridport, Addison, Panton, and Ferrisburgh, Vermont. It empties into Otter Creek near its mouth at Lake Champlain.

The Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1950 to provide breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl. It is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Acquisition and development efforts included construction of dams with water level control structures and the protection of nearly 3,000 acres. The area consists of wetlands, grasslands, woodlots, and agricultural fields.

Dam construction has greatly increased open water and permanently-flooded wetland areas. Habitats are enhanced through a combination of periodic mowing, burning, managing water levels, and agricultural activities. These activities benefit more than 250 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Funding for the WMA has been generated primarily from a federal tax on sporting arms and ammunition, and the purchase of hunting licenses and habitat stamps.

Part of the Dead Creek WMA is designated as a refuge, and visitors are asked to keep out of this area at all times. However, you are welcome to observe wildlife in the refuge from the viewing area pavilion on Route 17.

Habitats of Dead Creek WMA

Habitat Management Activities

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1. **Visitor Center.** Explore exhibits about conservation, history, ecology, and wildlife-based recreation. Talk with staff about birds, mammals, plants, and points of interest. Take a walk on the interpretive trail to learn what you can do in your own back yard to help wildlife. This is a great starting point for your Dead Creek WMA visit.

2. **Refuge Viewing Area.** An easily-accessible pull-off along Route 17 is an ideal location to view migrating waterfowl in the fall.

3. **Woodcock Pond Viewing Area.** From a platform, view waterfowl feeding in the Woodcock Pond.

4. **Gage Road.** Travel to the road's end to gain another view of the refuge. This is a good location to see snow geese when they are in the back of the refuge. Other birds seasonally seen include snowy owls, rough-legged hawks, American kestrels, and nesting grassland species. Do not walk past the orange gates or enter the refuge at any point. The old barn is also restricted and should not be entered for any reason.

5. **Route 17 Creek Access.** Because of the refuge boundary to the south, boaters should ONLY go north from this access.

6. **Brilleya Road.** This road follows the western boundary of the refuge and is an excellent place to view wildlife. It leads to the East and West Branches of Dead Creek.

7. **West Branch.** Walk around the gate and follow the maintenance road for a close-up view of a clayplain forest. A variety of wildlife may be seen from the road. Boaters should note refuge boundary signs to ensure they do not launch into a restricted area. Check in at the Visitor Center to make sure your walk or hike will not interfere with seasonal hunting activities in the area.

8. **East Branch.** After crossing over the bridge to the next parking area, walk past the gate and you will pass through old fields used by field-nesting songbirds. Upland mammals may be present in the early morning and evening. From this location, both the East and West Branches are accessible to boaters. Boaters should note refuge boundaries. Check in at the Visitor Center to make sure your walk, hike, or paddle will not interfere with seasonal hunting activities in the area.

9. **Farrell Access.** This is a boat access for the downstream section of the WMA and is a good place to watch for great blue herons. Please respect the private property on either side of the road.

10. **Stone Bridge.** Watch for migrating shorebirds in August and early September during years of water level drawdowns.

11. **Snake Mountain WMA.** This trail head leads you up the mountain for a vista of the Champlain Valley, Dead Creek, and the Adirondacks.

12. **Nortontown Road Access.** This is a quiet spot from which to observe wading birds and other wildlife that use the wetlands. The Creek here is full of water lilies and other aquatic plants.

**Please Remember To...**

- Respect all private lands and refuge boundaries, and refrain from trespassing on them. State and private goose management areas are accessible only with appropriate permit.

- Keep your distance from all wild animals by using binoculars to view them, and keep dogs under control at all times.

- Respect the rights of other visitors and the variety of activities that take place at Dead Creek WMA.