

Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Pond Woods WMA is a 2,495-acre parcel owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The majority of the WMA lies in the town of Benson with five acres in Orwell. The parcel can be accessed from several points, including the east side of Route 22A, Perch Pond Road, Bishop Hill Road, and the west side of Sunset Lake Road. There is a pleasant picnic area on the east side of Route 22A just south of Perch Pond Road.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department owns only the timber rights on approximately 400 acres of this WMA. Please be respectful of the private in-holdings located between Cranberry and Walker Swamps.

History

There used to be a logging operation and wool-carving factory run by S. Payne in the Sunset Lake area. Because of this, the area was called Payneville. Doughty Pond was named after a resident of the town.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department acquired most of the property from the A Johnson Lumber Company in 1962. State funds generated from the sale of hunting licenses were used for the purchase.

Habitat Features

Pond Woods WMA has excellent diversity of upland and wetland natural communities. Located near the northeast corner of the WMA, Mud Pond is a long, narrow 12-acre pond bordered by steep slopes on the east and west. A poor fen, an open, acidic peatland dominated by sphagnum mosses, sedges and heath shrubs, occupies less than one acre at the north end of the basin. Poor fens, which are rare in Vermont, are closely related to bogs but have some mineral enrichment. Adjacent to Mud Pond is a stunted woodland of pitch and white pine, and white and red oak. Twenty five-acre Spruce Pond is bordered by less steep slopes forested with red oak and eastern hemlock. Peatlands are to the north and south of the open water. The northern peatland is a combination of fen and lakeside bog. Connected by the southern peatland, Doughty Pond is smaller in size than Spruce Pond, and has a bog at its southern end.

Bishop Hill, with an elevation of 823 feet, is just west of Spruce and Doughty Ponds. Oak Hill, located west of the southern portion of Doughty Pond, is 887 feet. Both hills and nearly all of the WMA are forested with a mix of red and sugar maple, yellow birch, beech, red oak, hickory and hemlock. The southern portion of the WMA is lower in elevation and contains Cranberry Swamp, a poor fen, to the east and Walker Swamp to the west. The swamps have varying degrees of open water and have much aquatic vegetation. Cranberry Swamp Hill is a dry oak-hickory forest. A deer wintering area is located near Cranberry Swamp.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals The diversity of habitat found in Pond Woods WMA supports a variety of wildlife. White-tailed deer, snowshoe hares, cottontail rabbits, gray and red squirrels, red foxes, coyotes, bobcats, skunks and porcupines may all be encountered. Beavers, minks, weasels and otters may also be found in and around the ponds and swamps. Beaver lodges and dams are readily visible on the property.

Birds The assorted habitat types are a draw for several kinds of birds from waders and waterfowl to passerines and raptors. Walker Swamp is the site of a great blue heron rookery. These birds are quite sensitive to human disturbance near the colony site and are known to abandon sites, particularly when disturbed during certain critical periods. Great blue herons are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act -- please do not disturb them. Bitterns, rails, red-winged black birds, eastern kingbirds, tree swallows and marsh wrens can be seen at the ponds and swamps. Wood, black and mallard ducks may also use the area.

The forests contain such species as barred owls, pileated and downy woodpeckers, least flycatchers, northern flickers, blue jays and warblers. Turkey, ruffed grouse and woodcock also occur on the WMA.

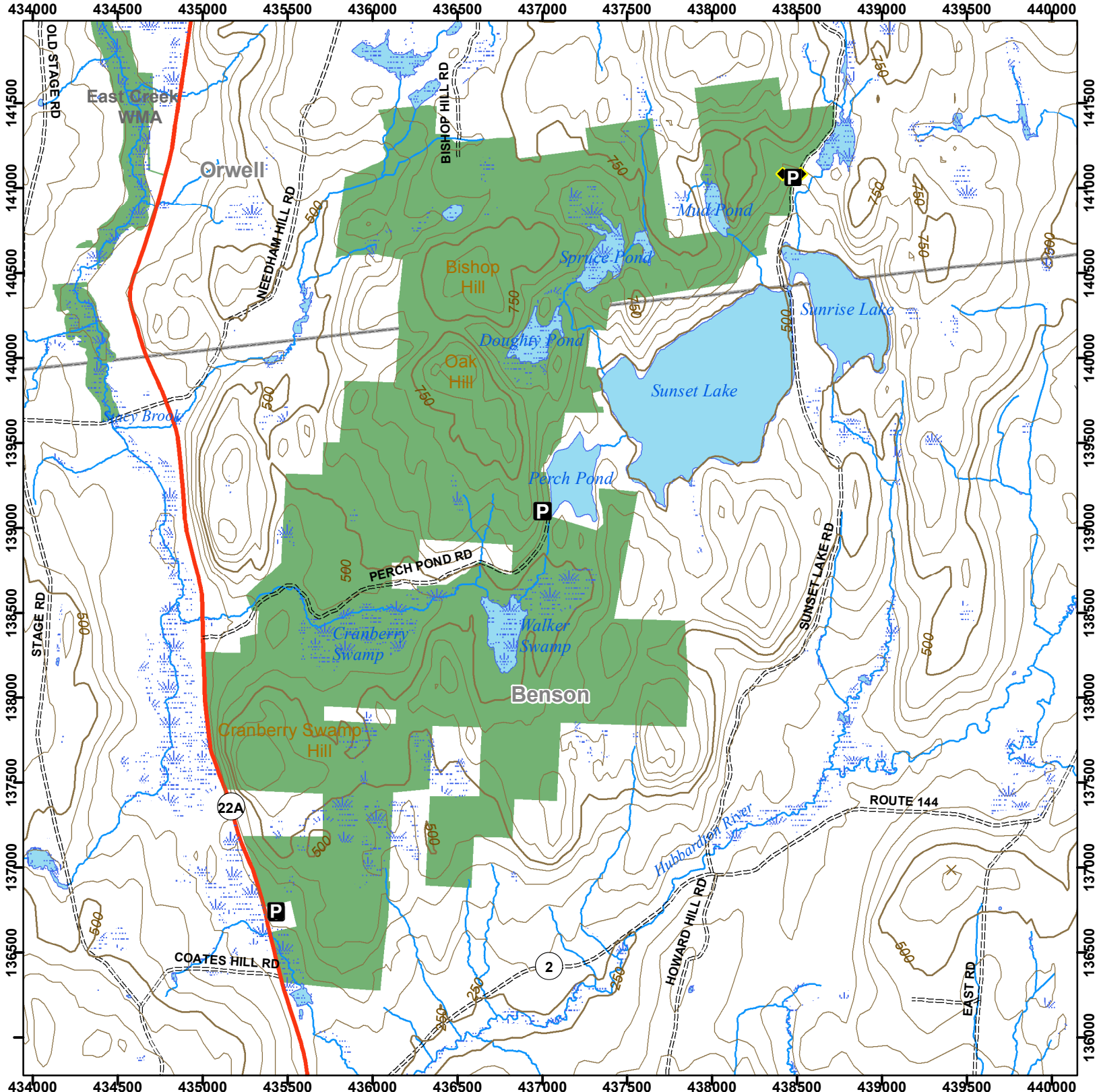
Reptiles and Amphibians Pond Woods WMA has a number of reptile and amphibian species located throughout the property. Jefferson's salamanders live underground in deciduous woodlands and commonly hybridize with spotted salamanders, which are found in hardwood forests and vernal pools. The northern two-lined and northern dusky salamanders live near small streams, wet woodlands and seeps. The eastern newt is easily spotted in its sexually immature eft stage, where it is a bright red-orange or red-brown color with red spots. The skin of the eft is toxic and the bright coloration acts as a warning to predators. Efts are often seen in the woods after a rain. Another salamander commonly seen on the WMA is the eastern red-backed salamander.

The WMA's ponds and swamps are home to snapping and painted turtles, bull, green and pickerel frogs, spring peepers and northern water snakes. Northern leopard, wood and gray tree frogs are more likely to be found in the moist fields or woodlands of the WMA. Smooth green, brown, red-bellied and garter snakes are found throughout the WMA.

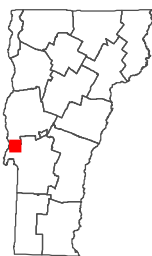
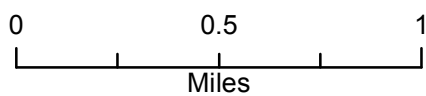
Fish Spruce and Doughty Ponds contain yellow perch in addition to golden shiners, minnows, horned dace and brown bullheads.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area



Pond Woods WMA: 2,273 acres



- Wildlife Management Area
- Other Public Land
- Private with Public Access
- Wildlife Viewing Areas
- Car-top Access
- P Parking
- Boat Ramp
- Gate
- Designated Camp Site During Big Game Seasons Only

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