

Snake Mountain Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Snake Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in west central Vermont in the towns of Addison and Weybridge. Its 1,215 acres span the upper slopes and summit of Snake Mountain. Access is from parking areas on Mountain Street near Wilmarth Road, Mountain Street Extension, and Snake Mountain Road south of Thompson Hill Road. There is a network of walking trails that crisscross the mountain. One popular day hike is to the summit from the Mountain Road parking lot. There are great views of the Lake Champlain Valley and the Adirondack Mountains from the summit. Some of the trails cross private land; please be respectful.

The WMA is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Timber rights are privately owned. Management goals for this area are to conserve wildlife habitat and provide public access.

History

Snake Mountain was once known as Grand View Mountain. There was a hotel on the summit aptly named "Grand View Hotel", which was built around 1870 by Jonas N. Smith. It subsequently burned down, but part of the foundation remains. Smith also built an observation tower. The road going up to the hotel, once plied by stagecoaches bringing vacationers, is still a trail.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department began to acquire land for Snake Mountain WMA in 1959 from the A Johnson Lumber Company, which has reserved timber rights. Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department funding, generated from hunting license sales, was used for most purchases. Recent acquisitions have used monies from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. There was also a private land donation.

Habitat Features

Snake Mountain is a prominent feature in the Champlain Valley, jutting up from the surrounding level countryside, and reaching an elevation of 1,287 feet. As such, it is an island of upland forested habitat in the heavily farmed Champlain Valley. Most of the WMA is covered by northern hardwoods. However, there are several other forest communities which result in a great diversity of plants and wildlife. These include a mesic red oak forest growing on deep, rich, well-drained soils, a dry oak-hickory hophornbeam forest on dryer soils, and a mesic maple-ash-hickory forest. There are also hemlock stands and eastern red-cedar in old pasture lower down. There is temperate calcareous cliff and temperate acidic outcrop forests, both with many unusual plants, and a transition hardwood tallus wood. Hophornbeam is a dominant understory tree. Dwarf chinquapin oak and fragrant sumac are two unusual woody plants found in the WMA.

Herbaceous plants are diverse, including white trillium, dog's-tooth violet, bloodroot, sweet cicely, beech-drops, large-flowered bellwort, bishop's-cap, hepatica, Canada-violet, dwarf ginseng, small-flowered buttercup, Christmas fern and rattlesnake fern. Back's sedge, four-leaved milkweed, handsome sedge, needle-spine rose, hair honeysuckle, large yellow lady's-slipper, podgrass and squaw root. The State-endangered Douglas knowtweed has also been found.

There is a very interesting wetland near the summit known as Cranberry Bog. It is about 33 feet deep and more than 9,500 years old. It began forming shortly after the retreat of the last glacier in Vermont. There is an acre of open bog mat, comprised mostly of sphagnum moss. Pitcher plants are abundant, and round-leaved sundew and tawny cotton-grass are also present. Shrubs include bog rosemary, bog laurel and sheep laurel. Dense leatherleaf rims the outer edge of the mat. The surrounding bog forest is dominated by black spruce with larch, red maple and white pine. Highbush blueberry dominates the shrub layer in the bog forest; black alder and speckled alder grow as well.

The entire wetland area is very fragile. Please minimize disturbance to it, and especially do not walk on the bog mat. And remember, no plants may be picked on public lands.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals There is an important white-tailed deer wintering area on Snake Mountain. The WMA also supports a full compliment of woodland mammals, including coyote, bobcat, red and gray fox, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, and occasional moose and bear.

Birds There is excellent hawk watching from Snake Mountain during migration. Peregrine falcons have been nesting on the cliffs – please obey posted signs to prevent disturbing them. All the woodland songbirds, woodpeckers and owls that one might expect can be found. One notable songbird that has been known to breed here is the golden-winged warbler. Game birds present on the WMA are wild turkey and ruffed grouse.

Reptiles and Amphibians Red-backed salamanders are common. Jefferson's, four-toed, blue-spotted and spotted salamanders also occur. Expect to find American toads, spring peepers, gray tree and wood frogs. Snake species that may be seen are milk, brown and garter snakes.

Fish There are no fishable waters on this WMA.