

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Get Out & Explore

A WONDERFUL WILDLIFE RESOURCE

BY LIZA POINIER

AS YOU'RE OUT SCOUTING hunting spots this fall—and dreaming about next spring's fishing—take advantage of one of New Hampshire's best-kept secrets: Wildlife Management Areas. Known as WMAs, these thousands of acres of undeveloped public land are owned by the N.H. Fish and Game Department and designated as areas for wildlife resource conservation, hunting and fishing. To encourage you to get out and explore, Fish and Game has recently published on its website descriptions of 25 of the larger WMAs.

How did these beautiful areas with flourishing wildlife come to be protected? Some hundred years ago, when wildlife had become scarce across the country and the concept of wildlife conservation was new, wildlife enthusiasts wondered what could be done to make wildlife populations grow. Few understood how complex a task the problem was; and none had a proven way of improving prospects for game animals and fish.

In New Hampshire, the Fish and Game Commission (forebears of today's Fish and Game Department) began hearing news of experiments in other states and in Canada, showing that wildlife, while difficult to breed in captivity, flourished in the wild when given a chance. It sounds like common sense today, but at the time it was a radical notion. The Commission embraced the idea that they could help wildlife "by simply giving the game a chance, under favorable conditions, and under protection, to propagate themselves."

New Hampshire passed a law in 1917 allowing for the creation of wildlife sanctuaries. The Fish and Game Commission started actively promoting the

refuge concept in the 1920s, and taking advantage of land gifts to create wildlife refuges and sanctuaries.

Many of these early refuges were ultimately turned into Wildlife Management Areas. Today, the value of these lands — both habitat value and economic value — is sky-high. Chuck Miner, landowner and constituent relations administrator for Fish and Game, admires the foresight of those long-ago Commissioners and others who worked to create these special places. "They were thinking about this 50, 60, 70 years ago, before the development boom," he says. "We're fortunate to have these places protected, not just for this generation, but to provide a wildlife legacy for the future."

The primary goal for WMAs is to protect and maintain critical wildlife habitat. Many WMAs contain important wetlands, or areas where threatened or endangered nongame species may be found. The larger areas are especially significant because they provide for a wide diversity of habitat.

Hunting and fishing are allowed on WMA lands, as is trapping by permit. Of course, all regular rules, laws and seasons apply for these activities.

More than a hundred WMAs and conservation easements now dot the New Hampshire landscape: from tiny parcels designed to protect specific, special habitats, to huge tracts like Enfield WMA, which covers more than 3,000 acres in Enfield and Grantham. Enfield is profiled here, along with Jones Brook and Kearsarge, large WMAs popular with outdoor enthusiasts. But this is just a sampling; find out more on Fish and Game's website: www.wildlife.state.nh.us.

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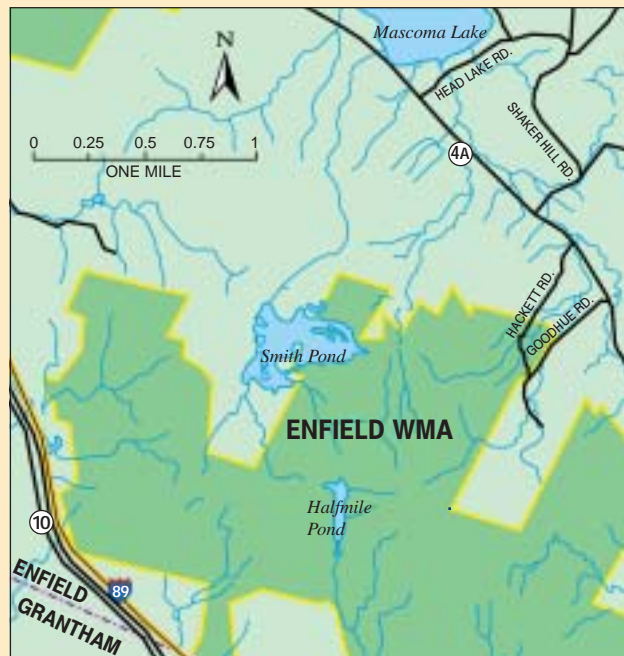


Fish and Game began acquiring land in Enfield and Grantham for Enfield Wildlife Management Area in 1968, adding other parcels to it over the years. Some 225 acres are held in a conservation easement, with the remaining acreage owned outright.

Enfield WMA is mostly forested with northern hardwoods and scattered stands of spruce and fir. It has marshlands, beaver ponds and numerous waterbodies, including 17-acre Cole Pond,

30-acre George Pond, 96-acre Smith Pond, 9-acre Halfmile Pond and 40-acre Butternut Pond.

Species commonly seen at Enfield WMA include moose, white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, black bear, wild turkey and beaver. Waterfowl frequent the marshy areas of the ponds.



Cole and Halfmile ponds are remote (hike-in) access brook trout ponds that are stocked annually by helicopter. Cole Pond has special fly-fishing only regulations, while Halfmile Pond has no special regulations. Anglers will find warmwater fish like pickerel, yellow perch, sunfish and largemouth bass in George and Butternut ponds; Smith Pond has smallmouth bass in addition to pickerel, bullheads and yellow perch.

Getting there: Enfield WMA is between Route 4A and I-89 and borders both roadways. From Route 4-A south of Enfield Center, turn south onto Bog Rd. at George Pond Dam. About 2 miles from 4-A, there is a parking area on the west side of Bog Rd. A trail to Cole Pond begins here. From the west, take Exit 14 off of I-89. Go under the interstate and proceed 50 yards to the east, turning south over a small bridge.

JONES BROOK WMA



In 1983, N.H. Fish and Game acquired the first 863 acres of what would become Jones Brook WMA. In 1990-1992, the Land Conservation Investment Program purchased three adjoining parcels and assigned management responsibilities to Fish and Game. Now one of Fish and Game's largest and most diverse wildlife management areas, Jones Brook WMA covers parts of Brookfield, Middleton and New Durham.

Jones Brook WMA is comprised of upland forest, with mixed stands and various age classes of hardwoods, hemlock and white pine. It hosts an abundance of wildlife, including moose, white-tailed deer, bear, coyote, otter, beaver, turkeys, snowshoe hare, chipmunks, squirrels, hawks, ruffed grouse and American woodcock, in addition to many different songbirds and waterfowl species. It has important deer wintering areas, several ponds and streams, and a network of wetlands.

The topography is hilly and steep in places.

Three mountains — Moose, Perkins and Rand — are located within the WMA. Although there are no clearly marked trails, climbers willing to bush-whack will enjoy nice views from the ridges.

The ridgeline of the mountains separates the two main waterbodies on the property: 12-acre, man-made Mountain Pond; and Jones Pond. Known by some as Pocomoonshine, Jones Pond was enlarged from a small waterbody into 20 acres when a prior owner created an earthen dam on Jones Brook. Stocked with brook trout, it is a popular hike-in, fly-fishing-only angling destination. Mountain Pond is also stocked with brook trout; it has single-hook artificial lure and fly-only regu-



KEARSARGE WMA

1,080 Acres

Land for the creation of Kearsarge WMA in Andover was purchased with funds from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program. Private landowners also contributed land parcels to complete the WMA.

This WMA is located at the northern base of Mount Kearsarge, a 2,937-foot-tall mountain that dominates western Merrimack and eastern Sullivan counties. In lower elevations, the property consists of mixed hardwoods and softwoods, but changes to predominantly hardwoods and then to stunted spruce as the land climbs in elevation. The WMA abuts the 4,965-acre Kearsarge Mountain State Forest to the south and west, creating more than 6,000 acres of contiguous protected wildlife habitat.

The WMA has a variety of habitat types, and therefore a diversity of species. Bear, white-tailed deer, moose, turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hare and other upland species abound. There are several beaver flowages, which provide habitat for mink, muskrats and waterfowl including wood ducks, mallards and black ducks.

Timber harvesting took place in 2000.



Trees that were heavily damaged during the 1998 ice storm were removed to regenerate early successional forest

stands and establish herbaceous wildlife openings to diversify the existing habitat. A Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project has also been completed to regenerate speckled alder and aspen.

Getting there: From Route 11 west of Andover, take Cilleyville Rd. to Kearsarge Mountain Rd. to Leadmine Rd. and proceed straight ahead for two miles. The WMA is on both sides of the road, which ends at the Andover-Salisbury town line.



1,492 Acres

lations and a 12-16 inch slot limit on brook trout.

At press time, discussions were underway regarding the possible re-naming of Jones Brook WMA in honor of Fish and Game Commissioner Ellis R. Hatch, who has championed this area's cause for more than 20 years. Perhaps in the future, this beautiful place will be known as the Ellis R. Hatch WMA.

Getting there: Jones Brook WMA abuts Kings Highway along the Middleton/New Durham town line. A small parking area off of Kings Highway connects to a gated-access road that leads to Jones Pond. From the east, an access road leads to Mountain Lake; from Route 109 in Brookfield, take Governor's Rd., then Mountain Rd. to its end. Limited parking is available at the gate, with foot travel only to the pond.

