

The Narrows Wildlife Management Area

General Description

The Narrows Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 429-acre tract of land owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. It is located in the "Dresden Narrows" section of Lake Champlain, west of Cold Spring Road in the town of West Haven. Access the WMA by boat on Lake Champlain. A parking area is located near the sharp turn on Cold Spring Road.

History

George Spiegel conveyed the 716-acre Spiegel Sanctuary in West Haven to the Vermont Land Trust in 1995 in memory of his parents, Charles and Lena Spiegel. A bronze plaque inlaid in a large boulder in the parking lot pays tribute to Charles and Lena Spiegel, stating that "they found freedom and happiness in New England". In 1997 the Vermont Land Trust conveyed 429 acres of the 716-acre property to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department to become The Narrows WMA.

Habitat Features

The Narrows WMA has 81 acres of wetlands that is part of a series of large wetlands in this area of Lake Champlain. They are known collectively as The Narrows Marshes. The WMA has many interesting features including 5,456 feet of shoreline frontage on Lake Champlain, several rare plant species, and examples of natural communities such as a calcareous cliff community. Please keep in mind that plants should not be picked or dug up regardless of abundance.



Calcareous cliff community in The Narrows WMA.
Lisa Thornton, VFPRD photo.

Twenty acres of the WMA are on an "island", which is accessible most of the year by a narrow land bridge; during times of high water it becomes a true island. The island is composed mainly of upland hardwood forest with a small

clearing. A dilapidated two-story house in the clearing is estimated to be about 150 years old.

The WMA contains 348 acres of upland hardwood forest, including 15 acres of old fields and several old orchards which provide excellent wildlife habitat for birds and mammals. The hardwood forests are composed of red and sugar maple, yellow birch, beech, red, chestnut and chinkapin oaks, shagbark hickory, hophornbeam, apple and scattered white pine. The ledges and cliffs have softwoods such as white and red cedar, hemlocks, and red and white pines.

Two of Vermont's largest trees are located on this WMA. One is a shagbark hickory that is 88 feet tall and has a dbh (diameter at breast height) of 48 inches. The other, a chinkapin oak, is a New England Champion Tree. It is 60 feet tall and has a dbh of 40 inches.

The Narrows WMA is adjacent to approximately 350 acres of conserved farmland and in the vicinity of two large natural areas owned by The Nature Conservancy.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals The Narrows WMA is a rich habitat that supports a wide variety of animals. Beavers and muskrats can be seen in the wetlands. White-tailed deer take advantage of the abundant food source that the old orchards provide. Gray squirrels can be found gathering nuts in the forest. Predators such as coyotes, red foxes, bobcats and fishers are found throughout the WMA. At dusk and dawn in the summer, little brown bats can be seen devouring insects.

Birds The wetlands are utilized by several species of birds including wood ducks, mallards, black ducks, hooded mergansers, red-winged blackbirds and common snipes. Osprey platforms have been placed off shore to provide ready nesting sites. Ruffed grouse and woodcock prefer early-successional habitat like the old fields that are slowly transitioning into forestland. Turkey will also use the old fields and orchards for food resources.

Reptiles and Amphibians The Narrows WMA has a good variety of reptiles and amphibians. Most notable is the five-lined skink. It is a State-endangered species and is the only species of lizard found in Vermont. The WMA has several species of snakes including eastern rat and common garter snakes. The wetlands and moist woodlands support a host of amphibians species such as spotted and red-backed salamanders, eastern newt, leopard, green, pickerel, bull and gray tree frogs, spring peeper and American toad. Painted and map turtles can also be found.

Fish The adjacent Lake Champlain waters offer large and smallmouth bass, walleye, brown bullhead, catfish, northern pike, chain pickerel, white and yellow perch, sheepshead gar, bowfin, black and white crappie, pumpkinseed and bluegill.

The Narrows WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing.

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429 Acres
1:13,000

