

Podunk Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Podunk Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in the east central Vermont town of Strafford, due west of Miller Pond. The WMA is 924 acres in size, is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Access to the WMA can be gained from the west via Justin Morrill Highway to Old City Falls Road, and then to Pennock Road, which eventually turns into an unmaintained Class 4 town road that bisects the WMA. The same Class 4 road can be accessed from the east via Miller Pond Road and Maple Hill Road. A developed parking lot is located off the Class 4 road on the east end of the WMA. Undeveloped parking exists at the entrance to the Podunk Pond access trail, and further west on the Class 4 road where the road reaches its highest point, adjacent to a maintained field. Podunk Pond, a 4-acre impoundment, is in the middle of the WMA, north of the Class 4 road.

History

No one is sure how the WMA received its name, but Podunk is a Natick Indian word meaning "a boggy place". The WMA, however, is an upland environment. It is thought that the early settlers of what was to become the town of Strafford first occupied this region of the town. Surveyor General James Whitelow identified the area on paper as West Podunk. Following its purchase by the State of Vermont, the WMA was given its current name by the late William Sladyk, a wildlife forester for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. McMaster Hill, located in the west end of the WMA, was named after an early settler.

This part of Orange County was once a nationally important region for copper production. In fact, the property is still encumbered by mineral rights held by the Ely Mine Company.

Cellar holes, fields and stone walls on the WMA are the remnants of a once self-sustaining farm economy.

The WMA was purchased by the State of Vermont in 1963 from the Malmquist Wood Products Company, using a combination of Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department funds, generated from the sale of Vermont hunting and fishing licenses, and the U.S. Department of Interior's Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Habitat Features

The WMA lies within the Ompompanoosuc River watershed and is mostly forested with a mix of sugar maple, white birch, beech, some red oak, balsam fir, red spruce, hemlock, and plantations of white and red pines and Norway spruce. The coniferous areas in the mid-eastern portion of the WMA provide wintering habitat for white-tailed deer. There are about 10 acres of field in five separate areas that are maintained by the Department through brush hogging. The largest field (~5 acres) is located along the Class 4 town road in the middle of the WMA, and it is

associated with the remains of an old farmstead. There are good concentrations of apple trees in these fields which are maintained through release cuttings.

Several intermittent streams feed Podunk Pond. The outlet of the pond eventually joins the outlet of Miller Pond and empties into Abbott Brook, which in turn empties into the West Branch of the Ompompanoosuc River. Elevations range from 1,900 feet on McMaster Hill to 1,300 feet at the lowest point in the WMA.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Game animals include white-tailed deer, black bear, moose, coyote, fox, snowshoe hare, fisher, bobcat and gray squirrel. Expect to find many smaller non-game species as well.

Birds Ruffed grouse and wild turkey can be found on the WMA, as well as osprey, great-horned owl and goshawk. A variety of other deciduous and coniferous forest-associated songbirds are certain to be found.



An immature goshawk on a perch. ©Jupiter Images 2004.

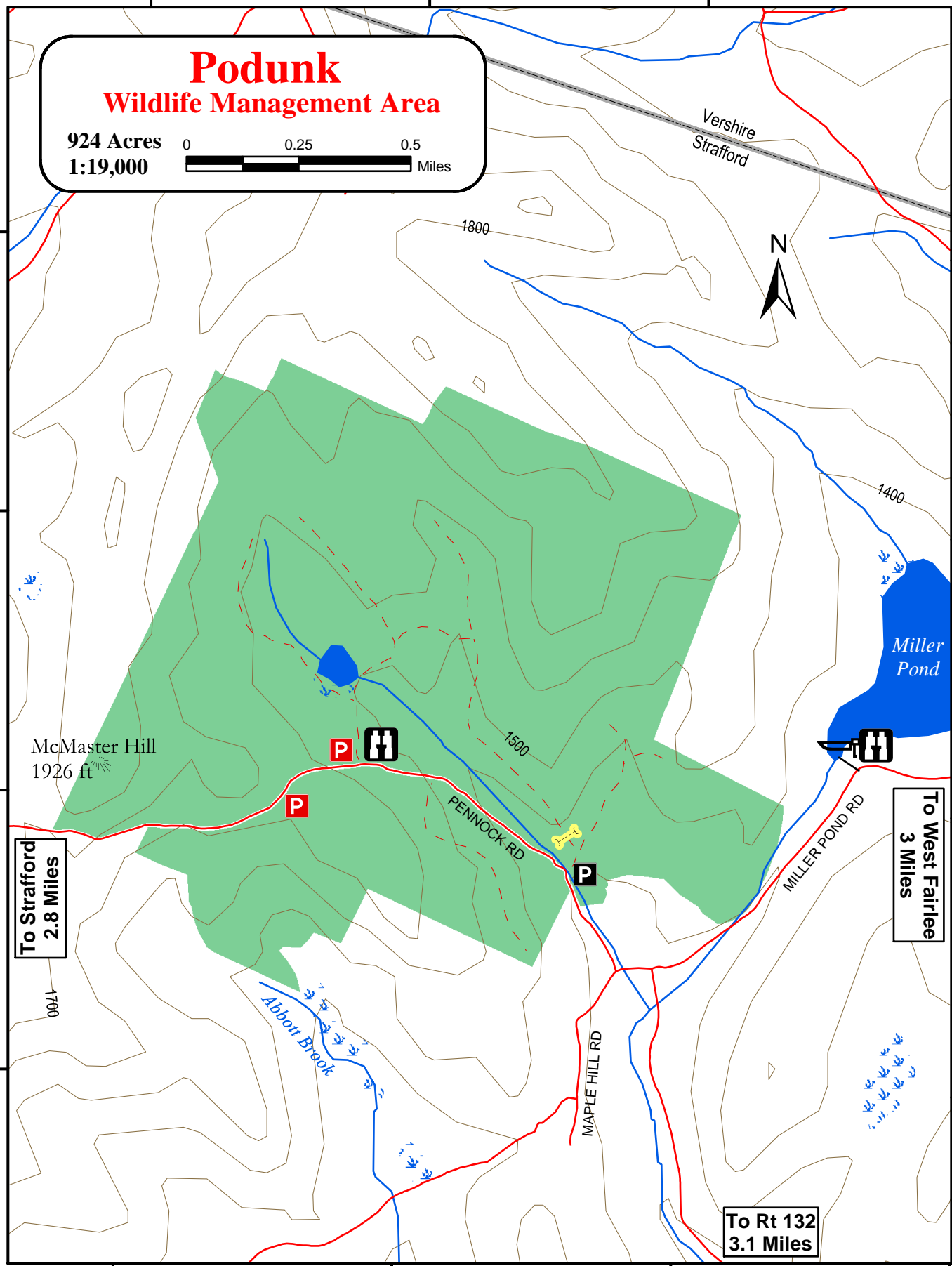
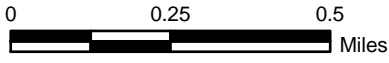
Reptiles and Amphibians Salamanders such as Jefferson's and associated hybrids, spotted, northern dusky, northern two-lined, red-backed and eastern newt might be found on the WMA. American toad, spring peeper, and American bull, green pickerel, northern leopard, gray tree and wood frogs are known to occur here. Painted turtles and snakes such as the smooth green, DeKay's brown, red-bellied and garter snakes might be found.

Fish Native brook trout may be found in outlet streams of Podunk Pond.

A breach in the man-made dam at Podunk Pond has significantly lowered the water level. Therefore, the pond itself does not provide a fishery at the current time due to unsuitable habitat conditions. Native brook trout were documented in Podunk Pond in 1971.

Podunk Wildlife Management Area

924 Acres
1:19,000



To Strafford
2.8 Miles

To West Fairlee
3 Miles

To Rt 132
3.1 Miles

McMaster Hill
1926 ft

Miller Pond

Vershire
Strafford

1800

1400

1500

PENNOCK RD

MILLER POND RD

MAPLE HILL RD

Abbott Brook

713517

714517

715517

716517

4864955

4863955

4862955

4861955