

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 2,858-acre tract in the towns of Addison, Panton and Bridport. A public viewing area is located along the south side of Route 17, one mile west of Route 22A, that provides excellent viewing of the huge fall concentrations of Canada and snow geese. There is also a small boat access on Route 17 as it crosses the Creek.

This WMA has seven impoundments that create cattail-dominated wetlands. Water levels are actively managed. Surrounding uplands are a mix of active agricultural lands, old fields and clayplain oak-hickory forests. Hunting, fishing and trapping are allowed on portions. Access to sections of the WMA is regulated because the area is primarily a waterfowl refuge. Dead Creek WMA is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

History

Before European-American settlement, the Champlain Valley was covered with forests. Native Americans traveled up Dead Creek to fish in the Creek and hunt in the forest. When Europeans arrived, they found fertile soils and fairly flat land. Farming was therefore an attractive alternative. Farming has been the major land usage in the Champlain Valley ever since, effecting large-scale loss of those original forests. Large dairy farms still surround the WMA. Some farmers lease land from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Department guidelines help the farmers enhance wildlife value by practicing certain cultivation techniques.

The WMA has been pieced together from many smaller parcels. Most of the land was purchased from neighboring farmers. State acquisitions began in 1950. Pittman-Robertson funds, which are generated from a tax on firearms and ammunition, financed most of them. Money from the US Land, Water and Conservation Fund were used to finance construction of the dams.

Habitat Features

Dead Creek originally flowed north sluggishly to Otter Creek through a fairly flat valley. Construction of dams has created impoundments and added much more open water and cattail marsh.

The soils in the area are mostly fine clays that inhibit drainage. The oak-hickory clayplain forest community is adapted to such poorly drained soils. This was a widespread community in the Champlain Valley before European settlement. Dominant tree species are shagbark hickory, white oak, swamp white oak, red oak, burr oak and white pine. Hophornbeam is the most abundant subdominant tree.

Besides open water, there is extensive emergent cattail marsh in Dead Creek WMA. There is also broad-leaved emergent marsh, deep bulrush marsh and buttonbush swamp. Pondweeds, broad-leaved arrowhead, arum-leaved arrowhead, waterweed, swamp-milkweed, bristly sedge, big-headed bulrush, wool-grass and water-dock are some of

the aquatic plants that occur. One may find flowering rush, which is naturalized from Europe. Parasitic dodder, jewelweed and sweet joe-pye weed grow on the banks.

Some areas are managed for moist soil. They are flooded for brief periods and then drained, and support plant species which enhance waterfowl habitat in the fall. Drawdowns benefit migrating shorebirds which are attracted to mudflats and shallow water held for them until late summer. The uplands are a mixture of farmland, old fields and clayplain forest. The farmland and old fields are managed to improve wildlife habitat. In many areas there is a dense line of shrubs ringing the marshes, which provides wildlife cover and food. These shrubs include chokecherry, meadow-sweet, downy arrow-wood, gray dogwood, round-leaved dogwood and prickly ash.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Game species occurring on the WMA are white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, bobcat, beaver, mink, muskrat, otter, red and gray fox, coyote and raccoon. Several species of small mammals - chipmunks, mice, voles, moles, shrews and weasels - occur in the variety of habitat types found on the WMA.

Birds Over 200 species of birds have been sighted on Dead Creek WMA. A bird list is available for this excellent birding site. Marsh-dwelling birds such as marsh wrens, soras, common moorhens, pied-billed grebes, American and least bitterns, and black terns may be seen or heard. Great, snowy and cattle egrets have been sighted here. Many species of ducks occur, both during breeding season and migration. There are resident breeding Canada geese, as well as huge flocks of migrating Canada and snow geese. Shorebirds stop here during their migration. Other birds include many species of songbirds, woodpeckers and raptors, including ospreys, bald eagles, northern harriers and short-eared owls. Upland game species are American woodcock, ruffed grouse and wild turkey. One may possibly observe the grasshopper sparrow, a State-threatened songbird. It is against the law to disturb endangered species, nest boxes or nest platforms. Please bring binoculars and keep your distance from wildlife.

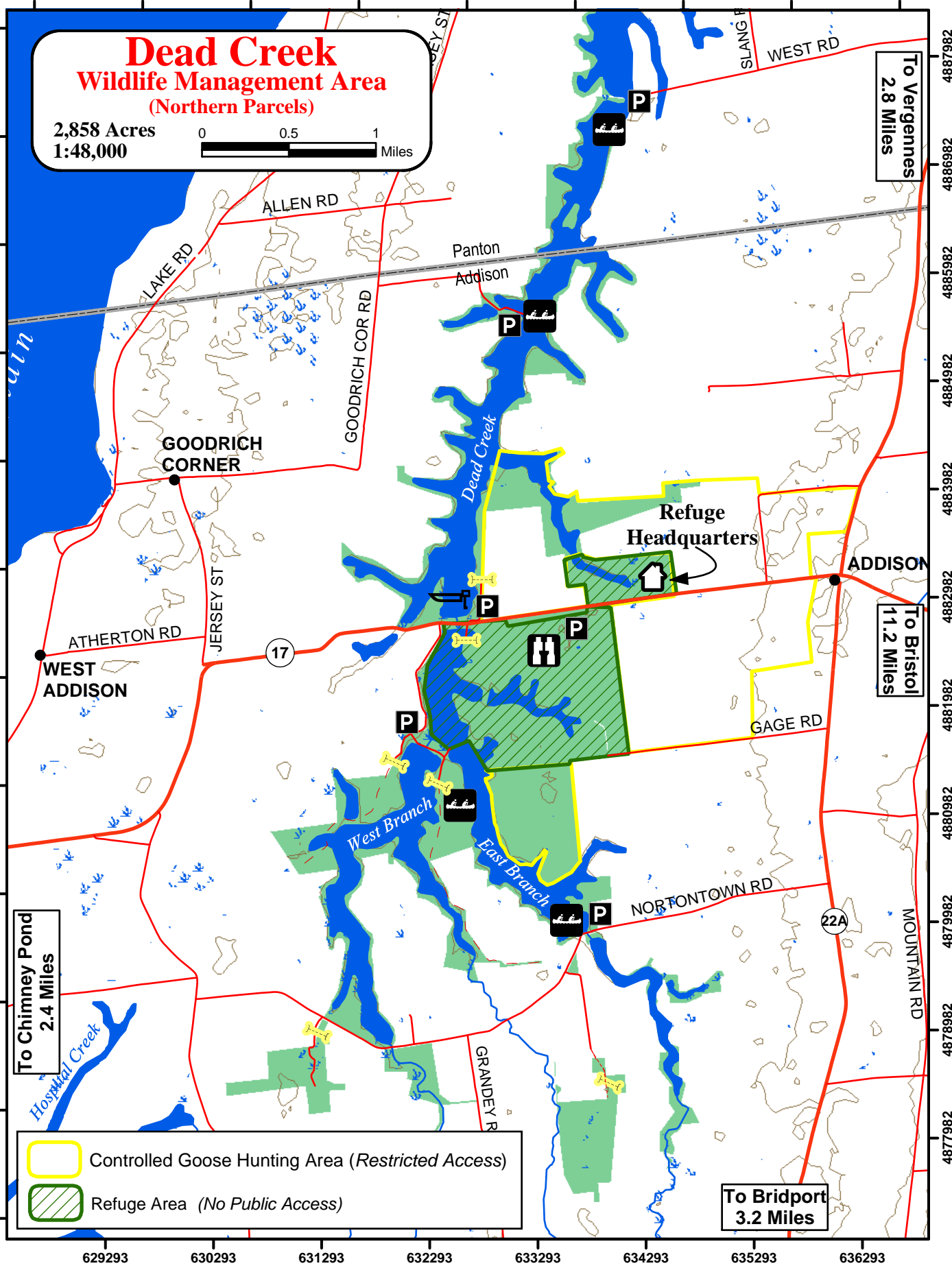
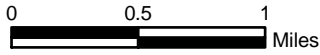
Reptiles and Amphibians Blue-spotted, spotted, red-backed and northern two-lined salamanders and eastern newts may be found on the WMA. American toads, bullfrogs, spring peepers, gray tree, green, pickerel and northern leopard frogs may all occur. There are painted and snapping turtles and stinkpots in the marshes. Garter, milk, brown and northern water snakes may also be found on the WMA.

Fish There is fishing for brown bullhead and, to a lesser extent, yellow perch and sunfish. Carp are numerous and may be seen on the surface during spring spawning. The bridle shiner is an interesting small fish species found in Dead Creek. A rare mussel, the giant floater, is also present.

Dead Creek WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing, except in the refuge. Hunting in the controlled hunting area is by permit only.

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (Northern Parcels)

2,858 Acres
1:48,000



To Vergennes
2.8 Miles

To Bristol
11.2 Miles

To Chimney Pond
2.4 Miles

To Bridport
3.2 Miles

- Controlled Goose Hunting Area (Restricted Access)
- Refuge Area (No Public Access)

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (Southern Parcels)

1:16,000



To Rt 125
1.5 Miles

To Rt 22A
0.8 Miles

To Bridport
3.1 Miles

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