

Blueberry Hill Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Blueberry Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is 1,152 acres in size. It is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The property consists of three separate parcels, referred to here as the eastern, middle and western parcels. It is located in the towns of Castleton (936 acres) and Ira (216 acres) just off Route 4.

Parking and public access to the middle parcel of Blueberry Hill WMA is available through an 80-acre parcel owned by the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs located off Belgo Road. The WMA can be reached by climbing up the hill due south of the parking lot. There is no access to Blueberry Hill WMA from Route 4 since this is a limited access highway. Parking in the Route 4 rest area is strictly prohibited.

History

Blueberry Hill WMA was created in 1970 when the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department acquired excess property from the Agency of Transportation in the towns of Ira and Castleton. The Agency obtained these parcels as a result of the construction of Route 4. In 2002, the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs acquired the land along Belgo Road that now allows access to the WMA.

Habitat Features

Blueberry Hill WMA contains steep mountainous terrain that ranges from about 500 feet near Route 4 to about 1,800 feet in elevation on the eastern parcel. Blueberry Hill, which lies just north of the western parcel, is 1,246 feet high. The forests within the WMA are a mixture of red, chestnut

and white oak, birches, maples, aspen, hickories, hophornbeam, and white pine. Old fields and apple orchards are scattered throughout the parcel.



Looking at Blueberry Hill across Route 4.
Kim Hall, VFWD photo.

The oaks, hickories and hophornbeams on Blueberry Hill WMA produce excellent mast, which is an important wildlife food resource. The blueberries that can be found on this WMA are another good food source.

The entire WMA serves as critical deer wintering habitat. Although the softwood cover is limited to scattered stands of white pine, the direct southerly exposure melts the snow even within the adjacent hardwoods. As a result, deer are able to move throughout the slopes of Blueberry Hill during most winters.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Because the WMA includes deer winter range, white-tailed deer are especially numerous in this area in the winter and spring. Deer are often seen feeding in the fields as soon as the snow melts in spring. Gray squirrels also benefit from the good mast production. Cottontail rabbits, red foxes, fishers, and coyotes can be found throughout the WMA. An occasional black bear may also be seen passing through the area.

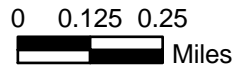
Birds The mixed forest and varied elevations support a variety of birds. Red-tailed hawks have been seen perching conspicuously. Rough-legged hawks hunt in the open fields of the WMA along Route 4. At night, the distinctive call of barred owls can be heard. Numerous songbirds such as blue jays, black-throated blue and black-throated green warblers, scarlet tanagers, rose-breasted grosbeak, indigo buntings, hermit thrushes and hummingbirds can be seen on the WMA. Blueberry Hill WMA supports a large number of turkeys, particularly in the fall when acorns are present. Ruffed grouse can be found in the open areas, especially in early successional habitat.

Reptiles and Amphibians Northern two-lined and eastern red-backed salamanders, along with eastern newts can be found hiding under damp logs and in other moist areas. Milksnakes and gartersnakes are most likely to be found near stonewalls or resting under rock piles. The melodic calls of the American toad and gray treefrog can be heard in the spring and summer. Since open water is limited on this WMA, reptiles and amphibians are less abundant and harder to find than in wetter areas.

Fish There are no fishable waters on Blueberry Hill WMA.

Blueberry Hill Wildlife Management Area

1,152 Acres
1:21,000



Vermont Federation of
Sportsmen's Clubs

North Britain Brook

Belgo Brook
West Rutland
Castleton

Blueberry Hill
1246 ft

Castleton
Ira

800

1500

1100

500

To Exit 5
0.5 Miles

To Castleton
1.2 Miles

To Exit 6
3.2 Miles

Castleton River

4

4A

649346

650346

651346

652346

653346

4833345

4832345

4831345

