

Loves Marsh Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Loves Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 100-acre parcel owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The WMA lies in the town of Castleton at the north end of Lake Bomoseen. It can be accessed from the Johnson Spooner Road, which is south of Float Bridge Road. Parking is located along the town road.

History

Loves Marsh was purchased from Hollis Johnson and Mrs. Allan Spooner in 1954 by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department using Pittman-Robertson Funds, which are generated from a tax on firearms and ammunition. The property was sought after because it is an important wetland habitat for waterfowl.

Habitat Features

The WMA has both a large cattail marsh and open water wetlands. Sixty two acres of the parcel is open water; the northern section contains the cattail marsh. Cattail marshes are sometimes considered common and uniform, but they are highly productive communities and provide critical habitat to many wildlife species. There are some mixed hardwood forests located around the edge of the marsh. The wetland was created by an impoundment; a dam is located at the southern end of the marsh. Loves Marsh WMA has excellent birding.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Because most of this WMA is a wetland, aquatic mammal species are more common on the parcel than upland species. Species present include beaver, muskrat, otter and mink. Muskrats use cattails as a food supply and as building material for their small, conical lodges. A colony of muskrats can have a major impact on cattail

marshes, forming a mosaic of open water and vegetation that is ideal waterfowl habitat. Small, often overlooked, wetland mammals include long-tailed weasel, star-nosed mole and water shrew.

Birds Loves Marsh is excellent waterfowl habitat. Nesting ducks include black, wood and mallard ducks, and hooded mergansers. Also present are wading and water birds such as great blue herons, American bitterns, kingfishers, red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens, swamp sparrows and eastern kingbirds. Spotted sandpipers and common snipe might be seen foraging along the shore. Ospreys are seen regularly on Lake Bomoseen. The surrounding woods support forest and edge-dwelling songbirds such as tree, barn and cliff swallows, blue jays, gray catbirds, cedar waxwings, yellow-rumped warblers and ovenbirds.

Reptiles and Amphibians In the woods around the marsh and rear the Marsh's edge, there are Jefferson's, spotted, blue spotted and eastern red-backed salamanders and eastern newts. From the marsh itself can be heard the calls of bull, green and pickerel frogs and spring peepers. Gray treefrogs can be heard from nearby trees and shrubs. Snake species found on this WMA are northern water and garter snake.

Painted and common musk turtles occupy Loves Marsh. When disturbed, the common musk turtle will quickly release a foul-smelling liquid from its musk glands. This kind of defense earned the musk turtle the nickname of "stinkpot". Also, males are particularly aggressive and will bite. Another unique behavior the nocturnal common musk turtle exhibits is walking on the bottom of the stream or pond while foraging, instead of swimming like other turtles.

Fish Loves Marsh is a warmwater fishery that supports several species of fish including largemouth and rock bass, bullhead, northern pike, perch, sunfish and golden shiner.



Looking north at Loves Marsh. VFWD photo.

Loves Marsh WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing.

