

Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary, Amherst, NH

Ponemah Bog is a natural oasis surrounded by a suburban environment. Five platforms provide open views for birding in this sanctuary for the senses.

Location: Rhodora Drive, Amherst, NH

Delorme Map edition and page: New Hampshire and Vermont (2018), page: 83, B-5

GPS location: 42.493, 71.3510

Directions

From the north or south via U.S. Route 3 (Everett Turnpike): take Route 101A west for about 5.0 miles. Turn right on Boston Post Road, travel 1.9 miles, and turn left on Stearns Road. After 0.25 miles, turn left on Rhodora Drive; the parking area is straight ahead.

Bog Data

Bog type and acreage: bog (kettle hole) and poor fen of 75 acres with a 3-acre open water pond.

Trails: Two trails provide 0.75 miles of linked hiking paths with observation platforms. The primary path is the Bog Trail of bog boards along the southern edge. The Bypass Trail starts in mixed wood forest and approaches the bog from the north. Both trails provide spur paths to viewing platforms. Read the 3-panel kiosk for flora, fauna, and seasonal information.

Ponemah Bog Overview and History

The 75-acre Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary came under the protection of New Hampshire Audubon in 1979 through a gift from Dr. and Mrs. Homer McMurray and Sanctuary friends. The name Ponemah is from the Ojibwe language and used in Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha," referring to the "land of the hereafter." Ponemah Bog is a kettle hole and includes a poor fen fed by the Souhegan River floodplain.

The Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a three-acre pond and floating sphagnum moss mat that is surrounded by a mixed forest of birch, maple, oak, and pine. The original lake of more than 100 acres was formed as glacial ice melted away. The bog mat started growing more than 6,000 years ago. In the 1940s, peat was harvested in the Black Spruce platform area with ditches visible from the boardwalk, looking like muddy lines in the peat mat.



Trails, Hiking, and Highlights

Trail guides follow a clockwise path at the bog's northern edge. With hiking paths of less than 1 mile, a second trip starting from the opposite direction is recommended. The bog and fen areas have many subtle flora and fauna features to explore and experience.

The bog is home to:

- Flowers: arrow arum, broad-leaved arrowhead, grass pink, horned bladderwort, liverwort, pink lady's slipper, pitcher plant, sundew, swamp candles
- Ground plants and shrubs: blueberry (high and low bush), bog cranberry, bog laurel, bog rosemary, cottongrass, leatherleaf, mountain holly, rhodora, sheep laurel, water willow, winterberry
- Trees: black spruce, fir, pitch pine, tamarack, and white pine.

Start southeast on the Bypass Trail into a hardwood forest interspersed with vernal pools and pitch and white pines. At the large white pine hugging the trail, bear right for the Hitchener Tower platform. Climb its 10 steps for a southerly view of the bog's landscape.

Follow the dirt path to the bog's entrance where a two-board trail takes you into the bog's outer edges with a mix of sedge, blueberries, mountain holly, maple, and white birch. As the trees and heaths give way, the landscape opens. Turn left on the spur path for the Black Spruce platform. This section is punctuated with pitch pine, white pine, and tamarack. Look for carnivorous bladderworts, pitcher plants, and sundews that flank the path.

Return to the main path and continue clockwise, heading southwest, through head-high blueberries and past many black spruces. At the trail intersection, access the two short paths to viewing platforms along the pond's edge. The one to the left is for the Gleason Platform; to the right is for the Tamarack Platform. Linger and take in the sights, sounds, and smells.



Gazing out across the open water of the Eye of the Pond bog, this area is a serene place to watch wildlife, observe plants, and to seek peace and solace.

Return heading west and look for bog rosemary and sheep laurel. Notice how the birch, maple, fir, pine, and spruce become more common. A stay at the Reflection Platform nourishes the soul.

Other Places of Interest Nearby

The Amherst Conservation Commission manages a range of outdoor properties, including Joe English Reservation, Betty Arnold Forest, Dacquino Forest and Bicentennial Trail, Pond Parish and B&M Trail, and Patch Hill.

Other local points of interest are:

- Bear Brook State Park (Allenstown)
- Forsaith Forest Atlantic White Cedar Swamp (Chester)
- Fox Forest Black Gum Swamp, Mud Pond Boardwalk (Hillsborough)
- Manchester Cedar Swamp Preserve (Manchester).