The Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary is maintained by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire’s Nashaway Chapter, which runs programs and field trips in the greater Nashua area. For more information on Nashaway Chapter activities, please call 224-9909 or email membership@nhaudubon.org.

The name “Ponemah” refers to the “land of the hereafter” from Longfellow’s “Hiawatha.” The 75-acre Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary came under the protection of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire in 1979 through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Homer McMurray and local friends of the Sanctuary.

Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary features a three-acre pond surrounded by a floating sphagnum mat and encircled by upland oak-pine woods. This bog resulted from the last receding glacier, which left a kettle hole pond in the Souhegan River outwash plain. Changes over the last 12,000 years have been recorded by the bog itself, which has preserved, in its layers of peat, pollen blown in from the surrounding woods. The moss mat has advanced over the last 6000 years to gradually fill in the pond with plant remains.

The food web is rather simple in bogs: the acid peat locks up most of the nutrients, offering little to support grazing animals and their predators.

The bog is home to both hardy northern plants, such as spruce, and southern species, such as pitcher plants and sundew. Ponemah hosts a combination of conifers, including white pine, pitch pine, black spruce, and tamarack, all relics of more southern or northern forests. Today, Ponemah Bog is a living museum, a relict habitat for plants far from home and an outdoor classroom for wetland botany and ecology.

How to get to Ponemah Bog

From theכניס Tumpike:
Take Nashua exit 7 or 8 and travel west on Route 101A for about 5 miles. Turn right onto Boston Post Road in Amherst. After traveling 2 miles, turn left onto Stearns Road. Drive about 0.3 miles until you see Rhodora Drive on the left. Turn left onto Rhodora Drive and drive straight ahead to park for the Sanctuary.

From the junction of Routes 101 and 101A in Amherst:
Drive east on Route 101A for about 0.5 mile, then turn left on Route 122. Take a quick right onto Stearns Road, and drive 1.1 miles to Rhodora Drive on the right. Turn onto Rhodora Drive and drive straight ahead to park for the Sanctuary.
At the intersection, turn left and meet the builder of bogs: sphagnum moss. Native American mothers used it to diaper their babies. The two trenches stretching north and west from this point date from the 1940s, when peat moss was commercially removed. The bog is dominated by sphagnum moss and other specialized plants rooted directly in the moss. Also, notice the soft bog cotton's flowering spikes that blow in the wind in the summer.

On approaching Sundew View, get down on hands and knees to examine the tiny sundews. Sticky hairs on the sundew's leaf surface trap insects. Pitcher plants are also here. Flies attracted to the pitcher's colorful lip slip on downward-pointing hairs into the rainwater-filled trap. Digestive juices released into the water transform the insect dinner into a dose of nitrogen for the plant that the bog cannot provide. The sundew, pitcher plant, and horned bladderworts are carnivorous plants common in Ponemah Bog.

Continuing left is the Black Spruce Site, the largest platform. Behind you, there are many black spruce trees, which are distinguished by their short, dark needles. Water willow tips arching to the water provide new footholds for sphagnum moss at the pond margin. Tiny cranberries grow at the edge of the water.

Next, the Tamarack Site focuses on the feathery tamarack, or larch. Our only native deciduous conifer, it has golden needles in autumn and fresh green foliage in spring. In the bog, notice the soft five-needle white pine, the bristly three-needle pitch pine, the dark short-needled black spruce, and the tamarack.

Following the boardwalk out to the left, notice the waves of herbs, low shrubs such as bog rosemary, the taller rhodora and winterberry, and finally, the spruces that march slowly behind as succession continues to fill the bog. Stop a moment and notice the bog rosemary, sheep laurel, pale laurel, cranberry, and blueberry. Ponemah Bog offers sanctuary to many things, including the human spirit.