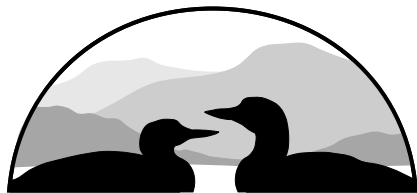




The Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary is maintained by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire's Nashaway Chapter, which runs programs and field trips in the greater Nashua area. For more information on Nashaway Chapter activities, please call 224-9909 or email membership@nhaudubon.org.



The Audubon Society of New Hampshire is an independent statewide membership organization. It operates nature centers throughout the state that provide educational programs for children and adults. It also protects thousands of acres of wildlife habitat through its sanctuaries program and monitors many of the state's endangered species. For information on the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, membership, programs, and publications, contact:

The Audubon Society of New Hampshire

3 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301

PH (603) 224-9909, FAX (603) 226-0902

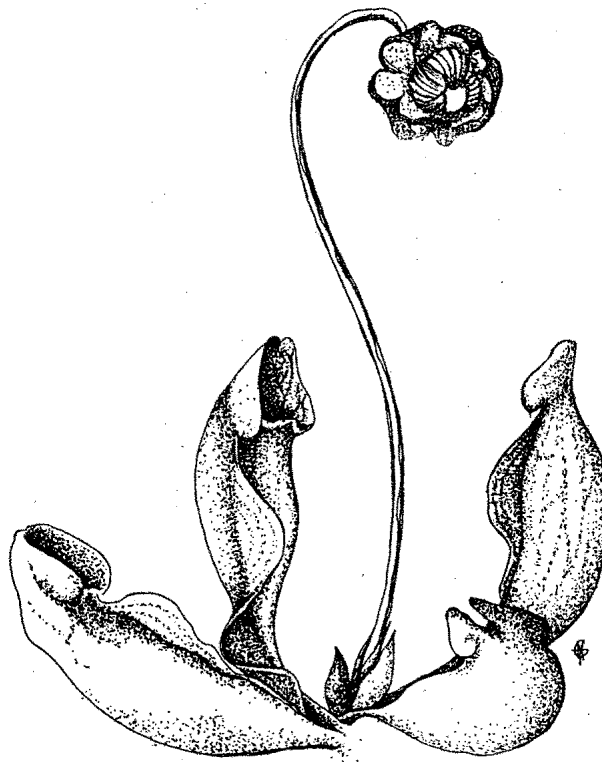
EMAIL asnh@nhaudubon.org www.nhaudubon.org

If you do not want to keep this guide, please return it to the mailbox at the trailhead.

Printed on  recycled paper.

Trail Guide

Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary Amherst, New Hampshire



Audubon Society of New Hampshire

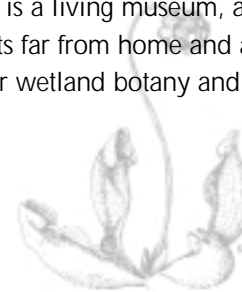
About the Sanctuary

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.

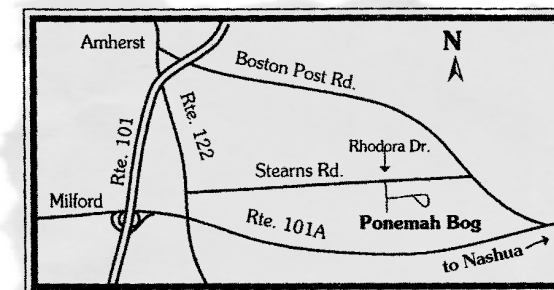
The bog is home to both hardy northern plants, such as spruce, and southern species, such as pitcher plants and sundew. Ponemah hosts a combination of conifers, including white pine, pitch pine, black spruce, and tamarack, all relics of more southern or northern forests. Today, Ponemah Bog is a living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



Visitor Information

Ponemah Bog is open throughout the year during daylight hours.

1. Only foot travel is permitted in the sanctuary.
2. Smoking, swimming, camping, fires, hunting, & trapping are prohibited.
3. Please keep to the marked trails and do not collect or in any way disturb any plants or animals in the sanctuary. Please follow directional signs and walk only on the boardwalk in the bog.
4. Please respect private property.
5. No pets are allowed in the sanctuary.
6. Please carry out all trash and litter.
7. Be prepared for country walking. The boardwalk may be wet, particularly in spring after frequent rain.



How to get to Ponemah Bog

From the Everett Turnpike:

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.

Trail Information

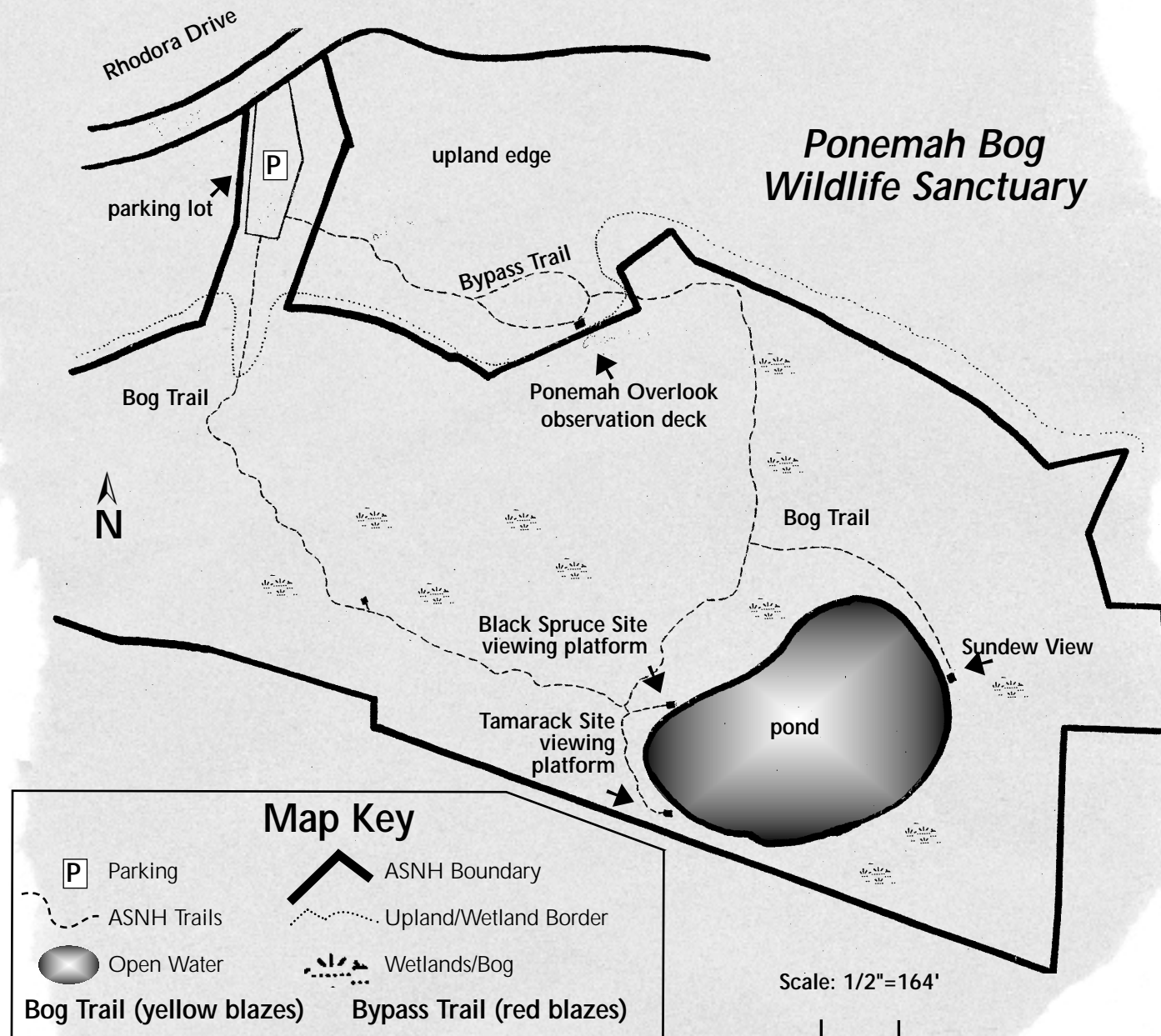
Trail Information

Walking Time: .75 mile, 40 minutes' leisurely walk

The Bog Trail is mostly narrow boardwalk with spur trails to four viewing platforms, where more information about the bog is available.

Entering from the southeast corner of the parking lot, the dry upland forest here is reminiscent of more southern forests of pitch pine and assorted oaks. These woods are home to the Whip-poor-will, Eastern Towhee, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Turn right at the fork to the observation deck and a vista of the entire bog. The three-acre pond is all that remains of the ancient 100-acre lake. The bog mat has been filling the pond with plant remains for at least 6,000 years. The trail to the left takes you past a small marsh that is becoming a swamp. In May, brilliant magenta rhodora flowers in this marsh.

The boardwalk marks the shore of an ancient lake. Along the boardwalk is the varying foliage of leatherleaf, bog laurel, rhodora, and their kin in the heath family. The thick leaves help reduce water loss for these plants, which depend upon rainwater for moisture, as bog water is too acidic. Bog water is normally acid (pH 4.0-4.5) because it seeps in very slowly decaying peat.



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 commer-

cially 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. Ponemah Bog hosts the soft five-needle white pine, the bristly three-needled 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.