



## Wildlands Birding Adventures

### Take a Hike (see Wildlands map for distances and directions)

1. **Hothole Pond Trail, Wildlands** – A trail through lovely mixed forest, surrounded by small streams and beaver ponds of all ages. Listen for Nashville warbler, northern waterthrush, great crested flycatcher, scarlet tanager, northern parula, pine siskin and black-and-white warbler. Scan ponds for swallows, eastern kingbirds, and waterfowl such as wood duck, green-winged teal and hooded merganser. Take a side trip down the Birding Path to the undisturbed Hothole Stream flowage, then venture to the quiet shore of Hothole Pond.
2. **Hothole Brook Trail, Wildlands** – A favorite for evening American woodcock watching, this trail hosts small, open meadows, plus a bridge over Hothole Brook and a stroll through moist spruce/fir forest. Near the end, take a side trip up Bump Hill to look down on another beaver meadow and across at Great Pond Mountain. A great picnic spot! Veery and hermit thrush, black-throated green warbler, northern parula, magnolia warbler, pileated woodpecker, and olive-sided flycatcher are all possible.
3. **Mead Mountain Trail, Wildlands** – A long gravel road/trail leading to a fantastic overlook on Mead Mountain. You'll cross a brook (a sometime beaver pond) and head uphill through spruce-fir and mixed woods. Magnolia, black-throated blue and black-throated green warblers, Canada warbler, northern parula, white-throated sparrow, great crested flycatcher, chickadees and nuthatches, and purple finches are some of the residents here.
4. **Stuart Gross Trail, Great Pond Mountain, Wildlands**—A two-mile round trip to the summit of the mountain passes through mixed woods and up over open, shrubby ledges. A small spruce-fir forest stands at the top. Listen for black-throated blue warblers and scarlet tanagers near the bottom of the trail; as it opens up at the ledges, watch for migrating hawks and peregrine falcons in fall. Ruby-crowned kinglets and eastern towhees in summer and crossbills and snowy owls in winter are possibilities.
5. **Nature Trail, Craig Brook Nat'l Fish Hatchery**—An easy 1.5-mile loop off the Don Fish Road winds through mature (150-year-old) hemlock and pine woods, with streamside and bouldery side-trails. Blackburnian, black-throated green and pine warblers, golden-crowned kinglets, white and red-breasted nuthatches, winter wrens, common ravens, pileated woodpeckers and barred owls are common. Extend your walk from Alamoosook Lake to Craig Pond to look for loons, common mergansers, bald eagles, belted kingfishers and spotted sandpipers.
6. **Dead River Trail to Picnic Path, Wildlands**—Park at Dead River Gate and walk the road to the Picnic Path, which descends steeply to an idyllic spot on the Dead River. Young woods and old fields on the way host common yellowthroats, chestnut-sided warblers and American redstarts. Tall oaks attract scarlet tanagers. Keep an ear to Hellbottom Swamp below for

warblers, great-crested flycatchers and rose-breasted grosbeaks. On the shores of Dead River, watch for fishing loons, osprey and eagles. It's so quiet, you'll be sure to hear the splash!

## 7. **Valley Road, Wildlands**

- a. **South End**—Park in the meadow just south of the gravel pit and walk north to the outhouse. Damp forests along the road are home to yellow-bellied flycatcher, winter wren, veery, Canada warblers and cedar waxwings. Stop in Mushrall Meadow to listen for warblers and woodpeckers, and scan the gravel pit for nesting belted kingfishers!
- b. **North End**—Park at Baker Brook Campground meadow and walk to Baker Brook Bridge. Yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-eyed vireo, hermit thrush and veery, black-and-white warbler, cedar waxwings and ovenbirds will greet you. Watch the birdhouses in Great Meadow for tree swallows, listen for drumming grouse and detour down Great Meadow Trail to listen for Canada warblers and yellow-bellied flycatchers in the mossy woods.

## **Only have a minute?**

**Esker Path, Wildlands** – Just a few yards in from South Gate, bring binocs and spot a variety of warblers and other songbirds along this trail. Do a short out-and-back or walk the entire loop.

## **Feeling more adventurous?**

**Paddle Moosehorn Stream!** Put in at the bridge on Bald Mountain Road in North Orland (leave your car roadside), and spend a morning paddling through a large cattail marsh to pristine Hothole Pond. Spring or fall are best, as water is higher and there may be beaver dams to slide over. Alder flycatchers, eastern kingbirds, swallows, yellow warblers, common yellowthroats, swamp sparrows and red-winged blackbirds are abundant. Listen for Virginia rails and marsh wrens, too, and watch for bald eagles, great blue herons and shy wood ducks.

**Take a night hike!** As the sun sets, venture into the Wildlands on a spring evening to hear some of its rarest residents. Woodcock display late March to early June in small clearings and along roadsides, especially on calm, moonlit nights. Early June is the best time to hear nighthawks “boom” as they swoop in aerial courtship over Great Pond Mountain, and to encounter feeding whippoorwills sweeping up and down gravel roads and through open woods. Year-round, listen for resident barred and saw-whet owls. In the summers of 2018-19, birders were delighted to find a Chuck-wills-widow (another nightjar relative) calling from the slopes of Flag Hill. These birds normally live south of New Jersey! Try walking Valley Road from South Gate to Hothole Brook Trail, or from North Gate, hike to Hothole Pond or Baker Brook Campsite.

## **What to Bring**

Binoculars, a Wildlands map, bug spray, sunscreen, extra layers, a hat, a snack and plenty of water are musts! A compass can also be helpful. Trails are often longer than you might expect, and it can be easy to get turned around at junctions. Bring your smartphone to use eBird, but keep in mind there are many locations where reception is spotty – so bring a notebook and pencil too!

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