

Thousand Acre Swamp

DIRECTIONS

From I-590, take Browncroft Boulevard (NY 286) east to Jackson Road. Browncroft Blvd. becomes Atlantic Ave. Turn left (N) and follow Jackson to the entrance road on the left opposite Penfield Center Rd. Follow the unpaved entrance road to the parking lot, bearing left at the intersection.

ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS

Thousand Acre Swamp is a Nature Conservancy sanctuary located in the town of Penfield. It is open year around, but the parking lot and trails are not plowed in winter. Admission is free, but donations to the Nature Conservancy Central and Western NY Chapter, 339 East Ave., Suite 300, Rochester, NY 14604 are appreciated. Pets, camping, fires and collecting without a permit are not allowed. Hikers must stay on the trails. There are annual public hikes led by knowledgeable volunteers including a number of birding walks in spring and early summer, the best seasons for birding at the Swamp. A hike list, a trail guide, and a bird checklist may be obtained at a kiosk near the entrance.

CAUTIONS

From late May through the first frost of fall, mosquitoes are abundant. Protective clothing and repellent are strongly recommended. Trails may be very muddy in spring. Poison ivy is abundant. Drinking water and restroom facilities are not available.

HABITAT

As of February 2000, the area of the sanctuary was 453 acres. Acquisition of land is ongoing. There are a variety of habitats including moist deciduous woods, swamp/marsh, grassland, and two ponds (Duck Pond, Way Pond). Some 450 plant species have been documented. Amphibians are abundant and varied.

SPECIALTIES

The sanctuary is known for a variety of breeding woodland and wetland species plus many migrants. The official checklist included more than 130 species as of 1990. Nesting woodland species include woodpeckers, thrushes and mimic thrushes, flycatchers, scarlet tanagers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, Baltimore orioles, vireos, great horned and screech owls. American redstart, yellow warbler, and common yellowthroat are the most abundant nesting warblers. Nesting wetland species include herons and rails as well as more common ones. Although wild turkeys are not on the 1990 checklist, they have occasionally been seen or heard since the early 90s. This writer once encountered an adult female with several youngsters at the Meadows. Flocks of migrating rusty blackbirds are sometimes seen in spring. It is one of few locations within 10 miles of downtown Rochester where bluebirds and grassland birds may be seen. For additional species, see the checklist.

SUGGESTED BIRDING ROUTE (2.6 miles round trip)

From the parking lot, follow the Entrance Trail and Deer Run west about 0.4 miles to the Boardwalk. You may wish to take a short side trip to Duck Pond which is accessed via an inconspicuous unmarked trail to the right from the Entrance Trail. Wood ducks

breed there, and pileated woodpeckers have been seen on the snags. You may encounter any of the woodland birds along Deer Run. The 0.1 mile boardwalk passes through a wetland area which has characteristics of both marsh and swamp. There are cattails and grasses with trees and dead snags emerging from the water. Red-winged blackbirds, swamp sparrows, marsh wrens, common yellowthroats, and rails may be seen from the Boardwalk. Great blue herons flying overhead are a common sight. There is a small rookery at the swamp. Any species of woodpecker found in western New York may be seen on the snags. In April, the display flights and winnowing sounds of common snipes may be observed. From the boardwalk, follow the trail to the left via Warbler Fen and Hermit Walk to the Meadows (about 0.7 miles). (If you don't want to go further after the boardwalk, go right at the first intersection to get back to Deer Run via Weasel Way. Turn left at Deer Run to return to the parking lot.) Along this route, be on the alert for rusty blackbirds (late April-early May), numerous warbler, flycatcher, and thrush species, and tanagers. At the Meadows, inspect the nest boxes for eastern bluebirds and tree swallows. Bobolinks, eastern meadowlarks, savannah and field sparrows have been seen here. On spring evenings, American woodcock males do their courtship display flights. On the evening of May 4, 1999 a whip-poor-will was heard calling loudly and clearly. Turn right and continue along the edge of the Meadows to Way Pond. Wood ducks and Canada geese breed there, although the youngsters often fall victim to snapping turtles. To return to the parking lot via the shortest route, retrace your steps along Hermit Walk, then bear left at the first intersection onto Trillium Trail and follow it to Deer Run.