

## Big Meadow Bog

Pittsfield, Burnham



### Description

An extensive wetland complex including exemplary peatland communities, bald eagle nests, and waterfowl habitat. The portion of Big Meadow Bog that was evaluated as a peatland is that north of the Sebasticook River, which bisects the area. This was described as a raised level bog with one off-center dome, without surface patterns or pools. The wooded portion appears to be the most raised section of the heath. It appears

to be a single basin with outlying transitional areas of swamps and streamside habitats. Peatland communities include sheep laurel dwarf shrub bog, black spruce – larch bog woodland (including larch woodland fen), red maple woodland fen, and mountain holly – alder woodland fen. Numerous deer and game trails cross the bog.

The area south of the river encompasses a large deer yard with a bald eagle nest and extensive wading bird and waterfowl habitat. This area is considered “moderate” priority for eagles statewide; eagles have been documented here since 1992. The eagles probably are responsible for the migration out of the great blue herons and osprey which had been nesting in that area; however, a few years ago, the eagles moved southwest a short distance to the shores of the Sebasticook, and herons and osprey are now recolonizing their former nesting area. This area has not been surveyed for rare or exemplary natural communities, but are believed to include at least some hardwood floodplain forest and cedar fen woodlands.

*Rare Species and Natural Communities Summary Table*

Common Name	Latin Name	EO Rank	Global Rank	State Rank
Level Bog Ecosystem	--	B	--	S4
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>		G4	S4

*Other Resources Mapped by MDIFW*

A large area south of the river is mapped as a Deer Wintering Area; a bald eagle nest site is located within this. Much of the wetlands are designated as Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat.

*Protection Status*

All of the land is privately owned. Pittsfield Airport abuts on the north, and a navigation channel runs from the airfield souther through the wetland to the river.

*Conservation Considerations*

The most important conservation strategy is maintaining or improving the water quality within the watershed. Conservation easements, fee ownership, and tree growth and open space treatments would be additional conservation vehicles.

The inaccessibility of the large wooded wetland south of the river presumably increases its value to wildlife; there is little use. However, the wetland both north and south of the river could be vulnerable to degradation from recreational uses. The Pittsfield airport is affecting the northern edge of Bog Meadow Bog because of tree-trimming required for safety, but these unavoidable effects can be localized. However, it could open an avenue for ORV access into the bog. ORV use of the peatland when the ground is not frozen could seriously degrade portions of the bog; this has been a problem in some other bogs in southern Maine. Buffers and monitoring can play a major role in protection here.

An adequate buffer should be retained between developed lots or timber harvest areas and the wetlands. The state minimum shoreland zoning standards restrict harvest and clearing within 250' of wetland borders. Because different species can have different buffering requirements, better protection will be afforded to the collective wetland plants and animals with larger buffers. Any timber harvesting within and adjacent to the wetland should be implemented with strict adherence to state or local Shoreland Zoning guidelines and Maine Forest Service Best Management Practices.