

Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge  
100 Merrimac Drive  
Newington, NH 03801-2903

For More Information, Please Contact:  
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge  
6 Plum Island Turnpike  
Newburyport, MA 01950  
978/465 5753

Federal Relay Service  
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing  
1 800/877 8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov/>

August 2021



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Great Bay

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



Osprey  
John & Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS

*“Take care of the earth  
and she will take  
care of you.”*

—Author Unknown



## History

In the early 1950s, the U.S. government acquired the land for the development of Pease Air Force Base. On January 1, 1956 the base became officially active. Over the years, Pease AFB played a prominent role in the nation's defense readiness, hosting long range bombers with nuclear strike capability. When the base closed in 1989, citizens and environmental groups from Newington and the surrounding area advocated for the creation of a wildlife refuge. This was accomplished in 1992 with the establishment of Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Great Bay NWR is currently managed by Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport, MA.



Greg Thompson/USFWS



USFWS

Greg Thompson/USFWS

## Welcome



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Welcome to Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge NWR. These 1,087 acres in the southeast New Hampshire town of Newington protect valuable wintering bald eagle and waterfowl habitat along the Great Bay estuary.

The Great Bay has been designated a National Estuarine Research Reserve due to its relatively undeveloped state and high value for supporting active research, education, and recreation. Refuge habitats include mudflats, salt and freshwater marshes, swamps, ponds, streams, woodlands, and reverting fields. The refuge boasts one of the longest stretches of undeveloped shoreline on Great Bay.

The bay supports the largest concentration of wintering black ducks and bald eagles in New Hampshire. Other waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and raptors (or birds of prey) flock to this safe haven. A growing number of shellfish and finfish benefit from the protection of the breeding grounds. State-listed rare and endangered plants and animal species are also protected.



*Salt marsh creek*

Katherine O'Donnell/USFWS



USFWS

*Kestrel*

The refuge's location on the Atlantic Flyway attracts birds and birdwatchers from near and far. Greater and lesser scaup, red-breasted mergansers, Canada geese, goldeneye, brant, and cormorants enjoy these protected waters. Herons, egrets, semipalmated plovers, sandpipers, dowitchers, and both greater and lesser yellowlegs feed in the mudflats and saltmarsh creeks. State-protected species such as the common loon, pied-billed grebe, osprey, common tern, northern harrier and upland sandpiper frequent the refuge.

Raptors using the refuge during the breeding season include American kestrel, osprey, red-tailed hawk, screech owl, and great-horned owl. Many white-tailed deer, turkey, and beaver make Great Bay NWR their home, as well as river otters, red foxes, painted turtles, and snapping turtles. Even bobcats have been seen on the refuge.

Great Bay NWR is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Refuge System represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world.



*Red fox kit*  
©Gary Prestash







Little Bay

Welsh Cove

To Pease  
Tradeport

Arboretum Drive

**Legend**

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Refuge Parking
-  Refuge Headquarters
-  Restroom
-  Bird Watching
-  Photography
-  Trails

North

0 500 1000 Feet



Ferry Way Trail

Field

Apple Orchard

Beaver Pond

Former Weapons Storage Area



Peverly Pond Trail



Upper Peverly Pond

Thomas Point

**GREAT BAY**  
*National Wildlife Refuge*

Herods Cove

Woodman Point

Great Bay

Fabyan Point



## Management

The management goal of Great Bay NWR is to protect native wildlife and plants. In support of this work, a dedicated team of volunteers work to control invasive plants such as purple loosestrife, autumn olive and Japanese knotweed. Meadows are mowed in late summer, after upland birds have finished nesting, to maintain the open grasslands and prevent forest encroachment. Occasionally, a prescribed burn is warranted in order to manage habitat, maintain grasslands, and remove invasive plants.

The refuge has an active volunteer program. To become a volunteer or for further refuge information, contact Parker River NWR at 978/465 5753.

## Enjoy Your Visit

Great Bay NWR's primary purpose is to protect habitat and manage wildlife. Please do not interfere with the wildlife, as sensitive species such as the osprey are adversely affected by human disturbance. Please respect closed areas.

Visitor use areas are open daily from dawn to dusk. To enhance your chances of viewing wildlife, minimize noise while on the trails and bring binoculars. Many animals are more active during the early and later parts of the day. Some of the best wildlife viewing occurs in the spring and fall during the bird migrations.

Restroom facilities are handicap accessible, but running water in restroom provides non-potable(non-drinkable) water. We advise visitors to bring their own drinking water.

## Peverly Pond Trail



Round trip: ½ mile  
Hiking time: 20 minutes  
Difficulty: easy - wheelchair accessible

Greg Thompson/USFWS



This boardwalk loop trail begins in the far corner of the parking lot, just past the restroom building. After passing through a forested area, the trail approaches the edge of Upper Peverly Pond, where an observation deck is provided. The trail then winds back toward the parking lot, passing by a number of vernal pools along the way

Katherine O'Donnell/USFWS

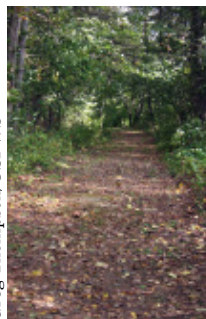


*Upper Peverly Pond*

## William Furber Ferry Way Trail

Round trip: 2 miles  
Hiking time: 1 hour  
Difficulty: moderate

Greg Thompson/USFWS



The trail begins as an asphalt path that parallels the chain link fence across the road from the visitor parking lot (see map). After following the fence line, the trail crosses a road and veers left onto an abandoned road. Entering the woods, the trail passes by a beaver pond, an old apple orchard, and a large field. The trail then loops down to Great Bay, past a marsh and along the lower edge of the field across a boardwalk before backtracking to the parking lot.

Note: this trail can be very wet in spring and during rainy periods. We advise visitors to wear boots during these times.

## Wildlife and Seasonal Happenings

*Spring* - Spring peepers announce the return of warmer weather as myriad shades of green begin to color the trees and shrubs. Flocks of migratory ducks, geese and songbirds drop into the protected waters, fields and forests of the refuge, making this an ideal time for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts to take to the trails.

*White-tailed yearling*



Greg Thompson/USFWS

*Summer* - White-tailed deer and their speckled fawns grace the meadow along the Ferry Way Trail. Turkey families strut boldly along the paths and occasionally down the road. Birders can enjoy the dazzling array of summer visitors such as the Baltimore oriole, goldfinch, ruby-throated hummingbird and yellow warbler.

*Autumn* - Nature puts on a spectacular fall show for visitors. Various tree species contend with one another to create the most stunning colors, a contest which the visitor always wins. The ponds and bay are alive with migratory waterfowl, resting on the trip south for the winter. Beaver and porcupine also prepare for the coming winter.

*Monarch butterfly on New England Aster*



Greg Thompson/USFWS

## Regulations



John & Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS

*Turkey*

*Winter* - Bald eagles wintering on Great Bay soar overhead, and black ducks swim in patches of open water. Abundant deer and turkey forage in the undergrowth. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing along the foot trails can bring you close to wildlife in the depths of winter.

As a visitor to a national wildlife refuge, you are responsible for knowing and following all refuge rules and regulations. Please help protect wildlife and their habitats by observing the following:

- Foot travel is limited to marked trails (Peverly Pond Trail and William Furber Ferry Way Trail)
- Bicycles and motor vehicles are limited to the entrance road and parking lot
- Pets are prohibited
- Fishing is prohibited
- Do not collect or disturb any wildlife or vegetation

Seasonal deer and turkey hunting (via a lottery selection process) is permitted in designated areas under federal and state regulations. Please contact Parker River NWR headquarters for additional information and regulations or visit the Great Bay NWR website: [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great\\_bay/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_bay/)

Please note that biting insects and ticks are common in this area. Please dress with that in mind and consider wearing insect repellent.

All areas beyond the parking lot and two trails are closed to the public. No sightseeing, roads, or trails beyond this sign are open to the public.

This sign marks the refuge boundary. Public access is limited to designated access routes. Please respect wildlife habitat.

