

## Silvio O Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Pondicherry Division

### Pondicherry: A Conservation Partnership

Welcome to the Pondicherry Division (Pondicherry) of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of 545 refuges, protecting about 100 million acres of key habitat for wildlife, fish, plants, and people.

The Refuge was established in 1997, in part to conserve, protect, and enhance the natural diversity and abundance of wildlife, fish, plants, and federally threatened and endangered species in the Connecticut River watershed.

Pondicherry first gained recognition in 1964 when it became an Audubon Society of New Hampshire sanctuary. In 1972 the National Park Service designated the area as a National Natural Landmark and it was honored as New Hampshire's first Important Bird Area in 2004.

### The Partnership

Refuge staff works with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, which administers Cherry and Little Cherry ponds, the New Hampshire Audubon Society, which owns approximately 166 acres around the ponds, and the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Bureau of Trails, responsible for the state trails that intersect the Refuge. Friends of Pondicherry, a volunteer organization, maintain trails, remove invasive plants, and offer environmental education programs. Together, the partners strive to conserve the important ecological attributes and provide visitors a memorable experience.

### Natural History

Pondicherry includes 6,405 acres, of which, 166 acres are protected by easements. The refuge encompasses a vital mosaic of ponds, bogs, wetlands, boreal and mixed forests in Jefferson and Whitefield, New Hampshire. Today's landscape is, in part, a product of ancient glaciations. Approximately 10,000 years ago as the glaciers receded, this area was at the bottom of Lake Israel. Residual glacial ice blocks embedded in the lake bottom melted as the lake drained into the Connecticut River leaving water-filled depressions known today as Cherry, Little Cherry, and Mud ponds.

### What to Expect

Travel out to Cherry Pond on a clear day and you will be rewarded with spectacular views of the Presidential Range. The ponds and adjacent forests are excellent habitat for migratory birds. Over the years, 236 bird species have been recorded here, 131 of which are confirmed breeders. Turtles, frogs, black bear, moose, and white-tailed deer are also common.

Pondicherry is open to the public throughout the year from 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. Visitors may hike, snowshoe, and ski here. Motorized access is limited to the state snowmobile trails during the winter. Hunting and fishing are allowed under state and refuge-specific regulations.

Pondicherry has three developed trails and two parking lots. The Airport Road lot is 1.5 miles east of the Mount Washington Regional Airport. A relatively flat trail connects the lot with Cherry Pond. The second parking area is on Route 116, about 1 mile east of the Whitefield and Jefferson town line. The Colonel Whipple Trail enters from the east on Whipple Road, passes near Cherry Pond, and exits the southern boundary, east of Cedar Marsh. The third trail is a loop between Cherry and Little Cherry ponds. This is a particularly good place to see boreal species such as black-backed woodpeckers and boreal chickadees as it traverses an extensive forest bog. Be aware that there are no signs off the three developed trails. Future plans call for a substantial improvement to the trail system, including ecological and historical interpretive panels

