

“Sessions Woods – A Guide” by Tess B. Bird

Tess B. Bird wrote this guidebook at the age of sixteen. The project included research, writing, photography, artwork, and booklet design. Her purpose in creating this booklet was to offer her services to Sessions Woods while gaining further writing experience.

Tess has always enjoyed writing and plans to attend college to study a combination of history and creative writing. Her dream is to be an author and she may also pursue a career in teaching or research.



Excerpt from the "Introduction"

What is Sessions Woods?

Sessions Woods is a Wildlife Management Area covering 453 acres in Burlington, Connecticut. A Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is different from a state park, which is used mainly for recreation, or a state forest, which concentrates on forest management. Sessions Woods WMA concentrates on benefiting wildlife and habitat. It is a place for wildlife to live and thrive, as well as a place that helps educate the public about wildlife management and environmental concerns. Sessions Woods teaches us how to manage and protect the precious gifts of the earth through educational programs, demonstration sites, self-guided walking trails, and displays. We have to understand that as humans we have a major role to play in protecting wildlife and managing resources. Having places like Sessions Woods means one step towards a better future for all creatures.

Sessions Woods was purchased in 1981 from the United Methodist Church by the Department of Environmental Protection with the help of sportsmen-generated Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Funds (Pittman-Robertson Act).

Excerpt From the "Trails of Sessions Woods" (*letters correspond to a map*)

The Beaver Pond Trail is a 2.6-mile long loop that brings you around the property on a wide, gravel-coated path. The walk is not difficult, apart from the semi-steep inclines and declines of the land. This trail can be used for seasonal bicycle riding and cross-country skiing. It is handicapped accessible, with a vehicle, to suitable areas.

After parking in the main parking lot, you can begin to walk from either side of the loop. This guide will describe the walk beginning at the entrance to the right of the large education center (A) at the north end.

The first half-mile of trail is not on state property but is actually on New Britain Water Department land. The trail begins with a small decline followed by a steep incline. Along the entire trail you will notice posts with information



"The Beaver Pond from the Boardwalk"



about different trees, plants, animals, and rock formations, as well as several forest management demonstrations. Included in these demonstrations are a forest clearcut, an electric deer fence, water control structures, and much more. Some of the first to be seen are the deer fence (a solar-powered electric fence around a tiny orchard, designed to keep the deer from eating the fruit) **(B)**, and the forest clearcut.

The clearcut, which may give some the feeling of desolation, is actually a forest management technique that promotes growth. As taller trees are cut down, undergrowth is able to grow anew, providing a valuable habitat for rabbits and other small animals. (See *Forest and Wildlife Management*).

Nearly a mile in, the trail reaches a sharp turn at the beaver pond, where you can look out at the wetland created by a beaver dam. If you catch it at just the right time of year, perhaps mid-July, the pond will be dotted with thousands of pink, yellow, and white lilies, flowering beside the lily-pads. If you walk a little more, to the right will be a short trail that takes you out on a boardwalk over the wetland. This trail brings you to the waterfowl blind **(C)**, a little hut on the edge of the water where you can get a better look at the beaver pond. The blind also provides a nice sheltered break from a long walk.



A little further down the main trail, there is a path to the left which leads to a vernal pool **(D)**. A vernal pool is a slight depression in the ground where water collects after a spring rain or snow melt. It serves as an important egg-laying habitat for frogs and salamanders.

Just beyond the trail to the vernal pool, the main trail passes by a rock outcrop, which provides shelter for animals, such as snakes and bobcats. As you walk further, only hearing the crunch of gravel under your feet, the songs of birds, the whispering of trees, and the occasional scurry of a woodland creature, you will come to some of the most interesting places to visit along this trail...

Friends of Sessions Woods printed the publication from a grant distributed by the Main Street Community Foundation and James R. Parker Trust. And the book can be purchased at Sessions Woods WMA for \$5. Friends of Sessions Woods have plenty of volunteer opportunities and encourages everyone to become a member.



SESSIONS WOODS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area focuses on nature conservation education, with facilities to offer the general public participation in education programs, demonstrations, and workshops pertaining to wildlife and natural resource management. For your walking and learning pleasure, Sessions Woods offers a variety of well-kept nature trails, including the Beaver Pond Trail, Deer Sign Trail, and

Tree I.D. Trail. Some of the beautiful sights you can expect to see on these trails include a 38-acre wetland with a beaver dam, a 25-foot observation tower, a waterfall, a vernal pool, a bat shelter, and much more!

The web address is: <http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife/geninfo/sessions.htm>

Trails open at sunrise and close at sunset.

Education Center Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Please carry out what you carry in. Dogs must be on a leash at all times.

Sessions Woods is located on Route 69, about 3 miles south of Route 4 in Burlington and 3 miles north of Route 6 in Bristol. Pictures of Sessions Woods WMA can be seen on the Town of Burlington's web site at http://www.munic.state.ct.us/burlington/sessions_woods



Map to Sessions Woods