

# Haskins Trail to Bog Pond

## Savoy Mountain State Forest



### SELF-GUIDED HIKING TOUR

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**WELCOME** to Savoy Mountain State Forest, 10,200 acres managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and located in the towns of Savoy, Florida, Adams and North Adams.

Much of this state forest was acquired by Massachusetts beginning in 1918, assembled from abandoned farmland. Over the years both planned management for wildlife and forestry and natural recovery processes have returned this landscape to something that resembles the time before early settlement. One of the best places to observe wildlife here is Bog Pond, just a few minutes hike from the campground. This is an easy trail through forest with views along a mountain pond.

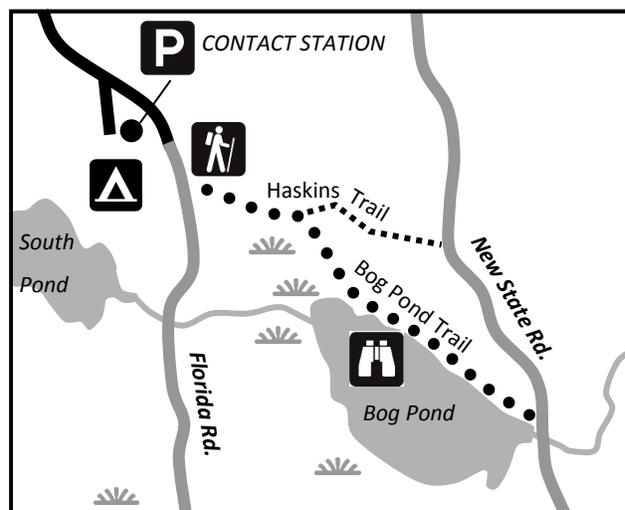
*Please remember to **carry-in, carry-out** all your belongings, including trash. Please leave no trace of your visit, and leave all that you find in its natural environment for all to enjoy. Thank you.*

As you walk the Haskins and Bog Pond Trails there are no marked stops. Allow this guide to give you some things to think about as you hike and encounter things of interest. If you choose to hike beyond the trails in this guide, download the Savoy Mountain State Forest Trail Map at the link below, or pick up trail map at the campground contact station or state forest headquarters down the road, 260 Central Shaft Road, Florida, MA.

Savoy Mountain State Forest Trail Map: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/trails/savoy1.pdf>

The trailhead is reached from the state forest campground contact station, where there is parking. Walk out to Florida Road, take a right. Continue for 200 yards and look for the Haskins Trail on the left. Take the Haskins Trail about 0.25 miles to the junction of the Bog Pond Trail. Turn right and follow Bog Pond Trail. Soon you approach Bog Pond, and the first of several beautiful vistas is revealed.

**BIRDS.** Here at the shallow western end of Bog Pond you're most likely to see wood duck, great blue heron and kingfisher as they patrol for fish or water plants. Songbirds too: common yellowthroat, yellow warbler, white-throated sparrow.



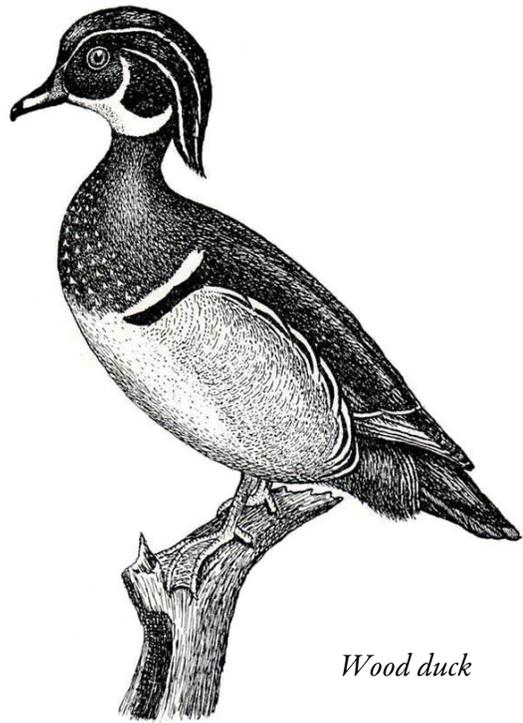
*Bog Pond Trail is **1.5 miles long, round-trip**, and **easy** for average hiker ability. Footing is uneven and wet in places. Plan about **1 hour** to complete it. The trail is marked with **blue blazes**.*

**BOG POND** (elev. 1,858 feet/566 meters; 40 acres in size) was dammed up in the 1800s to provide power for mills downstream. This may have displaced a pre-existing bog here. A bog is a type of wetland that has been accumulating dead plant material, mostly sphagnum mosses, over hundreds to thousands of years. Bogs are generally found in cool, temperate northern hemisphere climates. This is a *quaking bog*; conditions are right for floating mats of vegetation to grow over the surface of the pond. In the past, these mats have been seen to move from place to place according to the winds, but are stationary today. Over time, if undisturbed by humans or beavers these mats could completely cover the pond surface.

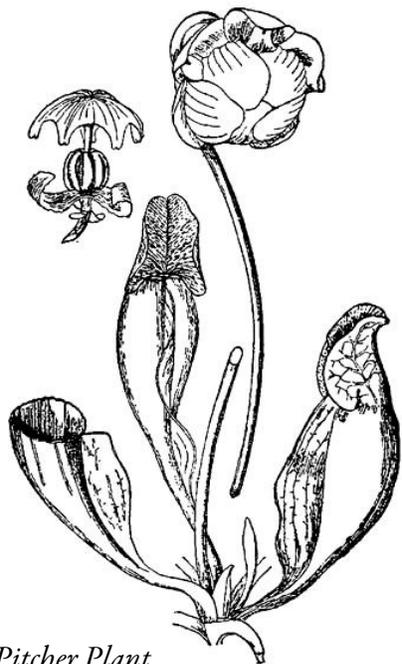
The brown-colored water is acidic, from dissolved tannins from decomposing organic matter. To further this, sphagnum moss removes mineral content (calcium and magnesium) from the water and gives off hydrogen ions, further reducing the pH, making the water even more acidic. Acids slow decomposing vegetation so the layers of dead plant material add up over time. However, this bog has an inlet and an outlet which allows water to flow through, circulating oxygen, and perhaps increases the decomposition of organic matter, and slows the formation of the bog.

Bogs normally form at the outside edge of the pond—inward. Plants loving acidic conditions include leatherleaf, sedges, cotton grass, bog rosemary, Labrador tea, and trees such as spruce and tamarack.

Water Lilies are commonly found here in the summer months. *Fragrant water lily* is white in color and a classic water lily shape. *Bullhead lily* or *yellow pond lily* has a distinctive flower, a large yellow central knob surrounded by 6-8 floating leaves.



*Wood duck*



*Pitcher Plant*

**CARNIVOROUS PLANTS.** Keep an eye out in moist areas for *pitcher plants*, *sundew* and *horned bladderwort*, carnivorous plants adapted to a nutrient deficient habitat. These fantastic plants lure, capture and digest insects only, so you needn't be concerned for your safety, but still refrain from touching these delicate plants. With all carnivorous plants once caught the insect is rapidly digested through enzymes, thus providing the plant nutrients—vitamins and proteins, instead of from the soil.

*Sundew* use glands that secrete a sweet, sticky mucilage that ensnares its victims. *Purple pitcher plants* have a liquid-filled pitfall trap that once the insect enters, it cannot climb out. *Horned bladderwort*, with showy yellow flowers from June-September, has submerged leaves with small, water-filled round bladders. Tiny swimming animals touch trigger hairs

around the mouth of a bladder, which opens and bladder expands, sucking the prey inside.

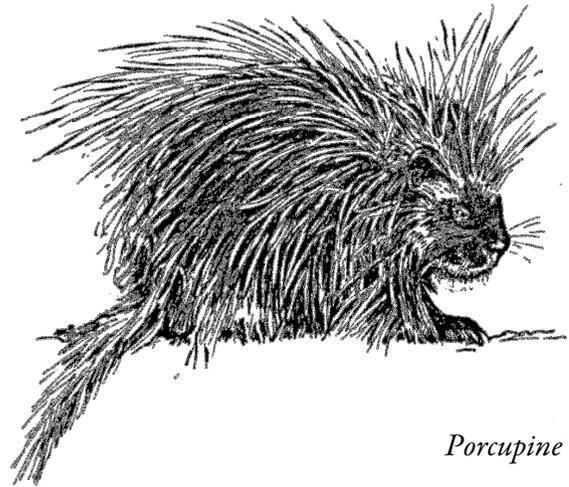
Despite all appearances that this is a bleak environment, bogs are sensitive habitats and highly important to biodiversity—a good thing. Bogs contain many plants and animals specialized to living in this nutrient-poor and acidic environment. Their presence makes life on earth that more rich.

**BOG POND DAM.** An earlier log crib and stone dam dating from the late 1800s powered William Coddington’s sawmill downstream on Bog Brook. This was replaced in 1937 by the current concrete and earthen dam by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 1171 Company, for both wildlife and recreation purposes. The CCC was a federal program that provided unemployed men with useful work in state and national forests during the Great Depression. Along with this and other dams the CCC planted and improved forests, built roads, trails, cabins, campgrounds and established wildlife preserves, while learning life-long social and manual skills; an environmental legacy that we still enjoy today. Look for the rustic stone treatment on the dam facing and the former wading pool at the foot of the dam. At the top of the dam is a carved limestone tablet to the CCC builders. Beavers sometimes get the impulse to further enhance the impoundment and build on top of the dam.

Notice the boat launch next to the dam. If you have a car-top boat consider coming back here to explore the pond by water for an entirely different and close-up perspective of the bog.

To return—either retrace your route back the way you came, or to make a loop, turn left onto New State Road and walk about 0.35 miles to the Haskins Trail on your left. Return via Haskins Trail 0.45 miles to Florida Road and the campground.

The Haskins Trail is named after the Haskins Family, early settlers of Savoy. Dennis Alcott “Ali” Haskins and his family last lived on this 1,000-acre farm in a rambling 22-room farmhouse up until 1955, when it was soon after torn down and the present-day campground was created on the site. Ali was a folk painter of note and hosted many worldly visitors to his home, known as the Haskins Club, from 1915-35.



*Porcupine*

*We hope your visit was pleasant and come back to explore Savoy Mountain State Forest again.*

SAVOY MOUNTAIN STATE FOREST  
Department of Conservation & Recreation  
260 Central Shaft Road, Florida, MA 01247  
(413) 663-8469  
[www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

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