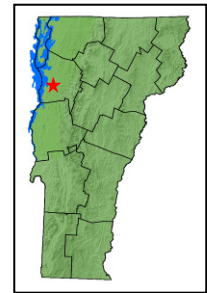


Lake Champlain Valley



WILLIAMS WOODS NATURAL AREA



TNC

**Williams Woods, nestled in the agricultural landscape of the Champlain Valley.**

Williams Woods Natural Area protects one of the best remaining stands of mature valley clayplain forest in the Champlain Valley.

Composed largely of white oak, red oak, red maple, white pine, shagbark hickory, white ash, and bur oak, this forest type once covered thousands of acres in the Champlain Valley. Now it exists in fragments on only 10 percent of its historic range in Vermont. A rich diversity of fruit and nut bearing trees are essential for birds, small mammals, deer and black bear.

The Nature Conservancy first began leasing and managing the 63-acre Williams Woods as a natural area in 1983, and has owned it since 1997. In addition to its valley clayplain forest, Williams Woods supports three different natural community types: a white pine and hemlock stand, a marshy area along Thorp Brook, and a regenerating field. Williams Woods is home to a number of amphibians such as the blue-spotted salamander, the grey tree frog, and the red-spotted newt. Barred owls have been sighted in the forest.

Two of the largest swamp white oaks in the Town of Charlotte, each estimated to be well over 200 years old, can be found in Williams Woods, though one of them lost its top in a brief, intense storm in June 2007. While many were saddened by the storm's damage, disturbance and regeneration are a natural part of the forest life cycle, essential to forest health and diversity.

The history of storm disturbance in Williams Woods can be seen in the mounds and pits of the forest floor. The Great Hurricane of 1938, the ice storm of 1998, and Hurricane Floyd in 1999 have all left their mark. Fallen trees and standing snags, called "coarse woody debris" by foresters, occur more frequently in mature woods and are an important part of the forest life cycle, providing wildlife habitat as they decompose and, eventually, returning to soil as nutrients for a new generation of trees.

"Mature hardwoods, like the swamp white oak that was toppled at Williams Woods, rot from the center out and form hollow logs that provide fantastic habitat for many species of wildlife from salamanders and insects to birds like pileated woodpeckers who feed on the insects found in rotting logs," says Rose Paul, Director of Science and Stewardship.



Measuring storm damage in Williams Woods

Many inhabitants of the forest depend on periodic disturbance to create structure and different habitats. Woodpeckers for example begin the process of decay by drilling holes in standing snags. Other birds and small mammals utilize these cavities for nesting and storage, and they hasten the decay of the snag as moisture and fungi take hold.

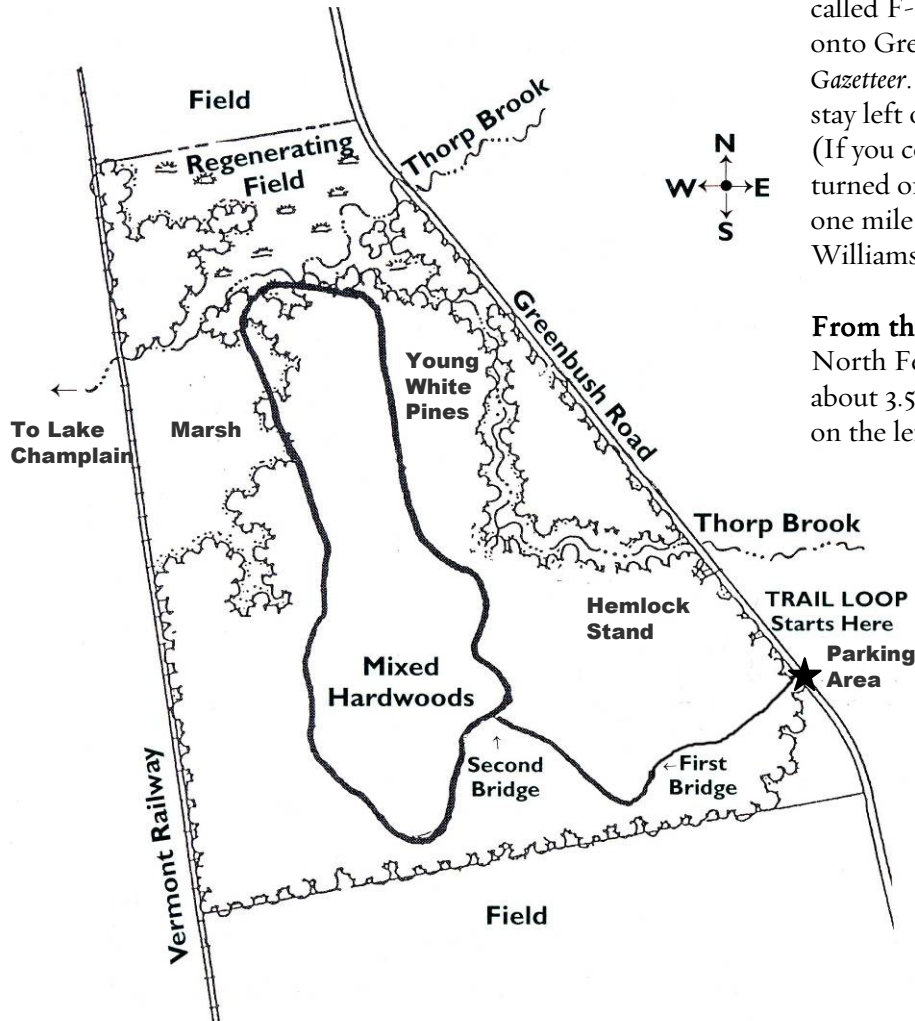
Storm damage from the summer of 2007 is providing an opportunity to study how quickly trees decay, how woodland creatures use this disturbed habitat, and how trees, shrubs and the herbaceous layer regenerate.

## Driving Directions

**From the north:** Take Route 7 south and turn right at the stop light in Charlotte at Ferry Road, which is also called F-5. Drive 0.3 mile to the stop sign. Turn left onto Greenbush Road, also called CR 22K in the *Vermont Gazetteer*. Drive two miles, and then veer left. Be sure to stay left on Greenbush Road as it continues to the south. (If you come to a railroad crossing, you've mistakenly turned off onto Thompsons Point Road.) Travel about one mile further on Greenbush until you come to a green Williams Woods sign and the parking area on the right.

**From the south:** On Route 7, traveling north toward North Ferrisburg, turn left onto Greenbush Road. Travel about 3.5 miles. The parking area for Williams Woods is on the left. Look for the green Williams Woods sign.

## Trail Map



The small parking area at Williams Woods is suitable for three cars and is located on the south-eastern corner of the preserve. From the parking area follow the yellow trail markers across two low bridges to the loop trail in the heart of the preserve.

- Please stay on designated paths.
- Keep group size small.
- Leave pets at home.
- Preserve use limited to low-impact activities such as walking, bird watching, photography and nature study.

