



Bob Klein



Barred owl

WILLIAMS WOODS



Williams Woods is 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, but now exists in fragments on only 10 percent of its historic range in Vermont.

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 bur 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 bur 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 like to feed on the insects found in rotting logs," says Rose Paul, Director of Science and Stewardship.

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 wooden Conservancy sign tucked into the trees on the right, and a parking area created by local Eagle Scout, Alex LaBerge.

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 Conservancy's sign among the trees.

PLEASE NOTE: The Conservancy's stewardship team will be rerouting the trail to avoid the trees felled by the June 2007 storm. Visitors are asked to delay their visit until this trail is fixed, as conditions are not safe for hikers. Check the "Places We Protect" section of nature.org/vermont for updates on the trail's status.



Libby Davidson

Featured Natural Community: Valley Clayplain Forest

Once the dominant forest type on the clay soils of the Champlain Valley, this community type has a diverse mix of trees in its canopy, including white oak, red oak, red maple, white pine, shagbark hickory, and white ash.