



Bob Klein



The marshes of Shelburne Pond.

H. LAURENCE ACHILLES NATURAL AREA AT SHELburne POND



Shelburne Pond is a surprising find. Located just 10 miles from the metropolis of Burlington, it is an area that has retained its wild and rich character despite the pressures of development. There are over 400 acres of swamps, marshes, and rich woods associated with the pond. These habitats support several unusual plants—especially ephemeral spring wildflowers—and birds.

The pond also serves as an important education resource for the University of Vermont. Now largely owned and maintained by the University of Vermont (UVM), the H. Laurence Achilles Natural Area at Shelburne Pond is a place where conservation, recreation, and research peacefully coexist.

Over thirty years in the making, the natural area at Shelburne Pond is one of the oldest and longest-running protection projects of the Vermont chapter and a successful collaboration between the Conservancy and UVM. Hub Vogelmann, former Chair of the Botany Department at UVM and co-founder of The Nature Conservancy's Vermont chapter, says he used to sit and fish in the pond and wonder about the pond's fate. Since those early days, over 30 years ago, when Vogelmann and the Conservancy started work at Shelburne Pond, the Conservancy has protected 1,047 acres at the natural area.

Much of the money for the protection work came from H. Laurence Achilles, a quiet philanthropist. Achilles came up to visit on a beautiful Vermont day and was immediately impressed. "You said it was a pond," he told Vogelmann. "This is a lake!"

The pond is surrounded by cattail marshes, a seepage swamp with fine limestone cliffs and talus slopes, pine forests, a dwarf shrub bog, and rich northern hardwood forest. In the spring, wildflowers abound here. Bloodroot, hepatica, spring beauty, white and red trillium, squirrel corn, Dutchman's breeches, wild ginger, and blue cohosh can be found in the rich woods and near the limestone ledges and outcroppings.

Coyotes track through the cattail marshes and pileated woodpeckers thrive in the woods. There are tracks and signs of snowshoe hares, meadow voles, and beavers.

This natural area can be enjoyed by foot on an easy-to-hike, 1-mile loop trail along the pond shore or by canoe or kayak.

Driving Directions

From I-89, take exit 13 to I-189 toward Shelburne and Middlebury. Take a left at the end of the off-ramp and travel south on Route 7. Drive 5.6 miles into Shelburne. At the light, just past Shelburne Museum, take a left onto Marsett Road. This left turn is directly opposite Bostwick Road on the other side of Route 7. Drive 0.3 mile. At the first stop sign, Marsett Road becomes Falls Road. Continue straight. After 1.2 miles, at Spear Street, the name of the road changes to Irish Hill Road. After a mile, the paved road turns to gravel. At Dorset Street, Irish Hill Road becomes Pond Road. Travel one mile more and take a left into the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Shelburne Pond fishing access. Go about 0.25 mile to the parking area and the hiking and boating access.



Libby Davidson

Featured Community:

Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest

Visible from Shelburne Pond and portions of the trail, this community type is rare in Vermont, occurs on limestone or other calcareous outcrops, and is dominated by slow-growing cedars.