

Finzel Swamp, **Garrett and Allegany Counties**



Located at the headwaters of the Savage River, Finzel Swamp boasts rich biodiversity with over 30 rare and uncommon species, and five globally and locally significant wetland habitat types. Walking through, visitors will hear numerous different types of bird calls. The swamp became a relict colony after the last Ice Age 15,000 years ago. During the Ice Age, glaciers moved southward, pushing northern vegetation in the same direction. When the glaciers retreated, the vegetation moved back north, except in areas such as Finzel with the right slope, topography and elevation to maintain the northern species. Poor drainage, high elevation, and its location in a shallow depression between Big and Little Savage mountains combined to create lower average temperatures.



Alexandra Cohen/TNC

The pond provides excellent habitat for many species, including the spotted salamander.

Visiting

- Waterproof footwear recommended because trails and road may be wet
- Trail meanders around the pond

Finzel has forested wetlands and herbaceous wet meadows with communities that are interconnected and support a variety of flora and fauna. It is an important site for three rare species - wild

calla, American larch, and an excellent example of a mountain peatland community. Finzel is considered a fen, not a bog; bogs are primarily filled from rain water, while fens are fed by a steady source of groundwater at springs and seeps. Many different ponds throughout the swamp are a dark color because of the tannins and acids that leak from the vegetation.

Contact

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Finzel is one of the southernmost locations in the country for some northern plants such as tamarack or larch (*Larix laricina*), wild calla (*Calla palustris*), and Canadian burnet (*Sanguisorba Canadensis*).



Alexandra Cohen/TNC

Wildflowers bloom throughout the preserve during the summer.

It also contains such northern species as red spruce, small cranberry, cotton grass, and bog fern. Spotted Alder thickets are everywhere within the swamp, as well as purple chokeberries and highbush blueberries that bloom in the summer. The rare alder flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) is an important bird found at Finzel that is more common in the north. Other birds include saw-whet owl, Virginia rail, sedge wren, Nashville warbler, rose-breasted grosbeak, woodcock, cedar waxwing, scarlet tanager, wild turkey, and whip-poor-will. Mammals there include the woodland jumping mouse, smoky shrew, and bobcat. Other unique animals here are the yearly migrating spotted salamander, the rare and secretive least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), and the blue, slender, and beautiful damsel flies.

Alexandra Cohen/TNC



Bridges over the swamp make visiting easy and enjoyable.

Key Elements

- American larch
- Alder flycatcher
- Tawny cottongrass
- Spotted salamander
- Montane peatland wetland

The first tract at Finzel Swamp was purchased in 1970, and it has been protected by The Nature Conservancy ever since. Eight additional tracts were added to this preserve in 1973, and five more were added in later years. Management at this site has included: a re-engineered road to allow a more natural water flow; forest regeneration and restoration by re-establishing populations of red spruce and American larch; and an attempt to reduce ATV impacts. There is also an audio tour available to enhance a visit to the preserve.

Unique Features of the American Larch

The population of American larch trees is one of only two remaining populations in Maryland. They shed their needles in winter after turning a brilliant golden-yellow in the fall. American larch has been lost in four places in Maryland due to changes in climate as well as changes in natural water flow (hydrology). However, the Conservancy has worked tirelessly to restore the natural hydrology of this swamp so that the American larch and other important species can thrive.

Watch Out For!

- Mosquitoes
- Ticks and biting flies
- Muddy trail

Directions (GPS Coordinates: 39.700124,-78.946037)

From Frederick: Take 1-70 west to 1-68 at Hancock. Continue on 1-68 about 50 miles to Exit 29. Turn right at the end of the exit ramp, heading north toward Finzel on MD 546 (Beall School Road), and continue about 1.8 miles. Turn right onto Cranberry Swamp Road and keep left at the fork. The swamp is on the left.