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# AUSABLE PADDLING NATURE TRAIL AT LAKE EVEREST



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## WILDLIFE ON LAKE EVEREST

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. alder                 | 15. pectoral sandpiper   | 29. marsh rabbit                        |
| 2. pintail duck          | 16. mallard              | 30. smartweed                           |
| 3. red-winged blackbird  | 17. purple loosestrife   | 31. pickerel frog                       |
| 4. great blue heron      | 18. bedstraw             | 32. bulrush                             |
| 5. black tern            | 19. willow               | 33. sedge                               |
| 6. northern harrier      | 20. damselfly            | 34. spikerush                           |
| 7. phragmites            | 21. sora                 | 35. duckweed                            |
| 8. buttonbush            | 22. common yellowthroat  | 36. wild iris                           |
| 9. dragonfly             | 23. arrowhead            | 37. yellow tiger swallow-tail butterfly |
| 10. shoveler             | 24. pickerelweed         | 38. black duck                          |
| 11. Canada goose         | 25. meadow jumping mouse |   |
| 12. ring-necked pheasant | 26. painted turtle       |   |
| 13. wild millet          | 27. mink                 |   |
| 14. muskrat              | 28. cattail              |   |

Welcome to Lake Everest on the beautiful Ausable River! A map at the centerfold of this brochure will guide you through the paddling nature trail. You may choose from two methods for "following" the trail. The trail can be navigated as a "geocaching adventure;" UTM's are provided on the map found in the center of this brochure. Alternatively, you may navigate the trail using the map and description of each stop found within the text of this booklet.



## WHY ARE WETLANDS IMPORTANT?

Wetlands are some of the Earth's most productive ecosystems. More plants and animals are found per acre in a wetland than in any other type of environment. Many wildlife species depend upon wetlands for all or a portion of their life

cycle. Wetlands are crucial for waterfowl nesting, fish breeding, and migratory bird resting stops. They also provide habitat for diverse species, including endangered species.



Wilmington Dam and wooden bridge ca. 1881

**"Lake" Everest** is formed by a dam on the West Branch of the Ausable River. Originally built in the early 1800's, the dam supplied power to industries such as a starch factory, gristmill, iron forge, and a sawmill with three gates and forty saws. Lake Everest also served as a containment pond, at first for saw logs, and beginning in about 1895 for pulpwood. The pulpwood was delivered to the river via log slides from the mountains into the pond and from there each spring the logs would float downstream to the mills.



Distilleries used water from Lake Everest and rye

grown in Wilmington to produce whiskey. During the War of 1812, Wilmington housed more distilleries than any other town in Essex County.

By 1873 dwindling forests and the distance of the area to commercial shipping lanes forced many industries to close. Lumbering continued to supply logs for pulp and paper production through the 1920's, but the use of Lake Everest gradually shifted towards tourism. Local hotels attracted



visitors by advertising boating, hiking, and scenic vistas. In 1920, Frank Everest was instrumental in converting the dam to hydroelectric generation and electrified Wilmington by lighting the Whiteface Mountain House. The Lake is named in his honor.

Start your adventure by paddling upstream (south) on the lake. Paddle past the end of the peninsula and beyond the open water to the right. Stop 1 is at the shrubby area on the west shore (right) and forested east shore (left).

## Stop 1: SCRUB SHRUB WETLAND

GPS UTM: N 4914961 E 0590757

Scrub-shrub wetlands adjoin (example on west shore) many Adirondack waterways and are important for absorbing flood waters in order to reduce downstream flood levels. Shrub and forested wetlands along rivers experience wide fluctuations in water levels. They may be “high and dry” in summer but annual floods “run them over” flattening vegetation and scouring the area with ice, logs and debris. Use your forensic skills to find “lingering” evidence of flood conditions. Look for linear piles of leaves, branches, tree trunks, and bare sand stranded above the present water line.

The plants in scrub-shrub wetlands grow in water logged conditions. Look for speckled alder, willow, honeysuckle, highbush cranberry, elderberry, nannyberry, wild raisin, winterberry holly, catberry holly, shadbush, and red osier dogwood. Sensitive fern and meadow rue grow in the understory.

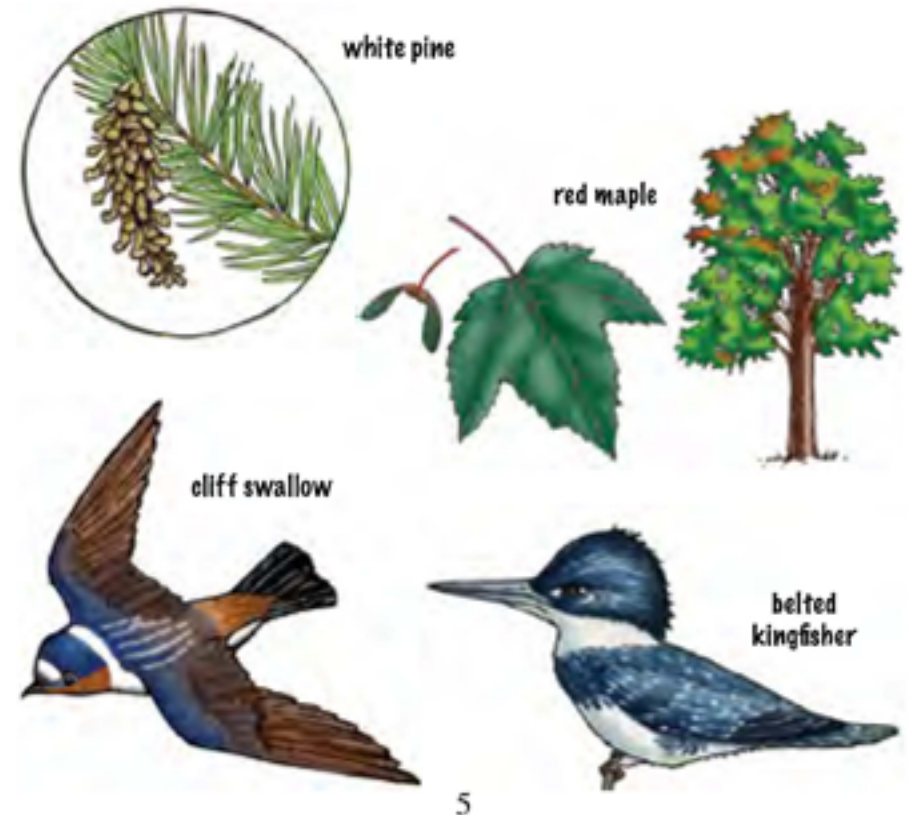


Continue up the lake and around the bend to the sand cliff bank and tall dead tree on the west shore...

## Stop 2: LANDSLIDE!

GPS UTM: N 4914930 E 0593320

Rivers are dynamic – constantly changing course and causing erosion in one place and deposition in another. The outside of every river bend erodes, while the inside of the bend accumulates sediment (sand, silt, pieces of trees and vegetation). On the right (west) streambank, swiftly moving water and years of erosion undercut the bank causing the white pine and red maple trees to topple into the water in 2011. The exposed sand is good habitat for birds that burrow into streambanks for nesting, like the belted kingfisher and cliff swallow.



# WEST BRANCH OF THE AUSABLE RIVER AND "LAKE" EVEREST



## BIRDS OF LAKE EVEREST

Look and listen for these birds as you paddle:

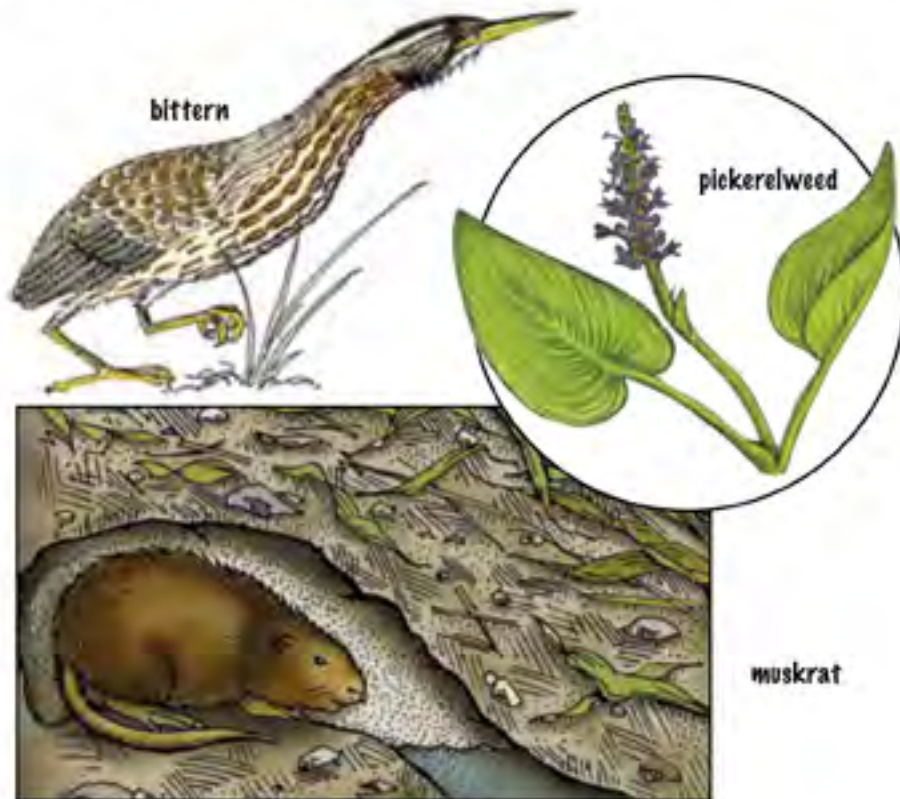


Continue upstream to a slot in the left bank (east) that leads into open water with grasses and reeds growing throughout.

### Stop 3: EMERGENT MARSH

GPS UTM: N 4914619 E 0593356

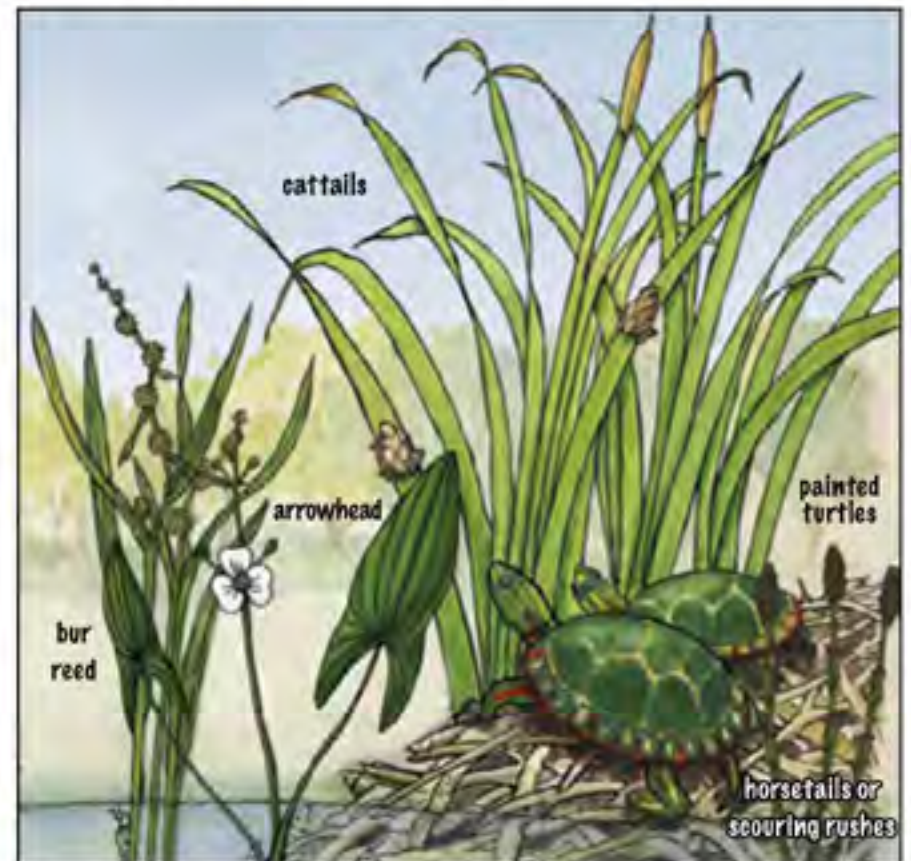
Within this embayment you will encounter another type of wetland – an “emergent marsh.” The name comes from grass and grass “look alike” plants with simple, linear, blade-like leaves that emerge through the water surface. The grasses act to shelter other aquatic plants like eel grass, water lilies, and annual herbs. Although wet, the area is not wasted, emergent wetlands are the nursery and production point for much of the “food” consumed by land and water dwelling creatures. It also shelters nests and baby birds – the wetland is like a wild nursery!



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## TURTLES

**Shhhhh!** Round the bend quietly! You might encounter a mud, painted or snapping turtle sunning itself on a log sticking out of the water. Turtles nest in sandy areas, lawns, and moss or sedge tussocks. Hatchlings emerge in mid August. The sex of the turtle is determined by the temperature of incubation – females warm, males cool. Could global warming favor female turtles? Turtles grow slowly and can live up to 70 to 80 years. Slow moving on land, a turtle’s best defense against predators is its double-shelled armor. Unfortunately this fortress does not protect it against cars and truck. Many turtles are crushed each year, especially females searching for a nest site in the gravel along roadways.



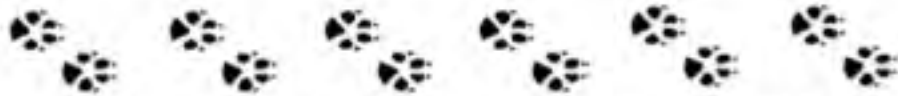
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*Paddle upstream to a dock on the east (left) shore. A sign for "Adirondack Wildlife Refuge and Rehabilitation Center" signals an optional stop. Disembark and walk up the trail to the Center.*

## Stop 4: WILDLIFE CENTER

*GPS UTM: N 4914403 E 0593399*

At this stop you can have a close encounter with predators that eat wetland critters. Drop-in or make an appointment by calling 518-946-2428.



Watch for beaver activity throughout your paddling experience in the form of beaver dams, houses and stumps and gnawed sticks.

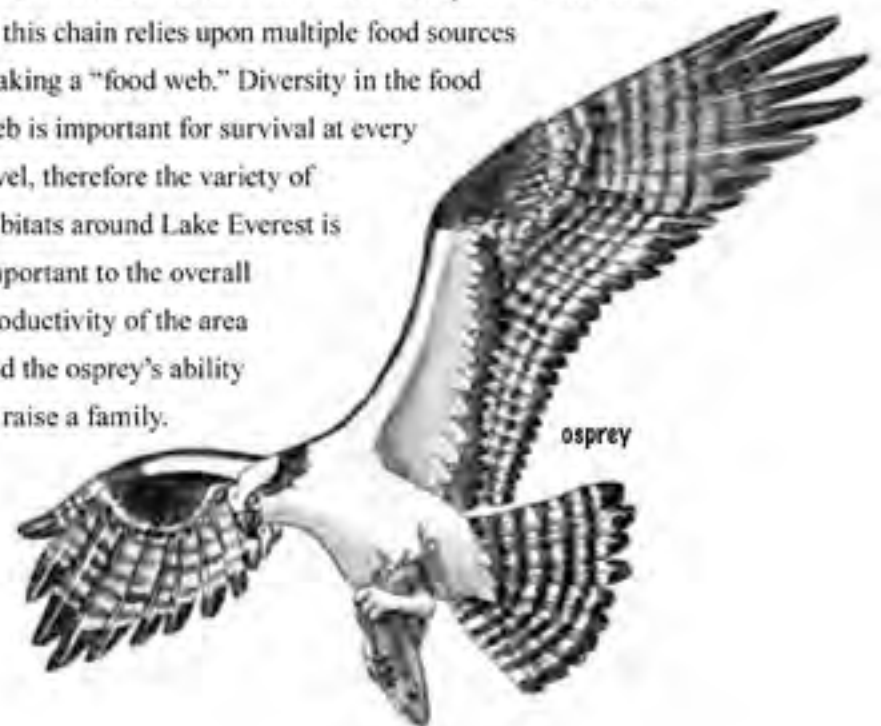


*As you leave the Refuge, paddle upstream to a tall white pine; look up to see a messy pile of sticks perched near its top.*

## Stop 5: NATURE'S FOOD WEB

*GPS: N 4914245 E 0593407*

An osprey (a.k.a. fish hawk) pair found the top of this white pine an ideal location to successfully raise a family. These birds of prey chose the site for the same reasons humans choose their real estate investments: safe neighborhood, close proximity to a grocery store, and good schools. The open sweeping branches of the white pine provides a firm platform to hold a nest; its close proximity to wetlands puts the nest in the neighborhood of an abundant food supply; its elevation above the water keeps the nest out of reach of predators that might steal the eggs for breakfast. Osprey eat small mammals and fish – that eat smaller fish or aquatic insects – that, in turn, eat other smaller insects or plants. Each animal in this chain relies upon multiple food sources making a "food web." Diversity in the food web is important for survival at every level, therefore the variety of habitats around Lake Everest is important to the overall productivity of the area and the osprey's ability to raise a family.



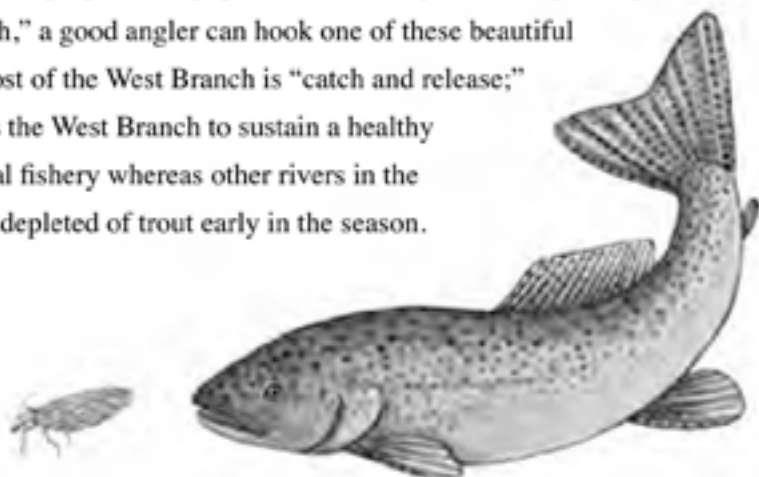
Paddle upstream until you encounter an "island" splitting the lake. Either channel will bring you to a point where the lake shallows, returns to river, and becomes impassible to paddlers. We do not advise that you attempt to drag your boat around the top of the island as the water moves swiftly and the boulder bottom is slick.

## Stop 6: RIVER BECOMES LAKE

GPS UTM: N 4913994 E 0593273 (west or right channel)  
N 4913980 E 0593437 (east or left channel)

Here the swiftly tumbling waters of the Ausable River slow to meet the "flat" water of Lake Everest. The river water tumbles over an uneven bottom becoming aerated, this makes it a superb home for trout and aquatic insects. Stoneflies, mayflies, and caddisflies attach themselves to the bottom of rocks leave their watery home when they hatch and become adults. Hungry birds, dragonflies and trout may snatch them for dinner as they fly out of the water.

The West Branch of the Ausable is renowned for its trout fishery; anglers come from around the world to coax Brook, Brown, and Rainbow Trout from its waters. Like Zen masters, fly fishermen practice the art of making a fishing line dance until it gently places a "fly" on the waters surface. With the proper timing, placement, and by "matching the fly to the hatch," a good angler can hook one of these beautiful "pisci." Most of the West Branch is "catch and release;" this allows the West Branch to sustain a healthy recreational fishery whereas other rivers in the region are depleted of trout early in the season.

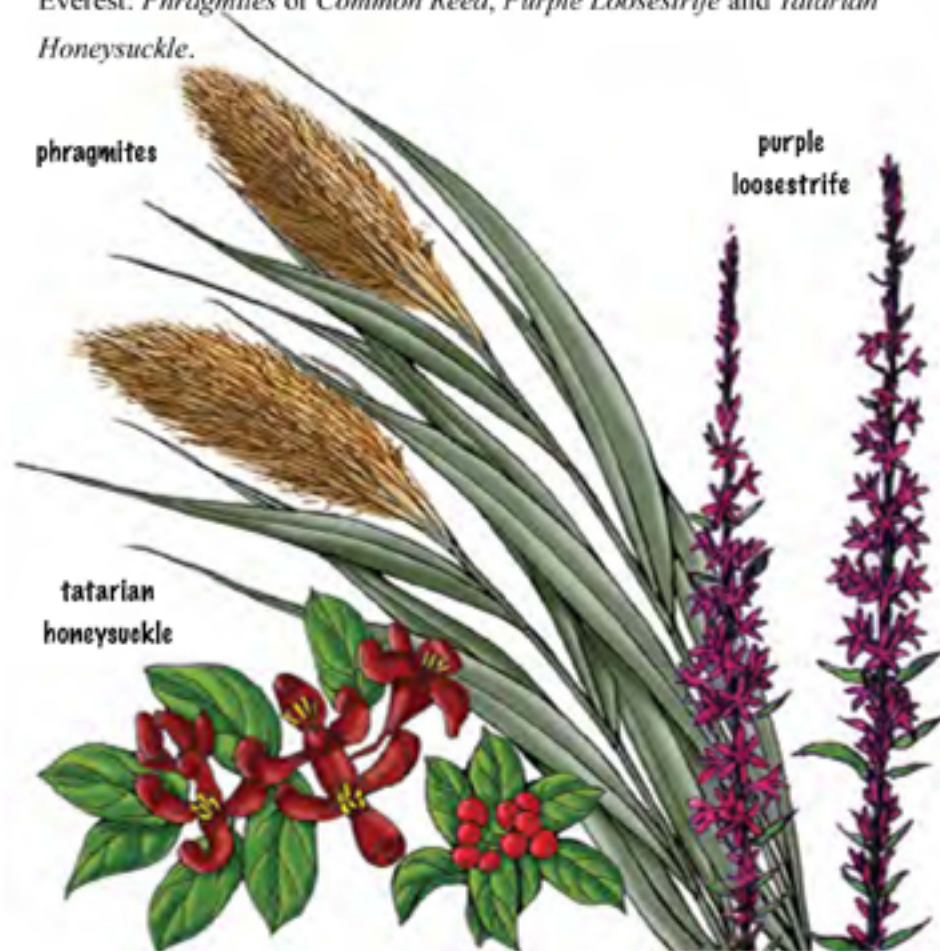


Retrace your paddle to the beach where you started.

## Stop 7: WHICH OF THESE DOESN'T BELONG?

GPS UTM: N 4915177 E 0590749

Some of the plants in the wetlands around Lake Everest are considered invasive. An invasive species is one which is non-native (or alien) to a particular ecosystem and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Three invasive species are known to be present along the shores of Lake Everest: *Phragmites* or *Common Reed*, *Purple Loosestrife* and *Tatarian Honeysuckle*.



phragmites

purple loosestrife

tatarian honeysuckle