# Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22

## General Description

Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is comprised of 670 acres. It is located in the towns of Weathersfield and West Windsor, and includes Little Ascutney Mountain and Pierson's Peak. It is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The Department also owns permanent hunting rights on an additional 206 acres. Abutting the WMA's northeast corner, the 1,000+ acre West Windsor Town Forest extends northward to Ascutney State Park. These three connecting properties account for one of the largest continuously-forested areas in the region.

The primary access to the property is from the Ascutney Basin Road where there is a developed access road and parking area. The WMA may also be accessed by parking on the shoulder of Little Ascutney Road along the southern boundary of the property.

## History

Abandoned farmland nestles between the steep slopes of Little Ascutney Mountain and Pierson Peak. The area was known historically as the Great Bowl or the Ascutney Bowl. There are two cellar holes, some stonewalls and barn foundations. The deeds for this land indicate that it was first given to the Minister of the Church of England, the Missionary Society, and the Schoolmaster in the 1700's. Through time the lands were sold to two private individuals, J.L. Sherwin and Alpheus Streeter; but even in the 1940's the deed for the Streeter farm still mentioned that they are "Church lands subject to payment of rents to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts."

In 1959 the Vermont Fish & Game (now Wildlife) Department purchased 396 acres known as the "Slayton Lot" from the Atkinson Davis Corporation in order to protect it permanently for hunting purposes. Atkinson Davis Corporation retained the timber rights. The State then obtained the hunting rights in 1964 for 209 acres owned by Walker and Julie Murray on the south side of Little Ascutney Mountain. In 1992, the Department acquired a key 53-acre in-holding with a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). The following year, through a joint effort by the towns of West Windsor and Weathersfield, the VHCB, and the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, the State purchased the timber rights to the Slayton lot, and an additional 207-acre parcel linking Little Ascutney and Ascutney Mountains. This was also funded by a grant from the VHCB.

## Habitat Features

The WMA is located within the Southern Piedmont biophysical region of Vermont. Elevations range from 600 feet. along the western edge to 1,709 feet on the top of Little Ascutney. Pierson Peak reaches a height of 1,648 feet.

Little Ascutney WMA contains a unique variety of wildlife habitats including vernal pools, beaver flowages, open fields with apple trees and hawthorn bushes, patches of alder and aspen, and an unusual forest type, oak-hickory-hophornbeam, which produces mast (the nuts of forest trees accumulating on the ground and used for food). Hemlock stands provide necessary deer wintering habitat. Open talus is found on the southwest slope, along with transitional hardwood talus woodland.

The very rare hay sedge (Carex foenea) and Back's sedge (Carex backii) can be found on Little Ascutney. The west facing cliffs of Little Ascutney Mountain are an historic nesting site for the federally-endangered peregrine falcon. Because the site has not changed much since the last pair of falcons raised chicks there in 1902, it has very good potential as a future nesting site. This area is also potential timber rattlesnake habitat.

White-breasted nuthatches glean insects From bark. ©Jupiter Images 2004.

## Common Fish and Wildlife

### *Mammals*

White-tailed deer, fisher, coyote, bobcat, beaver and otter all inhabit the WMA.

### *Birds*

Turkey, ruffed grouse and woodcock are present and may be hunted in season. Various woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches, black-capped chickadees, vesper sparrows, alder flycatchers, chestnut-sided warblers, red-tailed hawks and sometimes bald eagles are some other bird species that may be observed.

***Reptiles and Amphibians*** Amphibian species present on the WMA include wood frog, spring peeper, American toad and yellow-spotted salamander.

***Fish*** There are no fishable waters on the WMA.

Little Ascutney WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, hiking and wildlife viewing.

# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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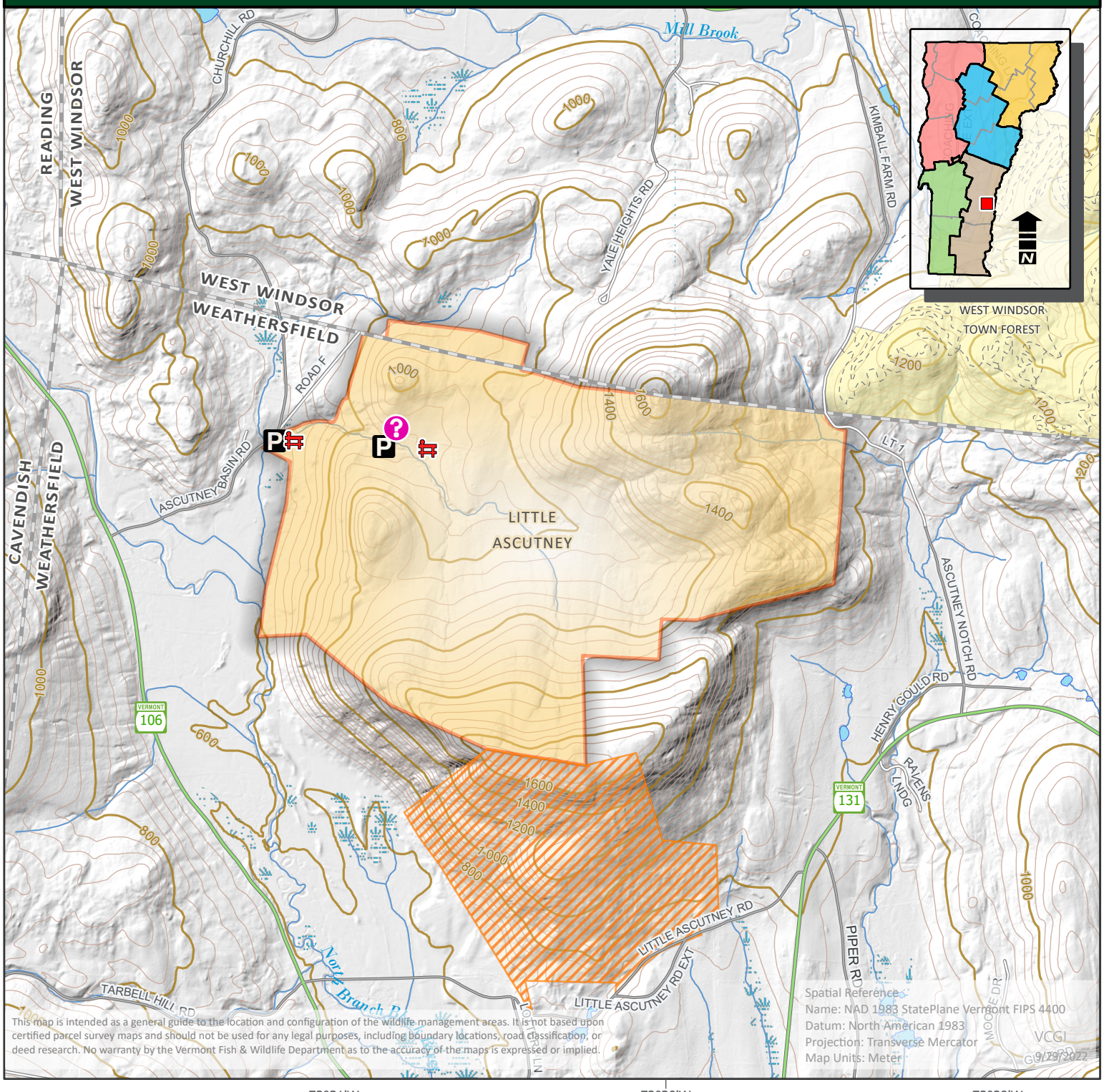


## Little Ascutney WMA

**Map Number: 67**

- Parking
- Boat Ramp
- Cartop Access
- Park Office
- Shooting Range
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Campground
- Vista
- Fishing Access
- Visitor Information
- Gate
- Rail Lines
- Trails
- Town Boundary
- Wildlife Management Area
- WMA Hunting Rights Only
- Refuge (no public access)
- Special hunting/trapping restrictions
- Streambank Management Area
- Controlled Hunting Area
- Federal Land
- State Land
- Town Land