

# Willoughby Falls Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22



## General Description

Willoughby Falls Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is comprised of 592 acres of land owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The WMA is part of a group of lands that includes streambank fishing access property, a waterfall site, and contiguous parcels forming one large tract. The lands lie north of the village of Orleans, at the confluence of the Willoughby and Barton Rivers, in the towns of Barton, Brownington and Irasburg in Orleans County.

There is a parking area at Willoughby Falls itself. Additionally, two other parking areas give access to the main part of the WMA.

## History

Willoughby Falls WMA was created with the initial purchase of 130 acres of riparian land on the Willoughby River in 1966. Many streambank parcels were acquired in the following decades for angler access, and the actual falls site was purchased in 1985. An additional 313-acre parcel was added to the original property in 1991. Purchases were made with Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, and grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

## Habitat Features

The Willoughby and Barton Rivers form the western boundary of this WMA. The terrain consists of meandering river floodplain, various wetlands and beaver ponds, and a hillside slope on the east side of the Barton River valley. The lowlands are a diverse mix of open wetlands (oxbows, cattail marsh, sedge meadows), alder, black willow, red maple and white cedar swamps. Mowed and fallow fields, a pine stand, scattered patches of spruce-fir-hemlock, and northern hardwoods compliment the wetlands to provide a mosaic of productive habitats.

The Department is actively restoring the riparian habitat through establishment of buffer strips, tree planting and streambank stabilization.

## Common Fish and Wildlife

**Mammals** Active and inactive beaver flowages create valuable wetland habitat for muskrat, mink, otter, raccoon and other wildlife.

Bobcat, coyote, fisher, red fox and weasel benefit from the diversity of open meadows, floodplain wetlands and upland habitats.

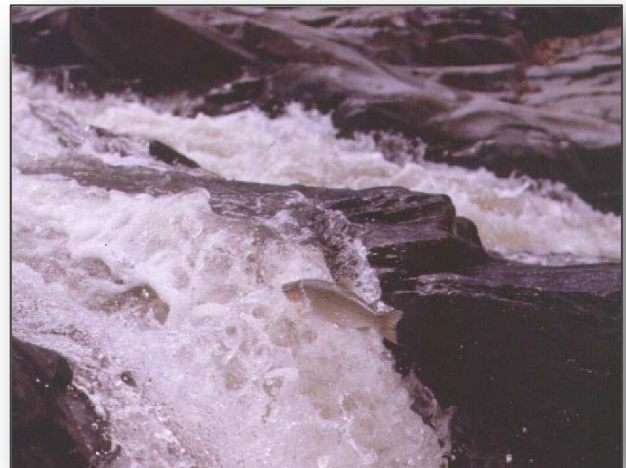
White-tailed deer are common in this WMA. They occasionally winter in the upland softwood and cedar swamp habitats.

**Birds** The rivers, wetlands and beaver ponds create feeding and breeding grounds for many species including herons and bitterns, wood ducks, mallards, black ducks, teal, mergansers, Canada geese, osprey, northern harrier, and many other raptors & songbirds.

Woodcock benefit from habitat management including fallow field maintenance and regeneration of alder-willow thickets.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** The tremendous diversity of uplands and wetlands may provide habitats for many species including red-backed and spotted salamanders and eastern newt. Snapping and painted turtles may be seen. Snake species include ring-necked, red-bellied and garter snakes. Mink, green, pickerel, wood and leopard frogs, gray treefrog, bullfrog, spring peeper and American toad may be found on the WMA.

**Fish** The steelhead fishery is the main attraction of Willoughby Falls WMA. Migratory rainbow trout (steelhead) provide a spectacular viewing opportunity as they "jump" Willoughby Falls during their April spawning run from Lake Memphremagog.



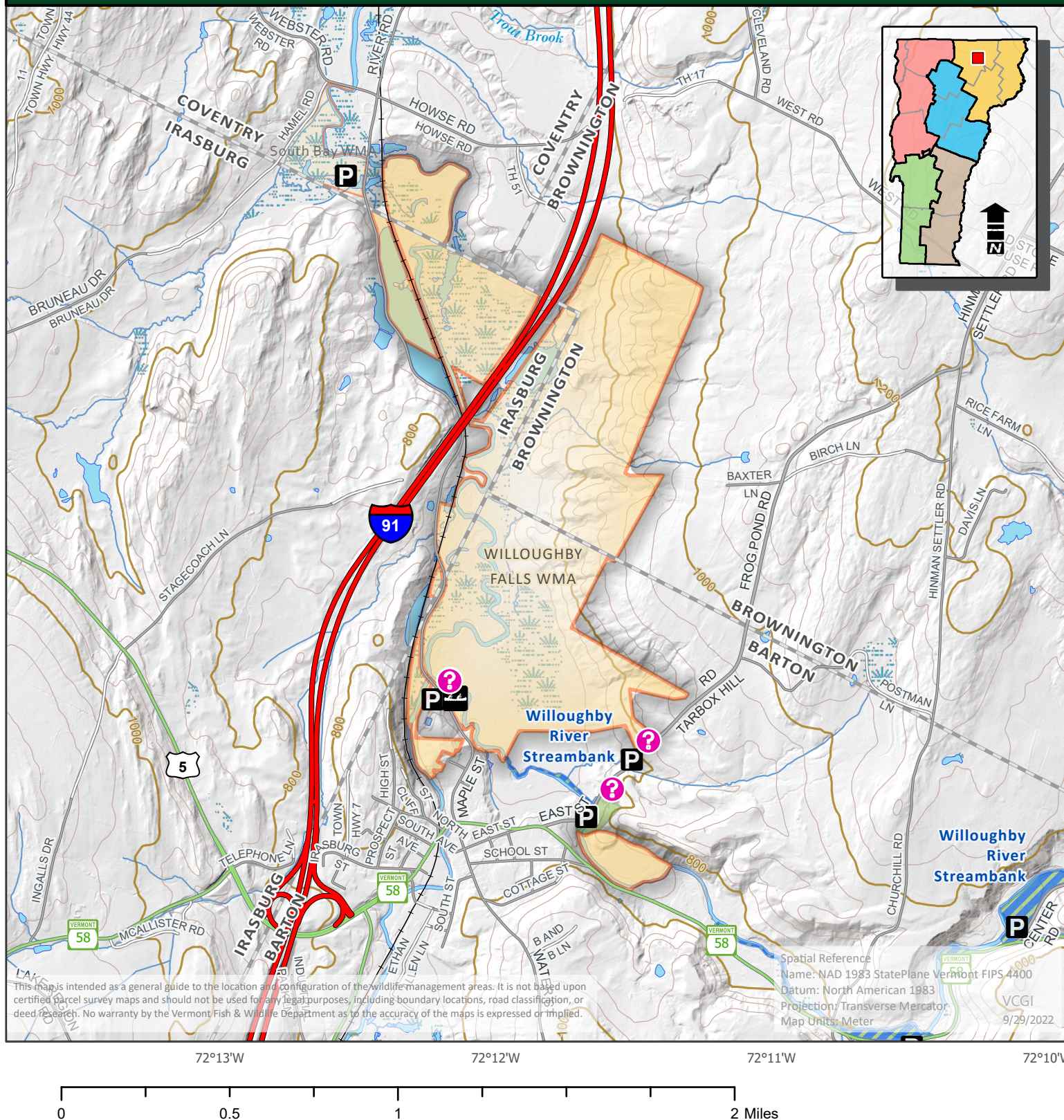
A rite of spring in Vermont is to watch steelhead trout migrating up the Willoughby River at Willoughby Falls. John Hall, VFWD photo.





# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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### Willoughby Falls WMA

Map Number: 30

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