

# EXPLORING North Hero NATURAL AREAS WITH CHILDREN



**A Guide for  
Parents and Teachers**

**Town of North Hero Recreation  
Committee**

**March, 2014**

## **The LAND**

**570 to 260 million years ago:** North Hero is a tropical ocean beach. Trilobites, coral reefs, and ferns flourish.

**350 to 65 million years ago:** Pelots is part of a vast swamp. Amphibians, fish, reptiles, and dinosaurs live among ferns, horsetails, and cone bearing trees.

**65 million years ago to 12,000 years ago:** Pelots is a plain with few trees. Lake Champlain has not been formed. Giant mastodons, beaver, and moose live in forests. Flowering plants, trees, and grasses now are the dominant plant life. Glaciers, like rivers of ice, cover Pelots for several long periods of time. The last glacier covers all but the tops of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump.

## **The LAKE**

**15,000 to 12,000 years ago:** Glaciers cover most of the North America and

gouge out Lake Champlain as well as Lakes Ontario, Erie, Michigan, Huron, and Superior.

**12,000 to 10,000 years ago:** Fresh water Lake Vermont forms from the melting glacier.

**10,000 to 8,000 years ago:** The Champlain Sea forms. The weight of the glacier creates a basin which fills with salt water from the Atlantic Ocean. Whales live in the waters and seals are found along the shores.

**10,000 years ago:** The land under Lake Champlain rebounds, rising up from the weight of the glacier, and becomes a freshwater lake. People come to live in the Champlain Islands. The lake is still rising.

## **The ECOSYSTEM: Who lives where?**

The Pelots and Ingalls Areas are in the temperate deciduous BIOME which does not have a severely cold climate. It has many trees which lose their leaves in the autumn. It has two different ECOSYSTEMS: Lake Champlain and the Champlain Valley.

There are several NICHES in the Pelots Natural Area. Niches are small environments where plants or animals live. Can you find cedar and deciduous forests, a sugarbush, fields, swamps, marshes, bays, and open lake? There are niches in the Ingalls Butternut Hill area which are similar to Pelots. One very unusual niche at Ingalls is a vernal pool.

Vernal pools, or spring time pools, are small temporary bodies of water in forest depressions created by snow and rain and high lake levels. They have a rich organic surface layer of soil but very little vegetation once dried. They are a crucial habitat for breeding, nesting and provide habitats where plants and animals, including insects, amphibians, reptiles including turtles, and birds, can mature and live. There is a rich diversity of shade tolerant plants live along and in the active pools.

## The ECOSYSTEM: Who eats what?

### The Food Web

Animals, plants and fungi depend upon each other in special ways to live.

**PREDATORS-** Animals which eat other animals (carnivores) or both animals and plants (omnivores): hawks, herons, owls, frogs, pikes, turtles, foxes, raccoons, bats, dragonflies

**CONSUMERS-** Animals which only eat vegetative matter: turkeys, grouse, song birds, rabbits, beavers, deer, butterflies, bees, zooplankton (microscopic lake animals)

**PRODUCERS-** Mostly plants which produce edible foliage, seeds, fruit, or roots: trees, grasses, flowers, shrubs, phytoplankton (microscopic lake plants)

**RECYCLERS-** Living things which take nourishment from living organism which have died or are dying: crows, worms, fungi

### One Food Web:

<b>Predators</b>	foxes
<b>Consumers</b>	rabbits mice
<b>Producers</b>	berries seeds nuts fruit grasses
<b>Recyclers</b>	crows fungus worms

**EXPLORING NORTH HERO NATURAL AREAS** gives teachers and parents a chance to explore the land, the animals, and the plants of North Hero's natural environment with their children.

### GENERAL ACTIVITIES:

Hiking, Snowshoeing, Skiing  
Photography, Mapping, Drawing  
Sugaring at Pelots  
Wildlife Identification  
Stargazing from the Pelots Parking Lot

Visit and compare our natural areas during each of the four seasons.

*(Please, no bicycles or motorized vehicles..)*

## Educational PLANNING:

Pelots can inspire teachers to develop units which can include: multi disciplinary approach, and meet a number of curricular and Vermont Framework objectives.

## Historical Use of the Natural Area

Both Areas were originally part of the Land Grant to the Green Mountain Boys. In 1799, the Pelots area called glebe land, was land set aside for the Town to provide the minister with a place to farm and thus have an additional source of income. The "Ministerial Lot" and the Ingalls Butternut areas have been used for farming since North Hero was founded. Pelots Nature Area still has a working sugarbush.

## DIRECTIONS:

To reach Pelots Point from the Village, go south on Route 2. Turn right on Station Road. Go west for about one mile until you reach the Lake. Turn right on Pelots Point Road. Go north for a little more than one mile. You will see the Natural Area sign, parking lot and information kiosk on the right. The parking lot can accommodate two school busses and a number of cars. The trails all leave from the parking lot.

To reach Camp Ingalls and Butternut Hill from the Village, go south on Route 2. Turn right on South End Road and follow it west and then south for about three miles. You will see the Camp Ingalls and Butternut Hill sign, parking lot and trail information kiosk on the left. The parking lot can accommodate one school bus and several cars. The trails all leave from the parking lot and in front of the long house.

Butternut Hill is a complex of land parcels owned by the Nature Conservancy, the Lake Champlain Land Trust, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife. Some of it is still farmed today.

**Please be sensitive and preserve this place.**

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