

THE SCANTIC RIPARIAN AREA (SRA)

THE RULES

The **SRA** is open to the general public every day all year for passive recreation such as fishing, hiking and bird watching. Campfires are prohibited everywhere except on bare soil along the riverside trail. Horseback riding as well as wheeled and motorized vehicles such as mountain bikes, dirt bikes, ATVs and snowmobiles are allowed on the service roads under the power lines but not allowed in the adjacent wetlands or on the riverside trail. Hunting is only allowed with a written permit from the **NCTLT**. Removal of plant or other living material aside from fish is prohibited. Also please do not to disturb the beaver, their dams or their lodge(s).

THE TRAILHEADS

The two trailheads are both on the south side of Durkee Road in Somers, CT. Durkee extends from Route 83 on the east to Four Bridges Road to the west. The trailhead for the riverside section of the trail is near the western end of the Scantic River bridge. Only roadside parking is available there. The trailhead for the power line service road section is at the gate. Ample parking is available along the road there and under the nearby steel tower.

THE TRAILS

The maintained ~1 mile loop trail is unblazed but easy to follow since alternative routes do not exist. It lies entirely south of Durkee Road. The eastern leg goes through the strand of trees that line the river. Side streams and low areas are spanned by numerous log or bog bridges. At its southern most point the trail turns abruptly to the west and crosses the marshland (partly on more bog bridges) to the service road under the power lines. It then heads more or less north to the trailhead at the gate on Durkee Road. Side trails off the service road all lead to dead ends that are interesting to explore without getting lost.

NOTE: All the bog bridges can be very slippery when wet or icy.

THE RIVER

The Scantic River is very dynamic as it flows through this area. Water levels fluctuate greatly from only a foot or so deep to overflowing Durkee Road during flood times. If the river is within its banks a storm dropping an inch of rain in its upstream drainage basin causes a rise of about a foot through the SRA within twenty-four (24) hours. As a result the riverside trail is often flooded in the spring and after heavy rains, especially along the southern section. The power line trail is usually above water except during extreme flood times.

The river along the upper half of the riverside trail is full of trees cut by beaver or toppled by other natural causes. Out of respect for our industrious furry friends the NCLT is leaving this area undisturbed. Below this area the river is kept more or less free of logs for the benefit of paddlers who have a haul out site on the lower part of the trail.

THE RIPARIAN AREA

The Scantic Riparian Area encompasses all the flood plain between the river and the higher farm fields to its West. It extends from about 150 yards north of Durkee Road all the way south to Hall Hill Brook near Four Bridges Road. In all there's nearly 40 acres owned by the **NCTLT**.

Originally the land was a fully functional natural riparian wetland. It provided a buffer zone for lands farther down stream by holding water during flood times and slowly releasing it later. Such wetlands also served the vital function of helping recharge aquifers beneath them as well as providing habitat for a vast array of wildlife. Years ago these wetlands were ditched and drained to create hayfields. These have since been abandoned and are slowly reverting back to their natural state.

Biodiversity in the SRA is impressive due to the many different habitats ranging from constantly flooded land in the south to relative high and dry land nearer Durkee Road. For instance during one wild flower hike in mid August more than 80 species were found in bloom. It's a great place for birding. Such rare and/or special species as Yellow-breasted Chats, Northern Shrikes, Solitary Sandpipers, Rusty Blackbirds and Water Thrushes have been recorded. Evidence of terrestrial vertebrates other than beaver can best be seen by their tracks in the winter following a fresh snowfall.