

What is a Fen?

The 50-acre wetland that dominates the center of the ESWCA is a fen. Fens have streams or groundwater running through them, while the only source of water in a true bog is precipitation. The core of this wetland, which is dominated by black spruce, has been altered by beaver activity. The outer western edge of the fen includes areas that are dominated by northern white cedar and brown ash (also known as black ash), and red maple.



The vernal pool on the eastern side of the fen provides breeding habitat for wood frogs and salamanders as well as food, water, and shelter for many other Maine wildlife species including deer, moose, hawks, waterfowl, and reptiles. Vernal pools, naturally occurring, temporary to semi-permanent wetlands, form in shallow depressions in forested landscapes. These wetlands range in size from a puddle to a shallow lake.



A Partial List of Birds and Plants

Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Barred Owl, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-eyed Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black-and-white Warbler, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Common Raven, Veery, Swamp Sparrow, Ovenbird, Chipping Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Loon, Osprey, Gray Catbird



Plant Diversity

The ESWCA features four unique plant habitats: a mixed hardwood-conifer forest; a 50-acre wooded fen with beaver lodges and dams; and emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands along Hopkins Stream. Staff from the Maine Natural Areas program identified 107 plant species in the fen in 2018. Look for these interesting species and many others as you hike the trails and explore the wetlands along Hopkins Stream: *Aronia melanocarpa* black chokeberry; *Glyceria striata* fowl meadow grass; *Goodyera pubescens* downy rattlesnake plantain; *Ilex mucronata* mountain holly; *Ilex verticillata* common winterberry; *Picea mariana* black spruce; *Platanthera clavellata*; little club-spur bog-orchid; *Rhamnus alnifolia*; alder-leaved buckthorn; *Sarracenia purpurea* northern pitcher plant; *Vaccinium corymbosum* highbush blueberry; *Vaccinium oxycoccos* small cranberry

About Kennebec Land Trust and the Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area

The Deer and Beaver Trails were constructed in 2018 by KLT Stewardship Director Jean-Luc Theriault, KLT summer interns Jack Daley and Jordan Tanguay, the Maine Conservation Corps, and community volunteers, with support from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund and the Maine Prison Industries Program.



The wildlife habitat interpretive signs and George's *Walk My Woodlot* book highlight the property's conservation values, including an MDIFW candidate deer-wintering area, biologically rich wetlands, and inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat.

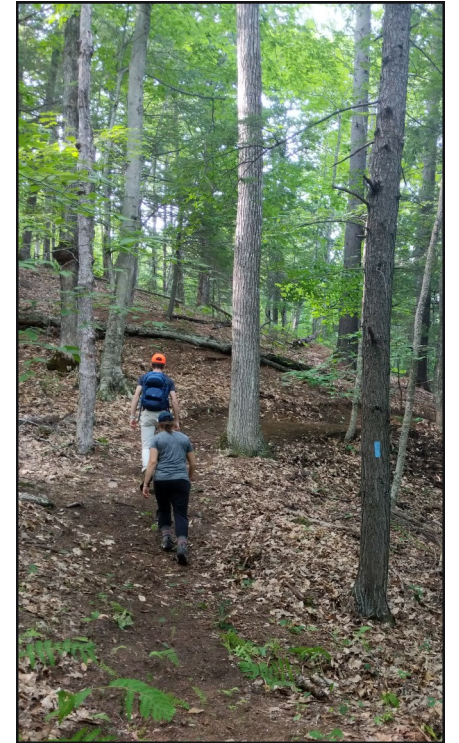
Kennebec Land Trust

Founded in 1988, **KLT** works cooperatively with landowners and communities to conserve the forests, lakes, streams, wetlands, fields, and wildlife that help define central Maine. KLT protects and stewards land permanently, offers access to conserved properties, provides opportunities for people to learn about and enjoy the natural world, and works with partners to support sustainable forestry and farming. Our properties feature more than 55 miles of trails for everyone. Your donation to KLT supports land conservation, trail development, and conservation and sustainability programs.

Thanks to those who contributed expertise and time for this brochure: Don Cameron & Jennifer Tibbets of the Maine Natural Areas Program; Deb Stabler & Victoria Eleftheriou. Photo credits: Phil Downes, Jean-Luc Theriault & Theresa Kerchner. Text: July 2018; updated January 2022

EZRA SMITH WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA

163 acres ~ Mount Vernon, Maine



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Welcome to Kennebec Land Trust's Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area

We hope you enjoy your visit!

The 163-acre Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area (ESWCA) is part of an extensive undeveloped forested and wetland landscape in the Hopkins Stream-Taylor Pond corridor in west Mount Vernon.

George and Linda Smith and their family have spent many years exploring these woods and wetlands. In March 2018, they donated their 125-acre woodlot to KLT with the intent that the land would be used to teach children about the importance of conserving Maine's wildlife and their habitats.



Many of George and Linda's friends and KLT members donated to a fund that will support the long term stewardship of this land. KLT used a portion of these gifts to purchase from Charles Lord an additional 38 acres of wetlands along both sides of Hopkins Stream. Together these 163 acres protect water quality and provide year round outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages.

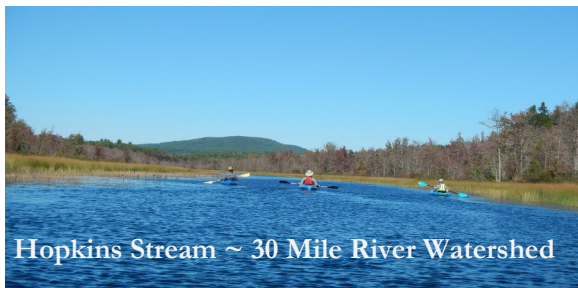
George named the property after his late father, Ezra since they spent many hours deer hunting here. In 2014, a few months before Ezra died, George placed a chair for Ezra just a short distance from Route 41. As you hike the Deer Trail above the wetland, look for Ezra's chair and impressive red oaks, eastern hemlocks, white pines, and sugar and red maples.

People and the Land

The natural resources that you see around you - the wildlife, wetlands, waters, and woodlands - have been valued by people, both resident and migratory, for thousands of years. Native Americans fished, foraged, and hunted here long before Mount Vernon was incorporated in 1792 (pop.~600).

If you paddle from Taylor's Pond north and follow Hopkins Stream to the ESWCA, imagine an earlier era before settlers arrived and the first saw mill and dam were constructed (circa 1780's). At that time, water levels were much lower, the stream was narrower and was likely bordered by meadow hay grasses. Early New England farmers used these meadowlands for pasture and as a source of hay for farm cattle. By the mid-1800's Kennebec County families, including the Blakes (who once owned this land) and the Butler Brothers to the south, had cleared over 60 percent of the region's forestland for cropland, hayfields, and pastures.

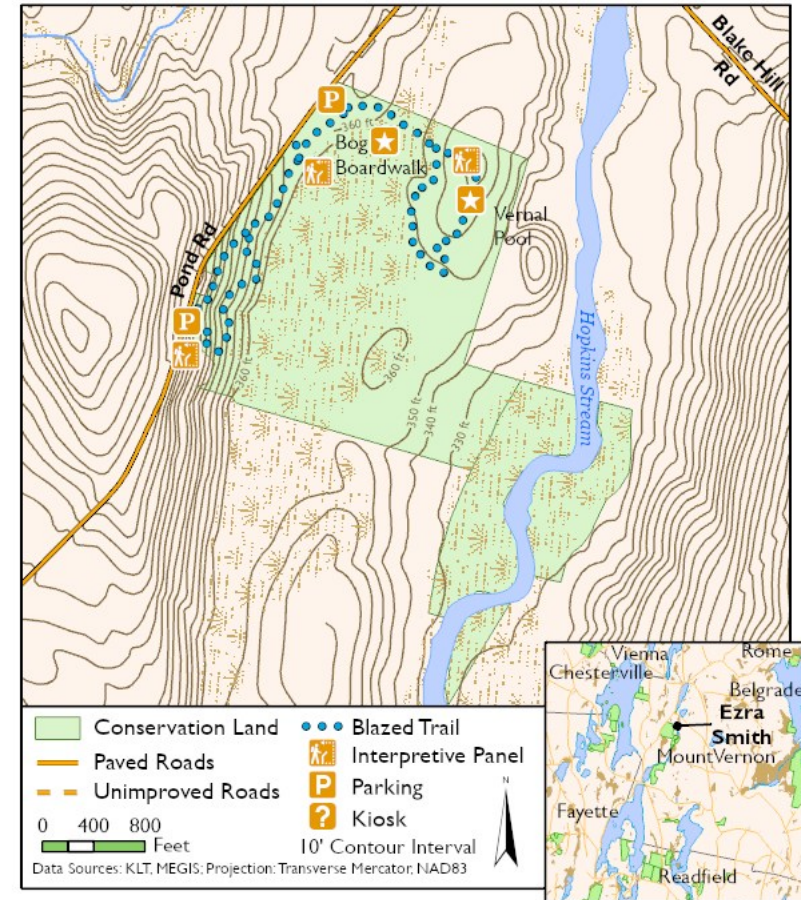
As you hike the Deer Trail look for stone walls (fences) and barbed wire - these agricultural artifacts are reminders of a time when this forest would have been used as pastureland.



If you are paddling along KLT's 5,500 feet of undeveloped shoreline on Hopkins Stream, search for painted turtles, black water snakes, wading birds and waterfowl, and fish-eating birds including osprey, eagles, and herons.

In the fall, stop to pick a few native cranberries (*Vaccinium macrocarpon* and *oxycoccos*), which have been harvested by generations of people who have known and appreciated this place.

Ezra Smith Conservation Area, Mount Vernon



Note: Watch your footing - portions of the trails are uneven and rooty.

Trails: From the large parking area at the bottom of the hill on Route 41, there are two lollipop trail options. Continuing straight past the sign-in box, the ~0.2 mile Boardwalk Trail takes you east across the wetland via boardwalk and bog-bridge to the ~0.5mi Doghair Fir Loop. The loop features a vernal pool, large boulders, mature forest, balsam thicket, and views of the fen from the eastern edge.

Taking a right past the sign-in box takes you south along the ~0.3 mile Beaver Trail. The trail follows the west edge of the fen and leads to the ~0.5 mile Deer Loop. The loop features mature forests, large boulders, and beautiful views of the western edge of the fen.

There is also a small, off-level parking pull-off at the top of the hill on Route 41 that accesses the trail system near the south end of the Deer Loop.

Public uses: The Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area is open to the public for nature observation, hiking, snowshoeing, and hunting. No motorized vehicles are allowed.

Dogs: For the protection of wildlife habitat and hikers, dogs should be under voice command or on a leash. Please pick up after your pets.

Directions and Public Access: **Trailhead:** A sign and parking lot is located on the east side of Route 41 at the bottom of the hill ~ 0.4 miles south of Blake Hill Road. **Access to Hopkins Stream** is from the State of Maine Taylor's Pond boat launch on the north side of Route 41 at the old French tannery mill site near the brick chimney. The southern boundary of the ESWCA is ~ 1.5 miles north of the chimney.