

FERD'S BOG

FERDINAND LaFRANCE

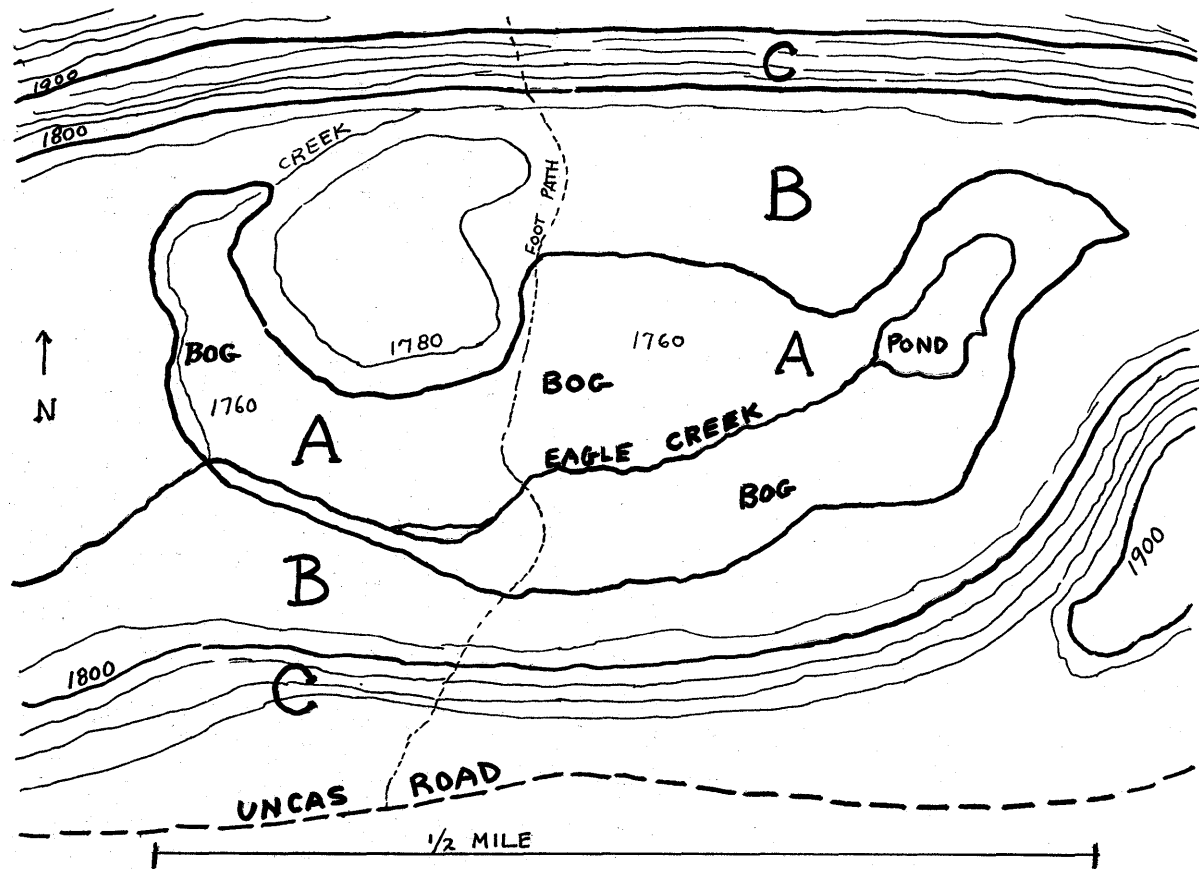
I usually spend a week or two each fall in the Adirondacks, deer hunting and birding. In the fall of 1969, while I was sitting on a watch at the edge of a bog, a woodpecker flew to a small tree no more than fifteen feet from me. I recognized it as a three-toed woodpecker, but its back was so vaguely marked that I could not precisely identify its species. Curiosity got the best of me, and for the rest of my stay in the area I spent more time tracking woodpeckers than deer.

I found other, more clearly marked woodpeckers, and was convinced that I had discovered a family of Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers. During the next two summers I made a complete search of the bog area. I found family groups of both species of three-toed woodpeckers, in addition to numerous old woodpecker holes beveled at the lower edge of the entrance. I concluded that the bog must be a favored nesting area for these birds.

The bog lies at the base of the Cascade Mountains, in the township of Long Lake, Hamilton County; the trail to the bog is, however, in the township of Inlet. In the sketch of the area, I have



Photograph by Marge Rusk



divided it into three types of habitat, A, B, and C.

Habitat A is the sphagnum bog. It is a flat, grassy plain with a scattering of standing deadwood and some small, live black spruce. The bog contains a small pond and an out-running creek, Eagle Creek. **WARNING:** Sections of this area are floating bog and caution is advised. Avoid all silty black areas devoid of growth. It is safer to stay along the bog edges. Do not attempt to cross the bog unless someone familiar with the bog is present. While the bog is generally safe, there are hazardous spots that would be impossible to pinpoint adequately in this article.

Habitat B is the low, generally solid terrain ringing the bog. It is an area of dense spruce, tamarack, balsam, and some large pine.

Habitat C is an area of moderate to steep slopes with hardwoods predominant.

Late April and early May are the best times to find the three-toed woodpeckers. At this time they are actively digging nest holes and can be located by the tapping sounds. However, this is also the most difficult time to travel Uncas Road—it is a sand road and virtually impassable until late May. The three-toeds are usually present in the bog until mid-July. After this time they tend to wander and the chances of sighting them in a day's birding become much slimmer.

Early June is a very good time to see Lincoln's Sparrows. This normally shy bird will be boldly in full view, singing from a bush top or even higher, from a tree. The Gray Jay will be curious, and may perch ten feet away to have its picture taken. "Spishing" near the spruce along the bog edge should produce Boreal Chickadee or Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Olive-sided Flycatchers and Rusty Blackbirds should also be found. Eastern Bluebirds and Spotted Sandpipers have been sighted near the pond. Looking toward the cliffs of the Cascade Mountains, the Red-shouldered Hawk can often be spotted. Also, the pair of Red-tailed Hawks seem out of place in the habitat of the Broad-winged Hawk and the Goshawk.

Below, I have listed 69 species of birds as positive or assumed breeders in the bog and adjacent high ground area, 7 species of Adirondack breeders that visit the bog or have been seen flying overhead, and 17 species that are listed as transients or winter visitants. This is a total, then, of 93 species. The letter "A" in the column "Breeding Evidence" indicates assumed breeders based on their regular presence in the area during the breeding season. The letters in the "Location" column refer to the accompanying sketch of the area and the sections thus delineated above.



Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker

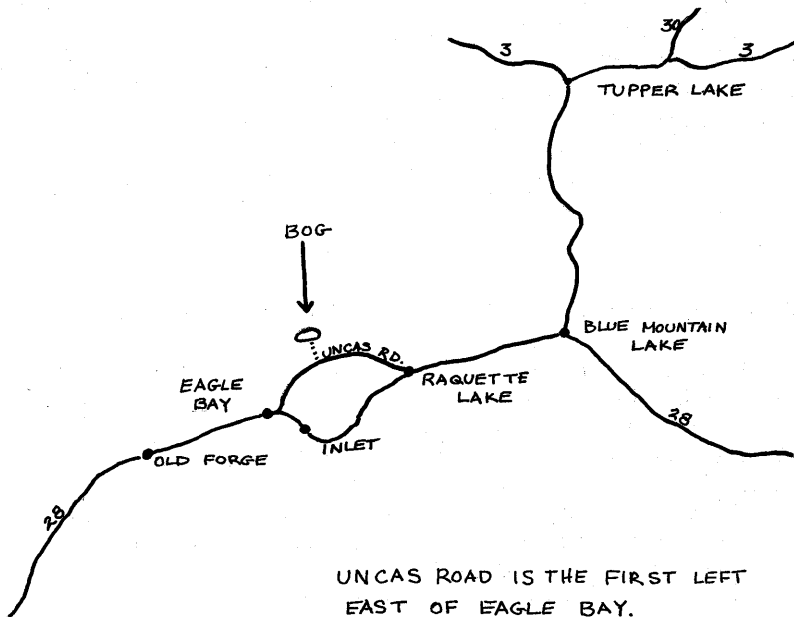
Photo by Dorothy W. Crumb

Ferd's Bog, June 17, 1972

<u>Species</u>	<u>Breeding Evidence</u>	<u>Location</u>
Black Duck	A	A
Hooded Merganser	A	A
Goshawk	A	ABC
Red-tailed Hawk	A	C
Red-shouldered Hawk	Courtship	C
Broad-winged Hawk	A	C
Ruffed Grouse	Young	C
Spotted Sandpiper	A	A
Barred Owl	Courtship	C

Chimney Swift	A	C
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	A	A
Common Flicker	Nest	AB
Pileated Woodpecker	A	C
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Nest	BC
Hairy Woodpecker	Courtship	C
Downy Woodpecker	Young	C
Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker	Nest, Young	A
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker	Nest, Young	A
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	A	B
Eastern Wood Pewee	A	BC
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Feeding young	AB
Tree Swallow	Nest, Young	A
Gray Jay	Sooty Immatures	ABC
Blue Jay	Nest	ABC
Common Crow	A	C
Black-capped Chickadee	A	BC
Boreal Chickadee	A	B
White-breasted Nuthatch	Courtship	C
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Courtship	BC
Brown Creeper	Nest	BC
Winter Wren	A	BC
American Robin	Nest	ABC
Wood Thrush	A	C
Hermit Thrush	A	C
Swainson's Thrush	A	B
Veery	A	C
Eastern Bluebird	Nest, Young	A
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Young	BC
Cedar Waxwing	A	BC
Solitary Vireo	A	B
Red-eyed Vireo	A	C
Black-and-white Warbler	A	C
Nashville Warbler	A	AB
Parula Warbler	A	B
Magnolia Warbler	A	BC
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A	C
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Young	ABC
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	C
Blackburnian Warbler	Young	C

Ovenbird	A	C
Northern Waterthrush	A	B
Northern Yellowthroat	Feeding Young	A
Canada Warbler	A	C
American Redstart	A	C
Red-winged Blackbird	A	A
Rusty Blackbird	Nest, Young	A
Common Grackle	A	A
Brown-headed Cowbird	Young	ABC
Scarlet Tanager	A	C
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	C
Evening Grosbeak	A	C
Purple Finch	A	ABC
American Goldfinch	A	ABC
Dark-eyed Junco	Nest, Young	BC
Chipping Sparrow	Young	C
White-throated Sparrow	Nest	ABC
Lincoln's Sparrow	Feeding Young	A
Swamp Sparrow	Feeding Young	A
Song Sparrow	Feeding Young	A



The seven Adirondack breeders that visit the area are Common Loon (overhead), American Bittern, Green-winged Teal, Belted Kingfisher, Barn Swallow, Brown Thrasher (recorded once), and Starling.

Additional birds, noted as migrants only, are Canada Goose, Mallard, Solitary Sandpiper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (range expansion?), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow.

Winter visitants include Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, and Tree Sparrow.

Directions to Bog: Going northeast on Hwy. 28, take the first left after passing Eagle Bay. This is the Uncas Road. Go 3.2 miles on Uncas Road and watch for a camp on the left named Camp Buckhorn. The trail to the bog is behind this camp. It is about a ten-minute walk to the bog opening.

R. D. 2, Manlius, New York 13104

Editor's note: At present there is a movement afoot to nominate Ferd's Bog for status on the National Register of Natural Landmarks. The impetus for this comes from Paul Buckley, Chief Scientist, National Park Service, North Atlantic Region, with help from Mike Peterson, President of the High Peaks Audubon Society. Both are members of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. Such status has already been endorsed by the Adirondack Park Agency. It would give the area the protection and recognition it deserves, and certainly would be a tribute to the man who "discovered" it, Ferdinand LaFrance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. LaFrance was born in rural Pompey Township in 1926 and now works at the Chrysler Motors plant near Syracuse. He is an experienced Adirondack woodsman and has been an active birder for the last fifteen years.

He concentrates his birding on specific areas with view to making and keeping status checklists of such areas. This approach is well illustrated in the article above. A previous checklist on the Old Fly Marsh, compiled by Mr. LaFrance, was used by the Onondaga Nature Conservancy in its report on that area. He is a member of the New York State Archaeological Society, Old Fly Marsh Management Committee, and the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs.