

## A BOG ABOVE IT ALL

If you've seen one bog, have you seen them all?  
Not necessarily.

Spruce Flats Bog is a rare high-elevation, 28-acre bog, formed in a mountaintop depression 2,720 feet above sea level. Here you can spot insect-eating plants, learn about long-ago lumberjacks, and look for signs that the bog is slowly returning to its forest days. Plus, since Spruce Flats Bog is part of Forbes State Forest and next door to Laurel Summit State Park, you have access to thousands of acres for hiking, biking, skiing, picnicking, and simply enjoying the view.

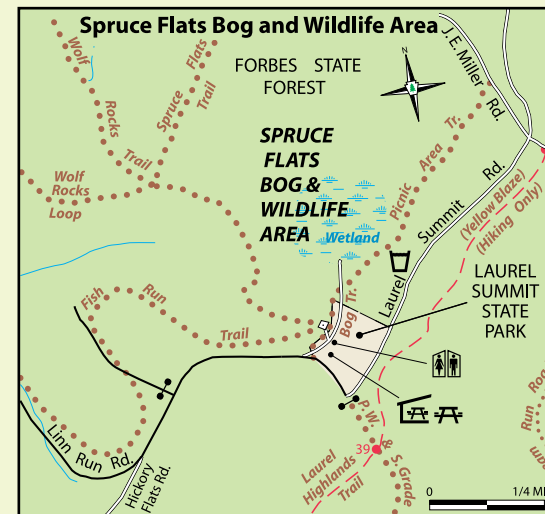
An observation platform at the end of the trail reaches out into the bog to get a close look at plant life and an unusual tree line caused by strong winds that sweep in from west to east. This wind deforms and kills branches on the windward side of trees.

## VISITING THE BOG



Located high atop Laurel Hill, the 305-acre Spruce Flats Bog & Wildlife Area is part of the 60,000-acre Forbes State Forest. The Bureau of Forestry manages the area to

promote wildlife habitat by planting trees and shrubs and clearing areas where wildlife will benefit. Access to trails make Spruce Flats a popular destination. Hike, bike or ski to Wolf Rocks or Beam Rocks for panoramic views. Watch wildlife, enjoy a picnic, or simply relax at adjacent Laurel Summit State Park.



• ADA-accessible Bog Trail • Parking available at Laurel Summit State Park

### Additional resources:

DCNR – Bureau of Forestry: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: [www.paconserve.org](http://www.paconserve.org)  
Powdermill Nature Reserve: [www.powdermill.org](http://www.powdermill.org)  
Audubon Society of Western PA: [www.aswp.org](http://www.aswp.org)

### For more information, contact:

Bureau of Forestry • Forbes Forest District 4  
1291 Route 30, P.O. Box 519 • Laughlinton, PA 15655-0519  
724-238-1200 • email: [FD04@pa.gov](mailto:FD04@pa.gov)

### In an emergency:

Contact a DCNR employee or dial 911.



Forbes  
State Forest

Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry

# Spruce Flats Bog & Wildlife Area



## FROM FOREST TO BOG & BACK

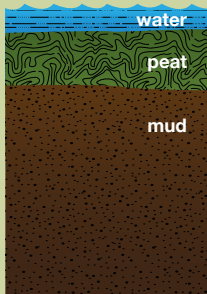
Bogs are one of North America’s most distinctive kinds of wetlands. With spongy peat deposits, acidic waters, and a floor covered by a thick carpet of sphagnum moss, bogs receive all or most of their water from rain and snow rather than from runoff, groundwater or streams. That means bogs usually occur in lowlands, not on mountaintops!

Geologic activity left a depression on top of Laurel Hill. Water collected there, first as open water and then as a bog. Over thousands of years, natural succession turned the bog into meadowland and finally to forest.



Around 1900, lumbermen arrived to harvest the virgin hemlock. (The lumberjacks called all short-needled conifers “spruce,” so the area became known as Spruce Flats, even though the trees were hemlock.) Once the thirsty trees were gone, the area reverted back to a swampy bog.

In 1909, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania bought this land to manage and protect as state forest, for many generations to come. Foresters thought they might dry up the area by dynamiting through the impervious sandstone underneath, but the bog held fast. Mother nature has the bog gradually filling in with plant matter. Eventually, it will turn back into a meadow, and then to a forest. Right now, the bog features six to eight inches of peat covering almost two and a half feet of mud.



## BOG PLANTS

Bogs are highly acidic and don’t offer much in the way of nutrients, so it takes a special kind of plant to survive here. Pitcher plant and sundew get their nutrients from the insects they attract and trap. Cranberries and cotton grass provide food for birds and other wildlife.

How did these unusual plants start growing after the trees were cut down? Wind and animals distributed the seeds of some plants. Others were planted here deliberately. For example, purple pitcher plants were transplanted in the 1940s during the construction of High Point lake in Somerset county.



Clockwise:  
cranberries,  
cotton grass,  
sundew



Pitcher plant



Broad-winged hawk

## BOG WILDLIFE

The bog provides wonderful opportunities for wildlife watching. Look and listen for a variety of birds, including broad-winged hawks soaring overhead as they hunt for prey. Spot four-toed salamanders crawling about in the soggy moss, and listen for wood frogs quacking out their duck-like calls in the spring.



Four-toed salamander



Wood frog