



Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge



Exploring the Refuge by Canoe or Kayak Selected Day and Partial Trips

Encompassing shorelines of more than 10 miles of the Magalloway and Androscoggin Rivers, their backwaters, and most of the 7,850-acre Umbagog Lake, Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge provides ample opportunity for exploration by boat. Whether your interests are wildlife photography, autumn foliage, moose watching, birding, or simply exploring, an expedition on these northern waterways is an ideal way to experience the Refuge and its wildlife.

The routes described below provide several options for half-day paddling trips. Information for each route includes estimated distances (round-trip), depending on adherence to the shoreline, exploration of backwaters, and other options.

Weather in this region can change rapidly. Umbagog is a large, shallow lake that becomes very challenging in moderate to high winds. Be prepared for a wide range of weather conditions, keep a frequent eye to the sky, and avoid large expanses of open water if conditions are deteriorating.

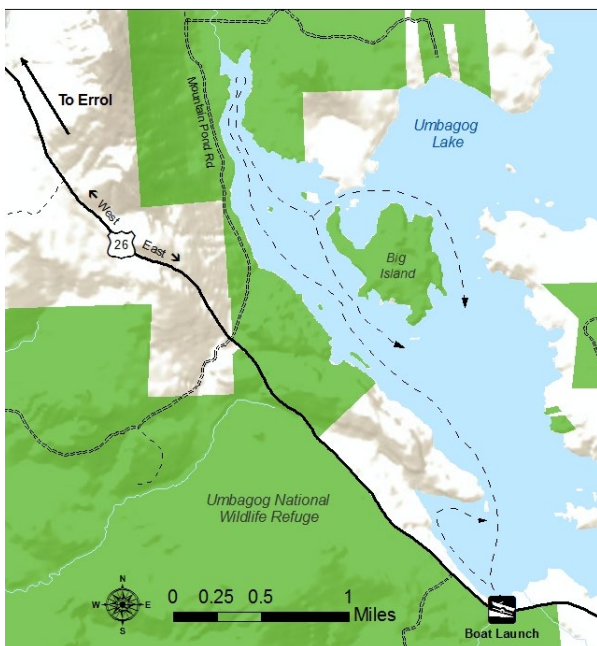
Shoreline campsites, operated by the Umbagog Lake State Park, offer numerous options for multi-day trips as well. For State Park campground information or reservations, call (603) 482-7795, or visit their website at:

<https://www.nhstateparks.org/visit/state-parks/umbagog-lake-state-park.aspx>

The Errol Chamber of Commerce is also a source for lodging, private campground, canoe/kayak rentals, guide services, and local area amenities. To contact the Chamber, call (603) 482-3906, or visit their website at:

www.umbagogchamber.com

Big Island and Thurston Cove (7-9 miles)

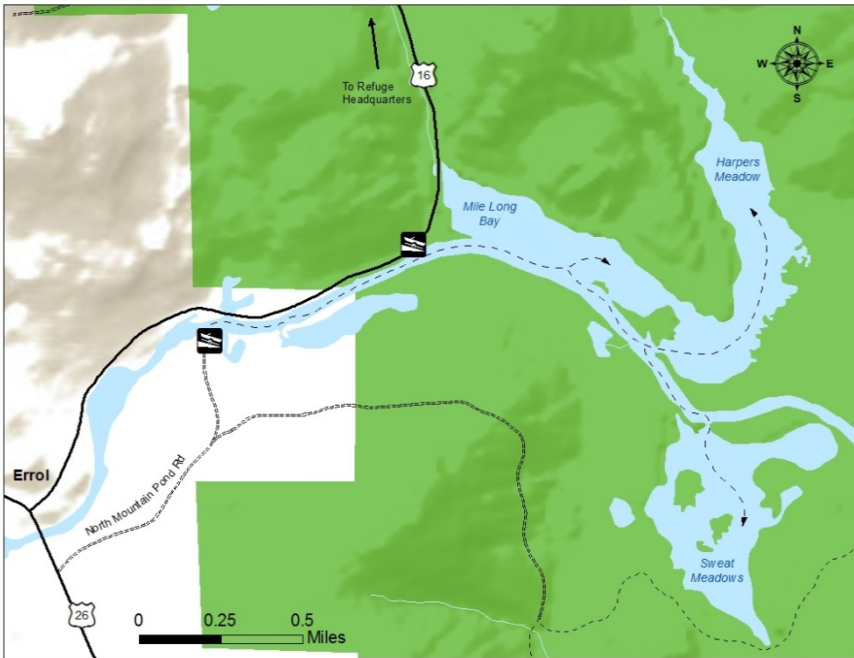


This route follows the southwest shoreline of Umbagog Lake, north from the public boat launch on Route 26 in Cambridge, NH. It is more exposed to wind than the river routes at the north end of the lake, and paddlers should be prepared for sudden changes in weather conditions.

From the boat launch at the south end of Sargent Cove, you have the option of following the shoreline north or striking out for the small island at the tip of the point in Umbagog State Park. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service federal ownership begins just south of a long, narrow island that parallels the shore almost a mile northwest of the point. Explore the narrow inlet of Thurston Cove as you continue northwest along the shoreline. Returning south, you have the option of following the west shore of Big Island (the largest island on Umbagog Lake), or winding through the narrow channel north of the

island and continuing around its outer shoreline through the straight, west of Tidswell Point. This option requires crossing at least a half-mile of open water at the southern end of Big Island en route back to the boat launch, and may be quite challenging in windy conditions. Watch for Common Loons, Common Mergansers, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles. Songbirds to be heard inland include Red-eyed Vireos, Hermit and Swainson's thrushes, and many warblers.

Harper's Meadow and Sweat Meadows (4-8 miles)



This route runs east along the Androskoggin River to explore Harper's and Sweat Meadows, some of the most outstanding wildlife areas in the Refuge. Look for the public boat launch sign as you head east on Route 26 from Errol, NH. An alternative boat launch that will save about 0.7 miles of paddling each way is the Steamer Diamond Boat launch approximately 1.5 miles north on Route 16 out of Errol.

Paddle upriver from the boat launch. Just after Route 16 leaves the north shore, Mile Long Bay is confluent with the river to the north. You can paddle up Mile Long Bay and enter Harper's

Meadow through the east channel, or continue up the Androskoggin and enter through the narrow channel to the north into the marsh.

Harper's Meadow includes an open water channel and an extensive area of marsh and bog between the Androskoggin and Magalloway Rivers. Moose are occasionally seen foraging in the shallows in the morning or evenings. Osprey and Bald Eagles are often seen flying overhead. Common Loons can be seen in the river channel or fishing in within the Meadow. Ring-necked, Wood, and American Black Ducks are some of the common waterfowl that can be seen in this area. Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, Common Snipe, and Northern Harrier all utilize the marsh and can be seen by patient observers.

Returning to the Androskoggin, continue upriver about 0.3 miles to the entrance to Sweat Meadows on the south shore. This area is sheltered in most wind conditions, allowing for excellent wildlife observation. Within the marsh is a cluster of trees, one of which holds a Bald Eagle nest. When the eagles are actively nesting, Sweat Meadows is closed off with signs and buoys to protect the nesting eagles. Too much disturbance from paddlers could cause the eagles to abandon the nest. However, you can still observe the nest with optics from the Androskoggin River.

Although a short paddle back to the boat launch, a strong northwest wind can make the return a good workout.

Androscoggin River to Leonard Pond (8-14 miles)

This route extends the Harper's and Sweat Meadows route to Leonard Pond. Put in at the public boat launch or Steamer Diamond boat launch as described above. You can paddle directly upriver to Leonard Pond or explore some combination of the backwaters along the way. After reaching the lake, a number of possibilities exist to explore the Leonard Pond area. The primary attraction in Leonard Pond is the old Bald Eagle nest tree. After Eagle populations declined drastically, this tree held the first discovered Bald Eagle nest in New Hampshire in 1989 after the last successful nest record was in the very same tree 40 years prior. The best view of the snag is from the Magalloway River at the southwest channel.

If time permits, one can paddle northeast from the central channel up to Leonard Marsh. This excellent wildlife area supports nesting waterfowl, Ospreys, Northern Harriers, and American Bitterns. During the spring and late summer, migrating shorebirds may be seen passing through these areas. Loop routes are possible using a combination of the channels around Leonard Pond. Consult the map for details.



Magalloway River to Leonard Pond (8-12 miles)

If you launch from the Refuge Headquarters (approximately 5.5 miles north of Errol) on Route 16 in Wentworth Location, NH, you can follow the Magalloway River to Leonard Pond, Umbagog Lake, and the Androscoggin River. The river parallels Route 16 south for about 1.0 mile, then angles southeast toward the lake. There are oxbows and backwaters that can be explored on along the way, where Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfishers, and Common Loons are often seen fishing. The open expanse of Leonard Marsh is visible through a narrow fringe of trees on the east shore. A narrow channel on to the east provides access to Leonard Pond.

Depending on available time, one can explore this section of the lake or explore along Leonard Marsh. If enough people and vehicles are available, your group could shuttle vehicles to the different boat launches and create a day trip from the Headquarters along the Magalloway River down to a launch along the Androscoggin River. Inspect the map to be familiar with the river channels and series of islands around Leonard Pond.



Canoe Launch (3-8 miles)

If you are looking for an easy paddle, the Refuge's canoe launch is a great option that will allow you to explore oxbows and backwaters along the Magalloway River. This paddle can be as short or as long as you want to make it. Great Blue Herons and various ducks are often seen around this area, and many songbirds can be heard from the shoreline.

The canoe launch is located on Route 16 approximately 8.3 miles headed north from Errol, NH and 2.8 miles from the Refuge Headquarters. Look for the kiosk and parking lot and follow the path down to the dock. From there you enter an oxbow. Loop around or head directly to the main river channel and be sure to note the sign located at the entrance to the oxbow that directs you back to the canoe launch for your return trip. Head upriver or down to explore the northern most section of Refuge land.

