

PENNSYLVANIA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

SITE NAME LAKE SOMERSET

COUNTY SOMERSET

SITE # 25

APPROX. SIZE 250 ACRES

OWNERSHIP PUBLIC (PFBC)

LAT. 40°02' **LONG.** 79°03'

DESCRIPTION

Lake Somerset is a shallow, man-made lake (maximum depth was 16 feet when built), owned by the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Years of sedimentation have reduced the lake's depth substantially. Over 50 percent of its area is now less than 7.5 feet deep. Five to ten percent of the lake area is emergent wetland. The submergent aquatic vegetation grows to a depth of 8 feet and extends approximately 20 feet from shore. Lake Somerset is oriented in a north / south position. Great Bulrush, Blue Flag, Marsh Buttercup, Cardinal Flower, and Broad-leaved Cattail are common around the lake's perimeter. Fishing is the primary recreational activity. Boats with electric motors are permitted.

Directions: From Somerset take Rt. 601 N, to SR 4026 E to the lake.

BIRDS - SUMMARY

This lake supports thousands of migrating waterfowl each year and is currently the breeding ground for a pair of Osprey. If unaffected by draw-down, the aquatic plant community present would be suitable nesting habitat for American Bittern, Least Bittern, Sedge Wren, Pied-billed Grebe, American Avocet, Ruddy Duck, and Virginia Rail. Records indicate that Common Moorhen bred at this site until annual draw-downs affected breeding ecology.

REPRESENTATIVE BIRDS - BY CRITERIA

- 1a Waterfowl: (SM - 12,000±). High numbers include: Canvasback (SM - 1700±), Oldsquaw (SM - 300±), Lesser Scaup (SM - 2500±).
- 2 Osprey (B - 2±), Bald Eagle, Black Tern, Common Tern.

CONSERVATION / ADDITIONAL NOTES

High nitrate levels in the lake, increased by runoff from adjacent farmland, have made it eutrophic. Excessive seasonal draw-downs (Sept. - June) of 7.5 feet result in habitat changes detrimental to the ecosystem's overall health. Additionally, water levels drop during 2 - 4 months when evaporation loss exceeds flow. Sedimentation buildup, mining activity, and commercial and residential development are all threats to the site.

Decreased draw-down with the normal pool level established in March would be less disruptive to the habitat of the lake. In 1996, an abundant production of ducklings resulted from full pool-water conditions and a good crop of aquatic weeds resulted thereafter. Both were a result of a cancellation of a fall 1995 draw-down due to Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission employee safety concerns. Introduction of Grass Carp is being considered.

LOCAL CONTACTS

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SUBMITTED BY:

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