

HUNTING FORT DRUM



Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch
Environmental Division - Public Works
772-9303 / 772-9636
FortDrum.iSportsman.net

2019

HUNTING FORT DRUM

Fort Drum is a 108,733 acre US Army installation in northern New York. Fort Drum is located in Jefferson and Lewis counties, approximately 10 miles northeast of Watertown and 80 miles north of Syracuse, New York. Although the primary mission of the installation is military training, its resources provide outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities.

Hunting is a popular recreational activity on Fort Drum. Approximately 70,000 acres are available for recreation.

Hunting regulations are established by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) which includes seasons, bag limits, and shooting times. Fort Drum is Wildlife Management Unit 6H in the NYSDEC hunting regulations.



Recreationists must also abide by *Fort Drum Regulation 420-3* (FD Reg 420-3), which includes all regulations regarding access, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping and other outdoor activities on Fort Drum. All individuals hunting or participating in other outdoor recreational activities on the installation must obtain a Fort Drum Recreational Access Pass.

Some regulations specific to Fort Drum include wearing blaze orange clothing during the hunting season (with some exceptions), and keeping firearms cased while being transported in a vehicle. See FD Reg 420-3 for more information.



Fort Drum offers opportunities for disabled hunters including specific designated hunting areas; a waterfowl blind; and the ability to hunt on designated ATV trails.

The use of hunting dogs is allowed on Fort Drum for day-time hunting only and in accordance with NYSDEC regulations. Dog owners/handlers should be aware of the danger of concertina wire in the Training Area.

To obtain a recreation pass or learn more about access and recreational opportunities on Fort Drum, as well as other opportunities in the region, see the web site:

FortDrum.iSportsman.net
or call 315-772-9303 or
315-772-9636.



Photo credits: Snowshoe hare by D. Gordon E. Robertson; Cottontail Rabbit and Eastern Gray Squirrel by US Fish & Wildlife Service; grouse hunting photo by John Carter; images of wings and feathers used with permission from The Wildlife Society; all other photos by Fort Drum.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

Odocoileus virginianus



The white-tailed deer is New York's most popular game animal and is found throughout the state including Fort Drum.

Male deer are easily identified during most

of the year because they have antlers. Antlers are not the same as horns. Antlers are a type of bone that grows outside the body on mostly male members of the cervid (deer) family and are shed and re-grown every year. (In comparison, horns are composed of keratin (the same protein as our hair and fingernails) covering a bony core that grows throughout the life of both males and females in animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, bison, and antelope.) You can not tell the age of the animal based on the number of points or tines on its antlers. Instead, aging a deer is based on the wear and replacement of teeth.

The overall goal on Fort Drum is to manage deer populations liberally to allow for the regeneration of trees, reduce deer-vehicle collisions and impact to landscape plantings, yet provide quality recreational opportunities to the greatest number of hunters. A specific harvest goal in the Training Area is to achieve a harvest ratio of approximately 1 female: 1 male through the use of Deer Management Permits (DMPs) which are administered through NYSDEC and allow the harvest of antlerless deer.

The harvest of antlerless deer is also encouraged in the Cantonment Area with the use of Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) Permits. Hunting in the Cantonment Area is the only restricted activity on Fort Drum limited to people who possess Department of Defense identification cards.

Habitat and Food: Deer are found in almost any habitat type in New York, but are often seen at the edges of woodlands and open areas. Deer are herbivores and eat a variety of grass, fruits, nuts, and browse depending on the season. Old apple trees and mast-producing trees are always favorites in the fall.

BLACK BEAR

Ursus americanus

The black bear is New York's largest big game species. An average adult male weighs about 300 pounds while females average about 170 pounds. The largest bear reported from New York weighed approximately 750 pounds.

Although the color of black bears actually varies widely in other parts of North America, almost all the black bears in New York are jet black in color with a brown muzzle.



Bears on Fort Drum are part of the northern or Adirondack population of bears in New York State. Radio-collared bears on Fort Drum were tracked to Cranberry Lake and Star Lake, as well as Croghan and Theresa.

Habitat and Food: Typically, bears are found in forests mixed with open areas and wetlands. Black

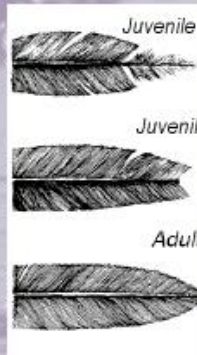
bears inhabit forested areas throughout Fort Drum and are seen occasionally in the Cantonment Area. Black bears are omnivorous, eating grasses, berries, fruit, nuts, seeds, insects, grubs, and carrion (i.e., dead animals).

WATERFOWL

Fort Drum has an abundance of wetlands, but not big agricultural fields where waterfowl are found in large flocks. If interested in hunting Canada or Snow Geese, you are better off contacting a private landowner in the area or hunting on nearby state lands. However, Fort Drum can afford some good hunting opportunities for puddle ducks. Common duck species on Fort Drum include wood ducks (photo upper right), black ducks, and mallards (photo below).



All birds molt their feathers through the year, as feathers get worn and damaged and need to be replaced. Most birds will molt their feathers a few at a time, but waterfowl molt all their flight feathers at one time making them flightless when the young are still unable to fly in the summer. Because of this, the best way to determine age of waterfowl is through feather wear on the tail and wings. The tail feathers on young-of-the-year waterfowl will either have a downy tip or the tip will have broken off forming a "V" shaped notch at the tip of the tail. In the adult birds, the feathers have been molted at least once so there will be no downy tip to break off and the tail feathers will come to a point (see photos below on left). Wing feathers of adults will be rounded and worn from use, whereas immature waterfowl will have more pointed tips (see photos below on right).



Habitat and Food: Wood ducks, black ducks, and mallards are all examples of "puddle ducks" or "dabbling ducks." Both names refer to the habitat and feeding habits of these ducks. They are often found in small bodies of water where they tip up to feed so the only part that is visible is the rump feathers above the water. These ducks typically feed in shallow water (1-3 feet) where they can reach the seeds of aquatic plants, such as bulrush, sedges, and wild rice. On Fort Drum, look for beaver ponds, streams, and marshes containing a combination of good cover and food. Matoon Creek in Training Area 17, Training Area 13A, and Training Area 6A are some examples of areas with good waterfowl hunting opportunities.

SNOWSHOE HARE

Lepus americanus



The snowshoe hare was given its common name because of the large, furred hind feet that act like snowshoes and keep the animal on top of the snow. Brown in summer, hares turn white (except for black ear tips) in winter. This

color change allows the hare more concealment from predators during the snowy winter months and gives rise to another name for the animal, "varying hare."

Cottontail rabbits appear similar to the snowshoe hare in the summer with a rusty nape, but cottontails lack the large hind feet, have smaller ears, and remain brown in the winter.

Snowshoe hares are 15 - 20 inches long and typically weigh 3 - 5 lbs.

Habitat and Food: Hares prefer heavily forested areas with a dense understory. They are found primarily in coniferous and mixed woods, but can also be found in cedar swamps and spruce bogs. Summer foods include grasses, clovers, ferns, and strawberries. Winter foods include bark, twigs, and buds from maple, willow, and aspen trees. Hares will frequent clear-cut areas where leftover tops and stems are near the ground within easy reach. An easy way to find the hare during the winter is to walk in the woods until you come across the distinct tracks with the large hind feet ahead of the front feet. Thick cover including conifers is typically a good place to find hares on Fort Drum.



Snowshoe hare tracks

COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Sylvilagus floridanus



This rabbit has a brown grayish body coloration, often with a rusty nape patch. The "cotton ball" looking tail gives this animal its name. Cottontails are sometimes confused with snowshoe hares, but cottontails are smaller overall, have smaller feet and ears, and don't change color in the winter months. These rabbits are typically 14 - 17 inches long and weigh between 2 - 4 lbs.

Habitat and Food: Cottontails are often found in heavy brush, forest patches with open areas, and near the edges of thick swamps. Like the snowshoe hare, cottontails feed on succulent green vegetation in the summer and woody material in the winter.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL

Sciurus carolinensis



The gray squirrel is most commonly seen as a resident in city and suburban parks where it has thrived due to the planting of oak and other hardwood trees, however, these animals are abundant in most areas that have good mast crops. Despite the common name, gray squirrels can sometimes be black in color. Gray squirrels weigh ¾ - 1 ½ lbs.

Habitat and Food: The gray squirrel is dependent on trees and will rarely be found far from them. Squirrels will be found primarily in upland hardwood forests where foods of choice are nuts, seeds, berries, and fungi. Look for mixed hardwoods that provide soft mast (maple and cherry) and hard mast (beech, oak, hickory).

AMERICAN WOODCOCK

Philohela minor



The woodcock, like the grouse, takes off explosively, often when underfoot. Unlike grouse, woodcock are migratory birds and members of the sandpiper family. They have long bills

relative to their bodies and large, dark eyes set high in their head that gives the bird a 360° field of view.

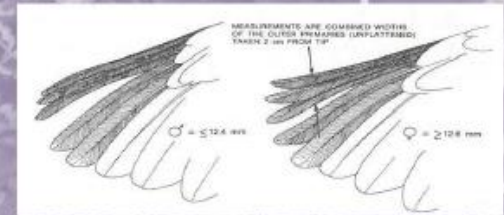
The sexes are extremely similar, however, they can be distinguished by two primary features: bill length and the width of the three outermost wing feathers. Bill length in the female is usually greater than 2 ¾ inches, while it is typically less than 2 ½ inches in the male.

The width of the three outer wing feathers (measured ~¾" from the tip) is usually ½" or more in the female and less than ½" in the male. Woodcock typically weigh between 0.25 - 0.60 oz. with females being heavier.



Bill of male woodcock is shorter than female.

The width of the three outer wing feathers (measured ~¾" from the tip) is usually ½" or more in the female and less than ½" in the male. Woodcock typically weigh between 0.25 - 0.60 oz. with females being heavier.



When flattened, the outer primary wing feathers of the male woodcock (left) will be slightly wider than the female (right).

Habitat and Food: Woodcock are found in young woodlands and shrubby fields with poor water drainage. Woodcock prefer moist, damp soils where they forage for earthworms, which make up approximately 80% of their diet. Fort Drum has an abundance of this type of habitat as well as woodcock. Concentrate hunting efforts in moist alder thickets and locations where alder transitions into small diameter (young) aspen forests.

RUFFED GROUSE

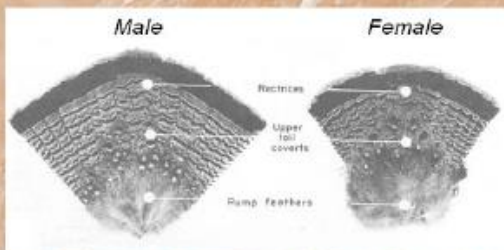
Bonasa umbellus

The ruffed grouse is often heard before it is seen, taking off rapidly with a loud fluttering noise. Males can be heard throughout the year when they are beating their wings (called drumming), trying to establish a territory and attract females. Drumming sounds something like a lawnmower starting off in the distance; females do not make this sound. Weights for these birds are typically 1 - 1 ¼ lbs.



Although similar in appearance, the sexes can usually be differentiated by the length of the central tail feather. In males, that length will usually exceed 6 inches (approximately the length of a dollar bill), while in females it will be less.

Additionally, the number of spots on rump feathers is a very good indicator of sex in mature birds—females have only one; males have two or three spots.



Habitat and Food: Grouse are typically associated with young aspen stands where they forage on buds, their favorite food. Grouse will also readily use mixed-aged hardwood and conifer forests for foraging and cover in the wintertime, eating the buds of beech, cedar, and hemlock trees; and roosting in patches of spruce and hemlock. During spring and summer, grasses, berries, herbaceous leaves, and insects dominate their diet.

The best places to find ruffed grouse on Fort Drum are dominant and mixed stands of small to medium-size aspen early in the season. As the season progresses, focus more on mixed stands of aspen with good conifer cover nearby or throughout.

WILD TURKEY

Meleagris gallopavo



The wild turkey is North America's largest game bird. Males—called toms, gobblers and jakes (for young males)—can often be distinguished by their mostly bald, bluish and red head; red throat and typically bare neck; and large bulbous caruncles. Toms

also have dark, iridescent plumage, prominent spurs on their legs, and a well-developed 'beard' (modified feather structure), protruding from their chest. Males get their nickname from the unmistakable "gobble" call they make to attract females during mating season, typically April-May.

Females—called hens or jennys (for young females)—have a bluish-gray head with a feathered neck. They typically have a more brown, duller appearance than males, which allows them to remain concealed when nesting. Hens may also have a beard. Weights average 18 - 20 lbs. in males and 9 - 12 lbs. in females.

To tell the age of a turkey, look at the tail fan. Until about 1 ½ years, young birds will have the three central tail feathers extending past the rest; tail fans in older birds will be more evenly rounded on the outside edge. Another characteristic between young and old birds is the outermost barred wing feather. On a young turkey, this feather will be sharply pointed and dark-tipped, while in older birds, the feather will be rounded and white-tipped.



Wing feathers (above) adult center and right. Tail fans (right).

Habitat and Food: Clearing of forests for farmland in the 1800s led to a dramatic decline of the native wild turkey in New York—most were gone by 1844. In the 1940s, small numbers of turkeys began moving northward from Pennsylvania into southwestern New York, and in 1957 NYSDEC began re-introducing turkeys to other parts of the state.

Since being re-established in New York, the turkey has adapted to numerous different habitats ranging from farmlands to oak forests. In the spring and summer, adult turkeys feed on a wide variety of plants and insects, while in the fall they typically feed on beechnuts, acorns, and other hard masts.

Turkeys are found throughout Fort Drum. In spring, focus hunting efforts on field edges near mixed forests; in fall, look for hard mast-producing trees, like oak.

EASTERN COYOTE

Canis latrans



The Eastern coyote is a secretive carnivore that hunts mostly during the night from dawn to dusk. The howl of the coyote is easily recognizable.



Eastern coyotes are larger than their western counterparts averaging 35 - 45 lbs. with some adult males exceeding 50 - 60 lbs. They resemble mid-sized German shepherd dogs and are predominantly a grayish brown color, although some have reddish or black pelts. Males tend to be slightly larger than females.

Habitat and Food: Coyotes inhabit a wide variety of landscapes ranging from expansive secluded forests to suburban areas. Their diet is extensive and includes small mammals, birds, insects, some vegetable matter, and carrion.

The Coydog Myth: Coyotes and dogs can theoretically interbreed to produce what is called a "coydog." However, these crossbreeds have reproductive cycles of dogs and give birth at times of the year when pups cannot survive in the wild. In addition, domestic dogs and coyotes are behaviorally different preventing hybrids from occurring. Coyotes are more likely to attack or prey on domestic dogs than mate with them.

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Early successional forest habitat has been disappearing in the northeastern US for many years. These forests are often characterized by dense, young, shade-intolerant ("sunlight loving") tree species such as aspen and gray birch. As these forests mature, shade-tolerant species that have been growing in the understory such as sugar maple and American beech, begin to dominate the stand. The Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch has been creating and maintaining early successional habitat in a mosaic of different age classes across the installation since 2005. Many wildlife species depend on early successional forest habitats such as Ruffed Grouse, Snowshoe Hare, and Golden-winged Warblers.



Aerial view of the clear-cut blocks in Training Area 14E looking south down U.S. Military Highway on Fort Drum. In this area, approximately 140 acres was divided into 5 acre blocks with a plan to harvest one-third in a patchwork or mosaic of blocks every 15-20 years. The first third was harvested in 2005-2006 and the second third was harvested in 2019-2020.

MOOSE ON FORT DRUM



The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) estimates that NYS has a population of approximately 400 moose in the Adirondack Region.

Moose are a protected species in NYS and it is not legal to kill a moose.

Moose are occasionally seen on Fort Drum. Early fall is their breeding season and is a peak time of moose activity when young males are often seen wandering around looking for mates. However, moose and moose tracks have also been observed on Fort Drum during the summer months.

If you see a moose or moose sign, please contact Fort Drum biologists at 315-772-9303.

CAUTION: TICKS

Anyone in NYS—including Fort Drum—that spends any time outdoors should be aware of the presence of ticks and tick-borne diseases. Black-legged ticks can be commonly found any time of the year even when there is snow on the ground.

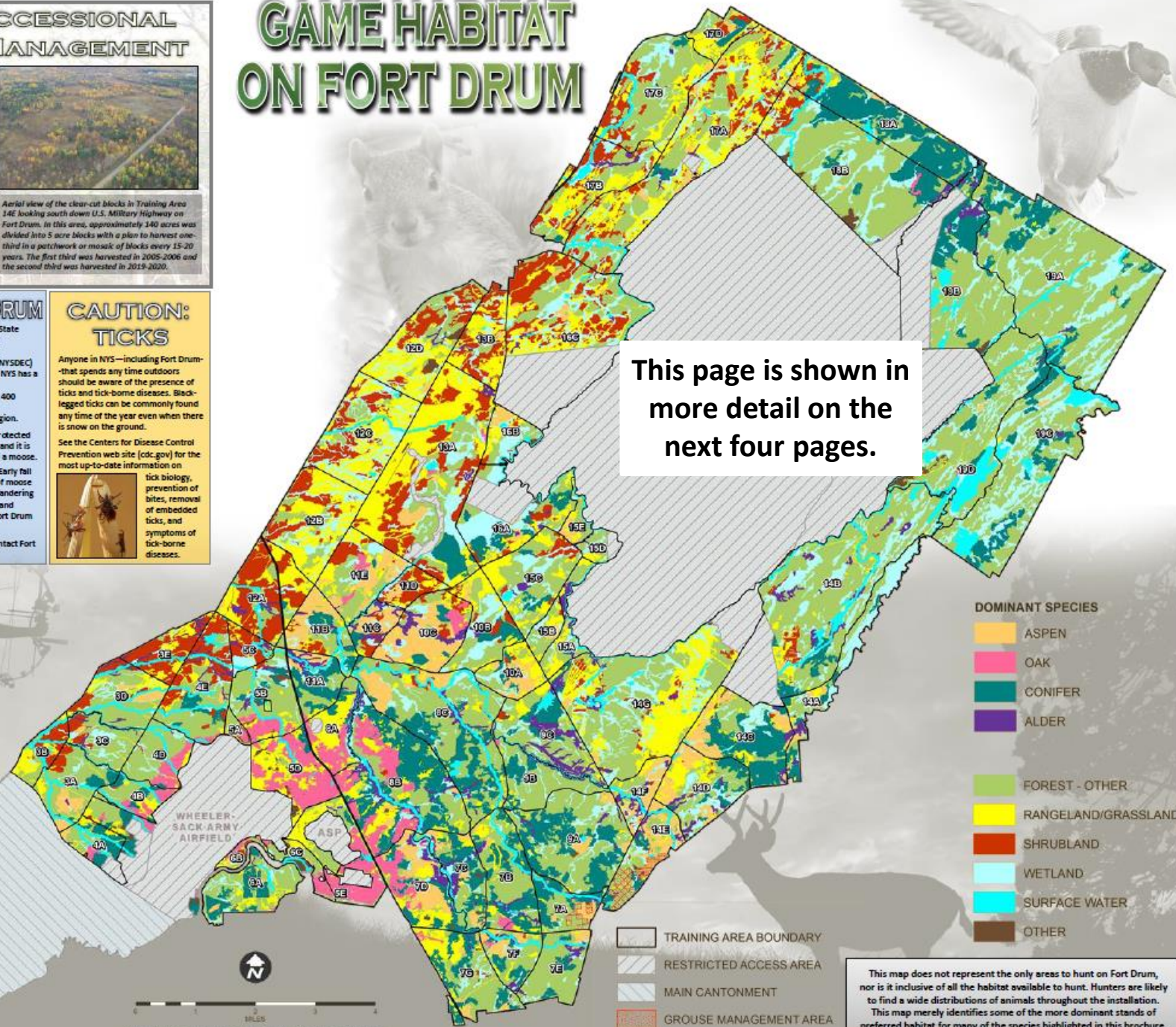
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tick biology, prevention of bites, removal of embedded ticks, and symptoms of tick-borne diseases.

GAME HABITAT ON FORT DRUM

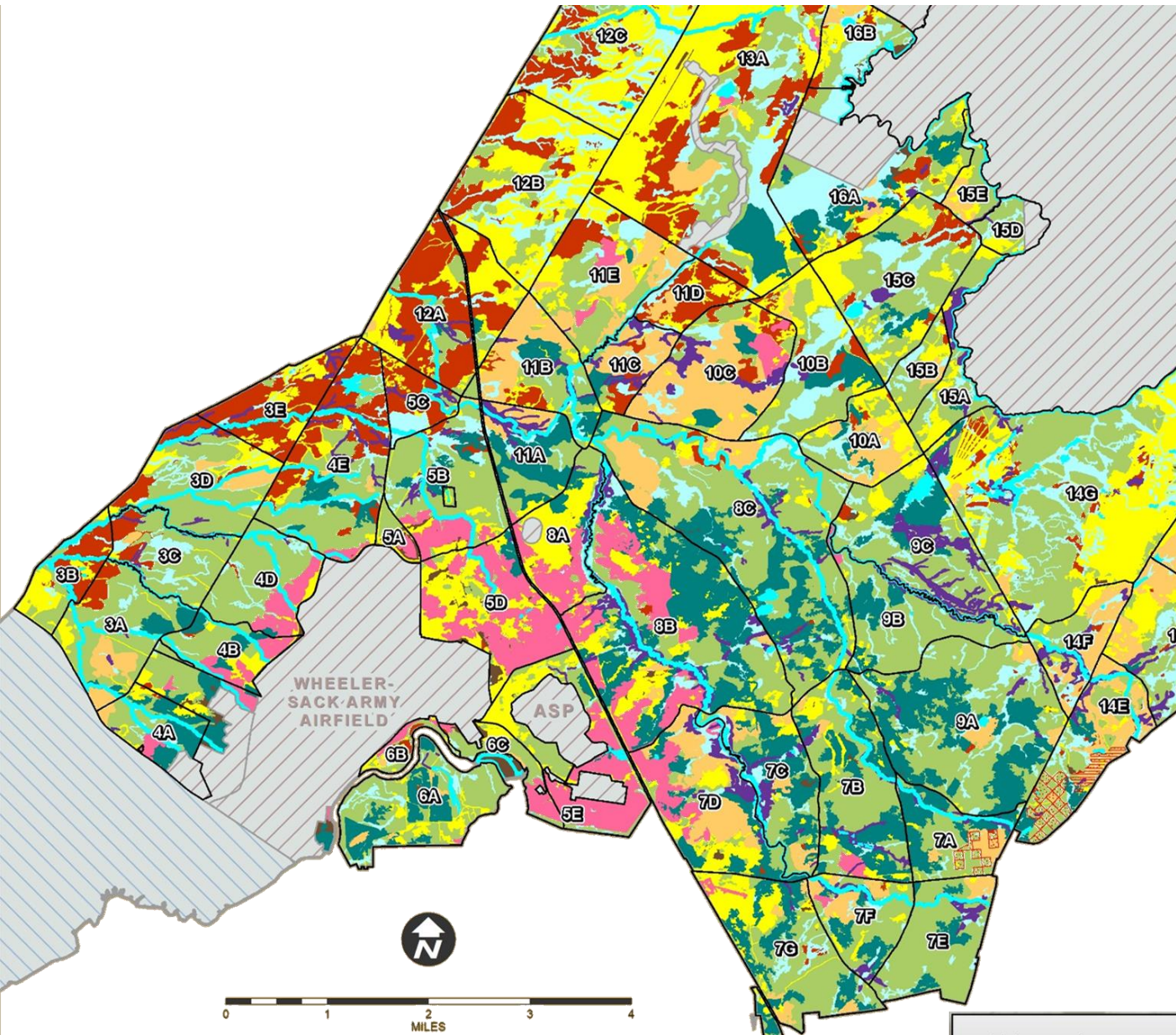
This page is shown in more detail on the next four pages.







- DOMINANT SPECIES**
- ASPEN
 - OAK
 - CONIFER
 - ALDER
 - FOREST - OTHER
 - RANGELAND/GRASSLAND
 - SHRUBLAND
 - WETLAND
 - SURFACE WATER
 - OTHER

- TRAINING AREA BOUNDARY
- RESTRICTED ACCESS AREA
- MAIN CANTONMENT
- GROUSE MANAGEMENT AREA

This map does not represent the only areas to hunt on Fort Drum, nor is it inclusive of all the habitat available to hunt. Hunters are likely to find a wide distributions of animals throughout the installation. This map merely identifies some of the more dominant stands of preferred habitat for many of the species highlighted in this brochure.



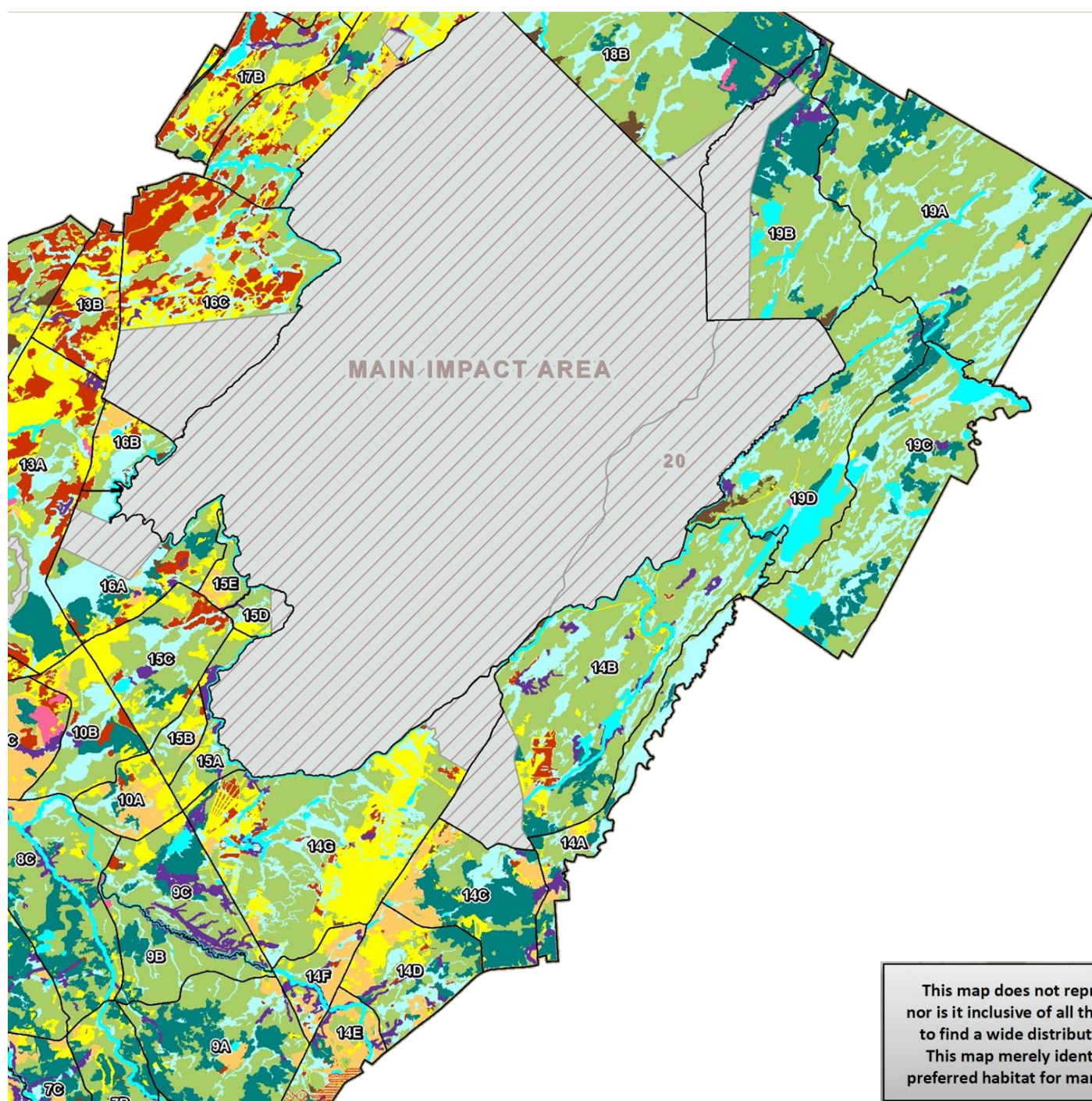
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MILES

PREPARED BY PUBLIC WORKS-ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION-GIS OFFICE 315-772-1502 NOVEMBER 2018

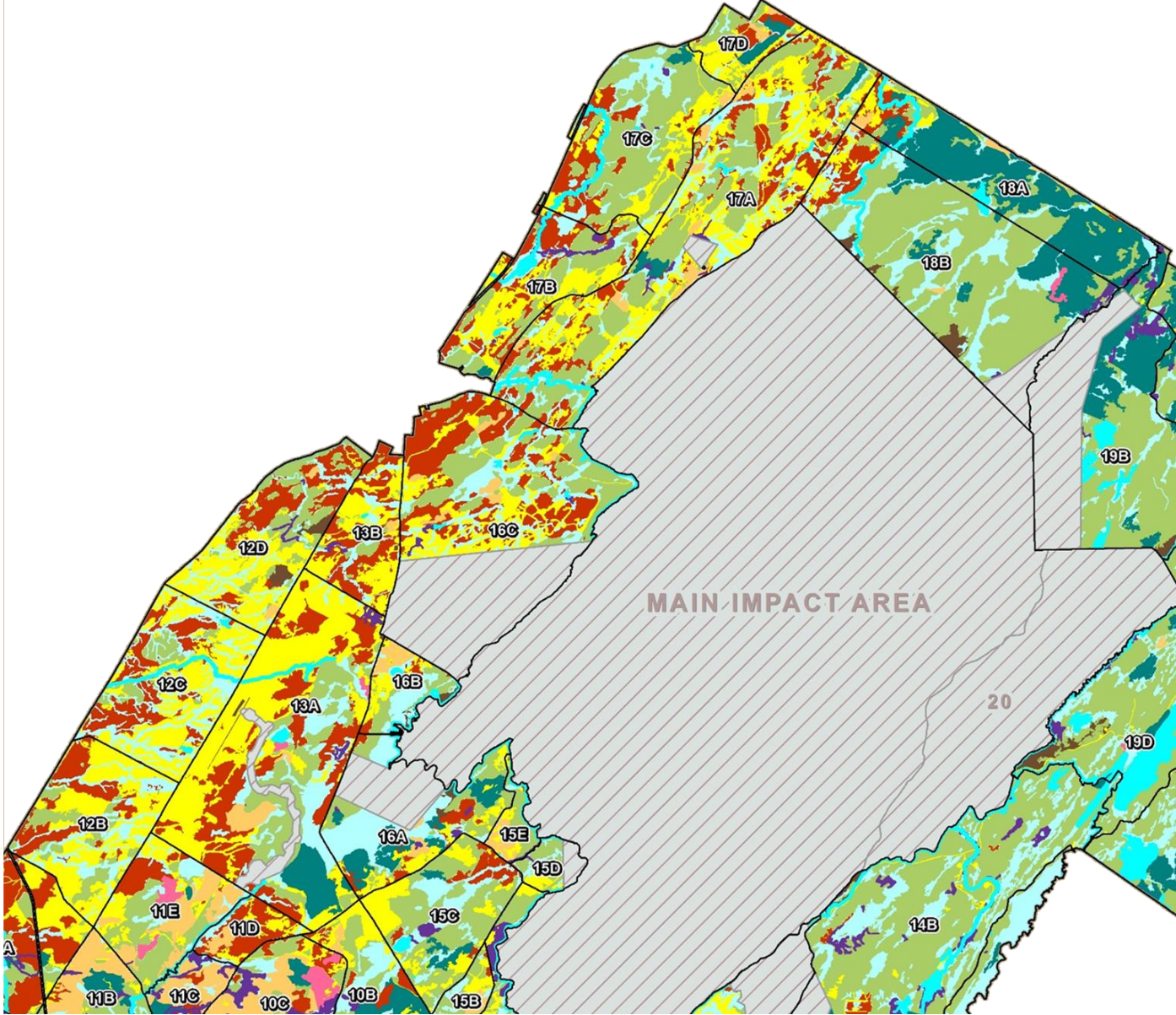
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