

Definitive Destination

Connecticut Lakes *by Bill Benner* Coos County, New Hampshire





Approximately 900 people live in Pittsburg, NH. Other residents of the area include moose and Pink-edged Sulphurs. Aug. 4, 2006. Connecticut Lakes, Coos Co., NH.



In the far northern tip of New Hampshire, straddling the Canadian border, the first springs and rills trickle south through the spruce groves, tumble over mossy logs, and enter the basin of the Fourth Connecticut Lake. Here they form the headwaters of the mighty Connecticut River, the largest river in New England. Eventually, these cool waters find their way south along the Vermont and New Hampshire border, through Massachusetts and Connecticut, and then

Overleaf: Main photo, Aug. 20, 2007. Connecticut Lakes, Coos Co., NH. Photo by Seth Sweet. Harris' Checkerspot, June 20, 2005 and Canadian Tiger Swallowtails, June 19, 2006 (placed on this road via Photoshop) by Eric Nielsen

empty into Long Island Sound. But first, they flow through these sun-dappled forests from one pool to the next, making their way through the four Connecticut (CT) Lakes, into Lake Francis and then rambling south. In addition to this beautiful waterway, a variety of other ponds, sloughs, and streams are scattered through the region. Large settlements are absent, but logging roads meander through the woods, connecting camps and homesteads.

This northern tip of New Hampshire, along with adjacent northern Maine, consists of true boreal forest, subtly different than the mixed deciduous-coniferous forest just a couple of hours farther south. Here in the CT Lakes region, black and white spruce and balsam fir predominate. Bunchberry and goldthread carpet the mossy forest floor. Bogs



The Connecticut Lakes region is one of the best spots in the eastern United States to see a Hoary Comma. Aug. 21, 2007. Connecticut Lakes, Coos Co., NH.

and uplands intertwine, and along the idyllic pond edges the browsing moose lift their heads, streaming with water.

Pittsburg is the closest village of any size, and the gateway to this region for U.S. visitors, at its southern end. The area from there north to the south shore of the First CT Lake contains most of the amenities, including lodging and food. North of the First CT Lake, the land is an almost-wilderness of beautiful boreal habitat. The elevation ranges from 1300 feet at Pittsburg to 2360 feet at the Canadian border. There are a few mountains that top out at over 3000 feet, and Stub Hill (3670 feet) is the highest. As of October 2003, a significant portion of the area is protected, most as part of a deal between conservation groups and the towns of Pittsburg and Clarksville

and the timber companies that own the forests. The protected area encompasses 171,000 acres, or 3% of the state of New Hampshire. This habitat supports some of the most sought-after butterflies in the East, including Common Roadside-Skipper, Pepper-and-Salt Skipper, Common Branded Skipper, Silver-bordered Fritillary, Atlantis Fritillary, Northern Crescent, Mustard White, Pink-edged Sulphur, and no fewer than 6 species of Comma — Gray, Green, Hoary, the uncommon Question Mark and Eastern, and the very rare Satyr. Also, some of the more common species can be very common here. Canadian Tiger Swallowtails can be found puddling in June in groups of up to a hundred or more at a time — six hundred at one spot for us on one of our trips! Red-spotted Admirals can be equally common, and