

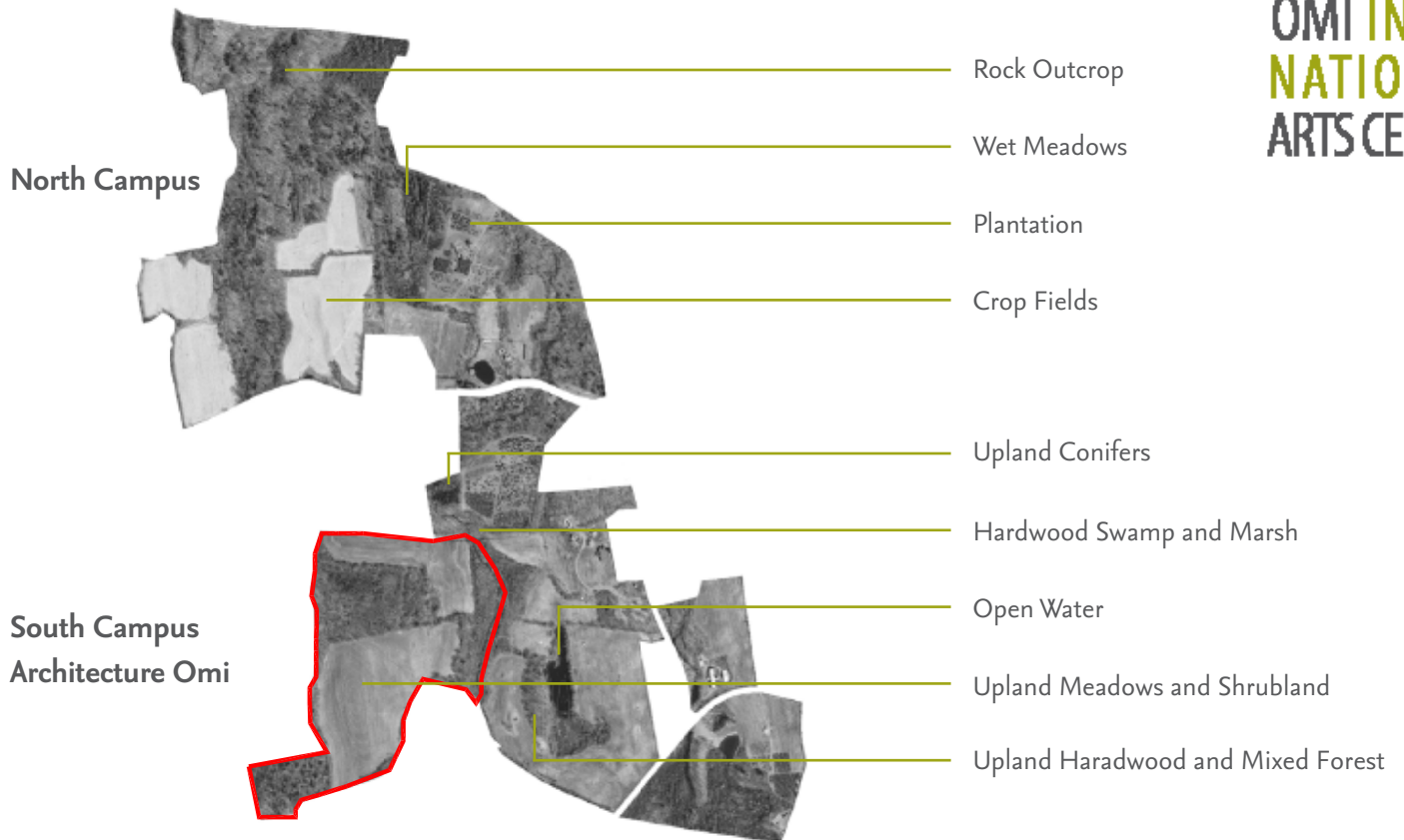


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BIOME MAPPING

The 400 acres of the Omi International Arts Center contains an incredible diversity of natural habitats facilitating the exploration of relationships between built and natural forms. The following documentation maps these natural resources.

Architecture Omi is located on 60 acres in the southwest quadrant of the South Campus.



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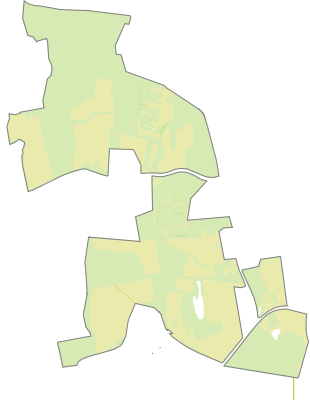


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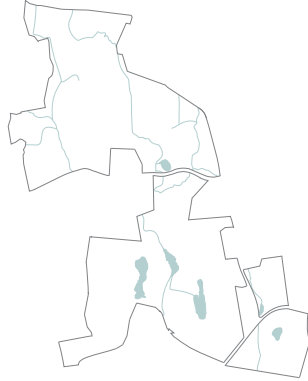
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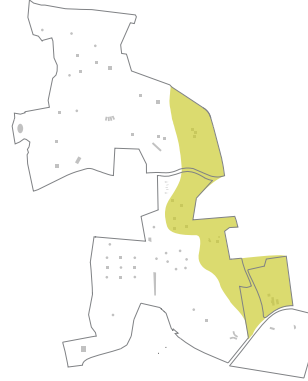
Topography



Forest vs Fields



Waterways



Public vs Private



Natural Elements



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Rock Outcrop

The Art Omi property is scattered with abrupt hillocks, most of which have greater or lesser stretches of exposed rock. These tend to be dry, thin-soiled areas. While such conditions can lead to some impoverishment of the native plant abundance, these outcrops are natural and can be home to relatively specialized species of plants and animals.

At least a couple of the rock outcrops on the Property appear to have vague trails along their crests, and provide an appealing walk. For example, on the North Campus, several outcrops run north/south and are bordered by sheltered wetlands.

The small-scale topography of these outcrops adds shape and shadow to the trails through the North Campus woods. If carefully constructed and supplemented by an ecological study to insure that no sensitive species were affected, extension of trails on to these outcrops could enhance the layout of the pathways.



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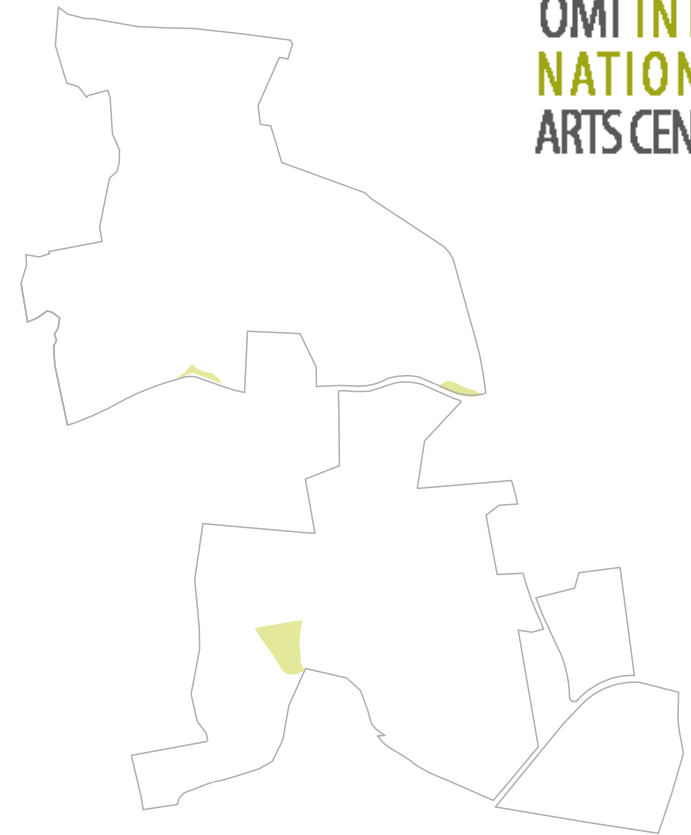


Wet Meadows

Wet meadow refers to open, apparently grassy areas that are regularly wet. Actually, such spots are usually dominated by the grass-like sedges rather than by true grasses. At Art Omi, the largest extent of wet meadow occurs in the western portion of the South Campus.

The natural analogue to the wet meadows that form in hayfields or pastures is the beaver meadow. These are areas that form as beaver ponds fill in and revert to drier land. Wet meadows may also have occurred along wide but shallow and slow-moving creeks. As beaver have been controlled and shallow wetlands ditched and drained, natural wet meadows have disappeared.

Aesthetically, wet meadows add contrast to upland meadows, they tend to have a slightly different color and texture, and so help highlight lower areas and shallow water flows. While also intriguing biologically, they are sometimes seen as more of a nuisance than a pleasure because they periodically make walking and tractor driving difficult.



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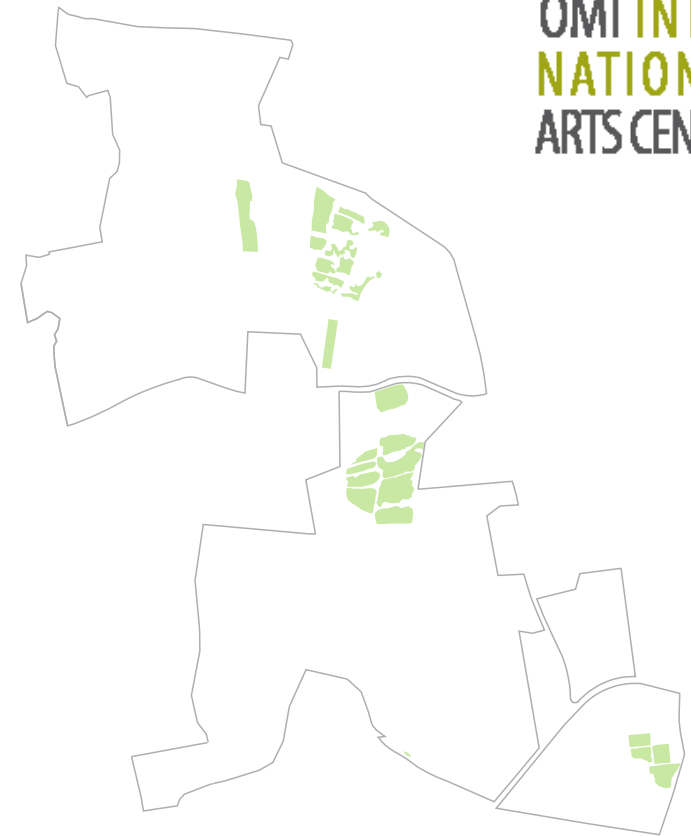
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Plantation

The Art Omi plantations are Christmas tree or at least conifer plantings. Some of the trees apparently have been dug up for transplantation. All are now beyond household tree size, although cutting their tops might produce acceptable holiday trees. Most of the trees that have been planted are not native species, and plantations tend to be relatively poor in terms of native species. They may however provide nesting habitat for some birds and occasional shelter for other animals.

The plantation trees are currently too dense to emulate a natural forest. Careful thinning, with some trees permitted to grow larger and provide shade provide a more welcoming habitat for human visitors. If this approach were to be considered, then a professional forester should be consulted. Such sites might grow towards an “upland conifer” forest type (see below). Doing nothing except keeping the roads clear might eventually (30 – 50 years?) result in the gradual evolution towards a more diverse and natural forest as the dense conifers collapsed and native deciduous species filled in the gaps.



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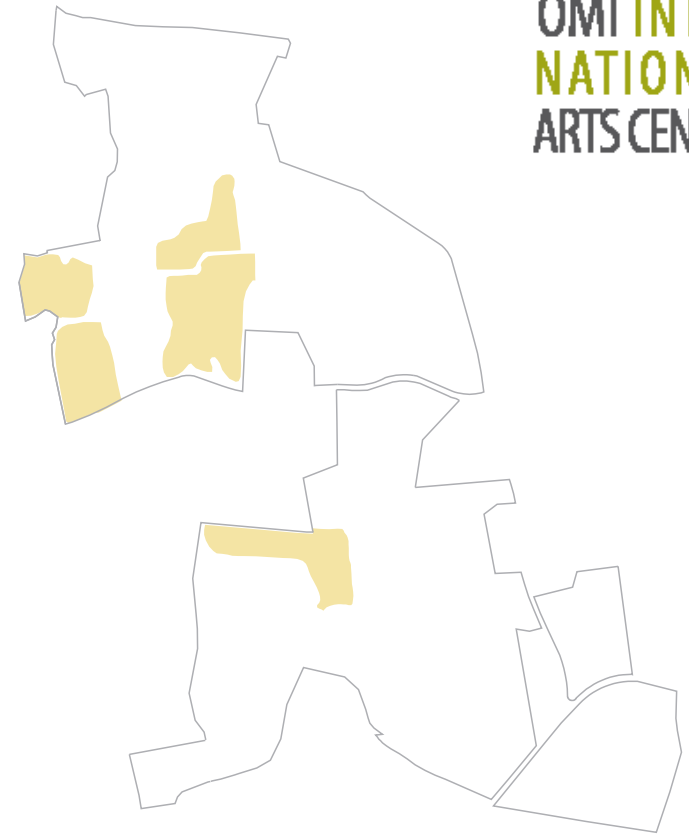
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Crop Fields

Crop fields are currently fairly extensive on the North Campus of Art Omi. These fields are ploughed and planted to corn by the farmer who is leasing them. Possibly other crops, such as soy beans, have also been planted at times.

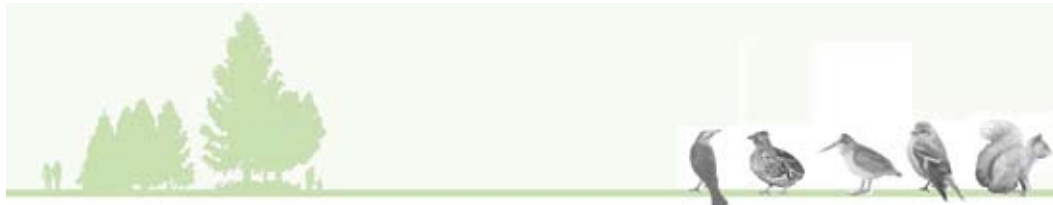
Although such areas may provide little habitat for native species, the corn remnants may be an appreciable food source for such animals as Turkeys, Raccoon, Opossum, and Deer.



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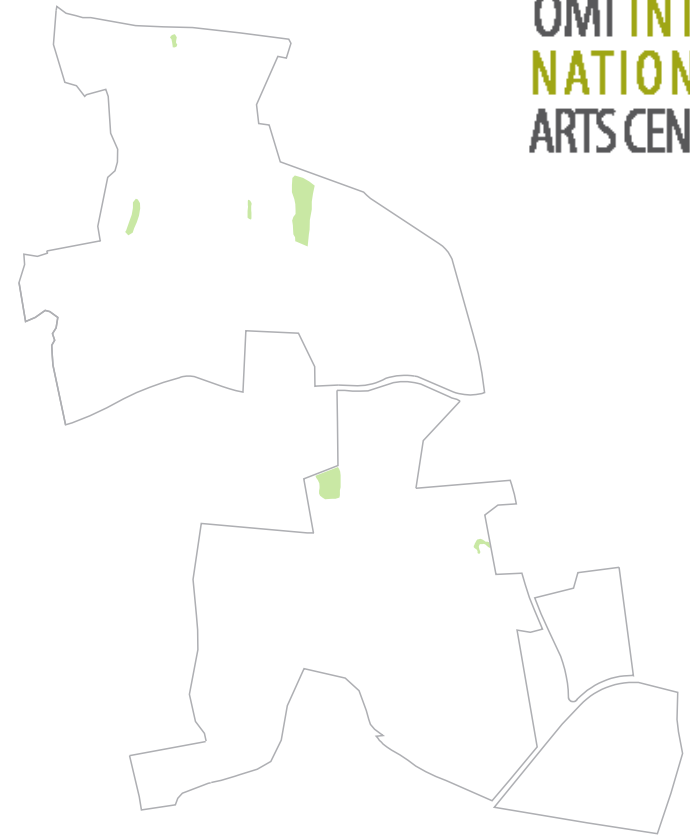


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Upland Conifers

The only extensive stand of “upland conifers” on the Property was on the North Campus and was actually a mature conifer plantation. Ecologists have classified such areas as “upland conifer” forest rather than “plantation” because once they reach maturity the understory and structure of such areas comes to resemble natural conifer stands. Such stands tend not to have many plants at ground level because the year-around shade and acidic soils tend to discourage growth. Certain animals (e.g., Red Squirrels and Pine Siskins) appreciate conifers.



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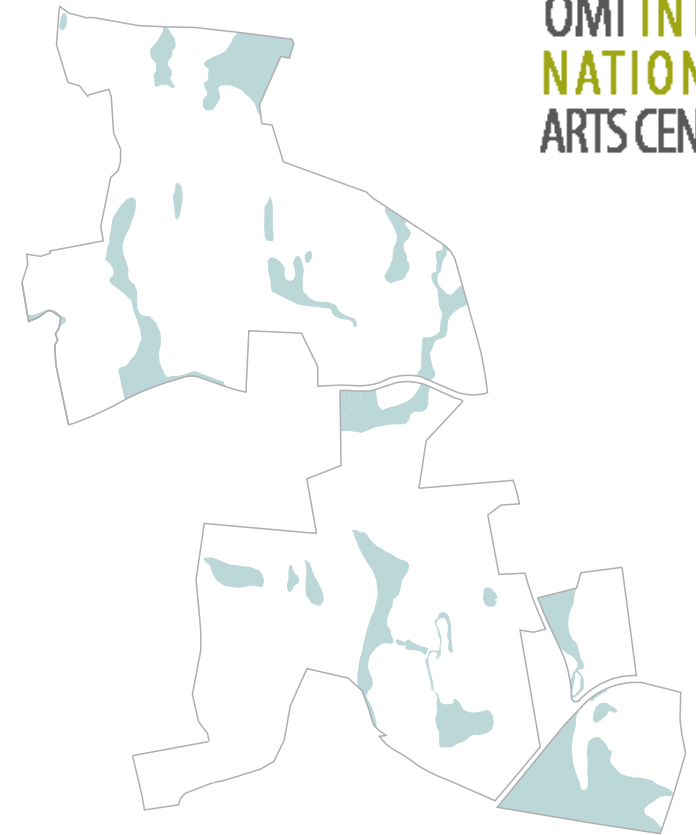
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Hardwood Swamp and Marsh

This habitat type is composed of the more or less continuously damp areas which are dominated by hardwoods such as Red Maple, Swamp White Oak, and Ashes. Alder, the tantalizingly-scented Spicebush and Winterberry are common in the understory. The North Campus of Art Omi has a beautiful mosaic of Hardwood Swamp and Upland Forest. The Long Pond is margined in part by such swamp and then, south of Rte 22, there is a thick Red Maple swamp. A winter drive by the Red Maple swamp that is across the road from the Visitors' Center rewards one with a fine frieze of red about 4-12' off the ground: the red berry clusters of Winterberry, a type of holly. At least one swamp at Art Omi harboured Black Ash, an interesting and somewhat rare tree. The wood of this species has been favored by basket makers from pre-colonial times through to the present.

A marsh has standing water, but, unlike a hardwood swamp, has few trees or shrubs and, instead, is dominated by annual herbaceous plants such as reeds, rushes and sedges. At Art Omi the only marsh of any size was found just south of Quinn Lane and north of the South Campus evergreen plantation. A marsh tends to form when water is deeper than that of a wet meadow. They may represent a transition from pond to swamp.



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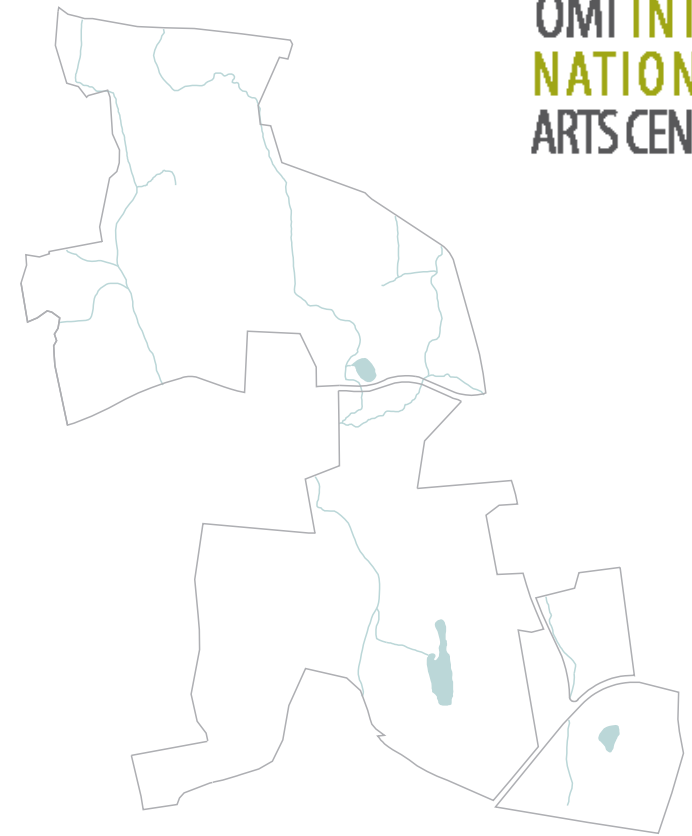
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Open Water

Open water denotes standing water which is not sheltered by vegetation. At Art Omi, there are three ponds: the one across from the Studio, the central Long Pond, and the lawn pond north of Quinn Lane. We studied all three of these ponds during the summer of 2006. The most diverse pond, the Long Pond, ranked 18th out of 96 ponds in terms of the diversity of native species. The Studio Pond and the Lawn Pond were less diverse, ranking 26th and 49th respectively. The Long Pond has the most natural margins, and it is commendable that this pond has been left in a relatively natural state despite being near the center of the South Campus. The general results of our pond study are mirrored in the above results from Art Omi – the more manipulated the pond margins, the less diverse ponds tended to be.

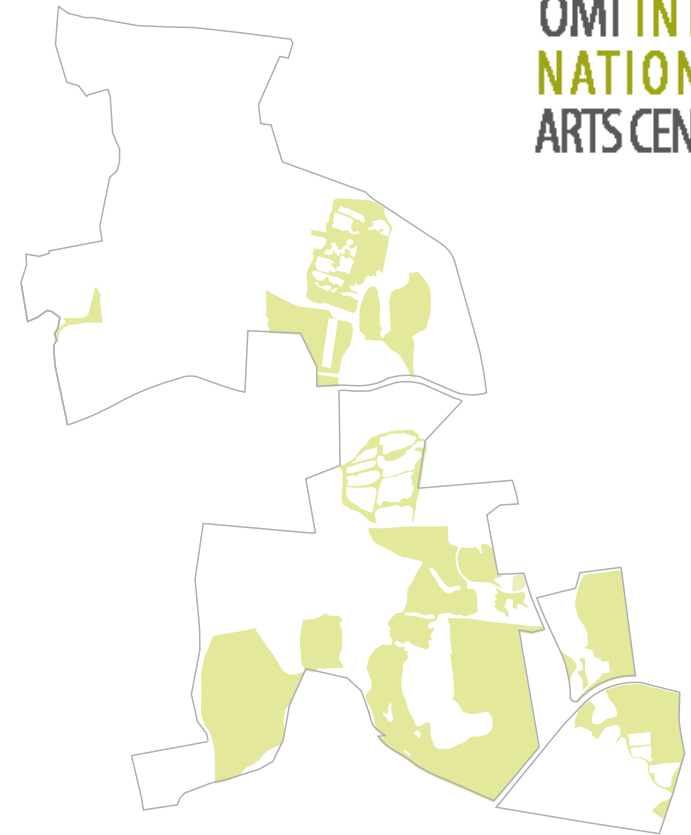
These ponds are home to a set of species that rarely occur in lakes (because lakes are deeper, have a different shoreline, and tend to have large fish). Ponds are dynamic, evolving habitats. In fact, prior to European colonization, most ponds were probably caused by beaver work and evolved into meadows as dams failed and ponds filled in. Many native species appear to be adapted for just such transitions between pond and wet meadow.



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Upland Meadows

Upland meadow refers to grasslands that are not in wet lowlands. At Art Omi, we classified hayfields, lawn and the regularly cut grass lanes in the plantations as upland meadow. Upland meadow can be valuable for nature conservation to the degree that it approximates native prairies or grasslands.

While true prairies were not native to the Northeast, upland grasslands can form on shallow soils in rocky areas or over sand, and certain plants and animals are native to those habitats. Hayfields are perhaps the human-made habitats that most closely approximate natural grasslands in our area. The most valuable hayfields, from a conservation perspective, are those that are cut relatively late in the summer (e.g., after mid-July) and that are not regularly replanted; unfortunately, both these characteristics tend to reduce their value for hay production.

Much of what creates the “rural farmland” landscape which is so appealing to many people is the interspersed woodland with such meadows. They provide for an airy feel along pathways and allow for rolling vistas.



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Upland Hardwood

“Hardwood” trees are, in common usage, the deciduous, non-conifer trees such as the maples, oaks, hickories, etc. They do not include the conifers such as pine, hemlock, cedar and their ilk. The wood of the “hardwoods” tends to be harder than that of the conifers, although there are some exceptions. “Upland” is the opposite of “lowland” and refers to areas that are not regularly flooded.

This forest type typically is home to many of our woodland animals. There is a large set of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects which make their homes here. We did hear, for example, Wood Frog calling from a few different wetlands around the Property. While Wood Frogs breed in lowlands, they spend most of the year living in the surrounding uplands.

If the forest is mature and the understory relatively opens, hardwood forests can give a lighter, loftier feeling than conifer forests.