

Spruce Hole in Durham

'Living Relic of Tundra Stage'

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DURHAM—The Conservation Commission has just acquired a "living relic of the tundra stage."

That's how Margery and Lorus Milne describe Spruce Hole, but a half-dozen conservationists The Herald attempted to interview were a little vague about where it is.

"I frankly wouldn't want everyone to troop down there," said one woman. "It's boggy, for one thing (dangerous for children), and it's very fragile."

Mrs. Milne allowed that it is north of Packers Falls Road, and she finds it by following her personal divining rod. "I sort of sense which way to turn."

One man says the bog is fragile and refers you to another man who is busy but will call back. The next day his wife says he is very busy but if you want to see it, go to the end of one road, turn right, and follow a right-of-way to the top of the hill and turn left. It's at the bottom of a steep embankment.

Norman Morgan donated the bog to the town, according to Richard Strout of the Conservation Commission, and the CC bought about six areas surrounding Spruce Hole as a protective zone for \$1,000 an acre, although it was appraised higher.

Strout emphasized that Spruce Hole is a conservation area, not a public park,

and expressed concern for children. The total land package, he said, is about 13 acres.

The Milnes say that thousands of years ago, a piece of the glacier broke off with in a rim of gravel. The piece melted there and left a hole, with no drainage, back when the earth was recovering from the glaciers.

Black spruce trees, which aren't native to this area, provide dense shade. The roots fan out horizontally through this six-acre peat bog, and the result is a sort of a bouncy mat.

Pitcher plants and sundew, both of which eat insects, grow there along with bog orchids which flower briefly in the spring.

This bouncy bog from the tundra stage was threatened a while back when gravel operations dug closer and closer to the rim around the bog.

"If the gravel pit were all dug out," explained Professor Milne, "Spruce Hole would drain, and that would be the end of it."