

An American Bittern Pauses While Feeding

A steady cacophony of love-sick, croaking frogs fills the warm, dry air. The marshes and swamps in Maine's northern forest are considered unwelcoming; a place rarely ventured by man. These wetlands are my second home, for here I am comfortable and secure. They calm me. They are my freedom. I am safe in this supposed inhospitable world; a place where I am not distracted by politics and economics. It is in these damp terrains where much of the life in the northern forest seeks sustenance and home. Without these profusely scattered small bodies of water there would be no northern forest.

The frogs silence long enough to allow a wood thrush to solo its flute-like song. An eastern kingbird sits on a dead tree trunk, flying repeatedly into the pond, only to return to its perch to continue its bath with meticulous preening of its delicate feathers with its bill. The unique mating call of the secretive bittern emanates loudly from the far corners of the pond. Later, a bittern flies over the pond, maybe to make a love match. Bitterns are familiar in many of the wetlands; flying in aerial highways in the early summer to and from the waterways to gather food for hungry babies.

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