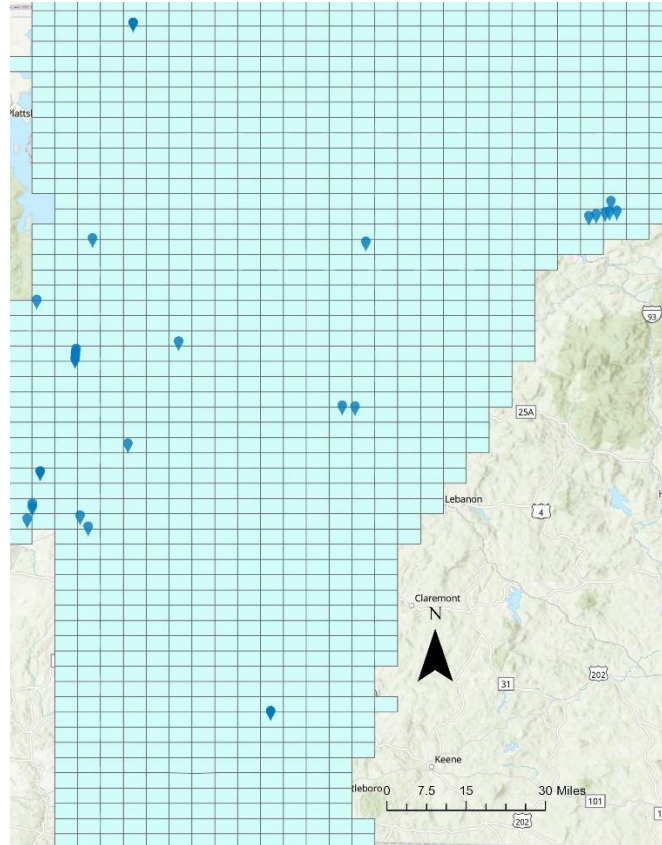


# 2022 Eastern Whip-poor-will Survey:



**Locations of 2022 Eastern Whip-poor-wills in Vermont by Breeding  
Bird Survey Block**

## **Annual Report to Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department**



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department for supporting this work. Thanks also to the dedicated team of 2022 volunteers who spent their time scouting during the day, surveying for Whip-poor-wills at night, and recording their data in detail.

## **Introduction**

The Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) is a crepuscular and nocturnal aerial insectivore that breeds across eastern North America and overwinters in southern Florida, eastern Mexico, and Central America (Sibley 2003; Skinner et al. 2022). In their breeding range, Eastern whip-poor-wills use dry, low-elevation forests for nesting and diurnal roosting, in addition to nearby open habitats for foraging (Spiller and King 2021). These medium-sized birds primarily feed on moths and beetles (Souza-Cole et al. 2022). Their breeding season generally occurs from late May through early July, with egg-laying timed so that hatching coincides with the full moon phase (Cink 2002). Eggs are laid on the forest floor and incubated for approximately 20 days (Raynor 1941).

Habitat requirements for this species are complex and necessitate a mix of open-understory forests for breeding and rearing young, and large tracts of open land to forage successfully (Hunt 2006). Examples of breeding habitat include forests with dry, nutrient-poor soils such as Pine Barrens and Pine-oak woodlands. Suitable foraging habitats include fields, open wetlands, linear infrastructure rights-of-way, agricultural fields, and recently logged or burned areas (Hunt 2013).

In Vermont, Whip-poor-will records can be found across most of the state but tend to be concentrated along the western and eastern edges of the state at low elevations, and are not typically found in the mid to high elevations of the Green Mountains or in much of the Northeastern Highlands (eBird 2022). In 2011, the State of Vermont Endangered Species Committee formally listed the Eastern whip-poor will as threatened. This listing was based on meeting two required criteria for threatened designations, an estimated fewer than 300 reproducing individuals (females) in the state and an overall decline in the species at the state or regional level.

## **Project Background**

### *Volunteer Surveys*

With concern over the status of Whip-poor-wills in Vermont and the knowledge that traditional bird survey methods such as those used in the Breeding Bird Survey do not adequately represent nocturnal or crepuscular species (Bart et al. 2005), species-specific survey methods have been used to better survey Eastern Whip-poor-wills. Because of this, in 2005, the Northeast Nightjar Survey expanded to Vermont in the form of nocturnal survey

routes. Routes were selected based on the presence of open or edge habitat (National Land Cover Database), well-drained soils, elevations under 1,500', and appropriate forest cover types (Hunt 2006). Each route was established with a series of ten points spaced 0.5 miles apart, with surveyors completing a three-minute count at each point. In 2007, the protocol was updated to its current version, which uses ten six-minute point counts at locations spaced one mile apart (Hunt 2007). Supplemental points are surveyed to assist in the tallying and triangulation of individual whip-poor-wills detected at the original points. Supplemental points are chosen 0.8km (0.5 miles) in each cardinal direction away from the original points.

Whip-poor-will surveys are timed to occur at least 15 minutes after sunset and end no later than 15 minutes before sunrise on waxing and waning moon cycles where there is at least 50% moon face illumination in order to maximize the effect moonlight has on detectability. Whip-poor-will detection probability is approximately 50% when the moon is greater than half full, over two times greater than when the moon is less than 25% full (Wilson and Watts 2006). To further increase the detectability of birds on a given route, surveys are only conducted on clear nights with wind speeds under 8mph and when background noises have no appreciable effect on the surveyor's ability to hear Whip-poor-wills. The survey period varies based on latitude and a start date two weeks after the average arrival date. For 2022, the survey period for southern Vermont extended from May 16<sup>th</sup> to May 22<sup>nd</sup> and again from June 7<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup>. While in northern Vermont, the survey period ran from June 7<sup>th</sup> and ended July 20<sup>th</sup>.

### *VCE Surveys*

For 2022, VCE did not conduct its staff-driven surveys but resumed its role in coordinating volunteer surveys and collecting those data.

## **Methods**

As in previous years, surveys started 20–30 minutes after sunset and continued as long as the moon was visible and the weather was suitable. During the waning moon, surveys began after sunset, continued until dark, then were delayed for varying amounts of time until the moon rose above the horizon. Early morning surveys ended 15 minutes before sunrise. Surveys were not conducted if conditions were windy (wind speed > 8 mph), cloudy (> 50% cloud cover), or rainy. Some points were repeated due to declining weather conditions in the first survey or if a survey ended at a point with a calling Whip-poor-will. If a calling individual was detected just before dawn, moon set, or declining weather, the original point

would be re-surveyed and cluster sampling would begin.

Each point on a given route included a six-minute count, during which time two observers listened and recorded birds independently of one another. At each point, latitude, longitude, wind speed, cloud cover, temperature, and noise were noted. Passing cars were noted during the course of the survey. The survey consisted of listening for one-minute intervals for six minutes, with a compass bearing and qualitative proximity assessment (“very close,” “close,” “far,” or “very far”) if a Whip-poor-will was heard. Because Whip-poor-wills are often found in clusters, we used cluster sampling to potentially detect more birds in the vicinity of a detection. If a bird was detected at a point, a supplemental point survey would be completed approximately 0.5 miles away in as many directions as possible. Ideally, there would have been two to three supplemental points available for each original point where a Whip-poor-will was heard; however, this was not always possible due to a lack of roads, impending sunrise or moonset, inclement weather, or time constraints.

If a Whip-poor-will was detected, observers would take a bearing to estimate the location of the individual bird. At the end of each point count, observers would review the quantity and possible location of calling birds and make notes of directions based on the visible landscape at the point. Any detections were mapped along the compass bearing and noted to be approximately 1 km for a “very far” distance code, 0.5 km - 0.75 km for a “far” distance code, and 0.25 km or less for “close” or “very close” distance codes.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Volunteer Surveys*

In 2022, volunteers surveyed 12 established Whip-poor-will routes under the conditions and methodology described above. The routes surveyed were, Berkshire, Brandon, Concord, Fair Haven, Georgia Plains, Highgate, Pawlet, Rutland, Salisbury, Snake Mountain, South Tunbridge, and West Haven. Coordinates for each survey point, the number of Whip-poor-wills encountered and route maps are included in the tables and appendices below. Half of the routes (6) had Whip-poor-wills calling during the surveys with a total of 18 singing males across 13 of the 117 total points surveyed (Salisbury has 11 established survey points; 4 of the 10 West Haven points were inaccessible during the survey period). Routes with Whip-poor-wills in 2022 were Brandon, Concord, Fair Haven, Snake Mountain, South Tunbridge, and West Haven. This is consistent with surveys at these sites over the past five years where Whip-poor-will have typically been recorded at the sites with positive identifications in 2022

and not occurring at the remaining six sites.

These counts resulted in an average of 3.67 singing Whip-poor-wills per route with positive identification. The West Haven route consistently outperforms the other established routes in terms of singing Whip-poor-wills by a wide margin and 2022 was no exception. In 2022, six singing Whip-poor-wills were recorded over six points at this site, twice as many birds as the second-highest site for this year. The average number of singing birds in 2022 per ten-point route excluding West Haven was 2.4.

To compile these data, 12 volunteers contributed 53.5 hours of work and over 600 miles of travel to and from sites.

### *eBird Observations*

Thirty-seven Whip-poor-will observations, separate from those recorded by surveys, from across the state were submitted to eBird in the month of June. Search query into eBird data was limited to June in order to capture reported singing birds during peak breeding season. These observations in addition to those routes surveyed this year occurred over 19 Breeding Bird Survey blocks. From 2020-2022, Whip-poor-wills have been documented on 44 different Breeding Bird survey blocks in Vermont, similar to the 2017-2019 (42), and 2014-2016 (41) totals. Observations being limited to 19 blocks in 2022 is likely a result of reduced effort as opposed to signaling a decline in occupancy in the state. As opposed to previous years, 2022 had no VCE surveys, fewer volunteer routes, and a reduction in June eBird observations over the past two years (37 in 2022, 41 in 2021) compared to previous years (159 in 2020, 56 in 2019).

## **Future Directions**

Several strategies should be used moving forward to help improve Whip-poor-will surveys in Vermont.

### **- Increase contributions from eBird**

With 159 contributed observations to eBird during peak breeding season, 2020 stands out as an example of how eBird can be mobilized to collect data on a species not always effectively captured by other survey protocols. An intentional outreach effort aimed at getting birders out in the evenings of June throughout the state to listen for Whip-poor-wills and report their checklists to eBird can go a long way in improving what we know about the distribution of this species in the state, inform the state's population estimate and identify areas for future targeted surveys.

- Improve survey effort at Whip-poor-will “hotspots”

Most Whip-poor-will routes have few if any birds recorded, but some, such as West Haven and Benson have at times had Whip-poor-will abundances several times greater than the average of the other routes in the state. These areas, while reliably having Whip-poor-wills, also have great variability in the number of birds reported. Increasing survey effort at these sites by using trained surveyors over several visits during the breeding season can reduce this variability, improve our confidence in the abundance on site and help refine population estimates.

-Establish new routes

Using observations submitted to eBird, new routes should be established in areas where birds are known to exist but have not been surveyed. This will further improve our confidence in population estimates

-Expand volunteer group

The Whip-poor-will monitoring effort has benefited immensely from a dedicated group of volunteers that adopt routes in Whip-poor-will habitat. As some volunteers have retired routes and new individuals join the group, a concerted effort should be made to fill vacancies and have any newly established routes adopted to maximize the area covered by volunteers during the breeding season

-Consistent and well-planned use of Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) to document Whip-poor-wills

ARUs have been deployed in the past to increase sampling effort in areas where Whip-poor-wills were expected to be present. As this technology continues to advance, units become cheaper, and analysis quicker and easier, these units have the potential to greatly expand sampling efforts in the state and significantly improve our understanding of this species’ distribution as well as aid in monitoring any future management conducted to benefit Whip-poor-wills and their associated habitat.

## **Conclusion**

The 2022 survey effort reconfirmed Whip-poor-will occupancy along six established routes and failed to identify Whip-poor-wills along six additional routes where Whip-poor-will have not been documented in the recent past. This year also marked the development of a recovery strategy for this species and the 2022 surveys coupled with additional

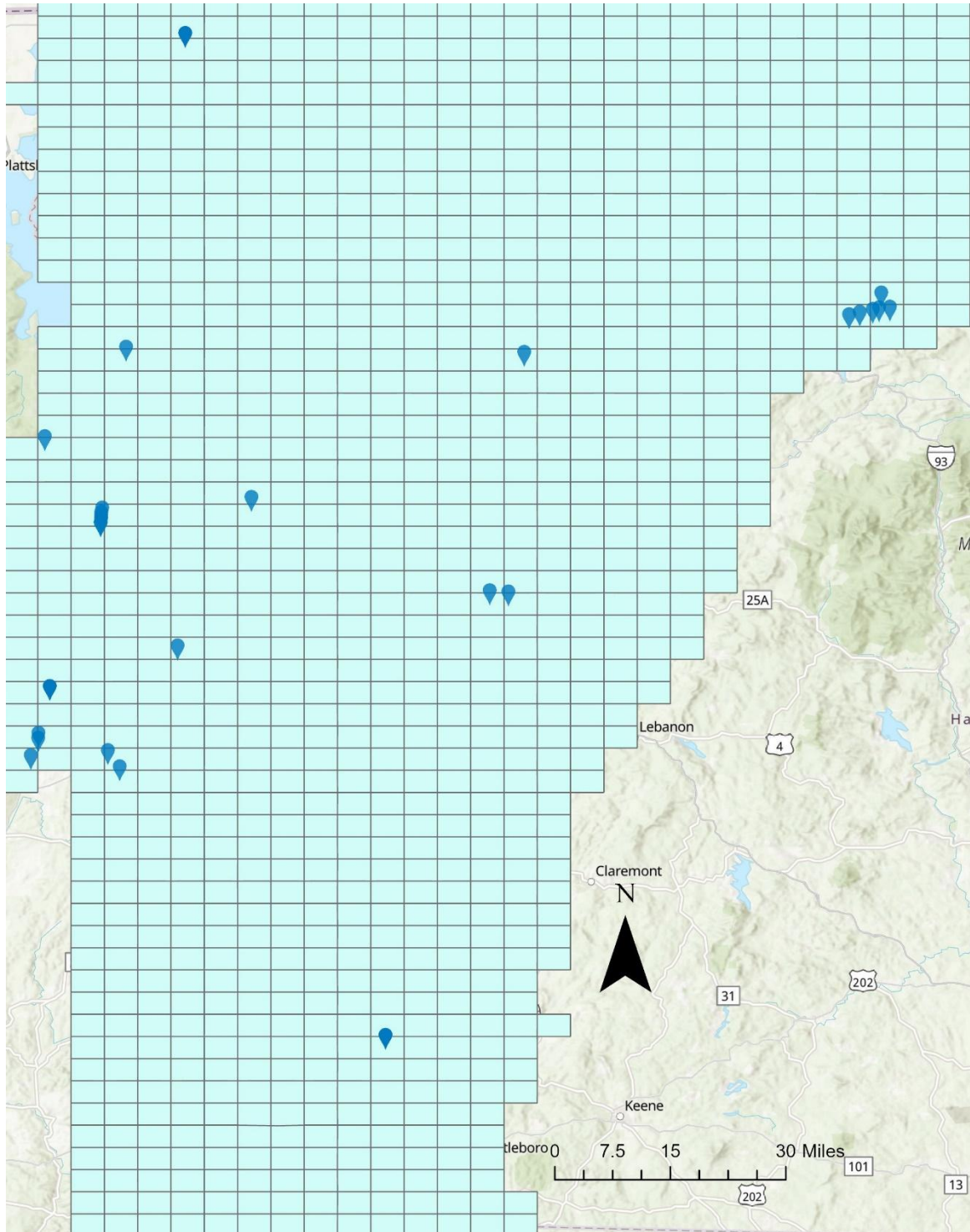
observations reported to eBird were additions to the previous 11 years of data following the Whip-poor-wills listing as threatened in 2011. These data help to inform the distribution of the species across the state as well as inform a statewide population estimate.



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**Figure 1: 2022 Documented Whip-poor-will occurrences (eBird and survey route data) and Breeding Bird Survey Blocks in Vermont**



**Table 1: 2022 Whip-poor-will survey point locations and number of observations**

Point ID	Lat	Long	# EWPW
Berk_1	45.0067	-72.7736	0
Berk_2	44.9925	-72.7768	0
Berk_3	44.9781	-72.7754	0
Berk_4	44.9638	-72.7733	0
Berk_5	44.9496	-72.7714	0
Berk_6	44.936	-72.7711	0
Berk_7	44.934	-72.779	0
Berk_8	44.923	-72.7967	0
Berk_9	44.9149	-72.7913	0
Berk_10	44.918	-72.7713	0
Bran_1	43.79629	-73.0952	0
Bran_2	43.78946	-73.1122	1
Bran_3	43.7831	-73.1294	0
Bran_4	43.78428	-73.1463	0
Bran_5	43.78581	-73.1607	0
Bran_6	43.78304	-73.1797	0
Bran_7	43.79208	-73.192	0
Bran_8	43.79659	-73.2056	0
Bran_9	43.79008	-73.2182	0
Bran_10	43.77613	-73.2142	0
Conc_1	44.42691	-71.888	0
Conc_2	44.41528	-71.89	0
Conc_3	44.40463	-71.8785	0

Conc_4	44.40145	- 71.8616	0
Conc_5	44.41151	- 71.8518	1
Conc_6	44.41634	- 71.8318	1
Conc_7	44.42007	- 71.8137	0
Conc_8	44.4246	- 71.7955	1
Conc_9	44.42583	- 71.7752	2
Conc_10	44.42573	- 71.7555	0
FaHa_1	43.59285	-73.243	1
FaHa_2	43.5786	- 73.2427	0
FaHa_3	43.56586	- 73.2368	0
FaHa_4	43.56242	- 73.2209	1
FaHa_5	43.55438	- 73.2118	0
FaHa_6	43.54073	- 73.2132	0
FaHa_7	43.52843	- 73.2043	0
FaHa_8	43.52642	- 73.1897	0
FaHa_9	43.51618	- 73.1778	0
FaHa_10	43.5067	- 73.1712	0
Georg_1	44.72571	- 73.1306	0
Georg_2	44.72308	- 73.1507	0
Georg_3	44.71781	- 73.1651	0
Georg_4	44.70472	- 73.1597	0
Georg_5	44.69037	-73.162	0
Georg_6	44.67625	- 73.1625	0
Georg_7	44.6644	- 73.1668	0

Georg_8	44.6623	- 73.1829	0
Georg_9	44.65402	- 73.1943	0
Georg_10	44.63917	- 73.1958	0
High_1	44.9357	-73.094	0
High_2	44.92527	- 73.0992	0
High_3	44.93101	- 73.1107	0
High_4	44.94524	- 73.1134	0
High_5	44.95839	- 73.1038	0
High_6	44.95524	- 73.0924	0
High_7	44.9494	- 73.0787	0
High_8	44.95839	- 73.0623	0
High_9	44.96756	- 73.0495	0
High_10	44.97078	- 73.0303	0
Pawl_1	43.41491	- 73.1318	0
Pawl_2	43.41079	- 73.1492	0
Pawl_3	43.39837	- 73.1497	0
Pawl_4	43.39066	- 73.1384	0
Pawl_5	43.37927	- 73.1413	0
Pawl_6	43.36606	- 73.1459	0
Pawl_7	43.35331	- 73.1528	0
Pawl_8	43.34286	-73.16	0
Pawl_9	43.33071	- 73.1513	0
Pawl_10	43.31714	- 73.1496	0
Rutl_1	43.58615	- 72.9516	0

Rutl_2	43.57156	- 72.9514	0
Rutl_3	43.5577	- 72.9453	0
Rutl_4	43.54392	- 72.9391	0
Rutl_5	43.53026	- 72.9327	0
Rutl_6	43.52403	- 72.9425	0
Rutl_7	43.51793	-72.96	0
Rutl_8	43.52312	-72.973	0
Rutl_9	43.53197	- 72.9824	0
Rutl_10	43.54576	- 72.9834	0
Sali_1	43.91204	- 73.1206	0
Sali_2	43.90909	- 73.1409	0
Sali_3	43.89887	- 73.1501	0
Sali_4	43.88498	- 73.1459	0
Sali_5	43.87506	- 73.1595	0
Sali_6	43.86589	- 73.1476	0
Sali_7	43.85469	- 73.1529	0
Sali_8	43.85093	- 73.1699	0
Sali_9	43.83643	- 73.1718	0
Sali_10	43.82266	- 73.1799	0
Sali_11	43.81221	- 73.1708	0
SnMo_1	43.99398	- 73.2526	0
SnMo_2	44.00664	- 73.2543	0
SnMo_3	44.02059	- 73.2565	1
SnMo_4	44.03522	- 73.2556	1

SnMo_5	44.04844	- 73.2536	1
SnMo_6	44.0623	- 73.2591	0
SnMo_7	44.07578	- 73.2546	0
SnMo_8	44.08655	-73.245	0
SnMo_9	44.09882	- 73.2466	0
SnMo_10	44.11247	- 73.2413	0
STun_1	43.81391	- 72.5029	0
STun_2	43.81796	- 72.4858	0
STun_3	43.83019	- 72.4754	0
STun_4	43.84281	- 72.4669	0
STun_5	43.85678	- 72.4638	0
STun_6	43.86532	- 72.4789	0
STun_7	43.86472	- 72.4968	0
STun_8	43.87639	- 72.5036	0
STun_9	43.88223	- 72.5169	0
STun_10	43.89304	- 72.5263	1
WeHa_1	43.65	- 73.3926	0
WeHa_2	43.63704	- 73.3905	0
WeHa_3	43.62756	- 73.3763	0
WeHa_4	43.61605	- 73.3739	3
WeHa_5	43.60431	- 73.3737	N/A
WeHa_6	43.59401	- 73.3826	NA
WeHa_7	43.58354	- 73.3876	3
WeHa_8	43.57444	- 73.3912	N/A

WeHa_9	43.57286	- 73.4038	N/A
WeHa_10	43.58232	- 73.4197	0



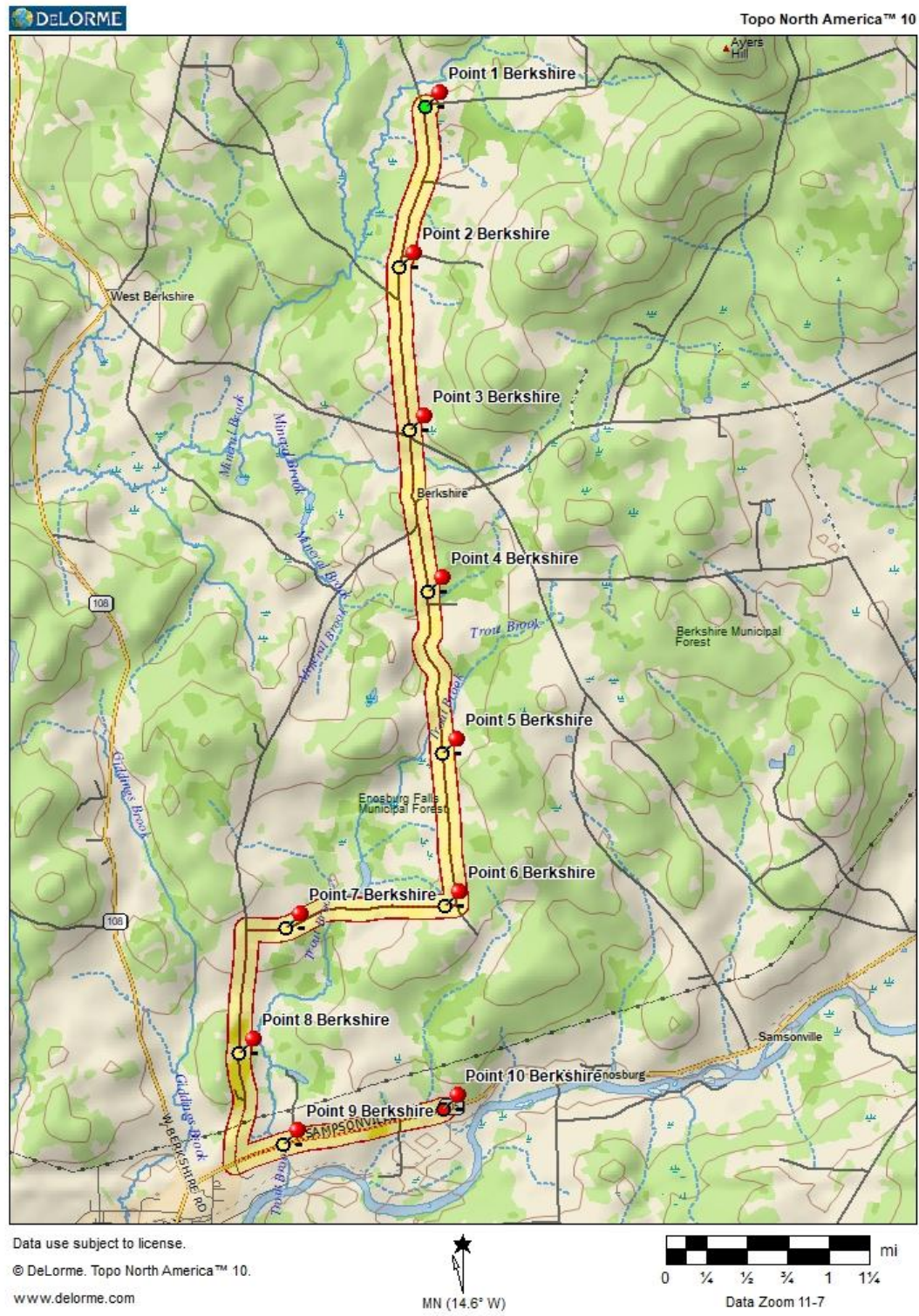
**Table 2: June 2022 eBird Whip-poor-will observation locations**

Location	Lat	Long	Date
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/1/22
Snake Mtn. Rd. Weybridge	44.02973	- 73.2556	6/2/22
1603 Lime Kiln Rd, Charlotte	44.35059	- 73.2089	6/3/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/3/22
Snake Mtn. Rd. Weybridge	44.02973	- 73.2556	6/5/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/5/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/6/22
County Rd, South Lincoln	44.0684	- 72.9736	6/8/22
Leonard Hill Road, Concord Corners	44.42158	- 71.8073	6/8/22
Rt. 2 at Beach Drive	44.45239	- 71.7914	6/8/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/9/22
Snake Mtn. Rd. Weybridge	44.02973	- 73.2556	6/10/22
Tunbridge	43.89087	- 72.4912	6/10/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/10/22
Anderson House	43.05789	- 72.7219	6/10/22
Button Bay State Park	44.18245	- 73.3614	6/11/22
Franklin Co. State Airport IBA	44.9398	- 73.0978	6/11/22
Franklin Co. State Airport IBA	44.9398	- 73.0978	6/11/22
Franklin Co. State Airport IBA	44.9398	- 73.0978	6/11/22
Franklin Co. State Airport IBA	44.9398	- 73.0978	6/11/22
Anderson House	43.05789	- 72.7219	6/11/22
Anderson House	43.05789	- 72.7219	6/12/22

Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/13/22
Frizzle Mountain	44.34087	- 72.4616	6/13/22
Snake Mtn. Rd. Weybridge	44.02973	- 73.2556	6/14/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/14/22
Cogman Road / Ghost Hollow Road	43.6254	- 73.3733	6/15/22
Anderson House	43.05789	- 72.7219	6/17/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/18/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/20/22
Anderson House	43.05789	- 72.7219	6/23/22
Snake Mtn. Rd. Weybridge	44.02973	- 73.2556	6/26/22
Owl and Whip-poor-will listening location north of barn.	44.04051	- 73.2553	6/26/22
Snake Mtn. Road intersection with Forrest Road.	44.02133	- 73.2565	6/26/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/26/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/28/22
Lake Road, Benson (Home)	43.71318	- 73.3521	6/29/22

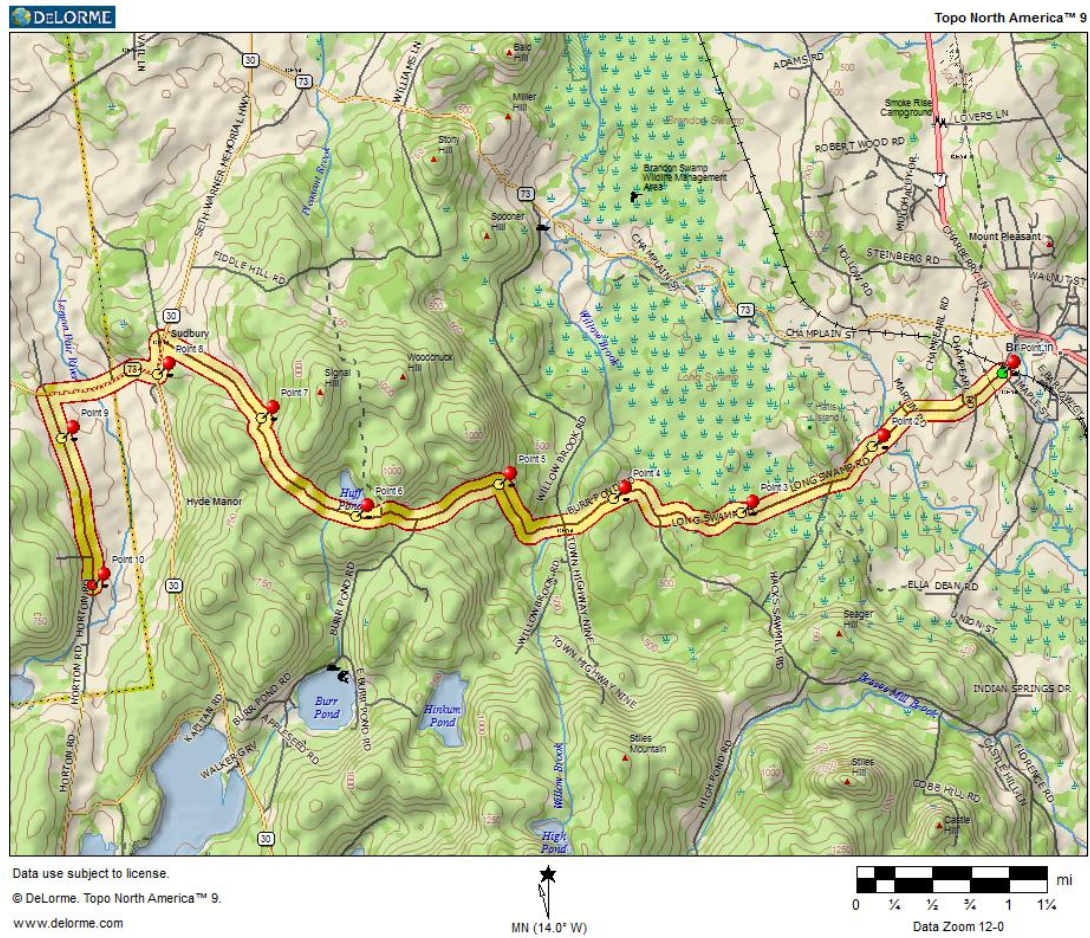
## Appendix: Survey Route Location Maps

Berkshire:

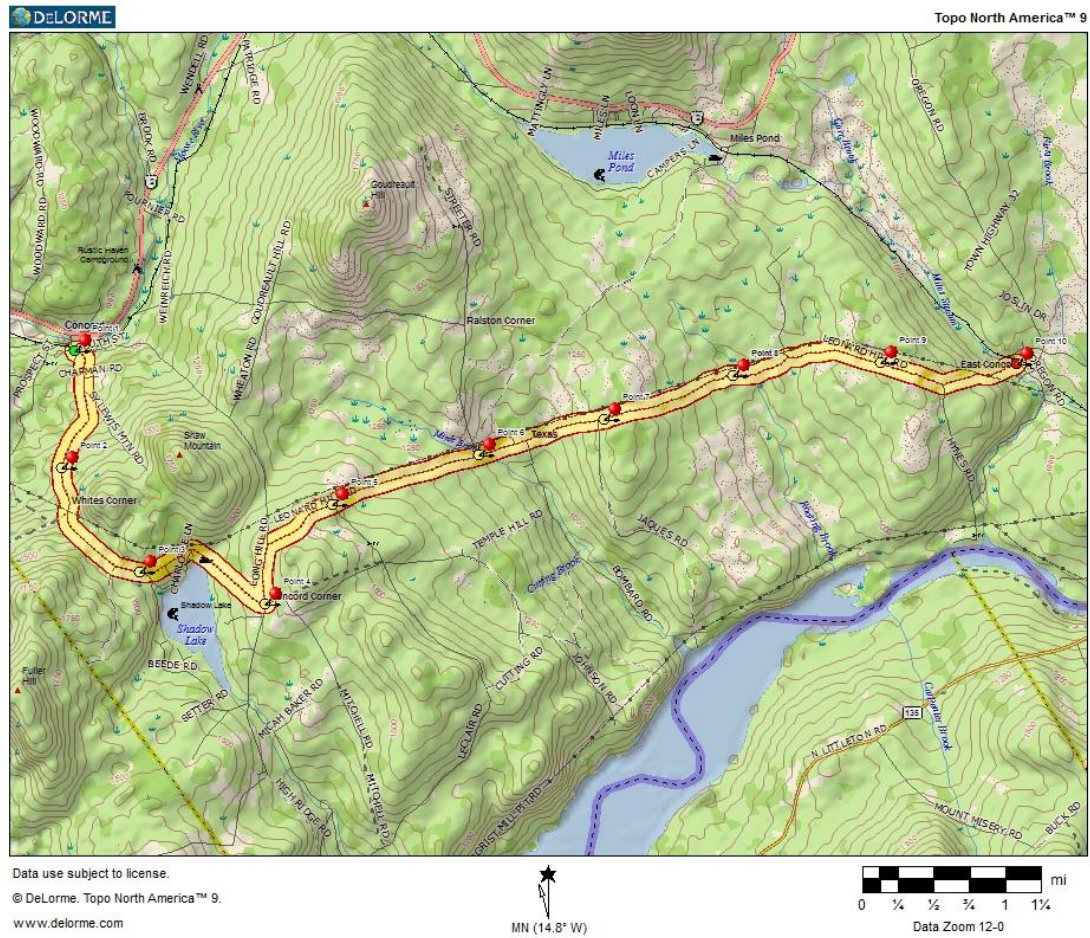




Brandon:

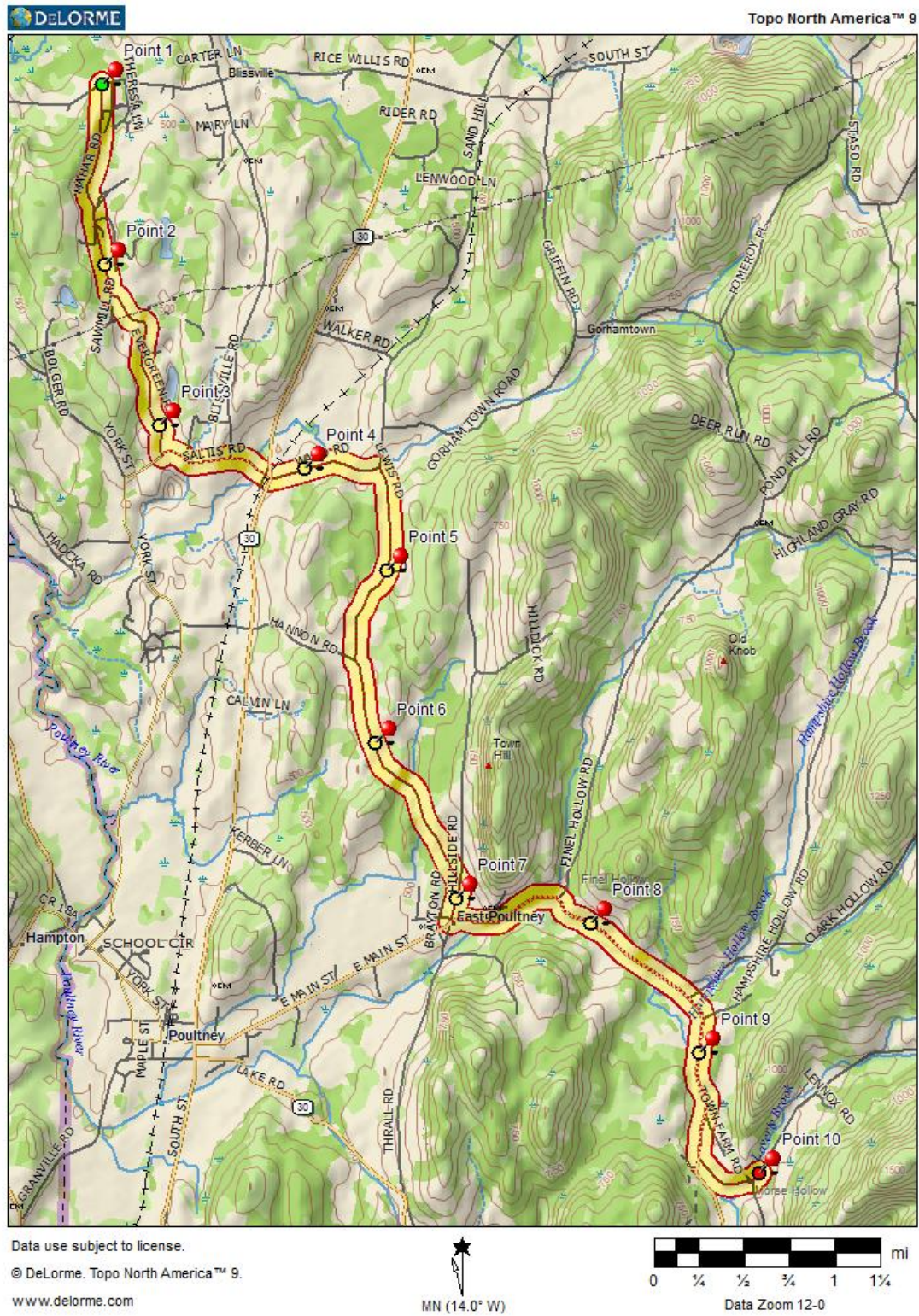


Concord:



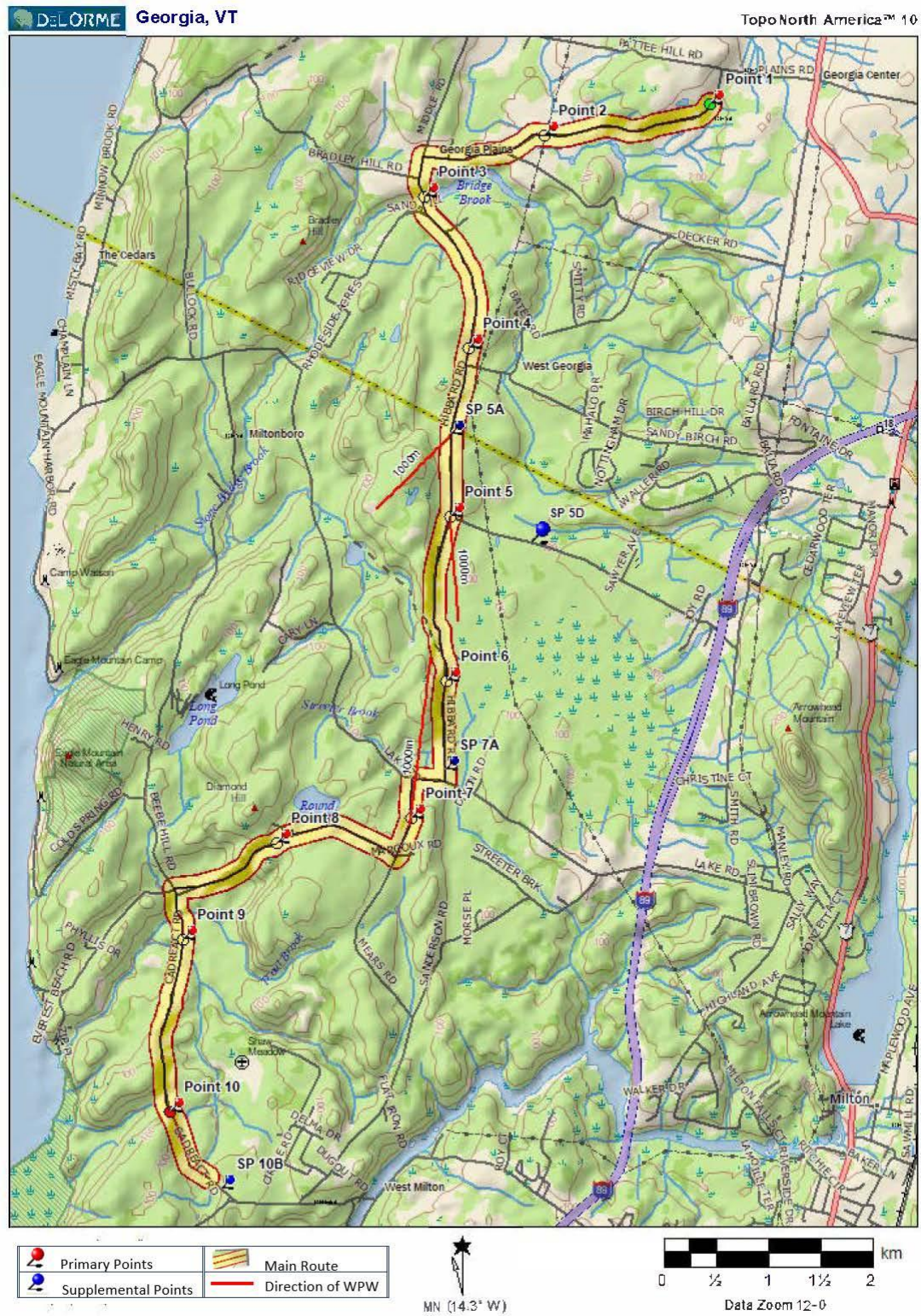


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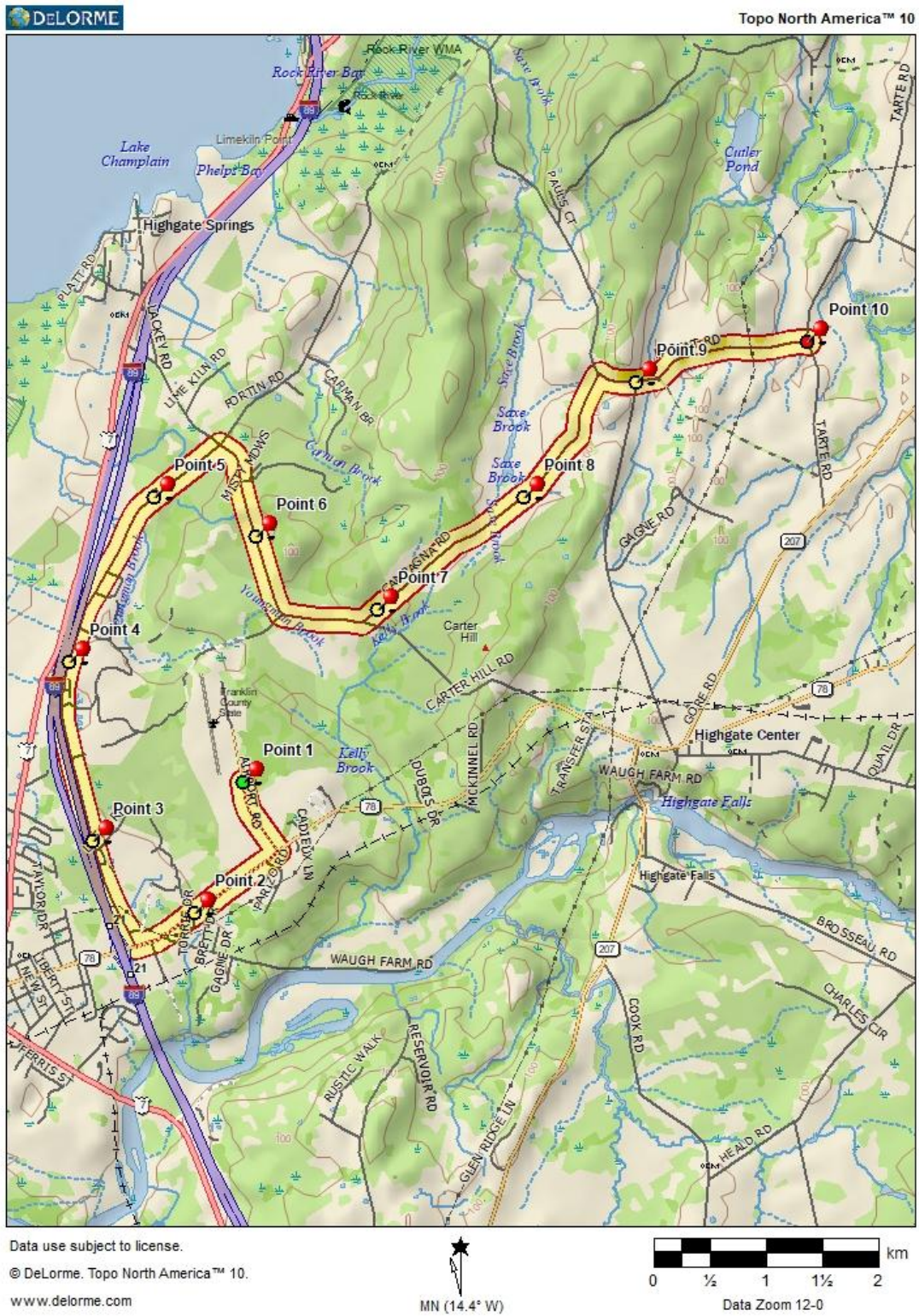


Georgia:



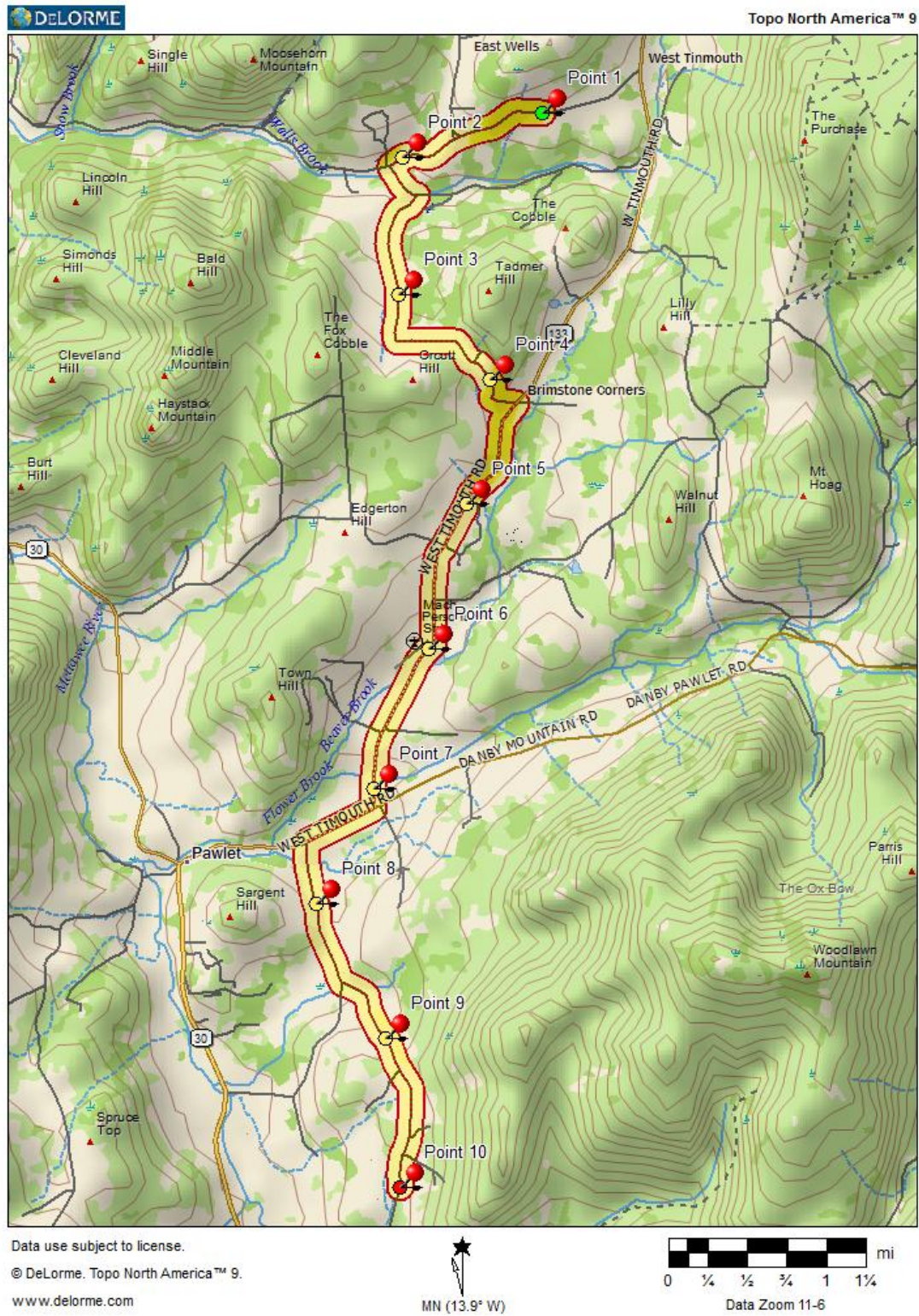


Highgate:



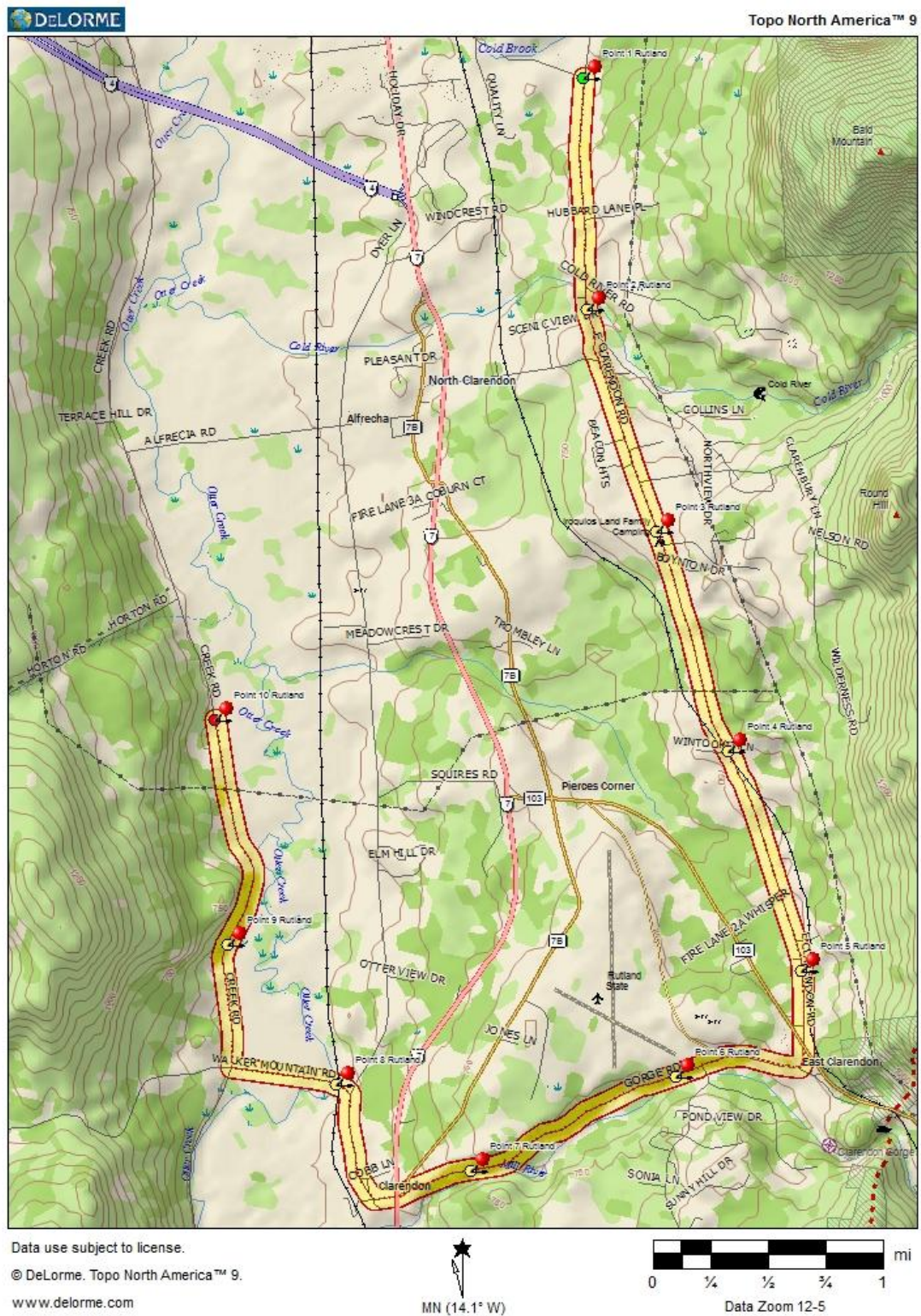


Pawlet:





Rutland:



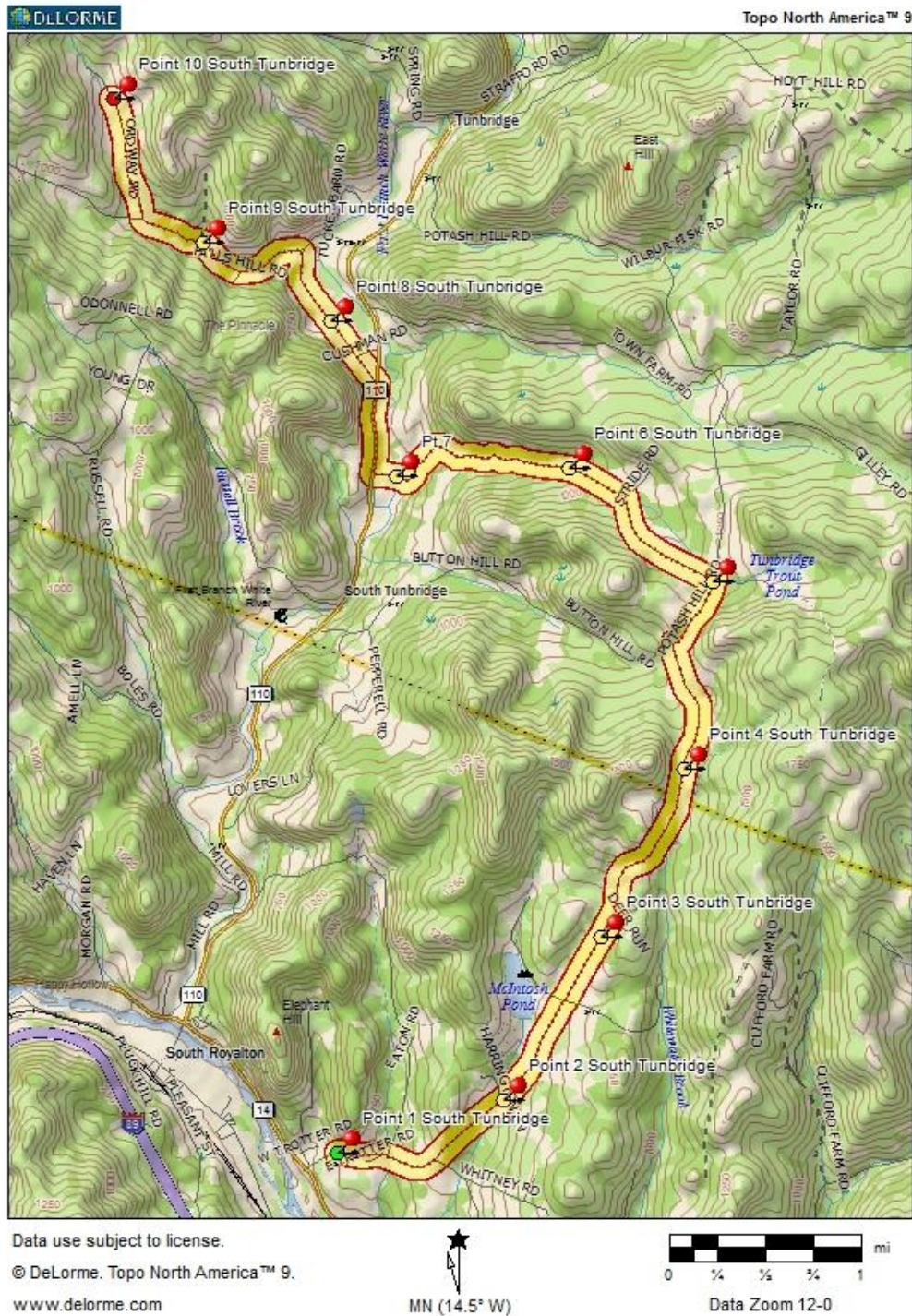


Salisbury:





# South Tunbridge:





West Haven:

