

Goodsell Ridge Fossil Preserve

Isle la Motte, Vermont



Goodsell Ridge Fossil Preserve protects the most complete fossil record of the world's oldest reef, an irreplaceable and world-renowned scientific resource. The last of the great glacial ice sheets receded from Vermont 12,000 years ago and dinosaurs roamed the earth 150 million years ago. Go even farther back in history to the Ordovician Period 480 million years ago and you will discover that Isle La Motte was part of a reef in a tropical marine environment in a shallow sea! Dry land had not yet been colonized. In this ancient Iapetus Ocean, organisms with hard calcium exoskeletons, including the first known species of coral, started to build the world's oldest reef. In addition, giant sponge-shaped creatures, stromatoporoids, became an integral part of this complex reef community. Some of the other inhabitants of this incredibly diverse ecosystem include the trilobite, the ancestor of the modern horseshoe crab and the cephalopod, an earlier form of the squid with a shell in the shape of a windsock, which roamed in and around the reef.

Conservation History: The Lake Champlain Land Trust, with the help of our partners at the Isle La Motte Preservation Trust, permanently conserved Goodsell Ridge Fossil Preserve in 2005. We had previously worked with our partners to save the Fisk Quarry Fossil Site, also on Isle La Motte, in 1999.

Trails are open dawn to dusk. Walking, hiking, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing are encouraged, however, due to the delicate nature of Goodsell Ridge, no motorized vehicles or bicycles are allowed. Removing any rocks or fossils from the preserve is strictly prohibited.

Directions and Park Information

From Burlington, take Interstate 89 to Exit 17. Take Route 2W through the islands. Just after crossing the bridge between North Hero and Alburgh, look for Route 129. Continue on 129 over the bridge to Isle La Motte. Route 129 becomes the Main Road-- Follow this road south until you see Quarry Road and the Historical Society on your left. Take Quarry Road for about 1/4 of a mile. You will see a large brown and white sign for Goodsell Ridge Preserve on your left. Pull into the driveway and park on the grass or along the driveway.



Goodsell Ridge is one of dozens of properties saved by the Lake Champlain Land Trust. Since 1978, the Lake Champlain Land Trust has preserved thousands of acres and miles of shoreline on Lake Champlain. To help us save more irreplaceable natural areas, please donate through our website www.LCLT.org!