

# 2021 Vermont Habitat Stamp Annual Report



Victory Wildlife Management Area

Tom Rogers

The work of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) is broad and focuses on the conservation of all wild living things in Vermont, touching everything from turtles to trout, moose to maples, and all of the natural communities and habitats they require to thrive. Our ability to accomplish this work and to serve all Vermonters, now and into the future, requires a focus on improving and maintaining healthy habitats. Donations made to the Vermont Habitat Stamp help support efforts by VFWD to conserve, restore and enhance habitats for fish, wildlife and a healthy environment.

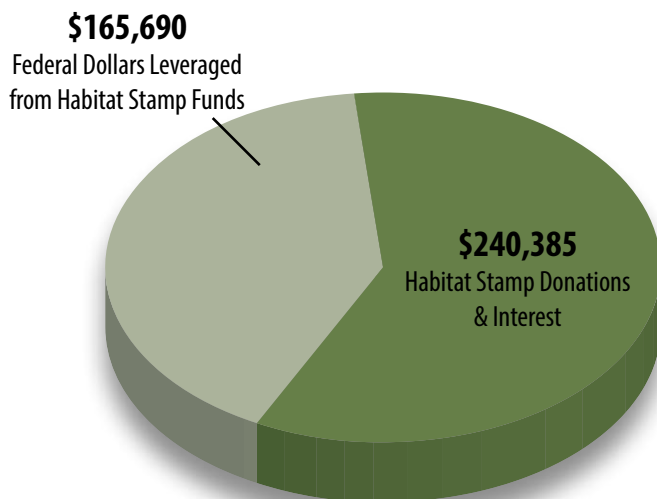
Habitat conservation and enhancement accomplishments have been many and include, among others, improved shrubland bird habitat, restored stream passages for trout and other aquatic organisms, and expanded young forest and meadow habitat on numerous Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). This past year has seen the highest amount of habitat stamp contributions since the inception of the program, with an 18 percent increase in donations over 2020. The VFWD is incredibly grateful for your continued support of the Vermont Habitat Stamp and to the future of Vermont's wildlife.

## By The Numbers\*

- **15,829** donations totaled **\$239,163**, earned **\$1,222** in interest.
- **\$183,378** in Habitat Stamp funds were spent and were matched by an additional **\$165,690** in federal funds.

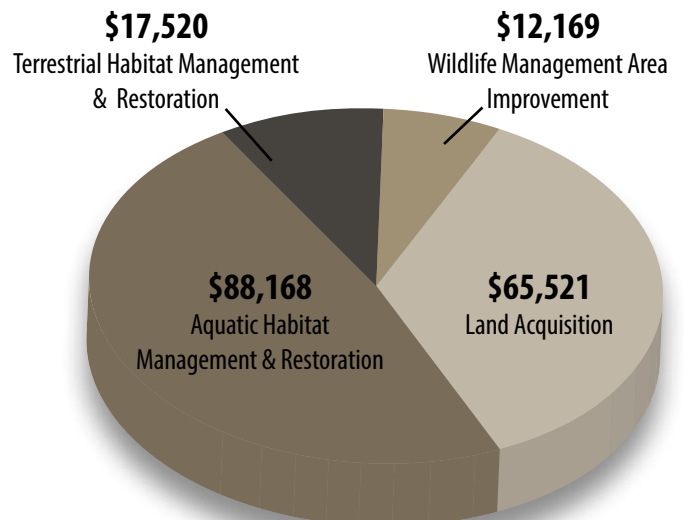
## Total Conservation Funding: \$406,075

### Where the Money Came From



## Total Habitat Stamp Funds Spent: \$183,378\*\*

### How the Money Was Spent



\* Dates are 12/01/20 through 11/30/21

\*\* These figures only include Habitat Stamp fund expenditures, not federal funds.

## Birds and Beyond

VFWD continued to work with private landowners and conservation partners to improve habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. This past year, habitat biologist Andrea Shortsleeve continued this work with a combination of private landowner site visits, habitat restoration projects, and virtual workshops.

### ❖ Working with Private Landowners

Andrea assisted landowners on **28 different properties in 27 towns** around the state of Vermont, offering expertise and guidance on the management and conservation of wildlife on private lands. This technical support provided one-on-one guidance to Vermont landowners to improve their properties for pollinators, songbirds, amphibians, bats, deer, turkeys, and other wildlife.

### ❖ Partnering in Conservation

In 2021, to provide Vermont landowners with the best possible technical assistance available, VFWD wildlife biologists worked with 16 different partner organizations, including Audubon Vermont, USDA-NRCS, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Coverts, and the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

These partnerships have allowed VFWD to complete a variety of on-the-ground projects in towns like Charlotte and Hinesburg to improve shrubland and streambank habitat by removing large amounts of invasive plants, planting native shrubs and trees, and collecting native seeds for future songbird and pollinator habitat enhancement.

Andrea also served on the steering committee for two fledgling conservation initiatives: Land Ethic Vermont and Women Owning Woodlands. Both groups were formed to provide Vermonters with information,



Tom Rogers

VFWD work with private landowners and conservation partners to improve habitat for wildlife.

resources, and a peer network surrounding habitat improvement on private lands.

### ❖ Delivering Interactive Workshops, Trainings and Other Resources

Wildlife biologists with the VFWD along with conservation partners created and participated in **17 online workshop training events and virtual presentations**. Topics included strategic wood addition to improve stream habitat, timber harvesting for habitat improvements, increasing hunter access on private lands, how to use BioFinder (a conservation planning and mapping tool), how to improve habitat in landowner's backyards, and how to strengthen our society's connections to the land we depend upon.

Using Habitat Stamp funds, a collection of informational signs was installed at the Hinesburg Town Forest to form a self-guided walking tour for visitors. These signs describe the habitat improvement work being done at the forest and how wildlife will benefit from the work.



Department habitat biologist Andrea Shortsleeve leading a workshop on Hinesburg Town Forest.

Ethan Tapper

## Cold Water Connections

Aquatic habitat biologist Will Eldridge continued efforts to restore habitat for fish and other wildlife along streams and rivers throughout Vermont in 2021.

### ❖ Eliminating Obstacles and Improving Aquatic Organism Passage

In 2021, Will worked on reconnecting streams and rivers by removing dams and upgrading culverts to increase the resilience of wild fish populations and other aquatic organisms by coordinating the VFWD regulatory review of road stream crossings; acting as a VFWD liaison with VTrans and DEC on aquatic organism passage issues; working with **11 aquatic connectivity groups** around the state to enhance passage at road stream crossings and dams; teaching road infrastructure trainings to state and municipal staff and consultants; participating on the Vermont Dam Task Force; and providing technical assistance to regional efforts focused on enhancing aquatic organism passage at road stream crossings.

In 2021, Habitat Stamp donations supported the design of new culverts to improve aquatic organism passage at **two locations in the upper White River watershed and two locations in the upper Lamoille River watershed**; supported an effort to identify the next set of culvert enhancement projects in the upper White River watershed; and supported the Connecticut River Conservancy's efforts to implement four dam removals in the Lower Connecticut River watershed.

Habitat Stamp donations made in 2021 will be used to remove the Pelletier Dam on the North Bretton Brook in Castleton. Once removed, **37 miles of habitat** will be available to trout in this tributary of the Castleton River.

### ❖ Improving Streambank Parcels and Restoring Floodplains

VFWD fisheries biologists worked with partners to restore natural forest communities in riparian areas along Vermont's streams and rivers by protecting and restoring trees to shade and feed fish, filter pollutants, and stabilize streambanks. To do this, VFWD and partners met with landowners to discuss conservation easements to permanently protect aquatic habitat; designed and implemented an experimental tree planting on the Otter Creek WMA to test forest restoration in the presence of beavers; and assessed recent tree plantings on ANR lands.

Will is also an advisor to the "Streamwise" initiative, a collaborative effort to improve riparian areas on private lands, where he helped develop outreach campaigns for landowners around protecting and restoring trees along their streams and rivers.



Karina Dailey

Habitat Stamp donations made in 2021 will be used to remove the Pelletier Dam on the North Bretton Brook in Castleton, opening up 37 miles of habitat for trout.

### VFWD continued floodplain restoration on a 35-acre department-owned streambank parcel

along the White River in Bethel, including removing portions of a man-made berm, restoring the site's natural hydrologic condition, planting trees, and removing invasive species.

### ❖ Stewardship and Outreach

In the spring of 2021, Will worked with the White River Partnership to plant trees on a VFWD Streambank Management Area on the Second Branch of the White River in Tunbridge.

Will works with district biologists to steward VFWD Streambank Management Areas and is working with staff to increase public awareness of these parcels. Will also represents the Fisheries Division on intra- and inter-departmental teams and workgroups overseeing the Agency of Natural Resources' lands and ensures that aquatic communities and public access are considered in land use acquisition, planning and restoration.



VFWD fisheries biologists worked with partners to restore and protect trees along Vermont's streams and rivers.

## Room to Roam

The Habitat Stamp is essential for the stewardship of the department's 100 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). Each dollar donated leverages an additional three dollars from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for WMA habitat management.

During this past year, Habitat Stamp funds were used at WMAs throughout the state to control invasive plants that negatively impact native plants and bird populations, maintain forested openings where wildlife often feed, mowing grasslands to benefit bird habitat, and restoring riparian habitat by planting native trees and shrubs.

### ❖ Working with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Crews from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps worked with VFWD biologists to improve wildlife habitat at Birdseye WMA and access improvements at Middlesex Notch WMA. Results from this work at Birdseye WMA are helping to improve and expand shrubland habitat for a myriad of birds and other wildlife. Access improvements at Middlesex Notch WMA are best reflected by the quote below from a local hunter.

---

*"I wanted to let you know what a great job the youth conservation group did on the roads. I was able to get up into an area that I had stopped hunting 10 years ago due to access.... I hope you can get them for one more week next year so they can complete what they were working on"*

— A neighboring landowner to the Middlesex WMA, via email

---

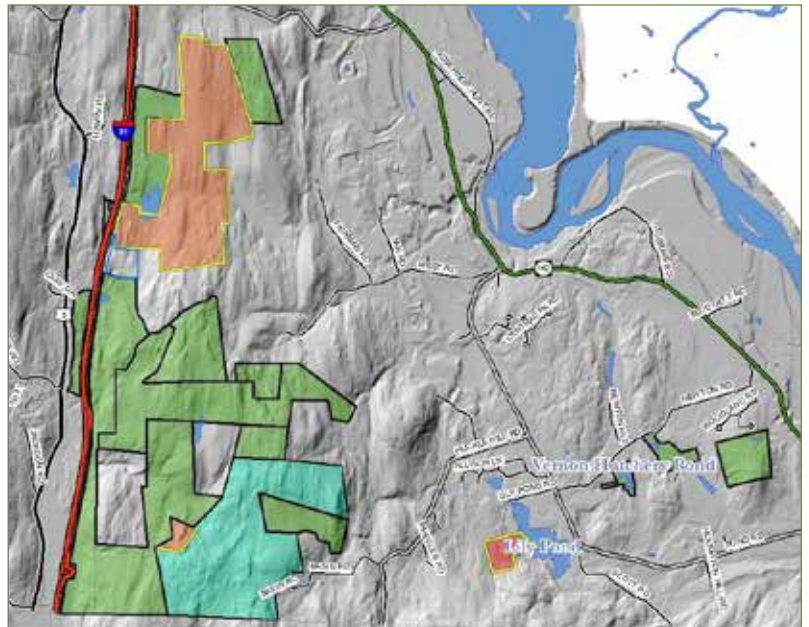
### ❖ District WMA Accomplishments

The Essex District used 2021 Habitat Stamp funding to brushhog and mow shrubland and old field habitat for pollinators, songbirds, game birds, and mammals that thrive in young forest conditions at Maquam WMA in Swanton.

The Rutland District used funding to prepare a popular birding area on Birdseye WMA for a prescribed fire to regenerate healthy habitat conditions. Preparations include establishing **2,788 feet of fire line** and cutting in **10 acres** for the burn.

Habitat Stamp funds were used on the Little Ascutney and Missing Link WMAs to mow and maintain **19 acres of wildlife openings**, treat **23 acres of invasive plants**, and release apple trees.

The St. Johnsbury District used Habitat Stamp funds to brushhog **69 acres** at **28 clearings** within **6 WMAs**, maintaining **80 wild apple trees** and other soft mast shrubs that provide a valuable variety of food for wildlife.



Roaring Brook WMA 2021 acquisition funded in-part by the Habitat Stamp.

■ Land added to the WMA ■ Existing WMA Property ■ Vernon Town Forest

### ❖ Roaring Brook WMA

During 2021, Habitat Stamp funds were used to match federal Recovery Land Acquisition Grant funds to add 446 acres to Roaring Brook WMA in Guilford and Vernon. The land conserved with Habitat Stamp funds supports the state and federally endangered northern long-eared bat and northeastern bulrush. It also supports a rare black gum swamp, deer winter habitat, vernal pools, and concentrations of oak and beech that provide valuable food for many wildlife species. In addition, the acquisition improves public access to this unique WMA.

## The View Ahead

The year 2022 presents many habitat conservation opportunities including the protection of an island on Lake Champlain and wetlands along the Clyde River. We look forward to another productive year of habitat conservation thanks to support from everyone who purchases a habitat stamp.

Thank you for your donations in 2021. Your support conserves land, protects clean water and restores healthy wildlife habitat. Please help to continue Vermont's conservation legacy by donating to the 2022 Habitat Stamp: [vthabitatstamp.com](http://vthabitatstamp.com).

Thank you!



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department  
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2  
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208  
802-828.1000  
[www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

