



Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

Happy First Day of Summer!

Today marks the official start to Summer! Before we bust out the burgers and hotdogs, we want to take a few minutes to update you on summer events and recent Vermont Fish and Wildlife news. We truly appreciate your time, support, and enthusiasm in training safe, responsible, and ethical hunters, thank you!

Where Are We?

Hunter Education, along with the rest of VT Fish and Wildlife and ANR, have settled nicely in Montpelier, Vermont. If you are in the area, you are welcome to stop by! You can find us in the Records/Dewey Building at the National Life Complex, where you can also buy your license. The physical and mailing address is:



Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Hunter Education
1 National Life Drive, Records/Dewey Building
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

Hunter Education is hosting a New Instructor Training weekend at Buck Lake **Friday July 26, and Saturday July 27**. Instructors will receive certification in both Bow hunter and Basic Firearm Education. If you are a certified Hunter Ed instructor, but would also like to be a Certified Bow instructor, please contact John Pellegrini, (802)272-2909, for more information. The Bow portion of the course will be taught Saturday morning.

Event Manager Update:

Event manager, a simple, online tool that will be the foundation for registering and organizing Hunter Safety courses, will be live in just a few weeks. Please keep a lookout for the summer mailing that will include a brief summary of how you will use Event Manager, and a link to the complete Event Manager start up guide. If you have questions or concerns regarding the transition, please do not hesitate to call. You can reach Mary Childs at (802) 241-3720 or mary.childs@state.vt.us.

VT Fish and Wildlife in the News

There has been a lot of Fish and Wildlife activity in the news over the past month. The rest of this newsletter highlights several articles. Enjoy!

VT ANR
Weekly Shout Out

Conservation and Historic Preservation Go Hand in Hand at New Turner Hill WMA

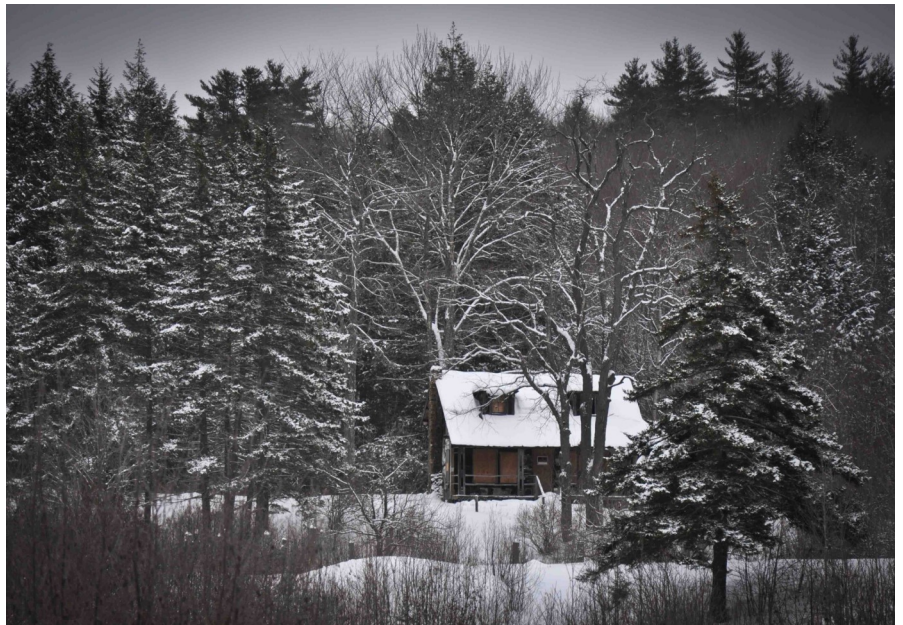
The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO), and the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development are celebrating the opening of the Turner Hill Wildlife Management Area, located in Athens and Grafton, on Sunday, June 23, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The celebration will include brief presentations and tours exploring the natural and cultural history of the property. Light refreshments will be served.

Turner Hill WMA conserves upland forests and wetlands, including a federally endangered Northeastern bulrush that requires beaver-flooded wetlands such as those found on the property. The bulrush was first brought to the attention of biologists from the Fish & Wildlife Department by local citizens of Athens. The WMA was created through collaboration with TNC, which purchased one of the tracts, and with VELCO, which donated the land for roughly half of the 600-acre property.

“We understand that our efforts to provide reliable electricity in Vermont impact the environment,” said Brian Connaughton, director of capital projects for VELCO. “Because of this, we feel a responsibility to ensure that special places such as Turner Hill are protected for current and future generations.”

Patrick Berry, Commissioner of the Fish & Wildlife Department, was quick to thank the many partners on the project. He also pointed out the value of the land to hunters, hikers, and birdwatchers. “In addition to the natural and cultural values found on the properties, the Athens Dome Wetland Complex provides outstanding recreation opportunities in a corner of Vermont that does not have a lot of public lands,” said Berry. “This property will serve as an excellent addition to our statewide system of wildlife management areas.”

Emily Boedecker, Acting State Director for the Vermont Chapter of TNC, reiterated the ecological importance of these wetlands. “The high plateau of Athens Dome is one of only a few places where beavers can have free rein, without their activities being at odds with human development,” said Boedecker.



The celebration will be held at the end of Turner Hill Road, which is located 1.4 miles south of Grafton on the Grafton/Townshend Road.

Directions:

From the South: Head north out of Townshend on the Grafton Road in the center of the village and continue for 3 miles. Turn left and continue on the Grafton/ Townshend Road for 5.2 miles. Turner Hill Road is on the right – follow to the end of road.

Gov. Shumlin Signs Sportsmen’s Act of 2013

Barre, Vt June 14th– Joined today by sportsmen and women at the Barre Fish and Game Club, Gov. Peter Shumlin signed the Sportsmen’s Act of 2013, legislation spearheaded by the Fish & Wildlife Department in coordination with members of the Legislature and many hunting, fishing, trapping, and other traditional interest groups.

“This law represents the important working relationship between the Fish & Wildlife Department, the administration, legislators, and key fish and wildlife partners,” said Gov. Shumlin. “It will protect our fish and wildlife resources, provide additional recreational opportunities, and support improved administration for the department and the Fish and Wildlife Board.”

“I want to thank all of you who worked together to shepherd this comprehensive bill through the legislative process,” said the Governor. “The Sportsmen’s Act of 2013 will benefit Vermont’s fish and wildlife resources, as well as those of us who enjoy them. It seems fitting that we are adopting it shortly after Vermont was recognized in a federal survey as the state with the second highest participation rate in fish and wildlife---based recreation, second only to Alaska.”

The bill includes the following provisions:

Prohibits the importation and possession of feral hogs in Vermont. Many state fish and wildlife agencies are fully engaged in attempts to reduce or eradicate wild hog populations, which can carry various diseases and are extremely destructive to wildlife habitat.

Requires that any person taking a nuisance bear must first attempt reasonable non-lethal measures to protect his or her own property. Under current law, there is no requirement for property owners to create an aversion for bears who may threaten property. In the law, there is an exemption for exigent circumstances or damage to corn fields.

Prohibits the intentional feeding of black bears. Previously, there was no prohibition for feeding black bears in Vermont, which has increased the number of nuisance bear problems in the state.

Repeals reimbursement for deer and bear damage. The Fish & Wildlife Department is no longer required to reimburse a claimant for damage to crops, fruit trees or crop bearing plants by deer; and for damage to livestock and bees by black bear unless the claimant derives at least 50 percent of their income from farming.

Allows landowners the opportunity to legally post their property so that hunting, fishing and trapping would be allowed only by permission. Previously, landowners wanting to control access for these activities were forced to post against trespass by anyone, which led to an increase in the amount of inaccessible land in Vermont.

Defines posting for landowners wishing to receive a landowner antlerless deer hunting permit to mean any signage that would lead a reasonable person to believe that hunting is restricted on the land. Previously, some landowners were posting their land against hunting, but not registering with the town clerk according to Fish & Wildlife law – and then applying for priority landowner antlerless deer hunting permits. The bill makes it clear that these landowners would not be allowed to receive landowner antlerless permits.



Clarifies that a person who is under suspension for the right to hunt, fish and trap may not hunt on their own property during the period of suspension.

Increases the distance a hunter can shoot from the road from 10 feet to 25 feet, prohibits shooting across a public highway, and creates a working group to address the taking of game from motor vehicles or public highways in Vermont. The working group will consist of the Commissioner or a designee, two members of the Fish and Wildlife Board, two State Game Wardens, and two people who hold a valid Vermont hunting license. The group must report back to legislative committees with recommendations by December 15, 2013.

Allows for possession of handguns during archery season and while training hunting dogs. Creates more consistency with rights currently afforded to hikers, wildlife watchers and others.

Authorizes the Commissioner to designate an additional Free Fishing Day during ice fishing season. One of Fish & Wildlife's goals is to enhance opportunities for wildlife-based recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing. This would encourage people to try ice fishing.

Grants authority to the Fish and Wildlife Board to regulate the use of crossbows during hunting seasons. Under current statute, there is ambiguity as to whether the Board has authority to regulate the use of crossbows.

Authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Board to set the annual number of antlerless deer and moose permits through a shorter procedure, rather than through a lengthy rule-making process. It also requires public participation in that process and requires permit numbers to be incorporated into the department's annual deer report to the Legislature. Previously, when Fish & Wildlife proposed annual antlerless deer and moose permit numbers to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board, the permit numbers were authorized through a rule-making process that took at least four months. By allowing the permit numbers to be approved through a shorter procedure, hunters will receive their permits earlier.

Authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Board to set Wildlife Management Unit boundaries no more frequently than every 10 years without approval of the Legislature. Previously, any wildlife management unit boundary change had to be approved by Legislature. Transferring authority to the Fish and Wildlife Board to periodically alter unit boundaries will maintain consistency in wildlife management programs, yet still allow for public input into unit boundaries.

Transfers permitting authority from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the State of Vermont for falconry permits. A federal regulation change requires falconers to obtain a single state permit that needs to comply with the general federal regulations. Vermont has until Sept. 1, 2013, to submit compliance documentation.

Allows the Commissioner to issue three no-cost moose permits for individuals with a life-threatening illness provided that at least one permit is awarded to an individual under the age of 22. Statute currently authorizes the department to issue up to three no-cost moose hunting licenses only to youths age 21 years or younger who have life-threatening illnesses.

Authorizes the department to raffle off promotional prizes in an effort to increase public involvement and participation in department activities.

Sets a minimum amount of \$1,500 for a winning bid to receive a moose permit in the moose hunting permit auction.

Allows the Commissioner to issue an annual therapeutic group fishing license to a health professional for up to four people for \$50. The fee is waived if the applicant providing care is a certified "Let's Go Fishing" instructor.

Fish & Wildlife Dept Works to Recover Vermont's Timber Rattlesnakes

RUTLAND, Vt. - The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has been working with researchers at The Nature Conservancy and the Orianne Society to conserve a piece of Vermont's unique natural heritage, the timber rattlesnake. They have captured rattlesnakes from the wild and implanted radio transmitters under their skin as part of a two-year study of timber rattlesnake habitat and movements in western Rutland County.

The researchers have also been working to determine the extent and severity of a condition referred to as 'snake fungal disease' that has recently begun afflicting Vermont's timber rattlesnakes. Snake fungal disease causes blisters or brown, crusty lesions on the face and neck of infected individuals.

Biologist Doug Blodgett leads the timber rattlesnake project for the Fish & Wildlife Department. "We first documented the lesions on timber rattlesnakes in 2012," said Blodgett. "Since then, the condition has been observed in several species of snakes throughout Vermont. It's difficult to assess the effects of this disease on individuals, but it does appear to be associated with population declines in neighboring states."



Timber rattlesnakes are one of eleven species of native snakes in Vermont. They once ranged throughout the Champlain Valley, but are now found only in two isolated populations in western Rutland County.

The fate of timber rattlesnakes in Vermont is uncertain. The loss of critical habitat, collection for the black market pet trade, and indiscriminate killing have depressed populations to state-endangered status, and snake fungal disease may exacerbate these problems. Together with other snake species, timber rattlesnakes help control rodent populations, which would cause crop damage and spread diseases such as Lyme without limits from predators.



"There's always been a strong cultural bias against rattlesnakes due to sensationalized Hollywood depictions of these animals as highly aggressive, stalking menaces of the forest," said Blodgett. "Nothing could be further from the truth. In my dozen years of experience working with rattlesnakes in Vermont, I've been most impressed with how docile, tolerant and secretive these animals are. They do just about anything to avoid confrontation with people."

Public perception of rattlesnakes is changing as people gain a better understanding of this species. Fear and hatred are giving way to interest and curiosity, as people begin to appreciate the important role that rattlesnakes play in the ecosystem.

While most rattlesnakes in Vermont remain in remote areas, they are occasionally found near people. The Fish & Wildlife Department urges Vermonters who find a rattlesnake in their yard to avoid handling the snake and to contact the [Rattlesnake Removal Program](#) by calling 802-241-3700 to have the snake safely relocated by a trained expert.

"These animals are the original native Vermonters. They've been here for thousands of years and are an integral part of our ecosystem and our wildlife heritage," said Blodgett. "I see them as a symbol of something still untamed and wild in a fairly tame landscape. They deserve our protection and stewardship."

New State Law to Address Bear Problems

MONTPELIER, Vt – A new state law goes into effect on July 1 intended to help reduce the problems that occur when bears are attracted to foods provided by people.

The new Vermont law prohibits feeding bears. It also requires that, under most circumstances, anyone taking a nuisance bear must first attempt reasonable non-lethal measures to protect their own property. And, it repeals a requirement that the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department reimburse a claimant who is not a farmer for damage by bears to livestock or bees. Farmers will still be reimbursed as long as his or her land is not posted against hunting.

An existing law also prohibits a person from killing a bear that has been attracted to any artificial bait or food such as bird seed.



"We are receiving reports from all across the state of bears seeking food at bird feeders, bee hives, chicken coops and other sources," said State Wildlife Biologist Forrest Hammond.

"People can help by removing any food sources that may tempt the bears. We also recommend using electrical fencing to protect bee hives and chickens from hungry bears and using noise-making devices to scare off bears that come near houses."

"These animals are smart and are easily attracted to birdfeeders. Bears can gradually lose their fear of people and begin going from house to house looking for more goodies," added Hammond. "It doesn't take long in these situations before a bear gets so comfortable around people that it causes property damage or begins to be seen as a potential threat to people in surprise encounters. When the department has to choose between the safety of people and the safety of bears, bears will always lose."

"Don't leave pet food outside, wash down your barbecues after using them, and secure your garbage containers," he added.

Hammond says that although rare, there have been incidents in which people were injured by bears that lost their fear of people while finding food near homes.

"We care about these bears as much as anyone," he said. "Having to destroy one that has become a threat to human safety is heart rending, and yet we know that moving them to another location doesn't change their behavior. They continue to seek food near people because they have learned that it

Vermont Moose Hunting Application Deadline is July 5, Moose Permit Auction is Now Open

Vermont's moose hunting permit lottery application deadline is July 5, and the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is urging hunters who plan on entering to do so online.

The application is quick and easy to fill out on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). Under "Hunting and Trapping," click on Lottery Applications.

"It's a really quick process that ensures your entry is immediately entered into the lottery," said Director of Wildlife Mark Scott, "plus, it saves postage. Printed moose applications are available at license agents, but we really encourage you to use the online application. It is more efficient for you and for us."

Lottery permit applications are \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. Winners of the permit lottery must purchase a resident moose hunting permit for \$100, or a nonresident moose hunting permit for \$350.

Five moose hunting permits are also offered in an auction with a bidding deadline of August 20 and a minimum bid requirement of \$1,500. Bids must be submitted on the department's moose permit bid form available from Fish & Wildlife at 802-828-1190. Money received from the winning bids is used in the department's conservation education programs.

A person may apply in the lottery and bid in the auction but can receive only one moose hunting permit. If a successful bidder receives a permit in the general lottery drawing, the person is no longer eligible in the auction.

The Fish & Wildlife Department is issuing 355 moose hunting permits by lottery for the regular October 19-24 moose season and 50 permits for an archery moose season October 1-7.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Course for Educators, July 14-19

Vermont's popular fish and wildlife summer course for teachers and other educators will be held July 14-19, 2013.

The hands-on field course that gets educators out into Vermont's streams, forests and wetlands with some of the state's leading experts takes place at the Buck Lake Conservation Camp in Woodbury.

Now in its 28th year, "Fish and Wildlife Management for Educators," is a one-week, three-credit graduate course taught by Vermont Fish & Wildlife and other Agency of Natural Resources staff through the University of Vermont.

"Wildlife resources are important to all Vermonters in one way or another," says Fish & Wildlife's Education Coordinator Alison Thomas. "If teachers can get connected with the outdoors and in turn expose their students, then many of these youngsters will be able to make informed decisions about Vermont wildlife and their habitat needs when they become adults."

"This course is unique in that it helps teachers from any discipline, whether it is math, language arts, physical education, or history, to improve their instructional strategies and make their lesson plans more relevant to their students," says Thomas.

Tuition is \$700 for the week -- books, food and overnight facilities are included. A limited number of partial scholarships are available. A course description and schedule of activities are available from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website at www.vtfishandwildlife.com under "general education." You can also contact them by calling (802) 371-9975 or emailing Alison.Thomas@state.vt.us.

Fish & Wildlife Dept, VEC Partner on Osprey Recovery

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) have partnered to provide nesting platforms for osprey in Vermont. The team recently created two new nesting platforms for the birds at the Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area in Derby, Vermont.

Osprey are large, fish-eating raptors that were once nearly extinct in Vermont due to loss of nesting habitat, declines in fish populations, and the effects of the pesticide DDT. Following a nationwide ban of DDT in the 1970's, osprey have made a dramatic recovery. They were removed from Vermont's threatened and endangered species list in 2005.



Osprey prefer to nest on standing dead trees, but many landowners remove these trees. The birds frequently turn to utility poles as an alternative nesting site, often with negative consequences, according to Jeffery Wright, Chief Operating Officer for VEC.

“One of our biggest fears was that osprey would roost or nest on our utility poles, which can damage the poles and harm the osprey,” said Wright. “After a nest caught on fire on one of our poles, we knew we had to start making some changes.”

VEC began collaborating with Fish & Wildlife in 2008 to create osprey nesting platforms throughout northern Vermont. The platforms are placed on the top of a telephone pole near open water. Osprey frequently use the platforms to build nests and fledge their young.

VT Departments of Corrections, Fish & Wildlife Partner for Bat Conservation

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has partnered with the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor to help save Vermont's bats. Inmates involved in a work crew program recently built 50 bat houses that state biologists are using to provide daytime roosting sites for bats. The bat houses were given away at this year's Herrick's Cove Wildlife Festival to attendees who regularly observe bats near their home.

This is not the first time that Fish & Wildlife biologist Forrest Hammond has partnered with the correctional facility to improve habitat for Vermont's wildlife. According to Paul Brosseau, work crew foreman supervisor at the correctional facility, Hammond had previously worked with the staff to release apple trees on the facility's 964 acre grounds.

“This project educated these inmates about the problems Vermont's bat populations are facing,” said Brosseau. “They were very happy to help and to give back to the community.” An additional 150 more houses are under construction, according to Brosseau.

Funds for the hardware and materials were donated by the Windsor Coon Hunters Association, whose clubhouse sits adjacent to the correctional facility. The inmates in this program are not paid for their work, but they are able to potentially reduce their sentences when it is coupled with good behavior.

Vermont's six cave-bat species began disappearing in 2008 from white-nose syndrome, a fungal disease that has rapidly spread to virtually all of the state's bat caves. White-nose syndrome has caused bat populations to decline as much as 90 percent in a single year.

Bats are also increasingly excluded from traditional roosting sites such as attics and barns as people improve their home insulation. Bat houses provide an alternative site for bats to roost during the daylight hours.

The Fish & Wildlife Department is encouraging homeowners with bat colonies in their buildings to contact Alyssa Bennett by phone at 802-786-0098 or via email at alyssa.bennett@state.vt.us. To learn more about building your own bat house, go to www.vtfishandwildlife.com/wildlife_bats.cfm.



Vaughn M. Douglass Access Area Dedication Held May 17



ELMORE, Vt -- The Lake Elmore – Vaughn M. Douglass Access Area was renamed on May 17, in honor of the Morrisville native and Lake Elmore camp owner who passed away in September. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jointly hosted a dedication ceremony at the access area located at the south end of the lake.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regional Director Wendi Weber noted Douglass' contributions to the creation of public access areas in Vermont.

Douglass retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in July, 2012 as lands and development program chief in the Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration. He served with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 33 years.

A leader in the regional Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program, Douglass mentored many employees in both state and federal agencies. He made a significant contribution to access areas in the Northeastern United States through his oversight of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Division of Federal Aid program.

“Vaughn contributed greatly to the development and expansion of Vermont’s fishing and boating access programs,” said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry. “In light of his conservation accomplishments, public access initiatives and the professionalism he always displayed, it is very fitting that Vermont, his home state, honor him with this recognition,” said Berry.

Stephen Majeski is Vermont’s Warden of the Year

Stephen Majeski of West Windsor is Vermont's State Game Warden of the Year. A State Game Warden for eight years, Majeski was given the award by Governor Peter Shumlin in recognition of his excellent service on May 16 in Montpelier.

"I want to thank Stephen for his outstanding performance in protecting Vermont's fish and wildlife resources and serving the people of Vermont," said Gov. Shumlin. He said Warden Majeski was chosen for “his professionalism, excellent law enforcement work, dedicated search and rescue efforts, and helpful outreach with the public.”

Lt. Paul Gaudreau, Majeski’s supervisor, commended him for his ability to conduct thorough investigations in hunting and fishing violations, and his dedication in search and rescue missions. Majeski was also praised for his skill in dealing with problem bears, his presentations to school groups, and his cooperative service with other law enforcement agencies.

