

Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

Winter is progressing slowly but surely, and already this year we have made some exciting developments in the program. The Chief Instructor Meeting was held on February 8th, and Nicole and Hope got the chance to meet some of the leaders in our program. The instructor award/recognition banquet is officially **March 29th at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier** (invitation to follow) so mark your calendars! This issue features press releases from the Department, as well as articles written by staff members. If you have input—a question, a picture, or story—please e-mail Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us

Insights

Chief Instructors: An Untapped Resource

Recently, Hunter Education staff met with Chief Instructors from across the state. We had a pretty good showing, especially considering there was a gun show going on at the time. We learned a lot from those Chief Instructors, and realized that everyone in the program can learn from them in some capacity.

Chief Instructors are the liaison between instructors or students and the Department. Chief Instructors know what is happening in their county and if an instructor is having an issue, Chief Instructors are usually more than happy to help out if they can.

Chief Instructors are leaders. They have applied or been appointed because of their innate ability to teach other instructor hopefuls, to mentor them and help them in the road to becoming an effective instructor.

Chief Instructors are experienced. Usually, Chief Instructors have years of experience teaching, hunting, or both. They know what works and what doesn't, but they are usually up to trying new things, too! They appreciate the input and new ideas from other instructors and hunters.

We have Chief Instructors for the benefit of our instructors as well as for the benefit of the Department. After meeting them recently, it is clear that they have lots of great ideas for the program, which I can't wait to implement.

If you don't know the Chief Instructor in your area, contact Nicole or Hope and we will put you in touch with them. It is worth a phone call or an e-mail just to say hi and introduce yourself.

So get to know your Chief Instructors—they have a lot to say, but they'll be happy to listen, too.

Fish & Wildlife Urges Public to Be Bear Aware This Winter

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is reminding Vermonters that variable winter conditions such as lack of snow and winter rain may cause black bears to abandon their dens. Prior to the recent snow storm, the department received reports of bears at bird feeders, residential areas, and wandering the backcountry.

In one incident, a black bear killed a snowshoe hare hunter's beagle in Elmore, Vt. Department game wardens investigated and believe the bear has likely found another den site and has gone back into its winter sleep.

"It is not uncommon for bears to be out of their dens in winters like this with so little snow cover," said Forrest Hammond, bear project leader for the Fish & Wildlife Department. "Bears sleep soundly in winters when deep snow covers the entrances to their dens. But during years with little snow, bears are exposed and awoken easily."

According to Hammond, winter rain events can make bears uncomfortable and restless, and may force many bears from their dens to seek drier accommodations.

Bears disrupted from their original den may produce makeshift nests of spruce boughs in dense evergreen thickets. Hammond recommends that hare and rabbit hunters should be aware of the potential for bears to be in these thickets and should not release dogs in areas where they see fresh bear tracks. While bears are generally docile animals they can sometimes become aggressive when they feel cornered or if a mother bear feels that her cubs are threatened.

"Hunters, hikers, skiers, and other backcountry travelers should steer clear of areas where they see bear tracks," said Hammond. "This is a very difficult time for bears in which they are extremely vulnerable to disturbance and may be with newborn cubs.

"Last winter, a group of hikers investigated a bear den resulting in the sow abandoning her cubs, which soon died of exposure," said Hammond.

With the passage of the Vermont Sportsman's Act of 2013, Vermonters are now required to take non-lethal measures to protect property including livestock and pets. This may include removing attract-



Photo courtesy of VTFW

Fish & Wildlife Makes Grant Money Available to

A Fish & Wildlife Department grant program creating more access to safe places to shoot is continuing in 2014.

Shooting clubs, sportsmen's groups and government agencies involved in the operation of shooting ranges, including archery ranges, have until 4:30 p.m. on May 16, 2014 to submit applications for grants to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The Shooting Range Improvement Grant Program encourages improvement of shooting ranges and enhances their safety and operation. The grant period begins July 1, 2014.

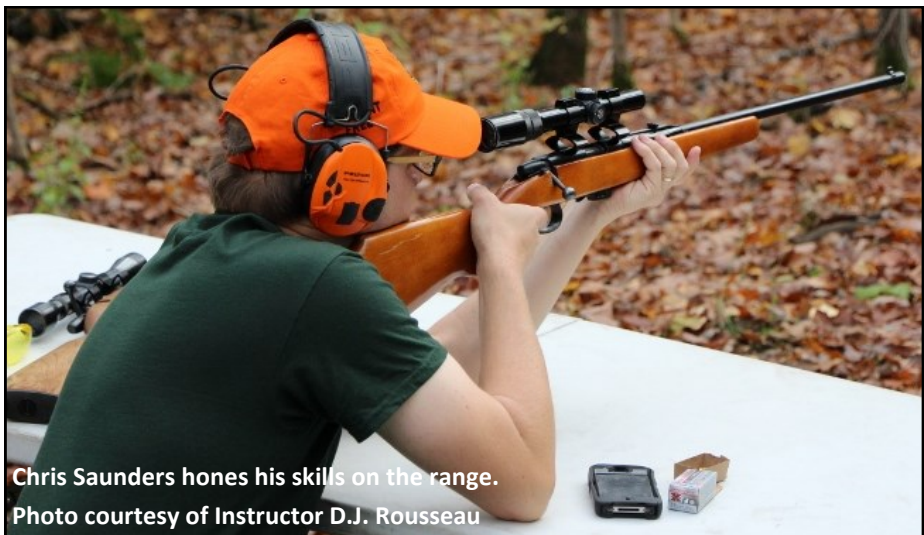
"This program is both a great help to fish and game clubs looking to improve their facilities and to hunters and shooters looking for places to sight in their rifles and hone their skills," said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry. "Increased range opportunities encourage hunters to become more proficient with firearms and promote safe and responsible gun handling."

Examples of projects that could be eligible for funding include shooting range re-development, noise abatement structures, safety berms, shooting pads and stations, and the construction or improvement of access roads and parking lots. Grant money also can be used for lead mitigation by recycling, reducing range floor surface drainage or liming range property.

The department anticipates making a total of \$25,000 available this year. These funds come from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program and are derived from Federal excise taxes on hunting, shooting and fishing equipment. This is a 75 percent reimbursement grant program and requires a 25 percent non-federal match from the grant recipient, which can come through 'in-kind' match, such as volunteer labor and donated equipment or cash.

Associated federal rules include a requirement that a range receiving one of these grants provide at least 20 hours of public use per month when in operation, and the facility must be open and available at reasonable times to hunter education courses. Vermont nonprofit organizations, municipalities and clubs are eligible.

The deadline to apply is May 16, 2014. For further information or to download an application packet,



visit the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department website at www.vtfishandwildlife.com. Click on "Hunting and Trapping," and then on "Shooting Ranges in Vermont." Or, contact Chris Saunders, Hunter Education Coordinator at (802) 343-5487.

Chris Saunders hones his skills on the range.
Photo courtesy of Instructor D.J. Rousseau

VT Fish & Wildlife wants more disabled vets to be eligible for free hunting licenses



Veterans march in Veteran's Day ceremony.
Photo courtesy of Gary Conner

Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin and veterans' advocates are touting efforts that support the state's veterans including a proposal to make more disabled veterans eligible for a free hunting and fishing license.

Now veterans must be considered 100 percent disabled to be eligible. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife is asking lawmakers to lower the threshold to the federal level for disability benefits of 60 percent disabled. In 2012 and 2013, 77 complimentary licenses were given out.

Shumlin and Secretary of State Jim Condos on Wednesday also highlighted the voluntary check-off box on the state tax form to donate a dollar to the Vermont Veterans Fund, which provides financial assistance to groups supporting veterans. Since it was launched in 2010, the fund has raised about \$159,000.

Eighth Grader Raises Money for Wildlife

Williston eighth-grader Cale Bombardier sold bracelets to raise \$142 that he donated to the Fish & Wildlife Department to fund waterfowl conservation. Cale became inspired to help waterfowl when he joined department biologist David Sausville on a day of fieldwork banding ducks.

Cale's donation will go to the Duck Stamp Fund and will meet with a match through federal grants.

Vermonters can help support wildlife conservation by making a donation to the Nongame Wildlife Fund on line 29a of their state tax return, or by purchasing a conservation license plate.



Thanks, Cale! Photo courtesy of VTFW

Hope's Cookhouse

Make a rabbit pot pie for your sweetie this Valentine's Day! This recipe would work well with squirrel, too!

Rabbit Pot Pie

Ingredients:

- Rabbit pieces
- 1 tablespoon oil
- water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1-5 tablespoons flour
- Half an onion, chopped
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 1/2 cups cauliflower, cut into small pieces
- 1 bag frozen peas
- Homemade pie crust or pre-made puff pastry
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 chicken bouillon cube (optional)
- 1 egg yolk



Directions:

- 1) Trim meat into small pieces. Season with salt and pepper. Keep the bones for the broth.
- 2) In a large cast iron skillet or dutch oven, heat oil and quickly brown the rabbit meat (plus bones) on both sides for about 1-2 minutes.
- 3) Add water, just enough to cover the rabbit. Add bay leaf. Cover and simmer for 1-1.5 hours, or until meat is tender.
- 4) Discard the bones, and add carrots, onions, cauliflower, thyme and rosemary. Add more water to cover the rabbit and vegetables. Cover and simmer for an additional 20-30 minutes, until vegetables are tender.
- 5) Discard the bay leaf and add the chicken bouillon. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- 6) In a separate bowl, combine flour and 1 cup hot broth or water. Whisk well. Slowly pour this slurry into the rabbit and vegetables. Mix in frozen peas.
- 7) Heat your oven to 375 degrees F. Spray an oven safe pie dish with cooking spray and scoop in the mixture.
- 8) Shape pie crust/puff pastry to fit over the top of your baking dish, and make a few slits on the top for venting.
- 9) Whisk one egg yolk and 1 tsp of water. Brush this over the top of the pie crust.
- 10) Bake at 375 degrees F until the crust is golden brown.

FAQ with Nicole



Nicole on the range

Photo courtesy of instructor DJ Rousseau

Q: What is going on with the new firearm exam?

A: On February 8th, Hunter Education staff met with Chief Instructors in part to update the firearm exam. The exam was torn apart and re-worked with students and instructors in mind. The test is being reviewed and will be printed in April or May. For now, use the old exams. We will have the updated test out to you for your summer classes.

Conservation Camps Applications Are Available

If you are 12 to 14 years old and want to learn about Vermont's wildlife and gain outdoor skills next summer, consider attending one of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's Green Mountain Conservation Camps.

The one-week camp program is held at two locations -- Lake Bomoseen in Castleton and Buck Lake in Woodbury. Campers participate in hands-on learning experiences about fish and wildlife conservation, ecology, forestry, orienteering, safe firearm and archery techniques, swimming, canoeing, fishing and more in an attractive outdoor setting. Natural resource professionals come to the camp during the week to share information on their programs and take campers out for field activities.

Conservation Camps open June 22 and continue until August 22. Tuition is \$250 for the week, including food, lodging and equipment. Please check the Fish & Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) for general information as well as information about partial and full scholarship availability. Information about the program is under "Education and Training" on the left side of the home page, and here is a link to the online registration page: <https://anrnode.anr.state.vt.us/GMCC/ApplyCamp1.aspx>.

A printable application also is available.

For more information about Green Mountain Conservation Camps contact: fwgmcc@state.vt.us or call 802-828-1460.

Vermont's conservation camp program is unique because it is sponsored and directed by Fish & Wildlife Department professionals -- the same people who manage Vermont's fish and wildlife resources. Working biologists, foresters, game wardens, and conservation educators teach young people about Vermont's forests, wetlands and wildlife. The program's greatest strength is connecting young people to the outdoors. The camp program is sponsored in part through a grant from the Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program.



Green Mountain Conservation Camp programs offer young people the opportunity to learn about natural resource conservation and develop outdoor skills through hands-on learning experiences. Photo courtesy of VTFW

Three Deer, Moose Hearings Set for March, Two More to Come in Early May

Hunters, landowners and anyone else interested in Vermont's deer and moose herds should plan on attending one of three public hearings scheduled for March 25 in Springfield, March 26 in Orleans and March 27 in Middlebury. Two more hearings will be held in central and southwestern Vermont in May.

The hearings will include results of Vermont's 2013 deer and moose seasons and prospects for deer and moose hunting next fall as well as an opportunity for hunters to provide their observations and opinions about the current status of the deer herd.

The department will also provide an update on the progress with its comprehensive deer management review which is scheduled for completion next October. Recommendations for any changes in hunting regulations will then be given to the Fish and Wildlife Board.

Attendees will also be able to comment on the proposed 2014 moose hunting season regulation. Members of the public unable to attend one of the hearings in person may watch a live stream of the March 27th meeting at VPT.org.

Hunters are invited to attend one of the following public hearings, held from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

March 25 Springfield -- Riverside Junior High School Cafeteria, 13 Fairground Road, Springfield

March 26 Orleans – Lake Region Union High School Cafeteria, 317 Lake Region Rd, Barton

March 27 – Middlebury – Middlebury Union High School Cafeteria, 73 Charles Avenue, Middlebury

Anyone interested in learning more about Vermont's comprehensive deer management review process and the regional working groups should visit the department's website www.vtfishandwildlife.com.



Photo courtesy of VTFW

Vermont Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Dates

2014 Season (All Dates Inclusive)*

Hunting

Deer (Bow & Arrow).....	Oct. 4-26 & Dec. 6-14
Youth Deer Weekend.....	Nov. 8 – Nov. 9
Deer (16 Day Regular Season).....	Nov. 15 – Nov 30
Deer (Muzzleloader).....	Dec. 6-14
Black Bear.....	Early Season Sept. 1-- Nov. 14 // Late Season Nov. 15--23
Youth Turkey Weekend.....	April 26-27
Turkey Spring Season.....	May 1 – May 31
Turkey Fall Seasons: Bow & arrow only: October 4-24 in all WMUs statewide	
Shotgun or bow & arrow: October 25- November 2 in WMUs B, D, G, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, and Q	
Shotgun or bow & arrow: October 25-November 9 in WMUs F, K, and N	
Moose.....	Archery Oct. 1-7 // Reg. season Oct. 18-23
Hare, Rabbit.....	Sept. 28, 2013 – March 9, 2014 & Sept. 27, 2014- March 8, 2015 WMUs D&E remain open through March 31
Gray Squirrel.....	Sept. 1 – Dec. 31
Ruffed Grouse (Partridge).....	Sept. 27 – Dec. 31
Woodcock.....	<i>To be announced</i>
Crow.....	March 14 – April 30 & Aug. 16 – October 29
Snow Goose.....	<i>To be announced</i>

Furbearer Hunting

Bobcat.....	Jan. 10 – Feb. 7
Red & Gray Fox.....	Oct. 26, 2013 – Feb. 9, 2014 & Oct. 25, 2014-Feb. 8, 2015
Raccoon.....	Oct. 11 – Dec. 31
Muskrat.....	March 20 – April 19
Coyote.....	Open Year Around
Fisher, Otter, Beaver.....	No Open Season

Furbearer Trapping

Mink, Skunk, Red & Gray Fox, Raccoon, Coyote, Opossum, Weasel.....	Oct. 25 – Dec. 31
Otter.....	Oct. 26, 2013 – Feb 28, 2014 & Oct. 25, 2014-Feb. 28, 2015
Muskrat.....	Oct. 26, 2013 – March 31, 2014 & Oct. 25, 2014-March 31, 2015
Fisher.....	Dec.1-31
Bobcat.....	Dec. 1 – 16
Beaver.....	Oct. 26, 2013 – March 31, 2014 & Oct. 25, 2014 – March 31, 2015

Furbearers-Closed Season

Marten, Lynx, Wolf	No Open Season
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***These are general season dates. Read the 2014 Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Laws & Guide for more information and exceptions.**

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Vermont Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Dates

2014 Season (All Dates Inclusive)*

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Fishing

Trout & Landlocked Salmon.....	April 12 – Oct. 31
Trout & Landlocked Salmon (Lake Champlain).....	No Closed Season
Largemouth & Smallmouth Bass.....	June 14 – Nov. 30
Catch & Release – Lakes and Ponds.....	April 12 – June 13
Pickeral, N. Pike, Yellow Perch.....	No Closed Season
Walleye (all waters except Chittenden Reservoir & Connecticut River.).....	May 4, 2013 – March 15, 2014 & May 3, 2014 – March 15, 2015
Walleye (Chittenden reservoir and Connecticut River).....	See Guide to Laws
Smelt.....	No Closed Season
Free Fishing Day	June 14, 2014

***These are general season dates. Read the 2014 Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Laws & Guide for more information and exceptions.**

Special Snow Goose Harvest Opportunity

Since 2009 hunters have had the opportunity to pursue snow geese during the spring as a result of a special management action referred to as a “Conservation Order” allowed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and adopted by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board.

The measure was adopted at the recommendation of federal and state wildlife scientists in response to concerns about a growing number of snow geese across North America. Eight states in the Atlantic Flyway (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Vermont) will hold a Spring Snow Goose Conservation Order in 2014.

The Vermont 2014 Spring Snow Goose Conservation Order will occur statewide from March 11 through April 25. The daily bag limit is 15 snow geese, and there is no possession limit. Waterfowl hunting regulations in effect last fall will apply during the 2014 Spring Snow Goose Conservation Order with the exception that unplugged shotguns and electronic calls may be used, and shooting hours will be extended until ½ hour after sunset.

A 2014 Spring Snow Goose Harvest Permit is required and is available at no charge on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department’s website (vtfishandwildlife.com) under “Items of Special Interest.” Hunters may also call the Essex Junction Office (802-878-1564) to request a permit.

In addition to this permit, hunters will need a 2014 Vermont hunting license (residents \$25, nonresidents \$50), 2014 Harvest Information Program (HIP) certification, a 2013 federal migratory hunting stamp (\$15), and a 2014 Vermont migratory waterfowl stamp (\$7.50). Hunters can register with the Harvest Information Program by going to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department website or by calling toll free 1-877-306-7091 during normal business hours.

The populations of snow geese, blue geese and Ross’s geese in North America, collectively referred to as “light geese,” have grown to record levels over the past three decades.

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Special Snow Goose Harvest Opportunity

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According to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the overabundance of light geese, which nest in far northern regions of North America, is harming their fragile arctic breeding habitat. The damage to the habitat is, in turn, harming the health of the light geese and other bird species that depend on the tundra habitat. Returning the light goose population to sustainable levels is necessary to protect this delicate habitat and every species dependent on it.

Greater snow geese make up a large share of the light goose population in the Atlantic Flyway.

“The population of greater snow geese has grown from approximately 50,000 birds in the mid-1960s to 1 million today,” said David Sausville, Vermont’s waterfowl project biologist. “This increase has resulted in damage to agricultural crops and marsh vegetation in staging and wintering areas from Quebec to North Carolina. The Atlantic Flyway has established a goal of 500,000 greater snow geese to bring populations in balance with their habitat and reduce crop depredation.”

Hunters who obtain a permit will be required to complete an online survey after April 25 and prior to May 16, 2014, whether they hunted or not. Hunters without access to the internet may obtain a copy of the survey by calling 802-878-1564.

The Spring Snow Goose hunt occurs annually from March 11 until the Friday before Youth Turkey Weekend.

During spring migration, snow geese typically move through the Champlain Valley in late March and early April. They usually pass through Vermont fairly quickly in route to their spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence River Valley. Here they remain for about a month before moving on to their nesting areas in the Eastern Canadian Arctic. About 100 snow geese are taken by Vermont hunters during the spring season.

Shot fired at deer hits vehicle with driver inside instead

Police in Monkton are looking for someone who shot a vehicle with the driver inside while aiming for a deer.

The victim, 30-year-old Michael Deforge, said he was working security detail on Vergennes Road when a truck stopped nearby. He said a person in the truck fired a single shot at a deer that had run across the road, but the bullet struck Deforge’s vehicle instead.

The truck drove off, but Deforge was able to give a description of the driver and vehicle to the state police. Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call the state police at 388-4919.

This article was originally published on February 5th, 2014 at WPTZ.com.

Two Morgan, Vt., Men Sentenced for Deer Poaching Conviction

Vermont Fish & Wildlife wardens followed an anonymous tip that led to the arrest and conviction of Douglas Vezina of Morgan, Vt., on two counts of taking a deer out of season and one count of hunting without a license.

Vezina was charged with shooting two juvenile bucks without a license during the November 2013 deer rifle season. A legal deer taken during the November rifle season must be a buck with two or more antler points on one side.

After entering a guilty plea to all charges in Orleans Court on February 5, Vezina was sentenced to serve 120 days in prison. He may also be ordered to pay restitution at an upcoming hearing.

Vezina was on parole at the time of the incident for several other convictions and faces an additional six to twelve months in prison for parole violations related to the investigation.

Warden Jason Dukette seized a .30-30 rifle that was involved in the crime, which may result in a charge of felon in possession of a firearm against Vezina from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Further investigation found that the rifle had previously been reported stolen.

In connection with the incident, Terrance Grondin of Morgan, Vt., was charged with assisting Vezina with the transport and processing of the deer, along with knowingly possessing deer meat taken in violation of the law. Grondin pleaded guilty in Orleans County criminal court and was fined \$400.

“Most Vermont hunters pursue game lawfully and respect hunting regulations,” said Col. David LeCours, head of law enforcement for Vermont Fish & Wildlife, noting that wildlife in Vermont is held in the public trust. “Those few who choose to break the law face serious consequences.”

The anonymous tip that led to the arrests was provided through Operation Game Thief. If you witness illegal activity, you can contact Operation Game Thief at 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378) or online at www.vtfishandwildlife.com/laws_thief.cfm. Rewards are paid for information leading to an arrest. You can also contact your warden through the local police barracks.



Upcoming Wildlife Events in Vermont

Clearly we're not the only ones in Vt engaging landowners and their communities in conservation. Here's a list of upcoming events where you can learn more about our state's natural heritage.

They range from talks about birds, to walks in the woods to learn about forest management, to weekend camps for women. You'll find Fish & Wildlife staff at many of these events, either as presenters or just there to learn more.

Classes through Hogback Community College

Courses Starting in February

Vermont Family Forests is offering three forestry courses through Hogback Community College. The courses include: Four-season Birding with Jim Andrews (starts February 22nd); Tree Identification with Jim Andrews (starts March 1st); and Forest Soils with Wendy Sue Harper (starts March 27th). Jim and Wendy-Sue are superb instructors and past classes have given both of them rave reviews. To learn more and to obtain registration materials, please go to:

<http://www.familyforests.org/public-education/events.shtml>

Vermont's Forests: Connecting People, Place and Time

Sunday, February 16th at 4:00 pm

Aiken Center, Room 102 UVM Campus

Branch Out Burlington! Proudly presents Michael Snyder, Vermont Commissioner of Forests, Parks & Recreation. He will share his thoughts about the important role of trees for the working landscape and will draw links between the forest trees that cover our mountainsides and those that populate our cities. This event is co-sponsored the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department. Refreshments will be served. No charge.

Forestry for the Birds Wood Tour

Friday, February 21st from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Join VLT Stewardship Forester, Dan Kilborn, Audubon Vermont Conservation Biologist, Kristen Sharpless, and logger, Warren Hill, for a woods tour of an active logging job at the Vermont Land Trust's Mud Pond Forest property in Greensboro. VLT is partnering with Audubon Vermont to use the VLT-owned Mud Pond Forest as a demonstration site for "Forestry for the Birds". This will be a fun and friendly opportunity to learn firsthand about the nuts and bolts of harvesting forest products for multiple benefits, especially forest songbird habitat. This logging job was started last winter and is being completed this year. Dress for a walk in the winter woods over uneven ground. Snowshoes may be helpful if the snow is deep. Children welcome; no dogs please. We will meet and carpool from the Fellowship Hall at the Greensboro United Church, located at 165 Wilson Street in Greensboro Village. We plan to return to the meeting site at noon. Space is limited. Please register online at www.vlt.org/events. Questions? Contact Sharon Plumb, VLT Membership & Outreach Manager at (802) 262-1241. This event is free for VLT and Audubon Vermont members and all children 12 and under; \$10 non-members.

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Upcoming Wildlife Events in Vermont

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Winter Doe Camp

February 28th—March 2nd

Hulbert Outdoor Center in Fairlee, Vermont.

Join Vermont Outdoors Woman for a weekend retreat for outdoor skill development, adventure, health and just plain fun. Participants can camp out or stay in heated cabins, enjoy great meals and play in the snow all day. Classes include dog sledding, fire making, winter camping, survival, camp fire cooking, cross country skiing, orienteering, pond hockey, ice fishing, nature, handgun and rifle instruction, nordic skating and many more. Don't miss the opportunity to enjoy affordable outdoor education in a stress-free, supportive environment. Deposits (\$100) are now being accepted to reserve your spot at camp. Send deposits to: VOW, P.O. Box 10, N. Ferrisburg, VT. 05473. Cost for the all inclusive weekend program is \$349 with discounts for mother/daughter combos and groups. Minimum age is 15 and minors must be accompanied by an adult. If you have any suggestions for programs or questions regarding the retreat, contact us at: vow@voga.org or call 802-425-6211.

Wetland, Woodland, Wildland

Thursday, March 6th, at 6:30pm

Grindstone Café, Lyndonville

Learn about Vermont's natural communities; Northern hardwood forests, dry oak woodlands, alpine tundra, red maple swamps, bogs, marshes. Author Eric Sorenson will discuss what natural communities are, why they are a useful tool, how the book can be used. A great indoor overview as you plan spring/summer adventures.

Introduction to Backyard Sugar Making

Saturday March 8, 2014 (Slow Sap date Saturday March 15), 9am-12:45pm

A tour of three Bennington County sugar operations, from a very small hobby set-up to

a very large business venture. Learn from the producers; how they got started, about their equipment—how it works, its cost, set-up and maintenance, their collection layout, their production schedule and tricks of the trade. Reservations by March 1 required. Sponsored by the Bennington County Conservation District, the Bennington County Sustainable Forest

Consortium, and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. We will meet at 9:00 am at “Hendersap” (the Henderson family operation), 490 Woodcock Road, Sandgate

(Woodcock Road is the first road on the left off Southeast Corners Road) from there we will travel to Bill Peacock's 350+ tap operation in Shaftsbury and wrap up at the 2500+ tap Mance family operation in Shaftsbury. To register contact Shelly Stiles at bccd@sover.net.

The Bobolink Project

Thursday, March 13th at 7pm

Ilisley Library, Middlebury

Join Otter Creek Audubon for their March speaker, Allan Strong. Allan will speak about bobolink in Vermont and the project that pays farmers in the Champlain Valley to mow early and late so that that the bobolinks have a better chance at nesting success.

A record 67 bald eagles in Granite State logged in midwinter count

Bald eagles photographed here last week are among 67 bald eagles in the midwinter count, 14 of them in the Merrimack River Watershed.

An additional eight bald eagles were found just over the border in Maine and Vermont. Although they visit the Granite State, they aren't part of the midwinter count.

This was the 34th year of the midwinter count, said New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Wildlife biologist Mike Marchand. "It was a record year this year," he said.

The midwinter count does include Canadian bald eagles who come south for the winter.

"They are looking for open water," he said. Their diet is fish, small mammals and smaller birds.

The 2013 nesting count showed 29 active nests, which means at least one egg, said Marchand. "Twenty of those (nests) were successful."

That means at least one baby fledged, although there may have been up to three eggs laid in the nest.

"Not all nests are successful," said Marchand.

Nests are usually built high in white pines, but heavy winds and rainstorms sometimes cause problems. Both male and female incubate and protect the egg or eggs.

"They are a large bird, and they can defend their nest quite well," he said.

Bald eagles are 3 feet tall, with a 6- to 8-foot wing span.

Marchand said the population is recovering well.

"It's still rapidly increasing," he said, adding that there is plenty of habitat left to support a larger population.



Bald eagles are no longer on any federal protection list. In New Hampshire, they are not listed as endangered, but they are considered threatened and are legally protected. Possession and take, which includes harming, harassing, injuring and killing, are illegal.

This article was originally published online on January 28th, 2014 at the New Hampshire Union Leader.

SAVE THE DATE!

Instructor Recognition and Awards Banquet

March 29th, 2014

Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier VT

Sound Off!

This is YOUR newsletter! Have a photo or story you'd like to share? Is there something that's missing in the newsletter? E-mail Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us with your suggestions, stories, pictures or other input!.

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<https://twitter.com/VTFishWildlife>