

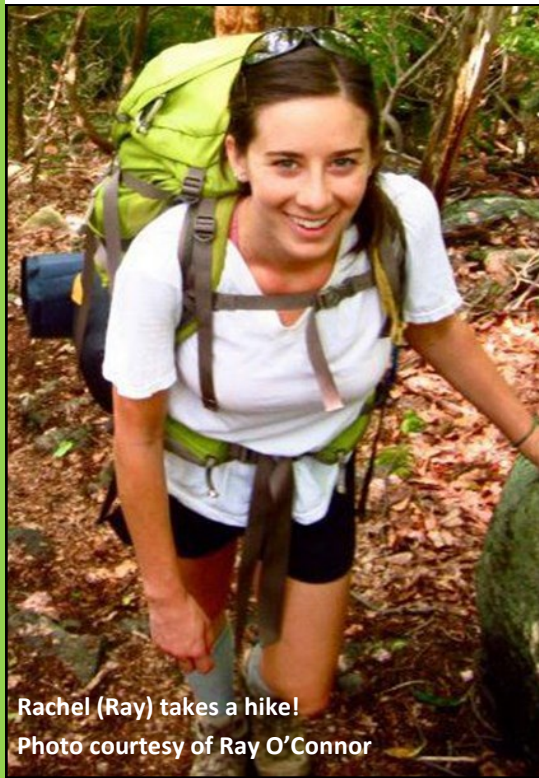


Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

Around here we are so excited for the banquet! The instructor award/recognition banquet is officially **March 29th at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier**. Have you responded yet? We hope to see you then! 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

Welcome Camp Coordinator: Rachel O'Connor!



Rachel (Ray) takes a hike!
Photo courtesy of Ray O'Connor

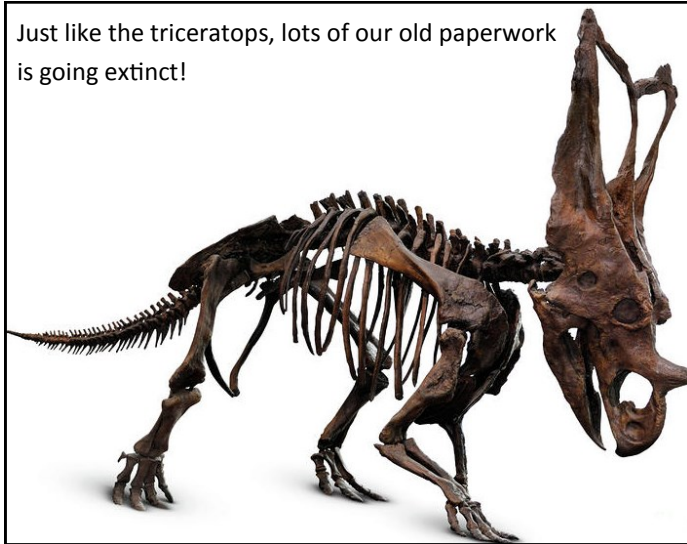
My introduction to the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife began in 2011 when I was hired as a seasonal Natural Resource Instructor for the Green Mountain Conservation Camp program on Lake Bomoseen. I began the program without a background in hunter education, but I have hunter education staff to thank for introducing me to this fun recreational activity and beneficial conservation practice. I enjoyed the program so much that I came back again the summer of 2012. After spending time with the U.S. Forest Service in Colorado, I decided to try my hand at GMCC again, returning as

the Camp Coordinator. I am responsible for hiring, training, and supervising our seasonal staff and ensuring that camp runs smoothly - no easy task with over 1,000 youths in attendance every year! Campers who participate in a basic week earn their hunter and bowhunter certification, and campers who participate in advanced week have the opportunity to either earn their trapper certification, or learn about waterfowl hunting. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be in beautiful Vermont and ensure that the youth gain a better understanding of their natural environment and the outdoor recreation opportunities available to them. I am originally from Huntington, NY and graduated from SUNY Geneseo with a degree in Geography in 2011.

Bubble Sheets and Other Paperwork

Going Extinct

Just like the triceratops, lots of our old paperwork is going extinct!



With the advent of the new online tool, Event Manager, lots of our paperwork is unnecessary. Students can register directly from the website, so that we no longer need to use those hard-to-fill-out bubble sheets (I'll admit—even I have had trouble filling them out and reading them). Here is a list of the forms we will no longer be ordering and how they are being replaced:

Bubble Sheets (student registration forms):

Bubble sheets are no more! Students fill out their registration information online via Event Manager. If you are still using these forms, you won't be using

them for long. We no longer have scanning capabilities, so Hope has been entering these forms by hand since the summer. It is easier and usually more accurate for a student (or an instructor) to just type all student information into Event Manager than it is to fill out a bubble sheet for every student, and then have Hope type all of that data into our system.

Student rosters: Event Manager has a student roster tool, so that you can print out your own class roster if you want. Of course, you always have the ability to see all your students from Event Manager, but you can print the student roster in a more printer-friendly version.

Time & Activity Forms (Instructor Forms): Your volunteer time is also entered directly from Event Manager. If you have someone helping who is a non-certified volunteer, we can add them to your class as well. Just tell us who they are and we will make a non-certified volunteer (NCV) profile for them. The NCV will then be able to be added to future classes and their hours will be recorded as usual. For events such as seminars, trainings, or speaking engagements, you can just inform Nicole of your hours for the day and she will input them into the system. You'll notice that we take attendance at events for this reason, too.

Material Requisition Form: We all agreed around here that it is just easier to call or e-mail us to tell us what you need. It isn't necessary to waste more paper.

Large pre-paid mailing envelope: Since instructors aren't sending back paperwork, we don't need to have these envelopes anymore (we are officially out, so it's a good thing we don't need them!).

Small pre-paid mailing envelopes: Instructors are no longer mailing in requisition forms, so these aren't necessary either. If we mail you something and request a return, we will send you a pre-stamped envelope with a regular stamp we buy from the post office. If you ship something large to us for some reason, keep the receipt and we will reimburse you for the cost of the postage.

Governor Shumlin Appoints New Members to Fish & Wildlife Board

Governor Peter Shumlin has appointed two new members to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board.

Cheryl E. Frank Sullivan of Underhill has been appointed to represent Chittenden County, replacing Edward Gallo, whose term has expired. Cheryl is passionate about archery and muzzleloader hunting for deer and icefishing for northern pike. She also fishes for salmon, bowfin and bass on Lake Champlain and hunts turkey, waterfowl and upland birds. When not pursuing outdoor activities, she enjoys riding and showing her horse.

A graduate and full-time employee at the University of Vermont, Cheryl has an M.S. in plant and soil science specializing in the biological control of insect pests and a B.S. in environmental science with a focus on conservation biology.

Johanna Laggis of East Hardwick has been appointed to represent Caledonia County, replacing Craig Lantagne of Lyndonville, whose term has expired. Johanna farms with her husband and brother-in-law in East Hardwick where they milk 500 Jersey cows. She and her family grow and raise most of their food, hunt, trap, fish, and are avid outdoor enthusiasts.

Johanna is a University of Vermont graduate with a B.S. in forestry. She worked for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation from 1983 to 1990 in forest resource protection.

The 14-member Fish and Wildlife Board is an advisory group of Vermont citizens that votes on fish and wildlife regulations. Members serve for six-year terms. They are eligible for reappointment only when they are filling a seat left vacant by a member who was unable to serve his or her full term.

“The Board plays an invaluable role in the conservation of our fish and wildlife resources in Vermont,” said Commissioner Patrick Berry. “The thoughtful, well-informed citizens that make up the board help shape regulations from the perspective of Vermont’s hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, and conservationists who have a strong interest in the sound management of these resources. Cheryl and Johanna bring new insights and expertise to the board, and I look forward to working with them on the conservation challenges we face.”

Fish & Wildlife Board Sets Permit Numbers for 2014 Moose Hunt



Photo courtesy of VTFWD

A total of 285 regular firearms moose season permits and 50 archery moose season permits will be issued for Vermont's 22nd annual October moose hunt under a proposed regulation approved by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board at their February 26 monthly meeting in Montpelier.

The board voted on a proposal presented by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department that allocates permits in 16 of the state's 21 Wildlife Management Units. The proposed regulation must be voted on at one more Board meeting in early April.

The 285 regular season permits proposed by the department represent a 20 percent decrease from the 355 permits issued last year. Under the proposal, hunters are expected to harvest close to 150 moose during the regular season hunt.

(Continued on next page)

Fish & Wildlife Board Sets Permit Numbers for 2014 Moose Hunt

(Continued from previous page)

“We recommended a reduction in permits this year based on the biological data we have collected on Vermont’s moose and our calculated population estimates indicating moose densities are below management goals in some areas,” said biologist Cedric Alexander, Vermont’s moose project leader. “It’s the intent of this proposal to allow slow population growth in some regions while continuing to stabilize moose numbers elsewhere.”

Alexander estimates Vermont has 2,500 moose statewide with the greatest concentration in the Northeast Kingdom.

“We also want to take a conservative approach given recent regional and national trends of moose populations and health,” added Alexander. “Moose biologists from the southern tier of moose range across North America are increasingly concerned about the effects of warming temperatures on moose health. Moose can easily become stressed by both warmer weather causing them to feed less and early spring snow melt that results in higher winter tick loads the following year.”

Fifty permits are proposed for Vermont’s special “archery-only” moose season to be held October 1-7. For the first time, archery permits are not authorized on a statewide basis, but by Wildlife Management Units to better manage the harvest. Hunters are expected to take close to 15 moose during this season.

Moose hunting permit lottery applications, \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents, will be available on Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) in mid-April. Printed applications will be at license agents in early June. Applicants are encouraged to review their Wildlife Management Unit selections closely as the boundaries of several of the units have changed.

Two lotteries will be held, one for the regular hunting season and one for the archery season. Winners of either lottery must purchase resident hunting permits for \$100 or nonresident hunting permits for \$350. Hunters also will have the option to bid on five moose hunting permits in an auction to be announced later.

You can review the proposed 2014 moose hunt and comment on it by going to the Fish & Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) and clicking on Law Enforcement and then Rules and Proposed Rules.

Hope's Cookhouse

Nicole is taking over the cook house this month with a recipe that is perfect for St. Patrick's Day, or any cold late-winter day!

Guinness Irish Stew

Ingredients:

- 1 pound venison, cubed (or stew beef or lamb)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 2 large parsnips, diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 sprig fresh rosemary
- 1 bottle Guinness Foreign Extra Stout
- 4 cups beef broth, home-made or packaged (not canned)
- Parchment paper, cut to fit inside the pot



Directions:

- 1) Pat the meat dry, liberally season with salt and pepper. In a heavy pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat until just smoking, then add the meat in a single layer. Brown the meat on all sides for several minutes.
- 2) When meat is dark golden brown, add the carrots, celery, parsnips, and onion. Keep stirring and mixing everything together as the vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes.
- 3) Add the thyme and rosemary. Pour in the bottle of Guinness, and scrape up any bits from the bottom of the pot. Add the beef broth and stir everything together.
- 4) Cover the stew with the piece of parchment paper cut to fit inside the pot, pressing down on the paper lightly so that it fits on top of the stew. Set the heat on low, and simmer 1 hour, or until beef is tender.
- 5) Taste the gravy for seasoning, add more salt and pepper if desired. Remove the thyme and rosemary sprigs, and ladle stew into bowls. Serve with a spoonful of potato champ or mashed potatoes. Garnish with a sprig of fresh thyme.

FAQ with Nicole



Nicole on the range

Photo courtesy of instructor DJ Rousseau

Q: When is John coming back?

A: As many of you already know, John was recently in a car accident. We aren't sure when exactly he will be back, but we are all thinking of John at this time and wishing him a speedy recovery!

Three of Vermont's Largest Fish of 2013 Are New State Records

Anglers have been entering impressive catches in Vermont's record fish program every year since records were first kept by the Fish & Wildlife Department in 1969, and 2013 was no exception. Three of the largest fish entered last year also qualified as new all-time state records.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department maintains the record fish program to help monitor productivity of fisheries throughout the state and also to give anglers recognition for their exceptional catches. Records are

kept for 31 different species as small as a 12 oz. rainbow smelt and as large as a 38 lb. 3 oz. muskellunge and 42 lb. 8 oz. carp.

"The record fish program continues to showcase Vermont's high quality fisheries in lakes and streams throughout the state," said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry. "We are fortunate to have the greatest variety of high quality freshwater fishing in the Northeast. You can fish for brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, lake trout, and landlocked Atlantic salmon, or you can cast for world-class largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, muskellunge, and walleye – due in part because we have waters connected to the St. Lawrence drainage, the Connecticut River drainage, and the Hudson River drainage."

(Continued on next page)



Robert Scarborough of Brandon, VT with his record Fallfish caught in Otter Creek.

Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Three of Vermont's Largest Fish of 2013 Are New State Records

(Continued from previous page)



Aaron Schondube of Vergennes poses with his record Freshwater Drum caught in Otter Creek.
Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Vermont's three new state record fish caught in 2013:

Fallfish – 3 lbs. 1 oz. – caught in Otter Creek by Robert Scarborough of Brandon, VT.

Freshwater Drum – 21 lbs 11 oz. – caught in Otter Creek by Aaron Schondube of Vergennes, VT.

Carp – 42 lbs. 8 ozs. – taken while bow fishing in the Connecticut River by Jeremy Ballantine, West Dover, VT.

The last few years overall have been remarkable in terms of record fish catches in Vermont.

Fisheries biologist Shawn Good, who administers the record fish program, says a recent trend in record-breaking catches are a testament to the great quality and diversity of fishing opportunities that are available to anglers in Vermont.

“We’ve had record breaking fish catches almost every year over the last 10 years or so. Almost half of the 33 record fish currently recognized have been set since 2001, with eight of them being caught since 2010,” said Good.

“Some species have even had new all-time state records broken in consecutive years, or even broken multiple times within the same year. There really aren’t very many states that can boast that number of record setting catches in recent times.”

You can learn more about Vermont’s big fish records on Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). A database of Vermont record fish entries is searchable by species, body of water and year of catch. While you are there, be sure to check out the Master Angler Program entries and photos.



Jeremy Ballantine of West Dover and his record carp caught while bowfishing the Connecticut River.
Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Public Meeting on Proposed Amendment to Posting Guidelines

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will be holding a public meeting on Wednesday, March 19, 2014, in Montpelier on a proposed amended rule that provides an additional option for landowners to allow hunting, fishing or trapping by permission only.

The proposed rule follows recent statutory changes and seeks to make posting requirements clearer and more consistent. The meeting will take place at the Pavilion Building on State Street from 6 to 8 p.m. and public comment is welcome.

Thanks to the new statute, Vermont landowners now have an additional option when considering access to their property. Through the state's "By Permission Only" option, landowners can now offer hunters who have obtained permission the chance to hunt on land that was previously closed. The new posting option, which began in July 2013, was conceived as an alternative for landowners who support hunting but had no other legal options for controlling access to their property.

Hunters, landowners, and anyone interested in commenting on the proposed amended rule should attend the public meeting. Attendees will be able to comment on the language for the amendment to the new posting rule and view signs that will be available for landowners' use.

"Hunting is a proud Vermont tradition and an important part of our culture," says Patrick Berry, commissioner of Vermont Fish & Wildlife. "The new Hunting by Permission Only option allows landowners to be part of the tradition of keeping lands in Vermont open to hunting, while making that access more selective if they so desire."

Anyone interested in learning more about hunter access, should visit the department's website or send comments to anr.fwpubliccomment@state.vt.us.

Vt. Truck Falls Through Ice on Lake Champlain

Police say two Vermont ice fishermen are safe after the truck they were in fell through the ice on Lake Champlain.

St. Albans police say 45-year-old Russell Hudson, Jr., and a passenger were able to escape through the windows of the truck after it went through the ice Wednesday morning.

Police were called to Kill Kare State Park in St. Albans shortly after 9 a.m.

A towing service pulled the truck from the lake.

Marten Population Continues to Expand in Vermont



Marten have begun to reestablish in Vermont after being absent from the state for nearly a century.
Photo courtesy of USFWS

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department believes there is an expanding population of American marten in Vermont. Marten are small carnivores in the weasel family. They are smaller than a housecat and are closely related to the more common and slightly larger fisher.

Though marten were extinct in Vermont by the early 1900s, evidence collected over the past two decades indicates that two small populations of marten have become established in the state. The frequency of recent sightings leads biologists to believe that the populations are expanding.

This expansion comes despite numerous obstacles, including the continued fragmentation of Vermont's forests, competition with an abundant fisher population, and milder winters. Marten have been

spotted on remote trail cameras and marten tracks have been identified in several locations.

"All of this evidence leads us to believe that there may be more marten out there than we had previously thought," said Chris Bernier, furbearer biologist for the Fish & Wildlife Department.

According to Bernier, Vermont currently contains two distinct populations of marten. The population in the southern Green Mountains may have originated from 115 individuals that were released from 1989 to 1991 by U.S. Forest Service and Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department staff as part of a marten reintroduction effort.

Follow-up studies in the mid-1990s failed to capture any signs of the animals, leaving researchers to believe that the release was not successful. However, recent evidence of the presence of marten in this region indicates that some individuals may have become established as a result of this effort.

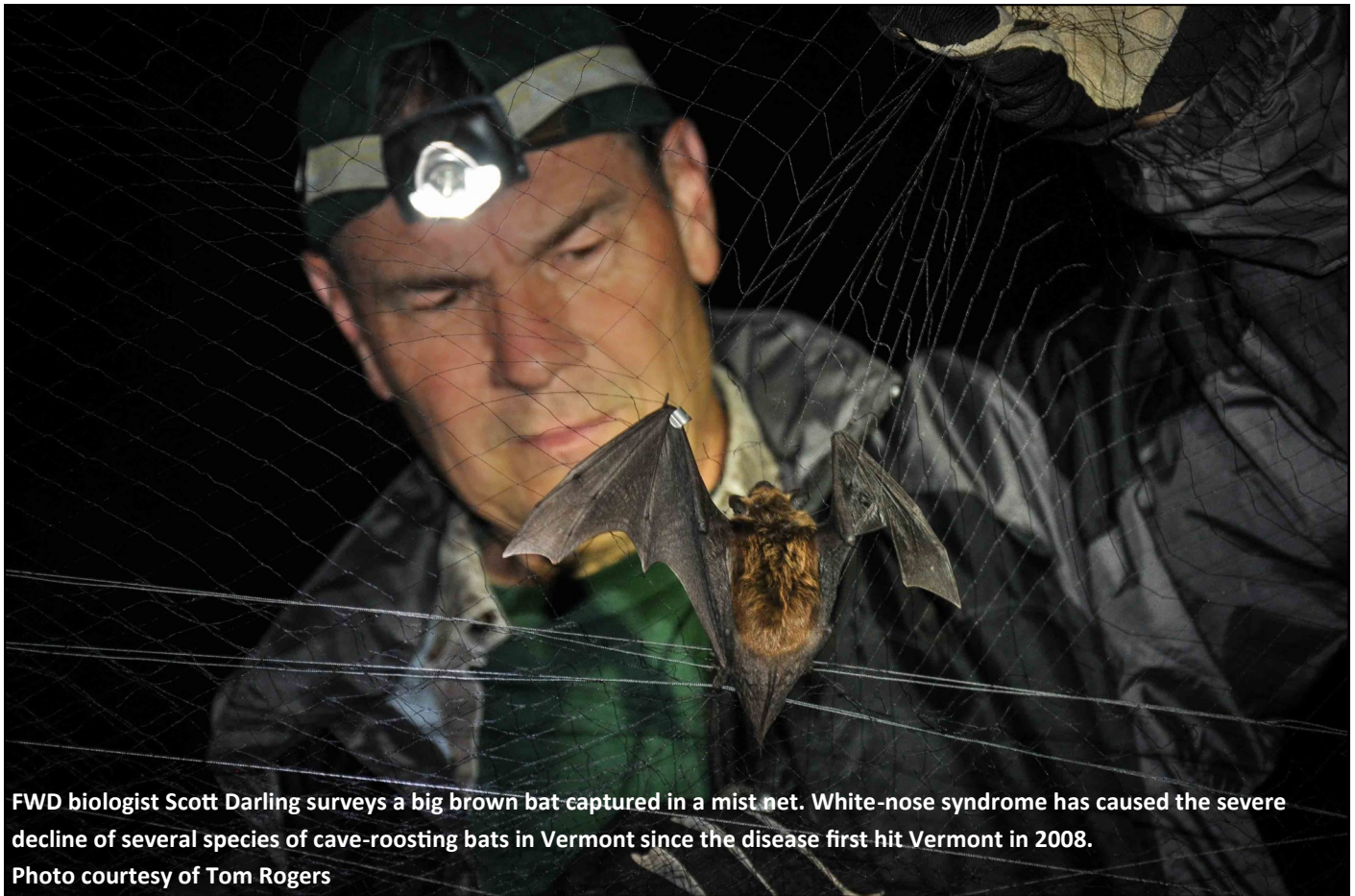
Vermont's other marten population is in the Northeast Kingdom and likely originated from New Hampshire or Canada.

Fisher are a primary competitor of marten, occupying similar habitats and eating many of the same foods. Fisher have also been known to prey on marten themselves. Marten, however, take advantage of their small size in deep snow, hunting for rodents in tunnels beneath the snow that are inaccessible to fisher.

"It's very encouraging to see these animals become established in Vermont," said Bernier. "Marten depend on large blocks of unfragmented forests. Their return signals that land conservation efforts are paying off for marten and other rare species in Vermont, and that these large unfragmented forests are being properly managed by biologists and foresters."

"Of the 17 marten that wildlife biologists have been able to examine to date, 15 were juveniles providing evidence that marten are reproducing and are potentially expanding in Vermont," said Bernier.

Vermont Biologists Continue in Race Against Time to Save Bats



FWD biologist Scott Darling surveys a big brown bat captured in a mist net. White-nose syndrome has caused the severe decline of several species of cave-roosting bats in Vermont since the disease first hit Vermont in 2008.

Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers

Although Vermont's populations of cave-dwelling bat species continue to drastically shrink in number every year, the rate of decline may be slowing down. Biologists with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department are working to determine if some individuals that remain are naturally resistant to the syndrome that has killed millions of bats to date.

Fish & Wildlife bat project leader Scott Darling hopes to determine if there is anything that can be done to prevent further declines in bats before it is too late for some species.

"We're observing the most precipitous decline of a group of species in recorded history and it's happening right here in our region," said Darling. "Several species, such as northern long-eared bats, have virtually disappeared in less than a decade and we are getting increasingly skeptical that they will ever be able to rebound."

To determine which bats continue to survive, department staff captured little brown bats last fall and fit them with tiny radio tags. They hope to find out what proportion of them survives after another winter in an infected cave.

(continued on next page)

Vermont Biologists Continue in Race Against Time to Save Bats

(continued from previous page)

State scientists also hope to determine if some bats are actually surviving multiple years hibernating in caves contaminated with the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome, or if new bats from other caves are simply replacing the old ones as they die off.

Bats normally remain in the hibernacula until spring, when temperatures are warm and insects are available to eat. Bats infected with white-nose syndrome become extremely dehydrated and emaciated, often flying out of the cave mid-winter in search of food and water. These bats face an almost certain death in the absence of insects or open water in mid-winter.

In addition to this research, last winter Vermont Fish & Wildlife staff teamed up with researchers from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in an experiment to see if bats infected with white-nose syndrome could survive in an artificial cave that was free of the fungus. The researchers transported 30 hibernating little brown bats to a former military bunker on Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge in Maine.

Nine bats survived the experiment, which was encouraging given the low survival rates of infected bats in natural conditions. “We’re looking at ways to increase survival of future groups so we’ll be better prepared if this strategy becomes necessary,” said Darling.

“The struggle to save Vermont’s bats continues to be a race against time,” said Darling. “If we’re not successful with these efforts, it’s unclear what actions we’ll turn to next.”

Vermont has nine species of bats, of which six spend the winter hibernating in caves. Vermont listed northern long-eared bats and little brown bats as endangered in 2011 and added tri-colored bats in 2012. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Indiana bat as federally endangered prior to the onset of white-nosed syndrome and has recommended adding the northern long-eared bat to the federal endangered species list. A decision is expected by October.

Vermonters can help bat researchers in their effort to save bats by donating to the [nongame wildlife fund](#) on line 29 of their tax return. Spring is also the time to erect one-way doors in attics containing bats protected by law so that they can safely be evicted. If residents still want to take advantage of bat’s valuable pest-eating services, they may consider erecting a bat house. More information is available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

A Vermont Hunting History Lesson

In the last copy of our newsletter we posted an article about the deer and moose hearings set for the early spring. Accompanying this story was the picture below. At the time the newsletter was released, I had no knowledge of the significance of this picture—I only knew that it was a black and white photo of a bunch of men with deer. Cedric Alexander, a Fish & Wildlife Department biologist stationed in St. Johnsbury, shed some light on the photo below.

The photo was taken in 1918 of a group of hunters from the Audet Camp that used to be on the Bill Sladyk WMA. A copy of the photograph was given to Cedric's father in 1993 during Vermont's first modern moose season. The photo was given to him by AOT Island Pond garage foreman Larry Walker. All of the men in this photo are from Derby or Holland. Larry's father, Irving Walker, told Larry that all the deer were shot by two men.

It is interesting to note that this is typical of an old fashioned hunting photo—no antlers are shown, no trophy shots. Just men at camp in front of their harvest.

From left to right, the men pictured are: Fred Aldrich of Derby Line, Dave Smith of Holland, Joseph Smith of Holland. Harry Smith of Derby, Eugene Gray of Derby, Eugene Perkins of Derby, George Tice of Holland and Harold Gray of Holland.

There are still Grays and Tices in the Holland/Derby area, and another camp on the WMA is still owned by the Tice family today.

This story is so representative of Vermont's strong history of hunting and family—it is certainly a piece of Vermont history.



Photo courtesy of VTFW

Cleaning Bird Feeders Can Prevent Spread of Disease

Feeding birds in the winter is a lot of fun, but it can also cause diseases to spread quickly among wild birds, which is why the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department says it is important to clean your birdfeeders regularly.

Bacteria and fungi can cause diseases such as aspergillosis, salmonella and conjunctivitis. Species commonly affected by bird feeder diseases are redpolls, pine siskins, goldfinches, sparrows, and cardinals.

All feeders should be thoroughly cleaned on a monthly basis. A solution of one part bleach to nine parts hot water is recommended to kill bacteria. Hot water with unscented dish detergent also does an excellent job. Wear rubber gloves to avoid any contamination. Be sure to clean inside and outside surfaces. Bottle brushes work well in tube feeders.

It is very important to thoroughly rinse and dry your feeder to prevent residual chlorine from being ingested by birds. Then, dry the feeders well before filling them again. Any remaining moisture could lead to mold and mildew that can cause rotten, unhealthy seed.

Also, take time to remove seed and droppings in nearby areas where birds congregate. Birds can spill seed and leave debris several feet away from feeders.

Clean birdfeeders and feeding areas will attract more birds and keep them healthier for birders to enjoy.

Additional information about diseases at bird feeders can be found at:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/fact_sheets/coping_with_diseases_at_birdfeeders.jsp



Cleaning your birdfeeders regularly will help prevent the spread of disease among wild birds. Photo courtesy of John Hall

Fish & Wildlife Looking for 'Let's Go Fishing' Instructors

The Fish & Wildlife Department is seeking volunteers who would like to pass on the tradition of fishing to the next generation of Vermonters. The department will be hosting two one-day training workshops for 'Let's Go Fishing' instructors on Saturday, March 29, at the Kehoe Education Center in Castleton, VT and on Saturday, April 5, at Fish & Wildlife's regional office in Essex Junction, VT.

Instructors in the 'Let's Go Fishing' program organize and instruct clinics in their communities for young people and their families. Participants in the training workshops will learn how to teach a fishing clinic, in addition to learning about fishing ethics, aquatic ecology, fisheries management, habitat conservation, and tackle craft. Classes are informal, and it is not necessary to have a high level of fishing expertise to become an instructor.

"Get involved and get our youth outdoors! The life you change might just be your own," urges James Ehlers, Executive Director of Lake Champlain International.

There is no charge for the training and all curriculum materials and lunch will be provided. The workshops run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Pre-registration is required, and you must be 18 to participate. You can register on-line at www.my Champlain.net/letsgofishing or by email at letsgofishing@my Champlain.net. The deadline to register is Friday, March 14, 2014.

becoming a 'Let's Go Fishing' Instructor is a great way to help others get outdoors and learn how rewarding fishing can be.
Photo courtesy of Cathy P. Merrill



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!.

Check Us Out:

Hunter Ed: <https://www.facebook.com/vthuntereducation>

Fish & Wildlife: <https://www.facebook.com/vtfishandwildlife>

<https://twitter.com/VTFishWildlife>