



Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

Hunter Education instructors have been busy scheduling and teaching classes before turkey season, trout season starts tomorrow (Saturday, April 12th!), the sun is out, and the snow is finally starting to melt—it feels like spring! We have been busy approving classes, distributing equipment, and coordinating special events such as Getting Started in Turkey Hunting, New Instructor Training, and some special women’s courses. This issue of Field Notes includes press releases from Fish & Wildlife as well as some articles written by staff members. If you have any articles, pictures, or comments, please e-mail them to Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us

Insights

Paid in Full!

by Instructor Robert Lajoie

I like to teach hunter safety. My schedule does not allow setting up classes as often as I would like, but I still get the time to interact with students and occasionally I hear from students from classes gone by.

Former students often tell of the buck they took last year or their frustration from lack of success; last weekend was different.

I saw a young lady (I think 20-something), walk across the room to say hello.

Her first words to me were, “Hey, you were my hunter safety instructor!”

I remembered her from a class a few years ago. She was looking for information and a mentor. She left the class with both.

She went on to tell me that she had started out turkey hunting, and she got a turkey her first year out. Surprisingly, her best day did not involve taking game. She was calling turkeys one day and a red fox stalked her. From her description and the way her eyes lit up telling the story, I saw the fox too. If I had a hand in introducing another hunter to that kind of joy, then my pay as an instructor has been far greater than any monetary value. As I said at the beginning, paid in full.

Patrick Berry to Step Down as Commissioner

The following is an e-mail sent to all Fish & Wildlife staff from Commissioner Patrick Berry.

Dear Staff,

With a heavy heart I am writing to let you know that I will be stepping down as Commissioner at the end of April. As you are all aware, these appointed positions are more temporary than we'd like to acknowledge, and I did not want to pass up an opportunity to be closer to my home and family in Middlebury. I have accepted a job as the Vice President for Philanthropy at the Vermont Community Foundation just a few minutes up the road from my house.

It has been the greatest honor of my career to serve as the Commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. I am humbled by your commitment to our mission and tireless efforts to protect and conserve Vermont's fish, wildlife, and plant resources. When recently asked what I would most miss about this job, the answer was easy – all of you.

Working as a cohesive team, we have been remarkably successful over the last 3+ years, largely because of your passion and work ethic. Kim and I tried to provide the resources, structure, and room for innovation and creativity so that every employee would have the opportunity to achieve their job at the highest level. Even in the midst of the devastation following Tropical Storm Irene, including the displacement of the entire central office, the department simply continued to work as though nothing had happened. It's a remarkable testament to the people within our ranks.

I feel proud of how I am leaving the department for the next Commissioner. We successfully fortified our budget so that we are almost fully staffed for the first time in years including the restoration of the Roxbury fish biologist position and 3 new limited service positions. And, with enhanced general fund support, we are now able to cover increased operational costs and long-overdue equipment purchases. Under Kim's leadership we revised and renewed our operational plans, linking it with our strategic plan and budgeting priorities.

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Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry will step down from his position this May. Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Patrick Berry to Step Down as Commissioner

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We passed countless statutes and regulations, including bills such as Wildlife Public Trust Act and the Sportsman's Act, and rules updating bear management, regulation of all department lands, protection of lynx, expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities, a ban on the importation of wild boar, and countless others. We conserved thousands of acres of critical habitat through both easements and acquisition including the creation of 3 new Wildlife Management Areas and the pending addition of almost 3,000 acres to an existing WMA.

We have also focused on some of the more intangible elements of our work. We dramatically enhanced our outreach and marketing efforts, and have received phenomenal media coverage on almost everything we do. We put a premium on strengthening our partnerships and relationships with conservation organizations, fish and game clubs, community groups, other state and federal agencies and departments, the Fish and Wildlife Board, the legislature, and the administration. When we work well with our partners, we can achieve so much more.

Secretary Markowitz has been hard at work behind the scenes to ensure that leadership succession at the department will be as seamless as possible, and I cannot thank her enough for her thoughtful and diligent efforts to ensure that you will be in good hands. I will be succeeded by Louis Porter as Commissioner.

Louis currently serves as the Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs under Governor Shumlin having previously worked for the Conservation Law Foundation and as Chief of the Vermont Press Bureau. His background includes a zoology degree from the University of Washington, commercial fishing in Alaska and a lifetime of hunting and fishing here in Vermont. Over the years Louis has developed excellent relationships across the broadest spectrum of fish and wildlife constituencies and political ideologies. He is passionate about fish and wildlife conservation. On a personal note, I have considered Louis a good friend for almost a dozen years and he once told me this was the only job he ever really wanted. I think you will find Louis to be an exceptional advocate for the department.

Secretary Markowitz and I are confident that the transition will be fairly seamless and that Louis, with Kim's support, will keep this department moving in a positive direction.

I want to thank you again for your passion, commitment, guidance, partnership, and friendship. I will miss all of you, but expect I won't be too far away.

Best regards,

Patrick

Patrick H. Berry

Commissioner, Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife

Commissioner Berry has always been a proponent of Hunter Education, but besides that, he is a great person. Although we are sad to see him go, we wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

Vermont Hunters Took More than 14,000 Deer in 2013

Hunters took 14,107 deer during Vermont's four deer hunting seasons in 2013, according to a report on last year's hunting success just released by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

The number of legal bucks with at least two points on one antler totaled 8,831, up 8% from 2012.

"We estimated there would be an increase in the deer population in 2013 due to two consecutive mild winters," said state deer biologist Adam Murkowski. "The number of antlerless deer permits was increased last year by 16 percent in response to these mild winters and we maintained or reduced antlerless deer permits in other regions to promote population growth."

Abundant apples, acorns and beechnuts that were available to deer last fall may have resulted in deer being more dispersed than in some previous years. However, cold temperatures and snow in the November rifle season likely increased the ability of hunters to find, see and take deer.

Hunters took 3,212 deer in the archery season, 1,718 on youth weekend, 6,725 in the November rifle season, and 2,452 deer during the December muzzleloader season.

The full report on deer hunting results of 2013 can be downloaded from Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com).

Vermont Moose Hunting Applications Available

Vermont moose hunting permit applications are now available online (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). Printed applications will be available from Vermont license agents in early May.

The 285 regular moose season permits to be issued this year represent a 20 percent decrease from the 355 permits issued last year. Hunters are expected to harvest close to 150 moose during the regular season hunt which starts October 18 and ends October 23.

An additional 50 permits are designated for the October 1-7 archery moose season when hunters are expected to take about 15 moose.

"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 says applicants need to realize some Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) boundaries have changed to better reflect current wildlife populations and habitat conditions. Check page 22 of the 2014 Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Laws and Guide or go to Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website for the new WMU maps and descriptions

Lottery applications are \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. The deadline to apply is June 10. Winners of the permit lottery will purchase resident hunting permits for \$100 and 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.

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

Vermont's Spring Turkey Hunting Starts Soon

Hunters are gearing up for Vermont's spring youth turkey hunting weekend later this month and getting ready for the regular spring turkey hunting season that starts May 1.

Vermont offers some of the best turkey hunting in New England according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. In 2013, Hunters took 6,362 turkeys in both the youth weekend and regular seasons, and 608 turkeys in the fall season.

What makes Vermont's spring gobbler season special? Vermont's turkey hunting is statewide during the spring season. Vermont's turkey population is one of the highest in New England. You can buy a turkey hunting license without having to go through a lottery. The turkey license comes with two spring tags for two bearded birds and one tag for a turkey of either sex in the fall season. Plus, you get to hunt the entire weekend, because hunting is allowed on Sundays.

Youth turkey hunting weekend is April 26-27 this year. Landowner permission is required to hunt on private land, whether or not the land is posted. To be eligible, a youth must be age 15 or under. The youth must have successfully completed a hunter education course and possess a hunting license, a turkey hunting license and a free youth turkey hunting tag. The youth also must be accompanied by an unarmed adult who holds a hunting license and is over 18 years of age. Shooting hours are one half hour before sunrise to 12:00 Noon. The youth may take one bearded turkey during youth weekend and two bearded turkeys in the regular May hunting season.

Last year, young hunters enjoyed a success rate of 42 percent when they took 782 turkeys during Vermont's two-day youth hunt, which offers a great opportunity for young people to learn about turkey hunting while coached by an experienced adult.

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Vermont's highly successful wild turkey management program resulted in hunters taking 6,970 turkeys in spring and fall seasons last year. This year's youth spring turkey hunting weekend is April 26-27. The regular spring season is May 1-31.

Photo by John Hall



Vermont's Spring Turkey Hunting Starts Soon

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The regular spring turkey hunting season is May 1-31. Shooting hours are one half hour before sunrise to 12:00 Noon. Two bearded turkeys may be taken, and all of Vermont is open to turkey hunting during the youth weekend and regular spring season.

A shotgun or bow and arrow may be used in the youth turkey or regular spring turkey hunting seasons. Shot size must be no larger than #2 and no smaller than #8.

“Although brood production was lower than average last year due to the wet spring, Vermont’s turkey population appears to remain high, and we anticipate

another great harvest in 2014,” said Amy Alfieri, Vermont’s wild turkey project leader.

Vermont was the first New England state to re-establish wild turkeys when it released 31 wild birds from New York in 1969 and 1970. Today, the Green Mountain State has an estimated 50,000 turkeys.

Vermont’s wild turkey restoration program is a tremendous wildlife management success story funded entirely by hunters through the sale of hunting licenses and a federal tax on hunting equipment. Now, hunters are reaping the benefits by seeing excellent turkey hunting in Vermont. And, all Vermonters are enjoying watching the big birds as they roam hillsides they had been absent from for almost a century.

To find out more about wild turkey hunting in Vermont, contact the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department by telephone at 802-828-1000 or check in at their website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). The 2013 Turkey Harvest Report, available on the website, has details to help you plan your hunt, including the number of turkeys taken in each town. Last year, turkeys were taken in all of Vermont’s 253 towns. While on their website, be sure to look at a printable copy of the guide to “2014 Spring and Fall Turkey Seasons.”

Licenses are available on their website and from agents statewide.



Photo courtesy of the National Wild Turkey Federation

FAQ with Nicole



Nicole on the range

Photo courtesy of instructor DJ Rousseau

Q: When is the next New Instructor Training class?

A: We will be holding an Instructor Training course on Friday July 18th and Saturday, July 19th in Woodbury at our Buck Lake camp. Times have not yet been scheduled, but if you or someone you know wants to take this training, please contact Nicole at Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us or call her at 802-318-1347

Anyone 18 and older who wants to become a fully certified instructor can attend as long as we have their application and completed background check. Anyone under 18 years old who would like to become a junior instructor may attend this training as well.

Spread the word!

Deer Hearings Set for May 7 and 8

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will host the final two of five annual public deer hearings on May 7 in Castleton and May 8 in Montpelier.

Three earlier hearings were held in Springfield, Orleans and Middlebury.

The hearings will include results of Vermont's 2013 deer seasons and an overview of the department's recommendations to the Fish & Wildlife Board for antlerless deer hunting opportunities in the youth, archery and muzzleloader seasons next fall.

Anyone interested in Vermont's deer management program is urged to attend one of the public hearings to be held from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the following locations:

Wednesday, May 7 – Kehoe Conservation Camp, 636 Point of Pines Road, Castleton

Thursday, May 8 – Pavilion Auditorium, 109 State Street, Montpelier



Photo courtesy of VTFWD

Hope's Cookhouse

Since Nicole loves fishing, she's taking over the cookhouse with a recipe perfect for your trout season opener.

This is a recipe that my mom likes to make with freshly caught fish, but you can use it on frozen fish, too. This recipe is delicious, and a staple in our house during fishing seasons. Thanks for sharing with us, Mom!

Mrs. Corrao's Milk Fish Bake

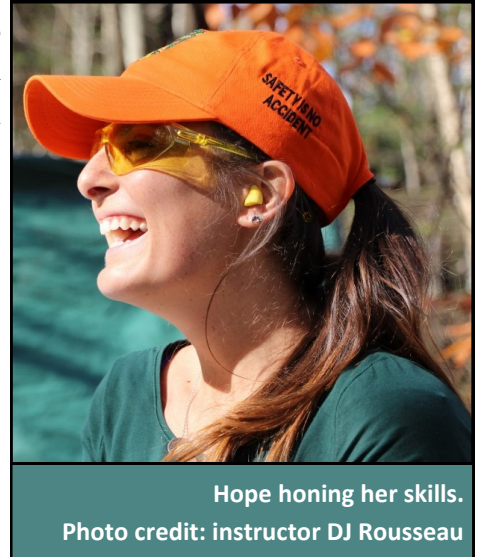
Ingredients:

- 1 lb. of fish
- 1/4 cup grated cheese (we prefer cheddar or some type of sharp cheese)
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1 tsp. oil (olive or vegetable work best)
- 1 Tbsp. butter

Directions:

- 1) In a small or medium pan sauté the onion in the oil and butter over medium heat until translucent.
- 2) Add grated cheese, breadcrumbs, and milk to the pan. Stir this together until the mixture has a batter-like consistency.
- 3) Rinse the fish and pat it dry.
- 4) Butter the bottom of a casserole dish or pan. Lay the fish on the bottom of the pan. Place the mixture on top of the fish.
- 5) Bake in the oven at 400F about 25 minutes, or until done, depending on the thickness of the fish.

Serve and enjoy! This goes especially well with a side of brown rice.



Hope honing her skills.

Photo credit: instructor DJ Rousseau

Vermont's Wildlife Responds to Delayed Spring

Vermont's human residents are not the only ones coping with the continued wintery conditions this year. The state's wildlife are also searching for ways to deal with the deep snow and ice that may remain late into spring.

Bears begin to emerge from their dens as the snow starts to melt and food typically becomes exposed and accessible. Despite the cold, snowy weather, they have already been spotted this year raiding birdfeeders and garbage cans looking for an easy meal.

"Once we receive reports bears are out and about, we urge Vermonters to remove any bear attractants," said Mark Scott, Vermont Fish & Wildlife's director of wildlife. "Take down your birdfeeder, seal up your garbage, and turn on the electric fence around your chicken coop or beehive."

The lingering winter weather is also affecting moose and deer, according to Scott. "Late March through April is a critical time for deer," he said. "They don't eat much during the winter, which depletes their fat stores. If the snow cover doesn't decrease in the next four to six weeks, we could see some impact on the deer herd."

Conversely, moose are not as strongly affected by the late spring and may actually benefit. Snow depths in Vermont are not typically deep enough to be problematic to moose, but late season snows can take a welcome toll on the moose's parasite, the winter tick.

"Winter ticks have increasingly become a problem for moose populations in many parts of the country," said Scott. "Snow on the ground that persists through April can cause moose tick loads to decline, which is very beneficial to moose survival."

Drivers are warned to keep an eye out for moose and deer along the roadways as the snow melts. They are attracted by the residual salt left behind from winter road maintenance.

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"This coyote represents how most Vermonters are feeling about winter right about now," joked Instructor Robert Lajoie. This photo was taken with one of Robert's trail cameras in March.

Photo courtesy of Robert Lajoie

Vermont's Wildlife Responds to Delayed Spring

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Bird feeders make an easy meal for black bears like this one, especially when they're hungry from a long winter. Be sure to take down bird feeders in order to prevent nuisance bears!

Photo courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Migratory birds usually begin heading back to Vermont when the days start getting longer, but they may linger elsewhere until the winter weather is over. "We've received reports of bird numbers building up in southern New England, which may mean that they are waiting for more favorable weather in our region," said Scott.

"Red-winged blackbirds and bluebirds typically arrive this time of year and just wait it out until food supplies become more

available," added Scott. "Many birds snack on the residual fruit left on trees until the buds start popping and insects become available."

Vermont's bald eagles have been setting up territories and building nests since January, and many nesting pairs along the Connecticut River have already begun incubating eggs.

Other animals that are usually active in the spring are still out of sight. In the unusually warm March weather in 2012, turtles were basking and frogs were chorusing by this date. "Frogs and salamanders wait for warm, rainy nights to begin their breeding activities," said Scott. "Once temperatures remain well above freezing at night, we begin to hear the spring peepers and wood frogs. The amphibians and reptiles may have to wait a while for those conditions this year."

With March nights still registering unseasonably low temperatures, those welcome heralds of spring may not sound any time soon.

The Endangered Species Act Turns 40

*By Deb Markowitz, Secretary, VT Agency of Natural Resources
and Dorothy Allard, Chair, VT Endangered Species committee*



Please donate to the Nongame Wildlife Fund
on line 29a on your state tax return

Photo courtesy VTFWD

A little over 40 years ago, the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) was passed into law. In Vermont, it is common to see osprey and loons, so it is hard to believe that merely a few decades ago, these birds were vanishingly rare in our state. These species, as well as hundreds of species of plants and animals from around the country, have been saved from extinction in large part because of the ESA and comparable state legislation like our own endangered species law.

Let's think back forty years. In 1974 Republican Richard Nixon was President, and Congress was conducting its investigation into Watergate; the average cost of a home was \$35,000 and the price of a gallon of gas was 40 cents; families gathered around the television to watch *All in the Family* and *The Waltons*, and the US had finished its withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. This was the backdrop for the passage of a whole host of new environmental protections, including the ESA. These far reaching protections were passed with strong bipartisan support in Congress and were signed into law by Nixon.

Under the leadership of Governor Deane Davis, Vermont passed the Protection of Endangered Species Act in 1972, even before the federal law was enacted. Our law listed several species as endangered in Vermont and prohibited harming them, including the American marten, lake sturgeon, osprey, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon. The law was updated in 1981 and continues to provide the foundation for the Agency of Natural Resources' efforts to protect these species and the lands and waters on which they depend. (Continued on next page)

The Endangered Species Act Turns 40

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Working hand in hand with the Endangered Species Committee (volunteers who advise the Secretary on issues related to implementing the Endangered Species Act) and its Scientific Advisory Groups, The ANR scientists in its Wildlife Diversity Program have worked hard to identify and protect species at risk and then help these endangered and threatened species recover. Over the years we have partnered with Vermont's trappers to implement conservation strategies to minimize risks to marten and lynx, and we have protected vital lynx habitat in the Northeast Kingdom. Sturgeon continue to swim and spawn in Vermont's waters and we are working on a long-term recovery plan for the species. We have identified and protected bald eagle nesting sites, boosting the state's population from zero to 16 nesting pairs in just ten years. Our efforts have also been rewarded with recovered populations of osprey, peregrine falcon, and loon, now removed from the state's endangered species list.

Now that forty years have passed, we face, perhaps, even greater challenges. Global climate change is causing extreme fluctuations in weather, as well as drought, floods, ice and fire, and weakens species already at risk. In Vermont, the warming climate impacts our high alpine habitat, and is causing a rapid increase in the spread of forest pests and invasive species. Increased rainfall rates means we have more pollution running into our lakes and streams, threatening important spawning grounds of many fish species.

In light of the uncertainties we face from our rapidly changing climate, the challenge ahead of us may seem overwhelming. But if nothing else, working together for the forty years since the Endangered Species Act was signed into law has proven that we can find a way to protect the biodiversity that makes our planet and its ecosystems work for all of us. In one of the great comeback stories of the last century, the bald eagle, gray whale, American alligator and many other species were saved from becoming consigned to memory because of the federal Endangered Species Act. The world is a better place for it, and so are we.

The recovery of the Common Loon is one of Vermont's greatest wildlife stories of recent times. Just a few decades ago, birds such as the Common Loon and the Bald Eagle were extremely rare sights in the state. These species and others have been saved from extinction in large part because of the Endangered Species Act (1973) and Vermont's own endangered species law.

Photo courtesy of VTFWD



Vermont's Spring Trout Fishing Opens April 12

Catch and release fishing now allowed on nine stream sections!

Vermont's traditional trout fishing season opens Saturday, April 12 this year, and anglers are looking forward to spring fishing for brook, brown and rainbow trout in the Green Mountain State's lakes and streams. Until then, eager anglers can capitalize on year-round catch-and-release trout fishing opportunities on nine river sections.

The following Vermont river sections are open for year-round trout fishing using artificial lures or flies. All trout caught must be immediately released where they are caught. Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Laws and Guide for the stream sections that are open. Trout fishing in these river sections is catch-and-release ONLY except during the regular trout season.



Willoughby River steelhead, like this one, provide a popular spring fishery in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom Village of Orleans. There fish are on their spring spawning run from Lake Memphremagog during April and May.

Photo by Wayne Laroche

Black River - From the Connecticut River boundary upstream to the top of the Lovejoy Dam in Springfield.

Lamoille River - From the Lake Champlain boundary (top of Peterson Dam in Milton) upstream to the top of the hydroelectric Dam at Fairfax Falls.

Lewis Creek - From the Lake Champlain boundary upstream to the State Prison Hollow Road (TH #3) bridge in Starksboro.

Ompompanoosuc River - From the Connecticut River boundary upstream to the Union Village Dam in Thetford.

Otter Creek - From the Lake Champlain boundary upstream to top of Center Rutland Falls in Rutland.

West River - From the Connecticut River boundary upstream to the Townshend Dam (Townshend) to Connecticut River boundary.

White River - From the Connecticut River boundary upstream to the bridge on Route 107 in Bethel.

Williams River - From the Connecticut River boundary upstream to the top of the dam at Brockway Mills Falls in Rockingham.

Winooski River - From the Lake Champlain boundary upstream to the Bolton Dam in Duxbury and Waterbury.

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Vermont's Spring Trout Fishing Opens April 12

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"We know anglers are keen to wet a line as early as possible," said Vermont Director of Fisheries Eric Palmer. "If weather conditions cooperate, these river sections will provide a great opportunity to do some catch-and-release trout fishing with artificials between now and the traditional start of trout season in April."

Vermont is known for excellent fishing opportunities for wild trout, and some of the biggest brown and rainbow trout are caught during early spring in many rivers throughout the state.

"Willoughby River steelhead provide a popular spring fishery in the Northeast Kingdom at the Village of Orleans," said Palmer. "These steelhead are on their spring spawning run from Lake Memphremagog, and they always attract a lot of interest, partly because they can be seen jumping the falls in Orleans."

As an added bonus, Vermont's catch-and-release bass fishing season in lakes starts the same day as trout season on April 12 and continues through June 13. Only lures and flies may be used, and bass must be immediately released.

The Fish & Wildlife Department is cautioning anglers that the use of felt-soled boots or waders in Vermont waters is prohibited in order to prevent the spread of the invasive algae called didymo.

Anglers also are reminded to use sinkers that are not made of lead. It is unlawful to use a lead sinker weighing one-half ounce or less while fishing in Vermont. Weighted fly line, lead-core line, downrigger cannonballs, weighted flies, lure, spoons, or jig heads are not prohibited.

Planning a Vermont spring fishing trip is easy. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has a 2014 Vermont Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Laws and Guide that includes maps showing lakes and streams as well as fishing access areas and public lands. It also lists the fish species found in each body of water and it includes fishing regulations. Copies are available where fishing licenses are sold, or from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Tel. 802-828-1000. You also can download sections of the publication from their website.

The Vermont Outdoor Guides' Association offers help in locating fishing guides and some overnight facilities on their website (www.VOGA.org). Additional help in finding a place to stay overnight can be found at (www.VermontVacation.com).

Fishing license fees are \$25.00 for adult residents, \$8.00 for residents 15-17 years of age, \$50.00 for adult nonresidents, and \$15.00 for nonresidents 15-17 years old. One, three and seven day fishing licenses also are available for nonresidents. Children under age 15 do not need a fishing license in Vermont. Licenses are quickly and easily available on Fish & Wildlife's website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) and at agents statewide.

Delayed Spring Weather Changes Options for Vermont Anglers



The late return of spring weather and persistent ice may alter the plans of some anglers this year. While the winter weather extends opportunities for ice fishing on some water bodies, it can also delay anglers' access to open water for the start of trout season.

Trout fishing season opens on April 12 this year, but on most waters in Vermont trout fishing is restricted to casting and trolling rather than ice fishing. Anglers should take note that on rivers, streams, and lakes with seasonal closures, they may not cut a hole through the ice to go ice-fishing for trout during the open-water trout season.

Lake Champlain, however, is open to year-round trout fishing and it does not matter whether the angler is ice fishing or fishing open water. Many other lakes and ponds are open to year-round fishing for species such as yellow perch and northern pike. For a list of year-round fishing spots, see the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website, www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

"Late springs such as this one traditionally delay the onset of open-water fishing by a few weeks," said Col. David LeCours, Fish & Wildlife's head of law enforcement. "But during these years, the ice fishing on lakes such as Champlain and Memphremagog remains good as long as the ice remains stable and safe."

LeCours reminded anglers that ice shanties must have been removed by the last Sunday in March, even if the ice remains thick. Temporary fabric wind shelters that remain with the angler are permitted. He also urged anglers to check fishing regulations regarding which waters remain open to fishing year round.

Anglers should proceed with caution and continuously check ice thickness and stability when walking out on ice. Ice conditions have become dangerously thin in many parts of Vermont.

2,760 Acres of Habitat Improved on State Wildlife Areas in 2013

Vermont's state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are increasingly important in providing a place for people to enjoy wildlife-associated recreation as more of the state is developed. The WMAs also contain key habitats for a diverse array of wildlife species from bats to black bears and spruce grouse to snowshoe hare.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department annually manages 89

VT's 89 Wildlife Management Areas are scattered throughout the state and easily discovered under "Maps" on the left side of VT Fish & Wildlife's home page. This colorful field is located in the Eagle Point WMA on the shore of Lake Memphremagog in Derby, VT

Photo by Paul Hamelin



WMAs and many riverfront parcels totaling more than 133,000 acres to conserve fish, wildlife and their habitats and for people to enjoy while hunting, fishing, trapping and pursuing other wildlife-based recreation.

A key factor in providing places for many different wildlife species to feed, raise young and find shelter is to have an abundance of different types of habitat available. A mix of mature hardwood and softwood forests, as well as areas with young saplings and open fields all help provide habitat that allows wildlife to prosper. Habitat is constantly changing as trees occupy fields, and as they grow through different stages of development. Maintaining different habitat types requires ongoing management and maintenance.

Each year the Fish & Wildlife Department reports on habitat improvement and maintenance work it performs on the WMAs scattered throughout the state, and the department has just issued its report for 2013 showing that 2,760 acres of habitat on WMAs received treatment of one form or another.

The report, which you can download from Fish & Wildlife's website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com), highlights many accomplishments during the year. Here are some examples:

646 acres of timber were harvested in 10 different areas, which will stimulate regeneration of young timber.

1,102 trees were planted along river banks to restore habitat and stabilize the banks.

360 wild fruit and nut trees were maintained.

7 acres of apple trees were released.

64 acres received invasive plant control measures.

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2,760 Acres of Habitat Improved on State Wildlife Areas in 2013

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A major improvement to help people discover and learn about WMAs was added in the form of a new web-based mapping tool (www.anr.state.vt.us/fwd/WmaLocator.aspx) providing better, more up-to-date information.

Fish & Wildlife added 579 acres to four WMAs in 2013, and 12 parcels ranging up to 3,000 acres are currently in various stages of acquisition.

“We acquired many of these WMAs over the years because of the unique habitat they contained, and because they would provide places for people to enjoy wildlife recreation in the future,” said Paul Hamelin, the state wildlife biologist responsible for coordinating the habitat work that gets done on WMAs. “It’s a great feeling of accomplishment to know that today’s children and grandchildren will have accessible places to go where they can enjoy Vermont’s wildlife.”

Special Assignment

By Instructor Robert Lajoie

“Bob Lajoie come to the office,” the principal's voice demanded on the school intercom.

I got up out of my seat in the classroom. My friends heckled me as I started my walk to the office. I was spirited but not a bad kid.

I got to the main office and the secretary pointed and told me to go right in. The principal was looking out his window, and he told me to come over and look.

Just beyond his window, I saw a red fox outside hunting.

After a minute or so, the principal finally spoke. “This is too good not to share,” he said with quiet excitement.

We watched until the fox caught and ate a mouse. As the fox trotted out of sight, the principal said I could return to class if I wanted to. I thanked him for the opportunity.

When I returned to class my friends looked at me. I shrugged my shoulders.

“Special assignment,” I said.



Public Invited to Weigh in on Kingdom Heritage Lands Management and Access

The public will soon have an opportunity to provide input on recent updates to the draft management plan and on public access on the Kingdom Heritage Lands in Essex County. There will be three public meetings and a comment period through June 11 to gather public input on the proposed updates.

The Kingdom Heritage Lands include West Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, and the Plum Creek Timberlands. They are comprised of vast, remote wetlands, streams, and forests hosting wildlife including moose and spruce grouse. The lands are popular for the diverse recreational opportunities offered such as hunting, fishing, bird-watching, snowmobiling, and horseback riding.

West Mountain Wildlife Management Area, at 22,971 acres, is the largest wildlife management area in Vermont. It is managed for public use and conservation through a unique partnership that includes the departments of Fish & Wildlife and Forests, Parks, & Recreation, the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and numerous stakeholder groups.

This partnership, in collaboration with the Vermont Land Trust, also manages a public access easement on 84,000 acres of surrounding forests owned by Plum Creek Timber Company.

The planning and management of these lands are guided by numerous legal requirements and restrictions written into the original purchase agreement. "Public involvement has been extensive in this effort to help guide the management of this large, complex property," said Doug Morin of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. "We rely on input from the public to help steer this process and encourage all those interested in these lands to provide us with their comments and ideas."

The public meetings will be held from 7-9 p.m. at the following locations:

April 29 at Brighton Elementary School (825 Railroad Street, Island Pond).

April 30 at Montpelier High School (5 High School Drive, Montpelier).

May 5 at Lyndon State College, ASAC building (see www.tinyurl.com/LyndonCampusMap).

There will be a brief presentation on the update process and the draft plans, and then the floor will be open for questions, comments, and discussion.

More information, including the new draft plans, can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/WestMtnReview. Public comments are welcomed until June 11, 2014 at ANR.FWWMAComments@state.vt.us, or by sending a letter to Doug Morin, Vermont Fish & Wildlife, 1229 Portland St, St Johnsbury, VT 05819.

Contact Us!

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