

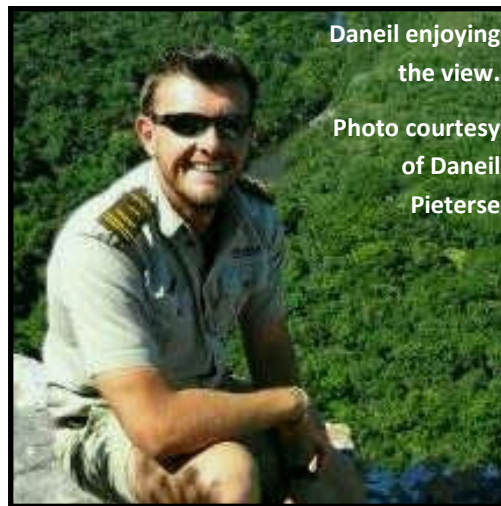


## Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

Happy fall! We weren't able to get a newsletter out for September, and we apologize for that! As you all know, September is BUSY for all of us! We have held tons of classes throughout the state, and we still have more going! Hopefully you've been relishing this beautiful fall, maybe going bow hunting, leaf peeping, or enjoying some fishing. In this issue you will find press releases, articles relevant to the program, and a few columns written by Hunter Ed staff members. Enjoy!

### New Staff Introductions

#### *Daneil Pieterse: Shooting Range Project Technician*



I was born in Cape Town, South Africa, but was brought up in the bush! Nature and hunting has always been a large part of my upbringing. I experienced my first hunt when I was 12 years old and ever since that day I believed that my destiny was to be an outdoorsman and a conservationist. I majored in Conservation at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town, South Africa.

After Graduating in 2006, I worked for Camdeboo National Park, a magnificent property in the heart of the Karroo. I was lucky to be involved in many aspects of the day to day operations and management of the park—everything from anti-poaching patrols, game-capture operations, environmental education, public relations and land management projects.

My next venture was working as a ranger and guide for a private game reserve on the East coast of South Africa. During my six years on the reserve I had worked hard, while continuing my studies part time through FGASA and had reached the level of being Head Ranger & Operations manager.

In 2012 I moved to Vermont, working as a Field Technician with the Department of Fish & Wildlife. I worked with biologist Doug Blodgett in Rutland, helping to study and conserve Vermont's endangered Timber Rattlesnake.

I have been hired as the new Shooting Range Project Technician. This is a challenging new position for me within the Department and I look forward to working here.

# New Staff Introductions

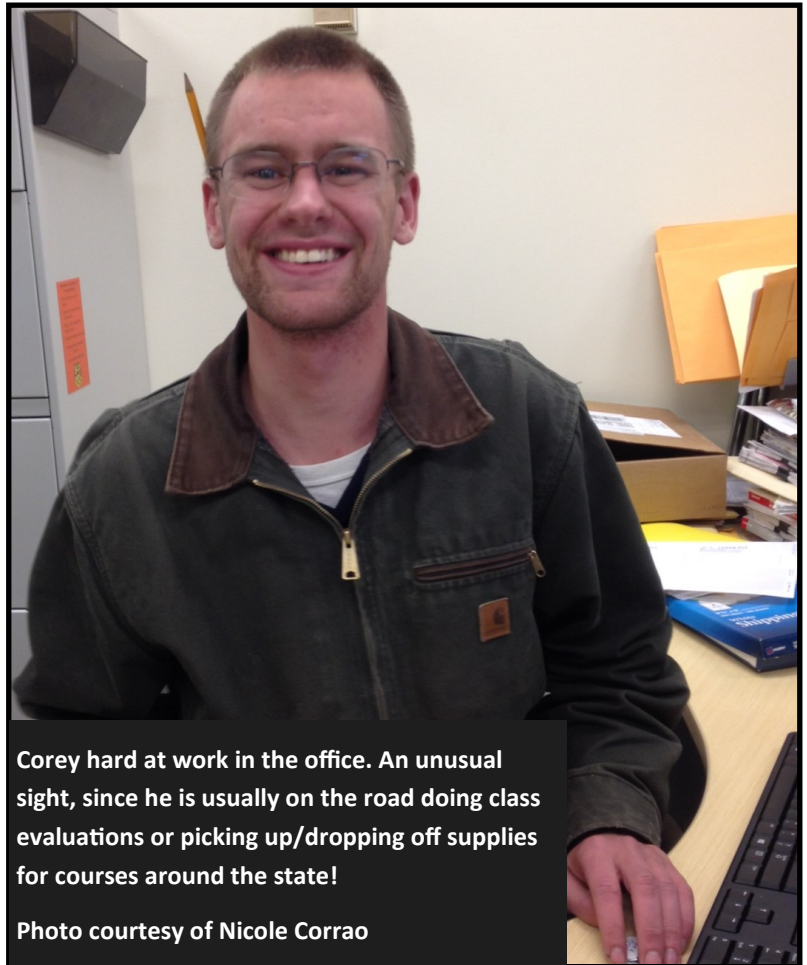
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## *Corey Hart: Hunter Education Specialist*

Growing up in Maine I spent the vast majority of my time hunting and fishing. From an early age I was immersed in the outdoors and have grown to love everything about our natural resources.

I have a Bachelor Degree in Conservation Law Enforcement from Unity College in Maine. While in college, I spent a lot of my time volunteering on a search and rescue team and had the opportunity to participate in searches all over the state.

Before coming to Hunter Education, I worked for VT Fish and Wildlife's Green Mountain Conservation Camps for four seasons and was most recently the Director at Buck Lake in Woodbury. I am very excited for this new experience and am looking forward to getting to know everyone!



Corey hard at work in the office. An unusual sight, since he is usually on the road doing class evaluations or picking up/dropping off supplies for courses around the state!

Photo courtesy of Nicole Corrao

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## Hunter Education Program Staff Contacts

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# Vermont Moose Check Stations Open Oct 18-23

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The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department reminds moose hunters with permits for the October 18-23 moose hunting season that if they take a moose, they must bring it to one of the five designated biological moose reporting stations within 48 hours.

“We strongly suggest you report your moose as quickly as possible in order to protect against meat spoilage,” said Cedric Alexander, Vermont’s moose biologist. “We will be operating biological moose check stations only during the October 18-23 season from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the State Highway Garages in Barton, Island Pond, Middlesex and Londonderry, and at Bernie’s Market on U.S. Route 2 in Concord Village. Weighing scales will be present at all five stations.”

The State Highway Garages are located as follows:

- Barton: on Route 16 just south of I91 exit 25
- Island Pond: just west of the village on Route 114
- Middlesex: on US Route 2 one mile west of I89 exit 9
- Londonderry: on Derry Wood Road, one quarter mile east of the junction of Routes 100 and 11

An archery moose hunting season was held October 1-7, during which successful hunters could take their moose to a big game reporting station that normally receives deer, bear and turkey taken by hunters. Any moose to be reported on October 24 or 25 must also be taken to one of these same big game reporting station.



Hunters who get a moose during Vermont’s October 18-23 hunting season are required to take it to one of five check stations so biologists can weigh it and gather biological information.

Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife

# The 2015 Vermont Fish & Wildlife Calendar is Available

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and Vermont Life Magazine are announcing the release of the colorful 2015 Fish & Wildlife calendar. This year's edition of the calendar maintains the popular large format and includes inset images, matching the format of Vermont Life's other popular calendars.

The new Vermont Fish & Wildlife calendar is filled with spectacular photos of Vermont wildlife and striking scenes of people enjoying the state's vast fish and wildlife resources. The calendar includes hunting, fishing and trapping season dates for each month – the perfect gift for any hunter or angler! These calendars usually sell out early, so get your copy today.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife calendars can be ordered online from Vermont Life's website at [www.VermontLifeCatalog.com](http://www.VermontLifeCatalog.com) or by phone (1-800-455-3399).



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## FAQ with Nicole



Nicole at the range.  
Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers.

**Q:** What can the Hunter Education Program do for my class?

**A:** Just like school teachers, our instructors often go above and beyond—buying equipment for their classes, getting accommodations for their students, etc. If you ever wonder whether or not we can help you pay for something, just ask! Recently, we purchased .410 ammo for a student who was too small to shoot a 20ga shotgun, and a canopy for the range portion of an outdoor class. Call us to find out what we can do for your class! Contact Dylan or Corey on the main line at 802-828-1193.

# Be Alert to Avoid Moose on the Highway

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Drivers need to be alert and cautious because moose are on the move, according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

Moose are more likely to be crossing roadways at this time of year, especially after dark or early in the morning. The peak of their breeding season is late September and the first two weeks of October.

“Motorists hit 75 moose on Vermont highways during 2013,” said Col. David LeCours of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “We are asking drivers to be especially careful and for people to enjoy watching moose from a distance. Moose can be unpredictable and dangerous if you get too close and they feel cornered or get irritated.”

Moose are a threat to motorists, but there are measures you can take to avoid hitting them, according to Fish & Wildlife:

- Always be aware of the danger -- moose cross the road randomly, as well as at their regular crossings.
- Increase your roadside awareness and reduce your speed when you see MOOSE CROSSING signs along the highway. When on secondary roads, the recommended speed is 40 mph or less in these moose crossing areas.
- Drive defensively and don't overdrive your headlights. Moose are more active at night and early morning, and they are difficult to see because of their dark color.
- If you see a moose ahead, slow down or stop. Trying to speed past them "before they can move" can be a serious mistake.

Vermont highway sections most frequented by moose:

- Rt.105 from Island Pond to Bloomfield.
- Rt.114 from East Burke to Canaan.
- Rt.2 from Lunenburg to East St. Johnsbury.
- Interstate 91 at Sheffield Heights.
- Interstate 89 from Bolton to Montpelier.
- Rt. 12 from Worcester to Elmore.
- Rt 118 near Belvidere Corners and the Rt. 109 intersection.



Eighteen people have died in motor vehicle collisions with moose on Vermont highways since 1985.

# Another Promising Year for Winooski River Salmon



Vermont anglers have something new to smile about. Strong spawning runs of landlocked Atlantic salmon from Lake Champlain have been returning to the Winooski River in the fall. The runs are monitored annually at the Winooski River fish lift, the main feature of a trap and truck fish passage project built into the Winooski One hydroelectric

Winooski One station operator Jon Clark holds up a 32-inch, 14-pound male landlocked Atlantic salmon lifted during the 2014 fall salmon run.

Photo courtesy of Nick Staats.

facility above the Salmon Hole in Winooski. The last few years have seen the highest numbers of salmon in the fish lift since the facility opened in 1993. Biologists are hoping that trend continues this fall.

“I think we’ve really turned the corner in Lake Champlain salmon restoration,” said Nick Staats, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fishery biologist who is monitoring the salmon run in cooperation with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. “In the last few years not only has the number of returning salmon increased but the size of these salmon has also increased. Just last week we handled a 32-inch, 14-pound male salmon, which would be a new state record.”

“Burlington Electric is proud to be part of the salmon restoration program in Lake Champlain,” said Neale Lunderville, Interim General Manager of Burlington Electric Department (BED), which recently purchased the hydroelectric station from the Winooski One Partnership. “Helping the salmon population grow and thrive in the lake is a rewarding part of our ongoing environmental mission at BED.”

“Winooski One and Green Mountain Power have been excellent partners in the fish passage program,” Staats added. “I look forward to working with Burlington Electric.”

More salmon means more fishing opportunities for the public as well. Salmon captured at Winooski One will be transported and released above the dam on the Winooski River. Salmon will have access to the upper Winooski and its tributaries from the Essex 19 dam, near the five-corners in Essex Junction, upstream 23 miles to the Bolton Dam. Anglers are allowed a daily limit of 2 salmon with a minimum length of 15 inches. Steelhead rainbow trout captured at the fish lift will be released between the Winooski One and Essex 19 dams.

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## ***Another Promising Year for Winooski River Salmon***

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The increasing salmon returns are testament to the cooperative efforts of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, New York Department of Environmental Conservation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore this native fish to Lake Champlain. Aggressive sea lamprey control and ongoing stocking efforts are central to the success of the restoration program.

“We’ve had dramatic declines in sea lamprey wounding rates over the past several years, which are resulting in improved survival and growth of salmon and trout stocked in Lake Champlain,” said Brian Chipman, a Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department fisheries biologist. “Anglers have been reporting excellent salmon fishing in the lake, and those fishing opportunities will be extended up the Winooski River.”

## **Federal Grant to Help VT Bat Research**

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The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will receive a grant for \$42,895 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this year to support bat research and monitoring related to White-nose Syndrome. This funding will support conservation and recovery of the six cave bat species affected by the deadly fungal disease. Vermont is one of 30 states this year to receive this special grant funding.

“This grant represents a great partnership between our two agencies with the goal of protecting our small remnant populations of cave bats and developing a plan for their long-term recovery,” said Alyssa Bennett, state small mammals biologist. “With help from cooperating researchers and other state agencies, we are able to stretch these dollars and contribute to answers about why some species and individuals survive, while others succumb to the disease.”

White-nose Syndrome affects six of Vermont’s nine species of bats, but some species have suffered more drastic declines than others. Vermont’s little brown bat population has declined by up to 90 percent, and the northern long-eared bat has declined as much as 98 percent from the disease. Both species, as well as the tri-colored bat, were added to the state endangered species list. Bats contribute to the economy and ecosystem by foraging on many species of insects, including agricultural and forest pests.

The department plans to use this grant for a variety of work, including a statewide acoustic monitoring project to locate and identify remnant populations of cave bats throughout the state. The work also includes further investigations into the current disease-related mortality rate over the winter and contributing to national bat conservation and recovery efforts.

“Bats migrate between summer and winter roost sites and don’t recognize state boundary lines,” says Bennett, “so this funding source allows states to work together toward a common goal of conserving bats for future generations.”

# An Archery Season Reminder from Fish & Wildlife

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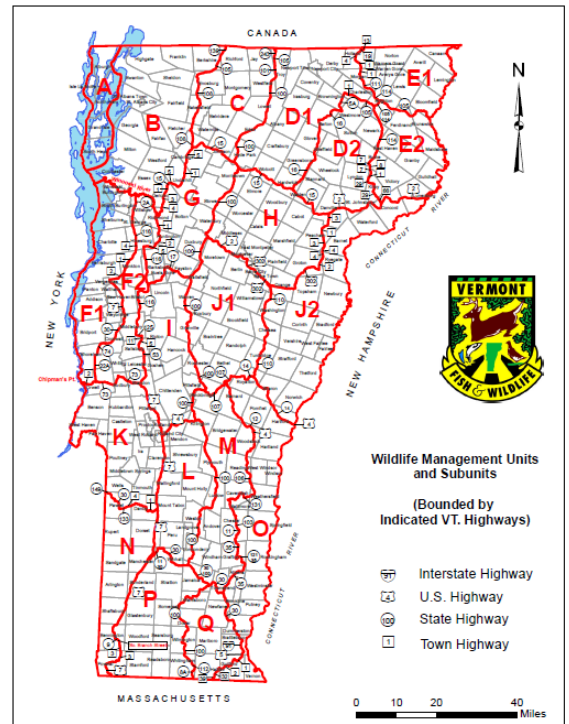
Vermont's archery deer season starts Saturday, October 4.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department reminds hunters that no antlerless deer may be taken in three Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) in the Northeast Kingdom during the 2014 archery season. The boundaries of several of the WMUs also were changed this year.

A hunter may take up to three deer in Vermont's two-part archery season with three archery licenses. No more than one of the deer taken during archery season may be a legal buck. No antlerless deer may be taken in Wildlife Management Unit (WMUs) D2, E1 or E2, where antlerless deer hunting is prohibited except during the November 8-9 Youth Deer Hunting Weekend in 2014.

Vermont's two-part archery deer season dates are October 4-26 and December 6-14 this year.

A map showing the revised WMU boundaries can be found on pages 22-23 of the 2014 Vermont Hunting, Fishing & Trapping LAWS and GUIDE, available where licenses are sold. The map also is on Fish & Wildlife's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)).



## Public Hearing on Aerial Hunting, Oct. 21

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A public hearing on a proposed regulation controlling the use of unmanned aerial vehicles or drones for hunting will be held by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Board on Tuesday, October 21 in Montpelier.

The proposed regulation would make it unlawful for any person to take or attempt to take wild animals while flying in an aircraft or by use of an unmanned aerial vehicle or drone.

The hearing will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Pavilion Auditorium at 109 State Street in Montpelier.

The full text of the proposed regulation can be viewed on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)) under Law Enforcement – Rules and Proposed Rules.



# Antlerless Permits

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The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will be mailing out Vermont antlerless hunting permits for the December muzzleloader season in mid-November. The department also says it has some unallocated permits available in southwestern Vermont that can be purchased on a first-come, first-served basis.

“Hunters who drew an antlerless permit in the lottery drawing, with results now posted on our website, are wondering when they will receive their permits,” said Fish & Wildlife’s Director of Wildlife, Mark Scott. “We plan on mailing those permits, which are on orange postcards, in mid-November.”

“We also want to let people know that some antlerless permits are still available in Wildlife Management Units K and N in southwestern Vermont. Excess permits are available in these units because not enough people applied to hunt there in the lottery.”

The remaining permits can be purchased on the department’s website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)) and printed at home.

## Treestand Safety Tips for Hunters

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Tree stands get hunters out of sight and smell of wary deer, but they can also get hunters into trouble. Here are some tips from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department to help stay safe and get the most out of your tree stand hunting experience:

- Choose a live, straight tree.
- Buy smart. Only use stands certified by the Treestand Manufacturers Association (TMA).
- Inspect them each time you use them.
- Know the rules. On state lands, it is illegal to place nails or other hardware into trees or to build permanent structures. On private lands, you must have landowner permission to erect a tree stand, cut or remove trees or other plants, or to cut limbs. All stands, including ground blinds, must be marked with the owner’s name and address.
- Always wear a full-body safety harness, even for climbing. Most falls occur going up and down the tree and getting in and out of the stand.
- Don't go too high. The higher you go, the vital zone on a deer decreases, while the likelihood of a serious injury increases.
- Never carry firearms or bows up and down trees. Always use a haul line to raise and lower all gear. Make sure your firearm is unloaded.
- Familiarize yourself with your gear before you go. The morning of opening day is a poor time to put your safety belt on for the first time.
- Be careful with long-term placement. Exposure can damage straps, ropes and attachment cords. Also, the stand’s stability can be compromised over time, as the tree grows.

Hunt smart. Hunt safe. Wear Orange.

# Vermont's Deer Hunting Opportunities

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Sportsmen and women should be optimistic about the upcoming deer hunting seasons, according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

“Our overall herd health is good, and people are seeing a lot of deer right now,” said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. “Hunters who scout early should do well as favorite fall foods for deer -- apples and nuts -- appear spotty. Hunters should key in on these fall food areas, because deer will concentrate in them.”

According to Vermont deer biologist Adam Murkowski biological data on the health of deer collected during last fall's hunting seasons show that Vermont's deer continue to remain in good health. Additionally, Murkowski noted that recent weather data indicate the past three winters have not been severe in nature -- a boon to deer throughout the state.

“It is important that hunters continue to act as local wildlife managers and stewards through harvesting an adequate number of antlerless deer this year,” Murkowski said. “Maintaining a healthy deer herd is beneficial to Vermont hunters, the deer and the habitats that support them. Scientific management of the state's deer herd would not be possible without the active participation of Vermont hunters.”

“Sportsmen and women should take note that the boundaries of some wildlife management units have been changed to better reflect wildlife populations and land uses. These changes will take affect during the 2014 hunting seasons, and hunters should be familiar with these changes when going afield and when reporting their harvest.”

A 2014 Vermont Deer Hunting Guide can be downloaded from the department's website at [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com). It includes a map of the revised Wildlife Management Units (WMUs), season dates, regulations, and other helpful information.

In Vermont, a hunter may take up to three deer in a calendar year in any combination of seasons (Archery, Youth Weekend, November Rifle Season, December Muzzleloader). Of these, only two may be legal bucks, and only one buck may be taken in each season. A “legal buck” is a deer with at least one antler having two or more points one inch or longer. All three deer in the annual bag limit may be antlerless deer taken in archery, youth or muzzleloader seasons.

Spike-antlered deer are protected except during the youth deer weekend. A point must be one inch or longer from base to tip. The main beam counts as a point, regardless of length. (Continued on next page)



Photo courtesy of Dave Yandell

# ***Vermont's Deer Hunting Opportunities***

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## **Archery Season Oct. 4-26 and December 6-14**

Vermont's archery deer hunting season offers hunters the chance to take up to three deer with three archery licenses. No more than one of the deer taken during split archery season may be a legal buck. No antlerless deer may be taken in Wildlife Management Units (WMU) D2, E1 and E2.

## **Youth Deer Weekend Nov. 8-9**

Youth deer hunting weekend, open to residents and nonresidents, is open the Saturday and Sunday before the regular rifle season. Anyone, resident or nonresident, who is 15 years old or younger on the weekend of the hunt and who has successfully completed a hunter safety course may purchase a hunting license and obtain a free youth deer hunting tag.

The young hunter must be accompanied by an unarmed adult over 18 years of age who holds a Vermont hunting license. Landowner permission is required in order to hunt on private land during the youth deer hunt weekend.

A young hunter who has obtained a Vermont hunting license and youth deer tag may take one deer of either sex during youth deer hunting weekend in any WMU. The antler restriction that applies for other Vermont deer seasons does not apply for youth deer hunting weekend.

## **Rifle Season Nov. 15-30**

Vermont's November rifle season begins on the Saturday 12 days before Thanksgiving and runs for 16 consecutive days. The rifle season offers the opportunity to enjoy north country deer hunting at its best. One legal buck with at least one antler having two or more points may be taken anywhere in the state during this season.

## **Muzzleloader Season Dec. 6-16**

During the muzzleloader season one legal buck may be taken with at least one antler having two or more points with the muzzleloader license tag. A regular hunting license must be purchased to get the muzzleloader license.

In addition to a legal buck, a muzzleloader hunter who receives an antlerless permit may take an antlerless deer in the Wildlife Management Unit indicated on the permit. (Continued on next page)

# ***Vermont's Deer Hunting Opportunities***

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Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers, Vermont Fish & Wildlife

## **Planning Your Hunt**

The 2013 Vermont Deer Harvest Report, available from the Fish & Wildlife Department's web site ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)) has a wealth of information to help plan a hunt, including the number of deer taken in each town. Click on "Hunting and Trapping" and "Big Game" to download a copy of the report.

Vermont's regular hunting licenses, including a November rifle season buck tag, still cost only \$25 for residents and \$100 for nonresidents. Hunters under 18 years of age get a break at \$8 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents.

Hunters must have a standard hunting license in order to purchase an add-on archery deer hunting license (\$23 residents, \$38 nonresidents), except that nonresidents may purchase an "archery only deer license" costing just \$75.

Muzzleloader licenses are \$23 for residents, \$40 for nonresidents, and a regular hunting license is required first.

Licenses are quickly and easily available on Fish & Wildlife's web site and from license agents statewide.

The "2014 Vermont Hunting, Fishing & Trapping LAWS and GUIDE" explains all of Vermont's hunting regulations and includes maps showing public hunting areas, as well as a map showing the WMU boundaries. It is available electronically on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website and in paper versions where licenses are sold.

In Vermont you can enjoy your hunting any day of the week, including Sundays, and all seasons are open equally for residents and nonresidents.

Contact the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department for more information. Telephone 802-828-1000 or Email [fwinformation@state.vt.us](mailto:fwinformation@state.vt.us).

# Migratory Game Bird Hunters Must Register with H.I.P.

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All Vermont migratory game bird hunters, including youth, permanent and lifetime license holders, must register with the Federal Harvest Information Program (H.I.P.) each year in each state that you hunt.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department provides migratory game bird hunters with a H.I.P. registration process online and by phone. Vermont, like other states, is required to annually provide a list of hunter names to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The list is used for their national migratory game bird harvest surveys.

H.I.P. enables the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S.F.W.S.) and state fish and wildlife agencies to develop reliable estimates of the number of migratory game birds harvested throughout the country. These estimates are important in making sound decisions about setting hunting season dates, bag limits and population management for ducks, geese, coots, snipe, and woodcock.

Hunters of migratory game birds are required to register on Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website ([vtfishandwildlife.com](http://vtfishandwildlife.com)) or by calling toll-free 1-877-306-7091. After providing basic information, you will receive your annual H.I.P. registration number which you need to record on the H.I.P. section of your hunting license.

Hunters who have a permanent or lifetime Vermont hunting license should print out the website response form showing the H.I.P. number and carry this with them while hunting. Permanent and lifetime license holders who register by telephone between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday will receive a number over the phone for their license.

Hunters who have registered for H.I.P. and have lost their license or H.I.P. number can look up their number on Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website.



Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife

# Vt. fishing opportunities heat up as waters cool

Despite dropping temperatures and shorter days, the fall season brings out some of the year's hottest fishing action on lakes, ponds, rivers and streams throughout Vermont and the state's Fish & Wildlife Department is urging anglers to take advantage of these prime angling opportunities.

"As water temperatures cool off, many different fish species begin to feed heavily," said Shawn Good, fisheries biologist with Vermont Fish & Wildlife. "From warm water species such as largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, perch, and walleye, to cold water species like trout and salmon, fish feeding activity really picks up across the board and creates exceptional fishing conditions for anglers."

While the hot temperatures of summer can sometimes make fishing slow, the autumn months represent a transition time where fish generally become more active and easier to catch. This increase in feeding activity can be attributed to fish boosting their reserves of essential nutrients in order to sustain themselves during the winter when their metabolism slows and they feed less.

Fishing pressure on Vermont waters also decreases significantly as the seasons change, so there is less competition from other anglers.

"Fall is one of the absolute best times to be on the water in Vermont

– regardless of what species you want to target or where you want to fish," said Good. "Some of the best days I've ever had on the water have come late in the fall when many other anglers have already put their rods away for the winter. It's an amazing time of year to be on the water, and you'll likely have your favorite fishing holes all to yourself."

One enhanced fall angling opportunity is bass fishing, whether it be on world-renowned Lake Champlain, the diverse Connecticut River or one of Vermont's many smaller lakes and ponds.

Professional tournament angler Dave Wolak of North Carolina, who has numerous victories and top finishes in Bassmaster and FLW Outdoors competitions on Lake Champlain, relishes fall bass fishing in Vermont. (Continued on next page)



Shawn Good, a fisheries biologist with Vermont Fish & Wildlife, poses with a beautiful late-fall Northern Pike caught on Lake Champlain.

Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

## ***Vt. fishing opportunities heat up as waters cool***

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"The fall makes the great bass fisheries of Vermont even greater," said Wolak. "Not only do cooling air temperatures make for comfortable fishing weather and less boat traffic for fishermen, but the bass also know to take advantage of cooling water temperatures by feeding shallow in preparation for winter. More and bigger bass in shallow usually means more bass action on the water."

"I've been coming to Vermont in the fall for decades and have always enjoyed the fall bass fishing because Vermont is one of those unique states in which the bass fisheries possess near equally abundant smallmouth and largemouth populations," said Wolak. "You can always bounce between different fishing strategies for the two bass species during other seasons, but I've found these healthy bass populations mix together more often in the fall when temperatures cool. This effect makes fall bass fishing in Vermont even more fun."

Other hot fall fishing action typically includes walleye fishing on the Connecticut River, landlocked salmon fishing on the Clyde River, and trout and salmon fishing on Lake Champlain, among various other opportunities.

One of the great things about late fall fishing is that there's no need to get an early start. Hitting the water at 6 or 7 a.m. for the early-morning bite isn't necessary.

"Sleep in and wait until the sun's well up and the surface water temperature has inched upwards a few degrees," said Good. "With water temperatures hovering in the 40s and low 50s, fish like bass and pike need a couple of extra hours to warm up and begin to feed. You can be on the water by 10 a.m. and off by 3 p.m. These are short days, but possibly some of the most productive of the year."

To purchase a Vermont fishing license or to find out more about fishing opportunities in Vermont, visit [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com).



# Vermont anglers, hunters and boaters reminded about cold water safety

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With the onset of autumn and resulting cold air and water temperatures, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is urging anglers, hunters and boaters to take caution and exercise safe practices while on the water this fall.

“The fall season can be a very enjoyable time of year to be on the water,” said Sgt. Keith Gallant, warden with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “With migrating waterfowl and great fishing opportunities, Vermont’s waterways are at their peak in the fall.”

Fall also brings lower water temperatures, which can increase the risk for hypothermia in the case of an on-the-water accident.

“The use of a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) is absolutely critical this time of year, given that it can significantly increase chances of survival in cold-water scenarios,” said Gallant.

Vermont boating laws require that all vessels carry one U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person on board. Vessels 16 feet in length or longer must also have one U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type IV PFD on board. Also, children under 12 years of age must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type I, II or III PFD at all times while any vessel is underway.

Additionally, New York State boating laws, which apply to waters on the New York side of Lake Champlain, require all persons aboard motorboats, canoes, kayaks, rowboats and sailboats less than 21 feet in length to wear a PFD while on New York waters from November 1 to May 1.

Sudden immersion in cold water, can lead to loss of swimming ability and strength, gasping and the inhalation of water, hypothermia, and rapid unconsciousness.

“Cold water removes body heat much faster than cold air, so wearing a life jacket is critical any time cold water is present,” said Gallant. “A life jacket won’t keep you warm in cold water, but it will keep you afloat in the event that you go overboard, which could mean the difference between life and death.”

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department also advises sportsmen and women to properly plan for a fall outing on the water by ensuring that they have all required safety equipment such as visual and audible distress signaling devices, plenty of warm clothing, and an updated weather forecast. Strong winds are common in the fall and can sometimes make for dangerous situations on larger bodies of water such as Lake Champlain.

To learn more about boating safety and Vermont’s boating laws, visit <http://www.boat-ed.com/vermont/handbook/>



# Walleye Stocking Returns to Island Pond

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The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has reinstated a program to stock walleye into Island Pond, a 600-acre lake in the Northeast Kingdom, stocking 14,350 fish into the waters this summer.

The stocking program is being done to bolster what is quickly becoming a walleye fishing destination in Vermont – 20 out of the 28 walleye entered in the 2014 Wright’s Northeast Kingdom Ice Fishing Derby came from Island Pond.

The Island Pond walleye population was first established through stocking roughly a century ago, but the population had virtually disappeared by the 1980s. Stocking was reinstated from 2000 to 2008 to test whether a self-sustaining population of walleye could be established by natural reproduction. However, the department determined after six years of monitoring that natural reproduction alone was not enough to meet angler demand.

“While we were waiting to see if the population could maintain itself without stocking, Island Pond became a popular location for walleye fishing,” said Jud Kratzer, fisheries biologist for Vermont Fish & Wildlife. “We decided to continue to support the walleye population there with regular stocking, which will help promote an important recreational fishing opportunity.”

The broodstock used for stocking walleye this year were drawn from Island Pond’s own walleye population.

Walleye will be stocked every other year in order to prevent creating competition among juvenile walleye that are too close together in age. Biologists anticipate that the juvenile walleyes will reach legal harvest size in about three to four years.



The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department recently reinstated a program to stock walleye in the Northeast Kingdom’s Island Pond. Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

# Spiny Water Flea Not Expected to Have Major Impact on Lake Champlain Fishing



A new aquatic invasive species, the spiny water flea, was recently identified in Lake Champlain, but biologists with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department do not believe the species will have a dramatic effect on fishing opportunities in the lake, or on most of the lake's native plants and animals.

Spiny water fleas have been in the Great Lakes since the 1980s, giving researchers several decades to study what happens when this species arrives in a new water body.

According to Shawn Good, fisheries biologist and head of the

department's aquatic invasive species team, while spiny water flea has had some impact on the Great Lakes, it has not proven as negative to fish populations as was once anticipated.

"Great Lakes anglers have needed to make some adjustments to fishing techniques due to the spiny water flea, but mostly it has been a minor inconvenience," said Good.

"Anglers who fish using downriggers have been the primary ones affected, but they've found ways to minimize the impacts by spooling their reels with heavier weight main line and attaching smaller diameter leaders," said Good. "The heavier main lines tend to prevent the spiny water flea from snagging and globbing up the line, while the finer leader still allows lures to be fished effectively for line-shy species like trout and salmon."

Good also points out that the spiny water flea has a confusing name. "This is not a flea – it is actually a crustacean," said Good. "Although the spines can present a problem for fish attempting to eat them, they do not pose any risk to people swimming in the lake. They won't cut your feet like zebra mussels."

Spiny water flea can disrupt the food web by preying on native zooplankton species, which are a food source for many small fish. But while some fish species avoid consuming spiny water fleas because of their barbed tails, others like smelt, cisco and alewife can actually begin targeting them as a food source.

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# ***Spiny Water Flea Not Expected to Have Major Impact on Lake Champlain Fishing***

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Good says that although they anticipate the effects of the spiny water flea to be modest in Lake Champlain, the effects could be more dramatic if they are moved to smaller, inland lakes. Therefore, boaters and anglers should remain vigilant for these aquatic hitchhikers and take every precaution to stop the spread of all invasive species.

“By our count this is the fiftieth aquatic invasive species to come to Lake Champlain,” said Good. “Even a minor addition to an ecosystem can significantly alter the balance among native species in ways that are often irreversible and the cumulative impact of these changes can be dramatic.”

“The best way to be sure of removing spiny water fleas or any other aquatic hitchhiker from your equipment is to dry it in the sun for five days before you move from Lake Champlain to another water body. You can also spray equipment with pressurized hot water to kill spiny water flea and their eggs,” said Good.



# Muskie Restoration Efforts Continue into Historic Range

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The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department continued its Lake Champlain muskellunge restoration efforts by stocking more than 7,000 fingerling muskies into the Missisquoi River and Missisquoi Bay last week.

This year, for the second time, muskellunge, or ‘muskie,’ were stocked above Swanton Dam up to the Highgate Falls Dam. This section of the Missisquoi River is the last location in Vermont that supported a naturally-reproducing native muskie population, before they disappeared in the late 1970s following a chemical spill.

Since 2008, the Fish & Wildlife Department has stocked more than 38,000 muskies into the Missisquoi River and Missisquoi Bay in an attempt to restore a viable population to Lake Champlain. Lake Champlain is the only lake in New England to which muskies are native.

“The muskie has a unique role as Lake Champlain’s apex aquatic predator,” said Shawn Good, the state fisheries biologist leading the muskie restoration effort. “On the Missisquoi River, muskies were historically important as a large mythical fish that was present but very difficult to catch. Successful anglers are members of a very small and fortunate club.”

The six-inch fish stocked in the river were donated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, which also stocks the Great Chazy River on the New York side of the lake with the same strain of muskie.

Genetic assessment of a small number of muskie caught by anglers since 2005 in the Lake Champlain Basin reveals these fish were stocked by the New York DEC into the Great Chazy River. They were not from the original native strain.

“In recent years, anglers have reported catching and releasing an occasional muskie in the lower Missisquoi River and Missisquoi Bay, and we’ve wondered if these were remnant native fish, or strays from New York,” said Good. “We now know through the genetic assessment that some of the muskie stocked in New York’s Great Chazy river make their way out into Lake Champlain and into Missisquoi Bay and Missisquoi River.”

Vermont regulations allow fishing for muskies on a catch-and-release basis only with artificial lures or flies. All muskies caught must be immediately released where they are caught.

“I have high hopes for these little guys,” said Good. “With so much habitat and food available to them in Lake Champlain, I expect these fish to grow fast and to get big. It’s not unreasonable to think that in the next few years, anglers could be catching trophy muskies measuring 50 inches or more from Lake Champlain.”

Muskies like this one held by state fisheries biologist Shawn Good may again be reproducing in the Missisquoi River and bay.  
Photo courtesy of VTF&W



# Loons Post Record Year for Nesting Success, Bald Eagle Nesting Down



A bald eagle sits on a nest near Barnet along the Connecticut River.

Photo courtesy of John Hall, VT Fish & Wildlife.

Vermont's loon population had a record year for nesting success, producing 65 fledglings, or chicks that survived to leave the nest, on lakes and ponds throughout the state. Loons faced dramatic declines in the 20th century mostly due to shoreline development and human disturbance of loon habitat, but were removed from Vermont's endangered species list in 2005 following decades of recovery efforts.

Peregrine falcons, which also were removed from Vermont's endangered species list in 2005, saw

similarly strong nesting success this year.

"Rare birds such as peregrine falcons and loons are very sensitive to human disturbance while nesting," said John Buck, nongame bird project leader for the Fish & Wildlife Department. "They nest only in a few specific habitats, so they need to find these in undeveloped places that are away from people."

The lingering winter weather appears to have proven difficult for Vermont's nesting bald eagles, which produced only 17 fledglings in 2014, down from 2013's modern day record of 26.

"A single down year for bald eagle nesting is not a major concern at this point, as nesting success will vary from year to year due to fluctuations in weather or food," said Buck. "We remain optimistic about the future of eagles in Vermont due to the widespread reports we have received of adult eagles throughout the state."

Bald eagles are no longer a federally endangered species, but they are still listed under Vermont's Endangered Species Act, as the birds have been slower to recover in the state. Other bird species monitored by the Fish & Wildlife Department and its partners saw mixed nesting success this year. Common terns produced only 16 fledglings out of 220 nests, due in part to depredation from gulls and great-horned owls on the nests. Biologists also monitored the grasshopper sparrow and black tern, which appeared to be stable in their small and limited habitats.

Vermont's rare birds are monitored in a cooperative agreement between the Fish & Wildlife Department and its conservation partners, Vermont Center for Ecostudies and Audubon Vermont.

"The return of loons and peregrines to Vermont is one of the state's great conservation success stories, but much remains to be done," said Buck. "The continued support from our partners and from the citizens of Vermont is critical for the future success of these important species."

Vermonters can help researchers in their effort to conserve birds by donating online to the nongame wildlife fund at [www.vtfishandwildlife.com/support\\_nongame.cfm](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/support_nongame.cfm) or by purchasing a newly redesigned conservation license plate, available in October.

## **Contact Us!**

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