

Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

What a snowy winter! Apologies for not getting a newsletter out for December and January, but we have been so busy with the Yankee Show, the Ice Fishing Festival, the Chief Instructor Meeting (held on February 8th, where Nicole, Dylan and Chris went through the bow exam with the group. Updates will come soon-ish), and more. The instructor award/recognition banquet is officially **March 28th at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier** so mark your calendars! This issue features press releases from the Department. If you have input—a question, a picture, or story—please e-mail Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us

Insights

New Instructor Trainings

New Instructor Trainings have taken on a new format that will be more convenient for instructors, involve less staff time, and immerse potential instructors in the program. New Instructor Trainings are more than just informational—they allow time for new instructors to meet and form a social network. We want to keep this social aspect, while making the training more accessible and convenient.

Any potential instructor will have to finish some mandated homework before the training class (the homework is online and available for free), and then attend a one-day in-person training with staff and certified instructors.

It used to be that a training would be discipline-specific. If you wanted to teach bow classes, you'd take a bowhunter instructor training course, and the same with trapping, and hunting. This is no longer the case. New Instructor Trainings will be general, so that anyone who wants to take a training has the ability to do so, no matter what discipline they want to teach. This will make it easier for people to get to trainings when we have them, and won't exclude people from taking any training.

After completing the course, applicants will enter the "mentor" or "apprentice" stage, where they must teach a course with a Chief Instructor in the discipline they wish to be certified in. The Chief Instructor must sign off on certain criteria, including having the apprentice teach a segment of the course, help with course paperwork, and aid in live-fire activities. This allows the apprentice time to understand all that goes on when scheduling, teaching, and submitting a class. After paperwork is submitted, the "apprentice" will receive their certification package in the mail.

If you want to attend a training, contact Dylan or Nicole at 802-828-1193.

Vermont Hunters Had a Safe Year

For the second time in three years, Vermont hunters had a perfectly safe record with no hunting-related shootings reported in Vermont. This includes the November rifle deer season when the vast majority of the state's 70,000 resident and nonresident hunters are in the woods.

"Vermont's hunters should be very proud," said Christopher Saunders, Hunter Education Manager. "This continues the state's safe hunting experience and marks the eighth year in the past decade that the state recorded five or fewer hunting-related shootings -- a track record that defies a common misperception that hunting is dangerous."

"I can't thank Vermont's 350 volunteer hunter education instructors enough for their hard work and dedication," said Saunders, "and Vermont hunters should be applauded for their vigilance in the field."

Mandatory hunter education in Vermont has led to an 80 percent decline in the hunting injury rate during the past three decades. Prior to hunter education becoming mandatory in 1975, the state sometimes recorded 20 to 30 hunting-related shootings per year. In addition, the growing use of hunter orange clothing, even though not mandated in Vermont, has likely also helped drive the rate down.

The universally safe hunting experience also reinforces the continued popularity of hunting in Vermont, which brings in more than \$260 million annually to the state and leverages an additional \$3.25 million in federal funding for wildlife conservation efforts.

Fish & Wildlife Dept Holds Free Trapping Seminar

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department will hold a free seminar entitled "Trapping Through the Ice" at the Edward Kehoe Education Center in Castleton, on Saturday, February 7.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife warden Dave Gregory will lead topics on regulations, trapping equipment, personal safety, and trapping techniques. Participants will spend a large portion of the day on Lake Bomoseen.

"Trapping through the ice can be a great way to get outside in the winter months," said Nicole Corrao, information and education specialist for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. "We're hoping that trappers will leave this seminar with a better understanding of how to safely and effectively trap through the ice."

Beavers and muskrats may be trapped until March 31, 2015. Otters can be trapped until February 28, 2015.

The seminar will run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and participants are encouraged to bring a lunch, though light refreshments will be served at the event. Proper attire is required as students will be outside for a majority of this seminar. Vermont Fish & Wildlife will provide all trapping equipment.

Registration is required by going to www.tinyurl.com/VtTrappingSeminar

Participants should note that this class is not a trapper education certification class.

F&W Board Votes on Proposed Deer Hunting Changes



Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Proposed changes in Vermont deer hunting regulations received a first vote by the Fish and Wildlife Board at their January 21 meeting in Montpelier. A series of public hearings, follow-up board meetings and two more board votes will be following in coming months before any changes can be adopted.

The changes, a mixture of department proposals and board-introduced motions, come on the

heels of a comprehensive deer management study and two years of public involvement, including meetings of regional working groups.

Three of the proposed changes would take effect this year. The first part of archery deer season would be lengthened by ten days – seven days prior to the existing season and three days after. Crossbows would be legalized for use whenever a regular bow and arrow could be used. Archery and muzzleloader season limits would be reduced from three to two deer.

“After receiving a number of petitions and requests to make a wide variety of changes to the current seasons and regulations, the Fish & Wildlife Department and the board began in early 2013 to take a comprehensive look at all of the rules around deer hunting,” said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter.

“After discussions with the department, and with a working group made up of dedicated and experienced deer hunters, the board has advanced a reasonable and thoughtful set of proposed changes. We will continue to discuss these options with the board and the public as we strive to always improve how we manage deer, deer habitat and to ensure deer hunting opportunities continue.”

If passed, a prohibition on the possession and use of deer urine-based lures and other deer fluids while deer hunting would be effective in 2016. This prohibition is a precaution against the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) into Vermont.

“Many of the chronic wasting disease outbreaks in other states have started in captive deer facilities exactly like the ones used to produce commercial deer urine lures,” said deer biologist Adam Murkowski. “Because CWD can be spread through deer urine, the Fish & Wildlife Board and the department are working to protect Vermont’s deer herd from this potentially devastating disease by prohibiting the use of natural deer urine lures in Vermont.”

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F&W Board Votes on Proposed Deer Hunting Changes

(Continued from previous page)

The archery season would begin the fourth Saturday in September and end the fourth Wednesday in October. The second part of archery season would remain the same – nine days beginning the Saturday after the end of the November deer season.

The lengths of youth deer season, November rifle season and muzzleloader season would remain the same.

The proposed regulation changes come after the Fish & Wildlife Department surveyed hunters during the past two years in response to changes suggested by some hunters. One survey shows that 68 percent of hunters are generally satisfied with Vermont deer hunting, indicating that a major overhaul of deer hunting regulations is not needed at this time.

The department will also conduct a three-year evaluation of the effects of the proposed regulation changes, including gathering more data on the current antler point restriction of at least one antler having two or more points.

“Preliminary numbers from 2014 hunting seasons compared to an average of the previous three years reflect a stable deer population in the state,” said Murkowski. “Vermont hunters took a total of 13,590 deer: 3,143 in archery season, 1,652 during youth weekend, 6,140 in rifle season, and 2,655 in muzzleloader season.”

Wording of the proposed regulation changes, additional information and a link for the public to add comments can be found at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.



Photo courtesy of Dave Yandell.

The Cookhouse

Doing some ice fishing this winter? Make your Valentine a delicious fish cake to show them you care! This recipe was originally published by Hank Shaw of Hunter, Angler, Gardener, Cook. The online version can be found here: <http://honest-food.net/2015/01/30/fish-cakes-recipe-wild-rice/>

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound cooked, flaked pike or other white fish
- 1 egg
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup cooked wild rice
- 1/4 cup minced onion
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise (I like Dijon)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped chives
- 1/4 cup butter, lard, or vegetable oil for cooking
- Greens for a salad



Photo courtesy of Hank Shaw.

Directions:

- 1) Make sure any bones are out of the fish. Mix everything (except the oil and salad greens) together in a large bowl. Divide the mix into 8 equal parts and form into patties. If you have time, set the patties on a cookie sheet in the fridge for 30 minutes to firm up. You can skip this step if you are rushed.
- 2) Fry the patties in the butter (or oil) until golden brown, about 3 to 5 minutes per side. Serve with a green salad.

Gary Robertson Wins Vermont's Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License Lottery

Gary K. Robertson, 60, of Loris, South Carolina is the lucky winner of a Vermont lifetime hunting and fishing license in the 2014 drawing from 4,474 lottery tickets purchased during the year.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department holds an annual "Lifetime License Lottery" drawing and presents a lifetime hunting and fishing license to the winner. The drawing was held at the department's headquarters in Montpelier during a December 17 meeting of the Fish and Wildlife Board.

"The License of a Lifetime Lottery gives anyone, resident or nonresident, an opportunity to win a Vermont hunting and fishing license that is valid for the rest of his or her life," said Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. "Even if you don't win the license, by applying, you have the good feeling of knowing you have contributed to fish and wildlife conservation in Vermont."

You can enter Vermont's License of a Lifetime Lottery by adding the \$2.00 entry fee when you buy your license on the Fish & Wildlife Department website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com), or by applying at locations statewide wherever Vermont hunting and fishing licenses are sold, or with a printable application also available on the department website. There is no limit on the number of times you may apply during a year.

Mr. Robertson improved his chances of winning the lifetime license by purchasing ten lottery tickets when he bought his license.

"This makes my day," he said. "I was born in Rutland, and I am recently retired from a military career, but I have always returned to Vermont to do my hunting and fishing. This is the best news I have heard in a long time."

The 4,474 Lifetime License Lottery tickets sold in 2014 was more than double the number purchased the previous year. The ease and efficiency of a new online licensing system is credited with the increase.

For more information on hunting and fishing in Vermont, contact Fish & Wildlife by calling 802-828-1000 or by emailing fwinformation@state.vt.us.

FAQ with Nicole

Q: When is the next New Instructor Training?

A: We have tentatively scheduled a New Instructor Training for the Bennington area on April 11th, and we hope to hold another training the following day, April 12th, in Caledonia. When we have the official dates, times, and locations, we will let all of you know!



Nicole in a duck blind.
Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers.

Batchelder Tapped for Head Game Warden Position

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has announced that Lt. Jason Batchelder has been named the new director of fish and wildlife law enforcement. Batchelder will begin the role of Colonel this week, filling the position vacated by Col. David LeCours who retired in October.

Batchelder has been with the department for ten years, working most recently in the Morrisville area, first as a field warden and then as the lieutenant for the northeast district since 2013.

“I am pleased and excited that Lt. Batchelder will be our new head of law enforcement,” said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. “During his time with the department, Lt. Batchelder has developed a reputation among his co-workers and with the general public of energetically, meticulously, and fairly pursuing fish and wildlife violators.”

Porter emphasized Batchelder’s knowledge and experience in his selection for the position. “Lt. Batchelder has a deep understanding of the vital role that law enforcement plays as part of the department’s overall mission,” said Porter.

Batchelder grew up in Derby, Vt. He worked for the U.S. Coast Guard in Virginia and Alaska for four years before graduating from the University of Southern Maine in 2001 and from the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council Academy in 2005. He currently lives in Morrisville with his wife and two young children. Batchelder is an avid hunter, angler and runner.

“Lt. Batchelder’s calm, thoughtful demeanor will be an important asset to the department in this position,” said Porter.



Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Vermont Turkey Hunters Had a Successful Year

Vermont wild turkey hunters had safe and successful spring and fall hunting seasons in 2014, according to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

A total of 6,414 turkeys were taken by hunters during Vermont's three hunting seasons – the spring youth hunt, the regular May spring season, and the fall turkey hunt.

Young turkey hunters mentored by experienced hunters took 554 bearded turkeys, which are almost always males, during the youth turkey hunt on the weekend before the regular spring season.

Hunters took 4,628 bearded turkeys in the May 1-31 regular spring turkey season.

Fall turkey hunting during October and November produced 1,232 turkeys of either sex, which was double that of 2013 and one of the highest fall harvests since Vermont's wild turkey population was restored in the early 1970's.

“Although the total harvest is less than last year's record, I am pleased that it is higher than average,” said wild turkey project leader Amy Alfieri. “This year's harvest number shows that Vermont's wild turkey population at this time can sustain itself through long, cold winter's like that of last year.”

Vermont's wild turkey population is estimated at 45,000 to 60,000 birds.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife also reports that no turkey hunting-related shooting incidents were reported for the fourth consecutive year.

For more information regarding Vermont's wild turkeys visit Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website at: www.vtfishandwildlife.com.



Vermont's wild turkeys are now well-established throughout the state as a result of scientific wildlife management practices that started in 1969 when birds were brought back to Vermont after their disappearance in the 1800s.

Photo courtesy of John Hall, Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Vermont Bear Hunters Had a Successful and Safe Season in 2014



Dylan Moore, age 14 of Rutland harvested this bear during the 2014 Vt bear season.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department reports that bear hunters in Vermont had a safe and successful hunting season in 2014. Hunters took 567 black bears during the 84 days of the two-part 'early bear season' and 'late bear season.' There were also no hunting-related shooting incidents.

The final harvest was nearly identical to the 2013 harvest, with 10 additional bears being taken in 2014. This represents a harvest that is consistent with the goal of stabilizing the bear population to remain within 4,500 to 6,000 bears, according to Fish & Wildlife Department bear biologist Forrest Hammond.

While 2014 bear harvest numbers nearly matched 2013 numbers, the timing of the harvest differed significantly. Bear hunters were much more successful this year during the early days of the hunt with 263 bears taken in September, nearly double last year's September harvest.

Hammond cited a decline in available foods and early snowfalls in 2014 as being responsible for the change in the timing of the harvest. "Our surveys of nut-producing mast trees such as beech, oak, and hickory indicated that only acorns were plentiful among fall food sources this year," said Hammond. "Unfortunately for the bears, oak trees are not widespread in Vermont, occurring mostly in the Connecticut River Valley and the Taconic Range in southwestern Vermont, so many bears moved to these areas of the state in search of food."

Hammond noted that the town of Rockingham in the southern Connecticut River Valley, which is not normally recognized as having a large bear population, had the largest number of bears taken of any town in the state at 12 bears.

"Bears also spent more time in September searching for food in open cornfields, making them more easily spotted by hunters and increasing the early season success rate," said Hammond.

A total of 458 bears were harvested during the early bear season while 109 were taken by hunters during the late bear season, which overlaps with the November deer season. November snowfalls may have driven bears into dens earlier than usual this year, which may account for the lower harvest during the late bear season when many hunters are out, but the bears were not.

Hammond also noted that participation in the early bear season was higher than anticipated, with 12,390 hunters choosing to purchase a \$5 early season bear tag, an increase of nearly 2,000 tags from the previous year.

"Between an abundant population, a long hunting season and the potential of harvesting delicious and nutritious bear meat, Vermonters and visitors are becoming increasingly interested in hunting this big game animal," said Hammond.

Vermont Hunters Had Successful 2014 Deer Seasons

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department says preliminary numbers show hunters took slightly more deer in 2014 hunting seasons compared to an average of the previous three years, reflecting a stable and healthy deer population in the state.

Deer biologist Adam Murkowski says reports from big game check stations indicate hunters had successful deer seasons in 2014. Hunters took a total of 13,590 deer in the state: 3,143 during archery season, 1,652 during youth weekend, 6,140 in rifle season, and 2,655 in muzzleloader season.

“Compared to the previous three-year average, harvest levels rose slightly during the archery season, were roughly the same for muzzleloader season and slightly decreased during the youth and rifle seasons,” said Murkowski.

Each year the department operates biological check stations during deer hunting seasons to gather information on the age, sex, field dressed weight, antler characteristics, and overall health of Vermont’s deer herd. Murkowski says biological data from 1,097 deer examined during the two-day youth hunt and November rifle season will be important in further assessing the status of local deer herds throughout the state.

According to Murkowski, the primary goal of Vermont’s deer management strategy is to keep Vermont’s deer herd stable, healthy and in balance with available habitat. “Maintaining an appropriate number of deer on the landscape ensures Vermont’s deer and the habitats that support them remain healthy and productive,” he said. “Healthy habitats and stable deer herds are beneficial to the deer themselves, important to Vermont’s deer hunters, and they are beneficial to the health of the land and other wildlife.”

“Under our current goal of maintaining a healthy deer herd, a stable harvest is a good indicator that we are meeting our management objectives set out in Vermont’s 10-year Big Game Plan,” said Murkowski. “Season totals in any given year may be up or down from the previous year. But the fact that fluctuations are small, rather than major boom and bust cycles, is an indicator that management strategies are working.”

The 2014 report on deer hunting seasons with final numbers will be on Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) by early February.



Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Ice Fishing Safety Tips from F&W

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has some ice safety tips for those of you who will be going ice fishing this winter.

“Once we have sustained cold weather to form good ice, ice fishing can be safe and a lot of fun,” said Major Dennis Reinhardt, “but when we go onto the ice, we need to use good judgment and observe several safety precautions.”

- Leave your car or truck on shore. Every year several motor vehicles go through the ice on Vermont lakes, and some people have drowned as a result.
- Leave information about your plans with someone -- where you intend to fish and when you expect to return.
- Wear a personal flotation device and don't fish alone.
- Ice varies in thickness and condition. Always carry an ice spud or chisel to check ice as you proceed.
- Be extremely cautious crossing ice near river mouths, points of land, bridges, islands, and over reefs and springs. Current almost always causes ice to be thinner over these areas.
- Avoid going onto the ice if it has melted away from the shore. This indicates melting is underway, and ice can shift position as wind direction changes.
- Waves from open water can quickly break up large areas of ice. If you can see open water in the lake and the wind picks up, get off!
- Bring your fully-charged cell phone with you.
- Carry a set of hand spikes to help you work your way out onto the surface of the ice if you go through. Holding one in each hand, you can alternately punch them into the ice and pull yourself up and out. You can make these at home, using large nails, or you can purchase them at stores that sell fishing supplies.
- Carry a safety line that can be thrown to someone who has gone through the ice.
- Heated fishing shanties must have good ventilation to prevent deadly carbon monoxide poisoning. Open a window or the door part way to allow in fresh air.

Learning to ice fish for the first time, this young girl is bunched up and fishing with a buddy!

Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers, Vermont Fish & Wildlife.



Buy a 2015 Vermont Hunting, Fishing or Trapping License Online

You'll be entered to win a fishing kayak or shotgun!

Vermont Fish & Wildlife makes buying a 2015 hunting, fishing or trapping license quick and convenient on their website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com), but they also are offering an extra incentive – two chances to win great prizes – a fishing kayak or a shotgun.

A drawing for a L.L. Bean® Manatee Deluxe 12-foot Angler's Kayak package, with paddle and cover, donated by LL Bean, Freeport, ME will be held on Friday, May 15, 2015. A second drawing for a shotgun will occur at the Yankee Sportsman's Classic Show in January 2016.

Anyone who purchases a 2015 license from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website before May 15 will be eligible for the kayak, and all who do so before December 31, 2015, will be entered to win the shotgun as well.

"Vermonters consistently show a love of wildlife-based recreation, and this contest just adds to the opportunities," said Susan Warner, director of public affairs for Fish & Wildlife. "You can start 2015 by showing your support for conservation and buy a license easily at home or on your mobile device."

To enter, you must purchase either a 2015 Vermont hunting, fishing, trapping, or combination license or duck stamp from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website. Licenses purchased from agents or through the mail do not enter you in this contest.

One entry per person – purchasing additional tags does not enter you in this contest multiple times. Permanent licenses purchased online to start in 2015 also enter the purchaser in this contest.

If you have trouble purchasing a license online, you may call Fish & Wildlife at 802-828-1000 for help with purchasing a license online. You can also buy one at Fish & Wildlife's booth at the Yankee Sportsman's Classic in Essex Junction on January 16-18 and be entered to win.

If you do not have access to the internet, most public libraries have internet access available for public use. If your local public library does not have internet, you can contact Fish & Wildlife at 802-828-1000 and make arrangements to buy your license online at one of their district offices.



Online purchases of 2015 fishing, hunting, and trapping licenses at www.vtfishandwildlife.com will qualify buyers to enter into a drawing for a new angler's kayak, donated by L.L. Bean.

Photo courtesy of L.L. Bean.

Vt Fish & Wildlife Announces Release of Landowner's Habitat Management Guide

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is announcing the release of the long-awaited book entitled *A Landowner's Guide – Wildlife Habitat Management for Lands in Vermont*.

The book is a comprehensive guide to wildlife habitat management on private lands. It is filled with colorful photos and helpful tips.

"The *Landowner's Guide* is something that Vermonters have been asking us about for years, so we're excited to finally announce its release," said John Austin, lands and habitat program manager for Vermont Fish & Wildlife. "Private landowners are a critical partner in the conservation of Vermont's rich fish and wildlife heritage."

"I'm confident this book will serve as a valuable resource for landowners, foresters, biologists, or loggers," said Austin. "It is a handy guide for people looking to improve the quality of habitat on their land for everything from deer and turkeys to songbirds and owls."

The *Landowner's Guide* was developed by the Fish & Wildlife Department in partnership with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation as well as the U.S.D.A.'s Natural Resource Conservation Service. Each chapter was authored by biologists and land managers with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, with guidance and technical input from foresters and wildlife biologists from partnering organizations.

The guide gives specific, easy-to-follow recommendations on methods for improving habitat for specific species and for fish and wildlife in general. It includes recommendations for managing for game species such as deer, turkeys, hare, ducks, and grouse, as well as nongame species from songbirds to amphibians.

A Landowner's Guide – Wildlife Habitat Management for Lands in Vermont is available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com for \$12 and makes a great gift for any wildlife enthusiast in your life!

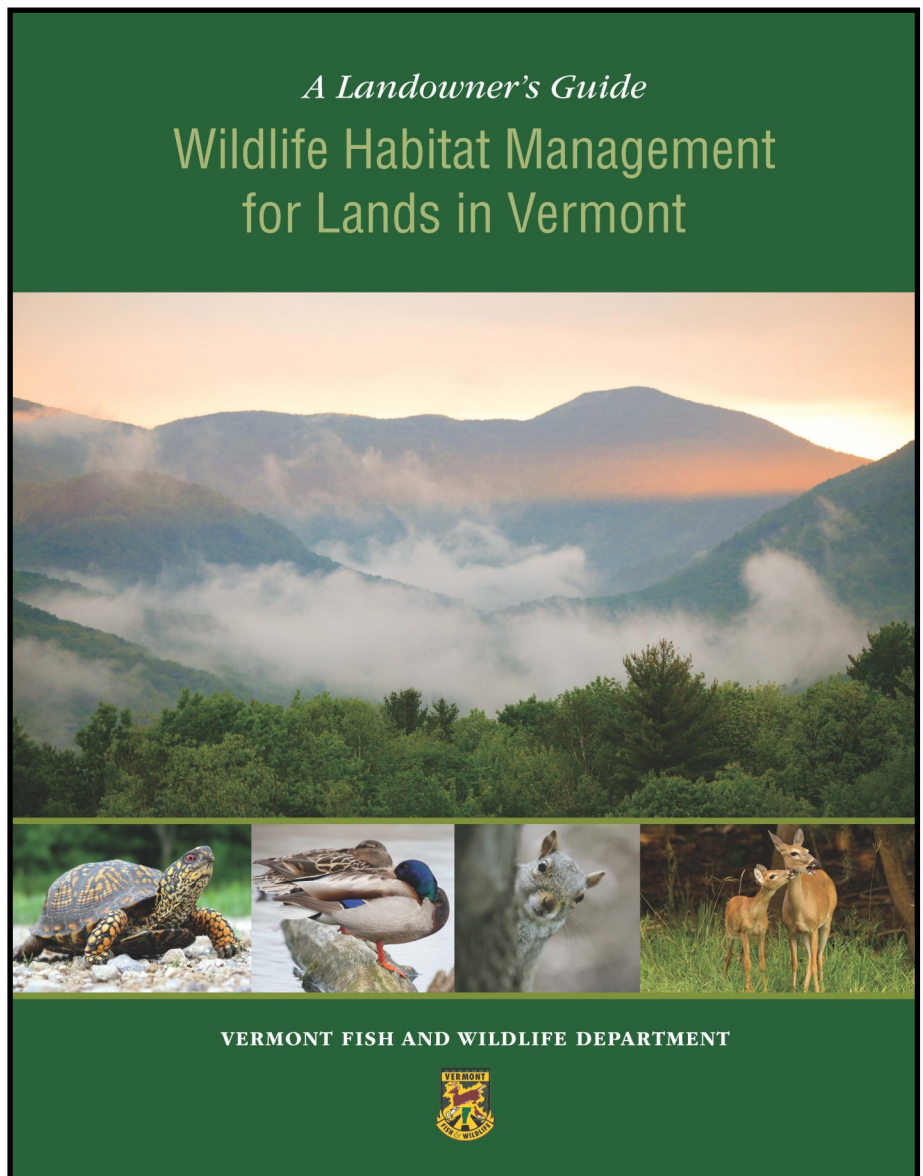


Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Multi-year Investigation Leads to Arrest of Irasburg Couple

Vermont Fish & Wildlife wardens have arrested a Northeast Kingdom couple for allegedly running an elaborate deer poaching operation. Wayne Dion, 66, and Jennie Dion, 63, were brought up on multiple charges related to deer baiting and illegal night hunting practices.

A warranted search of the Dion's home in Irasburg revealed 91 deer antler plaques and 15 shoulder mounts. The search also revealed seven chest freezers and several plastic totes containing corn and apples, which wardens believe were used to illegally bait deer.

Wardens also discovered five spotlights pointed towards a backyard enclosed by a 400-foot cedar hedge. At the center of the yard was a large pile of corn and apples, with well-worn game trails leading into the yard. Wardens discovered a sliding port cut into the back of the house with a rest similar to a gun-rest found at a shooting range.

Wardens discovered a large 9-point buck that they believe was killed the night before the season opened. The deer was not tagged, as is required by law. Wardens seized the ATV that was allegedly used to drag the deer to the Dion's basement, in addition to seizing the deer.

Wayne Dion faces multiple charges, including taking big game in closed season, separate counts of taking, transporting and possession of big game by illegal means, spotlighting wild animals, feeding deer, and failure to tag big game. Jennie Dion faces charges of aiding in a big game violation and possession of big game taken by illegal means.

Each charge carries a possible 60-day jail sentence and monetary fine of \$250-500 per offence. They also face a three-year loss of hunting privileges, which can be reinstated only after successful participation in a remedial hunter ethics course. Additional charges are anticipated.

The couple is to be arraigned in Orleans Superior Court on December 29, 2014, to answer the charges.

"Most Vermont hunters pursue game lawfully and respect hunting regulations," said Major. Dennis Reinhardt, acting chief of law enforcement for Vermont Fish & Wildlife. "Those few who choose to poach animals face serious consequences and can seriously damage the hunting opportunities for those who follow the law."

The arrest was a result of numerous anonymous tips from community members. If you have information concerning fish or wildlife violations, you can anonymously contact Operation Game Thief at 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378) or online at www.vtfishandwildlife.com. Rewards are paid for information leading to an arrest. You can also contact your warden through the local state police barracks.

Barton Man Fined, Loses Licenses in Poaching Case

A Barton, Vermont man will pay more than \$1,000 in fines and court fees and lose his hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for three years. Kenneth Bacon, Jr. of Barton pled “no contest” on January 7, 2015 in Orleans District Court to taking deer in closed season and reckless endangerment.



Bacon shot from a vehicle on a Craftsbury public road on November 30, 2013 and then fled as Vermont Fish & Wildlife wardens attempted to apprehend him, putting one warden in danger of serious injury.

Wardens were in Craftsbury at the time conducting an operation in response to several complaints of illegal road hunting and poaching activity in the area.

On December 7, 2013 Bacon was apprehended in Barton and issued tickets and citations for possessing a loaded rifle in a motor vehicle, shooting from a motor vehicle, attempting to elude a game warden, taking deer in closed season, and reckless endangerment.

Further investigation revealed that Mr. Bacon had already shot and reported a deer earlier in the season. The legal limit for deer during the November rifle season is one.

Bacon will be required to successfully complete Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s “Remedial Outdoor Ethics Course” before his licenses can be reinstated.

Vermont wardens continue to rely heavily on confidential information provided by the public. If you witness illegal activity, please alert a Vermont State Game Warden immediately by calling your local State Police Barracks. You can also contact Operation Game Thief at 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378) or online at (www.vtfishandwildlife.com/laws_thief.cfm). Rewards are paid for information leading to an arrest.

Waterfowl Blinds Must Be Removed



Photo courtesy Vt Fish & Wildlife.

Waterfowl hunters who did not remove their hunting blinds from the waters of the state earlier must do so before February 15 on Lake Champlain or May 15 on inland waters.

State law requires removal of the blinds before these deadlines in order to protect natural areas and to prevent boating accidents after the ice melts.

“Removal of the blinds and any posts that may be below the surface of the ice is important because of the danger they present when boaters are on the water in the spring,” said State Game Warden Colonel Jason Batchelder.

Batchelder says wardens have recorded names and addresses of blind owners and will follow up with inspections.

Burlington Man Charged With Importing Deer from CWD Area

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department says a multi-year investigation has led to the arrest by game wardens of a Burlington man for importing deer from a chronic wasting disease (CWD) endemic area.

Wardens executed a search warrant on December 2, 2014 at the residence of Alan Baker in Burlington for evidence of the importation of deer from a New York captive hunt facility. Wardens obtained evidence of four deer being imported from the Lowlands Whitetails Hunting Ranch in Lowville, NY.

Evidence obtained through the search warrant as well as information provided by Environmental Police Officers of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Police proved that Baker has imported deer from this facility in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Baker also allegedly attempted to report the deer as being killed in Vermont.

Baker has been charged with three counts of importing deer from a Chronic Wasting Disease endemic area and captive hunt facility.

Each charge carries a maximum fine of \$1,000 with five points charged against the offender's privilege to hunt, fish and trap. Baker will lose his hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for two years upon conviction and has been cited to appear in Chittenden County Superior Court on February 10, 2015.

CWD is a fatal disease of the brain and nervous system in deer and elk. Abnormal prion proteins produce lesions in the brain that cause disorientation and emaciation. For the latest information on CWD, check www.cwd-info.org and www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

A Vermont regulation requires special processing of deer or elk carcasses being imported from states or provinces that have, or have had, CWD. The disease has been found in more than 20 states and two Canadian provinces, including New York.

Vermont's CWD regulation applies to hunters bringing in deer or elk carcasses from the following states and provinces:

Alberta, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

Fish & Wildlife Dept Expands Two Addison County Wildlife Management Areas

Wildlife enthusiasts in northern Addison County have something to be excited about. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department recently closed on properties that will expand two popular wildlife management areas (WMAs).

Lower Otter Creek WMA in Ferrisburgh added 75 acres to the existing 738-acre property. The WMA consists largely of wetlands and floodplain forest near the mouth of Otter Creek. These wetlands and floodplain forests serve not only as quality waterfowl habitat, but also help to control flooding and improve water quality in Lake Champlain by mitigating the effects of nutrient loading into the lake.

The new acquisition opens up additional opportunities for bird-watchers and hunters to access land, as the new property was previously posted against all access. The property contains deer wintering habitat and is considered high-quality habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat.

“We’re excited to continue to expand Lower Otter Creek Wildlife Management Area, which is consistently a favorite destination for Vermont hunters and anglers,” said Jane Lazorchak, land acquisition coordinator for Vermont Fish & Wildlife. “In addition to being popular with wildlife enthusiasts, protecting these forests and wetlands goes a long way towards improving flood resiliency and cleaning up Lake Champlain.”

Another recent acquisition has added 20 acres to the Lewis Creek WMA in Starksboro. While the parcel was small in size, it contains three tributary streams of Lewis Creek and consists largely of mature hardwood forest.

In 2000, the 2,020-acre Lewis Creek WMA was expanded to connect with Huntington Gap WMA to form a large contiguous tract of public land. This recent addition is the result of a donation of land by two local landowners.

“We are pleased to accept this generous donation and thank these landowners for helping to preserve the future of Vermont’s wildlife and open spaces,” said Lazorchak.



An osprey takes off from a branch at Lower Otter Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison County, which was recently expanded in size. Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers, Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

Shawn Good, fisheries biologist for Vt Fish & Wildlife, holds a muskie on Otter Creek in Addison County, considered by many to be one of Vt’s fishing hotspots. Photo courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife.



Retired Fish & Wildlife Biologist Received Yankee Sportsmen's Heritage Service Award

A recently-retired wildlife biologist of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the recipient of this year's Sportsmen's Heritage Service Award, given out January 17 at the Yankee Sportsmen's Classic in Essex Junction, Vt.

Governor Shumlin presented the award to Bill Crenshaw who worked in land acquisition and waterfowl conservation for most of his 39-year career with Vermont Fish & Wildlife. The Governor cited Crenshaw's efforts towards conserving habitat, improving recreational access, and building partnerships in presenting the award.

Crenshaw was involved in the creation of the first wetland conservation plan in the Champlain basin in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, which resulted in the protection of thousands of acres of important waterfowl and wildlife habitat that is now open to public access.

"Bill has established a lasting legacy of wildlife and land conservation, and his impact on Vermont can hardly be overstated," said Governor Shumlin in his remarks. "Throughout his career, he was well-known and respected by all those with an interest in conservation, from hunters and anglers to bird-watchers and farmers"

Crenshaw was quick to credit much of the work to the many partnering organizations he worked with, particularly The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the many community Land Trusts throughout Vermont.

"Without the tremendous efforts of our partners, none of the work we did would have been possible," said Crenshaw. "It's thanks to the people like Jon Binhammer at The Nature Conservancy and so many others that we were able to conserve so much habitat in Vermont."

The Yankee Sportsmen's Classic is an outdoor trade show in Essex Junction that is now in its thirteenth year.



Governor Shumlin presents retired Vermont Fish & Wildlife biologist Bill Crenshaw with the 2015 Sportsmen's Heritage Service Award. Also pictured are Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter and Director of Wildlife Mark Scott.

Photo courtesy of Tom Rogers, Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

SAVE THE DATE!

Instructor Recognition and Awards Banquet

March 28th, 2015

Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier VT

RSVP by March 11th. Call Dylan at 802-828-1193

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