



# Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

It finally feels like summer around here! This month has consisted mostly of training camp counselors on Hunter Education and prepping for busy season. 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](mailto:Nicole.Corrao@state.vt.us)

## Vermont's Moose Hunt Auction is Open

Vermont's lottery for moose hunting permits closed June 17, but there's one more opportunity to get a permit for this fall's moose hunt. Vermont's auction for five moose hunting permits is open until 4:30 p.m. August 13. Bids will be opened and winners notified on August 14.

Auction winners will hunt in one of several wildlife management units (WMUs) open to moose hunting and choose to hunt during the October 1-7 archery season, or in the October 17-22 regular season.

Vermont's 2014 Moose Harvest Report on Fish & Wildlife's website has details on last year's hunt, including the towns where moose were taken. Look under moose hunting.

Bids must be entered with a sealed bid form available from Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

A minimum bid of \$1,500 is required, and winning bids are typically at least \$4,000. Bids do not include the cost of a hunting license (residents \$25, nonresidents \$100) or moose hunting permit fee (\$100 for residents and \$350 for nonresidents).

Additional information about the auction is on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)). Moose permit bid packets can be obtained by calling Fish & Wildlife at 802-828-1190 or by emailing ([cheri.waters@state.vt.us](mailto:cheri.waters@state.vt.us)).

Proceeds from the moose hunting permit auction help fund Vermont Fish & Wildlife educational programs.

The lottery drawing for 225 regular moose season permits and 40 archery season permits will be held at 10:00 a.m. on July 16 at the Barre Fish and Game Club in Barre.

# Fish & Wildlife Dept Launches New “All In” Habitat Stamp for Vermonters Interested in Conservation



The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is launching a new Habitat Stamp program to fund land conservation in Vermont. Photo courtesy of Summer M. Tribble

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is announcing a new way to directly fund the conservation of open spaces and wildlife habitat in Vermont. Fashioned on the success of the federal duck stamp, Vermont is releasing the new Habitat Stamp, a voluntary way to donate to protecting wild places in the state. Donations start at \$10.

“We’re very excited about this new conservation initiative,” said Commissioner Louis Porter. “For years, our vision of conserving wild spaces for a variety of species has been funded primarily by hunters and anglers. However, bird watchers, plant lovers, paddlers, and other outdoor enthusiasts often ask us how they can join in on this effort.”

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## ***Fish & Wildlife Dept Launches New “All In” Habitat Stamp***

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The Habitat Stamp’s proceeds will be used to acquire and manage wildlife management areas throughout Vermont. One of the first such sites is the Lemon Fair Wildlife Management Area in Bridport. Thanks in part to the new stamp, Fish & Wildlife will expand Lemon Fair to include three new acquisitions that contain excellent bat habitat and deer wintering areas, and also provides roadside public access. The acquisitions also include a large wetland complex that will be restored for waterfowl and shorebirds.

“One of the nice things about land conservation is that it is not exclusive to one type of species or user group,” said Porter. “The same parcel of conserved land can provide a home for endangered bats and for turkeys and grouse, while providing access to hunters, anglers and birders alike.”

Future department conservation projects throughout Vermont will follow this model of conserving and improving habitat for a variety of wildlife, as well as providing the public with access to conserved open spaces.

The stamp is available for purchase on the Fish & Wildlife Department’s newly redesigned website at [www.vtfishandwildlife.com/get\\_involved/donate](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/get_involved/donate). The stamp is also available as an add-on to 2015 hunting or fishing licenses when purchased online.

“From time to time sportsmen and sportswomen have asked us to add a small voluntary fee to license purchases that would go directly into improving habitat and providing access to lands,” said Porter. “This optional donation will provide hunters, anglers and other outdoor-enthusiasts an opportunity to ensure for future generations that there are lands in Vermont that remain open and accessible to the public.”

The Habitat Stamp is being released to widespread support following a survey by Fish & Wildlife Department of more than 900 Vermonters, 90 percent of whom supported its creation. One third of self-reported birdwatchers said they would be willing to contribute between \$25 and \$100, indicating that this group in particular has a strong interest in conserving habitat for wildlife.

“As forests and fields in Vermont yield to development, the Habitat Stamp will allow us to continue to purchase and manage critical open spaces that Vermonters can enjoy,” said Porter. “This ‘all in’ model gives everyone a chance to make a difference for conservation, so that we can save these special Vermont places for our children and grandchildren.”

# Op-Ed: by Commissioner Louis Porter

## The Habitat Stamp Offers a New Option for Conserving Critical Lands in Vermont

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One of the many things that makes Vermont special is our abundant wildlife and conserved open spaces. Vermonters treasure conservation but few appreciate the nuts and bolts of how it's funded. For most of a century, while the public interest in and legislative mandates for conservation have grown exponentially, funding strategies for state fish and wildlife agencies has largely remained unchanged, and mostly rests on the contributions of hunters and anglers. Yet in its nearly 150-year history, the mission of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has expanded far beyond its original role of managing game species to include the conservation of all species and the habitats on which they depend.

Simply put: we've been tasked with providing an ever broader variety of wildlife-related services to all Vermonters across the state. These responsibilities range from bringing back species such as common loons and American marten, to discouraging snack-seeking bears in suburban back yards and redirecting wayward moose, to fostering a connection to ecology and nature through education programs for both children and adults.

At the heart of all our conservation efforts is the understanding that wildlife and fish need good places to live, just as we do, in order to survive and thrive. Yet as human development takes up more of the land in Vermont and carves driveways and access roads into what remains, cherished wildlife species have a harder time finding suitable homes. Imagine if you had to cross a 4-lane highway on foot with no crosswalks or lights to reach the grocery store or school every day. You can quickly appreciate what challenges wildlife and fish face.

Before we can take on the conservation challenges of the years ahead, we clearly must tackle the need to set aside more unbroken land for the wild Vermont we want to continue to experience. Second, we must find a way to finance conservation that includes all of us whether we are hunters, anglers, hikers, paddlers, birdwatchers or many others who simply appreciate the natural world.

For the last few years, the Vermont legislature has allocated general funds to support the gaps in our operating budget. These funds provide much-needed support to ensure our current work continues but does not provide for purchasing land to provide critical habitats. To help reach this goal, we have developed the Habitat Stamp, a new way for all Vermonters to contribute to habitat conservation in Vermont.

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## ***Op-Ed: by Commissioner Louis Porter***

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The Habitat Stamp is a voluntary donation of \$10 or more that goes towards acquiring and improving habitat on state-owned Wildlife Management Areas. It is available on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department website on our donations page, and is also an optional add-on while purchasing a fishing or hunting license. The stamp offers anyone who wants to chip in for conservation a chance to help protect land that is home to many species. A single parcel can simultaneously provide deer the cover they need to survive the winter, a shrub for a hermit thrush to nest in, a secluded field for a turkey hunter, a roost for endangered Indiana bats, and a place for a birdwatcher to spot birds.

One of the first critical pieces of land that will benefit from the Habitat Stamp is the Lemon Fair WMA in central western Vermont. Lemon Fare is an incredibly rich habitat for many species, including green and great blue herons and rare four-toed salamanders, as well as waterfowl and deer, and its conservation is only the beginning of the benefits the Habitat Stamp will bring to Vermont's natural world and those who enjoy it. I encourage you to make the trip to the wildlife management area nearest you (there are 80 across the state) to see conservation in action.

We hope that Vermonters and visitors will also continue to support the valuable work we do, through the Habitat Stamp and other means, to keep Vermont the special place that it is. Help us give wildlife – from bobcats and bears, to birds and brookies – a better place to call home.

## **Muzzleloader Antlerless Deer Permit Applications Available**

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Vermont's muzzleloader season antlerless deer hunting permit applications are now available on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)). A quick-link to the information and application is provided on the home page.

"Applying online is a really swift, easy process that ensures your entry is immediately entered into the lottery," said wildlife director Mark Scott. "Plus, it saves you postage. We encourage you to use the online application because it is more efficient for you and for us. Be sure to apply before the August 28 deadline."

The Fish and Wildlife Board met on May 27 and approved the number of December muzzleloader season antlerless permits at 9,650 distributed in 10 of Vermont's 21 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) and to allow antlerless hunting during the archery season in 19 of 21 WMUs with WMUs E1 and E2 closed to the taking of antlerless during the archery and muzzleloader seasons. Youth hunters may take one deer of either sex during the youth deer hunting weekend on November 7-8, 2015.

Landowners who post their land may not apply for a muzzleloader landowner priority antlerless deer permit.

"The number of muzzleloader season antlerless deer permits was reduced from the 17,050 issued last year due to a decline in deer numbers caused by two severe winters in 2014 and 2015," said Scott. "The department's recommendation for antlerless deer hunting is based on population growth estimates, biological data, deer sighting rates reported by hunters, and winter severity data, as well as input from game wardens, foresters and the public."

"We expect the statewide deer population to be 115,000 to 120,000 prior to the start of the 2015 deer seasons," said Scott.

# Brookfield Angler Wins F&W Online Kayak

Nathan Brien, 25, of Brookfield, VT likes to go fishing, but he's never fished from a kayak before. That changed May 19 when the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department drew a winner for a new L.L. Bean "Manitou" Angler Kayak donated by the Freeport, ME, retailer.

Nathan became the lucky winner of the kayak by purchasing his hunting and fishing licenses on Fish & Wildlife's website ([vtfishandwildlife.com](http://vtfishandwildlife.com)). He was one of more than 24,000 people who were automatically entered into the kayak lottery that began in December.

"I like to fish Rood Pond, Sunset Lake, and Norton Pond," said Brien. "With this new kayak, I'll be able to get off the shore and fish other ends of these ponds."

Vermont Fish & Wildlife created the kayak lottery to improve customer service and as an efficiency measure to encourage license buyers to use the website when buying licenses.

"Buying your hunting or fishing license online is easy, quick, and you can immediately go hunting or fishing after purchasing your license," said Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. "Online licenses are more convenient for anglers and hunters, they help keep our department operational costs down, and they are easy to replace if lost."

Porter also notes that license sales in Vermont leverage federal funds that support the department's wildlife and fish conservation efforts and protect open spaces for all Vermonters to enjoy.



Nathan Brien of Brookfield, VT with the L.L. Bean "Manitou" Angler Kayak he won by purchasing his 2015 fishing license on Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website. Did anyone else notice that Nathan doesn't have a PFD? Maybe he will win one...  
Photo courtesy of Jessica Kelley

# Hunter Education at Green Mountain Conservation Camp

Each year the Hunter Education Program attends staff orientation at the Green Mountain Conservation Camps in order to train new staff members with the Hunter Education Program. Last year, our staff went above and beyond by offering two new programs for staffers: The Hunt and The Catch. These new training segments teach more advanced and in-depth hunting tactics and practical hunting knowledge.

Topics taught include how to prepare for the season (whether it be hunting or fishing), targeting your game or fish, proper equipment, hunting and fishing jargon, what harvest trends could mean for populations, how permits are distributed, what topographic features to look for when selecting a hunting spot, field dressing and butchering, and much much more.

The days were long, but lots of fun and very rewarding for both Hunter Education and GMCC staff. Thank you to camps staff for being wonderful, as always!



## FAQ with Nicole

**Q: When are Vermont State employee e-mail addresses changing?**

**A:** Starting August 1, 2015, all State of VT employees e-mail addresses will end in @Vermont.gov. My e-mail address will change to Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov. All other staff will become:

Chris.Saunders@vermont.gov

Dylan.Brooks@vermont.gov

John.Pellegrini@vermont.gov

Kim.Barrett@vermont.gov



**Nicole at the range.**  
Photo: Tom Rogers.

# Bird-Watchers Revel in Return of Vermont's Migratory Songbirds

Local birders have good reason to be atwitter. Migratory songbirds are back in the Vermont's forests and fields having completed their annual migration north.

Some birds began arriving from points south as early as March and April, but May and June is when the forests truly come symphonic with songbirds, according to John Buck, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's migratory bird biologist.

Buck says that Vermont's bird breeding season is shorter than many people realize. "Some migratory birds, such as warblers, live in Vermont for only about three months," said Buck. "The early migrants have flown from here by late-July or August, and most of our warblers are gone by September."

During the brief time between May and September birders excitedly grab their binoculars and head outdoors. While some birds are easy to identify by sight, spring songbirds are usually best identified by their songs.

"The sheer variety of birds in Vermont in early summer can be a little overwhelming to a beginning birder," notes Buck. "But with a little practice, and by focusing on a few common birds, you can easily learn to identify two dozen species by sound alone."

Buck advises beginners to start with a few of the easiest birdsongs such as those of a robin, chickadee, or Vermont's state bird, the hermit thrush. "The hermit thrush is like the Mozart of the bird world with one of the most melodic songs," said Buck. "Once you are familiar with the thrush and a few other basic birdsongs, they become like old friends talking and the bird chorus takes on a whole new feeling."

For birders who already have the basics, the next challenge is learning how to identify the wide variety of warblers in the state. "Warblers arrive in Vermont as the leaves appear, because they rely on insects that hatch in sync with bud break," said Buck. "As a result, the smaller-sized warblers can be a little more difficult to spot among the leaves."

Migratory birds arrive in Vermont from places as far away as South and Central America. This migratory nature of birds can complicate efforts to conserve them.

"Habitat loss is the primary source of bird population declines," said Buck. "As the land area available for birds to exist continues to shrink, ever-declining bird populations become concentrated in the remaining, sometimes marginal-quality spaces that remain."

Buck pointed out that even in rural Vermont, forest cover has started to decline. "Breaks in the forest such as roads, power lines, driveways, and lawns can degrade bird habitat and give an advantage to bird predators and parasites," said Buck. "Because they are so mobile, we all assume that birds will just fly 'somewhere else,' but we're quickly running out of 'somewhere else' for birds to go."

To counter these habitat losses, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department acquires and manages land for a variety of bird species with a wide range of habitat preferences, and these lands are open to the public to observe birds. For a list of Wildlife Management Areas in Vermont, go to [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com).



Cedar Waxwings.

Photo courtesy of David Englander



## **Contact Us!**

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## **Sound Off!**

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

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