

# Happy Holidays from the Vermont Hunter Education Program!

## Thank you, Instructors!

Dear Hunter & Trapper Education Instructors,

Season's Greetings! Much like last year, we have had another snowy start to the hunting season. I hope you have all found some time in your busy schedules to enjoy the woods whether you were alone or with a buddy.

It has been an incredibly busy year for the Hunter Education program. We continue to serve thousands of Vermonters by helping them gain the knowledge and skills to safely, legally, and ethically hunt and trap. Thanks to all of you for your commitment to this program, because we could not reach so many people without your enthusiastic leadership in education.

It has been a year for changes in the Outreach Division. The Director of Information and Education has moved on to a different position. The Information Specialist left for a position at the Nature Conservancy. And finally, as many of you know, John Pellegrini retired from the Hunter Education Training Coordinator position in May. We are currently in the process of hiring for this position. Needless-to-say, with three Outreach Division staffers away, the few that remain have certainly been in overdrive making sure all the information tasks and education programs carry on without a hitch. And, I think we did it! Our press releases, Facebook posts, and educational programs numbers have remained consistent with previous years. This is not to say that we have put new projects to the side, as a Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Podcast Series is in the works, as well as planning for a Hunting, Fishing, and Foraging Moth Style Story Hour at Zero Gravity this December. Finally, plans for another Learn-to-Hunt program next May are well underway so we can continue to recruit and retain adults new to hunting.

None of this old and new work could get done without the dedication of the Volunteer Hunter Education Instructors. The Fish & Wildlife Department is so appreciative and proud to work alongside you all.

Thank you, and happy holidays.

Regards,

Ali Thomas, Education Manager



## Winter Hours and Staff Updates

John Pellegrini officially retired in May 2019! He worked as a seasonal until early July, when he officially left state government. We wish him well in his retirement, but we know that he is enjoying kicking back – he even shot a deer during archery season, so if you see him, congratulate him twice! While John will be missed, we are on the hunt for a new Training Coordinator. The position will change a bit, with more of a focus on hands-on teaching of students and instructors, and hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation. The hiring process is in the final stages, so stay tuned for an official announcement soon!

Tess Prestage, our administrative assistant, started with us in summer 2018, but she left us in the summer of 2019 to pursue graduate school. Luckily, Olivia Bussiere joined our team this summer! See Olivia's introduction below, and take a moment to welcome Olivia to the team.

Nathan Lafont's hours ended on November 15th. Because Nathan is a seasonal, he can only work 1,280 hours per year. Luckily, Olivia and Ali will be around to take your phone calls and emails all winter.

Lastly, Nicole Meier will be on maternity leave this winter and will return sometime in March. If you need immediate assistance, please contact Alison Thomas (802-371-9975) or Olivia Bussiere (802-828-1193).

## Welcome, Olivia!

I am thrilled to be working with such passionate people! As a lifelong Vermonter and I feel strongly about conserving our fish and wildlife and ensuring the opportunity to enjoying our outdoor lifestyles for years to come. I've spent most of my adult life as an angler, but everyone has been so helpful in introducing me to hunting. I have really enjoyed meeting our instructors so far and look forward to working and learning with you all!



## Wild Food Seminars

In summer 2019, the Vermont Hunter Education Program in partnership with Rooted in Vermont, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, hosted a series of three wild game cooking seminars. These seminars aimed to reach people who were interested in local food, but hadn't made up their minds about hunting. The seminars got positive reviews from participants and had full attendance each night. The next step is to advertise hunter education courses and other similar events to the participants. If you are interested in helping with a food seminar in the future, please contact us!



## Important Dates:

### 2020 Hunter Education Program

Hunting, Fishing and Foraging: Storytelling Event December 3 at 6pm Zero Gravity Brewery, Burlington	Instructor Training and Recognition Banquet March 28 at the Capitol Plaza, Montpelier RSVP: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2020Banquet">https://tinyurl.com/2020Banquet</a>
New Instructor Training April 4, Essex Jct. Link to sign up: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/NITApril2020">tinyurl.com/NITApril2020</a>	Learn to Hunt: Spring Turkeys May 28—May 30, Woodbury Link to sign up: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/LearntoHunt2020">https://tinyurl.com/LearntoHunt2020</a>

### Save the Date: Instructor Training and Recognition Banquet

Expect interesting speakers, raffle prizes, awards, training, a delicious lunch, and much more!  
Prepare for a day of appreciation and learning. Look for your formal invitation in the mail!

### 2019 Regional Banquet Recap

In spring/summer 2019 the Vermont Hunter Education Program hosted six regional banquets throughout the state. The goal of these programs was to offer more opportunity for instructor professional development\*, meet instructors where they are, to allow an opportunity for networking with fellow instructors, offer prizes for appreciation, and to update instructors on the Vermont Hunter Education Program, while having an opportunity for open discussion. Meetings were held on weeknights for just a few hours, and catered dinner was provided. Although the regional banquet agendas were similar across the board, the discussions at the end of each meeting were unique. The meetings were overall productive and fun. I was overwhelmed by feedback from instructors thanking us for holding a meeting in their region. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet with instructors in a more personal way. Thank you to everyone who came out for those meetings! Despite the success of these events, we will hold a single large banquet in 2020.

#### Raffle Winners

Although every regional banquet attendee went home with thank you gifts or raffle prizes, a larger raffle was conducted after the banquets were finished. Congratulations to the raffle winners:

Henry mini-bolt rifles: Jim Sargent  
Terry Riel

Cooler: Rose-Ann Lombard

Food dehydrator: Art Greenbaum

\*In order to remain an active, certified instructor, all volunteer instructors must teach or assist in one course every other year AND attend one professional development opportunity every other year.



## Hunter Education by the Numbers

Numbers aren't necessarily the best way to measure the effectiveness of a program, nor can it qualify all of the amazing programs run by our volunteers in Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018—June 30, 2019), but it can help to visualize the immense effort that went into making the year such a great one!

	Students Certified in Hunter Education Courses	Students Certified in Bowhunter Education Courses	Students Certified in Trapper Education Courses	Total Students Certified in All Class Types
2019	Traditional: 1,144 Homestudy: 1,036 Combo: 775	Bow: 488 Combo: 775	182	3,625
2018	Traditional: 1,066 Homestudy: 932 Combo: 625	Bow: 445 Combo: 625	194	3,262
2017	Traditional: 1,088 Homestudy: 1,022 Combo: 756	Bow: 643 Combo: 756	184	3,693

	Average Hours Volunteered per Instructor	Total Number of Volunteer Instructor Hours Recorded	Number of Unique Active Instructors (including non-certified volunteers)	Total Number of Classes Taught (all disciplines)
2019	27.4	12,497	458	169
2018	24.7	10,822	432	151
2017	29.9	12,602	421	155

## Courses Taught in Schools

We are teaching more in schools each year. See below, the number of classes offered at schools during or after school hours by our staff and volunteers.

	Bowhunter Education	Basic Hunter Education (Traditional and Homestudy)	Combo	Total Events Held at/in Schools	Total Certifications
2019	4	28	6	38	504



## Hunter Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation: Learning to Hunt Spring Turkeys

From May 25 to May 26, 2019, 12 participants attended Vermont's first-ever Learn to Hunt Spring Turkeys program. Presented by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, National Wild Turkey Federation, L.L. Bean, and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. This "adult educational weekend" approached hunter education in a fully immersive manner, offering hands-on learning experiences culminating in a mentored hunt. The program was held at NorthWoods Stewardship Center in East Charleston, VT.

Enrolled students' motivations ranged from curiosity about where their food comes from to interest in self-sufficiency, woodsmanship, and the willingness to try something new.

For most of the students, it was their very first hunting experience. For many, the spring woods coming alive and the thrill of hearing a turkey gobble in the early morning countryside was enough to make the day worthwhile. While no birds were taken, all hunters agreed that the shared excitement of being "out there" and drawing upon all they learned together over the weekend was unforgettable.

The event was a hit with both instructors and students. We plan to do another Learn to Hunt event this spring at Buck Lake. If you are interested in helping or know someone who might be interested in attending the program, contact the Hunter Education Program office at 802-828-1193.





## Contact Us!

<p><b>Alison Thomas</b> Education Manager E-mail: Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov Cell: 802-371-9975</p>	<p><b>Nicole Meier</b> Information &amp; Education Specialist E-mail: Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov Cell: 802-318-1347</p>
<p><b>Vacant</b> Training Coordinator E-mail: Cell:</p>	<p><b>Olivia Bussiere</b> Hunter Education &amp; Licensing Admin E-mail: Olivia.Bussiere@vermont.gov Main Office: 802--828-1193</p>

### Hunter Education Program Office: All Staff

E-mail: HunterEducation@vermont.gov Main Office: 802-828-1193

Address: 1 National Life Dr, Dewey Bldg, Montpelier, VT 05620

## Access Your Instructor Discounts!

Instructor discounts can be accessed at: <http://ihe-a-usa.org/>

- 1) Click "Instructors"
- 2) Click "Special Offers for Instructors"
- 3) Click on a retailer
- 4) Enter password: **gohunt**