

March 2022



Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife

# Field Notes

## Compliments of the Hunter Education Program

As I write this introduction, the snow is coming down hard, but I know that spring is right around the corner. With it comes sugaring season, crocuses, and turkey season! We are so excited to see the number of classes that are already being posted onto our website. More than ever, students are craving in-person learning opportunities, and our instructors are here to deliver.

Stay tuned, as we'll be announcing an instructor recognition celebration to happen this summer on June 25th. We can't wait to hang out, share stories, eat food, and celebrate all you do.

- Nicole Meier

"In a cynical and overcrowded world, the need for each of us to cultivate a spiritual oasis shared with a few likeminded friends is not readily perceived by the majority of people numb with the mediocrity of modern life"

Greg Reiger- "The Wildflower's Quest"

## Updated Exam



This spring, a new hunter education exam will be distributed to instructors. If you would like a copy of the exam in advance, please contact our office and we can e-mail or mail it to you ahead of time. There aren't any big surprises, but we did have a lot of input from instructors from across the state, so we are confident that this new exam reflects what we actually teach.

## Remembering Herb Meyer

Chief Instructor and hunter education veteran of 52 years, Herb Meyer, passed away on December 15th of 2021, surrounded by his family. He was a cornerstone of the Vermont Hunter Education Program and his Guilford/Brattleboro community. Everyone currently involved in Vermont Hunter Education has been touched by Herb's influence, whether you realize it or not. Herb was instrumental in the creation of many Hunter Education standards that are still in place today.



All of us in Hunter Education had the utmost respect and admiration for Herb. As a way to express our feelings toward him, Nicole was able to award Herb the Hunter Education Lifetime Achievement Award. could go on and extoll Herb's many virtues, but we'll instead leave you with words from others, below.

*"Your last few words in this email (be kind to one another) are SO appropriate to who Herb just was as a human being. So soft spoken, kind, polite, caring, every possible word that describes virtues and values we should all strive for. It was and still is an honor to have known him. Herb mentored thousands of people in his lifetime."* - Mike Kolsun

*"Herb's legacy will live on in his students and friends for a very long time.*

*RIP old friend."* - Eric Nuse

View Herb's full obituary here: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/brattleboro/name/herbert-meyer-obituary?id=31927834>

# Upcoming Events

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- **March 26:** Learn To Hunt: Spring Turkeys– a day for novice turkey hunters to gain the knowledge needed to attend their first turkey hunt. Please reach out if you are interested in assisting.
- **April 10:** Habitat Project on Camel’s Hump State Forest with the NWTf Lake Champlain Longbeards. 8am meet at the Honey Hollow parking lot. Bring safety equipment and have a face covering available. Lunch at 12. For more information contact Ron Lafreniere. Home phone: 802-434-4274 Cell: 802-730-7660 Email: ronlafreniere@outdrs.net
- **April 16:** National Wild Turkey federation: Jakes Day– a fun and educational day for youth hunters. Join the Lake Champlain Longbeard folks in a beard mounting demo, mentorship match up, a raffle and free lunch! All youth hunters and their mentors are welcome. Please share with a friend!
- **June 4:** New Instructor Training– If you know someone interested in becoming a certified instructor, please direct them to our hunter education tab on the VTFW website, or share our contact info.
- **June 25:** Instructor Banquet: Waterbury Stowe Fish and game Club. Register here: <https://www.registered.com/events/view/179733> **Registration Opens April 2nd**

**Don’t forget to get your courses in soon for this upcoming hunting season!**

## Professional Development Opportunities Continue

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Our professional development series continues this month! Join us for our final two events; How To Teach Your Class In Schools VS. a Non-Traditional Setting on March 31st at 7pm, and Advanced Techniques for Teaching Outdoors with Ashley Eaton on April 14th at 7pm.

If you missed any of our professional development events, you can now view them in our recently updated ‘Instructor Resources’ link on the hunter education tab on the VTFW website. For your convenience, the Youtube links to the last four events are listed below.

Trends in Hunter Education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnpxgkuITpU>

Changes to the 2022 Fishing Regulations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YckbnC6TUU>

Tales from a Vermont Game Warden: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buo3R7Efwzl>

Teaching Land Ethic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQjzccHJqX8>



## Instructor Resource Updates

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This year we are offering some new materials for rent and a different format for ordering material. Coming soon, you will see a new layout on the equipment request page which now offers photos for many of the items on the order form. Additionally, we have three new laptops for lending out, all will come pre-loaded with teaching tools and videos. If you have your own laptop, we have the videos loaded on USB flash drives which can be lent out.

Additionally, we have updated the paperwork and links on the Instructor resources page on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website. Check it out at <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/131>.

# This Just In!

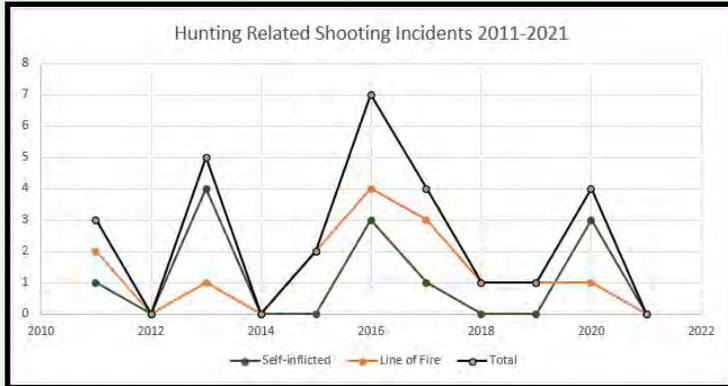
# Save The Date

In 2021 Vermont saw ZERO hunting related shooting incidents (HRSI). This is the third time Vermont has seen zero HRSIs. We can't wait to celebrate this achievement with you, our instructors.



Our annual instructor gathering is back and fully in-person. Join us on June 25th at Waterbury Stowe Fish and Game Club and be on the look out for a more formal invitation. If you have suggestions for activities or speakers for the event, please call or e-mail Nicole.

Register here starting April 2nd: <https://www.registered.com/events/view/179733>



## Fall Seasons



Upcoming instructor **Seth Wilkins** poses with his muzzleloader season buck. Seth's Windham County 8 pointer weighed in at 155lbs. Congrats Seth!



8 month old Briar shows off a successful retrieves and eagerly scans the horizon for more incoming birds while her human **Chris Boucher** documents one of her first retrieves. Great work Chris and Briar! We all look forward to seeing more of you two this fall!



**Adam Miller** reports that he is enjoying his new job and even had a chance to harvest a buck this fall at his new home in Pennsylvania. We'll miss you up here in VT Adam!

We look forward to your hunting stories, photos and lessons! If you or your family have photos, videos, short stories, or any other hunting and wildlife related works that you would like to share with us and your fellow instructors, please send them to us at [huntereducation@vermont.gov](mailto:huntereducation@vermont.gov). We would love to feature you in our newsletters!

# A Letter from Wildlife Biologist, Will Staats

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"I learned to hunt and inherited my passion for nature from old Vermont woodsmen in Addison County. The woods were part of their lives. They spent some portion of every day in the woods, hunting, trapping and hunting with dogs. I spent my childhood learning from them.

When I was 17, I lived in a log cabin on a mountain and trapped for my living. This experience gave me a vital understanding of wildlife ecology and led me to pursue a career in wildlife conservation. I've also lived a rich life as a woodsman, a hunter and trapper.

In my mind, these activities are complementary. Wildlife biologists, hunters and trappers understand the need to protect wild places.

I cannot convince you to like or agree with my cultural hunting traditions. Respectfully, I don't understand the joy of running a 6-mile loop on a wooded path or careening down trails on a bike — trails that cut through good wildlife habitat. But I don't tell you not to do these things.

If you were curious about my love of the woods, I'd tell you that a hunt endears me to the wild places where I've trapped a beaver or tracked a buck. These places imprint themselves on my soul and I would do almost anything to protect them. There are non-hunters who also have spiritual connections to wild places, and I respect them. But for me, this connection involves hunting, often with my beloved dogs. This is my culture. For many of us, it is how we raised our children.

You say, "Times change. Your traditions must stop. They involve unacceptable pain and suffering of animals." I understand this concern intensely. Hunting involves death, and often some measure of suffering. I care deeply for the animals I hunt and take no pleasure in the act of killing.

Hunters and trappers have always embraced new technologies and methods that make these practices more humane. We should and have evolved. Taking an animal's life demands respect. It is also important to note that many of the very best hunts, particularly with hounds, end in no death at all.

There is so much talk these days about the value of diversity and respecting cultural traditions. But it seems that these values only hold for certain people, and certain cultures. Will you also admonish the native peoples of Canada or Vermont and tell them their century-old traditions of survival and respect for nature are wrong and must be stopped?

In the course of these legislative arguments about hunting, there

has been indifference toward the people most knowledgeable about these practices and those who have the most to lose. There has been little attempt at even the appearance of curiosity or interest or respect for who we are and what we do.

In fact, there has been active hostility. Opponents of hunting have likened us to white supremacists and serial killers. As a state that identifies so strongly with progressive values, the hypocrisy is stunning.

And while we bicker, the real problems facing our wildlife grow. As a biologist, I have sat on the witness stand, testifying against massive energy projects that would have huge impacts on wild spaces, often proposed by companies from out of state. I was not joined in those rooms by anti-hunting activists, but the trappers and hunters I know had my back.

And as climate change progresses and more people migrate north, we will see more development encroaching on the last of Vermont's wild spaces. Additionally, with our changing demographics, I've seen a growing intolerance of wildlife. I've rescued bears off private property and faced countless indignant homeowners who don't understand that they've moved into what has always been good bear habitat.

These are the major problems we face, and the education and advocacy needed to protect wild places will require all of us to work together, and soon. It will require tolerance of difference. It will require working with people you don't agree with and don't understand.

If you force out the hunters and trappers whose practices you don't like, if you snub your nose at their lifestyles and culture, you will be forcing out some of Vermont's strongest and most loyal wildlife advocates. And you will be sending the very clear message: "Your cultural traditions do not matter. All that you have learned over generations about our wilderness and wildlife does not matter. You don't belong here anymore."

Traditionally, Vermonters have respected the privacy and different ways of their neighbors, with the mutual certainty they'll pull each other out of a ditch when the day comes. It has made this place civilized, and it is a tradition worth saving.

We don't have to like each other or share the same values. But we must find common ground in protecting our wild places before it's too late. And maybe if we concentrate on this shared mission, mutual respect and understanding will grow."

- Posted February 3rd, 2022 on [VTDigger.org](http://VTDigger.org)



# Must Read Articles



- **“Hunting the Maine Woods and Waters with Christi Holmes”**: <https://northernwoodlands.org/blog/article/hunting-christi-holmes>
- **“Guilford Man Honored By Vermont Fish and Wildlife with Lifetime Achievement Award”**: [https://www.reformer.com/local-news/guilford-man-honored-by-vermont-fish-wildlife-with-lifetime-achievement-award/article\\_3657beca-1e46-11ec-b50f-0733ffe63dae.html](https://www.reformer.com/local-news/guilford-man-honored-by-vermont-fish-wildlife-with-lifetime-achievement-award/article_3657beca-1e46-11ec-b50f-0733ffe63dae.html)
- **“Rodney Elmer of Mountain Deer: Hunting, Fatherhood & the River of Life”**: <https://www.alloutdoor.com/2022/02/15/mountain-deer-rodney-elmer/>
- **“Bald Eagle Removed From State Endangered and Threatened Species List”**: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/newsroom/bald-eagle-removed-from-state-endangered-and-threatened-species-list-five-other-species-and-three>
- **“Fungi May Kill Winter Ticks– And Help moose Survive”**: <https://www.concordmonitor.com/The-Outside-Story-44516212>
- **“VT Fish and Wildlife ‘Scat and Tracks Program’ Partners With Educators”**: <https://www.wcax.com/2022/01/18/wildlife-watch-vt-fish-wildlifes-scat-tracks-program-partners-with-educators/>



*“I think, as women, it’s OK for us to say, “I’m trying to get into hunting, where do I start?”*  
- Christi Holmes, Article 1.

*“Ego isn’t necessarily bad. But there is a lot of ego in hunting, and some of it is very distasteful if you look at it from the perspective of non-hunters or anti-hunters “*  
- Rodney Elmer, Article 3.



## COVID19 Updates

The State of Vermont is currently operating with no COVID restrictions. This means that the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department does not have any COVID protocols/restrictions regarding in-person classes. Our instructors should, however, follow any local town/city regulations regarding masking or other protocols.

When teaching an in-person class, we no longer have a residency requirement. This means that anyone of any age, from any state, may attend our in-person classes.

Please also remember that if you or a student wants to wear a mask, you/they are welcome to do so.

If you have questions or concerns about COVID protocols, please contact Nicole at 802-318-1347 or [nicole.meier@vermont.gov](mailto:nicole.meier@vermont.gov)

# Moose Hunt Proposed: Public Hearings Announced

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has proposed issuing 100 moose hunting permits in Vermont's Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) E in the northeastern corner of the state in order to reduce the impact of winter ticks on the moose population. The proposal was accepted by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board at its February 16 meeting.

"Department staff, including moose project lead biologist Nick Fortin and biometrician Dr. Katherina Gieder, brought incredible scientific expertise to this recommendation," said Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife Christopher Herrick. "The proposal our board vetted and approved was informed by years of field research and sophisticated statistical analyses that have been featured in peer reviewed publications alongside results from sister efforts in Maine and New Hampshire."



The goal of the department's 2022 moose harvest recommendation is to improve the health of moose in WMU-E by reducing the number of moose and thereby reducing the abundance and impact of winter ticks.

"Moose density in WMU E is still more than one moose per square mile, significantly higher than any other part of the state," said Nick Fortin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife's moose project leader. "Moose densities greater than one per square mile support high numbers of winter ticks which negatively impact moose health and survival."

The Fish and Wildlife Department partnered with University of Vermont researchers to conduct a study of moose health and survival in WMU E. The results of this study, in which 126 moose (36 cows, 90 calves) were fitted with GPS tracking collars, clearly showed that chronic high winter tick loads have caused the health of moose in that part of the state to be very

poor. Survival of adult moose remained relatively good, but birth rates were very low and less than half of the calves survived their first winter.

"Research has shown that lower moose densities in the rest of Vermont support relatively few winter ticks that do not impact moose populations," said Fortin. "Reducing moose density decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape."

The department would issue 60 either-sex moose hunting permits and 40 antlerless moose permits in WMU-E for the moose seasons this October. This is expected to result in a harvest of 51 to 65 moose, or about 5 percent of the moose population in WMU-E. The same number of permits were issued in 2021 when hunters took 62 moose.

"This permit recommendation represents a continued attempt to address winter tick impacts on moose in WMU-E," added Fortin. "Given the poor health of the moose population in that area and a clearly identified cause, we need to take action to address this issue. Without intervention to reduce the moose population, high tick loads will continue to impact the health of moose in that region for many years."

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board will hold public hearings on deer and moose management for 2022 on March 21, 23, 24, and 29.

The three in-person hearings will begin at 6:30 p.m. at these locations:

March 21 – Spaulding High School, 155 Ayers St, Barre, VT 05641

March 23 – Kehoe Conservation Camp, 636 Point of Pines Rd, Castleton, VT 05735

March 24 -- Lake Region High School, 317 Lake Region Rd, Orleans, VT 05860

The hearing on March 29 will be online. To access the meeting, [follow this hyperlink to access the Microsoft Teams meeting](#). Or find the link at [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

# What's New With Us?

## Nicole:

This winter, I've been working on the shooting range improvement grant, which will give 5 Vermont ranges funds to make improvements on their public shooting facilities. I've also completed our firearm exam, which will go out to instructors for use this spring, and continued assisting with the monthly live wild food show, The Vermont Wild Kitchen. I'm currently working with partners like NWTF and BHA on hosting hunting seminars this spring and fall. I also got the chance to teach a tracking course to a local Girl Scout Troop, which was especially fun since I was a Girl Scout! My son, Jake, has even gotten into tracking this winter! When not outside enjoying the snow, I spent a lot of time home with COVID with my family. Hoping you all stay healthy!



## Nathan:

Hey everybody! I've been enjoying what little snow we have gotten by riding my snowmobile at every chance I get. Hopefully this upcoming storm will hit us hard enough to re-open some trails! I have recently gotten into vintage snowmobiles as well and have been taking them to many shows this winter. I've also been doing some downhill skiing and working on my new house when time allows. Soon we will be getting up to my camp to do some much needed maintenance and some squirrel hunting as well. I am totally not ready for winter to end but it quickly is and I'm gearing up for spring classes and spring turkey. We also are planning some very special Hunter Ed events! I'm looking forward to those events and also relaxing on the lake and in the woods. Thanks for everything you do for Vermont Hunters!



## Olivia Baroffio:



You may recognize me from previous newsletters or the occasional office visit or other program gatherings, but you should note one small change. My 2021 wedding has led to an inconspicuous name change from Bussiere to Baroffio! Although you can still reach me at my previous email, these will only be forwarded to my new email for a limited amount of time, so please be sure to use my new email if you want to get in touch.

Within the department, I am still working front and center in our Montpelier office, fielding calls and making myself available to assist you all with any class scheduling help you or your students may need. You can also reach out to me if you need help with

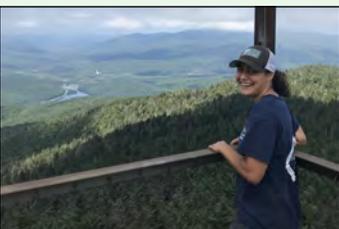
your license or have questions about regulations.. I'm always happy to help and love a good conversation about fishing every once in a while!



## Welcome Olivia Abair!

The Hunter Education Program is excited to welcome our newest employee, Olivia Abair. Olivia is our Hunter Education Specialist, which is a temporary position, slated to end in the fall. Olivia will be in charge of getting gear to our 350+ instructors for the roughly 200 classes taught each year. When she isn't running around the state with a truckload of class gear, she will be teaching classes for the public and assisting at our camps. Although the nature of her position is very variable, she will be based out of the Dewey Building here in Montpelier.

"My name is Olivia Abair and I am ecstatic to be working for Vermont Fish and Wildlife as the newest member of the hunter education team. Last summer I worked as a natural resource instructor for GMCC



Buck Lake, and I have recently graduated Unity College with a Bachelor's in Wildlife Biology and Conservation Law Enforcement. I look forward to evolving my career in the wildlife field whether that be in research, education or law enforcement. Outside of work I enjoy being outdoors, walking my dog, hiking, fishing and hunting ."



# Contact Us!

We love hearing from our volunteers and want to spotlight YOU in our quarterly newsletters! Send us a little update on what you've been up to and we'll include you in the next newsletter!

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## Have a Fantastic Spring!

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