

2018 Vermont Habitat Stamp Annual Report



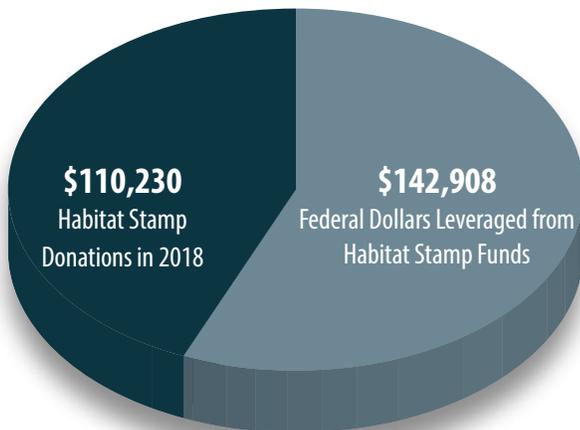
Tom Rogers

This year's Habitat Stamp demonstrated the power of the *multiplier effect*, when one action can be a catalyst for other actions and the effects keep radiating out. Thanks to your generous donations of \$110,230 we were able to leverage \$142,908 in federal funds for habitat conservation. Habitat Stamp funds helped one biologist work with dozens of members of local Watershed Groups and bring out hundreds of students to plant trees along streambanks. The Habitat Stamp helped another biologist provide assistance to scores of landowners to improve wildlife habitat on thousands of acres. And the improved habitat provides a boost to wildlife-based recreation in Vermont that is likely incalculable but will be enriching lives for generations to come.

By the Numbers*

Total Conservation Funding: \$253,138

Where the Money Came from



Average Donation: **\$13**

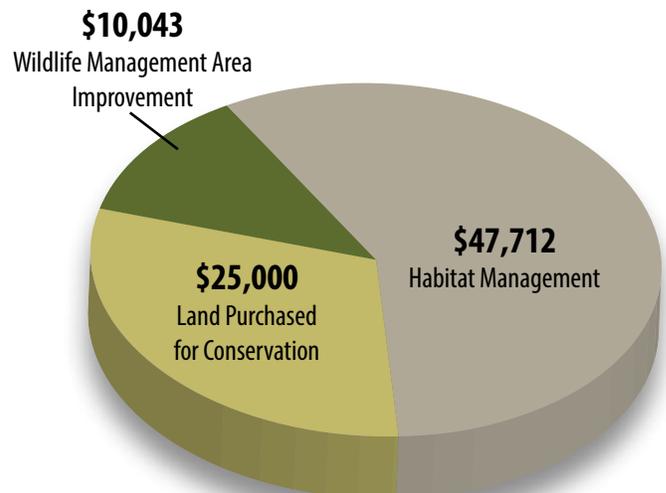
Donations from license buyers: **\$103,923 (94%)**

Donations from non-license buyers: **\$6,307 (6%)**

* Dates are 12/01/17 through 12/01/18

Total Habitat Stamp Funds Spent: \$82,755**

How the Money Was Spent



** These figures only include Habitat Stamp fund expenditures, not federal funds.

Birds and Beyond

Habitat biologist Andrea Shortsleeve continued to work with private landowners throughout the state in 2018. Her efforts to improve habitat statewide for birds and other wildlife found her focusing on three priority areas this year:

◆ Partnering in Conservation

The *Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers* program works with partners such as Vermont Woodlands Association, Audubon Vermont, American Forest Foundation, and consulting foresters to improve habitat for birds in Vermont. Andrea also helped facilitate a one-day summit bringing together conservationists to roll out Vermont Conservation Design, the Fish & Wildlife Department's statewide habitat conservation strategy.

◆ Assisting Private Landowners

With the majority of Vermont's land privately held, Andrea works with landowners in all corners of the state. She focuses on priority wildlife habitat, such as the Shutesville Wildlife Corridor across Route 100 between Waterbury and Stowe. In total, Andrea helped **improve wildlife habitat on 76 properties totaling more than 10,000 acres!**

◆ Supporting Towns and Communities

Andrea and her colleagues gave 25 presentations this year to the public and worked on 5 town forest plans with the goal of improving habitat for wildlife.



Tom Rogers

From bringing Shelburne middle-schoolers into the field to learn about invasive plants, to finalizing significant wildlife habitat designations with county foresters, 2018 has been a productive year for the Vermont Habitat Stamp program. We couldn't do this important work without the incredible support of Habitat Stamp donors.

—Andrea Shortsleeve



Richard Levine

Cold Water Connections

The effort to restore habitat for fish and other wildlife along streams and rivers continued in 2018, thanks to the work of stream habitat biologist Will Eldridge. A few of the things Will worked on this year:

◆ Removing Obstacles to Fish Passage

Fisheries biologists worked with state, federal and watershed partners to improve fish passage at problem culverts in some of the best trout streams in the White, Winooski, Lamoille and Missisquoi Rivers. They also worked with communities on dam removal projects around the state, including improving outreach to landowners to remove 'deadbeat dams' that no longer provide any services but are harm fish habitat and water quality.

◆ Improving Fish Habitat on 'Streambank Parcels'

Will continued to improve fish habitat on the department's many 'streambank parcels,' narrow strips of land along streams originally purchased to provide access for fishing. Many of these parcels are unmarked and unknown to the public and Will is working to improve public access, address encroachments, and restore forested streambanks to benefit fish and other aquatic organisms.

◆ Planting Trees and Vegetation Along Shorelines

Staff planted trees at five locations this year in partnership with local watershed groups, including along the White River and the Winooski River.

Several of the plantings included local school groups. Will and other staff were joined by 400 school kids to help plant trees and restore habitat along these rivers.



Tom Rogers

Room to Roam

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Planted Trees at State's Newest WMA

Engaging youths in improving habitat for wildlife

With support from the Habitat Stamp, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps worked directly with state wildlife biologists to improve habitat on the state's newest wildlife management area, Windsor Grasslands WMA.

More than five years in the making the Windsor Grasslands WMA restoration project was first envisioned to restore wetlands affected by past agricultural uses. Under the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's new ownership, the health of the property's wetlands, streams and forests, are being restored. These efforts will benefit the entire watershed downstream.

"The young people working for the VYCC spent a full week battling invasive plants and working to establish a mix of native, wildlife-friendly trees and shrubs in their place," said Chris Bernier, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department biologist who manages this WMA.

"Habitat stamp donors should take pride in knowing these funds are helping to restore fish and wildlife habitat, protect water quality, and engage youths in conservation. This collaboration demonstrates how, when the will and funding come together, we can improve our environment," said Bernier.

Members of the community also lent a hand planting trees and improving habitat during a volunteer day in late October. Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter joined the crew to lend a hand and to thank them for their efforts on this important project

Public Boardwalk Completed at Moose Bog for Wildlife Viewing

ADA accessible boardwalk provides opportunities for people with limited mobility



A new boardwalk at the popular Moose Bog provides additional opportunities for people to see wildlife in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Built to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities



Act, the boardwalk provides all visitors, including those with mobility impairments, an immersive experience in nature at the Wenlock WMA in Ferdinand, Vermont.

"Moose Bog is a popular spot with a beautiful view and fantastic opportunities to see wildlife," said Doug Morin, a wildlife biologist with Vermont Fish & Wildlife. "In a short one-mile trip, visitors may spot rare boreal forest birds such as spruce grouse, boreal chickadees, grey jays, and black-backed woodpeckers, in addition to the chance to see a moose. The bog itself is a beautiful black spruce bog, with a floating mat of sphagnum moss and many rare bog plants."

"We want Vermont's 95 wildlife management areas to be accessible to all Vermonters and visitors, and that includes people with limited mobility," said John Austin, who manages Vermont Fish & Wildlife's Lands and Habitat Program. "Moose Bog is popular with birders and other wildlife enthusiasts, so we decided a boardwalk would give more people the chance to experience this incredible place."

Habitat Stamp funds will help further improve interpretive signs and outreach materials at Moose Bog in the coming year.

Steam Mill Brook WMA Expanded by 225 Acres

These vast and wild lands will remain forever protected

One of Vermont's largest wildlife management areas, Steam Mill Brook WMA, has expanded by 225 acres, thanks in part to the generous donors who gave to the Vermont Habitat Stamp.

Steam Mill Brook WMA contains a large expanse of unbroken forests and provides an important corridor for wildlife moving between the Worcester Mountain Range and the Northeast Kingdom. This



enormous and wild WMA comprises roughly 11,000-acres in Caledonia County permanently conserved and managed to enhance wildlife habitat as well as to provide public access for wildlife-based recreation, including hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, photography, or gathering wild edibles.

“Wildlife is increasingly under threat from climate change and forest fragmentation. Intact forests that serve as movement and migration corridors are becoming ever-more important for wildlife such as songbirds, moose and black bears to continue to thrive,” said John Austin, lands and habitat program manager for Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “Our department is working with partners and willing landowners to achieve landscape-scale conservation in these high-priority areas.”

The newly conserved land area has been managed to create young forest habitat that is critical for many species of wildlife, from chestnut-sided warblers to American woodcock to moose.

“Every time a biologist has visited this property, they’ve seen an abundance of wildlife and wildlife sign,” said Austin. “Adding this property to Steam Mill Brook WMA offers outstanding opportunities for all people who appreciate Vermont’s wildlife, from hunters to bird-watchers.”

What Others Are Saying About the Habitat Stamp

Vermonter Martha Molnar on Why She Supports the Habitat Stamp

Until recently, Vermont Fish and Wildlife was just another name among a murky sea of state agencies that I’d hear and read about occasionally but didn’t think about much.



photo courtesy VPR

But twice now in just a few months, Vermont Fish and Wildlife has profoundly enriched my life.

First came the purchase of what’s now the Birdseye Mountain Wildlife Management Area. It spans five mountains over six miles, and we can see much of it right across the valley from our own home.

And now, Fish and Wildlife has acquired the north shore of beautiful Sunset Lake in Benson and added it to the existing Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area.

Lakeshore property is expensive and the Sunset Pond shoreline was no exception. Fish and Wildlife paid three hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars for those fifty acres, with most of the funds coming from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and from the agency’s national budget. But a significant amount was contributed through the agency’s Habitat Stamp

program. Jane Lazorchak, who coordinates agency land acquisitions, hopes everyone who appreciates wild places will consider buying Habitat Stamps, not just those who hunt and fish.

The stamps have no actual value—you can’t even mail a letter with one—and they cost fifteen dollars apiece. But many people actually choose to pay more than that, maybe as much as a thousand, because they represent Vermonters’ devotion to conserving our wildlife and the lakes, rivers, forests and mountaintops they depend on.

Seen that way, the stamps are as priceless as the first spring day we’ll spend exploring this newest jewel in the Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area.

This commentary by Martha Molnar was written for Vermont Public Radio and aired on April 12, 2018. To hear it in its entirety, go to digital.vpr.net/post/molnar-fish-and-wildlife#stream/0. Martha Molnar is a former New York Times reporter now living outside Rutland.

“Whether you are a hunter, an angler, a Vermont eBird, e-Butterfly, or Vermont iNaturalist enthusiast, or simply someone who appreciates the beauty of Vermont’s wild spaces, the Vermont Habitat Stamp is a great way to support wildlife and public land conservation.”

—Liza Morse

Vermont Center for Ecostudies
ECO AmeriCorps member

The View Ahead

The first few years of the Vermont Habitat Stamp program have been a success and 2018 was no exception! In a little more than three years, thanks to your help the Vermont Habitat Stamp has contributed to the direct conservation of 3,200 acres of land, the restoration of streams and rivers, and the removal of dysfunctional dams for fish passage.

In 2019, we’re hoping to continue to conserve land along the Northeast Kingdom’s Clyde River to create a brand-new WMA, in addition to adding lands to Lemon Fair WMA in Bridport, Kesick Swamp WMA in Sunderland, and celebrating the grand opening of Bonsawinno WMA in Castleton.

To continue protecting Vermont’s conservation legacy, donate to the 2019 Vermont Habitat Stamps at vtfishandwildlife.com and get your new stamp today. Thank you for donating in 2018!



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