



Green Mountain Conservation Camp



A Safe Place to Weather the Storm

By Alison Thomas, Outreach Division Director

We are ready for everything at Green Mountain Conservation Camp (GMCC). There are protocols for just about anything you can imagine, because although both camps are a place for exploring nature, building outdoor skills, and creating happy memories, we must pay due diligence to the serious medical and weather situations that may occur. Well, this summer certainly put that to the test on July 10th when Route 14 both south and north of Buck Lake Road went missing. Mercifully, it was just another rainy summer day at the Edward F. Kehoe camp in Castleton. But, in Woodbury, just beyond the entrance to Buck Lake, there were craters in the road in both directions and the dirt road alternative was not much better. However, campers were always safe and happy. With the help of wardens, biologists, and a willing electrician, we identified a route into camp and installed extra generators that thankfully were never needed. Despite some tense moments and difficult decisions for headquarters staff, activities for campers never wavered thanks to unbelievably dedicated and professional camp staff and junior counselors who kept the mood upbeat and lessons rolling. All campers left with their combination hunter education certifications, fun memories, and fires in their bellies to come back next year as advanced campers. Our protocols and staff were put to the test and passed with flying colors.

After the season was complete and I was reading camper evaluations, I was reminded that camp is more than a great place to shelter during a weather emergency, it's also a refuge for so many of the challenges everyone, especially young teenagers, face today. With the stressors of school, extra curriculars, social media, and more, camp is a place to unplug and be safe literally and figuratively. When asked what should change about camp in the evaluation, repeatedly, campers answered they would not change anything about it because they can be themselves at GMCC. Several mentioned how cool it is that so many kinds of people are at camp, but they all get along and learn about the outdoors at the same time. In a world that constantly pressures to label, categorize, and divide people, GMCC brings together and celebrates everyone. Hopefully these qualities will inspire and spread beyond the GMCC boundaries with every camper, junior counselor, and staff member to help make everyone a little bit gentler on the earth and each other.



Route 14 south of Buck Lake Road.

From the Campers:

What's your favorite part of camp...

“My favorite part of camp was fishing at camp. It gave me a way to pay attention to fish species and really got me “hooked” on fishing. Fishing was also a way to connect with the new friends I made.”

“My favorite part of camp was and will always be the friendship, support, and comradery of fellow campers, JCs, and staff.”

“My favorite part of camp was getting out in nature and getting to connect more with my emotions.”

“My favorite part of camp was being able to disregard social media to enjoy the outdoors.”

“Camp has always been a safe place where I can step away and truly feel comfortable being myself. Without camp I surely would not be the person I am today.”

“My favorite part of camp was meeting all kinds of people and making new friends that have different life experiences than me. I also enjoyed getting to be outside and do fun activities.”

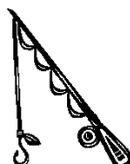
“My favorite part of camp was meeting new people and creating new bonds that have taught me life lessons and new experiences.”



Fisheries biologists teach about fish diversity during a seine netting demonstration.



Learning safe canoe t-rescues in Lake Bomoseen. And a good excuse to tip the boat.



Working at GMCC

Are you interested in wildlife conservation, working outdoors, and educating youth? Jumpstart your career in conservation while gaining valuable experience.

Positions include:

- Camp Director
- Junior Counselor Director
- Natural Resources Instructor
- Natural Resources Instructor - Medical Coordinator

Positions are posted in early January.

For details and to apply: vtfishandwildlife.com/about-us/employment

Interviews begin in February, and positions are filled on an ongoing basis.

Questions, contact:

Hannah Phelps
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Education Specialist
(802) 249-4199

New in 2023



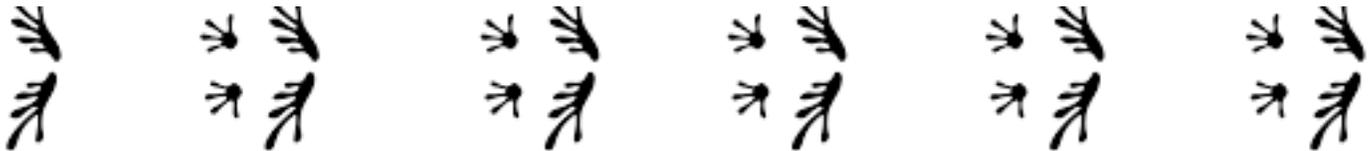
This year we added an additional Girls Basic Week, increasing our total number from three to four. We were absolutely thrilled to see this session fill, allowing an additional 60 girls to attend GMCC and qualify to attend an Advanced Session next summer!

After 35 years in state government, our long-time Camp Registrar, Jan, retired in October of 2022. We are incredibly thankful to Jan for all of her hard work registering campers throughout her time with us! In her absence, Hannah Phelps has now taken over as our full-time GMCC Coordinator to help with all things camp. After 13 years both participating and working at camp in various volunteer and temp positions, we are excited to have her with us full time!



Success! The campers rest at the peak of the day hike at Kehoe.

2023 brought a few changes to our registration system, the most notable one being the process to apply for a GMCC Scholarship. In the past, a lengthy application was required, and some families did not qualify for financial aid through our office. This year, we were fortunate enough to be able to completely revamp this system, making the application process significantly easier and allowing any family who reached out to receive a full or partial scholarship. If you or someone you know is looking for financial assistance to attend camp, please send them our way!



GMCC by the Numbers: 2023

921 Youths attended Buck Lake or Edward F. Kehoe

631 Firearm/Bow Hunter certifications

244 Advanced campers

117 Trapper Education certifications

44 Campers completed the advanced waterfowl course

83 Campers completed the advanced backpacking course



Happy campers show their hunter education and bow certifications.

Camp Coordinator Corner

By Hannah Phelps, Education Specialist

As the camp season wrapped up and paperwork season began, I spent a lot of time sifting through evaluations written by each camper at the end of their session. While reading through their highs and lows of the week, one camper stood out to me by writing, “My favorite part of camp is that there’s so many different types of people here but [we] still all have one thing in common...our love for camp.” I found that this camper put into words what so many of us, myself included, feel when spending time at GMCC.

We see lots of different people at GMCC. We often see more diversity at camp than in many Vermont classrooms, with children coming together from different areas or states and with different ideas, experiences, and backgrounds. This inadvertently allows campers to not only learn about conservation and natural resources, but also about other perspectives, working through differences, and making informed decisions and opinions that reflect on more than just their own lives. This is not something we are able to teach, but rather something we help to foster for campers to experience on their own.

This year it was clear that many campers noticed and took advantage of these circumstances. In fact, meeting and spending time with new friends was the #2 most mentioned camp favorite according to the evaluations, only being beaten out (unsurprisingly) by participating in live fire on the ranges. Several campers specifically mentioned how their new friends came to camp with different experiences from them, and they were excited to

be able to learn new perspectives from the people surrounding them.

It is easy for all of these different campers to bond when they all have the common experience of attending and enjoying GMCC. It is a great topic of conversation, and one that can last for hours with the right group. When a group from GMCC gets together, whether they were cabin mates, co-JCs, or on staff together, it can be hard to talk about anything other than camp. The infectious

love of the place and people takes over, and common ground is always found.

I have heard from many parents this fall that their children have already caught this infectious love for the program, and I am confident that the same is true for exponentially more than I heard from. People tend to come to camp and fall in love with GMCC, often leading them to return for many years to come.

The world around us is changing constantly, and sometimes at an alarming rate. We have faced numerous trials and challenges throughout the past

few years, from pandemics to 100-year floods and everything in between. We have seen these stressful world events exacerbate differences between people, leading to large rifts and more controversy. However, through it all one thing has continually rung true for decades at GMCC: our ability to find common ground through our love of camp.



Very immersive wetland ecology.

Hunter Education

Nicole Meier, Hunter Education Coordinator

Another GMCC season comes to a close, which means hunting seasons are opening in Vermont – fall is here! The change of the seasons marks something more than a holiday for many hunters – it marks the time of the year when tradition turns into action; this is the time of year when a day in the woods turns into a story and a meal shared at the table. At GMCC, this also marks a time when many campers are able to participate in the story telling for the first time as newly certified hunters.

The act of sharing our passion for hunting with others is the cornerstone of our Hunter Education Program and is something that is explored in depth at camp. Our Natural Resource Instructors, along with our many volunteers, are the backbone of safe, ethical hunting in Vermont. Whether a camper takes up hunting after their GMCC experience or not, we take seriously our responsibility to share the ethics, safety, and love for the environment that comes with hunting. Along with that come the tools for each camper to participate in the conversation surrounding conservation in Vermont. They are all able to tell their own story, no matter if it is about their favorite wildlife to observe or their first deer harvest.

Besides sharing their passion, our Natural Resource Instructors and Junior Counselors ensure the safety of hunters in the Vermont woods. They drive home the importance of muzzle control, respect for firearms, respect for the landscape, and the responsibility of hunters to make the woods and fields a better place.

Let's Go Fishing

Corey Hart, Education Specialist

Watersheds, wetland ecology, fly tying, tackle vs flies, fishing, and more... aquatic education is a big part of the GMCC experience. Which, is perfect for Vermont where there are so many great opportunities to enjoy ponds and streams.

All of the water-based activities at GMCC are part of the Let's Go Fishing Program (LGF), which engages all campers through place-based, hands-on topics. Even campers who are uninterested in fishing learn about something engaging and fun in each lesson. Often, the biggest smiles of the week happen when campers jump into muddy wetlands in search of aquatic organisms. And, nothing is more rewarding than seeing campers who have no desire to fish suddenly become enthralled with the art of tying a fly. Add to this, the excitement of catching their first fish, successfully tying a clinch knot, or showing off their fly to family and friends, and you begin to see the full impact LGF has on the campers at GMCC.

Regardless of a camper's interest level in fishing, LGF at GMCC allows everyone to engage with the water resources around them and deepen their understanding and love for the conservation of clean and healthy aquatic ecosystems.



Waterfowl blind building.



A good fish story.



Increasing his luck with extra bobbers (no hooks so it's legal)!

Thanks to all of the Junior Counselors who volunteer at GMCC and give campers the opportunity to participate in these programs!

Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund

Securing camps for future generations.

The Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund is a 501 C 3 non-profit that secures funds for existing GMCC programs, provides maintenance and equipment to the camp facilities, and expands educational opportunities.

The fund helps acquire new canoes, lifejackets, aquatic ecology nets, orienteering equipment, and more.

It's purchases like this that make the fund so important.

The Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund Needs Your Support.



Campers proudly holding their graduation packets.



Songs, dances, stories, and jokes are all a part of campfire connections.

Consider strengthening the fund with your donation.

With your help, we can provide many more generations with the invaluable education offered at Green Mountain Conservation Camps.

Donate today by visiting vtfishandwildlife/donate.com

Attention Educators!

Wildlife Management & Outdoor Education Techniques for Educators One-Week Field Course

Since 1986, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has offered a course that allows educators to go to summer camp, receive professional development, and participate in hands-on learning opportunities about wildlife management. Participants receive 3 graduate-level credits from Castleton University, and earn up to 60 hours of continuing education credits!

This is a one-week course held in mid-July for formal and non-formal educators of all disciplines and grade levels. Educators interested in integrating environmental topics into their curriculum and programs can learn about Vermont's wildlife and fisheries from professional biologists, foresters and educators through hands-on activities.

Contact Ali Thomas, Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov for more information.

For more information: vtfishandwildlife.com > [Learn More](#) > [Conservation Education](#)



Course Offering!

Educators who have already taken the Wildlife Management course at Buck Lake are eligible to take **PART II** offered at the GMCC: Edward F. Kehoe . This course offers 2 graduate-level credits from Castleton University.



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