



Vermont Furbearer Management Newsletter

FALL 2024

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 1

Allow Me To Introduce Myself

Being new to the position of Wildlife Division Director, a post previously held by my friend and colleague Mark Scott, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. Although I've only been serving in this position since November of last year, I have been working with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department for 30 years as a wildlife biologist. Over the years, I've worked mostly on habitat protection and management projects from protecting habitat in the Act 250 regulatory process to managing public lands to benefit wildlife. I've had the privilege and good fortune to work closely with former furbearer project lead Kim Royar for many years on a wide range of projects, and even remember the days of Jim DeStefano who was the furbearer biologist before Kim. I care deeply about the department, our conservation mission, and our responsibility to uphold the interests of our hunting, trapping, angling, and wildlife enthusiast communities.

Having worked on the periphery of the process to develop new trapping regulations, I am greatly impressed by the commitment from all involved to promulgate what appears to be

some of the most comprehensive, science-based regulations in North America. To all those who contributed to making that effort successful, thank you! Please keep in mind that the new regulations, while in effect, are currently the subject of a lawsuit.



John Austin
Wildlife Division Director

Joshua Morse

Not being a trapper myself, I have a lot to learn when it comes to trapping. Bree Furfey, our furbearer project leader, and David Sausville, our Wildlife Management Program Manager are doing an outstanding job of keeping me informed so I can support their work on various wildlife conservation efforts from understanding the extent of rodenticides in fisher and bobcats, to the distribution and abundance of American marten, and much more.

Moving forward, we have many significant challenges to our wildlife conservation mission including ongoing loss and fragmentation of habitat, expansion of invasive species, threats from disease, the attendant effects of a changing climate, as well as changing public attitudes towards wildlife and nature. In addition, we have great opportunities to confront those challenges including unprecedented funding opportunities for land conservation, among others. I look forward to working with all our partners to capitalize on conservation opportunities that will help us keep our wildlife healthy and abundant. Lastly, I welcome hearing from anyone who is interested in our wildlife conservation efforts.

With deep appreciation for all who care about and contribute to wildlife conservation,

John Austin

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Saying Farewell

"Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." - Fred Rogers

This past Spring I realized that I am at the end of my career with VT Fish and Wildlife and at the beginning of something else. The change will happen at the end of December. The "something else" chapter is yet to be written, but the draft outline includes more time with my husband, kids and grandkids, more time in the kayak, and more time dedicated to volunteer work. Any ending is always bittersweet, though. There are many people and projects I will miss, but especially those related to the Furbearer Management Program.

Mary Beth on the job installing a beaver exclusion fence.



When I first started working for VFWD in 2002, I had no experience with trapping and could barely name all 14 furbearers managed by the program I was working for, so it was with a bit of trepidation that I agreed to be a technician for the Fisher BMP trap testing project. It meant tagging along with someone I didn't know in unfamiliar territory and situations, in all kinds of weather,

every day for a month. Not unexpectedly, I had more than a few butterflies the first day. The trapper immediately put me at ease, though, and wanted to teach me as much as possible. He eagerly conveyed years of wisdom from living off the land and was a kind and patient teacher. His passion and concern for the wellbeing of the animals was contagious. I developed a great respect for him and the others participating in the study and was eager to learn more.

The BMP study opened the door for 20+ years of interacting with dozens and dozens of you who have been as knowledgeable, kind, generous, and conservation minded as "my fisher trapper". It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside many of you when the Furbearer Management Program needed samples for research and disease monitoring, when you volunteered for carcass processing, or when attending public meetings related to trapping. My favorite furbearer project has been building and maintaining the furbearer

education kits which you have graciously supported with donations of pelts and funds. I have enjoyed many a conversation about furbearers, other wildlife, and sometimes life in general when I've called to follow up on a trapper report, answered a call from a trapper needing information, or attended the Trapper Rendezvous.

During my time here, I've been able to work on the Deerfield Bear Study, monitor peregrines and eagles, give wildlife presentations at summer camps for kids, and work with a hundred or more landowners to help them improve wildlife habitat on their land. All so gratifying I've hardly been able to call this a job! My fondest memories, though, will always be related to the furbearer management program and of those who took me on as part of the team...Kim Royar, Chris Bernier, and Forrest Hammond. For those I am truly thankful. In the words of Garrison Keillor, "Be well, do good work, and keep in touch!"

With warmest regards,

Mary Beth



Don't Relocate Wildlife

This is a reminder that capturing wildlife and releasing it alive onto a different property from where it was caught is illegal. Possession of a live furbearing animal is prohibited except for the purpose of moving the animal to a more appropriate place for dispatch.

Relocating wildlife is stressful for the animal and a safety concern for people. Moving wildlife around can also mean moving diseases (i.e. rabies, canine distemper) and parasites. It introduces an animal into other animals' home ranges, which creates stress and increased competition for food and other resources. If the animal has become habituated to people and human food sources, it will seek out other human dwellings for food and become a problem for someone else.

Reminder to Renew Your Permanent License

If you are a permanent or lifetime license holder, please take a minute to "renew" your license each year to help us refine our mailing lists. Licenses can be renewed online at our website or in person at your nearest licensing agent or VFWD District Office (Note: A license agent may charge you up to \$1.50 for reprinting your license).

To renew online, visit our website at vtfishwildlife.com. Click "Buy Your License" photo on the homepage. Look for the green "Update Your Permanent License" button and then follow the instructions from there.



Annual Trapper Report Due Date: April 15th

For the upcoming 2024-2025 trapping season, the mandatory Annual Trapper Report is due April 15. The earlier due date allows Department staff additional time to summarize and evaluate the important data trappers provide for our state and federal reports. Watch for a reminder letter from VFWD in March that will have instructions with several options for how to submit your report. Updated reporting forms for the current trapping season are available on our website January 1 of each year or can be mailed to you upon request. Give us a call or email us to let us know you need them and we'll send them out.

Many of you have asked why there isn't an online reporting system for reporting. We are currently working on creating an online version that will eliminate the need to email or mail in the traditional reporting forms. The paper forms will still be available for trappers who wish to fill out and mail in their trapper report. We are hopeful to have this database finalized in time for this coming trapping season.

Stay tuned!

Outreach and Education

VFWD staff take outreach and education just as seriously as their focus on biological and ecological management and conservation. The Furbearer Project Management Team and the Outreach and Education Team work together year-round to bring topics of importance to the public. Here's a snapshot of our efforts this past year:

- Giving interviews with Vermont Public, WCAX, VT-Digger, and other media about a variety of furbearer related topics such as new trapping regulations, coyotes, and most recently the Canada lynx observed in Shrewsbury.

- Keeping the furbearer webpage on the department's website up to date with current data, proposed and/or current regulation changes, BMP news, and a variety of publications focusing on furbearers.

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Permanent License Holder But Not a Trapper?

Those of you who hold permanent combination licenses but are **not** trappers may wonder why you get the Annual Trapper Reports in the mail. Trapping might have been inadvertently added to your license without your knowing of it, most likely because the clerk forgot to ask or just didn't know to ask if you wanted it and checked the box. If this is the case, please call or email:

Bree Furfey 802-952-8543 | brehan.furfey@vermont.gov

or

Melissa Currier 802-289-0613 | melissa.currier@vermont.gov

We'll have trapping removed from your license and take your name off our mailing list.

Mast and Mustelids

There are several reasons why local and regional furbearer populations fluctuate. Weather, predation, disease, prey resources, habitat, etc. are all reasons we see changes over time. But what about vegetative resources, specifically soft and hard mast density, and what does that have to do with carnivorous furbearers like fisher and marten?

If you've heard the phrase "smoke follows beauty" while sitting around a particularly smokey campfire, then "mustelid survival follows mast events" would make sense to you. Research has demonstrated that there is lagged increases in small mammal abundance following mast cycles, and that coincides with the kit rearing period and juvenile growth for fisher and marten. Kits born in prey-rich environments likely experience higher survival rates. The more mast available = increased rodent abundance = increased prey resources that are loaded with fat.

Beech nuts, in particular, are especially important because they have a higher fat content in comparison to acorns, herbs, and even corn. Beech nuts are produced when the tree is 40-60 years old, and they ripen from August to November. By the time you are reading this, several wildlife species could be loading up on fat and not joining weight watchers to impress prospective mates. Instead, they are either caching it, or using that fat content for stored energy to survive the winter months ahead. Those fat resources are crucial for reproductive success.



Advanced beech bark disease on a dead beech tree.

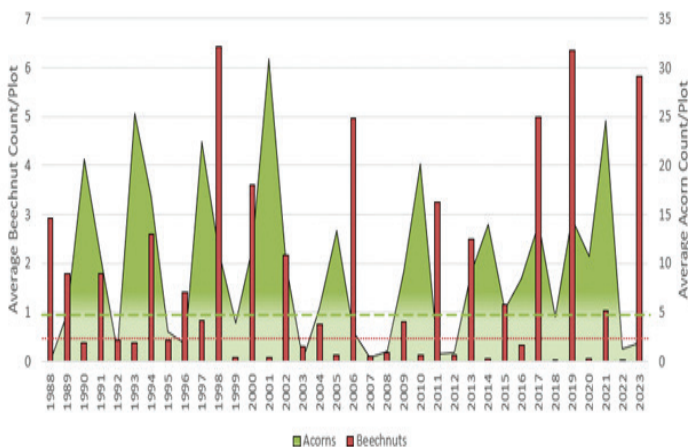
Elif Sagor

fruit, reducing mast production. Excessively high temperatures during the growing season can stress trees, leading to lower yields. Drought conditions during the spring and summer will result in poor fruiting, reducing mast yield. Conversely, too much rainfall, particularly during the spring, can hinder flower production, and waterlogged soils can also stress tree roots. Trees may be less productive if they've experienced a particularly harsh winter. These weather extremes can lead to irregular mast production cycles, and those cycles are influenced by the cumulative effect of varying weather conditions over several seasons. Last year was an exceptional mast year for southern Vermont but varied in quantity and quality across the rest of the state. If you follow the trends on the graph below, you'll see that this year may be a great acorn year compared to beechnuts.

When the mast density is low, research has indicated that marten, fisher, and weasel capture rates from regulated trapping activity increase. There are also demographic patterns that we look for, which are available to us through regulated trapping by collecting and aging teeth. An increased juvenile harvest signals a good reproductive year.

Another important factor influencing mast abundance is an outbreak of disease. The most recent threat, one that could have a significant impact on furbearers and other wildlife, is Beech Leaf Disease (BLD). BLD has been detected for the first time in Orange County after being discovered to have expanded its range in Windham and Windsor Counties. This invasive pest causes dark banding in between the veins of beech leaves. BLD infestations will lead to severe dieback and mortality of the host trees, though the full outcome of its

Hard Mast Availability in Vermont, 1988 - 2023



The mast cycle is every 2-8 years with a 2-year cycle in the Northeast, and weather impacts this. Late spring frosts can damage flowers and young

Mast and Mustelids *(continued from page 4)*

impact is still unknown. Vermont's beech trees are already under stress due to the longtime presence of Beech Bark Disease (BBD) and since beechnuts are a critical component of Vermont's wildlife food web, the combination of the two is concerning.

For more information about BLD and BBD, visit <https://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/forest-health>



Areas in red are beech leaf disease detections. The disease is spreading and is currently found in Windham, Windsor, Orange and Bennington Counties. Detections are confirmed by FPR's Forest Health Team and the Randolph Forest Biology Lab Staff, and have resulted in updates to the Vermont Forest Invasive Pest Status Map. Scan the QR code above to visit the map.

Report a Rare Furbearer



You can help us keep track of rare furbearers seen around the state by reporting them at our website. If you think you've seen an American marten, Canada lynx, mountain lion or wolf, the Rare Furbearer Reporting Form gives you an opportunity to submit the location and details of the sighting. You can upload photos and pinpoint the exact location on a Google Earth map.

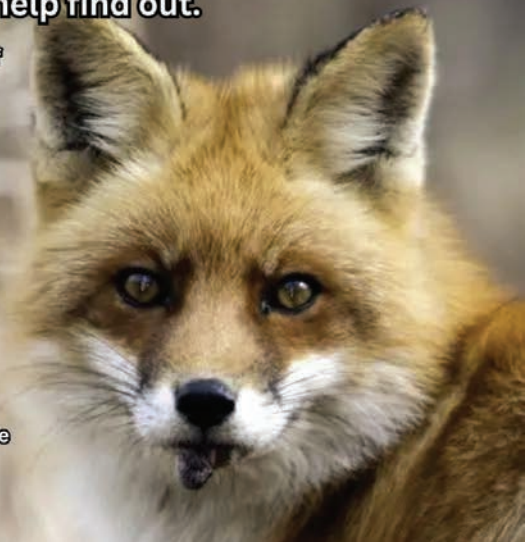
Once the report is submitted, the information goes directly into a database, VFWD staff are notified of the report and then respond appropriately. You can find the form here:

<https://anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/FurbearerReportingForm.aspx>

What does the fox eat? You can help find out.

Alexis M. Mychajliw, PhD, an assistant professor at Middlebury College's Dept of Biology and Environmental Studies Program, along with several other researchers are studying the diets of foxes and coyotes to better understand how these wild species may be responding to changes in their habitats and various kinds of human activities. Knowing what an animal eats is fundamental to understanding how it interacts with its environment and other species - including us! One method, a technique called "stable isotope analysis", allows us to use the chemistry of animal tissues to track what it has been eating, and this can in turn tell us what landscapes that animal prefers and if it has come into close contact with human-associated resources (like trash), leading to potential conflict or even disease transmission. This information can help us predict how these species may respond to changes in the future.














Researchers use a small amount of underfur or the nails from the fox or coyote to run stable isotope analysis and determine what the animal was eating over the past few months of its life. If you would like to participate in this research by providing these samples, contact Professor Mychajliw at amychajliw@middlebury.edu.



Furbearer Harvest and Effort Data

The furbearer team thanks you for your efforts to provide the critical data necessary to monitor the health and sustainability of furbearer populations in Vermont. Below are the harvest numbers for every furbearer species based on your trapper mail survey reports and the blue card returns (otter, bobcat, and fisher). We use this information both to monitor changes in harvest levels and to compare the harvest with the effort expended (number of traps X number of nights) by trappers. This is very important when monitoring wildlife populations so we can know what factors may be most significantly affecting the harvest.

Summary of annual trapper mail survey derived estimated* furbearer harvests, 2013-14 through 2023-24.**

Season		2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Prior 10-yr Average
Mink		759	831	309	212	168	95	125	184	113	103	59	289.8
Raccoon		1059	997	669	382	504	442	273	361	323	394	352	540.5
Muskrat		8799	9406	8242	2490	1558	1291	686	716	1325	582	427	3509.5
Skunk		312	360	255	204	106	183	89	105	116	107	99	183.7
Opossum		77	214	81	63	109	56	27	66	84	66	98	84.3
Weasel		36	98	14	72	14	54	18	46	25	56	19	43.3
Coyote		726	639	508	378	511	357	298	352	345	299	241	441.2
Red Fox		306	288	202	126	221	118	81	130	89	103	68	166.4
Grey Fox		130	85	79	31	60	51	26	43	45	39	46	58.8
Bobcat		121	57	56	54	44	39	37	44	41	49	49	54.2
Fisher		400	443	241	213	190	239	166	167	121	94	105	227.4
Otter		246	193	163	113	111	73	93	97	105	96	143	129.0
Beaver		2196	1546	1841	1198	865	776	730	844	889	853	1355	1173.9
Total Estimated Harvest		15167	15156	12661	5536	4461	3774	2649	3155	3621	2841	3061	6902.1

*Total reported harvest multiplied by correction factors until 2017-18 season when figures represent those reported from the mandatory survey. These data are subject to change as records continue to be received and reviewed.

Furbearer Program Research and Testing

North American Canine Ancestry Genetics Project: Vermont coyote genetic analysis

During the March 2024 Vermont Trappers Association fur auction, VFWD staff collected small tissue samples from various coyote pelts. Our efforts to carve out dried tissue sparked curiosity among many attendees. Below, you'll find a synopsis of Dr. VonHoldt's project and the results from these samples. We are grateful for the opportunity to gather this valuable data and look forward to continuing genetic research with additional samples. As you can see from the results, trapper derived data plays a crucial role in advancing our knowledge of Vermont's furbearers!



Written by Bridgett vonHoldt, Ph.D.

Princeton University; Dept of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Background. The North American Canine Ancestry Genetics project is a collaborative, multi-institutional project aimed at exploring canine ecology, demography, and population dynamics through the lens of genomic data. Our objective is to understand the genetic consequences of admixed genetic ancestry (a result of species interbreeding). Our main objective is to survey eastern canines to understand their evolutionary history, but also requires a larger survey of North American canines. Coyotes evolved as a species predominantly found in central North America, but currently are ubiquitous on the landscape. Yet, they are not well understood. Further, the eastern canines (relative to those found in Western North America) remain another group with controversial findings and suggested management. These mysterious canines are proposed to be the consequence of previous interbreeding (i.e., admixture) with wolves (gray and eastern) as western coyotes dispersed along the northern edge of the Great Lakes towards the east coast during the last century. Admixture is not a new event among mammalian species to say the least; we are entering an era in which genetic technologies allow us to identify and characterize these processes with fine-scale methods. The consequence is a complicated insight into the past demography of species—hopefully leading us to update the ways in which we

think about the world around us.

Methods. Here, the primary objective of the collaborative North American Canine Ancestry Genetics project is to investigate the extent to which wolf, dog, or coyote populations interbreed in various regions of North America using molecular techniques. We hope to find that with an extensive geographic sampling, we will be able to identify the geographic boundaries of this interbreeding (historic or current), with an expectation that the northern Great Lakes and New England regions are a critical location where wolves and coyotes admixed recently (and may be ongoing). We do this through collecting a small tissue sample of each canine. To date, we have sequenced over 3,000 samples across the continent (Fig. 1). We use a method called RAD-seq which permits a glimpse across the canine genome at thousands of genetic markers.



Results. I have sequenced 37 canine samples from Vermont and compared them to 81 canines that represent all major lineages in North America (eastern wolf, gray wolves from the Northern Rocky Mountains, gray wolves from the Great Lakes, red wolves from the species breeding program, coyotes from the west, coyotes from the southeast, and coyotes from the northeast). I have sequenced these canines to obtain genotypes for 127,656 genetic markers across the genome (all 38 autosomes and both X and Y sex chromosomes).

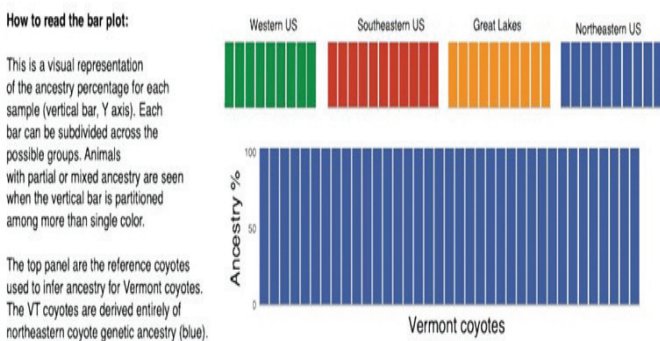
Using a clustering method, I first asked if Vermont coyotes have genetics more similar to other northeastern coyote genetic signatures by comparing them to the 81 representative canine lineages in North America (left panel, Fig. 2). I found first that Vermont coyotes are most similar to other coyotes of North America, although show subdivision as they have subclusters across the PC2 (Y axis). The coyotes in the lower end of PC2 (with negative values on the Y axis) are a different group of coyotes from the others. These are actually coyotes of the Great Lakes and New England regions. A closer inspection (right panel, Fig. 2) in an analysis of Vermont coyotes with just other coyotes (excluded wolves and dogs) confirms that Vermont

continued on page 8

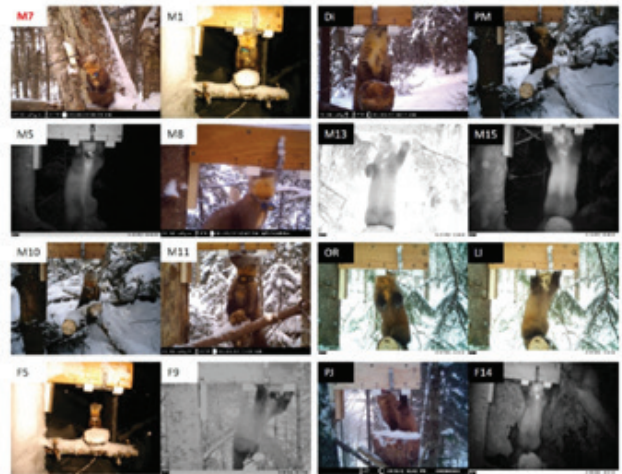
coyotes are most similar to those in the Great Lakes and New England regions.

To assess quantitatively which coyote population in the Great Lakes and New England regions the Vermont coyotes are most like, I conducted an assignment test to infer the percentage of ancestry for each Vermont coyote with respect to any possible coyote lineage in the United States (western, Great Lakes, southeastern, or northeastern). I found that all Vermont coyotes I sequenced were genetically identical to coyotes living in the northeast (Fig. 3), without any indication of carrying gray wolf or eastern wolf genomic ancestry.

Figure 3. Results from the assignment method which measures the amount of genetic ancestry each Vermont coyote has to each of the possible coyote populations in the United States (top panel of vertical bars).



Due to funding constraints, only six remote cameras were purchased for this first winter of sampling. For that reason, we are focusing on the northern greens this winter where some detections have occurred, yet little is known about marten there.



Example of ventral patches of marten during research in New Hampshire. (Siren, A.P.K, Perkins, P.J, Abdu, P.L, and Ducet, M.J. 2016. Identification and Density estimates of American martens (*Martes americana*) Using a Novel Camera-Trap Method. *Diversity* 2016, 8, 3).

American Marten

Upcoming Density Research

Furbearer project staff are collaborating with the US Forest Service and a research ecologist from University of New Hampshire to determine the density of marten in the southern green mountains. The overall goal of the project is to identify individual marten by their chest pattern (every marten has a unique chest pattern). This will give us density estimates for marten in areas where we acknowledge have low densities, but do not know how low. Given marten were reintroduced in 1990 and remain close to their relocation sites, why are they not expanding into areas with good habitat? Many of you are probably thinking fisher, which could be the case.

While we're at it, we are collaborating with Dr. Alexis Mychajliw from Middlebury College to collect hair samples at camera sites. Using isotope analysis, we can determine food resources that both marten and fisher are using in that area. This research will begin a multi-year effort to figure out what is limiting their expansion and what management actions we can take to help marten in the future.

Rodenticides

Project staff continue to collect samples of bobcat, fisher and otter from trapper derived carcasses to determine exposure to anticoagulant rodenticide. Vermont will be contributing samples to a multistate furbearer health project in 2025 to continue efforts to better understand fisher health and potential effects of rodenticide use.

Attention Trappers

In December 2023, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board adopted the Furbearer Species Rule (10 App. V.S.A. § 44). It is the responsibility of anyone participating in regulated trapping in Vermont to be familiar with and follow the adopted rule.

Please refer to Appendix 44 for the new trapping rules and regulations. This document was directly mailed to you in October 2024. If you did not receive this mailing, please visit our website for updated rules and regulations, or contact Charlee Drury (Charlee.Drury@vermont.gov or 802-828-1000) for a mailed copy.

Research and Testing *(continued from page 8)*

Upcoming Weyerhaeuser Long-term Management Plan

The second population of marten occurs in the Northeast kingdom on Weyerhaeuser property. There are approximately 4,000 acres of Montane Spruce-Fir Forest occurring on the Weyerhaeuser properties in Essex County, Vermont. These Montane Spruce-Fir Forests occur on four separate mountain ridges on the property: Gore Mountain in Avery's Gore, Seneca Mountain in Ferdinand and East Haven, East and Bull Mountains in East Haven and Ferdinand, and East Haven Mountain in East Haven. All these forests are considered state-significant examples of Montane Spruce-Fir Forest. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department considers this Montane Spruce-Fir Forest a rare and irreplaceable natural area under Criterion 8 of Act 250. Weyerhaeuser harvest activity above 2500 feet requires a permit application to VFWD and careful review by Furbearer project staff.

Areas above and below 2500 feet are important habitat for marten, and maintaining a large-scale corridor with suitable habitat is one of the direct actions we can take to keep marten on the landscape. VFWD and Weyerhaeuser are working towards creating a long-term management plan for marten on Weyerhaeuser property in northeastern Vermont to not only make the permit process smoother, but to also improve the large-scale habitat management for marten and other species that inhabit the area.

Outreach and Education *(continued from page 3)*

-Using social media to educate about furbearer species, especially the importance of beaver and wetland conservation and restoration in Vermont, to share news about the importance of trapping, to highlight opportunities for public comment on the furbearer rule changes, and to report on the recent Canada lynx sighting.

-Developing signs for state lands like WMAs to increase public awareness about trapping seasons in public use areas.

-Meeting with landowners and public groups to talk to them about beavers and how beaver related problems can be resolved.

-Aiding homeowners experiencing problems with

wildlife.

-Giving furbearer related presentations to all age groups, to town conservation committees and libraries, kids' summer camps, campers at Vermont State Parks, and at conservation camp training for teachers.

-Providing correct and scientific information about mange and other wildlife diseases in light of citizen concern for the animals and what citizens can and shouldn't do to help.

-Attending local outreach events year-round including the Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival, Dead Creek Wildlife Day, and the Southern VT Wildlife Festival.

-Visiting with State Legislators to share what we know about anticoagulant rodenticides and how it could possibly impact wildlife.

-This newsletter!

Some things to watch for in the coming months include a video explaining which traps are permitted under the new regulations and how to modify existing traps, updates to the Furbearer Education Kits, and webinars for the Community Wildlife Program about bobcats, fisher, and coyote ecology.

Watch for us at these upcoming events:

1. Yankee Sportsmen Classic- Jan. 17-19, 2025 Champlain Valley Expo
2. Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival- May 4, 2025 Herricks Cove, Rockingham VT



Bree chats with a reporter at a beaver baffle installation

Joshua Morse

Beaver Baffle Project Update

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's beaver baffle project continues to serve Vermonters throughout the state. VFWD staff receive, on average, 400 calls/emails, conduct over 50 site visits and install 15 baffles and exclusion fences a year. This project assists landowners, road crews, towns and other municipalities and organizations who are experiences conflicts with beavers. The goal of the project is to maintain, whenever possible, the valuable wetland habitat that beavers create for the many benefits to fish, wildlife and people. At some specific conflict sites, the installation of a beaver baffle or exclusion fence may function to resolve the conflict beavers have created. In 2023, VFWD staff conducted 74 site visits and installed 10 water control devices, influencing 46 acres of wetland habitat. To date, the project is responsible for the installation of over 350 devices influencing almost 3,800 acres of beaver created wetland habitat.

The beaver baffle project is funded largely by a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant and funds from the Vermont Duck Stamp.



Recipe: Roast Muskrat

3 Muskrats	1 tsp. salt
1/2 cup butter	1 tsp. poultry seasoning
Dash of pepper	1 cup hot water
1 quart dry bread crumbs	
1/4 cup onion, chopped	



Skin and dress-out muskrats, then rinse in warm salt water. Lay the muskrats in a baking dish. Stuff muskrats with dressing prepared as follows: add onions and seasonings to melted butter and sauté until onions are tender; combine with bread crumbs and add the hot water to moisten. After stuffing muskrats, cover baking dish tightly and roast at 325°F for 2 ½ hours. Use any juice that might be in the bottom of the dish to make gravy.

Recipe from "The Maine Way- A Collection of Maine Fish and Game Recipes" 1978

Remembering Bill Pickens: Friend, Outdoorsman and Conservationist

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department staff were saddened to hear about the passing of Bill Pickens this past April and, like many, we will miss him dearly. Vermont trappers lost an ardent advocate, an eager mentor, and a remarkably skilled outdoorsman. The Department lost a reliable partner, a formidable but fair negotiator, and a productive volunteer. We all lost a good friend who was always quick to smile, was willing to share his often blunt but always helpful opinions and was there when you needed him most. To anyone who knew him, he was clearly a man of honor, duty and commitment. To us, he was also someone we could count on to put the welfare of the natural resources we all share and care so deeply about above his personal interests.

Throughout our careers with the Department, Bill was an ever-present face at any furbearer related meeting, event or project, and he served this community in many varied roles. Bill was a card-carrying member of the Vermont Trapper's Association (VTA) for nearly as long as the organization has existed and his dedication to the organization included long spells as a board member, as the secretary/treasurer and, from 1996 to 2000 and again from 2003 to 2004, as president. During his tenure as VTA president, he worked with the department on a number of initiatives to further furbearer management and conservation including, most notably, expanding the fisher season, creating furbearer education kits, and supporting the Best Management Practices (BMPs) research.

With respect to the BMPs, Bill also volunteered as a trapper technician following the rigid trap testing protocol that ensured the best possible science, even at the expense of his personal trapline productivity. Volunteering, as Bill was so prone to do, led him to an impressive 28-year period as a hunter education instructor and a 19-year stint as a trapper education instructor! Ultimately, his passion for the outdoors, dedication to conservation and his strong call to duty found him representing Lamoille County residents on the Fish and Wildlife Board where his years of accumulated experience and knowledge served a critical role in the Board's

deliberations on such difficult and often controversial topics as cable restraints, lynx protections, mandatory trapper mail surveys, and bobcat and otter season extensions. With all his service to this community, it's hard to imagine he had any time for the woods where he so clearly yearned to be.

It's not often that someone comes along who leaves such an indelible influence on our futures. Bill was certainly this person and the number of lives his work touched from his student hunter/trappers to anyone who appreciates the sustainability of the state's wildlife is immeasurable. Despite this incredible legacy, though, many of us here at the Department will most remember Bill for the lively and engaging conversations he showered us with during our long hours of processing fisher, otter and bobcat carcasses in the back hills of Roxbury. Rest in peace, Bill. You will be sorely missed!





Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
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Springfield, VT 05156-3168
www.vtfishandwildlife.com

The MISSION of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.



Your Furbearer Management Project Staff

We are here to serve the wildlife resource and you! Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or comments.

Bree Furfey- Furbearer Program Leader
Brehan.Furfey@vermont.gov

Mary Beth Adler- Furbearer Technician
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