

January / February 2002

Connecticut Wildlife

PUBLISHED BY THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION

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From the Director

I am dedicating my space to two topics related to this issue of Connecticut Wildlife. Topic number one is the magazine's appearance. For the first time, Connecticut Wildlife has the look of color. Admittedly, this is an experiment. Color printing increases production costs and we have elected to absorb these costs in the hope that attracting additional subscribers will offset them. We are going to try this for a year while maintaining the current subscription rate. Therefore, if you are a fan of Connecticut Wildlife's new look, I encourage you to spread the word and help boost its circulation.

While the color format is not essential to our message, it does present another step in the evolution of the Wildlife Division's publication. From its humble beginnings as SCOPE, the Division's newsletter, Connecticut Wildlife has continually improved in quality as it has increased in readership. The magazine has benefited immensely from the talents and dedication of biologist/editor Kathy Herz and media designer/photographer Paul Fusco. Because the entire staff shares the responsibility of writing articles, we are committed to the magazine's professional appearance. Connecticut Wildlife serves as the best vehicle for explaining who we are, what we are doing, and why we are doing it.

Topic number two is the Year 2001 in review. While it is extremely difficult to condense our annual activities into a summary report, the article that begins on the opposite page attempts to do just that. If nothing else, readers will hopefully gain an appreciation for the breadth of our work. What is more difficult to convey is the ebb and flow of these activities on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Unforeseen circumstances, like a wildlife disease outbreak, site reviews on newly acquired properties, or a moose in downtown Hartford, play havoc with long-term scheduling. Suffice it to say that we plan proactively, but prepare to operate reactively depending on the issue of the day.

Overall, we achieved a great deal in 2001. By taking advantage of funding from the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP), we were able to develop and initiate many projects to forward our biodiversity initiative. After January's deer reduction efforts, the deer herd at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve is at the biological carrying capacity for the first time in over 20 years. We undertook large-scale habitat enhancements at Great Island WMA and Department of Corrections property in Enfield. We continued to strongly emphasize hunting safety and completed one of the safest hunting seasons on record. And much more.

*We hope to be even more successful in 2002. Subscribe to Connecticut Wildlife to read about it as it happens. **In color!***

Dale W. May

Cover:

Although not a resident of Connecticut, the snowy owl can sometimes be observed along the coastline in winter (see page 9 to learn how to prowl for owls).

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Connecticut Wildlife

Published bimonthly by

State of Connecticut

Department of Environmental Protection

<http://dep.state.ct.us>

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The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for wildlife management and research programs, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development and hunter education programs. Each issue of Connecticut Wildlife contains articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies.



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Year in Review 2001

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES - WILDLIFE DIVISION

The “Year in Review” is an overview of the responsibilities and projects undertaken by the DEP Wildlife Division in 2001.

Monitoring/Research

Wildlife Division biologists use a variety of techniques to monitor populations and collect scientific data, such as aerial and field population censuses, harvest data collected at check stations or through hunter/trapper surveys, roadkill records, banding and marking of animals, radio telemetry studies and sighting reports from the public.

Data Collection

Biological data was collected from deer harvested during the hunting seasons.

Pelts of six different species of furbearers harvested by trappers and hunters were tagged to determine harvest totals, town distribution of harvests and harvest methods.

Ongoing analysis of leg-band recovery data indicated that the special resident Canada goose hunting seasons (statewide September season and “late” coastal season running from mid-January through mid-February) have achieved their goal of harvesting substantial numbers of resident geese while having minimal impact on migrant geese.

Research Projects

A telemetry study was initiated to investigate habitat use and home range size of New England and Eastern cottontails. Cottontail rabbit specimens

(328) were collected from hunters, roadkills and rehabilitators in 49 towns. Preliminary results show 13 towns with New England cottontail populations.

Literature about the state-endangered red-headed woodpecker is being reviewed to learn more about the woodpecker’s current status and habitat requirements in Connecticut.

To better estimate black bear numbers, a project was initiated to capture bears in northwest Connecticut and tag their ears with markers. Future observations comparing the numbers of marked and unmarked bears will provide a better estimate of the size of the bear population. Another study will examine the effect that aversive conditioning has on problem behavior by black bears. Problem bears will be captured and subjected to noise and aerosol irritants. These bears will be fitted with radio-

collars before being released to determine if the problem behavior is repeated.

In addition to continued research on state-listed bat species, a project to examine the relationship between bats and West Nile Virus (WNV) was started to explore both the impact of WNV on bats and the potential for bats to serve as overwintering hosts WNV.

A new project to document habitat in Connecticut used by migrating shorebirds to feed on horseshoe crab eggs was initiated to better evaluate the potential impacts of changes in crab harvest rates.

A five-year radio telemetry study on population dynamics and movements of deer in urban areas was completed.

Surveys/Monitoring

Two wildlife management areas (Babcock Pond and Goshen) were



P.J.FUSCO

Wildlife Division biologist Jenny Dickson (left) and DEP Deputy Commissioner David Leff count the number of bats hibernating in one of several bat hibernacula located in Connecticut.

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surveyed for the presence of butterflies. Data will be considered when habitat management occurs at these sites.

The Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey was conducted by 92 volunteers with 77 (43 adults, 34 immatures) eagles seen statewide. A golden eagle was observed along the Connecticut River during the survey.

The seventh Colonial Waterbird Survey was conducted at offshore islands and rocks along Connecticut's shoreline with 18 species seen.

Puritan tiger beetle habitat was surveyed as part of a long-term effort to find populations of these state endangered and federally threatened beetles. For the second year in a row, larvae were removed from one site and transported to Massachusetts to augment the declining population there.

The current status of the banded bog skimmer dragonfly (state endangered) was monitored and researchers looked for new breeding sites. Although certain species of damselflies and dragonflies have been identified as rare or endangered in the state, further information is

required on all the species to obtain a good perspective of their overall distribution. As part of a newly initiated project, in collaboration with the University of Connecticut, field censuses will be conducted statewide and volunteers will be trained in collection and preservation methods.

Another new project initiated in 2001 is the development of a key to identify freshwater mussel species in Connecticut.

In its ninth year, the Wetland Callback Survey was conducted at eight wetlands statewide, with the help of eight volunteers.

The 12th year of a long-term bog turtle (state endangered, federally threatened) study was conducted. Bog turtles were found at a site owned by The Nature Conservancy and at one historic site.

Biologists and volunteers continued to survey and monitor grassland bird habitats statewide. This year, the Connecticut Ornithological Association helped identify additional locations as potential grassland bird nesting areas. These new locations will be monitored in 2002 to further evaluate their use by state-listed species. Wildlife Division biologists also aided National Audubon in establishing a new Connecticut grassland bird working group and is an active participant in this



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Two wildlife management areas (Babcock Pond and Goshen) were surveyed during the summer of 2001 for the presence of butterflies, such as this tiger swallowtail.

P.J.FUSCO(2)



The WHAMM Program used herbicides and mulching techniques to control 200 acres of the invasive plant, Phragmites, at Lord's Cove.

effort, along with many other conservation organizations and grassland bird experts.

Aerial deer surveys were conducted at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, the Mumford Cove Community in Groton and the town of Greenwich.

Black bear, bobcat and fisher population trends and distributions were monitored through sighting reports. More sightings were reported for all three species than in any previous year. Nearly 450 bear observations were reported compared to about 250 in 2000.

The Breeding Waterfowl Survey was conducted for the 12th consecutive year. The population estimate for mallards remained high at 17,000 pairs. The Canada goose pair estimate (14,300) reflects a rising trend for this species. Counts for wood ducks and black ducks were also above average.

A total of 670 Canada geese were banded this summer and 35 wood ducks also were banded.

Mosquitoes and WNV

In an interagency effort, the State's Mosquito Management Program conducted monitoring and surveillance activities for West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and other mosquito-borne diseases. Approximately 125,000 mosquitoes were trapped and tested, resulting in 37 isolations of WNV and 15 isolations of EEE. Of the 3,184 birds from 68 towns that were tested, 442 were positive for WNV and one tested positive for EEE. Eleven cases of WNV were reported in horses. Of those, seven recovered and four either died or were euthanized. Six human cases of WNV (including one death) occurred, all from lower New Haven and Fairfield counties.

The DEP Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM) Program offered technical and financial assistance to many towns where virus activity was or had been high in recent years. Through a special state appropriation, grants were given to 44 towns to assist in mosquito control activities. The Program's Mosquito Control Specialists inspected and applied larvicides to state-owned coastal properties. The WHAMM Program further assisted towns by planning and conducting water management projects to provide drainage of stagnant water areas or by excavating

open marsh water management projects in tidal areas to reduce mosquito breeding.

Management

The Division's management efforts range from actively protecting endangered species, to reestablishing populations, providing recreational opportunities for sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts, and improving habitat on state and private land.

Habitat Management

A total of 89 acres of old field and grassland habitats were created or restored at six sites. A total of 147 acres of fields were maintained on six wildlife management areas (WMAs). Prescribed burns were used to manage field habitat at three sites, comprising 38 acres.

Water level control devices which help minimize flooding caused by beavers were installed or repaired at 19 sites, enhancing 366 acres of freshwater marshes.

Four one-half acre ponds were installed in a 10-acre wetland at Higganum Meadows WMA to encourage use by ducks, wading birds and other wetland-associated animals. At Waterford Beach Marsh, 20 acres of grid-ditched salt marsh were restored and

several ponds and salt pannes were created.

Assistance was provided to the Department of Transportation in the development of vegetative management plans for the conservation of important grassland bird habitats at airports.

Technical assistance and supervision were provided in the development of grassland bird habitat at the Department of Corrections property in Enfield.

Phragmites is an invasive plant that can destroy the wetland habitat value of marshes. Phragmites control projects were conducted at approximately 20 sites, comprising over 250 acres.

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P. ROTHBART

A cooperative project between the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, the Valley Waterfowlers and the DEP resulted in the restoration of Turkey Hill Marsh in Haddam.



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Every year Connecticut's wood duck population is surveyed in Breeding Waterfowl Survey. In addition, wood ducks are captured during the summer and fitted with leg bands.

Year in Review,

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Major work continued on a comprehensive project to restore the salt marsh ecosystem of the Great Island complex in the lower Connecticut River.

Projects to restore proper drainage at marshes were completed in Fairfield, Guilford, Norwalk and Stamford.

Population Management

On state properties, 85 bluebird nest boxes and 700 wood duck boxes were inspected and maintained.

The Bluebird Restoration Project distributed 68 bundles of free wood for building nest boxes to 41 youth groups and community organizations.

Four breeding pairs of bald eagles (state endangered, federally threatened) nested; two nests produced and fledged three chicks and two nests failed. Two additional pairs built nests but did not lay eggs.

Three breeding pairs of peregrine falcons nested; one nest produced and fledged two chicks and two nests failed.

Through fencing and other protection efforts, 32 pairs of piping plovers fledged 39 young and 175 pairs of least terns fledged 21 young. Volunteers, trained on plover and tern

biology and how to educate the public about recovery efforts, monitored several beaches and distributed educational materials to beachgoers.

Equipment was contributed to the long-term roseate tern (state and federally endangered) project being conducted on Falkner Island and a new foraging survey being conducted along the coastline.

Deer management activities were implemented at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in Groton. Division staff removed 64 deer in January 2001. Biological data were collected from all harvested deer to monitor changes in deer herd health. A total of 2,610 pounds of venison were donated to food charities in 2001.

Controlled hunts were implemented on about 19,000 acres of privately-owned land throughout the state in an effort to assist large landowners in controlling deer populations.

Recreation and Access Management

Public access for small game hunting was secured through renewals of existing leases or agreements with 15 landowners, totaling 1,963 acres. Field staff from the DEP Law Enforcement Division negotiated the lease renewals with the landowners.

During the 2001 fall hunting season, 18,935 adult ring-necked pheasants were released on 68 state-owned, permit-required and state leased hunting areas. Cooperating sportsmen's clubs also released pheasants at various public hunting areas.

A random sample of hunters who purchased pheasant tags in the previous year were sent a survey to assess their opinions, attitudes and preferences in relation to pheasant hunting in Connecticut. Responses will assist long-term program planning efforts.

A major effort to upgrade public hunting access maps continued. The revised map series will feature state forests, wildlife management areas and cooperative access areas throughout the state, including newly acquired acreage at several sites.

A regulation was amended to provide more equitable opportunities for individuals wishing to trap on selected state-owned lands.

The hunter education field training facility (used for Conservation Education/Firearms Safety classes) at Franklin WMA was reconstructed.

Staff constructed and maintained parking areas, installed signs and gates and marked boundaries at state properties open to hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing.

A pavilion/wildlife viewing site was constructed at the Flaherty Field Trial Area.

A project was initiated to develop a Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail where visitors can learn about Connecticut's birds and their conservation issues. This network of key birding sites along the coastline will feature wildlife informational materials (e.g. signs, brochures) and enhanced viewing opportunities, via boardwalks and observation platforms.

Technical Assistance

Every year the Wildlife Division receives thousands of requests on how to solve problems with wildlife. Most of these problems involve common wildlife living in or around

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Neck-collars are placed on resident Canada geese to help biologists monitor the size of the population in Connecticut. Leg bands also are placed on the geese.

buildings, such as squirrels, bats, raccoons, skunks, woodchucks, house sparrows, foxes and coyotes. Division staff provide information and guidance on recommended solutions and control methods for each species and problem.

The Wildlife Division licenses individuals as Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators (NWCOS). NWCOS provide commercial wildlife control services to persons seeking direct help in resolving wildlife problems. The Division, working closely with the Connecticut Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator's Association, coordinated and assisted in the training of 39 NWCOS in damage identification and resolution techniques. Advanced training on the use of water level control devices to control beaver flooding was provided to 35 NWCOS.

The Wildlife Division coordinated and assisted in the training of about 125 wildlife rehabilitator candidates. The Division relicensed 220 rehabilitators. Special training for the handling and rehabilitation of rabies-prone wildlife was provided to 30 individuals.

Coyotes and black bears were a frequent source of complaints and calls of concern. Within the furbearer program, at least 40 complaints regarding coyotes were addressed. Reports of attacks on cats and dogs were common, with at least 13 cases reported. Three instances of livestock being attacked also were reported. Black bear complaints increased and in-



Wildlife Division technician Laurie Fortin (right) inspects the songbird aviary belonging to Jayne Amico (left), who specializes in the rehabilitation of songbirds.

cluded 83 cases of bears at birdfeeders, 29 cases of bears at garbage, seven cases of bee hive damage, two livestock attacks, 17 cases of bears entering porches or decks and one building entry.

Technical assistance concerning wild turkeys was provided to farmers and homeowners.

Staff reviewed 87 applications for special permits to control deer causing agricultural damage.

Advice and guidance on the management of deer populations was given to committees in Darien, New Canaan, Wilton and Groton. Guidance also was given in the operation of a controlled deer hunt to reduce the deer population in the Mumford Cove area of Groton.

Habitat management guidance was provided to numerous land trusts, fish and game clubs, towns and private landowners, covering over 5,000 acres.

Field inspections were conducted at 115 sites where damage was being caused by beavers.

Staff responded to 127 telephone calls from residents experiencing problems caused by beavers.

The booklet, "Beavers in Connecticut: Their Natural History and Management," was published and distributed to assist residents in addressing problems caused by beavers.

Approximately 250 federal, state, town and private project proposals were reviewed for their potential impacts to wildlife.

Staff participated in the DEP's Invasive Plant Working Group, which develops policies and recommends actions to minimize the adverse impacts that invasive exotic plants have on Connecticut's ecosystems.

Technical assistance regarding habitat enhancement and nature trail development was provided to nine schools and eight municipalities in Connecticut.

Education and Outreach

One of the Division's major functions is to provide the public with information on the state's wildlife and

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A large male bear, which weighed over 400 pounds, was trapped in Cornwall as part of a research project to help estimate Connecticut's bear population. Before being released, the bear was marked with ear tags to aid in future identification.

Year in Review,

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its management. Wildlife information and technical assistance is constantly provided to the public over the telephone and through publications, press releases, meetings, informational displays and presentations.

Six teacher workshops were conducted. Five schools, as well as five state parks and environmental organizations, borrowed the Division's outreach kits.

Wildlife programs were presented at schools, various industries, conservation organization meetings, and the Beardsley Zoo, to name a few. The Division also had exhibits at several public events, including the Durham Fair and the annual Hunting and Fishing Expo. Three new exhibits were developed for use at such events.

Division biologists gave numerous presentations at professional meetings

and conferences, hunting seminars, conservation organization and town meetings, inland wetland commission training, teacher workshops, college classes and other events. Topics included deer management, wild turkey management, backyard wildlife habitat enhancement, the effect of urbanization on wildlife, early successional stage habitat, wildlife habitat management, the Farm Bill and forest wildlife. Biologists also continued to participate in Coverts Project training seminars and workshops, which educate landowners on wildlife and forest management. At least 15 presenta-

tions on furbearers, including presentations that emphasized coyotes and black bears, were given to a variety of conservation and civic groups. At least 42 media interviews were conducted on furbearer species; bears or coyotes were the subject of 30 of these interviews.

Division staff provided assistance at two bioblitz events held in the state where scientists gather to survey a certain area in a 24-hour period and document all the species of flora and fauna that are present.

Work began on a new effort to assist urban schools and parks in creating wildlife habitat enhancement demonstrations. Projects will be implemented in 2002.

Under the Backyard Certification Project, 25 backyard wildlife habitats were certified.

The 316 volunteer Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS) instructors donated 13,970 hours of

service to the CE/FS Program. A total of 4,640 students graduated from courses in firearms, bowhunting and trapping.

A Remedial Hunter Education Program was initiated this past year and 14 hunters participated. This program is required of any persons who have had their hunting license suspended for safety violations.

Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center

Sessions Woods served as a site for 17 public education programs, 15 school field trips, Connecticut Envirothon wildlife management training, youth group camp outs, two Boy Scout camporees and a workshop for the Future Problem Solvers of America. Several meetings and training workshops also were held for DEP employees and various outside groups.

More than 19,000 visitors used the interpretive trails at Sessions Woods over the year. Work and planning continued on interpretive exhibits for the Conservation Education Center. An exhibit on the wild turkey, which is being funded by the National Wild Turkey Federation, is near completion.

Trail demonstrations at Sessions Woods continued to be maintained and enhanced. Other work on the property included three Eagle Scout projects, 12 volunteer projects, trail demonstrations at the fire tower, a warm season grass demonstration, a water garden demonstration, native wildflower and shrub plantings and a 14-acre clearcut.

The Friends of Sessions Woods achieved federal tax exempt status and received its first grant of \$9,900 from the Burlington Fund and the James R. Parker Trust to enhance educational programs at Sessions Woods.

Thank You for the Support

The DEP Wildlife Division wishes to acknowledge all of the cooperators who have provided their support, either by volunteering their time, making financial contributions, donating equipment and supplies or providing data. Our accomplishments over the last year would have been impossible without the help of our cooperators and the financial assistance provided by various grants and special funds.

On the Prowl for Owls

Written by Kathy Herz, Editor

If you are interested in wildlife watching, not all of your watching has to occur during the warmer, more pleasant times of the year. Winter is a great time to go on the prowl for owls in your neighborhood or local wildlife area. Owling is a challenging activity. It takes patience, commitment and lots of time. Before you get started, you should learn which owl species are found in your area. Local checklists and field guides are the best references. You also need to learn to recognize various owl calls by listening to tapes of recorded calls.

Most owls are nocturnal with secretive habits, making it difficult for wildlife watchers to find them. Therefore, nighttime is probably the best time to conduct your search. First of all, listen for hooting. Check bare trees for the blocky or barrel-shaped figure of an owl, usually sitting on a branch close to the trunk. Be sure to watch overhead for the silent passing of a hunting owl. In flight, owls have large, rounded wings.

Although you may not always see owls, you can still look for signs of their presence. Search for whitewash (an accumulation of droppings) or pellets beneath a tree to find a roost site. Pellets are indigestible pieces of prey that are regurgitated by owls. When carefully dissected (wear rubber gloves), the contents of the pellets can shed light on the owl's diet, whether it be mice skulls and bones, bird feathers or insect parts.

Some wildlife watchers and birders use taped owl calls to help them find owls. In most cases, using calls is unnecessary and not recommended. Playing tapes can disturb and stress the owls, distracting them from feeding, nesting and caring for young. The best use of taped calls is to listen to them and learn how to identify individual owl calls.

Great Horned Owl

The large, great horned owl is the one you will most likely observe while owling. February is probably the best month to see great horned owls. These early nesters take up residence in the old nest of a hawk or some other large bird by January or early February. The large, bulky nests are usually easy to locate in the bare trees. Fed by her mate, the female incubates her eggs, even as snow falls around her and the frigid winter wind blows. After hatching, great horned owls feed the downy owlets for 60 to 70 days before the young owls are ready to leave the nest. (If you are fortunate enough to find and watch an owl nest, be careful not to approach too closely or frighten the adults. Young owls are extremely vulnerable to predation by mammals and birds, including other owls. In addition, adult great horned owls often aggressively defend young in a nest.)

Snowy Owl

The beautiful snowy owl is not a resident of Connecticut. However, because of their striking appearance and rarity in the state, snowy owls attract a lot of attention when they are seen in the state. Snowy owls nest on the arctic tundra and seem to migrate cyclically to locations farther south, possibly in response to fluctuating populations of arctic lemmings, a primary food. Winter is the best time to observe a snowy owl in Connecticut, usually at coastal marshes or sandy beaches and at airports. The owls prefer open

areas without trees, similar to their typical tundra habitat. They will remain for part of the winter if a reliable food source is found.

The early winter of 2001 was an exceptional one for catching glimpses of snowy owls. Wildlife experts in all of the New England states reported large numbers of snowy owls visiting from the arctic north. In Connecticut, snowy owls have most frequently been observed at Milford Point and Hammonasset Beach State Park. The large number of visiting snowy owls was thought to be tied to a severe decline this year in lemming populations further north. Unfortunately this also resulted in many young snowy owls arriving severely emaciated and, in several cases, unable to survive.

It is important to remember that these lovely, rare visitors are not used to people. They often allow people to approach closely, sometimes too closely for their own good. Please remember to keep your distance from a snowy owl, relying instead on binoculars to help you get a better look.



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One of the best times to look for great horned owls is around dusk during February.



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An uncommon winter visitor to CT, the northern saw-whet owl can usually be found in conifer stands near open fields and wetlands along the shoreline.

Connecticut Hammer Heads

Written by Paul Fusco, Public Awareness Program

Few wooded areas in Connecticut are without their loud ringing calls, carrying through the forested landscape in a manner which the calls of few other birds do. Their undulating flight is punctuated by a few quick wing flaps, followed by the birds sailing downward with closed wings before swooping up to land on a tree trunk. As they fly from tree to tree, their boldly marked plumage is striking, yet camouflages them well against the bark of a tree. There are seven species of regularly occurring members of the Picidae, or woodpecker, family in our state. Most are a fairly common and familiar fixture throughout Connecticut. One species, the black-backed woodpecker has been documented as a very rare winter visitor to our area, normally being found in northern boreal forest habitat.

About the size of a crow, Connecticut's largest woodpecker is the pileated and, coming in at the size of a large sparrow, the smallest is the downy woodpecker. Most of our woodpeckers are nonmigratory residents. They overwinter here, but may range more widely in their search for food during the colder months. Woodpeckers can be attracted to backyard feeders that offer a selection of sunflower seeds, suet, peanut butter and various nuts.

Noisy Neighbors

All woodpeckers can be noisy in one way or another. Either with their loud, sometimes rattling calls, or with their territorial drumming. Frequently heard in spring, drumming is the repetitive bill tapping by woodpeckers on hollow dead tree trunks, branches or even metal that will produce a loud reverberation. Individual woodpeckers have one or more favorite drumming posts within their territory that are chosen based on the resonating sound that can be obtained. By producing this amplified noise, drumming is used both to announce territorial claims against others of the same species and as a means of communication to strengthen pair bonds.

Sometimes woodpeckers may make a pest of themselves if they find a drain-pipe or other structure that will produce a good noise. Most homeowners have a hard time understanding the flicker that starts its predawn ritual by drumming on a gutter outside the bedroom window.

Anatomy

Woodpeckers have a number of distinctive physical traits that make them well adapted to their way of life.

Most have chisel-shaped bills that are straight, hard and pointed, allowing them to easily dig their way into trees, living or dead.

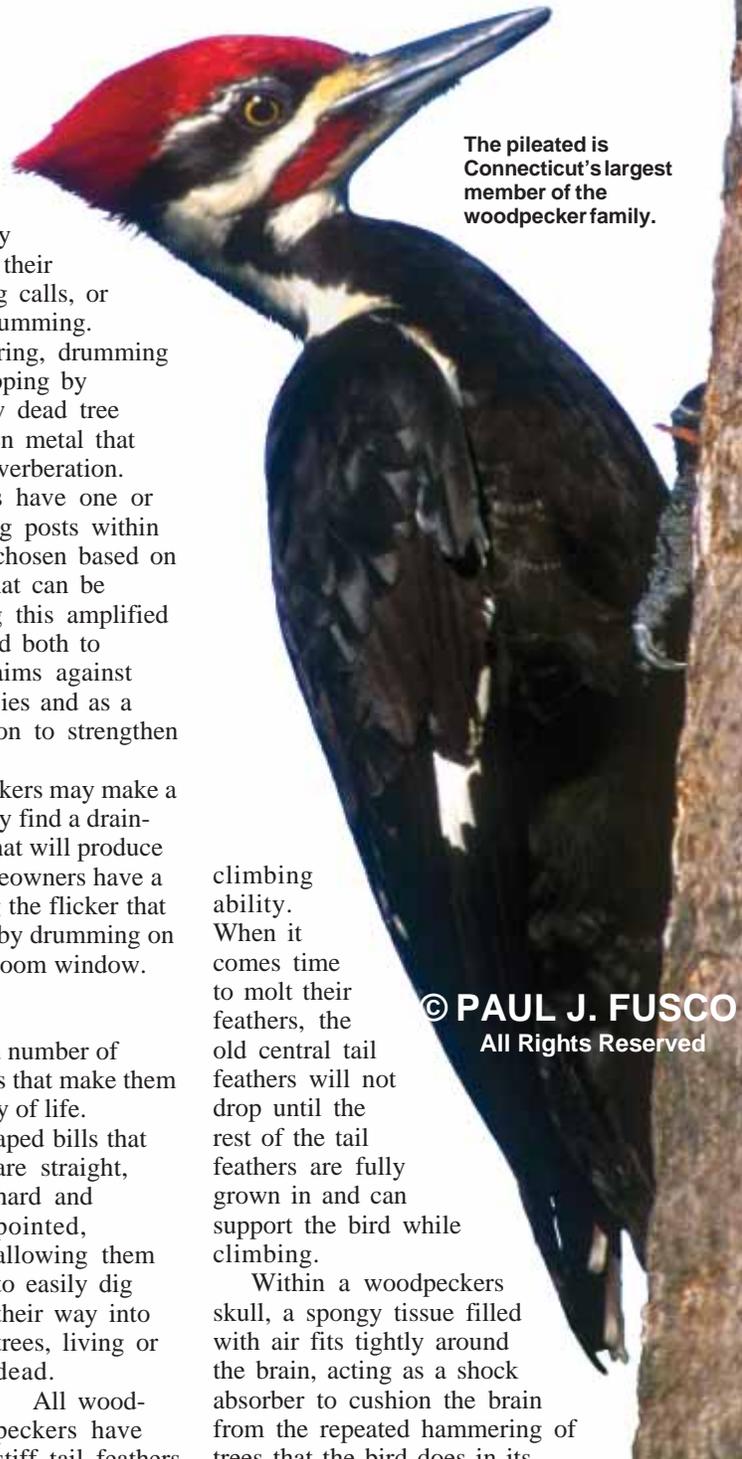
All woodpeckers have stiff tail feathers that are used as a support brace as they work their way up and around the trunks of trees. The two central tail feathers are particularly important for woodpeckers to maintain their

climbing ability. When it comes time to molt their feathers, the old central tail feathers will not drop until the rest of the tail feathers are fully grown in and can support the bird while climbing.

Within a woodpecker's skull, a spongy tissue filled with air fits tightly around the brain, acting as a shock absorber to cushion the brain from the repeated hammering of trees that the bird does in its normal activity. This natural suspension system protects the woodpecker by absorbing and deflecting the force of the blows. The bill and front of the skull are also reinforced by powerful muscles that provide support. Over the course of a typical day, a woodpecker may pound out thousands of pecks, so this adaptation is very important.

The tongue is supported by a forked cartilaginous structure that

The pileated is Connecticut's largest member of the woodpecker family.



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Flickers are commonly seen foraging on the ground as they look for their preferred food of ants.

wraps entirely over and around the skull, attaching at the base of the bill. It has remarkable flexibility and extension. The tip of the tongue is barbed and sticky, well suited to catching the woodpecker's main prey of wood-boring insects or ants that may be hidden deep within crevices.

Woodpeckers have strong zygodactyl (two toes pointed forward and two pointed backward) feet which improve their mobility while climbing on tree trunks and large branches.

Nest Cavities

All woodpeckers excavate cavities in trees for both nesting and roosting. These trees may be living or dead. Nest cavities are generally not reused in subsequent years, although roosting cavities may be used over and over. Frequently, a new nest cavity is carved just below the previous year's nest hole on the same tree or branch.

CT's Woodpecker Species

Downy woodpecker

Probably our most common and widespread woodpecker species, the downy is also our smallest. It can be found in practically any woodlot in Connecticut, regardless of size. Downy woodpeckers can even be seen feeding among dried corn stalks.

This species is a familiar and common visitor to backyard feeders, frequently found in the company of chickadees, titmice and other small birds during winter. Downys will use nest boxes to roost in overnight.

Hairy woodpecker

Very similar in appearance to the downy, hairy woodpeckers have a more wary nature than their downy cousins. They are shy birds, often hiding from intruders around the back side of a tree trunk, occasionally peeking around to see if the intruder is still there.

Hairy woodpeckers are an uncommon resident of heavily wooded areas in Connecticut. They are rare in the more developed parts of the state, having a very localized distribution. One factor that may be contributing to its absence in more urbanized areas, even those areas with nearby wooded patches or mature trees, is competition for nest cavities with the very aggressive European starling (see sidebar on page 12).

The diet of the hairy woodpecker consists mainly of insects, with the larvae of wood-boring beetles making up a large percentage of the diet.

Red-bellied woodpecker

This uncommon to fairly common species is at the northern edge of its range in southern New England. The red-bellied woodpecker is able to endure harsh winters with the help of backyard bird feeders that provide sunflower seeds, nuts and suet. Its preferred habitat is open deciduous woodland.

This medium-sized woodpecker is also under pressure from nest cavity competition with starlings. Persistently aggressive starlings are known to usurp freshly dug nest cavities from the red-bellied woodpecker. When this happens, the woodpecker is forced to find a new nest location. Despite competition with starlings, the red-bellied woodpecker has been expanding its breeding range over the past 40 years in our region.

Pileated woodpecker

The pileated woodpecker is one of Connecticut's most spectacular birds. Its large size and bold markings, including the flame-red crest, make identification unmistakable and a good sighting unforgettable.

It is an uncommon resident that requires large tracts of mature forest, being most numerous in the northwestern part of the state. Pileated woodpeckers typically make large ovate or rectangular shaped holes in the trunks or limbs of trees in their search for wood boring insects. They may also strip bark from dead trees, leaving a telltale sign of their presence.

Carpenter ants are one of the preferred foods in the diet of this woodpecker, which are found by digging out deep holes into large trees that hold the ant colonies. Pileated woodpeckers can also be found digging at rotten logs on the ground.

Northern flicker

Another of our most common and widespread woodpeckers is the northern flicker. It can be found in most suburban areas, as well as open woodlands. Unlike most of the other woodpecker species, the flicker is a migrant, with most

continued on next page



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Downy vs. Hairy

Making a correct identification between these two very similar black-and-white woodpeckers can be made easier by knowing what to look for.

First, the hairy woodpecker (bottom), with a length of 7 1/2 inches, is quite a bit bigger than the downy (top) at 5 3/4 inches. It also has a much larger bill proportionally than the little bill of the downy.

The outer tail feathers of both species are white, but the downy has black barring on them, while the hairy's outer tail feathers are unbarred.

Another difference is the voice. The hairy woodpecker has a loud, sharp "peek" call, while the downy has a softer "pick" call.

Woodpeckers,

continued from previous page

Connecticut breeders moving to regions just to our south in winter. Small numbers may winter in Connecticut, especially along the more temperate coastline.

As is the situation with most of the medium-sized woodpeckers in our region, the flicker is vulnerable to nest cavity competition with the starling. Although the flicker is still a common bird in Connecticut, its population has declined over the last 30 years. This decline has been attributed to competition with starlings.

Flickers can frequently be seen feeding on the ground around suburban areas. The short grass lawns maintained by homeowners are ideal places for them to find one of their preferred foods of ants. With their slightly curved bill and long sticky tongue, they can easily poke down into ant hills to get at their prey. Flickers consume more ants than any other bird species.

Yellow-bellied sapsucker

The yellow-bellied sapsucker is an uncommon breeder in the northwest hills of Connecticut, where it can be

found using northern hardwood forest habitat. They are shy and secretive birds whose presence can be noted by the rows of horizontal or vertical holes they drill in living trees in order to feed on the sap and the insects that are attracted to it.

Sapsuckers seem to have benefited from the reforestation of Connecticut, expanding their breeding range into Litchfield County from the north over the last century. Their normal breeding range includes the northern hardwood forest belt that stretches across the northern United States and southern Canada. They migrate south to the mid-Atlantic region and southern states for the winter, although a few stragglers may be found in the milder parts of Connecticut.

Red-headed woodpecker

The red-headed woodpecker is listed as a Connecticut endangered species. Its numbers in the state are so low that it's on the verge of becoming extirpated and

it is considered to be one of our rarest breeding birds. Connecticut is at the northeastern limit of this bird's normal range, which includes most of the central and eastern United States. Historic records indicate that this species has never been more than a sporadic nester in Connecticut.

Open woodlands with scattered large trees and savannah-like farmland are the preferred habitat of the red-headed woodpecker. The loss of this type of habitat has contributed to the decline of this species in Connecticut and throughout the eastern United States. It is another medium-sized woodpecker whose population has suffered because of nest cavity competition with the starling.

Woodpeckers consume a great deal of insect pests, thus providing enormous benefits to forest habitats. Among the pests they feed on are wood boring beetles, bark beetles and caterpillars, which if left unchecked could pose a threat to healthy forest ecosystems.



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The red-bellied woodpecker has become more common in Connecticut over the last thirty years due in part to the popularity of backyard bird feeders.

The Effect of the European Starling

Since the intentional introduction of 100 birds into New York's Central Park in 1890, the European starling population has exploded across North America. Their aggressive behavior has made starlings extremely successful in competing with native birds for food and, especially, nesting locations.

Starlings are cavity nesters, but they cannot excavate their own holes. Therefore, they must find an existing cavity or take over one from another bird. By persistently bullying a pair of native birds, starlings are able to take over their nest cavity. A starling will fly into the occupied nest cavity, forcing the nest owner out and destroying any eggs that may be inside. Even when repeatedly jabbed and physically pulled out of the cavity by an irate male woodpecker, the starling bolts right back in. Over the course of a few hours, the native bird will relinquish its territory and the starling has won.

Frequent victims of this kind of aggression are some of the medium-sized woodpeckers, including flickers, red-bellied, hairy and red-headed. Because our native birds did not evolve facing this type of bold, aggressive threat, they usually lose the battle. Some native bird populations have declined significantly because of competition with the European starling.



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When it comes to nest cavities, the European starling is an aggressive competitor that frequently displaces other cavity nesting birds.

Preliminary Results for 2001 Deer Hunting Seasons

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program

A preliminary assessment of the 2001 Connecticut deer hunting seasons shows a decrease in harvest, compared to 2000. General trends indicated that the total harvest in 2001 will be about 15 percent less than last year's near record harvest of 13,307 deer. Warm weather conditions and locally abundant acorn crops likely contributed to the reduced harvest in 2001.

The Role of Weather and Acorns

Weather conditions and acorn abundance can affect hunter activity and deer movements, ultimately influencing deer hunter success rates. Long-term trend data on deer hunter success rates and acorn abundance have shown that in years when there is a high abundance of acorns, hunter success rates decrease. On the other hand, in years when there is a low abundance of acorns, hunter success rates increase. When acorns are scarce, deer are more likely to wander farther

distances in search of acorns and other food sources, making them more vulnerable to hunters. When acorns are abundant, deer tend to wander less.

Warm weather conditions not only reduce deer movements, but also hunter participation. This year, abundant acorn crops in many parts of the state, combined with warm weather conditions, likely contributed to the reduced deer harvest in 2001.

Controlled Hunts

Several special hunts were conducted this year to target overabundant deer populations. The communities of Groton Long Point and Mumford Cove implemented a cooperative deer management program using shotgun and archery deer hunters. In three days, 21 deer were removed from an area of less than one-half square mile. Hunters successfully reduced the deer population by 82 percent in those communities. This hunt was initiated because of residents'

concerns about Lyme disease, deer damage to plantings and the high risk of deer-vehicle accidents.

In addition, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Bristol Water Company and BHC Company all implemented successful controlled deer hunts. A deer management program implemented at TNC's Devils Den Preserve in Weston resulted in 10 hunters removing 37 deer in only six days. Seventy-three percent of all deer removed were females. About 1,000 pounds of venison was donated to a soup kitchen in Bridgeport. Deer reductions at Devils Den will contribute to the long-term conservation of native plant communities.

A complete summary of Deer Program activities and final deer harvest results will be available in the annual deer program summary booklet in late summer 2002.

Japanese Knotweed: Another Habitat Intruder

Written by Peter Picone, Urban Wildlife Program Biologist

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), it was introduced in the late 19th century to the United States as an ornamental and later used for riverbank stabilization. This plant looks like a shrub, but it is not woody. Rather, it has bamboo-like stems that can reach up to 15 feet and white flowers that develop in late summer. The stems die back every year only to resprout in early spring from its rhizomes. The invasive nature of this non-native plant allows it to spread vegetatively and its rhizomes can be dispersed in soils transported by people or washed down streams during heavy storm events. Japanese knotweed will form large spreading stands and choke out and out-compete local native vegetation.

Once established, Japanese knotweed is one of the more difficult invasives to

control or to eradicate. Persistent mowing or cutting is required throughout the growing season and is usually followed up with repeated applications of a glyphosate herbicide (check with your local garden center for homeowner brands). Usually, it takes more than one growing season to begin to see results in reducing the spread of this plant.

Non-native invasives present a big challenge to wildlife habitat managers throughout Connecticut. The displacement of more valuable native plants degrades the habitat quality and reduces local plant diversity. Planting of native vegetation is encouraged to improve habitat conditions where control of Japanese knotweed is attempted. Some native alternatives to plant along streams or in moist locations in place of Japanese knotweed include: silky dogwood

(*Cornus amomum*), red-twig dogwood (*C. sericea*), common elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) and arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum recognitum*). These native shrubs provide food and cover for a variety of Connecticut's songbirds, including the American robin, northern catbird and wood thrush.

Native plant materials are becoming more readily available through the DEP State Nursery (860-376-2513) and local nurseries. The Wildlife Division has published a list of local nurseries that carry native plants. Request a copy from the Division's Sessions Woods office or check the wildlife section of the DEP's web site (dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife).

TIP (Turn In Poachers): To report a wildlife violation, call **1-800-842-HELP** (24 hours, tollfree). All calls are confidential.

USDA Farm Bill Being Considered in Congress

Prepared by Paul Rothbart, Wildlife Division Supervisor, Farm Bill Coordinator

The U.S. Congress is presently negotiating a final Farm Bill package that will have far reaching implications on wildlife resources throughout the nation and the Northeast Region. Several programs currently being considered will help assure that conservation compliance occurs and that Connecticut's heavily forested and mostly private land base receives an equality of payments with other regions of the country. This equality of payments will assist Connecticut's wildlife resource issues and in preserving a viable agricultural economy throughout the Northeast.

What Is the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill actually is not one single piece of legislation, but an accumulation of many diverse acts, the whole collection of which is subject to periodic review and modification by Congress. For simplicity, the Farm Bill refers to the overall collection of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm programs.

The first Farm Bill (Agricultural Act of 1933) was passed in response to the social and conservation challenges of the Depression and the Dust Bowl era. It established the basic system of federal agricultural support programs that continue today. During the 1980s and 1990s, several key amendments were made that broadened the Farm Bill to include a more comprehensive land conservation approach. The Food Security Act of 1985 was the first Farm Bill to devote a section to conservation, which created the Highly Erodible Land Compliance Program, Wetland Conservation Compliance Program, Farm Loan Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. This was followed in 1990 by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act that created the Wetlands Reserve Program, State Technical Committees, Forest Stewardship and the Stewardship Incentives Program. The last amendment made to the existing Farm Bill occurred in 1996 and was entitled the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act. Significant initiatives included Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Farm Option, National Natural



As part of the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program of the Farm Bill, grassland habitat was established at Pease Brook WMA in Lebanon.

Resources Conservation Foundation, Flood Risk Reduction Program, Conservation of Private Grazing Land Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

The menu of programs offered from the existing Farm Bill, 1996-2001, has an annual budget of over \$2.5 billion. Most of these programs have significant potential to affect fish and wildlife habitat. Many of them offer habitat opportunities, but each requires close involvement by wildlife managers to realize their maximum potential.

Farm Bill Programs

Farm Bill programs that are providing significant conservation benefits throughout Connecticut include the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Forest Programs, Conservation Reserve Program, Farm Land Protection Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Highly Erodible Land Compliance Program.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP): This program is the first Farm Bill initiative developed with wildlife resources as the primary consideration. It provides incentives

to farmers to protect birds and wildlife by preserving their habitat. Management goals are to restore, enhance and maintain early successional stage vegetation and wetland habitats.

In Connecticut, WHIP has enhanced 1,987 acres through 130 contracts, with an expenditure of \$935,405. The Wildlife Division has developed 17 contracts, receiving \$139,736. Projects have enhanced 436 acres of state land through grassland plantings, riparian buffers, inland marsh water control structure replacement, prescribed burning, brush mowing and restoration of field habitats using a specialized machine called a brontosaurus. An additional 26 acres are scheduled to be treated within the next six months. Division staff has provided technical assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and private landowners on several WHIP projects throughout the state.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): This program provides incentives for farmers to take cropland or marginal pasture out of production to then establish permanent grass or tree cover for wildlife habitat and other conservation needs. This program has

been used on several DEP properties to enhance wildlife habitat. Presently there are 25 CRP (18 private, 7 DEP) contracts being administered in Connecticut that cover over 316 acres.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP): This program leverages state and local funding to protect areas of farmland from development. Over \$2,000,000 has been transferred to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to provide cost-share incentives for purchasing farmland through FPP. As of October 2001, 187 farms totaling 27,990 acres have been preserved throughout Connecticut at a cost of \$81,696,000.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): This program provides incentives to farmers and livestock owners to use best-management practices for reducing water pollution. Agriculture runoff (pesticides, nutrients from fertilizers) is the leading source of water pollution in rivers and lakes. The majority of the program's funding is directed at dairy farm nutrient management (i.e., manure storage facilities). Additional practices have included riparian fencing and plantings and improved wetland crossings. During five years of this program, 86 contracts have been awarded throughout Connecticut, with a total expenditure of \$2,507,779.

Highly Erodible Land Compliance (HELC): This requires USDA farm program participants who farm highly erodible lands to develop and implement a conservation management plan.

Forestry Programs within the Farm Bill

With 60 percent of Connecticut being forested (85 percent of that landscape being in private ownership), it is clear that a variety of forest management programs are essential in ensuring the long-term health and diversity of our state's forest ecosystem.

Forest Stewardship Program/ Stewardship Incentives Program: These two programs essentially work as one stewardship effort to assist private forest landowners. The Forest Stewardship Program funds a land management planning process, while the Stewardship Incentives Program cost-shares on specifically approved management practices (i.e., daylighting trails, old

field enhancement, control of non-native exotics, nest box structures, constructing brush piles, etc.). Under this program, over 267 management plans have been developed covering 37,500 acres. If funded, this program could develop 50 new plans per year.

Forest Legacy: This forest land acquisition program ranks projects through a national review process. Funding is allocated as available on a case by case basis. Connecticut is presently finalizing an agreement on 6,000 acres in the northwest corner.

Recommendations for 2002 Farm Bill

The 1996 Farm Bill provided many new and wide-ranging conservation initiatives and recognized more wildlife resource values and needs. The programs and associated funding helped initiate cooperative efforts between a wide array of partners, such as the DEP, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Audubon, regional water authorities, municipalities, sportsmen's clubs, farmers and private landowners. With reauthorization of the 2002 Farm Bill pending, the Northeastern states have taken steps to help create a Farm Bill that meets the conservation challenges of our region. Recommendations have been developed by the Northeast Upland Habitat Technical Committee and endorsed by the Fish and Wildlife Agencies Directors. These recommendations have been forwarded to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for consideration in the formulation of the final Farm Bill reauthorization. Recommendations that are key to the Northeast include:

Technical Assistance: Recognize state fish and wildlife agencies as the authority for managing wildlife resources by formalizing their role as full resource partners in Farm Bill programs and provide mechanisms to transfer funding to state agencies for this purpose.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives

Program: Reauthorize \$100 million annually. All plans to be reviewed and approved by a state wildlife biologist, with funding for these technical assistance services being transferred to state fish and wildlife agencies.

Forest Legacy and Farmland

Protection: Reauthorize each program at \$100 million annually and ensure that fish and wildlife resource needs are considered.

Forestry Programs: Support the Forest Stewardship and Stewardship Incentives Programs at \$50 million annually for each program. All plans should be reviewed and approved by a state wildlife biologist with appropriate funding provided.

Conservation Reserve Program:

Expand the number of acres authorized from 36 to 45 million acres. Reauthorize and streamline the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP--a specialized program targeting environmental areas of national or regional significance). Ensure that fish and wildlife habitat goals are part of the CRP and CREP planning process.



A Conservation Reserve Program project at Robbins Swamp WMA in Canaan established a riparian buffer along the Housatonic and Hollenbeck Rivers.

P. BROTHBART

Check-off for Wildlife: How You Can Help

A special program established by the Connecticut General Assembly created the "Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund." This special program, which was initiated in 1994, allows Connecticut state income taxpayers to voluntarily donate a portion of their tax refund. The money is then used to support wildlife and natural area preserve projects by providing dollars when matching funds are needed or when other funding sources are unavailable. Those not expecting a state income tax refund but who wish to contribute can send contributions to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund, DEP Bureau of Administration-Financial Management, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Contributions are deductible on federal tax returns.

Tax-deductible donations to the Fund have financed projects that have increased the DEP's knowledge and understanding of uncommon species in Connecticut, such as the timber rattlesnake, tree-roosting bats, shortnose sturgeon, banded bog skimmer dragonfly and white-fringed orchid. The DEP uses the resulting information to protect these species and manage their habitats. Several new projects have recently been provided funding.

New Projects

Copperhead Snake: The copperhead is one of only two venomous snakes found in Connecticut. Although copperheads are often found near urban areas, camouflaged coloration and a secretive, non-aggressive nature allow fairly large populations of these snakes to remain virtually undetected. As a result, little is known of their life history. This study is designed to gain insight into the biology of the copperhead, including the habitats it prefers, the size of its home range and the components of the environment that are needed for survival.

New England Cottontail: In August 2000, a petition was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the New England cottontail as "threatened" or "endangered." Therefore, the USFWS has requested information from several states on the status of the New England cottontail. The New England cottontail, which is the only native rabbit in Connecticut, was historically distributed statewide. Limited research suggests that populations have declined in abundance and distribution in Connecticut and throughout the Northeast.

To supplement species distribution data currently being collected by the Wildlife Division (see the September/October 2001 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*), data on habitat use and home range size of both New England and Eastern cottontails are needed to develop management recommendations. Up to 40 cottontails will be captured using box traps and marked with ear tags and radio collars. Size, type and distribution of habitat patches used by New England and Eastern cottontails will be evaluated using radio telemetry. Results from this study will provide the DEP with current data to identify critical habitat needs, develop habitat management guidelines and direct future research and management activities for New England cottontails in Connecticut.

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: The saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow, a Connecticut species of special concern, is thought to have internationally important numbers in our state. Southern New England may be home to perhaps half the world's population of this small sparrow. Little is known, however, about the status or management of this bird. Tax Check-off funding will expand on a study of various aspects of saltmarsh sparrow conservation. An accurate population estimate for this species at key marshes, related environmental data and breeding productivity information will be collected. Fall use of Connecticut's marshes and identification of potential staging areas for saltmarsh sparrows will be studied in an effort to learn more about this unique songbird.

American Kestrel: Connecticut's American kestrel population is rapidly declining. Habitat loss and change in habitat characteristics, combined with competition from other species, are thought to be leading causes for this decline. By monitoring home ranges and habitat use of nesting kestrels, researchers hope to gain information that will help explain what the birds need to survive, as well as help them develop management efforts to ensure kestrels remain part of Connecticut's natural world.

Stay tuned to *Connecticut Wildlife* for progress reports on these projects.



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A new study funded by the Tax Check-off Program should help biologists gain insight into the biology of the copperhead snake, one of two venomous snakes found in Connecticut.

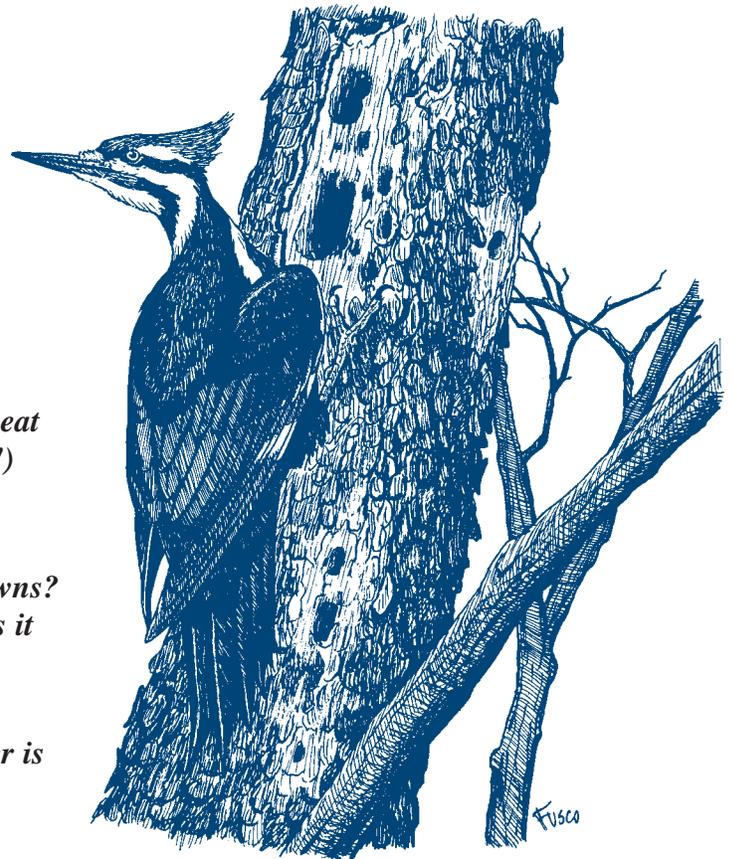
Just for Kids

Watching Woodpeckers

There are seven different types of woodpeckers in Connecticut, ranging in size from the large pileated (19 inches) to the small downy woodpecker (6 inches). Most are patterned black and white, except the northern flicker which flashes yellow feathers under the wing and tail while in flight. Woodpeckers are striking birds that are often seen and great fun to watch!

Stick out your tongue!

Woodpeckers that eat insects have really long tongues. The end of the tongue is barbed like a bee's stinger, which helps the woodpecker pull out insects from holes. The tongue is also very sticky to hold onto the insects.



Questions & More Questions

Do woodpeckers eat only insects? No. Sapsuckers also eat sap from trees. (Wonder if it's as tasty as maple syrup!) Many woodpeckers also eat acorns and fruit, such as berries.

Which woodpecker is often seen in schoolyards and lawns? The northern flicker. This woodpecker eats mostly ants it finds along the ground.

Are there any endangered woodpeckers? One of Connecticut's woodpeckers, the red-headed woodpecker is on the state endangered species list. The ivory-billed woodpecker, of the south, is actually very close to extinction.

Knock, Knock, Knock

Woodpeckers peck on wood to "talk" to one another, look for insects and make nesting cavities. All of Connecticut's woodpeckers nest in tree holes.

Try this at home:

Make a suet patty for the birds. Take beef suet (your local meat counter should have some) and melt it in a pan. Add chunky peanut butter and stir together. Hang it outside during cold weather and watch for woodpeckers.

P. J. FUSCO



This photo of Paul Merola, a former Wildlife Division biologist, was taken in the early 1990s, just before Paul boarded a plane to conduct the Annual Midwinter Waterfowl Survey.

Division Says Good-bye to Paul Merola

In November 2001, Paul Merola left the DEP's Wildlife Division to enter religious life with the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate in Griswold, Connecticut. Paul had worked for nearly 20 years as a Waterfowl Biologist for the Division. During that time he was involved in all aspects of waterfowl management in Connecticut. Paul served as Connecticut's representative on the Technical Section of the Atlantic Flyway Council for 10 years, beginning in 1991, and he was an active and respected member of the Canada Goose Committee of the Technical Section for several years. Paul spent a lot of time studying Canada geese in Connecticut. He banded hundreds of geese each year and coordinated surveys of neck-collared geese for many years. In 1989, he completed *Waterfowl in Connecticut*, a 96-page summary of much of the information collected on waterfowl in Connecticut since the 1930s. Despite his focus on waterfowl, Paul also generously provided time to assist other programs. He was respected and liked by all his colleagues.

A Tribute for Lisa Santacroce

Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) and Connecticut's conservation community mourns the loss of CAS's Director of Environmental Affairs, Lisa Santacroce. Lisa passed away Friday, September 7, 2001, at the age of 38. Although her last four years were spent living with cancer, Lisa remained an active and effective force in Connecticut's environmental community throughout.

"Lisa was Connecticut Audubon's voice in the state Capitol. She translated our mission into action to protect Connecticut's wildlife and habitats every day," said Ann Harper, President of Connecticut Audubon. "She was a highly-respected professional whose integrity and credibility were well-recognized. Connecticut Audubon and the environmental community at large have lost a colleague, leader and friend who made a difference."

Lisa played a significant role in several key environmental successes. In 1998, as co-chair of the Land Conservation Coalition of Connecticut, she led a campaign that resulted in passage of landmark open space funding.

"Lisa was a very strong constituent voice advocating broad-based funding for comprehensive wildlife management," said Dale W. May, Director of the DEP Wildlife Division. "We enjoyed working with her and appreciated her support." The Wildlife Division staff extends their sympathies to Lisa's family.

Memorial donations in Lisa's memory may be made to: The Branford Land Trust, P.O. Box 254, Branford, CT 06405.

Portions of this article were reprinted from *Connecticut Audubon News*.

The Connecticut Audubon Society will present the 3rd Annual Connecticut River Eagle Festival on February 16 and 17, 2002, in Essex. It will be another terrific weekend event filled with many free conservation activities for adults and children, including an opening parade, land-based eagle viewing tours, environmental lectures and live birds of prey demonstrations. (DEP Wildlife Division biologists will be presenting some of the environmental lectures.) There will also be free nature programs offered for children, Native American presentations, nature exhibits, music, ice carvings and other entertainment.

A complete Eagle Festival Program Guide can be obtained by calling 1-800-714-7201. Information can also be found on Connecticut Audubon's website: www.ctaudubon.org.

Winter Wildlife Weekend

February 22-24, 2002, Lakeville, CT

Audubon's Winter Wildlife Weekend - Art Gone Wild!, presented by the National Audubon Society in Sharon, will be held on February 22-24 at the Interlaken Inn and Conference Center in Lakeville. The art show and sale will showcase over 25 regionally and nationally known artists, carvers, sculptors and crafters. Also featured will be art and photography workshops, a silent auction, a special live animal presentation each day and the first annual *Avian Art Competition*. This year's subject will be the American bald eagle and the contest registration is open to all artists; painters, carvers, sculptors, quilters, you name it! Event visitors will cast ballots for their favorite artwork and several prizes will be awarded.

For information, call Scott Heth at 860-364-0520, (sheth@audubon.org) or check out the *Winter Wildlife Weekend* section of www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/sharon.

Stop by to see the Wildlife Division's informational display at the Northeast Fishing and Hunting Expo, on February 14-17, at the Connecticut Expo Center in Hartford.

Take the Wildlife Challenge!

Guess which animal is described in the challenge and enter into a drawing to win a free wildlife poster. Clearly print your answer on a postcard, along with your name, address and phone number and send it to: CT Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013, **Attn: Wildlife Challenge**. The answer and winner will be printed in the next issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*. **Official Rules:** Only one postcard will be accepted per household, per challenge. Postcards for this issue's contest must be postmarked by February 20, 2002. Only one winner will be chosen for each challenge. Each winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by the postmarked deadline.

Congratulations
go to Ann Castellano who was chosen as the winner of the November/December challenge. Ann gave the correct answer of Eastern chipmunk. She was given the choice of one of four posters for her prize. Thanks to all readers who sent in postcards with answers to the Challenge. Please keep trying!

January/February Wildlife Challenge

This issue's Wildlife Challenge was once present in Connecticut in greater numbers than it is now. This animal became scarce due to forest logging and clearing by early settlers and overexploitation; by the 1900s, this animal was considered extirpated from the state. A project to restore this native mammal into northwestern Connecticut was initiated by the DEP Wildlife Division in 1988. Presently, populations of this animal are well established in northern areas of the state and individuals are found periodically throughout the state.

Our Wildlife Challenge is an inhabitant of the forest and eats squirrels, rabbits, mice, voles, carrion, fruits, mast, birds and frogs. It is also famous for its porcupine-eating abilities. This animal can climb trees and uses tree cavities for its den. It is active primarily at night and is very secretive and alert, rarely seen by observers. What is this issue's Wildlife Challenge?

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- January Donate to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund on your 2001 CT Income Tax form (see page 9).
- Spring turkey hunting and state land deer lottery applications available at town clerks' and Wildlife Division offices.
- Black bear cubs born in the winter den weigh about one-half pound.
- The beaver breeding season lasts from mid-January to mid-March.
- Jan. 15-Feb. 15 Special late Canada goose season in the south zone only. For more details, see the 2001-2002 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide, available at town clerks' and DEP offices. The guide can also be found on the DEP website at <http://dep.state.ct.us>.
- Feb. 10 Postmark deadline for the state land spring turkey season lottery.
- Feb. 14-17 NE Hunting and Fishing Expo, Connecticut Expo Center, Hartford (Call 860-529-2123; www.northeastpromo.com).
- Feb. 16-17 3rd Annual Connecticut River Bald Eagle Festival (see page 18).
- Feb. 22-24 Audubon's Winter Wildlife Weekend (see page 18).
- Feb. 26 Tentative starting date for the first training session of the Master Wildlife Conservationist Program. Response from potential participants in the program has been overwhelming. Participants have been selected through an application process. Stay tuned to *Connecticut Wildlife* as the program progresses.
- Feb. 28 Send in permit-required (small game) season survey cards.
- Early March Clean out bluebird nest boxes and install new ones.

Connecticut Wildlife

Subscription Order

Please make checks payable to:

Connecticut Wildlife, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013

Check one:

- 1 Year (\$6.00) 2 Years (\$11.00) 3 Years (\$16.00)

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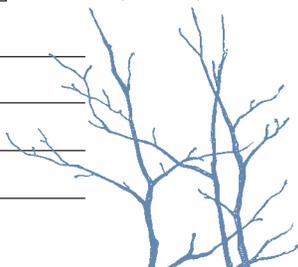
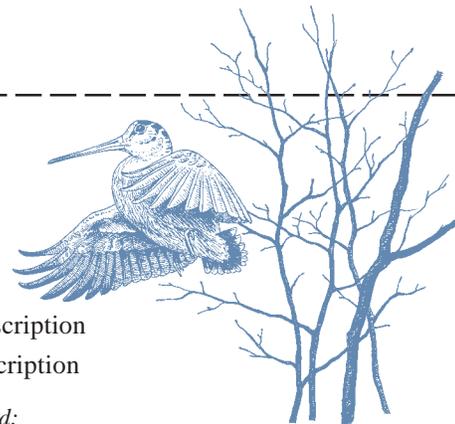
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Forest management activities were recently conducted on 10 acres of Kollar Wildlife Management Area in Tolland to improve habitat conditions for the ruffed grouse (above) and the American woodcock.

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