

July/August 2009

Connecticut Wildlife

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



Eye on the Wild

In the May/June 2009 issue of Connecticut Wildlife, Division Director Dale May wrote his farewell "From the Director" before retiring on June 1. Three other members of the Wildlife Division staff have joined Dale in retirement: Assistant Director Greg Chasko, Ecologist Ken Metzler, and Mosquito Control Specialist Dan Shaw. Starting on page 3 of this issue is a look back at the extraordinary careers of these four men. Between them, they have approximately 122 years of state service and they take with them a wealth of knowledge and experience that is virtually impossible to replace. I hope you take the time to read about their careers with the DEP as they were involved in making conservation history in Connecticut.

The DEP also said goodbye to Commissioner Gina McCarthy who was confirmed by the U.S. Senate for an appointment by the Obama Administration to serve as the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation Programs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Deputy Commissioner Amey Marrella has stepped up to be Acting Commissioner until a new commissioner is found.

Bureau of Natural Resources Chief Ed Parker also retired from the DEP after 33 years of service. William Hyatt has been named Acting Chief. Before taking on this assignment, Bill was the Director of the DEP's Inland Fisheries Division.

Finally, Rick Jacobson has been named Acting Director of the Wildlife Division. Rick comes to the Wildlife Division after spending 22 years in the Inland Fisheries Division, most recently as Assistant Director. Rick received a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse and a M.S. from the University of Connecticut. He is currently a doctoral candidate at UCONN. Rick comes from a family with a rich tradition in farming, land stewardship, and outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, camping). Throughout his career, he has been committed to natural resource conservation as a whole.

Elsewhere in this issue, you can read about the Wildlife Division's efforts to monitor state-endangered spadefoot toads, nesting woodland raptors, resident Canada geese, and chronic wasting disease in deer. Environmental Conservation Police Officer Bill Myers writes about an unusual experience he recently had concerning a turkey, just before he retired after almost 30 years of service (see page 16). On page 10, Wildlife Division photographer Paul Fusco writes about the common tern. And, last, but definitely not least, read about the unveiling of a spectacular wildlife mural that was painted by a Connecticut artist (see page 7). The mural can be viewed at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center in Burlington. Everyone is encouraged to visit Sessions Woods to view this beautiful piece of artwork!

Kathy Herz, Editor

Cover:

Aside from Falkner Island, this has been a bad year for nesting terns in Connecticut. Least terns nested in reduced numbers at a few traditional nesting areas. After many years of poor production, the state's largest historical least tern colony at Sandy Point in West Haven supported no nesting terns for the first time in memory.

See pages 10 and 17 for more about terns in Connecticut.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Connecticut Wildlife

Published bimonthly by
State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection

www.ct.gov/dep

Amey Marrella Acting Commissioner
Susan Frechette Deputy Commissioner
William Hyatt Acting Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources

Wildlife Division

79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127 (860-424-3011)

Rick Jacobson Acting Director
Mark Clavette Program Specialist/Recreation Management
Jenny Dickson Wildlife Diversity Program Biologist
Laurie Fortin Recreation Management Biologist
Lance Hansen Secretary
Elaine Hinsch Program Specialist
Heather Overturf Secretary
Chris Vann Technical Assistance Biologist
Dawn McKay Natural History Survey
Karen Zyko Natural History Survey

Eastern District Area Headquarters

209 Hebron Road, Marlborough, CT 06447 (860-295-9523)

Robin Blum Habitat Management Program Technician
Ann Kilpatrick Eastern District Biologist
Carrie Pomfrey Habitat Management Program Technician
Paul Rothbart District Supervising Biologist
Jane Seymour Belding WMA Steward
Judy Wilson Private Lands Habitat Biologist

Franklin W.M.A.

391 Route 32, N. Franklin, CT 06254 (860-642-7239)

Charles Bruckerhoff CE/FS Program Coordinator
Paul Capotosto Wetlands Restoration Biologist
Michael Gregonis Deer/Turkey Program Biologist
Min Huang Migratory Bird Program Biologist
Howard Kilpatrick Deer/Turkey Program Biologist
Kelly Kubik Migratory Bird Program Technician
Andy LaBonte Deer Program Biologist
Winnie Reid Secretary
Shana Scribner Secretary
Julie Victoria Wildlife Diversity Program Biologist
Roger Wolfe Mosquito Management Coordinator

Sessions Woods W.M.A.

P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013 (860-675-8130)

Trish Cernik Secretary
Peter Good Supervising Wildlife Biologist
Jason Hawley Furbearer Program Technician
Shannon Kearney-McGee Bird Program Technician
Christina Kocer Wildlife Diversity Program Technician
Geoffrey Krukar Bird Program Technician
Lauren Pasniewski Clerk
Peter Picone Western District Biologist
Kate Moran Wildlife Diversity Program Technician
Paul Rego Furbearer Program Biologist
James Koert Riley District Maintainer
Laura Rogers-Castro Natural Resource Educator
Laura Saucier Wildlife Diversity Program Technician
Jim Warner Facilities Manager

Connecticut Wildlife

Kathy Herz Editor
Paul Fusco Media Designer/Photographer

Wetlands Habitat & Mosquito Management Crew

51 Mill Road, Madison, CT 06443

Steven Rosa Mosquito Control Specialist



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. Connecticut Wildlife contains articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies.



The DEP is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer, providing programs and services in a fair and impartial manner. In conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities who need this information in an alternative format, to allow them to benefit and/or participate in the agency's programs and services, should call 860-424-3051 or 860-418-5937, or email Marcia Z. Bonitto, ADA Coordinator, at Marcia.Bonitto@ct.gov. Requests for accommodations must be made at least two weeks prior to the program date.

The Wildlife Division grants permission to reprint text, **not artwork**, provided the DEP Wildlife Division is credited. Artwork printed in this publication is copyrighted by the CT DEP Wildlife Division. Any unauthorized use of this artwork is prohibited. Please contact the editor at the Sessions Woods office to obtain permission for reprinting articles.

ISSN #1087-7525

Retiring Wildlife Division Employees Made their Marks

On June 1, 2009, DEP Wildlife Division Director Dale May and Assistant Director Greg Chasko retired from their long and dedicated careers at the Wildlife Division. On July 1, Ken Metzler, Ecologist, and Dan Shaw, Mosquito Control Specialist, followed suit. The Wildlife Division staff would like to thank each of them for their dedication over the years and wish them all the best in their retirement.

Director Dale May

Wildlife Division Director Dale May wrote dozens of articles for *Connecticut Wildlife* over his 27-year career with the Division. For the past 15 years, Dale's "From the Director" column also informed readers about his passion for wildlife. Through his column, Dale entertained readers with his personal wildlife experiences, but he also drove home the messages of wildlife management and explained the responsibilities of the Wildlife Division and its staff. Dale's farewell "From the Director" was published in the May/June 2009 issue. However, the magazine staff wanted to honor Dale upon his retirement by having him answer some questions about his career in his own words. What follows is a glimpse of the man who led the Division as director for 15 years. Dale may have ended one chapter of his life upon retiring from state service, but we wish him well in his next chapter, in which we are sure wildlife issues will be big part.

What was your background before coming to work for the Wildlife Division?

I grew up on the family farm in Woodstock, Connecticut – a great place to learn to love the outdoors. I spent four years in the U.S. Coast Guard as an oceanographer/meteorologist, and then received a B.S. in Natural Resources Management from the University of Connecticut in 1979 and a M.S. from the University of Maine in 1981 (working on bobcats).

What year did you begin working for the Wildlife Division and what were the different positions that you held?

I started with the Wildlife Division as a deer biologist in 1982 and then led the Furbearer Program from 1983 to 1985 while also supervising the Upland Game and Nonharvested Wildlife Programs. From 1986 to 1994, I supervised the Deer, Waterfowl, and Wild Turkey Programs until becoming the Wildlife Division Director in 1994.



P. J. FUSCO

During his years as a Supervising Wildlife Biologist, Dale May was actively involved with the Wildlife Division's Wild Turkey Program. In this photograph, Dale is preparing a rocket net to trap turkeys for relocation. Dale was instrumental in trapping and transplanting Connecticut turkeys to complete their statewide restoration.

Describe some of your job duties during your time with the Division.

During my time as a biologist (1982-1994), I directly administered federal aid projects on deer, turkey, and furbearers and also oversaw staff that ran waterfowl, upland game, and nonharvested programs. Some of my personal accomplishments included: initiating computer analysis of deer harvest data; developing Connecticut's first deer management zones; establishing the first Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Program in the Northeast; trapping and transplanting turkeys to complete statewide restoration; developing a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the State of Maine to assist in their turkey restoration program; developing the DEP tranquilization team and protocols for moose and bear; and developing a trapper questionnaire and pelt tagging programs to monitor furbearer populations.

As Director, my primary responsibili-

ties were to work with staff to identify priorities and to obtain funding and manpower to accomplish them. There was a lot of planning, budgeting, and coordination within the Division, Bureau of Natural Resources, and the DEP. I also was involved in many regional and national initiatives through the Northeast Wildlife Administrator's Association and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Working with professional counterparts throughout the country was extremely rewarding and beneficial. As Director, a large amount of time was spent developing policies, regulations, and statutory changes to benefit wildlife management. *What were some of your major accomplishments?*

Virtually all of the major accomplishments were "ours" and not "mine" since they were the result of a collective effort between the staff and myself. Therefore, I consider my most important accomplishments to be hiring key staff;



DEP Wildlife Division retirees Director Dale May (from left to right), Ecologist Ken Metzler, and Assistant Director Greg Chasko at their retirement celebration. These three men, along with fellow retiree Dan Shaw (pictured below), take with them a wealth of knowledge and experience that is virtually impossible to replace.

assigning priority duties to people best suited to do the job; and working effectively with them. The Wildlife Division has an outstanding staff that is highly regarded throughout the professional

community. Some of the priorities “we” accomplished include: (1) development of Connecticut’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, which resulted in substantial new federal funding to address conservation priorities; (2) maximizing the potential of the Farm Bill to improve wildlife habitat on state lands; (3) expansion of our outreach initiatives by continuing to develop Sessions Woods and Belding Wildlife Management Areas, improving *Connecticut Wildlife Magazine* and our website, and creating the Master Wildlife Conservationist Program; (4) continuing to adapt the Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program to meet current and future needs; and (5) continuing to practice good research and management, resulting in regulations that ensure healthy populations of harvested species of wildlife.

What do you consider the major issues currently facing the Wildlife Division?

(1) There is a need to diversify the financial support for wildlife conservation. The Division’s realm of responsibility continues to expand to include very

good stewards of wildlife habitat should be developed.

What major changes/differences have you seen since you first joined the Wildlife Division?

One difference is that the staff is more specialized and this has arisen from necessity. If we are going to manage ecosystems, recover rare species, and responsibly harvest abundant ones – we need expertise. Another difference is the increased opportunity for short-term, results-based funding to achieve specific objectives from a variety of initiatives. The Division and DEP must be flexible enough to take advantage of these opportunities when they arise by working effectively with federal, private, and other state entities.

Has anything remained the same?

Number one is the quality of the staff and their commitment to the job. Anyone aspiring to a career in wildlife learns early on that the job market is very competitive and, if they are fortunate enough to land a permanent position, they owe it to the profession to do their very best.



Mosquito Control Specialist Dan Shaw dedicated 36 years to state Service.

Despite declining numbers and an aging demographic, sportsmen continue to be critical to wildlife conservation – both in terms of funding all programs and in terms of managing abundant species. This remains the same, but probably can't sustain itself into the future.

What is the most memorable event that happened during your time with the Wildlife Division?

It is very difficult to choose just one, because there are so many. However, if I had to select just one, it would probably be the implementation of a deer management program at the Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in Groton. This was more of a process than an event. In essence, Bluff Point was a microcosm of wildlife management in an urban state — an unbalanced ecosystem was dominated by a single species (deer); rare species were being impacted; and special interest groups, legislators, and the courts all became involved. The Wildlife Division painstakingly collected data, evaluated options, communicated findings, and ultimately implemented the proper and necessary steps to balance the deer population with the ecosystem.

What advice do you have for your colleagues?

Do not be afraid to self-promote. You do important, vital work that is interesting to the average person. Make every effort to tell your story to the public. It may not be your nature to take credit for what you do, but it is essential to your credibility.

What are your plans after retirement?

To treat every day as a gift and spend as much time as possible enjoying and protecting the great outdoors.

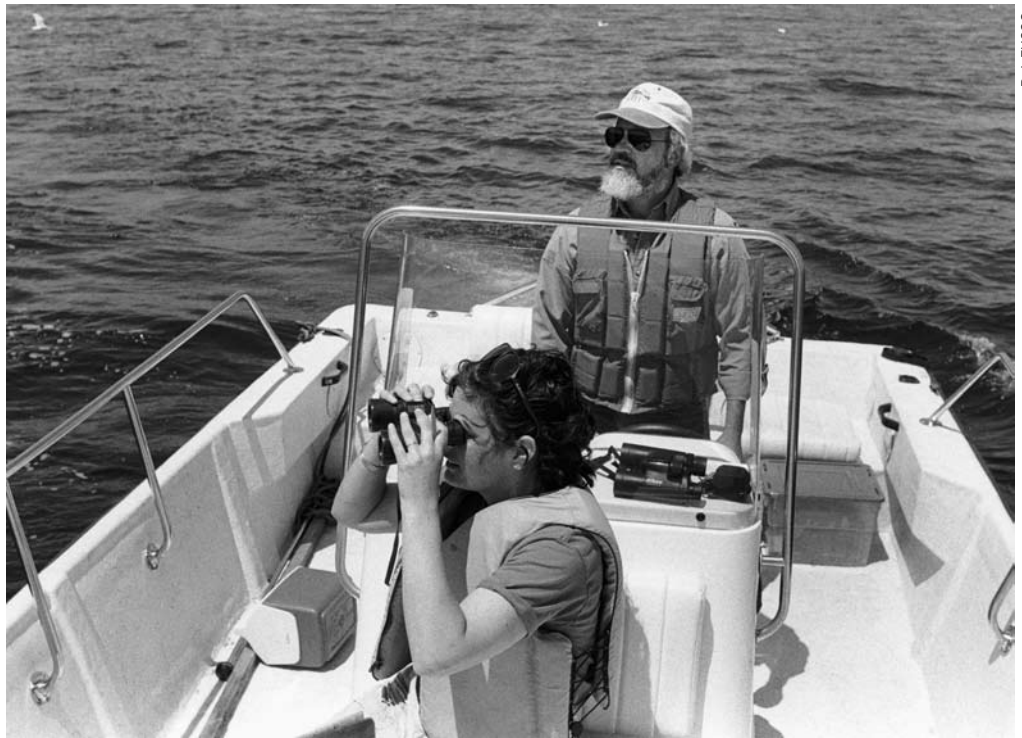
Any other thoughts you'd like to include?

I have had the opportunity to work with many wonderful people during my time at DEP. I thank all of them for making my career and my life richer. It has been my pleasure.

Assistant Director Greg Chasko

Greg Chasko began his career with the Wildlife Division as a seasonal for the Waterfowl Program in 1980 and worked his way up to Assistant Director by 1991. After 18 years in that position, Greg decided it was time to retire. Following is a look at Greg's many accomplishments during his time with the Division.

What was your background before com-



Wildlife Division Assistant Director Greg Chasko was sometimes able to incorporate his passion for boating into his work for the Division, as on this day spent surveying terns with Wildlife Diversity Program biologist Julie Victoria.

ing to work for the Wildlife Division?

I received a B.S. in Natural Resources Conservation from the University of Maryland (1977) and a M.S. in Wildlife Management from Frostburg State College (1980). My M.S. research on avian nesting success along powerline corridors was published as a *Wildlife Monograph*. *What were the different positions that you held at the Wildlife Division?*

I started as a seasonal in 1980 working with the Waterfowl Program on a lead toxicity study on black ducks and mallards. In April 1981, I took a five-month job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Damage Program in Ohio, but returned to Connecticut in fall 1981 to accept a permanent wildlife biologist position in the Waterfowl Program. I was the Waterfowl Program Leader from 1983 to 1991 until taking the Assistant Director position. I remained in that position until my retirement this year.

What were some of your major accomplishments?

One accomplishment that I am proud of is being the "Father of Resident Canada Goose Hunting Seasons." I was able to use biological information to develop a tool to help address an important wildlife management issue.

In 1986, while I was the Waterfowl Program Leader, Connecticut became the first state to be granted a special

resident Canada goose hunting season to be held in late winter along the coast. At the time, a recently completed study of resident goose movements in Connecticut showed that resident geese moved to the coast in late winter when inland areas were snow covered and lakes and ponds were frozen. However, band return data showed that "migrant" geese typically left Connecticut and migrated south to the mid-Atlantic region when "ice-up" occurred. Meanwhile, research conducted in Massachusetts indicated that the resident goose subspecies was larger than the subspecies of migrant geese. Putting this information together, I hypothesized that the majority of geese harvested after ice-up along the Connecticut coast would be resident geese. I was able to test this hypothesis by collecting "goose parts" of harvested geese from cooperating sportsmen. Certain measurements, such as bill length, could be used to separate larger resident geese from smaller migrant geese. The results of this research showed that in inland areas, harvest throughout the season was a mix of resident and migrant geese. However, virtually all geese harvested along the coast in late winter were residents. As a result, Connecticut was allowed to initiate the first ever Special Season for Resident Geese by having a liberalized bag limit and extended late winter season along the coast. This set the



DEP Ecologist Ken Metzler working in the field with Natural History Survey colleague Karen Zyko, an Environmental Analyst for the DEP Wildlife Division.

stage for other resident seasons nationwide, including September seasons.

Another major accomplishment was my role as Principal Editor of Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (or Wildlife Action Plan). The Plans were required of all 50 states and six territories in order to be eligible for federal State Wildlife Grant funds. Development of Connecticut's Plan was a massive project that began over two years prior to its due date of October 1, 2005. A vast amount of information from a variety of sources had been compiled into this comprehensive document. Two months prior to the deadline for submission, all the components and necessary information had been compiled, but the document needed to be synthesized and polished up. I was assigned this monumental task to complete in a short amount of time. With a lot of assistance from my colleagues, the Plan was completed by the deadline. It was eventually approved and is recognized as one of the best plans developed.

There are many other accomplishments (the Duck Stamp Program; developing regulations for the management of deer at the Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, etc.), but the resident goose season and the Plan are my favorites.

What do you consider the major issues currently facing the Wildlife Division?

(1) Converting the inherent human interest in animals into caring about

wildlife conservation; (2) acquiring funding from non-traditional users; (3) implementing responsible management of problematic wildlife species (e.g., bears, moose, mute swans); and (4) managing for a diversity of habitat types and uneven-aged forest habitats.

What major differences/changes have you seen since you first joined the Division?

The Division has exhibited substantial growth over the years, evolving from a "game management" to a comprehensive wildlife management agency, a very positive step. When I started in 1980, there was no nongame program. What little nongame work that was done was conducted by the Waterfowl Program.

What are your plans after retirement?

I plan to play more than work, but I hope to work as a natural resources consultant. I also will do more salt water fishing and will use my U.S. Coast Guard Captain's License to generate some income through fishing charters and tours.

Ecologist Ken Metzler

With the retirement of Ken Metzler, the DEP lost its expert on plant ecology, plant communities, and habitats. Since receiving a M.S. in Plant Ecology in 1977, Ken Metzler was associated with the State Geological and Natural History Survey, first as a contractor collecting statewide data on the distribution of lichens as related to air pollution patterns

to his appointment in 1983 as Heritage Ecologist, the position he held until his retirement in July 2009. From the beginning, Ken was solely responsible for the development and operation of the ecology program for the Natural History Survey. His expertise was called upon for every major land use project that involved the DEP — Ken's role was to analyze the proposed activity and make recommendations to eliminate and/or minimize impacts to the natural system, endangered and threatened species, and rare/sensitive habitats. Ken's expertise and knowledge accumulated through his education and many years of field experience collecting and analyzing environmental data using national protocols and standards, some of which he was involved in creating.

Ken has conducted statewide surveys, such as the National Wetlands Inventory for Connecticut, as well as ecoregional characterization of landscape patterns and vegetation classification and mapping projects that continue today. Through the years, Ken has been responsible for inventorying the plants and habitats of the state, assisting in the preparation of the state endangered and threatened plant species lists, developing an invasive plant species management program, conducting environmental reviews, and providing technical assistance to many agencies. He also assisted in the management of data on state and federal endangered and threatened species, critical habitats, and sensitive environmental areas through the development, maintenance, and operation of the Natural Diversity Data Base.

Before his retirement, Ken was compiling digital data on the distribution and characterization of imperiled habitats throughout the state. The result of this project will be a digital map that shows the distribution and extent of key habitat types important to greatest conservation need species, along with information about habitat size, condition, and associated vegetation. This information, which will become part of the state's Natural Diversity Data Base, will be used to enhance the review of impacts to critical habitats and to set priorities for site management and conservation of these habitats.

Throughout his career, Ken worked cooperatively with other state and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and local governments.

Much of this effort has culminated in various peer-reviewed journal articles, newsletter and non-technical articles, and several books, such as *Wetlands of Connecticut*, *The Vegetation of Connecticut*, and *Terrestrial Vegetation of the United States*.

The most memorable events during Ken's career with the DEP were eating fried alligator tail in a Ducks Unlimited field camp on an old rice impoundment in South Carolina, complete with nesting bald eagles, and visiting a RAMSAR wetland of International Significance in Yorkshire County, England. Ken's advice to his colleagues at the DEP is to "continue to work passionately on what you believe in." He plans to continue teaching Ecosystems Ecology in the State University system during his retirement.

Mosquito Control Specialist Dan Shaw

Daniel Shaw is no stranger to Connecticut's coasts. A native of Madison, his family has a long history of living and working along the shore. He often tells of his grandfather who owned and farmed salt hay on some of the marshes that today make up Hammonasset Beach State Park.

Dan began his career in state service as a seasonal worker with the Connecticut Health Department Mosquito Control Unit in June 1973 and again in 1974. He was hired to a full-time Maintainer III position in September 1974 and elevated to a Mosquito Control Supervisor in 1983. During this time, Dan performed field inspections of coastal marshes from Madison to Greenwich for mosquitoes and applied larvicides to those areas to control mosquito populations. As part of the program he also deployed and maintained light traps for adult mosquito surveillance and followed up on mosquito complaints. Based on surveillance and complaint data, Dan and others in the crew would occasionally apply adulticides in neighborhoods and developments to reduce high levels of adult mosquitoes. They also maintained many of the ditches, drainage ways, and water control structures along the coast to provide adequate tidal circulation and to prevent flooding and stagnation of water which could produce conditions favorable to mosquitoes. Much of this was done by hand but they also used specialized low ground pressure equipment that could traverse the soft marsh soils.



Mosquito Control Specialist Dan Shaw applies a larvicide to control mosquito larvae at salt marshes in Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison.

During a budget crisis in late 1991, Dan and the rest of the Mosquito Control crew were laid off temporarily until January 1992 when they were rehired. This was a rocky time for the Mosquito Control Unit when it was removed from the state budget and the entire crew was to be laid off on June 30, 1992. Fortunately, there were people in the DEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs and the Bureau of Natural Resources who saw this as an opportunity to gain a seasoned crew and the specialized equipment necessary to perform wetland restoration on Connecticut's tidal marshes and, on July 1, 1992, the Mosquito Control Unit of the state Health Department was transferred to the DEP Bureau of Support Services as a Wetland Restoration Unit.

Dan's title was changed to Wetland Restoration Specialist. The new unit did not perform operational mosquito control per se, yet worked on coastal wetland restoration projects, including culvert replacement and tidal flow restoration, wildlife habitat enhancement, and control of common reed (*Phragmites*). This new wetland restoration program flourished and gained national notoriety. However, with no state-organized mosquito control program in place (although a few private companies emerged), mosquito populations went largely unchecked for the next four years. In the summer of 1996, high levels of Eastern Equine Encephalitis

(EEE) virus were detected by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in the mosquito populations in southeastern Connecticut, which resulted in the aerial application of pesticides to several towns in that part of the state. As a result, Public Act 97-289 was passed the following year which appropriated state funds to recreate a Mosquito Management Unit, this time in the DEP's Wildlife Division. Dan's position was reclassified as a Mosquito Control Specialist and the Mosquito Management Unit was blended with the Wetland Restoration Unit to create the current Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management, or WHAMM, Program. Dan's duties were largely the same. However, with the new streamlined program, his mosquito inspection territory was limited to state-owned coastal properties from Madison (Hammonasset Beach) to Westport (Sherwood Island State Park).

Despite all the changes throughout his career, Dan's dedication and work ethic remained steadfast and his local knowledge and experience in Connecticut's tidal marshes were often called upon to help make wetland and mosquito management decisions. His experience, knowledge of local history, connections with landowners, and anecdotal observations and stories have been an invaluable asset to the DEP's WHAMM Program. Daniel Shaw retired July 1, 2009, after 36 years of service to the State of Connecticut.

2008 Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

Written by Andrew M. LaBonte, Deer Program

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a neurological disease that affects deer, elk, and moose. CWD was first documented in Colorado in the late 1960s, but currently is found in 17 other states (including New York and West Virginia), two Canadian Provinces, and in the Republic of Korea. The DEP has been testing for the presence of CWD in Connecticut since 2003. In 2008, a CWD surveillance program approved by the U. S. Department of Agriculture-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) was designed to focus sampling efforts in areas of Connecticut that were considered high and moderate risk. High-risk areas include deer management zones 1, 6, and 11, which are located along the New York border where CWD was documented in 2005. Since 2002, the State of New York has tested over 26,250 samples for CWD, including 5,300 from the county where CWD was first detected in 2005 (approximately 180 miles from the Connecticut border). Since 2005, no additional cases of the disease have been detected in deer. However, due to the ability of CWD to persist in the environment for an extend-

ed period of time, intensive monitoring efforts in New York are expected to continue. Moderate-risk areas in Connecticut are considered all remaining deer management zones.

Collecting Samples

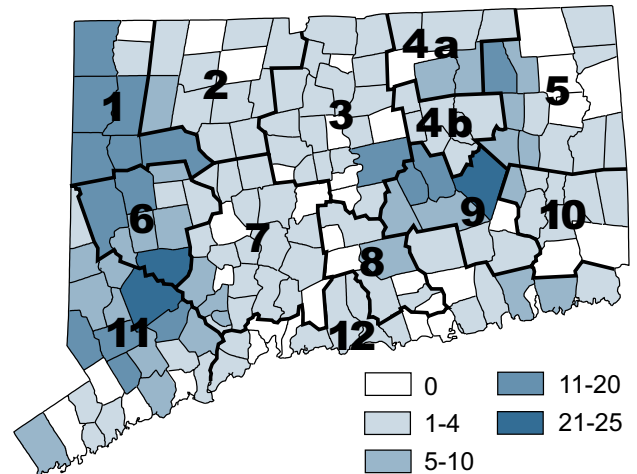
Prior to 2008, the main source of samples for CWD testing in Connecticut came from biological check stations during six peak days of the state-wide shotgun/rifle season. In 2008, the number of biological check station collection days was reduced to four, but check stations remained open during the entire shotgun/rifle season. A proposed regulation change that could occur for the 2009 hunting season would keep the number of biological check station days at four, but would eliminate check stations for the remainder of the season. Hunters harvesting deer after the first four days would be required to call a toll-free number or report their harvest via the internet within 24 hours. With the change in the deer harvest reporting method, collecting an adequate number of samples will be extremely difficult without a great deal of assistance from hunters, butcher shops, and taxidermists.

Testing Results

During the 2008 CWD surveillance period, 632 testable samples were collected from deer harvested during the archery, shotgun/rifle, or crop damage seasons and from deer found on roadways throughout the state. Over 300 of those samples came specifically from registered meat processors and taxidermists who generously offered to participate in CWD collection efforts. A total of 298 samples were collected from the high-risk area and 334 from the moderate-risk area. All samples were tested at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and all tested negative for CWD. Since testing efforts began in New England in 2003, no

CWD Sampling in Deer Management Zones

In 2008, sampling for CWD was focused in high-risk (deer management zones 1, 6, and 11) and moderate-risk populations (all remaining deer management zones). Samples were collected and tested (632) from 133 towns from September 2008–February 2009. This map shows the approximate number of samples collected in each town.



New England states have detected CWD.

The Wildlife Division's Deer Program would like to thank all the hunters, butchers, and taxidermists for their assistance during the 2008 CWD surveillance season. Anyone who shares an interest in deer is strongly encouraged to participate in this ongoing surveillance program for the benefit of Connecticut's deer herd.

CWD Sampling for 2009

During the 2009 fall deer hunting season, the DEP will continue collecting deer heads throughout the state to test for CWD. Anyone interested in donating deer heads for testing should store them in a cool place or refrigerator and call 860-424-6060 or the Franklin Wildlife Office (860-642-7239) so that a pickup can be arranged (typically the next day). Additionally, anyone who observes deer displaying symptoms associated with CWD (abnormal behavior, staggering, lowered head and ears, and emaciation) should contact the Division of Law Enforcement (860-434-3333), the Franklin Wildlife office (860-642-7239), or the Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130).

This project receives funding from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program.

Notes of Interest About CWD

- In West Virginia, ongoing and extensive surveillance efforts being conducted by the WV Department of Natural Resources have not detected CWD outside of the county where it was first documented. However, the area with known CWD-infected deer continues to slowly expand as the disease has been detected outside the original containment area. To date, 45 deer have tested positive for CWD in West Virginia.
- As part of an ongoing education effort, the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance has posted an online video (www.welcometohunting.com/video/CWD/cable/cwd.html) about processing venison and the precautions hunters should take regarding CWD.
- USDA-APHIS has proposed changes to a final rule that establishes a herd certification program to eliminate CWD from farmed or captive cervids in the United States. In the final rule, participating deer, elk, and moose herds would have to follow CWD herd certification program requirements for animal identification, testing, herd management, and movement of animals into and from herds.
- For all the up-to-date information on CWD related issues, log on to the CWD alliance website at www.cwd-info.org/.

Wildlife Mural Unveiled at Sessions Woods

Local Artist and MWC Charlene VanNess Paints Spectacular View of Sessions Beaver Marsh

In early June, the DEP Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods (FOSW) unveiled an 8' x 24' mural painted by local artist and Master Wildlife Conservationist Charlene VanNess at a special reception held at the Division's Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center in Burlington. The FOSW hosted the reception to honor Charlene for donating her time and tremendous talent to paint an outstanding mural which depicts the beaver marsh at Sessions Woods and the various wildlife species found there, such as the wood duck, kingfisher, white-tailed deer, great blue heron, and monarch butterfly.

The mural unveiling drew at least 60 attendees. FOSW president Paul Willis and DEP Deputy Commissioner Susan Frechette provided introductory comments before the ropes were pulled to unveil the stunning artwork. "Adults and children alike will enjoy searching the mural for animals they recognize while at the same time learning about the creatures and plants that may be new to them. What a great educational experience for us all," stated Deputy Commissioner Frechette in her speech. "I can see it now, when a bus load of children arrives for a day at Sessions Woods. First stop, a visit to view the mural and learn about what lives in the forest. What a better way to have a lesson in wildlife and art at the same time."

Charlene VanNess, of Terryville, is a professional floral designer and artist who paints mostly with oils and acrylics. Her specialty is landscapes, which is truly demonstrated in the Sessions Woods mural. Charlene's painting is realistic and very



P. J. FUSCO (2)

Artist Charlene VanNess adds her signature to the mural she painted of the Sessions Woods beaver marsh.

detailed, from the sky to the trees to the water, as well as from the soaring red-tailed hawk to the river otter to the smallest of dragonflies. Charlene also is a Master Wildlife Conservationist who participated in the 40-hour training program sponsored by the Wildlife Division.

The mural can be viewed at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, 341 Milford Street (Route 69) in Burlington. The Education Center is a facility of the DEP Wildlife Division and is open free-of-charge, Monday through Friday between 8:30 AM-4:00 PM. (The Education Center also is open to the public on select weekends. Call the Sessions Woods

office at 860-675-8130 during business hours before planning your weekend visit.)

The 777-acre Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area introduces visitors to wildlife and natural resources management through educational programs, demonstration sites, self-guided hiking trails, and displays. Facilities include the education center with an exhibit area and a large meeting room, as well as interpretive trails and habitat management demonstration areas. The Friends of Sessions Woods was established as an all-volunteer organization in 1998 to facilitate projects and programs to enhance the value of Sessions Woods.



Come to the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center to see the wildlife mural.

Spirit on the Sound - The Common Tern

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, Wildlife Outreach Program

The summer shoreline in Connecticut is typified by wispy blue skies, slow rolling waves, and beaches with soft, grainy sand. Many boaters and beachgoers make daily use of the natural qualities that Long Island Sound offers. As boats motor along on their way back and forth to bring their occupants to the best fishing spots, a small group of white birds speeds past, calling with a *kik, kik, kik*, and *kee-ur* to one another as they go. The birds' long, forked tails and long pointed wings help identify them as terns, which are also on their way to their best fishing spots. The anglers in the boats have learned that the terns can lead them to fish if they follow. Terns flock to areas where schools of bait fish are forced to the surface by the larger stripers and bluefish that the anglers are after. One after another, the terns dive headfirst into the school of bait fish, coming up with food for themselves and to feed to their hungry young.

Terns are members of the Larid family, which includes gulls as well as terns. Terns are smaller



©PAUL J. FUSCO
All Rights Reserved

Swift and graceful in flight, common terns can be identified by their long, pointed wings and long, deeply forked tail. The outer tail feathers and outer primary feathers darken with wear. A dark trailing edge in the primaries is visible from below.



©PAUL J. FUSCO
All Rights Reserved

Common terns are medium-sized with a red-orange bill tipped in black and red-orange legs.

and more streamlined than gulls. They have long, pointed wings and most have a long, forked tail. Their bills are long and pointed, and their legs are short with webbed feet. Most terns are whitish with a black cap during the breeding season. Of the three species of terns that breed in Connecticut, the common tern is the most widespread and familiar.

Range

During the summer breeding season, common terns are found throughout Long Island Sound. Their breeding range includes the Atlantic coast from the Carolinas north to Newfoundland and west to Alberta. Common terns use suitable inland lakes and marshes as well as coastal habitats. The bulk of

the population winters from the extreme southern United States south to Brazil (Atlantic) and Peru (Pacific). They are also found in Eurasia and northern Africa.

Behavior

Terns are strong, graceful, and agile in flight. While their flight pattern is fast and direct, they have the ability to make hard twisting turns to quickly accelerate or to pull up and stop on a dime. Their typical feeding style is to locate small fish by sight, get into position for a strike by hovering over the target, and then dive head first into the water, seizing prey with their bill. One of the common tern's alternate names is "striker" because of its feeding behavior.

In Connecticut, common terns are closely associated with sandy and grassy barrier beaches and rocky shoreline habitats. The birds nest both on the mainland and on offshore islands, where they scrape out a shallow depression in the sand to lay their eggs. Nests usually contain two or three eggs,

and the chicks are precocial when they hatch (chicks are feathered and can move about shortly after hatching). The chicks fledge in about four weeks.

Common terns are bold and aggressive while protecting their eggs and young. They will fearlessly attack intruders by dive-bombing, often striking with their sharp bills and/or excrement. When in large numbers, their screaming attacks can be frightful and relentless until the threat is driven from the area. While large breeding colonies have their advantages, they can also be vulnerable to catastrophic loss due to weather, tides, or extreme disturbance. The vulnerability of nesting colonies is one reason why common terns are listed as a species of special concern in Connecticut.



By late summer, common terns start to lose the forward part of their black cap, which will become a white forehead for the winter.

Status in Connecticut

Most of the common tern breeding colonies in Connecticut are small, with less than a dozen pairs at each. One noteworthy exception is at Falkner Island, off the coast of Guilford, where approximately 2,500 pairs of common terns have nested there in recent years. Large colonies, like the one on Falkner Island, have the benefit of “safety in numbers” for the breeding birds, increasing their chances of success.

Post-breeding staging locations are important conservation areas for terns, providing them resting and feeding places before their long migration. There are a few staging areas along the Connecticut shoreline, which include the sandbars and flats in New Haven Harbor and at the mouth of the Housatonic River. It is at these places that common tern flocks grow bigger and bigger, becoming more restless over the course of a few weeks in late summer. Juveniles gain strength as the adults constantly feed them from the plentiful runs of small fish (3-4 inches in length). Soon, the flocks get the urge to move on, and all of a sudden they are gone. What was once an active and raucous sandbar on one day is quiet and empty on the next, as the birds move on to the next stop on their way south.

Historically, tern populations declined steeply in the 1800s when huge numbers were killed for the millinery trade. Their feathers and bodies were used to adorn women’s hats. Some species, including the common tern, were nearly extirpated. Since that time, laws to protect them were enacted and most species recovered fairly well. In recent decades, many tern populations have turned downward again. These declines are due to a variety of factors, but the major threats are the continued development, encroachment, and exploitation of limited shoreline areas that are close to tern nesting colonies and foraging areas. Protection of breeding locations and staging areas is essential for tern conservation in Connecticut.

Impacts at Nest Colonies

Common terns face a number of challenges when nesting in Connecticut. Among the most threatening are the spring high tides that occur during the nesting season. Nests with eggs or young chicks are at risk from high water. In some instances, the nests of whole colonies may be lost to extreme tides.

Heavy human disturbance at nest colonies may prevent the birds from incubating eggs or rearing chicks because it causes alarm reactions from the terns, making them leave their nests or young for extended periods of time. Examples of heavy disturbance include dogs on the beach, people flying kites too close to the colony, and operating motorized vehicles on the beach, all of which have happened at one time or another at tern colonies in Connecticut. These types of disturbances may cause catastrophic damage, or abandonment, of nest colonies.

As if all of these threats aren’t enough, terns also have several predators like falcons, night-herons, gulls, crows, foxes, skunks, raccoons, rats, and outdoor cats.

The Barrier Beach Dynamic

The natural dynamics of barrier beach habitats are such that shifting sand from winter storms and tidal action both destroys and rebuilds barrier beaches, and with that, tern nesting habitat. In the process, the nesting habitat is periodically revitalized and replaced, which is important as older, more stable nesting sites sometimes become unsuitable due to thickening vegetation.

While terns will generally return to nesting beaches they have used in previous years, they will easily move to other regional areas that may offer better nesting opportunities if the first area declines in quality. Beach stabilization projects that affect natural barrier beach dynamics are detrimental to terns because the stabilization prevents new potential nesting areas from being formed.

An Assessment of Woodland Raptor Populations in CT

Written by Shannon Kearney-McGee, Bird Program

Almost all of Connecticut's woodland raptor species are described in the Connecticut Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as uncommon, declining, vulnerable, and in need of research and monitoring. As top predators, raptors play a crucial role in many ecosystems, and also can be more vulnerable to environmental threats, such as contaminants, forest fragmentation, and disturbance. Most raptors are wide-ranging, secretive, and occur at relatively low densities. As a result of these life history characteristics, breeding raptors are important environmental indicators but are difficult to monitor.

There are regional efforts to monitor raptors through migration hawk watches, which are effective for tracking general and regional population trends. These migration trends, however, are not as useful in establishing management guidelines that address conservation issues specifically relevant to Connecticut's breeding raptor populations. To address this need for more localized monitoring information, efforts were focused on developing and implementing volunteer monitoring techniques that would center on breeding raptors in Connecticut. As a result of these survey efforts, the DEP Wildlife Division has calculated abundance and distribution estimates for six targeted species and established protocols and recommendations for future monitoring of woodland raptors in Connecticut.

The protocol used to survey these birds included six visits to each survey location within defined survey periods that ranged from March 1-July 30. Surveyors were asked to survey three to five survey points in forested habitat spaced by about one-half mile. The six woodland raptor species targeted in these surveys included three buteo species (broad-winged hawk, red-shouldered hawk, and red-tailed hawk) and three accipiter species (sharpshinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, and northern goshawk). Surveyors broadcasted a recording of a great horned owl for five minutes and then listened and looked for an additional five minutes for any of the



During the woodland raptor surveys, broad-winged hawks were estimated to occupy 37% of the survey sites, and were more rare than the other buteos and scattered throughout the state.

targeted species.

Surveys were conducted between 2005 and 2008. Surveyors covered 91 survey locations for a total of 510 survey points. The survey effort was statewide, but uneven, with more effort in the northern and western portions of the state. To account for the many sites that were not covered with the same amount of survey effort each year, as well as the skewing of the spatial distribution, statistical and GIS (geographical information system) techniques were used to estimate abundance and distribution for the targeted raptors.

Occupancy is the statistical index that was used to approximate abundance and it is the predicted percentage of sites throughout the state that are occupied by each of the targeted raptor species. Occupancy estimates are calculated with consideration for how likely it was for surveyors to detect the species during each survey. This estimate accounts for instances where sites were occupied, but the particular individual was not detected.

To determine relative distribution for each species, GIS was used to compare the spatial spread of the species observations to the spatial spread of the sampling

locations. This technique lessened the effect of any spatial bias created by unequal and unbalanced survey spacing.

Buteos

Red-tailed hawks were found to be the most abundant, with an estimated occupancy of 57% at survey sites and a statewide distribution. Red-shouldered hawks had an estimated occupancy of 44%, with a central, southern distribution. Broad-winged hawks were estimated to occupy 37% of the survey sites, and were more rare and scattered throughout the state.

This index of abundance and distribution of the buteo species was not surprising. Red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks are the most able to adapt to human disturbance, with many birds taking advantage of areas in close proximity to human disturbance and development. The broad-winged hawk, in contrast, was more rare. This bird uses similar habitat as the red-shouldered hawk, but may be avoiding the more developed areas that red-shouldered hawks use. The timing of the survey periods also may have contributed to fewer broad-winged hawk

©PAUL J. FUSCO
All Rights Reserved

Cooper's hawks were the most common accipiter found during the woodland raptor surveys, with an estimated occupancy of 18% and a distribution that was split between the western and eastern highlands.

detections. Future research and monitoring efforts on buteos in Connecticut should focus more on broad-winged hawk populations. Investigation into their competitive interaction with red-shouldered hawks and their ability to breed successfully near development should be conducted.

Accipiters

Accipiters were less common than buteos in general. Cooper's hawks were the most common accipiter, with an estimated occupancy of 18% and a distribution that was split between the western and eastern highlands. The state-endangered sharp-shinned hawk was estimated to occupy 15% of the survey sites and more observations were in the southern and western portions of the state. The northern goshawk had the lowest occupancy estimate of 5%, with observations concentrating toward the southwest.

The accipiter that had the highest index value was the Cooper's hawk. This species was formerly listed on Connecticut's Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species List. Count numbers for Cooper's hawks have been increasing at hawk watch stations throughout the region. The estimated 18% occupancy indicates that Cooper's hawk numbers have also increased locally from Breeding Bird Atlas efforts in the 1980s, where birds were present at only six percent of survey locations.

Sharp-shinned hawks were more elusive and very difficult to detect through-

out the surveys, which resulted in a great deal of uncertainty in the occupancy estimate. Sharp-shinned hawks are currently listed as a Connecticut endangered species. Regionally, populations of sharp-shinned hawks demonstrate cyclic behavior. Currently, northern hawk migration count stations are experiencing increasing counts, while southern stations have lower numbers of birds migrating through. The uncertain index value does not give a lot of insight into where Connecticut breeding populations fall in this regional cycle, and more specific effort needs to be focused on nesting success and how this species has responded to forest management in the state.

It was surprising that the northern goshawk had the lowest occupancy estimate for these surveys. Unlike the sharp-shinned hawk, which was difficult to find, the northern goshawk is very vocal and territorial, and was detected

Thank You to Woodland Raptor Surveyors!

The DEP Wildlife Division would like to thank the following staff and volunteers, many who are also Master Wildlife Conservationists, for assisting with the Woodland Raptor Survey: Kristen Allore, Michael Anderson, Dave Arnold, L. Averill, Nicole Azze, Rob Ballinger, Susan Barlow, Trevor Becker, Mike Bedson, David Bingham, Robin Blum, L. Boynton, Dan Britton, S. Brown, Gail Cameron, Andy Chase, Chris Clark, J. Cohen, Mike Cunha, Vincent D'Andrea, Patrick Deane, Tina and Michael Delaney, Janice & Melissa Demetriou, Buzz Devine, Ryan Dibala, Jenny Dickson, Jim Dina, Jim Doris, A. Dorval, Patricia Duffey, Elkins, Kate Elshans, Beth Fair, Larry Farina, Dawn Ferland, Jamie Fischer, Lisa Fizzino, Corrine Folsom, Laurie Fortin, Rebecca Foster, Dawn and Tony Froomjian, Tom Gauthier, Hank Golet, Kristen Gould, Mike Gregonis, Mike Grosso, Nicki Hall, Liz Hill, Ed Hinkel, Min Huang, Nora Jones, Frank Junga, Shannon Kearney, Diane Kearney, Jen Keiser, Kristine Kelly, Erin King, Christina Kocer, Geoff Krukar, Jolyn Landrie, Jeremy Leifert, Celia Lewis, Jen Lowry, Ben M., Judi Mandl, Amanda Manso, Olean Mattei, Orla Molloy, Don Montandon, Kate Moran, Patrick Mule, Gretchen Nareff, William Neff, D. O'Keefe, Henry & Carol Perrault, Steven Peterson, Marianne Piche, Peter Picone, Carrie Pomfrey, Kristen Ponak, Daria Protopopova, Sheri Reynolds, Sally Rieger, Jan Rink, Kara Rogers, Peter Rzasa, Wendy Sabol, K. Sacilotto, Robin Sampson, Jeff Sanderson, Zellene Sandler, Laura Saucier, Rebecca Schwartz, Lisa Selner, Jane Seymour, Kathy Slabinski, Tanner Steeves, JT Stokowski, Mark Szantyr, Stacy Tallberg, Jeff Tompkins, John Triana, L. Tuori, Sarah Van de Berg, Chris Vann, Erin Victory, Jean Waterhouse, Jen Weiffenbach, Scott Williams, Judy Wilson, Pete Wlochowski, Donna Wojdak, Roger Wolfe, C. Work, and Anthony Zemba.

reliably using these surveys. This bird is not well tracked through hawk watch count stations and the low estimate may be a warning that northern goshawk populations are declining in Connecticut. Future research and monitoring efforts on accipiters in the state should focus on obtaining a more accurate assessment of sharp-shinned and northern goshawk abundance and breeding success in relation to forest management practices.

This project was completed with funding from the State Wildlife Grant Program.

Woodland Raptor Survey Results

Target Species	% Survey Sites Occupied	Distribution
Red-tailed hawk	57%	Statewide
Red-shouldered hawk	44%	South-central
Broad-winged hawk	37%	Statewide
Cooper's hawk	18%	Eastern and western highlands
Sharp-shinned hawk	15%	Western, southern
Northern goshawk	5%	Southwestern

GIS Aids in Identifying Potential Spadefoot Toad Habitat

Written by Kate Moran, Wildlife Diversity Program

The eastern spadefoot toad is a small, smooth-skinned toad that strangely spends most of its life burrowed underground. This toad emerges only rarely on warm rainy nights to forage and breed. Prolific breeding events take place in temporary pools formed after heavy rains and, in a race to develop before the pool dries up, eggs hatch and metamorphose within two to three weeks. This nocturnal behavior, explosive breeding, and rapid larval development are adaptations that hearken to this toad's desert origins.

The eastern spadefoot toad is both unusual and uncommon in Connecticut – unusual because of its adaptations to arid environments and uncommon because this “gnome of the night” has made only a handful of appearances over the last century.

of his study, Klemens made some interesting observations about soils and elevation characteristics of the new site, suggesting that a specific soil type at low elevations was spatially indicative of spadefoot habitat.

Building on this idea, Wildlife Division technician Kate Moran implemented a GIS (geographic information systems) model that would identify potential spadefoot habitat in eastern Connecticut. GIS software was used to examine soil and elevation characteristics of 79 spadefoot sites in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Soil properties, including texture, drainage, and deposit type, were summarized by acreage within a 250 meter radius of each site, and a set of selection criteria was established. Elevation also was examined, revealing that most of the

sites were positioned in the lower 25% of the surrounding landscape's elevation profile. This 25% relative elevation threshold became the selection criterion for elevation. Having established selection criteria for soils and elevation, the next step was to apply them in eastern Connecticut, where soils that shared the same properties as the initial 79 sites were identified based on these selection criteria. Areas of low relative elevation were isolated with the aid of digital elevation models (DEMs) and some computer processing power. Just as pixels in a digital photograph represent color, the pixels in a DEM represent elevation in the landscape. When displayed on a computer screen, DEMs portray the elevation of an area in a gray-scale ranging from black (low elevation) to white (high elevation). Mountain tops, for example, would appear white, while valleys would be shades of gray, and the lowest areas would appear black. By identifying suitable soils and low-lying areas in eastern Connecticut and taking the geometric intersection of the two, suitable soils in low-lying areas (or potential spadefoot habitat) were located.

However, to be sure that the habitat model

was accurate, it needed to be tested.

As part of a two-year study, the Division has been monitoring movements of spadefoot toads and blue-spotted salamanders using radio telemetry. To test the habitat model, spadefoot observations made during 2008 were compared to the model's predicted habitat. In 26 of 27 observations, spadefoots were documented in the areas predicted by the habitat model. The 27th observation came within a few meters of the predicted habitat. Although the study was not designed to test the habitat model, initial comparisons support the predictive capability of the model. Additional fieldwork in summer 2009 will generate more data with which to evaluate the model. In the meantime, “hotspots” are being identified for additional reconnaissance. With the aid of this habitat model, it may be possible to discover new or forgotten populations of spadefoot toads – perhaps even remnants of the colonies Stanley Ball studied so long ago.

This project is funded by the State Wildlife Grants Program.



K. MORAN, WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM

The state-endangered spadefoot toad emerges only rarely on warm rainy nights to forage and breed. The Wildlife Division has been monitoring toads with the use of radio telemetry. Potential habitat is being identified with the help of GIS software.

Research conducted in the 1930s by Stanley Ball, former curator at the Yale Peabody Museum, laid the groundwork for spadefoot research in Connecticut. Ball studied several populations of breeding spadefoot toads in New Haven County that subsequently succumbed to habitat loss. To learn more about Ball's work, visit the Yale Peabody Museum website (www.peabody.yale.edu/explore/cc_spadefoot/spadefoot01.html).

More recently, herpetologist Michael Klemens documented the contemporary status of the eastern spadefoot in his 1993 book, *Amphibians and Reptiles of Connecticut and Adjacent Regions*. He confirmed only eight observations between 1970 and 1989, and believes the species has been extirpated from the central valley. Current wisdom limits their extent to eastern Connecticut. In spite of the few and infrequent observations of spadefoots over the years, research by Klemens in 2002 unearthed a previously unknown population in eastern Connecticut and inspired renewed interest in this cryptic amphibian. In the course

Exotic Animal Amnesty Day a Big Success

Written by Dwayne Gardner, DEP Communications

There were no lions, no tigers, and not even bears but there were plenty of alligators, snakes, and even a vegetarian piranha. Noah's Ark 2009? No, it was not Noah that brought these animals together but Connecticut's first ever Exotic Animal Amnesty Day held Saturday, July 25, at Beardsley's Zoo in Bridgeport. Hosted by the zoo and sponsored by the DEP, the event also had invaluable support from the Rainforest Reptile Shows, in Beverly, Massachusetts, and the Zoological Center at Lionshare Farms, in Greenwich.

Based upon calls prior to the event, DEP's Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police expected about 50 animals to be turned in. By the end of the day, 135 animals had been collected. People showed up with animals at 9:00 AM, a good hour before drop-off was scheduled to begin, and continued coming until the very last minute. Hot and tired volunteers "closed the gate" at 3:00 PM and then members of the media were given an opportunity to videotape the animals and speak with staff and volunteers. Once the media left, the task of assessing and categorizing all of the many animals began.

"Our Amnesty Day addressed several issues raised by the possession of exotic animals," said Susan Frechette, DEP Deputy Commissioner. "In a number of cases, people were not really able to care for these animals properly. In some instances, the animals were a potential risk to public safety. Taking these animals in also eliminated the possibility that owners would release them into our environment. This is a more humane alternative for animals raised in captivity, and one which prevents a released animal from posing a threat to our native species and vegetation."

The event was prompted by several recent events involving exotic animals discovered in the wild or in domestic situations where the animal could be a threat to humans or was in poor health. Over the past few months, DEP EnCon Police officers have taken a variety of exotic pets from homes throughout Connecticut. Examples include:

- On July 14, a 20-year-old, five-foot spectacled caiman was removed from a condominium complex in Naugatuck. The owner had this crocodile-type reptile since it was eight-days-old and kept it in an enclosure in his condominium. Although an occasional adult may be docile, more often than not, spectacled caimans are known for their aggressive nature as adults.
- On July 10, a 14-year-old, five-foot caiman was taken from a downtown Manchester resident's basement, where the reptile was born and raised his entire life.
- On April 7, three western diamondback rattlesnakes were removed from a home in Stratford. These rattlesnakes are among the world's largest and most dangerous snakes. They account for more serious and fatal snake bites than any other North American reptile.
- Non-native pets, including alligators, have been discovered in waterways where they do not belong and where they can have an adverse impact on Connecticut's native plants and animals.
- EnCon Police officers have responded to requests to remove unwanted or dangerous exotic pets from people's homes.

Frechette said, "Our Amnesty Day certainly highlighted the numbers and variety of exotic animals that people have in their possession. We were pleased to provide this public service and make certain these animals were safely placed at appropriately licensed zoos, and wildlife and nature center facilities. Our message to the public, however, remains – exotic animals do not make good pets."



Moving a caiman to another crate.



An 11-foot albino Burmese python was one of 15 pythons turned in.



One of eight alligators turned in during Amnesty Day.

Animals Taken in at Exotic Animal Amnesty Day

Pythons 15	Alligators 8	Parrots 8
Boas 15	Caiman 1	Sugar Gliders 3
Anaconda 1	Monitor Lizard 2	Capuchin Monkey 1
Rattlesnake 1	Iguanas 16	Skink 1
Other snakes 5	Chameleon 2	Fish 3
Several species of Turtles/Tortoises 31		
Several miscellaneous birds, lizards, and frogs		

D. GARDNER, DEP COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE (3)



This wild turkey flew into a window and found itself trapped in a bedroom. EnCon Police Officer Bill Myers responded to the homeowner's call for assistance.



When Officer Myers entered the bedroom, the turkey took refuge in the bathroom where a struggle ensued. A trail of feathers was left behind.



Officer Myers eventually caught the turkey and released it out the front door, unharmed, but minus a few feathers.

Turkey Day??

During his more than 26 years as a DEP Environmental Conservation Police Officer, Bill Myers has plenty of stories to tell, but his recent "turkey through a window" experience is one that will definitely go down in memory:

"On Monday morning, May 25, 2009, DEP dispatch received a call from a family in Middletown about a wild turkey in their house, and I was dispatched to respond. I arrived at the house to find a big, healthy, 20-pound adult tom turkey in the bedroom. He had flown into the second story bedroom window, totally smashing it in shreds all over the carpeting. Fortunately, no one was in the room at the time. The family had peeked into the room a few times, but had kept the door shut until I got there.

As I went into the room, the turkey took refuge in the bathroom. I followed him into the bathroom to try to catch him; however, he was not a willing participant to be tackled and put under my arm. After several tries, I succeeded in getting him under my right arm and proceeded into the living room and then out the front door where I let him go. Amazingly, the turkey did not appear to have any injuries from the crash through the window. After I let the turkey go, he flew and then ran across the street, disappearing into the brush. All that was left behind was broken glass in the bedroom and feathers all over the bathroom floor, a result of our battle when I tried to pick him up. The bathroom was a huge mess! At least the homeowner had photos to show the insurance company."

EnCon Police Officer Bill Myers retired in early July after almost 30 years of state service. He started out as a seasonal employee at the Kensington Fish Hatchery and then Cockaponset State Forest. In 1983, he was hired as a Conservation Officer and was assigned to lower Fairfield County. In 1986, he transferred to Middlesex County and was stationed there until his retirement.

The tenth annual BioBlitz was held at Hartford's Keney Park and Goodwin College on June 12-13, 2009. This competition to count as many plant and animal species as possible in a 24-hour period has been held at various locations around Connecticut, and was first held at Keney Park in 1999. In previous years, 170 scientists found over 2,000 species. The last time Keney Park was catalogued, 1,369 species were observed by 74 scientists. To commemorate the 10-year anniversary and to break the 1999 records at Keney Park, the festival returned to its original location.

The collaborative effort put forth by a diverse group of organizers was quite impressive. Scientists from various academic institutions, non-profit groups, and state agencies joined with community organizations to catalog as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. Among the presenters, organizers, and scientists were individuals from the University of Connecticut, Goodwin College, University of New Hampshire, Center for Conservation and Biodiversity, Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, and Department of Environmental Protection. They searched for plants and animals along the Connecticut River to Wethersfield Cove and in Keney Park, a 693-acre urban park. The area was vibrant as investigators counted various species, including insects, bats, and birds. It was refreshing to see local middle school and high school students included in the effort as young scientists.

As an intern with the DEP Wildlife Division, I assisted Laura Saucier, a Wildlife Division technician, as she searched for freshwater mussels behind Goodwin College on the shores of the Connecticut River. Although no mussels were found, we came upon a snapping turtle and a spider, the latter of which was collected for identification. This information was shared with the other scientists who had been searching for these organisms. It was truly a collaborative survey.

As I explored the event, I observed BioBlitz to be an essential program to revitalize a vast city park, to celebrate and strengthen the communities of residents and scientists, and to inspire the students with a passion for our environment.

Andraya Ehrlich, an intern for the DEP Wildlife Division and a student from the University of New Hampshire

Several Bureau of Natural Resources staff members from the Wildlife Division, Fisheries Division, and Natural History Survey helped collect data and share the fascinating species found all around us with students, fellow scientists, and the public at BioBlitz.

Online Licensing for Sportsmen Available on the DEP Website

Go to www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing to purchase Connecticut hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses, as well as all required deer, turkey, and migratory bird permits and stamps. The system accepts payment by VISA or MasterCard.



Wildlife Division Seasonal Resource Assistant Orla Molloy erects protective string fencing around a piping plover nest on a beach in Milford. The homeowner granted permission for the fencing to help protect the nesting birds.

Weather and Predators Taking their Toll on Nesting Shorebirds

The 2009 piping plover and least tern season is shaping up to being a difficult one for many reasons. Although the endless rain in late spring and early summer deterred many people from visiting the birds' beach nesting habitat, high tides during the stormy weather washed out the nests of certain tern colonies. The state's largest historical tern colony at Sandy Point has been more like a ghost town than a vibrant and flourishing colony. This is also due in part to the consistent years of poor production. Regrettably, we are not seeing the population numbers in the state as was seen in past years.

Although there have been a good number of piping plover nests throughout the state, predation has been a significant problem so far this year. For the first time in several years, a predator, most likely a skunk, tunneled its way underneath the protective enclosure erected by the Wildlife Division and ate the plover eggs. On another beach, tracks leading into the enclosure were found, but the eggs were still intact. However, the adult plover never went back to incubate the eggs.

The Wildlife Division strives to increase the populations of these state threatened species by using protective measures. Unfortunately, Mother Nature is taking its toll on this year's breeding success.

Stay tuned to upcoming issues of *Connecticut Wildlife* to learn the final results of the 2009 nesting season.

Orla Molloy, Seasonal Resource Assistant

The 2009 Connecticut Envirothon Held at Sessions Woods

The 18th annual Connecticut Envirothon competition was held at the DEP Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington this past May. Forty high school teams registered for the event. The teams spent the school year preparing for the Envirothon where they competed in five natural science subject areas, including forestry, wildlife, aquatics, soils, and biodiversity.

The team from Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village took the top spot this year. Housatonic's five student team won the competition by earning the best cumulative scores of the five tests they took as a team. Wamogo Regional High School in Litchfield finished second and Litchfield High School took third place. The Housatonic Valley Regional High School team will compete in the National Canon Envirothon at the University of North Carolina in Asheville in August.

Peter Picone, Habitat Management Program

Observations of Northern Bobwhite Wanted

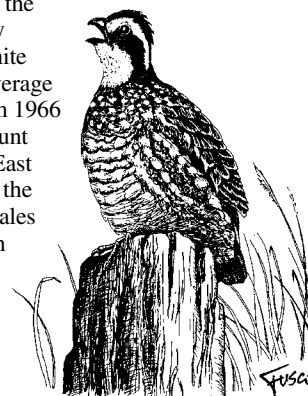
The DEP Wildlife Division is asking for help in gathering information about the current distribution of Northern bobwhite in Connecticut. The historical range of the Northern bobwhite extended into New England as far north as southern Maine. The population was considered to be abundant in the early 1800s but was limited by occasional and widespread die-offs during excessively long or unusually cold winters. Numerous sustained restocking efforts throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s replenished the population, at which point it was suggested that it would be nearly impossible to tell the origin of much of the bobwhite population in the state.

Recent data from the Breeding Bird Survey suggested that bobwhite counts declined an average of 8.6% per year from 1966 to 1989. Roadside count routes in Salem and East Haddam showed that the average number of males heard calling between 1980 and 1985 was similar to data from the same routes from 1946 to 1951. The most recent breeding bird

survey was conducted in Connecticut between 1982 and 1986 and showed that confirmed breeding was present in 24 different survey blocks (14.5% of the state). These data, while now more than 20 years old, suggest the possibility of a small, yet sustained breeding population of bobwhite in Connecticut, warranting further investigation.

The Division is specifically looking for the following information from any and all bobwhite sightings: observer name, contact details (phone or email address), date and time of day of observation, type of observation (visual or heard calling), number of individuals (adults and chicks), gender (adults), location (specific wildlife management area or nearest intersecting roads), and habitat (field, shrubs, forest). The Division is particularly interested in any observations of breeding bobwhite. Anyone who observes bobwhite in Connecticut should send an email to Wildlife Division biologist Mike Gregonis at michael.gregonis@ct.gov.

Brian Hiller, Seasonal Resource Assistant



Report any sightings of black bears and moose on the DEP website at www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife.



Do you have an interesting wildlife observation to report to the Wildlife Division?

Please send it (and any photos) to:
Wildlife Observations, DEP - Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013, or email: katherine.herz@ct.gov



Green Heron Nesting in Thomaston Backyard

Connecticut Wildlife reader Ralph Lowery of Thomaston sent in this photograph a green heron that was nesting in his backyard this summer. Green herons are found throughout Connecticut. They breed in swampy thickets and feed along creeks and streams and in marshes, ponds, and lake edges. Green herons eat fish, invertebrates, frogs, and other small animals. The nest is made of sticks and placed in a small tree or shrub, usually over water. Green herons tend to nest in small colonies.



Smart or Confused Geese?

Greg Decker, Biologist for the Millstone Environmental Lab, sent in this photograph (left) of a Canada goose nesting in an osprey platform in Smith Cove, in Niantic. According to the landowner, this goose had been on the nest for several weeks this past April. When Greg visited the nest, the goose left to be with the male. The male, however, did not act aggressive when Greg approached the platform.

Hank Golet relayed his own observations of a goose nesting on an osprey platform in Old Lyme (right) in 2008. According to Hank, he found out through research that geese have been known to use great blue heron nests as well, which can be quite high up in trees.



Close Encounter

Connecticut Wildlife reader Tim Burns of Clinton caught this photograph of a red-bellied woodpecker (on the feeder to the far right) trying to elude a sharp-shinned hawk that had landed nearby. According to Tim, the woodpecker was on the suet feeder first when the hawk set down on the other side of the feeding station. The woodpecker froze on the suet feeder for about five minutes until the hawk flew away.

Sharp-shinned hawks are commonly seen hunting for prey at backyard bird feeding stations.

Saltwater Fishing License Now Required in CT

Anglers 16 years of age and older wishing to fish in Long Island Sound are now required by state law to purchase a saltwater fishing license. The license – \$10 for residents and \$15 for non residents – is available through the DEP's Sportsmen's Licensing System (www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing) or it can be purchased at most town clerk offices and many retail outlets and bait and tackle shops. The license is free for residents 65 and older, but it must be renewed annually. Funds generated by the new license will be used for conservation and preservation programs in the state. The saltwater fishing license will provide the DEP with information needed to better manage our fisheries and coastal resources. The Connecticut program also will exempt residents from a federal program that would have required anglers to register with and pay a fee to the federal government.

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- July-August..... Respect fenced and posted shorebird nesting areas when visiting Connecticut beaches. Also, keep dogs and cats off of shoreline beaches to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Herons and egrets are nesting on offshore islands in Long Island Sound. Refrain from visiting these areas to avoid disturbing the birds.
- Dispose of fishing line in covered trash containers or specifically marked recycling receptacles. Improperly discarded fishing line is a hazard for wildlife.
- Sept. 15 Report use of bluebird nest boxes by sending in a Bluebird Nest Box Survey card to the Wildlife Division. Cards are available by calling 860-675-8130.
- Sept. 26 National Hunting and Fishing Day

Programs at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center

Programs are a cooperative venture between the Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register by calling 860-675-8130 (Mon.-Fri., 8:30 AM-4:30 PM). Programs are free unless noted. An adult must accompany children under 12 years old. No pets allowed! Sessions Woods is located at 341 Milford St. (Route 69) in Burlington.

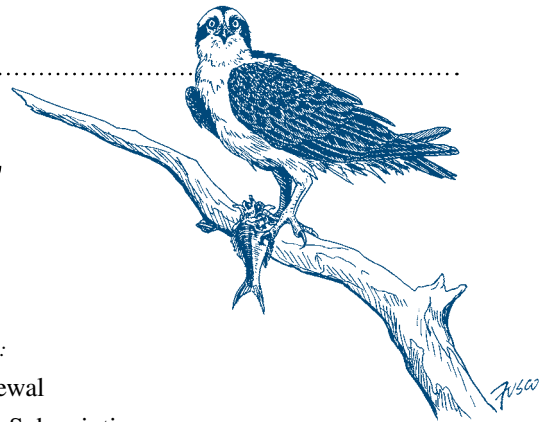
- August 15 **Butterfly Walk at Sessions Woods**, starting at 10:30 AM. Interested in learning about butterflies and invertebrate conservation? Join Wildlife Division Educator Laura Rogers-Castro for an introductory walk focusing on butterfly identification. Participants also will learn about using native plants to create butterfly habitat.

Hunting Season Dates

- September..... 2009 pheasant tags (\$14 for 10 tags) available from town clerk offices and online at www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing.
- Sept. 1-30 Early squirrel season
- Sept. 15-Nov. 17 First portion of the deer and turkey bowhunting season (private land bowhunters in deer management zones 11-12 may hunt deer until January 31, 2010).
- Oct. 3 Opening day for fall firearms turkey hunting season.
- Oct. 10 Junior Pheasant Hunter Training Day (Licensed junior hunters may hunt when accompanied by a licensed adult hunter 18 years of age or older. The adult mentor may not carry a firearm. Junior hunters must have valid pheasant harvest tags. Consult the 2009 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide for more information.)
- Oct. 17 Opening day for small game hunting season.
- Waterfowl season dates had not been finalized by the time this issue went to press. The 2009-2010 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide should be available at DEP and town clerk offices by mid- to late August. Also, check the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep/hunting) to view the guide.
- Consult the 2009 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide for specific season dates and details. The guide is available at Wildlife Division offices, town clerk offices, and on the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep/hunting).

Don't wait until the last minute! Sign up for a Conservation Education/Firearms Safety course today. Check the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep) for class times and locations or call the Franklin Wildlife (860-642-7239) or Sessions Woods (860-675-8130) offices during business hours.

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)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Tel.: _____

Check one:

- Renewal
 New Subscription
 Gift Subscription

Gift card to read: _____

Bureau of Natural Resources / Wildlife Division
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

STANDARD
PRESORT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BRISTOL, CT
PERMIT NO. 6



©PAUL J. FUSCO
All Rights Reserved

P. J. FUSCO

Late in the summer, common terns will gather, sometimes in large flocks, as they stage at favored locations before continuing on their southbound migration. Staging sites are critical habitats for migratory species such as terns.