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Connecticut Wildlife

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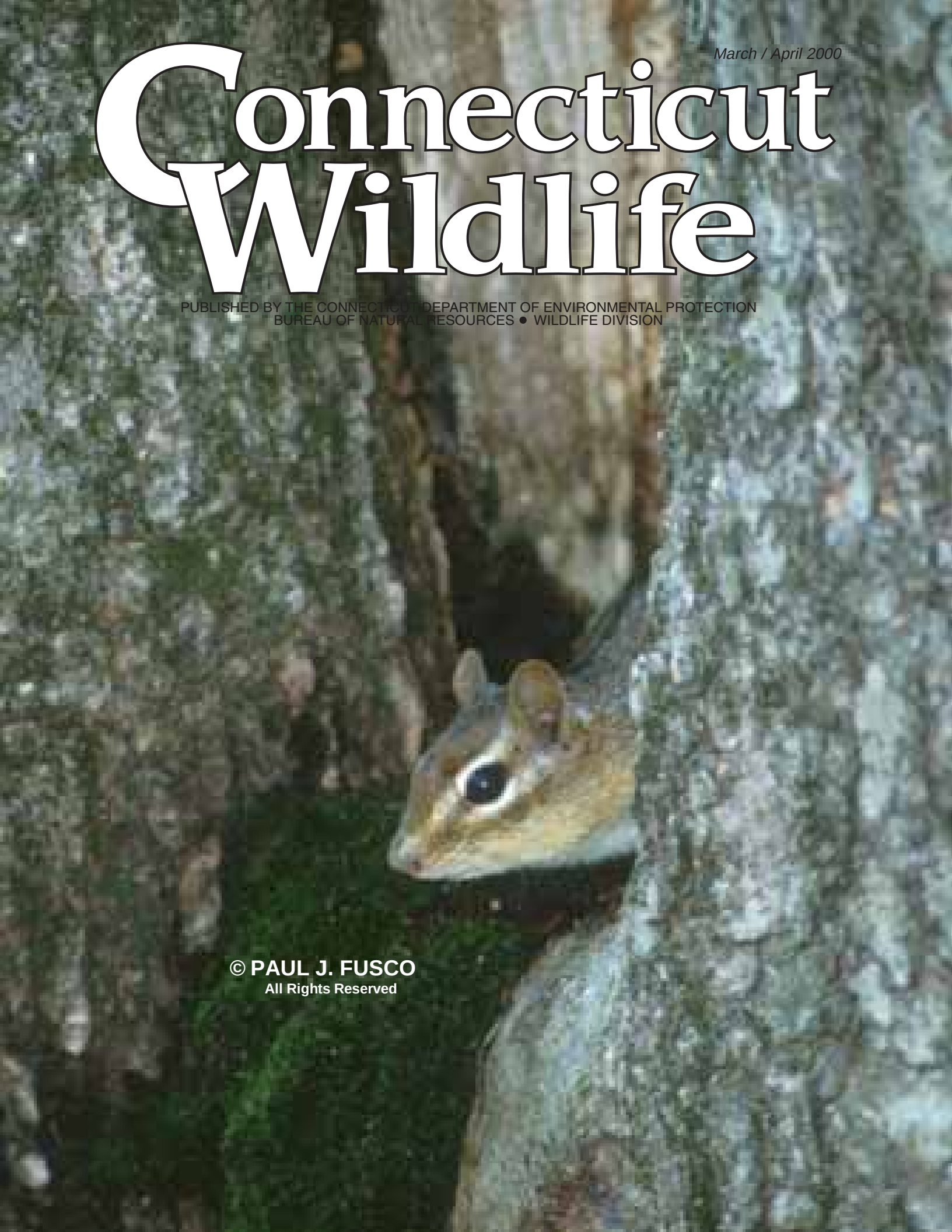

From the Director

"A March morning is only as drab as he who walks in it without a glance skyward, ear cocked for geese," wrote Aldo Leopold in his Sand County Almanac. *Indeed, to many of us who love the outdoors, memories of the calls of Canada geese from high above proclaimed the fall and spring seasons. Growing up in the rolling farmland of Woodstock, I recall the local excitement caused by the fleeting appearance of these majestic migrants. During those days, the geese were little more than V-shaped specks in the sky; they seldom landed anywhere nearby. We were just a mass of land they had to fly over to get where they were going, and along the way they inspired us through their distant honking as the epitome of wildness.*

In a relatively short period of time, the status of Canada geese has changed significantly. We are still graced by the appearance of the migrants and, in fact, some of these long-distance travelers now overwinter in our state. They are no longer specks in the sky, but are living among us. At the same time, however, another subspecies of Canada goose is undergoing a population explosion with negative consequences. These so-called "resident" geese breed and live year-round in Connecticut and have adapted to urban/suburban environments. Their high tolerance of humans has allowed them to thrive in park-like settings with virtually unlimited food supplies, low predator densities and, in many cases, no hunting.

With high rates of production and survival, the resident Canada goose population is growing exponentially; at an annual rate of 14 percent over the past decade in the Atlantic Flyway. This is a classic example of an adaptable species taking full advantage of a man-altered environment. The growing population is causing increasing conflicts at airports, public parks, beaches and swimming areas, athletic fields, golf courses, cropland, water treatment areas, and private properties. Without new initiatives, this situation will undoubtedly worsen. In recognition of this, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is holding scoping meetings throughout the country to encourage public participation in a process that will initiate an Environmental Impact Statement for resident Canada goose management under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

On February 10th, Connecticut hosted one of the nine scoping meetings that have been scheduled nationwide. The Danbury meeting was well attended and featured a wide diversity of public opinion. There was general agreement that problems posed by resident Canada geese are substantial and have the potential to worsen if the current growth rate continues. Solutions for these problems will not come easy, but come they must. Otherwise, the call of the goose will lose its allure.

Dale W. May

Cover:

Each year, free-roaming domestic cats kill millions of birds and small mammals, like the Eastern chipmunk. Read the article on page 16 to see how cat owners can help out.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Connecticut Wildlife

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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. It places an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. Articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies are depicted with the logo of the Wildlife Restoration Program.

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Bluff Point Deer Management Survives Legal Challenge

Written by Greg Chasko, Assistant Director

P.J.FUSCO

Recent publicity has focused on legal action taken by an animal rights group against the Department of Environmental Protection regarding the definition of "fawn" deer and the taking of deer at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in Groton. In January 2000, a request for a temporary injunction was filed in the Hartford Superior Court by the Animal Rights Front (ARF), a New Haven based group, to stop the Department from reducing the deer herd at Bluff Point. ARF claimed that the Department had violated Section 26-86f of the Connecticut General statutes because "fawn" deer were harvested during a controlled hunt conducted in 1996 at Bluff Point. This statute prohibits the hunting of "fawn" deer. The ARF contended that further deer herd reductions should not be allowed because fawns would be taken in violation of Section 26-86f.

Since 1963, when the fawn deer statute was passed, the Department has always interpreted the statute to prohibit the taking of "spotted" fawns. Deer are born with spots, then lose them at three or four months of age when they shed their reddish brown summer coat and replace it with a grayish brown winter coat. Therefore, during fall hunting seasons, "fawn" deer have a coat similar to that of yearling and adult deer. The issue in question is whether the term "fawn," as used in the statute, means all deer less than one year of age or only those deer with spots.

For wildlife management purposes, deer harvested in fall and winter are categorized by age class as adults (over 2 years old), yearlings (between 1 and 2 years old) and young-of-the-year or fawns (deer born the previous spring, less than 1 year old). Wildlife biologists use the terms young-of-the-year and fawn interchangeably. In a Department report on the 1996 Bluff Point controlled hunt, the term "fawn" was used in its biological sense, referring to deer born the previous spring. When ARF noticed this, they filed suit contending that under CGS 26-86f, the taking of "fawn" deer was prohibited.

From a law enforcement and practical perspective, it is extremely difficult to distinguish a fawn in its winter coat (without spots) from yearling deer during fall and winter hunting seasons. For at least the past 30 years, the Department's Law Enforcement Division has always interpreted CGS 26-86f to prohibit the killing of **spotted** fawns and enforced the law accordingly. Further evidence of the Department's position that the term "fawn" means a deer with spots can be found in the 1975 Connecticut Deer Season Field Guide. In 1975, when firearms hunting for deer was first allowed, the Guide specifically stated that "No spotted fawn deer may be taken."

Finally, it should be recognized that there is no biological reason to prohibit the taking of young-of-the-year deer. In fact, prohibiting the taking of such deer would result in dramatic population growth with negative impacts to other species of wildlife and increased human-deer conflicts.

In January 2000, after hearing two days of testimony from ARF and the Department regarding this issue, Hartford Superior Court Judge Marshall K. Berger denied ARF's request for a temporary injunction to prohibit the taking of deer at Bluff Point. In his ruling, Judge Berger stated that the Department's definition of a "fawn" was rational, sensible and enforceable. The Department then proceeded with a successful deer herd reduction effort. However, in deference to the court and in recognition that the definition of the term "fawn" was yet to be determined by the court, the Department developed guidelines to minimize the chance of taking deer less than a year old. For example, when deer were in a group, the largest deer would be removed, or if a deer had antlers, it would be taken. Other guidelines included observation of deer behavior and the length of the snout. Even with these and other guidelines, it proved to be a difficult task for trained biologists to selectively remove older deer. The herd reduction effort at Bluff Point was prolonged because many opportunities to take deer had to be passed up because biologists were unsure of the deer's age. Of the 74 deer taken, it turned out that two deer were less than one year old.

Following Judge Berger's denial of the injunction, the Attorney General's Office, on behalf of the Department, requested his permission to file a motion for a summary judgment. The ARF subsequently agreed to have the issue resolved by summary judgment based on facts stipulated to by both parties instead of by trial. Oral arguments were presented to Judge Berger on February 15, 2000. A ruling is expected within 120 days.

DEP Successfully Implements Bluff Point Deer Management Program

Written by Dale May, Director

In January 2000, the Department of Environmental Protection conducted deer herd reduction activities at the Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in a continuing effort to balance the deer population with the environment. The Wildlife Division has determined that the carrying capacity of the Reserve (the number of deer that can exist without damage to the habitat) is approximately 25 deer and has set that level as the Reserve's deer population goal. Based on aerial surveys conducted in January 1999 and spotlight surveys in November 1999, the Wildlife Division concluded that approximately 103 deer, more than four times the carrying capacity, were residing on Bluff Point. The deer reduction plan for January 2000 called for the removal of 78 deer to achieve the population goal of 25.

On January 12th, Department-assigned wildlife biologists began the deer removal in accordance with agency regulations. Due to the pending fawn deer litigation, biologists were instructed to follow guidelines to reduce the likelihood that young deer would be taken. These restrictions, which were helpful but not foolproof, decreased the efficiency of the shooters and certainly prolonged deer management activities because the biologists were required to identify, with relative certainty, the age class of every deer before shooting.

After nine days of effort, a total of 74 deer (23 males, 51 females) were removed. A preliminary analysis of the deer examined at the check station indicated that the physical condition of the deer is improving. For example, average body weights of deer on Bluff Point have increased by 42 percent since deer management was implemented in 1996. The results of other physical parameters, such as fat deposits, reproductive condition, and age structure will appear in a future *Connecticut Wildlife* article.

For many years, the unmanaged deer population caused severe overbrowsing of the vegetation at Bluff Point. At the time deer management efforts were initiated in 1996, the deer population was estimated at 284, more than 10 times the carrying capacity. Prior to 1996, winter starvation was an annual occurrence on the Reserve. The removal of 233 deer in 1996 through a controlled hunt, followed by Department-conducted removals of 35 deer in 1997 and 74 in 2000, have lowered the herd to a level that will allow ecological recovery. The continuation of deer population monitoring and management, coupled with the development and implementation of a vegetation recovery plan, will allow the Department to sustain and enhance biodiversity on this unique coastal peninsula.

Venison from Bluff Point Donated to Food Charities

All deer taken during the January 2000 management program at Bluff Point were examined in detail at a biological check station. Following the physical assessments, the deer were prepared and processed for distribution to charitable food organizations by volunteer sportsmen. The "Hunters for the Hungry," in cooperation with the Groton Sportsmen Club, processed 3,293 pounds of venison which were distributed to 19 food charities throughout Connecticut. Figuring an average of four ounces per meal, the work of the volunteer sportsmen resulted in approximately 13,172 meals of venison for needy citizens.

Trouble in Our Waters?

When a plant can invade an area, clog a waterway and prevent the growth of native vegetation, scientists become concerned. Such a plant, commonly known as European water chestnut, was recently discovered in a cove on the Connecticut River. This plant is termed an "invasive alien," meaning it is of foreign origin and has an aggressive growth habit. Scientists are worried because its dense growth can actually "choke" a pond or lake, eliminating native aquatic plants and creating a recreational hazard.

Water chestnut, or *Trapa natans*, is an aquatic plant with large, floating leaves and feathery, submersed leaves. It is not the same water chestnut commonly used in Chinese cuisine but does have an edible, nutlike fruit that is hard and four-spined. The seeds can actually remain viable in the sediment of a waterbody for up to 12 years.

Water chestnut is native to Europe, Asia and Africa and was introduced to North America in the 1870s. In addition to Connecticut, water chestnut is found in Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. How the plant disperses is questionable but one theory is that migratory waterfowl have carried the spiny-seeds on their feathers. Certainly, some dispersal has occurred by the seeds floating downstream.

Because water chestnut is non-native, there are no known natural controls for the plant here in the United States. Habitat managers in other states have attempted to control the spread of water chestnut by applying herbicides to an infested waterway or by pulling the plants with mechanical harvesters. Water chestnut can be hand-pulled in areas where there are smaller populations of the plant. Infested waters usually must be treated for five to 12 years to eliminate the plant.

DEP staff will be keeping a close watch in an attempt to spot any signs of additional water chestnut infestations. The DEP has also published a fact sheet about water chestnut that will help people identify the plant. To request a fact sheet or report a sighting of water chestnut, contact the Office of Long Island Sound Programs, at (860) 424-3034.

A Garden for the Birds

Written by Laura Rogers-Castro, Public Awareness Program

Why not try growing birdseed in your garden this year? Birdseed? Sure! When the flowering season has come and gone, it's nice to still see some activity in the garden. By planting birdseed plants, birds will visit your garden to forage during those cold winter months and obtain vital energy to keep their bodies working and warm.

What types of plants make good birdseed sources? In addition to the obvious sunflowers, cosmos, cleome, forget-me-not, cornflower, poppy, marigold and zinnia are all pretty flower plants that produce copious seeds for the birds. *Amaranthus* sp., buckwheat and millet are also good seed sources. Native plant selections include *Coreopsis* sp. (tickseed), columbine, aster and goldenrod. Black-eyed Susans and purple coneflower, native to the Midwest, also make good choices. If you plan to include thistle in your garden, choose only field or pasture thistle because the others have a tendency to become invasive.

There are several types of birds that may be attracted to your garden. Of course, goldfinches will be lured to the thistle plants. Other birds that could visit include dark-eyed juncos, cardinals, tufted titmice, thrashers and chickadees. Sparrows, such as white-throated, field, song and tree, will eat the seeds that drop to the ground. Your garden will be especially attractive to birds if there is cover, such as pine or cedar trees, and water nearby.

P.J.FUSCO

In fall and winter, many birds, like the American goldfinch, rely on plant seeds as a main source of food.

Early spring is a great time to plan your garden. Annuals can be purchased as seed and native perennials can be bought at local nurseries. (Be sure any native plant purchased is nursery-propagated and not collected from the wild.) For additional information on plantings for wildlife, contact the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office at 860-675-8130.

Attention Bowhunters -- 2002 Requirements

Beginning January 1, 2002, anyone wishing to purchase a small game/deer hunting archery permit must show proof of completion of Connecticut's Conservation Education Bowhunting Program or an equivalent course from any state, province or country. This requirement resulted from the passing of Public Act 97-250, "An act concerning wildlife management," that became effective on October 1, 1997.

Currently, 43 states and six Canadian provinces have mandates requiring hunters to take a bowhunting education course prior to purchasing a bowhunting license. The remainder of the states and provinces offer bowhunting courses; however, participation is voluntary. Bowhunting education certificates issued by any state or province are acceptable documents for purchasing a Connecticut bowhunting permit when the new requirement takes effect in 2002.

Because of trends established by the hunting community and their approval of mandatory hunter education, sometime in the future, ***all*** states and provinces may require persons to graduate from a bowhunting program before a license is issued.

The Wildlife Division's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS) Program offers Connecticut's bowhunting course. Courses are offered throughout the year at various locations throughout the state by certified volunteer instructors. The course, which consists of eight hours of training, is based on recommendations from the International Bowhunting Education Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association. The State of Connecticut Bow Certificate received upon graduation from the course is accepted in any state or province where proof of completion is required prior to obtaining a license. Course listings can be obtained from town clerks' offices, the DEP website at http://dep.state.ct.us (look under education) or by calling the Wildlife Division at 860-675-8130 (western CT) or 860-642-7239 (eastern CT).

The number of courses may be limited so it is recommended that you sign up early in order to obtain the class of your choice. There is no fee for the course or for materials. CE/FS courses are made possible due to the dedicated time of volunteer instructors and financial support from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program.

Bowhunters who have taken the CE/FS bowhunting course since 1982 **do not** have to retake the course. Anyone who has lost their certificate or who needs a replacement certificate can contact the CE/FS Program at the phone numbers listed above.

Since 1982, over 23,000 persons have graduated from Connecticut's bowhunting education program. Approximately 14,000 bowhunting permits are issued annually by the DEP.

Wildlife Habitat Profile: Vernal Pool

Written by Doug Hoskins, DEP Inland Water Resources Division

There is an important wildlife habitat found throughout Connecticut that, until recently, few people paid attention to or ever even knew existed. Fortunately, for vernal pools and the animals that are dependent on them, a steady momentum has been taking place toward learning more about their ecology and protection.

P. J. FUSCO

Wood frogs may travel more than a half mile from their upland habitat to breed and lay their eggs in a vernal pool.

Typically, vernal pools are small, shallow, circular depressions in the landscape that fill with water during times of high rainfall and snowmelt or high groundwater. They can become completely empty of water during warmer, drier periods. These habitats are called "vernal" pools because they are typically filled with water during spring (vernal meaning "of, relating to or happening in the spring"). However, vernal pools can also fill with water during fall and winter. The key is that these pools are not permanently filled with water, and they tend to dry up regularly. Because the term "vernal" is not entirely accurate, many have proposed the use of "intermittent waterbody," "ephemeral pool" or "temporary pool" to describe this landscape feature. However, it is probably best to keep the term "vernal pool" because it is in the spring that most of the ecologically significant activities take place in the pool.

Many vernal pools support unusually diverse and dynamic assemblages of wildlife. There are a number of animals that are dependent on vernal pools for one or more phases of their life cycle. Because of the absence of permanent water, fish do not live in vernal pools, making these areas very hospitable to certain animals that would normally fall prey to carnivorous fish. Various amphibian species are most commonly associated with vernal pools, particularly rare and endangered amphibians. Frogs and salamanders live in the surrounding uplands during their adult phase, and migrate to vernal pools only to breed. Migration distances vary significantly between species. For example, the wood frog has a significantly large dispersal range. A vernal pool may be more than a half mile from the upland the wood frogs live in as adults.

Scientists have been documenting a general downward trend in amphibian populations with one of the probable causes being upland habitat fragmentation. The wood frog is particularly susceptible to this fragmentation phenomenon. It has been shown in a Rhode Island study that wood frogs require a relatively unbroken territory of at least 100 acres and preferably over 1,000 acres in order to proliferate.

Vernal pools are not the only type of wetlands which support diverse, unique or endangered wildlife species that require upland areas to complete their life cycle. While certain salamanders may prefer a vernal pool habitat to breed in, prolific salamander breeding areas have been observed on the margins of extensive marshes fed by a perennial watercourse, far from the typical vernal pool habitat.

There is also more to vernal pools than amphibians. Due to their fairly recent coverage in biodiversity headlines, amphibians have become the stars of the vernal pool parade. While they are relatively big, colorful and, in some cases, hypnotically vocal, amphibians are only part of the "web of life" in a vernal pool. Dr. Eileen Jokinen, of the University of Connecticut, is discovering at several vernal pool locations the often hidden world of invertebrates, such as fairy shrimp, seed shrimp, water fleas, predacious diving beetles, dragonfly larvae, aquatic moths, springtails, midges, mosquito larvae, fingernail clams, snails and segmented worms.

During her studies, Dr. Jokinen found a "physiad" snail (*Aplexa elongata*) that, while common in the Midwestern United States, has not been recorded in southern New England for over a century. These invertebrate species make up a very lively, intense, short-lived ecosystem with fascinating predation and survival techniques that can dramatically shift in species composition from one pool to an adjacent one. Perhaps a closer look at the invertebrate populations of these pools would turn up several other stories of lost biodiversity and threats to one or more strands of the web of life.

Another phenomenon peculiar to vernal pools is that they often exist in groups, which have been shown to cooperate as a functional whole. Some pools in the group serve as a genetic "source," producing amphibian stock, and others as a genetic "sink," receiving this genetic stock. While research on this phenomenon is ongoing, it is suspected that the interplay between each pool in the group is crucial to their long-term survival.

So, how are vernal pools currently protected under Connecticut law? The most applicable state law today is Connecticut's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. It should be emphasized that the Act has always been able to include a vernal pool under its jurisdiction. Jurisdiction can be claimed using three approaches. The first approach is based on soil classifica-

tion via the statutory definition of "wetlands" (poorly drained, very poorly drained and alluvial/floodplain soils). The second approach is hydrological as provided for by the Act's definition of "watercourse," which includes "…all other bodies of water, natural or artificial, vernal or intermittent…" Particular note should be made that the term "vernal pool" is not used in the Act. Only the word "vernal" is used, which in its strictest sense should be defined as it is in most dictionaries "of, relating to or happening in the spring," not the multi-parameter description of vernal pool used in the beginning of this article. Thirdly, the presence of any wetland vegetation could also be used to classify the vernal pool as a statutory watercourse.

Given the current limitations of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act, as well as the integration that vernal pools have with their surrounding upland areas, adequate protection of vernal pool habitat, in many cases, may only be possible as a result of broad land-use planning efforts. This could involve a more cooperative effort between public and private parties as opposed to a purely regulatory one, and would focus on comprehensively identifying and prioritizing the most valuable vernal pools within an area in order to commit limited resources to fully protect them.

The blue-spotted salamander, a threatened species in Connecticut, breeds and lays its eggs in vernal pools.

DEP Fisheries Division Manager Jim Moulton Remembered

On December 22, 1999, Jim Moulton, manager of the DEP's Inland Fisheries Division passed away after a brief illness. Jim began his career with the State Fish and Game Commission in 1970 (the Commission became part of the DEP in 1971). Many of Jim's accomplishments during his time with the DEP had a significant impact on the fisheries resources of the state. Under his leadership, fisheries for pike and walleye were developed where none existed before and management plans for trout and bass, which will guide the Fisheries Division over the next 10 years, were also developed. Jim was an advocate from the beginning for the establishment of Trout Management Areas and he was dedicated to the effort to expand and improve state fish hatcheries, particularly the Quinnebaug Valley Hatchery, in Plainfield. Jim was actively involved in the creation of the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE) Program and continued to stay involved with the program throughout the years. Under the CARE Program, volunteers provide students with an understanding of fisheries resources, conservation, safety, aquatic ecology and angling though personal attention and hands-on experiences.

When Jim began his career with the DEP, Connecticut had little to offer freshwater anglers. Today, articles about fishing in Connecticut appear regularly in national magazines and, just recently, Connecticut was recognized for having pike and bass fisheries which are among the best in North America and trout and catfish fisheries that are tops in the Northeast.

A familiar face at Connecticut Free Fishing Day celebrations, family ice fishing derbies and dispensing diplomas to graduates of the CARE New Instructor Training programs, Jim will be missed by all who knew and worked with him.

Donations in Jim Moulton's memory can be made to the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE) Program at 42 Kenneth Drive, Glastonbury, CT 06033.

Celebrate the Wonders of Bird Migration

International Migratory Bird Day 2000 – Saturday, May 13

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is an annual event created by Partners in Flight, an international coalition of federal and state agencies, bird clubs, non-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals whose mission is to conserve migratory birds. IMBD celebrates the return of millions of migratory birds from their wintering grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean and the southern U.S., to their northern nesting habitats.

This year, IMBD features a success story –the recovery of the peregrine falcon. Peregrine falcon populations declined dramatically because of the use of pesticides. Protection provided by the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, regulation of the use of pesticides in Canada and the United States in the 1970s and active restoration programs in both countries enabled populations to begin to recover.

P.J.FUSCO

The colorful scarlet tanager migrates from its wintering grounds in South America to breed and raise its young in Connecticut's forest habitats.

Attend an IMBD Event

Each IMBD, several hundred thousand people gather at schools, nature centers, town squares and in the great outdoors to learn more about wild birds, take action to conserve birds and their habitats and simply have fun. Since the first IMBD, the number of events held nationwide has grown from a few dozen to over 500.

The Wildlife Division will be holding an IMBD event on May 13, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting with a 6:30 a.m. **Early Morning Bird Walk** (for serious birders). **Bird Banding Demonstrations** will be held throughout the morning and an introduction to bird watching for children and their parents, **Bird Watching for Kids**, will begin at 9:00 a.m. At the **Birdhouse Workshop**, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, participants can learn about building nest boxes and will construct a bluebird house (Bring a hammer and screw driver; a donation of $4.00 to the Friends of Sessions Woods is requested to cover the cost of the nest box materials). All those wishing to attend the IMBD event at Sessions Woods should preregister by calling (860) 675-8130 Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For more information about IMBD and IMBD 2000 materials, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management; 703-358-2318; IMBD@FWS.Gov. To find out about other IMBD events in Connecticut and elsewhere, visit the Partners in Flight website at www.PartnersInFlight.com.

National Wildlife Week

Water for Life: Keep the Wild Alive

Every year since 1938, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has celebrated National Wildlife Week with a different theme to highlight environmental issues affecting people and wildlife. The theme for the 2000 National Wildlife Week (April 16-22) is "Water for Life: Keep the Wild Alive." NWF has developed a series of Educator Guides which are only available on-line at their website: www.nwf.org. The guides bring together a set of lessons centered around watersheds, streams, lakes, wetlands and vernal pools and the species that inhabit them. Each guide focuses on a different conservation theme and is full of hands-on activities for students. Free posters, to go along with the Educator Guides, are available from the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA), the state affiliate for NWF. To request a poster, contact CFPA, at (860) 346-2372 (email: conn.forest.assoc@snet.net), or NWF, at (703) 790-4100 (email: wildlife@nwf.org).

Bluebird Bulletin

Bluebirds Face Tough Competition for Nest Boxes

What you can do to help

Putting up a bluebird nest box is the first step in helping to provide a nesting site for bluebirds. However, it is important to take extra steps to ensure that non-native birds do not take over the nest box and exclude bluebirds. Two non-native birds which aggressively compete against bluebirds for nest sites are the house sparrow and European starling.

House Sparrows

House sparrows can be very aggressive and persistent nest box competitors. They will kill both adult bluebirds and nestlings and will also puncture eggs. Persistence and planning are keys to reducing house sparrow competition. Here are a few tips:

- Do not put nest boxes near barns where animals are fed. Spilled and waste grain attract sparrows.
- Do not use corn for bird feeding.
- Do not put an extra entry-hole guard on your box. House sparrows prefer the thicker entryway.
- Remove house sparrow nests and eggs from nest boxes.
- Be persistent! It may take a few weeks to discourage house sparrows. If you have more than one nest box and a house sparrow takes up residence in one box, you may want to try removing only the house sparrow eggs every three to four days. The sparrow will continue to guard the box with the nest, thus reducing its aggression towards birds nesting in nearby boxes.
- If bluebird/house sparrow competition is intense or the house sparrow population is high, trapping and removal may be necessary.

European Starlings

European starlings are as aggressive as house sparrows and will kill both adult bluebirds and nestlings. The best way to keep starlings out of a bluebird nest box is to make sure the entry hole is no larger than 1.5 inches in diameter. If the entry hole is this size, starlings cannot fit inside the box.

House wrens

House wrens are a native species and are protected by law. If they start to build a nest in your box, you must leave them alone. The following tips will discourage house wren use of your nest boxes.

- Locate the nest box away from shrubs. Shrubs provide wrens with cover and nest materials. (Bluebirds prefer boxes in the open with a perch nearby.)
- Do not use a nest box with a perch. Boxes with perches located below the entry hole were created specifically for wrens.
- Avoid using slot-entrance style boxes. It is easy for a wren to get a twig through the long slot.

Other Native Cavity-nesters

Black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice and tree swallows are all native cavity-nesters which have suffered from many of the same problems experienced by the eastern bluebird. Their use of your nest box should be welcomed because you are providing a needed nesting location. Additional nest boxes can be installed to accommodate bluebirds or to allow resident bluebirds to share your yard with other birds.

P.J. FUSCO (3)

House sparrows can be very aggressive and persistent nest box competitors as they will kill both adult bluebirds and nestlings.

The best way to keep starlings out of a bluebird nest box is to make sure the entry hole is no larger than 1.5 inches in diameter.

To discourage house wrens from nesting in a bluebird box, place the box in open habitat, away from shrubs.

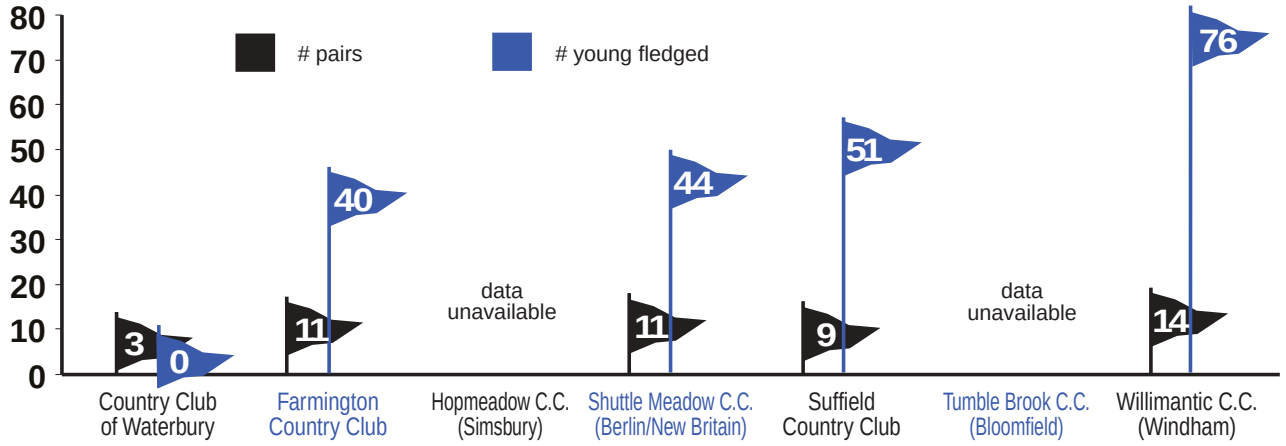
CT Golf Courses Contribute to Bluebird Restoration Efforts

Connecticut's golf courses continue to play an active role in bluebird restoration efforts. Most courses participating in the Bluebird Restoration Project had a very successful nesting season and fledged quite a few young bluebirds. The Farmington and Shuttle Meadow Country Clubs both rebounded from poor fledging rates in 1998 thanks to more diligent efforts in discouraging house sparrows. As a result of drought conditions in 1999 and related heat stress to young bluebirds, the Country Club of Waterbury experienced a decline in the number of successful fledges.

The Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Program appreciates the help of all participating golf courses and country clubs and encourages other courses to join in the Bluebird Restoration Project. The extra efforts of many course managers and box monitors to help educate golfers, school students and their local communities have contributed to the success of bluebird restoration at many of these areas.

If your golf course would like to participate by installing and monitoring nest boxes, contact the Nonharvested Wildlife Program biologist at the Sessions Woods office. Nest boxes can be provided and installed and monitoring assistance is also available. Several additional golf courses are planning to join in the project in 2000 and more participation is always welcome.

Number of Bluebird Pairs and Young Fledged at Connecticut Golf Courses, 1999



Nest BoxCam 2000

A glimpse inside the lives of cavity-nesting birds

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology Nest Box Network invites you to participate in the third breeding season of Nest BoxCam. From March to April, 2000, this unique web site offers bird enthusiasts the opportunity to watch cavity nesting birds build nests and raise their young. Last season, Nest BoxCam featured two eastern bluebird families, as well as a pair of Carolina chickadees from South Carolina. The web site also offers information on the basics of nest boxes, which birds you might attract and how to share observations from your nest boxes over the web with other bird house landlords from all over the country and scientists at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Best of all, it's free. Visit Nest BoxCam at http://birds.cornell.edu and click on "Birdhouse Online."

Did You Know . . .

All of the rough-cut lumber provided for the Bluebird Nest Box Distribution Project comes from timber sales on Connecticut state forests. Each year, the DEP Forestry Division works with the state sawmill to make sure that enough rough-cut lumber will be available for this and many other important wildlife conservation projects. Managers of several state parks and forests also help the bluebird project by coordinating wood distribution to project participants from their facilities. The Nonharvested Wildlife Program greatly appreciates the teamwork of both the Forestry and Parks Divisions, which has helped make the bluebird project a success.

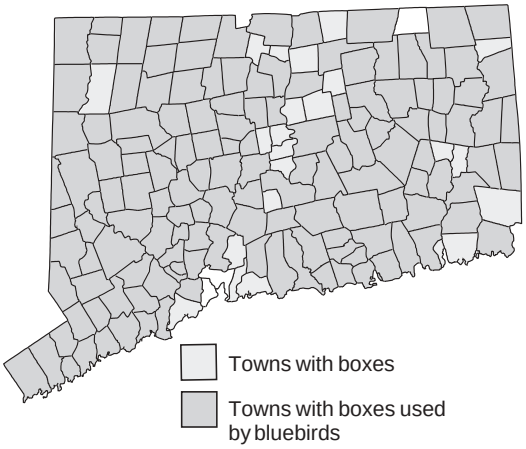
The Bluebird Bulletin is a special supplement to Connecticut Wildlife which reports on the activities of the Bluebird Restoration Project. Prepared by Nonharvested Wildlife Program biologist Jenny Dickson, the Bulletin also provides helpful suggestions and innovative ideas on helping eastern bluebirds continue their comeback. If you would like to join the hundreds of participants in Connecticut's Bluebird Nest Box Network, contact the Wildlife Division at (860) 675-8130.

1999 Bluebird Nesting Season Summary

Connecticut's Bluebird Restoration and Wood Distribution Project was initiated by the Wildlife Division in 1980 in an effort to increase the state's eastern bluebird population. Through this project, the Division has provided educational materials on bluebirds, as well as materials, plans and assistance to community service organizations, school groups and others for the construction and installation of bluebird nest boxes. Since the bluebird project started, 1,535 groups have helped build 38,720 nest boxes for bluebirds and other native, cavity-nesting songbirds. Many of these boxes have been regularly monitored through the Connecticut Bluebird Nest Box Survey. The number of survey cards returned to the Wildlife Division has varied greatly since 1980. Card returns were up slightly from 1998 rates. As always, survey card returns are an essential part of the monitoring process for the Bluebird Restoration Project, whether they report use by bluebirds or other species.

During the 1999 nesting season, tree swallows continued to be the most common nest box user statewide. Bluebirds were a close second, with 888 fledglings reported throughout the state. Although house wrens and house sparrows continued to compete with bluebirds for nest boxes, their overall box occupancy remained relatively unchanged. Competition from these birds seems to vary regionally with intense competition in some areas (often urban/suburban or active agricultural sites) and very little in others.

The most active bluebird project group participants in 1999 were nature centers. Participation by scout groups and Audubon chapters was again below historic levels. Individual participation by state residents reporting on the boxes in their yards continues to be the key element in monitoring the success of Connecticut's nesting bluebirds.



Millennium Mystery

Are there bluebird boxes in Union, New Haven and West Haven? If you have a nest box in one of these towns or know someone who does, please report it to the nest box network. Our goal for 2000 is to have bluebird nesting statewide!

To Learn More About Bluebirds . . .

- **Visit the North American Bluebird Society's web site**: http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/.
- **Obtain the Wildlife Division's fact sheet on bluebirds.** It provides bluebird life history information, plans for two styles of nest boxes, a listing of plants beneficial to bluebirds and tips on nest box installation and monitoring. Send requests for fact sheets to the Wildlife Division, at P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013 (860-675-8130) or visit the wildlife section of the DEP website at http://.dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife. Select "Learn About Connecticut's Wildlife" to find links to all of our fact sheets.
- **Read the following publications:** *Enjoying Bluebirds More*. 1993. Julie Zickefoose, Bird Watchers Digest Press, Marietta, OH. 33 pages (ISBN 1-880-241-03-X).

  Bluebird. The Journal of the North American Bluebird Society (formerly called *Sialia*). For membership/subscription information, contact the North American Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 74, Darlington, WI 53530.

  The Bluebird Book. 1991. Donald and Lillian Stokes. Little, Brown, and Co., Boston. 96 pages (ISBN 0-316-81745-7).

P.J.FUSCO

USDA Farm Bill Programs Hard at Work in CT

Written by Paul Rothbart, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

The DEP and key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) partners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, are very excited about what has been accomplished in Connecticut in the past two years through programs established by the 1996 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill authorized $2.5 billion per year for the period from 1996 to 2002. These monies fund over 20 programs nationwide, ranging in scope from flood risk reduction, erosion stabilization, grazing incentives, watershed protection, wetlands restoration, riparian buffers, grassland establishment and wildlife incentives.

Over the decades, the Farm Bill has grown in scope from being only focused on agricultural production to a more comprehensive land management approach dealing with environmental quality and wildlife habitats. This transition culminated in the development of the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), which was the first time that a Farm Bill program not only recognized the value of wildlife resources but specifically identified and funded a stand alone wildlife program.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The purpose of WHIP is to create, restore and maintain upland wildlife habitat, wetland wildlife habitat, aquatic habitat and habitats of threatened and endangered wildlife species. Priorities in Connecticut are riparian buffers, tidal and non-tidal marshes, control of non-native invasive plants and early successional stage habitats, such as grasslands and old fields.

The Wildlife Division, private individual landowners, corporations, municipalities and conservation organizations have completed a large number of diverse habitat projects this past field season. Many new projects have been approved for the upcoming 2000 field season.

1998 WHIP Accomplishments:

- $356,000 total statewide funding allocation
- 44 contracts developed
- 6 DEP contracts for a total of $42,171, resulting in 292 acres of early successional stage habitat management and wetlands enhancement on wildlife management areas (WMAs) throughout Connecticut
- Bat cave protection, 50 acres
- Riparian restoration, 145 acres
- Grassland restoration/ enhancement, 360 acres
- Old field enhancement, 430 acres
- Restoration to control invasive wetland plants, 52 acres
- Wetland enhancement, 100 acres
- **Total of 1,137 acres of habitat treated**

WHIP Projects for 1999

- 140 applications received
- 70 projects approved and scheduled for implementation during the 2000 field season
- $433,849 allocated
- 8 DEP contracts approved, totalling $55,665, for early successional stage vegetation management at Barn Island WMA (Stonington), Bear Hill WMA (Bozrah), Larson Lot (Colchester), Pachaug State Forest (Voluntown), Simsbury WMA

P. ROTHBART

Through the efforts of the Forestry and Wildlife Divisions, a prescribed burn is used to enhance warm season grassland habitat.

Wildlife Benefits of CRP Projects Nationwide

Duck populations increased by 3 million in the Dakotas and Montana in 1994.

Grasshopper sparrow, field sparrow, eastern meadowlark and American goldfinch populations increased on CRP lands in Missouri.

Grassland birds are 21 times more abundant on CRP lands.

Grassland birds are 32 times more likely to hatch on CRP lands.

Texas CRP lands saw an increase in lesser prairie chicken populations.

Colorado CRP lands saw an increase in greater prairie chicken populations.

The Idaho sharp-tailed grouse is making a recovery on CRP lands.

(Simsbury) and Wood Creek (Norfolk)

Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is the most widely applied program within the USDA Farm Bill. It is a large-scale land retirement program that establishes grass cover for wildlife habitat on environmentally valuable cropland or marginal pasture for 10 to 15 years.

The Wildlife Division has completed five CRP projects on Bartlett Brook, Robbins Swamp and Spignesi WMAs. These projects have involved the establishment of 34 acres of warm season grasses, 19 acres of riparian buffer and 21 acres of cool season grasses. The DEP plans to continue using this program when environmental considerations, agricultural economics and wildlife habitat benefits deem the long-term land commitments to be appropriate. During the 2000 field season, a 10-acre CRP cool season grass establishment project will be implemented at Pease Brook WMA. The CRP projects will benefit Connecticut's grassland wildlife species, provide soil erosion stabilization and serve as wetland buffers. On a national perspective, CRP has had a significant positive impact on various wildlife species.

WHIP and CRP have allowed the Wildlife Division to continue its efforts in early successional stage habitat management in a cost-effective manner. As reforestation and residential and commercial development continue to replace open habitats, these and other farmland and habitat improvement programs will become increasingly important in maintaining abundant, diverse wildlife populations throughout Connecticut.

P. J. FUSCO

WHIP helped fund a cooperative project to construct a cage gate at the Roxbury Iron Mine that will allow bats free access to their hibernacula while protecting them from human disturbance.

J. WILSON

A specialized machine, called a brontosaurus, is used to enhance habitat for the American woodcock. Woodcock require young second-growth hardwood forests, shrubby areas and open habitats, like old fields and forest clearings.

The Osprey:
From a Dramatic Decline to a Remarkable Recovery

During the 1940s in Connecticut, ospreys were a familiar sight along the coastline. At that time, there were a reported 1,000 breeding pairs of osprey between New York and Boston. Approximately 200 pairs nested on and around the Great Island Wildlife Management Area in Old Lyme. As shown in file photos from the 1940s, many of the osprey nests were built on the ground at this salt marsh. Although trees are preferred nest sites, shoreline development in the early to mid-1900s caused a decline in trees available for nest sites. The habitat at Great Island afforded some protection to the ospreys nesting on the ground as the area is separated from the mainland and ground predators, like raccoons and house cats, were limited at the time. Unlike the high populations today, raccoon numbers were at an all-time low after the raccoon fur coat fad of the 1920s. The only limiting factor to osprey ground nests was extremely high tides, which could inundate nests.


CTDEP-WILDLIFE

These photographs of osprey ground nests built on driftwood were taken at Great Island, in Old Lyme, during the 1940s.

Today, an osprey ground nest is a rarity and is seldom successful. Ground predators, especially raccoons (which have increased with shoreline development), and salt marsh destruction have altered the choice of nesting sites for ospreys. Where trees along the shoreline have not been available for ospreys to use, the birds have adapted further by using telephone poles, light stanchions, channel markers and, in more recent times, nesting platforms built specifically for ospreys.

Not only did development of the Connecticut shoreline put pressure on the ospreys to adapt, but the greatest threat came in the 1950s and 1960s when the pesticide DDT was used for mosquito control in salt marshes. Absorbed by invertebrates and, in turn, by fish, on which osprey depend for food, DDT ultimately caused osprey eggshells to weaken, resulting in nest failures due to cracked eggs. Faced with a lack of nest sites and the effects of DDT on reproduction, osprey numbers began to decline steadily. By 1974, only nine active nests were recorded in Connecticut. The ban on the use of DDT and other pesticides in the early 1970s helped bring about a steady recovery of osprey populations in the Northeast. The placement of nesting platforms in osprey habitat also contributed to the bird's recovery.

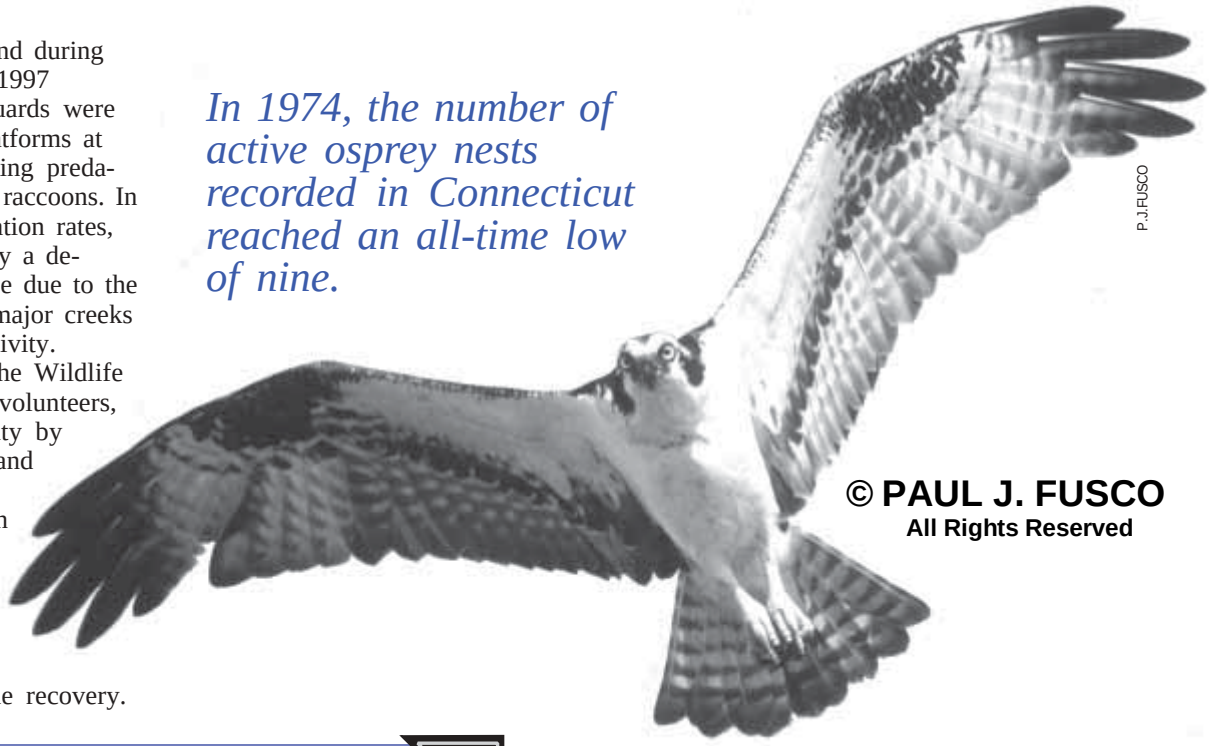
Can Connecticut ever support the breeding pair numbers of the past? Despite the osprey's ability to adapt to new nest sites like platforms and channel markers, a return to historical osprey population levels may not be a realistic goal because land use changes have limited nest sites and reduced feeding areas. In addition, ospreys are still exposed to pesticide contamination at their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

Fortunately, in recent years, Connecticut's nesting osprey numbers have bounced back dramatically. During the 1999 nesting season, 315 osprey chicks fledged from 162 active nests. At Great Island, still the stronghold of the state's osprey population, 37 chicks fledged from 19 active nests in 1999. Although this number seems small compared to the 1940s, it is notable because osprey production

had plummeted on the island during 1993 to 1996. Prior to the 1997 nesting season, predator guards were installed on the nesting platforms at Great Island, greatly reducing predation of eggs and young by raccoons. In addition to the lower predation rates, productivity was boosted by a decrease in human disturbance due to the temporary closure of two major creeks in the marsh to boating activity.

Every nesting season, the Wildlife Division, with the help of volunteers, monitors osprey productivity by assessing nesting activity and determining the number of young fledged. As Division biologists and volunteers follow through with this monitoring project, they remain optimistic that the state's osprey population will continue its remarkable recovery.

In 1974, the number of active osprey nests recorded in Connecticut reached an all-time low of nine.



P. J. FUSCO

CT DEP-WILDLIFE

Historic Osprey Egg Heist

Back in the 1960s, when the causes of the decline in osprey populations were not immediately obvious, Connecticut ospreys played a major role in the solution to the nest failure puzzle. As scientists looked for answers, environmental contaminants became prime suspects. But if pollutants were responsible for the nest failures, how so? Were there toxic effects on the eggs? Or, were nest failures a result of pesticide-induced behavioral changes that altered the nest attentiveness of the female or even the ability of adult birds to catch and provide fish for nestlings?

Aware that production by Chesapeake Bay ospreys had remained stable, researchers proposed an "egg switch" program. In the springs of 1968 and 1969, ospreys eggs were taken from failing Connecticut nests and placed in productive Chesapeake Bay nests, and vice versa. After the switch, incubation of 30 Connecticut eggs by Maryland ospreys did not improve the hatching rate. However, 45 Maryland eggs incubated by Connecticut ospreys hatched at their normal rate of success. This result indicated that nest failures were not due to aberrant adult behavior and that the most probable cause was contamination of the eggs. Further testing solved the mystery and verified that DDT-induced eggshell thinning was responsible for the nest failures.

National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day -- May 13, 2000

On May 13, 2000, the same day that International Migratory Bird Day will be celebrated throughout the country, the American Bird Conservancy is asking cat owners to participate in "National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day." The purpose of this day is to educate cat owners that cats, birds and other wildlife benefit when cats are kept indoors. A children's poster competition is currently being held to help promote this event. Entries will be accepted until May 1. For details on the poster competition, contact the American Bird Conservancy, at 1250 24th Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20037 (202-778-9619), or visit the American Bird Conservancy's website: http://www.abcbirds.org.

Each year, free-roaming domestic cats kill hundreds of millions of birds and small mammals. In addition, millions of cats are killed or injured by cars or in fights with other cats, dogs or wild animals. Free-roaming cats can contract life-threatening diseases, or get lost, stolen or poisoned. The poster competition will help draw attention to this problem and help promote National Keep Your Cats Indoor Day.

P.J.FUSCO

Ground nesting birds, including the ovenbird, are at risk from free-roaming cats.

CT Eagle Chick Observed in New York

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist

On December 23, 1999, a volunteer for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's Endangered Species Program, who was observing eagles at the Swinging Bridge Reservoir in Sullivan County, New York, identified the leg bands of an immature male bald eagle that was banded as a chick in Connecticut in 1998! This immature eagle was one of 18 eagles feeding at the location. This is exciting news for the Wildlife Division because the first two years of life are critical for this species. It is during this period that the young birds must learn to fend for themselves and many chicks don't make it. This immature eagle is one of two chicks born at the Barkhamsted nest in 1998.

The Wildlife Division has banded and examined most of the chicks hatched in Connecticut since 1992 as part of the protective management program for this state-endangered species. Attaching leg bands is a very useful tool for wildlife managers because it allows managers to trace local movements, estimate population changes and determine a species' lifespan. The use of leg bands has provided important information to the federal recovery program for this species. With an endangered population, it is necessary to collect any pertinent data that can be added to our knowledge of this species' life history in Connecticut.

Previous to this verified sighting, the chicks that fledged in 1998 had not been seen in Connecticut or reported elsewhere. Surviving birds will attain their adult plumage and be ready to breed by 2003. Once the birds find mates, it is hoped that they return to Connecticut to nest and raise their young.

Immature eagles are commemorated in the glossy 11" X 14" print "Connecticut's Bald Eagles -- Home Again," a photograph of the first eaglets successfully raised in the wild in Connecticut since the 1950s. Suitable for framing, this print is a great way to celebrate this recent wildlife success story. To order a print, send a check or money order for $6.00, payable to the Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.

GreenCircle Award Program

Former Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Sidney Holbrook first announced the GreenCircle Award Program in 1997. The Program recognizes businesses, institutions, civic organizations and individuals having undertaken projects that improve the quality of Connecticut's environment. Such recognition may encourage other groups and individuals to create innovative ways of preventing pollution or increasing environmental awareness in the state.

In April 1998, under the direction of Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr., the DEP implemented the Program. Those eligible to apply for membership in the GreenCircle Award Program and examples of eligible activities include:

- Businesses, both large and small, in the commercial, industrial and service sectors who increase access to waterways, improve energy efficiency or implement pollution prevention techniques in their operation.
- Government and other non-profit institutions, such as municipalities, state agencies, schools and hospitals who compost, limit pesticide use through better management techniques or convert buses or other fleet vehicles to natural gas or electricity.
- Individuals, citizen groups, school classrooms and other volunteers which improve community areas, lands and gardens, sponsor river clean up days, implement habitat enhancements for fish and wildlife on private property or volunteer time to environmental instructional programs.

Many groups and individuals donate significant quantities of their time and resources in an effort to develop safer and cleaner methods of conducting business, create environmental programs for their students or sponsor river clean-ups in Connecticut. The cumulative impact of these efforts is significant and warrants recognition. The Program acknowledges these activities and promotes them as positive examples for others within the community to follow.

DEP staff screens nominations for completeness and forwards the information to the GreenCircle Advisory Committee. The Committee includes representatives from environmental organizations, municipalities, businesses and Connecticut's General Assembly. The Committee is responsible for reviewing all GreenCircle applications and determining qualified applicants. Since the program began in 1998, over 250 award winners have been recognized for more than 325 project activities. Award recipients receive a certificate of commendation, window decal and public recognition.

The DEP is now accepting nominations for 2000. Interested parties are welcome to fill out the GreenCircle Award application attached to the center of this issue and submit it to the DEP. Be sure to check out the DEP's website at http://dep.state.ct.us for information on previous GreenCircle Award winners, examples of potentially qualifying projects and additional application forms. Any questions concerning the Program should be directed to Robert Hannon in the Office of the Ombudsman, at (860) 424-3003.

Wildlife Division on the Web

Do you surf the web? Want to check out a site where you can find lots of information about Connecticut's wildlife? Then you should visit the recently updated wildlife section of the Department of Environmental Protection's web site. The site contains links to all of the Wildlife Division's fact sheets, recent publications, hunting and trapping information, kid's pages and more.

Follow these steps to get to the site:

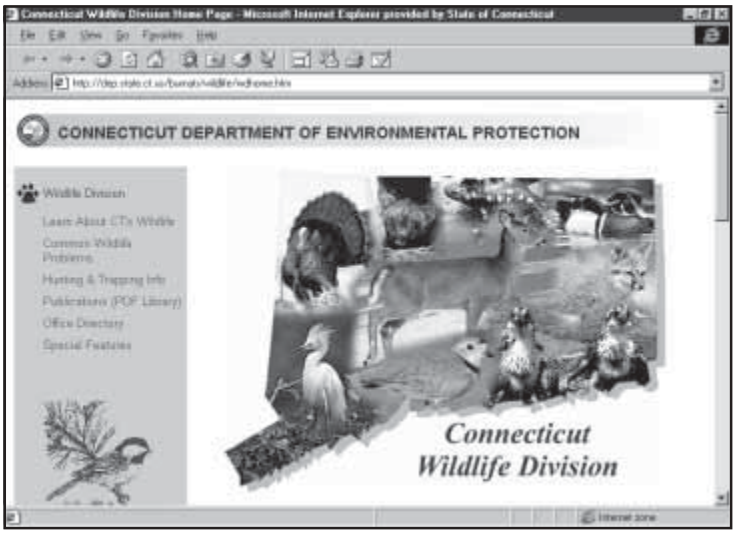
1. **Go to http://dep.state.ct.us**
2. **Select Recreation and Natural Resources**
3. **Select Bureau of Natural Resources**
4. **Select Wildlife Division**

- or -

Type this web address:

http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife

Once you get to the site, a navigation bar on the left makes it easy to jump from one section of the site to another. The Wildlife Division plans on continually updating the site with new features and publications. You can even download back issues of *Connecticut Wildlife*. Check us out.



Wildlife Workshops for Educators

The Wildlife Division will be hosting three teacher workshops at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center in Burlington, one each in March, April and May. On Friday, March 31, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., educators can explore "Vernal Pools." Participants will visit a vernal pool at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area and learn about the importance of conserving these vital habitats. "Wildlife Management" will be the topic for the workshop scheduled on Tuesday, April 18, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Participants will receive an introduction to wildlife management in Connecticut, learn about current wildlife research projects in the state and explore ways to teach children about wildlife biology. A workshop on Friday, May 5, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., will focus on "Neotropical Migratory Birds." Participants will learn about Connecticut's migratory birds and discover ways to teach about them in the classroom.

Continuing Education Units are available for each workshop. Participants must preregister and can obtain an application form by contacting Laura Rogers-Castro, at 860-675-8130, or email: laura.rogers-castro@po.state.ct.us.

Be Bear Aware!

Spring is here and so are the black bears. With the arrival of spring last year, the DEP started a busy year filled with calls, complaints and problems involving bears. The Division would like to pass on a few reminders to residents at a time when hungry black bears are coming out of hibernation. Unsecured garbage, bird feeders, barbecue grills and pet food left outside are perfect attractants for bears in search of food. Remove any of these food sources before they become a problem. Never approach or feed a bear. Report sightings of bears to the Wildlife Division at (860) 675-8130. To obtain a black bear fact sheet, an educational kid's page and a brochure on living with bears, contact the Wildlife Division at the same phone number or visit the wildlife section of the DEP website at http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife. Select "Learn About Connecticut's Wildlife" to find links to all of our fact sheets.

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

March 15 ..... Postmark deadline for deer lottery applications.

March 18 ..... **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 9:00 a.m. Just about every hemlock tree in Connecticut has some potential of being affected by this introduced insect pest. Are there solutions to this problem? Mark McClure from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station will present a slide show and discuss the latest information about the hemlock woolly adelgid. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

March 25 ..... **Wild Turkey Hunting Safety Seminar**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Wildlife Division biologist Michael Gregonis will discuss the natural history of the wild turkey and hunting topics. Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program Senior Instructors Gary Bennet and Ray Hanley will discuss turkey hunting techniques and safety. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

March 31 ..... **Teacher Workshop: Vernal Pools**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (look above for details). Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

April 8 ..... **Tree Care Workshop**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 1:00 p.m. Learn how to care for the trees and shrubs in your yard, park or beyond. The latest techniques, tools and resources will be discussed through slides and demonstrations. There will be both indoor and outdoor portions to the program, so come prepared for the weather. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

April 15 ..... **Landscaping for Wildlife**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 1:30 p.m. Urban wildlife biologist Peter Picone will talk about various plantings, techniques and resources for attracting wildlife to your backyard. Find out how to register your backyard as a "Wildlife Habitat" with the DEP. There will be both indoor and outdoor portions to this program. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

April 16-22 ..... National Wildlife Week (see page 8 for details).

April 18 ..... **Teacher Workshop: Wildlife Management**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (look above for details). Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

April 22 ..... Earth Day

May 3-23 ..... **Spring Turkey Hunting Season** (see the 2000 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide or visit the DEP website http://dep.state.ct.us for more information).

May 5 ..... **Teacher Workshop: Neotropical Migratory Birds**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (look above for details). Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

May 13 ..... **International Migratory Bird Day Event**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington (see page 8 for details).

June 10 ..... **Turtles of Connecticut**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 9:00 a.m. Hank Gruner from the Science Center of Connecticut will lead a presentation about turtles native to Connecticut. See some live turtles and be prepared to visit the beaver flowage to look for turtles. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

Just for Kids

Vernal Pools:
Now You See Them, Now You Don't

What is a vernal pool?
A low spot in a forest, meadow or other habitat that fills with water and dries out in a few months.

How big is a vernal pool?
Vernal pools can be very big or very small. Some could fit in your living room while others are as large as a football field.

Why are they important?
Several salamanders and frogs lay their eggs in vernal pools. Because these pools dry up, fish do not live in them and eat the eggs. Vernal pools are also home to many different types of insects.

P. J. FUSCO (2)

Fairies Live in Vernal Pools!

These fairies are actually fairy shrimp. They are beautiful little animals with featherlike legs. They feed by straining microscopic plant- and animal-like material from the water. Fairy shrimp are eaten by many of the other animals found in the pool.

I Didn't Know Frogs Quack

Not all frogs quack, but there is one called the wood frog that does. Wood frogs are brown, about two and one-half inches long, and have a raccoon-like mask. In the spring, they migrate to vernal pools. The males will sing to the females to get them to mate. The male's song sounds just like a quacking duck.

Salamanders by the Hundreds!

If you know the location of a vernal pool, you can watch for the annual salamander migration. On the first warm, rainy night in late March, visit the pool and you may see spotted salamanders making their way to the water to lay their eggs. Salamander eggs look like globs of jelly and are usually attached in one large ball to twigs under the water. Each ball is about the size of a tennis ball and can have up to 250 eggs in it. Later, you can visit the pond again to see the salamander larvae growing in each egg. After one or two months, the larvae will hatch and remain in the pool until they become young salamanders.

Connecticut Wildlife

The official bimonthly publication of the DEP Wildlife Division

Don't miss out . . . Get *Connecticut Wildlife* for yourself or for a friend! Mail this form, along with a check or money order for a minimum contribution (payable to *Gift to Wildlife*) to: Gift to Wildlife, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

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Help fund critical programs for the state's nonharvested and endangered species by contributing to the Gift to Wildlife *fund, which is supported solely by voluntary contributions. Please include a tax-deductible donation with your order for* Connecticut Wildlife. *Connecticut's Nonharvested Wildlife Program needs your help!*

My additional contribution for Connecticut's Nonharvested Wildlife:

☐ *$5.00* ☐ *$10.00* ☐ *$25.00* ☐ *Other $* _____

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City _____ *State* _____

Zip _____ *Tel.* _____

☐ *New*

☐ *Renewal*

☐ *Gift*

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Change of Address: Advance notice of an address change will assure all issues are delivered correctly.

Woodworking for Wildlife

Homes for Birds & Mammals

The Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Program is offering a revised second edition of this popular book for **$10.00**. Now published with color photographs and an easy-to-use spiral binding, it is the perfect resource for anyone wishing to build homes for wildlife.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ *State* _____

Zip _____ *Tel.* _____

Mail completed coupon with a check or money order ($10.00 per copy) to CT DEP Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

TIP Turn In Poachers

TO REPORT A WILDLIFE VIOLATION

CALL 1-800-842-HELP

24 HOURS - TOLL FREE

REWARDS OFFERED AFTER ARREST

ALL CALLS CONFIDENTIAL

For more information on TIP, call Conservation Law Enforcement at 424-3012

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

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