

**BEARS, BATS, BIRDS and MORE!!**

*Mary/June 2005*

# Connecticut Wildlife

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BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION



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# From the Director

*The alarm went off at 4:00 AM yesterday and, half an hour later, I was walking in fading darkness up the long hayfield, then into the woods beyond. It was a cold morning, even by early May standards. But it was calm and still. By 5:00 AM I was about where I wanted to be. I stood and waited for that first glorious gobble to direct me to my sitting location.*

*At 5:10 I heard what I'd been waiting for, but the roosted bird was off my property. A bad sign at this location, based upon my previous experience. Unlikely I would be able to convince this gobbler to leave his secure strutting grounds, cross a swamp, and come to the suspicious hen yelps emanating from my wooden box call. However, already committed and with no better options, I placed an admittedly unconvincing decoy in an old logging trail, loaded up the reliable 12 gauge, and sat at the base of a wide oak with a boulder on my left, a blowdown on my right, and the decoy 15 yards dead ahead.*

*I yelped occasionally and the tom gobbled occasionally, but there was no synchrony between the two. He wasn't coming. However, good turkey hunters know not to let their guard down. Perhaps another bird might come in silently. Sometimes that happens. So, for the next half hour, I sat riveted and motionless, listening and looking. Nothing. One more call. Nothing. Then, without warning, a flash of movement 20 feet to my right and coming directly at me. Warp speed. Not feathers, but fur. A bobcat had somehow appeared from nowhere and was in midair, about to pounce on this "turkey" amid the camouflage clothing.*

*All this happened faster than my human brain could compute. Too fast to describe. I won't admit that I screamed, but I know I made a loud, unmanly noise as I raised the gun barrel and deflected the lunging cat. At that precise moment, we probably both shared the vivid realization that perception belied reality. He ran a ways, but not too far. He kept looking back, knowing I wasn't a turkey, but trying to figure out how to never make that mistake again. And, finally, I had seen my first live Connecticut bobcat. Wildlife viewing, up close and personal!*

*I got home in time for breakfast and prepared for my day in the civilized world. I drove to Hartford, went to meetings, and then coached a Little League game. I ate late and went to bed at 10:00 PM. Before I did, I set the alarm for 3:45 AM!*

Dale W. May

## Cover:

*Every year, the Wildlife Division undertakes efforts to protect the shoreline nesting areas of the state-threatened least tern. To learn more about the various species of terns that can be found in Connecticut, see the article beginning on page 10.*

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

# Connecticut Wildlife

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# Update on Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon Nests

## Bald Eagles

The DEP Wildlife Division, with assistance from the volunteer Bald Eagle Study Group, has been monitoring the activities of 10 territorial pairs of bald eagles. One pair in New Haven County did not nest and one nest in Litchfield County failed. However, at the time of this printing, eight pairs were incubating eggs or feeding young. There are two pairs each in New London and Middlesex Counties, one pair in Litchfield County, and three pairs in Hartford County. In addition, the Wildlife Division received numerous reports of adult bald eagles along the Naugatuck River during spring. The Division encourages anyone who may know the location of a possible eagle nest to send an email to the Division's Franklin Wildlife office ([julie.victoria@po.state.ct.us](mailto:julie.victoria@po.state.ct.us)). There are plans to place identifying leg bands on the eagle chicks before they fledge from

their nests. Stay tuned to future issues of *Connecticut Wildlife* to find out how many chicks were banded.

## Peregrine Falcons

The Wildlife Division also has been monitoring seven territorial pairs of peregrine falcons that were incubating eggs at the time of this printing. Two pairs of peregrines are nesting in Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven Counties and one pair is nesting in Middlesex County. One of the Hartford County nests is located on the Travelers Tower in downtown Hartford, where, in years past, a live webcam captured nesting activities. To view the webcam or see images documenting nesting activities from this spring, go to <http://falcom.travelers.com>.

## Peregrine Egg Stolen from Nest

On April 7, 2005, DEP Environmental Conservation Police Officer Bill

Myers observed two men paddle a canoe up to a peregrine falcon nest located along the Connecticut River in Middletown and take an egg from the nest. This particular nest has been under surveillance since nesting activity was first documented in May 2003. Officer Myers radioed the Middletown Police Department who, with the assistance of the Portland Police Department, searched the river for the men and found them at Harbor Park in Middletown. The two men were arrested and the egg was recovered. The egg was subsequently returned to the nest where three additional eggs were seen. The female falcon has since been observed actively incubating the eggs.

The two men, who are students at Wesleyan University, were charged with third degree criminal trespassing. Look for more on this story in a future issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*.

## 46 Eagles Counted in Midwinter Survey

On January 7 and 8, 2005, 127 volunteers from the DEP, the Wildlife Division's Master Wildlife Conservationist Program, private conservation organizations, and the general public conducted the annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey. Unfortunately, the second (and most popular) day of the survey was plagued by an ice storm where sleet and freezing rain caused low visibility. Consequently, the survey results of 46 bald eagles (20 adults, 25 immature eagles and 1 unknown) recorded statewide probably underestimated the true number of eagles that were in Connecticut in January. Ninety-two eagles were counted in last year's survey.

The Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey is not a complete census of the entire wintering population in Connecticut, but an index of the species' use of the state, which can be compared year to year. The survey is conducted nationwide during a target time period and is coordinated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey and the Forest and

Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center at the Snake River Field Station in Oregon. (For more information, go to: <http://srfs.wr.usgs.gov/midwinte.htm>.)

The Wildlife Division appreciates the efforts of all the volunteers who braved the ice storm to donate their time to the survey and report their observations. Unfortunately, there were about 26 less volunteers helping with the survey this year than last year. Several areas where eagles may be found were not surveyed this year. The Division is already seeking volunteers to help with the **2006** Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, especially around the Lake Warmaug (Warren) and Margerie Reservoir (Danbury) areas. Those interested in helping with next year's survey should send a letter providing your name, address, and telephone number to Julie Victoria, Wildlife Diversity Program, 391 Route 32, North Franklin, CT 06254.



P. J. FUSCO

Twenty-five immature bald eagles were observed during the 2005 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey.

*Volunteers needed for the 2006 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey. Let the Division know if you can help by sending a letter (provide your name, address, and telephone number) to Julie Victoria, Wildlife Diversity Program, 391 Route 32, North Franklin, CT 06254.*

# Den Visits Reveal Fewer Bear Cubs

Written by Paul Rego, Furbearer Program

Almost anyone hiking past this snow-covered brush pile would be little impressed. The tangle of limbs has little distinction compared to others scattered throughout the forest. But this winter, it is different and the greatest evidence is the muffled squeals and bawls from within its shadows. This pile was chosen by a black bear sow back in November. She squeezed into a small void under the jumbled branches, made a crude bed of leaves and broken twigs, and spent the next four months curled under the drafty shelter. She gave birth to two cubs during the coldest days of January. On this March morning, the cubs announce their discomfort as the sow slightly shifts her position.

## Finding Bear Dens

DEP Wildlife Division biologists were able to zero in on this brush pile by



Wildlife Division research assistant Lisa Selner holds two 14-month-old bears. These 40-pound yearlings were originally examined as cubs last March. They will remain with the sow until midsummer.



Wildlife Division biologist Paul Rego (right) removes a black bear cub from a den and hands it to Environmental Conservation Police Officer Paul Hilli. Cubs are weighed, sexed, and tagged. Most cubs are born in January and weigh from four to eight pounds by March.

following the radio signal transmitted from the sow's radiocollar.

Several female bears have been fitted with radiocollars over the last three years. Dens of 14 female bears were located in March by using radio telemetry. Once the dens were located, biologists carefully approached them and then used a syringe pole to inject an immobilizing drug into the adult bear. This allowed the biologists to remove, examine, and take measurements from the collared bears and any cubs or yearlings. While the bears were drugged, their radiocollars were adjusted, if necessary, and old collars were replaced. As part of an effort to monitor Connecticut's growing black bear population, bear dens have been inspected in the last three winters in northwest Connecticut to gather information on cub production and survival.

## Tracking Cub Survival

In 2005, cubs were found at six dens. Five sows had two cubs and one had a single cub. A seventh sow, known to be of breeding age, had no cubs. No three-

cub litters, which are common for older sows, were found. Two years ago, three of seven litters examined had three cubs. The low cub production for 2005 is a result of the poor acorn crop produced last fall.

Black bears breed every other year. Cubs stay with the mother; denning with her through another winter and leaving her care when they are one-and-a-half years old. The relatively low reproductive rate of black bears is compensated by high survival. This pattern is being observed in Connecticut. Over the last two years, Wildlife Division biologists have been able to check the survival of 14 cubs; 13 were known to have survived their first year. Biologists were able to track the survival of four of the original 14 for a second year; all four survived their second year.

## Bear Population Continues to Grow

There's no doubt about it . . . the state's bear population is growing rapidly. Because of high survival, even a year like this one, with low cub produc-

tion, can result in growth of the black bear population. The Wildlife Division will continue monitoring reproduction in bears to assess its role in population growth.

### ***Bear Dens Come in All Shapes and Sizes***

Brush piles, slash piles, or fallen trees are the most common dens used by bears in Connecticut. In 2005, seven of the 14 bears checked made their dens in brush or slash piles and four used fallen trees as part of their den cover. Bears also use rock crevasses and ledges, open ground nests, and hollow trees as dens. Ground nests are usually just a sparse mat of leaves and twigs and are typically located in thick vegetation, such as mountain laurel.

Bears often den in locations that provide little shelter from the elements. This sow (right) chose to curl up under a fallen log where she was still exposed to the elements on two sides. A recent, wind-driven snowfall remains accumulated on her fur.



## **CWD Documented in Wild and Captive Deer in New York**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) recently announced that chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been documented in two wild deer that were tested during an intensive sampling effort in central New York. The test sample involved 292 wild deer. NYDEC implemented intensive monitoring efforts after CWD was found in two captive white-tailed deer herds in Oneida County – the first incidents of CWD in New York. Testing of the two captive herds found a total of five positive results for CWD. CWD is a transmissible disease that affects the brain and central nervous system of certain deer and elk. There is no evidence that CWD is linked to disease in humans or domestic livestock other than deer and elk.

The first positive result in a wild deer from New York was announced on April 27, 2005, and came from a yearling

white-tailed deer sampled from Verona in Oneida County. The second positive result was from a three-year-old doe, located within a mile of the location where the initial positive result was detected. These are the first known occurrences of CWD in wild deer in New York.

Since 2002, NYDEC has conducted statewide sampling of wild deer for CWD, and, so far, has collected more than 3,700 samples from wild white-tailed deer. Statewide sampling for CWD in New York will be increased to closely monitor the distribution and prevalence of CWD in wild deer. In addition, NYDEC has implemented emergency regulations regarding the handling, transport, and management of deer in New York. These emergency regulations are designed to ensure the proper handling of deer and prevent further spread of CWD in the wild herd.

More information on CWD can be found at NYDEC's website at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/deer/currentcwd.html>. Information on CWD also is on the Connecticut DEP's website ([www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us)) or the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website ([www.cwd-info.org](http://www.cwd-info.org)). An informational brochure on CWD has been developed by the DEP Wildlife Division. To obtain a copy, contact the Division's Franklin Wildlife office (860-642-7239).

**What does this mean for Connecticut? The DEP Wildlife Division has been randomly testing wild deer for CWD since 2003. Over 500 deer have been tested, with no positive results to date. Testing will continue in 2005. Look for more on CWD and the DEP Wildlife Division's response to the news of the disease in a neighboring state in the next issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*.**

## ***Sharon Audubon Center's Summer Festival--August 13-14***

*Mark your calendars and save the date! The 38th Annual Sharon Audubon Festival is taking place August 13th and 14th at the Sharon Audubon Center located on Route 4 in Sharon, Connecticut. Both days offer information for adults, children, and families on a variety of nature-related topics. Learning your birds? Take a bird walk with a birding expert. Interested in pond life? Sign up for the canoeing program! Live raptors and reptiles are always a big hit as well. Music, food, and fun are included in the festival, so check the newspapers closer to the date for the full festival supplement, or call the Center at (860) 364-0520 for more information ([www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/sharon](http://www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/sharon)).*

## Wildlife Division Staff Grows (continued from previous issue)

In the March/April 2005 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*, we introduced our readers to six new employees of the Wildlife Division. This issue introduces you to five more new employees who joined the ranks in late January/early February. Wildlife Division Director Dale May explained the funding of these positions in his "From the Director" column in the March/April issue.

### **Jane Seymour, Wildlife Technician, Belding Wildlife Management Area Steward**

Jane is a familiar face at the Wildlife Division. She started out as a seasonal employee in 1998 and has worked in various capacities (general worker, contracted researcher) over the years for several Division programs (nonharvested wildlife, habitat management, deer/turkey). Jane has been hired as the steward of the Belding Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Vernon. Her responsibilities at Belding WMA include monitoring wildlife populations, managing habitat, providing public

outreach, and implementing environmental education programs. (See the article about Belding WMA in the March/April 2005 issue of



Jane Seymour

*Connecticut Wildlife*.)

Because she has always been fascinated by wildlife species and their interactions with their habitats, Jane decided to pursue a B.S. degree in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Massachusetts. She is currently enrolled in the Master's program in the Department of Natural Resources at the University of Connecticut. She has been conducting research on American kestrels for her Master's thesis.

Jane brings to the job experience in survey techniques and species identification for a wide variety of organisms. Her major accomplishments include conducting a natural resources inventory and

writing the management plan for Belding WMA, as well as trapping and tracking 14 American kestrels in Connecticut using radiotelemetry to determine home range size and habitat use.

In her free time, Jane enjoys reading, hiking, birdwatching, and art.

### **Shannon Kearney, Wildlife Technician, Wildlife Diversity Program**

Shannon started out her career with the DEP as a seasonal employee for the Wildlife Division's Habitat Management Program. During that time she marked WMA property boundaries, marked forest cut areas, consolidated hunting maps, checked bluebird boxes, conducted Geographic Information System (GIS) classification for WMAs, and participated in bird surveys. After taking some time off to continue working on her education, Shannon was hired as an avian technician for the Division's Wildlife Diversity Program.

Although she grew up in Connecticut, Shannon decided to pursue her B.S. degree in Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She eventually returned to Connecticut where she received graduate certification in Geographical Information Sciences from the University of Connecticut. Shannon is currently working on her PhD in Pathobiology and Veterinary Sciences, also at the University of Connecticut. Her studies focus on the distribution of West Nile Virus in birds in Connecticut. Shannon also has experience monitoring various avian populations, including seabirds, shorebirds, wetland birds, grassland birds, raptors, and wood warblers.

One of the accomplishments that Shannon is most proud of is when she constructed a remote infrared camera system (with the help of her husband, Nils McGee) that involved radio

transmitted signals, time lapse video photography, and deep cycle marine batteries. The construction wasn't the most difficult part of this project, it was the deployment into a floating bog! They needed to bring four deep cycle marine batteries (which needed to be replaced every three days), the video unit, and the actual cameras to the bog, and make sure the whole thing didn't sink! All of this was done from a canoe, with screaming terns hitting them on the head.

When asked why she chose a career in wildlife, Shannon answered, "*While at the University of Wisconsin, I was interested in one of the biology majors or engineering. As I was cruising the campus to get information from the different departments, I experienced a strange incident involving a very persuasive "ladybug" beetle. To make a long story short, I didn't make it to the engineering building to pick up information. Shortly thereafter, I decided that wildlife would be an interesting major. I originally had plans to use the degree to eventually attend veterinary school, but I had so much fun working in the wildlife field (living on islands or other remote locations and working with birds), that vet school was no longer attractive.*"

Shannon is excited to now be involved in management as well as research at the state level. When she is not studying birds, Shannon likes to spend her time running, biking, swimming, and even contra dancing with her husband.

### **Carrie Pomfrey, Wildlife Technician, Habitat Management Program**

Carrie has moved to Connecticut from Virginia to work with the Wildlife Division's Habitat Management Program. Initially, she will be working with nuisance beaver and deer issues, preparing land agreements, and performing habitat work.

Carrie has a B.S. degree in Wildlife Sciences from Virginia Tech, and she participates in as many continuing education workshops as she can. She has plans to eventually earn a Master's degree in the environmental field. She is proud of her dedication to learn and her experience in carnivore ecology. She



Shannon Kearney



Carrie Pomfrey

contributed to several different wildlife projects before coming to Connecticut: red wolf reintroduction in North Carolina,

river otter dynamics in Missouri, and black bear research in Virginia. While working in Virginia, she prepared numerous management plans, implemented management strategies in the field, and educated the public about natural resources. Carrie brings to her new job a broad range of experience in resource management, from recreational programs to scientific research, both in the field and in the office.

When asked why she chose a career in wildlife biology, Carrie responded, *“As a child I lived on a dead end street and used to spend hours playing in the woods at the end of the street and behind my house. I also brought home all sorts of critters, to the dismay of my dad. It was just a natural choice to make a career out of ‘playing.’”*

Carrie enjoys art, dance, music, and the outdoors. In her free time, she likes to read, exercise, pamper her dogs, and spend time with friends. She also has an interest in wildlife rehabilitation, and likes to assist licensed rehabilitators when she is able to.

### **Jason Hawley, Wildlife Technician, Furbearer Program**

Jason has returned to his home state of Connecticut to work with furbearers and other mammals. Helping the Division assess and manage the state’s growing black bear population will be one of Jason’s first job assignments.

Jason graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst with a B.S. degree in Wildlife Conservation and just recently graduated (May 2005) from Central Michigan University with a M.S. degree in Conservation Biology. His graduate thesis is entitled: *“Experimental Assessment of Shock Collars as a Non-lethal Control Method for Free-ranging Wolves in Wisconsin.”*

Jason has had the opportunity to contribute to the conservation efforts of three endangered canids—Mexican gray wolf, island fox, and timber wolf. He recognizes that predators are often unduly persecuted animals, yet they hold extreme value to the overall health of the ecosystem. Because many predators are still endangered or threatened, Jason has always considered their conservation or reintroduction a high-priority in the field of wildlife biology.

When asked why he chose a career in wildlife biology, Jason responded, *“Growing up in northwestern Connecticut, I spent most of my time in the woods camping, hiking, fishing, and hunting. At a young age, I learned the importance of protecting natural resources, which are often taken for granted. Through my outdoor experiences, I became fascinated*



Jason Hawley

*with wildlife and set out to learn as much as I could about the animals that lived in the woods around me. I would spend hours following tracks, waiting in trees, and attempting to identify sign. As I grew older, I became very concerned with the rate at which wildlife habitat was being lost due to development in Connecticut. I wanted to do as much as I could to help protect and restore wildlife and wildlife habitat. To protect something, we must first understand it. So naturally, I chose wildlife biology as a career.”*

In his spare time, Jason enjoys camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing, snowshoeing, and playing basketball. He looks forward to using his experience with wildlife-human conflict resolution, predator/furbearer research and management, and human dimensions of wildlife management to benefit the Division. He is excited about returning to Connecticut and having the opportunity to contribute to the conservation, research, and management of the state’s wildlife.

### **Christina Kocer, Wildlife Technician, Wildlife Diversity Program**

Christina is new to Connecticut and the Wildlife Division, moving here from Nebraska where she finished her Master’s degree in 2004 in Natural Resources, Wildlife Ecology from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. She earned a B.S. degree in Environmental Sciences, with an emphasis in Biology from the University of Dubuque in Iowa. Christina joins the Division’s Wildlife Diversity Program where she will be working with small mammals, including bats, flying squirrels, and shrews. She also will provide support for projects involving furbearers and birds.

Christina is fortunate to have been able to work on a variety of wildlife projects and with different species, including brief work with reptiles, birds, and fish, and more extensive work with furbearers and small mammals. For example, she was able to get a glimpse into Blandings turtle research by volunteering for a short time with The Nature Conservancy. She also has had opportunities to work on fisheries-related activities, including electro-shocking and spawning procedures at a fish hatchery. Her work with small mammals includes a mark-recapture study and a statewide hantavirus surveillance project in Nebraska. She

also spent over two years working with furbearers, using radio telemetry and GIS analyses. Christina’s diverse background, specifically her work with mammals and small mammal disease, will prove beneficial in planning and implementing upcoming projects. Because of this diversity, Christina also has the potential to help with projects outside of her primary focus area. She welcomes the opportu-



Christina Kocer

*continued on page 19*

# Volunteer CE/FS Instructors Honored at Annual Ceremony

Written by David Kubas, Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program Coordinator

Connecticut's Conservation Education/Firearms (CE/FS) Program honored its volunteer safety instructors on April 10th at the Annual Awards and Recognition Dinner. This year's event marked the 23rd anniversary of Connecticut's CE/FS Program. Since 1982, 107,167 students have graduated from one of the three programs: firearms, bowhunting, and trapping. The 328 volunteer instructors honored at this event donated 13,741 hours during 2004 to conduct 151 courses for 3,961 students enrolled in basic firearms, bowhunting, and trapping programs.

At the dinner, two instructors also were recognized from each of the firearms, bowhunting, and trapping programs who have made exceptional contributions during the past year. The prestigious "Award of Merit" was given to instructors Lawrence King, Francis Wasyluk, and Warren Speh for their outstanding efforts in teaching classes and their participation in other activities directly related to the CE/FS Program. Instructors Henri Baxter and Carl Carlson were chosen by CE/FS Program coordinator David Kubas to recognize them for their individual long-standing and unique contributions to hunter



Award recipients at the 23rd Annual CE/FS Recognition Dinner: (seated, front) Henri Baxter; (front row, standing; l to r) Dan Troy, Arthur Vignola, Lawrence King, Carl Carlson, Frederick Becker, David Kubas (CE/FS Program Coordinator); (back, l to r) Francis Wasyluk, Francis Hasuly, Robert Kukuck, Chris Santisero, Mark Fowler, Richard Potter, Warren Speh, and Emmett Lyman.

education in the State of Connecticut. In addition, Junior Assistant Arthur Vignola was recognized for his outstanding contribution of 142 hours to the Program.

Special recognition for their contributions and support to Connecticut's CE/FS Program also was given to the Bozrah Rod and Gun Club and the High Rock Shooting Association. The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) received the Organization Award for special contributions on behalf of hunter education in Connecticut. Jodi Valenta, Director of NSSF's Recruitment and Retention Initiative accepted the award on their behalf.

The DEP Wildlife Division is proud of the hundreds of instructors who donate their time and expertise to educating Connecticut's citizens to be safe and responsible hunters. Connecticut's program continues to be recognized as one of the best in the nation, thanks to the efforts of our volunteers

## Top Honors for 2004:

### Firearms

Mark Fowler, Emmett Lyman

### Bowhunting

Francis Hasuly, Richard Potter

### Trapping

Frederick Becker, Robert Kukuck

### Award of Merit

Lawrence King, Francis Wasyluk, Warren Speh

### Coordinator's Award

Henri Baxter, Carl Carlson

### Outstanding Junior Assistant

Arthur Vignola

### Organization Awards

National Shooting Sports Foundation

### Club Awards

Bozrah Rod and Gun Club  
High Rock Shooting Association

E. KUBAS (2)



Jodi Valenta (right), Director of the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Recruitment and Retention Initiative, accepted the Organization Award from CE/FS Program Coordinator David Kubas.



## A Fond Farewell to Jerry Mersereau

Jerry Mersereau had a passion for raptors that surpassed most. He dedicated his life to these magnificent birds; a life that suddenly ended on April 15, 2005. Those who knew Jerry well know that he still had so much to do. Fortunately, Jerry did more than he can ever imagine for the conservation of raptors that live in or migrate through Connecticut. At almost 78 years old, Jerry had spent countless hours over the years volunteering his time to trap, band, and observe such raptors as ospreys, kestrels, and Cooper's hawks.

Jerry was well known for his work with ospreys. An article in the September/October 2004 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife* detailed Jerry's efforts over the years to monitor the state's osprey population after it plummeted in the 1960s. He was part of a study team that began observing and inspecting osprey nests to try and determine why osprey eggs were not hatching. It was eventually determined that the osprey population was declining because of the impact of the pesticide DDT (which caused eggshells to weaken and crack) and a lack of suitable nest sites. DDT was finally banned in the United States and osprey platforms were put up along Connecticut's coastline by the DEP and concerned citizens. Jerry then went to work to monitor the comeback of the osprey. Every year, he visited osprey nests to place leg bands on the young and collect valuable data about each bird. In 2004, Jerry and his helpers banded 134 young ospreys . . . quite a difference from the few young that hatched from only nine active nests in 1974! The osprey population has made a remarkable recovery and is now thriving in Connecticut.

Jerry learned how to band hawks at Cape May Point in New Jersey and Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania during the 1960s and 1970s. He was a federally licensed bird bander who banded raptors in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, and Florida. He banded every species of hawk, eagle, and owl common to the Northeast.

For almost 30 years, each fall, Jerry ran a banding station at Griswold Point in Old Lyme. Since 1976, Jerry trapped and leg banded over 3,000 hawks of nine different species at the Old Lyme banding station, some seasons catching more than 250 birds. During all that time, there was only one recoverable injury and no fatalities. Jerry's trapping records show a gradual decline in sharp-shinned hawks, beginning in 1987 to a drastic decline from 2000 to 2004. Kestrel totals were excellent until a drastic decline in 2002 to 2004. Cooper's hawk totals averaged one to two per season for the first five seasons, starting in 1976, rising to an average of 18 in the most recent trapping seasons. The data that Jerry collected over the years are invaluable because the information was collected consistently for such a long period of time. Wildlife Division biologist Julie Victoria, who had spent many hours in the field with Jerry, has offered to complete Jerry's last banding schedule and organize his remaining bands.

Besides trapping fall migrants, Jerry also would "road trap" for kestrels throughout much of the year. Since he began road trapping in the early 1970s, there have been some dramatic changes in his data. In the 1970s and 1980s, many kestrels were caught during winter, with body weights of 120



Jerry holds an osprey chick that he banded in July 2004.

grams to over 150 grams. But, the winter body weights started to decline in the 1990s and, then, winter kestrels just about disappeared in Connecticut. His catches of spring migrant kestrels also declined in that time span. Jerry was concerned about the decline of kestrels and, before his passing, was talking to the DEP Wildlife Division and others about trying to find out why this little falcon was disappearing.

All who were fortunate to accompany Jerry when he was banding raptors quickly found out that he was an excellent teacher. Any newcomer to the banding experience was given a thorough lesson on the birds' life history, why they are banded, what kind of information is gathered, characteristics of the young birds and so much more. You usually walked away with a better understanding of and appreciation for all raptors.

Jerry received two Certificates of Appreciation from the Wildlife Division for his work with ospreys. He also published an article in 1964 in *The Auk* with Peter Ames entitled "Some factors in the decline of osprey in Connecticut," which is often cited in osprey papers, even today. In 1983, he received the Maurice Broun Award for his contribution to the study of hawk migration from the Hawk Migration Association of North America, of which he was an active member. Jerry also was an active member of the Northeast Hawk Watch, Connecticut's Bald Eagle Study Group, Connecticut Ornithological Association, Hartford Audubon Society, and Eastern Bird Banding group. Jerry also received the respect and admiration of all who were associated with him.

Don Hopkins, a longtime friend and fellow raptor enthusiast, read a tribute to Jerry at his memorial service. The tribute read, in part, "He was so meticulous when working with raptors that he could drive you to distraction. We understood that this was his devotion to the raptors and we loved him for it, like an uncle. To paraphrase Shakespeare, 'the good a man

*continued on page 16*

# Swift and Daring - Terns in Connecticut

Written by Paul Fusco, Wildlife Outreach Program

P. J. FUSCO



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Terns, like this least tern, hunt by sight, hovering over their quarry before diving head-first into the water to catch small fish with their bill.

Connecticut's shoreline in the summer would not be complete without the noisy chatter of terns as they course over shallow water in pursuit of food. Related to gulls, terns are smaller and slimmer. They have long pointed wings and forked tails. Most are whitish with a black cap during the breeding season. There are three species of terns that nest in Connecticut and a number of others that can be found during late summer or times of migration.

Terns are strong, swift fliers with daring agility. They are well adapted to making their living over water, in search of their main prey, fish. Their typical style is to find their quarry by sight, get themselves into position for a strike by hovering over the target, and then dive head first into the water to catch small fish with their bill. Not all dives are successful, but when they are, that is when the fun begins for some terns.

As well as being good hunters, some terns also are good at being pirates. Common terns can be aggressive and have been known to chase down and rob other terns that are carrying food. In

Connecticut, they have been known to victimize their smaller relative, the least tern, at areas where both species are found in close proximity. As a least tern returns to the colony carrying a fish to feed its young, common terns will attack and chase it, forcing the terrorized least tern to drop its catch. The fish will then be snatched by one of the perpetrators and brought back to its own nest to feed to its young.

In Connecticut, terns nest on the ground in colonies that may hold from a few pairs to as many as a few thousand pairs of nesting birds. They will aggressively defend their colony from intruders and predators by fearlessly diving at them, pecking, and defecating on them. The great blue heron that makes a lazy, inadvertent flight over a common tern colony will undergo a lesson in life. The heron will get bombarded, pecked, and screamed at relentlessly until it high-tails its way out of the area.

## *Least Tern*

The smallest of our terns is the least tern, which nests in colonies on the

mainland in areas with sandy beaches or sand spits and sparse vegetative cover. These dynamic shoreline habitats are subject to change by the forces of nature. However, these habitats also experience heavy recreational use by people during summer at the same time the terns are nesting and rearing their chicks. This situation has the potential to negatively impact nesting colonies.

While Northeast regional populations seem to be stable, breeding least terns have averaged a long-term decline in Connecticut. The principle reasons for the decline are a combination of habitat loss due to beachfront development, disturbance from a variety of human related causes, and extreme high

tides that wash out nests.

Beachfront development has increased over the last 20 years, leaving fewer potential nesting locations for least terns along Connecticut's shoreline. This is an important factor because of the dynamics of beach dune habitat and the terns' need to have alternate nest sites when a site becomes unsuitable. Nesting locations may change from year to year because of beach erosion, the rearrangement of sand by winter storms, or vegetation overtaking a previously used nesting area. When any of these situations occur, terns may need to use an alternate site to remain successful breeders. Terns also may relocate if their first nesting attempt is lost early in the nesting season.

Depredation on tern eggs and young occurs from a long list of predators. Black-crowned night herons, gulls, crows, skunks, foxes, raccoons, rats, and outdoor cats may all prey on tern colonies. At some locations, dogs have the potential to cause catastrophic damage to a nesting colony. Terns view a dog as a canine predator, the same as if

it were a fox. Colonies that are disturbed too often by dogs may be abandoned by the birds.

Least terns are listed as a state threatened species in Connecticut. They frequently nest at the same locations as the federally threatened piping plover. The DEP Wildlife Division affords protection to both species during their nesting seasons by using fencing, signage, and volunteer monitors to protect nest colonies and educate beachgoers. Wildlife professionals also continually strive to protect the birds while educating the beach-going public.

### **Common Tern**

A medium-sized tern with a widespread distribution, the common tern is the one most often seen in Connecticut. This adaptive bird nests in the open on offshore islands and mainland beaches at numerous locations along the coast. The largest common tern colony is on Falkner Island, off the coast of Guilford, where their numbers may reach 4,000 breeding pairs. In some locations they nest alongside least terns and piping plovers.

Despite their distribution and seemingly large numbers, common terns are considered vulnerable because they nest in colonies. They are listed in Connecticut as a species of special concern.

### **Roseate Tern**

Terns, as a family, are elegant birds, but the most graceful of all may be the roseate. With its long wings, streamlined body, and long, deeply forked tail, the roseate's buoyant flight rides the wind in style. Similar in size and appearance to

the common tern, the roseate tern is paler, has a longer tail, and has a darker bill during the breeding season.

Roseate terns are found in small numbers in Connecticut, nesting at several offshore islands. The main nesting colony in Connecticut is on Falkner Island, where there may be between 100 and 200 nesting pairs. In some years, smaller numbers of roseates may nest on a few other offshore islands. In our region, roseate terns tend to nest under the cover of vegetation or rocks. At Falkner Island, roseates successfully breed in old tires and boxes that have been placed on the island by researchers to provide the terns with artificial cover for eggs and chicks.

Roseate terns are a state and federal endangered species. The nest colony at Falkner Island is one of the largest roseate tern colonies in the region. The

island is part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, where each summer a team of researchers protects and manages the tern colony. In our region, the main stronghold of roseate terns is the Cape Cod/eastern Long Island area. Roseate terns are highly pelagic compared to the other terns, spending much of their life offshore.

### **Non-breeding Terns in CT**

In August and September, common terns gather in large numbers at such staging areas as West Haven and Milford before migrating south for the winter. At these locations, common terns can be seen in a variety of plumages, including adults, in breeding or wintering plumage, and young fledglings and juveniles. This also is a good time of year to find other species of terns that don't breed in

Connecticut, but may be present during their post-breeding wanderings. Arctic, black, bridled, Caspian, Forster's, gull-billed, royal, Sandwich, and sooty terns have all been observed in Connecticut.

Black terns and Forster's terns are regular visitors to Connecticut, while the others are less common. The most likely tern from this group to be seen in the state during spring is the black tern. Small numbers visit the coast during their spring and late summer

*continued on next page*



**A common tern shows off its catch along the shoreline.**

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### **Why Nest in a Colony?**

**Terns nesting in colonies gain protection from predators and intruders through the active defense by all of the individuals in the colony. When large numbers of terns aggressively defend their colony, they have a greater impact defending their nests than would a single bird or smaller numbers of birds.**

**When the colony begins to form, the most experienced birds arrive early to claim the best nesting spots. These early arrivals are gradually surrounded by birds that arrive later as the colony builds. The early arrivals will end up with the better, most protected areas in what will be the middle of the colony. Late arrivals will end up in the perimeter areas. The birds nesting toward the outer edges of the colony are the ones most susceptible to losing their nests due to flooding, predation, or heavy disturbance. By nesting in a colony, all of the birds gain protection from the others, and the most experienced birds tend to be the most successful in raising young.**

## Terns,

*continued from previous page*

migrations as they move to and from their more northern freshwater breeding areas in northern New York, Vermont, Maine, and southern Canada. Black terns, as with most terns, spend their winters south of the United States.

The most common non-breeding tern found in our state is the Forster's tern. Its breeding range includes coastal locations slightly to the south, in parts of New Jersey. The Forster's terns that visit Connecticut are either post-breeding wanderers from the south or migrants coming to the coast from inland breeding areas in the Midwest.

### Conservation

Historically, tern populations declined steeply in the 1800s when huge numbers were killed for the millinery trade. Some species were nearly wiped out. 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, some of which have already been discussed. The major threat facing these birds is the continued development, encroachment,

and exploitation of shoreline areas that are close to tern nesting colonies. Protection of these breeding locations is essential for tern conservation. In the long-term, additional properties that have the potential for tern breeding also should be protected as "set-aside conservation areas." These set-asides could become very important breeding areas if traditional nesting locations become unsuitable.

The dynamics of barrier beaches are such that shifting sands both destroy and create tern nesting habitat. Beach stabilization projects take away those dynamics, thus removing the areas from the total potential tern nesting habitat.

If you are interested in becoming a tern monitor for part of the summer or for the July 4th weekend, contact the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, at 860-399-2513.



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P. J. FUSCO (2)

State and federally endangered roseate terns on Falkner Island are fitted with color coded leg bands that allow researchers to monitor the population.



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State threatened least terns nest on sandy beaches at shoreline locations where colonies can reach over 100 pairs.

# New Wildlife Regulations Effective in May 2005

- In an effort to curtail illegal activities and vandalism that have been occurring at many state wildlife management areas (WMA) at night, all WMAs will be closed to the public from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise, except for persons hunting, fishing, or conducting other activities authorized by the DEP.

- The minimum acreage requirement necessary to establish a private shooting preserve was reduced from 300 acres to 200 acres to allow more private clubs to qualify as shooting preserves.

- The season for the taking of diamondback terrapins has been closed. (See page 14 for more on this topic.)

## *Small Game*

- Pheasants taken during the pheasant hunting season by one person may not be tagged by another and the daily bag limit for pheasants taken on private club lands was removed.

- A new definition of the cartridge size and projectile weight of ammunition that can be used for hunting with rifles or handguns on state or private lands allows the use of the newly marketed .17 caliber rimfire ammunition. The DEP has evaluated the characteristics of the .17 caliber ammunition and has deemed it appropriate for small game hunting.

- The DEP may use alternative methods of issuing permits under the permit-required hunting reservation system. This facilitates the use of computer-based reservation systems or other alternatives to the current written permit reservation system on permit-required hunting areas, thereby improving the convenience for hunters.

- The ruffed grouse hunting season has been shortened to reduce hunter-caused mortality of grouse. Ruffed grouse populations are declining, in part, because of a decline in early successional habitat. The season will open on the third Saturday in October and end on the last day of November, instead of on the second Saturday in January. The daily bag limit also was reduced from two to one and the season limit was changed from 10 to eight.

- The fall firearms turkey season has been extended from the first Saturday in October through October 31. Hunters will be able to purchase both a private and state land permit during the fall firearms turkey season. This regulation expands the fall firearms turkey season to provide additional opportunity for hunters to use an abundant and growing wildlife resource that has been fully restored throughout Connecticut.

## *Deer*

- When in a tree stand at least 10 feet off the ground, archery deer hunters are exempt from the requirement to wear fluorescent orange clothing during the private land firearms deer seasons in zones designated by the DEP commissioner. This regulation increases the effectiveness of bowhunting in areas with high deer populations while having no adverse safety impact on bowhunters or the public. These hunters, however, must wear fluorescent orange when traveling to and from a tree stand.

- The mandatory deer check station system for the muzzleloader deer season will be replaced with a mandatory harvest report card system. Because few deer are harvested

during the muzzleloader season, the harvest cards represent a more convenient and cost-effective method of collecting basic data while providing DEP Law Enforcement with a mechanism to verify mandatory harvest reporting.

- Any hunter who checks three antlerless deer during a designated season can obtain a replacement either-sex tag for use during that same season in zones designated by the DEP commissioner. This regulation should serve as an incentive for hunters to harvest multiple antlerless deer in support of the DEP's deer population management objectives.

## *Waterfowl*

- Surveys conducted by the DEP indicate that a majority of waterfowl hunters are willing to pay more for the Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp, as long as the funds remain dedicated to the conservation and management of waterfowl habitat. Therefore, the price of the Duck Stamp was increased to \$10 to help generate up to \$70,000 per year.

- The construction of permanent waterfowl hunting blinds or structures on state-controlled lands or waters is prohibited. Abandoned blinds are unsightly, may conflict with wildlife management activities, and those that are placed in waterways can become hazards to navigation.

- The requirement for hunters to obtain a special permit for the extended goose season in the south zone has been eliminated.

- A technical change, consistent with Public Act 03-192, was implemented to allow waterfowl hunters to use any non-toxic shot approved for use by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Based on the recommendations of the DEP's Hunting Review Team, which conducted a field evaluation with regards to public safety and the physical characteristics of the site, a portion of Plum Bank Marsh in Old Saybrook will be closed to hunting.

## *Trapping*

- Padded metal traps, on or below ground, can be used from December 1 through January 31 for the taking of coyotes on private land parcels of at least 10 contiguous acres where the landowner has given written permission explicitly for the use of such traps. Any person using such traps must have completed a trapping course. This regulation will allow for more efficient methods for trapping coyotes. The acreage restriction and required written landowner permission were included to minimize the chance of incidental capture of domestic animals.

- An open trapping season for fisher has been established during November, with a season bag limit of two and a requirement that all fisher pelts be tagged by the DEP. The season will open on the first Sunday following the first Saturday of November until November 30. Regulated trapping will provide an opportunity to harvest a species that has been restored throughout Connecticut and provide DEP biologists with additional biological information. (See page 14 for more on this topic).



## *Bluebird Nest Box Workshop a Success*

Over 150 people participated in a bluebird nest box workshop at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center in February. Pre-cut wood kits were available for \$5.00 and Friends of Sessions Woods members assisted with nest box construction. Wildlife Division technician Geoffrey Krukar provided information on where to place the boxes for maximum nesting success. Over 50 boxes were constructed by children and adults, who planned to erect them in the proper habitat so that they could be used by nesting bluebirds.

Look for other upcoming educational events at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center on the DEP website ([www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us)), or call the Session Woods office at 860-675-8130 (Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM).

## *Diamondback Terrapins Protected from Collection*

One of several new wildlife regulations (see page 13) has closed the season for the taking of diamondback terrapins, the only marine species of turtle that regularly occurs in Connecticut.

Several key issues facing diamondback terrapins include commercial harvest, illegal unregulated traffic for food markets, loss of nesting beaches through shoreline erosion and construction, egg predation, and fatal collisions with boats and jet skis. Members of the DEP's Amphibian and Reptile Advisory Committee believe that this species is in a long-term decline and that collection is accelerating the decline. Regulations previously allowed the harvest of diamondback terrapins with a possession limit of five. The season closure has been enacted to eliminate the impact that collection may be having on diamondback terrapins.

## *Fisher Trapping Season Set for 2005*

The story of the successful reintroduction of fishers to Connecticut has been relayed often in *Connecticut Wildlife*. It started with the release of 11 fishers in northwestern Connecticut in 1989. (The 7 females and 4 males were trapped and transplanted from Vermont and New Hampshire.) At the same time, fishers were already recolonizing the northeastern corner of the state from Massachusetts. Sighting reports and vehicle-kill data collected over the past 16 years have indicated that fishers are now widespread throughout the state. Because the fisher population is considered fully restored, a regulated trapping season

## *2004 Deer Hunting Season Results and Changes for 2005*

Hunters harvested 13,436 deer during Connecticut's 2004 regulated deer hunting seasons. The 2004 harvest total was the second highest harvest ever in Connecticut, falling short by about 300 deer from the record harvest of 13,740 in 1995. Compared to 2003, permit issuance in 2004 increased by two percent and deer harvest rates increased by six percent.

The largest increase in permit issuance and harvest occurred during the muzzleloader season. The increase in the harvest can probably be attributed to good snow conditions and the use of bait and replacement tags during the muzzleloader season. Bowhunters continue to show consistent annual increases in harvest rates over the past few years.

Over 1,300 replacement antlerless tags were issued during the 2004 deer hunting seasons, resulting in an additional 626 antlerless deer being harvested from deer management zones 11 and 12 (which include the southwestern corner of the state and the shoreline towns). More than half of all replacement tags were issued during the archery season and about 35 to 40 percent of the replacement tags issued during the firearms deer hunting seasons were used to harvest additional antlerless deer. About 80 percent of all antlerless deer harvested with replacement tags were female. The removal of one adult female during the hunting season is equivalent to reducing next year's deer herd by three deer (typically, one adult female will give birth to two offspring).

Hunting has been a successful tool to reduce and maintain deer populations at acceptable levels in most deer management zones. In more developed areas like Fairfield County and many of the shoreline towns, deer populations continue to increase. Changes in regulations to allow use of bait in these areas has increased hunter success and number of deer harvested per hunter. Bait has been a useful tool, especially in developed areas where hunters have access to relatively small parcels of land. Connecticut's deer season framework will continue to evolve until population stabilization is achieved.

New regulations regarding the deer hunting season have been approved for 2005. However, these changes are not in the 2005 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide. The changes include: 1) Muzzleloader hunters can report harvested deer on kill cards rather than checking deer at vendor check stations; and 2) Bowhunters are not required to wear fluorescent orange while hunting during the firearms seasons when in a tree stand at least 10 feet above ground (see article on page 13). For more details on the new regulations, visit the DEP website ([www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us)).

*Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program*

## *Wayward Raptor Visits CT*

In mid-April, Connecticut was visited by a spectacular raptor normally found in the southeastern part of the country. Hundreds of people, including some from other states, took advantage of the opportunity to observe a swallow-tailed kite that showed up near the lower Connecticut River. It stayed for over a week in Deep River, Essex, and Lyme, putting on shows before crowds of onlookers as it caught mayflies on the wing. It soared gracefully, in effortless flight, over large expanses of wetlands and fields. Appearing regularly at one favored location almost every day, the kite gave people a good chance to observe it while it caught flying insects with its talons.

How did a swallow-tailed kite end up in Connecticut? One theory is that strong storms that were in the southeast a few days before the kite appeared may have forced it farther north than it would normally have been found. This species is considered to be a rare but regular vagrant during the spring in some northeastern states, including Connecticut.



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has been established, to allow sportsmen the opportunity to make use of this fur resource. The anticipated low level of trapping effort, conservative season dates, and the limit of two fishers per season will ensure that harvest levels are not detrimental to the statewide fisher population. Carcasses of harvested fisher will be collected from trappers to obtain additional biological information about the population.

## FOSW Annual Meeting

The Friends of Sessions Woods (FOSW) held an annual meeting in April, drawing over 200 participants. President Clark Spencer reviewed the group's accomplishments over the past year, providing a very impressive list. The group received a grant from the Main Street Community Foundation from the Merriman Family Fund and the James R. Parker Trust to develop classroom space in the exhibit area of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center. The organization also was able to provide the Wildlife Division with several new taxidermy mounts for display; hosted various special events; purchased books for resale as a "satellite DEP store;" developed a website; and supported Wildlife Division staff in many other ways.

Following Clark's address to the audience, Wildlife Division biologist Paul Rego presented a program on coyotes and foxes. This informative program provoked many questions from inquisitive participants that Paul was happy to accommodate. The annual meeting also provided musical entertainment. Several local musicians took to the stage and performed jazz, rock, and contemporary musical tunes to a very enthusiastic audience. Thanks to the FOSW for all the fine work and support the members provide to the Wildlife Division.

## Keep an Eye Out for Wildlife License Plates!



The last issue of *Connecticut Wildlife* featured photographs of wildlife license plates sent in by our readers. Once again, we applaud several more readers for their commitment to wildlife by showing their support with the purchase of a bobcat or bald eagle license plate.

The top two wildlife license plates pictured here are proudly displayed on the vehicles owned by DEP Wildlife Division Assistant Director Greg Chasko and his wife. Greg writes, "Having devoted my entire career to the conservation of wildlife, I was excited when the new wildlife plates became available. I uncharacteristically splurged and bought vanity plates for both my wife's and my own vehicle. Both plates were intended to promote wildlife: 'WILD 1' as in 'wildlife is number 1' and 'GO WILD' as in 'go wildlife.' Any ambiguity in the plate names being reflective of our lifestyle was purely intentional."

The third plate pictured is one of two plates ordered by Holly and Dan Krouse in Barkhamsted and the bottom plate also is one of two plates ordered by Jason Marshall of Winsted.

You can join these dedicated people by purchasing your own wildlife license plate for your vehicle. Funds raised from sales and renewals of the plates will be used for wildlife research and management projects; the acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and management of wildlife habitat; and public outreach that promotes the conservation of Connecticut's wildlife diversity.

Application forms are available at DEP and Department of Motor Vehicle offices and on-line at [www.ct.gov/dmv](http://www.ct.gov/dmv).

## Your Questions Answered ????

The DEP Wildlife Division regularly receives questions regarding the issuance and use of junior hunting licenses and the interpretation of existing laws/regulations. The following information is meant to help answer those questions:

1. Junior hunting licenses can only be issued to persons 12, 13, 14, and 15 years of age.
2. The expiration date of these licenses is December 31 of the calendar year in which they were issued.
3. When a 15-year-old possessing a junior hunting license for the current calendar year turns 16 years of age, they **do not** need to purchase an adult license for the remainder of the year.
4. At age 16, a person holding a valid Junior Hunting License may hunt alone. The law requiring a minor to be accompanied by an adult licensed hunter references the person's age (15 and under), not the license type.
5. Any person with a valid Junior Hunting License may participate in the designated junior hunting training days for deer, turkey, and pheasant. The regulations do not reference the person's age. Therefore, a 16-year-old licensed as a junior hunter for the calendar year may also participate, but only if that person is accompanied by an adult mentor with the appropriate permit.
6. Federal regulations for participation in youth waterfowl hunter training days are specific to the age of the youth hunter (defined as 15 years of age or younger) and do not allow a 16-year-old to participate.

**Do you have a wildlife question you'd like to have answered?**

Please send it to:

Your Questions Answered  
DEP - Wildlife Division  
P.O. Box 1550  
Burlington, CT 06013

Email:

[katherine.herz@po.state.ct.us](mailto:katherine.herz@po.state.ct.us)

# Camp Columbia: A New Connecticut State Forest and State Park!

Written by David Irvin, DEP Forestry Division

In 2004, Camp Columbia State Forest and Camp Columbia State Historic Park were officially named and dedicated. They are located by Bantam Lake near the junction of Routes 109 and 209 in Morris. Most of the 600 acres are located in the town of Morris, with a small parcel in Bethlehem.

This property is a historic gem that has been mostly overlooked. The state originally acquired the property from Columbia University in 2000. Since then, it has undergone scrutiny to determine the best public use and land stewardship. Due partly to a history of active forest management and hunting, the majority of the property (532 acres) will be state forest, managed for multiple uses, including growth and harvest of forest products, wildlife habitat enhancement, research, hunting, and other recreational uses. Approximately 68 acres, including frontage on Bantam Lake, will be classified as a state park based on the historic and unique character of the area.

Camp Columbia was created circa 1903 when Columbia University purchased land from several farms to create a summer camp for engineering students. For eight decades, students used the property as their field location to put classroom skills to practical use, sometimes resulting in engineering breakthroughs. The university football team also practiced there and a number of dignitaries reportedly hunted on the property during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Dwight D. Eisenhower. During World War I, the Camp was used for combat training. The last class was held at the property by Columbia in the early 1980s, and since then the land has been essentially quiet, except for some forestry activities, including cultivation of a Christmas tree plantation.

Today, Camp Columbia consists of mostly mature hardwood forest, with some conifers, wetlands, and old field areas. Although relatively small compared to many DEP properties, there is a great deal of potential for wildlife habitat diversity through continued management of the property. Deer and turkey are both abundant at Camp Columbia and, in 2004, the property was opened to regulated hunting for the first time. Although some sections of the property have been restricted to archery hunting only, the majority of the state forest is open to all types of public hunting.



P. J. FUSCO

**This combination stone water tower and observation deck (not currently open to the public) provides a unique landmark and focal point for the state park portion of Camp Columbia. It is a perfect example of the Camp's era of youthful creativity in engineering.**

A long-term forest management plan will be developed for the property in 2005 and 2006, which will serve as a basis for activities and uses to occur at Camp Columbia. There is already volunteer interest in assisting with reestablishment of an old trail system on the property and, in general, the local community and other Connecticut residents are enthusiastic about the potential for this new open space acquisition.

There are now 32 state forests in Connecticut managed by the DEP Division of Forestry, totaling an estimated 169,250 acres. State forests comprise an estimated 68% of DEP land. Altogether, DEP owns and manages 249,000 acres of property statewide, primarily state forests, state parks, and wildlife management areas.

For questions about this new parcel, call the Division of Forestry at (860) 379-7085. For specific questions regarding wildlife and hunting regulations, call the Wildlife Division's Hartford office at (860) 424-3011. A hunting map of the property can be found on the DEP's website, [www.dep.state.ct.us](http://www.dep.state.ct.us).

## **Jerry Mersereau,**

*continued from page 9*

does is oft interred with their bones.' This is not the case with Jerry, for there are raptors still flying with bands that Jerry put on them, which may continue to produce data. And, there are generations of his friends which will continue to cherish the memories of the good times we had shared. He will be missed, but not forgotten by all his friends and some raptors."

Thanks are extended to Don Hopkins and Mike O'Leary who provided much of the information for this tribute to Jerry. Don and Mike are close friends of Jerry's who also devote a lot of their time to the conservation of raptors and other birds. Don is the founder of the Bald Eagle Study Group, which monitors Connecticut's bald eagle nests, and Mike has helped the Wildlife Division with the banding of bald eagles, ospreys, and Canada geese. *Kathy Herz, Editor*



# Four Bat Species Detected During Hibernacula Surveys

Written by Geoffrey Krukar, Wildlife Diversity Program

During February and March 2005, DEP Wildlife Division staff conducted a biennial survey of hibernating bats at six hibernacula located throughout western Connecticut. The purpose of this survey is to determine the number and species of bats using the various hibernacula. A hibernaculum is a cool, moist, dark place, such as a cave, mine, or aqueduct, where bats hibernate in stable temperatures and humidity levels. Five of Connecticut's eight bat species seek out a hibernaculum either in the state or in neighboring states. The other three bat species migrate to more southern areas to either hibernate or remain active throughout the winter.

The results of the 2005 hibernacula survey were encouraging. Approximately 400 more bats were observed during this year's survey than during any of the last three surveys. The bitter cold winter weather likely contributed to the increased numbers. Bats that might have attempted to hibernate at a smaller, less sheltered hibernaculum probably were forced to the larger, more protected hibernacula that were surveyed.

Surveys are conducted every other year to minimize disturbance to the hibernating bats. When in hibernation, bats are dependent solely on their fat reserves for the energy necessary to sustain life until spring arrives and a new supply of insects becomes available for consumption. Bats are able to reduce the rate at which the fat reserves are used by dropping their body temperature and lowering their heart and breathing rates. However, when a bat is disturbed during hibernation, it will quickly raise its body temperature by shivering. While this allows the bat to move away from the disturbance, it also uses up a large



P. J. FUSCO (3)

Wildlife Division technicians (l-r) Christina Kocer, Laura Saucier, and Geoffrey Krukar collect data on hibernating bats (species and number) in an aqueduct.

amount of the fat reserves. Bats that are forced to awaken from hibernation too many times may not have enough reserves to survive until spring.

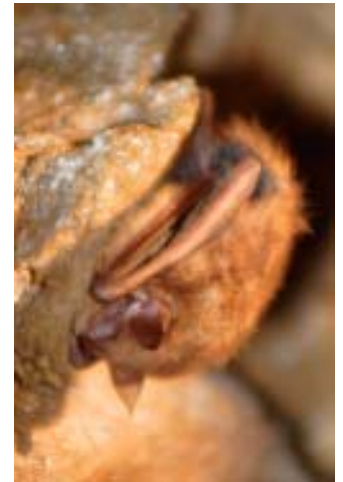
Four species of bats were detected during the surveys in 2005: the little brown, northern long-eared, eastern pipistrelle, and big brown bats. Little brown and northern long-eared bats often hibernate together, forming large,

tightly packed clusters.

These clusters can consist of hundreds of bats. Pipistrelles and big brown bats usually hibernate alone. Big brown bats typically select colder hibernating sites than the other three bat species.



Northern long-eared bat



Eastern pipistrelle

## Number of Bats Counted During Hibernacula Surveys

Town	1999	2001	2003	2005
Greenwich	136	162	244	162
Morris	9	20	21	17
New Milford	28	82	167	274
Roxbury	2,570	2,505	2,634	2,901
Terryville	83	101	35	61
Winsted	752	759	710	780
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,578</b>	<b>3,629</b>	<b>3,811</b>	<b>4,195</b>

## Banded Bats Found During Survey

Several wing-banded bats were observed during hibernacula surveys conducted in Connecticut in 2003 and 2005. The wing-bands were placed on the bats by certified researchers during the summer. At that time, data, such as the species, sex, reproductive status, and size of the bat, are recorded. The unique number sequence on the band allows researchers to track individual bats from summer roosting areas to winter hibernation sites.

# Just for Kids

## Nest Boxes

P. J. FUSCO



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### What animals use nest boxes?

Woodpeckers  
Squirrels  
Owls  
Bluebirds  
Wood Ducks  
and more!

### Predator Protection!

After placing a nest box in the correct habitat, be sure to protect it from predators, such as raccoons. How do you do this? Place a piece of sheet metal around the pole or tree where the nest box is attached to make it too slippery to climb.

### *The Right Rules!*

#### **#1 Make the entry hole the *right* size.**

*By correctly sizing the entry hole on a nest box, you can keep out larger, unwanted animals.*

#### **#2 Place the box in the *right* location.**

*It is important to place a box in the correct habitat and at the proper height.*

#### **#3 Attract the *right* animal.**

*Discourage invasive birds, like starlings and house sparrows, from nesting in bluebird nest boxes.*

### *Scarce Snags*

*Snags (standing dead trees) have cavities (holes), sometimes made by animals, that provide nest sites and shelter for wildlife. When snags are not common, a simple solution to help wildlife may be to put up a nest box.*

### **Building a Nest Box**

Here are some measurements for a screech owl nest box:

Floor size: 8 inches x 8 inches

Entrance hole: 3 inches in diameter

Entrance above floor: 9 to 12 inches

Make the box 12 to 15 inches deep

Place the box 10 to 30 feet above the ground

(Get some help for this one!)

Order the *Woodworking for Wildlife* booklet to get plans and instructions for building all kinds of nest boxes for wildlife. Send a check for \$10.00 (payable to the Nonharvested Wildlife Fund) to CT DEP Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.

# Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- May-August ..... Keep dogs off of Connecticut beaches to avoid disturbing nesting shorebirds.  
..... 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 receptacles. Improperly discarded fishing line is a hazard for wildlife.
- June 4 ..... **National Trails Day**, sponsored by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA). Events are planned across Connecticut, in parks, forests, and at nature centers. Hike, learn about trails and history, do trail maintenance, ride horses, or try orienteering. For a brochure or more information, call CFPA at (860) 346-2372 or email [info@ctwoodlands.org](mailto:info@ctwoodlands.org).  
..... **National Trails Day Hike at Sessions Woods**, beginning at 9:00 AM. Join Friends of Sessions Woods members Elmer and Joanne Madsen for a four-mile hike that starts at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area parking lot, in Burlington. This moderately-paced hike will follow a trail past the Beaver Pond to the Lookout Tower, for a spectacular view, and onto the Tree Id Trail. There may be an opportunity after the hike to view the exhibits in the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center and browse through books available from the DEP bookstore.
- July 4 ..... While viewing fireworks displays at Connecticut coastal areas, respect fenced and posted shorebird nesting areas and offshore rookeries.
- August 13-14 ..... Sharon Audubon's Summer Festival (see page 5 for details).

## New Employees,

continued from page 7

nity to work with a variety of projects and species.

When asked why she chose a career in wildlife biology, Christina responded, "I wanted to have a career that was interesting, challenging, and dynamic – I don't like the idea of doing exactly the

same thing every day. With wildlife, you never know what will happen next. There are always opportunities to learn; new questions come up almost every day. I enjoy the outdoors and have had a fascination with all wildlife species since I was young."

In her free time, Christina enjoys hiking, biking, camping, running,

kayaking/canoeing, and generally being outdoors. She also enjoys music and exploring her artistic side. She is excited about the opportunity to work for the Wildlife Division, and looks forward to upcoming projects, new experiences, and learning more about Connecticut in general.

## Step Up to the Plate for Wildlife...

and show your support by displaying a wildlife license plate on your vehicle.



There are two great designs to choose from: the state-endangered bald eagle or the secretive bobcat.

Funds raised from sales and renewals of the plates will be used for wildlife research and management projects; the acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and management of wildlife habitat; and public outreach that promotes the conservation of Connecticut's wildlife diversity.

Application forms are available at DEP and Department of Motor Vehicle offices and on-line at [www.ct.gov/dmv](http://www.ct.gov/dmv).



# Connecticut Wildlife

## Subscription Order

Please make checks payable to:

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

Check one:

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

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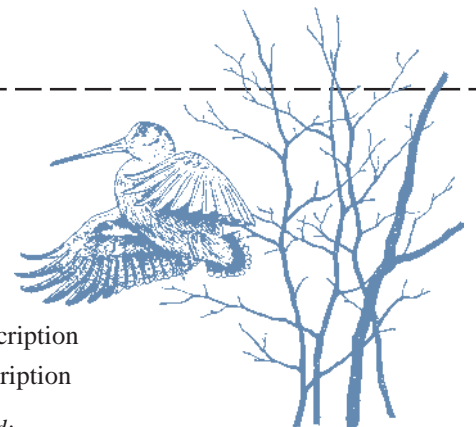
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This young raccoon was cared for by a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator. As “cute” as this raccoon may appear, it is illegal to keep wild animals as pets and raising wildlife for successful return to the wild requires considerable knowledge of appropriate feeding formulas, countless hours of care, and appropriate outdoor caging, in addition to the required state and/or federal permits.

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