May/June 2018

CONNECTICUT Wildlife

From the Director's Desk

It is often hard to see the role we play in a larger context. We toil over the pile of work in front of us, and rarely step back and consider what we have accomplished. I was recently asked to do just that and the results were awe-inspiring.

Thanks to the work of staff throughout the agency, our small state has emerged as a leader in the conservation of rare and imperiled species. That leadership is expressed at local, regional, national, and international scales.

The notable achievements range from the small to large, with each putting the talents and commitment of our exceptional staff on display. And, each is richly rewarding in its own right. For example, working with collaborators has led to the successful development of new colonies of endangered Puritan tiger beetles along the shores of the Connecticut River. Yes, who would have thought that playing in the sand (excavating beetle larvae for translocation) would be so fulfilling. Another example is the 2015 announcement by U.S. Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell highlighting Connecticut's leadership among a collection of states in restoring New England cottontails to their native range so that listing as an endangered species was not warranted. Perhaps the biggest conservation opportunity to rise on the national scene is the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, introduced in the U.S. Congress this session. Connecticut played a formative role in the development of the concepts within the Bill and continues to play a leadership role in supporting its eventual adoption (keep your fingers crossed). We haven't stopped there. Connecticut has enjoyed a long history of conservation leadership within the international community through representing the United States and the States themselves in two notable international treaties – the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna. But, the work is far from finished. In the former, Connecticut is a central player in defining management actions and regulatory structures intent on conserving stocks of Atlantic salmon throughout the North Atlantic. In the latter, staff are working to shape the Strategic Vision of the 180 country treaty organization to ensure world-wide trade does not threaten rare species with extinction, while ensuring the interests of Connecticut and the other states are being met.

"Little" Connecticut remains committed to achieving great things. Through hard work, commitment, and perseverance, our talented team will continue to make great strides for all wildlife, both here at home and in faraway places. That's what makes it so easy to come to work each day; knowing that today you can make a difference, locally and globally.

Rick Jacobson, Wildlife Division Director

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

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Cover:

The beautifully-colored indigo bunting nests in open woodlands in Connecticut, preferring brushy and weedy areas. Volunteers for the Connecticut Bird Atlas project are documenting the presence of this bird and many others that migrate through and breed and winter in our state. See page 20.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Burning for Wildlife

Prescribed burn at Tunxis State Forest

Article and photos by Paul Benjunas, DEEP Wildlife Division

Historically, fire has had a profound impact on Connecticut's landscape. Periodic wildfires were once essential to sustaining eastern grasslands, oak savannas, much of the oak forest, and pitch pine/scrub oak forests. The elimination of fire in recent times has led to instability in these ecosystems. Without fire or mowing, woody vegetation quickly reclaims grasslands. As a result of this natural succession and the general decline in farming practices, grassland habitat has diminished so much in New England that some butterflies (i.e. fritillaries) and grassland birds (i.e. eastern meadowlark) have experienced steep population declines.

Naturally occurring fire was not the only cause for the creation of grassland habitats. Native Americans purposely created extensive grasslands in southern New England by setting frequent fires. They also used fire in abandoned agricultural fields to enhance habitat for game animals. Additionally, numerous smaller inland meadows were created naturally through the work of beavers. These "beaver meadows" appeared after beavers abandoned their dams, and the water behind the dams was able to drain out. Human restriction of beaver activity has ultimately led to a decline in available "beaver meadow" habitat.

(Above) Wildlife Division biologist Geoff Krukar, Igniter (left), and Rich Schenk, of the Division of Forestry and also Division Supervisor for the west side of the burn, stand by with drip torches as they observe fire behavior along the firebreak.

(Top right) DEEP Forester David Irvin, also Burn Boss Trainee on the operation, monitors progress of the burn as two separate Divisions carefully light edges of the field while in close radio contact with one another.

Using Fire to Create Habitat

In late April 2018, the DEEP Forestry Division

successfully conducted a controlled burn across 18 acres of field within Tunxis State Forest in West Hartland along Route 20 (Center Street). This was the only controlled burn the Forestry Division was able to carry out on state land this year due to cold and damp spring weather conditions. The burn was led by forester David Irvin as a Burn Boss Trainee and 14 other highly-trained and experienced personnel from DEEP's Divisions of Forestry, Wildlife, State Parks, and Support Services.

The purpose of the burn was to maintain the native "warm season" grasses present in the field and eliminate competition by woody stems that were beginning to encroach as a result of natural vegetative succession. Fire can be an effective tool in maintaining grassland habitat because it does not require the use of chemicals, and it also immediately returns nutrients to the soil. This encourages native grass species, including big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass to return with a healthy density. Grasslands are recognized as critical habitats for a number of wildlife species, most notably birds like the state species of special concern bobolink and savannah sparrow, and the state threatened eastern meadowlark. Bobolinks have historically been known to use this particular field at Tunxis State Forest.

The window of opportunity to complete the burn during 2018 was closing quickly due to unfavorable weather conditions, especially because the bobolinks were expected to return to the field by early May and begin nesting around the middle of the month. While weather is a significant factor in implementing a controlled burn, other factors, such as time since significant rainfall, maximum wind speed, and acceptable relative humidity, must also be taken into consideration. The conditions on the designated date in April were sufficient, and within several hours, the burn was completed. During the 2018 growing season, the field will be evaluated for relative success controlling target vegetation. Pending available trained personnel and continued department support, future maintenance burns will likely be scheduled every three years.

Fire!

Fire is an excellent tool for maintaining grassland and brushy habitats. It also is important for managing native pitch pine/sand plain habitat in Connecticut, which is known to contain nearly a dozen listed species, mostly insects. The pitch pine/scrub oak sand plain forest is one of the 13 imperiled ecosystems in Connecticut. Historically, pitch pine ecosystems were more prevalent in the pre-settlement forest because they were sustained by relatively frequent fires. Pitch pine benefits when a fire event kills competing vegetation and prepares the site for new pine germination by exposing mineral soil.

Both the DEEP Forestry and Wildlife Divisions are concerned about the gradual long-term loss of oak forests in Connecticut during the coming century. While oak is a dominant cover type in our state's forested landscape, it also is disturbance-dependent and, without that regime, it is not replacing itself for future generations. The oak forest is being replaced by black birch, beech, and red maple, which do not support the expansive insect, bird, and mammal diversity supported by oak trees. Fire is an important tool for ensuring successful oak regeneration, while reducing aggressive natural competition. It was instrumental in establishing the oak forests we see today, along with other major disturbances, such as the rapid demise of American chestnut and large-scale clearcutting for charcoal production. Without a future of widespread oak stands in Connecticut's forests, we will lose the hard mast that our deer, bear, turkey, and other wildlife populations depend on.

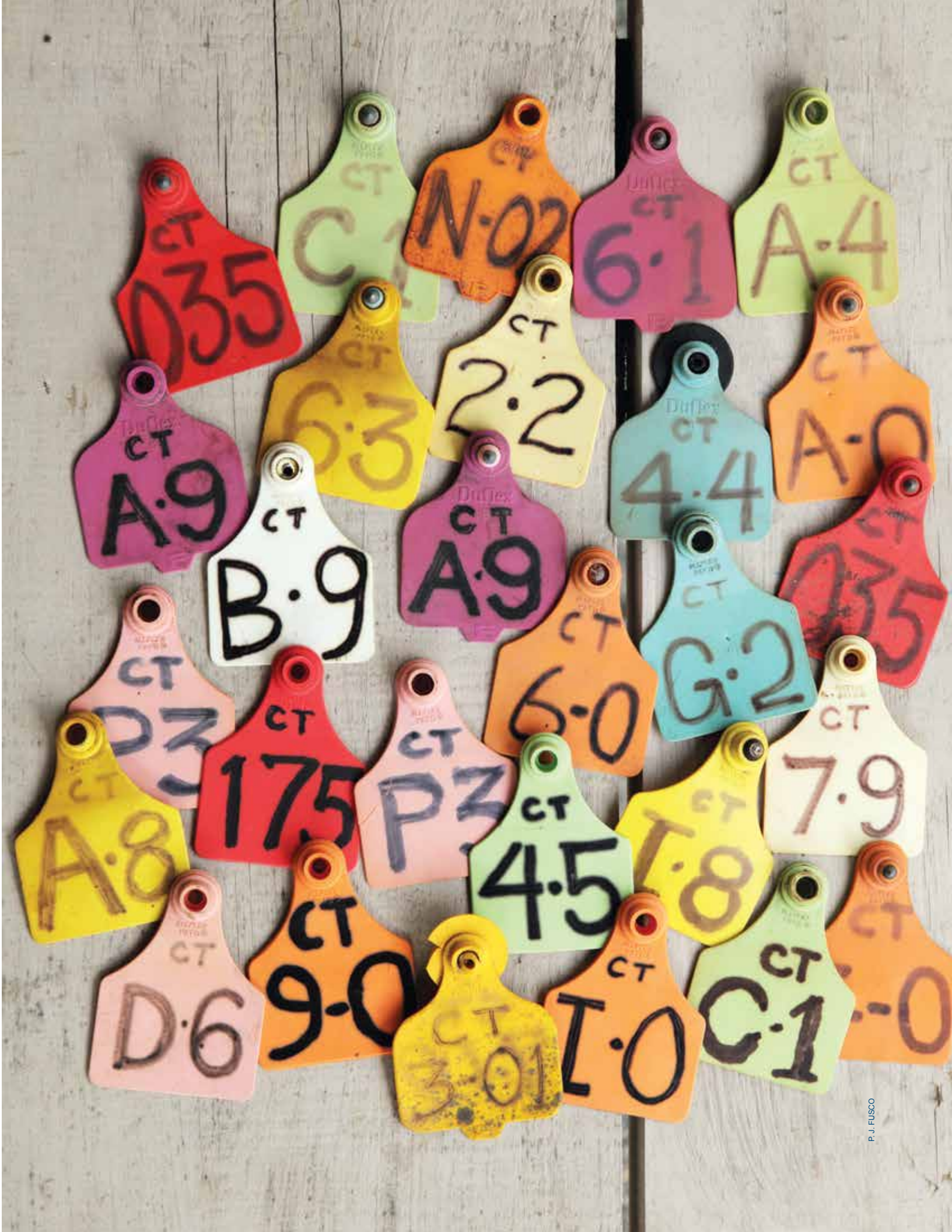
Keeping Track of Bears

The DEEP Wildlife Division monitors wildlife populations through a variety of methods and techniques, depending on what works best for each species. The most common methods involve collecting sighting reports from the public, marking with ear tags (mammals) or leg bands (birds), radio telemetry and GPS (Global Positioning System) devices, PIT (passive integrated transponder) tags (often referred to as microchips), population surveys, and more. However, the Division's request to Connecticut residents for sighting reports, in particular of animals with ear tags, often results in many questions and even some misunderstandings about our objectives. The Wildlife Division's long-running Black Bear Project, which began in 2001 to research the state's population, provides a good example. The project involves the use of coded and colored ear tags, as well as PIT tags, to mark individual bears; placing GPS collars on females to track their movements; and soliciting sighting reports from residents via phone, email, or online reporting.

Why Does a Bear Have Ear Tags?

When an untagged bear that is trapped or tranquilized with dart guns or similar equipment, either as part of the study or because it had wandered into an unsafe area or caused certain conflicts with humans, it is measured and weighed, and its overall physical health is assessed. Every bear handled is

Every bear handled by the DEEP Wildlife Division is marked with brightly-colored ear tags, one in each ear. The tags have numbers unique to that bear, and the color indicates the year the bear was tagged. Each colored tag has a three-digit number code. The last digit indicates the year, while the first two numbers indicate the sequence in which it was caught. Older tags may have a two digit number and/or letter code.
PHOTO BY P. J. FUSCO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CT 3-01
CT I-0
CT C-1

P. J. FUSCO

In Connecticut, most ear-tagged bears have been caught as part of biological research efforts, NOT as problem bears. Every bear handled receives a tag in each ear. Bear sighting reports from the public provide important information about distribution and abundance of bears throughout the state for a long-running research project that started in 2001.

marked with brightly-colored ear tags, one in each ear. The tags have numbers unique to that bear, and the color indicates the year the bear was tagged. For example, a bear with yellow tags was handled in 2016, and one with pink tags was handled in 2013, regardless of age, gender, or reason for tagging. Each colored tag has a three-digit number code. (Older tags used in the earlier years of the project may have a two-digit number and/or letter code.) The last digit indicates the year, while the first two numbers indicate the sequence in which it was caught. For example, a bear with ear tag "20-6" would be the twentieth bear handled in 2016, and a bear with ear tag "03-8" would be the third bear handled in 2018. Bears involved in serious conflicts are typically marked with purple ear tags.

Ear tags are relatively cost-effective, but they sometimes tear out or break. A bear observed with only one tag may have lost a tag, possibly due to fighting with another bear or snagging it on brush. Large male bears, or boars, are more likely to lose tags as compared to females and smaller males, as they are likely fighting more and traveling through thicker brush.

Besides helping identify individual bears, ear tags, as well as PIT tags, can reveal the distance and direction where young bears disperse once they become independent. For example, bears tagged in Connecticut have traveled as far as Vermont, while bears tagged in New York, Massachusetts, and even Pennsylvania have shown up in Connecticut. The ramblings of individual bears through multiple towns have been revealed through reported sightings with tag information. (The use of leg bands on birds serves the same purpose.)

A common misconception is that a tagged bear in Connecticut is a problem bear, and a bear with two ear tags was caught on two different occasions because it was causing problems. Actually, every bear receives two ear tags (one in each ear) the first time it is handled by DEEP, regardless of why it was tagged. Most ear-tagged bears have been caught as part of biological research efforts, NOT as problem bears.

Another misconception that has spread across social media is that a bear with two ear tags will be destroyed if it is reported a "third time" as causing a problem. This misinformation often results in people telling others not to report sightings to DEEP because we are "going to destroy the animal." This couldn't be farther from the truth. The Wildlife Division has been collecting bear sighting reports since black bears returned to the state in the early 1990s. These sighting reports of bears with and without ear tags yield valuable information on the distribution and abundance of bears in towns throughout the state. All bear sightings reported to the Wildlife Division are tabulated in a database that is used by Bear Program biologists. A running tally of sighting reports of black bear activity by town over a one-year period is available on our website. It is often viewed by those who are curious about the number of bears observed in certain towns.

Connecticut's Growing Bear Population

It should be no surprise that Connecticut's black bear population is expected to continue growing and expanding due to the habitat succession of Connecticut's landscape to more mature forests. Roughly 60% of the state is dominated by mature-aged forest habitat that provides an abundance of food for bears. During late summer and fall, bears feed primarily on hard mast, including acorns, American beech nuts, and hickory nuts. Soft mast food options include black cherries, apples, and fruits from various shrubs.

Why Does a Bear Have a Radio Collar?

Adult female bears trapped by the Bear Program are also fitted with radio collars around their necks. The collars allow biologists to track movements and also locate winter dens to determine if any of the females have given birth to cubs or are denning with yearlings born the previous winter. If there are cubs or yearlings in a den, they will be examined, weighed, and measured. Male bears are not fitted with radio collars because they tend to have much larger home ranges than females and are prone to wandering farther, making it very difficult to track them. Fitting and keeping collars on males can be a challenge because their necks can be larger than their heads and their body weights widely fluctuate.

Over the past 17 years of the study, technology has changed and biologists are now using GPS-equipped collars on female bears. GPS collars can obtain and store thousands of locations where collared bears have travelled over the previous year. The data is retrieved when biologists locate and visit winter dens of collared females to assess productivity. The collars are removed and replaced with new ones with fresh batteries. Data stored in the old collars are downloaded to be analyzed by biologists.

Purpose of PIT Tags

With advances in technology, the Bear Program has also been implanting PIT tags just under the skin in each bear handled. These tags are like the microchips inserted into dogs and cats to help identify lost pets. PIT tags provide a reliable, identifying "barcode" for individual animals. Each tag consists of an integrated circuit chip, capacitor, and antenna

P. BENJUNAS

Wildlife Division seasonal resource assistant Caitlin Drasher poses with a female black bear that has been fitted with a GPS-collar and ear tags as part of a long-running research project. Biologists visited this bear's den over the winter to check if she had cubs or yearlings with her. The female was immobilized so that the old collar could be removed and replaced with a new one with fresh batteries. Data stored in the old collar are downloaded to be analyzed by biologists

coil encased in glass. They are dormant until activated and do not require an internal power source. When a scanner, which has a small electromagnetic field, is passed close to the PIT tag, the tag's coils are energized enough to send a signal with a unique alpha-numeric code back to the scanner. With no battery to change, PIT tags are a permanent marker and have virtually no negative impacts on the animal. The tags are especially useful for marking cubs whose ears are too small for ear tags. Cubs that never received ear tags or bears that have lost ear tags can be identified by their PIT tags years after they were initially handled.

PIT tag shown next to a quarter for size comparison.
PHOTO BY P. J. FUSCO

How You Can Help!

Bear sighting reports from the public continue to be an important part of our study, particularly if the bear has ear tags. If you observe a bear, whether it is in your neighborhood or during your travels around the state, please report it to the Wildlife Division. Information needed is the reporter's name and contact information (telephone and/or email address), date and time of observation, exact location, number of bears seen, absence or presence of ear tags (please provide the color and code if possible). Sightings can be reported on the DEEP website at *www.ct.gov/deep/blackbear*, via email to *deep.wildlife@ct.gov*, by calling 860-424-3011 (weekdays, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM), or posting to the CT Fish and Wildlife Facebook page at *www.Facebook.com/CTFishandWildlife*.

Deer Hunting Season Rebounds

Written by Bill Embacher, Wildlife Management Institute/DEEP Wildlife Division

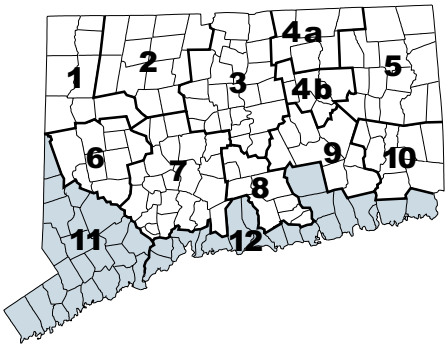
Connecticut deer hunters enjoyed a bit of a rebound this past season after low harvests during the 2015 and 2016 hunting seasons. Statewide, overall harvest was 12,102 deer; 1,440 more than 2016 and 1,712 more than the three-year average. Archery hunters took 5,932 deer, exceeding the 2016 archery harvest by 646 and the three-year harvest average by 837. Shotgun/rifle hunters took 4,281 deer in 2017, 503 more than in 2016, while muzzleloader hunters harvested 810 animals, 166 more than in 2016.

Hunter success rates are estimated by using a formula that includes total deer harvest and permit issuance. In 2017, success rates were universally up from both 2016 and the three-year average. The highest success rate was experienced by archery hunters of whom 34.8% successfully harvested a deer, which is 3.5% higher than both the 2016 and three-year average rate. Private land firearms hunters were the next most successful at 29.4%; six percent higher than 2016 and the three-year average. State land hunter success varied for "A" Season hunters at 14.6%. "B" Season hunters had a 8.1% success rate, continuing the trend and increasing the success rate from 2016 and the three-year average. Muzzleloader hunters were 9.7% successful combined on private and state land, 2.6% higher than the previous season and 3.2% higher than the three-year average. Smaller acorn mast crops, colder weather, and two previous seasons of low harvest all contributed to an increase in harvest and higher success rates in 2017.

COURTESY J. ROSS

Debbie Ross poses with the buck she harvested in Mansfield during the 2017 Landowner Deer Season. Congratulations, Debbie!

Deer Management Zones



Chronic Wasting Disease

The Wildlife Division's Deer Program continued to monitor Connecticut's deer population for chronic wasting disease (CWD) during the 2017 season. CWD originates from a prion (abnormally-shaped protein) and is closely related to livestock diseases, such as mad cow disease in cows and scrapie in sheep. Lymph nodes were removed from 360 deer primarily collected at butcher shops and taxidermists who agreed to participate in CWD testing. Deer exhibiting symptoms associated with CWD (emaciation/weight loss, abnormal behavior, extreme poor posture) or any deer that hunters willingly donated were also tested. More emphasis was placed on testing older deer this past season than in previous seasons as older deer are more likely to have encountered the CWD prion than younger animals. Males are also more susceptible to becoming infected, although it is not yet clear why. It is likely due to the tendency of males to roam more, thereby increasing the odds they will come into contact with the prion. The agent responsible for CWD may spread directly through animal to animal contact or indirectly through soil or other surface to animal contact, mainly through saliva and feces of an infected animal.

To date, CWD has been confirmed in 24 states and three Canadian Provinces. Connecticut is currently considered CWD-free. Due to last summer's localized outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in our state, there

Connecticut hunters enjoyed a bit of a rebound during the past deer hunting season after low harvests during 2015 and 2016.
PHOTO BY P. J. FUSCO

Deer Harvested During Connecticut's Regulated Hunting Seasons, 2016-2017

Season	*Harvest 2016*	*Harvest 2017*	*3-year Average Harvest (2015-2017)*
Archery			
State Land	*663*	*551*	*619*
Private Land	*4,425*	*5,097*	*4,272*
January	*198*	*284*	*205*
Muzzleloader			
State Land	*75*	*137*	*86*
Private Land	*569*	*673*	*543*
Shotgun/Rifle			
State Land A	*573*	*623*	*550*
State Land B	*84*	*129*	*70*
Private Land	*3,200*	*3,529*	*3,159*
Landowner	*875*	*1,079*	*888*
Total	*10,662*	*12,102*	*10,390*

is often confusion between CWD and EHD among residents. EHD is a common virus found in white-tailed deer outside of New England which is carried by small biting midges (often referred to as no-see-ums). EHD is not always fatal (whereas CWD is); however, it is fast-acting and often kills or weakens deer within only a few days of being infected. Deer can build up antibodies to EHD, and therefore subsequent outbreaks are typically less intense. EHD-infected deer are typically found in or near water, with symptoms including swollen tongues, no fear of humans, and loss of coordination. Efforts to test and monitor for both CWD and EHD in deer will continue in 2018 and likely beyond. For more information or to have a deer tested, please contact Bill Embacher at *William.Embacher@ct.gov*.

Essence of the Wild

The Black-bellied Plover

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, DEEP Wildlife Division

The ethereal whistling call of the black-bellied plover characterizes the essence of wildness and the wide open, far away places where this bird is normally found. This long-distance migrant is a powerful flyer and travels in flocks during migration. Some individuals make incredibly long journeys, including long flights over open water. This cosmopolitan bird is found in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. The typical call, a slurred whistle *plEE-uu-ee*, is far reaching and has an eerily melancholic quality.

The black-bellied plover population in North America has been estimated at about 200,000 birds, with some recent surveys indicating the population may be higher. The birds breed on the expansive Arctic tundra and winter as far south as southern Argentina. They are fairly common migrants in Connecticut, with some hardy individuals attempting to remain here through winter. Migration occurs by day or night.

When identifying black-bellied plovers in flight, look for the diagnostic black axillary (armpit) feathers.

Description

The black-bellied plover is our largest plover, about the size of a pigeon. In adult breeding plumage, the black-bellied plover is a spectacular-looking bird. Its black face, neck, and breast, along with a gray and white speckled back are distinctive and elegant. The winter and juvenile plumages are gray with less distinctive speckling. In all plumages, black-bellied plovers have a white lower rear flank that separates this species from the similar American golden plover. The black-bellied also has black axillary (armpit) feathers that show on the underwing when the bird raises its wings. This is a good field mark to look for as it shows in all plumages and can be seen from a long distance when the bird is flying.

Plovers are closely related to sandpipers. They have long and pointed wings, short tails, compact bodies, proportionally large eyes, and thick necks. The short, pigeon-like bills are used to grab prey of small invertebrates. Black-bellied plovers feed on marine worms, insects, and crustaceans. Their flight is strong, swift, and direct. Plovers are often seen along the shoreline exhibiting a distinctive behavior of stop, run, stop; alternately running, then standing still while foraging.

Like all plovers, black-bellied plovers nest on the ground. They will use distraction displays to lure predators away from the nest or young. The nest is a scrape on the ground of the Arctic tundra, lined with lichens, tiny twigs, and pebbles. Females typically lay four brownish or greenish well-camouflaged eggs with dark speckles. The eggs are incubated by both parents and will hatch after about 27 days. The downy plover chicks are precocial and will be able to run and feed themselves in one day. They fledge after about five to six weeks of age.

Conservation

The wary nature of migrating flocks protected the black-bellied plover from the slaughter inflicted upon most of the other shorebird species by the market gunners of the late nineteenth century. Federal bird conservation laws passed in the early 1900s, the Lacey Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act, have protected all birds, including shorebirds, from exploitation.

Today, the main threats to plovers and other shorebirds is the continuing loss and degradation of habitat, especially stopover habitats critical for shorebird migration. Stopover sites are historically important feeding and resting locations, including estuaries, bays, marshes, shoreline mudflats, and sandbars that have supported migrating flocks for millennia.

Coastal development, wetland destruction, habitat degradation, and unregulated shooting on the wintering grounds have all contributed to declining populations of shorebirds. These population declines are now widely recognized by experts to be categorized as a full-blown crisis. Long-distance

The call of the black-bellied plover is a slurred whistle *plEE-uu-ee.*

migratory birds know no political borders. Their populations are vulnerable to whatever is the weakest link of the chain in their migration path.

As if habitat loss is not enough, Arctic breeding shorebirds, including plovers, are also impacted and threatened by climate change. Climate change is a long, slow process of warming average temperatures, coupled with rising sea levels. Rising temperatures in the Arctic will thaw tundra permafrost, leading to vegetation changes that are detrimental to the Arctic's tundra ecosystem and tundra nesting shorebirds. Sea level rise will inundate low-lying tundra, resulting in tidal flooding and subsequent loss of breeding habitat for shorebirds.

Other recognized threats to shorebirds include wind farms along migration paths which result in turbine collisions; pesticide exposure occurring at stopover sites on migration paths and wintering grounds; and unregulated hunting pressure on some Caribbean islands during fall migration.

Over the years, black-bellied plovers have fared better than many of the other shorebirds. Their wary disposition and far-reaching presence make them fitting representatives of the true wildness of our continent, even within our small state.

*North American Population Estimates and Recent Trends for Select Connecticut Occurring Shorebirds**

Species	Population Estimate	Population Status
Black-bellied plover	>360,000	stable
Piping plover	8,400	stable to slight increase
American oystercatcher	11,000	stable
Greater yellowlegs	137,000	stable
Lesser yellowlegs	660,000	significant decline
Whimbrel	80,000	decline
Upland sandpiper	750,000	slight increase
Hudsonian godwit	77,000	stable to decline
Marbled godwit	175,000	stable
Ruddy turnstone	<245,000	decline to significant decline
Red knot	<60,000	significant decline
Sanderling	300,000	decline
Semipalmated sandpiper	2,200,000	stable to decline
Pectoral sandpiper	>1,600,000	decline
Dunlin	>1,200,000	stable to decline
Buff-breasted sandpiper	56,000	stable to unknown
Short-billed dowitcher	153,000	stable to unknown
American woodcock	3 to 4 million	stable

** Based on Andres, B. A., et. al. Population Estimates of North American Shorebirds, 2012. Wader Study Group Bull. 119(3): 178-194.*

Bringing Back the Natives

Article and photography by Michael Humphreys, DEEP Fisheries Division

A look back in time at Connecticut's distant past tells us that most brooks and rivers in our state were once teeming with beautiful wild, native brook trout, which were thriving in pristine cold, clear, pollution-free flowing waters, as well as numerous beaver ponds and other natural lakes and ponds. These vibrant and delicious fish provided a valuable renewable natural resource for Connecticut's original human inhabitants for thousands of years. Since the early colonial period, however, industrious settlers from overseas have drastically changed the natural world, often in ways that were not beneficial for brook trout. Cutting down nearly all of the forests for fuel and agriculture caused many streams to become warm and muddy from increased exposure to sunlight and erosion. Streams were recognized as convenient conduits for disposal of household and farming waste, as well as toxic by products generated by a blossoming industrial revolution. Most streams with moderate to high gradients were dammed to harness water power for a wide variety of industrial uses. These dams blocked fish movements, eliminated stream habitat, and caused additional warming of the streams. As cities grew and surrounding lands became more and more developed, surface runoff of rainwater added more pollutants to brooks and rivers and caused additional increases to water temperatures. The historical record shows that the combined effects of habitat degradation caused by all of these factors eliminated many, and perhaps most native brook trout populations in Connecticut.

In more recent times, changes in the human use of the environment, including the reduced need for wood as fuel, statewide reduction in farming, and replacement of water power with electricity, as well as a vastly improved ethic of protecting and restoring the natural environment, have combined to restore suitable conditions for brook trout to once-again reproduce and thrive. However, some of these restored stream habitats needed a little extra help getting started. Early restoration efforts included raising brook trout in hatcheries and restocking empty streams on a broad scale. Wild brook trout were caught for brood stock for hatchery propagation of fingerlings, and some wild caught fish were undoubtedly moved from streams with remaining populations into restored streams with no trout. The results of these earlier efforts were dramatically successful, and Connecticut now boasts thousands of streams with self-sustaining wild brook trout populations.

Currently, most streams suitable for brook trout have wild populations. However, there are some exceptions. DEEP fisheries biologists have surveyed fish populations at thousands of stream locations throughout the state, occasionally finding streams where the habitat appears suitable for brook trout, but the stream was never recolonized. This can occur where no nearby populations are able to spread naturally into the restored habitat due to barriers, such as dams and impassible road culverts. Also, occasionally, a toxic chemical spill may wipe out an entire stream population. That is where wild brook trout reintroduction comes in. When biologists recognize situations like this, they may prescribe restocking with wild fish captured from a nearby stream.

The DEEP Fisheries Division raises domestic strains of brook trout at State hatcheries and stocks them at many locations exclusively to provide anglers with abundant oppor-

Wild-captured native brook trout of all sizes patiently await transport in oxygenated tanks to be transported and released in Deep Brook Wild Trout Management Area, in Newtown.

Native brook trout are collected from a healthy donor stream by backpack electrofishing for relocation to Deep Brook Wild Trout Management Area.

tunities to catch and eat fish. Research has shown, however, that these domesticated brook trout strains are not suitable for establishing naturally self-sustaining populations. Domesticated strains are well-suited to life in the hatchery, but after many generations of the easy life, unlimited food, and protection from natural predators, the gene pool no longer has what it takes to survive and reproduce in the more challenging real natural world. In fact, some evidence suggests that occasional hybridization between hatchery strains and native wild strains may damage wild populations by reducing the fitness of the wild population to survive in the wild. Consequently, the best approach for restoring wild populations is to move up to a few hundred wild fish from a "donor" population to the stream targeted for restoration.

In contrast to hatchery operations, efforts to restore native brook trout are not always focused exclusively on providing fishing opportunities. Restoring the natural ecology of a stream has value in itself, but streams that have the potential to offer new fishing opportunities offer stronger justification for undertaking restoration initiatives. In recent years, two "Class 1" Wild Trout Management Areas (WTMAs), where wild trout are managed to provide fishing with no stocking (see the Connecticut Anglers Guide for more information), were targeted for wild brook trout reintroduction. An additional wild brook trout restoration was attempted on one very small cold stream with no fish present.

The Mill River below Easton Reservoir, in Easton and Fairfield, was the site of the first formal restoration effort in recent years. The river below the dam is unusually cold due to releases from the cold layer of water near the bottom of the reservoir. The river's entire watershed below the reservoir had no wild native brook trout in the main river or its lower tributaries; however, a few protected tributaries feeding the reservoir above the dam had strong wild brook trout popula-

Two weeks after release, reintroduced wild brook trout were observed spawning on redds made in gravel that was placed in Deep Brook Wild Trout Management Area by volunteers from the Candlewood Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU). An adult male and female brook trout can be seen (upper right) resting near their spawning redd (center), under a shelter structure constructed by TU volunteers. Many fry of native brookies were sampled here the following summer (2017).

tions. In 2002, 46 small brookies from these tributaries were collected by backpack electrofishing and moved to the section of river below the dam. Again in 2004, 160 wild brook trout from another donor stream were released. In follow-up electrofishing assessments at the release site in subsequent years, fish samples showed that the brookies had successfully spawned and rapidly produced a thriving self-sustaining population. A 2012 survey of anglers conducted in this WTMA showed high angler catch rates of wild brookies, as well as naturalized wild brown trout. As time passes, the wild brook trout population will continue to expand downstream. As a result, special catch-and-release regulations have been extended downstream, beginning in 2018. This WTMA has become one of the most popular wild trout fishing destinations in Connecticut, ironically, in a heavily developed part of the state where wild trout resources are rare.

More recently, in 2016, with the help of volunteers from the local Trout Unlimited Chapter, 266 wild brook trout were relocated to Deep Brook in Newtown, where oil spills and a toxic chemical discharge had completely destroyed the wild population. Sampling in 2017 revealed, to the delight of biologists and volunteer assistants, that the transferred fish had successfully spawned and produced a new year class of native brook trout fry. Monitoring of this new population will continue in 2018 and, if all goes well, these fish should begin to contribute to anglers' catches in spring 2018.

Most recently, in fall 2017, 69 native brookies were moved from an adjacent stream to a small unnamed tributary of Globe Hollow Reservoir in Manchester. The first assessment of this wild brook trout transfer will be in summer 2018.

Moving forward, as DEEP Fisheries Division biologists continue to conduct stream fish assessments around the state, they will uncover more streams that could use a boost with recolonization by our most beautiful and recreationally important native stream fish species. Anglers and other members of the public with suggestions for potential locations for brook trout reintroductions may contact the author at 860-567-8998.

Buffleheads to Be Featured on 2019 Connecticut Duck Stamp

Written by Kathy Herz, DEEP Wildlife Division

In a contest filled with great artwork, a panel of judges selected Indiana artist Jeffrey Klinefelter's depiction of buffleheads flying across Barn Island Wildlife Management Area as the winner of DEEP's 2018-2019 Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation (Duck) Stamp Art Contest. Jeffrey is a previous winner of the Connecticut contest, taking first place in the 2015-2016 contest with his depiction of Atlantic brant.

Jeffrey's painting of buffleheads was chosen out of 29 entries submitted by artists from across the country, including a record 18 from Connecticut artists. Paintings were judged in six categories: suitability for reproduction, composition, habitat suitability for that species, anatomical correctness, eye appeal, originality, and whether a recognizable Connecticut landmark or habitat was used. Jeffrey's painting will be the image for the 2019 Connecticut Duck Stamp.

A pair of Canada geese on the Connecticut River with the East Haddam swing bridge in the background, submitted by artist Melissa Barker, of Colchester, Connecticut, placed second. Third place went to Chris Goins of Sheridan, Arizona, who submitted a painting of a pair of redheads. The DEEP Wildlife Division continues to encourage local Connecticut artists to submit paintings for this contest.

The Connecticut Duck Stamp Program was initiated in the early 1990s when concerned sportsmen worked with DEEP to develop legislation that would generate revenue for wetland conservation. Modeled after the federal Duck Stamp Program, Connecticut's program requires the purchase of a state stamp, along with a hunting license, to legally hunt waterfowl. By state law, funds generated from the sale of Duck Stamps can only be used for the development, management, preservation, conservation, acquisition, purchase, and maintenance of waterfowl habitat and wetlands, as well as the purchase and acquisition of recreational rights or interests relating to migratory birds. The Program has generated over $1.6 million for the enhancement of wetland and associated upland habitats, as well as garnered additional monies through matching grants from federal conservation initiatives. By combining Duck Stamp funds with additional monies, over $4 million dollars have been available to complete wildlife conservation projects. Anyone who wishes to support wetland conservation and restoration should buy a Duck Stamp. Stamps can be purchased for $17 each wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold: participating town clerks and retail agents, DEEP License and Revenue (79 Elm Street, Hartford), and through the online Sportsmen's Licensing System (*www.ct.gov/deep/sportsmenlicensing*). Learn more about the Connecticut Duck Stamp and the Art Contest at *www.ct.gov/deep/ctduckstamp*.

(Top to bottom) First place - Jeffrey Klinefelter; second place - Melissa Barker; and third place - Chris Goins for the 2018-2019 Connecticut Duck Stamp Art Contest.

Quinnipiac River Water Trail Improved

Written by Peter Picone, DEEP Wildlife Division; photos by Emily Picard

Walking, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, kayaking, camping, hunting, and fishing are some ways you can experience the outdoors and get closer to wildlife in Connecticut. Opportunities to canoe and kayak have just been improved through the refurbishing and re-opening of the Upper Quinnipiac River Water Trail from Route 322 in Southington to Quinnipiac Park in Cheshire, Connecticut.

During the last two years, several local conservation organizations and federal, state, and local government officials joined forces to establish a water trail on the northern section of the Quinnipiac River from Southington to Cheshire. Several dams were removed to allow fish to migrate along the river, while also providing more spawning habitat. Improved recreational opportunities were created with funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Program. The Town of Cheshire installed a canoe/kayak launch and the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association refurbished an old canoe/kayak launch at Route 322 in Southington. Paddlers can now stream audio (available at *www.qrivertrail.org*) from a cellphone to a bluetooth-activated speaker or ear phones to learn about both natural and man-made features of the Upper Quinnipiac River.

Ribbon cutting at the opening of the Upper Quinnipiac River Water Trail on Route 322 on the Southington/Cheshire town line.

An inaugural celebration of the improved Upper Quinnipiac River Water Trail was held as part of a National Trails Day event on June 3, 2018, at the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association Headquarters in Meriden. Speakers included U.S. Fish & Wildlife Restoration Biologist Lauren Bennett, DEEP Fisheries Biologist Steve Gephard, DEEP Wildlife Biologist Peter Picone, Town of Cheshire Environmental Planner Suzanne Simone, Town of Southington Assistant Planner Dave Lavallee, and Lyman Hall teacher Emily Picard and student Fiona Haggerty. The celebration also included activities for children, live music (Lori Holm, Ed Rosenblatt and Bruce Burchsted), a live bald eagle and numerous raptors, courtesy of Christine's Critters with Christine Peyreigne, a licensed falconer and wildlife rehabilitator. Representatives from local non-profits on the Quinnipiac River Trail workgroup were on hand during the event, including the Cheshire Land Trust, Lyman Hall High School Ag-Science Program, Meriden Land Trust, Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society Riverbound Farm Sanctuary, Quinnipiac River Watershed Association, Save the Sound, Southington Land Trust, Meriden Linear Trail Committee, DEEP No Child Left Inside Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Southington Boy Scout Troop 32. Additional information about the Upper Quinnipiac River Water Trail can be found at *www.qrivertrail.org*.

CASEBOOK

Reports from the Environmental Conservation Police

April kicked off Connecticut's spring turkey hunting season, along with the trout fishing season. With warmer temperatures, many people headed outside, particularly after a rather long winter, and the Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police Officers were out in the woods, on the water, and in the parks patrolling. During April, Officers conducted over 1,280 fisheries and 94 hunting enforcement patrols and investigated two hunting safety violations. They also logged in 143 boating enforcement patrols, 43 ATV/Snowmobile patrols, and 76 public safety assists. Officers responded to 88 wildlife calls, 19 of which involved nuisance bears and two for exotic/non-native wildlife possession. In the parks, Officers performed 405 park and forest patrols investigating a variety of cases. Some of the cases are highlighted here. You can learn more about other interesting cases by following the EnCon Police Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/CTEnConPolice.

- On April 6, 2018, 12 EnCon Police Officers, including four Honor Guard members, attended funeral services at Rentschler Field in East Hartford for Connecticut State Police Trooper Kevin Miller, following his tragic death in a motor vehicle accident while on duty. Upon learning that Trooper Miller's son was interested in fishing, Officers presented him with a fishing pole engraved with his father's badge number and also provided an opportunity for him to fish with one of the EnCon Officers following the opening day of trout season.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION POLICE

- EnCon Police, with the assistance of Meriden Police, served a search and seizure warrant on April 26, 2018, at a residence in Meriden after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided information on an advertisement on a snake forum for the sale of several venomous snakes. Officers gained further information that the accused, Cameron DeFrances, 21, of Meriden had posted photographs on his social media account and listed the venomous snakes for sale. Based on this information, EnCon Officers applied for and executed a search warrant of the DeFrances residence, locating multiple venomous snakes that are illegal to possess in Connecticut. With the assistance of a qualified licensed reptile specialist, all of the snakes were seized and safely transported to a secure facility for reptiles. Seven snakes that are illegal to possess under state law were located alive in the residence and two snakes that were illegally possessed were found deceased. Among the snakes that were found alive were a gaboon viper, forest cobra, two Egyptian banded cobras, and two monocled cobras. A tree viper and king cobra were found dead. DeFrances was charged with nine counts of Illegal Possession of a Category Two Wild Animal and Reckless Endangerment First Degree.

- A West Marine EnCon Officer responded to a complaint in Shelton on April 12, 2018, of an individual catching and keeping undersized striped bass behind a sports complex. The Officer located and approached the person and asked to see his 2018 Connecticut fishing license. He provided a Connecticut driver's license but failed to produce a fishing license. Upon being asked how many striped bass he had caught, he responded "three or four." When the Officer asked to see the fish, the person produced seven undersized striped bass ranging from 14 to 18 inches. The legal daily limit for striped bass is one fish with a minimum length of 28 inches. The offender was issued a Misdemeanor Summons for seven counts of undersized striped bass, six counts for over the daily creel limit, and fishing without a license.

- On the afternoon of April 15, 2018, Southeast Sector Officers responded to the Salmon River State Forest, in East Hampton, on a report of a Jeep partially submerged in the water with a person standing on top of it. After a foot search along the riverbank, an officer located the abandoned vehicle. The driver was found some distance away. He admitted to off-roading in the forest and getting stuck, and was issued citations for trespass and illegal trail use. The vehicle was later removed by good Samaritans.

- On April 22, 2018, a West Marine EnCon Officer received a complaint of individuals catching and keeping undersized striped bass at Sandy Point in West Haven. The Officer observed the individuals catching several striped bass but was unable to tell if they were releasing the fish. The Officer approached the individuals and asked to see their fishing licenses, while also observing several undersized striped bass on the beach next to them. Both denied the fish were theirs. As one person was looking for his fishing license in his backpack, the Officer noticed the sand nearby the backpack was disturbed. The Officer removed some of the loose sand and uncovered a plastic bag containing eight undersized striped bass ranging from 16 to 24 inches. The Officer issued the individuals a Misdemeanor Summons for four counts of undersized striped bass and three counts for over the daily limit each.

FROM THE FIELD

P. J. FUSCO

Save the Date: September 22 to Attend Discover Outdoor Connecticut Day

Come to the DEEP Wildlife Division's Franklin Wildlife Management Area in North Franklin on Saturday, September 22, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM to participate in a FREE, new event sponsored by the Bureau of Natural Resources. *Discover Outdoor Connecticut Day* explores Connecticut's fish and wildlife resources and legacy of outdoor traditions, with live animals, demonstrations, archery, fish casting, fly tying, shooting clays, kid's activities, outdoor skills, a photo contest, and more. Bring a picnic lunch and stay for a few hours or the whole day! Visit *www.ct.gov/deep/DiscoverOutdoorCT* to see the list of activities and how to enter the photo contest.

Bird Hunting Seasons Announced

The 2018-2019 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide is now available on the DEEP website (*www.ct.gov/deep/hunting*) and at DEEP and town clerk offices. The guide contains season dates, as well as specific details on bag limits, regulations, and other reminders, for ducks, geese, woodcock, snipe, rails, and crows.

Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Days will be held on Saturday, September 29, and Saturday, October 17, 2018. Participants must be 17 years of age or younger. Junior hunters 12 to 15 years old must possess a valid junior small game hunting license and a Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp. Sixteen and 17-year-old hunters must have a valid hunting license, a 2018 Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp, and a 2018-2019 federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Adults (at least 18 years of age or older) must accompany junior hunters and possess a valid hunting license; however, they are not allowed to hunt waterfowl.

DEEP's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program has developed a Junior Hunter webpage that provides information on junior hunter events and opportunities. Check out the webpage for more details at *www.ct.gov/deep/juniorhunter*.

Connecticut Bird Atlas Kicks Off!

The Connecticut Bird Atlas Project is fully underway. This ambitious project will catalog all breeding, migrating, and wintering birds in our state. In addition, the Atlas will, for the first time, estimate abundance of most of our breeding birds. Once completed, the Atlas will provide critical data to better inform land use planning and conservation actions by all who want to protect our natural environment. Ultimately, all of the data collected from this project and the analyses will be freely available for those wishing to use it. So far, over 3,000 individual reports have been submitted, and this is just the beginning. The project brings together many partners, including the Great Hollow Nature Preserve, Connecticut Audubon Society, Audubon Connecticut, and more. The Atlas belongs to everyone who cares about birds and nature and, as such, volunteer birders are collecting much of the important data. To learn more and also help, please visit *www.ctbirdatlas.org*.

Min Huang, DEEP Wildlife Division

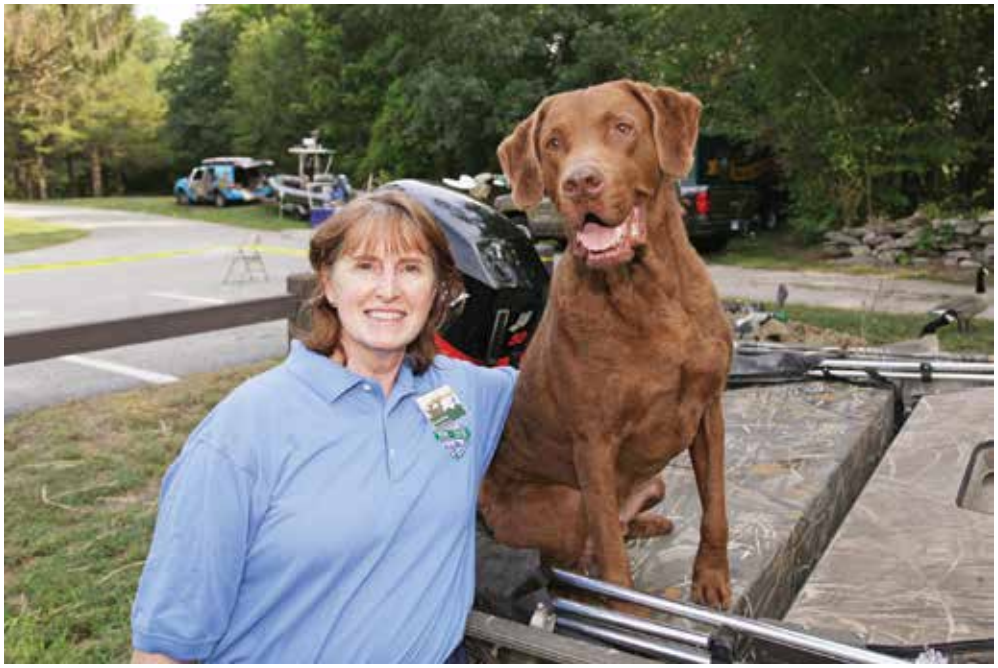
The Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife: Update

The Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife was created to change how conservation is funded in order to protect and conserve our fish and wildlife for the benefit of our nation, economy, and way of life. The solution is passage of the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), federal legislation that will help wildlife at risk before they need the more costly and restrictive "emergency room" measures required by the Endangered Species Act.

Connecticut businesses and organizations are encouraged to join the Alliance membership and support the effort to secure funding for fish and wildlife. You can sign up for free and show your support by submitting a membership form to *alliance@fishwildlife.org*. The form can be found on a new webpage about our involvement with the Recovering America's Wildlife Act: *www.ct.gov/deep/AllianceforFishandWildlife*. Regularly check the webpage for updates on the legislation and how you can help with this important effort to secure funding for fish and wildlife conservation. You should also check out and follow these associated Facebook pages: *www.facebook.com/OurNatureUSA* and *www.facebook.com/RecoveringAmericasWildlifeAct*.

Elaine Hinsch Reflects on Her Time with the Wildlife Division

Former long-time biologist with the Wildlife Division Elaine Hinsch has retired from State service to begin a new chapter in her life. While still in college at the University of New Hampshire, Elaine began her career with the Wildlife Division in a seasonal position in the summer of 1981. After graduating, she returned to the Wildlife Division again as a seasonal employee, before being hired as a permanent full-time biologist. Since that time, Elaine has held numerous roles within DEEP (formally DEP). Many of her friends will remember her walking the halls at the State Capitol as the legislative liaison representing the Department, conducting public hearings to promulgate regulations for the Bureau of Natural Resources, and as the federal aid coordinator for the Wildlife Division.



P. J. FUSCO

Long-time Wildlife Division biologist Elaine Hinsch poses with a Chesapeake Bay retriever that was participating with its handler at a Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day event at the Franklin Swamp Wildlife Management Area in North Franklin. Elaine enjoyed participating in public events to provide wildlife education and information.

Though most of Elaine's career was spent in planning and management, her favorite times were field days. Over the years, she helped with surveys for bears, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, waterfowl, grassland birds, and bats.

When asked what her favorite species to work with is, Elaine explained that, "Each species has their own unique and interesting qualities. However, if I have to pick a highlight to my career it was when I went with the Division's Bear Program staff to search for radio-collared hibernating sows with cubs. Being able to handle these animals was amazing."

Elaine hopes the Wildlife Division will continue to educate the public on such issues as living with wildlife: "Connecticut has healthy populations of wild animals that live in some of the state's heavily urban and suburban areas. In most cases, people and animals can coexist without infringing on each other's territory. Hopefully, the public will understand that wild animals are not to be feared, but respected from a distance. People can also discover how to manage their property to avoid damage while sharing the space."

When Elaine began her career in the 1980s, the Wildlife Division had management programs for deer, turkey, and furbearers; enhancing wildlife habitat; and land acquisition. When asked what she thought was the biggest change over the years, Elaine replied that "the incorporation of the nongame and endangered species programs provided the Wildlife Division with a whole new facet to wildlife management. People enjoyed seeing songbirds; grassland and coastal birds; raptors; mammals; reptiles and amphibians; and invertebrates. Now, with expert staff, these animals can be monitored to manage for healthy populations."

When asked what was the most surprising and interesting event during her time with the Wildlife Division, Elaine said definitely the sighting of a mountain lion in Connecticut in 2011. Though Connecticut does not have a native or transient population, amazingly a South Dakota mountain lion (lacking a compass) traveled east instead of west, over 1,500 miles, finding its way to Connecticut. "I think I can speak for the entire staff, that this rare occurrence was a surprise to all of us."

Elaine's heartfelt statement to all of her friends and coworkers is, "I have been so fortunate throughout my career with the Wildlife Division to have worked with such dedicated professionals and people I consider my closest friends. These people made coming to work every day for 35 plus years interesting and fun."

We wish Elaine the best in her new adventures!

"I have been so fortunate throughout my career with the Wildlife Division to have worked with such dedicated professionals and people I consider my closest friends. These people made coming to work every day for 35 plus years interesting and fun." – Elaine Hinsch

Robbins Swamp WMA Expands

Written by Paul Benjunas, DEEP Wildlife Division; photos by Paul J. Fusco

Located within the towns of Canaan and North Canaan, Robbins Swamp Wildlife Management Area contains the largest freshwater wetland in the state and provides highly significant wetland habitat for a wide variety of wildlife and plants. A partial listing of the wildlife found at Robbins Swamp includes white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, various species of waterfowl, songbirds, rabbits, wood turtles, and amphibians. Several of the inhabiting species are listed as state endangered, threatened, or special concern.

Robbins Swamp occupies a low-lying basin that once contained glacial Lake Hollenbeck. This former lakebed contains a variety of wetland soil types, including deep organic sediments, poorly drained soils, and poorly drained alluvial silts and loams. This variety of substrates in turn supports a diversity of vegetation types, including northern white cedar dominated swamps, red maple-black ash seepage swamps, and open sedge (*Carex lacustris*) marshes.

Upland bird hunting opportunities can be found at Robbins Swamp Wildlife Management Area, including those for American woodcock and ring-necked pheasant.

The acquisition of Robbins Swamp was in large part through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program (Pittman-Robertson) during the 1970s. This program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for fish and wildlife management and research, habitat acquisition, and sportsmen education programs. Over the years, additional acreage at Robbins Swamp was acquired with state funds and donations made by The Nature Conservancy.

The latest land acquisition, which added an additional 90 acres to the already existing 1,569-acre wildlife management area, was purchased from the Newtown Fish and Game Club with funds from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program. Located in Falls Village between Route 7 and Route 63, the newly-acquired property shares a boundary with an existing piece of Robbins Swamp WMA that is difficult to access. This purchase not only provides additional roadside access, it also serves as protection for the Hollenbeck River. The area is heavily used for a variety of wildlife-based recreational opportunities, including all forms of regulated hunting, especially upland bird hunting.

The newly-acquired property contains a diversity of high quality, critical wetland habitats, including forested and shrub wetlands, wet meadows, and riparian and floodplain habitat. The property also lies within the core of the Upper Housatonic New England Cottontail Focus Area and is considered a high priority parcel for Connecticut's only native rabbit.

Wildlife management areas are managed primarily for the conservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat. The quality and quantity of habitats found at Robbins Swamp, paired with the fact that it is embedded in a lightly developed landscape, creates conditions that provide outstanding habitat for both common and uncommon wildlife.

Maps of public hunting areas on state forests, wildlife management areas (including Robbins Swamp), and other similar properties can be found on the DEEP website at *www.ct.gov/deep/huntingareamaps*.

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Conservation Calendar

Mid-April-August ..... Respect fenced and posted shorebird and waterbird nesting areas when visiting the Connecticut coastline. Also, keep dogs and cats off of shoreline beaches to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Share the Shore!

June - Sept. 1 ..... **Enter the Discover Outdoor Connecticut PHOTO CONTEST!** Have you taken an amazing wildlife photo? Did you spot a pollinator up close? Have you spent some time in a park or out on the water? Did you watch the leaves turn brilliant oranges and reds? Show us! The new Discover Outdoor Connecticut photo contest is open through September 1, 2018. Enter your best shots and possibly win some great prizes. Instructions, rules, and other details are at *www.ct.gov/deep/DiscoverOutdoorCT*.

Sept. 22 ..... **Discover Outdoor Connecticut Day**, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Wildlife Division's Franklin Swamp WMA in North Franklin. More details are on page 22 and at *www.ct.gov/deep/DiscoverOutdoorCT*.

Programs at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center

Programs are a cooperative venture between the Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. A complete list of programs can be found at www.ct.gov/deep/SessionsWoods. *Please pre-register by sending an email to* **laura.rogers-castro@ct.gov** *or calling 860-424-3011 (Mon.-Fri., 8:30 AM-4:30 PM). Programs are free unless noted. An adult must accompany children under 12 years old. No pets allowed! Sessions Woods is located at 341 Milford St. (Route 69) in Burlington.*

Aug. 1 ..... **Nature Drawing for All**, starting at 9:30 AM. The Friends of Sessions Woods is cosponsoring a special workshop for adults and children, focusing on nature drawing, with local artist Judy Bird. The program will involve a walk (2 miles round trip) to the beaver marsh at Sessions Woods. Judy will provide a lesson observing and drawing in the outdoors. The workshop is funded, in part, through the generosity of the Newman's Own Foundation. All materials will be provided.

Sept. 6 ..... **Late Afternoon Walk to the Marsh**, starting at 4:00 PM. Join Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro for a late afternoon walk (approximately 2 miles round trip) to the beaver marsh at Sessions Woods. There will be stops to talk about the flora and fauna seen in the woodland and field habitats along the way. Participants should bring water and wear proper footwear. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center.

Hunting and Fishing Season Dates

August 11 ..... **Free Fishing License Day #2.** Statewide free fishing licenses for this special day are available at *www.ct.gov/deep/sportsmenlicensing.*

Sept. 1-29 ..... Early September Canada Goose Season in the north zone.

Sept. 15-29 ..... Early September Canada Goose Season in the south zone.

Sept. 15-Dec. 31 ..... Deer and turkey bowhunting season on private land and state land bowhunting only areas.

*Consult the 2018 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide, 2018-2019 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide, and the 2018 Connecticut Angler's Guide for specific season dates and details. The guides are available at DEEP facilities, town halls, and outdoor equipment stores, and also on the DEEP website (***www.ct.gov/deep/hunting** and **www.ct.gov/deep/fishing***). Go to* **www.ct.gov/deep/sportsmenlicensing** *to purchase Connecticut hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses, as well as required permits and stamps. The system accepts payment by VISA or MasterCard.*

Sign up to receive *Wildlife Highlights*, a free, electronic newsletter for anyone interested in Connecticut's wildlife and the outdoors! *www.ct.gov/deep/WildlifeHighlights*

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P. J. FUSCO

A bald eagle chick tries to scare off Wildlife Division biologist Brian Hess during a recent visit to collect data on the health of the chicks and band them with identifying markers. Its nest mate remained unphased by all the commotion. Approximately 55 active eagle nests have been documented in Connecticut this year.