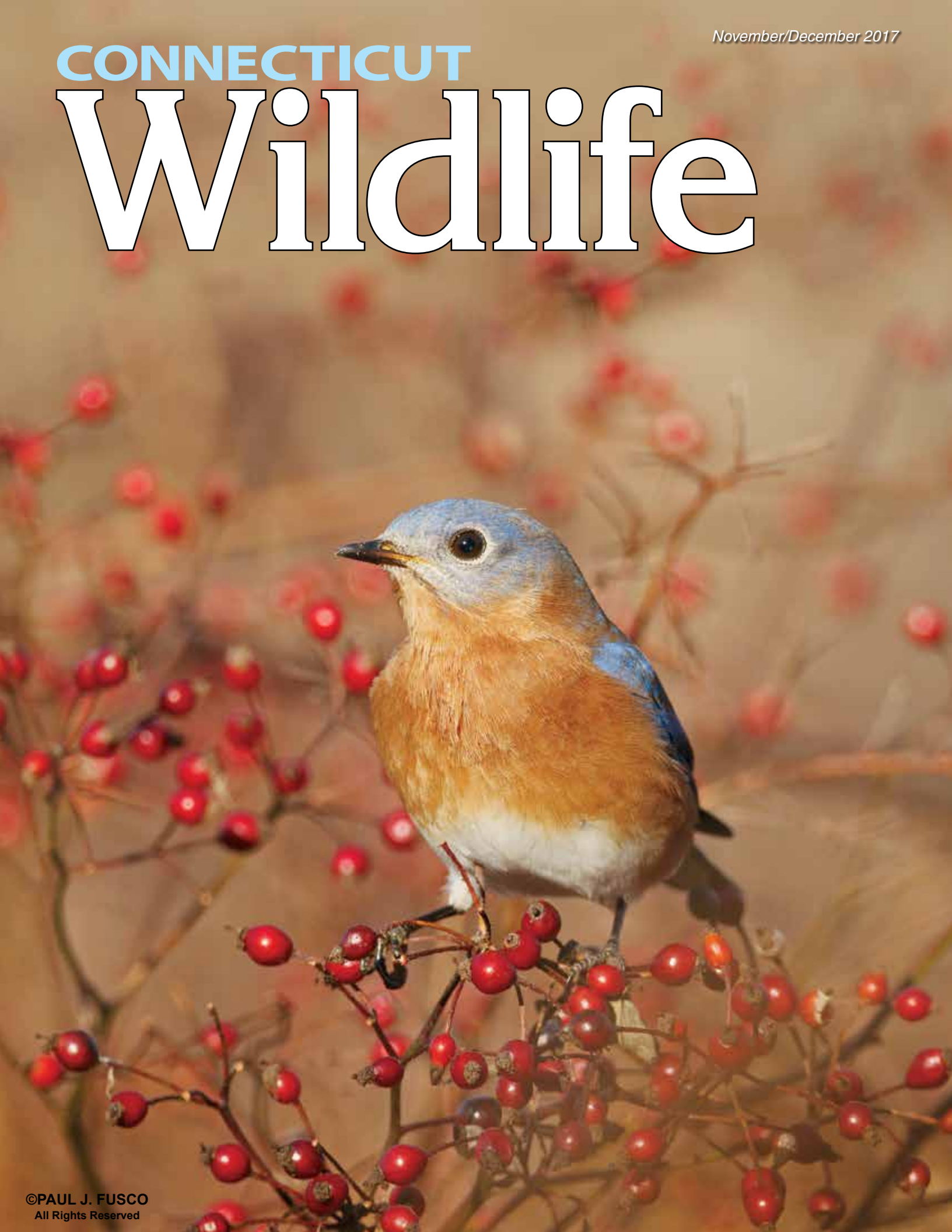
November/December 2017

# CONNECTICUT Wildlife



# Wild Thoughts

*One of the most effective ways we can all help wildlife is through leading by example. This issue of* Connecticut Wildlife *features one person who did just that – and with remarkable results. Dr. Stephen Kellert is probably not someone who would immediately spring to mind for most people as an influential conservation leader (see article on page 8). He is definitely someone who preferred to lead by example and, in his quiet way, left an amazing conservation legacy from which we all benefit. Steve's effectiveness arose from his willingness to share his passion for and enjoyment in nature with others. His messages about the importance of staying connected to nature for both our physical and mental well-being are becoming more important in our increasingly fast-paced world. By sharing his passion with those he met, whether in a classroom, a wild place, a street corner, or a corporate boardroom, Steve's stewardship ethic and connection to the natural world engaged countless numbers of people. Just like the ripples on a pond, his example will continue to move forward, having a wider impact.*

*This is something each and every one of us can do in our own way. If your passion is birding, tell someone you just met about watching your backyard bluebird deliver caterpillars to a nestbox full of noisy – and hungry – chicks. If you favor hunting, tell someone what it was like to see a deer moving silently through the woods, its breath visible in the cool morning air. Take a minute and show someone the carefully tended bluegill nest visible below the water's surface, if you look closely. Bring a coworker on a walk in the park to see the crazy antics of a gray squirrel. Share your passion and it will resonate with others. Be willing to teach people who are less familiar with wildlife what you know or go on a walk with them, teach them to hunt or fish, or offer to share your binoculars or spotting scope with a stranger so they can experience that amazing view.*

*Jane Goodall noted that the greatest danger to our future is apathy. If we assume someone else will value and conserve wildlife and the natural places we love, we are not leading by example. By sharing your love for the outdoors and the sense of wonder and curiosity it creates, you help others understand the outdoors better and value it more. When you finish enjoying this issue of* Connecticut Wildlife*, share it with a friend or colleague and start a conversation. Let's all get out there and start creating our own ripples on the pond.*

Jenny Dickson, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

### *Cover:*

*The Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife strives to create a 21st century funding model for much needed conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife, including species like the eastern bluebird. Find out how you can help on page 11.*

*Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco*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CONNECTICUT Wildlife

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## DEPARTMENTS



P. J. FUSCO

# CT Offers a Perfect Combination of Habitat and Food for Bears

*Article by Paul Rego, DEEP Wildlife Division*

Black bears seem to be on a constant quest for food. This is particularly true during the fall when they can become downright gluttonous. In fall, bears exhibit hyperphagia – literally, excessive eating – which allows them to rapidly pack on pounds of fat. The excessive calories become stored fat, which sustains them through three to five months of winter denning and the early spring months when available foods, such as skunk cabbage, are relatively low-calorie. Bears can gain over one kilogram (approximately 2.2 lbs.) per day during hyperphagia. Energy rich hard mast, such as acorns and beechnuts, is the most important fall food source for bears. Berries and fruits also contribute calories to the diet. Abundance of these natural foods can vary dramatically from year to year. Anyone who spends time outdoors has probably noticed years in which the forest floor is densely littered with acorns and years in which acorns are

nearly absent.

In years of natural food shortages, bears seek unnatural food sources, such as corn or human-provided garbage. Some states and Canadian provinces experience elevated cases of human/bear conflicts during years when natural foods are scarce.

## *Fall Food and Reproduction*

The abundance of fall foods not only helps black bears pack on weight for winter, it also plays a critical role in reproduction and population growth. Female black bears in regions of productive habitat and abundant fall foods are heavier, have larger litters, breed at younger ages, and breed more frequently than females from regions of less productive habitat. Year-to-year changes in fall food supplies within a region can similarly affect reproduction, with high reproduction in winters following a fall of abundant foods and broad reproductive failure when fall foods are scarce. A female bear's fall and winter body weight is a particularly important predictor of whether she will successfully give birth to a litter in January or, if nutritionally stressed, she resorbs embryos and does not give birth.

WILDLIFE DIVISION FURBEARER PROGRAM (2)

**(Photo on left) During a winter den check, these four yearling bears were found in the den with their mother. All five bears were given an immobilizing drug so that biologists could collect important data. These same bears are pictured as cubs above one year earlier. High survival reflects adequate food resources. Weights of the four yearlings were high and ranged from 50 to 75 pounds, suggesting that the yearlings would continue to thrive after they emerged from the winter den and became independent.**

**(Photo above) Radio collars allow DEEP staff to locate adult female bears in their winter dens. The cubs or yearlings denning with the sow are counted and a variety of physical measurements are taken on the sows and offspring. Abundant fall foods enabled this sow to gain considerable weight before denning – she weighed 264 pounds during the winter den inspection – which made it possible for her to give birth to an uncommonly large litter of four cubs. Litters of two or three cubs are more common. Pictured are Wildlife Division biologist Jason Hawley with the four cubs and Environmental Conservation Police Officer Alex Johnston.**

## *Connecticut's Perfect Bear Habitat*

Connecticut's forested habitat appears to be very productive for bears, allowing them to grow fast and large and reproduce at a high rate. Compared to bear habitat at more northerly latitudes or in western states, Connecticut has more abundant and a greater variety of fall foods, particularly acorns from the many species of oaks. In other regions of the country, female bears may have their first litter as late as four to six years of age. In Connecticut, sows typically have their first litters at three years of age; however, litters at two years of age have been documented.

## *Factors Affecting Successful Reproduction*

Successful reproduction is directly related to body size, which in turn is directly related to the habitat's ability to provide fall foods. Thus, researchers in Quebec found that sows weighing less than 123 pounds in early winter did not give birth while all bears weighing more than 154 pounds successfully gave birth. Similar research in Minnesota found that sows weighing less than 147 pounds in the fall failed to produce litters the following January, while nearly all sows greater than 176 pounds bore litters. Most female bears in Connecticut exceed these body weight thresholds and reproduce by age three. Several sows handled by Wildlife Division biologists during early winter impressively weighed in excess of 300 pounds.

Division biologists measured and weighed 25 adult female bears at their winter dens between February and April of

2017. The average weight of these sows was 225 pounds. As one might expect given these heavy weights, excluding sows with yearlings, there were no cases of sows failing to produce a litter. Nine of these sows had litters of three cubs, eight had litters of two cubs, one had a single cub, and two had litters of four. Litters of four were found only twice in the previous years of winter den research.

Food abundance can also affect body weights and survival of yearling bears. Researchers in Minnesota examined yearling bears while they were denned with their mothers. Those weighing less than 22 pounds did not survive after leaving the winter den while those heavier than 29 pounds had high survival. A study in Pennsylvania, a

P. REGO

**Yearling bears handled during winter den inspections are ear-tagged. If the bears are observed later, recaptured, struck by vehicles, or harvested by hunters in other states, the tags can provide information on movements, dispersal, growth, and survival. Pictured are (left) Research Assistant Derek Broman and Wildlife Division biologist Jason Hawley.**

## *What Do Bears Eat?*

**Black bears have a diverse diet and will eat anything from skunk cabbage to the occasional small mammal. Their omnivorous diet, however, heavily depends on Connecticut's changing seasons and habitat availability.**

**Spring: Permanently flooded wetlands, such as marshes, swamps, and lake shores, are especially important in providing skunk cabbage and other forbs as the first food sources for black bears once they emerge from overwintering. In spring and throughout the year, bears are occasional and opportunistic predators, preying on fawns, nestling birds, and livestock.**

**Summer: Fruits and berries, such as raspberries and blueberries, make up a large part of the bear's diet during this time. Black bears also seek insect larvae, particularly those of ants and bees.**

**Late Summer into Fall: Hard mast, including (but not limited to) acorns, American beech nuts, and hickory nuts, is abundant for black bears during this time. Other food options include soft mast, such as black cherry, apples, and the fruit from various shrubs.**

**Winter: During the overwintering period, most black bears will not leave their dens if there is snow cover. If snow cover is absent and food is available, bears may eat acorns and other foods that persist from the fall. Female bears that are pregnant or have newborn cubs do not venture from winter dens.**

**Food Sources Provided by Humans: Black bears will take advantage of seed at birdfeeders, improperly stored grills, pet food left outside, and garbage in dumpsters and unprotected trash cans to obtain food. Connecticut residents are advised to make these low energy food items inaccessible to bears to avoid nuisance problems. Fed bears can become habituated and lose their fear of humans. Learn about "Black Bear Do's and Don'ts" at *www.ct.gov/deep/blackbear*.**

***Lisa Massicotte, DEEP Wildlife Division***


P. J. FUSCO

**Acorns**


P. J. FUSCO

**Beech nuts**

state known for its large and productive bears, showed yearlings in winter dens had an average weight of 40 pounds and high survival. In Connecticut, weights of yearlings in dens routinely exceed 50 pounds and biologists have handled some yearlings that exceeded 100 pounds!

*Connecticut's habitat appears to be very productive for bears, allowing them to grow fast and large and reproduce at a high rate.*

Another factor in the productivity of bear populations is the frequency of litters. In regions of poor habitat quality or where there are periodic food failures, female bears may fail to reproduce, often leading to longer periods between successive litters. In these instances, sows may have litters as infrequently as once every three years on average. In productive habitats, sows typically give birth every other year. (Female black bears care for their young for 14 to 16 months, precluding the females from breeding every year.) The vast majority of female bears in Connecticut breed at the high rate of every other year. Remarkably, we have documented a couple of cases where sows successfully bred in consecutive years!

Wildlife Division biologists have been examining the reproduction and survival of Connecticut's bear population each year since 2002. Over those years, there has never been a case of broad reproductive failure or even notably low reproduction. This is true for bears living in areas of relatively low human development, as well as in areas with more development, such as suburbs. To the contrary, habitat in Connecticut appears to provide substantial foods, allowing bears to gain weight and reproduce at a relatively high rate. In more developed towns, human-derived food sources, such as bird seed and garbage, may be the frosting on the cake of natural foods. The population drivers of body weights, early breeding, and breeding frequency are independent of bear density. It appears that Connecticut's bear population growth will not be slowed by self-regulation.

P. J. FUSCO

**Environmental Conservation Police Officer Ed Yescott and Wildlife Division Research Assistant Melissa Ruszczyk are pictured with a large sow and yearling found denning in a residential area. In this area, like many settings in Connecticut, housing is interspersed with forest habitat. Natural foods in the forest can sustain bears near and in developments, but bears will add human-provided foods, such as bird seed and garbage, to their diet. If human-provided foods become too convenient and available, then bears will habitually forage in and around homes, often leading to serious conflicts.**

# A Biophilic Life: Stephen R. Kellert 1943-2016

*Article by Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director, Responsive Management*

The natural world and humanity have lost an important spokesperson. Stephen R. Kellert, Ph.D., passed away on November 26, 2016, with his family by his side after a long battle with multiple myeloma. He left behind a loving family, hundreds of mentees around the world, and a scholarly legacy that has benefited wildlife conservation and our understanding of the connection between humans and nature.

Steve was a world-class scholar. His official title was Tweedy Ordway Professor Emeritus of Social Ecology and Senior Research Scholar at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. However, students and colleagues around the world knew him as an extraordinary mentor and friend.

From a personal standpoint, Steve was an important person in my life. After receiving my degree in wildlife biology and becoming a wildlife biologist in 1982, I knew I wanted to not only work as a biologist, but also be involved in wildlife policy. I wanted to make a difference, and I felt the place to do it would be in the realm of people and policy. I had read the work of a professor at Yale who was involved with a groundbreaking study on understanding how the American public valued wildlife and connected with nature. I wrote to this professor to express my interest in his work – and this was in the day of snail mail – not really expecting to hear back from such an important person at an Ivy League university. I have to say I was surprised to quickly receive a kind and warm letter back from Steve inviting me to meet with him. I still have that letter 35 years later.

This correspondence resulted in Steve not only getting me into Yale, but also offering me two scholarships to study under him as a graduate student. From our first meeting, a lifelong friendship emerged.

Steve was a mentor through graduate school, helped secure my first job at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and assisted me with starting and running my business, Responsive Management. He continued to be a mentor to me for 35 years, and we would talk often. He always made the time to talk on the phone and answered emails within a few hours. This amazed me as he was such a busy person.

I share this because the real story is that Steve had similar relationships and gave his time and energy to hundreds of other students, colleagues, and friends around the world as well.

Steve was a quintessential academic. He started his career at Cornell University, where he earned his B.S., and then moved to Yale University for his Ph.D. He remained at Yale for his entire academic career. In the process, Steve authored or co-authored 11 books and 150 scientific articles. He influenced and transformed lives, mentoring hundreds of students throughout his career.

Steve's early research focused on Americans' attitudes toward wildlife and led to the development of a typology of how the public relates to wildlife. From there he conducted a wealth of related studies, examining how sociodemographics, outdoor recreation, and culture influence our relationships with nature. In addition to these pioneering studies, Steve conducted other studies on how people relate to wolves, bears, and cetaceans. Today, the wildlife profession takes for granted the importance of this type of research, now referred to as the "human dimensions of wildlife management." This was not the case 40 years ago. In a very real sense, an entire field grew up around Steve's work.

More recently – in fact, up until his passing – Steve was working with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Blue Ribbon Panel. This panel is working toward obtaining much needed funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. Steve was working with former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and current president of the Wildlife Management Institute, Steve Williams, to address the relevancy of conservation to the American public. This work of Steve Kellert and Steve Williams has set in motion a discussion of the relevancy of fish and wildlife agencies for the next century and with it the wise management of our nation's fish and wildlife resources.

*"A world made better for wildlife is necessarily a world made more attractive, meaningful, and inspiring for people. A sense of stewardship for wildlife and the land can provide opportunities for human growth, competence, and responsibility." – Dr. Stephen Kellert*

**Steve Kellert loved to interact with wildlife in many different ways, from identifying songbirds in his backyard during spring migration to big game hunting in remote areas of North America. Pictured here is Steve (right) with his first caribou during a hunting trip in Northern Quebec with the author of this article, Mark Damian Duda.**

In addition to his work with the Blue Ribbon Panel, Steve was also working on a national study and initiative to connect Americans and nature. The recommendations that flowed from this study are vital to the future of fish and wildlife management in the United States.

The common theme was Steve's passion to make conservation relevant to the American public. For wildlife conservation, it is highly relevant that Steve not only started his career contributing to the wildlife profession but that he circled back and ended there. The wildlife profession is tremendously better off because of his work.

For any other individual, this list of accomplishments and contributions to the wildlife profession would be an entire career. However, Steve's work and contributions did not end there. In fact, in thinking about Steve's impact on the way we think about the natural world, he had five major areas of impact and influence:

- Wildlife and human dimensions;
- Childhood development and children and nature;
- Biophilia;
- Biophilic design; and
- Nature and spirituality.

Following is a brief overview of Steve's influence in each of these areas.

### *Childhood Development: Children and Nature*

Steve's interest in childhood development and the interaction of children with nature resulted in research that continues to inform and challenge education and child psychology theory. Steve identified the various stages of childhood development and connected them to the best ways to teach kids about nature. His work stimulated the redesign of how we teach kids about nature, and his 2002 book *Children and*

*~ Biophilia is man's innate connection to the natural world. ~*

*Nature* with Peter Kahn was a stimulus, not just for further research, but for a social movement to reintroduce children to the natural world.

### *Biophilia*

Steve's third major area of influence was Biophilia.

Why are we attracted to beauty in nature? Why do we find flowers beautiful? Why would people rather look at flowers or green vegetation than buildings? Why, if given a choice, do people choose to camp near a lake, stream, or waterfall? Biophilia can be defined as man's innate connection to the natural world.

In the 1980s, Steve, and Edward O. Wilson of Harvard, advanced the emerging theory of Biophilia. Their book, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, became a foundational work on integrating the worlds of people, philosophy, sociology, and psychiatry.

### *Biophilic Design*

Steve's interest in Biophilia naturally resulted in its application to biophilic design. Biophilic design connects people and nature through the built environment. Research shows that people live healthier and happier lives, have deeper relationships with each other, and even heal faster when sick when working and living in environments that are constructed with nature in mind. It could be said that Steve influenced the entire architectural community to think differently. Steve's influence is evident in the design and structure of many buildings around the world, including the new School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale, one of the greenest buildings in the nation.

### *Nature and Spirituality*

In his last major area of influence, Steve sought to "determine whether a middle ground is possible in which scientific and spiritual outlooks of nature and humanity could be reconciled."

Not only writing extensively about this subject, Steve also co-created a joint program between Yale's Divinity School and Forestry School. His work on integrating nature and spirituality continues to inform and challenge institutions and individuals to rethink environmental ethics in such terms.

Dr. Stephen R. Kellert will be missed by people around the globe who care about the natural world. However, through his research, writings, teachings, mentorship, and friendships, we will remember a life devoted to not only helping the natural world but humanity itself. For as Steve pointed out, "If we stray too far from our inherited dependence on the natural world, we do so at our own peril."

The passing of an academic giant, mentor, and close friend is unsettling. We may only be consoled by the words of another great nature writer, Henry David Thoreau: "Even the death of friends will inspire us as much as their lives… their memories will be incrusted over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as monuments of other men are overgrown with moss…"

### *2017 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Special Recognition Award*

**This award was presented posthumously to Dr. Stephen Kellert in recognition of his work as part of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife. The Panel was tasked with developing recommendations and Congressional policy options on the most sustainable and equitable model to fund conservation of the full array of fish and wildlife species in our nation. Steve was a lead editor of the Panel's final report and co-chair of its working group on relevancy and agency transformation. He convincingly and persistently argued that relevancy and agency transformation were as important to fish and wildlife conservation as the need for increased funding. A long-time advocate of the need for increased funding for states to conserve all wildlife, he also advanced our understanding of the human side of wildlife management and the challenges that diverse attitudes toward wildlife bring. Dr. Kellert left an indelible mark on the members of the Panel. And, despite the many awards and distinctions he earned during his career, he remained humble, approachable, curious, and 100% committed to the cause of conservation.**

## *Remembering a Friend and Champion*

*Dr. Stephen Kellert was no stranger to Blue Ribbon Panels. Long before he was asked to serve at the national level, Steve chaired the Connecticut Wildlife Conservation Committee, the Blue Ribbon Panel that helped establish Connecticut's Nonharvested Wildlife Program (now referred to as the DEEP Wildlife Division's Wildlife Diversity Program.) Joined by notables, such as Roger Tory Peterson, Noble Proctor, S. Dillon Ripley, and Rolland Clement, Steve guided the Committee to create an approach for developing a nongame wildlife program in Connecticut. Foreshadowing his national efforts, the ability to establish a stable source of funding for all wildlife was identified as a priority. Dr. Kellert eloquently noted that the committee "acted with the conviction and knowledge that a world made better for wildlife is necessarily a world made more attractive, meaningful, and inspiring for people. A sense of stewardship for wildlife and the land can provide opportunities for human growth, competence, and responsibility." It is definitely a legacy that will live on in Connecticut, and beyond, for many generations to come.*

# Coming Together to Protect Our Natural Heritage

*Article by Jenny Dickson, DEEP Wildlife Division*

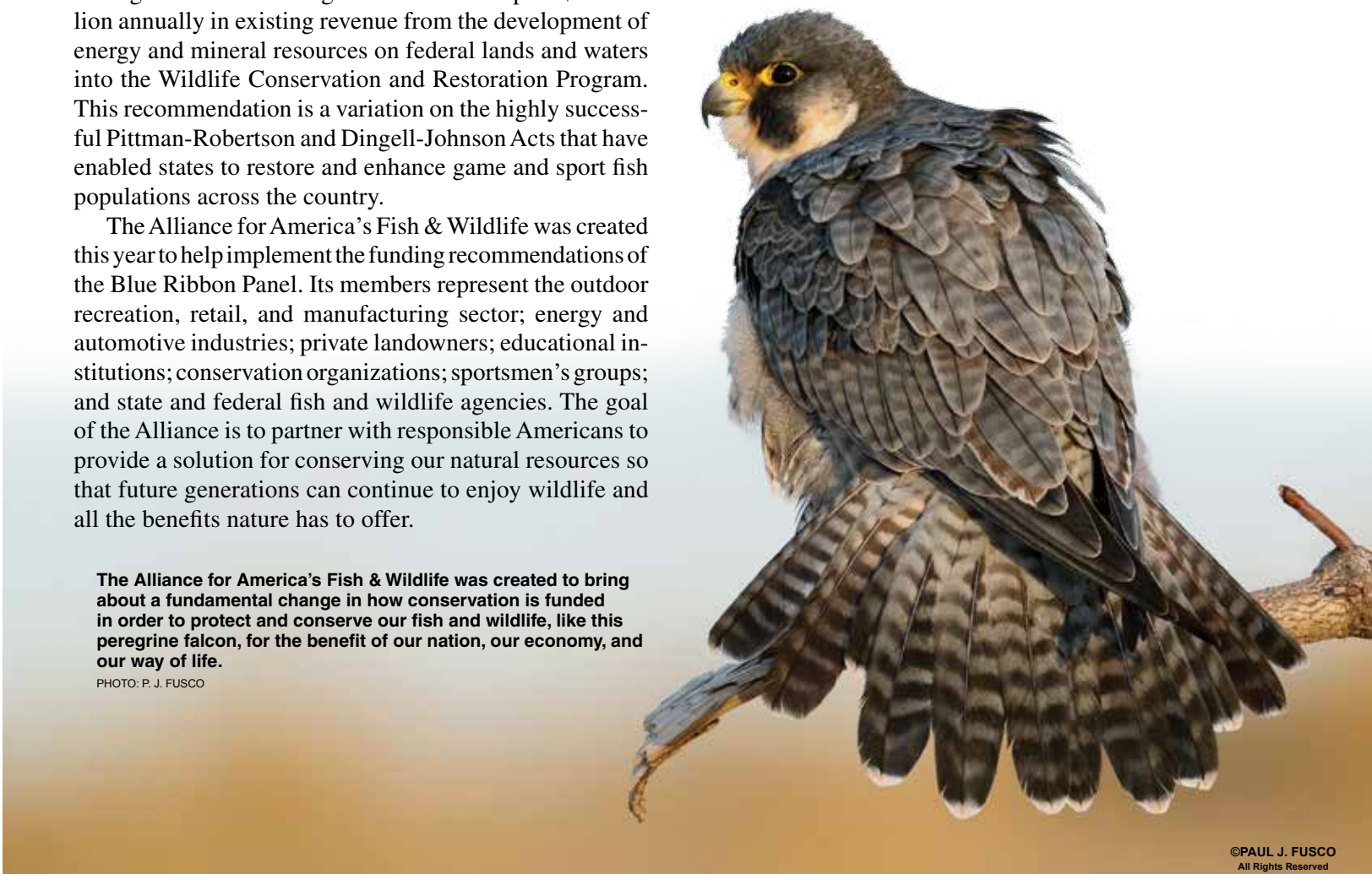
The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies established The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources to explore ways to address the looming wildlife conservation crisis in America. Despite some remarkable success stories, such as the return of bald eagles, ospreys, and peregrine falcons in Connecticut and across the nation, thousands of species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates have been lost in the conservation shadows. Without an investment in proactive efforts, many of these species will continue to slowly decline, impacting our national natural heritage, ecosystems, and economy.

A national survey determined that the states need an average of $1.3 billion annually to effectively implement State Wildlife Action plans and proactively conserve species of greatest conservation need. (State and Tribal Wildlife Grants only provide approximately $60 million annually – a shortfall of $1.2 billion from what is actually needed.) In 2016, the Blue Ribbon Panel issued a recommendation calling for the U.S. Congress to dedicate up to $1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters into the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. This recommendation is a variation on the highly successful Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts that have enabled states to restore and enhance game and sport fish populations across the country.

The Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife was created this year to help implement the funding recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel. Its members represent the outdoor recreation, retail, and manufacturing sector; energy and automotive industries; private landowners; educational institutions; conservation organizations; sportsmen's groups; and state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. The goal of the Alliance is to partner with responsible Americans to provide a solution for conserving our natural resources so that future generations can continue to enjoy wildlife and all the benefits nature has to offer.

The Alliance also seeks to support proactive versus reactive (and often extremely costly) efforts aimed at conserving the full array of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Many of Connecticut's long-standing conservation partners, such as our National Wildlife Federation affiliate the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Audubon Connecticut, and Connecticut Audubon Society, are part of the Alliance helping to support conservation of all wildlife. The Alliance also provides an important opportunity for all of us to step up and support these efforts and become part of what Ding Darling famously called "the conservation army." If you enjoy spending time in nature and the outdoors with your friends and family or watching birds in your backyard, or if you want to make sure clean air, clean water, and wildlife should be sustained for future generations to enjoy, then it is important for all of us to step up and support these efforts.

To learn more about the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife and how you can help, visit *www.OurNatureUSA.com*.



**The Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife was created to bring about a fundamental change in how conservation is funded in order to protect and conserve our fish and wildlife, like this peregrine falcon, for the benefit of our nation, our economy, and our way of life.**

PHOTO: P. J. FUSCO

# A Cat Calling Mimic
## *The Gray Catbird*

*Article and photography by Paul Fusco, DEEP Wildlife Division*

Songbirds in the mimic thrush family (*Mimidae*) are well known for their singing and mimicry talents. All members of the family have strong legs, long tails, and a slightly downward curved bill. They often run on the ground to escape danger, as well as fly. Three representatives of the *Mimidae* family occur in Connecticut, the northen mockingbird, brown thrasher, and gray catbird.

The gray catbird is a little smaller than a robin, has a long tail, and has mostly dark gray plumage. The under tail coverts are chestnut colored. The gray catbird also sports a black cap.

Named for its distinctive cat-like mewing call, the song of the gray catbird is long and varied, similar to that of a mockingbird or thrasher, but not as rich. The song typically contains a series of short, clear warbling notes interspersed with some raspy notes. The song is frequently interrupted by pauses, along with harsh squeaking notes. Catbirds sometimes include phrases of other birds in their songs. Unlike mockingbirds and thrashers, catbirds do not typically repeat phrases while singing.

Gray catbirds are common breeders which are distributed statewide. They can be found in a variety of habitats, including dense thickets, thorny scrub, and edge habitats. Well-adapted to humans, catbirds are frequently found nesting in dense hedgerows and shrubs in suburban backyards. Look for them in heavy thickets and vine tangles where they feed on invertebrates and berries.

**The cat-like mewing call of the gray catbird gives this berry-loving bird its name.**

### *Behavior*

Catbirds often feed on the ground in leaf litter, searching for a varied diet of both animal and vegetable matter. Berries of many kinds are relished when in season. Dogwoods, viburnums, cherries, grapes, honeysuckle, sumac, poison ivy, pokeweed, blackberry, mulberry, rose, and bittersweet are all readily consumed. Cultivated fruits (blueberries, strawberries) may also be consumed, which sometimes gives the catbird a bad reputation with growers. Some growers, however, appreciate the large amount of agricultural insect pests this bird consumes. Among those are Japanese beetles, wood boring beetles, plant lice, ants, grasshoppers, crickets, and spiders. Catbirds also are known to prey heavily on gypsy moth larvae.

Catbirds are migratory, with some birds moving as far south as Panama for the winter. Small numbers of catbirds will overwinter in Connecticut, especially in lowlands and along the shoreline in places with persistent berries.

Nests are built in the thick cover of shrubs and tangles, where the female lays an average of four dark greenish-blue eggs. Incubation lasts 12 to 15 days and the young fledge (fly from the nest) after 10 to 14 days. Catbirds will often raise two broods in a season.

### *Conservation*

The gray catbird population is considered stable and not under any immediate conservation threat. There are some concerns that affect many songbirds, including the catbird. Those include pesticide use and free-roaming cats. Catbirds migrate at night, making them susceptible to collisions with tall buildings, towers, and wires. Their daily routines seldom take them far from the ground, where they are vulnerable to feral or free-roaming cats and vehicle strikes. The use of pesticides and herbicides can impact the birds' food source.

# Tracking Wildlife in Winter

*Article by Katerina Hutchins, DEEP Wildlife Division*

Winter weather in Connecticut usually brings snowfall, sometimes a lot of it. Once the winter season is upon us and fall activities have wound down, people tend to stay inside. One great outdoor family activity that is often overlooked is animal tracking. Although we might be ready to overwinter inside, many mammals are still active outside during cold, snowy, winter days. Snow is a blank palette that can be filled with tracks of any animals that pass by.

When identifying tracks, it is first key to know the mammals native to your area and which ones are active during winter. In Connecticut, some of the most common tracks observed are from coyotes, foxes, white-tailed deer, opossums, raccoons, weasels, skunks, and squirrels. A good trick to identifying the tracks of these animals, some of which are closely related, is to group the prints by families and orders, such as felids (the cat family) or canids (the dog or canine family). You should also pay attention to your surroundings and the habitat to help connect you to the correct animal.

Members of the canine family, which include coyote, domestic dog, and fox, all leave similar tracks exhibiting four toes on both front and back paws and visible claw marks.

Members of the feline family, which include domestic cat and bobcat, display a rounded track with four toes on both front and back feet and three lobes. Cat claws are retractable, therefore claw markings usually are **not** visible, distinguishing these tracks from the canine family.

Members of the deer family, which include white-tailed deer and moose, leave behind the most commonly seen and distinguishable tracks in and out of snow. The tracks are heart-shaped with a line down the middle. Moose tracks are larger versions of the deer track.

The mustelid family, also known as the weasel family, contains fisher, river otter, mink, and short-tailed and long-tailed weasels. The tracks of these animals show claw marks and five toes on both the front and hind feet. There is great variation between species.

The rodent family also shows great disparity between species, but the tracks contain four front toes and five rear toes.

The order Lagomorph, which encompasses rabbits, is not closely related to rodents, but their tracks have similarities. Rabbit tracks are easily recognizable because the back feet are two to four times larger than the front. Tracks of a running rabbit resemble a "Y" with the large rear footprints forming the top branches of the "Y" and the smaller front footprints forming the lower stem. Squirrel and rabbit tracks can appear similar, but paying attention to foot placement and where the tracks are headed can help lead you to the correct identification. For example, squirrel tracks usually lead to the base of a tree while rabbit tracks will be near underbrush.

The hind tracks of the raccoon, opossum, and bear families look somewhat similar to human footprints because their toes are elongated and somewhat resemble fingers. These animals have five toes on both the front and hind feet.

The pattern of travel visible in tracks can be more important than the actual footprint in identifying wildlife. In addition, understanding an animal's gait, or the way it walks, can also aid with identification. Four main gaits are usually observed: walking, trotting, running, and jumping. Walking can show even-spaced prints, depending on the animal. Trotting is a quicker way of moving when two diagonal feet move concurrently, with the hind foot usually in front of the front foot. Running is almost always the fastest gait and, at one point, all four feet are off the ground. Jumping is somewhat similar to running where all four feet are off the ground at one point. When jumping, some animals push off the ground using their hind feet and land on their front feet.

When animal tracking in winter, be sure to exercise caution. Winter is a crucial time for animals because food is limited and more energy may be needed to find it. If you happen to come upon an animal while tracking, practice good wildlife watching techniques. Always keep your distance, and never approach a wild animal as this can cause undue stress or track an animal back to its den or shelter. Remember to enjoy your time outside and learn from the tracks left behind by these mysterious animals.

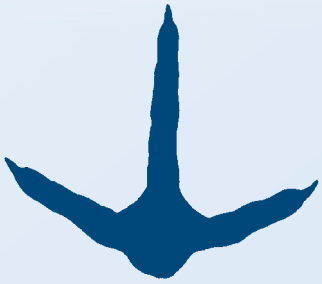
**Coyote (left) and Domestic Dog (right):** Canine and feline tracks are often confused with one another. Tracks for both contain four toes. Canine tracks can be distinguished from bobcat tracks by visible claw marks, and the front of the foot pad has a single lobe while the back has two lobes. Dog tracks can vary in size, but are usually between 2 to 4 inches wide, while coyote tracks are usually more narrow, about 2 inches wide, and with the hind foot somewhat smaller than the front.

**Black Bear**: Black bear tracks are comparable to human feet with five rounded toes. The front pad is wide and curved and has a small inside toe. The rear foot is larger than the front and has a large heel. Claw marks are usually visible and the length of the rear foot will range between 7 to 9 inches and 4.5 inches for the front.

**Crow**: Crow tracks show three toes pointing forward and the fourth toe pointing backwards. The length is about 2.5 inches.

**Grouse:** Like crows, grouse leave tracks with each foot containing 3 toes pointing forward and 1 pointing backward. The track measures 2 inches. Grouse have a short stride.

**Wild Turkey**: Turkeys have 4 toes and sometimes will leave a round imprint connecting three together. The fourth toe, which faces backwards, is not always present. The toes are splayed and nail marks should be visible. The tracks are approximately 4 inches in length.



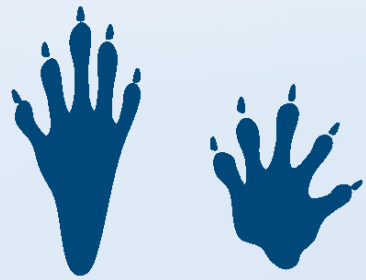
**White-tailed Deer**: Deer tracks are one of the most commonly seen tracks in Connecticut. They are heart-shaped, with a line going down the middle, and 2.5 to 3 inches long. Moose tracks are larger, usually measuring between 4 and 6 iches long.

**Cottontail Rabbit:** Both the eastern and New England cottontail leave similar tracks, with 4 toes on the front and back feet. The front foot is around 1 inch and the rear is 4 inches in length. The tracks of a running rabbit resemble a "Y."

**Bobcat**: Bobcat tracks are fairly rounded and have 4 toes on both the front and rear feet. The bottom of the foot pad has 3 lobes and claw marks are **not** visible. Tracks are approximately 2 inches in size.

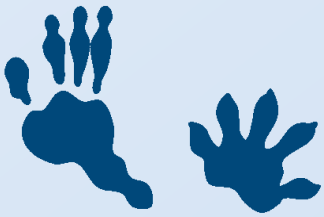
**Fisher**: Fishers have 5 digits on each foot. The front pads are C-shaped and have a small heel pad. The rear feet contain a palm pad but lack a heel pad. The tracks are like other weasels but the gait is distinctive. When hunting, the fisher leaves a trail that "zig zags" through the forest. The tracks are approximately 2.25 inches long.

**Mink:** The mink has 5 digits on each foot. The front foot pad has 5 loosely connected palm pads, each associated with a digit and measuring about 1 to 2 inches. The rear feet have four loosely connected palm pads and measure roughly 1.5 inches. Look for mink tracks next to a body of water.



**Raccoon**: Raccoon tracks resemble the hand of a small child. They contain 5 long toes which tend to be splayed. The pad is C-shaped and claw marks are present. The hind feet measure 4 inches in length, while the front feet measure 2.5 inches. These tracks may be found primarily near the water's edge.

**Opossum**: Opossum tracks are like those of the raccoon, with 5 toes on each foot. The "thumb-like" toe on the hind foot is spread wide and about 2 inches in length, while the front foot is a bit smaller.



**Gray Squirrel**: Squirrels, like other rodents, have 4 digits on the front foot and 5 on the rear. The hind foot is larger in size than the front at about 2.25 and 1.5 inches respectively.

Track art for crow, grouse, deer, rabbit, fisher, raccoon, opossum, squirrel and mink courtesy New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

# Blue Ribbon Brown Trout and Drinking Water –

## *Strange "Redd" fellows*

*Article by Mike Beauchene, DEEP Fisheries Division*

"That will be seventy-eight cents, please." I dug into my pockets and handed the Pleasant Valley General storeowner a collection of nickels and dimes. In exchange, I left with a can of Sure-Fine cream soda (my favorite at age 11) and a bag full of assorted penny candy. I hopped on my bike and pedaled over the "steel bridge" to meet up with some friends on one of our many fishing trips to the West Branch Farmington River. We had no idea why the trout fishing was so good; we didn't care – to us it was the best way to spend a summer day.

Today, things at the store have changed. Soda is more like $1.75 and penny candy jars are gone, but across the street, the fishing is still fantastic. Each year, anglers from around the world cast lines for tens of thousands of hours within the Wild and Scenic West Branch Farmington River with hopes of landing one of the famed "survivor" brown trout. What may surprise many of these anglers is the creation of the fishery indirectly dates back to the 1850s with the quest to ensure Hartford with a sustainable supply of quality drinking water.

### *Back in the Day*

It is hard to imagine the transition of Connecticut's landscape over the past 300 years, especially when standing in the Wild and Scenic portion of the West Branch Farmington River today. In fact, as recently as the 1930s, the "central riffle" was actually "central bottom," 10 or so feet under the surface of Greenwoods Pond. Even earlier in our history, a continual series of small dams impounded the river from Farmington to Otis, Massachusetts, in order to store water to power mills and manufacturing, primarily during summer low-flow periods. It also is hard to imagine reports of the river being reduced to a mere trickle at times during a prolonged dry spell from 1870 to 1884.

### *The Tale of a "Tailwater"*

Later that same summer, on one of the hottest, haziest, most humid days, we are further upstream at one of our favorite pools. "Ready, set, go!" My best friend counts, "... *eight, nine, ten, eleven, twel...*" I can't take it anymore, the counting stops with my leap out of the water, making all sorts of unhuman noises, "that was freezing, your turn." The challenge – who can sit, submerged up to their shoulders, the longest. I think the record is 18 seconds, one that might not be broken for a very long time.

The core of the West Branch fishery is the water contained in the West Branch Reservoir (Hogback Dam completed in 1960) and Colebrook River Lake (dam completed in 1969). Through a variety of complex agreements and series of legislation, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), who owns and operates Goodwin Dam, is required to release at least 50 cubic feet per second (CFS). This requirement is very important for two reasons. First, the water released from the bottom of the Goodwin Dam has one of the most important

**2016 Connecticut Angler's Guide Photo Contest Cover winning shot of Roland Salvatore fly fishing in the Farmington River, New Hartford.**
PHOTO: TAYLOR KEMP

requirements for trout survival – cold water (40-50 degrees during peak summer months). Second, in times of extreme low flow, the minimum required release can be greater than the amount coming into the reservoir, thus keeping more water in the river than would be there naturally.

As part of agreements with the Army Corps of Engineers, the MDC and a series of legislation related to the construction of these dams, CT DEEP has two "pools" of water, each 1.6 billion gallons. The DEEP Fisheries Division can use these pools of water to augment downstream flow (above the 50 CFS minimum) as needed to support the Farmington's fisheries. Flow augmentation is especially important in fall when brown trout are creating their spawning "redds," nests where the next generation of browns will hatch. This reserve of water ensures fish will have access to the prime spawning habitat and that the eggs remain submerged.

The combination of cold water, storage for release during low flows, and a required minimum release provides the habitat necessary to support the world-class blue-ribbon trout fishery so many enjoy.

### *Life without the Dams*

Recent drought and below normal precipitation have demonstrated the delicate balancing act required to sustain the tailwater fishery. As recent as September 2016, Connecticut experienced an extended period of time where precipitation was below normal (a 20-inch deficit in some locations), which dropped incoming flows to Colebrook Lake to a mere three CFS. The continual release of 50 CFS was able to maintain enough "cold water" to sustain trout through the majority

**A view from the top of Jones Mountain in New Hartford, looking northwest towards Barkhamsted. Greenwood Pond (1845-1936) was a large impoundment formed to power one of the largest cotton mills in the nation in the 1860s. It had a 220-inch wide loom, which allowed the manufacture of many unique products. The dam failed in 1936, leaving this highly fished section of river as we know it today. Credit: Greenwood Pond and Dam, New Hartford, 1910-1929, photograph, 2000.178.152, the Connecticut Historical Society**

of the trout management area.

Without the two dams and resulting impoundments, during periods of very low flow, the river would be a much different place for fish (in terms of flow and temperature). Without the ability to augment flow, the fishery would more than likely resemble our other popular trout waters, including the Natchaug, Salmon, Naugatuck, Willimantic, and Housatonic Rivers – where summer low flows and associated warm water temperatures create conditions where it can be difficult for trout to survive.

So, the next time you frequent the West Branch Farmington River, think of how things might have been without

CT DEEP FISHERIES (2)

**A picturesque section of the West Branch of the Farmington River as it enters Colebrook River Lake, Colebrook. At this point, the river drains approximately 103 square miles (from Massachusetts). This section of river also provides a glimpse into what the river could look like in times of severe drought without the current ability to augment flow from the two impoundments.**

**A 180-degree view from the middle of the Army Corps of Engineers Dam (est. 1969) at Colebrook River Lake, Colebrook. Looking left (pg. 18) and to the North is Colebrook River Lake and its gate house. To the right (pg. 19) and south is the West Branch Reservoir. The management of these two waterbodies is complex, balancing legal requirements of minimum flows, water rights (riparian) for downstream entities established in the early 1800s, hydropower, protecting life and property from floods, and managing fish habitat. In addition, these two waterbodies provide the public with recreational boating and fishing opportunities.**

people like Hiram Bissell, who championed the quest for quality drinking water for Hartford in the 1850s to 1860s and his predecessors, Caleb Saville and Charles Goodwin, who built a complex and massive water supply system that affords tap water to hundreds of thousands of residents and makes a blue-ribbon trout fishery available to even more.

# CASEBOOK

## *Recent Reports from DEEP ENCON Division*

*Once fall arrived, Connecticut's State Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police Officers prepared for a busy hunting season. In September, officers logged over 227 deer hunting enforcement patrols, 321 boating enforcement patrols, 396 fisheries enforcement patrols, 90 public safety assists, and 370 park and forest patrols investigating numerous cases. Officers responded to 63 wildlife complaints, 22 nuisance bear complaints, and the K-9 Unit was deployed 11 times. Some of the cases are highlighted here. You can learn about other interesting cases by following the EnCon Police Facebook page at* www.Facebook.com/CTEnConPolice.

- On September 12, 2017, an officer was walking a parcel of woods in Plymouth when he discovered a clearing with multiple tree stands facing apples, corn, and a bait block on the ground. On opening day of the archery season (Sept. 15), officers entered the woods in the early morning and, at approximately 6:45 AM, discovered an individual wearing camouflage clothing and sitting in a treestand with his compound bow facing the bait piles. The accused was escorted from the woods and charged with hunting deer over bait. His bow, arrows, trail camera, and treestand were seized as evidence.

- On September 23, 2017, a sergeant was patrolling the shoreline around Milford and saw three individuals with fishing gear and several small plastic coolers. The sergeant checked the coolers and found 54 short scup, nine short sea bass, and three short striped bass. The individuals were cited accordingly and the dead fish were donated to Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo to feed zoo animals.

- Eastern and Marine District Officers brought their outreach trailers to DEEP's Hunting and Fishing Day at Cabela's. Officer Logiodice and his K-9 partner Ruger conducted a fish and game detection demonstration where youths hid "evidence" around the grounds. Officer Logiodice and Ruger were able to locate all of the evidence. The demonstration was well received by attendees and emphasized the abilities of EnCon Officers and our K-9s.

- On September 30, 2017, the Connecticut State Police notified DEEP Emergency Dispatch that a moose had been seen in Essex near a limited access highway. EnCon Officers were responding when they received notification that the moose had been struck by a car in the vicinity of exit 4 on Route 9 in Essex, with no apparent injuries to the vehicle's occupants. Officers found the moose far down an embankment with serious injuries, and it was euthanized. Wildlife Division biologists performed a necropsy on the moose and estimated it to be a 2½-year-old, 650-pound female which had been tracked from Stafford through Tolland, Lebanon, Montville, East Lyme, and Lyme over a five-day period.


Eastern towhees have appeared in shrubby habitats created by storm damage to trees.
PHOTO: P. J. FUSCO

## Shrubland Birds Benefit from Storm Damage

In a forest, a big storm is not necessarily a disaster. It is a chance for regrowth, an increase in diversity, and one set of plants and animals to replace another. That is exactly what happened in 2012 when Hurricane Sandy took down 100 acres of pine forest within Centennial Watershed State Forest on Black Rock Turnpike, adjacent to the Aquarion Water Company's Hemlock Reservoir in Easton and Fairfield. Centennial Watershed State Forest is jointly managed by Aquarion, Connecticut DEEP, and The Nature Conservancy.

"It might have looked bad for a while," said Milan Bull, senior director of science and conservation for Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS). "But, it has opened up the area so that birds that are disappearing from Connecticut elsewhere have a new place to nest."

After its fifth season of regrowth, the storm-damaged property is thick with brambles, greenbriar, young red cedar, birches, and the other shrubby plants. To document the benefit to birds, Aquarion hired CAS to carry out a breeding bird survey this past May and June.

"After the storm, we gave the forest a chance to grow back and the birds a chance to find it, and then see if it is being used," said Brian Roach, program manager of environmental protection for Aquarion. "We wanted to verify it with an expert, which is why we asked Miley to come in."

Miley visited the site once a week in May and June to conduct the survey, following a well-established protocol. He plotted a transect across the property, and on each visit he stopped at five spots along the transect, 100 meters apart. He spent 10 minutes at each, listening and watching, and making notes on what he saw and heard. He did the same in a section of intact forest nearby, as a test control site. In the control forest, he regularly found red-eyed vireo, black-throated green warbler, scarlet tanager, wood thrush, veery, and ovenbird – typical forest birds. In both areas he found some more common species, such as American robin and song sparrow. Not surprisingly, in the area where Sandy toppled trees, Miley also found birds that nest in shrubby areas. Those included common yellowthroat and gray catbird, as well as declining species like eastern towhee and blue-winged warbler. In future years, he expects chestnut-sided warbler, indigo bunting, and perhaps brown thrasher and prairie warbler to nest there as well.

*Tom Andersen, Communications Director for Connecticut Audubon Society*

## Same Sturgeon, 24 Years Later!

This past season brought about a thrilling re-encounter with a shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) first tagged in the lower Connecticut River on May 4, 1993. At initial capture, the fish measured 740 mm (29 inches) and weighed 4.5 kg (9.9 lbs). Given its size, the fish was already an adult (10+ years) in 1993, making it 35 to 40+ years old today!

The sturgeon was recaptured on August 30, 2017, in virtually the same spot it was captured in 1993. The fish had grown to 973 mm (38 inches) and weighed 10.3 kg (22.7 lbs). This large increase in weight indicates she was likely preparing to spawn and, due to her age, has been contributing to the population for many decades. The sex of the fish is not an assumption. Collaboration with fishery biologists in Massachusetts allowed us to discover that they had captured and sexed her in 2001.

Connecticut has two species of sturgeon, shortnose and Atlantic. Both are classified as state and federally endangered. Understanding and tracking the abundance of these individuals began in the late 1980s and is conducted under a federal permit with strict handling requirements. The data accumulated over time have allowed the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program to understand movements, habitat requirements, reproductive abilities, and growth rates, as well as gauge population estimates.

**Shortnose sturgeon**
PHOTO: ROBERT MICHELSON for DEEP MARINE FISHERIES

To date, DEEP has handled more than 2,800 individual shortnose sturgeon. Of those, 600 have been recaptured, some multiple times; one fish was captured eight times! These recaptures provide documentation of growth and more importantly survival, both in our local environment and from the collection, handling, and processing procedures used to study them.

Today, both Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon are protected under the Connecticut and federal Endangered Species Acts and if caught, must be released immediately without harm. To report sightings and/or catches, please contact the CT DEEP Marine Fisheries Program at *deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov*.

*Renee St. Amand and Tom Savoy, DEEP Marine Fisheries Program*

# More Acres Added to Franklin Swamp Wildlife Management Area

*Article by Laurie Fortin and Elaine Hinsch, DEEP Wildlife Division*

The DEEP Wildlife Division's Franklin Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in North Franklin is comprised of 776 acres. The original acquisition of 514 acres was purchased in 1947 with State funds. In 1983, approximately 170 acres were purchased with a Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) grant, which is provided through an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition. DEEP continues to add parcels to expand the area, with the most recent purchase of 46.25 acres located on the northeast corner of the WMA. This parcel is adjacent to Route 207, providing additional roadside access.

Two streams bisect the property – Ayers Brook and Beaver Brook. These brooks are part of a wetland area stocked annually by the DEEP Fisheries Division with approximately 950 fish. The addition of the property to the WMA will reduce encroachment from development and assist in maintaining existing land in the various hunting and fishing programs.

The habitat types present at Franklin WMA are conducive for the management of a wide variety of wildlife species. The area consists primarily of red maple swamp with uplands dominated by an oak-hickory forest. Management goals for the property are to provide habitat diversity to maintain stable, healthy populations of all species of wildlife, and to support wildlife-based recreational activities (i.e., hunting, trapping, hiking, birdwatching, and photography).

The DEEP Wildlife and Forestry Divisions have developed a cooperative vegetation management plan for Franklin WMA to assure a healthy and diverse ecosystem for the future. Management activities include bluebird and wood duck nest box monitoring, vegetation maintenance and water level control of a five-acre impoundment, road access maintenance, and the administration of two agricultural agreements. Agricultural agreements encourage the local farming community while also maintaining food, cover, and open field habitat for wildlife. Species using these open fields include cottontail rabbits, meadowlarks, bobolinks, bluebirds, numerous raptors, and a variety of native pollinators.

A special habitat of significance found at the WMA are vernal pools. These temporary bodies of fresh water, which are filled by snowmelt and spring rains, are commonly associated with wooded habitat. Many species of wildlife, some of which are totally dependent on the pools for some aspect of their life cycle, inhabit these unique and increasingly vulnerable wetlands. The alteration of these sites may result in the local extirpation of populations of certain species (i.e. wood frog, spotted salamander, Jefferson salamander, and marbled salamander). The forest and agricultural management planning process addresses the importance of identification and protection of these sites.

Franklin WMA is also home to the Wildlife Division's eastern Connecticut office, which houses staff from the Division's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS), Deer/Turkey, Migratory Bird, and Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management Programs. A classroom for hunter safety courses is in the office building, and a laboratory was established at the facility for a variety of projects, including surveillance for chronic wasting disease in deer.

Franklin Swamp WMA has a range/shooting facility that is dedicated solely to the training of CE/FS Program students and instructors. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 10 grant, which is available for enhancements to state hunter education programs, provided funding for enhancements to the range. The project included the replacement of shooting decks, construction of a 50-yard shooting deck, a storage building, an elevated bow/treestand training platform, and numerous other replacements to other training structures and equipment.

Franklin WMA is open for hunting of small game, waterfowl, spring and fall turkey, and non-lottery shotgun deer. The area is located on Route 32 in North Franklin.

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

R. WOLFE

# Another Success for Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day

*Article by Lisa Massicotte, DEEP Wildlife Division*

The DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources holds Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day to thank hunters and anglers for their support of conservation efforts in our state. The event also provides an opportunity to bring new faces to hunting and fishing. A vital connection between humans and the environment has been decreasing over the past decades. Traditions and thrills of trekking through the forest while facing the brisk morning breeze to live off the land seems to be losing interest amongst our busy society. To keep this spark alive, the Connecticut Bureau of Natural Resources implements a variety of programs to engage the public in fishing, hunting, and other wildlife related activities; one of them being Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day.

P. J. FUSCO

**A popular activity at Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day was learning to shoot a tranquilizer gun and how DEEP biologists use it to immobilize animals like black bears.**

This year's event hit the target, bringing in over 1,000 people, with over half never having participated in a previous Hunting and Fishing Day event. Participants from 95 Connecticut towns and also towns in New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey attended the 2017 event.

## *A Day Full of Fun!*

The large, enthusiastic crowd took advantage of a full day of free activities related to fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation – all thanks to a new venue at Cabela's in East Hartford and our many other sponsors and vendors. Popular activities included, but were not limited to, Flu-Flu archery shooting *(it's way harder than you think!)*, BB gun shooting ranges, building bluebird nest boxes and tool boxes, and backyard fishing with award-winning bass fisherman Alex Wetherell.

"It was my pleasure to help out, I had a blast and I appreciate all CT DEEP does for the fishing community and kids. I would be happy to help in any way I can in the future," Wetherell said.

Bird dog demonstrations, which were performed throughout the entire day by professional trainer Jennifer Broome of Quinebaug Kennels, were an exciting addition. The crowd rose to their feet as her black lab crashed through the water, effortlessly retrieving decoy after decoy.

A diverse group of live birds of prey and waterfowl was presented and demonstrated by Nick Tiberio of The Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy and Christine Peyreigne of Christine's Critters.

## *Thrill of the Day*

Lucky viewers of Livingston Ripley's raptor demonstration witnessed a falconer in action as he faced one of his worst nightmares during the performance. A *wild* peregrine falcon stole the show when it suddenly flew out of thin air to defend its territory against the "interloper" from Livingston Ripley's. The skilled falconer quickly helped his bird by swinging a leather lure and calling the bird back down to his arm. About three long, suspenseful minutes passed with the two birds twisting and turning mid-air until the demonstration bird successfully returned to the ground. Quite a scary moment for this falconer, but what a spectacle for the viewers! This is an acknowledged risk any falconer has to take when flying a bird.

## *Good Eatin'*

With a full day of activities scheduled, guests and staff needed something tasty to help them keep enjoying the fun! The Boy Scouts of America Troop #1027 (Winsted) and Troop #29 (Waterford) volunteered their time to grill hamburgers and hotdogs, and provided a variety of chips and refreshments that were available for purchase.

## *Thank You!*

The DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources extends a gracious thanks to all participants, vendors, and sponsors of this fantastic event. Almost all of those who attended provided positive feedback.

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# Conservation Calendar

Dec. - March ..... Observe eagles at the Shepaug Eagle Observation Area in Southbury. The viewing area will be open on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM starting on Saturday, December 16 through Sunday, March 11, 2018. Visitation to the observation area is by reservation only. To schedule a free visit, go to *www.shepaugeagles.info* or call 1-800-368-8954.

January-April..... Donate to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund on your 2017 Connecticut Income Tax form. Learn more at *www.ct.gov/deep/EndangeredSpecies*.

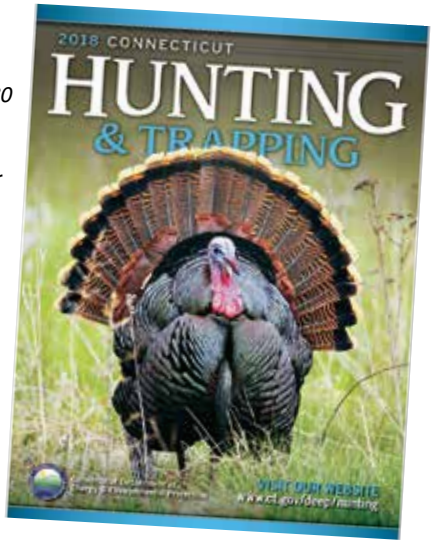
## *Programs at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center*

*Programs are a cooperative venture between the Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register by 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.*

Jan. 25 ..... **Bobcats in Connecticut**, starting at 6:00 PM. Join Wildlife Division Biologist Jason Hawley for a presentation on bobcats. Jason will discuss a new research study underway by the Wildlife Division to evaluate the diet, habitat use, and abundance of bobcats in Connecticut. This presentation will be held in the large meeting room.

Feb. 13..... **Stories in the Stars**, starting at 6:00 PM. Join Friends of Sessions Woods Director Josh Peters for a look at the night sky. Josh will interpret the stories behind the constellations, maybe even including a few featuring wildlife! Bring binoculars if you have them or borrow a pair from the Friends of Sessions Woods. Participants should meet in the parking lot of the Sessions Woods Conservation Center.

Feb. 20..... **Children's Program: Wildlife Tracks and Signs**, starting at 1:30 PM. Wildlife may not be readily seen in winter but with good observational skills, evidence of their presence can be found. The program begins indoors with a lesson on identifying wildlife tracks and then the group travels outside for a short walk to look for animal signs. All children must be accompanied by an adult during the program.




## *Hunting and Fishing Season Dates*

Jan. 1-31 ..... Deer bowhunting season on private land only in Deer Management Zones 11 and 12.

Jan. 25-Feb. 15 ..... Special late Canada goose hunting season in the south zone only.

*Consult the 2018 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide and 2017-2018 Connecticut Migratory Bird Hunting 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***). 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.*

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BURLINGTON, CT,
AND ADDITIONAL
OFFICES

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Bureau of Natural Resources / Wildlife Division
Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area
P.O. Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013-1550


P. J. FUSCO

**A young white-tailed deer buck peeks through a thicket in a Connecticut natural area.**