

January/February 2013

**CONNECTICUT**

# Wildlife



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# From the Director's Desk

Hunters and the sale of hunting licenses have been the cornerstone of funding of modern wildlife management in North America. Connecticut has long enjoyed a strong hunting (and trapping) tradition. But, that tradition is very much at risk. Reflective of the national trend, fewer Connecticut residents hunt each year, with hunting license sales declining a startling 13% in the past seven years (2010-2016). As revenues from hunters (and trappers) decline, the future of wildlife management as we've known it comes into question.

According to the publication Best Management Practices Workbook for Hunting and Shooting Recruitment and Retention (2007), there will be unintended consequences if the loss of hunters continues. We can expect to see increases in wildlife depredation, wildlife/vehicle collisions, nuisance wildlife complaints, and wildlife-related diseases (some zoonotic), and decreases in tourism, sales, taxes, and related jobs. A sharp decline in wildlife management activities, programs, and research also are expected unless alternative funding is forthcoming. Last, long-standing traditions that have defined a way of life for a large segment of the population will be lost. The importance of hunters and hunting to all of these issues cannot be overstated. The CT DEEP Wildlife Division recognized the importance of hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation many years ago and began addressing the issues. Eight years ago, the Wildlife Division, in cooperation with local sportsmen's organizations, began hosting Connecticut Hunting and Fishing Day events. These one-day events expose young hunters (and anglers) to a wide variety of outdoor-related recreational activities through interactive, hands-on activity stations, including shooting and casting. Some sportsmen's organizations have seen the benefit of these events and now conduct their own.

The Wildlife Division is in its tenth year of co-hosting mentored youth hunts for those who have recently passed and received their hunter education certification and possess a junior hunting license. Each group of junior hunters is supported by three to four instructor/mentors/dog handlers. There also are several other junior hunter days for deer, turkey, and waterfowl; youths receive a certificate commemorating their successful deer or turkey harvest.

The Division has also been involved in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) for the past two years. While designed to teach international style target archery, the program can serve as a springboard to an interest in hunting. Thirty-three schools are currently participating in NASP.

The future of hunting in Connecticut depends on the efforts of the Wildlife Division and its partners – active Connecticut hunters. I hope you will join us in supporting the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of licensed hunters, those with a long and determined history of support for wildlife conservation for all.

Rick Jacobson, Wildlife Division Director



# Connecticut Wildlife

Published bimonthly by

Connecticut Department of  
Energy and Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Natural Resources

Wildlife Division  
[www.ct.gov/deep](http://www.ct.gov/deep)

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Management, Conservation Education/Firearms Safety, Connecticut  
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Connecticut Wildlife magazine (ISSN 1087-7525) is published bimonthly  
by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection  
Wildlife Division. Send all subscription orders and address changes to  
Connecticut Wildlife, Sessions Woods WMA, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington,  
CT 06013. Subscription rates are \$8 for one year, \$15 for two years, and  
\$20 for three years. No refunds. Periodical postage paid at Bristol, CT.  
Postmaster: Please send all address changes to Connecticut Wildlife, P.O.  
Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.

[www.ct.gov/deep/wildlife](http://www.ct.gov/deep/wildlife) [www.facebook.com/CTFishandWildlife](https://www.facebook.com/CTFishandWildlife)  
E-mail: [deep.ctwildlife@ct.gov](mailto:deep.ctwildlife@ct.gov) Phone: 860-424-3011



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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Printed on recycled paper

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Putting Memories on Ice**  
*Learn about ice fishing in Connecticut*
- 8 2017 Shorebird Nesting Season**  
*A summary of the nesting activities of piping plovers and least terns*
- 12 Northern Bobwhite**  
*Connecticut's northern bobwhite population is on the decline.*
- 14 Sparks Fly for Bat Conservation**  
*Special gates have been installed at six bat hibernacula in Connecticut*
- 16 A White-tailed Deer with Fangs?**  
*"Fangs" were discovered on an eight-point buck harvested in Goshen*
- 17 Wildlife Management Areas, a Benefit of Federal Aid**  
*Maintenance and management of state wildlife management areas are supported by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program*
- 20 Cougar to be Removed from Endangered Species List**  
*The eastern cougar is considered extinct by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
- 21 Rose Hill Wildlife Management Area Grew by 100+ Acres**  
*Federal funding allowed the purchase of additional acreage*
- 22 Pizza and . . . Logging?**  
*What does logging have to do with pizza in Connecticut?*

DEPARTMENTS

- 18 From the Field**
- 19 EnCon Police Casebook**
- 23 Conservation Calendar**



**Cover:**

*It has been a tough, cold winter for many species of wildlife as this red fox was found hunting in the middle of the day in a Connecticut meadow.  
Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco*

# Putting Memories on Ice

Written by Mike Beauchene, DEEP Fisheries Division

**“FLAG UP!”** Music to the ears when ice fishing. A common piece of ice fishing equipment is a tip-up, which consists of a spool with line, a spring-loaded arm, and a flag. When the spool spins (fish taking the bait), the spring-loaded arm is tripped and the flag pops up. “Flag up” means there is a pretty good chance a fish has taken the bait and gets our ice fishing party excited and moving. As my two kids and their friends slip and slide their way over to the flag, anticipation builds as to the type of fish that triggered this jolt of adrenalin.

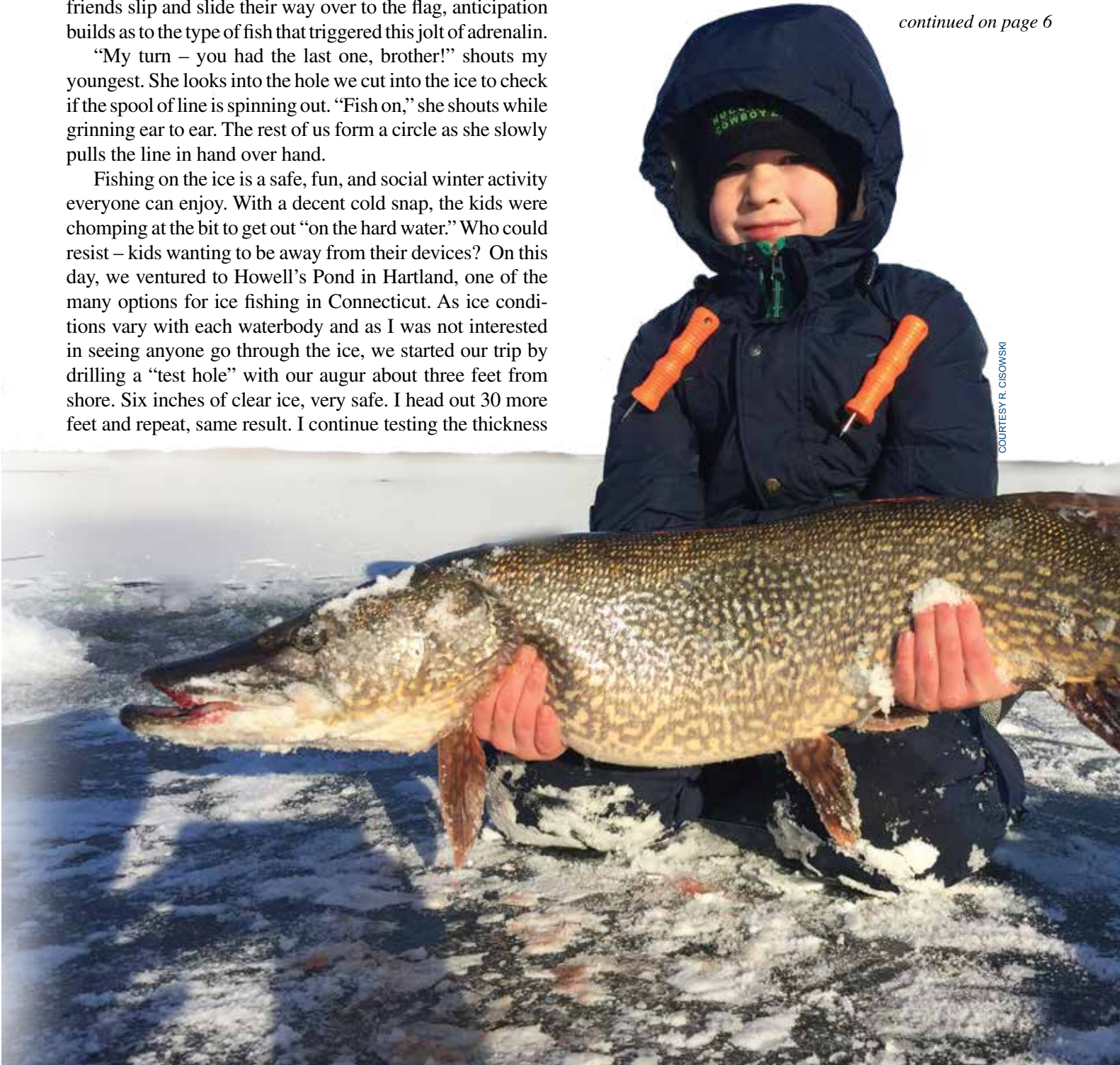
“My turn – you had the last one, brother!” shouts my youngest. She looks into the hole we cut into the ice to check if the spool of line is spinning out. “Fish on,” she shouts while grinning ear to ear. The rest of us form a circle as she slowly pulls the line in hand over hand.

Fishing on the ice is a safe, fun, and social winter activity everyone can enjoy. With a decent cold snap, the kids were chomping at the bit to get out “on the hard water.” Who could resist – kids wanting to be away from their devices? On this day, we ventured to Howell’s Pond in Hartland, one of the many options for ice fishing in Connecticut. As ice conditions vary with each waterbody and as I was not interested in seeing anyone go through the ice, we started our trip by drilling a “test hole” with our augur about three feet from shore. Six inches of clear ice, very safe. I head out 30 more feet and repeat, same result. I continue testing the thickness

until I reach where we will set up camp for the day.

Giggling as she slowly pulls in the line, the other kids start to guess the type of fish. “I bet it is a pickerel.” “I think it is a black crappie.” “Nope, probably a trout.” Then, “FLAG UP!” as quick as that, the fickle pack was gone, headed to the second tip-up, leaving only Katherine and I to admire a nice 12-inch yellow perch. After a great photo was posted to

*continued on page 6*



COURTESY: CISOWSKI



Chain pickerel, one of our native top predators, are commonly captured while ice fishing.



A tip-up is a device commonly used while ice fishing. The spring loaded flag “pops up” when a fish takes the bait.



*“Ice fishing is awesome! I was skeptical at first, but after taking the free ‘learn to ice fish’ class with DEEP, we have added a new winter activity.”*

*– Kristen J. Coventry*

*DEEP reminds fishermen that ice conditions in Connecticut may be extremely variable. We urge all people considering ice fishing to use extreme caution and check ice thickness frequently.*

## Ice Fishing

*continued from page 4*

all of our favorite social media – Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, and FishBrain (when is the last time you took a photo of your kids playing video games?) – we reset the tip-up.

“Dad, how about some fish tacos tonight?” We decided to harvest the perch, as it is one of the tastiest freshwater fish around. We ended the day after several hours. We landed five different types of fish and took home a half dozen yellow perch (for fish tacos).

### *Tips and Pointers for Safe and Fun Ice Fishing*

**Safety First:** A rule of thumb for ice safety is “there is no 100% guarantee.” Ice thickness and strength will vary from place to place. Be sure to “test” the thickness as you go – do not assume. Generally, a minimum of four to five inches of clear ice is acceptable for a small group ice fishing.



Ice fishing is safe and fun for all ages. A nice chain pickerel (above) and yellow perch (above right) caught on Coventry Lake.



COURTESY S. PICKERING

### **Ice formation depends on the combination of many things including:**

- size of the waterbody (small pond versus large lake);
- depth of the waterbody;
- objects sticking out of the water like boulders and logs;
- proximity to moving water (like the inlet and outlet);
- amount and angle of the sun;
- where springs are found in the waterbody;
- and recent weather conditions (air temperatures, wind, and precipitation).

### **Be Prepared – Just in Case:**

- Tell someone where you will be.
- Carry hand ice picks, a tossable rope, a flotation device, whistle, and a cell phone
- Take a friend or two.

### **Dress the Part:**

- Dress in layers and avoid cotton.
- Wear a windproof outer layer, waterproof boots, and thick wool socks.
- Mittens and a hat are a must.
- Sunglasses are recommended to protect the

eyes from the glare.

- Creepers or other traction devices for your boots (ice can be very slick).

### Make It Memorable:

- Go as a group, bring the family.
- Pack a picnic or bring a small portable stove or grill.
- Bring hot chocolate (especially if you take kids).
- Multi-task with ice skates, snow shoes, or cross country skis while waiting for the flags to go up.
- Post some pics to social media.
- Take home some delicious fresh fish for dinner.



COURTESY M. CHERNISE



Kids of all ages enjoy “walking on the water” and are especially proud when landing a fish from above – a brook trout from Mohawk Pond (top left), a chain pickerel from Burr Pond (top right), and yellow perch from New Milford Reservoir (below).

### Interested in Getting Started?

Free “Learn to Ice Fish” classes are offered every year through the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE) Program. The basics of ice fishing are covered through our informative two-hour class, leaving you motivated and inspired to make your own winter adventures. Classes are usually held in December and January and are listed at [www.ct.gov/deep/care](http://www.ct.gov/deep/care). For a more in depth read about gear and strategy, check out the November/December 2013 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife Magazine*.

### Popular Places with Public Access for Ice Fishing

**Western Connecticut:** East Twin Lake, Salisbury; Dog Pond, Tyler Lake, and Westside Pond, Goshen; Squantz Pond, New Fairfield; Highland Lake, Park Pond, and Winchester Lake, Winchester; Burr Pond and Stillwater Pond, Torrington; West Hill Pond, Barkhamsted; Bantam Lake, Morris/Litchfield; Mohawk Pond, Cornwall/Goshen; Wood Creek Pond, Norfolk; and Mount Tom Pond, Washington.

**Central Connecticut:** Batterson Park Pond, New Britain; Wethersfield Cove, Wethersfield; Keney Cove, Glastonbury; Crystal Lake, Ellington; Moodus Reservoir, East Haddam; Lake Beseck, Middlefield; and Black Pond, Middlefield.

**Eastern Connecticut:** Mashapaug Pond and Bigelow Pond, Union; Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, Mansfield; Coventry Lake, Coventry; Pachaug Pond and Beach Pond, Voluntown; and Gardner Lake, Bozrah.



# 2017 Shorebird Nesting Season

Written by Rebecca Foster, DEEP Wildlife Division; photography by Paul Fusco, DEEP Wildlife Division

**S**tate-threatened shorebirds, the piping plover (also federally threatened) and least tern, return to Connecticut's shoreline beaches every spring to nest and raise their young. These birds use many of the same beaches for nesting in consecutive seasons because they offer the best habitat. In the case of piping plovers, ideal nesting habitat must be large enough to provide distinct territories for each plover pair, provide enough food resources for the adults and their chicks, have few predators, and experience limited human disturbance. However, ideal habitat is limited in Connecticut due to coast-

line development and intensive public use of some beaches (which often results in disturbance to nesting birds).

Each April, the DEEP Wildlife Division delineates probable nesting habitat on sandy beaches with wooden stakes, twine fencing, and brightly colored, informative signs. This fencing provides a "psychological" barrier to people and



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**Least terns nest on the same beaches as piping plovers; therefore they benefit from the protection offered by the wooden stake and twine fencing. DEEP staff, our conservation partners, and volunteers monitor least tern nesting activity and collect productivity data while also monitoring piping plovers.**

prevents plover nests from being accidentally stepped on by people. Piping plover populations in New England have been recovering due to management and protection efforts over the past several decades. With this recovery, biologists have noted that ideal beaches are becoming saturated with nesting pairs. Subsequently, plovers are increasingly forced



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to use smaller and busier beaches for nesting. To locate these “less than ideal” nesting beaches, DEEP Wildlife Division staff, along with conservation partners, must continuously survey, throughout the nesting season, as many Connecticut beaches as possible to ensure that nests are being protected and productivity is accurately calculated. Once a plover pair has been located on a “new” beach, protective fencing and signage are quickly erected with landowner permission, and the site is assimilated into the numerous beaches DEEP and our conservation partners monitor throughout the nesting season.

In addition to fencing and signage, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Piping Plover Recovery Plan recommends protecting individual nests from predators with an enclosure. Enclosures are metal cages that create a physical barrier to prevent predators from reaching and eating the plover eggs in a nest. The bottom of the cage is buried deep in the sand and anchored, using heavy metal posts. The wire fencing is large enough to allow adult plovers to walk in and out of the enclosure easily, but small enough to prevent all but the smallest mammalian predators from reaching the eggs (e.g. rats and weasels). In addition, netting is pulled tightly over the top of the enclosure to deter avian predators. The most common predators of plover eggs are foxes, raccoons, and crows. Once plover eggs hatch, the chicks leave the protection of the enclosures with the adults.



**Cooperation and the stewardship ethic demonstrated at one private beach resulted in a very productive nesting season for piping plovers.**

An important aspect of plover management is daily monitoring to collect accurate breeding and behavioral data. In 2017, piping plovers used 19 Connecticut beaches, from Stonington to Wesport, for breeding and nesting. The Wildlife Division is fortunate to have many conservation partners that assist with piping plover management, including over 100 volunteers, Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Audubon Society, the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds, Roger Tory Peterson Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Bridgeport Wild-



life Guards, shoreline homeowners, municipalities, and DEEP State Park personnel. These groups aid DEEP staff with fencing, monitoring, equipment maintenance, data collection, and most importantly, public education.

### ***Plover Results***

This past season, 66 pairs of piping plovers attempted to nest on Connecticut beaches. That is the highest pair count for our state since plover management began 31 years ago. If a pair of piping plovers loses a nest to predation or high tides, the birds usually try to re-nest. The Wildlife Division has documented that one to three nesting attempts per season is common for a piping plover pair. This past season the Division recorded



**The DEEP Wildlife Division, along with our partners Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Audubon Society, and Roger Torey Peterson Institute, provide annual training for volunteer shorebird monitors. Wildlife Division staff Laura Saucier (left) and Rebecca Foster manage the Connecticut Piping Plover and Least Tern Project.**

90 piping plover nesting attempts of which 53 nests hatched, resulting in a hatching success rate of 59%. From the 53 successful nests, 210 chicks were counted and of these, 100 chicks



**Ewa Prusak, a Shorebird Technician with Audubon Connecticut, tirelessly assists the DEEP Wildlife Division in protecting and monitoring shorebirds across Connecticut.**

survived to learn to fly (called fledging), with a fledging success rate of 48%. Research indicates that in order to maintain the Northeast Atlantic Coast piping plover population, an annual productivity of 1.25 chicks fledged per pair is necessary. The research further shows that 1.50 fledges per pair or higher is needed to increase the population. In Connecticut, this goal was surpassed at 1.51 fledges per pair!

Losses of piping plover nests

are most commonly attributed to predation, high tide wash-outs, and abandonment. Whenever a plover nest has failed, field staff and volunteers make careful observations to collect evidence to explain the nest loss. Predator tracks in the sand, digging around an enclosure, or wrack (seaweed) located within an enclosure are examples of the evidence sought to determine the cause of a nest loss. In 2017, 13 nests, or 34% of the nest losses, were attributed to high tide wash-outs. Nest wash-outs occur often and happen when a plover nest is not made on high enough ground. During a full moon or storm event, tide waters rise and reach closer to the dunes, which may wash plover eggs away. Fifteen nests, representing 41% of the total nest losses, were lost due to predation, primarily by foxes and raccoons. Ten nests were abandoned, representing 25% of nest losses. Abandonment can occur when there is too much disturbance near the nest, often caused by humans walking too close to, or lingering near, a nest. Unfortunately, sometimes even well-meaning wildlife enthusiasts can add to this disturbance if they are not conscious of the amount of time spent in close proximity to nesting birds. The cause of the remaining three nest losses, or 0.08% of plover nest failures, is unknown. An unknown designation is given when there is no evidence indicating what occurred.

### *Odds and Ends*

Each nesting season, field staff and researchers document bird behaviors that deviate from the typical, and some of these behaviors seem odd. One odd behavior observed was the parent birds moving their eggs, functionally relocating their nest. This egg relocation behavior has been documented five times over three consecutive seasons in Connecticut. In each case, sometime before or during a high tide event, the adult plovers moved their eggs to a higher and safer location. The eggs were placed in a new nest and incubation continued. Two out of the five relocated nests were successful. No one has observed the birds in the act of moving their eggs; however, it was obvious to staff when this occurred because a nest that was once located in the center of an enclosure was outside of the enclosure and a short distance away.

Another oddity is the increasing number of scrapes observers have watched male plovers create. Typically, the male will dig two to three scrapes in the sand (small depressions that create a cup to hold the eggs) with his feet. The female then sits in each of the scrapes and selects one in which to lay her eggs. However, in the past few seasons, field staff have observed that the number of scrapes made by males is increasing. In 2017, one particularly high-energy male made 12 scrapes and two other males made 10 each. In addition to the excessive number of scrapes, the digging of multiple nests was documented while the female plover of the pair was already on an active nest, incubating eggs. Wildlife Division biologists do not yet have an explanation for this “new”

behavior, and the benefit of expending extra time and energy to dig a large number of scrapes is not clear. This time would normally be spent defending the active nest, defending the mate, or foraging. One interesting theory is that this may be a new defense strategy. The hypothesis is that by continuously digging additional nest scrapes, the male plover is indicating to predators that he does not already have an active nest. Field staff will continue to carefully document these novel behaviors in future nesting seasons.

### *Least Tern Results*

The least tern is a small black and white shorebird with a brightly colored orange beak. This state threatened species is managed by the Wildlife Division in conjunction with the piping plover. Like piping plovers, least terns make their nests in the sand and lay two to three cryptically-colored eggs. Least terns nest on the same beaches as plovers; therefore they benefit from the protection offered by the wooden stake and twine fencing. DEEP staff, our conservation partners, and volunteers monitor least tern nesting activity and collect productivity data while also monitoring piping plovers.

Over the last several seasons, least tern pair counts have been low, but relatively stable. In 2017, 244 pairs of least terns were counted on Connecticut beaches. In 2016, Connecticut recorded 250 pairs of least terns, and in 2015, there were 241 pairs. Least tern nests can fail for the same reasons as piping plover nests, and in 2017 most of the nest losses were attributed to high tide wash-outs. From 158 least tern nests in 2017, 37 chicks hatched and 31 chicks fledged.

### *A Worthy Cause*

Shorebird management in Connecticut is always challenging with many factors seeming to work against a positive outcome. In 2017, however, piping plover and least tern management in Connecticut resulted in successful productivity. Success is only possible with ongoing cooperation of landowners combined with hard work and dedication of volunteers, field staff, and conservation partners. Thanks are extended to everyone who helped make a difference. We are always looking for new volunteers and partners to share their appreciation and knowledge of Connecticut’s threatened shorebirds with family, friends, and others. Please consider volunteering to help protect our amazing shorebirds and educate the beach-going public during the 2018 nesting season!

Those interested in becoming a shorebird monitor should contact the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds at [ct-waterbirds@gmail.com](mailto:ct-waterbirds@gmail.com). A training session for new volunteers will be held on Saturday, March 31, 2018, from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM at the Audubon Connecticut office at Stratford Point, 1207 Prospect Drive, in Stratford. The session will review biology of the piping plover; how to monitor breeding pairs and chicks; volunteer organization and logistics; and law enforcement information.

# Northern Bobwhite

## *The quail of Connecticut*

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, DEEP Wildlife Division

The northern bobwhite is a small member of the Galliformes order of birds, which also includes turkeys, pheasants, grouse, ptarmigans, and quails. Galliformes spend much of their life on the ground. They have strong legs and feet used for running and scratching the surface for food.

### **Description**

Measuring eight to 10 inches in length, this small relative of the wild turkey is the only quail found in Connecticut. The bobwhite is chunky with a short black bill, legs, and tail. It has reddish brown plumage on its back and a pale underside with intricately detailed dark streaking on the flanks and barring on the breast and belly.

Males have a bold white throat and white eyebrow line. Those same areas are buffy in females.

Bobwhites are named for the distinctive whistled call of the male: “bob-WHITE!” or “bob-bob-WHOIT!” with a rising emphasis on “WHITE!” Both males and females also communicate with soft vocalizations among themselves.

### **Range and Habitat**

Bobwhites need a mix of habitat components which includes open, early successional land with short dense grass, dead grass stems, patches of open ground, and some woody or brushy vegetation for cover. These compo-



In Connecticut, northern bobwhites are hard to find. Their numbers have declined steeply over the past 100 years to where their natural population is close to being extirpated.

nents are found in overgrown fields, farmland with fencerows, old pastures, and brushy power line cuts. Bobwhites are not found in maturing forests.

This bird’s range includes the central and eastern United States from southern New England west to the Great Plains and south to Florida and eastern Mexico. It is also found in parts of Central America and the Greater Antilles. The population is most common in the southern United States. In Connecticut, the northern bobwhite is most common in the southeastern part of the state. The species is at the northeastern limit of its range in southern New England.

Bobwhites are residents all year in their entire range. They do not migrate south to escape harsh winter weather, and as such are susceptible to bad winters.

### **Behavior**

Bobwhites roost on the ground in tightly packed groups called coveys. The birds position themselves in a circle with all birds facing outward so as to stay alert for predators. Coveys are familial and usually include up to 30 birds. When flushed, a covey will explode into the air, scattering in all directions. The rapid beat of their short, rounded wings makes a sudden loud



whirring sound before the birds quarter away, gliding on downcurved wings to a safe landing place. The covey will reassemble a while later. Northern bobwhites pair off for the nesting season, but are gregarious most of the year. Both males and females may have multiple mates in the same year.

Bobwhites nest on the ground in a shallow depression that is scratched out jointly by both sexes. The well-hidden nest is lined and arched over with grass. Twelve to 15 creamy white eggs are laid. Incubation is carried out by both sexes and lasts about 24 days. Young birds will leave the nest soon after hatching.

The diet consists mostly of seeds, hard and soft mast, leafy greens and buds, and arthropods, depending on the time of year and availability. When available, flies, bees, beetles, and spiders are consumed. Mosquitoes have also been known to make up a portion of the bobwhite diet. Growing chicks depend on insect protein to quickly gain size and strength.

### ***Conservation and Management***

Northern bobwhites were once common to abundant birds in Connecticut during the 1800s. Since that time, the state's major habitat types have changed. What was once agricultural/early successional habitat with a large percentage of young forests and thickets has, over time, become a generally maturing forest habitat statewide. This change has been detrimental to the northern bobwhite population.

Attempts were made to help mitigate the bobwhite decline in the early 1900s, as game managers built winter shelters and feeding stations for the birds. This was to no avail, as the habitat loss gradually became too great and widespread. Connecticut's population has been in a long-term decline since then.

Today, much of Connecticut's remaining farmland is intensively managed. Most hedgerows, border areas, and hayfields do not provide bobwhites with the food and cover they require. As a result, the state's bobwhite breeding population continues to be rare, spotty, and declining. Habitat loss can also be attributed to suburbanization, and the population may have been impacted by pesticides. In addition, the native population may have interbred, to some extent, with less hardy, introduced birds from other parts of the country, possibly contributing to the decline.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey (National Audubon Society and U.S. Geological Survey) has estimated

population declines averaging over 11% per year between 1966 and 2015. The change in population over that timespan equates to a total decline of 97% to 100%, making the bobwhite virtually extirpated as a breeder in Connecticut. It is one of Connecticut's steepest declining birds. The northern bobwhite has also been declining sharply on the national level at an estimated average of up to four percent per year, raising concerns among many state wildlife agencies.

In Connecticut, bobwhites are hard to find, but good places to look include brushy, early successional habitat in southeastern parts of the state. Among the best locations are Bluff Point State Park and Haley Farm State Park in Groton, as well as Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington.



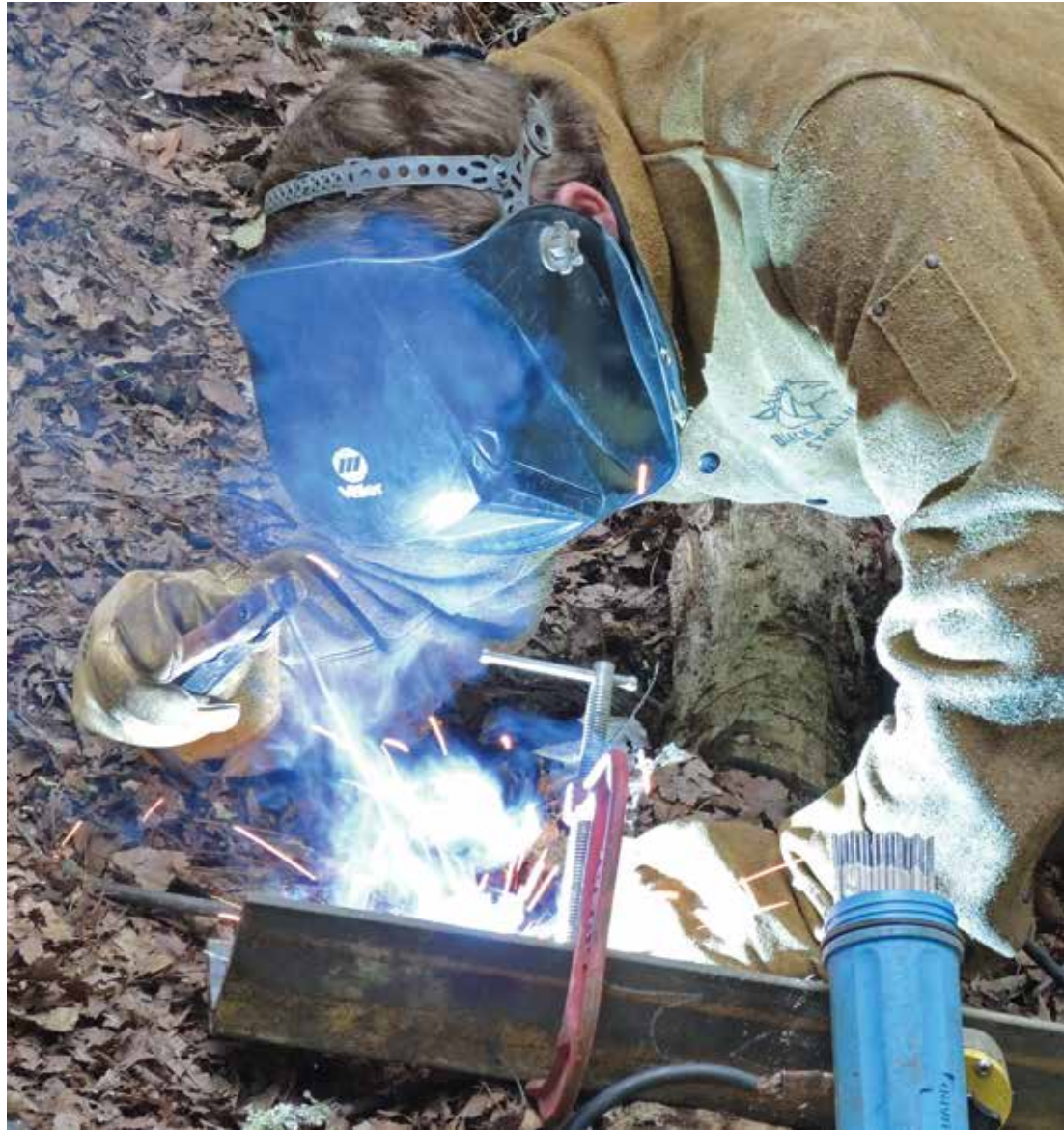
# Sparks Fly for Bat Conservation

Written by Kate Moran, DEEP Wildlife Division

It is hard to believe that a decade has passed since the 2007 discovery of white-nose syndrome (WNS) in New York State and its subsequent documentation in Connecticut in 2008. WNS is a disease of cave-hibernating bats that affects nine different species in North America. It is caused by a fungus known as *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*Pd*) and thrives in damp, cold environments where bats hibernate underground. The white, fuzzy fungus, which is harmless to people, infects the muzzles and wing membranes of bats, causing frequent arousals from hibernation, loss of body fat, and the nearly inevitable fate of starvation. By 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that nearly six million bats had perished from WNS. Today, WNS continues to spread westward and is present in 31 states and five Canadian provinces.

For the last decade, scientists across the continent have been researching how to control the disease and developed some promising leads. Fungal growth inhibitors and a recent publication about the sensitivity of *Pd* to ultraviolet light could lead to targeted treatments. Unfortunately, as WNS continues to spread to new states, we are still a long way from a solution that can be safely implemented in the field. So, what can be done in the absence of a “silver bullet?” For bats, minimizing disturbance during the hibernation phase of their life cycle is one of the most effective conservation actions that can be taken, especially when bat populations are already weakened by WNS.

Bats prepare for hibernation in late fall by gathering from miles around at the entrances of caves and mines. They have been documented traveling hundreds of miles to their fa-



Chris Sanders of Sanders Environmental fabricates a cave gate on-site at a bat hibernaculum.

PHOTO: C. DAVIS, WEANTINOGE HERITAGE LAND TRUST

*“We are so pleased to have our bats protected from disturbances during their hibernation season. Our hope is that this will reduce the stress on local bat populations affected by white-nose syndrome. Thanks go to our partners, Connecticut DEEP and the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, who helped with the site preparation. Sanders Environmental fabricated the gate on-site and installed it in just one day!”*

— Carrie Davis,  
Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust, Inc.



The finished bat cave gate at Tory's Cave.

cave-gating projects in 2017 at sites in Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire. Bat-friendly cave gates are uniquely designed, allowing bats to freely pass on the wing while preventing unauthorized entry and the associated disturbance of intruders. Experts on bat physiology estimate that for each arousal, a bat can burn as much as 10 days' worth of stored body fat. When that happens multiple times over the winter, the chances of surviving until spring are greatly reduced.

In Connecticut, this Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) grant financed the installation or repair of cave gates at six different sites. The DEEP Wildlife Division coordinated the projects in partnership with the Wildlife Management Institute, Sanders Environmental, Weantinoge Heritage Land

vorite winter haunts, with complete disregard for state boundaries. For this reason, protecting hibernation sites where bats concentrate has the potential to benefit bat populations from multiple states in the Northeast.

Recognizing this as a conservation opportunity of regional significance, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) funded

Trust, Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Roxbury Land Trust, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Town of Winchester Public Works Department, as well as private landowners in northwestern Connecticut. Thanks to the commitment of these organizations and the dedication of numerous volunteers, the protection of these valuable

hibernation sites will pay dividends for decades to come.

To learn more about WNS and bats, visit [www.whitenosesyndrome.org](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org).

*“Roxbury Land Trust is pleased to advance bat conservation through this partnership with Connecticut DEEP and Sanders Environmental. With regional bat populations in serious decline, we are happy to play a part in protecting these fascinating and important mammals.”*

– Ann Astarita, Roxbury Land Trust



This little brown bat exhibits the visible fungus of WNS on its snout and forearm.

## Connecticut's Northern Long-eared Bat

While many Connecticut residents may witness bats flying overhead at dusk during spring and summer, it is important to recognize that these creatures of the night have been facing very difficult times. The genus *Myotis*, meaning mouse-eared, represents four of the nine native species of bats found in Connecticut. One of those is *Myotis septentrionalis*, the northern long-eared bat.

The northern long-eared bat is medium-sized, ranging from 3 to 3.7 inches in length with a wingspan of 9 to 10 inches. As the name suggests, the identifying characteristic of this species is the long ears, especially when compared to other bats belonging to the genus *Myotis*. During winter, this species hibernates in caves and mines, known as hibernacula. These vital locations must meet certain specifications by having constant temperatures, high humidity, and a lack of air currents. During summer, these bats usually roost underneath bark or in cavities and crevices of trees. Although uncommon, long-eared bats have also been known to roost in barns or sheds. Through the use of echolocation, the northern long-eared bat is able to hunt forested areas to search for its preferred prey, including moths, flies, and beetles.

In recent years, white-nose syndrome (WNS) has caused the deaths of millions of bats across North America, and the long-eared bat is no exception. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the long-eared bat population has declined up to 99% in the Northeast based on hibernaculum counts, and WNS is expected to continue spreading in the foreseeable future. While state and federal agencies, universities, and other organizations work to discover ways to control the spread of WNS, you can help by installing a bat box, leaving dead and dying trees standing, and by not disturbing hibernating bats.

Paul Benjunas, DEEP Wildlife Division



# A White-tailed Deer with Fangs?

Written by Geoffrey Krukar, DEEP Wildlife Division

A hunter in Goshen got quite the surprise this past November when he examined the eight-point buck he had harvested. The mature deer resembled others he had harvested with the exception of two visible upper canine teeth that looked somewhat like fangs. Was this a discovery of a new variety of deer? Perhaps part vampire, capable of sucking blood? The answer is no! It is actually a rare phenomenon believed to be an evolutionary throwback to the ancestral form of the white-tailed deer.

White-tailed deer are thought to have evolved from deer in Asia. Some species of modern deer cousins in Asia still have large upper canines. Chinese water deer, muntjacs, and musk deer all use their large canines to fight for territory. Each of these species has very small or no antlers. Researchers believe that as white-tailed deer began to evolve larger antlers for defending territory, the upper canine teeth became unnecessary and began to shrink to the point where most deer no longer have any traces.

The rate at which upper canines appear in the white-tailed deer population is not known because not much work has been done to quantify it. Connecticut's Deer Program biologists have seen this phenomenon before in our state but only on a few occasions. Reports of deer with fangs can be found throughout the whitetail's range but, anecdotally, it appears to be more common further south. Both male and female deer can grow upper incisors, but it seems to occur more frequently in males.

While upper canines are rare, lower canines are present in all normal whitetails. The lower jaw typically has eight front teeth and six incisors bookended by two canines. These canines have moved forward through evolutionary adaptation to look and function like incisors. These teeth are used for snipping or tearing vegetation.



P. J. FUSCO (2)

John Krukar poses with the skull of a buck he harvested this past November. The unusual upper canines can be seen in the photo below.





# WMAs, a Benefit of Federal Aid

Written by Paul Benjunas, DEEP Wildlife Division

The mission of the Wildlife Division is to advance the conservation, use, and appreciation of Connecticut's wildlife resources. Acquiring and managing wildlife management areas (WMAs) is one mechanism for meeting this mission. WMAs are areas of land and water having unique or outstanding natural resource qualities that are managed for the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat and wildlife-based recreation, including hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife observation.

The Wildlife Division is responsible for managing over 32,000 acres of WMAs statewide. WMAs range in size from one to 2,017 acres and include a variety of habitats, including grasslands, meadows, old fields, shrublands, forests, coastal and inland wetlands, and riparian zones. These areas provide habitat for nearly 500 vertebrate species and thousands of invertebrates, including many state- and federally-listed species. They are open to wildlife-based recreation and other forms of recreation compatible with the purpose of the WMA system, such as hiking. In order to reduce disturbance to wildlife and also protect habitat values, motorized vehicles are prohibited; areas are closed from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise except for hunting; and dogs must be on a leash and under the control of their owner. Camping is prohibited at WMAs, except at the group camping area at Sessions Woods WMA in Burlington by special permit only.

The Division's Habitat Management Program is responsible for developing management plans that identify the natural resource values of WMAs and objectives to maintaining those values. Approximately 60% of the state's landscape is dominated by forests, most of which are mature. While many wildlife species use mature forests, most of our declining wildlife are dependent on early successional habitats (i.e., grasslands, meadows, reverting fields, shrublands, and seedling/sapling size tree stands) and wetlands. Early successional habitats have declined due to natural succession, development, and human control

over some natural processes (fire, beaver activity, storms, flooding,) that used to create and maintain these important habitats. An aversion to forestry activities has also added to the decline. Early successional habitats will continue to decline without active management. Associated with the disappearance of these habitats is a decline in once common wildlife, such as the bobolink, blue-winged warbler, New England cottontail, and American woodcock.

A variety of techniques are used to restore and enhance these habitats, including tractor/brush mowing; prescribed burns; invasive plant control through the use of herbicides; brush and tree mulching using specialized heavy duty forest mowers; and grassland and shrubland plantings. Silvicultural (the care and cultivation of forest trees) practices are used to create a varied age structure (such as thick, dense seeding/sapling habitat) and a diversity of tree species. Wetland habitats are enhanced through the maintenance of water control structures, water level control in wildlife impoundments, invasive plant control, open marsh water management, and the installation of wood duck nest boxes. Routine maintenance of WMAs includes boundary and sign posting and the repair and maintenance of parking lots, gates, interior service road systems, and wildlife viewing areas.

The statewide system of wildlife management areas is largely the result of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937. This federal program collects an excise tax on sporting arms, handguns, ammunition, and archery equipment and distributes the money to state wildlife agencies to support wildlife restoration (land acquisition, management, and research) and hunter education programs. Federal aid funds have been instrumental in the purchase of approximately one-third of the wildlife management areas that are managed by the Wildlife Division. In addition to providing funding for the purchase of WMAs, dedicated federal funding ensures there are dependable resources to maintain infrastructure and habitat.



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P. J. FUSCO



## Enter the 2019 Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp Art Contest

### Connecticut Bird Atlas Round Two

It has been approximately 32 years since the first Connecticut Bird Atlas was published. The multiple-year study summarized the distribution of the 175 confirmed species of breeding birds in our state. Since then, many changes have occurred regionally, globally, and climatically, and it is now time to once again update the available Connecticut bird conservation data on a large statewide scale.

If the conservation community is going to maximize its conservation efforts, it is paramount to have a thorough understanding of not only where birds are found but also their relative abundance across the landscape. It is important to note that this study does not focus exclusively on breeding birds. Wintering birds and birds that rely on the state's habitat as migration stopover sites during spring and fall are also a point of focus.

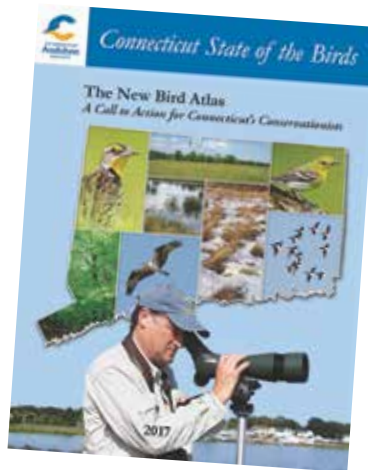


Upon completing this five-year study, the conservation community will have critical information on bird distributions throughout the year. This data will help to better inform land use decisions, develop a greater understanding of habitat requirements of species of greatest conservation need, and allow more efficient and informed conservation planning.

The new Connecticut Bird Atlas is a joint project of the Connecticut DEEP and UCONN, with additional funding from the Connecticut Ornithological Association, Great Hollow Nature Preserve, New Haven Bird Club, and several other donors. The success of this project, however, will ultimately depend on the support of volunteer birders. Prospective volunteers looking to contribute to this great cause should visit the Project website at [www.ctbirdatlas.org](http://www.ctbirdatlas.org) to sign up or send an email to [ctbirdatlasvol@gmail.com](mailto:ctbirdatlasvol@gmail.com).

### Connecticut Audubon Releases State of the Birds Report

The Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) released its annual Connecticut State of the Birds report in December 2017 and is calling on the state's conservation community to dedicate their full efforts to supporting the upcoming Connecticut Bird Atlas, which promises to be the most important bird conservation research project the state has ever seen. The 12th annual report, *The New Bird Atlas: A Call to Action for Connecticut's Conservationists*, serves as a guide and rallying cry for the Connecticut Bird Atlas, which is scheduled to begin in spring 2018. Upon completing the five-year project, the atlas aims to provide updated data about where Connecticut's birds live, locations of prime habitats, and changes in bird distribution since data for the last Connecticut Atlas were published in 1986. The State of the Birds report can be viewed on the CAS website at [www.ctaudubon.org/state-of-the-birds](http://www.ctaudubon.org/state-of-the-birds).



The Connecticut DEEP is holding an annual art competition to determine the image for the 2019 Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation (Duck) Stamp. The contest invites artists (including Junior Duck Stamp artists), regardless of residence, age, and experience, to submit an original piece that depicts an eligible waterfowl species (duck, goose, or brant) that occurs in Connecticut. Artwork that depicts a Connecticut scene or landmark is highly preferred. Artwork may be in any full-color medium, including acrylic, oil, colored pencil, and watercolor. Entries will be judged on originality, composition, anatomical accuracy, general rendering, and suitability for reproduction.

Entries must be received in person or postmarked on or before April 15, 2018 to be eligible. They should be sent to: CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Attn: Migratory Game Bird Program, 391 Route 32, North Franklin, CT 06254. Full contest rules, judging criteria, and an official entry certificate are available on the DEEP website at [www.ct.gov/deep/ctduckstamp](http://www.ct.gov/deep/ctduckstamp) or by calling the DEEP Wildlife Division at 860-418-5952.

### Mobile Phone App for Forest Owners, Users

Do you know what's in your woods? There's an app for that. *About My Woods* is a free mobile app that provides location-specific information about the forest and connects users to professional resources. Woodland owners in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, as well as northern New England, now have a new tool to help learn about their woods. Foresters, loggers, and others who work in the woods will find it useful too. This app is built for family forest owners and is designed to do one thing – put useful and actionable information in the user's hand so landowners can better steward their woods. The app is full of maps, photos, brand new videos, and information and

*continued on next page*

connections to professional resources. *About My Woods* is available for free in the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store, or at [www.aboutmywoods.org](http://www.aboutmywoods.org).

The app includes:

- *Location specific maps, including information on soils, land cover, protected lands, terrain, and watersheds;*
- *Seven brand new videos (watch them on YouTube on the About My Woods channel) to help landowners decide how to manage their woods;*
- *High quality photos and text descriptions of trees, wildlife, wildflowers, shrubs, and other things you'll find in the woods;*
- *Connections to resource professionals that can help landowners manage their land; and*
- *A "Things to Know" section with information on forestry, a glossary, and references to other helpful resources.*

## CWA – Supporting Wetland Conservation

Founded in 1967, the Connecticut Waterfowlers Association (CWA) continually strives to fulfill its mission for conserving wetland habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species. Over the years, CWA has worked closely with the DEEP Wildlife Division on many wetland conservation projects, and their "Conservation Connecticut Fund" has proven instrumental in acquiring some of the State's finest marshes, including Charles E. Wheeler Wildlife Management Area (WMA) ("Nell's Island") and Quinnipiac Meadows WMA. In recent years, CWA has contributed matching funds to several federal grants that the Wildlife Division has received for wetland restoration and enhancement. Future projects could include Phragmites (common reed) control, creation of shallow ponds/pannes in tidal marshes, replacement or enhancement of water control structures, and other efforts. The CWA additionally conducts multiple educational programs, including the National Junior Duck Stamp competition, the Waterfowl Hunter Mentoring Program, and a Waterfowl Hunting Seminar in cooperation with the Wildlife Division's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program. For those looking to support the CWA and help them continue their important conservation work, you can participate in a raffle featuring an **original** painting by acclaimed Connecticut artist Chet Reneson, who created the artwork for the 2018 Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp. For more information, please visit [www.ctwaterfowlers.org](http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org).

Connecticut



Waterfowl Association

## CASEBOOK

### Reports from the Environmental Conservation Police

November was peak hunting season time as the deer firearms season opened, along with the ongoing pheasant and late waterfowl seasons. Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police Officers logged over 949 hunting enforcement patrols with 778 of those cases for deer hunting enforcement and three for hunting safety violations. They also conducted 226 fisheries enforcement patrols, 103 boating enforcement patrols, and 80 public safety assists. Officers responded to 41 wildlife complaints, two boating accidents, and the K-9 Unit was deployed 13 times. 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](http://www.Facebook.com/CTEnConPolice).

- On November 2, 2017, an Officer responded to a complaint of illegal hunting on state property in Putnam, which was posted against trespass. Upon making contact with the 23-year-old male, the subject stated he had permission to hunt an adjacent property but could not produce any written permission. The individual was arrested for bowhunting without written permission and criminal trespass third degree.

- On November 18, 2017, an Officer was investigating a wooded area in Hartland due to a recent complaint of possible illegal hunting. He located a large wooded elevated hunting blind, and a ladder stand affixed to a nearby tree. A large plastic deer feeder filled with corn connected to a tree was found approximately 15 yards in front of the blind. The Officer returned later in the evening and found a male in full camouflage wearing no orange safety clothing hunting with a rifle. The male was sub-

sequently escorted out of the woods and issued a Misdemeanor Summons for hunting without 400 square inches of orange, hunting with a rifle on less than 10 acres of land, and hunting over bait.

- On November 23, 2017, Officers were patrolling Madison and saw an individual hunting with archery equipment over bait on town-owned land adjacent to state-owned property. Upon checking the individual for compliance, it was found he was also in possession of a pistol. Hunting is not allowed on town land in Madison. Baiting is allowed in zone 12, but only on private property, not town or state-owned land. Archery hunting while in possession of a handgun is also prohibited. The individual was issued a court summons for his numerous hunting violations.

- On November 29, 2017, an Officer was checking commercial fishing vessels offloading their catch at the New London docks. Upon checking one of the vessels, the Officer noticed an overabundance of fluke. The captain stated he was under the impression the new quota for fluke was established and effective. The Officer explained the new quota for fluke did not begin until December 1, 2017. On this date, the vessel was over by 35 pounds. The Officer issued the captain a written warning for the violation and seized the fish. The fish were brought to the commercial dealer where they were purchased by said dealer. This allows the fish to enter the market and not go to waste.



# Long Extinct Eastern Cougar to be Removed from Endangered Species List

Written by Paul Benjunas, DEEP Wildlife Division

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently published a notice declaring that the extinct eastern puma (*Puma concolor cougar*; also known as mountain lion or cougar) will be removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, resolving the lingering anomaly of having it listed despite its disappearance from its eastern North American range approximately 80 years ago. The removal of the extinct subspecies from the federal endangered species list will take effect February 22, 2018. Although considered long extirpated from Connecticut, the eastern cougar (puma) is currently listed as a species of special concern on the state's Threatened and Endangered Species List because of its prior federal status. As a result of this determination, the eastern cougar will be removed from the state list during the next five-year review, which will occur in 2020.

The decision comes from the best available scientific and commercial information, which has shown no evidence of the existence of either an extant reproducing population or any individuals of the eastern puma subspecies. It is also highly unlikely that an eastern cougar population could have remained undetected since the last confirmed sighting was in 1938. Accounts from the 1800s indicate that intentional killings out of fear for human and livestock safety, massive deforestation, and overharvesting of white-tailed deer were

the main contributing factors to the disappearance of a majority of the eastern cougar population. Genetic and forensic testing has confirmed that recent validated cougar sightings in the East, outside Florida, were animals released or escaped from captivity, or wild cougars dispersing eastward from western North America.

In 2015, the USFWS took public comments over the proposal of dropping federal protections for the eastern cougar. Hundreds of comments were received from members of the public that claimed to have seen a cougar or cougar evidence (deer kills, missing pets, tracks, vocalizations, game camera photos). In regards to potential sightings in Connecticut, many of these cases were investigated but none could be confirmed by tangible, physical evidence. Proposed evidence in the form of tracks, photographs, and videos had shown many of these sightings to be cases of bobcats and coyotes being mistakenly identified.

Connecticut residents may be familiar with the male western cougar that was killed by a vehicle on the Wilbur Cross Parkway on June 11, 2011. Tissue samples from that animal later revealed its DNA matched a subpopulation in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Researchers then compared the Connecticut samples to the genetics of other cougar scat and hair samples that were found outside of known cougar populations. Upon completing the investigation, researchers were also

able to match the DNA of the Connecticut samples to DNA found in a scat sample collected in Minnesota 18 months earlier. While it is common for many subadult mammal species to exhibit dispersal behavior, the 1,200-mile trek from South Dakota to Connecticut marked the longest documented dispersal of a cougar.

The USFWS's removal of the eastern cougar from the endangered species list does not affect the status of the Florida panther, a separate puma subspecies listed as endangered, and all other cougars that may be found in Florida, which are protected under a "similarity of appearance" designation to aid in protection of the Florida panther. Additional information, including frequently asked questions, and cougar sightings, is available at [www.fws.gov/northeast/ecougar](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/ecougar).



A trail camera captured this image of a cougar traveling through private land in Clark County, Wisconsin, on January 18, 2010. No DNA samples were collected at this site. However, based on other nearby sightings and DNA evidence collected at several locations, biologists agree that the cougar is possibly the same individual that eventually traveled all the way to Connecticut by June 2011.

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# Rose Hill WMA Grew by 100+ Acres

Written by Laurie Fortin and Elaine Hinsch, DEEP Wildlife Division

Rose Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA), located in Ledyard and Preston, has a diversity of wildlife habitats, including mixed hardwood forest, a stand of red cedars, wetlands, agricultural fields, and an old agricultural field containing a variety of native trees and shrubs, such as dogwoods and highbush blueberry. These habitats support a wide array of species, including deer, wild turkeys, bluebirds, goldfinches, blue jays, flickers, squirrels, and ruffed grouse. Many of these animals use the food and cover provided by the old field, which abounds in grasses, shrubs, and small trees. A variety of birds use the wetland areas, such as wood ducks, great blue herons, hawks, owls, and migratory songbirds, such as warblers, wrens, and red-winged blackbirds.

Rose Hill WMA was purchased in large part with State Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program funds in the 1970s and through exchanges from other state agencies. The latest acquisition in 2017, which added an additional 100+ acres to the already existing 634 acres, was funded by a Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The new property has varied topography and is mostly wooded with stone walls scattered throughout. The stone walls and standing deadwood of red cedar provide evidence that this site was formerly cleared for agricultural purposes. Aerial photography suggests the area was heavily wooded by 1934, indicating that agricultural activities were likely abandoned in the late 1800s or early 20th century.

The property also provides wetland and headwater protection of Joe Clark Brook, which supports wild trout. Additionally, a section of a Blue-blazed Trail, the Pequot Trail, managed by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, runs approximately 4,000 feet through the property, roughly from the southeast corner by Rose Hill toward the northeast corner. Because Rose Hill has substantial agricultural land, an agricultural agreement has been incorporated into the area's wildlife management plan. This program allows farmers to plant crops and maintain wildlife habitat on State land, benefiting both the local farming industry and wildlife.

Rose Hill WMA is used for a variety of activities, including wildlife watching and all forms of regulated public hunting. The area is easily accessible from Route 395. Take exit 79A; follow Route 2A two miles to Route 117; go 0.8 miles south on Route 117 to Rose Hill Road. Parking is available off Rose Hill Road. Maps of public hunting areas on state forests, wildlife management areas (including Rose Hill), and other similar properties can be found on the DEEP website at [www.ct.gov/deep/huntingareamaps](http://www.ct.gov/deep/huntingareamaps).



K. HUTCHINS, DEEP WILDLIFE (2)



# Pizza and . . . Logging?

Article and photos by Jerry Milne, DEEP Division of Forestry

**W**hat do pizza and logging have in common? Well, ordinarily, not too much. But in the case of Connecticut restaurants that make pizza in wood-fired ovens, timber harvesting provides the heat source.

Timber sales on State Forests produce large quantities of firewood. Trees that are crooked, forked, or of less-favored species are removed to provide more sunlight for better quality trees. These “undesirables,” at least from a timber point of view, are often turned into firewood by the loggers. Homeowners typically buy this wood, either as log length (20-24 feet) or cut to shorter lengths and split.

But, restaurants are also customers. Matthew Yard, a Connecticut-certified Supervising Forest Products Harvester, supplies firewood from DEEP timber sales to several pizza restaurants with wood-fired ovens. He says the chefs like using wood because of the intense heat it produces (850 degrees F) and the slight smoky flavor it imparts. The pizza cooks quickly, creating a crust that is crispy but soft and airy on the inside.

As a forester for the DEEP Forestry Division, I like that DEEP is able to sell its lower quality trees, improving its forests over the long-term, and that local businesses are using a wood product from a sustainably managed resource. I also really like pizza! There are many wood-fired pizza restaurants in Connecticut. Why not try one and help support Connecticut’s forest products industry, as well as a local business?



Log length firewood harvested in Naugatuck State Forest by Turner Logging and Firewood.



A load of cut and split firewood ready for delivery.

## Got Wood?

Near the end of a long winter, sometimes homeowners run low on seasoned firewood with many weeks of cold weather still to come. What should they do?

Kiln-dried firewood might be the answer. Back to Basics Garden Center, on Route 6 in Terryville, has two kilns that dry six cords of firewood at a time. After a few days in the kilns, the wood can be burned immediately. Even better, the business is enrolled in the Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s Connecticut Grown program, ensuring that their firewood comes from sustainably managed forests. Back to Basics can be reached at 860-589-8858.

Learn more about Connecticut Grown Forestry Products at [www.ct.gov/deep/forestry](http://www.ct.gov/deep/forestry).



San Gennaro Wood-fired Brick Oven Pizza in Bristol is one of several pizza restaurants that uses Connecticut grown firewood in its wood-fired ovens.

# CONNECTICUT Wildlife



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## Conservation Calendar

Dec. - March ..... Observe eagles at the Shepaug Eagle Observation Area in Southbury. The viewing area is open on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM now through Sunday, March 11, 2018. Visitation to the observation area is by reservation only. To schedule a free visit, go to [www.shepaug eagles.info](http://www.shepaug eagles.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](http://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. A complete list of programs can be found at [www.ct.gov/deep/SessionsWoods](http://www.ct.gov/deep/SessionsWoods). Please pre-register by sending an email to [laura.rogers-castro@ct.gov](mailto: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.

March 25 ..... **A Season of Fun(gi)**, starting at 9:30 AM. The CT Valley Mycological Society welcomes members and non-members to Sessions Woods for a presentation on mushrooms by Noah Siegel. Noah has spent over two decades seeking, photographing, identifying, and furthering his knowledge about all aspects of macrofungi. He is one of the premier mushroom photographers in the nation and has recently co-written a book about mushrooms of the northern California coast. Coffee will be served at 9:30 AM followed by the program at approximately 10:00 AM.

April 29 ..... **2018 Friends of Sessions Woods Annual Meeting (12:30 PM) and Live Birds of Prey with A Place Called Hope, starting at 1:00 PM.** The 2018 Friends of Sessions Woods Annual Meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m. with the infamous Dessert Extravaganza Potluck. At 1:00 p.m., there will be a brief, 10-minute business meeting before the featured presentation. This year's program will be "Live Birds of Prey" presented by wildlife rehabilitators from A Place Called Hope, a facility dedicated to returning wild birds to the wild and teaching people how to protect and respect wildlife. All are welcome and the program is free.

May 6 ..... **Spring Hike**, starting at 2:00 PM. Join CT DEEP Wildlife Division Natural Resources Educator Laura Rogers-Castro for a hike to the beaver marsh and back. We will learn about beaver habitat and search for signs of spring, including migrating birds, blooming native wildflowers, early butterflies, and more! The hike will be approximately two miles roundtrip. Participants should wear appropriate shoes and bring water. Meet in the lobby of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center.

### Hunting and Fishing Season Dates

April 14 ..... Opening Day of Trout Season at 6:00 AM

April 14-21 ..... Junior Spring Turkey Hunter Training Days (excluding Sunday). More details are at [www.ct.gov/deep/JuniorHunter](http://www.ct.gov/deep/JuniorHunter).

April 25-May 26 ..... Spring Turkey Hunting Season

Consult the 2018 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide and the 2018 Connecticut Angler's Guide (available by mid-March) 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](http://www.ct.gov/deep/hunting) and [www.ct.gov/deep/fishing](http://www.ct.gov/deep/fishing)). Go to [www.ct.gov/deep/sportsmenlicensing](http://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](http://www.ct.gov/deep/WildlifeHighlights)



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P. J. FUSCO

This has been a big winter for snowy owls in Connecticut. Many sightings have been reported from all across the state. Some snowy owls, like this heavily barred first-year female, have found a temporary home along the shoreline. These owls are large and powerful. They use their strong feet and talons to take prey as large as gulls, ducks, and rabbits.