

September/October 2008

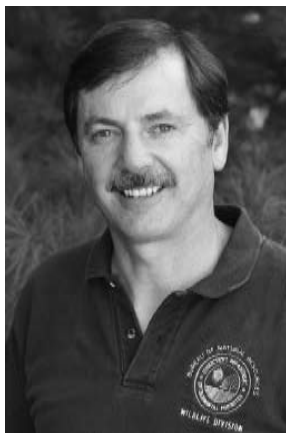
Connecticut Wildlife

PUBLISHED BY THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION



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From the Director



If you are a fellow Nutmegger, I am going to ask you a favor. Next time you approach your vehicle, take a glance at your Connecticut license plate. Does it have an eagle or a bobcat on it? If not, you are missing an opportunity to do something very meaningful for wildlife. And, you are missing the chance to display your support for something you care deeply about – wildlife conservation.

If you are reading this magazine, chances are that you spend a lot of time outdoors (or at least wish you did). You probably belong to a number of conservation organizations. Your hobbies might include activities like nature photography, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, and paddling where encounters with wildlife enhance your outdoor experience. However, it costs money to sustain and manage healthy wildlife populations and their habitats. And, unless you are a hunter or angler whose license and permit fees and excise taxes are reinvested in the resource, you aren't paying the freight.

*It used to be said that fish and wildlife agencies served the "hook and bullet" crowd because that's where their funding came from. To some degree, that was correct as state agencies successfully restored depleted populations of game animals. However, since then, agency mandates have expanded dramatically to include **all** wildlife and **all** habitats, but the source of funding has continued to be the sportsmen. The user-pay model that was so successful in restoring game species has not been expanded to other constituencies.*

In June 2004, Connecticut's Wildlife License Plates were first offered as a way for the public, particularly non-sportsmen, to voluntarily contribute to support wildlife conservation. Though certainly not intended to fund the state's wildlife programs, the plates offered the potential to raise a lot of money given the facts that: (1) more than one million Connecticut residents are classified as "wildlife watchers" and (2) 70% (\$35) of the \$50 purchase price is deposited directly into the Wildlife Conservation Account. While this new source of revenue is desperately needed, it has not materialized. After four years, just over 1,000 plates have been sold and the agency is faced with reverting federal dollars because we do not have the required matching state funds for wildlife programs.

It may seem surprising that sportsmen haven't vociferously complained as they have been asked to carry the financial load for wildlife management even as some of their favored programs have been reduced. Personally, I believe this is because most sportsmen are conservationists at heart and recognize that healthy ecosystems are worth supporting. I am hopeful that many of the other "wildlife watchers" feel the same and step up to the plate for wildlife.

Dale W. May

See pages 14 and 19 to find out how to order your Wildlife License Plate.

Cover:

The merlin, a small member of the falcon family, is an uncommon migrant in Connecticut. See the article on page 10 to learn more about falcons in our state.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Connecticut Wildlife

Published bimonthly by
State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
 www.ct.gov/dep

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The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for wildlife management and research programs, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development, and hunter education programs. Connecticut Wildlife contains articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies.



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Hunting Season Outlook

Wild Turkey Season

Hunters should expect to observe an abundance of wild turkeys during the 2008 fall turkey seasons because of favorable spring weather conditions. Much of Connecticut encountered dry and warm conditions during the nesting (May) and hatching (June) periods. These conditions may have increased nesting success and poult survival.

Fall firearms turkey hunters have many opportunities to harvest a wild turkey. Individuals can obtain both a private land permit (2 either-sex tags) and a state land permit (1 either-sex tag). The 2008 fall firearms season runs from October 4 through October 31.

The fall archery turkey season runs concurrent with the regular archery deer season (see below for season dates). Archers can harvest two birds of either sex from state or private land. Many archers that hunt principally for deer also purchase a fall archery turkey permit to take advantage of a chance encounter with a turkey while sitting in their deer stand.

During the fall seasons, turkey hunters should concentrate their hunting efforts on oak ridges, cut cornfields, and forest openings. Each of these areas contains food resources that turkeys use during fall. Hunters should scout several locations, prior to the season, to find scratchings, feathers, and droppings to determine whether turkeys are present.

If hunters purchase all available firearms and archery permits, they may harvest up to five birds. Although fall turkey hunting is challenging, the effort can be very rewarding with fine table fare and an enjoyable outdoor experience.

Migratory Gamebird Seasons

Ducks, Mergansers, and Coots: Black duck populations continue to be stable, therefore a one black duck bag limit will be allowed during the early season in both the north and south zones. Increasing wood duck populations have allowed for an increase in the daily bag limit for wood ducks from two to three. The daily bag limit for sea ducks

remains at five, and the daily bag limit for long-tailed (oldsquaw) ducks remains at four. Declining numbers of wintering sea ducks and increased hunting pressure on these long-lived species continues to warrant more conservative regulations. Continued concern over the status of scaup has led to a reduction in the scaup season. In Connecticut, the daily bag limit for scaup will be one for the first 40 days of the duck season and two for the final 20 days of the season.

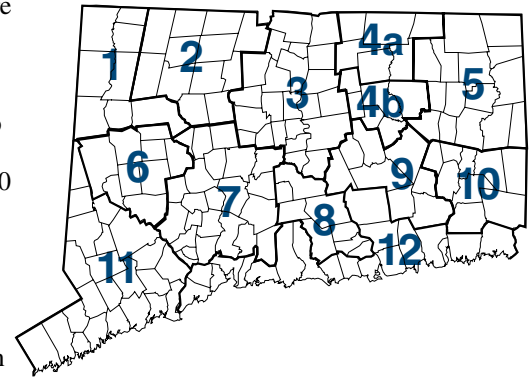
Regular and Late Canada Goose Seasons: New data have allowed the creation of a new goose hunting zone, the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population (AFRP) zone. This zone was created to exert more harvest pressure on resident geese in areas (primarily southwestern Connecticut) where there have been persistent nuisance problems. The season length for the AFRP zone will be 80 days, with a five-bird daily bag limit. The North Atlantic Population (NAP) continues to be stable, thus there is no change to the hunting season in the NAP-H zone. The season will be 60 days with a two-bird daily bag limit.

The Atlantic Population (AP) of Canada geese continues to recover. Breeding pair estimates for 2008 were 169,700. This is a slight decline from last year. However, breeding conditions were very good, and an excellent production year is expected. Thus, there is no change in the AP Unit. The season will be 45 days, with a three-bird daily bag limit.

Descriptions of the hunting zones for Canada geese are in the 2008-2009 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide, which is available at most town clerk and DEP offices, as well as on the DEP's website (www.ct.gov/dep).

Sportsmen also will have the opportunity to harvest resident Canada geese during the early September season and the special late season (in the south zone only; January 15-February 14, 2009). No special permits are required for either special goose season. New for 2008 is the extension of shooting hours during the September goose season to one-half hour

Connecticut Deer Management Zones



past sunset. This change should allow for more roost hunting and an increase in harvest of resident geese.

Hunters are reminded to report waterfowl bands. Band returns provide vital information for the continued management of the waterfowl resource. Bands can be reported online at www.reportband.gov. Those who report bands online provide quicker information on the band origin and they will be able to print a certificate from home.

Woodcock, Snipe, and Rail: There are no changes in the woodcock, snipe, and rail seasons. Woodcock production throughout the Northeast was pretty good this year. Overall, woodcock numbers have been stable for the past 10 years.

White-tailed Deer Season

Connecticut's deer population remains healthy and harvest rates are expected to be high during the 2008 hunting season. The abundance of acorns and weather conditions during the hunting season will influence hunter success and total deer harvest. Opening days are September 15 for archery, November 19 for shotgun/rifle, and December 10 for muzzleloader.

During the 2008 season, hunters who harvest an antlerless deer on private land and have permission to hunt on private land in deer management zones 11 and 12 will be eligible to obtain a free replacement antlerless tag (see the 2008 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide). Replacement tags will be available for use during the shotgun/rifle, archery, and muzzleloader hunting seasons. The replacement tag program has resulted in

Continued on page 16

Fall Archery Turkey Seasons

State Land	State Land Bowhunting Only Areas	Private Land (zones 1-10)	Private Land (zones 11 – 12)
Sept. 15-Nov. 18 Dec. 24-31	Sept. 15-Dec. 31	Sept. 15-Nov. 18 Dec. 10-31	Sept. 15-Dec. 31 Jan. 1-31, 2009

Songbird Banding in Naugatuck State Forest

Written by Jeremy Liefert, Wildlife Diversity Program

Background

In May 2008, a long-term (5-10 year) bird banding study was initiated to examine populations and year-to-year hatchling survivability of songbird species within the west block of Naugatuck State Forest. Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) protocols were followed so that an established standard would be used for data collection. In addition to collecting banding data for use by the Wildlife Division, this data can also be shared with the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), which coordinates the United States and International MAPS programs. At IBP, data from over 500 MAPS stations nationwide is collected and used to analyze species' breeding and survivability patterns on a larger scale.

The area in Naugatuck State Forest was chosen as a MAPS site for a few important reasons. First, the state forest has been designated as an Important Bird

Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society due to its importance as a critical migratory stopover habitat area, as well as the presence of threatened and endangered songbird species. Second, placement of the site in the vicinity of a recent forest cut may give an indication of species' use over time as the cut area begins to re-grow. Last, the site contains many "wet areas," including streams and small wet floodplains, which most songbird species use.

Setup

The protocol involves the use of "mist nets" with a very fine mesh. Birds fly into the nets and

get caught, but can be removed easily for transport to a nearby central banding station. The nets are set up on banding days between two poles and can be difficult to see under normal conditions. Individual nets are about 12 meters (40 feet) in length and 2.6 meters (8.5 feet) high. During the study period, 10 nets were set up in a 25-acre study area within the state forest. They were separated by approximately 100-150 meters and arranged in two walking loops of five nets each. On each banding day, two banders were able to periodically walk the two five-net loops to check for captured birds. The locations of the nets were chosen to incorporate a variety of habitats within the study area, including hardwood stands, softwood stands, riparian (streamside) areas, and forest edge areas. To keep data collection consistent, the nets will be placed in the same locations each year.

Capture and Data Collection

Mist net checks were performed by walking the net loops approximately every 40-50 minutes to check for captured birds. After transport back to the central



Wildlife Division research assistant Jeremy Liefert removes a hooded warbler from a mist net that was set up in Naugatuck State Forest. Songbirds are being captured as part of a long-term project to examine populations and year-to-year hatchling survival of these birds within the west block of the state forest.



Wildlife Division research assistant Kate Elsishans records data collected from each captured bird – species, sex, age, wing length, and weight.

P. J. FUSCO (2)



Wildlife Division research assistant Erin Victory holds a robin that was captured in a mist net. The robin was transported to a central banding station to be banded before being released.

ing, the birds were then released.

2008 Banding Results

The site was visited seven times between May 31 and August 8 of this year, and 77 adult and 12 juvenile birds were captured and banded. In addition to new captures, 14 birds, which were originally banded within the banding site in 2008,

were recaptured. See the table for results. For more information on the MAPS program, please visit www.birdpop.org/maps.htm. For more information on Audubon's Important Bird Area program, please go to www.audubon.org/bird/iba/.

banding station, the birds were banded and data, such as species, sex, age, wing length, and weight, were taken. Additional biological samples were taken as well, such as a tail feather for genetic analysis of migrating populations. After process-

Birds Captured at Naugatuck State Forest for MAPS, 2008

Species	# Captured
Gray Catbird *	11
Wood Thrush *	11
Ovenbird *	9
Veery *	9
American Robin	7
Hooded Warbler *	6
Black-Capped Chickadee	4
Eastern Towhee *	4
Hairy Woodpecker	4
Baltimore Oriole *	3
American Goldfinch	2
Black-throated Blue Warbler *	2
Blue Jay	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee *	2
Northern Cardinal	2
Black-and-white Warbler *	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Carolina Wren	1
Chipping Sparrow	1
Common Yellowthroat	1
Downy Woodpecker	1
Eastern Phoebe	1
Hermit Thrush *	1
Louisiana Waterthrush *	1
Tufted Titmouse	1
White-Breasted Nuthatch	1
Recaptured Birds	14

* Listed in Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Looking Back at Roger Tory Peterson

2008 marks the 100th anniversary of the famous naturalist and artist's birth

This past August marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Roger Tory Peterson, the renowned naturalist, educator, and artist, who also made his home in Old Lyme, Connecticut. Dr. Peterson, who died in 1996 at the age of 87, was a gifted artist and bird lover whose love for nature and talent for drawing inspired his first guide, *A Field Guide for Birds*, in 1934. The *Guide* launched his international career as author and illustrator for more than 30 publications. His work heightened the public's interest in wildlife and helped make bird watching a national pastime. Dr. Peterson went on to earn 23 honorary degrees and was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his role in modern environmental awareness.

Connecticut was truly fortunate that Dr. Peterson had made his home here. He was concerned about the state's wildlife

and often lent his help and expertise. In the 1960s, Dr. Peterson was one of the first individuals to notice the lack of successful osprey nests along Connecticut's coast, which led to the recognition of pesticide contamination as the cause. He was also instrumental in the first efforts by local residents to erect artificial nesting platforms for ospreys along the coastline. Dr. Peterson erected the first nest platform at Great Island in Old Lyme in 1962. Because of Dr. Peterson's interest, and the people inspired by him, Connecticut's osprey population maintains its stronghold at Great Island. Today, volunteers cooperating with the DEP Wildlife Division maintain the numerous platforms that are currently on the island.

In 2000, Great Island was dedicated as the Roger Tory Peterson Wildlife Area to establish a permanent memorial to Dr. Peterson. A special ceremony, attended

by several notables and Dr. Peterson's widow Virginia Marie Peterson, was held at the wildlife area to honor Dr. Peterson and unveil a new sign. The 588-acre Roger Tory Peterson Wildlife Area is located at the mouth of the Connecticut River. Its tidal brackish (mixture of salt and fresh water) marsh is home to numerous varieties of plant life and animal species, including ospreys, sora and king rails, blue-winged teal, gadwall, willets, American bittern, black ducks, and other coastal species.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Dr. Peterson's birth in Jamestown, New York, the Roger Tory Institute (RTPI) has scheduled a number of events. To learn more about the events, as well as about the RTPI and Roger Tory Peterson, visit the RTPI website at www.rtpi.org.

The End of the Line: Trash Poses Danger to Wildlife

Written by Kathy Herz, Editor

More than three decades ago, the U.S. Forest Service created Woodsy Owl to spread the word of “Give a hoot, don’t pollute,” and people took notice. Nowadays, it seems that Woodsy needs to remind people once again to not carelessly throw out their trash. Not only is it unsightly and bad for the environment, but it is hazardous to wildlife as well.

Every year, the Wildlife Division receives numerous reports of birds and other animals that have been injured or killed after getting tangled in our trash. Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators also report handling numerous animals in similar situations, and these animals rarely survive their ordeals. Also disheartening is the increasingly common sight along Connecticut’s shoreline of birds, like gulls and ospreys, with strands of fishing line hanging from or wrapped around their bodies.

Monofilament Fishing Line

The accompanying grim photograph, taken this past June, of a dead osprey hanging from its nest drives home the message of just how dangerous discarded monofilament fishing line can be. Animals can become entangled in or ingest the line, whereby starvation, strangulation, or deep wounding are possible. Wildlife usually does not survive the injuries caused by entanglements.

Ospreys and gulls, as well as other birds, unwittingly collect fishing line for nesting material, causing hazards for their young and themselves. The prevalence of fishing line can be seen in osprey nests throughout Connecticut. Most nests contain fishing line, balloon ribbons, kite string, and/or plastic that have been scavenged. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, conservative estimates indicate that 5-10% of osprey nests have fishing line present.

Although monofilament line is the greatest hazard, hooks, lures, and weights are often left behind at fishing sites and consumed by fish and wildlife, causing serious injury or illness. Just this year alone, volunteer wildlife rehabilitators reported numerous incidents of wildlife entanglements. Following is just a sampling:

- April, Windsor Locks: Canada goose with a fish hook and line attached to the wing.



H. GOLET

Long-time Wildlife Division volunteer Hank Golet took this photograph of an osprey hanging from its nest before removing the dead bird. Discarded fishing line, which is often picked up by ospreys to place in their nests, was wrapped around the bird’s neck. The nesting platform is located in the Roger Tory Peterson Wildlife Area (also known as Great Island) in Old Lyme.

- May, Walkers Pond, Vernon: Canada goose tangled so badly in fishing line that it was unable to fly or walk.
- June, Guilford: A gull was found with four fish hooks in its throat. The hooks were surgically removed but the bird died shortly after surgery.
- June, North Farms Reservoir, Wallingford: A Canada goose with fishing line wrapped around both legs.
- August, Old Saybrook: A cormorant

wrapped in fishing line.

Connecticut Wildlife reader William Stallman of Mansfield also sent in a photograph he had taken of a dead grackle wrapped in fishing line that was found in June along the Natchaug River.

Other Trash Items

Improperly discarded fishing line has been the main culprit in most of the incidents reported this year, but other

trash items have wreaked havoc as well. Discarded kites and kite string pose the same dangers as fishing line. In August a heron was found suspended about 50 feet above ground after it flew into kite string stretched between two trees. Fortunately, the Milford Fire Department was able to rescue the bird. Also, the Menunkatuck Audubon Society recently reported in its newsletter how two young willets were rescued after becoming entangled in kite string at Hammonasset Beach State Park.

In June, the Wildlife Division came to the aid of a deer that had an unusual piece of trash stuck to its leg (see story below). And, a few years ago a deer brought into a check station had Christmas lights

wrapped around its antlers.

These real life instances demonstrate just how dangerous our trash can be. Other items that can cause harm to wildlife include, but are not limited to, six-pack rings; plastic bags; balloons and their ribbons; and yogurt containers (skunks and other small animals have gotten their heads stuck inside). It is also important to note that when litter is left behind at beaches used by nesting shorebirds, scavengers (like raccoons and gulls) may turn to preying on nestlings once they have finished picking through the trash.

What You Can Do

It is up to all of us to clean up after

ourselves and properly dispose of trash at home and when we are in the outdoors:

- Retrieve broken kite string, fishing line, lures, and hooks and deposit them in trash containers. Cut six-pack rings and fishing line into small pieces before throwing out.
- Secure garbage at home to keep out bears, raccoons, opossums, skunks, and other wildlife.
- Clean up yards and properly dispose of unwanted items.
- When visiting parks and beaches, pack up your trash and dispose of it in a garbage can at home. Pick up after others, if possible.

Deer Management, No Strings Attached

Written by Andrew LaBonte and Bill Embacher, Deer Program

For years, we've been told to cut soda can six-pack rings to prevent birds from becoming entangled in them, but much hasn't been said about empty string spools from weed trimmers. However, in late June, a homeowner in Trumbull contacted the DEP Wildlife Division about an injured deer in her yard that apparently had an object around its left hind leg. The deer appeared to be in discomfort due its unwillingness to put any weight on its hind leg. Wildlife Division biologist Andy LaBonte and research assistant Bill Embacher decided to immobilize the deer and remove the object that was causing distress. The homeowner indicated that the deer typically arrived at her birdbath between 6:00 and 8:00 PM every evening to drink and eat the seeds she put out for the animals.

Andy and Bill arrived at the home to set up equipment and wait for the deer to appear. After two hours of waiting, a woodchuck came to the food that had been put out, followed by a raccoon and her two young who nearly passed over Bill's feet before moving on. After another hour of waiting, the deer did not appear. As the gear was being packed up, the homeowner went into the woods and came back running and yelling, "the deer's coming!" Andy and Bill quickly set up the darting equipment and repositioned themselves. Moments later the deer approached the birdbath and was darted in the rear hindquarter. Once the deer was sedated, Andy used a hacksaw to carefully remove the object, which turned out to be an empty spool from a string trimmer. The discomfort the deer was experiencing was apparent after the spool was removed. The spool had caused a serious abrasion to the skin, leading to swelling of the lower leg. After antiseptic ointment was applied to the wound, the deer was given a drug reversal agent and positioned for recovery. The homeowner checked on the deer a few hours later and reported that it had gotten up and left. The deer has been seen since the spool was removed and it appears to have recovered from its injury.



B. EMBACHER, DEER PROGRAM (2)



FAR LEFT: HOMEOWNER

Top: Wildlife Division biologist Andy Labonte uses a hacksaw to remove a string trimmer spool that became stuck around a deer's leg. The deer was immobilized before the spool could be removed. **Bottom left:** Fortunately for the deer, it regularly visited a backyard and the homeowner was able to notice that a spool was stuck on the deer's left hind leg. **Bottom right:** After the spool was removed, the abrasion caused by the spool was treated with an antiseptic ointment. The deer has been observed by the homeowner since the spool was removed and it appears to have recovered.

Citizen Scientists Help the Wildlife Division Understand Woodland Raptor Nesting Success

Written by Shannon Kearney-McGee and Erin Victory, Wildlife Diversity Program. Photography by Larry Fischer

Almost all of Connecticut's woodland raptor species were described in Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as uncommon, declining, vulnerable, and in need of research and monitoring. Migrating raptors have a long history of being monitored through migration hawk watches and this monitoring technique is efficient at tracking population trends over time for many of Connecticut's species.

From this regional migration data, biologists know that sharp-shinned hawks have cyclic population levels, but current population trends suggest that counts of sharp-shinned hawks at Connecticut watch stations will decrease to 50% of the current population in approximately 21 years. Migration data also indicate that Cooper's hawks are declining at Connecticut locations, but increasing at other regional migration count locations. Alternately, red-tailed hawks are increasing at Connecticut migration locations. This trend information is a good start, but biologists don't know why the bird populations are declining or increasing. Is it failure to successfully breed? Is it stress from harsh winters? Is it stress from lack of food and harsh weather conditions during migration? These are all important questions to answer, and they need to be answered if we want to do our part to manage Connecticut's landscape to sustain raptor populations.

With upland forest covering over 60% of Connecticut's landscape, the state should be a great place for woodland raptors to nest, but biologists don't know if it is! Lots of forest cover doesn't automatically indicate that hawks are finding the resources they need to successfully fledge their young. Hawks may be encountering some problems – inadequate prey levels; competition from more aggressive species; fragmentation of large forest blocks; and inadequate forest age and structure.

Observations of Nesting Raptors Reported

The Wildlife Division wants to know if hawks are reproducing successfully. Regular readers of *Connecticut Wildlife* may have noticed the requests for nesting hawk locations. These requests were part of a pilot project to obtain estimates on nest-



A view into a nest of sharp-shinned hawks. The Wildlife Division has been requesting observations of raptor nests in an effort learn more about woodland raptor populations.

ing success for woodland raptors. These requests have generated over 74 reported nests in 59 towns from the 2006 and 2007 breeding seasons! The accompanying table describes the nests from the 2007 breeding season that were reported and monitored by citizen scientists. The majority of nests reported were from red-tailed hawks, red-shouldered hawks, and Cooper's hawks. Most of the reports were from Hartford and Litchfield Counties and all but a handful of these raptors were actually nesting in people's yards!

What Do Observations Tell Us?

Habitat measurements were made at each of the reported nests, and statistical techniques were used to estimate nesting success for the 2007 season on 17 nests (10 red-tailed hawks and 7 red-shouldered hawks). Each nest had a 99% chance of surviving each day and a 73% chance of fledging at least one chick. These estimates are encouraging and imply that Connecticut may be a good place for raptors to place their nests – at

Woodland Raptor Nests Reported for 2007 Breeding Season # of nests monitored/# of nests reported

	Fairfield	Hartford	Litchfield	Middlesex	New Haven	New London	Tolland	Windham	All Counties
Broad-winged Hawk	–	–	0/2	–	–	–	–	–	0/2
Cooper's Hawk	–	0/3	1/2	–	0/1	–	1/4	–	2/10
Northern Goshawk	–	–	1/1	–	–	–	–	–	1/1
Red-shouldered Hawk	1/2	2/5	1/2	1/1	1/2	2/2	0/1	–	8/15
Red-tailed Hawk	1/2	3/7	0/3	0/1	3/4	2/3	–	–	9/20
Sharp-shinned Hawk	–	–	0/1	–	–	–	–	–	0/1
Unknown Raptors	–	0/1	0/2	0/1	–	0/1	–	–	0/5
Totals	2/4	5/16	3/13	1/3	4/7	4/6	1/5	0/0	20/54

least a good place for red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks! At this time, there is not enough information to make conclusions about other nesting raptors. As the Wildlife Division moves forward with its investigations, biologists will continue to request raptor nest reports. They will also augment the citizen scientist nest monitoring with directed sampling to obtain measurements on some of the more rare and secretive raptor species.

How You Can Help

You can help the Wildlife Division monitor nesting success of woodland raptors by reporting active raptor nests that you find! Nests are set up in spring (between March and April) and the young birds fledge by July. Biologists are interested in knowing about any nesting raptors, including red-tailed hawks, red-shouldered hawks, broad-winged hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, and northern goshawks. Please also report nesting common ravens, any owl species, and American kestrels. A special challenge: The Division is looking for information on the peregrine falcon pair in Stamford that was not observed nesting this year.

Caution!!

Although the Wildlife Division is asking the public to help in its search for nesting raptors, there are several precautions that need to be taken to avoid causing disturbance to the birds.

- *Birds are very vulnerable to disturbance during the nest building and incubation phases. If disturbed too often or for too long, a bird may abandon its nest. Once chicks have hatched, observers should keep as far away from the nest as possible and only stay for a short period of time. Your presence could cause a bird to spend unnecessary time defending the nest, rather than feeding their young. A good rule of thumb: if your presence alters the bird's activity, it is time to go!*
- *Do not leave an obvious trail to the nest! If you continually*



A view into a nest of Cooper's hawks. This view isn't typical for those volunteering for the woodland raptor nest survey. Nests should be observed at a distance to avoid disturbing the birds.

visit and walk directly to the nest tree, you may leave an obvious scent trail for potential predators. Please alter your route to and from the nest.

- *Be aware of private property! Make sure you get permission from all property owners before crossing private property! Keep in mind that it may be possible to monitor nests from roadsides.*

All of the above guidelines apply unless you are watching a nest from inside your home or some other structure that acts as a blind. Under these conditions, your presence should not affect the birds and, therefore, you have more freedom to actively monitor the nest, if you choose.

Who to Contact

If you have any observations of nesting raptors to share, please contact Wildlife Technician Shannon Kearney-McGee at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130), or send email to shannon.kearney@ct.gov. Be sure to include your contact information and the nest location.

Update on Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon Nests

Every year, several dedicated volunteers and Wildlife Division staff monitor all of the bald eagle and peregrine nests located in Connecticut throughout the nesting and fledging season. Division biologists also attempt to visit all of the nests to place identifying leg bands on the young birds before they fledge.

This past nesting season, 17 pairs of bald eagles attempted to nest in Connecticut. Thirteen of those nests were successful, fledging a total of 21 chicks. One pair was territorial, two pairs were inactive, and one pair failed to nest successfully. In 2007, 15 bald eagle pairs set up territories and 10 pairs produced a total of 15 young.

Also this year, 10 pairs of peregrine falcons were reported. Of those, nine pairs actively nested and one pair was inactive. The nests of two pairs failed. Biologists were able to access five of the peregrine nests to place leg bands on the fledglings. A total of 18 chicks fledged from these accessible nests, while the number fledged from the two nests that could not be reached is unknown. There were nine breeding pairs of peregrine falcons in 2007; six of those pairs fledged 10 chicks.

The Need for Speed - Falcons in Connecticut

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, Wildlife Outreach Program

Fast and powerful, falcons generally overtake their prey with great speed and/or endurance. Their flight pattern of rapid, powerful, sometimes choppy wingbeats is distinctive. Falcons have long, pointed wings and medium to long tails that make them extremely fast and agile flyers. They often hunt from steady, direct flight, or coursing. Kestrels frequently hover over prey. Occasionally, falcons may be seen soaring with spread wings and tails.

Most kills are quick and efficient as falcons grab their prey with strong, taloned feet, and then use their strongly hooked bill to dispatch the prey. Falcons have a tooth-like notch in the bill which is used to sever the spinal column of vertebrate prey.

Compared to other members of the hawk family, falcons have large, blocky heads, and small bills. Their large eyes have a resolving power that is much greater than that of a human.

Most species of hawks and eagles build large stick nests. Falcons, on the other hand, do not build nests. They lay their eggs on bare ledges, or in crevices,

tree cavities, or nest boxes.

All falcons are open country birds, never being found within the forest. Some of their preferred habitats include shorelines, marshes, river valleys, grasslands, and farmlands.

Each of Connecticut's three regularly occurring falcon species is migratory, with two of those also breeding in the state. The fourth falcon species, the gyrfalcon, is a very rare winter visitor. Good numbers of kestrels, merlins, and peregrines move through the state in spring and fall on their way to and from their breeding grounds. Fall is the best time to witness the migration as large numbers can sometimes be seen on ideal weather days at concentration spots, such as Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven.

American Kestrel

About the size of a robin, the kestrel is Connecticut's smallest falcon. Kestrels can frequently be seen perched on utility wires, signs, or tree tops that overlook open landscapes. From these perches, they can look out for prey such as grasshoppers, dragonflies, small birds and small rodents. Once prey is spotted, a kestrel may fly out, hovering over the victim before dropping down to catch it.

During the nesting season, kestrels require tree hole cavities, including old woodpecker holes, for nesting and raising their young. Where there is a shortage of natural tree cavities and the habitat is appropriate, kestrels will also readily use nest boxes.

Kestrels have a close association with open habitat, such as that found in agricultural areas, airports, grasslands, and along power lines. Many of these habitats have been declining in size and quantity in both Connecticut and the region due to development and forest succession that have been going on for many decades.

Along with the decline in open habitats, there has been a long-term decline in kestrel populations in the Northeast, including Connecticut. The decline is thought to be caused by a variety of factors. The loss of open

habitat is the most notable, but a shortage of natural nest cavities and possible contaminants in the food chain are also having an impact. Kestrels are listed as a threatened species in Connecticut.

Merlin

Slightly larger than a kestrel, merlins are small falcons that sometimes take prey as large as themselves. When flying, they are extremely powerful and agile, sometimes making spectacular aerial maneuvers.

When hunting, merlins are tireless flyers that will methodically chase down prey with strong, direct flight. They do not hover like their cousin, the kestrel. Often, merlins will course low to the ground, flying rapidly over the contour of the terrain, in order to surprise their prey. The main quarry is small birds, including warblers, sparrows, sandpipers, blackbirds, and swallows. They will also eat dragonflies and small mammals, such as mice, bats, and red squirrels.

In North America, merlins breed mostly in open areas of the spruce/fir boreal forest region of Canada. They nest on ledges or often in old, abandoned crow or hawk nests. They also breed less extensively in some of the northern border states and the Rocky Mountain states. Merlins are considered uncommon migrants in Connecticut and they do not breed in the state.

Peregrine Falcon

Peregrine falcons usually hunt from high in the sky, attacking their prey by stooping (diving headfirst with wings drawn in close to the body) or chasing from above. There is nothing more frightening to a flock of shorebirds than to have a peregrine circling overhead. The main prey is medium-sized birds, including pigeons, flickers, sandpipers, ducks, and gulls.

Peregrine falcon populations declined rapidly in the mid-twentieth century. By 1975, the peregrine population in the entire eastern United States was considered to be extirpated. The decline is directly attributed to the deleterious effect of pesticides, particularly DDT, on breeding populations. On a massive scale, birds were unable to reproduce successfully because of the build-up of pesticide compounds in the food chain. The peregrine



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Our smallest falcon is the American kestrel.

falcon was one of the first species placed on the federal endangered species list when the Endangered Species Act became law in 1973.

Due to the federal ban on the use of DDT (1972) and a dedicated captive breeding and release program, mainly carried out by falconers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), peregrine populations began a long, slow recovery in the eastern United States. Based on the success of the recovery program, the USFWS removed the peregrine falcon from the federal endangered species list in 1999.

In Connecticut, the peregrine was a regular nester through the early 1900s, but started to decline somewhat by the 1920s and 1930s. The decline continued until Connecticut lost its last breeding peregrines in the late 1940s. After a long absence from the state, a pair successfully raised three young in Hartford in 1997. Today, the peregrine remains on Connecticut's endangered species list while the population continues to recover. Currently, there are over a dozen breeding pairs in the state and the population is slowly increasing. Most of the nesting pairs are in urban areas that have close proximity to shoreline and/or large river open habitats.

Gyr Falcon

Revered by falconers as a majestic and sacred raptor, gyrfalcons are the bird of choice for the sport of kings. They are the largest and most powerful of the falcons. Compared to the stream-

lined, but also powerful peregrine, gyrfalcons are heavy-bodied and have a broad base to the wings. Their flight is strong and fast but with slower wing beats than a peregrine. They will take mostly birds, and sometimes mammals, as prey. Their most frequent quarry includes ptarmigans, ducks, alcid, and rabbits. Gyrfalcons normally hunt by coursing and direct chasing, frequently at a height of under 100 feet from the ground. They sometimes, but seldom, stoop from high in the sky like a peregrine.

Gyrfalcons are circumpolar. In North America, they are uncommon to rare breeders in Arctic tundra, mountain, and sea cliff areas in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. They are very rare winter

visitors to New England. Connecticut has had less than 20 documented occurrences of gyrfalcons since the late 1800s. The last one was in 1995 in Madison.

Continued on next page



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Adult peregrine falcons have blueish gray plumage on their topside and a light underside with dark barring.

What Is DDT?

DDT (Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) is a synthetic chemical in the family of organochlorine compounds. It is a persistent organic pollutant with long-lasting effects.

The use of DDT as a nuisance insect pesticide was widespread in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Its unintended effect on raptors, particularly North American populations of peregrine falcons, ospreys, and bald eagles, was devastating. Once DDT made its way into the food chain, concentrated levels of the pesticide built up in these top predators when they ate contaminated prey. High levels of DDE, a metabolite (breakdown product) of DDT, prevented normal calcium deposition during eggshell development, resulting in thin-shelled eggs that easily broke while being incubated. The birds were not able to reproduce successfully and their populations crashed.

DDT is still used in many tropical countries as a cheap and effective insecticide. In these places, where malaria is a major human health concern, disease-organism carrying mosquitoes are fought by using DDT. There are some parts of the world where targeted mosquitoes have become resistant to DDT.

Falcons,
*Continued from
previous page*

Conservation

In Connecticut, artificial nest boxes have been used to benefit nesting by peregrine falcons and American kestrels. Peregrine boxes are open-topped or open-fronted structures with a gravel floor. They have been used under highway bridges and on tall building ledges to provide a safe place for peregrines to lay eggs and raise young. The kestrel box is designed to replicate the kestrel's natural use of tree cavities. The boxes are similar to a regular bluebird box, except larger. They have a round hole in the front panel of the box with a diameter suitable to kestrels, and they are put up on poles, trees, or other elevated structures in the appropriate early successional habitat. Both peregrines and kestrels will readily use artificial nest boxes.

The Wildlife Division's kestrel box project provides nesting habitat in areas where natural nesting cavities are in short supply. The Division is looking for suit-

able habitat (approximately 30 acres of fairly contiguous managed hay fields or pasture habitat) with landowners interested in monitoring a kestrel box. Landowners interested in becoming a kestrel box monitor should contact Laura Saucier at

the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office.

Most raptors have a history of population declines stemming from years of indiscriminate shooting, egg collecting, and of food chain contamination from pesticides, mainly DDT. Laws were passed early in the twentieth century to protect migratory birds, including falcons. Widespread shooting continued into the 1930s, but tailed off due to public concern and conservation measures. Most raptor populations continued to decline sharply until the use of DDT was banned in Canada in 1970 and in the United States in 1972. Since then, most raptor populations have experienced slow, but ongoing recovery.

Today, falcons face a new threat of habitat loss – one that is less direct, but equally alarming. The continuing loss of open space, large tracts of open habitat, and migratory stopover areas has a long-term deleterious effect on falcons, as well as on many other species.

In addition, migratory falcons still face threats from the use of DDT in their wintering areas, primarily in Latin America where DDT is used to combat mosquitoes.



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Large and heavy-bodied, the gyrfalcon is a rare winter visitor to Connecticut from the far north. It occurs in different color morphs, including dark, white, and gray, as seen above, which is the most common.



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Immature peregrine falcons are brownish with heavy streaking on the underside.

Mystery of Bat Die-off Still Unsolved

White-nose Syndrome (WNS), a mysterious ailment that has affected bats in Connecticut and killed bats throughout the Northeast, was the focus of a special gathering this past June in Albany, New York. Connecticut DEP Wildlife Division biologists joined colleagues from 12 state, eight federal, and two Canadian government agencies, four non-governmental organizations, and eight universities to discuss current research results and to coordinate continuing work to find answers and solutions to this deadly illness.

Named for a white fungus that often appears on the noses of sick bats, WNS has been difficult to quantify. Specialists throughout the eastern United States have been working together to try and learn what the root cause of this die-off is and how to stop it. While a definitive answer has not yet been determined, a significant amount of progress has been made.



Wildlife Division technician Geoffrey Krukar (right) holds a bat while he and biologist Jenny Dickson (center) and technician Christina Kocer check the bat for signs of white-nose syndrome. Division staff entered two Connecticut bat hibernaculas in March 2008 to document the presence of WNS in bats.

Many Volunteers Help Bats

As information was collected on WNS, one protocol that was established for bat research was to make sure each bat was held on its own and not placed with any other bats. This presented a huge dilemma for bat researchers: how do we keep each bat separate?

Borrowing an idea used for tree-roosting bats, such as the red, hoary, and silver-haired bats, the Wildlife Division staff decided individual holding bags would be the perfect solution. The next challenge was getting enough holding bags to meet project needs. That's when biologists sought help from other DEP employees.

The call went out that the Wildlife Division was in need of old pillowcases that could be recycled into bat bags. DEP staff, employees from other state agencies, including the Department of Transportation and the Department of Developmental Services, and some schools and community groups that had heard about the request came through in a big way.

Hundreds of pillowcases began making their way to the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office. Realizing that reworking pillowcases into bat bags would also require help, the Wildlife Diversity Program asked Master Wildlife Conservationists (MWCs) to help with the sewing.

Once again, some truly amazing volunteers came forward and created more than 1,000 bats bags in very short order. MWCs Olean Mattei and Dawn Ferland, along with Dawn's friend Laurel Ducat, deserve special thanks for making our vision a reality. By working together, we solved one small conservation challenge in the effort to solve the mystery of WNS. The Wildlife Division is very grateful for all the help and support.

Researchers and state and federal wildlife biologists are pursuing several leads. They've learned that bats are starving and will try to find out why. Investigations will examine the possibility that bats are dying from an unknown pathogen. Contaminants also are being studied for possible direct or indirect links to WNS. The possibility that many smaller issues, such as loss of stored body fat, declines in food resources, and delayed immune responses, have combined with deadly results will also be investigated.

Many of the bats that spend their summers in Connecticut and other New England states spend the winter hibernating in New York and Vermont where mortality rates have exceeded 90%. This will have a dramatic impact on ecosystem dynamics throughout the region.

WNS may have a catastrophic impact on little brown bats, one of Connecticut's most common species. The impacts to the federally and state endangered Indiana bat have been profound and have been a huge set back in the recovery of this species. The impact of WNS is important for more than just protection of a species. Bats are our single largest predator of night flying insects and provide an important form of natural insect control – any significant depletion in their numbers will also result in a significant effect in other parts of the ecosystem.

DEP is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), other states, and scientists throughout the country to try and solve the mystery of WNS. The DEP offers these suggestions for anyone wishing to help bat conservation efforts:

- *If you have a colony of bats in your barn, eaves, or other structure, the DEP Wildlife Division would like to know how many bats you think are there and if you've noticed a change since last year. You can contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 860-675-8130.*
- *Build, install, and monitor a bat house. Plans and installation tips are available on the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep).*
- *Consider getting a Wildlife Conservation License Plate for your vehicle. The proceeds go into a dedicated fund for wildlife research and conservation. These contributions also help the Wildlife Division match other grants and multiply the funding available to study bats.*

For more information or current updates on WNS, please visit the USFWS website (www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html) or the National Wildlife Health Center website (www.nwhc.usgs.gov).



A Birthday Gift for Wildlife

At a time when most kids anticipate receiving lots of great gifts, one young girl decided that instead of getting gifts for her birthday, she wanted to do something for wildlife. For her 9th birthday, Saylee Missell, of Stafford Springs, asked her friends to make donations to Connecticut's Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund. In July, Saylee sent the Department of Environmental Protection checks totaling \$200 and a letter that stated, "I hope that you can use this money to help protect and study the wildlife of our State. Thank you for all the hard work you do to protect the animals and their homes."

This is the second year that Saylee has foregone gifts and instead asked her friends to donate to a cause that means a lot to her. This year, she chose the Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund because of her interest in vernal pools and the frogs, salamanders, and other species that live there. She looks forward to being outside in spring, when the evening rains come, to observe wood frogs, spring peepers, and spotted salamanders make their way to vernal pools to lay their eggs. As a way to say thank you to her birthday guests, Saylee gave each of them a vernalpool.org T-shirt, which benefits the Vernal Pool Association.

Saylee's generous and thoughtful gesture will go to help several wildlife projects, including an assessment of the state-endangered Indiana bat, a research study on weasels, and the placement of monofilament fishing line recycling receptacles at several fishing areas. Previous projects have focused on various reptiles and amphibians, which Saylee has an interest in. The Wildlife Division appreciates Saylee's efforts to help Connecticut's wildlife!

Anyone who has an interest in helping wildlife can donate to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund. The majority of donations are received as a tax check-off option on the Connecticut State Income Tax Return. However, donations can also be sent to the Connecticut DEP, Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Donations to the Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Fund are also greatly appreciated. Donations can be sent to the Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, Sessions Woods WMA, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.



The DEP Wildlife Division discourages the collection of any wild animal to be kept as a pet, even though, in some cases, it is legal to do so. Consider the case of a diamondback terrapin found in mid-July, walking down a driveway in a Middletown subdivision. The homeowners realized they had never seen a turtle like this one in their yard and they called the Middletown Animal Control Office. Without seeing the turtle, the Animal Control Office advised them to "put it in a nearby swamp." However, the family knew that this was not a local turtle. They did some research on the Internet and determined it was a diamondback terrapin. After taking some photos, they called the Wildlife Division for a positive identification and advice on what to do.

If this family had released the turtle in a swamp, it would have died. Diamondback terrapins need brackish water (a mixture of salt and freshwater), which is found in salt marshes, estuaries, and tidal creeks. They eat fish, marine snails, and marine and tidal mollusks, which would not have been found in a freshwater swamp in Middletown.

The happy ending is that the terrapin was collected by a Wildlife Division biologist and returned to the coast. However, the question still remains, how did this marine turtle get 25 miles from the shore? The best guess is that this female terrapin may have been laying eggs on a sandy beach along the shoreline and was collected and taken home by a family that lives in the large Middletown subdivision. The turtle either then escaped or was let go and eventually ended up in someone else's driveway in the early morning.

This incident provides a strong reminder that by regulation (Sec 26-66-14a) diamondback terrapins in any developmental stage CANNOT be collected or possessed.

To learn more about the diamondback terrapin, check out a fact sheet on the Wildlife Division's section of the DEP website at www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife.

Step Up to the Plate for Wildlife!

In this issue, Wildlife Division Director Dale May wrote in his regular column how the public can help fund wildlife programs by purchasing a wildlife license plate. What better way to show your support for Connecticut's wildlife by displaying a special license plate that features a bobcat or a bald eagle. Plus, the purchase of a wildlife license plate is a wise investment that will benefit a variety of species, including songbirds, shorebirds, butterflies, bobcats, box turtles, and their habitats. An application form and information about the wildlife license plate can be found on the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website, www.ct.gov/dmv. Forms are also available at DEP and DMV offices.

Donate to Help Nonharvested Wildlife Projects

In addition to purchasing a license plate, citizens can also help fund wildlife programs in Connecticut by sending a donation to the Nonharvested Wildlife Fund or by taking advantage of the Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off option on the Connecticut State Income Tax form (see above article to find out how to donate to these funds).

Buy Connecticut Duck Stamps and Help Conserve Wetlands and Wildlife

Those interested in the conservation of wetland wildlife, such as waterfowl and waterbirds, and their habitats can help by purchasing the Connecticut Duck Stamp. Sportsmen who hunt waterfowl are required to purchase a \$10 stamp every year. However, you don't have to be a waterfowler to buy a Duck Stamp. Anyone can purchase and collect stamps. Each year the stamps have a different image and feature a different species of waterfowl. The 2008 stamp features a pair of common goldeneyes illustrated by Connecticut artist, Burt Schuman. Duck stamps are available at your local town hall for \$10 each.

Testing for Chronic Wasting Disease Continues

Written by Andrew M. LaBonte, Deer Program

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a neurological disease that affects deer, elk, and moose. CWD was first documented in Colorado in the late 1960s, but currently is found in 14 other states (including New York, West Virginia, and most recently in a captive deer herd in the lower peninsula of Michigan) and two Canadian Provinces. The Connecticut DEP has been testing for CWD since 2003. In 2007, a CWD surveillance program approved by the United States Department of Agriculture-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) was designed to focus sampling efforts in areas of Connecticut that were considered high and moderate risk. Deer management zones (1, 6, and 11), located along the New York border where CWD was documented in 2005, are considered high risk areas (see map). New York has collected nearly 5,300 samples from the area where CWD was first detected in 2005 (approximately 180 miles from the Connecticut border). Since 2005, no additional cases have been detected. However, due to the ability of CWD to persist in the environment for an extended period of time, intensive monitoring efforts in New York are expected to continue. All of the remaining nine deer management zones in Connecticut are considered moderate-risk areas.

In 2007, a total of 583 testable samples were collected from deer harvested during the archery, shotgun/rifle, or crop damage seasons and from road-killed deer found throughout the state. A total of 240 deer were collected from the high-risk area and 343 from the moderate-risk area. All samples were submitted for testing to the University of Connecticut's Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Science in Storrs. However, due to the overwhelming number of samples submitted and changes in lab personnel, all samples were forwarded to the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for testing. Results from all CWD samples were obtained in late June, and

all tests were negative for CWD. Surveillance efforts in Connecticut and all other New England states have not detected CWD.

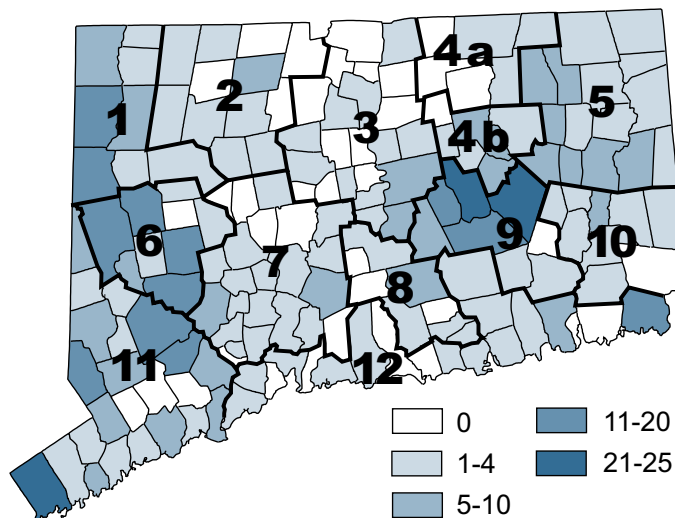
In the past, the main source of samples for CWD testing have come from biological deer check stations during six peak days of the statewide shotgun/rifle season. With a reduction in data collection days from six to four in 2007, collecting an adequate number of samples was more difficult compared to previous years. Modifications in collection procedures and increasing hunter familiarity with the CWD collection program will hopefully increase sampling effectiveness in the future.

The DEP will continue collecting deer heads for CWD testing throughout the state during the 2008 fall deer hunting season. Those interested in donating deer heads for testing should store them in a cool place or refrigerate them and call the Wildlife Division's Franklin Office (860-642-7239) to arrange a pick-up time (typically the next day). Additionally, anyone who observes deer displaying symptoms associated with CWD (abnormal behavior, staggering, lowered head and ears, and emaciation) should contact the DEP's Division of Law Enforcement (860-434-3333), or the Wildlife Division's Franklin Office (860-642-7239) or Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130).

CWD Forefront

Researchers from the USDA-APHIS and Colorado State University recently evaluated and validated the first live rectal-tissue biopsy method for detecting chronic wasting disease (CWD) in captive and wild elk. Researchers collected over 1,500 biopsies from captive elk in Colorado and used this technique to detect CWD in 15 elk. Compared to proven post-mortem diagnostic tests, the live rectal biopsy test appears to be nearly as accurate. "The key advantage to the rectal biopsy test is that it can be performed on live animals," said Dr. Kurt VerCauteren with APHIS' Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center. "Until now, there was no practical live test for CWD in elk. With this technique, we can detect CWD in animals not showing any signs of the disease and, thus, remove them so they are not left to infect other individuals and further contaminate the environment." The use of this new, live test in the initial screening, surveillance, and monitoring of CWD will greatly aid in the management and control of the disease in the wild, as well as in captive settings.

Chronic Wasting Disease Sampling Efforts, 2007



Chronic wasting disease sampling efforts in 2007 focused on high (deer management zones 1, 6, and 11) and moderate-risk populations (all remaining deer management zones).

Samples were collected and tested (n = 583) from 136 towns from September 2007-June 2008. This deer management zone map details the range of samples collected from each Connecticut town.

Regulations were enacted in October 2005 prohibiting hunters from transporting into Connecticut any deer or elk carcasses or part thereof from any state where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been documented unless de-boned: "Section 26-55-4: No person shall import or possess whole carcasses or parts thereof of any deer, moose, or elk from wild or captive herds from other states or Canadian Provinces where chronic wasting disease has been confirmed, including, but not limited to, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, Montana, South Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska, Oklahoma, New York, West Virginia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Any additional states* and provinces where chronic wasting disease is confirmed will be published in the Department's annual Hunting and Trapping Guide and on the Department's Web site (www.ct.gov/dep). This provision shall not apply to meat that's de-boned, cleaned skullcaps, hides or taxidermy mounts."

* CWD was recently documented in a captive deer herd in Michigan.

Hunting Season Outlook,

Continued from page 3

an increased harvest of female deer in southwestern Connecticut and in many shoreline towns.

The Earn-A-Buck Program will remain in effect in management zones 11 and 12. It provides incentives for hunters to harvest additional antlerless deer. Any hunter who harvests and checks in three antlerless deer during the same season (archery, shotgun, or muzzleloader) will be eligible to earn an extra bonus buck tag (either-sex) to use during the same hunting season.

Hunters are reminded that bowhunting is permitted on state land during the shotgun/rifle-hunting season only in designated deer bowhunting areas and on private land in zones 11 and 12. Bowhunters also can hunt deer during January 2009 on private land in zones 11 and 12. These liberalizations, combined with the ability to use bait during the deer hunting seasons in zones 11 and 12, have contributed to increased deer harvest rates in these areas. (The Wildlife Division publishes an annual Deer Program Summary, which contains harvest results. Recent summaries, including the 2007 Deer Program Summary, can be found on the DEP website, www.ct.gov/dep/hunting.)

The DEP has been working to increase convenience for hunters. For instance, hunting licenses and deer permits can now be purchased online at www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing. During the January 2009 archery deer season, a new "telecheck" system should be in place for hunters to report their harvest. The telecheck system will replace the kill

2008 Junior Hunter Training Days

On designated days each year, licensed junior hunters may hunt when accompanied by a licensed adult hunter 18 years of age or older (mentors may not carry firearms). These training days provide junior hunters with an opportunity to learn safe and effective hunting practices from experienced hunters.

Pheasant - Saturday, October 11, 2008

Private Lands Only: Licensed junior hunters must have valid pheasant harvest tags. Harvest tags must be used except when hunting on lands of a registered private hunting club with a pheasant tagging exemption

Waterfowl - Saturday, October 11 & Monday, October 13, 2008

Participants must be 15 years of age or younger, possess a valid small game junior hunting license and a HIP permit and be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age. Adults must possess a valid hunting license; however, they are not allowed to carry a firearm. Ducks, geese, mergansers, and coots may be hunted. Bag limits and shooting hours are the same as for the regular duck and goose hunting seasons.

Deer - Saturday, November 15, 2008

Private Land: Licensed junior hunters must have a valid private land shotgun/rifle deer permit and written consent from the landowner. Adult mentors must have a valid private land deer permit and written consent from the landowner. Harvested deer must be brought to a deer check station.

State Land: Licensed junior hunters must have a state land shotgun deer permit for the specific area being hunted (lottery or no-lottery). Adult mentors must have a valid deer permit of any type. Harvested deer must be brought to a deer check station.

Junior Hunter Season Access Permits

Junior Hunter Season Access Permits are available for the Babcock Pond, Bear Hill, East Windsor/Enfield, Goshen, Hebron, Higganum Meadows, Nathan Hale, NU-Maromas, NU-Skiff Mountain, Quinnipiac River State Park, Stanley Works, and Woodstock Permit-Required Hunting Areas. These permits allow licensed junior hunters and their accompanying adult licensed hunters to hunt small game on the designated Permit-Required Hunting Area without having to obtain the normal daily permits required of other hunters on these areas.



postcards for reporting harvested deer. It requires hunters to call in their harvest rather than complete and mail a kill report card. Hunters who wish to obtain replacement tags in zones 11 and 12 will be required to check in their deer at an official deer check station.

The Deer Management Program is in the process of developing new regulations that will increase hunter flexibility and harvest opportunities, especially in deer management zones 11 and 12. Periodically check the DEP website in December to see if these changes have been implemented.

Small Game and Upland Bird Seasons

Opening day for most small game hunting will be Saturday, October 18. The DEP will purchase 14,742 adult pheasants for the upcoming fall season, a decrease of 1,115 birds from the previous year's purchase. A number of stocking areas will receive adjustments in allocations as a result of the decrease in the number of birds purchased. In addition to adult pheasants, 950 eight-week old pheasants were purchased and delivered to Norwich Fish and Game and Sprague Rod and Gun Clubs for eventual release on permit-required hunting areas.

The Pheasant Program budget is determined by the net revenue collected in the previous year. The 2008 stocking program was directly affected by a decrease in the net revenue collected from pheasant hunters in 2007, combined with an expected increase in average pheasant costs. Rising fuel and grain costs continue to impact commercial growers.

Despite the reduction in the number of pheasants stocked, sportsmen should

What Is a Deer Ked?

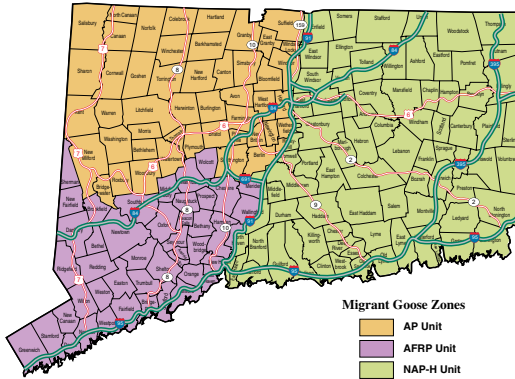
The Wildlife Division often receives questions from hunters about brown, flattened-looking insects crawling through the fur of recently harvested deer. These insects are called deer keds and are often mistaken for ticks. While ticks attach themselves to the skin of the deer and have eight legs as an adult, deer keds are highly mobile and have six legs.

Deer keds are actually flies (Family Hippoboscidae). They are ectoparasites of cervids (deer and moose) that feed on blood. Four species are found in North America, and only one species (*Lipoptena cervi*) inhabits the northeastern United States, including Connecticut. Juvenile deer keds have wings to disperse (usually in early fall) from their larval host, but they lose these wings once they find a new host.

The species of deer ked found in Connecticut will occasionally bite humans, but it is not known to spread pathogens. It is not necessary to control deer keds because they are host-specific. When venison is hung in coolers or outdoors during cold weather, these parasites typically perish.

Laura Saucier, Wildlife Diversity Program

Connecticut Goose Management Zones



Buy a Connecticut Duck Stamp and Help Conserve Wetlands and Wildlife!

You don't have to be a waterfowl hunter to buy a Duck Stamp. Anyone can purchase and collect stamps. A stamp costs \$10 and it features a different waterfowl species each year. Stamps can be bought at town halls, the DEP's License and Revenue office at 79 Elm Street, and on the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing).

recognize that the ratio of pheasants stocked per hunter has actually increased over the years and the prospects for pheasant hunting remain good.

A total of 43 areas will be stocked during the 2008 fall season. A number of lower quality/lower public use areas will not be stocked in an effort to maintain adequate allocations on the higher quality sites. Stocking will occur two to three times per week during the seven-week distribution period, except during the third week in November when the firearms deer season opens statewide. Only a limited number of pheasants will be stocked during that week on 23 areas. Pheasants will be nearly evenly distributed with one-half of the allocations

released in October and one-half during November. All stocking will conclude by Thanksgiving Day.

To provide opportunities for the weekend/family and youth hunters, volunteers for the DEP will release pheasants on Friday evenings and variable Saturdays on selected sites. Cooperative sportsmen's clubs that provide public hunting access to permit-required hunting areas will continue to stock state-purchased birds on several areas. Several changes in vendor locations have occurred since the 2008 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide was printed. To help promote the use and increase opportunities on some of the highest quality state-owned areas, daily hunting permits

will not be required for Goshen WMA, Babcock Pond WMA, Bear Hill WMA, Higganum Meadows WMA, and Nathan Hale State Forest.

A program to provide youth hunters with unrestricted access to selected permit-required hunting areas will continue. For details and a complete listing of all major stocking areas and vendor locations, visit the DEP website. Pheasant tags (\$14 for 10 tags) can be purchased at town halls or at the DEP's License and Revenue office, at 79 Elm Street, in Hartford. Tags may also be ordered through the online licensing system (www.ct.gov/dep/sportsmenlicensing), but hunters should allow sufficient time for receiving tags through the mail.

Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center Public Program Series

The Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center's Public Program Series is a cooperative venture between the Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register for these programs by calling 860-675-8130 (Monday through Friday, from 8:30 AM-4:30 PM). Programs are free unless noted. An adult must accompany children under 12 years old. Please, no pets allowed for organized programs! Sessions Woods is located on Route 69 in Burlington.

Orienteering Event, October 19, 2008 (Sunday) from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Orienteering is an activity for all ages! It involves using a map and compass to find your way to each of several checkpoints on an orienteering course. The Western Connecticut Orienteering Club (WCOC) will be hosting this orienteering event on the trails at Sessions Woods. Participants can register and begin any time between 10:00AM and 12:00 PM, but must complete the course by 2:00 PM. Beginners are welcome to arrive early for additional instructions on orienteering basics. The cost is \$5.00 per person or \$12 per family. Pre-registration is not required and additional information can be obtained by emailing WCOC club member Jim Henderson at bandjhenderson@sbcglobal.net.

Fall Hike, November 2, 2008 (Sunday) at 2:00 PM

Join DEP Wildlife Division Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro on a two-mile hike along the crosscut and beaver marsh trails at Sessions Woods. Laura will discuss the wildlife use of the various habitats that are visited along the way, in addition to describing the special features of the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area. Participants should wear appropriate shoes for hiking along a woodland trail and bring a water bottle. No pets are allowed. Please meet in the exhibit area of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center.

An Update on Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases in Connecticut with Dr. Kirby Stafford, November 12, 2008 (Wednesday) at 6:30 PM

Dr. Kirby Stafford, of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, will be visiting Sessions Woods to provide an update on the black-legged tick, Lyme disease, other tick-borne illnesses, and tick management methods. Dr. Stafford is a medical-veterinary entomologist whose research focuses on the ecology and control of the tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, that transmits the agents of Lyme disease, human babesiosis, and human ehrlichiosis. This presentation will provide participants with the most current information available today to protect yourself from tick-borne illnesses.

Resident Canada Goose Banding and Research

Written by Min T. Huang, Migratory Gamebird Program

In late June and early July, the Wildlife Division's Migratory Gamebird Program and a slew of volunteers headed out for the annual Canada goose banding effort. As part of the Division's work with resident geese, birds are banded every year to help measure survival rates and movement patterns. In 2008, 1,762 geese were captured at 42 different sites throughout the state. Yellow neck collars were placed on 126 geese, with approximately 15 put out in each of the eight counties. Geese were caught during the annual flightless period when they shed all of their flight feathers while undergoing a molt. During the period of feather re-growth, which lasts approximately four weeks, the birds lose the ability to fly. Geese were captured by corralling them into a portable net where they were aged, sexed, and the collars and leg bands were installed. Subsequent sightings of these collared birds will provide valuable information on movement patterns.

Neck collars were placed on geese during 2002 to 2005 as part of a research project on resident geese. This effort enabled biologists to develop movement probability models of geese in both urban and rural areas, delineate new hunt zones that will specifically target resident geese, and gain insight into molt migration behavior and winter migration to areas in the southern portion of the Atlantic Flyway. The previous research also provided annual population estimates independent of yearly breeding surveys. This year, collars were placed on geese to specifically derive an estimate for the state's resident population. Surveys will be conducted to re-observe these collars. An overall goose population estimate can be derived from the percentage of collared birds to uncollared birds that are observed in the August surveys. Population estimates will be conducted every three years to monitor the resident population, which in recent years has been declining slightly.

The Resident Goose Dilemma

Over the past 20 years, human landscape changes (grassy lawns, ponds, golf courses, etc.) have created excellent goose habitat throughout the state. As a



J. SPAULDING, MIGRATORY BIRD PROGRAM

Back to his roots – Wildlife Division Assistant Director Greg Chasko, also former Waterfowl Program biologist, bands a resident goose during the annual goose banding effort.

result, the resident goose population has increased to over 36,000. This population expansion has resulted in an increase in damage, health, and nuisance complaints about geese. The feeding of geese in both urban and rural settings substantially contributes to the increasing nuisance problems. In Connecticut, resident geese have negatively impacted both property and agricultural interests. High densities of geese in urban settings have led to conflicts at parks, beaches, golf courses, athletic fields, and residential lawns.

As negative interactions between geese and humans increase, the social value of the geese decreases. Up until the 1970s and early 1980s, it was rare to see geese in Connecticut during summer. The only geese that were seen were migrant flocks whose presence was always a harbinger of the changing seasons. In those times, geese were revered by most. Unfortunately, geese are viewed very differently now. Until current population levels of resident geese are reduced to a point that will be tolerated by people, geese will likely continue to be considered by most as just a nuisance species.

Reduction of the resident goose population to a level that is more acceptable to the public is not easy. Previous research

indicated that towns felt that an 87% reduction of current goose numbers would result in a tolerable situation. Regulated hunting has resulted in a reduction in goose numbers in areas where hunting is allowed. A new agricultural depredation program has also helped to alleviate some of the problems that geese are posing to agricultural crops in spring and summer when hunting seasons are closed. In urban areas, however, where hunting is typically not feasible, different tactics are needed. Some municipalities currently use hazing (frightening geese with loud noises, dogs, or other methods). However, our research has shown that success is often short-lived, and merely excluding geese from one area does not solve the problem of overabundant goose populations. The birds usually move to another safe area and just create new problems.

Anyone who encounters a marked goose is urged to report it to the Bird Banding Laboratory at 1-800-327-BAND (2263) or on the web at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl. Those interested in volunteering for next year's goose banding efforts can contact Wildlife Division technician Kelly Kubik at kelly.kubik@ct.gov.

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- Sept.-Nov. 30 **Daily Hawk Watch**, at Lighthouse Point on New Haven Harbor. Free and open to the public. Lighthouse Point is one of the premier locations in southern New England for watching migrating eagles, hawks, and falcons, as well as good numbers of songbirds. The watch starts at 7:00 AM daily and continues as long as the hawks keep flying.
- Oct. 5 **Connecticut Audubon Society's 2008 Bird Carving and Wildlife Art Show**, from 10:00 AM-4:00 PM, at the CAS Center at Fairfield, 2325 Burr Street. Some of the country's top bird carvers and wildlife artists – including many Connecticut natives – will be exhibiting and selling their artwork and demonstrating their craft. The show will also include special activities for the whole family: children's nature crafts and activities, live "Birds of Prey" demonstrations by trained CAS staff, lectures, and more. Exhibit admission is \$7 for adults, \$3 for children. All net proceeds help support CAS's year-round conservation, education, and advocacy initiatives.
- Oct. 19 **Orienteering Event**, from 10:00 AM-2:00 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (see page 17 for more details).
- Nov. 2 **Fall Hike**, starting at 2:00 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (see page 17 for more details).
- Nov. 12 **An Update on Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases in Connecticut with Dr. Kirby Stafford**, starting at 6:30 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (see page 17 for more details).

Hunting Season Dates

- Sept. 15-Nov. 18 First portion of the deer and turkey bowhunting season (private land bowhunters in deer management zones 11-12 may hunt deer until January 31, 2009).
- Oct. 4 Opening day for fall firearms turkey hunting season.
- Oct. 11 Junior Pheasant Hunter Training Day (see page 16 for more details).
- Oct. 11 & 13 Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Days (see page 16 for more details).
- Oct. 18 Opening day for small game hunting season.
- Nov. 15 Junior Deer Hunter Training Day (see page 16 for more details).
- Nov. 19 Opening day for deer shotgun/rifle season.
- Nov. 29 Open day for deer shotgun season on state land (B season) and state land no-lottery season.
- Dec. 10-23 Deer muzzleloader hunting season.
- Consult the 2008 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide for specific season dates and details. The 2008-2009 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide contains information on duck, goose, woodcock, rail, and snipe seasons. Both guides are available at Wildlife Division offices, town halls, and on the DEP's website (www.ct.gov/dep). The 2009 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide will be available by mid-December.



Step Up to the Plate for Wildlife...

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

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

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

Application forms are available at DEP and Department of Motor Vehicle offices and online at www.ct.gov/dmv.

Connecticut Wildlife

Subscription Order

Please make checks payable to:

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

Check one:

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

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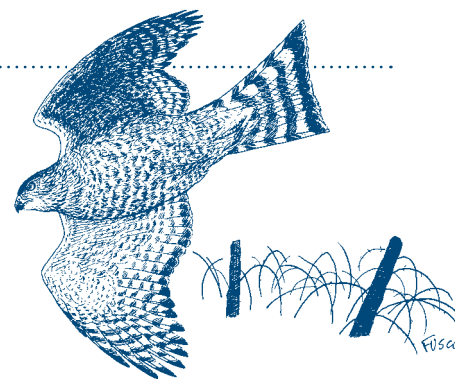
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Hunters should expect to observe an abundance of wild turkeys during the 2008 fall turkey seasons because of favorable spring weather conditions. To get a closer look at the upcoming hunting season, see the Hunting Season Forecast, starting on page 3 of this issue.

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