

# Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume V, Issue 4 \* January 2021



Jack Carrier  
with his  
Vermont  
buck



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# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Launches Mobile App to Enhance Outdoor Recreation

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department released a new mobile application to help the public recreate outdoors in a safe and socially distanced manner. The “Vermont Outdoors” app connects the public with department lands, fish and wildlife regulations and up-to-date COVID-19 guidance.

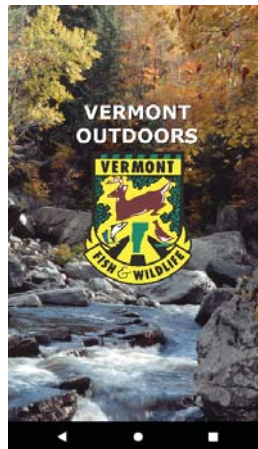
“We’ve seen an increase in outdoor recreation across our 100 wildlife management areas and nearly 200 fishing access areas since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Lands and Facilities Administrator Mike Wichrowski. “This new app will encourage Vermonters to find new opportunities to hunt, fish, trap, or view wildlife on public lands and waters. The app will also provide access to fish and wildlife law digests, baitfish dealers, department news and current events, and the ability to report fish and wildlife violations.”

This project was paid for with federal funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security

(CARES) stimulus to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities. Other CARES funded projects completed by the department included improvements to boat ramps and other water access points, wildlife management area roads, parking areas and informational signage.

The application can be downloaded at the [Apple App Store](#) for iPhones or [Google Play](#) for Android phones.

For more information, call Lands and Facilities Administrator Mike Wichrowski at 802-917-1347.■



*The new Vermont Outdoors mobile app encourages Vermonters to find new opportunities to hunt, fish, trap and explore department-owned lands in a safe and socially distanced manner.*

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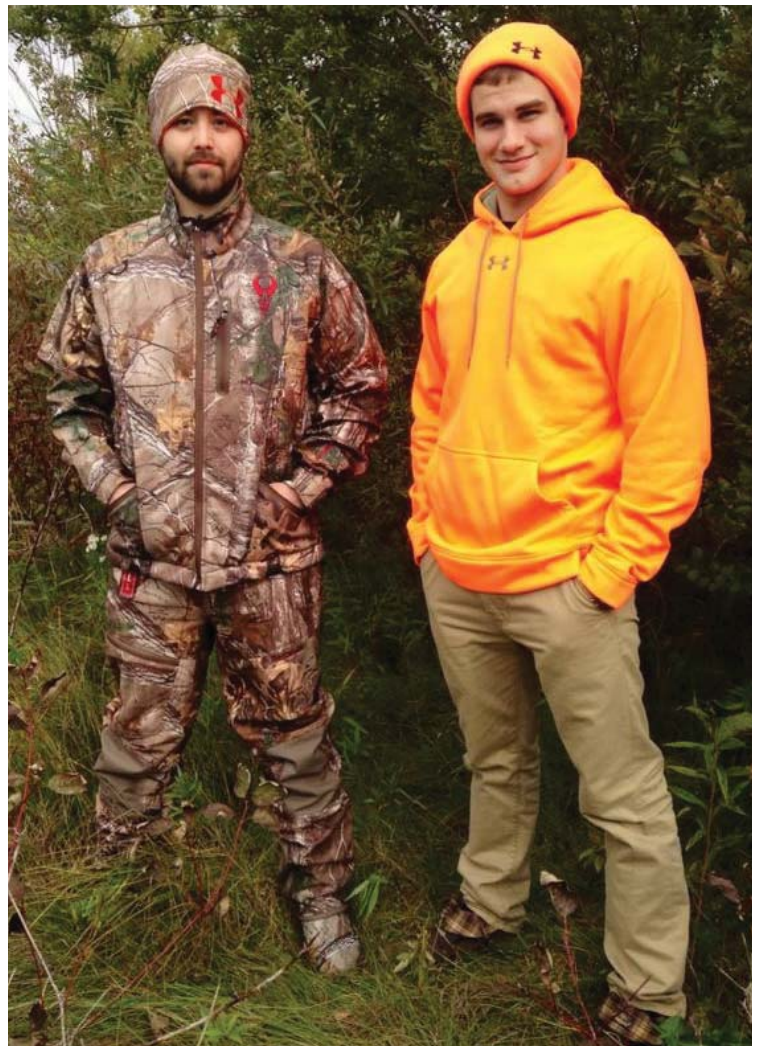
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## The Trapline

by Randy Barrows

Well as I write this, we are finally getting some snow. Looking out the cabin window it's been snowing all day but it has not amounted to much. Finally, some tracking snow to find those hard to locate whitetails. Four days left, let's see what happens.

The trapline has been slow also, after a week all I have to show is a mangy fox and a 20-pound possum. It's been way too warm for the critters to become really active. I have been fielding many calls about how difficult it's been so far but with no bad weather the critters have had it pretty easy.

I will cover fox trapping this time around. The red fox is easily recognized by its red color and large red tail. Red fox is native to most areas including farmland to living right in cities. Red fox is clever and suspicious by nature and can be difficult to trap.

Red fox seems to be much larger than they actually are. Fox's usually weigh ten to twelve pounds with some weighing much more. Color phases may vary in some areas, foxes can be grey, black, silver or a cross between red and silver.

Foxes pair up in January and mating occurs. The litters are born 50-55 days later or by the end of March with litter sizes from 6-8 pups. Litters are born in underground dens with good visibility in all directions and multiple entrances. During the first week the female stays with the pups while the male provides for the whole family. After weaning both parents provide the chow. If the family is threatened any way the parents

will move to a new location. Foxes have one litter per year and can live to ten plus years.

Fox sign is easy to locate. Red fox has small padded feet and a track pattern seem to be in a straight line with toenails showing in the tracks. Fox can be found on the edges of forests, in fields, haystacks and abandoned buildings. Fox scat are dark, pointed and contain hair, feathers, bones and seeds inside.

Fox have keen senses of sight, sound and smell which is helpful; in finding food and avoiding enemies are shy but curious and are quick to run if disturbed. Fox are excellent hunters and are commonly watched pouncing on their prey with a stiff legged bounce. Fox eat voles, mice, rabbits, muskrats' snakes or anything that presents as a warm meal, and eat like it's their last meal. Fox urinate often to mark their territory and to let other fox know they are around.

Fox will travel a long way to find a meal. Pet food left on the front porch will be consumed if left out. I get calls every year to trap fox that have found the chicken coop.

As with all trapping scouting the area will show you where they are living. Checking for fox in freshly cut fields will let you catch them out mousing all hours of the day. Finding their scat, tracks and dens only sweeten the deal. Chatting with the landowner can be helpful also. There are many sets to use and I will cover a couple. My go to is a dirt hole set with a number 1 or 1 ½ coil spring trap. Be sure to bed the trap firmly as any wiggle

will cause the fox to withdraw before the trap shuts. I usually place the trap with a backing behind it by building a cubby behind the set so the fox cannot work it from behind. I also put stepping sticks on each side of the pan to direct the foot onto the pan. Most critters avoid stepping on sticks if at all possible.

Another good set is to dig a hole under a rock or stump four or five inches in diameter. Place some fox urine on top and bait down the hole. Red will smell the urine from far away and come to investigate. Once near he will smell the bait and hopefully step on the trap. Foxes travel in pairs a lot so if you are setting one trap you might as well set two.

Now hopefully you have scored it is time to skin them. Be sure the furs are clean and dry. Fox are very thin skinned so care is needed. I hang fox by one hind foot and make your cut up the back of the leg to the vent and then switch sides and do the other leg. Then the tail needs to be skinned which is easily done with a tail slit guide. Once the tail is split continued removing the fur as you would skinning a deer. When to the front shoulders again split the back of the legs and remove down to the pads, or leave the pads on is you are selling for taxidermy purposes. Skinning around the chest and head are tedious. Small cuts rule here and take your time. Every mis-cut down grades the fur potential. If doing fox taxidermy, the ears need to be turned and the caralige removed along with the lips.

After the pelt is removed it needs to be fleshed. Again, be careful. Fox are thin skinned and too much pressure on

the fleshing knife will rip them. Once fleshed onto the stretcher they go. Fox go on hide out for a couple days or until they start to firm up. Be sure to use belly boards because a fox will dry completely to the board and you will hate yourself when you are trying to get it off. Once the fur starts getting tacky the fur needs to be turned. To sell a fur at auction the fur has to be visible so the whole cape has to be turned fur side out and then back on the stretcher with BELLY Boards back in. At 60 degrees it usually takes two to three days to totally dry.

I would be remiss in not stating this important fact that I forgot in the beginning. Fox carry all kinds of critters on the bodies year-round. Do yourself a huge favor and put them in a garbage bag, fog the bag with a good bug spray for killing all bugs and let it set. You will be shocked at what you shake out of the bag when done. By not doing this you put yourself at risk of trucking these critters in the house with you. I have a very understand-

ing wife if I was to infest the house, I would be in the Schmidt house.

Now off to the fur dealer or to an auction. A properly prepared fox will bring you maybe \$10.00 in the current fur market.

Keep your waders patched, your lures in the shed and take a kid out with you. ■



Shaley Gingras with her Bampa Randy Barrows

My name is Shaley Gingras. I am 7 years old and I live in Milton, VT.

My Bampa is Randy Barrows. I love to hunt and trap with him.

When I was 2, I would ride on his back in a trapping pack basket to check traps.

Now that I am older, I can walk with him. On Tuesday, we checked the line and did not catch anything.

We rebaited and I told Bampa not to worry, its going to be cold tonight and the animals will be hungry, you will catch something tonight. Well, the next morning, we caught a beautiful fox.

I can't wait to go again!!



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## Ashley's Bear

by Ashley Johnson

I am not an experienced bear hunter. In fact, I am not a successful hunter, period. I had never filled a tag for *any* season despite years of sitting, hiking, and waiting in anticipation. I had refined the recipe for Tag Soup. I grew up in a family of deer hunters, bears were only seen by chance, so hunting for them exclusively was never a priority.

Last fall, my Great Uncle Church offered me a chance to run with his bear dogs, and I jumped at the chance. I spent a few days bouncing around in that truck, listening to stories about my family history and the good ol' days, but most of my time was spent learning about the habits of bear. Topics included their favorite food resources, tree identification, and what prime conditions led to good tracking. With knowledge of the animal that rivaled (if not surpassed) any state biologist, he had my complete and full attention. Decades of wisdom should not be wasted.

Our first day out, we never got a good track due to poor weather the day before, and the second day didn't start any better. We decided to change tactics, so we stopped to give the dogs a break from the truck and went for a short hike. That walk made all the difference, because within ten minutes of leaving the truck, those hounds had a bear treed. The pride in Church's voice when he checked the time, noting their lightning-fast tree, could not go unnoticed. On top of that, this bear marked 91 adult bears treed for him since the start of training season that year. My uncle intently watched his GPS, assessing barks per minute, who was considered "treed" and he took special note of where his young pups were. Every tree is a learning experience, Church explained, and we had two pups who were about 6 months old with us that day who needed the practice. As we got closer to the tree, and we could identify each dogs' howls and bays of excitement, it quickly occurred to me that I had no idea what I was getting myself into! I should have requested more of a pep talk, or what I should do if any number of possible scenarios played out. Before I had time

to process, we were at the base of the tall pine where a decent sized boar had taken up residence. Church's gestures made it clear I wasn't allowed to talk. My rifle was still hanging from my shoulder in its sling as he abruptly placed my hands on the trunk, hounds springing from the ground all around me. That bear and I had a stare down, I was willing him to stay in the tree, and he calmly assessed which was worse. Me, or the dogs? His attempt to urinate on me made his opinion clear. Becoming a bear dog was not exactly on my bucket list, and every part of me wanted to get out from under that bear. My head was telling me to trust Church, my body was telling me this was a dumb idea. One by one Church leashed the dogs and tied them to nearby trees out of harm's way, then I backed away and took my shot. For the first time ever, I had filled a tag.

When I stood over that big, beautiful bear, my work had just begun. On top of a mountain, the sky spitting snow, we now had to get this beast out of the woods. The only text that managed to go out before my phone battery died was to my husband who was out of cell range, prepping deer camp with his uncles and cousins for the upcoming season, with *all* the manpower I had intended on using. What had I gotten myself into?

Bring in the B-Team. My dad, mom, sister, her boyfriend, and three young daughters came to my rescue. My dad, a true hero, brought some antique rope and a pink plastic winter sled. After dragging over a mile, with the rope and sled both breaking within sight of the truck, well after dark, my first successful hunt was over. What. A. Day. I felt like I had survived some sort of initiation, every bear hunt wouldn't be like this, right?

I didn't want a repeat of last year's chaos, although it made for a good story, so this time I made sure my extraction team was at-the-ready, and within cell range...

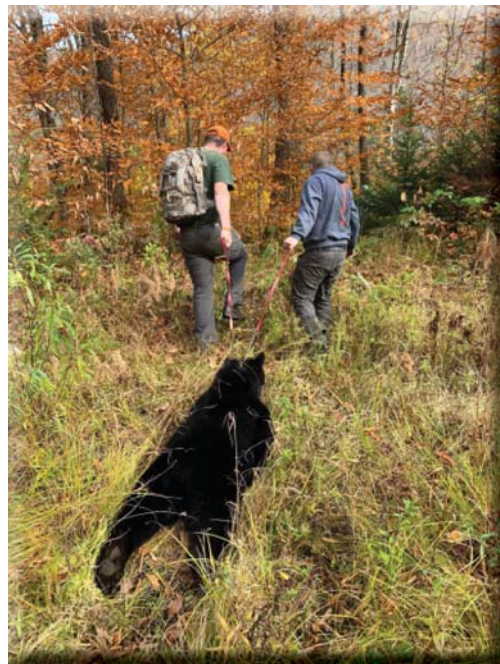
With abundant food resources bears weren't moving which made



finding a fresh track difficult. Three days in, it felt like we'd developed a routine, and I was starting to feel hope dissipate with each passing day. The last frosty morning, we let the dogs out of the box for a potty break, and we got lucky *again*. Off they went! We watched the GPS as the dogs went up and over a ridge, crossed a river, and up the neighboring ridge line. We had a successful tree. After quite a drive, we parked along the road and began our hike. Church assured me it was "only 800 yds from the road." A very steep hike to



a picture-perfect tree. The youngest pups greeted us with enthusiasm, showing off their success. A beautiful bear, which at first glance we thought was a large sow. I took my time, sitting and bracing myself against bank, took my shot and filled my second tag ever. A plump, healthy, 178lb boar. The dogs had done their job and enjoyed every minute of it, my uncle beamed with pride. My friends and family came to share in my excitement, and everything went as planned. It was a form of therapy for us, a way for us to grieve together. We had recently lost a very big part of our family, and for anyone who knew Randy Johnson, they knew his love of the sport. There seemed no better way to honor



him that day than to be together, out in the woods, dragging a bear.

I cannot thank my Uncle Church enough for the experiences he's given me these past few years, and I hope to be able to keep

this tradition with him for years to come. The dogs may change, but Church, the legend, will certainly stay the same!

I find that those who have never hunted with dogs assume that it's easy. I must admit I was once part of that crowd. I mean, the dogs do all the work, right? True, once they have a scent a good set of dogs will get you to a tree, but you still have to hike in, hike out, and if you're lucky, drag a bear. Not to mention finding a scent is no guarantee, especially as it gets later in the season. And, if you're the owner of those dogs, you could never account for

the time spent training, prepping, and caring for these elite athletes. I got the easy job of just showing up and sitting in that truck. Dragging is a small feat compared to the time, knowledge, and skill it comes to training those hounds.

Here are some things you should know when hunting with bear dogs, some of which I learned the hard way:

When the GPS tells you how many yards the dogs are away, that's "as the crow flies" and not accounting for vertical inclines. "Only 800yds from the road" can suddenly turn in to a *very* steep hike that is *way* longer than the GPS says it is.

Not every bear is a shooter. You might find a sow with cubs, a small yearling, or the monster you're hoping for.

The bear is more afraid of you, than you are of them. (This I find unlikely, but that's what I'm told.)

A treed bear is what these dogs train for, this is their reward and the climax of their day, and boy are they going to enjoy it any way they can. Who needs a tennis ball when you have a black bear?

There is no better sound than the bay of a hound who knows they're on a hot trail. And if they wind it from the road, that dog box should be rockin'.

Time spent in the woods is one hundred times better than any day spent inside. And if it is spent with family, that makes each day an even better adventure. ■

## Mountain Deer

By Rodney Elmer

Open up any hunting social media and you'll see all kinds of means and methods for going after about any quarry in North America. From tree stands, to firearms, trail cameras and optics, it's all out there... in nearly any, way, shape and form. Most of it has to do with the ease of getting the job done, the enjoyment of the experience and the taking home, of it all. For the most part satisfaction is the name of the game. Most of its surrounding a gadget, merchandise and physical wonders of all kinds from lasers, Special alloys, micro machined ...what's it's... galore.

Innovation is awesome when it comes to the ease of getting things done but I'm not sure about the satisfaction levels, sometimes. It sometimes seems like we don't wanna take our hunting or skills to the next level and I suppose at some point there's probably a ceiling to it all. But of all the gadgets in my life and the things they brought me, the method of "tracking" has been by far the most satisfying in the making of myself. And a definite resurgence in this part of old school hunting is definitely making

a comeback. The personal skills of awareness, physical strength, patience mixed with a lot of learned investigational skills and a host of some newly developed trust in intuition makes the art of woodsmanship a crowning achievement. An experienced woodsman is a hard thing to beat. It's a level to attain, that most would be very proud to speak of, about themselves... even when they get to the rocking chair. It can't be taken away by anyone or any law. It's pure and it should be honest. It's done best with care and respect and a degree of reverence in my opinion. Reverence for life reverence for the land, and others and especially reverence for yourself. There always seems to be the time when old-school and new school meet up and I hope everyone gets a chance to be part of that. When you first start shooting you use a rest and later on you level up and shoot offhand. You change your shooting cap, so to speak. When you sat like an hour for hours and waited for something to walk by, are you stock something you can see like

a cat, are you following hound away like a wolf. Each is admirable in its way and the beauty of being in nature as you can do it your way. All the scouting and the beauty discovering what's out there, having the patience to stick to it and catch that Wiley old buck or doe sneaking along unawares or completely in the know, being able to be in tune with your surroundings completely as possible that's always where it's at. Any fool can hold a gadget. Yes thanks to fellas, who inspired me to wander in the mountains, the Berniers, the Benois, the grandfathers and older neighbors, best friends from work or a story in magazines. The new DVD, or YouTube video it's all great stuff! Let's keep woodsmanship and a oneness with nature, this hunting spirits front legs!



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Corey Young with his 8 point buck.



# 2021 Hunting, Fishing, Trapping Licenses Are Available Online

*Proceeds go to manage wildlife and conserve habitat*

**VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE Press Release**

Vermont hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for 2021 and license gift certificates are available on the Fish and Wildlife Department's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)).

"Our licenses for the New Year will be popular based on the increased interest we are seeing from people who want to enjoy more outside activities like hunting and fishing," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. "Ice fishing is a lot of fun, and it will soon be possible with colder weather."

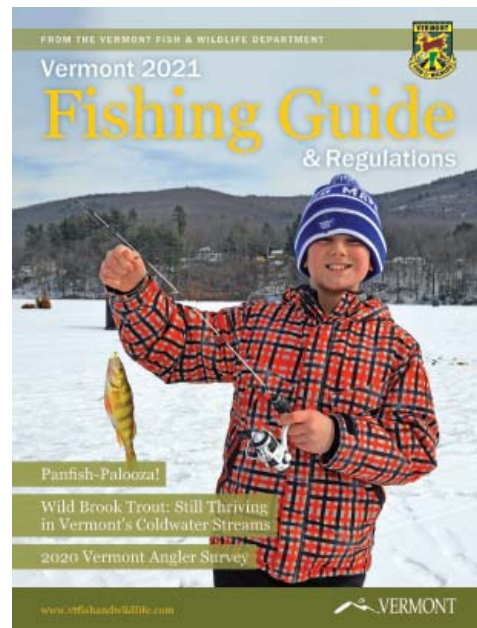
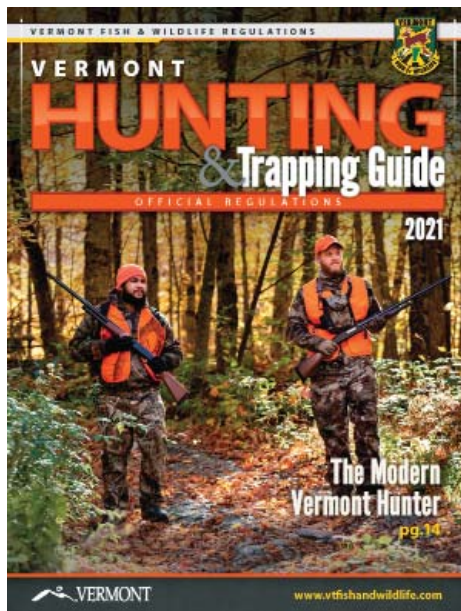
"A license gift certificate is the perfect gift for a friend or family member who hunts or fishes," he added. "You can go to our website, fill out the certificate and pay for it online, and then you can print it to present to your recipient."

A [gift certificate link](#) is on the top of Vermont Fish and Wildlife's [website home page](#) and in the license section. The person who receives the certificate must go to the website to redeem it and purchase their licenses.

Porter noted that proceeds from license sales have helped pay for some of Vermont's greatest wildlife conservation success stories, including restoring game species as well as helping nongame species such as peregrine falcons, bald eagles, loons, and ospreys. These funds also go to managing Wildlife Management Areas that provide critical habitat for many species as well as recreational opportunities for Vermonters.

Printed copies of the "**2021 Hunting & Trapping Guide** and **2021 Fishing Guide**" are available from license agents. The department's website will soon have a link to online versions as well.

Existing permanent, lifetime or five-year licenses cannot be updated online until January 1. ■



Copies of Vermont's **2021 Hunting & Trapping Guide** and **2021 Fishing Guide** are now available free from license agents statewide.

## My First Deer 2020

By Layla Commo

It was a cold cloudy Sunday morning, I was excited that I was going out hunting for the first time ever! I passed Hunter Safety this summer, it was online, I had to read a document and answer questions about what I read. Some of the questions were hard but I did it! Now I was ready to get in the woods.

My dad helped me get ready, I was going to use my mom's gun. We headed to the blind. We stayed there for a while, but got cold so we headed home to get lunch and warm up. Later in the day, we headed out again.

One doe walked beside me and my dad, then a baby deer came right behind it and another doe came up this hill! Then I put my cross hairs on it and shot it! I couldn't believe I had actually shot my first deer! I turned to my dad and shouted, "I can't believe I shot my first deer!" Dad gave me a high five and said "Good Job!"

We climbed out of the blind and checked out the deer. It was a doe.



After a few minutes my dad called my mom and said "Layla just shot a doe!"

She said "I heard the shot."

My dad said "can you go down to the house and bring the side by side up?" Mom was hunting with my brother because he passed hunter safety this summer too.

My mom said she would. My dad took a picture of me holding the deer's head up. My mom and my brother finally got to where I shot the deer and my dad got a picture with me and my brother. So we loaded the deer in the back of the side by side and rode down to the house so that we could

clean it out. Then after we cleaned it out, we hung it up in our barn.

The next day, we went to weigh it in and it weighed 90 pounds.

I shot my first deer on my first day hunting, it made all the hard work of hunter safety worth the hard work. I was so proud when we sat to the first meal of venison fried in butter and garlic. ■



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## My First Deer

By Ryder Curavoo

Yes yes yes yes!



looked around some more and started to find big puddles of blood. Then we just followed the blood puddles to the deer. It was so cool, from where I had shot it the deer had run only about 75 yards before falling to the ground.

It was so awesome I don't think I'd ever smiled so wide in my life,

That's all I could think, I was about to shoot my first deer. All the adrenaline rushed through me as I slowly pulled the cold metal trigger, then the gun fired bang! The deer took off running, stumbling as it ran. I had hit the deer. The first thing I did was turn on the walky talky to tell my mom to come to my tree stand because I had shot a deer. There was so much adrenaline going through my veins that I didn't even notice that my thumb almost had frostbite. Then my mom's boyfriend, Tate, said, "hand me the gun so I can carry it down" so I did. Then once he had got to the ground I started to climb down the cold metal ladder that was attached to my tree stand.

when I got to the deer my mom said she hadn't seen me so happy in my whole life. Then my mom went back up to where the four wheelers were parked and drove Tate's to where the deer was laying on the ground. Then I got my knife out of the back of Tate's four wheeler and helped Tate gut out the deer. First we made a cut down the middle of the deer. Then we had to remove the lungs, guts then the bladder. The weird warm but like the gooey feeling of the skin almost made me vomit.

When I got to the ground my mom was down there with Tate. Then the tracking started, first we looked where the deer was standing when I shot it and found a little bit of blood. So we followed the blood trail for a bit but then the blood stopped. My mom and I

After the deer was all gutted out we tied the deer to a rope and then tied the other end to the four wheeler and

started to slowly drag the deer down to where my mom had parked Tate's truck. When we got to the truck my mom was waiting for us. Then we unhitched the deer from Tate's four wheeler and we all pushed and pulled to get it into the back of Tate's truck. "Now we have to bring the deer to some place to get it weighed" said Tate. On the way all I could think was about the deer and how I had shot it.

When we got there I had to show them my hunters license and then the man at the register said to bring it to the back of the building so we brought it to the back of the building to weigh it. When we got out back there was a man waiting for us. He helped unload it onto the scale and it weighed 120 pounds then we put it back into the truck and headed home.

That feeling when I pulled the trigger was so amazing. You can never forget the feeling of the shot when the gun goes off and you hit the target. It's the most exciting thing in the world. And that's the story of how I got my first deer. ■



## The Volunteer Experience

by Brett Ladeau

I've been a volunteer for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) for nearly 20 years and feel like I have gotten so much more in return than I've given. The main reasons I started volunteering was to get outside my comfort zone, meet new people, and to give back to something that has given me so much enjoyment over the years. I have served as a local chapter president for many years, I've been the state chapter president and vice president, and currently serve as the vice president and Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. coordinator.

Being a volunteer has opened doors to many opportunities. Before I volunteered, I was always reserved and reluctant to put myself out there. Since volunteering, I have been surrounded by likeminded people, made lifelong friends, and have been involved with many fundraising and habitat projects. Volunteering has led to other volunteer and mentoring opportunities and has helped me discover my passion for teaching and passing on the hunting tradition to anyone that wants to spend some time with me.

By volunteering, I have met people that I wouldn't have met otherwise, and this has led to some lifelong friendships, and new hunting partners. In fact, I just returned from a hunting trip with friends that I met because I volunteered. I have many stories that I could share regarding hunting opportunities that have presented themselves simply because I started volunteering. The friendships come from across the country, within my home state of Vermont, and throughout New England. It's a nice network of friends to share your successful and unsuccessful stories with.

Volunteering opens the door to partnerships with other groups and organizations, this has been a great experience too. I have worked with many conservation organizations in partnership with NWTF. One group that we've worked closely with is the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. We've shared many volunteer hours working on various habitat projects on public land throughout Vermont. The last shared habitat project was on the Hubbardton Battlefield Wildlife Management Area, where we did some apple tree release work last winter. Due to the pandemic, we have not been able to do many in person projects since then. However, we have joined

forces through Zoom and Facebook live and done some virtual pint nights and shared hunting stories and tactics. This has helped keep our partnership alive and given us a platform to continue to reach people and share our message.

I have also become a volunteer hunter safety instructor, which has provided opportunities to teach and mentor new hunters. We have partnered with Vermont Fish and Wildlife and other organizations



to give seminars and learn to hunt programs. These are rewarding on many levels as well. I have been a lifelong hunter so breaking things down to the elementary level has sometimes proven challenging, but it's fun to come up with ways to explain hunting and safety so that it makes sense to everyone in the class or seminar. The learn to hunt programs that I have been involved with mostly consist of new adult onset hunters. They have put so much thought and effort into becoming a hunter that I always learn something from listening to their stories as to why they decided to hunt. Their articulate thoughts and reason often open my mind to different points of view and makes me reflect deeper as to why I hunt. It's enjoyable to spend time with new hunters whether we get an animal or not. The reward is just sharing the experience and knowing that I have helped along the way.

The fundraising aspect for our local NWTF chapter consists of one Hunting Heritage Banquet a year, and some locally funded chapter raffles. NWTF has several local chapters throughout Vermont. We average about 100 people at most of our banquets and everyone always has a good time and most people leave with some artwork or other items that are raffled or auctioned off. It's a great night of fellowship and allows you to hang out with like minded people. The funds raised are used nationally and locally



on various habitat or other conservation work. In Vermont, we've used funds to help purchase additional lands to add to existing

Wildlife Management Areas or new public lands. We have helped fund conservation and habitat efforts on the Green Mountain National Forest, Camels Hump State Park, and many other smaller projects around the state. We truly try to put the money raised right back into our local areas. We have offered scholarships in the past and still offer a national scholarship. We typically hold several outreach events throughout the year and hope to return to that soon. We have offered to JAKES events for kids. We usually hold a JAKES event in April and

another in September. We have held a Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunt, where we take people with disability on a turkey hunt in the spring. We have also been planning a Women in the Outdoors (WITO) event and hope to get that off the ground as soon as possible. Whether you volunteer for NWTf or not, I would encourage you to volunteer for some organization. It really is a rewarding experience and opens so many doors for additional opportunities. For more information on the NWTf, or to become a member and/or volunteer please visit [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org) We would love to have you join the flock. ■

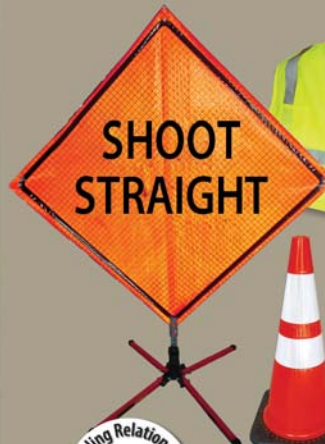


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## Turkeys Day to Day

By Ken Jones

With deer seasons coming to a close in most of the New England states, let's turn our attention to a much warmer place and time.

The year was 2000 and the approach of the upcoming spring turkey season had me scouting several farms but one in particular had my interest peaked. This would also be a special first week of the season because I'd be guiding the current Chairman of the board of directors of the National Wild Turkey Federation. No pressure to produce or anything.

Opening day would put me alone and

I thought I'd test the water on this one particular farm. There's one little back pasture on this farm that would soon be known simply as, "The Graveyard".

I arrived early hadn't roosted the night before, but had been listening several mornings and had a good idea where I could cause the most trouble. Shortly after, a pack of coyotes ran across the hillside above the pasture very vocal and surely putting the fear of God Almighty in any prey critters within ear shot. Now as daylight begins to brighten the landscape I decided I'd take the hunt to the timber and work the mountainside hoping to fire a gobbler up after fly down.

As I started up out of the pasture a little voice in my ear said "don't give up on the graveyard." Knowing turkeys frequented the pasture I decided to just go back and set up some decoys. I started calling periodically receiving no response throughout the first couple hours of the morning. Suddenly, around 8:30 I caught

movement to my left and to my surprise a lone silent long beard came sneaking in to the set up. Without him ever making a sound, I punched my first tag of the season as he approached the decoys.

Day two was the day I would be with the Chairman and a camera. I decided we would be patient and wait out another gobbler in the graveyard. To my surprise, for the second day in a row, not a single gobbler was heard at daylight. In fact, at 9:30 the chairman and the camera guy were getting a bit impatient and began suggesting we move to another location. I assured them we were in the right spot but I could tell they were getting antsy and I decided I'd take em for a little walk. We went to the other end of the pasture and picked up an old logging road that would take us up the mountain.

We set up behind a hog back that paralleled the graveyard and began blind calling. With an hour or so left in the morning hunt, I noticed the chairman and the camera guy were quite engaged in conversation while I reached out with a box call and they didn't hear the gobblers respond from north of the pasture. I interrupted their talk with a hand clap and the game was afoot!!!

I hit the box again and they answered right about where we had been set up all morning in the pasture. At which point the chairman whispers over, "they're in the field!!" I kind of rolled my eyes to myself and yelped to the gobblers with a mouth call to let them know exactly where we were. They answered and within thirty seconds,



*The author, Ken Jones leaving the spring woods with a mature Vermont gobbler*

two beautiful long beards appeared on the top of the hog back and the chairman punched his first Vermont turkey tag.

Day three had me guiding again. This time a fella, whose wife had won a VT hunt from a fella I knew in a banquet auction and he wanted to extend the opportunity to her husband as well. I jumped on the chance to take him and decided I'd go to the graveyard well one more time.

This time things went like a turkey hunt is supposed to. Turkeys gobbled hard on an owl on the level above the graveyard and we're gobbling hard. I told him we needed to get up there with him and he got a little timid and asked if I thought we should go up

there. I assumed him I knew exactly what limb they were on and there was no time to waste!!!

We got up to textbook position next to them on the bench and I began some tree calling to let them know I was there. They answered repeatedly and I worked the tree calls into a fly down cackle. The next answer sounded further away and I knew they had flown down. I sent a series of pleading yelps their way and they answered with booming gobbles!!! I noticed my hunter getting all in behind his gun right about the time I heard drumming and looked between the trunks of a double hemlock in front of me to see a beautiful long beard strutting. Boom!!! His gun reported dropping

one of the three long beards that were in front of him!!!

So, three days, three hunts, three dead gobblers and each with their own changing techniques. I had scouted that farm and knew the birds were frequenting that pasture and patience paid off on the first day. The second day I basically did the same thing although we moved, we didn't move far and the third day was the chance to get aggressive and get up close to em on the roost and get that dream hunt.

So remember to scout your ground and be ready to play the hand you're dealt with turkeys day to day.

As always, best wishes. Be safe have fun and shoot em up!!!! ■

## Lost Hunters in Middlesex Assisted by State Game Wardens

*VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE Press Release*



Members of the Vermont Warden Service were called to assist two lost hunters in the Middlesex Notch Wildlife Management area on Saturday evening, November 14, the opening day of Vermont's sixteen-day rifle deer hunting season.

The two young brothers from East Montpelier had successfully harvested a buck, a first for the older brother, high on a ridge in the Middlesex Notch WMA. Darkness fell shortly after the pair had field dressed the deer

and they became disoriented. The older of the two brothers called 911 to ask for assistance. The dispatcher was able to get latitude and longitude coordinates from the hunters' cell phone signal.

Three members of the Vermont Warden Service responded to the area. The wardens navigated their way to the lost hunters at around 8:15 p.m. and found them with their deer, healthy and in good spirits. The wardens proceeded to assist the hunters in dragging their deer out of the woods.

The two brothers were returned to the parking lot of the WMA and their very thankful waiting parents by around 9:15 p.m.

"This was a good outcome to what could have been a very long cold night in the woods," said Lt. Sean Fowler, regional State Game Warden Supervisor. "The incident serves as a good reminder for all hunters to always carry a compass and GPS." ■

## VF&W Has Online License Gift Certificates

Finding a gift that will continue to give for a full year is a challenge, but the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has a solution on their website — a license gift certificate for hunting and fishing licenses.

“It’s the perfect gift for a friend or family member who hunts or fishes,” said Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. “You can go to our website, fill out the gift certificate and pay for it online, and then print the certificate to present to your recipient.”

The gift certificate has a link in the license section of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)). The person who receives the certificate must go to the website to redeem their certificate and purchase their licenses.

“If you have a friend or relative who hunts or fishes, this is an easy gift-giving solution,” said Porter. “The gift certificate will cover licenses for 2021 or for licenses in future years.” ■



*Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s license gift certificate is available on their website.*

## VF&W Has Online License Gift Certificates and 2021 Lawbooks Available

Vermont Fish and Wildlife announces it has gift certificates for hunting and fishing licenses on its website [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com) and the 2021 lawbooks are now at license agents statewide.

“A license gift certificate is the perfect gift for a friend or family member who hunts or fishes,” said Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. “You can go to our website, fill out the certificate and pay for it online, and then you can print it to present to your recipient.”

A [gift certificate link](#) is on the top of Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s [website home page](#) and in the license section. The person who receives the certificate must go to the website to redeem it and purchase their licenses.

If you are going ice fishing soon, planning a family fishing trip next summer, or want to plan for deer season next fall – you will want to get copies of the 2021 Vermont Hunting and Trapping Guide and Fishing Guide. Both are now available from [license agents](#) throughout Vermont.

The two publications are updated with the latest laws and 2021 season dates as well as a lot of additional helpful information.

Digital versions of the publications will soon be available on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website. ■



# New Year, New Outdoor Opportunities

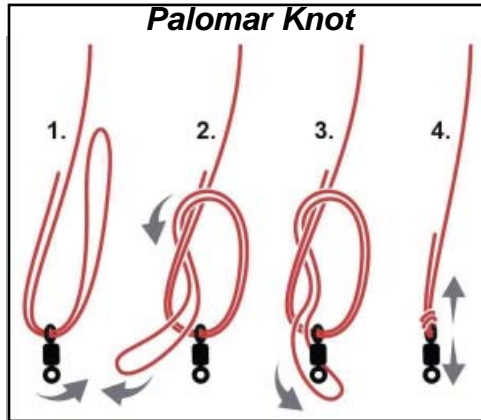
By Brad Roy

With 2020 wrapped up, I think it's safe to say most of us are looking forward to a fresh start in the New Year. 2020 was wrought with pain and struggle for many of us, and at some points it seemed as though we may never make it to the end. January, however, brings with it a clean slate, and a fresh start for the year's outdoor pursuits. As we begin getting used to writing '21' instead of '20' at the end of our dates, many who peruse these pages will also be thinking about hitting the hard water. Ice fishing season is upon us, and those who haven't yet been out likely will be getting gear together for a maiden voyage to a favorite access quite soon. Early season ice fishing can be a great time to score some big fish before the pressure is high, and with more social-distancing orders and closures, we can reasonably expect that pressure will be as high this year as ever. One of my favorite ways to ensure success early in the season is to make sure all my gear is tuned up and ready before I head out. Here are a few quick tips to get you thinking about some ways to optimize your time on the ice this year.

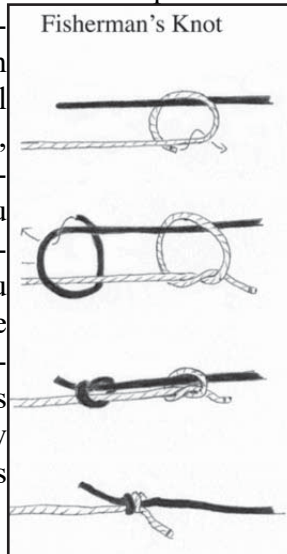
## Pike Leaders

One great pre-season project is to upgrade your old steel-leaders with homemade fluorocarbon leaders. I like to use 40-60lb Fluorocarbon, cut to about 24-inch lengths. Although it can be a hard line to work with at first, with a little practice it is pretty easy to get a good system down for building a seasons worth of high-quality leaders.

I use a pair of pliers to tie a Palomar knot to attach my favorite pike hooks



to one end, and a plain old fisherman's knot to attach a heavy-duty barrel swivel to the other end. These leaders make it much more difficult for a pike to see your line, with the added benefit of kinking much less than steel. To date I have never had one bit off either, although they do suffer degradation after repeat-catches. This means fluoro leaders require more frequent swapping out than the old school steel leaders, but the confidence that you are doing everything you can to fool the wise and experienced pike is worth the few extra minutes of your time.



## Double-Down on Panfish

Another key part of my hardwater tackle system is the gear I trust to catch panfish. While fishing single-hooked jigs in shallow water for flatfish like bluegills and crappie is an absolute blast, I often find myself looking to deeper structure to target large white and yellow perch. A great

way to maximize your fishing effort when fishing deeper water is to add a second lure to your line. By incorporating a two-lure system, you will find yourself adding much more flash and eye-appeal to your rig, and you might be surprised how often you pull up doubles!

When fishing deep water for schooling fish, one of the biggest limitations of how many fish end up hitting the ice is the time you can effectively keep your lures in the "Fishy Zone" rather than being pulled to the surface or dropping to the bottom. By capitalizing on a two-lure system, you give yourself the chance to catch two fish at once, while also providing options for even finicky fish to find something they like. My absolute favorite combo is a Northland Tackle Buckshot Rattling Spoon and a small tungsten jig tied on 6-10 inches above the buckshot with the hook pointing upwards to ensure solid hooksets from light-biting fish. Size the bottom lure large enough to quickly get you back down to the bottom after a catch, and you will notice more fish in your bucket at the end of the day.

## Do More with Less

Another simple way you can ensure you're maximizing your time on the ice is to sacrifice one of the three hooks on your panfish lures treble hook. One of the biggest time consumers when fishing fast-paced schooling fish like perch is getting a deeply-hooked fish off the hook. The small treble hooks used for most panfish jigs are often swallowed entirely by big fish. This

NEW YEAR continued on page 18

## Legislative Update with Evan Hughes

It is no secret that the advocates of gun control will begin 2021 with new campaigns to severely damage the right of private citizens to own and use firearms. These campaigns will seek the passing of gun control laws at the federal, state, and local level.

Vermont has had former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg's gun control group, Everytown for Gun Safety, spending tens of thousands of dollars for lobbyists in Montpelier pushing its agenda to enact NYC-style gun laws in our state. The group is based in New York City.

The national gun control group, Giffords, also spends big money to hire Vermont lobbying services to push their gun control agenda. Giffords is based in Washington, D.C..

On Dec. 3, the legislature met on Zoom from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. to discuss the upcoming 2021 legislative year agenda. The plan is to continue to use Zoom to conduct hearings and other legislative events. Zoom is fine for making it possible for the public to view emergency government proceedings, but the participants in the hearings/meetings should be physically present and able to be contacted by citizens.

After Friday March 13, Zoom was only supposed to be used for legislation essential to Covid 19 and mandatory budget bills. Many citizens witnessed that the Zoom process was used for much more by enacting laws non-essential to the Covid 19 situation. Hearings often started quite late. The audio and/or visual was garbled and/or was incompre-

hensible. Legislators and witnesses could not log in or were dropped from the proceeding. Most frequently, it was those from the rural areas of the state who had the greatest participation problems.

Important and permanent legislation was enacted lacking sufficient input from the public, not providing sufficient time for careful review, and driving a needless time crunch for action, late in an election year time.

Zoom meetings created the hastily constructed, politically driven bills passed just a couple of months ago. Already, these actions are coming back to bite the legislature and the public.

One of these bills has Attorney General, T.J. Donovan, seeking to have the legislature fix a new sentencing law. A law that has the families of murder victims and sexual assault victims shocked over the substantial sentence reductions for those incarcerated for serious violent crimes. This oversight got through the Zoom process and, now, the public has seen the result. There is justified outrage related in the Dec.3 [vtdigger.org](https://vtdigger.org) article: "Attorney general asks lawmakers to limit new 'good time' law." Article: <https://vtdigger.org/2020/12/03/attorney-general-asks-lawmakers-to-limit-new-good-time-law/>

Another Bill, S.119, regards use of force by law enforcement. S.119 has the Commissioner of the Vermont State Police, and other law enforcement leaders warning legislators that late date amendments to S.119 by the House Judiciary Committee would

create serious enforcement problems. Senator Randy Brock (R) Franklin County raised serious questions about these last minute changes. The legislature was determined to rush this bill and passed the amended House bill, on September 24, the next to the last day of the legislative session.

The Senate did not take a roll call vote on S.119, avoiding a record of how each senator voted. Governor Phil Scott declined to sign it into law. It passed into law without his signature. This will be, yet, another important criminal law that will require repair. You can hear the questioning by Sen. Brock on the link provided and the roll call vote at 6 minutes into the video. (Note this video shows the senate is returning after yet another loss of Zoom service) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JLXHwRhZSc>

Laws should create sound public policy and must be in compliance with the state and federal constitutions. Public oversight makes certain these important standards are achieved in our laws. Public oversight by all citizens must be encouraged and allowed by the legislators. Oversight should not be evaded by a Zoom process that was reportedly only for Covid 19 and mandatory budgets bills and to be used only during the Emergency Period.

The legislature embraced Zoom in its 2020 proceedings. Why wouldn't they? They worked from home, and avoided being contacted by any members of the public they did not want to encounter. They avoided

being handed unwanted state house message slips from the Sgt-at-Arms staff. Many legislators even had their home telephone numbers removed from the legislator directory.

They could wander to their computer, with their favorite beverage and snacks, conducting the business of the people from the comforts of home. These legislators are conducting the “people’s business” without being subjected to contact with the “people” or without being questioned on whether legislation complies with the constitution they have sworn to uphold.

A point was made in the Dec. 3 meeting to congratulate themselves on their 2020 Zoom process. A celebration, despite the fact that Zoom was mandated to be used in 2020, solely, for legislation essential to Covid 19 and mandatory budget bills. Despite their self-congratulations, many of those listening and watching, wit-

nessed the Zoom process abused to enact laws having nothing to do with the stated emergency Covid 19 situation. Zoom was, instead, used as a means to avoid input from the public who might oppose the rushed legislation.

You can watch the legislature’s Dec. 3 morning meeting using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRVwRYppk>

Important, serious, and permanent legislation was enacted with insufficient input from the public and in a needless time crunch. Now, our elected officials want to again run loose with Zoom in 2021.

On Dec. 5, the House Democratic Caucus met planning their agenda for 2021. At 5 Hours and 18 minutes into this Zoom meeting Rep-Elect Erin Brady cited Rep. Charlie Kimball (D) Windsor with their plan for the party course of action: “You don’t let a crisis go by without taking advantage of the opportunity”. She was advocating

using the Covid 19 situation to push through legislation not essential to Covid 19 issues and passage of which would otherwise be more difficult by the normal legislative review process than during the Emergency Order justified Zoom run proceedings.

This leads to a conclusion that the legislature plans to continue as they did in 2020: using Covid 19 and Zoom willing to rush out more defective, intrusive, and expensive state government.

Have Chicago-type political tactics been adopted in Vermont? The two Vermont legislators were paraphrasing this quote:

«You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that, it’s opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.» Rahm Emanuel

Link to Dec. 5 House Caucus meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4yifbE3AcM> ■



leaves the hassle of removing all three points up to the angler; a task that can be especially tough with cold fingers! This problem may be largely avoided by simply snipping off a single point of your treble with wire cutters. I also like to flatten the two remaining hooks so they face



Treble hook adjustment

directly away from each other. I have done this for years on my perch jigs, and have not found any significant decrease in effectiveness, while noticing a huge increase in the ease of getting the fish off at the surface—a critical time-saver when fishing for faced-paced schooling fish.

**Stay Vigilant**

While the itch to get out on the ice early in the season may feel impossible not to scratch, always make sure you have a good handle on the

ice conditions, and follow all recommended guidelines for staying safe. Fishing with others, wearing proper safety gear, and waiting until the ice has had time to develop to a safe thickness will all be worthy precautions. Hopefully these tips will give you something new to try this year, and good luck! ■

## Vermont Fish & Wildlife Completes Streambank Lands Assessment in the Northeast Kingdom

*VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release*

A survey and assessment of 107 streambank parcels owned by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department were recently completed along approximately 60 miles of river in the Lake Memphremagog and Upper Lamoille River watersheds of north-eastern Vermont.

A private contractor was hired to assess and prioritize the sites for the department's strategic streambank and floodplain protection and restoration program. The project was funded by a grant awarded to Fish and Wildlife by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation under the Clean Water Initiative Program.

The project began in April 2019 with the collection of background information and initial contact with adjacent

landowners, local cooperative partners, watershed organizations, and special interest groups. Between April and May 2019, site visits were made to all 107 properties, where observations were noted on vegetative cover, presence of invasive species, bank stability and slope, encroachment, infrastructure, land use, and angler access. These observations were reviewed and analyzed for restoration feasibility and prioritized on a low-medium-high scale. Sixty parcels were identified as high priority and work is now being conducted to contact adjacent landowners to determine interest in expanding the conservation effort at these locations.

"Completing this project allows us to concentrate our efforts to pro-

tect and restore the most vulnerable streamside locations and to improve the sites of greatest restoration feasibility," said State Fisheries Biologist Peter Emerson.

"This unique partnership between Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Environmental Conservation allows us to achieve our shared mission to provide clean water for all Vermonters by reducing runoff and erosion, mitigating floods, providing ecologically-significant streambank habitats, and promoting clean, cold water for trout and other aquatic organisms," added Emerson.

To learn how the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is working to protect and conserve the fish, plants and habitats of Vermont's waterways, visit [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

## Colchester Man Charged in Poaching Violation

*VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release*

Stephen Burt, 64, of Colchester, has been charged with possession of illegal big game in connection with an early morning deer poaching case in Essex.

The Vermont Warden Service received an Operation Game Thief alert in the early morning hours of Wednesday, December 2, for a report of a gun shot fired before daylight in Essex. A responding State Game Warden narrowed the shot location to an overgrown field and after searching found an antlered deer deceased with a bullet hole in it.

Wardens remained on scene conducting surveillance for several hours un-

til a black truck pulled up to the field and backed up to the deer shortly after 11 o'clock. The operator of the truck retrieved the deer and dragged it back to his truck. Wardens apprehended the operator, Stephen Burt, who was taken into custody without incident and is scheduled to appear in Chittenden Superior Court at a later date.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife department is asking anyone with information about any poaching activity or this incident to contact their local Vermont State Game Warden through their nearest State Police Dispatch, or they may leave an anonymous tip to Operation Game Thief at 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378).



Stephen Burt, 64, of Colchester, has been charged with possession of illegal big game in connection with an early morning deer poaching case in Essex on December 2.

Photo from VTF&W

# Fish Health Laboratory Renamed in Honor of Fish Health Biologist Dr. Cassidy Hahn Shaw

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

On Thursday, December 17, 2020, friends, family and past work colleagues from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD), the State of Vermont, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), as well as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), gathered virtually to acknowledge the career accomplishments and contributions of Dr. Cassidy Hahn Shaw with the dedication and renaming of the VTFWD's new fish health laboratory -- the Dr. Cassidy Hahn Shaw Fish Health Laboratory.

Dr. Shaw previously was a fisheries biologist and research assistant for the USGS Leetown Science Center, a past research microbiologist with the USDA National Center for Cool and Coldwater Aquaculture Research, a past VTFWD fish health biologist, and most recently the VTFWD's fish culture operations manager. Prior to her resignation from VTFWD due to health reasons, Dr. Shaw was instrumental in the final completion and installation of the new fish health laboratory.

Throughout Dr. Shaw's career she worked on significant fisheries projects and research such as analyzing genetic resistance to bacterial coldwater disease in cultured rainbow trout, diagnostics and molecular analysis of melanistic tumors on brown bullhead in Lake Memphremagog, the discovery of a novel aquareovirus in landlocked Atlantic salmon in Lake Champlain, as well as many other fish culture and fish health projects. Her work ethic, perseverance, managerial excel-

lence, and willingness to tackle new, complex challenges led to the renaming and dedication of the fish health laboratory in her name.

Dr. Shaw currently resides in Jefferson, Maryland with her husband and two children. Her dedication to her family, her work, and her colleagues are noted and the impact that she has on people, both professionally and personally is extraordinary.

With Dr. Shaw, her friends, family, and work colleagues present on the Zoom meeting, a plaque was revealed that is now displayed at the entrance to the renamed lab that reads:

Dr. Cassidy Hahn Shaw Fish Health Laboratory

A past employee of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, The United State Department of Agriculture, and the United States Geological Survey, Dr. Cassidy Hahn Shaw's commitment and career accomplishments in the fields of fish health, fisheries, and fish culture cannot be overstated.

Her contributions to the field of fisheries and science in general, both in the State of Vermont and beyond, are to be remembered for years to come.

This fish health laboratory, dedicated in her name, recognizes her perseverance, strength, and commitment to scientific and managerial excellence that echo through the years to promote sound scientific management of Vermont's fish and wildlife resources for future generations. ■



# Roxbury Fish Culture Station Back in Operation

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department recently completed the reconstruction of the Roxbury Fish Culture Station. Locally known as “the fish hatchery,” the original facility was constructed in 1891 as Vermont’s first fish hatchery, but it was destroyed on August 28, 2011, during Tropical Storm Irene.

Efforts began immediately to restore the hatchery, and with support from Governor Scott, state legislators, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, State of Vermont Buildings and General Services, and E.F. Wall and Associates Inc., the site reached the milestone of substantial completion on September 23, 2020.

The facility is back at full production after nine years of planning, permitting and rebuilding, starting with eggs that will be raised into yearlings and stocked into lakes, ponds and streams in the spring of 2022. The former gravity-fed pond system was upgraded to meet modern clean water standards and to reduce sediment and



The Roxbury Fish Culture Station is now back in operation after being destroyed during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011.

particulate matter entering Vermont’s waterways.

The renovated facility will produce 25,000 pounds of fish — approximately 60,000 brook and rainbow trout annually for stocking in state waters. These fish will provide opportunities for anglers and play an important role in Vermont’s economy. Previous studies from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have shown

the Roxbury Fish Culture Station has contributed about \$2.4 million dollars in annual economic impact to the state.

“This facility is now Vermont’s oldest and newest fish hatchery,” said Roxbury Fish Culture Station Supervisor Jeremy Whalen. “We were able to preserve historic details of the original hatchery and meet modern water quality standards for the receiving watershed. The new and improved Roxbury hatchery will allow us to raise fish, provide angling opportunities and continue to be a mainstay in Vermont’s history, culture and economy.”

The outdoor grounds at the Roxbury Fish Culture Station will remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic and visitors are reminded to practice social distancing and wear face coverings while on-site.

The Roxbury Fish Culture Station is now back in operation after being destroyed during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. ■



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# December is the Start of Bird Feeding Season

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department recommends Vermonters wait to put up bird feeders until December 1 to avoid attracting bears.

Doug Morin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s bird project leader said, “This may be a particularly good winter for attracting winter birds arriving from Canada, including Evening Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls. Black oil sunflower is a good seed choice that will attract a variety of birds, and folks may want to try other seeds or suet to attract certain species. Thistle, for example, attracts many of the finches. Gardeners will find leaving late-blooming flowers uncut provides seeds which can also attract birds.”



While watching your bird feeders, you can participate in one or more bird monitoring projects by looking up the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count and Project Feeder Watch—all three collect important information to understanding bird populations.

The Fish and Wildlife Department offers these tips for bird-friendly bird feeding:

- ***Keep cats inside.*** Domestic cats are the leading cause of bird death in North America, and feeders can make birds particularly easy prey.
- ***Place feeders closer than 4 feet or farther than 10 feet from a window.*** Being close to, or far from a window reduces bird collisions.
- ***Clean feeders regularly.*** To eliminate harmful bacteria and viruses, feeders should be washed every few weeks with a 10 percent bleach solution, then rinsed and allowed to dry before refilling.

***•Feed birds only between December 1 and April 1, but remove feeders if you see signs of bears.***

Most bears should be in dens during this time, but some delay entering their dens while even those that have denned may re-emerge to feed if there is a period of warm weather. Bears that learn to get food from people will continue to do so, potentially leading to property damage and dangerous encounters with people which can result in the bear’s demise. ■



Bird feeders offer an easy and safe way to interact with wildlife, but installing them after December 1 limits the potential to attract bears.

## A Successful Year for Vermont Deer Hunters in 2020

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Final deer harvest numbers will not be available for a few more weeks, but the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department says the final tally will be around 18,000 deer, the second highest total since 2000. Those deer will provide approximately 3.6 million servings of local, nutritious venison.

The archery season harvest, which will be close to 5,800 deer, will be a new all-time record for that season. Several changes to archery hunting regulations took effect in 2020, including a longer season, allowing the use of crossbows by all archery hunters and an increased bag limit. These changes were intended to increase archery participation and the harvest. However, some of the increase was likely due to a spike in participation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hunters weren't quite as successful during the regular firearm and muzzleloader seasons, but final harvest numbers for those seasons will be close to or above average for the past 10 years.

"Fewer bucks were harvested than in the previous four years, but the final number will be near or above the 10-year average of 8,857," said Nick Fortin, the department's deer project leader.

"Hunting conditions were challenging this year. Weather conditions, food availability, and possibly other factors limited deer movement in November and December and made it difficult for hunters to locate deer. The new one buck annual limit likely also contributed to the lower buck harvest."

The primary goal of Vermont's deer management strategy is to keep the deer herd stable, healthy and in balance with available habitat. "Maintaining an appropriate number of deer on the landscape ensures deer and the habitats that support them remain in good condition and productive," said Fortin.

The 2020 White-tailed Deer Harvest Report with final numbers will be on Fish and Wildlife's website in early March. Beginning in late March, department biologists will be holding informational hearings to share biological information and to listen to any information people wish to share. ■



*Nick Mayer of Lincoln, VT with the 190 lb., 14-point buck he took in Addison County in 2020.*

*Photo courtesy of Nick Mayer and VTF&W*