

Vermont Sporting Journal

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Opening Day Birds

Samuel Bascomb, 18

Jackson Bascomb, 13



We return a portion of pre-tax profits as follows:

2% Hunting and Fishing Education * 2% Habitat Improvement * 2% Preservation of the Second Amendment

Hammond Cove Shooting Range Opened April 1

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

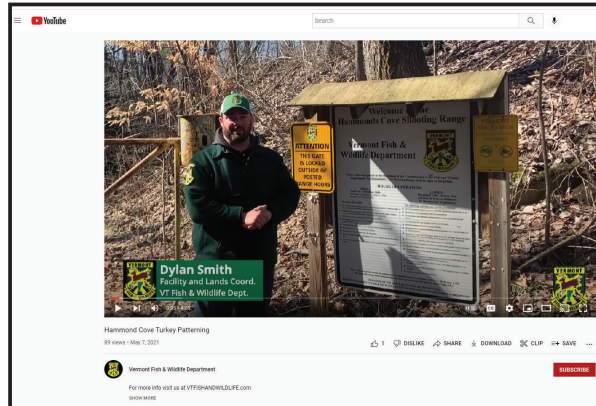
The Hammond Cove Shooting Range in Hartland, Vermont opened on April 1, at 10:00 a.m.

The range operates under rules set by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Range users must sign in with an onsite range safety officer and have a valid Vermont hunting or fishing license or be the guest of someone who does.

Before using the range, shooters are urged to review the range rules on Fish and Wildlife’s website. The range is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays as well as all state and federal holidays.

“Anyone who is going turkey hunting this spring will benefit from patterning their shotgun at the newly installed shotgun section of the range,” said Dylan Smith, the facility and lands coordinator for Vermont Fish and Wildlife. “It allows users to pattern their shotgun out to 50 yards so they can better understand their effective range.”

“We recently filmed an instructional video on how to pattern a shotgun. Understanding how your gun performs is a vital part of being an ethical hunter,” added Smith. The video can be seen at this url: <https://youtu.be/TZF2xDsnjz4>



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Hunter Education Program Meets Goal of Zero Hunting-Related Shooting Injuries in 2021

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department reported zero hunting related shooting injuries (HSRIs) in 2021, continuing a multi-year trend of declining HSRIs in Vermont.

The department attributes the success in part to a strong culture of safety among Vermont hunters, and the state's required Hunter Education Program.

“Since hunter education became a requirement in Vermont in 1975, HSRIs have dropped precipitously,” said Commissioner Christopher Herrick. “Hitting the goal of zero HSRIs this past year is a testament to the important work being done through our Hunter Education Program and in the wider hunting community.”

The department stresses that its hunter education effort and Vermont's safety-focused hunting culture is a community accomplishment.

“Our hunter education program relies on over 350 dedicated, knowledgeable volunteer instructors,” said Nicole Meier, the department's Hunter Education Program Coordinator. “They are incredibly effective bridges between the department's programs, hunting organizations across the state, and the wider hunting community.”

Working alongside department staff and game wardens, Hunter Education Program volunteer instructors are responsible for teaching the basics of firearm safety to roughly 3,500 youth and adult-onset hunters per year.

They also cover other skills like correctly identifying game species, and principles like respecting landowners, which the department considers essential for anyone hunting in Vermont to know.

“This year's success with zero HSRIs is a reminder of why we dedicate so much of our time to this work,” said Hunter Education Program volunteer instructor and Hubbardton resident Katrina Ducharme. “It's a good sign for the future of hunting in Vermont.”



Evaluating a New Rainbow Trout Strain for Vermont

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is stocking a new strain of rainbow trout this spring and is looking for help from anglers to evaluate its performance.

“Vermont stocks about 115,000 rainbow trout annually into inland rivers and lakes to provide recreational fishing opportunities for the public,” said State Fisheries Biologist Lee Simard. “We are evaluating the new Eagle Lake strain of rainbow trout against our traditionally stocked Erwin-Arlee strain to ensure we are providing the highest quality fishery possible with these stocked trout. The Eagle Lake strain is currently stocked in many states including Maine and Michigan and could be a great fit for Vermont as well.”

The two strains are the same species,

but genetic differences can impact their behavior and performance. Both strains will be stocked side-by-side into 11 waterbodies across Vermont and will be compared based on their catchability, survivability and growth to see if the Eagle Lake Strain performs better after stocking.

The two strains look very similar but can be identified by a clipped ventral fin, the paired fins found on the underside of the fish about halfway along its body. A missing left fin indicates the new Eagle Lake strain while a missing right fin indicates the Erwin-Arlee strain.

“To help us evaluate the new Eagle Lake strain, we are asking anglers to report to us the rainbow trout they catch from the waterbodies included in this evaluation,” said Simard.

“Take a picture of the trout that clearly shows the missing fin. Then submit that picture and catch report on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department website or by using the [Vermont Outdoors app](#) on your smartphone. The data submitted by anglers will directly influence our management of stocked rainbow trout in Vermont.”

The two strains will be stocked each spring through 2024. A final decision about which strain will continue to be stocked in Vermont will be made by 2025.

Additional information and a complete list of the waterbodies included in the evaluation can be found on Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s website <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/rainbow-trout-strain-evaluation>.

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Young Wildlife Belong in the Wild

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Watching wildlife is enjoyable, especially when young animals appear in the spring. But it is best to keep your distance. Picking up young wildlife can do more harm than good, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, and it is also against the law.

When people see young animals alone, they often mistakenly assume these animals are helpless or lost, in trouble or needing to be rescued. Bringing young wildlife into a human environment often results in permanent separation from their mothers and a sad ending for the animal.

Handling wildlife could also pose a threat to the people involved. Wild animals can transmit disease and angry wildlife mothers can pose significant dangers.

Department scientists encourage wildlife watchers to respect the behavior of animals in the spring and early summer, and to resist the urge to assist wildlife in ways that may be harmful. Here are some helpful tips:

- Deer and moose nurse their young at different times during the day, and often leave young alone for long periods of time. These animals are not lost. Their mother knows where they are and will return.
- Young birds on the ground may have left their nest, but their parents will still feed them.

- Young animals such as fox and raccoon will often follow their mother. The mother of a wildlife youngster is usually nearby but just out of sight to a person happening upon it.

- Animals that act sick can carry rabies, parasites or other harmful diseases. Do not handle them. Even though they do not show symptoms, healthy-looking raccoons, foxes, skunks, and bats may also be carriers of the deadly rabies virus.

- Many wildlife species will not feed or care for their young when people are close by. Obey signs that restrict access to wildlife nesting areas, including hiking trails that may be temporarily closed.

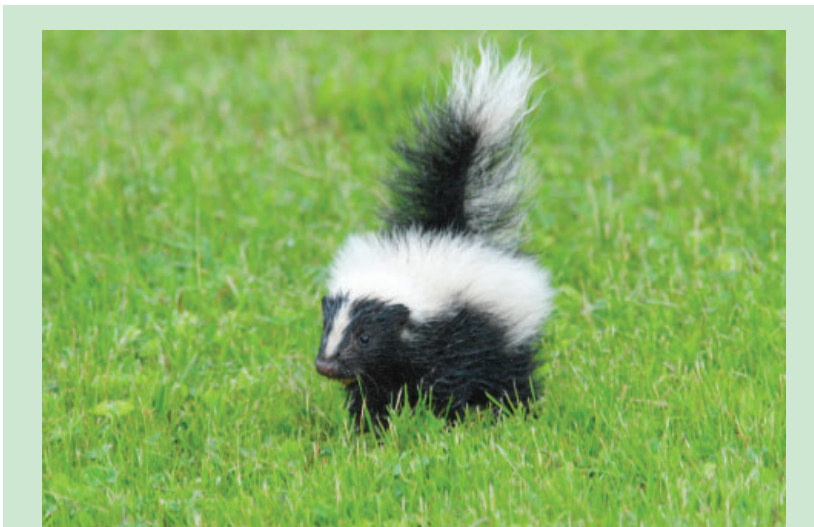
- Keep domestic pets indoors, leashed or fenced in. Dogs and cats kill many baby animals each year.

- Avoid projects that remove trees, shrubs and dead snags that contain

nests during the spring and summer.

For information about rabies and wildlife conflicts, or truly orphaned wildlife, call the Vermont Rabies Hotline at 1-800-4RABIES (1-800-472-2437).

For the safety of all wildlife, taking a wild animal into captivity is illegal, even one you suspect is sick, injured or has been abandoned.



Picking up young wildlife can do more harm than good, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. It's also against the law.

VTF&W photo by John Hall

Green Mountain Conservation Camp ‘Work-cation’ Weekends

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is looking for volunteers to join them for fun-filled weekends to get the camps ready for the 2022 season. This year, the GMCC Kehoe ‘workcation’ weekend will be May 14-15 and the GMCC Buck Lake workcation weekend will be May 21-22.

“We look forward to workcation weekend all winter long,” said Education Manager Ali Thomas. “With the help of local volunteers, we spruce up both camps in preparation for the summer and enjoy being outdoors knowing it’s for a good cause -- environmental education for kids.”

Volunteers can participate for as long as they are able to; one hour, one day, or both days. They are welcome to stay overnight in onsite cabins or they can bring their own tents. Lunch and dinner will be provided.

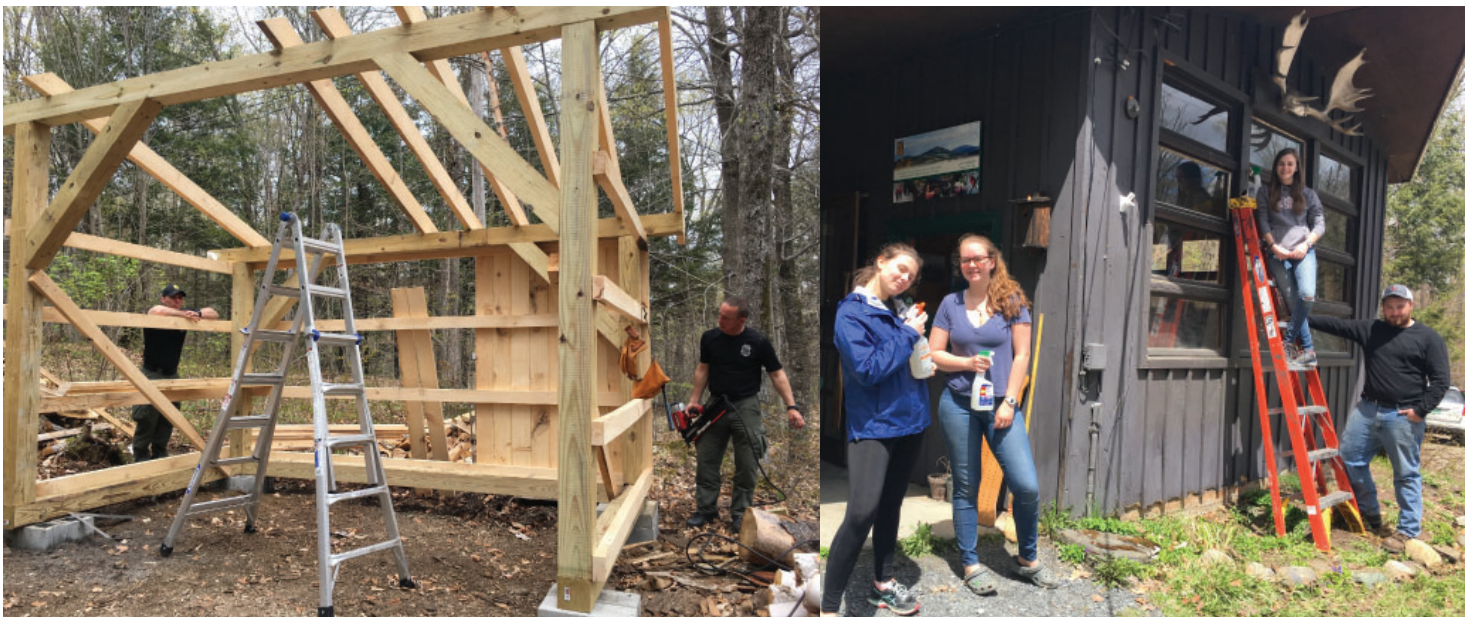
The Buck Lake camp is located in Woodbury and the Kehoe camp is on Lake Bomoseen in Castleton. This is an excellent community service opportunity for boy scout and girl scout groups, as well as high school and college

clubs. The Conservation Camps are looking for help with general repairs, construction, landscaping, painting, cleaning, firewood, and gardening. Participants are encouraged to bring their own tools, but the camps will have some available.

For more information and to register as a volunteer for one of these weekends, please email Hannah.Phelps@vermont.gov and 802-249-4199.

Vermont’s conservation camp program is unique because it is sponsored and directed by the Fish and Wildlife Department professionals who conserve Vermont’s fish and wildlife species. Working biologists, foresters, wardens, and conservation educators teach young people about their role with Vermont’s forests, wetlands, wildlife, and fish through interactive activities.

The Green Mountain Conservation Camp program’s greatest strength is connecting young people to the outdoors. The camp program is sponsored in part through a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife is asking for volunteers to help at its conservation camp work weekends -- May 14-15 at the Bomoseen camp and May 21-22 at the Buck Lake camp.

VTF&W photos by Alison Thomas

Vermont Master Angler Program 2021 Annual Report Released

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has released the [Vermont Master Angler Program 2021 Annual Report](#) with 1,169 entries and 73 Master Angler Award recipients.



Vermont's wealth of waters and abundant fish populations provide many opportunities to experience outstanding fishing. The Vermont Master Angler Program recognizes the achievements of anglers who catch trophy-sized fish from Vermont waters and celebrates the clean water and healthy habitats that allow these fish to survive and grow to exceptional sizes.

The Vermont Master Angler program is a length-based program that sets "trophy sized" benchmarks for 33 eligible fish species. While these trophy-sized fish are a challenge to catch, they are attainable for anglers that develop the necessary knowledge and skills.

Anglers catching a fish exceeding the minimum qualifying length in any of the 33 species categories can receive a certificate commemorating their catch. Their names and catches are also included in the Vermont Master Angler Annual Report posted annually on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website. Anglers demonstrating the skill necessary to catch multiple species that all exceed the minimum qualifying lengths in the same calendar year are recognized as "Vermont Master Anglers" and receive a unique one-of-a-kind lapel pin at the end of the year. To qualify for the annual Vermont Master Angler Pin, an angler must submit qualifying entries for five or more species within a calendar year.

2021 was another record year for the program, with 1,169 entries approved, 332 of which were from youth anglers. There were also 73 Vermont Master Angler award recipients in 2021, 17 of which were youth anglers. Youth anglers have a slightly lower minimum qualifying length for each species.

"We were surprised to see another record year for the program in 2021, especially since we set a record the previous year too," said state fisheries biologist Shawn

Good. "I'm hoping it's because Vermonters who discovered fishing and the Master Angler Program during the 2020 Covid pandemic continued fishing and enjoying the program in 2021.

Good says that the program provides the department with information on big fish throughout the state and helps promote the many diverse fishing opportunities that Vermont has to offer.

"One of the best things about this program is that it provides some families with a little extra incentive to get outside and enjoy some quality time together on the water."

The 2021 Vermont Master Angler Program Annual Report is on Fish and Wildlife's website at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish/fishing-events-and-programs/master-angler-program>.

The image shows the cover of the Vermont Master Angler Program 2021 Annual Report. The cover features a person in a kayak holding up a large fish. The text on the cover includes "Vermont Master Angler Program" at the top, "2021 Annual Report" at the bottom left, and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife logo at the bottom right. The background is a scenic view of a lake and mountains.

Vermont's Master Angler Program set a new participation record in 2021 with 1,169 entries and 73 award recipients, 17 of which were youth anglers.

Vt Allocates Moose Hunting Permits for 2022

Permit applications are available on Fish & Wildlife's website

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board voted on April 6 to have 60 either-sex moose hunting permits and 40 antlerless moose hunting permits available this year for a hunt limited to Vermont's Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) E in the northeastern corner of the state. The science-based hunt will result in an estimated harvest of 51 to 65 moose, or 5 percent of the more than 1,000 moose currently estimated to live in WMU E.

Permit applications are now available on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's website www.vt-fishandwildlife.com.

"Moose density in WMU E remains well above one moose per square mile, significantly higher than any other part of the state," said Nick Fortin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife's biologist in charge of the moose project. "Moose densities greater than one per square mile support high numbers of winter ticks which negatively impact moose health and survival."

The Fish and Wildlife Department recently partnered with University of Vermont researchers to conduct a study of moose health and survival in WMU E. The results of this study, in which 126 moose (36 cows, 90 calves) were fitted with GPS tracking collars, clearly showed that chronic high winter tick loads have caused the health of moose in that part of the state to be very poor. Survival of adult moose remained relatively good, but birth rates were very low and less than half of the calves survived their first winter.

The goal of the Fish and Wildlife Department's 2022 moose season recommendation is to improve the health of moose in WMU-E by reducing the impact of winter ticks.

"Research has shown that lower moose densities, like in the rest of Vermont, support relatively few winter ticks that do not impact moose populations," said Fortin. "Reducing moose density decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape."

"These permits will help address winter tick impacts on moose in WMU-

E by reducing the density of moose, but it does so slowly, over a period of several years," added Fortin. "This allows future moose permit allocations to be adjusted as new information becomes available. Given the poor health of the moose population in that area and a clearly identified cause, we need to take action to address this issue. Without intervention to reduce the moose population in WMU-E, high tick loads will continue to impact the health of moose in that region for many years."

Lottery applications for hunting permits are \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. The deadline to ap-



VTF&W photos: Winter Ticks by Jake DeBow / Calf by Josh Blouin
The high number of moose in northeastern Vermont has stimulated a dramatic increase in winter ticks, causing moose health to severely decline. As many as 90,000 winter ticks have been found on one moose. More than half of moose calves have died in recent winters due to blood loss caused by the winter ticks. VTF&W explains that reducing the number of moose will reduce the number of parasitic ticks and improve moose health.

ply is June 22. Winners of the permit lottery will purchase resident hunting permits for \$100 and nonresident hunting permits for \$350.

Hunters who held a permit within the past five years are not eligible to apply for a permit or to buy a bonus point. Applicants must continue to annually submit a moose permit application if they wish to retain their past bonus permits and accumulate subsequent bonus points.

Five permits will be available to Vermont military veterans, three permits will be available for “Special Opportunity” recipients with life-threatening illnesses, and three permits will be auctioned in accordance with regulations.

The [2022 Moose Season Recommendation](#) and related information about moose research and management are available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s website at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.



Fawns are Arriving; Leave them Alone Urges F&W

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department says deer fawns are being born this time of year and asks that people avoid disturbing or picking them up.

Most deer fawns are born in late May and the first and second weeks of June, according to Vermont deer biologist Nick Fortin.

Fortin says it is best to keep your distance because the fawn’s mother is almost always nearby. When people see a small fawn alone, they often mistakenly assume it is helpless, lost or needing to be rescued.

Fawns do not attempt to evade predators during their first few weeks, instead relying on camouflage and stillness to remain undetected. During these times, fawns learn critical survival skills from their mothers. Bringing a fawn into a human environment results in separation from its mother, and it usually results in a sad ending for the animal.

Fortin encourages people to resist the urge to assist wildlife in ways that

may be harmful, and he offered these tips:

- Deer nurse their young at different times during the day and often leave their young alone for long periods of time. These animals are not lost. Their mother knows where they are and will return.
- Deer normally will not feed or care for their young when people are close by.
- Deer fawns will imprint on humans and lose their natural fear of people, which can be essential to their survival.
- Keep domestic pets under control at all times. Dogs often will kill fawns and other baby animals.



For the safety of all wildlife, taking a wild animal into captivity is illegal in Vermont.

“It’s in the best interest of Vermonters and the wildlife that live here, for all of us to maintain a respectful distance and help keep wildlife wild,” added Fortin.

VTF&W photo

Fawns are being born now and should be left alone. Their mothers are almost always nearby, according to Vermont Fish and Wildlife.

Some Cliff Tops and Overlooks Closed to Protect Nesting Peregrines

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Hiking Vermont's hillsides is a great way to enjoy a spring day, but the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Audubon Vermont recommend people check to see if the area they are planning to hike or climb is open. In addition to the many trails that are currently closed to reduce impacts during mud season, several cliff areas are closed to protect nesting peregrine falcons.

"Peregrine falcons are very sensitive to human presence during their breeding season, so we ask climbers and hikers to please maintain a respectful distance from all nests," said state wildlife biologist Doug Morin. "The areas closed include the portions of the cliffs where the birds are nesting and the trails leading to cliff tops or overlooks."

Biologists and community scientists are just now identifying which cliffs are occupied by peregrines, and not all sites have been visited to-date. Once closed, these sites will remain closed until August 1 or until the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department determines the risk to

nesting falcons has passed. As sites are visited in April and if nesting falcons choose new sites, additional sites may be added to the closed list at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

- Bolton Notch (Bolton) – UUW cliff – cliff access and climbing closed
- Deer Leap (Bristol) – cliff-top and climbing closed
- Eagle Ledge (Vershire) – closed to hiking and climbing
- Fairlee Palisades (Fairlee) – cliff-top closed
- Marshfield Mt (Marshfield) - portions closed to climbing
- Mt Horrid (Rochester) – Great Cliff overlook closed
- Nichols Ledge (Woodbury) – cliff-top and climbing closed
- Prospect Rock (Johnson) – overlook closed
- Red Rocks Park (S. Burlington) – southern cliff access closed
- Rattlesnake Point (Salisbury) – southern overlook closed
- Snake Mt (Addison) – entire western trail closed
- Stimson Mt (Bolton) – climbing closed

Audubon Vermont conservation biologist Margaret Fowle works with volunteers and other conservation professionals to monitor the sites throughout the nesting season. "Peregrine falcons were removed from Vermont's endangered species list in 2005, and the population continues to thrive thanks to the efforts of our many volunteers and partners," said Fowle. "In many cases the lower portions of the trails remain open, and we encourage people to enjoy watching peregrine falcons from a distance with binoculars or a scope."

What you can do to help Vermont peregrines:

- Respect cliff closures, and retreat from any cliff where you see peregrines
- Report any disturbance of nesting peregrines to your local State Game Warden
- Report any sightings to Margaret Fowle at margaret.fowle@audubon.org



*TF&W photo by Tom Rogers
Hikers and climbers can help nesting peregrine falcons by avoiding several Vermont cliff areas this spring and early summer.*

Vermont Walleye Fishing Season Opens Saturday, May 7

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont walleye fishing season opens on Saturday, May 7, marking the return of some of the best walleye fishing in New England.

Excellent spring walleye fishing can be found in several Vermont lakes and rivers, including Lake Champlain and its tributaries – the Missisquoi, Lamoille and Winooski rivers and Otter Creek. In the Northeast Kingdom, Salem Lake and Island Pond also have walleye populations that are on the rebound thanks to stocking by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

A trio of additional waters – Lake Carmi, Chittenden Reservoir and the Connecticut River, also offer quality walleye fishing.

Veteran walleye anglers use a variety of techniques, but one of the simplest and most effective is to slowly troll a nightcrawler harness near the bottom. Most nightcrawler harnesses include a rotating blade ahead of two hooks, where the worm is secured. The blade produces a fish-attracting flash and vibration. Shore-based anglers can catch walleyes on nightcrawlers or live minnows or by casting crankbaits or hard jerk baits. Walleyes are generally more active at night, so fishing in the dark is often more effective.


As a reminder to anglers, there is no open season on sauger, a close cousin to the walleye. Once abundant in southern Lake Champlain, sauger still appear there rarely. If caught while fishing for other fish, sauger must be immediately released.

Anglers can read about current fishing regulations in the 2022 VERMONT FISHING GUIDE & REGULATIONS available free from Vermont license agents. To purchase a fishing license or learn more about fishing in Vermont, visit www.vtfishandwildlife.com.



VTF&W photo

Vermont's walleye fishing season starts Saturday, May 7. Benjamin Creamer of Swanzey, N.H. caught this nice one last year while fishing on Lake Champlain in South Hero.




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Smoke Show, turkey hunting with black powder

By Ken Jones

Some time in the late 1990's I started deer hunting primarily with a muzzleloader. The allure of the one-shot challenge and the risks during wet weather etc. caught my eye. You can only imagine how excited I got when I saw this new muzzleloading shotgun enter the scene in 2000. In fact, Knight Rifles named it the TK 2000. The TK was an abbreviation for turkey. The gun was designed specifically for turkey hunting with a unique forcing coned barrel and super tight external screw on choke. In the years to come they would offer modified and improved cylinder chokes but I have not seen the need to try either.

Money was a bit tighter in those days so it took a few years but I believe I bought mine in 2004.

I remember the first bird I killed with it. Opening morning I knew some birds were on one of my favorite farms and I set out early to get above them in the dark. It had been extremely dry that spring so as I work a bench above a chorus of gobblers the leaves left no secret that something was up there.

This was also the early days of me trying full fan decoys. Something that would surely pay off this morning. There were multiple gobblers sounding off on the level below me as I moved in and set up my makeshift strutter. A half strutt buckwing I had cut a slot in to accept a fan.

I got the decoy set up in a fresh logging road since they had done some cutting in there over the winter. I hunkered in a

brush pile about twelve yards from the decoy and as I was reaching for my mouth call case, I looked down the log road and here he comes. Big white head and running towards me!!! Within seconds he was right up against the decoy, drummed and threw up his full fan, quickly pulled it in and while he was completely involved with the decoy, I settled the fiber optic sights on his waddles and sent the 2.5 ounces of lead sixes and crushed him before I even had a chance to get a call out!!! Being a competition caller, it was a little bittersweet but, just a little. Walking out twenty pounds heavier always seems to sooth the bitter part.

Years went by and I compiled quite a resume of long beards with the TK. There were some missed along the way of course. And it proved to be a very dependable weapon as I killed a few gobblers in torrential down pours

encouraging me to coin the phrase "a wet bird is a dead bird."

In recent years a new shot has hit the turkey hunting scene called TSS. Which stands for tungsten super shot. It's an incredibly hard tungsten steel shot that provides massive kinetic energy in a very small shot size, this allowing you to use smaller shot giving you more bbs per shot. I reached out through social media to some guys that were ahead of the curve so to speak on this new material. One of them assured me it was perfectly safe to shoot it out of the TK and actually sent me some materials he was using in a muzzleloading shotgun. One look at the pattern and I was hooked. The difference at 40 yards



comparing the lead 6's to the TSS 9's was astounding. That's right, I said nine-shot. The fact is a TSS nine bb hits with the same kinetic energy at 40 yards than number 4 lead bb. Patterns are more uniform also since the shot is so dense. It doesn't deform going through the choke therefore you get almost no flyers.

This is my fourth or fifth season with TSS in the TK and that brings us to my last bird with the cannon.

Last spring birds had been avoiding me like the plague and with only a few days left in the season I received a call one night from fellow journal contributor and my good buddy Brett Ladeau. Butter, (a Nick name I gave him some years back when he was "on a roll" in the fall woods) had roosted a bird and asked if I wanted to make a quick before work attempt at him. Seeing as I was getting whipped like a misbehaving school boy on my side of the state, I jumped at the opportunity to once again share a tree with my buddy.

We set up maybe a hundred yards from the roosted gobbler and as daylight broke, he announced his presence like thunder from the forest. Shortly after fly down it was apparent, he wasn't alone when our calling was answered not only by him but a rather talkative hen.

She actually left the gobbler to come up and see who the new girls in town were. The chit chat back and forth with her was enough to put a big ole smile on a turkey hunter's face and the gobbler would be a nice bonus but this hunt was already awesome.

I had picked out a couple of possible distances and openings in the forest as to where I wanted him to get. Our female guest had moved above us and she would still chime in from time to time.

We threw everything we could at him to try and break him, including fighting purrs and more excited stuff. Finally, below us we started to get a glimpse of his

full fan moving up towards our setup. He had made his way to 40-45 yards and into what was my furthest shot at him when Butter whispered, "Can ya kill him right there Ken??" I settled the cross hairs of the 4X scope that now sat atop the TK since my age is starting to catch up and things up close like fiber optic sights become too blurry on his waddles and sent the two ounces of TSS downrange. Two birds flew away and there didn't appear to be any flopping down there but I got up and headed to investigate. As I approached, I thought I was looking at a rotten piece of old firewood in the leaves but when the light hit it right, the iridescent colors of a gobbler's back feathers stood out from the forest floor. That shit hit him so hard he didn't even flop!!! Butter videoed the whole hunt and it can be seen on his YouTube page.

Where there's smoke, there's fire as the old saying goes. There's definitely a cloud of smoke after the firing of a TK 2000. There's always that white out in the scope when you squeeze the trigger. That moment of did I or didn't I??? Another allure to the black powder hunt.

Whatever you're chasing thunder with this spring. Be safe, have fun, and shoo em up!!!



Legislative Update with Evan Hughes

The end of the 2021-2022, Vermont Legislature Biennium is moving toward a Final Gavel falling around mid-May, 2022. It is an election year, and for the first time since 2006, there will be federal office(s) open.

U.S. Senator Leahy retiring has resulted in U.S. Rep. Peter Welch seeking his senate seat. This has resulted in two open federal elections, and Vermont's ambitious politicians are leaping forward. Three of the candidates seeking the seat vacated by Peter Welch currently operate in the Vermont Senate. They seek to get outside the Vermont state house, seriously campaigning. The political campaign games will really begin.

As the Final Gavel nears, there are two bills in play that are specifically of interest to the outdoor sporting community. H.411, a bill frequently called (Wanton Waste), addresses the issue of the disposition of taken game. This issue has been traveling around the state house. H.411 has finally reached a bill that Vermont F&W and numerous stake holder groups hold as viable.

H.411 as passed the House and Senate:
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/BILLS/H-0411/H-0411%20As%20Passed%20by%20Both%20House%20and%20Senate%20Unofficial.pdf>

S.281 is a bill on coyote hunting with dogs. The bill started out as a ban on hunting coyotes with dogs and evolved into a bill that would establish rules similar to those existing for hunting black bears with dogs. This bill is in the home stretch towards passage.

Vermont and the rest of the nation are stunned by the drastic increase in extremely violent crime. Gun control supporters call for more restrictions on the owning of firearms. They refuse to look at how these drastic

violent crimes are committed by the same repeat violent criminals.

Be it in Vermont or anywhere else, it is gangs and drugs that are a far too common factor in these violent crimes. It is inexcusable that our elected officials are not grasping the fact and are failing to recognize the reality that so many of the dangerous and deadly crimes are the result of gangs and drugs.

All over this nation we have illegal drugs pouring over our southern border. The sale of these drugs that feed crime and fund dangerous gangs. Illegal heroin, cocaine, and opioid drugs are surging over the southern border because of a complete collapse of border protection enforcement. Fentanyl is a poison manufactured in Mexico from Chinese made components.

The illegal drug overdose deaths in the U.S. reached a record of over 100,000 in 2021.

The illegal drugs and gangs should have the undivided attention of our elected officials, particularly, our federal officials who serve in Washington, D.C. Federally elected officials are truly in the best position to close off the southern border gateway to this state. These officials have an obligation to close this southern border gateway for the illegal drugs that gangs are pumping into our state. Drug sales are funding extremely violent crime and killing, yes, Americans.

It is the duty of our elected officials to get off the sidelines and take decisive action to interdict the illegal drugs flooding over the southern border and that serves as the product source and funding for gangs dealing these drugs in Vermont. It falls to us to force our elected officials to close off the source of these illegal drugs being pushed by gangs that cause and fund so much violent crime.



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Vermont Wildlife Course for Educators, July 17-22

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont's popular fish and wildlife summer course for teachers and other educators will be held July 17-22, 2022.

The interactive field course that gets educators out into Vermont's streams, forests and wetlands with some of the state's leading natural resource experts takes place at the Buck Lake Conservation Camp in Woodbury.

Now in its 37th year, "Wildlife Management and Outdoor Education Techniques for Educators," is a one-week, three-credit graduate course taught by Vermont Fish and Wildlife and other Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) staff through Castleton University.

"Wildlife resources are important to all Vermonters in one way or another," says Fish and Wildlife's Outreach Director, Alison Thomas. "If educators can get connected with the outdoors and in turn expose their students, then many of these students will be able to make informed decisions about Vermont wildlife and their habitat needs."

"This course is unique in that it helps non-formal and pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade

teachers from any discipline -- math, language arts, physical education, or history -- improve their instructional strategies and make their lesson plans more relevant to their students."

"This course is hands-on," added Thomas. "It continues to evolve and incorporate new environmental education ideas and activities, but we also continue to do traditional programs that have been part of the week for more than three decades. It is a great mix of new and old with all of it being incredibly helpful and memorable. We believe during these difficult times, it is important now more than ever that we foster personal relationships with the natural world, habitat and wildlife and encourage an individual's connection with the outdoors."



*VTF&W photo
Vermont Fish and Wildlife's summer course for teachers and other educators will be held July 17-22 at Buck Lake in Woodbury, VT.*

Tuition is \$650 for the course. Books, food and overnight facilities are included. A limited number of partial scholarships are available.

A course description, schedule of activities and registration information are available by email from Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov

Buck Lake Conservation Camp is located east of Route 14, north of Woodbury Village.

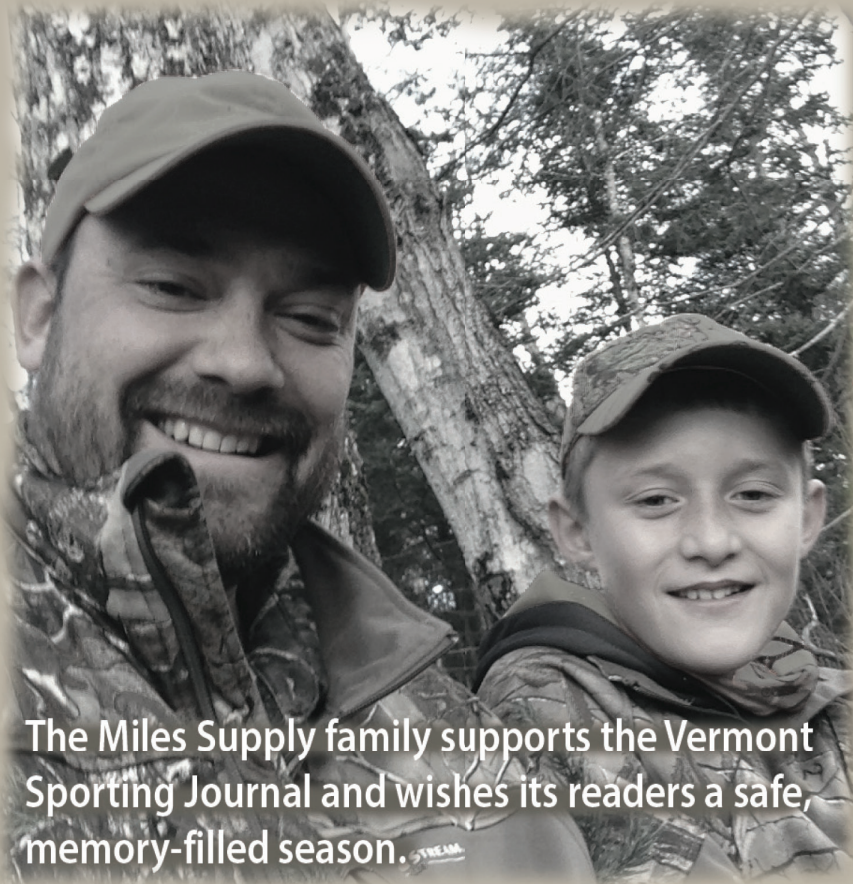
The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, experience level, sex, or gender identity.

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available on request at no cost. Please include a description of the accommodation

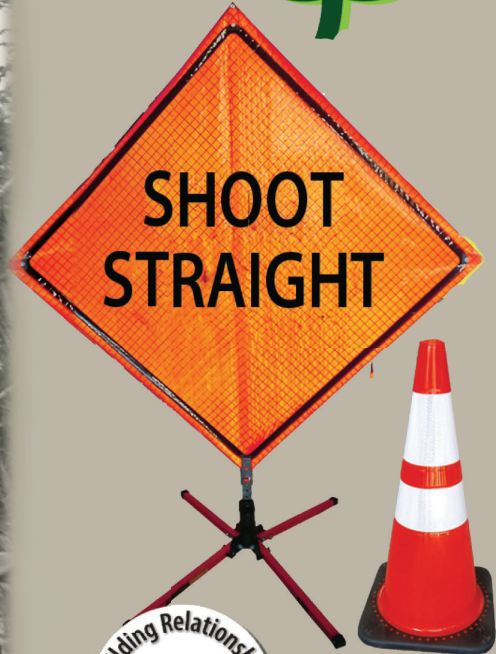
you will need. Individuals making such requests must include their contact information. Requests should be made as early as possible. For example, an interpreter must be requested at least two weeks in advance. Please contact: Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov, 802-371-9975 (voice), 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).

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Vermont's Spring Turkey Hunting Starts Soon

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

It's almost time for spring turkey hunting in Vermont. Youth and novice turkey hunting weekend is April 23 and 24 this year, and the regular spring turkey season is May 1-31.

“The youth and novice turkey hunting weekend provides an excellent opportunity for experienced hunters to teach young or new hunters how to safely and successfully hunt wild turkeys,” said Chris Bernier, Vermont’s wild turkey biologist.

To hunt turkeys on April 23 and 24, a youth must be 15 or younger and must have completed a hunter education course and possess a hunting license, a turkey hunting license and a free youth turkey hunting tag.

A person who has purchased their first hunting license in the past 12 months and is 16 or older may hunt turkeys as a novice on April 23 and 24. They must have a hunting license, turkey hunting license and a free novice tag.

The youth or novice must be accompanied by an unarmed licensed adult over 18 years of age. Shooting hours for the weekend are one half hour before sunrise to 5 p.m. Landowner permission is required to hunt on private land during youth-novice turkey hunting weekend.

The youth or novice may take one bearded turkey on the weekend and two bearded turkeys in the regular May hunting season.

Shooting hours during the May 1-31 turkey season are one half hour before sunrise to 12:00 Noon, and two bearded turkeys may be taken.



Vermont Fish and Wildlife re-established our native wild turkeys when it released 31 wild birds from New York in 1969 and 1970. Today, Vermont has an estimated wild turkey population of more than 45,000.

VTF&W photo by John Hall

A shotgun or archery equipment may be used to hunt turkeys. Shot size must be no larger than #2.

A successful hunter in Vermont’s spring turkey seasons must report their turkey within 48 hours to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. This can be done at a local big game reporting station or online at Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com).

Last year, youth and novice hunters took 708 and 35 turkeys, respectively during the April weekend hunt and hunters took 5,024 gobblers during the regular spring season.

“Combined with the 426 turkeys taken during the fall season, hunters harvested in excess of 140,000 servings of locally sourced, free range turkey meat in 2021,” added Bernier.

Turkeys are Stupid and Easy to Kill

By Bradley Roy

Slowly, a cool feeling sets into my backside. I ascertain that the seeping moisture from the damp spring soil of a Vermont corn field is to blame. The ground where I sit is leeching manure-laden water through my thin camo pants and boxers until it meets bare butt skin with a chilly vengeance. “Great, nothing makes a half day of sitting more pleasurable than a wet butt” I think to myself. A lone mosquito rings in my right ear like a bad bout of tinnitus, and although I cannot see it in the pitch-black darkness, I am quite confident it is flying slower than normal; suggesting to me it has a belly full of my blood inhibiting its once nimble flight. As I ponder just how life-threatening West Nile Virus might be, I am told by my wife with stern confidence that the rattle of my coffee thermos is not an appropriate sound to be making at this very moment in time. I whisper back confidently, “Don’t worry, turkeys are stupid and easy to kill.”

The ink black night is melting into pre-dawn as we wait on the edge of our cornfield. I often wonder during turkey season if those who have never sought game with feathers-including ducks, geese, and turkeys- truly understand the many layers of time that unfold in a typical morning. Much like the many seasons of Vermont we are all familiar with, there are many chapters of the turkey hunter’s morning book as well. Now these are unofficial, but I feel they have considerable merit and should be considered bonafide. There’s “bedtime”, which takes place mere minutes prior to the next phase, which is “alarm” time. Oddly enough, “alarm” time occurs somewhere around many peoples “bedtime”... but I digress...

Now the funny thing about “alarm” time is that it only happens a single time on opening day. The second the tone begins to chime one is up-and-at-em, ready for the day! Perplexingly though, it reoccurs much more frequently as the season progresses, as if the hunter begins to revere the act of being jolted awake by a jingling iPhone, only to fall back to slumber for a few moments just to do it all over

again and again. Next you have what I’ve deemed “The Pepto Hour”, characterized by the unsettled stomach of a hunter who has not slept nearly enough and is chugging down coffee and red bull to try and overcome the grasp of insufficient sleep. This phase lasts well into the time you arrive on site and begin to prep for the days hunt. The following phase of morning obviously being the “Pin the tail on the donkey” phase, in which you and likely a hunting partner stumble around in the pitch blackness of a spring morning in hopes you can put all your gear together in a way which A) keeps you comfortable, B) looks attractive to a turkey and C) ensures the other crazy people who are awake at such an ungodly hour don’t mistake you for their quarry. Once these critical blocks of time have passed though, comes my favorite period. At this point, you are able to carefully pour a small cup of coffee from your unreasonably loud thermos, sit back, and listen to the quiet ramblings of a few dozen aerial dinosaurs perched close by in a tree.

This timeline brings us back to the exact moment I was describing to you all earlier, with my lovely wife and I, a hot cup of coffee, and gentle purrs and clucks emanating from a large stand of timber nearby. Now although I keep repeating in my head to myself the simple fact that turkeys are stupid and easy to kill, at this point a slight discomfort presents itself in the pit of my stomach. I question whether

I’ve miscalculated the duration of the “Pepto Hour”, but conclude this is something different entirely. I realize that I’m beginning to question almost every task I’ve performed thus far. Did I wear the right camo? Is that the right decoy? Can the birds see me? Did they hear my thermos? Am I going to have to poop again before daylight? So many questions and concerns flood my brain all at this one very moment that I have difficulty getting the last few bites of my gas station egg sandwich down, although I persevere onward.

Now we are in the post-pre-dawn but pre-early dawn time period, which as we all know lasts for exactly

I whisper back confidently, “Don’t worry, turkeys are stupid and easy to kill.”

seventeen minutes. A brief duration in which things go from utter darkness, to only slightly dark. At this time, the thunderous echo of a gobbler begins to palpate the countryside periodically, making me excited enough to abandon my coffee and focus on the task at hand with much more determination. I take a deep breath to calm myself, realizing that this seventeen-minute window has already shrunk to only fourteen minutes left. After a cacophony of gobblers for what seems like hours, there are only eight minutes more to wait. Shadows begin taking shape, and doves are flying overhead now on their way to the barn. Three minutes to go. As the hourglass begins to run dry, just a few seconds remaining, and then, suddenly, without warning, I CAN SEE! I can finally see not just the imaginary shapes and figures in my head, but for real. I can see the trees, I can see the grass and the freshly tilled soil, and right in the opening in front of me I can see an empty field holding nothing but my decoys.

It's alright, I whisper ever so quietly once again with shaky confidence. "Turkeys are stupid and easy to kill. Watch This."

I pull out an old box call, neglected since I picked it up at the sportsman's show as a young boy. I make some

scratchy, high-pitched sounds reminiscent of a rabbit being disemboweled by a coyote, then sit back confidently holding my 12 Gauge in shooting position. After waiting the proper 14 seconds between calling cycles, I get disappointed at the lack of reaction and try once more. This time, I skillfully accentuate the dying rabbit noises with trumpet-like yelps from a mouth call at the same time. "Boy oh boy, what kind of stupid bird wouldn't come running in to investigate these sensual sounds of avian spring procreation" I boast in my own head.

This charade goes on for roughly five hours more. With the sun constantly navigating its way higher into the blue sky, I make an assortment of honks, squeaks, yelps, and other unmentionable noises that somehow fail to bring one of these stupid woodchucks with feathers anywhere near our carefully crafted gobbler brothel here on the edge of the grass. As we glumly decide the gig is up, we mope our way out into the field to gather our gear and leave. While driving home in silence, observing dozens of flocks of turkeys in fields along the way, passing pickups pulled over being loaded with large, dead turkeys, I break the silence of the journey with a reluctant "turkeys are stupid and easy to kill, we'll get one tomorrow."



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Increased Trout Stocking for Anglers in Chittenden, Pittsford, Leicester and Dorset

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department today announced that trout originally planned for the 2022 stocking season at Sugar Hill Reservoir, also known as Goshen Dam, in Goshen will be diverted to other area waterways for anglers. The shift is being made to ensure there are plenty of opportunities to get out and enjoy Vermont's waterways, while ongoing safety enhancements are made to the Goshen dam.

"Goshen Dam has always been a popular place for anglers. The yearling and trophy-sized brook trout we stock there attract anglers from all over the area," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department fisheries biologist Shawn Good. "It's in a beautiful setting in the Green Mountain National Forest, and the fishing platform and access facilities Green Mountain Power and the National Forest provide and maintain make it a great fishing destination."

The reservoir was slated to receive an April stocking of 1,350 yearling brook trout averaging nine inches and 450 two-year old "Trophy Brook Trout" averaging thirteen inches in length, according to Good.

The trout are being reallocated to Lefferts Pond in Chittenden, Smith Pond in Pittsford, Silver Lake in Leicester, and Prentiss Pond in Dorset.

A drawdown for dam improvements on the 58-acre waterbody will be in place again this summer. This important dam safety project is expected to be completed during the 2022 construction season with refill beginning potentially by the end of the summer. Water levels this year will be similar to those in 2021.

"Obviously, these important safety repairs will make it impossible for normal trout stocking to occur there this year, and it will also eliminate fishing opportunities in



Sugar Hill Reservoir, as seen in this April 2022 photo, will be maintained at reduced water levels and will not be stocked with trout this season. Public access will mostly be restricted due to ongoing repairs on the dam.

VTF&W photo by Margaret Murphy

general. In the meantime, trout normally destined for Goshen Dam will provide anglers with increased opportunities at other area waterways," said Good.

Good says that state and federal agencies will be working with Green Mountain Power to develop a plan to restore Sugar Hill Reservoir and its aquatic and fish communities for 2023 and beyond once repairs are completed and the reservoir is refilled.

In the meantime, most facilities at Sugar Hill Reservoir will be inaccessible this season, including the roundabout at the reservoir, the access road across the dam, and the road to the plunge pool area due to contractor parking, vehicle traffic, equipment operation, and for safety reasons.

U.S. Forest Service biologist Jeremy Mears says local anglers can still find plenty of fishing opportunities in the area's National Forest.

"There are still many places for anglers to enjoy fishing on the National Forest," said Mears. Stream fishing for native brook trout is abundant throughout the area, and there also are opportunities for shore fishing at Chittenden Reservoir, Blueberry Lake or Silver Lake. Please be sure to check the Green Mountain National Forest [website \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/home\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/home) for updates before you go."

For helpful information on finding fishing locations near you, visit the department's access area and family fishing pages at:

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish/boating-in-vermont/fishing-access-areas>

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish/fishing-opportunities>

Trap Line Talk

By Randy Barrows

Happy spring. I hope your trapping season was productive but more importantly fun. My personal line was pretty diminished this year. I love to trap but it was evident that things were not going to be any better this year than last. As I said before money is not a player on my line, but I could not justify putting any more pelts into a severely flooded market.

Now its clean up time. Clean all your equipment, inspect for damages and hang up for next fall, just a short eight months away. Or.....

Call the state of Vermont and get signed up to do nuisance trapping in your area. I did this twenty plus years ago now and there is never a dull moment. Being in Chittenden County about every inch of land that used to be a critters home are now housing developments or malls. The results of all of this growth are a cornucopia of nuisance animals roaming the streets.

Add the states brilliance in making the dumping of food scraps in the landfill against the law, nearly all households are dumping their scraps in the back forty, creating a bad situation. The landfills are cleaner, did I say that? but everyone has a new pet skunk, coon, fox, possum, coyotes you name it. The old saying "if you feed them, they will come" holds true here. Soon all of these critters will have

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the new young of the year and the fun begins.

Usually, I hear that the owners think their new pets are cool and fun to watch. One

interaction with Fluffy the cat and a skunk and the cool disappears. That's when my phone starts to ring.

Everyone wants the critter gone now!!!!!!I am a one man show here so they get to hear they are on my list. In the summer months you can easily turn nuisance work into a full-time gig. Only book what you can handle. Overbooking causes haste and haste stinks LITTERLY!!

If you choose to do this, make sure you have a contract between yourself and the homeowner spelling out your requirements and what their responsibilities are. Make it crystal clear what your rates are and when you expect to be paid. Also make it clear that you are dealing with wild animals and that they can not always be caught. I can not tell you what to charge but I recommend you charge by the hour. Trying to catch a animal that someone else has pinched with a trap can cost you plenty.

Also touch base with the local warden in your area and get to know him. It is illegal to transport wildlife from one area to another so get the wardens blessing to do so, so you do not have to euthanize a skunk on Main Street. In trapping beaver sometimes, you get an otter and the warden would want to know this also.

Do yourself a favor and get a rabies pre-exposure shot. The three-shot program is expensive but, but cheap insurance. Every critter you are going to deal with comes with teeth and claws and will gladly use them if given the opportunity. Gloves are mandatory, latex under cloth works the best. You also need to be mindful of the hitch hikers as in fleas, ticks, chiggers etc. A can of good all-purpose bug spray will save the day. Bring home one batch and infest your home and be prepared to sleep in the trap shed.

You have to remember you are there to help the homeowner. Some are nastier than the animals you deal with. If you are like me, I have a short fuse with these folks. Go out and have fun and more importantly be safe.

If you want some prices to charge shoot me an email at critrgitr@msn.com. Have a good summer!!



Turkey Tripping

by Brett Ladeau

I just arrived back from another turkey hunting road trip to Nebraska and Iowa. The trip was a success, and I was able to check off another new state in the process. I have driven through Iowa numerous times on my way to Utah or other western destinations but never spent any quality time there. While we also hunted eastern Nebraska the focus was to try to shoot a bird in western Iowa.

I drove out by myself to scout and spend time getting to know the area a little before our hunt started. We had a friend of a friend that had given us a general starting spot so I wanted to be as familiar as I could be with the area by the time the season rolled in. I spent most of my time on public land finding birds and checking for sign. I marked areas on Onx maps where I either saw or heard birds, to include some private land, but focused on the

public land. There are plenty of birds in the area we were in, so it made it a bit difficult to narrow it down to one or two tracks of land. As usual, we weren't giving ourselves much time to get two birds. We basically hunted one day in Nebraska and gave ourselves two days in Iowa.

After a day or two of scouting my



hunting partners, TJ and Chase Jordan, flew out to meet me. We stayed at our friend's house in Nebraska and hunted his property on Tuesday morning. We were expecting big things from a small piece of property based on our history there. The birds were not roosted where they normally roost but about 10 AM we finally got one to gobble. He gobbled good and came to the call where Chase (age 9) put the hammer down on him. We hunted a few more hours in Nebraska but decided to head to Iowa to scout some more.

It was about an hour from our Nebraska area to where we hunted in Iowa. We spent a windy afternoon looking for birds and scouting new areas. Just before fly-up we spotted a longbeard and hens headed to roost in the back corner of a field. We watched them until just about dark and headed to our Nebraska roost. We



about to crest the hill on to a ridgetop field and decided I better check to see if I could hear a bird before I made my presence known. I ran a box call but didn't hear anything. I decided the coast was clear and took a few more steps and dang if they weren't right there the entire time. Of course, they took off flying and just like that the birds were gone. It looked like the flew from Iowa to Vermont based on the distance they went. Disappointed in myself and with my tail tucked between my legs I went back to the blind and told Chase and Tj what happened. We eventually pulled the plug on that area and hit the road checking likely spots as we made our way around the property. We had a few gobbles and even tried a few set-ups, but the birds were not really interested in coming to the calls.

Eventually, we decided to start our way back to Nebraska a little early. However, on our way back we saw a nice longbeard and a group of hens on some private land. Tj and Chase approached the landowner and accessed permission. We still had time before fly-up, Iowa is all day turkey hunting, and made a quick dash into the woods just off the back of the field we saw the turkey in. I was able to carry on a good conversation with a few responsive turkeys, but they would not come in for a look.

We could hear several turkeys fly-up around us and decided to hunt in that area first thing the next morning. We were set up in a ground blind on the edge of the cornfield well before daylight. It was a very foggy morning but that didn't stop the chorus of gobbling all around us. We heard plenty of gobbling on the roost but as is often the case things were quiet once the birds hit the ground. Nothing entered the field early so we decided to go for a walk to see if we could strike a bird. We finally got a response, but the birds were headed the other way and onto the public land we could hunt. We made a mad dash to the truck and got to the public land access area. The birds were out in front of us, but we made quick work to get around in front of them. They were still responsive to the call but had no interest in coming our way. Finally, they ended up on private land we couldn't access. Chase and Tj decided to go back to the private piece they had permission on, and I stayed on the public land hoping to get on another bird. It wasn't long after they left that I thought I heard a

were up early the next morning with high expectations and solid game plan. Unfortunately, we were beat to the spot by another hunter so all our time and effort from the day before was squashed. We went to plan B based on my scouting and I still had high hopes of success. The weather conditions were rainy and windy, not ideal, but you cannot get a turkey sitting inside. After a few hours of silence, I decided to put some tracks on the ground. I left Tj and Chase at the blind and headed up an old access road where I had seen turkey walking before. Scat and tracks confirmed that birds were using the road on a regular basis. I got about 150 to 200 yards from the blind and was just





given us reports the day before that he had one located but because of the traveling distance we passed on the opportunity. After lunch we decided to head his way even before we knew he had a bird around. On our way to his location, we got a call saying he had one located. We arrived at his house mid-afternoon. His territory was more open and less wooded. He drove us to an observation spot and sure enough there was a big strutter and a couple

shot, but I wasn't sure. I continued to hunt the public land and did get a bird to respond. I made several moves to get closer to the turkey that was gobbling and got some good response to the calls, but like before, they lost interest and went the other way. Tj ended up calling me about half an hour later and let me know that Chase had gotten his bird on the private land. One tag filled and one to go. I met them at the parking area and went to get some lunch.

Not previously mentioned, but we had another friend that lived about an hour plus south of us out looking for birds in his hunting area. He had

of hens several hundred yards away in the wide-open area. We formulated a plan and my friend and I went after the bird, and Tj and Chase returned to the observation area to help guide us into position. After several stressful phone calls between Tj and I we finally got in front of the bird and the rest is history. He gobbled once on the way and within a few minutes I was positioned for the shot. The old Mossberg SA 20 gauge did the rest. Just like that and Iowa bird in the bag. The celebration continued for the rest of the afternoon. Iowa makes state 21 that I have turkey hunted in and 16 that I have gotten a bird in. I am always appreciative of the turkey and



the places it has brought me and the friends it has given me. It's amazing and humbling what the wild turkey has done for me. While I enjoy harvesting a turkey, I really enjoy the places this obsession has brought me and the friendships that I have made chasing these beautiful birds. I think people that don't hunt think we want to kill everything. However, the people I know love the animals we hunt more than most can imagine. It's a hard concept to explain but I want the animals I hunt to thrive and flourish.

Between turkey hunting, calling, and being a volunteer for the National Wild Turkey Federation I have met some great friends and made terrific memories along the way. If you are interested in joining the NWTF, and in my opinion you should be a member if you turkey hunt, please consider joining at www.nwtf.org

