

Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume VI, Issue 16 * March 2023



Special Time of Year

Training Course Offered for New Hunter Education Instructors

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is offering a New Instructor Training Course for people interested in volunteering to teach Hunter Education courses in Vermont.

The training will take place Saturday, March 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the at South Burlington City Hall, 180 Market St, South Burlington, VT 05403.

All applicants must complete their instructor paperwork and online homework before attending the course. Instructor application paperwork can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/2pfr7c44 or call 802-828-1193 prior to the course date.

Policies and procedures, field techniques and teaching methods will be covered to give instructors the tools to teach future hunters how to have a safe and enjoyable experience. Lunch will be provided.

Be prepared to be outside for at least part of the day.

Applicants are required to pass a background check with a Vermont State Game Warden and apprentice-teach with a chief instructor before they will receive their full State of Vermont Hunter Education Instructor certification.

“Our hunter education instructors are all volunteers, donating their time to pass on a cherished Vermont tradition,” said Hunter Education Training Coordinator Nathan Lafont. “The hours our instructors put in will leverage federal dollars that enable the Hunter Education Program to function.”

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available for free upon request. Requests should be made as early as possible. Please call the of-

fice staff at 802-828-1193 (voice) or 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).



VTF&W Photo

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Lake Champlain Management Cooperative to Hold State of the Lake Meeting



The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative—a working group of fisheries professionals from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service—will host a State of the Lake meeting later this month for anglers and other individuals interested in the fisheries of Lake Champlain.

Where: SUNY Plattsburgh Hudson Hall, Lecture Room 106

Address: 317 Hudson Hall, Plattsburgh, NY 12901

When: Saturday, March 25, 9:00am - 1:00pm

This meeting is an opportunity for agency and university staff to provide updates on the status and trends of the fisheries and to hear from anglers.

Information will be provided on restoration, research, assessment, and other work that has been accomplished over the past year, as well as work planned for the coming year. Species to be discussed include lake trout, landlocked Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, muskellunge, walleye and bass. Time will be allotted for questions from the public.

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Waterfowl Season Public Hearings, March 14 & 16

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Public hearings on the status of migratory game bird populations and proposed 2023 migratory game bird hunting seasons for the interior zone of Vermont and Lake Champlain zone in New York and Vermont will be held Tuesday, March 14 and Thursday, March 16.

The annual Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board informational hearings will be held from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. on March 14 and March 16, 2023. The meetings will be held jointly by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Information to attend the hearings is as follows:

Tuesday, March 14, 6:30-9:00 p.m. (in person only)
Ticonderoga Fish and Game Club, County Route 56, Ticonderoga, NY 12883 (Across from Reale Construction)

Thursday, March 16, 6:30-9:00 p.m. (in person only)
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, 111 West Street, Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-4695. (To be held in the Act 250 conference room)

Waterfowl and webless migratory game bird hunters are asked to attend one of the hearings to share their preferences for season dates and bag limits as well as to provide any data to support their preferences.

Under Federal regulations, waterfowl seasons, bag limits, and shooting hours in the Lake Champlain Zone must be uniform throughout the entire zone. Waterfowl seasons in New York's portion of the Lake Champlain Zone must be identical to the waterfowl season in Vermont's portion of the Zone.

The proposed [2023 migratory bird hunting seasons](#) are available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website by typing "Board Rules" in the search window. A video explaining the proposal will be available on the website after the hearings. Comments may be provided until March 31 by emailing ANR.FWPublicComment@vermont.gov.

Comments received, as well as input and recommendations from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, will be reviewed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board in making final 2023 hunting season decisions.

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available at the meetings on request. Please include a description of the accommodation you will need as early as possible. For example, an interpreter must be requested at least two weeks in advance. Please send an e-mail to: Andrew.Bouton@vermont.gov.



Vermont Hunter Education Courses Starting in March

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

If you or someone you know would like to go turkey hunting this spring, but they have never taken a hunter education course, this is the time to act. Vermont's volunteer hunter education instructors are now holding a limited number of courses throughout the state.

A person must pass the [hunter education course](#) before they can purchase their first hunting license.

"Many of these courses are held in August and September, but our volunteer instructors will be holding courses this spring to help new turkey hunters as well as anyone else who wants to take a course now," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Hunter Education Coordinator Nicole Meier. "Our volunteer instructors teach because they are passionate about hunting and want to ensure that Vermont's safe hunting legacy continues."

"Volunteer instructors are the backbone of the Vermont Hunter Education Program. They are vital to Vermont's strong record of safe hunting. Hands-on and in-person learning from an experienced in-

structor are the best ways to become familiar with the hard-skills associated with safe hunting and firearms handling."

Anyone of any age is permitted to take the course. The class content, exam and paper and electronic materials are written at a grade 6 reading level.

"Courses are available in basic hunter education, bowhunter education and combination hunter-bowhunter education," said Meier. "We expect more classes to be posted in the future, so check our website frequently."

The courses will be listed as they become available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website. On the Home page, click on Hunt and then Hunter Education and [Find the Right Class for You](#). To register for a course, go to this link: <https://www.register-ed.com/programs/vermont>

A Vermont hunter education card entitles you to hunt in all 50 states, as well as some international locations.

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 to the student. Please include a description of the accommodation you will need and include your contact information. Requests should be made as early as possible. Please send an e-mail to: Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov 802-828-1193 (voice), 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).



Vermont hunter education courses are starting in March.

VTF&W photo

Three Game Warden Trainees Promoted to Full Game Warden After Seven Months of Community Rotations

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is pleased to announce that game warden trainees Louis Daversa, Noelle Kline, and John Truong were promoted to full game warden on Monday, February 13, 2023.

The promotion came after wardens Daversa, Kline, and Truong completed a seven-month series of rotations through Vermont communities in each region of the state. All game warden trainees also complete the four months of police academy required of sworn law enforcement officers in Vermont.

“Being a game warden requires first-hand experience with the diversity of Vermont communities,” said Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman.

“Game wardens may find themselves providing first response services in multiple languages with field translation tools, mitigating a bear incident in a residential neighborhood, or enforcing wildlife laws during Vermont’s hunting, fishing, and trapping seasons.”

Rotations allow game warden trainees to develop the necessary experience and skills for this range of duties. After rotations, game wardens are required to live in one of the towns within their service district.

Warden Daversa has been assigned to the Fair Haven District, Warden Kline has been assigned to the Randolph District, and Warden Truong has been assigned to the Barre District.



Wardens Daversa, Kline, and Truong (front row, left to right) at their promotion ceremony with Game Warden Colonel Justin Stedman, Agency of Natural Resource Deputy Secretary Maggie Gendron, Agency of Natural Resources Secretary Julie Moore, Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Christopher Herrick, and Game Warden Major Sean Fowler (back row, left to right).

VTF&W Photo

Vermonters Encouraged to Support Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery with Nongame Tax Checkoff

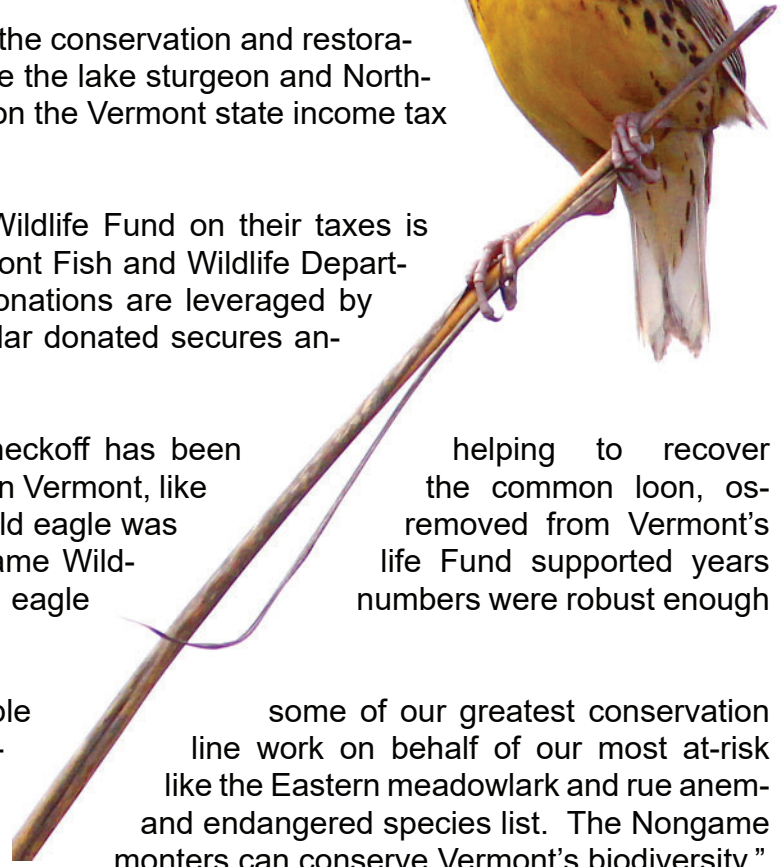
VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont's Nongame Wildlife Fund is essential to the conservation and restoration of some of Vermont's most at-risk wildlife, like the lake sturgeon and Northern long-eared bat. Thanks to a checkoff option on the Vermont state income tax form, donating to the fund is easy and impactful.

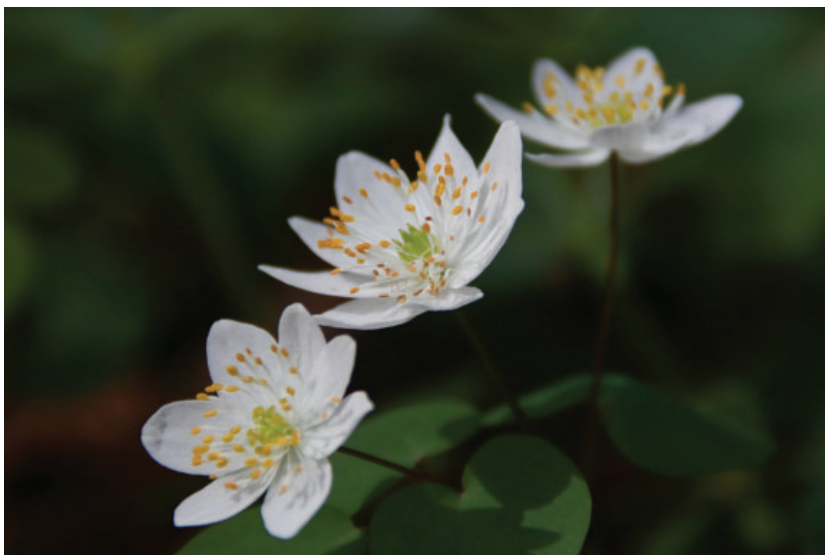
"Every dollar Vermonters donate to Nongame Wildlife Fund on their taxes is nearly tripled," says Rosalind Renfrew, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Wildlife Diversity Program Manager. "Donations are leveraged by matching federal grants, meaning that every dollar donated secures another \$2 in federal funds for Vermont's wildlife."

For over 35 years Vermont's Nongame Tax Checkoff has been helping to recover species that were once on the brink of extinction in Vermont, like the common loon, osprey, and peregrine falcon. Most recently, the bald eagle was removed from Vermont's list of endangered species in 2022. The Nongame Wildlife Fund supported years of monitoring and nest protection to ensure that eagle numbers were robust enough to declare the species recovered.

"Nongame Checkoff donations have made possible some of our greatest conservation success stories, and they continue to fund front-line work on behalf of our most at-risk species," said Renfrew. "Last year saw species like the Eastern meadowlark and rue anemone and endangered species list. The Nongame Checkoff is one of the most direct ways Ver-



some of our greatest conservation line work on behalf of our most at-risk like the Eastern meadowlark and rue anemone and endangered species list. The Nongame monters can conserve Vermont's biodiversity."



In 2022, the Eastern meadowlark (photo by Tyler Pockette) was listed as threatened and the rue anemone wildflower (photo by Warren Bielenberg/Great Smokey Mountain National Park) was listed as endangered. Both species will benefit from Nongame Wildlife Fund tax checkoff donations.

VTF&W Photos

Planning Your Out of State Turkey Hunts

by Brett Ladeau

Planning for this year's turkey hunts really started more than a year ago but this time of year the fine details start coming together. Being prepared but flexible is important when making plans. It seems every year that plans get altered by various reasons but trying to be as prepared as possible is as important as the hunt itself. As of this writing, I have plans to visit Maryland for a youth hunt April 15th with Chase and TJ Jordan, and then head to North Carolina and/or Virginia to hunt with a good friend. After a few days in North Carolina and Virginia I head to Oklahoma with my friend Jeff Hoke. We were high bidders on this hunt at my NWTF fundraising banquet last year. We will flyout together from Virginia. I've only passed through North Carolina and have never been to Oklahoma, so I am looking forward to these adventures. On my way home I will either try to fill a tag in Virginia or North Carolina, depending how those states go before we head to Oklahoma. If I had luck before we head to Oklahoma, my plan is to stop back in Maryland for a day or so and then on to Massachusetts for another day or so.



The key to all these plans is I have good contacts and friends that live in those states and will use their local knowledge to my advantage. I think making connections is the important part of a traveling turkey hunter. Between my competitive calling, NWTF volunteer work, and connections I have through helping others in Vermont, I know people that are willing to help no matter where I head to. My only issue is that I don't have enough time to go everywhere I want. Money and time always get in the way.

After I get home from Massachusetts, I will have a couple of days to get ready to take my grandson out on his first turkey hunt. I might even spend more time helping a few novice hunters get started. Giving back is as important as getting to hunt myself. I will hunt Vermont and New Hampshire with friends and family throughout May and will probably take a few day trips around the northeast on the weekends. I try



to pack as much turkey hunting in as I can. A lot of before work hunts mixed in too. I will end my season in early June in Maine.

Besides friends that live in the areas I plan to hunt; I often call the Wildlife division and ask pertinent questions on where to start my search for a place to hunt. I have hunted both public and private land, but if my focus was on public, I like to look at harvest data, if available, this helps me determine where pockets of turkey's live, but could also indicate increased hunting pressure. I review mapping applications and if I get lucky, I might get a tip/pin from a friend on where to start my hunt.

I like the comforts of a nice bed but have slept in my truck to save money. I've also been fortunate to stay at several people's homes couch surfing through my spring get-away. If I do get a hotel room, I am not looking for anything fancy. All I really need is a bed and shower. I have stayed at some shady places over the years, but they fit my budget and allowed me a shower and a comfortable bed to sleep in. I am usually only in the room for 6 to 8 hours to sleep and that's it, so I am not looking for amenities. Splitting travel expenses with a travel partner helps keep things inexpensive too. In my opinion it's more fun to have a friend along on the hunt. The draw back is that you are now looking for at least two cooperative turkeys on a 2-to-3-day hunt. This has not been a real issue but does add to the self-imposed pressure to succeed quickly and to take advantage of the op-



portunities when presented.

It's extremely rewarding when all the planning leads to a successful hunt, but things don't always come together. So far, I have hunted 21 states and need to return to 5. Misses on out of state hunts hurt more than home turf misses too. Kentucky, a state I need to return to, haunts me to this day. I had a perfect hunt on a distant gobbler. He closed the distance fast and when he got in range I missed. He did everything I needed him to do but I ended up blowing the opportunity. Kentucky is a beautiful state so going back is no big deal, but I would rather have gotten that turkey. Georgia, Maryland, Virginia, and Missouri are the other states I need to return to if I want to complete my 49 state US Super Slam. I've had opportunities in all state but Virginia but passed on legal birds in hopes to call in a long-beard. I don't regret those choices either, but I have friends that remind me that jakes count too. I am not opposed to shooting a Jake but usually pass. It just depends on how the hunt unfolds. Traveling and planning to travel is a lot of fun and has extended my time in the spring turkey woods. I might never get the 49 states, but I am going to have as much fun as I can trying. If you are traveling this spring, I hope there are gobblers gobbling and they come running to your calls. Best of luck to everyone this spring.



Save the date

by Ken Jones



As we move through our lives as hunters and years go past. We find ourselves looking at specific days of the season each year and remembering certain hunts on those days. I'm sure there's a tactic here that we could use some of these memories to track different periods of the rut in our areas. But I'll leave that to the guys that chase the moon phases and have lucky underwear and stuff like that.

For me one of those days in recent years has been Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. Here in Vermont our traditional 16 day rifle buck hunt always includes Thanksgiving weekend. In fact I believe it's law that the season dates cannot be changed to not include that weekend.

The season of 2015 I had two trail cam pics of a deer with two drop tines one broken rather short and the other making one side of the rack form a turkey track. These pics were in mid September. I'd also picked up one photo of a mega 8 point the morning before bow opener.

If memory serves I'd picked up a doe or two during bow season and as rifle came in I decided to put a good amount of time in trying to catch up with the drop tine or the mega 8.

First week of rifle had me working more than I wanted but I finished enough up to free up an extra couple days towards the end of season.

Wednesday morning day before Thanksgiving I set out for a full day in the woods and had sat for a while at daylight and moved a couple times throughout the morning taking short sits because it

was a bit noisy to still hunt. On my third sit of the day, my plan was to sit till 2pm and then go stage up near some food and sit till dark. At noon I heard the whistle from the factory in town bellow. It was a full moon that week and my thoughts started turning into that moon phase chaser. Thought how the experts say hunt the mid day during a full moon and I quickly surmised that in 40 years of deer hunting I might have killed 3 mid day deer.

At that exact moment I caught movement coming down the hardwood bank to my left and spotted a deer working down the hill. As I scoped it immediately I saw antlers and it was on!!! The deer reaches the bottom of the bank and gets on my level. Now he turns and starts coming my way. As I take a look at him I immediately notice the drop and say in my head, "hey I know you". He walks in to around 35 yards and stops looking kind of in my direction but maybe looking past me. I'm not a fan of frontal shots but if he's trying to figure me out, this could get messy in a hurry so I settled the crosshairs just below the base of his neck and squeeze.

When the smoke from the Ruger M77 50 cal muzzle-loader cleared he was tipping over stone dead. Definitely a highlight in my deer hunting life.



The author with his double drop and 6 point bucks taken a year apart on the same day of the season.

Fast forward one year to deer season 2016. I'd had some archery success on does here and in New York state. As rifle season came in I was on a project that didn't allow the time I had the previous year. I'd be working Thanksgiving week except for Thanksgiving and Friday.

On my way home Tuesday afternoon it was prime time and the corn fields on the road leading to my town were teeming with deer. One particular field had me thinking. If I could slip in there in the dark Wednesday morning I might catch some activity right at daylight and maybe catch a buck cruising. I could sit till 8 o'clock and then I'd be off to work.

I brought a gobbler lounge with me because I wasn't sure what or where I'd be able to set up. I found a spot in some tall grass on the edge of the cut corn that I could hide in and see a good portion of the field. I hadn't been there five minutes and I caught some white in the low light across the field that looked like the inside of a deer's hind leg. As I lifted the .280 Ruger M77 (I opted out of the muzzleloader because of the chance shots might get long) I saw the flicker of a tail!! Then he strolled out of the half light into the corn field. Once in the scope he was confirmed a legal buck and I started to take aim. I had trouble getting settled and it dawned on me. You're in a gobbler lounge, get in turkey position and rest the rifle on your knee!! I slid down into the seat and he must've heard my wool pants slide on the Cordura seat. He stopped broadside at maybe 125 yards looking in my direction. A mistake he'd soon wish he didn't make. With the rifle steady on my knee I settled behind his shoulder and squeezed. He hummed up and stumbled ahead ten yards or so. Realizing I had a repeater in my hand I racked the bolt and sent another one down range to him and that one

crumbled him. A beautiful wide six point buck on the same day of the season as the year before.

I now not so patiently await Wednesday the day before Thanksgiving in hopes that that's my lucky day or the moon phases is right or we're in the right point of the rut or..... You get my meaning. Sometimes it's nice to have a day you feel like you might have something on your side. Wednesday the day before Thanksgiving. I'll forever save that date.

Until next time. Be safe, have fun and shoot em up!!!

Three Record-Setting Fish Caught in Vermont in 2022

New records set for burbot and carp

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont Fish and Wildlife today announced that three fish caught in 2022 were certified as new state records.

In February, Swanton angler Matt Gingras landed a new Vermont record burbot while fishing on northern Lake Champlain in the West Swanton area. The burbot, caught on a live golden shiner set under a tip-up, weighed 10.9 pounds and measured 32 ½ inches long with a 17-inch girth. It beat the previous state record burbot caught in 2012 by 2.1 pounds. Unfortunately for Matt, his reign as the state record burbot holder lasted just two months. In early April while open water bass fishing on Lake Champlain around South Hero, Stephen Estes of Auburn, New Hampshire, caught an 11.0 pound burbot casting a Ned Rig. The fish measured 34 inches in length and had a 17 ½-inch girth.

In May of 2022, North Hero angler Jacob Kinney was out bowfishing at night for carp on Lake Cham-

plain and took a fish that weighed an incredible 63.4 pounds. This monster carp smashed the previous record set just last year by Bradley DiSorda – a fish that weighed 44 pounds 11 ounces, also taken on Lake Champlain by bow. Kinney's new record measured 39 ¼ inches in length while its girth was an immense 37 ¼-inches.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department fisheries biologist Shawn Good, who administers the state's Record Fish Program, says Kinney's carp is the heaviest fish ever entered in the program.

"The department started tracking state record fish in 1969, and this 63 pound carp is far and away the largest fish ever entered," said Good. "As a matter of fact, looking through the more than 1,200 entries received over the last 53 years, seven of the ten biggest fish on the list are carp. The other three fish in the Top 10 are a muskellunge, a lake trout and a channel catfish."

Good says with the increased interest in carp fishing in North American waters in the last 10-20 years, Kinney's giant really shines a light on the potential Lake Champlain has as a world class carp fishing destination.

"Bradley's record carp last year was no slouch at nearly 45 pounds," said Good. "But then Jacob's fish beating it by nearly 20 pounds is really just mind blowing."

Good says that at 265,000 acres and 120-miles long, Lake Champlain offers a nearly untapped carp population that receives very little attention.

"I think that die-hard carpers, whether they fish European style,



Carp_Kinney.jpg: Jacob Kinney took this 63.35 pound carp while bowfishing last May in the Alburgh area of Lake Champlain. It beat the existing carp record set in 2021 by nearly 20 pounds.

or go after them with fly gear, would be floored at what Champlain has to offer. The lake not only produces trophy sized fish but it also provides consistent action for carp in the 15 to 20 pound range. It truly is a carp angler's dream paradise."

Good says that for anglers looking for new challenges and adventures, Vermont provides many overlooked fishing opportunities.

"Vermont has an abundance of waters with a wide diversity of fish species that can be targeted and caught by hook-and-line, which speaks to both the variety and quality of sport fishing opportunities supported by healthy waters and good aquatic habitat," said Good.

A great example of that, according to Good, is seeing the burbot record broken three times in the last 10

years, and twice last year in just a two-month span.

"While fishing remains excellent for more traditional species such as bass, trout, salmon, and pike, there are so many other fish out there that can provide amazing action with real trophy potential. Fish like burbot, bowfin, drum, gar, fallfish, suckers -- the opportunities are endless," said Good.

"The three records set in 2022 just reinforce the notion that Vermont anglers are expanding their fishing pursuits and having a great time while doing it."

For more information on Vermont's fishing opportunities, Record Fish Program and more, visit Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Fish page at <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish>.



Vermont's burbot state record was broken twice in a 2-month period in early 2022. Matt Gingras landed his record 10.9 pound fish while icefishing in February, only to be beaten by 2 ounces in April when Stephen Estes landed an 11 pound burbot while bass fishing.

Governor Appoints New Fish and Wildlife Board Member

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Governor Phil Scott has appointed Paul F. Noel of Irasburg as the new Fish and Wildlife Board member from Orleans County.

Originally from the northern Adirondacks, Noel earned his bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from SUNY Cobleskill. His career includes a first job out of college at the Bald Hill Fish Hatchery in Newark, and a more than three-decade tenure at IBM.

Noel's many outdoor pursuits include fishing, hiking, hunting, nature photography, skiing, snow shoeing, and trapping. He currently volunteers as a chief instructor for the Fish and Wildlife Department's Hunter and Trapper Education Programs and Let's Go Fishing Program.

"I have devoted my life to the ethical, sustainable and biologically sound conservation of our natural resources," said Noel. "I look forward to continuing this work on the Fish and Wildlife Board."

The Fish and Wildlife Board is a citizen panel that sets Vermont's rules regulating fishing, hunting, and trapping. The board is informed by expert input from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department staff and guided by the department's mission. Board members serve six-year terms, with one board member from each of Vermont's 14 counties.

"The Board, the public, and Vermont's wildlife and wild places are fortunate to have Paul stepping into this role," said Commissioner Christopher Herrick. "Paul is a gifted teacher and a skilled hunter, naturalist, and trapper whose dedication to conservation is unmatched."

Game Wardens Respond to Waterbury Snowmobile Crash

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

On Saturday, February 18, the Vermont Warden Service responded to a snowmobile crash on the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) Trail 100 in the Waterbury section of Mt. Mansfield State Forest.

In addition to the Vermont Warden Service, Stowe Rescue, Stowe Mountain Rescue, and the Stowe Police Department also responded to the scene.

An investigation of the crash determined that Alisha Habershaw, 28, of Rhode Island, was operating a snowmobile on a guided tour. Habershaw lost control of the snowmobile while navigating a curve and was ejected from the vehicle when it crashed into a ledge west of the trail.

Habershaw was transported out of the woods by Stowe Rescue and Stowe Mountain Rescue. She received treatment for severe but non-life-threatening injuries at Copley Hospital in Morristown.

The snowmobile sustained heavy front-end damage and was removed from the trail by the guiding service.

WRITERS WANTED



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Lake Champlain Management Cooperative Announces Further Stocking Reduction for Lake Trout

Research suggests successful natural reproduction and establishment of wild lake trout population in Lake Champlain.

The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative (Cooperative)—a working group of fisheries professionals from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service—announced their decision to further reduce the number of stocked lake trout released annually in Lake Champlain.

This decision was prompted by a continued increase in natural reproduction and the documentation of multiple age classes of wild lake trout in the lake.

A stocking program was established in the 1950s to restore lake trout in Lake Champlain following the loss of native populations due to water quality and habitat changes. Although the lake was stocked with 82,000 fin clipped fish annually, there was little evidence of successful natural reproduction during the first 60 years of this program.

In the last 12 years, University of Vermont researchers have documented an increasing number of unclipped juvenile lake trout, suggesting successful natural reproduction and the establishment of a wild population. Additionally, surveys conducted by the Cooperative since 2020 have reported an increasing percentage of unclipped juvenile lake trout exceeding the threshold established in the Strategic Plan

for Lake Champlain Fisheries for reducing stocking.

In response to increasing wild reproduction, the Cooperative reduced lake trout stocking by 33 percent in 2021 to avoid overstocking and maintain quality trout populations.

Results from the 2022 assessment again indicate that the percentage of wild fish is above the established threshold for further stocking reduction. Sea lamprey wounding rates for lake trout have also met the Cooperative's target of less than 25 wounds per 100 fish. In response to this data, the Cooperative has decided to reduce the 2024 lake trout stocking by 50 percent and plan to stock 41,000 lake trout in fall of 2023. Current Lake Champlain stocking levels of other salmonid species (landlocked Atlantic Salmon, brown trout, and steelhead) will remain the same.

Members of the Cooperative, along with University of Vermont researchers, will continue conducting annual assessments and data collection to guide future decisions.

The observations of increasing wild lake trout production in Lake Champlain is exciting news and a testament to the progress that has been made toward the restoration of a self-sustaining lake trout population. This a positive sign for the future of the lake's ecology and the Lake Champlain fishing community will greatly benefit from these realized improvements.



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PARROSCUNRANCE

Public Hearings on Deer and Moose

March 20, 23, 24



The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board will hold public hearings on deer and moose management for 2023 on March 20, 23 and 24.

The hearings will include results of Vermont's 2022 deer seasons and prospects for deer hunting next fall as well as an opportunity for people to provide their

observations and opinions about the current status of the deer herd.

The hearings will also include a review of the 2022 moose hunting seasons and an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the number of moose permits recommended for 2023.

The three in-person hearings will begin at 6:30 p.m. at these locations:

March 20 -- Lake Region High School, 317 Lake Region Rd, Orleans, VT 05860

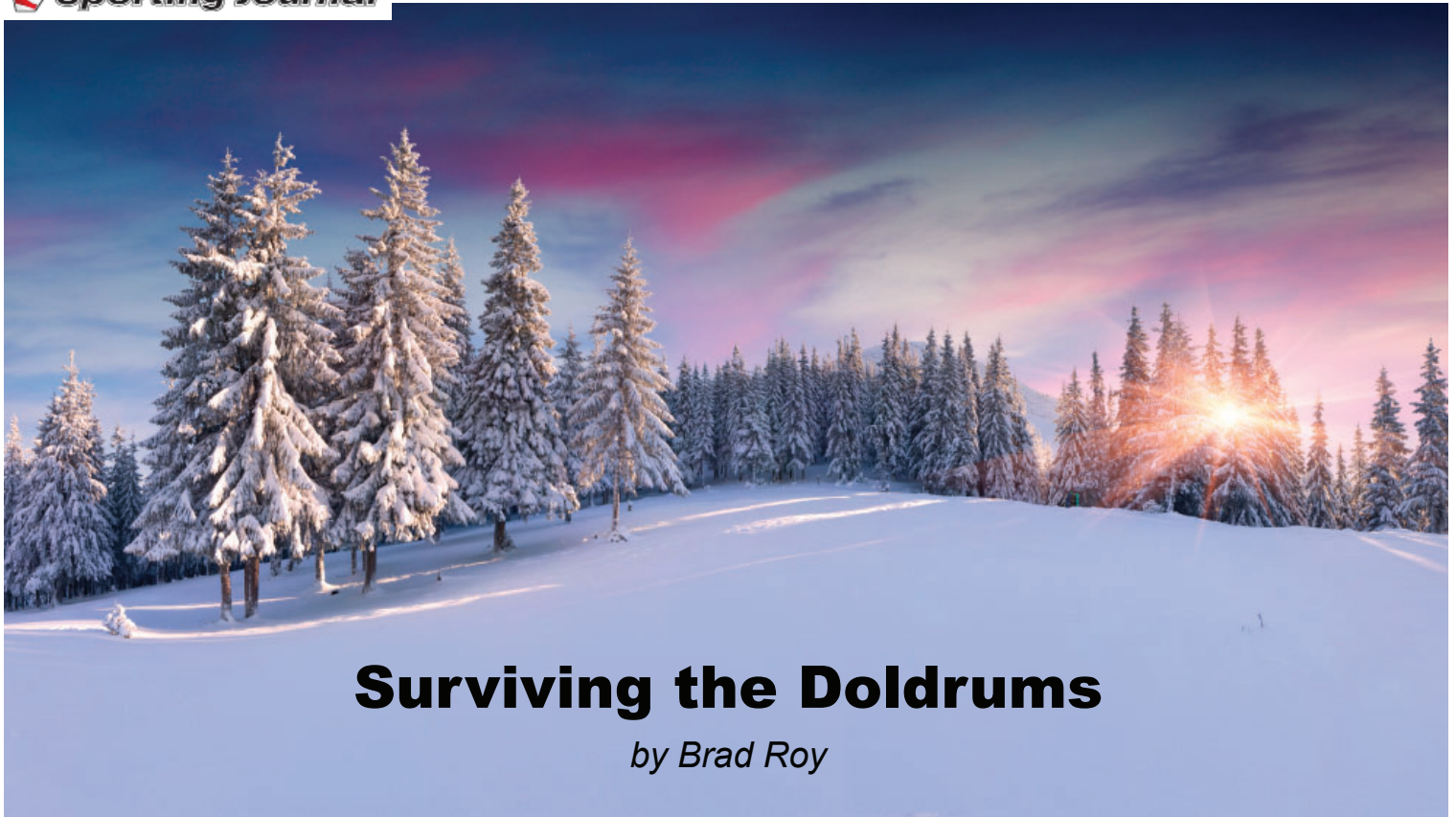
March 23 – Woodstock Union High School, 100 Amsden Way, Woodstock, VT 05091

March 24 – Manchester Community Library, 138 Cemetery Ave., Manchester Center, VT 05255

Pre-recorded videos of the moose and deer presentations that will be given at these meetings will be available by going to the “Public Hearings Schedule” on Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s home page. The Fish and Wildlife Department’s 2023 Moose Season Recommendation is also available on that page.

In addition to the public hearings, anyone can leave a comment on the proposals by emailing ANR.FW-PublicComment@vermont.gov. Comments on moose must be received by March 31 and for deer by May 12.

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Surviving the Doldrums

by Brad Roy

Large, fluffy flakes of snow seem to swallow me up as the bucket of my tractor slowly floats along the driveway, moving an ever-growing pile of winter in front of me towards the ditch line. It is true, I am in the midst of unforsaken wintertime with no light at the end of the tunnel. A warmer than average winter has left the lake ice in a constant state of concern, keeping my ice fishing endeavors to less than the bare minimum; and until recently, snowshoes have only made for a more difficult wander through the woods due to the lack of snowpack on the ground.

Life this time of year in Vermont can feel eerily similar to that of Milo's in the classic children's book "The Phantom Tollbooth." Poor Milo finds himself bored by the world around him, and after a few pages of fantastical children's writing that includes a magical toll booth, he ends up in a strange land he couldn't have imagined in his wildest dreams. As the young man navigates this odd new reality, much like during winter in Vermont, a lack of stimulation triggers an onset of daydreaming and driving which lands him in "A colorless place where nothing ever

happens...the Doldrums." Here, Milo discovers the most uneventful place he's ever seen, where there's nothing to do, and little hope exists for the future.

Now, Vermont in the winter isn't quite that bad, but in my personal case, I wouldn't say it's great, either. Despite having persevered through the most seasonally depressing time of year surviving on coffee and root vegetables, I now move snow around the yard while beginning to mistake the numbness in my frozen cheeks for the embrace of warm sunshine on an early spring day. As the whine of the tractor's hydrostatic transmission lulls me into a trancelike state of oblivion, like Milo on his journey I begin to daydream of the spring fishing season just around the corner...

Early season fishing is one of my favorite times of year to hit the water. While the cold is releasing its firm grasp on lakes and ponds in our area, their wintertime lids are broken to bits and begin to dissolve away in a similar fashion as the fat cap on last

night's soup pot while it re-warms for lunch. As this transition takes place, seasonally warm springtime runoff and sunlight drive the temperatures in shallow water upward at a pace far exceeding deeper water. Many species flock to the turbid, warm and shallow water in search of food, heat, and love, making it a prime time to get out and angle for a wide-variety of fish. Common sportfish like bass, trout, and pike can be readily found in the shallows this time of year, but a mixed bag of other species like bowfin, carp, catfish, and even eels may be caught right alongside them. While these some of these species aren't typically targeted in this area, catching them can be an absolute blast, particularly on light tackle from a kayak or canoe.

Capitalizing on this early season fish fest is often best done at first ice-out. During this time of year, many anglers still haven't spooled their reels or dug their life vests from the garage for the upcoming season, but warm spring sunshine can make for a downright pleasant day on the water despite still frigid water temps. Large fish are chasing baitfish as well as working their way to spawning grounds. As their metabolisms and tenacity rise with the water temperatures, their likelihood of being caught does too. Sliding along the shoreline in a kayak or canoe offers an easy, low-budget method to take advantage of the smorgasbord of species waiting to be caught, provided it's done safely (think life vests, fishing with a buddy, and being safety smart). I like using simple, slow moving baits like spinners and spoons to catch predatory fishes' attention, but it's tough to beat live bait fishing with worms or minnows when it comes to bringing in a variety of species.

As the pile of snow grows exponentially in front of me, I continue thinking about this time of year with great fondness. The

thought of warm sunshine on my face, frogs beginning their spring chorus in the shallows, and the abundance of fish swimming around my kayak as I quietly patrol the shallows. Aside from the great fishing, it's not uncommon to see springtime activity from birds, beavers, muskrats, and other wildlife as well if you pay close attention. If you're a trapper like myself, these fishing trips can also provide great pre-season scouting for the fall season ahead. All these warm thoughts are filling my mind, but then with a sudden WHAM, my tractor abruptly lurches to a complete stop. It looks like all that spring dreaming may have caught up with me as I attempt to maneuver out of the ditch I just drove into. Suddenly I reorient myself into the middle of what looks like the aftermath of a packing peanut factory explosion and think "Oh well, it was a nice thought while it lasted. Don't say there's nothing to do in the doldrums..."

Soon, we will have officially made it through the doldrums. The sun will shine high and warm once again, and the fishing will heat up quickly! It's an opportunity that only comes around once a year, and something to get us all through these remaining cold, dark winter days.



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