

Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume VI, Issue 17 * May 2023



**Sydney Ladeau
with her turkey**

Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival on May 7

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

If you're a wildlife enthusiast itching for spring then be sure to check out the Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival on Sunday, May 7, on the Connecticut River in Rockingham, Vermont -- presented by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society.

This is a family-friendly festival with an emphasis on the wildlife and natural resources of Vermont. The festival will feature live animals, nature-focused walks, kids' activities, presentations, and demonstrations by environmental and nature organizations, and more -- all focused on getting outdoors and enjoying nature.

"The Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival gives participants a chance to learn about our native wildlife and the importance of conserving their habitats so future generations can appreciate them as well," said MaryBeth Adler, a state wildlife biologist with Vermont Fish and Wildlife.

Activities are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The suggested donation is \$2.00 for an individual and \$5.00 for a family. Pets are not allowed.



Herricks Cove is located just off Route 5, less than three miles north of Bellows Falls.

The Vermont Sporting Journal

is published bimonth

Advertising, editorial and circulation mailing address is:

The Vermont Sporting Journal 29 Strong Road * Orange, Vermont 05641
or email us at: vermontsportingjournal@gmail.com

Letters, manuscripts and photographs should be mail to the above address.

If you would like submitted materials returned, please enclose a SASE.

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Deer Ages Available on VTF&W Website

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Hunters who provided the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department with a tooth from their deer can now find out how old their deer was by visiting the [department's website](#).

A total of 1,820 usable deer teeth were received from successful hunters in 2022. When added to the 935 deer examined by biologists during the youth and regular November seasons, the department was able to get accurate ages for 2,755 deer.

"We are thankful to the thousands of hunters who supported our deer management efforts by providing us with a tooth from their deer," said Deer Project Leader Nick Fortin. "This age information helps us estimate deer population size and assess the health of deer. It is also critically important for understanding the effects of new hunting regulations on the deer population and buck age structure."

The oldest deer harvested was a 19-year-old doe taken in Pittsford. The oldest buck was 10 years old



VTF&W photo by John Hall

and was taken in Lincoln.

The [deer ages](#) can be found on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website with [a link from the home page](#).

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Winners Announced for K-12 Student Fish Art Contest

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is pleased to announce winners of the 2023 Vermont Student Fish Art Contest in partnership with Wildlife Forever.

The department received 311 submissions from Vermont students in grades K-12. Participants selected a fish species found in Vermont waters and submitted an illustration and one-page creative essay on the species.

“The Fish Art Contest is a way for Vermont students to use their creativity and strengthen their knowledge and connection with our environment,” said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Education Specialist Corey Hart. “This year’s artworks included many less-familiar species like the brown bullhead and slimy sculpin, as well as better known species like the brook trout. The results speak to the diversity of life in our aquatic ecosystems, and our students’ curiosity to explore that diversity.”

The following winners were selected for four age categories:



Fish Art Contest submissions featured species as well known as the eastern brook trout (courtesy Sloane Urette) as well as less widely familiar fish like the brown bullhead (courtesy Hannah White).

VTF&W photo

Grades: K-3

- 1st: Lyra Heft: pumpkinseed
- 2nd: Raine Chaleff: northern pike
- 3rd: Dorothy Krahn: smallmouth bass

Grades 4-6:

- 1st: Victor Stahler: pickerel
- 2nd: Emelia Brothers: walleye
- 3rd: Siler Russ: mottled sculpin

Grades: 7-9

- 1st: Hannah White: brown bullhead
- 2nd: Alexander Webber: northern pearl dace
- 3rd: Elizabeth Palfalv: slimy sculpin

Grades: 10-12

- 1st: Sloane Urette: eastern brook trout

Winners will receive a fishing rod and reel, and their art will be entered into a selection process to be featured in the department’s forthcoming 2024 Fishing Guide and Regulations publication.

Turkey Hunting Safety Tips from VTF&W

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Hunting safely during Vermont's spring turkey hunting seasons is easy if you follow tips issued by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Christopher Herrick strongly encourages all hunters to have a safe turkey hunt. "A successful hunt is one which sees ALL hunters returning home safely afterward," said Herrick.

With the opening of spring turkey hunting for youths and novices on April 29 and 30 and the regular season May 1-31, Fish and Wildlife urges hunters to consider these safety tips:

- Never shoot unless you are absolutely sure of your target and what is beyond it. Look for a beard as only turkeys with beards are legal during the spring season.
- Never stalk a gobbling turkey. Your chances of getting close are poor, and you may be sneaking up on another hunter.
- Avoid red, white, blue, or black in clothing and equipment. A tom turkey's head has similar colors.
- Stick with hen calls. A gobbler call might draw in other hunters.
- Avoid unnecessary movement. This alerts turkeys and attracts hunters.
- Don't hide so well that you impair your field of vision.
- Wrap your turkey in blaze orange for the hike back to your vehicle.
- Always sit with your back against a tree trunk, big log or a boulder that is wider than your body. This protects you from being accidentally struck by pellets fired from behind you.
- Place decoys on the far side of a tree trunk or a rock. This prevents you from being directly in the line of fire should another hunter mistakenly shoot at your decoy.
- Wear hunter orange while moving from set-up to set-up. Take it off when you are in position.
- If you see another hunter, call out to them, but don't move until they respond. You may ruin the hunt, but you may have avoided injury.
- Make sure you know your effective range when shooting. For the most clean and ethical shot, make sure your shotgun is patterned and you are shooting within your effective range,



VTF&W photo by
Joshua Morse

Vermont Master Angler Program 2022 Annual Report Released

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has released the [Vermont Master Angler Program 2022 Annual Report](#) with 1,064 entries and 79 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. An-

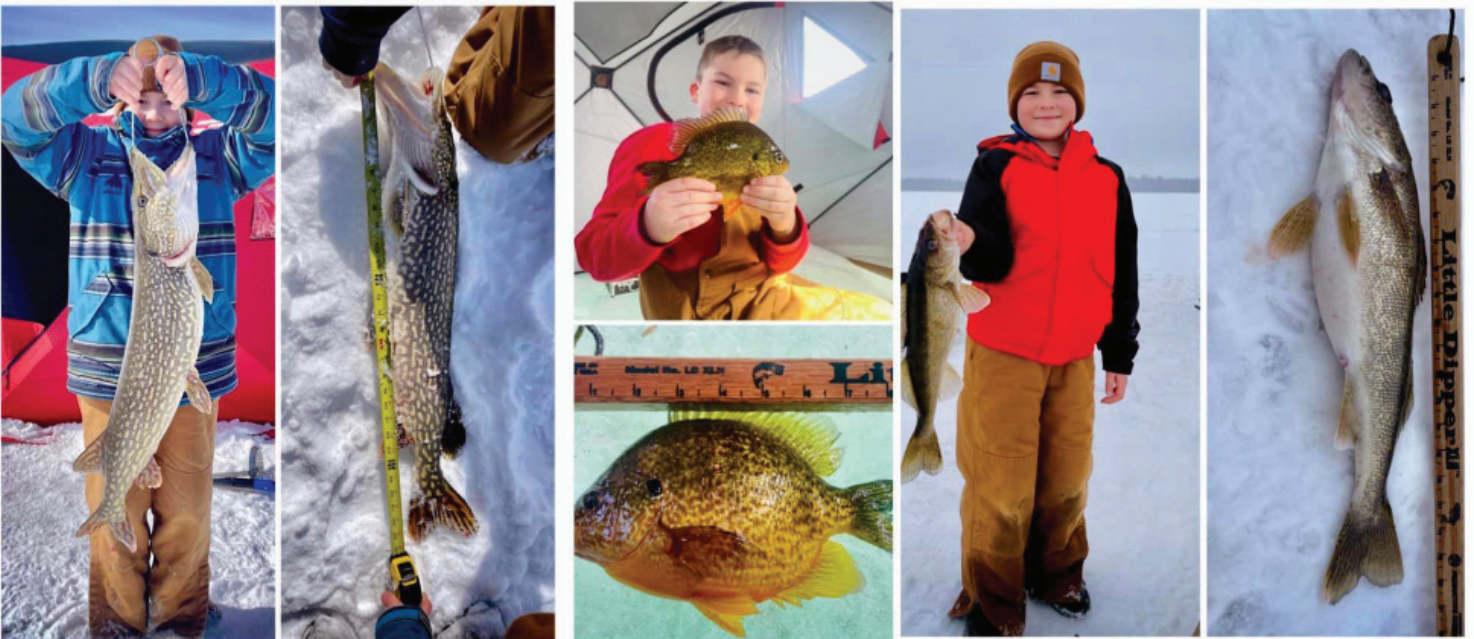
glers demonstrating the skill necessary to catch multiple species that all exceed the minimum qualifying lengths in the same calendar year are recognized as "Vermont Master Anglers" and receive a unique one-of-a-kind lapel pin at the end of the year. To qualify for the annual Vermont Master Angler Pin, an angler must submit qualifying entries for five or more species within a calendar year.

2022 was another successful year for the program, with 1,064 entries approved, 299 of which were from youth anglers. There were also 79 Vermont Master Angler award recipients in 2022 -- 25 of which were youth anglers. Youth anglers have a slightly lower minimum qualifying length for each species.

"We were glad to see another successful year for the program in 2022, with the second highest number of entries since the program began in 2010," said state fisheries biologist Shawn Good.

Good says the program provides the department with information on the quality of fishing 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 families with a little extra incentive to get outside and enjoy some quality time together on the water.”

St. Albans angler Derrick Farmer and his 11-year old son, Colby, agree. Participating for the first time in 2022, they found the Master Angler Program got them out fishing more often, kept their interest up and gave them goals to shoot for.

“This is such a cool program,” said Derrick. “We put in quite a bit of effort overall, but the Master Angler Program kept Colby engaged and wanting to learn how to target different species.”

Colby was able to catch 7 different trophy fish species in 2022, exceeding the minimum number of 5 species required to earn his Master Angler pin. A walleye, a pumpkinseed sunfish, a northern pike, and a yellow perch were all caught while ice fishing, and Colby added three more species – lake trout, smallmouth bass and freshwater drum – during the 2022 open water fishing season.

“His goal this year is to do it again, but with different species than last year,” added Farmer.

To see the full 2022 Vermont Master Angler Program Annual Report, visit Fish and Wildlife’s website at: <https://tinyurl.com/4uuwt6px>

Vermont’s Master Angler Program had the second highest number of participants in 2022 since the program began in 2010, with 1,164 entries and 79 award recipients, 25 of which were youth anglers.

VTF&W photo



But First, Habitat

by Brad Roy



Spring is here! The long, cold, and dreary days of winter have given way to increasing sunshine and longer days. The surge of energy that accompanies this time of year has yet to be rivaled by even the most sinister concoction of energy drink you could find at a local gas station. Yes, us sportsmen and women are chomping at the bit to get back out afield, whether it be to scout and hunt spring gobblers, clean up debris fallen into our camp trails and around old deer stands, or hang cameras to begin taking a careful inventory of potential suspects for this fall. The time of year has arrived when we all have shaken the winter chill from our bones and traded it for a brow wet with sweat from hot rays of sunshine.

The urge to get outdoors and enjoy the nice weather is a constant this time of year, but I urge you all to stop before your next outing to scout, hunt, or fish and remind yourself, "But First, Habitat."

You see, we all learned quite plainly in our hunter's education classes the importance of habitat. But much like many other terms we are reminded

of on a consistent basis, its meaning and value can become lost as we grow in our lives in the outdoors.

With an end-goal of sustainably harvesting animals on a consistent and ongoing basis, as well as oftentimes trying to best personal records, many of us fall into the trap of focusing solely on how to increase our own success afield. While this method can work for a while, it inevitably will lead to a "Tragedy of the Commons" situation if it's followed by all.

For those not familiar with the premise behind the Tragedy of the Commons, it is an economical and ecological principle that suggests that when an unregulated common resource is available to many, the resource is destined for failure. This peril exists as the inclination of mankind as a whole is to capitalize on the resource in order to gain the most personal benefit. This remains true even if that means destroying the resource through exploitation in the long run.

The often-used example is where a piece of common pasture exists in a town where every farmer maintains access to let their animals roam and

graze it. In a perfect world, each farmer would be allotted an equitable number of animals to graze the shared parcel in such fashion as to limit the total amount of grazing pressure so the resource may maintain its use in perpetuity. The “Tragedy of the Commons” principle, however, tells us that the inclination of the people will lead at least one farmer to graze slightly more heavily than the others. This would frustrate the rest, who would then begin to capitalize on the resource at an exponentially faster rate in order to ensure they get what they need before the resource is depleted. This continues on until the pasture is barren and useless to everyone.

“Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons”

— Garrett Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons*

Thankfully, we live within the most successful model of wildlife management to ever exist on earth, which utilizes regulation as just one tenant of its foundation. This regulation maintains the “commons” in a way that allows it to continue to function for all of us. However, there is one limiting factor which decides just how MUCH we are all entitled to, and that is habitat.

Habitat, or “the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism,” is all around us. We know habitat as places like winter deer yards, marshes and wetlands for waterfowl, and so much more; but it also includes any ecological “space” which can be occupied by plants and animals. Habitat is the single most

important requirement to maintain populations of wildlife, and it’s time we as a group spent more time improving it.

Installing food plots, managing your hunting properties forest cover, and abiding by all the rules and regulations when hunting, fishing, and trapping are great tools to ensuring good habitat remains in the future, but as sportspeople in 2023, we need to work harder and do more than just look out for ourselves. Our voice in the world seems to be getting ever quieter, and we face more vocal opposition to our science-based way of life than ever before.

In light of this, we must work diligently to make our work seen at a broader scale by getting even more involved in habitat projects and working hard to see them through. Sportspeople need to be stepping up and volunteering on municipal boards, conservation committees, and speaking out to their local selectboards and zoning boards when issues arise that could impact habitat. We can donate our time and unique expertise to projects supported by groups like VT Fish & Wildlife, the VT Trappers Association, VT Bear Hound Association, and others guided by conservation goals, and finally, we can utilize our own abilities in life to assist with maintaining, creating, and restoring habitat. That assistance may take the form of making informed voting decisions at the local, state, and national level, contacting leg-

islators, and working with groups dedicated to habitat and wildlife conservation and management, among others.

We are living in an ever-changing world, but

the “Tragedy of the Commons” remains a constant threat if we fall into complacency and only consider our own goals. It is as critical now as it has ever been to pause before we spend time and effort on our own outdoor pursuits and say to ourselves, “But First, Habitat.

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 2023 season. This year, the GMCC Kehoe 'workcation' weekend will be May 6-7 and the GMCC Buck Lake workcation weekend will be May 20-22.

"We look forward to workcation weekend all winter long," said Education Specialist Hannah Phelps. "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 today's youth."

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 or call 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 Fish & Wildlife is asking for volunteers to help at its conservation camp work weekends -- May 6-7 at the Bomoseen camp and May 20-21 at the Buck Lake camp.

VTF&W photos by Alison Thomas

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

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 and Wildlife's summer course for teachers and other educators will be held July 16-21 at Buck Lake in Woodbury, VT.

VTF&W photo

Vermont Wildlife Course for Educators **July 16-21**

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont's popular fish and wildlife summer course for teachers and other educators will be held July 16-21, 2023.

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 38th 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."

Tuition is \$710 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).



Sometimes Not Roosted is Roasted

By Ken Jones

It was a Wednesday evening in late May. I'd been dealing with a mixed flock of turkeys for two mornings and we seemed to be playing hopscotch. The long beard in this bunch roosted high on me Monday and I set up low. Tuesday, you guessed it. I set up high, he roosted low. Wednesday it was the Ole switcheroo all over again. But this evening offered me the opportunity to give roosting this bird a try.

I arrived at the farm a little before twilight. I walked up to a high vantage point where I new I'd be heard from many directions. I focused my best natural voice "who cooks for you, who cooks for you all" at the knob or hopscotch court if you will and low and behold Mr. fabulous ate it up and responded with a thunderous gobble. Giving up his location low on the knob. I knew this farm well. In fact, I could picture the bull pine I thought he was in.

My approach in the morning would have to be early and quiet. I figured him to be just inside the tree line off of a tractor road entrance. I slid in and placed a hen decoy in the road just in front of me. As the sky became Grey with the awakening day it was a blue Jay that set him off. Boy did I call this one. He indeed was in the big bull pine I expected and the base of that pine was about twenty five yards away. A few hens chimed in along with the jakes and they started pitching out into the field. This had me concerned because I hadn't set up for them to do this.

About the time I thought I'd blown it big wing beats and snapping limbs started sounding from the top of the pine. A combination of my hen decoy being the first thing he saw and gobbler tendencies got him to jump straight down to the tractor road and in immediate gun range when his feet hit the ground. When he stood tall to admire his new girlfriend, the old Winchester reported and this match was over. Check mate!!!

Fast forward to 2023 youth weekend in Vermont. I had a buddy from New York state who's young son didn't meet the age requirements to hunt his home state but at ten years old he'd completed at least one grand slam and taken over thirty gobblers in various states around the country. Having started his turkey slaying career at age four he became known to us as the "car seat killer".

Knowing I had a seasoned vet coming to hunt with me and having the honor of being part of this young man's portfolio. I scouted diligently for the week coming up and had plans b,c,d and e set up if needed. All that was left was to get one roosted so we'd have a plan A. After hitting all the spots it was one of those nights when they just wouldn't talk.

Morning came and I decided on a spot where I figured we'd be pretty much alone and the birds in there weren't as visible as the other farms. After we met at the rendezvous point. The little man was catching a few z's after an under the lights little league game had him up a little late. So, I had them follow me to the spot.

We made our way to the back ridge where gobblers were most audible. After a few distant reports from down the ridge, we finally heard some birds in our wheelhouse. As I led them down an atv trail towards the gobblers, we rounded a bend and were suddenly right tight to them!!! Quickly taking up position we began the soft tree talk to let them know we were there. With hens and gobblers answering soon there were Jake yelps coming from on the ground below us. They soon made their way into my back pocket so to speak as they slipped in next to me about five yards trying to sneak off with the new girls in town.

The big birds and the hens had different thoughts and once on the ground I could tell they were go-

ing through the yard of my friend's deer camp. We Quickly got up and slipped over there. As we approached the yard we hung back, and I scratched on a pot call and they answered just up behind the outhouse in a thicket. Dad suggested they sneak to the outhouse and see if we couldn't get one of them to slip back just enough. I stayed back and continued calling to at least distract them while dad and the "csk" moved into position. I even pulled the walking away calling trick but the gobbling didn't seem to budge. I was formulating a plan to get around them to an area I thought we could call them to when I heard the unmistakable sound of snapping sticks associated with someone moving in the brush. I accessed that they were moving on the birds when I heard "putt, putt, putt" and I thought uh oh. A couple seconds later the

young man's twenty gauge reported followed by the unmistakable sound of a flopping gobbler!!!! The car seat killer had struck again!!!

I blew an owl hooter so much and so hard in there the night before, I had to push my eyes back into the sockets!!! Yet, there they were. Gobbling like nobody's business the next morning.

Rooting can sure mean roasted. Especially if you have an exceptional understanding of the area you've roosted in. But quiet evenings don't always mean a quiet morning.

Until next time, be safe, have fun and shoot'em up!!!!

The author, "The Car Seat Killer" and his dad with his 34th and 2023 Vermont youth gobbler.





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Vermont Habitat Stamp Raises \$450,000 for Conservation in Fiscal Year 2022

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The [Vermont Habitat Stamp](#) raised \$221,337 in 2022 and leveraged a \$228,567 federal match, totaling just under \$450,000 for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's land conservation and habitat improvement efforts.

"This is our second strongest year for the Habitat Stamp since the program was established in 2015," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Lands and Habitat Program Manager John Austin. "The growing support for habitat conservation and enhancement reflected in healthy Habitat Stamp sales over the past eight years is encouraging."

The Vermont Habitat Stamp is designed to allow anyone who cares about conservation to help improve habitat for species as diverse as pollinators, songbirds, migratory fish, and large mammals. Habitat Stamp funds go towards both land acquisitions adding to the department's more than 130,000 acres of Wildlife Management Area (WMA) properties, and implementing habitat improvement projects across the state.

In 2022, the department spent \$168,532 from the Habitat Stamp Fund. These dollars contributed to removing dams to increase stream connectivity for brook trout, controlling the spread of invasive plants that diminish the quality of shelter and forage for native insects and birds, and expanding the [Otter Creek WMA](#) in Wallingford.

The Habitat Stamp was inspired by [Vermont Migratory Waterfowl Stamp](#) and [Federal Duck Stamp](#) programs, which raise funds for wetland conservation from waterfowl hunters who are required to display a stamp along with their license. The Habitat Stamp is a way for conservationists who do not typically purchase a hunting, fishing, or trapping license to contribute to the state's habitat conservation efforts.

"Although we can be proud of the Habitat Stamp Fund's accomplishments this year, there is still room to grow," said Austin. "We especially invite Vermonters who do not contribute to conservation by buying a hunting, fishing, or trapping license to consider buying a habitat stamp. It is one of the most direct ways to funnel your dollars to supporting biodiversity in our state."



In fiscal year 2022, the Vermont Habitat Stamp funded land acquisition in Wallingford to expand the Otter Creek Wildlife Management Area.

VT F&W Photo

Vermont's Trophy Trout Stocking for 2023

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont's "Trophy Trout" stocking program for 2023 includes nine river sections and 37 lakes and ponds receiving the two-year old trout, some over 18 inches long.

"The Trophy Trout program provides exciting fishing opportunities for anglers of all ages and skill levels," said Vermont's Director of Fisheries Eric Palmer. "Trophy rainbow and brown trout will be stocked in the Black, Winooski, Lamoille, Missisquoi, Walloomsac, and Passumpsic Rivers as well as East and Otter creeks while trophy brook trout will be stocked into the Deerfield River. Large two-year old brookies and rainbows will also be stocked in many lakes and ponds."

Trout harvest season opened this year on April 8 and will continue through October 31. There is no length limit and the daily creel limit is two trout for the Trophy Trout stream sections listed below.

Lake and pond stocking began in April as ice cleared while river stocking began at the start of May and will continue through the month. Anglers



Trophy trout like these are being stocked this spring in eight Vermont river sections and 25 lakes and ponds.

VTF&W photo by John Hall

can check Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com) to see the stocking that has occurred and see the lakes and ponds that are being stocked with trophy trout. Click on "Fish" and then "Fish Stocking Schedule."

Black River: along Rt. 131 in Weathersfield and Cavendish, from Downers covered bridge upstream, approximately four miles, to the next bridge across the river, the Howard Hill Bridge.

Deerfield River: in Searsburg - from the downstream edge of the East Branch Trailhead Bridge upstream 4 miles to the downstream edge of the bridge on Somerset Road near junction with Forest Road 71

East Creek: in Rutland City – from the confluence with Otter Creek upstream, approximately 2.7 miles, to the top of the Patch Dam in Rutland City.

Lamoille River: from the downstream edge of the bridge on Route 104 in the Village of Fairfax upstream, approximately 1.6 miles, to the top of the Fairfax Falls Dam in Fairfax.

Otter Creek: in Danby and Mt. Tabor - From the Vermont Railway Bridge north of the fishing access upstream, approximately 2 miles, to the Danby-Mt. Tabor Forest Rd. Bridge (Forest Road # 10).

Missisquoi River: in Enosburg and Sheldon, from the downstream edge of Kane Road (TH-3) bridge upstream, approximately 5.7 miles, to the top of the Enosburg Falls Dam in Enosburg Falls.

Passumpsic River: in St. Johnsbury, from the top of the Gage Dam upstream to the top of the Arnold Falls Dam. This section includes the Moose River from its confluence with the Passumpsic River upstream to the Concord Avenue bridge.

Walloomsac River: From the Vermont/New York border in Bennington upstream to the top of the former Vermont Tissue Plant Dam (downstream of Murphy Road) in Bennington.

Winooski River: in Duxbury and Waterbury, from the top of Bolton Dam upstream to the Route 2 Bridge east of Waterbury Village. This section includes the Little River: from its confluence with the Winooski River upstream to the Route 2 bridge.

For fishing regulation details, see the "Vermont 2023 Fishing Guide & Regulations" available where licenses are sold, or use the online fishing regulations tool at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/486>.

Vermont fishing licenses are available on Fish and Wildlife's website and statewide from license agents.

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.

Fish and Wildlife 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 young 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 (for example, the adult has been hit by a car) 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

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Turkey Road Trip 2023

by Brett Ladeau

If it seems like all I talk about is wild turkey, it's because all I think about is wild turkey. Even when I am deer hunting or hunting other species all I am thinking about wild turkey. I have deer hunted since I was a kid and still love it but the turkey hunting addiction bit me hard in 1997, at age 29, and gets worse with every passing year. It's an addiction that I don't want the cure for. I am writing this on the eve of the Vermont youth and novice weekend and have dreams of a filled tag or two over the next couple of days.

My spring 2023 is off to a great start as I was able to travel to turkey hunt already. I started in Virginia on April 8, 2023. I have hunted with my friend Jeff Hoke in 2017 and 2022 but wasn't able to fill a tag. I didn't expect a whole lot this trip down but figured it beat wondering if I could have gotten one if I went, plus I enjoy spending time with Jeff. We usually have a good time and fill some tags too. We had tried a few different areas my first two trips down, but this time Jeff said he had some turkeys located on public land not about an hour and half drive from where he lives. We checked some property closer to his house the night before the season but didn't hear anything, so we decided to make the drive down to where he had heard the birds on public land. Sure enough, as we were walking in in the dark one gobbled on the roost. We were in the game. We got as close as we dared and set up. We worked the birds for a while, and it sounded like they

were inching closer to us but for some reason the flock scattered. Birds flew in multiple direction and two landed in trees about 80 yards from where we were sitting. One gobbler and one hen. The gobbler eventually flew in the direction of our truck and the hen flew in a different direction along the creek. We gave it a bit of time at the scatter area, but nothing was sounding off, so we decided to take a swing up to where they were and do a little scouting in case we needed to come back. It took us about an hour or more to make the swing back towards the truck and in the general direction the gobbler flew. We had made it to the wood road we had walked in on and saw some fresh scratching that wasn't there on our way in. I was calling periodically on my box call every hundred yards or so and finally he gobbled just down over the bank.

I scrambled to get into position and within a few minutes I could hear him spit drumming, but the wind was messing with my hearing so I couldn't pinpoint where he was. I called again and he gobbled just out of sight. I was able to make my final adjustment just as I saw the tip of his

fan and white topped head coming up the hill. He was within range, but the woods were thick on the edge of wood road. I was telling myself to be patient and not mess this up. As he dropped down into a dip I got ready and as soon as he stepped up on the knob he popped out of strut and stretched his neck out. I was already on him and at around 15 yards I knew he was within range, so I decided to take the shot. After the recoil settled, I was happy to see my first Virginia turkey down for the count. Still not sure what scattered them, but it ended up working to our advantage. He had been separated from his hens and was lonely, so he was receptive to the call. The key was that we gave him time to settle down before we headed his way. A happy ending to a two-day trip to Virginia.





On April 14th I drove to Maryland to hunt with Tj Jordan and his son Chase for a Maryland youth hunt. I usually travel with both on my spring adventure but this year we couldn't align our schedule, so this was the first opportunity to get a chance to hunt together. We hunted with our friend Ryan from the area, and he had put us in an area that he had seen several turkeys at. It was a rainy morning, so we set up a couple of ground blinds to stay dry. Nothing gobbled close on the roost, but I thought I had heard one distant gobble before flydown. First bird out to the field was a hen. She eventually worked her way to the decoys and was agitated by their presents and started getting vocal. Soon, we heard a gobble in the distance, but the birds were

behind us. We called and the responded with a re-sounding gobble. They were closing the distance and fast. Ryan spotted them coming into the field and soon they were running in our direction. However, one quickly put the breaks on as he wasn't happy to see the decoys. The skirted us but eventually TJ and I were able to coax them into range and Chase filled his Maryland youth tag. Quite a fun hunt with friends.

After some celebration and picture taking, I headed to North Carolina to hunt with Sandy Brady and Matt Van Cise. We were on birds early, but nothing really cooperated. After a quick break I decided to sit a field for the afternoon at Sandy's suggestion. As I arrived at the field the birds were already there, but I didn't see them before they saw me, and I bumped them out of there. I didn't have a lot of options, so I decided to sit it out and am I glad I did. It didn't take long, and a hen popped back out into the field and a gobbler sounded off near the field edge. I called and he would answer but wouldn't come into the field. My entertainment was watching the hen feed and dust and he'd gobble just enough to let me know he was still around. Mid afternoon I decided it was a good

time to take a woods nap. When I woke up, he was in the middle of the field strutting with four hens. I tried to call to him, but he wasn't interested in me. He had four hens after all and didn't seem to share the field with my decoys either. The hens eased off and he followed. I decided it was time to make a move and try to get in front of them. I used the terrain on the backside of the field to my advantage and make a quick walk to the far edge of the field in the direction they were walking. I had just barely gotten to the field when I saw them coming. I was able to settle the red dot on the wattles and gently squeezed the trigger. Just like that my first North Carolina turkey was in the bag, and he was a good one. He had a 10-inch beard and had one 1 an 3/8th inch spur, and the other was broken off at about an inch. We didn't weigh him, but he was approximately 20 plus pounds. A great trophy and the fact that he was missing a toe on the same side of the long spur just added to his character.

Sandy sent me on my way to hunt with a game warden friend in the mountains of North Carolina. When I arrived there, it reminded me a lot of Vermont. It sure was a beautiful area to hunt in. We hunted the afternoon but with high winds we just didn't hear or see anything to get on. We did get a chance to see a North Carolina black bear and a bunch of deer, so the afternoon wasn't a complete bust. We met early the next morning, but work obligations were going to keep our hunt short. Luckily, the last place we checked we were able to get on a bird.



He gobbled good at first but then went silent. I am not a fan of a silent bird, but we kept our eyes and ears peeled. Eventually we heard a spit drum close. A few seconds later we heard it again and that time we were able to tell he was hard to our left. I quickly adjusted myself just in time to see him pop over the bank at about 15 to 20 yards. I got the red dot on him, and the rest is history. Filled both my North Carolina tags in very different parts of the state and was thankful for both opportunities.

Next on the trip was a flight to Kansas to hunt Oklahoma and if time permitted Kansas. The first morning we scouted some public land in Kansas before heading to Oklahoma for our hunt. We saw a bird or two, but we didn't get on one in Kansas. We arrived at our Oklahoma camp Thursday afternoon and discussed our plan of attack. The person we were hunting with brought us to a known roost area Friday morning and

we had a great hunt on a gobbling Rio, but at about 80 yards he saw something he didn't like and turned around and went the other way. That's turkey hunting sometimes. We didn't really get on another bird that day, at least not on property we could hunt. We did see a few but we couldn't do anything with them. The next morning temps were in the high 20s with a steady wind around 20 MPH. We sat it out at a location birds showed up to 75 percent of the time, however it seemed like we were there the 25 percent of the time. After hanging there as long as we could we decided a new location would be better. We eventually checked an area we could hunt and saw a group of 3 longbeards, a jake, and a few hens. We made a move on them and got as close enough for a shot. Jeff and I shot at about the same time, I might have been a little quicker on the trigger than Jeff, but we both missed the first shot. Jeff connected on a subsequent shot, but I was not as for-

tunate. I shot twice and missed twice. Feeling a little dejected but happy for my friend, we celebrated and took some time to take a few photos, etc. Jeff headed back to the truck with his turkey, and we decided to walk the timber back as the birds we missed hadn't gone far after the shot. Sure enough, we got them to gobble and gobble they did. However, with hens they never came to the call and eventually the hens took them away. Still feeling dejected I tried to keep my spirits up with a few jokes and laughs with my friends.

After a midday break, we headed back out to a place where there was a turkey rumored to be hanging out about mid-afternoon. I saw rumor because every time we drove by to check the birds were never there. Seemed like our timing was always off. As we approached the area, we scanned the field left to right and at first didn't see anything, but eventually we saw the longbeard with

a hen. We drove by, parked the truck out of sight and made a move to the edge of the field and used a mound of dirt to block our approach. As we settled into position, I let out a call and the long-beard fired back with a gobble. At least we knew he was interested. A few seconds later I called again and again he responded. We looked around the dirt berm and could see him about 250 yards away. It appeared he was separated from his hen and interested in this new hen he heard. Again, I called, and he answered but this time he started heading our way. He eventually closed the distance and saw the decoy that we had put out behind us. He eventually closed the distance to about 25 yards and closing but I decided to end the battle before he got too close. I had some awesome Tac-tacam footage of the hunt but accidentally deleted it and couldn't recover it. Sad about that but happy to fill an Oklahoma turkey tag.

With both Oklahoma tags filled for Jeff and me we headed back to Kansas. We tried to roost some birds but didn't have any luck that night. The next morning, we headed to a spot that we had seen a hen at on our scouting mission. Eventually we heard some gobbling and moved towards the turkeys. We got set up but after flydown they lost interest and moved off. We stayed on them, and they gobbled just enough to let us know they were still interested. It took about half an hour and a little bouncing around with my calling, but eventually they started heading our way again. I decided to set up about 30 yards behind Jeff and do most of the



calling. Jeff told me he could see them, but they were holding up just out of range. We simulated a turkey fight and that broke them, and Jeff was able to fill his Kansas



tag on another fine Rio.

We flew back to Virginia the next morning and I drove from there to Maryland for a one-day hunt with Ryan. We worked a bird, but I couldn't close the deal. Maryland will need to be revisited either later this spring or next year perhaps. Either way it was great to be able to be in the game.

I had one last stop to make before heading home from my 2023 spring turkey tour. Massachusetts was calling and I accepted the charges. Ended up getting into the area just before flyup and got some good intel from my buddy Justin that the birds were on fire and had not been hunted yet. The next morning, we were set up on an edge of the field with anticipation of a hard gobbling eastern turkey finding our location appealing. As daylight came, we could hear several birds gobbling on the limb. They were known to fly from the roost right to the field and like the script read that is what a couple of them did. A big, long gobbling turkey and a hen landed in the bottom end of the field we were in. He would answer the call but stayed with his hen. After half an hour or so he started heading our



way, but we also heard a bird gobble behind us. It quickly became apparent that it was almost a race to our location but the bird coming in behind us won, or did he? He was the one I got to put my Massachusetts tag on so maybe the other bird won. We celebrated a little but knew there were several other birds in the area.

We let the woods settle down for a bit and eventually started working towards where we had heard some distant gobbling on the roost. We came up over a rise and let out a call and they fired back with some great gobbling activity. They gobbled and came closer but eventually a hen led them away. Justin looked behind us and saw a hen coming our way. Using the hedgerow to hide in we got her all fired up with a wingbone call that my friend Carl made for me. Once she got fired up so did the group of gobblers and between her calling and my wingbone calling the group started our way again, but this time they were on a mission. I made a quick readjustment to my set up and could soon see the hen within range and the gobblers closing the distance. I could see the group of 4 or 5 longbeards but couldn't get a clear shot at just one so I patiently waited for them to separate. After what seemed like forever one separated enough for me to shoot. Bang, tag two filled in Mass in one morning. Truly thankful for the opportunities and the friendships the wild turkey has given me. The older I get the appreciative I am. As I type this, I am gearing up for the Vermont youth/novice weekend and getting ready to start our local seasons as well.

Good luck to everyone out there. Be safe, have fun, and enjoy turkey season. I will just be sitting here thinking about turkey. Long live the wild turkey!!!!



Trout Stocking to Resume at Goshen Dam This Spring

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department today announced that trout stocking will resume this spring at Sugar Hill Reservoir, also known as Goshen Dam, in Goshen, following the completion of safety enhancements made to the dam over the last two years.

“Goshen Dam has always been a popular place for anglers,” said state 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 yearling and trophy-sized brook trout we stock there attract anglers from all over the area. We’re really happy to be able to once again provide this fishing opportunity.”

The reservoir will be re-stocked in early May with 1,350 yearling brook trout averaging nine inches and 450 two-year old “Trophy Brook Trout” averag-

ing thirteen inches in length, according to Good.

For the past two years, the 58-acre waterbody was almost completely drained of water to allow for important dam safety improvements. Work was completed this past winter and the reservoir has now refilled to its normal minimum summer levels, allowing for trout stocking to resume.

Good says the Goshen Dam Road is still closed to the public due to soft road conditions, but public access will return to normal this spring once conditions allow.

For helpful information on finding other fishing locations near you, visit Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s access area and family fishing pages at:

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

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

Game Wardens Investigate Illegal Deer Shooting in Pomfret

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Warden Service is actively investigating an illegally shot deer in the town of Pomfret.

On April 26, game wardens responded to reports of an adult female deer (doe) shot out of season on Cloudland Road. The doe was found alive and was euthanized due to its injuries. A necropsy found that the doe had been pregnant with twin fawns.

As the investigation continues the Vermont Warden Service is asking the public for any information on this incident.

Tips can be sent to the Vermont State Police, Westminster Barracks, at 802-722-4600, attn. Warden David Lockerby. You may also provide information through the Operation Game Thief anonymous tip

line at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/hunt/hunting-regulations/operation-game-thief>

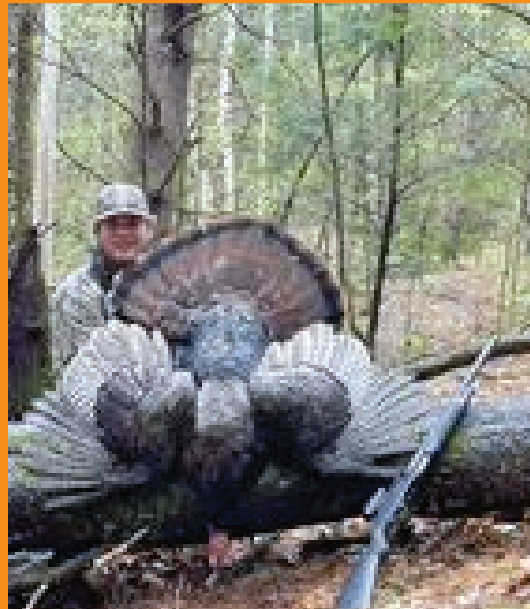


An illegally shot deer is being investigated by the Vermont Warden Service.

VT F&W Photo

Aidan Solomon & Corrina Lavit

“Shots” of the SEASON



Quinn Higgins



Jackson Bascom



Jack & Brandno Carrier



Blake Clark

Fried Turkey Fingers

The most difficult challenge that I face in writing this column is to create a new recipe each month that is relatively easy to prepare and is nutritious. I enjoy good food, but I don't like the idea of being handicapped with a recipe that calls for exotic herbs and wines. That would require the mindset of a rocket

scientist to create the entree successfully. All my recipes are surely nutritious, and relatively easy to prepare. Every once in a while, I come up with a recipe that is truly a gourmet delight that may just knock your sox off!! I feel that this is such a recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

Breast meat of a wild turkey
BISQUICK or AUNT JEMIMA pancake mix
Peanut oil
Milk
Duck Sauce

Use a sharp filet knife to deftly shave a whole turkey breast away from the bird's breastbone and other skeleton bones. Remove any skin and fat that might be on the breast meat. You now have a good size chunk of turkey breast meat to work with. If I elect to bone out one breast, I usually do both of them, and cut off the legs at the top of the thigh joint. I freeze these pieces for future use. I then cut off the wing, neck, and break the rest of the carcass up into small pieces. The aforementioned pieces then go into a large cooking vessel to be the base for an outstanding turkey soup!

Lay your turkey breast on a cutting board with the breast meat side facing the board. Use a sharp knife to cut the breast meat into slices about a half inch to three quarters of an inch thick. Make your cuts PARALLEL to the grain of the breast meat, that is running LENGTHWISE. Then cut each slice of the breast into strips or "fingers" a half inch to three quarters of an inch wide. Cut these fingers into strips about four inches long.

Pour enough peanut oil into your frying pan so the oil covers half the thickness of your turkey fingers. I insist you use peanut oil because it will withstand higher temperatures than vegetable or olive oil without scorching or burning. I use the HOLLYWOOD brand of peanut oil because it is fortified with vitamin E, which is an antioxidant. Peanut oil also adds a subtle pleasant flavor to any entree fried in it.

Set your electric frying pan at 375 degrees F. Make a batter from pancake mix. I use BISQUICK or AUNT JEMIMA brand mix, but any pancake mix should do. Pour enough mix into a bowl and make up enough batter to cover all your turkey fingers. Add some milk to the pancake mix and blend thoroughly. You want to mix just enough milk into your pancake mix so your batter is not as thick as pancake batter, but just thick enough so it will give your turkey fingers a generous coating of batter. Your batter should have the consistency of a thick gravy, more or less. Do not make the batter too thick, for it will overpower your turkey fingers. Drop ALL your turkey fingers into the bowl of batter and coat ALL of them with batter.

When your frying pan reaches 375 degrees F., using a fork, spear one end of each finger, lift the finger out of the batter for several seconds to allow excess batter to run off, and then ease each finger into the hot peanut oil. Allow space in your frying pan so the fingers do not touch each other when cooking. WORK QUICKLY!!

After you have placed as many fingers in your frying pan as it will hold, watch their frying progress carefully. A minute or two after placing the fingers in the oil, CAREFULLY run a spatula against the bottom of the frying pan and UNDER each of the fingers to make sure the batter is not sticking to the bottom of the pan. When the batter becomes golden brown, turn them over and finish frying them. Your turkey fingers will cook through in a matter of minutes on each side. Remove the fingers from the peanut oil and allow them to drain on several layers of paper towels. Continue to fry the rest of your fingers.

I have not mentioned portions in the column, as only you will know how many folks you are serving. Serve your fried turkey fingers garnished with duck sauce or you may elect to pour a generous amount of duck sauce onto each plate, then peach finger into the sauce before taking a bite. I usually serve the fingers with mashed potato and turkey gravy, along with a vegetable.

I have never seen this entree served on any restaurant's menu anywhere in the world, and I have traveled from Alaska to England! The closest you will come to this recipe will be in a Chinese restaurant, however you can be guaranteed they are not using wild turkey breast meat for their breast meat. Enjoy!!!!

Turtles Must be Left in the Wild

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department says keeping native turtles as pets is prohibited because it can harm the turtle and pose threats to wild turtle populations.

“Capturing a wild turtle and keeping it as a pet, even if only for a short time, is detrimental to that individual turtle and also to Vermont’s turtle populations as a whole,” said Vermont Fish and Wildlife herpetologist Luke Groff. “Releasing captured turtles back into the wild comes with risks as well.” Groff says the risks include introducing diseases or disrupting the genetics of wild populations.

“Adult turtles often have well-defined home ranges and know exactly where to find shelter, food and mates. Turtles released in unfamiliar habitats are likely to be disoriented and stressed, and they may attempt to return home, potentially causing them to cross roads and be struck by vehicles.”

Groff says taking a turtle out of the wild means removing its reproductive contribution to the population. “Turtles are slow to develop, especially those living at northern latitudes where the growing sea-

son is short. Many of Vermont’s turtle species do not reproduce until they are at least 10 years of age. Older, sexually mature females are critically important to the long-term persistence of some Vermont turtle populations. The loss of even a couple

mature females from some populations may have serious consequences.”

Some common species you are likely to see include the painted turtle and snapping turtle. The wood turtle, spotted turtle and spiny softshell are rare in Vermont, and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department urges you to report sightings of these species to the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas <https://www.vtherpatlas.org/>

If you see some of Vermont’s native turtles, Groff says “Feel free to take a photo home with you, but support Vermont’s turtles by leaving them in the wild.

For more information on Vermont’s native turtle species, visit Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s website and search for Reptiles or contact Vermont Fish and Wildlife herpetologist Luke Groff at Luke.Groff@vermont.gov.

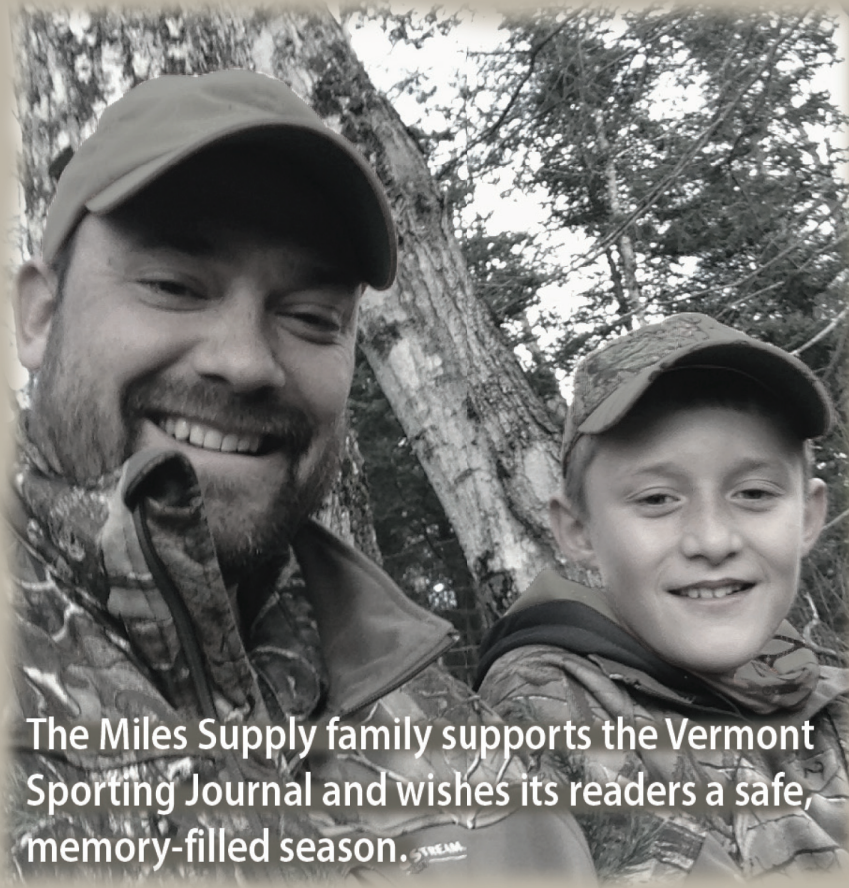


Bringing home a native Vermont wild turtle to keep as a pet is illegal because it can be harmful for the individual animal and local turtle populations.

VTF&W Photo by Luke Groff

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The Miles Supply family supports the Vermont Sporting Journal and wishes its readers a safe, memory-filled season.

