

Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume VI, Issue 20 * November 2023



**Jon
Valsangiacomo**



**David
Valsangiacomo**

Hunters Asked to Help Collect Deer Teeth

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is asking hunters for help gathering biological data on the state's deer population. Hunters who get a deer during the November 11-26 regular deer season are asked to [provide an incisor tooth from their deer](#). Tooth envelopes are available at all deer reporting stations.

Biologists are collecting middle incisor teeth from all regular season bucks to evaluate regional differences in ages and antler characteristics as well as to help estimate population size, growth rate, health, and mortality rates. Each tooth will be cross sectioned to accurately determine the deer's age, and the results will be posted on the Fish and Wildlife website next spring.

“Knowing the ages of harvested deer is critically important, and more information allows us to make better management decisions,” said Nick Fortin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s deer project leader. “To accurately estimate deer numbers, and to better assess our current management strategies, we really need to get teeth from as many bucks as possible.”



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Hunters Asked to Help Collect Deer Teeth 1

Utter Disbelief 2

Vt F&WL 2024 Calendar 3

New Bear Population Estimate Based on 2022 Data Avail. 4

Trap Talk 5

VF&WL Urges Hunters to Help Deer Healthy. 7

F&WL Asks Deer Hunters to Report Wildlife Sightings 8

Leashed Tracking Dogs for Recovery of Game 9

My First Bear 11

Vt's 'Operation Game Thief' Helps Catch Poachers 12

VTF&W Website Helps with Learning How to Process Deer 13

Rabbit Hunters Be Aware 13

Regulated Trapping Seasons Opened Oct 28. 14

Shaley Did It! 15

Vt Hunters Can Report Turkeys and Some Deer Online. 16

Attention Vt Sportsmen 17

Tree Stand Safety Tips for Hunters. 18

How Come They Are So Lucky 19

Legacy Weapons. 20

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.

Utter Disbelief

by Brad Roy

The overhead seatbelt sign illuminated in the cabin darkness; my plane was making its final approach back into BTV after a short work trip to Florida. I eagerly stepped off the plane and walked hurriedly toward my parked truck, excited to (in no particular order) see my family, sleep in my own bed, and catch the last two days of Vermont's early season antlerless muzzleloader hunt. Ever since the first year this hunt was opened, I found I enjoyed walking the woods with a smoke pole during the month of November a tremendous amount, and having never been successful, waited with grand anticipation for this short and elusive season.

It must have something to do with still being in "archery mode" and suddenly thrusting yourself into the opportunity to reach out a few extra yards. No longer constrained by the few close-range pins on a bow, the sight of crosshairs with 100 yard plus capability gives me the sense that I am suddenly a deer hunting superhero with newly discovered powers. Shaking the jetlag from my groggy mind, I listened to my normal heavy metal playlist on the way to my hunting spot in preparation for what I hoped would be a memorable hunt. And memorable it was.

I parked the truck and readied myself and my muzzleloader for a short walk. Darkness was approaching just a few hours away, and given my lack of free time to scout in preparation for this season, I decided to do a short walk, making my way back out to check some open areas I thought deer might be feeding in an hour or so before dark. I picked my way, slowly and carefully around a ledgy knob that often holds deer in the evening with no success. I was feeling a tad unlucky until I came upon a trail of turkey feathers spotted along with areas of what looked like an explosion of feathers over the course of about a hundred yards or so. I determined my fate that day was unlikely to be as grizzly as whatever had happened to that turkey and counted my blessings as I pressed on.

The time had come to start checking fields in hopes of spotting something without horns, as an antlerless tag was all I had to work with that day. As I approached the truck to regroup, I noticed four deer feeding proudly in a farm field across the way. Having landowner permission to hunt the area, I decided to attempt to get close enough

for a better look. The deer spooked at first, but hung up on the far edge of the field and stopped. I moved quickly toward them across open grass and quickly dropped to prone position when I determined I was within range. A quick look through the scope and my heart sank. Of the four deer I originally saw, one had bounded into the woods, two were yearling fawns, and one, the largest one, had a single prominent spike ejecting approximately 8 inches from the left side of its head.

I watched in disbelief as the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th deer all made their way into the woods. Each one offering perfect broadside shots as they disappeared from well within range. I shook my head at my poor luck, knowing that I've gone entire rifle seasons not seeing that many deer. However, I still had about a half hour of legal light left, and decided to make a play in hopes that I may have a chance to fill my doe tag yet.

I scurried across the grass field to a rock pile on the edge of a small corn patch. I quickly settled into the jagged fieldstones and pointed myself with a view of where the deer had gone into the woods, and a spot on the corner of the field's wood line where I anticipated they might come back out. After about ten minutes the jagged rocks were getting the better of my behind, so I shifted around to get more comfortable. When I looked back up, I immediately noticed a deer standing exactly where I thought they would come out. In utter disbelief that I had actually predicted a white-tailed deer's movements for once in my life, I brought the gun up in hopes of making the relatively simple shot at about 90 yards, knowing I was seated, comfortable, and had a great rest. As I found fur in my rifle scope my jaw dropped. An 8-point buck stood proudly surveying the field. I stared at the rack, larger than any deer I'd been fortunate enough to harvest in my life, and practically needing to hold my finger off the trigger with my left hand. I was powerless and could only sit and watch in agony.

After watching the buck feed in the field 80 yards away or so for a few minutes, I looked up from my scope to survey my surroundings only to find the two fawns had made their way back into the field as well and were approaching me about 40 yards away. They got closer and closer, completely unaware of the 6'4" human

shaped boulder that had seemingly grown in the rockpile overnight. I watched them carefully, hoping they would grow into mature does right before my eyes, but to no avail. I decided it was time to go back to watching the 8 points bobbing amongst the cornstalks.

Looking back up into the field for my 8-point, I noticed movement in the bushes where it had originally come out, and to my complete disbelief, another buck came walking proudly out to join the party. This one with six tall, perfectly symmetrical points adorned on its mature head. I could not believe my eyes.

Now, I am not the wisest, most experienced deer hunter, but despite having eaten a veggie burger once, I am generally sound of mind and considered conscious and alert with decent vision, so when I continue this story, I ask you not judge my need for medical intervention due to hallucinations and dissociation. I say this because, and let me reiterate I am being completely and utterly honest here, as I watched the 8-point and the 6-point and the two fawns, movement caught my eye once again.

I trembled with anticipation. This HAD to be the mature doe I was waiting for. I brought my scope once again to the location all the other deer had entered my now exceptionally small world from, and as the crosshairs magnified the area I noticed this deer, the fifth deer in the field and potentially the ninth deer I had seen in the last half hour, had four points adorning its skull.

I was flabbergasted. Astounded. Stunned. Dumfounded. I was surviving in a state of complete and utter disbelief. I was all of those and more. Here I sat, with an antlerless tag in my pocket, looking at three legal bucks during any other day of hunting season. More deer than I often see in an entire season stacked like cordwood, less than 100 yards away, all standing still and broadside.

Eventually, one particularly nosey fawn made its way close enough to get uncomfortable with the size and shape of the human boulder plopped amongst the other rocks and bounded its way toward the woods. As I videoed them all casually disembarking their chosen feeding grounds on my iPhone, I knew I was going home without venison, but at least I'd have one hell of a story.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife's 2024 Calendar Is Available

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont Fish and Wildlife's colorful [2024 calendar](#) is now available.

The calendar is filled with stunning photos of Vermont native species ranging from a rugged white-tailed deer buck to the vibrant dogbane leaf beetle.

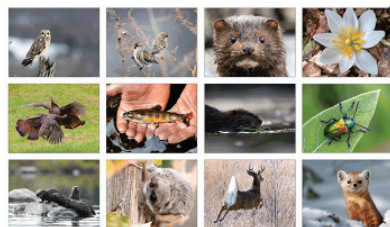
The calendar features art by both well-known and emerging nature photographers, including Roger Irwin, Jim Blakeslee, Emmanuel Soza-Foias, Roger Farmer, Chris Ingram, Brian Pfeiffer, and Rav Benett.

“Vermont’s wildlife, habitats and people are interconnected, and this calendar celebrates that,” said

Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Christopher Herrick. “It showcases many wildlife species and commemorates the contributions and leadership of hunters and anglers as well as community scientists, private landowners and dedicated volunteers in conserving these species and their habitats for all Vermonters.”

The calendar includes hunting, fishing and trapping season dates for each month along with beautiful photography, making it the perfect gift for any outdoor recreationist.

The calendar is available for \$15 from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department website, www.vtfishandwildlife.com, using the online shopping cart function or by downloading a printable free-shipping mail-in form.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
Conserving Fish, Wildlife, Plants and Their Habitats for the People of Vermont

The cover photo of Vermont Fish and Wildlife's 2024 calendar features a family of river otters. This widespread but elusive species benefits from the department's active management of state lands to maintain the habitat on which it and many other species depend, work that is supported by a federal excise tax on firearms and other sporting equipment.

VTF&W photo

New Bear Population Estimate Based on 2022 Data Available

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont’s black bear population is estimated at 7,000 to 8,500 based on 2022 data, the most recent available, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

“It is important to look at the 2022 population estimate as part of the typical cycles of growth and decline in a bear population that is stable over the long term,” said wildlife biologist and Black Bear Project Leader Jaclyn Comeau. “The 7,000 to 8,500 bear estimate for 2022 is a five-year high. We will be watching closely in the coming few years to see if the population drops as we have seen it do before, after high years in previous cycles.”

Comeau stressed that the current population estimate is not a basis for changes to Vermont’s bear management at this time. She added that today’s robust bear population is the result of a decades-long research and conservation effort that includes land protection, regulated hunting and significant public education on proactive conflict prevention.

As recently as the early 1970s Vermont’s bears were found only in mountainous areas and the Northeast Kingdom, and likely numbered between 1,500 and 3,500. Today they are found in every Vermont town except for communities on the Lake Champlain Islands. Since the mid-1990s the population has been relatively stable, fluctuating from 4,000 to 7,500 bears in consistent cycles of growth and decline. The population has seen steady growth since 2019.



“Taking active steps to coexist with bears is our responsibility as Vermonters,” said Comeau. “That means respecting these powerful animals as an important part of our native biodiversity, using proactive conflict prevention strategies like keeping human food out of bears’ reach, and relying on a scientifically regulated hunting season to keep the bear population in line with Vermont’s social carrying capacity.”

The department’s bear population model uses age and sex data from hunter harvests and non-hunting mortalities like vehicle strikes to estimate the population and account for model uncertainty. Because the model relies

on annual data from hunters, it lags one year behind the current hunting season.

“Hunter harvest data are used by state fish and wildlife agencies to model bear populations nationwide,” said biometrician and Research

Program Manager Dr. Katherina Gieder. “We are confident in our bear population model estimates because they consistently match what other data indicate about the population trend over time. Model certainty has also increased in recent years, especially since making it mandatory for bear hunters to submit a tooth from their harvest to the department in 2018. It’s a good example of how community science can directly inform wildlife conservation.”

Trap Talk

By Randy Barrows

Happy fall to everyone. To me it's the best time of year. Gone are the hot and humid days and the coolness of the air is so refreshing. Being semi retired I am way ahead of the game on the honey do before winter list. The cabin is all buttoned up, the garden beds are cleaned out, the pool is down, and the leaves are all cleaned up. Not to mention the cord of wood in the basement. All of this seemed to take longer this year and I struggled to figure out why. And then it hit me. Freekin geese. If you have followed my scratchings the last ten plus years I have the same problem every spring and fall.

Every day, several times a day I hear the sound of geese. Being weird, I stop what I am doing and look up, try to count them, and watch until they disappear, knowing that I might never see the same geese again. It really kills productivity. Oh well, I openly admit that I am not to stable.

As I write this the weather is 42 degrees, down from the seventy we hunted in yesterday. That put the last of the mosquitoes to bed. This weather puts the trappers in the frame of mind that it's the time we have been waiting for. Two more days and we can do what we love so much, set some steel out. I am ready to go but will wait a bit until I am sure the critters are prime. Most folks think that cold weather primes up critters but the bigger part of the equation is the amount of daylight we receive daily. I will scarf up a road kill and do a test skin. If its blue I will wait longer as blue fur has no market value.

By now one should have some what of a plan on how their trap line will play out. I like to start with the water animals, for the simple reason of lack of ice. Over the years I chopped my fair share of ice to check my sets. That has disappeared from my trapline for the simple fact that I refuse to chop through two inches of ice several times a day for a two dollar muskrat or five dollar beaver. I do a few for old time sake but I get worn down quickly.

Once solid ice forms I pull the water line and head for the land critters.

I have trapped some of the same farms for 50 plus years. I enjoy chatting with the landowners every fall about

"I like to start with the water animals, for the simple reason of lack of ice."

what they have seen all summer and fall. I trap the same trails and field roads and leave any stakes and heavy stuff near where I set. Saves lugging that stuff on set up days. No more heavy rebar for me. I can stuff two dozen disposable stakes inside my jacket,

much lighter than the rebar. Traps are brought out a month ago and stashed also. On opening day all you lug is a pack basket, baits, lures and bedding materials and setting tools. I call it "work smarter, not harder!!!"

Try to make a point of checking your baits and lures also. If stored in a cool, dry out of the light place most are good for years. You should not use any rancid bait. If you use something rancid you will find fur in your trap as the stink is not attractive to the critter, but for whatever reason they will roll in it. If you have ever owned a dog I am sure you have seen this happen.

"Do your homework on set locations"

Do your homework on set locations also. You have heard location, location, location before. It does no good to set 100 yards away from where the critter is traveling. A quick walk looking for scat, tracks, fur on the barb wire will put you on the right track. Any faint trails through the weeds, atv trails, fence rows, farm roads are always hot spots. Be sure to get down on your knees and look at it from the critters level, it's a whole different view from down there.

Also make sure you have the time to process what you catch. You owe it to the animal to use all of it as much as you can. They are much easier to skin out fresh versus letting them sit for a couple of days. My practice is to green skin them, roll them up and pop them in the freezer. Yup, they tend to pile up but once the season is done, or after deer season is done, but while waiting for ice on the lake its perfect time to do the hides. You will find that most animals will flesh a lot easier once they have frozen. Be careful to make sure no flesh is exposed as this will freezer burn and be impossible to flesh.

I just read the latest fur report and things do not look too promising this year either. Russia and Ukraine were major buyers of most of our fur and unless you live in a fox hole things are not good over there. Bottom line do it for the fun and not the money. If you get a buck for a rat that's a buck more than you started with!! How much did you make deer hunting last year?????

Its also the time of year to give thanks. My thanks go to the big guy above for starters. In April I had a near death

experience and I thank him for cancelling my reservation with him. I thank my wife and family for putting up with my antics all year and absenties from daily life , and the smells associated with trapping. I thank my parents for introducing me to the outdoors many years ago. I tear up remembering how my grand daughter, at ten years old this year, harvested her first whitetail with a crossbow after hunting two years and showing great patience and waiting for that ethical shot , off my food plot!!!! She is the fifth generation of my family to hunt and harvest game. To say I am proud is a under statement.

And lastly, but not leastly, I want to thank the Members of the Vermont Trappers Association. At their annual business meeting in September at the Annual Rendezvous, I was nominated and inducted into the Vermont Trappers Associations Hall of Fame. I was shocked to say the least. What a honor to receive this award.

May all of you have a wonderful trapping and hunting season and Happy Holidays.

www.LambGraphicDesigns.com

Lamb Graphic Designs
Your dreams, our best quality



T-shirts,
Custom logos, merchandise,
apparel, decals, desktop publishing, etc.

VT F&W Urges Hunters to Help Keep Deer Healthy

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is reminding hunters of a regulation designed to help keep Vermont deer healthy by banning the use of any deer lure containing deer urine or other deer bodily fluids.

The infectious agent of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a fatal disease of deer, is a mutant protein or “prion” that can be passed in urine. Prions can bind to soils and remain infectious for many years. Nearly all urine-based lures are produced in captive deer facilities, where CWD is most likely to occur. There is no accepted way to test live animals, and infected animals can spread CWD for years before showing any symptoms. No amount of testing or special certification program can eliminate the risk of spreading CWD through urine lures.



VTF&W photo by John Hall

CWD is 100 percent fatal to deer and moose. It causes irreversible population declines and has been impossible to eliminate once it becomes established in a population. CWD has not been detected in Vermont.

“No single buck is worth risking the health of Vermont’s entire deer herd,” said Nick Fortin, Vermont’s deer biologist.

“If someone feels they must use a lure, there are legal, synthetic alternatives that are just as effective.”

“If CWD becomes established in Vermont, the deer population, deer management and deer hunting will never be the same. The most effective way to control CWD is to prevent it from getting here in the first place.”

More information about Chronic Wasting Disease can be found at www.cwd-info.org and by typing CWD in the “Search” section at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.





Fish & Wildlife Asks Deer Hunters to Report Wildlife Sightings

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is asking hunters to participate in its annual deer hunter effort and sighting survey.

The survey asks hunters to record how many hours they hunted and how many deer, moose, bears, or other wildlife they saw each day they hunted. This information helps the department evaluate how hunting pressure and the number of these animals varies around the state.

The easiest way to complete the survey is to use the Deer Hunting Log feature in the [Vermont Outdoors mobile app](#). The app allows hunters to track their effort and wildlife sightings each day during any of the 2023 deer hunting seasons. It also includes useful features like a check station locator tool and lots of hunting and fishing related information. Vermont Outdoors is available through the App Store or Google Play.

A [web-based version of the survey](#) will also be available on Fish and Wildlife's website www.vtfishandwildlife.com after the start of the regular season on November 11. "This survey is a great opportunity for hunters to let us know what they saw and to help inform management of deer and other wildlife," said Nick Fortin, Fish and Wildlife's deer and moose project leader. "If we hear from more hunters, our population estimates will be more reliable, and our management will be more effective."

*VTF&W photo by John Hall
Licensed deer hunters are invited to participate in the annual deer hunter survey to report hunter effort, wildlife sightings and other information to the Fish and Wildlife Department.*

Leashed Tracking Dogs for Recovery of Game

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is providing the following list of [certified leashed tracking dog owners](#) who volunteer during the hunting seasons to help hunters locate deer or bear that have been shot during hunting season but not yet recovered.

The leashed tracking dog owners, who provide their services free of charge, must pass an extensive exam in order to be certified and licensed to provide their services.

This list, which may be updated during hunting seasons, is available on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com).



2023 Vermont Leashed Dog Trackers

Name	Town	Phone
Tim Nichols	Granville, NY	518-642-3012
Travis Nichols	Granville, NY	518-642-3012
Nicholas Merritt	East Fairfield, VT	802-238-3884
Mandi Harbec	Orleans, VT	802-323-3536
Bill Gaiotti	Mt. Tabor, VT	802-345-8500
Mark Harbec	Orleans, VT	802-323-3536
Nick Smith	Groton, VT	802-584-3121
Matt Bourgeois	Whiting, VT	802-989-2213
Scott Newell	Groveton, NH	603-636-2264
Riley Harness	Newbury, VT	802-272-8955
Crystal Earle	Johnson, VT	802-730-5591
Courtney Davis	Troy, NH	603-209-6548
Jason Cassant	Fort Ann, NY	518-796-3215
Steven Bourgeois	Bridport, VT	802-758-2526
Matthew Anderson	Orwell, VT	802-318-0260
Jeremiah Gracie	Lincoln, VT	802-349-4587
Mike Harbec	Orleans, VT	802-754-6371
Tammy Barrows	Fairfax, VT	802-338-6089
Gabriel Gervais	East Fairfax, VT	802-370-2288
Shawn Lambert	Enosburg Falls, VT	802-582-0571
Justin Robert	Underhill, VT	802-324-2903
Jeremy Rhodes	Sharon, VT	802-356-9209
Lucas Kane	Highgate, VT	802-393-5335

Name	Town	Phone
Tyler Bagster	Troy, NH	603-762-6328
Dennis Jewett Jr.	Bakersfield, VT	802-904-3423
Sierra Dudley	Jeffersonville, VT	802-309-7624
Robert Arel Jr	N Haverhill, NH	203-996-8851
Jason Minor	Fairfax, VT	802-370-4268
Jason Fleury	Barre, VT	802-522-5205
John Konya	Bradford, VT	802-439-3838
Kayla Konya	Thetford, VT	802-333-0664
Jon Earle	Johnson, VT	802-730-5591
David Wilder	Barre, VT	802-522-6938
Kaitlyn Tilton	Waterville, VT	802-730-6121
James Mazzola	Fairfield, VT	802-379-5652
Alex McClain IV	Richford, VT	802-528-6264
Alex McClain V	Richford, VT	802-528-6264
Tom Best	West Pawlet, VT	802-287-1800
Brent Grenier	Troy, VT	802-274-9057
*Kristie Adams	Pittsford, VT	802-483-6257
*Jim Bixby	Ludlow, VT	802-228-8853
*Shane Reed	Wells, VT	802-287-0851
*Ethan Teague	Franklin, VT	802-370-2831
*Mike Slattery	Essex Jct, VT	802-777-2485
*Jake Tuck	St. Albans, VT	802-782-4386

*Semi-Active tracker



HENRY
TOP 100 DEALER

Parro's is more than a gun shop!



Full line gun shop & Vermont's only commercial indoor shooting range, featuring:
Try before you buy, NFA Rentals, classes, walk ins welcome, 2,000 firearms in stock!
Open 7 days a week.

Parro's Gun Shop & Indoor Range • 601 U.S. Route 2, Waterbury, VT 05676
Phone: (802) 244-8401 • Fax: (802) 244-5256

www.parros.com



@parrosgunshop

My First Bear

By David Valsangiacomo



Saturday, September 2nd, the second day of Bear season, my dad and I went hunting on our family land that had originally been owned by my great-grandfather. We had put up a new stand below a corn field in an area that had a lot of deer sign, but we hadn't scouted yet. We decided to go sit there because we wanted to watch for deer movement, and it was bear season so we thought we might see a bear because we had seen bear in the area last year.

We got to the stand around 5 p.m. and we sat there for two hours with no animals, no action, no nothing. Around 7:20 p.m. we were thinking about getting down from the stand, but a doe popped out about 30 yards away and started eating apples in front of us.

We watched her for about 30 seconds before another one popped out behind her. We noticed the second doe was looking behind her a lot. So I told my dad I was going to look slowly over my shoulder to see what she was looking at and I saw a black bear clawing at a tree 25 yards away.

I told my dad, "Bear!" and he looked and saw it. He looked at it with his binoculars and said it was a big bear. I took the safety off my gun but I had no shot where he was standing because there was a dead tree branch in the way. I told my dad I had no shot, and I was going to wait until he came into an opening.

The bear pushed off the tree and started walking out right towards the apple tree where the deer were. I moved my gun and put it on the bear. This spooked the deer, and they ran away. The bear wasn't fazed and kept on walking.

I put my crosshairs right behind the shoulder and shot. He hunched up, he ran and we heard him crash. We listened for death moans. We heard the death moans 30 seconds later and then it stopped. We were really excited, and we fist bumped and hugged.

We got down and looked



for blood but didn't find any. We called people to come help us find the bear. When we didn't find blood, we drove down the hill in the ranger to pick everyone up.

We hiked back up the hill and we started scanning again for blood. About five minutes after we started looking, my cousin Jack yelled, "I found him!" I ran over to him and saw the bear laying dead at his feet. He had only gone 40 yards. I had shot him through both lungs. I yelled to everyone to come over; I gave fist bumps, high fives and hugs to everybody and we celebrated.

We gutted it out and dragged it to the ranger. We put it in the ranger and my Grandfather brought it down to the truck and we got it in the back. We went and grabbed dinner and then we got some ice to put in it for overnight. We woke up early the next morning and drove it to Roxbury General Store to weigh it in.

The official weight came up to be 254 pounds clean dressed. It was my first bear ever and will probably be the biggest bear of my life.



Vermont's 'Operation Game Thief' Helps Catch Poachers

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont State Game Wardens are asking Vermonters with information about fish and wildlife crimes to submit them through the Operation Game Thief program.

Operation Game Thief (OGT) is a joint nonprofit program sponsored by the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and administered by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. The program provides a way for people to help protect the state's fish and wildlife by reporting law violators at 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378). The toll-free hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to report violations. Rewards are paid for information leading to arrests.

Vermont is lucky to have dedicated wardens patrolling our fields, forests and waterways, but their numbers

are limited," said Col. Justin Stedman. "Operation Game Thief is a great way for Vermonters to assist in reducing fish and wildlife violations by providing tips and information. We're asking people to call with details such as names and descriptions of perpetrators, and descriptions and plate numbers of vehicles whenever possible."

"Poachers steal the opportunity for others to legally hunt and fish and may create an unfairly negative impression of hunting and fishing with the general public," said Col. Stedman. "They may also target threatened, endangered or nongame species. We appreciate this partnership with the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs to help us catch and prosecute poachers through Operation Game Thief."

VTF&W Website Helps with Learning

How to Process Deer

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont is one of the most rural states in the country, and Vermonters have a proud heritage of living close to the land. Hunting is highly regulated and provides a way to connect with the land, connect with nature and connect with a healthy, sustainable food source that is rooted in Vermont.

Making the most of the meals provided by deer taken in hunting seasons starts with processing them quickly and correctly which is why the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has three online videos demonstrating how to process deer. Finding the videos is easy on the Fish

and Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). Click on “[Hunt](#)” and then “[From Field to Freezer](#).”

The educational videos are titled Field Dressing, Skinning a Deer and Butchering a Deer.

“Correctly processing game can make a big difference in the taste of the meat,” said Hunter Education Program Coordinator Nicole Meier. “Taking the time to do it correctly assures that you and your family will have many enjoyable meals ahead.”

Rabbit Hunters Be Aware

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus, a highly contagious virus capable of affecting rabbits and snowshoe hare, is appearing in states close to Vermont and may show up here according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

The department does not think this virus is present in Vermont at this time, but it is thought to be spreading eastward from the western United States. The virus does not affect other wildlife, humans or pets, except rabbits. It spreads through direct contact with infected rabbits or indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces.

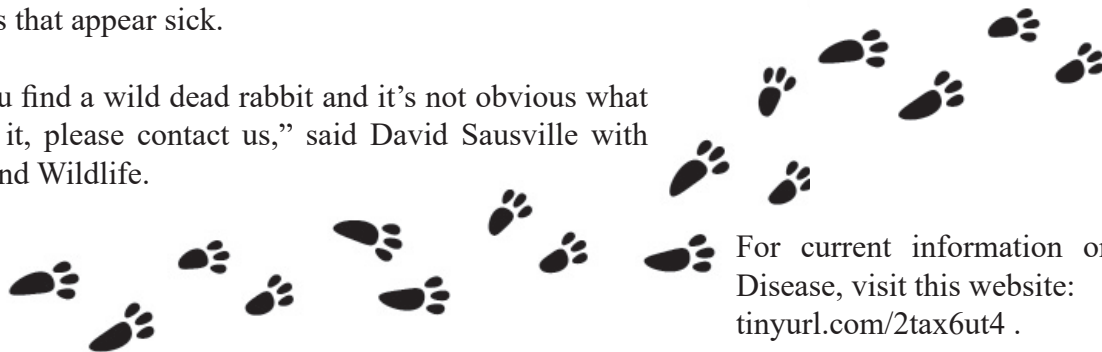
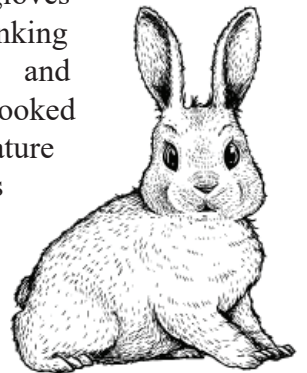
Sudden mortality in healthy rabbits occurs with this virus, and infected rabbits may be lethargic, reluctant to move, or have blood coming out of the nostrils or mouth.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife advises hunters not to harvest rabbits that appear sick.

“If you find a wild dead rabbit and it’s not obvious what killed it, please contact us,” said David Sausville with Fish and Wildlife.

“When hunters are field-dressing rabbits, wear disposable gloves, securely bag entrails and other remains, and dispose of them in the trash. Do not discard remains where other animals may have access to them.”

Similar to all wild game preparation, you should wear disposable gloves and refrain from eating, drinking and smoking while handling and cleaning game. Meat should be cooked thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165 degrees and all surfaces in contact with meat should be cleaned and disinfected.



For current information on Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, visit this website: tinyurl.com/2tax6ut4.

Regulated Trapping Seasons Open October 28

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont's [regulated land and water trapping seasons](#) open on October 28, 2023, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Traps can be set on land for species such as fox, coyote and raccoon through December 2023, and in the water or under ice for species such as beaver, muskrat and otter through March 2024. These species have healthy populations in Vermont that can sustain regulated trapping for fur and food each year.

“If you plan to enjoy Vermont’s outdoors this fall and winter it is important to know when trapping season is open and to be aware that trappers may be using the same public lands or, with [landowner permission](#), private lands,” said Wildlife Biologist and Furbearer Project Leader Brehan Furfey. “Vermont has had regulated trapping seasons for decades and Vermont hikers, hunters, skiers, trappers and others have a good track record of sharing the same landscape safely and respectfully.”

The season for many species occurs between the end of October and the end of December. For otter, muskrat and beaver the season lasts until the end of March. People are encouraged to check the [department’s website](#) for specific dates.

It is extremely rare for pets to be caught by law abiding trappers during Vermont’s regulated seasons. The department’s website has [information on how to free pets from traps](#) in the unlikely event they are caught. Anyone whose pet is caught in a trap should report the incident to a game warden after freeing their pet.

It is [illegal to interfere with lawfully set traps in Vermont](#). Anyone who finds a trap that appears to be in violation of Vermont’s trapping regulations should [contact a game warden](#).

Vermont’s trapping regulations are currently [under review](#) by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board. The department will announce any changes as they are implemented.



A trapper in the process of setting a trap below the ice for beaver during Vermont’s regulated trapping season for this species.

VTF&W Photo



Shaley Did It!

By Randy Barrows

Shaley Gingras is a 10-year-old from Milton. She has been in the woods with her parents, grandfather & uncle for her entire life. She successfully passed the hunter safety course in the fall of 2022 then the online bow and arrows course and had received a lifetime license as an infant from her Grandparents and Uncle. She saw much activity in the woods last season but was unable to get an ethical shot. She was no stranger to the excitement of seeing wildlife in their natural habitat.

Shaley's Grandparents, Mamma & Bampa recently purchased some additional land around their home. Shaley and her Bampa, Randy Barrows who also happens to be one of the instructors for her hunter education class have been watching lots of activity all summer long. Specifically they had watched a Mom with triplets. During the first week

of the season the Mom and one of the fawns had stopped showing up. The only assumption was that they had already been harvested or found by one of the many predators that have also been seen in the area.

For her 10th Birthday she received her first Crossbow. Lots of practice and even more patience as she spent hours with her Dad in their blind or with her Mom in a pop up blind on her Grandparents property during the first week of Bow season this year.

Saturday October 7, 2023 began with Mom realizing Shaley was awake already bright and early. The forecast called for lots of rain over the next day or so. With a promise to only sit until the rain started, Shaley reluctantly agreed.

After being settled for less than 20 minutes two deer appear. Slowly walking but VERY interested in what the blind was. Getting as close as 5 yards Shaley's excitement was too much. She couldn't stay still or stop whispering. Unfortunately, this action caused the deer to bound away. A conversation about attempting to stay calm amongst the excitement was had. Mom was certain the deer were not to return. Shaley was extremely disappointed but had learned a valuable lesson.

To their surprise 5 minutes later the deer returned! This time Shaley took some deep breaths and proceeded accordingly. She slowly moved into position, kept calm even though she was "so excited even my butt is shaking", waited for the deer to position in a safe and ethical position, asked Mom to range the distance and took the shot. The deer dropped in its spot.

After tagging it she couldn't wait to share her excitement. While still shaking she quickly called her Dad and ran the short distance back to her Grandparents house to share the great news. She requested her Dad teach her how

to field dress so he climbed out of his stand in a neighboring town to head her way. Over an hour later when he arrived the excitement and shaking had yet to wear off.

She discovered she had harvested a button buck that was likely one of the fawns from the triplets. While it definitely wouldn't be breaking any records this deer is a trophy to Shaley. She persevered through all of the ups and downs of missed opportunity, being an ethical sportswoman and most importantly enjoying and respecting the great outdoors and all it has to offer. With no prompting she thanked the deer for the meat he would provide and rubbed his head and told him how handsome he was.

Being a 4th generation hunter on both sides of her family, this day brought so much excitement and the promise of traditions to continue to everyone. Having 3 generations together to witness and share in the joy is a memory none will forget. Her father's words to her were "if you ever lose that feeling when you see a target animal then you will know it is time to stop hunting."

May all hunters continue to show respect and gratitude to all the animals while keeping those butterflies in the belly at bay long enough to be as successful as Shaley was!

Vermont Hunters Can Report Turkeys and Some Deer Online

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Vermont hunters will be able to report turkeys and some deer they harvest this fall online through the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's website www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

Turkeys may be reported online or in-person at a regional big game reporting station.

Deer may be reported online or in-person during the archery and muzzleloader seasons, but deer must be reported in-person during the youth and novice deer hunting weekend on October 21-22 and during the regular deer season on November 11-26. This in-person reporting requirement allows biologists to collect important information from deer during these seasons.

Bears must be reported in-person at a regional big game reporting station. The hunter must also submit a premolar tooth from the bear at the time the bear is reported or within 30 days. The tooth provides important data on the age structure and size of the bear population. Envelopes for submitting teeth are available at all big game reporting stations.

Hunters are required to report deer, bear and wild turkeys they harvest during the hunting seasons within 48 hours. Deer and bear must be field-dressed prior to reporting,

and a hunter must take a warden to the kill site of a deer or bear if requested by a warden.

The online reporting link for deer and turkey as well as a map and list of [big game reporting stations](#) is available under "Hunt" on the left side of Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website.

Fish and Wildlife urges hunters to review the [2023 Deer Season Guide](#) also available on the website home page.

WRITERS WANTED



Have you always wanted to write for an outdoor publication? Now is your chance.

vermontsportingjournal@gmail.com

ATTENTION VERMONT SPORTSMEN

By Randy Barrows

If any of you that read my ramblings remember previous columns of Trap Talk I am sure you remember me whining about the possibility of our trapping rights getting hammered in Vermont. Well folks it is happening as I write and it looks like we are doomed!!!!

In the 22-23 session in Montpelier the folks from Protect our Wildlife got thru to certain representatives who, for the promise of campaign monies and votes submitted bills to highly restrict both trapping and all form of hound hunting in Vermont.

The bills made it to the energy and natural resources committee, a group of six folks who barely know what day it is, nor know what a trap is, how it is used, or anything about hound hunting. They 6, after many meetings laid out a plan that would make most traps being used today illegal and would make hound hunting basically disappear.

Under the new law, traps would need to be off set jaws, center swiveled, with certain amount of chain attached, meaning the 100 traps I use a year would be illegal. None of these new rules would make a bit of difference in how trap. Trapping is not catch and release folks unless a trapper chooses to let small animals grow. Also, the way we dispatch animals, normally a well placed bullet or a strong blow to the skull would not be allowed. They recommend using other means, like archery equipment!! How does anyone make this stuff up??? It is cruel to club them but ok to shoot them with a arrow and watch them slowly bleed to death, not to mention the damage inflicted to the pelt you harvested. I smell tainted kool aid here!

On the hounding part a hunter would have to be in total control of their hounds at all times. I do not know how many hound hunters we have here but do you go stride for stride with your hounds when the tail gate drops. I have hunted with hounds for sixty plus years and when I was in my prime I could not even to begin to keep up with them. The antis answer, collars on the dogs to track them and when they get near someone else's property give them a shot on the "shock collar" to make them stop. WAIT, ISNT THAT CRUEL???? Shock collars are used to correct misbehaving dogs, correct??? So if your dog is

chasing a bunny, gets close to the out of state trust fund antis land and you shock it for doing what it was born and trained to do, how long will that dog be a solid performer for you?? I would guess not to long.

The history of pow, a bunch of pin ball wizards who hide behind computer screens and cause hate and discontent for everything they feel is not ok. Who gave them the God given right to tell me how I can trap or run my hounds. Every year they come out of the wood work and regurgitate their same lingo, backed by nothing and get listened too. Yet trappers, who have tons and years of research on their side have to defend every aspect of what we do. And shame on the folks under the golden dome who with no knowledge of anything about trapping or hounding mandate changes.

AND THE SAD PART, I OFFERED TO TAKE A DAY, TWO DAYS, A WEEK OR WHAT EVER IT TAKES TO TAKE THEM OUT TO SHOW THEM THAT WHAT THEY ARE PROPOSING IS PURE GARBAGE AND NOT ONE OF THEM ACCEPTED. AFRAID OF LEARNING THE TRUTH, I GUESS.

SO MY REQUEST TO SPORTSMEN OF VERMONT IS SIMPLE. CALL YOUR LOCAL REPS AND SOUND OFF. CALL YOUR REPS ON THE FISH AND WILDLIFE BOARD AND SOUND OFF. THE SQUEAKY WHEEL MIGHT GET THE GREASE. AND THIS GOES TO ALL SPORTSMEN BECAUSE IF THE ANTIS GET THEIR WAY ON THESE TOPICS IT WILL BE A VICTORY FOR THEM AND THEY WILL BE BACK NEST YEAR WITH MORE FRIVILOUS B.S LIKE NO MORE RETRIVERS FOR DUCK HUNTING OR BIRD DOGS FOR GANE BIRDS OR USING LIVE WORMS FOR FISH BAIT. THE LIST CAN GO ON FOREVER.

IN THE COMPUTER WORLD USING CAPS ON ALL WORDS MEANS SOMEONE IS FRUTRATED. I AM BEYOND THAT; I AM PISSED OFF!!

PLEASE DO YOUR PART, IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES. UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.

Tree Stand Safety Tips for Hunters

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE - Press Release

Tree stands get hunters out of sight and smell of wary deer, but they can also get hunters into trouble. Here are some tips from Vermont Fish and Wildlife to help stay safe and get the most out of your tree stand hunting experience:

- **Choose a live, straight tree**, and avoid ash that may be in decline due to emerald ash borers.
- **Buy smart.** Only use stands certified by the [Tree Stand Manufacturers Association \(TMA\)](#).
- **Inspect them each time you use them.** Check your tree-stand for wear and tear each time you go out into the woods.
- **Know the rules.** On state lands, it is illegal to place nails or other hardware into trees or to build permanent structures. On private lands, you must have landowner permission to erect a tree stand, cut or remove trees or other plants, or to cut limbs. All stands, including ground blinds, must be marked with the owner's name and address.
- **Always wear a full-body safety harness, even for climbing.** Most falls occur going up and down the tree and getting in and out of the stand. Make sure your safety harness is in good condition. Especially, check the straps.
- **Don't go too high.** The higher you go, the smaller the vital zone on a deer becomes, while the likelihood of a serious injury increases. Climb within your personal limit.
- **Never carry firearms or bows up and down trees.** Always use a haul line to raise and lower all gear. Make sure your firearm is unloaded.
- **Familiarize yourself with your gear before you go.** The morning of opening day is a poor time to put your safety belt on for the first time.
- **Be careful with long-term placement.** Exposure can damage straps, ropes and attachment cords. Also, the stand's stability can be compromised over time, as the tree grows.



“Hunter education instructors want you to be safe this coming season,” said Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s Hunter Education Program Coordinator Nicole Meier. “Falls from tree stands are a major cause of death and serious injury to deer hunters, but they are preventable by always wearing a full-body harness and staying connected to the tree.”

Learn more about *Tree Stand Safety* here: <https://www.tmas-tands.com/safety/>

How Come They Are So Lucky?

By Brett Ladeau

We probably all know a hunter that can just flat get it done no matter where, when, or what they hunt. Maybe you are one of them but if not do you ever wonder what their secrets are? I sometimes feel like I am one of those hunters, especially with turkey, but if I am honest with myself, I am a fair deer hunter at best. I admire deer hunters that seem to shoot a nice buck no matter where or when they hunt. I do ask myself what sets them apart? Why can't I get consistent with getting a good buck more consistently? I don't know all the answers, so I asked some of the hunters in New England and the Northeast that I admire. Some I know on a personal level and others I have only met through social media. Some might be recognizable names, but most are just blue collared workers that have a passion for the hunt.

There are consistencies through all the feedback I got. First, persistence was mentioned by nearly all the people I talked to. Second, having a good place to hunt. Third, scouting and spending as much time in the woods as possible. Fourth, learn to find and read sign to put the odds in your favor.

Persistence, from the Oxford Dictionary; "firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition." Being persistent when hunting is going even when the deck seems to be stacked against you. Keep pushing yourself to go as often as time allows. My buddy Morgan says, "It really does come down to time and effort." I think being flexible with your persistence helps too. Thinking outside the box and not being afraid to try a new area or trying a new technique will break up the monotony and may put you in the right spot.

Jeff Hoke, my hunting buddy from Virginia, is a guy that hunts more than anyone else I know, and he says, "You can't kill what ain't there. That being said, some hunters are way better at being than others at being in the right place to pull the trigger and connecting." I agree that you can't shoot a turkey, bear, or big deer if there aren't any there. You need to have an area that holds game, but there definitely seems to be people that just have the knack of putting themselves in the right spot at the right time. I have hunted spots where I believe there should be deer but rarely see them. You should move on from these areas even if you feel there should be animals there.

I checked a spot this weekend that has good beech nuts this year but there was very little sign in the area, and I covered a lot of ground. They may move in there eventually but since they aren't there now, I am trying to find a more lucrative spot. I use the same thought process in the spring for turkey. If I am not hearing or seeing sign that turkey live in the area I move to another spot until I find what I am looking for.



Another common theme is dedication to scouting year-round. Jeremy Ballentine, a guy that can get the job done out west as well as on any game species in New England told me, “Knowing as much as possible regarding terrain, cover, food sources and water.... Putting in the extra effort that other hunters simply don’t do. Look for overlooked spots as much as hard to get to. Using a boat or waders to access spots will separate you from 99 percent of the competition.” He also says, “My time in the woods has always been to scout 80 percent and hunt the other 20 percent.” A lot of people are using trail/cell cameras to gather intel, but a lot don’t. While new technology helps, it only tells you where the animals have been. There is no better way to learn the woods and where deer or other game species live than being out there and learning by personal observation.

I have another friend, Garrette, that isn’t sure exactly what his secret is, but he spends as much time in the woods as possible. His results over the past few years have stuck in my mind, and I know his success hasn’t been by accident. He shot two late season trophy buck in Massachusetts last year and has already shot a nice buck in the Adirondacks in New York and another in New Hampshire. He hunts new areas often and looks for areas with few people. He still hunts, slowly walking through a good area, but he doesn’t spend much time where he isn’t seeing deer sign. He doesn’t mind bumping deer without getting a shot as it helps him piece the area together and learns where the deer like to hangout. He likes to hunt the big woods of



the northeast and has learned that elevation can play a part in where he sees deer. He gave me an example with his New Hampshire deer. He told me that he saw the most sign between 1400 to 1600 feet and when he climbed to 2200 feet the sign was gone. He dropped back down to the elevation where he saw the most sign and took a few steps at a time until he caught the deer moving before it saw him. He uses this technique a lot before buck really start chasing doe. He’s noticed good success before rut really kicks in. When the rut starts the key is finding doe.

My friend Finn says he likes to find a place to conceal himself after he has found good sign and to be patient in that area. He says, “If you think you’ve waited long enough, wait another five minutes.” When walking, he likes to look several steps ahead to plan his route so he can scan the surroundings as he moves. With most big game, especially deer, he uses the wind to his advantage, moving into the wind or sitting in an area where the wind is blowing from the area you think deer will be coming from. He also reminded me that deer and turkey are out in the woods even when the weather is bad.

Using all these techniques or trying some of your own will likely help put the odds in your favor this fall. The takeaway is staying persistent, going as often as possible, knowing your area, and having good areas to hunt will get you in the game. Often, we get stuck going to an area that used to produce but hasn’t in years, but because we know it so well, we keep going. Being flexible and trying new areas could also change your luck.



LEGACY WEAPONS

By Ken Jones

The 2023 deer season is well underway and the memories are already stacking up.

I started 23 with a goal. In the midst of last deer season my family was hit with a tragic loss in the passing of my son Adam.

So after inheriting his bow, a Mathews Switchback XT. My goal was to take a deer with Big A's bow.

I missed the season opener while whale watching in Gloucester but Temps were pretty warm and I knew it was a long season.

I managed to escape work early enough to venture down into some hickory nuts I'd found during preseason scouting. I had quite the lather going by the time I settled the summit 20 feet up. Sitting in a t shirt with a bow waiting on a deer is something we don't deal with every season but it does happen.

I got settled in and decided to sit in the t-shirt for a bit while I dried off since I still had close to four hours of daylight.

An hour or so in, I look to my left and a little deer had slipped out of the understory and was feeding about 25 yards away. Still in my t-shirt I grabbed Boobie off the hanger. (Boobie was a nick name I had for Adam so when I got his bow I affectionately named it) after a once over this was definitely a little deer and I definitely decided to pass. I stayed alert looking for other deer

when I caught movement coming out of the same thicket. Ah, a nice mature doe heading to the same place it's little partner was!!

As she closed she went behind some of the still vibrant green vegetation and I drew. Two more steps and it's go time. Well, there must have been quite a few hickory nuts at her feet because she stopped behind the leaves and put her head down and went to feeding. And she stood there. And she stood there. I'm sure many of you have been here before. Full draw and you need two steps. Finally I cave and let the bow down. She finally decides to step out and I come to full draw again and here's where things get a little dicey. As I'm settling in to my anchor my finger bumps the release and a warning shot sails over her back!!! Little deer explodes up the hill like a space x rocket leaving the pad, target doe takes one hop out to 30 yards and gives me a steep quartering away shot. I quickly knock another quill and take aim just in front of the hind quarter utilizing the angle.

I squeezed the release and the lighted knock looks like it found its mark perfectly. But there was something about the way she left that troubled me. So since it was only 4 o'clock and dark wasn't until 7ish, I decided to give her an hour before I descended down to pick up the trail.



Still in my t-shirt I made my way to where she was standing and picked up blood right away. A very good blood trail ensued and within a half hour I came upon her expired.

My shot wasn't as true as I'd thought. Nearly a perfect Texas heart shot had severed her femoral artery which is every bit as lethal as a heart shot. She went about the same distance as a heart shot deer would.

The legacy is carried on. I wish it was you Boobie. I wish we were tracking your deer. I guess it's my way of still including you on some of my hunts. That bow shoots so well, it's been the only vertical bow I've hunted with this season. We won't mention the complete miss in NY state. Totally operator error.

As we grow older we kind of expect to begin losing loved ones. These last few years have handed me some of the most devastating losses of my life. So much that I now carry a handful of prayer or memory cards in my hunting pack of some my lost comrades.

Though they may be gone they will never be forgotten and can still be a part of the hunts you go on moving forward even if only in a prayer card.

Stay close to those you've lost if you can. Take one of their legacy weapons on a memorial hunt.

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



The author with his 2023 archery doe taken with his son's bow and the memorial cards he carries.

Miles Supply

milessupply.com



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

