



Vermont Sporting Journal

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Time Flies Tying Flies

By Brian Divelbliss

Why Tie Flies?

As an avid outdoors person, I enjoy fishing and hunting of all types, making maple syrup, gardening, hiking, bird watching, and in general about anything to do with nature. So, tying flies would be new for me, but seemed like a natural fit with my interests.

Other than the obvious reason of using something you have assembled; it is a terrific way to spend some cold winter days and nights. No, tying your own flies

will not save you money. Cast that thought in the river right now. If you do enough of it and enjoy it, it will become a passion and outlet for creativity. How can you put a price on that? It will also challenge you to learn about a whole host of topics: stages of insect life, various feathers, metals, and many other materials used in tying.

The beginning:

I began fly tying in the winter of 2018, when I received a beginner's fly-tying kit as a gift. I

have always had an interest in tying flies, and consider it an art. I mean, I've fly fished before, and surely tying has to be easier to learn than casting a fly rod. HA!!! My hours turned into days, and days into weeks of watching DVD's and fly-tying videos; attempting to create something that resembled the picture on the screen. After making several attempts and becoming remarkably familiar with the trial-and-error method, I began tying something that resembled what it was supposed to. I was now hooked, and

yes, the pun is intended.

I used my friends as my fly testers and shipped boxes of my flies to various parts of the country to see how they worked. I knew I would get honest feedback from these guys, so I waited. Finally, a text came through with a picture of one of my friends, from West Virginia, holding a rainbow trout. Then after that came more pictures, texts, and encouragement from my friends, I began tying

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Introduction to Decoy Carving

By John Bourbon

Hello All! I'm John Bourbon, I live in Essex Town and I have been carving decoys for about 30 years now. This is the first of what I hope will be several articles on decoy making and repair. I started carving my own hunting decoys on a lark, just to see if I could make some that would look better than the store bought ones that were available at the time. They really weren't all that pretty, BUT they pulled ducks within shooting range. That got me hooked on decoy carving and I've been at it ever since.

Those first birds were burlap covered foam, using foam from a foam insulation spray can. I painted them as black ducks 'cause I thought they would be the easiest ducks to emulate. I sprayed

the foam on a piece of plywood until it was an oval shaped blob. I then used a wavy edge kitchen knife to shape that blob into a "duck like" shape. I then cut out the burlap with regular scissors and used bar top epoxy (because that's what the local Aubuchon's had in stock) to fasten the burlap to the foam. I drew a duck like head onto a straight grained 2x4 and cut it out with a coping saw and shaped it with a very sharp chisel. Back then I didn't even own a carving knife or a decent jack knife! The head was fastened through the foam and into the bottom board with a 1/2" dowel rod. Since I was going to hunt "the big water" of Malletts Bay, I decided they needed keels. I found some maple boards to cut into 1" strips. Wow, was that ma-

ple hard! Hard enough that I never used Maple again on a decoy. I'd read that the old time decoys were all painted with oil based paints, so I used Rustoleum flat black for the body and flat white mixed with artists oil paints in tubes for the face and bill. And yes, anything mixed with artists tube oils takes a long time to dry.

Since then I have made decoys from 2x construction grade wood, basswood, cedar (my preferred material), pink foam insulation board, blue foam insulation board, low density brown cork and high density tan cork. Foam and cork decoys really should have a bottom board under the foam/cork to eliminate chipping and denting on the bottom edges. I've made bottom boards from

exterior plywood, marine plywood, construction grade wood, straight grained pine and those plastic composite deck boards that are so popular for home construction these days. The same with tail boards (which I like to use on foam and cork decoys). The possibilities for material selection are endless and bounded only by your imagination and budget.

If you'd like to try your hand at decoy carving, there are several "easiest ways" to do this. You can buy a book with patterns in it, hang out on Internet groups and ask lots of questions or find a mentor, preferably one with a band saw...but the absolute eas-

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Ashley Brown- 11.18.2023- Apt 177#
Buck harvested in Orange, VT with her Tikka 6.5 Creedmoor.

The Lady Luck Buck

By Ashley Brown

Saturday, November 18th, 2023; Cold, windy, a little bit of sun, no snow... Some might say those conditions in Vermont during Rifle Season won't result in harvesting a buck.

Up before daybreak so not to be in the woods at first light, but rather to be milking and feeding the cows and my goat before I can get to the woods. Hunting comes after chores here on the farmstead! I finished chores, had a quick breakfast with my boyfriend Dan and discussed our plan for the day, then we headed for the woods.

Dan was going "up high" on a ridge above where I had decided to go. We walked up to the base of the first ridge together then split off. I decided to stop atop of the ridge, in a nice bowl like funnel, which is usually a good spot to see deer moving through. I did some calling but the wind was pretty brutal, even with all of my warmest gear on I was having a hard time staying warm while sitting still. It was about noontime,

so I began to think about how much time I had before I would need to go feed the animals again to keep them warm. Me, always thinking about my animals! I figured that I would take my time and meander down the backside of the ridge where I had just been watching from above, to see if there was anything bedded down below in the Softwoods. Then, I would take our trail around the sugar woods and loop back home for a late lunch with the animals. With no snow to track on, you have to rely on your deerlike senses. Not everyone who hunts truly understands the animal, its behavior, its patterns, and how the weather affects the animal. Keeping all of these things in mind I began my stroll through the softwoods. There's something eerie about this piece of woods on a windy day when it's extremely hard to hear and after seeing some larger dog tracks than I'd like to see in the mud by the spring. Keeping my eyes peeled for deer and unwanted dogs, I headed towards my favorite stonewall four-way at the

base of the bowl I was previously watching. I stopped here for a drink and to take a few pictures as it really is a super cool spot in the woods. I began walking again, working my way under the bowl and looping back toward our trail while thinking to myself, "Alright, now if I were a deer, where would I be on this windy day?" Generally, bucks like to be up high here, so I almost doubted that I would see anything on this hunt, since that I chose to hunt the first ridge... but then again with the wind, maybe they would be hunkered down lower to avoid the wind more.

About halfway down our trail, I stopped and did a little calling as I like to do, especially when there is no snow to quiet my footsteps. Walk for a few, stop and call, look all around, then start moving again. I got a good gut feeling and thought "Man, if I were a buck, I'd be up on that bank in the little bit of sunshine, with the

See Buck page 4

Scouting for Spring Turkey Season Is an All-Year Long Adventure

by Brett Ladeau

Is it too early to start scouting for spring success now? Personally, I never stop scouting for the entire year. However, from now until May I will really start stacking up the hours in the woods and on the roads looking for turkeys to hunt.

Things will change a lot between early March and turkey season but accessing permission early on new and old properties will pay dividends. Getting permission early may provide you with additional properties to hunt because the landowner might have a quota on the number of hunters they allow to hunt their land. I also like this time of year because the flocks are huge. You get a good inventory of the birds in the areas you hunt because they are concentrated in fewer locations. They will disperse as spring progresses, but it gives you a good understand of what is in the immediate area. It also allows me to see how the prior years hatch was. This can help dictate my approach come turkey season. In 2023, our late spring and early summer were quite wet, so my bet is that poult production was down. However, winter has been mild to this point in late February, so the birds that were around in the fall should be in pretty good shape this spring. I believe we will see fewer jakes and maybe have a strong gobbling season with primarily two- and three-year-old males on the landscape. I guess time will tell on that prediction though.

As spring progresses my scouting tactics change as well. I spend less time in my vehicle and more time in the woods trying to find those birds that others can't see or hear. I do hunt a lot of areas where birds are visible to a bunch of people but if I can, I'd like to find birds that only very few people know about. In today's world it's hard to find a bird that only you know about. I don't really have exclusive hunting rights to any areas I hunt. Most of my areas are open to anyone and everyone, and I don't mind that really. However, if I can find an unpressured bird, I consider that a bonus.

I believe I may have said something similar in another article about scouting turkey, but thinks it's important to say again, I have turkey hunted some areas for about 25 to 28 years and have several "go to" spots that produce year in and year out. In those areas, I will usually check to confirm there are birds there again but will likely branch out to find new/fresh areas to hunt.

I might not even find a new area until turkey season starts, but my scouting of the new areas doesn't change much. Whether I find them in March or May I tend to loop the properties looking for scat, scratching, feathers, track, or any other turkey sign that may be out there. If I can find a roost location that will help me focus on my early morning hunts. If it's a feeding or dusting area I might hangout there during mid to late morning. It just depends on what the sign is telling me. I am not much of a sitter so if a turkey isn't gobbling, I am not likely to sit and wait one out. However, if I know where they like to be it may assist in location one if my other areas dry up.

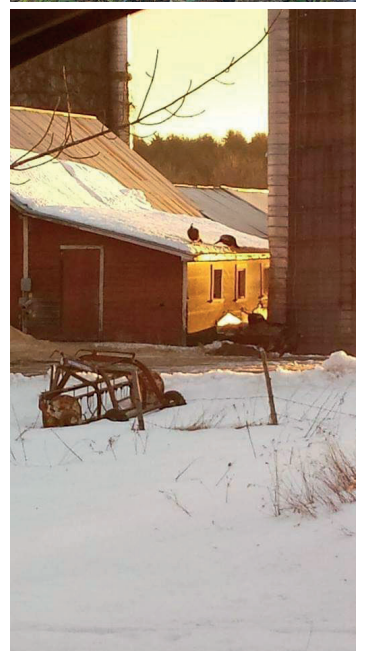
I also use OnX mapping to assist in my scouting. If I see an opening in the middle of the woods, I like to investigate those area first. Turkey like to visit open areas to strut and feed. If I can find a location like that far from a road, I will likely concentrate a few hours of scouting in that location.

I still have not used trail cameras scouting turkey very often, but I believe that would be another tool to help pattern where the birds may hang out during certain times of day. I am seriously considering adding a camera or two to my scouting this spring. Especially in areas that are a little farther from my core hunting area.

I happen to practice turkey calling year-round, but if that's not your thing, right now would be a good time to get those mouth calls bought and start practicing now. The more realistic we can sound the more success we can have. Same with a box call or pot call. The more real we are the better are results. Now, that's not saying you need to be competition ready, but being proficient on a variety of calls will enhance your season and success. Plus, it's just plain fun to make a bunch of turkey racket and drive the family and dog crazy. I mentioned this previously, but my scouting doesn't end when turkey season starts either. I've also said this before, but I think scouting in season is important as patterns and habits change throughout the season. During the season I burn the candle at both ends trying to find one on the roost. The night before a hunt I will spend several hours looking or listening for a turkey gobble. If I can one roosted the night before I feel like my chances of getting one increase significantly. Plus, it makes waking up at turkey hunting hours a lot easier. The other thing I like about a roosted turkey is that I can almost guarantee that I am at least in the game first thing in the morning. They may get away, but I will have some early morning adrenaline trying to call them in.

Another thing I like to do is have hunting partner join me. If could be family, a friend, or someone I just met, having someone to meet makes getting out of bed easier too and it's just plain fun to share the experience with someone. It can also help with scouting areas. Often, you can send your friend to different areas to listen for a turkey and maybe you will be lucky and roost two or three. The key to scouting and success is knowing where birds are. You could be the best turkey hunter in the world but if there are no turkeys to hunt in the area it doesn't matter. Scouting will help you find more turkey and that by itself will help you become more successful. It's better to hunt a target rich environment than spend hours in woods that don't hold turkeys.

Hopefully some of these tips help with your success this spring and many season to come. Best of luck to everyone this spring. Be safe, have fun, and scout a lot. If you happen to see me out and about feel free to say hi and let's talk about some turkey hunting.



A scouter gobbler in the snow

Well now that deer season fever is cooling down many of us are shifting gears to spring turkey season. Unless you're a complete bird brain like me and they're always on your mind.

Now is when the sleep deprivation actually begins. Late February and early March will have me up before light, driving from spot to spot. Just listening from the truck. Maybe tossing a few "who cooks for you!!" Owl hoots to entice the operatic sound of spring. The gobble of the wild turkey. As we get closer, laying boots on the ground, watching

as the winter flocks become smaller and smaller as the hens start to sit for their suitors and move off to begin forming nests to raise the next generation. Pre season scouting for turkeys for me, is as important as the 31 plus days I'll spend chasing gobblers come late April through May.

For some mornings for whatever reason you may not be greeted with the morning thunder of an anxious gobble calling to his lady friends from the roost.

Let's step back some 20 plus years to the spring of 2000.

We'd dodged all the Y2K business and the world didn't end so here we were. Opening morning on a farm I knew oh so well having pretty much cut my teeth hunting everything here since I was a teen.

My previous recon missions had revealed several high ranking officers encamped in a back pasture up and away from the large open crop fields behind the barn. My mission was to slip in well before daylight and set up a couple decoys consisting of an enlisted man and a faux wax recruit to stage an act of insubordination and hopefully enrage an officer into marching in and getting dead.

Now here's where the plan gets a little off. As I stood in the darkness and the sky showed the slightest hint of Grey to the east. Beginning to give up the darkness to the new day.

Suddenly the soft singing of the earliest song birds was broken by the sound of insurgents in the form of a pack of coyotes not far above me and perilously close to where I'd hoped the officer's club was set up the night before. Their howls and barks gave the illusion of a pack of Apache raiders springing a trap on a westward wagon train.

As this went on for a solid minute or two I felt my chances of that story book off the roost turkey hunt slip through my fingers. Panic set in as daylight came and not a gobble. Not a bugle from the company post to sound reveley, silence.

Panic set in and I began the climb up the mountain into the timber. I'd have to locate and initiate the battle. Then a hundred yards or so into my accent, something clicked. Remember your recon missions. Remember how much the enemy officers liked to camp in that pasture. I would double back and resort to a more late season tactic and set up just like I'd planned and blind call periodically hoping to catch the attention of an officer perhaps detached from his regiment.

We weren't too far up into the morning and I was able to sneak back to the pasture and set up my corporal and his wax counterpart undetected. Periodic calling over the next hour and a half brought no responses and we were in the generally quiet part of the day.

Suddenly I caught movement headed my way. It was indeed a turkey. As it closed the colors of its head revealed it was indeed a gentleman of the enemy brigade

but I couldn't define his rank yet. Then as he closed he revealed his rank of officer with a beautiful long beard swinging from the front of his glistening uniform. The sun acted like a battery lighting up the greens and bronze colors from his plumage.

He closed to well within killing distance and paused to inspect my two accomplices and with a squeeze of the trigger on the old winchester. Mission accomplished. A fine two year old officer sporting a 9 inch beard and weighing right at 20 lbs.

Not exactly the gobble fest and high intensity hunt I'd expected for Opening day but trusting my instincts and sticking to what my prior recon missions told me I put myself where turkeys liked to be and without hearing a single gobble that day, I still came out 20 lbs heavier.

It will be here before we know it. The southern states are a little over a week from starting as I write this. Now is the time to start figuring them out so if you're hit with some diversity, trust your INSTINCTS!!!

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



The author with an early season long beard.

Trusting Your Instincts

By Ken Jones

The Hard Way

By Brad Roy

I notice more and more just how commonplace it is to hear people talking about trivial difficulties in their lives. Its everywhere. Complaints about so-called "First World Problems" like not having a cell phone battery that will last all day or sheets with a thread count deemed barbaric by modern society are taking place at a much faster rate than I have ever known in my short time on earth.

More and more we are catered to in every facet of our lives, and so far, the end is not in sight. As soon as a task is made easier for us by technology, we move on to worrying about the next thing we feel like is too bothersome. Get that new cell phone with the better battery, you'll immediately want a nicer camera on it. Get those new high thread count sheets? You'll decide your pillow cases need to be upgraded to match. Unfortunately, I am no less susceptible to this endless struggle of laziness than anyone else, lest someone splash a cup

of water on the soap box I stand on and watch me battle with the suds of my own hypocrisy.

Always needing more, better, and brighter new things as quickly and easily as possible is something that we, as humans, largely have benefitted from throughout history. An innate drive to create a better life for ourselves and our children has been the very component of our DNA that has allowed us achieve success as a species, and our ability to learn and adapt to make things easier for ourselves has largely benefitted our ability to evolve. I for one, am glad I don't have to hitch up a wagon to my horses to take a trip into town, for example. However; as we push forward into yet another technology revolution, things have gotten easy for us beyond the wildest dreams of those who were here even a few short generations ago.

We have machines to keep our food cold, make our food hot, wash our clothes and dishes, drive us places, and generally do most every laborious task we need done. This day-to-day monotony of challenge-less living is exactly what draws people like me to the outdoors. In a world of immediate gratification, I continue to find that the more time I spend doing things the "Hard Way," the less I fall victim to the constant urge to complain

about things in life that are in reality, quite easy. Like a piece of seasoned maple I cut from the forest being fed into a woodstove on a frigid winter night, the warmth of satisfaction that blooms from a seed planted with ones own sweat and persistence is more satisfying than any technology I've come across.

Trudging through wet, slippery snow into the backcountry with a pack basket of 330 conibear traps and a sled heavy with gear on the way to a beaver flowage is the antithesis of easy. While most pursuits related to the outdoors suffice as a way to escape the constant positive feedback loop we get when we make things less strenuous for ourselves, I think winter beaver trapping may just be the most profound.

Dragging a heavy sled in between stands of conifers, over logs and around ditches; up hills and down hills and still further on into the forest leaves a person lots of time to sweat. And to think. On my most recent February outing in pursuit of fully prime, thick furred winter beavers, my mind was occupied by the fact that despite the burning in my shins and the sweat rolling down my brow, I was having more fun than I knew how to handle. Continuing in an attempt to understand why, I realized it was the work that make it so enjoyable. The pace is slow, the work is hard, cold, and wet. Yet despite the hardships, or rather, *because* of the hardships involved, my heart was full and my mind at peace. Trapping beavers in the winter is something relatively new to me, and if I were tasked to explain it simply to the uninitiated, it would go something like this:

You will spend a long-time hiking, carrying a heavy pack and likely pulling a sled through the most arduous terrain possible that is covered with somewhere between 1-4 feet of snow. The ground will be frozen, except when it's not. There is no way to tell. When it's not, you will fall into a swamp that usually you can get out of. Once you get on site, you will walk around, dig, chip ice, sweat, get cold, get wet, chip more ice, set traps, prepare to leave, go check the traps to make sure you didn't forget something, re-make the set, then hike out back to a cold truck where your windows will be foggy for the remainder of the winter due to the influx of moisture your swamp-laden gear and sweat have allowed to seep into your seat cushions. There is a high likelihood you will return and not have caught anything, but if you are lucky, your traps won't be frozen into the ice too badly. Also, it will be the most fun you have all winter.

This is hard work. The kind of hard work that puts into perspective just how little work it takes for most of us to get by in day-to-day life in the 21st century, and for me that's the appeal. Knowing that I have chosen to take part in an activity like this, knowing my energy expenditure is going to far outweigh what I



may harvest, and knowing that I am continuing on a tradition as old as the nation itself (and then some) is fulfilling beyond what I had ever imagined it could be. Much in the same way keeping a home warm with firewood cut yourself brings a sense of peace and fulfillment, so too does this seemingly insane pursuit of wet winter rodents under the snow and ice. I have found it's largely not the harvest, but the journey of pursuit that makes hunting, trapping, and fishing so rewarding, and have realized that putting yourself at a disadvantage can be quite advantageous in today's modern day and age.

So, with a pack basket now lightened by the removal of a few steel traps, and my mind turning to thoughts of returning to the comforts of modern life, I couldn't escape the desire for the hike out to be just a little bit further than it actually was. As my snowshoes began forward motion, I thought to myself "Maybe I'll take the hard way back."




My First Deer



By Shaley Gingras



I started going with my Dad Trevor and Mom Crystal to hunt when I was 2. I finally got to go get my license. We went to 4 classes and a range day. I got my license! I was so excited. Then this year I went hunting. We saw a couple of deer but they either didn't get in range or it wasn't season for them. Then before we knew it hunting season was over. After waiting and waiting it was finally hunting season again. We waited and waited. One day all of that changed! A deer came 2 feet away from our hunting blind!! But then I got excited and whispered too much and they ran away. About 10 minutes later they came back out! I shot it was 29 yards away. We went up to it after I reloaded my crossbow. We were hunting in my grandparents back yard and I ran inside after we made sure it was dead and told my Bampa Randy and Mamma Diane and Great grandma Wanda. We called my dad who was hunting on my uncle's property in a different town. We called everybody else and they all came, then we gutted it and then there was a dragonfly. That showed everybody that my Great grandpa Roy was there. It was cold outside and dragonflies are not usually out at this time of year and it wouldn't leave me alone that's how we knew it was Great grandpa. Then we went to get it weighed it was 35.0 pounds. Then we brought it to the taxidermist and got it back a couple of months later.










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Flies

Continued from page 1

more, and sending more out to them. Eventually, one of my “testers” said that I should really be selling them to help pay for materials. This is where Dog River Fly, “DRF” began.

My goal and mission with DRF are to produce a quality fly that someone will want to use and encourage them to begin tying as well as get outdoors and go fishing. As well as to provide me a creative outlet, and activity I can do regardless of the weather outside.

Other benefits:

Fly tying has also expanded my interest in conservation. I am a member of Trout Unlimited local Mad Dog Chapter. This organization allows me the opportunity to assist in riparian projects, community outreach, and help with educating others about the importance of our watersheds. It also affords me with a platform for teaching fly tying classes in our community. I recommend that if you are reading this, regardless of if you fly fish or not, check out your local Trout Unlimited Chapter, www.tu.org

Tools to begin:

Below is a list of tools recommended to begin your journey. Depending on your interest and where your tying takes you, some tools are more important than others. You will find this out the more you tie. There is also an overwhelming amount of styles, brands and variations of all these tools. Just like with the materials, it sometimes became a roadblock for me, as it was too much to mentally digest. So, do your research and if possible, check in with your local fly shop.



List of tools to begin:

- **Tying desk** - used to attach or hold vise and have materials available.
- **Desk Lamp** - using a desk lamp will really help with your vision when tying.
- **Vise** - I started with the table clamp vise, which came with my original kit, and worked for what I was tying. I then switched to a rotary vise, with a heavier base and it allowed me more freedom and options to tie other things.
- **Bobbin** - used to hold the thread.
- **Bobbin threader** - used to feed the thread through the bobbin.
- **Thread** - used to hold materials. This comes in many sizes and colors. Depending on the fly will dictate the size and color needed.
- **Scissors** - one for cutting softer, fine materials, another pair for cutting wire.
- **Hackle pliers** - used for wrapping hackle around the fly.
- **Tweezers** - used to pick up small objects such as beads and hooks.
- **Hair stacker** - used to even the tips of types of hair required for certain flies.
- **Bodkin** - used for applying cement to hold knots and parts of fly together. It can also be used for teasing out dubbing, and cleaning hook eyes. There is also a wide variety of these available.
- **Head cement or UV Glue** - used for sealing the threads, holding the fly together, and making it more durable.
- **Whip finisher** - used for tying

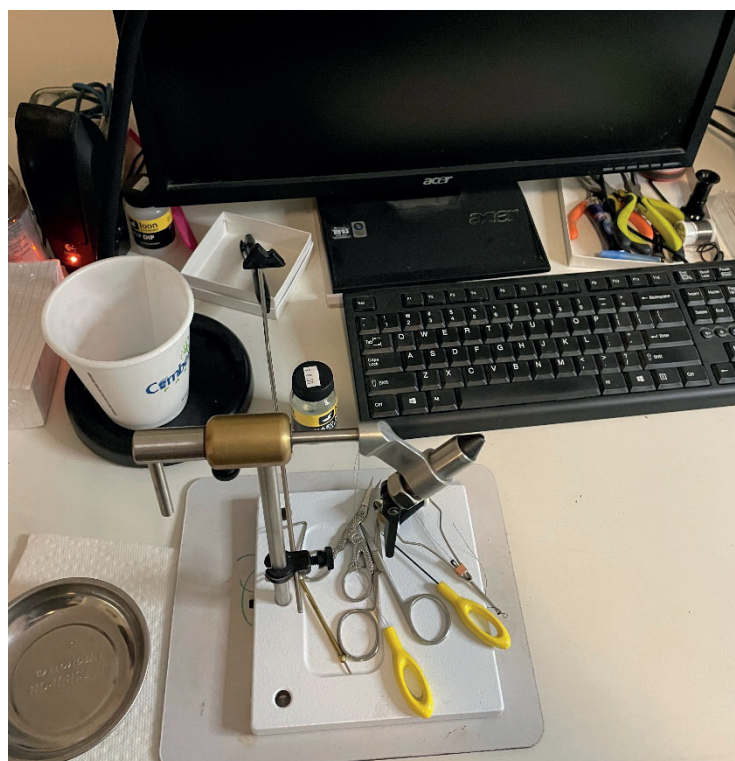
off flies.

Most of the tools I still use came from my original fly-tying kit. One update I have added is a small Cumberland Farms coffee cup. I use it as a drying wheel so I can continue to tie flies while previous flies are drying. There are also many other types of tools available for different purposes, but this list will give you a great start. I always recommend visiting your local fly shop for recommendations on tools and materials. Many shops carry fly tying kits as well. Seek out a class and other fellow tyers as well, this will only enhance your knowledge and joy of tying flies. I have never met a fellow tyer who was not more than willing to share their knowledge of tying flies.

Closing:

Tying flies is something I discovered by chance, and my only regret is that I did not start sooner. If tying flies, creating functional art, is something you feel you might enjoy, give it a shot. Be warned that once you start, and you get the fly-tying bug, pun intended, hours will pass before you know it. As I like to say, time flies tying flies.

Brian Divilbliss
Owner & Tyer, Dog River Fly



802-479-9330

PRO HEAT

Welcome

Mikeljon Hollister Mascitti

Buck

Continued from page 1

wind in my face so I could smell what's coming." And when I get those feelings, I trust them. Boy, am I glad that I did! I got a little cold and impatient to get back and feed the animals, but I know that the hunt isn't over until it's over. So, I kept watch on the bank above me and crept on slowly. The wind was still howling so I knew I had a little wiggle room with how loud the leaves were with me walking on them. Walk and stop, walk and stop.

Then, I spotted a tiny bit of white. Weird, no snow... DEER! I took a step to the left, drew up my gun so I could dial in on what I was seeing with my scope. It for sure was a deer's nose. Okay... deep breaths. I moved a bit more to the left, all while knowing I had a set of eyes on me, if not several sets. I still couldn't see if it was a buck or doe, but the

deer had its body laid up against a log making for great camouflage. Then, I saw her. A doe was bedded above the deer I was focused on. Things start piecing together in my head... I bet it's a buck. I moved back to the right where I had originally spotted white, and then I could see it... BUCK! A legal one! I clicked the safety off and set the sights on his shoulder but with the way he was laying, I didn't like the shot. I took a second to make a plan, then moved the sight to his neck hoping for a quick shot that would put him down fast and easy. BANG! I quickly ejected the spent casing and got another racked and ready as I looked back through the scope only to see he was still there in his bed. The Tikka had done its job! I had just connected with a buck in his bed! Most hunters only dream of a hunt like this, but the story isn't over just yet.

My dad always told me as a young hunter to shoot, check, and wait a few. As I waited, I hopped on the phone with Dan,

eyes still on the deer, gun in hand and ready, while still standing in the exact spot I had shot from. "BUCK DOWN!" I screamed into the phone. We swapped info and I quickly clicked off, as I had a second call to make. Dan was a few miles above me so I had time, although he did get down to me pretty darn fast.

I hopped on the phone with my dad while I waited for Dan. My dad is always my second call. He is out in Big Sky Country now but that didn't stop him from answering right away. He was as stoked as I was. While on the phone with him, I slowly walked up to see the deer. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw his rack! Huge, but only a 4 pointer. "Can't eat the horns," I told him. I then thanked the deer for putting food on my table, as I always do when I harvest an animal. Taking a few minutes to really admire him, I was shocked at how big and blady his shoulders were, and the rack on him! What a BEAUTIFUL buck! Dan made it to me by the time I had

hung up with dad to help me get the deer down the bank to where we could get him out of the woods with the tractor. After dragging him down the bank, both of us were thinking, "Wow, he's bigger than we thought!"

Fast forward... We got him down to the house and field dressed, then I quickly changed and fed the animals their now VERY late lunch, and off to the store to report him we went. Every year Dan and I enter the local Washington Village Store Rifle Buck Pool, being that it's our local store and reporting station. We took some guesses before hooking him up to the scale. Both of us were still thinking about 140-150#. Up he went on the scale and holy smokes, I couldn't believe it. Not 140, not 160, not even 170 but 177#! WOW! The store clerk was pretty pumped to be writing the new Buck Pool leader's weight up on the board. I knew there was a good chance that he would be beaten by another buck, as there was still a week left in the sea-

son and I hadn't even suspected that he would be a contender.

As the season came to a close, I received the call from the store owner, Kara, letting me know that my buck indeed DID WIN the Buck Pool! Now, I am patiently awaiting the return of the Lady Luck Buck from the taxidermist. I just had to have this beautiful buck mounted. He is the largest VT buck that I have harvested to date. My first buck was in graded school, a 6pt weighing 148#, shot across the valley in Washington. My second buck, after an extremely long time without any luck, was in 2019; A 7pt farm buck from right here in Orange, weighing in at only 114#. And then this beautiful guy... The 2023 Lady Luck Buck, 4pt 177#!

Congrats to all of the successful hunters in VT this year. Remember, the hunt isn't over until it's over. Thank you to my great mentor, all those years ago!

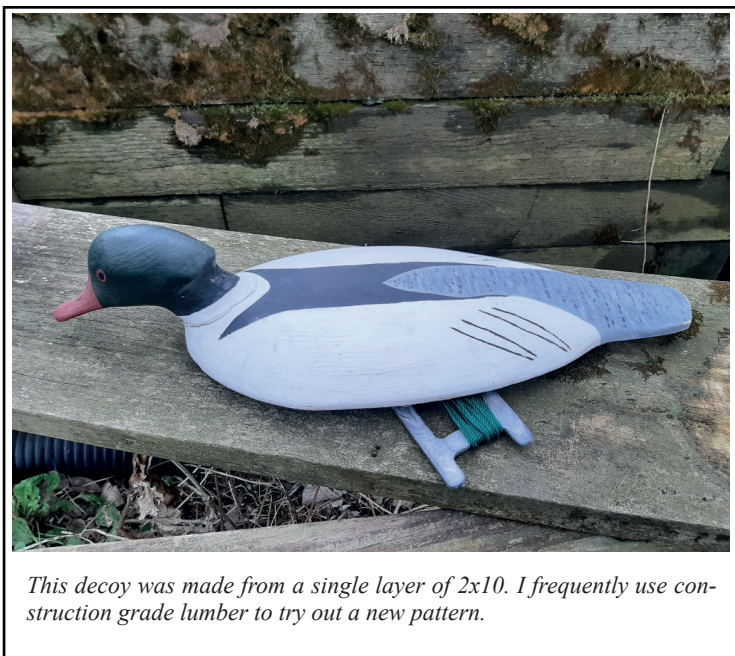
Decoys

Continued from page 1

Best way is to go online and find a decoy supply house and order one of their kits. For a little less than \$30 you get a band sawed body and head and a keel. You'll get a pair of glass eyes, a dow-

Sharpening. I could write an entire article on what to buy and how to use it. But, for the purposes of the newbie decoy carver, we want to stay simple and uncomplicated. And for that you can go 2 routes, Hard Arkansas stone or diamond hone. Either will work once you teach yourself how to use them. In this case

ene. Each of these birds are mostly black and white with no fancy blending or tricky painting required. Once you pick out the species, draw the head for that body on another piece of 2x. Its pretty important that you trace the head pattern onto the wood so that the bill runs in the same direction as the grain of the wood. This makes the bill much less prone to breaking. I'd also like to recommend that since this is your first decoy from scratch, that you limit the thickness to one layer of 2x. Save the complications from hollowing, glueing and clamping for your 2nd or 3rd decoy. We'll discuss hollowing and glueing in the next article.



This decoy was made from a single layer of 2x10. I frequently use construction grade lumber to try out a new pattern.



The decoy on the left was made from a 2x10. The decoy on the right is a 2x10 with a thin cork layer glued to it.

el rod for the head and usually a painting guide for what colors go where. Not quite a paint by numbers guide, but not too far off. Most of these places also offer paint kits for specific species. The paint kits and painting guides are an absolute godsend in that you won't go crazy trying to get the color shades correct.

You Tube is your friend. As to the stone/hone, I like it to be at least 2" x 6" with 2" x 8" being even better.

Now that you've traced the body and head onto the wood, now what? Time to make sawdust fly. You can cut out the bodies and heads with a bandsaw, jig-saw or even a coping saw. The coping saw will be slow, but it will work. With that done, take carving knife in hand, find a comfortable place to sit and start rounding the edges of the back of the decoy. Don't touch the bottom, leave it flat on this decoy. With all 4 of the species I mentioned, the tail lays flat on the water (unlike a mallard of

and drill a hole in the body under the tallest part of the head. Then, put the drill bit in from the bottom of the body and place the head in its spot and drill through the hole in the body and up into the head. Pre Drilling the holes prevents splitting of the wood. Notice I didn't specify what size hole for body or head. The hole size is determined by the screw size. Before you fasten the head to the body, spread a little silicone seal around on the bottom of the head. When you tighten

the body and head before painting. Definitely true on basswood and brown cork, but not true on cedar and construction grade wood. On this first effort construction grade decoy, just thin the heck out of the paint. That way the paint will soak in and act like a sealer. I have painted over 200 birds this way and have yet to have an issue. After that first coat is dry, scuff the paint job with sandpaper. if you see places where the paint raised the grain a little, scuff a little harder. The 2nd coat of paint will be full strength, no thinner added. Give that coat 24 hours to dry. You'll definitely want 2 coats on the bottom also. You can paint eyes on if you want, but you don't have to. Many thousands of hunting decoys have been created with no eyes. The old timers said such decoys were "blind".

Once you get all that, go back to the local hardware store and pick up an inexpensive set of artists brushes. Look for ones that say they are for oil paints. Then, go a couple of aisles over and pick up an inexpensive rasp. Look for one of the half round, half flat rasps with the 4 different tooth patterns. They won't have a fancy name or fancy price tag on it, but they will last you a long time. I still have, and use, the one I bought 30 years ago. There are several other niceties one could pick up such as leather thumb guards and Surform rasps. And sandpaper. 50 or 60 grit will do for all your hunting decoy needs. Any finer than that and the decoy will be shiny and possibly flare birds.

Let's say you buy a kit, shape the body and head, and attach the keel. You paint it as best as you can and after it dries you give it a test float. And you like it! You want to carve another, but you don't want to spend \$30 on each kit as you need a dozen or more decoys to hunt that spot you like so much. And you also don't want to spend the money for a band saw or a bunch of other tools. And for the sake of discussion, you don't have or want to spend money on sheets of cork or slabs of cedar. What to do? 2x construction wood or pink/blue insulation foam is the answer. You can most certainly go to a home improvement sort of store and buy 2x wood or foam board. Or you could be on the lookout for construction sites. Especially ones with a dumpster out front. If they have scrap pieces of 2x8's, 2x10's or 2x12's 14" long or better, ask if you can fish one or more out of the dumpster to take home. I still do it and as long as they understand you're taking trash out and not putting it in, they usually won't turn you down.



Bufflehead decoys made from 2x wood are the perfect project for the beginner.

After you get that wood home, its time to draw a duck shaped body on the 2x wood. This is where the book of patterns you bought comes in handy. As your first decoy will be a learning experience, I recommend you choose a species that is relatively easy to carve and paint. The drakes of the following species are rounded and relatively easy to carve and paint: canvasbacks, bufflehead, scaup, and gold-

wood duck). Have some reference photos nearby while you are doing this. Google "images of _____ duck". A vast library of images are online. Those images will be handy for both the carving and the painting of your decoy(s). The same with the head, round the edges till you like what you see. This being your first decoy, it probably won't be perfect. And. That's. OK. Your next one will be better, and the one after that, even better.

down the screw that holds the head on, a little silicone will ooze out, filling any gaps that might be there. Wipe off the excess caulk and let dry overnight.

If this bird is destined to sit on a shelf and never get wet, no further action is necessary. But if it's to be used, we have a couple more steps to do. You'll need a way to attach an anchor line. The very simplest way to do that is with fence post staples from the hardware store, the kind you pound in with a hammer. install it about 1.5" back from the breast. I like to pound it in with the staple situated sideways. There is less chance of splitting the wood that way.

However, there are 2 must haves. A decent carving knife and a way to sharpen it. There are a bunch of different carving knives on the market. Different shapes, lengths, types of steel, handle shapes, etc. 30 years ago, I bought a Sloyd style knife with a 2.5" blade from Woodcraft.com. I do the vast majority of my carving with that knife. Woodcraft still lists 2 different Sloyd style knives. One is \$30 and the other, by a fancy name maker is \$50. I don't think you would go wrong with either one.

Sanding time! 5 minutes spent getting the rasp gouges out and softening the bottom edge of the body will be time well spent when you see the paint job on the finished bird. Don't obsess about the level of smoothness. 5 minutes of sanding time is all you need for a hunting decoy.

And lastly, sign and date your decoy on the bottom with a sharpie or other contrasting paint. Years from now, you and your kids will be glad you did.

Get out your painting guide for the species you are carving. Using a dull pencil (dull pencils leave less indentation), draw in the shape of the major colors. On the 4 species I mentioned earlier, those major colors are going to be black and white. Some people will tell you you should seal

A 2x decoy will look like its riding too low in the water to be effective, but it's not. To you and I, sitting ashore or in a boat, we see it at a low angle. To a fast moving bird, many feet or yards in the air, they will be able to see the whole bird, no partial view there. I hope you've enjoyed this "how to" article. In the next article, we'll go into more detail about the how and why's of shaping cork or cedar birds.

Lake Champlain Management Cooperative to Hold 'State of the Lake Fisheries' Meeting
VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

If you are an avid Lake Champlain angler or someone who would like to learn more about the vast array of fish species that live in Lake Champlain, be sure to reserve March 23 to attend a meeting with fisheries biologists in Essex, New York.

The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative -- a working group of fisheries professionals from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service -- will host a 'State of the Lake Fisheries' meeting at Whallonsburg Grange, 1610 NY-22, Es-

sex, New York from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 23, for anglers and other individuals interested in the fisheries of Lake Champlain.

This meeting is an opportunity for agency staff and others to provide updates on the status and trends of the fisheries and to hear from anglers. Information will be provided on restoration, research, assessment, and other work that has been accomplished over the past year as well as work planned for the coming year. Species to be discussed include lake trout, landlocked Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, muskellunge, walleye, and bass. Time will be allotted for questions from the public.

Public Hearings on Deer and Moose
March 18, 20, 21

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board will hold public hearings on deer and moose management for 2024 on March 18, 20 and 21,

The hearings will include results of Vermont's 2023 deer seasons and prospects for deer hunting next fall as well as an opportunity for people to provide their observations and opinions about the current status of the deer herd.

The hearings will also include a review of the 2023 moose hunting seasons and an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the number of moose permits recommended for 2024.

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

- March 18
Hazen Union HS
126 Hazen Union Dr
Hardwick, VT 05843

- March 20
Brattleboro Union HS
131 Fairground Rd
Brattleboro, VT 05301

- March 21
Enosburg Falls HS
65 Dickinson Ave
Enosburg Falls, VT

Pre-recorded videos of the moose and deer presentations that will be given at these meetings will be available by going to the "Public Hearings Schedule" on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's home page. The Fish and Wildlife Department's 2024 Moose Season Recommendation is also available on that page.

In addition to the public hearings, anyone can leave a comment on the proposals by emailing ANR.FWPublicComment@vermont.gov. Comments on moose must be received by March 31 and for deer by May 12. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department does not discrimi-

nate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, experience level, sex, or gender identity. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available on request at no cost to the student. Please include a description of the accommodation you will need. 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: Nick.Fortin@vermont.gov, 802-793-8777 (voice), 1-800-253-0191 (TTY)



One New Fish Record Established in Vermont in 2023

New record set for Longnose Gar

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release



Vermont Fish and Wildlife today announced that a Longnose Gar taken by a bowfishing angler in 2023 has been certified as a new state record.

In May of 2023, Pennsylvania angler Jeremy Bicking was out bowfishing in the evening on Lake Champlain and took a gar that weighed 18.6 pounds. This big fish measured 54 ¾ inches in length, a ¼ inch longer but 3 ounces lighter than the current record Longnose Gar taken by rod and reel in 2007. State records are kept separately for four species of fish that can be taken both by hook-and-line and bowfishing.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department fisheries biologist Shawn Good, who administers the state's Record Fish Program, says in recent years, anglers have expanded their species preferences to include many of

the state's under-appreciated but equally challenging native sport fish species.

"While fishing remains excellent for more traditional sport fish species such as bass, trout, walleye, and pike, there are so many other fish out there that can provide amazing action with real trophy potential. Fish like bowfin, gar, freshwater drum, suckers, and even fallfish – Vermont's largest native minnow species -- the opportunities are endless," said Good.

Although not new state records, two other notable fish were entered in the State Record Fish Program in 2023 – an 11.86 pound Walleye from Lake Champlain and a 25.6 pound Lake Trout from Echo Lake in Charleston.

"While Lake Champlain gets most of the attention for Lake

Trout fishing opportunities and action in Vermont, many of the inland lakes in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom are real sleepers for big fish," said Good.

"In fact, if you're talking exclusively about trophy sized Lake Trout, the Northeast Kingdom is where you want to be," said department fisheries biologist Jud Kratzer. All 69 Lake Trout exceeding 20 pounds that have been entered in the Record Fish Program over the years have come from Kingdom waters. And 530-acre Echo Lake has produced four of them, with the largest being just shy of 30 pounds. That's remarkable for a lake of that size."

While several Kingdom lakes do offer the best possibility of a Vermont lake trout over 20 pounds, Good says the average size tends to be smaller overall than what anglers will find in Lake Champlain.

On Lake Champlain, Good says that the 11.86-pound Walleye entry is a testament to the ongoing successes of fisheries management efforts on the lake.

Good says the department's cutting edge walleye hatchery on Grand Isle, and the continued success of long-term sea lamprey control by the Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative (comprised of Vermont Fish & Wildlife, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) has only help bolster Walleye and other sport fish species in the lake.

"It's been amazing to see what anglers are catching lately on Champlain for big Walleye. The population has really been booming in the last few years, with lots of 10-pound plus fish being caught. As one of the

fisheries biologists on the lake, it's really heartening to see our hard work and long-term management efforts paying off for anglers."

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

Captions for VTF&W photos:

Left: Jeremy Bicking took this 18.6 pound Longnose Gar while bowfishing last May on Lake Champlain. It beat the existing bowfishing record set in 1996 by just under a pound.

Right: Anglers continue to reap the benefits of successful long-term sea lamprey control and an improved walleye stocking program on Lake Champlain, with many fish over 10-pounds being caught in recent years. This fish, taken in 2023 by Grand Isle VT angler Nausori Osasa was just under 12-pounds.

Vermont Habitat Stamp Raises \$656,000 for Conservation in 2023

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

The Vermont Habitat Stamp raised \$238,513 dollars in 2023 and leveraged a \$417,912 federal match, totaling more than \$656,000 for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's land conservation and habitat improvement efforts.

"This is one of our strongest years for the Habitat Stamp since the program was established in 2015," said Fish and Wildlife's Director of Wildlife John Austin. "The growing support for habitat conservation and managing land for wildlife habitat over the past nine years is encouraging."

The Vermont Habitat Stamp is designed to allow anyone who cares about wildlife to help improve habitat for diverse species on private lands and the department's more than 130,000 acres of Wildlife Management Area (WMA) lands. Habitat Stamp funds also go towards both land acquisition projects to expand or create new WMAs and to making improvements on existing WMAs.

In 2023, the department spent \$189,355 dollars from the Hab-



itat Stamp Fund. These dollars contributed to habitat improvement assistance with private landowners and conservation partners to benefit native pollinators, songbirds, amphibians, bats, white-tailed deer, turkeys, and other wildlife. A dam on

the Saxtons River was removed to restore natural habitat and allow passage for trout and other aquatic organisms. A total of 68 acres of invasive plant control was done on six Fish and Wildlife Department WMAs. A total

of 355 acres of wetlands, floodplain and riverbank were added to Otter Creek Wildlife Management Area in Wallingford.

The Habitat Stamp was inspired by the Vermont Migratory Waterfowl Stamp and Federal Duck

Stamp 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 this year. It is one of the most direct ways to funnel your dollars to supporting biodiversity in our state in 2024."

The 2023 Habitat Stamp Annual Report highlighting the conservation work done through the program is available online at www.vtfishandwildlife.com. Matching funds for habitat projects sponsored by the stamp have come from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

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Rare Bird that Sparked Excitement and Concern Died of Natural Causes According to New Lab Results

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

A rare [marbled godwit](#) sparked excitement in the birding community this fall when the bird was discovered in Vermont, far from its normal range. That excitement became concern, when the godwit was found dead a little over a week after it was first spotted. New lab results show the bird died from natural causes, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Marbled godwits are about the size of a crow, with stilt-like legs and a long bill used for finding food at the edges of rivers and ponds. They breed in the Great Plains and northern Ontario and migrate to the Gulf and Atlantic Coast for the winter. Although their population is stable in their normal range, godwits do not usually migrate through Vermont. In the past 10 years, there has only been one other marbled godwit reported in Vermont according to the community science [website eBird](#).



Post-mortem x-ray of the marbled godwit showed no signs of injury, as a result the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department sent the godwit to the University of New Hampshire for further testing. Photo provided by VTF&W

This marbled godwit was first spotted in North Hero on September 19, 2023. Birders quickly shared the news and many traveled from around the state to see it.

“The godwit in North Hero was a rare and exciting find, the kind of ‘vagrant’—or bird outside of its usual range—that gives local birders a chance to see a new species close to home,” said Jill Kilborn, bird biologist with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. “That said, it isn’t entirely unusual to see vagrant birds like this godwit in Vermont. Migrating birds can be pushed off course by storms, like the [dovekie found in the Northeast Kingdom](#) this past December.”

A little over a week after the godwit was first discovered, birders became worried when it vanished from the stretch of lakeshore habitat it had been frequenting. Some birders worried the godwit could have been harmed by the large numbers of people who had come to see it. Three days later, a local landowner found the godwit dead and reported it to the department.

Because godwits are rare in Vermont and because this one showed no clear cause of death, Kilborn sent the godwit to the University of New Hampshire Diagnostics Lab for a full disease panel and necropsy. Knowing the attention this godwit had received, Kilborn hoped the results could address some questions and concerns raised by birders.

Although some tests were inconclusive, lab results showed that the godwit had no injuries and a high parasite load. The bird was extremely malnourished and had



A marbled godwit in non-breeding plumage similar to how the North Hero godwit would have looked during September 2023. Photo provided by VTF&W



contracted bacterial and blood infections.

“Oftentimes birds found outside of their normal range are very stressed, and if they can’t find the proper food or cover this can combine with other stressors like poor nutrition and sickness,” said Kilborn. “All ev-


idence suggests this is what happened to the godwit.”

Although this godwit died from natural stressors, Kilborn hopes to amplify the message already shared by birders who were concerned that viewing pressure could add to the challenges the bird faced.

“If a bird is changing their behavior because you are watching them, then you are too close,” said Kilborn. “This is especially important for nesting birds or rare birds like this godwit, that may draw a large number of excited viewers.”




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Game Wardens Respond to Waterbury Snowmobile Crash

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

On Monday, February 19, 2024, the Vermont Warden Service responded to a snowmobile crash in Waterbury.

Game wardens responded to the scene along with Stowe Rescue, Stowe Mountain Rescue and the Stowe Police Department. An investigation of the crash determined that Upasana Nyaupane, 27, of Massachusetts, was operating a snowmobile on a guided tour in Mount Mansfield State Forest.

Nyaupane lost control of the snowmobile while navigating a curve along Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) Trail 100S. The snowmobile left the east side of the trail and went head on into a tree. Nyaupane and her passenger were ejected from the snowmobile.

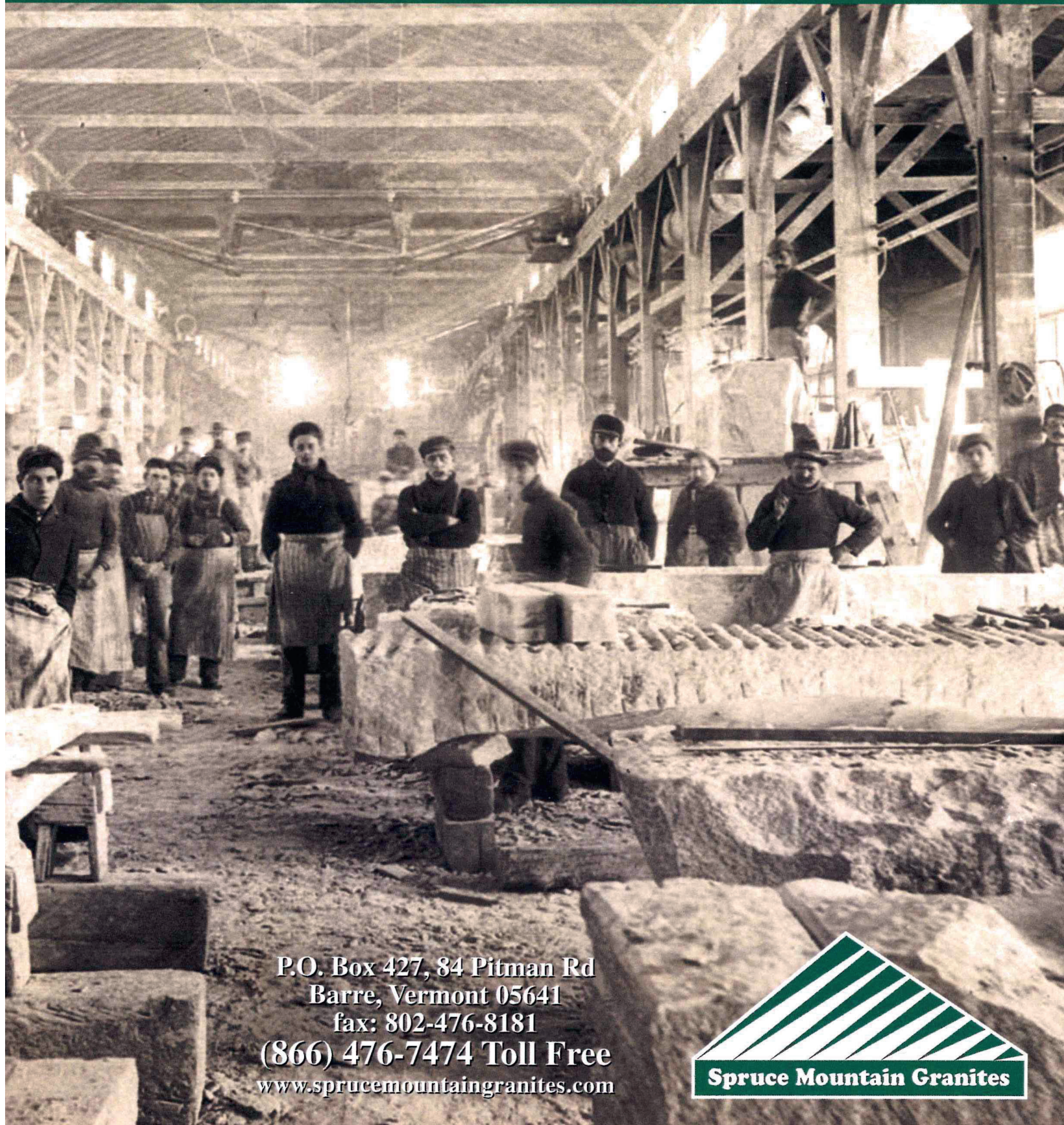
Nyaupane was transported out of the woods by her tour guide. She was then transported to Copley Hospital in Morristown and treated for minor non-life-threatening injuries.

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



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Our Heritage Matters

by Bill Huff

It was about 40 years ago I landed in Kipnuk, a small native village in southwestern Alaska. My passengers were to attend meetings at the school lasting several hours so I had time to kill in the village. Soon after striking out for town, a foul smell permeated the air. I followed my nose into the center of town where I came upon an old man attending a washtub full of brown foaming liquid on top of a roaring fire. As I approached, I queried, "Whatcha got cooking?" The attendant, a native Aleut, in very broken English, proudly explained to me his son had killed a walrus and the meat was being processed to provide for the family. It was then I noticed his wife, tucked into a small shed, busy with an ulu, prepping more walrus to add to the washtub.

This family was living as their forefathers had done for centuries. Providing sustenance for the family to sustain their lives from the natural world around them. We often refer to it as "Our Heritage." Some interpret the phrase in a very narrow form meaning, "to do as we have done in the past." "Heritage," however is much more than that.

Living IN the natural world is much different than observing that world from the outside, ... LOOKING IN. Many Vermonters choose to live IN our natural world following multiple previous generations. Their home is not defined by the four walls of their house, but by the woods, fields and streams that surround them. We hunt, fish, and trap, because that is a natural extension of living outside the four walls that define our house. We are one with our wilderness surroundings. The way we live our lives defines who we are as much as our blood type or DNA. Our heritage, is more than generations of a lifestyle or doing the same things our ancestors did in the past. It is our lives, our soul, our very being.

"Outsiders," those looking in to the natural world rather than being a part of it, will never understand how much every animal harvested, (hunted, fished, or trapped), is revered and respected by those of us that harvest them. We care just as much about the wellbeing of wildlife as any "anti" ever did. We do not like to see any animal, wild or domestic, suffer. When we

harvest an animal, we do it expeditiously and as painlessly as possible. Certainly, with more respect than the millions of pigs, chickens, and cows that are butchered daily. But sustaining our lives by utilizing the natural resources around us are what makes us who we are. Being one with nature sustains our body as well as our soul.


From an outsider's perspective, the impulse is to ban participation, limit access, and prevent harvest of all our natural resources whether it be wildlife or forest. Post it, put a fence around it, prohibit hunting, trapping, and halt the harvesting of any wood products. Our renewable resources are far better off with purposeful management to prevent damage to infrastructure and crops, keep numbers in balance to prevent disease, and allow selective forest harvesting for better yields and a more diverse forest. Those of us that live IN the natural world, play an indispensable role in that purposeful management.

We allow the Aleuts to harvest whales and walrus because it's their heritage. The harvests

are an inseparable part of who they are. It provides sustenance for both body and soul. It's no different with Vermonters who live WITHIN their natural surroundings except the Vermont legislature doesn't protect those that hunt, shoot, and trap. To the contrary, they have an annual "open season" on us, pandering to every anti with a grievance to bear. Countless bills, every session, attempt to strip us of the very essence that makes us who we are. Can't they see, they are destroying a culture that is the fabric of Vermont? Who do they think cleared the land with an ax and crosscut saw? How do they think that stone wall out back that stretches over the mountain got there if not for handpicked rocks, a stone boat, and an ox. The tools may have changed over the years but the individuals that made Vermont what it is, still live on today generations later and are unjustly under a constant attack simply for generational longevity.

There have been several recent incidents where Vermont law has intentionally been violated. Title 10, section 4708 clearly

states "A person shall not intentionally interfere with the lawful taking of fish or wildlife..." and goes on to specify what actions are illegal. The illegal behavior is being addressed but the statute falls short of what is needed to stop the coordinated hatred, harassment, and bullying by a small group of anti activist. Sportsmen and women's Facebook posts are maliciously attacked by a coordinated deluge of "replies" intended to assassinate the poster's character and ruin their business. Some media outlets display the antis' ads for the revenue regardless of the fact the ads are inaccurate or unfairly demonize a group of Vermonters. Modern day tactics are being used to "intentionally interfere" with the lawful pursuit of game. Current statutes should be updated to reflect the use of social media and modern tactics meant to bully, demonize, and interfere with Sportsmen and women. It's time for the legislature to acknowledge our existence, our heritage, our livelihoods and move to protect our culture, and our businesses rather than try to destroy them. Our heritage matters too!



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Green Mountain Conservation Camp Registration is Open
VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

If you are 12 to 14 years old and want to learn about Vermont's wildlife and gain outdoor skills, consider attending one of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Green Mountain Conservation Camps this summer. If you are a GMCC alum, 16 or younger, consider coming back for another summer.

The one-week camp programs are held at Lake Bomoseen in Castleton and Buck Lake in Woodbury. Campers participate in hands-on learning about fish and wildlife conservation, ecology, forestry, orienteering, safe firearm and archery techniques, swimming, canoeing, fishing and more. Natural resource professionals come to the camp to share information on their programs and take campers out for field activities.

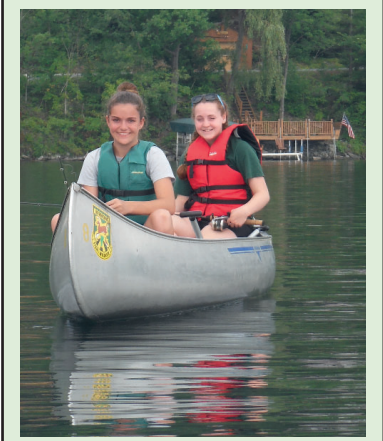
"Whether kids come alone or with friends, they are guaranteed to meet new people and form new bonds while experiencing Vermont's natural resources to the fullest," said Fish and Wildlife Education Specialist Hannah Phelps. "An important take-away message and common theme during the week is that conserving and managing habitat will help ensure Vermont will have fish and wildlife in the future."

"We would love to have all of the advanced sessions filled for campers who have already attended a basic session," added Phelps. "Advanced sessions are for campers who have completed a basic session in a previous summer and who are 16 years old or younger. Advanced sessions include more in-depth activities about backpacking, camping, natural resources, and unique hunting and fishing techniques."

Conservation Camps open June 16 and continue until August 16. Tuition is \$250 for the week, including food, lodging and equipment, and financial assistance is available.

[Information and registration](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com) are available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

For more information, contact FWGMCC@vermont.gov or call 802-522-2925.



Fried Turkey Fingers

By Gene Lafrance

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 breast bone 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!!!!



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Vermont Fish & Wildlife's Green Mountain Conservation Camp program offers young people the opportunity to learn about natural resource conservation and develop outdoor skills through hands-on learning experiences.

VTF&W Photo

Report From Vermont Traditions Coalition

by Mike Covey

This year Vermont stands at a crossroads for hunting and fishing. The first thing I need to do is thank everybody who has followed through when they were asked to contact people so far this year. It's only because of that that we are doing as well as we are, and we need everybody on board for these efforts. The days when sportspeople could be concerned with only enjoying the hunt and the story of the hunt are long gone. We have a legislature where some have shown an interest in ending these practices to placate the anti-hunting ideology. then I need to ask everybody else to get involved. Sitting on the sidelines is no longer an option.

With a bill that would dismantle the Fish and wildlife Board, replace many of the current members with non-hunters (or even animal rights activists), diminish the value placed on deer, and end multiple forms of coyote hunting, we see the values of most Vermonters discarded in favor of an ideology that segregates humans from the world around us. This was done in Washington state in 2021 and has already had disastrous effects on wildlife management there. In fact, one of the non-hunting members of the board has become an outspoken opponent of the idea after seeing how activists appointed to the board discarded science in favor of their personal bias.

Furthermore, the Administration has proposed closing the Salisbury fish hatchery. This would have an incredibly negative impact on our trout fishery that would ripple into the loss of native populations. Thankfully, there is work being done in the senate to find a better path, but they need our support.

Despite the protestations of supporters of the bill (S258) that would rewrite how the fish and wildlife board works and is composed, it can have no positive effect. This committee had planned to vote the bill out two weeks ago, and they have not yet done so because hunters have showed up. There are far more of us than there are those who oppose what we do, and we need to keep showing up and continually show up in greater numbers. We also need to vote this year in both the primary and general elections. Find out how your candidates land on hunting and trapping and vote accordingly. Don't be afraid to call legislators

at home or approach them when you see them out and about. The anti-hunting contingent does this all the time. I am in the State house most days, and there are always 5 to 10 of them floating around. Feel free to step into the State house anytime you're in Montpelier. You don't need to wait for an invitation, it is your building. Seek out your senators and representatives, and just tell them that you're opposed to the bill.

The lead sponsor of S.258, Senator Chris Bray, states regularly that there is "misinformation" being spread about the bill. This ignores the fact that all testimony about the bill has been focused on hunting and trapping. Why would the anti hunting activists be so desperate to pass the bill if it didn't forward their goals and mission? These folks have shown an inability to listen, as no amount of explanations to them or science is ever enough. During testimony, they contradicted themselves regularly. One activist stated that "the people want scientists, not hunters managing wildlife, then, moments later, they stated that the Department doesn't manage wildlife with sound science. They desperately twist and shift their narrative to whatever seems most injurious to the hunting community at the time. A great example of this is that during the pandemic, when we had to find a mechanism for remote reporting of game harvest, they took the position that the commissioner shouldn't have the authority to do that, and the proper entity for formatting the concept was the fish and wildlife board. Now, just four years later, the fish and wildlife board can't be trusted and they claim the proper entity is the commissioner.

They show a consistent refusal to accept the science of the Department, as it doesn't support their goals. Fisher have been a central species that really shows their doggedness. Despite regular interactions with the Department on this topic since 2019, they continue to deny the science. They either refuse to or can't understand the principles that guide modern wildlife management, so they write their own "white papers" that are unsupported, not peer reviewed, and simply wrong. Bad enough to consider giving them a role, but the bill has now been changed to allow these new board members to spend 12 years in their roles,

should this pass. How much harm could an anti-hunting activist, or several, do to our lifestyle with 12 years in a position of influence?

Furthermore, despite their statements to the contrary, one bill sponsor (Senator Becca White) has said on the record that as she understood it, this was just about hunting and trapping. This shows up in the fact that it bans hunting coyotes with hounds or bait and removes the directive for the Department to manage deer for a "healthy and abundant" herd. Currently, the law requires this, but if this bill passes, the word "abundant" will be removed. What do protections on coyotes and a less abundant deer herd have in common? I think you know the answer.

To summarize, for any who question what a terrible idea this bill is, if S.258 passes it will: Eliminate the F&W board. Replace it with a new board, 2/3 of which is appointed by Legislators (speaker of the house and committee on committees) and the last 1/3 to be appointed by the Commissioner. This departure from the balance of powers should concern everyone. Not only would the legislature create the board, but it would also largely appoint the board, and Senator Mark MacDonald suggested that they should do it before the judicial branch has an opportunity to rule on the currently debated rule that was just put in place. This consolidation of power, in what appears to be an unfriendly legislative committee, should be off-putting to everyone as who knows where they will do this next.

Give the new Board authority over Department policy and rules beyond the current scope of just game harvesting rules, including non-game and other policy issues that the department is already managing just fine. Again, nobody is complaining about the fish and wildlife department, except for anti-hunting activists.

Require appointment of non-hunters to the board that determines how we hunt.

If the department creates a rule or policy, they then must submit it to the board for review and the board may suggest changes. This adds a new level of bureaucracy that will cost taxpayers money.

If the department does not do what the board tells them to do, they are required to file a written explanation of their decision with the board and the legislature. This will unquestionably trigger legislation to place the board's wishes into law.

Require creation of a non-game fish and wildlife plan. (This was already done in the comprehensive wildlife management plan.) Remove the existing requirement to maintain an abundant deer herd. Remove language about stewarding the deer herd being a primary goal of the Department. Outlaw the hunting of coyotes with hounds.

Outlaw the taking of coyotes with bait.

Create trapping setbacks from all roads and trails, even trails on private lands even if the landowner has granted permission. Apply these setbacks to traps in the water and under the ice.

Remove the word "hunting" from the definition of trapping in an attempt to ensure it is not constitutionally protected as a form of hunting.

You will all make up your own mind on who to trust. If you think that a committee that has clearly shown it's interest in moving this initiative and a handful of anti-hunting activists have your best interest in mind, then by all means support them and do all things but otherwise find a way to reach out to your

legislators and make sure they know that you will be voting based on their behavior around this bill.

While you are at it, talk to them about the other major issue we are facing, the potential closure of the Salisbury fish hatchery. If the Salisbury hatchery closes, we may never recover in terms of trout fishing. Salisbury hatchery closure impacts

The assertion that the hatchery is out of compliance with its EPA permit is proving to be very questionable. According to the EPA website, they are well in compliance with allowable permit levels, and the waters that ANR is saying are compromised by the hatchery are shown as having full ecological function on the EPA website. The only violations appear to be a history of failing to file reports in a timely manner.

https://echo.epa.gov/detailed-facility-report?fid=110071377584&ej_type=sup&ej_compare=US
The hatchery is a National Historic Site, and as such would still need to be maintained and curated.

If the Salisbury hatchery is closed, the minimum impacts will be:

We would lose Vermont's "broodstock station," producing approximately nine million trout eggs annually to support our other state and federal fish hatcheries. This facility spawns five different trout species for Vermont's lake and streams.

Stocking Impacts

The immediate closure of Salisbury will have disastrous impacts on our trout fisheries in the state. Based on the report, decommissioning of the Salisbury Fish Culture Station immediately would have the following programmatic impacts:

- The need to move broodstock to other state fish culture facilities to provide eggs for the VT fish culture program - Given the fact that Salisbury Fish Culture Station has a prevalence of having the fish disease furunculosis, the only way that a full swap of broodstock could occur would be with the distribution of eggs to be grown out for broodstock for other hatcheries. This would result in one of two scenarios:

1: VTFWD would need

to stop stocking fish statewide until the new broodstock grow to the point that they reach sexual maturity and can produce eggs for statewide stocking. Gaps between stocking would be as follows.

- Brook trout – no catchable sized trout stocking for 2027 and 2028 seasons.
- Brown and rainbow trout – no catchable sized trout stocking for 2027 – 2029 seasons.
- Steelhead – no yearling steelhead stockings for 2027 - 2030 seasons.
- Lake trout – no yearling lake trout stockings for 2027 – 2032 seasons. Eggs would need to be purchased or secured from out of state sources.

or 2: Stock would have to be sourced.

- Brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and steelhead – would most likely be purchased from a private corporation (i.e. Troutlodge); however, eggs would not be of the right genetic strain and would have the potential to significantly impact the wild trout population in VT. This would be an environmentally risky and financially costly endeavor and result in the discontinuation of "strain critical" stockings (i.e. the Willoughby River steelhead program), as well as other concerns with availability, biosecurity, etc.

- Lake trout - would need to be secured from the White River National Fish Hatchery pending availability.

Economic Impact

There is a number thrown around of \$10M to "fix" the hatchery. Instead of making the logical spend to do so, the Commissioner is proposing to spend \$6M (and I have seen no proof that is anything more than a guess) to expand the Grand Isle hatchery near his home.

We all know fish from Champlain can't be moved anywhere else because of biosecurity (spreading disease and invasive species). Why would we build space there? -What will filtration cost?

They are proposing \$250k-400k just to study if it is possible to safely raise fish on Grand Isle to stock elsewhere. Why? Salisbury has great water and is the most bio-secure of our 5 hatcheries. Why take the risk for what will likely be less than a 20% savings even if we take the random numbers ANR is throwing around at face value?

In 2018, fishing was responsible for about \$141M in annual economic activity to the state, up from \$131.2M in 2012. In 2012, the portion of that economic input attributed to stocking was \$31.6M, so assuming the percentage has remained stable, that equates to \$35.4M in 2018. We know there has been further growth in participation with a large spike in 2020, and that can only grow these numbers further.

Ecological impacts

We can be certain that with no stocked fish for folks to catch, fishing pressure will be increased on our wild trout. The long-term potential impacts of this have not even been assessed. If the Grand Isle hatchery has a bio security breach (think a rat, otter, mink carrying invasive aquatic species or disease getting in there), the whole program may need to be reset, sanitized, and started again.

In the event of such a breach that goes unnoticed, we stand a very real chance of compromising otherwise healthy inland waters with invasive species and disease.

Social Impacts

Loss of social equity. Fishing is an outdoor activity that is available to almost anyone regardless of age, physical condition, or financial status. Closing Salisbury will drastically impact the level of access Vermonters have to this resource.

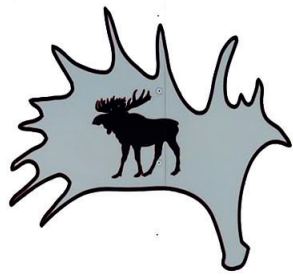
Reduced food security. In 2017 VTFW placed almost 11,000,000 fish including 182,000 lbs of brook, brown, and rainbow trout. These are all meals that benefit the citizens of the state. If we lose our trout fishery, it will negatively impact people of all social classes, but as we know, these things tend to affect those suffering financial insecurity to a higher degree.

Loss of educational opportunities including the "Trout in the Classroom" program and school field trips to the hatchery.

In closing, there has never been a more important time for hunters, trappers, and anglers to become politically active. It is clear the direction this legislative committee wants to push the needle, and we need to stand up and say no. We need to do it now in the legislature, we need to do it in August in the primary election, and we need to do it in November. Make sure to stay aware of what is happening by signing up for our email list. You can do so on our website at www.vermont-traditions.org.

Mike Covey is the Executive Director of the Vermont Traditions Coalition, a full-time advocacy group for the outdoor community of Vermont.

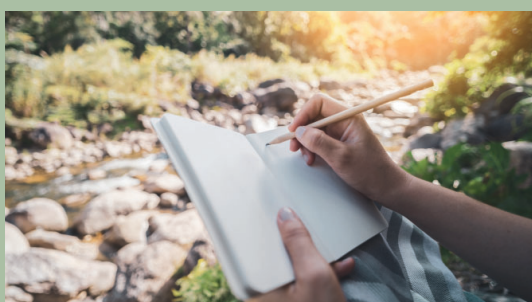
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Bears are Becoming Active Earlier in the Spring, Vermonters Need to Take Steps Now to Prevent Bear Conflicts

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has begun to receive reports of bears coming out of their dens and is urging Vermonters to take steps now to prevent conflicts with bears over the spring and summer.

“Vermonters need to act to prevent bear conflicts now, even if they have never had a bear visit their property before,” said Jaclyn Comeau, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department’s bear biologist. “Do not wait to take down your birdfeeders and

bearproof your yard until a bear comes to visit.”

Bear incidents have been on the rise over the past several years. Officials believe this trend is a result of Vermont’s healthy black bear population learning to associate people and food over multiple generations.

Shorter winters also mean that bears are emerging from their dens earlier in the spring. In recent years bear activity has begun in mid-March, roughly two weeks earlier than what is

typically thought of as the start of bear aware season in northern New England.

“Mid-March is the time for Vermonters to take down our birdfeeders, make sure our garbage is secure, and protect our backyard chickens and bees with an electric fence,” said Comeau. “This helps teach bears that our yards and neighborhoods are not good places to search for food. But, it will only work if everyone does their part.”

The department asks Vermonters to take the following proactive steps for coexisting with bears:

- Take down birdfeeders between mid-March and December
- Store garbage in bear-resistant containers or structures, trash cans alone are not enough
- Follow the steps on our web page for composting in bear country
- Use electric fences to keep chickens and honeybees safe
- Request a bear-resistant dumpster from your waste hauler
- Feed your pets indoors
- Never feed bears, deliberately or accidentally

“Preventing bears from having access to human-related foods is key to successful coexistence with these long-lived and intelligent animals,” said Comeau.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife also asks Vermonters to submit reports of bears engaging in potentially dangerous behavior like targeting birdfeeders and garbage, feeding on crops or livestock, or investigating campgrounds. Reports can be submitted on the department’s



Building damage caused by a bear that had become comfortable around a Vermont residence and attempted to access the kitchen in the summer of 2022.

VTF&W Photos

Living with Black Bears web page. The data help biologists keep track of bear incidents and provide early interventions to head off conflicts.

“At the end of the day, purposefully feeding a bear is not just bad for the bear,” said Comeau. “It

is also dangerous for you, it causes problems for your neighbors, and it is illegal. If bears are finding food on your property it is your responsibility to remove that attractant and report a problem before the situation escalates.”



Fresh bear tracks on a Vermont porch photographed in the first week of March 2024.

VTF&W Photos

New High-Resolution Data Helps Identify Habitat Connections for Conservation

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

Towns, planners and conservation organizations in Vermont can now take advantage of new high-resolution data to find and protect important habitat features like wildlife road crossings.

The new data are available in the most recent update to BioFinder, a free mapping tool that uses Vermont Conservation Design to show Vermont’s most important landscapes for wildlife and climate resilience.

“This update is a major step forward in mapping the connections between Vermont’s most important wildlife habitats,” said Jens Hawkins-Hilke, conservation planning biologist with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. “As wildlife populations adjust their ranges to a changing climate these connections will become even more important.”

The updated Vermont Conservation Design analysis uses new data that is 60 times more detailed than previous versions. Higher resolution data allows Vermont Conservation Design to accurately capture the edges of large areas of uninterrupted habitat, and the connections between them. The online BioFinder tool lets planners and conservation organizations see those connecting landscapes in the areas where they work.

“We are watching species move in real time as a result of our changing climate,” said Gus Goodwin, senior conservation planner and ecologist with The Nature Conservancy. “Our state plays an outsized role in supporting that movement throughout the entire Northern Appalachians, a vision supported by the BioFinder tool. With these updates, Vermont Conservation Design is ready to help us meet the conserva-

tion challenges of the coming decade.”

Vermont Conservation Design and BioFinder were developed by a team led by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, along with scientists from the Nature Conservancy, the Northeast Wilderness Trust, the Vermont Land Trust, and the University of Vermont.

“This partnership brought together critical perspectives needed in assessing Vermont’s landscape for climate and ecological resilience, and the results will help guide our future conservation work,” said Tracy Zschau, president of the Vermont Land Trust.

Updating Vermont Conservation Design and BioFinder offered collaborators an opportunity to revisit the science that underpins both products. The Vermont Conservation Design team reaffirmed this underlying research, even taking into account evolving climate data over the last decade.

“I was consistently impressed with the amount of expertise in the room developing this updated model,” said Shelby Perry, wildlands ecologist with the Northeast Wilderness Trust. “Everyone on the team was motivated by protecting an ecologically functioning landscape here in Vermont, and it was an honor to work together on this.”

BioFinder is available online for free, for everyone from scientists and town managers to students and private landowners, on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources’ website.



Three images of the same landscape showing an orange pre- and maroon post-update Vermont Conservation Design readout in BioFinder. The post-update analysis excludes areas around houses from important habitat areas and shows new connecting habitats that wildlife can easily move through.

VTF&W Photo

Learn to Hunt Wild Turkeys with VF&W

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

If you would like to learn how to effectively hunt wild turkey gobblers in the upcoming spring hunting season, consider attending the turkey hunting seminar being offered by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and volunteer instructors on Saturday, March 23.

Learning to Hunt Spring Turkeys, designed specifically for new hunters, will be held on Saturday, March 23, from 9:00

a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Waterbury-Stowe Fish & Game Club, 5365 Waterbury-Stowe Rd, Waterbury Center, VT 05677.

This seminar will cover turkey biology, effective turkey calls, how to pattern your shotgun, how to butcher your turkey, and lots more. Lunch is provided, and all participants will go home with a new turkey call. Participants will also have the opportunity to meet a turkey hunting

mentor who can go turkey hunting with them this spring.

This seminar will cover turkey biology, hunting tactics, scouting, and more.

For more information about the seminars, contact Nicole Meier at Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov or call 802-828-1193.

Registration for these upcoming

seminars is available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's [web-site](http://www.vermont.gov) at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/3hdkwxx3>

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, experience level, sex, or gender identity. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available on request at no cost to the student. Please


include a description of the accommodation you will need. 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: Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov, 802-318-1347 (voice), 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).

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3 column x 8"	\$168	\$156	\$144	\$132
3 column x 9"	\$189	\$176	\$162	\$149
3 column x 10"	\$210	\$195	\$180	\$165
3 column x 11"	\$231	\$215	\$198	\$182
3 column x 12"	\$252	\$234	\$216	\$198
3 column x 13"	\$273	\$254	\$234	\$215
3 column x 14"	\$294	\$273	\$252	\$231
3 column x 15"	\$315	\$293	\$270	\$248
3 column x 16"	\$336	\$312	\$288	\$264

Size	1 month	4 months	8 months	12 months
4 column x 3"	\$84	\$78	\$72	\$66
4 column x 4"	\$112	\$104	\$96	\$88
4 column x 5"	\$140	\$130	\$120	\$110
4 column x 6"	\$168	\$156	\$144	\$132
4 column x 7"	\$196	\$182	\$168	\$154
4 column x 8"	\$224	\$208	\$192	\$176
4 column x 9"	\$252	\$234	\$216	\$198
4 column x 10"	\$280	\$260	\$240	\$220
4 column x 11"	\$308	\$286	\$264	\$242
4 column x 12"	\$336	\$312	\$288	\$264
4 column x 13"	\$364	\$338	\$312	\$286
4 column x 14"	\$392	\$364	\$336	\$308
4 column x 15"	\$420	\$390	\$360	\$330
4 column x 16"	\$448	\$416	\$384	\$352



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Trap Talk ~ Memories

By Randy Barrows

I can remember it well. It was a hot summer day in July of 1967. I had been tasked by my Dad to clean up the garage, straighten stuff up. Upon cleaning I looked up on the beam and saw a contraption hanging off the beam. Being a curious, 12-year-old I climbed up and took it down. Upon inspection I was baffled. Had no idea what it was. Later that night when Dad got home I asked him what it was. He advised it was an animal foothold trap.

Still being hopefully unaware he showed me how to set it. So then I asked where to set it? He advised me to go up and set it in the stream.



I will admit I had no clue. I went and set it and checked it daily. I could not concentrate in school at all, wondering if I had caught something. After a couple of weeks checking it I went up and the trap was gone. I saw the chain and pulled on it and was met with a very angry, actually pissed off muskrat. I never knew an animal to be so anti-social.

I raced home, grabbed the 22 single shot and put that critter out of its misery. Not knowing what to do next, I lashed the rat to the cross bar of my 3-speed bike and went down to the hardware store, and went strutting thru the front door with my prize. The owner promptly started to holler at me. Number one, it was not trapping season. Number two, I did not have a trapping license. I went from being a big deal to swamp muck in seconds. George knew then he had been harsh on me and offered a trapping book for me and if I read it he would sell me a license and help me along the way. The book was a hard copy of Trapping North American Furbearers. I read that book cover to cover and passed the test. With a license in hand I was a TRAPPER.

Over the years, I read that book and read it again. The book is frail today compared to when I first got it. The corners are tattered, pages are torn, with many stains from bloody hands. But it is still a gem.

At sixteen I got my driver's license. Along with that came a request from Pickle, the road foreman who advised he had beavers all over town plugging up culverts and asked if I could trap them. Not having a clue how to trap a beaver it was back to the hard ware store for copies of Fur Fish and Game and quickly learned the best I could how to properly trap a beaver. Fifty-two years lat-

er and thousands of beavers trapped I still enjoy trapping beaver.

Over the years I studied and learned all I could about trapping. Trapping consumed my life, if you did not want to talk trapping I did not feel like talking. I would check traps in the morning, go to work all day, come home and prep furs, and do it again the next day. I did it during blizzards and floods. A lot of times I questioned my sanity when I was in a raging stream, 11:00 at night looking for traps before they washed away.

In the early eighties the market collapsed, and I was still trapping. Two bucks for a rat

was better than what I started out with that morning.

Early in life I joined the Vermont Trappers Association, the smartest thing I ever did. What a good group. Before I knew it I was a director for Chittenden County. Over the years I attended many meetings, county fairs, rendezvous, 28 regional conventions and national conventions all over the U.S. Before I knew it I was named President of the Vermont Trappers Association. Then it was time to open a small supply outfit, get a fur buyers license and go all in.

I held trapping classes for many years so folks would not have to learn the way I did. Twice a year, 30 students each for thirty years. I taught hunter ed for 42 years, twice a year 35 plus each just to help folks learn the trade. Things were going great until this past year.

The trapping trade got slammed with new rules and regulations and we watched as our way of trapping slipped away.

So, I captioned this article MEMORIES. A brief history of my life as a trapper. That all ended on February 5, 2024. No more teaching, no more nuisance trapping. Make sure you alter all of your traps, the ones you have used for 50 plus years, or you cannot trap. Stay 50 feet from a road or trail so if someone is walking their unleashed dog you will not catch them. (against the law).

It was a good 56-year run, now just a memory!!!

Training Course Offered for New Hunter Education Instructors

FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

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

The training will take place Saturday, April 6, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the R.E.C. Zone, 94 Harvest Lane, Williston, VT 05495

All applicants must complete their instructor paperwork and online homework before attending the course. Instructor application paperwork can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/2pfr7e44 or call 802-828-1193 prior to the course date.

Policies and procedures, field techniques and teaching methods will be covered to give instructors the tools to teach future hunters how to have a safe and enjoyable experience. Lunch will be provided. Be prepared to be outside for at least part of

the day.

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

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

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available for free upon request. Requests should be made as early as possible. Please call the office staff at 802-828-1193 (voice) or 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).



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Waterfowl Season Public Hearings March 12 & 14

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE ~ Press Release

Public hearings on the status of migratory game bird populations and proposed 2024 migratory game bird hunting seasons for the interior zone of Vermont and Lake Champlain zone in New York and Vermont will be held Tuesday, March 12 and Thursday, March 14.

The annual Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board informational hearings will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on March 12 and March 14, 2024. Information to attend the hearings is as follows:

Tuesday, March 12
 (in person only)
 Ticonderoga Fish and Game Club, County Route 56, Ticonderoga, NY 12883 (Across from Reale Construction)

Thursday, March 14
 (in person only)
 Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, 111 West Street, Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-4695. (To be held in the Act 250 conference room)

Under Federal regulations, waterfowl seasons, bag limits, and shooting hours in the Lake Champlain Zone must be uni-

2024 Migratory Game Bird Season Recommendations

to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board



form throughout the entire zone. Waterfowl seasons in New York's portion of the Lake Champlain Zone must be identical to the waterfowl season in Vermont's portion of the Zone.

The proposed 2024 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons are available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website by typing "Board Rules" in the search window. A video explaining the proposal will be available on the website after the hearings. Comments may be provided until March 31 by emailing ANR.FWPublicComment@vermont.gov.

Comments received, as well as input and recommendations from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, will be reviewed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board in making final 2024 hunting season decisions.

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