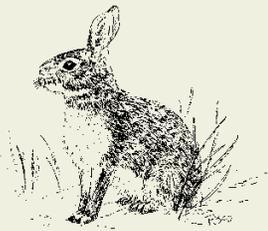


New England Cottontail Initiative

An update of activities being conducted to benefit this declining species

Habitat Program Supervising Wildlife Biologist Paul Rothbart Retires



held in September 2015 when the Secretary of the Interior announced that due to these extraordinary on-the-ground efforts and unprecedented collaboration, the need for listing had been precluded.”

While Paul will certainly be missed in all his capacities, his full retirement was short-lived. After some remodeling of his home, and time spent fishing and kayaking, Paul returned on September 30 as a Contractor to the Wildlife Management Institute to work on grants and reporting (and knowing Paul, some field projects) for the NEC Initiative.

*If you build
it, they will
come-*

In February 2016, the Wildlife Division said goodbye to our Habitat Program Supervising Biologist, Paul Rothbart, as he retired after 33 years of state service. Paul’s contributions to the Wildlife Division, and to the New England Cottontail Initiative, cannot be summarized in just a few paragraphs. Every single day Paul worked tirelessly for the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat in Connecticut. He was a tremendous advocate for conservation efforts, and was passionate about managing young forest habitat on state and private lands.

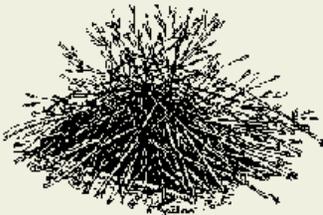


Paul is thanked for his service by members of the NEC Regional Technical Committee in January.

When asked about the most memorable events of his career, Paul responded, “The most significant conservation program that I was involved with was the New England Cottontail Initiative. I served as the State’s Technical Committee representative and was involved with much of the grant applications, conservation planning, outreach, and habitat implementation. It was extremely rewarding to be part of the event

States cooperate on trapping effort to restock NEC at Great Swamp WMA in RI

CT DEEP Wildlife Division staff were requested to assist RI DEM with trapping efforts used to restock Great Swamp WMA with New England Cottontail. The effort was jointly organized by RI DEM Biologist Brian Tefft and CT DEEP/WMI Wildlife Research Technician Travis Goodie. The



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Rabbit traps ready to be deployed.

trapping took place on Patience Island, which was previously stocked with NEC in hopes of creating a nursery from which to draw rabbits in the future. During the month of March, over 90 traps were shipped over and deployed on the north side of the island. Travis recalled, "With a goal of 20 rabbits to be removed (10 male, 10 female) we did not know how long it would take, however, after the first trap night we realized it would not take long at all." After five nights of trapping and over 50 captures, the quota for rabbits had been met. In attendance from CT DEEP were Travis Goodie, Howard Kilpatrick, Lisa Wahle, Josh Tracy, Tim McKinney, Molly Tassmer, and Justin Church.



NEC in a trap on Patience Island waiting to be moved to its new home.

Private Land Efforts Continue

For more information about pursuing a project on your property, please contact the NRCS or the DEEP. You can find NRCS local service office contact information at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ct/contact/local/>, and DEEP contact information is available at the end of this newsletter.

Research Update: Range-Wide Monitoring of the NEC

Since the inception of the New England Cottontail (NEC) Initiative, biologists have been learning as much as possible about the NEC, such as state-wide distributions, interactions between NEC and EC, and monitoring success of habitat restoration, just to give a few examples. The newest research effort, which began in winter 2015, is a range-wide monitoring project. This project uses an occupancy modeling approach, the aim of which is to identify the biotic (living) and abiotic (physical) factors that most strongly influence the status and dynamics of NECs. One of the main objectives of this project is to determine current occupancy rates of EC and NEC throughout the NEC range, and to see how occupancy changes through time.

What does this mean for Connecticut? This fall and winter, researchers and biologists will continue sampling 11 of the 12 Focus Areas across the state. Monitoring sites will be visited anywhere from 2-4 times during the winter. Visits to a site include vegetation surveys, searching for rabbit signs such as tracks, and collecting rabbit pellets for DNA analysis to determine the presence of EC or NEC. This project will ultimately give researchers a better understanding of species occurrence and dynamics of NEC across their range, which

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will allow scientists to continue to manage for this species in the most effective way.

Have you checked out New-EnglandCottontail.org?

Need more detailed information on the New England Cottontail? Look no further than newenglandcottontail.org. This website covers all aspects of the entire Regional Cottontail Initiative; here you can find information about cottontail biology, the latest media news stories, what's happening in each of the regional states, as well as pictures, signs, brochures, guidebooks, posters, and a host of other resources.

Contact Information

For more information, or to discuss a potential project, please contact the following:

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The following websites offer further information pertaining to New England cottontails:

www.ct.gov/deep/youngforestinitiative
www.newenglandcottontail.org
www.ctnrns.usda.gov/cottontail
www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit

What do you think?

We hope you find this newsletter informative and we welcome all comments. To submit recommendations or to unsubscribe, please email:

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