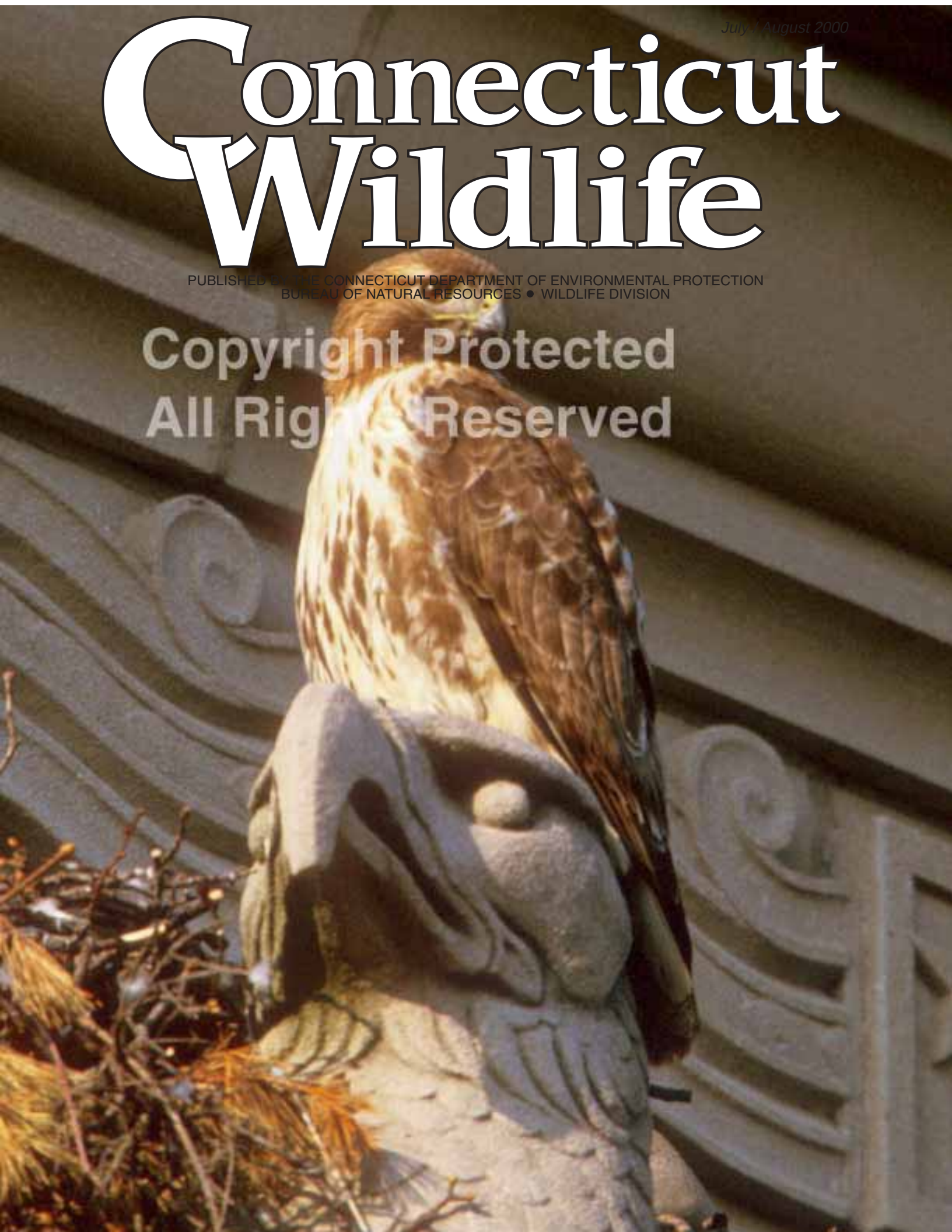
July / August 2000

Connecticut Wildlife

PUBLISHED BY THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION



From the Director

Everyone who is interested in the future of Connecticut's wildlife should be closely watching legislation before Congress this summer and fall. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) would provide the largest infusion of conservation funding in the nation's history by dedicating $2.8 billion from offshore oil and gas revenues to programs that protect our coastlines, parks, historic resources, and wildlife. The House of Representatives passed CARA in May by a 315-102 vote and the bill is currently being marked up in the Senate.

The wildlife-related benefits of CARA are enormous. Of the seven titles in the legislation passed by the House, Title III is dedicated for wildlife conservation and would provide $350 million annually to be apportioned among the states. Connecticut's estimated share exceeds $3 million, which is more than the Wildlife Division's current total budget. It is important to note that, like the Pittman-Robertson program, CARA requires a 25% state match for the federal funds. Connecticut will have to develop a new source of state funding to take full advantage of CARA.

The funding could not come at a better time. Throughout the 20th century, revenues derived from sportsmen have supported the vast majority of state wildlife programs. Consequently, "game" species, such as waterfowl, deer, and wild turkeys and their habitats have been the primary beneficiaries. Not only have these species been restored and managed, but also nongame species have indirectly benefited from the habitat management and land protection programs funded by sportsmen. The additional revenues provided by CARA will, for the first time, allow Connecticut to follow through with the creation of a comprehensive wildlife diversity program.

What can Connecticut residents expect if CARA delivers a predictable, long-term source of wildlife conservation funding? Our expectations are high and yours should be too. Improved management of wildlife, particularly the 85% of species that are not traditionally funded as game or endangered/threatened species. We need to learn much more about these species, emphasizing the ones showing signs of decline, so that we can take action to protect them from becoming threatened or endangered. Better opportunities for citizens to learn about and enjoy Connecticut's wildlife resources through new publications, programs, exhibits and viewing opportunities. Improved technical assistance to private landowners and municipalities, particularly as it relates to resource planning. Better management of our state wildlife areas. The list of needs is very long and we are developing a solid plan to ensure that the new funding is spent wisely.

By October we will know whether Congress has taken advantage of this window of opportunity and passed this historic act. For the sake of wild animals and wild places across the country and for the opportunity of future generations to enjoy them, I hope they do.

Dale W. May

Cover:

An adult red-tailed hawk sits above its nest on the Hartford Superior Court building (see article on page 5).

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

Connecticut Wildlife

Published bimonthly by

State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
http://dep.state.ct.us

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for wildlife management and research programs, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development and hunter education programs. It places an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. Articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies are depicted with the logo of the Wildlife Restoration Program.

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Two Peregrine Chicks Hatch in View of Webcam Watchers

Since April, web surfers have been watching the nest of a pair of state endangered peregrine falcons on the *Peregrine Watch at Travelers Tower* webcam, a partnership between The Science Center of Connecticut, the Department of Environmental Protection and Travelers Insurance. Over the course of the spring and early summer, DEP biologists and websurfers kept a daily vigil on the nest. On April 16, the female laid the first of four eggs. Two of the eggs eventually hatched on May 26 and 27. The webcam captured images of the eggs, newly hatched chicks and the chicks being fed by the adults.

In mid-June, Tom French, a biologist from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, assisted Connecticut Wildlife Division biologists in banding the two chicks, one male and one female which were almost three weeks old. Each chick was fitted with a black aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band on one leg and a half-black, half-red band with letters and numbers on the other leg. The letters and numbers on the two-color band can easily be identified through a spotting scope, which will help biologists track the movements of the these young peregrines after they leave the Travelers Tower nest area.

The Travelers Tower, owned by the Travelers Property Casualty, a member of Travelers Group, still provides the necessary privacy and solitude that these adult peregrines need for hatching and rearing young. The Wildlife Division extends a special thanks to Trammel Crow Co., facilities manager for the Travelers Tower, for allowing the Wildlife Division to monitor these peregrines and to track their movements and productivity.

Two other peregrine falcon pairs nested in the state this year, one in Hamden and one in Bridgeport. Unfortunately, both nests failed. The Hamden nest produced one egg that was abandoned by the adults and the Bridgeport nest produced a chick that fell to its death before it was able to fly.

The peregrine was removed from the federal Endangered Species List in August 1999. It is still considered endangered in Connecticut; however, it is encouraging that the number of pairs is increasing in the state.

To find out more about peregrine falcons in Connecticut, visit the DEP's website at http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife; click on the Special Features Section to access the Wildlife Division's Peregrine Falcon page. Here you will find links to the *Peregrine Watch at Travelers Tower* webcam and images of Amelia and her chicks. Additional links offer kid's pages and coloring sheets, the Connecticut Peregrine Falcon Story and fact sheets.

L. ST AMAND

Wildlife Division biologists Julie Victoria (left) and Jenny Dickson hold the two peregrine falcon chicks hatched in Connecticut this year. The chicks were expected to fledge from the nest in early July.

One Bald Eagle Chick Hatches in CT this Year

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist

In 1992, a pair of eagles raised two chicks near the Barkhamsted Reservoir, the first successful nesting in Connecticut since the 1950s. Every year since then, the Wildlife Division has monitored the nesting status of this state endangered and federally threatened species. This year, four bald eagle pairs were active; however, only one pair managed to nest successfully, producing one chick. The pair that nests on private property along the Connecticut River in Suffield was the successful couple. The other three pairs nested at Barkhamsted Reservoir and at sites along the Connecticut River and the Massachusetts/Connecticut border.

At six weeks of age, the only eagle chick hatched this year in Connecticut was lowered from the nest by a climber for banding and examination. The chick was weighed and measured, and blood samples were taken to determine the general health of the bird, as well as to detect the presence of heavy metals. The eaglet was fitted with a silver aluminum federal band on one leg and a black band with silver letters and numbers on the other leg. The letters and numbers on the black band can be easily identified through a spotting scope, which will help biologists track the

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Bald eagles, continued

movements of this young eagle after it leaves the nest.

The Wildlife Division has banded and examined most of the chicks hatched in Connecticut since 1992 as part of the protective management program for this state endangered species. Attaching leg bands is a useful tool for wildlife managers because this technique allows them to trace local movements, estimate population changes and determine a species' lifespan. The use of leg bands has provided useful information to the federal recovery program for bald eagles. With an endangered population, it is necessary to collect any pertinent data that can be added to our knowledge of this species' life history in Connecticut.

Eagle Born in CT Nested in NY

On May 30, 2000, biologists for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's Endangered Species Program were banding eagles along the Hudson River north of the city of Hudson when they identified the leg bands of a mature female bald eagle that was banded as a chick in Connecticut in 1994! This adult female had three chicks in her nest. This is exciting news for the Wildlife Division because the first years of life are critical for this species. It is during this period that they must learn to fend for themselves and many young don't make it. This adult female was one of two chicks born at the Barkhamsted nest in 1994. Previous to this verified siting, the chicks that fledged in 1994 had not been seen in Connecticut or reported elsewhere.

Immature bald eagles are commemorated in a glossy 11" X 14" print "**Connecticut's Bald Eagle - Home Again**," a photograph of the first eaglets successfully raised in the wild in Connecticut since the 1950s. Suitable for framing, this print is a great way to celebrate this recent wildlife success story. The print sells for $6.00. Send orders (check or money orders accepted) to: Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.

Mallards and Geese Top the Waterfowl Breeding Survey

Written by Paul Merola, Waterfowl Program Biologist

This past spring, Connecticut, along with states from New Hampshire to Virginia, participated in the Atlantic Flyway Council's annual Breeding Waterfowl Survey. The survey is conducted, from the ground, by counting all waterfowl seen at ponds, marshes and swamps within randomly selected, one-kilometer square plots. In Connecticut, there are more than 50 plots in inland habitats and six in coastal tidal habitats.

The mallard and Canada goose were the most frequent and abundant species found in the survey. The number of mallard pairs was estimated at 16,774 in inland habitats, which was similar to last year. In coastal habitats, 266 pairs of mallards were estimated. The Canada goose pair estimate was 12,063, which was a considerable increase from the previous year. The wood duck population estimate, at 5,767 pairs, was up considerably from the previous year's unusually low count. This year's wood duck estimate was back at the average level. The inland black duck pair estimate (755) increased slightly from last year, while the coastal pair estimate was average.

Mallards and Canada geese are highly adaptable to the urban/suburban landscape which encompasses much of Connecticut, explaining why they tend to be more abundant than the other waterfowl species. The resident Canada goose population has increased greatly in Connecticut during the last decade, as well as throughout the eastern United States, because of their ability to adapt. The wood duck, which prefers forested habitats and beaver marshes, is less abundant in Connecticut, but has a relatively stable population. On the other hand, the black duck, which once was a common breeder in Connecticut, is less adaptable to the state's changing landscape and has done poorly in most areas. Coastal areas currently provide the most important habitat for Connecticut's remnant black duck population.

P. J. FUSCO

Canada geese have been very successful in raising young in Connecticut's urban/suburban landscape.

Waterfowl Breeding Pair Population Trends for Major Species in Connecticut

	Year 2000	Previous 5-year average
Mallard		
Inland	16,744	14,037
Coastal	266	286
American black duck		
Inland	755	453
Coastal	177	185
Wood duck		
Inland	5,767	5,423
Coastal	0	0
Canada goose		
Inland	12,063	10,868
Coastal	76	53

Remarkable Accomplishment by Urban Hawk

Written by Paul Fusco, Public Awareness Program

Growing up and living in an urban setting can sometimes be tough and full of hardship. Such was the case with the story of a pair of red-tailed hawks that chose to build a nest and raise their young on the Superior Courthouse building in downtown Hartford this year.

The nest was built 30 feet up on an eagle statue that is part of the building structure. Eggs were laid and incubated while the city life of local residents and businesses went on all around them. Automobile traffic was constant and noisy. Sirens, fast cars and radios echoed in the street. Every day, pedestrians walked below the nest, while a construction crew busily made repairs to the courthouse roof above the nest. Amongst all this human activity, the hawks went about their instinctual behavior of reproduction.

A young red-tailed hawk (left), close to fledging, sits next to the adult male at their nest on the Superior Courthouse in Hartford.

Red-tailed hawks are normally reclusive and wary of humans, but these hawks didn't seem to be bothered by life in the city and the almost constant presence of people. The biggest problem turned out to be dealing with other wildlife in the area. As witnessed by many observers on numerous occasions, every time one of the hawks left the nest to hunt or rest it was aggressively chased and harassed by crows. The crows kept harassing the hawks until they left the area around the courthouse.

Once the eggs hatched and the chicks were approximately two weeks old, tragedy struck when the adult female was found under a tree with a broken wing. She was taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment but died overnight. No one can be certain what happened. However, shortly before being found on the ground, the female had been observed being chased by crows. It was speculated that her wing may have clipped a branch when she flew through a tree while trying to avoid the crows. This left only the adult male to care for the two small chicks. He had to brood them during the many cold, wet days and nights experienced in May. The male also had to successfully hunt for enough food to feed all three of them while avoiding harm from the ever-present crows.

Many of the people who had been watching the hawks from the beginning gave up hope for the chicks after the female died. After all, how could the male successfully raise two young chicks under these circumstances by himself?

Then in late May, about two to three weeks after losing the female, two small heads began to pop up from the nest. The chicks were still alive and growing. Over the next few weeks, on a steady diet of mice, squirrels and pigeons, the young red-tails grew and became more active. Sometime in mid-June these two young hawks fledged their nest. As improbable as it seemed, the adult male hawk was remarkably able to beat the odds.

Sharon Audubon Nature Festival to Be Held in August

The Sharon Audubon Festival, which is being sponsored by the Housatonic Audubon Society and Audubon In Sharon, will be held on August 5 and 6, 2000. This event provides participants with an opportunity to learn about all aspects of the natural world through nature walks, lectures, exhibits and on-going activities. Professional naturalists and wildlife specialists from all over the tri-state area will be on hand, including DEP Wildlife Division biologists. Programs and walks will cover a wide array of exciting topics, including everything from butterflies to bears and mushrooms to wildflowers. The Festival appeals to amateur and experienced naturalists alike and it is appropriate for adults and children of all ages. In addition to keynote performances at 1:00 PM each day, live music will be performed by local and regional musicians at various times throughout the day both Saturday and Sunday. For more information on the festival, call (860) 364-0520.

DEP's Fawn Deer Definition Upheld By Court

The State of Connecticut has won a key wildlife decision on the issue of fawn deer. In a recent decision, Judge Marshall K. Berger, Jr., of the Hartford Superior Court ruled in favor of the Department of Environmental Protection in defining the term fawn as a deer with a spotted coat. The decision came in response to a complaint filed by the Animal Rights Front claiming the DEP illegally took fawn deer during a controlled hunt in January 1996 at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in Groton. The Animal Rights Front interpreted the phrase fawn deer to be any deer less than one year old.

"This is a significant victory for DEP and wildlife management in the state," said DEP Deputy Commissioner David K. Leff. "This decision validates the standard the Department has applied for over 30 years while dismissing claims that fawn deer were illegally taken during the controlled hunt at Bluff Point in 1996."

The DEP has held that the term fawn deer refers to a young deer with a spotted coat. In stating its case, the DEP pointed out that it may be difficult to impossible for an individual to distinguish between a fawn deer and an adult deer once a fawn deer has lost its spotted coat. The only reliable method of determining whether a deer without a spotted coat is less than one year of age is by examining its teeth.

After considering the information presented by both parties, including definitions from a number of dictionaries, Judge Berger ruled that a fawn means a deer with spots. In reaching his decision, Judge Berger stated that "it is impossible to distinguish between a 10 month old deer and 13 month old deer in the wild." (Summary Judgment page 4, June 2, 2000). Judge Berger, in addressing the enforceability of the fawn deer statute, concluded "construing section 26-86f to prohibit only the killing of spotted fawns enables a person to know what conduct he must avoid," otherwise "people taking deer without spots would have no reliable way to know if they were complying with the statute prior to taking the deer". (Summary Judgment page 9, June 2, 2000).

"We are very pleased with this ruling in that it upholds an understandable and logical definition of a fawn deer," said DEP Deputy Commissioner Leff. "This clarification makes it easier to reliably identify fawn deer in the wild which will assist the department's efforts in the enforcement of this statute."

P. J. FUSCO

Respect Timber Rattlesnake Territory

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist

The timber rattlesnake is an endangered species in Connecticut. In the northwestern part of the state, illegal take (poaching) has been identified as one of the primary factors in the decline of the timber rattlesnake population. A recent survey completed for Connecticut indicates an 85 percent loss of Connecticut's historic timber rattlesnake populations, leaving only five viable populations statewide. Seventy-two percent of the dens in northwest Connecticut are critically depleted in number (less than 30 to 60 snakes per den). Regionally, this species is extirpated from five states, listed as endangered or threatened in 10 states, proposed to be listed in one state and protected in eight other states.

Until recently, the life history of the timber rattlesnake has remained little studied and poorly documented. Currently, several researchers are actively pursuing long-term field studies which are beginning to build significant new knowledge.

The timber rattlesnake is a slow-maturing and long-lived reptile. It has a low reproductive rate. Most females in northern populations do not reproduce until they are nine or 10 years old and then only at three- or four-year intervals. Females in northern popula-

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tions may only reproduce three to five times in a lifetime. This trait is the main reason why recovery of depleted populations will be slow.

What Hikers Can Do to Help Rattlesnakes

Human disturbance can cause rattlesnakes to abandon prime habitat and move to marginal areas -- a serious threat to populations already near extinction. This is especially important to remember when hiking near rattlesnake habitat in northwestern Connecticut where the Appalachian Trail traverses. People who hike or work in the few areas where rattlesnakes might be found are asked to remember a few simple rules to keep both themselves and the snakes safe:

- Avoid confrontation. Be careful around rocky areas where timber rattlesnakes might live. Avoid walking in these areas if possible. Do not pick up or overturn rocks in areas where timber rattlesnakes might be.
- Be cautious. If a timber rattlesnake is encountered, back away slowly. Snake vision is designed to detect motion, and sudden or fast movement may further upset the snake. Remember, rattlesnakes are wary and they will try to avoid you if they can. Timber rattlesnakes will not strike without provocation.
- Be informed. Timber rattlesnake bites are rare in Connecticut, and defensive bites may carry only a fraction of the venom injected in bites used to kill prey. If you are bitten, remain calm and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Agitation speeds up the heart rate and will facilitate the spread of the venom. The treatment of applying a tourniquet and trying to suck out the venom IS NOT recommended.
- DO NOT try to kill or capture a rattlesnake. Doing so will not help you or the snake, and may cause you personal injury.
- Know the laws. It is illegal to move, harass, collect or kill rattlesnakes in Connecticut.

Your Questions Answered

I live several miles from the nearest pond. Why is there a snapping turtle in my yard?

Although snapping turtles spend most of their lives in water, female snapping turtles leave the pond each June in search of dry, loose soil in which to lay their eggs. While snapping turtles are capable of inflicting a nasty bite, they are not a threat to children or pets as long as they are not handled or provoked. Once the turtle lays its eggs it will return to the water body it came from. If the turtle chooses to lay its eggs in your yard there is no reason to be concerned. The young snapping turtles that will hatch sometime in September will be only the size of a quarter!

P. J. FUSCO

It may take several hours for a female snapping turtle to lay up to 30 eggs in a shallow hole dug in the ground. The female covers the eggs and then returns to water.

I found a baby bird on the ground in my yard, should I bring it to a wildlife rehabilitator?

If the bird appears to have feathers on its body and on much of its wings it is most likely not orphaned. Most young songbirds leave the nest before they are fully capable of flying. During this time they may spend a few days on or close to the ground. The adult birds will continue to feed the young every couple of hours and within time they will learn to become efficient flyers. For further advice on injured or orphaned wildlife, please contact the DEP Wildlife Division at (860) 424-3011.

I have been seeing foxes in the yard during the day. I am concerned about the safety of my children and my pets, what can be done?

It is not uncommon for foxes to be found in suburban areas where food and shelter are plentiful. Each spring, their kits are born in a den sometime during April. As the adults are providing food for several hungry kits, they may hunt during all hours of the day and throughout the evening. Foxes are omnivorous and will take advantage of food sources such as nuts, berries, vegetation and a variety of small mammals. Although healthy foxes do not pose a threat to people, they are territorial and may not tolerate the presence of house cats or small dogs within their territory. For this reason, the Wildlife Division recommends keeping pets closely supervised while outdoors and walking them on a leash. Remove all food sources that might be attracting foxes to your yard, including bird seed. If you do not like having the fox in your yard, actively harass it by shouting, making loud noises and squirting it with a hose. Only if a fox appears sick is there reason for concern. In the event that a fox appears sickly and is seen staggering, stumbling or approaching people, contact your local Animal Control Officer, the local Police Department or DEP Emergency Dispatch at (860) 424-3333 for further advice or assistance.

Connecticut Envirothon 2000 Held at Sessions Woods

Written by Peter Picone, Urban Wildlife Program

As the sun broke through the clouds during an early morning this past May, 43 high school teams got ready for the 9th Annual Connecticut Envirothon competition, which was held at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area, in Burlington. The mission of the Connecticut Envirothon is to promote environmental awareness, knowledge and active personal stewardship among Connecticut high school students through education and team competition.

Students team up in groups of five and set out to test their knowledge on five environmental science subjects, namely forestry, wildlife management, soils, aquatics and wetlands management. The students prepared during the school year by studying each subject and attending workshops to hone their knowledge of the environment and how it is managed. Subject matter contains not only definitions of terms, but also hands-on identification and applied science questions. The teams visited five subject stations scattered throughout the 450 acres that make up the Sessions Woods property. They had 30 minutes at each station to answer a 100-point test, using their knowledge and teamwork skills.

This year's top scoring team was Bacon Academy of Colchester. They edged out New Milford High School, which placed second, and Northwest Regional School 7, which placed third. Bacon Academy's team will participate in the National Envirothon competition to be held in Nova Scotia in August.

"This competition seeks to reward and recognize excellence in environmental science," said Jean Cronauer, chair of the Connecticut Envirothon Steering Committee. "Through the Envirothon, there are opportunities to influence these students' career decisions, and hopefully inspire a sense of stewardship and ownership in our natural resources."

The Connecticut Envirothon's trademark motto is "The Natural Challenge." The event has proven to be not only a natural challenge, but also a natural benefit for today's young men and women as they learn about the challenges of managing our natural resources.

P. J. FUSCO

Katie Baroni, a member of the first place team from Bacon Academy, Colchester, examines a bear skull at the wildlife testing station during the Connecticut Envirothon 2000.

Envirothon Quiz

As the wildlife station leader for the 2000 Envirothon, Urban Wildlife Program biologist Peter Picone prepared 50 questions relating to wildlife biology and management. Following are a few sample questions. Take the quiz and see how you do.

1. If you were investigating wildlife damage to shrubs, which of the following evidence would lead you to believe a deer did the damage?

A. A rough-edged cut on the stem B. A sharp, clean-edged cut on the stem

2. The yellow-breasted chat is listed as an endangered species in Connecticut. Which of the following habitats is critical for this species?

A. Mature forest B. Grassland C. Shrubland

D. Coniferous forest E. None of the above

3. True or false. There was a greater amount of forested land in Connecticut 200 years ago than there is today.

4. Which of the following hawks is an accipiter?

A. Red-tailed hawk B. Sharp-shinned hawk C. Marsh hawk

Answers:

1. A- a rough-edged cut on the stem. Because deer do not have upper incisors, they leave a ragged edge on browsed branches.

2. B- shrubland forest. Some animals, such as the endangered yellow breasted chat, depend on shrubland habitat for their life cycle. A student who is not familiar with wildlife management topics may be tempted to choose "A- mature forest." Stories in the media about "ancient forest" or "spotted owl" controversies in the western United States lead most people to believe that mature forests are the most important wildlife habitats.

3. False. Connecticut has more forested land today than 200 years ago. How can this be? Farms have been abandoned and much of the farmland has reverted back to forest. It is estimated that Connecticut's landscape was about 75 percent field or pasture in 1810.

4. B- sharp-shinned hawk. The students' wildlife study materials included fact sheets depicting the differences between accipiters, buteos, falcons, harriers and eagles.

New Regulations for Horseshoe Crab Harvest in CT

New regulations to conserve horseshoe crabs have been proposed by the DEP, establishing a closed season from June 3 through April 30 of the following year. The open season for the harvest of horseshoe crabs is from May 1 through June 2. The harvest of horseshoe crabs and the possession of live horseshoe crabs on the waters or shores of the state during the closed season is prohibited, however, possession of legally-acquired dead crabs for use as bait is allowed.

"Horseshoe crabs are used as bait in the American eel and conch fisheries," said Ernest E. Beckwith, Manager of Marine Fisheries for DEP. "Each spring millions of horseshoe crabs crawl onto beaches from Maine through Florida to lay their eggs. Fisheries in all Atlantic seaboard states are required to reduce harvest by 25 percent under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plan for this species."

The objective of these measures, which have been adopted as emergency regulations, is to reduce horseshoe crab harvest by 25 percent. These regulations will be the subject of a public hearing this summer in order to receive public comment before the regulations become final.

"Harvest is being restricted coastwide, both to conserve horseshoe crabs and to assure that adequate numbers of horseshoe crab eggs are available for shorebirds that use the eggs as a major food source during annual spring migrations, particularly in Delaware Bay," said Beckwith.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has requested that every Atlantic Coast state reduce the horseshoe crab harvest by 25 percent.

The taking of horseshoe crabs by unlicensed persons is prohibited. Only holders of the Connecticut Commercial Fishing License and Commercial Finfish License are permitted to take horseshoe crabs. The issuing of new licenses is currently prohibited under the commercial fishing license moratorium enacted in 1995.

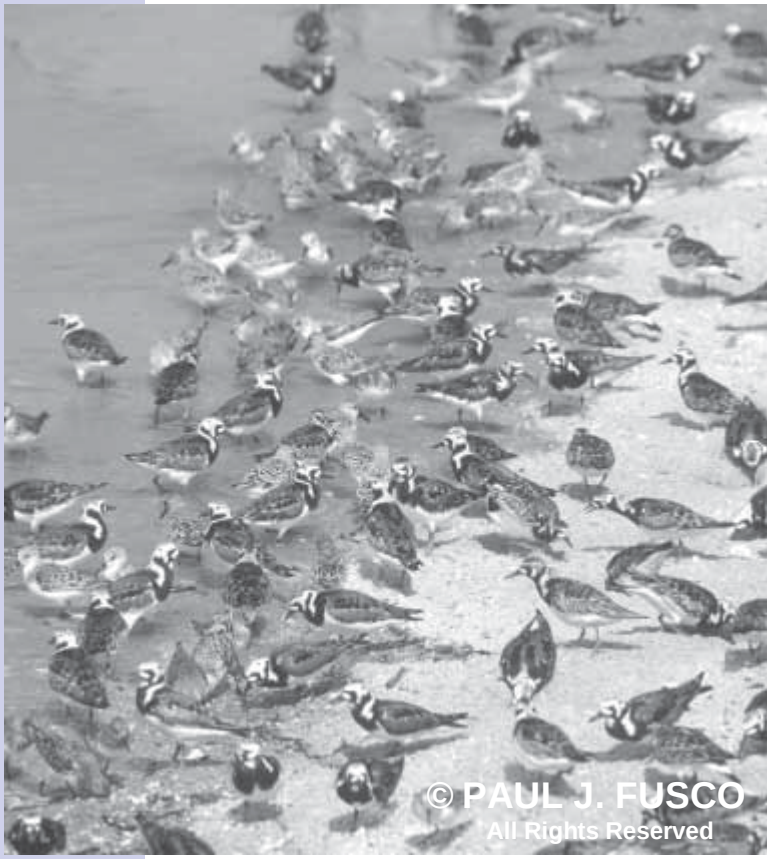
Sanctuary Proposed

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has voted to request that the National Marine Fisheries Service close federal waters surrounding Delaware Bay to the harvest of horseshoe crabs. This would create a sanctuary that would also serve as a nursery in the heart of the horseshoe crab range on the East Coast. The proposed sanctuary will also help to protect populations of migratory shorebirds that feed on horseshoe crab eggs, as well as a booming ecotourism business in the area. Almost all of the states in the affected area support this plan to protect the resource.

Delaware Bay, which includes the Cape May shore in New Jersey and the shoreline of Delaware, is the largest staging area for migratory shorebirds in the Atlantic Flyway and the second largest staging site in North America. An estimated 425,000 to 1,000,000 shorebirds, representing six species, converge on Delaware Bay in the spring to feed and rebuild their energy reserves before finishing their journey northward.

Concerns about the overfishing of horseshoe crabs in the region have resulted in a ASMFC harvest reduction quota for the landing of crabs. Recent years have seen the number of horseshoe crabs landed skyrocket to levels that the Commission feels cannot be sustained and is harming the population.

Not only is the situation serious for horseshoe crabs, but also for the millions of shorebirds migrating from South America that depend on having a high density of crab eggs to feed on so that they can continue their migration to their breeding grounds in Arctic Canada. Shorebirds, like the red knot and sanderling which have been experiencing long-term population declines, have had added pressure put on their populations by the dramatic decline of this important food source. An estimated 80 percent of the hemispheric population of red knots use the Delaware Bay as a staging area. Some studies estimate the number of horseshoe crab eggs available to shorebirds in the Delaware Bay area declined from one million per square meter in 1991, to less than 100,000 per square meter in 1996. The Delaware Bay staging area is unique and important to shorebirds because shorebirds use few major stopovers during spring migration, they arrive at stopover sites with little or no fat reserves and they demonstrate fidelity to staging areas.



P. J. FUSCO

Migrating sanderlings and ruddy turnstones feed on horseshoe crab eggs at a staging area along the Delaware Bay shoreline in New Jersey.

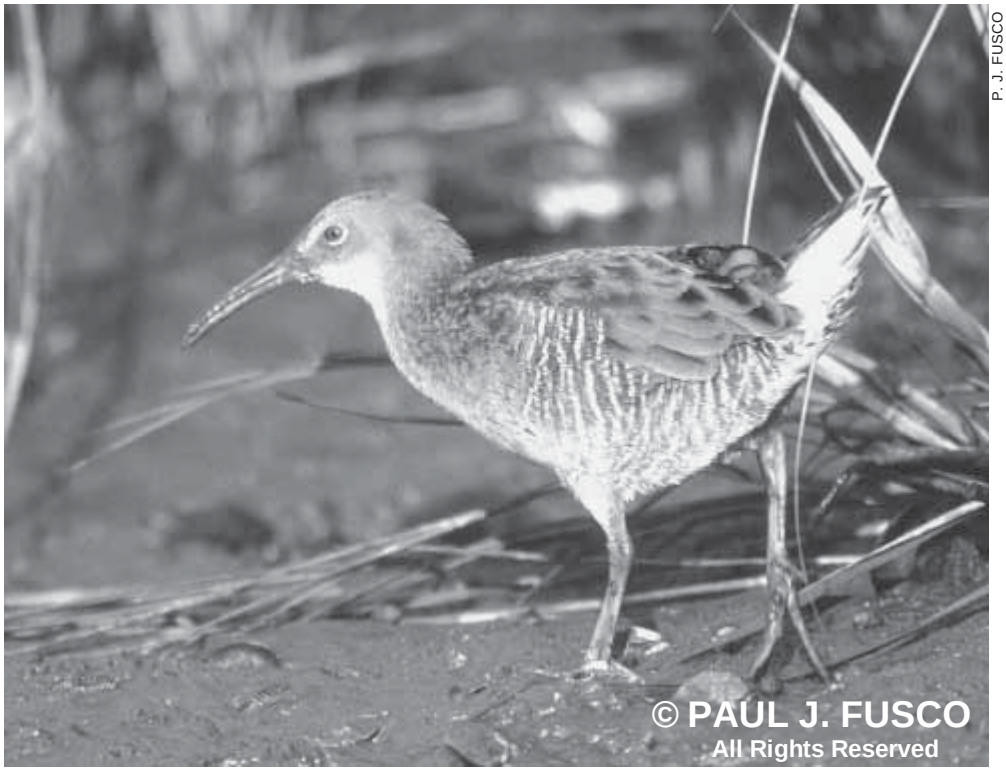
Those Secretive Rails

Written by Paul Fusco, Public Awareness Program

Kak - kak - kak - kak - kak - kak. The loud, sharp call of the clapper rail resonates from salt marshes across the coast of Connecticut. When one clapper calls, another will answer, then another and another. Then all at once the calling stops and the marsh is quiet. After a short time the calling cycle starts again.

Rails are small to medium-sized ground dwelling marsh birds. They have compact bodies, short necks and strong legs. Some have long bills for probing in mud, while others have short stubby bills. All rails have short, rounded wings and short tails. Although most migrate long distances, they are weak flyers. Their strong legs are well adapted for their life on the ground.

More often heard than seen, an observer may have a calling rail in marsh grass right at his or her feet, but the rail is nowhere to be seen. Rails move through the thick marsh grass with ease, running and hiding. Cryptically marked in drab colors, rails can be very difficult to see. Seldom will one come out into the open, and usually then showing itself only for an instant before slipping back into the dense grass. Because of their secretive behavior, the most common, and frequently the only way, to identify rails is by their call.



P. J. FUSCO

The clapper rail can be found in salt marsh habitat along the Connecticut shoreline.

The Species

Six species of rails may be found in Connecticut, four of which are breeders. At 15 inches in length, the king rail is the largest and also one of our rarest breeders. It prefers freshwater or brackish wetlands in spring and summer and, during migration or in winter, it may be found along the coast. Breeding populations of king rails are listed as endangered in Connecticut.

The clapper rail is almost as large as the king, and is found chiefly in coastal salt marsh habitat. It is a fairly common breeder and some hardy individuals may stay in Connecticut through the winter.

Among the smaller rails, the Virginia rail is locally common and widespread. It can be found in a variety of marsh habitats. Freshwater wetlands are preferred during the breeding season.

Another small rail, the sora, is an uncommon breeder in Connecticut's freshwater wetlands. It's regional population has declined since the early 1900s due to habitat loss. Historically, soras were abundant fall migrants along the Connecticut River valley.

The black rail and the yellow rail are both considered to be very rare in Connecticut. Historically, the black rail may have nested along the lower

Connecticut's Rail Species

Yellow Rail	*Coturnicops noveboracensis*
Black Rail	*Laterallus jamaicensis*
Clapper Rail	*Rallus longirostris*
King Rail	*Rallus elegans*
Virginia Rail	*Rallus limicola*
Sora	*Porzana carolina*

Benefits of Wetlands

- **Flood control -** Wetlands absorb water from storms and runoff, preventing flooding of developed areas.
- **Water quality -** Wetlands act as giant filters, purifying water by removing nutrients and pollutants.
- **Erosion control -** Wetlands form buffers between water bodies and higher ground, preventing erosion.
- **Fish and wildlife habitat -** Wetlands serve as nurseries for fish, shellfish and wildlife populations, including many endangered species.
- **Recreation -** Wetlands are places where many people hunt, fish, hike, canoe, boat, birdwatch and participate in photography and painting.

The sora is a small rail with a short stubby bill.

Places to Look for Rails in Connecticut

Coastal

- Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison
- Wheeler Wildlife Management Area (Milford Point), Milford
- Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Great Meadows Marsh, Stratford
- Great Island WMA, Old Lyme
- Barn Island WMA, Stonington

Inland

- Cromwell Meadows WMA, Cromwell
- Durham Meadows WMA, Durham
- White Memorial Conservation Area, Litchfield
- Robbins Swamp WMA, Canaan

Connecticut River on an irregular basis, and it is listed as an endangered breeder, although no recent nesting attempts have been documented. The yellow rail normally breeds north and west of Connecticut, only showing up here with very rare frequency during the spring or fall migration.

Habitat Loss

As with many species of wildlife in Connecticut and elsewhere, the major conservation issue is habitat loss. Without a place to live, reproduce and find food, individuals in a population will die out, and eventually the population undergoes decline and possible extinction. This is especially true of species that are critically dependent on specific types of habitat such as wetlands.

The DEP estimates that Connecticut has lost between 33 and 50 percent of its original wetlands. Urban and coastal areas have been hit the hardest. For instance, the estimated loss of tidal wetlands in Fairfield County stands at 61 percent.

The loss of coastal wetlands has slowed dramatically since the passage of the Tidal Wetlands Act in 1969. This act regulates the draining, filling and excavation of tidal wetlands through a permit process.

While it may be too late to reclaim some lost habitat, the Wildlife Division, along with cooperating partners, is using resources through the DEP's Wetland Restoration Program to restore degraded wetlands and create new ones. Currently, a small cooperative project is underway at Hammonasset Beach State Park that, when completed, will have reclaimed five acres of tidal wetland habitat. Although small in size, this project has paid off for the shorebirds, ducks, herons and egrets that are already using it. Projects like these benefit a long list of wetland dependent wildlife species.

Wetland Callback Survey

Every year the Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Program coordinates a wetland breeding bird survey. Volunteers are enlisted to check wetlands across the state in search of possible breeding wetland birds. Participants have the opportunity to find five species of rails, two species of bitterns, the common moorhen and pied-billed grebe. Survey results are tabulated and entered into a database for conservation purposes.

If you would like to participate in the wetland callback survey next year, contact the Nonharvested Wildlife Program at the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130).

P. J. FUSCO (2)

Perhaps the most common and widespread rail in Connecticut is the Virginia rail.

Wildlife Management through the Century

As part of our continuing feature on looking back at "Wildlife Management through the Century," following is another series of excerpts from reports of the Connecticut Board of Fisheries and Game. The excerpts focus on the status of shorebirds in the 1930s and 1940s, the effects of mosquito ditching and the hurricane of 1938 on wildlife habitat and the state's early efforts to bolster the raccoon population.

Shorebirds, 1920s-1930s

In the early 1900s, several species of shorebirds were legally hunted in Connecticut except during the closed season from April 1 to August 31. No person was allowed to kill more than 50 plovers in one day. By the mid-1920s, it was becoming apparent that the numbers of rails, yellowlegs, plovers (sandpipers were usually included in this group) and other shorebirds were declining. At that time, many of these species were still legally harvested. Recognizing the need for action, the Board of Fisheries and Game decided to close the hunting season on certain shorebirds.

Report of the State Board of Fisheries and Game, July 1, 1924 to June 30, 1926

"Shore birds, such as greater and lesser yellowlegs, Wilson snipe and the several plovers, appear to be on the decrease, and reports vary as to curlew, willet and upland plover [sandpiper]. *The sandy grounds in many instances have been turned into shore resorts and the places in this State for hunting shore birds are gradually decreasing. The sora or Carolina rail has shown a marked decrease in the past few years, although the reports are somewhat conflicting.*

The bag of one-third of the licensed hunters in 1923 for plover (open season 78 days) showed a kill of 607 birds; for snipe (open season 52 days) 408 birds; for sora (open season 68 days) 4,722 birds.

During the season of 1924, over 20,000 hunters reporting their bag in the more limited open seasons caused by proclamation of the Governor, the kill was as follows: Plover 221; snipe 305; rail 1374.

The Federal daily bag limit on sora has recently been reduced from 50 to 25. Connecticut has a bag limit of 35, which could be reduced to 15 without deprivation to the hunters. Also the open season on black bellied and golden plovers has been closed by the Federal authorities for an indefinite period. Comparatively few persons hunt shore birds and to hunt them without violating the law calls for a very good knowledge of the different species, due to the many existing exceptions—that is, birds which are entirely protected. It would be no very great sacrifice if all of the shore birds, with the exception of perhaps the sora, were afforded a close season in this state."

Report of the Board of Fisheries and Game 1949-1950

Game Population Trends

"Rail: Numbers fell rapidly after 1923 and increased gradually to a peak in 1930 followed again by a drop in 1931. Another peak was reached in 1932 with a gradual fall to a low in 1937. For the years 1929-1934, kill figures as an index to abundance may be slightly too high due to less restricted hunting regulations.

Plover: A drop of over 70 percent occurred in 1924 followed by another

CT DEP - WILDLIFE

This photograph, taken in September 1949, shows two men hunting rails at Pratts Cove in Deep River.

drop in 1925. The season was closed in 1926.

Yellowlegs: A gradual decline to 1925 with a drastic drop of 57 percent in 1926. Season closed in 1927."

Mosquito-ditching, 1930s

In the 1930s, the effects of mosquito-ditching in salt marshes on shorebird and waterfowl habitat became a concern:

"There appears to be little hope for any substantial increase in shore birds. The salt marshes which they formerly frequented in great numbers, have been so thoroughly drained in a popular effort to control mosquitoes [mosquito ditching], *that the environment which they require has been largely destroyed. The drainage has also affected the supply of waterfowl by destroying aquatic and other vegetation upon which they depend for food."*

Fortunately, mosquito-ditching in salt marshes is in the past. Today, Connecticut's Wetland Restoration Program uses a method called Open Marsh Water Management (OMWM). OMWM rejuvenates the overall health of salt marshes by improving the natural flushing of water and nutrients between marshes and adjacent bays. The creation of ponds in marshes is the most common technique used. Mosquitoes are controlled when killifish, small fish that feed extensively on mosquito larvae, inhabit the ponds. Through these efforts, not only are populations of salt marsh mosquitoes controlled, but many of the state's salt marshes (and also freshwater marshes) are being restored and enhanced for the benefit of waterfowl and shorebirds.

Hurricane of 1938

Although the hurricane of 1938 was devastating to the people of Connecticut, it turned out to have a positive effect on wildlife habitat:

"The hurricane of the fall of 1938 has without doubt improved food and cover conditions for forest game species. The many openings made in the forest canopy as a result of the uprooted trees have increased the amount and varieties of plant growth available to deer, grouse and rabbits many fold. The mast-bearing trees (oak and hickory) which withstood the wind best and lost competing trees will now be heavy producers of mast. Trees that have fallen into streams have created deep holes and "hides." Upturned trees have provided dusting points and year around sources of grit. Down timber in profusion has made some areas inaccessible to man and difficult for hunting dogs to work through. Those who have studied the effect of the hurricane on food and cover conditions of forest game have noted that similar effects might be produced artificially to improve conditions in a given forest area."

CT DEP - WILDLIFE

These raccoons from a breeding colony at a state-owned sanctuary appear to be looking for a way out of their cage. This photograph was probably taken during the 1930s or 1940s.

Raccoons, 1930s-1940s

The Bureau established a raccoon breeding colony at the state-owned Shade Swamp Sanctuary, in Farmington, to raise raccoons for release in the wild. A cooperative propagation program was also established with local sportsman's groups. The purpose of this program was to bolster the raccoon population on state-owned areas and provide a recreational resource for sportsmen.

"The State-owned raccoon colony at Shade Swamp Sanctuary, Farmington, was moved to the University of Connecticut, Storrs, during the biennium. This change of location was necessitated because of the discontinuance of the animal exhibit at the Shade Swamp Sanctuary. The Forestry and Wildlife Department at the University is caring for these animals at no cost to the department, except for the food item. Selective breeding experiments are being carried on with the approximately fifty breeders. The excess breeders and young animals are being liberated on State Forests and raccoon sanctuaries about the state.

Eighty-five raccoon were released during the fall of 1938 and thirty excess breeders, some of which were bred females, were released in the spring of 1940. A number of these animals have been ear-tagged to determine their movements and the ability of these pen-raised animals to survive.

A cooperative raccoon propagation program with raccoon clubs was started in 1940. This program, which is similar to a successful Wisconsin project, offers a contribution for the production and release of raccoon to those clubs which will properly equip themselves for such propagation work."

Raccoon hunting is not as popular as it was in days past. Today, plentiful raccoon populations can be found just about anywhere. Raccoons have adapted so well to Connecticut's current suburban landscape that they are a frequent source of homeowner complaints to the Wildlife Division.

Watchable Wildlife: Butterfly Watching

Written by Laura Rogers-Castro, Public Awareness Program

If you are looking for something new to do while enjoying the outdoors, try butterfly watching. This increasingly popular sport uses little equipment and can be conducted just about anywhere. Each outing brings excitement, especially when new butterflies are seen for the first time, difficult ones are identified or new habitats are explored.

With over 120 different types of true butterflies and skippers (also included while "butterflying") found in the state, identification can be challenging. A good guide, such as Jeffrey Glassberg's *Butterflies through Binoculars,* is helpful. Butterflies are identified by their size, coloration, habit and flight period. Most butterfly watchers use close-focusing compact binoculars to assist them in viewing identifying characters. Some even net their butterflies for a closer look and then release them, unharmed, later.

Skippers are particularly hard to identify. They are more heavy-bodied than true butterflies and are grouped based on how their wings are held at rest (either spread-winged or folded-winged). The smaller skippers are known as LBJs, or "little brown jobs," to butterfly watchers, and are hard to distinguish. Most LBJs are orange-brown with various markings but some are without markings. Skippers have the habit of darting quickly from view and rapidly disappearing among vegetation.

Connecticut has a great variety of habitats to explore for butterflies. Fields are good places to see many butterflies, including great spangled fritillaries, pearl crescents, clouded and orange sulphurs, American coppers and eastern tailed blues. Often, silver-spotted skippers and American ladies can also be seen in fields. Wet meadows provide habitat for least skippers, Baltimores (beautiful butterflies with black, white and orange coloration) and red admirals. Although bogs are rare in Connecticut, they are home to bog coppers, a state species of special concern. A pretty butterfly called the falcate orangetip may be seen on Connecticut's trap rock ridges in early spring. A walk in a local woodland might reveal mourning cloaks, a butterfly that overwinters as an adult, red-spotted purples or a question mark or comma butterfly, two species that are recognized by the "punctuation marks" on their underwings. Connecticut's coast can be a spectacular place to view migrating monarch butterflies in the fall. These butterflies often alight on shrubs and small trees in the evening and spend the night there before continuing on to the southwest (all the way to central Mexico if they're lucky!)

Anyone interested in butterflying in the state can contact the Connecticut Butterfly Association (P.O. Box 9004, New Haven, CT 06532-0004). This organization offers members guided butterfly walks and field trips, educational indoor programs and various publications, including a newsletter. The group also has information on Fourth-of-July Butterfly Counts, which are held annually in July and involve counting all butterflies seen within a 15-mile diameter, established count circle.

Butterfly watching is an exciting hobby and a great way to spend some time outdoors. With a little practice, identification can be achieved and watchers inspired by the diversity of Connecticut's butterflies.

The Connecticut Butterfly Atlas Project

Since 1995, the Connecticut Butterfly Atlas Project has documented the distribution of Connecticut's butterflies. Volunteers have collected voucher specimens and photographs of butterflies and skippers throughout Connecticut. The data will be used to produce the Connecticut Butterfly Atlas which will contain maps and species accounts for all of our butterflies. For additional information on the project, visit their website at www.peabody.yale.edu/other/cbap.

Butterflying Hot Spots

West Rock Ridge State Park, New Haven
Osbornedale State Park, Derby
Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Area, East Windsor
Topsmead State Forest, Litchfield
Haley State Park, Groton
Northwest Park, Windsor
Bent-of-the-River, Southbury
Cromwell Meadows WMA, Cromwell

A monarch butterfly feeds on the nectar of Joe-pye-weed.

Butterfly Releases: An Environmental Error?

Written by Laura Rogers-Castro, Public Awareness Program

People like butterflies. We plant gardens to attract them and are intrigued by their beauty. They symbolize freedom, peacefulness and fragility. Yet, because of our fascination with the butterfly's symbolism, we could be harming them. Releasing butterflies at weddings and other ceremonies is occurring more frequently, to the misfortune of certain populations.

What could be more dramatic than seeing hundreds of butterflies fly off into the distance at the culmination of a wedding celebration? Beautiful? Yes. Environmentally correct? No. Butterflies for these releases are purchased commercially from growers, usually located far from release sites. Although a permit is required for the interstate shipment of butterflies, the law is rarely enforced. Once released, the butterflies can breed with native ones, mixing the genes from two entirely different populations. Additionally, farm-raised butterflies could harbor parasites and diseases that can be released into a new environment. Sometimes, the butterflies are not native to the area and are introduced with unknown effects into an already established, natural community.

Due to the demand, there is now a commercial market for live butterflies. Monarch butterflies, a migratory species, are targeted and poachers now threaten their overwintering sites in Mexico and California. Butterflies collected in this manner rarely arrive alive after shipped to the purchaser.

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA), an organization dedicated to the conservation of butterflies, suggests a ban on the environmental release of commercially obtained butterflies. Educational institutions could be exempt, but should be encouraged to keep commercially obtained butterflies within the confines of the school. There is educational value in rearing butterflies from egg to adult but maybe schools could choose to raise one per class, rather than one per student. Adult butterflies could be kept in captivity, provided with a nectar source if needed and used to compare with other animals in study topics such as pollination, animal adaptations and biological diversity.

Butterflies are unique animals and should be enjoyed, but not to the detriment of their populations. Additional information can be obtained by visiting the NABA website at naba.org.

James V. Spignesi Scholarships Awarded to First Recipients

Jim Spignesi, a Hampton resident and DEP Conservation Officer, was killed in the line of duty in November 1998 at the age of 45. Shortly after Jim's death, several of his friends and coworkers established the James V. Spignesi Memorial Scholarship Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing financial support to students who possess Jim's dedicated work ethic and love for nature.

To date, more than $61,000 has been raised and permanent scholarships have been established at the University of Connecticut (UConn) and Parish Hill High School (a regional school for the towns of Scotland, Chaplin and Hampton). The UConn scholarship will be awarded annually to an upperclassman or graduate student who aspires to a professional career in the field of wildlife management or conservation law enforcement. The Parish Hill scholarship will be awarded annually to a senior who, in the opinion of the school faculty, demonstrates the attributes of hard work, community service and caring for others that Jim possessed.

The first UConn scholarships were awarded on April 10, 2000, to two undergraduate students studying wildlife ecology in the Department of Natural Resources Management and Engineering. The first recipients were Christopher M. Renshaw, a graduate of Coventry High School, and Matthew S. Sanford, a graduate of Wolcott High School. These two individuals were chosen on the basis of their personal character and accomplishments in keeping with those which Jim Spignesi exemplified.

Chris Renshaw was captain of the national award-winning Envirothon team from Coventry High School in 1995 and was awarded the Connecticut and all New England Outdoor Writers Association awards in 1999. He is serving on the Coventry Conservation Commission and was head coach for the E. O. Smith High School track and field teams.

Matthew Sanford also has been active during his undergraduate years at UConn, serving as Vice President and member of the UConn Chapter of The Wildlife Society and the Ski Club. He has been active in intramural softball and soccer, along with special wildlife projects.

In spite of their many commitments, both men are holding part-time jobs with research projects in the Wildlife Conservation Research Center at UConn to help finance their education. Both are looking forward to pursuing graduate degrees in wildlife and plan to conduct research and teach at the college level.

The first Parish Hill High School Scholarship was awarded on June 22 to Mark Maschka, Jr., of Scotland. Mark, an Eagle Scout, plans to continue his education at Norwich University in the field of engineering.

The many local residents who donated to the Spignesi Scholarship Fund should feel pride in the role they have played to ensure Jim's memory lives on through the act of helping these outstanding young individuals continue their educations. The committee that manages the scholarship fund will continue to seek contributions for worthy educational causes such as these. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to: James Spignesi Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 156, Hampton, CT 06247.

Wildlife Species Profile: *Cottontail Rabbit*

Whether it's been along the edge of an open field or in a backyard, most people have seen cottontail rabbits. Connecticut is actually home to two different species of cottontails, the New England and Eastern. New England cottontails are native to the state while eastern cottontails were introduced into New England in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Both are links in the food chain and a principal prey item for many animals.

Description and Range

Cottontail rabbits are stocky animals with large hind feet, long ears and short fluffy tails that resemble cottonballs. Their coat varies in color from reddish-brown to a black or grayish-brown. The underparts are white. The New England cottontail and the eastern cottontail are almost identical in appearance, except for a slight variation in color. About half of the eastern cottontail population shows a white, star-like shape on the forehead while none of the New England cottontails exhibit this trait. A comparison of skull characteristics is the most reliable way to distinguish the two species.

The eastern cottontail is more abundant than the New England cottontail and is expanding its range. Currently, eastern cottontails can be found in the eastern United States and southern Canada, south to eastern Mexico and into Central America. Another population can be found in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. New England cottontails are found from southern Maine, west to the Hudson River.

Biology and Habits

Rabbits tend to be prolific and cottontails are no exception, particularly eastern cottontails. Breeding begins in March and continues through early fall. Females scratch out a slight depression in the ground in an area of dense grass for concealment. The nest is lined with fur and dry grass. After a short gestation period of 28 days, females give birth to three to eight young (usually there are two to four litters each year). The young rabbits are born blind, naked and helpless, but they grow rapidly and leave the nest after only two to three weeks. They are weaned and totally independent at four to five weeks. On average, 15 percent of the young will survive their first year. Cottontail rabbits are food sources for many animals, including hawks, owls, weasels, coyotes, foxes, fishers and bobcats.

Although active all year, cottontails forage mainly at night. During the day, they remain concealed in dense brush, protected from predators. In summer, they feed almost entirely on tender grasses and herbs; crops such as peas, beans and lettuce are also eaten. In winter, bark, twigs and buds of shrubs and young trees are eaten. Rabbits also re-ingest their own fecal pellets, increasing their level of vitamins and minerals. A rabbit's home range varies greatly with the quality of habitat, but generally averages about three acres for females and eight acres for males.

Cottontails have very keen eyesight and hearing. When danger is sensed, the animal will usually freeze in place until the danger has passed, but it will flush readily if approached too closely. Rabbits normally move slowly in short hops or jumps, but when frightened, they can achieve speeds up to 18 miles per hour over a short distance. They often zig-zag to confuse a pursuing predator. When playing, breeding or fighting, cottontails often make low purring, growling or grunting sounds. If captured by a predator, the animal may produce a loud shrill scream.

P. J. FUSCO

Solving Problems

Rabbits can cause problems by browsing garden crops or chewing on shrubs and trees. Rabbit browsing can be distinguished from deer browsing by looking at the clipped-off end of the twig. A rabbit will leave a clean, angled cut while a deer will leave a rough, jagged cut. Browsing and debarking by rabbits usually does not extend more than two-and-a-half feet above the ground or snow line. Cottontails can be restricted from gardens and other areas by fencing. Individual trees and shrubs can be protected by wrapping loose-fitting plastic tubing or wire around the trunk. Chemical taste and odor repellents are also available from many lawn and garden stores.

To obtain a fact sheet on cottontails, contact the Wildlife Division at the Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130) or visit the wildlife section of the DEP's website at http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife. Select "Learn About Connecticut's Wildlife" to find links to all of our fact sheets. Select "Hunting and Trapping Info" to get information on Connecticut's cottontail hunting season.

From The Field

Field Notes from Wildlife Division Projects and Activities

Volunteers Help Out at New Goshen WMA

The boundary of the DEP's new 848-acre Goshen Wildlife Management Area (WMA) has recently been marked. This labor intensive task was undertaken largely by volunteers from sportsman's groups from northwestern Connecticut. Chris Marino, President of the Northwest Connecticut Sportsman Council, spearheaded this volunteer effort. By coordinating with the sportsman's groups and other local volunteers, Chris managed to get more than 20 people to log in over 140 hours of their time to accomplish this project.

Working in sometimes harsh conditions, these ambitious volunteers marked the boundaries enthusiastically. They all took great pride in helping out with this newly acquired property. Under the coordination and efforts of Chris, there are plans to accomplish many more needed projects. The Wildlife Division would like to thank Chris, the sportsman's groups, the Goshen Conservation Commission and all of the other volunteers who helped out on this project and we look forward to working with them in the future.

J. W. WARNER

James Bibb, avid sportsman and volunteer, marks the boundary line at the new Goshen Wildlife Management Area.

Teacher Workshops Planned for Summer

The Wildlife Division will be offering several teacher workshops this summer at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center in Burlington.

- A workshop on **Wildlife Management**, to be held on Friday, July 28, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., will provide an introduction to wildlife management in Connecticut, as well as give teachers an opportunity to learn about current wildlife research projects in the state and explore ways to teach children about wildlife biology.
- During the **Insects in Connecticut** workshop, scheduled for Friday, August 11, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., participants will explore the basics of insect identification, learn about some of the insect projects being conducted in Connecticut and discover ways to use insects to teach about ecology.
- **Sessions Woods: An Ideal Field Trip Destination** will be the topic for a workshop on Tuesday, August 22, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Attendees will tour the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area and learn how to use the area with classes to teach about wildlife, forest ecology and other environmental topics.
- A workshop on **Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats (for teachers of grades 5-8)** was held on July 18. Participants explored the diversity of wildlife habitats in Connecticut, discovered the impact of invasive, introduced species on biodiversity and learned how wildlife habitat is managed.
- The Division's traveling outreach kits will be highlighted in future workshops. Outreach kits that are currently available cover the topics of **Woodland Wildlife, White-tailed Deer** and **Wildlife in Your Connecticut Backyard.** Participants in the workshops will receive an introduction to each traveling educational kit, learn about common Connecticut wildlife through the kits' slide shows and printed materials and conduct activities for use in the classroom by using wildlife-related props. For information on how to reserve a traveling outreach kit, contact Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro, at (860) 675-8130.

Those interested in attending one of the summer workshops should also call Laura at the above listed phone number. All workshops are free but require a preregistration application. Space is limited, so register early to avoid disappointment.

Participating teachers can earn 0.2 Continuing Education Units for each workshop completed.

Women in the Outdoors

Brought back by popular demand

Written by Patricia Kolodnicki, Event Chairman, Women in the Outdoors 2000

In September 1999, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) introduced one of their most exciting and ambitious programs, *Women in the Outdoors*. This was the first time the program was offered in Connecticut, and the response was overwhelming.

Women in the Outdoors is designed to provide hands-on, educational outdoor opportunities for women 14 years of age and older. The goals are to teach conservation and stewardship of our natural resources to result in a better environment now and in the future. This is accomplished with responsible wildlife management, environmental awareness, good natural resource management, safe and responsible outdoor recreation, knowledge and awareness of hunting ethics and preservation of the hunting tradition. Women have the opportunity to gain valuable outdoor skills in an environment that promotes self esteem, confidence, success and satisfaction while having fun. Skilled professionals train workshop participants in the basic fundamentals of fly fishing, archery, basic firearms, rock climbing/rappelling, canoeing, high ropes, bird watching, turkey calling and much more.

Last year's program was so successful that the pleased attendees requested a two-day event for the year 2000. The NWTF Nutmeg Chapter is proud to present *Women in the Outdoors 2000*, which will be held on September 9 and 10 at the Deer Lake Scout Reservation in Killingworth. The minimal fee of $75 covers most equipment, a T-shirt, materials, all meals, lodging (if needed) and events for one or both days. Those who choose to participate in the rock climbing/rappelling and/or high ropes courses will be required to pay an additional $25 fee for each activity due to the special equipment and instructors needed. The event also includes a live animal presentation entitled "Wild Connecticut."

For registration and further information, interested individuals should call Patti Kolodnicki, at (860) 399-7720, or Karen Gagliardi, at (860) 663-3866, and an informational package will be sent out promptly. **Please register before July 30, 2000**, to avoid a late processing fee of $10.00.

Come and participate in *Women in the Outdoors 2000*. The activities and instructors will nurture your eagerness to learn, help improve your outdoor skills and satisfy your enthusiasm for challenges and adventures while you enjoy the great outdoors.

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

July ..... Federal Duck Stamps are available at post offices.

July 28 ..... **Teacher Workshop: Wildlife Management**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. (see page 17 for details).

Aug. 5-6 ..... **Sharon Audubon Festival**. See page 5 for details.

August 11 ..... **Teacher Workshop: Insects in Connecticut**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. (see page 17 for details).

August 19 ..... **Butterflies (children's program)**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 2:00 p.m. Discover butterflies as we explore various habitats at Sessions Woods. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

August 22 ..... **Teacher Workshop on Sessions Woods: An Ideal Field Trip Destination**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. (see page 17 for details).

Sept. 1 ..... 2000 pheasant tags available at town clerks' offices ($10.00 for 10 tags).

..... Opening of September squirrel season.

Sept. 9 ..... **Summer Sounds (children's program)**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 9:30 a.m. Discover who makes all those buzzes, chirps and twills in late summer. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.

Sept. 9-10 ..... **Women in the Outdoors 2000**, sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation. For details, see article on this page.

Sept. 15 ..... Report use of bluebird nest box use by sending a Bluebird Nest Box Network survey card to the Wildlife Division.

Sept. 15-Nov. 14 .... First portion of archery deer and turkey seasons.

Interested in building homes for birds and mammals?

The Nonharvested Wildlife Program is selling the perfect resource for you -- Woodworking for Wildlife. *This revised second edition, published by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, contains color photographs of the construction processes, as well as of the wildlife species attracted to the houses. The spiral binding is a great plus for use at the work bench. For ordering information, see the coupon on the back page of this magazine.*

Just for kids

SNAKES!

Connecticut is home to 14 different types of snakes. Ranging in size from 7 inches (eastern worm snake) to up to 68 inches (black rat snake), these reptiles are fascinating! They can swallow prey larger than their head, crawl without arms or legs, taste the air with their tongue and feel vibrations from the ground.

P. J. FUSCO (2)

The black rat snake can reach a length of almost six feet.

Shake, rattle and roll!

One of Connecticut's remarkable snakes is the eastern hognose snake. It gets its name from its upturned nose. If this snake is alarmed, it may hiss, inflate its "neck" like a cobra or roll over and play dead!

Scared of snakes?

Many people fear snakes. Snakes do not bite unless they feel threatened. If you see a snake, take a look at it and then walk away. Try to find out more about the snake when you get home. Maybe you can figure out what type of snake you saw, what it eats and other places that it lives. By learning about the snake, you will no longer be afraid of it. Guaranteed!!

For the record....

Only two Connecticut snakes, the northern copperhead and timber rattlesnake, are venomous and most people will never see them. Timber rattlesnakes are so rare in the state that they are on the endangered species list.

Myth or Reality?

1. Snakes make holes.
2. Snakes climb trees.
3. Eastern cottonmouths (water moccasins) live in Connecticut.
4. Milk snakes drink milk from cows.

Answers:
1. false; 2. true, some snakes do climb trees; 3. false, they are found in the southeastern U.S.; 4. false, may be found around barns where they search for mice to eat.

Connecticut Wildlife

The official bimonthly publication of the DEP Wildlife Division

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