

January/February 2010

# Connecticut Wildlife

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



# Eye on the Wild

## Year in Review 2009

Annual reports were occasionally published by the Wildlife Division, but became a regular feature of the January/February issues of Connecticut Wildlife magazine, starting in 2002. The first “Year in Review” highlighted Division accomplishments in 2001. This current issue of the magazine continues the tradition, looking back at the accomplishments of 2009. This summary is an excellent resource on current or recently completed projects, as well as a historical record. Annual reports published in the early years of the Division’s existence, along with old issues of the “Connecticut Wildlife Conservation Bulletin,” were valuable sources of information when we compiled an issue of SCOPE (the precursor to Connecticut Wildlife) in 1991 that highlighted the 125-year history of wildlife management in Connecticut. That historical issue gave an account from the early years when employees of the Board of Fisheries and Game managed only game species to 1991 when responsibilities of the Wildlife Division encompassed all wildlife species. The 150th anniversary won’t be marked until 2016, but it will be interesting to look back through old and recent annual reports to obtain a new picture of how much the Division and wildlife management have changed over the decades.

As I assembled all of the reports written by Division staff and put this issue together, I was amazed at how much was accomplished in a year of tight budgets and early retirements. Despite reductions in funding, Division staff members, in some capacity, were able to carry on or complete most, but not all, of their projects. Their assistance in putting together this comprehensive issue of Connecticut Wildlife is greatly appreciated.

This annual report issue also marks the first full-color edition of the magazine. Connecticut Wildlife has come a long way since its inception in 1981, when it began as an informal newsletter called SCOPE. Originally typewritten and copied on a copy machine, with no photographs, SCOPE transformed over the years into a magazine format with color photographs, in-depth articles, additional pages, and more readers. Photographer and Media Designer Paul Fusco and I have been involved with the transformation since 1988 and we plan to continue improving the magazine into the future.

## Biggest Story of the Year

As a Division, we all believe that each and every one of the topics covered in the “Year in Review” is important. However, there is one that stands out on its own, mostly due to the urgency it presents, – the threat of white-nose syndrome to bat populations. So much is still unknown about this strange affliction that is causing an alarming and precipitous decline in bat numbers throughout Connecticut and the Northeast. Biologists are working diligently to learn more. Be sure to read the section on page 6 of this issue that provides the most recent updates on white-nose syndrome and Connecticut’s efforts to monitor its effects.

Kathy Herz, Editor

## Cover:

Little brown bats hibernating in a Connecticut hibernaculum. Bat populations are plummeting because of white-nose syndrome, which is characterized by a white, fuzzy fungus that invades the face, ears, and wings of bats while they hibernate.

Photo by Paul J. Fusco

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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. Connecticut Wildlife contains articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies.



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# The Year in Review 2009

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES - WILDLIFE DIVISION

*This "Year in Review 2009" provides a summary of the many accomplishments and responsibilities of the DEP Wildlife Division.*

## Species Research and Management

### *Nongame Birds*

Twenty breeding pairs of bald eagles (state endangered) attempted to nest in 2009. Seventeen pairs fledged 31 chicks; 16 chicks were banded by biologists. Volunteers counted 80 bald eagles (48 adult, 32 immature) during the 2009 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey in January.

Connecticut recorded 13 pairs of peregrine falcons (state endangered). Ten pairs fledged young. Biologists obtained a chick count of 25 from 9 of the nests, and 9 chicks were banded.

Biologists and volunteers surveyed osprey platforms statewide during the nesting season and banded 79 chicks.

Charles Island, off the coast of Milford, and Duck Island, off the coast of Westbrook, were closed to the public during the heron and egret nesting season to reduce the effect of heavy recreational use on these state-listed species. Division and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff repaired the fencing that protects the interior of the islands where the birds nest.

With the help of fencing and other protection efforts, 44 pairs of piping plovers (state and federally threatened) fledged 74 young and 90 pairs of least terns (state threatened) fledged 11 young. Least tern chicks fledged from only 2

out of 8 nesting areas routinely used by the birds. Terns nesting in the colony at Long Beach in Stratford lost their nests to abnormally high tides. Forty trained volunteers monitored several beaches and distributed educational materials to beachgoers. Twenty-four fireworks permit applications were reviewed for impacts to piping plovers.

Division staff and volunteers conducted summer night bird surveys to determine the distribution of whip-poor-wills and northern saw-whet owls. Sixteen survey routes were completed, and whip-poor-wills were estimated to occupy 27% of the routes. Detections from these surveys have assisted in mapping statewide distributions of these 2 species.

Biologists conducted radio telemetry and invertebrate sampling to identify specific habitat features and management that are associated with foraging use by whip-poor-will, and to determine prey selection and availability.

The Division organized volunteers and staff to conduct surveys to determine the status of owls of greatest conservation need in Connecticut. These winter surveys targeted great-horned owl, barred owl, long-eared owl, and eastern screech owl. A total of 42 statewide survey routes were run at least once during 2006 and 2009. Barred owls were the most abundant owls recorded in the surveys, followed by great-horned, screech, and long-eared owls.

Breeding brown thrashers are difficult to confirm because of their relative rarity, combined with low detection rates. A volunteer conducted targeted surveys at 16 locations to help increase certainty of brown thrasher submissions to Connecticut's Natural Diversity Database, as well as improve understanding of this bird's nesting habitat.

Grassland bird surveys were conducted at Bradley International Airport and the Enfield/Somers prison complex. Despite the rainy spring and summer, the number of birds observed was consistent with previous years.

Early successional habitat is rapidly decreasing in Connecticut, but is being restored through efforts to create habi-

## Where Are All the Gray Squirrels?

Where are all the squirrels? This question, in direct contrast to the usual complaints of too many squirrels raiding bird feeders and gardens, inundated the Wildlife Division during fall 2009. Those who called noted the same story, which was corroborated by many of their friends and neighbors. No one could remember the last time they had seen a gray squirrel, noting that it had been weeks since they had needed to refill their feeders. Were the squirrels poisoned? Is there a disease going around? Are they being eliminated by predators?

There are a few potential explanations for this apparent population crash. Squirrel populations often fluctuate widely from year to year. Generally, these population peaks and valleys are in response to food availability – when food is plentiful, so are squirrels! When food isn't readily available, squirrels have to travel longer distances in search of food, making them more vulnerable to predators and accidents. But, there were plenty of acorns this past fall! So, where were the squirrels?

Acorn crops were low during fall 2008 and what acorns were available were small. Acorns are the most important food source for squirrels, thus acorn production dictates the health of the squirrel population. Squirrels depend on acorns to build up fat reserves to help them survive winter. The sparse acorn crop in fall 2008 made it difficult for squirrels to find enough food to make it through the winter and those that did were probably in poor shape and had fewer young this past breeding season. Couple that with an unseasonably cool and wet summer and squirrels had a rough year! It is considerably more difficult for squirrels to keep their blind and helpless young warm and dry in a summer with record rainfall and low temperatures.

Along with significant rainfall comes an increase in mosquitoes, which are carriers of a variety of viruses, including West Nile virus. Squirrels are susceptible to West Nile virus and may have been impacted to a greater extent this year than in past years.

Fortunately, the acorn crop in 2009 was significantly better than in 2008. The acorns were large and plentiful! Squirrels have been able to spread out across the landscape, traveling only short distances before getting their fill of nuts. As a result, they have not been as dependent on sunflower seeds and corn at feeders. Most of the squirrels were probably in good shape going into winter this year and, next summer, females could have two litters with up to 7 young in each. The population should rebound, and the squirrels will be back!



P. J. FUSCO (2)



The brown thrasher is a species of greatest conservation need and difficult to detect through traditional bird survey methods.

tat for New England cottontails. Early successional birds may benefit from these restoration efforts. Therefore, the Division initiated pre-monitoring of birds at sites that are targeted for New England cottontail habitat restoration. Bird surveys were conducted at Goshen Wildlife Management Area (WMA; Goshen), Housatonic WMA (Kent), and Roraback WMA (Harwinton). Surveys will be continued after the conclusion of management activities to assess effects of the management on early successional bird species.

Division staff and volunteers continued to conduct bird surveys in early successional shrubland habitat across the state to obtain baseline data on species occupancy of managed properties. Targeted habitats included old fields, shrublands, woodland edges, grasslands, and powerline right-of-ways. The species observed at the most sites were gray catbird, eastern towhee, blue-winged warbler, and Baltimore oriole, all of regional

conservation concern. The surveys also detected several state-listed species, including alder flycatcher, brown thrasher, sedge wren, and golden-winged warbler.

### **Chimney Swifts**

Division staff and volunteers monitored fall migration staging at known chimney swift roost sites. Activity also was reported throughout the spring migration and summer breeding seasons. Collectively, information was recorded for 22 roost locations, and swifts were active at 17 roosts. Migration activity ranged from a few individuals to over 400 birds. Activity at roosts during summer, combined with an earlier end to fall migration roost activity may be an indication that populations or summer breeding productivity have decreased in Connecticut.

Volunteers conducted Chimney Watch surveys at 30 chimneys in survey blocks in Norfolk, Brookfield, Guilford, Chaplin, and Norwich. Swifts were observed occupying 1 chimney. Data were submitted to the regional database.

Seventy-eight chimneys used for Chimney Watch were revisited in 2009 to determine a rate of chimney capping. Six percent of the chimneys became unavailable between 2008 and 2009 because of capping. The average capping rate by survey block was 14%. According to Breeding Bird Survey data, chimney swifts are declining at a rate of at least 6%. The capping rate may be an indicator of the rate at which nesting habitat is becoming unavailable for chimney swifts, and an explanation for their decline.

Results of Chimney Watch efforts indicated that there are many available but unoccupied chimneys in Connecticut. The Division began investigating if habitat features, other than chimney availability, are important for chimney swifts. DEP staff conducted point count surveys in different habitat types to determine if foraging swifts “prefer” a particular habitat type. The results of these surveys indicated that wetland habitats may be important for foraging, along with chimneys for nesting.

### **American Woodcock**

Woodcock surveys on 10 statewide routes continued in 2009. Survey results provide an index to the status of the woodcock population and its habitat. The average number of woodcock heard per stop in 2009 was 0.26, which is similar to the 0.20 heard per stop in 2008. Since

2003, when surveys began on these routes, there has been no significant change in the total number of birds heard. However, the gradual decline in birds heard on some of the routes is likely the result of increased development and differing land use.

Habitat improvement work at a woodcock/early successional habitat demonstration area at Roraback WMA (Harwinton) commenced in August. Biologists attached radio transmitters to 3 woodcock at the site before the habitat project began to provide an assessment of habitat use before and after the work. The Division expects to conduct 2 workshops on habitat management for woodcock at the demonstration area in 2010. The Connecticut Woodcock Council, Wildlife Management Institute, Beardsley Zoo, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program are funding the demonstration area.

### **Waterfowl**

Leg band return data provide information about survival rates, harvest, and the migratory patterns of waterfowl. Such

information is essential for waterfowl management, particularly for assessing the effects of season length and bag limits on harvest rates. Canada geese were banded during the molting period at 47 sites throughout the state. Division staff and volunteers captured 757 adults, 586 juvenile birds, and 430 previously-banded geese.

## **CT Woodcock Council**

The Connecticut Woodcock Council is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting public appreciation for American woodcock and other wildlife species associated with early successional habitat. Formed in October 2002, the organization strives to raise money for on-the-ground habitat work. The Council had gained national prominence in 2006 and received a national conservation award in 2007. However, the loss of leadership had made its continued existence tenuous. A new chair of the board (recently retired Wildlife Division Director Dale May), along with new board members, should result in a viable entity into the future. The Woodcock Council is a vital partner for the DEP, not only for assisting with funding, but more importantly, bringing interested private landowners into the mix who want to provide or enhance early successional habitat on their property.



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P. J. FUSCO



M. HUANG, WATERFOWL PROGRAM

Seasonal resource technician Libby Beckman ensures a radio transmitter fits a hen black duck properly before releasing the bird as part of a wintering black duck study.

## Bad News for Bats

Biennial bat hibernacula surveys were conducted in February and March 2009 at 7 sites, including 2 newly surveyed sites. Big brown, little brown, northern long-eared, and tricolored bats (also known as eastern pipistrelles) were detected. A meager 1,085 bats were counted, reflecting a steep decline of 78% from 2007 when the last survey was conducted. 2009 marked the first decline noted in Connecticut's wintering bat population since these surveys began over 25 years ago. One site experienced an overall decline of over 90%, with the most drastic losses occurring in little brown bats where only 5% of their 2007 population remained.

These catastrophic losses are the result of white-nose syndrome (WNS). First detected in Connecticut in 2008, and initially in New York in 2006/2007, WNS has already devastated bat populations throughout the Northeast and its rapid spread has the potential to affect bats throughout the country. WNS is characterized by a white, fuzzy fungus that invades the face, ears, and wings of bats while they hibernate. This fungus, recently named *Geomyces destructans*, only grows in cold, moist environments and opportunistically thrives on bats while their natural immunities are repressed for hibernation. Once bats wake from hibernation, they groom themselves and the fungus is no longer visible. Bats affected with WNS often arouse from hibernation months early and leave the protection of the hibernacula. Unprecedented numbers of bats have been found flying outside, during the day and the coldest months of winter, and are ultimately freezing and starving to death. Preliminary data suggest that the fungus may be the causative agent for these mass mortalities; however, further research is being conducted to be sure that no underlying ailments are to blame. Fungal infections are usually no more than an irritation, so it is unclear how a fungus could ultimately kill the bats. Researchers are frantically searching for answers and are hopeful that current studies on treatments, control, and transmission will shed light on this devastating disease. WNS has been confirmed at 3 sites in Connecticut and another 3 sites are suspected to be affected. Connecticut is 1 of 9 states that has documented WNS in its bat populations.

The majority of what is known about WNS comes from winter survey work. However, little is known about what happens to the few survivors that leave the winter hibernacula for their summer maternity colonies. Female bats from throughout the region intermingle and roost in numerous colonies across the landscape to raise their young together. This past summer, Division staff and volunteers conducted surveys of maternity colonies by counting bats as they emerged at night to feed. Approximately 8 sites were surveyed statewide and close to 500 bats were reported; however, more than half of those were from one site. Another site where hundreds of bats were reported as recently as last year, had only a small handful return this past spring. Unfortunately, numerous reports of complete colony loss were recorded. Dozens of reports of dead pups and adults found underneath these colonies also flooded the Division throughout the summer. Approximately 50 individual bats were collected and many were sent to the National Wildlife Health Center for necropsy. Results of these analyses point to starvation as the cause of death. The unusually cold and wet summer likely compounded the stress these animals already endured due to WNS, resulting in a difficult summer. Maternity colony surveys will be conducted again in 2010 to monitor changes in these small populations.



P. J. FUSCO

*Will scenes of tightly clustered little brown bats in a Connecticut hibernaculum be a thing of the past?*



C. KOGER, WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM

*Hibernating little brown bats affected with the characteristic white-nose syndrome fungus.*

Annual pre-season duck banding operations yielded 1,302 ducks. Leg bands were placed on 1,190 mallards, 56 wood ducks, 40 American black ducks, 14 mallard x black duck hybrids, 1 blue-winged teal, and 1 northern pintail. An additional 296 ducks were banded post-season as part of a wintering black duck study. This included 169 mallards, 87 black ducks, and 40 mallard x black duck hybrids. All ducks were aged, sexed, and banded before being released.

The second year of a wintering black duck study was finished. The project aims to assess winter carrying capacity, habitat use, and survival of wintering black ducks. This involves monthly

food availability sampling at 4 study sites and capturing ducks to attach radio transmitters. Radio transmitters have been placed on 26 female black ducks to assess habitat use and survival. Nine of those hens were lost to various forms of mortality during winter 2008-2009. The final portion of the black duck study is to quantify the amount of food available to the birds in various habitats. Biologists began the third and final year of the study in November 2009.

Atlantic brant (49) were captured and banded during winter 2009.

Wood duck nest boxes (296) on state land were checked during winter 2008-2009. Overall, 81% of the boxes were in

good condition. Duck use of nest boxes was 49% in the eastern part of the state and 57% in the western part.

Wood duck boxes were installed in eastern (55) and western (35) Connecticut. Thirty-five nest boxes also were constructed at Flaherty Field Trial Area (East Windsor).

The Division conducted the breeding waterfowl survey, breeding swan survey, triennial Atlantic Flyway summer mute swan survey, breeding marshbird surveys, woodcock surveys, and the midwinter waterfowl inventory.

## Wild Turkey

During the 2009 spring turkey hunt-

ing season, 7,376 permits were issued and 1,502 turkeys were harvested (72% adult males, 27% juvenile birds, and 1% bearded hens).

Brood surveys provide an index of annual productivity for the state's turkey population. Survey cooperators reported 333 wild turkey observations, including 2,918 hens – 1,588 with broods and 1,330 without broods. The 2009 average statewide brood size (total number of poults/total number of hens) of 2.0 poults per hen was lower than the 2008 average of 2.2. Brood survey information for the past 3 years has shown a downward trend for wild turkeys across Connecticut. This downward trend may be attributed to wet and cool weather in spring when turkeys are nesting and rearing their young, thus leading to reductions in productivity.

### ***Mourning Doves***

A mourning dove banding program was initiated to assist with regional monitoring efforts. Division staff caught and banded 7 “after hatching year” and 20 “hatching year” mourning doves at 4 different locations throughout the state. The goal is to annually band at least 50 doves as part of the monitoring effort.

### ***Avian Influenza***

Targeted surveillance of migratory birds for Asian H5N1 continued as part of a national plan to monitor the potential spread of the disease into North America. Resident Canada geese, mallards, black ducks, greater scaup, long-tailed ducks, Atlantic brant, semi-palmated and least sandpipers, dunlin, sanderlings, and black-bellied plovers are targeted for sampling in Connecticut. Connecticut was given the task to collect at least 600 samples from live and hunter harvested birds in 2009. The Division submitted 807 samples for testing in 2008 – 27 samples from found dead birds, 10 from hunter harvests, and 770 from live bird captures. The Division also continued with mortality event surveillance by



BEAR PROGRAM TRAIL CAM

Every spring and summer, the DEP attempts to recapture bears that have either lost their radio collars or have malfunctioning collars. Previously captured bears, like the one pictured above, can become increasingly difficult to recapture as they may become “trap smart.”

conducting weekly mortality surveys at 26 sites throughout the state.

### ***Tricolored Bat Project***

The Division conducted a home range study of the tricolored bat (originally known as eastern pipistrelle) with funding from Connecticut's Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund. Although the tricolored bat is considered a common species throughout much of its range, very little research has been done to reveal its summer ecology. Five adult females from a colony in Stamford were fitted with radio transmitters and tracked nightly from early June through mid-July in 2009. Analysis of the data is not yet complete, but should provide useful information about habitat and landscape preferences.

### ***Weasels***

2009 marked the conclusion of a 2-year status and distribution study of short-tailed and long-tailed weasels. Trapping efforts were conducted throughout the state at federal, state, and town-owned properties, as well as on several private properties. Between

July and December 2008, 11 individuals were captured 19 times during 1,549 trap nights (one trap night was defined as one 24-hour period in which the trap was set). An additional 40 weasel specimens were collected from trappers, licensed wildlife rehabilitators, Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators, nature centers, and by collecting weasels killed by pets and vehicles. Similar to historically described ranges for these species, long-tailed weasels were found throughout Connecticut while short-tailed weasels were found in the northwestern part of the state. Limited data were collected for short-tailed weasels, therefore the species' range may be underestimated. The Division will continue collecting weasel observations and specimens for future analyses.

### ***Black Bears***

Winter dens of 16 radio-collared female black bears were inspected in February and March to examine reproduction. Eleven of these sows had litters of cubs, with an average 2.3 cubs per litter. Five sows denned with yearlings born during the previous winter. Biologists estimated the first year survival of

### Adult or Yearling Bears Captured/Tagged, 2001-2009

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
<b>Females Tagged</b>	1	8	4	9	2	5	0	10	10	49
<b>Males Tagged</b>	7	18	11	7	8	10	18	7	12	93
<b>Total Tagged</b>	8	26	15	16	10	15	19	17	22	148
<b>Recaptures</b>	2	12	35	8	21	16	22	5	24	145
<b>Total Captures</b>	10	38	50	24	31	31	40	22	46	293

cubs to be close to 80% by determining the number of yearlings present.

During 2009, 26 previously untagged bears were captured. These included 3 yearlings tagged at their winter den, 15 bears while trapping to recapture research bears, and 8 bears captured at problem sites. Division biologists have captured and tagged nearly 150 bears since 2001.

From October 2008 through September 2009, 1,967 bear sightings and 196 cases of property damage were reported to the Division. During this same period,

21 bears were killed by vehicles and 2 bears tagged in Connecticut were killed by vehicles in other states. This was the highest recorded 1-year total of vehicle-killed bears.

### Furbearers

Division employees devote a considerable amount of time and effort responding to calls and e-mails with questions and concerns about furbearer species. Concerns about coyotes, especially in southern towns, and foxes have become

### Habitat for the New England Cottontail

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded grants to a consortium of Northeast states participating in a regional initiative to restore 1,200 acres of New England cottontail habitat. The Department received a grant of \$223,525 to restore 150 acres on state lands. The New England cottontail is a high priority mammal among species of greatest conservation need and is the only native cottontail rabbit found in Connecticut.

This regional habitat restoration initiative is one major component of a strategy to restore and secure populations of New England cottontails in the Northeast. Activities will include reclaiming old field sites, control of non-native invasive plants, and the clearing of forested areas to encourage regeneration of plants less than 3-inches in diameter to provide dense thickets of cover. Although this project will provide direct benefits to native cottontail populations, these early successional habitats also may benefit a wide array of species of greatest conservation need, including 70 species of butterflies and moths, 3 species of beetles, 40 species of birds, 3 species of amphibians, 11 species of reptiles, and 9 species of mammals. State-lands selected to be managed include Roraback WMA, Goshen WMA (Goshen), Housatonic River WMA (Kent), and Camp Columbia State Park (Morris).

P. J. FUSCO

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Trappers are required to have the pelts of certain furbearing species, like the otter, tagged by a DEP representative before they are sold, exchanged, or kept for personal use.

more frequent in recent years.

Trapping and hunting harvest totals for beaver, river otter, mink, red fox, gray fox, coyote, and fisher were determined through pelt tagging. Trapping harvest totals for muskrat, raccoon, skunk, opossum, and weasel are estimated from a trapper questionnaire. Season harvest totals for most species and harvests by trappers and hunters decreased compared to the 2007-2008 season. Trappers tagged 973 beavers and 182 fishers in 2008-2009. The proportion of coyotes taken by trappers increased and the proportion taken by hunting decreased in each of the 4 years following a regulation change that allows land trapping for coyotes.

Trappers reported on an annual survey that 74% of the beavers and 100% of the coyotes they trapped were taken to resolve problems. Trapping is valuable in directly resolving beaver conflicts and managing the beaver

### Pelt Tagging Totals of Furbearers, 1997-98 through 2008-09 Seasons.

Season	Beaver	River Otter	Mink	Coyote	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Fisher	Total
1997-98	1,163	177	262	166	65	40		1,873
1998-99	708	113	180	136	49	34		1,220
1999-00	1,008	131	113	103	57	15		1,427
2000-01	638	167	127	100	39	13		1,084
2001-02	1,224	216	244	144	56	36		1,920
2002-03	472	138	153	119	64	29		975
2003-04	977	201	165	175	89	24		1,631
2004-05	900	197	258	181	126	39		1,701
2005-06	1,100	238	290	168	83	64	166	2,109
2006-07	1,237	189	251	267	131	101	276	2,452
2007-08	1,095	193	305	212	86	76	214	2,181
2008-09	973	190	165	211	121	75	182	1,917



Master Wildlife Conservationist Jim Batterson (left) assists Wildlife Division District Maintainer Koert Riley at a deer check station during the shotgun/rifle deer hunting season. Koert and Jim are collecting biological data, such as weight, antler beam diameter, and age. They are examining the teeth to estimate the buck's age.

deer and all samples tested negative for CWD. Over 3,000 samples have been tested for CWD during the last 5 years and all tests were negative. Surveillance efforts will continue in 2010.

The Division received grants from Connecticut's Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Checkoff Fund and the Northeast Wildlife Damage Management Cooperative to study the state's moose population. This cooperative study between the Division and University of Connecticut focuses on home range size, habitat use, movements, causes of mortality, and public perceptions about moose. Efforts to capture moose have been limited. So far,

population.

Trapping is allowed on 68 state land units, primarily state forest and wildlife management areas. Forty-seven trappers purchased 93 permits for trapping these parcels during the 2008-2009 trapping season. Approximately 20% of the statewide harvest of many furbearer species was taken on state land.

Observations of bobcats continued to increase. The 227 reported observations comprised the greatest 12-month total yet recorded. Bobcats are observed more frequently west of the Connecticut River.

Fisher sightings were reported at about the same level as in 2008, but reports have declined by more than 50% in the last 5 years. Trapping harvests will be examined for evidence of a population decline. Fisher sightings and harvests are more frequent east of the Connecticut River.

Carcasses of river otters (39), fishers (39), bobcats (30), and black bears (20) were examined to determine reproductive status, age, and diet. Otters, fishers, and bobcats had good indices of reproduction. The sample of female bears was too low to assess reproduction.

### *White-tailed Deer and Moose*

Health of Connecticut's deer herd and changes in hunting pressure are assessed by collecting biological data from hunter harvested deer at check stations. Division staff collected biological data from about 2,000 deer during the 2009 shotgun/rifle deer hunting season.

A deer management plan implemented for the Bluff Point Coastal Reserve (Groton) has reduced the deer herd from about 222 deer per square mile down to about 20 per square mile. In January 2009, 18 deer were removed from the reserve over 4 nights by Department personnel to maintain the population at 20 deer per square mile. All deer removed were donated to Hunters for the Hungry and distributed to area food shelters.

The Division received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct surveillance for chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Connecticut's deer population. Work under this grant was completed by the Division and the University of Connecticut's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. Tissue samples were collected from about 650 vehicle-killed and hunter-harvested

2 bulls and 1 cow were captured, collared, and ear-tagged. One moose uses a 10-square mile area in Hartland, the collar of another moose malfunctioned, and efforts to locate the remaining moose have been unsuccessful. Moose capture efforts have resumed this winter.

Public and general hunter opinions about moose and moose management were collected in 2008 and final analysis was conducted in 2009. A detailed survey regarding moose and moose management was prepared and mailed to over 800 deer hunters in June, July, and September with a 64% response rate. Analysis is planned for spring, along with a final report for all surveys by May 2010. Data from this study will assist the Department in developing a comprehensive moose management plan. There were 93 reported moose sightings and 2 documented moose vehicle accidents in 2009.

### *Small Game*

An estimated 5,395 daily and 809 season permits were issued for hunting on permit-regulated hunting areas during the 2008-2009 small game hunting seasons. Extrapolated survey data indicated that



Information on wood turtles was requested from residents in Fairfield County. Habitat loss and fragmentation is a concern in this county, which has the highest human population in Connecticut. One wood turtle was recorded.

### *Monofilament Line Recycling Receptacles*

Wildlife Division staff constructed monofilament fishing line recycling receptacles and placed them at inland and coastal sites around the state to encourage less waste line in the environment. Volunteers will collect the disposed fishing line from the receptacles. The line will be sent to a company that recycles it to make underwater habitat structures for fish.

Carelessly discarded fishing line can seriously harm or kill wildlife. Animals can become entangled in, or ingest, the line, whereby starvation, strangulation, or deep wounding are possible. Usually, wildlife cannot survive the injuries they sustain from entanglements.

Help protect wildlife and keep your favorite fishing area clean by placing waste fishing line in a recycling receptacle. It's the responsible thing to do!



hunters took an estimated 4,995 trips at the various areas. Based on data obtained from the permit-regulated hunting area surveys, overall harvest indices for ruffed grouse, woodcock, pheasant, cottontail, and gray squirrel show a declining trend.

Ruffed grouse population data were collected from observations and drumming surveys. A total of 38 sightings were reported from 13 towns, bringing the count to 240 since 2005. Drumming surveys were conducted in April. Grouse were heard on 10 of 13 routes and 20 unique drumming males were reported. The routes that produced the highest number of birds were in Barkhamsted and East Hampton, with 4 unique drummers heard along each route.

During 2009, 99 cottontail specimens were examined to determine distribution of New England and eastern cottontail rabbits throughout Connecticut. Of the 99 rabbits collected, 18 were roadkills, 64 were live-trapped, 15 were harvested by hunters, and 2 were collected through other means. Division staff identified 61 eastern cottontails and 35 New England cottontails; 3 specimens were not confirmed to species. A total of 1,350 rabbits have been collected since 2000; 77% of samples are eastern cottontail, 11% are New England cottontail, and 12% are unconfirmed.

### *Ring-necked Pheasants*

During the 2009 fall hunting season, 14,303 adult ring-necked pheasants

were purchased for release on 42 state-owned, state-leased, and permit-required hunting areas. The Division continues to use volunteers to assist with stocking on several public hunting areas.

### *Surveys at Suffield WMA*

The DEP purchased the former General Cigar property in Suffield in 2008. The 195-acre area, now known as Suffield WMA, was formerly used for growing tobacco. It has more than 100 acres of open or managed field habitat and is contiguous to a 400-acre state wildlife area in Southwick, Massachusetts. Inventory of existing habitat conditions and wildlife use of the property began in 2009. Extensive herpetological surveys also were conducted by staff and volunteers, and vegetation, birds, butterflies, tiger beetles, other insects, and spiders were sampled, identified, and inventoried.

### *Reptiles*

2009 marked the 20th field season of a bog turtle (state endangered, federally threatened) study to survey historic and new locations for the presence or absence of suitable habitat and turtles. The decline of bog turtles is mainly due to habitat loss and, in small part, to collection pressure. No bog turtles were found at the 2 historic sites surveyed.

Information on wood turtles was requested from residents in Fairfield County. Habitat loss and fragmentation is a concern in this county, which has the highest human population in Connecticut. One wood turtle was recorded.

### *Invertebrates*

Counts for adult Puritan tiger beetles (state endangered, federally threatened) were conducted at all known sites along the Connecticut River from late June through the beginning of August. Division staff closed a beach site to limit disturbance to the adult beetles from human recreation. Staff also searched for larval burrows at previously unchecked but potentially suitable sites along the Connecticut River. Boat surveys were conducted over 2 days to collect habitat information and sand samples at sandy beach areas along the Connecticut River to determine potential Puritan tiger beetle habitat. Vegetation was removed at 2 beetle sites to improve habitat.

Signs detailing state regulations and a map of closed areas were erected at 3 locations on the coast to protect horseshoe crabs.

Division staff and volunteers initiated a project to determine the distribution of the northern dusk-singing cicada (*Tibicen auletes*; state species of special concern). This annual cicada was thought to be extirpated from Connecticut until it was rediscovered in 2007. It is considered the largest cicada in North America. Unlike other cicadas, this species sings only at dusk. Therefore, it is unclear whether the cicada had been overlooked by scientists or it is truly rare. More research is slated for 2010.

The northern metalmark (state endangered) is a small butterfly that uses forest habitats with openings, often with limestone outcrops. It is dependent on its host plant, roundleaf ragwort. This past field season, habitat was restored at 3 northern metalmark colonies by removing invasive species, thinning the forest canopy, planting nectar sources, and erecting a fence around planted nectar sources to protect them from deer browsing. The restoration was accomplished with the help of work parties comprised of Dr. David Wagner's students from the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut Butterfly Association, The Nature Conservancy, various volunteers, and the Wildlife Division. Division and UConn staff also surveyed metalmarks at these colonies.



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The snowy egret is listed as a threatened species in Connecticut. The state Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species List is reviewed and updated every 5 years. A public hearing was held in 2009 and the updated list will be published in 2010.

Habitat conditions of the 3 colonies have improved as a result of this work and northern metalmarks were observed at all of the sites this year.



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A young upland sandpiper forages in grassy habitat at Bradley International Airport during the summer of 2009. Bradley Airport is a primary breeding area for upland sandpipers in the state.

### Grassland Bird Monitoring at Bradley International Airport

The grassy areas surrounding the runways at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks have served as important breeding grounds for a number of state-listed bird species for more than 10 years. These grassland-obligate species, such as the upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, and eastern meadowlark, require large tracts of grassland to successfully rear young. The Wildlife Division established 13 survey points around the 2 main runways in 1996 to gain a better understanding of how many of these birds are on the property and where. Point count surveys have been conducted most years since that time by Division staff (1996, 2001-2009) and volunteers from the Massachusetts Audubon Society (1998-2000). An estimated number of breeding pairs of each species can be calculated from the data collected. Unfortunately, upland sandpipers are difficult to document using point surveys because their large territory size and secretive nature introduces a large amount of uncertainty into the breeding pair calculation. Therefore, caution should be used when interpreting the figures listed for upland sandpiper. Also, it is important to note that the number of survey points was reduced from 13 to 12 in 2008 and 2009 because of loss of available habitat from various construction projects at the airport.

#### Estimated Number of Grassland Bird Breeding Pairs at Bradley International Airport

Species	1996	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009*
<b>Bobolink</b>	N/A	5	5	7	2	2	3	4	3	0	4	3	7
<b>Eastern Meadowlark</b>	N/A	4	7	12	11	9	6	4	2	6	3	2	5
<b>Grasshopper Sparrow</b>	6	8	11	10	4	10	13	12	15	12	14	9	9
<b>Horned Lark</b>	4	5	3	5	2	2	3	3	3	2	10	6	8
<b>Savannah Sparrow</b>	8	14	13	21	11	11	17	19	15	20	17	11	14
<b>Upland Sandpiper<sup>^</sup></b>	8	12	5	6	5	3	4	4	2	4	1	0	1

\* There were less survey points in 2008 and 2009 due to loss of habitat around the airport from various construction projects.

<sup>^</sup> This species is not well documented during point count surveys because of extremely large territories.

# Connecticut's Other Goose - The Brant

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, Wildlife Outreach Program

Everyone is familiar with the sometimes all-too-common Canada goose, but not so with its less common relative, the brant. Brant are found at scattered locations along the Connecticut shoreline only during winter. They are uncommon to fairly common in the appropriate habitats, and are usually found in small flocks numbering up to 40 or 50 individuals. Other species of goose are sometimes found in Connecticut, but only the Canada and brant regularly occur in numbers.

Brant are small, stocky geese. They have a black head, neck, and breast, and a white neck blaze. Their topside is dark brown and the belly is pale. Seen up close, brant have a short, stubby bill, and a short, black tail with a contrasting white underside. Their white upper tail coverts are long enough to obscure most of the black tail. At a distance, brant appear all dark with a white backside.

## Range and Habitat

Nearly always associated with salt water, brant are maritime geese. They are rarely found on inland bodies of water with such occurrences usually happening only during migration. Brant breed

in high Arctic tundra regions across the northern hemisphere, where they are found in wet coastal lowland tundra habitats, often with components of small ponds, inlets, and small islands. They usually nest among grass or sedge tussocks on the flat plain of small islets. Brant nest farther north than any other species of goose.

Brant tend to favor marshes in winter that fringe shallow water bays and estuaries where they can forage on submergent aquatic vegetation, especially eelgrass and sea lettuce. Brant have adapted in recent years to feeding at cultivated areas and grass fields that are close to the coast.

## Flight

When compared to other species of goose, brant have rather long and slightly pointed wings. Their flight is fast and agile; they fly with rapid wing beats. Flocks typically fly low over water in ragged formations of lines or loose Vs.

Brant often vocalize in flight, sounding soft "rronk, rronk" calls. When birds are in a flock, the constant calls merge into a background noise that carries long distances across the water.

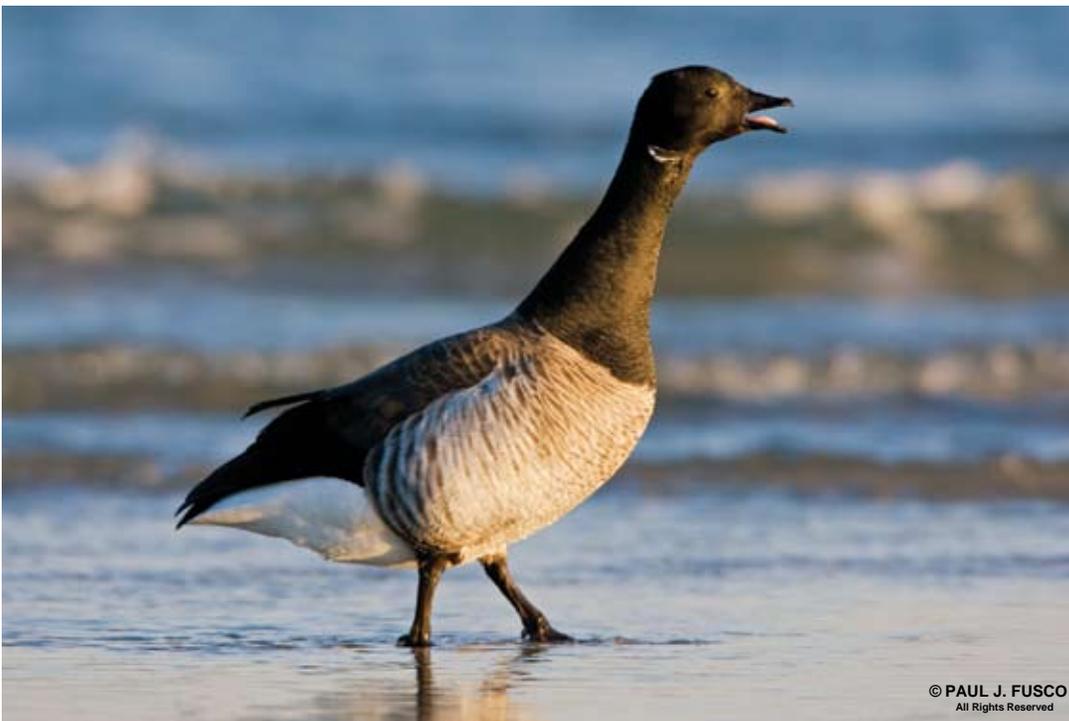


## Conservation

Brant numbers fluctuate considerably depending on annual breeding success and food availability. In some years, few young are raised if nesting birds are subjected to extended periods of severe weather. Bad weather on the breeding grounds not only destroys nests and eggs, but also may kill young birds.

Brant populations declined dramatically in the 1930s when a worldwide die-off of their main food source, eelgrass, occurred. The die-off was caused by eelgrass wasting disease. Brant are specialized and were once thought to be heavily dependant on eelgrass as a winter food source. With the decline in eelgrass due to disease, a portion of the brant population was able to adapt to other food sources, including sea lettuce and grass. Since that time, eelgrass has been recovering, and so have brant, although brant are now using other foods more often. The brant population has recovered from the eelgrass wasting disease event of the 1930s, but not to the historic numbers seen before the population crash.

Although brant are cold weather birds, they are susceptible to extreme cold that freezes coastal waters. When coastal waters freeze, brant are unable to



Brant are small, coastal geese that breed in the high Arctic. Their wintering range on the East Coast includes the mid-Atlantic states from Massachusetts to the Carolinas.



Flocks of over-wintering brant are now a regular sight along the Connecticut shoreline.

access their aquatic food sources, making them vulnerable to starvation if the freeze is prolonged. At these times, brant may be seen foraging on lawns in coastal parks and golf courses.

### Management

Brant hunting season length and bag limits are determined every year based on recommendations of the Atlantic Flyway Council. The Council is comprised of biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and state and provincial agencies. Harvest of Atlantic brant was prohibited in the Atlantic Flyway from 1933 to 1952 due to low population numbers that were the result of the eelgrass die-off. Based on population levels after 1952, limited harvest was restored and continued into the 1970s.

The Atlantic brant population declined significantly during the 1970s due primarily to poor reproduction and also winter mortality, including high harvest. At that time, steps were taken to restrict harvest quotas, with a goal of maintaining the population at 150,000 birds before more liberal harvest levels would take affect. Because breeding success rates are

extremely variable, hunting seasons are now adjusted accordingly.

Winter waterfowl surveys in the region provide the basis for population estimates that are used to help determine hunting seasons. In Connecticut, those surveys have been done every year from the air by Wildlife Division staff.

Population levels for Atlantic brant have fluctuated dramatically over the years. Estimates showed recovery from the 1930s to a high of 265,000 in 1961. By the 1970s, Atlantic brant numbers dropped to a low of 40,000 in 1973. Since the 1970s, numbers have rebounded but remain in the 150,000 range. The most recent estimated population for Atlantic brant was 151,000 birds in January 2009. Surveys show, that starting in 2004, brant numbers have topped 1,000 every year in Connecticut. Their numbers were much less in previous years. The dramatic increase indicates that more brant are wintering in Connecticut than ever before.

### Three Subspecies

*There are three subspecies of brant, differing in plumage characteristics and range.*

#### Dark-bellied Brant - *Branta bernicla bernicla*

- Uniformly dark gray-brown overall with flanks and belly not contrasting with back.
- Breeds in western and central Siberia. Winters in western Europe, primarily along the coasts of England, France, and Germany.

#### Pale-bellied Brant - *Branta bernicla hrota*

- Also known as Atlantic brant.
- Pale belly contrasts with black chest and dark back.
- Side neck patches do not meet in front.
- Breeds in Greenland and northeastern Canada. Winters in northwestern Europe and the Atlantic coast of the United States from Massachusetts to North Carolina.

#### Black Brant - *Branta bernicla nigricans*

- Uniform sooty dark with contrasting white flank markings
- Black belly.
- Extensive white neck patches form nearly complete collar.
- Breeds in western Canada, Alaska, and eastern Siberia. Winters primarily from southern Alaska to California, with smaller numbers in eastern Asia.

## Outreach and Education

The Division's Outreach Program published 5 issues of *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine, prepared press releases on wildlife topics, and assisted in the production of several publications, including the annual deer and turkey summaries and wildlife fact sheets. Most of these publications are available on the DEP Web site ([www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife](http://www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife)). Due to the new automated licensing system on the DEP's Web site, there was a large increase in the number of subscribers to *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine in 2009. Sportsmen and women who purchase their hunting and fishing licenses and permits through the automated system also have the opportunity to purchase a subscription to the magazine.

The 9th Master Wildlife Conservationist (MWC) Program series was completed by 24 participants at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (Burlington). MWCs assist the Division with public programs and wildlife projects. Sixty-three MWCs provided over 3,700 hours of volunteer service in 2009.

MWCs and Outreach Program staff presented 185 programs to various school, scout, civic, and general public audiences. Division biologists also presented public programs on various wildlife topics to such groups as conservation organizations, municipal commissions, students, and civic organizations. Requests for media interviews were received throughout the year.

Programs held at Sessions Woods included wildlife presentations and tours of the exhibit area that focused on Connecticut's changing landscape. Nine elementary school classes from the Hartford area visited Sessions Woods with assistance from a Newman's Own Foundation grant awarded to the Friends of Sessions Woods. Sessions Woods also was the host-site for a DEP-sponsored Great Park Pursuit event drawing over 500 families.

Wildlife displays, featuring



The 9th Master Wildlife Conservationist (MWC) Program series was completed by 24 participants at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (Burlington). MWCs assist the Division with public programs and wildlife projects. Sixty-three MWCs provided over 3,700 hours of volunteer service in 2009.

coyotes, black bears, and state wildlife issues, were staffed at 12 public events.

The Division continues to provide bundles of rough-cut wood to groups for the purpose of constructing bluebird nest boxes. Forty-three groups participated

and successfully turned 75 bundles into approximately 1,500 new nest boxes. Participation was statewide and included scout troops, school groups, nature centers, land trusts, conservation commissions, and many others.



Master Wildlife Conservationist Felicia Ortnier provided black bear presentations to over 2,000 individuals and transported a tabletop bear display to 28 Connecticut libraries in 2009.

## Friends of Sessions Woods

The Wildlife Division appreciates the support of the Friends of Sessions Woods, a volunteer organization established to facilitate projects and programs that enhance the value of Sessions Woods.

The Friends received a second grant from the Newman's Own Foundation in 2009. This grant funded a second printing of the children's workbook, "Exploring Wildlife at Sessions Woods," and increased a transportation fund for field trips to Sessions Woods.

The Main Street Community Foundation, Inc., provided a grant in 2009 for a waterfowl display in the Education Center. Friends of Sessions Woods provided a 50% match to the grant. Two new exhibit cases have been purchased and beautiful waterfowl mounts are now on display.



Division staff conducted 2 bluebird nest box workshops and partnered with the White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield to organize a bat house building workshop. Participants learned firsthand how these artificial nesting structures can benefit Connecticut's wildlife. They also learned about the importance of checking and maintaining the boxes to ensure long term usage.

## Thank You for the Support

The DEP Wildlife Division wishes to acknowledge all of the cooperators who have provided their support, either by volunteering their time, making financial contributions, donating equipment and supplies, or providing data. Our accomplishments over the past year would not have been possible without the help of our cooperators and the financial assistance provided by various grants, donations, and special funds.



P. J. FUSCO

## Wildlife Mural Unveiled at Sessions Woods

Local artist and Master Wildlife Conservationist Charlene VanNess donated her time and talent to paint a stunning 8' x 24' mural depicting the beaver marsh at Sessions Woods and the various wildlife species that can be found there. Charlene's painting is realistic and detailed, from the sky to the trees to the water, as well as from the soaring red-tailed hawk to the river otter to the smallest of dragonflies. The Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods held a special event to unveil the mural in June, which drew at least 60 attendees, including DEP Deputy Commissioner Susan Frechette, Friends of Sessions Woods members, Wildlife Division staff, and Charlene's friends and family. The mural currently hangs in the lobby of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, for all visitors to admire. Charlene did an amazing job of capturing the beauty of the beaver marsh, and all of her hard work and dedication are greatly appreciated.

## Funding for Wildlife

**Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program:** Many of the projects described in this annual report are funded by sportsmen's dollars, either through the purchase of licenses, permits, and hunting equipment. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program provides funding for wildlife management and research, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development, and hunter education programs. Funds for this program are provided through an excise tax on the sale of sporting firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment.



**State Wildlife Grants:** This program provides federal dollars to support cost-effective conservation aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. A non-federal match requirement assures local ownership and leverages state and private funds to support conservation. Projects supported by State Wildlife Grants restore degraded habitat, reintroduce native wildlife, develop partnerships with private landowners, and collect data to find out more about declining species.



**Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund:** This fund was created in 1993 by the State Legislature to allow Connecticut state income taxpayers to voluntarily donate portions of their tax refund to support efforts aimed at helping Connecticut's endangered species, natural area preserves, and watchable wildlife.



## Threatened and Endangered Species List

The Department is mandated to review and update Connecticut's Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species List every 5 years. Taxonomic advisory committees were called on in 2007 to review the available data and assess the status of the state's plants and animals. A public hearing on the proposed changes was held in September 2009 and the regulation is now entering the final stages of approval. The new list also incorporates significant taxonomic revisions that are now widely accepted in the scientific community and resulted in name changes for many species. Look for the updated list of Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species in early 2010.

# State Lands Management

Activities of the Division's State Lands Management Program are focused on the state's 105 wildlife management areas (WMA) comprising 32,000 acres. Projects also are undertaken at state forests, parks, and flood control areas. Activities continue to emphasize early successional habitats (i.e., young forests, old fields, grasslands). Such sites are rapidly declining due to the loss of farmlands, development, and the absence of fire within our landscape.

Even though state and Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration funding have been limited over the past decade, the Division has received funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). This valuable program was the first Farm Bill conservation program specifically developed to address wildlife resource needs on non-federal lands. Projects, since the inception of WHIP in 1998, have included warm and cool season grass establishment, riparian native tree and shrub plantings, water control structure replacement/enhancements, aspen/young forest regeneration, and old field enhancement/non-native plant management targeting invasive species, such as autumn olive, multi-flora rose, Asiatic bittersweet, tartarian honeysuckle, and tree-of-heaven.

## Woodcock Demonstration Sites

An ongoing partnership between the Department and the Connecticut Woodcock Council has resulted in the accomplishment of the first state lands cooperative habitat enhancement project.

The Division completed a 13-acre regeneration harvest at Roraback WMA in Harwinton with funding spearheaded by the Connecticut Woodcock Council and contributions from the Wildlife Management Institute and Beardsley Zoo. The project, which was completed in August 2009, provides critical early successional forest/shrubland habitat for the benefit of American woodcock, New England cottontails, and an assortment of 47 "species of greatest conservation need" identified in Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. This area now serves as a demonstration site to educate private landowners on early successional habitat and management strategies and opportunities. The area also is a component of an ongoing regional New England cottontail restoration project.



P. J. FUSCO

**A skidder transports trees being harvested on a 13-acre site at Roraback WMA in Harwinton. Activities will enhance early successional forest habitat critical to a declining group of wildlife species, including New England cottontail rabbits and American woodcock.**

Management practices include brush mowing, heavy-duty brush and tree removal with specialized equipment (i.e. brontosaurus, fecon mower, and feller buncher), prescribed burning, no-till fluffy grassland seedings, and selective herbiciding.

This past field season was productive by combining WHIP funds with staff commitments from the Wildlife, Support Services, Parks, and Forestry divisions. Approximately 989 acres of early successional habitat enhancement practices were completed at 38 sites throughout the state.

The State Lands Program continues to administer 7 Conservation Reserve Program contracts that involve the maintenance of grassland sites for a 10-year period at Robbins Swamp WMA in Canaan (2), Pease Brook WMA in Lebanon, Bartlett Brook WMA in Lebanon, Spignesi WMA in Scotland (2), and Bloomfield Flood Control Area. The Program also oversees 54 agricultural agreements on approximately 1,404 acres. This program allows farmers to use state-owned agricultural lands in exchange for maintaining wildlife habitat.

Division staff developed comprehensive 10-year management plans for Roraback WMA (Harwinton) and Flaherty Management Area (East Windsor), covering over 2,500 acres. These plans provide direction in the application of habitat management treatments over the next decade.

State Land Management staff also provided guidance for management projects to assure that impacts to wildlife were minimized and potential benefits were secured. These included:

- Input on 2 forest management plans comprising 1,316 acres;
- 2 enduro reviews;
- 47 property reviews;
- 12 reviews of Department proposals, including boat launches, access roads, trails, and facility development.

*Operational activities included:*

- Boundary posting of 8.5 miles at Suffield WMA (Suffield) and Flaherty Management Area.
- Access road upgrades (2.25 miles total) at Rose Hill WMA (Preston), Pease Brook WMA, Roraback WMA, Nod Brook Management Area (Avon), Simsbury WMA (Simsbury), and Suffield WMA.
- Routine/ongoing maintenance at key public access locations on 35 WMAs (mowing, herbiciding, painting gates, staining wooden signs, replacement of informational signs, and general site clean-up).
- Involvement with hazardous tree and encroachment issues.
- Installation of new signs at Suffield WMA, Shade Swamp WMA (Farmington), Skiff Mountain WMA, and Simsbury WMA.
- Enhanced public parking at Rose Hill WMA, Durham Meadows WMA



This skidsteer/fecon heavy-duty mower was used at Roraback WMA to remove non-native invasive plants from the forest understory prior to conducting a harvest. This practice, in association with selective herbicide application, will encourage the regeneration of desirable native tree and shrub species.

Outreach is a key component of activities at Belding WMA. Nineteen off-site programs on wildlife ecology and habitat management were conducted at local schools, public libraries, and the Tolland County Agricultural Center; 309 people participated in these programs. In addition, 18 outreach initiatives were conducted involving University of Connecticut students, Junior Gardeners, Cub Scouts, and general interpretive walks.

Third and fourth grade students from the Vernon School system visited Belding WMA as part of the science curriculum. In May, 234 third graders visited Belding over

(Durham), and Pease Brook WMA.

- Maintenance at 16 inland marshes, including vegetation control via mowing and herbiciding and management of water levels to maximize wetland wildlife values and minimize human public safety conflicts.

Staff serves as the Department's Lead Core team member on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Conte Refuge Initiative, which will result in a more comprehensive federal plan incorporating the wildlife resource needs of Connecticut.

### **Belding WMA**

Funding from WHIP allowed the Division to accomplish several habitat projects at the 282-acre Belding WMA (Vernon) in 2009. A 3-acre stand of pitch pine was restored by removing competing overstory trees and disturbing the soil. Non-native invasive plants were controlled in old fields and grasslands via brush mowing, manual removal, and application of herbicides. Over 200 native shrubs were planted to enhance riparian habitat, and 225 chestnut trees were planted to create a more diverse regenerating hardwood stand representative of the historical forest composition. Annual bird, amphibian, and mast surveys also were conducted.

### **Managing Declining Grassland Habitat**

The Wildlife Division has been working closely with the Centennial State Land Management Committee, which is comprised of the DEP Forestry Division, Aquarion Water Company, and The Nature Conservancy, to manage and enhance grasslands for early successional habitat dependent wildlife at Flirt Hill. This 60-acre site, located in Centennial State Forest in Easton, is identified as an important birding site in Fairfield County and has been in need of management for the past several years. The Division has conducted a series of enhancements with funding provided by a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program grant awarded in 2007. The project's primary goal is to improve the herbaceous component for ground-nesting birds, such as bobolinks, and reduce invasive non-native woody plants, like oriental bittersweet, and native woody plants, like poison ivy and blackberry. The intrusion of woody plants is a natural process of succession for fields that are abandoned or not intensively managed. Two vegetation management strategies are being conducted to maintain and improve the grassland/meadow habitat: 1) increase mowing frequencies to reduce woody plants, and 2) use selective herbicides on woody invaders so as not to affect grasses.

Wildlife that depend on early successional habitat are declining throughout southern New England. Suburban and urban development have resulted in fragmented and isolated grassland habitat in Connecticut. Restoring and maintaining existing grasslands on state-owned properties has been identified as a critical need in Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and the Department's Grasslands Initiative. Habitat management on sites such as Flirt Hill are critical if we are to maintain populations of bobolinks, American kestrels, indigo buntings, and other early successional habitat wildlife throughout our landscape.



The Eastern meadowlark is one of a variety of grassland specialists that will benefit from ongoing management activities at a 60-acre grassland site within Centennial State Forest in Easton. The Division is conducting multi-year treatments of mowing and selective herbiciding to reduce competition from non-native invasives and other undesirable plants (poison ivy) which has recently lessened the overall quality of this important grassland site.

P. J. FUSCO (2)



Although early successional habitats, like grasslands, are created and maintained for the benefit of wildlife species that are dependent on those habitats, other wildlife, like white-tailed deer, will use the areas as well.

5 days to learn about habitats and wildlife. In September, 276 fourth graders visited for 6 days to learn about living and non-living parts of the environment.

### ***Landowner Incentive Program***

The Landowner Incentive Program continued to work in partnership with private landowners across Connecticut to restore, create, and manage habitat for rare or declining species at risk by carrying out a host of projects. Two projects were completed in 2009 and work continued on 11 other multi-phase projects. To date, 25 projects have been completed or have had one or more phases completed. Projects to control non-native phragmites are designed for multiple treatments to be implemented in yearly phases. Typically, phragmites requires a minimum of 3 rounds of herbiciding done during the growing season, which is followed by mowing to mulch the dead stalks during the dormant season. Phragmites treatment is typically funded for 3 years under the Program.

Early successional habitat projects will begin in the next several months at the The Nature Conservancy's Burnham Brook Preserve in East Haddam, Pleasant Valley Preserve in Lyme, and Audubon Connecticut's Bent of the River property in Southbury. Follow-up winter mulching will be carried out on most of the phragmites control projects. Despite no new funding, the Landowner Incentive Program continues to work using the original grant monies, but does face an uncertain future. Staff continues to execute contracts, and prepare project proposals and purchase requests for all previously approved projects. More projects will be implemented in 2010.

### ***Native Trees and Shrubs Planted at Cockaponset State Forest***

An ongoing early successional habitat enhancement project was initiated in late summer 2007 within a 50-acre block of Cockaponset State Forest in Middletown. The Division used a brontosaurus (heavy-duty, drum-style mower mounted on an excavator), a tractor-mounted brush hog, and herbicide treatments to control invasive woody plants, primarily multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, and autumn olive, within a 19-acre field formally used for growing corn and hay. Funding for the project was awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, through its Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Five hundred native, berry-producing trees and shrubs were planted in May 2009 in a 2-acre area along the edges of the field to further enhance the field's value to wildlife. Species planted included arrowwood, serviceberry, gray dogwood, red chokeberry, highbush blueberry, northern bayberry, blackhaw viburnum, and Eastern red cedar. These plants provide dense cover and a high quality food source for a variety of mammals, insects, and resident and migratory birds throughout the year. Long-term maintenance will include the selective application of herbicides and periodic mowing.



*C-flex mesh fencing (1.75-inch x 2.25-inch mesh) was installed around clumps of native trees and shrubs planted at Cockaponset State Forest to protect them from deer browsing. For more information about this project, contact Ann Kilpatrick, District Wildlife Biologist, at the DEP's Eastern District Headquarters (860-295-9523).*

PHOTO: A. KILPATRICK, HABITAT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

***Look for an article in the March/April 2010 issue of Connecticut Wildlife that highlights the most recent LIP projects accomplished in 2009.***

# Technical Assistance

## Nuisance Wildlife

The Division receives thousands of phone calls involving human-wildlife conflicts every year. The majority of these calls concern “urban” wildlife species that take advantage of the shelter and food found around homes and businesses. Although common wildlife comprise a majority of the calls, the diversity of wildlife in Connecticut and the capacity of many other species to adapt to living in developed areas has given rise to many other conflicts. Recommendations for controlling wildlife damage and identifying permanent solutions to prevent repeated damage are routinely provided to the public. Information also is provided on animal behavior.

The Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO) Program licensed 365 NWCOs in 2009 who service an estimated 5,000 residents annually. NWCO reports indicate that most homeowner complaints involve problems caused by common species, such as gray squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and woodchucks. In addition to these routine species, the Division issued over 75 NWCO Special Permits for the control of certain mammals identified as special permit species and some migratory birds. The control of special permit species, such as muskrats, coyotes, and foxes, requires qualified NWCOs to use advanced trapping methods, equipment, and safety protocols not generally used or allowed in urban settings. NWCO special permits are also issued, in conjunction with federal Migratory Bird Depredation Permits, when the control of protected migratory birds, such as Canada geese, woodpeckers, gulls, or turkey vultures, is required to prevent severe property damages or resolve public health and safety issues.

Technical assistance staff held an Advanced NWCO Training Class for 8 NWCOs interested in providing live capture “round-up” services for the control of nuisance resident Canada geese. Class participants were provided with information on the biology and management of Connecticut’s resident goose population,



P. J. FUSCO

**Nuisance beavers remain a significant concern for many property owners throughout Connecticut. Most concerns can be addressed with basic information on beaver behavior and the majority are addressed during the regulated trapping season.**

federal and state migratory bird laws, and depredation permits. They also received training on how to complete a Canada goose management plan for a site. Interested NWCOs also must complete a comprehensive Canada goose control training class and successfully round-up molting flightless Canada geese during a field training class conducted by the Department. Eleven NWCOs were recognized in 2009 as qualified to provide “round-up” services to landowners considering this method of goose control.

### Wildlife Rehabilitation

The Division responds to calls from the public regarding sick, injured, and orphaned wild animals. The Division does not have the resources to provide care for these animals. Therefore, it relies on a network of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators that consists of private individuals, staff at nature centers, and local veterinarians who have the proper training, as well as the appropriate facilities to house wildlife species until they can be returned to the wild. There are 254 individuals authorized to care for animals in need. Of that group, 4 are authorized to care for orphaned fawns and 43 have specialized training and authorization for handling rabies vector species (RVS; skunks, rac-

coons, foxes). In addition, 61 individuals have federal permits to care for migratory birds. In 2008, wildlife rehabilitators cared for 13,471 animals, which included 8,294 birds, 5,052 mammals (of which 133 were fawns and 399 were RVS), and 125 reptiles and amphibians. A total of 9,327 (69%) of the animals cared for were released back into the wild.

### Nuisance Beaver Management

Nuisance beavers remain a significant concern for many property owners throughout Connecticut. The majority of complaints are received during April to October. Most concerns can be addressed with basic information on beaver behavior and the majority are addressed during the regulated trapping season. Concerns involving health and safety can be addressed outside of the regulated trapping season under specific statutory authorization. Those who inquire about nuisance beavers are provided with information about management options, including trapping, piping, fencing, and tolerance. Division staff also manages nuisance beaver problems on other Department properties. There is no relocation of beaver in the state. The number of nuisance beaver complaints received from private landowners in 2009 was 216.

*Anyone with nuisance beaver or deer damage complaints should contact the Wildlife Division at either the DEP Eastern District Headquarters in Marlborough (860-295-9523) or the Sessions Woods office in Burlington (860-675-8130).*

## Commercial Deer Damage

The Deer Damage Permit Program addresses severe damage to crops of commercial farmers. The permit allows for the harvest of deer outside of the regulated deer hunting season, specifically to protect commercial crops. Farmers must meet certain requirements, and their property is inspected to evaluate the presence or absence of damage and the level of severity. Permits are valid from January 1 through October 31 of that year. Farmers are expected to use the regulated hunting seasons after October 31. All laws and regulations of the regulated hunting season apply to the use of crop damage permits. The Division processed 133 new deer damage complaints in 2009, which required 111 site inspections.

## Mosquito Management

Connecticut's Mosquito Management Program is a collaborative effort involving the DEP Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management Program, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Public Health, Department of Agriculture, and the University of Connecticut Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Science. Ninety-one mosquito trap locations are maintained throughout the state from June through October to monitor the mosquito population and track mosquito-borne pathogens like West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) that can cause disease in humans, birds, and animals. In the 2009 season, 289,243 mosquitoes were trapped and tested, and 33 WNV-positive pools of mosquitoes were isolated. There also were 118 EEE isolations, which encompassed the eastern half of the state and, by late summer, parts of Fairfield County as well.

There were no confirmed human cases of EEE in Connecticut, although horse and non-native bird deaths were reported. A horse reportedly died from EEE in Plainfield, and the virus also was identified in penned pheasants in

## Wetland Restoration Projects

### Invasive Plant Control

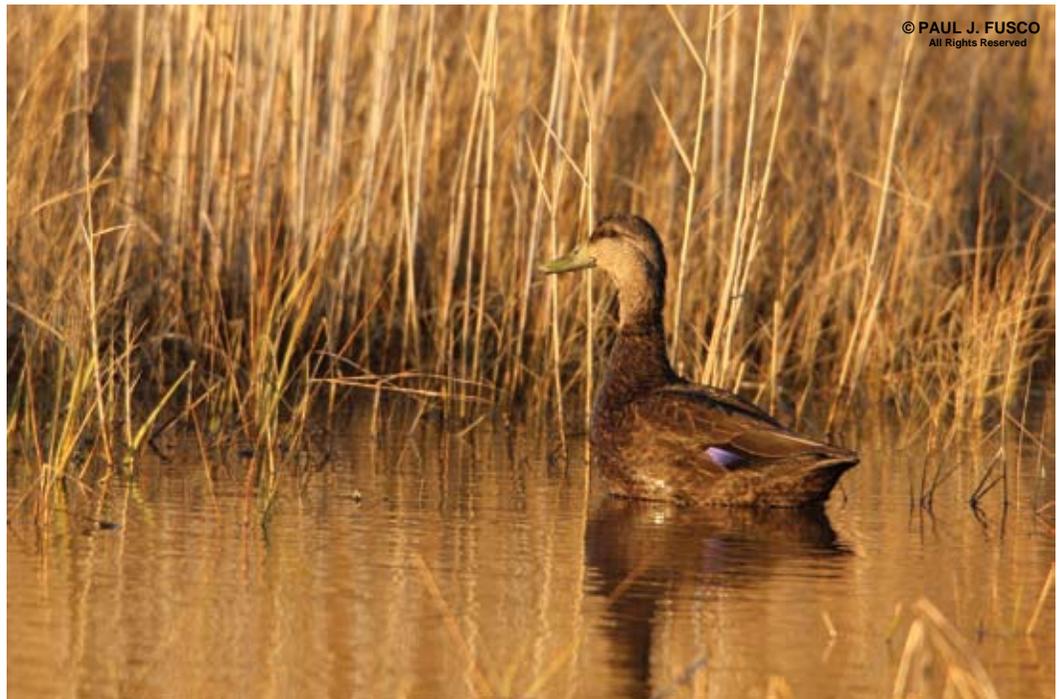
The Division's Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM) Program used specialized mowing machines and sprayed herbicides to control phragmites, an invasive plant, on 341 acres:

- The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program funded phragmites control projects at Asekonk Swamp WMA in North Stonington; the Verkades Property in Waterford (part of Harkness Memorial State Park); Barn Island WMA dike 1 in Stonington; John Minetto State Park in Torrington; White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield; Penny Hill Road in Ashford; and Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford.
- Under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program, projects were completed at Ayers Point, Ragged Rock, and Plum Bank in Old Saybrook; Back River, Upper Island in Old Lyme; Silver Sands State Park in Milford; and Sherwood Island State Park in Westport.
- The Landowner Incentive Program funded control projects at North Cove, South Cove, and Mill Meadows in Old Saybrook; Lieutenant River in Old Lyme; Lords Cove in Lyme; Bermuda Road, Grove Point, and Sherwood Mill Pond in Westport; Flanders Nature Center in Woodbury; Seaside Avenue in Guilford; and Long Wharf in New Haven.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funded a phragmites control project at Poquetanuck Cove in Ledyard.
- The Connecticut Department of Transportation funded control projects at Groton Airport in Groton, Shenipsit State Forest in Stafford Springs, and West River in West Haven.

Other invasive plant projects included the control of 4 acres of Japanese knotweed at Groton Airport and Harkness State Park, and 0.5 acres of yellow floating heart at Camp Columbia State Forest in Morris.

### Habitat Projects:

The WHAMM Program also completed a river habitat project for the DEP Fisheries Division on the Shetucket River in Scotland. A wetland habitat project for the Department of Transportation was initiated in 2009. Five 1-acre pools will be created on the Turkey Hill Brook Section of the Wheeler Wildlife Management Area in Milford. A 14-acre section of this area is currently being treated for phragmites control.



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A black duck swims in a tidal marsh restored by the Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program. The Program was one of the first wetland habitat restoration programs in the country with a dedicated staff and specialized, low ground pressure equipment used exclusively in restoration activities.

## Specialized Equipment for Controlling Phragmites

The Wildlife Division's Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program uses several pieces of specialized low ground pressure equipment to spray and mow the invasive common reed, also known as phragmites. This equipment is able to travel on sensitive wetland areas without causing damage.

The ARGO 8x8 Avenger EFI is an amphibious low ground pressure tracked vehicle. It has a load capacity of 1,150 pounds on land and 1,000 pounds on water. The speed is 20 mph on land and 3 mph on water. Ground pressure is 0.67 pounds per square inch (psi) when using tracks. A pull-behind 44-inch rough-cut mower, called a Swisher, can be attached to the ARGO or an ATV and can cut most phragmites stems up to 2 inches in diameter.

The Posi-track ASV 2810 is a low ground pressure, rubber tracked loader. The base machine has a 20-inch track and a speed of 6 mph. Ground pressure is a maximum of 3.0 psi. Factory installed equipment includes a 72-inch dirt bucket with bolt-on cutting edge and front brush cutter.

The Marsh Master II is a low ground pressure, light weight, high-flotation aluminum pontoon vehicle. The base machine is 14 feet, 6 inches in length and 8 feet wide, with a track width of 28 inches. Speed on land is 9 mph and 2 mph on water. Maximum ground pressure is 1 psi. It came with a 100-gallon herbicide spray system and a rotary cutter attachment that can cut most phragmites stems up to 2 inches in diameter. The purchase of the Marsh Master was made possible with funding from the sale of Connecticut's Migratory Bird Conservation (Duck) Stamps.



The Marsh Master is an amphibious tracked unit that can be outfitted with a tank sprayer for herbicide applications or used for mowing dead phragmites stems.



The Posi-Track ASV is a low-ground pressure vehicle used for mowing dead phragmites stems and brush.

Norwich and Ellington. The high level of EEE activity noted in 2009 was not just confined to Connecticut. There were confirmed horse cases in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maine, and Massachusetts. A three-year-old girl from New Hampshire became ill from EEE and a 70-year-old man from upstate New York died in September from EEE after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Although the risk of contracting EEE from an infected mosquito is very low, the mortality rate is over 50% in humans and over 90% in horses.

## Submit Artwork for the CT Junior Duck Stamp Contest

Young Connecticut artists have an opportunity to submit their artwork of a waterfowl species in the Connecticut Junior Duck Stamp competition sponsored by the Connecticut Waterfowlers Association (CWA). Students are judged in four groups according to grade level. Three first, second, and third place entries are selected for each group. A "Best of Show" is selected by the judges from the 12 first-place winners. The "Best of Show" is then entered into the national Junior Duck Stamp Contest. The first place design from the national contest is used to create a Junior Duck Stamp for the following year. Junior Duck Stamps are sold by the U.S. Postal Service for \$5 each. Proceeds support conservation education and provide awards and scholarships for the students, teachers, and schools that participate in the program.

The deadline for submitting artwork for the 2010 competition is March 15, 2010. Artwork should be sent to Chris Samor, 29 Bower Hill Rd., Oxford, CT 06478. More information about the Junior Duck Stamp Program is on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). To learn more about the Connecticut Waterfowlers Association, visit the organization's Web site at [www.ctwaterfowlers.org](http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org).

# Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program

The 328 volunteer instructors in the Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS) Program contributed 10,961 hours of service to teach 4,127 students in 140 hunting safety courses. Student enrollment has been increasing slightly over the past several years, with the largest gains seen among the bowhunting classes. Courses were presented on firearms hunting (76), bowhunting (57), and trapping (5). Two supplemental coyote land trapping courses were given to 65 trappers who completed the trapping education course or its equivalent and wish to use land sets for trapping coyotes on private land.

Twenty-five new instructors were certified during 2009.

The firearms hunting home study course continues to grow in popularity. In 2009, 8 courses were offered, allowing 156 students to complete most of the program at home. The workbook-based home study course continues, but will be phased out in the near future as the Internet version ([www.IHEA.com](http://www.IHEA.com)) has become more popular with both students and instructors. Students are still required to attend an 8-hour field day that is comprised of 4 instructional topics, a field course, live firing, and an exam. Additional on-line course offerings are planned for 2010, including a self-study course for potential new instructors. A daytime firearms course taught by CE/FS instructors was hosted by Cabela's in East Hartford. Another daytime course was presented at the Division's Franklin office last summer, as was done for the past 5+ years to accommodate youth who are out of school for the summer. These courses, which met the needs of students who are unable to attend evening classes, were in high demand and filled to capacity quickly.

The Glastonbury Public Shooting Range in Meshomasic State Forest continues to be popular among shooting enthusiasts. The range was operational for its fourth full season. Public use remained high, with phone reservations often filled to capacity each Monday. Weekend range hours were extended to



Wildlife Division biologist Mike Gregonis (right) assists CE/FS Senior Instructor Ray Hanley at the Wild Turkey Hunting Workshop held at Cabela's in spring 2009.

accommodate deer hunters in preparation for the firearms deer seasons. The range provided opportunities for 1,847 shooters using pistol, rifle, shotgun, and air gun during the 60 days of operation. Clay target shooting is not allowed. Five seasonal employees, who are trained as Range Safety Officers, currently staff the facility. The range is open free-of-charge for public use on weekends from April through November, although the 2009 opening was delayed until May. It also is available to CE/FS firearms hunting instructors, on request, for use in conducting the live fire component of the hunting safety course. All operational costs of the range continue to be funded through the section 10 allocation of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program.

The High Rock Range in Naugatuck State Forest and the Wooster Mountain Shooting Range at Wooster Mountain State Park (Danbury) continued public operations through cooperative agreements with 2 shooting organizations.

## *Big Changes in Licensing and Hunter Reporting*

Connecticut completed its conversion to a fully automated system for all of its recreational hunting and fishing licenses in 2009. Internet sales of hunting and fishing licenses started in 2008, but by the start of 2009, all of the state's licensing agents had terminals for issuing licenses. Over 195,000 sportsmen used the system in 2009. Each of them was assigned a unique Conservation ID Number to use when purchasing licenses and permits. This allows the DEP to easily keep track of the licensing history of sportsmen and fine tune surveys that track hunting and harvest trends. Sportsmen with Internet access can update their contact information and print a new license at anytime by logging on to the licensing system. By keeping their mailing and e-mail addresses up-to-date, they also are assured of getting the latest information about hunting. Broadcast e-mails were sent out this year to hunters with information about new regulations, new hunting areas, and increased bag limits for deer in certain management zones.

A new tagging and reporting system for deer and turkeys also was launched in 2009. Hunters are now required to use newly-designed kill tags to record information about the deer or turkeys they harvest. Copies of the tags are in the Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide or on the DEP Web site. Then, within 24 hours, they are required to report their harvest, either on the DEP Web site ([www.ct.gov/dep/hunting](http://www.ct.gov/dep/hunting)) or by calling a toll-free number (1-877-337-4868). The only exception is that deer taken during the first 4 days of the shotgun/rifle season must be brought to a check station so that Division biologists can collect biological information from the harvested deer. The new harvest reporting system makes it possible for the Division to keep a running tally of harvests during each season and post season results on the DEP Web site.

# Wildlife Calendar Reminders

## Programs at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center

Programs are a cooperative venture between the Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register by calling 860-675-8130 (Mon.-Fri., 8:30 AM-4:30 PM). Programs are free unless noted. An adult must accompany children under 12 years old. No pets allowed! Sessions Woods is located at 341 Milford St. (Route 69) in Burlington.

- Feb. 6.....**Nature Walk and Drawing Workshop**, 1:00 PM-3:00 PM. Natural Resources Educator Laura Rogers-Castro will lead an interpretive walk focusing on Connecticut's wildlife and the conservation of wildlife habitat. Artist Judy Bird will teach a nature drawing class focusing on personal observation and expression of nature. Snow date is February 7.
- March 3 .....**Wildlife Tales**, starting at 6:30 PM. When the European settlers arrived in Connecticut, which mammals did they encounter? How have habitats changed since the first settlers arrived in the 1600s to the present? Are coyotes native to Connecticut? What is the wild turkey and fisher connection? Join Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro for this indoor presentation to learn about some of the wildlife species found in Connecticut.
- March 21 .....**Mushrooms**, from 9:30-11:30 AM. Join the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society, during their annual meeting at Sessions Woods, for a presentation on mushrooms. There will be a coffee hour at 9:30 a.m., followed by the speaker at 10:30 a.m.
- April 11 .....**The Friends of Sessions Woods Annual Meeting with a Program on Bats**, starting at 1:00 PM. The Friends of Sessions Woods Annual Meeting at the Sessions Woods Conservation Center is open to all! Learn about Connecticut's bats and white-nose syndrome in a presentation by Wildlife Division staff. White-nose syndrome is a condition in bats associated with the deaths of hundreds of thousands of hibernating bats in the northeastern United States. It was first noticed near Albany, New York, in 2007. Since March 2008, biologists and cavers have documented dead and dying bats at over 25 caves and mines in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. What do we know about white-nose syndrome and how has it affected the bats of Connecticut? **A potluck dessert extravaganza will precede the presentation at 12:30 p.m. Please bring a dessert to share.**

## Hunting Season Dates

Jan. 15-Feb. 10 ..... Special late Canada goose season in the south zone only.

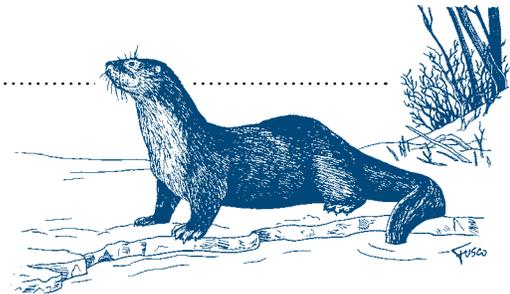
**UPDATE:** Printed versions of the 2010 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide and the 2010 Connecticut Angler's Guide will not be available until April 2010. Information about 2010 seasons and regulations are available on the DEP's Web site ([www.ct.gov/dep/hunting](http://www.ct.gov/dep/hunting) and [www.ct.gov/dep/fishing](http://www.ct.gov/dep/fishing)). The printed versions will be available at more than 350 locations statewide -- including town halls, bait and tackle shops and other vendors selling outdoor equipment, DEP facilities, and commercial marinas and campgrounds. The 2010 guides will have a new and improved look. After making this transition, the DEP plans to return to its traditional publication schedule and have printed copies of the 2011 guides available late next December.

## View Bald Eagles at the Shepaug Observation Area in Southbury

The Shepaug Bald Eagle Observation Area, in Southbury, is open to the public on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM, through March 17, 2010, — strictly by advance reservation. All individuals and groups wishing to visit the site to view eagles must make a reservation for a particular date, as there will be a limited number of visitors allowed per open day. Reservations can be made on Tuesdays through Fridays, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, by calling 1-800-368-8954.

New prices effective  
Jan. 1, 2010

# Connecticut Wildlife



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A flock of wintering Canada geese seen flying at dusk. The geese are starting their descent to an area to spend the evening.