

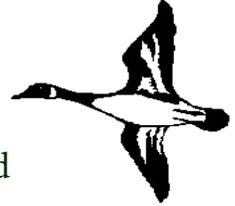


October 2021

Green Mountain Conservation Camp

Doing What Works at GMCC

By Alison Thomas, Education Manager



State authorities, doctors, school officials, and parents were pleading for youth to be outdoors, connect with peers, find mentors, and be immersed in a place of healing from the chaos that 2020 brought. The good news, Green Mountain Conservation Camp (GMCC) has been offering those opportunities since 1966!

Despite the willingness of GMCC staff in Headquarters to make any necessary changes so the program was able to open in 2021, few were needed. The Camp Coordinator, Hannah Phelps, and I spent many hours in meetings with state health officials and camp directors trying to make protocols that would keep camps open and everyone safe. Hannah created an extensive COVID-19 protocol document we thought was necessary for camp to operate. However, in the end, very few changes were implemented, because time spent indoors at GMCC is few and far between. Campers mostly spend their waking hours in fresh air exploring the waters and woods - something they have been doing for over 50 years.

Of all the lessons learned in the past two years, one of the biggest takeaways at GMCC was that we should keep doing exactly what we have been doing all along - connecting youth to nature by being in nature. Thanks to the Wildlife Management Areas each camp is connected to, accessing wild space comes naturally. Added to the great settings is a group of amazing staff, junior counselors, and campers who are immersed in conservation education with their toes firmly planted in the mud.

GMCC by the Numbers: 2021

Total Basic Campers = 528
Total Advanced Campers = 125
Total Hunter Combo Certifications = 523
Trapper Certifications = 53
Waterfowl Certifications = 15
Advanced Backpacking Certifications = 47
Total Sponsored Campers = 172

Work Weekends 2021:

Where staff and volunteers come together to make camp great.

Edward F. Kehoe Updates [May 15-16]

Firewood, wildlife garden weeding, fishing pole repair, painting, and cleaning are always on the to-do list during the Kehoe work weekend. This year also included new benches at the overnight camp site and much-needed repairs to the female staff cabin stairs and door. Despite the long list of tasks, volunteers and staff always have smiles on their faces and are happy to steal time in the evening and early morning to go fishing, birding, turkey hunting, or just take in the gorgeous view of Lake Bomoseen.



Benches at the Kehoe overnight site.



Invasive honeysuckle removal.



Buck Lake Updates [May 22-23]

Yet again, a hardworking group found their way to Buck Lake in rainy May. We managed to accomplish all of the cleaning, painting, and groundwork while sneaking in some time near the fire playing games and chatting in the evening.



The hardworking crew at Buck Lake.



The tired workers taking a break to play games.



Working at GMCC

Are you interested in wildlife conservation, working outdoors, and educating youth? Jumpstart your career in conservation while gaining valuable experience.

Positions include:

- Camp Director
- Assistant Director
- Natural Resources Instructor
- Natural Resources Instructor - Medical Coordinator

Positions are posted in early January.

For details and to apply: vtfishandwildlife.com/about-us/employment

Interviews begin in February, and positions are filled on an ongoing basis.

Questions, contact: Hannah Phelps
Hannah.Phelps@vermont.gov
Camp Coordinator
(802) 249-4199



Having Fun and Being a Kid at GMCC

Everything is fun at GMCC. Hands-on activities are centered on educational topics such as forestry, wildlife biology, aquatic ecology, and more. Focused knowledge and skill development, like hunter education, and soft skill training, like teamwork during canoeing, are all a planned part of the week. The opportunities help campers make wonderful memories of hardwork mixed with a lot of laughter.



The Vermont Bearhound Association not only sponsors many campers, but members of BHA also visit camp with their bearhounds and teach about their value in wildlife management.



Bee house construction as part of a lesson about the value of pollinators during a girls session at Buck Lake.



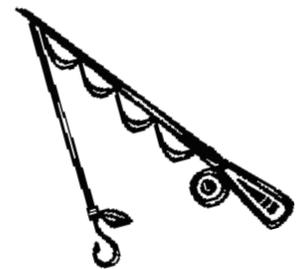
Campers get to seine net fish at Buck Lake during a fisheries biologist visit.

From Novice to Avid Anglers, GMCC Loves Fishing

By Corey Hart, Let's Go Fishing Coordinator

In conversations with parents, I constantly hear GMCC referred to as *Hunter Education Camp* or *Gun Camp*. While it is true and accurate that campers go through a thorough and immersive hunter education program while at camp, there is so much more that the campers do.

In addition to hiking, camping, and canoeing, a portion of the curriculum is focused on the Let's Go Fishing Program. Campers are introduced to a wide range of fishing techniques, and often have the opportunity to catch their first fish while at GMCC! We also find that some kids thrive when they get a chance to make a craft or show their creative side. That becomes evident during the fly tying lessons when kids get so excited about the fly they tied. And, they are even more enthusiastic about going fishing with their new creation. Fishing is also a relaxing activity that allows kids to just cast a line and be calm for a few minutes while chatting with their new camp friends.



Canoe fishing at Buck Lake.

Campers come to GMCC for a wide range of reasons, but regardless of their motivation, there is a portion of the Let's Go Fishing curriculum that will appeal to everyone!

Camp Coordinator Corner

By Hannah Phelps, GMCC Camp Coordinator

The People of GMCC

As we wrap up another year at GMCC, I find myself once again reflecting on what makes this camp so special. For a while, I thought it was the location. The forests of Buck Lake and the meadows of Kehoe have always called to me, as I'm sure they do many others. After spending last summer in those two beautiful places alone, I realized this simply was not the case. We are fortunate enough to hold our program in two exquisite places, but it is not the location that is important. It is the fact that it is a place filled with people. Campers who attend year after year, from different backgrounds and across generations. Staff members who come from across the country during a global pandemic to passionately and eagerly share their skills and knowledge. Junior Counselors, our dedicated high school volunteers, who are willing to give up time at jobs, sports, and other summer activities just to spend a week with us. Wardens, biologists, and foresters who come to share their deep knowledge of natural resources. Together, these people make genuine and lasting connections as they explore the natural world around them. They create a space where teaching and learning happens at every level, whether exploring aquatic ecosystems, shooting a firearm, or being a respectful cabin mate. Together, they make up the GMCC experience and bring the "camp magic." Our camp locations are the perfect environments for hands-on learning and exploration, but they are not what makes GMCC so special. It is the people.



Campers enjoy fireside corn.

New in 2021

We were excited to be able to offer several new experiences for campers this year. Two new classes were added to the schedule, one focusing on the natural history and biology of deer and moose and the other on how climate change is affecting pollinators in Vermont. In addition, Kehoe campers were able to make use of the Bonsawino WMA with a new remote campsite to use during our advanced overnights, while Buck Lake campers took advantage of the trails around the lake for an additional advanced backpacking overnight.

Teen Conservation Weekend

This summer we were able to pilot a new program at GMCC Kehoe! Teen Conservation Weekend was a co-ed program held for teens 15-17 years old. We kicked the weekend off with an advanced map and compass course, and then headed out with all of our gear to a campsite on a remote pond. We spent the rest of the weekend out there, cooking over a fire, frying up bass we caught and filleted ourselves, and learning from Vermont Game Wardens and Biologists. Overall, we had a blast and are very excited to continue offering this opportunity in the future!

Level Up: Attend an Advanced Camp at GMCC

Nicole Meier, Hunter Education Coordinator

It is Friday afternoon at GMCC. The camp is buzzing with excitement as campers, instructors, and parents grab food and recount the week. After a week of swimming, canoeing, hiking, shooting, making new friends, and generally enjoying six days of being a kid playing outside, nearly every camper can be overheard saying “I can’t wait to come again next summer!” Campers are often hooked after that first summer, and we have something special to offer “repeat campers” (campers that come back next year). Once they have attended a basic week, campers can unlock the next level: advanced week. The basic week of camp can be compared to a training ground for advanced week. Instructors lay down the foundation for how camp works, expectations, and general outdoor skills. Once that groundwork is established, campers can return the next summer to be challenged further environmental education courses.

Offerings at advanced week are not only fun, but campers use STEM concepts and apply them to real-world environmental situations. During an advanced week, campers learn about aquatic ecology, habitat restoration (science!), population dynamics (science and math!), how to shoot a bow (engineering and technology!), and LOTS more.

Besides the hard-skills, campers also learn soft-skills that are necessary for success in adulthood: perseverance, humility, focus, and teamwork, which are learned from overnight backpacking, canoeing, fishing, shelter-building, fire-building, and other outdoor skills.

Girls especially benefit from an advanced week at camp. Many lifelong friendships come from a week at GMCC, and girls get the opportunity to see amazing women in leadership roles. It is not often that a girl sees her instructor dig her hands into the mud to talk about soil quality, but it is something memorable for so many young women. In addition, campers get to meet some incredible male role models on staff, who set the example for how women should expect to be treated in the classroom and workplace – both equitably and with respect.

You may ask yourself, “How could this opportunity get any better?” Well, buckle up, because the icing on the cake is that there are still LOTS of scholarships/sponsorships available, meaning an advanced week at camp could be free.

Need more convincing that an advanced week at GMCC is the right choice? Check out this podcast episode and hear from real campers and instructors all about a week at camp:

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/about-us/vermont-fish-wildlife-department-podcast>

Or watch this short video that summarizes a week at camp (it is shot and edited by a junior councilor!): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSLKujBBrw0>



Muzzleloaders



Shotguns



Fire building



Trapping



Shelter building

Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund

Securing camps for future generations.

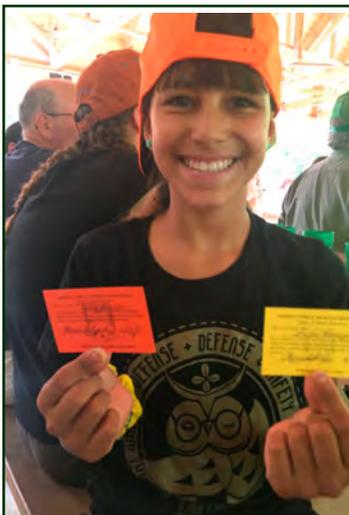


The Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund is a 501 C 3 non-profit that secures funds for existing GMCC programs, provides maintenance and equipment to the camp facilities, and expands educational opportunities.

The fund helps acquire new canoes, lifejackets, aquatic ecology nets, orienteering equipment, and more.

It's purchases like this that make the fund so important.

The Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund Needs Your Support.



A Buck Lake camper proudly shows her hunter education cards.



Songs, dances, stories, and jokes are all a part of campfire connections.

Consider strengthening the fund with your donation.

With your help, we can provide many more generations with the invaluable education offered at Green Mountain Conservation Camps.

Donate today by visiting vtfishandwildlife/donate.com

Attention Educators!

Wildlife Management & Outdoor Education Techniques for Educators One-Week Field Course

Since 1986, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has offered a course that allows educators to go to summer camp, receive professional development, and participate in hands-on learning opportunities about wildlife management. Participants receive 3 graduate-level credits from Castleton University, and earn up to 60 hours of continuing education credits!

This is a one-week course held in mid-July for formal and non-formal educators of all disciplines and grade levels. Educators interested in integrating environmental topics into their curriculum and programs can learn about Vermont's wildlife and fisheries from professional biologists, foresters and educators through hands-on activities.

Contact Ali Thomas, Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov for more information.

For more information: vtfishandwildlife.com > [Learn More](#) > [Conservation Education](#)



New Course Offering!

Educators who have already taken the Wildlife Management course at Buck Lake are eligible to take **PART II** offered at the GMCC: Edward F. Kehoe . This course offers 2 graduate-level credits from Castleton University.



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