



Green Mountain Conservation Camp

50 Years of Exploring Wildlife, Woods, and Water

By Alison Thomas, Education Manager

GMCC's 2016 season has been particularly special for GMCC, as we are celebrating the program's 50th year. The program has experienced big changes over the 50 years since it was first started. Some of these changes include its management transitioning from the wardens in the Law Enforcement Division to the education staff in the Outreach Division, new education centers being built at both sites, shooting range improvements, and the continual revision of our curriculum. These changes make the program remain relevant, fun and safe. However, I think one of the special aspects of this camp program is that it has also remained the same in many, important ways. Historical buildings are maintained, traditions have been kept alive in the woods and around the campfire, and most importantly – the mission of the camp program continues to steer everything we do, and that is to connect youth to Vermont's natural resources.

All GMCC campers experience interdisciplinary education by hiking, camping, canoeing, fishing, and studying firearm and bow safety. They also learn about forestry, botany, and wildlife management from professional scientists. Advanced week campers choose from trapper education or waterfowl natural history and hunting, while they all try muzzleloader, crossbow, and elevated bow hunting techniques. GMCC staff have an advantage when it comes to getting campers excited about learning, because it happens mostly outside in the woods and wetlands, and getting dirty is strongly encouraged. This isn't to say that incredibly valuable educational topics are not being addressed. I'm convinced campers and alumni have such fond memories of their camp experience because, along with campfire songs, cabin games, and new friends, they're being challenged with new ideas, skills, and information. GMCC offers authentic opportunities to demonstrate knowledge about natural resources. This is something campers can be proud of long after their week comes to an end.

This season has been about celebrating 50 years of the dedicated staff, enthusiastic youth, and supportive parents and guardians who have made this program great, and something that has touched the lives of thousands of youth and their families. GMCC staff plan to continue celebrating the importance of being outdoors and breathing fresh air, getting dirt under your fingernails, and experiencing wild Vermont. Vermont's identity is grounded in and defined by its natural places, and by being part of the GMCC program, we're working to ensure that that identity will remain for generations to come.



Green Mountain Conservation Camp Through the Years



1966

Warden Al Blow (left) and Commissioner Edward F. Kehoe (right) were the main initiators of GMCC, and in 1966, Commissioner Kehoe founded GMCC at Lake Bomoseen in Castleton.



1969

Buck Lake camp opens in Derby, VT on Salem Lake. It was moved to Woodbury, VT in the early 1970s where it is still located today on a 395 acre Wildlife Management Area.



1985

The first Wildlife Management for Educators course is held at Buck Lake, and led by Mark Scott, who is now the Wildlife Director. This course has continued for 30 years.



2007

A new Education Center and Dining Hall at Kehoe Camp is built.



2016

A new Education Center and Dining Hall at Buck Lake Camp is built.



For 50 years, GMCC has been connecting youth to natural resources!

Summer 2016 by the Numbers

846 Campers graduated

599 Campers: Hunter Safety Combination Certification

113 Campers: Trapper Certification

134 Campers: Waterfowl Certification



Camp Coordinator

By Caroline Blake, GMCC Camp Coordinator

Another camp season in the books! This year 846 campers walked across the graduation stage to receive their hunter orange hats with the new 50th anniversary logo on it. I could not be more proud to have been a part of this program during such a monumental year.

Along with administrative staff in the Montpelier office, there are eighteen staff members who live at camp with the campers every day. These staff are all college students or college graduates who bring an incredible level of professionalism to this very fun environment. This summer more than fifty percent of our staff hailed from Vermont. Others joined the crew from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Iowa, New York and Connecticut. These individuals dedicated 12 or more weeks of their summer to making this the best experience possible for these campers. The level of enthusiasm, curriculum knowledge, and silliness that they bring to this program is unmatched.



Camp staff worked tirelessly week after week instructing campers about hunter education and how to be good stewards of the land. However, that is not all they did. They also filled in for the role of mom, dad, counselor, friend, gardener, woodsman/woman, maintenance crew, cook, disciplinarian, comedian, and teacher. The list

goes on and on. Each year, staff give valuable feedback about how to continuously improve the program. This feedback allows the education programs staff to create curriculum that can be better used at the camp level the following year. Changes to program this year included revamping our fishing and orienteering curriculum such as a Build a Pond



"I have been with GMCC for 11 years, and it has been the best years of my life. This program changed my life forever. It helped me to realize my dreams of teaching young children about the world around them. There is no other place like it."
 ~ Eileen Lusenskas
 Assistant Director



Activity during our Wetland/Aquatic Ecology class, an Advanced Let's Go Fishing Class, a new fly to tie during Fly Tying, and an updated orienteering course at each camp.

The dedication of the 2016 GMCC staff did not go unnoticed by the Fish & Wildlife Department. During the annual Fish & Wildlife Department Day, camp staff was awarded the "Team Commissioners Award." The award is given to a group of people within the department that are "recognized for their strong commitment to the mission of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department: the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont." This is given out by the Commissioner of the Department every year.

Thanks for playing in the mud, hiking in the heat, dancing around the campfire, and most of all, for instilling an environmental ethic in so many campers.

"Being a part of GMCC has taught me so much about the world I come from and who I am as a person."
 ~ Amanda Preston
 Natural Resources Instructor



Buck Lake Camp Facility Updates

This year has been very busy with updates to the GMCC facilities, as a wide variety of projects were completed. Many of the tasks were done by volunteers during the annual work weekends. Thanks again to all of the hardworking crews!

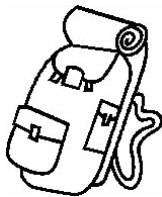
Buck Lake camp said goodbye to the old education room and dining hall this summer. In the nick of time, a new and improved Education Center & Dining Hall was built. The new building is closer to the administrative office, cabins, and waterfront, which drastically reduced walking time and increased activity time this past summer!



New Education Center & Dining Hall



Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Education Center & Dining Hall with Governor Peter Shumlin



New heavy duty stairs were built leading up to the .22 and shotgun ranges by GMCC Endowment Board Co-Chair, Dave Calvi and Junior Counselors Ronan and Mason.



Angela Coco, Kehoe Natural Resources Instructor, Discovers Invasive Clam Species in Lake Bomoseen

Angela Coco, a first-year NRI at Edward F. Kehoe Camp this summer, and native of Pennsylvania, identified an invasive Asian clam species in Lake Bomoseen during an advanced snorkeling class. Staff notified an Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) biologist, who confirmed that the clam, *Corbiula fluminea*, is in fact an invasive species that had not yet been found in the Lake.

Once positively identified, the ANR staff then surveyed the lake to determine the extent of the population, focusing on areas with suitable habitat and likely introduction points.

Edward F. Kehoe Camp Facility Updates

Updates include: a storage structure, composting system, gravel under the lean-to on the archery range, a wildlife garden, remodel of the director's cabin, major plumbing work on the water system, and much more including the donation of a new bench for the wildlife garden.

All of these updates add to the facility in a unique way. The composting system will allow us to now compost everything including meat and bones and have zero food waste from the kitchens. The wildlife garden reduces a large portion of the yard that was previously very difficult to mow, and can now be utilized for botany classes. The director's cabin which was in poor shape before work weekend, was jacked up and leveled out and had new windows, trim, and a floor installed.

We will continue updates to the facility next year and some projects on the agenda include installing the second half of the wildlife garden and completing the aquatic ecology display in the basement.

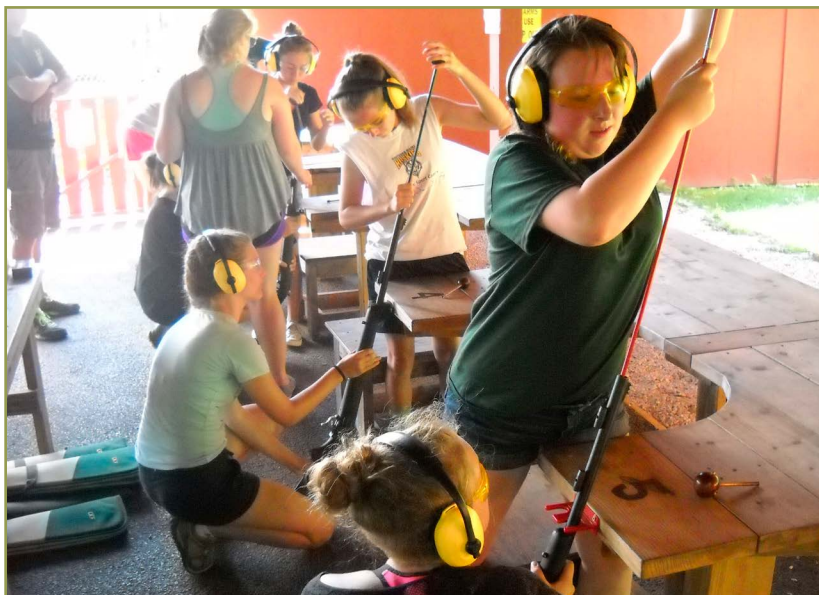


Muzzleloaders and Sleepovers: A Match Made in the Woods

By Nicole Meier, Hunter Education & Special Events Specialist

As another summer comes to a close, we have another opportunity to reflect on the past year. 2016 was a big year for the Fish & Wildlife Department, with lots of milestones hit. The Hunter Education Program has undergone many changes, but it is important to acknowledge how far we have come in such a short amount of time.

In 1949, the first ever hunter education program was established in New York. At that time, Vermont was averaging about 30 hunting related shooting incidents per year. In order to alleviate this, the first instructor training was held in 1960 at the Randolph Fish & Game Club. The class was taught by certified NRA instructors; their students were Vermont game wardens. Upon “graduation,” these wardens were dubbed Vermont Hunter



Advanced week muzzleloaders at Kehoe.

Safety Instructors.

During this time, the Hunter Education Program was part of the Law Enforcement Division. All classes in Vermont were taught by Wardens. This is largely how the model looked for the whole country in the 50s and 60s – law enforcement teaching hunter education courses in addition to their regular enforcement duties. On the heels of the first Vermont Hunter Safety Instructors came the first hunter education law, passed in 1975. This law stated anyone purchasing a hunting license in Vermont for the first time must show proof of completing a hunter safety course. The certifications were a popular part of camps, and in fact the biggest emphasis was on hunting and fishing during the camp week.

Since that time, the Hunter Education Program has been working hard to make sure that

Hunter Education is not a barrier to participation for future hunters, and to make classes more thoughtful and engaging. With this in mind, the Education and Outreach division took over control of the Hunter Education Program in 1985. Adding more information about conservation, teaching students using different and emerging teaching methods, and the creation of Teacher’s Week were huge steps for education. The core emphasis of hunter education was still the same – safety. There is no place where this safety emphasis

is more evident than in the GMCC program.

In 1999 the International Hunter Education Association adopted its first national standards, which included minimum core content in hunter education courses throughout the USA, Canada, Mexico, and abroad. Vermont quickly adopted these standards – most of which were already regular practice during

courses. This standardization process

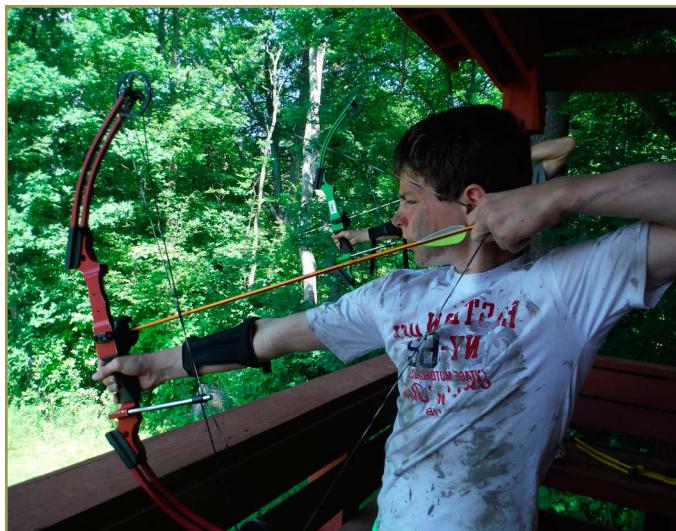
is what makes our hunter education certifications international – many students don’t realize that their hunter education card allows them to hunt in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. What our students learn during their week at GMCC is above and beyond these minimum standards, and allows them the opportunity to visit a variety of locations to hunt. This is especially important for those campers who are not Vermont residents – their hunter/bowhunter certification is good in their home state!

With the standard core curriculum in place, Vermont experienced a 75% reduction in hunting related shooting incidents in 2001 from the high of 30 per year in the 1950s, proving that delivery of effective, standard education programs works to create safe and ethical hunters. 2001 also marked

the bowhunter education mandate, and so in 2001, bowhunter education certification was added to the week at GMCC.

2012 marked the first year that Vermont had ZERO hunting related shooting incidents, and 2014 was the second year with ZERO hunting related shooting incidents. Vermont leads the country with our safety record – zero incidents is not a feat many other states can boast.

Through the years, the Vermont Hunter Education Program has worked to deliver more courses that go above and beyond the traditional hunter education classes, and we bring these courses to camp, as well as take class ideas from GMCC to deliver to the public. GMCC was the first place to see our crossbow training, and then we unleashed it to the public that same summer. Campers love the rush of pulling the trigger on the crossbow, and learn how important it is to remember that the rules of firearm safety also apply to this hunting tool. Many of our trapper education courses are modeled after the lesson plans used at GMCC by the Wardens, who are still involved in our hunter education courses. GMCC is the best place to learn about hunter education because it has the opportunity to be the cutting-edge of our educational programs. The campers have the opportunity to have the most immersive and hands-on experience, in a no-judgment zone that they know is safe, in every sense of the word. Being taught by such a dynamic team of passionate individuals only instills that passion to the students, and has the possibility



A camper takes aim during a bow class.

to open doors to new friendships, experiences, and even wake potential interests that wouldn't have had an opportunity to arise otherwise.

The Hunter Education Program views GMCC as the crown jewel of Hunter Education – the model that all classes should strive to be. The comprehensive view of natural resources is reinforced by their hunter education classes, and the opposite is true. The comradery, experiences, and opportunities that arise are unique to any other program. The campers are the safest, and most motivated hunters in the woods in Vermont. They are the culmination of over 50 years of safety programs, and one day it may be up to them to continue improving on the tradition of safe, effective, and fun hunter education programs.

Attention 2017 Campers

By Jan Flinn, Education Programs Registrar

1. Please bring a completed Medical Certificate to check-in on Sunday. This form will be included in the welcome packet, and should be completed by your child's physician.
2. We will require a copy of the written sponsor agreement to be emailed to the main office before children will be assigned a session. The email address to use will be given once the application has been submitted.
3. Welcome information for all parents and guardians, except for camper doing the Advanced Trapper course, will come in a bright orange business envelope. Trapping students will get a packet that includes a workbook and manual in the mail.
4. A parent/guardian consent form has been added to the application. Parents and guardians now have to sign this form.



Attention Educators

You can become a camper for a week, and learn how to integrate wildlife management education into your classroom while earning 3 graduate level credits through Castleton University. Preservice, non-formal, and pre-kindergarten through grade 12 teachers are invited.

By participating, you receive:

- 3 graduate-level credits from Castleton University
- 45 hours of professional development credits
- Project WILD & Aquatic WILD Certification and Curriculum Resource Guide
- Project Learning Tree Certification and Curriculum Resource Guide
- A week in a fun, remote, rustic setting on a beautiful lake with hiking trails

For the continuing education experience of a lifetime, contact Ali Thomas for details: Alison.Thomas@vermont.gov or call 802.371.9975.

Partially Funded By:



Endowment Fund

A 501(c)(3) Endowment Fund with a mission of providing a perpetual source of income for the environmental education facilities and programs at GMCC.

Membership Benefits:

- Receive GMCC Newsletter
- Receive GMCC email updates
- Invitations to special GMCC and Fish & Wildlife Events
- GMCC Anniversary Sticker

Your support helps provide youth with an educational, fun, and memorable experience discovering Vermont's natural resources.

See the website for details:
www.fishandwildlife.com/
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