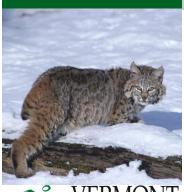
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Vermont Furbearer Management Newsletter







The MISSION of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.

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Reminder to Renew Your

Permanent License

What's New in 2019?

The 2018 legislative session was a busy one, resulting in several new laws and regulations that will go into effect in 2019 and 2020 with the passage of Act 170. Some of the changes could be categorized as "housekeeping" but several others have significant implications to furbearer trappers and hunters. The highlights are summarized below, but the entire bill can be found at the following link: https://

<u>legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2018/Docs/ACTS/ACT170/ACT170%20As%20Enacted.pdf</u>



Kim Royar, Furbearer Management Project Leader

- a) Sec. 10. 10 V.S.A. 4254c was added to read: A person who incidentally traps a dog or cat shall notify a fish and wildlife warden or the Department within 24 hours after discovery of the trapped dog or cat. The Department shall maintain records of all reports of incidentally trapped dogs or cats submitted under this section and the reports shall include disposition of each incidentally trapped dog or cat. (effective July 1, 2018)
- b) Sec. 11. 10 V.S.A. 4828 changed the exemption for people trapping rabbits or furbearing animals in defense of property. Provisions of law and rules still do not apply to landowners, their employee, tenant, or caretaker of the property or to a member of the selectboard of a town. However, effective January 1, 2020, people trapping furbearers for a compensation (money) shall:
 - a. Possess a valid trapping license, and
 - b. Shall follow rules adopted by the board from existing regulations in section 44 that currently apply to license holders trapping in season. Those rules (in summary) are as follows:
 - i. Daily trap check for terrestrial traps,
 - ii. Trap check every 3 days for traps under the ice or water,
 - iii. Traps set on land or in water must be visibly tagged with name and address,
 - iv. Traps with a jaw spread greater than 8" must be set >5 feet above the ground,
 - v. The use of toothed traps and snares are illegal,
 - vi. A person shall not possess a living furbearer (except for dispatch),
 - vii. A person shall not possess fur or skin of a fur-bearing animal unlawfully taken,
 - viii.A person shall not take a fur-bearing animal by use of any poisonous mixture (unless the animal has already been trapped),

Continued on page 5

Annual Trapper Surveys — Lots of Changes!

This past year was the first year that the Annual Trapper Surveys were **mandatory** for all licensed trappers in Vermont. The low number of returned surveys in the past was of critical concern to the Department since the information collected is used to assess the health of furbearer species, evaluate season changes, and identify potential threats to furbearer populations such as habitat loss, climate change, or disease.

We will be collecting information on harvest during the regular season, as well as animals taken in defense of property.

In addition, a new, two-part reporting system is also in place to protect the anonymity of the data you submit. This two-part system allows us to keep track of who has or has not trapped in any given season (**Response Card**) but then separates names from the reported harvest data (**Trapper Activity Report**).

There has been a notable increase in the response rate (thank you!), and most trappers have responded in a timely fashion to both the April and December surveys. As with any new rule, it takes time for word to get around about the change and to iron out all the wrinkles in implementing it. The process will likely evolve over time based on your feedback. This is especially true of the new report

Photo courtesy of Vermont Trappers Association



for trapping for animal damage control. There has been a fair bit of confusion about what it is for and who should respond. See "What to Look For" below for more details.

It goes without saying that we appreciate the time and effort you take to fill out these surveys and return them. You are eyes and ears for each of these species, and your data help us ensure furbearer populations are healthy enough to harvest. As mentioned above, there are many reasons why the data you collect and send to us are

important. It is especially vital to our ability to clearly demonstrate that regulated trapping is not a threat to furbearer populations. THANK YOU!!

Still Have Questions?

As always, the Furbearer Project staff want to make this as easy as possible for you. If you still have questions about what is required, please don't hesitate to contact us. If you have lost your survey, we will be happy to send another, or you can print a copy from our website: https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/691

What to Look For

- In April 2019, we sent out the Annual Trapper Survey for any trapping activities conducted within the regular trapping seasons. If you have not already done so, return the Response Card (half sheet) whether you trapped or not. Return the Trapping Activity Report only if you did trap.
- In **April 2020** look for a combined survey that requests results from both the 2019/2020 trapping season and the 2019 harvest of animals taken out-of-season in defense of property. Please try to maintain accurate records of your harvest. If you would like a free daily log, see page 5.

Monitoring for Canada Lynx in Vermont

Though Vermont is considered on the periphery of suitable habitat for Canada lynx (Lynx canadensis), Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department staff continue to work with partner organizations to monitor and survey the presence of lynx in the state. These efforts include camera and track surveys and reviewing and conducting follow-up investigation of citizen sightings. These sightings are reported through an online form found at the Department's website (https://anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/F urbearerReportingForm.aspx). Since 2014, camera and track surveys have been focused in the Northeast Highland and Southern Green Mountains biophysical regions, but this past winter efforts were expanded to the Northern Green Mountains region where suitable habitat is also available for lynx.

Through the past year, a total of 78 cameras were deployed by VFWD and its partners within the three regions mentioned above. More than 33,000 photos were collected but despite the effort, no lynx detections were made by camera. There have been, however, five sightings confirmed in various parts of the state in the last 18 months. Two of these were confirmed in the Nulhegan Basin area through track identification, one by a VFWD staff member doing field work for the moose project, and one by a US Fish and



Wildlife Service biologist conducting track surveys. A third lynx was captured on a camera placed near a highway bridge in Searsburg as part of a project run by VFWD, VTrans, and the Staying Connected Initiative. The remaining two reports included submissions of credible photos by astute observers — one in Whiting and one in Jericho.

These efforts will continue through 2019 with our partner organizations, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, Weyerhaeuser, Inc., and our newest partner, Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC). CHC is an organization dedicated to forest stewardship and protection of core wildlife habitat and connectivity in the Northern Forest (https://www.coldhollowtocanada.

org/). Department staff will also continue efforts to provide technical assistance and outreach to the wardens, foresters, landowners, trappers, hunters, and general public whose activities may influence the recovery of this species in the state. The more we all understand about the status and distribution of lynx in Vermont and its habitat needs and preferences, the better able we are to move towards the primary goal outlined in the *Recovery Outline for* the Contiguous United States Distinct Population Segment of the Canada *Lynx* (USFWS, March 24, 2000): "...to address threats to the lynx so that protection of this species under the Endangered Species Act is no longer required and delisting is warranted." It's a goal we take very seriously.

Marten Research Continues in Southern Vermont

A research project which began in 2014 continues to confirm the success of the 1989-1991 reintroduction of American marten (Martes americana) into the southern Green Mountains of Vermont. Since the beginning of the study, marten have been detected on cameras in 17 of 45 areas within a narrow portion of the southern Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). In several instances, multiple individuals have been detected in one photo! This exciting discovery supports the presence of a breeding population, a surprising outcome after it was initially thought the reintroduction had failed.

The project, a partnership between VFWD, the US Forest Service, and Central Connecticut State University, will continue to monitor for marten via camera surveys. In the next two winters, some of the areas where marten were originally detected will be resampled. Other areas not previously sampled, but on the edge of known marten habitat, will be included. These efforts will help to refine a camera trap study design for the long-term monitoring of the species. They will also give insight into how the presence of other mesocarnivores (fisher, fox, coyote, bobcat, mink, raccoon) influence the use of an area by marten and help to guide management of furbearers in those areas.

These recently documented, agile forest dwellers of the southern Greens make up the southernmost population of marten in the eastern United States. Marten prefer woodlands composed predominantly of softwoods or mixed woods. They are generally associated with older aged forests having complex physical structure such as downed, dead wood and thick vegetation.

A second objective of this ongoing study is to collect data related to the structure of the forest (species, basal area, number of snags, tree canopy structure, available coarse woody debris) where marten have been detected, and determine how various forest management activities might affect the sustainability of the habitat. This, too, will help guide biologists and land managers as they plan timber harvests and wildlife management improvement activities in areas inhabited by marten.

If you live, work, and/or recreate in the southern GMNF, keep watch for this inquisitive tree climber. For more about marten, visit our website http:// vtfishandwildlife.com/learnmore/vermont-critters/mammals/ american-marten. If you see a marten, you can report it here: https://anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/ FurbearerReportingForm.aspx. Stay tuned for what will undoubtedly be an exciting couple of winters for following the progress of the marten recovery!



COMING SOON: The Trapper's Daily Log

VFWD Furbearer Project staff have developed a Trapper's Daily Log booklet based on a daily log published by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. We hope it will make it easier for you to keep track of the information you need to fill out the Annual Trapper Activity Report at the end of the trapping season.

The Daily Log will be available in September 2019. The booklet

includes trapping season dates for each species; plenty of pages to keep daily records of sets, locations, and fur caught; a place to record expenses and supplies; a season summary page; and landowner permission forms. We have included "Key Messages on Trapping" to help you communicate the role of regulated trapping to those who don't understand it, as well as a guide to recognizing the differences

between bobcat and Canada Lynx. It is easily transported and IT'S FREE!

The Daily Log booklets will be available at all VFWD district offices, at the VTA Trapper Rendezvous, or by request. To request a copy of the Daily Log, contact Mary Beth Adler at (802) 289-0629 or via email at marybeth.adler@vermont.gov.

What's New in 2019? (continued from page 1)

- ix. To possess the pelts of bobcat, fisher, and otter, a trapper must notify the Department within 48 hours and have them tagged;
- x. Any person who incidentally takes a lynx must notify the Department immediately.
- c) Section 14 10 V.S.A. 4716:
 Outlaws coyote-hunting
 competition as defined in 4716
 (a): a contest in which people
 compete in the capturing or
 taking of coyotes for a prize.
 (effective July 1, 2018)

The Department continues to work closely with the Vermont Trappers Association to accomplish our fundamental mission, the maintenance of sustainable furbearer populations for the people of the state, as well as to protect your right to trap.

These are challenging times as we are now facing significant threats including habitat loss, fragmentation, and climate change as well as threats to our rural culture. It is important that we always remember our primary role as conservationists and protectors of the resource. Hunters and trappers have funded and participated in some extraordinarily successful efforts to recover and maintain many of the native species we hunt and trap today. It is also important that the public understands and values that role. We can each play a part in promoting and fostering these deep-seated values in a thoughtful and respectful manner, amongst ourselves and with others who are less familiar with these activities.

Puntuly Royan

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- Lt. Sean Fowler (incoming)
 Game Warden District Chief
 Sean.Fowler@vermont.gov



Furbearer Kits at Vermont State Parks

The Furbearer Education Kits continue to be popular resources for educating campers at Vermont State Parks around the state. There are several kits that leave the district offices at the beginning of the summer to make the rounds at various parks and don't return until Fall. Kids especially love them!

Park staff appreciate being able to offer a hands-on learning experience with a collection of resources that is easy to adapt to a variety of audiences. We at the VFWD Furbearer Management Project are grateful for their efforts. Folks of all ages and backgrounds are being informed

and educated about Vermont's furbearers and their biology, habitats, conservation, and management. It's a terrific partnership!

If you would like to borrow a kit, contact your nearest VFWD District office.



Park Interpreter Christine Paluga shares furs from the kit with Button Bay State Park visitors (left).



VFWD Biologist Noel Dodge uses a beaver skull from the Furbearer Education Kit while he talks about beavers with his son's class at Mountain River School in Stowe, VT (right).

Quote from Furbearer Curriculum Kit Report Card

"I have used this five times now over a nine-year period. All of my students loved the curriculum each time I presented it! Also, Tammy Gratton out of the Essex Office has been great to work with over the years. She's always been very helpful!"

Ross Perry Jeffersonville, VT Junior High/High School Educator June 2018



The Vermont Habitat Stamp

The Vermont Habitat Stamp was first issued by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department in May of 2015 and has already seen tremendous support from the public. The Habitat Stamp is a voluntary donation to habitat conservation in Vermont. The actual 'stamp' comes either printed on the license of hunters and anglers who purchase it, or it comes as a bumper sticker mailed to people who donate online.

The first few years of the Habitat Stamp program have been a success and 2018 was no exception. Thanks to generous donations totaling just over \$110,000 this past year, the Department was able to leverage an additional \$143,000 in federal funds for habitat



conservation. In a little more than three years, donations to the Habitat Stamp have contributed to the direct conservation of 3,200 acres of land, the restoration of streams and rivers, and the removal of dysfunctional dams for fish passage.

In 2019, we're hoping to continue to conserve land along the Northeast Kingdom's Clyde River to create a brand new Wildlife Management Area (WMA), as well as add lands to Lemon Fair WMA in Bridport and Kesick Swamp WMA in Sunderland. We will be celebrating the grand opening of Bonsawinno WMA in Castleton.

To continue protecting Vermont's conservation legacy, donate to the 2019 Vermont Habitat Stamp at wthabitatstamp.com or donate when purchasing a hunting or fishing license by including your contribution when applying.

2018 Habitat Stamp Projects

- Assisting Private Landowners
- Supporting Towns and Communities
- Partnering with Non-Government Organizations
- Removing Obstacles to Fish Passage
- Improving Fish Habitat on Streambank Parcels
- VYCC Tree Planting at Windsor Grasslands WMA
- Public Boardwalk Completed at Moose Bog for Wildlife Viewing
- Steam Mill Brook WMA Expanded by 225 Acres

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Trappers, hunters, game wardens, biologists, seasonal staff, education specialists, support staff, and volunteers for your help in the management and conservation of Vermont's furbearers



Enhanced Rabies Surveillance Initiative Freg Pogmore, Wildlife Biologist, WS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (WS) program in Vermont has been involved in research to look at new baits for the Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORV) since 2012. These new baits have shown great potential and led to the implementation of an Enhanced Rabies Surveillance initiative (ERS) in 2016. ERS is a cooperative effort between WS, state and federal trappers, and the public. These partners help monitor the distribution of rabies in Vermont by donating samples to be submitted for testing, and providing the WS program valuable information that is then incorporated in its management decisions.

The objective is to increase our surveillance effort by collecting and testing more raccoons, skunks, and foxes annually. These mesocarnivores are of particular interest to WS because they are common rabies vectors in Vermont. In 2018, WS collected and submitted 831 samples to the VT Department of Health Laboratory for ERS, 339 of which came from nuisance wildlife trappers. A total of 24 animals tested positive for rabies statewide, 12.5% of which originated from cooperative trappers. An additional 58 tularemia samples were also collected from these specimens. Tularemia is a disease caused by the bacterium Francisella

tularensis which is generally spread to humans by handling infected sick/dead animals or by the bite of infected ticks or tabanid flies. Given these statistics, cooperation from trappers has proven to be a very effective method of collecting disease samples from across the landscape in Vermont. WS wants to encourage trappers who legally harvest animals to help monitor wildlife disease and prevalence throughout Vermont by providing samples to be tested for rabies and other diseases.

WS is looking to continue collecting non-exposure target specimens only from the specified areas outlined on the map below, including: 1) strange acting animals that have been euthanized; 2) animals that were found dead; 3) road kills within 20 miles of the Canadian border; and 4) nuisance animals trapped and euthanized. If you'd like to participate by assisting WS with this effort, please contact WS at 1-802-223-8697 or 1-800-4RABIES.

2019 ERS Focus Areas Highest Priority 2nd Priority VTTown Boundary Lake Champlain

What Do We Do with All Those Carcasses You

Many of you may wonder whether the requirement to turn in fisher, otter, and bobcat carcasses is worth the hassle. The original impetus behind the regulation was to allow us to collect sex, age, distribution, and nutritional plane data on these species to better monitor their health and sustainability on the Vermont landscape...and for the last 40 years we have been annually collecting that valuable information from almost every carcass you submit. In fact, Vermont has the longest running, uninterrupted collection of biological data in the east and possibly the nation. But that's not all.

Every year as researchers, geneticists, and disease specialists have become aware of the potential to access these specimens, we have partnered with many of them to drill into some of the more vexing issues of the day. Below are some examples of the types of studies that have been done to help ensure the future of these important species:

2002

- The University of Vermont (UVM), in cooperation with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept. (VFW), conducted a genetics study on bobcats in VT.
- UVM utilized fisher carcasses to conduct a genetics analysis of the reintroduced population.
- 20 otter samples were sent to Maine for mercury testing.

2009

• Green Mountain College (GMC) students collected tissue from fisher carcasses to conduct a genetic analysis of population structure and determine the infection rate of canine parvo virus on the fisher population (see research poster on pg. 10).

2012

- Johnson State College students collected samples of fecal material from the large intestines of otter, fisher, and bobcat to research the sources of the bacteria E. coli.
- GMC students attended 4
 necropsy sessions to continue
 efforts from 2009 and to
 investigate the presence of
 methyl mercury and mercury
 toxicity in VT's otter population.

2013

- Cooperation with GMC continues.
- St. Michael's College (SMC)
 professor conducted research to
 determine immune genetic
 variation in VT's population of
 eastern bobcats from almost 100
 samples from bobcats provided
 by trappers.

2014

b Bobcat tissue samples were sent to NH for a cooperative project led by the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and the NH Fish & Game Dept. to both evaluate possible movement corridors for bobcats while examining their distribution and abundance in NH.



- UNH graduate student sampled bobcats harvested in VT to evaluate the dietary patterns and stress levels of the population in response to urban development.
- A UVM graduate student examined genetic markers in martens from southern and northern populations to determine the source of the two VT populations.

2017

 Wildlife Services (WS) collected samples from fisher and bobcat to test for rabies within the bait drop zone in northern VT.

2018

 WS continued to sample for rabies.

2019

- WS continued to sample for rabies.
- SMC professor collected samples from VT bobcats to continue his research on immune genetic variation.
- A Tufts University student collected fisher samples to assess the level of rodenticides.
- VFD cooperated with the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Lab to test organ samples from 40 fisher carcasses to assess the level, if any, of canine distemper.

What do we do with all those carcasses you submit? (continued from page 9)

How Disease Effects Management Plans /ermont Fisher Populations:

could drastically impact carnivore populations. Currently there is no formal that wild carnivore populations are being found with emerging diseases. Spe ially effect the overall health of the population, is often not considered, due nanagement plan. The rise of newly emerging diseases which could potento the difficulty of evaluating total animal health. Current evidence suggest cifically in this study, fisher (Martes penanti) are being infected with an unidentified variant of Canine Parvovirus (CPV). The overall health implications of this virus are extreme and in many cases result in mortality, which bstract: There are many considertions when formulating a conservation due to loss of habitat from farming and logging, and long and ex ishers (Martes penanti) were once almost extinct from Vermon

management plan for fisher in Vermont.



thereby restore a balance which, since broken, has permitted ab normal development of porcupine populations." (Vermont Fish

isher were then live trapped from surrounding states (New

managers felt that they needed the fisher back in the ecosystem 1958 the Pest Control Division of the Department of Forests and coming diseases being found in the fisher population

ds through the feces of the host animal, and can be ob-

By 1974 the intorduction of fishers was deemed a success

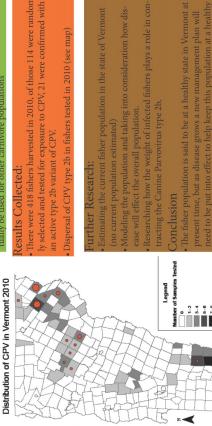
towns between 1959 and 1967.

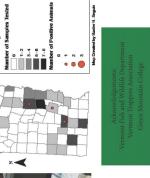


















 Hoelzer, K. and C. R. Parrish. 2010. The emergence of parvoviruses of • Vermont Fish and Wildife (2001). Fisher Martes pennati Vermont Wildlife Fact Sheet.



























Do Fox Play a Role in Controlling Lyme Disease?

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board was petitioned last year to stop the harvest of red and gray fox due to recent research that suggested a link between fox populations and the spread of Lyme disease. In response, the Department collaborated with the Vermont Department of Health and conducted an in-depth review of the literature to assess the situation in Vermont. In summary, while the Department continues to promote healthy predator populations and recognizes the important role they play in nature, we did not conclude that the current level of

harvest is influencing red and gray fox population numbers enough to have an effect on the spread of Lyme disease. Rather, as outlined in the report below, there are other more important factors that we believe have influenced the spread of Lyme disease. For a full copy of the report go to: https:// vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/ fishandwildlife/files/documents/ Vermont%20Fish%20and% 20Wildlife%20Board% 20Meeting%20Documents/Foxand-Lyme-Disease-VT-Fish-and-Wildlife.pdf



VFWD Furbearer Project on the Road

Look for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Furbearer Project Display and staff at the following events:

- → Herrick's Cove Wildlife Festival
 Sunday, May 3, 2020
 Rockingham, VT
- Southern Vermont Wildlife
 Festival
 Sunday, September 22, 2019
 Dover, VT
- Dead Creek Wildlife Days
 Saturday, October 5, 2019
 Dead Creek WMA
 Addison, VT

Lt. David Gregory is Retiring!

The furbearer project wants to thank Warden David Gregory for his many years of service to furbearer management and conservation. In his role as the Law Enforcement representative on the furbearer team, Warden Gregory has provided thoughtful input laced, more often than not, with clever asides and dry (or sometimes biting (2) humor. Dave's expertise and quick wit have added so much to the project, and it would be almost impossible to fill his shoes, if his replacement wasn't Warden Sean Fowler. We will very sorely miss Dave and wish him the very best in his retirement. We look forward to working with Warden Fowler.





Fish & Wildlife Department

Vermont Furbearer Management Newsletter

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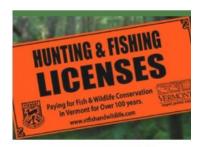


Your purchase of hunting and fishing licenses as well as equipment supports
Fish and Wildlife Restoration.

Reminder to Renew Your Permanent License

If you are a permanent or lifetime license holder, please take a minute to "renew" your license each year to help us refine our mailing lists. Doing so is not only easy and free, but it saves us valuable time and money and helps to ensure that no one gets left out of our surveys and mailings. Licenses can be renewed online at our website or in person at your nearest licensing agent or any VFWD District Office (Note: A license agent may charge you up to \$1.50 for reprinting your license). To renew online, visit our website at www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

Click on the "Hunt" tab and then the "Buy Your License" photo at the top. Look for the green "Update Your License" button and then follow the instructions from there.



ONLINE

UPDATE YOUR PERMANENT LICENSE

Buy a License