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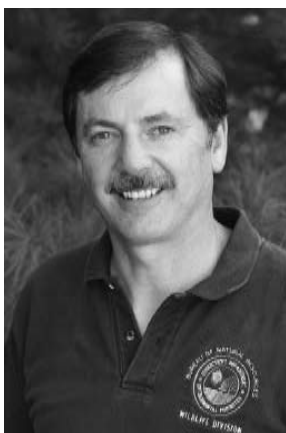
# Connecticut Wildlife

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



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# From the Director



State and federal endangered species laws were enacted in the latter half of the twentieth century to sustain the existence of plant and animal species in danger of extinction. The concept sounds relatively simple – identify the threats, develop conservation actions to reverse them, and implement recovery plans until the species' existence is secure. However, for most listed species, the road to recovery is fraught with ecological, financial, practical, sociological, and political challenges. Successes, when they occur, are often the result of decades of work by state and federal biologists, conservation organizations, and landowners supported by the general public. Successes, when they occur, should be celebrated.

Therefore, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) announcement on June 28, 2007, that officially removed the bald eagle from the federal Endangered Species List, must be considered a monumental achievement for the entire country. After all, this is our nation's symbol. Bald eagles in the continental United States had declined to an all-time low of 417 breeding pairs by 1963. Due to the protections of the federal Endangered Species Act (which was enacted in 1973), along with research, management, habitat protection, and environmental cleanup, there are nearly 10,000 pairs of eagles in the lower 48 states today. As USFWS Director Dale Hall noted, "It's fitting that our national symbol has also become a symbol of great things that happen through cooperative conservation."

The bald eagle is expanding its numbers in Connecticut, and this year 10 pairs produced 16 young. However, bald eagles are still classified as a state endangered species under Connecticut's Endangered Species Act. Furthermore, two federal laws, the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act (1940) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918) will ensure that eagles retain protection into the future.

The biggest threat to eagles in Connecticut is human disturbance at nesting sites. The public needs to understand and respect the fact that eagles are sensitive to human disturbance and that such disturbance may prevent eagles from attending their eggs and young. Repeated disturbance will cause eagles to abandon a nest site entirely. Keeping this sensitivity in mind, future generations of Connecticut residents will have the opportunity to be inspired by the spectacle of this majestic bird gracing our skies.

Dale W. May

## Cover:

The establishment of nest boxes helped Connecticut's bluebird population make a remarkable recovery. Dave Rosgen, of the White Memorial Conservation Center, has spent more than 20 years monitoring hundreds of bluebird boxes. See the article on page 4 to learn more.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

# Connecticut Wildlife

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# Moose-Vehicle Accidents in CT Expected To Increase

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program

In the 1990s, Massachusetts' moose population began expanding southward, resulting in the establishment of a resident moose population in Connecticut. Currently, Connecticut's moose population is estimated at about 100 animals.

Moose are large, majestic animals that can weigh up to 1,200 pounds. Seeing a moose wading through a wetland can be an enjoyable experience, but hitting a moose with a vehicle can be a life-threatening experience.

Once moose became established in Connecticut in the early 1990s, it didn't take long before the first moose/vehicle accident was documented in 1995. Over the past 12 years, 17 moose/vehicle accidents have been reported on Connecticut roadways. The majority of accidents

have occurred in northern portions of the state where moose populations are well established (see map). Between 1995 and 2006, Connecticut experienced an average of one moose/vehicle accident per year. During the first six months of 2007, a record high of four moose/vehicle collisions already has been reported. These four moose were struck and killed by vehicles in Cornwall, Barkhamsted, Thompson, and New Canaan.

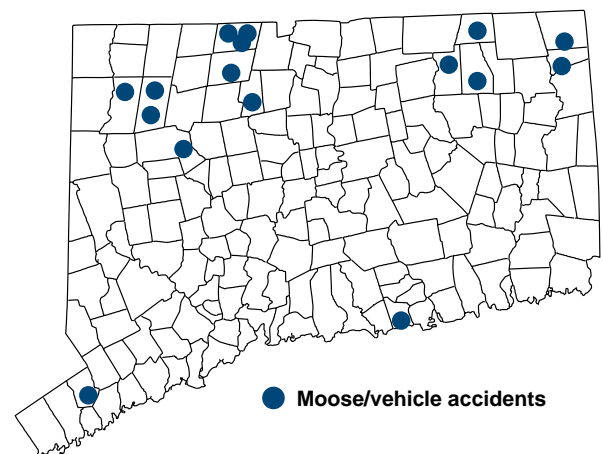
The most recent moose/vehicle accident occurred on the Merritt Parkway in New Canaan on June 5 during rush-hour traffic. As reports were received of a moose moving southward from Watertown, Southbury, and into Easton over a two-day period (10 miles per day), the DEP activated its moose response team to attempt to tranquilize and relocate the wandering moose before it posed a public safety hazard. On June 5, DEP staff followed up on reports of moose sightings in Norwalk, Darien, Stamford, and New Canaan, looking for an op-

portunity to tranquilize the wandering moose. Search efforts were terminated when DEP Law Enforcement received a report that the moose had been hit by a vehicle on the Merritt Parkway in New Canaan. The driver of the vehicle received serious head injuries and the injured moose was euthanized. Portions of the moose that were salvageable were donated to food charities through the Hunters for the Hungry Program.

As Connecticut's moose population continues to grow, the risk of hitting a moose on Connecticut roadways is expected to increase. Although it is difficult to predict where moose will be traveling, whenever the DEP is aware that a moose may be a potential threat near highways and other well traveled roads, local police departments and the

news media will be contacted to help spread the word and efforts will be made to relocate any moose that pose a public safety hazard. Motorists should always exercise caution, especially when driving at night.

## Location of reported moose/vehicle accidents in Connecticut, 1995-June 2007.



A moose was hit by a vehicle on the Merritt Parkway in Canaan during rush hour traffic in early June. It was so severely injured that it had to be euthanized. The vehicle was totaled and the driver was seriously injured. Because moose are tall and large, impact with a car usually occurs at the windshield or roof, as demonstrated by the photograph. This type of impact can cause serious or fatal injuries to the occupants of the vehicle.

A. LABONTE

# On the Trail of Bluebirds

Written by Kathy Herz, Editor

In the early 1980s, avid birder and biologist David Rosgen was working for the National Audubon Society in Sharon. One of his responsibilities was to monitor bluebird nest boxes that had been installed on the Audubon property. When checking the boxes he was shocked at how many of the bluebird nests were destroyed by predators. He made a vow, right then and there, that he would find a better way of managing bluebirds so that predation would not decimate their numbers.

That was the beginning of the Connecticut Bluebird Restoration Project (CBRP), a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration, conservation, and management of native cavity-nesting birds. Founded in 1984, the CBRP was initially created to help the eastern bluebird, which had been on a long-term decline since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One significant contributing factor to the bluebird population decline was the lack of natural nesting cavities due to changing land use patterns and increasing urbanization. Competition for nesting cavities from non-native house sparrows, the loss of open field habitats, use of pesticides, and severe weather conditions also played a role in the decline of bluebird populations.

Dave Rosgen, currently a wildlife biologist/research direc-



Dave Rosgen, wildlife biologist/research director for White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield, has been actively involved with the restoration and management of eastern bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds for the past 23 years.

## Participate in the Wildlife Division's Bluebird Restoration Project

In 1980, the DEP Wildlife Division created the Bluebird Restoration and Wood Distribution Project in an effort to help increase the population of eastern bluebirds in Connecticut. In addition to developing a variety of informational materials about bluebirds, the Division has provided educational groups and community service organizations with directions, plans, materials, and assistance in constructing and installing nest boxes every year since then. The Division also asks participants to fill out and submit Bluebird Nest Box Survey Cards every nesting season. Although the successful comeback of the bluebird in Connecticut cannot be attributed to this project alone, the construction and placement of thousands of nest boxes through this effort have no doubt contributed to the recovery of this popular species.

To learn how your group or organization can participate in this worthwhile project, contact the Division's Sessions Woods office at (860) 675-8130 during business hours.

tor for the White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield, has been working diligently for the past 23 years on behalf of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds. Through his efforts, and with the help of other dedicated volunteers, the CBRP has monitored up to 2,500 nest boxes a year and is presently managing about 700-800. Dave visits a lot of these boxes on his own in late winter before the birds return to Connecticut to breed and at least every two weeks throughout the nesting season. Armed with a cordless drill and a notebook, Dave visits locations throughout the state and walks the "bluebird trails." Each box that is visited is marked with its own serial number to aid in data collection. Winter visits involve cleaning out old nesting material and checking for needed



This bluebird nest box at White Memorial Conservation Center is home to five bluebird chicks. Their progress was being monitored by bluebird advocate Dave Rosgen.



Dave Rosgen carefully checks the status of a bluebird nest at White Memorial Conservation Center. It is important to monitor the box and maintain it without causing too much disturbance to the nesting birds and their young.

repairs (rotting wood, loose screws, leaks). During the nesting season, Dave uses the drill to remove screws from the front of each nest box so that the front panel can be opened and he can look inside. Sometimes there is a house sparrow nest in a box, which Dave will promptly remove to discourage the sparrows from nesting so that bluebirds will hopefully move in and take over the box. (It is not illegal to remove/destroy house sparrow nests because house sparrows are not native and are considered to be invasive.) If bluebirds or tree swallows have built a nest or laid eggs, Dave records it in his notebook so that he can return again to check the box around the time the eggs have hatched. If there are young chicks in the boxes when he returns, Dave records how many eggs have hatched and if moisture and/or blowflies are affecting the chicks. He also tries to check the boxes around the time of fledging and will clean out the nesting material once the young have left the box. Data collected include species usage, number of nesting attempts, successes, failures, and number of young fledged. Whenever possible, the causes of failures are documented. The data are analyzed to determine population and distribution trends, and to improve future management.

According to Dave, this process of nest box monitoring evolved slowly over time to become the present standardized system. Mistakes were made along the way, but many lessons were learned and corrections were made. Nest box designs have been modified to help keep predators and house sparrows out and to make monitoring easier. It was discovered that white pine and white spruce are the best wood to use for constructing boxes because they hold up better under the elements. Screws have replaced nails in the construction as well. During box checks, loose screws can be tightened and the screws are easier to remove and replace when opening the boxes. Although weather is a factor that cannot be controlled, boxes that are constructed with wider tops and caulking along the seams can protect the birds from getting wet and/or chilled. In the past, nest boxes were often attached to trees. Experience has shown that boxes should **never be mounted on trees** but instead on seven to eight-foot, heavy duty, metal garden stakes that are sunk two to three feet in the ground for stability. Predator

guards are a must. A piece of PVC pipe (4" in diameter and 3'4" long) should be placed on the stake and a wire mesh screen should cap the top of the pipe. Dave often coats the pipe lightly with axle grease to discourage climbing predators (however, grease is not recommended when the boxes may be used by house wrens, chickadees, and titmice because they may attempt to walk along the predator guards).

When it comes to habitat, it's been determined that bluebirds will use nest boxes that are placed in open habitat (approximately one-half acre or greater in size) and at least 25 feet from any wooded or shrubby edge. The boxes must also be about 22 feet apart to reduce competition between the birds using the boxes. Tree swallows will often nest in a box that is adjacent to one occupied by bluebirds.

With all of his experience building and maintaining nest boxes, Dave feels most strongly that the boxes must be built, installed, and managed properly. Poorly constructed boxes, a lack of predator guards, and boxes placed in poor habitat do more harm than good for cavity-nesting birds. Many of the birds using these boxes end up being killed or having their nests raided by predators. Raccoons are the major culprit, but snakes, mice, weasels, chipmunks, squirrels, and domestic cats do their share as well. In recent years, bears have even been responsible for destroying bluebird boxes. In Dave's experience, he first came across a box raided by a bear in 1989 at Barkhamsted Reservoir. From then until 1999, at least one box was raided every year in either Hartland, Barkhamsted, or New Hartford. However, as the bear population has grown and expanded, the number of nest boxes raided has ranged between two and seven from 2000 to 2006.

In the big picture, though, predation is only one of several threats faced by cavity-nesting birds. Competition from aggressive house sparrows that take over nest boxes and drive out nesting bluebirds is a major threat. The best defense is to make sure the entrance hole to nest boxes is one-and-a-half inches in diameter and to diligently and immediately remove house spar-

*continued on page 19*



A large supply of nest box pieces are kept at the workshop at White Memorial Conservation Center. Dave Rosgen uses these pieces to repair weathered or broken nest boxes that are out in the field.

# Surveillance of Migratory Birds for Avian Influenza Continues

Written by Min T. Huang, Migratory Gamebird Program

In 2006, the DEP Wildlife Division, along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services and the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Diagnostic Laboratory, began targeted surveillance for the detection of avian influenza, specifically the Asian H5N1 strain (see the July/August 2006 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife* for background information).

Surveillance in Connecticut was conducted through various different avenues: live sampling, hunter harvested sampling, morbidity and mortality event sampling, and environmental sampling. The Wildlife Division concentrated on live sampling. The goal was to collect at least 800 cloacal swabs from resident Canada geese, mallards, greater scaup, long-tailed ducks, Atlantic brant, semi-palmated sandpipers, least sandpipers, dunlin, sanderlings, and black-bellied plovers. Birds were captured using mist nets, baited swim-in traps, and rocket nets. Once captured, each bird was banded, and measurements and a cloacal swab sample were taken. The samples were submitted within 48 hours to the UConn Lab.

Resident geese were captured in July, shorebirds from July through October, mallards in September, and Atlantic brant in December, January, and February. The primary emphasis was on shorebirds. Very little is known about the prevalence of infection or the likelihood of virus shedding in this suite of birds. Additionally, very little banding of shorebirds has historically occurred in Connecticut. On the flip side, researchers wanted to constrain their sampling of resident geese because there was a slight likelihood of infection detection, due to the time of sampling (July). Mallards are known to be good carriers of avian influenza, and researchers wanted to concentrate on young-of-the-year because the literature indicated that they were the most susceptible age group. Atlantic brant breed in the high Arctic in close proximity to other species that come from Europe and



**The primary emphasis for the surveillance of avian influenza (the Asian H5N1 strain) is on shorebirds. Very little is known about the prevalence of infection or the likelihood of virus shedding in this suite of birds. Additionally, very little banding of shorebirds has historically occurred in Connecticut.**

were a high priority for sampling.

To fully involve the public in reporting suspicious die-offs or sick birds, an online reporting system was developed that was linked to the statewide flu website with the assistance of the Department of Information Technology. Public reports of mortality events were monitored for any potential avian flu events.

A total of 812 cloacal samples were submitted to the UConn Lab. No samples came back positive for Asian H5N1; however, four mallards did test positive for a different strain of avian influenza. This strain of avian influenza poses no threat to humans, nor to the birds. USDA Wildlife Services submitted another 450 samples from live-captured and hunter harvested birds and also collected 1,000 environmental samples, consisting of fecal samples. None of these samples tested positive for Asian H5N1.

Nationwide, 143,133 samples were tested. These samples, similar to those from Connecticut, consisted of a mix of samples from live birds, hunter harvested birds, reported mortality events, and environmental samples. During the 2006

sampling effort, no Asian H5N1 was detected in North America.

The nationwide sampling efforts provided information about the virus and what species are most vulnerable to it. This information is guiding how the national surveillance effort for 2007 should be designed. For starters, The virus itself has a low prevalence outside of Asia and parts of Europe. Research conducted in 2006 in North America provided insight as to which species and at what times of year efforts should be focused. Existing data indicate that for live bird surveillance, young-of-the-year puddle ducks (mallard, teal, pintail) should be targeted in fall and early winter because that is the time when birds, if carrying the virus, will show exposure. In general, puddle ducks are not negatively affected by the virus, and, thus if infected, show no outward signs of illness. These birds, however, actively shed the virus.

For the surveillance of mortality events, smaller scale events, particularly of swans, wood ducks, and white-fronted geese, need to be actively looked for. Part of the surveillance for this com-

ing year will involve active searches for mortality events in specific locations. Scientists working on the virulence of Asian H5N1 have come to the following conclusions: the virus does pose a significant risk to commercial poultry

operations, but it does not pose a significant risk to human health nor to the population viability of migratory birds. In Connecticut, researchers will continue to conduct surveillance for Asian H5N1. Plans have been developed in coopera-

tion with various federal agencies. Work for the 2007 sampling period is expected to begin sometime in July. Stay tuned to *Connecticut Wildlife* to keep informed about the research and results.

## Breeding Waterfowl Survey: Wood & Black Duck Counts Increase

Written by Kelly Kubik, Migratory Gamebird Program

Staff from the DEP Wildlife Division completed the annual spring breeding waterfowl plot surveys in April. Each state in the Atlantic Flyway from Virginia north to New Hampshire participates. In Connecticut, this ground survey targets 56 randomly selected one-kilometer square plots of varying habitat types. The information derived from this survey provides part of the data that is used in the Eastern Mallard Adaptive Harvest Management models, which help determine waterfowl hunting season lengths and bag limits each year in the Atlantic Flyway.

Habitat conditions during the survey and for the breeding period were variable. Heavy rainfall during early spring helped to recharge the water table of many of the state's water bodies. Prior to the rain, water levels of some wetlands located in northeastern and northwestern Connecticut were very low or completely dry. The heavy rainfall, however, did result in moderate to severe flooding along the coast and major rivers. In addition, there has been some wetland loss on some survey plots due to the breaching of beaver dams.

Mallards continue to dominate the survey in Connecticut. The mallard estimate for 2007 was 16,716 pairs. This is a six percent decrease from 2006 and slightly below the five-year average. Mallards are very adaptable birds that will regularly nest in urban, suburban, and rural landscapes.

For the first time since 1996, the estimated number of breeding wood ducks was higher than the estimate of Canada goose pairs. The wood duck estimate for 2007 was 11,038 pairs. This is a 37% increase from the previous year and almost double the five-year average. Substantial rains prior to the survey helped to create ideal wood duck habitat by inundating forested habitats in some areas.

### Connecticut Breeding Waterfowl Survey Results for Major Species

| Species      | 2007   | 2006   | Five-year Average |
|--------------|--------|--------|-------------------|
| Black Duck   | 870    | 253    | 220               |
| Canada Goose | 8,855  | 10,982 | 11,248            |
| Mallard      | 16,716 | 17,716 | 17,129            |
| Wood Duck    | 11,038 | 6,924  | 5,999             |

The Canada goose estimate for this year was 8,855 pairs. This is a 19% decrease from 2006 and a 21% decrease from the five-year average. Resident Canada goose hunting seasons are having an impact on local populations in areas where hunters have access to the birds.

This is the first year since 2001 where black ducks have been observed in inland plots. The breeding black duck estimate was 870 pairs, an increase of almost 400% from the five-year average. The large variation in black duck breeding pair estimates is likely attributed to ever changing habitat conditions and particularly the secretive nature of this species. In inland areas, black ducks prefer forested wetlands, where detectability by surveyors is difficult.

As has been the case in previous years, common and hooded mergansers were also detected during this year's survey. These cavity-nesting species continue to expand their breeding range and numbers in Connecticut. Hooded mergansers will readily use wood duck boxes for nesting.

### Mute Swan Breeding Survey

To better document the inland proliferation of mute swans in Connecticut, a separate breeding survey was initiated in 2004. The entire coastline and a random sample (41) of the one-km<sup>2</sup> inland plots are surveyed during the mute swan breeding survey. A fixed-wing aircraft is used to survey the coastline, major rivers, and large inland water bodies, while a helicopter is used to survey the remaining areas.

During the 2007 survey, 172 breeding mute swan pairs were detected; 45 pairs were observed in inland plots and 127 pairs were observed in coastal areas. Thirteen percent of the swan pairs counted along the coastline were actively nesting, while 76% of the pairs at inland areas were seen on nests. Widespread flooding caused by heavy rains in March and April probably resulted in delayed nesting or failure for coastal swans. Inland water levels were relatively stable during this time, resulting in a larger percentage of nests not being inundated with water. The mute swan population has stabilized along the coast but continues to expand into freshwater areas where these birds will compete for resources with native waterfowl.



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For the first time since 1996, the estimated number of breeding wood ducks was higher than the estimate of Canada goose pairs.

# Fairfield County Communities Take Action to Manage Deer

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer Management Program (Excerpt from *Managing Urban Deer in Connecticut*)

Fairfield County has the highest deer densities and greater number of reported deer-vehicle collisions than any other county in Connecticut. High deer densities have been closely associated with abundant tick populations and high incidences of tick-related diseases. Expanding deer populations and associated concerns relating to deer overabundance in Fairfield County have prompted local officials to take action.

Unlike 20 years ago, many towns in Fairfield County now have either appointed deer committees, become active in the Fairfield County Deer Management Alliance, or implemented deer management programs.

The following case studies illustrate efforts by some communities to safely and effectively reduce deer populations within their community.

**Darien:** A Deer Management Committee was formed in 1997. In March 2005, the committee presented a deer management plan to the Board of Selectmen to allow hunting on Sellecks Woods (28 acres), owned by the town, and on Dunlap Woods (22 acres), owned by the Darien Land Trust. Liability issues surrounding the hunt prevented hunting at Dunlap Woods and delayed hunting at Sellecks Woods until mid-December 2005. In 2006, the second hunt at Sellecks Woods ran for eight days and was expanded to include land owned by the Darien Land Trust. Efforts are expected to continue in 2007.

**New Canaan:** A deer committee was appointed in 1998 to collect information on deer and evaluate all possible deer management options. The committee recommended that bowhunting be used to reduce the deer herd. The town allocated funds to conduct surveys of the deer population and of residents' opinions about deer. The town also hired a deer manager to contact all homeowners who owned at least six acres to encourage them to allow bowhunting. A sportsmen's group assisted the community by making hunters available to landowners interested in reducing the deer population in their area. During the first two years of the program, the number of deer removed by hunting tripled.

**Redding:** In 2005, a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission prepared a report that examined the

effects of deer on forest ecology. In October 2005, the Redding Conservation Commission voted unanimously to allow controlled hunting on town-owned land (about 1,000 acres) to protect and preserve the land from the effects of deer overabundance. Limited bowhunting was allowed on some town-owned properties in 2005 and efforts were expanded in 2006. In 2006, bowhunters removed about 100 deer on town-managed properties. Redding appointed a deer warden and assistant deer warden to oversee deer reduction efforts. Bowhunting on private property has been the primary means of reducing deer numbers. Owners of larger properties have been encouraged to allow hunting on their land. Controlled hunts are being planned over the next five years on large parcels of open space throughout town to achieve deer densities of 10 deer per square mile, reduce the prevalence of ticks and Lyme disease, and allow vegetation to recover.

**Ridgefield:** The Ridgefield Deer Committee was established in 2004 to determine the extent of deer overpopulation in the town and assess how the problem should be addressed. In 2005, the committee voted to approve a report containing many recommendations, including controlled hunting on town-owned property, and a five-member deer management committee was appointed to implement the recommendations. In 2006, Ridgefield residents voted in support (73%) of modifying the local ordinance to allow hunting on town-owned land. That same year, the town implemented its first hunt and removed 25 deer in an area just less than one-half square mile. This was equivalent to removing deer at a rate of 50 deer/square mile. The deer management committee is considering expanding efforts in 2007.

**Wilton:** A deer committee was assembled in 2001 to research perceived problems associated with deer. The committee sponsored public meetings, conducted a town-wide survey of residents, and created a newsletter dedicated to deer issues. In 2002, the first controlled deer hunt administered by Wilton was conducted on water company land within the town, and the committee sent a letter to large landowners encouraging them to allow hunting. In 2004, Wilton initiated the formation of the Fairfield County

*Controlled deer hunting programs are designed specifically for communities to reduce deer populations while addressing safety concerns of residents.*

Municipal Deer Management Alliance and added a second year of controlled hunting. In 2005, the town changed an ordinance that previously prohibited hunting on town-owned properties to allow hunting for the purpose of reducing nuisance wildlife that threatens public health and safety or threatens the town's natural resources. The town initiated its first hunt on town-owned open space in 2005 and added a second town-owned property in 2006. The Wilton Land Conservation Trust also has authorized hunting on one of its parcels.

The Fairfield County Municipal Deer Management Alliance has been addressing deer overabundance issues on a regional scale since it was formed in 2004 by representatives from 10 towns in southwestern Connecticut (New Canaan, Ridgefield, Wilton, Redding, Greenwich, Norwalk, Darien, Westport, Weston, Stamford). Bethel and Danbury joined the Alliance soon after, and more recently Easton, Fairfield, and Bridgeport became members. The mission of the group is to "protect our people and our environment from problems caused by excess deer in our area by fostering a cooperative approach to effective deer management." This includes research, legislation, inter-town coordination, and public education. The Alliance has grown to include 15 of the 23 Fairfield County towns since its establishment.

Liberalization in state hunting regulations in Fairfield County, along with efforts by local communities to address issues of deer overabundance have collectively helped reduce deer population growth in this region of the state.

**The Wildlife Division recently completed the second edition of *Managing Urban Deer in Connecticut – A Guide for Residents and Communities*. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Wildlife Division's Franklin office at 860-642-7239 or by email ([howard.kilpatrick@po.state.ct.us](mailto:howard.kilpatrick@po.state.ct.us)).**



# Chick from CT's Only Cliffside Peregrine Falcon Nest Banded

Written by Kathy Herz, Editor

The Wildlife Division and numerous volunteers have been busy this past season, keeping a close watch on several bald eagle and peregrine falcon nests around the state. Although populations of both of these species are increasing nationwide, the birds are still listed as endangered species in Connecticut. Because of their status, Wildlife Division biologists make an effort every year to visit bald eagle and peregrine nests and place identifying leg bands on the chicks before they fledge.

Reaching these nests can be a dangerous job, but that doesn't seem to bother Wildlife Division technician Geoffrey Krukar. Whether climbing tall trees or rappelling down a steep cliff, Geoff takes the necessary precautions and seems to enjoy this part of his job.

On a recent visit to a peregrine falcon nest, Geoff donned his climbing gear to rappel down the side of a cliff to reach a nest containing one chick. Volunteer Stephen Broker, of Cheshire, has been monitoring this nest location for the past eight years, keeping track of the pair's nesting success. He has noted that success has been limited mostly by weather conditions. The nest location makes it vulnerable to extreme weather changes during the nesting season. This year was no exception as a severe storm in April and cooler temperatures probably took their toll. According to Steve's observations, the nest originally contained four eggs. However, one egg disappeared and one didn't hatch. The other two eggs hatched, but only one chick survived. This was the chick that Geoff placed in a canvas bag when he reached the nest. The bag was carefully raised to the top of the cliff where Wildlife Division biologist Julie Victoria and others were waiting.

The chick appeared healthy and was determined to be a female. Julie placed a black and green band with a number/letter combination on the chick's left leg and a silver U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) band on the right leg. The two-colored leg band aids in the



P. J. FUSCO (2)

(Above) Wildlife Division biologist Julie Victoria (right) places leg bands on a peregrine falcon chick with the assistance of Kathy Herz (editor of *Connecticut Wildlife*) and volunteer Stephen Broker, who has been monitoring the nest every day since late February of this year.

(Below) This young peregrine chick was banded for identification and safely returned to its nest on a cliff. There had been four eggs in the nest, but only one chick survived.

identification of the individual bird with binoculars or a spotting scope. The silver band has a unique number that is recorded at the USFWS banding lab. According to Julie, there is about a one percent return on bands. However, the colored bands have been helpful in identifying nesting peregrines at locations that are closely monitored.

Once the chick was banded, it was safely lowered back to Geoff who was still hanging by ropes near the nest. He placed the chick in the nest and then climbed back to the top of the cliff. During this whole operation, both adult peregrines circled overhead, making warning calls. However, they quickly returned to the nest once the coast was clear. All in a day's work when it comes to monitoring Connecticut's nesting peregrine falcons



and bald eagles. Julie and Geoff still had other nests to visit this season. Stay tuned to *Connecticut Wildlife* to find out how many eagle and peregrine chicks successfully fledged in 2007.

## Update on Bald Eagle Nests

At publication time, Wildlife Division biologists were still in the process of banding eagle chicks before they fledge. This year, 15 bald eagle pairs set up territories. Ten of those pairs produced 16 young, one pair was territorial, and four pairs lost their eggs or chicks during the nesting season, probably due to stormy weather. Stay tuned to the next issue of *Connecticut Wildlife* to find out how many eagle chicks fledged from nests in our state.

# A Connecticut Favorite - The Killdeer

Article and photography by Paul Fusco, Wildlife Outreach Unit

Anyone who has spent time at local ballfields, parks, or farm fields has probably encountered the killdeer, a robin-sized member of the plover family. Its loud, noisy call sounds like *kill-deer, kill-deer, kill-deer*, as the bird makes its presence known. Vocalizations also include an upward slurring *deeah, deeah*, and a long, trilling *trrrrrrrrrrr*.

The basic coloration of the killdeer is dark brown above and white below. At close range, a thin red eye ring can be seen. Distinctive markings on the killdeer include two black breast bands and a buffy, golden rump. In flight, a white wing stripe and longish tail are prominent.

## Plover Family

Killdeer are members of the plover family, of which five members can be found in Connecticut. Two of those species, the piping plover and killdeer, breed here.

All plovers have short, pigeon-like bills that are narrow, with a slightly swollen appearance at the tip. Their eyes appear relatively large and they have thick necks. Plovers have long, pointed wings and short tails. The killdeer is the exception, as its tail is slightly longer than the other plovers. It is a strong, fast flier.

The smaller plovers, including the piping plover, have a single breast band,

while the slightly larger killdeer has two. It is thought that the double band helps the bigger killdeer blend into its surroundings by breaking up its profile more effectively than a single band would.

## Open Habitat

Killdeer are fairly common in Connecticut and can be found in most good sized, open habitats. Those habitats include parks, airports, farm fields, shorelines, large lawn areas, gravel lots, and any large area that has short vegetative cover or is semi-barren. The killdeer's territory frequently has a water source nearby, although this bird may also be found in dry uplands.

In many locations, killdeer are adapting well to people and are often found in close proximity to human activity.



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**Killdeer chicks are able to walk and feed on their own within hours of hatching from the egg. At this stage, they look like little cotton balls with legs. It will take almost four weeks until they are able to fly.**

At least in Connecticut, they seem to be well associated with some type of human altered or maintained open habitat. Killdeer often have a high tolerance for people, even during the nesting season, making them highly visible and favorites among wildlife watchers.

## Nesting / Distraction Display

Choosing a patch of bare ground or gravel, killdeer will scrape a depression to create their nest. Like all plovers, they

normally lay four eggs in a clutch. Their eggs are spotted and blotched with brown, gray, and black, cryptically blending into the ground. After an incubation period of approximately 24 days, the fluffy chicks hatch. They are precocial, meaning they are fully capable of standing and, shortly thereafter, of running and feeding on their own. They will stay close to the adult female while feeding and will frequently come back to her so that she can brood them. The chicks will huddle under the adult's wings to keep their little bodies warm at night and at times during the day.

When a potential threat



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**Like other members of the plover family, killdeer nest on the ground and rely on distraction displays to protect their nest and young from potential predators and other threats. By flapping their wings and spreading their tail feathers while they seemingly flop on the ground as if injured, a killdeer will get the attention of the predator and lead it away from the nest or chicks.**

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As their scientific name (*Charadrius vociferus*) implies, killdeer are highly vocal birds. They are named for their loud, ringing call of *kill-deer*, *kill-deer*, which they use to claim territories, as well as to alarm other birds of potential danger.

gets too close to a killdeer's nest or young, the bird will do a "broken wing" distraction display to lure the threat away from its eggs or chicks. The killdeer will first attract attention by vocalizing, then by flopping around on the ground, feigning injury. By moving in a direction away from the nest or young, the killdeer draws the threat away from its nest. Killdeer can be quite bold and aggressive while protecting their nest. They have been known to fly into the faces of livestock in pastures to keep the livestock from trampling eggs.

### **Feeding Behavior**

Similar to a robin, killdeer have a distinctive "run-stop" behavior pattern while foraging. They will run a short distance, then stop suddenly to pluck food items from the ground. Their food consists of worms, beetles, grubs, grasshoppers, caterpillars, flies, spiders, ticks, and various other invertebrates.

### **Migration / Range**

Killdeer have a widespread range, which extends throughout the United

States, most of Canada, and south into Mexico. Northern birds migrate for the winter. Outside of the breeding season, killdeer may be seen in small flocks.

One of our earliest arriving migrants in spring, killdeer have a fair tolerance for cold. The earliest arrivals usually show up in coastal areas in late February or early March, where they make use of ice-free areas, such as seeps and snowmelt, where they can probe the ground to feed on worms and insects. In milder winters, a few very hardy individuals may overwinter in Connecticut, again usually on the shoreline.

### **Conservation**

While killdeer are fairly common throughout their range, their population does get impacted by the loss of open



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Being an early migrant, killdeer can be found in coastal areas in late February and early March, often before the winter snow and ice have had a chance to completely melt.

habitat, including farmland. In areas with a shortage of habitat, killdeer may nest on gravel rooftops in industrial and retail areas. They seem to do well in close proximity to people as long as they have room to meet their basic requirements for food and raising their young.

# Bald Eagle Soars Off Federal Endangered Species List

It's official! After nearly disappearing from most of the United States, the bald eagle is now flourishing and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has declared that it no longer needs the protection of the federal Endangered Species Act. The nation's symbol has recovered from an all-time low of 417 nesting pairs in 1963 to an estimated high of 9,789 breeding pairs today, and will be removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

To ensure that eagles continue to thrive, the USFWS will work with state wildlife agencies to monitor eagles for at least five years. If it appears that bald eagles again need the protection of the Endangered Species Act, the USFWS can propose to relist the species. The USFWS is also making the draft post-delisting monitoring plan available and is soliciting public comment for 90 days.

The bald eagle first gained federal protection in 1940, under what was later named the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The law curbed illegal hunting and shooting of eagles for their feathers, but they soon fell victim to another threat: organochlorine pesticides. The widespread use of these pesticides after World War II caused eagle populations to plummet towards extinction. When the pesticides washed off into waterways, they were absorbed by aquatic plants and animals. When eagles ate contaminated fish, they would then be poisoned. Organochlorine pesticides prevented the proper formulation of calcium necessary to produce strong eggshells. Consequently, the thinned eggshells cracked when an adult bird tried to incubate them. Widespread reproductive failure and a precipitous decline in numbers followed. As a result, the bald eagle was protected in 1967 under the precursor to the Endangered Species Act. The eagle continued to be protected when the Endangered Species Act of 1973 was enacted.



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**Due to the remarkable recovery of the nation's bald eagle population, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has removed the bald eagle from the federal endangered species list. However, because of a slower recovery in Connecticut, the eagle will remain a state endangered species.**

The legal protections provided by these statutes, along with a decision by the Environmental Protection Agency to ban the use of one of the most infamous organochlorine pesticides, DDT, in 1972, provided the springboard for the USFWS and its state, federal, and private partners to accelerate recovery through captive breeding programs, reintroductions, law enforcement efforts, protection of habitat around nest sites, and land purchase and preservation activities.

The bald eagle will continue to be protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which prohibit "taking" -- killing, selling, or otherwise harming eagles, their nests or eggs. In June, the USFWS clarified its regulations implementing the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and published a set of National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. These measures are designed to give landowners and others clear guidance on how to ensure that actions they take on their property are consistent with the laws currently protecting the bald eagle.

More information about the bald eagle and the post-delisting monitoring

plan is available on the USFWS's bald eagle website at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/baldeagle.htm>.

## ***Bald Eagle Still a State Endangered Species in Connecticut***

**While Connecticut did not participate in any bald eagle reintroduction programs, the state benefited from efforts in neighboring states. In 1992, after more than 40 years of absence in Connecticut, a bald eagle pair successfully nested on private water company land in Litchfield County, producing two chicks. Leg bands revealed that the nesting pair of eagles came from a reintroduction project in Massachusetts sponsored by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Five years later, a second pair of bald eagles successfully nested in Connecticut. This year, 15 pairs of eagles were territorial and 10 pairs have produced young.**

**Although the number of nesting pairs has increased over the past 15 years, the recovery of Connecticut's eagle population has been slow compared to other regions in the nation. Therefore, the bald eagle still satisfies the criteria for state listing and will remain a Connecticut endangered species.**

# Ticks Can Transmit More than Just Lyme Disease

If you read the May/June 2007 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*, you would have learned about Lyme disease: what it is, how it is transmitted, the symptoms, and how to protect yourself. Lyme disease is a concern for those who spend time outdoors in areas where black-legged ticks (also known as deer ticks) are prevalent. It is important to check yourself for ticks and to know the symptoms of the disease. It also is important to know that the deer tick can transmit other disease organisms in addition to the one that causes Lyme disease, most notably human ehrlichiosis and human babesiosis. Both of these diseases are not as common as Lyme disease, but they cause serious complications in some cases.

## Human Ehrlichiosis

Ehrlichiosis is a disease of both animals and humans caused by several bacteria in the genus *Ehrlichia* and *Anaplasma*. Two main forms of ehrlichiosis in humans are currently recognized in the United States: human monocytic ehrlichiosis (HME), caused by *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*, and human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE), caused by *Anaplasma phagocytophila*.

HME was first described in the mid-1980s. The lone star tick is the vector for the bacteria that causes HME. White-tailed deer, a major host for this tick, is a reservoir host for the bacteria. Lone star ticks are uncommon in Connecticut. People living mainly in coastal communities in Fairfield and New Haven Counties are occasionally bitten by these ticks.

HGE was first reported from Wisconsin and Minnesota in 1994. Most cases of HGE have been reported from states where Lyme disease is highly endemic (such as Connecticut). The black-legged (deer) tick is the principal vector in the northeastern and upper midwestern states. White-footed mice, and possibly deer, are reservoirs for the bacteria. Most cases of HGE and HME occur during the summer in May, June, and July.

The symptoms of ehrlichiosis may resemble symptoms of various other

infectious and non-infectious diseases. Nonspecific signs and symptoms generally include fever, headache, fatigue, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, joint pains, confusion, and occasionally rash. Symptoms typically appear after an incubation period of five to 10 days following the tick bite. It is possible that many individuals who become infected with ehrlichiosis do not become ill or they develop only very mild symptoms. However, fatalities do occur and treatment with antibiotics (Doxycycline) should be started promptly. Although all age groups may be affected, the number of cases increases with age.

A diagnosis of ehrlichiosis is based on a combination of clinical signs and symptoms and laboratory tests, including low white blood cell count, low platelet count, and elevated liver enzymes. Both HGE and HME have been reportable diseases in Connecticut since 1995. Coinfections by the HGE and Lyme disease agents have been reported and may result in more severe cases and complicate the diagnosis of Lyme disease.

## Human Babesiosis

Babesiosis is a rare, severe, and sometimes fatal tick-borne disease caused by various types of *Babesia*, a microscopic parasite that infects red blood cells. The protozoan is spread principally by the bite of the black-legged (deer) tick. White-footed mice carry this parasite. The majority of human cases occur in June, July, and August. The first Connecticut case of human babesiosis was reported from Stonington in 1988.

Laboratory diagnosis is based on identifying the parasite in red blood cells. Signs and symptoms include fever, fatigue, chills, sweats, headache, and muscle pain, beginning usually one to six weeks after the tick bite. It can take from one to 12 months for the first symptoms to appear, but less time for persons with weakened immune systems. Infections can occur without producing symptoms or only mild symptoms in healthy children and adults, although all ages can

be severely affected. Babesiosis can be severe or fatal in immunocompromised individuals, the elderly, and people without spleens. Death has been reported in five percent of the cases. Co-infection with the agents of ehrlichiosis or Lyme disease can result in more severe or prolonged illness and overlapping symptoms.

Complications include very low blood pressure, liver problems, severe hemolytic anemia (a breakdown of red blood cells), and kidney failure. Complications and death are most common in persons whose spleens have been removed. Other people usually have a milder illness and often get better on their own. Standardized treatments for babesiosis have not been developed. However, some drugs used in the treatment of malaria have been found to be effective in some patients.

## Protecting Yourself from Tick Diseases

There are several precautions you can take to reduce the likelihood of being bitten by a deer tick. Refer to the informative article in the May/June 2007 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*. You can also contact the following organizations or agencies to learn more about ehrlichiosis, babesiosis, Lyme disease, and tick prevention:

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, 123 Huntington St., P.O. Box 1106, New Haven, CT 06504; 203-974-8500 [www.ct.gov/caes](http://www.ct.gov/caes) (new website address);

Connecticut Department of Public Health, 410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-0308; 860-509-7994; [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us);

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1600 Clifton Rd. NE, Atlanta, GA, 30333; 404-639-1075; [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov);

New York State Department of Health, [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us).

**Information for this article was obtained from the sources listed above.**

## “Connecticut Butterfly Atlas” Available

The newly published *Connecticut Butterfly Atlas* includes species accounts for all of Connecticut’s 117 butterfly species, along with maps that illustrate historic and recent distributions and colorful photographs of butterflies and caterpillars. It also provides information on life cycles, host plants, butterfly conservation projects, and a list of butterfly viewing “hot spots” in Connecticut. It can be ordered from the DEP Store by mail (79 Elm St., Hartford, 06016), fax (860-424-4088), phone (860-424-3555), or on the website ([www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep)). Orders must be accompanied by payment (\$19.95 plus 6% tax and shipping).

## Islands Closed During Heron and Egret Nesting Season

Charles Island in Milford and Duck Island in Westbrook were closed to the public starting May 20, 2007, and will remain closed until September 10, 2007, to prevent disturbances to nesting snowy egrets and great egrets (both state threatened species), glossy ibis, and little blue herons (state special concern). Disturbances can result in abandonment of nests and possibly of the entire nesting colony. Examples of disturbances include illegal camp-outs and bonfires, unleashed dogs roaming the island, and human visitors entering the fenced nesting areas.

Over the last several years, the DEP has worked cooperatively with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the nesting colonies (also known as rookeries). The rookeries are fenced and educational signs have been erected at access points used by the public to inform them about these rare, sensitive birds and why they should not be disturbed.

Signs stating the closure of Charles and Duck Islands are posted and DEP Environmental Conservation Police Officers will be patrolling the islands, particularly on weekends and after dark. Anyone caught trespassing on the islands will be arrested. Landing of watercraft on the beaches is prohibited. The public can help protect the nesting birds by following the closure and reporting any observed violations to 1-800-842-4357.



**Wildlife Diversity Unit biologist Jenny Dickson (left) and Master Wildlife Conservationist Susan Gray install a bird nesting area sign at Charles Island in Milford.**

P. J. FUSCO



## Step Up to the Plate for Wildlife...

... and show your support by displaying a wildlife license plate on your vehicle

There are two great designs to choose from: the state-endangered bald eagle or the secretive bobcat.

Funds raised from sales and renewals of the plates will be used for wildlife research and management projects; the acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and management of wildlife habitat; and public outreach that promotes the conservation of Connecticut's wildlife diversity.

Application forms are available at DEP and Department of Motor Vehicle offices and online at [www.ct.gov/dmv](http://www.ct.gov/dmv).

*Report bear sightings to the Wildlife Division and learn more about Connecticut's black bears at:*

[www.ct.gov/dep/blackbear](http://www.ct.gov/dep/blackbear)

## Where Are the Weasels?

Short-tailed and long-tailed weasels are frequently observed in Connecticut, however their status requires further investigation. This year, DEP Wildlife Division staff is conducting a statewide survey of these species. This project will investigate appropriate field handling techniques, distribution, and habitat associations of both weasel species in Connecticut. If you see weasels, either alive or road-killed, please contact Wildlife Division technician Christina Kocer at 860-675-8130 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM-4:30 PM).

## Friends of Sessions Woods Receives a GreenCircle Award

On June 5, 2007, the Friends of Sessions Woods was presented with a GreenCircle Award by DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy at a ceremony held at Dinosaur State Park. The DEP established the GreenCircle Award program to recognize businesses, institutions, individuals, and civic organizations who have participated in activities or projects that promote natural resource conservation or environmental awareness. Friends of Sessions Woods (FOSW) was established as an all volunteer organization in 1998. FOSW is affiliated with the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area located in Burlington. Members work closely with the Division to facilitate projects and programs that are designed to enhance the value of Sessions Woods as a resource for education, research, and the enjoyment of nature. Projects have included the funding of exhibits, taxidermy, and educational equipment for the Sessions Woods facility, and the development of a hands-on classroom located in the Education Center and an outdoor pavilion to be used as both a picnic area and shelter for outdoor instruction. Each year, the FOSW hosts public events at Sessions Woods to promote use of the facility and to increase knowledge about Connecticut's wildlife and its management. Accepting the award for the FOSW were founding president Clark Spencer, former secretary Cheryl Spencer, and current president Paul Willis.



**FOSW founding president Clark Spencer (left), former secretary Cheryl Spencer, and current president Paul Willis accept a GreenCircle Award from DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy.**

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## ***40th Sharon Audubon Festival: August 10-12***

The theme of this year's Sharon Audubon Festival is "Migrating to a Greener Future," a call to action in response to the need for all of us to help reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions for the benefit of birds and other wildlife. The event will begin on the evening of Friday, August 10, with a special keynote address from a prominent conservationist who has made a significant contribution to the field of conservation (final plans are in progress). Saturday, August 11, and Sunday, August 12, will be full of programs, activities, and exhibits designed to get families excited about nature and the invaluable natural heritage in Northwest Connecticut. In conjunction with the theme, there will be a Green Living Expo with exhibits, vendors, and speakers exemplifying renewable energy technology, environmentally friendly products, "green" vehicles, and more. There also will be programs on a myriad of topics from wildflowers to amphibians and trees to fish, as well as programs designed for adults and children alike. There will be a wildlife art show, vendors and crafters, live animals, free flying falcons, music, story-telling, and much more. DEP Wildlife Division staff and Master Wildlife Conservationists will be participating in the festival, manning an exhibit and conducting presentations.

For more information about the 40th Anniversary of the Sharon Audubon Festival, visit [www.sharon.audubon.org](http://www.sharon.audubon.org) or call the Sharon Audubon Center at 860-364-0520.

## ***Grant Proposals Being Accepted for the WCS Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund***

The Wildlife Conservation Society's North America Program is accepting proposals for the second round of grants through its Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund. This \$3.3 million grant program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, is a valuable source of funding for 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations seeking to help implement specific actions in the state wildlife action plans. Two million dollars is available in this round for projects ranging from on-the-ground action plan implementation to communications and policy. Grants over \$1.3 million were awarded in 2006.

Pre-proposal applications are due August 2, 2007. To learn more about this important funding opportunity, visit the Wildlife Conservation Society's website at [www.wcs.org/wildlifeopportunity](http://www.wcs.org/wildlifeopportunity). Questions may also be directed to Wildlife Conservation Society Program Officer Darren Long at 406-556-7203 or [dlong@wcs.org](mailto:dlong@wcs.org).

## ***Remote Camera Allows Biologists to See What Really Happens at a Bear Trap!***

Part of the DEP Wildlife Division's bear research has relied on monitoring reproduction and movements of radio-collared black bear sows. Sows' radio collars, which have limited battery life, are often checked and changed in winter when the bears are drugged during den inspections. Each winter some sows are not handled, particularly those that don't settle into a den. At times, biologists have attempted to use live traps to recapture sows that need their collar changed.

In May and June of this year, a bear trap was set up in an area that had been used by a sow with a collar that was emitting a weak signal. A trail camera was deployed at the site, first to verify that the sow was present, but later to photograph activity at the trap site. The camera revealed more animal activity at the trap than ever would be detected by personnel visiting the trap once or twice per day.

The first photos of the sow showed her accompanied by yearlings. As May turned to June and the onset of the breeding season, the yearlings (nearly one-and-a-half years old) were no longer photographed with her. Photos now showed the sow accompanied by single, larger male bears. Over a two-week period, six different male bears were caught in the trap. One of these was the largest that Division biologists had ever handled, weighing an estimated 480 pounds (see photo above). A seventh male, which had been caught and ear-tagged in 2006, was photographed at the trap site but never trapped. Perhaps it remembered being previously trapped and avoided the trap? The black bear is not the only large mammal with an increasing population in Connecticut. Moose numbers are also growing. The trail camera caught the image of a young bull strolling past the trap. The sow that was the original target of the trap was eventually captured and outfitted with a new collar.

## ***Walks and Talks at DEP's Kellogg Environmental Center***

Come to the DEP's Kellogg Environmental Education Center for interesting environmental weekend programs. Programs are free (unless otherwise noted), open to the public, and geared towards families with children. Registration is required, except for bird walks. To find out about programs and events, call (203) 734-2513 or go to [www.ct.gov/dep/education](http://www.ct.gov/dep/education). The Kellogg Environmental Center is located at 500 Hawthorne Avenue in Derby (directions are available on the DEP website).



**Captured by a remote camera as it investigates a bear trap, this young moose was an unexpected find.**



**Wildlife Division technician Jason Hawley is seen with an immobilized black bear caught in a trap this past spring. This large male bear weighed in at an estimated 480 pounds, which is unusually large for Connecticut. Images of this bear were also captured on a remote camera installed at the trap site.**

# CT's CE/FS Program Celebrates Its Silver Anniversary

David R. Kubas, Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Program

In March 2007, Connecticut's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS) Program honored its volunteer safety instructors at the Annual Awards and Recognition Dinner. This year's event marked the 25th anniversary of the CE/FS Program. It's especially notable that this silver anniversary marked a year of zero hunting accidents.

Since the program's inception in 1982, 114,443 students have graduated from one of the three programs: firearms, bowhunting, and trapping. The 330 volunteer instructors honored at this event donated 11,980 hours during 2006 to conduct 147 courses for 3,598 students.

At the dinner, two instructors also were recognized from each of the firearms, bowhunting, and trapping programs who have made exceptional contributions during the past year. Awards for firearms hunting were presented to Emmett Lyman and David Paulus. Bowhunting awards were given to John Fountain and Mark Hall. Trapping awards were given to Robert Kukuck and Jules Perreault. The prestigious "Award of Merit" was given again to instructors Lawrence King and Francis Wasylink for their outstanding efforts in teaching classes and their participation in other activities directly related to the CE/FS Program.

The Coordinator's Award was presented to Instructors Blair Albrecht and John (Jay) Swan. They were chosen by CE/FS Program Coordinator David Kubas in recognition of their individual long-standing and unique contributions to hunter education. In addition, Junior Assistant Beth Irwin was recognized for her outstanding enthusiasm for the sport of hunting and her contribution of 37 hours to the firearms and bowhunting programs. She is the daughter of Instructor Tim Irwin and his wife, Connie, of East Hartland.



Award recipients at the 25th Annual CE/FS Recognition Dinner: (front row, l to r) Mark Clavette (CE/FS Program Administrator), H. Baxter, R. Kukuck, F. Wasylink, B. Albrecht, B. Irwin, David Kubas (CE/FS Program Coordinator); (second row) N. Delmonico, R. Jackson, R. Boucher, J. Wessell, J. Holmes, E. Lyman; (third row) R. Potter, B. Pard, D. Proulx, D. Paulus; (fourth row) L. King, E. Dudek, K. Crepeau, S. Bonardi; (last row) B. Johnson, J. Eber, J. Swan, J. Urgitis.

Special recognition for their contributions and support to the CE/FS Program also was given to the Hall's Arrow in Manchester, the Brooklyn Trading Post and Academy, and the Wolcott Landowners Protective Association. The Connecticut Waterfowlers Association (CWA) received the award given to organizations for their support of the CE/FS Program and sportsmen development. CWA was commended for its waterfowl conservation efforts and its focus on youth waterfowl hunting. CE/FS Instructor Dave Proulx accepted the award as president of CWA.

For the first time, a new award recognizing the efforts of an entire teaching team was given to two teaching groups. The plaques listing all members were given to the New Haven Raccoon Club and the Quaker Hill Rod and Gun Club teams. These two teams donated a combined total of 1,828 hours of in-

structional time in 2006. The New Haven Raccoon Club team consists of Sam Bonardi, Ken Crepeau, Ed Dudek, Mark Fowler, David Paulus, Larry King, and Frank Wasylink. The Quaker Hill Rod and Gun Club team is made up of Henri Baxter, John Holmes, Ralph Jackson, Emmett Lyman, Robert Partington, Jeff Urgitis, and Joseph Wessell.

As always, the DEP Wildlife Division is proud of the 330 instructors who donate their time and expertise to educating Connecticut's citizens to be safe and responsible hunters. Zero hunting accidents is an impossible record to beat, but the goal for the next 25 years is that this enormous achievement be matched many times over again. Connecticut's hunter education program continues to be one of the best in the nation, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the volunteers.

*Don't wait until the last minute! Sign up for a Conservation Education/Firearms Safety course today. Check the DEP website ([www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep)) for class times and locations.*



## National Hunting and Fishing Day Launches Yearlong Learning Campaign

A 2006 public opinion survey commissioned by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) showed that a majority of Americans agree that hunters are among the world's leading conservationists. A new campaign is helping to reinforce that image to build even stronger public support for both hunting and fishing. The campaign, launched by the national coordinators of National Hunting and Fishing Day, is a 12-part series of colorful, copyright-free "Wildlife Portraits."

Each portrait includes artist drawings of wild species with facts about their natural habits, habitats, and histories. A longer narrative also supplements each piece of artwork. The theme illustrates how wildlife today depends on conservation funding from hunters and anglers. The first five portraits -- featuring the elk, bison, wild turkey, wood duck, and smallmouth bass -- are available for downloading at [www.nhfd.org](http://www.nhfd.org).

Upcoming works will highlight pronghorn antelope, redbird, white-tailed deer, and other species that flourish today because of conservation funding and leadership from hunters and anglers. The portraits are suitable as posters or handouts for teachers, business owners, and youth leaders, but use by the media is also a major goal of the campaign.

"Portraits are already appearing in several newspapers around the country, and others have committed to running the entire series later in the year. We're pleased that the message of National Hunting and Fishing Day is being carried more often in more places," said Denise Wagner, a spokesperson for Wonders of Wildlife museum in Springfield, Missouri. Wonders of Wildlife is the official home of National Hunting and Fishing Day, set for September 22, 2007. Comedian Jeff Foxworthy is the celebration's honorary chairman for 2007.

National Hunting and Fishing Day was founded and fostered by NSSF. Since 1971, the day has been called the most effective grassroots campaign ever undertaken to promote traditional outdoor sports and conservation.

### 70 Years of Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration

The Wildlife Division receives the majority of its funding through federal grants. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program has been particularly important. This program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for fish and wildlife management and research, habitat acquisition, and sportsmen education programs.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, popularly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act, was approved by Congress 70 years ago on September 2, 1937, and began functioning July 1, 1938. The purpose of this Act was to provide funding to state fish and wildlife agencies for the restoration, conservation, management, and enhancement of wild birds and mammals, and the provision for public use of and benefits from these natural resources. The Act was amended October 23, 1970, to include funding for hunter training programs and the development, operation, and maintenance of public target ranges.

Funds are derived from an 11% federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and a 10% tax on handguns. These funds are collected from the manufacturers by the Department of the Treasury and are apportioned each year to the states and territorial areas (except Puerto Rico) by the U. S. Department of the Interior on the basis of formulas set forth in the Act. Appropriate state agencies are the only entities eligible to receive grant funds. Funds for hunter education and target ranges are derived from one-half of the tax on handguns and archery equipment.

Each state's apportionment is determined by a formula which considers the total area of the state and the number of licensed hunters in the state. The program is a cost-reimbursement program. State fish and wildlife agencies submit proposals for projects that address their needs and priorities. States are reimbursed for 75% of the cost of eligible projects, and must provide a 25% match from a non-federal source.

This material was adapted from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Federal Aid website. Go to [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) for more information.



### Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration funds can be used for:

- Research into problems affecting wildlife populations
- Acquisition and improvement of wildlife habitats
- Wildlife population surveys
- Hunter education programs
- Management of wildlife areas
- Communicating results of research and management activities to the public
- Construction of facilities to enhance wildlife or the public enjoyment of them
- Construction of shooting ranges
- Reintroduction of wildlife species
- Technical assistance to landowners



## Public Program Series at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center

The Sessions Woods Public Program Series is a cooperative venture between the DEP Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register for these programs by calling the Sessions Woods office at 860-675-8130 (Mon.-Fri., 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM). Programs are free unless noted and all children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Sessions Woods is located on Route 69 in Burlington.

**July 25, 2007 (Wed.) at 9:00 AM. Tree Identification Trail Hike:** Join Wildlife Division Educator Laura Rogers-Castro on the trails at Sessions Woods to learn about Connecticut's forests and their wildlife value. The hike is about 2 miles round trip. Participants should wear appropriate footwear and bring water for the hike. Meet outside at the flagpole in front of the Conservation Education Center.

**August 1, 2007 (Wed.) from 9:30 to 11:30 AM. Children's Workshop -- Summer Photo Spectacular:** The Friends of Sessions Woods, on behalf of donations given in memory of dedicated board member Paul Petersen, is offering a special children's photography workshop. Children will be given photo tips and a camera for picture taking while being led on a walk to view the special features of

Sessions Woods. At the end of the session, the children will return the camera for the pictures to be developed. Several photos will be used in a future display in the Conservation Education Center. All photos will be returned after the exhibition. **Pre-registration is required for this unique program and all children must be accompanied by an adult.** Due to the nature of the program, registrants must be seven years or older. Wildlife Photographer Paul Fusco and Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro of the Wildlife Division will present the workshop.

**September 30, 2007 (Sun.) from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Halloween in September:** Children and their families are welcome to attend this very popular open house, hosted annually by the Wildlife Division and Friends of Sessions Woods. There will be crafts, activities, and special presentations on Halloween creatures. Hope Douglas of Wind Over Wings will present a program with live owls at 2:15 PM. Registration is required due to limited seating. Costumes are always encouraged! This is a fun event for all! Special thanks to the family and friends of Paul Petersen for making this event possible.

## September Programs at CAS Center at Glastonbury

**Switching Seasons Nature Walk,** Saturday September 8, 11:00 AM. A change is in the air! Join a Trail Guide for an interpretive nature walk through 48-acre Earle Park adjacent to the Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) Center at Glastonbury. \$3 per participant, which includes entry into the Discovery Room before and after. Rain cancels.

Citizen Science – **Water Testing with Macro-invertebrates,** Saturday, September 22, 9 AM to noon. Ginny and Walt Smith will guide participants as they wade into a riffled stream to capture macro-invertebrates (small creatures that can be seen with the naked eye). Collections will be brought back to the nature center where they will be sorted and inventoried. The numbers and ratios of macro-invertebrates are used to analyze water quality, and results will be sent to the DEP for reporting to the EPA and Clean Water Act. Have fun, learn, and make a difference. \$5 CAS members, \$7 non-members.

To find out more about these programs or other planned programs, contact the CAS Center at Glastonbury at 860-633-8402.

## Connecticut Envirothon 2007

Written by Peter M. Picone, Habitat Management Program

The cool but sunny spring weather was great and so was the enthusiasm of 30 high school teams as they competed in the 16th annual Connecticut Envirothon held in Farmington in May. Students, in teams of five, went to various test stations, clipboards in hand, deciding on the best answers to natural science questions. The Connecticut Envirothon offers high school students a great opportunity to challenge their knowledge of Connecticut's renewable natural resources. Although some teams scored higher than others, all of the participants in the Envirothon were winners; taking an educational journey throughout the school year to learn about Connecticut's natural sciences.

This year's top scoring team was Housatonic Valley Regional Agriscience High School, followed by Norwich Free Academy in second place and Xavier High School in third place. The event took place at Winding Trails in Farmington. The property offered many opportunities for "natural challenge" questions. Five subject stations that included forest-

ry, wildlife, soils, aquatics, and alternative energy were located throughout the property.

Preparation for the Connecticut Envirothon occurs during the school year where each team studies the five environmental subjects and attends workshops to hone their knowledge of the subject areas. Subject matter contains not only definitions of terms, but also hands-on identification and applied science questions. The teams had 30 minutes to answer a 100-point test in each subject and also give an oral presentation on renewable alternative energy.

The wildlife station challenged the five-student teams to think about an animal's needs of food, water, shelter, and space. The students also had to ascertain their knowledge of the species' habitat requirements.

The mission of the Connecticut Envirothon is to promote environmen-



Housatonic Valley Regional Agriscience High School was the top-scoring team for the 2007 Connecticut Envirothon, held at Winding Trails in Farmington.

tal awareness, knowledge, and active personal stewardship among Connecticut high school students through education and team competition.

Housatonic Valley Regional High School, this year's first place team, will go on to the National Envirothon competition to be held in August in New York. The Wildlife Division wishes them the best of luck.

Bluebirds, continued from page 5

row nests from the boxes. Severe weather is another threat. For example, the weather this past spring was unfavorable for bluebirds. Cold and icy conditions in February and March and the major rain-storm in April appear to have taken their toll on bluebirds and some other bird species as well. Properly weatherized nest boxes can make a difference. Wet, drafty boxes can cause the demise of young nestlings when the weather is like it has been this year. Vandalism is an-

other major problem that Dave observes regularly. Vandals, including ATV riders, have destroyed numerous boxes and poles. There is nothing that can be done except to replace what was destroyed and hope that the vandals do not return.

There's no doubt about it -- bluebirds have definitely made a comeback in Connecticut, thanks in big part to the efforts of Dave and those involved with the Connecticut Bluebird Restoration Project. The effective management of cavity-nesting birds, like bluebirds,

requires dedication, hard work, time, and money. Those who are committed to properly constructing, installing, and managing bluebird nest boxes can help out. To learn more, contact Dave Rosgen c/o White Memorial Conservation Center, P.O. Box 368, Litchfield, CT 06759 (860-567-0857; [drosgen@optonline.net](mailto:drosgen@optonline.net)). Nest box plans and a fact sheet about bluebirds can also be found on the DEP website at [www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife](http://www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife).

## Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- July-August ..... Respect fenced and posted shorebird nesting areas when visiting Connecticut beaches. Also, keep dogs off of shoreline beaches to avoid disturbing nesting birds.
- ..... Herons and egrets are nesting on offshore islands in Long Island Sound. Refrain from visiting these areas to avoid disturbing the birds.
- July 25 ..... **Tree Identification Trail Hike**, starting at 9:00 AM, at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area (see page 18).
- August 1 ..... **Children's Workshop: Summer Photo Spectacular**, from 9:30-11:30 AM, at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area (see page 18).
- Aug. 10-12 ..... **Sharon Audubon Festival** (see page 15).
- Sept. 15 ..... Report use of bluebird nest boxes by sending in a Bluebird Nest Box Network survey card to the Wildlife Division. Cards are available by calling (860) 675-8130.
- Sept. 22 ..... National Hunting and Fishing Day (see page 17 to learn more).
- Sept. 30 ..... **Halloween in September**, from 1:00-3:00 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center (see page 18).
- Sept. 30 ..... Report use of bat houses to the Wildlife Division. Call (860) 675-8130 for more information.

### Hunting Season Dates

- September ..... 2007 pheasant tags available from town clerks' offices (\$14 for 10 tags)
- Sept. 1 ..... Early squirrel hunting season opens.
- Sept. 15-Nov. 13 ..... First portion of the deer and turkey bowhunting seasons (private land bowhunters in deer management zones 11-12 may hunt deer until January 31, 2008).
- ..... Waterfowl season dates had not been finalized by the time this issue went to press. The 2007-2008 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide should be available at DEP and town clerk offices by mid- to late August. Also, check the DEP's website ([www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep)) to view the guide.
- ..... Consult the 2007 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide for specific season dates and details. The guide is available at Wildlife Division offices, town halls, and on the DEP's website ([www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep)).

# Connecticut Wildlife

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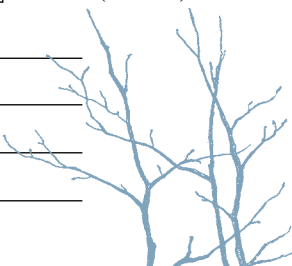
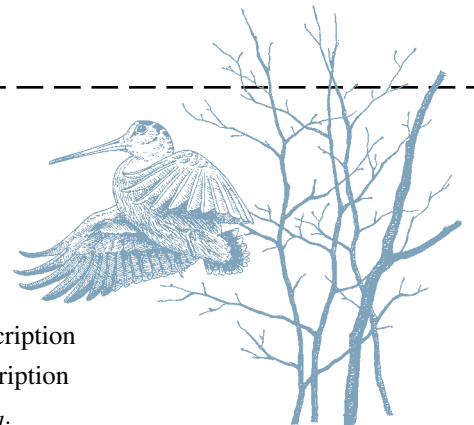
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**An adult peregrine falcon flies near its cliffside nest while its chick was temporarily removed by DEP Wildlife Division biologists. Identifying leg bands were placed on the chick, which was safely returned to the nest and its waiting parents. Read the article on page 9 of this issue to learn more about the banding of peregrine falcons.**

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