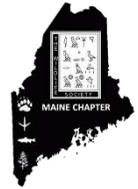


MAINE CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

THE MAINE WILDLIFER



FALL 2013

WHERE HAVE ALL THE RABBITS GONE?

By Kelly Boland and Lynn Wolfe, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

The New England cottontail, or “coney”, may look like any other species of rabbit; brown, long ears, about the size of a football, white “cotton” tail, but this New England native is unique. It has a black penciled line running along the front edge of its ears, small eyes, and it sometimes has a small black spot on its forehead. New England cottontail needs thicket. The multi-stemmed and tightly knit canopy of young trees and shrubs provide hiding cover from foxes, owls, hawks, and many other predators. The larger the thicket, the better. They feed on a variety of woody stems in the fall and winter, like blackberry and arrowwood, and in the summer they take advantage of fresh legumes, grasses, and forbs. New England cottontails are slightly smaller than its southern cousin, the eastern cottontail. In the early 1900s, eastern cottontails flourished after they were introduced to several New England states by hunting

clubs and state agencies from places like Missouri and West Virginia. Incidentally, the eastern cottontail hasn’t made it to Maine. For now, eastern cottontails in Portsmouth, NH and New England cottontails in Kittery, Maine are separated by the wide mouth of the Piscataqua River.

In the 1960s, New England cottontail could be found east of the Hudson River in New York and in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, up to Belfast, Maine. The thickets that grew on abandoned farms created a flush of habitat, but these matured over time leading to an 86% range decline to present day levels. Additionally, natural disturbances that would have created young forest, like fires and beaver activity, have all but stopped. The species is no longer found in Vermont. In their current range in Maine, which is only in York and Cumberland County, young forest covers only about 2-3% of the land, the rest is either in closed canopy forest, or has sprouted homes or other development. Of the 250-300 New England cottontails that remain in southern Maine most are scattered among small habitat patches (<5 acres) within a few miles of the coast. This drastic drop in population and uncertain future led to the State of Maine listing the rabbit as an endangered species in 2007.



New England Cottontail Great Bay
Photo credit: Kelly Boland

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Captive bred rabbits at Roger Williams Park Zoo
Photo credit: Lou Perrotti

The New England cottontail also is a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. In 2015, federal agencies will determine whether or not to federally list the species. Conservation efforts put forth by states will be considered when it comes time to make this listing decision. Maine and the other states in the rabbits' range have contributed habitat and population goals to the range-wide "Conservation Strategy for the New England Cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*)". Maine's habitat goals are to make approximately 5000 acres available for this species by 2030.



Hardening pen for weaned New England cottontail in New Hampshire
Photo credit: USFWS

Habitat patches will be within one of six Focus Areas, each with its own set of goals. To help reach these goals, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) initiated the Working Lands for Wildlife Program in 2012. The New England cottontail is one of only seven species, nationwide, including the Greater Sage Grouse and Golden-Winged Warbler to be funded under this initiative. Landowners from Connecticut through Maine have enrolled in the program aimed at helping offset the cost of managing habitat on private land. Additional habitat projects have been made possible by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), planning from the National Wild Turkey Federation, and technical expertise and funding from the Wildlife Management Institute and support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Working in southern Maine is not without its hurdles. The small parcels and abutter concerns make managing large habitat areas challenging. Cutting trees, in particular, requires talking to neighbors to let them know the reasons behind it. Despite the challenges, Maine landowners have started habitat work. As of 2013, over 700 acres of land were enrolled in plans that will increase the diversity of young forest and shrub cover within hopping distance of the rabbits. An example of one project is in Scarborough, Maine. Three abutting landowners, Scarborough Land Trust, Camp Ketcha, and a private landowner rallied together to plan a 35 acre habitat area. A harvester and other equipment landed in 2012 to clear a mix of poplar, birch, red maple trees to make room for the flush of young growth. During the 2013 growing season, poplar has exploded into the thicket, log cabin style brushpiles have settled and await their new residents (dubbed the "hare-iott"), and blackberry canes have filled into the edges. Another project is on the 288 acre Perkinstown Commons in Wells, Maine. Last winter small white pines and hardwoods were harvested creating a 20 acre clearing. During the past four months, saplings have begun springing up from the stumps of the logged off hardwoods. Over the next few years the clear cut should be transformed into a thicket of young trees and shrubs, creating magnificent early successional habitat. The town Conservation Commission has further enhanced the site by constructing "bunny bunkers" composed of woody debris such as tree branches overlaid on and around stumps. These bunkers will provide shelter from predators throughout the winter months. Biologists from USFWS and

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FEATURE ARTICLES

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MDIFW will monitor the sites for rabbits once habitat condition develops to an ideal thicket.

Efforts are also being made to enrich existing shrubby habitat. This fall a new partnership has begun with the University of New England (UNE), MDIFW, USFWS, and Central Maine Power (CMP) to construct experimental burrows for the rabbits. Burrows provide thermal refuge during the cold winter months. Cottontails are not able to dig their own burrows; instead they depend on underground dens abandoned by foxes and woodchucks, or man-made structures such as old stone foundations. Faculty and students from UNE will be working with MDIFW to construct, install, and monitor burrows for evidence of use by cottontails. Experimental burrows will be installed at Kettle Cove State Park this September. The burrow project will be expanded to CMP property, utilizing the thicket-covered utility corridors.

Habitat management is one facet of the restoration effort, but population management isn't being left out. Last March, biologists from MDIFW and USFWS live-trapped four (two male, two female) New England cottontails from Cape Elizabeth and transported them to the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island to become part of a captive breeding program. Once weaned, young captive bred rabbits from the zoo are brought to a one acre predator proof enclosure, known as a hardening pen. The pen allows the rabbits to safely learn how to find cover and food in native vegetation before being released into a natural setting. No rabbits, to date, have been released in Maine, however, starting this year a few states are beginning to pilot releases on conserved lands.

Conservationists are optimistic that continued partnerships with the aim to maintain and create thickets will improve the



Poplar sprouting near a brushpile at Camp Ketcha, August 2013
Photo credit: USFWS

New England cottontail populations, not to mention the nearly 70 concern species that need this habitat in the Northeast. More information about New England cottontails, the events, workshops, and habitat management can be found at www.newenglandcottontail.org or by contacting Kelly Boland, New England Cottontail Restoration Coordinator at 207-646-9226 ext 32, Kelly_boland@fws.gov.

Are you are a landowner in York or Cumberland County and want to learn about habitat management opportunities for New England cottontails? Join us for an evening workshop on Wednesday, October 30th, 2013 at the Wells Reserve, Laudholm Farm Road, Wells, Maine. Hosted by NRCS, USFWS, NWTF and partners. For more details or questions, call Melissa Brandt, 324-0888, or email melissabrandt@yorkswcd.org



METWS ON FACEBOOK

Don't forget to 'LIKE' METWS on Facebook. Post your photos and share your Maine wildlife stories! Check out our photo albums of Maine critters, read news highlights, and keep in touch.



FEATURE ARTICLES

FISH & WILDLIFE DATA MANAGERS COME TO MAINE

By Don Katnik, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Last week the annual conference for the Organization of Fish and Wildlife Information Managers (OFWIM) was at the Schoodic Education and Research Center in Winter Harbor. The last time the OFWIM conference was near Maine was 2006. Despite increasing restrictions on travel by state employees and the beginning of a federal government shutdown, this was a great opportunity to learn about the rapidly evolving technologies that we use to collect, manage, and analyze fish and wildlife data and to communicate that information to the public. The presentations included:

- Synoptic modeling of animal location data combining animal movements, home range, and resource selection to ask important questions about space use by wildlife and fish
- Applications of Python programming to information management
- Griffin Groups: a free online tool for building a community of conservation communities
- Developing the Florida shorebird alliance and database
- Assessing the effects of landscape patterns and arrangements on native bee abundance in Maine's wild blueberries
- Using GIS to track fall mallard migration
- Spatial modeling to predict swamp rabbit habitat in Missouri
- Landscape-level in-stream habitat mapping using side scan sonar
- Use of LIDAR for mapping wildlife habitat
- How to manage your agency's fish web pages without the webmaster lifting a finger
- Fishing tournaments, coon dogs, and weddings: using technology to manage events on public land and water
- A GIS greenprint tool for quality growth
- "Beginning with Habitat": conservation planning assistant tools
- National survey of data capture device effectiveness
- Maintaining data security while promoting data sharing



- Use of trail cameras for estimating white-tailed deer populations
- Integrating SAS business intelligence and ESRI for customer relationship management
- Improving the user experience in geo-mobile applications
- Interactive browser map in support of "Bald Eagle Nests, Bald Eagle Concentration Areas and Communal Roosts in Virginia"
- Development of a hand-held application for fisheries trip reporting
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's TRACS System
- The ongoing battle between dinosaurs and puppies
- WILDSPACE: wildlife data integration in a government context
- Geo-enabling the wildlife management workforce
- Producing dynamic PDFs from databases
- A tale of three Content Management Systems
- Introduction to SAS DataFlux software and its use at Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Survey results: How are AFS members using social media?
- Texas Youth Hunting Program—participant characterization and retention

Dr. George Jacobson, from the University of Maine, presented the keynote address, "Long-term climate dynamics provide a surprising key to the contemporary world."

FEATURE ARTICLES

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE STUDENT RECEIVES RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP

By Shannon Chapin

I am pursuing my M.S. degree in Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the University of Maine. My research focuses on the application of spatial modeling tools to assess how landscape patterns and arrangements impact native bee abundance in Maine's lowbush blueberry fields. Bees are a very important component to most ecosystems as they provide a mechanism for pollination, and therefore food for other wildlife (including humans!), but they are often overlooked by wildlife agencies.



Because of this, I was very excited to be chosen as the 2013 recipient of the Organization for Fish and Wildlife Information Manager's (OFWIM) Student Research Scholarship as it enabled me to share my research proposal with representatives from wildlife agencies across the states. The OFWIM scholarship is a great opportunity for students. The recipient is presented with a substantial monetary award, invited to present their research proposal at the current year's OFWIM meeting (registration fee waived), and invited to present their research findings at the following year's meeting (registration fee waived and travel costs provided).

I was presented with this honor at the 2013 OFWIM Conference and Annual Meeting at Schoodic Point, Maine. The meeting focused on improving work efficiency and efficacy, while bridging the fields of information technology and wildlife and fisheries science. While the group of information managers present was relatively small, it was diverse with representation from wildlife agencies located across the Country. Actually, I think the smallness of this conference was one of its best traits; I was able to network with many people and gain valuable feedback about my research. I am looking forward to traveling to Flagstaff, AZ next year to present the results of my research and reconnect with the people I met this year. I expect to graduate in May 2014 and look forward to the opportunities that may arise in Maine where I can put my skills in applying GIS to wildlife conservation issues to good use.



President Danny Lewis presents Shannon Chapin with the OFWIM Student Research Scholarship.

A PILOT STUDY OF OFFSHORE BAT MOVEMENT USING NANOTAGS

By Trevor Peterson

Ongoing acoustic surveys of bat activity in the Gulf of Maine, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes have demonstrated that bats are present offshore regularly, particularly between late-July and mid-September. Stay tuned for results of the first three years of offshore survey in Maine waters, which are summarized in a paper to be published in the Northeastern Naturalist this winter. However, we know very little about behavior of individual bats offshore, how much time they spend offshore, and whether they are using offshore islands as stopover sites during migration. We

conducted a pilot study to track individual bats offshore using VHF nanotags this past September to see whether the method could help address some of these questions. Nanotags are individually coded radio transmitters that allow many tagged animals to be tracked on the same frequency. Weighing only 0.29 g, nanotags are small enough to use on bats that occur in Maine and are glued between bats' scapulae using surgical glue.

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Stantec received permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to mist-net bats during September at three sites within the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. This location was ideal as it surrounded by a network of datalogging VHF nanotag receivers maintained by the collaborative Northeast Regional Migration Monitoring Network (<http://sbe.umaine.edu/avian/migrationmonitoring.html>). This expanding network of receivers is enabling unprecedented research on offshore and coastal migration of small wildlife in the northeast. Our objectives included determining whether nanotags are an effective tool to monitor bat migration offshore and whether the existing network of receivers provides sufficient coverage to document bats' movements.

We captured 8 bats during 8 nights of netting: 3 eastern red bats (*Lasiurus borealis*), 3 little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*), 1 eastern small-footed bat (*Myotis leibii*), and 1 northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). Each bat was fitted with a nanotag and released at the capture site. Each bat was recorded by at least one of 6 telemetry receivers in the area, and 5 bats were recorded at 3 or more receivers. The bats tended to remain in the area between Schoodic Point and Harrington and were detected up to two weeks after they were released. As data from other receivers in the area continue to be downloaded, we are hopeful that additional



Stantec biologist Lindsey Wight and Univ. of Maine student Marie Martin determine the age of an eastern red bat captured in September

receivers in the area that have not yet been downloaded will yield a few more data points.

Though small in scale, the pilot study was an encouraging first step in tracking bats offshore using nanotags and a regional network of receiving stations and we plan to expand upon these efforts in the coming year. We are grateful to others in the Northeast Regional Migration Monitoring Network for installing and maintaining the receivers in the area and for sharing data from their receivers.

THE NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT, *MYOTIS SEPTENTRIONALIS* ESA/USFWS CURRENT STATUS AND LIKELY STATUS

By Aaron Svedlow

In July 2011, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS or the Service) was petitioned to list the northern long-eared and eastern small-footed bat as Endangered or Threatened, and designate critical habitat, under the Endangered Species Act (1973). On October 2, 2013 USFWS released the results of their 12-Month finding on the 2011 petition. Based on the Service's review listing for eastern small-footed bat is not warranted at this time. Listing for the northern long-eared bat was deemed warranted, and the species is now proposed for listing as endangered. In addition, it was determined that critical habitat was not determinable.

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) a fungal pathogen, is responsible for unprecedented mortality in hibernating bats,

with over 5.7 million bats killed. Precipitous declines have been documented for the northern long-eared and eastern small-footed bats over the last three years with estimated loss greater than 1 million bats. First discovered in eastern New York in February 2006, WNS has been documented in at least 19 states, and at least 4 Canadian provinces.

Other threats to Northern long-eared bat include (A) the present or threatened destruction, and modification of its habitat or range, including: Agricultural and Residential Development, Logging, Oil, Gas and Mineral Development, Wind Energy Development, and Mine Closures, and (B) Predation (USFWS 2013).

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FEATURE ARTICLES

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The USFWS has issued an advisory calling for a moratorium on all caving activities in States with known infected hibernacula.

Life History

Medium-sized bat with average adult body weight of 5 to 8 g (0.18 to 0.28 oz). Relatively long-lived species with, ages up to 19 years old. Species is recognizable from other *Myotis* by its long ears (avg. 17 mm, (0.67 in) (USFWS 2013). Unlike other *Myotis* that forage alongside streams or within flood plains, northern long-eared bats typically forage along ridge tops and forested hillsides (Harvey et al. 2011). Summer day roost sites include buildings, behind shutters, under tree bark, and in small tree cavities (Harvey et al. 2011). The species is more solitary than other *Myotis* species and are generally found singularly or in small maternity colonies (typically fewer than 60 individuals) (Harvey et al. 2011, USFWS 2013). Utilization of a wider range of roost sites than the Indiana bat, may be the reason for its greater range (USFWS 2013), however, the species is still reliant on intact interior forest habitat with late successional features such as complex vertical structure, tree fall gaps, standing snags, and woody debris (USFWS 2013). Northern long-eared bats hibernate from October or November until mid-March in caves and mines with cool, humid conditions. These sites are also used by big brown, eastern pipistrelle, little brown, and Indiana bats (USFWS 2013). Greatest concentrations are found at the mouths of caves and mines before and after hibernation in the fall and spring, however, the species is not conspicuous within hibernacula. Individuals are often found within deep in the cave interior, nestled in tight cracks and crevices, where temperatures are warmer and more stable (USFWS 2013).

The northern long-eared bat is not a migratory species but movements of up to 56 km (34.8mi) have been reported between summer roost and winter hibernacula (USFWS 2013). The northern- long eared bat has a wide occurrence, ranging across much of eastern and north central US all Canadian provinces west to the Northwest Territories and eastern British Columbia. However, distribution within the range is patchy and the species rarely occurs in large numbers.

References

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2013. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 12-Month

Finding on a Petition To List the Eastern Small-Footed Bat and the Northern Long- Eared Bat as Endangered or Threatened Species; Listing the Northern Long-Eared Bat as an Endangered Species; Proposed Rule Federal Register. Vol 78, No. 191.

Harvey, M. J., J. S. Altenbach, and T. L. Best. 2011. Bats of the United States and Canada. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.



(Blog.usa.gov) A Northern long-eared bat with visible symptoms of white-nose syndrome (WNS).



Approximate range of the Northern long-eared bat (source: batcon.org)

FEATURE ARTICLES

**NEIGHBORS PITCHING IN:
LAND CONSERVATION PROJECT—FLORIDA LAKE, FREEPORT**

By Lauren Gilpatrick, Maine TWS President-Elect

The Town of Freeport recently acquired through a back-tax situation a 28.6 acre parcel of land that abuts the Florida Lake Conservation Area (Fig. 1). The property was quarried in the 90s and has since grown into an early successional, shrub/thicket habitat. The parcel is ripe for conservation and a great candidate for winning grant support through the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program in 2014. Language in the town-approved management plan for Florida Lake includes: “Investigate options for acquiring adjacent lands and those necessary for possible connections to other public open spaces.” A copy of the Florida Lake management plan can be found on Freeport’s website (www.freeportmaine.com).

Wetlands and streams exist on the property with drainage to, and frontage along Collins Brook. Collins Brook holds one of the last native wild brook trout populations in Freeport and an associated eastern pearlshell freshwater mussel population. Eastern pearlshells are in decline throughout Maine and found only in clean streams with salmonid presence. Collins Brook has seen increasing development pressure in both Brunswick and Freeport over the past two decades and water quality continues to decline as a result of increased non-point runoff within the watershed.

Over 100 species of birds have been observed on the property, many listed as Species of Special Concern or Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine. These include yellow-billed cuckoo, great blue heron, whip-poor-will, eastern wood-peewee, chimney swift, wood thrush, veery, chestnut-sided warbler, eastern towhee, fox sparrow, and yellow warbler. A least bittern (state endangered) was observed in one of the wetlands in 2011. American woodcock breed annually on the site and ruffed grouse and wild turkeys are observed regularly.

Unfortunately, the previous owners were not good stewards of their land and quite a bit of trash removal will be required to clean the place up. Fortunately, the property has relatively few invasive plant species and a beautiful feathered edge that leads up to a forested buffer along Collins Brook. The bottom line is that despite its condition, the property is already providing habitat to a multitude of species and is worth saving from further fragmentation.



View of Collins Brook, property being discussed on the left of the brook, Florida Lake parcel on the right.



Figure 1. Snip from Tax Map 17, Town of Freeport, Maine. Florida Lake Conservation Area highlighted in blue, property being discussed in green.

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The Town has expressed interest in subdividing house lots on some of the parcel. I have been attending various town meetings and giving site tours in an effort to convince the Town that conserving this whole parcel would be beneficial for habitat diversity. The property’s young forest/shrub/old-field habitat is unique in comparison to the older forest habitat that dominates the rest of the Florida Lake Area. I have met with the Town Manager, Town Engineer, the Freeport Municipal Facilities Committee, and the Freeport Conservation Commission about how the project would provide additional multi-use recreational space as well as provide habitat protection and connectivity for multiple species of wildlife. Support has been expressed from the Freeport Conservation Trust and local neighbors whose properties are adjacent to the parcel in question.

I believe progress is being made toward getting at least some of the acreage added to the existing Florida Lake property. If the Town decides to move forward with a conservation easement, I would like to reach out to METWS to rally some members who would be interested in donating some time and labor to the actual cleanup effort. I believe this will be a great opportunity to get Maine Chapter members involved in a local, on-the-ground conservation effort together! Please feel free to contact me for more information on the project at LGILPATRICK@hotmail.com or 406-370-6043.



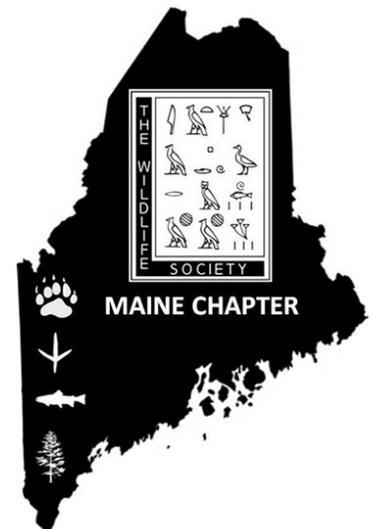
Representative habitat photo



This area will be one of the ugliest to clean up!

**NEW METWS
LOGO & STICKERS**

The new TWS-approved logo depicts our state outline and four symbols. The symbols mirror what the hieroglyphics in the TWS logo read – beasts (mammals), birds, fish, and plants – but with a Maine twist – a bear track, turkey track, brook trout, and white pine. METWS MEMBER logo stickers will be available at the Fall Meeting!



MAINE TWS CHAPTER NEWS

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

By Sarah Boyden

In 2010, the METWS board completed a strategic plan for the chapter, outlining goals and objectives for the next ten years of operation. As part of this process, results from a member survey revealed the desire for an influx of younger members into the chapter. In an effort to reach out to new members, I recently attended a student wildlife society meeting in Orono. The students had very real-life questions, and we had a great discussion about what I do for work, and talked through questions like, “Do I need to go to grad school?” and “How do I get an internship?”

Many wildlife biologists can probably relate to the struggle of finding employment in our chosen area of study, or any field of wildlife biology. It can be a can be a test of endurance trying to make the transition from student, intern, or even a part-time employee into a full-time career in biology. At this year’s fall meeting, we will open up the discussion between working professionals and aspiring biologists, to learn more about the various paths to a successful career in wildlife biology. Representative biologists from MDIFW, USFWS, Maine Warden’s Service, the forestry industry, NGO’s, and private business will talk about their work life, and answer questions from the audience. What suggestions do they have to someone just starting out, or someone looking to make a career change? Do you or your organization have upcoming internship opportunities? What does the future of the wildlife biology field look like in the face of reduced state and federal budgets? How can student’s best prepare for employment, post-graduation?

Whether you are beginning a career, or looking to make a change, Maine has an exceptional mix of agency, industry, and NGO wildlife career opportunities. Join us on November 14th, as we host aspiring biologists from across the state, to discuss how to best prepare for, or transition into a satisfying career in wildlife work. I hope to see you there!

ANNUAL FALL MEETING

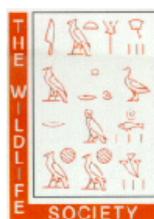
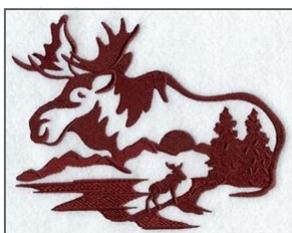
Careers in Wildlife Biology



- 9:00 am Coffee and doughnuts, membership renewal, stickers
- 9:30 am Greetings, brief business meeting
Modern Technology and METWS
Facebook Page—Lauren Gilpatrick
METWS Habitat Workshop—Deb Perkins
- 10:00 am Jerry Longcore, Keynote Speaker
- 10:30 am Break, snacks, coffee, more doughnuts
- 10:45 am Wildlife Biologists Panel—Q & A

John DePue, MDIFW
Mao Lin, USFWS
Troy Thibodeau, Maine Warden Service
Adam Vashon, USDA APHIS
Deb Perkins, First Light Consulting
Ray Ary, Plum Creek

*Additional panelists may be present
Depending on availability!*



MAINE TWS CHAPTER NEWS

EDUCATION/INFORMATION & PUBLIC STATEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS (EIPSR, A.K.A. POLICY) COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Rodney Kelshaw, Committee Chair

In 2012 and 2013 the Education/Information & Public Statements/Resolutions (EIPSR) Committee focused on proposed changes in state laws related to wildlife, and once again 2012/2013 was a busy time in the Maine State Legislature. We began 2013 by sending an informational letter to the co-chairs of the State Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (ACF) to introduce our organization to the new committee and volunteer our help and expertise.

At the outset of the 126th legislative session there were over 2000 LD's. Not all of these involved wildlife so it was easy to sort through the initial list and removed many that did not apply. To streamline this process the EIPSR developed a flow chart; ME TWS EIPSR Committee Action Item Flow Chart, to help decide which LD's TWS should become involved. At a meeting in early spring 2013 the flow chart was used to sort through the 20 some odd pages of Legislative Documents (LD) titles and narrow down the list of LD's we would follow and possibly comment. The flow chart worked well to create a process that is open, predictable, and removed personal opinion when making these important decisions.

Once we decided which LD's to follow the EIPSR committee signed up for State Legislative Committee email notifications where weekly the State Committees send out updates on what LD they will be working. This includes when they schedule workshops and public hearings. Because these documents are sent out weekly there is typically a short lead time, less than a week, between the time they schedule and then hold a public hearing; thus it can be difficult to pull together official public comment from TWS. Development of public comment for an LD hearing involves research, coordination sometimes including meetings, writing the comment letter, proof reading and adoption of the comment letter by the TWS Executive Committee (EC), and then finding someone to attend the meeting and read the letter. We did our best to get involved when we thought it was appropriate and inform the membership, even with these narrow time constraints.

Topics that we were involved with over the past year include:

LD 674 An Act to Clarify the Natural Resources Protection Act –TWS was opposed to this bill. If passed this would have changed the regulated “buffer” (really should be called a regulated consultation zone) around significant vernal pools; high and moderate inland wading bird and waterfowl habitat; and shorebird nesting, feeding and staging areas from 250’ to 75’. We were at the hearing prepared to provide testimony in opposition when the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee suspended comment to hold a vote where the committee voted LD 674 “Ought Not To Pass”. At that point there was no more testimony and on May 8, 2013 the bill was dead.

LD 730 An Act to Protect Maine’s Loons by Banning Lead Sinkers and Jigs – TWS was in favor of this bill. If passed this would make it illegal to sell or use lead sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less and measuring 2 1/2 inches or less in length. We presented testimony to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) Committee. The bill passed and became law without the governor’s signature on June 27, 2013.

LD 794: An Act to Amend Setback Requirements and Standards Related to Species Migration under the Laws Regulating Development near Vernal Pools – TWS was neither for nor against this bill, however was prepared to comment. This bill proposes to amend the laws regulating significant vernal pool habitat to account for species migration patterns. However, this was only a concept bill with no text to explain how this directive would be met. TWS was in favor of the concept for allowing development of directional habitat for vernal pools, but as we know the devil is always in the details. On July 10, 2013 the ENR Committee carried over the bill to special legislative session and the ENR Committee directed that a task force be set up to develop the text. The task force will be spearheaded by our own Aram Calhoun and will include representatives from TWS and other environmental and development minded organizations so that it will take into account ideas and concerns on both sides of the issue before it is presented to the ENR Committee. The task force will begin meetings in October 2013.

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MAINE TWS CHAPTER NEWS

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Chapter 335: Significant Wildlife Habitat Rulemaking – The principal purpose of the rulemaking is to make Chapter 335 consistent with the statutory changes included in PL 2011, Chapter 362. These changes clarify the effect of vernal pool regulation on adjacent property owners, clarify the regulation of vernal pools which straddle property boundaries, and clarify the regulation of artificially created vernal pools, all as directed by Chapter 362. The TWS EC will be meeting soon to determine how it will respond to the proposed rule changes and will be attending the public hearing.

Bear Hunting/Trapping Referendum – Currently a group is attempting to obtain enough signatures to hold a referendum vote in 2014 regarding changing bear hunting and trapping regulations in the State of Maine. A similar vote was held in 2004 and at that time the Maine Chapter of TWS wrote a position statement opposing the referendum. If there is a referendum vote in 2014 we again plan to be involved in the discussion and to provide guidance.

Members of the committee and non-committee members worked hard this year to keep up with these constantly changing topics, wrote and delivered public testimony during many hearings and workshops. Thanks for going to Augusta and sitting in hearings for hours on end and taking the time to research and write great testimony. If anyone has interest in being a member of the TWS Policy Committee or have topics or issues in which they believe our chapter should act upon please contact me.

Rodney Kelshaw,
Chair Maine Chapter of TWS EIPSR Committee
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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE TWS STUDENT CHAPTER NEWS

By Caitlin Gunn

On October 12, members from Student Chapter went hiking and camping in the Bold Coast.

On October 27, Student Chapter members volunteered for the Penobscot Trust to relocate freshwater mussels to a deeper water habitat along the Eddington and Veazie shoreline.

Upcoming Student Chapter Events:

Nov 5—Jason Baker presentation on survival skills

Nov 14—METWS fall meeting in Brewer

Dec 3—Bat biologist Tim Divoll from the Biodiversity Research Institute presentation

Dec 10—Student Chapter officer elections

TBD—How to become a certified biologist in The Wildlife Society by Dr. Faren Wolter

Questions? Contact Caitlin Gunn,
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FERAL CAT COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Lauren Gilpatrick

Committee Chair Stacie Grove (of NewEarth Ecological) recently prepared and submitted the final report on the METWS Feral Cat Colony Assessment Project to the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. This grant fulfillment marks a major accomplishment for our Chapter and sets a successful precedent for future grant opportunities. The full Feral Cat Colony Assessment Project report will soon be available on the METWS website. Thank you Stacie for all of your hard work!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**MAINE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE'S
2013 RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT REPORT NOW AVAILABLE**

Download your copy from: http://www.maine.gov/IFW/wildlife/pdfs/2013%20R&M%20Report-FINAL_9-06-13.pdf

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Give a gift to wildlife this year - put a check with the chickadee!

MAINE TWS OFFICERS, COMMITTEES, & STAFF

OFFICERS

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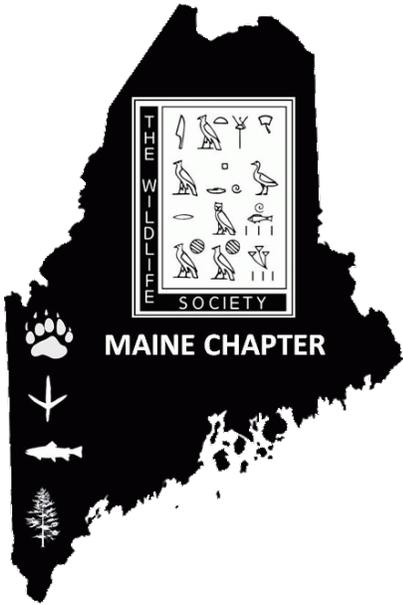
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