

# RIDEM *Division of Fish & Wildlife*

## Volunteer Newsletter

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Want to know how to become involved in fish and wildlife conservation?

Join RIDEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife Volunteer Program and help us conserve and manage Rhode Island's wild resources!

Programs range from conducting field surveys, to hands-on waterfowl banding, to participating in habitat projects across our management areas. There are so many exciting ways to become involved!

**For more information, contact:  
Volunteer Coordinator,  
Jennifer Brooks  
Email: [Jennifer.brooks@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Jennifer.brooks@dem.ri.gov)  
Phone: 401-789-0281**

**Great Swamp Headquarters  
277 Great Neck Road  
W. Kingston, RI 02892**

Volunteers and staff, getting ready to release a group of newly banded Canada geese!

### **RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife Volunteer Program!** *Happy New Year!*

Last year marked the first full year of RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife's new Volunteer Program. This past year, over 400 volunteers took part in projects ranging from surveying the spring herring run, to monitoring bat colonies, to helping Division staff check –in hunter harvested deer! None of these projects could have been accomplished without the extra hands lent by our dedicated group of volunteers. On behalf of RIDEM, and the Division of Fish & Wildlife, I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to all of the volunteers and organizations that made this year so successful!! We thank you for your generous gifts of time, skills, and talent, and we look forward to working with you in this new year!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Brooks

RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife, Volunteer Coordinator



# American Black Duck Banding!

## Winter Volunteer Opportunity

February (Annually)

### American Black Duck Banding

It's a chilly, February morning, and Waterfowl Biologist, Josh Beuth begins his day before the sun is up, armed with a bag of corn and a rocket net, prepared to capture ducks.

Once at his intended location, Josh and his interns maneuver their way over the dark shoreline and pour a heaping mound of corn onto the target area. They carefully retreat into

the vegetation out of sight to prepare for the arrival of their hungry guests.

At approximately 5:00 AM, a small group of warmly clad volunteers arrive and tuck themselves away beside the crew.

Josh sinks down where he has the perfect vantage point of the bait site, and with the rocket net armed and ready, he waits for the perfect moment to engage.

When the group of feathery targets finally arrive and are feasting greedily on the bait, Josh fires the net and within seconds, he has captured the bumbling group of ducks! Josh and the eager team of volunteers approach the



Above: Banded drake American black duck

group of birds and one-by-one place them into a holding container, where they will wait to be banded. The target species in this mix is the American black duck.

Soon the morning chill is forgotten with the excitement of the opportunity to be so close to these beautiful creatures! With the help of biologists, volunteers spend the morning helping to band ducks, and assist the staff in taking vital species data.

## American Black Duck: Identification

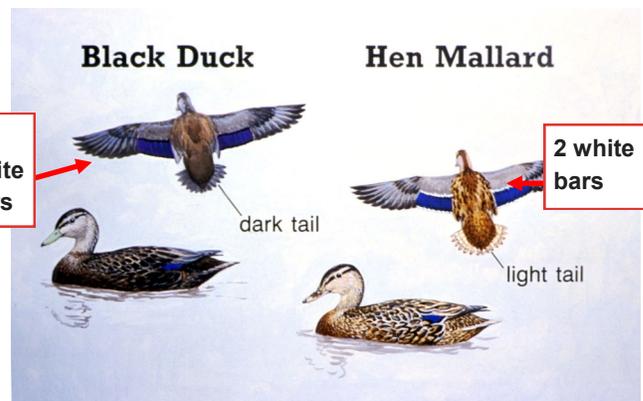
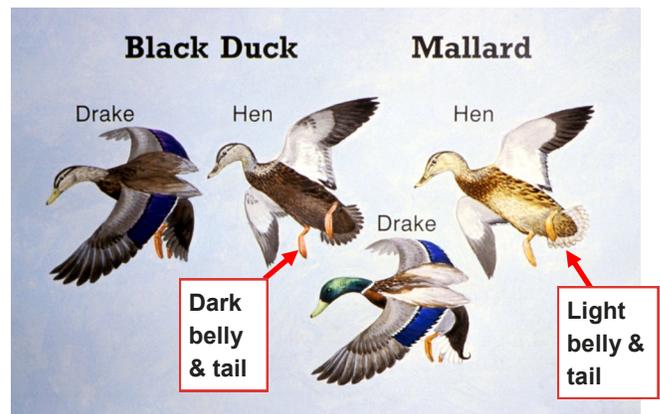


American black duck, *Anas rubripes*



Mallard hen, *Anas platyrhynchos*

The American black duck is often confused with a the hen of a very similar looking species, the mallard. Upon careful examination of these two species, there are some distinguishing features that can be used to tell them apart. Looking at the illustrations on the right, you will notice that the drake (male) mallard, in his winter/ breeding plumage, is easily identified by his spectacular emerald head. Difficulty can set in when trying to distinguish between hen (female) mallard and either sex of the American black duck. Looking at the mallard first, you can see that both sexes, have a light-colored belly and tail, and there are two distinct white bands above and below their blue wing patch, called the speculum. Conversely, the black duck has a dark belly and tail, and has no white bars along the blue speculum.



Black duck illustrations: USFWS

# More About Waterfowl Banding

## Why Do We Band Waterfowl?

**B** iologists around the country have been banding waterfowl for decades. This practice provides biologists with a wealth of information, including location of waterfowl breeding and wintering areas, migration pathways, population dynamics, and the ability to check the birds for diseases, such as Avian Influenza. The breadth of data that has resulted and continues to be collected, alerts biologists to any alarming population declines, concerning migration changes, or diseases that are impacting the birds. This information is extremely important, and the results of these data are directly applied to harvest regulations, as well as to address any habitat issues that might be affecting breeding or migration. These actions help to assure that waterfowl populations remain strong and healthy.

Hunters are the number one resource of banding data. When a hunter harvests a banded bird, they report the band number to the Federal Government's banding database ([www.reportband.gov](http://www.reportband.gov)). Once the information is entered, the hunter will receive a thank you confirmation with the year and site of the birds' banding, as well as the sex of the bird.

Banding recoveries, have led to many interesting and important findings, such as the discovery of the four primary migration flyways (see map below), and the identification of critical breeding and wintering areas, which biologists monitor to maintain suitable habitat for these birds.

RIDEM Fish & Wildlife Division accepts volunteers every year to help us band ducks in February and Canada geese in June/July. Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator for more information!



**Above:** Waterfowl biologist, Josh Beuth bands a hen common eider .



**Above:** A band on the leg of a Canada goose



**Above:** Carl Dumas, and daughter, Hannah, wrangle some Canada geese for banding!

## Monitoring the Atlantic Flyway



**Left:** Each of these colors represent a particular “flyway”, or flight route that waterfowl follow during migration every year. There are four major flyways, and Rhode Island is part of the Atlantic Flyway, indicated in black. These migration paths were discovered through banding studies.

# Volunteers in Action!



Middletown 4H members learn about New England cottontails, how to follow a scientific protocol, and help collect rabbit DNA for the NEC project!



URI student, Allyson Gelinas, follows a survey transect in search of cottontail pellets for genetic assessment, with the New England Cottontail project.



Volunteers, Alyssa & Tyler collect CWD samples from hunter harvested deer at Arcadia check station.



Seasonal staff member Cody, and volunteer – for-the-day, URI Researcher, Amy Gottfried-Mayer, holds a red bat during a bat survey.



Volunteer, Brian, puts a fresh coat of paint on a Great Swamp cabin.



Volunteers & staff working together to lift river herring over the Main St., Wakefield dam, before the completion of the successful fish ladder renovation this year.



Tommy & Ana Augusto prune and remove invasive plants that were inhibiting the growth of a large apple tree at Durfee Hill Management Area.



# Conservation in the Community!



John Sanna, with family and friends, built over 30 wood duck boxes, posted them, and assists the Division by surveying and maintaining them.



Alyssa wrangles a goose to hand off to volunteers and staff awaiting to band and re-release the bird.



URI student, Megan Gray holds a Canada goose before banding.



A group of scouts teamed up with Queens River Kayaks to repair and replace deteriorating wood duck boxes.



RIDEM staff and volunteers, Save the Bay, and The Nature Conservancy, spent a warm summer day planting salt marsh grasses, during a restoration effort at the new Goddard Park boat ramp.



Father and daughter, Jon and Abigail Dodd, maintain their assigned survey station for the URI/RIDEM bear genetics project. Here Abigail is pouring bear lure at the site.

# Volunteer Spotlight: Barry Martasian

For over 7 years, Barry Martasian has been a dedicated volunteer with our freshwater fisheries program. Every year Barry helps coordinate local residents to assist in river heron population counts at the Forge Road Fish Ladder, which is situated in the Hunt River Watershed. Barry's passion and enthusiasm for aquatic fauna that populate our Rhode Island's rivers, is contagious!

When not training volunteers, educating passersby, and keeping the fish ladder clean,

Barry enjoys photographing, videotaping, and creating artwork, inspired by his aquatic subjects.

One of Barry's greatest passions is his love for the American eel. He is captivated by the life history of these fascinating creatures, and works with our Fish and Wildlife Division to assist in conservation efforts.

Barry has captured these beautiful photographs of migrating eels, while assisting in data collection. These animals have also been the inspiration for many of his paintings, as well.



# *Spring Volunteer Opportunity!*



## *River Herring Monitors Needed!*

Come help welcome the return of spring and RI's herring population back to our rivers!

## **Join Us for the 2017 Annual Herring Count!**

Every year in Rhode Island herring make their annual trip from the Atlantic Ocean back into the fresh water systems from which they were born, and we need your help counting them as they arrive!

**Surveys are Fun and Easy, and only take 10 minutes!!**

Surveys work around your schedule!

Sign up for one survey or several.



Herring Counters: Nick & Alex Callahan of Boy Scout Troop 1, East Greenwich

Sites are located in:

- North Kingstown
- Wakefield
- Warwick
- Providence
- East Providence

Contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jennifer Brooks for more information!

Email: [Jennifer.brooks@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Jennifer.brooks@dem.ri.gov)

Phone: 401-789-0281