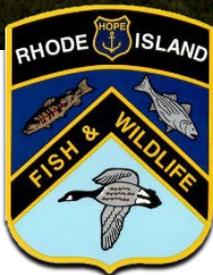


# *Wild Rhode Island*

Autumn 2020 ∞ Volume 13 ∞ Issue 4



Bat Mist Netting 2019, Great Swamp Management Area. Photo: Chelsea Thomson

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ONLINE MAPPING.....	3
FALCONRY IN RHODE ISLAND.....	4
REPORTING WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS.....	7
AUTUMN FLY FISHING: THE HEARTS HOPPER.....	11
2020 HUNTING REGULATIONS GUIDE.....	12

## *COVID-19 Shifts Bat Conservation Concerns for the 2020 Field Season*

By: Sarah Riley, Division of Fish & Wildlife

To date, there is no evidence that any North American bat species harbors SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus or spreads Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19), and their susceptibility to this virus is yet unknown. However, out of an abundance of caution, this year's bat handling, collection and research have been restricted, and additional safety protocols have been put in place; not just for public health and safety, but for concerns over the potential impacts of COVID-19 on bats as well. While public health professionals and researchers work tirelessly to understand and combat this novel virus, wildlife agencies and organizations have set to the task of examining the potential impacts on our native bats.

Charles Brown, the Division's wildlife biologist who oversees the bat program, explains: "The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA),

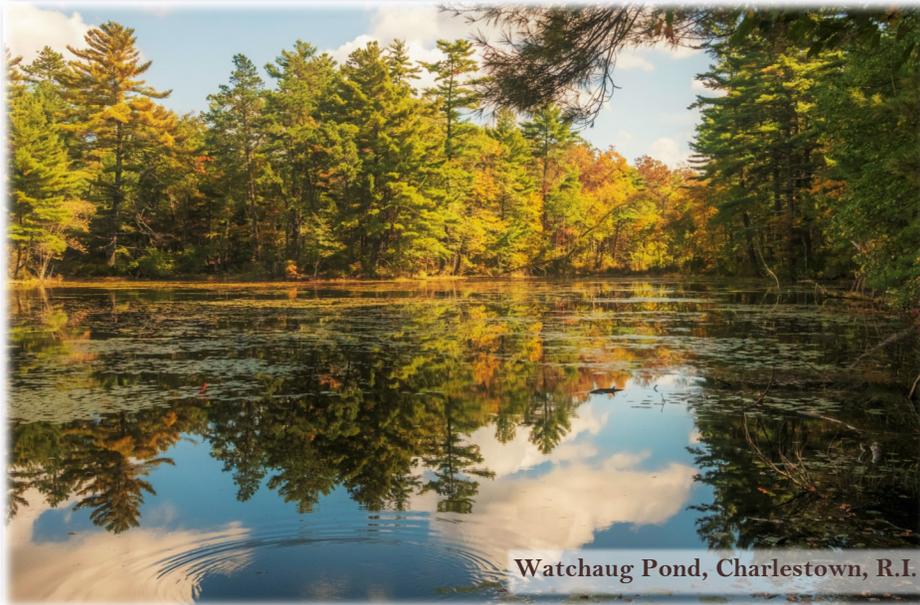


Eastern red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*)  
Photo: Troy Langknecht, 2016

Continued on page 8

THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to ensure that the freshwater, wildlife, and marine resources of the state of Rhode Island will be conserved and managed for equitable and sustainable use.



Watchaug Pond, Charlestown, R.I.



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This Issue Features:

BAT CONSERVATION CONCERNS OF 2020.....1
ONLINE MAPPING.....3
FALCONRY IN RHODE ISLAND.....4
REPORTING WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS .....7
AUTUMN FLY FISHING: THE HEARTS HOPPER.....11
2020-2021 HUNTING REGULATIONS GUIDE.....12

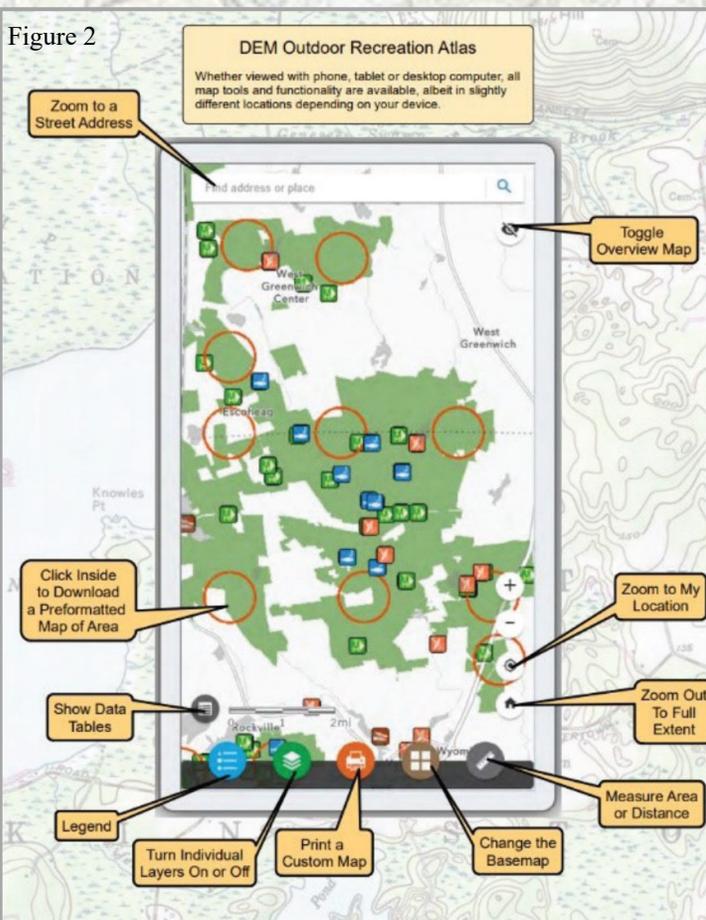
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# Online Mapping

MAPS YOU CAN USE AT HOME AND ON YOUR SMART PHONE TO HELP YOU ENJOY OUR STATE LANDS! By Paul Jordan, Supervising GIS Specialist RIDEM

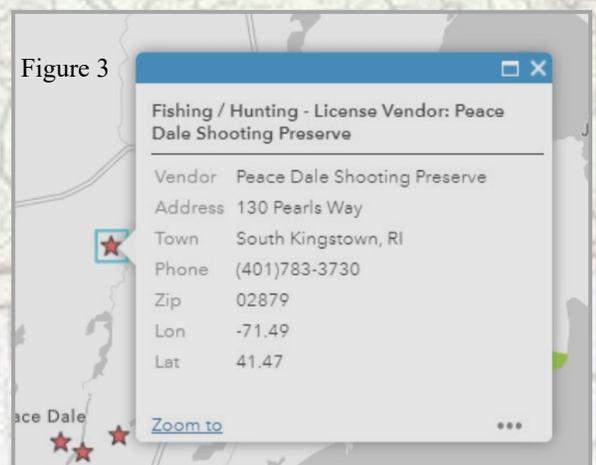
Looking for a new place to hunt or fish? Want to know where's the closest check station, or which WMA's are being stocked with pheasants? You can find all that and more in RIDEM's Outdoor Recreation Atlas (<https://bit.ly/3emoloY>). Our newest interactive map leverages nearly 30 years of GIS data collection throughout the state on properties owned or managed mainly by RI DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife for outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. The map includes boundaries to all WMA's and State Parks (developed and undeveloped), hiking trails, bikeways, boat ramps, check stations and much more. All this information can be viewed easily from a desktop or mobile device.

Following the link above, you'll see an initial screen like Figure 1. The view will vary slightly with the service you use to access the map. If you are unfamiliar with the map you can view or download a printable page like Figure 2 describing the tools available to help you find your way about. You can turn layers (information displayed on the map) on or off to see where they are in the state, view recent aerial photography or topographic maps, measure distances and even print out your own customized map to take along with you into the field.



Here are some quick tips for hunters:

- To see where you are in relation to property boundaries, use a mobile device to zoom to your proximate location by clicking “my location.”
- To be sure you are the sufficient distance from dwellings while hunting, use the measure tool. Click the measure tool, then in the pop-up window select the middle option (line distance) and set your units, default is in feet. Select your starting point (ie., an occupied dwelling) by clicking it, then double-click on the place you planned on hunting. If you want to restart your line, just click “Clear.”
- To determine contact information for license vendors, open Layer List. Click the drop-down arrow on the side of “DEM\_Outdoor\_Recreation\_V2” to show more options and select the box to turn on the “Fishing/Hunting - License Vendor” layer. Click on any vendor location (red star) for the name, address and phone number. (Figure 3)



We think you'll like our new map as it has a variety of uses for hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. If you have questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife at (401)-789-0281 or email Paul Jordan at [paul.jordan@dem.ri.gov](mailto:paul.jordan@dem.ri.gov).

# Falconry in Rhode Island

By: Jim Gwiazdzinski

1992 - the year falconry regulations were approved by the State of Rhode Island. Twenty-eight years later, Rhode Island lays claim to two master, two general, and three apprentice class falconers practicing the sport of falconry: *The ancient art of taking wild quarry with a trained raptor.*

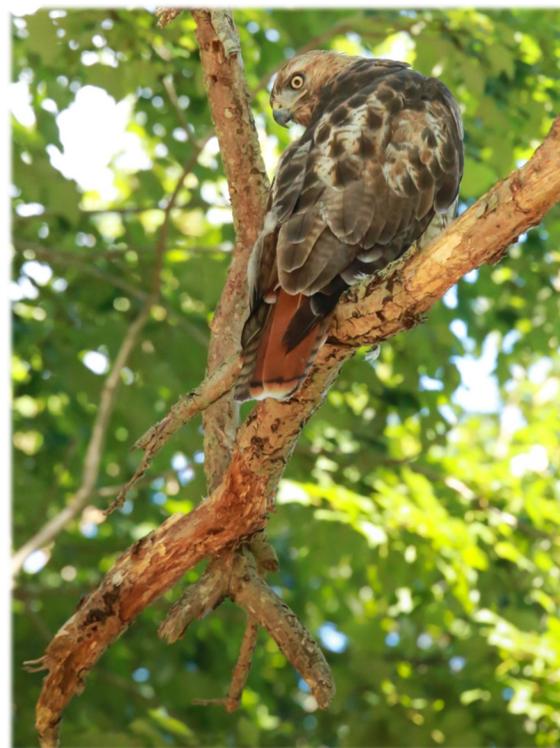
The landscape of the sport, 28 years past, was certainly limited and a bit different. In fact, at some juncture, to the best of my recollection, there was only one practicing falconer in the state - yours truly. With only seven falconers currently holding a falconry license, based upon the state's population of 1,059,361 (United States Census Bureau 2019) - there is roughly one falconer for every 150,300 Rhode Islanders.

What Rhode Island also has, aside from seven licensed falconers, are regulations that are bar none, the best falconry regulations in southern New England. Rhode Island falconers would be remiss if Paul Ricard was not the recipient of a big "Thank You". His tireless efforts and hours were instrumental to bring Rhode Island falconry regulations in place and approved by the January 1, 2014 deadline set forth by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). To put it into perspective, any state which did not meet this deadline date would not have falconry regulations. Essentially - the sport would not exist. Mr. Ricard was pinnacle and directly attributed to falconry regulations that were not only approved, but are truly "falconry friendly". Only the state of Maine rivals such regulations. Many hours on the phone and formal meetings with Mr. Ricard further enhanced regulations that allow the sport to be practiced true to its form. He was willing to listen to the input of falconers - a commendable attribute, that again, only made our regulations what they are today.

Falconry is the most stringent and highly-regulated hunting sport in the United States. Raptors, such as the Northern goshawk, Cooper's hawk, and sharp-shinned, are your three accipiter species and also referred to as "true hawks". Merlins, American kestrels referred to as "longwings", Harris's hawk, and of course, ole' reliable, the red-tailed hawk, have graced the glove of falconers here in Rhode Island. Falconry was well established in Asia and the Middle East by 2,000 BC. Still, to this day, many original facets of falconry, such as trapping, manning, training and hunting methods are practiced very much the same way.

Here in Rhode Island, depending on the bird at hand, a falconer can hunt rabbit, squirrel, duck, pheasant, European starling and English sparrow. Falconers in Rhode Island mainly hunt rabbit and squirrel with red-tails. Goshawks are flown as well, enabling a falconer to hunt "fur and feather"- rabbit, squirrel, duck, and pheasant. The speed, agility, and maneuverability to catch both fur and feather is demanding and requires a special bird to put game in the bag. A falconer hunting with a goshawk can hunt rabbits in the morning, and then provide a duck slip (duck stamp required) in the afternoon. All this is usually done from the glove and/or fist. On the other hand, a red-tailed hawk is hunted from the advantage of trees. A goshawk is up close and personal. To delve a bit further, a falconer who hunts with accipiters is more accurately called an austringer. The "gos" is the "Porsche" end of falconry, but they are also temperamental and unforgiving. Only an experienced falconer who is detail-oriented with weight management, training methods, and husbandry will prove successful. Peregrines may get all the PR and accolades for their aesthetics; but, the adult plumage of a Northern goshawk is downright beautiful.

The medium sized accipiter, the Cooper's hawk, bears mention - but is unequivocally the most difficult hawk to train. The "coops" lends itself to loss of hair and sanity. Kent Carnie, the curator for the Archives of American Falconry (AAF) and a



Red tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*).

Photo courtesy of J. Gwiazdzinski

bonafide falconry legend, leveled with me, well over a decade ago, here in Rhode Island in my backyard. While enjoying some seared scallop I just pulled off the grill, he turned to me with a smirk and said: “Jim, if falconry only had the Cooper’s hawk to offer, I would not be a falconer.” At the time, I was trying my hand at my first “coops”... not really what I wanted to hear with my first go around with this miniature velociraptor.

It is important to note that the AAF, founded in 1986, is an important affiliation of The Peregrine Fund. Both entities are located at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho.

A cooper’s hawk is absolutely a perfect predator. This species is usually the bird that throws caution to the wind and comes screaming through your backyard at Mach 1, trying to pick a bird off your bird feeder. An awesome bird to fly, but hold on, and prepare for a bird that is inclined to push a falconer beyond his or her limits.

At the other end of the spectrum is North America’s smallest falcon: the American kestrel. A falcon that hunts within the 100 gram plus range, is an excellent falconry bird to pursue European starling and English sparrow. Both species are considered invasive and are not native to North America, so the sky's the limit regarding headcount. There is no hunting season. A falconer can pursue hunting with a kestrel until it begins to moult. Kestrels are smart, agile, and a determined bird of prey. They’re a quick learner and take well to hunting with a falconer. Dare I say, the kestrel can exhibit a personality of sorts.

Last, but certainly not least. There is of course a favorite, the red-tailed hawk. These birds of prey, a prolific breeding species in Rhode Island, are reliable, steady, athletic and can make a day of hunting most entertaining. Watching a “red-tail” cork screw down a tree in pursuit of a squirrel is downright exciting and fun. Red-tailed hawks are the entry point for many apprentice’s falconry and can also be where a diehard falconer continues his or her falconry. No other bird has been flown more in the sport. Because red-tails are conspicuous, common and abundant in nature, they do not always get the respect and accolades they deserve.



Rhode Island Falconers (left to right): Jim Gwiazdzinski, Anson Smith, Noah Croy and Jack Billings. Photo courtesy of J. Gwiazdzinski

All this being mentioned, in order to hunt with these talented birds of prey, first thing’s first. Acquiring a falconry license. Of first order: finding a sponsor. Finding a sponsor is extremely important for an upcoming apprentice because he/she is at the mercy of the sponsor. Trapping, training, manning, and methods of falconry are passed down from sponsor to apprentice. Finding the right sponsor is imperative for an upcoming and unsuspecting apprentice. A competent, successful sponsor will pass along competent, successful falconry. Just the opposite can be detrimental to an apprentice. A responsible sponsor is constantly looking over the shoulder of the apprentice and holding the apprentice to the highest standards and expectations of the sport. Upon the apprentice finding a sponsor, he/she must take the state-issued falconry test. An 80% or better is required. Passing the test, in many ways, is just the beginning. There are still a plethora of hoops that need jumping through. Equipment needs to be purchased, including, but not limited to; a scale (weight management), leather (preferably kangaroo leather). Any falconer worth their salt, prides themselves on making their own gear, such as anklets, jesses and lures. Also needed are a

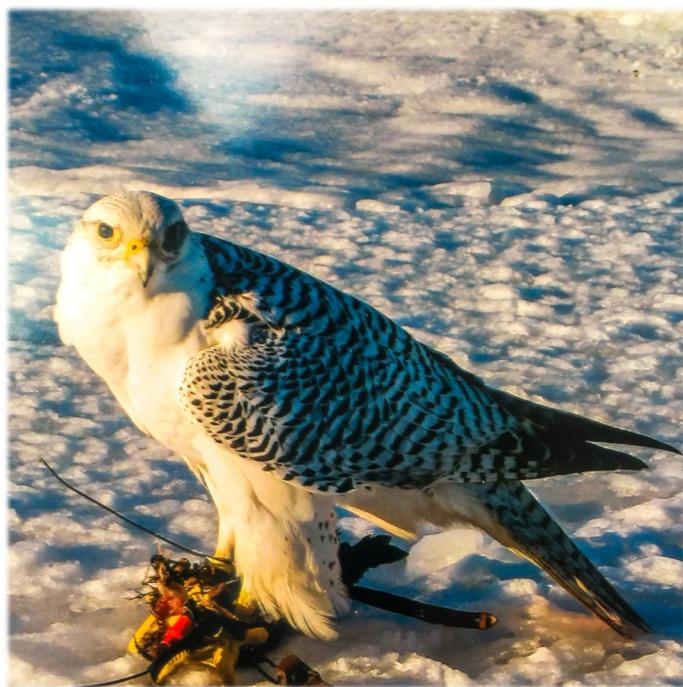
gauntlet, falconry bells, hoods, hawking bag, perches, bath pans, the list continues, but I'll refrain. And then there is of course, the mews (not to be confused with the Mews Tavern in Wakefield), and/or hawk chamber. This chamber is constructed to house the bird. Once completed, it also needs final approval from the RIDEM and namely - Sarah Riley, the falconry coordinator. Sarah also administers the state-issued test at the Division of Fish & Wildlife Great Swamp Field Headquarters.

With all these requirements fulfilled, the fun begins. Apprentices in Rhode Island, as mentioned previously, have the privilege of trapping wild, first year, immature red-tailed hawks. On the contrary, falconers in the nearby state of Connecticut do not share this privilege. Here again, a sponsor is an integral part of the sport. A sponsor will now dedicate hours upon hours of assisting the apprentice with trapping, manning, training, and ultimately hunt with the new charge. The sponsor will pass along techniques and information to enhance the success of a first-year bird and a first-year apprentice.

Finally. You found a sponsor, passed the test, bought and made equipment, built a mews, tallied many miles and hours in order to trap an "immy" (first year red-tailed); manned, trained the newly trapped bird for the pinnacle moment. Capturing game with a trained raptor. Falconry is no easy feat, nor a passing fancy. I consider myself extremely fortunate to hold a falconry license. The birds of prey I have had the privilege of hunting with, and the experiences I have had in woodlots and fields near and far for over twenty years, are not something I take lightly. I've also met all sorts of falconers from all parts of the United States and Europe as well. A personal highlight was traveling to Spain. Upon invitation, I attended a book opening for: *The Red-tailed Hawk - The Great Unknown* by Beatriz E. Candil Garcia. In return for contributing to the book, Ms. Garcia flew me to Madrid. I met falconers from all over Europe. Staying in a B&B on the side of a mountain, in the town of San Lorenzo de El Escorial was the icing on the cake. During my seven day stay, I was treated to all parts Spain, both on and off a tourist attraction list. Traveling with European falconers and Ms. Garcia was nothing but a treat. My visit also solidified the fact that American falconers are on the cutting edge of the sport. American falconry adheres to regulations that are above and beyond the far reaches of the world. For example, some countries allow a prospective falconer to simply buy a license and a bird of prey. This mentality certainly lends itself to pet keeping and collecting birds, rather than falconry.

I also feel extremely fortunate to have worked and currently work with folks closer to home, such as Rhode Island's Division of Fish and Wildlife personnel. Specifically, individuals such as Paul Ricard, Jay Osenowski, and a name from way back when, Mike Lapisky. I, of course, could not forget to mention and thank Sarah Riley. She has fielded endless phone calls, updated a wealth of falconry forms, administered tests, and bestows an exorbitant amount of patience to a handful of folks engaged in the obscure passion that is falconry. There may only be a handful of falconers here in Rhode Island - but make no mistake, falconry is alive and well.

Due to our excellent falconry regulations, falconers are able to practice the sport as it is meant to be practiced. A falconer can immerse his or herself in the great outdoors with a bird of prey. Whether a woodlot or field, falconers witness firsthand the connection and intricacies of all things wild. Tom Cade, an avid falconer, field biologist, and Cornell Professor, referred to falconry as "advanced bird watching." He also acknowledged it was much more. Mr. Cade, who passed in February of 2019 at 91, also co-founded the non-profit conservation organization The Peregrine Fund, in 1970. The inception of the "P Fund", as it is referred to by falconers, was to restore the Peregrine Falcon from the brink of extinction on the East Coast. Make no mistake, falconers played a vital role. Monitoring hack sites and captive breeding



Male white gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*)  
Photo courtesy of J. Gwiazdzinski

methods are just a couple noted contributions. In 1999, at the World Center for Birds of Prey, Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of Interior, removed the Peregrine Falcon from the Endangered Species List. It should also be noted that when Audubon magazine published “Champions of Conservation” in 1998, amongst a list of notable names such as: Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson, four falconers were also noted: Tom Cade, Heinz Meng, and John and Frank Craighead.

Falconry has made its mark in history. Without doubt, it has made a positive impact on the protection and conservation of birds of prey. The hunting bond that exists between falconer and hawk or falcon, is unique and timeless. It is well worth all the legitimate hoops placed before an aspiring falconer. Few experiences compare to entering a woodlot in the early morning hours with a trained raptor. The world as we know it melts away into the backdrop; it is only a falconer and their bird. For millennia, the very same scenario has transpired. It has been said: *“In all of man’s association with the birds of prey there has been none more intimate than that of the falconer’s with his hawk.”* - I couldn’t agree more.

❧

## Report Wildlife Observations to RIDEM Using New Online Reporting System

The RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife requests the public’s assistance in reporting observations of wildlife throughout the state. Observations from citizen scientists help our state biologists understand the distribution, abundance and health of our native wildlife.

To report your observation online, click the appropriate button below and select “open in browser”. If you expect to report observations frequently, we recommend downloading the FREE Survey123 app on your smartphone. You only need to download the app once. Click on the appropriate survey button below and select “open in the Survey123 Field App”, the application will automatically download and you can enter future observations from the application on your phone! **For more information go to: [www.ri.gov/reportwildlife](http://www.ri.gov/reportwildlife).**



**Herp Observer** (Year-round) Report your sightings of frogs, toads, salamanders, snakes and turtles to the RIDEM’s secure database. All observations go directly to our State Herpetologist to provide information on distribution and abundance of reptiles and amphibians in Rhode Island.

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/herp-observer-fs.pdf>

### Wild Turkey Brood Survey (July 1st–Aug 31st)

Report your summer sightings of wild turkey hens, toms and poults (chicks) to RIDEM biologists. Turkey brood observations help provide information on the fecundity and health of turkeys in our state.

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/wild-turkey-brood-packet.pdf>



### Summer Deer Survey (Aug 1st–Sept 30th)

Report your sightings of white-tail deer seen during the late summer to help state biologists calculate the distribution, density and reproductive success of deer in Rhode Island.

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/9b5b29b86b1e4544a644b78d7d383906?open=menu>

### General Wildlife Observations (Year-round)

The Division of Fish and Wildlife also collects observations of: Bobcat, Bear and Coyote. Please include the town, date, address or nearest road, and observed behavior (cross road, in yard, etc.). Send to

[DEM.DFW@dem.ri.gov](mailto:DEM.DFW@dem.ri.gov)





*Top:* DFW staff Jen Brooks and Sarah Riley, with a volunteer, examine a bat wing to age it and check for signs of WNS.

*Middle:* calipers are used to measure the bats arm length.

*Bottom:* a big brown bat is banded and ready for release.

Photos by Mike Stultz.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Northeast Bat Working Group all issued recommendations early on in the pandemic that those agencies or persons involved in the direct handling of bats refrain from doing so until more is known about the possible risk of reverse transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus from humans to native bats. The concern is not only for the potential direct impact that the coronavirus may have on bats, but also that if the coronavirus enters and becomes established in the native bat population, it may potentially create an additional reservoir to host the coronavirus that causes the COVID-19 disease. There is no evidence at this point to suggest the disease can be passed from bats to humans.”

With that said, it means that this year we have had to restrict permitting of bat-related research, and establish explicit protocols for Nuisance Wildlife Control Specialists and Wildlife Rehabilitators permitted to work with bats. It also means the Division will not be trapping and banding bats for the first summer in ten years. For those of us who have come to look forward to this aspect of our job as a valuable, rewarding, and rare experience, it has been a disappointing field season, but we know how crucial it is to be cautious during this time.

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#### *The Bat Monitoring Season - 2020*

“They’re getting ready in there – I can hear them” I whisper to the biotechnician, Chelsea, who has worked for DFW on the bat project for the last four years. She nods, keeping her gaze trained on the barn doors in front of us. I strain my eyes to keep focus in the near darkness, shifting them slightly every couple of seconds to prevent “night blindness”. We’re watching for a quick bolt of movement out of the building’s cracks and crevices. Movement so quick that if you blink, you could miss it.

We are out in a relatively remote part of Rhode Island conducting a bat maternity roost survey. In the summer months, female bats of some species gather together in large groups known as maternal colonies to give birth and raise their young (called “pups”). They usually return to the same locations; in Rhode Island, that may be a man-made structure like an attic, barn, or other outbuilding. During the day they congregate together and rest, and in the evenings, they filter out into the night in search of food: night -flying insects like moths, beetles, lighting bugs, and mosquitoes.

We can hear them inside the barn scratching around and squeaking at each other, as though nervously queuing up to go on stage; a sure sign the action is about to begin. I find myself holding my breath in anticipation. There is a moment of

silence, then suddenly, the first one drops down from the top left corner of the barn door and soars in a low arch right between the two of us. I let out a little squeal of delight – I can't help it. Chelsea laughs and clicks the counter. The first little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) has made an appearance. We settle in to wait and watch for the rest.

\*\*\*

These exit counts are an important part of monitoring the number of breeding females in an area, thus providing information on population trends. Communal bats, like the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) and the little brown bat, have been particularly hard hit by White-Nose Syndrome (WNS), a disease caused by a fungus that can damage or deteriorate their wing membranes, cause respiratory issues or failure, critically disrupt their hibernation, and can be fatal. It can spread quickly throughout a hibernaculum and devastate bat populations. Estimates suggest WNS may have killed around 80% of the bats in the Northeast United States, and since being found in the US for the first time in upstate New York in 2006, it is believed to have caused the death of over 6 million bats in North America. For this reason, and other human – caused disturbance, bats have become a focus for many wildlife agencies to protect against further losses.

#### *Bat Monitoring and Banding in Years Past*

Maternity roost exit counts are not the only method of population monitoring DFW conducts. Since 2010, the Division has also conducted hibernacula surveys in the winter and, as previously mentioned, bat mist netting and banding in the summer.

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It's July 2019, and six of us stand outside a large, rustic barn seated on the edge of a rolling green field skirted by stone walls and hedges and ending at the forest line in the distance. It's the picturesque New England farm. Light is fading fast and we need to be quick about readying the equipment; we push open the big barn doors and walk in. There is a smaller room off to the left which appears to be a storage space for large and rusting farm equipment. High above us among the beams, we hear the tiny squeaks and scratches of dozens of little brown bats.

We break off into groups, some of us setting up the mist nets and being careful not to tangle them or get them stuck on the wooden fence. The fine mesh netting is arranged like large loose pockets that the bats occasionally fly into and get caught, so we can remove them from the net, collect the data, band them, and release them unharmed.

The other group sets up the harp trap; an interesting design which uses thin monofilament fishing line stretched vertically between telescoping poles, somewhat resembling a harp. Below the lines is a tarp fashioned into a sort of bag; when a bat flies into the lines, it slides down into the bag and is trapped, to be scooped out for processing. While the nets and trap go up, another person is setting up the processing station – laying out the scale, data sheets, the strings of tiny metal bands, and the calipers- to measure the bats forearm length.

By the time everything is in place, darkness has fallen and the evening quiets as the last of the songbirds settle down for the night. Off in the trees, we can hear katydids chirping away. Occasionally one of us suddenly flails and slaps an arm or leg – the mosquitoes are out in force.

It's not long before the first bat zooms by just above us and disappears into the night. Then another, and another. Mere minutes go by and we have our first capture, and everyone jumps into action. We lower the net and get to work freeing it from the net. Once out of the net, the bat is tucked into a toilet paper tube and carried to the processing station. The tubes are stapled at one end to create a sort of pocket, and after a bat is placed inside, the top is folded over to keep it enclosed. This keeps them calm, and allows us to safely and securely transport them.

Soon enough we have another bat in the second net. We work quickly to minimize the amount of stress and handling time. As soon as it is safely out, the nets go back up. Careful and diligent efficiency is of utmost importance.

Wearing my electricians' gloves, I carry the tube over to the processing station and turn on the scale. Excitement is mounting in my chest and my hands shake slightly. I take a deep breath and exhale slowly, calming my nerves. I need to focus and be careful. Bats are spirited, agile, and surprisingly strong for their size; if I don't pay attention, it could get free or, much worse, fall from my hands and get injured.

The toilet paper tubes are pre-weighed so that they can be placed on the scale, with the bat inside, and we can more easily weigh the bat. Next, I unfold the top of the tube and peer inside, the bat blinks at me and stares, looking everything like a tiny gremlin. Then it starts yelling. You'd never imagine such a little thing could make so much noise; a series of sharp clicks in quick succession, so loud you feel them in your eardrums. Message received: it is not pleased with the situation.

I gently coax the bat out and get it into my hand. This is the



Charles Brown demonstrates to DFW Staff Gabrielle DeMeillon and Sarah Riley how to remove a bat from a mist net. Photo: Chelsea Thomson

first bat I've processed this season and I need to remember how to them; gentle but firm, constantly correcting its position in my hand so that it can't wiggle away or bite my glove. It's a female, I reposition my hands again so I can carefully pull out her left wing and get it between my thumb and pinky. I grab the calipers and measure her arm, reading the number off to Chelsea to record on the data sheet. I hold her wing over a headlamp to look at her metacarpal-phalangeal joint to assess her age; the joints do not appear to have fused together yet, indicating that she is likely a juvenile. We look over the wing membrane as well to see if there is any scarring indicative of WNS damage, or any past injuries.

Next is the band – Chelsea reads the number off as she hands it to me. Such a small band is difficult to grab with a gloved hand, meanwhile holding the squirming bat in the other. I focus my headlamp on the wing and put the band around the forearm, carefully squeezing it closed so that it is not too tight. It should still be able to move slightly on the arm, but not be so loose that it can fall off. Once it's just right, we double check that we've gotten all the information needed, and once confirmed, she's ready to be released. I walk out and away from the barn and hold her up in my hand, letting her get her bearings. She is still and quiet for a moment, then briefly hangs upside

down on my glove, and in the next instant, she drops away and flies into the night.

As I watch her go, my heart swells with joy and I am once again awestruck by these incredible animals. No matter how many times I go through this process, the amazement never subsides. Their unique physiology, life history, ecological impact, migration patterns – everything about them is a point of fascination. I take a moment to reflect on just how lucky I am to have this opportunity... but the moment doesn't last long. "We got another one!" someone yells out from the barn. I turn on my heel and head back to do it all over again.

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### *Looking towards the Future*

Despite how "up in the air" everything seems to be right now, there is some good news. The Northeast Wildlife Disease Cooperative recently announced that an approved SARS-CoV-2 test for bats has been developed. A bat's guano can be collected in a test tube and shipped to a lab, where it can be tested and determined if it is infected with COVID-19.

In September, Charlie and I went out to gather samples from 12 bats who had been in the care of the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association of Rhode Island (WRARI) since the beginning of the pandemic. Without a way to test the bats for the virus, they couldn't be safely released. Now, all 12 bats have tested negative for the virus and all have been released back into the wild.

They were released to an area with known populations of the same species so that they can have time to readjust to life in the wild before the winter. They may return to hibernacula in Rhode Island, or they may migrate with other bats to places with more natural sites, like the caves in Vermont or upstate New York. In the spring, they may return to Rhode Island, where the females can gather in their maternity roosts and raise their pups – continuing the cycle for future generations of bats.

And who knows, we may cross paths with them again someday, in some future field season.

RIDEM/Division of Fish & Wildlife : [www.dem.ri.gov/programs/fish-wildlife/](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/fish-wildlife/)  
 White-Nose Syndrome Response Team: [www.whitenosesyndrome.org/](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/)  
 Northeast Wildlife Disease Cooperative: [www.northeastwildlife.org/](http://www.northeastwildlife.org/)

# AUTUMN FLY FISHING: THE HEARTS HOPPER

By: Scott Travers, Hunter Education Coordinator, Division of Fish & Wildlife

Greetings and fair winds, fellow fly tyers, I hope your summer fishing was bountiful. Autumn is upon us and so is the uniqueness of this season's fly fishing.

This terrestrial pattern, which emulates a grasshopper reasonably well, is a great choice. With a foam body and deer hair, this will float with the best of them. Add to it the cleverly tied rear legs accompanied with the front sets, and you will have astounding movement through the water.

Be sure to add some floatant to the foam sections of this fly before fishing with it; this will help to block the foam from absorbing the water and keep it on the surface. Remember to use "closed cell" foam for the best buoyancy as "open cell" will trap water inside and eventually become semi-buoyant at best. Tie a few up and enjoy the beautiful colors that nature has to offer during this crisp and refreshing season.



## Ingredients:

- Hook size 8-10
- Thread – Olive
- Body – Olive foam
- Wing – Natural Elk or Deer Hair
- Legs – Barred Sili Legs
- Superglue (optional)

## Instructions:

- Mash the barb on the hook
- Secure the hook in the vise so the shank is horizontal running from left to right
- Start the thread an eye's distance back from the eye of the hook
- Make touching wraps with the thread extending back to the point of the hook
- Take a 3" foam strip, as wide as the gap of the hook, and insert the point of the hook into it about a 1/2cm from one end
- Slide the foam around the bend of the hook and stop where the thread begins.
- Rotate the foam piece so that the small section is hanging off the bend of the hook and the rest of the strip is under the hook shank heading towards the eye
- Hold the foam taught so that it touches the eye of the hook underneath it
- Using your bodkin, or another sharp object, puncture a hole in the middle of the foam where it meets the eye
- Pull up on the foam so that the eye of the hook come through the hole in the foam
- Fold the rest of the foam strip over the top of the hook shank heading towards the bend
- Cut both the top and bottom pieces of foam on an angle to match the length of the bottom part
- Superglue the top and bottom foam pieces together (optional)
- Your thread should still be hanging at the point of the hook
- Wrap the thread back slightly and make 3 to 4 tight wraps near the bend of the hook securing the foam both on top of and below the hook shank
- Take one piece of rubber sili legs, fold it in half, and cut into two pieces
- Take both pieces, fold them in half again, and cut into four pieces (approximately 4 inches long)
- Tie 2 pieces in on one side of the foam at the bend
- Make sure the 2 parts extending towards the bend of the fly are 3 times longer than the parts that are extending towards the eye of the hook
- Tie an overhand knot securing the two longer parts together (this simulates a joint in the rear facing legs of the fly)
- Repeat the process for the other side of the fly
- Advance the thread forward to the area of the point of the hook and make 3 to 4 more tight wraps.
- Advance the thread forward one more time to the area between the point and the eye of the hook and make 3 to 4 more tight wraps
- Take another piece of rubber sili legs, fold it in half, and cut into two pieces
- Take both pieces, fold them in half again, and cut into 4 pieces
- Take one piece, fold in half, and tie in on one side of the foam
- Both sections extending front and back should be approximately 1 inch long
- Cut the section that is looped so that both sections have 2 legs in each direction
- Take a section of deer or elk hair, about half the size of the gap of the hook
- Remove short and long hairs from the section
- Place the section of hair on top of the foam body with the cut end even with the start of the foam behind the hook eye with the tips of the fibers extending towards the bend of the hook
- Make 3 to 4 tight wraps over the same place where you tied in the front legs. The deer hair should fan out in the front.
- Trim the back end of the hair so it is even with the back of the fly
- Trim the front part of the hair so that it is even with the bend in the foam (head of the fly)
- Finish the fly with whip finish or several half hitches

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