



A Quarterly Publication from the Division of Fish and Wildlife, RI Department of Environmental Management

Division of Fish & Wildlife Offers Free Fishing Programs to Public

By Scott Travers

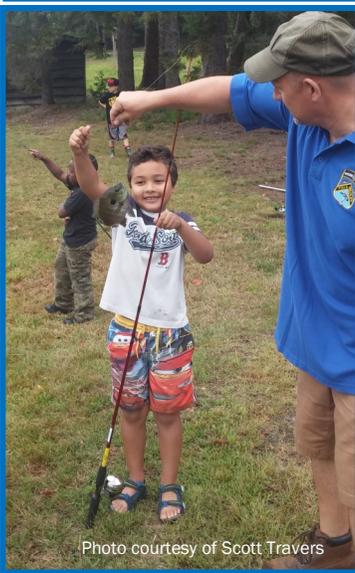


Photo courtesy of Scott Travers

An eager participant of a fly fishing event at Carolina trout pond presents his catch.

As the hunting season comes to a close and colder weather gives way to warmer spring days, our thoughts begin to refocus on another fantastic fishing season. While Rhode Island may not be the largest state, it has plenty of outdoor recreation and angling opportunities. The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has several programs that it will be expanding this season, offering even more opportunities for both beginners and experienced anglers to learn and improve their fishing prowess.

One of the programs offered by the DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife is a group fishing day at the Carolina Trout Hatchery. The hatchery has several ponds that are home to many freshwater species and also stocked as necessary. Picnic tables and port-a-johns are available, and one pond has a wheelchair accessible dock specially designed to accommodate all of our anglers. All rods, reels, and bait are provided for the participants. One or more staff members, along with intern support staff, are present at all times to assist each group. Every year, many people enjoy the program; school and youth assemblies, assisted living facilities and senior groups all participate in the fun. We hope to have even more groups participate this year.

A fly-tying and fly-fishing program is also offered. During the winter months, participants tie a series of flies to be used later in the season on their own, or at various fishing events throughout the state. The Division, in partnership with several non-government organizations, maintains both freshwater and saltwater fly rods and reels. An excellent volunteer staff is available to assist those interested in tying flies and learning how to fly fish in both freshwater and saltwater. The Division has fly-tying vises, materials, and everything you need to create and take home your own personal fresh and/or saltwater flies.

The Aquatic Resource Education program also offers several family fishing events for the public planned for the spring, including a kids' fly fishing day hosted by the United Fly Tyers Association for children interested in learning how to fly fish and a Big Brothers Big Sisters sponsored fly fishing event at Deer Creek Farm. A Women's Fly Fishing for Bass event on July 9th will be held at the Carolina Trout Hatchery, and preregistration is required by calling the Division's Hunter Education at 401-539-0019.



Photo courtesy of Scott Travers

A participant at the fly tying/fly fishing event last September learns how to tie flies from a Trout Unlimited Volunteer.

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THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to ensure that the Freshwater, Marine and Wildlife resources of the State of Rhode Island will be conserved and managed for equitable and sustainable use.



Janet Coit, Director
Rhode Island Department of
Environmental Management

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(401) 222-3070

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Last year the Division took over a program named "Come Clam With Me." A local shell fisherman assisted in presenting an informative look at bivalves, their importance in the environment, and how to harvest them. At the conclusion of the program, participants sampled a native dish cooked on site. The Division provides all of the equipment needed, including gauges, rakes, and bags. However, participants are welcome to bring their own equipment to use. Please note that preregistration is required for

these programs so that we can have adequate materials and staff on hand to assist participants.

The Library Loan program will also be expanded this year. Through this program, several libraries throughout the state are assigned fishing equipment, including fresh and saltwater rods, reels, and associated tackle, to loan out to members of the community. The fishing equipment is checked in and out of the library just like any other library materials.



The Division hopes to get more participants involved in future classes and events.



DEM partners with Rhode Island Turkey Chicks, an organization of female hunters, for a weekend of activities in September. Here, they stand with the equipment they used to harvest clams.

Free Fishing Programs Continued from page 2

While all of the programs offered by the Division's Aquatic Resource Education program have not been listed, we hope that we have piqued the interest of people who would like to know more about what we have to offer. Information on all our programs can be found on the website at www.dem.ri.gov. If you have a group that would like to participate in any of these programs, questions, or have an idea for a program that you did not see, please feel free to contact scott.travers@dem.ri.gov.

Watch Out For That Animal Crossing!

Spring is here! The warm weather that gets us outdoors also makes wildlife more active. There are many things that you can do to reduce the risk of wildlife-vehicle strikes this spring:

- Pay attention, particularly on heavily-wooded roads which wildlife may have to cross to get to other parts of their habitat.
- Drive the speed limit! Those limits are in place to allow you to slow down in time to prevent an accident from occurring.
- Slower moving animals such as skunks, turtles and opossums are at particular risk— so keep an eye out for them.

If you see an injured animal in the road, please call the Rhode Island Wildlife Clinic at: 401-294-6363. Your call could save its life!



The Division's Volunteer Program offers Great Opportunities to the Public

The Division of Fish and Wildlife is happy to announce the arrival of our Volunteer Program's very first newsletter! Pick one up at our West Kingston office to get caught up on all of the great projects with which the public has been involved.



Everything from trout stocking to bat surveys, Canada goose banding, to New England Cottontail rabbit surveillance. These volunteers get to experience what it is like to work on biological research projects conducted by the Division.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, please call 401-789-0281, or email our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer coordinator at Jennifer.Brooks@dem.ri.gov.



Photos courtesy of Jennifer Brooks

Bobcat Research in RI and Project Status Update By Sarah Riley

The forests of New England have been home to bobcats for centuries.

Although their reclusive nature makes them a rare sighting, every so often they can be observed hunting in backyards or walking across a street.

Bobcats are the most numerous and widely distributed wild felids in North America. They can be found in the boreal regions of Canada, almost every state in the U.S., and even down into southern Mexico. Over time, this species has adapted to live in a variety of habitats, including swamps, grass or shrubland, forest, mountains and agricultural land.

There are several sub-groups which vary slightly in habitat, appearance and prey selection. Those found in New England (*Lynx rufus rufus*) average between 13 and 30 lbs. and measure between 32 and 34 inches long. Their fur is reddish to tawny brown with black spots and stripes along their body; large white spots adorn the back of their tufted ears. The tail is “bobbed” and only about four inches long on average, although it can be a bit longer. Individuals found in the Northeast tend to have less spotting on their coat than bobcats in other parts of North America, causing them to be mistakenly reported as mountain lions.

In New England, the bobcat’s diet relies mostly on cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares, but they will also eat small mammals such as meadow voles, mice, chipmunks and birds. They will even kill and eat a white-tailed deer, attacking it while it is bedded down.

The mating season begins in February or March, and birthing will begin in May or June, when a female will have 2 to 5 kittens and rear them by herself. As they are primarily solitary animals, the only time they spend in groups is during the mating season, or when a mother is with her kittens. The kittens will often stay with the mother through their first winter, sometimes until the breeding season. The young males tend to leave the maternal home range earlier than their female siblings.

Recent research suggests a nationwide increase in bobcat populations. In 2009, 40 states reported evidence of stable or increasing bobcat populations. Florida was the only state which reported a decreasing population, which may be correlated with land development and habitat loss (Roberts and Crimmins, 2010).



Trail camera photograph of a bobcat in South Kingstown by the South Shore Management Area



“The bobcat of Green Hill” Local artist James Cashman illustrates a resident bobcat seen in South Kingstown.

Rhode Island seems to be witnessing a continued increase in population of bobcats. The Division has been monitoring bobcat sightings since 1999 and since then, there have been zero sightings in Bristol County, 20 in Kent County, 3 in Newport County, 37 in Providence County and Washington County received the most, with 57 reliable reports, often accompanied by photographs. Somewhat surprisingly, the most reports were from South Kingstown with 25 total reported sightings, more than twice as many as Westerly, which received the second highest number of reports.

There could be many reasons why there have been more bobcat sightings; habitat loss and fragmentation in their historic ranges could force them to live and hunt closer to people, or it could be that reports are more likely to be made in areas where people do not expect to see bobcats, such as the less-forested, coastal neighborhoods. Bobcats have large home ranges,

Continued on page 5

Bobcat Research in RI *continued from page 4*

requiring them to cross roads frequently, potentially causing them to be seen more often.

Due to their habitat choices and diffident nature, getting a reliable estimate and evaluation of the population is not easy. However, a team from the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the University of Rhode Island (URI) is working on just that.

The Division is working in conjunction with URI to research southern Rhode Island's bobcat population. Using radio collars and GPS technology, the biologists can collect data and analyze bobcat distribution patterns, home-range sizes and relative abundance. Information on how landscape patterns influence bobcat movement and habitat choice will be essential for the future of bobcat management in Rhode Island, particularly in the face of urban development.

Most of the research is being conducted in Washington County within the state wildlife management areas. Large box traps are set up in areas where the cats are likely to travel. Brush and leaves are put on and around the trap to



A bobcat is photographed while it leisurely rests in a back yard in Kingston, RI.

Photo submitted by Andy Bird

to disguise it and various baits and lures are put around the trap to entice the bobcats. Bobcats are very visually oriented, so the team has even put baubles hanging from strings around to appeal to their natural curiosity.



The research team from URI takes biological samples from a bobcat while it is anesthetized. Photo by C. Brown

So far, the team has caught and collared one bobcat, although there have been many photographs taken by trail camera around the traps (pictured below). Unfortunately, after four months of tracking, that bobcat was struck by a car and killed in February. Thanks to a group of concerned citizens, the collar was retrieved and the team was able to recover all of the data that was collected on the bobcat's movements. The team still has many traps and cameras set up to capture any movement through the research area in the future.

Rhode Island is fortunate to have such a beautiful and important animal living within its borders. It is essential that we properly manage this apex predator for the health of our wildlife communities and ecosystems. If you spot a bobcat in your area, or if you have questions about them or the research conducted by the Division and its partners, please call our office at (401) 789-0281.

Literature Cited

- Roberts N. M. and S. Crimmins. 2010. Bobcat Population Status and Management in North America: Evidence of Large-Scale Population Increase. *J. of Fish and Wildlife Mgmt*: 1(2).
- Young S. P. 1978. *The Bobcat of North America*. Wildlife Management Institute Publishing. 1st ed



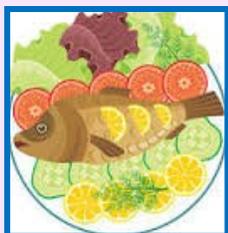
A trail camera captures a photo of a bobcat while it walks past one of the traps one evening.

Rainbow Trout with Fennel and Ginger - Lemon Vinaigrette

This is a fresh and zesty way to dress up that locally caught rainbow trout this season!
Get your 2016 freshwater fishing license and try out this delicious recipe!

Ingredients:

- 4 boned trout fillets rinsed and patted dry
- 1/2 cup chopped fennel bulb
- 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon chopped shallot
- 1 tablespoon ginger powder
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fennel seeds



Directions:

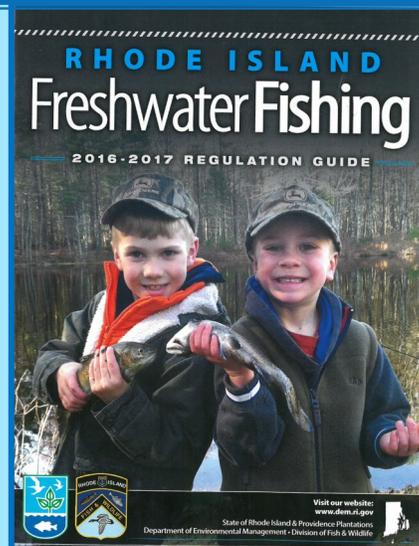
- In a bowl, mix the fennel, vinegar, shallot, ginger powder, lemon peel, and salt.
- Whisk in 1/2 cup olive oil until combined.
- Brush both sides of trout with oil, then sprinkle with salt and fennel seeds.
- Set a nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat. Pour in about 1/2 teaspoon olive oil, then wipe pan with a paper towel.
- Set fillets skin side down in pan.
- Cook, turning once with a spatula, until surface is lightly golden and fish is opaque in center of thickest part, 5 or so minutes.
- Transfer each fillet to a plate. Whisk vinaigrette to combine and then spoon over fillets. Enjoy!

Freshwater Fishing Regulations Abstract for 2016-2017 now available!!

Pick up a copy of this year's freshwater fishing regulations at our Great Swamp Field Headquarters in West Kingston, at the DEM headquarters in Providence- Office of Boat Registration and Licensing, or at locations that sell fishing licenses.

The abstract can also be found on the DEM website at:
<http://www.eregulations.com/rhodeisland/fishing/freshwater/>

If you have questions, please contact the Division at 401-789-0281.



Kid's Corner! Presented by the Aquatic Resource Education Program

SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

We have seen winter turn into spring and watched all of the snowmelt and rainfall fill up our ponds, rivers, lakes and **vernal pools**. Vernal pools are bodies of water that appear each spring because of these "April showers," but shrink or disappear in the late summer, fall and winter. These seasonal ponds are important to many frogs, toads, salamanders and insects who need a safe pond to lay their eggs. These seasonal ponds do not hold water all year round, so that they cannot be home to fish which would otherwise eat the amphibian and insect eggs. This habitat insures a safe "nursery" for those species.



Vernal pools are fragile habitats that many species rely on to birth their next generation. However, these habitats are often overlooked because they are only temporary bodies of water and may not be protected from development or other human-caused disturbance.

There are plenty of vernal pools all over the state, big and small. One of the best known and protected is located at Kettle Pond Visitor's Center in Charlestown, RI. For more information, please call the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Kettle Pond: 401-364-9124.

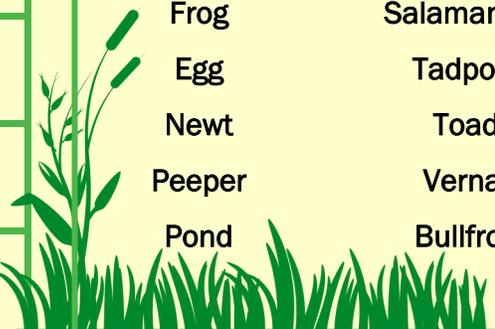
Can you find all of the words hidden in our springtime word search?

E	B	U	L	L	F	R	O	G	P
D	D	T	T	S	P	E	V	E	M
W	A	W	A	E	P	I	E	G	U
T	E	O	E	D	N	O	R	G	J
N	S	P	T	L	P	P	N	I	G
F	E	G	O	R	F	O	A	D	I
R	E	D	N	A	M	A	L	A	S
R	A	I	N	K	P	Q	W	E	P



Can you find these words?

- | | |
|--------|------------|
| Jump | Rain |
| Frog | Salamander |
| Egg | Tadpole |
| Newt | Toad |
| Peeper | Vernal |
| Pond | Bullfrog |



SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY

17th: Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to the Hunting and Freshwater Fishing Rules and Regulations: 7 p.m. in the Community Room at Warwick Police Department, 99 Veterans Memorial Drive, Warwick. For additional information, contact Ashley Schipritt at 782-3720.

JUNE

3rd: Firearms Familiarization for Hunters Course: 6 to 10 p.m. at the Fish and Wildlife Education Office at 1B Camp E-Hun-Tee Place, Exeter. Participants will learn about different types of firearms. Space is limited, to register please email Scott.travers@dem.ri.gov, or 401-539-0019.

4th: Fly Fishing Express: 9am-3:00pm. Hop aboard the Old Colony train for a saltwater fly fishing safari. This class is designed for those with fly fishing experience who would like to tweak their skills as they fish remote areas along Aquidneck Island. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more information, email kimberly.sullivan@dem.ri.gov or call 401-539-0019.

11th: Women's Day at the Range to be held at the Great Swamp Shooting Range. This event is free of charge and no range permit is required. All equipment will be provided by the Division. To register, please email Jessica.Pena@dem.ri.gov or call 401-539-0019.

18th & 19th: Land Navigation (Map and Compass) two day course at the Camp E-Hun-Tee location. Register by calling 401-539-0019.

25th: Introduction to Freshwater Fly Fishing, 9am-3:00pm. Learn about the sport of fly fishing through this all day seminar where you will be taught how to fly tie, cast and fish a stocked pond. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more information, email kimberly.sullivan@dem.ri.gov or call 401-539-0019.



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