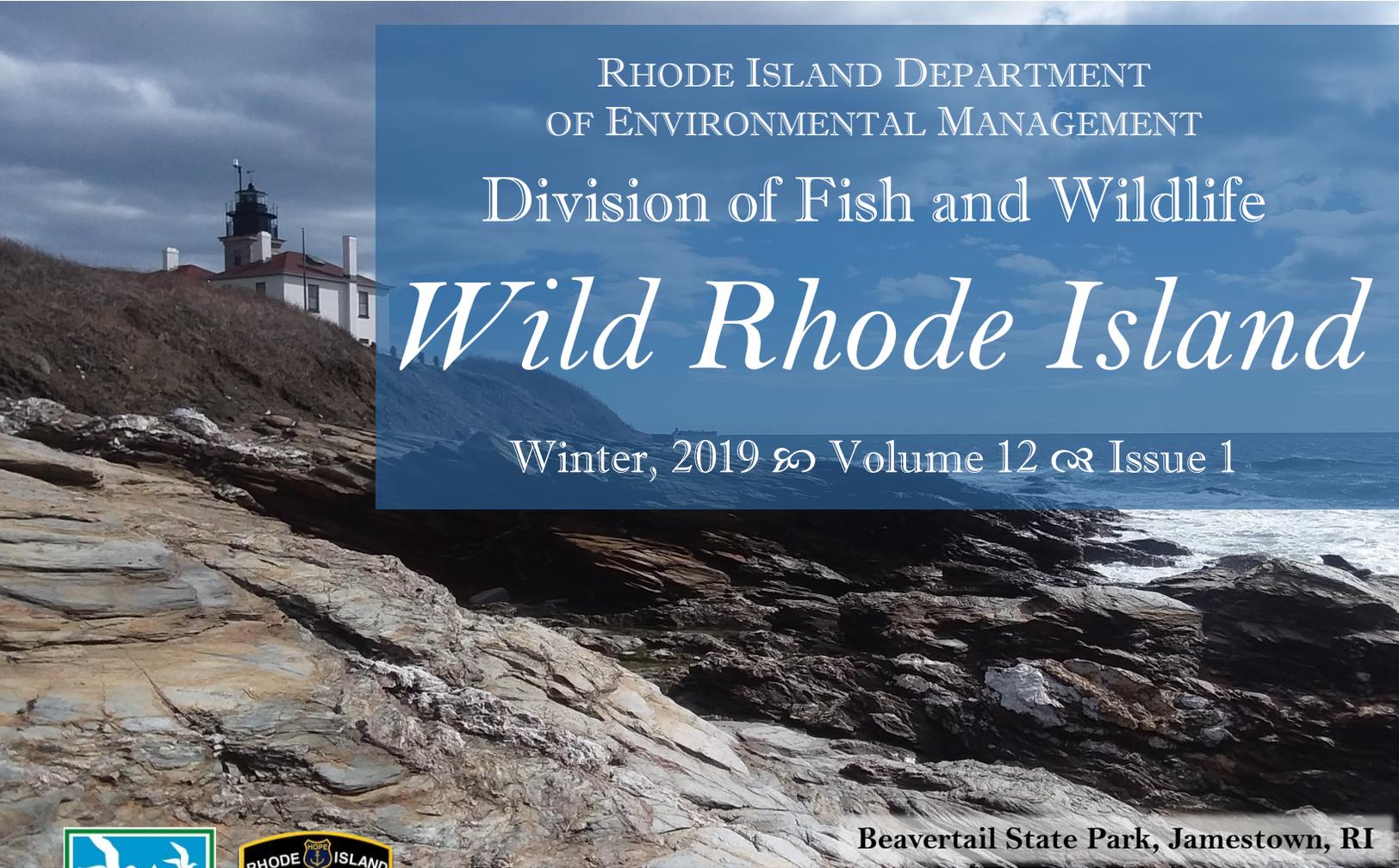


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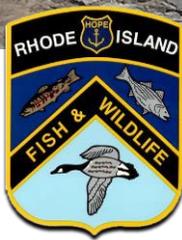
Division of Fish and Wildlife

Wild Rhode Island

Winter, 2019 ∞ Volume 12 ∞ Issue 1



Beavertail State Park, Jamestown, RI



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Beavertail State Park.....	3
Ice Fishing in RI (continued).....	4
Why We Shouldn't Relocate Wildlife.....	6
Wild Rhode Island Explorer.....	9
Tales from the Trails.....	10

BRAVING THE COLD: ICE FISHING IN RHODE ISLAND

WRITTEN BY COREY PELLETIER, DFW

FRESHWATER FISHERIES

What is fun about sitting out in the cold on a frozen waterbody, waiting for a fish to bite? This is a common question from those who have never been ice fishing, and even some who have. The idea of being out on a frozen lake or pond in mid-winter, in cold temperatures, and sometimes harsh weather conditions, seems like a daunting activity. Not to mention sitting in these conditions for hours just to *hopefully* catch a few fish. There is not one answer to this question, but a variety that are unique to the anglers who are passionate about this winter fishing experience.

From those who spend every weekend of winter out on the ice, provided safe conditions, to those who venture out only once, the values of the experience



PICTURED LEFT: COREY WITH A
LARGE MOUTH BASS.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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.

Beavertail State Park, Jamestown, RI



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For a free subscription to *Wild Rhode Island*, please email Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov

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This Issue Features:

ICE FISHING IN RHODE ISLAND.....4



Rhode Island is a great place for ice fishing during the cold winter months; read about it from the perspective of an avid ice angler.

WHY WE SHOULDN'T RELOCATE WILDLIFE.....6



Have you wondered why wildlife relocation is not allowed in RI? Learn about why it's not a good idea.

WILD RHODE ISLAND EXPLORER!.....9



The DFW has a new children's publication featuring family-friendly events and programs, games, puzzles, and more!

TALES FROM THE TRAILS.....10



Learn about the fun of using a trail camera, as well as the many uses for this technology.

NEWS FROM DFW.....12



Keep an eye out for these upcoming DFW events and programs

 Follow us on Twitter @RhodeIslandDEM

 Visit our Facebook page @RIFishWildlife

 **Made from 100% recycled material**

BEAVERTAIL STATE PARK, JAMESTOWN, R.I. FEATURED STATE LAND, RIDEM PARKS & RECREATION

Beavertail State Park, located in Jamestown, Rhode Island, is known for offering some of the most beautiful vistas along the New England coastline. The park attracts people from all over the country to enjoy its pristine environment. Beavertail also provides some of the best saltwater fishing in the area, along with hiking trails and a naturalist program that attracts hundreds of people each year. Beavertail is a great place for wildlife viewing, recreational hunting and fishing, and is an important location for DFW research.



BIRDWATCHING: This state park is well-known for its excellent birdwatching. Off shore, it is common to see rafts of eider, black ducks and, in the winter, it is one of the only places in the state

Harlequin ducks. Photo courtesy of Peter Paton



you can see harlequin ducks (featured on the 2018 - 2019 R.I. Waterfowl Conservation Stamp). The shrubby habitat along the trails provides food and cover for songbird species, and is a great place for birdwatching during the spring and fall as it is frequently used by migrating birds as a rest stop along their journey.

FISHING AT BEAVERTAIL: Whether fishing from shore or in a boat, the waters off of Beavertail are a great place to catch striped bass, bluefish, black sea bass, false albacore, and black fish.

HUNTING AT BEAVERTAIL: Beavertail is open to archery deer hunting, with a special permit from the Jamestown Police Department, in addition to a R.I. hunting license and applicable deer tags. It is also a popular location for waterfowl hunting for sea ducks, such as black ducks and scoter.

DFW BAT RESEARCH: Biologists from the Division of Fish and Wildlife use this state park to monitor bat activity during the late summer and fall. Acoustic detectors that can record ultrasonic bat vocalizations are used to determine which bat species are found there, and what time of year and climatic conditions may influence their migration behavior. Many of Rhode Island's bat species have been detected there, including big brown bats, red bats, hoary bats, and silver-haired bats. Like birds, bats will use the coastline as a guide during migration; this often takes them over Beavertail State Park.



ICE FISHING IN RHODE ISLAND CONTINUED FROM COVER



Largemouth bass are often targeted when ice fishing

vary from angler to angler. This activity is a great way for family and friends to escape during the cold months and spend some time outdoors.

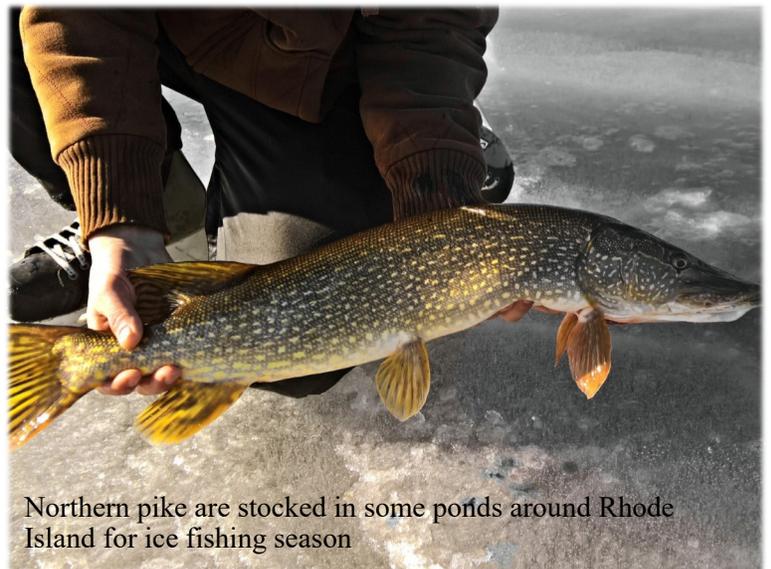
Often during winter, one can find a day that is pleasant to be outside where the rays of the sun warm the body and the wind is non-existent. Ice fishing can be viewed as more of a social activity, accompanied by grills, hot food, and warming beverages, with the success of catching fish a bonus.

Some anglers have one goal in mind while ice fishing: catch enough fish to take home and fill the freezer. Whether jigging for panfish or setting tip-ups with live bait for perch and bass, fishing through the ice can be a productive method for

catching a quantity of fish for the table. Advanced ice anglers will stay on their feet, drilling holes across vast areas of ice to locate schools of fish, sometimes using electronics to identify fish within the water column. Regardless of skill level and equipment, ice fishing can be a fun way to catch a healthy meal during the winter months.

Of course, ice fishing cannot be overlooked as a way of targeting large trophy fish; species such as northern pike, largemouth bass, and walleye are commonly targeted for their size and fight. Using tip-ups rigged with large live baits such as golden shiners, white suckers, and fallfish can entice large gamefish to strike. Ice fishing for these larger species, although not as frequently caught as other panfish, can be very exciting to catch using tip-ups and handlining. Catching trophy fish through the ice often takes a lot of patience and persistence, but can make for memorable moments and great photo opportunities. Trophy ice fishermen often spend long days on the ice, sometimes from sunup to sundown, even fishing through the night for the chance of catching their personal best. If you are willing to put in the time and sit through some unfavorable conditions, a chance at catching a trophy fish will be in your favor.

Personally, ice fishing fulfills many voids during the winter months. First and foremost, it is my favorite way to be outside and get exercise during a time of year with short daylight hours and little to do outdoors. Being out on the ice with friends, whether on a bright sunny day or during a snow storm, greatly helps to mitigate the winter doldrums. I generally practice catch and release and target larger gamefish species, such as northern pike and largemouth bass. All the time spent waiting becomes worthwhile when you feel the line pull from a hooked fish, followed by the back and forth, pulling and retrieving of line, and finally the glimpse of the fish through the hole in the



Northern pike are stocked in some ponds around Rhode Island for ice fishing season

Purchase a Rhode Island fishing license today by going to: www.ri.gov/dem/huntfish

ice. Filled with exhilaration, these moments make you forget everything else around you.

The one caution I must add about ice fishing is safety and understanding the conditions that provide safe ice. On a yearly basis there are accidents with anglers falling through the ice due to pushing the limits or not taking the time to make sure the ice is safe. Weather patterns provide a general idea of ice conditions, but ice quality and thickness can vary drastically between locations. Examining the ice edges along a lake or pond can indicate the recent freezing or melting trends as the edges are the first to melt. The general guideline for ice safety is greater than four inches of hard ice for walking, hard ice being the key factor in reference to the ice quality. When ice undergoes patterns of freeze, thaw, and snow cover, the result is called white ice which has less structural stability than hard, black ice. Certain areas such as river outlets and springs will not freeze consistently with surrounding ice and may only be covered by unsafe skim ice. In safe practice, using an ice chisel or auger to test ice thickness in the areas you are walking and fishing can prevent accidents.



If you are a beginner who is uncertain on how to get started, where to go or what to use, find someone who is more experienced, or research the basic steps. The equipment necessary to get started does not have to be anything fancy or expensive. Simple supplies including a few tip-ups or a jigging rod, a hand auger, and some bait is all that is needed. Inform yourself about local waterbodies, many which have designated fishing accesses that can be found online, in a State freshwater fishing regulation guide, or from your local tackle shop. Make sure the ice conditions are safe by reading weather forecasts, checking online reports or calling local authorities. Cold weather months do not have to be spent stuck inside in front of the television. Get out and get some exercise, fresh air, and catch some fish!



WHY WE SHOULDN'T RELOCATE WILDLIFE

ADAPTED FROM "WILDLIFE
RELOCATION IS PROHIBITED IN
RHODE ISLAND" (RIDEM, DFW)

Nearly every day the Division gets a call from a member of the public about a nuisance wildlife issue. Often, they will ask if a biologist can trap the animal and release it elsewhere. Although this may seem like the simplest, most humane solution, for many reasons it is not, and may cause more harm to the animal, other animals, habitats, or ecosystems. We need to consider what will happen *after* we relocate an animal to a new place; where will it find food and shelter? How will it impact, or be impacted by, the habitat? What parasites and diseases could it bring with it? All of these questions need to be addressed when considering trapping and transporting wild animals, and are ultimately why relocating wildlife is prohibited in Rhode Island.

THE SPREAD OF WILDLIFE DISEASES

A landowner has seen a raccoon in the neighborhood and sniffing around their garbage cans. They believe the best solution is to live trap it and bring it to a State Park where they have seen other raccoons; where it "belongs." What they may not have considered is that raccoons are often found in

higher densities in developed areas, due in part to the availability of human-related food sources. These high-density areas can cause the spread of disease. Raccoons are a host species to many communicable diseases, such as rabies, *Baylisascaris* roundworm, parvovirus, tularemia, and more. These diseases can quickly spread between animals and have devastating consequences on a population. A person relocating wildlife may think they are helping one animal, when in reality they are putting all animals in the area at risk. And it is not just raccoons that are at risk; many wildlife species that are considered nuisance wildlife are "rabies vector species" (RVS), such as woodchucks and skunks. Others carry additional highly-transmissible diseases, such as canine distemper, which can be found in fox populations. Handling wildlife can endanger people as well; zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that can spread between animals and humans. Capturing, handling, and transporting wild animals can put people at risk of exposure.

IT CAN HARM OTHER WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS

A skunk has been hanging around a bird feeder, eating what has fallen to the ground. The homeowners have children and a dog, and are worried that this skunk is going to become a problem, so they ask a friend to trap it and bring it to a wildlife refuge on the coast.

Once released, the skunk now must struggle to find a food source in this unfamiliar territory. It makes its way out to the beach dunes and happens upon some eggs in a ground nest; despite the adult birds' valiant attempts to chase it away, the hungry skunk breaks open and eats every egg. Unfortunately, these were piping plover eggs, and the whole clutch was lost.

Relocated wildlife, faced with the threat of starvation and competition from other wildlife, will seek food and shelter wherever available. Raccoons, skunks, and opossums commonly raid bird nests for eggs. Releasing them onto

- **Zoonotic Disease:** An infectious disease which can be spread between animals and humans
- Moving animals randomly around the landscape will increase the chance of introducing diseases into uninfected populations.
- You cannot tell if an animal is sick just by looking at it. An animal that appears healthy may carry diseases or parasites which can be transmitted to susceptible species, domestic animals, or humans.
- Traps and cages used to capture or transport animals can become contaminated by disease-carrying organisms, creating potential exposure risks to humans and pets.



Big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) Credit: Charles Brown



American mink (*Neovision vison*) Credit: Sarah Riley



Eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) Credit: Brian Tefft



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) Credit: Michael Schipritt

wildlife management areas and refuges will increase nest predation of nesting songbirds, gamebirds, and shorebirds in these areas.

SOMEONE ELSE IS ALREADY LIVING THERE

A family of coyotes has taken up residence in a suburban neighborhood because there are no other coyotes to compete with, and there is plenty of food available in gardens, at bird feeders, and near trash bins. Before long, the neighborhood becomes fed up with the coyotes walking through their yards, and asks the Division to trap them and release them in a State Wildlife Management Area.

With few exceptions, it is likely that there are already individuals of the same species living in the relocation site. Any newly introduced animals must compete for resources that the current residents are utilizing. Competition for resources increases stress and conflict. Many wildlife species are territorial and will vigorously defend their territories against others; animals without established territories are at an immediate disadvantage and the odds that they will survive are low.

Coyotes are territorial, and will kill other animals who pose a threat to them, including foxes and other coyotes. Trapping and releasing those coyotes into a Management Area is unlikely to end well for them.

Additionally, it is likely that the nuisance animal, relocated elsewhere, will continue this behavior in someone else's yard or neighborhood. It is worth considering how we feel about our neighbors releasing nuisance wildlife onto our property. We have to ask ourselves; Are we resolving our issue by creating an issue for someone else?

RELOCATED ANIMALS MAY TRY TO RETURN

It's June and a snapping turtle is burying her freshly-laid clutch of eggs in a backyard. The homeowner is worried that the turtle will stick around to tend to the eggs, so they decide to drive it to a large pond down the road and drop it off. Later that day, the mother turtle attempts to return to her home pond, and is hit by a truck during her journey.

Faced with unfamiliar surroundings, competition for limited resources, and possibly having been separated from their families, relocated animals will often attempt to return to home ranges or breeding sites. Many animals have excellent homing skills. Some animals such as squirrels, raccoons and box turtles have demonstrated that they can travel great distances to return to the point of capture. Many will not survive the journey as they attempt to cross roads, are taken by predators, or meet some other demise.

THE THREAT OF INVASIVE SPECIES TO NATIVE WILDLIFE

We must protect and support ALL wildlife

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

and their habitats. Introducing animals into places where they do not currently live may cause unintended consequences for other species that have adapted to life without them. The islands of Narragansett Bay and Block Island, because of their isolation, lack some or many of the furbearer species that occur in mainland portions of Rhode Island. The birds, amphibians, and other wildlife that naturally occur there thrive in part because of the absence of certain predators or competition. The introduction of a new predator or competitor can negatively impact resident wildlife, and removal of an introduced species, once established, is often impossible.

FINDING A SOLUTION

Most situations involving nuisance wildlife come down to two issues: food and shelter. Whether it is access to unsecured garbage, food left around bird feeders, or an ideal denning site under an unsecured shed, wildlife will always find a way to take advantage of the resources that people, intentionally or unintentionally, provide for them. Relocation alone will not resolve the issue because the underlying cause has not been addressed. Identifying and eliminating potential food sources and blocking access to potential den sites are the only ways to prevent recurring problems.

Wildlife issues can be very frustrating and sometimes all other prevention and mitigation efforts fail. Dispatching an animal is never an easy resolution, but if the alternative is leaving an animal in unfamiliar territory to face the dangers of predation, starvation, exposure and disease, euthanasia is the humane option. Property owners, as provided for under RIGL 20-16-2 may kill, by legal means, any furbearer on their own property that is killing livestock, domestic pets, or damaging property or crops, provided that the carcass of the animal is turned over to the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife. In situations where capture and

removal of nuisance animals is necessary, they will be referred to a Nuisance Wildlife Control Specialist (NWCS). Nuisance Wildlife Control Specialists are professionals licensed by the RIDEM who provide wildlife control services to the public for a fee (these costs are not dictated by RIDEM and may vary depending on the wildlife species, number of animals to be trapped, etc.). NWCS are experienced in species identification, capture, handling, exclusion, regulations, and humane, legal euthanasia techniques. A list of licensed NWCS is available from the RIDEM, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

RIDEM/DFW does not remove or relocate wildlife. If you are experiencing a problem with wildlife you can visit the RIDEM website at www.dem.ri.gov/Topics/Wildlife. There, you will find fact sheets on a variety of wildlife species which can provide you with information on the species in question and advice on how to prevent or eliminate problems. If you need additional information please contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife at DEM.DFW@dem.ri.gov or (401)-789-0281. Staff biologists can provide suggestions to help you resolve your problem.

“Most situations involving nuisance wildlife come down to two issues: food and shelter. Identifying and eliminating potential food sources and preventing access to potential den sites are the only ways to prevent recurring problems”

Visit the following websites for more information about mitigating wildlife issues:

www.dem.ri.gov/programs

www.wildlifehelp.org

www.aphis.usda.gov

“Relocation alone will not resolve the issue”

Unless appropriate steps are taken, such as removing food sources, installing adequate fencing, or sealing off entryways into or under structures, it is only a matter of time before some other animal moves in. Food sources may or may not be obvious. Pet food dishes left outside, unsecured garbage cans or compost piles, bird feeders, fruit trees and vines all provide food for wildlife. Sheds elevated on blocks, porches, uncapped chimneys, and poorly maintained structures all provide potential shelters.

Tales From The Trails: The Fun and Function of Trail Cameras

Written by Sarah Riley

The hike out to the trail camera is the always filled with anticipation and, for me, it's one of the best parts. *What did I get this time? A deer? a raccoon? A bear?!* With mounting excitement, I set down my backpack and pull out my laptop and SD card reader flash drive. I unlock the camera case, flip off the power switch and pull out the card while my laptop powers on. *Maybe, just maybe, I finally got video of that*



bobcat we've been getting calls about! I open the card file; six videos! A good haul for having checked it days before.

I start the first video; a gray squirrel runs through the frame, and the video plays on without much else. The next one is of the bushes swaying in the breeze. Disappointing, but not unexpected; better to have a sensitive camera than

not.

The next is a coyote that stops to smell the scent lure I've put out. It takes its time walking around the stump and sniffing the ground. I haven't gotten many coyotes

visiting this site, and a smile breaks across my face. This one looks familiar. I make a mental note to compare it to the other videos to see if it might be the same one.

Another video of a squirrel, then one of a bumbling opossum that looks as though it's been eating well, and finally a fox hurriedly passing through. I wonder how old it is, and if it's a male or a female. I replay the video looking



Trail cameras can be used for wildlife research, such as these bobcats photographed at a URI live trap station, or they can be used by hunters and wildlife lovers to scout wildlife.

for indications. I wonder if it smells the coyote and doesn't want to risk waiting around. I wonder if it knows the squirrel

has been through.

I save the files and clear the SD card. Although it's a 32GB card, I don't want to risk running out of space. I return the card to the camera, flip the switch back on and check the





Above: A buck in velvet walks right in front of the camera as he passes through. I watched him nibble at the sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) that grows in abundance on that part of the trail.

bait sites and live trap stations to gather data even if they don't successfully trap the animal. And some people just use them because they like to see what their wild neighbors are up to.

The DFW frequently gets photos and videos submitted from cameras all across the state. In addition to our own cameras, this provides more data on Rhode Island

Pictured below: A coyote triggers a camera trap at night. Even in darkness, some trail cameras can take excellent photos. This coyote seems to visit this site every few weeks.



battery: 89%. Good, plenty of juice. The camera stops taking night videos when the power gets below a certain percentage, and I don't want to risk missing anything. I haven't had it long enough to know exactly where that line is, so better safe than sorry. On the plus side, the six rechargeable batteries I use to power it last several months without issue. I lock up the camera, pack up my gear, and enjoy the hike back home.

Although I use mine for research in the field, a trail camera is not just for use in the "deep woods." It can be used right in your backyard. Many people have cameras next to their house and get excellent pictures of all of the same wildlife I do, and without having to go so far to get them. Here at DFW we often suggest that folks put up a trail camera if they are having issues with nuisance wildlife, or can't figure out what animal is making that strange sound at night. The one I have is on the expensive side, but folks who don't need such a high-tech camera can get one at a sporting goods store, or online, for much less.

Hunters use trail cameras to scout wildlife. It can be a way to track the growth and progress of animals for the harvest season. Researchers commonly use trail cameras at

wildlife, and improves our ability to help folks mitigate nuisance wildlife issues, since we know what species is likely causing the issues.

So, even if you're not a hunter or a researcher, consider putting a trail camera out on your property. If you're like me, you'll get a real kick out of the whole process; from the anticipation of what awaits you on the camera, to feeling victorious when you get a good photograph, and the pride you feel when you're able to share the that experience with friends and family. In our ever-changing and fast-developing society, trail cameras afford us a rare peek into the mysterious and beautiful world of the wildlife around us.

News from the Rhode Island Division of Fish & Wildlife



Practical Field Training for Hunters Now Available

The Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife's Hunter Education Program is now offering FREE Practical Field Training to augment our classroom and internet training. The field training is optional and is open to anyone who has completed a hunter education course or bowhunter education course.

To schedule and register: Please contact Scott Travers at 401-539-0019 or scott.travers@dem.ri.gov.

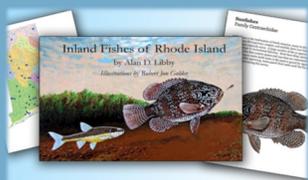
Visit the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management website for **information on all of our programs, news, events, volunteer opportunities, information, and more:** www.dem.ri.gov

- Hunting & Fishing Regulations
- Rhode Island Management Area Maps & Information
- Hunter Education Programs & Events
- Aquatic Education Programs & Events
- Division of Fish & Wildlife Volunteer Programs
- Wildlife Education & Outreach Programs & Events
- Hunting & Fishing Season Dates

Inland Fishes of Rhode Island on Sale Now!

This publication describes more than 70 fishes found in over 377 pond and stream locations throughout Rhode Island. With gorgeous color and black and white scientific illustrations, each fish is addressed with a detailed description and color location map.

Paperback: 287 pages, 8"x10" Price: \$18.75 (includes tax). Email DEM.DFW@dem.ri.gov for more information.



The Division of Fish & Wildlife **Annual Regulations Hearing** will be held this spring at the RIDEM Headquarters in Providence. A workshop will be held before the hearing to review the hunting, trapping and fishing regulation proposals, as well as to provide a Q&A session. Event date and time to be announced. Check the RIDEM website (www.dem.ri.gov) or call the DFW (401-789-0281) for updates.



WILD RHODE ISLAND

RI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE



GREAT SWAMP FIELD HEADQUARTERS
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