

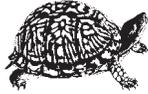


Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Monthly Report

www.mefishwildlife.com

284 State St., 41 SHS, Augusta, ME 04330 207-287-8000



April, 2015

MAINE WILDLIFE PARK



The Maine Wildlife Park held its annual Volunteer Appreciation banquet this week with 125 volunteers attending – a record crowd. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours of time and labor to the wildlife park each year. Commissioner Woodcock offered his thanks and appreciation to the crowd for the work they provide us, as did Information & Education Director Bonnie Holding. Fish Culturist Ashley Malinowski did a great presentation about Hatcheries and Stocking, paying specific attention to what goes on at the adjacent Dry Mills Hatchery. The wildlife park is aiming to open April 15th this year, snow cover and weather permitting.

I guess you can't always catch big ones!



INFORMATION CENTER

In March the front office of the Department received and replied to (approx):

- 3,417 Phone calls
- 2,125 Emails
- 255 Walk-ins



Missed an issue?

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Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Swan Island

Maine Wildlife Park

OUTREACH

Brittany Humphrey's self-proclaimed home away from home is out on the frozen lakes and ponds of Maine. A native Mainer, Brittany grew up in Gray-New Gloucester spending most of her free time enjoying the Maine outdoors. One of her favorite pastimes? Ice fishing - which is a good thing, because in her capacity as IFW's Outreach Coordinator, Brittany has spent her first few months on the job working with various organizations to provide opportunities for Maine's children and families to join her on the ice and learn more about ice fishing.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has been utilizing the Hooked on Fishing Program as an outreach tool for nearly 20 years. A national program put out by the Future Fisherman Foundation, it was first established in Maine by former IFW staffer Charlie Mann. When Brittany started in the position with us last November, she took over as the State Coordinator for the program, a position I held for the past 10 years.

The Hooked on Fishing program provides curriculum that can be used by certified volunteer instructors in a variety of settings. The lessons cover not only fish biology and angling skills, but also activities to teach children about the impact their actions have on the environment, their role in conservation and about wise use of our natural resources.

The Department offers trainings periodically for individuals who are interested in becoming certified instructors. Maine has several hundred trained volunteer Hooked on Fishing instructors who make use of the program in communities throughout the state.

As the Department's Outreach Coordinator, Brittany is responsible for heading up several educational programs. In addition to the Hooked on Fishing Program, she is also managing the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program in Maine and is actively developing new programming to reach Maine's youth and families.

Over the past couple of months, Brittany has been busy at various ice fishing events and derbies working directly with children and families, all in hopes of passing along her passion for the sport. Thanks to many generous donors and sponsors, the Department is able to provide loaner equipment, bait, tackle and educational materials to those who attend Hooked on Fishing events. This past year, Cabelas generously donated a new ice auger to the program, which has been put to great use this season.

As the snow and ice begin to melt, Brittany will be shifting her attention to the upcoming open water season, so be sure to keep an eye out for opportunities later this spring. For more information about the Hooked on Fishing program or other IFW education programs, you can contact Brittany at:

brittany.humphrey@maine.gov.

~Written by Emily MacCabe



A note from Brittany: "It's a wrap on ice fishing season derbies & school trips! Here are a couple photos from March events- Kittery Trading Post Kids Derby on Lower Range Pond & Fishing on Lovewell Pond in Fryeburg with students from Molly Ockett Middle School. I would also like to extend a big thank you to Game Warden Lucas Bellanceau for all the help!"



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

March events:

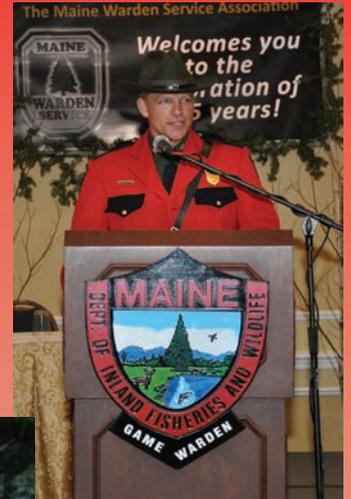
- Eastern Maine Sportsman's Show (photo at right)
- Warden Service 135th Anniversary event, Samoset Resort, Rockland
- 2015 Western Maine Fly Fishing expo, Bethel
- Advisory Council meeting, 3/27 at IFW Augusta.
- Maine Sportsman's Show, Civic Center Augusta
- Maine Wildlife Park volunteer dinner, Spring Meadows Country Club, Gray



MAINE WARDEN SERVICE



The Maine Warden Service celebrated its 135th anniversary on March 13th at the Samoset Resort in Rockport, Maine. The celebration included their annual awards banquet giving special recognition to game wardens for their performances in 2014. The day also included the recipient of the Maine Game Warden of the Year, which was awarded to Game Warden James Fahey of Bangor. >



< Corporal Mike Joy instructed the dive team this month on cold water rescue held on Sebago Lake.



< Corporal Andy Glidden has been covering a few snowmobile crashes in the Katahdin region. One involved a snowmobile and a groomer. The operator of the snowmobile suffered a broken leg.



< Warden Paul Mason was involved with searching for and investigating a truck stuck on a maintained snowmobile trail in Milo. With the assistance of Game Warden Sarah Miller, the wardens located the truck and later summonsed the owner for operating a motor vehicle on a snowmobile trail.

RETIREMENT

Reggie Hammond started his career in the Maine Warden Service as a District Game Warden in the Saco/Biddeford District in 1990. He then transferred to Rangeley in December of 1993, where he spent the rest of his career as the District Warden, and, along with his wife Janet, raised their two children, Luke and Allison.

Wdn. Hammond's work ethic and unwavering fight to protect Maine Fish and Game resources led him to the highlight of his career in 2007, when he was named Warden of the Year.

Since a young boy, all he ever wanted to be was a Maine district Game Warden. Wdn. Hammond never forgot that and maintained a high level of passion for the job throughout his career, and kept resource protection a priority.



FISHERIES & HATCHERIES DIVISION

Long Lake Salmon Management - 2015 Update - Written by Frank Frost, Biologist

Long Lake in northern Aroostook County is a well-known destination for anglers seeking large landlocked salmon. Long has that rare potential for supporting a large, robust and stable smelt population; coupled with deep well-oxygenated lake habitat, Long Lake produces excellent salmon fishing. Sitting at the top of the Fish River Chain of Lakes, it is truly a gem among the best salmon fisheries in Maine and the Northeast U.S. In this same report a couple years ago, we discussed Long Lake in detail...the long-time great salmon fishery, the smelt runs and the factors that result in great conditions for salmon growth. This update will draw attention to some factors causing a reduced smelt population, which is causing markedly declining salmon growth.

We recently finished a complete ice fishing survey where anglers are interviewed and their harvested fish are measured and weighed. These surveys give us excellent information to manage sport fisheries. Long Lake has been surveyed nearly every winter this way for more than 30 years, providing a good base of information. In short, salmon growth is declining and the number of large fish is declining as well. Three year old salmon, the bulk of the winter fishery, are now nearly 16 inches in length - a decline of more than 3 inches on average since 2008 (see graph). The drop in size has been fairly steady the past seven years in response to a declining smelt population.

Why are smelt declining?

Long Lake's smelt population was surprisingly stable for many years, fluctuating less than most waters throughout the State. Smelt populations vary widely from year to year due to many factors, many of which are highly unpredictable. The number of salmon predators at Long Lake is one variable that has changed recently. While the number of stocked salmon has remained stable or slightly reduced, the number of wild salmon has surged in recent years. We think this is in response to relatively high water years that result in higher survival of young salmon – with more salmon preying on smelt, their preferred food, the prey have declined.

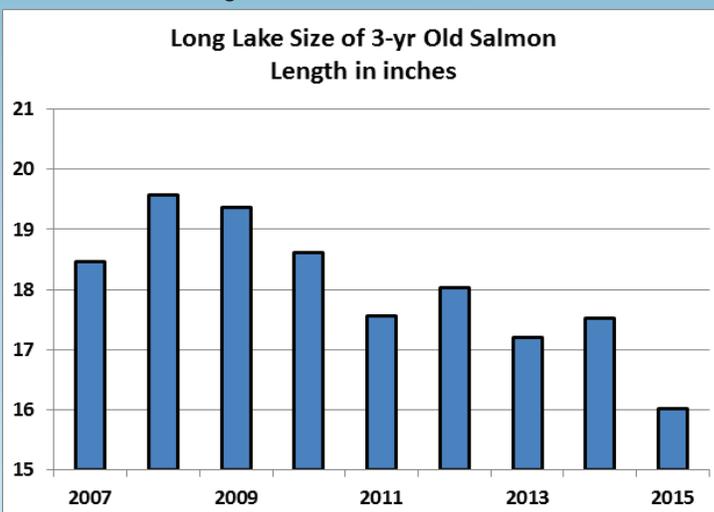
Salmon are not the only fish predator using smelt as forage. There is no question that yellow perch, an invasive fish in the Fish River drainage, has become a dominant species at Long and many other waters in the Chain. Any angler who has fished here recently knows that perch are easily caught in shallow and deep water when fishing for trout and salmon. Yellow perch were very low, barely detectable, during the initial survey in the 1950s but they have increased in the past 15 years to become a significant predator on smelt and a nuisance to anglers. Perch have certainly changed the ecology of Long Lake. Why they have become so abundant is unclear at this point but there is a movement of volunteers in Sinclair who are interested in helping the situation. This group, the Long Lake Rod and Gun Club, are now holding regular meetings on the first Tuesday each month.

Smelt dipping at Mud Brook

Another major factor influencing smelt abundance recently was a 2006 law change that opened Mud Brook to the dipping of smelt. Mud Brook is a large tributary that enters Long Lake at the end of Van Buren Cove. Since 2007, anglers have been dipping large numbers of the small, silvery fish while they are trying to complete their life cycle by spawning on

the gravel riffles. Coincidentally, salmon size has been declining ever since this changed occurred (see graph). Mud Brook is just one of about a dozen smelt spawning runs around the Lake; however, the amount of habitat used by smelt in Mud Brook totals more than all the rest combined. We feel the continued, heavy dipping of smelt during the spawning run at Mud Brook has resulted in a lower smelt population and less food for salmon.

The remedy for returning Long Lake to its full potential as a size-quality salmon water will be a complicated fisheries management problem. The immediate need is to reduce those factors that are negatively influencing smelt abundance, only a few of which are within our immediate control. There is considerable interest among anglers in Maine to manage certain waters for larger fish where biologically possible – in the past Long Lake has proven to be one of those waters.



WILDLIFE DIVISION

Roadway Caution! - *Written by Ryan Robicheau, Wildlife Management Section*

The arrival of spring brings with it increase movement of animals throughout the State. With it, the Department urges motorists to use extra caution in their travels to reduce the likelihood of collisions with animals.

The Wildlife Management Section works closely with the Department of Transportation to identify areas where seasonal animal movements result in an increase of collisions. These collisions are a public safety concern as well as a source of additional mortality for wildlife species.

Throughout the State, MDIFW and DOT work collaboratively to place signs to increase the awareness of motorists and urge them to slow down and drive safely. Please pass along the word to friends and family to use extra care when travelling this spring.



RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT SECTION

The Legacy of One Bear – Sara (ID 225) - *Written by Randy Cross, Biologist*

Wildlife biologists have been monitoring black bears in Maine since 1975. Over the course of this monitoring program, a few bears have been monitored for over 20 years. This is a short account of the legacy of one of those bears – Sara (#225) – who started her life in January 1972.

Sara was born in a warm den in January, just as hundreds of other bear cubs are born in Maine. This den would be her home for 3 months, where she would nurse, gain strength, and develop from a 12 ounce, nearly hairless creature; into a bright-eyed 8 pound miniature bear. When she left the sanctuary of her den that spring, she would follow her mother throughout the summer and den with her again through the next winter. Most likely, in June of 1973, weighing only 30-40 pounds, she left her mother for good and took on the challenges of surviving alone in the vast forestlands of northern Maine.

At the same time Sara was becoming acquainted with the woods of northern Maine, efforts were being made by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIF&W) to start a research project to gain a better understanding of bears in Maine. The section of woods that Sara bear was born into was chosen to be one of the study areas for the bear project. Biologists began capturing bears to monitor their survival, general health, and reproduction in 1975. MDIFW used this information to develop a bear management system and a monitoring program that is still used today to monitor the status of Maine's bear population.

Although MDIFW wildlife biologists began capturing bears in 1975, Sara managed to escape capture until August 11th, 1980. On that day she was captured with a cable foot restraint, given the study identification number of 225, and named Sara. She was the 225th bear captured since the study began. By this time, Sara was eight years old and had grown to 150 pounds. She was fitted with a radiocollar that emitted signal that could be used to locate her either from a plane or on the ground. From this point forward, Sara, as well as many other female bears, would be visited in her den each winter by biologists who would document her successes and failures at producing and raising cubs.

The following winter (February 19, 1981), researchers found Sara with two offspring just over a year old (yearlings) that had been born in the previous winter's den. This was likely Sara's second litter of cubs. One of these yearlings was a female (ID 236) who weighed a remarkable 63 pounds, which is strong evidence that natural foods for bears were in great abundance during the preceding summer and fall. This yearling received a radiocollar of her own so that when she left her mother in June, she could also be followed through her life, contributing valuable information to the monitoring project. When recaptured on March 24, 1983 Sara had nearly doubled her weight in the year since she had last been seen in the den. Snuggled under her were 3 healthy female cubs (ID's 454 (Clara), 455 (Belle), and 456 (Karen)). All 3 were radiocollared as yearlings the following winter and a matriarchal dynasty began to take shape.



This is one of Sara's great Granddaughters who now is wearing a collar of her own.

Sara had 11 offspring which produced 18 "grandchildren", 32 great grandchildren (5 are currently being monitored), 31 great-great grandchildren (7 are currently being monitored); and 13 great, great, great grandchildren (2 of which are being monitored). Overall, 105 different bears have been tagged that are direct descendants of Sara, representing 6 generations of bears. Unlike males, who instinctively will roam many miles from where they were raised, females reside very close to where they were born. All of the females in this family line live within a few miles of where Sara was first captured back in 1980. Today, sixteen of her descendants are equipped with radiocollars, and are providing information on the survival, health, and reproduction of bears in this study area. (see chart on last page to see Sara's family tree)



Ynonna (2214), born in 2005 to Josie (1048, Sara's granddaughter). The picture was from this year with her two female yearlings who got their first radio collar.

as of April 2015

SAPA CATZ

225 F

G-1 #160 ↓

G-2

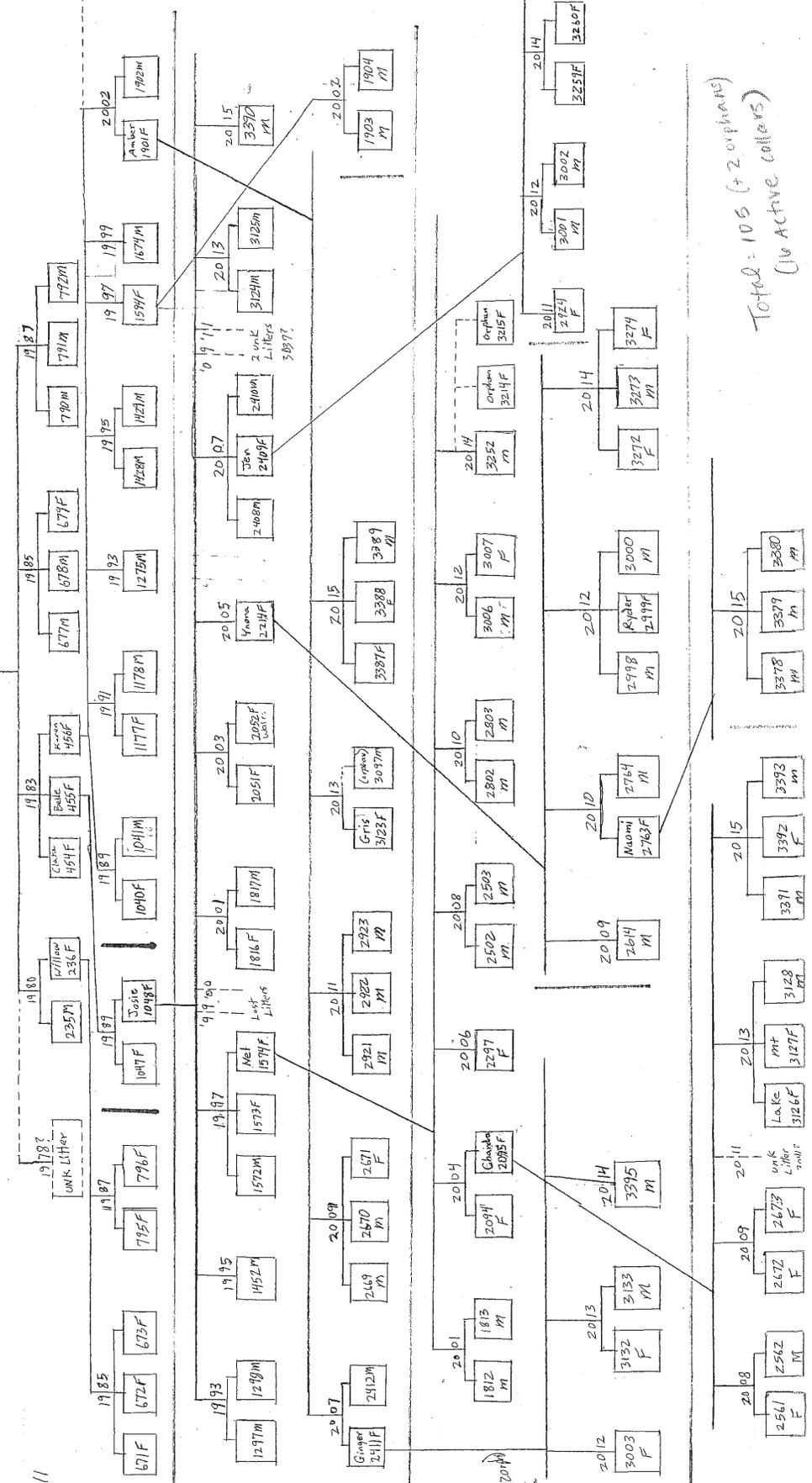
G-3 = 18' (2A)

G-4 = 32 (5A)

G-5 = 31 (+200M) (1K) 1K

G-6 = 13 (2A)

At least 2 more letters (04+06)
* 1 made 1/1/10



Total: 105 (+2 orphans)
(16 Active collars)