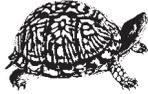




# Monthly Report

[www.mefishwildlife.com](http://www.mefishwildlife.com)

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



Friday, August 2, 2013

## FISHERIES & HATCHERIES DIVISION

### **Fishy Projects Along the Kennebec River – Region B** - *Written by Wes Ashe, Assistant Regional Fisheries Biologist*

The Kennebec River is a spectacular coldwater fishery that supports robust populations of landlocked salmon as well as brook trout, brown trout, and rainbow trout. The Kennebec River has several dams located along its length, and many sections of the river are unique in respect to their species assemblage, management strategy, and fish habitat. Currently, we have a couple of very interesting Kennebec projects that are now underway.

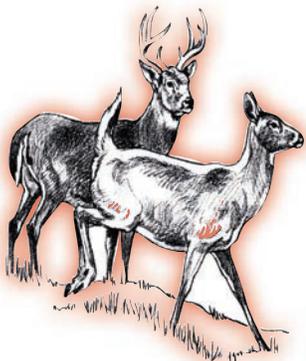
#### **Solon Reach – Radio Telemetry Project**

The Solon Reach (Williams Dam to Madison) is a 14-mile, picturesque stretch of river with spectacular landlocked salmon, brown trout, and brook trout fishing. This past spring, in collaboration with Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners, Region B began a radio telemetry project in Solon. To date, we have surgically implanted radio transmitters on 23 landlocked salmon, 16 brown trout, 10 brook trout, and 1 rainbow trout (we have also collected length, weight, and age data on over 100 trout and salmon). These transmitters allow us to track tagged fish as they move throughout the river reach in search of food, in response to temperature or flow, to spawn, or for any other reasons. These movement data will be an invaluable resource; providing Region B fisheries biologists with information to manage the Solon fishery more effectively with species-specific knowledge.



#### **Shawmut Dam – Investigating the Brown Trout Fishery Decline**

During the 1990's and early 2000's, the tailwaters of the Shawmut Hydroelectric Project (known to locals as "Shawmut") supported a nationally renowned brown trout fishery in the Kennebec River. However, this fishery was short-lived, and beginning around 2000, catch rates on legal (and even trophy) brown trout declined. In order to investigate the potential causes that contributed to the decline, Region B began a comprehensive, 2-year project in May 2013. The multi-faceted Shawmut project will: examine brown trout movement and mortality using surgically-implanted radio telemetry tags, evaluate the sport fishery through angler creel surveys, conduct an evaluation of two genetic strains of brown trout, and measure various habitat variables including temperature, dissolved oxygen, competitor/predator fish species, and water velocity. With these results, we not only hope to understand those environmental variables responsible for the brown trout decline, but also provide a means by which different genetic strains of brown trout perform with regards to movement, growth, and survival. Ultimately, this research should allow the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife to make more informed management decisions with regards to future stocking strategies in the tailwaters of Shawmut Dam.



Any Deer Permit Lottery!

Apply Online until  
August 15, 2013.

Drawing will be held on  
September 9, 2013

### INFORMATION CENTER

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

- 4,940 Phone calls
- 2,203 Emails
- 313 Walk-ins



**Missed an issue?**

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Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Swan Island

Maine Wildlife Park

## RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT SECTION

### **Bald Eagles – They’re Back!** - *Written by Charlie Todd, Endangered and Threatened Species Coordinator*

A statewide survey of nesting bald eagles during 2013 revealed the continuation of a steady, broad comeback across Maine. Numbers soared to a minimum count of 630 nesting pairs. The last comparable effort was in 2008 and tallied 477 pairs. Annual growth rates since that time slightly exceed 6% and are virtually unchanged from yearly increases that fuelled growth during the height of species recovery.

MDIFW began active surveys, research, and management of bald eagles in 1976. Prior to this involvement, only 31 nesting pairs could be found in Maine; only 5 were left in areas outside of the remnant stronghold in Down East Maine. Many landowners voluntarily protected nests. MDIFW applied Essential Habitat rules for 19 years to bolster those safeguards and worked cooperatively with private landowners to conserve and recover this national symbol. Substantial gains by 1994 were still localized in eastern Maine: >71% of the population was in Washington, Hancock, or Penobscot County.

The dramatic range expansion since, into other regions of Maine, now safeguards the population from local risks. Numbers and density of eagle nests continue to rise Down East, but the recovery is quickening elsewhere. The 13 counties combined, which had only 5 eagle pairs in 1975, now support nearly half of the statewide population. Recovery of endangered species is always a prolonged effort, especially when regional extirpation and significant loss of range are factors. After 31 years of recognition under the Maine Endangered Species Act, bald eagles were removed from Maine’s list in 2009.

Wildlife biologists and Warden Service pilots at MDIFW conducted 190 hours of low-level aerial surveys to monitor eagles in 2013. Agency personnel have amassed >12,000 hours of aerial surveillance of the population since 1976. Warden pilots Durward Humphrey, Charlie Later, and Dan Dufault are uniquely experienced for these missions and are also keen eagle observers. Tom Schaeffer, Allen Starr, Brad Allen and I were lead observers. A host of biologists completed the 3-person crews: Rich Bard, Erynne Call, Mark Caron, Danielle D’Auria, Kendall Marden, Amy Meehan, Cory Stearns, and Brad Zitske.

We monitored nests for eagle residency and breeding activity from mid-March to early-May. Occupied nests were rechecked in June and early-July to evaluate nesting success and numbers of fledgling eaglets. Nesting productivity statewide during 2013 still exceeds 0.8 fledglings per nesting pair: an indication that diminished regulatory protection after delisting has not handicapped eagle reproduction in Maine.

Staff checked the vicinity of all 1,637 individual nest locations (in 689 different nesting territories) found during a 50-year monitoring effort in Maine. A total of 140 nests were newly located in 2013 while searching other suitable habitats. Forty-one were in new nesting territories, and 99 others were alternate nest locations of established pairs that shifted locations since previous monitoring 1–5 years earlier.

Plots of all 768 nests found to be intact during 2013 can be viewed via an internet mapping service hosted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service – Maine Field Office. MDIFW maps nests, and USFWS provides consults. See <http://fws.maps.arcgis.com/explorer/?open=5aa77d8ff7bc419f82a1a26d5712262b>.

A federal law, the Bald Eagle – Golden Eagle Protection Act, now serves as the primary legal standard for bald eagles in Maine; <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/EcologicalServices/eagle.html>. National Management Guidelines and suggestions for avoiding disturbance to eagles are available at that link.

MDIFW staff will continue to provide technical assistance to landowners and conservation partners. Agencies and cooperators now own or hold easements to protect at least 250 eagle nest territories across Maine. This “safety net” helps to defend some eagles from constant threats on shoreline habitats. See the MDIFW website at <http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/birds/baldeagle.html> for additional information on life history, nesting ecology, and research updates of Maine’s bald eagles.



*Photo credit: Sharon Feidler*

## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

July found the Commissioner and Deputy on the road for five (5) public hearings to receive comments on the fishing regulation proposals. Hearings were held in Presque Isle, Millinocket, Ellsworth, Rangeley and Standish. Although lightly attended, the comments received at the hearings were informative.

An additional hearing was held in Hiram to discuss a petition that was received to restrict horsepower on Big Clemons Pond in Hiram to motorboats with no more than 6 horsepower. Many residents from around the pond came to express their opinions both in favor and opposed to the petition. The Commissioner will weigh all of the public comments received by the deadline of August 1st and make a determination whether or not to move the proposal forward for a vote by the Advisory Council.



*Among those taking comment from the public at the Standish hearing were Deputy Commissioner Andrea Erskine, Biologist Francis Brautigam, and Fisheries Director Mike Brown.*

## MAINE WARDEN SERVICE

On Tuesday, July 16th, Wardens Lefebvre, Warden Kulis, Warden MacCabe and K9 Morgan, Warden Judd, and K9 Tundra, and Sgt. Fowlie responded to the town of St. George to search for a missing elderly woman with Alzheimer's disease. The Knox County Sheriff's Department called the Warden Service. The two Warden Service K9 handlers and a State Police K9 handler searched the surrounding woods, Marine Patrol Officers searched the ocean shoreline by boat, Warden Kulis searched the nearby driveways and roadways and a nearby lighthouse, while Warden Lefebvre searched the residence and spoke with the husband. The missing woman was located by Warden Kulis walking down a nearby drive a couple of hours later. She was in good condition. She had a few minor scratches on her indicating that she may have spent some time in the woods or brush. She was checked over by medical personnel and then brought back to her residence to be reunited with her husband.



Warden Farrington worked on East Grand with Warden Powers and saw a fair amount of watercraft both fishing and recreating. They did see some very nice salmon and quite a few anglers were enjoying success. Some of them had a little too much success with one over limit being detected and addressed.



This was week seven of Warden School for Warden Luke Bellanceau. The class spent the beginning of the week on the range with the use-of-force team using all issued weapons systems. All members of the class met all firearm qualification requirements. Luke was issued his patrol rifle and shotgun as well. The mid part of the week involved some class time and a few different use-of-force scenarios with Warden Bruce Loring. The end of the week included some air boat training on the Kennebec River.



## Introductory Skills Weekend is almost here!

September 13 - 15, 2013 at Camp Caribou in Winslow, Maine

This 3-day workshop provides participants with the opportunity to complete four sessions throughout the weekend on topics of their choosing that are related to hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.

[www.mainebow.com](http://www.mainebow.com)



*IFW's Youth Activities Coordinator, Emily MacCabe, spent her Tuesday morning fishing in Auburn with the Boys & Girls Club, Androscoggin Land Trust and Mayor Jonathan LaBonte.*

## WILDLIFE DIVISION

### **Habitat Management Activities** - *Written by Ryan B. Robicheau, Lands Management Biologist*

The Wildlife Division actively manages State-owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in order to conserve and enhance habitat for a variety of upland and wetland species. Depending on the WMA, wildlife staff may be mowing, planting, harvesting timber, adjusting water levels, or performing other tasks designed to enhance habitat at the WMA.

This summer, the consistent rains have hampered some of the planned habitat work, but we have been able to mow some areas, restoring habitat for grassland birds. Next month, we will begin a wetland restoration project that will restore the natural flow of water on a wetland that was negatively impacted by prior uses. We also plan a dam drawdown at one of our waterfowl breeding areas.

Wetlands, like most ecosystems, are dynamic and they need change to thrive. Dam drawdowns are the tool we utilize to mimic natural cycles, and they provide many benefits to the wetlands.

Drawdowns can help to anchor and stabilize cattail mats, and allows the establishment of less aggressive, more beneficial aquatic plants. It also increases the number of plant and animals species in the wetland. It helps water quality by increasing the number of aquatic plants and reducing suspended sediments.

More noticeably, it improves wildlife habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, muskrats and other wetland wildlife, which allows for increased recreational uses such as waterfowl hunting, fishing and wildlife watching.

These are just a few of the many habitat management activities undertaken by the department to maintain and improve a variety of habitats on the Department's WMAs throughout the state. Even when we have wet springs and summers such as this, there are always opportunities to effect real change on the landscape, and the department works diligently to accomplish this.

### **Biologists and Volunteers Capture and Band Canada Geese** - *Written by Mark Latti, IFW Promotional Coordinator*

Biologists and volunteers recently wrapped up a busy season collecting and banding over 500 resident Canada geese throughout the state.

Banding is an important tool that biologists use to manage waterfowl populations, as bands that are returned by hunters give biologists information on migratory patterns, survival rates, hunting pressure and other factors. Each year, approximately 12-15% of the resident Canada goose harvest is comprised of banded birds. This data allows the department to adjust hunting season lengths and bag limits.

Resident Canada geese are different than migratory Canada geese in that they rarely travel more than several hundred miles from where they were born, and they return to the same feeding and nesting sites.

Due to their shorter migrations and association with suburban areas, they also are not as heavily hunted. They tend to breed earlier in life, lay larger clutches of eggs and have higher gosling survival rates than migratory geese.

Their higher survival rates and their breeding success is reflected in the daily bag limits for geese. During the early season for geese, which focuses on resident geese, hunters in the southern part of the state are allowed eight geese per day. In October, when migratory geese move through Maine, the daily bag limit is reduced to two geese.

In order for biologists to get all this data to make these management decisions, they have to collect and band these birds. But, collecting geese in order to band them can get a little tricky. Fortunately for biologists, geese molt, or lose their feathers, in early summer. During this time, the birds are flightless, and easier to capture.

Biologists scout for areas where geese are residing, trying to find areas that are suitable for surrounding and capturing them.

Not every location is suitable for trapping and capturing geese. The flock needs to be surrounded by people in order to be captured, and woods, marshes and waterways can provide escape routes for the geese.

Once a suitable location is selected, a group of biologists and volunteers quickly surround the geese, blocking any escape routes. The group slowly contracts around the flock, gently guiding them towards nets positioned at one end of the field. The nets are set in a manner to funnel the geese into a small area, where they become trapped.

Once confined, the work begins. Birds are classified as adults or juveniles, the sex of the bird is identified, and if the bird is not already banded, a silver band with a unique number is placed around the bird's leg. Once all the birds have been banded, they are released.

This year, biologists captured geese in areas of Aroostook, Cumberland, Penobscot and Waldo counties. In all, 575 geese were captured. Of those, 495 were newly banded and 80 geese were captured and banded. The department has been capturing and banding resident geese since 2001.

The data collected has been invaluable, and hunters have benefitted as the daily bag limit for the early season for geese continues to grow. The general public has also benefitted through management of the resident goose population. Currently, there is a proposal being considered to increase the daily bag limit from eight geese to ten geese in the southern and coastal zones. On August 14, 2013....to read the rest of this article, [click here](#).

