Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Monthly Report

www.mefishwildlife.com

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January, 2014

Wildlife Division

Weather Monitoring - *Written by Amanda DeMusz, Assistant Regional Wildlife Biologist*

Whether you are a winter enthusiast or not, winter is upon us. With the onset of the snow and cold and the conclusion of most hunting seasons, biologists are shifting gears from biological data collection of harvested deer and moose to monitoring wintering conditions across the state. For the past 30 plus years from December to April, approximately 26 weather monitoring stations spread across the state are set up precisely for this purpose.

In Region G we have 4 weather monitoring stations spread throughout the county from the Allagash to Houlton. Each station is equipped with an electronic data logger called a HOBO PRO which records ambient conditions continuously, 5 measuring stakes spread out in open habitat, and 5 stakes spread out in continuous coniferous shelter sites. Once a week biologists visit the sites and take measurements of snow depth from the stakes and convert those into a snow depth average for tree cover areas and open areas. Additionally, they dig what is called a "snow pit" to obtain information of the structure of the snow as it accumulates throughout the winter. Much like a traditional soil pit used to identify layers of soil, the snow pit allows biologists to characterize snow conditions such as powder layers, soft crust layers, and hard crust layers.

Why do we need this information? The main purpose of the weather monitoring stations is to monitor winter conditions for white-tailed deer. In northern climates, in order to survive harsh winters deer migrate to areas called "deer yards" which consist of heavy conifer cover. The yards provide deer with protection from the most severe elements and minimal food resources. When snows reach depths of 12-18 inches it greatly limits the animals' ability to move around and any movements they do make require a lot of energy expenditure. Unfortunately deer do not have the luxury of putting on snowshoes like we do! Snow profile information provides a catalog of whether snow has a hard crust that can support deer weight and also provides information on freeze and thaw events throughout the winter. Along with the snow depth and profile biologists measure "sinking depth" of deer; this gives information on the relative mobility of the deer.

In the end all of this data collected is used to develop a "winter severity index" which is used as one of many factors for determining harvest adjustments for the following hunting season. It also has provided a great catalog of how climate has changed in Maine and how it varies across the state over time!

The Open Water & Ice Fishing lawbook is available now!

Regulations are effective for 2014.

You can grab these books wherever licenses are sold.

You can also view the book online by clicking here!

Information Center

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

- 2,662 Phone calls
- 1,585 Emails
- 190 Walk-ins

Missed an issue?

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Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Swan Island

Maine Wildlife Park

Maine Warden Service

December proved to be a very busy month for Maine Game Wardens. With one of the coldest Decembers in recent years, winter set in early along with wintertime activities. From search and rescue, snowmobiling, ice fishing, muzzleloader hunting, and trapping, wardens had their hands full statewide.

The search for a Quebec man, Renald Poulin, was suspended on December 13. The effort included 26 game wardens including K9 teams and the Maine Warden Service Dive Team as well as 15 MASAR search team volunteers and five Maine Forest Rangers. No clues were found that led investigators to Poulin. The primary search area was contained within T6 R13 WELS and included both the western and southwestern shores of Umbazooksus Lake, Umbazooksus Stream, and encompassed significant portions of the once-used tram railway system; believed to be Poulin's destination.

Poulin's vehicle was located by game wardens on Saturday, November 30; however Poulin was never physically seen at this location. With no clues indicating Poulin's direction of travel and recent snows accumulating 3 to 4 inches, evidence detection had become nearly impossible. Search effort will resume when ice and snow in the area melts.

Wardens in Section 12 were busy this past week on a number of different fronts. Wardens are still finding trap sets even though a lot of trappers have pulled already. Land trapping was more challenging this year as trappers are reporting low catch rates on fisher and marten. Wardens are starting to see some early season ice fishing activity on some of the "A" waters around the region. The lakes and ponds are buttoning up early this year with the cold weather we have been experiencing.

Some hidden ATV's shown above whose occupants were involved in a large deer drive. Subjects all pled guilty to driving deer.

Winter camping area at Chamberlin

Office of the Commissioner

The Commissioner and Deputy had a relatively quiet month:

- Attended a Fisheries Division meeting at the Arboretum.
- Met with the Maine Professional Guides Association.
- Advisory Council Meeting at the main office in Augusta.
- Commissioner Woodcock spoke with a Rotary in Farmington
- Chandler & Andrea hosted a Christmas Luncheon for employees and retirees. Lots of retirees came back for a visit. *(See photos)*

Research & assessment Section

Looking ahead to 2014: Maine's Chickadee Checkoff is still a lifeline for inland fish and wildlife "at risk"

Written by Charlie Todd, MDIFW Endangered & Threatened Species Coordinator

Are there issues that you care about but fail to act upon? Many New Year's resolutions slip easily into that category. Many citizens of Maine care a great deal about our State's rich fish and wildlife heritage but fail to realize that their voluntary donations are the only state funding for the program. Here's an easy, timely way to participate as we begin the New Year:

Please contribute to the "Chickadee Checkoff" when filing your Maine income tax return.

Look for the "Chickadee Checkoff" on Schedule CP of Maine individual tax forms.

The "Chickadee Checkoff" generated the first revenue for Maine's Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund in 1984. Like many voluntary funding programs, participation naturally wanes without frequent reminders of needs and benefits. In fact, awareness of the Fund's importance steadily eroded until checkoff income in 2012 fell by 80% from early levels of support.

However, small contributions add up quickly if more donate. Please consider some highlights from our 2013 conservation efforts and the 30 year-history of the "Chickadee Checkoff:"

- Each dollar you contribute to the Maine Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund can leverage between $1.86 and $9.00 of additional federal matching funds to MDIFW for conservation of endangered and threatened wildlife or other species "at risk."
- Generated only from voluntary donations, this trust account provides the only state funding for endangered and threatened wildlife, other species "at risk," and all other inland fish and wildlife in Maine that do not benefit from sportsmen's dollars.
- In 2013, MDIFW biologists documented at least 631 nesting pairs of bald eagles in Maine. Prior to the onset of recovery efforts in 1976, annual counts yielded only 21 to 35 nesting pairs during 1962-1975.
- Since 1999, citizen scientists have generated > 17,000 records on dragonfly and damselfly distribution as a baseline for some of our lesser-known invertebrates.
- Numbers of two bat species have plummeted so dramatically (> 90% decline) and so rapidly (within 7 years) that new Endangered Species listings are being reviewed in Maine, several other northeastern states, and under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Forty-three pairs of piping plovers nested in southern Maine: the most since 2005. Despite a myriad of threats from beach erosion to intense recreation pressures, our tireless partners safeguard this Endangered Species with intensive management.
- Maine's once diverse array of bumblebees is dwindling and serves as yet another symptom of wide-ranging concerns on the fate of insect pollinators.
- Major research and management ventures for state-listed species like Blanding's turtles and New England cottontails between MDIFW and partners in neighboring species are typical of increasing conservation alliances in the Northeast. Threats of regional extirpation for species "at risk" do not recognize state boundaries.
- 2013 represents the largest annual increase for Maine's "Chickadee Checkoff" since 1985. Donate on Schedule CP when filing Maine tax returns in the next four months and be part of the solution for imperiled fish and wildlife in our State!

If you need further information, please visit www.mefishwildlife.com or call (207) 287-8000.

Fisheries & Hatcheries Division

Long Lake Salmon Management - *Written by Frank Frost, Regional Fisheries Biologist, Fish River Lakes Region*

It's no secret that Long Lake is the top salmon producing water in northern Maine. For decades this 6,000 acre lake, which sits at the top of Maine and forms the headwaters of the famed Fish River Lakes Chain, has been attracting anglers locally and from afar. Long Lake is well known for its large salmon and produces catches in excess of 6 pounds at a frequent clip. As early as the 1940s there are accounts of fish exceeding 10 pounds, and more recently several ice fishing world records have been set and then broken here. A recent ten-year period of exceptional salmon growth has drawn even more interest. Long Lake has become a destination for anglers from throughout Maine and New England seeking the opportunity to fish for trophy salmon.

Why does Long Lake produce such superb salmon fishing year after year?

To read more of the article, **click here!**