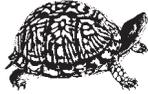




Monthly Report

www.mefishwildlife.com

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May, 2014

FISHERIES & HATCHERIES DIVISION

Rangeley Lakes Region Spring - *Written by Dave Howatt, Fisheries Biologist*

The long, cold winter is finally starting to give way in northwestern Maine. Despite the late spring and persisting ice conditions, ice-outs have begun in the southern parts of the Rangeley Region, and smelt runs are just beginning to occur. Ice-outs are anticipated to be a little later than average in the Rangeley Lakes chain this year. It usually takes place in early May, but this year expect the big lakes in that area to be free of ice as late as the second full week of the month.

A creel survey will be conducted at Rangeley Lake this summer. The census will begin as close to ice-out as possible and will continue into July, when the fishing activity begins to slow down. The last creel survey on Rangeley was conducted in 2010, when 296 anglers were interviewed. They reported catching 71 legal brook trout and 48 legal salmon. The salmon kept averaged almost 19½ inches and 3 pounds. This year catch rates for salmon are expected to be higher with good numbers of both stocked and wild salmon being present in the lake.

Creel survey work will also be conducted at two other lakes in the Rangeley area this summer. Surveys at Mooselookmeguntic Lake and Richardson Lakes will take place over a period similar to the Rangeley Lake survey. In the fall of 2013, trapnetting surveys were conducted on Richardson Lake and some impressive brook trout were collected and released. The largest was almost 20" and weighed over 3 pounds. However, about 80% of the 148 trout sampled weighed under a pound. Mooselookmeguntic Lake is well known for very fast fishing on the right day with regular strikes from both salmon and brook trout. Brook trout in the 3-4 pound range are possible.



With the warmer days returning, aquatic insect life will begin to emerge. Anglers should target small brook trout ponds in the evening to take advantage of eagerly feeding fish. A few to try are Quimby Pond in Rangeley, Little Jim Pond in Jim Pond Township, and Round Pond in Chase Stream Township.

Bass fishing will begin to pick up toward the end of May as water temperatures rise. Smallmouth anglers should try Umbagog Lake in Upton, Webb Lake in Weld, Wyman Lake in Moscow, or the Kennebec River in the Norridgewock area. If largemouth bass are what you're looking for, try Crowell and Norcross Ponds in Chesterville or Wesserunsett Lake in Madison. When the conditions are right any of these waters will provide action for respectable sized bass.



INFORMATION CENTER

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

- 3,812 Phone calls
- 1,819 Emails
- 378 Walk-ins



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Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Swan Island

Maine Wildlife Park

MAINE WARDEN SERVICE

- Game wardens were able to close a case from last fall which resulted in a Class D violation of hunting or possession of a moose in closed season. With persistent investigation and evidence detection by K9 team members, wardens were able to recover some very important evidence at the scene. A job well done and the true meaning to team work.
- Warden Will Shuman worked many days this month on snowmobile. He checked two men that were fishing at the Seboomook Dam. One guy said he caught two brook trout 14-inches in length. The men fish this location every year the first week in April. Warden Shuman checked other remote fisherman as well during this early spring fishing opportunity.
- An April Fool's Day snowstorm in eastern Maine with severe ice storm damage.



RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT SECTION

Leveraging Technology for Better Tracking of Fish and Wildlife Species - *Written by Don Katnik, Habitat Group Leader*

The Department is responsible for about 1,000 species of fish and wildlife in Maine. Ideally we need to track the population status, habitat associations, and management concerns for each one. Among other things, this information is used when the Department updates its list of Endangered/Threatened species and our 10-year State Wildlife Action Plan. Previously these data were scattered among dozens of tables in various reports, which made it time-consuming to use and difficult to modify. Jason Czapiga of the Research & Assessment Section (RAS) Habitat Group has been working with Charlie Todd, the Endangered Species Coordinator, and all of the RAS Species Specialists to build a relational database to provide much easier ways to search, summarize, and revise these data. A key part of updating our State Wildlife Action Plan is prioritizing our "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (SGCN) list. This requires comparing the list of species that Maine is responsible for to many other regional and national lists of species of concern. That sounds simple, but subtle differences in the taxonomical naming of species can make it difficult for the database to determine whether two similar names actually refer to the same species. Building the database required "mining" all of the data from the old report tables. This steadfast and somewhat tedious work, however, is a valuable investment that will greatly expedite meeting future needs to track and report on species' status.

NEAFWA a Tremendous Success - *Written by Shawn Haskell, RAS Supervisor*

As always the annual Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency conference was a great time to touch base with professional colleagues of the northeastern U.S. and neighboring provinces, as well as the up-and-coming students. There were many student presentations and posters this year, which was nice to see and we were honored to have Governor LePage address the conference. The core planning team in Augusta did a remarkable job organizing what appeared to be a seamless event. Dr. Katnik organized >90 wildlife presentations into 21 technical sessions and accommodated all who requested to moderate a session. Habitat Group staffed the 'ready room' upstairs, so that when session moderators found the front of their rooms, the session's presentations were waiting for them having already been quality-controlled. Danielle D'Auria and Erynn Call of our Bird Group organized student activities. Several RAS biologists presented findings of our fish and wildlife research and assessment programs; wildlife presentation abstracts are still found here: <http://neafwa.org/html/wildlife.shtml>. It appeared that all Bureaus, Divisions, and Sections of MDIFW were well represented at the conference, and it was not hard to spot a bright blue vest when in need of host assistance.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner's Office, along with other Department staff, were in attendance at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, April 13 – 15. The annual Northeast Fish & Wildlife Conference attracts over 500 natural resources professionals in the fields of wildlife biology, fisheries and fisheries management, information and education and law enforcement. The event provided opportunities for education, discussion, and exchanging of ideas. Highlights included: over 50 workshop sessions, keynote speakers, poster displays, and social networking events.

Commissioner Woodcock also attended the following events:

- Warden Service Annual Meeting
- Maine Professional Guides Association Annual Banquet
- Maine Bowhunters Banquet
- Bowmantown Association Annual Banquet

WILDLIFE DIVISION

The Young Forest Project - *Written by Ryan Robicheau, Wildlife Mgt. Section Supervisor*

Early successional habitats are extremely valuable wildlife habitat, and increasingly in southern Maine our forests are transitioning to more mature forest community types. To help spread the word about the benefits of young forest habitat, Department personnel recently attended a training workshop offered at the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) annual conference (which was hosted by MDIFW in Portland, ME this year).

The Young Forest Project is an initiative developed out of the Habitat Technical Committee of NEAFWA which Maine participates in. The Project is aimed at educating the public, policy makers and the media about what young forests are, what benefits they provide to society, and how landowners can provide those benefits through management action.

Young forest habitat is always a consideration for management objectives on the state owned Wildlife Management Areas, but these are an extremely small percentage of land ownership throughout the state. By educating others about how these areas are important and how to create and maintain these habitats, the Department can be much more effective in meeting some of its species management goals – for both game and non-game species.

The Department plans to take this information and utilize it to hold trainings for landowners, foresters, loggers and municipalities to increase the amount of young forests we have on the landscape. With this information, we hope to further the Department's goals, and the regional goals to increase and then maintain the young forest habitat available for a multitude of species.



The Free Family Fishing Days will take place on May 31 - June 1, 2014.



On these days, any person (except those whose license has been suspended or revoked) may fish without a license. All other laws and regulations apply on these days.



