



A Quarterly Publication from the RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife

Local Students Learn about Ecology and Fly Fishing with Division and Partners By Scott Travers

There was an exciting addition to the curriculum at the Exeter-West Greenwich High School this spring semester. Junior and senior students taking the elective class Wildlife Management taught by Ms. Marcy Ward participated in the school's first ever introductory classroom fly fishing program.

The school partnered with the Division's Aquatic Resource Education Program, and Tom Daniels and Everett Thornton of TEAM7x Flyfishing— a fly fishing guide and educational group. The program consisted of six sessions, during which the students learned about the importance of habitat conservation, sources of pollution, water quality, and various methods of biological sampling. One such technique involves collecting macroinvertebrates— creatures that do not have a backbone— such as crayfish, clams or aquatic insects.



The Wildlife Management class of Exeter-West Greenwich High School celebrate the completion of their fly fishing training program this Spring. Photo courtesy of S. Travers

[Continued on page 3](#)

Unusual Conditions Caused Lower Deer Harvest in 2015, Improvement Expected In 2016 By Brian Tefft

Inside This Issue:

2015 Deer Harvest Results 2

Ecology and Fly Fishing Class 3

New Striped Bass Regulations 4

Fluorescent orange requirements 5

Kids' Corner 6

Harvest numbers for the 2015 deer hunting season were lower than normal and for the second year in a row, there was a decline in the number of deer reported harvested to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The total harvest of deer was 1,883; archery hunters (including cross bow) took 644 deer, muzzleloader hunters took 823 deer, and shotgun hunters took 416 deer. Overall, the deer harvest was down by 14% in 2015 from the previous year. Multiple factors may have effected the hunting season.



Deer can cause damage to yards, gardens and farms. Photo courtesy of USFWS

Rhode Island manages deer across four hunting zones, two in mainland RI (Zones 1 and 2) and two island populations; Zone 3 is on Prudence island (archery hunting only) and zone 4 is Block Island. Rhode Island hunters are offered a long hunting season which begins September 15 and extends until the end of February on Block Island where population reduction has been desirable over the past several years. Likewise, bag limits are liberal, particularly in Zones 1 and 4 where the local deer population is a nuisance and has caused property damage resulting

[Continued on page 2](#)

THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to ensure that the Freshwater, Marine and Wildlife resources of the State of Rhode Island will be conserved and managed for equitable and sustainable use.



Janet Coit, Director
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director,
Bureau of Natural Resources

Wild Rhode Island is a quarterly publication of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Division of Fish and Wildlife. Printing is supported by the Aquatic Resource Education program (Federal Aid Grant F-42-E).

Publisher: Kimberly Sullivan, Principal Fisheries Biologist, ARE Coordinator

Editors: Sarah Riley, Implementation Aide and Veronica Masson, Federal Aid Coordinator, Division of Fish and Wildlife

For a free subscription to *Wild Rhode Island* please call (401) 789-0281 or send an email to Sarah.Riley@dem.ri.gov. Please indicate whether you would like to have the newsletter sent to you via email or US mail.

Wild Rhode Island is also available on the web at: www.dem.ri.gov

To report an environmental emergency or violation please call the RIDEM Division of Law Enforcement (401) 222-3070

2015 Deer Harvest continued from page 1

from excessive auto strikes. Management focused on increasing harvest of antlerless deer is needed in these zones to reduce these negative deer impacts.

Many hunters seemed to have difficulty seeing any deer this past fall and they were worried about the deer population. Some even expressed concerns that there had been widespread die-offs due to some unknown disease or that they had been over-harvested. However, all biological surveys and indicators show the population is still increasing and is now at an estimated 18,000 deer statewide.

The fall of 2015 was an unusual one, with events that caused changes in deer behavior and movements. November 2015 was very warm: in fact it was the 8th warmest November in 122 years of record keeping. The average temperature for R.I. was recorded at 47.1°F and on November 6th the high temperature in Providence reached 72°F. Above



Despite some of the low hunter success rates, some hunters were able to harvest deer during the 2015 season. Photo courtesy of B. Tefft

average temperatures persisted for much of the deer hunting season. For any deer- by this time in its winter coat and fat from eating the abundant acorns- this means reduced movements to stay cool. As a result, fewer deer moved during hunting hours and hunters saw fewer animals, which kept the harvest numbers and success rates down.

The acorn crop was another factor. Acorns are an important food source for deer and the fall 2015 crop was plenti-

ful and widespread. Abundant acorns on the ground means that deer do not need to travel far to find food, further restricting movements. These two factors alone are largely responsible for why many hunters had poor results or saw fewer deer during last year's deer season.

Another population statistic the Division monitors, independent of hunting, is the number of auto strikes of deer. The number of deer struck by cars in 2015 actually increased by 9% over the previous year. Most deer collide with cars while crossing roads at night or at twilight just after hunting hours have concluded. This timing also coincides with the coolest part of the day and may be further evidence of deer reacting to the abnormally warm temperatures we experienced in the fall. Ultimately, the R.I. deer herd is still healthy and abundant and we expect the opportunities for hunting success to remain strong, despite conditions that may have reduced the deer harvest this past season.

Rhode Island 2015-16 Total Deer Harvest Statewide			
Method	Total 2015-16	Total 2014-15	% Change
Archery	644	746	-14%
Muzzleloader	823	912	-10%
Shotgun	416	524	-21%
	1883	2182	-14%
Harvest by Management Zone		2015-16	% of Harvest
Zones 1, 2 - Mainland		1606	85%
Zone 3 - Prudence Patience		19	1%
Zone 4 - Block Island		258	14%
Totals		1883	100%

Fig 1- Comparative deer harvest numbers between the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons. Courtesy of B. Tefft

We encourage you to take advantage of the many fine hunting opportunities available to the deer hunter in our state. With liberal bag limits for antlerless deer, a long hunting season, an opportunity to harvest a trophy buck and thousands of acres of prime deer habitat on public land, chances are great that you will fill your tag in the fall of 2016.

Fly Fishing Class continued from page 1

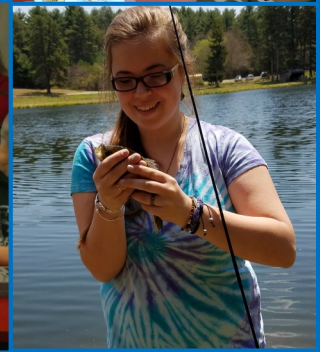
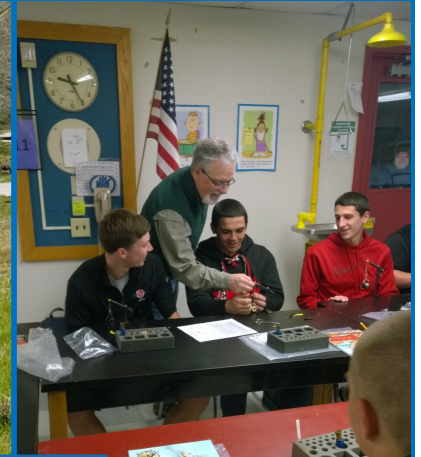
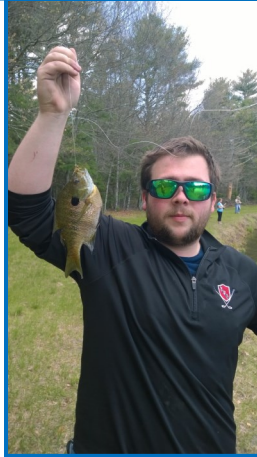
Macroinvertebrate species are considered water quality indicators in a given habitat because their presence and abundance in that habitat means the habitat is healthy enough to support them.

This is how fly fishing enters into the program: fly fishing anglers try to mimic the macroinvertebrates by creating flies- or fishing lures- that look like specific species found where they are fishing. What better way to learn about these invertebrates than by learning how to tie flies that imitate them as well?

Students were provided tools and materials to tie several different flies, including a “wooly worm”, “wooly bugger”, “elk hair caddis”, and a “soft hackle”. There was also a lesson on the art of casting a fly line in such a way as to get the fly to where the fish are located and so improve the chances of catching a fish.

The program concluded in the final session with students gathering at the Carolina Trout Hatchery to put their newly acquired knowledge and skills to the test. After a great day of fishing by the pond, and a small awards ceremony, students walked away having learned important environmental lessons in both the classroom, and in nature.

For more information about programs offered through the Division’s Education Program, please call 401-539-0019. To learn more about the work of TEAM 7x Flyfishing, visit riflyfisher.blogspot.com

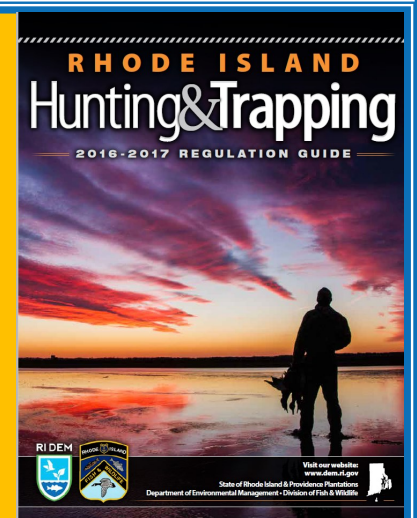


The Exeter/West Greenwich High School Wildlife Management class learns about macroinvertebrate biological indicators, tying flies and practices fly fishing. Photos courtesy of S. Travers

The 2016-2017 Hunting Regulations Are Available in Print and Online

Pick up a copy of our hunting and trapping regulations abstract where hunting licenses are sold, town halls, the RIDEM headquarters in Providence or the Great Swamp Field Headquarters. A digital copy can also be downloaded from: <http://www.eregulations.com/rhodeisland/hunting/>

The new and improved hunting abstract now includes waterfowl hunting information. Stay informed about hunting season dates, new regulations, the Division’s ongoing projects, and much more!



Striped Bass Management and New 2016 Regulations By Nicole Lengyel

With the warmer months finally upon us in R.I., one of the most sought after sportfish on the Atlantic coast has also arrived: striped bass. Striped bass are a migratory species that spawn in rivers in the spring, migrate north in the warmer months, and subsequently migrate south in the colder months. Striped bass are considered a long-lived species and can reach very large sizes; the R.I. state record striped bass was a 52-inch, 77.4-pound fish caught in 2011. Scales taken from the fish, which can be used to determine the age of a fish, revealed that the state record striped bass was over 20 years old.



The right pectoral fin should be removed as close to the body of the fish as possible. Photo courtesy of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries.

As one of the most popular recreational and commercial species on the Atlantic coast, overfishing caused a major collapse in the 1980s. Consequently, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) responsible for managing striped bass took drastic measures to rebuild the stock. This included the adoption of seasonal closures and minimum size regulations, with most Atlantic states instituting a full moratorium on striped bass harvest for several years. Due to these efforts spawning stock biomass (SSB) levels, or the biomass of fish able to spawn, increased and the stock was declared rebuilt in 1995. This increasing SSB trend did not

last long, however, and in 2006 the population once again began to decline.

Since 2006, this trend in SSB has continued with no management changes until 2015. The 2013 benchmark stock assessment indicated that the declining trend in SSB was expected to continue and that fishing mortality levels were higher than the target level. This led managers to include Addendum IV in Amendment 6 of the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan. Addendum IV implemented new biological reference points and SSB that would help maintain a healthy stock, as well as new recreational and commercial management measures. In response to Addendum IV, R.I. adopted a reduced recreational bag limit in 2015 of one fish per person per day and reduced commercial quota in order to achieve a 25% harvest reduction from our 2013 harvest levels.

In 2016, R.I. adopted additional regulations with the hope of further protecting the resource. While the recreational season for striped bass in R.I. is open all year, the general category commercial season is limited to a fall and spring season.

****All striped bass thirty-four inches (34") and greater harvested while fishing recreationally must have the entire right pectoral fin removed at the time of harvest. Fin clipped striped bass may not be purchased or offered for sale.**



Figure 1- New striped bass regulations notice as pictured on the 2016-2017 marine fisheries rules and regulations card. Photo courtesy of RIDEM

The commercial general category possession limit for licensed fishermen is five fish per person per day, and the fishery is closed on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the two commercial seasons. Due to R.I.'s small commercial quota, it was anticipated that the Friday/Saturday closures would assist in prolonging the commercial seasons which typically result in premature closures each year. Recently there has been a growing concern that commercial fishermen may be "stockpiling" fish, or recreationally harvesting fish on closed commercial days and subsequently selling them commercially on open commercial days. This, as well as concern over fish recreationally harvested in RI waters being sold commercially in neighboring states, lead R.I. to pursue and adopt new fin clipping regulations this year.

Striped Bass continued from page 4

The new regulations, as stated in [RIMF Regulations, Part XII – Striped Bass](#), require all recreationally harvested striped bass 34" or greater to have the entire right pectoral fin removed at the time of harvest (see Figure 1). This is only required for harvested or retained fish, not fish released back into the water. There is also a complimentary dealer regulation in [RIMF Regulations, Part 7 – Dealer Regulations](#), that makes it unlawful for any licensed fish/shellfish dealer to purchase a striped bass where the right pectoral fin has been removed. These regulations not only bring R.I. into line with M.A., who passed similar regulations in 2014, but will also assist DEM law enforcement with easily identifying recreationally versus commercially harvested striped bass, and help prevent the illegal sale of striped bass. Anyone with questions regarding striped bass, including the new regulations, is encouraged to contact Nicole Lengyel at nicole.lengyel@dem.ri.gov or 401-423-1940.

Florescent Orange Requirements for Hunting Season

It is important to know that fluorescent orange safety clothing is required during the hunting season statewide for all hunters as well as all Management Area users. To meet this requirement, safety clothing must be solid daylight fluorescent orange. The hunter orange must be worn above the waist and be visible in all directions. Examples that meet the orange requirements are a hat that covers 200 square inches (baseball cap), or combination of hat and vest covering 500 square inches.

The following orange requirements apply:

- ◆ Two hundred (200) square inches by small game hunters during the small game season
- ◆ Two hundred (200) square inches by fall turkey hunters while traveling
- ◆ Two hundred (200) square inches by muzzleloader hunters during muzzleloader season.
- ◆ Five hundred (500) square inches by all hunters and other users (including archers) during shotgun deer seasons.
- ◆ Those using Pop-up blinds during the firearms deer season must display 200 square inches of fluorescent orange visible on the outside of the blind from all directions. Hunters must also wear orange in accordance with the rules for the specific seasons while in the blind.



Exempt from fluorescent orange requirements are:

- ◆ Waterfowl hunters hunting from a boat or blind, over water or field, when done in conjunction with decoys.
- ◆ Archery deer hunters (except during muzzleloader and shotgun deer season)
- ◆ Hunters crown hunting over decoys
- ◆ Spring turkey hunters
- ◆ First segment dove hunters
- ◆ Not required in areas limited to archery-only by regulation

All Other Users– Hikers, Bikers, Horseback Riders, Etc.:

All other users of State Management areas and undeveloped State Parks are required to wear two hundred (200) square inches of solid daylight fluorescent orange from the second Saturday in September to the last day of February (September 10, 2016–February 28, 2017), and the third Saturday in April to the last day in May (April 15, 2017–May 31, 2017).



Kid's Corner! Presented by the Aquatic Resource Education Program

POND INVADERS

Some species of PLANTS and animals are invasive species in Rhode Island's habitats– that means that they did not naturally live there and were brought in, or "introduced." Invasive species are introduced by people either by accident or on purpose and can cause harm to the environment.

R.I. has had some of its beautiful PONDS, lakes and rivers taken over by these INVASIVE plants which grow very fast and crowd out the NATIVE plants– plants that naturally grow in that habitat. These native plants are important because FISH, birds, crustaceans and many other animals rely on them for food and shelter within the fragile pond ecosystem.

It is important to keep our POND, lake and river HABITATS balanced and healthy by not helping these invaders SPREAD to new waterways!

You can help protect our waters by helping your parents CLEAN off your BOAT, motor, paddles and boots after they are used. Make sure there are no AQUATIC plants or animals stuck to the boat or other equipment.

Want your very own "STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!" floating keychains?!

Complete the crossword puzzle and mail it to:

Division of Fish and Wildlife
277 Great Neck Road
West Kingston, RI 02892

We'll send you a keychain so you can remember to help protect our local ponds and lakes!!



POND INVADERS CROSS WORD PUZZLE

Across

4. Where animals make their homes
7. You want to _____ peanut butter, not invasive plants!
9. A species that naturally lives in a habitat
10. The opposite of dirty

Down

1. Where you can go swimming and fishing
2. Paddle, sail or motor
3. They have leaves, stems and roots
5. A species that was brought in by people that shouldn't be there
6. _____ and chips, yum!
8. This means that it lives in the water

FALL CALANDER OF EVENTS

September:

- 1: Opening Day of the Early Canada Goose Season
- 10: Opening Day for Coyote Hunting on State Land
- 10 & 11: Youth-Only Archery Weekend (Zones 1 & 2)
- 15: Opening Day of Archery Season (Zones 1 & 2)

October:

- 11: Opening Day of Archery on Block Island (Zone 4)
- 15: Opening Day of the Small Game season
- 29 & 30: Youth-Only Muzzleloader Weekend (Zones 1 & 2) and Youth-Only Archery Season on Prudence-Patience Island (Zone 3)

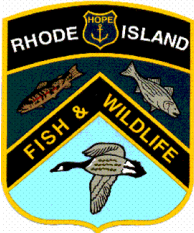
November:

- 5 - 8: First four days Muzzleloader season, ALL DEER HARVESTED MUST BE CHECKED AT CHECK STATIONS (see regulations for locations and details)
- 19: Opening Day of Regular Canada Goose Season (Special Permit Required. Reservation system in place)
- 24: Opening day of the Sea Duck Season and *Thanksgiving Day*

* See *Hunting and Trapping Abstract* for complete list of hunting season dates and details*



This program receives federal funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin or ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in this program, activity, or facility operated by this recipient of federal assistance should write to:
The Office for Equal Opportunity, U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Washington, D. C. 20240



Wild Rhode Island

A Quarterly Publication from the Division of Fish and Wildlife

Great Swamp Field Headquarters
277 Great Neck Road
West Kingston, RI 02892
(401) 789-0281 TTD 711

TO:



Wild Rhode Island
is printed on 100% recycled paper