



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

Division's Aquatic Resource Education Program

Hosts 'Come Clam with Me' Classes

By Kimberly Sullivan

Did you know that Rhode Island residents can bring home half a bushel of quahogs a day for free? The Division of Fish and Wildlife has a great way to learn about shellfish and their habitats with a free, hands-on workshop that teaches students about the shellfish of Rhode Island and how to dig for quahogs. A cooking demonstration is also provided! The Division's Aquatic Resource Education (ARE) program and the Rhode Island Sea Grant held four such workshops over the course of the summer with overwhelming success.



Photo courtesy of Kim Sullivan

The 'Come Clam with Me' classes originated as an outreach program to inform the public about the Rhode Island Shellfish Management Plan. URI Coastal Resource Center, RI Sea Grant and commercial fisherman, Jody King, designed and implemented a hands-on program where participants learned about Rhode Island's shellfish and their management: how to dig for

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DEM, Partners Offer Youth Hunting Opportunities

By Sarah Riley

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The Division of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and partnering organizations are working to introduce youth to hunting. New workshops and continuing programs, offered last fall are designed to provide opportunities for kids to learn about good sportsmanship and be involved in wildlife management and conservation activities.

Youth waterfowl hunt training workshop

On September 20th, a gaggle of young hunters gathered at the Great Swamp Field Headquarters in West Kingston to learn about waterfowl hunting. Division of Fish and Wildlife waterfowl biologist Joshua Beuth, with the assistance of Scott Travers of the Hunter Education program, volunteers from Rhode Island Ducks Unlimited (DU), and the Federated Rhode Island Sportsmen's Club, taught the participants



Shea and Liam Godin present their pheasant hunt quarry.

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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

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Working Together to Reduce Whale Entanglements Off New England Coast

By Scott Olszewski

Large whales are found throughout the world's oceans and widely distributed throughout the northwest Atlantic. Their habitat and seasonal migrations make them susceptible to interactions with human activities and materials such as shipping and fishing gear. Realizing that these threats may be hampering the recovery of certain whale species, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) developed the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) to address the interactions with fishing equipment. Through numerous meetings over the course of a decade, the team worked together to implement measures that would reduce the likelihood of whale entanglements, while still preserving the area fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries implemented its Final Rule regarding fixed gear modifications and the interaction between vertical lines and large whales in December 2014, with the latest measures taking effect in June of 2015. The ALWTRT developed a management strategy to reduce injuries and deaths of large whales due to incidental entanglements. This is an ever-evolving management plan as the NOAA Fisheries Service and Take Reduction Team (TRT) members gather more information on how large whales are endangered by fishing practices and how these activities can be modified to reduce risk to marine life.

The ALWTRT is a team made up of NOAA Fisheries staff from their Protected Resources Division, state fisheries and council managers, academics, conservation groups, non-governmental organizations and the fishing industry. Originally developed in 1997, the plan aimed to reduce the level of serious injury and mortality of three strategic stocks of large whales; the North Atlantic right, humpback, and fin whales. A strategic stock is one which is listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), or likely to be listed as threatened under the ESA or Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The immediate goal of these take reduction plans is to reduce the incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals from commercial fishing. The long-term goal is to reduce, within five years of its implementation, the incidental mortality and serious injury mortality of large whales from commercial fishing operations to insignificant levels, while taking into account the economics of the fishery being affected and existing state or regional fishery management plans (NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources).

The core of the most recent ALWTRT management plan and action revolved around broad-based gear modifications and time area closures. In 2012, the TRT decided to use a co-occurrence modeling approach to analyze the potential interaction of large whales and fixed fishing equipment from whale sightings data and known concentrations of fixed fishing equipment. This information came from NOAA aerial surveys of large whale aggregations and fisher-based logbook information. The general idea was to identify when large whale aggregations frequent areas that co-occur with high concentrations of fishing gear. When areas are identified as posing potential risk of entanglement, area-based management measures can be implemented. Resulting measures of high co-occurrence scores could be time or area closures, gear modifications and removal.



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Reduce Whale Entanglements continued from page two

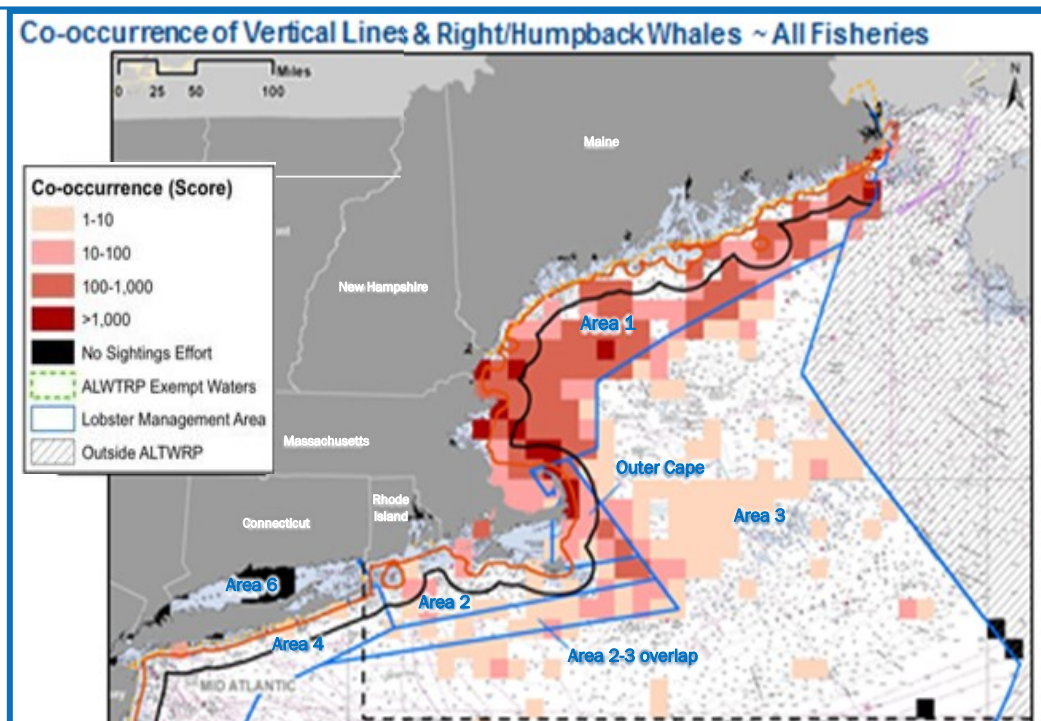


Fig 1- Co-occurrence model of vertical lines and right/humpback whales in the North East coast. Co-occurrence values are higher in the Gulf of Maine than RI sound. Photo courtesy of Industrial Economics

An example of the co-occurrence model results are shown in Figure 1. In this illustration the co-occurrence score is much lower in Rhode Island Sound than in coastal areas of the Gulf of Maine. Information such as this can be used to modify management measures specific to a species, area or season.

The Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Southeast are three specific regions on the East Coast which fall under the Large Whale Take Reduction Plans, with the affected gear types being lobster, fish pot and gill net fisheries. In each of these regions, fisheries may be required to modify their fishing activities based on frequencies of large whales and fishing equipment co-occurrence. The highest risk to large whales in our area comes from vertical lines in the water column which are generally used to mark and retrieve the ends of lobster pot trawls (multiple traps on a line). Due to this risk, the TRT agreed there was a need to reduce the number of vertical lines and chose to use two methods for the Northern nearshore waters. First, as part of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plan for Lobster, the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Area 2 Lobster Management Area scheduled a 50% reduction in the number of traps allowed to be fished over the next six years. This should theoretically reduce the number of lines and the associated risk.

Second, the team used a trawling-up approach that mandates the minimum number of traps that can be fished per trawl based on the distance one fishes from shore. These two measures will likely reduce the number of vertical lines in the water and reduce the overall risk to the whales.

Also adopted in the latest final rule was increased vertical line markings. These additional markings will be used to better identify the gear associated with a large whale interaction, should one occur. This finer scale and increased frequency identification marker will allow the TRT to adjust its management strategy to avoid interactions and minimize entanglement risk.

Although Rhode Island is not known for its robust whale populations they do frequent coastal areas seasonally. The work of the ALWTRP has been, and will continue to be, the driving force behind whale stock stability and historic fisheries preservation.

For more information please contact: Scott Olszewski of RI Marine Fisheries at (401)423-1934 or scott.olszewski@dem.ri.gov, or NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, Office of Protected Resources <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/whaletrp/index.html>.

Youth Hunt continued from page 1



Photo courtesy of Josh Beuth

about the wide array of waterfowl hunting gear, how to properly dress, the different boats used when waterfowl hunting, boating safety and waterfowl identification. Lieutenant Ed Cabral of the DEM's Division of Law Enforcement spoke to the participants about waterfowl hunting laws and what to expect if they are checked by an environmental police officer in the field. The participants also got to see a hunting retriever demonstration by Beuth's black Labrador retriever and volunteer Jeremy Daugherty's chocolate Labrador retriever, both named "Whiskey."

During the second half of the workshop, the students had the opportunity to practice for the hunt by shooting clay targets at the Great Swamp Shooting Range. The Division's Hunter Education Program provided safety

gear, shotguns, ammunition and clay targets for the participants. In between breaking some clays, they watched as Jim Tappero of DU cleaned two freshly harvested Canada geese and prepared them for the grill. A cook-out style lunch was also provided by the Federated Rhode Island Sportsmen's Club in support of the program. Between the splendid September weather and the building excitement for the hunting season, participants, staff and volunteers all had a wonderful time.

Those participating in the workshop were eligible to participate in a mentored hunt in October. The Division of Fish & Wildlife partnered with DU, an organization of sportsmen and women dedicated to conserving, restoring and managing wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl, to provide this unique hunting opportunity. Volunteers with DU were paired with the youth hunter and their guardian and headed afield in pursuit of ducks and geese on Youth Waterfowl Day.

Youth pheasant hunt

Every year, the first weekend in October marks the youth pheasant hunt in the Great Swamp, Durfee Hill and Eight Rod management areas for youth hunting license holders, with a reservation through the Division of Fish & Wildlife.

In preparation for the hunt, the Division held a training workshop in September at the Great Swamp Field Headquarters. This session introduced the youths to the basics of upland game hunting, including the biology of pheasants,

hunting laws and regulations, and firearms safety. A great lunch was provided by the Rhode Island Pheasants Forever Club, and local dog trainers Sarah and Dave Marshall presented a hunting dog demonstration. After the talks, the students were shown proper firearm handling methods by the Division's Hunter Education coordinators and range officers, and were allowed to practice these skills on clay targets. Next year, the Division of Fish & Wildlife would like to see more young hunters involved with this program so that they can enjoy the exceptional experience of upland game hunting.



Photo courtesy of Karen Unsworth



Photo courtesy of Karen Unsworth



Photo courtesy of Karen Unsworth

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Youth Hunt - Salt Pond Unit (by special permit only)

Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge

In December, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) held its first special hunting season for youth hunters in the Salt Pond Unit of Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge. This hunt is by special permit only and those interested in participating next year can apply online at <http://www.ninigretpermits.com>, or by mailing in a paper copy to Kinsail Corporation, P.O. Box 7087, Arlington, VA 22207. For more information about this program, the Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge, or hunting regulations pertaining to USFWS land, please call the Rhode Island USFWS complex at Kettle pond: 401-364-9124.

All of these opportunities are available to any youth interested in participating; however they must possess a valid Rhode Island junior hunting license (age 12-14 years) or resident hunting license (age 15 years or older). The junior hunting license is available upon completion of a hunter safety course, and junior hunters must be accompanied by a person 21 years or older who holds a valid RI hunting license.

The Division of Fish & Wildlife is committed to educating future generations of Rhode Islanders about the traditions of hunting, trapping and fishing, wildlife conservation, and hunter safety. Through programs like these, we can impart the values of safe sportsmanship and an appreciation for the natural world, as well as the importance of respectful and renewable natural resource management.

For more information about any of these programs, please call the DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife at 401-789-0281, or the Hunter Education program at 401-539-0019. To obtain a youth hunting license or gamebird permits, please call DEM's Division of Boat Registration and Licensing at 401-222-3576.



The Great Swamp Shooting Range in West Kingston, Rhode Island

Obtaining a Great Swamp Shooting Range Permit

The RI Division of Fish and Wildlife operates a free public shooting range at the Great Swamp Management Area located at 277 Great Neck Road in West Kingston (photo at bottom left). The range is open from April 1st through September 30th and includes a 50-yard rifle/pistol range with eight covered shooting stations, an open field for clay target shooting and a 30-yard archery range. In order to use this free-of-charge range, you must first obtain a Division-issued range permit. Applications for this permit can be found online at: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/rangapp1.pdf>. They are also available at the Great Swamp Field Headquarters in West Kingston, and at the Hunter Education office in Exeter. Applications will be accepted for the 2016 season beginning in February and continue through late September.

The permit application form must be filled out, signed and notarized. You also must include a copy of your driver's license or state-issued picture identification and a copy of **one** of the following: A hunter education card, firearms hunting license, DEM Pistol/Revolver Certification ("Blue") Card, RI Department of Attorney General Pistol Permit, active duty military ID or equivalent certification as determined by the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife. Youth applications are also available for minors under age 18. Minors are not required to provide safety credentials but must shoot under the immediate supervision of an adult 21 years or older who also possesses a valid range permit.

Once the permit application is complete, it must be sent to the Hunter Education Office at 1B Camp-E-Hun-Tee Place, Exeter, RI, 02822. All successful first-time and renewal applicants are required to attend a range safety briefing; these sessions are conducted by the range safety officers at the range during the operational season. Range permits will be issued at the completion of the range safety briefing and are valid for five years. Applications can take up to two weeks to process, so please plan accordingly. If you have any further questions, please call the Hunter Education office at (401) 539-0019.

'Come Clam with Me' continued from page 1



quahogs and even how to prepare them. The 'field to table' workshop technique proved to be a successful educational model. The URI Coastal Resources Center and the RI Sea Grant facilitated the workshops for three years with the intention of handing the program to DEM.

In 2015, the 'Come Clam with Me' workshops were integrated into the Division's ARE program as another way to educate the public about Rhode Island's numerous marine resources. RI Sea Grant and URI's Coastal Resources Center generously donated clamming tools and buckets, staff expertise, and handouts to the ARE program as they took over the class. Jody King again offered his services and led participants on a journey to explore Rhode Island's rich shellfish heritage. He spoke about the importance of shellfish to the marine ecosystem and stressed the necessity of shellfish harvesting closures to shellfish management and public health. Mr. King then taught the participants how to dig for clams, taking them into the water and helping the group become



acquainted with the equipment. The workshops ended with a shellfish preparation and cooking demonstration.

Last summer, four 'Come Clam with Me' workshops were offered to the public free of charge. The response was overwhelming. All classes were filled with extensive waiting lists. In total, over 120 people attended the classes and took away folders of information on clamming, tides and saltwater regulations. This year, to meet the demand, the Division's ARE program plans to offer six such programs over the summer at various locations across the state. If you are interested in learning more about this and other ARE programs, please contact Kimberly Sullivan at kimberly.sullivan@dem.ri.gov or 401-539-0037.



Fluorescent Orange Requirements

All users of state management areas (e.g. hikers, cyclists, horseback riders) are required to wear 500 square inches of solid daylight fluorescent orange during the shotgun deer season (December 5, 2015 – December 20 2015, and December 26, 2015 – January 3, 2016).

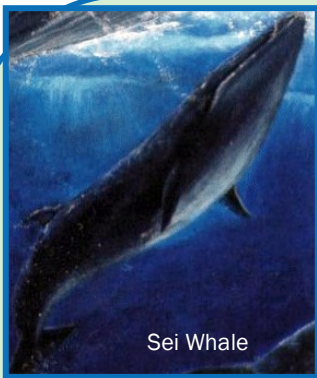
Additionally, all users of state management areas are required to wear 200 square inches of solid daylight fluorescent orange (generally, a baseball hat) from the second Saturday in September (9/12/15) to the last day of February (2/29/16), and the third Saturday in April (4/16/16) to the last day in May (5/31/16).

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

Visitors to Our Ocean Waters

Whales are gigantic mammals that live in the ocean. Like humans, whales are warm-blooded, breathe air, have hair (though not as much as us), and have a four-chambered heart. There are two types of whales and they are separated by how they feed. Baleen whales, such as the humpback whale, have large comb-like structures that filter crustaceans, fish and other small ocean critters. Toothed whales, like the killer whale, are fierce predators that hunt their prey using echolocation. Whales migrate, or travel, large distances throughout the ocean to feed in colder waters and breed in warmer waters. Some whales migrate over 12,000 miles!

While Rhode Island is not known for its large whale population, we do have a couple of whale species that can be found along southern New England, which includes Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Unscramble the names of the more common whale species that we can see along our coast.



Sei Whale

Unscramble:
 EHNRTONR GHIRT _____
 BUKPAMHC _____
 BICFNAK _____
 ESI _____
 KINME _____

Do you remember the beluga whales that traveled into Narragansett Bay last year? While the beluga whale is not common to our coastal waters, beluga and killer whales occasionally visit off-shore. Can you connect the dots and identify the whales? Which one would you be more likely to see off the coast of RI?



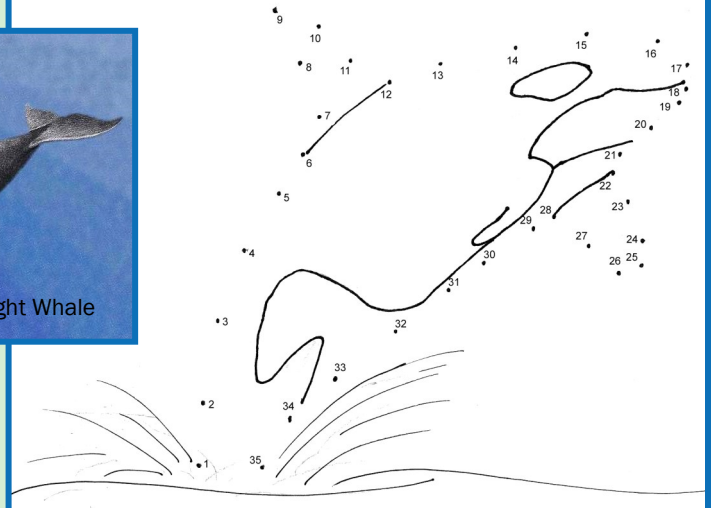
Finback Whale



Northern Right Whale



Humpback Whale



Minke Whale



ICE FISHING TIPS

When venturing out on the ice, safety should be your number one priority!



Be cautious! There is no such thing as safe ice. Make sure the ice is at least six inches thick. Test the ice as you go with an ice auger. If there is a path, stick to it.



Ice thickness varies throughout a pond and is usually thinnest around shore and protruding objects such as rocks, trees and docks. Beware of areas where there are springs or inlets to a pond—the ice may also be thinner in these areas.

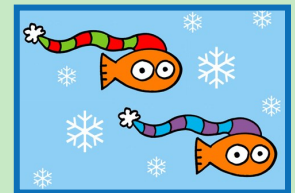


Stay dry and dress warmly. Wear many layers with “long johns” and a wind-breaking over-layer. Wear appropriate footwear such as insulated boots and wool socks that will keep your feet warm and dry. Sunglasses or ski goggles are helpful for glare and wind. Rubber gloves are good for bait and fish handling and mittens are good for warmth. Bring a change of clothes and don’t forget to wear a hat.



Remember to bring safety equipment including ice spikes, 50 feet of safety rope, and a flotation device such as a boat seat cushion.

Interested in learning how to ice fish? Please contact Kimberly Sullivan at kimberly.sullivan@dem.ri.gov or 401-539-0037 for more information on upcoming ice fishing programs this winter.



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