



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Hunting Safety and Education

Air Date:

Background

According to the 2001 National Survey for Fishing, Hunting, and Wild-life Associated Recreation, approximately 9,000 residents and nonresidents above the age of 16 took part in hunting that year. Rhode Island residents made up the majority of that number at 7,000 or about 83 percent. The total hunting expenditures in Rhode Island totaled more than \$5 million in 2001. Out of this total, approximately \$4 million (or 77 percent) was spent on hunting equipment (guns, ammunition, etc.) Overall, in 2001 over 399,000 Rhode Island residents fished, hunted or wildlife watched. Out of this total only about 2 percent of Rhode Islanders participated in hunting. However, despite the low percentage of hunters in comparison to fishing and wildlife watching, it is still a sport enjoyed by many throughout Rhode Island and one that requires the utmost care and safety from its participants.

Education/Licenses

At all levels of their activity, hunters must take many precautions, from proper dress to careful handling of their kill. Yet the primary step that must be taken before any hunting takes place is completing a Hunter Education course. Hunter Education courses are taught by volunteer instructors in conjunction with DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife and are free of charge. The courses are a minimum of ten hours and once completed, the Rhode Island Hunter Education Cards are accepted in all 50 states as well as Canada and Mexico. This course must be completed in order to obtain a hunting license in Rhode Island unless one is in or has been honorably discharged from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard. The website to view the 2006 schedule for classes and locations is:

http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/huntered/h_courses.htm.



Mike DiPietro, an Environmental Police Officer at the RIDEM, demonstrates how to properly handle a shotgun.

In addition to the course, a hunting license must be obtained. Applications and fees vary on the type of wildlife recreational sport one plans to partake in. Various hunting forms

are available on this website:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bpoladm/manserv/hfb/hunting/hunting.htm>

A list of the various fees are provided on this website:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/wildfees.htm>

A list of license agents (where the licenses can be obtained) are provided on this website:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bpoladm/manserv/hfb/hunting/pdfs/huntvend.pdf>

Basic hunting licenses are available for \$18 regardless of age.

Hunting Safety

Dressing properly while hunting is also very important. Hunters should be wary of the elements and also keep in mind the dangers of ticks and mosquitoes. If hunting in the colder seasons or on or near water, hunters should take precautions to prevent hypothermia, or lowered body temperature. It is important for hunters to stay dry and avoid sweating by dressing in layers. During the hotter seasons precautions must be taken to prevent hyperthermia, or the rapid rising of body temperature. It is important to drink liquids (non-alcoholic), dress in lighter layers and stay in shaded areas whenever possible.

It is also important to dress smartly to avoid contact with ticks and mosquitoes. Tuck pants into boots and wear light colors so ticks may be easily spotted on clothing. Other steps for Lyme disease prevention can be found on this website:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/huntabs.pdf>

Other diseases that hunters must take precautions against are rabies, chronic wasting disease and avian influenza, all which can be found in the link above.

Proper Steps for Dressing The Kill

In order to prevent bacteria growth and maintain the freshness of killed game, one should take care to follow the field dressing tips below:

1. It is best to field dress fresh game immediately. By removing entrails, the game is allowed to cool by exposing the body cavity to air.
2. Heat is the number one concern. Bacteria grow rapidly in a carcass, especially if it is allowed to stay warm. Meat begins to spoil above 40^o Fahrenheit.
3. Keep meat clean from debris. Covering it with cheesecloth will protect it from insects. Rubbing the meat with black pepper will also repel insects.
4. Do not use excess water to wash the cavity; too much moisture will damage the meat.
5. If the animal has been quartered, pack the quarters in ice. Do not process the animal beyond quartering until you reach your final destination.
6. Ice is the easiest and usually the least expensive way to cool fish. Not only does the ice absorb heat from the fish, but also the melting action helps to wash bacteria from its surface. 1 pound of ice to 3 pounds of fish is usually sufficient.

Hunters must use their equipment with the utmost caution when hunting. Listed below are the Ten Commandments of Firearms Safety that must be abided by:

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF FIREARMS SAFETY

1. Treat every firearm with the same respect due a loaded firearm
2. Control the direction of your firearm's muzzle. Carry your firearm safely, keeping the safety on until ready to shoot. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
3. Identify your target and what's beyond it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt.
4. Be sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions and that you have only ammunition of the proper size for the firearm you are carrying.
5. Unload firearms when not in use. Leave the actions open. Firearms should be carried unloaded when traveling to and from shooting areas.
6. Never point a firearm at anything you do not want to shoot. Avoid all horseplay with a firearm.
7. Never climb a fence or tree, or jump a ditch or log, with a loaded firearm. Never pull a firearm toward you by the muzzle.
8. Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water. During target practice, be sure your backstop is adequate.
9. Store firearms and ammunition separately beyond the reach of children and careless adults.
10. Avoid alcoholic beverages or other mood-altering drugs before or while shooting.

Hunting Regulations

See 2006/2007 Rhode Island Hunting and Trapping Abstract:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/huntabs.pdf>

Most animals and birds are set with a bag limit (with raccoons and weasels being the few exceptions). Some animals require special permits. Certain types of trapping are prohibited for certain animals. Most animals and birds are only to be hunted within specific seasons. Contains a list of general prohibitions, shooting restrictions, and wildlife restrictions and a list of protected animals/ animal protection acts.

Other helpful sites:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/topics/wltopics.htm> (Contains all info; most useful site)

<http://rihunts.com/>

For more information:

General hunting questions, or concerns - please contact:

Lori Gibson, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

Division of Fish and Wildlife

277 Great Neck Road, West Kingston, RI 02892

401-789-0281

Food safety information - please contact:

University of Rhode Island

Cooperative Extension

1 Greenhouse Rd., Kingston, RI 02881

401-874-2900

<http://www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/consumer.html>

Interviews:

- Lori Gibson, Supervising Wildlife Biologist, DEM's Division of Fish (below, left)
- Brian Teft, Principal Wildlife Biologist, DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife (below, right, speaking with Channel 10's Dylan Dryer)

