



MassWildlife News

Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

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RAFTING FOR LOONS

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) is interested in receiving loon sighting reports this spring and summer. Reports of birds with chicks are of particular interest. For years, MassWildlife has been monitoring loons nesting in the state. Common Loons, listed as a Species of Special Concern in the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, returned to nest in Massachusetts in 1975 after being absent as a breeding bird in the state for almost a century. From 1975 to 1983 loon pair activity was only observed on the Quabbin Reservoir. In 1984, loon activity was also observed on the Wachusett Reservoir. By 1986, loon nesting activity began to spread to other water bodies in the state. In 2012, 35 territorial loon pairs were documented on 13 lakes and ponds in the state. Submit loon pair sighting reports via MassWildlife's electronic [Vernal Pool and Rare Species VPRS Information System](#), an online data submittal and mapping application, or email: mass.wildlife@state.ma.us, or send by postal mail to "Loon Survey", DFW, Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230, West Boylston, MA 01583.

In addition to monitoring loon activity, MassWildlife has been partnering with other agencies and organizations to improve nesting sites for loons. Recently, the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), based in Gorham, Maine provided funding for 18 loon rafts to be placed on reservoirs where loons have been attempting to nest. Common Loons cannot walk well and are very awkward on land. They only come on to land in spring to breed and build their nest within a few feet of the shoreline. This is not a problem in water bodies with constant water levels, but for loons nesting on reservoir shorelines, fluctuating water levels can be a problem. If water levels rise, the nest and eggs flood and will not hatch. If water levels drop more than 6 to 12 inches the nest will be abandoned because the loon cannot reach the nest. To reduce losses on reservoirs,

loon rafts are constructed of cedar logs, foam floatation, and wire with vegetation placed on the raft to appear as if the raft is a small island. Predator canopies are added to protect the nests from predation by other birds. The raft is floated and anchored in the loon territory. Because the raft floats, it protects the nest and eggs from being flooded or stranded. Some loons utilize the rafts immediately; others may take a few years to use the raft. This month, loon rafts will be deployed at the DCR Wachusett and Quabbin Reservoirs and on reservoirs operated by the Fitchburg and Pittsfield water departments where loon pairs have been reported.

MASSWILDLIFE STAFF HONORED

Several staff from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and the Department of Fish and Game were recently honored with awards for their public service to fisheries, wildlife, and conservation.

Environmental Protection Agency Bronze Medal – Dr. Mark Tisa, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Dr. Jon Regosin, Chief of Conservation Science, from MassWildlife and Rich Lehan, General Counsel for the Department of Fish and Game were part of a multi-agency group honored by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) New England Regional office with a Regional Medal Bronze Award. The Bronze Medal is EPA's third highest honor and is presented by regional Environmental Protection Agency offices to recognize exceptional, distinguished, or heroic individual and group achievements. It is uncommon for recipients of this award to be given to non-EPA staff.

The multi-agency team consisted of representatives of EPA New England and EPA Headquarters, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Connecticut Attorney General's Office. EPA and the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut discussed potential approaches to clean up the Rest of River portion of the GE Housatonic River site. The team focused on the need to address the risks from polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) to humans, fish, wildlife, and other organisms while avoiding, mitigating, or minimizing the impacts of the cleanup on the unique ecological character of the Housatonic River. As stated in the nomination application by EPA staff, "Thanks to the partnerships formed during this process with the states, the program and the public can be assured that this difficult cleanup decision will be made based upon sound science and the best available information and in an open and transparent manner."

The Wildlife Society, Northeast Section, Certificate of Recognition – At the recent Northeast Fisheries and Wildlife Conference, field staff from MassWildlife's Biodiversity Initiative were awarded a Certificate of Recognition for their substantial contributions in establishing high quality grassland and shrubland habitats to support rare and declining kinds of wildlife throughout the Commonwealth. The Biodiversity Initiative (BDI) field staff recognized were Christopher Buelow, Rebecca DiGirolomo, Brian Hawthorne, Benjamin Mazzei, and Tim Simmons. The Initiative undertook habitat restoration work at five sites throughout the state and involved the largest habitat contracting effort ever conducted by the Division. Division Director Wayne MacCallum noted the efforts of Jack Buckley, DFW Deputy Director of Administration, in securing funding, the quick and efficient awarding of bids and contract by the Boston office

contract/administrative staff, and the oversight of design and implementation of the restoration by John Scanlon, Habitat Program Supervisor.

University of Maine, Distinguished Alumnus Award – Dr. Scott Melvin, MassWildlife Senior Zoologist in the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, was recently honored as a Distinguished Alumnus by the University of Maine’s Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Biology. Melvin earned a Bachelor’s of Science Degree from the University of Maine in 1975. He went on to earn a Master’s of Science in Natural Resources and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin. Scott Melvin has been with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program for nearly 30 years.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS ANNOUNCED

On May 6, 2014, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rick Sullivan honored 27 energy and environmental education programs at the 20th Annual Secretary's Awards for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education. During a State House ceremony, Secretary Sullivan recognized 22 schools and 5 nonprofits across Massachusetts.

“We are proud to recognize the students, teachers, and nonprofits raising awareness about energy and environmental issues affecting Massachusetts and the planet,” said Secretary Sullivan. “The ideas, research, and knowledge being recognized today show the forward-thinking of our youth and how ready they are for the challenges ahead.”

Winners competed for \$5,000 in awards, funded by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, with the intention to fund further environmental education initiatives at the schools. EEA solicited Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education Award nominations in early 2014. Schools and organizations that voluntarily incorporate environmental education into public or private school curricula are eligible.

The Secretary's Advisory Group on Energy and Environmental Education comprised of environmental educators from state agencies, non-profits, industry and academia scored the project applications. Secretary Sullivan also recognized a [U.S. Department of Education \(USED\) Green Ribbon School](#) from Massachusetts, the Boston Latin School. The award honors schools that are exemplary in reducing environmental impact and costs, improving the health and wellness of students and staff, and providing effective environmental and sustainability education, which incorporates science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), civic skills and green career pathways. A complete listing of the 2014 award winning programs is posted on the [Energy and Environmental Affairs website](#).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 17 – Spec Pond Family Fishing Festival, Wilbraham -- Join the MassWildlife [Angler Education Program](#), in cooperation with the Wilbraham Parks and Recreation Department, at Spec Pond - 2540 Boston Rd (Rt. 20), in Wilbraham from 9:00am – 1:00pm for some basic fishing instruction. This is a free, non-competitive, family-friendly, learn-to-fish event. Bring

your fishing equipment, or borrow ours - limited equipment and bait will be provided. Contact Jim Lagacy (MassWildlife) at (508) 389-6309 or jim.lagacy@state.ma.us for more information.

May 22 – Snakes Alive! Hubbardston – Find out about the mythology and superstitions associated with these fascinating reptiles, why some are on the endangered species list, and which ones you are most likely to encounter in your backyard or on a hike. The Hubbardston Nature Club is hosting a free public presentation by Peter Mirick, Editor and Wildlife Biologist for the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, at 7:00PM at the Pine Crest Lodge, 84 Bemis Road in Hubbardston. His talk will cover information on the state's 14 native snakes, provide anecdotal accounts of his experiences with them, and include live snakes to observe and handle. For more information contact hubbardstonnatureclub@yahoo.com.

May 30 – Grassland Bird Conference, Hardwick - Landowners, land managers, birders, and other conservationists are encouraged to participate in this conference focusing on Grassland Bird Conservation at the Kresge Studio Theater at Eagle Hill in Hardwick. Sponsored by the Hubbardston-Ware River Nature Club and the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), registration is required and space is limited. The morning session will consist of a field trip to one of two EQLT grassland properties. Afternoon speaker sessions will follow lunch at Eagle Hill. Among the speakers will be MassWildlife's State Ornithologist Andrew Vitz who will talk about a recently published collaborative Action Plan for Grassland Birds, the Division's habitat management efforts on specific wildlife lands, and an American Kestrel conservation initiative. MassWildlife's NRCS Habitat Management Biologist Marianne Piché and Dan Lenthall, NRCS Worcester County Conservationist, will discuss the habitat needs of grassland-dependent wildlife, with practical information about bird-friendly grassland management activities and haying options. For more information and registration information, contact hubbardstonnatureclub@yahoo.com.