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MassWildlife Monthly December 2015

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State Launches Wildlife Climate Action Tool

The Massachusetts Climate Adaptation Partnership – a diverse team of experts from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the Department of the Interior's Northeast Climate Science Center, and the USGS Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit unveiled the [Massachusetts Wildlife Climate Action Tool](#) this week. It is an online tool for local decision-makers, conservation managers, land trusts, regional planners, landowners, and community leaders in Massachusetts who are interested in taking action in response to climate change. A [webinar](#) about the Climate Action Tool will be held on Wednesday, December 2, 2015 at 3:30 P.M. and interested users are invited to attend.

Massachusetts Wildlife Climate Action Tool users can access information on climate change impacts and the vulnerabilities of various fish and wildlife and their habitats. The tool also allows users to explore adaptation strategies and actions to help maintain healthy, resilient natural communities in the face of climate change based on their location and area of interest.

"While there is an overwhelming amount of information on climate change, it is often not easily accessible to the public and it can be challenging to incorporate scientific information into day-to-day management and planning," says John O'Leary, Assistant Director of Wildlife with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. "The Climate Action Tool focuses on what people can do now to reduce climate change impacts on natural resources such as fish, wildlife, and their habitats, in the coming decades. Users can access information and data from the scientific literature that have been synthesized by scientists for the tool."

The tool synthesizes the best available science on climate change, including:

- climate change impacts, with projections for over 30 climate variables,
- vulnerability assessments for fish and wildlife species and their habitats,
- information about non-climate stressors such as development and loss of landscape connectivity that must be accounted for, and
- on-the-ground actions including forestry practices, land protection, and restoring landscape connectivity.

Michelle Staudinger, an ecologist with the USGS and adjunct faculty member in the Department of Environmental Conservation at UMass Amherst, says the climate is changing rapidly in Massachusetts in ways that are already impacting human and natural communities statewide. "There are actions we can take now to adapt to climate change and protect fish, wildlife and their habitats, as well as help human communities increase resiliency to better cope with these changes," she points out. "This tool is designed to inform and inspire local action to protect the Commonwealth's natural resources, including species of greatest conservation need, and help them adapt to a changing climate."

"This tool makes science available to inform on-the-ground action. The information provided is research-based and vetted by scientists," says Scott Jackson, Extension Associate Professor in the Department of Conservation at UMass Amherst. "The tool provides adaptation information that can be integrated into a comprehensive climate adaptation plan for an organization or community, including local actions related to land protection, forestry practices, and connectivity across roads and highways. It provides links to relevant resources and experts who can offer additional information and assistance in implementing actions, such as replacing a culvert or conserving land."

"We need up-to-date information and guidance about how we can help our 19 communities adapt to climate change, so we are thrilled to discover the Massachusetts Climate Action Tool," says Robert A. Jonas, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Kestrel Land Trust. "In one online package, we can research climate change impacts on fish and wildlife species, forests and forestry practices, landscape connectivity, land protection and conservation planning."

Although this tool was designed for decision-making in the state of Massachusetts, it provides broadly relevant climate and adaptation information, and can serve as a model for related efforts across the entire Northeast region. The developers point out that the tool is dynamic, allowing them to add new information as climate science improves and as



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new adaptation actions are developed in the field. Future updates will include more case studies and actions related to transportation and infrastructure, public health and safety, coastal areas, and municipal land use planning.

For more information, contact John O'Leary, 508/389-6359; john.oleary@state.ma.us

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A New Conservation Effort for the Threatened Eastern Spadefoot

MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) – with financial support from the [Massachusetts Outdoor Heritage Foundation](#) and its partnership with Genzyme Corporation, a Sanofi company – launched a new conservation project at the [Southwick Wildlife Management Area \(WMA\)](#) in August 2015. The project aims to establish a self-sustaining local population of the [Eastern Spadefoot](#)   (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*), a species that is listed as Threatened pursuant to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. The Eastern Spadefoot has become increasingly rare in the Connecticut River Valley region during the past century. The initiative is tailored after a spadefoot reintroduction project in Falmouth by MassAudubon and Grassroots Wildlife Conservation, Inc. and is expected to complement [MassWildlife's grassland bird management](#) at the Southwick WMA, substantially increase wildlife diversity at the site, and improve the long-term viability of the regional Eastern Spadefoot population.

The project aims to:

1. Establish prospective breeding habitat for Eastern Spadefoot at the Southwick WMA by constructing a series of ephemeral-pool basins.
2. Introduce Eastern Spadefoot to the Southwick WMA over a period of several years or more via:
 - a. direct translocations of eggs and/or tadpoles from other sites to the constructed pools; and
 - b. delayed translocation of "head-started" tadpoles and juveniles to the constructed pools.
3. Monitor the Southwick WMA regularly to determine:
 - a. survival of eggs/tadpoles in constructed pools;
 - b. presence of metamorphs, juveniles, and adults at the site; and
 - c. occurrence of breeding activity.
4. Periodically manage soil conditions along field-forest and field-shrub edges to maintain important terrestrial habitat, if necessary.

During August and September of 2015, pool basins were constructed across northern portions of the WMA. Construction work was performed by a team consisting of MassWildlife staff from the Connecticut Valley District Office and the Westborough Field Headquarters, undergraduate students in Dr. John McDonald's Wildlife Ecology and Management course at [Westfield State University](#), and students in the [Natural Resource Management program at Bristol County Agricultural High School](#) led by instructors Brian Bastarache and Aaron Caswell. The Southwick Department of Public Works provided essential equipment for executing design plans. Monitoring visits conducted in October provided encouraging results, as the pool basins appeared to hold water well after heavy rains. Evaporation rates will be greater during the breeding season than during autumn, but early signs suggest that the three basins will hold water long enough to support Eastern Spadefoot reproduction.

[Click here](#) to stay up to date on the progress and results of this project.

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2016 Licenses On Sale December 1

2016 hunting, sporting, fishing, and trapping licenses will be available for purchase starting Tuesday, December 1st through [MassFishHunt](#), at a [license vendor location](#), or at a [DFW office](#). During December, it is possible to purchase either a 2015 or a 2016 license; therefore, license buyers should use care selecting the year when making a purchase. Minors 15-17 years of age may not purchase hunting or sporting licenses online and must have certain documentation in their possession when making a license purchase at a MassWildlife District office or other license vendor locations. Anyone 15 or older needs a license in order to fish in freshwater or to hunt. Freshwater fishing licenses for minors 15-17 are free and can be obtained online. [Learn more about license purchasing requirements.](#)

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Sportfishing Awards Program Deadline Approaching

There's still time to catch a trophy and submit your catch to the [Freshwater Sportfishing Awards Program](#)! 2015 is the first year that both 'Catch and Keep' and 'Catch and Release' categories will be recognized in the Program. Freshwater Sportfishing Awards participants are reminded that all affidavits must be submitted to MassWildlife and postmarked by

January 9, 2016 to be eligible for the 2015 season. The Sportfishing Awards Program, also known as the Pins Program, has been recognizing anglers who have caught exceptional freshwater fish from Massachusetts waterbodies open to the public for over 50 years. Anglers receive bronze pins for catching fish of eligible weight (Catch and Keep) or length (Catch and Release) for 22 species. Gold pins are awarded to anglers who catch the largest fish in each category. Gold pin winners, as well as the winner of the highly revered Angler of the Year, will be announced in the coming months. [Click here](#) to view the current leaders.

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Join the 116th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Make the Christmas Bird Count part of your seasonal outdoor tradition! From December 14, 2015 through January 5, 2016, birders in Massachusetts will participate in the longest-running citizen science survey in the world - the 116th Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Bird lovers armed with binoculars, field guides, and checklists embark on this seasonal mission to collect data that is used by conservation biologists to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys, the CBC provides a picture of how bird populations have changed over the past 115 years.

In Massachusetts, there are 34 geographic "count circles" where bird surveys occur. Each count circle is a 15-mile wide diameter circle and is coordinated by a Count Compiler who works with teams of volunteer birders to ensure that beginning birders are grouped with more experienced birdwatchers. If your home is within the boundaries of a count circle, you can help by reporting the birds that visit your feeder during the CBC. If you are interested in participating, view the CBC map, zoom to your location, and click on the center of the count circle to contact your local Count Compiler. For more information about the CBC, visit the [National Audubon website](#).

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Give a Gift on the Wild Side!

Now is the time of year to think about the outdoor or wildlife enthusiast on your holiday list! Consider the following wildlife-related gifts available from MassWildlife.

- **MassWildlife Publications:** A 2-year subscription to [Massachusetts Wildlife magazine](#) (\$10) delivers eight full-color issues of the Commonwealth's best wildlife publication. The magazine is packed with award-winning articles and photos on the environment, conservation, fishing, hunting, natural history, and just about everything related to the outdoors in Massachusetts. [Find this and other great publications at the gift section of our website.](#)
- **2016 Licenses:** The sportsman or sportswoman in your life will appreciate a 2016 hunting, fishing, or sporting license and any supplemental stamps they will need (available December 1). License purchases support MassWildlife's fish and wildlife conservation, management, and habitat protection programs. Go to [MassFishHunt.org](#) to make a purchase.
- **Charitable Donations:** For the person who has everything, make a donation in his or her name to support one of the following funds. The [Wildlands Fund](#) is dedicated to acquiring and conserving important wildlife habitat open to wildlife-related recreation. Send the honoree's name with a check made out to "Comm. of MA - Wildlands Fund" to our Boston office: DFW, 251 Causeway St., Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114-2152. The [Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Fund](#)  supports efforts to protect rare and endangered wildlife. A donation in the form of a check made out to "Comm. of MA - NHESP" can be sent to NHESP, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581.

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Upcoming Meetings and Events

December 1 – January 31, 2016: Junior Duck Stamp Traveling Exhibit, Turners Falls – A combination of the top 100 pieces of art from the [Junior Duck Stamp Program](#) will be on display at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. For more information, contact Laurel Carpenter at (413) 863-3676. Help support the Junior Duck Stamp Program! Proceeds from the purchase of the \$5 Junior Duck Stamp are used to support the program and go toward youth conservation education, awards for students and/or schools participating in the program, and marketing of the JDS program. You may purchase stamps from the U.S. Postal Service website ([www.usps.com](#)) or Amplex Corporation ([www.duckstamp.com](#)).

December 5: Project WILD Professional Development Workshop, Athol – Receive training in this award winning, interdisciplinary nationally recognized program! It is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs among educators of students in kindergarten through high school. The program emphasizes terrestrial and aquatic wildlife because of their intrinsic, ecological value, as well as their role in teaching how ecosystems function. Through the use of balanced curriculum materials and professional training workshops, Project WILD accomplishes its goal of developing awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment. Workshop participants will receive a copy of the guide and a certificate of completion. This hands-on workshop has applications for school teachers, scout leaders, camp counselors, nature center staff, home educators, after care teachers, etc. [Click here to learn more about this workshop.](#)

  To register please contact Dawn Marvin Ward at dmward@crocker.com or (413) 367-9562. Registration deadline is November 23, 2015.

December 10: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Meeting, Westborough – The meeting will take place at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarters Office located at 1 Rabbit Hill Road in Westborough from 1:30- 4:30 P.M. in the Southwest Meeting Room, Room #103. Please note: If you have a disability or medical condition and would like to request special accommodations, please contact Susan Sacco at 508-389-6342.

December 15: Fisheries and Wildlife Board Meeting, Westborough – The December meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board will be held on Tuesday, December 15, 2015, at 10:30 A.M., at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Field Headquarters, Richard Cronin Building, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, off North Drive, Westborough, Massachusetts. Please note: If you have a disability or medical condition and would like to request special accommodations, please contact Susan Sacco at 508-389-6342.

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