



## Energy and Environmental Affairs

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### MassWildlife News April 2012 Edition

#### MassWildlife News Release

All Media Inquiries: Contact (617) 626-1052

MassWildlife News is published 1-2 times/month. If you are interested in receiving the MW News electronically, send an e-mail to the following address: [Join-MassWildlife.news@listserv.state.ma.us](mailto:Join-MassWildlife.news@listserv.state.ma.us)

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Released April 2, 2012

#### **NEW ENGLAND COTTONTAILS STILL NEED YOUR HELP**

In December of 2010, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) appealed to sportsmen, highway department workers, animal control officers, and other interested citizens to collect and provide MassWildlife with cottontail carcasses or cottontail skulls. That call for action kicked off a statewide survey of cottontail rabbits to assess the distribution and population of two kinds of cottontails in the Commonwealth, the common and non-native eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), and the imperiled native New England cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*). The New England cottontail has been designated as a Candidate Species for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. MassWildlife is making a special appeal to animal control officers in the central and western regions of the state to continue the collection effort and to alert others in their communities to participate in this citizen science opportunity.

Since the first appeal, MassWildlife received approximately 500 cottontail specimens. From the collected specimens, about 10% have been identified as New England cottontails, and significantly, several new local populations of New England cottontails have been identified. The majority of cottontail carcasses came from the eastern and southeastern parts of the state. MassWildlife needs a sample that is characteristic of the entire Commonwealth and is especially in need of more cottontail specimens from Worcester County and all points west. MassWildlife will still gratefully accept cottontails from anywhere in the state.

The only way to distinguish between the two cottontails is by examining various skull features, or submitting tissue samples for DNA analysis. Therefore, carcasses in any condition can be donated to facilitate the survey effort. Road-killed carcasses or cottontail heads should be placed in a plastic bag and frozen until they can be dropped off at a MassWildlife District Office, MassWildlife Hatchery, or MassWildlife's Field Headquarters in Westborough. Be sure to wear gloves when handling carcasses. Please include a note with your contact information, date of collection, and detailed, specific location information such as a street address, intersection, or other discernable landmark.

The location where the carcass was collected is the single most important piece of data used to assess the cottontails' distribution, so please make every effort to record as specific a collection location as possible. A marked topographic map, Google map, or GPS coordinates are ideal, but any detailed, specific location information will greatly aid biologists.

The cottontail survey in Massachusetts is part of a regional effort, the New England Cottontail Initiative, to conserve New England cottontail populations. The Initiative involves partnerships with state and federal natural resource agencies, conservation organizations, and other landowners working together to identify populations of New England cottontails and to create or maintain large patches of suitable habitat for them. Any inquiries can be directed to David Scarpitti, Upland Game Biologist, [David.Scarpitti@state.ma.us](mailto:David.Scarpitti@state.ma.us), (508) 389-6377.

#### Quick Links

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Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
1 Rabbit Hill Road  
Westborough, MA 01581  
(508) 389-6300  
[Mass.Wildlife@state.ma.us](mailto:Mass.Wildlife@state.ma.us)

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#### **HELP MASSWILDLIFE STOCK SALMON FRY**

Volunteers from high schools, sporting clubs, civic groups, colleges, and other people with a passion for rivers, fish, or fishing are needed to assist the MassWildlife personnel in stocking approximately 750,000 salmon fry (juvenile fish) as part of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon restoration program. According to Dr. Caleb Slater, DFW's Anadromous Fish Project Leader, stocking begins the week of April 9 and continues through early May to release salmon fry into dozens of Connecticut River tributaries. The fry will come from MassWildlife's Roger Reed Hatchery in Palmer. Fry will be trucked to meeting sites where volunteers will gather and caravan to release sites. The tiny fish will then be moved from truck to water by bucket using volunteer man- and womanpower. Schedule and details on meeting locations.

Dr. Slater offers some tips for potential volunteers: "You may get wet! A change of clothes is a good idea. You will be walking in slippery stream and river beds, so waders or other waterproof footgear is useful. There are a few waders to loan, but please bring your own if you have them." Volunteers should be in good physical condition as they will be climbing up and down steep stream banks and hauling 5-gallon buckets with water. MassWildlife aids anadromous (migratory) fish in a number of ways: stocking fry in tributaries of the Connecticut River; monitoring fish passage at dams on the Connecticut, Westfield, and Merrimack Rivers; trapping salmon and shad for transport to hatcheries and/or upstream release locations; working with federal agencies to ensure safe upstream and downstream fish passage at hydroelectric dams; and working with local watershed groups to improve freshwater habitat for fish. For more information, click on the above link or contact Dr. Slater at (508) 389-6331.

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#### **REMEMBER ENDANGERED SPECIES ON YOUR STATE TAX FORM**

Help protect Box Turtles, Peregrine Falcons and other endangered wildlife by supporting the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Fund when you file your state income tax this year. Since 1983, Massachusetts tax filers of Form 1 have had the option of donating to this effort through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund when filing their state income tax (Line 32a: "Endangered Wildlife Conservation"), and tens of thousands of people have done so over the years.

All contributions go directly into the Fund, an important portion of the annual operating budget of DFW's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), which conserves and protects endangered species and their habitats in Massachusetts. Over 20,000 tax filers support the program with over \$200,000 in critically-important donations each year. Won't you join them? With your contributions to the Fund, you directly help to study, protect, and restore endangered animals and plants and their habitats. Donations help restore populations and conserve and maintain habitat for many vulnerable kinds of wildlife, from raptors to reptiles.

You can also contribute directly to the Fund by sending a check payable to: "Comm. of Mass-NHESP Fund" and send it to: NHESP, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Rd, Westborough, MA, 01581.

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#### **BOATERS, WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!**

Though air temperatures have risen considerably, boaters are still at risk from cold water. State law requires all canoeists and kayakers to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times through May 15. For safety it's best that boaters wear lifejackets year-round, but during cool and cold weather months, it's the law in Massachusetts. Wearing a life jacket could

save someone's life and could also make an encounter with the Environmental Police or other enforcement officer a positive experience.

The first warm days of spring mask dangerously cold water temperatures. If paddlers capsize or fall overboard, they can succumb within minutes to hypothermia (the lowering of a person's internal body temperature), which deadens arms and legs and renders a victim unable to swim, paddle, or stay afloat. A related danger - the "cold-water-immersion-reflex," whereby a victim, shocked by frigid water, involuntarily gasps, and ingests a significant amount of water - can lead to death by drowning.

Failure to wear a lifejacket, operator inattention, overloading, alcohol, and small boat instability are the most significant factors in boating fatalities. Wearing lifejackets gives both victims and rescuers additional precious time to get themselves out of a potentially tragic episode.

Massachusetts boating regulations require that all persons aboard canoes and kayaks between September 15 and May 15 wear a Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, or III Personal Flotation Device (PFD) at all times while a boat is underway. In addition, the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) recommends wearing a PFD as standard practice year-round, and reminds boaters that children under 12 are required to wear PFDs in boats of all types throughout the year. While most Type I, II, and III lifejackets will not prevent hypothermia, they do give the victim one less thing to worry about: staying afloat.

The Massachusetts Environmental Police encourages all boaters to take a state-approved boating safety course. Visit the [Massachusetts Boat Safe web page](#) for links to the MEP boating course schedule, other approved course providers, and information about state boating laws.

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#### **TURKEY HUNTING REMINDERS & OPPORTUNITIES**

The spring turkey hunting season opens throughout most of Massachusetts on April 30, 2012. Do you have your turkey permits? Have you found a place to hunt? Are you familiar with safe turkey hunting methods? If successful, how do you report your turkey harvest? MassWildlife offers the following information for turkey hunters regarding new permit procedures, turkey hunting opportunities and safe turkey hunting methods to follow when hunting.

**Turkey Permit Reminder** - In order to legally hunt turkeys, licensed hunters must obtain a turkey permit. With the new electronic MassFishHunt system, there is no longer a deadline to apply for a turkey permit, hunters may simply purchase a permit via home computer ([www.mass.gov/massfishhunt](http://www.mass.gov/massfishhunt)) or by visiting a license vendor or DFW office to get their permit. A hunting license is required when purchasing the permit.

**Information for Youth Turkey Hunters - NEW THIS YEAR:** This year, minors 12 - 14 years of age who successfully completed the Youth Turkey Hunt Program will be issued a Youth Turkey Hunt permit with two tags. The permit and tags will be valid for both the Youth Turkey hunt date of April 28, 2012 and the regular spring turkey hunting season. The youth permit and tags are not valid for fall turkey hunting. As in the past, young turkey hunters aged 12-17 years-old who successfully completed the Youth Turkey Hunt Program in a previous year and plan to hunt on April 28, 2012 must obtain a Youth Turkey permit by completing the Past Participant Application. Applications may be mailed or dropped off at: Youth Turkey Permit, MassWildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road (off North Drive), Westborough, MA, 01581. To ensure the permit will be received before April 28, the application must be received or postmarked by April 13, 2012. Remember that the daily bag limit is 1 bird/day for both the Youth Turkey Hunt date and the duration of the spring turkey hunting season. All other turkey hunting regulations apply to young turkey hunters.

**Turkey Harvest Reporting** - Successful turkey hunters must check their turkeys in at an official check station for the spring turkey hunting season. Because the MassFishHunt online harvest reporting system is still under construction, there will be no opportunity to report turkey harvest on line. List of turkey check stations.

**Outdoorswoman Turkey Hunting Seminar**- There is still time to sign up for this two-part program designed for the beginning adult woman hunter. The two parts consist of a one-day seminar on April 14 in Shirley and a one-day turkey hunt to be offered May 7 in nearby Devens. If you've taken hunter education and want to try turkey hunting, this is a good next step! Participants may choose to take part in one session or both. Turkey Hunt participants are required to take the Seminar segment if they want to participate in the Hunt. Turkey Hunt participants must also have a valid gun license, shotgun, valid MA 2012 hunting license, and turkey permit. Registration for the Turkey Hunt gives preference to participants new to this hunt program. Deadline for registration is April 6, 2012. Registration materials.

**Turkey Hunting Safety Tips** - Finally, all turkey hunters are urged to hunt safely. Being completely sure of your target and what is beyond it before you shoot will reduce the chance of hunting accidents and the number of hens that are mistakenly killed during the spring season. Turkey hunting can be an exciting and memorable experience, but it has

associated dangers that the hunter must keep in mind. The wild turkey has a keen sense of sight and can easily detect movement and colors that are out of place in the woods, making the use of complete camouflage or drab colored clothing almost a must. Camouflage not only reduces the turkey's chance of seeing the hunter, but also has the same effect on other hunters, increasing the chances for accidents. Hunters sneaking up on (stalking) other hunters who are calling and hunters who are wearing turkey colors (red, white, blue, and even black) are involved in a high percentage of reported accidents. Putting these following safe turkey hunting practices to use will help to ensure that turkey hunting will remain a safe, enjoyable outdoor experience.

- Don't stalk birds; sit or stand and call the turkeys to you.
- Don't wear red, white, blue or black anywhere on your body where the colors might be exposed during your hunt.
- Don't hide in a place where your view is obstructed.

Further tips on turkey hunting safety from MassWildlife and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

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#### UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS & HEARINGS

**April 12 -- Natural Heritage Advisory Committee Meeting, Westborough** -- The NHES Committee will meet Thursday, April 12, 2012 at the DFW Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Rd (off North Drive) from 1:30 - 4:30pm. The building is handicapped accessible. Directions are at [www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/facilities/westboro.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/facilities/westboro.htm) or call the Field Headquarters at (508) 389-6300.

**April 24-- Fisheries and Wildlife Board Meeting, Worcester County**--The Fisheries & Wildlife Board will meet on Tuesday, April 24, 2012 at 1 PM to be held at a location to be decided in Worcester County. When finalized, the meeting location will be posted at: [www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/calendar/meetings/board\\_meetings.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/calendar/meetings/board_meetings.htm).

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

**April 7 - Opening Day of Fishing at Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoirs**

**April 14 - Opening Day of Fishing at Quabbin Reservoir**

**April 19 - Hopkinton Reservoir Family Fishing Festival, Hopkinton** -- At Hopkinton State Park from 9:00am - 1:00pm, cast a line, learn about fish in our waters, safety, ethics, and fishing equipment. If you have fishing equipment, bring it along. A limited quantity of fishing equipment and bait will be available. MassWildlife is participating in this festival in cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Contact Jim Lagacy at (508) 389-6309 or email [jim.lagacy@state.ma.us](mailto:jim.lagacy@state.ma.us).

**April 22 - MassWildlife at Springfield Science Museum Earth Day Festival, Springfield**--The MassWildlife Angler Education Program will run the Kids Casting Program from 11:00 - 4:00pm Learn how to accurately and confidently case a line with a fishing pole! Contact the Springfield Science Museum (413) 263-6800 x325 for more information.

**April 27 - Berkshire Wildlife, Sheffield** -- Learn about the wildlife in your community, from bats and bears, to fish and beaver from MassWildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden. This talk will be hosted by the Bushnell-Sage Library on 48 Main Street, Sheffield at 6:30 PM. For more information, call the library at (413) 229-7004.

**April 28 - Shooting Sports Day for Outdoors Women and Men, Hanson** - Ever wanted to learn the basics of firearms, shoot a rifle, shotgun, handgun or bow and arrow? This is a workshop for beginners, both for men and women. Try your hand at shooting a shotgun, rifle, handgun, and archery equipment with friendly, expert instructors. Optional Massachusetts Gun Law Session at the end of the day. Registration materials.

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