

Tim Carroll

From: Larson, Marion (MISC) [marion.larson@state.ma.us]

Sent: Friday, November 30, 2012 5:23 PM

To: TOWN@bos-mta-004.state.ma.us; Chilmark@bos-mta-004.state.ma.us; Executive.Secretary@bos-mta-004.state.ma.us; Tim Carroll

Subject: [masswildlife.news] MassWildlife News-December Issue

MassWildlife News

Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

Media Inquiries: Call (617) 626-1052

***2013 LICENSES GO ON SALE DECEMBER 1
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2013 LICENSES GO ON SALE DECEMBER 1

Beginning on Saturday, December 1st, the 2013 hunting, sporting, fishing, and trapping licenses will be available for purchase at all license vendor locations, MassWildlife District offices, the West Boylston Field Headquarters and on the internet at www.mass.gov/massfishhunt. Anyone 15 or older needs a license in order to fish in fresh water or to hunt. Because it is possible to purchase a 2012 and a 2013 license in December, license buyers are reminded to be sure to select the correct year when buying their license. Minors 15-17 years of age may not purchase their license online, but must have certain documentation in their possession when making their license purchase at a MassWildlife District office or walk-in license vendor location. Freshwater fishing licenses for minors ages 15-17 years of age are free.

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GIVE A GIFT ON THE WILD SIDE!

Now is the time to consider a wildlife-related gift for the outdoor or wildlife enthusiast on your holiday list! The following suggestions from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) are suitable gifts to consider for all ages.

A 2-year subscription to Massachusetts Wildlife magazine (\$10) delivers eight full-color issues of the Commonwealth's best wildlife publication. For the budding conservationist, try a copy of the Critters of Massachusetts book (\$5). Critters is a great gift for the curious youngster or the beginning adult naturalist with an interest in backyard wildlife and beyond. For the more advanced naturalist, the Field Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies (\$20) or A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools (\$12) might be just the ticket. In-depth descriptions and detailed photographs help the reader identify and learn more about these creatures. For the budding herpetologist, there are a couple of options: The Field Guide to the Reptiles of Massachusetts features information on breeding, feeding habits, range, habitat, and conservation issues. This unique issue of the Massachusetts Wildlife Magazine is \$3 per copy and also offers spectacular color photos of the various species, including color and pattern morphs of those species with variations and a list of key features that allows you to identify any native snake or turtle (except sea turtles) found in the Bay State. The turtle enthusiast in your life may also enjoy the Introduction to the Threatened Turtles of Massachusetts (\$5), a video available from the DFW's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Go to www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/publications/publications_home.htm or call the West Boylston Field Headquarters at (508) 389-6300 for further purchase information.

The sportsman or sportswoman in your life will appreciate a 2013 hunting, fishing, or sporting (combination) license and any stamps they will need. Remember that freshwater fishing licenses for minors ages 15-17 years of age are free! (Minors under 15 do not need a license to fish.) Beginning December 1, 2012, 2013 licenses are available for sale online or through license vendors throughout the state. License purchases support the DFW's fish and wildlife conservation, management, and habitat protection programs in Massachusetts.

Give them the gift of the outdoors! Purchase a gift certificate for one of the 2013 Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, workshops. Workshops on skills such as animal tracking, shooting, fishing, kayaking, and photography are designed for adults and families new to that particular skill. The 2013 schedule of workshops will be posted in January. A terrific outdoor experience for teen girls and boys is the Junior Conservation Camp, a two-week overnight camp session packed with outdoor skills learning such as shooting, fishing, canoeing, and camping and field trips with biologists. The camp is located in Chesterfield and will be held in August. Go to http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/education/jr_conservation_camp.htm.

For the person who has everything, make a donation in his or her name to support one of the following two funds. Wildlife habitat protection can be supported by donating to the [Wildlands Fund](#), a fund dedicated to acquiring important wildlife habitat open to wildlife-related recreation. Send the honoree's name with a check made out to "Comm. of MA - DFW Wildlands Fund" and send it to: DFW Wildlands Fund, DFW Field HQ, 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230, West Boylston, MA 01583. 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 also be sent to the DFW Field HQ in West Boylston.

JOIN THE 113TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Make the Christmas Bird Count part of your seasonal outdoor tradition! From December 14, 2012, through December 30, 2012, bird lovers in Massachusetts will be participating in the nation's longest running wildlife survey, the 113th Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Families, students, birders, and scientists armed with binoculars, bird guides, and checklists go out on an annual seasonal mission - often leaving before dawn. For decades, the desire to both make a difference and experience the beauty of nature has enticed dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the holiday season. The data collected by bird observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, the CBC provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

In Massachusetts, there are 33 geographic "count circles" where bird counts occur. Each count circle is coordinated by an experienced Count Compiler who works with teams of birders who've signed up for that circle's bird count. Beginning birders can join a group that includes at least one or two experienced birdwatchers in charge of covering a portion of the circle. In addition, if your home is within the boundaries of a count circle, you can report the birds visiting your feeder. In

either case, if you have never been on a CBC before, contact your local Count Compiler to find out how you can participate. For more information, visit the MassBird website at <http://massbird.org/birdobserver/CBC/index.htm>. Information and history about the CBC can be found at National Audubon's web page at <http://birds.audubon.org/faq/cbc>.

ENDANGERED SPECIES FACT SHEETS

Want the facts on endangered species in Massachusetts? Visit MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species web page at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/species_info/ mesa_list/ mesa_list.htm. Fact sheets for all state-listed birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants have been posted. (Sea turtles and five whale do not have fact sheets.) Each fact sheet includes an image or drawing of the species, a brief description, listing of similar species, habitat preferences, life history, range map, management recommendations and references.

SIGN UP FOR HUNTER EDUCATION IN 2013

New and novice hunters of all ages are encouraged to make a New Year's resolution to sign up for a free Basic Hunter Education Course in the winter or spring months of 2013. Students who successfully pass the course will receive a Basic Hunter Education Certificate of Completion. All first-time hunters must have a government-issued Basic Hunter Education Certificate, in order to purchase a Massachusetts hunting or sporting license and it is also recognized for the purchase of hunting or sporting license in other states, Canada, and Mexico. In Massachusetts, the Basic Hunter Education Certificate of Completion also fulfills a training requirement that allows individuals 15 years of age or older you to apply for a firearms license with their local police departments. The Massachusetts Hunter Education Program offers courses from January through October, and January 2013 courses will be posted soon at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/education/hed/hed_basic_listing.htm. Additional 2013 courses will be announced monthly and students who want to be notified about courses in their area are encouraged to complete and submit an online form (www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/education/hed/hed_find_course.htm) requesting notification.

"Many people fail to consider signing up for a course in the winter or spring months because they aren't thinking about hunting," says MassWildlife Hunter Education Program Administrator Susan Langlois. "By completing a course early in the year, new hunters have time to apply for a firearms license, practice newly-acquired skills, and scout potential hunting locations." By law, the course must be at least 12 hours in length but is typically 15-16 hours to cover all required topics. Courses are offered in different formats to meet the public's needs. Some courses are scheduled over several weekday evenings. Some are conducted on weekends, while others are a combination of weeknights and weekend days. All classes are provided at no charge to the students. Topics covered during the Basic Hunter Education course include the safe handling of hunting arms and ammunition, hunting laws and ethics, wildlife identification, wildlife management, care and handling of game, and personal preparedness.

It is the mission of the Massachusetts Hunter Education Program to train safe, knowledgeable, and responsible hunters; to promote the wise management and ethical use of our wildlife resources; and to encourage a greater appreciation of the environment through education. Funding is derived from the sale of hunting and sporting licenses, and from federal excise taxes on firearms and archery equipment. Massachusetts offered its first hunter safety course in 1954, and to date has graduated more than 187,000 students. Graduates who have lost their certificates may obtain a duplicate by calling the Hunter Education Program office in Ayer at (978) 772-0693, or completing an online form at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/education/hed/forms/dup_cert_form.htm.

NEW VIDEO ON BLAZE ORANGE

Hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to check out a new short (5-minute) video on the "Effectiveness of Blaze Orange" from Kalkomey Enterprises. See some excellent footage demonstrating how wearing fluorescent orange in the woods makes you highly visible to others. The video can be found on the MassWildlife website at the bottom of the Hunter Education Program page at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/education/hed/hed_home.htm.

BROODSTOCK SALMON STOCKING UPDATE

Depending on weather and access to water, broodstock salmon stocking will begin in mid-December and will be completed by the end of the year. Each district will receive 124 fish, all from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Roger Reed State Fish Hatchery in Palmer. The fish will range in size from 5 to 12 pounds. To find out which lakes and ponds are stocked, contact the DFW District office in Ayer (978) 772-2145; Belchertown (413) 323-7632; Bourne (508) 759-3406; Dalton

(413) 684-1646; or West Boylston (508) 835-3607. Once stocking is complete, the list of stocked waters will be updated on the DFW website at http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/fisheries/anadromous/broodstock_salmon_stocking.htm.

COTTONTAIL SURVEY CONTINUES, YOUR HELP NEEDED

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) is still asking the public's assistance to assess the distribution and population of New England cottontails (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*), the only cottontail rabbit species native to the northeastern United States and rarely seen. Two kinds of cottontail rabbits are found in Massachusetts, the common non-native Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) and the New England cottontail. Division biologists want to remind hunters, highway department workers, animal control officers, and other interested citizens across the state to provide DFW with cottontail carcasses or cottontail skulls for the survey. Specimens from the central and western part of the state would be very helpful as there have been fewer submitted samples from these regions. The more samples collected from different parts of the state, the better the agency can understand where New England cottontails are found. Because it is virtually impossible to tell the two rabbit species apart in the field DFW biologists need to examine skull characteristics or use DNA analysis. Carcasses or cottontail heads can be handled with gloves and should be placed in a plastic bag and frozen until they can be dropped off at a DFW District Office, DFW hatchery, or DFW's Field Headquarters in West Boylston. Please include a note with contact information, date of collection, and detailed location information such as town, street, or land parcel. A marked topographic map or GPS coordinates are ideal, but any detailed location information will greatly aid biologists.

The cottontail survey is part of a range-wide effort called the New England Cottontail Initiative (NEC), focusing on distribution and habitat restoration of New England cottontails throughout New England and New York. The NEC Initiative involves partnerships with state and federal natural resource agencies, conservation organizations, and other large landowners focusing on surveys, habitat identification, and habitat restoration efforts.

UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS

The [Fisheries and Wildlife Board](#) will hold its December meeting on Tuesday, December 11, 2012 at Noon at the DFW Field Headquarters, 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230, in West Boylston (**NOTE NEW ADDRESS**).

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee will be meeting on Thursday, December 13, 2012, at the DFW Field Headquarters, 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230, in West Boylston (**NOTE NEW ADDRESS**) from 1:30- 4:30 P.M.

For directions go to www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/facilities/westboro.htm or call the Field HQ at (508) 389-6300. Both meetings are open to the public and the meeting location is handicapped accessible.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS—Visit www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/calendar/calendar.htm

December 1-18 -- Junior Duck Stamp Traveling Exhibit; Connecting Children with Nature Through Science and Art! Holden-- Interested in submitting artwork to the 2013 Massachusetts Junior Duck Stamp Contest? Take inspiration from traveling exhibits featuring top youth entries from the 2012 [Massachusetts Junior Duck Stamp](#) (JDS) Contest at the [Wachusett Regional High School](#), Bowes Gallery. For directions and more information, contact Suzanne Breen at (508) 829-6771.

December 11 -- River Otters and Fishers in Massachusetts: A Tale of Two Weasels, Groton-- The [Nashua River Watershed Association](#) (NRWA) invites the public to for this free wildlife presentation beginning at 7 PM at at the NRWA River Resource Center at 592 Main Street (Rt. 119) in Groton. Trina Moruzzi, Wildlife Biologist with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife will explain the basics of river otter and fisher biology and ecology. Trina will talk about what these often mysterious animals are, where you can find them, what they eat, how they behave, and what signs you might see when they are present. This presentation is free and open to the public. Seating is limited and pre-registration is strongly recommended. Seats for all pre-registrants will be held until 6:55 at which time open seats will be released to walk-in attendees. To pre-register, please contact Pam Gilfillan, NRWA Development Associate, at (978) 448-0299, or email PamG@NashuaRiverWatershed.org.

December 19 – New Field Headquarters Groundbreaking, Westborough– The public is invited to join state officials at a groundbreaking event to mark the construction of a new MassWildlife Field Headquarters. The new building will be the
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Commonwealth's first zero net energy office building, designed to achieve either a LEED gold or platinum certification. The event will take place at 10:30AM at the site of the old building on North Drive in Westborough.