



## IF&W INSIDER

WEEK ENDING 02/03/09

We are stewards of Maine's fish and wildlife, preserving and protecting our natural resources, quality of life and economic future.

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### 2008 MOOSE AND DEER SEASONS: MOOSE HARVEST UP; DEER COUNT DOWN

**By Lee Kantar**, Deer and Moose Biologist, IF&W Resource Assessment Section  
**Moose Season 2008**

Overall the September and October moose seasons were fortunate to have very good hunting conditions during a majority of the season. In other words, cool, fall weather prevailed with crisp mornings and precipitation overall was scarce.

Moose season is typified by very high participation rates and therefore changes in hunting conditions may be demonstrated by an increase in success rate. For the September-October season, the success rate increased 5 percent over 2007. From 2007 to 2008, there were increased success rates in 8 of 19 WMDs or 42 percent of the districts.

The total harvest was ~2,202 of 2,880 permits. (Note that not all the moose data has been entered in the database.) The 2007 moose harvest was 2,052 so the 2008 season represents an increase harvest of 150 moose, not counting November moose and any September/October registrations that have not been yet accounted for.

The November Moose season, which took place for the first time in WMDs 15, 16, 23 and 26, had mixed results. With a total of 135 permits offered and the registered kill not yet entered into the database, the preliminary numbers appear very low, especially in WMD 26, where as little as 3 out of 45 permits were filled. The November season must be carefully assessed once all the data is in to balance the population objectives for these WMDs as well as ensuring that prospective hunters understand the nature of this hunt, i.e., low success rates, small landownerships, access issues and less moose habitat than in more northern and eastern WMDs.

#### Deer Season 2008

With deer season over I thought it may be of interest to put this season in context with other jurisdictions. Recall that during the spring permit allocation meeting we figured a fall harvest of ~24,200 deer. This, of course, is based on the deer management system and all the data we use to assess current conditions and ultimately project buck harvest, determine the appropriate harvest prescription, calculate adult doe quotas and expansion factors. After reviewing and gleaning the deer biological data I calculated the predicted fall harvest based on a regression formula using annual biological data collection and the annual registered harvest. This year, using the biological data collection, the predicted harvest looks to be about ~24,100 statewide.

One important point is that this decreased harvest is not unexpected -- a drop of 5,000 deer or 17 percent from 2007, if the prediction holds out -- and Maine is not alone! If we review adjacent jurisdictions -- Quebec, New Brunswick and New Hampshire -- and take a quick look at their 2008 harvest, we will see some striking changes across the board in decreased deer harvests: Quebec Zones 2-4, that are adjacent to Maine WMDs 1, 4, 7 and 8 were down 41, 46 and 22 percent respectively; Coos County, NH (the most northern county) is estimated to be down 19 percent, and Carroll County, just south of Coos and adjacent to Maine WMDs 12, 15, and 20, is down 48 percent. New Brunswick harvest, I believe, is down ~20-25%.

The widespread decrease in deer harvest on a generalized scale reflects the harsh winter conditions and lengthy yarding period experienced across the northeast throughout the 2007-08 winter.

As typical for the various deer hunting seasons spanning across the months of September through December, hunter conditions were highly variable including during the November firearms season. Tracking snow conditions were available in many parts of the state during both the firearms and

muzzleloader season, which typically translates in increased hunter participation and potential harvest. However, in a large part of the state influenced by a long winter, deer numbers were down.

Each year a large portion of the harvest is comprised of yearlings. For hunting season 2008, that would be the fawns from 2007. It is widely recognized that during severe winters, fawns are most susceptible to winter mortality and hence the following year, yearling deer show a decline in representation in the harvest. Preliminary numbers in Maine would support this decrease and mortality influence. Actual numbers should be available in the next month or two.

### **MOSES SETS RECORDS! MORE CUSTOMERS USING ONLINE LICENSING SYSTEM**

MOSES, the online licensing system of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, is becoming a popular choice for people purchasing licenses as two sales records were set recently.

In January, a record 14,381 licenses and permits were sold for the month via the internet. The previous record of 12,764 had been set in July 2008.

On average, MOSES internet sales are growing at a rate of 14 percent annually, according to Bill Swan, director of IF&W's Licensing Division.

On Dec. 31, a new record for daily sales of licenses on the Internet through Informe, the Division's partner that manages MOSES, was set. A total of 1,932 licenses were sold online that day.

The previous daily record was 1,636 licenses on Dec. 31, 2007.

This record is especially encouraging given that IF&W and Informe recently launched a new, updated version of the Internet sales application of MOSES.

"It appears that the new version handled a very high volume of sales with no significant problems," according to Swan.

During the as week of December, 26,795 licenses and registrations were sold through the combination of all sales by our MOSES agents, front counter sales at IF&W, and internet sales through Informe.

The previous weekly record was 22,821 items sold the week of May 27, 2007.

### **FREE FISHING DAYS: BRING SOMEONE YOU LOVE FISHING ON FEB. 14 AND 15**

Want to try your hand at ice fishing to see if you'll like it? Want to get your kids on the ice to experience the joy of hooking a fish?

Valentine's weekend is the time to do it as the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife promotes Family Fishing Days.

On Saturday, Feb. 14, and Sunday, Feb. 15, people can fish for free on Maine's waterways. This free fishing event is open to any person except those whose license has been revoked or suspended. All fishing regulations apply.

Fishing, whether on open water or on ice, is one of the most popular activities in Maine, drawing thousands upon thousands of residents and out-of-state visitors to the state's nearly 6,000 lakes and ponds and almost 32,000 miles of rivers and streams.

This weekend is the first of two free fishing weekends offered this year. The second is May 30 and 31, the weekend after Memorial Day.

"Family Fishing Days provides adults a chance to give children the same enjoyment they had as a youngster, and for free," said Commissioner Roland "Danny" Martin. "If they find they love it, we hope that children and adults will be encouraged to buy a fishing license and spend more time on Maine's waterways throughout the year."

Want to continue the fishing experience throughout the year? Fishing licenses are available for purchase on IF&W's Web site, [www.mefishwildlife.com](http://www.mefishwildlife.com), at any of the more than 285 MOSES licensing agents statewide, or at town offices and other locations.

They also are available at our Augusta office at 284 State St.

For a complete list of fishing regulations, including limits and sizes, visit [www.mefishwildlife.com](http://www.mefishwildlife.com) and click on "fishing."

## **IF&W MAGAZINE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [WWW.MEFISHWILDLIFE.COM](http://WWW.MEFISHWILDLIFE.COM)**

Maine Fish and Wildlife, the quarterly magazine of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, now is available in an online version only – and is free!

For more than 40 years, IF&W has published a magazine to showcase the work and dedication of IF&W employees to preserving and protecting Maine's inland waters and woods. But given recent tight economic considerations, the magazine was facing extinction because of reduced funding.

During the last Legislative session, members of the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife asked IF&W to come up with an inexpensive way to continue producing the magazine. The best solution was to put it online, according to Roland "Danny" Martin, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

"The Maine Legislature didn't want to see the decades-old magazine cease in existence and neither did we," Commissioner Martin said. "By putting the magazine online, not only are we saving money but now a greater number of people will have access to the publication and at no charge."

More than 3,000 people had paid subscriptions to the quarterly magazine's paper editions. By going online, the Department expects to reach more than 90,000 potential readers through e-mails and its website.

The online version of Maine Fish and Wildlife is produced in cooperation with FlipSeek LLC of Lyndhurst, Ohio, which developed a software application that gives publications such as magazines and catalogs the electronic look of hard copies. FlipSeek's easy-to-use application lets readers flip through pages, zoom in and out of articles and pictures, and print what they'd like to keep in paper form.

Articles are written by IF&W employees, and the magazine is edited and designed by IF&W's Division of Public Information and Education.

The electronic version of the magazine is not much different than the paper one. Readers will find insightful articles about projects or programs within the Department, see colorful pictures of biologists, wardens and educators at work, and share the reader-favorite "KidBits" with their children.

Also, readers will find "Field Notes" on Game Wardens' activities or cases they have closed, "Biologist's Journal" about an awe-inspiring or introspective event biologists may have experienced, and "Inside IF&W," a feature about a talented staffer.

"The 300 employees at IF&W are dedicated to managing fish and wildlife resources and enforcing the laws that protect them," said Commissioner Martin. "Like our readers, our staff hunts, fishes, boats, snowmobiles, hikes or canoes/kayaks in the abundance of wilderness Maine offers. Their commitment will be evident in this publication."

## **"A WICKED GOOD DEAL FOR MAINE!" DVD SHOWS IF&W'S IMPACT ON ECONOMY**

Most people have heard about "the little engine that could." Now they can learn about how one small state agency, with as much might as a locomotive, fuels the state's economy.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has produced a 10-minute DVD that outlines its role in preserving and protecting Maine's natural resources for present and future generations.

The DVD was well received by the Department's legislative committee of jurisdiction, the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, last month during a Department informational session.

With a staff of 300 employees, from biologists to game wardens and from educators to license processors, IF&W manages outdoor resources such as fish and wildlife and their habitats, and enforces resource protection laws.

The Department licenses more than 495,000 anglers and hunters each year, and registers 392,000 snowmobile, ATVs and boats. These outdoor enthusiasts enjoy the outdoors that IF&W, along with conservation groups and clubs, manage -- and while doing so, leave a \$2.4 billion impact on Maine's economy. Approximately 800,000 wildlife watchers alone contribute \$1.3 billion of that total impact amount.

All of the resource management and law enforcement is done on a budget of \$32 million, of which \$22 million is funded by licenses and registrations.

The DVD was put together by IF&W employees who are outdoor enthusiasts, too. The employees want Maine's valuable outdoor resources to continue to be a draw for people who love Maine the way it is -- picturesque and peaceful.

They want their children to have the same opportunities.

Viewers are encouraged to "toot IF&W's horn" by bookmarking the site and sharing the DVD with their friends or members of their clubs or organizations.

## **CHECK OUT "CHICKADEE CHECK-OFF" ON TAX FORMS**

In 1983, the State Legislature created the Maine Endangered and Nongame Wildlife Fund by adding a check-off option to the state income tax form. Maine citizens responded generously, and the Maine Endangered Species Program was established.

Mainers again are asked to consider contributing to the "Chickadee Check-Off" fund. It's on the tax forms.

Thanks to generous contributions from Maine citizens in the past, the "Chickadee Check-Off" has supported work on many of Maine's rare, threatened, endangered and nongame wildlife species, including the resurgence of the Bald Eagle in Maine.

All money donated to the fund, whether through the tax check-off, car registrations, grants, or direct gifts, is deposited into a special, interest-bearing account, from which money can only be spent on the conservation of Maine's endangered and nongame species.

Consider making a donation through the Chickadee Check-off on your state tax return. It's easy! The Maine Wildlife Park was spotlighted on WGME Channel 13 Wednesday night on Doug's Discovery. Doug wanted to find out how we caretake and prepare our wildlife for winter, highlighted our new program -- the Winter Photography Pass; and gave a nod to the Windham Correctional inmates that spend weeks working at the park fulfilling their community service requirements.

## **RECENT EVENTS:**

**Snowmobile Safety Press Conference:** Gov. John Baldacci (left) and IF&W Commissioner Roland "Danny" Martin (right) joined Maine Warden Service Col. Joel Wilkinson and Bob Meyers, executive director of the Maine Snowmobile Association, during an annual press conference on snowmobile safety. Most daily newspapers and TV stations attended the press conference on Dec. 30.

**Maine Chevrolet Derby Commercial Shoot:** IF&W Commissioner Roland "Danny" Martin and Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner John Richardson in early January filmed a TV commercial for the Maine Chevrolet Derby 2009, which features two ice fishing tournaments this winter. The Sebago Lake Derby is set for February 21 and 22 and the State Wide Derby is scheduled for March 7 and 8. Gov. John Baldacci also filmed a TV commercial with a member of the Good Shepard Food Bank, one of the benefactors of the derby.

**"Finding Amy:"** Lt. Pat Dorian of the Maine Warden Service talked about MWS's role in the search for Amy St. Laurent in October 2001 to 20 people at the Bangor Public Library on Jan. 12. Dorian was invited to participate as a speaker in the Bangor Public Library's program, "Bangor Reads," in which community members may read the same book and take part in discussions about it. The book is "Finding Amy" about the 25-year-old's disappearance and murder, and a family's quest for justice.

## **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: PLAN ON IT!**

Successful wildlife management begins with a well thought out plan. To develop management plans for Maine's wildlife species, the Wildlife Division has designed a comprehensive species planning process. The major components of the process are:

- 1) A species assessment that summarizes what we know about a particular species or group of species (e.g. freshwater mussels);
- 2) Fifteen-year species management goals and objectives developed by a public working group;
- 3) Approval of those management goals and objectives by the Commissioner and Advisory Council, and
- 4) A species management system that delineates a path to achieve the goals, including which data to collect, how to analyze and interpret those data, and rules-of-thumb to drive management decisions.

Maine's species planning process is a key component of the state's nationally acclaimed Wildlife Action Plan (Maine's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy), and is a "state-of-the-art" approach

to incorporating public input into species management decisions.  
<http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/maine.html>

#### **RECENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

**Moose:** The Department convened a Moose Working Group in September 2007 to review current management goals and objectives for moose (established in 1999) to determine if they needed revision. The initial decision by the working group was to stay the course until the Department is able to gather better data on moose densities and the effects of winter ticks on moose survival. Subsequently, some members of the working group raised management issues that a more comprehensive working group will need to address as they wrestle with multi-species management in Northern and Eastern Maine.

**Northern Black Racer Snake:** In August 2007, the Northern Black Racer Working group recommended management goals and objectives for this species through the year 2022. In response to those recommendations, biologist Jonathan Mays developed feasibility statements for each objective; he also identified problems in reaching the goals and objectives and potential strategies to overcome each problem. The Commissioner's Advisory Council approved the goals and objectives on February 20, 2008. <http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/plans/reptiles/index.htm>

**Freshwater Mussel:** Beth Swartz wrote the Freshwater Mussel Assessment, which the Freshwater Mussel Working Group referenced as they developed management goals and objectives during their meeting in March 2008. Beth has since written feasibility and problems and strategies statements that are currently under review. She will present the goals and objectives to the Advisory Council in March 2009.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Tom Hodgman finished crafting the Grasshopper Sparrow Assessment. It is now ready for the Grasshopper Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper Working Group to review as they prepare to meet in February or March 2009 to develop management goals and objectives for both species.

**Least Tern and Piping Plover:** Lindsay Tudor completed the Least Tern and Piping Plover Management System, and Brad Allen finished the Leach's Storm-petrel Management System. Both systems were reviewed and approved by the Wildlife Division, and now guide our management programs for these species.

#### **FUTURE PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

During the coming year, we plan to complete species assessments for American marten, fisher, Canada lynx, peregrine falcon, grasshopper sparrow, and ringed boghaunter. We also plan to convene public working groups to address the American marten and fisher; Canada lynx; grasshopper sparrow and upland sandpiper; peregrine falcon; and ringed boghaunter. Management systems are planned for the American black bear; black racer; freshwater mussels; Island-nesting terns; red-necked phalarope; bald eagle; and golden eagle.

If you are interested in reviewing the Wildlife Division's species planning documents, please visit our website at <http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/plans/index.htm>

#### **IF&W, CONSERVATION PARTNERS RECEIVE FEDERAL GRANTS**

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and its conservation partners have been awarded more than \$2.1 million in conservation grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program.

IF&W Director of Resources Management Ken Elowe said the grants are significant in many ways. Maine competed with other states for funding, and four of the five proposals submitted by IF&W were accepted by USF&WS. Local and state conservation groups, coordinated by the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, of which Dr. Elowe is chair, demonstrated the need to conserve coastal wetlands to benefit fish, wildlife and their habitats, and facilitated the development of creative conservation projects with willing landowners.

The Coastal Conservation funds will be matched by contributions from landowners and conservation groups.

"It was a cooperative effort that successfully garnered these funds in what essentially is a nationwide competition for money," said Dr. Elowe. "To receive four out of the five grant proposals we submitted is

extraordinary, and it demonstrates the strong desire of conservation groups to protect valuable wetlands and the importance and credibility of Maine's conservation efforts nationally."

The groups participating in this effort within the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition are the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, the Pleasant River Wildlife Foundation, the Great Auk Land Trust, and the Kennebec Estuary Conservation Collaboration.

The grants and the projects the funds will support permanently protect nationally significant coastal wetland habitats in the following areas:

- Mason Bay Wetlands Conservation, to protect 496.5 acres of coastal wetland habitat in Mason Bay, Washington County, \$521,000;
- Grain Point Wetlands Conservation, to protect 204.4-acres in Pleasant Bay, Washington County, \$375,000;
- Upper Maquoit Bay Coastal Wetlands, to permanently protect a 72-acre tract of coastal shorefront on Maquoit Bay in Brunswick, Cumberland County, through the purchase of a conservation easement, \$600,000;
- Kennebec Estuary Robinhood Cove Project, to protect 157.5-acres embedded within the greater 3,420-acre Little River subsite of the Kennebec Estuary Conservation Project, Sagadahoc County, \$610,185.

#### **MAINE WARDEN SERVICE FIELD NOTES:**

- **Hunter's Death Ruled Accident:** A New Gloucester man who suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound on the last day of firearms hunting season last November died as a result of an accidental shooting while hunting, according to the results of a combined investigation conducted by Dr. Edward David, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, and the Maine Warden Service.

Ernest L. Russell II, 55, of New Gloucester, went hunting alone on Prong Pond Mountain in Beaver Cove Township (Piscataquis County) at approximately 12:15 p.m. Saturday, November 29, 2008.

Mr. Russell's wife notified the Maine Warden Service through Piscataquis County dispatch at approximately 7:30 p.m. when her husband did not return as planned.

Mr. Russell's vehicle was located by activating its On Star system, and Game Wardens followed tracks in the snow to locate the hunter.

According to Lt. Patrick Dorian of the Maine Warden Service, who supervised the MWS investigation, Mr. Russell fell approximately 21 feet down a hill after slipping on a large snow-and-ice-covered rock. The hunter had been following skidder trails on a ridge at the time.

"He never broke stride as he was walking, and after stepping on the large rock he fell face first down the hill," according to Lt. Dorian. "In an effort to regain his footing, Mr. Russell's gun discharged. We feel that during the victim's fall down the hill, in all probability the gun became cocked and he didn't know it."

Physical evidence at the scene was instrumental in the investigation, according to Lt. Dorian.

Dr. David performed the medico-legal examination in this case. Eight Game Wardens and a Maine State Police Evidence Response Team member took part in the accidental death investigation. Mr. Russell's death was the only fatality during last fall's hunting season. Since 1964, 12 hunters have died as the result of accidental self-inflicted gun shots.

- **Poland man dies hitting porch with snowmobile:** A 52-year-old Poland man snowmobiling on Hogan Pond in Oxford died Wednesday night, Jan. 21, when he left a trail and drove underneath a camp's porch.

Brent Howe, 52, was riding ahead of two other sleds when the incident occurred at approximately 9 p.m. Wednesday. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mr. Howe was wearing a helmet. Speed may have been a factor, according to Maine Warden Service Game Warden Jeremy Judd.

- Snowmobiler hits tree branch; dies hours later at hospital:** A 53-year-old Island Falls man died at approximately 2:55 a.m. on Jan. 12 at Houlton Regional Hospital as a result of injuries he suffered in a snowmobile incident Sunday night.

Raymond Webb, 53, of Island Falls, was operating his Ski Doo MXZ 500SS south on the West Branch of the Mattawamkeag River near Houlton when he struck an overhanging tree on the east side of the river.

The Maine Warden Service received a call about the incident at 11:44 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 11, according to MWS Sgt. Brian Gray. The actual time of the incident has yet to be determined.
- Snowmobiler goes into water where sledder died last year:** The Maine Warden Service issued another warning to outdoor enthusiasts to use extreme caution when going onto ice particularly in areas near bridges, thoroughfares, culverts and wherever else there may be currents flowing underneath as ice in these areas may be very thin or non-existent.

A Massachusetts man went through thin ice on South Twin Lake, near North Twin Dam on Indian Purchase 4 near Millinocket, at approximately 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10, 2008.

The area where the man went into the water is in close proximity to where a Connecticut man died in early April 2008 when snowmobiling onto thin ice near moving water on North Twin Lake.
- Carbon monoxide overtakes men in separate ice shacks:** An ice fisherman asked Wardens Josh Smith and Tony Gray to take him to the hospital after the wardens came upon him in a disoriented state outside of his ice shack on Jan. 2. The man had been inside his shack with a propane heater that may not have had proper ventilation. Carbon monoxide poisoning was suspected.

Earlier, a 70-year-old man who was out coyote hunting from his ice shack was found dead inside the shack. According to wardens, there was no ventilation and propane heaters were on. The death was under investigation by a sheriff's office.
- Snowshoer found by stream after night in woods:** A 33-year-old Ellitsville Township woman was found in good condition after spending a night in the woods. Seven wardens, including a pilot, were called to search for the woman when she did not return at noon on Jan. 2 as planned. Pilot Charlie Later located a fire along Little Wilson Stream, and wardens trekked to the location and helped her out of the woods at 4:30 in the morning.
- Hunters shoot 'John Deere' on first day of deer hunt:** A blueberry farmer reported that a tractor he had in one of his blueberry fields was shot up on opening day of hunting season. One rear tractor tire had been shot along with two mower tires and the mower itself. After an investigation, one man was summonsed for criminal mischief and defacement of notices. A second suspect has been identified. Wardens Doug Kullis and Bob Decker and Sgt. John Blagdon worked on the case.
- Man threatens suicide until he sees warden:** A man who was threatening suicide at a store that he owns reconsidered when he looked outside the building and saw Warden Bruce Loring, who he knows from hunting seasons. That personal connection was enough for the man, who was holding the gun under his chin, to not follow through with ending his life.
- Whichever way the wind blows for snowmobiler:** A snowmobiler tried to get away with putting his registration stickers for one snowmobile on two separate sleds. He claimed the sticker must have blown off until Warden Troy Dauphinee noticed the same numbered sticker on the other sled.
- Angler smiles for the camera while fishing without license:** When reading the Bangor Daily News, Warden Jim Fahey saw a picture of two people fishing on Pushaw Lake and he

recognized one of them as a prior fish and game violator. He did some checking and found out the man did not have a current fishing license. A few days later, the man was seen fishing with another individual but with no license. He was issued a summons.