



# *Ducks, Etc...*

*Connecticut Waterfowlers Association  
Fall 2018 Newsletter*



## **President's Message**

Dear CWA Members:

As we get near the close of this year's waterfowl season, I wanted to share some information with you about changes coming for next year.

Unfortunately, breeding surveys for the Atlantic Population (AP) of Canada geese last year showed virtually no reproduction. This is the population that migrates through and winters in western Connecticut. The reproductive failure was due to a very late spring in arctic areas. However, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) new process of setting seasons two years in advance there was no opportunity to have a more restrictive season this year. As a result, the population will be further reduced and you can expect a 30-day, two bird limit in that zone next year. (Don't feel too badly, states in the Chesapeake Bay area will have a 30-day, one bird limit).

The FWS went to setting seasons two years in advance because it was difficult for them to get through the bureaucratic process of publishing the regulations (as required by law) in the Federal Register prior to season openings. However, they always got it done. The rationale for setting seasons on an annual basis was always that season lengths and bag limits should be based primarily on the current year's productivity data. Now, with the two-year system we face a potential management problem with AP geese that could result in restrictions on harvest and hunter opportunity in future years. This is not what the

waterfowl hunting community needs now and represents poor management.

Also, be prepared for a two-bird mallard limit with a one hen restriction next year. This is due to a substantial decline in mallard numbers in the Northeast over the last several years (see details about the mallard decline on Page 10). Don't be depressed, how many times do you limit out on mallards?!? This is responsible waterfowl management!

CWA thanks the Atlantic Flyway Council for allowing the use of this document and Min Huang, DEEP's Wildlife Division Migratory Bird Coordinator for providing it to us.

Keep the faith! Waterfowlers are dedicated to our passion! We've survived 30-day seasons in the past and we will get over this bump in the road also!

Best to All,

Greg Chasko  
President, CWA



Greg Chasko, CWA President, addresses the attendees about the training seminar and CWA.



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### **Current Connecticut Conservation News**

A project to create an impoundment that will provide great waterfowl habitat in a wet area in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme will be starting in the near future. A water control structure will be placed in a dike so that water levels can be controlled. This will result in a wetland that will greatly benefit waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife. CWA and the Connecticut Chapter of Delta Waterfowl will be providing the funding for this project.



Also, a project to replace a pipe in the Brown Hill Marsh in Goodwin State Forest in Hampton will be initiated soon to restore this valuable wetland to increase its value to all water dependent wildlife. This area is not open to hunting, but all wetland projects that improve habitat benefit both waterfowl and waterfowl hunters.

Another project that was recently completed was the installation of a water control structure in a 26-acre marsh in Meshomasic State forest in Glastonbury. This project was funded by a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant. The

DEEP Wildlife Division (WD), under the guidance of Min Huang, Migratory Game Bird Coordinator, has been very successful in obtaining these competitive federal grants.

The DEEP Wildlife Division is in the process of conducting annual wood duck box checks for productivity and installing new boxes built by CWA! If you have boxes that you have installed, be sure to check them and provide your information to the Wildlife Division.

Speaking of productivity, the Wildlife Division has completed its survey of brant in Connecticut, where they identified the ratio of adults to juveniles and found an abysmal percentage of only 3% juveniles. This indicates a near complete failure of brant reproduction. Atlantic Flyway-wide, the results were 1%. Bad news for brant!

The DEEP's Wildlife Division recently completed a study to determine if images taken from drones could be used to census waterfowl. This research was accomplished through funding by Ducks Unlimited and the Black Duck Joint Venture (BDJV). The BDJV is a partnership-based conservation program consisting of member agencies and organizations with responsibility for or interest in the conservation and management of black ducks and other species that share its range. Member Organizations include Federal, state, and provincial wildlife management agencies in the U.S. and Canada and non-government agencies. The "good news" results were that the drones did not alter the behavior of waterfowl (e.g., they did not flush when the drone flew over). The "bad news" is that the quality of the imagery was not sufficient to differentiate



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species. Perhaps, if the quality of drone cameras improves in the future, waterfowl managers can add them to their bag of tools!

Thank you for your continuing support of CWA. And keep in mind you will not get this kind of Connecticut specific information anywhere else! Please encourage all your hunting partners to become members!

## **Thomas C. Marshal Scholarship Award**

Tom Marshal was a founding member of CWA back in the late 60's. He was a passionate conservationist and a more passionate waterfowler.

When the State and Federal Governments proposed building I95 through Nell's Island in Stratford, it was a small group of duck hunters lead by Tom who stood strong and fronted the effort to preserve this 680-acre wetland. Tom's ashes were scattered in that same marsh years later.

Recently, the CWA Scholarship Committee met and reviewed Hamilton Gray's application for the Tom Marshal Scholarship Award.

Agreement of the committee was unanimous to award the \$1,000 scholarship to Hamilton. Hamilton attends Lyman Hall High School in Wallingford is an avid duck hunter and this year's recipient.

Hamilton has received early acceptance to Unity College in Maine and will be starting his

education in Conservation Law Enforcement in September.

## **CWA Web Site Upgrade**

We recently upgraded the web hosting system to a more sophisticated package which provides us additional capabilities. We now have the ability to implement members-only functions. That means we don't have to be so PC and can show dead animals and guns without offending the general public! We can also do audio and video functions that were not possible with our previous system. The new system has given us the capability to offer unlimited fund raising items, and the capability to offer digital products that will result in considerable administrative expense reductions.

As part of the upgrade we switched to PayPal for our transaction processing. This provides CWA with a number of benefits:

- Easy secure checkout that almost everyone is familiar with.
- A lower per transaction fee.
- Ability to accept Donations through our web site.
- Participation in the PayPal Giving Fund that lists CWA as an approved charity.

Members are encouraged to keep submitting pictures for use in the members-only section. But now we have more. We have a video sharing page set up for members only access where we can share our videos with other members. Since almost everyone carries a phone that functions as a still and video camera, please help make these





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new features a success by submitting videos of your adventures.

As always, members are encouraged to submit materials to make our web site more interesting and useful. Thank you very much to all those members who have been supporting our web efforts.

### **Fall Events**

#### **2018 Annual Waterfowl Hunter Training**

On Sunday, September 9, 2018, the CWA in cooperation with the DEEP's Wildlife Division held its annual Waterfowl Hunter Training Seminar at the Wallingford Rod and Gun Club in Wallingford.



After the seminar, a raffle was held and several attendees went home with decoys donated by CWA members. The morning ended with a fine waterfowl lunch including goose stew, goose

kielbasa and grilled mallard breasts. Folks greatly enjoyed it – there were no leftovers!

#### **2018 CWA Sporting Clays Shoot**



CWA would like to express our gratitude for GSA's exemplary performance hosting the CWA 2018 Sporting Clays Shoot. We especially want to express our appreciation for the outstanding work that Dave Tarducci and his team of trappers who provided all of our attendees a very enjoyable experience. The course and the people supporting our event could not have done a better job!



"To the CWA Admins Running the Fun Shoot, I cannot thank the you enough for the amazing day you put on for everyone, at this year's CWA





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sporting clays event!! Our squad(s) consisted of a wide range of shooting ability: from a few diehard duck hunters to individuals who were newer to the shooting sports. You did everything possible to make sure everyone had a great time from start to finish! The facility of Guilford Sportsmen's Club was truly amazing and allowed both the expert and the novice shooters the ability to improve their skills. With that, the individuals running each of the stations went above and beyond to help out and make sure everyone had a safe and enjoyable shoot."

"From start to finish we could tell that you put a lot of time and effort to providing a great time for everyone! I hope next year we can get more of the membership out to the event - they will NOT be disappointed. The breakfast and lunch were some of the best we had, while the raffles, and the awards gave a large group of participants a chance to win a number of awesome prizes. You guys really did a great job! EVERYONE, from our squads had a "blast" and are already looking forward to next year's shoot! Keep up the great work!"

Tom Lewoc







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## **Discover Outdoor Connecticut Saturday, September 22**



Thanks go to Rich Chmiel and Wil Iturrino for staffing the booth.

## **Wood Duck Box Building Day Sunday October 21<sup>st</sup>**



Twelve CWA members, together with the DEEP Wildlife Division, took part in a Wood Duck Box Building Day at the Flaherty Field Trial Area in East Windsor.



Over 100 boxes were constructed this year, and will be placed on state lands by the Wildlife Division. It was good to meet and work with some new CWA members, including a father and son team. This has been an annual event, and anyone interested, conservation minded individuals, CWA members, and organizations such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, are encouraged to take part in this local wildlife conservation effort.





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### **Coming Events**



### **All Members Meeting**

As the Connecticut Waterfowlers Association continues to expand and improve, we have decided to hold our first ever "All Members Meeting." It will be held at Cabela's in East Hartford on Saturday, March 2, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to noon followed by a free lunch provided by CWA. This event is free to all current members and any prospective members. All attendees will receive 10 free tickets that can be used for raffle prizes at our Annual Fund-Raising Banquet to be held on April 14, 2019 at the Westbrook Elks Club.

The goal of this meeting is to encourage more participation in CWA from members so that we can further our mission to conserve wetlands and to protect the interests of waterfowl hunters. The morning will include a presentation that explains all the conservation efforts that CWA does in Connecticut. It will also feature a special presentation from the DEEP's Wildlife Division's Migratory Game Bird Program Leader, Min Huang, on waterfowl conservation in Connecticut.

CWA will offer the opportunity for all attendees to express their ideas on anything related to waterfowl in Connecticut and we hope members will indicate what actions they want from their organization. Also, any input from members on potential habitat improvement projects or other efforts that will improve waterfowl hunting in Connecticut will be appreciated!

Please plan on attending and participating, we need your input! Please RSVP to the CWA website to let you know if you plan to attend and what issues you would like to discuss!

**Northeast Fishing  Hunting Show**  
March 29 - 31, 2019 - Connecticut Convention Center

The CWA exhibit will highlight our projects that have benefitted habitat and waterfowl conservation in Connecticut. Our exhibit will feature information about our ongoing conservation efforts and show examples of the artwork particular to waterfowling. There will also be exhibits featuring hand-carved decoys and taxidermy mounts.

Partnering with the Connecticut Chapter of Delta Waterfowl, we will host a seminar on waterfowling at the show.

Stop by CWA's booth and visit! Your support is welcome and needed at the show. If you would like to volunteer a few hours to help, please contact Rick Boucher at 203-255-0686 or [boucherrj1@aol.com](mailto:boucherrj1@aol.com) via email.





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### **2019 CWA Fund Raising Banquet**



The 2019 Banquet will be held at the Westbrook Elks Lodge on April 14, 2019. This is a very nice facility located centrally on the coast and it is literally on the coast of Long Island Sound.



The Westbrook Elks Club is renowned for the quality of its food. The 2019 CWA Banquet will feature sit-down dining with the food served family style. This means that you can eat as much of any item as you wish! Our menu will consist of:

- Beef tenderloin medallions
- Chicken marsala
- Baked stuffed shrimp
- Grilled vegetables
- Potato fingerings
- Salad and rolls
- Cheese cake for dessert



The main hall capacity for our event will only be 150 seats. Tickets will go on sale for CWA members about 10 weeks before the banquet.





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## **Marketplace**

### **German Shorthaired Pups**



Call or text Jackie at 860-304-9978.

Becket Hill GSP

Lyme, CT

<https://www.facebook.com/beckethillgsp/>

### **Complete Hand Carved**

#### **Mallard Rig**



Location: East Lyme

Seller: Rich Chmiel

Price: \$2800 OBO

Telephone: 860-739-5586

### **2004 Lund Alaskan**



18'10" with an 83" beam

60 HP 2004 Yamaha four stroke

Garmin 44DV GPS/fish finder

2017 Karavan roller trailer

Contact Rich at 860-739-5586

[richchmiel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:richchmiel@sbcglobal.net)

Asking price \$7000

Location: East Lyme

More details:

<http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org/mkt5.htm>

### **For Sale**

#### **Mossberg 930 12 Gauge Autoloader**



#85120

NIB, Unfired

\$500.00

Call or text 860-304-9978

Jackie Alix



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### Changes in the Atlantic Flyway Mallard Bag Limit



### The Decline of Eastern Mallards

Mallards in the U.S. portion of the Atlantic Flyway are largely the result of released live decoys and game farm birds starting in the early 1900s. Mallards became prominent in the flyway's duck harvest during the 1970s and have consistently been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America for the last few decades. In the past 20 years, however, eastern

mallards have been on the decline. Spring surveys conducted throughout eastern Canada and northeastern U.S. every year they have decreased steadily in northeastern U.S., declining by about 38% since 1998 (Figure 1).

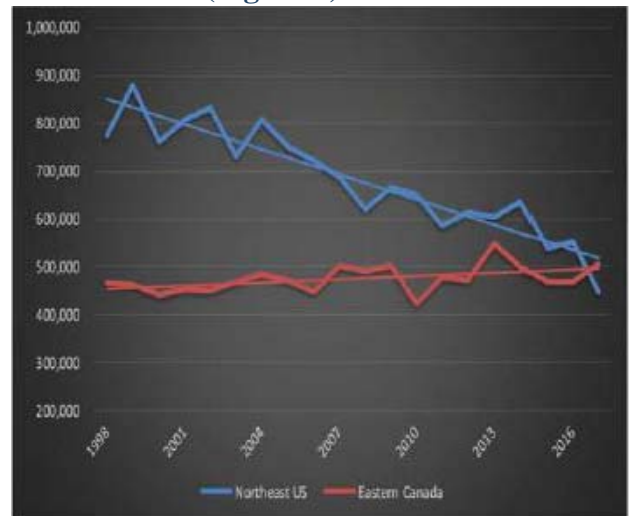


Figure 1. Mallard breeding populations in eastern Canada and Northeast U.S.

When these two survey areas are combined, the total breeding mallard population in eastern North America is declining at a steady rate of approximately 1% per year (Figure 2).

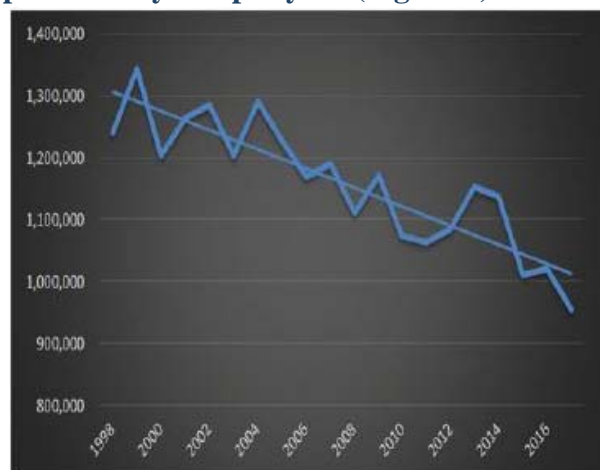


Figure 2. Mallard breeding population in eastern North America in the combined Total Survey Area





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Based on banding data, about 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states are northeastern U.S. birds, so that means there are fewer mallards available to Atlantic Flyway hunters in the U.S. now. This is reflected in harvest estimates from the annual USFWS survey of waterfowl hunters; from 1998 – 2016 the mallard harvest in the U.S. portion of the Atlantic Flyway has decreased by about 40% (Figure 3).

To put this in perspective, eastern mallards are now only marginally more abundant than American black ducks in eastern North America. At this time, biologists are unable to pinpoint why the decline has occurred. Breeding population size in any year depends on how many birds from the previous year's population survived the full year (survival rate), and how many young-of-the-year birds from the previous year's nesting season made it through the winter and early spring (production rate). A long-term decline means that either survival or production (or both) is too low to maintain the population size. However, banding data indicate that eastern mallard survival rates are not measurably different now than they were in the 1990s, when the population was stable. Production estimates obtained from the USFWS Parts Collection Survey have not decreased from that time either. Yet the population decline is evident. This indicates a problem with either one or both of these critical data streams.

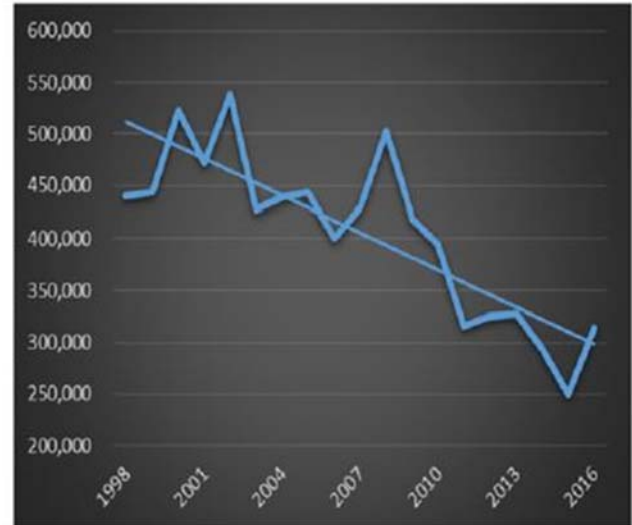


Figure 3. Harvest of mallards in the U.S. portion of the Atlantic Flyway

### Changes to The Mallard Bag Limit

Based upon biologists' present understanding of eastern mallard population dynamics, contemporary harvest rates from a 60-day season with a 4-mallard daily bag limit may result in harvest rates that are above a sustainable level. Thus, biologists are recommending that the mallard bag limit be reduced from 4 birds to 2, beginning in the 2019-20 hunting season. Hopefully, this change will stabilize the eastern mallard population. Should the population start to grow again, biologists will have a better understanding of the effects of harvest on the population. Meanwhile, biologists from the Atlantic Flyway and USFWS will keep trying to determine what caused the mallard decline in northeastern U.S. and if that mechanism can be mitigated. Further, biologists will work toward a new eastern mallard harvest strategy that incorporates the best available population data,



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demographic data (i.e. survival and productivity), and hunter preferences.



## **How Future Duck Season Frameworks Will Be Set**

Since 2000, the status of eastern mallards has been used to set the general duck hunting season frameworks (season length and total duck bag limit) in the Atlantic Flyway. The declining trend in mallard population levels nearly resulted in the general duck season being closed or restricted to 30 days in recent years. Thankfully, mallard population levels were just high enough to avoid a closure or shortened season. Setting all duck seasons based on mallards' status is no longer the optimal approach because most other important duck species in the Atlantic Flyway (such as wood ducks, ring-necked ducks, and green-winged teal) are either stable or increasing while mallards continue to decline. By setting overall frameworks based on multiple important species, there is a greater chance of continuing more liberal frameworks in the Atlantic Flyway in the foreseeable future.

Over the past five years the Atlantic Flyway Council and USFWS have been developing a new

approach to duck harvest management by using an Adaptive Harvest Management strategy based on the status of 4 species (green-winged teal, wood ducks, ring-necked ducks and golden-eyes) instead of relying solely upon the status of eastern mallards. By moving away from a reliance on mallard population status to set the general duck hunting season, the objective is to continue maximizing hunting opportunity commensurate with the population levels of a more representative suite of duck species that breed and are harvested largely within the Atlantic Flyway. Removing eastern mallards from the "driver seat" for setting general duck seasons and bag limits, and managing them independently, is a more reasonable strategy at this time. There is precedence for this type of management approach for other duck species that are below population objectives (i.e. pintails, scaup) while being within a larger duck harvest management framework. Waterfowl managers are seeking to implement the new framework for setting general duck seasons for the 2019-20 hunting season.

