

## Central District Activities – March, 2018

Wildlife – Two active bear dens, one in Rutland and one in Petersham, were visited by District and Field Headquarters Staff. Each collared sow had three newborn cubs. The sows were immobilized, assessed, weighed and their telemetry collars changed or adjusted. They were then reunited with their cubs, which had been weighed and sexed, and all returned to the den with extra bedding or outer cover added. A third collared sow is inaccessible as she chose to den in the median strip of a divided highway.

The Public Hearing to discuss proposed regulatory changes which would extend the deer archery season by two weeks in WMZs 10 – 14 has been postponed until April 7, at 7 PM at the MassWildlife Field Headquarters in Westboro. The Hearing to set migratory bird season dates will be held at 3 PM on the same date.

A coyote hunter called the District to report an ear tagged bobcat he observed over coyote bait in Northbridge. Furbearer Biologist Dave Wattles advises that both Connecticut and Rhode Island have active bobcat research projects with Connecticut using the yellow tags the hunter described. The sighting information has been shared with the Connecticut biologist who is receiving other reports of both tagged and radio collared bobcats. Approximately 50 animals are part of the Connecticut study.

The Turkey Review is ongoing and was discussed extensively at the most recent Senior Staff meeting. Turkey Project Leader Dave Scarpitti presented on a wide variety of turkey related issues, focusing on the request by the Fisheries and Wildlife Board to explore the potential for expanded turkey hunting recreational opportunities. Extending the hunting season, hours and bag limits were all discussed.

Fisheries – Trout stocking commenced during the week of March 12 with the following lakes and ponds receiving fish: Webster, Wallum, Quinsigamond and Comet. Rainbow trout from the McLaughlin Hatchery in Belchertown are the first fish to hit local waters. Trout stocking reports will be updated daily at the [Mass.gov/trout](http://Mass.gov/trout) web page. A list and map of trout stocked waters will be available on the trout page with the date and species of trout stocked.

Natural Heritage – Bald Eagles have been documented back on their nesting territories at multiple locations including Northbridge, Holden, Webster, Boylston, West Brookfield and Shrewsbury. The annual bald eagle nesting survey is scheduled for Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, when MassWildlife staff and volunteers will observe all known eagle nests and try to document new nests and territories. Anyone with an eagle observation on or about April 6<sup>th</sup> is asked to report it to the District or State Ornithologist Drew Vitz.

Assistant Director Tom French reports a peregrine falcon banded by the District at an active nest box on the Fallon Health building in downtown Worcester in 2009 was photographed and reliably reported on Fox Hall at UMass Lowell. Tom does not know if this 9 year old falcon has replaced the 16 year old female that originally established the Fox Hall territory. He is also curious as to the whereabouts of the 9 year old bird since fledging as it should have been nesting for the past 6+ years.

Habitat – Habitat Project Leader John Scanlon advises that four bids were received for the habitat work proposed at the Muddy Brook WMA in Hardwick and two bids received for habitat work proposed at Birch Hill WMA in Winchendon and Royalston. The high bidders have been notified and will advise Scanlon whether or not they will accept the contract.

Three northern Worcester County farmers requested bid packages for 79 acres of hay fields at the High Ridge WMA in Westminster. The fields will be made available for hay production with the caveat that no cutting may occur before August 1<sup>st</sup>. The restriction is in the interest of maximizing the grassland habitat benefits for bobolinks, deer fawns, turkey poults, and other wildlife that utilize fields. Bids will be opened on March 26 at the District office.

District staff moved mowing equipment to the Raccoon Hill WMA and continued field reclamation work given the favorable weather conditions. Equipment was brought back to the District office in advance of the March 7<sup>th</sup> nor'easter.

The Massachusetts Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation will contract work to define a parking area and remediate an old farm dump at the Moose Brook WMA in Barre. This effort builds on the field reclamation work NWTF sponsored at Moose Brook in 2017.

