

# 2017 Vermont Habitat Stamp Annual Report



This was a banner year for the Vermont Habitat Stamp! Thanks to our donors, more than \$100,000 (a first for the stamp!) for habitat conservation in Vermont was raised. Habitat Stamp funds helped us offer one-on-one assistance to landowners on habitat conservation and management. And Habitat Stamp funds also contributed to three land acquisition projects, including the largest state wildlife land purchase in Vermont in more than a decade, as well as a critical outdoor classroom space near our Kehoe Conservation Camp that will be forever conserved for Vermont's young people to experience wildlife and the outdoors.

## By The Numbers\*

**Total Conservation Funding: \$251,047**

### Where the Money Came From



Average Donation: **\$13**

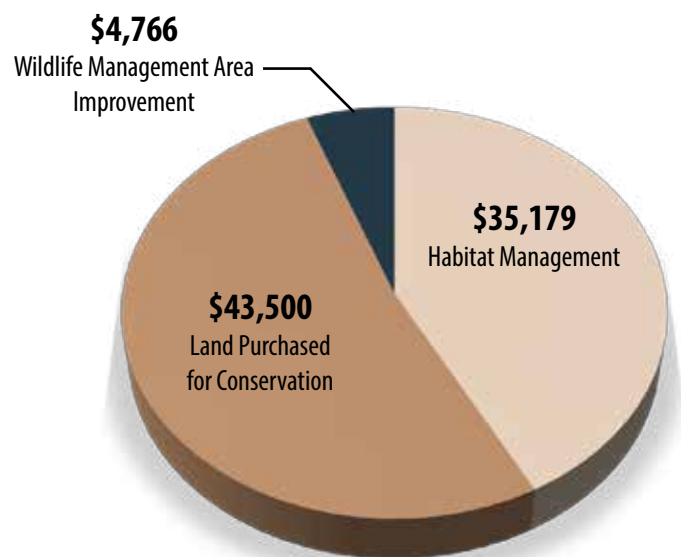
Donations from License Buyers: **\$92,930 (92%)**

Donations from non-license buyers: **\$8,283 (8%)**

\* Dates are 12/15/16 through 12/15/17

**Total Habitat Stamp Funds Spent: \$82,445**

### How the Money Was Spent



\*\* These figures only include Habitat Stamp fund expenditures, not federal funds.



## Wildlife Management Area Maintenance

In 2017, Habitat Stamp donations helped improve wildlife habitat on numerous Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) including enhancing **8 acres of wild apple trees** on Little Ascutney WMA in Weathersfield. One type of mechanical brush cutter known as a brontosaurus was used to remove competing trees and provide more sunlight to the sun-loving apple trees.

Wild apple trees are maintained in openings on WMAs along with many other shrubs that provide food and shelter to wildlife including blueberry, raspberry, dogwood, chokecherry, and hawthorn. These plants produce fruits that attract a variety of wildlife, including grouse, wild turkey, deer, bear, numerous songbirds, and many small mammals, such as mice and voles.

## By Land

In 2017, habitat biologist Andrea Shortsleeve joined the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department to enhance our habitat management work with private landowners throughout the state. Since joining the department, she has been working on three priorities:

- **Enhancing Wildlife Habitat Management in Forests Enrolled in 'Current Use'**

Andrea is working to improve how wildlife habitat is addressed in Use Value Appraisal ('Current Use') forest management plans, in partnership with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. **Over 1.2 million acres of private land** in Vermont is currently enrolled in this property tax relief program.

- **Working with Private Landowners**

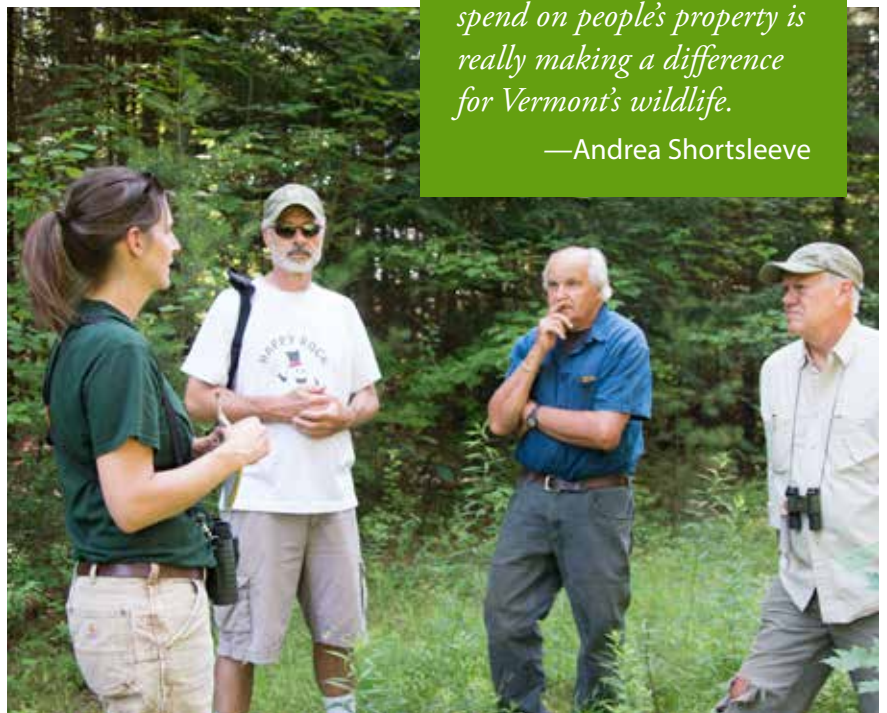
Andrea has assisted landowners on more than **30 properties covering over 3,000 acres to improve wildlife habitat**. Andrea is available to meet with landowners who are interested in improving their property for wildlife. Because the vast majority of Vermont's land is privately owned, these landowners are critical to successful wildlife conservation in Vermont.

- **Outreach and Workshops**

Andrea and her colleagues have **offered 10 workshops** and presentations throughout Vermont, bringing habitat improvement tips and tricks directly to more than 160 Vermonters.

*One of the highlights of this position has been working with landowners who are new to owning property. Landowners have written to me to express their gratitude and share photos of the invasive plants they ripped out, or to tell me they're recruited their children into helping improve habitat on their properties. It's been really rewarding to know that the few hours that we spend on people's property is really making a difference for Vermont's wildlife.*

—Andrea Shortsleeve



## By Water

Will Eldridge, a skilled habitat and fisheries biologist, is now working to improve habitat along streams for both fish and wildlife throughout Vermont thanks to the Vermont Habitat Stamp.

- **Stewarding Department Lands**

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department owns **hundreds of parcels of land** throughout the state that are known as 'streambank parcels,' many of which are only 16.5 feet wide. These areas along streams and were purchased to provide access for fishing. Many of these parcels have not been publicized, utilized, or stewarded for fish and wildlife. Will is working with other fish biologists to improve habitat and recreational opportunities on these lands.

- **Improving Streambanks**

Will has secured over **\$130,000 for restoration of streams** in Vermont, which will be used to plant trees, control invasive species, and restore wetland and floodplain habitat by department staff and watershed organizations.

- **Removing Obstacles to Fish Passage**

Will is working to improve undersized culverts that are barriers to fish and other creatures and can wash out during a storm. He has helped assess nearly 3,500 culverts in Vermont to create designs for the **replacement of 5 culverts and removal of 5 dams**.



*“The area along streams and rivers is a critical interface between the water and the land. Protecting and restoring forests next to streams, rivers and lakes creates a buffer that provides enormous benefits to water quality, flood resilience, and aquatic organisms.”*

—Will Eldridge

## Bird's Eye Wildlife Management Area

*Celebrating Our Largest Land Conservation Project in Fifteen Years*

In 2017, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department **added nearly 3,000 acres** to Bird's Eye Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Ira and Poultney, bringing this publicly conserved area to more than 3,600 acres. This is the largest addition to a Vermont wildlife management area in more than a decade.

The wildlife area includes the iconic Bird's Eye Mountain--a well-known nesting site and habitat for peregrine falcons—in addition to the surrounding lands. The Habitat Stamp provided a small, but important, piece of the funding for this tremendous purchase.



The land is just 10 minutes outside of Rutland, and is part of a larger connected area of 4,100 acres of conserved land that includes Blueberry Hill Wildlife Management Area and West Rutland town forest properties.

“Large connected habitat blocks, such as the ones at Bird Mountain, are essential for wildlife including bears, songbirds, bobcats, and brook trout,” said Louis Porter, commissioner of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “These lands are popular with hunters, hikers, birdwatchers, and snowmobilers. This expansion will provide additional recreational opportunities and a year-round boost to regional tourism.”



## Unique Shoreline Conserved Along Sunset Lake

*A New Addition to Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area in Benson*

Fifty acres of **spectacular forested shoreline** have been added to the Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area in Benson thanks in part to Habitat Stamp donors. The property is now permanently conserved and open to the public for wildlife-based recreation such as bird-watching, hiking, fishing, and hunting.

Sunset Lake is known for its remarkably clear, clean water, holding the record for the greatest water clarity measured in any water body in Vermont.

The department is investigating the possibility of adding a small public access area on the property for launching canoes and kayaks for fishing or watching wildlife.

“**Sunset Lake is an absolute treasure**—one of the prettiest lakes in Vermont,” said Jane Lazorchak, who coordinates land acquisitions for Vermont Fish & Wildlife. “This property provides a great place to launch for a paddle to look for birds or fish, or just go for a walk to listen for and view wildlife. We’re excited that this special place will be permanently conserved for the people of Vermont to enjoy.”

The forest within Pond Woods contains incredible stands of oak and hickory that attract all sorts of wildlife including deer, turkeys, and squirrels, as well as giant old hemlock trees that serve as deer wintering habitat. It is also part of an important forested corridor for wildlife migrating between the Adirondacks and Green Mountains.

“Conserving this shoreline will help **protect the pristine water quality** in Sunset Lake, enhancing water quality downstream all the way to Lake Champlain,” said Lazorchak. “We owe a special thanks to the people who purchased their Vermont Habitat Stamp to help make this happen.”

## A Place for Generations of Campers to Explore

*Habitat Stamp Donors Step Up to Conserve Kehoe Conservation Camp Outdoor Classroom*

All of the proceeds from Habitat Stamp donations in the month of May were directed to help purchase an amazing property adjacent to the Edward Kehoe Conservation Camp in Fair Haven that campers have been using for more than 50 years. When the property became available, Habitat Stamp donors, including camp staff alumni, current and former campers and their families, came up big, contributing nearly \$15,000 in just one month to help with the purchase of this land. These funds were critical in completing this unique conservation opportunity that will benefit the conservation camp for generations to come.

Now protected forever, the 281-acre property is where campers **get hands-on with wetland creatures**, fish in Bullhead Pond, see rare snakes in the old slate quarry, and learn about the variety of forest types found in the area. Trails on the property lead to a spectacular view of the surrounding Taconic Mountains.

The purchase includes all of Bullhead Pond, which is a largemouth bass fishery and home to beavers and mink. During the fall and winter, the land is a great place to hunt white-tailed deer, turkeys, or gray squirrels.

Vermonters young and old will forever be able to enjoy this spectacular property.



## The View Ahead

Continued contributions to the Habitat Stamp in 2018 will support landowners in creating and protecting young forest and other important habitats, as well as protecting shorelines. It will also help the department purchase special lands that provide habitat for a variety of Vermont species and provide access to the public for generations to come. Habitat Stamp donors will help the Vermont Fish & Wildlife continue to leverage federal funds to make all this work possible. Thanks to your donations, Vermont’s forests and fields will remain places for healthy wildlife populations to thrive now and in the future.

If you want to continue contributing to Vermont’s conservation legacy, 2018 Vermont Habitat Stamps are available at [vtfishandwildlife.com](http://vtfishandwildlife.com).

Thank you, Habitat Stamp donors for making all these new wildlife habitat projects happen in 2017!

Louis Porter, Commissioner