

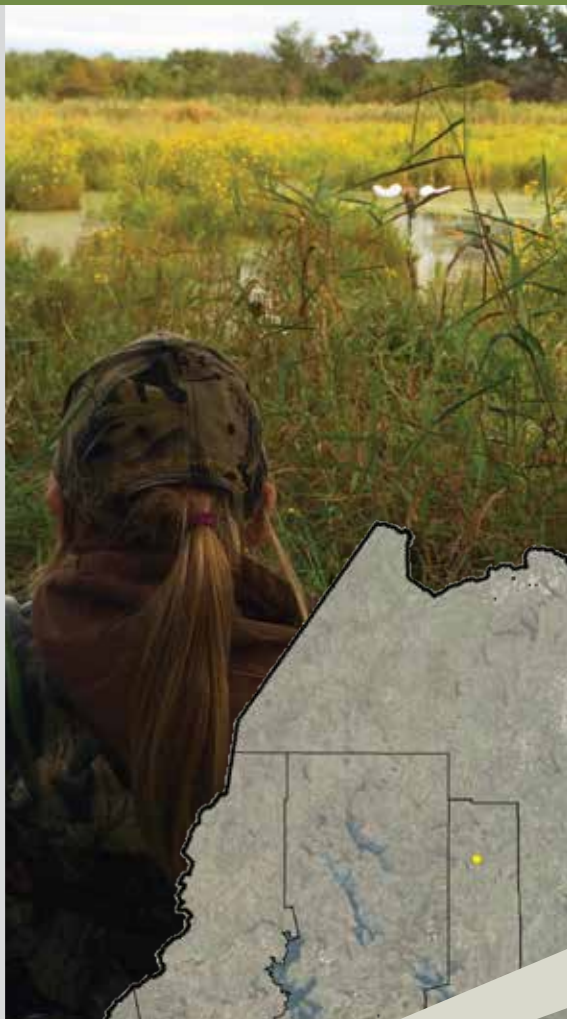
# NEW ENGLAND

2019 CONSERVATION REPORT



## YOUTH HUNTING PROGRAM EDUCATES NEW GENERATION

Ducks Unlimited and the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge supported the 2018 and 2019 Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Program. The program is a joint educational effort with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, Ducks Unlimited, the Sportsman's Club of Franklin County and volunteers to teach young hunters about waterfowl hunting and local habitat conservation efforts. The program instructs beginning hunters in the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible, respected individuals who strive to learn all they can about the species being hunted, and to become knowledgeable in hunter ethics and wildlife conservation. Ducks Unlimited is pleased to support this program and work with the staff at the refuge, who are longtime supporters of the Ducks Unlimited mission.



## VERMONT WETLAND RESTORATION MOVES FORWARD

An important 25-acre wetland restoration in northwest Vermont will soon provide refreshed migration resting spots for waterfowl. The Goad Road project is transforming land back to its historical wetland condition. The restoration will improve the area for waterfowl and wildlife and will complement the nearby restored Millet Creek Wildlife Management Area. This project is the result of a partnership between Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, Agency of Natural Resources. It represents continued efforts by Ducks Unlimited to partner and restore critical wetland habitat within the Atlantic Flyway. Permitting and designs are underway, and delivery is planned for fall.



## PROTECTING CRITICAL COASTAL HABITAT IN MAINE

Ducks Unlimited has partnered with Georges River Land Trust to advance the Weskeag Conservation Project in South Thomaston. The project will conserve one of the few remaining parcels in the 1,500-acre Weskeag Marsh focus area. Protection of this coastal zone will reduce and prevent contamination to the coastal wetlands, while protecting unfragmented forestland that buffers the marsh. The Weskeag Marsh is important to a variety of wildlife and provides breeding, spawning, nursery, nesting, migratory and wintering habitat for a diversity of fish and wildlife. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has identified this parcel as having significant benefits to shorebirds and waterfowl. The project is scheduled to be complete in December.



## CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

Connecticut conservation (see back page for full article)



## MASSACHUSETTS COASTAL WETLANDS GET PROTECTION, RESTORATION

Ducks Unlimited and several partners continue to advance the restoration of Foothills Preserve (also known as Tidmarsh West), a 130-acre former cranberry bog habitat near Plymouth. The project will restore two sites that include a mixture of upland and wetland habitat. Ducks Unlimited completed designs and permits and delivery is planned by fall. This restoration will benefit wildlife, improve water quality and provide public access for residents. Ducks Unlimited partnering with the Town of Plymouth, Mass Audubon, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Division of Ecological Restoration.

## ★ Conservation Spotlight: **CONNECTICUT CONSERVATION SEES UPSWING**

Ducks Unlimited habitat partnership projects are growing in Connecticut, with a recent restoration leading to new conservation opportunities in coming years.

Ducks Unlimited completed the restoration of Del Reeves Marsh, a 25-acre freshwater emergent marsh that is part of Meshomasic State Forest in the central part of the state. The project was in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CDEEP) and the North American Wetland Conservation Act and is part of a larger conservation effort by CDEEP to restore and protect 2,175 acres of critical wetland habitat the coastal boundary area of Connecticut.

At Del Reeves, new infrastructure will provide healthy freshwater wetland habitat for waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds. The restoration benefits nesting and migration habitat for American black ducks and mallards. This inland impoundment provides essential habitat for numerous rare birds and other wildlife and forms an extensive biological corridor of forested wetland, emergent marshes and upland habitat.

People will benefit too. The project allows for public access for a variety of wildlife related activities, such as hunting, bird watching, hiking and environmental education.



The Del Reeves project was a catalyst for future work in Connecticut. Ducks Unlimited has entered into a \$300,000 agreement with CDEEP to enhance several sites over the next three years. Many of the state-managed marshes have failing water-control structures, leaving managers without the proper tools to create healthy wetland habitat. The agreement will enable Ducks Unlimited and CDEEP to replace infrastructure at a handful of sites, improving migration habitat for waterfowl.

The first project will be at Papineau marsh that is part of the 13,438-acre Natchaug State Forest. The goal of the project is to restore the biological function and integrity of the 26-acre inland wetland. Delivery is planned for fall 2019.

“We are very excited about our new wetland restoration opportunities,” said Sarah Fleming, Ducks Unlimited manager of conservation programs for the North Atlantic. “CDEEP continues to be an excellent partner and our new agreement will ensure we maximize recreational opportunities with improved habitat for wildlife.”

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Focus on mallards

Ducks Unlimited continues to focus our conservation efforts on partnerships that ensure we maintain an active presence in restoration and protection of coastal wetlands and inland freshwater habitat. These partnerships aim to improve habitat for the eastern mallard population. Over the past 20 years, the population of eastern mallards—which numbered just under 900,000 birds in 2017—has been gradually declining at a rate of about 1 percent per year. Ducks Unlimited wetland conservation projects that target on restoration of inland freshwater systems, with maximum management capabilities for emergent marsh and “moist-soil” conditions will provide the greatest diversity of habitat for key species like mallards and black ducks. The majority of our work in New England is restoration and protection of public lands that improve the opportunity for land managers to maximizing habitat quality, and thus provides breeding and migration habitat for waterfowl, including mallards. Although science has not identified the cause of the eastern mallard decline, Ducks Unlimited is committed to providing quality habitat that will benefit mallards, other wildlife, and people.

Ducks Unlimited’s ongoing work in New England will emphasize the following:

- Enhance existing managed wetlands and develop new managed wetlands on public waterfowl areas to meet migrating and wintering habitat needs.
- Enhance coastal wetlands via elimination of tidal restrictions and integrated marsh management.
- Restoration of lost freshwater wetlands in agricultural landscapes, and reduce nutrient and sedimentation in rivers and bays, improving water quality and regeneration of submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Protection of key parcels with restorable or existing habitat that expands or creates new waterfowl management areas.
- Protection of key parcels adjacent to protected areas to buffer tidal marsh from development.



## ATLANTIC FLYWAY BAG LIMITS APPROVED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved changes to bag limits for Atlantic Flyway mallards and Canada geese for the 2019–2020 waterfowl season. The changes were made at the recommendation of the Atlantic Flyway Council. Ducks Unlimited plays no role in setting bag limits or hunting seasons for waterfowl.

**Mallards:** Bag limit will be reduced from four birds to two. Further, the USFWS approved limiting hen mallards to one daily within the two-bird mallard bag limit.

**Canada geese:** For Atlantic Flyway states north of Chesapeake Bay (Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey), the limit will decrease from three birds to two. In the Chesapeake Bay region (Maryland, Delaware and Virginia), the limit will decrease from two birds to one. The USFWS has approved reducing the season length for all states from 45 days to 30 days. These changes apply only to Atlantic Population zones and not to North Atlantic or Resident Population Canada Goose zones. Check with your local state wildlife agency for details.

The changes reflect declines in populations of mallards and Canada geese in the north Atlantic region. The cause of the eastern mallard population decline has not yet been determined. Atlantic population Canada geese have decreased during the past two years. In 2018, a late spring thaw and cold weather on the population’s northern breeding grounds prevented the geese from nesting successfully.

## NEW ENGLAND BY THE NUMBERS

Historical conservation totals for Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont:

- **Over 40,000 acres conserved**
- **\$9 million invested**

Learn more at [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)

## NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATION STAFF



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**Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.**



**GREAT LAKES & ATLANTIC REGION**

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