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FOURTH YEAR
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BETTER DOGS
BETTER FISHING
BETTER HUNTING

10¢

FROM THE COVER OF *Game and Fish Conservationist*
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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
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VIRGINIA
Ending June 30, 1917

VIRGINIA
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PELUEGER
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INC. 4009

1928

617



By William H. Funk

Government For The People... And Their Wildlife

In this era of reflexive suspicion for government programs generally, it's important to remind ourselves of those agencies and public servants whose work, often underappreciated and rarely recognized, contributes so much to the health and happiness of the taxpaying citizenry. And when the benefits of their dedicated labor extend beyond the accommodation of purely human needs and desires, we are witnessing the unlikely combination of governance and altruism. Those who work on behalf of the commonwealth's wildlife do so from honorable conviction, an inspired certainty that the nonhuman world is at least as fascinating and priceless as our own. In their daily efforts in the woods, on the water, in the office and on the computer, the personnel of Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries ensure that our common heritage of hunting, fishing, boating, and enjoying wildlife for its own sake continues to provide a necessary breathing space amid the hurly-burly of modern life.

We think of hunting licenses, duck stamps, deer tags, and trout permits as having been with us forever. Routine, tedious and yet somehow reassuring, these bureaucratic hoops must be jumped through by each and every outdoorsperson regardless of wealth, social status, or political connections. They provide a democratic leveling, giving us the opportunity to compete—with one another, with our quarry, even with ourselves—on an even field of play and pursuit.

But the imposition of a governmental presence in that most primal of human activities, the provenance of wild game, was not immediately seen for the logical necessity it has become, a sharp deviation from the frontier mentality of limitless natural resources always there for the taking. The realization by an elected body of representatives that the free-for-all which since colonial days had characterized our relationship with

other animals in this country had at last come to a close, and that further unregulated take would in short order completely empty the forests, rivers, and skies of a shared natural heritage, was a long time coming. Buoyed by the principles of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model advocating that wildlife belong to all of us and must therefore be managed in a sustainable manner, management action was implemented at what might be described as the last chance for retaining the intact habitat and vestigial populations from which today's comparative bounty of wildlife has grown.



1900

The Lacey Act passes, banning the trafficking of illegal wildlife

1916

June 17 - Landmark legislation creates the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries

1920

First issue of "The Virginia Conservationist," official DGIF bulletin, is published

1924

General Assembly passes most comprehensive, far-reaching game laws

Beginnings

In 1916, as American doughboys were gearing up to enter the apocalyptic chaos of Europe's Great War, Virginia's General Assembly, at the urging of the League of American Sportsmen, the Audubon Society, and the Farmers Institute, brought into being the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, an agency within the Commission of Fisheries. Under its legendary first secretary, M. D. "Mac" Hart, a comprehensive vision for

misdemeanor. Game wardens, the oddly penitential title that conservation officers were referred to until recently, were conscripted along with local police to enforce this law, severely lengthening the number of hours on the job that the wardens had signed up for: enforcing needed protections for our remnant wildlife populations.

And enforcement was truly necessary, with better-late-than-never statutes having come into being that outlawed the commercial take of wildlife, effectively shutting down the market hunting that had for centuries glutted baronial urban restaurants with delicacies such as roasted canvasback duck, turtle soup, and grilled venison. Bag and creel limits were strictly enforced, and slowly, slowly Virginia's wildlife began the gradual and uncertain recovery we're still managing today.

But many viewed the Commission's successes as too little, too late, each deliberate step forward being trounced by the widespread habitat destruction, poaching, and rampant development of the period. In looking back at the early "History of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries," James McInteer



the new agency hit the ground running despite DGIF's inauspicious initial headquarters in the cloakroom of the Senate building in Richmond.

Over the next decade Hart initiated the current system of game wardens, originally appointed in 1903, providing armed personnel in the field to enforce the new game laws among a sometimes suspicious rural public. Next up was the state's first "game farm," where game birds like quail, pheasant, and turkey were raised for release into the wild to repopulate exhausted habitats, and a hatchery for raising bass. A comprehensive survey of our diminished wildlife was undertaken to pinpoint the areas most in need of immediate strengthening; elk and ring-necked pheasants were imported from out of state and released, and Game and Fish Conservationist magazine was launched to provide citizens with information about game regulations and wildlife biology in a collaborative atmosphere of mutual interest.

A setback occurred in 1918 with the passage of the Baker Dog Act, which charged those who failed to license their canines with the local commissioner of revenue guilty of a



Clockwise from left: Young hunters pose with mallards; game farms, like this pheasant farm, were created to also raise bob-white quail, turkey, and a few exotic species; 1947, continued deer stocking brought whitetail deer harvest numbers of 267 in 1924 to over 200,000 today; legendary first Secretary of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, M.D. "Mac" Hart.

1926

A. Willis Robertson becomes first Chairman and Director, Commission of Game & Inland Fisheries

1926

First deer restoration program begins; restocking west of Blue Ridge

1926

Three trout rearing stations established in the western region, 1926-1930

1928

First resident fishing license is required



recounts the sputtering invective displayed to members of the Virginia Game and Fish Protective Association by a Colonel Hiram Opie of Lynchburg, a lovely diatribe of disappointment, nostalgia, and even a tangible fear of a future drained of the outdoors heritage he clearly prized:

“It is little less than amazing, that with all the experience of the past age, all the literature on the subject and specious warnings issued from time to time by national and worldwide authorities, and the day-to-day incidents before our very eyes, there has not developed in Virginia any real, constructive, de-

termined leadership among the lovers of the great outdoors, to warn our people of the inevitable results to the whole state of our reckless waste of life.”

Certain obsolete attitudes toward wildlife, particularly predators, were sadly allowed to flourish at this time. Nineteen-twenty-eight saw the disbursement of over \$32,000 in scarce agency funds to bounty hunters targeting two species of hawk (sharp-shinned and Cooper’s) along with great



horned owls, crows, minks, and weasels. In 1921, a “State-wide Hawk-Killing Contest” was announced with shotguns and shells as prizes, while the Department announced that it was very much in favor of a bounty system for every county. A special “State Lecturer” was commissioned to deliver gems like this to those who might waver about killing hawks: “Of all the vermin which prey upon Bob-white partridges [sic] and poultry, the hawk is the greatest marauder of them all, the most rapacious, the most daring and cunning. He is the arch-criminal...”

But according to the account of Beverley W. Stras, Jr., department chairman during the 1950s, “The Commission found numerous states abandoning the payment of bounties and, even at this early stage, felt that the indiscriminate killing of wildlife in this manner was not to be encouraged.”

In 1926 the Department became the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and was split from the Fisheries Commission—today’s Marine Resources Commission that oversees coastal fisheries. The Commission was given authority to change the dates and lengths of hunting seasons based on an

1930

First Wildlife Management Area, Havens, established in Roanoke County

1930

Between 1930-1940, fish hatcheries are established at Front Royal, Stevensville and Marion

1934

Duck Stamp Act passes, providing funds for waterfowl habitat restoration

1935

Fifty-one elk from Yellowstone are released in Giles and Botetourt counties



Act levied an eleven percent federal tax on guns and ammo and thus provided 75 percent of state wildlife restoration costs, firmly aligning Virginia's sportspeople with overarching management goals and proving that hunters and anglers are the foundation of wildlife conservation in the U.S. Beverly Stras recalled that, "Virginia thus provided one of the largest areas available to the public for hunting and fishing of any state east of the Mississippi River. This program has moved steadily forward until today it is probably the finest program of forest-game management in the United States." And in 1937, Virginia Wildlife magazine, initially a project of Virginia Tech, was taken over by the Commission and ably edited by Cecil F. DeLaBarre of Blacksburg.

evolving science-based understanding of wildlife populations, and directed to issue freshwater fishing licenses. A game warden was assigned to each county and major city, with the terms of employment starkly understood, as revealed in a 1930 letter hiring the first warden for Patrick County: "Your starting salary will be eighty-five dollars per month (\$1,020 annually) and you are expected to devote your whole time to our service. Badge will be mailed."

A Growing Commitment to Recovery and Conservation

From 1930 to the early 1940s, captive breeding of quail, turkey, and Hungarian partridges at Windsor Shades Game Farm in New Kent County proceeded apace while three trout hatcheries were begun in western Virginia. Beaver were reintroduced; a Cooperative Committee on Stream Pollution inventoried the state's major waterways and found them laden with agricultural runoff and industrial pollutants; and in a poorly planned early effort at rewilding, 150 elk were shipped in from Wyoming by train, the survivors of that traumatic experience briefly surviving in Giles and Bedford counties. (Elk are native to Virginia, and DGIF released in 2012 a new herd of elk in Buchanan County where their numbers are growing with the help of elk naturally migrating eastward from Kentucky.)

Cooperative agreements with the federal government—the first of their kind in the nation and still in effect today—provided for joint management of wildlife on Virginia's national forests, while the visionary Pittman-Robertson



Clockwise from top left: The first fish hatchery was established between 1918-1922; Game Warden Ray Jenkins checks licenses in Bath County, 1960s; 600-lb. bull elk taken in 1958 at Jefferson National Forest during first 2-day open season since WWII, photo courtesy of U.S. Forest Service; biologist monitors newly hatched quail chicks at game farm in Cumberland County; A. Willis Robertson, Chairman from 1926-1932 and co-sponsor of historic Pittman-Robertson legislation of 1937.

1937

Pittman-Robertson Act passes, landmark wildlife restoration and management legislation

1937

Virginia Wildlife is first published as an 8-page bulletin; in 1940 debuts as official DGIF publication

1939

First deer check station opens, 4000 animals registered

1947

First DGIF boat landing established at Wittaker Hollow, Washington Co.



port for wetlands restoration and preservation projects. Hog Island Wildlife Management Area was founded in coastal Surrey and Isle of Wight counties to provide a refuge for migrating birds, particularly waterfowl moving up and down the Atlantic flyway.

In 1953 the trapping of beaver was again permitted, testimony to successful reintroduction efforts over the previous decade, but some Commission activities can be viewed today as questionable, at best: the September 1959 issue of *Virginia Wildlife* announced that agency biologists were betting on the successful introduction of “Iranian blackneck pheasants and Japanese green pheasants,” which “have no native counterpart in Virginia and perhaps will thrive in habitat going unused.” The fact that no habitat is ever “unused” in a healthy ecosystem was pushed aside during this era of fascination with the stocking of exotic game species across the country.

The 1960s brought into focus the ongoing erosion of the Jeffersonian ideal as bloated agribusinesses, with the enthusiastic support of Congress, amalgamated family farms one by one into gigantic single-crop plantations, thousands of acres of chemically-laden corn, wheat, and soybeans without an inch of natural habitat to be seen. The weedy fencerows and wooded gullies were bulldozed and burned, taking with them habitat critical to the bobwhite quail, among other game species.

As the voice of the sporting conservation community, *Virginia Wildlife* provided an alluring vehicle for the Commission to trumpet its progress with conservation, enlighten citizens as to their rights and obligations afield, and provide the latest scientific understanding of our native wildlife. But its initial foray was to be a brief one, and publication was suddenly halted in 1942 as the commonwealth’s resources were directed wholeheartedly toward the war effort. The tremendous recruiting policies that followed America’s entry in World War II took many a farm boy out of the woods, allowing game species, especially deer, to spend the war years replenishing their numbers. Habitat restoration came to the fore at this time, with the Commission mailing out seed packets of native grasses and other nourishment to landowners eager to see their wildlife return.

Virginia Wildlife returned after the war and the first wildlife essay contest, sponsored by the state chapter of the Izaak Walton League, was announced in 1947. The next year the revenues from hunting and fishing licenses were formally separated under the Crockett Act, with income from each activity benefitting the restoration of game and fish, respectively. Another beneficent federal excise tax was passed in 1951. The Dingell-Johnson Act provided a ten percent excise tax on fishing gear that provided much needed support for Virginia’s fisheries research and management.

This was also the period in which the commonwealth stepped into the waterfowl business, setting up a management system for our ducks, geese, and swans to bolster the federal “Duck Stamp Act” of 1934 which provides enormous sup-



Top Left: Science-based wildlife research led by Professor Massey at VPI&SU, 1964; Above: Re-seeding areas along logging road to establish a food patch for wildlife, mid-1970s; Right: Partnerships with boy scouts and other conservationists play a key role in wildlife education and restoration.

1948

General Assembly provides for separate hunting and fishing licenses

1949

Education Division established with ambitious goals and programs

1950

Dingell-Johnson Act passes, benefiting fisheries restoration

1952

Statewide program initiated to collect data on deer population



1954

First archery season is held

1957

Land acquisition for public hunting and fishing becomes agency priority

1958

Eagles, hawks, and owls are protected under state law

1958

Black bears trapped and tagged for research on their life history



Following the end of WWII, the Department ramped up its efforts in deer stocking, turkey farming, creating education and media outreach programs, conducting firearms training, and increasing fishing opportunities.

1958

Record deer harvest of 22,473

1958

Big game license to hunt deer, bear, turkey is established

1960

Boating safety becomes priority focus area

1961

Hunter safety program is established statewide



1964

The Wilderness Act passes, creating formal preservation system, now protecting 106+ million acres

1970

Wild turkey trapping and relocation become top priority this decade

1973

First muzzleloader deer season is held

1973

Endangered Species Act passes, a framework to conserve and protect species and habitats at risk



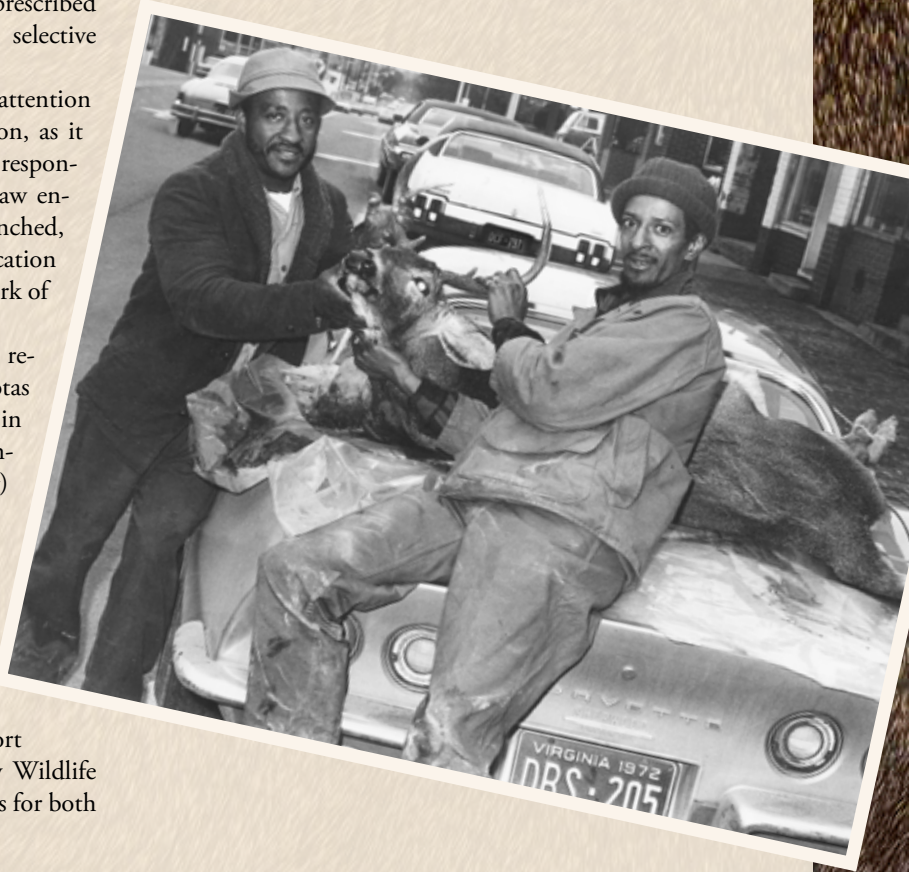
Into the Modern Era

During the 1980s game wardens were given full law enforcement authority and, sparked by an appalling 18 hunting fatalities in 1985 alone, took over the hunter safety program from volunteers. Nineteen-eighty-seven brought mandatory blaze orange hunting vests into the woods and the agency's name changed back to Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Virginia's chapter of the nationwide outdoor education group called Project WILD kicked off a new commitment to getting students outside and involved in conservation issues, the goal being the "making of informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive action concerning wildlife and the environment" through "balanced curriculum materials and professional training workshops." Over one million American educators have participated in Project WILD's admirable goal of "No Child Left Inside."

What habitat remained was therefore in need of careful, informed management to maximize its productive capacity for wildlife. New methods of land management—prescribed burning, mowing, disking, and carefully planned selective timbering—were put into practice.

About this time, the Commission turned its attention to activities outside the sphere of wildlife restoration, as it undertook the role of state boating agency—with responsibilities spanning boat titling and registration to law enforcement. Boater and hunter safety efforts were launched, which have today evolved into comprehensive education programs made largely possible by a statewide network of dedicated volunteer instructors.

In 1972 Virginia's game wardens were at last relieved of dog license duties. Overly generous quotas had drastically reduced the state's deer population in the 1960s, and bag limits were lowered even as anti-poaching efforts (mainly to combat jacklighting) became widespread. Waterfowl management became a central priority, as was the trapping and relocation of recovering turkey populations to other areas of the state. Field research in 1974 revealed that black bears den earlier than previously believed; at the urging of staff, the hunting season was pushed back one month to protect sows. Also during this timeframe, through admirable bipartisan support the Commission was able to purchase several new Wildlife Management Areas that today serve as crucial refuges for both game and nongame species.



1982

Game Wardens receive full law enforcement authority

1987

Blaze orange becomes mandatory for deer hunters

1988

Damage Control and Deer Management Assistance Programs implemented

1988

Hunter education becomes mandatory for hunters



The '80s also brought a wildlife crime line for citizens to counter the increasing problem of poaching and the trafficking of wildlife and their body parts (e.g., bear gallbladders for the Asian "traditional medicine" market). A refreshingly radical approach to the Chesapeake Bay's depleted fish stocks was also begun. With a goal to "provide for fish passage at dams and remove stream blockages whenever necessary to restore natural passage for migratory and resident fish," the fish passage grant program, part of the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, mandated that 1,357 miles of waterways flowing into the Bay would have their antiquated and irrelevant series of dams removed to allow fish to migrate up and downstream to breed.

In 2000, reappraisal of the program's goals extended the number of affected miles to 2,807. The total miles reopened to date comes to 2,288, which is 81 percent of the overall goal. The dams are destroyed using high explosives or are breached by having a chunk sawed out of them to allow for the free passage of aquatic wildlife, a remarkable commitment to creative destruction that has bolstered coastal fish stocks nationwide.

In the '90s it was realized that Virginia's wild turkey population was doing well enough in some areas that the birds could be trapped and relocated rather than bred in captivity and released. This was testament to the success of earlier reintroduction efforts as well as a realization that animals born in the wild retain healthier genetic attributes than those reared in pens, and that stocking depleted areas with wild-hatched turkeys is a much more effective technique for long-term suc-

cess. To further bolster turkey numbers statewide, in 1995 the fall turkey season was reduced from nine weeks to six.

The 1990s also brought the state's first resident goose season and a free fishing day for residents, while trout stockings were hereafter unannounced to disallow the bad habits of those who follow stocking trucks to snag the disoriented fish as they're first dumped into the water. This period was also when the daily risks associated with enforcing wildlife laws became deeply apparent, with traffickers and poachers becoming more dangerous and widespread as the black market for wildlife parts soared with a booming Asian economy. Virginia's game wardens became accredited through a federal program, patrol boats were upgraded and four-wheel-

drive patrol vehicles became standard, and officers were issued semi-automatic firearms and body armor. And not for nothing, either: eight DGIF officers have been killed in the line of duty over the years.



Clockwise from top left: Trapping and banding ducks for research; planting lespedeza for wildlife habitat, early 1950s; restocking trout to the Moorman's River, 1960; hunters take a nice buck in Washington County. Now, 70 years after the mandatory check-in program was established, hunters have checked approximately 7.6 million deer across Virginia.

1988

Duck stamp program established to support habitat restoration

1990

Steel shot for waterfowl hunting becomes mandatory

1990'S

First Virginia Birding Festival begins on Eastern Shore

1991

Virginia leads national ban on carbofuran pesticides



Left: Beginning in the 1950s, Game Wardens began receiving intensive, formal training; Right: Officials prepare for a field trial with fox hounds, 1949; Bottom right: Department planes were used for waterfowl surveys and law enforcement efforts during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

A season on tundra swans—the first since the early 1900s—was begun, and an urban trout program sought to introduce city kids to the wildlife of their own neighborhoods. Shooting ranges were set up in the Amelia and Chickahominy Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), while a prescient federal law criminalized the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting, a decision that has spared an untold number of scavengers such as eagles from agonizing deaths.

The early years of the new century brought changes intended to further safeguard the health of deer and other game; namely, the use of high fences to contain wild animals was banned in 2001, and a regulation prohibiting the practice of feeding (or, baiting) wildlife was passed in 2006. Such decisions serve as good examples of recommendations proffered by staff and approved by the Board, which over the decades have increased opportunities for all to pursue and enjoy wildlife across the state. Through partnerships and close communication with private landowners, hunt clubs, and town councils, among others, programs such as DMAP, DCAP, Earn-A-Buck, and Urban Archery Season have succeeded in further refining wildlife management in the face of a growing populace.

What Makes a Conservation Police Officer?

In 2007 the “game wardens” were renamed “conservation police officers (CPOs),” and the next year Bob Duncan of the Department’s Wildlife Division was named Director, a title

he has retained through both Republican and Democratic administrations.

An observation from the 1920s in *Fins, Feathers and Fur* is still relevant for us today:

“The average warden is a sportsman and as such enjoys the thrill of a good, clean shot as

much as anyone else, but his duties seldom permit him a day in the field for real pleasure. The average warden is a gentleman through and through, ready and willing to give worthwhile service to the sportsmen. The warden’s duties are many and his knowledge must be varied. He must have keen vision, a cool head, and a judicial mind.”

Bruce Lemmert exemplifies these traits to a “T.” Recently retired from his position as conservation police officer for Loudoun County, where since 1989 he had enforced laws to perpetuate wildlife even as Loudoun and other Northern Virginia counties were being rapidly paved over by DC sprawl, Lemmert reports that working for DGIF allowed him to do something he believed in. “I’ve always believed in hunting, fishing, wildlife, and treating people right.”

“We have so many good people [in DGIF],” he said, “and they’re in it for the right reasons. These are some really sharp folks who could’ve done absolutely anything, and they’re totally dedicated to conservation.”

Lemmert and other conservation police officers I spoke with pointed out the need for community involvement and participation that is a basic necessity when you’re the only officer assigned to your county. Regular interactions with sportsmen and other locals allow game wardens to know their districts intimately, to become friends and neighbors in familiar ways that urban police officers and state troopers can rarely commit to. I asked Lemmert about his retirement and what it meant for his community. At his retirement party, attended by hundreds of enthusiastic sportspeople, “Folks really came out to show their appreciation for what we’ve done here ... including a few I’d written tickets to.”

1992

Modern striped bass hatchery constructed at Brookneal

1996

Junior Combo License created to encourage young hunters

1999

First statewide Deer Management Plan is completed

2000

Freshwater Mussel Propagation Facility constructed with USFWS and partners

Another example of committed altruism is found out on the Eastern Shore where Steve Garvis, a 21-year veteran conservation police officer, covers Accomack and Northampton counties, teaching boating safety in the summers, patrolling waterfowl and wading bird hunting areas in the fall and winter, and actively engaging with the scattered Tidewater communities that form his district. I asked Garvis about the inherent dangers involved in his solo patrols over open water, marshes, and woodland. Did he ever feel threatened or obliged to display his sidearm? He thought about that for a moment, then said, “Ninety-nine percent of people are well behaved and understanding” when asked for their licenses, but “with solo patrols, backup isn’t readily available.”

He recounted one occasion when an encounter with a drunken jacklighter nearly took a tragic turn: “We were very fortunate,” he said, and his reliance on training and professionalism saved the day and possibly a life when the belligerent poacher, once forcibly deprived of his rifle, suddenly realized the gravity of the situation and surrendered peaceably.

Aside from acknowledging the random nature of such encounters, how best to integrate oneself into a new area so that folks feel confident in relaying knowledge of potential wildlife crime? Garvis replied that, “Respect for wardens comes through knowing the community, letting them know your name, talking to them in the grocery, at church, and in schools. A lot of police officers have to work under a degree of anonymity—not game wardens.”



This close connection to their community is often most visible during times of trouble or disaster. Most recently, CPOs were among the first emergency personnel to reach the victims and survivors of a tornado which struck the town of Waverly in February, 2016. Officers spent tireless hours conducting search and rescue operations and providing related disaster relief in the aftermath of a huge storm cell that landed a series of intense tornadoes across the state. Likewise, CPOs offer emergency assistance on the national front. Many will recall that DGIF officers guarded nuclear power plants with M-4 assault rifles and underwent anti-terrorism training after the horrors of 9-11, and spent several months in Louisiana and Mississippi assisting with recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Given the level of job responsibilities and commitment required, I asked Garvis if he would recommend the profession to young people just starting out? “This job has allowed me to explore every inch of the Eastern Shore,” he said. “You can make your own schedule to some degree, but then again you’re up at 3 a.m. every day during waterfowl season, out in a little boat in dark stormy weather. I’m still not tired of this work and always look forward to getting in the field, despite the extreme environments and the heartbreaking hunting and boating accidents we respond to. I can’t think of a better career if you love the outdoors.”



2001

First Black Bear Management Plan is completed

2005

Youth Hunting Days established for deer, bear, and turkey

2006

Online Boater Safety Education Program is established

2007

Game Warden title changed to Conservation Police Officer



2008

Apprentice Hunting License created to encourage new hunters

2008

Quail Recovery becomes a major statewide initiative and habitat focus

2010

Elk Restoration Plan begins in Southwest Virginia

2011

DGIF managing over 176,000 acres of impounded waters and 200 boating access sites

The Future's In Our Hands

Today your Department of Game and Inland Fisheries manages over 200 access sites for boats, 176,000 acres of impounded waters, and 41 management areas spread across more than 200,000 acres. Virginia's Nongame Program protects state and federally listed threatened and endangered species such as the Northern flying squirrel. A recently updated Wildlife Action Plan seeks to proactively protect nongame species by placing greater emphasis on habitats in need of conservation and prioritizing projects and research needed at the local level. The ultimate goal: to preempt federal listing of imperiled species by employing conservation strategies before populations drop low enough to trigger the Endangered Species Act.

Unfortunately the federal funding that is so critical to nongame management has been drying up of late, and all Virginia citizens are urged to donate a portion of their state tax refunds to the Department's Nongame Program, a wonderfully imaginative and diverse set of strategies including inventorying nongame species in Virginia. Among the outcomes: creating educational awareness; offering technical assistance for landowners; reintroducing or translocating species in appropriate areas of the state where they have been absent; and leasing, buying, and entering into cooperative agreements for lands which provide critical wildlife habitat, connective corridors, and riparian buffers.

DGIF's Nongame Program is perhaps the most powerful illustration of the altruism that truly motivates all of the agency's work, a deliberate, scientifically-based decision to perpetuate animals we may never hunt or fish for, consume or profit from. Instead we are compensated for allowing these species to survive in subtler but no less rewarding ways: the stark and sudden stare of an awakened owl, the unnerving sight of a hellbender creeping across a coldwater creek bed, or the close encounter with a rare mussel propagated and reared in a nationally-recognized facility. All of these sensations are free for the taking by any and all of us, a sumptuous cornucopia of sensual delights still to be found in Virginia's woods and waters,

thanks to the diligent work and inspired dedication of Department staff.

Among the items to be proud of is the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, the first statewide wildlife viewing trail in the U.S. and a splendid system of three regional, driving networks that showcase the commonwealth's uncommon diversity of habitats that, as the DGIF website attests, "includes every bird and animal habitat that occurs naturally between Maine and Florida." The Coastal Trail includes barrier islands and cypress swamps, lowland pine forests and saltmarshes abutting the Chesapeake Bay. The Piedmont Trail boasts of rolling woodlands and the Blue Ridge foothills, as well as some incredible birding. The Mountain Trail is known for the marvelous upcountry hiking in the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, as well as the verdant Shenandoah Valley with its terrific fishing and paddling. The Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail system stands out on our compacted East Coast for its capacity to reveal the wonderful bounty of wildlife and open spaces that, somewhat incredibly, may yet be explored by one and all.



Left: License fees have been our mainstay funding source over the past 100 years; Above: Management efforts often stretch beyond state borders and with the help of many partners, such as those working with migratory species.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

The men and women who risk their lives protecting our wildlife resources from the merciless impulses of greed are the epitome of the selfless public servant, working from the heart to ensure that future Virginians are blessed with some semblance of the marvelous

natural heritage that so colored our past. There can be no doubt that without the preservation of natural resources through the mutual consent of the citizenry, those who would selfishly take everything for themselves would preside over a barren world. We are indeed fortunate, in our urbanized, online, indoor realities, that some people still care enough for our wildlife and wild lands to invest a lifetime in their preservation. They fully deserve our thanks, our support, and the public acknowledgment of the hazards and hardships they daily endure for each and every one of us. ✎

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2013

Department offers online Hunter Safety Education Program

2015

Legislation allowing Sunday Hunting on private land is passed

2015

DGIF managing 41 Wildlife Management Areas, 200,000+ acres, across the state

2016

Headquarters staff settled in new location in time to celebrate the Department's 100-year anniversary!



Summary of Virginia Game Laws 1983 and 1984 Seasons

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PRIMOS
HUNTING CALLS
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