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Six Honored for Contributions to Fish and Wildlife Conservation in New Hampshire

CONCORD, N.H. – Six New Hampshire citizens and organizations were recently recognized by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission with Awards of Excellence for their efforts in the conservation field in support of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's mission.

"What a privilege it is to present these awards, which recognize truly significant contributions in support of the mission of New Hampshire's wildlife agency, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department," said Robert S.S. Blake, Fish and Game Commissioner for Strafford County and chair of the Commission's Awards of Excellence program. The awards were presented at the Commission's April meeting at the N.H. Fish and Game Department in Concord.

The 2011 Commission Award of Excellence recipients (presented in 2012):

The **Ellis R. Hatch Jr. Commission Award of Excellence**, the commission's highest honor, was presented to **Paul Hammond of Raymond, N.H.**, for his work opening more than a thousand acres of town-owned land to hunting. Hammond is a long-time volunteer Hunter Education instructor with Fish and Game. For many years, his home town of Raymond, N.H., had an ordinance prohibiting hunting on town-owned property, and Hammond spoke out at many town meetings to help people understand the benefits of allowing hunting on these lands. In 2010, Hammond generated a citizen petition warrant article and gathered signatures in support of allowing hunting on town-owned lands. The measure made it to the ballot and passed. In large part thanks to Hammond's endeavors, the Town of Raymond currently allows hunting on 1,880 acres of town-owned land.

The **Conservation Organization Award of Excellence** was presented to the **Wildlife Heritage Foundation of New Hampshire**. This award recognizes an organization, group, foundation or agency that has excelled in efforts to enhance the welfare of fish, wildlife and marine resources in support of the Department's mission. The

2011 Fish and Game Commission Awardees (presented in 2012)

NEWS MEDIA: Click to download a high-res image of recipients with their awards



Paul Hammond, Ellis R. Hatch Jr. 2011 award recipient



Accepting the Conservation Organization Award of Excellence: Wildlife Heritage Foundation of N.H. board members (from left) Kenneth Hastings, John Monson, Charles Miner, coordinator Nancy Berliner, Chairman Steven White and Donald Beauchesne.

Foundation is Fish and Game's official nonprofit partner, a charitable, non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the critical conservation programs of Fish and Game through providing private financial support.

"With each year that goes by, the Foundation plays a more significant role in conservation of New Hampshire's fish and wildlife resources and maintaining the traditions of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching for future generations," said Blake.

The many initiatives that Foundation grants have funded include extensive improvements at Fish and Game's Owl Brook Hunter Education Center and the Great Bay Discovery Center, support for Discover Wild New Hampshire Day and National Hunting and Fishing Day Expo activities, publication of Discover Wild Times for Kids, and support for programs such as Operation Land Share, Barry Conservation Camp, the aerial stocking of remote trout ponds, and Fish and Game Law Enforcement Division's K-9 conservation corps.

"The Foundation is making a huge difference for this Department. Its work would not be possible without its capable and dedicated board of directors and is a key part of creating a stable financial future for the Fish and Game Department," said Blake.

Two individuals were honored with the **Volunteer Award of Excellence**. The first was **Dr. James Paine, a veterinarian at the Russell Animal Hospital in Concord**, who was honored for his work with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. Paine provided vital services related to Fish and Game's research on threatened black racer snakes. The project called for costly skilled veterinary services, which Dr. Paine graciously offered at no cost. Over two years, the Russell Animal Hospital examined 27 individual black racers, conducting health screenings and scientifically approved surgical procedures. The value of donated staff time, supplies and equipment exceeded \$8,000.

"As a result of Dr. Paine's work, Nongame Staff will be able to provide sound recommendations to federal, state and private landowners to help maintain black racers as an important part of New Hampshire's native wildlife diversity," said Blake. "In recognition of Dr. Paine's generous assistance, we are pleased to award him with the 2011 Volunteer Award of Excellence."

A second **Volunteer Award of Excellence** was presented to **Ammy Heiser of Pembroke**, whose efforts resulted in the permanent conservation of the Hillman property in Pembroke, a 44-acre working farm along the Suncook River. As Chair of the Pembroke Conservation Commission, Heiser led the process to conserve the farm. She thoroughly researched the parcel and found that its soils were of statewide agricultural importance. She then worked with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission to develop an Open Space plan, discovering in the process that the property was also of significant environmental, historical and cultural value.

Heiser took on the monumental task of applying for a Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection grant and succeeded in obtaining \$300,000 in matching funds for the acquisition of the property and purchase of a permanent conservation easement. Even with this grant funding, she still faced an uphill battle to educate and convince the selectmen and taxpayers to support the project. While many would have given up, Ammy rolled up her sleeves and spearheaded an education campaign about the importance of open space.



Russell Animal Hospital staffers Diana Nason, Sara Blackman and Jenny Fecteau accept the Volunteer Award on behalf of Dr. James Paine.



Ammy Heiser of Pembroke earned the Volunteer Award of Excellence



Jeff Mucciarone of the Hippo Press, 2011 Communications Award winner

"In the end, her tenacity won out, with an overwhelming show of support at Town Meeting," said Blake. "As a result, there is permanent protection of a working farm with many other conservation values, including a significant riparian buffer on the Suncook River and public access for fishing, as well as forest, field and aquatic habitat protection."

The **Communication Award of Excellence** was presented to **Jeff Mucciarone of Manchester**, a news writer for the Manchester-based Hippo Press. This category recognizes an outdoor communicator or media source that has written or published materials beneficial to public understanding of fish, wildlife or marine resources as they relate to Fish and Game's mission. During the past year, Mucciarone has reported on his personal adventures trying upland bird hunting and ice fishing, as well as exploring topics ranging from wildlife management to big game hunting.

"Now, you might wonder how an urban lifestyle magazine feature writer like Jeff qualifies for a Fish and Game award!" quipped Blake. He went on to explain: "By regularly covering these topics, Jeff is bringing knowledge and awareness of outdoor recreation and fisheries and wildlife management to a young, urban audience. Fostering support from a broad and diverse public is key to ensuring that our activities remain relevant through the 21st century and beyond."

The **Youth Conservationist Award** was earned by **Destiny Fiaschetti of Manchester**. This award recognizes an individual, 18 years of age or younger, who has excelled in efforts to benefit fish, wildlife or marine resources or the Department's mission through any variety of involvement. Fiaschetti served as a capable, enthusiastic member of the Student Conservation Association (SCA)'s Manchester Conservation Leadership Corps, a group that aims to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire young people to lifelong stewardship of their environment and communities.

Through her work with SCA, Fiaschetti made countless contributions to New Hampshire resources and habitats, from improving Karner blue butterfly habitat to maintaining hiking trails in the White Mountain National Forest. In all, she completed over 170 service and education hours and took part in 10 service learning projects, in the process gaining leadership skills and an on-going commitment to conservation.

There are seven award categories for New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission Awards of Excellence. Nominations are accepted each year, and must be submitted by December 31. Consider nominating your conservation hero or a worthy organization for next year's awards! For a description of the various award categories and a nomination form to download, visit www.wildnh.com/Inside_FandG/commission_awards.html.

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