



Woodlands *for* Wildlife

Volume 54 Summer 2020

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Rich Chalmers, *Class of 2005 Spring*



These are challenging times we live in. Many things we thought of as constants have changed dramatically – our sense of personal safety, how we work, communicate, spend our free time, gather – all affected by Covid-19. But as with all dark clouds, there are silver linings. We have seen a lot of them in the last few months.

Many of us, in our new lives, have spent much more time at home and a lot more time in our woods. We are noticing more details and having more interactions with wildlife. It has provided a chance to learn, and to think about things from a different angle, re-evaluate what is important and why.

Coverts has experienced dramatic change as well. We came into this pandemic as an organization that did most of its work in person, often via small gatherings in the woods. Within almost no time, that communication became entirely on-line.

Zoom has now become our gathering place to meet, discuss, ask questions and learn new things. In the past, if you missed it, you lost your chance. Now you can watch the recording on the Coverts Youtube channel, bringing Coverts programming to you on your schedule. More knowledge is more easily accessible now than ever before.

Who would have imagined we would have conversations with most of Vermont's County foresters, a consulting forester and the Commissioner of Forest Parks & Recreation within just a few months? Their varied background and personalities have brought a rich diversity of perspective and creativity to our understanding of our woods and the environment around us.

We have learned from experts about bear, beaver, turkey, old growth forests and climate change. We discussed the use of game cameras to record what we rarely see in our woods. There is more on game

cameras in this issue of the newsletter.

Of course, this never would have happened if not for the people, both presenters and attendees, who stepped out of their comfort zone and translated this personal connection into a screen-based format.

Each person, bringing their passion and expertise, filling a niche, makes the disparate parts a better whole - like mycorrhizal fungi on the world wide web.

This experience has highlighted for me, yet again, the amazing people who are committed to wildlife and conservation. Their passion, knowledge and desire to help shine through so clearly.

Sadly, we lost two such people in April. Dough Murray and Arthur Westing were outstanding human beings with impressive life accomplishments. They clearly illustrate the humanity, wisdom and leadership that has helped define Coverts as an organization and lay out the path to fulfilling our mission.

Together let's strive to continue this great work as we look forward to a time we can meet and learn again in person.

Rich Chalmers
President



AN INTRODUCTION TO GAME CAMERAS

Katy Crumley, *VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife*



Often outdoor experiences are some of our most rewarding and cherished moments. But, some of the most interesting animals can be elusive. In addition to the tracks and sign, we find game cameras provide a glimpse into the world of these animals.

How do you choose a game camera? Where do you put it? How often should you check it? Answering these and other questions will help improve your success and enjoyment. So, let us get started with the basics!

First, consider your objectives. Would you like your game camera to capture nocturnal animals with color images? Do you want stills or video? Are you interested in using your game camera to monitor your camp in the off season? These questions will impact the camera and type of flash you choose (infrared vs. incandescent).

You should also consider the game camera's trigger speed (how long it takes for the camera to snap a picture once triggered) and recovery speed (how long it takes the camera to cycle and be ready for another photo or burst of photos), manufacturer's warranty and whether the camera has a viewing screen for images. Viewing screens are helpful to properly aim your camera and view photos in the woods.

Often a good quality camera can be purchased for \$100-\$200. Cameras in this range can be easier to use and just as effective as their more expensive counter parts. Once you have selected a camera and obtained landowner permission (if not your own land), you will want to assemble several supplies and consider camera settings.

These supplies include two or more SD cards (8GB or larger) and lithium batteries. Bait or lure and a cable lock, for security, may also be used. If you choose to use bait or lure, note that feeding white-tailed deer and black bear is not permitted in Vermont. Check with your local game warden if you have any questions.

Camera settings will vary by the model you've chosen, but often you'll have the ability to choose between motion/heat activated photos or videos, varying degrees of photo/

video quality, date and time settings and multi-shot modes that produce a burst of photos. Photos are great if you are looking for an image to share, while videos can provide a small glimpse into animal behavior.

In the beginning, testing different options and checking back frequently to see how your photos or detection rates are changing, will be the best way to dial in your settings. Consider starting with photo mode, 3 photo burst, 3 second capture delay and 8MP image size. Camera settings and proper placement are always the first steps to getting a great animal picture!

When choosing a camera location, think about the tendencies of the species in which you are most interested. What forest types or features attract this species? Where will they seek food, water and shelter? How might they change their behavior seasonally? Answering these questions, and looking for animal sign in the woods, will provide a good starting point for selecting a successful camera location.

As you begin setting your camera, always remember to point the camera north to avoid sun glare, remove extra brush in the camera's field of view and aim properly by adjusting the camera's angle and height on the tree. Each camera brand and model will have a unique detection zone and range, taking several test images will help you to better understand your camera and the distance it must be set from your target.

Now all that is left, is waiting! Resist the urge to check it daily. Checking it daily can increase disturbance and leave your scent in the area reducing your chances of success. Cameras should be left for one week to one month before being checked. When the time comes, hopefully your hard work has produced some incredible images.

Images can be enjoyed on your own, shared with a friend or posted on iNaturalist. Vermont Fish and Wildlife is also interested in hearing about any rare furbearer sightings, such as the American Marten. Best of luck in all your camera adventures!

For more information on using game cameras, watch Katy Crumley present an "Introduction to Game Cameras" on the Coverts Youtube channel.

REMEMBERING DOUG MURRAY AND ARTHUR WESTING

Bob Lloyd, *Coverts Class 1997*

In April, two stalwart participants in the Coverts project from the earlier days passed on: Doug Murray and Arthur Westing. Doug went through the training in 1989 and Arthur in 1996. As the 1997 class representative I first met them at that November Council meeting.

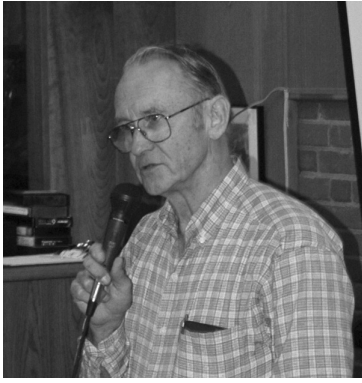
At that time, Coverts had received a grant from the Orton Foundation to underwrite a group of cross-boundary wildlife management projects. Council member David Clarkson had laboriously created a community-wide project in Windham County, and the Council was inspired to emulate his example.

As President, Doug engineered the application with Noel Fritzingler at Orton, and several of the Council members were enlisted to design projects in their communities. Arthur – also on the Council – was engaged by Orton to evaluate the success of their operations.

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Remembering Doug Murray and Arthur Westing

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These were heady times for Coverts as the Council explored new organizational territory. There was plenty to talk about and decide. Doug and Arthur oversaw the complicated operation and its relationship to Orton for two years and brought it to a successful conclusion.

Doug's strengths, which he exercised in a number of important national and international agencies, were executive and administrative. His manner was always pleasant, diplomatic and to the point. He moved Coverts along skillfully and painlessly, with unostentatious energy. After he left the Council, his support continued, organizing a patch-cut workshop on his land, participating in the Coverts movie, keeping his eye on us.

His interest in the natural environment and wildlife habitat was highly educated and passionate. When asked to be the Master of Ceremonies for Coverts' Twenty-fifth Celebration, he agreeably accepted the invitation and did a superb job. In their wealth of detailed observations, his individual award citations, were amazing and refreshing. His moral support of Coverts continued until his death.

Arthur's contribution to Coverts was of a different sort. His personal and professional experience, described by Jerry Carbone in Woodlot Tips, Spring 2020, is formidable: advanced degrees in forestry, physiology and ecology, teaching at Middlebury College, Hampshire College and Windham College, work in Stockholm for the United Nations Environmental Programme, visiting professor at universities in Ireland, Austria, Germany and England. During the Vietnam War he traveled and researched the environmental effects of Agent Orange and helped bring an end to herbicidal warfare in Vietnam.

There is more, but here I'd describe Arthur's presence on the Coverts Council as alert, his attention sharp, and the context of his suggestions always broad. One particularly important suggestion he made was to eliminate our annual dues – which were small and added up to a few hundred dollars – and to substitute an annual fund drive, which has steadily grown, reaching \$37,000 last year. This along with grants allows us to support two part-time staff. That seed that Arthur planted has allowed Coverts to undertake projects that we had never dreamed.

Arthur continued to care about the environment through his retirement. Most recently, as a resident at Wake Robin, he chaired two committees. One was tasked with the management of 25 acres of meadow and the other with establishing a butterfly garden. In January, he reached out to Coverts to

determine if he and some residents might raise funds for carbon sequestration. They hoped this would be on state or protected land. Coverts connected Arthur to a program with VT Fish and Wildlife to plant trees on a newly purchased WMA. To date \$3,025 has been collected which, when matched will enable \$12,100 to be put toward this objective.

To ensure our mission continued both also made substantial gifts to our endowment. Through their vision and actions both Doug and Arthur had lasting impacts on VT Coverts. They will both be greatly missed.

FOREST, PARKS AND RECREATION HIRES CLIMATE FORESTER, ALI KOSIBA

Recently, I joined FPR as the new Climate Forester. Why does Vermont need a Climate Forester?

Without global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, Vermont's climate will continue to change in ways that will cause irreversible consequences to the state's forests. We could see declines in forest health and productivity due to climatic conditions outside the adaptive capacity of the trees. Increases in pest and pathogen outbreaks could result in tree declines and mortality. Larger rain events will lead to more soil erosion, provoking nutrient loss and root mortality. Unfavorable climatic conditions, like prolonged drought, may result in regeneration failure. And in a worse-case scenario, unmitigated climate change could cause forest die-offs if climatic tipping points are met without sufficient time or support for adaptation.

Forests and the people who rely on forests will be affected more than others by the climate crisis. Climate change could lead to reductions in forest products harvest potential, increased costs and hazards for forest-related operations, and contraction of the forest products sector. Changes could impair the important ecosystem services that forests provide, like water and nutrient cycling, pollution abatement, and cooling, as well as cause declines in forest-based recreational opportunities and tourism.

What can we do to help forests?

The most important thing we can do is keep forests as forests. Forests are a "Natural Climate Solution" through their ongoing sequestration of carbon for tree growth. The amount of carbon that Vermont's forests sequester and store is directly proportional to the acres of forestland. Keeping forests as forests also conserves species and genetic diversity, which provides resiliency when a stress is encountered. In Vermont, we have several incentives to keep forests as forests, including the Use Value Appraisal program that reduces the tax burden of owning active forestland, and conservation easements. More recently, landowners may be able to sell carbon credits from the sequestration of trees.

Along with keeping forests as forests, we must be good forest stewards. This means restoration of degraded forests, preservation of soils, control of invasive plants, and use of ecological silviculture.

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Forest, Parks and Recreation Hires Climate Forester

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At FPR, I will be developing more resources and opportunities for understanding the potential impacts of climate change on your forest, management techniques you may choose to employ for climate resilience and carbon mitigation, and science-based information to better understand the relationship between forests and climate change. Integral to all of this is that we are creative, open-minded, and collaborative so that we can collectively steward Vermont's forests into the future.

Please be in touch if you have thoughts or questions, Alexandra.
Kosiba@vermont.gov.

MISSION Enlist Vermont landowners in a long-term commitment to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems.



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