

## Deer Release at NCTAMSLANT DET Cutler



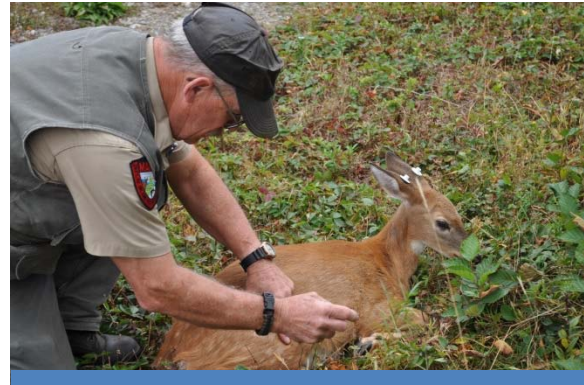
On 29 September 2015, the NAVFAC MIDLANT PWD-Maine Natural Resource Manager along with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W) Regional Biologist released two yearling white-tail deer fawns at the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Atlantic Detachment (NCTAMSLANT DET) Cutler installation located in Cutler, Maine. The release occurred as part of an experimental partnership with the Maine DIF&W. The goal of the partnership is to determine if Cutler will work as an approved deer release site for rehabilitated deer from the surrounding county.



*Maine DIF&W Region Biologist Thomas Schaeffer – left and PWD-ME NRM Ian Trefry - right carry rehabilitated whitetail doe yearling to release site. – photo by Kari Moore (NAVFAC PWD-ME NEPA Manager)*

In recent years, the Maine DIF&W has been reluctant to issue deer rehabilitation licenses since the rehabilitated deer typically become nuisance problem animals due to the inherent nature rehabilitation practices have on imprinting deer to human presence. In other words, the deer typically lack a fear of humans following rehabilitation. However, Cutler provides a unique opportunity of habitat and healthy deer population and lacks the problems typically associated with nuisance deer.

In addition to its many other legislative mandates to manage, protect, and enhance the fisheries and wildlife resources of the State, the Maine DIF&W also administers a wildlife rehabilitation program. This program largely



*Maine DIF&W Region Biologist Thomas Schaeffer administering anesthetic reversal drug. – photo by Kari Moore (NAVFAC PWD-ME NEPA Manager)*

consists of volunteer or privately funded citizens who must meet various standards and qualifications for operating and providing rehabilitation services to various types of wildlife in order to be permitted by the Maine DIF&W. These rehabilitation facilities provide a valuable service to the State of Maine in rehabilitating injured wildlife. The numbers of rehabilitation facilities is very limited throughout the State. Currently, there is only one capable of handling deer in Region C, where the Cutler installation is located.

When it comes to deer, the Maine DIF&W works to dissuade the public from intervening with nature by advising the public through public service announcements to leave what appears to be "orphaned" wildlife alone. But all too often, emotions come in to play, and animals are "rescued" by a well-intended individual and then turned in with little chance to successfully return to its site of origin and/or mother. As such, the Maine DIF&W is left with a dilemma of having to rehabilitate a certain number of fawns, sometimes under public or media scrutiny. The best opportunity for the animal to be returned to its natural environs as a "wild" animal is to make the rehabilitation period as brief as possible. It is important for the Maine DIF&W to have appropriate release sites where deer have a good chance to acclimate to a home range area with good forage, reasonable chance for survival, and

minimized chances for developing conflicts with people, while habituating to natural conditions as a wild animal.

The Cutler installation is strategically important for the Maine DIF&W Region C and the Downeast area of the State, particularly Washington County. Because of its size, fenced/secure operations, land management practices, and resident deer herd, Cutler is a model area based on the ideal qualifications for a release site, as previously described. Due to the coastal influence, the climatic extremes of weather are most often moderated, enhancing survival during the harshest period of a deer's life history in northern New England - winter. Because vegetation at Cutler is managed in order to maintain grass/shrub association, forage for deer is abundant throughout the year. With the resident deer herd on the base often in open environs, there is ample opportunity for a young, rehabilitated animal to habituate to its own kind and adopt wild behaviors. Finally, the potential for an animal becoming acclimated to humans in a residential setting and presenting conflicts is also reduced in this setting.

Other release sites in the area have been used in the past, but problems have occurred on occasion involving domestic, residential-type nuisance issues (e.g., gardening activities, people feeding the animals, attempting to tame, etc.). Having a secure site within reasonable proximity to a rehabilitation

facility with the characteristics of Cutler is considered a significant asset and is very much appreciated by the Maine DIF&W Regional operations.

The licensed rehabilitator associated with the Cutler release initiative is also an instructor at University of Maine at Machias in the fields of environmental science and marine biology and has held state and federal permits for many years. Her current State of Maine Wildlife Rehabilitators Permit for deer was conditional on conducting a fall release in which the Maine DIF&W participates to sedate and handle the animals in transporting. A fall release gives the animals the best opportunity for acclimation to new environs and honing wild behaviors while reducing their tolerance and dependence on

humans. Once sedated, each animal is fitted with a 1 1/4 inch white tag in each ear complete with an identification number and contact phone number. Several observations of the released deer at Cutler have been made since the release on 29 September 2015. Monitoring of the released deer will occur as much as practicable over the next year.



*Maine DIF&W Regional Biologist Thomas Schaeffer - left and PWD-ME NRM Ian Trefry - right following release of deer. - photo by Kari Moore (NAVFAC PWD-ME NEPA Manager)*

Any questions pertaining to this story can be directed to Ian Trefry, PWD-Maine Natural Resources Manager.

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