BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT
December 2020

Carole Stanko, Chief

NEW JERSEY WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT
GRANT NO. W-68-R

STUDY PLAN I. WHITE-TAILED DEER

Jodi Powers, Senior Wildlife Biologist (Northern Region)
Joe Leskie, Senior Wildlife Biologist (Southern Region)

Annual Deer Harvest (Job I-A)

J. Leskie and J. Powers spent a considerable amount of time returning inquiries from hunters who experienced errors or needed assistance with their deer harvest reporting during the Permit Muzzleloader and Six-day Firearm Season. Hunters using the wrong harvest tags as well as the inability to report a harvest made up the majority of the reporting issues.

Deer season dates for the remainder of the 2020-21 season were reviewed for accuracy.

Extension Activities

J. Leskie prepared and delivered the December Division of Fish and Wildlife Report to members of the Atlantic County Federation of Sportsman's Clubs.

Other Activities

J. Leskie and J. Powers continued the collection of deer heads for the 2020 CWD surveillance effort. Currently, 230 retropharyngeal lymph nodes samples have been collected in the State. Sampling efforts have been slower this year as game butcher participation has been down from previous years, but sampling will continue until desired sample sizes have been reached.

J. Leskie was contacted by G. Fowles of the Endangered and Nongame Species Program regarding the collection of white-tailed deer ear samples for a gene flow analysis study throughout New Jersey. The statewide sampling was started in 2019, however the current focus is on the outer coastal area of the pine barrens.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
Andrew W Burnett, Principal Biologist
James Sloan, Senior Biologist
Joseph R. Garris, Wildlife Technician I
Keith Santini, Seasonal Technician

<u>Objective 1</u> – Conduct annual or periodic monitoring programs of the upland game and furbearer resource, their users, and the habitats on which they depend.

Hunter and Trapper Harvests
During the current segment, deer hunters reported harvesting 39 coyotes and 2 gray fox while trappers reported harvesting 11 coyotes and 2 gray fox. Reported harvest to date totals 74 coyotes and 5 gray fox.

Beaver and River Otter
Staff continued conducting statewide beaver/otter field inventories, which will continue through Dec. 31. Several nuisance beaver complaints were received during the segment and were forwarded to the Wildlife Services Unit.

Although all beaver and otter permits were awarded in the recent lottery, 33 beaver and 26 otter permits were not claimed and were available for the OTC sale on December 2nd. All beaver permits were sold within minutes, and several license agents experienced difficulty in accessing the system. As of December 18th, one (1) river otter permit remains available in Zone 28.

Sighting Reports
Reports received during the segment included: coyote sign in Cape May County; American woodcock in Atlantic County; and, bobcat (1 adult, 2 juveniles) in Warren County. Project files were updated; and, the bobcat sighting was forwarded to G. Fowles (ENSP).

<u>Objective 2</u> – To participate in business, meetings and monitoring programs of the National Bobwhite Technical Committee (NBTC), Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC), Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEUGBTC), and Short-leaf Pine Initiative (SPI).

Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEUGBTC)
Burnett participated in the monthly Multi-State Grouse Restoration Group meeting on December 17th. Discussions included results of meeting with US Forest Service, development of WNV risk model for the East, updates on the grouse population status document, and the upcoming strategic planning kick-off schedule for January 19-26, 2021.

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)
Burnett responded to a humane dispatch questionnaire on November 20th.

<u>Objective 4</u> – To provide technical guidance to landowners interested in providing wildlife habitat on their lands.

Burnett participated in a remote meeting of the NJ-NRCS State Technical Committee on December 2nd. Discussions included 2020 Program year in review; 2021 Program changes; Regional Conservation Partnership Program update; and, a review of current Partner Agreements.

<u>Objective 5</u> – To disseminate accurate and appropriate information on upland game and furbearer programs to sportsmen, public, state and local agencies, and other organizations.

Garris prepared the Winter 2020-21 Furbearer e-Newsletter and forwarded same to Burnett for review.

Burnett provided an NYU graduate student with NJ coyote population estimates and their role in maintaining ecological balance on December 1st. The student attended the WITO Deer Camp event and was making further inquiry on the information provided.

Garris provided input and identified various species of wildlife and scat from pictures/videos/audio and conversations with constituents.

Other Activities

Burnett and Garris participated in a Teams meeting with B. Stoff on December 2nd to discuss the upcoming beaver and otter trapping season harvest reporting via AHRS.

Garris assisted with mobile checking of bears during the week of December 7th.

Sloan attended the remote Fish & Game Council meeting on December 8th.

Burnett reviewed *Best Management Practices for Trapping Furbearers in the United States* (Wildlife Monograph 207) on December 16th.

The project's coyote database contains 12,754 records of mortalities, sightings, and other incidents from a minimum 470 municipalities in all 21 counties.

WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
Lisa Clark, Assistant Biologist

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Recruitment Surveys for Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swans

Program staff conducted productivity surveys for tundra swans on 3 December. Productivity surveys measure the proportion of young in the fall flight and can be used in population modeling. Because tundra swans nest in remote arctic wilderness, recruitment is measured on the wintering grounds.

Productivity was 8.0% young in the fall flight (n=75 birds examined) and was similar to brant, in that it was not a bust but below the long-term average (mean=14% young).

Objective 2 – Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures

As chair of the Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section, T. Nichols worked with (virtual) host South Carolina DNR and the Nongame Technical Section Chair to draft the agenda for the 2021 Winter meeting.

Program biologists developed questions for and commented on a proposed survey to waterfowl hunters regarding the Eastern Mallard Harvest Strategy. The survey will be sent in January in coordination with other Atlantic Flyway partners.

Atlantic Brant Ecology Study

Program staff responded to recoveries of transmitters and geolocator-marked specimens that were shot by hunters by sending SASE to retrieve the devices for data download. Staff prepared geolocators, transmitter harnesses, tarsal bands, leg bands, and other materials for the winter 2021 marking phase of this study. Planning for captures began and trapping will begin at the end of the brant hunting season in late January.

WILDLIFE SERVICES SECTION

Anthony McBride, Supervising Wildlife Biologist
Mike Madonia, Principal Wildlife Biologist
Joe Burke, Wildlife Technician I
Amy DeCheser, Wildlife Technician I
Emilia Topp, Wildlife Technician II
Michael Patrick, Wildlife Technician II
Peter Stark, Wildlife Worker

Bear Control: Lethal and Non-Lethal

The black bear unit received a total of 37 bear calls from November 20, 2020 to December 21, 2020; this compares with 38 calls from the same time period in 2019.

The black bear unit received 2 Category I calls, 12 Category II calls, and 23 Category III calls for the time period November 20, 2020 to December 21, 2020; this compares to 0 Category I calls, 10 Category II calls and 28 Category III calls for the same time period in 2019.

The black bear unit received a total of 1,395 bear calls from January 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020; this compares with 812 calls from the same time period in 2019.

The black bear unit received 71 Category I calls, 599 Category II calls, and 720 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020; this compares to 57 Category I calls, 345 Category II calls and 403 Category III calls for the same time period in 2019.

As of December 21, 2020, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 71.8 percent from the same time period in 2019. Category I incidents increased 24.5 percent, Category II calls increased 73.6 percent and Category III calls increased 78.6 percent from 2019. This data does not include calls made to local police departments.

Research

Project personnel continue to edit and input harvest research data into the bear database.

2020 Bear Harvest Total - Segment B Extension
Total Harvest by Zone

Zone	Segment A Total	Segment B (Dec 7th-12th)	Wednesday 12/16	Thursday 12/17	Friday 12/18	Saturday 12/19	Segment B Total	Season Total A + B
1	69	24	0	0	0	1	25	94
2	140	28	0	1	1	2	32	172
3	81	10	0	0	0	0	10	91
4	44	7	0	0	0	0	7	51

5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	**336**	**69**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**74**	**410**
Number of bears harvested that were tagged this year / cumulative total	15	4	0	0	0	0	4	**19**
Cumulative harvest rate based on 141 tagged bears available for harvest	**10.6%**	**13.4%**	**13.4%**	**13.4%**	**13.4%**	**13.4%**	**2.8%**	**13.4%**

Total Harvest by County

County	Segment A Total	Segment B (Dec 7th-12th)	Wednesday 12/16	Thursday 12/17	Friday 12/18	Saturday 12/19	**Segment B Total**	**Season Total A + B**
Sussex	152	34	0	1	1	2	38	190
Warren	89	24	0	0	0	1	25	114
Passaic	21	4	0	0	0	0	4	25
Morris	63	6	0	0	0	0	6	69
Bergen	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Hunterdon	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	8
Somerset	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mercer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**336**	**69**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**74**	**410**

Damage/Nuisance Control

Project personnel continue to provide technical advice for damage complaint incidents and set traps for Category 1 behavior.

Cooperative Research

Project personnel continue to work on cooperative research projects with East Stroudsburg and Stockton University.

Other Activities

Unit employees matched beaver complaint sites with 2020-21 beaver trapping season permit holders prior to the December 26 season opening. No special site specific permits were issued during the current reporting period.

Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)

BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES

Bat	1	Hawk	1
Bear	37	Owl	2
Beaver	15	Rabbit	1
Bird	3	Raccoon	6
Coyote	11	Skunk	3
Deer	64	Squirrel	2
Duck	1	Swan	1
Fish	1	Turkey	2
Flying squirrel	1	Turtle	1
Fox	14	Unknown	1
Goose	2		

133 calls for the Federal Aid Project.
Total calls: 170 (*black bear calls are not included in this project)

Wild Turkey Research Project (Federal Aid Project W-68-R-16)

A. McBride edited harvest reporting data from the 2020 spring and fall turkey seasons.