

**Endangered and Nongame Species Program**  
**Monthly Report for 16 February – 15 March, 2021**

**Staff:**

John Heilferty, Chief  
Kathy Clark, Supervising Zoologist  
Jeanette Bowers-Altman, Principal Zoologist  
Christina “Kashi” Davis, Environmental Specialist II  
Amanda Dey, Principal Zoologist  
Gretchen Fowles, GIS Specialist  
MacKenzie Hall, Environmental Specialist II  
Emily Heiser, Assistant Biologist  
Sharon Petzinger, Senior Zoologist  
Bill Pitts, Senior Zoologist  
Kris Schantz, Principal Zoologist  
Robert Somes, Senior Zoologist  
Brian Zarate, Senior Zoologist

**Administration** – J. Heilferty

As of 16 March 2020, all ENSP staff are working from home and instituting social distancing in the course of our work to minimize spread of the novel coronavirus.

ENSP staff are preparing the 2022-2024 grant proposals in the new federal **Tracking and Reporting on Actions for Conservation of Species (TRACS)** format in preparation for review and ultimately, input into TRACS online.

**Landscape Project** – J. Heilferty

No new report.

**Habitat Change Analysis Project (HCAP)** –S. Petzinger

No new report.

**Technical Guidance & Policy/Planning** – all staff

K. Clark coordinated with USFWS Regional permits office on several bald eagle permit issues.

K. Schantz worked with the Division of Land Resource Protection and associated consultants/contractors in the review of and to provide guidance/recommendations on a DEP permit-required study regarding the effects of a solar field on a northern pine snake population.

K. Schantz provided technical assistance to the Mercer County Park Commission and Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space regarding additional rare snake research and how ENSP may contribute as a partner.

ENSP staff is reviewing and providing input on Scientific Collecting Permit applications.

C. Davis attended the Atlantic Flyway Council Nongame Bird Technical Section meeting (virtual) as the NJ nongame representative and the chair of the Shorebird Committee. K. Clark also attended some of the committee meetings.

**Biotics Database** – G. Fowles

Staff submitted high priority new data for inclusion in the next SOA file, but the program is without staff to work on the data transcription to Biotics pending the on-boarding of temp services staff, as well as receipt of a delayed computer order.

**Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ)** – G. Fowles, B. Zarate, M. Hall

No new report available.

**Habitat Conservation Management on Public Lands** – All staff

Habitat work in Stand 12 on Sparta Mountain WMA began on March 2, 2021. S. Petzinger and others conducted at least 13 site visits during this period to monitor the work for compliance and help keep onlookers at a safe distance from the operation. The project should be completed by the end of March.

**Species Status Review** – K. Clark

Staff reviewed proposed status changes and made corrections to scientific names where necessary.

**State Wildlife Action Plan** – All staff

No new report.

**HERPTILES**

**Snake Fungal Disease** – K. Schantz

No new report.

**Snakes** – K. Schantz

K. Schantz worked on a backlog of data, compiling, reviewing and reformatting data in preparation for Biotics submittal.

**SGCN Turtles** – B. Zarate and B. Pitts

B. Pitts, NJA staff, and USFWS staff performed habitat maintenance for bog turtles on 5 properties in March, and are working on plans to survey these and other sites in the region this spring.

Red-bellied cooter sampling is planned for the week of March 22.

**Eastern Tiger Salamander** – B. Pitts

No new report.

**Diamondback Terrapins** - J. Bowers-Altman and B. Zarate

B. Zarate and J. Bowers-Altman continued reviewing scientific collecting permit applications relating to diamondback terrapin research.

J. Bowers-Altman attending a meeting organized by K. Dacaney (BMF) regarding erosion planning/habitat improvement for Sedge Island. The use of dredged material to create nesting areas for diamondback terrapins was discussed.

## **MAMMALS**

### **Bobcat Project** – G. Fowles

No new report available.

### **Bat Conservation** – M. Hall

No new report available.

### **Allegheny Woodrat** – G. Fowles

No new report.

## **BIRDS**

### **American Kestrel** – B. Pitts

B. Pitts has been coordinating with Raritan Headwaters on an Eagle Scout project to install 5 new boxes in Somerset County. Additionally, the scout is donating 15 more boxes for installation in the region. Mercer County Parks is also coordinating with an Eagle Scout to install 3 boxes on their properties this spring. Plans are in the works to install another dozen boxes on County, NGO, and private lands in the upcoming year. Clean outs and box maintenance will begin the first week of April, and most of the project volunteers are eager to monitor boxes again this season.

### **Colonial Waterbirds** – C. Davis

C. Davis made plans to conduct the aerial survey for long-legged wading birds, terns, and gulls in 2021. She worked with Stockton University interns on data analysis for changes in site use across the state. She provided technical guidance for a number of Yellow-crowned Night-heron and Great Blue Heron inquiries. She participated in regional conversations about a coordinated 2023 survey.

### **Beach-Nesting Birds** - C. Davis & E. Heiser

C. Davis & E. Heiser have been working on preparing for the 2021 field season. Migration surveys began during the first week of March and the first Piping Plover was documented in New Jersey on March 7. A number of the state's returned breeders have been documented at nesting sites. Fencing dates are planned for late-March and early-April. Seasonal staff returns on April 1.

C. Davis has been actively working with Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative to establish protocols for using game cameras to enhance monitoring and management of breeding shorebirds.

C. Davis & E. Heiser are working with The Wetlands Institute to continue banding breeding Black Skimmers and deploy GPS transmitters in the 2021 field season.

### **Bald Eagle Monitoring** - K. Clark

L. Smith (Conserve Wildlife Foundation) sends out weekly updates on nesting. Most nests are being reported on by vol nest monitors. The peak of egg-laying is typically in mid-February, and most hatching in late March. New nests have been discovered in several counties so far.

### **Peregrine Falcon Monitoring** – K. Clark

K. Clark and J. Verhagen (Little Egg Foundation) installed cameras at three nest sites (to date) to document nesting and enable prey identification.

### **Osprey Monitoring** – K. Clark

B. Wurst of Conserve Wildlife Foundation coordinated the installation of new nests and widespread nest platform repairs.

**Other Raptors** – K. Clark

Staff and partners installed a second coastal nest box for Barn Owls in Cape May Court House, and planned for another in Stone Harbor at TWI. CWF partner M. Kolk installed a camera in a barn owl box in Marmora.

**Migratory Shorebirds** – A. Dey

No new report.

**Scrub-shrub/Open Field birds (GWWA)** – S. Petzinger

S. Petzinger gave two presentations to two college classes about forest habitat restoration for imperiled wildlife.

**Secretive Marsh Birds**– C. Davis & E. Heiser

E. Heiser has been working with SHARP to hire a NJDFW field technician for the 2021 regional SHARP census. The technician will work with a crew to census the state's population and track the efficacy of model predictions for the northeast population of Saltmarsh Sparrows.

C. Davis met with a group of contractors as well as a biologist from Forsythe NWR to continue plans for Black Rail surveys in NJ in 2021. She is currently planning on focusing heavily on using acoustic recording devices this season.

**Monitoring Avian Productivity & Survivorship (MAPS)** – S. Petzinger

No new report.

**Regional & National Bird Coordination** – S. Petzinger

The first Bird of the Month Facebook post about the Dark-eyed Junco on the DFW Facebook page was posted Feb 16. The second post on chickadees was drafted and posted on March 15.

**INVERTEBRATES & AQUATICS**

**Freshwater Mussels/Shortnose Sturgeon/Aquatics** – J. Bowers-Altman

J. Bowers-Altman provided comments to LRP on several proposed instream projects regarding impacts to listed freshwater mussels; attended three associated virtual meetings. Also reviewed and provided comments on one LMR's relating to freshwater mussels.

J. Bowers-Altman attended the monthly Brook Floater Working Group meeting.

J. Bowers-Altman began reviewing scientific collecting permit applications relating to freshwater mussels for the upcoming season. Conditions for one application were prepared and sent to L. DiPiano for processing.

**Pollinator Conservation** – R. Somes

No new report.

**Lepidoptera, Odonata, Coleoptera-** R. Somes

No new report.