

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

May 2021

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)

Special Areas

J. Leskie and J. Powers forwarded the final 2019-20 deer harvest zone graphs to the appropriate Special Area Administrators.

Extension Activities

J. Powers forwarded 2020-21 deer harvest data to several county ark and municipality programs.

Other Activities

J. Powers and J. Leskie worked on the statewide 2020 farmer depredation database to be forwarded to C. Stanko.

J. Powers completed annual waterfowl BPI surveys.

Community Based Plan for Management of Suburban Deer Populations: Job I-C

J. Powers received a CBDMP application from JB MDL. It is currently under review and will be presented to the Fish and Game Council at the June meeting.

J. Powers is making final comments on the CBDMP application from Ocean Twp., Monmouth County.

J. Powers spoke to Hopewell Twp., Mercer County regarding the possibility of the County submitting a CBDMP application.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist

Andrew W Burnett, Principal Biologist

James Sloan, Senior Biologist

Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I

Objective 1 – 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, turkey hunters reported harvesting 6 coyotes opportunistically. Reported harvest total to date is 315 coyotes and 34 gray fox. One nuisance coyote was shot by a farmer.

A total 19 of the 1,183 Trapper Harvest Surveys mailed were returned as undelivered (~2%) and 381 were returned (~33%). Data entry was completed, and analyses will be done in the next reporting segment.

American Woodcock

Five Singing Ground Survey routes selected by USFWS for 2021 were sampled in Burlington, Mercer, Morris, Salem, and Warren counties between 15 Apr-05 May. No birds were heard on any of the routes.

Ruffed Grouse

Nine ruffed grouse roadside drumming surveys in Passaic, Sussex, and Warren counties were each sampled twice (forward and reverse) during the segment. At least 10 individual grouse were heard on five routes, all within the Ridge and Valley geophysical province.

Wild Turkey

Sloan spent a significant amount of time handling turkey harvest reporting errors and staffing the turkey help hotline.

Sighting Reports

Reports received during the segment included: 2 woodcock sightings (Montague Twp., Sussex County and Hardwick Twp., Warren County), 1 coyote-vehicle mortality and 1 bobcat-vehicle mortality (Warren County). Project files were updated.

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

Sloan visited a Cumberland County landowner on April 22 to assist with chemical treatment of fescue pastures in an effort to establish native cover as part of their NRCS contract to convert 26 acres into warm season grass and wildflowers.

Sloan attended Landis Sewage Authority's quarterly meeting on April 29 to discuss their NRCS contract timeline and work to be completed by the end of 2021, Atlantic white cedar restoration, and the upcoming Outdoor Women of NJ mentored turkey hunt.

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

Sloan answered numerous nuisance turkey complaints.

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

Burnett prepared calendars for 2021-2050 marking the opening dates for turkey (spring and fall), deer (fall bow, permit bow, six-day firearm), small game, and black bear.

Hunting Digest

Burnett reviewed the Firearms, Bows, and Ammo for Small Game Hunting table and provided comment to Digest Editor C. Kuenstner on May 14.

Other Activities

Sloan participated in the first NJDFW *Outdoor Women of NJ* mentored turkey hunt on May 3-5 sponsored by Landis Sewage Authority, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), NWTf's Women in the Outdoors Chapter and the Division. All participants heard gobbles and enjoyed a true turkey hunting experience while harvesting four turkeys.

Garris assisted the Waterfowl Project by conducting 27 Breeding Pair Index survey plots in northern counties during 15 Apr-05 May.

Burnett and Sloan attended the Hunters Leadership Forum's *How to Talk About Hunting* webinar on April 22-23.

Burnett spent a significant portion of time clearing out unwanted files in preparation to relocate to the Southern Region Office. Years of proposed Game Code changes and old deer-related Federal Aid reports were scanned and provided to BWM staff. A file cabinet and several boxes of game bird files were relocated to the Central Region Office. Bear-related files were dropped off at the Clinton Office.

The project's coyote database contains over 12,800 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, Senior Biologist

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey

Division personnel and cooperators completed the New Jersey portion of the annual Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey. All Atlantic Flyway states from New Hampshire to Virginia have participated in this survey since 1989. Results of this survey are used to document changes in the abundance and distribution of the primary breeding waterfowl species in the Atlantic Flyway. Survey data are also used in conjunction with other waterfowl population data to set waterfowl hunting seasons.

In New Jersey, this survey is completed by recording waterfowl observed in 105 randomly located, one square kilometer plots, that are located throughout the state. During 2021, plots were completed from 15 April to 13 May. Data were submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for compilation. Results will be available in the next monthly segment.

2021 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey

During the spring of 2021, the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife (Division) implemented a statewide

Conservation Order (CO) for light geese under the authority of the US Fish and Wildlife Service as promulgated in 50 CFR 21.60 (E). 2021 was the 13th consecutive year the CO was held. The CO began (16 February) the day after the close of the special winter Canada goose season and closed 3 April. Participants were permitted to take light geese without bag limits using unplugged guns, electronic calls, and shooting hours extending to ½ hour after sunset. As part of the Federal requirement, the Division was responsible for reporting on participation and take. Federal requirements to report the numbers of light geese taken with special methods were suspended following 2015.

The Division required CO participants to obtain a \$2.00 permit as a provision to conduct the harvest survey. CO participants could only obtain their permits on the Division's licensing web site. In 2021, the Division used a different licensing contractor and the CO permit was more prominently displayed as part of license buying opportunities. Beginning 1 March, participants could report their harvest and activity either online through the license vendor or by mailing a paper activity diary that they received as their CO permit. Paper diaries were accepted through 13 May when estimates were derived.

A total of 1,651 CO permits were issued. 59% of permit holders actually pursued geese during the CO expending 3,179 hunter-days. An estimated 9,081 light geese were harvested. The 2021 harvest estimate was 19% above the long term (2009-20) mean.

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

Contaminant Loads in Waterfowl

T. Nichols worked with multiple collaborators to submit a Multi-State Grant Pre-proposal on a study: “Contaminant Loads in Waterfowl of the Northeast Atlantic Flyway: New Threats and Outdated Advisories”. Collaborators include Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, and the state wildlife agencies in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New Jersey. If funded, this would be a 4-year study. Dr. Krysten Schuler (Cornell University) is principal investigator.

Tuckahoe WMA Impoundments

In coordination with Bureau of Lands Management, Program staff initiated a slow water drawdown on 2 Tuckahoe WMA impoundments (Lester and Yellowlegs) in preparation for aerial seeding of an annual/perennial mix in June. Staff will continue monitoring water levels throughout the growing season.

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee

Terry Caruso, Green Acres liaison to the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee (WSAC), is retiring June 1. T. Nichols participated in a MS Teams meeting with Terry Caruso and her WSAC liaison replacement, Jessy Muttahil (Green Acres), as a transition training event.

Extension Services and Miscellaneous

T. Nichols coordinated with Mitch Weegman (University of Saskatchewan) and Chris Williams (University of Delaware) to select 3 graduate students (2 PhD; 1 MS) for projects involving Atlantic brant energetics, Atlantic brant movements and spring staging, and American black duck ecology, where the Division is a partner. Nichols served on the interview panels in these student selections.

L. Clark assisted Bureau of Information and Education with the Women's Turkey Hunt Workshop.

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 122 bear calls from April 20, 2021 to May 21, 2021; this compares with 140 calls from the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received 12 Category I calls, 47 Category II calls and 62 Category III calls for the time period April 20, 2021 to May 21, 2021; this compares to 5 Category I calls, 62 Category II calls and 72 Category III calls for the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received a total of 206 bear calls from January 1, 2021 to May 21, 2021; this compares with 261 calls from the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received 14 Category I calls, 87 Category II calls, and 104 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2021 to May 21, 2021; this compares to 12 Category I calls, 127 Category II calls and 120 Category III calls for the same time period in 2020.

As of May 21, 2021, the total number of calls received by the Division decreased 21.0 percent from the same time period in 2020. Category I incidents increased by 16.6 percent, Category II calls decreased 31.5 percent and Category III calls decreased 13.3 percent from 2020. This data does not include calls made to local police departments.

Research

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

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.

White-tailed Deer Calls and Complaints

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services staff immobilized a deer with a plastic fitting on its front leg in Toms River, Ocean County. The plastic was removed and the deer was released at the capture site.

Beaver calls and Complaints

Unit staff trapped and euthanized five beavers at Bear Swamp WMA in Sussex County. Beavers at this location were causing flooding on a private property that borders the WMA. Staff also spent time maintaining two beaver flume water leveling devices at additional locations on the WMA with flooding issues.

Unit staff removed two additional beavers from the Webbs Mills section of Greenwood Forest WMA in Ocean County. Beavers at the site had flooded an important community of rare plants as well as the boardwalk that allows visitors to see the bog. The dam was removed and the water level is returning to normal.

Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)

BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES

Bat	1	Loon	1
Bear	122	Muskrat	2
Beaver	11	Opossum	3
Bird	10	Rabbit	4
Coyote	23	Raccoon	24
Crow	1	Skunk	3
Deer	41	Squirrel	3
Duck	6	Swan	2
Fish	1	Turkey	4
Fox	65	Unknown	6
Frog	1	Vulture	1
Goose	19	Woodchuck	7
Hawk	1		

240 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 362 (*black bear calls are not included in this project)

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

J. Sloan and A. McBride monitored the Automated Harvest Reporting System during the spring turkey season which began on Saturday, April 24 (youth turkey hunting day). Unit employees responded to calls received during the season from hunters who were having difficulty with automated harvest reporting. The Automated Harvest Reporting System continues to work efficiently for the majority of turkey hunters.