

**Endangered and Nongame Species Program**  
**Monthly Report for 16 December 2021 – 15 January 2022**

**Staff:**

John Heilferty, Chief  
Kathy Clark, Supervising 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

During this period, the Department’s return to office-based work was modified to allow remote work two-three days per week.

Staff biologists are drafting federal reports and compiling federal-required match.

**Landscape Project** – J. Heilferty

No new report.

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

No new report.

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

Staff continued to provide review and guidance regarding offshore wind energy planning.

Select staff are reviewing a draft potential DEP policy regarding minimizing the use of soil erosion and sediment control products that incorporate plastic and other synthetic material-made netting on DEP owned, leased and managed lands.

Staff planned ENSP the assumption of duties to issue DFW Scientific Collecting Permits for native, nongame species.

**Biotics Database** – G. Fowles

Biotics staff continue to work on final testing of the back-end of the NJ Wildlife Tracker online submittal application in collaboration with the Bureau of GIS, to ensure as seamless a flow as possible for appropriate data to and from the Biotics database. A Dashboard enabling ENSP biologists to review submitted species observations online is now being utilized and working well and an automated email is sent to biologists each week with a tally of records ready for their review within the application.

The next version of the SOA (version 13) was finalized and released, including a version that will be used for the update of the Landscape Project mapping.

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

The CHANJ team led a monthly planning meeting for partners in New Jersey interested in helping to organize the Northeastern Transportation and Wildlife Conference (NETWC) to be held in NJ in September 2022. Partners include ENSP, the South Jersey Transportation Authority, DOT, The Nature Conservancy, Stockton University, and USFWS. G. Fowles also participated in a NETWC regional steering committee call during the reporting period.

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

No new Report

**Species Status Review** – K. Clark

ENSP are contributing with regional partners on the RCN Grant-funded effort to update the northeast region's "Regional Species of greatest Conservation Need" (RSGCN) list.

**State Wildlife Action Plan** – All staff

No new report.

**HERPTILES**

**Snake Fungal Disease** – K. Schantz

No new report.

**Snakes** – K. Schantz

No new report.

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

No new report.

**Eastern Tiger Salamander** – B. Pitts

Surveys by ENSP, USFWS, and volunteers during the past month have found ponds to be completely dried up or holding 40cm or less of water. Adults have been reported by volunteers at a few sites, but no egg masses have been reported so far this season. Staff have scheduled a site evaluation in Cape May County with a private landowner that is in proximity to two known breeding populations.

**Diamondback Terrapins** - B. Zarate

No new report.

**MAMMALS**

**Bobcat Project** – G. Fowles

There were 7 bobcats reported trapped during the reporting period the ENSP and BWM responded to. Genetic results from scats and tissues collected in 2021 were reported to ENSP by the National Genomics Center for Wildlife and Fish Conservation.

**Bat Conservation** – M. Hall

M. Hall attended (virtually) the annual 3-day Northeast Bat Working Group meeting and presented a NJ state update, highlighting our bridge-bats inspections and migratory bat research & monitoring.

M. Hall is participating in a bat symposium planning committee for the upcoming Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies conference.

### **Allegheny Woodrat** – G. Fowles

Camera monitoring at historic woodrat sites in the Delaware Water Gap continue.

G. Fowles led the bi-monthly regional Allegheny woodrat working group meeting in early January. Eight states gave updates on their 2021 research and plans for 2022, including G. Fowles for New Jersey. She also gave an update on the working group activities over the course of 2021.

Results from a habitat assessment of woodrat active sites in the Palisades, which hadn't been conducted before and was contracted out, was submitted to ENSP and being reviewed. Also preliminary results came in from Towson University on the chloroplast DNA analyses they have been conducting on woodrat scat from the Palisades in collaboration with G. Fowles. The results appear very promising and there is a call planned with NJ ENSP, NY, PA, and Towson University to talk about next steps with the tool.

## **BIRDS**

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

Staff set up the logistics and secured the paperwork necessary to conduct cormorant control at Gull Island for the benefit of nesting wading birds.

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

Staff led the NJ state BNB meeting and coordinated a meeting about expanded use of color bands on Piping Plovers. Staff worked out logistics for pre-season trapping efforts. Staff began interviewing candidates for the 2022 field season tech positions. Staff prepared multiple presentations for the upcoming Atlantic Coast Piping Plover and Least Tern Workshop (virtual).

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

The 2021 Bald Eagle Project report was released Jan. 1. One hundred thirty volunteers helped to report on the results of 247 active and territorial eagle nest sites in 2021.

In the first week of January, the first eagle nest was documented as incubating. By Jan. 15, five nests were incubating. Eagle Project nest monitor volunteers are checking their nests regularly and will continue to do so through July.

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

The 2021 annual report was released and posted on the website.

### **American Kestrel** – B. Pitts

K. Clark and B. Pitts attended an update meeting on the kestrel research group studying kestrels in the northeastern states, led by Hawk Mountain biologist JF Therrien.

### **Osprey Monitoring** – K. Clark

No new report.

### **Other Raptors** – K. Clark

No new report.

### **Migratory Shorebirds** – A. Dey

**Scrub-shrub/Open Field birds (GWWA)** – S. Petzinger  
Data were summarized and written up for federal aid reports.

**Secretive Marsh Birds**– C. Davis & E. Heiser  
No updates for Black Rail.

**Regional & National Bird Coordination** – S. Petzinger  
No new report.

## **INVERTEBRATES & AQUATICS**

**Freshwater Mussels/Aquatics** – R. Somes

R. Somes participated in the Chinese Pondmussel Working Group meeting where updated eDNA results were reported and planning for the upcoming field season was discussed. Chinese Pondmussels are believed to still be present in two impoundments at the original site.

R. Somes and J. Heilferty participated in the Brook Floater Conservation Working Group meeting and planning for the upcoming field season was discussed as well as the use of a recently awarded grant for conservation work related to this species.

**Pollinator Conservation** – R. Somes

R. Somes participated in a NJDEP meeting relating to the management of pollinator habitats in Solar Arrays and how it related to recent regulatory changes. ENSP will be working together with other NJDEP staff to develop guidelines for creating wildlife and pollinator habitat on solar installations.

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

R. Somes is working to process sighting data from 2021 for input into Biotics.

R. Somes participated in an Appalachian Grizzled Skipper Working Group meeting where plans for the upcoming field season were discussed. The group has been highly successful in gathering DNA samples from museum specimens of this species for analysis.