

# **BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

## **MONTHLY REPORT**

**January 2022**

**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

Megan Mills, Biologist Trainee (Northern Region)

Megan McCafferty, Biologist Trainee (Southern Region)

#### **Annual Deer Harvest (Job I-A)**

Project staff continues to return inquiries from hunters who experienced errors or needed assistance with their deer harvest reporting during multiple on-going hunting seasons. The majority of the reporting issues were from hunters using the wrong harvest tags, not having the appropriate purchased tags, or having multiple profiles.

#### **Game Code**

Project staff compiled and reviewed current and historic deer harvest data in preparation for a meeting to discuss proposals for amendments to the 2023 Game Code.

#### **Special Areas**

J. Powers contacted Special Areas about changes in deer season structure in preparation for Game Code amendments.

#### **Extension Activities**

Project staff attended a webinar entitled The Social and Ecological Systems of Chronic Wasting Disease Management.

#### **Other Activities**

Project staff completed the collection of deer heads for the 2021-22 CWD surveillance effort. A total of 313 retropharyngeal lymph nodes samples have been collected from 4 butcher shops. All samples were aged and verified.

Project staff continues to collect ages to be added to the deer harvest database.

M. Mills finalized the EHD report database. J. Gyurcsak created a GIS map displaying all EHD reports by municipality. J. Powers is currently reviewing the map.

Project staff continues to work on the detailed process of looking up links from the current website in preparation for streamlining links for the new website.

### **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  
Alexandrea Nickel, Seasonal Technician

**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 Harvest, Recreational and Economic Surveys**

A total of 82 coyotes and 8 gray foxes harvest mortalities were recorded via the Aspira (AHRS) reporting system and coyote reports reported directly to Division offices for the segment. A chart showing method of harvest/mortality for the segment, including vehicle mortalities is below.

Archers could harvest coyotes and gray foxes beginning October 2. Shotgun hunters could legally harvest coyotes or gray foxes incidentally to small game hunting on November 6.

Trappers using a cable restraint, or a cage trap could harvest coyotes beginning on November 15. Deer hunters could harvest coyotes during the muzzleloading rifle and shotgun deer season incidentally to deer hunting.

The Special Permit Coyote season began on January 1, 2022. Three of the coyotes and 1 gray fox in the chart (below) were taken by shotgun at night during that permit season. One coyote and 1 gray fox were taken during daylight hours by modern rifle during that special permit season. The remainder (6) of the gray foxes listed in the chart below were taken incidental to deer hunting.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Coyote</b>	<b>Gray Fox</b>
Archery	3	2
Trapping	54	0
Muzzleloading Rifle	10	0
Modern Rifle	1	1
Shotgun	14	5
Vehicle	4	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>8</b>

Queries to be used to draw the 2021 license year Hunter and Trapper Harvest databases from the Aspira/Insights data were set up within Insights and the dataset for the 2021-22 Hunter Harvest Survey was generated and sent to project biologists. The dataset for the 2021-22 Trapper Harvest Survey was generated and merged into a mailing database in preparation to printing both mailing and return address envelopes.

A total of 1,270 trappers (youth, resident, and non-resident licenses) are included in the dataset for the 2021-22 Trapper Harvest Survey. Demographics for the dataset were organized and the data entry form used by the project was generated and organized.

#### *Beaver and River Otter*

Beaver Bridge surveys by zone are underway during the segment.

Beaver and river otter trapping season began on December 26, 2021. Beaver and river otter harvest may be reported via AHRS as well as being physically measured and sealed at the mandatory check stations. A query structure was set up within Insights so that the 2021-22 beaver and otter harvest data could be monitored daily if the trapped animals were reported via Aspira/Insights. As of this writing a total of 98 beavers and 3 river otters statewide were recorded as harvested via Aspira.

#### *Ruffed Grouse*

New Jersey Audubon staff reported sightings of a ruffed grouse that was flushed on November 6, 2021. Another grouse was filmed by a constituent on the same property approx. 1 mile away in the prior week.

#### *Wild Turkey*

J. Sloan met with Pat Woerner of the Office of Fish and Wildlife Information Systems to discuss the 2022 Turkey Brood Survey on December 21<sup>st</sup>.

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

J. Sloan attended the Southern Region Habitat Management meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss 2022 habitat management plans for southern region wildlife management areas.

J. Sloan worked with Jessica McGuire of Quail Forever to format a job announcement for a Farm Bill Biologist in Columbus, NJ with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. This Farm Bill Biologist will coordinate and implement wildlife-related conservation programs and provide technical assistance to landowners in NJ. This announcement closed January 21, 2022.

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

J. Sloan answered questions from a reporter regarding turkeys in NJ for Outdoor Life magazine on January 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Extension Activities**

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

## **WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV**

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist

Lisa Clark, Senior Biologist

Austin Damminger, Biologist Trainee

### **Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs**

#### *Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey*

Since 2001, the Division has worked cooperatively with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) using their aircraft and pilot-biologist to conduct the Mid-Winter Survey (MWS) in New Jersey. Division biologists have served as observers on the flights. Since 2016, the MWS now only covers wintering areas for Atlantic brant and tundra swans and these are the only species counted. The MWS effort reduction was due to budget cuts within the Service. MWS estimates are used for harvest management for both species.

The MWS was completed January 4-6 using a US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) aircraft and pilot-biologist (John Rayfield). The Service aircraft (Kodiak), equipped with a turbine engine and pontoon floats enhances safety for crew members. Ted Nichols and Lisa Clark served as observers for flights in New Jersey and Long Island, New York which combined winter about 85% of the brant in the Atlantic Flyway. Use of the Service aircraft and pilot came at no expense to the Division.

The New Jersey (48,990) and Long Island, New York (45,370) counts were collectively down 21% from the 2020 MWS (survey not flown during 2021) and the first time this combined count was below 100,000 since 2015. The Atlantic Flyway total estimate was not available but is expected to be down from the 2020 MWS.

### **Objective 2 – Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures**

Program biologists prepared for the 2022 winter Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section (AFCTS) meeting which will be held in a hybrid fashion.

### **Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies**

#### *American Black Duck Research*

Program staff collaborated with 7 other Atlantic Flyway states, the USFWS, CWS, and Mitch Weegman (University of Saskatchewan; lead investigator) on a study funded by the Black Duck Joint Venture entitled: *Quantifying the influence of environmental conditions and American black duck behavior and movements throughout the full annual cycle on subsequent productivity using state-of-the-art tracking devices*. This study will use backpack transmitters on black ducks captured on the wintering grounds for the next 2-3 years. Technician crews established trapping stations at 4 locations as duck seasons closed during mid-January in the North and South Zones.

### **Objective 5 – To provide technical guidance for enhancement and acquisition of migratory game bird habitats.**

Program staff participated in a virtual WMA habitat planning meeting concerning impoundment management at Tuckahoe WMA for 2022.

T. Nichols worked with DEP Contracting Office and Ducks Unlimited to finalize a lengthy agreement to renew the coordinated state/DU Canada “Fall Flight” North American Waterfowl Management Plan projects

in Canada Program for the next 5 years on behalf of the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee. The agreement was finalized after a 14-month process.

**Objective 6 – To disseminate accurate and appropriate information on migratory game bird and habitat management to sportsmen, public, local and state agencies, and other organizations.**

T. Nichols conducted a radio interview for *ESPN Rack and Fin Radio* concerning the light goose conservation order.

**Atlantic Brant Ecology Study (2BRANTXX)**

Staff continued to collect geolocators and transmitters from Atlantic brant shot by hunters. Data from geolocators was downloaded and devices with suitable remaining life will be redeployed.

Program biologists prepared GSM backpack transmitters, tarsal bands, and supplies for the marking phase of this study. 25 new transmitters and five 1-year old transmitters recovered from hunters will be redeployed on new birds.

T. Nichols worked with Frank Baldwin (Canadian Wildlife Service) to finalize a contract with the University of Manitoba to analyze data from Atlantic brant marked with geolocators that have been encountered. L. Clark synthesized all the encounter data for birds with geolocators. As study partner, CWS will pay for the contracting work.

**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 19 bear calls from January 1, 2022 to January 21, 2022; this compares with 14 calls from the same time period in 2021.

The black bear unit received 3 Category I calls, 7 Category II calls and 9 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2022 to January 21, 2022; this compares to 1 Category I calls, 2 Category II calls and 11 Category III calls for the same time period in 2021.

As of January 21, 2022, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 35.7 percent from the same time period in 2021. Category I calls increased by 200 percent, Cat II incidents increased by 250.0 percent and Category III calls decreased by 18.1 percent in comparison from 2021. 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 University.

## **White-tailed Deer Calls and Complaints**

USDA staff immobilized a deer in Morris Plains Morris County with an arrow in its shoulder. The arrow was successfully removed and the deer was released on site.

## **Beaver calls and Complaints**

Unit staff continued matching beaver trappers to complaint sites for the upcoming recreational beaver trapping season.

## **Other Activities**

Unit employees continued conducting statewide beaver/otter zone point surveys.

Unit staff attended several internal meetings on wireframe construction and content inclusion for the Division's new website.

## **Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)**

### **BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES**

Bat	1	Hawk	4
Bear	19	Heron	1
Beaver	17	Mountain Lion	2
Bird	3	Raccoon	8
Bobcat	1	Snake	1
Coyote	21	Squirrel	2
Deer	22	Swan	2
Eagle	1	Turkey	5
Fox	26	Turtle	1
Goose	2	Vulture	4

**124 calls for the Federal Aid Project.**

**Total calls: 143 (\*black bear calls are not included in this project)**