

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

June 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, Principal Wildlife Biologist (Southern Region)

Annual Deer Harvest (Job I-A)

J. Leskie and J. Powers reviewed and forwarded future dates for the Automated Harvest Report System (AHRS) for the 2021-22 deer hunting season.

J. Powers and J. Leskie began testing the AHRS for the upcoming 2021-22 Deer Season. Testing started with limiting gender options for the Six-day Firearm Season, the Zone/County/Township/Unit combinations, and Zone deletions and Township additions in the location drop down menus.

Hunting and Fishing Digest

J. Leskie and J. Powers continued reviews of deer information, layout, and content for the 2021-22 NJ Hunting & Trapping Digest. Edits to the document were made and forwarded to appropriate staff.

Special Areas

J. Leskie and J. Powers reviewed Special Area boundaries for any possible GIS edits that would be needed for a meeting with the Office of GIS to discuss the NJ Hunting and Trapping Explorer. Zone boundaries for the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR will be removed for the 2021-22 deer season.

J. Leskie met with Edwin B. Forsythe NWR Refuge Manager to discuss the permit allocations for the Forsythe properties as the refuge will be absorbed into the surrounding Deer Management Zones beginning with the 2021-22 deer season.

Extension Activities

J. Powers met with C. Stanko and F. Virgilio regarding a Warren County Federation of Sportsmen meeting.

J. Leskie prepared and forwarded the June 2021 Division Report to members of the Atlantic County Federation of Sportsman's Clubs. Updates on the Division and various projects and programs were provided.

J. Leskie and J. Powers answered inquiries from multiple residents about "abandoned" fawns. These residents were informed to leave the fawn alone for the parent female to find.

J. Powers received a few emails regarding potentially sick deer. It was determined that these deer were only shedding their winter coats and/or had tick infestations.

J. Powers forwarded 2020-21 harvest results to multiple county park systems.

Other Activities

J. Leskie and J. Powers sent the final 2020 farmer depredation database to C. Stanko.

J. Powers spoke to staff from Six-Mile Run Reservoir regarding changes to their 2021-22 deer management program.

J. Powers attended the Division meeting.

J. Powers attended two Website planning/update meetings.

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

J. Powers presented the CBDMP application from Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst to the Fish and Game Council at their June meeting. It was unanimously approved.

J. Powers sent final comments to Ocean Twp., Monmouth County on their CBDMP application.

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

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 2 coyotes opportunistically. Reported harvest total to date is 316 coyotes and 34 gray fox. Over half (163) of coyotes were reported by trappers followed by shotgun deer hunters (57), special permit holders (48), archery deer hunters (31), muzzleloader deer hunters (8) and spring turkey hunters (8). During the Special Permit Season, 30 coyotes were harvested with a shotgun and 118 were harvested with a rifle.

Based on preliminary results of the 2020-21 Trapper Harvest Survey, an estimated 632 licensed trappers were active and expended 20,820 trap-nights. An estimated 325 trappers employed dog-proof traps. A comparison of harvest estimates is presented in the table below.

Species	2020-21			2019-20	
	# Trappers	# Captured	# Harvested	# Harvested	# Trappers
Beaver	200 permits	728	728	604	200 permits
Otter	143 permits	51	51	44	143 permits
Mink	137	571	571	820	182
Muskrat	223	7,192	7,192	270	10,460
Nutria	0	0	0	0	0
Coyote	364	248	248	163	376
Red fox		2,193	2,068	3,576	
Gray fox	46	258	122	168	80
Raccoon	339	3,013	2,866	5,279	419
Opossum	86	575	364	604	114
Skunk		113	76	114	60
Weasel	6	3	3	18	9

Beaver and River Otter

One hundred ninety-seven (197) trappers had ≥ 1 beaver trapping permit; and 3 trappers had 2 permits for the same zone (Zones 5, 7 and 29). One hundred thirteen (113, 57%) trapped ≥ 1 day and 19 (10%) were inactive. The remaining 65 permit holders (33%) failed to return their harvest form, and therefore it is unknown whether they were inactive or active but unsuccessful. One hundred four (104) trappers caught ≥ 1 beaver and a total of 551 beavers; and 38 trappers were successful in harvesting their permit bag limit of 8 beaver (304 beavers, 55% of the recreational harvest). The average catch/active trapper was 4.9 beavers. Active beaver trappers expended at least 9,036 trap-nights (1 trap/night = 1 TN) pursuing beaver and the statewide harvest per 100 TN was 6.1 beaver. An additional 53 beaver were taken on in-season beaver damage permits.

One hundred forty-three (143) trappers had an otter trapping permit. Sixty-nine (69, 48%) trapped ≥ 1 day and 25 (17%) were inactive. The remaining 49 permit holders (34%) failed to return their harvest form, and therefore it is unknown whether they were inactive or active but unsuccessful. Forty-four (44) trappers (31%) were successful in taking an otter. Active otter trappers expended 2,336 TN and the statewide harvest was 1.9 otter/100 TN.

Northern Bobwhite

Staff conducted 9 Whistling Bobwhite Call Count routes in Cape May, Cumberland (3), Gloucester (2), Salem (2), and Salem/Cumberland counties. Zero (0) bobwhite were heard.

Sloan attended the Greenwood Forest WMA Forest Stewardship internal stakeholders meeting on June 10.

American Woodcock

No report.

Ruffed Grouse

Garris completed the final Ruffed Grouse Roadside Drumming Survey at Allamuchy State Park during the segment (0 birds (possibly due to high traffic disturbance from nearby I-80).

Wild Turkey

Sloan developed an online version of the annual Turkey Brood Count Survey, which will be tested in 2021 and hopefully made public in 2022. Creation of the online platform will hopefully increase sample size from which to determine recruitment levels and population size.

Sloan met remotely with Pennsylvania Game Commission biologist M. Casalena to discuss PA's spring turkey season outcome and potential study in regard to turkey population estimates.

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

The preliminary 2021 spring turkey harvest estimate is presented below with comparisons to the 2020 and 2019 harvests, by zone.

2021 Preliminary Spring Gobbler Harvest

THA	2021 Preliminary Harvest	2020 Harvest	2019 Harvest
01	28	44	61
02	48	67	60
03	20	20	16
04	71	100	115
05	49	92	109
06	49	70	81
07	41	68	65
08	103	119	154
09	67	113	125
10	39	56	41
11	122	168	172
12	94	103	96
14	228	302	275
15	61	81	71
16	109	155	109
20	610	657	651
21	355	366	363
22	233	269	198
State	2,327	2,850	2,762

Sighting Reports

Reports received during the segment included: 4 coyote-vehicle mortalities. Project files were updated. Sightings of American bald eagle and osprey were forwarded to K. Clark (ENSP).

Objective 2 – 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).

National Bobwhite Technical Committee (NBTC)

The NBTC will offer a hybrid meeting in Bentonville AR on August 2-5. Virtual participation will be limited to the plenary, awards banquet, and business meeting. Committee meetings will be in-person only.

Sloan provided data from 2020 Coordinated Implementation Program data (spring call counts and habitat from both Dix WMA Focal Area and Thundergut WMA Reference Area) to NBCI Data Analyst M. Foley on June 14.

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

Burnett prepared a monthly Division report for June and provided same to interested constituent groups. Burnett gave the report at the NJ Trappers Association meeting on June 20 and fielded questions.

Garris provided input and identified various species of wildlife and scat from pictures/videos/audio and conversations with constituents; and, responded to several callers requested turkey hunting areas in northern New Jersey.

Hunting Digest

Burnett and Sloan attended the remote *NJ Hunting and Trapping Digest* meeting on June 9; reviewed the first complete pass of the 2021 August issue; and provided comment to Chief Stanko by June 17.

Other Activities

Garris assisted Black Bear Project staff with spring research bear trapping and tagged 8 bears.

Staff attended the remote Division meeting on May 26.

Staff participated in the remote *Website Wireframe & Narrative* meeting on June 2 and the *Website Wildlife Narratives* remote meeting on Jun 14.

Burnett and Sloan attended the remote *Hunting and Trapper Explorer* meeting on June 11.

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

Preseason Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Banding

Preseason Canada goose banding began. Coordination was made with several cooperators including Forsythe and Cape May/Supawna National Wildlife Refuges who provide much of the needed manpower to accomplish this project. Banding began on June 22 and will be completed by early July. A minimum of 1,200 geese will be banded which represents about 1.5% of the state's resident population. The banded sample will consist of approximately two-thirds adult geese and one-third goslings. These statewide banding goals, distributed by age cohort, are outlined in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Management Plan.

Objective 2 – Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures

T. Nichols participated in an online planning meeting for the upcoming 2021 virtual Atlantic Flyway Council and Technical Section meetings.

T. Nichols participated in a virtual meeting of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Black Duck Working Group. The Working Group is drafting the Black Duck Habitat Management Plan.

Atlantic Population Canada Goose Harvest Strategy Hunter Opinion Survey

T. Nichols worked with Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section collaborators to deliver a hunter survey to Atlantic Flyway hunters concerning developing an Atlantic Population Canada Goose Harvest Strategy. Surveys will be sent out during July by e-mail to 1,340 individuals who had provided an e-mail address when

obtaining a HIP certification in NJ for the 2020 hunting season. The survey asked hunters to rank the trade-offs between season length and bag limit for Canada geese during the regular season during a restrictive season. In short, hunters were asked whether they preferred a (days/bag) 30/1 versus a 15/2 season. Survey responses will be scaled across the flyway geographically as well as be compared to waterfowl hunting avidity.

Atlantic Brant Migration and Breeding Ecology Study (2BRANTXX)

During February 2018, program staff initiated a multi-year, collaborative Atlantic brant migration and breeding ecology study with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Brant are being marked with a variety of auxiliary markers with the objectives to 1) Determine if the Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey is representative of the wintering population; 2) Determine fidelity of brant to wintering and breeding areas; 3) Determine breeding propensity and variables related to age and body condition on breeding success; 4) Determine key spring and fall migration staging areas; and 5) Compare breeding propensity estimates from multiple marking techniques to develop a complete measure of annual productivity.

69 total new transmitters were deployed in NJ (n=32) and NY (n=37) during winter 2021. A total of 60 males were marked while 9 females were also marked. 14 and 2 additional units from the winters of 2020 and 2019 are also still functioning. 77 birds were alive as of June 15. During May and early June, birds departed for spring staging grounds and/or for arctic breeding grounds. 7 birds took a migratory route up the Northeast US coast to the Canadian Maritimes, while presumably (some did not offload data after leaving Long Island) the remaining birds took the more common, overland route directly north to James Bay. Two birds were known to have died during migration, 1 being killed by a bald eagle and ending up in a nest and the other of unknown cause at James Bay. As of June 15, only 1 bird with a transmitter still remained on the wintering grounds (Long Island). Other salient statistics below:

- Departure from NJ (n = 40): Mean – 5/1/2021
- Departure from NY (known departure date; n = 75): Mean - 5/14/2021, Median – 5/17/2021.
- Number days NJ birds spent on LI, NY: Mean - 30 days, Min – 0, Max - 74
- Arrival on James Bay: Mean – 5/18/2021, Median – 5/17

Telemetered birds are now presumed to be on breeding grounds in the vicinity of Foxe Basin, Nunavut, Canada and will not return to cell tower range until September-October. At that time, spring routes, spring staging areas, summer breeding/molting areas, and fall staging routes will be revealed.

Extension Services/Other

Program biologists updated migratory bird regulations and pertinent sections of the 2021 Hunting Digest.

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 139 bear calls from May 20, 2021 to June 21, 2021; this compares with 243 calls from the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received 6 Category I calls, 55 Category II calls and 77 Category III calls for the time period May 20, 2021 to June 21, 2021; this compares to 5 Category I calls, 91 Category II calls and 145 Category III calls for the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received a total of 342 bear calls from January 1, 2021 to June 21, 2021; this compares with 494 calls from the same time period in 2020.

The black bear unit received 20 Category I calls, 138 Category II calls, and 182 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2021 to June 21, 2021; this compares to 17 Category I calls, 216 Category II calls and 258 Category III calls for the same time period in 2020.

As of June 21, 2021, the total number of calls received by the Division decreased 30.7 percent from the same time period in 2020. Category I incidents increased by 17.6 percent, Category II calls decreased 36.1 percent and Category III calls decreased 29.4 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.

Beaver calls and Complaints

Unit staff installed a water level control device at Collins Pond at Sparta Mountain WMA to prevent beaver damming and flooding.

Other Activities

Unit staff attended the Division meeting.

A. McBride provided digest edits for the August 2021 hunting and trapping issue.

Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)

BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES

Bat	2	Hawk	1
Bear	139	Opossum	4
Beaver	11	Owl	2
Bird	10	Rabbit	3
Bobcat	2	Raccoon	17
Chipmunk	1	Skunk	5
Coyote	23	Snake	2
Crow	1	Squirrel	3
Deer	85	Swan	10
Duck	9	Turkey	3
Eagle	3	Turtle	7
Fisher	1	Unknown	5
Fox	56	Vulture	2
Frog	1	Woodchuck	24
Goose	7		

300 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 439 (*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 began data analysis for the 2021 spring season.