

**OFFICE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH AND FORENSICS**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**January 2024**

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**FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH PROJECT (FW-69-R21)**

**Diagnosis of Diseases in Freshwater Fish (Job F-1)**

**Fish Health Inspection of the Pequest Trout Hatchery**

Trout from the nursery and the outdoor raceways were randomly collected for examination that did not reveal the presence of infectious agents in the examined fish.

**Diagnosis and Research of Diseases in Marine Fish (Job F-2)**

**Non-Project Activities**

**Shellfish Pathogen Surveillance Program**

The histopathological examination of 120 clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) collected in September 2023 for the detection of hemocytic neoplasia was completed. Definitive lesions of hemocytic neoplasia were present in 2/120 (1.7%) clams.

**(Job W-1) and Wildlife Toxicology (Job W-2)**

**Gray squirrel - Bergen County**

OFWHF was contacted on January 4 by NJDEP Bureau of Pesticide Control to request assistance with a Bergen County resident who is concerned that a neighbor is purposely poisoning wildlife. On January 11, OFWHF collected a deceased gray squirrel from BPC for necropsy and sample collection. Necropsy was performed on January 26. No abnormalities were found. Tissues were saved for ancillary testing if requested by BPC.

**Cooper's hawk - Little Falls, Passaic County**

A female Cooper's hawk suspected of dying due to rodenticide exposure was collected by CO Nicholas DellaVella on January 6 and necropsied by OFWHF on January 8. The hawk was in poor body condition and had mild pulmonary hemorrhage. Anticoagulant rodenticide screening and lead analysis by NJDEP Pesticide Evaluation & Monitoring is pending.

**American robin mass mortality and unusual behavior - Cape May County**

A resident contacted OFWHF on January 22 to report hundreds to thousands of American robins and other songbirds flying erratically into traffic along the northbound Garden State Parkway from Avalon to Ocean City, as well as large numbers of deceased individuals along the roadway on January 21. OFWHF responded to the site of the event on January 23 and observed hundreds of migrating American robins feeding in the area, as well as 20-30 deceased robins along the GSP as apparent roadkill. Live robins were not observed to be behaving unusually or erratically, although multiple were noted to fly across the parkway and almost get hit. Recent roadwork was noted throughout the area. One deceased

individual in good condition was collected and necropsied on January 23. The robin was in good body condition, with significant internal trauma consistent with a vehicle collision. The entirety of the intestinal tract was filled with dozens of yet undetermined seeds or desiccated berries. Workup on potential fermented berry intoxication is ongoing. Conversation with USDA-WS found that a similar event occurred in robins in March 2023 in a neighboring township.

#### **White-tailed deer with facial abscesses and bacterial pneumonia – Newton, Sussex County**

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, OFWHF advised USDA-WS biologist Jessica Hinton to euthanize a buck on a residential property which was poorly mobile, had hoarse and efforted breathing, and had a bulging right eye. Dr. Connelly collected the carcass on January 25<sup>th</sup> and performed a necropsy on January 26<sup>th</sup>. The buck was in fair body condition, with multiple large abscesses present over the face, including two which were crusted, ulcerative, and draining pus. The right eye was found to be bulging due to an infraorbital abscess. On internal examination, severe bacterial pneumonia was evident throughout all lung lobes. Bacterial isolation and testing is pending.

#### **Deer Health Questions**

The OFWHF was contacted for opinions/advice on deer health issues as follows:

- A deceased deer found with red foam emitting from the oral and nasal cavities on Jan. 8
- An emaciated buck approaching people in Cumberland County on Jan. 8; the buck was showing signs of a brain abscess and euthanasia by USDA-WS was recommended by Dr. Connelly
- A deceased buck with a damaged antler on Jan. 9
- A NJ deer hunter interested in having future harvests tested for CWD on Jan. 16
- A deceased deer in a backyard on Jan. 19
- Inquiry regarding potential causes of lung adhesions in healthy harvested deer on Jan. 24
- A deceased deer in a backyard on Jan. 29

#### **Miscellaneous Activities**

- Dr. Connelly attended a wildlife management meeting on January 4.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Fish & Wildlife Council Meeting on January 9.
- Drs. Connelly & Groff attended the monthly Animal Health Meeting on January 11.
- Dr. Connelly attended an onboarding meeting for the Shared Wildlife Health Information System (SWHIS) on January 16.
- Dr. Connelly attended a SWHIS feature service meeting with the UPenn Vet Wildlife Futures Program on January 17.
- Ongoing conversations and planning with Peter Stark regarding best practices for the upcoming fisher project.
- Dr. Groff attended the Toxics in Biota Committee meeting on January 18.