

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

JANUARY 2024

NEW JERSEY WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT

GRANT NO. W-68-R

STUDY PLAN I. WHITE-TAILED DEER

Jodi Powers, Principal Wildlife Biologist

Megan Mills, Assistant Biologist (Northern Region)

Megan McCafferty, Assistant Biologist (Southern Region)

Brian Schumm, Assistant Biologist

Objective 1 – To determine the composition, size, distribution, productivity, and other aspects of the annual deer harvest mortality by deer management zone, unit, county, municipality, land ownership, date, and season.

The Deer Project Team continues to receive calls regarding harvest report errors, leading to harvest report corrections and transfers across several ongoing seasons.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills continue to monitor harvest reports for errors and complete error corrections as the season progresses.

Objective 2 – To coordinate a statewide Suburban Deer Management Program for management in areas of high human density where standard hunting practices are not feasible.

Bergen County meeting information-

The Deer Project Team attended two meetings in Bergen County (Franklin Lakes and Saddle River) where B. Schumm gave a presentation on Suburban Deer Management to administrative staff and mayors from about 10 of the northwest Bergen County municipalities. J. Powers and B. Schumm are drafting a follow-up document to provide to those municipalities.

J. Powers and B. Schumm are continuing to evaluate potential grant opportunities to communities experiencing overabundant deer and have impediments to beginning deer management.

All five CBDMP permit holders have begun culling programs.

Objective 3 - To participate in business meetings and monitoring programs of the Northeast Deer Technical Committee, and other related meetings and conferences.

No report.

Objective 4 - To conduct one white-tailed deer research study.

Effects of White-tailed Deer Herbivory on Atlantic White Cedar

This study began in 1989 in cooperation with Stockton University with the objective of measuring the long-term effects of deer herbivory on vegetation in the Pine Barrens of southern New Jersey.

Deer Project and members of the GIS team met with drone specialists from Warren University to conduct a preliminary site visit of Pequest WMA. The visit went well, and the next steps are being taken to start developing a drone survey using infrared cameras to count deer at night.

Objective 5 – To disseminate accurate and appropriate information on white-tailed deer and habitat management to sportsmen, public, local, and state agencies, and other organizations.

The Deer Project Team began reviewing material and season dates for the 2024-25 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

The Deer Project Team is continuing design of a survey to sportsmen and women on deer regulations.

J. Powers attended the annual joint meeting of the Hunterdon and Somerset County chapters of the NJ Sportsmen Federation. J. Powers presented the Simplification of Deer Regulations presentation and gave preliminary deer harvest data.

The Deer Management and the Farmer brochures have been printed and are ready for distribution.

The Deer Management for Suburban Communities brochure is in final review and will be ready for printing soon.

Objective 6 – Develop, maintain, and make adaptive changes to a white-tailed deer Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan.

M. McCafferty, G. Canale, and J. Bauer continued CWD sampling in the southern region of New Jersey, with a total of 304 deer sampled and approximately 530 aged. M. McCafferty and G.

Canale attended the FAA Technical Center (Special Area 66) deer drive to sample harvested deer for CWD, receiving 7 additional samples for CWD testing.

M. Mills, J. Gyurcsak and J. Bauer concluded sampling in the central region with a total of 169 deer sampled and a total of 243 deer aged.

M. Mills, K. Barone, K. Ollo, and J. Santini concluded CWD sampling with a total of 390 deer sampled and 428 aged. The samples were labeled and organized to be moved to the lab for testing.

Extension Activities

The Deer Project Team has received reports for injured or sick deer from the public and continues to work with USDA Animal Control to decide the best course of action for these deer.

J. Powers received a request from the Morristown National Historic Park, Morris County to assist with developing a Deer Management Plan. Deer Project is currently reviewing the EA from the park and supporting documents. A meeting has been scheduled for the end of January.

J. Powers reserved a booth for the NJ Department of Agriculture and Vegetable Growers annual convention in Atlantic City. Deer Project will represent the Agency, answer questions, and distribute the Deer Management and the Farmer brochures.

Other Activities

The Deer Project seasonal technicians have shifted over to assist the Waterfowl Project, Turkey Project, and Furbearer Project. They have all done a fantastic job assisting the Deer Project this season. J. Powers wants to extend her thanks and appreciation to Jordan Gyurcsak, Gianna Canale, and Jodi Bauer.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
James Sloan, Senior Biologist
Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I
Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee

Alexandrea Nickel, Seasonal Technician
Shelby Gravatt, 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.

Coyote Harvest

To date, a total of 199 coyotes harvests have been reported to the AHRS during the 2023-24 hunting and trapping seasons.

A total of 110 coyote mortalities were reported through the AHRS for the segment. Thirteen of the 110 coyotes were harvested incidental to deer hunting with shotgun, 8 were taken with muzzleloading rifle incidental to deer hunting and 77 were harvested by cable restraint. A total of 12 coyotes were harvested during the Special Permit Coyote season which began on January 1, 2024. Of the 12 coyotes harvested during the Special Permit season, 5 were taken by modern rifles, 3 were taken with muzzleloading rifle and 4 were taken with shotgun. Two of those 12 coyotes were taken at night.

Coyotes during the reporting segment were harvested from the following counties: Atlantic (9), Burlington (8), Cape May (4), Cumberland (13), Gloucester (2) Hunterdon (10), Middlesex (2), Ocean (6), Salem (16), Somerset (6), Sussex (3) and Warren (31).

By sex, the harvested coyotes were: Male (57), Female (53). By pelt color: Black (6), Blonde (14), Typical (85), and Red (5). A total of 20 (18.2%) of the 110 reported coyotes had mange.

An additional 1 coyote was reported to the project as a vehicle mortality.

Gray Fox

To date, a total of 12 gray foxes harvests have been reported to the AHRS during the 2023-24 hunting and trapping seasons. None have been recorded for the segment.

Beaver and River Otter

Beaver and river otter harvests are encouraged to be reported through the AHRS during the course of the beaver/otter trapping season (Dec. 26, 2023 – Feb. 9, 2024). To date, 3 incidentally harvested river otters were reported to the project and were recovered from the trappers. Incidental otters were harvested in management zones 2, 5 and 7.

Northern Bobwhite

No report.

American Woodcock

Ruffed Grouse

No report.

Wild Turkey

J.Sloan and program staff had 2 successful captures of wild turkeys on January 18th and 23rd in southern New Jersey. Currently there are 18 hen turkeys equipped with telemetry units in the southern study area. Trapping will continue in the next reporting period.

Fisher

Project staff and volunteers successfully installed 150 trail camera stations in the northwest part of the state (north of I-80, west of I-287). Every 15 days, stations will be visited and maintained, when staff will exchange camera cards and refresh bait. The resultant camera data will be used to inform fisher distribution in northwest New Jersey and help predict rates of occupancy.

Staff will begin live trapping efforts in late January/early February. Select individual fishers will be affixed with GPS collars; the telemetry data will be utilized to quantify home range size and determine patterns of movement and habitat use.

Trapper Harvest Survey

Each year in March, a mail survey is sent to all individuals who purchased a trapping license for the prior calendar year (n=1,303 for 2023) (Table 1). In addition, active youth licenses from individuals who had not reached 17 years of age by November 15 (start of trapping season) are also sent a survey (n=68 for 2023; this number includes all current youth licenses from 2020 to 2023) (Table 1). Youth trapping licenses are valid through December 31 of the year the individual turns 16.

J. Garris used several queries in the AHRS to exclude duplicates and produce the final number of licensed individuals for 2023. All mailing envelopes have been printed, and the survey will be mailed on or about March 15, 2024.

Year	Trapping license type	Count
2020	Youth	5
2021	Youth	13
2022	Youth	14

2023	Youth	36
2023	Non-Resident	13
2023	Non-Resident (NC)	0
2023	Resident	1079
2023	Resident (NC)	211

Table 1. A breakdown of trapping licenses included in the 2023-24 Trapper Harvest Survey. The number of youth trapping licenses from 2020-2023 is shown in the upper portion of the table, followed by the number of all resident and non-resident trapping licenses purchased by individuals of age 16+. “NC” = “No Charge,” referring to those individuals (disabled veterans, active, resident New Jersey National Guard personnel) that are permitted to obtain a trapping license free of charge.

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 and Grassland Initiative (NBGI)

No report.

Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEUGBTC)

J.Sloan met with other members of the Steering Committee for the Eastern Grouse Working Group to work on the Strategic Plan on January 4th , 11th and 18th . The draft strategic plan is complete and will be provided to the entire committee on January 25th for review and commenting.

National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee

No report

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)

No report

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

No report.

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

Staff answered numerous questions and provided input to identify various species of wildlife and scat from pictures/videos/audio and conversations with constituents.

Other

No report.

WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist

Lisa Clark, Senior Biologist

Austin Damminger, Assistant Biologist

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey

For over 20 years NJFW 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. NJFW biologists have served as observers on the flights. Although the MWS was historically a geographically comprehensive survey with all species of waterfowl counted, the survey was streamlined in 2016 as a cost savings measure. MWS estimates are used to guide harvest management for Atlantic brant and tundra swans but utility of estimates for other species have always been less tangible. Resultingly, since 2016, the MWS only covers wintering areas for Atlantic brant and tundra swans and these are the only species counted.

The MWS was completed January 3-5 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. Austin Damminger flew on the NJ flight to learn survey routes. Use of the Service aircraft and pilot came at no expense to NJFW.

The New Jersey and New York counts were nearly identical and totaled 98,710 brant which was down 9% from 2023. The Atlantic Flyway total estimate was not available at the time of this report.

Objective 2 – To participate in programs of the Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

American Black Duck Research

For the past 3 years, 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*. The study uses backpack transmitters on black ducks captured on the wintering grounds and about 30 transmitters will be deployed in New Jersey this winter. Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments which will be the final year of field deployments.

Atlantic Brant Research

Staff continued to collect geolocators and transmitters from Atlantic brant shot by hunters. Data from geolocators was downloaded.

Program biologists prepared GSM backpack transmitters. Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments which will be the final year of field deployments. 10 new transmitters and 5 redeployments transmitters recovered from hunters will be redeployed on new birds.

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

No report.

Objective 6 – Outreach

T. Nichols delivered a presentation on rail population status and harvest patterns to the Cumberland County Chapter, NJFSC.

Miscellaneous

T. Nichols participated in an exercise to identify statewide wildlife priority threats for the State Wildlife Action Plan.

Black Bear Research Project

Mike Madonia, Principal Wildlife Biologist

Joe Burke, Wildlife Technician

Emilia Topp, Biologist Trainee

Michael Patrick, Wildlife Technician

Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee

Maureen Kinlan, Biologist Trainee

Ryan Ferraro, Biologist Trainee

Benjamin Laubach, Senior Wildlife Worker

Christian Nitko, Senior Wildlife Worker

Amy DeCheser, Wildlife Technician

Grace Johnson, Senior Wildlife Worker

Bear Control: Lethal and Non-Lethal

The black bear unit received a total of 10 bear calls from Jan 1, 2024, to January 21, 2024; this compares with 8 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 1 Category II calls and 9 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024, to January 21, 2024; this compares to 1 Category I calls, 0 Category II calls and 7 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

As of January 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 25.0 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents decreased 100.0 percent, Category II calls increased 100.0 percent and Category III calls increased 28.5 percent for the same time period in 2023. 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.

Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)
BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES

Beaver	18	Owl	1
Bird	1	Pigeon	2
Black Bear	10	Raccoon	11
Bobcat	1	Red Fox	40
Coyote	21	Squirrel	3
Deer	31	Turkey	9
Duck	1	Turtle	1
Goose	2	Unknown	2
Hawk	2	Vulture	5
Opossum	1	Woodchuck	1

154 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 164 (*black bear calls are not included in this project).

