

**BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**February 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 are completing error corrections as the season progresses, while providing Law Enforcement with potential violations.

**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.**

J. Powers and B. Schumm attended a meeting with BLE and Office of Business Administration staff to discuss online depredation permit harvest reporting.

J. Powers and B. Schumm continue to discuss and draft a plan for NJ DEP community funding. Both met with AD Barno to finalize the plan.

J. Powers and AD Barno met with NJ DEP staff to discuss the details of the community funding.

**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.**

*Nothing to report*

**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 has continued to work on a Deer Hunter Survey to distribute to the public regarding general hunting questions and questions regarding potential regulation changes.

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

M. McCafferty, J. Gyurcsak, and M. Mills organized and labeled all 865 CWD samples from the entire state to be delivered to P. Connely before sending out for analysis.

**Extension Activities**

B. Schumm attended the Atlantic County Board of Agriculture Annual Meeting.

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.

The Deer Project began scheduling meetings with each of the Federation of Sportsman County chapters for the month of April. These meetings will consist of this year's harvest data and a presentation on the potential 2025 Game Code changes.

**Other Activities**

The Deer Project Team attended the 2024 NJ Agricultural Convention and Trade Show in Atlantic City from February 6-8. Information was provided for farmers regarding depredation permits.

### 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*

*Gray Fox*

*Beaver and River Otter*

Project staff have finalized preparations for the annual beaver and otter check station, which will be held on February 24 at the following locations:

Flatbrook WMA Office - Sussex County  
Newfoundland Firehouse - Passaic County  
Clinton WMA Office - Hunterdon County  
Central Region Office - Monmouth County  
Southern Region Office - Camden County  
Tuckahoe WMA Office - Cape May County

Several requests for early sealing of beaver and/or otter pelts have been received by the project from individuals who could not be present at check station on February 24.

*Fisher*

Project staff successfully handled and released an adult male fisher that was incidentally caught in a box trap by a trapper in Warren County. The male, in good condition, was outfitted with a GPS collar prior to release.

Staff have begun live trapping efforts for fishers in Sussex County. To date, no fishers have been caught, though several individuals have been observed near trap locations. Unfortunately, staff have been forced the closure of the trap line on several occasions due to limited availability, hampering efforts.

*Northern Bobwhite*

No report.

*American Woodcock*

*Ruffed Grouse*

No report.

*Wild Turkey*

J.Sloan and program staff had 1 successful capture of wild turkeys on January 30<sup>th</sup> in southern New Jersey and 2 successful captures on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> in northern New Jersey. Currently there are 25 hen turkeys equipped with telemetry units in the southern study area and 12 hen turkeys in the northern study area. Trapping will continue in the next reporting period.

**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 25<sup>th</sup> and February 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> . The draft strategic plan is complete and was provided to the entire committee on January 25<sup>th</sup> for review and commenting. Comments are currently being compiled for the next reporting period.

*National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee*

J.Sloan attended the National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup> virtually. Discussions included a presentation from E-Obs (telemetry manufacturer), NWTF research updates, and turkey techniques training.

*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.

J.Sloan work Beaver and Otter check station on February 24<sup>th</sup> at the Conservation Center on Assunpink WMA.

**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**

*No report*

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

*Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section*

Nichols and Damminger prepared for the 2024 Winter Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section (AFCTS) meeting.

**Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies**

*American woodcock migration ecology study*

During the fall of 2018 and 2019, NJFW worked with several state agencies and study leader

Erik Blomberg (University of Maine), using GPS satellite telemetry units on a study of the migration ecology of woodcock in eastern North America.

T. Nichols contributed as coauthor by commenting on a revision of a draft manuscript which uses this telemetry data entitled: "*Satellite tracking of American Woodcock reveals a gradient of migration strategies*". Lead author is Sarah Clements, Doctoral student at University of Maine, and other coauthors include several other state and provincial collaborators. The paper was accepted for publication in the Journal of Ornithology.

T. Nichols contributed as coauthor by commenting on a revision of a draft manuscript which uses this telemetry data entitled: "*American woodcock migration phenology in Eastern North America: implications for hunting season timing*". Lead author is Alex Fish, Doctoral student at University of Maine, and other coauthors include several other state and provincial collaborators. The paper was accepted for publication in the Journal of Wildlife Management.

#### *American Black Duck Research*

Program staff collaborated with 8 other Atlantic Flyway states, 4 Mississippi Flyway state, CWS, USFWS, 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 uses backpack GSM transmitters on black ducks captured on the wintering grounds for 3 years. Winter 2024 was the third and final operational year and NJ was assigned 30 telemetry units to instrument on females. Program staff operated several banding stations and began putting out telemetry units on study birds on 27 January.

#### *Identifying Limiting Factors of Eastern Mallards*

Program staff collaborated with 14 other Atlantic Flyway states, CWS, USFWS, and Mitch Weegman (University of Saskatchewan; lead investigator) on a study on eastern mallards. Program staff captured and instrumented mallards for this study. This study uses backpack GSM transmitters and geolocators on mallards captured on the wintering grounds for 3 years. Winter 2024 was the third operational year and NJ was assigned 25 telemetry units and 40 geolocators to instrument on females. Program staff operated several banding stations and began putting out telemetry and geolocator units on study birds on 27 January.

#### *Atlantic Brant Research*

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

Program biologists began trapping and marking study specimens for the 2024 marking phase of this study. 10 new transmitters and 3 ( $\geq 1$ -year-old) 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**

**Other**

T. Nichols worked with Federal Aid Coordinator K. Oneill on the next 5-year segment federal grant narrative and budget for Bureau of Wildlife.

**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 6 bear calls from January 20, 2023 to February 21, 2023; this compares with 7 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 3 Category II calls and 3 Category III calls for the time period January 20, 2024 to February 21, 2024; this compares to 0 Category I calls, 4 Category II calls and 3 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received a total of 16 bear calls from January 1, 2024 to February 21, 2024; this compares with 15 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 4 Category II calls, and 12 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024 to February 21, 2024; this compares to 1 Category I calls, 4 Category II calls and 10 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

As of February 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 6.67 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents decreased 100.0 percent, Category II calls remained the same and Category III calls increased 20.0 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**

Bat	1	Mink	1
Bear	6	Pig	1
Beaver	13	Raccoon	7
Bird	5	Red Fox	34
Bobcat	2	Skunk	3
Coyote	29	Squirrel	2
Deer	48	Turkey	10
Duck	1	Unknown	1
Eagle	1	Vole	1



Goose	4	Vulture	5
Hawk	2		

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

**Total calls: 177 (\*black bear calls are not included in this project).**