

**BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**May 2024**

**James Oxley, Chief**

**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 (Deer Outreach)

**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 has prepared the analyzed deer harvest data for distribution and presentation to the Fish and Game Council in the May meeting.

J. Powers presented the 2023-24 final deer harvest data to the Fish and Game Council in the May meeting.

The Deer Project Team reviewed each Deer Management Zone individually to review for any zones of concern following the harvest in regards to the 2025 Game Code regulations and the 2024-25 season.

The Deer Project Team continues to analyze data and attend meetings for game code changes under consideration.

**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 received correspondence from Morristown National Historic Park in advance of an expected 2025 permit season application.

**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 continues to review material and season dates for the 2024-25 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

The Deer Project Team received the completed Deer Hunter Survey data which had been opened to the public regarding general hunting questions and questions regarding potential regulation changes.

The Deer Project Team is reviewing all data received from the Survey as it was sorted to include only valid and complete responses.

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

**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.

M. McCafferty presented at the Ocean and Cumberland County Sportsman Federation Chapter meetings, discussing the 2025 Game Code Considerations and the preliminary harvest numbers.

M. Mills presented at the Middlesex and Essex County Sportsman Federation Chapter meetings, discussing the 2025 Game Code Considerations and the preliminary harvest numbers.

J. Powers presented at the Monmouth County Sportsman Federation Chapter meeting, discussing the 2025 Game Code Considerations and the preliminary harvest numbers.

B. Schumm and M. Mills attended a meeting in Fair Haven where B. Schumm gave a presentation on deer management and their options should they wish to pursue a hunting program.

B. Schumm gave a presentation for Franklin Lakes Council on deer management and their options should they wish to pursue a hunting program.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills continue open communication with Special Areas as we review considerations for the 2025 Game Code and review the harvest history within the Special Area Deer Management Zones as changes are requested.

J. Powers participated in an inspection of a captive deer herd facility.

**Other Activities**

The Deer Project Team is reviewing data collected from the density surveys via spotlight counts from Pequest WMA and Peaslee WMA.

The Deer Project Team attended the Bureau of Wildlife Management Staff Meeting to discuss ongoing projects and the recodification of the Game Code and wildlife management considerations and to meet the new chief, Jim Oxley.

The Deer Project Team met with the Game Code Committee to discuss the deer specific game code considerations for the 2025 Game Code.

B. Schumm, J. Powers and J. Oxley reviewed and scored all Community Based Deer Management Grant applications. Funding has been allocated and grant packages and agreements are being drafted.

### **STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS**

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist  
James Sloan, Senior Biologist  
Joseph R. Garris, Wildlife Technician I  
Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee  
Alexandrea Nickel, Seasonal Technician  
Shelby Gravatt, Seasonal Technician  
Richard Strittmatter, 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 574 coyote harvests have been reported during the 2023-24 hunting and trapping seasons, either through the Automated Harvest Reporting System (AHRS), regional offices, or via the 2023-24 Trapper Harvest Survey.

Coyote trapping and special permit season hunting season ended on March 15. However, coyotes may be harvested incidental to spring turkey hunting. To date, a total of 7 coyotes have been taken by shotgun incidental to turkey hunting. The coyotes were harvested in the following counties: Burlington (2), Cape May (1), Cumberland (1), Gloucester (1), Monmouth (1), and Warren (1).

##### *Gray Fox*

A total of 42 gray fox harvests have been reported during the 2023-24 hunting and trapping seasons.

##### *Fisher Project*

Telemetry monitoring efforts continue on two adult male fishers. Review and classification of trail camera footage is ongoing.

#### *Trapper Harvest Survey*

The 2023-24 Trapper Harvest Survey was mailed to all licensed trappers in mid-March. Data collection and data entry was completed during the reporting segment. Just over 37% (502/1371) of the mailed surveys have been returned to the project and the responses were entered into a database for analysis. Seventeen surveys were returned as undeliverable.

#### *Beaver and River Otter*

No report.

#### *Northern Bobwhite*

No report.

#### *Ruffed Grouse*

J. Garriss checked access to ruffed grouse routes in Sussex and Warren counties. The Old Mine Rd from Millbrook south to Worthington State Park has been gated/closed by Delaware Water Gap National Recreation so that ruffed grouse route will not be run this spring. All routes (10) that could be run were completed in standard and reverse order to give us a total of 20 routes ran. A total of 3 drumming ruffed grouse were heard on all routes.

#### *Wild Turkey*

Wild Turkey Research Project Update-

##### South Study Area

Out of the original 25 telemetry equipped hens, 21 are accounted for and alive while 4 are confirmed deceased. Of the 21, 5 have hatched successful clutches and 4 are currently incubating.

##### North Study Area

Out of the original 26 telemetry equipped hens, 11 are accounted for and alive while 6 are confirmed deceased, 5 are unconfirmed deceased, and 4 are currently missing. Of the 11, 3 are currently incubating. 1 of the deceased birds was predated while incubating.

J.Sloan and project personnel conducted 2 week old brood counts and 4 week old brood counts on several hens in the South Study Area.

2024 Spring Gobbler Season harvest numbers will be available during the next reporting period.

#### *American Woodcock*

J.Sloan attended the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's training on data entry for this upcoming American Woodcock Singing-ground Survey on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. This year data will be entered through "Naturecounts" in cooperation with Bird Canada to streamline the process for participating parties.

Bureau of Wildlife Management personnel conducted 7 American Woodcock Singing-ground surveys in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Morris, and Salem counties. A total of 7 woodcock were heard on the 7 routes.

**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 attended the Eastern Grouse Working Group's (EGWG) steering committee meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss the outcome of the presentation of the regional recovery plan at the NEWAA meeting in April. EGWG received a grant for \$5,000.00 to complete the plan which includes hiring a graphic designer.

*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.**

J.Sloan attended an game committee meeting on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

J.Sloan attended the Fish and Game Council meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

P. Stark attended game code committee meetings on April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup>.

R. Ferraro and P. Stark attended a BWM meeting in Assunpink on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

P. Stark attended the Fish and Game Council meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> and presented several proposed game code changes to furbearer/small game mammal regulations.

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

### **Other**

R. Ferraro, J. Garris, and P. Stark completed shotgun/.22 rimfire requalification at Black River WMA on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV**

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist  
Austin Damming, Assistant Biologist

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

#### *Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey*

Division personnel and cooperators completed the New Jersey portion of the annual Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey. All Atlantic Flyway states from New Hampshire to Virginia have participated in this survey since 1989. Results of this survey are used to document changes in the abundance and distribution of the primary breeding waterfowl species in the Atlantic Flyway. Survey data are also used in conjunction with other waterfowl population data to set waterfowl hunting seasons.

In New Jersey, this survey was completed by recording waterfowl observed in 105 randomly located, one square kilometer plots, that are located throughout the state. Plots were completed from 12 April to 14 May. Data were submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for compilation. Results will be available in the next monthly segment.

#### *2024 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey*

During the spring of 2024, NJ Fish and Wildlife (NJFW) implemented a statewide Conservation Order (CO) for light geese under the authority of the US Fish and Wildlife Service as promulgated in 50 CFR 21.60(E). 2024 was the 16th consecutive year the CO was held. The CO began the day after the close of the special winter Canada goose season (16 February) and closed 6 April. Participants were permitted to take light geese without bag limits using unplugged guns, electronic calls, and shooting hours extending to ½ hour after sunset. As part of the Federal requirement, NJFW was responsible for reporting on participation and take. Federal requirements to report the numbers of light geese taken with special methods were suspended following 2015.

NJFW required CO participants to obtain a \$2.00 permit to identify participants. CO participants could only obtain their permits on NJFW's licensing web site. Beginning in 2021, NJFW used a new licensing contractor, and the CO permit was more prominently displayed as part of licensing

privileges. Beginning 1 March, participants could report their harvest and hunting activity online. Reminders to report hunting activity were sent by e-mail to permit holders on 11 March, 18 March and 2 April. Online harvest reports closed on 1 May.

1,354 CO permits were issued in 2024. The harvest survey response was 35% and e-mail reminders have clearly boosted the response rate during the past 3 years. We conducted a phone survey of random non-respondents (NR;  $n=81$  contacts from 344 calls) on 15 May. We calculated total estimates by summing reports from hunter survey respondents ( $n=475$ ) with derived estimates from NR ( $n=879$ ). No prestige bias (i.e. correction factor) was applied to either harvest estimate.

Participants spent 933 days pursuing light geese and an estimated 2,440 light geese were harvested. The weighted estimate of permit holders who participated in the CO was 26%. The harvest estimate was similar to the record low harvest estimate from 2023. Light geese were never abundant at any time during winter 2024 in NJ and the spring migration through the state was rapid. Further, many fewer light geese use Delaware Bay marshes (all public land) during spring when compared to a decade or more ago. Rather, light geese spend most of late winter-early spring in farm fields on private land further inland. This makes pursuing geese much more difficult since the birds' use of agricultural land is much more unpredictable making hunt planning difficult.

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

As past Technical Section Chair, T. Nichols participated in 2 Atlantic Flyway Council Executive Committee meetings.

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

T. Nichols commented on the first draft of a manuscript, "*Environmental Contaminants Assessment for Frequently Harvested Migratory Waterfowl in the Northeast Atlantic Flyway*". Lead author is David Dayan (Cornell University), with contributions from 11 other authors from the contributing agencies of Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, and the state wildlife agencies in New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.

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

**Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee**

## **Objective 6 – Outreach**

## **Other**

A. Damminger assisted ENSP on their Migratory Shorebird Aerial Survey as navigator. The survey focuses on estimating abundance of red knots and ruddy turnstones.

T. Nichols participated in a meeting to discuss and recommend changes to the Game Code. All migratory bird sections of the Game Code were reformatted for recodification.

### **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 180 bear calls from April 20, 2024 to May 21, 2024; this compares with 204 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 9 Category I calls, 77 Category II calls and 93 Category III calls for the time period April 20, 2024 to May 21, 2024; this compares to 13 Category I calls, 123 Category II calls and 68 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received a total of 338 bear calls from January 1, 2024 to May 21, 2024; this compares with 350 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 17 Category I calls, 162 Category II calls, and 158 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024 to May 21, 2024; this compares to 26 Category I calls, 199 Category II calls and 124 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.



As of May 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division decreased 3.4 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents decreased 34.6 percent, Category II calls decreased 18.5 percent and Category III calls increased 27.4 percent for the same time period in 2023. This data does not include all 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	4	Osprey	1
Bear	180	Otter	1
Beaver	22	Owl	2
Bird	20	Rabbit	10
Coyote	34	Raccoon	25
Deer	60	Skunk	3
Duck	3	Snake	5
Eagle	2	Squirrel	6
Fox	94	Swan	2
Goose	12	Turkey	2
Hawk	2	Turtle	1
Hornet	1	Unknown	3
Mole	1	Vulture	6
Opossum	1	Woodchuck	9

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

**Total calls: 513 (\*black bear calls are not included in this project).**

