

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

June 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

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 reviewed each Deer Management Zone individually to review for any zones of concern following the harvest in regard to the 2025 Game Code regulations and the 2024-25 season which were presented to the Fish and Game Council meeting in June.

J. Powers presented Deer Management Zones of Concern to the Fish and Game Council at the June meeting.

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 began reviewing an application from Morristown National Historic Park.

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 prepared information for the 2024-25 Digest and email distribution of the decision from The Fish and Game Council regarding the zones of concern and the decisions regarding season closures in Deer Management Zones 45 and 46.

J. Powers gave an interview for Rack and Fin Radio.

J. Powers gave final edits to the 2025 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

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

J. Powers and P. Connelly began inventorying CWD sampling equipment.

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 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 reviewed a notice of violation letter for a captive deer herd facility.

Other Activities

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

The Deer Project Team is continuing to review data collected from the density surveys via spotlight counts from Pequest WMA.

The Deer Project Team has been working on the recodification of the Game Code, regarding the sections such as the General Provisions and each specific deer season to be rewritten and updated.

J. Powers and B. Schumm worked with Chief Oxley to review and award grant applications for deer management projects.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills presented to the Conservation Law Enforcement Interns regarding deer regulations, a demonstration on aging, and the communication between biologists and Law Enforcement during the deer seasons.

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

J. Powers presented to the Game Committee and the Fish and Game Council regarding game code changes under consideration.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

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

A total of 575 coyote harvests were 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 the special coyote permit hunting season ended on March 15. However, coyotes may be harvested incidental to spring turkey hunting. Accordingly, a total of 9 coyotes (7 male, 2 female) were taken during the 2024 spring turkey season. The coyotes were harvested in the following counties: Atlantic (1), Burlington (2), Cape May (1), Cumberland (1), Gloucester (1), Monmouth (1), Sussex (1) and Warren (1).

Gray Fox

Beaver and River Otter

Fisher Project

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

Northern Bobwhite

Project personnel conducted twelve (12) Whistling Bobwhite Counts in Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Gloucester and Salem Counties from June 5-20, 2024. One additional route was ran twice (in reverse) in Cape May County after J.Sloan received photo's of northern bobwhites. Unfortunately, zero (0) bobwhites were heard on all routes.

Ruffed Grouse

No report.

Wild Turkey

The 2024 Spring Gobbler Season harvest total was 2,321 male wild turkeys. This is down 224 birds from 2023's Spring Gobbler Season. 2024 Youth Day harvest was 70 male wild turkeys, down 50 birds from 2023's Youth Day harvest of 120. Unfortunately, bad weather hindered participation.

Wild Turkey Research Project Update-

North Study Area

Out of the original 26 telemetry equipped hens, 11 are accounted for and alive while 7 are confirmed deceased, 3 are unconfirmed deceased, and 5 are currently missing. They have attempted to nest 9 times and have hatched 0 successful nests.

South Study Area

Out of the original 25 telemetry equipped hens, 19 are accounted for and alive while 6 are confirmed deceased. They have attempted to nest 23 times and have hatched 9 successful nests.

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 by THA vs Period

| THA | Period A | Period B | Period C | Period D | Period E | Farmer | Period Y |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | 14 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 21 | 6 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 1 | 4 |
| 3 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 28 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 0 | 6 |
| 5 | 22 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 13 | 2 | 5 |
| 6 | 31 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 | 20 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 1 | 3 |
| 8 | 47 | 18 | 5 | 7 | 16 | 5 | 7 |
| 9 | 34 | 14 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 4 |
| 10 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 47 | 29 | 6 | 24 | 28 | 2 | 5 |
| 12 | 38 | 23 | 11 | 10 | 26 | 4 | 6 |
| 14 | 68 | 33 | 27 | 21 | 35 | 0 | 14 |
| 15 | 14 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| 16 | 31 | 18 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 1 | 8 |
| 20 | 208 | 111 | 65 | 85 | 95 | 10 | 33 |
| 21 | 101 | 75 | 41 | 35 | 50 | 11 | 16 |
| 22 | 56 | 47 | 26 | 23 | 26 | 3 | 17 |
| Totals | 806 | 441 | 225 | 275 | 394 | 46 | 134 |

American Woodcock

No Report.

Trapper Harvest Survey

The 2023-24 Trapper Harvest Survey was mailed to all licensed trappers in mid-March. Based on the results of the survey, 737 licensed trappers were estimated to be active during the 2023-24 trapping season, and expended a total of 326,507 trap nights. Fifty-three percent of survey respondents actively trapped at least one day, and spent an average of 25 days afield. The three most harvested species were muskrat, raccoon, and red fox, which together accounted for an estimated 83% of the total harvest. Average catch per unit effort (CPUE) for all species was 7.62. A comparison of estimates from the 2022-23 and 2023-24 trapping seasons is presented in the table below.

| | 2022-23 | | | 2023-24 | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|------|------------|-----------|------|
| | # Trappers | # Harvest | CPUE | # Trappers | # Harvest | CPUE |
| <i>Beaver</i> ¹ | 200 | 709 | 17.1 | 200 | 773 | 17.3 |
| | permits | | | permits | | |
| <i>Coyote</i> ² | 238 | 303 | 0.8 | 235 | 411 | 0.8 |
| <i>Gray fox</i> ³ | 71 | 65 | 0.9 | 66 | 104 | 1.7 |
| <i>Mink</i> | 147 | 802 | 2.8 | 142 | 924 | 4.3 |
| <i>Muskrat</i> | 217 | 12,278 | 28.6 | 205 | 10,302 | 26.4 |
| <i>Nutria</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Opossum</i> | 186 | 707 | 2.3 | 139 | 565 | 4.9 |
| <i>Raccoon</i> | 482 | 6,365 | 11.4 | 462 | 5,982 | 15.2 |
| <i>Red fox</i> | 388 | 2,263 | 3.3 | 347 | 3,140 | 3.5 |
| <i>River otter</i> ¹ | 146 | 51 | 5.8 | 146 | 40 | 5.5 |
| | permits | | | permits | | |
| <i>Skunk</i> | 105 | 397 | 2.8 | 85 | 161 | 2.2 |
| <i>Weasel</i> | 5 | 5 | - | 11 | 3 | - |

Table 1. Comparison of harvest estimates from the New Jersey 2022-23 and 2023-24 trapping seasons, showing the est. number of trappers, est. number of harvested animals, and catch per unit effort (CPUE). Actual harvest numbers are shown for beaver, river otter, and coyote. CPUE = total est. harvest/(est. total effort*0.01); not calculated for weasel due to low sample size.

¹ Actual harvest figures as reported annually at official checking stations.

² Reported harvest figures as required by N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.11(g).

³ Voluntary reporting of gray fox harvest is encouraged through the Automated Harvest Report System (AHRS).

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)

No report

National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee

No report

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)

R. Ferraro and P. Stark attended the 2024 Joint Furbearer Working Group Meeting (a combination of the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast Fur Technical Committees) in Louisville, KY on May 20-23. Topics of discussion included: review of trapping Best Management Practices (BMPs), CITES regulation overview, public survey methodologies, emerging methods for occupancy modeling, camera trap study design and analysis, educational outreach methods, and current and emerging wildlife disease trends. R. Ferraro and P. Stark also attended the NEFRTC business meeting, which was held at the end of the joint conference.

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 the State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation meeting on June 23rd. Presentations were provided on the 2024 Spring Gobbler Season harvest and updates on the on-going research project.

J.Sloan attended the Fish and Game Council meeting on June 11th.

Other

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

WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
Austin Damming, Assistant Biologist

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Preseason Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Banding

Coordination was made with cooperators including staff from National Wildlife Refuges in NJ and landowners for banding. Banding will begin on June 18 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 – To participate in programs of the Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures

Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

American woodcock migration ecology study

No report

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

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee

As NJFW representative to the New Jersey Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee, T. Nichols administered the Fall Flights Program commitment for FY2024. Partners in this project include Ducks Unlimited, and several Atlantic Flyway states. Ducks Unlimited uses the Fall Flight Program funds to leverage North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds for habitat projects in Quebec, Canada, which is a primary breeding ground for waterfowl found during the fall and winter in New Jersey.

Other

T. Nichols responded to comments from G. Brower regarding the migratory bird and nontoxic shot portions of the proposed, recodified, Game Code and sent the comment document to AD Barno.

Black Bear Research Project

Mike Madonia, Principal Wildlife Biologist
Joe Burke, Wildlife Technician
Emilia Topp, Senior Biologist
Michael Patrick, Wildlife Technician
Peter Stark, Senior Biologist
Kaitlyn Barone, Senior Wildlife Worker
Ryan Ferraro, Assisting Biologist
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 319 bear calls from May 20, 2024, to June 21, 2024; this compares with 281 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 10 Category I calls, 102 Category II calls and 206 Category III calls for the time period May 20, 2024, to June 21, 2024; this compares to 15 Category I calls, 106 Category II calls and 159 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received a total of 657 bear calls from January 1, 2024, to June 21, 2024; this compares with 615 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 27 Category I calls, 265 Category II calls, and 363 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024, to June 21, 2024; this compares to 39 Category I calls, 298 Category II calls and 276 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

As of June 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 6.8 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents decreased 30.7 percent, Category II calls decreased 11.0 percent and Category III calls increased 31.5 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 | 2 | Mountain Lion | 2 |
| Bear | 319 | Opossum | 8 |
| Beaver | 11 | Osprey | 1 |
| Bees | 1 | Owl | 1 |
| Bird | 31 | Rabbit | 3 |
| Bobcat | 4 | Raccoon | 20 |
| Chipmunk | 1 | Skunk | 3 |
| Coyote | 23 | Snake | 5 |
| Crow | 2 | Squirrel | 11 |
| Deer | 117 | Swan | 4 |
| Duck | 13 | Turkey | 4 |
| Fox | 90 | Turtle | 7 |
| Goose | 17 | Unknown | 4 |
| Gray Fox | 1 | Vulture | 2 |
| Hawk | 1 | Woodchuck | 11 |

400 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 719 (*black bear calls are not included in this project)