

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

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**June 2024**

**Joseph M. Groff, VMD, PhD, Research Scientist 1**

**Patrick J. Connelly, DVM, Research Scientist 2**

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

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

**Hackettstown Hatchery**

Inspection of 60 juvenile (60-day) northern pike from the Hackettstown Hatchery was performed in June 2024. Pathogens of concern (viral, bacterial or parasitic) were not detected.

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

**American Eel Survey**

Collection of glass eels/elvers for the detection of various anguillid pathogens was completed in June 2024. Diagnostic results are pending.

**Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Investigations (Job W-1) and Wildlife Toxicology (Job W-2)**

**Black Bear Mange Serosurvey**

OFWHF and Bureau of Wildlife Management Bear Research Project have begun a serosurvey to investigate the prevalence of sarcoptic mange exposure in New Jersey black bears. 85 individual bears were sampled in June during spring research trapping. Additional samples will be collected during fall research trapping. Serum samples have been frozen for later analysis via ELSIA.

**UPDATE: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak**

Testing by NJAHDL found a negative result for avian influenza from the two clinical red fox kits. Testing by NJAHDL found a nonnegative result for avian influenza from a clinical turkey vulture and 2 deceased fish crows found in Ocean County. Confirmatory testing for HPAI by NVSL was positive (H5 2.3.4.4).

*OFWHF collected samples on May 23rd for HPAI testing from two neurologic red fox kits which had died at a local rehab facility. Testing is pending.*

*Testing by NVSL confirmed Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5 2.3.4.4) in all 3 buffleheads submitted for testing. Testing is pending on a turkey vulture and 2 fish crows also from Ocean County that had gross necropsy changes consistent with HPAI.*

*On March 18<sup>th</sup> OFWHF received notice of 3 dead buffleheads at Manahawkin WMA. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, OFWHF was informed of 30+ dead buffleheads in the vicinity of Brant Beach. Carcasses were collected and frozen on March 20<sup>th</sup> for diagnostics. USDA-WS collected swabs for avian influenza virus testing on*

*March 20<sup>th</sup>; results pending. Reports of dead sea ducks, as well as at least one gull, continued in the following days. Initially, residents reported a methane smell in the area which was determined to be due to a sewerage gas leak in the vicinity. Cause of death is not yet determined.*

### **Histopathological Examination of Wildlife Cases**

Dr. Groff performed microscopic/histopathological examinations, and provided definitive or differential diagnoses for wildlife cases submitted to the Clinton Wildlife Pathology Lab.

### **Deer Health Questions**

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

- A deer with abrasions to the flank (presumed hit-by-car) on June 26<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with high aural tick burden on June 25<sup>th</sup>.
- A deceased deer along a canal on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - o The condition of the carcass was unsuitable for necropsy or testing.
- An emaciated doe with a severe limb injury on June 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - o OFWHF recommended euthanasia.
- A buck with presumed fibromas on June 20<sup>th</sup>.
- A fawn with facial abscesses on June 19<sup>th</sup>.
- A deceased emaciated fawn on June 18<sup>th</sup>.
  - o The condition of the carcass was unsuitable for necropsy or testing.
- A deer with a laterally displaced mandible on June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- A deer with presumed arterial worm infection on June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- A deer with wart-like growths on the right pinna on June 13<sup>th</sup>.
- A thin and drooling deer on June 11<sup>th</sup>.
- A lame deer on June 10<sup>th</sup>.
- A deer with loss of fear of humans on June 5<sup>th</sup>.
- A neurologic deer on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- An emaciated doe on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - o OFWHF recommended euthanasia, but the deer was not located by USDA-WS.
- A deer with skin lesions on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Avian Health Questions**

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

- 3 deceased European starlings on private property in Sparta, Sussex County on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
  - o Dr. Connelly responded to this call and collected the birds for HPAI testing from the local animal control officer.
- A deceased “blackbird” found dead on private property on June 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 8 deceased common grackles found dead on private property over a 2-week period in Hackettstown, Warren County on June 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - o Dr. Connelly responded to this call and investigated the property. One sub-adult grackle in extremely poor postmortem condition was collected, but was unsuitable for testing or necropsy.

- A dead crow along with multiple dead domestic cats and rats on a public street in Cranford, Union County on June 16<sup>th</sup>.
- A captive macaw permitted by NJFW with suspect psittacosis on June 18<sup>th</sup>.
- A dead sub-adult common grackle in Hackettstown, Warren County on June 18<sup>th</sup>
  - o Dr. Connelly responded to this call. One sub-adult grackle in extremely poor postmortem condition was collected, but was unsuitable for testing or necropsy.
- A dead sub-adult common grackle in Hackettstown, Warren County on June 24<sup>th</sup>
  - o The condition of the carcass was unsuitable for necropsy or testing.

### **Miscellaneous Activities**

- Dr. Connelly and Jim Neugebauer participated in spring research trapping for black bears on June 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly was the featured guest on the Under Budget Outdoors podcast to discuss EHD and CWD on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly attended the biweekly NJ Interagency Call on H5N1 on June 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly attended the monthly NJ HPAI Working Group meeting on June 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly performed pre-release exams and fecal flotation on 2 translocated Allegheny woodrats on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Non-Project Activities**

- Dr. Connelly assisted ENSP staff with an Eastern box turtle population health survey on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The OFWHF as directed by Dr. Groff completed surveillance and subsequent sampling of amphibians for the presence of chytrid fungus and viral pathogens in local populations including Stokes State Forest.