

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

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**July 2024**

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

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

**Marine Reef Survey**

Two groups of black sea bass, tautog and conger eels collected from traps during the Marine Fisheries Reef Survey were examined. Samples were taken for histology, viral isolation and molecular diagnostics; results are pending.

**Delaware Bay/Delaware River Striped Bass Sampling**

A subsample of YOY striped bass taken by Marine Fisheries during the Delaware Bay/Delaware River striped bass survey were collected for histology, viral isolation and molecular diagnostics; results are pending.

**Endangered Species Act Permit**

Dr. Groff completed a NOAA application to receive an Endangered Species Permit for permission to collect non-invasive samples from live Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon taken as by-catch during the quarterly ocean trawls conducted by Marine Fisheries; approval is pending.

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

**Black bear cub with congenital abnormalities**

OFWHF performed a necropsy on a black bear cub on July 4<sup>th</sup>, which had been euthanized by Woodlands Wildlife Refuge due to potential congenital deformities and poor prognosis for return to the wild. The cub had received a CT scan, echocardiogram and general exam by specialists at Oradell Animal Hospital prior to euthanasia. Based on their workup, they were most suspicious of a congenital collagen disorder, such as Marfan Syndrome. On necropsy, Dr. Connelly found the cub to have multiple dental deformities, joint crepitus, pectus excavatum, enlarged heart, enlarged aorta, and a depressed right side of the heart. Histopathology is pending.

**White-tailed deer with severe lungworm infection**

OFWHF received the carcass of an adult female doe which had been euthanized due to emaciation and immobility. Necropsy discovered a severe case of verminous pneumonia, caused by a species of *Dictyocaulus* lungworm.

### **Piping plover chick**

OFWHF received the carcass of a piping plover chick from ENSP for necropsy. The chick had a half-day history of panting and NDR. Based on necropsy findings, cause of death is presumed to have been starvation. Histopathology is pending.

### **Multiple juvenile red-tailed hawks with similar clinical signs**

OFWHF received the carcasses of 3 euthanized juvenile red-tailed hawks which presented to The Raptor Trust within the previous 48 hours with similar clinical signs. Radiographs demonstrated no physical trauma. The hawks were euthanized due to concern for West Nile Virus. On necropsy, all hawks were in good body condition and had a pale heart with white streaking and congested vessels. PCR testing in all 3 birds was positive for West Nile Virus.

### **West Nile Virus Outbreak**

OFWHF has received a significant number of calls regarding deceased birds of multiple species, including blackbird species, sparrows, and raptors, beginning in June. Conversation with NJDOH revealed that West Nile Virus activity is currently higher than usual. OFWHF performed several necropsies in July with gross changes consistent with WNV infection.

### **Raccoon Poisoning Investigation**

OFWHF was contacted by DEP Bureau of Pesticide Control on July 8<sup>th</sup> regarding 3 juvenile raccoons which a local ACO suspected of possibly been poisoned by rodenticides. They requested liver removal by OFWHF to facilitate testing for the investigation. Liver samples and ingesta samples (consistent with consumed rodenticide blocks) were collected by Dr. Connelly.

### **UPDATE: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak**

No additional mortalities have been reported in New Jersey since mid-May.

### **Deer Health Questions**

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

- An emaciated yearling buck with an antler deformity in Andover, Sussex County on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - o OFWHF recommended euthanasia.
- A buck with possible "Bullwinkle syndrome" in Clinton, Hunterdon County on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- A doe with a degloving injury to the thorax in Woodbridge, Union County on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- A neurologic doe in Flemington, Hunterdon County on July 8<sup>th</sup>.
  - o OFWHF recommended euthanasia and necropsy but the deer was not located.
- A buck with an antler injury and swollen leg, and a doe with hind leg lameness in Hopatcong, Sussex County on July 9<sup>th</sup>.
- A neurologic buck in Long Valley, Warren County on July 9<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with possible "Bullwinkle syndrome" in Clinton, Hunterdon County on July 10<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with moderate to severe fibromas in Clinton, Hunterdon County on July 11<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with severe antler sloughing in Long Branch, Monmouth County on July 11<sup>th</sup>.
  - o OFWHF recommended euthanasia.
- A severely emaciated and immobile doe in Middleton, Monmouth County on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

- OFWHF recommended euthanasia and necropsy (described above).
- A deceased deer in Clifton, Passaic County on July 14<sup>th</sup>.
- A sick fawn in New Egypt, Ocean County on July 15<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with a hernia or abdominal tumor on July 16<sup>th</sup>.
- A doe carrying its head lowered and panting North Bergen, Bergen County on July 18<sup>th</sup>.
- An emaciated and neurologic deer in Manchester, Ocean County on July 19<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with a presumptive oral tumor or abscess in North Bergen, Bergen County on July 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- A fawn with yellow foam at the mouth and staining the hind limbs in Toms River, Ocean County on July 25<sup>th</sup>.
- A buck with mild fibromas in Hopatcong, Sussex County on July 29<sup>th</sup>.
- An emaciated doe in Ewing, Mercer County on July 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Avian Health Questions**

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

- A deceased house wren on private property in Rocky Hill, Somerset County on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. The property had a history of recently found dead songbirds including blue jays and “blackbirds”. The property owner is a veterinarian and was concerned about avian influenza.
  - Dr. Connelly collected the carcass, which was actually a house sparrow, for testing and necropsy.
- 4 deceased “blackbirds” in Stratford, Camden County on July 10<sup>th</sup>.
- 10 dead mallards and 2 dead Canada geese in Stafford, Ocean County on July 13<sup>th</sup>.
  - OFWHF collected 2 frozen carcasses on July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Wildlife Health Questions**

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

- A raccoon with yellow foam at the mouth and staining the hind limbs in Toms River, Ocean County on July 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - Dr. Connelly received the carcass from the local ACO, but carcass condition and consumption by maggots limited diagnostic opportunities. Dr. Connelly did not observe any pathology consistent with the local health department’s concern for fungal disease, or of poisoning.
- An adult black bear with severe hair loss in Washington, Warren County on July 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Miscellaneous Activities**

- Dr. Connelly attended the Monthly Animal Health Meeting on July 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly attended the biweekly NJ Interagency Call on H5N1 on July 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly had a meeting with the Rutgers Center for Vector Biology on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Non-Project Activities**

- Dr. Connelly performed forensic necropsies on 2 Canada geese on July 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Groff gave short presentations to two groups from the *Youth Inclusion Initiative* (YII) that visited the Pequest Hatchery.