

**BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**October 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, and ownership, date, and season.**

The Deer Project Team began receiving calls regarding harvest report errors as fall bow season has started, leading to harvest report corrections and transfers.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills review the weekly harvest for harvest violations in cooperation with Conservation Police Officers.

**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 have continued evaluating CBDMP applications for Morristown National Historic Park, Mercer County Parks, and Princeton Township.

**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.**

M. McCafferty attended the Southern Regional Law meeting to discuss the deer season as Fall Bow began and any potential issues with the changes made to Deer Management Zones 45 and 46.

B. Schumm is working on updating the Deer Management web page design and content.

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

M. McCafferty, G. Canale, and J. Bauer began CWD sampling in the southern half of New Jersey with a total of 26 samples and approximately 57 aged.

M. Mills and D. Dolor began CWD sampling in the North/Central part of New Jersey with a total of 16 samples and approximately 19 aged.

**Extension Activities**

The Deer Project Team has received reports for injured or sick deer from the public and continues to work with the pathology team and USDA Animal Control to decide the best course of action for these deer.

The Deer Project is working with USDA employees to help coordinate their sampling efforts for COVID in our collected deer.

J. Powers attended a meeting with Chief Oxley, staff from the Permitting Section, P. Connelly and a Captive Game permittee to discuss conditions of that permit.

J. Powers attended a stakeholders meeting to discuss proposed changes to the Game Code.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills continue open communication with Special Areas.

**Other Activities**

The Deer Project Team attended the Bureau of Wildlife Management staff meeting at Assunpink to discuss ongoing projects and future project planning.

The Deer Project Team attended the new F&W Experience at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and demonstrated aging techniques and lymph node removal for new employees.

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

J. Powers attended a meeting regarding the Federal Aid Grant budget.

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.

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

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*

For Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24) a total of 583 coyote mortalities (a combination of hunter/trapper harvest, vehicle strikes, and all other causes of mortality) were recorded.

#### *Beaver*

*No report*

#### *Fisher*

Telemetry monitoring efforts and gps data analysis continue on two adult male fishers. Review and classification of trail camera footage is ongoing. Staff continue logistical planning and have begun equipment preparation for the next upcoming field season.

#### *Northern Bobwhite*

No report

#### *Ruffed Grouse*

No report.

#### *Wild Turkey*

### **Wild Turkey Research Project Update-**

#### North Study Area

Out of the original 26 telemetry equipped hens, 8 are accounted for and alive while 9 are confirmed deceased, 6 are unconfirmed deceased, and 3 are currently missing.

#### South Study Area

Out of the original 25 telemetry equipped hens, 16 are accounted for and alive while 8 are confirmed deceased, and 1 is currently missing.

*American Woodcock*

No Report.

*Trapper Harvest Survey*

**Hunter and Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Surveys (Job III-B)**

A total of 9 coyote mortalities were reported via Aspira for the segment and were harvested incidental to hunting for deer during the archery deer seasons, Coyotes were harvested from the following counties: Burlington (1), Cape May (1), Hunterdon (1), Morris (1), Salem (2), Somerset (1) and Warren (2).

By sex, the harvested coyotes were Male (3), Female (4) and Unknown (2).

Six of the coyotes were of typical pelage and 3 were blonde color phase. None of the reported coyotes had mange.

A total of 3 coyotes were reported to the project that were vehicle mortalities. One each from Morris, Passaic and Somerset counties.

One gray fox was reported via Aspira as harvested during fall archery deer season incidental to hunting deer. The gray fox was harvested in Salem County.

**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 Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee meeting in Mystic, Connecticut September 30-October 4. Discussions included range wide research being conducted on upland game bird species, rising concerns over certain disease prevalence, and multi-state research efforts.

J.Sloan provided Will Cassidy, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the 2024 Northeast Upland Game Bird State report for New Jersey.

*National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee*

*No report*

*Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)*

**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.**

R. Ferraro attended New Jersey Trappers Association Annual Convention on 10/6 and presented a furbearer project update and general agency news.

J.Sloan attended the bureau meeting at the Conservation Center on October 9<sup>th</sup>. Project updates were provides as well as team building exercises.

J.Sloan attended the Bureau of Wildlife Management's new employee experience at Pequest Natural Resource Education Center on October 16<sup>th</sup>. New employees received the chance to learn about our bureau, participate at the bear check station and explored various trapping techniques used by the bureau.

J.Sloan was interviewed by Tom P. for Rack and Fin radio to discuss the upcoming Fall Either-Sex Turkey Season that opened October 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Extension Activities**

Garris answered questions and provided input and identified various species of wildlife and scat from pictures/videos/audio and conversations with constituents.

**Other**

R. Ferraro answered questions from the public pertaining to furbearers.

Garris monitored the location of the 2 radio collared fishers weekly.

## **MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS - INVESTIGATION I**

Ted Nichols- recently retired Supervising Biologist

Austin Damminger, Assistant Biologist

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

#### *Preseason Duck Banding*

Preseason duck banding operations were conducted between 1 July and 30 September. Preseason banding is carried out during this period since banding locally breeding and hatched ducks is a major objective of this monitoring program. Marking local ducks allows for the derivation of harvest or specific harvest rate analyses by geographic breeding region and contributes to Multi-Stock Harvest Management.

Agency staff, USDA Wildlife Services, volunteers, and local cooperators banded 596 ducks including 399 mallards, 183 wood ducks, 9 American black duck, and 5 mallard X black duck hybrid. An additional 108 (90 mallards and 18 wood ducks) previously banded ducks were recaptured. 23 banding stations were established. Ducks were banded at 17 stations in 10 counties from Warren to Cape May. About half of the mallards were banded in Atlantic County (193), across 5 stations while a third of the wood ducks were banded in Burlington County (60), from 1 station.

Mallard banding accomplishments were 50% below the long term (1993-2024) mean of 790 mallards. Between 2003-2010 staff and cooperators consistently banded >1,000 mallards/year; however, we have not exceeded 1,000 mallards for over a decade. The mallard immature to adult ratio (0.657) during banding (including recaptures) was 6% below the long-term (1993-2024) mean.

Staff worked collaboratively with USDA-Wildlife Services on a surveillance program for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) whereupon 128 (89 mallards, 1 black duck, 3 mallard X black duck hybrids, and 35 wood ducks) birds were sampled at 10 stations across 5 counties within the Delaware Mid-Atlantic-Coastal watershed.

Banding schedules and recapture records for all ducks were entered into computer records, edited and sent to the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). All banding equipment was inventoried, cleaned, repaired, and stored.

#### *2025 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey*

Hunting permits, diaries, and on-line harvest survey information for the 2025 Light Goose Conservation Order were developed and sent to the licensing section.

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

No report

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

#### *Atlantic Population Canada Goose research*

A. Damminger participated in a virtual coordination call with Atlantic Flyway partners concerning data analysis and future marking plans. He also corresponded with hunters that harvested AP geese wearing these collars and coordinated shipping replica collars out and creating maps of those bird's movements.

#### *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 draft manuscript which uses this telemetry data entitled: "*Lack of evidence for discrete migration strategies in American Woodcock suggests potential for species' resilience*". Lead author is Sarah Clements, Postdoctoral student at UME, and other coauthors include several other state and provincial collaborators. The paper was submitted for publication in the journal Ornithology.

#### ***Atlantic brant survival***

T. Nichols commented on and wrote sections of the final draft of a manuscript, "Hunter harvest affects survival of Atlantic brant". The manuscript was submitted to Journal of Wildlife Management on October 21st, 2024. Lead author for the first 2 drafts was Kevin Dufour (CWS), with contributions by J. Leafloor, (CWS) and J. Dooley (USFWS); unfortunately, Dufour passed away in April 2024 and J. Dooley took on role as lead author for the third and any forthcoming manuscript versions.

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

#### *Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee*

No Report

### **Objective 6 – Outreach**

A. Damminger conducted a waterfowl identification presentation at the NJ Waterfowlers Association New Waterfowl Hunters Clinic in Tuckerton. 20 potential new waterfowlers attended the clinic.

### **Other**

A. Damminger attended the Bureau of Wildlife Management staff meeting and discussed 2024 preseason duck banding accomplishments and the upcoming AP Canada goose telemetry study NJ will be participating in the winter.

A. Damminger attended and demonstrated a net launcher and rocket net at the Fish & Wildlife Staff Experience day.

A. Damminger attended the Seasonal's Workload Meeting and discussed the Migratory Bird Program's yearly schedule and varying workloads throughout the year. He also, discussed time sheets and use of proper job and activity codes.

### **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 104 bear calls from September 20, 2024 to October 21, 2024; this compares with 88 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 13 Category I calls, 33 Category II calls and 58 Category III calls for the time period September 20, 2024 to October 21, 2024; this compares to 11 Category I calls, 29 Category II calls and 48 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received a total of 1,603 bear calls from January 1, 2024 to October 21, 2024; this compares with 1,208 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 138 Category I calls, 611 Category II calls and 843 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024 to October 21, 2024; this compares to 105 Category I calls, 530 Category II calls and 563 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.



As of October 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 32.7 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents increased 31.4 percent, Category II calls increased 15.2 percent and Category III calls increased 49.7 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**

Bear	151	Opossum	6
Beaver	13	Rabbit	1
Bird	8	Raccoon	17
Bobcat	6	Skunk	6
Coyote	35	Snake	1
Deer	96	Squirrel	10
Fox	57	Turkey	7
Goose	5	Turtle	5
Gull	1	Unknown	5
Hawk	1	Vulture	2
Woodpecker	1	Woodchuck	1

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

**Total calls: 435 (\*black bear calls are not included in this project).**