

OFFICE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH AND FORENSICS

MONTHLY REPORT

January 2025

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

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

Microscopic examination of freshwater yellow eels was completed in January 2025, whereas ancillary diagnostics are in the planning stage.

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

Microscopic examination of striped bass was completed in January 2025, whereas ancillary diagnostics are in the planning stage.

Non-Project Activities

NA

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

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance

New Jersey has been experiencing a resurgence of avian influenza since late December 2024. Preliminary in-state testing has indicated presumptive positive results for H5 avian influenza from 14/14 tested birds with additional samples pending. Confirmatory testing by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory is pending, but highly pathogenic avian influenza is expected to be the cause of death for these animals. As of January 28th, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife has received reports of over 430 sick or dead wild birds during this time. The resurgence has primarily been driven by snow geese and clustered primarily in the counties along the Delaware River and Delaware Bay (particularly Warren, Salem and Cumberland counties). Beginning in mid-January suspect cases in Canada geese began to rise, and suspect cases are now distributed state-wide. Numerous suspect cases have also involved raptors, vultures and corvids.

Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

OFWHF and NJ Deer Project have finished collecting samples from hunter-harvested deer for annual chronic wasting disease surveillance. In total, over 1,100 hunter-harvested deer were sampled from October 2024 to January 2025. Testing by the University of Pennsylvania Wildlife Futures Program will commence shortly.

Necropsies

- This month, Dr. Connelly performed necropsies on 1 Cooper's hawk, 1 gray fox, 1 white-tailed deer, 2 great-horned owls and 4 bobcats. Samples were collected from the gray fox as part of a northeast regional gray fox and fisher health assessment.

Miscellaneous Activities

- Dr. Connelly attended the biweekly NJ Interagency Call on H5N1 on January 9th and 23rd.
- Dr. Connelly attended the HPAI Working Group meeting on January 27th.