

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

January 2025

James Oxley, Chief

**NEW JERSEY WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT
GRANT NO. W-68-R**

STUDY PLAN I. WHITE-TAILED DEER

Jodi Powers, Supervising Wildlife Biologist
Megan Mills, Senior Biologist (Northern Region)
Megan McCafferty, Senior Biologist (Southern Region)
Brian Schumm, Senior 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 continues receiving calls regarding harvest report errors as several seasons have 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.

Princeton Township's and Essex County Park's applications have been presented to Council in December and were approved. Bernards Township is being presented in February.

J. Powers, M. McCafferty, and B. Schumm provided technical assistance to FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center regarding an inquiry about a Special Wildlife Management Permit.

J. Powers attended several meetings regarding Princeton's CBDMP applications.

Objective 3 - To participate in business meetings and monitoring programs of the Northeast Deer Technical Committee, and other related meetings and conferences.

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 and M. Mills continued editing and reviewing deer season charts and special area dates for the 2025-26 Digest.

The Deer Project Team prepared preliminary harvest data for the 2024-25 season to present to the Fish and Game Council during the January meeting.

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 continued CWD sampling in the southern half of New Jersey with a total of 246 samples and approximately 400 aged.

M. Mills, D. Dolor, and G. Canale continued CWD sampling in the central portion of New Jersey with a total of 161 samples and approximately 240 aged.

M. McCafferty has been working with pathology and the southern region conservation officers in collecting CWD samples from deer displaying neurological concerns.

M. McCafferty, G. Canale, and J. Bauer collected samples from harvested deer during scheduled deer drives at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center.

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.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills continue open communication with Special Areas as the 2025-26 digest is being reviewed.

Deer Project has begun disseminating deer management signage to management programs to use to provide information to the public. Plainsboro Township, who began a pilot program this year after consultations from the Project, is the first to receive them.

Other Activities

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

The Deer Project team along with the GIS team has started planning a second drone survey to be conducted at Pequest WMA again this year in conjunction with Warren County Community College.

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.

B. Schumm and J. Powers met with Chief Oxley and S. Preisig regarding a second round of funding for the Community Based Deer Management Grant.

J. Powers attended a federal grant meeting to discuss transition of program.

J. Powers attended two meetings regarding the RFP for a new ELS and AHRS vendor.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

James Sloan, Senior Biologist
Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I
Tim Ruth, Biologist Trainee
Peter Stark, Senior Biologist
Alexandrea Nickel, Seasonal Technician
Shelby Gravatt, Seasonal Technician
Richard Strittmatter, Seasonal Technician
Jodi Bauer, Seasonal Technician
Michael Ferraro, Seasonal Technician
Michelle McGill, 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.

Northern Bobwhite

No report

Ruffed Grouse

No report.

Wild Turkey

Wild Turkey Research Project Update-

2025 Turkey Research trapping has started. The 2025 goal for hen transmitter deployment is 25 in each study area and 8 redeployments for a goal of 58 transmitter deployments in 2025.

North Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 27

Out of the original 2024 26 telemetry equipped hens, 7 are accounted for and alive while 10 are confirmed deceased, 6 are unconfirmed deceased, and 3 are currently missing.

On January 8, 2025, project personnel trapped 10 female and 6 male turkeys in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. 10 new transmitters were deployed on females and biological samples were taken. Both males and females were leg banded, weighed, and male attributes (spur and beard length) measured.

On January 22, 2025, project personnel trapped 10 female and 10 male turkeys in Warren County, New Jersey. 10 new transmitters were deployed on females and biological samples were taken. Both males and females were leg banded, weighed, and male attributes (spur and beard length) measured.

South Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 51

Out of the original 2024 25 telemetry equipped hens, 16 are accounted for and alive while 8 are confirmed deceased, and 1 is currently missing.

On January 24, 2025, project personnel trapped 13 females in Salem County, New Jersey. 8 redeployment transmitters were deployed on females and biological samples were taken. Both males and females were leg banded, weighed, and male attributes (spur and beard length) measured.

South Jersey study area is complete for the 2025 trapping season.

American Woodcock

No Report.

Beaver Trapping

The 2024-25 Beaver and River Otter permit trapping season began on December 26, 2024, and will run through February 9, 2025. To date, 117 beaver harvests have been voluntarily submitted

via the AHRS, and 1 incidentally harvested river otter was reported to and recovered by the project.

Pelt seals and other materials for the 2024-25 beaver and otter check station were prepared, organized and the boxes of materials are awaiting distribution to staff members. The check station will be held at 6 locations throughout the state on February 22, 2025.

Coyote Harvest

To date, a total of 236 coyote harvests have been reported to the Automated Harvest Reporting System (AHRS) or to regional state offices for the 2024-25 hunting and trapping seasons.

A total of 109 coyote mortalities were recorded by the AHRS for the monthly reporting period. Of the total, 23 were taken incidental to deer hunting: 5 by archery, 6 by muzzleloading rifle, and 12 by shotgun. Seventy-five (75) coyotes were harvested by cable restraint. A total of 11 coyotes were harvested during the Special Permit Coyote/Fox Hunting Season which began on January 1. Of these 11, 8 were taken by shotgun and 3 by modern rifle, and 5 were taken during nighttime hunting hours.

Coyotes were harvested from the following counties: Atlantic (6), Burlington (3), Cumberland (13), Gloucester (7), Hunterdon (8), Middlesex (3), Monmouth (3), Morris (3), Passaic (2), Salem (18), Somerset (8), Sussex (3), Warren (30) and 2 coyotes were reported with county unknown.

By sex, the harvested coyotes were male (61), female (43) and unknown (5).

Nine of the coyotes harvested were of black fur color, 16 were blonde, 78 were of typical pelage, 5 were red color phase and 1 was white. Nineteen of the 109 reported coyotes had mange.

An additional 1 coyote was reported to the project via telephone as a vehicle mortality from Boonton Township, Morris County.

Gray Fox Harvest

To date, a total of 36 gray fox harvests have been reported to the AHRS or to regional state offices during the 2024-25 hunting and trapping seasons.

A total of 16 gray foxes were recorded by the AHRS during the monthly reporting period. These were harvested incidental to hunting deer (1), trapping (10), or during the Special Permit Coyote/Fox Hunting Season (5). All 5 of the gray foxes taken during the Special Permit season were taken at night.

Gray foxes were harvested from the following counties: Atlantic (1), Burlington (2), Camden (1), Cape May (1), Cumberland (1), Gloucester (5), Ocean (3), Sussex (1), and Warren (1).

By sex, the harvested gray foxes were male (6), female (6) and unknown (4).

Fisher

Project staff and volunteers successfully installed trail camera stations in the northwest part of the state (north of I-80, west of I-287) during the week of January 5. Every 15 days, stations will be visited and maintained, when staff will exchange camera cards and refresh bait. The resultant camera data will be used to inform fisher distribution in northwest New Jersey and help predict rates of occupancy.

Staff have begun live trapping efforts in northern Sussex County. Select individual fishers will be affixed with GPS collars; the telemetry data will be utilized to quantify home range size and determine patterns of movement and habitat use.

Telemetry monitoring efforts continue for two adult male fishers in Sussex County.

Trapper Harvest Survey

Each year in March, a mail survey is sent to licensed trappers from the prior season to obtain information regarding trapper activity and estimate harvest for all furbearer species except beaver, coyote, and river otter, whose harvest reporting is mandatory.

The survey is sent to all individuals who purchased a trapping license for the prior calendar year (n=1,383 for 2024) as well as individuals with active youth licenses who have not reached 17 years of age by November 15 (start of trapping season) (n=62 for 2024). In total, 1,445 licensed trappers will receive a survey in 2025.

J. Garriss used several queries in Aspira Insights to exclude duplicates and produce the final number of licensed individuals for 2024. All mailing envelopes have been printed, and the survey will be mailed on or about March 15, 2025.

Year	Trapping license type	Count
2021	Youth	12
2022	Youth	14
2023	Youth	36
2024	Youth	38
2024	Non-Res Trap	13
2024	Non-Res (NC) Trap	0
2024	Res Trap	1125
2024	Res (NC) Trap	207

Table 1. A breakdown of trapping licenses included in the 2024-25 Trapper Harvest Survey. The number of youth trapping licenses from 2021-2024 is shown in the upper half of the table, followed by the breakdown of all resident and non-resident trapping licenses purchased by individuals age 16+ in 2024. “NC” = “No Charge,” referring to those individuals (disabled veterans, active, resident New Jersey National Guard personnel) that are permitted to obtain a trapping license free of charge.

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)

No report

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.

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

J.Sloan and other NJDEP F&W employees have had a series of meeting to draft the Pheasant & Quail Stamp Buyer Survey. This survey should be ready for release in the next reporting period.

Project personnel has helped with migratory bird trapping during this reporting period.

Extension Activities

Other

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS - INVESTIGATION I

Austin Damminger, Assistant Biologist

Mary Kate Lisi, Biologist Trainee

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey

For over 20 years NJFW has worked cooperatively with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) using their aircraft and pilot-biologist to conduct the Mid-Winter Survey (MWS) in New Jersey. NJFW biologists have served as observers on the flights. Although the MWS was historically a geographically comprehensive survey with all species of waterfowl counted, the survey was streamlined in 2016 as a cost savings measure. MWS estimates are used to guide harvest management for Atlantic brant and tundra swans but utility of estimates for other species have always been less tangible. Resultingly, since 2016, the MWS only covers wintering areas for Atlantic brant and tundra swans and these are the only species counted.

The MWS was completed January 5-13 using a US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) aircraft and pilot-biologist (John Rayfield). The Service aircraft (Kodiak), equipped with a turbine engine and pontoon floats enhances safety for crew members. Austin Damminger and Ted Nichols (USFWS Volunteer) served as observers for flights in New Jersey and Long Island, New York which combined winter about 85% of the brant in the Atlantic Flyway. Use of the Service aircraft and pilot came at no expense to NJFW.

The New Jersey counts were a little more than half of New York counts and totaled 117,540 brant. The Atlantic Flyway total estimate was not available at the time of this report.

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

No report

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

American Black Duck Research

For the past 4 years, program staff collaborated with 7 other Atlantic Flyway states, the USFWS, CWS, and Mitch Weegman (University of Saskatchewan; lead investigator) on a study funded by the Black Duck Joint Venture entitled: *Quantifying the influence of environmental conditions and American black duck behavior and movements throughout the full annual cycle on subsequent productivity using state-of-the-art tracking devices*. The study uses backpack transmitters on black ducks captured on the wintering grounds and about 10 transmitters will be deployed in New Jersey

this winter. Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments which will be the final year of field deployments.

Atlantic Brant Research

Staff continued to collect geolocators and transmitters from Atlantic brant shot by hunters. Data from geolocators was downloaded.

Program biologists prepared GSM backpack transmitters Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments which will be the final year of field deployments. 6 redeployment transmitters recovered from hunters will be redeployed on new birds.

Atlantic Population Canada Goose Research

A. Dammingier continued correspondence with hunters that harvested AP geese wearing GPS collars and coordinated shipping replica collars and creating maps of those bird's movements.

For the past 3 years the Atlantic Flyway has participated in study on *Migration chronology, breeding distribution, and winter site fidelity of Atlantic Population of Canada geese*. The study uses neck collar transmitters on AP geese captured on the breeding and wintering grounds, and about 20 transmitters will be deployed in New Jersey this winter. Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments which is the third year, NJ's first, on the wintering grounds.

Identifying Limiting Factors of Eastern Mallards

Program staff collaborated with 14 other Atlantic Flyway states, CWS, USFWS, and Mitch Weegman (University of Saskatchewan; lead investigator) on a study on eastern mallards. Program staff captured and instrumented mallards for this study. This study uses backpack GSM transmitters and geolocators on mallards captured on the wintering grounds for 4 years. Winter 2025 was the third operational year and NJ was assigned 22 (16 new, 6 redeployment) telemetry units and 30 geolocators to instrument on females. Logistical arrangements were made for this coming winter's deployments.

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

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee

No Report

Objective 6 – Outreach

No report

Trainings

M.K. Lisi completed the online NJ Boater's Education Course and is making arrangements to take the in person exam.

Other

A. Damminger participated in an Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section (AFCTS) Canada Goose Committee meeting to discuss data from the Atlantic population goose telemetry research in preparation for the Winter AFCTS meeting, an exercise to identify statewide wildlife priority threats for the State Wildlife Action Plan.

M.K. Lisi along with program staff collected and transported bird specimens to be tested for avian influenza.

M.K. Lisi attended the new employee orientation.

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 30 bear calls from November 20, 2024 to December 21, 2024; this compares with 55 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 16 Category II calls and 14 Category III calls for the time period November 20, 2024 to December 21, 2024; this compares to 8 Category I calls, 14 Category II calls and 33 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received a total of 1,774 bear calls from January 1, 2024 to December 21, 2024; this compares with 1,363 calls from the same time period in 2023.

The black bear unit received 147 Category I calls, 683 Category II calls and 923 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2024 to December 21, 2024; this compares to 121 Category I calls, 592 Category II calls and 640 Category III calls for the same time period in 2023.

As of December 21, 2024, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 30.1 percent from the same time period in 2023. Category I incidents increased 21.4 percent, Category II calls increased 15.3 percent and Category III calls increased 44.2 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	1	Mountain Lion	2
Bear	30	Opossum	3
Beaver	28	Owl	2
Bird	7	Rabbit	1
Bobcat	4	Raccoon	5
Coyote	28	Skunk	2
Deer	69	Squirrel	3
Fox	42	Swan	2
Goose	2	Turkey	7
Gull	2	Unknown	3
Hawk	6	Vulture	6

225 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 255 (*black bear calls are not included in this project).