

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

February 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.

The Deer Project Team began reviewing and analyzing all harvest data as the season has ended.

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 met with upper management and officials from Princeton to discuss their CBDMP plan and future applications that involve a non-lethal component.

B. Schumm presented Bernards Township's 2024-25 CBDMP application and it was denied due to delinquency on required items and waning interest from agents.

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

J. Powers attended a joint conference between the Southeast Deer Study Group and the Northeast Deer Technical Committee. The conference was held in Cambridge, Maryland. The agenda was full of research and management hurdles including disease monitoring, urban and suburban management, and habitat management.

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 completed CWD sampling in the southern half of New Jersey with a total of 253 samples and approximately 400 aged.

M. Mills, D. Dolor, G. Canale and J. Bauer completed CWD sampling in the central portion of New Jersey with a total of 199 samples and approximately 330 aged.

M. McCafferty and M. Mills have begun preparing samples to be sent for testing.

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.

B. Schumm coordinated the distribution of deer management signage designed by BI&E targeted at increasing public awareness for local deer management activities. To date, 1,020 units have been distributed to 9 entities with 1,200 more units awaiting pick up.

Deer Project designed a survey, which was built by OIS and distributed by the Office of Local Government Assistance, for municipalities to report public opinion on deer. 27 municipalities

completed the survey which lead to productive conversations on local deer management issues with municipal officials.

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 in conjunction with staff from the GIS team and Hunterdon County Community College have begun planning another trial of drone surveys at Pequest WMA.

The Deer Project Team has started to prepare for spring spotlight counts by reviewing routes and areas of interest.

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

Deer Project attended a meeting with other projects from the Bureau of Wildlife Management to discuss the benefits of potentially reinstating annual mast crop surveys.

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.

J. Powers and B. Schumm met with the Permits Section to discuss taking over the Dog Tracking Permit project.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

James Sloan, Senior Biologist
Joseph R. Garris, 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 been completed. A total of 62 transmitters were placed on female wild turkeys throughout the State (35 South/ 27 North).

A total of 106 wild turkeys were caught statewide in 8 trapping attempts. A total of 49 (28F/21M) in the North Study Area and a total of 57 (41F/16M) in the South Study Area.

North Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 34

A total of 9 females are still alive from the 2024 trapping season.

Two hens die during this reporting period. Both transmitters were redeployed on the February 17th trapping.

On February 117, 2025, project personnel trapped 8 female and 5 male turkeys in Sussex County, New Jersey. 5 new and 2 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 Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 50

A total of 16 females are still alive from the 2024 trapping season.

One hen died during this reporting period.

American Woodcock

No Report.

Beaver and River Otter

Pelt seals and other materials for the 2024-25 beaver and otter check station were prepared, organized and the boxes of materials were distributed 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 439 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 197 coyote mortalities were recorded by the AHRS for the monthly reporting period. Of the total, 11 were taken incidentally to deer hunting: 2 by archery and 9 by shotgun. One hundred sixty-four (164) coyotes were harvested by trapping: 163 by cable restraint and 1 by cage trap. A total of 22 coyotes were harvested during the Special Permit Coyote/Fox Hunting Season which began on January 1. Of these 22, 11 were taken by shotgun, 10 by modern rifle, and 1 by muzzleloader. Three (3) were taken during nighttime hunting hours.

Coyotes were harvested from the following counties: Atlantic (13), Burlington (6), Cape May (10), Cumberland (28), Gloucester (8), Hunterdon (24), Mercer (1), Middlesex (5), Monmouth (4), Morris (5), Ocean (10), Passaic (2), Salem (28), Somerset (7), Sussex (7), Warren (37) and 2 coyotes were reported with county unknown.

By sex, the harvested coyotes were male (99), female (97) and unknown (1).

Fourteen of the coyotes harvested were of black fur color, 27 were blonde, 138 were of typical pelage, 14 were red color phase and 4 were white.

An additional 2 coyotes were reported to the project via telephone as a vehicle mortalities: 1 from West Milford Township, Passaic County, and 1 from Hardyston Township, Sussex County.

Gray Fox Harvest

To date, a total of 71 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 34 gray foxes were recorded by the AHRS during the monthly reporting period. These were harvested incidentally to deer hunting (3), trapping (27), or during the Special Permit Coyote/Fox Hunting Season (4).

Gray foxes were harvested from the following counties: Atlantic (5), Burlington (2), Cape May (3), Cumberland (7), Gloucester (8), Middlesex (1), Monmouth (1), Salem (4), and Warren (3). By sex, the harvested gray foxes were male (17), female (11) and unknown (6).

Fisher

One adult female fisher was caught on February 8 in Sussex County and outfitted with a GPS collar. Telemetry monitoring efforts continue for two adult males that were captured and collared last year.

Project staff and volunteers continue maintaining trail camera stations. The project has recorded positive fisher detections at numerous locations, including areas in Byram, Hardyston, Montague, and Sandyston Townships, Sussex County; Allamuchy Township, Warren County; and West Milford Township, Passaic County.

Trapper Harvest Survey

All forms and envelopes for the 2024-25 Trapper Harvest Survey have been printed and are ready for mailing. The survey will be sent out on or about March 15, 2025, to all licensed trappers from the 2024-25 season.

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

Project personnel attended the National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee meeting February 12-14 virtually. Discussions included NWTF Endowed Professorships, research updates (including our multi-state collaborative study), brood survey updates, and State/Federal policy updates.

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.

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

Extension Activities

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

No Report

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

Damminger and Lisi virtually attended the 2025 Winter Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section (AFCTS) meeting. Damminger compiled and provided an update on the Atlantic population goose telemetry research project during the Canada Goose Committee meeting.

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

American Black Duck Research

American Black Duck Research

Program staff collaborated with 8 other Atlantic Flyway states, 4 Mississippi Flyway state, CWS, USFWS, 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*. This study uses backpack GSM transmitters on black ducks captured on the wintering grounds for 3 years. Winter 2025 was the fourth year and NJ had 8 redeployment telemetry units to instrument on females. Program staff operated several banding stations and began putting out telemetry units on study birds on 29 January.

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 3 years. Winter 2024 was the third operational year and NJ was assigned 25 telemetry units and 40 geolocators to instrument on females. Program staff operated several banding stations and began putting out telemetry and geolocator units on study birds on 27 January.

Atlantic Brant Research

Program biologists began trapping and marking females for the 2025 marking phase of this study. Staff deployed 6 redeployment transmitters and received 5 more redeployment transmitters from NY that staff plan to also deploy.

Atlantic Population Canada Goose Research

A. Damminger 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. Staff continued logistical arrangements for trap sites and started deploying collars for the third year (NJ's first) of the study.

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

Other

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

M.K. Lisi assisted upland/furbearer staff with the 2025 Tuckahoe beaver/otter check station.

M.K. Lisi participated in the annual woodcock roadside survey planning meeting and started working on logistics for NJ's survey routes.

A. Damminger and M.K. Lisi virtually attended the NJFW's Mast Crop Survey meeting.

A. Damminger virtually attended the NJFW's Annual Southern Region Habitat Biologist Meeting to discuss potential migratory bird habitat management projects. Staff discussed water level adjustments for all six Tuckahoe WMA impoundments along with seeding 1 to 3 of the northernmost impoundments.

A. Damminger participated in a Unity College student assignment interview, discussing wildlife management and regulations pertaining to migratory birds along NJ's coast.

A. Damminger corresponded to the public through calls and emails pertaining to waterfowl complaints and avian influenza reports and complaints.

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 9 bear calls from January 20, 2025 to February 21, 2025; this compares with 7 calls from the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 1 Category II calls and 8 Category III calls for the time period January 20, 2025 to February 21, 2025; this compares to 0 Category I calls, 4 Category II calls and 3 Category III calls for the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received a total of 17 bear calls from January 1, 2025 to February 21, 2025; this compares with 17 calls from the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received 0 Category I calls, 2 Category II calls and 15 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2025 to February 21, 2025; this compares to 0 Category I calls, 5 Category II calls and 12 Category III calls for the same time period in 2024.

As of February 21, 2025, the total number of calls received by the Division remained unchanged at 0.0 percent from the same time period in 2024. Category I incidents remained unchanged at 0.0 percent, Category II calls decreased 60.0 percent and Category III calls increased 25.0 percent for the same time period in 2024. 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	2	Hawk	44
Bear	9	Heron	9
Beaver	4	Osprey	1
Bird	110	Owl	7
Bobcat	3	Pigeon	4
Coyote	20	Raccoon	9
Crow	8	River Otter	1
Deer	47	Skunk	2
Duck	18	Squirrel	5
Eagle	5	Swan	23
Falcon	1	Turkey	6
Fox	35	Unknown	4
Goose	151	Vulture	31
Gull	31	Woodchuck	1

582 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 591 (*black bear calls are not included in this project).