

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

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**March 2025**

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

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

The OFWHF visited Ghost Lake in Jenny Jump State Forest on March 3<sup>rd</sup> in response to a reported fish kill, although only a few fish were found that could not be further examined due to advanced postmortem autolysis.

Fish health certificates from commercial suppliers that sell fish to private interests in New Jersey for stocking were approved for 10 suppliers.

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

Glass eels collected by NJDEP Marine Fisheries and Barnegat Bay Partnership during the annual eel survey were obtained by the OFWHF for future histopathological examination and ancillary diagnostics as necessary for comparison with the findings from the 2024 survey.

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

**Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance**

New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife is monitoring highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds. State officials are working with partners to test suspected cases when warranted and collaborating with municipalities to safely dispose of dead birds. Testing by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory has confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (EA H5) in snow geese in Warren and Salem Counties. As of March 26<sup>th</sup>, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife has received over 1,500 reports involving over 3,200 sick or dead wild birds during this time. During this resurgence, presumptive positive tests results have been detected in Canada goose, snow goose, mallard, northern shoveler, northern pintail, mute swan, great black-backed gull, dark-eyed junco, common grackle, American crow, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, red-shouldered hawk, snowy owl, turkey vulture, and bald eagle. Evidence suggests that HPAI is widespread in wild birds in New Jersey and is expected to be present even in areas where there has not been a confirmed positive. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, we launched the [Wild Bird Disease Reporting Form](#) to receive public reports involving sick or dead wild birds and updated the F&W HPAI webpages.

**Necropsies**

- This month, Dr. Connelly performed necropsies on 3 bobcats, 1 snowy owl, and 2 white-tailed deer. Chronic wasting disease samples were collected from 2 clinical wild deer. HPAI samples were collected from 23 wild birds.

**Miscellaneous Activities**

- Dr. Connelly attended the biweekly NJ Interagency Call on H5N1 on March 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly attended the HPAI Working Group meeting on March 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Dr. Connelly attended black bear den work to collect blood from cubs on March 18<sup>th</sup> (negative controls for sarcoptic mange serosurvey).

**Non-Project Activities**

- Dr. Connelly performed a forensic necropsy on a bobcat.
- Dr. Connelly aided with investigations involving HPAI spillover events to domestic cats and captive wildlife.