

OFFICE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH AND FORENSICS

MONTHLY REPORT

April 2025

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

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

Lake Hopatcong Spring Survey

Largemouth Bass from the spring survey of Lake Hopatcong by Justin Rozema/Freshwater Fisheries were received on April 18, 2025. Gross examinations were unremarkable; histopathology and ancillary diagnostics are pending.

Two Walleye from Lake Hopatcong with cutaneous lesions were also received from Justin Rozema/Freshwater Fisheries on April 18, 2025. Histopathology is pending.

Bullhead catfish with orocutaneous lesions from Lake Hopatcong were received from Justin Rozema/Freshwater Fisheries on April 23 (2 fish), April 25 (1 fish) and April 26, 2025 (6 fish). Histopathology is pending.

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

American Eel Survey

The collection of glass eels/elvers by Barnegat Bay Partnership and Rutgers University continued in April 2025, and the eels were received by the OFWHF for histopathological examination.

Navesink River Menhaden Mortality

The OFWHF visited Swimming River Park on the Navesink River in Red Bank on April 25 in response to a reported severe Menhaden mortality, although fish could not be collected for examination due to low tide. The site was revisited on April 28 at peak high tide and 23 live menhaden were collected for examination. The fish had abnormal swimming behavior characterized by horizontal positioning and continuous swimming in wide circles. The majority of the fish had a mild to severe cutaneous anchor worm infection, although examination of the gills, brains, and viscera were considered unremarkable. Ancillary diagnostics are pending.

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

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance

Beginning in April, suspect cases of HPAI in wild birds have been decreasing. State officials continue to work with partners to test suspected cases when warranted. The 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 and in mallards in Burlington County. As of April 25th, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife has received over 1,660 reports involving over 3,700 sick or dead wild birds during this time. During this resurgence, preliminary positive tests results have been detected in Canada goose, snow goose, bufflehead, 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, barn owl, turkey vulture, and bald eagle.

Necropsies

Dr. Connelly performed necropsies on 6 bobcats, 5 bald eagles, 2 peregrine falcons, 2 red foxes, 1 fisher, and 35 gray foxes. Samples from gray foxes and fisher were contributed to a Northeast regional health assessment on these species. HPAI samples were collected from 9 wild birds and 5 wild mammals. CWD samples were collected from 1 hit-by-car white-tailed deer.

Dr. Groff examined one bog turtle, and 2 box turtles found dead by ENSP.

Miscellaneous Activities

- Dr. Connelly attended the Governor's Office H5N1 Interagency Call on April 3rd and 17th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Monthly Animal Health Meeting on April 10th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire from April 21st – 24th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Health Committee Meeting on April 22nd.
- Dr. Connelly attended the HPAI Working Group Meeting on April 28th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Vector-borne Disease Working Group Meeting on April 30th.
- In collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Health, samples from 35 raccoons, 4 striped skunks, and 1 fox, which all tested negative for rabies virus, were submitted to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study as part of a multi-state assessment of canine distemper virus in wild mesocarnivores.
- Dr. Groff recently published a manuscript as senior author in *Microbiology Resource Announcements* by the American Society of Microbiology: *Complete genome sequence of Photobacterium piscicola strain WVL24019 isolated from a freshwater hatchery-raised rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss)*