

OFFICE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH AND FORENSICS

MONTHLY REPORT

June 2025

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

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

Pequest Hatchery

Investigation into a minimal rainbow trout mortality in G-line at the Hatchery was initiated on June 6. Occasional mortalities were also observed in H-line. Specifically, necropsy examination and bacterial cultures were suggestive of a bacterial infection. Medicated (antibiotic) feed is currently being administered to both lines and the mortality has stabilized or decreased.

Harmony Township Fish Kill

The OFWHF visited a small private pond in Harmony Township on June 12 due to a mortality of carp. Fresh dead or moribund fish were not available for examination, although the cause of death was considered to be secondary to the application of nitrogen in the adjacent farm field with consequent contamination of the pond.

Veterans Lake, Mercerville Fish Kill

A severe fish kill was reported in Veterans Lake in Mercerville on June 19. A site visit by the OFWHF on the same day revealed very turbid water and an abundance of dead gizzard shad, and occasional bullheads and small panfish with advanced decomposition of all fish that precluded necropsy examinations. However, the water quality parameters measured by Mercer County revealed a low dissolved oxygen that was considered the cause of death.

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

American Eel Survey

The collection of glass eels/elvers by the OFWHF in cooperation with Rutgers University/Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve was completed in June 2025.

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

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance

HPAI has not been detected in a wild animal in New Jersey since mid-April. State officials continue to work with partners to test suspected cases when warranted. HPAI has been detected in free-ranging

mammals for the first time in New Jersey – a neurologic adult male red fox recovered from Essex County (Jan. 2025) and a neurologic male red fox kit recovered from Mercer County (April 2025).

Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

27 deer were sampled for CWD during the month of June (all negative).

Necropsies

- Dr. Connelly performed 15 necropsies including 4 bald eagles, 1 peregrine falcon, 1 red-shouldered hawk, 1 red-tailed hawk, 1 American black duck, 1 American oystercatcher, 3 red foxes, 2 white-tailed deer, and 1 bobcat.

Miscellaneous Activities

- Dr. Connelly attended the Monthly Animal Health Meeting on June 12th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Governor's Office H5N1 Interagency Call on June 12th.
- Dr. Connelly attended a webinar on New World Screwworm on June 18th.
- Dr. Connelly attended the Vector-borne Disease Working Group Meeting on June 25th.

Non-Project Activities

- Dr. Connelly responded to a reported wood frog tadpole mortality event on June 16th, and recovered 20+ tadpoles for testing and histopathology.