

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

JUNE 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 2024-25 deer harvest data has been analyzed. All charts, tables and graphs have been updated. Harvest data was uploaded to the agency website.

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 submitted an application for a Permit to Inhibit Wildlife Reproduction which falls under a Community Based Deer Management Plan. It is currently under review.

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

J. Powers and M. Mills attended an Interstate Chronic Wasting Disease meeting (more information under the CWD section).

Objective 4 - To conduct one white-tailed deer research study.

The Deer Team continues to prepare and plan for a future research project dependent on federal grant approval.

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 completed editing and reviewing deer season charts and special area dates for the 2025-26 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

M. McCafferty attended the Gloucester, Ocean, Atlantic, and Camden chapters of the Sportsman Federation to present the results of the 2024-25 Harvest as well as the results for each specific county general updates for the deer project.

M. Mills attended NJ Federation of Sportsman chapter meetings for Middlesex County and Essex County to present the results of the 2024-25 statewide harvest as well as the results for each specific county and general updates for the deer project.

B. Schumm attended the Burlington, Morris, and Union chapters of the Sportsman Federation to present the results of the 2024-25 Harvest as well as the results for each specific county general updates for the deer project.

J. Powers, M. Mills and B. Schumm provided a report including results of a spotlight survey and management recommendations to Liberty State Park.

Objective 6 – Develop, maintain, and make adaptive changes to a white-tailed deer Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan.

The Deer Team and Dr. Patrick Connelly, OWHF, have entered into a partnership with Cornell University in regard to CWD surveillance and monitoring. Best sampling practices will be determined.

J. Powers and M. Mills attended the 2025 Interstate CWD Meeting in Delaware on June 2nd and 3rd. The meeting included round table discussions with other states about CWD response plans and experiences. The second day of the meeting included presentations on nationwide research covering topics from soil remediation to genetic mapping for CWD resistance. From this meeting, the Deer Team and P. Connely are trying a new disposal method to further mitigate fluids from symptomatic or out of state deer from entering the environment.

Deer Project Staff attended a meeting on the CWD Warehouse application regarding data input and use.

Extension Activities

NJFW again received an appropriation of \$160,000 from the state general fund. This allocation must be used to advance deer management in suburban communities. Deer Project launched a grant application similar to the grant in 2024. The closing period for communities to apply was May 9, 2025. Twenty six applications were received. Applications were reviewed and evaluated. Nineteen applicants received funding and all \$160,000 was allocated.

The Deer Project Team has received reports for injured deer, sick deer, and fawns from the public and continues to provide guidance and to work with the pathology team and USDA Animal Control if needed and 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 and the 2024-25 hunting season has concluded.

M. McCafferty attended a meeting at Forsythe Wildlife Refuge to meet with the new deer management program coordinator to discuss management options as well as rules and regulations.

B. Schumm and M. Mills presented to Ocean Township, Monmouth County as well as the Bergen County League of Municipalities on deer management options.

B. Schumm distributed deer management signs to 6 more organizations totaling 3,117 units distributed to date.

Other Activities

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

Deer Project Staff attended a meeting with BWM staff to plan a mast survey.

Deer Project Staff assisted the Waterfowl Team with goose banding efforts in north and south Jersey.

B. Schumm continued working with OIS staff to develop a spotlight survey data recording application. OIS is also assisting Deer Project with the development of online forms for dog tracking permits.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

James Sloan, Principal Biologist
Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I
Tim Ruth, Biologist Trainee
Peter Stark, Senior Biologist
Alexandrea Nickel, 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

Garris conducted ruffed grouse drumming routes in Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties. A total of 11 separate ruffed grouse drumming routes were conducted from April 15 to the current date. Each of the 11 routes were run twice, each time on different days, one time from stop 1 to the end and then one time from the last stop to the beginning. Each route was run beginning ½ hour before sunrise and each route generally takes about 2 ½ hours to complete. The route consists of consecutive stops ½ mile apart with a 4-minute listening period at each stop.

All 22 routes were completed. Ruffed grouse were heard drumming on 5 of the routes with a total of 8 individual grouse heard.

Wild Turkey

Wild Turkey Research Project Update-
North Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 21

We had 5 telemetry unit batteries die during this reporting period. Our telemetry units have an approx. lifespan of ~18 months. These 6 units were from the 2024 winter trapping season.

4 hens are currently incubating and 4 hens have had successful nests.

South Study Area

Current number of hen turkeys on air: 40

3 hens started incubating and 9 hens have had successful nests.

J.Sloan met with Marc Buentjen, e-Obs, on June 4th to discuss availability of telemetry units for the 2026 trapping season, current problems with units, and updates on new technologies/programming with the current units.

American Woodcock

No report

Beaver and River Otter

Information on beaver and river otter nuisance/damage reports was requested and received from USDA APHIS. A total of 142 reports of beaver/otter nuisance and/or damage have been recorded for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025) as of late May. The final data summary from USDA will be available mid-July.

Coyote Harvest

A total of 3 coyotes taken incidentally to spring turkey hunting were reported to the Automated Harvest System (AHRS) during the segment. All 3 were taken in Middle Township, Cape May County. All 3 were typical females.

A database of coyote nuisance incidents and/or sightings for FY 2025 was requested and received from USDA APHIS and summarized. A total of 292 sightings and nuisance reports have been recorded as of late May. The final data summary from USDA will be available mid-July.

Fisher

Data review of trail camera footage is ongoing.

Telemetry monitoring efforts continue for 1 adult female fisher.

Gray Fox Harvest

No report

Gray Fox/Fisher Multistate Conservation Grant

No report

Trapper Harvest Survey

No report

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)

T. Ruth participated in a survey on the Northeast State's current pheasant and quail stocking programs. Answers were submitted to the Chair Mike Dye, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and will later be compiled in the Technical Committees annual report.

National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee

No report

Initiative (SPI).

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)

The 49th Annual Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee meeting will be held September 8-12 at a venue in Jefferson Twp, Morris County. P. Stark and R. Ferraro are assisting the committee chair with final preparations.

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.

J. Garriss assisted the Waterfowl Project with scouting and locating Canada geese in Hunterdon, Warren and Sussex counties for the upcoming capture and banding effort in mid to late June.

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 answered questions and provided input and identified various species of wildlife and scat from pictures/videos/audio and conversations with constituents.

J. Sloan met with Vincent Bonica, Superintendent, Wharton, Parks and Forestry, on June 11th to discuss a joint project between NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, NJDEP Parks and Forestry, and the National Wild Turkey Federation. This project will include brood rearing habitat plantings on certain food strips found within Wharton State Forest. Exact location and acreages are currently being discussed and reviewed by partners.

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS - INVESTIGATION I

Austin Damminger, Senior Biologist

Mary Kate Lisi, Biologist Trainee

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Preseason Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Banding

Program staff completed preseason banding of Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada geese. A total of 1,467 Canada geese were leg banded including 973 adults (482 female; 490 male; 1 unknown) and 494 goslings (277 female; 217 male) from 18 – 27 June. Captures were made at 38 sites in 13 counties. 832 Canada geese banded in previous years were recaptured. The band distribution was reasonably geographically proportional to the distribution of geese observed during the Breeding Waterfowl Survey. An effort was also made to band birds across the various landscape types (i.e. rural, tidal marsh, suburban, urban) in the state. The banding goal was 1,300 geese, which represents about 1.5% of the state's resident population of Canada geese. The banded sample targeted 67% adult geese and 33% goslings as outlined in the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Management Plan. All banding objectives were met, with the adult to gosling ratio, 66% adult and 34% goslings. Recoveries of banded geese will provide information on the proportion, timing, distribution and derivation of the Canada goose population (Resident versus Migrant Populations) that are harvested during the hunting season. Recapture data from live, previously banded birds, play a critical role in calculating annual survival rates (e.g. Beston et al. 2014). Staff from NJFW Wildlife Services, Turkey Project, Deer Project, and Nongame along with interns and volunteers from Cape May NWR, Forsythe NWR, and Great Swamp NWR provided critical logistical and labor needs. Banding data were entered into the appropriate software and sent to the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory.

References:

Beston, J. A., T. C. Nichols, P. M. Castelli, and C. K. Williams. 2014. Factors affecting survival of Atlantic flyway resident population Canada geese in New Jersey. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 78:612–619.

2025 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey

During the spring of 2025, NJ Fish and Wildlife (NJFW) implemented a statewide Conservation Order (CO) for light geese under the authority of the US Fish and Wildlife Service as promulgated in 50 CFR 21.60(E). 2025 was the 17th consecutive year the CO was held. The CO began the day after the close of the special winter Canada goose season (16 February) and closed 6 April. Participants were permitted to take light geese without bag limits using unplugged guns,

electronic calls, and shooting hours extending to ½ hour after sunset. As part of the Federal requirement, NJFW was responsible for reporting on participation and take. Federal requirements to report the numbers of light geese taken with special methods were suspended following 2015.

NJFW required CO participants to obtain a \$2.00 permit to identify participants. CO participants could only obtain their permits on NJFW's licensing web site. Beginning in 2021, NJFW used a new licensing contractor, and the CO permit was more prominently displayed as part of licensing privileges. Beginning 1 March, participants could report their harvest and hunting activity online. Reminders to report hunting activity were sent by e-mail to permit holders on 11 March, 18 March and 2 April. Online harvest reports closed on 1 May.

1,354 CO permits were issued in 2025. The harvest survey response was 35% and e-mail reminders have clearly boosted the response rate during the past 4 years. We conducted a phone survey of random non-respondents (NR; $n=81$ contacts from 344 calls) on 15 May. We calculated total estimates by summing reports from hunter survey respondents ($n=475$) with derived estimates from NR ($n=879$). No prestige bias (i.e. correction factor) was applied to either harvest estimate.

Participants spent 933 days pursuing light geese and an estimated 2,440 light geese were harvested. The weighted estimate of permit holders who participated in the CO was 26%. The harvest estimate was similar to the record low harvest estimate from 2023. Light geese were never abundant at any time during winter 2024 in NJ and the spring migration through the state was rapid. Further, many fewer light geese use Delaware Bay marshes (all public land) during spring when compared to a decade or more ago. Rather, light geese spend most of late winter-early spring in farm fields on private land further inland. This makes pursuing geese much more difficult since the birds' use of agricultural land is much more unpredictable making hunt planning difficult.

Preseason Duck Banding

Trap setup and baiting for preseason duck banding operations began. Preseason banding will continue through September.

Objectives 3 and 4 – Research studies

Migration chronology, breeding distribution, and winter site fidelity of Atlantic Population of Canada geese

As part of a collaborative Atlantic Population Canada goose study with the Atlantic Flyway, Canadian Wildlife Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and University of Delaware, A. Dammingier prepped and shipped 146 (130 new and 16 redeployment) GPS collars to Canada. These collars will be deployed in August during capture and marking operations of arctic nesting geese on the Ungava Peninsula and Hudson Bay, Canada.

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

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 198 bear calls from May 20, 2025 to June 21, 2025; this compares with 365 calls from the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received 7 Category I calls, 63 Category II calls and 127 Category III calls for the time period May 20, 2025 to June 21, 2025; this compares to 13 Category I calls, 116 Category II calls and 235 Category III calls for the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received a total of 473 bear calls from January 1, 2025 to June 21, 2025; this compares with 705 calls from the same time period in 2024.

The black bear unit received 31 Category I calls, 170 Category II calls and 271 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2025 to June 21, 2025; this compares to 32 Category I calls, 282 Category II calls and 390 Category III calls for the same time period in 2024.

As of June 21, 2025, the total number of calls received by the Division decreased 32.9% percent from the same time period in 2024. Category I incidents decreased 3.1 percent, Category II calls decreased 39.7 percent and Category III calls decreased 30.5 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	4	Hawk	4
Beaver	12	Nutria	1
Bird	19	Opossum	1
Black Bear	198	Otter	5
Bobcat	6	Owl	1
Chipmunk	1	Rabbit	4
Coyote	24	Raccoon	27
Crow	1	Raven	1
Deer	112	Skunk	2
Dove	2	Snake	3

Duck	6	Squirrel	3
Eagle	1	Swan	6
Fox	73	Turkey	5
Frog	1	Turtle	5
Goose	16	Unknown	5
Gray Fox	2	Vulture	1
Gull	3	Woodchuck	10

367 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 565 (*black bear calls are not included in this project).