

Endangered and Nongame Species Program
Monthly Report for 16 December – 15 January, 2021

Staff:

John Heilferty, Chief
Kathy Clark, Supervising Zoologist
Jeanette Bowers-Altman, Principal Zoologist
Christina “Kashi” Davis, Environmental Specialist II
Amanda Dey, Principal Zoologist
Gretchen Fowles, GIS Specialist
MacKenzie Hall, Environmental Specialist II
Emily Heiser, Assistant Biologist
Sharon Petzinger, Senior Zoologist
Bill Pitts, Senior Zoologist
Kris Schantz, Principal Zoologist
Robert Somes, Senior Zoologist
Brian Zarate, Senior Zoologist

Administration – J. Heilferty

As of 16 March 2020, all ENSP staff are working from home and instituting social distancing in the course of our work to minimize spread of the novel coronavirus.

Landscape Project – J. Heilferty

ENSP staff coordinated with the Office of Fish and Wildlife Information Systems regarding revisions to the Landscape Project mapping.

Habitat Change Analysis Project (HCAP) –S. Petzinger

No new report.

Technical Guidance & Policy/Planning – all staff

Staff consulted on DEP land-use project reviews as requested.
Staff coordinated on the review of an offshore wind federal consistency application.
Staff attended an NRCS meeting to discuss updates to standards.
Staff provided training to Bureau of Lands Management staff regarding use of the ENSP’s rare, threatened and endangered species data and Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) project.

Biotics Database – G. Fowles

Biotics staff continue to work on developing the NJ Wildlife Tracker online submittal application in collaboration with the Bureau of GIS, that will work as seamlessly as possible with new customized batch upload tools for the Biotics database that staff completed earlier this year in collaboration with NatureServe. The remainder of the backend of the application continues to be developed, including additional mobile friendly forms for the public to use and for biologist review of submitted records.

G. Fowles completed the interim federal aid report for Biotics. Notable was that the fewest records in at least 15 years were entered into the Biotics database in 2020. ENSP continues to struggle with lack of staff and computers to adequately handle the incoming data flow, particularly as they convert to an all-electronic system.

Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) – G. Fowles, B. Zarate, M. Hall

The Roads and Wildlife Working Group made initial outreach to the NJ Department of Agriculture's Conservation Committee to address concerns over the use of plastics and wildlife-entangling materials in soil erosion control practices, following up from the recent multi-state web meeting on this topic.

M. Hall sent out a CHANJ Listserv post in early January that described some of the 2020 CHANJ highlights. The CHANJ Team also completed the interim SWG CHANJ federal report for 2020. The team worked with CWF to finalize a CHANJ Story Map that CWF has been developing aimed at a school-age audience. Lastly, G. Fowles and B. Zarate were invited to participate in a new AFWA Transportation working group, specifically a community of practice on transportation ecology that will be meeting quarterly starting in 2021. G. Fowles and B. Zarate were also invited to give a presentation on NJ's transportation and wildlife efforts at the first meeting.

Habitat Conservation Management on Public Lands – All staff

A revised bid to conduct habitat work in Stand 12 on Sparta Mountain WMA was submitted and accepted.

Staff participated in a NJ/DE Tidal Marsh Working Group meeting with USFWS staff and conservation partners, an effort that may inform the need for and/or design of future projects on state lands.

Species Status Review – K. Clark

Staff worked on consolidating the status review results into a format for making recommendations for listing changes.

State Wildlife Action Plan – All staff

K. Schantz completed the interim federal aid report (State Wildlife Grant).

HERPTILES

Snake Fungal Disease – K. Schantz

No new report.

Snakes – K. Schantz

Collection and compilation of the venomous snake response team information (time/mileage sheets, response activity and sighting report forms) continued in preparation for the ENSP's federal aid report. K. Schantz completed the snake portion of the State Wildlife Grant report.

K. Schantz continued a literature review and drafting a guidance document regarding the dangers of snake entanglement and subsequent mortality from soil erosion control materials that include netting made of plastics and other synthetic materials. The ENSP has reached out to the Executive Secretary of USDA's Soil Conservation Districts to pursue future discussions with them and NJ DOT regarding replacing such materials with biodegradable products.

K. Schantz continued to work with research partners to obtain the necessary supplies for the 2021 field season's corn snake study.

SGCN Turtles – B. Zarate and B. Pitts

B. Zarate participated in regional coordination calls for box turtle RCN, spotted turtle CSWG/RCN, wood turtle RCN/CSWG, and bog turtle CSWG, regional, and SSA. It was announced this reporting period that a new CSWG for wood turtle was approved by FWS and NJ will be receiving over \$120K in funds to complete work over the next three years.

Planning for field work for bog, wood, and box turtles is taking place, including surveys that will be done by staff, volunteers, and permittees.

ENSP reptile and amphibian staff met to discuss current and future project ideas and to communicate any challenges or opportunities in their work.

Eastern Tiger Salamander – B. Pitts

K Clark identified new potential pools at a recently acquired State property, and is exploring introducing egg masses from existing nearby pools that may be less secure.

Diamondback Terrapins - J. Bowers-Altman and B. Zarate

B. Zarate and J. Bowers-Altman reviewed several coastal projects for impacts to terrapins and beneficial use of dredge material to create/enhance nesting areas.

MAMMALS

Bobcat Project – G. Fowles

DFW responded to 2 trapped bobcats during this period. G. Fowles completed an interim report for the bobcat project under the PR Species of Greatest Conservation Need Mammal Research and Management grant for 2020. G. Fowles reviewed the thesis and participated in the thesis presentation and defense of a University of Delaware Master's Degree student, with whom ENSP has been collaborating on bobcat research. G. Fowles plans to continue to collaborate with the student and her advisor to refine the scenario modeling, which is one component of her research.

Bat Conservation – M. Hall

M Hall participated in a web workshop about the use and potential for automated telemetry stations (i.e., Motus) at off-shore wind energy facilities. Nanotags compatible with this technology have recently been made small enough for migratory bats to carry.

Federal grant reports for the 2020 calendar year were completed.

Allegheny Woodrat – G. Fowles

G. Fowles completed an interim report for the Allegheny woodrat project under the PR Species of Greatest Conservation Need Mammal Research and Management grant for 2020. G. Fowles also led the bi-monthly regional woodrat working group call, which included updates from NJ, PA, OH, NC, IN, and VA on 2020 work completed and possibilities for collaborations in 2021.

BIRDS

American Kestrel – B. Pitts

B. Pitts met with Raritan Headwaters (RH) staff and a landowner in Somerset County to install two new nest boxes. Morris County Parks staff also recently reached out about installation of boxes that

were planned prior to COVID. New boxes are being constructed as part of an Eagle Scout project, and ENSP will continue to coordinate on their installation and monitoring.

Colonial Waterbirds – C. Davis

C. Davis attended an update meeting on the habitat restoration/resiliency efforts taking place on Gull and Sturgeon Islands. C. Davis worked on coordinating cormorant control at Gull Island for spring 2021. C. Davis began bid process for helicopter rental for aerial survey in spring 2021.

Beach-Nesting Birds - C. Davis & E. Heiser

No new report.

Bald Eagle Monitoring - K. Clark

The DFW-ENSP released the annual report of the Bald Eagle Project, and the DEP Press Office made a [statewide press release](#). The release was also sent as a listserve message.

The 2021 nesting season is underway with the first few pairs incubating in the second week of January. Volunteer nest monitors, who contributed over 3,000 hours to the project in 2020, will be monitoring their nests from January through early summer.

Among recent injury or mortality events, one was notable: the female known to nest at a Pennsauken nest was banded with only a federal band (lacking a green state band) was found dead near the nest. Her band revealed that we had banded her in 2011 at a nest on Oradell Reservoir in Bergen County. We had to treat a cyst on her leg, which was the reason for not attaching a second band. She nested in Pennsauken for at least the last three years.

Peregrine Falcon Monitoring – K. Clark

The annual report was completed for the federal aid report and a summary was distributed to project volunteers and cooperators. The summary will also be posted on the DFW website.

K. Clark compiled a 20-year dataset on nests, nest success, and band encounters for a USFWS-led status assessment of peregrine falcons nationwide. As one of six pilot states, we also provided feedback on the scope and difficulty of the data request.

Osprey Monitoring – K. Clark

No new report.

Other Raptors – K. Clark

K. Clark organized meetings with Cape May County MUA to scope out potential locations for barn owl nest boxes on suitable county land.

Migratory Shorebirds – A. Dey

Scrub-shrub/Open Field birds (GWWA) – S. Petzinger

S. Petzinger conducted a site visit on private lands to assess it for enrollment in WLFW.

Secretive Marsh Birds– C. Davis & E. Heiser

C. Davis began planning 2021 Black Rail survey, including beginning hiring process for a technician, recruiting survey contractors, and making plans for survey routes and acoustic unit locations. E.

Heiser worked on securing funding for a technician for a Salt Marsh Sparrow survey, in close coordination with the statewide SHARP effort.

Monitoring Avian Productivity & Survivorship (MAPS) – S. Petzinger

Nothing to report

Regional & National Bird Coordination – S. Petzinger

Nothing to report

INVERTEBRATES & AQUATICS

Freshwater Mussels/Shortnose Sturgeon/Aquatics – J. Bowers-Altman

As requested by the DLRP, J. Bowers-Altman reviewed and commented on a proposed instream project relating to impacts to listed freshwater mussels.

J. Bowers-Altman provided information to the Brook Floater Working Group regarding NJ project needs for possible inclusion in an upcoming Comp-SWG proposal.

Pollinator Conservation – R. Somes

Nothing to report

Lepidoptera- R. Somes

R. Somes attended several virtual meetings related to the Appalachian Grizzled Skipper Research Project. This project is a multistate effort led by the USGS to determine the current status and distribution of this species.

Odonata- R. Somes

Nothing to report

Coleoptera – R. Somes

Nothing to report