

BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY REPORT

May 2023

Carole Stanko, Chief

NEW JERSEY WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT GRANT NO. W-68-R

STUDY PLAN I. WHITE-TAILED DEER

Jodi Powers, Principal Wildlife Biologist

Megan Mills, Assistant Biologist (Northern Region)

Megan McCafferty, Assistant Biologist (Southern Region)

Brian Schumm, Biologist Trainee

Annual Deer Harvest (Job I-A)

Project staff continues to compile 2022-23 hunting season data to collect and compare harvest reports with previous years in an effort to assess how a deer regulation simplification would impact harvest.

Hunting and Fishing Digest

Project staff reviewed the first draft of the Digest and provided several edits and comments to Chief Stanko.

Game Code

Project staff spent considerable time analyzing current and past years data for upcoming Game Code proposed changes.

Project staff met internally with Chief Stanko, AD Barno, and AC Golden to discuss possible proposed changes.

Special Areas

Project staff continued open communication with Special Areas as we share 2022-23 harvest data.

Extension Activities

M. McCafferty attended the Ocean, Gloucester, and Cumberland County chapters of the NJ Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs to present the results of the 2022-23 harvest and the results for each specific county.

M. Mills attended the Union, Bergen, Middlesex, and Monmouth County chapters of the NJ Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs to present the results of the 2022-23 harvest and the results for each specific county.

Other Activities

M. Mills, M. McCafferty, and J. Gyurcsak collected additional ages from frozen deer samples at the Central Region Office. All ages have been entered into the 2022-23 harvest database.

M. Mills and M. McCafferty began to record inventory to be able to prepare for the upcoming CWD sampling season.

Project staff submitted butcher invoices for payment for collection of hunter-harvested deer heads for CWD sampling.

B. Schumm made deer harvest graphic for social media posts.

Community Based Plan for Management of Suburban Deer Populations: Job I-C

Nothing to report.

STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
James Sloan, Senior Biologist
Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I
Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee
Alexandrea Nickel, Seasonal Technician
Shelby Gravatt, 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.

Hunter and Trapper Harvests

As of May 16, 2023, a total of 517 coyote harvest mortalities have been reported through the Automated Harvest Report System (AHRs) by calls placed to NJ Fish and Wildlife offices or

through the 2022-23 Trapper Harvest Survey. This total surpasses the previous record, from fiscal year (FY) 2022, when 513 coyote mortalities were recorded by 5/17/2022.

While coyote trapping and the special permit hunting season both ended on March 15, coyotes may be legally harvested incidental to the spring turkey season and mortalities will continue to be recorded until the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2023.

During the reporting period, a total of 10 coyote mortalities were reported. Of this total, 7 were harvested by shotgun incidental to hunting turkeys during the spring wild turkey season which began on April 22. Three additional coyotes were reported as vehicle mortalities. Coyote mortalities were reported from Cumberland (2), Gloucester (2), Ocean (3), and Warren (3) counties.

Beaver and River Otter

Northern Bobwhite

No report

American Woodcock

J. Sloan, L. DiPiano, J. Garriss, and S. Gravatt concluded 9 American Woodcock Singing-ground Surveys in Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Salem, and Sussex Counties. Results were submitted to USFWS's Webless Survey Coordinator.

Ruffed Grouse

No Report

Wild Turkey

Fisher

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 Technical Committee (NBTC)

J. Sloan met with John Morgan, NBGI Director, to discuss New Jersey's FY23 contributions and membership fees.

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)

Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee (NEFRTC)

Through committee correspondence, P. Stark learned of and attended a virtual meeting on 5/22/2023 to discuss the potential of a Multi-State Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) to

investigate muskrat population declines in the U.S. The meeting was hosted by several members of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. In attendance were representatives from Kentucky, New Jersey, and North Carolina, as well as several researchers from the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS).

Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEUGBTC)

No report

National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee

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. Sloan reviewed turkey harvest reporting data and resolved edit issues.

J. Sloan provided 2023-24 NJ Hunting and Trapping Digest edits to Chief Stanko.

P. Stark attended the trapping committee meeting of the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs on May 1.

WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist
Lisa Clark, Senior Biologist
Austin Dammingier, Biologist Trainee

Objective 1 – Migratory game bird monitoring programs

Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey

Division personnel and cooperators completed the New Jersey portion of the annual Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey. All Atlantic Flyway states from New Hampshire to Virginia have participated in this survey since 1989. Results of this survey are used to document changes in the abundance and distribution of the primary breeding waterfowl species in the Atlantic Flyway. Survey data are also used in conjunction with other waterfowl population data to set waterfowl hunting seasons.

In New Jersey, this survey was completed by recording waterfowl observed in 105 randomly located, one square kilometer plots, that are located throughout the state. Plots were completed from 13 April to 11 May. Data were submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for compilation. Results will be available in the next monthly segment.

2023 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey

During the spring of 2023, 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). 2023 was the 15th 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 8 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, the NJFW was responsible for reporting on participation and take.

NJFW required CO participants to obtain a \$2.00 permit as a provision to conduct the harvest survey. CO participants could only obtain their permits on NJFW's licensing web site. Beginning 1 March, participants could report their harvest and hunting activity online. Reminders to report hunting activity and harvest went out by e-mail to permit holders on 2 March and 2 April. Online harvest reports closed on 1 May.

1,397 CO permits were issued. The harvest survey response rate was 29% and e-mail reminders appear to have boosted the response rate both in 2022 and 2023. NJFW also experienced higher reporting during 2019 when a reminder was sent. We conducted a phone survey of random non-respondents (NR; $n=80$ contacts from 206 calls) on 3-4 May. We calculated total estimates by summing reports from hunter survey respondents ($n=412$) with derived estimates from NR ($n=985$). No prestige bias (i.e. correction factor) was applied to either harvest database.

Participants expended 739 days pursuing light geese and an estimated 2,339 light geese were harvested. These estimates were by far the lowest on record for NJ since the CO began but this was not surprising. Light geese were never abundant at any time during winter 2023 in NJ and the spring migration through the state was rapid. It also seems that many fewer light geese now stage in Delaware Bay marshes (all public land) when compared to a decade or more ago. Rather, light geese spend most late winter-early spring in farm fields further inland. This makes pursuing geese much more difficult since they are always on private land while on farm fields and the birds use individual farm fields in a much more unpredictable fashion making hunt planning difficult.

Objective 2 – Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures

T. Nichols coordinated Atlantic Flyway personnel needs for Atlantic Population Canada Goose Monitoring Programs in summer Atlantic Population Canada goose banding on the Ungava peninsula of northern Quebec.

Objective 5 – To provide technical guidance for enhancement and acquisition of migratory game bird habitats.

Staff initiated a slow drawdown on 22 May to 2 impoundments at Tuckahoe WMA. The impoundments will be managed as a moist-soil unit for migratory birds. Staff will continue monitoring water levels throughout the growing season.

Objective 6 – Disseminate information on migratory game bird and habitat management to the public.

A. Damminger and T. Nichols updated second draft language for the Hunting Season Digest.

Other

L. Clark participated in an onsite stakeholder meeting to review plans for a proposed habitat restoration project at Paulinskill WMA.

T. Nichols provided a peer review for a manuscript on mallard nesting ecology in New England for the Journal of Wildlife Management.

A. Damminger assisted ENSP on their Migratory Shorebird Aerial Survey as navigator. The survey focuses on estimating red knots and ruddy turnstones.

Black Bear Research Project

Mike Madonia, Principal Wildlife Biologist

Joe Burke, Wildlife Technician

Emilia Topp, Biologist Trainee

Michael Patrick, Wildlife Technician

Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee

Maureen Kinlan, Biologist Trainee

Ryan Ferraro, Biologist Trainee

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 186 bear calls from April 20, 2023 to May 21, 2023; this compares with 279 calls from the same time period in 2022.

The black bear unit received 9 Category I calls, 119 Category II calls and 58 Category III calls for the time period April 20, 2023 to May 21, 2023; this compares to 24 Category I calls, 121 Category II calls and 132 Category III calls for the same time period in 2022.

The black bear unit received a total of 332 bear calls from January 1, 2023 to May 21, 2023; this compares with 490 calls from the same time period in 2022.

The black bear unit received 23 Category I calls, 194 Category II calls, and 114 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2023 to May 21, 2023; this compares to 55 Category I calls, 230 Category II calls and 202 Category III calls for the same time period in 2022.

As of May 21, 2023, the total number of calls received by the Division decreased 32.2 percent from the same time period in 2022. Category I incidents decreased 58.1 percent, Category II calls decreased 15.6 percent and Category III calls decreased 43.5 percent for the same time period in 2022. This data does not include 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	1	Mountain Lion	2
Bear	186	Muskrat	1
Beaver	18	Opossum	5
Bees	1	Pigeon	3
Bird	23	Rabbit	7
Bobcat	7	Raccoon	28
Coyote	38	Raven	1
Crow	2	Skunk	5
Deer	32	Snake	1
Duck	9	Snapping Turtle	1

Fisher	1	Squirrel	8
Flying Squirrel	1	Swan	2
Fox	92	Turkey	14
Goose	15	Unknown	11
Gull	1	Vulture	6
Hawk	1	Woodchuck	17
Mink	1	Woodpecker	2
Mole	1		

361 calls for the Federal Aid Project.

Total calls: 547 (*black bear calls are not included in this project).