

**Endangered and Nongame Species Program**  
**Monthly Report for 16 November – 15 December 2021**

**Staff:**

John Heilferty, Chief  
Kathy Clark, Supervising Zoologist  
Jeanette Bowers-Altman, Principal Zoologist (*retired as of 1 September 2021*)  
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 November 8, the Department’s return to office-based work took effect.  
Staff biologists are drafting federal reports and compiling federal-required match.

**Landscape Project** – J. Heilferty

No new report.

**Habitat Change Analysis Project (HCAP)** –S. Petzinger

No new report.

**Technical Guidance & Policy/Planning** – all staff

Staff continued to provide review and guidance regarding offshore wind energy planning.

Select staff are reviewing a draft potential DEP policy regarding minimizing the use of soil erosion and sediment control products that incorporate plastic and other synthetic material-made netting on DEP owned, leased and managed lands.

Staff attended the NRCS technical committee virtual meeting on December 1, 2021.

Staff initiated discussions and planning regarding ENSP taking over the issuance of DFW Scientific Collecting Permits.

**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. The final back-end scripting continues to be tested and updated to ensure data are properly exported to a local geodatabase and the schema works as seamlessly as possible with the tools used to upload data into Biotics. A Dashboard enabling ENSP biologists to review submitted species observations online is now being utilized.

Final edits were made to the next version of the SOA (version 13), and the datasets were being prepared for release.

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

The CHANJ team met with staff from the Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration to work on finalizing an MOA related to road mitigation funds.

G. Fowles gave a presentation on CHANJ to the Rutgers The Wildlife Society Student Chapter.

G. Fowles participated in a NJ Highlands Conservation Blueprint Workshop to offer feedback on the Conservation Blueprint, which incorporates CHANJ mapping.

The CHANJ team participated in the bi-monthly Roads and Wildlife Working Group meeting. The main topic for discussion was the new Infrastructure Act, particularly the \$350 million Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program. The next meeting will focus on discussing priority projects and a plan for applying for funding collaboratively.

The CHANJ team led a planning kickoff meeting for partners in New Jersey interested in helping to organize the Northeastern Transportation and Wildlife Conference (NETWC) to be held in NJ in September 2022. Partners include ENSP, the South Jersey Transportation Authority, DOT, The Nature Conservancy, Stockton University, and USFWS.

**Habitat Conservation Management on Public Lands** – All staff

On November 19, 2021, staff met with representatives from the NJ Highlands Coalition and NJ Conservation Foundation to discuss proposed activities in Stand 9a on Sparta Mountain WMA. As a result of that meeting, S. Petzinger provided Emile DeVito more information about the draft areas planned for future management that were outlined in the July 2021 Addendum to the Sparta Mountain WMA Forest Stewardship Plan.

One bid was received to conduct the proposed shelterwood cut in Stand 9 on Sparta Mountain WMA.

**Species Status Review** – K. Clark

Staff met with D. Jenkins (hourly) who is working on documents to adopt species status changes that have been recommended since the last adoption in 2012. Taxa team leaders reviewed recommended statuses and common/Latin names for the new lists.

ENSP staff also coordinated with regional partners on the RCN Grant-funded effort to update the northeast region's "Regional Species of greatest Conservation Need" (RSGCN) list.

**State Wildlife Action Plan** – All staff

ENSP staff coordinated with regional partners regarding SWAP revision best practices.

**HERPTILES**

**Snake Fungal Disease** – K. Schantz

No new report.

**Snakes** – K. Schantz

No new report.

**SGCN Turtles** – B. Zarate and B. Pitts

Staff participated in regular monthly coordination calls for bog, wood, and box turtles. Staff began compiling 2021 volunteer match information and data.

**Eastern Tiger Salamander** – B. Pitts

Staff met with volunteers to begin assessing habitat suitability on state WMAs in Cumberland County for eastern tiger salamanders. There are large tracts of preserved land between known populations along the Delaware Bay and north into Atlantic County, and with cooperation between bureaus withing DFW and NGO partners, new pools could be created, augmented, and surveyed between these populations to provide additional connectivity to mitigate against land loss that will occur due to sea level rise. This effort is building on the previous work to provide more connectivity between sites in Cape May County using preserved land and power line ROWs.

**Diamondback Terrapins** - B. Zarate

No new report.

**MAMMALS**

**Bobcat Project** – G. Fowles

There were 2 roadkilled bobcats during the reporting period. The carcasses were retrieved, necropsies performed, and samples taken.

G. Fowles continues to collaborate with the Bureau of Wildlife Management on responding to bobcats trapped during the furbearer trapping season beginning Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>. There were two trapped bobcats reported during the reporting period.

**Bat Conservation** – M. Hall

No new report.

**Allegheny Woodrat** – G. Fowles

Camera monitoring at historic woodrat sites in the Delaware Water Gap continue.

G. Fowles gave a woodrat presentation to a Rutgers Ecology class during the reporting period.

**BIRDS**

**American Kestrel** – B. Pitts

Staff has been updating kestrel GIS to include many new nests that have been active over the past two years. All data will be submitted to Biotics staff for inclusion in SOA files and future updates to Landscape Project mapping.

**Colonial Waterbirds** – C. Davis

No updates

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

No updates

**Bald Eagle Monitoring** - K. Clark

To date, 223 nests have been identified as active, 24 as territorial, and 67 as unknown status. These numbers will be updated as we receive more information. The total number active is similar to the

2020 total of 220 nests, even though 25 new nesting pairs were documented, because the number of unknown-status nests grew. The annual report is in draft.

**Peregrine Falcon Monitoring** – K. Clark

The annual report is in draft form and expected completion is January.

**Osprey Monitoring** – K. Clark

B. Wurst of Conserve Wildlife Foundation compiled results of nesting colony surveys and will provide report of nesting and volunteer contributions.

**Other Raptors** – K. Clark

K. Clark initiated a survey of N. harrier in southern NJ salt marshes for spring, 2022.

**Migratory Shorebirds** – A. Dey

No new report.

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

Nothing to report

**Secretive Marsh Birds** – C. Davis & E. Heiser

E. Heiser worked with ACJV to set up meetings with stakeholders in New Jersey that have knowledge of the marshes. This data contributed information to the Saltmarsh Sparrow Habitat Prioritization Document. The purpose of the document is to drive saltmarsh restoration to benefit Saltmarsh Sparrow conservation in New Jersey. The document is being finalized and provided to ACJV for inclusion in the Saltmarsh Sparrow Plan.

**Regional & National Bird Coordination** – S. Petzinger

Nothing to report.

**INVERTEBRATES & AQUATICS**

**Freshwater Mussels/Aquatics** – R. Somes

J. Heilferty and K. Clark met with DFW staff to discuss the recently awarded Comp-SWG project. R. Somes participated in the Brook Floater Conservation Working Group meeting where upcoming project work was discussed related to a recent Competitive-SWG grant award.

R. Somes participated in the Chinese Pondmussel working group meeting. Upcoming field work needs were discussed for the 2022 field season. There was also an extensive discussion of the need for the State of NJ to develop an Aquatic Nuisance Species plan to deal with the rising threat of aquatic invasive species.

R. Somes conducted several field surveys of Brook Floater habitat in northern NJ.

**Pollinator Conservation** – R. Somes

No new report

**Lepidoptera, Odonata, Coleoptera** – R. Somes

No new report

**Photo of the Month:** Bald eagle photographed in Edgewater, NJ, in November with black band R/7; origin is New Haven, CT, in 2018.

