

Endangered and Nongame Species Program
Monthly Report for 16 April – 15 May 2022

Staff:

John Heilferty, Chief
Kathy Clark, Supervising Zoologist
Christina “Kashi” Davis, Environmental Specialist II
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

J. Heilferty worked on agency planning, and regional actions as part of the Northeast Wildlife Diversity Managers committee.

Landscape Project – J. Heilferty

No new report.

Habitat Change Analysis Project (HCAP) –S. Petzinger

No new report.

Technical Guidance & Policy/Planning – all staff

Staff reviewed applications for Scientific Collecting permits, and issued permits for 2022.
Staff reviewed and commented on DEP land use permit applications, and internal NHR land projects.
S. Petzinger continued to participate in a working group which will advise on ways to enhance powerline rights-of-way managed by PSE&G for wildlife, particularly invertebrates and birds. S. Petzinger completed the online training on climate adaptation planning and practices for wildlife and carbon.
S. Petzinger assessed the Combe Fille S Landfill for breeding grassland birds on May 6, 2022 and detected at least 8 bobolinks, 3 grasshopper sparrows, and one savannah sparrow on the landfill.
K. Clark consulted with USFWS on bald eagle nest permit issues.

Biotics Database – G. Fowles

No new report available.

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

No new report available.

Habitat Conservation Management on Public Lands – All staff

The first of two sets of bird surveys on South Branch WMA – Merck Tract was conducted on May 12. Bird surveys on Sparta Mountain and Weldon Brook WMA will be conducted sometime between May 16 through around June 16.

Species Status Review – K. Clark

No new report.

State Wildlife Action Plan – All staff

No new report.

HERPTILES

Snake Fungal Disease – K. Schantz

No new report.

Snakes – K. Schantz

No new report available.

SGCN Turtles – B. Zarate and B. Pitts

No new report available.

Eastern Tiger Salamander – B. Pitts

Staff from Herpetological associates will survey translocation pools within wildlife management areas in Cumberland County for larval tiger salamanders to assess the success of the project.

Diamondback Terrapins - B. Zarate

Staff are coordinating on a background paper of threats and potential actions that will be developed for review by committee/councils once approved within NJDEP FW.

MAMMALS

Bobcat Project – G. Fowles

No new report available.

Bat Conservation – M. Hall

No new report available.

Allegheny Woodrat – G. Fowles

No new report available.

BIRDS

Colonial Waterbirds – C. Davis

Project is on a temporary hold due to staffing, no update.

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

The beach-nesting bird field season got fully underway, with six seasonals, two interns, and a number of volunteers blanketing the state to fence nesting habitat and begin monitoring birds. Early in the season, this is primarily American oystercatcher and piping plover. Oystercatcher numbers seem comparable to 2021, while plover numbers are down (however, it is too early to determine if this will remain the case). Least terns and black skimmers are just now arriving in the state. C. Davis coordinated all staff work, implemented BMPs in 20+ field sites, provided technical guidance as municipalities grapple with protecting nesting birds, and mounted the response to two severe storm events (one in April, one in May).

Bald Eagle Monitoring - K. Clark

Eagle Project nest monitors have continued checking nests statewide and reporting using NestStory. As of mid-April, 226 nests have been documented as active, including 21 nests that are new in 2022. Staff scheduled eagle nest visits for banding and coordinated access.

Peregrine Falcon Monitoring – K. Clark

As of mid-April, staff and volunteers documented 30 active nests, while other sites remain to be checked.

American Kestrel – B. Pitts

The 2022 Kestrel Nest Box project saw an early start to the season with egg laying beginning in the first week of April; most seasons begin one to two weeks later than this. Additionally, there were around 30 active nests by the third week of April, which again is around a week sooner than peak egg laying begins. To date there have been 89 nesting attempts, with three boxes failing due to predation, and three already hatched. 29 attempts are in Natural Lands boxes, 14 are in Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space boxes, 2 are in Raritan Headwaters boxes, 1 box is from Monmouth County's Big Brook Park, and the remaining 43 are from ENSP boxes. 23 adults have been captured so far, with 13 recaptures and 10 newly banded birds. Staff from Duke Farms has been cooperating on capture and banding of birds on their property.

Osprey Monitoring – K. Clark

No new report.

Other Raptors – K. Clark

No new report.

Migratory Shorebirds –

J. Heilferty finalized contracts for spring field work including shorebird stewards, horseshoe crab egg surveys, aerial surveys, and ground surveillance.

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

Bird surveys for GWWAs and WLFW properties will be conducted sometime between May 16 through around June 16.

Secretive Marsh Birds – C. Davis & E. Heiser

The SHARP seasonal technician, with financial support, began her field season monitoring marsh birds, in particular the saltmarsh sparrow. C. Davis managed the administrative part of her work and made progress in securing an operational boat for her efforts. The black rail project is on hold this year, due to staff constraints.

Regional & National Bird Coordination – S. Petzinger

S. Petzinger attended the monthly AMJV monitoring meeting. Ebird data is being used to model relative abundance and trends for many species. It is possible to have those models done for most SGCN within each state.

INVERTEBRATES & AQUATICS

Freshwater Mussels/Aquatics – R. Somes

No new report available.

Lepidoptera, Odonata, Coleoptera, Pollinating Insects – R. Somes

No new report available.