

# **BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

## **MONTHLY REPORT**

**May 2022**

**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, Biologist Trainee (Northern Region)

Megan McCafferty, Biologist Trainee (Southern Region)

#### **Annual Deer Harvest (Job I-A)**

M. McCafferty and M. Mills reviewed and compiled age data from the previous CWD sampling season. All valid age data was added to the harvest database and the updated database was forwarded to J. Powers.

Project staff compiled harvest data from the 2021-22 deer season and added it to binders containing data from the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons for the Fish and Game Council.

#### **Hunting and Trapping Digest**

M. McCafferty and M. Mills reviewed and made edits to the publisher's first pass of the 2022-23 Hunting and Trapping Digest and forwarded the working document to J. Powers, who reviewed and added additional edits/comments to the digest draft. J. Powers met with Chief Stanko to go over the project's edits/comments.

Project staff attended a meeting to discuss edits to the publisher's first pass of the 2022-23 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

#### **Special Areas**

Project staff continued open communication with Special Areas to prepare for the 2022-23 deer season.

J. Powers began distributing, upon request, 2021-22 final deer harvest data to municipalities.

#### **Extension Activities**

M. Mills compiled historical harvest data for DMZ 7 at the request of T. Sulikowski from Merrill Creek. The data was forwarded to J. Powers for review and was then sent to T. Sulikowski.

## Other Activities

Project staff continues to work on the detailed process of looking up white-tailed deer links from the current website and organizing links to transfer to the new website. Staff attended a virtual website meeting with Oxford.

J. Powers held a project meeting to go over all current website links and review those links to be moved over to the new website.

J. Powers met with Chief Stanko to discuss white-tailed deer current and new website links.

J. Powers forwarded all approved white-tailed deer links for website pages to be transferred to the new website to J. Sloan.

J. Powers met with A. Damminger to go over waterfowl BPI survey plots. A. Damminger will be taking over the plots.

### STUDY PLAN III. UPLAND WILDLIFE AND FURBEARERS

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist

James Sloan, Senior Biologist

Joseph R. Garriss, Wildlife Technician I

Alexandrea Nickel, 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*

##### ***Hunter Harvest Survey***

The New Jersey Hunter Harvest Survey (hereafter, the survey) has been conducted biennially to obtain information regarding hunting activity and harvest for: crow (*Corvus* sp.), pheasant (*Phasianus* spp., pen-raised), bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*, pen-raised), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), rabbit/hare (*Sylvilagus floridanus*/*Lepus* spp.), Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), and woodchuck (*Marmota monax*). Harvest for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallapavo*, fall only) were tallied through the Automated Harvest Report System since harvest reporting is mandatory. The black bear hunting season was closed during 2021-22.

Objectives of the survey were to:

1. Estimate number of hunters and statewide harvest since mandatory reporting is not required for all game species.
2. Estimate the number of hunter days afield.
3. Estimate hunter expenditures (excluding state sale of licenses, stamps, and permits) during the 2021-22 hunting season.

The 2021-22 survey was administered by New Jersey Fish and Wildlife using the Survey Monkey internet-based platform. 63,102 unique firearms license holders were sold in New Jersey during the 2021 calendar year. The survey was sent to individuals who provided an (optional) email address (n = 52,319, 83%) when obtaining a license. All resident and non-resident firearms license types were included in the survey.

Respondents were required to enter their Conservation Identification Number (CID) to authenticate their submission and ensure only one response per hunter was recorded.

A website link to the survey was provided 2–16 March 2022. The survey contained 58 questions; however, participants were prompted to skip sections for species they did not pursue. Respondents were asked specific questions related to their harvest, hunting effort, and economic expenditures. Hunters were asked to provide approximate dollar amount spent during the season, excluding costs of licenses, stamps, and permits.

3,262 surveys were received but removal of duplicate and erroneous submissions yielded 3,054 usable surveys, resulting in a 6% response rate. Eleven percent of respondents indicated they purchased a license but did not hunt, yielding an estimated 55,664 active firearms license holders in New Jersey during the 2021-22 hunting season.

Pheasant (n = 13,103) and/or quail (n = 2,781) hunters spent as estimated 134,55 days afield, spending approximately \$4.3 million while pursuing birds on designated public lands (23 Wildlife Management Areas, Fort Dix, and Delaware Water Gap NRA). An estimated 14,689 hunters spent 105,087 days afield pursuing small game mammals, while contributing \$3.1 million. 46,682 deer hunters spent 1.2 million days afield and contributed approximately \$31.4 million to the state economy. Hunting license, permit, and stamp sales were calculated through the electronic licensing system. During the 2021 calendar year \$7.2 million were generated through the purchase of hunting licenses, permits, and stamps.

Survey estimates indicated that 1,298 hunters pursued crows and harvested 7,437 birds. Hunters took 31,723 pheasants and 5,513 quail of the 57,480 pheasants and 11,000 bobwhite quail released on public lands. Small game mammal harvest was estimated at: 659 gray fox; 6,901 red fox; 21,219 cottontail rabbit/hare; 31,540 gray squirrel; 597 Virginia opossum; 4,058 raccoon; and 20,024 woodchuck. Harvests for species with mandatory self-reporting requirements were: 77 coyote, 36,787 white-tailed deer, and 68 wild turkey during the fall season.

### **Hunter and Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Surveys (Job III-B)**

A total of 6 coyotes harvest mortalities were recorded via AHRS reporting system for the segment. The 6 coyotes were harvested incidental to hunting wild turkeys.

For the 2021-22 coyote seasons there have been a total of 513 coyotes mortalities reported (as of 5/17/22) and a total of 50 gray foxes. The 2022 coyote harvest is a FY new record. The previous high coyote harvest was in 2020 and a total of 400 coyote mortalities were recorded that FY. Coyote trapping and special permit season hunting season ended on March 15. Coyote season opened again concurrent with the Spring Wild Turkey season.

A total of 37% (466/1270) responses to the 2021-22 Trapper Harvest Survey were returned to the project and the data from the responses have been entered into a database. A total of 22 of the mailed Trapper Harvest surveys were returned as undeliverable. The Trapper Harvest Survey response period ended April 15, 2022. Data entry was completed, and the dataset turned over to Project Leader Tony McBride and Biologist Trainee Peter Stark for further analysis and summarization.

#### *Northern Bobwhite*

J. Sloan prepped data collecting material for the National Grassland and Bobwhite Initiative's Coordinated Implementation Programs habitat monitoring that will take place May 15- Aug 15, 2022.

### *American Woodcock*

J. Sloan and L. DiPiano, Bureau of Information and Education, completed the 2022 Woodcock Singing Ground Survey routes assigned to NJ Fish and Wildlife by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Five (5) woodcock were heard on three (3) routes, one (1) in Salem, one (1) Cape May, and (1) in Morris Counties.

### *Ruffed Grouse*

Garris conducted ruffed grouse routes in Passaic, Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties. Several roads on routes have been gated/closed by Delaware Water Gap NRA or NJ Fish and Wildlife in Walpack Township, Sussex County and the problem is ongoing. Alternate survey routes have been established. Routes were run beginning April 18.

### *Wild Turkey*

J. Sloan fixed harvest reporting errors via NJ Fish and Wildlife's Automated Harvest Reporting System. In total, thirty-nine (39) errors were made during this portion of the Spring Gobbler Season.

J. Sloan attended the Hen Wild Turkey Collaboration meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Discussions included telemetry supplier needs and data resources through the University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State University.

### *Sighting Reports*

During the NJ Audubon World Series of Birding fundraiser on May 14-15, 2022, staff members heard 4 and flushed 1 ruffed grouse on/near the Appalachian Trail. Sighting reports were made, and NJ Audubon staff members entered information into eBird.

**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 attended NBTC's Steering Committee meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup> as Chair of the Forestry Subcommittee. Discussions included the current name change of the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative to the National Grassland and Bobwhite Initiative and planning the 9<sup>th</sup> Quail Symposium that will be hosted in August 2022 in Missouri.

J. Sloan and R. Longcor met with John Morgan and Penny Barnhart on May 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss the NBGI Pittman-Robertson sub-recipient business model and discussion of future investments vs. returns.

### *Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee (NEUGBTC)*

J. Sloan attended the Eastern Grouse Working Grouse meeting on April 12-14<sup>th</sup>. Planning for the organization's future path was discussed to establish momentum and administrative support. Meeting notes are still being summarized, but the development of a Steering Committee is final. A draft strategic Regional Grouse Recovery Plan will be developed this year and discussed at the Northeast Upland Game Bird Technical Committee meeting in September 2022.

**Objective 4 – To provide technical guidance to landowners interested in providing wildlife habitat on their lands.**

J. Sloan attended the quarterly meeting at Landis Sewerage Authority on May 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss this year's habitat management plan. Acreage tied to their current Working Lands for Wildlife program will have chemical and mechanical treatments included to meet the requirements of the grant. Growing season prescribed burns may be conducted.

**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 participated in the Internal working group for upcoming forestry plan on Buckshutem and Lenape Farm Wildlife Management Areas on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

J. Sloan was interviewed by Tom P. from ESPN Rack and Fin radio on April 21<sup>st</sup> concerning the upcoming spring gobbler season.

### **Other Activities**

J. Sloan attended NJ Fish and Wildlife's Outdoor Women of New Jersey second annual women's mentored turkey hunt for nine women May 1-3, 2022. This event was made possible through a partnership with Landis Sewerage Authority which provides access to their property, showcasing their recent habitat work. Four turkeys were harvested, and all participants heard gobbles and had incredible action.

## **WATERFOWL - STUDY PLAN IV**

Ted Nichols, Supervising Biologist

Lisa Clark, Senior Biologist

Austin Damminger, 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 14 April to 13 May. Data were submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for compilation. Results will be available in the next monthly segment.

#### *2022 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest Survey*

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). 2022 was the 14th consecutive year the CO was held. The CO began (16 February) the day after the close of the special winter Canada goose season and closed 9 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. Beginning 1 March, participants could report their harvest and activity either online through the license vendor or by mailing a paper activity diary that they received as their CO permit. Reminders to report hunting activity and harvest went out by e-mail to permit holders on March 2 and April 6.

A total of 1,593 CO permits were issued. 33% of permit holders completed the harvest survey. We conducted a phone survey of random non-respondents (NR;  $n=83$  contacts from 214 calls) on 9-10 May. We calculated total estimates by summing reports from hunter survey respondents ( $n=527$ ) and estimates from

NR ( $n=1,066$ ). Participants expended 1,825 days pursuing light geese and an estimated 4,863 light geese were harvested.

## **Objective 2 – Atlantic Flyway Council and Joint Ventures**

T. Nichols participated in the third virtual meeting of the Federal Regulations Working Group. Nichols serves as an AFC representative to the working group whose goal is to devise regulatory procedures to ensure the annual federal migratory bird hunting season regulations are promulgated and published on time. The annual migratory bird regulations have not been published as required in the Federal Register since the change to the federal regulations process in 2016. Nichols shared language from the NJ Game Code which defaults many regulations, such as season dates and bag limits to the Federal Register. Several states in the Atlantic Flyway use a similar process as New Jersey.

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

T. Nichols updated the Canada goose population management page on the Division web site.

Program staff reviewed migratory game bird pages and sites on the agency web site and provided a list to J. Sloan concerning the pages to migrate, delete, or modify, for migration to the new Division web page.

A. Dammingier and T. Nichols updated second draft language for the Hunting Season Digest and attended a staff meeting at the CRO for the topic.

## **Other**

Program staff designed and A. Dammingier produced the 2022-23 Migratory Bird Regulations card.

T. Nichols did the BWM budget with input from project leaders.

T. Nichols coordinated BWM equipment inventory for Mig Bird, Deer, and Upland Gamebird programs.

### **WILDLIFE SERVICES SECTION**

Anthony McBride, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

Mike Madonia, Principal Wildlife Biologist

Joe Burke, Wildlife Technician I

Amy DeCheser, Wildlife Technician I

Emilia Topp, Biologist Trainee

Michael Patrick, Wildlife Technician II

Peter Stark, Biologist Trainee

Ryan Ferraro, Biologist Trainee

## **Bear Control: Lethal and Non-Lethal**

The black bear unit received a total of 264 bear calls from April 20, 2022 to May 21, 2022; this compares with 134 calls from the same time period in 2021.

The black bear unit received 22 Category I calls, 116 Category II calls and 124 Category III calls for the time period April 20, 2022 to May 21, 2022; this compares to 13 Category I calls, 54 Category II calls and 67 Category III calls for the same time period in 2021.

The black bear unit received a total of 473 bear calls from January 1, 2022 to May 21, 2022; this compares with 221 calls from the same time period in 2021.

The black bear unit received 53 Category I calls, 223 Category II calls, and 194 Category III calls for the time period January 1, 2022 to May 21, 2022; this compares to 15 Category I calls, 95 Category II calls and 111 Category III calls for the same time period in 2021.

As of May 21, 2022, the total number of calls received by the Division increased 114.0 percent from the same time period in 2021. Category I incidents increased 253.3 percent, Category II calls increased 134.7 percent and Category III calls increased 74.7 percent for the same time period in 2021. 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.

## **White-tailed Deer Calls and Complaints**

USDA employees immobilized a deer in Voorhees, Camden County that was stuck on a fence. The deer was released on site.

## **Beaver calls and Complaints**

One Beaver Damage Control Permit was issued during the reporting period, in Sussex County.

## **Other Activities**

USDA staff captured and euthanized an aggressive turkey in Southampton, Burlington County.

Unit staff continue to work on the process of preparing information for the new website.

J. Burke surveyed northern region BPI pots for the waterfowl project.

Staff provided information on secondary website links to J. Sloan.

A. McBride and P. Stark attended a NJ Fish and Wildlife Digest meeting.

## **Wildlife Nuisance Complaints/ Technical Guidance (Federal Aid Project)**

### **BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS BY SPECIES**

Bat	3	Otter	1
Bear	264	Owl	1
Beaver	20	Rabbit	2
Bird	20	Raccoon	22
Bobcat	3	Skunk	3
Coyote	37	Squirrel	3
Deer	35	Swan	3
Duck	5	Turkey	13
Fox	80	Turtle	1
Goose	5	Unknown	3
Heron	1	Vulture	2
Muskrat	1	Woodchuck	9
Opossum	5		

**278 calls for the Federal Aid Project.**

**Total calls: 542 (\*black bear calls are not included in this project).**