

NYSCC Fall Convention- Bureau of Wildlife Highlights

WMA Updates – 8/31/2022

Access and Public Use Plans

- Ashland Flats – recently finalized and posted online
- Cranberry Creek – 30-day public comment period opens 9/1
- Plantation Island - 30-day public comment period opens 9/1
- Canadaway Creek - 30-day public comment period closed 3/2
- Hanging Bog - 30-day public comment period closed 3/2

Habitat Management Plan Meetings

Catharine Creek scheduled for November 1st

Partnerships

Region 8 wildlife staff collaborated with Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNYPRISM) on invasive stiltgrass mapping at Rattlesnake Hill in July and herbicide treatment of invasive shrubs at Oak Orchard in May.

WMA Forest Management Projects— Region 8 Sample

In Progress Projects –

- Rattlesnake Hill WMA 90 acre timber sale ongoing, approximately 30% complete.
- 11.5 acre grinding and aspen cut project at Honeoye Creek WMA almost complete.
- 25 acre herbicide project at Northern Montezuma started. To fix ash aftermath forest.
- 10 acre herbicide project at Stid Hill almost complete. To fix ash aftermath forest.

See also; ***Forest management summary***

Hunter Education

Most HEP instructors are back teaching again after COVID and in-person courses are being offered statewide. The online hunter education and bowhunter education courses are still available.

Next Step Courses- The HEP is piloting a limited number of Next Step courses for those who have already completed a hunter education, bowhunter education, or trapper education

certification course and want more education and hands-on experience. Each four-hour course focuses on safety, techniques, and hands-on experience. There is no certification offered with these courses.

Eleven Next Step courses have been scheduled statewide through September. Piloted courses were in bowhunting, rifle, shotgun, crossbow, and land trapping. Registration for these courses has been low, but those who participated have giving us great feedback. We plan to offer many more of these courses starting next spring.

By the Numbers in 2022

Number of in-person courses taught 1/1/22-9/6/22

Hunter Ed – 151 (1,336 students certified)

Bowhunter Ed – 51 (302 students certified)

Trapper Ed – 16

Waterfowl ID – 6

Number of in-person courses currently scheduled between 9/6-12/31

Hunter Ed – 78

Bowhunter Ed – 46

Trapper Ed – 12

Waterfowl ID – 7

Number of in-person courses taught in Oswego County- (Chuck's question)

Hunter Ed – 3 taught

Bowhunter Ed – 1 taught, 1 scheduled for future

Trapper Ed – 1 taught, 1 scheduled for future

Waterfowl ID – 0

Number of students certified in the online hunter education course 1/1/22-9/6/22 – 6,808

Number of students certified in the online bowhunter education course 1/1/22-9/6/22 – 2,843

Wildlife Health

Avian Influenza- As of late August we have confirmed cases in 88 birds of multiple species (primarily waterfowl, raptors, waterbirds and game birds) including 22 bald eagles. Most cases were during spring migration, but there has been a slight uptick again as we approach fall. This is somewhat expected with migration and movement.

SARS Co-V 2 – White-tailed deer have been shown to be readily susceptible to infection by the Corona Virus. Testing of deer in NY has shown varying degrees of COVID in deer with clusters of higher infection rates in some areas such as western NY. More sampling will be conducted in

2022 to better understand distribution. Researchers are also studying possible reasons for clusters and whether deer might serve as a reservoir of the virus.

EHD- After significant EHD outbreaks in the Hudson Valley (2020) and a more widespread outbreak in 2021, we have been monitoring for the disease in 2022. Cases have now been detected in Dover Plains, Dutchess County in early August, 2 additional in Rensselaer County, (Schodack and Nassau) late August, and more recently in Suffolk County. EHD is caused by biting midges and doesn't transmit between deer. It does not affect human. We will continue to monitor reports of sick or dead deer. The disease subsides with the first killing frost.

Small Game

Upland game birds- DEC recently adopted new turkey regulations that will open the first regular spring turkey hunt on Long Island and will modernize shot restrictions to allow for up to size #9 shot. The new shot size restrictions will take effect in the fall of 2022 and the inaugural Spring Turkey season on Long Island (WMU 1C) will begin in May 2023. The bag limit for WMU 1C will be 1 bearded bird.

New for 2022, BOW moved to an online summer turkey survey. The effort allows for participants to submit precise location information when they observe turkeys. As a result of the transition, the number of turkey observations reported to DEC was more than doubled (~1,000 to more than 2,500). Preliminary results from the survey suggest average turkey productivity in 2022.

Migratory birds- The 2022-2023 hunting seasons and bag limits are set; most season lengths and bag limits remained stable. Information on 2023-2024 recommendations will be available in December.

DEC is beginning the 2nd iteration of the duck season setting process. We anticipate surveying duck hunters this fall about what factors most influence their satisfaction with duck season dates. We will also be updating migration information with the most recently available data.

The Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended two important changes to duck and goose seasons for the **2023-2024 (next year)** seasons.

- An increase in the mallard bag limit from 2 per day to 4 per day (no more than 2 hens). The change is largely driven by new population modeling developed by the states and USFWS that better informs how we manage mallard populations. Mallards in Eastern Canada continue to increase, while mallards in the Northeast US have stabilized.
- Increases to the Canada goose hunting season length and bag limits in several upstate zones. The past 3 seasons of restrictive harvest regulations have allowed the Atlantic Population of Canada geese to rebound significantly in a

relatively short amount of time. The breeding population increases, paired with average or better productivity allows biologists to propose more liberal hunting opportunity during the 2023-2024 hunting season in the form of a 45 day season with a 3 bird bag limit.

- **It is important to note that none of these changes affect the 2022-2023 season.** More information and explanation will be forthcoming over the next few months.

Furbearers (see also: *Furbearer Update 2022*)

We are wrapping up our fisher demographic project in the Northern Zone. Throughout the three field seasons, DEC staff and contract trappers captured a total of 181 fisher (97 males/84 females). The purpose of this work was to capture and monitor adult females to determine how many kits they had and how many survived until June. To do this, we collared females to find den trees and set trail cameras at the base of these trees to capture photos of them moving their kits. Preliminary results suggest that survival and reproductive rates were higher in the Tug Hill area than they were in the Central Adirondacks, where the population appears to be declining. Final results are expected by next spring.

This past winter, we conducted sign surveys for river otter across the Southern Zone. We surveyed a total of 1,128 sites and detected otter at 13% of these sites. We are currently working with SUNY-ESF to analyze these surveys in combination with another round of surveys completed in 2018. We are hoping this will give us information on otter abundance, population trend, and distribution. On a related note, a draft river otter management plan has been completed and has been reviewed by the furbearer management team. We are currently working on incorporating team comments. This plan calls for the reopening of the Mohawk Valley and Catskills aggregates to otter trapping.

This fall, we will be piloting bobcat surveys across the state. This project will attempt to use non-invasive hair snare cubbies to identify individual bobcats and estimate how many reside in NY and where they can be found across the state. This information will help us make harvest management decisions and evaluate the potential for additional future harvest opportunities.

Big Game

Hunting seasons

- 2022-23 seasons will be the 2nd year with an early antlerless season in 13 WMUs where availability of DMPs has exceeded demand by hunters and additional antlerless harvest is still needed for proper deer population management;
- 12- and 13-year-old hunters may continue to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow when accompanied by a licensed and experienced adult hunter. 52 of 54 counties have passed the required local law to enable this activity;
- The 2nd Holiday Deer Hunt will occur from Dec 26, 2022 – Jan 1, 2023 this season. In 2021, the additional 7 days of hunting resulted in a 10% increase in late season bow and muzzleloader harvest and was utilized by many young hunters. Legislation is pending that would allow counties to pass a local law or resolution to prohibit hunters from participating in this late season.

Bear

- Dry conditions during the summer of 2022 set the stage for a busy season of human-bear conflicts. DEC recorded 50% more conflicts than in 2021 and has had to euthanize multiple bears for breaking into homes, vehicles, or other structures.
- Bear harvest this fall should be greater than average, particularly in the early seasons. Bear harvests generally follow a high-low pattern influenced by patterns in food availability and cub production. 2022 was expected to be a high year, and coupled with reduced natural foods, bears will be very active in September and October, increasing the success rates of hunters.
- DEC will soon begin the process of updating our 10-year management plan for black bears. No major management changes with bears are anticipated, though our ability to monitor bear populations and harvest patterns would be improved by an ability to track hunter effort. This could be accomplished by creating a separate bear hunting permit or registration process.
- DEC has joined the national [BearWise](#) educational platform and will begin using BearWise messaging on our website and social media sites

Deer

- Harvest of antlerless deer continues to be insufficient in some portions of New York. We anticipate the early antlerless season will be helpful, but additional strategies will likely be necessary in some areas in the future. DEC will be assessing potential alternative management strategies and tag issuance procedures.
- Chronic Wasting Disease is a priority concern, and DEC has begun a targeted campaign via social media and other digital platforms to inform hunters about how they can reduce the risk of bringing CWD into NY.

Moose

- Research is ongoing with a Cornell doctoral student to monitor survival of moose calves and assess parasite risks across the Adirondacks.
- In January 2023, DEC will begin the 2nd round of moose population surveys in the Adirondacks. The 1st round occurred from 2015-2019 as part of the initial research effort to assess moose distribution and abundance. This 2nd round will occur during the winters of 2023-2025, allowing biologists to assess changes in the moose population from the prior survey period.
- DEC is in process of developing a moose conservation plan.

Gun Laws

DEC and the New York State Police have now posted guidance on the requirements of the new laws that went into effect in early September. See:

www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/gunlawqanda2022.pdf for more information.

Staffing- recent changes

Mike Schiavone- has been promoted to Assistant Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife

Jeremy Hurst- has been promoted to Section Head, Game Management, Bureau of Wildlife

Marcelo DelPuerto- has left his position as Section Head, Land Management and Habitat Conservation, Bureau of Wildlife

Jill Trunko- has left her position as NASP coordinator, Hunter Education Program, Bureau of Wildlife

Bird/Mammal Diversity Unit- we anticipate filling a Unit Leader position in the Wildlife Diversity Section (non-game) in the near future, filling a vacancy that has existed for three years.

