



M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Christopher Amato, Assistant Commissioner

FROM: Patricia Riexinger, Director, DFWMR



SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT - February 2008

DATE: April 7, 2008

Information and Extension

Bureau of Fisheries Participates in Effort to Increase Fishing License Sales: The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, along with 30 other states, will be collaborating with the Recreation Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) in an effort to encourage lapsed anglers to purchase a fishing license. Research has noted that only about 15% of anglers actually purchase a fishing license every year, providing an excellent opportunity to increase license sales. Fishing participation continues to decline across the country and this decline is particularly notable in the northeast. As part of this cooperative program, RBFF has contracted with Southwick Associates to assist the states in identifying anglers most apt to renew their fishing license through the analysis of each states electronic fishing license sales data. These former anglers will be mailed oversized postcards with a custom marketing message reminding people of the many benefits associated with the sport of fishing with the hope of encouraging them to once again buy a fishing license. RBFF will also be funding promotional spots on local radio stations in participating states. In trial states where this direct mail marketing approach has been used, returns of six to 32% have been experienced. Public Use Section Head Ed Woltmann attended a two-day workshop in Dallas, Texas on this exciting new program that we hope will increase fishing license sales in NY.

Bureau of Fisheries

Edward Woltmann

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Information and Extension

NY Natural Heritage Completes On-line Conservation Guides for Rare Species and Natural Communities in the Hudson River Valley – With funding from DEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program, NY Natural Heritage has completed Conservation Guides for all the rare animals, rare plants, and rare or high-quality natural community types known to occur in the 10 Hudson River Valley counties, more than 300 Guides in all. Each Guide provides information on a species’ or natural community’s rarity in New York State, conservation issues, threats, management considerations, habitat, behavior, distribution (including a range map for New York State), and identification. Each Guide also includes photos, a list of the best places to see the species or community, and a section called “Did You Know?” For example, did you know that there is a water-nymph, an aquatic plant, that is found nowhere in the world except the Hudson River? Conservation Guides are generated dynamically from an underlying database, so that they always include the latest data and current information. These Guides can be used by professionals in conservation and natural resource management, by municipal officials and planners, by students and researchers, and by the general public, and will help build an appreciation for the diversity of life in the Hudson River Valley. Conservation Guides are available on-line at www.guides.nynhp.org.

Bureau of Habitat

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Protection

Peatlands Receive Protection - Chenango County is home to four fens, bogs and peat swamps totaling 18 acres that are proposed for addition to the wetland maps. These wetlands have educational and scientific value as excellent examples of different stages of peatland succession from open water medium fen to floating mat poor fen to forested peat swamp allowing them to be added to the maps as wetlands of unusual local importance. In addition, a 300 ft regulated adjacent area surrounding each wetland is proposed to provide adequate protection for these unique vulnerable plant communities. An additional 40 acre wetland nearby will be added to the maps, also.



Bureau of Habitat

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Peregrine Falcon Nesting Site Protected - Buffalo’s Peregrine Falcons will be affected by proposed renovations on the Statler Building in downtown Buffalo, on which they nest. To that end, Region 9 Bureau of Wildlife staff have met recently with the building managers or owners of four downtown office buildings. We have examined alternative nest site options on these buildings, taken necessary measurements, and have already constructed one nest box for placement on one building ledge. We will soon construct the other boxes and situate them as nest-site alternatives for the Peregrines, so that a suitable nesting location will be in place when construction begins on the Statler.



Bureau of Wildlife

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State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement-Conservation Reserve Program (SAFE-CRP) - The USDA has accepted the Division’s application to participate in the SAFE-CRP program. Through this program, the Division will have the opportunity to help guide the CRP program in New York. CRP involves the conversion of erodible cropland into a less erodible cover to prevent soil loss and provide wildlife habitat. Through SAFE-CRP, NY will take the lead in reviewing CRP applications and recommending projects to the USDA Farm Service Agency. Through this program, 4900 acres of grasslands will be protected and managed to the benefit of New York’s grassland bird species of concern.

Bureau of Wildlife

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Recreational Use

Potential user conflicts at DEC boat launches: Each year the Region 5 Bureau of Fisheries receives several dozen requests for permits to hold fishing tournaments at Department boat launches. The Region issues Temporary Revocable Permits for these events with the goal of avoiding multiple tournaments on the same day, and to assure that parking is available for non-tournament boaters. Thus far this year, the Region has received 25 permit applications to hold bass fishing tournaments. The Ticonderoga Boat Launch, a Department facility which is located on lands belonging to the Fort Ticonderoga Association, remains the most popular destination for bass fisherman. Eighteen of twenty-two scheduled events will originate from Ticonderoga (Lake Champlain). Two events will be held at Mossy Point (Lake George), two at Port Henry, and three at South Bay (both on Lake Champlain).

Bureau of Fisheries

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DEC Releases 2007 Deer Harvest - Hunters harvested approximately 220,000 deer in the 2007 season, a 16 percent increase over the previous season. Harvest numbers increased in every deer hunting category DEC tracks: bucks, antlerless deer (females and young males), takes by muzzleloading and takes by bowhunting. Also, researchers detected no cases of Chronic Wasting Disease during the season, despite testing nearly 7,500 deer. The 2007 take included 104,451 bucks and 114,690 antlerless deer. Buck takes grew by eight percent over 2006 (96,569) and 17 percent over 2005 (89,015), suggesting that deer populations in many portions of New York are continuing to grow slowly. Big-game hunting incidents continue to be very low compared to previous years, despite the sobering fact that five fatalities occurred while deer hunting in 2007. However, the 2007 deer season set a new record low with only 14 hunting-related shooting incidents. After more than 50 years of mandatory hunter education courses, New York State now has an extremely safety-conscious generation of hunters.

Bureau of Wildlife

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DEC Releases 2007 Bear Harvest - Bear harvest numbers increased in 2007 in all three of New York State's bear hunting ranges. Statewide, hunters took 1,117 black bears, a significant increase over 2006 (796 bears). In the Allegany range, hunters took a record 120 bears, reflecting a slight increase over 2006 (113 bears). In the Catskill range, hunters took 453 bears, a significant increase over 2006 (365) although slightly less than the record (494 in 2005). In the Adirondack range, harvest numbers returned to normal after two consecutive down years. In 2007, 544 bears were taken in the Adirondack range compared to 318 in 2006. Overall, bear harvest statewide has steadily increased over the last two decades in correlation with a continuous rise in the bear population.

As the bear population rises, DEC management actions in the Allegany and Catskill ranges have included changing season dates and opening additional areas for bear hunting. These changes have been intended to limit bear-population growth and migration into new areas. The impact of these changes will likely take several years to become fully evident. However, approximately 70 bears were taken this season in the portions of the Allegany and Catskill ranges that have been opened since 2005.

Bureau of Wildlife

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Research and Monitoring

Cattaraugus County Water Quality Council Meeting: Biologists Cornett and Janis attended the Cattaraugus County Water Quality Council meeting. Discussions revolved around various stream projects, watershed education, farmland protection and nutrient management projects amongst other water quality issues. Biologist Cornett discussed a habitat improvement project slated for McIntosh Brook to attract brook trout and also described a possible riparian buffer incentive to protect streams and the corresponding wildlife beyond public fishing right easement. Biologist Janis shared about the start of a State Wildlife Grant on the Allegheny River to assess the restoration of paddlefish. The group will now look over the County's Water Quality Strategy in order to revise the 1999 version.

Bureau of Fisheries

Scott Cornett

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Over 16,000 Analyses Conducted at Hale Creek Field Station in 2007 - During the 2007 calendar year, the Analytical Services Unit (ASU) at the Division's Hale Creek Field Station conducted 16,278 chemical analyses on fish that were collected in New York State. The ASU consists of two chemists, a biostatistician, and two laboratory technicians. The Unit performs precise and accurate laboratory analyses for persistent contaminants, such as mercury, PCBs, DDT, chlordane, mirex, hexachlorobenzene, and others. Over 700 fish of 23 different species were tested by the ASU during 2007. Largemouth and smallmouth bass, yellow perch, lake trout and walleye comprised over 50 percent of the fish that were tested. Division personnel collected the fish from over 30 locations statewide, from Lake Erie to the Hudson River, and from Lake Champlain to Long Island. Results of the laboratory analyses are used to help track down sources of chemical contaminants, identify effects of the contaminants, and to aid in the enforcement of environmental laws. Results are also used by the NYS Department of Health to issue its annual Health Advisories for consuming sportfish and game.

Bureau of Habitat

Anthony Gudlewski

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NY Natural Heritage's database now includes more than 11,900 mapped locations - NY Natural Heritage's database of locations of rare animals, rare plants, and significant ecological communities now includes 11,931 mapped locations. In the third quarter of FY 08, from October 1 through December 30, 72 new locations were mapped and entered into the database, and 280 records were remapped and/or updated with new information.

During the third quarter of FY 08, with funding from a State Wildlife Grant, NY Natural Heritage's Zoology staff entered records for:

- The federally endangered dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmodonta heterodon*) in Dutchess County. This is the first record of the species east of the Hudson River in New York.
- Three new Blanding's turtle (*Emys blandingii*) locations in northern NY, including the first Blanding's turtle record in Lewis County. An additional six Blanding's turtle records were updated for locations in St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties. This resulted in the addition of approximately 36 Blanding's turtle locations to the database.
- Approximately 100 Long Island colonial waterbird location updates using data provided by DEC Region 1.
- 32 historical and current dragonfly and damselfly locations.

Bureau of Habitat

Hollie Shaw, Alina Leder, Kelly Perkins, (518) 402-8955
Andrea Chaloux

Research and Monitoring

New York State Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey Completes its Third Year – The NYS Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey (NYDDS) completed its third field season in 2007. Data have been rolling in, with submissions from 48 NY Natural Heritage staff, contractors, and volunteers as of the end of 2007, reporting on more than 450 surveys. Natural Heritage Assistant Biologists Andrea Chaloux, Alina Leder, and Kelly Perkins completed data entry into the NYDDS database for the 2006 field season, and have started processing data from 2007. The NYDDS database now contains 1540 survey records and 3150 voucher records. Kelly also updated historical records in the Natural Heritage database, which will better inform field planning for 2008. Most of the 2006 specimens have now been incorporated into the NY State Museum collection by Project Coordinator Erin White and Advisor Paul Novak. Lists of dragonfly and damselfly species for each county of New York State will be available on the project website, <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/31061.html>, later this year. Erin also attended a workshop on identifying aquatic larvae and exuviae (skin casts left behind as the larvae emerge into adults); the workshop had the colorful name of NymphFest. Additional State Wildlife Grants funding has been allocated to the NYDDS in order to carry the project through a fourth field season in 2008, which will allow volunteers to target under-represented counties, habitat types, and species to fill in data gaps.

Bureau of Habitat

Erin White

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Wild Turkey Survival Study Update – In January 2006, DEC began a four-year wild turkey banding project designed to estimate harvest and survival rates of male wild turkeys (“gobblers”) in New York. This study is being done in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, researchers from Pennsylvania State University, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.



Through February 27, staff in DEC Regions 3 through 9 have banded 269 gobblers (153 juvenile males or "jakes," 116 adult males or "toms") and 229 hens in 31 counties and 52 towns. Frequent thaws and below-average snowfall have made for a challenging trapping season in much of New York, particularly in the southeastern portion of the state (DEC Regions 3 and 4). We're about 30% behind last year's totals at this time, but we are still on pace to reach our statewide goal of 300 males by the end of March.

To add to the challenging weather conditions, field crews have been attempting to increase the geographic scale of the project by banding birds in the 12 counties where no birds were caught during the first two years of the study. Through the third week of February, staff has successfully banded turkeys in seven of these counties.

Bureau of Wildlife

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Restoration

Liming of Peaked Mountain Lake: In an effort to counter the effects of acid rain, Peaked Mountain Lake was treated with agricultural lime during the month of February. The lime is applied during the winter while it can be spread out over the surface of the pond's ice. The Region 6 liming program monitors a set of 21 brook trout ponds/lakes that have been deemed suitable candidates for treatment under the guidelines of the 1990 EIS on Liming. Without periodic liming, these waters would have acidified to the point lethal to brook trout sustainability. This year, the Region only had to lime this one water with a total of 37 tons of agricultural lime. Liming was accomplished through the assistance of the State Police helicopters. Pallets of lime were slung from the State boat launch at Stillwater Reservoir to the ice surface of Peaked Mountain Lake. Crews from the Lowville and Brownville Operations offices did an outstanding job of making this complex liming run smoothly. In addition, the Region 6 Forest Rangers played a critical role of maintaining safe conditions and coordinating flight operations with the State Police. These liming projects are a great example of the magnitude of accomplishment that can be achieved when the various aspects of DEC come together as a team.

Bureau of Fisheries

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Staff Development

HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) Training: The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Aquatic Biologist Heidi O'Riordan and Fisheries Technician Erik Latremore attended the HACCP training course offered by Michael Goehle, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Helen Domske, NY Sea Grant. Goals of this training were to educate and prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS's) and Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS's) while sampling and stocking the waters of New York State by answering the Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why questions. The majority of this training allowed its attendees to create HACCP plans for various sampling and stocking protocols. This course provided each attendee to develop plans to minimize the spread of AIS's and ANS's. Most HACCP plans not only take "visible" species under consideration, but also pathogens, viruses and diseases (VHS, IPN, spiny water flea, bloody shrimp). "Visible" species include plants (Phragmites, purple loose strife, Eurasian milfoil, Cabomba), mussels (zebra and quagga), and vertebrates (fish, amphibians, mammals, crustaceans). With detailed instruction from Michael and Helen, many groups started to create basic five step HACCP plans. The steps include describing the activity, identifying potential hazards, describing the steps of the activity, filling out a hazard analysis worksheet, and completing the HACCP forms or wizard. Successful plans need management approval, proper training, and a team to continually update and monitor the plans.

Not only were fellow DEC employees present, but many private organizations and other state agencies were present at this training course. Leslie Surprenant, NYS DEC Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, updated fellow employees and attendees of statewide initiatives, accomplishments, and future goals. More information on HACCP and the HACCP Wizard can be found via the following links.

HACCP general information:
<http://www.haccp-nrm.org/>

HACCP Plan Wizard
<http://www.haccp-nrm.org/Wizard/default.asp>

Bureau of Fisheries

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