

# Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources

## Monthly Highlights

### January, 2009

#### Issue Priorities:

#### Connect New Yorkers to Nature

**Fisheries Reports for DEC Website** - Four new region 9 fisheries reports have been posted to the DEC website under the “Freshwater Fisheries Research” section ([www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27272.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27272.html)). The report summaries were provided by biologist Cornett. The new online reports include 2008 trout population surveys (Elm, Ischua and Mansfield Creeks) and the 2008 McIntosh Creek habitat improvement project. With the addition of these reports, Region 9 Fisheries continues to provide timely, pertinent information for New York anglers.



*Bureau of Fisheries*

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**New State Record Walleye Caught in Cattaraugus County Pond** - While ice fishing in a private overflow pond adjacent to the Allegheny River, an angler caught a new state record walleye. The fish, totaling 34 inches in length, having a girth of 26 inches and weighing 16 lbs, 9 ounces, beats the old record from Allegheny Reservoir by 2 ounces. The fish was verified by Biologist Clancy.

*Bureau of Fisheries*

*Paul McKeown*

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**Freshwater Fishing Web Pages Analyzed** - The monthly website usage reports were analyzed to determine website visitor use patterns of the fishing web pages. Of the 33 top pages that were analyzed, a total of 1,077,974 page views occurred. However, there are over 500 total freshwater fishing pages, so the total number of page views for the program is much higher. In general, page views rise quickly in April and slowly decline through December. Fishing hotline pages were the most popular fishing content. “Places to Fish” gateway pages (geographical region pages that showed links to resource pages) averaged approximately 18,600 page views. A total of 198,915 PDF downloads (from the top 1,000 PDF downloads per month) was recorded in 2008. Contour maps were the most popular PDF download, followed by PFR maps and educational brochures.

After analyzing the results of the data, the following recommendations for the fishing section of the website are:

- “Places to Fish” pages should be expanded in Regions where content is limited/non-existent and expanded in regions where content exists;
- More PFR maps need to be posted for Regions 4 and 6 (project under way);
- Additional fishing educational brochures should be created and posted;
- New stocking information should be posted by mid-March;
- Fishing hotlines should be maintained or expanded;
- Contour maps should be added as resources become available.

*Bureau of Fisheries*

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### [Promote a Toxic Free Future](#)

**River Otter in the Hudson River Drainage** – Over the past eight years, the Hudson River Otter Stewardship Program conducted from the NYS DEC Hale Creek Field Station in Gloversville has been collecting river otter sightings from the Hudson River drainage reported by the public. Interns from the Hudson Valley Student Conservation Association have been responsible for outreach programs educating the public about river otters, and for collecting and analyzing the sighting records. Much of this information supports efforts to assess the effects of toxics and habitat modification on river otter in the Hudson Valley. Benjamin Stafford, the current SCA intern, has completed his 10-month internship as a Wildlife Educator. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this program will be continued during 2009 due to the lack of financial support for a new intern. For more information on river otter and this program, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6962.html>.

*Bureau of Habitat*

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**Region 4 Fish Contaminant Results** - Test results for warmwater game fish and panfish species collected in Vlaie Pond (Schoharie County), Greens Lake (Greene City), Thompsons Lake (Albany City), and Copake Lake (Columbia City) show that the contaminant levels in these waters are very low. The maximum contaminant levels recorded were 0.007 ppm mercury and 0.0003 ppm DDT in Greens Lake and 0.001 ppm PCB's in Thompsons Lake. Other tested contaminants were below detection limits for all four waters. The maximum levels recorded for mercury, PCB's, and DDT in these four waters were well below the actionable levels of one ppm mercury, two ppm PCB's, and five ppm total DDT. Fish from these four waters are safe for human consumption.

*Bureau of Fisheries*

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### [Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Assets](#)

**Wild Turkey Banding Project and Winter Flock Survey** – 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.

During January, DEC staff and volunteers kicked-off the fourth and final year of the project by banding 148 gobblers (73 jakes or young males, 75 toms or adult males) and 107 hens in 22 counties and 30 towns throughout upstate New York, including two counties and several towns where turkeys had not been banded in previous years. Banding efforts will continue through March. DEC thanks all of the volunteers and cooperating landowners for their invaluable assistance in the field. This project would not be possible without them.

This winter, we have also implemented the Wild Turkey Winter Flock Survey. This survey is conducted from January through March and is used to monitor trends in relative abundance of turkeys statewide and within major regions of the state. This survey helps us assess the general health of the wild turkey population prior to the breeding season in the spring. To participate, download a survey form from the DEC website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48756.html>.

*Bureau of Wildlife*

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**Muskrat Population Study** - In a cooperative effort with trappers and local fur buyers, Region 6 Biologist Andy MacDuff collected age and sex data from over 600 muskrat pelts. Muskrat populations are reported to be in decline throughout the northeast range. In an effort to investigate these declines, DEC staff have begun collecting age and sex ratio information on fall harvested muskrats statewide. Age and sex information on muskrats can be derived from an inspection of the dried pelt. Age is determined by the patterns that appear on the leather side of the pelt. Adults have a blotchy pattern of dark and light areas while juveniles display an alternately dark or light striped pattern. Sex of the animal is determined by the presence or absence of nipples on the pelt.



This effort is part of a larger project developed by several states and provinces that are members of the Northeast Fur Resources Technical Committee. In the Region 6 sample, males tended to be slightly more abundant than females for both adult and juvenile age classes. There were approximately three times as many juveniles as adults. Additional sampling is anticipated, with hopes that these data may shed some light on possible causes for the long-term decline of this species.

*Bureau of Wildlife*

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#### **Short-eared Owl Wintering Area Studies Under way -**



In several areas throughout the state, DEC has initiated work to delineate the distribution of and habitat use by wintering short-eared owls. This collaborative project between Regional staff and the Endangered Species Unit is being done to develop guidelines for short-eared owl management that will be incorporated into the recovery plan for this state-endangered species. A combination of site surveys, owl trapping, banding, and telemetry work are the main techniques being employed.

Region 8 Wildlife staff captured their first owl on December 17. Since then, three additional birds have been netted. The second, on January 11, was fitted with a satellite transmitter and will now be followed several times a week as the winter progresses. This unit will also allow the continual monitoring of the bird as it migrates northward towards its breeding grounds.



The other three owls were banded and equipped with VHF transmitters for monitoring of daily travels. Each owl will be followed over the coming few months until they head north in the spring. The VHF units will not allow extended contact during the summer months, but their life expectancy of up to one year might allow staff to relocate these birds if they return to the region next winter.

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Photos of short-eared owl fitted with a satellite transmitter.

Region 9 Wildlife staff captured two short-eared owls and fitted with radio transmitters on December 29, 2008 in the Town of Hartland, in Niagara County. A primary objective of this portion of the study is to monitor short-eared owl movements to identify important winter foraging habitats and roost sites. Staff monitored owl movements until both owls left the study area during the second week of January 2009. Staff and volunteers also visited previously known short-eared owl wintering sites to determine presence/absence of short-eared owls and to evaluate habitat suitability.

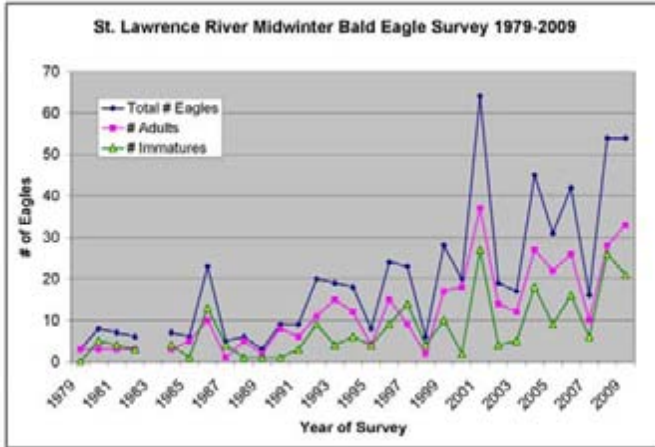
Similar efforts are under way elsewhere, with birds “on air” in the Coxsackie grasslands in Region 4, Fort Edward in Region 5, and Cape Vincent in Region 6.

*Bureau of Wildlife*

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**National Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey** – Region 6 Wildlife staff conducted an aerial survey of the St. Lawrence River between Cape Vincent and Massena on January 14. The helicopter survey is part of the National Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey which takes place on an annual basis. Aerial survey records go back to 1979. This year’s count resulted in the same total as the 2008 survey; 54 bald eagles were observed: 33 adults and 21 immature. The St. Lawrence River is one of the major wintering areas for bald eagles in the state. As interior lakes and rivers freeze over in Canada, birds migrate to the south, congregating in areas of open water. Strong currents in the St. Lawrence provide open water areas for foraging throughout the winter months. Annual totals for the St. Lawrence River, dating back to 1979, show an increasing abundance of eagles over the past 30 years (see figure on next page).



*Bureau of Wildlife*

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**Changes in Hudson River Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Published** - A new publication on applications of remote sensing for ecosystem assessment was released this month and includes a chapter entitled *Distribution and Spatial Change of Hudson River Estuary Submerged Aquatic Vegetation: Implications for Coastal Management and Natural Resource Protection*. This chapter presents the results of a study conducted by a team representing several institutions, including DEC. The study showed that between 1995 and 2002, there was a net loss of 160 hectares (approximately 400 acres) of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and a net gain of 40 hectares (approximately 100 acres) of Eurasian waterchestnut (*Trapa natans*), an invasive species. Significant loss in SAV beds (e.g., SAV beds shrunk in size) may have been caused by an exceptionally turbid year (2000). During the study period, the tidal freshwater and oligohaline (salinity between 0.5 and 5.0 parts per thousand) portions of the river supported the greatest abundance of SAV with the mesohaline (salinity between 5.0 and 13.0 parts per thousand) areas supporting the least; 95% of the shallow water area in the mesohaline zone lacked vegetation. Other chapters in the book cover remote sensing projects throughout the coastal zone along with conceptual and technical issues and developments in the use of remote sensing and geospatial technologies in the coastal ecosystem. For more information about this book [**Remote Sensing and Geospatial Technologies for Coastal Ecosystem Assessment and Management**, 2009 X. Yang (Ed.). Springer-Verlag Berlin, 561 pages.], see: <http://springer.com/978-3-540-88182-7>.

*Bureau of Habitat*

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**Northeast States Move Closer to Unified Habitat Classification System** – A Northeast Habitat Classification Workshop was held on January 9, 2009 at DEC’s Central Office and video-conferenced to the regions. Over 100 people attended, representing state and federal agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations. The purpose of the workshop was to continue recent work on developing aquatic and terrestrial habitat

classification systems. The Nature Conservancy and NatureServe have been working with fish and wildlife agencies in the 13 Northeast states (Virginia to Maine) to develop standard classification systems and GIS datasets for aquatic and terrestrial habitats. The USGS has been developing a multi-scale aquatic habitat classification system for New York and the Great Lakes Basin. These systems are meant to unify state classifications and promote an understanding of biodiversity patterns across the region. The habitat datasets will form the foundation of state and regional conservation in the northeast, provide common definitions and mapping of habitat types across state lines, and will create a new opportunity to assess the condition of habitats at a scale broader than the individual states. The Nature Conservancy's work can be found at: [www.rcngrants.org](http://www.rcngrants.org); and will be available on DEC's Master Habitat Databank in the coming months. Information on the Great Lakes Regional Aquatic Gap Analysis Project can be found at: [http://www.glsc.usgs.gov/main.php?content=research\\_GAP&title=Aquatic%20GAP0&menu=research\\_NCE\\_GAP](http://www.glsc.usgs.gov/main.php?content=research_GAP&title=Aquatic%20GAP0&menu=research_NCE_GAP). The final report and a central database that houses all of the data, model predictions, and classification elements will be finalized later this year.

*Bureau of Habitat*

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**Rare Plant Found in New Vernal Pool Locations-** False hop sedge (*Carex lupuliformis*), listed as rare by New York State, was found in three vernal pool complexes in three different counties this past field season. Specimens were found at vernal pools in Wilcox County Park in Dutchess County, Highland Lakes State Park in Orange County, and by biologists working for Scenic Hudson Land Trust in Black Creek Forest in Ulster County. Previously, there were only 19 known occurrences of this species in New York State. This is the first known occurrence of false hop sedge in Dutchess County. Field work this coming summer will focus on surveys for this plant at additional vernal pool sites. Photo by Troy Weldy.



*Bureau of Habitat*

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**Inventory of Rare Species and Significant Communities on Former Finch-Pruyn Lands Completed** - In 2007, the Nature Conservancy (TNC) completed their largest conservation and financial transaction ever by purchasing over 161,000 acres of Adirondack lands from Finch-Pruyn & Co. While much of the land will be transferred to DEC's Forest Preserve, approximately 72,000 acres will be sold back to a timber management organization with a conservation easement held by DEC. In the summer of 2008, the New York Natural Heritage Program conducted inventories for rare species and significant natural communities on these 72,000 acres. The Heritage Program released a report and gave a presentation to the Division of Lands and Forests and TNC on their findings in December 2008. Overall, the Heritage Program spent 114 person-days visiting 21 tracts scattered over six counties. Thirty-eight new locations for rare species or significant natural communities were documented and updated information was collected for five previously known locations. These findings include two new locations for Bicknell's thrush (Special Concern, S2S3); a new possible nest site for peregrine falcon (Endangered, S3); a new location for the forcipate emerald dragonfly (S1); an

extension of the rare riverside ice meadows community and associated rare plant species (dwarf sand-cherry, sticky false asphodel) along the Hudson River; and various exceptional wetlands (e.g. spruce-fir swamp, sedge meadow, black spruce-tamarack bog, medium fen) and uplands (e.g. Appalachian oak-hickory forest, spruce-northern hardwood forest, mountain spruce-fir forest). The Heritage Program continues to work with the Division of Lands and Forests and TNC to incorporate these findings and other ecological conservation principles into the conservation easement that will be attached to these lands.



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**DEC Pursues Natural Resource Damages Assessments Statewide** – Since its inception in November 2007, the Statewide Natural Resource Damages (NRD) Unit has been working to conduct assessments of injury to natural resources that have resulted from release of contaminants into the environment. When injury is documented, monetary damages can be collected from those deemed responsible for the contamination with the goal of restoring the resource or compensating for its loss. Staff are working with the US Department of Interior (DOI) and the Onondaga Nation to collectively study the Onondaga Lake area to document current resource conditions resulting from mercury contamination discharged by Honeywell and others. The information being collected will be valuable to quantify the injury to trustee resources and select the best restoration methods. Staff are also meeting with representatives of BASF in Rensselaer to discuss contamination to groundwater and the Hudson River from former operations of the BASF dye manufacturing plant. BASF and DEC are cooperatively undertaking a natural resource damage assessment at this site and discussing possible restoration projects.

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**Improvements in the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control Program lead to substantial decreases in sea lamprey attack rates** - For nearly a decade, since the Lake Champlain experimental Sea Lamprey Control Program ended, sea lamprey attack rates on lake trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon have been exceedingly high. In 2008, lamprey attack rates decreased to 31 wounds per 100 lake trout and 35 wounds per 100 salmon - levels similar to those achieved during the eight-year experimental program (see table). However, those rates are still higher than our objectives of 25 and 15 wounds per 100 for lake trout and salmon, respectively. Thus, while the 2008 results indicate significant progress, additional improvements are still needed. The 2008 results are most likely due to intensified treatment efforts in 2007. In addition to the regular, four-year rotation of treatments on certain lamprey producing areas, treatments during 2007 included the Poultney River and a spring treatment on the South Fork of the Ausable River. The Poultney River had not been treated since 1996. The Ausable River was treated in 2006, but follow-up surveys showed a low level of effectiveness in the South Fork of the Ausable. Therefore, a spring treatment of just the South Fork – with stronger flows than in fall – was conducted in 2007.

Sea lamprey wounding rates on Lake Champlain (main lake) lake trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon through time. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Species	Number of sea lamprey wounds per 100 fish									
	Objective	Pre-control	Experimental control	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Lake trout <sup>a</sup>	25	55 (1,854)	38 (1,827)	72 (182)	77 (203)	62 (117)	94 (64)	99 (137)	46 (26)	31 (75)
Salmon <sup>b</sup>	15	51 (43)	27 (953)	38 (47)	79 (66)	47 (74)	59 (118)	71 (159)	71 (180)	35 (138)

<sup>a</sup> Lake trout in the 533-633 mm (21.0-24.9 inches) length interval. For lake trout, pre-control included 1982-92, while experimental control includes 1993-97.

<sup>b</sup> Salmon in the 432-533 mm (17.0-21.0 inches) length interval. For salmon, pre-control included 1985-92, while experimental control includes 1993-98.

**Bureau of Fisheries**

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**New Marine Fishing Data Management** - The Commercial Fisheries Unit in the Bureau of Marine Resources collects commercial fishing information from permitted fishermen for each commercial fishing trip landing in New York State. Trip information is collected on the Fishing Vessel Trip Report form (VTR). Prior to 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) collected VTRs from both state and federally permitted fishermen, processed and entered the fishing data, and archived the VTRs, both from state and federal permit holders.

Starting in January 2008, NMFS ceased processing data submitted by state permitted fishermen and no longer would supply VTR forms to DEC. In response to this program change, the Commercial Fisheries Unit, in partnership with Cornell University Cooperative Extension Marine Program (CCE), has established a new system for handling the fishing data submitted by state permitted fishermen. New data gathering and archiving procedures were established, and a new VTR form and data entry protocols were developed.

Data collection protocols were modified to require all state permitted fishermen to submit VTRs to DEC. After sorting and preliminary data collection, the VTRs are forwarded to CCE for processing and data entry. VTRs are then archived by DEC.

**Bureau of Marine Resources**

**Maureen Davidson**

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**Commercial Meetings** - In response to the challenges of managing declining seafood quotas, DEC staff held six meetings to discuss management alternatives with commercial fishermen in October and November 2008. The quota-managed species were the focus of the meetings: summer flounder, black sea bass, bluefish, and scup. In each meeting, the tentative 2009 quota, as proposed by NMFS, was presented to the fishermen, as well as quota management alternatives that addressed the change in available quota.

There was constructive discussion during the meetings and a number of quota management alternatives were developed that addressed the concerns and needs of the commercial fishermen. Related factors of market price, fishing season, fish availability

and competition from other state's fishermen were discussed and incorporated into the management alternatives. One of the main highlights of these meetings was bringing commercial fishermen together and providing them the opportunity to determine fishery quota management practices that addressed their unique needs and situations.

A final quota distribution meeting was held on January 7, 2009. Final 2009 quota distribution plans for summer flounder, black sea bass, scup and bluefish were developed at this meeting.

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**Summary of 2008 Commercial Landings** - These are the final commercial landings for quota-managed species:

Summer Flounder – The quota was 709,959 pounds; New York harvested 673,530 pounds of summer flounder, about 95% of the quota.

Black Sea Bass – The quota was 141,805 pounds; New York landed 140,938 pounds; about 99% of the quota.

Bluefish – The quota was 1,202,057 pounds; this final quota includes 455,000 pounds of bluefish transferred from other states. New York harvested 1,208,309 pounds of fish, about 101% of the quota (as of December 27, 2008).

Scup – The quota was 276,905 pounds; New York harvested 290,621 pounds, 104% of the quota.

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**NY Gear Buyback Project Minimizes Whale Entanglement Threats** - The Marine Endangered Species Program and Crustaceans Unit, in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, administered a second voluntary gear buyback program for NY-based commercial trap and pot fishermen on January 15, 2009. The first gear buyback took place in February 2008.

Arrangements were made with the Town of Brookhaven to use its waste management facility as a staging area for the buyback. In order to get a weight measurement for the gear, fishermen drove their trucks onto the facility's scale before and after offloading their gear at a specially designated loading dock. Eleven fishermen turned in 9.2 tons of floating rope that day. The rope was then transported to Covanta Energy's Hempstead facility where it was incinerated in a waste-to-energy system at no cost to the State through their "Fishing for Energy" initiative. The Town of Brookhaven's Councilman Mazzei attended the event to express his support for this effort, and *Newsday* published an article summarizing the event on January 16, 2009.

For each pound of gear brought in, fishermen received a voucher for a dollar amount equal to \$1.58 per pound. Participants have 60 days to use their vouchers toward the purchase of sinking or neutrally buoyant line from Gearwork Marine Industrial, Inc. in Riverhead, NY. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are providing funding for the gear replacement vouchers through a grant obtained by DEC's Marine Endangered Species Program. The two NY Gear Buyback Project events held in February 2008 and January 2009 resulted in the removal of 16.96 tons of floating rope, with \$56,354.67 worth of vouchers being distributed to 15 fishermen.

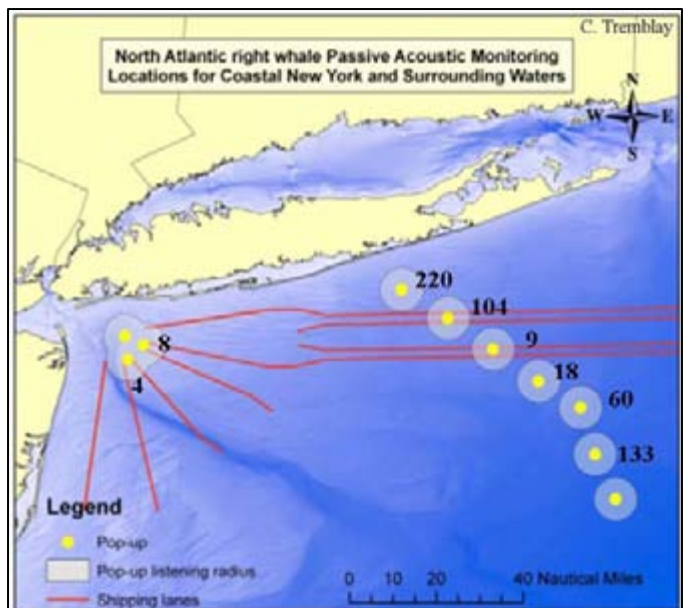
The gear buyback program was designed to facilitate the removal of actively fished floating groundlines (rope between traps) from offshore trap and pot fisheries, as these lines have been identified by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) as an entanglement threat to large whales by April 5, 2009. New regulations promulgated through the ALWTRP require fishermen to replace floating line with line that sinks to the ocean bottom. The buyback program provided an economic incentive for fishermen to be proactive about complying with these regulation changes while also directly reducing whale entanglement threats posed by New York-based pot and trap fisheries.



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**Acoustic Whale Monitoring Update** - Preliminary results generated by the New York Passive Acoustic Whale Monitoring Project have been reported by the Cornell Bioacoustics Research Program (BRP). The project is a partnership between the BRP and the DEC's Marine Endangered Species Program, with funding support generously provided by the NYS Ocean and Great Lakes Initiative, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the SWG program, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Between March and May of 2008, 556 North Atlantic right whale vocalizations were recorded by marine autonomous recording units (MARUs) which were deployed on the sea floor off of New York. The picture to the right illustrates the distribution of recorded calls that occurred on 27 out of 75 recording days. Passive acoustic data are currently being analyzed for other species



such as fin, humpback, and minke whales. Right whale data are a top priority due to the population's critically-endangered status; scientists estimate that less than 425 individuals remain worldwide. Data analysis requires specially designed automated detection software, as well as thousands of hours worth of visual and auditory scanning by bioacoustic technicians.

A second recording phase was initiated in August and will continue through February 2009. This project is the first long-term, standardized monitoring project for large whales in New York. The resulting baseline data will provide a clearer picture of the extent to which whales utilize New York's marine habitat, and therefore the extent to which their survival may be impacted by anthropogenic activity taking place in this region of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. As such, passive acoustic monitoring will provide critically needed data which will enable scientifically sound management and conservation decision-making—particularly at a time of increasing interest in offshore energy development. Furthermore, the passive acoustic monitoring project will be one of New York State's first contributions towards mitigating threats to whale populations as recommended by the NYS Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, as well as Federal recovery plans such as the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and the Right Whale Recovery Plan.

***Bureau of Marine Resources***

***Maureen Davidson***

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**Nitrogen Settlement Agreement Funds PSP Research** - With money from the New York City Nitrogen Settlement Agreement for Long Island Sound, the Bureau of Marine Resources funded a two-year study by Dr. Chris Gobler at SUNY-Stony Brook's School of Atmospheric and Marine Sciences. During 2007 and 2008, Dr. Gobler and graduate assistant Theresa Hattenrath studied *Alexandrium fundyense* levels in the water column and sediment in the bays and harbors in the Town of Huntington, in northwest Suffolk County, and other tributaries of Long Island Sound. *Alexandrium fundyense* (*Af*) is a naturally occurring marine dinoflagellate (phytoplankton) that produces the biotoxin responsible for paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP).

In 2006 and 2008, to protect public health, DEC designated over 5000 acres of shellfish harvesting areas in the Town of Huntington as temporarily closed on an emergency basis after its biotoxin monitoring program detected elevated levels of saxitoxin in shellfish in Northport Harbor, Northport Bay and Huntington Bay. BMR funded Dr. Gobler's study of *A. fundyense* following the closures that occurred in 2006.

In January 2009, Theresa Hattenrath presented some results of the two-year study. They showed that *Af* bloomed in Northport Harbor and adjacent bays in response to certain forms of nitrogen introduced to the water by a nearby sewage treatment plant and stormwater runoff. *Af* begins to bloom in late March, in response to nutrients (nitrogen), rising water temperature, and increased sunlight. By June, as water temperature begins to approach 20°C (68°F), the *Af* cells in the water column begin to form cysts, which sink and settle into bottom sediments. Those cysts will germinate during the following spring.

One particularly ominous finding of the study was that *Af* cysts in the sediment in late 2008 were three times (3x) higher than they were in late 2007. The 2007 cysts were the “seeds” for the 2008 bloom, which produced the highest saxitoxin levels that have ever been detected in New York. The 2008 levels were so high that as little as 3.5 ounces of shellfish contained enough saxitoxin to be potentially fatal to humans.

The Bureau of Marine Resources is gravely concerned that the high level of *Af* cysts in bottom sediments in the Huntington embayments and some nearby areas of Long Island Sound, is likely to result in a massive bloom of *Alexandrium fundyense* in April 2009. That will cause toxic levels of saxitoxin in shellfish in the Huntington bays and harbors and perhaps in other areas where such high levels have not been previously found.

***Bureau of Marine Resources***

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### **Foster Green and Healthy Communities**

**Avian Influenza** - On opening day of waterfowl season (December 27), Biologist Connie Adams from Region 9, worked with fish and wildlife technician Bill Hoffman from Central Office to collect Avian Influenza samples from waterfowl shot on the upper Niagara River. Together, they checked 18 groups of hunters and collected AI samples from 80 ducks. Opening day was a beautiful bluebird day, and most hunters did exceptionally well that day. Most waterfowl bagged were greater scaup, (probably 80%), with some redheads ( from one party), goldeneye, bufflehead, one mallard, and one Canada goose. To date, no incidences of the high pathogenicity strain of Avian Influenza have been found in the U.S.



***Bureau of Wildlife***

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