

OFFICE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH AND FORENSICS

MONTHLY REPORT

July 2023

Joseph M. Groff, VMD, PhD, Research Scientist 2

FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH PROJECT (FW-69-R20)

Kaitlyn Barone has returned to the Office of Fish and Wildlife Health and Forensics to assist Dr. Groff with laboratory operations.

Diagnosis of Diseases in Freshwater Fish (Job F-1)

Fish kill at Berry's Creek, Carlstadt, NJ (July 5, 2023)

A fish kill in Berry's Creek was reported on July 5. Conservation Officer Nicholas Della Vella observed 50-100 dead fish that were primarily carp and perch, and crab in the outgoing tide. There was also a small sheen of oil on the upstream side of Gotham Road that may have been due to run-off from recent storms. However, fish were not collected since affected fish appeared to be several days old.

Fish kill at Briant Park, Summit, Union County, NJ (July 8, 2023)

A report was received on July 8 regarding approximately a hundred large dead fish at Briant Park in Summit, Union County. The Conservation Officer Jack Sikora responded to the call but did not recognize a visible sheen on the water. The pond is small with a depth of approximately one foot, overgrown with vegetation and filled with mud. Carp were the primary affected species. Fish were not collected due to the advanced state of autolysis.

Fish kill at The Villages, Freehold, NJ (July 8, 2023)

A report of numerous fish dying from an apparent herbicide treatment according to the local citizen; the fish kill occurred following a heavy rain. The person that reported the fish kill did not observe external lesions but did report a malodorous smell of ammonia. Senior biologist Eric Boehm contacted the local citizen and explained that "... high summertime temperatures, and the recent chemical treatment can drastically reduce dissolved oxygen, especially in small, shallow ponds (yours looks to be around 3 acres in size). As water temperature increases, dissolved oxygen levels decrease accordingly. Small ponds typically don't have deep water refuge where fish can find cooler water. Furthermore, if an herbicide was applied to kill unwanted aquatic vegetation as it decomposes, it will consume additional dissolved oxygen lowering it to lethal levels and compounding the issue ... ". Since the fish kill was considered a small fish kill that occurred several days prior to notification, fish were not collected.

Fish kill in Medford, NJ (July 11, 2023)

A fish kill that started on July 4 in a pond next to a golf course in Medford, NJ. The water quality was reported to be dirty with less than 8 inches of visibility and a strong smell of dead fish. Affected fish included sunfish and American eel without apparent external lesions. Conservation Officer Salvatore Garofalo responded on July 9, but the dead fish were removed, and no fish were available for collection.

Diagnosis and Research of Diseases in Marine Fish (Job F-2)

No activity for July 2023

Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Investigations (Job W-1) and Wildlife Toxicology

(Job W-2)

House Finches, Jackson, NJ (July 8)

A house finch at a bird feeder in Jackson that died on July 7 was reported on July 8. Prior to death, the bird reportedly had small sunken eyes and was disheveled with respiratory difficulty. An additional finch with similar signs was seen on July 8. There were no further reports, and the case was not further investigated.

Cormorant, Lower Sylvan Lake, Burlington Township, NJ (July 9)

A local citizen reported a film on the shoreline of this lake on July 9 that was associated with a moribund cormorant that subsequently died. The lake was previously tested for harmful algal blooms a week prior to this report and had a 30,000 cell count and that warranted a “watch” status. There was no investigation of affected wildlife.

Deer, Lower Alloway Creek, NJ (July 13)

A local citizen was concerned about the health of a local deer and submitted a video for evaluation. A decision was made to have the citizen to continue monitoring the deer.

Deer, Emerson, NJ (July 18)

A photograph from a local citizen in Emerson was submitted for evaluation of a deer with mild or mild to moderate emaciation. A decision was made to have the citizen to continue monitoring the deer.

NON-PROJECT ACTIVITIES

No activity for July 2023

Other Activities

Dr. Groff attended a CWA Orientation meeting on June 27.

An announcement for two seasonal positions to assist with fish and wildlife laboratory and field work in The Office of Fish & Wildlife Health & Forensics was posted and circulated to local universities. Interviews have been conducted and final selection of candidates is pending.

Dr. Groff and Kaitlyn Barone had a virtual meeting with USDA personnel on July 7 to discuss the 2023 shellfish survey (clams and oysters) and the funding mechanism.

Dr. Groff attended a webinar on “Sharks in New Jersey” on July 11.

Dr. Groff had a virtual meeting with Dr. Sabrina Greening from Wildlife Futures on July 11 concerning the Wildlife Disease database.

Dr. Groff participated in the New Employee Orientation (NEO) online event on July 12.

Dr. Groff had a virtual meeting with Russell Babbs on July 13 to discuss the shellfish survey and future projects.

Dr. Groff attended a “Toxics in Biota” virtual meeting on July 20.

Dr. Groff attended a virtual meeting on July 10 to discuss the EHD Sighting App.

Dr. Groff attended a webinar on July 18 by the New Jersey State Library on “Finding Grant Funding with The Foundation Directory.”

Dr. Groff and Kaitlyn Barone met with The Northern Regional Conservation Officers on July 19 as an introduction and to discuss communication and response concerning fish kills.

Kaitlyn Barone organized and inventoried the Pequest laboratory in preparation for the annual trout inspection and shellfish survey.