



# NEW JERSEY FIELD OFFICE

## FIELD NOTES

### WINTER 2018



#### Strategic Conservation - Landscape Conservation

By Beth Freiday

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) is working with the NJ Invasive Species Strike team, NJ Audubon Society, PSE&G and NJDEP to prevent colonization of kudzu. The mild winters that have become more of the norm for NJ are failing to kill this invasive non-native vine over winter, which puts NJ at risk for a wide-spread infestation. Otherwise known as 'the vine that ate the south', kudzu is moving north into NJ: last year the partnership identified 24 populations (see map, below). The partnership is working to eradicate new sightings of kudzu before the plant becomes well established. NJFO has contributed \$50,000 to the control effort, which will ultimately thwart hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage to public and private forest lands if left unchecked.



Photo: Beth Freiday treating kudzu infestation.



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#### **Strategic Conservation – Coastal Resiliency** **By Marc Virgilio**

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) staff, along with Ducks Unlimited, Salem County Mosquito Control, and New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife established vegetation survey plots within and around the Silver Lake. Originally constructed for salt hay farming, the impoundment has been managed for waterfowl hunting since the 1960's. Years of artificial water level manipulation have caused the impoundment system to be overrun by invasive phragmites and waterfowl populations have declined significantly. NJFO staff and partners are working with the landowner to reintroduce tidal flow into the system via existing water control structures to control phragmites and encourage growth of native saltmarsh plants. The vegetation survey plots established will allow us to document habitat response to prescribed changes in water management.





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#### **Supporting our workforce** **By Eric Schrading**

Danielle McCullouch began working for NJFO in December. She will be working to assist with our long-term monitoring efforts at three Hurricane Sandy recovery projects: Hughesville Dam removal, Wreck Pond fish passage; and Gandy's Beach living shoreline. Danielle earned her M.S. from Virginia Commonwealth University while studying the influence of restored oyster reefs on fish assemblages in Chesapeake Bay. She has over 8 years of experience working at Virginia Institute of Marine Science on fisheries-related topics, including oyster reef restoration, and population assessments. Danielle also has experience with freshwater stream assessments, anadromous fish restoration, and living shorelines. Her professional interests include geospatial analysis applications, ecosystem-based resources management, ecological and habitat restoration, stakeholder collaborations and effective science communication.



#### **Strategic Conservation - Landscape Conservation** **By Marc Virgilio**

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Biologist, Marc Virgilio presented at the Joint Meeting of New Jersey Fish and Wildlife, Parks & Forestry, and Green Acres programs to talk about the PFW program and the resources that NJFO can bring to the table. NJFO is interested in assisting with habitat restoration of land acquisition projects that are still under private ownership. The goal is to bring together State and Federal resources to restore and protect priority habitats and landscape across New Jersey. Currently, NJFO assists the State with preparation of National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants and we are seeking to expand opportunities for collaboration.



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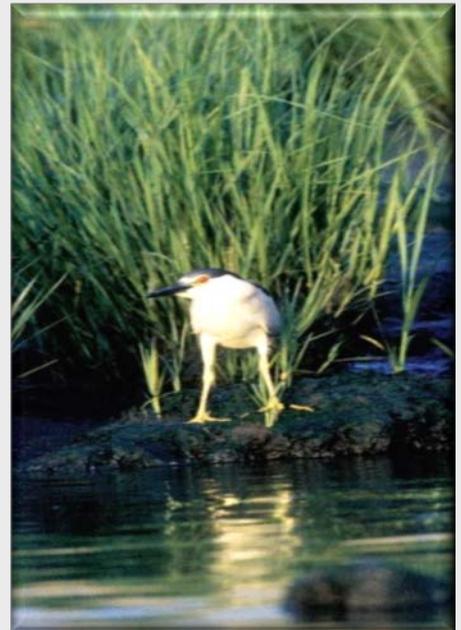
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#### **Strategic Conservation - Landscape Conservation** **By Melissa Foster**

Melissa Foster attended the 13th annual meeting of the New York Harbor Estuary Program's Harbor Herons Working Group in December. The Working Group conducts monitoring and research to identify threats to wading birds and other species in the New York/New Jersey Harbor estuary; address information gaps; measure the success of management actions; improve protection and health of foraging habitat; develop educational programs; and foster communication among stakeholders to encourage best management practices that support robust bird populations. The meeting included updates following the 33rd consecutive year of wading bird monitoring activities in the New York/New Jersey Harbor and surrounding waterways. The information obtained through monitoring helps to assess the relative health and stability of avian populations in New York/New Jersey Harbor and also provides an indicator of the overall health of the estuary.



#### **Strategic Conservation - At-risk Species** **By Eric Schradung**

The NJFO attended the annual New Jersey Beach Nesting Bird meeting on December 13. The meeting discussed population status, habitat restoration, predator management, and current research on piping plovers and other beach nesting birds. The meeting was attended by NJDFW, CWF, Wetlands Institute, USDA-APHIS, NPS, and Forsythe and Cape May NWR. Several areas of collaboration among agencies and partners will be implemented in 2018.



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#### **Strategic Conservation – Aquatic Connectivity** **By Cathy Marion**

Final permits were issued this week to make way for the removal of the Columbia Dam, located on the Paulins Kill River, New Jersey. At a price tag of approximately \$7 million, the project represents the most expensive and largest dam removal effort to date in New Jersey. The removal of this 18-foot tall, 130-foot long concrete dam will open 11 miles of the Paulins Kill River to the Delaware River for the first time in 109 years, restoring riverine ecological integrity and allowing American shad to return to their historic spawning grounds. Dewatering of a 45-acre impoundment upstream of the dam will begin in March, and the removal is scheduled for late June. This project reflects years of hard work by project partners, including: The Nature Conservancy; American Rivers; the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife; the New Jersey Office of Natural Resources and Restoration; the USFWS Fisheries Program, and NRCS. New Jersey Field Office NRDAR Biologist Cathy Marion and Field Supervisor Eric Schradung have played key roles in project planning, oversight, and funding.





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#### **Strategic Conservation** **By Eric Schrading**

The NJFO had our annual strategic planning meeting on Feb 15 at Edwin B Forsythe NWR. The staff reviewed our strategic plan for 2017 and highlighted accomplishments and then discussed and prioritized actions and conservation focus for 2018. The staff also reviewed how planning priorities fit with Regional, FWS, and DOI priorities. The Forsythe NWR also provided a brief presentation on their priorities for 2018. The meeting was successful and high and secondary priorities were defined and will be shared with the RO and our partners.



#### **Strategic Conservation - Landscape Conservation** **By Clay Stern**

Clay Stern continuing in the role of the Region 5-Central Zone Oil Spill Response Coordinator, participated (as a designated member) in several Area Committee Executive Steering Committee (ESC) meetings with the US Coast Guard, NOAA, affected States (NY, NJ, PA, DE), and oil spill response organizations. The ESCs are the Area Committees' senior leadership and function to set the tone and activities to ensure the identification and protection of environmentally sensitive areas and infrastructure; review and revise response actions; planning and evaluating response exercises; and most importantly, assuring the overall preparedness of the oil spill response communities. Mr. Stern's participation in these meetings provides Service perspective on coastal environments and the maritime transportation community from the Port of Albany, New York to the Delaware-Maryland State line, including the ports of New York and Philadelphia.

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## **Strategic Conservation - At-Risk Species** **By Alicia Protus**

In March, Endangered species biologist Alicia Protus teamed up with state biologist MacKenzie Hall and biologists from the Conserve Wildlife Foundation to survey an abandoned railroad tunnel in Hunterdon County which had been documented as a northern long-eared bat hibernaculum pre-WNS. The tunnel ceilings were tall, but with some zoomed photography we were able to make species identifications. The census only turned up 50 big brown bats, but we are hopeful that future surveys will document use by *Myotis* species.



## **Strategic Conservation - At-Risk Species** **By Alicia Protus**

NJFO staff met with representatives from the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, and Rutgers University to discuss plans for the 2018 bat season in New Jersey. Topics discussed included hibernacula updates, findings and opportunities; NABat statewide acoustic 2017 results and 2018 plans; target sites and species for mist netting and telemetry studies; and bridge surveys. NJFO staff will be organizing and executing mist netting surveys and telemetry studies for the northern long-eared bat the next two summers at the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in an attempt to locate and protect maternity roost trees.



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### **Strategic Conservation - At-risk Species**

**By Wendy Walsh**

On March 19, the NJFO's Meghan Kolk and Wendy Walsh met with private landowners, the Corps, the State, and Point Pleasant Beach Borough to discuss seabeach amaranth. In 2017, a State survey team found 217 amaranth plants in a small area spanning two private properties in the Borough. Outside of protected public lands, this was the largest number of plants found in one place in New Jersey since 2005. One of the landowners has agreed to minor adjustments in driving practices, as well as a zone with no beach raking for 2018. NJFO will work with these landowners and other partners on fencing and to develop a Beach Management Plan.

### **Supporting our Workforce**

**By Eric Schradig**

The NJFO and IT staff celebrated the career of Sue Robinson, who finishes a 27-year career in the Federal government including 23 with USFWS. Sue started with NJFO as an office assistant when computers were just starting to be used. Sue's drive, determination, and willingness to learn soon moved her from an IT expert at NJFO to an IT expert in the Region and nationally. Sue left as the primary IT support for iPhones and mobile devices. We were happy to celebrate her career with good food, good stories, and good people!

