

“Snakehead Management Activities: 2010”

The northern snakehead was first collected from New Jersey waters in June 2009 from the fish ladder at Stewart Lake, which is the first impediment on Woodbury Creek; a tributary of the Delaware River. The snakehead was collected by consultants for PSE&G monitoring the fish ladder for river herring. A second northern snakehead was collected shortly thereafter by an angler fishing below the spillway at Blackwood Lake, which is the first impediment of the Big Timber Creek.

Numerous anglers reported catching snakeheads in New Jersey prior to 2009 as a result of the media attention given to the Potomac River, located in Maryland and Virginia, snakehead population. All reports received prior to 2009 were identified as bowfin, a native species. Snakeheads were first identified in the Delaware River basin in July 2004. Several individuals were captured from a pond in FDR Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 2005 young snakeheads were captured in the park pond and by 2008 adults were collected in the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia.

Extensive sampling of New Jersey waters began in 2010 to identify the distribution of the northern snakehead in tributaries of the Delaware River. Sampling efforts were concentrated in the tributaries directly across the river from the Schuylkill River, however were expanded after snakeheads were confirmed by anglers in the Rancocas Creek.

In 2010 the Bureau sampled six tributaries of the Delaware River which included Big Timber Creek, Little Mantua Creek, Mathews Branch, Pennsauken Creek, Rancocas Creek and Woodbury Creek. Two impoundments (Stewart Lake and Cooper River Lake), which contain fish ladders and are located within these drainages, were sampled. Young of the year snakeheads were confirmed by Bureau staff while electrofishing in Stewart Lake, Woodbury Creek drainage. Anglers have observed or caught snakeheads at all locations sampled.

The snakehead population appears to be growing and expanding its distribution. Due to the extensive and habitat and sheer size of the Delaware River complete eradication of the species does not appear to be feasible.

NJ DFW 2010 Field Sampling efforts for snakeheads		
Waterbody	Location	Snakeheads
Almonesson Creek	Downstream of Almonesson Lake	0
Big Timber Creek	Upstream of Delaware confluence to .5 mile upstream Rt 295 bridge	0
Delaware River	Downstream of Woodbury Creek	0
Little Mantua Creek	Trib to Delaware River	0
Menantico Sand Wash Ponds		0
Pennsauken Creek	Upstream of Delaware confluence R.to Rt 73 bridge	0
Rancocas Creek	Dredge Harbor	0
Stewart Lake	Woodbury	8
Woodbury Creek	Downstream of Woodbury LakeUpstream of Woodbury Creek to Mathews Branch	0