

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2008

# North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter



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## Welcome to the second edition of the North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter!

The information in this newsletter has been provided through the cooperative efforts of North Carolina's licensed trappers and licensed fur dealers. The information they provide helps the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) monitor furbearer harvest levels and track trends in the furbearer populations.

If you missed the first newsletter, it can be found on our website at:  
[http://www.ncwildlife.org/pg04\\_HuntingTrapping/Furbearer\\_FallWinter07.pdf](http://www.ncwildlife.org/pg04_HuntingTrapping/Furbearer_FallWinter07.pdf)

Please check our website in October for the Fall/Winter 2008 edition of the Furbearer Management Newsletter!

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## Monitoring Furbearer Populations

Historically, NCWRC has monitored trends in furbearer populations by relying on fur transaction reports submitted by licensed fur dealers. These reports documented the number of pelts purchased by the licensed fur dealer, as well as the counties of harvest. While these reports are still used to help the NCWRC monitor the furbearer harvest, licensed trappers now have other options for where they can market their harvested furbearers, such as out-of-state auction houses and/or fox and coyote pens.

In order for the NCWRC to continue to monitor the furbearer harvest, we have created a voluntary trapper harvest mail survey. Since the 2002-2003 trapping season, the harvest mail survey has been sent to all licensed trappers to obtain estimates of total statewide furbearer harvest by species. These surveys ask for harvest, the number of days trapped and the number of traps set per day; this information is then used to calculate annual catch-per-unit effort for each species.

Using information from the surveys, coupled with reports from licensed fur dealers, the NCWRC can monitor trends in trapper harvest and effort, which often mirrors trends in the furbearer population. The data gained from these surveys also helps us make management decisions, set seasons and bag limits, and address questions we receive from sportsmen, the media and the general public.

## How you can help!

If you receive a mail harvest survey, please take the time to fill it out as accurately as possible and return it promptly. These surveys also provide you with the opportunity to make comments or ask questions of our furbearer biologist.

Thank you for your participation!



## Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey

The NCWRC has conducted the trapper harvest mail survey since the 2002-2003 trapping season. The reported harvest from these surveys has ranged 2.6 to 3.8 times higher than the number of furbearers purchased by North Carolina's licensed fur dealers (Table 1). This difference between the surveys and the fur dealer reports reflects the growing number of licensed trappers who are marketing their pelts to auction houses or selling live foxes and coyotes to North Carolina licensed pens.

**Table 1. Harvest comparison of North Carolina Fur Dealer Reports and total harvest reported on the Trapper Harvest Mail Survey, 2002-03 through 2006-07.**

	Harvest				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
<b>Fur Dealer Reports</b>	5,859	7,169	11,170	12,059	9,135
<b>Trapper Harvest Mail Survey</b>	15,247	27,428	31,955	34,565	35,542

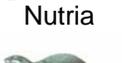
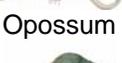
The response rate for the trapper harvest mail survey has varied over the years, but has steadily increased since 2002-2003 (Table 2). The response rate for the 2006-2007 mail survey was 63%, of which 27% of respondents reported that they did not trap during the trapping season.

**Table 2. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2006-07.**

Survey Year	# of licensed trappers	Response Rate	% respondents who did not trap
2002-03	811	39%	34%
2003-04	1,173	54%	23%
2004-05	1,211	50%	23%
2005-06	1,317	58%	19%
2006-07	1,326	63%	27%

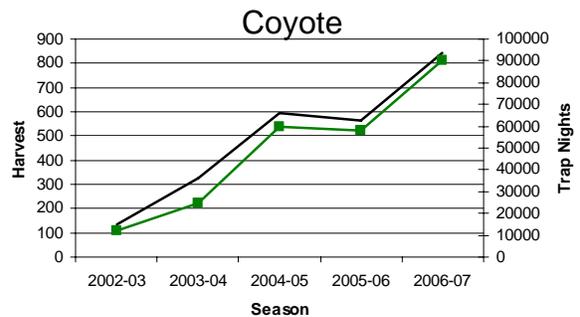
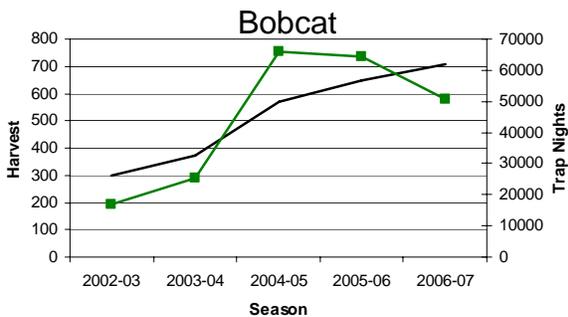
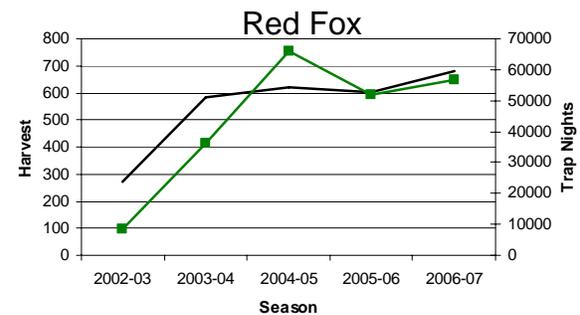
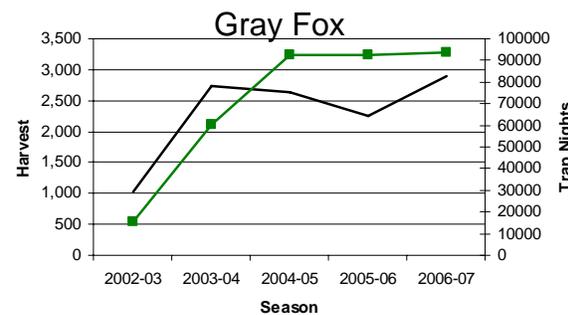
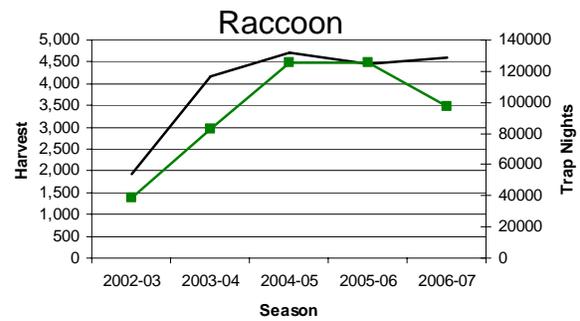
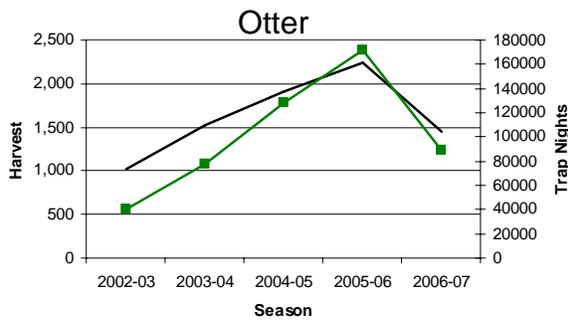
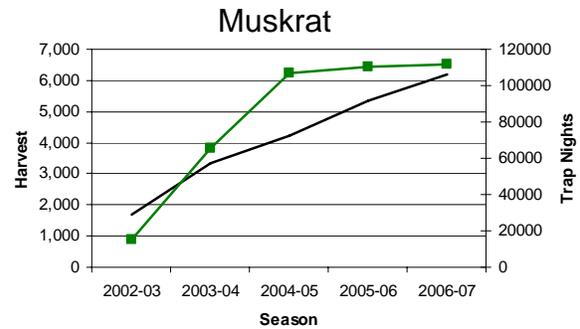
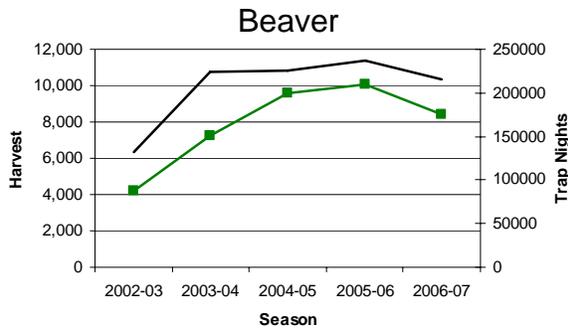
The 2006-07 furbearer harvest was slightly lower (0.2%) than the 2005-2006 trapping season. While there was a decrease in the harvest of beaver, mink and otter, all other furbearer species experienced an increase in harvest. Of note, the gray fox harvest increased 26% and the coyote harvest increased 49%. The largest difference occurred in the otter harvest, which experienced a 52% decline. This corresponds with the 64% decline in value of otter pelts. Table 3 on the following page presents data obtained from the past five trapping seasons.

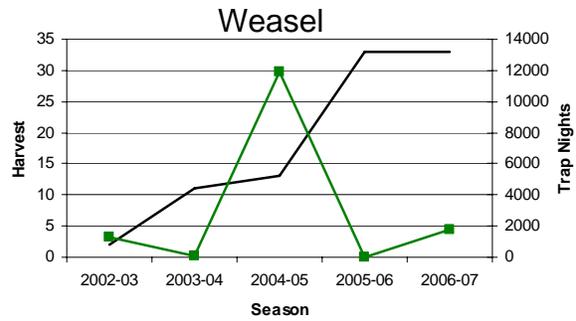
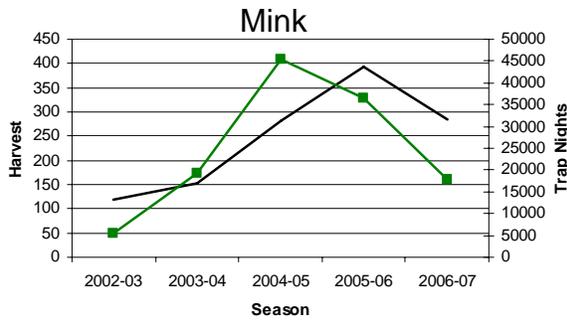
**Table 3. Estimated furbearer harvest from trapper harvest mail surveys and licensed fur dealer reports from 2002-03 through 2006-07.**

Species	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	Harvest	Prices								
 Beaver	7,209	\$6.50	11,531	\$8.75	11,968	\$8.13	13,097	\$7.00	11,458	\$11.00
 Mink	133	\$6.95	181	\$7.37	327	\$7.09	432	\$8.93	328	\$8.21
 Muskrat	2,198	\$2.52	3,972	\$2.36	5,722	\$2.34	6,440	\$2.45	7,412	\$3.77
 Nutria	914	\$1.00	1,090	\$2.17	1,867	\$2.25	3,115	\$1.25	3,720	N/A
 Otter	1,974	\$73.13	2,235	\$85.40	3,104	\$83.75	3,675	\$92.39	1,751	\$33.13
 Bobcat	349	\$13.00	440	\$24.60	678	\$18.50	690	\$20.14	791	\$23.43
 Coyote	133	N/A	325	N/A	593	N/A	567	\$12.25	847	\$11.00
 Gray Fox	1,078	\$6.00	2,831	\$13.30	2,770	\$10.00	2,392	\$10.00	3,020	\$25.83
 Red Fox	287	\$12.50	587	\$16.20	631	\$13.00	613	\$13.67	695	\$13.00
 Opossum	1,440	\$1.75	2,371	\$1.00	3,457	\$1.00	4,101	\$1.00	4,317	\$1.69
 Raccoon	2,777	\$5.76	5,103	\$5.65	6,156	\$5.96	5,281	\$5.00	5,967	\$6.56
 Skunk	58	\$1.50	N/A	\$1.00	226	\$1.00	172	\$2.00	186	N/A
 Weasel	5	\$1.00	11	\$1.00	13	\$1.00	33	\$1.00	33	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,555</b>		<b>30,677</b>		<b>37,512</b>		<b>40,608</b>		<b>40,525</b>	

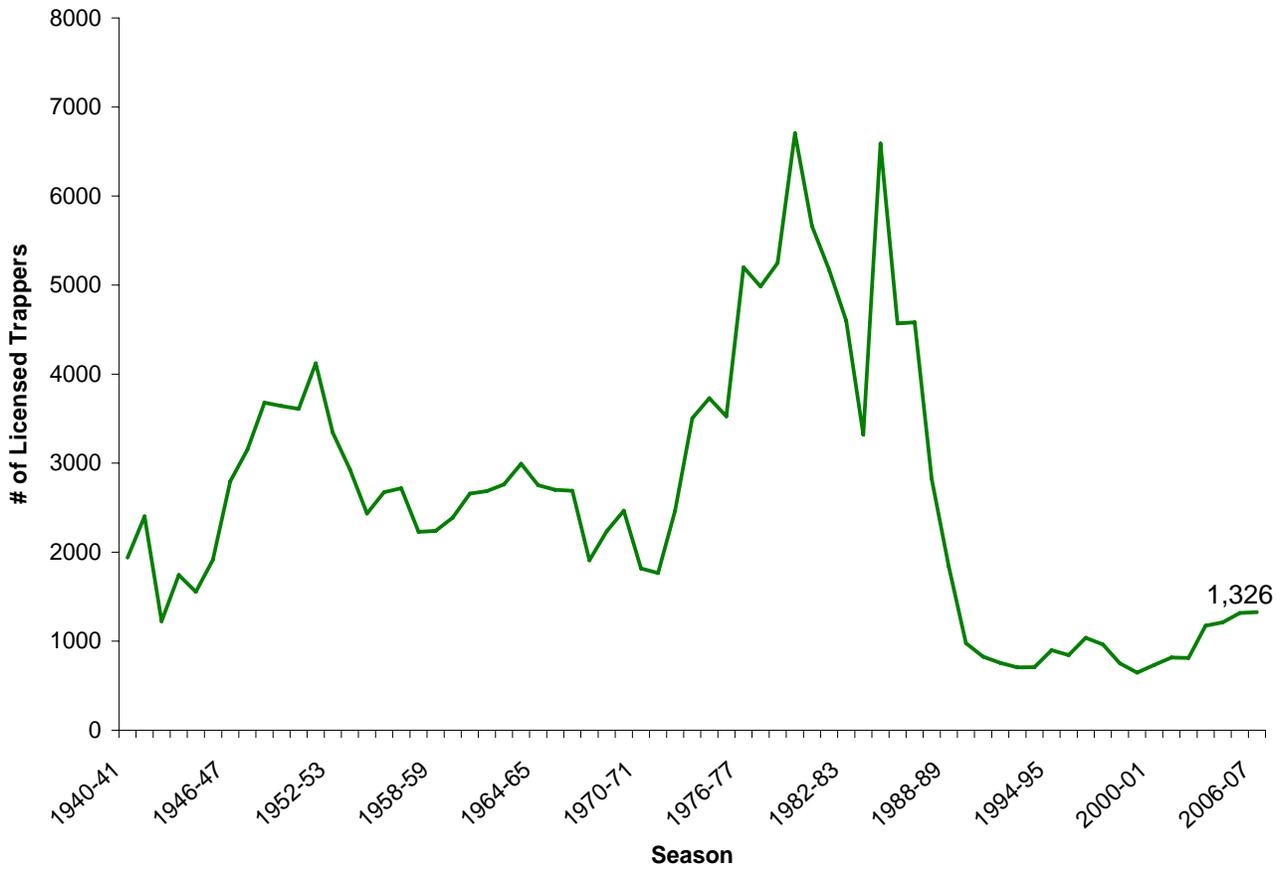
## Trapper Effort

The NCWRC is able to monitor trapper effort by comparing harvest levels to the number of trap nights (*# traps set per day x # days the traps are set*). This information is provided by licensed trappers through the voluntary mail survey. Below are results for selected species.





Total number of trapping licenses sold from 1940-2007.



## Trapper Education Opportunities

The North Carolina Trappers Association (NCTA), in cooperation with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, will conduct a one-day trapper education program on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the Wake County Wildlife Club, near Raleigh, NC.

This program is designed to teach both new and experienced trappers basic and updated trapping techniques. The trapper education course is a one-day, free course consisting of morning classroom instructional lectures given by volunteer NCTA members. A free lunch is provided. The afternoon session is “hands-on” with outdoor land and water trap setting demonstrations conducted by professional trappers. A certificate of course completion is mailed to those participants receiving a passing grade on a written examination given at the end of the day’s activities. Some of the topics covered in the current program include:

- History and Heritage of Trapping
- Trapping and Wildlife Management
- Furbearer Management in North Carolina
- Trapping Ethics and Trapper Responsibilities
- Trapping Laws and Regulations in North Carolina
- Furbearer Identification, Signs, and Behavior
- Trapline Equipment, Supplies, and Costs
- Pre- & Post-season Trapping Activities
- Trapline Safety and Proper Handling of Catch

Pre-registration information for the course may be obtained from:

Todd Menke  
NCTA Education Coordinator  
2663 Tar River Rd.  
Creedmoor, NC 27522  
E-mail: [minkster@netzero.net](mailto:minkster@netzero.net)  
Phone: (919) 528-9063

## Websites of interest

North Carolina Wildlife Resources  
Commission  
<http://www.ncwildlife.org/>

North Carolina Trappers Association  
<http://www.nctrappers.com/>

National Trappers Association  
<http://www.nationaltrappers.com/>

Association of Fish and Wildlife  
Agencies Furbearer Resources  
<http://www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer.html>

Conserve Wildlife  
<http://www.conservewildlife.org/>

Furbearers Unlimited  
<http://www.furbearers.org/>

Fur Takers of America  
<http://www.furtakersofamerica.com/>

Internet Center for Wildlife Damage  
Management  
<http://icwdm.org/>