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## Welcome to the Spring/Summer 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.

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### Trapping information available on-line!

In an effort to better inform trappers, the NCWRC has a section on their website dedicated to trapping. The address is: <http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/>

On this web page you will find information on:

- Trapping Regulations and local laws on Foxes
- Trapper Education Opportunities
- Selling your Fur
- Surveys and Reports
- Furbearer Management and Furbearer Species Information
- Trapping Best Management Practices (BMPs)

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### Monitoring Furbearer Populations

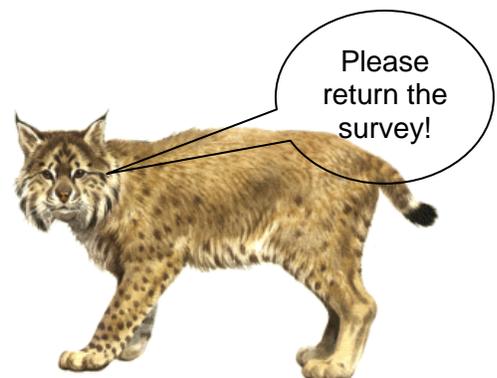
In order for the NCWRC to continue to monitor the furbearer harvest, we have created a voluntary trapper harvest mail survey. Since the 2002-2003 trapping season, the harvest mail survey has been sent to all licensed trappers to obtain estimates of total statewide furbearer harvest by species. These surveys ask for harvest, the number of days trapped and the number of traps set per day; this information is then used to calculate trap effort (trap nights) and 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 and address questions we receive from sportsmen, the media and the general public.

### How you can help!

If you receive a furbearer harvest survey in the mail, please take the time to fill it out as accurately as possible and return it promptly. These surveys also provide you with the opportunity sign up to be on the landowner assistance list, which connects landowners needing help with trappers during the trapping season.

Thank you for your participation!



## River Otter Research: How you can help!

During the 1990's, licensed trappers assisted the NCWRC in restoring river otters to western North Carolina.

River otters are now successfully restored throughout North Carolina, and with that success, the NCWRC and North Carolina State University (NCSU) are interested in learning more about otter reproductive parameters and the age structure of the population in all three furbearer management regions.



You can assist by letting us take biological samples, such as the reproductive tract and teeth, from any river otter you harvest during the next trapping season (2010-11).

To find out how to assist, please contact NCSU student, Charles Sanders, at:

E-mail address: [cwsander@ncsu.edu](mailto:cwsander@ncsu.edu)  
[charles\\_w\\_sanders@yahoo.com](mailto:charles_w_sanders@yahoo.com)

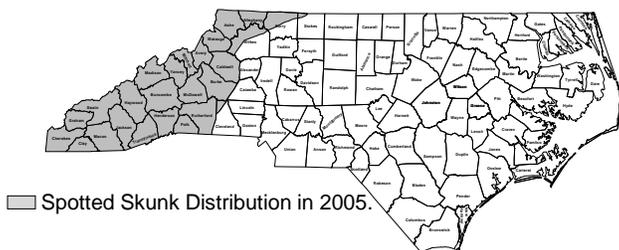
Phone: (919) 896-9519

## Have you seen a Spotted Skunk? We would like to know!

If you think you harvested an Eastern Spotted Skunk in western North Carolina, please let us know about it! It is legal to harvest an Eastern Spotted Skunk. But we hear very few reports about Eastern Spotted Skunks and we are interested in their current distribution.



Spotted Skunk



The Eastern Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*) is one of two species of skunk that inhabit North Carolina. The Eastern Spotted Skunk inhabits western North Carolina (see map) and is a small, slender animal weighing about 1-4 pound. It is smaller than the more common Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). The Spotted Skunk's fur is jet black with 4 to 6 horizontal white stripes on the neck and shoulders (see pictures).

The main way to tell the difference between a Spotted Skunk and a Striped Skunk is that the head of the Striped Skunk possesses a white inverted triangular patch above the nose (see arrow in picture below).



Spotted Skunk



Striped Skunk

If you think you harvested a spotted skunk in western Carolina, please contact the Furbearer Biologist:

Colleen Olfenbittel  
 Furbearer Biologist

E-mail address: [colleen.olfenbittel@ncwildlife.org](mailto:colleen.olfenbittel@ncwildlife.org)

Phone: (919) 629-2644

## Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

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 4.4 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 2007-08.**

	Furbearer Harvest						
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
<b>Fur Dealer Reports</b>	5,859	7,169	11,170	12,059	9,261	8,297	4,510
<b>Trapper Harvest Mail Survey</b>	15,247	27,428	31,955	35,333	36,269	36,859	32,628

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 2008-2009 mail survey was 59%, of which 32% of respondents reported that they did not trap during the trapping season.

**Table 2. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2008-09.**

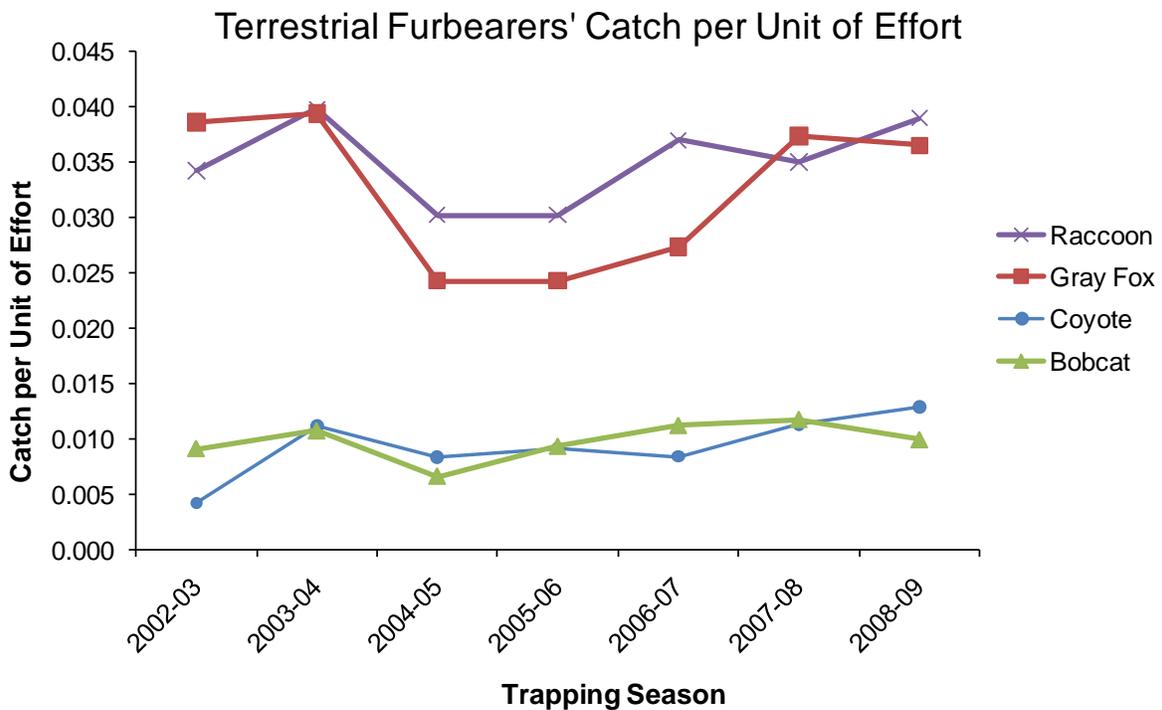
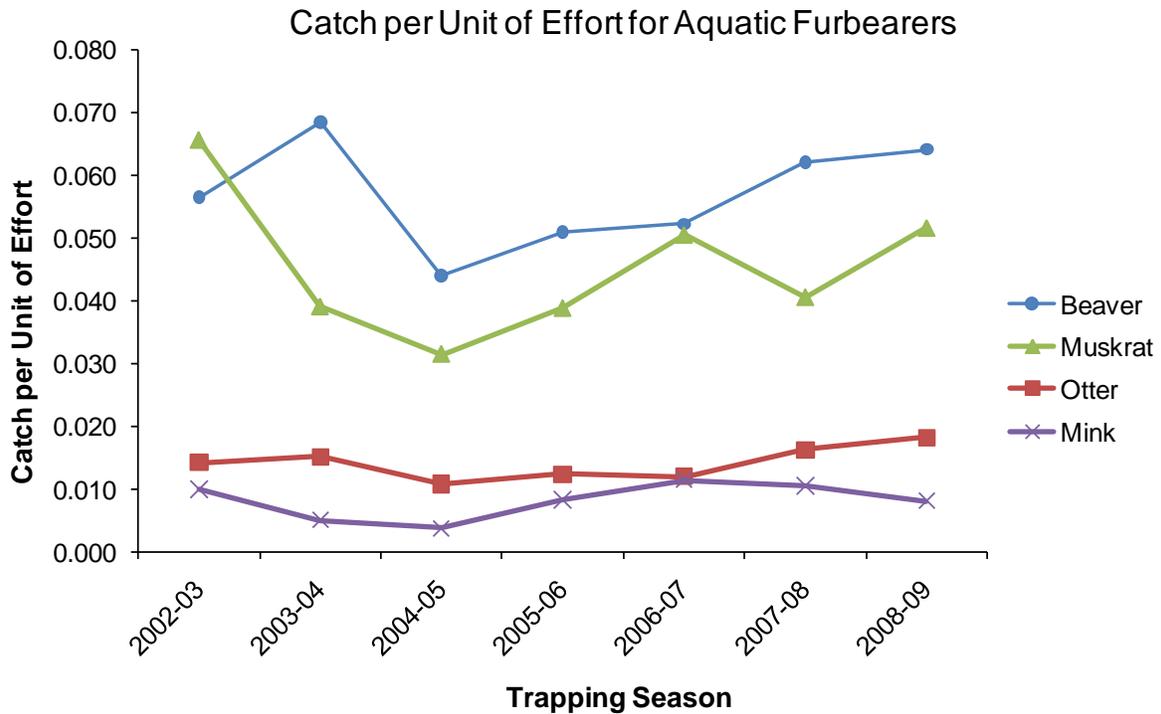
Survey Year	# of licensed trappers	Response Rate	% respondents who did not trap
2002-03	811	39%	34%
2003-04	1,173	54%	23%
2004-05	1,211	50%	23%
2005-06	1,317	58%	19%
2006-07	1,326	63%	27%
2007-08	1,494	61%	33%
2008-09	1,572	59%	32%

The 2008-09 furbearer harvest level was lower than that seen during the 2007-2008 trapping season. There were declines in the harvest of most furbearer species, except coyote and raccoons; the coyote harvest increased 22% and the raccoon harvest increased 9%. The table on the following page presents data obtained from the past six trapping seasons

Species	2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009	
	Harvest	Prices										
 Beaver	11,531	\$8.75	11,968	\$8.13	13,097	\$7.00	11,458	\$11.00	9,919	\$16.25	8,370	\$8.80
 Mink	181	\$7.37	327	\$7.09	432	\$8.93	328	\$8.21	331	\$9.30	193	\$5.87
 Muskrat	3,972	\$2.36	5,722	\$2.34	6,440	\$2.45	7,412	\$3.77	3,543	\$3.15	2,724	\$2.45
 Nutria	1,090	\$2.17	1,867	\$2.25	3,115	\$1.25	3,720	N/A	2,436	\$2.13	2,173	\$0.61
 Otter	2,235	\$85.40	3,104	\$83.75	3,675	\$92.39	1,751	\$33.13	1,457	\$23.25	1,341	\$26.21
 Bobcat	440	\$24.60	678	\$18.50	690	\$20.14	791	\$23.43	1,045	\$28.12	993	\$19.01
 Coyote	325	N/A	593	N/A	567	\$12.25	847	\$11.00	1,434	\$18.12	1,747	\$8.94
 Gray Fox	2,831	\$13.30	2,770	\$10.00	2,392	\$10.00	3,020	\$25.83	5,560	\$26.46	4,212	\$16.00
 Red Fox	587	\$16.20	631	\$13.00	613	\$13.67	695	\$13.00	1,180	\$14.83	838	\$9.60
 Opossum	2,371	\$1.00	3,457	\$1.00	4,101	\$1.00	4,317	\$1.69	6,393	\$2.55	4,481	\$1.53
 Raccoon	5,103	\$5.65	6,156	\$5.96	5,281	\$5.00	5,967	\$6.56	6,712	\$10.75	7,307	\$5.73
 Skunk	N/A	\$1.00	226	\$1.00	172	\$2.00	186	N/A	641	N/A	354	\$2.77
 Weasel	11	\$1.00	13	\$1.00	33	\$1.00	33	N/A	0	\$6.12	0	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,677</b>		<b>37,512</b>		<b>40,608</b>		<b>40,525</b>		<b>40,651</b>		<b>34,733</b>	

## Catch per Unit of Effort

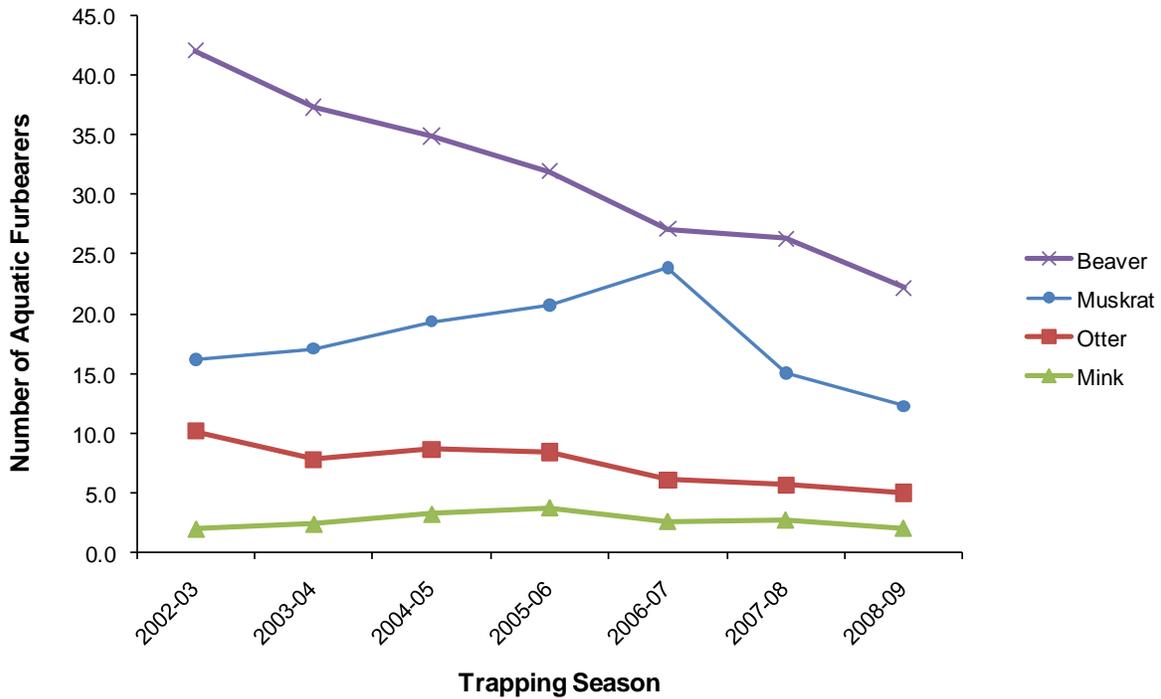
The NCWRC is able to monitor how much effort it takes to capture a furbearer species through the furbearer harvest survey we send to all licensed trappers. The higher the “catch per unit effort” number, the more successful trappers were in harvesting the species. During the 2008-09 trapping season, trappers were more successful at harvesting beaver, muskrat, otter, raccoons and coyotes than during the prior trapping season.



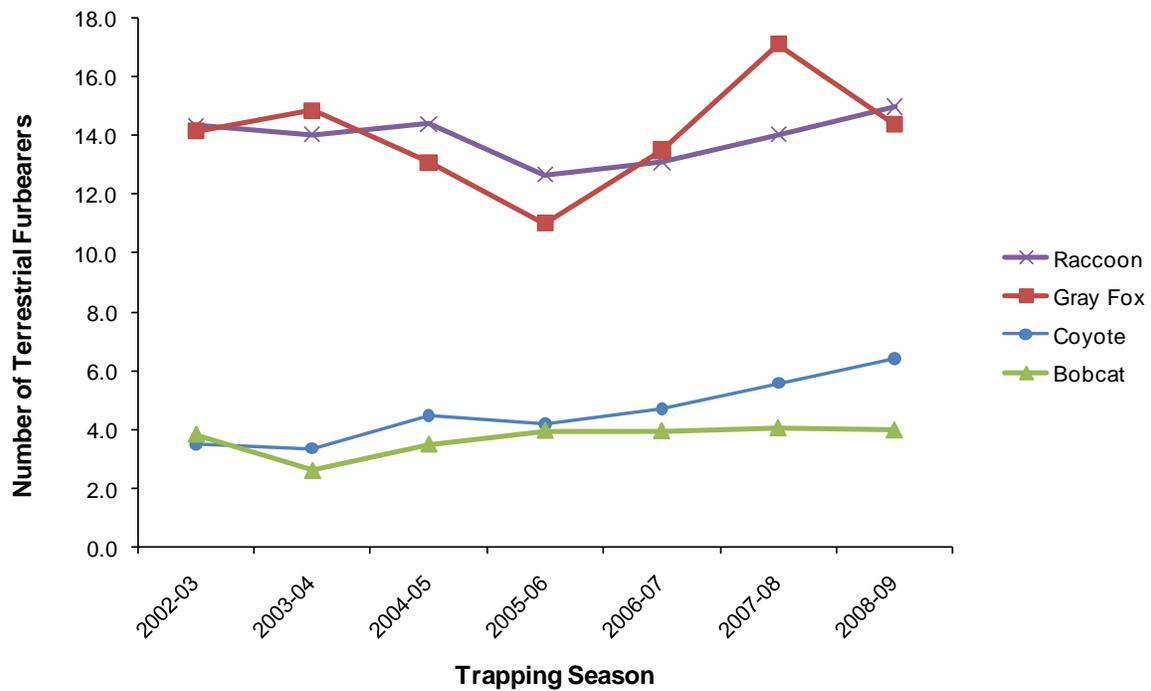
## Average Number of Furbearers Caught per Trapper

The NCWRC is able to monitor the average number of furbearer species harvested by each licensed trappers through the furbearer harvest survey. Below are graphs showing the average number of furbearers harvested from 2002 through 2009.

Average Number of Aquatic Furbearers Harvested per Trapper



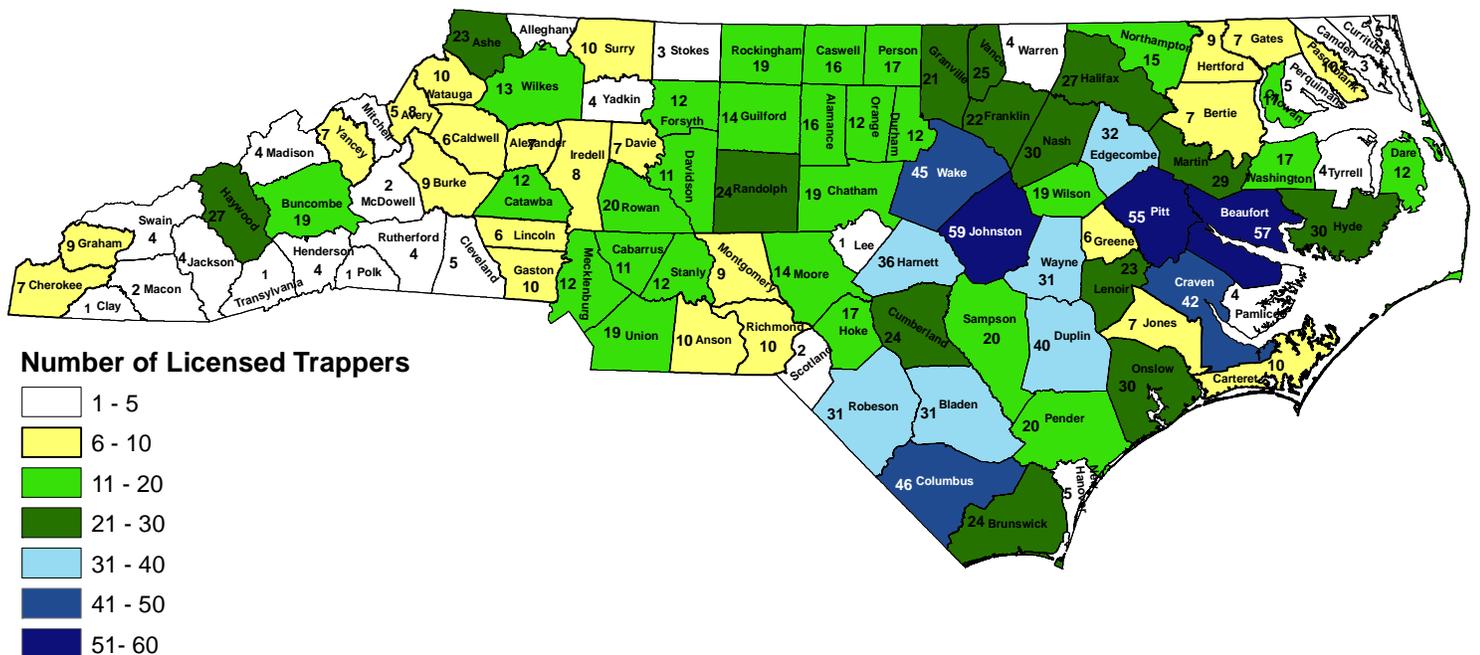
Average Number of Terrestrial Furbearers Harvested per Trapper



**2008-2009 reported harvest from respondents to the voluntary trapper mail survey.**

	Furbearer Management Region		
	Mountain	Piedmont	Coastal Plains
<b>Beaver</b>	374	1,983	5,568
<b>Mink</b>	32	42	100
<b>Muskrat</b>	386	626	1,496
<b>Nutria</b>	1	174	1,993
<b>Otter</b>	45	270	861
<b>Bobcat</b>	177	162	580
<b>Coyote</b>	564	575	608
<b>Gray Fox</b>	139	1,696	2,260
<b>Red Fox</b>	107	347	379
<b>Opossum</b>	300	1,088	3,065
<b>Raccoon</b>	556	1,700	3,834
<b>Weasel</b>	0	0	0
<b>Skunk</b>	59	230	64

**Total number of North Carolina trapping licenses sold in each county for 2009-2010 trapping season.**



## Trapper Education Opportunities

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) has started to offer free Trapper Education Courses. NCWRC plans to offer courses throughout the year in several wildlife districts.

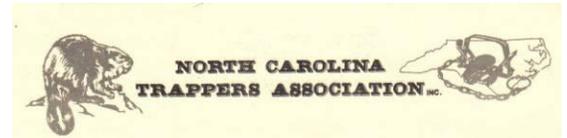
For more information on future trapper education courses contact:  
 David Denton  
 Phone: (252) 482-7105  
 E-mail: [d1huntersafety@inteliport.com](mailto:d1huntersafety@inteliport.com)



Or visit our website at: [http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Trap\\_Education.htm](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Trap_Education.htm)

The North Carolina Trappers Association (NCTA) offers advanced trapper educational opportunities for both new and experienced trappers.

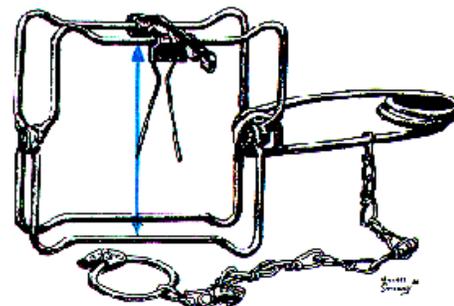
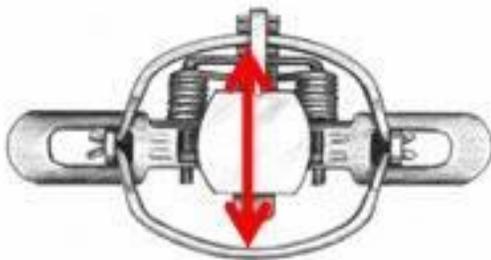
For more information contact:  
 Todd Menke, NCTA Education Coordinator  
 2663 Tar River Rd.  
 Creedmoor, NC 27522  
 E-mail: [minkster@netzero.net](mailto:minkster@netzero.net) Phone: (919) 528-9063



## Jaw Spread and Trap Chain Measurement Guide

- 1) How to measure the jaw spread of a trap:

Jaw spread is measured from the inside jaw to the opposite inside jaw of the trap (see pictures below).



- 2) How to measure the trap chain length:

Measure the trap chain/cable from the anchor point (ground level) to the base of the trap.