

North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter



Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of the North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter!

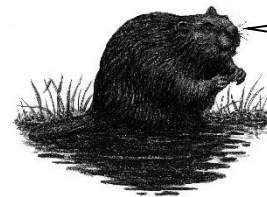
The information in this newsletter has been provided through the cooperative efforts of North Carolina's licensed trappers and licensed fur dealers. The information they provide helps the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) monitor furbearer harvest levels and track trends in the furbearer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

Monitoring Furbearer Populations

In order for the NCWRC to monitor the furbearer harvest, we have created a confidential voluntary trapper harvest mail survey. 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.



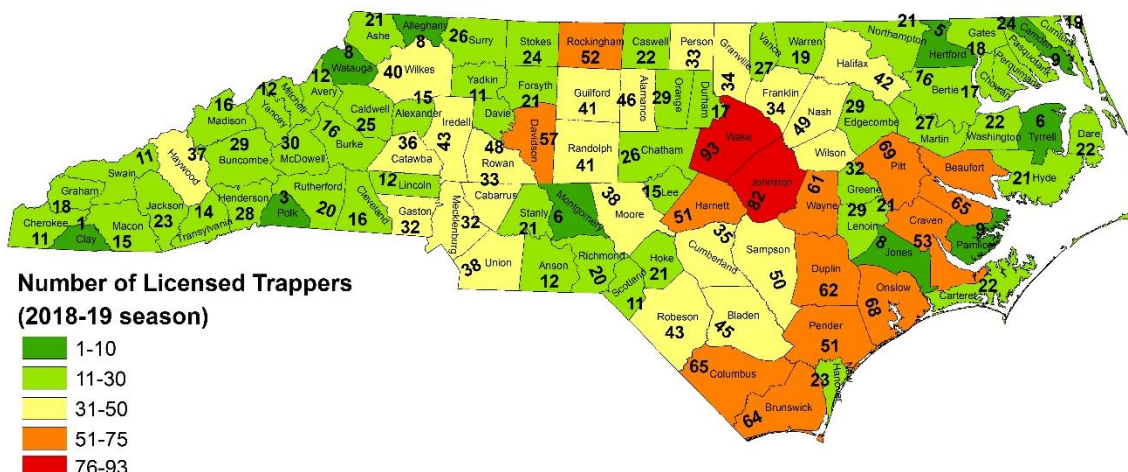
Please return the survey!

Landowner Assistance List

These surveys also provide you with the opportunity to sign up to be on the landowner assistance list, which connects landowners needing help with trappers during the trapping season. Check out our website: www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Contact-a-Licensed-Trapper

2018-2019 Trapping License Sales

The map below shows the number of residents, by county, who purchased a trapping license for the 2018-2019 trapping season. The highest number of licensed trappers resided in Wake County (93 trappers), followed by Johnston (82 trappers) and Pitt (69 trappers) counties. The lowest number of licensed trappers resided in Clay County (1 trapper), followed by Polk (3 trappers) and Hertford counties (5 trappers).



Trapper Education Opportunities

Basic Trapper Education: The NCWRC, in cooperation with the North Carolina Trappers Association (NCTA), offers **free half-day** Basic Trapper Education Courses. Courses are offered throughout the year in several wildlife districts and are taught by volunteer instructors.



To find out if there is a course offered in your area, please visit www.ncwildlife.org/trapped

Check this website monthly, as new courses are added throughout the year, with most scheduled during the late spring and throughout summer.

Advanced Trapper Education: The NCTA offers advanced hands-on trapping workshops that also qualify for WDCA recertification. These workshops are all day and require advanced registration and a registration fee.

Two advanced workshops are scheduled for 2020, so start planning now! To learn more and for instructions on signing up for either workshop, go to nctrapper.org/advanced-classes

Advanced Hands-On Wildlife Damage Management Workshop in 2020. You will learn about:

- Animal biology/behavior
- Trap types
- Investigations/Inspections
- Understanding signs/habitats
- Lures/baits/urines-when/why
- Prevention/exclusion techniques
- Non-lethal techniques
- WDCA regulations
- Local laws/ordinance

When: Saturday, August 22nd, 2020, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Where: McNeely Pest Control, 3831 Reynolda Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Instructors: Scott McNeely, Frank Fowler, Robert Newsome

Questions: Scott McNeely, smcneely@mcneelypest.com or 336-692-4200



Advanced Hands-On Coyote Trapping Workshop in 2020. You will learn about:

- Coyote biology/behavior
- Traps/anchors/pan covers
- Dirthole variations/step down
- Flat/post sets-when/why
- Blind/multiple sets-when/why
- Understanding signs/habitats
- Lures/baits/urines
- Weather/wind-Dos/Don'ts
- Peat moss/cover hulls-when/why
- Coyotes laws/regulations
- Hands-on check/setting traps

When: Saturday, October 3rd, 2020, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Where: Franklin County, 1 Allen's Lane, Youngsville, NC 27596

Instructors: Todd Menke and Jimmy Pierce

Questions: Todd Menke, minkster1971@gmail.com or 919-885-6187



2019 Trapper Instructors of the Year!

During the North Carolina Trappers Association Annual Convention in Smithfield, NC, **the NC Wildlife Resources Commission Furbearer Team presented Jimmy and Susan Pierce with the “Trapper Instructors of the Year” award.** Jimmy and Susan have organized and conducted dozens of basic and advanced trapper educational courses in the Piedmont region since 2008. They have been a great asset to help teach new instructors and establish classes in new areas of the state. Thanks to their efforts, the NCWRC has been able to provide reliable and annual trapper education courses in the Piedmont and Coast, educating countless students in how to responsible, ethical, and skilled trappers. Thanks Jimmy and Susan!



Thank you to our 2019 Trapper Education Instructors!

The Basic Trapper Education Classes offered by the NCWRC, in cooperation with the NC Trappers Association, would not be possible without our volunteer force of Trapper Education Instructors.

We would like to recognize and thank those trapper education instructors who organized and taught a class during 2019. Without the willingness and dedication of our volunteer instructors, we would not be able to offer these important trapping courses that help teach responsible, ethical and effective trapping. *Thank you instructors!*



2019 Trapper Education Instructors:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| • David Allen | • Sean Brooks |
| • David Denton | • Matt Bishop |
| • Dan Hunt | • Kevin Myers |
| • Todd Menke | • Scott McNeely |
| • Jimmy Pierce | • Charlie Sanders |
| • Susan Pierce | • Harold Dorsett |
| • Dwayne Robinson | • Dan Jones |
| • Robert Newsome | • Wiley Royal |

Trapping Demonstrations assisted by:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| • Kenton Althiser | • Penny Ballew |
| • John Caldwell | |

The Wildlife Control Agent (WCA) Program

The WDCA program allows trained and certified individuals to issue wildlife depredation permits to landowners that experience property damage caused by wildlife.

Depredation permits are needed to trap and lethally control wildlife outside the regulated trapping season. Certified WCAs are authorized to issue permits for controlling certain wildlife species that are causing property damage.



Photo Credit: AAAnimal Control

Training:

In order to become a WCA, an individual must complete a certification course covering laws, rules, health considerations, and humane handling techniques. In addition, the individual must pass a written examination. Agents are subject to background checks prior to certification.

The 2-day course is for the certification and re-certification of Wildlife Control Agents (WCA). There are now other options for re-certification (see below).

Course Location

Both courses listed below will be held at McKimmon Center in Raleigh, NC. Lodging is not included in the registration fee.

To sign up, call us at 919-707-0061 or go to ncwildlife.org/wdca

Class Registration Deadline	Registration Fee	WCA Class Date
June 1, 2020	\$175	June 10-11, 2020 (Wednesday-Thursday)
September 1, 2020	\$175	September 9-10, 2020 (Wednesday-Thursday)

WCA Recertification Options

The NCWRC offers certified WDCAs alternative options to becoming recertified. See options below or check our website: ncwildlife.org/wdca and click "Classes and Certification" for more information.

NCWRC requires a minimum of 8 NWCOA Continuing Education Units (CEU) to count for recertification.

To qualify for recertification, you must complete one of the training options listed below during the 12 months prior to the expiration of your certification. These classes are also listed at ncwildlife.org/wdca and click "Classes and Certification" for more information:

- National Wildlife Control Training Program (NWCTP)-[NC Specific Online Recertification](#)
- NCTA [Advance Hands-On Coyote Trapping](#) Workshop (8 CEUs; see page 2)
- NCTA [Advance Hands-On Wildlife Damage Management](#) Workshop (8 CEUs, see page 2)
- NCWRC's 2-Day [WDCA Certification Training Course](#)

House Bill 597: Changes that Affect Trappers

During 2019, the N.C. General Assembly recently passed [legislation](#) to modify the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's (Commission) license structure and fees. As a result, there are significant changes the Commission must make to its license sales system to accommodate. For your convenience, we have listed below the changes that relate to trapping:

Game Lands License

Effective Sept. 1, 2019, all trapping licenses now include access and use of game lands. Valid trapping license holders will no longer have to purchase a separate Game Land license to trap on game lands.

Trap Tags and Trapper Identification Number (TIN)

Effective Oct. 1, 2019, the Commission started issuing each trapper a TIN at the time they purchase or renew their trapping license. This number will be printed on their license.

Either the TIN and Commission telephone number (800-662-7137) or the trapper's name and address can be used on trap tags (see options 1 and 2 below).

If a trapper places a trap on the property of another, the Commission is required to disclose the identity of the trapper to the landowner where the trap is located at the landowner's request.



Option 1: Trapper's name and address



Option 2: Trapper Identification Number (TIN) and Commission telephone number (800-662-7137).

Resident Lifetime Trapping License

Effective Jan. 1, 2020, North Carolina residents can purchase a Lifetime Trapping License. The cost is \$300 and all proceeds from the sale of this license goes to the Wildlife Endowment Fund.

Wildlife Control Agent License

Starting January 1st, 2021, any individual who engages in wildlife damage control or wildlife removal activities, including bat eviction, for compensation, including reimbursement for the cost of materials, must first procure a wildlife control agent (WCA) license. This will be an annual license issued by the Commission for \$50. *This license will not be required for licensed trappers taking wild animals during the established trapping season for that species.* More information about changes to the WCA program, including the annual WCA license, will be available throughout the year leading up to the Jan 1st, 2021. This will include engagement with stakeholders, as well as a public comment period to receive input on draft rules regarding the implementation of the WCA license.

Skulls and Carcasses Wanted



The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Furbearer Team is interested in collecting the following:

Bobcat Skulls

Otter Skulls

Spotted Skunk Carcasses

This year we will be shipping cooperators pre-paid envelopes to mail in bobcat and otter samples instead of coordinating in-person pick-ups. The canine tooth will be used to look at the age structure of the harvest.



Additionally, we're hoping to obtain carcasses of spotted skunks to collect locations and tissue samples, including genetic samples, to increase our knowledge of this elusive furbearer species. Please contact Casey Dukes (information below) to submit a carcass.

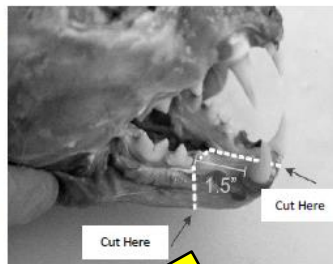
Projects such as these are important, as they help us monitor populations and improve our knowledge of North Carolina furbearers. We feel this information will help us maintain trapping for future generations.

In return for your cooperation, you will receive a furbearer cooperator patch and the age of submitted animals. Thank you in advance!

NCWRC – BOBCAT & OTTER JAW SAMPLE ENVELOPE

1. **USE ONLY ONE (1) ENVELOPE PER ANIMAL.** Only submit animals trapped during the regulated trapping season (no road killed or hunted animals please). If you need additional envelopes, please call 919-609-7226.

2. We need the two (2) bottom canines from each animal; cut the jaw bone with loppers or hacksaw between the lower canines and 1.5 inches back from canine (see photo). Be careful not to cut too close to the canine tooth, so it is not damaged. The root of the tooth is needed to determine age of the animal. **DO NOT** attempt to pull the canine tooth from the jaw because it will break in half.



3. Clean away as much flesh as possible from the sample. **Allow the jaw section to completely dry** before enclosing in this pre-paid sample envelope and mail.

7-DIGIT WRC CUSTOMER # (found on back of envelope)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

ZIP CODE: _____

EMAIL: _____

DATE HARVESTED: _____ COUNTY OF HARVEST: _____
(if exact date unknown, please provide month and year)

SPECIES (Check one): ☐ BOBCAT ☐ RIVER OTTER

SEX OF ANIMAL* (Check one): ☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ UNKNOWN

*Note - The sex of otters and bobcats can be difficult to determine. If testicles are not visible, make an incision in the abdomen of the carcass and examine for presence of uterus and ovaries, which can be found behind the bladder and below the kidneys.

You will receive a cooperator patch and age report for your harvested animals.

NEW for 2019-2020:

Cut and dry the portion of the lower jaw containing the canine tooth. Follow instructions on pre-paid envelope to ship.

For envelopes, contact:

Ashley Hobbs

Asst. Black Bear & Furbearer
Biologist

919-698-4655

ashley.hobbs@ncwildlife.org

For more information visit:

ncwildlife.org/furcooperator

Rabies Statistics

During 2019, positive rabies results were obtained from 82 raccoons, 48 skunks, 42 foxes, 3 bobcats, and 1 deer. The total number of terrestrial rabies cases (n=196) was a 24% decrease from the number of cases detected during 2018 (n=259). The number of positive terrestrial rabies cases since 2005 remains below levels seen in the mid-1990’s and mid-2000’s (Figure 1). All but 3 western North Carolina counties have had positive terrestrial rabies cases at the end of the reporting period (Figure 2). Skunks and raccoons are the primary species of wildlife in which rabies is observed in North Carolina, excluding bats (Figure 3). During 2019, 63 out of 100 counties documented a positive terrestrial wildlife rabies case. Guilford County (n=12) had the highest number of positive terrestrial rabies, followed by Gaston, Iredell, and Mecklenburg counties (n=9 in each county).

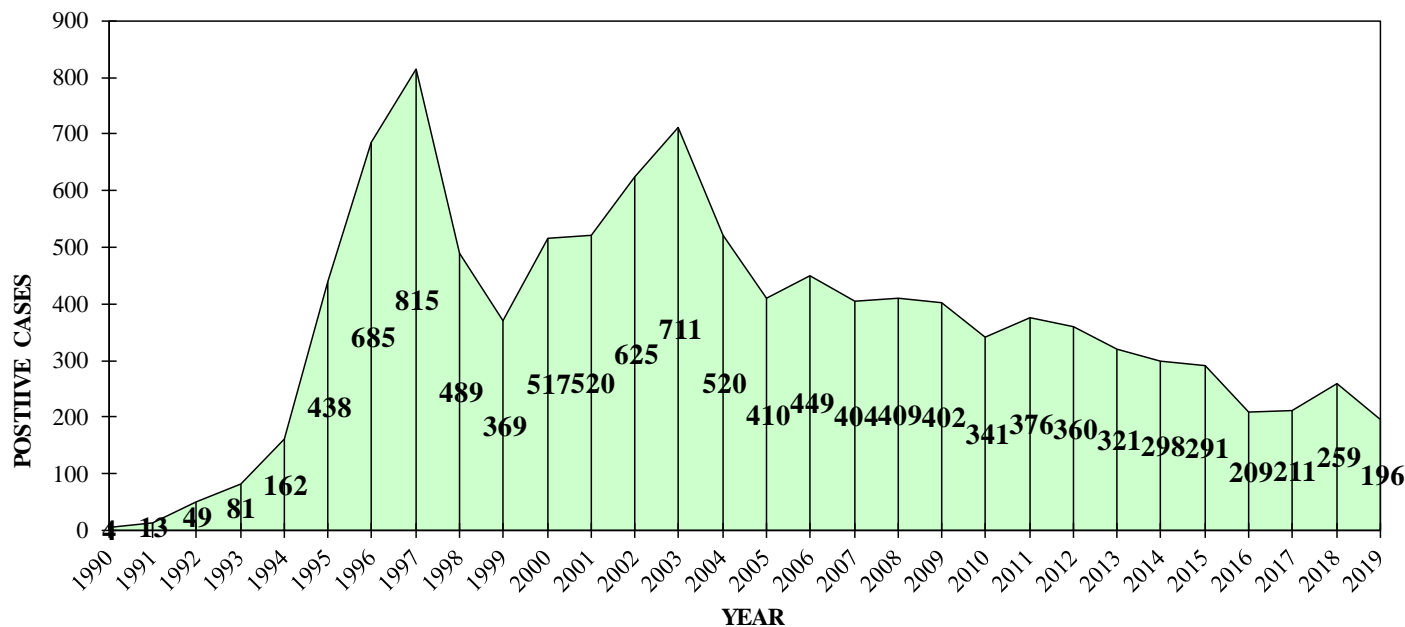


Figure 1. Positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases from 1990 through 2019.

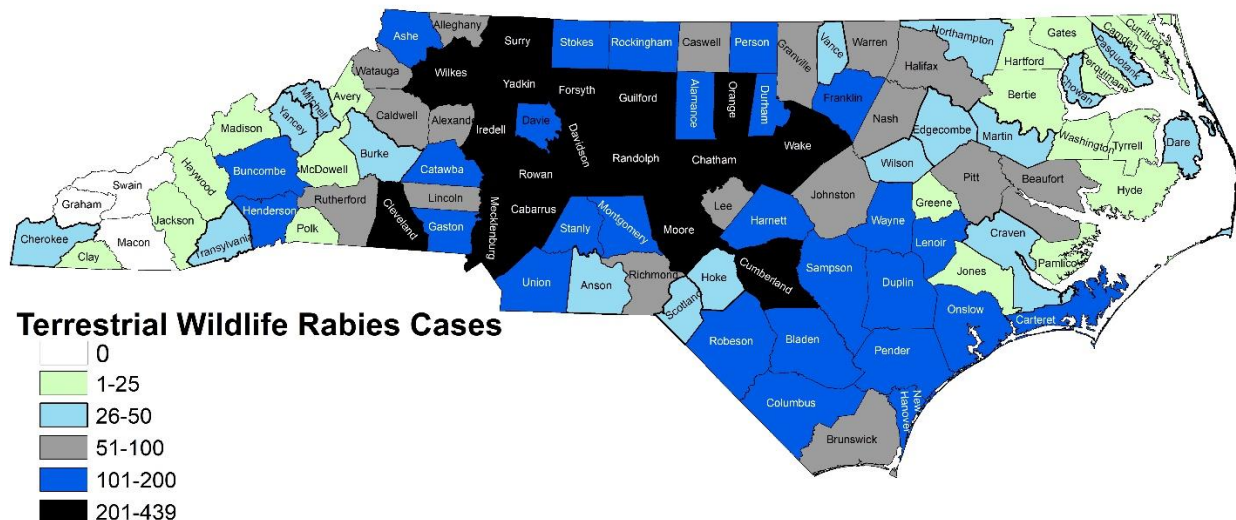


Figure 2. Number of positive rabies cases in terrestrial wildlife by county from 1990-2019. No positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases in Graham, Macon and Swain counties.

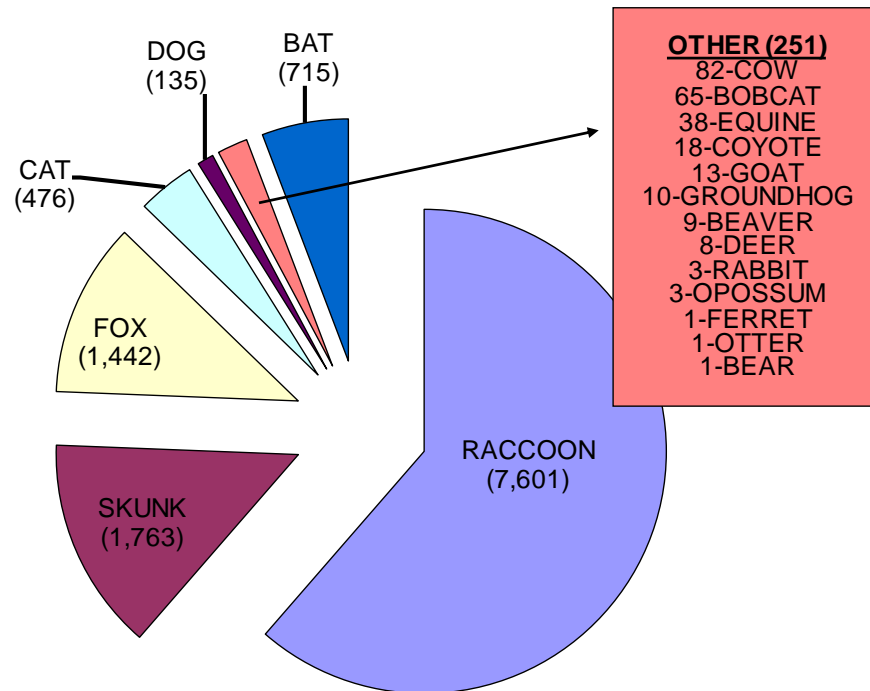


Figure 3. Number of positive rabies cases by species from 1990-2019.

Creature Feature: The Long-tailed Weasel

There are two species of weasels in North Carolina, the least weasel and the long-tailed weasel. The long-tailed weasel is the larger and more widely distributed of the two species. Biologists have described the long-tailed weasel as the purist of carnivores, as every feature of their body and behavior is adapted to live exclusively as a hunter. In short, they are effective rodent-harvesting machines.

Weasels are rarely observed in the southeastern USA and it is unknown if this is because they are rare and declining or because they are secretive and difficult to survey. For example, there are only 72 museum records for North Carolina, and only three of these records have occurred since 2000.



Trail Camera photo of a long-tailed weasel. Photo: Jessie Matthews/NC State University

In collaboration with the NC Trappers Association and North Carolina State University, the NCWRC is testing the effectiveness of a baited-tube camera trap survey that has been successful in detecting weasels in Montana and West Virginia. In 2019, 20 cameras with baited tubes were placed in six game lands (Jordan, South Mountains, Sandhills, Croatan, Pisgah, and Shocco Creek) in North Carolina. These cameras were deployed for 2 weeks at each game land. One long-tailed weasel was detected on South Mountain Game Lands and one on Pisgah Game Lands.

Have you trapped or observed a weasel? Let us know! Please e-mail Casey Dukes at: casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org

Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

The response rate for the 2018-2019 mail survey was 46%, which was a slight decline from the 2017-2018 survey year. During the 2018-19 trapping season, 52% of licensed trappers actively trapped during the season (Table 1). Reversing a 3-year trend, the number of licensed trappers increased 1% from the previous 2016-2017 trapping season (Table 1).

During the 2018-19 season, 51% of furbearers were harvested in the Coastal Plain Furbearer Management region, followed by the Piedmont and Mountain regions (Table 2). But most coyotes and foxes were trapped in the Piedmont region (Table 2). The 2018-19 furbearer harvest level was 12% lower than that seen during the prior trapping season, driven by declines in mink, muskrat, nutria, coyote, gray fox, red fox, opossum, and raccoon harvest (Table 3). Overall, pelt prices increased 19% from the 2017-18 season; prices are based on information from fur dealers and fur auctions. Bobcat pelts had the highest value, followed by otter pelts, but those values are approximately 50% to 70% lower than the peak that occurred during the 2012-13 trapping season. Skunk pelts have held their value for the past four trapping seasons (~\$3-\$5; Table 3). During the 2018-19 trapping season, raccoon and beaver were the most trapped furbearers, followed by opossums and coyotes (Figure 4).

Table 1. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2018-19.

Survey Year	# of licensed trappers	Response Rate to Survey	% of Licensed Trappers that were active
2003-04	1,286	54%	51%
2004-05	1,547	50%	46%
2005-06	1,744	58%	44%
2006-07	1,867	63%	41%
2007-08	2,027	61%	40%
2008-09	2,233	59%	39%
2009-10	2,120	60%	48%
2010-11	2,186	57%	52%
2011-12	2,638	54%	52%
2012-13	3,125	54%	49%
2013-14	3,695	51%	52%
2014-15	3,547	48%	46%
2015-16	3,076	49%	43%
2016-17	2,983	48%	54%
2017-18	3,006	49%	51%
2018-19	2,863	46%	52%

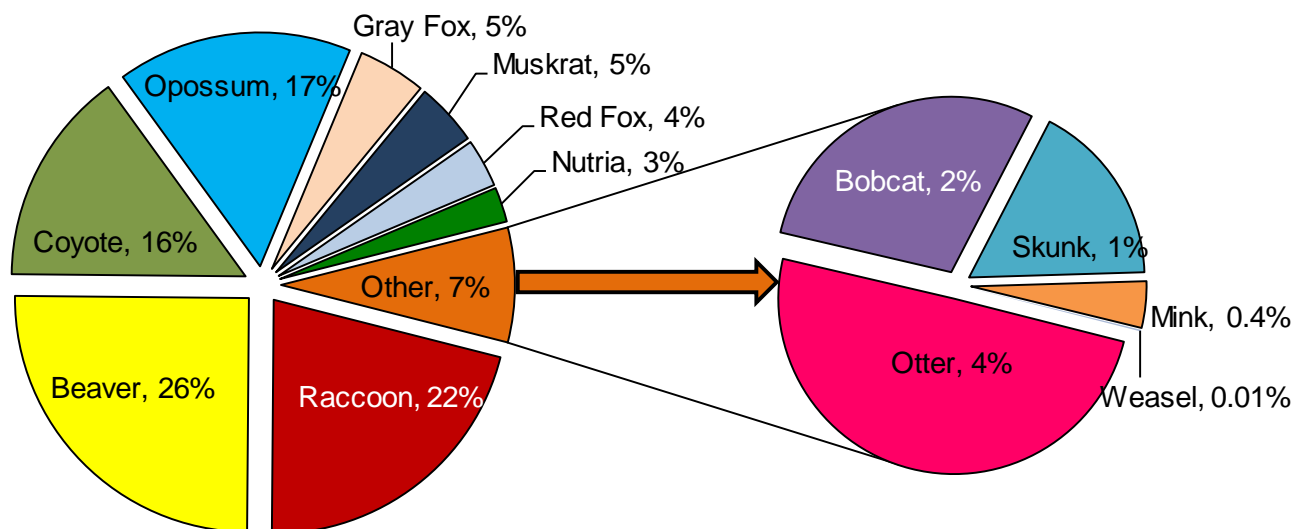















Figure 4. The wildlife species composition of the 2018-19 trapper harvest based on estimates from the voluntary trapper harvest survey.

Table 2. Estimated trapper harvest by furbearer management region from the 2018-19 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	Coastal Plain	Piedmont	Mountain
Beaver	8,511	3,272	485
Bobcat	732	161	211
Coyote	3,647	2,903	872
All Fox	1,451	2,173	344
Gray Fox	915	1,350	106
Mink	65	57	47
Muskrat	1,150	718	291
Nutria	1,156	57	0
Raccoon	5,566	3,619	1,207
Red Fox	558	836	237
River Otter	1,451	431	78
Skunk	104	375	162
Virginia Opossum	4,491	2,430	902
Weasels	4	0	2
Total	28,323	21,596	5,709
% of regional harvest	51%	39%	10%

Table 3. Estimated trapper harvest from the 2015-16 trapping season through the 2018-19 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Price
 Beaver	9,344	\$8.71	9,660	\$8.59	12,899	\$9.29	12,855	\$9.02
 Mink	161	\$6.45	166	\$7.95	181	\$5.24	174	\$6.51
 Muskrat	2,841	\$2.41	3,129	\$3.76	4,235	\$2.92	2,230	\$3.68
 Nutria	1,461	N/A	719	N/A	2,199	N/A	1,234	N/A
 Otter	1,254	\$19.08	1,450	\$29.26	1,702	\$20.78	2,019	\$24.38
 Bobcat	1,014	\$28.51	1,393	\$34.12	1,096	\$31.71	1,176	\$29.54
 Coyote	7,645	\$17.08	6,337	\$10.98	9,077	\$13.44	7,638	\$19.93
 Gray Fox	4,177	\$11.31	3,780	\$14.01	3,478	\$9.87	2,410	\$11.62
 Red Fox	2,041	\$9.14	1,929	\$12.04	2,165	\$6.35	1,716	\$11.68
 Opossum	7,149	\$0.15	8,759	\$0.99	8,829	\$1.00	8,350	\$1.14
 Raccoon	9,365	\$3.32	11,195	\$3.68	11,766	\$3.18	10,876	\$4.08
 Skunk	487	\$3.25	835	\$2.89	653	\$5.21	688	\$3.12
 Weasel	2	\$1.17	0	N/A	2	N/A	6	N/A
TOTAL	46,941		49,352		58,282		51,372	

Trapping Best Management Practices

Trapping Best Management Practices (BMPs) are carefully researched **recommendations** designed to ensure animals are **humanely captured**. Developed as part of the **largest trap research effort** ever conducted, BMPs feature the **latest scientific information** about trapping techniques and equipment, along with practical advice from *experienced trappers* and wildlife biologists.

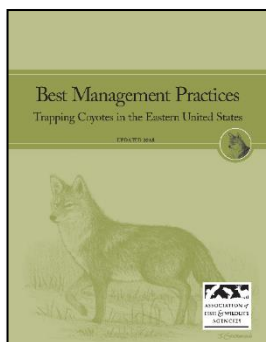
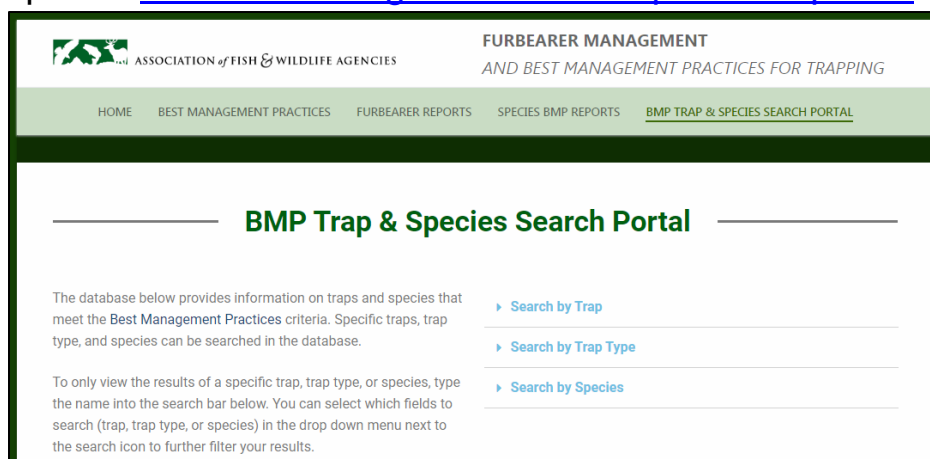


BMPs are intended to inform people about traps and trapping systems considered to be state-of-the-art in animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, and practicality.

The trapping BMPs serve as a guide to inform trappers about trap-types they should consider using for capturing a specific furbearer, including bobcats, coyotes, beaver and raccoons! BMP-approved traps have been tested to be effective, selective, efficient, practical and humane.

To learn more about Furbearer Management and trapping BMPs:
furbearermanagement.com

You can find out what traps are approved BMP traps at a new search portal: furbearermanagement.com/bmp-search-portal/



Trapping BMPs, combined with Trapper Education Programs, are intended to maintain the integrity of furbearer management programs throughout the nation and to sustain trapping methods now and in the future.

North Carolina Hunter Harvest Survey

In addition to the survey we conduct of licensed trappers, the NCWRC conducts a mail survey of licensed hunters to estimate the numbers of hunters for specific game species, hunter effort and hunter harvest. As you can see in figure 5, hunters harvested more coyotes than trappers, but this was due to the high number of licensed hunters in North Carolina. Most of the coyotes harvested by hunters is incidental to deer hunting. Trappers are more efficient and effective at harvesting coyotes in comparison to hunters; during the 2018-19 season, for every 1.3 coyotes harvested by hunters, trappers harvested 9.2 coyotes (Figure 6). Figures 7 and 8 show the raccoon and bobcat harvest by both hunters and trappers. Figure 9 shows the harvest of foxes by hunters.

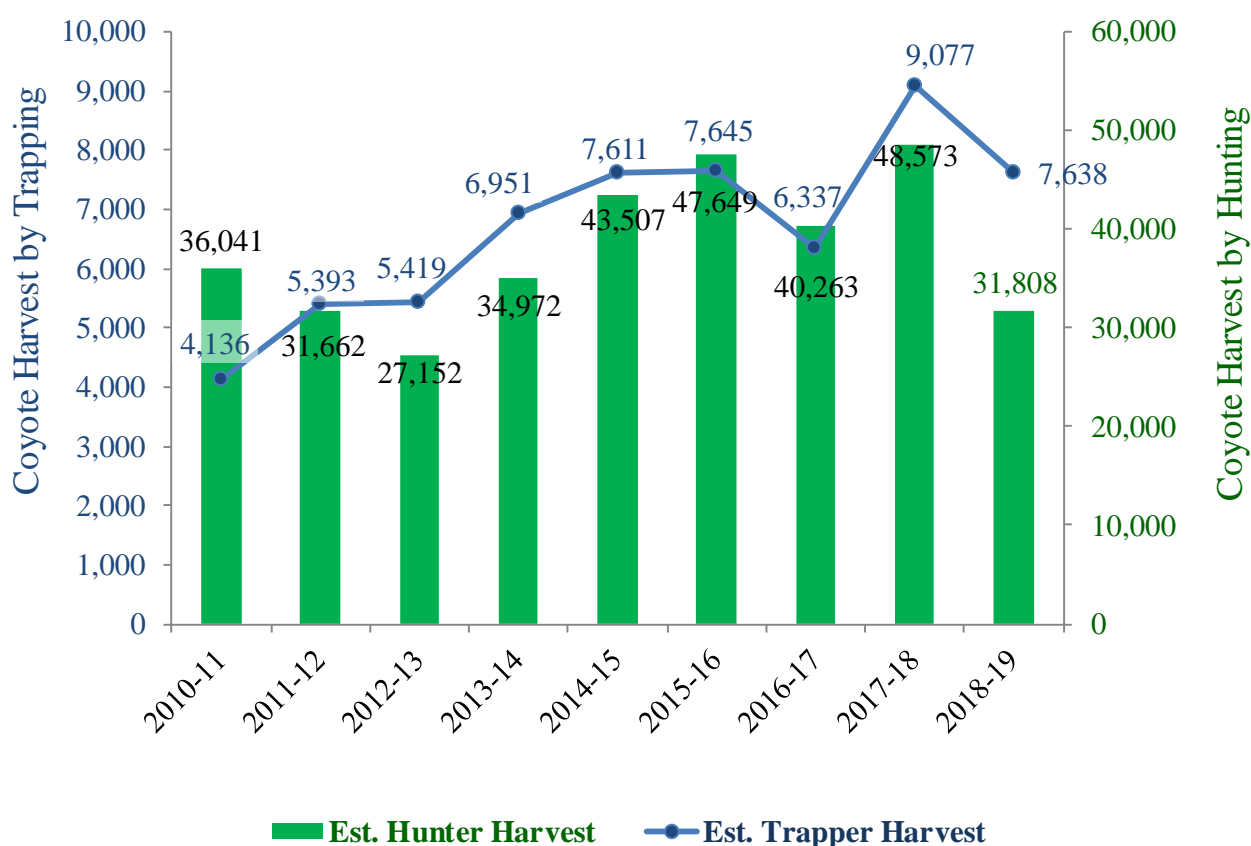


Figure 5. Estimated harvest of coyotes by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line).

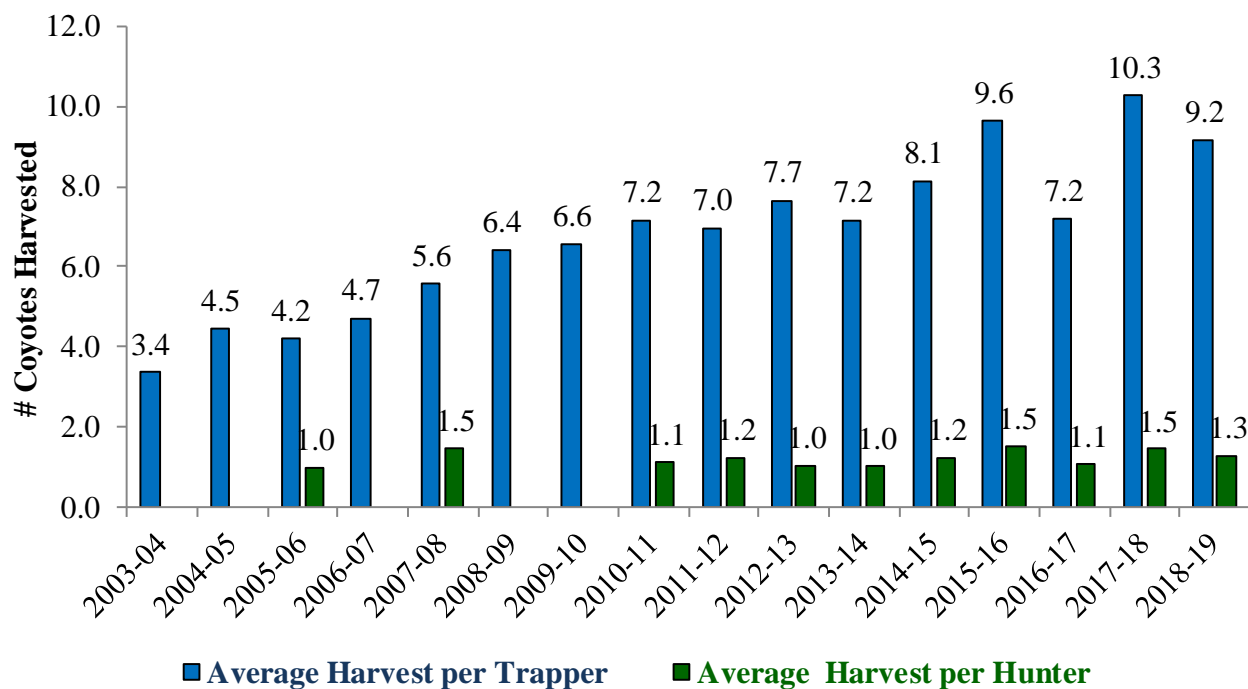


Figure 6. Average number of coyotes harvested by hunters (green bar) and by trappers (blue bar) from the 2003-04 season through the 2018-18 season.

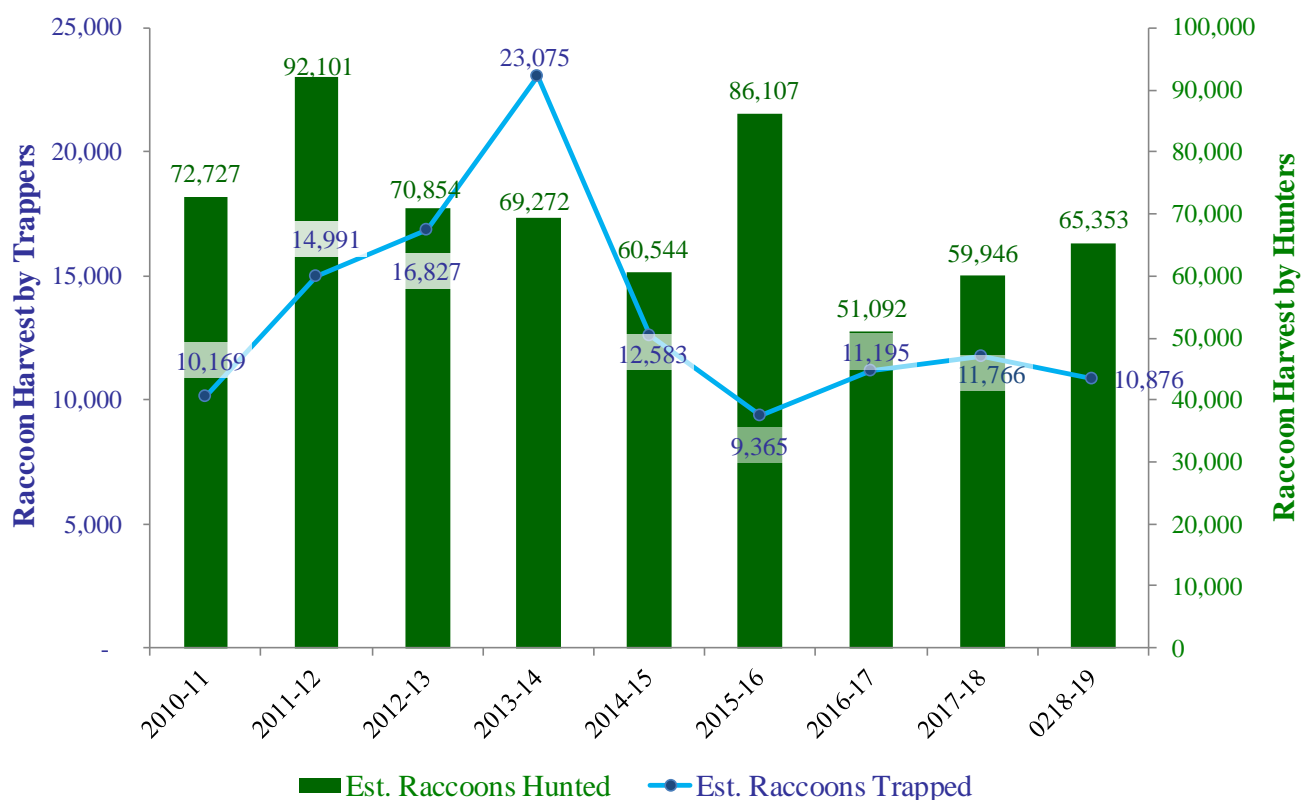


Figure 7. Estimated harvest of raccoons by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line) from the 2010-11 season through the 2018-19 season.

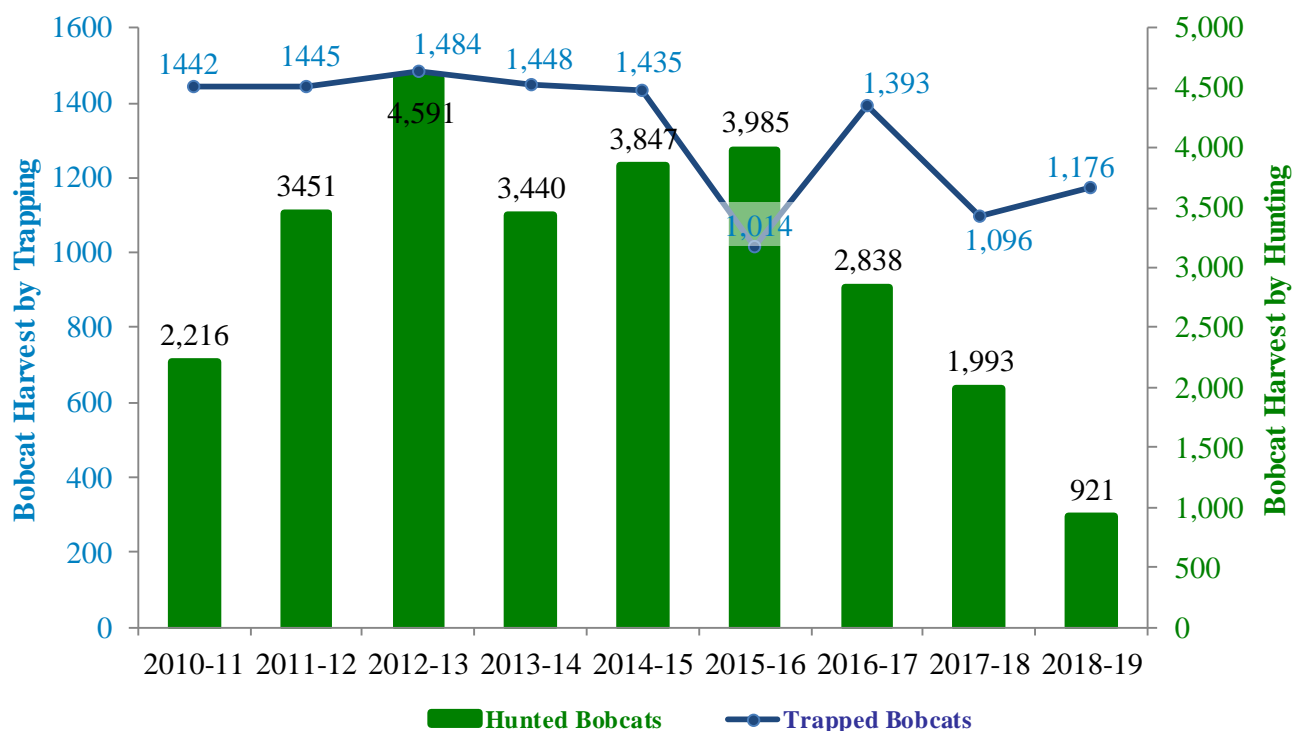


Figure 8. Estimated harvest of bobcats by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line) from the 2010-11 season through the 2018-19 season.

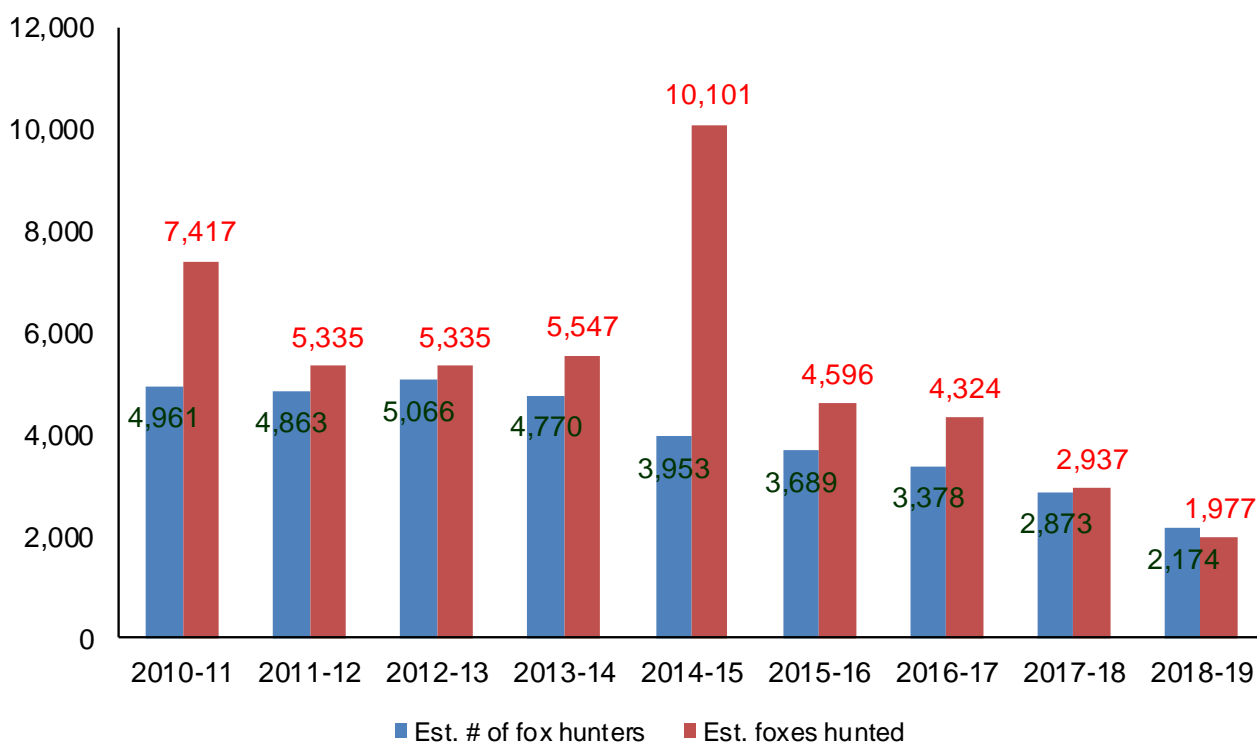


Figure 9. Estimated harvest of foxes (red bars) by hunters (blue bars) from the 2010-11 season through the 2018-19 season.

“Why can’t I trap foxes in my county?”

This is one of the most common questions we get from trappers. The answer is that our agency does not have authority to allow fox trapping in a county.

Only the General Assembly has the authority to allow fox trapping in a county through passage of a local law.

During the 2019 NC General Assembly Legislative Long Session, **4 more counties were opened up to fox trapping**, with exemptions from fox tagging requirements. **The new counties are Caldwell, Cleveland, Cumberland, and Yancey counties.**



There are now 55 counties with fox trapping seasons in North Carolina. Please note that not all county fox trapping seasons are the same. There are 23 different fox trapping seasons within these 51 counties. Outside these 55 counties, you cannot trap foxes during the regulated trapping season and any fox captured must be released in those 45 counties without a fox trapping season.

For more information on fox hunting and trapping seasons, including county-specific restrictions and season dates please go to: ncwildlife.org/foxseasons

Your Furbearer Team!

We are here to serve the wildlife resource and you! Please don’t hesitate to contact us with questions, comments, or to participate in our cooperator programs!



Colleen Olfenbuttel
Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist
colleen.olfenbuttel@ncwildlife.org

Casey G. Dukes
Surveys and Research Biologist I
casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org



Ashley Hobbs
Asst. Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist
(temp)
ashley.hobbs@ncwildlife.org

