

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.

Trapper Education Opportunities

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



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 Coyote Trapping Workshop: The North Carolina Trappers Association will be offering hands-on coyote trapping workshops in April and October. You will learn about:

- Coyote biology/behavior
- Traps/anchors/pan tension
- Trap set varieties
- Lures and baits
- Weather and wind
- Understanding signs/habitats
- Coyote laws and regulations

This coyote trapping workshop qualifies as a recertification option for Wildlife Damage Control Agents!!

Advanced Hands-On Fur Handling Workshop: Once you have trapped your target animal, the work has just begun! Learn how to skin, flesh and handle fur to prepare it for sale! The North Carolina Trappers Association will be offering a hands-on fur handling workshop on April 7th, 2018 in Gold Hill, NC.

For more information, go to nctrapper.org and hover over the "Education" link in the top row, then select "Advance Coyote Trapping Workshops" or "Advanced Fur Handling Workshop"

Or contact Todd Menke, NCTA Education Coordinator
E-mail: minkster1971@gmail.com
Phone: (919) 885-6187



Thank you to our 2017 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 that organized and taught a class during 2017.

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. Pictured below are instructors that helped in 2017. *Thank you instructors!*

We need you!! We would like to recruit more trapper education instructors, so if you are interested please contact us for information: casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org



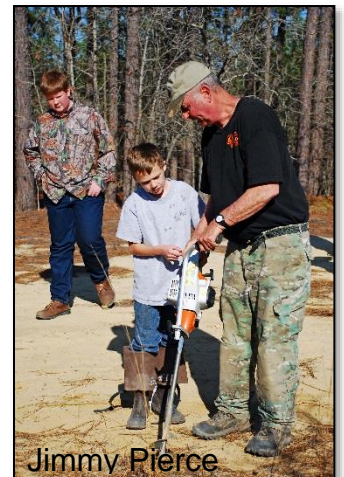
Dan Jones (left)
Harold Dorsett (right)



Dan Hunt



David Denton



Jimmy Pierce



Dwayne Robinson



Todd Menke

Not pictured:
Charlie Sanders
Susan Pierce



Terry Marsh



Wiley Royal (2nd from right)

The Wildlife Damage Control Agent (WDCA) 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 WDCAs 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 WDCA, 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 Damage Control Agents (WDCA). There are now other options for re-certification (see below).

Course Location

The June course will be held at McKimmon Center in Raleigh, NC and the September course will be held at Bass Lake in Holly Springs, NC. Lodging is not included in the registration fee.

Contact us at 919-707-0061 to sign up!

Class Registration Deadline	Cost	WDCA Class Date
June 1, 2018	\$175	June 20-21, 2018 (Wednesday-Thursday)
September 1, 2018	\$175	September 12-13, 2018 (Wednesday-Thursday)

WDCA Recertification Options

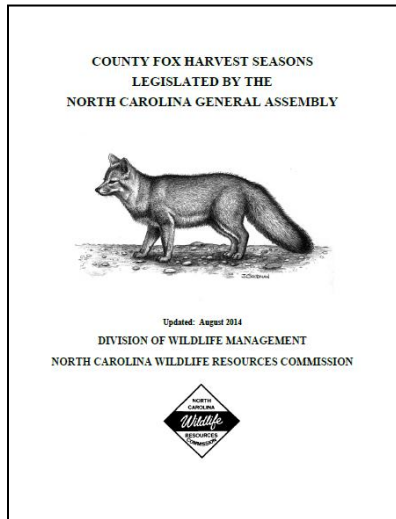
The NCWRC offers certified WDCAs alternative options to becoming recertified. See options below and check our website: ncwildlife.org/wdca and click "Classes and Certification" for more information.

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:

- National Wildlife Control Training Program (NWCTP)-NC Specific Online Recertification
- National Wildlife Control Operators Association (NWCOA, nwcoa.com) Training Courses (only need one of the following):
 1. Basic Operator Training Course (16 CEUs)
 2. Species-Specific - Bats Standards Compliant (8 CEU's)
 3. Species-Specific - Bird Barrier Certification (8 CEU's)
 4. NWCOA & NPMA Wildlife Expo (up to 10 CEU's)
- NCTA Advance Hands-On Coyote Trapping Workshop (8 CEU's; see page 1)
- Fur Takers of America (FTA) Trappers College (6 nights, 7 days)
- NCWRC's 2 Day WDCA Certification Training Course

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



The answer is that our agency has **no** 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.

In 2017, 2 more counties were opened up to fox trapping. There are 43 counties with fox trapping seasons in North Carolina.

Outside these 43 counties, you cannot trap foxes during the regulated trapping season and any fox captured must be released in the 57 counties without a season.



For information on current fox hunting and trapping seasons in North Carolina go to: <http://www.ncwildlife.org/foxseasons> and download our publication on fox hunting and trapping seasons.

Reminder about Tagging Changes

In February 2017, a regulation change was approved by the NCWRC that removed the regulation that prohibited any person from affixing an unused fur tag purchased in one season on a bobcat, otter or fox taken in a subsequent season.

Prior to this change in the regulation, a person had to dispose of any extra fur tags they purchased at the end of the season and purchase new tags the following season.



Starting this past trapping season, if you purchased too many fur tags, you can now use those tags in the subsequent seasons. Fur tags will no longer have the year printed on the tag.

A person can tag bobcat, fox and otter up to 30 days after the close of the applicable season. No tags will be shipped from our agency to a person after 23 consecutive days from the close of the applicable season. After 23 days, you will have to pick up your tags at the NCWRC Headquarters in Raleigh, NC.

To order your tags, call 888-2468-6834.

Rabies Statistics

During 2017, positive rabies results were obtained from 111 raccoons, 52 skunks, 43 foxes, 2 bobcats, 1 coyote, 1 groundhog, and 1 deer. The total number of terrestrial rabies cases (n=211) was a 1% increase from the number of cases detected during 2016 (n=209). The number of positive terrestrial rabies cases since 2012 remains below 1999 levels (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 2017, 64 out of 100 counties documented a positive terrestrial wildlife rabies case.

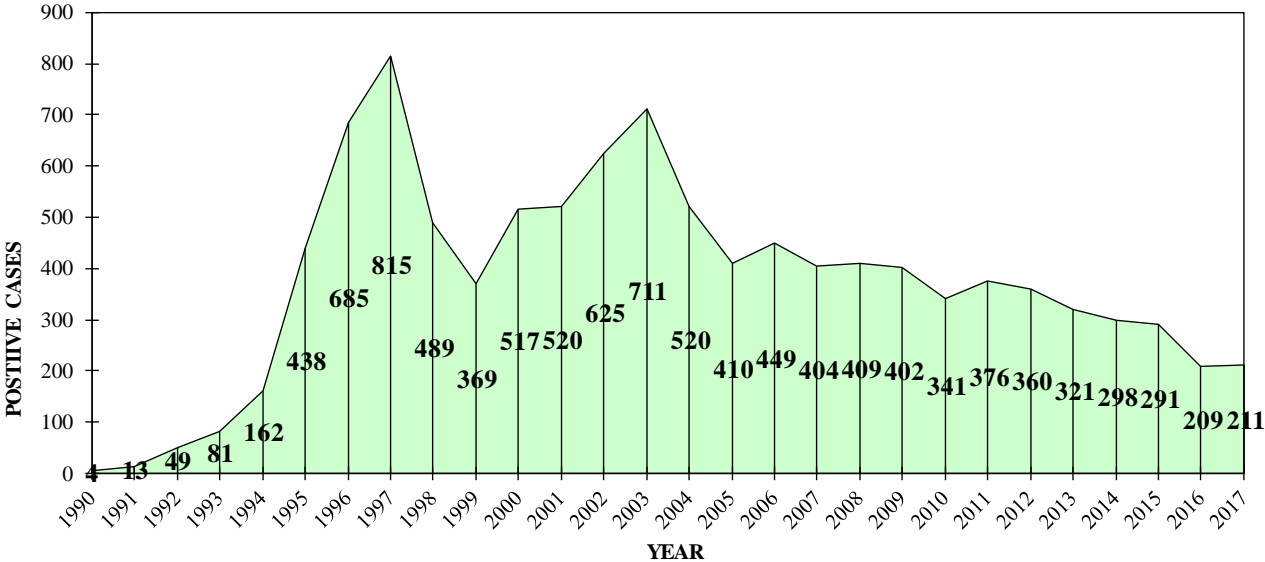


Figure 1. Positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases from 1990 through 2017.

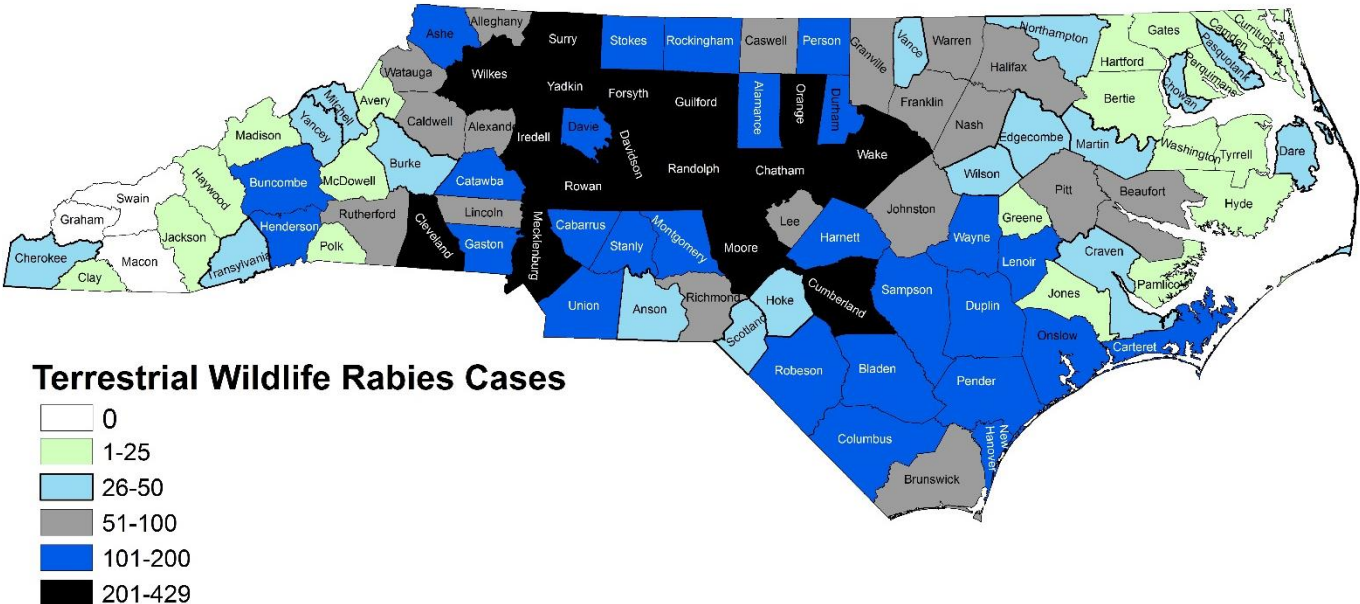


Figure 2. Number of positive rabies cases in terrestrial wildlife by county from 1990-2017. No positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases in Graham, Macon and Swain counties.

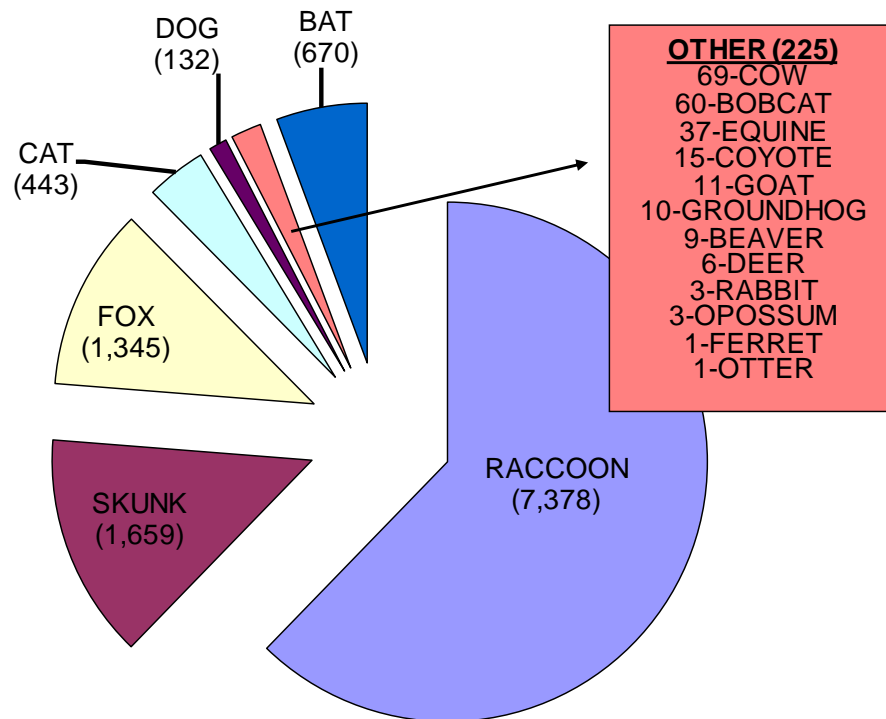


Figure 3. Number of positive rabies cases by species from 1990-2017.

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.

North Carolina Muskrat Study

Due to concerns about regional muskrat populations, several southeastern, northeastern and Canadian furbearer biologists have started monitoring muskrat populations in cooperation with licensed trappers. Efforts involve monitoring the age and sex ratio of harvested muskrats, as this may indicate population declines.

Starting in 2011, North Carolina joined regional efforts by attending fur sales and working with North Carolina fur dealers. We will need multiple years of data before we can start to detect trends in the muskrat population.

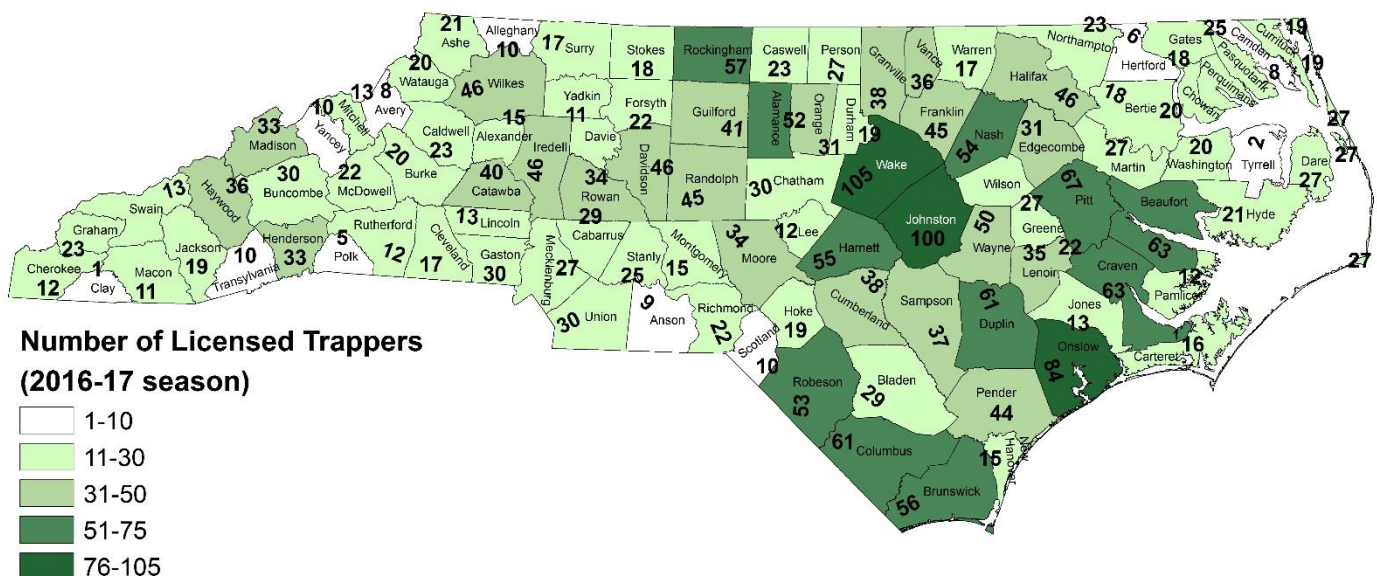


Ratios

Category	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Adult Male/Female	1.5	3.64	1.11	1.91	1.34	1.11	1.22
Juvenile Male/Female	0.96	1.3	1.38	1.93	1.14	1.58	1.11
Juvenile/Adult	2.12	2.4	1.48	2.66	1.04	2.10	1.80
Juvenile/Adult Female	5.3	11.36	3.16	7.73	2.43	4.61	4.01
Sample size (n)	82	199	928	133	2,627	319	2,505

2016-2017 Trapping License Sales

The map below shows the number of residents, by county, who purchased a trapping license for the 2016-2017 trapping season. The highest number of licensed trappers resided in Wake County (105 trappers), followed by Johnston (100 trappers) and Onslow (84 trappers) counties. The lowest number of licensed trappers resided in Clay County (1 trapper), followed by Tyrrell County (2 trappers).



Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

The response rate for the 2016-2017 mail survey was 48%, which was similar to the 2015-2016 survey year. During the 2016-17 trapping season, 54% of licensed trappers actively trapped during the season (Table 1). For the third year in a row, the number of licensed trappers declined; there was a 3% decline in the number of licensed trappers from the previous 2015-2016 trapping season (Table 1).

During the 2016-17 season, 53% of furbearers are harvested in the Coastal Plain Furbearer Management region, followed by the Piedmont and Mountain regions (Table 2). But a slight majority of coyotes and foxes are trapped in the Piedmont region (Table 2). The 2016-17 furbearer harvest level was 5% higher than that seen during the prior trapping season, due the decline in the number of licensed trappers and lower pelt prices (Table 3). Overall, pelt prices increased 27% from the 2015-16 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 69% 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; Table 3). During the 2016-17 trapping season, raccoon and beaver were the most commonly trapped furbearers, followed by coyotes and opossums (Figure 4).

Table 1. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2016-17.

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%

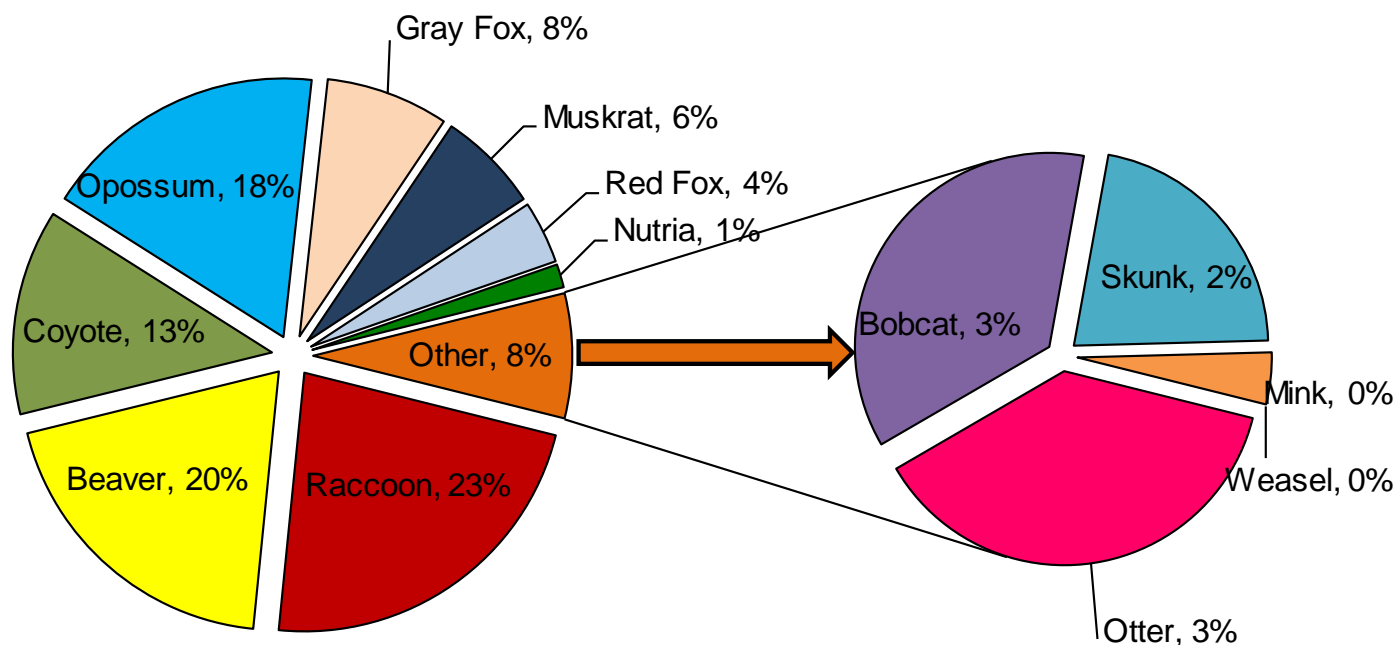















Figure 4. The wildlife species composition of the 2016-17 trapper harvest based on estimates from the voluntary trapper harvest survey.

Table 2. Estimated trapper harvest by furbearer management region from the 2016-17 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	Coastal Plain	Piedmont	Mountain
Beaver	6,079	2,681	627
Bobcat	872	262	253
Coyote	2,622	2,685	1,029
All Fox	2,057	3,107	536
Gray Fox	1,518	2,033	221
Mink	71	33	47
Muskrat	1,639	938	484
Nutria	688	19	0
Raccoon	5,809	3,949	1,382
Red Fox	539	1,073	314
River Otter	1,029	335	75
Skunk	99	448	270
Virginia Opossum	4,983	2,723	1,016
Weasels	0	0	0
Total	25,948	17,181	5,627
% of regional harvest	53%	35%	12%

Table 3. Estimated trapper harvest from the 2013-14 trapping season through the 2016-17 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

2013-14			2014-15		2015-16		2016-17	
Species	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices
 Beaver	13,138	\$12.64	10,382	\$9.82	9,344	\$8.71	9,660	\$8.59
 Mink	530	\$15.38	237	\$8.06	161	\$6.45	166	\$7.95
 Muskrat	10,064	\$10.36	7,392	\$4.48	2,841	\$2.41	3,129	\$3.76
 Nutria	3,194	N/A	2,166	N/A	1,461	N/A	719	N/A
 Otter	2,908	\$56.09	2,102	\$35.07	1,254	\$19.08	1,450	\$29.26
 Bobcat	1,448	\$66.00	1,435	\$41.39	1,014	\$28.51	1,393	\$34.12
 Coyote	6,951	\$16.42	7,611	\$8.27	7,645	\$17.08	6,337	\$10.98
 Gray Fox	6,410	\$22.79	5,001	\$15.74	4,177	\$11.31	3,780	\$14.01
 Red Fox	2,186	\$27.91	1,658	\$15.70	2,041	\$9.14	1,929	\$12.04
 Opossum	11,630	\$1.31	6,423	\$1.49	7,149	\$0.15	8,759	\$0.99
 Raccoon	23,075	\$8.50	12,583	\$3.86	9,365	\$3.32	11,195	\$3.68
 Skunk	1,163	\$3.48	709	\$3.80	487	\$3.25	835	\$2.89
 Weasel	26	\$0.40	2	\$0.25	2	\$1.17	0	N/A
TOTAL	82,722		57,701		46,941		49,352	

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.

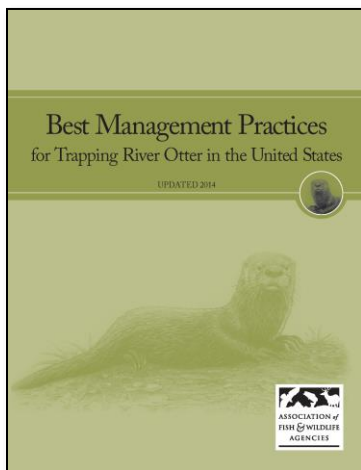


BMPs are intended to inform people about traps and trapping systems considered to be state-of-the-art in animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, and practicality.

The BMP publications 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!

All furbearers in North Carolina now have their own BMP document, which can be found at: ncwildlife.org/bmp

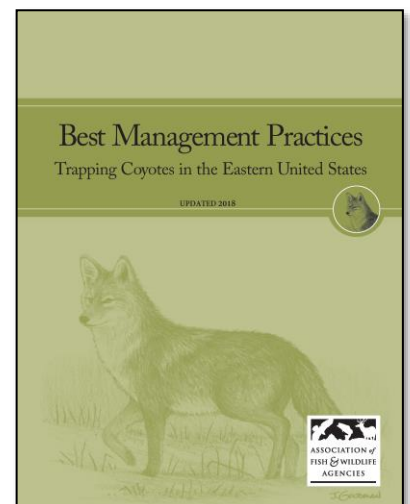
Trapping BMPs exist for 22 species of furbearers:
www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/research



Did you know?

- Trapping BMPs are recommendations, not laws. Each state fish and wildlife agency decides how BMPs are used in their trapper education programs.
- Data collected and used to develop BMPs are consistent with internationally-accepted scientific standards for the evaluation of trapping techniques and the welfare of animals captured in traps.

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.



Skulls and Carcasses Wanted



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

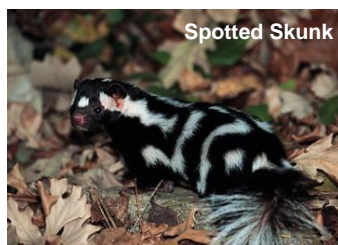
Bobcat Skulls or jawbones
Otter Skulls or jawbones
Spotted Skunk Carcasses

As in recent years, we'll collect bobcat and otter teeth to monitor the age structure of the harvest age structure. We will come to you to pick up the skulls or jawbones from you!

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

**You will receive a furbearer cooperator patch and
the ages of the furbearers you submit!**

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).



Projects such as these are important, as they help us monitor populations and improve our knowledge of N.C. furbearers. We feel this information will help us maintain trapping for future generations! Thank you in advance!

Contacts for this project are:

Charlie Sanders
(919) 698-4655

charles.sanders@ncwildlife.org

Casey Dukes
919-609-7226

casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org

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 2016-17 season, for every 1.2 coyotes harvested by hunters, trappers harvested 7.2 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.

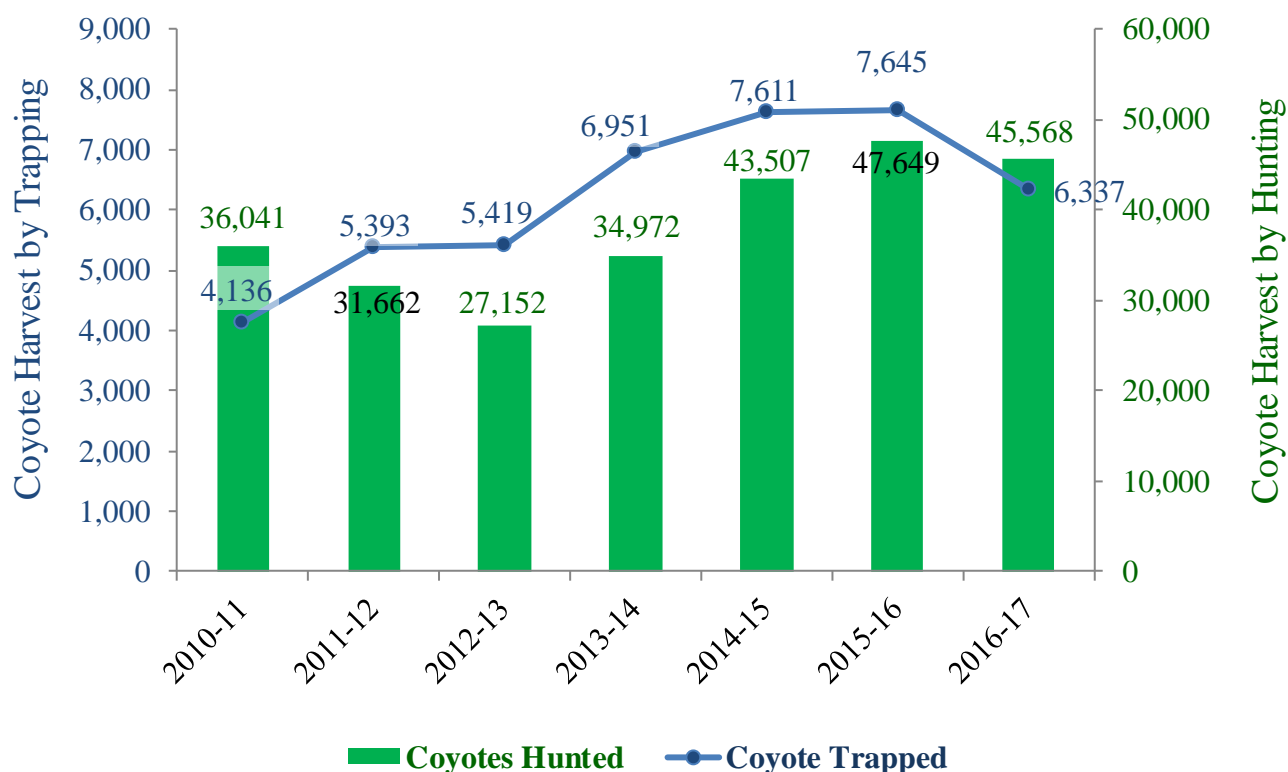


Figure 5. Estimated harvest of coyotes by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line).

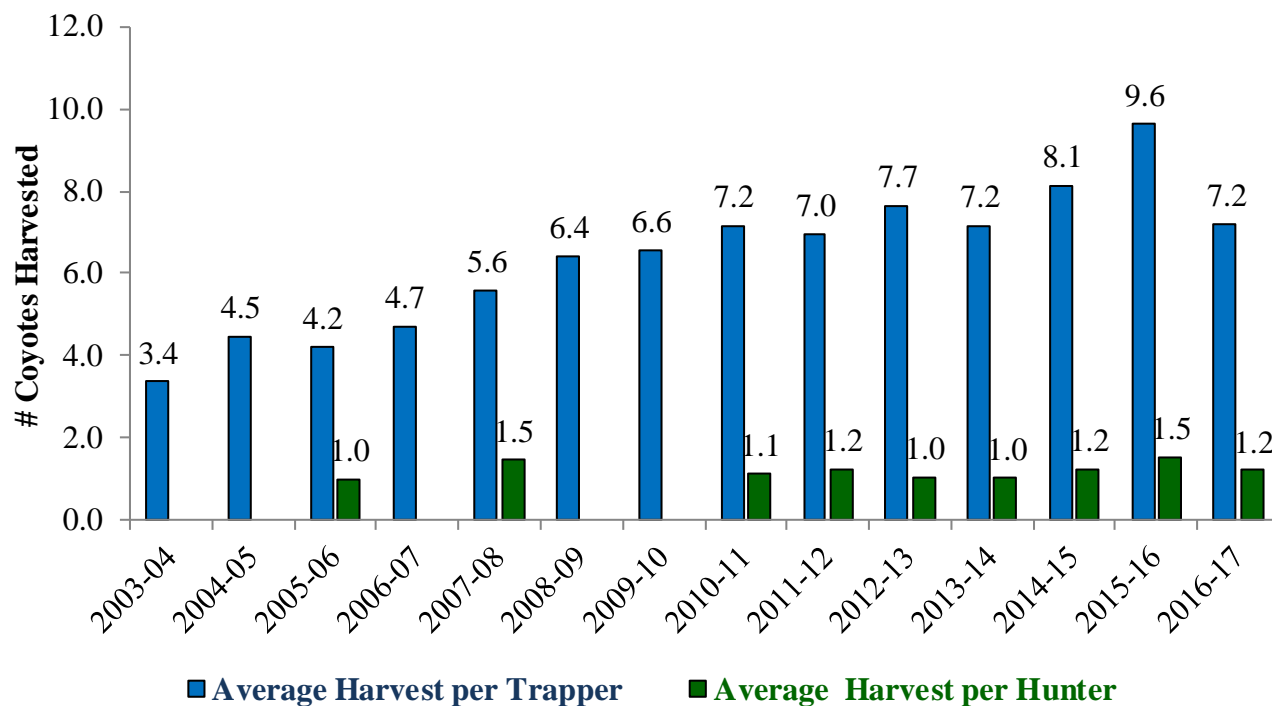


Figure 6. Average number of coyotes harvested by hunters (green bar) and by trappers (blue bar) from the 2003-04 season through the 2016-17 season.

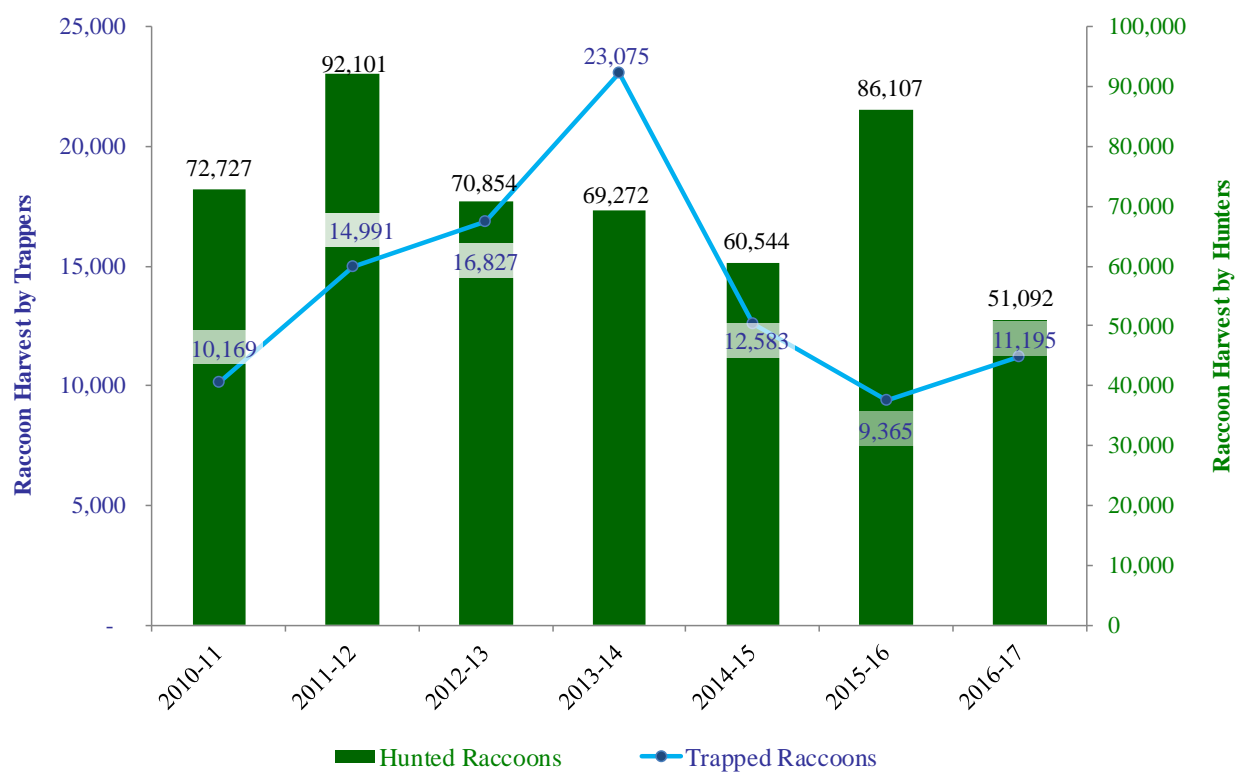


Figure 7. Estimated harvest of raccoons by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line).

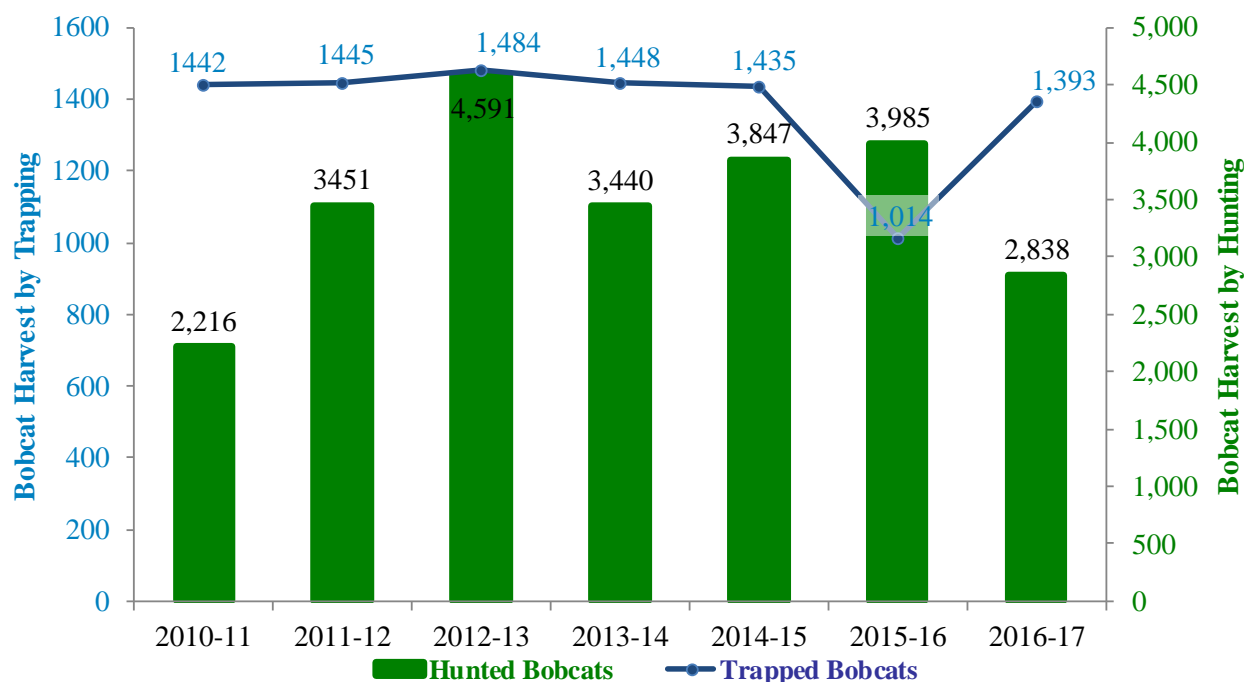


Figure 8. Estimated harvest of bobcats by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line).

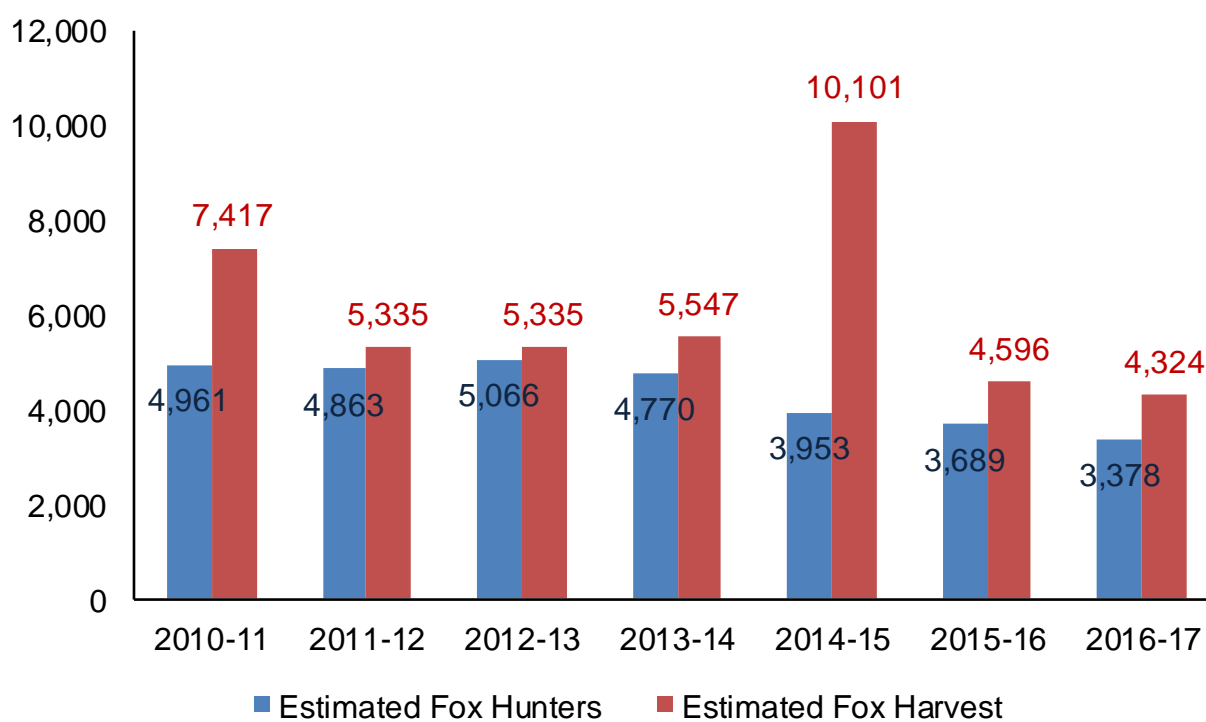
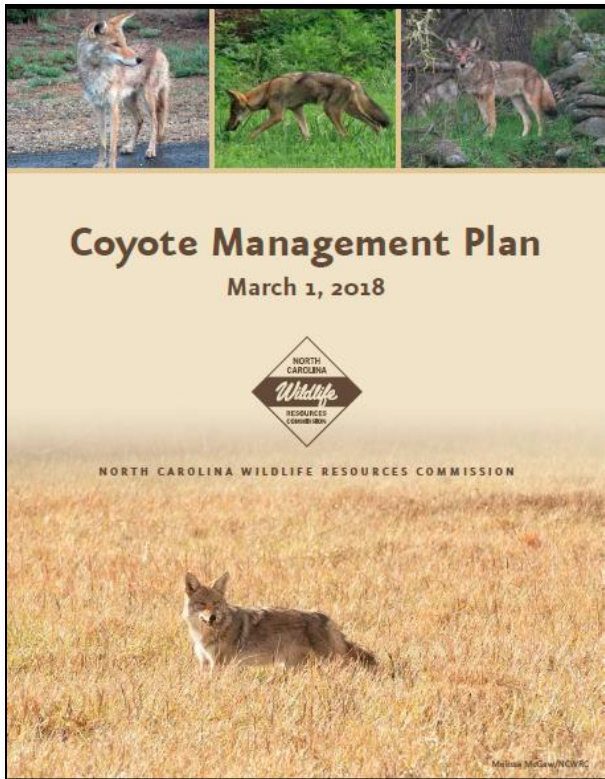


Figure 9. Estimated harvest of foxes (red bars) by hunters (blue bars) from the 2010-11 season through the 2016-17 season.

Coyote Management Plan



The Wildlife Commissioners approved the Coyote Management Plan at their board meeting in Raleigh on February 28th, 2018. The Plan was developed by Commission staff based on best-available science and management principles, with incorporation of public comments from constituents and organizations across North Carolina.

The 200-page plan provides biological information on coyotes in North Carolina, identifies concerns about coyotes, outlines the challenges of coyote control and provides strategies to minimize impacts of coyotes.

The plan also includes information on the relationship between fox trapping and coyote harvest, outlines statutory changes that will improve coyote management, identifies known

knowledge gaps and research needs and recommends new biological and social strategies to address coyote management issues.

To view the plan, go to ncwildlife.org/coyote and click the "Management" tab.

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

Charlie Sanders
 Asst. Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist (temp)
charles.sanders@ncwildlife.org

