

# North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter



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

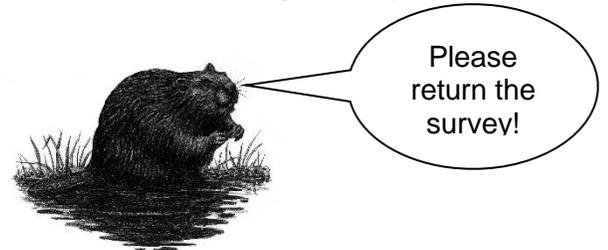
The information in this newsletter has been provided through the cooperative efforts of North Carolina's licensed trappers and licensed fur dealers. The information they provide helps the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) monitor furbearer harvest levels and track trends in the furbearer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



### 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](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Contact-a-Licensed-Trapper)

## Reminders to Trappers

### Trap Tags

Effective Oct. 1, 2019, the Commission started issuing each licensed trapper a Trapper Identification Number (TIN) at the time they purchase or renew their trapping license. This number will be printed on the license. Either the TIN or Wildlife Control Agent (WCA) license number and Commission telephone number (800-662-7137), or the trapper's name and address can be used on trap tags. The license number issued to licensed WCAs is equivalent to a TIN and can be used on the trap tags.

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). Note that a WCA license number can also be used on the trap tag.

## **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 will go to the Wildlife Endowment Fund. As of March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 154 lifetime trapping licenses have been sold.



## **Regulation Changes that impact Trappers**

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reviewed proposed rule changes at its business meeting on February 25, 2021. The Commissioners accepted 40 of the proposed changes related to wildlife management, inland fisheries and game lands for the 2021-22 seasons. The effective date for these regulations is Aug. 1, 2021. Of the 40 accepted rule changes, several will positively impact trappers.

### **Trapping on Game Lands:**

- Clarified that coyotes, armadillos, and groundhogs are authorized to be taken on game lands by trapping during the regulated trapping season (November 1 through end of February). This accepted rule also clarified that foxes can be trapped on game lands during the regulated trapping season in counties with a local law that authorizes fox trapping in that county. This proposal also establishes a closed trapping season on game lands from April 1 through October 31.
  - *Justification for rule change:* There has been confusion about the legality of trapping foxes, coyotes, armadillo, and groundhogs on game lands. This proposal will clarify the rules for this activity. This proposal will also establish a closed trapping season to avoid conflicts among game land users.
- Clarified that licensed trappers can use bait on game lands while trapping.
  - *Justification for rule change:* The rule text about using bait on game lands for trapping had been unclear and various interpretations about this rule had been made by Commission staff and the public. This accepted rule change will clarify that trappers can use bait on game lands while trapping, provides a specific definition of bait, and includes requirements that trappers must follow.
  - *Baiting Requirements:* At each trap, trappers may use a single bait site of grain, fruit, or other foods when trapping if the food is not a processed food product as defined in GS113-294(r), is less than 3 cubic inches, and is completely covered to prevent it from being seen from above. Feathers (including those with attached skin or entire bird wings), hair (with or without skin or hide), and bones that include no attached meat, organs, or viscera do not need to be covered.

## Regulation Changes that impact Trappers continued...

### **Trap Attendance:**

- This accepted rule change allows the use of remote trap checking systems in lieu of a physical trap check under specified conditions.
- *Justification:* Wildlife control agents (WCAs) and the wildlife control industry have expressed interest in having remote trap checking systems as an alternative to physical trap check. WCAs feel the devices would improve their ability to more quickly respond to an activated trap, which will not only improve animal welfare, but improve their efficiency, reduce costs, and make them look more professional, all of which may increase customer satisfaction. Electronic trap check systems conforming to the standards recommended in this rule ensures that trap status is reliably determined. The recommended standards are supported by the wildlife control industry and assures that remote trap monitoring devices used in North Carolina are reliable in detecting captured animals and notifying the user. These standards also assure that the users using these devices will meet or exceed maximum time requirements (e.g., daily trap check except 72 hours for completely submerged conibear-type traps) for trap attendance.
- *Remote Trap Checking System Requirements:*  
Remote trap checking systems may be used in lieu of visiting the trap, provided the system has the following features:
  - a control unit that monitors the trap in real-time and reports trap status and unit status to a centralized application database at least once every 12 hours;
  - a software application that notifies the user of unit status, trap activity, and system health issues within 10 minutes of these events via text-based messaging systems, or an in-application notification; and
  - on-demand test procedure that is used at each deployment of a unit to confirm that the unit is placed in a location where its wireless communication can be received and processed.
- If the remote trap checking system control unit reports a trap closure, the trap shall be physically visited within 24 hours of the time the trap was reported closed.
- If a remote trap checking system control unit fails to report its status after a 12 hour period, or reports a system health issue, the trap shall be physically visited within 24 hours of the last time a status report was sent.
- Remote trap checking system users shall maintain records of trap status and notification alarms for a period of no less than seven days after receipt. Records shall be made available for inspection upon request by a representative of the Commission.

Note: Both WCAs and licensed trappers are authorized to use remote trap checking systems if those systems meet the above specific requirements.

## 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](http://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. While Covid-19 restricted availability of these courses in 2020 and winter 2021, we hope to start offering these courses again for the remainder of 2021.

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

One advanced workshop is scheduled for August 2021, so start planning now! To learn more and for instructions on signing up for either workshop, go to [nctrapper.org/advanced-classes](http://nctrapper.org/advanced-classes)

Advanced Hands-On Wildlife Damage Management Workshop in 2021. 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 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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



## The Wildlife Control Agent (WCA) Program

The WCA program allows trained and licensed 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. Licensed WCAs are authorized to issue permits for controlling certain wildlife species that are causing property damage.



### **Changes in 2021:**

The NC General Assembly passed Session Law 2019-204, which created the Wildlife Control Agent (WCA) License and Alligator Control Agent (ACA) certification. In response to passage of the session law, the NCWRC drafted rules to implement SL 2019-204. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the NCWRC approved a new set of rules (15A NCAC 10H .1500) that regulate licensing and standards for WCA and ACA. These rules replace requirements of the Wildlife Damage Control Agent program.

### **WCA Eligibility and Requirements:**

To engage in wildlife damage control or wildlife removal activities for compensation, including eviction or exclusion activities, an annual WCA license is now required (\$50). Licensed trappers are excluded from the WCA license when taking wild animals during the applicable open trapping season for that species.

To qualify for a WCA license, individuals must complete a WCA training course (the 2-day “certification” training course), take an exam and pass with a score of 80%, and have no misdemeanor convictions as specified in G.S. 113-294 or G.S. 14, Article 47. This 2-day training course covers laws, rules, health considerations, and humane handling techniques. Currently certified WDCAs do not have to take this course again to qualify for and purchase the WCA license.

### **WCA License Renewal and Revocation:**

WCA license renewal is done by completing at least one Commission-approved continuing education course within the previous year (see page 4 or [ncwildlife.org/wca](http://ncwildlife.org/wca) for courses). If a license is not renewed for two consecutive calendar years, the individual will be ineligible for renewal and must repeat the requirements for licensure. WCA licenses may be revoked at any time.

### **Course Location and Dates**

Three courses are offered annually. Two more courses remain for 2021 and are listed below. Courses will be held at McKimmon Center in Raleigh, NC; the WCA course is subject to change to a virtual course via Zoom at any time. The 2-day course fee is \$150, a \$25 reduction in costs from previous years and the WCA license fee is included in the registration fee. **To sign up, call us at 919-707-0061 or go to [ncwildlife.org/wca](http://ncwildlife.org/wca)**

Class Registration Deadline	Registration Fee	WCA Class Date
June 1, 2021	\$150	June 9-10, 2021 (Wednesday-Thursday)
September 1, 2020	\$150	September 8-9, 2021 (Wednesday-Thursday)

# 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 Ashley Hobbs (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.

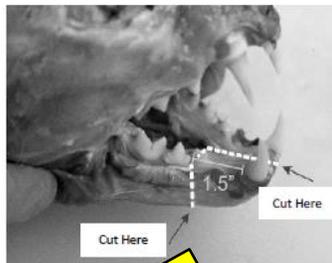
**In return for your cooperation, you will receive a furbearer cooperator patch and the age of submitted animals. Thank you in advance!**



## 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 \_\_\_\_\_)  
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.

**Please send in your bobcat & otter jaws by March 31<sup>st</sup>!!**

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](mailto:ashley.hobbs@ncwildlife.org)

For more information visit:

[ncwildlife.org/furcooperator](http://ncwildlife.org/furcooperator)

## Rabies Statistics

During 2020, positive rabies results were obtained from 112 raccoons, 74 skunks, 44 foxes, 2 coyotes, and 1 groundhog. The total number of terrestrial rabies cases (n=233) was a 19% increase from the number of cases detected during 2019 (n=196). 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 2 western North Carolina counties have had positive terrestrial rabies cases at the end of the reporting period (Figure 2). Of note, Macon County had their first confirmed positive terrestrial rabies case (a raccoon) in 2020. Skunks and raccoons are the primary species of wildlife in which rabies is observed in North Carolina, excluding bats (Figure 3). During 2020, 59 out of 100 counties documented a positive terrestrial wildlife rabies case. Forsyth County (n=23) had the highest number of positive terrestrial rabies, followed by Carteret (14), Mecklenburg (13), Iredell (13), and Mecklenburg counties (13).

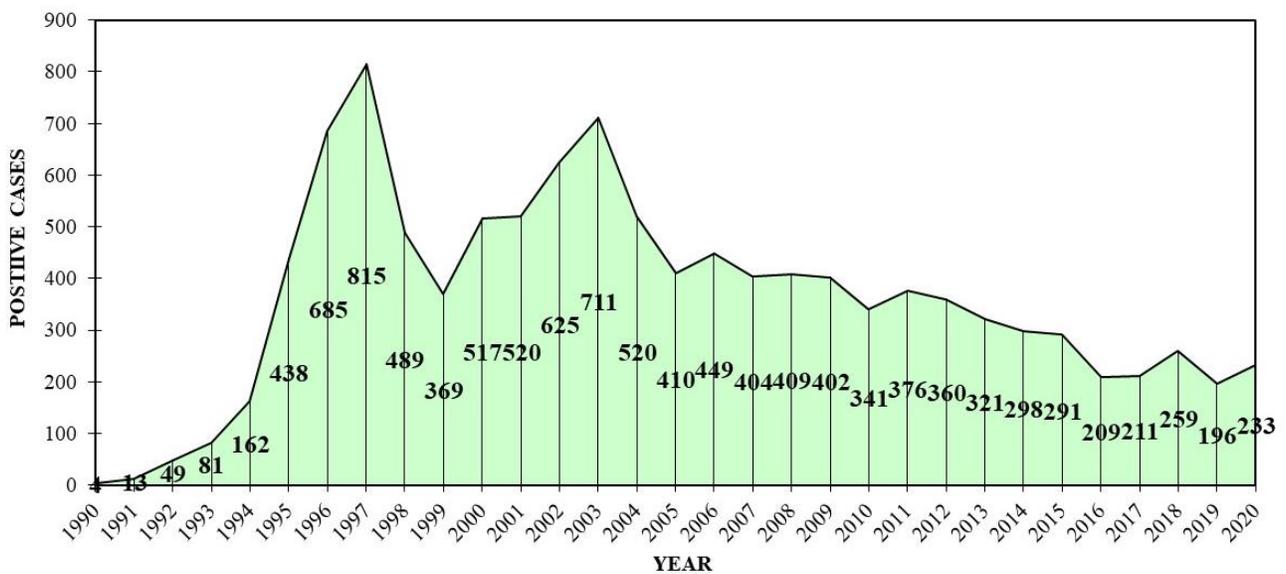


Figure 1. Positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases from 1990 through 2020.

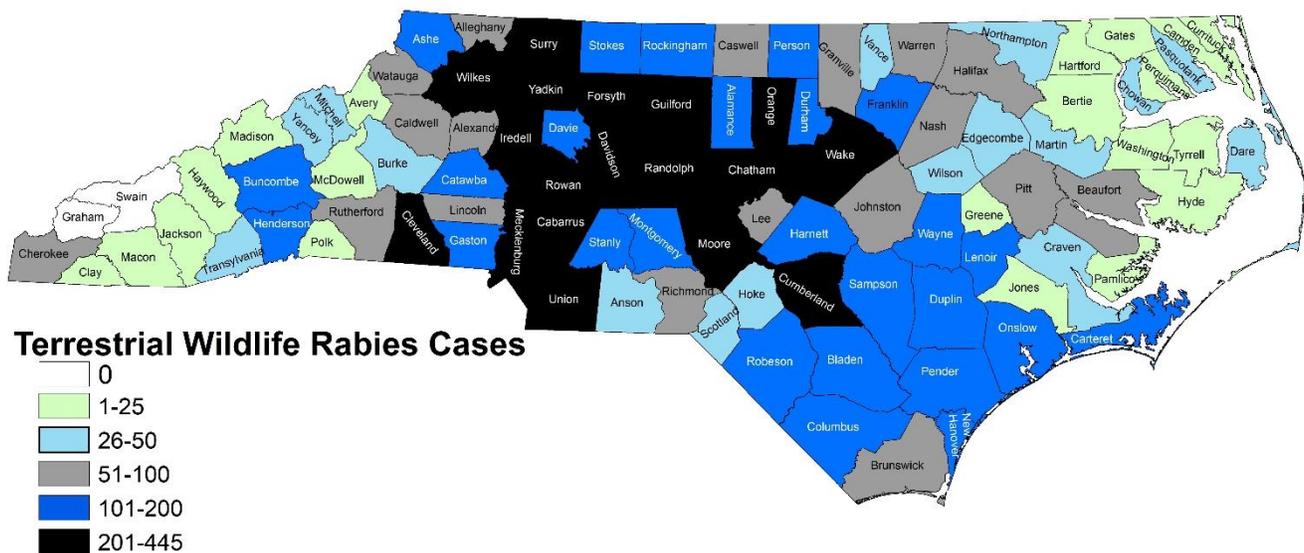


Figure 2. Number of positive rabies cases in terrestrial wildlife by county from 1990-2020. No positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases in Graham and Swain counties.

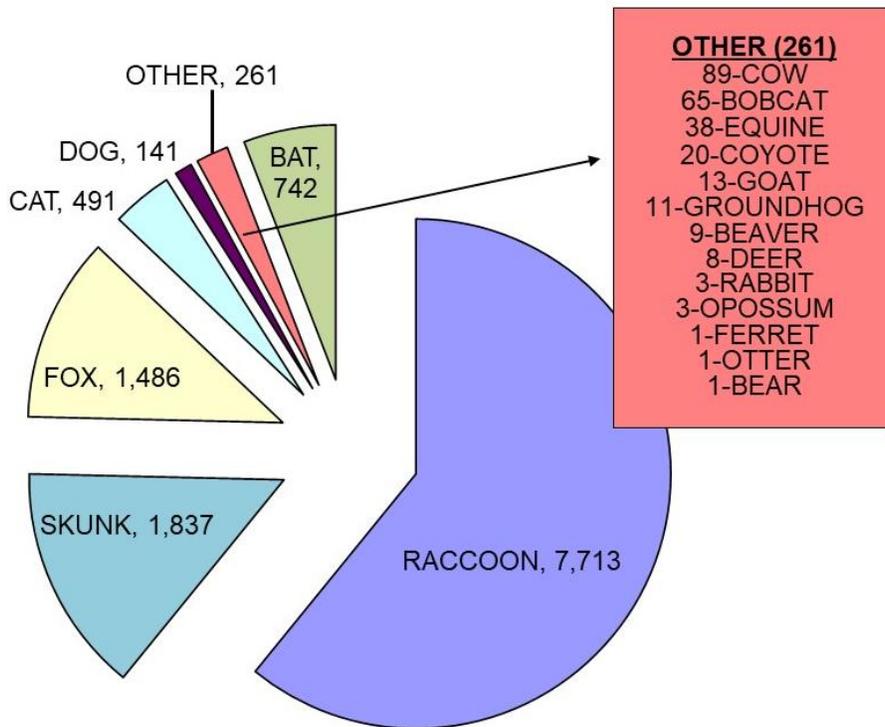


Figure 3. Number of positive rabies cases by species from 1990-2020.

### 2020-2021 Trapping License Sales

The number of licensed trappers increased 10% from the previous 2019-2020 trapping season (Table 1 and Figure 4). We'll further explore this increase in license sales, including the demographics (age, gender) in the 2021 Fall Furbearer Newsletter.

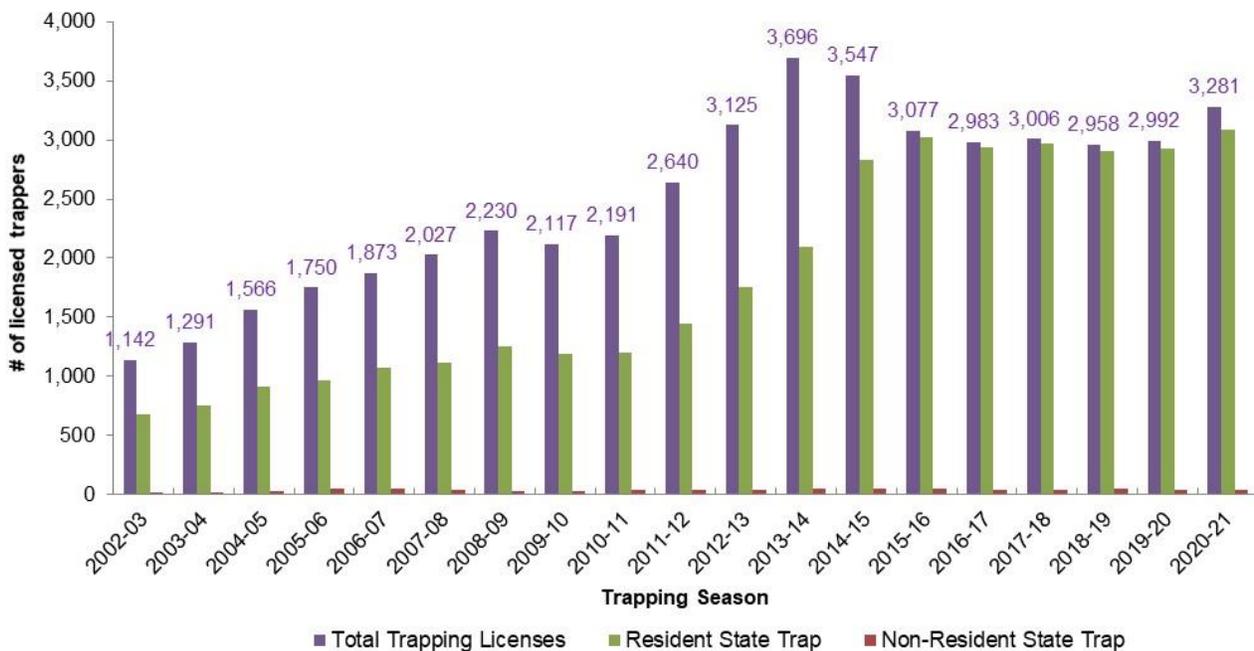


Figure 4. The number of licensed trappers in North Carolina from the 2002-03 trapping season through the 2020-21 trapping season.

Figure 5 below shows the number of residents, by county, who purchased a trapping license for the 2020-21 trapping season. The highest number of licensed trappers resided in Wake County (109 trappers), followed by Brunswick (86 trappers), Onslow (84 trappers), and Johnston (80 trappers) counties. The lowest number of licensed trappers resided in Clay County (2 trappers), followed by Alleghany, Hertford, Polk, Swain, and Transylvania counties (7 trappers in all these counties).

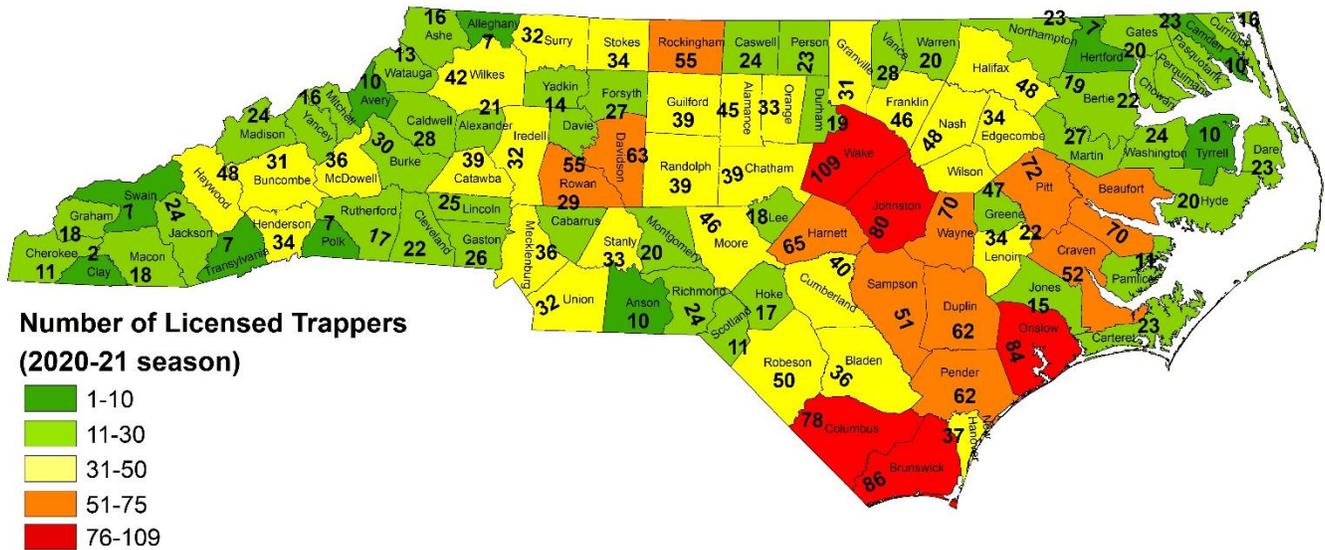


Figure 5. Number of trapping licenses sold by county during the 2020-21 trapping season.

### Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

The response rate for the 2019-2020 mail survey was 47%, which was a slight increase from the 2018-2019 survey year (Table 1, page 10). During the 2019-20 trapping season, 46% of licensed trappers actively trapped during the season (Table 1). The number of licensed trappers increased 1% from the previous 2018-2019 trapping season (Table 1).

The 2019-20 furbearer harvest level was 3% lower than that seen during the prior trapping season, driven by declines in bobcat, beaver, muskrat, opossum, and gray fox harvest (Table 2, page 10). Red fox (+27%), coyote (+8%), and raccoon (+6%) increased in harvest from the 2018-19 trapping season. Overall, pelt prices declined 29% from the 2018-19 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. During the 2019-20 season, 54% of furbearers were harvested in the Coastal Plain Furbearer Management region, followed by the Piedmont and Mountain regions (Table 3, page 12). However, most foxes, skunk, and mink were trapped in the Piedmont region (Table 3). During the 2019-20 trapping season, raccoon and beaver were the most trapped furbearers, followed by coyote and opossums, matching trends from previous trapping seasons (Figure 6, page 10).

Table 1. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2020-2021.

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	2,958	46%	52%
2019-20	2,992	47%	46%
2020-21	3,281	N/A	N/A

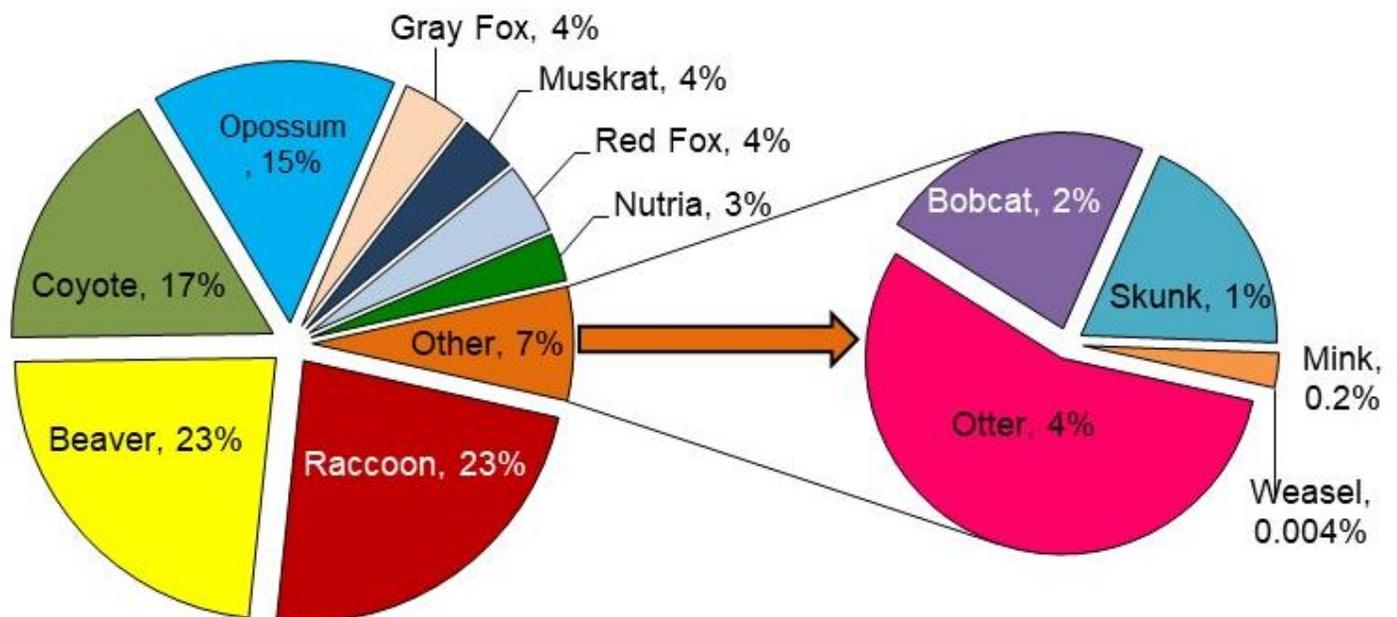


Figure 6. The wildlife species composition of the 2019-2020 trapper harvest based on estimates from the voluntary trapper harvest survey.

Table 2. Estimated trapper harvest from the 2016-17 trapping season through the 2019-20 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Price
 Beaver	9,660	\$8.59	12,899	\$9.29	12,855	\$9.02	11,464	\$7.16
 Mink	166	\$7.95	181	\$5.24	174	\$6.51	99	\$3.92
 Muskrat	3,129	\$3.76	4,235	\$2.92	2,230	\$3.68	1,805	\$2.45
 Nutria	719	N/A	2,199	N/A	1,234	N/A	1,460	\$1.00
 Otter	1,450	\$29.26	1,702	\$20.78	2,019	\$24.38	1,927	\$16.37
 Bobcat	1,393	\$34.12	1,096	\$31.71	1,176	\$29.54	789	\$24.02
 Coyote	6,337	\$10.98	9,077	\$13.44	7,638	\$19.93	8,249	\$14.92
 Gray Fox	3,780	\$14.01	3,478	\$9.87	2,410	\$11.62	1,995	\$7.64
 Red Fox	1,929	\$12.04	2,165	\$6.35	1,716	\$11.68	2,173	\$7.51
 Opossum	8,759	\$0.99	8,829	\$1.00	8,350	\$1.14	7,513	\$0.58
 Raccoon	11,195	\$3.68	11,766	\$3.18	10,876	\$4.08	11,495	\$2.09
 Skunk	835	\$2.89	653	\$5.21	688	\$3.12	659	\$2.42
 Weasel	0	N/A	2	N/A	6	N/A	2	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,352</b>		<b>58,282</b>		<b>51,372</b>		<b>49,631</b>	

Table 3. Estimated trapper harvest by furbearer management region from the 2019-20 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Coastal Plain</b>	<b>Piedmont</b>	<b>Mountain</b>
Beaver	7,811	2,718	667
Bobcat	494	135	147
Coyote	3,969	2,758	1,325
All Fox	1,293	1,863	649
Gray Fox	735	942	284
Mink	36	19	42
Muskrat	663	778	297
Nutria	1,397	40	2,022
Raccoon	5,657	3,619	429
Red Fox	642	1,073	95
River Otter	1,142	644	198
Skunk	101	360	189
Virginia Opossum	3,503	2,472	1,426
Weasels	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,152</b>	<b>15,559</b>	<b>7,103</b>
<b>% of regional harvest</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>15%</b>

### 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 7 on page 13, 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 2019-20 season, for every 1.96 coyotes harvested by hunters, trappers harvested 10.1 coyotes (Figure 8). Figures 9 and 10 on page 14 show the raccoon and bobcat harvest by both hunters and trappers. Figure 11 on page 15 shows the harvest of foxes by hunters.

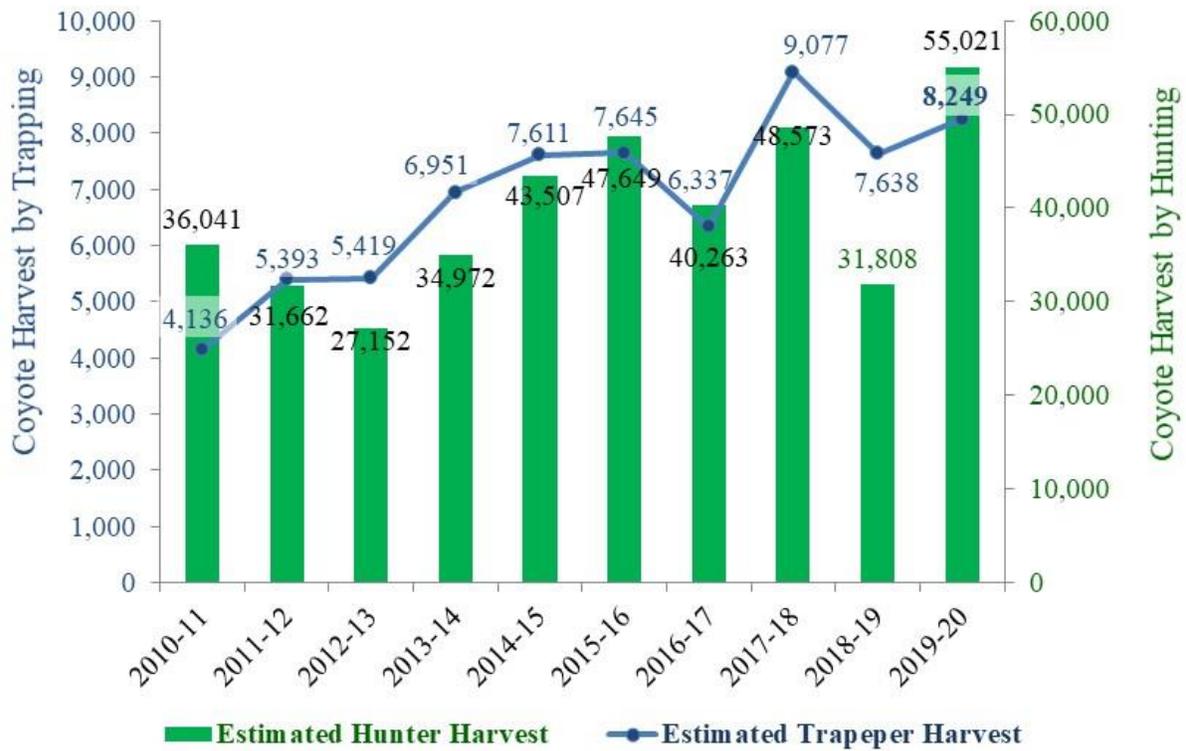


Figure 7. Estimated harvest of coyotes by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line).

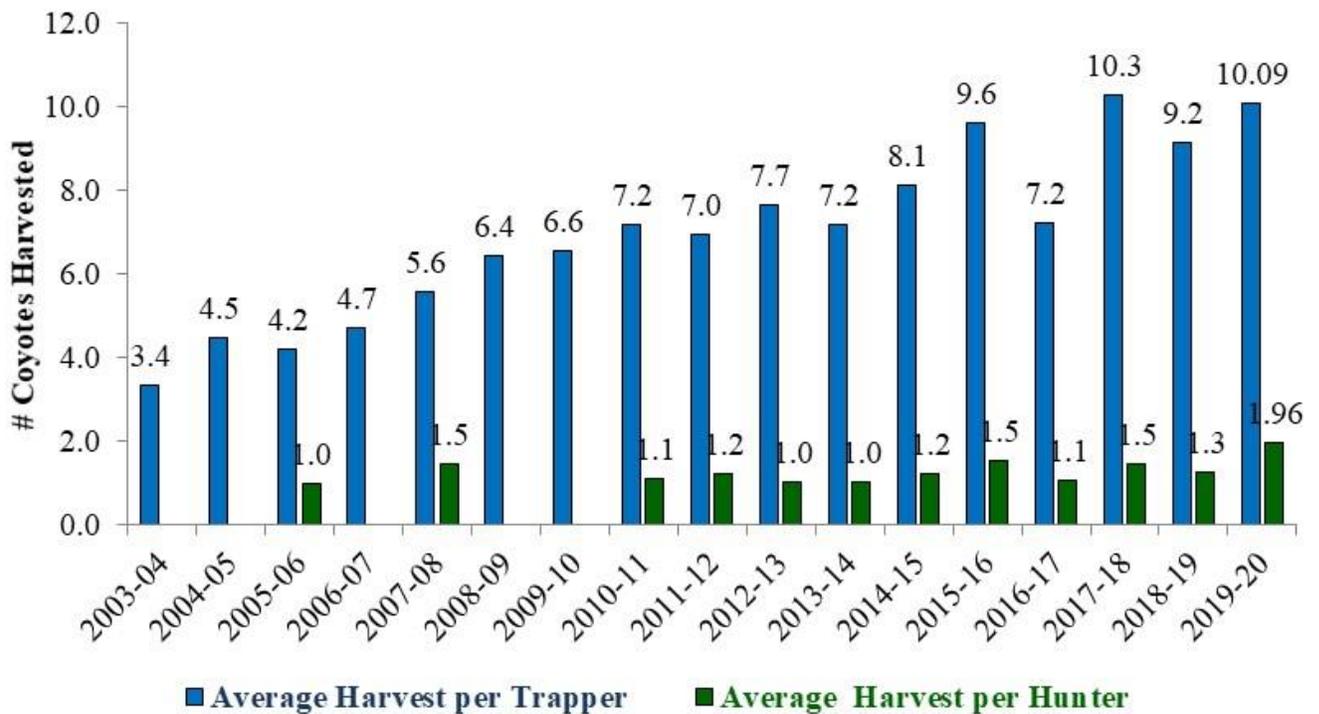


Figure 8. Average number of coyotes harvested by hunters (green bar) and by trappers (blue bar) from the 2003-04 season through the 2019-20 season.



Figure 9. Estimated harvest of raccoons by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line) from the 2010-11 season through the 2019-20 season.



Figure 10. Estimated harvest of bobcats by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line) from the 2010-11 season through the 2019-20 season.

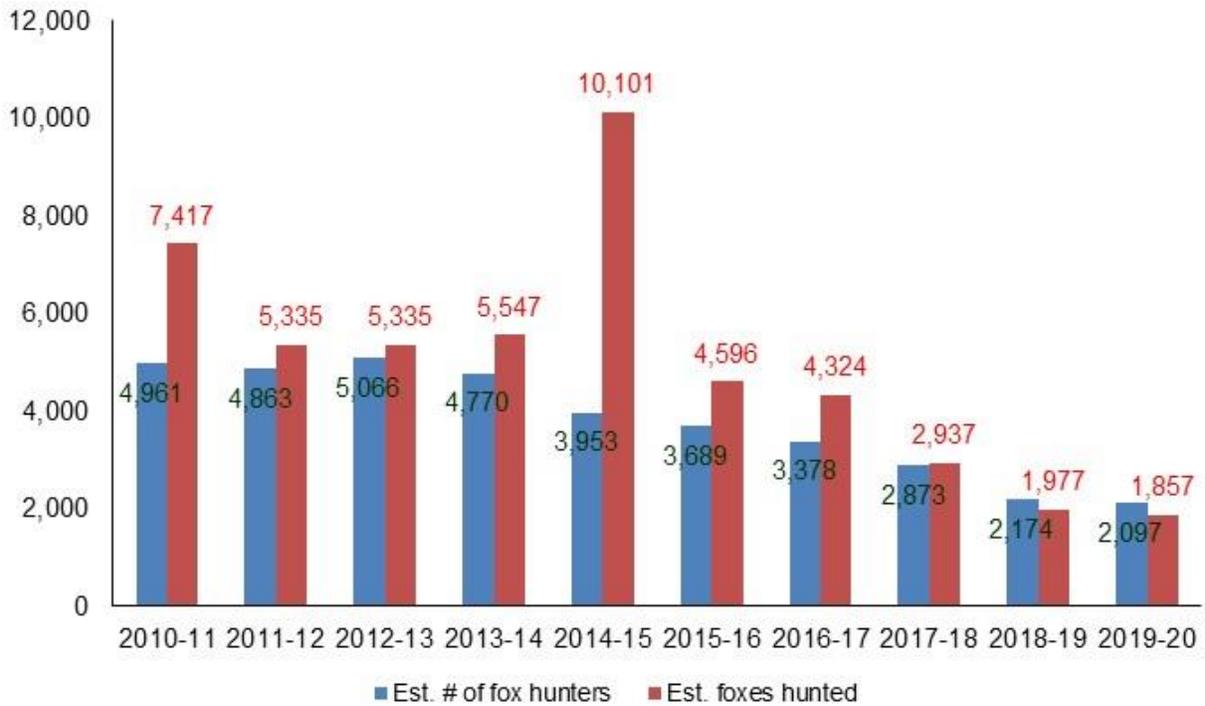


Figure 11. Estimated harvest of foxes (red bars) by hunters (blue bars) from the 2010-11 season through the 2019-20 season.

### 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!



Casey G. Dukes  
Wildlife Conservation Biologist  
[casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org](mailto:casey.dukes@ncwildlife.org)

Colleen Olfenbuttel  
Black Bear and Furbearer Biologist  
[colleen.olfenbuttel@ncwildlife.org](mailto:colleen.olfenbuttel@ncwildlife.org)



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



## 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.



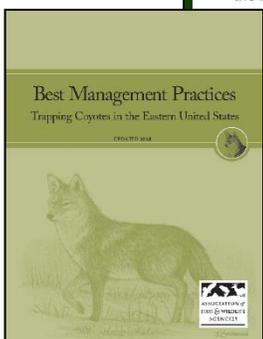
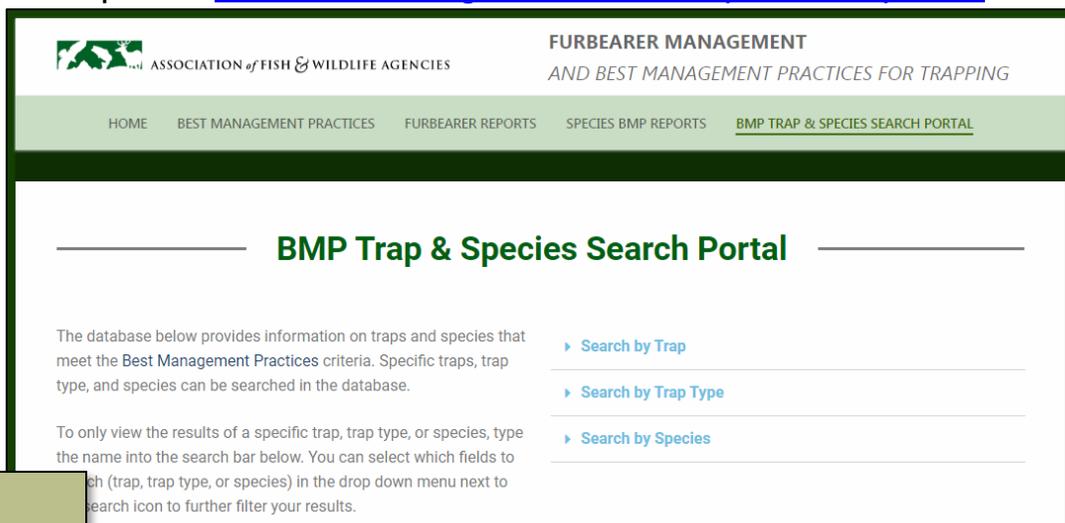
BMPs are intended to inform people about traps and trapping systems considered to be state-of-the-art in animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, and practicality.

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, trapping key messages, and trapping BMPs:

[furbearermanagement.com](http://furbearermanagement.com)

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