



West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Furbearer Management Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2013/2014

Wildlife Resources Section

As we enter what appears to be another fur boom, trapper surveys will become increasingly important for management of furbearers. Please make sure you read about our survey below and participate. If you can't print the page, contact Rich Rogers or any WVDNR Wildlife Resources office and one will be sent to you. As usual, feel free to contact us with any questions regarding your trapping and furbearer hunting concerns. Please direct correspondence to: Rich Rogers, WVDNR, 1 Depot St., Romney, WV 26757, Rich.E.Rogers@wv.gov.

Results of 2012-13 River Otter Trapping Season

Our second river otter trapping season resulted in a harvest of 192 otters. This is very close to the first year's harvest of 206 and is what we expected. CITES seals were affixed to 78% of the otters harvested indicating that a large percentage of pelts were shipped for sale.

Harvests were reported in 39 of West Virginia's 55 counties with average harvest being 4.9 animals/county where harvests were reported. Top counties were Greenbrier (25), Summers (15), Pocahontas, Calhoun and Hardy (10 each). District harvests may be seen in the table below.

We have received several requests from trappers to increase the otter bag limit. With a stable harvest, increasing pelt prices, and lack of otter survival data this will not happen. Presently, otter survival data can only be obtained from constructing a model with data obtained from otter carcasses. We need female otter reproductive tracts and canine teeth from male and female skulls. We continue to receive very few otter carcasses from

trappers. Please make an effort to turn in carcasses to local WVDNR Wildlife Resources offices or call and arrange to have them picked up.

Wildlife District	2011-12 Harvest	2012-13 Harvest	2012-13 Harvest/County With a Harvest
District I	7	15	2.5
District II	32	28	4.0
District III	49	35	5.0
District IV	52	65	8.1
District V	5	14	2.8
District VI	61	35	5.8
State Total	206	192	-



Otter pelts at the West Virginia Trappers Association spring fur sale in Gilmer County.

2012-13 Furbearer Harvest

Harvests remained high but were down from last year for all species except bobcat and beaver. High harvests were due to another fairly mild winter and the incentive of high fur prices. The table below shows number of pelts purchased by licensed state fur buyers, numbers of pelts shipped by individuals, and numbers of CITES seals applied to pelts during the year. Beaver, bobcat, fisher and otter all require mandatory checking. Numbers of pelts purchased for these species are 30-50% less than actual harvests. If a similar relationship between harvest and pelts purchased exists for other species, an additional 30-50% can be added to fur purchased to indicate actual numbers harvested for those animals not required to be checked at game checking stations. In other words, numbers of pelts purchased by fur dealers indicate extremely conservative estimates of what are actually harvested.

Pelts Purchased							
SPECIES	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Shipped 2013	CITES Sealed
Muskrat	2331	2850	1920	6649	5909	1453	
Opossum	2866	1487	2029	4976	2009	3	
Raccoon	8949	6201	7495	22105	18606	33	
Mink	318	237	357	689	476	208	
Red Fox	1472	1152	1752	2664	1680	208	
Gray Fox	1631	988	1703	3188	1701	91	
Bobcat	593/1456*	351/992*	926/1495*	1835/1857*	1424/1994*	605	1152
Beaver	781/1286*	593/783*	1106/911*	2271/1587*	1322/1742*	465	
Weasel	8	1	3	15	6	0	
Skunk	222	103	278	557	191	2	
Coyote	624	691	2302	3086	1886	458	
Fisher	41/84*	24/60*	61/87*	72/149*	74/130*	40	
River Otter	0	0	0	0/206*	0/192*	0	149

*Number after slash mark is actual harvest as determined from animals checked at checking stations.

It also appears that as pelt prices climb, fur purchases more accurately reflect the true harvest. This becomes apparent as one looks at harvests in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Trapper Survey

The WVDNR's Trapper Survey is now in its third year. We have had two years of fair participation. Thirty-two (32) completed surveys were sent in which is an increase of 5 from last year. Results are used to gauge trapping pressure and provide furbearer harvest/population trend information. This survey will become increasingly important as fur prices and harvest continue to rise with some fur market experts predicting a fur boom lasting at least five years. Please consider participating in this survey to support wise management of the resource you dearly love. Survey forms may be obtained from any WVDNR District Office, www.wvdnr.gov, the West Virginia Trappers Association web site, or simply use the one provided at the end of this newsletter.

West Virginia Trapper Survey		
Species	2011-12 Days/Catch	2012-13 Days/Catch
Beaver	1.33	1.35
Bobcat	11.39	16.55
Coyote	5.53	7.83
Fisher	72.00	106.00
Gray Fox	10.91	7.53
Mink	5.60	16.00
Muskrat	1.44	1.49
Opossum	3.26	5.24
Otter	10.83	29.5
Raccoon	0.98	2.29
Red Fox	14.26	12.31
Striped Skunk	10.23	7.06
Weasel	14.00	-

Why Coyote Bounties Do Not Work

Each year the Division of Natural Resources receives a few serious requests regarding bounty programs for coyotes. There are several reasons why state wildlife agencies do not support bounty programs, chief of which is that they simply have not proven to work historically. The following is a short list of the main reasons these programs have been largely ineffective at reducing coyote densities:

1. Funding quickly runs out,
2. Interest by hunters and trappers diminishes.
3. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if coyotes are being taken from areas covered by the bounty.
4. Research has shown that at least 70% of a population must be removed to affect any reduction in damage attributable to coyotes.
5. Research has repeatedly shown that heavy harvests of coyotes results in larger litters and higher survival of pups.

The single best method of reducing coyote predation to livestock is targeted trapping of offending animals. Research has also indicated that healthy wildlife populations in good habitat are more than capable of withstanding coyote predation. See the next issue of this newsletter where we will be discussing something called prey switching and predator/prey relationships.

Identifying Spotted Skunks

Recent surveys in a few states have indicated that many trappers cannot properly identify spotted skunks. This is important since many states, including West Virginia, are concerned with low densities and restricted ranges of spotted skunks in their jurisdictions. Please take note of the pictures below when reporting catches or sightings of spotted skunks. Striped

skunks have varying lengths and widths of white stripes of fur running down the length of their bodies. Spotted skunks are about half the size and have white stripes running down and across the length of their bodies. They generally also have a white spot on their foreheads.

Striped Skunk



Spotted Skunk



Links

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

www.wvdnr.gov

West Virginia Trappers Association

www.wvtrappers.com

Guide to State Game Depts.

www.identcards.com/links/statednr.html

Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Furbearer Resources

www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer.html

National Trappers Association

www.nationaltrappers.com

Fur Takers of America

www.furtakersofamerica.com

Conserve Wildlife

www.conservewildlife.org

Furbearers Unlimited

www.furbearers.org

CITES

www.cites.org

2013-2014 TRAPPING REPORT FORM
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Section

Read instructions on back side before completing this report.

Name _____ **Hunting License #** _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

SPECIES	County:									
	# OF DAYS TRAPPED	# KILLED								
Beaver										
Bobcat										
Coyote										
Fisher										
Gray Fox										
Mink										
Muskrat										
Opossum										
Otter										
Raccoon										
Red Fox										
Spotted Skunk										
Striped Skunk										
Weasel										
Other:										

Signature _____ Date _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAPPING REPORT FORM

This is a voluntary report that will be used to help West Virginia Division of Natural Resources biologists collect more accurate data regarding trapping success and numbers of animals harvested each year.

1. Fill in your name and full address.
2. Provide your phone number only if you would like to.
3. During the trapping season, fill in columns for # days trapped and # animals killed for **EACH COUNTY** that you trap during the legal trapping season. Two columns are provided for each county. Do not include animals that you release.
4. Use more than one sheet if you trap more than 5 counties.
5. Try to accurately record number of days trapped. If in doubt, give the closest approximation of number of days trapped.
6. Sign and date your data sheet before sending in to:

**Rich Rogers
Trapper Survey
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
1 Depot St.
Romney, WV 26757**

7. If you have any questions, call Rich Rogers at (304)822-3551.
8. **Send all completed forms in by April 30 of each year.**
9. **DO NOT** include animals caught on Animal Damage Control licenses or on nuisance wildlife permits.