

Volume 19, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2025

North Carolina Furbearer Management Newsletter



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

This newsletter is mailed to all Wildlife Resources Commission customers who purchased a trapping license during the recent 2024-25 regulated trapping season. Inside this newsletter, you will find recent changes to regulations, opportunities to attend trapper education courses, updates on trapping harvest levels, and other information.

This issue and previous newsletters can be found at:

<https://www.ncwildlife.org/hunting/trapping/trapper-resources>

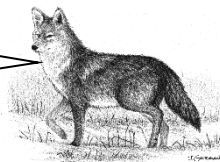
Monitoring Furbearer Populations

In order for the Commission 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 Commission 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 for the current list of licensed trappers:

<https://www.ncwildlife.org/hunting/trapping/contact-licensed-trapper>

Resident Lifetime Trapping License

Effective Jan. 1, 2020, North Carolina residents can purchase a Lifetime Trapping License. All proceeds from the sale of this license will go to the Wildlife Endowment Fund. As of February 20th, 2025, 587 lifetime trapping licenses have been sold. This is a 23% increase since last year's report in the 2024 spring/summer newsletter.

Did you lose your lifetime trapper decal? Contact 888-248-6834 (Customer Service, M-F, 8am – 5pm) or licenses@ncwildlife.org to get a replacement decal.



Furbearer Samples Wanted!



The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is interested in collecting:

- Lower jaws from bobcats and otters.
- Carcasses of bobcats, coyotes, foxes, mink, muskrat, raccoons, skunks, and weasels.



Bobcat and otter jaws: We will mail pre-paid envelopes to you for bobcat and otter jaws. The canine tooth will be used to look at the age structure of the harvest. ***Cut and dry the portion of the lower jaw containing the canine tooth and its root. To ensure you include the root, cut the jawbone at least 2 in. away from the canine. Follow instructions on the pre-paid envelope to ship.***

Carcasses (can be skinned): Additionally, we're collecting furbearer tissues and organs to gain information on diseases, parasites, genetics, and toxicology exposure for a variety of species.

In return for your cooperation with jaw submissions, you will receive a furbearer cooperator patch and the age of your bobcat or otter. Thank you in advance!

For more otter or bobcat jaw envelopes, contact:
Ashley Hobbs
919-698-4655
ashley.hobbs@ncwildlife.org

For questions contact:
Caitlin Brett
919-609-3392
caitlin.brett@ncwildlife.gov

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 jaw section to **completely dry** before enclosing in pre-paid sample envelope and mail.

7-DIGIT WRC CUSTOMER ID: _____

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
April 30th!!

Fox-Coyote Transport Permit: Reminder to Submit Report!

A transportation permit is required prior to taking possession of live foxes and coyotes for sale to licensed fox preserves. This permit is free and the application is available at <https://license.gooutdoorsnorthcarolina.com/> or at the WRC's booth at the NC Trapper's Convention held Sept. 26-27th, 2025 at the Johnson County Livestock Auction Arena.



Holders of the fox-coyote transport permit are required to provide accurate written records on a report form available from the Commission for each fox or coyote sold or transferred to licensed fox preserve. The activity report shall be received by May 1st, and can be submitted by mail or online through Go Outdoors North Carolina.

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.



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 required. Licensed trappers are excluded from the WCA license requirements 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 (a 2-day 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.

WCA License Renewal and Revocation:

WCA license renewal is done by completing at least one Commission-approved continuing education course within the previous year (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

The 2-day course fee is \$100, a \$50 reduction in costs from previous years and the WCA license fee is included in the registration fee. To sign up, go to ncwildlife.org/wca and click on the link under "Classes and Continuing Education"

Class Registration Deadline	Registration Fee	WCA Class Date
March 1, 2025	\$100	March 19-20, 2025 (Wednesday-Thursday)
June 1, 2025	\$100	June 11-12, 2025 (Wednesday-Thursday)

Basic Trapper Education Opportunities

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.


New courses are added throughout the year, with most scheduled during late spring and throughout summer. There is one course coming up on Saturday, April 5th, 2025, Wake County Wildlife Club, Durham, NC, 9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. To sign up for this and other classes, go to www.ncwildlife.org/trapped and click on the calendar of courses currently scheduled.



Trapper Identification Number (TIN)

The Commission issues each trapper a Trapper Identification Number (TIN) at the time they purchase their trapping license. This TIN is printed on your license (see picture below). The TIN will remain the same for all trapping license renewals.


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. The trapper identification number (TIN) is located below your date of birth on your license card.



North Carolina
Wildlife Resources Commission
Transaction Date: 02/26/2024

WRC Customer Number: 8641803
John Q Public
130 CITY ST
RALEIGH, NC 27604





Date of Birth: 07/15/1950
Hunter Education #: Pre July 2013 LH
Trapper ID #: 320824000111



Current NCWRC Licenses	Effective	Expiration
Lifetime Comprehensive Hunt	02/26/2024	N/A
Big Game Harvest Report Card	02/26/2024	06/30/2024
Resident Lifetime Trapping	02/26/2024	N/A

Providing false, fraudulent, or misleading information for the purpose of obtaining these licenses or the use of a fraudulently obtained license is a Class 1 Misdemeanor, (G.S. 113-275 (d))

3 Easy Ways to Report A Big Game Harvest

-  Go Outdoors North Carolina Mobile App, even in outdoor locations that do not have access to internet or cell service!
-  GoOutdoorsNorthCarolina.com. Internet connection required.
-  800-I-GOT-ONE (800-446-8663) to report harvest through automated messaging. Cell service required.
-  Contact 833-950-0575 or biggameregistration@ncwildlife.org

Download the free Go Outdoors North Carolina App



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.

Rabies Statistics

During 2024, positive rabies results were obtained from 85 raccoons, 45 skunks, 36 foxes, 2 coyotes, 1 bobcat, and 1 groundhog. The total number of reported terrestrial wildlife rabies cases (n=170) was a 5% decline from the number of cases detected during 2023 (n=178). Since 2005, the number of positive terrestrial rabies cases, which does not include bats, 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). Skunks and raccoons are the primary species of wildlife in which rabies is observed in North Carolina, excluding bats (Figure 3). During 2024, 44 out of 100 counties documented a positive terrestrial wildlife rabies case.

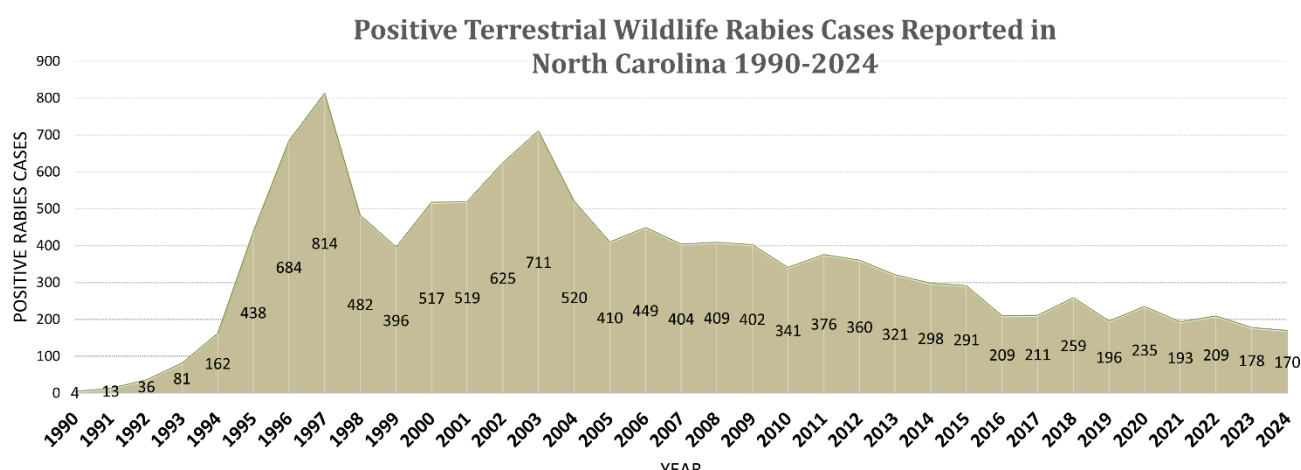


Figure 1. Positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases reported from 1990 through 2024.

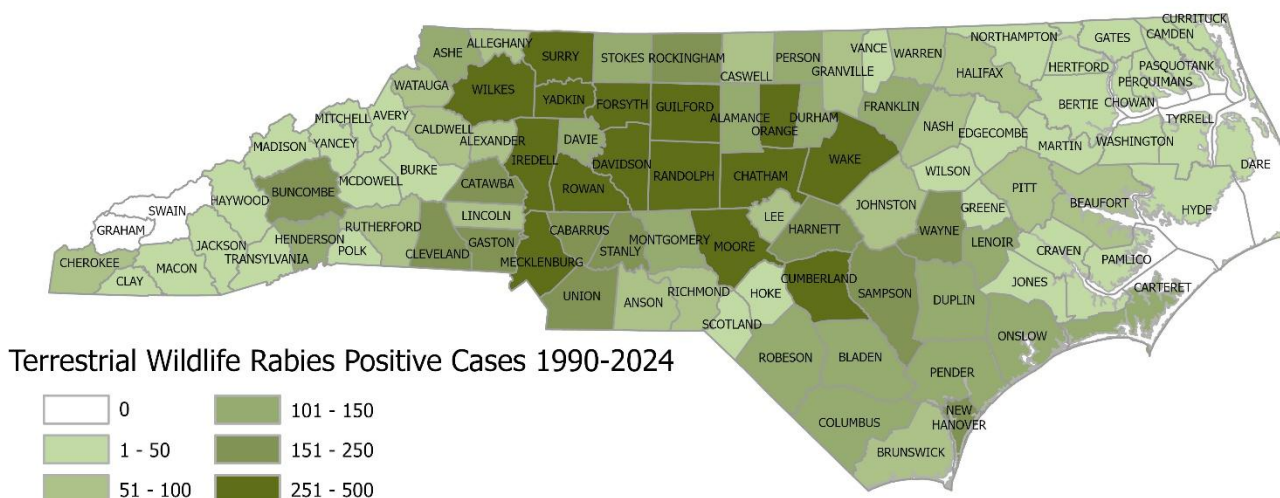


Figure 2. Number of positive rabies cases in terrestrial wildlife by county reported from 1990-2024. No positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases have been documented in Graham or Swain counties.

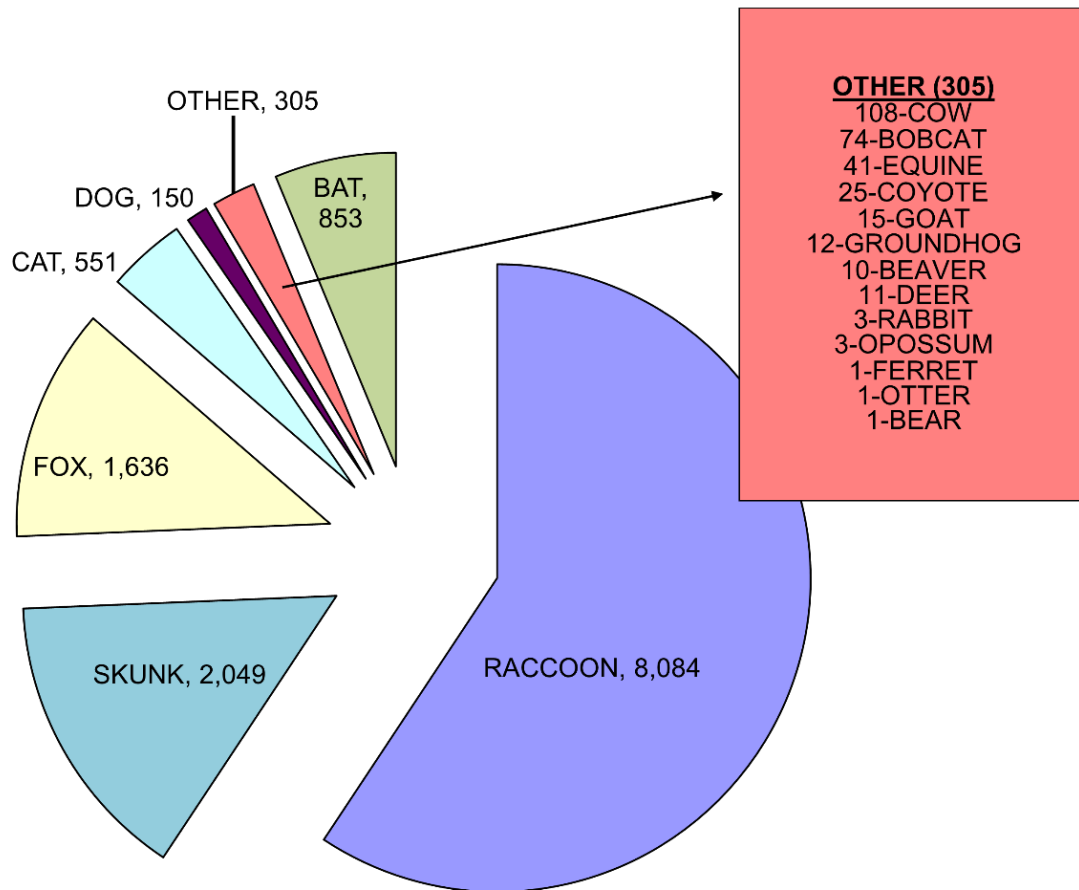


Figure 3. Number of positive rabies cases reported by species from 1990-2024.

Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

The response rate for the 2023-24 mail survey was 43%, which was an increase from the 2022-23 survey year (Table 1, page 7). During the 2023-24 trapping season, 47% of licensed trappers actively trapped during the season.

The number of licensed trappers during the 2023-24 trapping season increased 12% from the previous trapping season (Table 1). The 2023-24 total furbearer harvest increased 17% compared to the prior trapping season, with estimated harvest increases of >20% for all species except mink (-4%) and beaver (-30%). The greatest harvest increases were seen for striped skunk (+57%), bobcat (+54%), and gray fox (+49%). Similar to previous seasons, the majority of the furbearer harvest was comprised of raccoon, beaver, opossum, and coyote (Figure 4 on page 7).

Table 1. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2003-04 through 2023-24.

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	44%	44%
2021-22	3,508	42%	44%
2022-23	3,488	37%	42%
2023-24	3,919	43%	47%

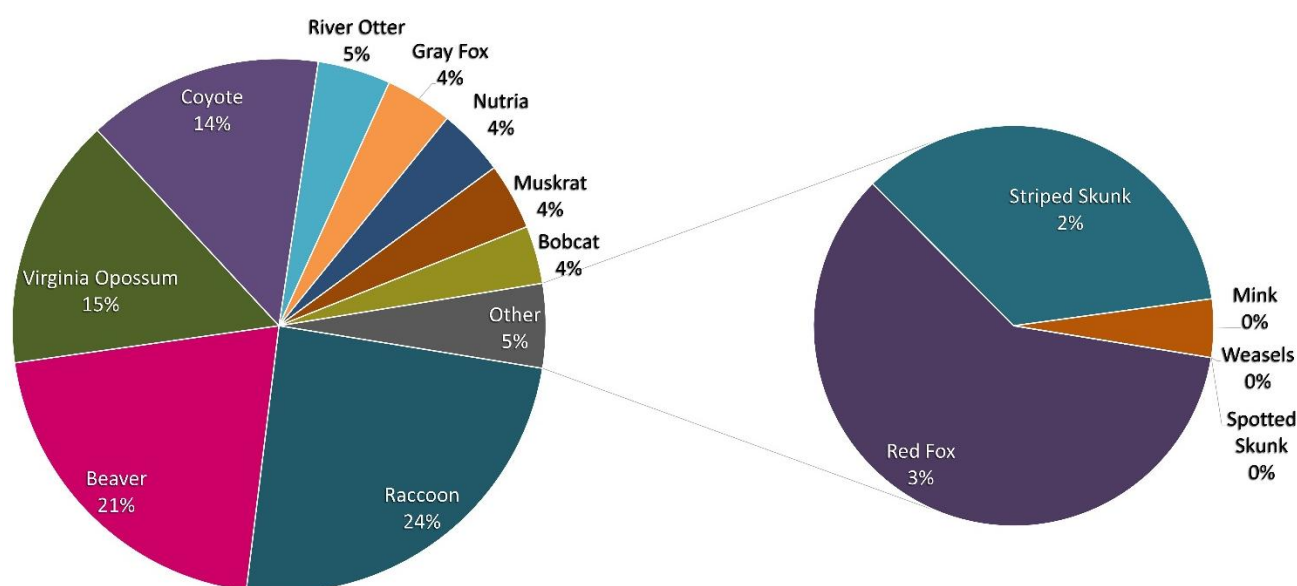













**Figure 4.** The wildlife species composition of the 2023-24 trapper harvest based on estimates from the voluntary trapper harvest survey.

Table 2. Estimated trapper harvest from the 2020-21 trapping season through the 2023-24 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys, and average prices.

2020-21			2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
Species	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices
 Beaver	10,156	\$11.92	12,360	\$7.80	13,709	\$11.78	10,905	\$18.13
 Mink	100	\$4.88	97	\$3.20	131	\$11.75	125	\$4.20
 Muskrat	1,987	\$5.12	2,661	\$2.24	1,463	\$2.63	2,112	\$2.91
 Nutria	1,462	N/A	2,364	N/A	1,670	\$1.00	2,133	N/A
 Otter	1,176	\$20.57	2,086	\$20.58	1,766	\$25.61	2,315	\$27.10
 Bobcat	1,141	\$32.21	1,227	\$21.62	1,193	\$44.09	1,836	\$42.11
 Coyote	7,312	\$12.49	8,042	\$10.00	5,734	\$9.19	7,481	\$3.00
 Gray Fox	1,926	\$8.10	1,794	\$4.95	1,433	\$14.00	2,133	\$9.38
 Red Fox	1,778	\$4.96	1,722	\$4.00	1,138	\$8.43	1,601	\$7.23
 Opossum	6,100	\$0.64	5,712	\$0.25	6,378	\$0.25	8,015	\$1.00
 Raccoon	10,299	\$3.99	9,325	\$1.27	9,488	\$1.56	12,793	\$2.67
 Skunk	529	\$2.83	537	\$2.90	599	N/A	941	\$7.00
 Weasel	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
TOTAL	43,966		47,927		44,702		52,391	

During the 2023-24 season, 54% of estimated furbearer harvest occurred in the Coastal Plain Furbearer Management Unit (FMU), followed by the Piedmont and Mountain FMUs (Table 3). Beavers comprised the majority of the harvest in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont FMUs, followed by raccoons, coyotes, and opossums. In the Mountain FMU, raccoons comprised most of the harvest, followed by opossums and coyotes.

Table 3. Estimated trapper harvest by furbearer management unit from the 2023-24 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	Coastal Plain	Piedmont	Mountain
Beaver	7,262	2,990	519
Bobcat	1,306	327	184
Coyote	4,028	2,434	891
All Fox	1,770	1,662	251
Gray Fox	1,058	956	91
Mink	80	2	43
Muskrat	865	1,069	164
Nutria	1,993	141	0
Raccoon	5,379	5,169	1,880
Red Fox	712	705	160
River Otter	1,681	491	128
Skunk	56	703	182
Virginia Opossum	0	0	0
Weasels	56	703	182
Total	28,380	18,405	5,706
% of regional harvest	54%	35%	11%

North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey

The NCWRC conducts an annual volunteer Deer Hunter Observation Survey (DHOS), where hunters are asked to record their daily observations of deer and other wildlife while still-hunting (hunting from a stationary position) for deer. The primary objective of the DHOS was to provide long-term indices of wildlife occurrences across North Carolina.

If you are a deer hunter and would like to participate, please e-mail ryan.myers@ncwildlife.org

With 10 years of data, we now have trends for several wildlife species, including raccoons, coyotes, bobcats, and foxes.

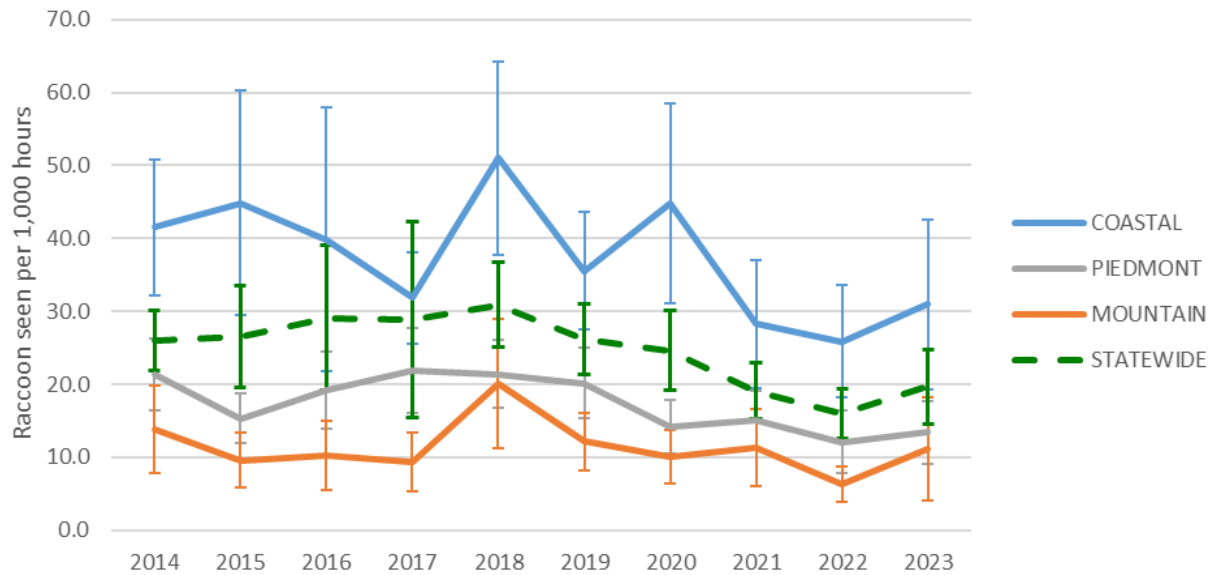


Figure 5. Annual raccoon observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2023.

As expected, more raccoons are observed in the Coastal and Piedmont FMU (Figure 5), which matches regional trapper harvest data (Table 3 on page 9), though observation rates have declined slightly over time in these regions (-3% statewide average).

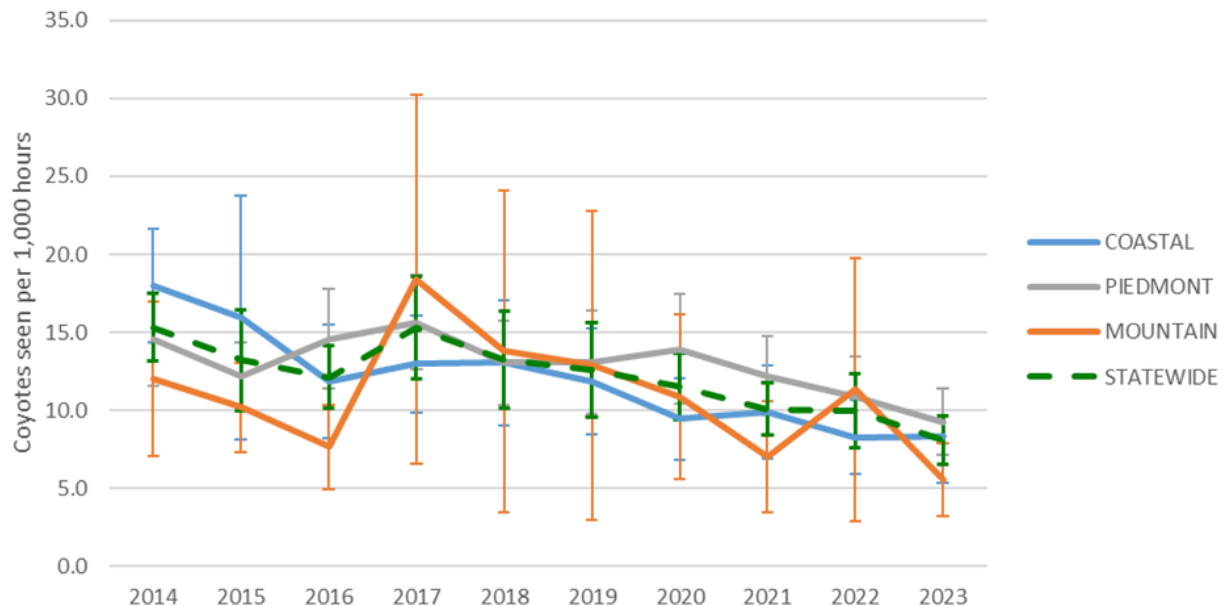


Figure 6. Annual coyote observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2023.

Over the past 10 years, coyote observation rates have decreased statewide (-4% statewide average; Figure 6). They are observed at similar rates across all regions, indicating that populations are fully distributed across the state.

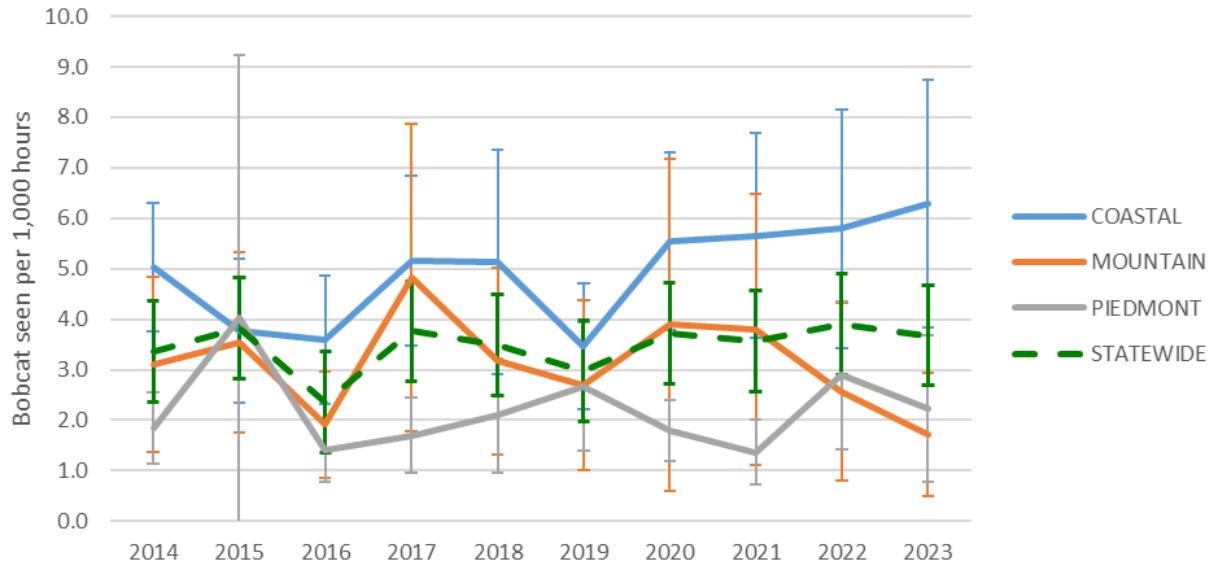


Figure 7. Annual bobcat observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2023.

Over the past 10 years, there has been no evidence that statewide bobcat observation rates have changed significantly (Figure 7). Observation rates were highest in the Coastal FMU compared to the Mountain or Piedmont regions, but regional annual estimates were relatively imprecise generally due to the scarcity of observations.

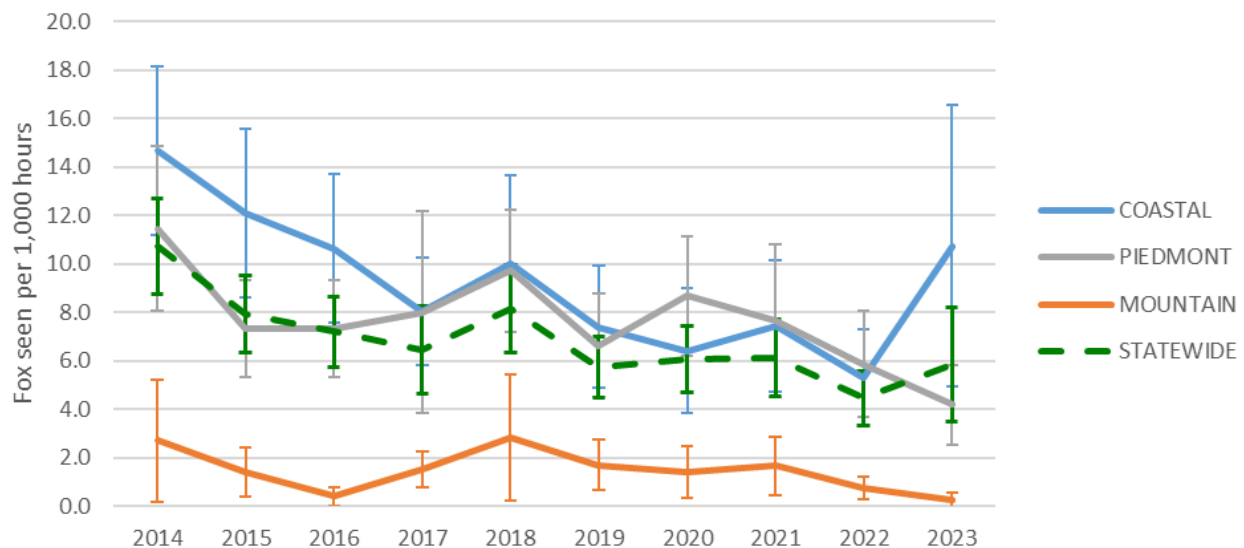


Figure 8. Annual gray fox observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2023.

Observation rates of gray foxes have significantly declined statewide (-5% statewide average). Observations in the Mountain FMU have remained consistently low.

Regulation Changes that impact Trappers

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reviewed proposed rule changes on October 3, 2024, of which two will positively impact trappers.

1. **TRAP ATTENDANCE:** Regulations currently require daily trap attendance for all traps except completely submerged conibear-type traps, for which 72-hour trap attendance is permitted. Rule changes, going into effect March 1, 2025, will extend the 72-hour trap attendance to also apply to legal trap types (such as foothold and cage traps) that are set as a submersion trapping system (defined below). All other trap types will still require daily attendance.
 - a. ***“Submersion trapping systems”** are traps, other than snares and Conibear®-type traps, that are set in a manner that allow or cause the captured animal to become irreversibly submerged in water.*
2. **FURDEALER REPORTING:** Reporting requirements for licensed fur dealers will be changed from monthly to annually. This rule change will take effect August 2025, and furdealers will submit their annual reports to the Commission within 15 days of their license expiration.

Your Furbearer Team:

In 2024, your long-time Bear and Furbearer Biologist, Colleen Olfenbuttel, was promoted to become the Game Mammals and Surveys Supervisor for the Wildlife Management Division of the WRC. In January 2025, Caitlin Brett was brought on to the Wildlife Management Division to take on the responsibilities as the new Furbearer Biologist. While Colleen will continue to be involved, Caitlin will be taking over as the main point of contact for furbearer-specific research, management, and inquiries.

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!



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Email Update: In spring 2025, all WRC email addresses will be changing from “@ncwildlife.org” to “@ncwildlife.gov” – please update your records accordingly!