



Volume 17, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2023

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 2022-23 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 newsletter, and previous newsletters, can also be found at <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Learn-Resources/Surveys-Reports>

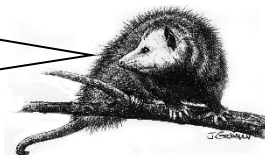
Monitoring Furbearer Populations

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: www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Contact-a-Licensed-Trapper

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 February 22nd, 2023, 366 lifetime trapping licenses have been sold. This is a 39% increase since last year's report in the 2022 spring/summer newsletter.

Did you lose your lifetime trapper decal? Contact 888-248-6834 (Customer Service, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.) or licenses@ncwildlife.org to learn how to get a replacement decal.



Skulls and Carcasses Wanted



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

Lower jaws from Bobcats and Otters

Carcasses of bobcat, coyote, foxes, mink, muskrat, raccoon, skunk and weasel

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.

Carcasses (can be skinned): Additionally, we're hoping to obtain carcasses to collect tissues and organs to gain information on diseases, parasites, genetics, and toxicology exposure. Please contact Ashley Hobbs (information below) to submit a carcass.



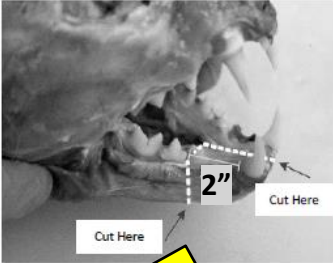
Projects such as these are important, as they help us monitor populations and improve our knowledge of North Carolina furbearers. We feel this information will help us maintain trapping for future generations.

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 back of pre-paid 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.

Please send in your bobcat & otter jaws by April 30th!!

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 pre-paid envelope to ship.

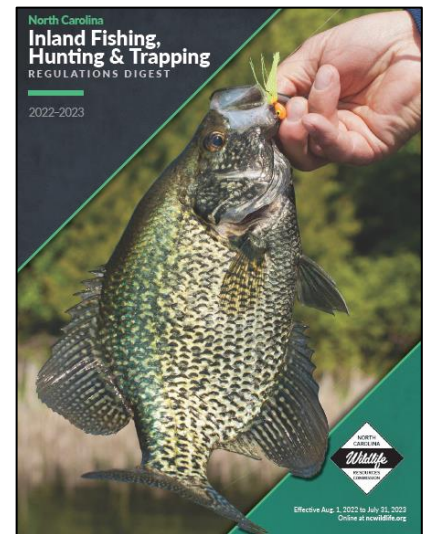
For more envelopes, contact:
Ashley Hobbs
Special Projects Biologist
919-698-4655
ashley.hobbs@ncwildlife.org

For more information visit:
ncwildlife.org/furcooperator

Regulation Changes that impact Trappers

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reviewed proposed rule changes at its business meeting on February 22, 2023. The Commissioners accepted all proposed changes related to wildlife management, inland fisheries, and game lands for the 2023-24 seasons. The anticipated effective date for these regulations is Aug. 1, 2023.

All changes approved, as well as updated season dates, can be found in the 2023-24 North Carolina Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest. This digest is updated annually and will come out in July 2023 and is available on-line (<https://www.ncwildlife.org/Licensing/Regulations>), downloadable as a pdf, or can be requested by mail.

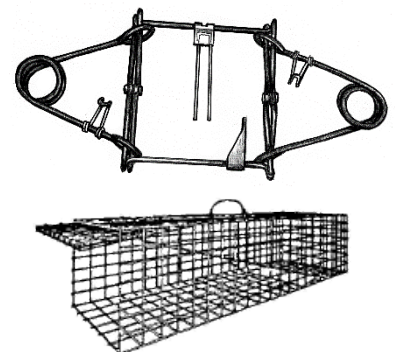


Statewide Trapping Season Date Changes

- What is the change? The start of the statewide regulated trapping season was changed from November 1 to October 1. The 2023-24 statewide trapping season will be from October 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024.
- Justification for season change: There have been requests to extend the trapping season for several years. Regulated trapping season dates established by the NCWRC are based on the time of year when young are independent, fur is prime, and the welfare of any animal (i.e., target, incidental, wild, domestic) captured in the trap is better assured (e.g., lack of extreme hot temperatures). Extending the trapping season by one month in October versus into March assures our regulated trapping season accounts for animal welfare and utilization of the resource. In October, young are independent, so the extension of the trapping season in October would not result in orphaning events, as would occur if the trapping season started in March. In addition, trap success and efficiency are higher in October than in spring, as young are independent and dispersing, and adults are moving around the landscape as they are no longer limited to the den site to care for young.

Defining Trap-Types

- What is the change? Defined conibear[®], conibear[®]-type, box traps, and cage traps.
- Justification for change: The NCWRC identified a need to define these trap-types and trapping systems. This would also be consistent with the NCWRC's efforts to reduce complexity and confusion by defining trap-types in rule. Previously, other trap-types (e.g., foothold) and trap devices (e.g., Collarum[™]-type trap) had been defined in NCAC 10B .0301.



Clarification on Tagging Traps

- *What is the change?* Clarified that a weather-resistant permanent tag (see example on page 5) must be attached to all traps, including Collarum™-type traps, snares, box traps (including those for rabbits), and cage traps, as is required for foothold and body-gripping traps.
- *Justification for change:* Tagging of traps to identify the person that set the trap has been required of several trap-types in North Carolina, such as foothold traps, body-gripping traps, corral traps for feral swine, and traps for snapping turtles. Requiring a trap to have an identifying tag attached aids in enforcement investigations, such as determining if a trap found on a property was set legally (e.g., trapper had written permission), as well as identifying the owner of stolen traps. This rule change clarified that Collarum™-type traps, snares, box traps, and cage traps also need to have a tag identifying the trapper, reduces regulatory complexity, and creates consistency among what is required in state law as well as NCAC regarding the tagging of traps.

Fur Dealer License Price Reduction

- *What is the change?* Effective for the 2022-23 trapping season, a state law was amended to reduce the price of the resident fur dealer license from \$60 to \$30, and the nonresident fur dealer license from \$300 to \$60.
- *Justification for statutory change:* Over the past few decades, pelt prices have declined, which has resulted in a decline in both resident and non-resident fur dealers. However, despite declining pelt prices, the cost of the fur dealer license had not been changed in statute. By lowering the resident and non-resident fur dealer license, North Carolina may increase the number of fur dealers in the state. This could result in an increase in the number of outlets for licensed trappers to sell their fur and increased competition among fur dealers, resulting in increased fur prices. With an increase in options and fur prices, wanton waste of fur would decline.

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.



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

There is one course coming up on Saturday, April 22nd, 2023, 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/trappered and click on the list of courses currently scheduled.

Reminders to Trappers

Trapper Identification Number (TIN)

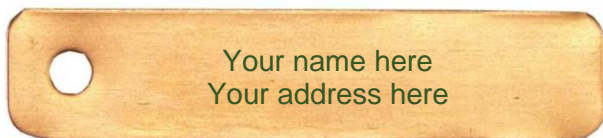
The Commission issues each trapper a Trapper Identification Number (TIN) at the time they purchase or renew their trapping license. This TIN is printed on your license (see picture on next page for example).

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. See trap tag examples on next page.

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.

<u>North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission</u>		<u>North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission</u>		
WRC CUSTOMER NUMBER:	10685970	WRC CUSTOMER NUMBER:	10685970	
DATE OF BIRTH:	01/01/1978	ISSUED:	02/28/2022	09:52:31
TRAPPER ID:	123456	<u>VALID LICENSE/PERMIT TYPES</u>	<u>FEE</u>	<u>EFFECTIVE-EXPIRATION</u>
		Res State Trap	\$32.00	02/28/2022 - 02/28/2023
MAILING ADDRESS		I certify that the information contained herein is true and accurate. I also understand that providing false, fraudulent, or misleading information for the purpose of obtaining this license or the use of a fraudulently obtained license is a Class 1 misdemeanor [G.S. 113-275 (j)].		
JOHN Q PUBLIC 1751 VARSITY DR RALEIGH, NC 27606		SIGNATURE: _____ (MUST BE SIGNED TO BE VALID)		
DETACH THE ABOVE CARD, SIGN AND CARRY ON YOUR PERSON WHEN EXERCISING THE PRIVILEGES AUTHORIZED				

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



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.

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.



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 (\$50). 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. This 2-day training course covers laws, rules, health considerations, and humane handling techniques. Currently licensed WCAs 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 (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 2023 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, go to ncwildlife.org/wca** and click on “Classes and Continuing Education”

Class Registration Deadline	Registration Fee	WCA Class Date
June 1, 2023	\$150	June 14-15, 2023 (Wednesday-Thursday)
September 1, 2023	\$150	September 13-14, 2023 (Wednesday-Thursday)

Alligator Control Agent (ACA) Program Certification

Only licensed WCAs can register and attend the ACA Program to become Alligator Control Agents. Alligator Control Agents must apply annually to renew their WCA license, ACA certification and Endangered Species permit to continue operating as an ACA. To learn more about the ACA Program, go to ncwildlife.org/wca.

Rabies Statistics

During 2022, positive rabies results were obtained from 94 raccoons, 66 skunks, 46 foxes, 1 coyote, and 1 bobcat. The total number of reported terrestrial rabies cases (n=208) was an 8% increase from the number of cases detected during 2021 (n=193; Figure 1). 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). Skunks and raccoons are the primary species of wildlife in which rabies is observed in North Carolina, excluding bats (Figure 3). During 2022, 53 out of 100 counties documented a positive terrestrial wildlife rabies case. Forsyth (n=18) and Guilford (n=18) counties both had the highest number of positive terrestrial rabies, followed by Iredell (17), Franklin (12), Gaston (12), and Mecklenburg (12) counties.

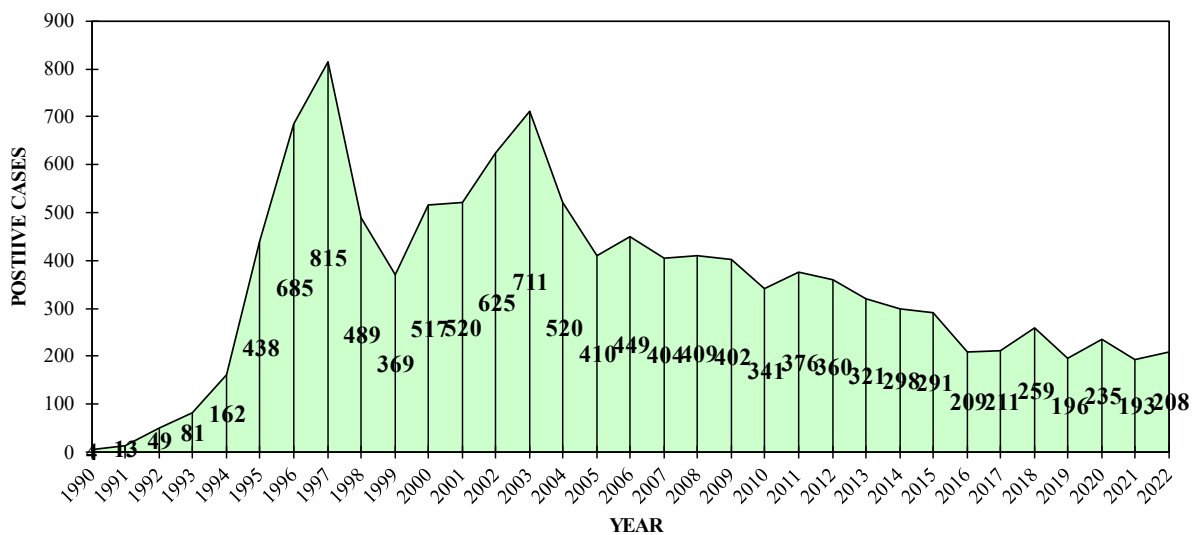


Figure 1. Positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases reported from 1990 through 2022.

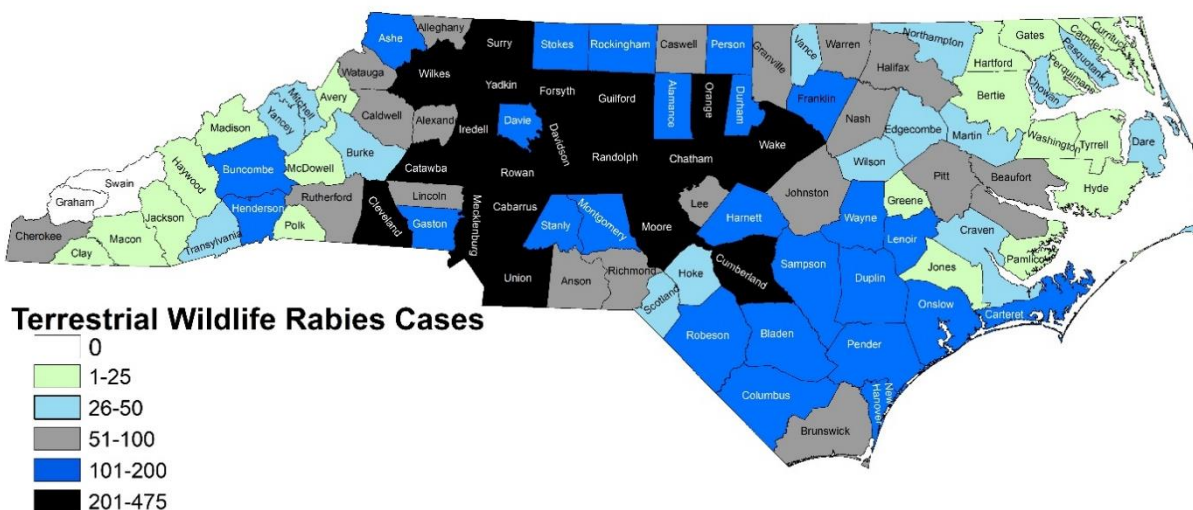


Figure 2. Number of positive rabies cases in terrestrial wildlife by county reported from 1990-2022. No positive terrestrial wildlife rabies cases in Graham and Swain counties.

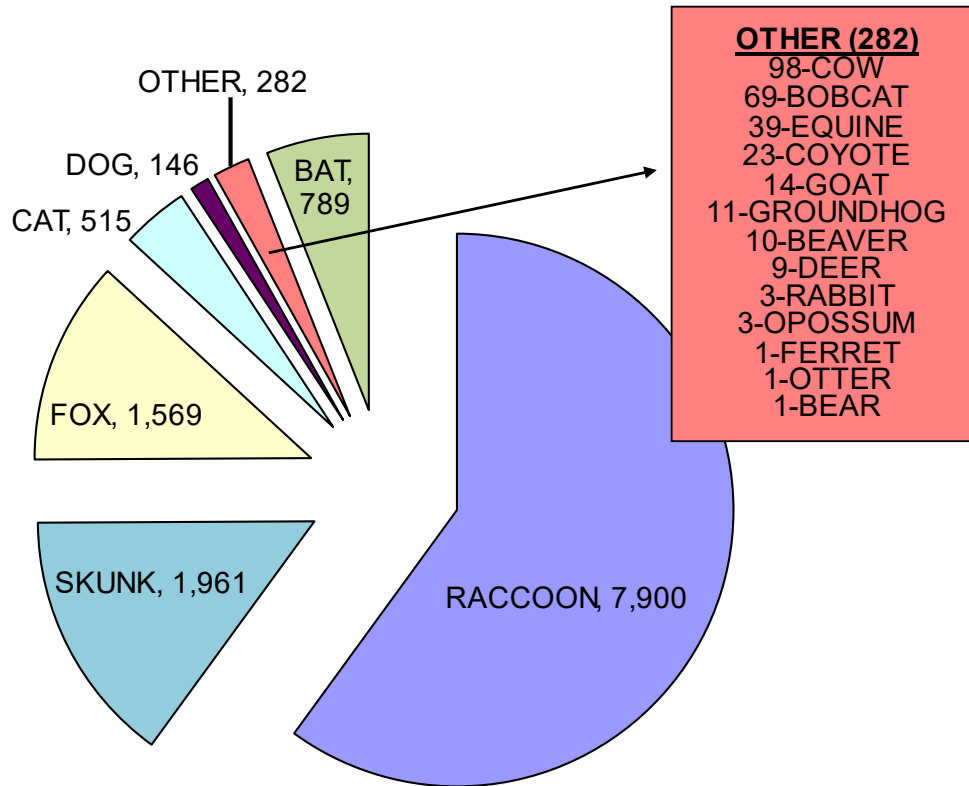


Figure 3. Number of positive rabies cases reported by species from 1990-2022.

Voluntary Trapper Harvest Mail Survey Results

The response rate for the 2021-22 mail survey was 42%, which was a decrease from the 2020-21 survey year (Table 1, page 9). During the 2021-22 trapping season, 44% of licensed trappers actively trapped during the season (Table 1).

The number of licensed trappers during the 2021-22 trapping season increased 7% from the previous trapping season (Table 1). This is the 3rd highest number of licensed trappers since the 1986-87 season. In addition to the 7% increase in trapping license sales, the 2021-22 furbearer harvest level was 9% higher than that observed during the prior trapping season, driven by increases in river otters (+77%), beaver (+22%), coyote (+10%), and bobcat (+7%) (Table 2, page 9). Raccoon (-9%), gray fox (-7%), opossum (-6%), mink (-3%) and red fox (-3%) had a decline in harvest from the prior trapping season. Beavers comprised most of the harvest, followed by raccoons, coyotes, and opossums (page 9, Figure 4).

Overall, pelt prices for the 2021-22 season declined 27% from the previous trapping 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. See Table 2 on page 10 for more information on pelt prices.

Table 1. Data from the trapper harvest mail survey, 2002-03 through 2021-2022.

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%

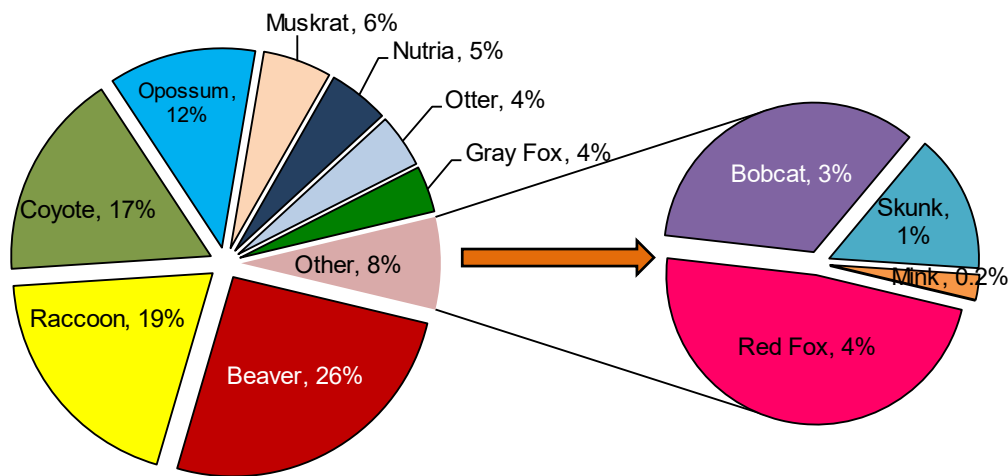















Figure 4. The wildlife species composition of the 2021-22 trapper harvest is based on estimates from the voluntary trapper harvest survey.

Table 2. Estimated trapper harvest from the 2018-19 trapping season through the 2021-22 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Prices	Harvest	Price
 Beaver	12,855	\$9.02	11,464	\$7.16	10,156	\$11.92	12,360	\$7.80
 Mink	174	\$6.51	99	\$3.92	100	\$4.88	97	\$3.20
 Muskrat	2,230	\$3.68	1,805	\$2.45	1,987	\$5.12	2,661	\$2.24
 Nutria	1,234	N/A	1,460	\$1.00	1,462	N/A	2,364	N/A
 Otter	2,019	\$24.38	1,927	\$16.37	1,176	\$20.57	2,086	\$20.58
 Bobcat	1,176	\$29.54	789	\$24.02	1,141	\$32.21	1,227	\$21.62
 Coyote	7,638	\$19.93	8,249	\$14.92	7,312	\$12.49	8,042	\$10.00
 Gray Fox	2,410	\$11.62	1,995	\$7.64	1,926	\$8.10	1,794	\$4.95
 Red Fox	1,716	\$11.68	2,173	\$7.51	1,778	\$4.96	1,722	\$4.00
 Opossum	8,350	\$1.14	7,513	\$0.58	6,100	\$0.64	5,712	\$0.25
 Raccoon	10,876	\$4.08	11,495	\$2.09	10,299	\$3.99	9,325	\$1.27
 Skunk	688	\$3.12	659	\$2.42	529	\$2.83	537	\$2.90
 Weasel	6	N/A	2	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
TOTAL	51,372		49,631		43,966		47,927	

During the 2021-22 season, 56% of furbearers were harvested 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 and coyotes (Table 3). 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 2021-22 trapping season, based on voluntary trapper harvest surveys.

Species	Coastal Plain	Piedmont	Mountain
Beaver	8,008	3,736	594
Bobcat	841	222	159
Coyote	4,154	2,850	960
All Fox	1,473	1,647	367
Gray Fox	761	906	108
Mink	35	19	43
Muskrat	1,396	1,057	188
Nutria	2,213	149	0
Raccoon	4,458	3,428	1,353
Red Fox	712	741	259
River Otter	1,391	600	90
Skunk	45	333	153
Virginia Opossum	2,765	1,904	977
Weasels	0	0	0
Total	26,778	15,944	4,883
% of regional harvest	56%	33%	10%

North Carolina Hunter Harvest Survey

The NCWRC conducts a voluntary 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 below, hunters harvested more coyotes than trappers, but this is due to the high number of licensed hunters in North Carolina. Most of the coyotes harvested by hunters is incidental to deer hunting.

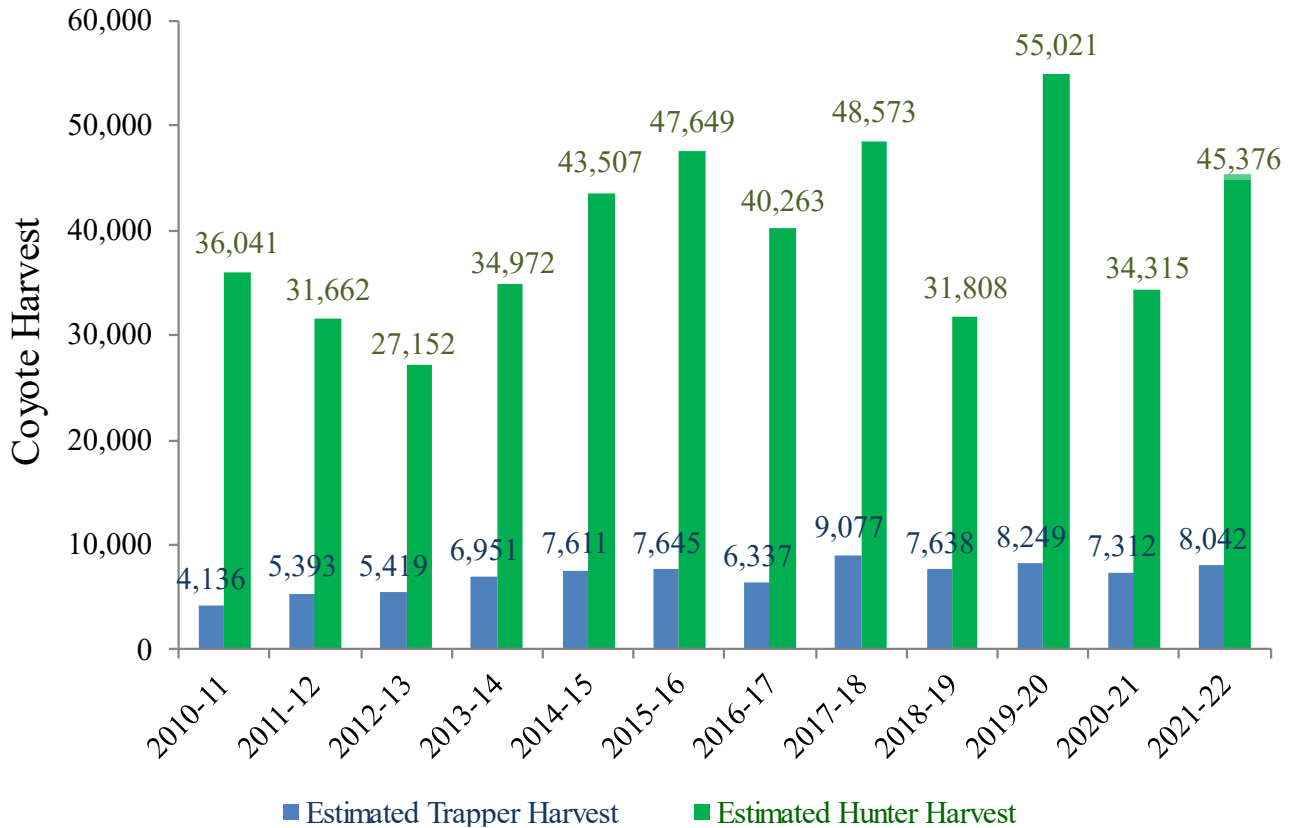


Figure 5. Estimated harvest of coyotes by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue line) from the 2010-11 seasons through the 2021-22 seasons.

Trappers are more efficient and effective at harvesting coyotes in comparison to hunters; during the 2021-22 season, for every 1.7 coyotes harvested by hunters, trappers harvested 8.4 coyotes (Figure 6 on next page). Figures 7 and 8 on page 13 and 14 show the raccoon and bobcat harvest by both hunters and trappers. Figure 9 on page 14 shows the harvest of foxes by hunters and trappers.

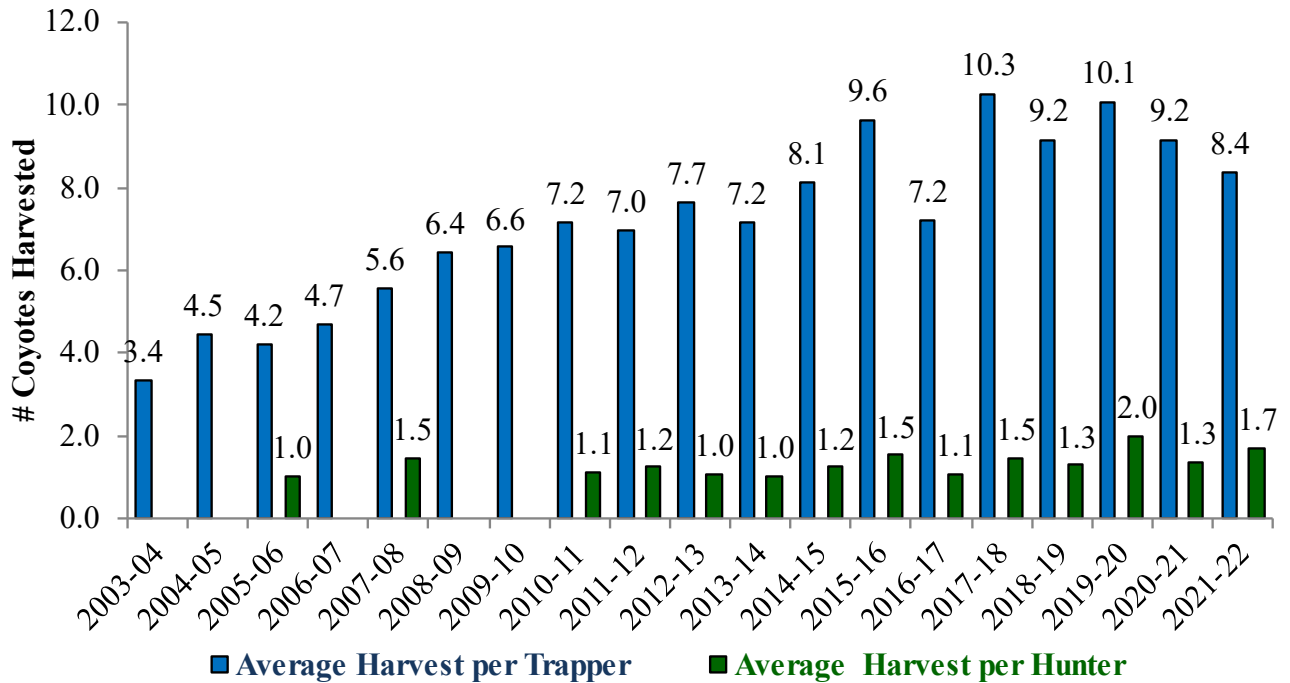


Figure 6. Average number of coyotes harvested by hunters (green bar) and by trappers (blue bar) from the 2003-04 season through the 2021-22 season.

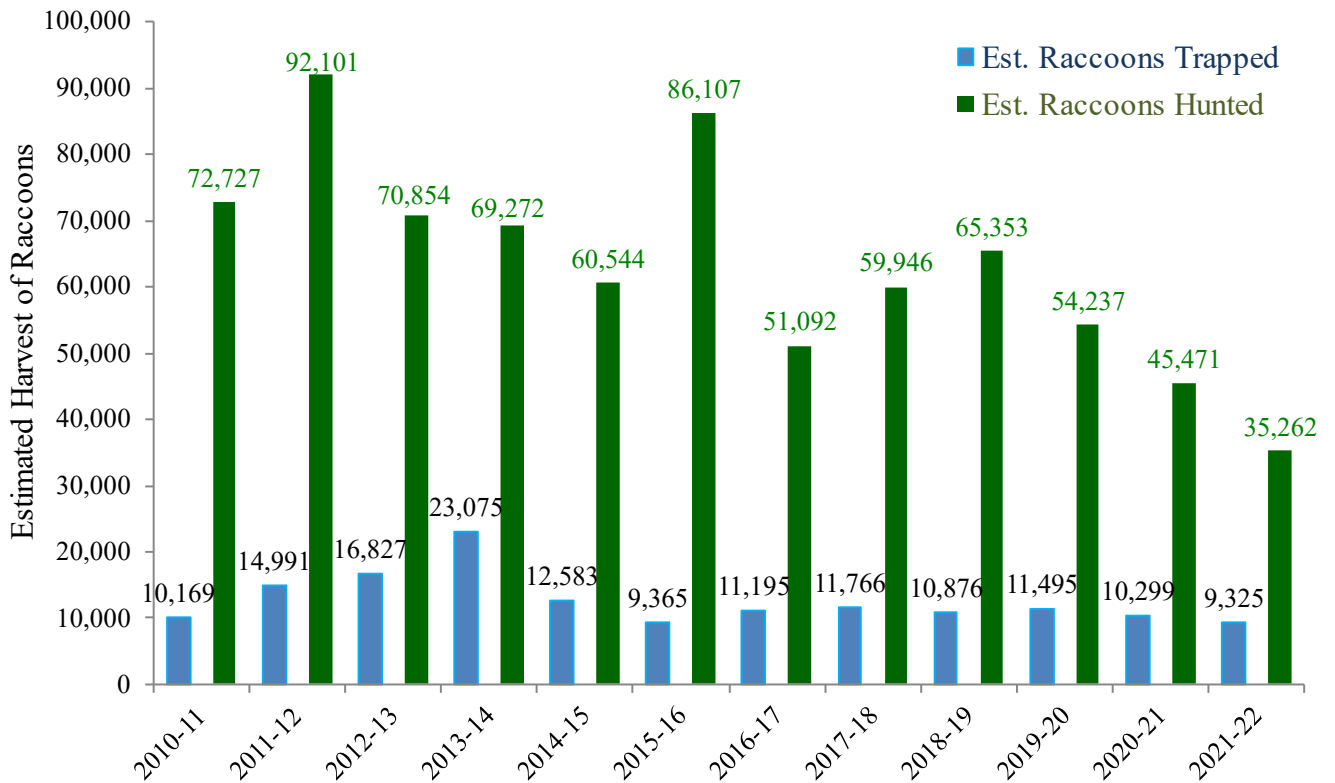


Figure 7. Estimated harvest of raccoons by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue bar) from the 2010-11 season through the 2021-22 season.

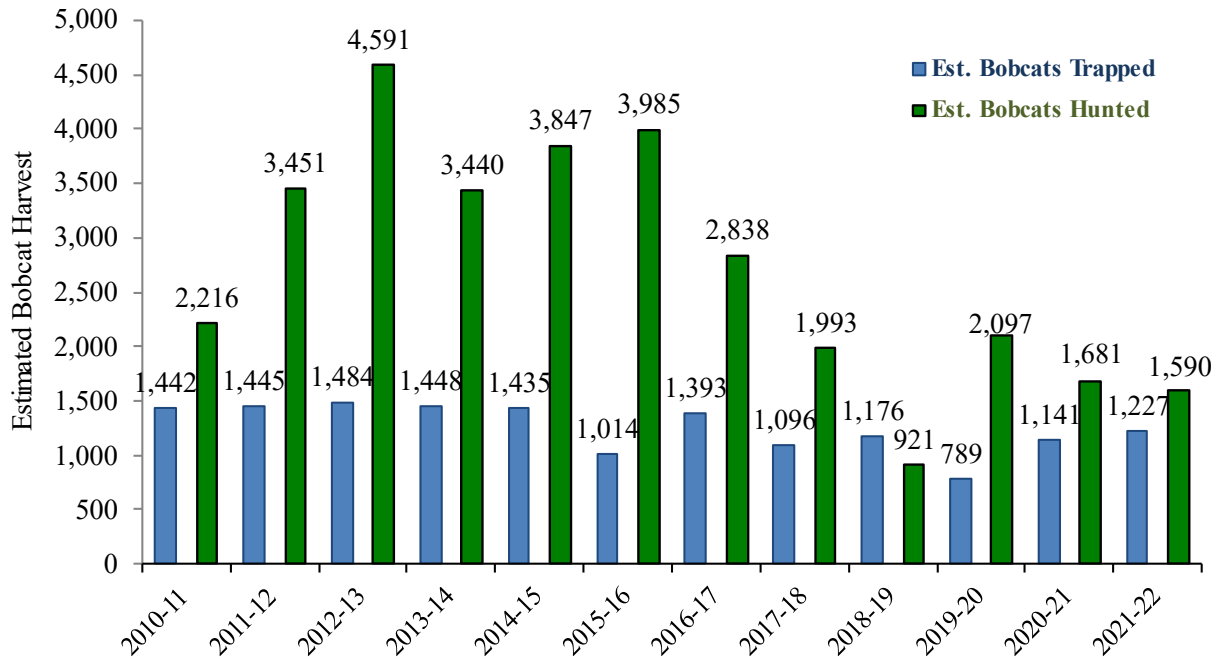


Figure 8. Estimated harvest of bobcats by hunters (green bars) and trappers (blue bar) from the 2010-11 season through the 2021-22 season.

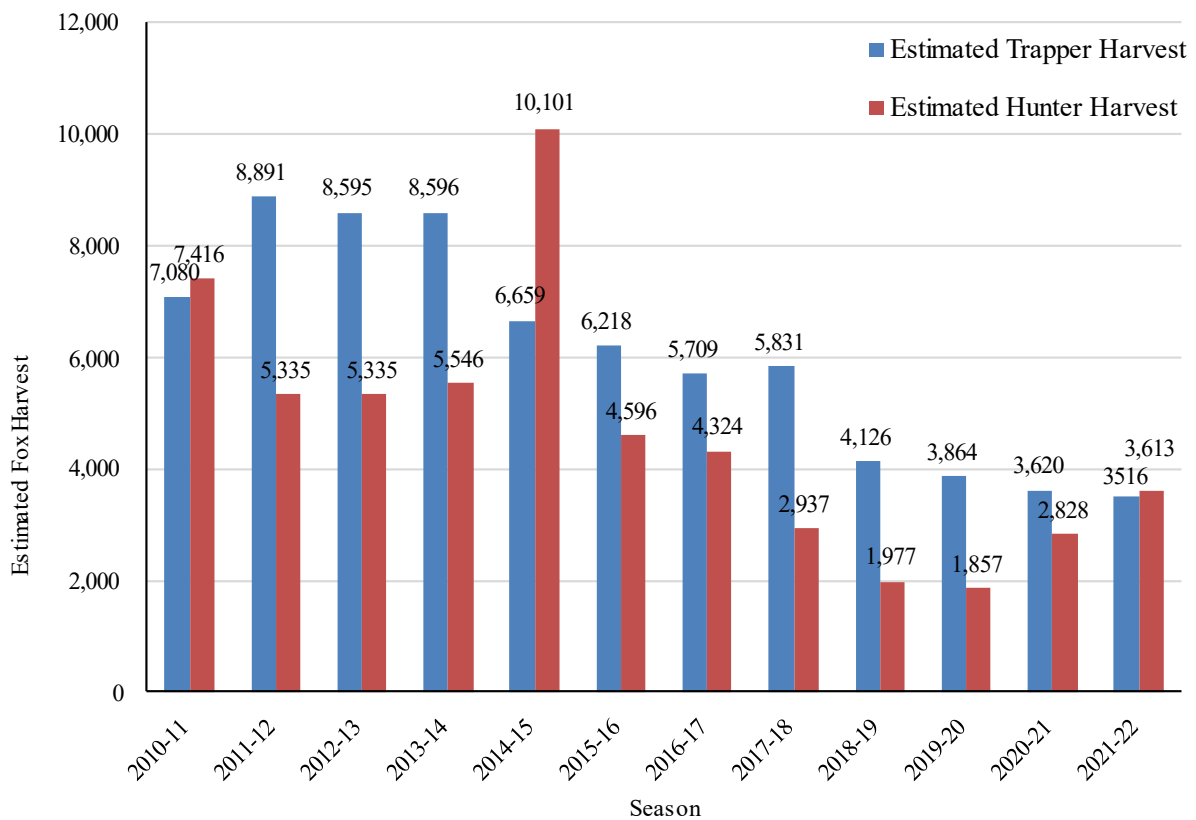


Figure 9. Estimated harvest of foxes by hunters (red bars) and trappers (blue bars) from the 2010-11 season through the 2021-22 season.

Deer Hunter Observation Survey

The NCWRC initiated an annual volunteer Deer Hunter Observation Survey (DHOS) in 2014. Hunters were asked to record their daily observations of deer and other wildlife while still-hunting for deer. The primary objective of the DHOS was to provide long-term indices of wildlife occurrences and demographics across North Carolina. These data increase understanding of spatial differences and temporal changes in populations, and supplement other survey, harvest, and biological data collected by the NCWRC to monitor wildlife and evaluate management actions.

With 8 years of data, we now have trends for several wildlife species, including raccoon, coyotes, and bobcats. As expected, more raccoons are observed in the Coastal and Piedmont FMU (Figure 10), which also matches regional trapper harvest data (Table 3 on page 11). Accounting for confidence intervals, raccoon observation rates are relatively stable over the past 8 years.

There is evidence that statewide observation rates for coyotes have decreased during the past 8 years, driven primarily by declines in the coastal management zone (Figure 11 on page 16). Despite trend differences, there is no evidence that coyote observation rates are different between the three furbearer management units. These results match that of other indices the NCWRC uses to track coyote population distributions which indicate that populations are fully distributed across the state.

Bobcat observation rates within the past 5 years were significantly different between each of the furbearer management FMUs. Observation rates were highest in the coastal FMU (5.0 bobcat per 1,000 hours), followed by the mountain FMU (3.7 bobcat per 1,000 hours), and lowest in the piedmont FMU (1.9 bobcat per 1,000 hours; Figure 12 on page 16). There has been no evidence that statewide or regional observation rates have changed over time within the past 8 years.

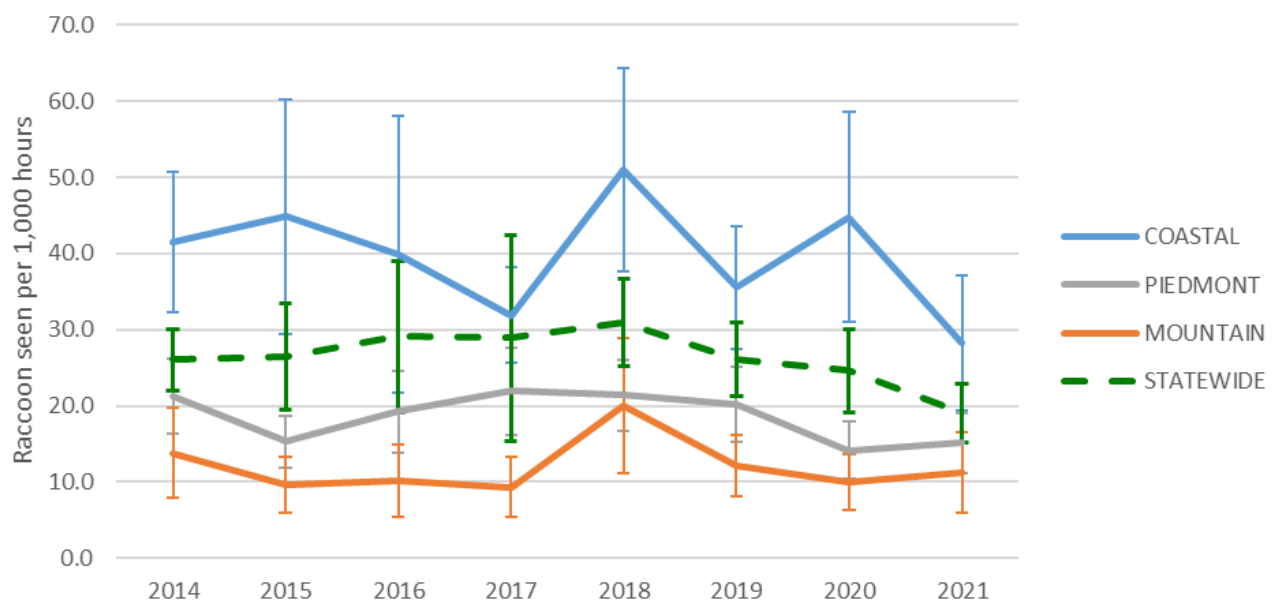


Figure 10. Annual raccoon observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2021.

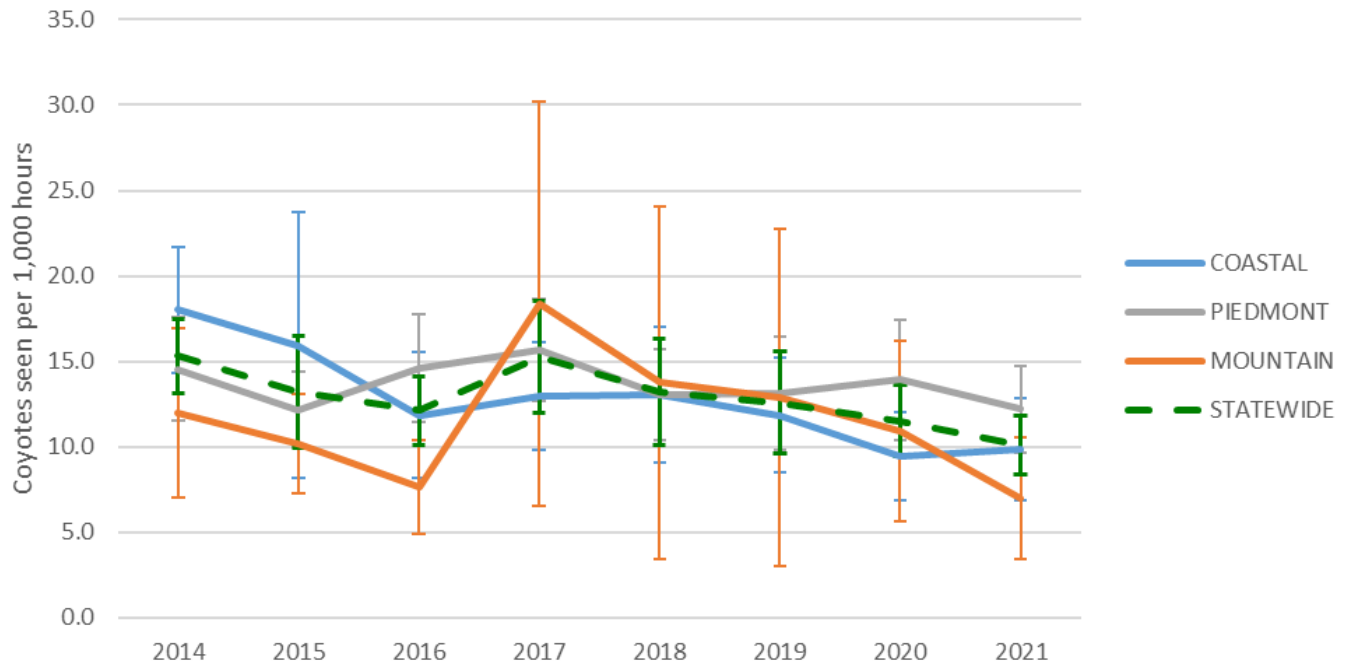


Figure 11. Annual coyote observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2021.

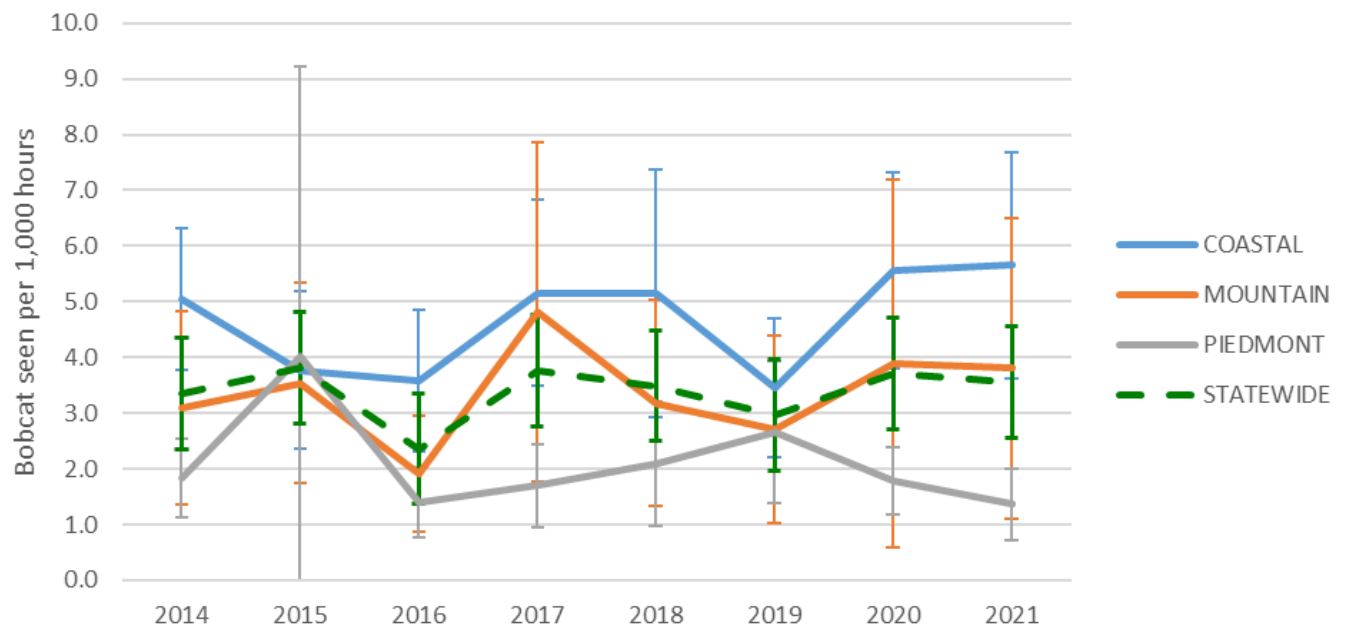


Figure 12. Annual bobcat observation rates by furbearer management unit with 95% confidence intervals, North Carolina Deer Hunter Observation Survey, 2014-2021.

For more information on the NCWRC’s Game and Furbearer Program, including annual reports on survey and research activities, go to:

<https://www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Programs/Game-and-Furbearer-Program>