



# New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter

## Winter 2015-16

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Project



### Important Upcoming Dates:

- Hunter Education courses resume in March. Registration opens in mid-February. Call 877-2-HUNT NJ for schedule and additional information.
- 25 January – 22 February – Application period for Spring Turkey permits.
- Tuesday 9 February – Last day of beaver and otter trapping season
- Saturday 20 February – Beaver & Otter Check-in 9AM-NOON at Assunpink, Clinton, Flatbrook, Tockahoe and Winslow WMA as well as Newfoundland Fire Department on Rt. 23 in Newfoundland
- Tuesday 15 March – Last day of the 2015-16 trapping season and Special Permit Coyote/Fox season
- Saturday 19 March – New Jersey Fur Harvesters spring fur collection at Assunpink WMA
- Sunday 20 March – New Jersey Trappers Association annual fur auction at Space Farms, Beemerville (fur will be collected on Saturday 19 March)

### Remember:

- To trap with or use cable restraints, a person must have first passed a Fish and Wildlife-approved trapper education course which included use of cable restraints and carry their course completion card while trapping.
- Any person must be at least 12 years of age in order to obtain a trapping license.
- TAKE A KID TRAPPING OR MENTOR A NEW TRAPPER!



### In This Issue:

- New Jersey Fisher
- Fur Market Forecast
- Furbearer Facts: Foxotes?
- New Jersey Trapper Harvest Survey
- Results of Recent Changes in Beaver/Otter Permits
- Beaver and Otter Check-in

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is *the* professional, environmental agency overseeing the protection and management of the state's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic value for all New Jerseyans.



## NEW JERSEY FISHER!

After its first discovery in over a century by the late Charles Kontos in October 2006, the inevitable finally happened - the Division of Fish and Wildlife received its first call from a trapper reporting the capture of a fisher on 15 January 2016!



Personnel from the Wildlife Services Unit and the Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Research Project responded to the call in Mansfield Township, Warren County on the Pequest Wildlife Management Area property. The fisher, a male weighing 11.46 lb. (5.20 kg), was captured in a cable restraint set for fox. The animal was chemically immobilized, released from the snare, weighed, measured, tagged and DNA samples were taken. No apparent damage from the cable restraint was noted. The fisher recovered from the drug dose within 2 hours and was released back into the Pequest WMA woods in great shape. Fishers are returning, naturally and through reintroduction efforts in New York and Pennsylvania, to most of their historic range in the northeastern United States. Fishers have been documented in several northern and southern New Jersey counties.

**There is no open trapping season for either bobcat or fisher; possession is not permitted.**

**If you encounter a live fisher (or bobcat) captured on your trapline, do not disturb the animal or the set, but immediately notify Fish and Wildlife by calling (877) WARNDEP (877-927-6337).**

A Fish and Wildlife technician will provide further instructions. Call the same number for a dead bobcat or fisher on your trapline; a Fish and Wildlife technician will arrange to pick up the animal. Biological samples will be taken from all bobcat and fisher carcasses. The data collected will be instrumental to understand the status of the species populations.

The Division's Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Research Project would like to ask anyone who might have trail camera pictures of fishers to share them with us! We hear, usually second or third hand that quite a few of our hunters have seen them but we've rarely received a picture of a fisher. Please send any clear, recognizable pictures of fishers to: [joseph.garris@dep.nj.gov](mailto:joseph.garris@dep.nj.gov).

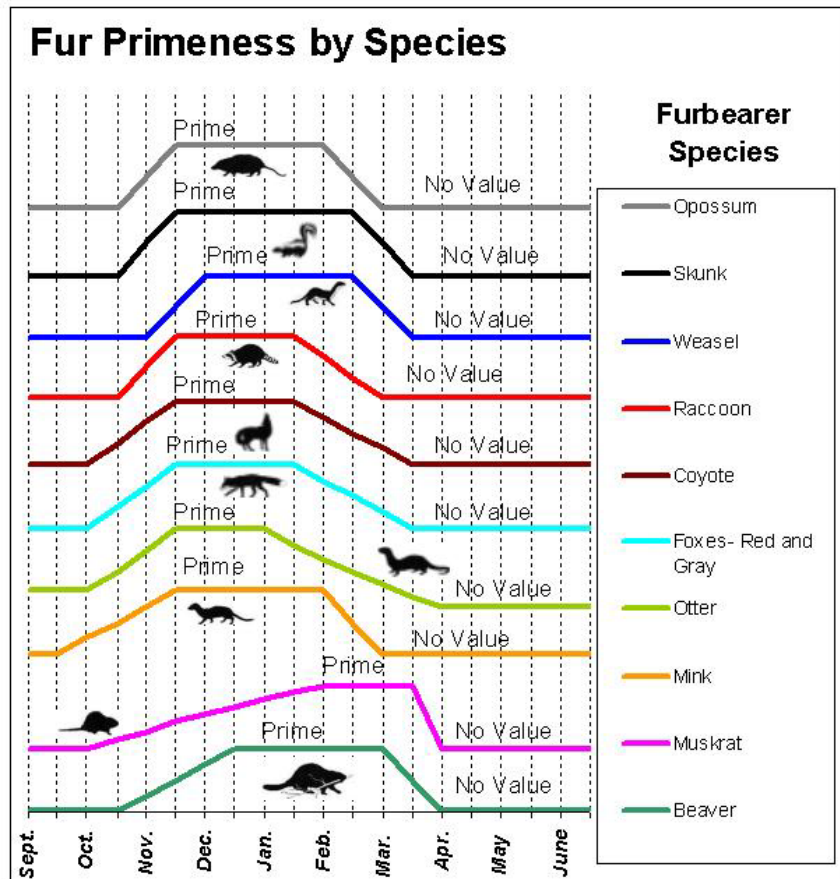
## Fur Market Forecast

What we really need is for the Russian economy to strengthen and for a cold winter in China. As in the past couple of years the struggling economy in China and Russia is what's behind the overall slump in the fur industry worldwide. Cold temperatures in China may help keep some of the fur industry in business in that country. The Russian currency is extremely weak and the political climate that Russia faces particularly in regard to the sanctions imposed by western Nations following the Ukraine crisis has greatly hampered Russia's participation in the fur industry. Russia was the big market for raccoon pelts and is why low prices can be expected for pelts of that species. Overall, the outlook isn't so good, with prices which may be lower than last year's by an estimated 15 to 20%!

Trappers should try to make sure they trap when fur is at its most prime. Poor and un-prime fur may be a waste of the trapper's efforts. Remember, what we hear from most fellow trappers is the high price they get for their *best* pelts, which is **not** what you should expect for *every* pelt. Trapping fur that's not yet prime will decrease that trapper's average price per pelt and will end up with those poorer pelts graded down to a much lower monetary value. With the market outlook those poorer pelts WILL be nearly valueless! See the fur primeness chart at the end of this section.

Predictions (*Trapper's Post / Fur, Fish and Game / Trapper and Predator Caller*) suggest that fur price averages will be somewhat decreased from last year. Expect pelt grading to be tough again this year, so take the extra time necessary to properly flesh pelts in order to maximize the return for your effort. Here's what the predictions say and what prices have been lately in New Jersey:

Species	Prediction	NJ Average Last Year	NJ 5-Year Average
Beaver	Expectations are that an average beaver might bring up to the low teens; prime, well-handled blankets may bring in low \$20s	\$ 13.19	\$ 21.20
Coyote	Easterns averaging in the teens to as high as \$25-30 for very best prime pelts; don't expect much for lesser pelts	\$ 12.63	\$ 18.62
Gray fox	Hard to predict as there seems little interest in this species; a well-handled prime pelt may bring \$10-15	\$ 15.83	\$ 22.67
Mink	Large bucks in prime condition in the \$8 range; females half that; Chinese market flooded with ranch mink	\$ 8.66	\$ 16.64
Muskrat	Expect average in the \$2-3 range; best prime pelts might reach \$5	\$ 4.93	\$ 6.99
Opossum	The best silver, well-handled primes may go \$2 tops	\$ 1.83	\$ 2.24
Otter	Best, unsinged prime otter may get into the \$40s; most will likely sell in the \$18-30 range	\$ 34.00	\$ 54.94
Raccoon	Only the best prime pelts may go for \$10; expect \$4-5 for average, well-handled pelts; no market for early/blue pelts	\$ 6.42	\$ 11.17
Red fox	Best, heavy furred dark reds may bring \$30; average, well-handled pelts probably in the \$15-20 range	\$ 14.14	\$ 23.13
Skunk	Very best expected in the \$6-8 range; less than prime pelts may be worthless; buyers looking for nice, white full stripes	\$ 1.50	\$ 4.90
Weasel	Long-tails in the \$2-3 range; short-tails in the \$1-2 range	No data	No data



## Furbearer Facts: Foxotes?

Occasionally, we receive phone calls describing fox-like or coyote-like animals that are enthusiastically described as an obvious cross between a red fox and a coyote. A few years ago in *The Trapper and Predator Caller*, a writer described trapping what he called **foxotes**; animals he thought were crosses between red foxes and coyotes. And of course, there are YouTube videos showing footage of animals the videographers believed to be a coyote/fox hybrids. We thought some clarification on North American canid hybridization might clear up some misconceptions.

The text below might seem a bit technical but the explanation is needed to get to the correct answer. Also, keep in mind that the following only pertains to what is regarded as *wild, naturally occurring* hybridization which would produce offspring.

To explain the point clearly it's important to know that only species with the same number of chromosomes and having similar autosomal genetic patterns can hybridize. Autosomes are chromosomes which carry the genes which determine an animal's characteristics, but not the sex of the animal. Generally speaking, only animals of the same genus can hybridize, but this is not the case for the red fox which has a different number of chromosomes than other species in the genus *Vulpes*. Thus these species do not interbreed. The arctic fox has the same number of chromosomes as the kit and swift foxes but the species are greatly separated by geography. So, in the case of foxes, the only species that naturally hybridize are the swift and kit foxes which both having 50 chromosomes and overlapping ranges. Recent studies question whether the swift and kit foxes are simply one species or are genetically different. We can find no data to verify or dispute if swift/kit and arctic foxes can cross successfully.

### North American Canids

Common Name	Genus	Genus/species	Number of chromosomes
Red Fox	Vulpes	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	34
Kit Fox	Vulpes	<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>	50
Swift Fox	Vulpes	<i>Vulpes velox</i>	50
Arctic Fox	Vulpes	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	50
Gray Fox	Urocyon	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	66
Coyote	Canis	<i>Canis latrans</i>	78
Gray Wolf	Canis	<i>Canis lupus</i>	78
Red Wolf	Canis	<i>Canis rufus</i>	78
Domestic Dog	Canis	<i>Canis familiaris</i>	78

However, gray wolves, red wolves, coyotes, and domestic dogs can all interbreed and produce fertile young, which explains accounts of coydogs, coywolves and coyote-dog-wolf hybrids.

But, can wild coyotes and foxes cross? The answer is a resounding NO! Naturally occurring hybrids of these species do not exist! And no, red foxes and gray foxes can't crossbreed either for the same reason – the chromosome counts are incapable. The term “cross fox” applies to the partially melanistic color variant of the red fox, and the name is derived from a long, dark stripe running down its back and intersecting another stripe at the shoulder to form a “cross”.

## New Jersey Trapper Harvest Survey

The Division surveys all licensed trappers annually to collect information on trapper activities, affiliation with trapping organizations and to estimate harvest levels of the state's furbearers. Last year, the survey was conducted in a mixed-mode manner where licensed trappers that provided an email address were provided a link to an online survey and those without an email address were sent a hard copy of the survey through the mail. Each trapper had the option to reply by either method, but were requested to submit only one response (i.e., they could submit their response either by mail or through the online survey, but not both).

A total 331 usable responses were returned by the April 30 deadline (187 via the online survey and 144 via mail), which was less than hoped for considering there were 1,367 licensed trappers contacted. It seems that while the number of licensed trappers is increasing, the survey response rate is decreasing (24.2% for the 2015

survey). Keep in mind that not every licensed trapper actively traps, so the following results of the 2015 survey were based only on the 216 active respondents.

Species	Total # Survey Respondents	Est. # of Active Trappers	Avg. Experience (years)	Avg. days active	Est. Total Trap-nights	Reported or Estimated Harvest	Avg. Pelt Price (\$US)	Est. Value (\$US)
Beaver	56	236	7.2	17.3	18,499	<b>660</b>	\$ 13.19	\$ 8,705
Coyote	64	269	5.1	40.4	383,588	<b>197</b>	\$ 12.63	\$ 2,488
Gray fox	25	105	13.5	51.0	266,446	<i>181</i>	\$ 15.83	\$ 2,864
Mink	51	215	13.6	30.2	96,334	<i>963</i>	\$ 8.66	\$ 8,343
Muskrat	104	437	24.1	21.9	234,764	<i>17,098</i>	\$ 4.93	\$ 84,325
Nutria	0	0				<i>0</i>		
Opossum	12	50	20.1	38.3	40,619	<i>1,148</i>	\$ 1.83	\$ 2,105
Raccoon	121	509	16.4	33.0	379,064	<i>7,096</i>	\$ 6.42	\$ 49,429
Red fox	134	564	13.1	41.5	869,943	<i>9,068</i>	\$ 14.14	\$ 120,010
River otter	25	105	4.6	121.5	3,286	<b>45</b>	\$ 34.00	\$ 1,530
Skunk	7	29	11.3	37.7	36,800	<i>248</i>	\$ 1.50	\$ 372
Weasel	4	17	0.3	6.3	580	<i>3</i>	No data	
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>21.0</b>		<b>2,329,922</b>	<b><i>36,708</i></b>		<b>\$ 280,171</b>

### Recent Changes in Beaver / Otter Permits

Beaver permit quotas were last adjusted for the 2013-14 trapping season by adding 14 permits in Zones 2, 6, 7, 25, 28, 29 and 30 to address increased complaint levels. Here's a look at the harvests reported during recent recreational beaver trapping seasons (not including site-specific or damage permit harvests):

Beaver Zone	Old Quota	2012 Harvest	2013 Harvest	Current Quota	2014 Harvest	2015 Harvest
1	8	32	47	No change	17	23
2	16	53	43	17	48	27
3	9	47	40	No change	30	41
4	7	26	31	No change	22	27
5	12	56	49	No change	44	26
6	20	95	96	22	78	61
7	9	37	36	10	44	41
8	8	37	21	No change	19	17
9	7	26	35	No change	30	31
10	8	30	38	No change	8	33
11	6	8	6	No change	10	10
12	3	0	4	No change	10	10
13	7	12	2	No change	1	8
14	2	0	0	No change	0	8
15	2	0	9	No change	16	2
16	6	17	6	No change	20	11
17	5	3	6	No change	3	13
18	3	2	0	No change	0	1
19	3	16	8	No change	8	14
20	7	19	12	No change	13	8
21	1	8	8	No change	0	4
22	1	2	8	No change	0	0
23	1	8	0	No change	0	1
24	3	8	8	No change	1	14
25	5	24	24	6	33	28
Beaver Zone	Old Quota	2012 Harvest	2013 Harvest	Current Quota	2014 Harvest	2015 Harvest

26	3	10	19	No change	13	9
27	2	1	5	No change	1	3
28	8	31	28	11	42	54
29	8	35	40	12	19	57
30	6	24	8	8	14	17
State	186	667	627	200	544	599

These changes enabled the Division to more effectively address beaver complaints, while increasing the recreational beaver take in some of the affected zones but had no negative result in the statewide beaver harvest. Harvest differences are more likely attributed to those lucky enough to receive a permit and weather conditions during respective seasons.

At the same time, the Division reallocated river otter trapping permits statewide and increased the number of permits from 106 to 115 in order to initiate otter trapping in Zones 21-25, 28 and 29 where trapping was not authorized. The otter population in each zone was estimated based on scientific research conducted in other states, and the permit quotas were evaluated based on the estimated population. We found that permit quotas were generally high in northern zones where populations were considered low, and permit quotas were low in southern zones where populations were considered higher (the statewide estimate is about 930 otters). Quotas were reallocated in each zone to affect a 5-10% harvest of each zone's estimated otter population. Here's a look at recent otter harvests by zone:

Otter Zone	Old Quota	2012 Harvest	2013 Harvest	Current Quota	2014 Harvest	2015 Harvest
1	7	0	3	2	1	1
2	7	1	2	3	1	0
3	2	2	1	No change	2	1
4	3	1	1	2	1	0
5	2	0	0	3	2	0
6	9	2	4	4	2	2
7	3	0	1	No change	1	1
8	6	3	3	7	0	1
9	3	1	0	4	0	1
10	4	1	3	2	0	2
11	5	2	4	No change	2	1
12	2	0	0	No change	1	1
13	14	10	10	7	5	6
14	7	2	3	6	3	4
15	12	3	7	15	4	6
16	4	1	3	No change	2	1
17	2	1	0	No change	1	2
18	5	4	4	No change	2	3
19	1	1	0	3	0	2
20	1	0	1	3	1	0
21	Closed	0	0	1	0	1
22	Closed	0	0	1	0	1
23	Closed	0	0	1	1	1
24	Closed	0	0	3	0	0
25	Closed	0	0	3	2	2
26	1	0	1	3	1	0
27	1	0	0	2	0	1
28	Closed	0	0	5	2	1
29	Closed	0	0	3	1	0
30	5	2	1	9	5	3
State	106	37	52	115	43	45

These changes had their desired affect by reducing otter harvests where permit quotas were reduced (Zones 1, 2, 4, 6, 10, 13 and 14), keeping otter harvests stable with no quota changes (Zones 3, 7, 11, 12 and 16-18), allowing for a slight harvest increase where quotas were increased (Zones 5, 8, 9, 15, 19, 20, 26, 27 and 30), and allowed for a harvest in new zones previously closed to trapping (Zones 21-25, 28 and 29). At the same time, these changes generally moderated the range in the annual statewide harvest (about 5% of the estimated population).

### Beaver and Otter Check-in

Successful beaver and otter trappers are reminded that the check-in date to register your pelts is Saturday, 20 February at the usual locations (Assunpink, Clinton, Flatbrook, Tuckahoe and Winslow WMA as well as the Newfoundland Fire Department on Rt. 23. A few things to remember:

- Check station operation hours are 9:00 AM to Noon
- Have your data forms completed and remember to bring them – this will speed things along.
- If you harvested an otter, remember to bring the carcass.
- If you can't get to the check-in station personally, it's OK to have a friend check your pelts **provided** they have all necessary paperwork (completed data form, transportation tags), pelts and otter carcass.
- If you can't get to the check-in station personally and can't find someone else to do so for you, please call Wildlife Technician Joe Garris at the Northern Region Office (908) 735-7040 or on his cell phone (609) 306-4545 to make alternate arrangements. Alternate arrangements should be scheduled by Friday, 12 February!



Please Remember to Report Your Coyotes!

Coyotes harvested by any method must be reported to a New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement office within 24 hours.

Regional NJ Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Office phone numbers:

Northern Region Office	908-735-8240
Central Region Office	609-259-2120
Southern Region Office	856-629-0555



Please report any fisher or bobcat captures  
Call: **877-WARNDEP (877-927-6337)**

