



New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter Winter 2014-15

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



Deadlines and Dates to Remember-

Beaver and Otter Trapping Season Dates
Dec. 26 – Feb. 9 (Jan. 1 – Feb. 9 on some WMAs)

Coyote and Fox Special Permit Season Dates
January 1 thru March 15, 2015

Beaver/Otter Check Station date: February 21, 2015 (9am until 12 Noon)
Assunpink WMA, Clinton WMA, Flatbrook WMA, Tuckahoe WMA, Winslow WMA & Newfoundland FC
NJTA Fur Auction at Space Farms, Beemerville NJ, is scheduled for March 22, 2015. Furs will be collected on Saturday, March 21.

NJFH spring fur collection and meeting is tentatively set for March 28, 2015 at Assunpink WMA. Check www.njfurharvesters.org for further information

TAKE A KID TRAPPING!!



Proposed Amendments to the 2014-15 New Jersey Game Code affecting Trapping and Furbearers

At their July 2014 meeting, the NJ Fish and Game Council proposed the changes of interest to trappers. Please note that these are merely proposals and may not be implemented (depending on comments received). Proposals will be formally published in the *NJ Registrar* in early 2015 followed by a 60-day comment period, public hearing and another 60-day comment period before they are voted on in July 2015. Amendments will take effect September 2015.

- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.6 (Bobcat) – Amendment is proposed to require trappers to report an incidentally-caught bobcat within 24 hours.** Bobcats are a game species with a closed season and are a State-listed endangered species. Because bobcats are an elusive species and hard to study, data are limited. Requiring trappers to report their incidental catches will add to the data set to better enable the Division to manage this species.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.8 (mink, muskrat, nutria), 7:25-5.9 (beaver) and 7:25-5.10 (river otter) – Amendment is proposed to increase trapping opportunity for mink, muskrat and nutria, beaver and river otter on all WMAs prior to January 1.** This proposal would add 31-46 additional days for mink, muskrat & nutria and 6 additional days for beaver & otter for areas stocked with pheasants. Trapping on Pheasant and Quail Stamp Designated Areas is prohibited prior to January 1 to minimize conflicts between user groups (trappers and hunters with dogs). Since mink, muskrat, nutria, beaver and river otter are primarily semi-aquatic furbearing animals; the potential for user group conflict is minimal.

- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.9 (Beaver) – Amendment is proposed to allow permittee agent(s) to obtain a damage beaver permit provided that they first applied for a special beaver trapping permit.** The majority of landowners making application for a damage beaver permit are not licensed trappers themselves and often employ the services of licensed trappers as their agents; therefore “permittee” is proposed to be amended to “trapper”. Currently, the first sentence reads, “For Beaver Damage Control Permits issued during the dates of the annual beaver trapping season, the permittee must have first applied for a special permit for the current beaver trapping season”. The proposal is to correct the problem that most permittees (i.e., landowners) probably aren’t licensed trappers and would require agent(s) to remove nuisance beaver.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.11 and 7:25-5.19 (coyote) – Amendment is proposed to add coyote harvest reports via the Automated Harvest Report System (AHRS) for coyotes taken by farmers, trappers and hunters.** Language is also added to require famers and their agents who trap depredating coyotes to report these animals through the AHRS. Using the AHRS to replace the mandatory call-in reporting system now in use will consolidate coyote data, be more efficient for biologists, and will be convenient for farmers, trappers and hunters. Coyotes will be the third species on the AHRS; deer has been on the system since 2012 and there is a proposal to add turkey as well.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.12 (General Trapping) – Amendment is proposed to require all live capture cable restraints to include a relaxing-type lock, except when submerged underwater or when set for mink, muskrat, nutria or weasel.** Current live capture cable restraint regulations are silent regarding cable lock systems, but use of relaxing locks are promoted in agency Trapper Education classes and by both statewide trapping organizations to enhance the welfare of captured animals.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.12 (General Trapping) – Amendment is proposed to change cable restraint regulations for taking weasels.** Current cable restraints regulations for weasel trapping require systems to have a deer stop six inches from the end to restrict loop closure to no less than six inches in circumference which effectively negates the trappers’ ability to capture weasels with cable restraints. Amendments are proposed to extend mink, muskrat and nutria cable restraint regulations to also include weasel (i.e., smaller cable diameters, 4” loop opening, 7” height to top of loop and no deer stop).
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.12 (General Trapping) - Amendment is proposed to allow for the use of enclosed foothold traps.** There have been many innovations in the design of restraining devices for use in trapping since steel-jawed leghold traps were prohibited in New Jersey. Several commercially available devices, known as enclosed foothold traps but more commonly referred to as species-specific traps, have been specifically designed to capture species such as raccoon and opossum (which possess a degree of manual dexterity) while avoiding the capture of non-target animals (such as domestic dogs and cats). Enclosed foothold traps are a live-restraint trap which does not result in the death of the captured animal, or in the numbing effect of steel-jawed leghold traps. All types of traps used on land to hold live animals were evaluated against five performance criteria: animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and safety. Enclosed foothold type traps have been extensively studied under the Best Management Practices process and their performance in capturing opossums and raccoons equal or exceed those of steel-jaw leghold type traps currently prohibited by Section 2 of the Act. They capture higher numbers of target species and are more selective than cage traps. Enclosed foothold type traps have undergone rigorous testing through the BMP process and have been scientifically proven based on internationally agreed standards to measurably reduce trauma to captured animals compared to unmodified steel-jaw leghold traps.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.12 (General Trapping) and 7:25-5.23 (Firearms and Missiles) – Amendments are proposed to allow the use of air guns to dispatch legally trapped furbearing animals other than muskrat.** Properly licensed trappers, raccoon and opossum hunters and woodchuck hunters may already possess and use .22 caliber rifles for the dispatch of trapped animals. Air guns were added to legal weapons for taking squirrel, rabbits and hares in the 2013-14 Game Code. Air guns are safer at

point-blank range (less chance of ricochet) and quieter than .22 caliber rifles. *Note: Noise reduction systems (NRS) are illegal in New Jersey!*

- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.19 (Coyote and fox hunting) – Amendment is proposed to allow for the harvest of foxes with center-fire or rim-fire rifles during the special permit season in 5.19(i).** This is a correction of an omission from prior Game Codes. Foxes are allowed to be taken during this season but were omitted in the sentence clause which describes what weaponry can be used.
- **N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.19 (Coyote and fox hunting) – Amendment is proposed to allow use of 20-gauge shotguns for coyote and fox hunting during the special coyote and fox season.** Twenty-gauge shotguns are allowed and effective for deer hunting and legal for use during the coyote and fox small game firearm season. The change may encourage young hunters and women to participate, as these caliber shotguns are lighter and have less recoil. Maximum shot size is proposed to be standardized at #3 Buck.



Fur Market Forecast for the 2014-15 New Jersey Trapping Seasons

As always, trappers should try to make sure they trap when fur is at its most prime. 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 may be nearly valueless! It's a fact that trapping when fur is not yet prime is a waste of the fur resource. *A fur primeness chart is on the following page.*

As always, fur handling skills are very important and the trappers who put the time in and do the best job putting up their fur will definitely see it in their fur check. Good fur handling can offset lack of primeness to some degree but by trapping prime fur and perfecting your fur handling skills you'll soon see the fruits of your labors in a bigger fur check.

Remember: *Prime fur + well-handled fur = maximum \$ in the fur check!*

Expectations should not be for the prices of the last few years. But, predictions (*Trapper's Post, Fur, Fish and Game* and *Trapper and Predator Caller*) suggest that fur prices may be all over the board and some sources predict the price averages will be somewhat decreased (*Trapper's Post*). Expect pelt grading to be tougher this year. Again, poor and un-prime fur may be a waste of the trapper's efforts as stated above. Remember what we hear from most fellow trappers is the high price they hear about or the price they get for their *best* pelts. Those prices really are not what you should expect for every pelt sold. But since no one knows for certain, let's have fun and hope for the best.

Muskrat: The demand is still there for this species, especially from China and South Korea, but trappers probably should not expect a \$10 price for other than the very best muskrats this year. Predicted average prices are expected in the neighborhood of \$8 to \$9 range.

The 2013-14 NJ average price for muskrats was \$8.36; the five year average for NJ muskrat pelts is \$7.35.

Raccoon: Well-handled prime pelts will always bring the most at the auction/sale. It's expected that we'll see prices in the \$12 to \$15 to possibly as high as the \$16 to \$18 range. Of course this is only for the best heavy pelts. Only the best prime pelts are likely to have an active market with little interest in less prime pelts.

The 2013-14 NJ average price for raccoon was \$11.04; the five year average for NJ raccoon pelts is \$11.40.

Red Fox: The trapper who takes the time to make sure his fur is handled properly will get the best prices. The best, heavy furred dark reds might bring \$26 to \$28. This is a species that *Fur, Fish and Game* predicts might even make it to the \$30 to \$40 range for the very best prime pelts. Poorer, flat pelts will probably bring in the \$15 to \$20 range. As with all species primeness of the pelt is very important.

The 2013-14 NJ average price for red fox was \$24.40; the five year average for NJ red fox pelts is \$21.68;

Gray Fox: Prices are predicted to be in the \$15 to \$20 range for the best pelts.

CITES

Successful New Jersey river otter trappers may wonder why Division of Fish and Wildlife personnel at the beaver and otter check station snap a plastic CITES seal on their otter pelt each February. Most trappers probably don't have any idea what CITES is or what the organization does. Here's what CITES is and what it means to furbearers and endangered species. For additional information about CITES please check at: <http://www.cites.org/>

CITES is an acronym for the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*, an international agreement between the world's many countries. The purpose of CITES is to ensure that the international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten the future survival of those species. Three Appendixes are presently in place to determine the extent of how animals and plants are ranked.



- **Appendix I:** This appendix lists animal and plant species that are the most threatened with extinction and international trade of these species is prohibited for non-commercial purposes, such as for scientific research.
- **Appendix II:** This appendix lists species that may not now be threatened with extinction but that may become so unless the trade in these species is closely monitored and regulated. This appendix includes "look-alike species". "Look-alike" species are animals or plants whose specimens look very much like those species listed for conservation reasons. A good example of a "look-alike species" would be the North American river otter as compared to the European river otter. International trade in Appendix II species may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate. No import permit is necessary for these species under CITES (although a permit is needed in some countries that have taken stricter measures than CITES requires). A plastic CITES seal must be placed on any Appendix II furbearer pelt before it leaves the country of origin.
- **Appendix III:** Is a list of species included at the request of a country or government that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International trade in specimens of species listed in Appendix III is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate specific permits or certificates.



Black bear, bobcat and river otter are the only CITES Appendix II species found in New Jersey. State regulations require that all otter pelts be affixed with a CITES seal no later than 20 days after the open trapping season ends. There is no open hunting or trapping season for bobcats in New Jersey where they are currently listed as "State Endangered", but bobcat legally harvested from other states or Canadian provinces may be possessed or sold provided that the pelts are affixed with a CITES seal from the state/province of origin. *Any parts* of black bears that are harvested or that are otherwise obtained in New Jersey, including meat, claws or skull, **may not be sold in any form** (N.J.S.A. 23.4-27).

Furbearer Facts:

Beaver, Muskrat or Nutria?

Here are some tips about how to identify these species. The Division of Fish and Wildlife frequently receives pictures or questions regarding which of these animals they may have observed. Beavers and muskrats are native species and are found throughout the State of New Jersey. Many times beaver and muskrat may be found in the same pond/stream habitat. Nutria, an invasive exotic species native to South America, *may* exist in New Jersey but the Division of Fish and Wildlife has no documentable evidence that they are present. The only

known nutria harvest in New Jersey occurred in the mid-1980s when two were trapped from the Burlington County portion of the Delaware River. No harvests have since been reported.

American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

Characteristics

- **Size:** much larger than either the muskrat or nutria.
- **Tail:** Broad *horizontally flattened* and almost hairless.
- **Length:** Is between 36 and 60 inches (including tail).
- **Weight:** Maximum between 30 and 50 pounds but can weigh 70 pounds.
- **Fur color:** Appears reddish brown to black.
- **Feet:** Each foot has five toes, the hind feet have webbing, but the front feet do not.



If it's a beaver you'll notice:

- Obvious girdled or felled trees, limbs and branches with bark removed in immediate area of pond/stream where the animal was sighted.
- Dams and lodges made from woody limbs and mud.
- Primary dam-building time is August through October thus dam building and tree cutting is very evident at this time.
- Slides or slick trails leading to and from water where the animals enter and leave water.



Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

Characteristics

- **Size:** Much smaller than a beaver, but smaller than nutria.
- **Tail:** Long, rat-like tail that is *flattened vertically*.
- **Length:** About 16 to 25 inches long (including tail).
- **Weight:** Can reach a maximum of four pounds.
- **Fur color:** Dense, grayish under fur overlaid by long, glossy guard hairs that vary in color from dark brown to yellowish brown; guard hairs are long and coarse on the back and finer on the side and the belly



If it's a muskrat you'll notice:

- Lodges /huts which are much smaller than beaver lodges and built from marsh vegetation, and **not constructed of limbs, mud and sticks**.
- The muskrat's food consists almost entirely of aquatic and semi aquatic vegetation including grasses, rushes, sedges, cattails, etc. Again, no cut sticks or limbs.



Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*)

The Nutria is a highly invasive, exotic rodent species native to South America.

Characteristics

- **Size:** Much smaller than the beaver; much larger than the muskrat.
- **Tail:** is *hairy and round* (not compressed from side to side like a muskrat or flattened horizontally like a beaver). Pointed at the tip.
- **Length:** About 30 to 40 inches long (including tail).
- **Weight:** Maximum of 20 pounds.



- **Feet:** Hind feet are webbed.
- **Fur color:** The dense grayish underfur is overlaid by long, glossy guard hairs that vary in color from dark brown to yellowish brown.
- **Appearance:** Muzzle is covered by white coarse hair. Long whiskers very evident.
 - Hind legs are much longer than the front legs, giving them a hunched appearance when on land
 - Large incisors are yellow to orange-red.

If it's nutria you may notice:

- Floating platforms up to three feet high that they make from aquatic vegetation
- Burrows in vegetated banks near waterways and collapsing banks and road beds.
- **No cut trees, sticks or limbs in evidence.**

For additional information about Nutria as an invasive species click on the link below.

[Worldwide Distribution, Spread of, and Efforts to Eradicate the Nutria \(*Myocastor coypus*\)](#)



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



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