New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter

Fall 2018

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

Important Upcoming Dates:

- **Trapper Education courses are scheduled. Call 877-2-HUNT NJ for registration and further information.**
  September 22 and 23, Hackettstown Fish Hatchery
  October 20 and 21, Hackettstown Fish Hatchery
  October 13 and 14, Tuckahoe WMA, Lenape Farms
  October 25 (evening) and October 28, Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst
- **October 1-31 – Application period for beaver and otter permits**
- **Sunday October 7 – New Jersey Trappers Association annual convention at Space Farms**
- **Sunday November 4 – New Jersey Fur Harvesters annual convention at Atsion Recreation Area.**
- **Black Bear, Fall Turkey and Deer Permits now available.**

Remember:

- To trap 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 the certificate while trapping.
- Any person must be at least 12 years of age in order to obtain a trapping license.
- **TAKE A KID TRAPPING!**

In This Issue:

Fur Market Forecast

We know this is very much a repeat of what we've been hearing for the past several years and as in the past it isn't going to make any trappers happy. However, what was important last year still holds for this year. New Jersey trappers targeting raccoon, foxes, opossum, muskrat, mink, beaver or otter should expect another tough outlook for fur prices in 2018-19.

What has been said on these pages for the last few years still stands: in tough times, **only the best furs sell at higher prices**. Be very selective on what you spend your time targeting, harvesting and handling. Wait until fur is fully prime before even thinking about hanging a cable restraint, setting a body-gripping trap or opening the cage trap door. Then take the time to handle your fur properly – any fur with any kind of damage will be of little value in the current market.

Remember that the prices listed below are averages.

In New Jersey we CAN NOT expect prices like what western bobcats and coyotes are bringing and NJ trappers can only wish that it was so. We don't have a season for bobcats, but a good Eastern coyote pelt could bring $30 or more.

The effort required to put up a beaver pelt is time consuming. With beavers, the work starts as soon as you get out of the truck! Pelt prices for beaver should be about what we've seen in the last few years: $10 to $15 for a good blanket.

Raccoon, like beaver take more effort to put up than other pelts. Expect the usual $5 to $10 for a good, big heavy pelt.

Foxes, both red and gray, expect more of the same as last year; around $15-20 for a good one.

Muskrat, expect around $3-4.

Otter, maybe $30-40.

The availability of ranch mink drives the mink market. It's much easier to buy ranch mink pelts that are identical for the garment industry. Even the prices for ranch mink have dropped and a good portion of the ranch pelts remain unsold. It's hard for the wild mink to compete. Expect possible $8-10 for your best pelts.

Skunk, expect possible $6 to $8 for a good one.

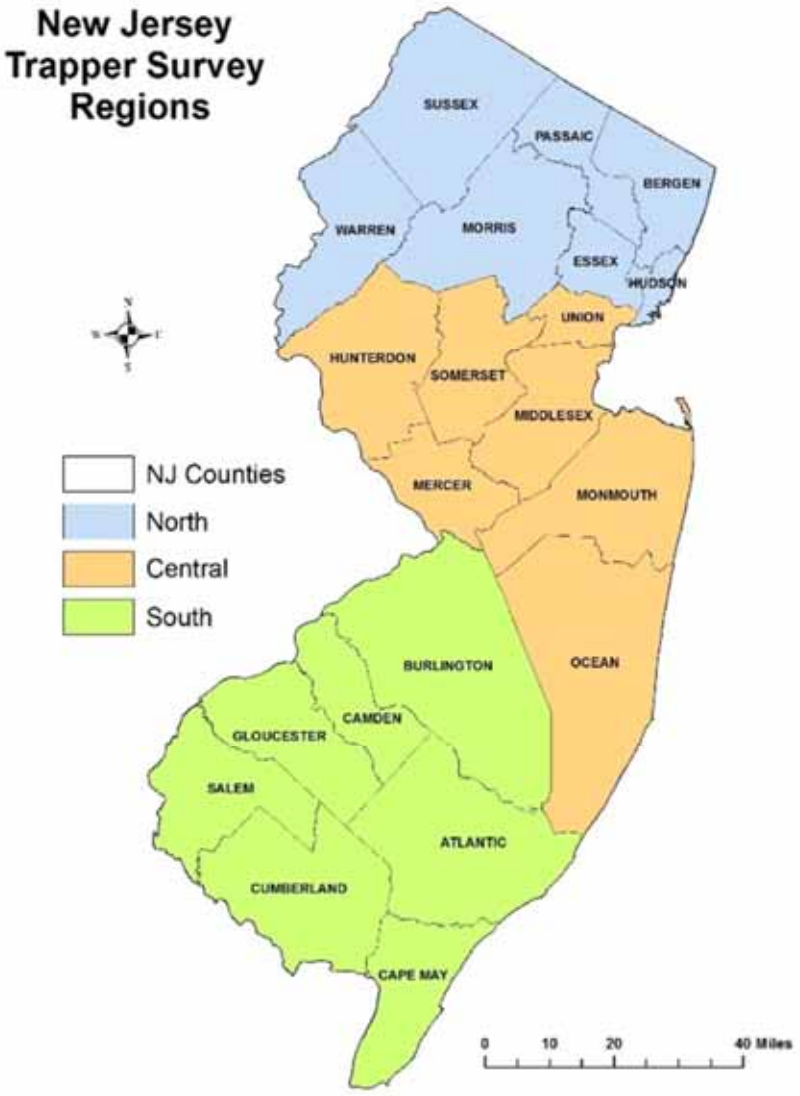
Opossum, expect in the neighborhood of $2.

2017-18 Trapper Harvest Survey Results

Harvest by Region

Region	Mink	Muskrat	Gray fox	Red fox	Opossum	Raccoon	Skunk	Weasel	Beaver	Otter	Coyote	Total
North	27%	13%	9%	23%	13%	12%	9%	0%	45%	27%	60%	**17%**
Central	32%	8%	6%	49%	14%	27%	19%	0%	22%	16%	14%	**22%**
South	41%	78%	40%	5%	45%	55%	66%	100%	33%	57%	26%	**54%**
Unknown	0%	1%	46%	24%	29%	7%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	**7%**
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**100%**

North: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties (26% of resident trappers)
Central: Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset and Union counties (29% of resident trappers)
South: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland Gloucester and Salem counties (45% of resident trappers)



New Jersey Trapper Harvest by County and Species, 2017-18

County	Estimated Harvest								Reported Harvest			Total Harvest
	Mink	*Muskrat*	*Gray fox*	*Red fox*	*Opossum*	*Raccoon*	*Skunk*	*Weasel*	*Beaver*	*Otter*	*Coyote*	
Atlantic	22	503	6	6	63	187	8	-	40	8	13	855
Bergen	-	96	-	42	-	19	-	-	3	-	12	172
Burlington	11	154	-	33	8	107	16	-	71	4	13	418
Camden	5	3	-	-	-	55	3	-	21	1	1	86
Cape May	11	124	-	8	-	154	22	-	-	1	9	329
Cumberland	44	3,101	11	36	25	343	14	3	17	13	9	3,616
Essex	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	8
Gloucester	11	821	22	94	44	494	3	-	4	-	7	1,501
Hudson	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hunterdon	63	113	-	731	16	288	3	-	6	1	16	1,237
Mercer	16	30	-	6	-	93	-	-	28	-	-	174
Middlesex	3	80	-	232	33	135	3	-	26	1	5	517
Monmouth	-	143	-	147	5	346	14	-	38	4	-	697
Morris	33	190	3	418	-	102	3	-	90	4	18	860
Ocean	16	82	6	97	5	242	5	-	36	1	3	494
Passaic	19	335	-	44	3	30	-	-	35	3	2	472
Salem	231	2,508	-	-	69	978	19	-	51	2	-	3,857
Somerset	168	319	-	656	3	38	-	-	3	1	4	1,191
Sussex	36	519	3	66	44	181	8	-	126	5	7	996
Union	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Warren	132	63	3	299	14	154	-	-	18	2	79	763
Unknown	3	96	44	908	135	277	8	-	-	-	-	1,471
Total	824	9,279	97	3,822	467	4,233	129	3	**613**	**51**	**198**	19,712

Number of Trappers, Trapper Effort and Estimated Value, 2017-18

Species	# Active Respondents	Estimated # Trappers	Estimated # Trap-Nights	Average Pelt Price	Estimated Value ($ US)	Catch / 100 Trap-Nights	# Released	Total Capture
Beaver	72	215	9409	$ 9.71	$ 5,951	7	0	613
Otter	47	149	2962	$ 34.67	$ 1,768	2	0	51
Mink	53	146	17470	$ 8.12	$ 6,693	5	11	835
Muskrat	76	209	94572	$ 2.86	$ 26,537	10	5	9284
Nutria	0	0	0	0		0	0	0
Canine	89	244	385953					
Coyote				$ 33.40	$ 6,612	0	6	204
Gray fox				$ 23.25	$ 2,252	0	6	102
Red fox				$ 10.68	$ 40,831	1	144	3966
Opossum	23	63	11907	$ 1.17	$ 546	4	286	753
Raccoon	111	305	75493	$ 6.73	$ 28,478	6	810	5043
Skunk	8	22	4409	$ 8.97	$ 1,157	3	15	144
Weasel	2	5	242	$ 3.27	$ 9	1	0	3
					$ 120,835			

Furbearer Fun Fact:
The Weasels of New Jersey

Two species of weasel are native to New Jersey- the long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*) and the short-tailed weasel (*Mustela erminea*). These are two of the three species of weasel in North America. The least weasel, (*Mustela nivalis*) is not found in New Jersey. These small carnivores are known for their hunting ability and their fearlessness in the face of man and animals much larger than themselves is legendary.

Long-tailed weasels have the largest distribution of any mustelid in the Western Hemisphere, and is only found in the Western Hemisphere. The short-tailed weasel occurs throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, from Greenland and the Canadian and Siberian Arctic islands.

Both resident weasel species can be harvested by licensed trappers during the New Jersey trapping season that runs from November 15 through March 15. Weasel pelts rarely show up in any New Jersey fur sales.

The Long-tailed Weasel

The long-tailed weasel is the largest and has the longest tail of any species of North American weasel. The fur of the long-tailed weasel is short, soft and is a chocolate brown on the sides and back with a light-colored neck and light-colored belly tinged with yellow; the tail is tipped with black.

In winter, the long-tailed weasel's pelt color changes to completely white except for a black tip on the tail. In areas where it rarely snows, such as in the southern United States, Mexico, and Central America, the long-tailed weasel will have a brown winter coat. In intermediate areas including New Jersey, the winter coat may be either brown or white. Data from Pennsylvania shows that about 80% of long-tailed weasels remain brown during the winter. Long-tailed weasels molt during fall and spring each year.

The long-tailed weasel can be distinguished from the short-tailed weasel by its long tail which is more than 44% the length of the head and body, hence the name- Long-tailed weasel. Long-tailed weasels have a total length of about 11 to 14 inches for females and 13 to 16.5 inches for males. Males weigh 5.6 to16 ounces; females are smaller, 3 to 9 ounces. As with other members of the Mustelidae family, males tend to be significantly larger than females. Weights and lengths at the low end of the scale generally are females and the heavier and larger end is for males. Overall pelt coloration is brown with a yellowish-white neck and belly. In northern New Jersey long-tailed weasel molt in the fall and their pelage might become totally white and remain that color until they molt again to brown in the spring. In areas of New Jersey and farther south the long-tailed weasel might remain brown throughout the year.

Long-tailed weasels mate in the mid-summer months. After breeding, implantation is delayed, and the egg does not begin to develop until March. The total gestation time is about 280 days. Young are born from late April to early May, and the average litter size is six. At birth, a young weasel may weigh about 3 grams. Newborn long-tailed weasels are pink with wrinkled skin and have white fur. In fourteen days, their white hair begins to thicken, and size differences make it easy to tell the males from females. Weasels are weaned at about 5 weeks and can by then eat food brought back to the nest by their mother. They learn how to hunt and kill prey from the mother and by about 2 months of age they can kill prey on their own. Females will mate during their first summer, but males will not breed until the following spring.

Generally, most long-tailed weasels do not survive much longer than a year in the wild with average lifespan about 1 to 1.5 years. However, weasels have been known to live to 7 years of age.

A male long-tailed weasel may have a home range of between 25 to 60 acres and home range size can change, as it is dependent on food availability. A home range for a female is usually smaller and is generally included within a male's home range. Males may live in an area for their entire lifespan, but females frequently disperse from their natal area before establishing home ranges.

Long-tailed weasel habitats range from agricultural fields to small woodlands to suburban areas. They are not found in thick, dense forests or desert areas. Areas near water seem to be preferred. Long-tailed weasels prey mainly on small rodents, including voles, mice and chipmunks. Male long-tailed weasels will take larger prey than females up to the size of and including cottontails. The weasel's small bodies fit readily into the burrows of their prey while hunting. The eggs of ground nesting birds and snakes may also be taken. Small birds make up a relatively small part of their diet. While long-tailed weasels can be active during daylight hours, they hunt mainly at night.

Male, (left) and Female (right), Long-tailed weasels (Tyler Kinney photos)

Short-tailed Weasel

In the warm months the fur of the short-tailed weasel is reddish brown above and white below with white fur along and down the inner side of the hind leg. Tail length averages about 35% of the length of the head and body. And, like the long-tailed weasel, the tail has a black tip. In most areas the short-tailed weasel molts to white during winter, except for the black tip on its tail. In its white winter coat, the short-tail weasel is known as an ermine.

The short-tailed weasel males weigh 2.5 to 7.3 ounces and reach a total length of 7–13 inches, whereas females weigh 1 to 3 ounces and are 7.5–11 inches in length. The short-tailed weasel is not particularly common in New Jersey.

Short-tailed weasels mate in late spring to early summer. Like the long-tailed weasel, the young are born in April or May after an average gestation period of 280 days. This gestation period includes 8 to 9 months of developmental delay. The changes in photoperiod (longer days) beginning in March trigger the continuation of fetal development. Litter size ranges from 3 to 18 offspring with an average somewhere between 4 and 9. The sex ratio is unequal (favoring males) and young are born blind and helpless. The young are covered with fine white hair, with a prominent dark mane of dense fur developing around the neck by about three weeks of age. The young grow fast and can hunt with their mother by two months of age. Although the females do not completely reach adult size until at least 6 weeks after birth, they are able to mate when they are 60 to 70 days old, often before they are weaned. Males do not grow to their full size nor do they breed until their second summer. Females normally rear the young without assistance. No long-lasting pair bond is formed between males and females.

In the wild, females may live through at least two breeding seasons. Males generally do not survive this long.

A male short-tailed weasel's home range may cover an area like the size of a male long-tailed weasel's home range. This is generally two to three times and sometimes up to five to six times the size of the female's home range area. The size of the home range is dependent on food availability. Data suggests that female short-tail weasels remain in or near their natal home range, unlike female long-tailed weasels. Young male short-tailed weasels will disperse from their natal range.

Short-tailed weasel's habitat preferences include riparian woodlands, marshes, shrubby fencerows, and open areas adjacent to forests or shrub borders. Short-tailed weasels hunt primarily during the night. These small predators specialize in taking small, warm-blooded vertebrates, preferably mammals of rabbit size and smaller. When these preferred prey species are scarce they will eat birds, eggs, frogs, fish, and insects. In severe climates, short-tailed weasels will hunt under snow and survive on small rodents. It is essential to the weasel's survival that they eat daily meals to meet their tremendous energy and heat production demands. Short-tailed weasels will cache leftovers from a meal as a way of dealing with these demands.

Weasel Identification tip:

- In summer, in the long-tailed weasel, ***body fur is a uniform dark brown, extending to and including the feet and toes.***
- The ***feet and toes of the short-tailed weasel stay white year around*** although the fur on the rest of the body turns brown in the warm months.

Wildlife Diseases: Trichinosis/Trichinellosis

What is it?

Trichinosis is caused by nematode (roundworm) parasites in the group known as Trichinella. The parasite produces the disease in man and many other domestic and wild animals. The disease is called Trichinellosis.

Trichinellosis is found globally and many varied species of Trichinella are associated with different geographic regions and different host species. Several Trichinella species are known to found in North America.

Nearly all mammals are susceptible to infection with this parasite, which encysts in the muscle tissue of the host and is then transmitted by *eating the raw or poorly cooked meat* of that infected animal. Humans can contract Trichinellosis by eating undercooked meat from many species of domestic and wild animals.

Although most mammals are susceptible to Trichinellosis it is mainly a disease of carnivores. Trichinella has been detected in bears (black, polar, grizzly, brown), coyotes, cougars, gray wolves, skunks, bobcats, raccoons, wolverines, fishers, lynxes, walruses, red foxes in North America. However, this parasite has also been found in many animals such as rodents, beavers, opossums, whales, crocodiles, and carnivorous birds.

Transmission

Trichinellosis is transmitted when carnivores and omnivores ingest meat of infected animals that have Trichinella larvae encysted within muscle cells. Once ingested, the larvae imbed themselves within the intestinal lining of the new host and develop into adults. The adult worms mate and the females release live larvae. The larvae migrate to muscle tissue and enter individual muscle cells where they grow, destroy the cells, and encase themselves within cysts. Some larvae end up in the intestines and are released in the feces; these larvae can then infect new hosts. Infective larvae encysted in muscle can survive freezing and can also survive for several weeks in decomposing carcasses.

Diagnosis

Trichinella larvae may be found by microscopic examination of muscle tissue. The tongue, the diaphragm, the muscles used for chewing, and the muscles between the ribs usually contain the most larvae. Antibody tests are also available that help with diagnosis.

Management/Prevention

It is not practical or realistic to try to control Trichinellosis in wildlife as its life cycle depends on natural predation and/or scavenging.

Trichinellosis was once much more common in domestic pigs, but control efforts have nearly eradicated the parasite in these animals, at least in North America.

Cooking to an internal temperature of 165° (Fahrenheit), or freezing at 5° for 20 days will kill Trichinella. Curing should follow approved government regulations.

Common sense precautions that will greatly reduce the risks of contracting the disease or parasites from wild animals:

- Wear plastic or rubber gloves when skinning or handling furbearers or scats;
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling animals;
- Avoid animals that are abnormally or that are obviously sick;
- Do not drink directly from streams or lakes;
- Cook all wild game thoroughly; and
- Inform your doctor of your wildlife related activities if an unusual illness should develop.

Treatment

Treatment of Trichinellosis is usually not attempted in animals.

In humans, Trichinosis usually isn't life threating and often gets better on its own, usually within a few months. However, fatigue, mild pain, weakness and diarrhea may linger for months or possibly even years. Symptomatic infections often respond readily to treatment with medication.

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Bobcat Hair Snare Study

The Division will be conducting the second winter of research for the 3-year study to obtain information regarding New Jersey bobcat population information. The purpose of the study is to conduct research on New Jersey's bobcat population to improve our understanding and management of the species. This research will allow the Division to obtain a reliable status assessment of bobcat density and occurrence and establish and enhance baseline information for future monitoring of the species. The study will benefit bobcats in New Jersey by providing Division staff with science-based, quantitative data to ensure sound and responsible management of bobcats, including protection of their habitats and enhancement of their travel corridors, in northern New Jersey.

Following are some preliminary results from the 2018 segment of the three-year study.

Cooperators:

- East Stroudsburg University (will determine species based on fur samples and conduct bobcat genetic analyses)
- NJ Div. Parks and Forestry (access to State Parks and Forests)

- NJ Trappers Association (39 volunteer trappers)
- Wallkill River NWR (access to federal refuge)
- Morris County Parks (access to county parks)

Findings:
75 trail cameras deployed for three months.

Total videos recorded……..……...37,462

Wildlife…….....17,761
Domestics…….……91
Hunters…….…27
Hikers…….....……...71
Other (study pers./ wind/snow)….....19,512

Number of Videos by species (number of individuals in parentheses)

Gray Squirrel	8,109	Flying Squirrel	118
Deer	4,134	Skunk	118
Rabbit	500	Red Squirrel	95
Mouse	447	Moth	46
Opossum	343	Black Squirrel	38
Chipmunk	308	Woodchuck	14
Wild Turkey	183 (233)	Porcupine	6
Raccoon	1,159	Fisher	14 (9)
Red Fox	625	Gray Fox	14
Bobcat	94 (56)	Mink	11
Coyote	77	Weasel	8
Bear	71		

- **400** hair samples collected from various species.
- ESU is using next generation sequencing to determine species.
- Bobcat samples will be further analyzed to determine individual DNA.

Bobcat Video Activity
94 Videos representing 56 individual bobcats (34 appearances at Hair Snare Cubbies and 22 appearances at Hair Snare Trees)

Next Steps:

Data analysis and population modeling

- Changes to protocol?
- Next survey period begins January 2019

New Jersey Bobcats and Fishers

Bobcats are still classified as endangered in New Jersey; they are distributed widely across the northern part of the state. 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 bobcat or fisher 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 under- stand the status of the species populations.

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

Or, call Joe Garris, (Division of Fish and Wildlife, cell phone) at: 609-306-4545

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 DIVISION OF
Fish and Wildlife

Managing your wildlife since 1892