



# New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter

Fall 2022

New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife  
Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Project



## Deadlines and Dates to Remember

### Beaver and Otter Deadlines

Application Period: October 1-31

Award Notification: **Begins November 1**

Claim Permit by: **11:59 PM November 28**

### Beaver and Otter Trapping Season Dates

Dec. 26 – Feb. 9 (Jan. 1 – Feb. 9 on some WMA)\*

Mandatory Pelt Registration: **Feb. 25 9am-noon**

## Please remember:

- **Successful beaver and/or otter applicants must claim their permit between November 1 and prior to 11:59 PM on Monday, November 28. Unclaimed permit availability will be posted on the website by late afternoon Tuesday, November 29.**
- **Unclaimed permits will be returned to the quota and made available for over-the-counter sale at participating license agents or online beginning at 10 AM on Wednesday, Nov 30.**

## Trapper Education classes will be held this fall at:

Tuckahoe WMA, Lenape Farms Section (Estell Manor, Atlantic County), September 17 and 18

Hackettstown Fish Hatchery (Hackettstown, Warren County), September 17 and 18

Jamesburg Field & Stream Club (Manchester, Ocean County), October 20 (evening) and October 23

Hackettstown Fish Hatchery (Hackettstown, Warren County), October 29 and 30

## 2022-23 Beaver and Otter Permit Application Information

### Applying for a Beaver and/or Otter Permit –

Apply in person by visiting any participating license agent or go online at <https://nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales> to log in to the Division's license sales website. You will be prompted to enter the necessary information. The website accepts most major credit cards and electronic checks as payment, using proven security technologies to ensure that your transaction is secure.

A non-refundable \$2.00 application fee will be charged for each permit you apply for. You must pay the remainder of the fee (\$15.00 for beaver and \$2.00 for otter) when claiming your permit(s). Unsuccessful applicants no longer need to wait for a refund since the only payment made was the non-refundable \$2.00 application fee. If paying via the Internet, applicants will receive their permits by mail (additional shipping charges apply).

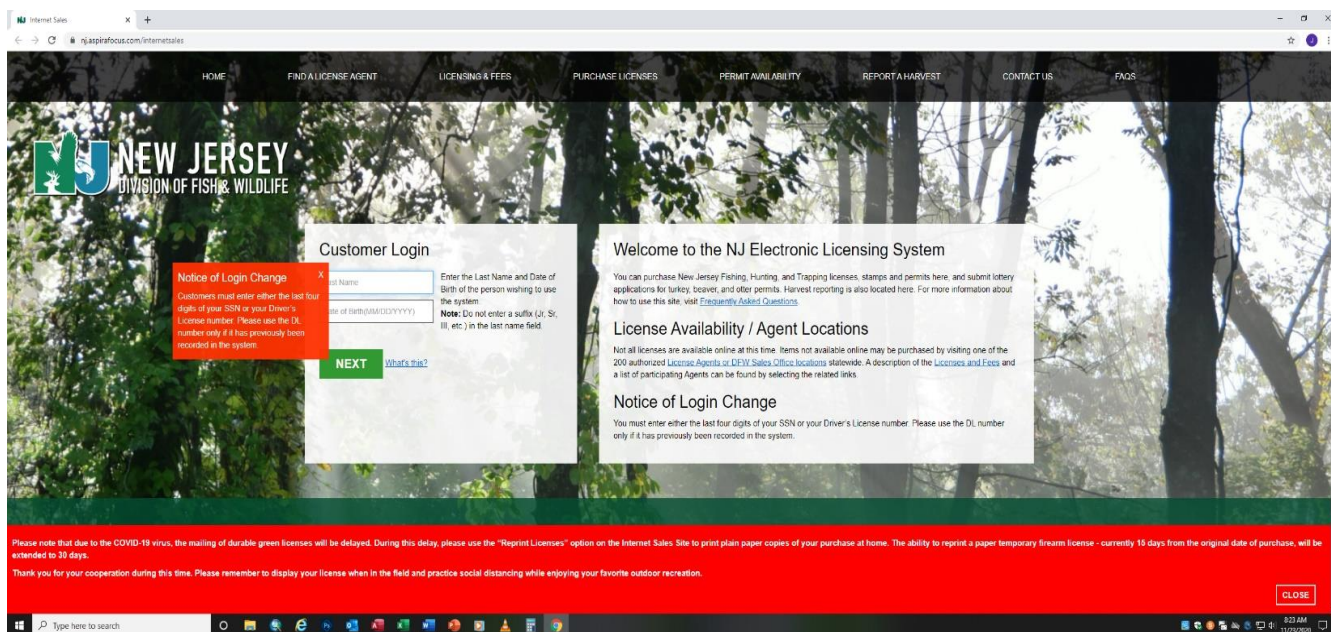
**Permits awarded via the lottery system may be claimed at participating license agents. Leftover and unclaimed permits returned to the quota will be made available for over-the-counter sale at license agents or online beginning 10 AM WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30.**

## 2022-23 Automated Harvest Reporting for Beaver or Otter

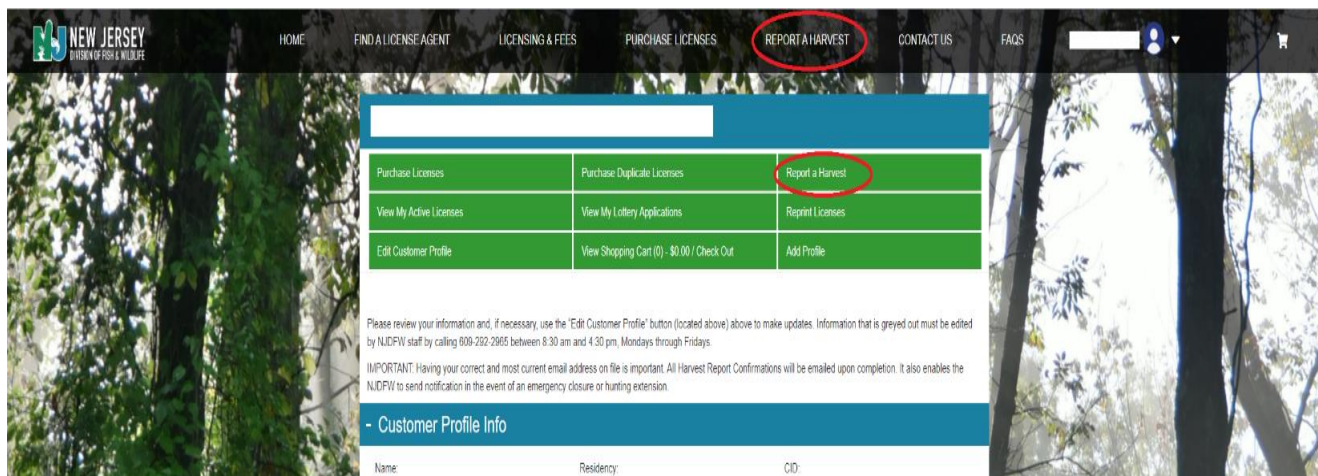
Reporting of harvested beaver and river otter via telephone or online was added to the AHRS system last year. This gives the Division real-time harvest information on which to base current management decisions on whether the season needs to be extended. **It will NOT replace the mandatory pelt registration.**

**To file an online report for a beaver or otter harvested during the trapping season please follow the instructions below.**

1. On your computer or smartphone go to <https://nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales>
2. Log in as directed. The login screen looks like the view below.



3. Once logged in you will see your Profile screen. It will look like the first image on the following page.
4. In several locations on the menus on your Profile screen you will see REPORT A HARVEST (circled in red on following page).
5. Click on/select REPORT A HARVEST at either location.





6. The next screen that will appear after selecting REPORT A HARVEST will look like the one below.
7. The list of your Beaver and/or Otter Transportation Tag Harvest Numbers will appear as in the view, below. **Those Harvest Numbers will be called Document #s on the reporting menu.**

8. To report a beaver harvest, choose the Document # as in the view (above) that corresponds to Harvest Number that is printed on the Beaver or Otter Transportation that you have affixed to your beaver or otter carcass/pelt.
9. Choose the SUBMIT (green button) to the left of the Document # that matches the Harvest Number on the Beaver Transportation Tag on the beaver you need to report.
10. A menu box will appear as in the view below. In the menu, (circled in red, below), simply choose and follow the prompts and choices as indicated choosing appropriate answers. When completed click on the SUBMIT button at the bottom of that page. You be issued a HARVEST CONFIRMATION NUMBER. Record it on the Transportation Tag.

11. That beaver or otter is reported! Repeat for additional beavers as needed. Bag limit for otter is 1 otter.

## **Fur Market Forecast**

The fur market outlook is not bright and fur prices haven't really changed, and we realize this is very much a repeat of a repeat of the past 5 years. Everything for the past several years remains the same with a few hopeful upturns in fur prices for several species. However, what was important last year still holds for this year and for the New Jersey trapper targeting raccoon, foxes, opossum, muskrat, mink, beaver, or otter; expect a very mediocre outlook for fur prices.

What has been said on these pages for the last several years still stands: in tough times, only the best furs sell. Be very selective on what you spend your time targeting, harvesting, and handling. Remember, only the best of the best will sell in the climate of this fur market. Any fur with any kind of damage will have little or no value. As we all know, we need to wait the extra weeks until fur is fully prime before considering taking any fur. Remember also that when we have a good fur market low-grade goods will sell but at a lower price. This hasn't been so in the last 5 or so years. Low grade and unprimed furs are near worthless, and it may be a waste of your time and effort to process it. So, if you are planning on trapping do so for the fun of it.

Remember that the prices listed below are averages:

**Beaver:** as anyone who has ever trapped and handled beaver pelts well know, the effort required to trap and 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 prime blanket.

**Raccoon:** like beaver they take more effort to put up than other pelts. Expect the usual \$10 to \$15 for a good, big heavy pelt.

**Foxes:** both red and gray, expect about the same prices as last year; around \$10 to \$15 for a very good prime red. For grays expect around \$6 to \$10.

**Muskrat:** expect around \$2.

**Otter:** expect to receive \$20 to \$30.

**Mink:** possible \$8 for your best pelts, more for males, much less for females.

**Skunk:** expect possible \$6 to \$8 for a good one, possible as much as \$10 for a very good one.

**Opossum:** expect less than \$3.

**Coyote:** this was the only bright spot in the fur market over the past several years. However, it is not necessarily so this year. Prices have decreased for this fur with lessening demand for this item for garment trim.

## **Some Interesting Facts About Our “Native” Furbearers?**

*The New Jersey Hunting and Trapping Digest* lists raccoon, skunk, opossum, weasel, mink, muskrat, red and gray fox, coyote, beaver, otter, and nutria as species that have open seasons for trapping in the State of New Jersey. However, if we look back in time, we will find that several of the species listed above were not here historically, or have had some help over the years with re-introduction.

The River otter (*Lontra canadensis*), Long-tailed (*Mustela frenata*) and Short-tailed or Ermine (*Mustela ermine*) weasels are native to New Jersey and have probably never been introduced, supplemented, or reintroduced at any time. Neither have the Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) or Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). However, a few of our furbearers have interesting histories.

Not too long before the mid-twentieth century, the Coyote (*Canis latrans*) didn't exist in New Jersey. In fact, coyotes were never present in New Jersey until the past fifty or so years. There are several theories why we have coyotes and DNA sampling agrees that within the last century the western coyote moved up through the mid-western and Great Lake states and through Lower Canada. During their moving through the Great Lake states and Canada, at some point some of the western coyotes mated with Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*), moved eastward through Lower Canada and down through the New England states and into the Mid-Atlantic States. There is some evidence that some coyotes also transported eastward via station wagon during the 1930s and 1940s. Now the Northeastern Coyote is here to stay. Also, note that up until about the mid-1800s there were Gray Wolves in New Jersey. Today, there are no wolves in New Jersey outside of zoos.

Many sources question whether the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was a native of New Jersey. If the species was native there weren't many as there are several references regarding the introduction of Red Foxes from England for the purpose of hunting with horses and hounds. It appears that the English foxes were introduced to the Long Island area and eventually crossed into mainland New York State and into New Jersey.

The Mink (*Mustela vison*) is a native to New Jersey. However, there is a very good possibility that escapees from mink farms have interbred with wild mink.

The Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) is again present in northern New Jersey, although they are considered rare. Re-introduction of fisher by New York and Pennsylvania in the last few decades have established enough of a breeding population in those states that New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife is beginning to receive sighting reports and trail camera photos of Fishers in Sussex and Warren counties. Also, the Marten (*Martes americana*) was present in New Jersey historically, but the species has been extirpated since the mid to late 1800s.

By the late 1800's Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) had almost disappeared from Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Mercer, and Burlington, Ocean, Salem, and Warren counties. Some of the last sites with active beaver colonies were in the Great Egg Harbor, Machesautuxen, Nescochaque, Big Timber Creek, Wading River, Sluice Creek, Toms River, Raccoon Creek, and the Assunpink waterways.

Beaver activity was described in 1902 around the towns of Roseville (*Andover/Byram Townships*) and Two Bridges (*Hampton Township*) in Sussex County. At that time those beaver represented almost all the activity in the state. It is possible that these beaver in the northern areas were the results of escaped beaver from the Rutherford-Stuyvesant game preserve in

Allamuchy, Warren County. Apparently, these escaped beavers were able to gain a foothold and spread across the Delaware River from Sussex County to Monroe County, Pennsylvania.

Historical reports note that a bill before the state legislature in 1902 gave total protection to beaver. In fact, the beaver was afforded complete protection in 1903.

In the first half of the twentieth century, New Jersey, as well as other northeastern states began augmenting the few remaining beaver colonies with beaver obtained from Wisconsin, Michigan, Wyoming, and Minnesota. This restocking enabled the beaver to re-establish itself by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another large furbearing rodent that may be but probably *is not* present is the Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*). There are records of two nutria trapped in the salt marshes of the Delaware Bay back in the early 1980s. The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has not received any valid report of nutria nor have any been reported by trappers via the annual trapper harvest survey.

On another note, the raccoon is, was and has always been a native of New Jersey. The Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) was thought to be numerous in much of the state in the late 1860s but not in the northern counties.

In the last hundred years or so the northern-most boundaries of the ranges of both species have extended. In fact, the raccoon has extended its range into parts of Canada where there are no Native American names for it!



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



## **New Jersey Furbearer Facts:**



### **The Opossum**

The Opossum, (*Didelphis virginiana*) is North America's only marsupial and chronologically is the oldest existing mammal on the continent. When Europeans first colonized America opossums did not occur north of New Jersey or Pennsylvania. As time passed, opossums slowly moved north and westward on the Great Plains. In 1890, opossums were introduced to California and their range spread on the west coast. Today they are currently spreading into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Opossums are currently found in North America from Central America and Mexico in the south, through the states of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, along the west coast of the U.S. and northward up into southwestern Ontario. They thrive just about everywhere being

both omnivorous and opportunistic in food habits and are found throughout New Jersey where it is considered both a game animal and a furbearer.

Opossums have a low, heavyset body that to some resembles a large house cat, or to others a giant-sized rat. They have a long head with a pointed snout and a whiskered face. Opossums have scaly appearing, long, tapered tails. The color of the opossum varies by the region with northern populations having thick underfur that is white in color and has black tips. The pale guard hairs give the opossum a gray appearance. In the south, the underfur is much sparser. All opossums have white cheek hairs.

Adult opossums generally are between 20 to 40 inches long, including the 10 to 12-inch tail and will weigh between 4 and 12 pounds; males are larger and heavier than females. Opossums rarely live past 18 months and an opossum that reaches 3 years of age is old indeed.

An opossum's gait is an ungainly shuffle and at top speed they can barely top four miles per hour. They are good climbers and climb using both their feet and their prehensile tails for gripping and balancing. Opossums have five toes on each foot, each with a claw except the long first toe of each hind foot that is capable of grasping, like a thumb.

Opossums generally breed in February and March. After mating the females drives that male away and has no further contact with him. After a gestation of 12 to 13 days and when barely past the embryonic stage, the pink-skinned, hairless, blind newborn opossums "swim" through their mother's fur to the fur-lined pouch on their mother's belly. At this time the young opossums are about ½ inch long and weigh about .005 ounces, the front legs of these newborns are developed with claws and the hind legs are rudimentary.

The litter size can vary from about five to thirteen young and averaging eight. Female opossums usually have 13 mammarys so any young in excess of this number die. The young grow fast and increase their weight about ten times and doubling their length in seven to ten days. After about eight weeks the young opossum's eyes open. At about this time they start to leave the pouch for short periods and ride on their mother's back gripping her fur with their claws. By three to four months the young begin to look for their own food and soon they will stop nursing and in a short time are on their own. After weaning her first litter, females may breed again and bear a second litter in mid-May to mid-July. Females can breed when they are a year old.

The home range of an adult, female opossum is generally about 270 acres. A female will stay within their home range for their entire lives while males continually shift their home ranges throughout their lives.

Opossums are opportunistic and omnivorous and include a wide variety of food types in their diet. A majority of their diet is composed of insects and carrion. Opossums also will eat many types of plants, including various fruits and grains in season.

### **Fur Handling**

Think of a tough critter with a thin hide and you've got the opossum. Opossum are skinned in the same way as muskrat. Be careful during the skinning process to avoid holes in the thin pelt. Fleshing should be done on a beam with a dull fleshing knife after the fat has set or congealed. Be careful as the pelts of opossum will rip easily during the fleshing process. When fleshing early pelts (not yet prime) be careful of hair pulling through the leather which will mean poor grades and prices.

Like muskrats, raccoons and skunks, opossums are stretched leather side out. An inspection window may be cut in the belly similar to what is done with raccoons. With female opossums, the pouch should be cut out as part of forming the window. Opossums can be stretched on the small raccoon stretchers or boards.

<b>OPOSSUM Pelt Sizes:</b>	
<b>SIZE</b>	<b>LENGTH</b>
<b>4XL</b>	Over 26"
<b>3XL</b>	24"–26"
<b>2XL</b>	22"–24"
<b>XL/LGE</b>	18"–22"
<b>M–SM</b>	Under 18"

*The New Jersey DEP 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.*

