

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2020 SUMMARY

Wildlife Diversity Program Note 21-2

Prepared by Stan McTaggart, Division of Wildlife Resources, October 2023

Nuisance Animal Removal Permits are issued directly to landowners or tenants to capture animals causing property damage if an investigation confirms a problem and a lack of effective alternatives. Permits are valid only for the property where damage is occurring. Staff from the Department of Natural Resources who issue permits specify means by which animals may be taken, their disposition,

and a period of time the permit is valid (up to 90 days).

Staff from the Division of Wildlife Resources issued 188 permits, down 29% from 2019. Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 123 permits, up 56% from 2019.

Table 1. Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2020^a.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Badger	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beaver	36	7	12	15	12	82
Bobcat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coyote	6	0	0	1	2	9
Fox	2	1	7	2	1	13
Muskrat	8	1	5	4	6	24
Opossum	1	2	7	5	3	18
Rabbit	0	1	1	1	0	3
Raccoon	24	8	39	30	12	113
River Otter	1	0	0	2	3	6
Skunk	3	1	9	3	1	17
Squirrel	6	12	7	6	1	32
Weasel	0	0	0	0	0	0
Woodchuck	12	1	29	9	4	55
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

^a Includes 57 permits issued to landowners or tenants for removal of more than one species (i.e., number of permits by species is greater than total number of permits issued).

Adoption of Title 17, Illinois Administrative Code, Part 525 during 1991 authorized the Department to issue Class A (commercial), Class B (volunteer), and Class C (governmental) Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits. Individuals with permits may provide wildlife damage control services for other people. Part 525 specifies methods and devices for capturing species protected by the Wildlife Code, conditions and options for disposition of animals that are captured, and reporting requirements.

The Department licensed 690 Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permits during 2020 (497 Class A; 1 Class B; 193 Class C). We made no attempt to correct data for non-reporting because the number of complaints serviced by each individual varied widely.

The number of wildlife conflicts serviced by permittees during 2020 decreased 1% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 90,725 animals (Table 3), up 3.9% from 2019. Increases in the number of chipmunks, squirrels, beaver and muskrats handled led the increase. Most wildlife conflicts (81%) were serviced by permittees residing in Region II,

which includes the greater Chicago metropolitan area.

Illinois law has required euthanasia of striped skunks since 1991. From 1991 through 1999, euthanasia or relocation (>10 but <40 miles from point of capture) were allowed for other common species defined as game or fur-bearing mammals by the Wildlife Code. In 1999, laws were amended to prohibit relocation of raccoons because of concerns about spreading diseases, movement of relocated raccoons into nearby residential areas, and impacts of predation on other wildlife where numbers of raccoons attained artificially high densities.

The new law took effect in April, 1999. It offered three options for the disposition of raccoons: (1) euthanasia in accordance with Department guidelines, (2) release within 100 yards of the capture site, or (3) surrender to a licensed veterinarian who was also a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. During 2020, 120 raccoons were relocated illegally, 569 were released within 100 yards, and 168 were transferred to rehabilitators. Those who relocated raccoons were sent a reminder that this activity is prohibited by State law.

Table 2. Number of wildlife conflicts serviced by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits, 2020.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	6,633	65,629	2,707	2,591	2,265	79,825
Class C	1,581	19,801	1610	1,461	1274	25,727
Total	8,214	85,430	4,317	4,052	3,539	105,552

Table 3. Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2020.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	124	1,208	68	34	23	1,457
Beaver	393	1,105	344	121	311	2,274
Birds	113	806	220	27	27	1,193
Chipmunk	668	8,350	103	274	150	9,545
Coyote	151	636	51	135	12	985
Foxes	20	70	8	7	18	123
Ground squirrels	183	375	9	73		640
Muskrat	306	2,847	466	176	105	3,900
Opossum	829	5,560	496	851	225	7,961
Raccoon	4,026	15,078	1,370	2,477	1,087	24,038
Squirrels	525	17,826	588	932	206	20,077
Striped skunk	500	10,956	161	390	617	12,624
Woodchuck	588	633	492	562	262	2,537
Other	1,600	88	287	801	595	3,371
Total	10,026	65,538	4,663	6,860	3,638	90,725

^a Includes permittees' estimates of bats that were excluded.

Permittees reported that 85% of all animals they handled were euthanized or taken by lethal means (Table 4). This proportion has increased (e.g., from 31% in 1991) because of state laws that prohibit relocation of raccoons and striped skunks, Forest Preserve policies that prohibit or limit relocation, and costs associated with transporting animals to release sites.

Data presented in this summary are conservative estimates of problems caused by wildlife in Illinois. Many residents who live in urban areas are not aware of permit requirements and undertake removal efforts without the Department's knowledge. In rural areas, many nuisance animals are removed by sport hunters and trappers during legal seasons.

A website developed by DNR and University of Illinois Extension is a rich resource for people who experience conflicts with wild animals (Wildlife Illinois: <https://www.wildlifeillinois.org/>).

Conflicts between humans and wildlife are likely to increase because of (1) urban sprawl, (2) high and/or increasing populations of many types of urban wildlife, and (3) better wildlife habitat as landscaping matures in older communities.

Table 4. Animals relocated, released on site or surrendered to wildlife rehabilitators by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2020.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	4,519	1,161	335	1,995	189	8,199
Beaver	1	21	15	1	23	61
Birds	126	968	40	60	22	1,216
Chipmunk	63	669	120	12	1	865
Coyote		25			21	46
Foxes	27	73	3	5	19	127
Ground squirrels	6	113	3	1	1	124
Muskrat	2	61			3	66
Opossum	215	1,344	83	132	94	1,868
Raccoon	128	513	71	30	115	857
Squirrels	239	1,868	83	197	36	2,423
Striped skunk	4	36			1	41
Woodchuck	64	139	75	53	15	346
Other	3	52			1	56
Total	5,397	7,043	828	2,486	541	16,295

^a Includes permittees' estimates of bats that were excluded.