

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2021 SUMMARY

Wildlife Diversity Program Note 22-2

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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 137 permits, down 27% from 2020. Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 51 permits, down 59% from 2020.

Table 1. Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2021^a.

| Species | Region | | | | | Statewide |
|-------------|--------|----|-----|----|---|-----------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | |
| Badger | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Beaver | 20 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 37 |
| Bobcat | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Coyote | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Fox | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Muskrat | 10 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 22 |
| Opossum | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Rabbit | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Raccoon | 28 | 1 | 18 | 18 | 4 | 69 |
| River Otter | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Skunk | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Squirrel | 4 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 18 |
| Weasel | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Woodchuck | 5 | 0 | 24 | 8 | 2 | 39 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |

^a Includes 33 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 664 Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permits during 2021 (481 Class A; 1 Class B; 182 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 2021 increased 2.5% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 75,056 animals (Table 3), down 17% from 2020. Reductions in the number of raccoon, squirrel, chipmunks, skunk and opossum handled led the decline. Most wildlife conflicts (70%) 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 2021, 147 raccoons were relocated illegally, 431 were released within 100 yards, and 234 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, 2021.

| Permit type | Region | | | | | Statewide |
|-------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | |
| Class A & B | 5,797 | 56,641 | 3,948 | 6,055 | 9,743 | 82,184 |
| Class C | 3,919 | 18,668 | 1,335 | 1,455 | 626 | 26,003 |
| Total | 9,716 | 75,309 | 5,283 | 7,510 | 10,369 | 108,187 |

Table 3. Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2021.

| Species | Region | | | | | Statewide |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | |
| Bats ^a | 109 | 831 | 26 | 59 | 187 | 1,212 |
| Beaver | 466 | 904 | 317 | 144 | 204 | 2,035 |
| Birds | 75 | 576 | 70 | 89 | 2 | 812 |
| Chipmunk | 470 | 3,779 | 196 | 457 | 1,409 | 6,311 |
| Coyote | 167 | 616 | 118 | 75 | 9 | 985 |
| Foxes | 12 | 43 | 10 | 15 | 4 | 84 |
| Ground squirrels | 170 | 561 | 47 | 34 | | 812 |
| Muskrat | 514 | 2,713 | 275 | 243 | 84 | 3,829 |
| Opossum | 941 | 2,971 | 333 | 1,069 | 1,083 | 6,397 |
| Raccoon | 3,133 | 9,271 | 1,263 | 3,582 | 2,333 | 19,582 |
| Squirrels | 1,227 | 7,860 | 788 | 2,337 | 3,831 | 16,043 |
| Striped skunk | 928 | 5,508 | 603 | 1,029 | 1,402 | 9,470 |
| Woodchuck | 528 | 1,067 | 330 | 538 | 76 | 2,539 |
| Other | 3,402 | 325 | 367 | 850 | 1 | 4,945 |
| Total | 12,142 | 37,025 | 4,743 | 10,521 | 10,625 | 75,056 |

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

Permittees reported that 83% 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, 2021.

| Species | Region | | | | | Statewide |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | |
| Bats ^a | 1,681 | 4,677 | 392 | 1,991 | 13 | 8,754 |
| Beaver | 0 | 6 | 23 | 1 | 0 | 30 |
| Birds | 102 | 698 | 109 | 100 | 103 | 1,112 |
| Chipmunk | 89 | 322 | 345 | 17 | 31 | 804 |
| Coyote | 0 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 31 | 50 |
| Foxes | 5 | 33 | 31 | 13 | 21 | 103 |
| Ground squirrels | 15 | 24 | 52 | 20 | 6 | 117 |
| Muskrat | 3 | 19 | 35 | 0 | 9 | 66 |
| Opossum | 122 | 689 | 356 | 128 | 139 | 1,434 |
| Raccoon | 139 | 378 | 146 | 50 | 100 | 813 |
| Squirrels | 177 | 704 | 389 | 291 | 180 | 1,741 |
| Striped skunk | 2 | 188 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 192 |
| Woodchuck | 70 | 127 | 54 | 62 | 35 | 348 |
| Other | 3 | 23 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 31 |
| Total | 2,408 | 7,907 | 1,933 | 2,676 | 671 | 15,595 |

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