

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2019 SUMMARY

Wildlife Diversity Program Note 20-2

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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 264 permits, down 15% from 2018. Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 79 permits, down 13% from 2018.

Table 1. Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2019^a.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Badger	2	0	1	0	0	3
Beaver	18	4	7	4	8	41
Bobcat	0	0	1	0	1	2
Coyote	3	0	5	0	1	9
Fox	4	0	3	6	1	14
Muskrat	4	2	1	3	5	15
Opossum	3	1	9	9	4	26
Rabbit	1	2	4	4	1	12
Raccoon	24	9	28	45	24	130
River Otter	2	0	0	1	1	4
Skunk	5	3	5	1	8	22
Squirrel	5	9	16	6	5	41
Weasel	1	0	0	0	0	1
Woodchuck	13	1	56	16	12	98
Other	2	0	0	1	1	4

^a Includes 69 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 had 681 licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permits during 2019 (477 Class A; 1 Class B; 203 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 2019 increased 6% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 86,903 animals (Table 3), up 23% from 2018. Increases in the number of raccoons, chipmunks, squirrels and opossum led the increase. Most wildlife conflicts (79%) 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 2019, 125 raccoons were relocated illegally, 340 were released within 100 yards, and 174 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, 2019.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	6,414	64,793	2,761	2,741	1,226	77,935
Class C	4,732	19,274	1666	1,491	1,274	28,437
Total	11,146	84,067	4,427	4,232	2,500	106,372

Table 3. Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2019.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	261	1474	75	119	2	1,931
Beaver	307	854	270	76	151	1,658
Birds	147	680	204	490	85	1,606
Chipmunk	678	5,164	74	123	244	6,283
Coyote	181	521	64	104	21	891
Foxes	8	85	9	9	10	121
Ground squirrels	111	212	50	70		443
Muskrat	360	2,338	471	161	37	3,367
Opossum	857	6,584	520	679	223	8,863
Raccoon	4,419	17,396	1,306	2,286	737	26,144
Squirrels	501	15,039	566	689	108	16,903
Striped skunk	649	11,772	221	312	558	13,512
Woodchuck	661	746	439	467	216	2,529
Other	944	170	402	569	567	2,652
Total	10,084	63,035	4,671	6,154	2,959	86,903

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

Permittees reported that 80% 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, 2019.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	5,426	1,129	474	3,403	4,054	14,486
Beaver		17				17
Birds	64	996	11	48	84	1,203
Chipmunk	298	646	88	12		1,044
Coyote		27			22	49
Foxes	40	44	32	2	25	143
Ground squirrels	1	163	8	53		225
Muskrat	2	47			1	50
Opossum	189	1,322	55	182	96	1,844
Raccoon	127	338	47	63	64	639
Squirrels	216	1,578	67	80	81	2,022
Striped skunk		33			1	34
Woodchuck	70	182	100	22	30	404
Other	6	69			5	80
Total	6,439	6,591	882	3,865	4,463	22,240

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