



West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Furbearer Management Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2014/2015

Wildlife Resources Section

New things are happening. Read about the upcoming bobcat population dynamics study being undertaken by West Virginia University for WVDNR. Trappers will be paid to supply bobcat carcasses for this important study. Also, make sure you read about our trapper survey below and participate. If you can't print the page, contact Rich Rogers or any WVDNR Wildlife Resources office and one will be sent to you. As usual, feel free to contact us with any questions regarding your trapping and furbearer hunting concerns. Please direct correspondence to: Rich Rogers, WVDNR, 1 Depot St., Romney, WV 26757, Rich.E.Rogers@wv.gov.

Bobcat Population Dynamics Study to Begin

The WVDNR has long recognized that bobcat populations may be easily overharvested under certain conditions. To ensure that this does not happen, the WVDNR keeps close track of bobcat population harvests and uses a change in harvest population model to determine that the harvest does not exceed levels that will result in declining densities of cats. The population model used requires periodic updates in juvenile and adult survival and productivity. Juvenile survival can change dramatically from year to year and has a great impact on the following year's population. Additionally, it is desirable to have a means to determine bobcat population densities regionally and changes in such over time.

With these factors in mind, the WVDNR has awarded a research contract to West Virginia University to begin studying bobcat populations in the state. A PhD student will be determining range occupancy, regional bobcat densities, and developing a protocol to use in the future. Another graduate student will be collecting bobcat carcasses and skulls from trappers to determine survival and productivity rates. Additional aspects of the study will

include bobcat food habits and whether bobcats serve as a reservoir for feline panleukopenia.

Students will be contacting the WVTA and individual trappers for assistance with these projects in the near future. Carcasses will be paid for by the project. Everyone's participation will be greatly appreciated.

Results of 2013-14 River Otter Trapping Season

The 2013-14 river otter trapping season resulted in a harvest of 193 otters. The harvest through this third season has remained stable across most of the state with the exception of District 6. CITES seals were affixed to 80% of the otters harvested.

Harvests were reported in 39 of West Virginia's 55 counties with average harvest being 4.9 animals/county where harvests were reported. Top counties were Greenbrier (22), Nicholas (12), Pocahontas (12), Fayette (9) and Raleigh (9). District harvests may be seen in the table below. It is of note that legal harvests were reported in northern panhandle counties for the first time since the seasons have opened.

DNR District	2011-12 Harvest	2012-13 Harvest	2013-14 Harvest	2013-14 Harvest/County With a Harvest
District I	7	15	19	2.4
District II	32	28	23	2.9
District III	49	35	52	7.4
District IV	52	65	59	7.4
District V	5	14	12	2.4
District VI	61	35	28	3.5
State Total	206	192	193	-

Man Attacked by Beaver in Belarus

The following is an Associated Press report from 2013. Two lessons learned: 1) do not grab live furbearers, and 2) hunting and trapping keeps wildlife wary of humans and reduces these types of conflicts.

Beaver kills man in Belarus

Incident is latest in series of beaver attacks on humans in the country, as animals make comeback following hunting bans



A beaver swims in a pond north-west of Minsk: once hunted nearly to extinction in Europe, the animals have made a comeback. Photograph: Sergei Grits/AP

A beaver has attacked a 60-year-old fisherman in [Belarus](#), slicing an artery and causing him to bleed to death.

It was the latest in a series of beaver attacks on humans in the country, as the rodents, who have razor-sharp teeth, have turned increasingly aggressive after wandering near homes, shops and schools.

"The character of the wound was totally shocking," said the village doctor Leonty Sulim. "We had never run into anything like this before."

Once hunted nearly to extinction in [Europe](#), beavers have made a comeback as hunting has been banned or restricted and new populations were introduced.

In Belarus, a former Soviet republic between Russia and Poland, the beaver population has tripled in the past decade to an estimated 80,000, according to wildlife experts. That has caused beavers increasingly to encroach on populated areas.

The Belarusian emergency services said they have received a rash of reports of aggression by beavers, which can weigh up to 30kg (65lbs) and stand about a metre (3ft) high. Officials have responded to some calls by sending out crews to drive away the [animals](#), often by spraying them with water from a fire hose.

The fisherman, who has not been named at the request of his family, was driving with friends toward the Shestakovskoye lake, west of the capital, Minsk, when he spotted the beaver along the side of the road and stopped the car. As he tried to grab the animal to have his picture taken, it bit him several times. One of the bites cut a major artery in his leg, according to Sulim.

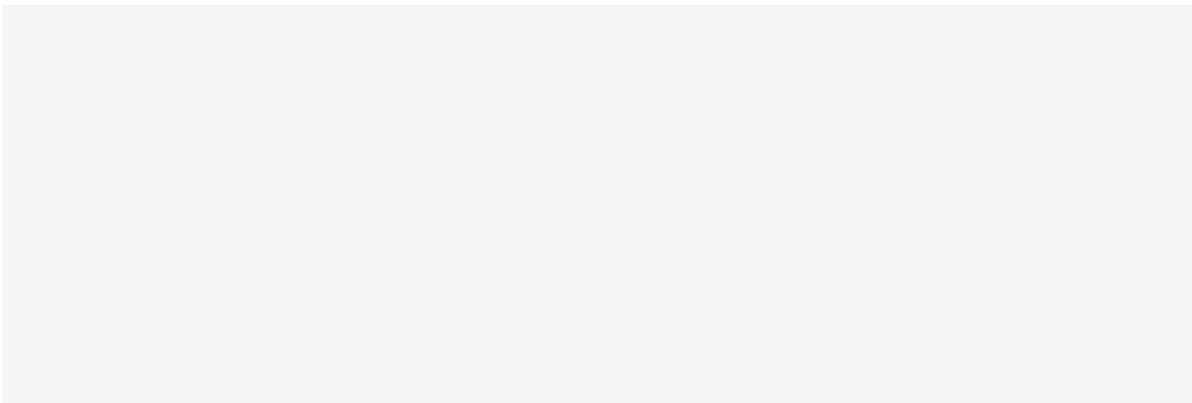
The man's friends were unable to stem the bleeding, and he was pronounced dead when he arrived at Sulim's clinic in the village of Ostromechevo.

He is the only person known to have died from a beaver attack in Belarus.

The rise in the number of attacks is attributed partly to spring bringing about more aggressive behaviour in young beavers that are sent away to stake out their own territory. Largely nocturnal, beavers can also become disoriented during the daytime and attack out of fear, according to Viktor Kozlovsky, a wildlife expert.

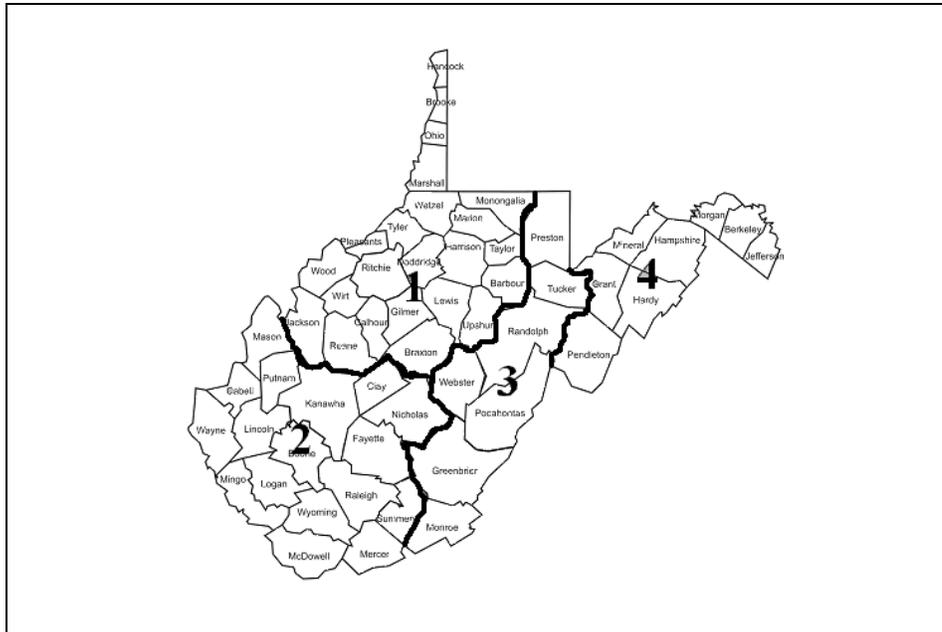
Kozlovsky said the large beaver population was beginning to cause significant damage to forests and farms. The forestry ministry said it was encouraging the hunting of beavers, once prized for their fur and gland secretions used for medicinal purposes. But since they are such easy targets near dams, says the ministry spokesman Alexander Kozorez, "beaver hunting holds little sporting interest".

"Hunting them is more like work," he said.



Raccoon Harvest – Trap vs Hunt

Percent of raccoon pelts sold by trappers and hunters are analyzed by Raccoon Field Trial Survey regions and are presented below. These regions contain counties similar in habitats and raccoon hunting pressure.



Raccoon Field Trial Survey regions.

% Raccoon Pelt Sales Attributable to Hunters						
Region	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	5 Year Average
1 ¹	43	26	11	27	35	28
2 ¹	63	24	3	23	28	28
3 ¹	29	8	2	29	26	19
4 ¹	44	10	1	30	27	22
State ¹	44	19	14	27	29	27
State ²	36	17	10	42	25	26

¹With known counties of kill only.

²With unknown counties of kill used in tabulation.

2013-14 Furbearer Harvest

Harvests remained high with greatest increases shown in the red fox and coyote harvests. The table below shows number of pelts purchased by licensed state fur buyers, numbers of pelts shipped by individuals, and numbers of CITES seals applied to pelts during the year. Beaver, bobcat, fisher and otter all require mandatory checking.

SPECIES	Pelts Purchased					Shipped 2013	CITES Sealed
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14		
Muskrat	2850	1920	6649	5909	4105	1715	
Opossum	1487	2029	4976	2009	2380	625	
Raccoon	6201	7495	22105	18606	13927	8106	
Mink	237	357	689	476	468	475	
Red Fox	1152	1752	2664	1680	3214	3296	
Gray Fox	988	1703	3188	1701	1679	2811	
Bobcat	351/992*	926/1495*	1835/1857*	1424/1994*	1831/2008*	2018	1199
Beaver	593/783*	1106/911*	2271/1587*	1322/1742*	1052/1713*	765	
Weasel	1	3	15	6	6	0	
Skunk	103	278	557	191	332	116	
Coyote	691	2302	3086	1886	2825	1379	
Fisher	24/60*	61/87*	72/149*	74/130*	81/147	74	
River Otter	0	0	0/206*	0/192*	0/193*	124	155

*Number after slash mark is actual harvest as determined from animals checked at checking stations.

Trapper Survey

Last year's trapper survey indicates that effort to catch bobcat, coyote, and mink has steadily increased for the third year in a row. Efforts for beaver, muskrat, opossum, and

raccoon have also increased, but at lower rates. Higher harvests coupled with greater trapping pressure will yield greater effort. Survey forms may be obtained from any WVDNR District Office, www.wvdnr.gov, the West Virginia Trappers Association web site, or simply use the one provided at the end of this newsletter for the coming season.

West Virginia Trapper Survey			
Species	2011-12 Days/Catch	2012-13 Days/Catch	2013-14 Days/Catch
Beaver	1.3	1.4	2.0
Bobcat	11.4	16.6	28.2
Coyote	5.5	7.8	11.9
Fisher	72.0	106.0	21.5
Gray Fox	10.9	7.5	18.7
Mink	5.6	16.0	25.3
Muskrat	1.4	1.5	2.4
Opossum	3.3	5.2	7.4
Otter	10.8	29.5	26.2
Raccoon	1.0	2.3	2.5
Red Fox	14.3	12.3	14.3
Striped Skunk	10.2	7.1	31.3
Weasel	14.0	-	-



Juvenile muskrat molt patterns.



Adult muskrat molt patterns

Albino Muskrat

This white muskrat was spotted in Kentucky over a year ago. It is not known if the animal was a true albino as they eyes cannot be seen. Although this pelage is not as rare as in other furbearers, it is still very uncommon. A normal colored muskrat can be seen standing behind it in the second picture.



Links

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

www.wvdnr.gov

West Virginia Trappers Association

www.wvtrappers.com

Guide to State Game Depts.

www.identicards.com/links/statednr.html

Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Furbearer Resources

www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer.html

National Trappers Association

www.nationaltrappers.com

Fur Takers of America

www.furtakersofamerica.com

Conserve Wildlife

www.conservewildlife.org

Furbearers Unlimited

www.furbearers.org

CITES

www.cites.org

2014-2015 TRAPPING REPORT FORM
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Section

Read instructions on back side before completing this report.

Name _____ **Hunting License #** _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

SPECIES	County:									
	# OF DAYS TRAPPED	# KILLED								
Beaver										
Bobcat										
Coyote										
Fisher										
Gray Fox										
Mink										
Muskrat										
Opossum										
Otter										
Raccoon										
Red Fox										
Spotted Skunk										
Striped Skunk										
Weasel										
Other:										

Signature _____ Date _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAPPING REPORT FORM

This is a voluntary report that will be used to help West Virginia Division of Natural Resources biologists collect more accurate data regarding trapping success and numbers of animals harvested each year.

1. Fill in your name and full address.
2. Provide your phone number only if you would like to.
3. During the trapping season, fill in columns for # days trapped and # animals killed for **EACH COUNTY** that you trap during the legal trapping season. Two columns are provided for each county. Do not include animals that you release.
4. Use more than one sheet if you trap more than 5 counties.
5. Try to accurately record number of days trapped. If in doubt, give the closest approximation of number of days trapped.
6. Sign and date your data sheet before sending in to:

Rich Rogers
Trapper Survey
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
1 Depot St.
Romney, WV 26757

7. If you have any questions, call Rich Rogers at (304)822-3551.
8. **Send all completed forms in by April 30 of each year.**
9. **DO NOT** include animals caught on Animal Damage Control licenses or on nuisance wildlife permits.