



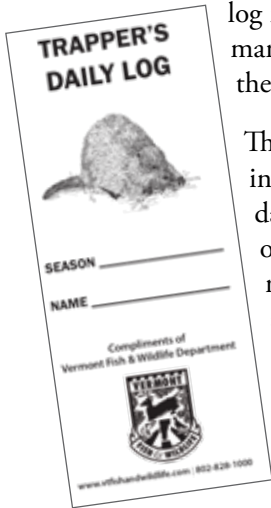
Vermont Furbearer Management Newsletter

FALL 2020

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 1

Trapper's Daily Log

The newly published Trapper's Daily Logs have been well received by new and seasoned trappers alike. To date, with the help of the Vermont Trappers Association and Vermont State Game Wardens, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (VFWD) Furbearer Team has given away more than 400 of the Daily Logs. The tear-out Trapper Report Form included in the log makes it easy to send in the mandatory report at the end of the season.



The Trapper's Daily Log includes trapping season dates for each species, plenty of pages to keep daily records of sets, locations, and fur caught, a place to record expenses and supplies, a season summary page, and landowner permission forms. We have included "Key

Messages on Trapping" to help you communicate the role of regulated trapping
(continued on page 3)

Best Management Practices for Trapping Update



Many of you are already familiar with the Best Management Practices (BMPs) trap testing history, the purpose of which was to scientifically evaluate traps and trapping systems for animal welfare, selectivity, practicability, efficiency and safety. Vermont trappers and field observers were integral in testing several of the currently listed traps. As a result, there are now 600 commercially available trap designs that were created to humanely capture wildlife for harvest, restoration, and damage work. These have all passed the International Association of Worldwide Standards (ISO) for welfare, efficiency, and safety, and have also proved to be highly selective.

It is important to remember that the public (and trappers) care deeply about wildlife and do not take the killing of animals lightly. It is, therefore, essential that trappers voluntarily adopt practices, including the use of BMP traps, that demonstrate their commitment to adhering to the highest standards of welfare and selectivity available. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, The Wildlife Society and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies all recommend the use of BMP traps.

The following are some of the important findings of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies BMP research:

- ❖ During this national research effort, different trap designs were set over a quarter of a million times by trappers in the field to capture legal furbearers. Each trapper was accompanied by an independent technician/data recorder.

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Maine Survey on Furbearer Management

Like so many conservation issues, trapping is usually framed as country mouse versus city mouse, but a recent study suggests trapping support doesn't always follow our assumptions.

The study, *The Human Dimensions of Furbearer Management in Maine*, was one of the most comprehensive investigations ever conducted on public attitudes related to furbearer management. It included a large public survey that found 75 percent of all Maine residents strongly or moderately approved of regulated trapping with only 17 percent strongly or moderately disapproving.



While few states can boast higher overall support for trapping, the study shows that support in Maine was variable. Counter to common wisdom, urban and suburban residents were more likely to support trapping than rural residents; older residents (48 years and older) were much more likely to oppose it than younger residents; and support in northern Maine was only slightly higher than the general population.

Researchers found these seemingly counterintuitive results were influenced by a key finding—trapping disapproval in Maine is primarily driven by older and/or rural females. That gender plays a role is nothing new. That older and rural females oppose trapping the most is a new twist. It was particularly apparent in the eastern region of the study (Downeast), likely due to the area's demographics.

Note that trapping approval was still above 55 percent for all the groups and many (39 percent) of the people who were against trapping, still supported the right of others to do so. Never-the-less, the research results underscore the need to avoid stereotypes and be mindful of trapping's image, even on the backroads of Maine or Vermont.

What About Vermont? The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department recently asked the firm that conducted the Maine Study, Responsive Management, to do some additional analysis on a trapping question from a 2018 survey they did for us. At the time, it found 56 percent of Vermonters supported regulated trapping and 27 percent opposed it, with older residents being more likely to oppose than support, but we didn't look at gender or location. Sure enough, the new analysis found rural females had the highest overall opposition to trapping and the lowest overall support.

The VTA and Other Sportsmen's Groups Donate \$8,000 to Help Conserve the Brownsville Forest in Stowe



The furbearer team wants to give a shout out to the VTA and other sportsmen's and conservation groups for their work with the Stowe Land Trust and the Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation to conserve a key parcel adjacent to the C.C. Putman Forest in Stowe. The future of wildlife in Vermont and elsewhere is dependent on the availability of large blocks of interconnected habitats.

The conservation of this parcel adds 750 acres to a forest matrix that links together other conserved properties as well as protects the headwaters of Moss brook, key wetlands, and other critical wildlife habitats. It will also provide access to future generations of hikers, birders, hunters and trappers. This is a true legacy and one that we can all be proud of. Thank you so much for your contribution to our collective futures and those of our children and grandchildren.

Reminder to Renew Your Permanent License

If you are a permanent or lifetime license holder, please take a minute to "renew" your license each year to help us refine our mailing lists. Licenses can be renewed online at our website or in person at your nearest licensing agent or VFWD District Office (Note: A license agent may charge you up to \$1.50 for reprinting your license). To renew online, visit our website at www.vtfishwildlife.com. Click "Buy Your License" photo on the homepage. Look for the green "Update Your Permanent License" button and then follow the instructions from there.



Buy a License

UPDATE YOUR PERMANENT LICENSE ONLINE

Trapper's Daily Log (continued from page 1)

to those who do not understand it, as well as a guide to recognizing the differences between bobcat and Canada lynx. It is easily transported and IT'S FREE!

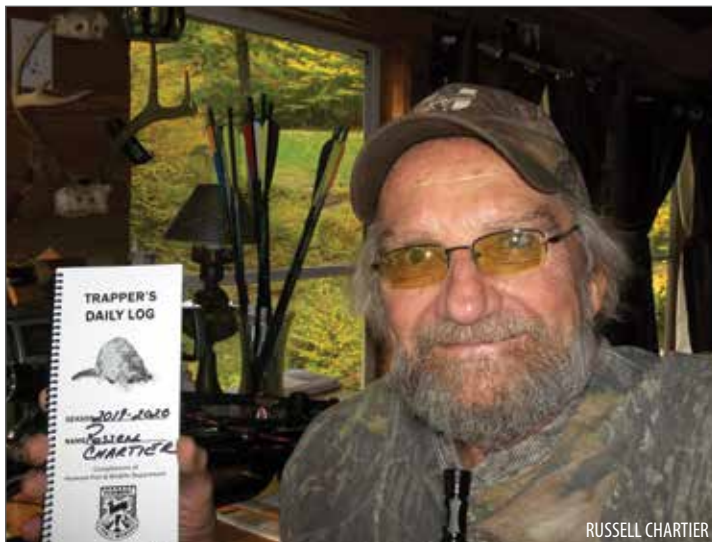
"The daily Log Book is fantastic. Thank you for such a good idea for us old farts. I often don't agree with everything Fish and Game does, but this is a winner. Thanks again!"

– R.C., Lifetime Trapper

"The trapper log was helpful for recording what I caught. We used it for our expenses too. I will definitely use it again."

– K.C., Youth Trapper

For those of you using the log, we welcome suggestions for improving the format and ease of use. If you haven't had a chance to try one out, we will gladly mail one to you.



Get your **FREE** Trapper Daily Log by contacting Mary Beth Adler at marybeth.adler@vermont.gov or (802) 289-0629.



Beaver Baffle Program Updates

Now in its 20th year, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's beaver baffle program is as busy as ever. On an annual basis VFWD staff:

- ❖ Field over 400 calls/emails
- ❖ Conduct over 50 site visits
- ❖ Install between 15 and 20 baffles and protective fences

Through the assistance provided to landowners, road crews, towns and other municipalities and organizations who are experiencing conflicts with beavers, the many benefits of beaver-created wetlands are maintained for fish, wildlife, plant species, and people. From a human standpoint, these benefits include flood control, cleaner water, fishing opportunities, and wildlife viewing.

To date, the program is responsible for the installation of more than 300 devices influencing more than 3,500 acres of beaver-created wetland habitat.

Trapper Survey 2020

At the time this newsletter was going to print, the response rate for the mandatory annual Trapper Report Form was 79 percent and we are working to get that even higher. A total of just over 1,900 licensed trappers were contacted in April and May through one of two email surveys or through paper copies sent via regular mail. Thank you to all who responded! We truly appreciate your patience and willingness to be part of collecting this vital data, especially as we worked through the challenges of providing the reports while not having direct access to the VFWD office. For those who have not yet responded, you will likely be hearing from us.

New this year on the form: Some permanent license holders have trapping included in their licenses but are not aware of it. Permanent license holders were asked to notify us if they do not trap and therefore wanted to be removed from our mailing list. This will eliminate sending forms to those who have never trapped and do not intend to in the future.

REMINDER: EVEN IF YOU DID NOT SET TRAPS YOU MUST RETURN THE ANNUAL TRAPPER REPORT FORM OR CALL US IF YOU HOLD A VALID TRAPPING LICENSE.

2020 Disease Update

The VFWD furbearer project has been conducting a variety of disease surveillance activities over the last year to better understand how, or if, any of the following diseases might affect furbearer populations. The furbearer carcasses you all turn in have been key to collecting this important information.



Only one of 60 tissues samples from fisher collected the last two years tested positive for canine distemper.

Canine

Distemper

Virus: Given our concerns over the potential spread of canine distemper and the effect it could have on the fisher population, we collected tissue samples from 70 fisher over the last two years and sent them

to the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for analysis. These were fisher that had been turned in by trappers from around the state. Only one of the 70 samples came back positive. Currently, fisher biological data that includes sex ratios, juvenile to adult ratios, and harvest rates suggest that for the last 10 to 15 years the fisher population has been generally stable in most parts of Vermont and that canine distemper is not a major factor at this time.

Rodenticides: Thirty liver samples from fisher were sent to a Tufts University graduate student for rodenticide testing. Final results are pending, however preliminary information suggests that at least five different rodenticides are quite ubiquitous throughout the state. We had hoped to do some additional testing this year but were not able to due to budget reductions. If possible, we will continue testing next year as there are a lot of unknowns regarding how rodenticides influence carnivore survival.

COVID and mammals: Although there are still a lot of unknowns, the COVID virus has been found in mink on fur farms in both the Netherlands and Denmark, as well as a tiger and lion in the Bronx Zoo. In the case of the mink farms, the virus has been passed from humans to mink and back again. Experts are concerned that it might potentially



COVID virus has been found in mink on fur farms in Europe.

affect mink, weasel, fisher, marten, otter, and bobcat if they are exposed. For that reason and through an abundance of caution, we have developed the following recommendations for rehabilitators, researchers and trappers who may have contact with live mustelids or felids and then return them to the wild:

- ❖ To avoid the possibility of introducing COVID into wild populations of bobcats, coyotes, foxes, or mustelids (fisher, mink, weasel, otter), NWCOs and/or trappers intending to release live trapped animals should wear gloves and masks and sanitize hands and any equipment (catch pole, cage trap, etc.) before and after release.



Trappers and NWCOs releasing live trapped animals should wear gloves and masks and sanitize hands and any equipment to avoid introducing COVID into wild populations.

Rabies Update: Since 2012, The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (WS) program in Vermont has been involved in research measuring the effectiveness of a new oral rabies vaccination (ORV) delivery system. These new baits have shown great potential and led to the implementation of an Enhanced Rabies Surveillance (ERS) initiative in 2016. ERS is a cooperative effort between WS, state and federal partners, licensed trappers and the public. These partners help monitor the distribution of rabies in Vermont by donating samples to be tested and providing the WS program valuable information that is incorporated in its management decisions.

In 2019, WS submitted 749 samples to the VT Department of Health Laboratory. Additionally, 73 samples were tested using the Direct Rapid Immunohistochemical Test (dRIT). A total of 16 animals tested positive for rabies statewide: 2 bats, 2 coyotes, 2 gray fox, 5 raccoons, 4 skunks, and 1 woodchuck.

Tularemia: This past year, Tularemia and DNA samples were also collected from specimens provided by trappers. Tularemia is a disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* which is generally spread to humans by handling infected sick/dead animals or the bite of infected ticks or tabanid flies.

You Can Help! Cooperation by licensed trappers has proven to be an effective method of collecting disease samples from across the landscape in Vermont. Wildlife Services wants to encourage trappers who legally harvest animals to help monitor wildlife disease across Vermont by providing samples of raccoons, skunks, and foxes to be tested for rabies and other diseases. These mesocarnivores are of particular interest as they are common rabies vectors in Vermont.

If you'd like to participate and assist WS with this effort, please contact 1-802-223-8697 or 1-800-4RABIES. Specimens will be collected all year from towns in the northern portion of the state.

For more information about rabies and its prevalence in Vermont, see the VT Department of Health website: healthvermont.gov/disease-control/zoonotic-diseases/rabies. Click on the "INTERACT WITH VERMONT RABIES DATA" button to see what species have tested positive by town or county from 2005 through 2019.



Check Out WildlifeHelp.org

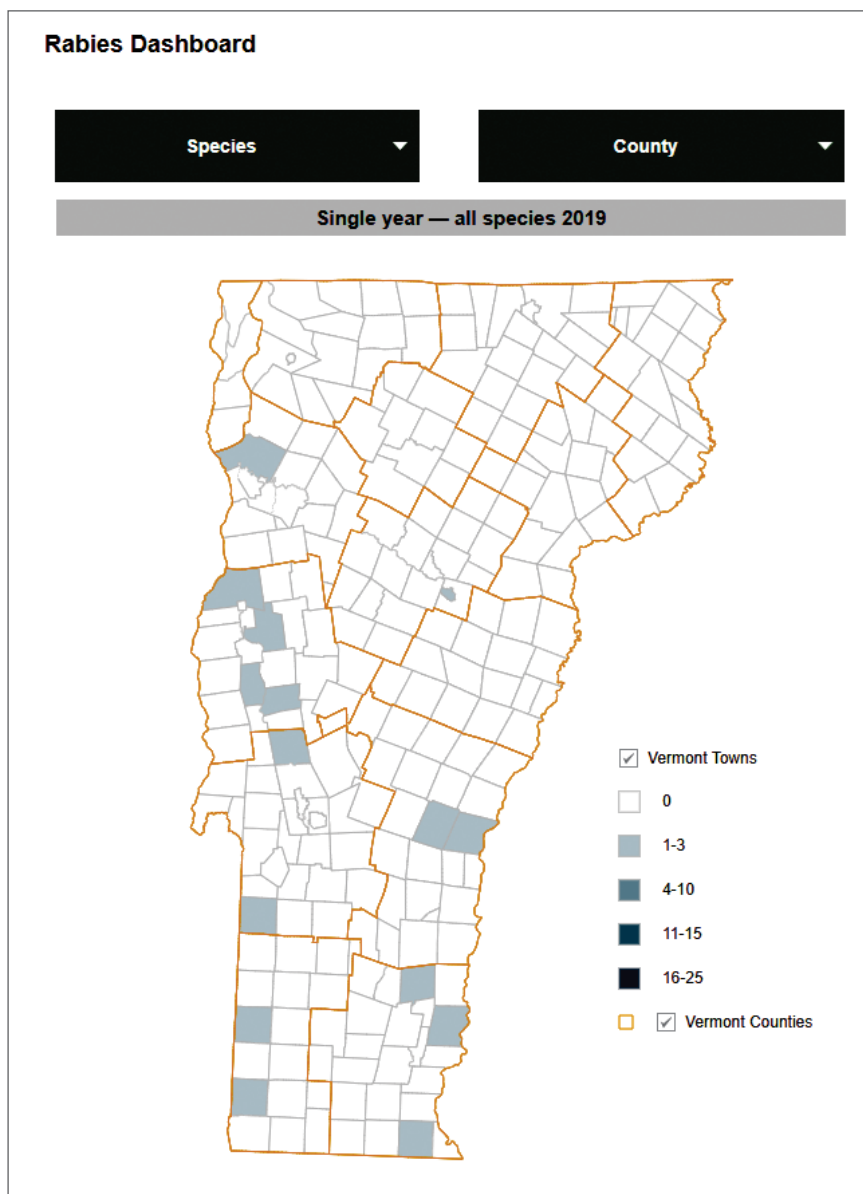
WildlifeHelp.org is an online resource developed by the Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) to help people find sound, legal, and ethical advice for wildlife damage control and prevention in the 13 northeastern and mid-Atlantic states. It offers solutions by state, by species (the species addressed varies by state), and by specific problems being caused by an animal. The Vermont section features 19 species, including 6 furbearers:

- ❖ beaver,
- ❖ coyote,
- ❖ fox,
- ❖ opossum,
- ❖ raccoon, and
- ❖ skunk.

Wildlife control operators can register on the site and be included on a list as those providing damage control services.

VFWD Furbearer Project staff recently reviewed and updated the general species information and solutions for furbearers that are applicable for each of the 13 states, while also adding specific information about laws and regulations for Vermont.

In Vermont, WildlifeHelp.org is supported by NEAFWA, the Northeast Wildlife Damage Management Cooperative, the Wildlife Management Institute, and the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.



Vermont's Department of Health's Rabies Dashboard is an interactive tool that shows animals that have tested positive for rabies during 2005 through 2019.

Marten and Lynx Research Efforts

American Pine Marten: VFWD and Central Connecticut State University are wrapping up the field portion of a three year camera study to assess American marten distribution and occupancy in the southern Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). This research has confirmed that the reintroduction of marten by the VFWD and the US Forest Service (USFS) in 1989, 1990 and 1991 resulted in reproducing animals and the establishment of a small core population in southern Vermont. It will also help to inform future management strategies for the GMNF in order to safeguard critical marten habitats.

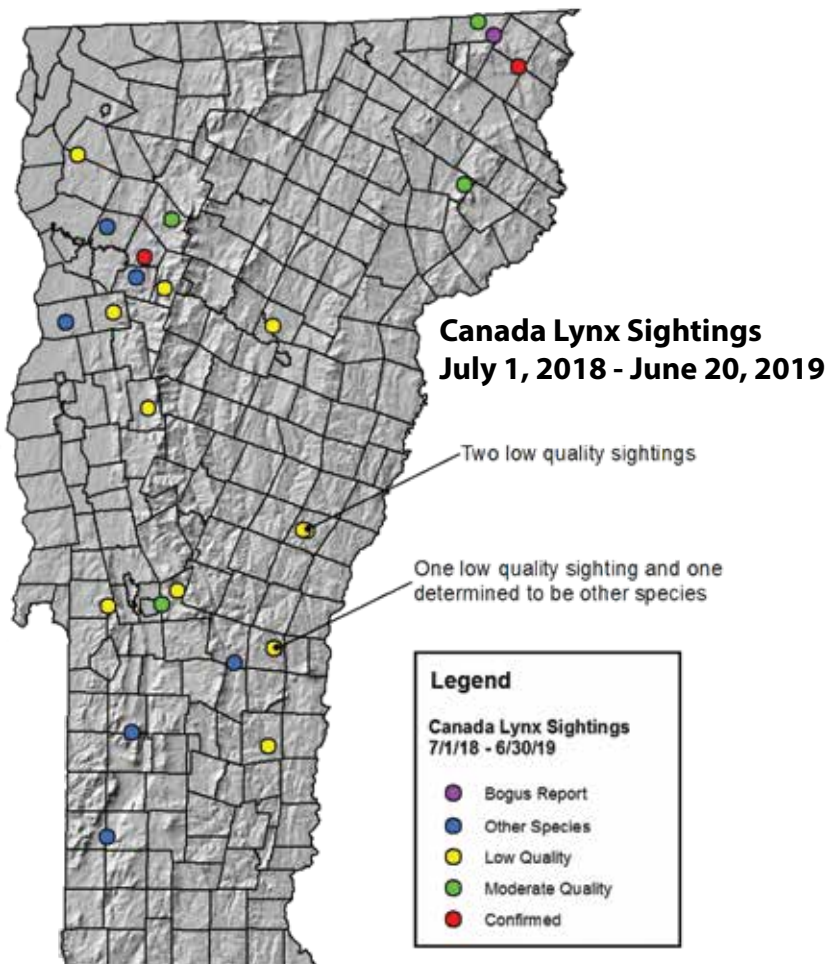


American Pine Marten

Canada Lynx: Furbearer Management Project staff has developed a database for maintaining citizen sighting reports and occurrence data of Canada lynx, American marten, wolf, and mountain lion. All information concerning the credible sightings and occurrences of these species in the state is entered into the database thereby providing project staff with a tool for tracking such information both spatially and temporally. Below is a map of the lynx sightings from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. There have been 13 additional lynx sightings since then, none of which were confirmed. However, there was one highly probably sighting in Jericho, Vermont.

Hampshire and develop a unified approach across the region. This has, in turn, facilitated the analysis and comparison of results across states and has provided outstanding opportunities for further investigations into the ecology of lynx along the southern periphery of their range in the future.

We recently completed a baseline effort to develop effective methods for monitoring lynx throughout the varied landscapes of Vermont and New



Canada lynx



Bobcat

Learn the differences between a bobcat and a lynx at www.vtfishandwildlife.com/canada-lynx-or-bobcat-learn-the-difference. Although very rare, it is possible that lynx may periodically show up in Vermont.

Social Media Tips

These days it is almost impossible to escape social media. Even if you don't have a social media profile, you may end up in a photo or story that is posted by someone else.

The worst thing a hunter or trapper can do is turn a non-hunter into an anti-hunter. We do this by posting inflammatory or angry responses to anti-hunters and trappers. This can include photos, posts, or replies to posts.

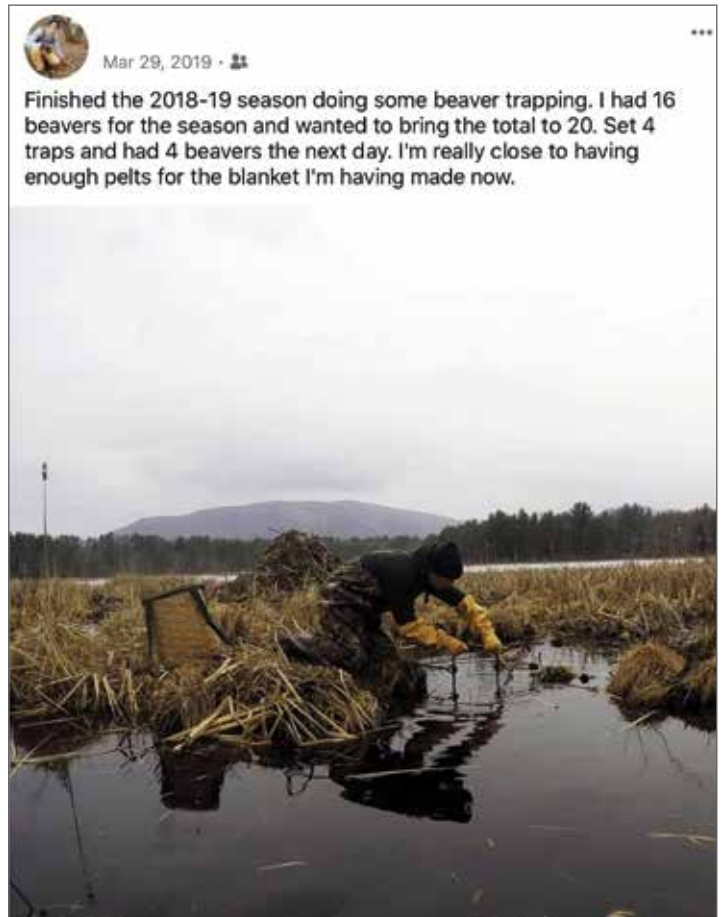
When posting on social media, try to do the following:

- ❖ Post tasteful photos, with as little blood and animal suffering as possible. We know animals in BMP traps suffer very little, but many people don't realize that.
- ❖ Make sure you add context to the photo. Give it a nice caption about what a great day it was, how you enjoyed spending time with your friends, loved hearing the birds, etc.
- ❖ If you get questions or angry comments, reply civilly. Try to keep cool, calm, and respond with both facts and your opinions as to why trapping is important to you.
- ❖ If you see a hunter or trapper posting something distasteful on social media, talk to them about it. We need to be sensitive to the feelings of others and ensure that as a group, we always take the high road.
- ❖ Be supportive of other hunters and trappers on social media. Like and comment on those tasteful posts!

Remember, even though 94 percent of people in the US don't hunt or trap, that doesn't mean 94 percent of people in the US are anti-hunters. In fact, 75 percent of US citizens approve of hunting and trapping. Although a small minority can be loud, we can remain positive and make sure we are posting the best trapper image on social media.
















When posting to social media, use tasteful photos, and adding a caption or context to the post is always a good idea.



Furbearer Harvest and Effort Data

The furbearer team thanks you for your efforts to provide the critical data necessary to monitor the health and sustainability of furbearer populations in Vermont. Below are the harvest numbers for every furbearer species based on your trapper mail survey reports and the blue card returns (otter, bobcat, and fisher). We use this information both to monitor changes in harvest levels and to compare the harvest with the effort expended (number of traps X number of nights) by trappers. This is very important when monitoring wildlife populations so we can know what factors may be most significantly affecting the harvest.

Summary of annual trapper mail survey derived estimated* furbearer harvests, 2009-10 through 2018-19.**

Season	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	10-year Average
Mink 	460	620	601	749	748	800	299	212	168	95	475.1
Raccoon 	598	533	850	1,044	1,004	953	648	382	504	442	695.8
Muskrat 	7,628	4,785	4,222	10,770	8,737	9,053	8,199	2,490	1,558	1,291	5,873.3
Skunk 	280	297	245	385	218	218	241	204	106	183	237.7
Opossum 	43	44	99	139	61	214	79	63	109	56	90.7
Weasel 	34	28	26	340	36	92	11	72	14	54	70.7
Coyote 	381	407	494	612	726	626	462	378	511	357	495.4
Red Fox 	185	119	184	229	306	270	181	126	221	118	193.9
Grey Fox 	78	77	109	175	130	81	69	31	60	51	86.1
Bobcat 	111	32	55	80	116	55	51	54	44	39	63.7
Fisher 	403	478	407	588	359	432	235	213	190	239	354.4
Otter 	122	175	234	269	246	154	155	113	111	73	165.2
Beaver 	1,555	865	1,472	2,125	2,139	1,504	1,789	1,198	865	776	1,428.8
Total Estimated Harvest	11,878	8,460	8,998	17,505	14,826	14,452	12,419	5,536	4,461	3,774	10,230.9

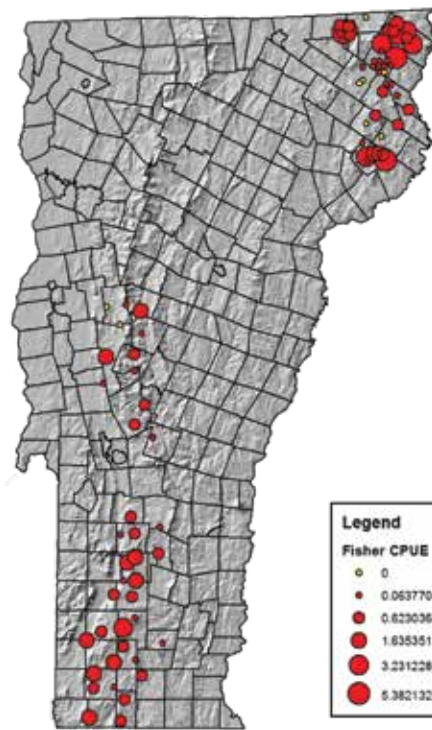
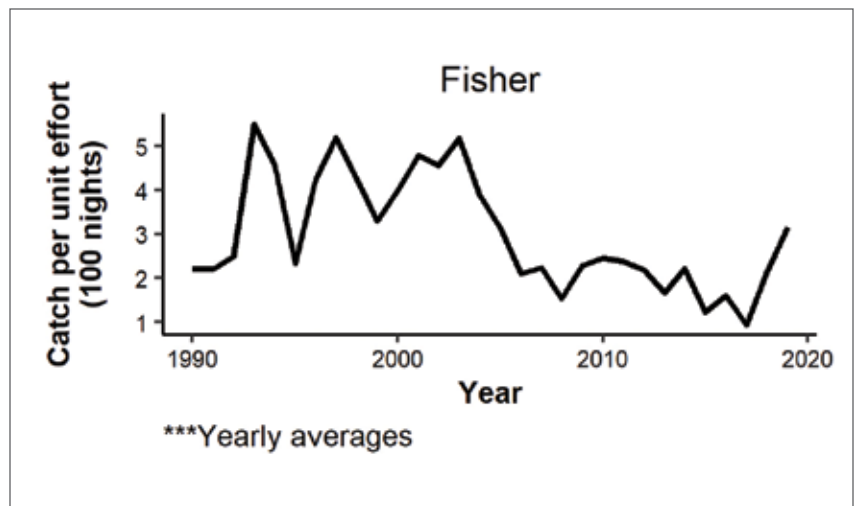
*Total reported harvest multiplied by correction factors until 2017-18 season when figures represent those reported from the mandatory survey.

**Fisher, otter, bobcat data are from pelt tagging records.

The catch per unit of effort (CPUE) is just one of many other potential indicators that we use to understand fish or wildlife population abundance. When reviewing the data, keep in mind that factors such as season expansions or reductions, reporting accuracy, and sample size can influence results and must be considered in the interpretation of the outcomes.

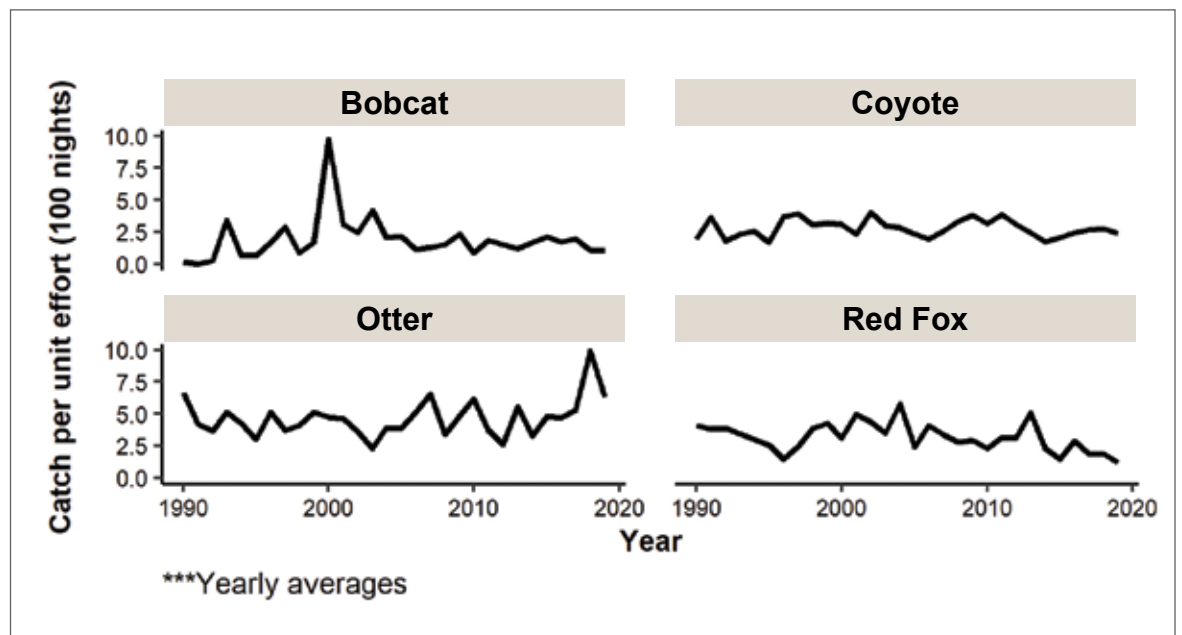
- ❖ In 2018/19 the average CPUE for all species was either higher or close to the ten-year average. We will be looking into how the mandatory reporting affects variability in the trapper mail survey data once we have at least five years of data. Similar to many other states, we have seen a decline in the average number of trap nights since the 1990s likely related to a decline in fur markets, access challenges, demographic changes, a more developed landscape, and other associated factors.
- ❖ Fisher CPUE has been relatively stable for the past decade albeit lower than the mid-1990s to 2005. We will continue to closely monitor the trend going forward to ensure healthy populations into the future.
- ❖ The average CPUE in 2018/19 for otter was the highest in ten years in spite of the month-long expansion of the trapping season implemented two years ago. However, this should not be interpreted necessarily as a statewide expansion but could indicate increases in local populations. Otter populations, like many other furbearers, tend to fluctuate from year to year and site to site. We will continue to monitor these populations to ensure a sustainable, healthy, population.

- ❖ CPUE for all other species fluctuate from year to year but has remained relatively stable over the previous ten-year period. The graph on the right shows individual species CPUE.



Fisher CPUE Independent Detections Per 100 Trap Nights 2014-2019

This map is the CPUE for fisher based on cameras that were distributed in the Northeast Kingdom and southern Green Mountains. The results suggest a well distributed and robust fisher population in these regions.



Thank you to our Trapper Education Instructors!

The Trapper Education courses offered by the VFWD, in cooperation with the Vermont Trappers Association, would not be possible without our volunteer force of Trapper Education instructors. In 2019, 12 volunteer trapper education instructors taught eight classes for the public, and five Trapper Education courses were taught at Green Mountain Conservation Camps, for a total of 13 classes taught in 2019.

Without the willingness and dedication of these volunteers, we would be hard pressed to offer these important courses that teach responsible, ethical and effective trapping. Trapper education instructors organize and often host the classes, they guide students through the required Trapper Education Workbook, and they conduct outside, hands-on trapping demonstrations for the class. Many of them also give of their time and resources to mentor new trappers.

Many thanks to each and every one of you! The staff of the Education and Outreach Division and the Furbearer Management Team at VFWD truly appreciates all you do to



The volunteer Trapper Education Instructors make it possible for the department to offer the Trapper Education courses that teach responsible, ethical, and effective trapping.

teach your students how to be responsible, ethical trappers and stewards of Vermont's furbearers.

If you are interested in becoming a Trapper Education instructor, please contact us for information: Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov or (802) 318-1347.

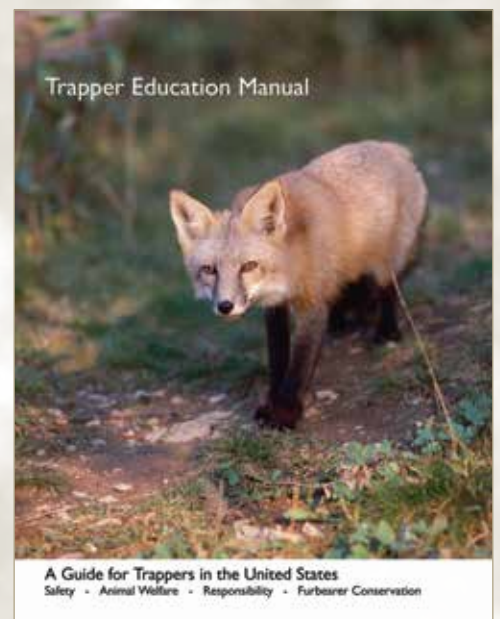
Trapper Education and COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, the Vermont Hunter Education Program suspended all in-person hunter, bowhunter and trapper education courses. In place of the usual in-person trapper education course, a correspondence course was implemented. This correspondence course was inspired by the correspondence course that has been an option in Wisconsin for many years. To obtain trapper education certification through Vermont's correspondence course, the general sequence goes like this:

1. E-mail or call the Vermont Hunter Education Program to obtain materials and directions: HunterEducation@vermont.gov or (802) 828-1193.
2. Complete the prerequisite homework (either paper or on-line).
3. Review Vermont's current laws around trapping and pass a quiz on those laws.
4. Pass the final exam with a 90 percent or better.

Throughout this process we encourage students to take an in-person course when they become available or get in touch with a trapper to learn more and get hands-on experience.

Since this option was implemented at the end of March, 38 people have become trapper certified through the correspondence course and 11 students are in progress.



Your Furbearer Management Project Staff!

We are here to serve the wildlife resource and you! Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or comments.



Kim Royar - Furbearer Program Leader
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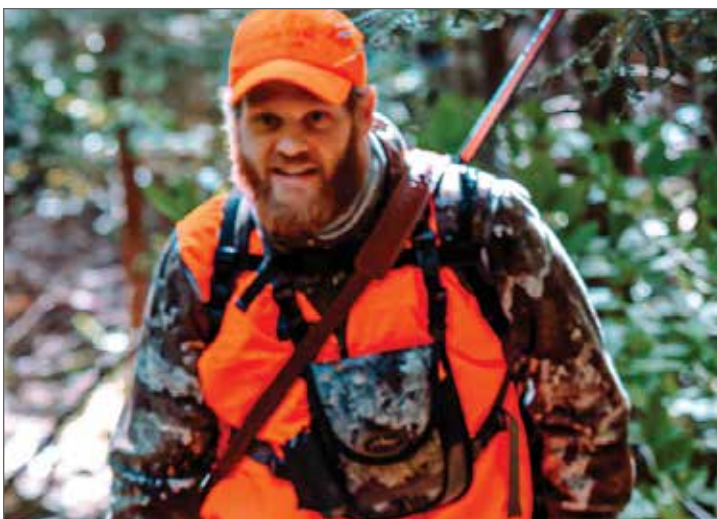
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The MISSION of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.



BMPs for Trapping Update *(continued from page 1)*

- ❖ No threatened or endangered species were captured throughout the extensive research effort. In addition, no domestic dogs or cats were captured 99.95 percent of the time and those few that were, were released unharmed.
- ❖ Trap research on beaver in New Hampshire resulted in 87 beaver caught after 544 trap checks. The only other animals that were caught were three muskrats and one raccoon. The overall selectivity rate for in-season furbearers was 100 percent.
- ❖ Recent national surveys suggest that 78 percent of the traps used today are of the type that were determined to be most selective. In Vermont, we would like to make that 100 percent through voluntary compliance.



If you want to know more about what trap types meet BMP standards for specific species, go to the following link:
<http://furbearermanagement.com/bmp-search-portal/>

Vermont Furbearer Management Newsletter

Editors: Kim Royar
Chris Bernier
Mary Beth Adler

Designer: Lilla Stutz-Lumbra



Your purchase of hunting and fishing licenses as well as equipment supports fish and wildlife restoration.

