



## New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter Winter 2016-17

### New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Project



#### Important Upcoming Dates:

- **Application period for Spring Turkey permits is January 25-February 22.**
- **Hunter/Trapper Education** courses resume in March. Registration opens in mid-February. Call 877-2-HUNT NJ for schedule and additional information.
- Thursday, February 9 – Last day of beaver and otter trapping season.
- **Beaver & Otter** Check-in is **Saturday, February 25 9AM-NOON** at Assunpink, Clinton, Flatbrook, Tuckahoe and Winslow WMA as well as Newfoundland Fire Department on Rt. 23 in Newfoundland.
- Wednesday, March 15 – Last day of the 2016-17 trapping season and Special Permit Coyote/Fox season.
- Saturday, March 18 (tentative) – NJ Fur Harvesters spring fur collection and meeting at Assunpink WMA.
- Saturday, March 18 – NJ Trappers Association spring fur collection at Space Farms, Beemerville
- Sunday, March 19 – NJ Trappers Association annual fur auction at Space Farms, Beemerville begins 10AM.

#### Remember:

- To trap with or use cable restraints, a person must have first passed a Fish and Wildlife-approved trapper education course which included use of cable restraints and carry their course completion card while trapping.
- Any person must be at least 12 years of age in order to obtain a trapping license.
- TAKE A KID TRAPPING OR MENTOR A NEW TRAPPER!



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*The New Jersey DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife is the professional, environmental agency overseeing the protection and management of the State's fish and wildlife resource to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic value of all New Jerseyans*

## Fur Market Forecast

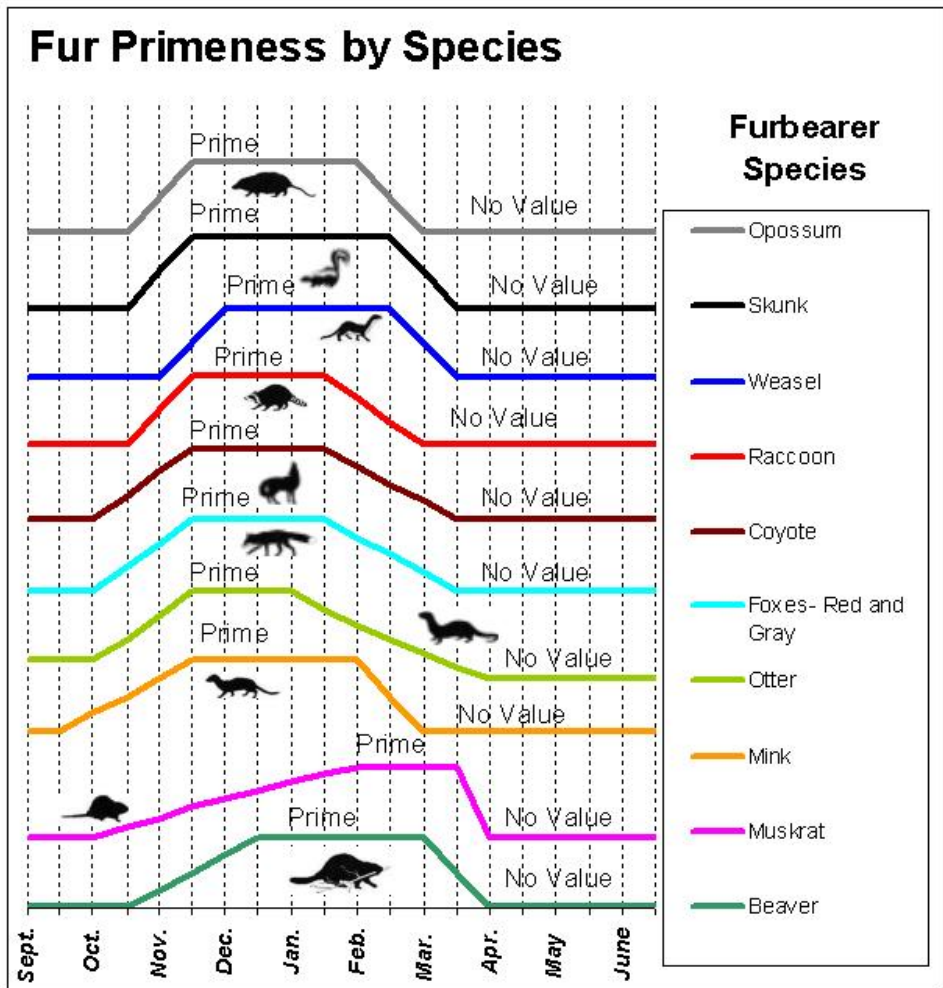
It's a fact that warmer, unseasonable weather doesn't stop the priming process of fur, so the fur is out there. However, trappers may be starting this season out rather cautiously and with much less optimism after last year's low fur prices. Overall, the outlook isn't very good, with this seasons prices starting with prices similar to those at last year's seasons end.

As in the past couple of years the struggling economy in China and Russia are what will be behind the overall slump in the fur industry worldwide as they remain the two main, major markets. China is an extremely important player in the fur industry and much of what fur sells revolves around that market. Colder temperatures in China thus far this season may help keep some of the fur industry in business in that country.

In times such as these, trappers can maximize the value of their catch by following two simple rules: target species during the period when fur is at its most prime and handle the fur well. Poor and un-prime fur will be a waste of the trapper's efforts. Remember, what we hear from most fellow trappers is the high price they get for their best pelts, which is not what you should expect for every pelt. Trapping fur that's not yet prime will decrease that trapper's average price per pelt and they will end up with those poorer pelts graded down to a much decreased value. With the market outlook those poorer pelts WILL be nearly valueless! See the fur primeness chart at the end of this section.

Again, expect pelt grading to be tough again this year, so take the extra time necessary to properly flesh pelts in order to maximize the return for your effort. Here are some predictions for the coming season along with the fur values from recent NJ Trapper Harvest Surveys:

Species	Prediction	NJ Average Last Year (2015-16)	NJ 5-Year Average
Beaver	Expectations are that an average beaver might bring up to the low teens; prime, well-handled blankets may bring near \$20.	\$ 11.71	\$ 19.32
Coyote	Easterns averaging in the mid-teens to as high as \$25-30 for very best prime pelts; don't expect near as much for lesser pelts.	\$ 31.76	\$ 20.94
Gray fox	Hard to predict as there seems little interest in this species; a well-handled prime pelt may bring \$10-15.	\$ 9.51	\$ 19.09
Mink	Large bucks in prime condition in the \$8 to \$10 range; females half that; Chinese market flooded with ranch mink.	\$ 8.70	\$ 15.52
Muskrat	Expect average in the \$3 range; best prime pelts might reach \$5.	\$ 2.76	\$ 6.99
Opossum	The best silver, well-handled primes may go \$1.50 tops.	\$ 0.74	\$ 2.06
Otter	Best, unsinged prime otter may go to \$40; most will likely sell in the \$18-30 range.	\$ 23.67	\$ 49.11
Raccoon	There are lots of raccoons in inventories worldwide and there are collections from 2014 and 2015 which have not yet sold! Only the best prime pelts may go for \$10; expect \$4-5 for average, well-handled pelts; no market for early/blue pelts.	\$ 4.11	\$ 9.07
Red fox	Best, prime, heavy furred dark reds may bring \$25; average, well-handled pelts probably in the \$15 range. That's probably optimistic.	\$ 14.85	\$ 23.29
Skunk	Very best expected in the \$6-8 range; less than prime pelts may be worthless; buyers looking for nice, white full stripes.	\$ 4.19	\$ 4.60
Weasel	Long-tails in the \$2-3 range; short-tails in the \$1-2 range.	\$ 2.17	\$ 0.43



## New Jersey Trapper Harvest Survey- 2015-16

The Division surveys licensed trappers annually to collect information on trapper activities, affiliation with trapping organizations and to estimate harvest levels of the state's furbearers.

An online survey for holders of a 2015 New Jersey trapping license was created using Survey Monkey to estimate the furbearer harvest, trapping effort and trapper expenditures. A link to the survey was sent to 1,000 sportsmen and women that provided an email address resulting in 183 valid responses (19.2% response rate).

An estimated 1,159 of 1,405 trapping license holders actively trapped during the 2015-16 season which began November 15, 2015 and concluded March 15, 2016. Harvest was estimated to include 1,942 mink, 17,298 muskrat, 200 gray fox, 8,691 red fox, 355 opossum, 12,488 raccoon, 203 skunks and 15 weasels in addition to the reported harvest of 697 beaver, 51 river otter and 171 coyote, with a raw fur value estimated at \$292,945.

Active trappers contributed an estimated \$809K to the State economy during 2015-16, and today's trappers have contributed an estimated \$5.6 million to the State economy over the course of their trapping career

The majority of respondents were affiliated with at least one statewide trapping organization, however 40% of respondents were not and 70% of all respondents were not affiliated with any national trapping organization.

Species	Total # Survey Respondents	Est. # of Active Trappers	Avg. Experience (years)	Avg. days active	Est. Total Trap-nights	Reported or Estimated Harvest	Avg. Pelt Price (\$US)	Est. Value (\$US)
Beaver	44	217	6.4	21.6	19,648	<b>697</b>	\$ 11.71	8,165
River otter	31	96	8.8	16.0	3,854	<b>51</b>	\$ 23.67	1,207
Mink	44	315	17.8	29.0	180,700	1,942	\$ 8.70	6,898
Muskrat	52	368	23.9	24.8	292,010	17,298	\$ 2.76	47,776
Nutria	3	0				0		
Coyote	75	583	12.7	37.5	412,987	<b>171</b>	\$ 31.76	5,431
Gray fox	31	253		43.8	167,141	200	\$ 9.51	1,897
Red fox	91	714		34.0	656,980	8,691	\$ 14.85	129,099
Opossum	15	115	10.7	26.4	55,586	355	\$ 0.74	262
Raccoon	97	745	14.0	29.7	314,298	12,488	4.11	51,324
Skunk	16	123	9.8	25.2	56,392	203	\$ 4.19	853
Weasel	6	46	13.7	21.7	5,290	15	2.17	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>1,159</b>	<b>14.1</b>		<b>2,668,954</b>	<b>42,111</b>		<b>\$ 262,945</b>

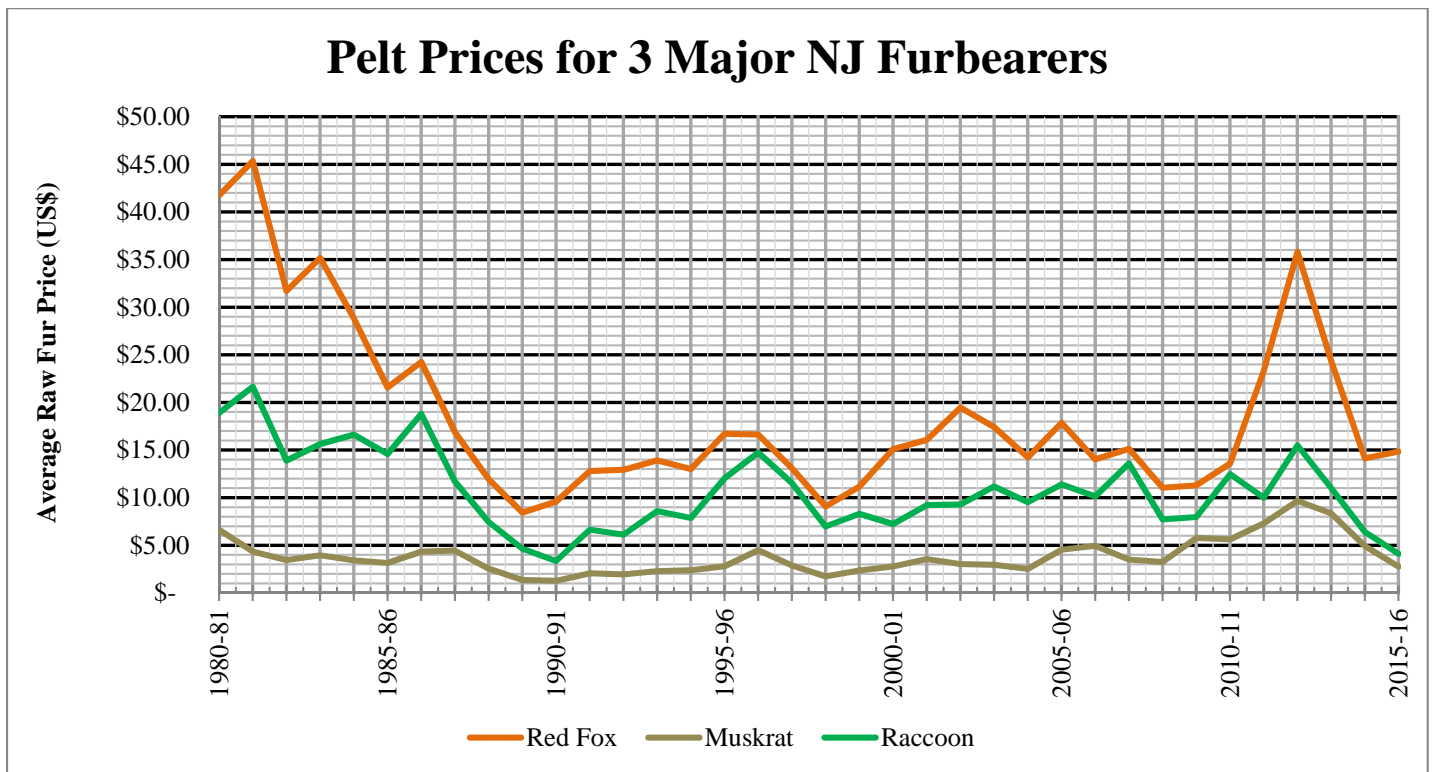
## Is the Past Present? Fur Prices over Time

Looking back to previous Trapper Harvest Surveys, we can see some great differences as well as many similarities to the 2015-16 survey. Was it really better way back when, or are we merely looking through rose colored glasses? We all know that fashion is fickle and hope that what goes around comes around sooner or later (hopefully, sooner). One thing is certain - the resurgence in trapper numbers is the brightest star!

Species	Average Raw Pelt Value (\$US)				
	1975-76	1985-86	1995-96	2005-06	2015-16
Beaver	18.00	12.80	19.43	22.55	11.71
Otter	No season	14.95	43.35	100.25	23.67
Mink	9.00	14.00	12.40	18.44	8.70
Muskrat	3.75	3.15	2.80	4.54	2.76
Coyote	No season	13.78	19.43	22.55	31.76
Gray fox	20.00	17.04	11.70	21.83	9.51
Red fox	45.00	21.58	16.72	17.87	14.85
Opossum	1.50	1.49	2.23	1.99	0.74
Raccoon	17.00	14.59	12.04	11.40	4.11
Skunk	1.00	0.96	2.52	4.06	4.19
Weasel	0.50	0.83	3.00	3.00	2.17
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>3,109,073</b>	<b>1,357,503</b>	<b>333,898</b>	<b>317,853</b>	<b>262,945</b>
License sales	3,466	1,438	560	596	1,405
Resident fee	7.25-10.25	27.00	32.00	32.50	32.50
Junior fee	Not offered	13.75	13.75	Free	Free
Non-res. fee	40.25-100.25	132.50	150.00	200.50	200.50
Active trappers	3,195	944	378	445	1,159

What's changed since 1975? Apparently, quite a bit has changed, such as:

- **Age:** Back in the 1975 the age class which included the highest percentage of NJ trappers was 14 to 19 year olds with 30.5% of the total number of licensed trappers followed by the 20 to 24 year old age class with 13.8% (44.3% combined)! In 2015, younger trappers under age 25 constituted only 10.4% of licensed trappers. Trappers are getting older (averaging 48 years in 2015), and the abundance of other activities (sports, video games, etc.) have an obvious negative impact on trapper recruitment.
- **Residency:** Resident trappers were more evenly distributed across the state in 1975 (30% in the Northern Region, 32% in the Central Region and 38% in the Southern Region), but that is no longer the case. Today, almost half (48%) of licensed trappers now live in the Southern Region while 27% live in the Northern Region and 25% live in the Central Region. Region refers to the county-based division used by the State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.
- **Reason for not trapping:** The main reason given for trapper inactivity remains the same: No Time! (Poor Weather in 1975 has been replaced by Health Issues in 2015 as the number two reason).
- **Trap Types:** Steel-jawed leghold traps (coil-springs and longsprings) were still legal in 1975 but have been prohibited since 1985 which caused a lot of trappers to quit trapping. On the bright side, we now have the dog-proof trap in our trap basket.
- **River Otter and Coyote:** There was no trapping season for River Otter or Coyote. Otters weren't legal to trap by permit until the 1983 February trapping season which ran concurrent with beaver. Coyotes became legal to trap during the 1980-81 season.
- **Fur Sales:** Forty years ago, the majority of trappers (88.9%) sold their fur in-state to local fur buyers (71.2%) or at local auctions (11.8%) or a combination of these (4.8%). Today, local fur buyers are scarce as hen's teeth and there is only one fur auction in New Jersey so most trappers selling furs probably do so through one of the big international auction houses. And, of course, fur prices change.





## Beaver and Otter Check-in

Successful beaver and otter trappers are reminded that the check-in date to register your pelts is **Saturday, 25 February** at the usual locations (Assunpink, Clinton, Flatbrook, Tuckahoe and Winslow WMA as well as the Newfoundland Fire Department on Rt. 23. A few things to remember:

- Check station operation hours are **9:00 AM to Noon**
- Have your data forms completed and remember to bring them – this will speed things along. If you didn't go trapping but had a permit, please remember to return your data form by mail, fax or email!
- If you harvested an otter, remember to bring the carcass.
- If you can't get to the check-in station personally, it's OK to have a friend check your pelts provided they have all necessary paperwork (completed data form, transportation tags), pelts and otter carcass.

If you can't get to the check-in station personally and can't find someone else to do so for you, please call Wildlife Technician Joe Garris at the Northern Region Office (908) 735-7040 or on his cell phone (609) 306-4545 to make alternate arrangements. **Alternate arrangements should be scheduled by Friday, 10 February!**

## Recent Legal Decision

Back in 2015, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council amended the Game Code to allow for the use of enclosed foothold traps by trappers targeting raccoon and opossum. This amendment was predicated on the results from numerous scientific studies conducted by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' Best Management Practices for Trapping Furbearers in the United States. A series of legal actions initiated by several animal welfare organizations against the Council, Division and DEP began shortly after the amendment was approved culminating in the decision by the Appellate Division, Superior Court of New Jersey on October 5, 2016. The Appellate Court found in favor of the Council, Division and DEP and discerned no flaw in the process by which the new regulation was drafted and adopted or in the record that supports it. A copy of the decision is available from the [Rutgers School of Law](#).

More trappers targeted raccoon in 2015-16 compared to the previous year despite declining fur prices. Perhaps the new trapping system had something to do with that, as well as the increased raccoon harvest?

You all know about animal rights activities in other states (Maine, Montana) so you can probably expect to hear more about enclosed foothold traps in the future. New bills have already been introduced in our Legislature to prohibit all trapping systems other than a cage trap. *Trappers are notoriously independent, but that shouldn't stop you from getting involved in the legislative process. It is **VITAL** for your elected representatives to hear from you whenever a bill opposing trapping is introduced or being heard in committee!*



## Legislative Update

A host of legislative bills are introduced every year. Below is a list of current bills. Those beginning with “A” are Assembly bills; those beginning with “S” are Senate bills; “CR” means Concurrent Resolution. Identical bills (for example, A122/S485) have been grouped together. Bills that have passed committee votes are followed by the date passed; otherwise bills remain in their respective committees. For further information on specific bills, please visit <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>

Number	Description	Introduced	Committee Referred To
A109	Increases membership of F&G Council and clarifies sole authority to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources (withdrawn 5/26/2016)
A122	Provides for no net loss of DEP lands for fishing, hunting and trapping	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S485		1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
A432	Prohibits use of snares in trapping of wildlife	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S1309		2/8/2016	Environment and Energy
A723	Provides discounted hunting and trapping license, permit and stamp fees for senior citizens	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S585		1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
A997	Provides for discounted resident trapping license fees for senior citizens	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S929		2/4/2016	Environment and Energy
A1157	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
A1387	Requires voter registration forms be made available when applying for hunting, fishing or trapping license	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources (passed Committee 5/19/2016)
A2178	Authorizes State Fish and Game Council to establish number of beaver trapping permits issued annually	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources (passed Committee 9/19/2016)
A2460	Establishes certain requirements for trapping of snapping turtles	2/4/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources (passed Committee 9/19/2016)
A3049	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service	2/16/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S2126		5/2/2016	Environment and Energy
A3668	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for volunteer emergency workers and persons with certain types of military service	4/14/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
A3737	Clarifies that Fish and Game Council has sole authority to regulate fishing, hunting and trapping	5/19/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
S472		1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
S256	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service	1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
S603	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping for certain retired military personnel	1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
S2129	Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for volunteer emergency workers and persons with certain types of military service	5/2/2016	Environment and Energy
S2750	Bans manufacture, sale, possession, transportation, or use of certain traps	11/10/2016	Environment and Energy
A4407		12/15/2016	Environment and Solid Waste
ACR25	Determines that F&G Council’s proposal to allow use of enclosed foothold traps is inconsistent with plain language and legislative intent of 1984 law banning animal traps of steel-jaw leghold type	1/27/2016	Regulatory Oversight & Reform (passed Committee 10/6/2016) (passed Assembly 10/20/2016) Referred to Sen Environ & Energy
SCR11		1/12/2016	Environment and Energy
ACR79	Proposes constitutional amendment to preserve right of people to fish, hunt, trap and harvest fish and wildlife	1/27/2016	Agriculture and Natural Resources
SCR27	Proposes constitutional amendment to preserve right of people to fish, hunt, trap and harvest fish and wildlife	1/12/2016	Environment and Energy

**Please Remember to Report Your Coyotes!**



Coyotes harvested by any method must be reported to a New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement office within 24 hours.

**Regional NJ Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Office phone numbers:**

<b>Northern Region Office</b>	<b>908-735-8240</b>
<b>Central Region Office</b>	<b>609-259-2120</b>
<b>Southern Region Office</b>	<b>856-629-0555</b>



**Please report any fisher or bobcat captures**  
**Call: 877-WARNDEP (877-927-6337)**



A bobcat captured on December 5, 2014 in Frelinghuysen Township, Warren County and ear tagged with NJDFW 00002 was recaptured twice in 2016. The first recapture occurred as an incidental in November 2016 and the animal was released. The second recapture occurred on the adjacent farm on December 31. Both the November and December capture sites were located approximately 108 linear miles away from the initial capture in Frelinghuysen – just north of Harrisburg PA!



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