

# WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2015 SUMMARY

## *Wildlife Diversity Program Note 16-2*

*Prepared by Bob Bluett, Division of Wildlife Resources, May 2016*

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 422 permits, down 21% from 2014. Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) issued 81 permits, up 11% from 2014. Based on a sample of 181 reports that were returned to IDNR by landowners and tenants, 75% of people who received permits captured  $\geq 1$  animal.

**Table 1.** Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2015<sup>a</sup>.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Raccoon	23	10	54	83	23	193
Beaver	22	7	14	16	26	85
Woodchuck	15	2	39	32	11	99
Muskrat	6	2	1	15	11	35
Squirrels	5	0	17	25	2	49
Striped skunk	5	4	1	9	12	31
Opossum	2	1	23	36	12	74
Coyote	8	1	4	6	4	23
Rabbit	2	2	5	4	3	16
Foxes	1	1	4	9	8	23
River otter	0	0	1	4	2	7
Bobcat	0	0	0	0	4	4
Chipmunk	0	1	0	2	0	3
Weasel	0	1	1	0	0	2
Other	3	1	0	1	1	6

<sup>a</sup>Includes 106 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 issued 712 Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits during 2015 (478 Class A; 32 Class B; 202 Class C). Most individuals (96%) submitted annual reports of their activities. 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 2015 decreased 5% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 98,422 animals (Table 3), down 9% from 2014. Estimates of numbers of bats excluded from structures in northwestern Illinois accounted for much of the overall decline, so we consider the change nominal. 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 2015, 237 raccoons were relocated illegally, 350 were released within 100 yards, and 205 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, 2015.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	4,288	55,688	2,869	2,535	1,584	66,964
Class C	6,262	21,744	972	1,927	553	31,458
Total	10,550	77,432	3,841	4,462	2,137	98,422

**Table 3.** Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2015.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats <sup>a</sup>	2,274	2,774	1,084	3,238	38	9,408
Beaver	249	970	199	133	95	1,646
Birds	1,744	2,145	246	696	4	4,835
Chipmunk	679	4,371	122	120	17	5,309
Coyote	197	432	47	73	86	835
Foxes	34	140	19	11	23	227
Ground squirrels	316	405	61	68	0	850
Muskrat	491	2,228	153	296	154	3,322
Opossum	795	5,008	562	1,170	183	7,718
Raccoon	3,844	16,910	1,640	2,767	459	25,620
Squirrels	729	16,709	751	810	140	19,139
Striped skunk	687	11,426	304	404	368	13,189
Woodchuck	696	775	305	424	90	2,290
Other	321	984	61	215	14	1,595
Total	13,056	65,277	5,554	10,425	1,671	95,983

<sup>a</sup>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 (Living with Wildlife in Illinois; <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/wildlife/>). Nevertheless, staff from the Division of Wildlife Resources devoted 2,378 hours to helping residents with wildlife problems and administering permits during 2015.

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, 2015.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats <sup>a</sup>	2,133	1,857	799	3,115	34	7,938
Beaver	0	64	1	0	19	84
Birds	151	1,202	103	52	3	1,511
Chipmunk	59	671	86	31	0	847
Coyote	0	34	0	1	20	55
Foxes	4	88	17	5	19	133
Ground squirrels	10	176	34	0	0	220
Muskrat	5	25	0	0	0	30
Opossum	121	1,048	63	135	67	1,434
Raccoon	130	451	76	100	35	792
Squirrels	238	1,630	83	234	46	2,231
Striped skunk	0	74	0	1	3	78
Woodchuck	74	179	30	34	31	348
Other	74	539	10	11	7	641
Total	2,999	8,038	1,302	3,719	284	16,342

<sup>a</sup>Includes permittees' estimates of bats that were excluded.