

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2022 SUMMARY

Wildlife Diversity Program Note 23-2

Prepared by Stan McTaggart, Division of Wildlife Resources, October 2023

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 132 permits, down 3.7% from 2021. Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 53 permits, down 4% from 2021.

Table 1. Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2022^a.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Badger	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beaver	6	3	9	10	3	31
Bobcat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coyote	3	1	0	2	0	6
Fox	3	1	0	2	0	6
Muskrat	2	0	1	5	3	11
Opossum	4	3	6	2	0	15
Rabbit	0	3	3	0	0	6
Raccoon	29	5	19	24	2	79
River Otter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skunk	3	4	3	1	0	11
Squirrel	3	4	8	3	0	18
Weasel	0	0	0	0	0	0
Woodchuck	5	2	28	4	1	40
Other	2	0	0	0	0	2

^a Includes 34 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 licensed 674 Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permits during 2022 (503 Class A; 1 Class B; 171 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 2022 decreased 5% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 75,167 animals (Table 3), up less than 1% from 2021. Reductions in the number of woodchuck, opossum, birds, chipmunks and skunks handled led the slight increase. Most wildlife conflicts (80%) 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 2022, 133 raccoons were relocated illegally, 485 were released within 100 yards, and 217 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, 2022.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	4,381	66,823	3,323	3,808	991	79,326
Class C	4,766	15,081	1,383	1,955	396	23,581
Total	9,147	81,904	4,706	5,763	1,387	102,907

Table 3. Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2022.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	272	983	101	47	9	1,412
Beaver	283	945	264	114	259	1,865
Birds	81	476	279	1,043	15	1,894
Chipmunk	390	6,893	284	109	125	7,801
Coyote	121	558	80	69	30	858
Foxes	22	67	19	4	2	114
Ground squirrels	153	364	38	4	14	573
Muskrat	220	2,424	125	175	451	3,395
Opossum	735	4,951	503	712	190	7,091
Raccoon	3,012	10,996	1,816	2,230	854	18,908
Squirrels	658	6,457	344	433	328	8,220
Striped skunk	554	15,196	344	1,106	334	17,534
Woodchuck	524	592	756	662	294	2,828
Other	1,546	162	163	642	161	2,674
Total	8,571	51,064	5,116	7,350	3,066	75,167

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

Permittees reported that 85% 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, 2022.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats ^a	3,463	871	635	1,389	1	6,359
Beaver	0	25	0	3	0	28
Birds	134	1,024	11	37	11	1,217
Chipmunk	43	728	23	15	0	809
Coyote	2	26	0	0	42	70
Foxes	12	70	35	11	22	150
Ground squirrels	3	87	0	0	3	93
Muskrat	2	26	0	0	1	29
Opossum	137	1,045	59	137	124	1,502
Raccoon	162	375	182	28	88	835
Squirrels	1	17	3	0	2	23
Striped skunk	122	1,378	105	204	21	1,830
Woodchuck	73	151	69	38	32	363
Other	0	5	0	0	0	5
Total	4,154	5,828	1,122	1,862	347	13,313

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