

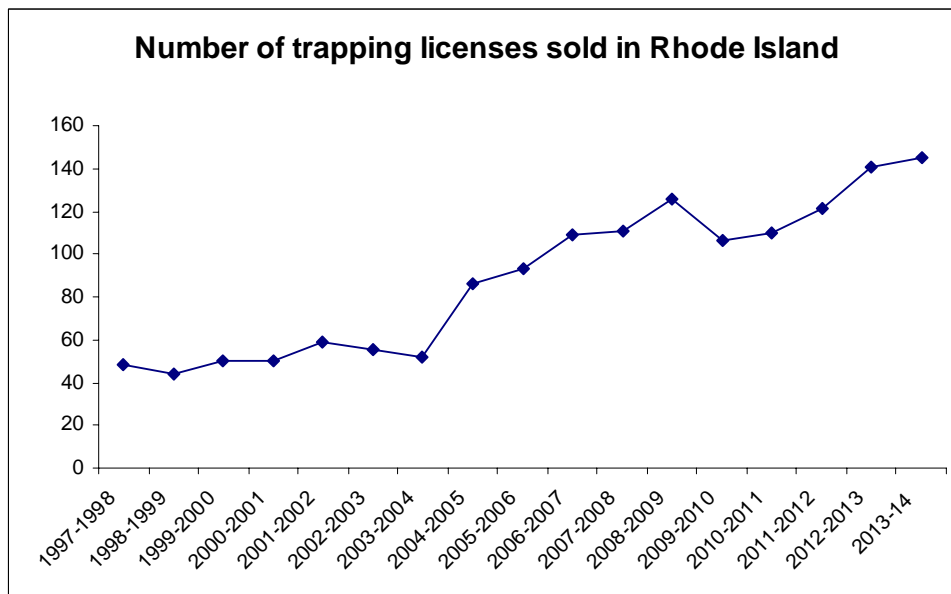


2013-2014 Rhode Island Furbearer Harvest Report Rhode Island DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife



Furbearers are those mammals that are harvested primarily for their pelts. In Rhode Island this would include muskrat, beaver, mink, raccoon, skunk, opossum, red and gray fox, coyote, weasels, and fisher. The collection of data through examination of trapper-caught carcasses, pelt tagging, and harvest questionnaires provide the primary basis for our management decisions. The attached furbearer harvest figures reflect only those furbearers harvested recreationally, (i.e. during the open season) and not those taken outside the open season under nuisance wildlife permits. Fur harvest figures are based on mandatory fur harvest reports which, by state law all trappers (i.e. anyone purchasing a trapping license) must return at the end of the trapping season.

A total of 145 trapping licenses were sold in Rhode Island for the 2013-14 season, a slight increase from last year (141) and a continuation of an increasing trend over the past ten years. The total recreational fur harvest stayed about the same as the 2012-13 harvest.



Beaver

The beaver harvest increased 21% from the previous season with 112 beaver taken during the 134 day season. Forty beaver trapping permits were issued, an increase from 33 permits issued for the previous season. Based on prices paid at the local fur auction, pelt values decreased about 14% from the previous year. At the March 2014 Rhode Island Trappers Association fur auction the average pelt price was \$14.88 compared to \$17.38 in 2013.

The season dates for 2014-15 will be as follows: November 1, 2014 through March 14, 2015 (134 days) on private lands and December 1, 2014 though February 28, 2015 (90

days) on state management areas. A beaver trapping permit, in addition to a R.I. trapping license is required to harvest beaver and is available at no charge at the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Great Swamp Field Headquarters in West Kingston. Beaver pelts must be affixed with a Division issued pelt tag prior to export or sale.

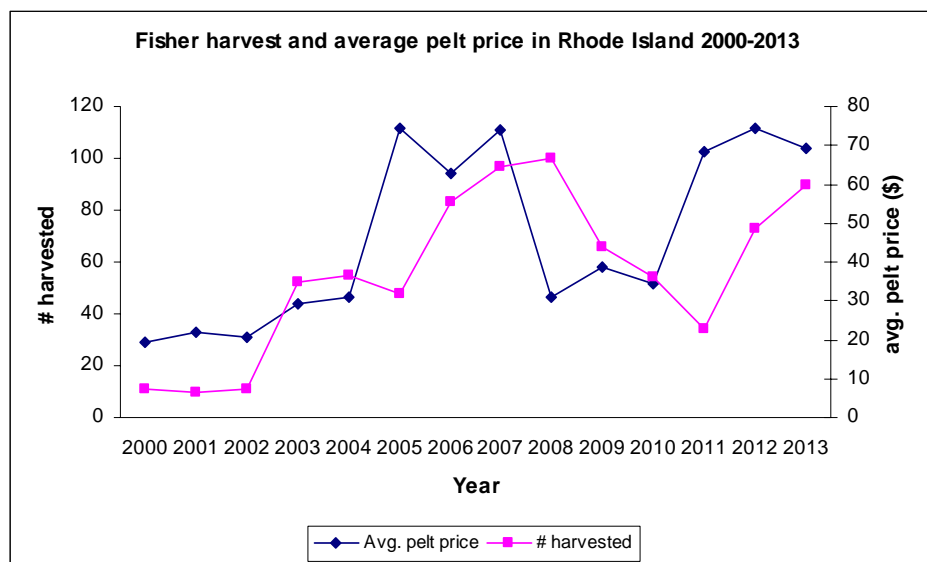
Fisher

Rhode Island trappers harvested 90 fishers during the 24-day season, a 23% increase from last year's total of 73. The Division issued 55 fisher trapping permits for 2013, an increase from last year (49). Forty permit holders made sets for fisher, with 80% (32) successful in taking at least one fisher. All fisher trappers are required to submit the heads of harvested fishers to the DFW to determine age and sex. Results from tooth cementum aging analysis of fisher collected in 2013 indicate that 49% of fisher taken during the season were juveniles. The ratio of juvenile to adult female (2 years or older) harvested in 2013 in Rhode Island was 2.4 juveniles to 1 adult female, a higher ratio than last year but still below what has been considered sustainable levels in other states. The ratio of juveniles to adult females greater than two years old has been used as an indicator of trapping pressure, with some studies indicating that in some areas ratios of less than 6:1 resulting in population declines. Fishers can be vulnerable to over-harvest and with increased pelt prices driving demand it is something we will have to closely monitor. The average pelt price paid to trappers at the March 2014 fur auction was \$69.23, a decrease of 7% from the previous year's average price of \$74.44.

The season dates for the 2014 season will be December 1, through December 24 inclusive, with the bag limit of four fishers. All fisher pelts must be tagged by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. We will again only be requiring trappers to submit the head of all fishers that they harvest. Bags will be provided to trappers when they receive their permits. Trappers will be required to include date of capture, town in which the animal was captured, and sex of the animal in order to receive a pelt tag.

Fisher trapping permits, which are required in addition to a current trapping license, are available at the Great Swamp Field Headquarters. A fisher trapper survey, included with the permit must be completed by each trapper whether they were

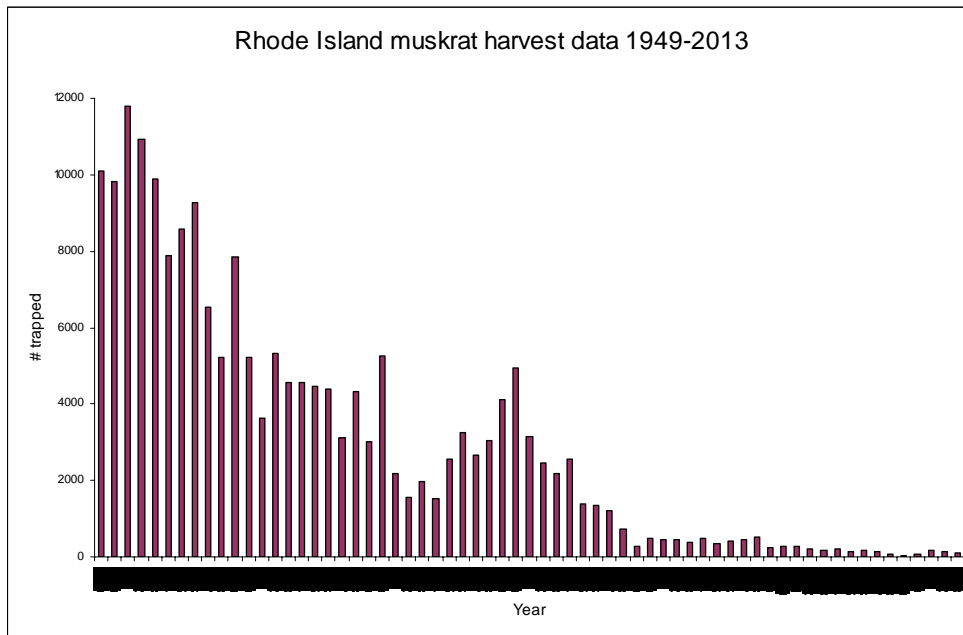
successful or not, and whether or not they set traps for fisher during the open season.



Muskrat

Muskrat populations continue to remain low across a wide geographic area and subsequently muskrat harvests in the state have remained very low for a number of years. The reasons for the apparent decrease are still not understood. One hundred fifteen muskrats were harvested this past season, a decrease from last year's harvest of 153. The average pelt price paid at the March fur auction was \$6.25, a decrease from last year's price of \$7.45.

In response to a request from a researcher from the University of North Dakota, we will be asking local trappers to voluntarily submit muskrat carcasses for a genetics study. We are only asked to submit eight samples for the state, taken from different areas so try to coordinate with the Division Biologist regarding the number of samples and locations from which they are collected.



Mink

Rhode Island trappers harvested 76 mink in 2013-14, more than the previous season total of 62. A total of 39 mink were collected from trappers or as road-kills for the continuing study by the U.S. EPA on mercury and other environmental contaminants. Canine teeth were removed for aging and stomach contents were examined as well with findings shown in the attached tables. The U.S. EPA Lab in Narragansett has expressed an interest in continuing to collect tissue samples so we again would request that trappers voluntarily submit skinned carcasses for the study during the upcoming season.

The average price paid for mink pelts at the March 2014 auction was \$14.66, a decrease of 6% from last year (\$15.55).

Legislation

There was only one legislative proposals introduced during the 2013-14 legislative session that would affect trapping or furbearer management. House Bill #7859 would have amended R.I. General Law 20-16-17 to grant the DEM authority to promulgate regulations for a river otter trapping season, an authority which the Department does not

currently have. The proposal had the support of the Department Director, and Fish and Wildlife Staff testified at a subcommittee meeting regarding the bill. Despite supporting testimony from the R.I. Trappers Association and the Federated Sportsman of Rhode Island, the bill was tabled without a committee vote.

Rabies

For the period of January to June 2014, the Rhode Island Department of Health tested a total of 250 wild and domestic mammals for the rabies virus. Rabies infection was confirmed in 12 animals in the state for that period, for an overall positivity rate of 4.8%. Positive tests were confirmed in seven raccoons (58% of total positives), two woodchucks (16%), one fox (8%), one skunk (8%) and one cat. Care should be taken when handling or skinning furbearers; particularly target species such as raccoons, skunks and foxes. Wear rubber gloves when skinning and do not skin animals that appeared sick or were behaving abnormally.

Best Management Practices (BMP's)

The total number of BMP documents released to date is 20 and represents the culmination of the largest national trap testing effort ever conducted. The research was the result of collaboration between state and federal fish and wildlife agencies in the U.S. and Canada and state and national trappers associations. BMP's are meant to serve as a guide to various agencies responsible for the management of furbearers. The goals of the BMP process are to:

- Promote regulated trapping as a modern wildlife management tool
- Identify practical traps and trapping techniques that continue to improve efficiency, selectivity, and welfare of trapped animals
- Provide specifications for traps that meet BMP criteria for individual species in various regions of the U.S.
- Provide wildlife professionals with information to evaluate trapping systems
- Instill public confidence in, and maintain public support for, wildlife management and trapping through distribution of science-based information.

Bobcat

The University of Rhode Island and the Division of Fish and Wildlife will be undertaking a cooperative study of bobcats in Rhode Island starting this fall. The goal of the project is to try to determine the distribution, relative abundance, and home-range size of bobcats in the state and to try to get an understanding of their movement patterns, particularly how they are affected by human development. We will be attempting to capture and affix radio collars to a number of bobcats and track their activities for up to one year. Bobcats will be captured using cage traps. Sighting reports, trail camera photos, and road-kills would suggest that bobcats appear to be increasing in number in our area. This five-year study will hopefully give us a better understanding of what habitats are important to bobcats, how they are using them and maybe an estimate of their numbers in the state.

Miscellaneous

Rhode Island trappers have in the past been very helpful in providing sighting reports and specimens non-furbearing mammals in the state. Over the past several years I have collected valuable specimens of long-tail weasels, southern flying squirrels, star-nosed moles and other species from local trappers. Voucher specimens provide valuable information on distribution of some of our lesser-known mammals. I would be interested in collecting whole specimens of weasels, flying squirrels, moles, bats, shrews or other small mammals whenever possible.

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2014-15 Dates

November 1st – Trapping season for muskrat, mink, raccoon, skunk, opossum, rabbit, foxes, weasels, and beaver (private land) begins.
December 1st – Beaver (state land) and fisher seasons begin.
December 24th – Fisher season ends.
December 31st – Last day to present fisher pelts for tagging and to submit heads.
January 31, 2015 – Trapping season ends (except for beaver).
February 28, 2015 – Beaver season ends on state land only.
March 14, 2015 – Beaver season ends.
March 15th – Time to return your fur harvest report card!

Furbearer harvest in Rhode Island 1978-2014

Year	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Otter	Raccoon	Skunk	Coyote	Weasel	Fisher	Beaver	Total
1978	86	21	80	3045	62	23	286	82	0	7		0	3692
1979	62	42	100	4130	255	2	379	140	2	21			5133
1980	47	42	161	4952	279	3	542	98	1	35		1	6161
1981	65	36	165	3163	322		591	106		11			4459
1982	53	48	69	2448	322		503	67		11			3521
1983	40	12	42	2189	152		243	13		1			2692
1984	61	17	63	2543	204		255	30		4			3177
1985	40	15	48	1375	190		213	50		7			1938
1986	55	10	76	1337	171		253	34		8			1944
1987	34	17	67	1211	166		331	29		12			1867
1988	23	9	58	728	62		120	13		2			1015
1989	12	11	63	284	32		42	6		0			450
1990	9	6	65	473	35		78	8	2	0		12	688
1991	3	4	109	442	25		74	6		3		7	673
1992	0	3	65	461	82		306	67		4		0	988
1993	2	3	69	367	39		294	83		2		0	859
1994	5	0	56	472	57		342	90		0		6	1028
1995	2	3	71	356	64		347	112		2		19	976
1996	2	0	85	417	55		232	63	1	0		20	875
1997	1	6	79	454	73		158	246	0	0		56	1073
1998	8	2	54	512	123	4*	230	309	2	0		72	1316
1999	8	11	49	243	125	4*	173	381	0	4		66	1064
2000	18	2	47	275	172	3*	232	512	4	0	11	56	1329
2001	4	4	46	283	122	0	207	518	2	1	10	148	1345
2002	5	8	46	216	302	1*	322	719	1	1	11	33	1664
2003^	3	6	57	177	28	2*	69	94	12	2	52	147	743
2004^	0	5	80	197	10	4*	26	10	1	2	55	88	474
2005^	4	5	86	152	13	2*	67	7	1	3	49	90	476
2006^	1	8	82	161	8	6*	62	4	1	2	83	124	536
2007^	12	10	114	126	39	0	82	30	6	0	97	63	579
2008^	13	20	63	58	18	1*	82	19	3	14	100	73	463
2009^	11	9	34	42	12	0	47	10	10	0	66	39	280
2010^	3	8	49	83	18	1*	70	12	2	3	54	75	377
2011^	15	13	59	184	24	0	86	16	21	3	34	93	548
2012^	4	9	62	153	36	0	68	33	21	4	73	91	554
2013^	4	10	76	115	30	0	82	17	10	0	90	112	546

Harvest numbers based on mandatory fur harvest reports and pelt tagging (beaver, fisher)

*Incidentals to beaver trapping

^does not include those animals reported taken under nuisance wildlife control permit outside the open season

Species	Providence County	Kent County	Washington County	Newport County	Bristol County	Total of Species
Coyote	1	0	9	0	0	10
Muskrat	38	32	40	5	0	115
Raccoon	28	8	24	22	0	82
Red Fox	2	1	1	0	0	4
Gray Fox	6	0	4	0	0	10
Skunk	10	1	1	0	5	17
Fisher	33	20	34	2	1	90
Mink	8	30	29	9	0	76
Weasel	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opossum	18	1	1	7	3	30
Other*	29	10	6	16	0	61
Beaver	59	12	41	0	0	112
Total:^	232	115	190	61	9	607

* includes: gray squirrel, red squirrel, woodchuck, rabbit

^does not include those animals reported taken under nuisance wildlife control permit outside the open season

Average pelt prices* received by Rhode Island trappers 1977-2014

Year	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Otter	Raccoon	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Beaver	Fisher	Coyote	Skunk	Total Value (\$)
1977	20.00	5.25	2.00	40.00	30.00	60.00	37.00					23,976.00
1978	21.33	5.43	4.90	45.57	29.98	76.02	50.03					35,642.00
1979	30.66	7.35	4.36	61.62	29.11	57.56	54.06					52,096.00
1980	21.05	6.86	3.91	51.46	23.71	56.86	45.22					58,610.00
1981	20.94	5.21	1.38		20.75	48.20	32.46					36,944.00
1982	21.70	3.49	1.07		17.17	40.26	33.76					22,803.00
1983	23.23	4.77	1.10		12.52	34.88	33.55					16,425.00
1984	27.85	4.42	2.59		15.12	29.81	30.76					19,735.00
1985	17.61	3.33	1.62		13.24	13.71	15.44					9,445.00
1986	26.47	4.87	2.10		21.26	32.16	36.23				1.90	16,456.00
1987	34.48	5.33	1.93		15.80	17.00	31.71				NA	14,414.00
1988	31.42	3.32	1.26		5.95	20.48	17.20				1.35	5,263.00
1989	23.32	1.30	0.85		3.74	7.37	8.23				NA	2,202.00
1990	23.56	1.05	1.14		5.45	9.83	5.00				NA	2,267.00
1991	27.50	2.40	1.78		7.16	15.38	10.50				NA	4,720.00
1992	16.65	1.73	0.72		6.60	10.19	8.56				2.59	4,157.00
1993	16.60	2.42	0.91		8.08	NA	11.07				1.40	3,409.00
1994	10.68	2.93	1.22		11.26	16.15	9.92				2.39	6,197.35
1995	11.96	2.81	1.46		8.90	NA	11.24	NA			2.10	5,606.46
1996	19.37	5.52	1.75		16.73	14.37	10.04	NA			NA	4,667.67
1997	10.87	3.57	0.70		13.60	15.06	10.65	22.96		NA	2.51	5,166.42
1998	9.62	1.44	0.75		6.61	6.89	5.46	15.65		NA	2.28	5,030.23
1999	7.99	2.49	0.69		3.35	13.39	6.45	12.95		10.79	1.98	3,471.11
2000	7.25	2.22	2.01		6.90	16.17	8.54	13.59	19.18	19.67	3.72	6,161.25
2001	7.43	3.89	0.91		10.38	13.03	11.36	16.75	22.10	21.07	4.91	2,812.03
2002	8.17	3.55	2.30		10.35	12.11	17.13	13.31	20.56	32.40	4.99	2,719.92
2003	11.48	2.64	2.29		9.71	20.46	17.04	17.81	29.33	20.80	4.40	2,964.58
2004	15.38	2.25	2.92		6.68	17.25	15.25	16.76	30.83	16.50	4.15	2,146.17
2005	20.62	5.31	2.65		8.42	17.62	21.59	20.32	74.24	27.51	5.43	4,847.19
2006	11.10	4.20	2.26	47.56^	9.97	22.09	41.33	22.95	62.70	34.27	5.88	7,450.03
2007	9.99	2.95	1.53	41.49^	18.48	23.05	30.01	21.27	74.17	25.00	4.43	12,419.41
2008	7.06	2.78	1.09		5.47	8.25	7.00	7.86	31.06	4.00	3.00	5,070.21
2009	10.00	4.73	1.50	38.65^	10.20	7.33	10.50	10.43	38.65	12.70	1.80	4,313.86
2010	14.05	4.84	NA	NA	7.95	21.25	19.17	15.15	34.56	14.64	2.50	4,952.55
2011	16.64	8.08	2.33	NA	7.13	23.89	25.80	25.89	68.19	7.57	2.00	8,748.53
2012	15.55	7.45	1.25	NA	16.00	20.33	26.00	17.38	74.44	8.50	3.00	10,845.47
2013	14.66	6.25	1.77	NA	8.33	41.67	15.00	14.88	69.23	NA	2.33	9,822.62

* based on Rhode Island Trappers Association fur auction sales

^ tagged in other states