

Wildlife Diversity Program Note 04-3

NUISANCE WILDLIFE CONTROL IN ILLINOIS - 2003 SUMMARY

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Nuisance Animal Removal Permits

Nuisance Animal Removal Permits are issued directly to a landowner or tenant if an investigation confirms the existence of damage and a lack of effective alternatives. These permits are valid only for the property where damage is occurring. The issuing officer specifies the means by which animals may be taken, the disposition of any animals taken, and the period for which the permit is valid (up to 90 days).

IDNR issued 735 Nuisance Animal Removal Permits to landowners/tenants during 2003, down 29% from 2002. Staff

from the Office of Resource Conservation (ORC) issued 609 permits (83%); staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 125 (17%). The origin of 1 permit was unclear.

Vacancies in ORC probably accounted for declines in numbers of permits issued in Regions II ($n = 143$; -43%) and III ($n = 115$; -54%); similar numbers of permits were issued in Regions I ($n = 254$), IV ($n = 126$) and V ($n = 97$). Raccoons, beavers, and woodchucks were the most common sources of problems (Table 1). Based on reports received by the Wildlife Diversity Program ($n = 248$), most landowners (66%) who obtained permits removed ≥ 1 animal.

Table 1. Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2003^a.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Raccoon	84	74	37	25	33	253 (-39) ^b
Beaver	62	11	10	39	34	156 (+4)
Woodchuck	60	5	20	9	9	103 (-44)
Muskrat	11	4	4	29	13	61 (-23)
Squirrel (spp.)	29	19	15	11	3	77 (-14)
Striped Skunk	4	21	6	7	5	43 (-20)
Opossum	25	13	15	11	9	73 (-25)
Coyote	6	18	1	9	1	35 (+75)
Rabbit	11	3	10	8	4	36 (-5)
Fox	2	1	2	2	2	9 (-53)

^aIncludes 104 permits that were issued for >1 species (i.e., no. permits by species > no. permits issued).

^bNumbers in parentheses are percent change from 2002.

Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits

Adoption of Title 17, Ill. Adm. Code, Part 525 during 1991 authorized IDNR to issue Class A (Commercial), Class B (Volunteer), and Class C (Governmental) Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits. Under this program, permittees are authorized to provide nuisance wildlife management services for other people. Part 525 specifies methods and devices for capturing wildlife, species that can be controlled, conditions and options for the disposition of animals that are captured, and reporting requirements.

IDNR issued 545 Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits during 2003 (351 Class A;

26 Class B; 168 Class C). The reporting rate was 97.6% for all classes combined. We made no attempt to correct data for non-reporting because of the large variation in numbers of complaints serviced by individual permittees.

Numbers of complaints reportedly serviced by permittees decreased 18% from 2002 to 2003. Commercial and governmental permittees serviced similar numbers of complaints; volunteers serviced comparatively few ($n = 608$) (Table 2). Permittees handled 63,812 animals (Table 3), down 8.2% from the previous year. Most complaints (83.1%) were serviced by permittees in Region II, which includes the greater Chicago metropolitan area.

Table 2. Complaints serviced by Nuisance Wildlife Control permittees in Illinois, 2003.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	2,521	29,099	1,551	1,374	370	34,915
Class C	1,698	26,640	951	2,056	796	32,141
Total	4,219	55,739	2,502	3,430	1,166	67,056

Table 3. Numbers of animals handled by Nuisance Wildlife Control Permittees in Illinois, 2003.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bat (spp.)	990	998	316	133	45	2,482 (-12.5) ^a
Beaver	258	786	243	211	58	1,556 (+2.9)
Bird (spp.)	948	2,315	510	233	41	4,047 (+49.8)
Chipmunk	139	1,866	61	66	45	2,177 (+7.9)
Coyote	82	357	80	42	27	588 (+8.5)
Fox (spp.)	10	73	13	25	10	131 (+28.4)
Grnd. squirrel (spp.)	58	490	67	7	6	628 (+51.0)
Muskrat	334	951	212	281	71	1,849 (-19.6)
Opossum	670	6,448	694	664	199	8,675 (-1.8)
Raccoon	2,816	13,669	1,259	1,190	288	19,222 (-20.6)
Striped skunk	261	3,900	147	179	61	4,548 (-6.2)
Squirrel (spp.)	605	12,179	684	554	130	14,152 (-11.9)
Woodchuck	787	783	421	232	86	2,309 (-2.2)
Other	253	988	82	81	44	1,448 (+95.4)
Total	8,211	45,803	4,789	3,898	1,111	63,812 (-8.2)

^aNumbers in parentheses are percent change from 2002.

Disposition of Animals Removed by Nuisance Wildlife Control Permittees

Illinois law has required euthanasia of striped skunks since 1991. From 1991 through 1999, euthanasia or relocation (>10 but <40 miles) were allowed for other common species defined as game or furbearing mammals. In 1999, laws were amended to limit relocation of raccoons because of high numbers and associated risks of spreading diseases or creating artificially high populations near release sites, thereby compounding nuisance wildlife problems in nearby residential areas, increasing predation of birds and other wildlife, and disrupting behavioral mechanisms in resident populations.

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 is also a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. In 2003, 149 raccoons were relocated illegally, 793 were released within 100 yards, and 130 were surrendered to rehabilitators. Those who reported relocating raccoons or skunks were sent a reminder that this activity was prohibited.

Overall, permittees reported that 80% of the animals they handled were killed or taken by lethal means (Table 4). This proportion has increased since the program started (31% in 1991; 44% in 1992, 51% in 1993, 58% in 1994, 60% in 1995, 66% in 1996 and 1997, 70% in 1998, 76% in 1999 and 2000, 78% in 2001, 80% in 2002), mostly because of educational efforts by IDNR, Forest Preserve policies that prohibit or limit relocation, and costs associated with transporting animals to release sites.

Discussion

Data presented in this summary are conservative estimates of nuisance wildlife problems in Illinois. Many residents in urban areas who are not aware of permit requirements undertake removal efforts without the Department's knowledge. In rural areas, many nuisance furbearers (especially raccoons, muskrats, and beavers) are removed by sport trappers and hunters during legal seasons.

Conflicts between humans and wildlife are likely to continue to increase because of: (1) urban expansion, (2) high and/or increasing populations of many types of urban wildlife, and (3) improved habitat as landscaping matures in older communities.

Table 4. Animals relocated, released on site or surrendered to wildlife rehabilitators by Nuisance Wildlife Control Permittees in Illinois, 2003.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bat (spp.)	962	580	232	58	9	1,841 (74) ^a
Beaver	0	13	0	3	0	16 (1)
Bird (spp.)	144	1,278	82	42	30	1,576 (39)
Chipmunk	35	707	30	22	4	798 (37)
Coyote	0	5	1	0	23	29 (5)
Fox (spp.)	0	39	6	14	7	66 (50)
Ground squirrel (spp.)	0	85	5	0	4	94 (15)
Muskrat	1	23	0	0	0	24 (1)
Opossum	204	1,762	99	197	95	2,357 (27)
Raccoon	201	694	20	129	28	1,072 (6)
Striped skunk	19	53	3	76	3	154 (3)
Squirrel (spp.)	221	3,457	93	189	108	4,068 (29)
Woodchuck	77	202	40	46	55	420 (18)
Other	76	373	46	40	17	552 (38)
Total	1,940	9,271	657	816	383	13,067 (20)

^aNumbers in parentheses are percent of animals relocated, released on site, or rehabilitated.