

# WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ILLINOIS – 2018 SUMMARY

## *Wildlife Diversity Program Note 19-2*

*Prepared by Stan McTaggart, Division of Wildlife Resources, September 2019*

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 309 permits, up 1.6% from 2018.

Staff from the Office of Law Enforcement issued 55 permits, down 39.6% from 2018.

**Table 1.** Numbers of Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued for selected species in Illinois, 2018<sup>a</sup>.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Badger	0	0	0	1	0	1
Beaver	12	23	6	6	6	53
Bobcat	0	0	0	1	2	3
Coyote	1	3	2	6	5	17
Fox	1	0	3	6	2	12
Muskrat	3	11	0	6	4	24
Opossum	0	21	3	22	3	49
Rabbit	1	10	1	5	0	17
Raccoon	7	79	12	51	11	160
River Otter	3	0	0	3	2	8
Skunk	0	46	1	2	2	51
Squirrel	4	40	3	11	4	62
Weasel	0	0	0	0	0	0
Woodchuck	2	5	6	24	3	40
Other	5	3	0	2	3	13

<sup>a</sup> Includes 111 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 751 Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Permits during 2018 (538 Class A; 1 Class B; 213 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 2018 increased 3% from the previous year (Table 2). Permittees handled 70,772 animals (Table 3), down 27% from 2017. Reductions in the number of bats, birds, chipmunks, muskrats and squirrels handled led the decline. Most wildlife conflicts (81%) 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 2018, 136 raccoons were relocated illegally, 281 were released within 100 yards, and 185 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, 2018.

Permit type	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Class A & B	4,463	63,300	2,804	4,166	1,464	76,197
Class C	3,025	17,898	690	1,862	608	24,083
Total	7,488	81,198	3,494	6,028	2,072	100,280

**Table 3.** Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2018.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats <sup>a</sup>	308	816	94	28	5	1251
Beaver	274	692	215	100	80	1361
Birds	118	1969	193	461	39	2780
Chipmunk	470	2565	61	188	127	3411
Coyote	142	308	26	55	14	545
Foxes	19	65	1	13	1	99
Ground squirrels	278	635	41	36	0	990
Muskrat	331	2111	391	194	36	3063
Opossum	749	4822	467	548	162	6748
Raccoon	3067	12,538	971	1866	601	19,043
Squirrels	488	11,971	566	776	260	14,061
Striped skunk	514	10,984	137	388	259	12,282
Woodchuck	465	587	343	356	147	1898
Other	889	198	403	1136	614	3240
Total	8112	50261	3909	6145	2345	70,772

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

Permittees reported that 76% 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, 2018.

Species	Region					Statewide
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Bats <sup>a</sup>	6889	1120	408	2757	3103	14277
Beaver	2	36	1	0	2	41
Birds	104	1118	17	32	1	1272
Chipmunk	128	627	81	17	0	853
Coyote	13	24	0	0	21	58
Foxes	24	105	28	5	15	177
Ground squirrels	17	205	32	0	0	254
Muskrat	4	46	0	8	0	58
Opossum	120	1375	44	166	77	1782
Raccoon	155	289	48	79	31	602
Squirrels	183	1285	43	207	34	1752
Striped skunk	1	44	0	0	2	47
Woodchuck	121	146	51	38	39	395
Other	38	199	0	31	14	282
<b>Total</b>	<b>7799</b>	<b>6619</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>3340</b>	<b>3339</b>	<b>21850</b>

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