

**ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

**2005-2006 Furbearing Animal Report**

Prepared by

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## 2005-2006 Furbearing Animal Report

### Abstract

During the 2005-2006 fur-taking season, 25,714 pelts valued at \$563,630.21 were purchased by licensed Arkansas furdealers. Compared to the 2004-2005 season the number of pelts sold decreased by 6% and the total value of the harvest increased by 73%, primarily due to an increase in otter value. A survey of non-resident furtakers found that approximately 67% were hunters, most of whom purchased the permit only to hunt raccoon. Non-resident fur hunters primarily utilized National Wildlife refuges and non-leased private land and most non-resident trappers used non-leased private land. This year two new surveys were begun to gather information on furbearer population. Information on relative distribution of bobcat, coyote, gray fox, opossum, raccoon, and red fox was obtained by including them on the existing bowhunter observation survey that included over 14,000 hours of data in 2005-2006. Raccoon field trial clubs were surveyed on raccoon seen while participating in sanctioned field trial events that will provide useful data on raccoon population trends in the state.

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## **PART 1: FUR PURCHASES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The harvest of furbearing animals is important both recreationally and economically to many Arkansans. The hunting and trapping of furbearers, accompanied by the subsequent marketing of fur pelts, contributes to the state's economy. Hunting and trapping helps reduce wildlife damage and may help reduce disease in wildlife populations by preventing furbearer populations from reaching unhealthy levels. Fur-takers, therefore, are an effective and vital tool for managing this renewable resource.

The 2005-2006 private land fur-taking seasons were:

#### **General Furbearer Hunting,**

Sunrise September 1, 2005 – Sunset, February 28, 2006 (Limit 2 per day per species except no limit on beaver, muskrat, nutria or skunk)

#### **General Furbearer Trapping,**

Sunrise, November 11, 2005 – Sunset, February 5, 2006 (No limit)

#### **Muskrat, Nutria, Beaver Trapping:**

Sunrise November 11, 2005 – Sunset, March 31, 2006 (No Limit)

#### **Coyote Trapping**

August 1, 2005 – March 31, 2006 (No limit).

#### **Raccoon Hunting:**

July 31 – August 31, 2005 (night, with dogs, Limit 1); November 11, 2005 – March 31, 2006 (day or night, No limit)

#### **Coyote Hunting:**

October 1, 2005 – February 28, 2006 (dogs allowed, no limit); April 2-3 (in all Turkey Zones except 17 where it is March 26-27); April 9 (April 2 in Turkey Zone 17), 2006 – June 11, 2006 (no dogs, no limit)

### **METHODS**

Statewide pelt purchase totals are obtained from Fur Dealer Report Booklets and are calculated each year by county and physiographic region. Each county has been assigned to a specific physiographic region, even though a county may lie in parts of two physiographic regions. This data enables us to estimate the worth of the furbearer resource and, in conjunction with other biological data, helps us to objectively manage these species.

Fur buyers are required to record all pelt purchases in Fur Dealer Report Booklets. Fur dealers were supplied these booklets and instructed to complete and return them within 30 days following the close of the fur-taking season. All fur dealers were issued self-addressed, stamped envelopes for the return of these booklets. During the 2005-2006 fur-taking season, 38 fur dealers were licensed (25 resident and 13 non-resident) which is an increase of 3 from the previous year (Figure 1). Reports were returned from all dealers. Pelt prices are based on the average of the reported average green pelt sale price at the two large fur sales held in Arkansas; Russellville (January 28, 2006) and Malvern (February 11, 2006). These fur sales amounted to 33% of pelt sales in Arkansas and should be representative of overall fur prices. Information on trapping violations was obtained from the Enforcement Division and accident information from the Education Division.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the 2005-2006 fur-taking season, 25,714 pelts valued at \$563,630.21 were purchased by licensed furdealers in Arkansas. Furbearer sales for the 2005-2006 season and percent change from 2004-05 season were: badger 0; beaver 7,637 (+17%); bobcat 1,524 (+16%); coyote 346 (-15%); gray fox 889 (-31%); long-tailed weasel 0; mink 586 (-8%); muskrat 423 (-33%); nutria 267 (+36%); opossum 804 (-284%); raccoon 10,463 (-11%); red fox 66 (-8%); river otter 2,665 (+16%); spotted skunk 7 (+17%); and striped skunk 37 (-354%) (Table 1, Figures 2-16). Compared to the 2004-2005 season the number of pelts sold decreased by 6% and the total value of the harvest increased by 73%, primarily due to an increase in otter value (Table 2).

Furbearer harvest pressure is affected by animal population fluctuations, by the current prices paid for fur and by the weather. Any of these factors can increase or decrease the harvest of furbearing animals. Also, harvest pressure changes geographically within the state over time. No information is available on the number of resident furtakers in 2005-2006 though in 2002-2003 residents were required to obtain a free furtakers permit prior to harvesting any furbearing animal (any method). The 7,847 permits issued that year represents a significant drop in the number of resident furtakers from 1983, which was the last time a resident furtakers permit was required. Non-residents are required to obtain a Non-Resident Furtakers Permit (\$100). The number of permitted non-resident furtakers increased from 104 in 2004-2005 to 113 in 2005-2006 (+9%)(Figure 17). More information on resident and non-resident furtakers can be found in Part 2.

Reported purchases of bobcat and otter by furdealers are known to under-represent the number of these species taken within Arkansas. In accordance with federal law pelts of these species must be tagged prior to leaving the state. While only 2,665 otter and 1,524 bobcat were purchased in Arkansas a total of 3,430 otter and 2,071 bobcat were tagged in 2005-2006. A similar pattern was observed in the 2003 and 2004 seasons. While some of these animals may have been taken in previous years, it is clear that our current system of furdealer reporting is missing a significant percentage of otter and bobcat harvest which may have a serious impact on assessments of county and regional harvest trends. The actual harvest of other furbearers is also probably under-represented by furdealer purchase records since many trappers and hunters ship their pelts from the state to dealers who are not required to have Arkansas furdealer permits.

In Arkansas, Act 1358 of 1997 (Conservation District Beaver Control Program) has continued to maintain an interest in beaver trapping, and beaver pelts, though the distribution of bounty funding among counties is somewhat haphazard. Under this program administered by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (formerly the Soil and Water Conservation Commission), approximately 30,000 beavers are taken annually at a cost to the state of \$150,000 (which is appropriated by the Legislature and not the AGFC). The annual reported sales of beaver in 2005-2006 were only 7,637, some of which may have also had their tails submitted for bounty payment. While it is clear that bounties have encouraged the taking of beaver, the effectiveness of this program in reducing actual nuisance problems in high beaver-density counties has not yet been evaluated.

Information on violations of furbearer regulation violations and on furbearer-related hunting and trapping accidents is presented in Figures 18-23.

**Table 1. 2005-2006 FURBEARING ANIMAL SALES.**

	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Nutria	Opossum	Raccoon	Red Fox	River Otter	Spotted skunk	Striped Skunk	Weasel
<b>PRICE*</b>	n/a	\$12.01	\$47.99	\$9.07	\$16.58	\$15.28	\$4.25	\$1.66	\$0.33	\$4.09	\$14.35	\$122.14	\$22.00	\$1.00	n/a
<b>DELTA</b>	0	3,331	316	20	36	370	278	55	264	3,735	6	978	1	2	0
<b>GULF COASTAL PLAIN</b>	0	2,704	645	124	474	103	33	210	180	4,431	35	1,239	0	5	0
<b>OUACHITA MOUNTAINS</b>	0	1,103	349	64	130	48	38	0	109	1,020	8	295	3	8	0
<b>OZARK MOUNTAINS</b>	1	469	209	138	238	64	74	2	251	1,248	17	140	3	22	0
<b>UNKNOWN REGION**</b>	0	30	5	0	11	1	0	0	0	29	0	13	0	0	0
<b>Grand Totals</b>	1	7,637	1,524	346	889	586	423	267	804	10,463	66	2,665	7	37	0

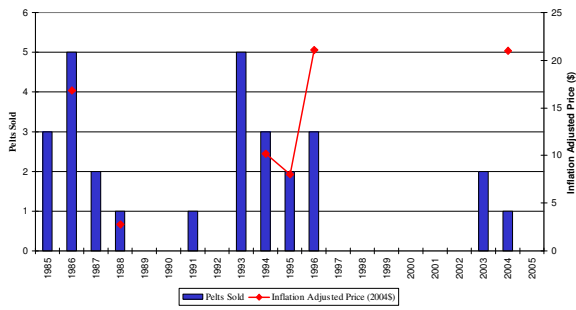
\* Average prices paid for green pelts statewide based on average of Russellville and Malvern fur sales.

\*\* Pelts for which Fur Dealers did not record the county (therefore a region could not be determined).

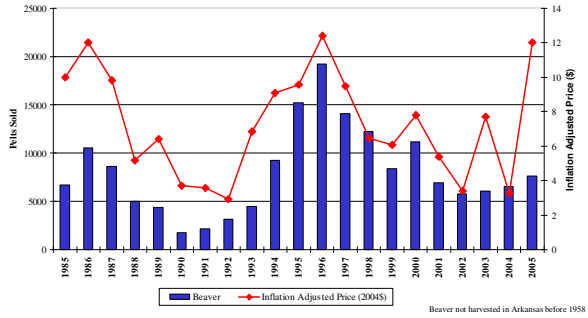
**TABLE 2. ESTIMATED VALUE OF ARKANSAS FUR SALES FOR 2005-2006.**

Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
Badger	1	n/a	n/a
Beaver	7,637	\$12.01	\$91,720.37
Bobcat	1,524	\$47.99	\$73,136.76
Coyote	346	\$9.07	\$3,138.22
Gray Fox	889	\$16.58	\$14,739.62
Mink	586	\$15.28	\$8,954.08
Muskrat	423	\$4.25	\$1,797.75
Nutria	267	\$1.66	\$443.22
Opossum	804	\$0.33	\$265.32
Raccoon	10,463	\$4.09	42,793.67
Red Fox	66	\$14.35	\$947.10
River Otter	2,665	\$122.14	\$325,503.10
Spotted Skunk	7	\$22.00	\$154.00
Striped Skunk	37	\$1.00	\$37.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>25,714</b>		<b>\$563,630.21</b>

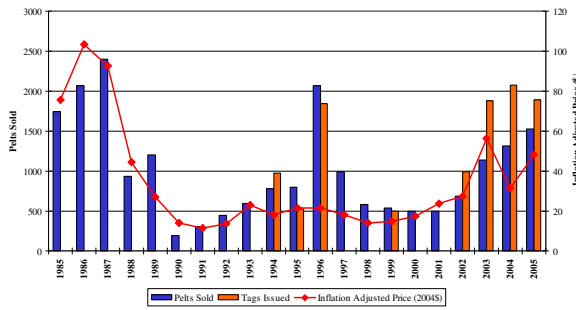
**Figure 2**  
Arkansas Badger Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



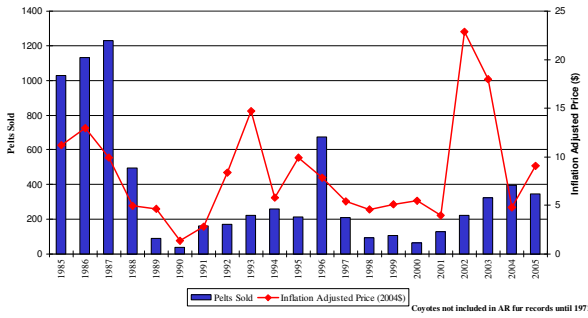
**Figure 3**  
Arkansas Beaver Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



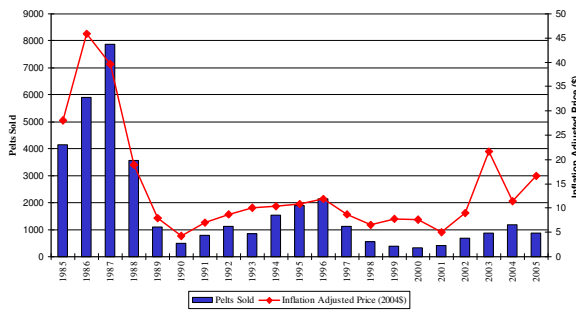
**Figure 4**  
Arkansas Bobcat Purchases and Tags  
Issued, 1985 - 2005



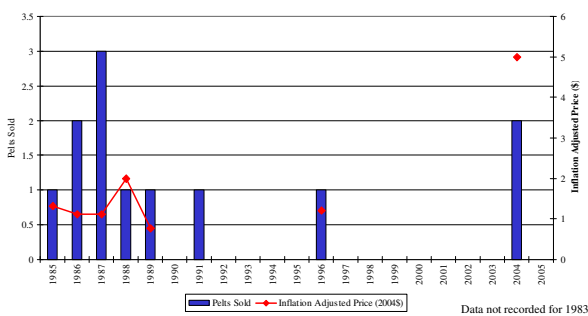
**Figure 5**  
Arkansas Coyote Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



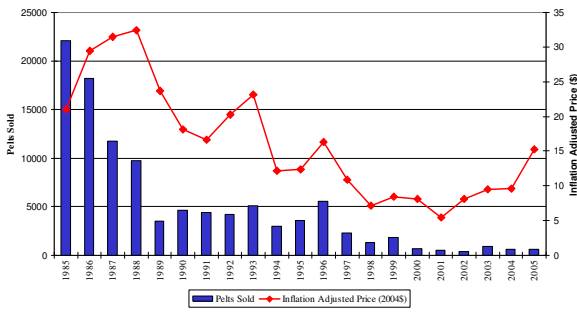
**Figure 6**  
Arkansas Gray Fox Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



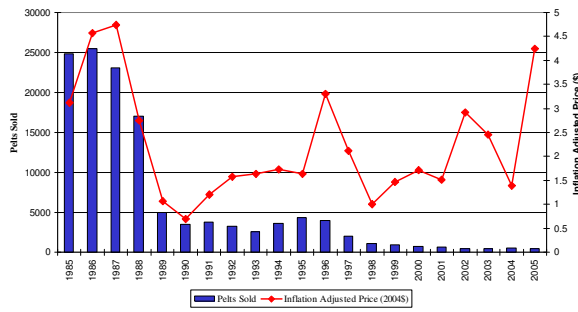
**Figure 7**  
Arkansas Long-tailed Weasel  
Purchases, 1985 - 2005



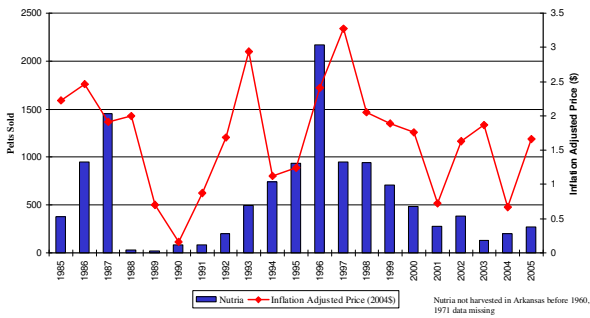
**Figure 8**  
Arkansas Mink Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



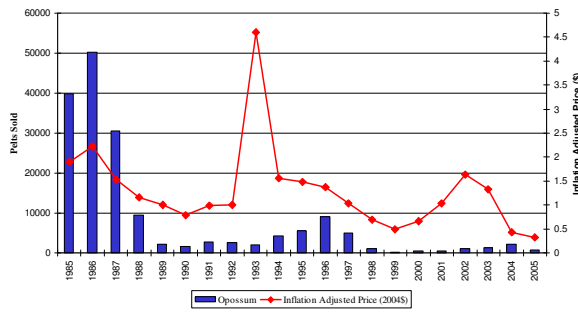
**Figure 9**  
Arkansas Muskrat Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



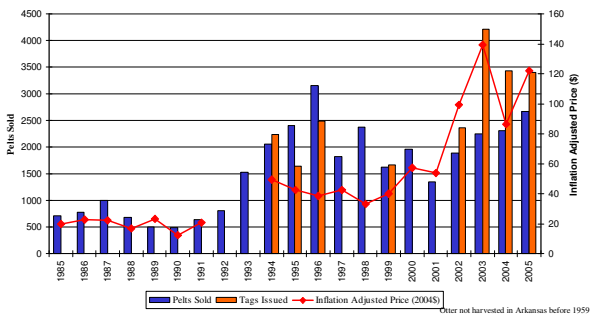
**Figure 10**  
Arkansas Nutria Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



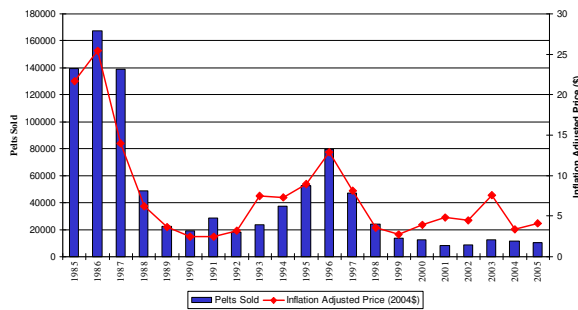
**Figure 11**  
Arkansas Opossum Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



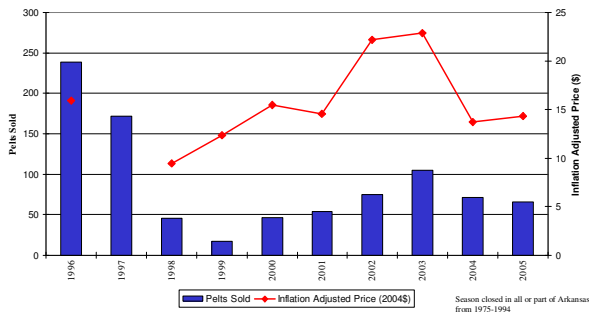
**Figure 12**  
Arkansas Otter Purchases and Tags  
Issued, 1985 - 2005



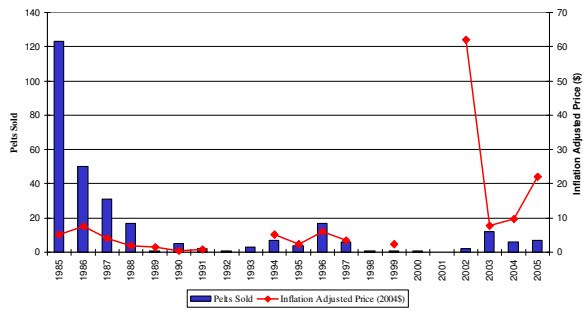
**Figure 13**  
Arkansas Raccoon Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



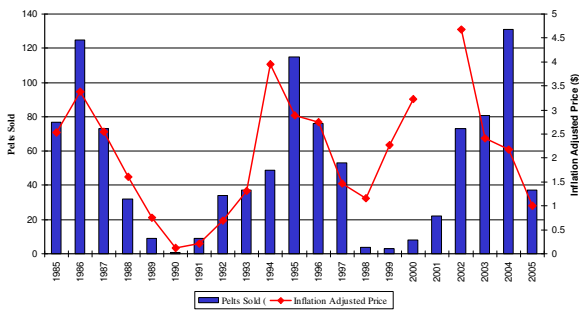
**Figure 14**  
Arkansas Red Fox Purchases,  
1996 - 2005



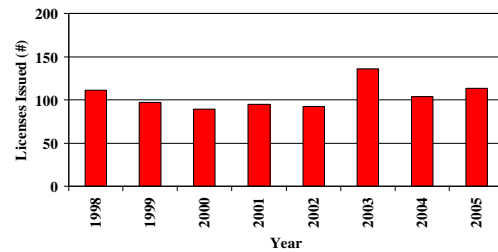
**Figure 15**  
Arkansas Spotted Skunk Purchases,  
1985 - 2005



**Figure 16**  
Arkansas Striped Skunk Purchases,  
1985 - 2005

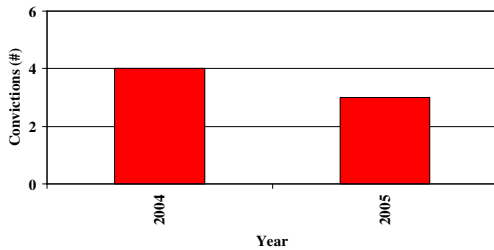


**Figure 17**  
Non-Resident Furtaker Licenses in  
Arkansas, 1999-2005



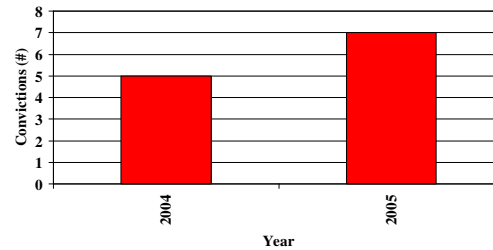
Each year represents licenses active July 1 to June 30 of the following year

**Figure 18. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Furbearer Season Violations (Code 02.07) in Arkansas, 2004-2005**



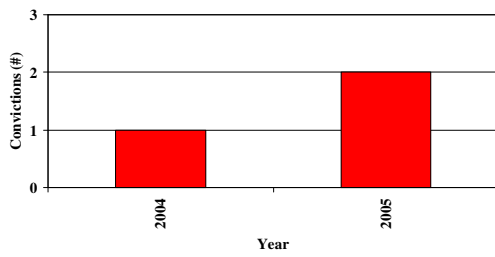
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July - June)

**Figure 19. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Regular Furbearing Season Trap Violations (Code 10.02) in Arkansas, 2004-2005**



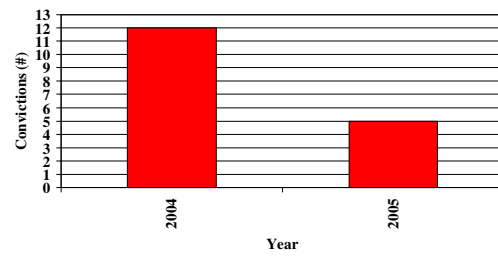
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July - June)

**Figure 20. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Trap Checking Violations (Code 10.06) in Arkansas, 2000-2004**



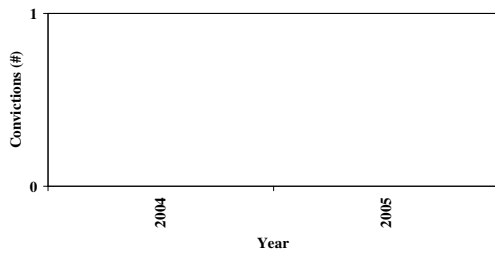
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

**Figure 21. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Trap Identification Violations (Code 10.07) in Arkansas, 2004-2005**



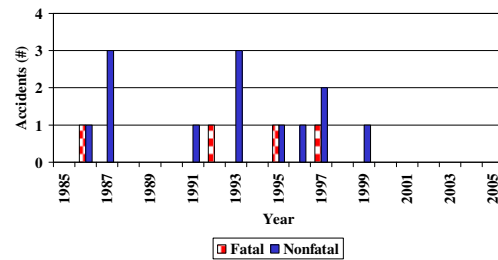
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

**Figure 22. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Bobcat and Otter Pelt Tagging Violations (Code 10.12) in Arkansas, 2004-2005**



Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

**Figure 23. Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Fatalities and Injuries in Arkansas, 1985-2005**



Information provided by AGFC Hunter Education Program

## PART 2: FURTAKER SURVEYS

During the 2002-2003 fur season Arkansas resident fur hunters and trappers were required to obtain a free Furtakers Permit. A total of 7,847 resident furtaker permits were issued. Almost all (96.2%) furtakers were male and the median age was 41. After the 2003-2004 fur season those furtakers who had a 2002-2003 resident furtaker permit and a valid e-mail address were surveyed about their activities in that season. There were 486 respondents, of which only 316 hunted or trapped in 2003-2004. Approximately 72% (95% Confidence Interval = 67-77%) of furtakers were hunters and 29% (95% Confidence Interval = 24-34%) were trappers. Therefore, the estimated number of trappers that were active in Arkansas in 2003-2004 was 1,883-2,668.

Non-residents who wish to hunt or trap furbearers are required to purchase a non-resident furtaker permit (\$100 in 2005-6) in addition to a non-resident hunting license. Since 1998 an average of 105 non-resident permits (range 89-136) have been sold (Figure 17). In order to learn more about the habits of this group of sportsmen, in April 2006 a voluntary survey and a stamped return envelope were sent to the 113 persons who purchased non-resident furtaker permits that were valid during 2005-6. Furtakers came from 18 different states with the majority (66%) from Tennessee (41), Missouri (14), Louisiana (11), and Texas (9). Of the 113 surveys sent out, 4 were returned due to bad addresses, and 49/109 (45%) of the remaining surveys were completed and returned. Sixty-seven percent (95% Confidence Interval = 53-79%) of permit holders hunted furbearers while 37% (95% Confidence Interval = 25-51%) trapped furbearers. Most hunters utilized National Wildlife Refuges or non-leased private land while trapping was primarily carried out on non-leased private land (Table 3). A majority (73%, 95% Confidence Interval = 56-85%) of hunters only acquired the permit so as to be able to hunt raccoon in Arkansas, primarily on National Wildlife Refuges (70%, 95% Confidence Interval = 50-85%).

## PART 3: BOWHUNTER OBSERVATION SURVEY

**TABLE 3. Observations of furbearers by Arkansas bowhunter survey participants, 2005-2006.**

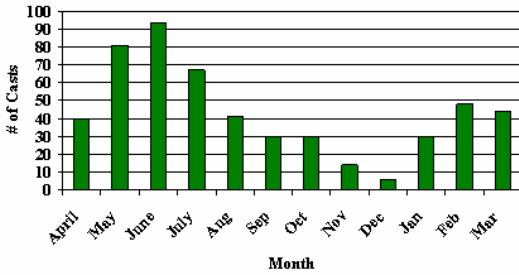
	<b>Delta</b>	<b>Gulf Coastal Plain</b>	<b>Ouachita Mountains</b>	<b>Ozark Mountains</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
Observation (hours)	4,113.67	4,119.50	2,283.68	3,872.65	14,389.50
<b>Observations Per 1000 Hours</b>					
Bobcat	5.6	22.3	6.1	7.2	10.9
Coyote	14.6	10.9	9.2	10.1	11.5
Gray Fox	1.9	15.5	3.5	17.3	10.2
Opossum	10.7	34.7	6.6	3.6	15.0
Raccoon	55.4	33.3	30.2	12.4	33.5
Red Fox	2.9	26.2	0.0	0.8	8.6

## **PART 4: RACCOON FIELD TRIAL SURVEY**

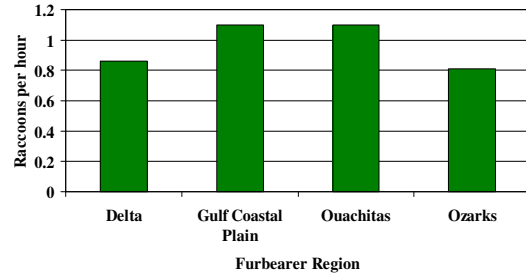
Raccoons are popular game animals that are found in all parts of the state. However, since they are usually most active at night it has been difficult for wildlife managers to identify patterns of population growth or decline over the years. In cooperation with the Arkansas Coon Hunters Association and many local clubs, a voluntary survey was begun to gather information on raccoon population trends in the state. This survey started in April, 2005 after the close of the raccoon hunting season and near the time when young are born, and continued through the end of March, 2006. After each field trial, participating clubs returned a form to the Commission indicating the county or counties in which the event took place, length of the trial, the number of raccoons seen and scored, and the number of dogs in the cast. This information allows us to compare the number of raccoons seen per hour at statewide and regional levels and over time will demonstrate raccoon population trends.

The first year of this survey was very successful; 33 clubs submitted information on 524 casts. The peak of field trial activity appears to be in the spring with May, June, and July having the most casts (Figure 24). While information was obtained from all four furbearer regions, participation by clubs in the Delta was low (Figure 25). Over the entire year an average of 1 raccoon was seen per hour of hunting, though this varied by month, ranging from 0.7-1.4 raccoons per hour (Figure 26). Raccoons seem to be slightly more common in the Ozarks and Ouachitas than elsewhere in the state, though the difference is small (Figure 27). It was apparently not difficult to find raccoons as 70-90% of casts saw at least one raccoon (Figure 28).

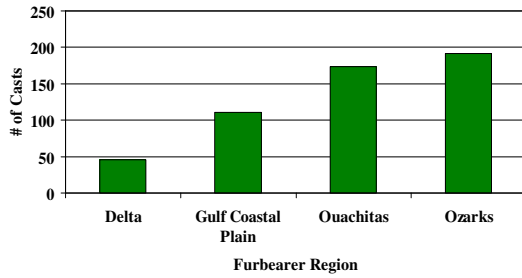
**Figure 24.**  
**Number of Casts by Month, 2005-6**



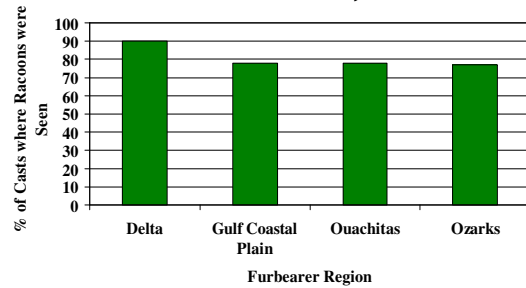
**Figure 27.**  
**Average Number of Raccoons Observed per hour, 2005-6**



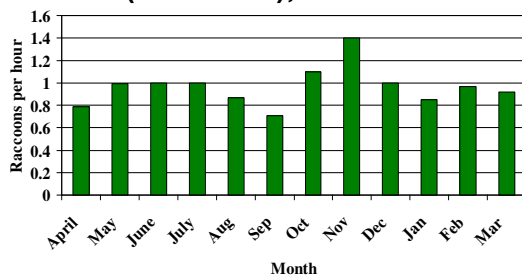
**Figure 25.**  
**Number of Casts by Region, 2005-6**



**Figure 28.**  
**Percent of Casts with At Least One Raccoon Observed, 2005-6**



**Figure 26**  
**Average Number of Raccoons Observed Per Hour By Month (Statewide), 2005-6**



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