

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Wildlife Management Division

2006-07 FURBEARING ANIMAL REPORT

Prepared by

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Keeping the Natural State natural.

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Abstract

During the 2006-07 fur-taking season, 28,968 pelts valued at \$342,000.99 were purchased by licensed Arkansas fur dealers. Compared with the 2005-2006 season, the number of pelts sold increased by 13 percent, but the total value of the harvest decreased by 41 percent, primarily because of a major decrease in otter pelt value.

A survey of nonresident fur-takers found that about 63 percent were hunters, most of whom purchased the permit only to hunt raccoons. Nonresident fur hunters primarily used national wildlife refuges and private land; most nonresident trappers used nonleased private land.

This was the second year of two surveys that tracked furbearer population trends. Information about relative distribution of bobcat, coyote, gray fox, opossum, raccoon and red fox was obtained by including them on the bowhunter observation survey, which included more than 16,000 hours of data in 2006-07. Raccoon field-trial clubs were surveyed about raccoons seen during sanctioned field-trial events.

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Part 1 Fur Purchases

Introduction

The harvest of furbearing animals is important recreationally and economically to many Arkansans. The hunting and trapping of furbearers, and the marketing of fur pelts, contributes to the state's economy, reduces wildlife damage and helps prevent furbearer populations from reaching unhealthy levels. Fur-takers are effective and vital tools for managing this renewable resource.

2006-07 Private Land Fur-taking Seasons

Gray Fox, Mink, Red Fox, and Striped Skunk Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2006-sunset, Feb. 28, 2007. Day hunting only.
Limit two per day per species.

Opossum Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2006-sunset, Feb. 28, 2007. Day or night hunting.
Dogs required to hunt at night. Limit two per day.

Bobcat and Coyote Hunting

Sunrise, Oct. 1, 2006-sunset, Feb. 28, 2007.
Dogs allowed to hunt bobcat and coyote during the day. Coyote may not be hunted at night. Dogs required to hunt bobcat at night. Dogs not allowed in deer zones during a firearms deer season that prohibits the use of dogs.

From the first day of spring turkey season through the last day of spring squirrel season: Day hunting only. No dogs allowed. Only youths allowed may take coyote or bobcat during youth turkey hunts.

Bobcat limit two per day. No limit on coyote.

River Otter Hunting

Sunrise, Nov. 18, 2006-sunset, Feb. 28, 2007. Day hunting only. Limit two per day.

Raccoon Hunting

Sunset, July 1-sunrise, Aug. 31, 2006. Night hunting only. Dogs required.

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2006-sunset, March 31, 2007. Day or night hunting. Dogs required for hunting at night. Limit one, July 1-Aug. 31. Limit two, Sept. 1-Nov. 17. No limit, Nov. 18-March 31.

Muskrat, Nutria and Beaver Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2006-sunset, March 31, 2007. No limit.

Badger, Spotted Skunk, Weasel Hunting

Closed.

Furbearer Trapping (other than beaver, coyote, muskrat and nutria)

Sunrise, Nov. 18, 2006-sunset, Feb. 18, 2007. No limit.

Coyote Trapping

Sunrise, Aug. 1, 2006-sunset, March 31, 2007. No limit.

Beaver, Muskrat, Nutria Trapping

Sunrise, Nov. 18, 2006-sunset, March 31, 2007. 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 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, with other biological data, helps us 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 by May 5, 2007, in self-addressed, stamped envelopes provided by the AGFC. During the 2006-2007 fur-taking season, 37 fur dealers were licensed (28 resident and nine nonresident), which is a decrease of one from the previous year (Figure 1). Reports were returned from all dealers except one, who went out of business and left the area, probably without making any purchases.

Pelt prices are based on the reported average green pelt sale price at the two large fur sales in Arkansas – Russellville (Jan. 27, 2007) and Malvern (Feb. 10, 2007). These fur sales amounted to 39 percent of pelt sales in Arkansas and should be representative of overall fur prices. Information about trapping violations came from the AGFC Enforcement Division, and accident information came from the AGFC Education and Outreach Division.

Results and Discussion

Furbearer harvest pressure is affected by animal population fluctuations, by prices

paid for fur and by the weather. Any of these factors can increase or decrease the harvest of furbearing animals. Harvest pressure changes geographically within the state over time.

No information is available on the number of resident fur-takers in 2006-07, although residents in 2002-03 were required to obtain a free fur-takers permit before harvesting furbearing animals (any method). The 7,847 permits issued that year represent a significant drop in the number of resident fur-takers from 1983, which was the last year a resident fur-takers permit was required. Nonresidents are required to obtain a Nonresident Fur-takers Permit (\$125). The number of permitted nonresident fur-takers increased from 113 in 2005-06 to 140 in 2006-07, up 24 percent (Figure 2). More information about nonresident fur-takers may be found in Part 2.

Furbearer violations remained low (Figures 3-7) and for the seventh year in a row, there were no reported trapping or furbearer hunting accidents (Figure 8).

During the 2006-07 fur-taking season, 28,968 pelts valued at \$342,001 were purchased by licensed fur dealers in Arkansas (Table 1). Compared with the 2005-06 season, the number of pelts sold increased by 13 percent, but the total value of the harvest decreased by 41 percent (Table 2).

Reported purchases of bobcat and otter by fur dealers are known to under-represent the number of these species taken in Arkansas. In accordance with federal law, the pelts of these species must be tagged before they

leave the state. Although 1,596 otter and 1,695 bobcat were purchased in Arkansas, 2,467 otter and 2,278 bobcat were tagged in 2006-07. A similar pattern has been observed since 2003.

Some of these animals may have been taken in previous years, but it is clear that our system of fur dealer 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 probably under-represented by fur dealer purchase records, since many trappers and hunters ship their pelts from the state to dealers who are not required to have Arkansas fur dealer permits.

In Arkansas, Act 1358 of 1997 (Conservation District Beaver Control

Program) has resulted in a continued interest in beaver trapping and beaver pelts. Under this program, administered by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (formerly the Soil and Water Conservation Commission), about 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). Reported beaver sales in 2006-07 were 8,791, some of which may have had tails submitted for bounty payment. Although it is clear that bounties have encouraged the taking of beaver, the effectiveness of this program in reducing nuisance problems in high-density beaver counties has not yet been evaluated and the distribution of bounty funding among counties is somewhat haphazard.

Table 1. 2006-07 Furbearing Animal Purchases

	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Nutria	Opossum	Raccoon	Red Fox	River Otter	Spotted Skunk	Striped Skunk	Weasel
PRICE*	n/a	\$10.58	\$45.89	\$8.04	\$27.59	\$14.94	\$4.98	\$1.47	\$0.38	\$4.67	\$13.39	\$39.50	n/a	\$2.00	n/a
DELTA	0	4,047	334	52	37	620	599	26	297	3,589	14	832	1	1	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	0	1,916	596	114	442	59	26	209	136	3,943	32	475	1	2	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAINS	0	1,268	469	118	278	59	73	6	297	2,467	16	145	0	5	0
OZARK MOUNTAINS	0	934	281	177	292	57	238	0	482	1,706	24	86	1	21	0
UNKNOWN REGION**	0	626	15	0	14	5	5	85	0	240	0	58	0	0	0
Grand Totals	0	8,791	1,695	461	1,083	800	941	323	1,212	11,948	86	1,596	3	29	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 Purchases, 2006-07

Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
Badger	0	n/a	n/a
Beaver	8,791	\$10.58	\$93,008.78
Bobcat	1,695	\$45.89	\$77,783.55
Coyote	461	\$8.04	\$3,706.44
Gray Fox	1,083	\$27.59	\$29,879.97
Mink	800	\$14.94	\$11,952.00
Muskrat	941	\$4.98	\$4,686.18
Nutria	323	\$1.47	\$474.81
Opossum	1,212	\$0.38	\$460.56
Raccoon	11,948	\$4.67	\$55,797.16
Red Fox	86	\$13.39	\$1,151.54
River Otter	1,596	\$39.50	\$63,042.00
Spotted Skunk	3	\$0	\$0
Striped Skunk	29	\$2.00	\$58.00
Totals	28,968		\$342,000.99

Part 2 Non-resident Furtaker Survey

Nonresidents who wish to hunt or trap furbearers are required to purchase a nonresident fur-taker permit (\$125 in 2006-07) in addition to a nonresident hunting license. Since 1998, an average of 109 nonresident permits (range 89-140) have been sold (Figure 17). To learn more about the habits of this group of sportsmen, in April 2007 a mandatory survey and a stamped return envelope were sent to the 140 people who purchased nonresident fur-taker permits valid during 2006-07. Of the 140 surveys sent, five were returned because of bad addresses and 73 (54 percent) of the remaining 135 surveys were completed and returned.

Fur-takers came from 21 states. The majority (85 percent) came from Tennessee (54 percent), Missouri (17 percent), Louisiana (8 percent) and Texas (6 percent). Sixty-three percent of respondents hunted furbearers and 40 percent trapped furbearers. Most hunter respondents used national wildlife refuges or private

land. Trapping was carried out primarily on nonleased private land. A significant majority (80 percent) of hunter respondents acquired the permit only to be able to hunt raccoon in Arkansas, primarily on national wildlife refuges (56 percent).

Respondents hunted 476 days and trapped 715 days. Seventy-five percent of hunters stayed less than 10 days; 59 percent of trappers stayed more than 10 days. Respondents were asked to provide information about their harvest, but since 54 percent of permit holders participated in the survey, these numbers should be viewed as the minimum harvested. Hunters reported taking 625 raccoon, 12 striped skunk, 6 beaver, 5 bobcat, 2 gray fox, 1 opossum, 1 red fox and 1 river otter. Trappers reported taking 1,342 beaver, 615 raccoon, 439 opossum, 181 nutria, 172 mink, 156 river otter, 103 bobcat, 62 muskrat, 61 striped skunk, 34 gray fox, 6 red fox and 3 spotted skunk.

Part 3 Bowhunter Observation Survey

This was the second year in which observations of six furbearer species (bobcat, coyote, gray fox, opossum, raccoon and red fox) were included in the bowhunter observation survey conducted each deer season (Figure 24). Participants reported the dates and times they hunted, and the number of

individuals of each species they saw each day. Since the survey is 2 years old, data is insufficient to evaluate apparent population trends. However, observation rates in Arkansas are roughly comparable to those of other states conducting similar surveys, so this should become a useful tool.

Part 4 Raccoon Field Trial Survey

Raccoons are popular game animals and are found across the state. 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. This year's survey started in April 2006, after the close of raccoon hunting season and near the time when young are born, and continued through the end of March 2007. After each field trial, clubs returned forms to the AGFC 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 state-

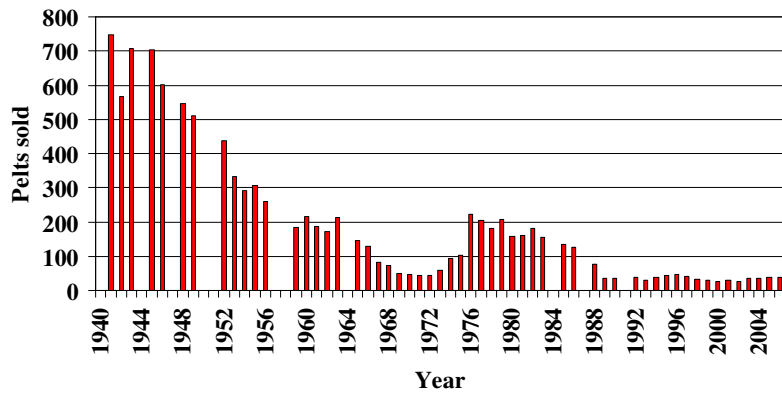
wide and regional levels and will demonstrate raccoon population trends.

Club participation declined during the second year of this survey – 33 clubs submitted information about 524 casts in 2005-06 and 18 clubs submitted information about 267 casts in 2006-07. Information came from all seasons and all four furbearer regions (Figures 25-26). During the year, an average of one raccoon was seen per hour of hunting, though this varied by month, ranging from 0.6-1.5 raccoons per hour (Figure 27-28). It apparently was not difficult to find raccoons – 81 percent of casts saw at least one raccoon (Figure 29), and though raccoons seem to be slightly more common in the Delta, the difference is not great (Figure 30).

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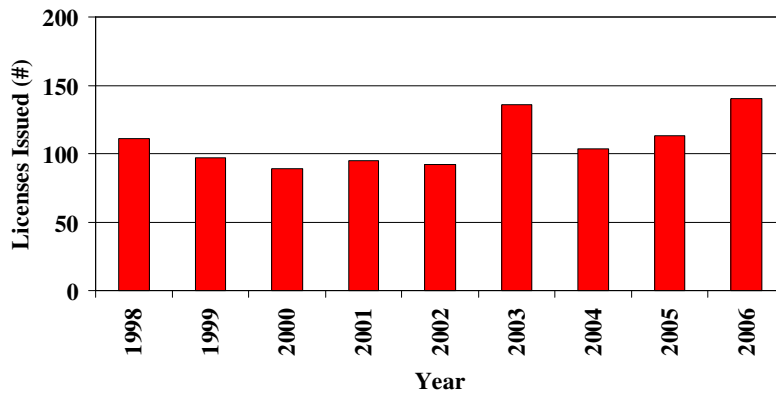
Prepared by: Blake Sasse, Nongame Mammal Program Coordinator

Figure 1
Arkansas Licensed Furdealers,
1941-2006



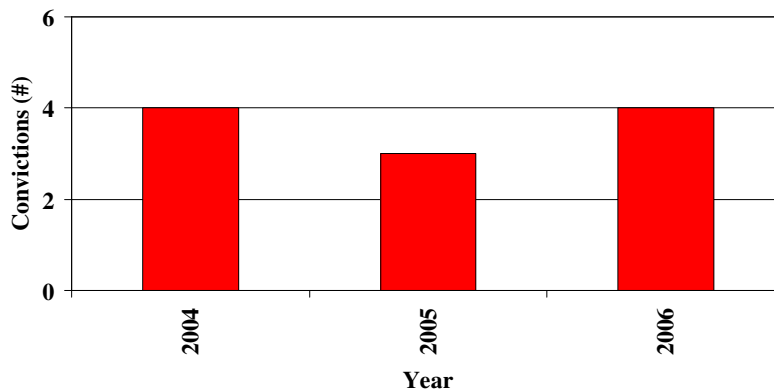
Residents and Non-Residents

Figure 2.
Non-Resident Furtaker Licenses in
Arkansas, 1998-2006



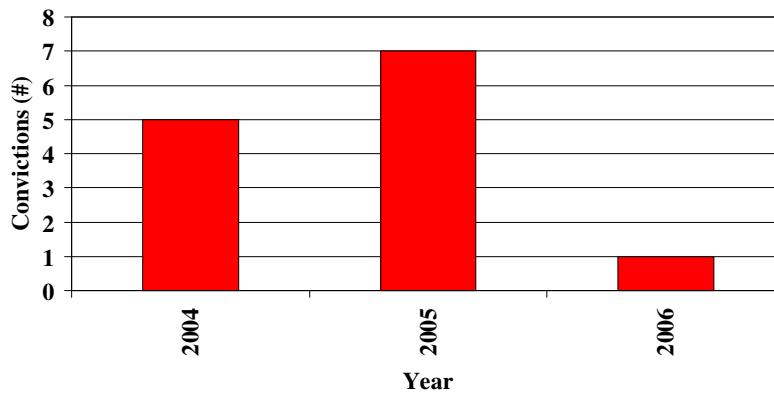
Each year represents licenses active July 1 to June 30 of the following year

Figure 3. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Furbearer Season Violations (Code 02.07) in Arkansas, 2004-2006



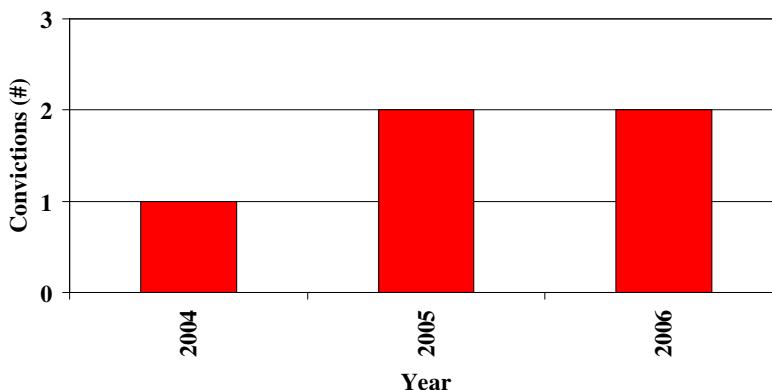
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

Figure 4. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Regular Furbearing Season Trap Violations (Code 10.02) in Arkansas, 2004-2006



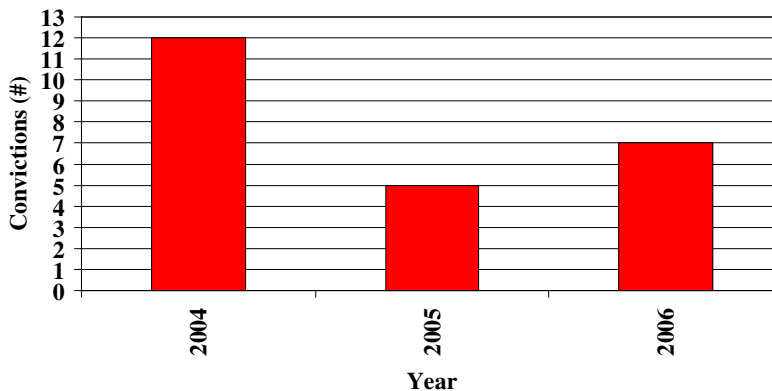
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

**Figure 5. Citations Issued (including warnings)
for Trap Checking Violations
(Code 10.06) in Arkansas, 2000-2006**



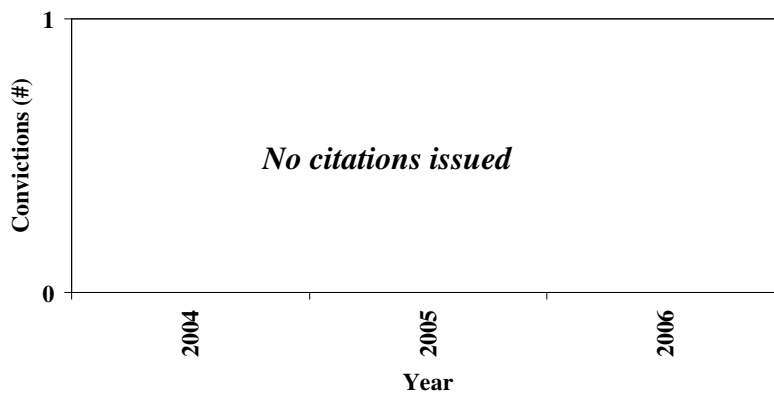
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

**Figure 6. Citations Issued (including warnings)
for Trap Identification Violations
(Code 10.07) in Arkansas, 2004-2006**



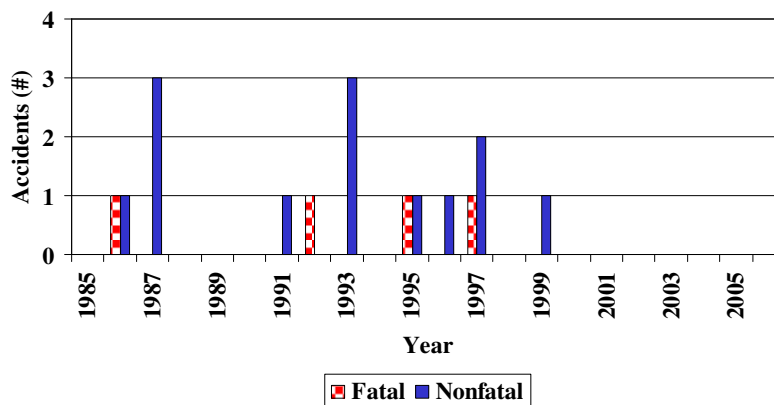
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

Figure 7. Citations Issued (including warnings) for Bobcat and Otter Pelt Tagging Violations (Code 10.12) in Arkansas, 2004-2006



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

**Figure 8
Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Fatalities and Injuries in Arkansas, 1985-2006**



Information provided by AGFC Hunter Education Program

Figure 9 Arkansas Badger Purchases, 1986 - 2006

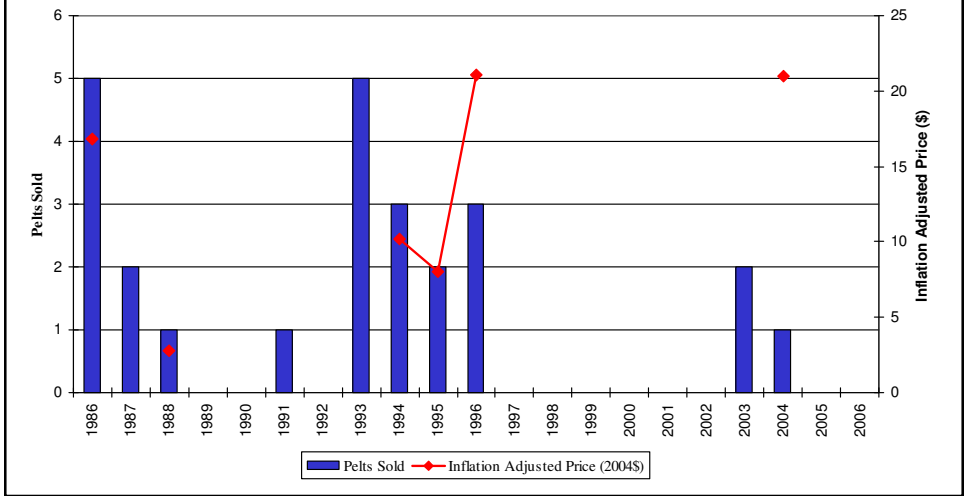
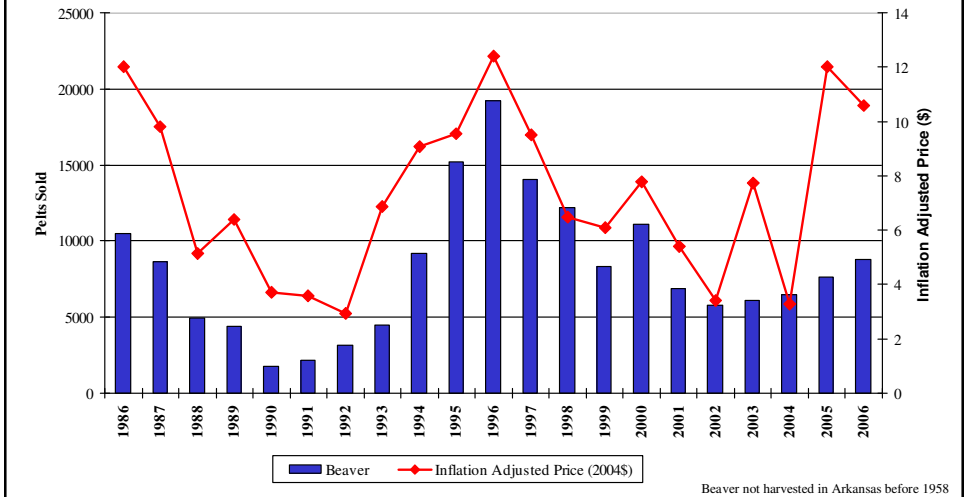


Figure 10 Arkansas Beaver Purchases, 1986 - 2006



Beaver not harvested in Arkansas before 1958

Figure 11
Arkansas Bobcat Purchases and Tags
Issued, 1986 – 2006

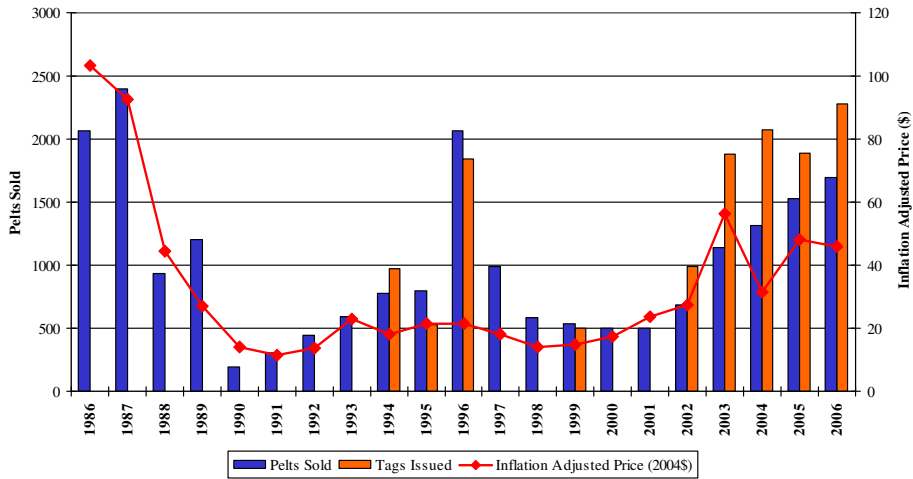


Figure 12
Arkansas Coyote Purchases,
1986 - 2006

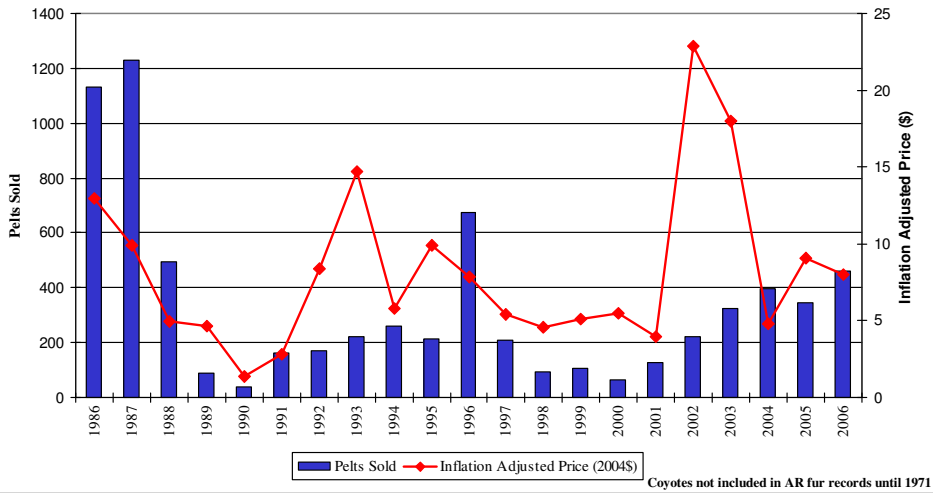


Figure 13
Arkansas Gray Fox Purchases,
1986 - 2006

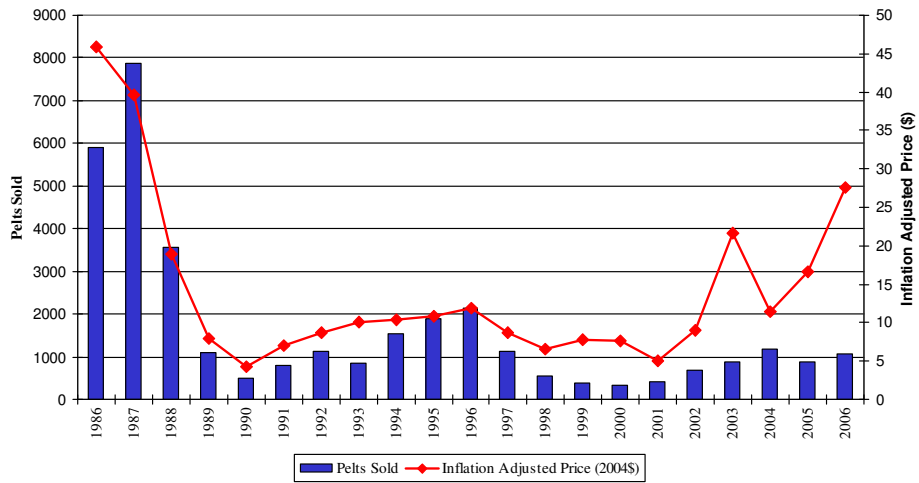


Figure 14
Arkansas Long-tailed Weasel
Purchases, 1986 - 2006

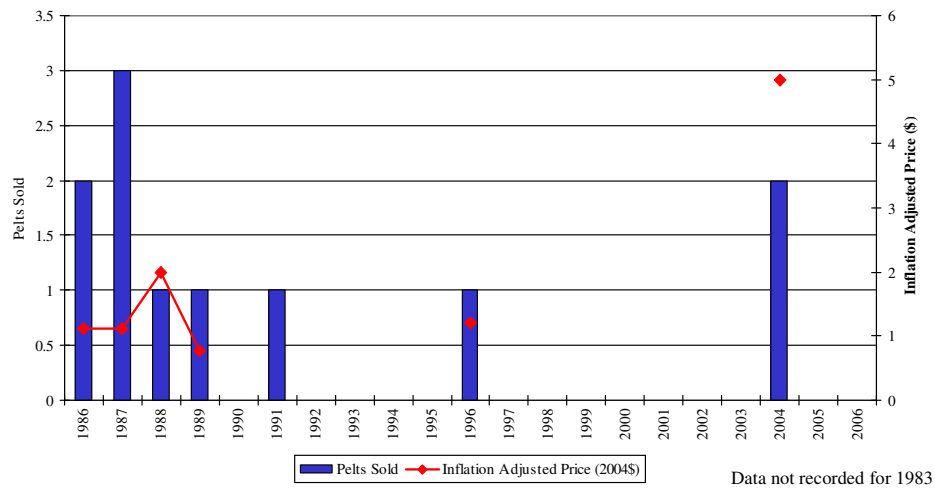


Figure 15
Arkansas Mink Purchases,
1986 - 2006

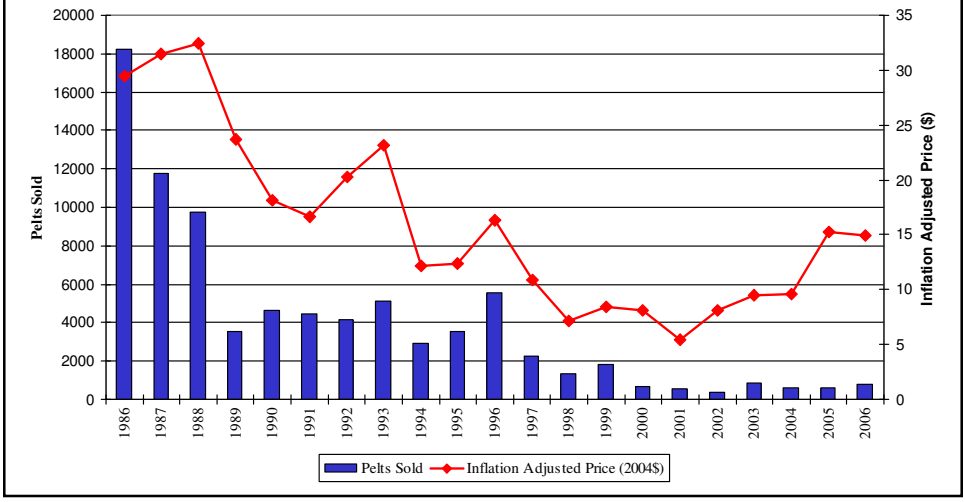


Figure 16
Arkansas Muskrat Purchases,
1986 - 2006

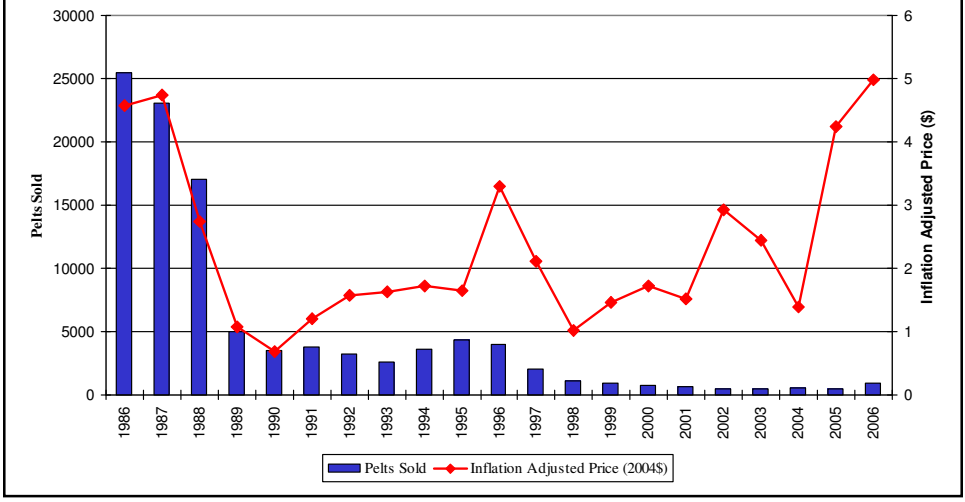


Figure 17
Arkansas Nutria Purchases,
1986 - 2006

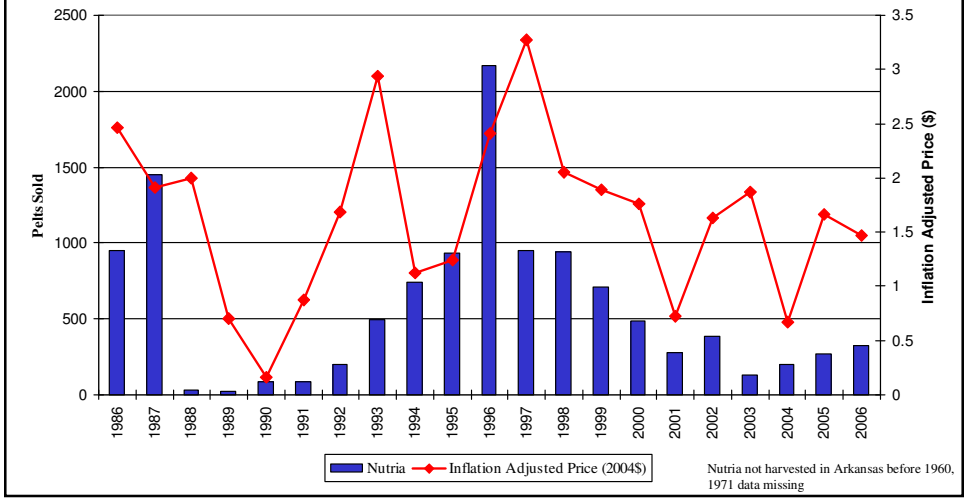


Figure 18
Arkansas Opossum Purchases,
1986 - 2006

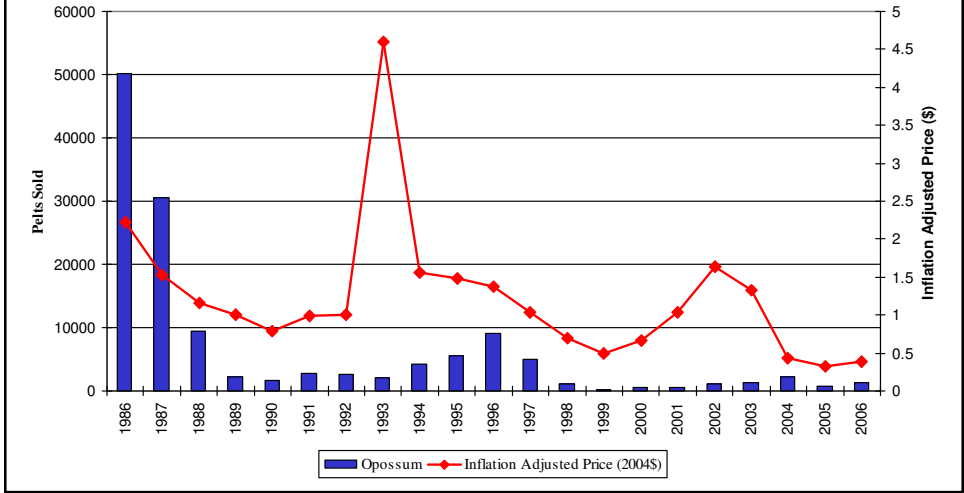


Figure 19
Arkansas Otter Purchases and Tags
Issued, 1986 - 2006

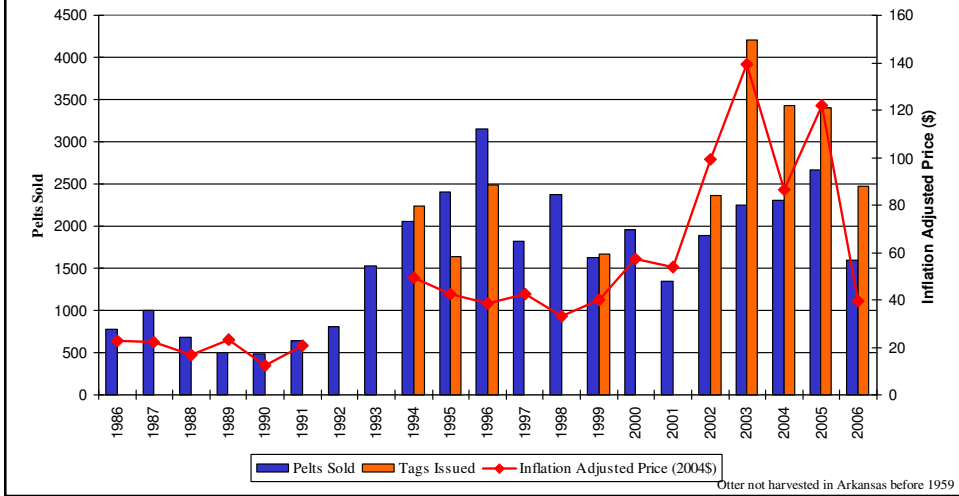


Figure 20
Arkansas Raccoon Purchases,
1986 - 2006

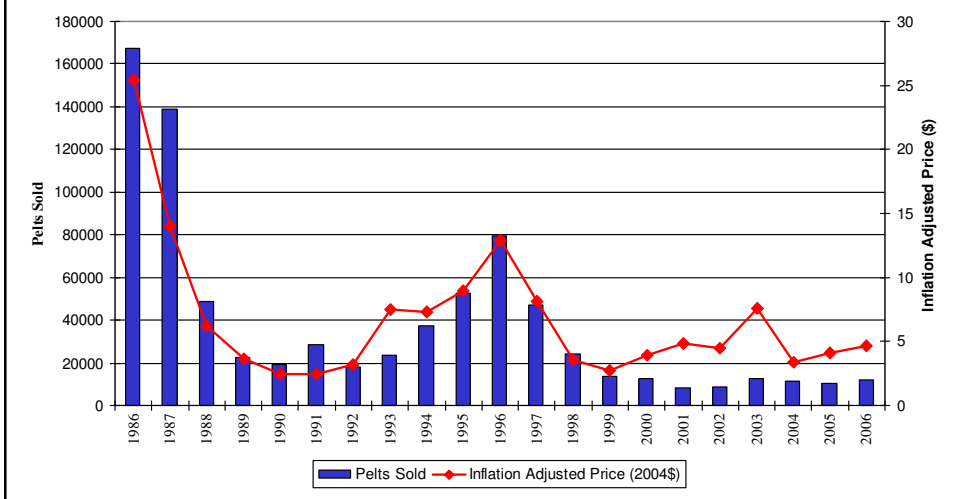


Figure 21 Arkansas Red Fox Purchases, 1996 - 2006

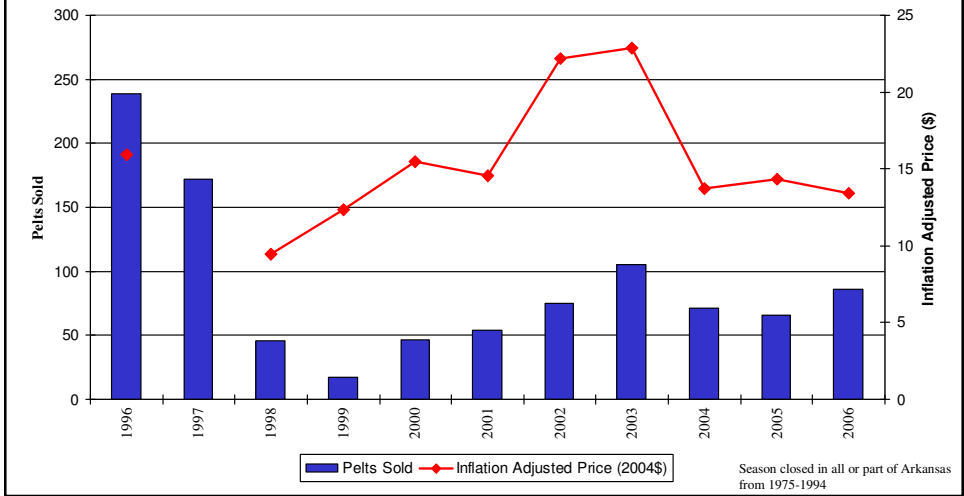


Figure 22 Arkansas Spotted Skunk Purchases, 1986 - 2006

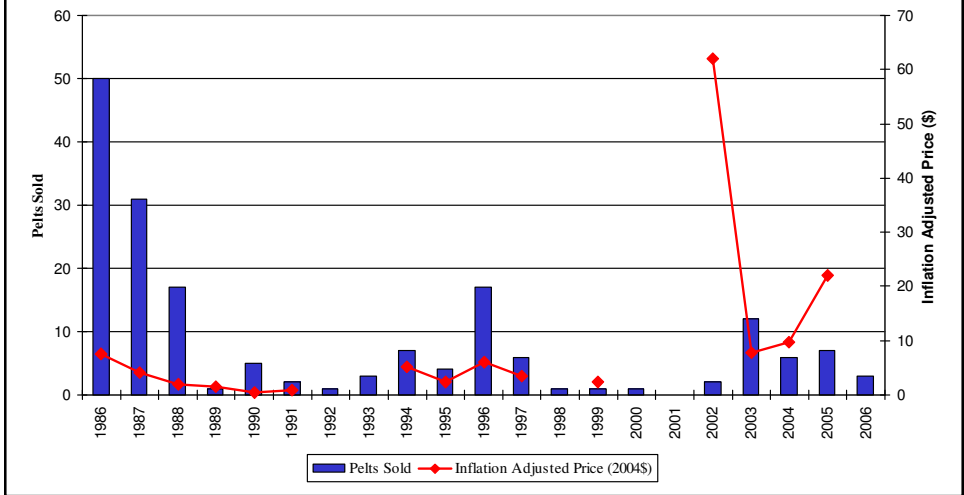


Figure 23
Arkansas Striped Skunk Purchases,
1986 - 2006

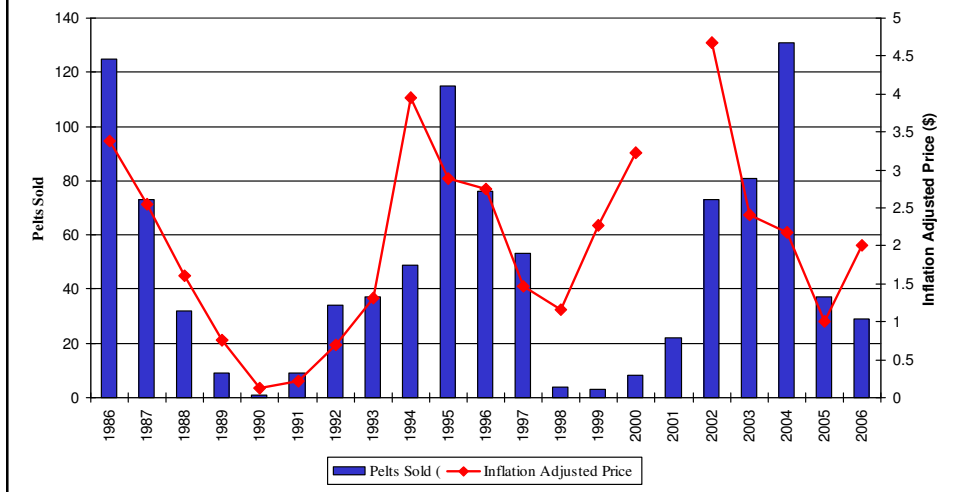


Figure 24. Statewide Bowhunter
Observation Data, 2005-2006

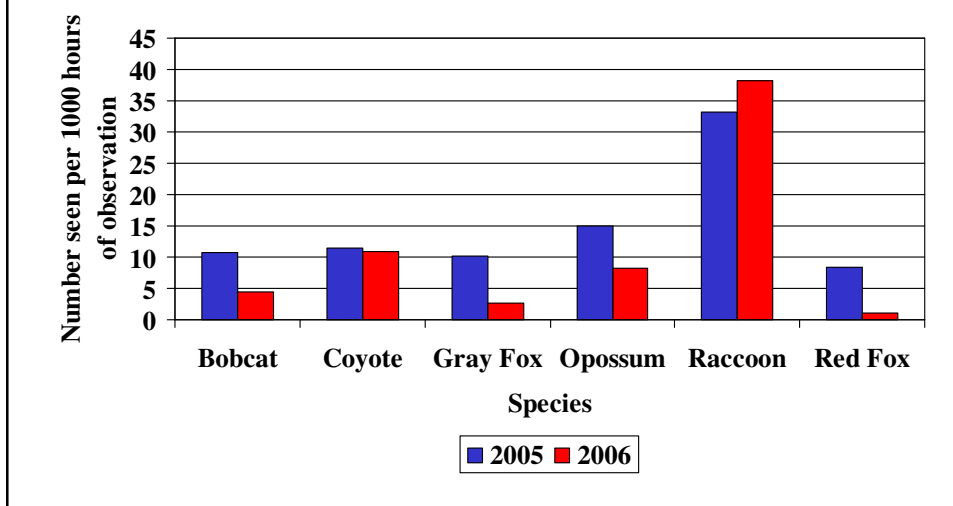


Figure 25.
Number of Raccoon Field Trial Casts
by Month, 2006-7

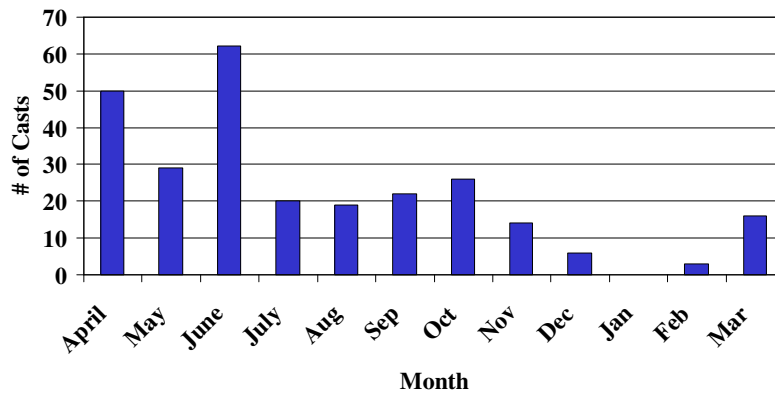


Figure 26.
Number of Raccoon Field Trial Casts
by Region, 2006-7

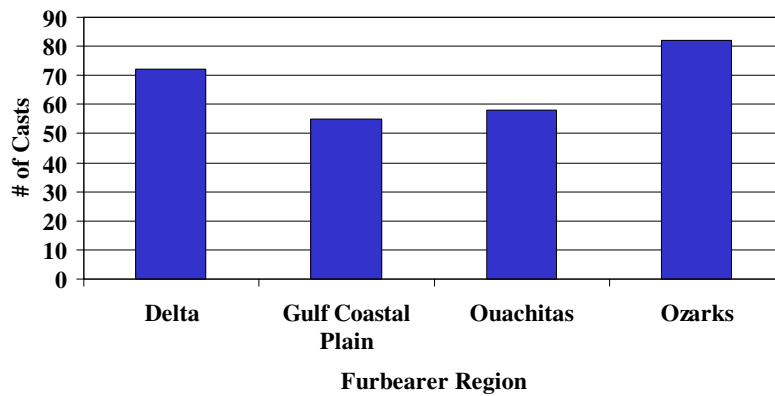


Figure 27.
Raccoons Observed per Hour (Statewide)

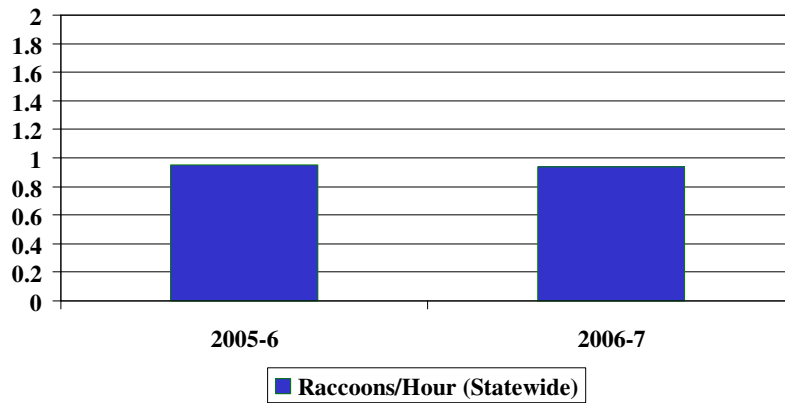


Figure 28
Average Number of Raccoons Observed Per Hour By Month (Statewide), 2006-7

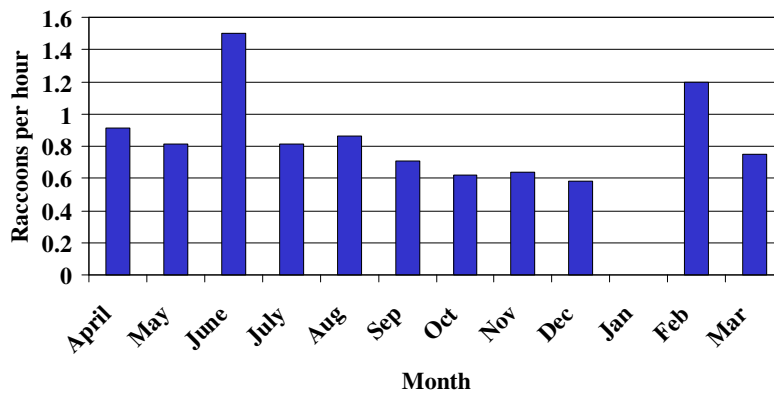


Figure 29.
Percent of Raccoon Field Trial Casts with Raccoons Observed

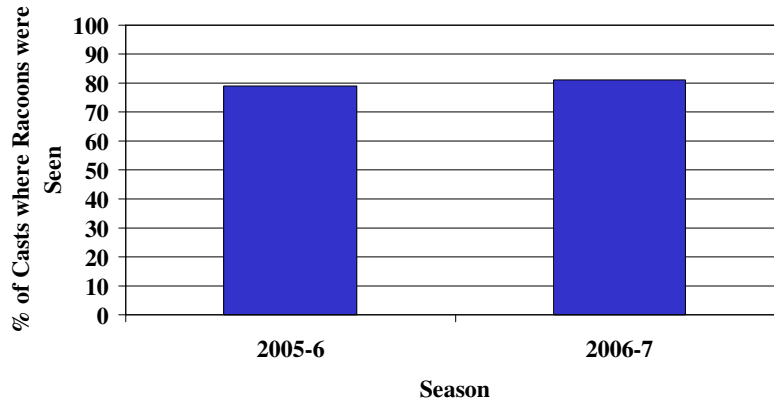


Figure 30.
Average Number of Raccoons Observed per hour by Region, 2006-7

