

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Wildlife Management Bureau

2010-11 FURBEARING ANIMAL REPORT

Prepared by

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July 31, 2011
Mayflower, Arkansas

Abstract

During the 2010-11 fur-taking season, 26,248 pelts valued at over \$228,880 were purchased by licensed fur dealers in Arkansas. Compared to the all-time low 2009-10 season, the number of pelts purchased increased by 91 percent and the total value of the harvest increased by 43 percent, putting pelt purchases on par with those seen from 1999-2007. The 2010-11 bowhunter survey included 34,912 hours of observations and indicates populations of terrestrial furbearers, with the possible exception of coyote, are stable. The perception of Arkansas trappers is that populations of mink and muskrat are stable or decreasing, gray and red fox are stable, beaver, bobcat, and otter are stable or increasing, and that coyote, opossum, and raccoon are increasing.

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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, reduces wildlife damage and helps prevent furbearer populations from reaching unhealthy levels. Fur-takers are an effective and vital tool for managing this renewable resource.

The 2010-11 private land fur-taking seasons were:

Gray Fox, Mink, Red Fox and Striped Skunk Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. Day hunting only. Limit 2 per day per species with no limit on striped skunk.

Opossum Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. Day or night hunting. Dogs required to hunt at night. Limit 2 per day.

Bobcat Hunting

Sunrise, Oct. 1, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. Dogs allowed to hunt bobcat during the day. Dogs required to hunt bobcat at night. Dogs not allowed during firearms deer seasons in deer zones that prohibit the use of dogs. From the first day of turkey season through June 13. Day hunting only. No dogs allowed. Only youths allowed to take bobcat during youth turkey hunts. Limit 2 per day.

Coyote Hunting

Sunrise, July 1, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. Dogs allowed during the day. No night hunting. Dogs not allowed during firearms deer seasons in deer zones that prohibit the use of dogs. From the first day of turkey season through June 13. Day hunting only. No dogs allowed. Only youths allowed to take coyote during youth turkey hunts. No limit.

Otter Hunting

Sunrise, Nov. 13, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. Day hunting only. Limit 2 per day.

Raccoon Hunting

Sunset, July 1-sunrise, Aug. 31, 2010 Night hunting only. Dogs required. Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2009-sunset, March 31, 2010. Day or night hunting. Dogs required for hunting at night. Limit 4, July 1-Nov 12. No limit, Nov. 13, 2010 -March 31, 2011.

Muskrat, Nutria and Beaver Hunting

Sunrise, Sept. 1, 2010-sunset, March 31, 2011. No limit.

Badger, Spotted Skunk and Weasel Hunting

Closed.

Furbearer Trapping (except beaver, coyote, muskrat and nutria)

Sunrise, Nov. 13, 2010-sunset, Feb. 28, 2011. No limit.

Coyote Trapping

Sunrise, Aug. 1, 2010-sunset, March 31, 2011. No limit.

Beaver, Muskrat and Nutria Trapping:

Sunrise Nov. 13, 2010-sunset, March 31, 2011. No Limit.

Season dates and bag limits were identical on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas except the raccoon hunting bag limit was four per day from July 1, 2010 to Feb. 28, 2011 and unlimited during March, and that beaver, muskrat, and nutria hunting ended Feb. 28, 2010. Unless otherwise prohibited, firearms of any caliber were permitted for taking coyote, bobcat and fox during daylight hours on AGFC-owned WMAs, and all U.S. Forest Service lands during those seasons.

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 an estimate of the worth of the furbearer resource and, in conjunction with other biological data, helps 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, 2011, in self-addressed, stamped envelopes provided by the AGFC. During the 2010-11 fur-taking season, 33 fur dealers were licensed (23 resident and 10 non-resident), which is an increase of four from the previous year. Reports were returned from all dealers. 2010-11 pelt prices were based on the average of the reported average green pelt sale price at the fur auctions on February 19, 2011 in Russellville and in Malvern on February 12, 2011. The fur purchased at these auctions amounted to 39 percent of pelt purchases by Arkansas dealers and should be representative of overall fur prices. Information on historical pelt prices is based on AGFC records and has been adjusted for inflation to 2010 dollars using Consumer Price Index information at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis web site (www.minneapolisfed.org). Information on trapping violations was obtained from the AGFC Enforcement Division; accident information came from the AGFC Education Division.

Results and Discussion

During the 2010-11 fur-taking season, 26,248 pelts valued at over \$228,880 were purchased by licensed fur dealers in Arkansas. Compared to the all-time low 2009-10 season, the number of pelts purchased increased by 91 percent and the total value of the harvest increased by 43 percent.

TABLE 1. 2010 - 2011 FURBEARING ANIMAL PURCHASES.

	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Nutria	Opossum	Otter	Raccoon	Red Fox	Spotted skunk	Striped Skunk	Weasel
PRICE*	n/a	\$5.12	\$37.10	\$5.11	\$17.82	\$11.76	\$3.86	\$0.81	\$0.55	\$41.72	\$4.02	\$15.75	\$n/a	\$1.71	n/a
DELTA	0	2,087	221	25	63	479	425	6	163	634	2,078	13	0	14	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	0	1,434	310	44	423	43	8	138	453	692	5,342	17	0	2	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAINS	0	1,302	318	73	249	59	68	21	412	193	2,700	19	0	23	0
OZARK MOUNTAINS	0	1,118	162	66	230	62	153	0	294	127	1,977	23	0	24	0
UNKNOWN REGION**	0	783	27	0	11	2	1	0	22	130	435	50	0	0	0
Grand Totals	0	6,724	1,038	208	976	645	655	165	1,344	1,776	12,532	122	0	63	0

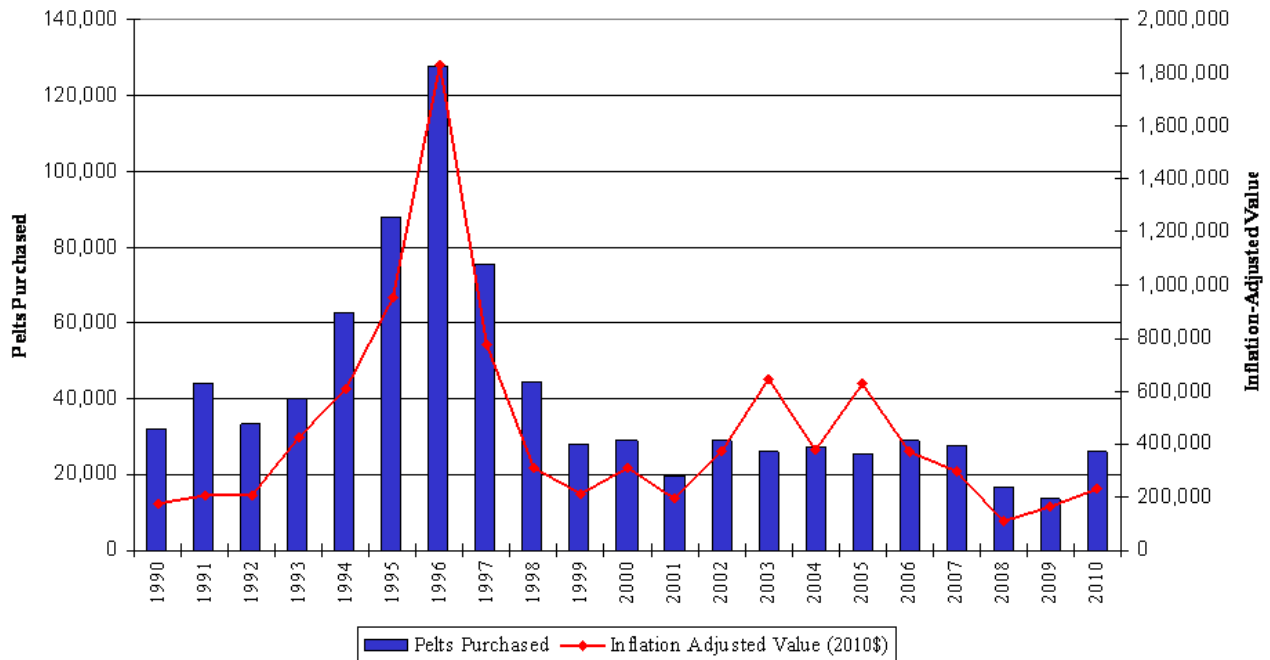
*Average prices paid for green pelts statewide based on average of green pelts purchased at the Malvern and Russellville fur sales.

**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, 2010 - 2011.

Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
Badger	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Beaver	6,724	\$5.12	\$34,426.88
Bobcat	1,038	\$37.10	\$38,509.80
Coyote	208	\$5.11	\$1,062.88
Gray Fox	976	\$17.82	\$17,392.32
Mink	645	\$11.76	\$7,585.20
Muskrat	655	\$3.86	\$2,528.30
Nutria	165	\$0.81	\$133.65
Opossum	1,344	\$0.55	\$739.20
Otter	1,776	\$41.72	\$74,094.72
Raccoon	12,532	\$4.02	\$50,378.64
Red Fox	122	\$15.75	\$1,921.50
Spotted Skunk	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	63	\$1.71	\$107.73
Weasel	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTALS	26,248		\$228,880.82

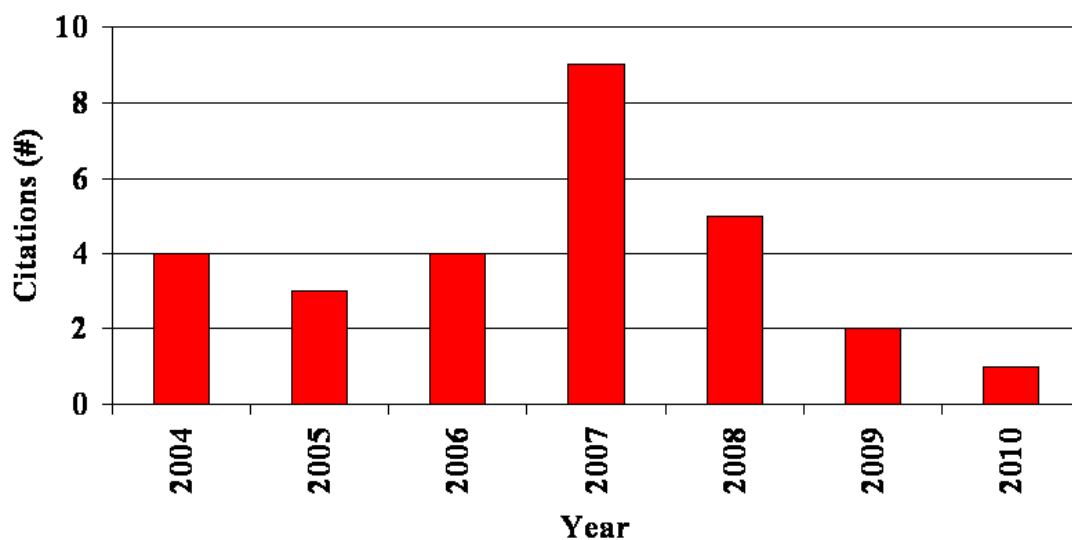
FIGURE 1. TOTAL PELT PURCHASES AND VALUE, 1990-2010.



Furbearer harvest pressure is affected by animal population fluctuations, by current prices paid for fur and by weather. Also, harvest pressure changes geographically within the state over time. Any of these factors can increase or decrease the harvest of furbearing animals. The recent economic troubles had an impact on demand for fur over the last few years, but for the most part prices and pelt purchases have returned to pre-crisis levels.

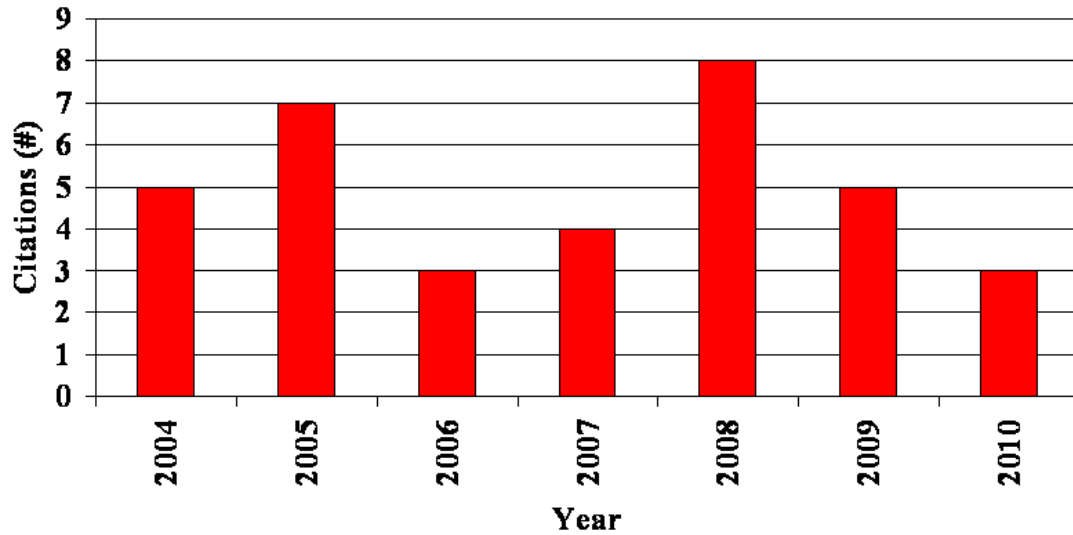
Furbearer violations remained infrequent. There was one non-fatal accident related to furbearer hunting and trapping in 2010-2011. On November 25, a man was exiting his truck to shoot at a coyote that was near a calf and the trigger of his .17 caliber rifle caught on his jacket zipper, causing it to discharge and he was struck in the foot by the bullet.

FIGURE 2. CITATIONS ISSUED (INCLUDING WARNINGS) FOR FURBEARER SEASON VIOLATIONS IN ARKANSAS, 2004-2010.



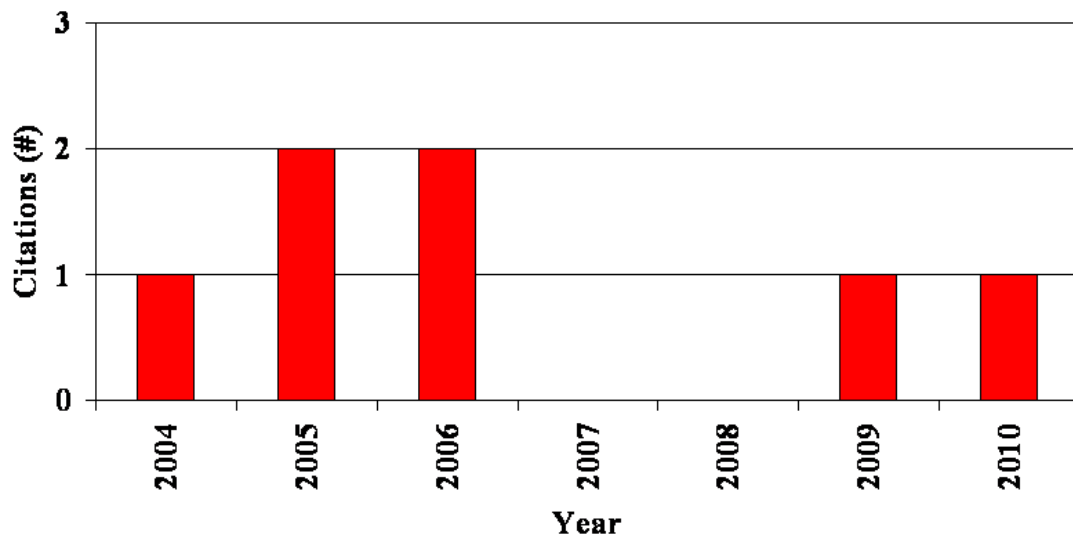
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

FIGURE 3. CITATIONS ISSUED (INCLUDING WARNINGS) FOR REGULAR FURBEARING SEASON TRAP VIOLATIONS IN ARKANSAS, 2004-2010.



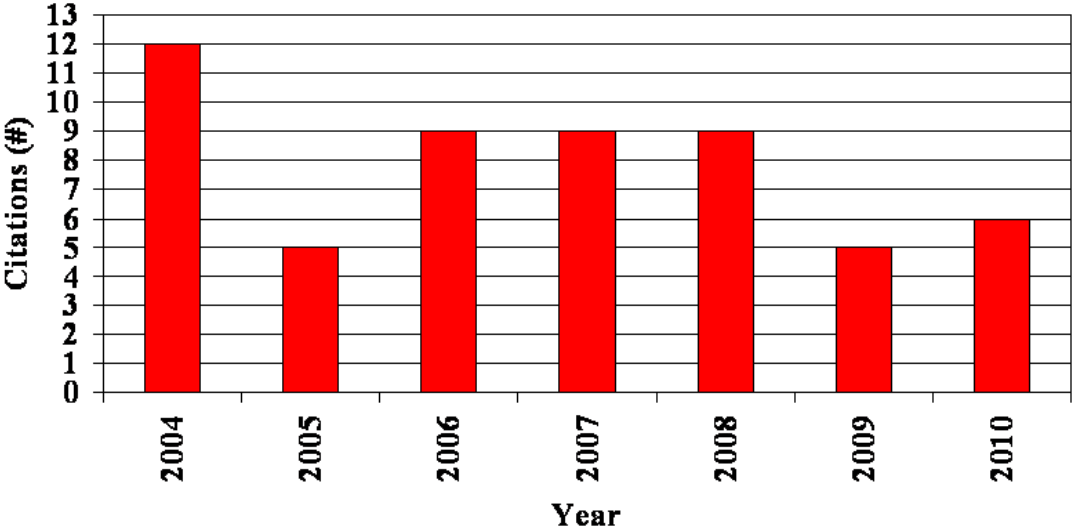
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

FIGURE 4. CITATIONS ISSUED (INCLUDING WARNINGS) FOR TRAP CHECKING VIOLATIONS IN ARKANSAS, 2004-2010.



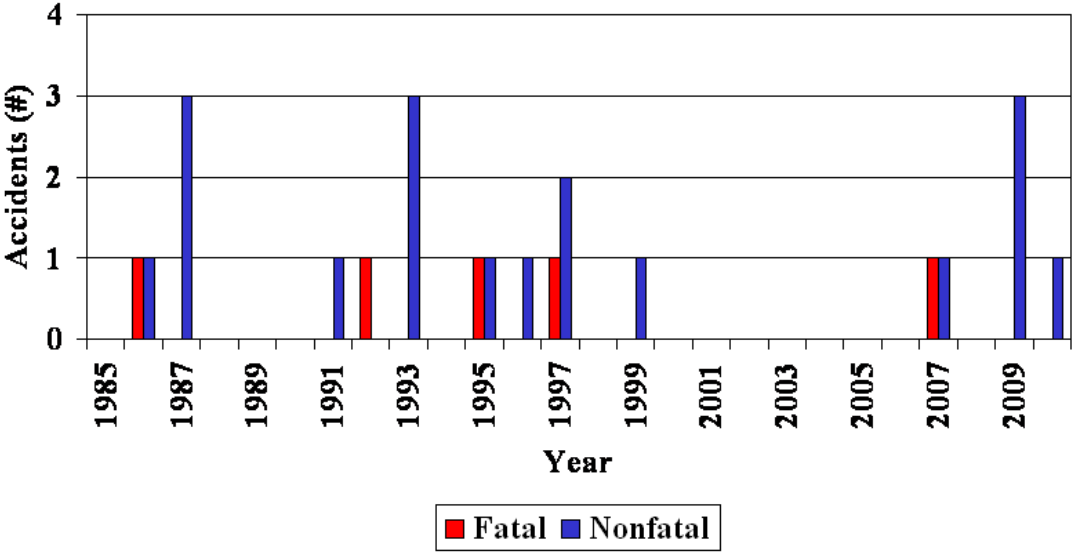
Information provided by Enforcement Division for fiscal year (July – June)

FIGURE 5. CITATIONS ISSUED (INCLUDING WARNINGS) FOR TRAP IDENTIFICATION VIOLATIONS IN ARKANSAS, 2004-2010.



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

FIGURE 6. FURBEARER HUNTING AND TRAPPING FATALITIES AND INJURIES IN ARKANSAS, 1985-2010.



Information provided by AGFC Hunter Education Program

Reported purchases of bobcat and otter by fur dealers under-represent the number of these species taken in Arkansas. In accordance with federal law, pelts of these species must be tagged before they leave the state. Although 1,776 otters and 1,038 bobcats were purchased in Arkansas, 2,734 otters and 1,582 bobcats were tagged in 2010-11. A similar pattern has been observed since 2003. Although some of these animals may have been taken in previous years, it is clear that the current system of fur dealer reporting is missing some otter and bobcat harvest, which may have an impact on assessments of county and regional harvest trends. The actual harvest of other furbearers probably is 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) 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). The reported purchase of beavers by fur dealers in 2010-11 was 6,724; the tails of some of those animals also may have been 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 counties with many beavers has not been evaluated.

PART 2: BOWHUNTER OBSERVATION SURVEY

This was the sixth 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. Participants reported dates and times they hunted, along with the number of individuals of each species seen each day. Surveys reporting more than 10 individuals of any one species (except coyote, for which any reported number up to 15 would be acceptable) during the same hunt were deemed to be spurious and not included in the summarized report. Hunts reporting no hours or 11 or more hours of hunting during a single day were removed from analysis. During the 2010-11 season, 34,912 hours of observations were reported statewide. Regional information for each species is reported in Part 5 of this report.

FIGURE 7. HOURS OF BOWHUNTER OBSERVATION BY REGION AND YEAR, 2005-2010.

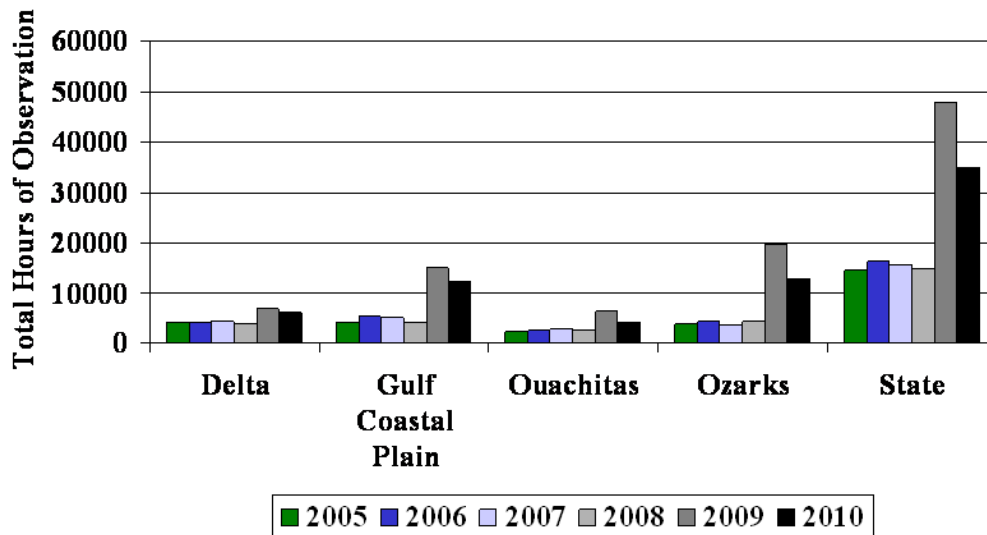
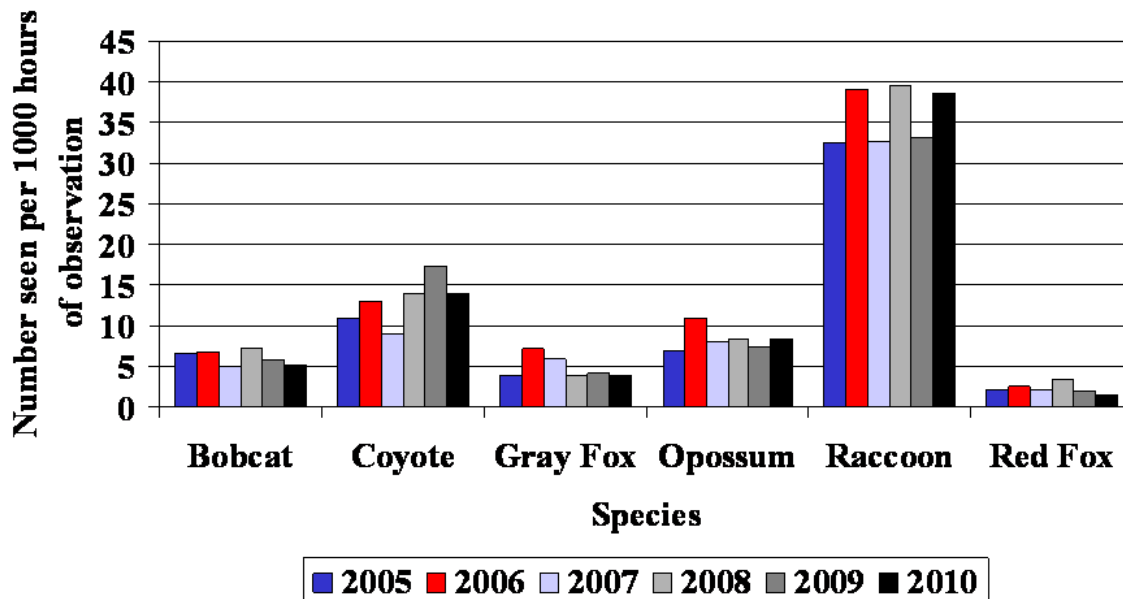


FIGURE 8. STATEWIDE BOWHUNTER OBSERVATION DATA, 2005-2010.

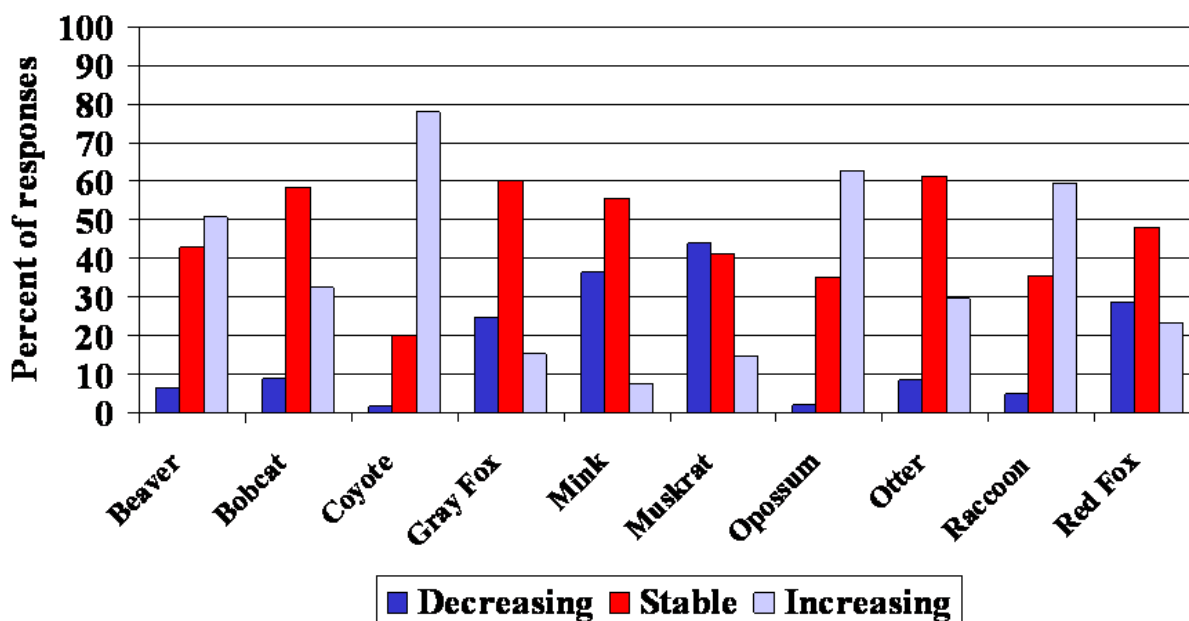


PART 3: RESIDENT TRAPPER SURVEY

Beginning with the 2008-09 season, resident trappers over the age of 16 were required to obtain a free Resident Trapper Permit as well as a hunting license to trap in Arkansas. Following the close of the season an optional survey was mailed to the 3,063 people who obtained the permit and a total of 1,211 completed surveys were returned (40.8 percent of delivered surveys). The average trapper who responded to the survey was 46 years old.

Most respondents (67 percent) set traps in the 2010-11 season, higher than the 61 percent seen in 2009-10. Those that obtained a permit, but did not trap primarily did not because they were too busy (47 percent), health reasons (17 percent), or pelt prices were too low (14 percent). The average number of days trapped was 41 and trappers set out an average of 16 traps each day they trapped. Raccoon was sought by 79 percent of trappers, followed by beaver at 58 percent, bobcat at 52 percent, coyote at 51 percent, gray fox at 40 percent, and otter at 33 percent. The largest share (23 percent) of trappers kept their harvest for personal use, marketed their harvest through Arkansas furdealers (22 percent), trap for nuisance control only and don't sell anything (19 percent), sold at the two Arkansas fur auctions (11 percent), or by shipping to a major auction house such as NAFA (8 percent), sold directly to an out-of-state dealer (8 percent), or kept for later sale (6 percent). Most trappers sell their harvest skinned (65 percent) and only 28 percent finish their pelts (skinned, fleshed and dried) or sell the entire carcass (7 percent). Trappers were asked to describe the current trend in abundance of seven common furbearer species and with the exception of muskrat, trappers believe that they all seem to be stable or increasing.

FIGURE 9. STATEWIDE ABUNDANCE TRENDS BASED ON OPINIONS OF ACTIVE TRAPPERS THAT TARGETED THESE SPECIES, 2010.



PART 4: NON-RESIDENT TRAPPER SURVEY

Non-residents who wish to trap furbearers are required to purchase a non-resident trapper permit (\$125 in 2010-11) in addition to a non-resident hunting license. Prior to the 2008-09 season a combination furtaker permit was required for non-resident trappers and non-resident furbearer hunters. A total of 56 permits were issued to non-resident trappers. A mandatory survey was mailed to all permit holders and a follow-up survey was sent to those who didn't return the original survey. Of 56 surveys delivered, 49 (88 percent) were returned. Forty-six (93.9 percent) of the respondents indicated they trapped in Arkansas this season.

Trappers originated from 16 states with the majority from Ohio (14 percent), Indiana (13 percent), Louisiana (12 percent), Missouri (12 percent), and Pennsylvania (12 percent). Non-resident trappers set traps an average of 24 days (range 1-90), with 63 percent trapping for more than two weeks. The average number of traps set per day was 37 (range 4-150).

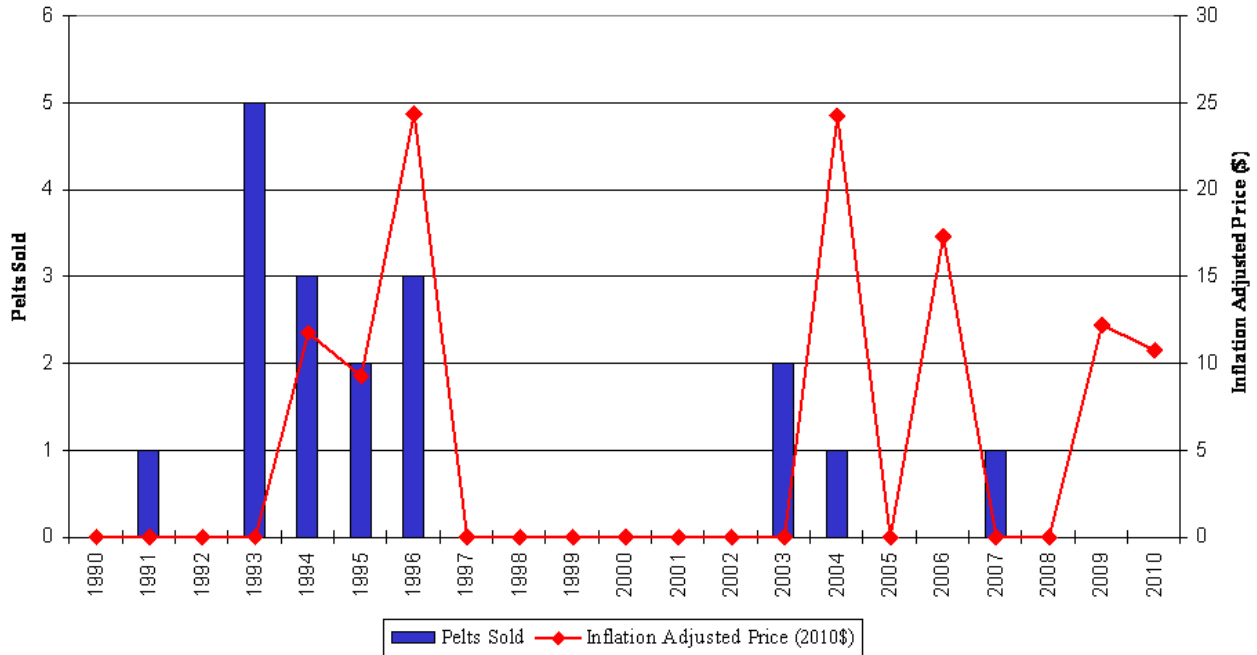
Respondents reported taking 2,406 beaver, 1,376 raccoon, 593 opossum, 388 nutria, 353 otter, 288 coyote, 166 muskrat, 164 mink, 133 bobcat, 48 striped skunk, 15 gray fox and 8 red fox. Since not all permit holders responded to the survey this represents only the minimum number of animals known to be harvested by non-resident trappers, but it does add considerably to the known fur harvest in the state. Some of these animals may have been sold to Arkansas furdealers and may be represented in their purchase reports.

PART 5: SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

Badgers are uncommon in Arkansas and only occur in the northern part of the state. Reports of them along Crowley's Ridge and in Marion County have been increasing in recent years and they may be expanding in this part of the state.

FIGURE 10. ARKANSAS BADGER PURCHASES, 1990-2010.



Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

Perhaps no other mammal in Arkansas is as valuable as the beaver and at the same time, creates more problems and economic loss. Its activities often conflict with man's vested interest, and damage to agricultural and timber lands present difficult problems for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. In the Delta, beavers cause flooding of agricultural land by damming canals, drainages and pipes. They also fell trees or kill trees by girdling or submerging the roots behind dams for prolonged periods. On the other hand, the beaver provides several important services to humans. Because of their construction of ponds, beavers provide water storage for a variety of uses, retard soil erosion, enhance conditions for warm water fish and create plant diversity.

Castoreum, which is a secretion from the castor gland, is relatively valuable, being used in perfume and trapping industries. Beaver meat also is eaten by some people and is used for dog food.

FIGURE 11. ARKANSAS BEAVER PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

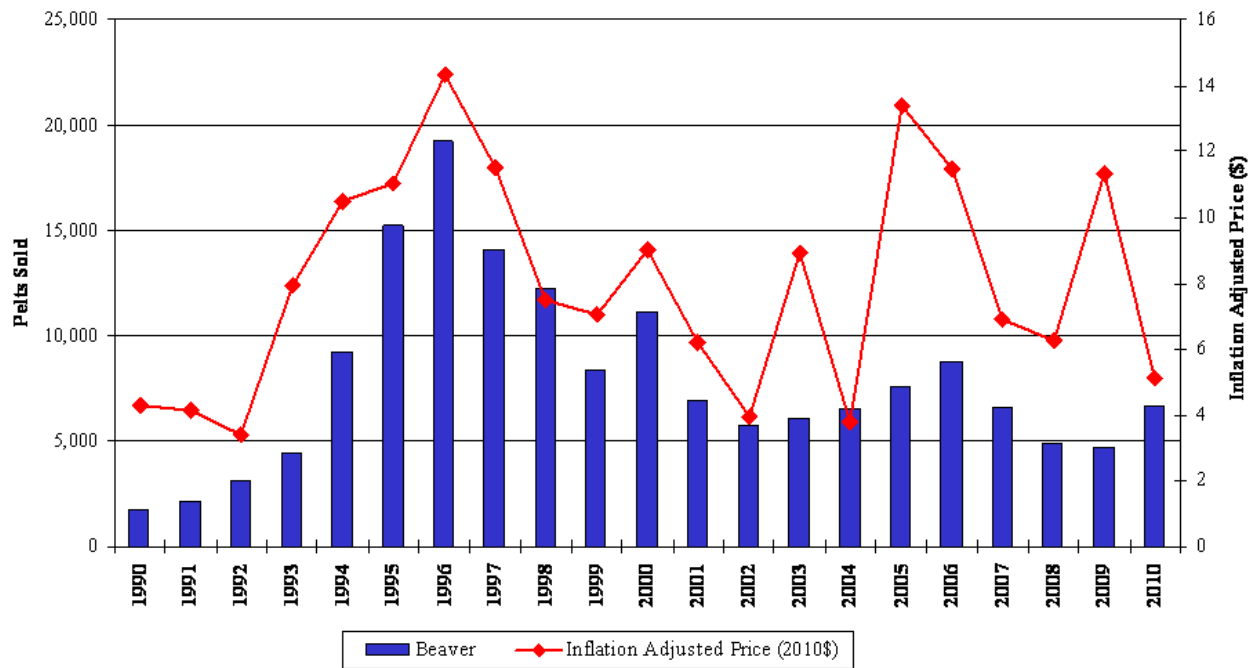
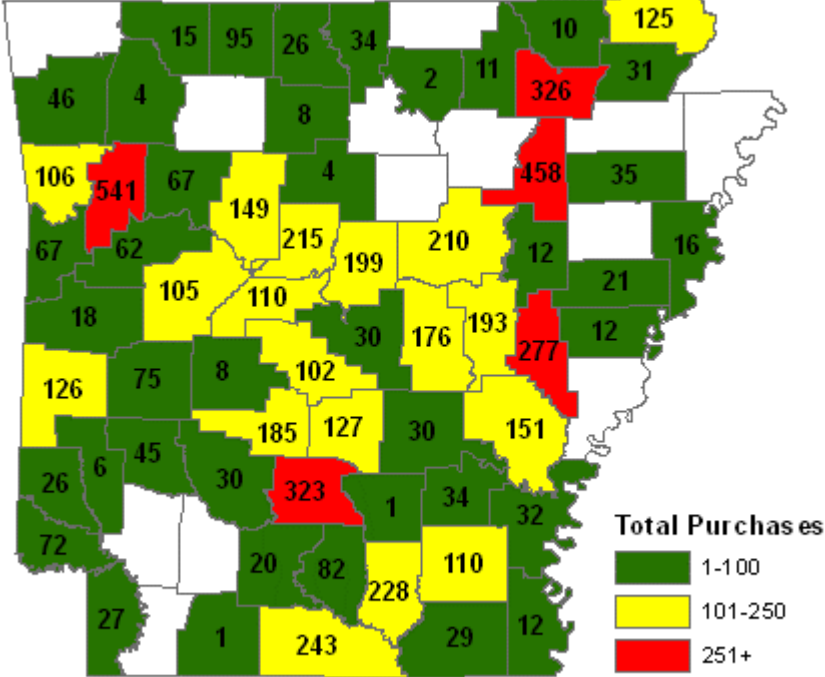


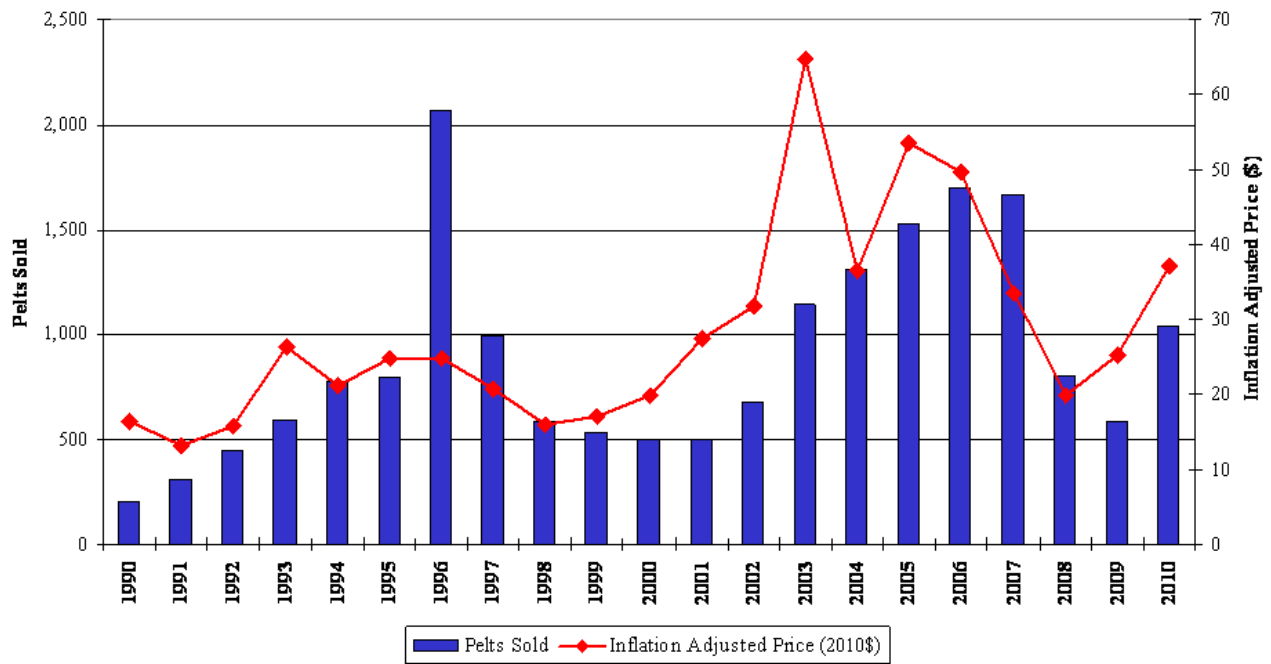
FIGURE 12. ARKANSAS BEAVER PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.



Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

Bobcats are found throughout the state, primarily in wooded habitats. Their diet consists mostly of rabbits, though they also eat rodents and birds as the opportunity arises. Breeding generally occurs from December to February with litters of one to six kittens being born from March through early May. Despite popular perception of an increasing number of bobcats, objective data from the bowhunter observation survey indicates that their populations have been stable over the last six years (Figure 14).

FIGURE 13. ARKANSAS BOBCAT PURCHASES, 1990-2010.



Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

In Arkansas, the coyote originally was found in the more open areas of western Arkansas. But with changing agricultural practices, such as clearing of timberlands and creation of more open lands, the coyote extended its range to the central part of the state by the early 1950s and over the entire state by the early 1960s. Presently, coyotes are common in every Arkansas county, but are an underused resource.

Coyotes can be beneficial, since they consume large numbers of rodents, scavenge for dead animals and remove crippled and diseased deer from the deer herd.

Coyotes are controversial, since they sometimes prey upon game animals and domestic animals, such as cats, dogs and occasionally upon poultry and other livestock. However, proper animal husbandry measures can control most depredation problems.

Bowhunter observation data provides some modest support for the popular perception that coyote populations are increasing in the state, however, the large amount of annual variation in observation rates and relatively short time frame over which the survey has been conducted make such determinations difficult. However, it is clear that recreational harvest, aided by very liberal hunting, trapping and nuisance wildlife control regulations, is not reducing coyote populations on a statewide level. Coyote control can only realistically be achieved on a local scale, and only then if a significant effort is made on a sustained basis.

FIGURE 16. ARKANSAS COYOTE PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

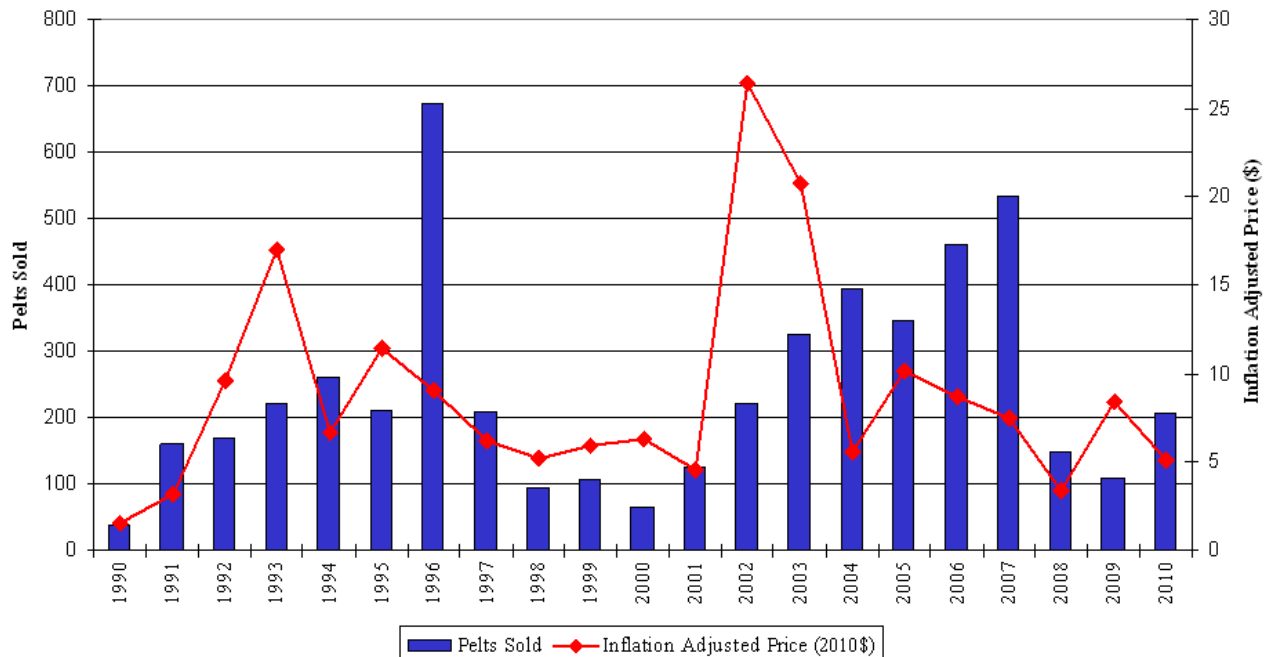
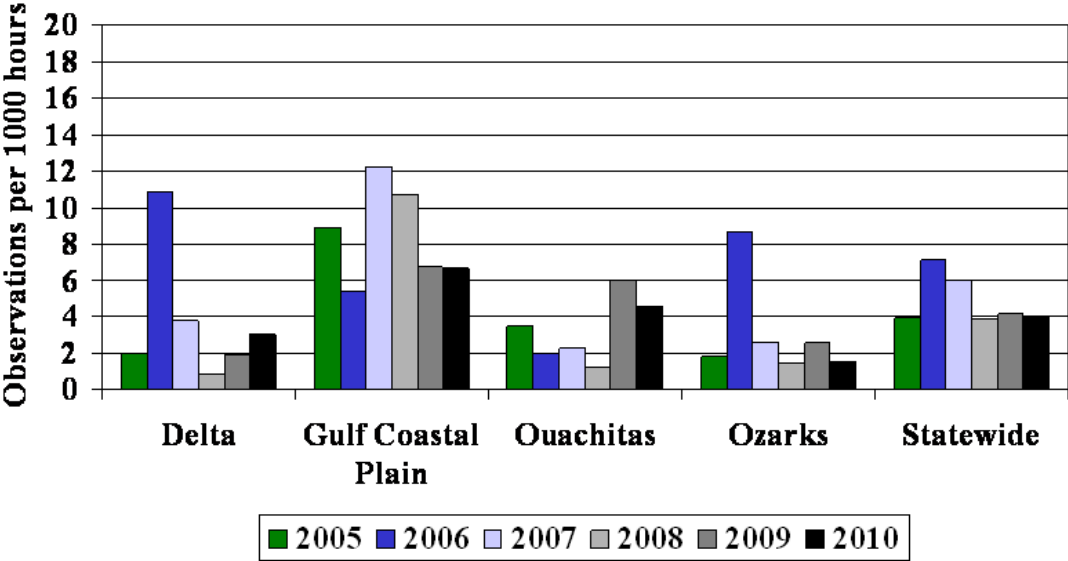


FIGURE 21. REGIONAL GRAY FOX OBSERVATION BY BOWHUNTERS, 2005-2010.



Mink (*Mustela vison*)

This species is found statewide, but is most plentiful in the Delta region, where irrigation canals and reservoirs are common.

FIGURE 22. ARKANSAS MINK PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

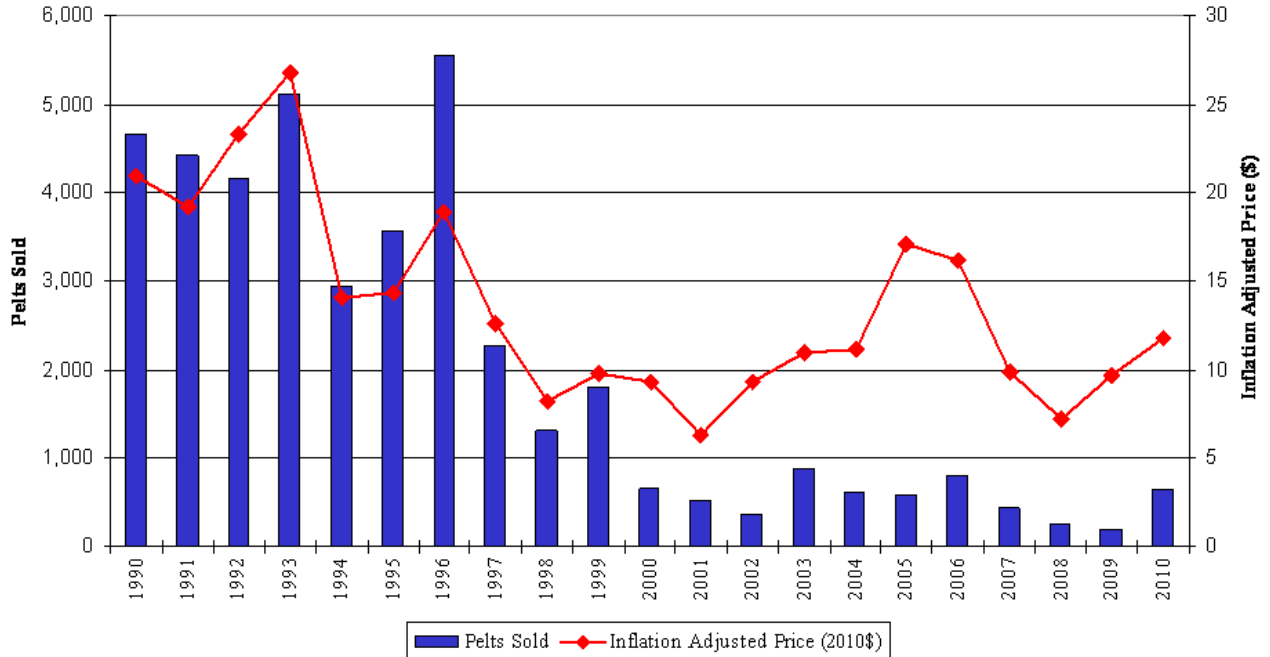
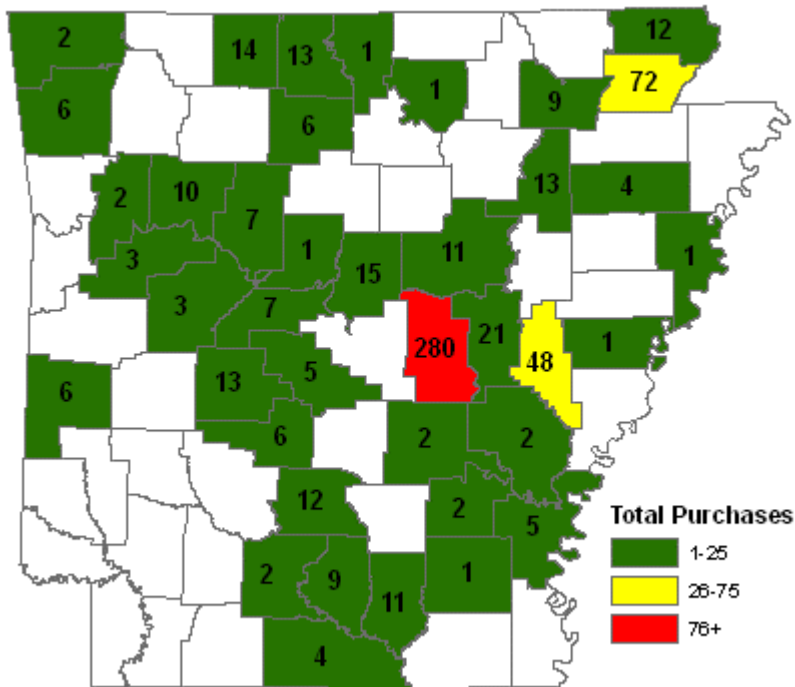


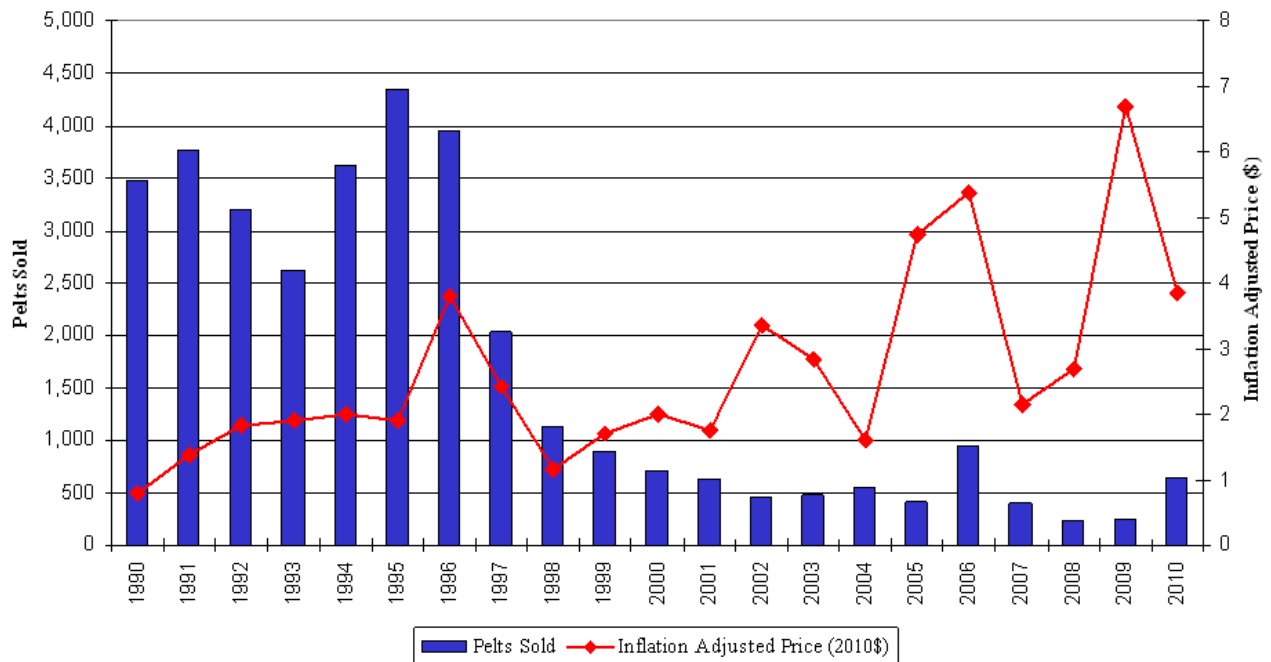
FIGURE 23. ARKANSAS MINK PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.



Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

Changing land use patterns have contributed to increases in muskrat populations during the last few decades. Practices such as larger acreages devoted to rice and fish farming with accompanying irrigation water, borrow pits, canals and ponds provide more suitable habitat for muskrats. However, in recent years there appears to have been a decline in muskrat populations in the eastern United States, though the reasons for this apparent decline are unknown. High prices seen in the last few years should have brought about a larger increase in pelt purchases than has been observed in Arkansas, providing some support for the idea that they are not as abundant as they have been in the past.

FIGURE 24. ARKANSAS MUSKRAT PURCHASES, 1990-2010.



Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*)

The nutria was first successfully introduced in Louisiana in 1938 as a new fur resource. Since then, nutria have become well established through natural dispersal and by trans-locations along the Gulf Coast and inland to Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, northern Mississippi and Alabama. Nutria were introduced in many areas to control aquatic vegetation, such as water hyacinth, bladderwort, algae and other unwanted vegetation that choked ponds and waterways. But, the nutria's value for this purpose is greatly overrated, since it more often feeds on desirable vegetation, especially in waterfowl habitat. Its burrowing activities also cause serious damage to drainage canals, irrigation ditches and levees in rice-growing areas and on fish farms.

Nutria have few natural enemies, and except for trapping, control measures do not appear to be very effective. This species does not represent a very valuable fur resource in Arkansas, since less than 500 are trapped annually and the demand for their fur (and thus price) is low. Most nutria are seen in the West Gulf Coastal Plain, the Mississippi Delta and up the Arkansas River Valley. Most nutria are trapped within these regions, often incidental to trap sets for other species.

FIGURE 26. ARKANSAS NUTRIA PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

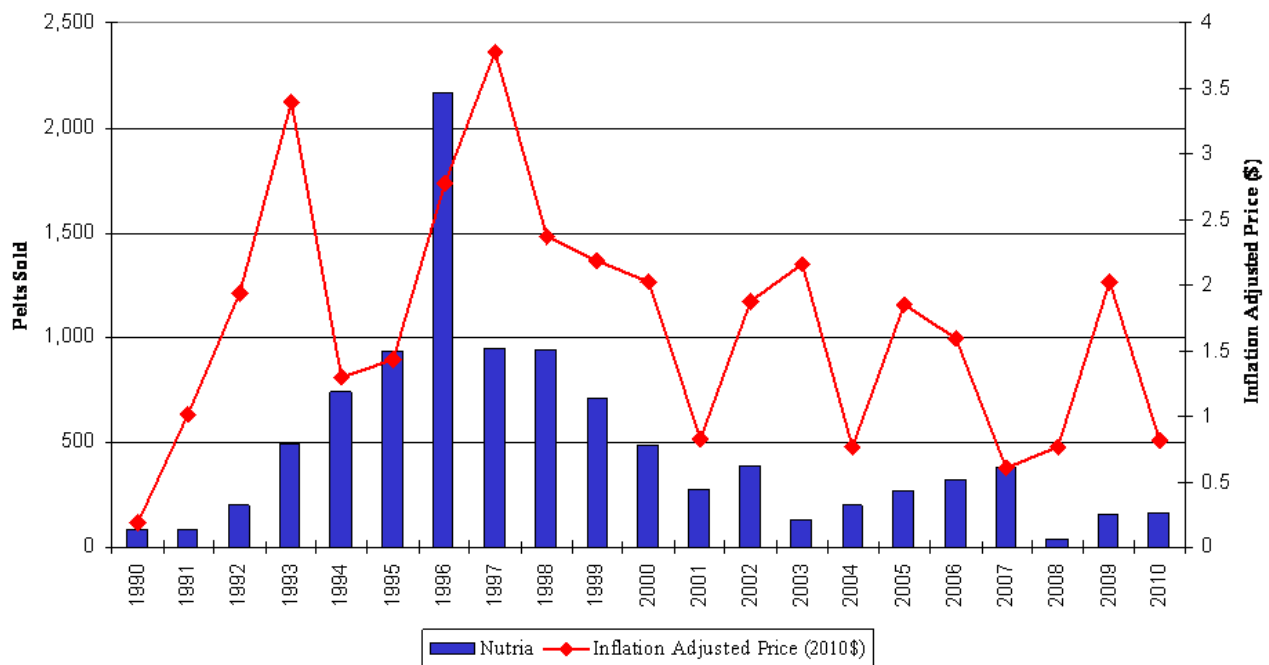
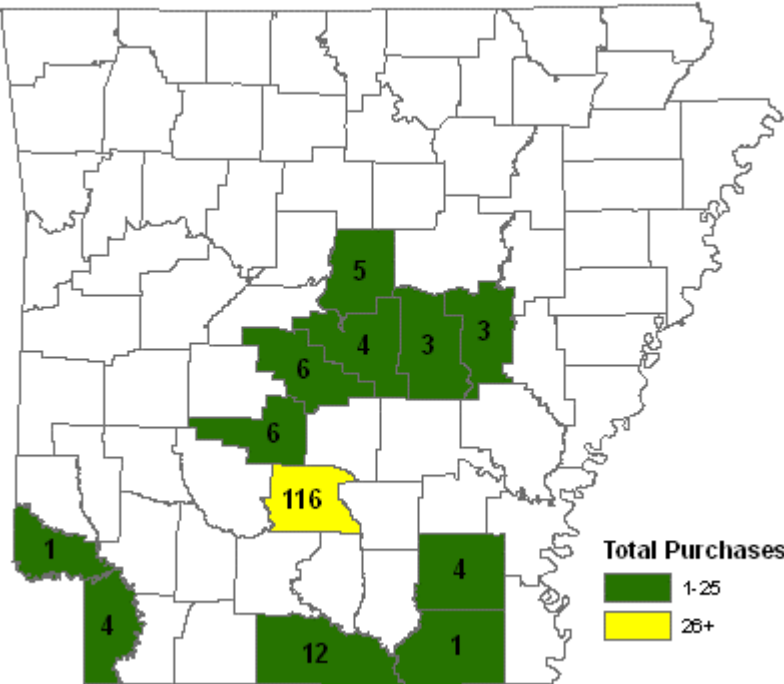


FIGURE 27. ARKANSAS NUTRIA PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.



Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)

The opossum is common throughout the state and its fur is currently of low economic value, although many are caught annually in the pursuit of other, more valuable species. The opossum is not considered a significant nuisance species, although they do get into people’s garbage and chicken houses occasionally. The species may serve as a host for organisms causing tularemia, relapsing fever, leptospirosis and usually carry a large burden of internal parasites, such as flukes, tapeworms and roundworms.

FIGURE 28. ARKANSAS OPOSSUM PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

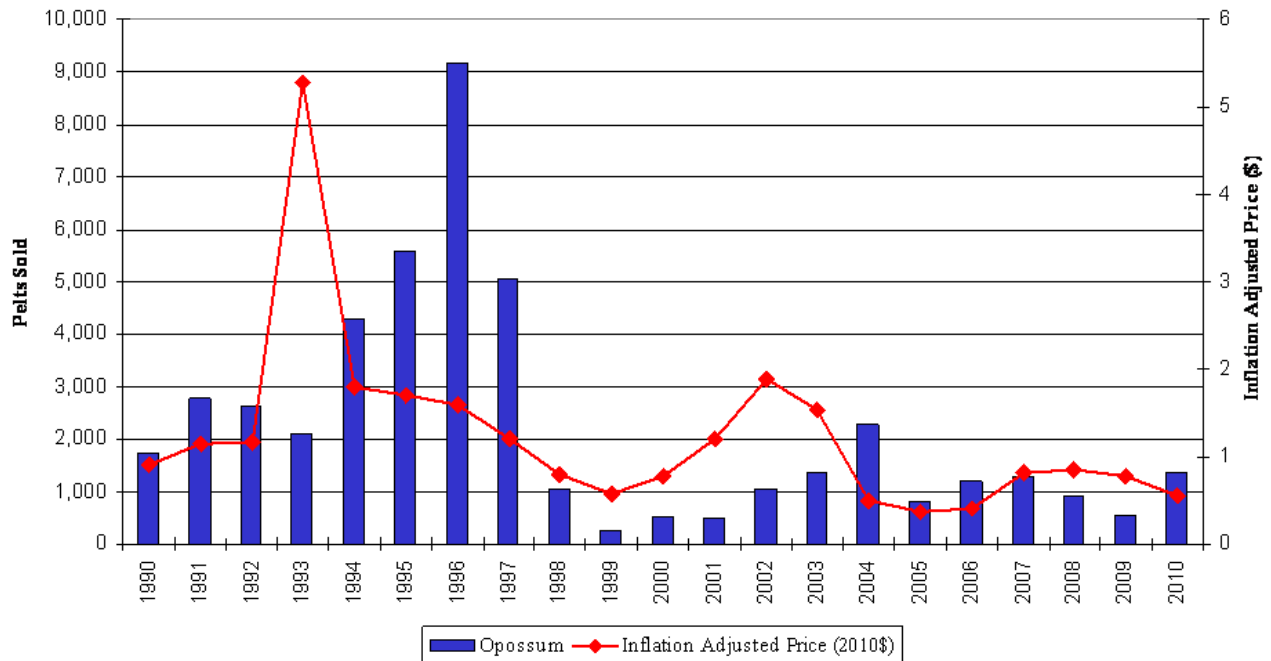


FIGURE 29. ARKANSAS OPOSSUM PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.

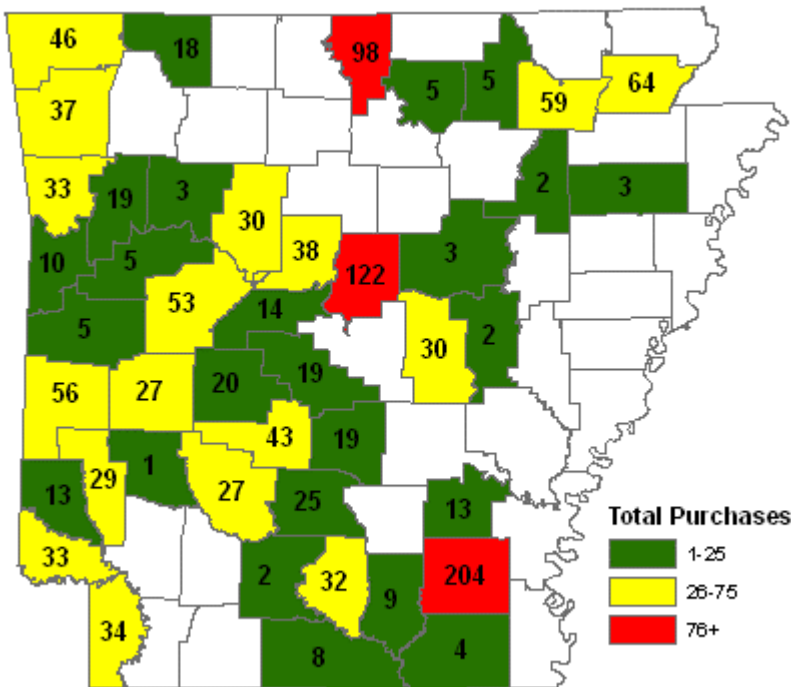
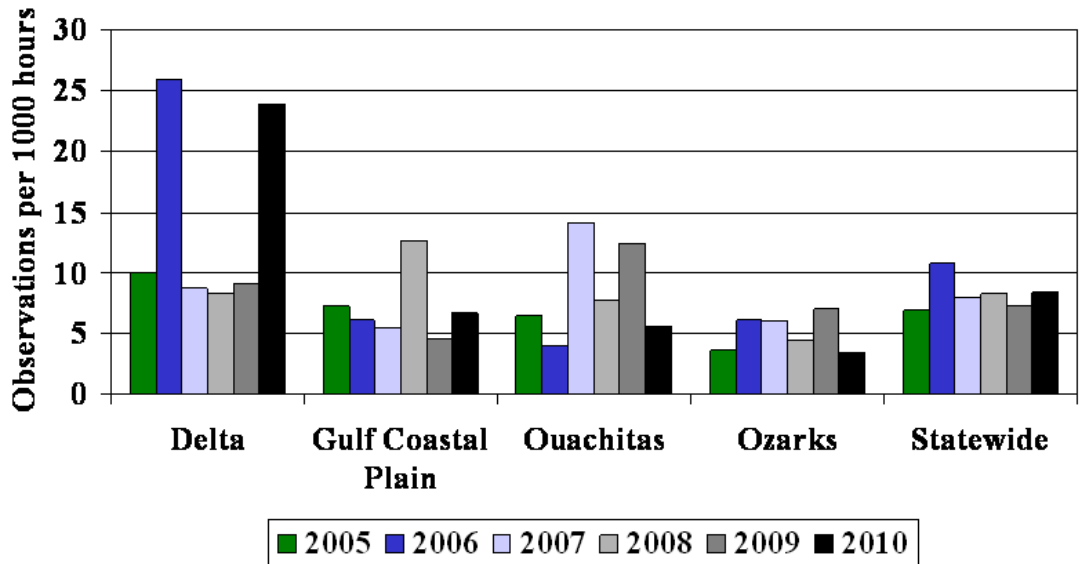


FIGURE 30. REGIONAL OPOSSUM OBSERVATIONS BY BOWHUNTERS, 2005-2010.



Otter (*Lutra canadensis*)

River otter occur in all counties of the state, but are most common in the southern and eastern parts of Arkansas. However, otter are common in most river drainages in the Ozark and Ouachita regions and are apparently on the increase in these areas. Nuisance complaints are becoming more common for otter, and when they occur, usually involve eating fish out of ponds and causing damage to boat dock floatation.

FIGURE 31. ARKANSAS OTTER PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

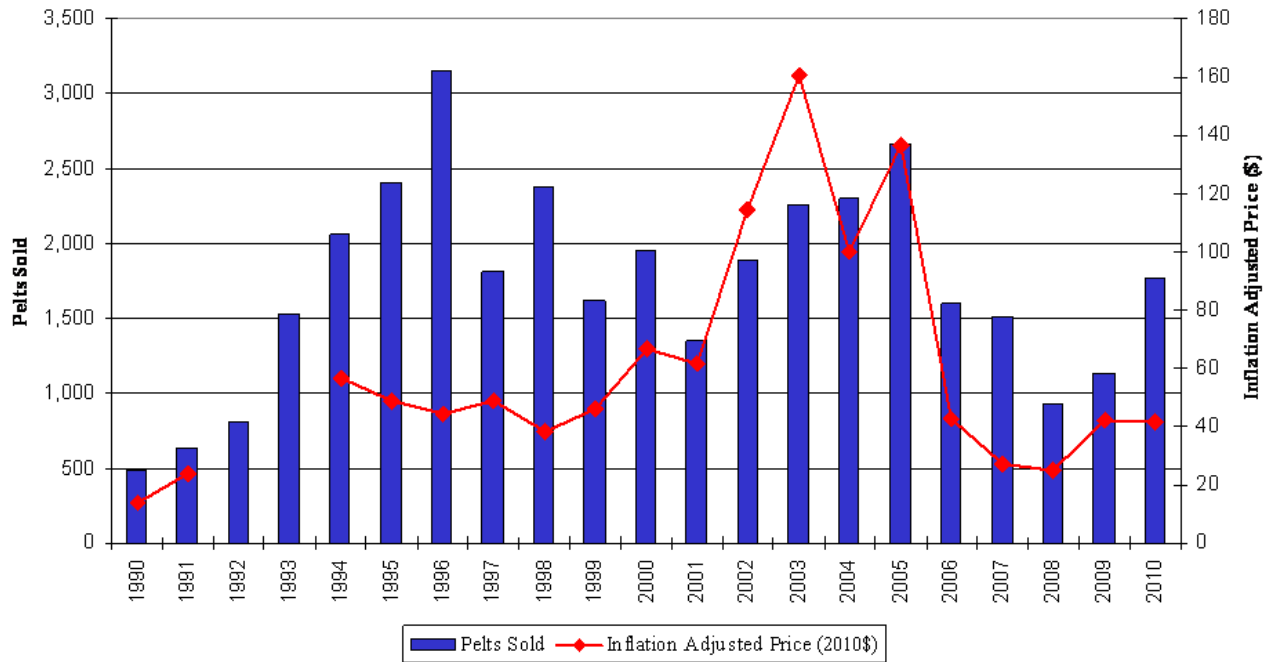
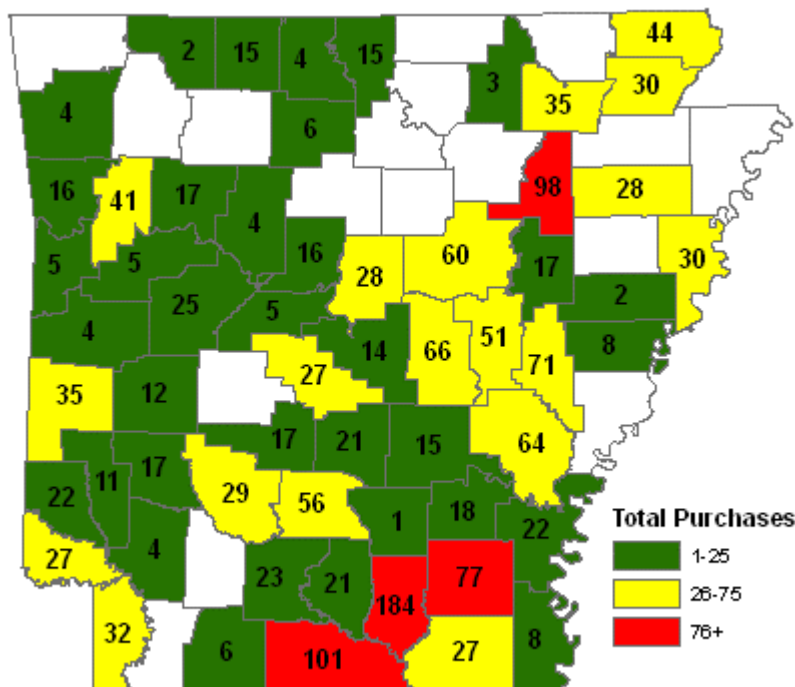


FIGURE 32. ARKANSAS OTTER PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.



Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

Raccoons are distributed statewide and have been harvested in greater numbers than any other furbearer for 50 years. Reasons for the high harvest include the ubiquitous nature of raccoons, their high population levels and their high reproductive potential. Also, they are easily caught, there is demand for the fur and they are pursued by both trappers and sportsmen.

Raccoons are frequent urban and rural pests. Damages often occur from their nuisance activity. They also prey upon waterfowl, wild turkey and other ground-nesting birds and their nests. Distemper often affects localized populations, and while rabies is a potential problem, no rabid raccoons have been found in Arkansas in more than 15 years.

While many Arkansans believe that the number of raccoons is exploding, objective data from the bowhunter and field trial surveys indicate that their populations have been stable over the last six years (Figures 35 and 36).

FIGURE 33. ARKANSAS RACCOON PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

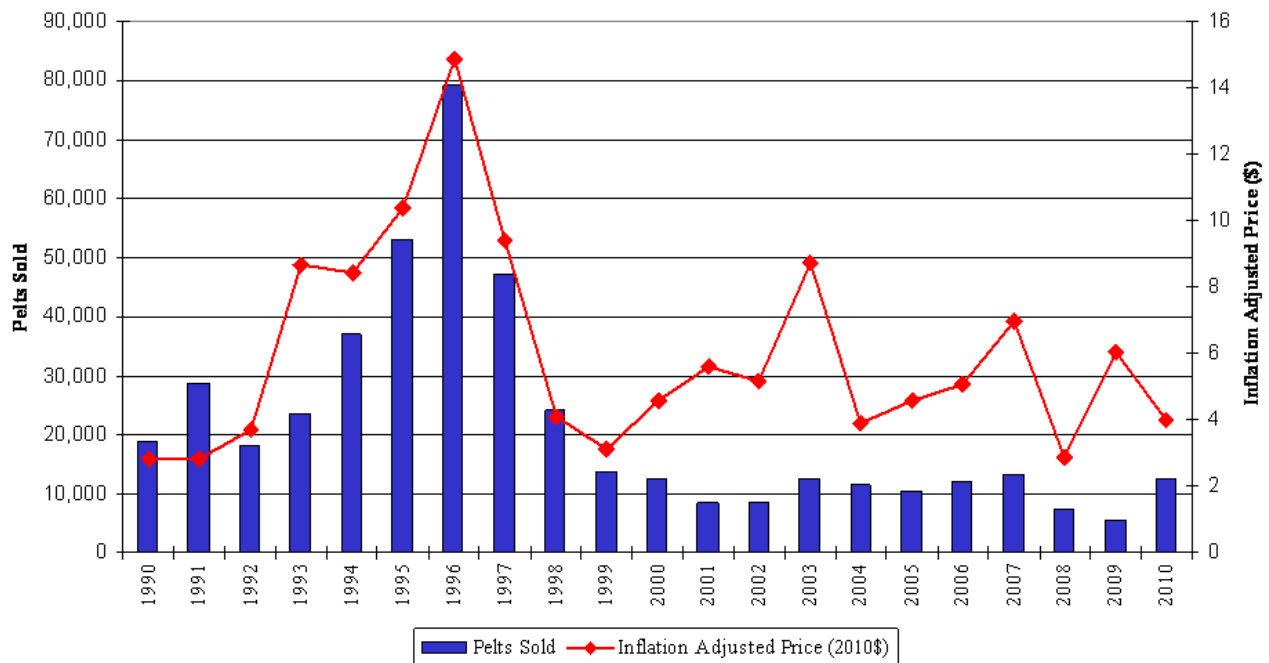


FIGURE 34. ARKANSAS RACCOON PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.

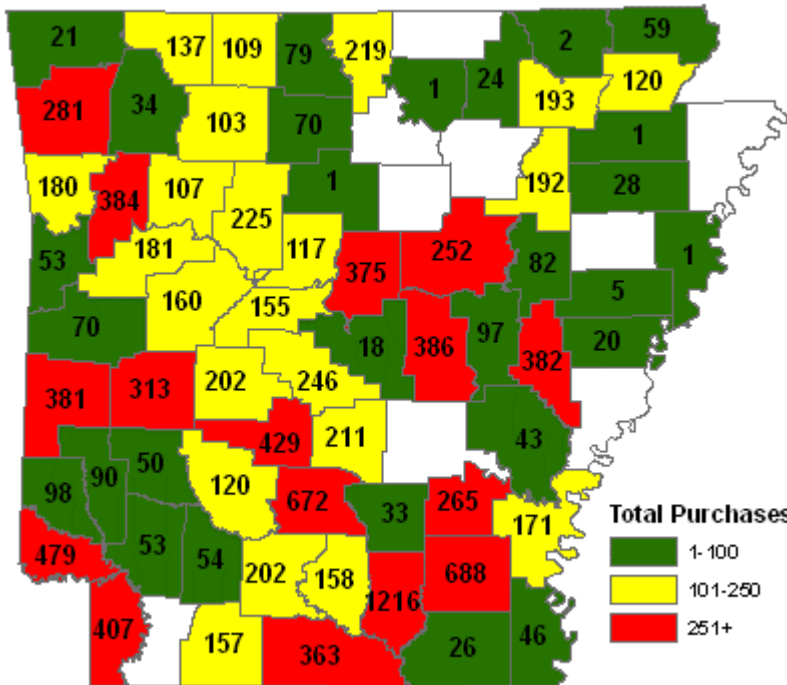


FIGURE 35. REGIONAL RACCOON OBSERVATION BY BOWHUNTERS, 2005-2010.

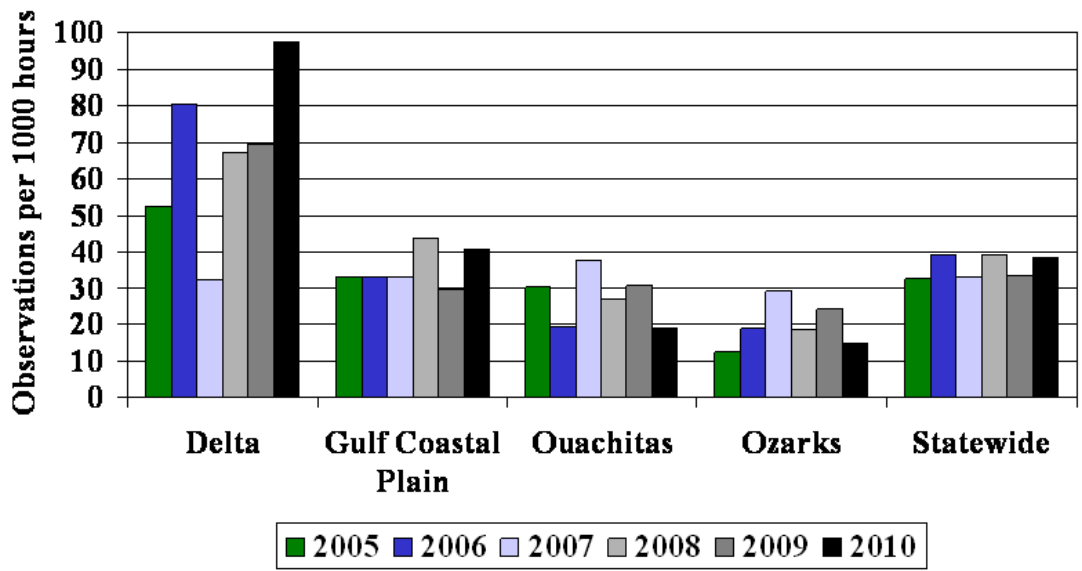
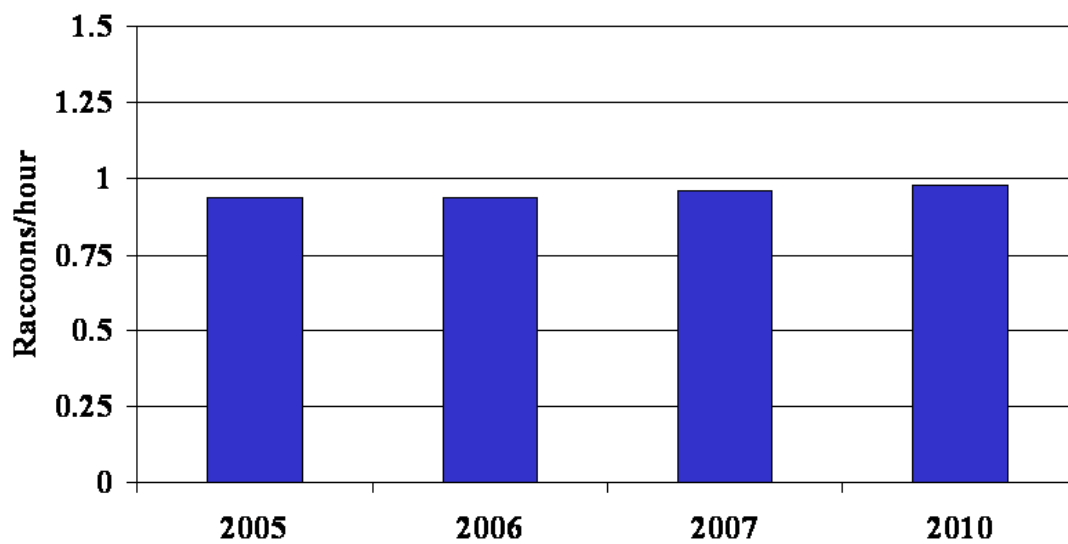


FIGURE 36. STATEWIDE RACCOON OBSERVATIONS PER HOUR DURING RACCOON FIELD TRIALS, 2005 - 2010.



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

When the state was heavily forested, the red fox was uncommon. Clearing of land for agriculture provided habitat and the red fox extended its range across the state. Increasingly open habitat also enhanced the migration and proliferation of the more dominant coyote. Evidence suggests that where the two species occur together, the coyote will displace the red fox. The red fox occurs in all regions of the state, but it reaches its highest densities in the Delta, where extensive open lands predominate.

FIGURE 37. ARKANSAS RED FOX PURCHASES, 1995-2010.

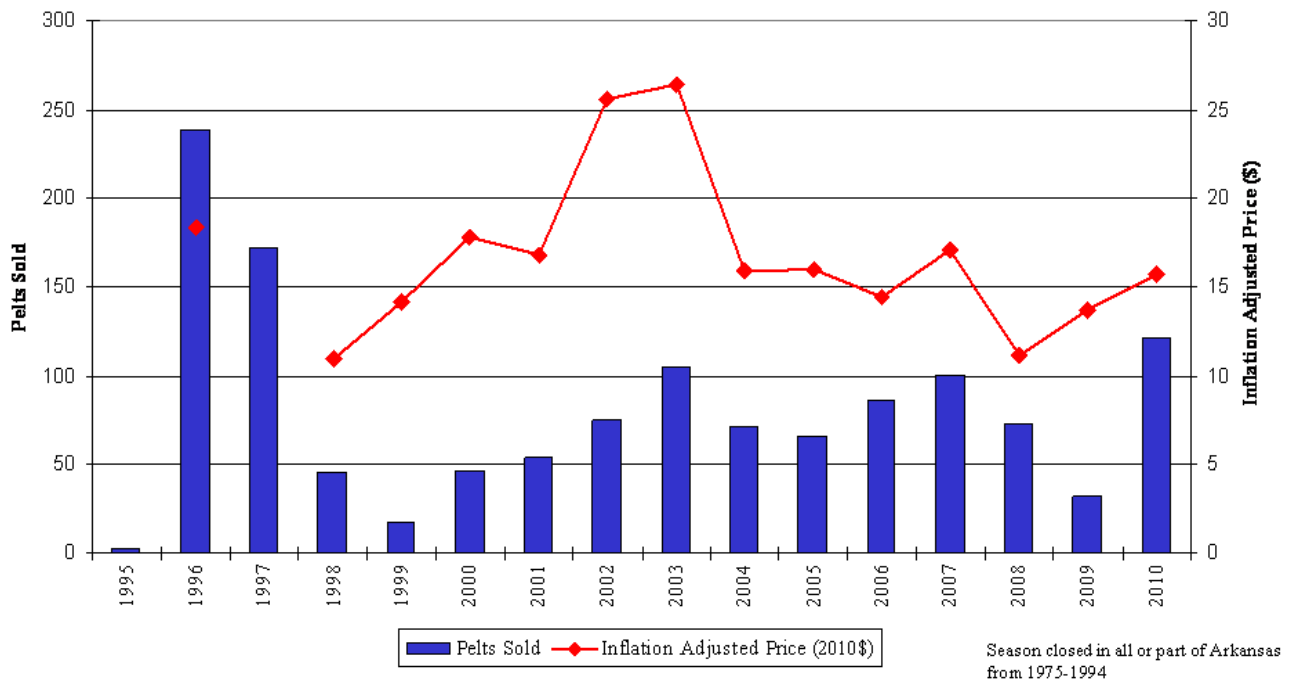
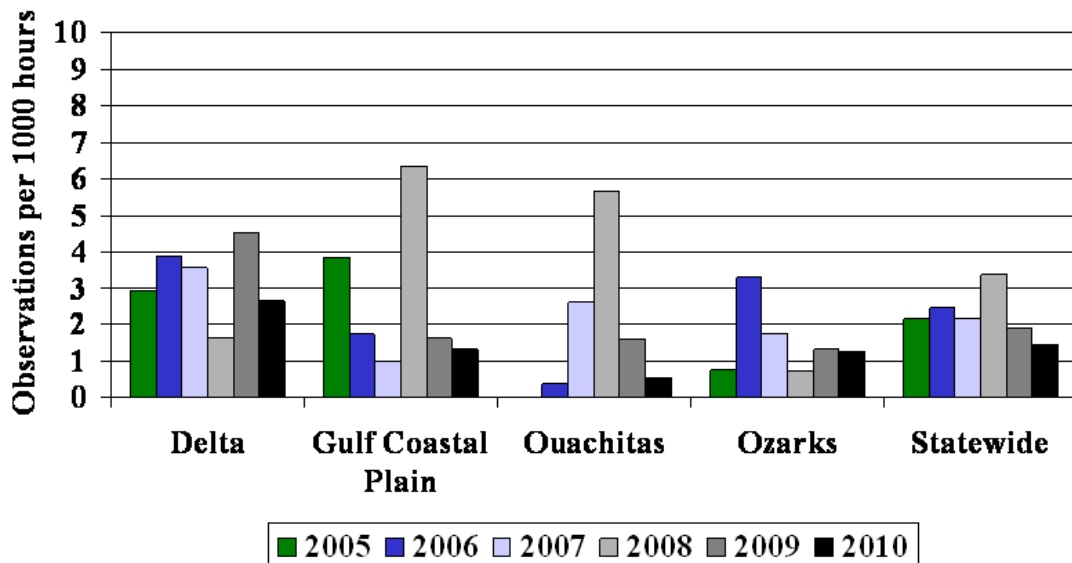


FIGURE 38. REGIONAL RED FOX OBSERVATION BY BOWHUNTERS, 2005-2010.

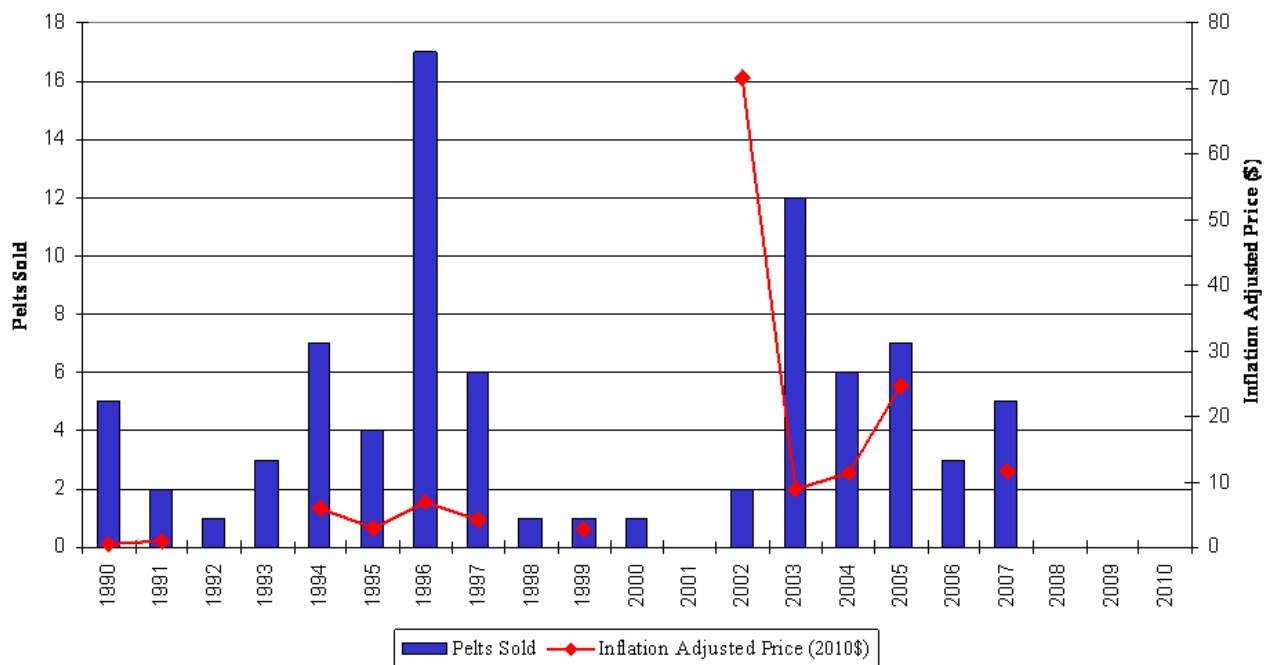


Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*)

The spotted skunk is also known to some as civet cat. Like the striped skunk, the spotted skunk has little economic value to trappers or hunters because of the low demand and low pelt value, although spotted skunk pelts sell for a higher price, in spite of their smaller size. These little animals are excellent mousers and unlike the striped skunk, climb trees with ease.

Spotted skunks are thought to occur statewide, with the possible exception of the easternmost portion of the Mississippi Delta. They are most common in the upland areas of the Ozarks and Ouachitas, where they prefer rocky outcrops and ledges.

FIGURE 39. ARKANSAS SPOTTED SKUNK PURCHASES, 1990-2010.



Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)

Striped skunks occur in all counties of the state and are most common in cleared agricultural lands and pasture land. Skunks are a common nuisance animal, usually causing problems such as digging under houses and emitting their telltale odor when alarmed by domestic dogs. Skunks are the major vector of wildlife rabies in the United States and Arkansas, averaging 40-50 percent of all reported cases.

FIGURE 40. ARKANSAS STRIPED SKUNK PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

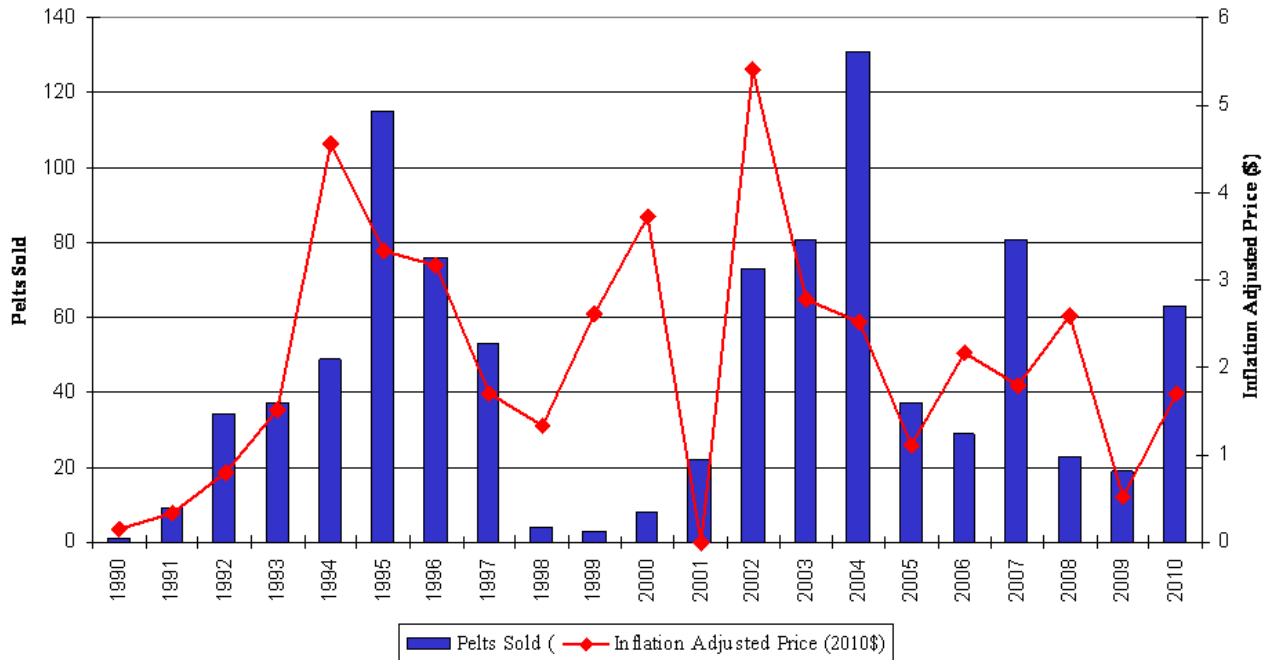
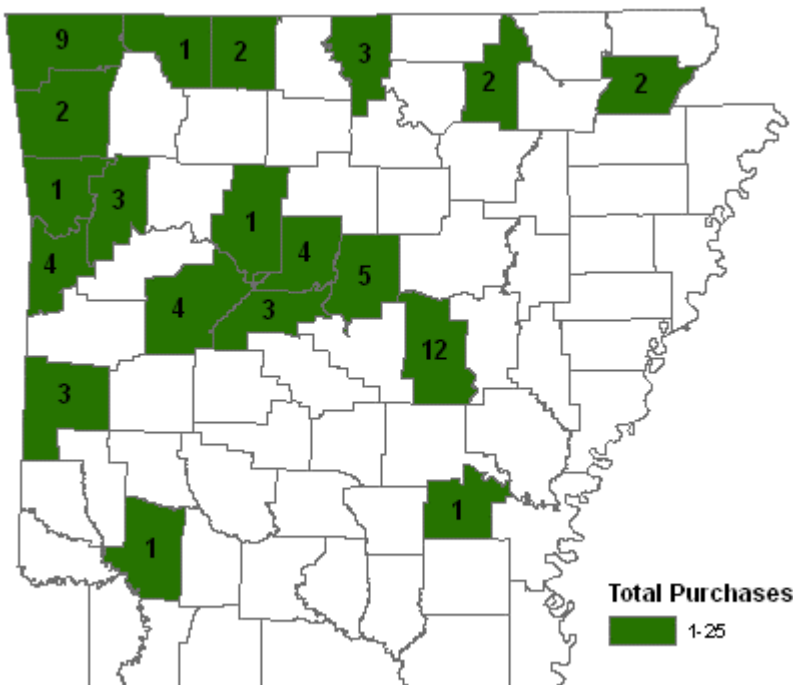


FIGURE 41. ARKANSAS STRIPED SKUNK PURCHASES BY COUNTY, 2010.



Weasel (*Mustela frenata*)

Weasels are rare within the state and most common where pocket gopher populations are found. Very little is known about this mammal in Arkansas due to its scarcity. They are beneficial, since they feed on rats, mice and pocket gophers. In the northern and western United States, weasels turn white, except for the black tip on its tail. In Arkansas, weasels do not change color, but the winter coat may be lighter than in summer.

FIGURE 42. ARKANSAS WEASEL PURCHASES, 1990-2010.

