

No.	Author: Geriann Albers	Date
	Title: Summary of Furbearer Hunting Contest Activities, 2023-2025	
2079		07/24/2025

Introduction

Furbearer hunting contests are tournaments typically designed for the harvest of coyotes, foxes, or raccoons participated in by licensed hunters or trappers following existing state regulations. Contests have a registration fee and award prizes to teams or individual hunters based on the rules for the respective event. For example, prizes may be awarded to the participant who harvests the most animals, the largest animal, and/or the smallest animal. Prizes awarded to winners typically consist of a portion of total entry fees. Hunting contests are not prohibited in Indiana if existing wildlife laws are followed but are not specifically encouraged or sanctioned by Indiana DNR.

In 2023, a citizen petition was received by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) asking to consider more specific regulations or elimination of furbearer hunting contests. Public survey data from Indiana DNR and Purdue University research, along with estimates of participation and harvest did not demonstrate a need for changes to regulations. However, the NRC requested DNR to estimate a minimum number of events that might occur in Indiana.

Methods

An internal survey was established so any DNR employee could report a hunting contest they saw advertised to the furbearer and turkey program. Data collection began in January 2024 and continued through April of 2025. Contests in fall of 2023 were reported once the survey opened, so this effort includes data from two hunting/trapping seasons for furbearers. Information collected through the survey included some basic information like species targeted, date (either start or end), and primary county of contest. Additional questions like the type of organization involved (if any) and whether the contest seemed to be a fundraiser were also included as optional.

Summary

A total of 38 events were reported during the reporting window, with 24 events occurring in 2023–2024 hunting/trapping season and 11 during the 2024–2025 hunting/trapping season. The remaining three occurred during summer 2024, between hunting seasons, when coyote hunting is still allowed on private land with a license and landowner permission. Though the survey opened in January, the first contest reported was November 2023, so the survey spanned two full hunting and trapping seasons. Most events listed one species (31) as the focus of the contest, with 1 event listing 2 focal species, 5 events listing 3 focal species, and 1 event listing 5 focal species. January and February were the most common months for furbearer contests (14 each). While not every event had location information, at least 23 counties were represented, with the majority of events (24) occurring in southern Indiana. Coyote was the most common primary focus species for a furbearer contest, followed by raccoon (6) and beaver (1). Contests with multiple species were often coyote and fox or coyote, fox, raccoon, and opossum contests. Of the contests documented, 24% (9/38) appeared to have been a fundraiser of some kind. Information on the type of fundraiser was not collected. While some events didn't have any group associated with them, the most common type of group reported when there was one was outdoors/hunting club or conservation group (12), followed by outdoors/gear shop (8). Contests vary by year, but this provides a minimum number that occurred during the span of two hunting and trapping seasons. The number is a minimum because we likely were not able to document every contest that occurred and have no way of correcting for contests staff did not document.

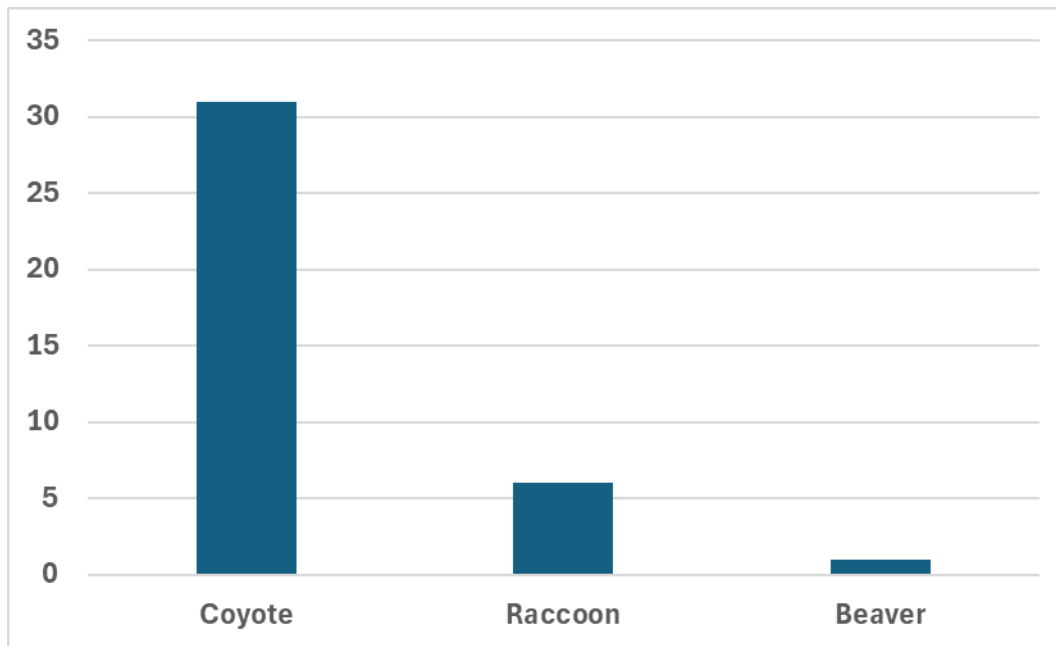


Figure 1. Primary species reported as focus of furbearer contest in Indiana from November 2024 – April 2025.

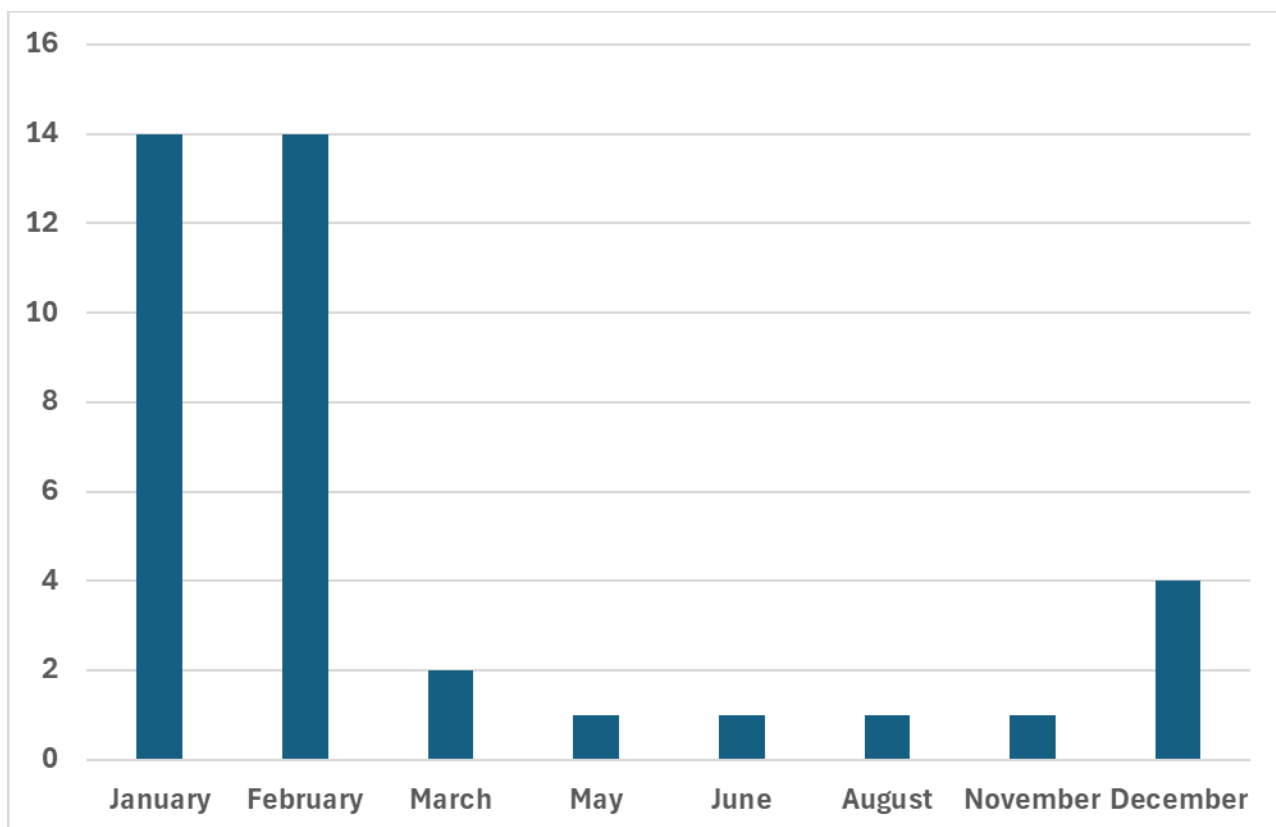


Figure 2. Number of contests held by month, based upon provided start or end date from November 2024 – April 2025.

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