



**MARYLAND WILDLIFE DAMAGE CONTROL INFORMATION GUIDE**

This guide is only an information summary and is not law as printed.

Wildlife and Heritage Service  
Tawes State Office Building  
580 Taylor Ave E-1  
Annapolis, MD 21401

## Overview

In Maryland, anyone conducting work for wildlife damage control must obtain a Wildlife Damage Control Permit. We offer three permit types: Commercial, Assistant, and Public Agency.

Please read through this guide. If your question still has not been answered, please email us.

## TYPES

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**Landowner:** If the damage you seek to control is on your own property, you may apply for a free Landowner Permit. They are a contracted service that will provide the permit over the phone. This permit is not issued through the Wildlife and Heritage Service's Permits Administrator. To obtain a landowner wildlife damage control permit, a person shall apply by telephone to USDA Wildlife Services, at 1-877-463-6497 (for phone numbers outside of Maryland, please call: 410-349-8055), or by mail listed under "Contact Information".

**Commercial:** A commercial operator is defined as a person who charges a fee or receives compensation for providing wildlife damage control services. This permit type is typically for individuals who own a business or hold a commercial operator or supervisor position at a business.

**Assistant:** If you are operating as an employee of a business without direct supervision, an Assistant permit can be issued. Assistant applicants are required to share the name and permit number of the commercial operator they are working under (COMAR 08.03.15.16).

**Public Agency:** Those employed by a governmental agency that are established to provide wildlife damage control services are eligible for this permit type. The application fee is waived.

[Take our quiz to find the right permit for you.](#)

## FEES

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**Application Fee:** After successful completion of the application, application fee, and testing requirements (if applicable), a permit will be issued: Commercial: \$50, Assistant: \$25, Public Agency: Waived.

**License Period:** License issued pursuant to this section run for a period of 1 year from the current year of issuance until the next 31<sup>st</sup> day of December after issuance, on which date the license expires unless it is revoked sooner.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATION MATERIAL

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The written examination for the wildlife damage control permit is a 70-question test and available via Google Forms. In accordance with Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 08.03.15.05, the test covers the following for wildlife damage control:

- Wildlife damage control procedures.
- Current statutes and regulations pertaining to Maryland wildlife (COMAR 08.03.15).
- Wildlife biology, such as reproductive cycles, feeding patterns, and den sites of the more common problem wildlife species in Maryland.
- Human health and safety issues.
- Wildlife control methods, both lethal and nonlethal.
- Acceptable methods of killing; and
- Other questions necessary to determine an individual's ability to conduct wildlife damage control services.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

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### New Applicants:

1. Review the exam material under the "Written Examination Material".
2. Complete the Wildlife Damage Control application and return it to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources via mail or email with the non-refundable application fee (if applicable) by check, money order, or the ShopDNR Online Store. Failure or refusal to provide information requested on the application is sufficient grounds for rejection of the application.
3. Complete the open-book, multiple choice Wildlife Damage Control Exam online. A passing score for the written examination must be 80% (56/70) or higher.
4. If you do not pass the examination with a score of 80% or higher, you must wait a minimum of 30 days before retaking your exam. You may take the test a total of three times without passing before your application is no longer valid, and you must wait 12 months from the date of the last examination to reapply.
5. If you wish to be listed on our website for wildlife damage control calls, complete the availability form. Please do not complete this form unless you intend to take calls from the public.
6. If you selected "mammals (including bats)" on your application, a bat informational reading and affidavit is required. If the affidavit is not received before or with your application, your permit will be issued without bats.

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## **Permit Renewals:**

1. Renewals are sent 2 months prior to the renewal date. If you did not receive your renewal form by December 1<sup>st</sup>, please fill out the Blank Renewal Form listed on our website.
2. Complete the renewal form and return it with a non-refundable processing fee (check, money order, online payment) to Maryland Department of Natural Resources via the address listed on the application or via email.
3. Submit your annual report(s) with your renewal, or by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

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Wildlife Damage Control permit holders must maintain a complete and accurate record of each wildlife complaint which the operator responds to. Records shall be kept for 3 years and be available for inspection by the Service. Records should be kept at their normal place of business and must contain the date of the complaint, name and address of the complainant, the number and species of wildlife involved, the type of damage caused by the wildlife, and the method of disposition.

An annual report shall be filed with the permit renewal application by December 31 of each year covering the preceding October to September period. The report shall be on a form provided by the Service or in a format providing the same information, and include permittee name, permit number, period covered, number of complaints, and number of wildlife handled, and their disposition separated by species and county.

A separate annual report on bat colony exclusion is required for permittees authorized to provide wildlife damage control services for bats. The report shall include for each activity the:

- Date
- Street Address, including City and Zipcode
- Species
- Estimated Colony Size
- Work performed

While completing the reporting forms digitally are preferred for their convenience and quicker permit processing, we understand some may require a paper format, which we can provide upon request. Please email [wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov) or call Wildlife Services toll-free at 1-877-463-6497.

**Failure to file the annual reports will prevent renewal of the permit.**

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Law regarding record keeping and reporting requirements can be found within the Code of Maryland Regulations, 08.03.15.27.

### **SPECIES (COMAR 08.03.15.08)**

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Wildlife damage control operators may control these species under the authority of their permit and must follow different dispositions for each of these species. Certain species may require a separate certificate or permit from another agency.

Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Fisher	Fox
Mink	Muskrat	Nutria	Opossum	River otter
Raccoon	Skunk	Weasel	Rabbits	Bats
Chipmunk	Gray squirrel	Eastern fox squirrel		
Red squirrel	Southern flying squirrel	Woodchuck		
Reptiles and amphibians	European starling	Feral pigeon		
House sparrow	Migratory birds			

### **BUSINESS PRACTICES**

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Per COMAR 08.03.15.18, a wildlife damage control operator may not engage in any form of false or misleading advertising or promotional activities, including, but not limited to, the falsification or misrepresentation of:

1. The work of a wildlife damage control operator or of an individual employed by the wildlife damage control operator.
2. The academic or professional qualifications or affiliations of the wildlife damage control operator.
3. The experience or licensing status of the wildlife damage control operator.

In rendering professional services, a wildlife damage control operator may not counsel or assist anyone, including, but not limited to, a wildlife damage control operator's client, in conduct a

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wildlife damage control operator knows, or is reasonably expected to know, is illegal or improper.

A wildlife damage control operator may not use property adjacent to a client's property as a work area or to gain access to the client's property without the adjacent property owner's permission.

A wildlife damage control operator shall enter into a written agreement with the client that clearly conveys the:

1. Objective and scope of services, including potential disposition of the wildlife.
2. Anticipated dates of the wildlife damage control operator's work on the project.
3. Amount and method of remuneration for the services; and
4. Requirement that the client must notify, verbally or in writing, any person who is likely to be affected by or witness the activities of the wildlife damage control operator, if the wildlife damage control:
  - a. Takes place outside of a dwelling or structure; and
  - b. Involves the use of:
    - i. Body-gripping traps.
    - ii. Drowning sets.
    - iii. Foot-hold traps.
    - iv. Snares.

A wildlife damage control operator may not exploit clients served professionally by:

1. Accepting a wildlife damage control project if a benefit cannot reasonably be expected to accrue to the client.
2. Continuing wildlife damage control services when a benefit no longer accrues to the client.
3. Charging for services not rendered.
4. Misrepresenting services rendered.

## **OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES (EXCLUDING BATS)**

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Per COMAR 08.03.15.19, a wildlife damage control operator shall have the permit in the permittee's possession while conducting wildlife damage control operations. The permittee shall provide the permit to a client or law enforcement officer upon request.

A wildlife damage control operator may conduct wildlife damage control at any time. A wildlife damage control operator shall check traps once every calendar day, protect all cage type live traps from weather elements, and remove dependent young when present in a structure during the course of wildlife removal.

A wildlife damage control operator may not use toothed or serrated jaw traps.

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Allowable methods for trapping mammals include:

1. Body-gripping traps which are:
  - a. Larger than 8 inches by 8 inches or 8-inch diameter when the traps are submerged partially or totally in water; or
  - b. Equal to or less than 8 inches by 8 inches or 8 inches in diameter:
    - i. On, in, or under a building;
    - ii. In tidal wetlands, flooded nontidal wetlands, and in those portions of inland freshwater marshes, shrub swamps, wooded swamps, and bogs where water is covering the surface of the soil or the soil is waterlogged to the surface; or
    - iii. In all other locations when partially or totally submerged in water;
2. Box-type live capture traps;
3. Drowning sets;
4. Foot-hold traps as follows:
  - a. On land with a jaw spread no greater than 5-3/4 inches; or
  - b. Completely submerged underwater with a maximum jaw spread of 7-3/4 inches;
5. Snares; and
6. Other capture devices as approved by the Service.

**Chimney Swifts** (08.03.15.21): Chimney Swifts are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and a federal permit is needed to remove birds and their nests during the nesting season. Please visit U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website for more information on the Migratory Bird – Depredation permit.

**Migratory Birds** (08.03.15.19): A wildlife damage control operator may remove the nests of migratory birds that do not contain eggs or young. Migratory birds may require additional permitting. Please see the Migratory Birds section for more information.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** (08.03.15.22): A wildlife damage control operator may not kill reptiles and amphibians.

**Fisher and River Otter** (08.03.15.23): A wildlife damage control operator shall tag all fisher and river otter captured from November 15 to March 15 with tags provided by the Service.

## DISPOSITION

Species	Disposition				
	Non-Lethal Only	Released On-Site <sup>^</sup>	Transported Off-Site	Transported to Rehab	Euthanized
Bats*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coyote, Bobcat, Muskrat, Mink, Otter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Raccoon, Skunk, Fox**	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reptiles and Amphibians***	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick or Injured Wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nutria, Mute Swans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Non-Target Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Other Species in Regulation <sup>^^</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
* = State or local health department can require lethal removal.					
** = transported to a person licensed to rehabilitate rabies vector species if they are orphaned, healthy, and dependent young.					
*** = released on site or transported and released on a wildlife management area or on other areas with written permission from the landowner or managing authority, within 2 miles of the location of capture.					
<sup>^</sup> = The permission of the landowner or client is required to release wildlife on site.					
<sup>^^</sup> = transported and released on a wildlife management area or other areas with written permission from the landowner or managing authority, within the same or an adjacent county					

## BATS: INFORMATION, REGULATIONS, OPERATIONS AND PRODECURES (08.03.15.20)

### What type of permit do I need to conduct bat exclusion work?

All companies that conduct work with bats in the state of Maryland must have a Wildlife Damage Control Operator's permit from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, including pesticide applicators that are licensed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and national pesticide companies with offices in Maryland.

Pesticide applicators who are found to be in violation of their pesticide applicator's license by fogging bat colonies that are in the building, applying chemicals, or otherwise, improperly excluding bats will be reported to Department of Natural Resources Police and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. These actions may result in the revocation of your permit and/or your pesticide applicator's license.

### How can I become permitted as a wildlife damage control operator to exclude bats?

Operators who wish to do bat work must complete the required bat affidavit and reading and indicate "mammals (including bats)" on their application. Only those who complete the affidavit will have "mammals (including bats)" listed on their permit. If you do not complete the bat

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affidavit, your permit will be issued excluding bats, and bats can be added later by completing the affidavit.

### **What type of methods can be used to exclude bats?**

Non-lethal exclusion is the only method permitted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for nuisance bat colonies.

### **When can damage control operators exclude bats?**

Bat colony exclusions are recommended to take place in September-October when bats leave summer areas. Exclusion of a bat colony and sealing of active entrances into the building shall take place before hibernation.

Bat colony exclusions are also recommended to take place in March-April, when bats leave their hibernation sites. A wildlife damage control operator may install and leave in place exclusion devices for hibernating bats until the colony emerges in the spring.

Operators should encourage homeowners to wait until after September 1<sup>st</sup> to conduct any exclusions. Operators should be knowledgeable enough to answer a customer's questions about bats, diseases, or behavior, and be able to alleviate a customer's fear of bats. A letter is not needed for inspection work, sealing off ways that bats gain entrance into the living areas of the house, and sealing potential external access holes leaving the main exits open until September 1; but needed when the exclusion phase begins with the installation of one-way doors.

Bat colony exclusions can take place during the active colony period, March 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>, but require a Letter of Exemption. Information for the letter of exemption forms can be found on our website and below.

### **What if a customer wants to exclude a bat colony during the active colony period (March 1<sup>st</sup>-August 31<sup>st</sup>)?**

Bat colonies should not be excluded from buildings from March 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> during the active colony period to avoid trapping flightless young inside structures. Installing the doors prior to September would allow the females to exit the roost, but not allow them to get back in, thereby trapping the young and ultimately resulting in their death.

If a colony must be excluded prior to September 1, then both a homeowner exclusion form and the operator bat colony exclusion reporting form must be completed to receive a letter of exemption. Both operators and customers should be aware that excluding bats at the wrong time of year can lead to far greater problems for the homeowner, including bats dying and creating an odor problem, or more bats getting inside the living quarters due to females searching for their pups.

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The letter of exemption will not be issued automatically. Each letter is manually reviewed by the Department of Natural Resources. Letters will not be issued if invalid or expired permit numbers are submitted.

### **What should I do if I get a call for a single bat within a home?**

A single bat found within the living quarters or working space (e.g., bedroom, living room, kitchen, hallway, office) may be captured and released at any time of the year without prior approval from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources if contact with people or pets has not occurred. Homeowners can be referred to the “Bats In Houses” page for information on removing a single bat from the home. If contact has occurred with people or pets, the County Health Department should be contacted since bats have the potential to carry rabies.

If the homeowner would still like you to come remove the bat, the operator should make effort to determine how the bat got inside the living quarters and whether a colony is present.

### **ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES**

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The authority of a permit issued pursuant to this chapter does not allow the control of any species listed as endangered, threatened, or in need of conservation in COMAR 08.03.08. It is illegal to take, possess, transport, export, process, sell, offer for sale, or ship any species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or In Need of Conservation in Maryland (ACM [§4-2A-03](#), [§10-2A-03](#)). The State of Maryland may issue a permit as an exemption for scientific purposes or to enhance the propagation or survival of a listed species (ACM [§10-2A-05](#), COMAR [08.03.08.03](#)).

Species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or In Need of Conservation can be found in the *Code of Maryland Regulations* (COMAR):

[08.03.08.04 Endangered Species of Wildlife, Reptiles, Amphibians, Mollusks, Crustaceans, and Finfish](#)

[08.03.08.07 Threatened Species of Wildlife, Reptiles, Amphibians, Mollusks, Crustaceans, and Finfish](#)

[08.03.08.09 Species in Need of Conservation](#)

### **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

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To perform wildlife damage control regarding migratory birds, a federal permit may need to be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

*Migratory birds include:*

Ducks	Pigeons	Woodcock	Little Brown Cranes
Geese	Snipes	Brant	Rails
Crows	Swans	Coots	Doves

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## Gallinules

A complete list of migratory bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act can be found on the USFWS website at [List of Birds Protected by Migratory Bird Treaty Act \(2023\)](#) and in code of federal regulation, [10.13 List of Birds Protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#).

All other questions regarding migratory birds and wildlife damage control, contact US Fish & Wildlife, Migratory Bird Region 5 office at 300 Westgate Center Drive in Hadley, MA 01035 or (413)-253-8200.

## HUNTING SEASONS AND REGULATIONS

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Wildlife damage control operators should be aware of Maryland's species, hunting seasons, and hunting laws and regulations to ensure they are legally trapping certain species.

[Maryland Hunting Seasons Calendar 2023-2024](#)

[Maryland Guide to Hunting and Trapping 2023-2024](#)

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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*Maryland Department of Natural Resources*

Submit your application/renewal:

[wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov)

Permits Coordinator  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
Tawes State Office Building  
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General Wildlife Damage Control Related Questions: Wildlife Permits Administrator,  
[wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov](mailto:wildlifepermits.dnr@maryland.gov)

Maryland Wildlife Damage Control Regulations: Code of Maryland Regulations 08.03.15.

Maryland Natural Resources Police Information: 410-260-8880

Maryland Natural Resources Police (Violations and Emergencies): 410-260-8888

*US Fish and Wildlife Service*

Regional Office: 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035 or (413)-253-8200

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