

Fox Bounty in Indiana During the Years 1961 through 1968

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Abstract

Fox bounty records for 1961 through 1968 were obtained from each county auditor in Indiana. The number of Indiana counties paying fox bounties declined from 63 in 1961 to 51 in 1968. Numbers of fox bountied ranged from 20,066 in 1963 to 23,863 in 1966. Fox bounty records may reflect gross fox population fluctuations. Estimates of relative abundance of foxes in Indiana, derived from the annual Sportsman's Questionnaire and the annual Furbuyer's Report are compared to data from fox bounty records. During this 8-year period, the number of foxes bountied peaked at 1.036 foxes per square mile in 1966. The number of fox pelts purchased by Indiana fur buyers also peaked in 1966 at 0.258 pelts per square mile. Numbers of fox pelts purchased annually indicated a greater correlation with total numbers bountied than with economic value of pelts. A lesser degree of correlation was obtained between numbers of foxes bountied and numbers of hunter-killed foxes as determined by the annual Sportsman's Questionnaire.

Laporte County paid fox bounties from 1875 through 1877. Fox bounties were not paid in Indiana again until 1911. One or more counties have expended funds for fox bounties each year since that date (2).

Early Indiana fox bounty records through 1948 are given and discussed by Haller (2). Fox bounty records for the years 1949 through 1960 are listed and discussed by Brooks (1). No Indiana state agency compiles fox bounty records by county or by year. Both Haller and Brooks comment on the difficulty of compiling an accurate and complete fox bounty record. County records, including fox bounty information, tend to be stored in courthouse attics or basements where they are occasionally damaged or lost.

Fox bounty records for each Indiana county for the years of 1961 through 1968 were secured in the present study. Numbers of foxes bountied were compared with numbers of fox pelts purchased by Indiana furbuyers and with numbers of foxes supposedly killed by Indiana hunters.

Methods

Fox bounty records for the years 1961 through 1968 were secured by a personal contact with every County Auditor's Office in northeastern Indiana. A questionnaire was mailed to all other County Auditors. County Auditors that did not return to questionnaire were contacted in person or by telephone.

Records of the number of fox pelts purchased by Indiana furbuyers and average fur prices were secured from the Annual Furbuyers Reports filed with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (William E. Ginn, personal communication).

Estimates of annual hunter kill of fox were obtained from the Annual Sportsman's Questionnaire compiled by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (William E. Ginn, personal communication).

Results and Conclusions

The number of counties paying fox bounty has declined from 63 in 1961 to 51 in 1968, with the majority of bounty-paying counties being located in northern Indiana (Table 1, Fig. 1). States north and east of Indiana have also experienced a decline in the number of counties paying

TABLE 1. *Number of foxes bountied in Indiana 1961 through 1968.*

County	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	Total
Adams	270	176	195	218	206	242	203	252	1,762
Allen	408	303	241	444	297	381	525	390	2,989
Benton	407	318	281	310	233	306	240	346	2,441
Blackford	224	168	174	207	205	223	184	141	1,526
Boone	534	496	546	299	347	425	00	00	2,647
Carroll	453	467	432	428	377	519	442	236	3,354
Cass	308	381	500	400	498	500	500	500	3,587
Clinton	628	421	387	368	321	627	407	332	3,491
Decatur	75	89	88	94	105	00	00	00	451
DeKalb	454	308	310	320	324	366	352	307	2,741
Delaware	450	405	330	271	308	435	306	309	2,814
Dubois	769	767	00	00	00	00	00	00	1,536
Elkhart	181	223	203	283	387	422	383	366	2,448
Fayette	133	489	250	189	192	240	207	234	1,934
Fountain	342	318	227	213	183	325	390	312	2,310
Fulton	491	380	372	416	500	828	468	442	3,897
Grant	350	370	376	319	351	435	271	267	2,739
Hamilton	400	397	324	309	301	311	284	262	2,588
Hancock	405	342	321	236	211	361	303	299	2,478
Hendricks	701	500	472	391	429	579	500	493	4,065
Henry	487	357	300	196	274	404	462	425	2,905
Howard	500	480	460	430	390	380	400	223	3,263
Huntington	344	357	283	297	273	387	270	279	2,490
Jasper	762	658	655	599	519	672	774	543	5,182
Jay	231	395	312	335	221	280	243	200	2,217
Jefferson	320	300	301	345	00	00	00	00	1,266
Jennings	167	100	316	263	00	00	00	00	846
Johnson	00	00	00	00	226	252	283	368	1,129
Knox	00	00	00	170	200	220	00	00	590
Kosciusko	494	550	508	677	687	833	594	565	4,908
LaGrange	248	280	289	266	264	389	413	331	2,480
Lake	479	543	400	465	313	315	292	330	3,137
LaPorte	566	624	665	696	667	783	929	732	5,662
Madison	403	433	293	323	320	389	414	307	2,882
Marion	248	237	143	228	97	123	171	00	1,247
Marshall	478	357	338	552	471	689	548	517	3,950
Miami	371	321	362	347	363	428	380	347	2,919
Monroe	401	280	314	395	325	500	590	520	3,325
Montgomery	441	504	455	350	440	00	00	00	2,190
Morgan	425	350	242	285	266	333	330	571	2,802
Newton	682	374	438	468	353	524	371	421	3,631
Noble	490	301	486	533	672	686	471	376	4,015
Ohio	31	37	45	65	00	00	00	00	178
Owen	00	00	402	399	269	00	00	00	1,070
Parke	333	318	278	196	213	342	331	332	2,343
Porter	00	00	00	495	500	500	400	446	2,341
Posey	340	340	00	00	00	00	00	00	680
Pulaski	600	560	496	664	551	691	612	515	4,689

TABLE 1. *Number of foxes bountied in Indiana 1961 through 1968—Continued.*

County	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	Total
Putnam	425	380	380	325	396	466	466	466	3,304
Randolph	00	00	00	00	00	00	537	442	979
Ripley	460	357	329	277	00	00	00	00	1,423
Rush	391	331	295	273	298	442	333	00	2,363
St. Joseph	200	228	232	392	300	366	352	405	2,475
Scott	167	174	157	85	83	17	17	00	700
Shelby	442	387	328	293	268	366	442	499	3,025
Starke	255	230	215	228	298	348	246	228	2,048
Steuben	365	222	290	374	499	500	500	655	3,405
Sullivan	00	00	00	00	250	300	250	00	800
Switzerland	85	77	116	00	111	00	00	00	389
Tippecanoe	470	301	263	367	321	398	403	332	2,855
Tipton	369	300	274	328	300	278	268	210	2,327
Union	229	250	249	223	218	245	273	00	1,687
Vermillion	190	174	163	195	178	206	267	266	1,639
Vigo	284	333	358	335	313	384	332	00	2,339
Wabash	253	377	292	391	362	400	400	325	2,800
Warren	400	299	276	176	169	194	211	194	1,919
Wells	269	336	236	302	342	405	324	306	2,520
White	576	472	477	423	503	428	467	405	3,751
Whitley	189	366	326	420	385	475	359	273	2,793
Total	23,843	22,168	20,066	20,751	20,243	23,863	21,690	18,842	171,676
Counties Paying Bounty	63	63	62	63	60	56	54	51	69
Mean No. Bountied/ County	378.5	348.7	323.6	335.9	337.4	426.1	401.7	369.5	2,488.1

fox bounty. The number of Ohio counties paying fox bounty declined from 66 in 1961 to 52 in 1968 (5) and Michigan stopped paying fox bounty entirely in 1965 (3).

The custom of fox chasing persists in southern Indiana but has practically died out in northern Indiana where it was practiced in Grant County as recently as 1931 (4). Fox chasers have discouraged the expenditure of funds to pay fox bounty in southern Indiana counties. A reason for the discontinuance of bounty payments in the few southern counties that appropriated bounty funds is the import of dead foxes from nearby counties.

The mean number of foxes bountied per Indiana county peaked in 1966 when an average of 426.1 foxes (or 1.036 foxes per square mile) were bountied per county (Fig. 2).

Brooks (1) reported peak Indiana fox bounty payments in 1926, 1934, 1946, 1954, and 1960. It appears that, if bountied foxes actually are an index to total fox numbers, the Indiana fox population fluctuates with high populations occurring each 6 to 8 years.

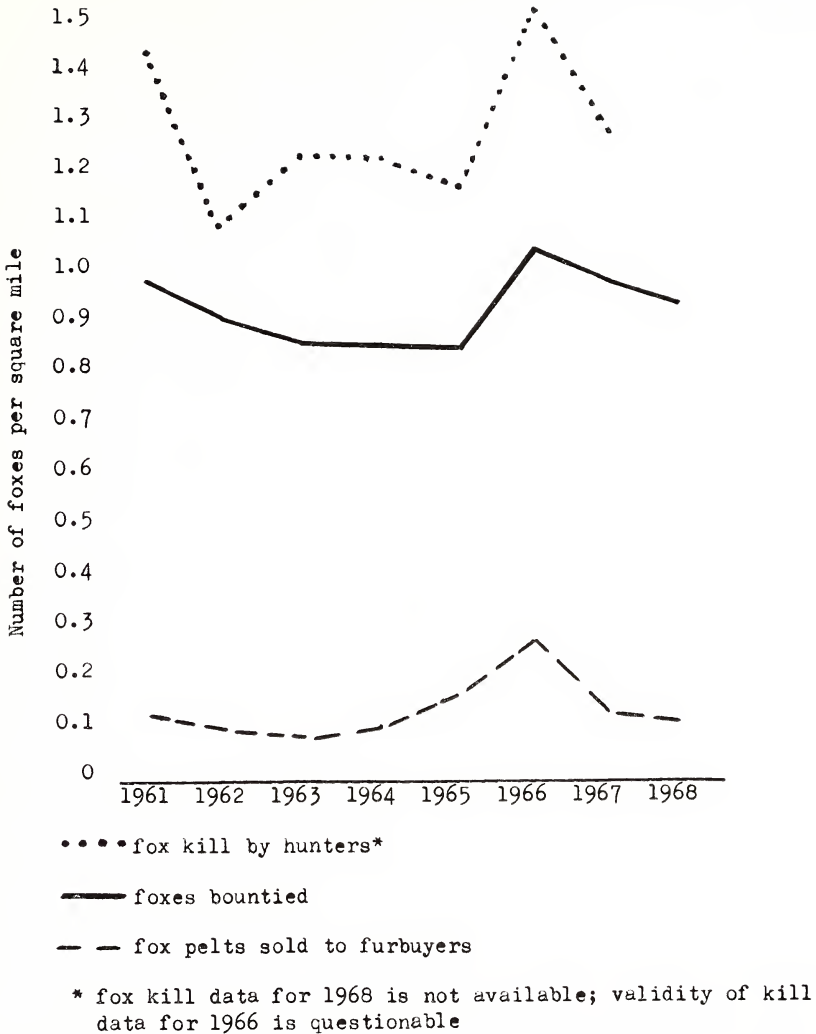


FIGURE 2. Comparison of three measures of fox population levels in Indiana for the years 1961 through 1968.

Bounty amount paid per fox during the years of this study has been \$3.00 per animal. Brooks (1) points out that the amount paid per fox does not directly affect numbers of foxes bountied per year. Fluctuations in numbers of foxes bountied during the years of 1961 through 1968 parallel fox kill data supplied by the Indiana Sportsman's Questionnaire (Fig. 2). These data may be an index of gross populations fluctuations.

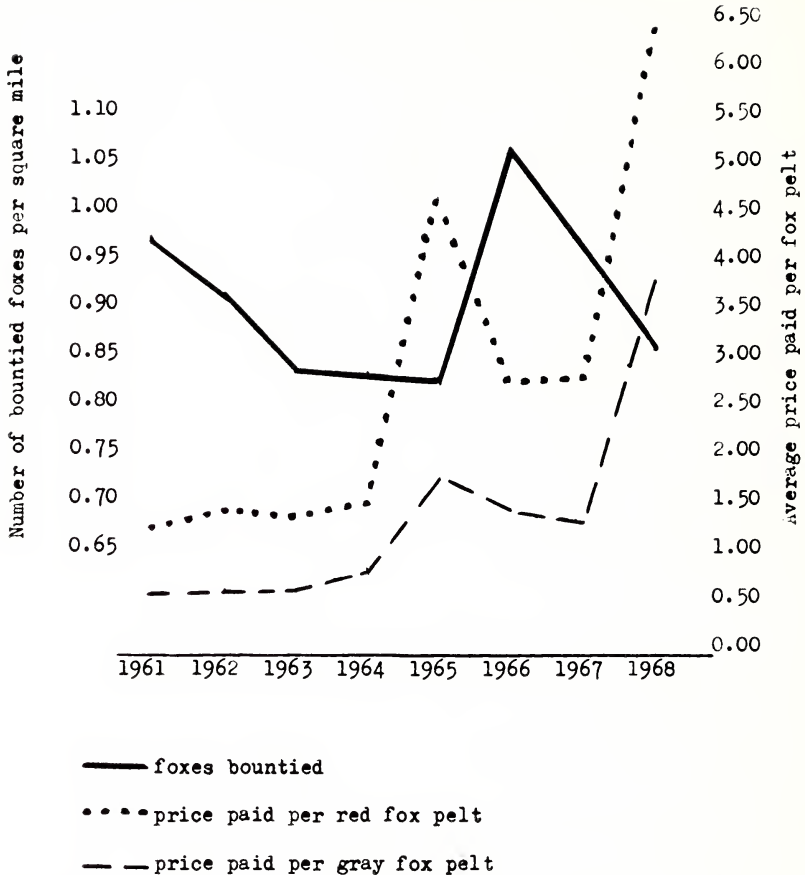


FIGURE 3. Comparison of average prices paid for fox pelts by Indiana fur buyers with numbers of foxes bountied per square mile for the years 1961 through 1968.

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