

areas are identified by cut-up roots accompanied by holes and digging in the marsh. Other techniques used to find nutria include trained scent detecting dogs and artificial resting platforms, which are checked for droppings.

Since 2002 USDA has removed major populations of nutria from Dorchester, Talbot, Somerset and Wicomico Counties. Recently, additional populations have been discovered along the Wicomico, Manokin and Big Annemessex Rivers.

How can landowners help?

Private landowners can join the fight to protect our precious wetlands. In fact, their cooperation is critical to the success of the program. Landowners can obtain free assistance protecting their property from this destructive rodent by enrolling in the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project and granting project staff permission to inspect their property. For more information, call 410-221-7857.

For more information about nutria and the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project, visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakenutriaproject/>

The Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project is a public-private partnership funded and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



*USDA and USFWS representatives meet with a private landowner.
Photo by Sharon Vilchek, USDA*

**LANDOWNERS:
Do you have
NUTRIA?**



Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project

What are Nutria?

South American nutria are a large semi-aquatic rodent that were imported to the United States for fur farming in the early 1900s. They were released on the Delmarva Peninsula in Maryland's Dorchester County in 1943 and over the years have spread to Talbot, Somerset and Wicomico Counties and have even been reported in Eastern Delaware.



Nutria are approximately two feet long and weigh up to 21 pounds. They have dark brown fur with a long rat-like tail, partially webbed rear feet, and spend much of their life in and around water. They breed rapidly, giving birth to as many as 13 young every four months.



Why are they a problem?

Nutria consume a quarter of their body weight in vegetation each day, feeding on the roots of marsh plants and leaving behind barren mudflats. The resulting erosion has devastating impacts on our marshes, threatens fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, seafood harvesting, agriculture and timber production and harms the overall health of the entire Chesapeake Bay.



If caught soon enough, nutria removal can allow damaged marshes to return to a healthy, natural state. Before and after photos of Monie Bay by Steve Kendrot, USDA

What is being done about them?

The USDA-Wildlife Services program is responsible for eradicating nutria from the Delmarva Peninsula. USDA's wildlife specialists remove them using systematic hunting and trapping techniques.

We look for their sign: tracks, droppings, and damaged feeding areas in marshes and along rivers and streams. Their webbed feet leave distinctive tracks, and a tail drag can often be seen in the mud. Droppings are banana shaped, about 2-2 ½ inches long, grayish green to black in color and are often found along shorelines or floating in the water. Their feeding



Digging and droppings are telltale signs that nutria are the culprit. Photo by Steve Kendrot, USDA