



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
NONGAME BIRD AND MAMMAL SECTION**



**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT  
1988 -1989**

by

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January 1990

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**TECHNICAL REPORT 1990 - 2  
NONGAME BIRD AND MAMMAL SECTION REPORT**

# **LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT 1988-1989**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department has been gathering information on the number of furbearing mammals harvested, their value, and the number of licenses sold in California since 1919. Early reports of take were gathered by compiling data from a sample of licensed trappers. Since the 1952-53 season each licensed trapper has been required to report their annual take of furbearing or nongame mammals for profit in order to purchase a trapping license for the following season. As of January 1, 1983, anyone being issued a trapping license must pass a test of trapping competence and proficiency and pay a fee. For 1988-89 that fee was:

Adult: \$50.00      Juvenile: \$16.75      Nonresident: \$249.50

Over the years the take and monetary return to the trapper for his/her furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 1920s to 5,243 in the 1927-28 season. Fur revenues were relatively high at that time as well. With the depression and World War II fur revenues and trapping license sales decreased dramatically. This decline continued until about 1970 when the fur value and take began to increase. The increase was rather dramatic over the next decade; the number of licensed trappers increased from less than 500 to more than 3,900 and the fur value increased from about \$50,000 to almost \$2,400,000. Until 1988-89 the 1980s has seen a slight decrease and stabilization of both fur values and the number of licensed fur trappers, at level of revenue and number of trappers about half of that at the beginning of the decade. During 1988-89 the fur market returned to a level similar to that of the mid-1970s, just at the beginning of the resurgence in interest in furs that has dominated the market since that time.

## **METHODS**

Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, requires that all licensed trappers report their season's harvest by the end of the trapping year (July 1) or not receive a trapping license for the next season. On these reports the trappers note the number of each species of furbearer or nongame animal taken for commercial purposes, the number of each species sold, the county of take for each species, and the dealers to whom the furs were sold.

Likewise, licensed fur dealers and their agents annually report their purchases of furs. The dealers are required (Section 4040, Fish and Game Code) to report the number of furs of each species taken in California that they bought and the average price paid per fur for each species.

After the trappers' and fur dealers' reports are received by the Department, the data from these are compiled to determine the take for each species, the distribution of that take, and the variations in that take from previous years. These compilations of data are presented herein.

## RESULTS

A total of 1,244 trapping licenses were sold during the 1988-89 trapping season, a decrease of 9% from the 1,370 licenses sold in the 1987-88 season (Table 1). This was the sixth successive year in which license sales were below 1,800 and the lowest number of licenses sold since the 1975-76 season. This level is well above the 450 to 1,000 licenses sold annually during the period from 1950 to 1976 but below the 3,000 plus licenses sold in the years immediately preceeding the increase in license fees and the mandatory proficiency examination. Current fur prices are not likely to encourage license sales to reach 3,000 in the near future.

**Table 1. Numbers of trappers buying licenses and reporting their harvest.**

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Licensees who reported trapping effort	924	979	706
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	256	271	271
Licensees not reporting	167	120	267
Total licenses sold	1,347	1,370	1,244

Revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1988-89 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$489,890.54 (Table 2). This is 68% below the revenue of \$1,513,803.25 received in 1987-88 and 80% below the high of \$2,399,565 of 1978-79. The current fur value is only 32% of the average over the previous 13 seasons. Also, it is the lowest fur revenue since the 1974-75 season and not representative of the boom in the fur market which has predominated for the last 13 years.

The average income per successful trapper decreased by 55% from \$1,546.28 in 1987-88 to \$693.90 in 1988-89. This is the lowest income per successful trapper since the 1974-75 season.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1988-89 season 30% was unsold, compared to 14% unsold during the 1987-88 season. Unsold pelts still have value, and for the purpose of this report they have the same monetary value as marketed pelts. Therefore, the estimated value of the 1988-89 fur harvest was \$650,183.48, a decrease of 62% from the \$1,728,224.10 of the 1987-88 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Sierra and Stanislaus (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals providing 85% of the total value of California's furs. Although 5,586 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1988-89 season in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses only reported the take of 5,165. This is a 38% decrease from the reported take of 8,266 during the 1987-88 season. The average price paid per bobcat was \$102.31, a 28% decrease from the average price of \$142.73 paid during the

1987-88 season. This year the lower value of bobcat pelts, along with the decrease in take, resulted in a 60% decrease in the overall value of bobcat.

Muskrats, historically the most economically important furbearer, were second in importance behind bobcats during the 1988-89 season, and ahead of gray foxes for the first time since the 1980-81 season. The 54% decrease in average value of muskrat pelts, and the 41% decrease in take, resulted in a 75% decrease in the overall value of muskrats. The market for both gray fox and coyote virtually crashed. The gray fox, the third most important furbearer, had a 78% decrease in pelt value and a 38% decrease in take which resulted in a 90% decrease in the overall value of gray foxes. Coyote was the fourth most economically important furbearer and it sustained a 24% decrease in take, and a 42% decrease in average pelt value.

**Table 2.** Number of animals taken, average price paid, and revenue received by species during 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Species	1987-88			Fur Value	
	Harvest				
	Sold	Unsold	Total	Average	Revenue
Badger	52	183	235	\$5.34	\$277.68
Beaver	717	514	1231	\$9.82	\$7,040.94
Bobcat	7286	980	8266	\$142.73	\$1,039,930.78
Coyote	4143	2704	6847	\$10.99	\$45,531.57
Gray Fox	10329	941	11270	\$26.51	\$273,821.79
Mink	270	30	300	\$15.00	\$4,050.00
Muskrat	33906	198	34104	\$3.40	\$115,280.40
Opossum	193	686	879	\$0.68	\$131.24
Raccoon	2994	799	3793	\$9.04	\$27,065.76
Spotted Skunk	59	221	280	\$1.53	\$90.27
Striped Skunk	362	2877	3239	\$1.61	\$582.82
Weasel	0	5	5	\$0.76	- -
<b>Total</b>	<b>60311</b>	<b>10138</b>	<b>70449</b>		<b>\$1,513,803.25</b>
Species	1988-89			Fur Value	
	Harvest				
	Sold	Unsold	Total	Average	Revenue
Badger	25	67	92	N.R.*	- -
Beaver	367	255	622	\$5.76	\$2,113.92
Bobcat	4083	1082	5165	\$102.31	\$417,731.73
Coyote	1614	3614	5228	\$6.39	\$10,313.46
Gray Fox	4540	2412	6952	\$5.92	\$26,876.80
Mink	140	31	171	\$10.34	\$1,447.60
Muskrat	18084	1982	20066	\$1.57	\$28,391.88
Opossum	172	440	612	N.R.	- -
Raccoon	883	862	1745	\$3.06	\$2,701.98
Spotted Skunk	26	205	231	N.R.	- -
Striped Skunk	143	2138	2281	\$2.19	\$313.17
Weasel	0	3	3	N.R.	- -
<b>Total</b>	<b>30077</b>	<b>13091</b>	<b>43168</b>		<b>\$489,890.54</b>
* N.C. = Average fur value was not reported by fur dealers.					

**Table 3.** Number of animals reported taken by licensed fur trappers and by species and county during the 1988-89 trapping season.

County	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spot. Skunk	Strip. Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alameda													
Alpine		3	10	3	3						2		21
Amador			6	2	10						7		30
Butte		79	12	30	193	3	3291	12	3	2	48		3745
Calaveras				19	27		1	1	3		18		69
Colusa		11	81	26	42		4080		21		10		4271
Contra Costa				6	2				51				59
Del Norte			20		3				10				33
El Dorado		40	8	24	19	1	85	9	43		28		257
Fresno			257	235	272				46	2	9		821
Glenn	2	11	41	19	216		2455	1	62		45		2852
Humboldt	2	7	216	32	301	1		5	322	16	156	1	1059
Imperial	2		10	129	51				7				199
Inyo		94	75	138	54	2			3	2	1		369
Kern	3	3	410	433	335			7	11	5	26		1233
Kings		1					28						29
Lake			57	31	196	14	4	6	66	15	9		398
Lassen	1	22	62	181		2	16		1		6		291
Los Angeles	7	2	335	239	361			5	34	12	45		1040
Madera	1	1	43	50	65	10			21	1	18		213
Marin			39		14			35	52		184		324
Mariposa			18	11	85			5	13	18	31		181
Mendocino			59	10	212			2	50		41		374
Merced	1	27	8	159	5		35	32	59		17		343
Modoc	10	4	101	106	1	19	1228		12	15	24		1520
Mono		7	55	113	44	1	2						222
Monterey	6		280	124	221			85	10	20	387		1133
Napa			24	30	43			3	20		19		139
Nevada			1		8				1		1		11
Orange			10	11	3				1		1		26
Placer		56	5	24	14	1	297	11	43		35		486
Plumas		12	19	63	31	3	6		23	2	4		163
Riverside	2	10	122	356	262			31	9	21	76		889
Sacramento		70		29	6	9	423	7	52	1	20		617
San Benito			92	89	25			1	9	2	103		321
San Bernardino	23	2	688	833	564			18	32	8	53		2221
San Diego	2		423	271	583			36	38	27	77		1457
San Francisco													
San Joaquin		18		26	15	5	365	13	23		11		476
San Luis Obispo	1		156	260	244			1	25		183		870
San Mateo			2										2
Santa Barbara	13		387	517	698			64	10	41	180		1910
Santa Clara	3		11	24	17			3	1		5		64
Santa Cruz													
Shasta		39	151	104	458	26	3193	12	87	4	59		4133
Sierra													
Siskiyou	7	41	247	134	114	54	3477		101	11	37		4223
Solano		3		1	3	4	43	5	15		2		76
Sonoma	6		93	10	82	1		111	92		105	2	502
Stanislaus													
Sutter		15		3	2	5	245	35	40		20		365
Tehama		5	35	86	167		50	11	33		19		406
Trinity		3	26		184	8			51	3	20		295
Tulare			196	25	179			20	21	2	67		510
Tuolumne			35	26	84				17		27		189
Ventura		2	237	176	404			16	11	1	35		882
Yolo		12		3	3		274	4	4		3		303
Yuba		22	2	7	27	2	468		11		7		546
Total Animals Trapped	92	622	5165	5228	6952	171	20066	612	1745	231	2281	3	43168
% Total Take	0.21	1.44	11.96	12.11	16.10	0.40	46.48	1.42	4.04	0.54	5.28	0.01	

Once again more muskrats were taken than any other species. The 20,066 muskrats taken during the 1988-89 season represented 46% of the total take. This is a slight decrease from the 48% that this species represented during the 1987-88 season but the total take is the lowest reported for this species since the 1937-38 season.

During the 1988-89 season there were 26 licensed fur dealers. Eight (31%) licensed fur dealers reported on their 1988-89 activities; six dealers reported buying furs. Of the reporting dealers, seven were from California. They reported buying 12,207 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$162,994.88. This represents handling only 28% of the furs reported sold by licensed trappers and a 75% decrease of California furs sold to licensed fur dealers during this last year. None of the fur dealers reported buying over \$100,000 in furs in 1988-89 while five reported buying more than \$100,000 in furs in 1987-88. The average prices paid by the reporting dealers is used to calculate the fur value for each species and the value of furs reported bought by the dealers.

**Table 4. Furs Purchased by Dealers from Licensed Fur Dealer Reports, 1988-89.**

Species	Range of Average Prices	No. of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger		0	
Beaver	4.00 - 15.00	86	\$495.00
Bobcat	40.00 -130.00	1,349	\$138,022.07
Coyote	5.00 - 9.46	211	\$1,348.76
Gray Fox	8.47 - 15.00	1,261	\$7,459.66
Mink	10.34	27	\$279.18
Muskrat	1.52	8,706	\$13,657.47
Opossum		0	
Raccoon	2.00 - 3.15	566	\$1,730.55
Spotted Skunk		0	
Striped Skunk	2.19	1	\$2.19
Weasel		0	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>12,207</b>	<b>\$162,944.88</b>