

State of California
Natural Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wildlife and Fisheries Division
Wildlife Branch

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2014-15

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fish and Wildlife 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 his/her annual take of furbearing or non-game mammals for profit in order to purchase a trapping license for the following season. As of January 1, 1983, anyone applying for a new trapping license must first pass a test of trapping competence and proficiency before they may purchase the license. For 2013-2014 that license fee was:

Resident: \$113.75 Junior: \$38.25 Nonresident: \$570.00

Over the years, the take and monetary return to trappers for their furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 1920's 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. During the 1980s, the number of trapping licenses sold decreased from 3,021 to 834, and the take decreased from 131,491 to 21,046. License sales decreased by 42 percent in the 1998-99 season and 46 percent in the 1999-00 season. These decreases in license sales were no doubt due to the passage of Proposition 4 on November 3, 1998. Passage of Proposition 4 eliminated the use of any body-gripping traps for commercial purposes.

After legislation was passed in 2002, beginning in 2003, persons who provided trapping services for profit (nuisance/pest control trappers) were also required to obtain a trapping license as has historically been required of commercial fur/recreational trappers. Therefore, the number sold in 2003-04 could be a combination of both groups. Beginning with the 2004-05 license year, this report only provides trapping data generated by commercial fur/recreational trappers.

METHODS

Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, requires that all licensed commercial fur/recreational trappers report their season's harvest by the end of the trapping year (July 1). Beginning in 2014, trappers can now report their take electronically, utilizing CDFW's Automated License Data System (ALDS) accessible online at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/harvestreporting/>.

If the trapper's annual report is not received by July 1, the trapper's license will

be suspended. On these reports, trappers note the number of each species of furbearing or non-game mammal taken for commercial or recreational purposes, the number of each species sold, the county of take for each species, and the dealers to whom the furs were sold. Beginning in 2014, trappers may also report their “catch-per-unit-effort”, for taking individual furbearing and non-game species. The catch per unit effort (CPUE) for a target species, is equal to the number of individuals captured, divided by the total number of “trap-nights” (trap nights = number of traps set * number of nights traps were set).

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 253 trapping licenses were sold during the 2014-15 trapping season, a decrease of five percent from the 267 licenses sold in the 2013-14 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest				
	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	128	118	149	125
Licensees who reported, but did not trap or were unsuccessful	72	64	113	120
Licensees not reporting	19	37	5	8
Total Commercial Fur/Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	200	216	267	253

Licensed trappers who do not send in their annual reports by July 1 (Table 1) will have their licenses suspended pursuant to Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations. This year, 8 licensed trappers failed to send in his annual report by the required due date.

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2014-15 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers was \$154,880 (Table 2). This is \$282,707 less than the estimated revenue of \$437,587 received during the 2013-2014 season. The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$2,937 in 2013-14 to \$1,239 in 2014-15. The average income per successful trapper (beginning in 2009-10) is based on numbers of trappers who indicated that they were successful during the current season. Average income in prior years was based upon total trapping licenses sold.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2014-15 season, 36 percent was unsold, compared to 15 percent unsold during the 2013-14 season. Unsold pelts still have value and, for the purpose of this report, are considered to have the same monetary value as marketed pelts. In comparison to the 2013-14 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing and nongame mammals decreased 24 percent in the 2014-15 season.

Although 326 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2014-15 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 500. Part of this difference is due to some trappers holding pelts to sell in the future, when the market is more favorable.

On August 5th 2015, the Fish and Game Commission voted to ban bobcat trapping in California. This action makes it unlawful to trap any bobcat, or attempt to do so, or to sell or export any bobcat or part of any bobcat taken in the state of California. Hereafter, any holder of a trapping license who traps a bobcat shall immediately release the bobcat to the wild unharmed.

Once again, more muskrats were taken during the 2014-15 season than any other species (Table 3). The 4,641 muskrats taken represented 67 percent of the total take.

TABLE 2
Number of Animals Taken, Average Price Paid, & Revenue Received by Species

2013-2014						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	7	5	2	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	60	5	55	NR	NR	NR
Bobcat	1,292	34	1,258	\$278.98	\$350,956.84	\$360,442.16
Coyote	169	64	105	\$10.29	\$1,080.45	\$1,739.01
Gray Fox	1,338	250	1,088	\$28.00	\$30,464.00	\$37,464.00
Mink	15	-9	24	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	5,593	526	5,067	\$10.81	\$54,774.27	\$60,460.33
Opossum	60	58	2	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	246	157	89	\$3.50	\$311.50	\$861.00
Spotted Skunk	59	59	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	176	176	0	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	9,015	1,325	7,690		\$437,587.06	\$460,966.50
2014-2015						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	26	4	22	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	39	26	13	\$16.15	\$209.95	\$629.85
Bobcat	760	260	500	\$295.36	\$147,680.00	\$224,473.60
Coyote	156	82	74	\$32.12	\$2,376.88	\$5,010.72
Gray Fox	774	355	419	\$11.01	\$4,613.19	\$8,521.74
Mink	13	6	7	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	4,641	1264	3,377	NR	NR	NR
Opossum	51	51	0	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	139	131	8	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	5	4	1	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	272	272	0	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	7	0	7	NR	NR	NR
Total	6,883	2,455	4,428		\$154,880.02	\$238,635.91
NR = No Report						

TABLE 3
Trapping Take by County 2014-2015

County	BA	BE	BC	CO	GF	MI	MU	OP	RA	SP	ST	WE	Total
Butte	22				3		380	1	4		4		414
Colusa				2		1	460		1			7	471
Contra Costa								1			3		4
El Dorado		0						2			10		12
Glenn			8		63		281				2		354
Humboldt				5									5
Imperial			59	8	24		5				12		108
Inyo			73	3	30				14		2		122
Kern		2	144	17	131			10	25		72		401
Lake			1	4	36								41
Lassen	0		14	5	8				0	1			28
Los Angeles			61	0	125								186
Marin			1								1		2
Mendocino			5		8			2	10		7		32
Modoc	2		97	35	3		981			4	10		1132
Mono			38		6								44
Nevada					1								1
Placer			0		14			5	9		9		37
Plumas		27	21		4	2	5		1		34		94
Riverside			17		27			2			11		57
San Benito			8	7	6			1	3		15		40
San Bernardino	1		78		67								146
San Diego			14		33			2	2		3		54
San Luis Obispo				16									16
Santa Barbara											2		2
Santa Cruz			3		1								4
Shasta		6	13	4	28	6	1673		4		2		1736
Siskiyou			76	38	87		427		2		29		659
Solano					1				5				6
Sonoma			2					2	4				8
Sutter						4	429						433
Tehama			3	2	6			10	25				46
Trinity				6	39				5				50
Tulare			13	1	12								26
Tuolumne			1	3	6			6	7		8		31
Ventura			3										3
Yolo	1	4	7		5			7	18		36		78
Unknown													0
Total	26	39	760	156	774	13	4641	51	139	5	272	7	6883
Percent	1%	1%	11%	2%	11%	0%	67%	1%	2%	0%	4%	0%	100%

BA = Badger; BC = Bobcat; BE = Beaver; CO = Coyote; GF = Gray Fox; MI = Mink; MU = Muskrat;
 OT = Other; OP = Opossum; RA = Raccoon; SP = Spotted Skunk; ST = Striped Skunk; WE = Weasel
 "0" reported for county trapping take means that the county was actively trapped with no take for the season.

While the reporting of CPUE to take individual species is not required by law, 60% of all licensed commercial fur/recreational trappers reported this information during this, the second year of voluntary reporting. Catch per unit effort can be considered an indirect measure of the relative abundance for a given target species. However, CPUE

is influenced not only by the intrinsic density of a target species local population, but also by extrinsic factors, including: local variation in landscape characteristics; changes in trapping regulations; and the experience/skill level of individual trappers. Therefore, CPUE should only be considered a coarse measure of differences in relative abundance of a given species and location from one year to the next, or between locations within the same year. Reported capture rates during the 2014-15 season were highest for muskrats (0.1690) and lowest for the western spotted skunk (0.0033, Table 4).

TABLE 4
Reported Capture Rate (CPUE) By Species 2014-15

Species	Trappers Reporting	Reporting Trapper Take	Total Trap Nights	Capture Rate (CPUE)	2-Year Average CPUE
Badger, American	6	26	4,946	0.0053	0.0031
Beaver, American	6	15	130	0.1154	0.0721
Bobcat	97	676	61,763	0.0109	0.0114
Coyote	25	113	5,008	0.0226	0.0130
Fox, Gray	80	774	46,291	0.0167	0.0157
Mink, American	2	6	1,694	0.0035	0.0025
Muskrat, Common	12	4,369	25,854	0.1690	0.1467
Opossum, Virginia	12	47	5,391	0.0087	0.0078
Raccoon	18	125	7,241	0.0173	0.0121
Skunk, Striped	24	257	10,435	0.0246	0.0174
Skunk, Western Spotted	1	4	1,200	0.0033	0.0365
Weasel, Long-tailed	1	7	1200	0.0058	0.0029

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 146 pelts in California (Table 5). The average prices paid by the reporting California dealers, in addition to sales reported by trappers (which may be out of state), are used to calculate the estimated fur revenue and value (Table 2) for each species.

TABLE 5 Furs Purchased by Dealers 2014-2015			
Species	Average Fur Price	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Beaver	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Bobcat	\$191.00	100	\$19,100.00
Coyote	NR	6	NR
Gray Fox	\$13.57	21	\$284.97
Mink	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Muskrat	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Opossum	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Raccoon	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Spotted Skunk	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Weasel	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Total	\$0.00	86	\$19,384.97
NR = No Report			

The 2014-15 season saw a decrease in the number of commercial fur/recreational trapping licenses sold and a decrease in the number of animals taken from 2013-14.