

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

## BOBCAT HARVEST ASSESSMENT 2015-16



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## ABSTRACT

An estimated 263 bobcats were taken by sport hunters during the 2015-16 license year. Sport hunter take increased 28% from the 206 bobcats taken during the 2014-15 license year. Historically, commercial trapping has accounted for the majority of bobcats harvested in California (Table 1). This year no bobcats were taken by fur trappers as a result of the November 2015 implementation of the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 (Fish and Game Code §4155), which took effect prior to the 2015-16 trapping season and banned the commercial trapping of bobcat in California.

From 1977 through 2015, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife reported annually to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the number of bobcats taken through trapping and hunting in order to fulfil its obligations to the Federal Government, as a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). This international treaty restricts trade in endangered species and establishes procedures to monitor the trade of other species that might be faced with endangerment in the future. The bobcat was one of the species selected by the parties to the treaty as a possible candidate for future endangerment, primarily because of concern for the Mexican bobcat. Because other North American bobcat subspecies are considered “look-alike species” to the Mexican bobcat (i.e. species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons), they remain listed under Appendix-II of CITES. However, California no longer allows for recreational take of bobcat through regulated trapping and no commerce in bobcat fur or other products is allowed.

In the current year, data on the harvest of bobcats were gathered through bobcat hunter tag returns. In prior years data were also gathered through the issuance of tags for export of bobcat furs in accordance with CITES and the annual reports of CDFW licensed trappers.

## INTRODUCTION

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) occur in southerly regions of Canada, throughout the majority of the contiguous United States and into Mexico. Bobcats occur in virtually all counties in California and inhabit virtually all suitable terrestrial habitat types. Bobcats are strict (obligate) carnivores because their diet consists of only meat. They typically stalk or ambush their prey which consists primarily of small mammals though they may supplement their diet with birds, reptiles, amphibians or fish.

Bobcats weigh up to 40 lbs. and have a thick soft pelt with color and patterning that varies regionally. Due to the value of their fur and their status as a predator, bobcats have been trapped and hunted across their range in North America since the arrival of western settlers. Today bobcats are also valued greatly by those who enjoy recreation, wildlife watching and photography in California's wild landscapes.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the annual bobcat harvest on a regional basis.
2. Use this information along with previously gathered information on bobcat biology and population dynamics to manage local populations. Management may be through manipulating season lengths and chronology, take methods, and harvest limits.



## METHODS

The sport hunter take of bobcats was determined through assessment of mandatory hunter tag returns for successful bobcat hunters. Hunter returned bobcat tags provide information on the method of take, the date, time, location and sex of harvested bobcats.

## RESULTS

For the 2015-16 season, the total hunter harvest of bobcats was 263 individuals. This represents an increase of 28% over the 206 bobcats taken during the 2014-15 season (Figure 1). Sport hunters took bobcats in 44 counties (Table 2).

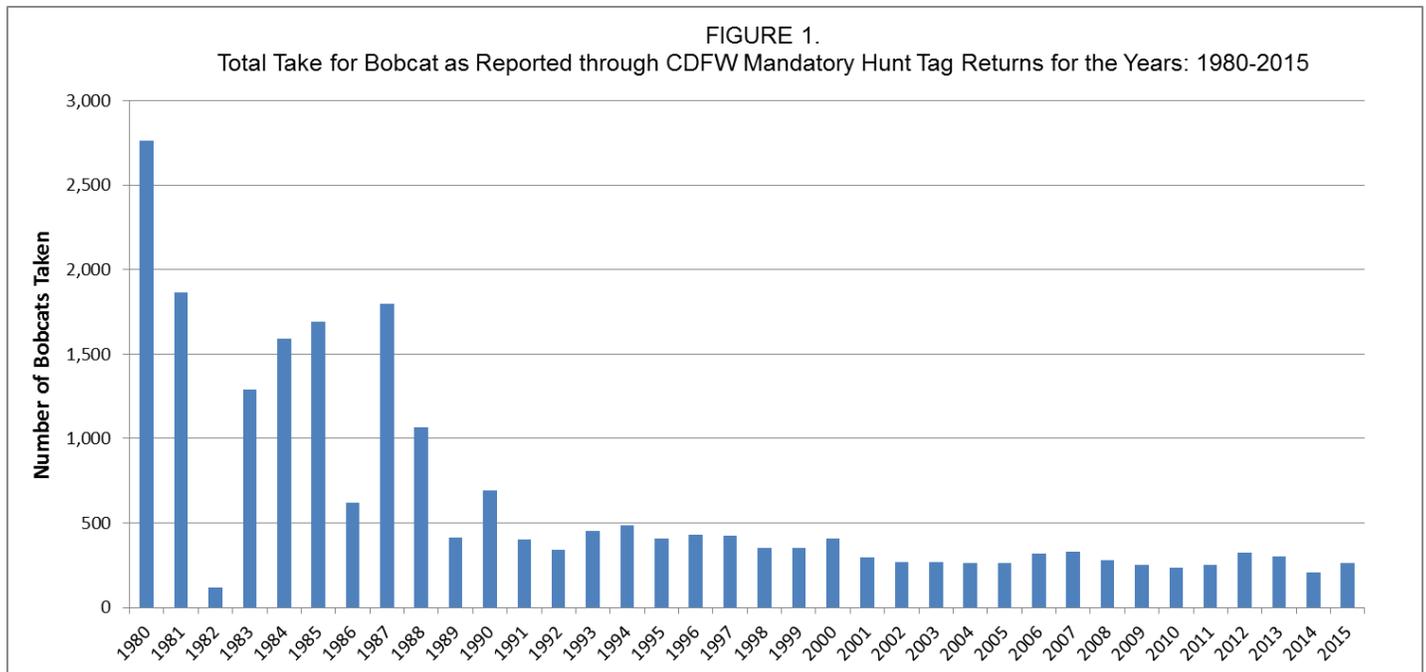


TABLE 1.  
Estimated Annual Take of Bobcats by Hunting and Trapping in California  
1983-1984 to 2015-2016

Season	Commercial Trapper Take**	Commercial Hunter Take (IB)	Total Hunter Take
1983-84	6,576	786	2,077
1984-85	7,495	1,402	2,993
1985-86	6,927	1,172	2,861
1986-87	8,003	1,120	1,739
1987-88	8,017	977	2,773
1988-89	4,877	709	1,778
1989-90	2,677	303	715
1990-91	962	186	881
1991-92	1,089	0	401
1992-93	1,039	0	342
1993-94	1,148	0	451
1994-95	1,319	0	488
1995-96	660	0	410
1996-97	1,066	0	429
1997-98	1,165	0	426
1998-99	224	0	353
1999-00	182	0	352
2000-01	190	0	414
2001-02	214	0	295
2002-03	394	0	342
2003-04	429	0	268
2004-05	506	0	261
2005-06	627	0	265
2006-07	885	0	317
2007-08	641	0	336
2008-09	623	0	281
2009-10	457	0	251
2010-11	893	0	240
2011-12	1,499	0	255
2012-13	1,214	0	324
2013-14	1,292	0	308
2014-15	760	0	206
2015-16	0	0	263

*\*Federal fiscal year data is from 10-1 to 9-30, all other data in this table is from 7-1 to 6-30.*

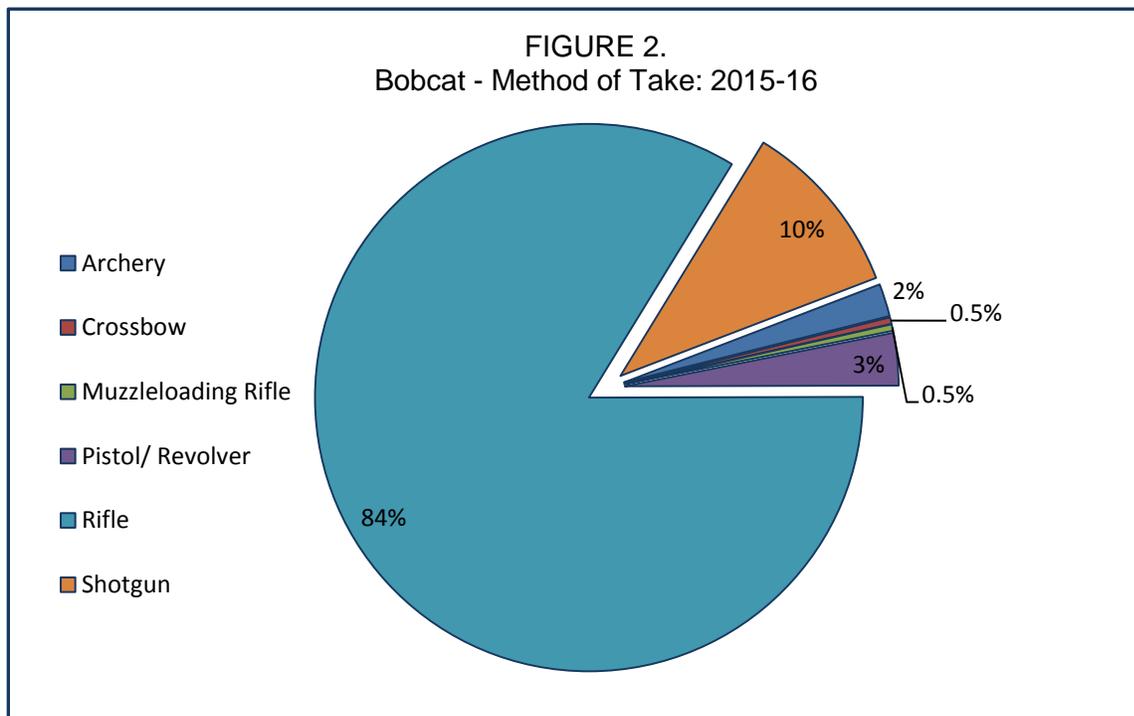
*\*\*Totals taken from annual trapper reports, starting with 2001.*

## Sport Hunting

The season for bobcat sport hunting opened October 15, 2015 and extended through February 28, 2016. The maximum number of bobcat hunt tags available for purchase is 5 tags per hunter per season. There were a total of 11,650 tags sold, and 2.2% of tags were reported as “successful” by bobcat hunters.

Of harvested individuals, 125 were female (47.5%), 131 were male (49.8%), and 7 were unknown (2.6%).

The use of a rifle was the primary method of take for bobcat and accounted for 84% of all animals harvested (220 individuals). The use of shotgun accounted for 10% of animals taken (27 individuals) and 3% (8 individuals) were taken by way of pistol or revolver. Archery, crossbow, and muzzle-loading rifle accounted for the remainder of bobcats taken (Figure 2).



Information on the extent and distribution of the sport hunting take of bobcat is gathered through mandatory returns of hunting tags from successful hunters. Sport hunters took bobcats in 44 counties during the 2015-16 hunt season. The five counties comprising the highest percentage of bobcat take were Kern (11.0%), San Bernadino (7.2%), San Diego (6.1%), Riverside (5.7%), and Siskiyou (5.3%). Table 2 summarizes bobcat sport hunter take by county.

**TABLE 2.**  
**Bobcat Take by County**  
**2015-2016 Season**

COUNTY	SPORT HUNTER HARVEST
Alameda	2
Alpine	0
Amador	3
Butte	3
Calaveras	2
Colusa	0
Contra Costa	0
El Dorado	4
Fresno	4
Glenn	2
Humboldt	4
Imperial	5
Inyo	0
Kern	29
Lake	10
Lassen	13
Los Angeles	6
Madera	7
Marin	4
Mariposa	2
Mendocino	8
Merced	1
Modoc	12
Mono	1
Monterey	8
Napa	1
Nevada	3
Orange	0
Placer	4
Plumas	6
Riverside	15
Sacramento	1
San Benito	3
San Bernardino	19
San Diego	16
San Joaquin	0
San Luis Obispo	1
Santa Barbara	2
Santa Clara	4
Santa Cruz	0
Shasta	12
Sierra	2
Siskiyou	14
Solano	2
Sonoma	0
Sutter	1
Tehama	8
Trinity	5
Tulare	4
Tuolumne	5
Ventura	1
Yolo	0
Yuba	4
Unknown	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>

## DISCUSSION

Sport hunter take of bobcats increased 28% from the 206 individuals taken during the 2014-15 license year. Historically, commercial trapping has accounted for the majority of bobcats harvested in California. This year no bobcats were taken by fur trappers as a result of the November 2015 implementation of the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 (Fish and Game Code §4155), which took effect prior to the 2015-16 trapping season and banned the commercial trapping of bobcat in California.

## RECOMMENDATION

Continue to monitor the take of bobcats by geographical area, and use that information to determine the management needed to maintain viable bobcat populations throughout California.