

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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2016-17

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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 2016-2017 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 after the passage of Proposition 4 on November 3, 1998. Passage of Proposition 4 eliminated the use of 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). Since 2014, trappers have had the option to 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.

Trappers also have the option to 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). This index of trapping effort is commonly standardized to reflect the catch per 100 trap-nights.

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 120 trapping licenses were sold during the 2016-17 trapping season, a decrease of thirty eight percent from the 193 licenses sold in the 2015-16 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest				
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	149	125	51	52
Licensees who reported, but did not trap or were unsuccessful	113	120	132	66
Licensees not reporting	5	8	10	2
Total Commercial Fur/Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	267	253	193	120

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, 2 licensed trappers failed to send in their annual report by the required due date.

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2016-17 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers was \$540 (Table 2). This is \$4,960 less than the estimated revenue of \$5,500 received during the 2015-2016 season. The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$108 in 2015-16 to \$10 in 2016-

17. The average income per successful trapper (beginning in 2009-10) is based on numbers of trappers who indicated trapping success 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 2016-17 season, 72 percent was unsold, compared to 32 percent unsold during the 2015-16 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 2015-16 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing and nongame mammals decreased 73 percent in the 2016-17 season.

More gray foxes were taken during the 2016-17 season than any other species (Table 3). The 133 gray foxes taken represented 27 percent of the total take.

TABLE 2 Number of Animals Taken, Average Price Paid, & Revenue Received by Species						
2015-2016						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	2	2	0	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	26	9	17	NR	NR	NR
Coyote	114	61	53	\$33.00	\$1,749.00	\$3,762.00
Gray Fox	284	194	90	\$13.00	\$1,170.00	\$3,692.00
Mink	2	2	0	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	1,108	28	1,080	\$2.39	\$2,581.20	\$2,648.12
Opossum	44	44	0	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	120	118	2	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	129	129	0	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	1,829	587	1,242		\$5,500.20	\$10,102.12
2016-2017						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	4	4	0	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	6	0	6	\$90.00	\$540.00	\$540.00
Coyote	111	82	29	NR	NR	NR
Gray Fox	133	123	10	NR	NR	NR
Mink	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	91	0	91	NR	NR	NR
Opossum	48	48	0	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	66	62	4	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	39	39	0	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	498	358	140		\$540	\$540
NR = No Report						

TABLE 3
Trapping Take by County 2016-2017

County	BA	BE	CO	GF	MI	MU	OP	RA	SP	ST	WE	Total
Butte								3		8		11
Colusa												0
Fresno												0
Glenn										1		1
Humboldt			11							7		18
Inyo			2									2
Kern			11	11			2	10		2		36
Lake				6								6
Lassen												0
Los Angeles			2	62			4					68
Madera												0
Marin												0
Mendocino				21				30		5		56
Modoc	2		2					1		6		11
Mono												0
Monterey												0
Nevada				1								1
Orange												0
Placer				5			42	18		6		71
Plumas	2	2		12						4		20
Riverside			0									0
Sacramento												0
San Benito				1								1
San Bernardino			2					0				2
San Luis Obispo			11									11
Shasta				2								2
Sierra		0										0
Siskiyou			37	1		91						129
Solano							0					0
Sutter												0
Trinity				11				4				15
Tulare			1									1
Tuolumne			32									32
Yolo												0
Yuba		4										4
Unknown												0
Total	4	6	111	133	0	91	48	66	0	39	0	498
Percent	1%	1%	22%	27%	0%	18%	10%	13%	0%	8%	0%	100%

BA = Badger; 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, 93% of all licensed commercial fur/recreational trappers reported this information for the 2016-17 season. 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 2016-17 season were highest for American badger (0.1818) and lowest for the coyote (0.0232, Table 4).

TABLE 4

Reported Trap Capture Rate (CPUE) By Species 2016-17					Average CPUE	
Species	Trappers Reporting	Reporting Trapper Take	Total Trap-Nights	Capture Rate (CPUE)	4-Year Average: CPUE	4-Year Average: Catch Per 100 Trap-Nights
Badger, American	2	4	22	0.1818	0.0029	0.293
Beaver, American	2	4	40	0.1000	0.0372	3.721
Coyote	12	65	2,795	0.0232	0.0112	1.116
Fox, Gray	13	127	5,222	0.0243	0.0170	1.698
Mink, American	0	0	0	NR	0.0018	0.185
Muskrat, Common	1	23	800	0.0288	0.1453	14.53
Opossum, Virginia	4	6	76	0.0789	0.0088	0.879
Raccoon	7	50	760	0.0658	0.0108	1.078
Skunk, Striped	6	26	635	0.0409	0.0164	1.639
Skunk, Western Spotted	0	0	0	NR	0.0271	2.706
Weasel, Long-tailed	0	0	0	NR	0.0058	0.577

Licensed fur dealers reported that no pelts were purchased 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 2016-2017			
Species	Average Fur Price	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	NR	0	\$0.00
Beaver	\$90.00	0	\$0.00
Coyote	NR	0	\$0.00
Gray Fox	NR	0	\$0.00
Mink	NR	0	\$0.00
Muskrat	NR	0	\$0.00
Opossum	NR	0	\$0.00
Raccoon	NR	0	\$0.00
Spotted Skunk	NR	0	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	NR	0	\$0.00
Weasel	NR	0	\$0.00
	Total	0	\$0.00
NR = No Report			

The 2016-17 season saw a decrease in the number of commercial fur/recreational trapping licenses sold and a decrease in the number of animals taken from 2015-16.