

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

BOBCAT HARVEST ASSESSMENT 2017-18



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ABSTRACT

An estimated 331 bobcats were taken by sport hunters during the 2017-18 license year. Sport hunter take increased 25% from the 265 bobcats taken during the 2016-17 license year. Historically, commercial trapping has accounted for the majority of bobcats harvested in California (Table 1). Bobcats have not been taken by fur trappers since the 2014-15 trapping season 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 bobcats 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 unless marked with the current export or shipping tag from the state of origin.

Since the 2015-16 season, data on the harvest of bobcats are gathered through bobcat hunter tag returns. In previous seasons, 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.



2017-18 Bobcat Harvest Assessment

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 2017-18 season, the total hunter harvest of bobcats was 331 individuals. This represents an increase of 25% over the 265 bobcats taken during the 2016-17 season (Figure 1). Sport hunters took bobcats in 50 counties (Table 2).

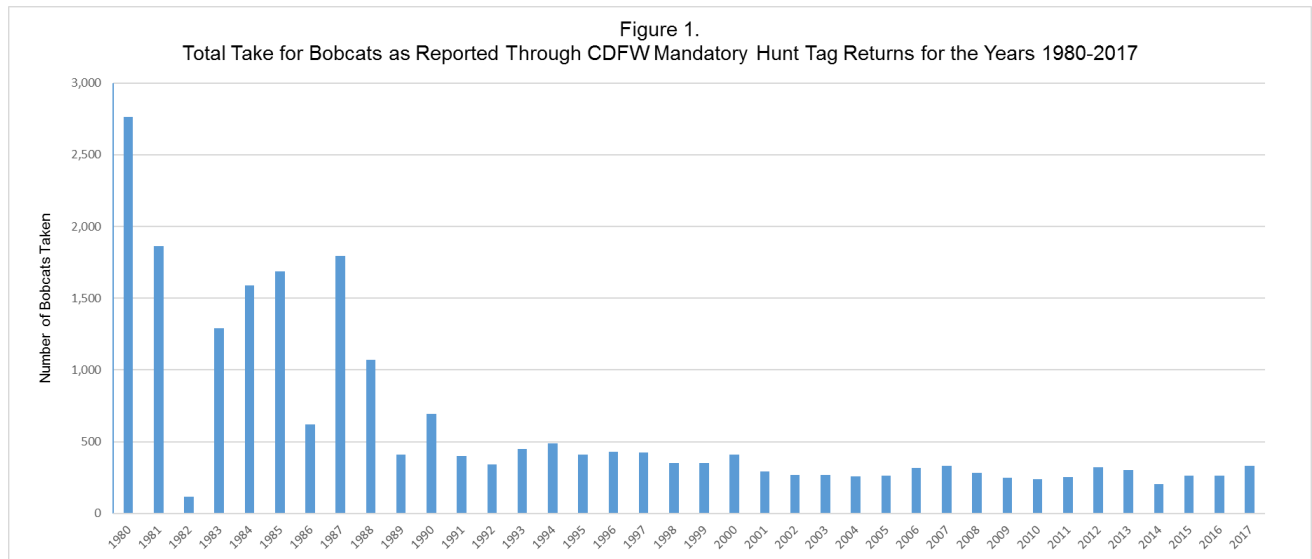


TABLE 1.
Estimated Annual Take of Bobcats by Hunting and Trapping in California
1983-1984 to 2017-2018

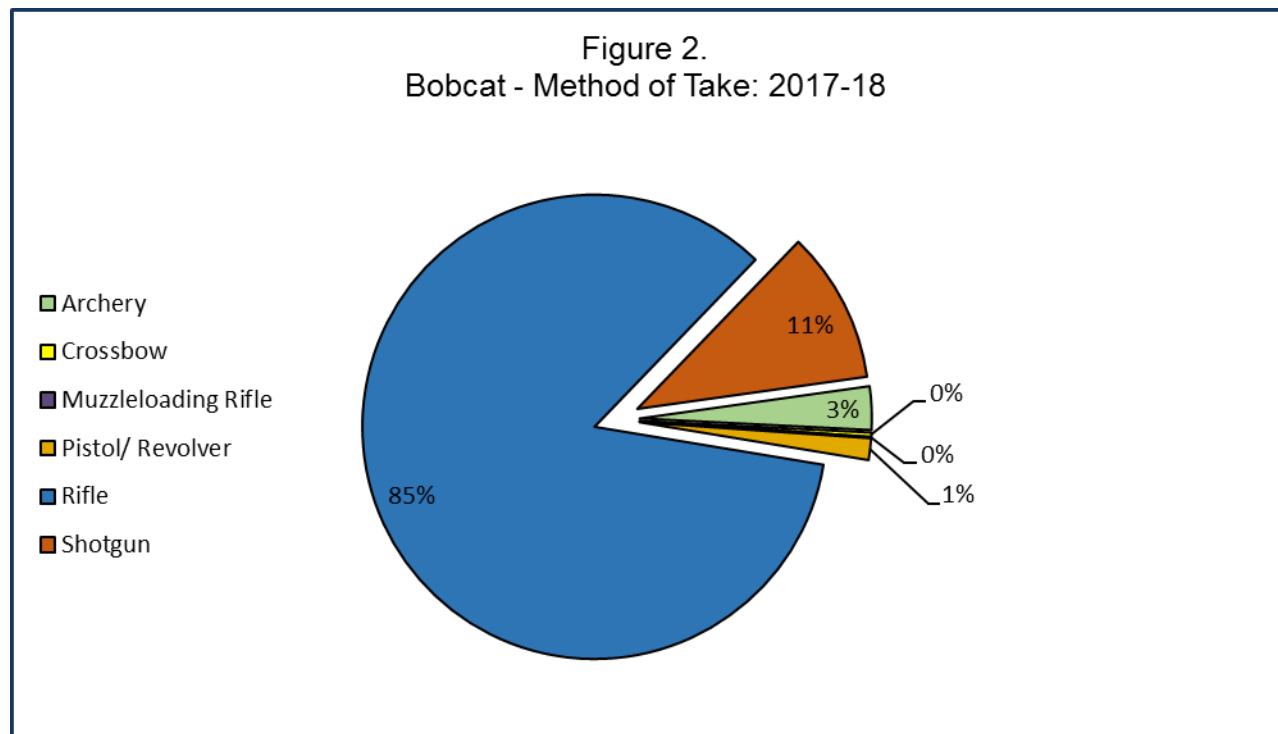
Season	Sport Hunter Take	Commercial Trapper Take	Commercial Hunter Take
1983-84	1,291	6,576	786
1984-85	1,591	7,495	1,402
1985-86	1,689	6,927	1,172
1986-87	619	8,003	1,120
1987-88	1,796	8,017	977
1988-89	1,069	4,877	709
1989-90	412	2,677	303
1990-91	695	962	186
1991-92	401	1,089	0
1992-93	342	1,039	0
1993-94	451	1,148	0
1994-95	488	1,319	0
1995-96	410	660	0
1996-97	429	1,066	0
1997-98	426	1,165	0
1998-99	353	224	0
1999-00	352	182	0
2000-01	414	190	0
2001-02	295	214	0
2002-03	342	394	0
2003-04	268	429	0
2004-05	261	506	0
2005-06	265	627	0
2006-07	317	885	0
2007-08	336	641	0
2008-09	281	623	0
2009-10	251	457	0
2010-11	240	893	0
2011-12	255	1,499	0
2012-13	324	1,214	0
2013-14	308	1,292	0
2014-15	206	760	0
2015-16	263	0	0
2016-17	265	0	0
2017-18	331	0	0

Sport Hunting

The season for bobcat sport hunting opens October 15th and extends through February 28th. The maximum number of bobcat hunt tags available for purchase is 5 tags per hunter, per season. There were a total of 11,988 tags sold, and 2.8% of tags were reported as “successful” by bobcat hunters during the 2017-18 season.

Of harvested individuals, 155 were female (46.8%), 170 were male (51.4%), and 6 were reported as unknown (1.8%).

The use of a rifle was the primary method of take for bobcat and accounted for 85% of all animals harvested (280 individuals). The use of shotgun accounted for 11% of animals taken (35 individuals) and 3% (10 individuals) were taken with archery equipment. Pistol or revolver, 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 50 counties during the 2017-18 hunt season. The three counties comprising the highest percentage of bobcat take were Kern (10.0%), San Bernardino (5.7%) and Shasta (5.7%). Table 2 summarizes bobcat sport hunter take by county.

TABLE 2.
Bobcat Take by County
2017-2018 Season

COUNTY	SPORT HUNTER HARVEST
Alpine	1
Amador	5
Butte	6
Calaveras	5
Colusa	2
Contra Costa	3
El Dorado	5
Fresno	1
Glenn	2
Humboldt	10
Imperial	5
Inyo	12
Kern	33
Kings	1
Lake	11
Lassen	13
Los Angeles	7
Madera	14
Marin	1
Mariposa	4
Mendocino	17
Merced	5
Modoc	10
Mono	5
Monterey	2
Napa	4
Nevada	6
Placer	3
Plumas	10
Riverside	17
Sacramento	1
San Benito	4
San Bernardino	19
San Diego	17
San Luis Obispo	5
Santa Barbara	1
Santa Clara	2
Santa Cruz	1
Shasta	19
Siskiyou	7
Sonoma	2
Sutter	2
Tehama	10
Trinity	1
Tulare	4
Tuolumne	7
Ventura	1
Yolo	3
Yuba	3
Unknown	0
Total	331

DISCUSSION

Sport hunter take of bobcats increased 25% from the 265 individuals taken during the 2016-17 license year. Historically, commercial trapping has accounted for the majority of bobcats harvested in California. No bobcats may be taken by fur trappers since 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.

RECCOMENDATION

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.