

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

2018-19 LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

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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 2018-2019 that license fee was:

Resident: \$117.25

Junior: \$39.25

Nonresident: \$588.25

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: [ALDS Harvest reporting](#).

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 101 trapping licenses were sold during the 2018-19 trapping season. This represents a decrease of 24% from the 133 licenses sold in the 2017-18 season (Table 1).

Table 1: Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest

License group:	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	51	52	68	62
Licensees who reported, but did not trap or were unsuccessful	132	66	58	32
Licensees not reporting	10	2	7	7
Total Commercial Fur/Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	193	120	133	101

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

No purchases or revenues were reported by Licensed Fur Dealers or Trappers from the sale of furs during the 2018-19 season. (Table 2). This is \$10,595 less than the estimated revenue received during the 2017-2018 season (Table 3). The average estimated income per successful trapper decreased from \$156 in 2017-18 to \$0 in 2018-19. The average income per successful trapper (beginning in 2009-10) is based on numbers of trappers who indicated

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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 2018-19 season, 28 percent was unsold, compared to 21 percent unsold during the 2017-18 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 2017-18 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing and nongame mammals decreased 32 percent in the 2018-19 season.

More muskrats were taken during the 2018-19 season than any other species (Table 4). The 707 muskrats taken represented 66 percent of the total take.

Table 2: 2018-2019 Number of Animals Taken, Average Price Paid & Revenue Received by Species

Species:	Total Harvest	Harvest Unsold	Harvest Sold	Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
Badger	5	5	0	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	5	5	0	NR	NR	NR
Coyote	125	85	40	NR	NR	NR
Gray Fox	47	26	21	NR	NR	NR
Mink	11	9	2	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	707	1	706	NR	NR	NR
Opossum	38	38	0	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	32	32	0	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	97	95	2	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	1067	296	771		NR	NR

Table 3: 2017-2018 Number of Animals Taken, Average Price Paid, & Revenue Received by Species

Species:	Total Harvest	Harvest Unsold	Harvest Sold	Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
Badger	2	2	0	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	6	6	0	NR	NR	NR
Coyote	118	66	52	\$73.00	\$3,796.00	\$8,614.00
Gray Fox	167	105	62	\$11.86	\$735.32	\$1,980.62
Mink	3	3	0	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	995	0	995	NR	NR	NR
Opossum	63	33	30	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	111	71	40	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	9	9	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	94	32	62	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	1568	327	1241		\$4,531.32	\$10,594.62

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Table 4: 2018-2019 Trapper Take by County

County	Badger	Beaver	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spotted Skunk	Stripped Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alameda							3	1		9		13
Butte					1	344						345
Colusa						156						156
Contra Costa												0
Fresno												0
Glenn												0
Humboldt			14				1	1		7		23
Inyo			4									4
Kern			11				30	10		30		81
Lassen										2		2
Los Angeles							2			3		5
Mendocino												0
Modoc	2			1				2		4		9
Mono												0
Monterey												0
Nevada		1		2								3
Orange												0
Placer		3		5	9			16		1		34
Plumas		1										1
Riverside			4									4
Sacramento												0
San Benito												0
San Bernardino			3									3
San Luis Obispo	3		38									41
San Mateo												0
Santa Clara							2	1		3		6
Shasta				18		5				36		59
Siskiyou			48	4		10						62
Solano												0
Sutter					1	192						193
Trinity				17						2		19
Tulare			3									3
Tuolumne								1				1
Ventura												0
Yuba												0
Unknown												0
Total	5	5	125	47	11	707	38	32	0	97	0	1067
Percent	1%	1%	11%	4%	1%	66%	4%	3%	0%	9%	0%	100%

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While the reporting of CPUE to take individual species is not required by law, 90% of all licensed commercial fur/recreational trappers reported this information for the 2018-19 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 2018-19 season were highest for muskrat (0.3333) and lowest for the American mink (0.0013, Table 5). Coyotes had the second highest CPUE (0.2185) during the 2018-19 season. While coyotes were reported to have the second highest CPUE this season, most licensed trappers take coyotes by way of firearm rather than a trap. For this reason, CPUE is a less meaningful statistic for coyote than for other species.

Table 5: Reported Trap Capture Rate (CPUE) by Species

Species	Trappers Reporting (2018-2019)	Reporting Trapper Take (2018-2019)	Total Trap-Nights (2018-2019)	Capture Rate/CPUE (2018-2019)	5-Year Average CPUE (2014-2018) Per 100 Trap-Nights
Badger, American	2	5	5	1	0.697
Beaver, American	3	2	26	0.0769	6.401
Coyote	13	99	453	0.2185*	3.595*
Fox, Gray	7	42	418	0.1005	2.210
Mink, American	2	2	1560	0.0013	0.291
Muskrat, Common	5	697	2091	0.3333	18.940
Opossum, Virginia	6	38	3034	0.0125	0.885
Raccoon	8	18	3049	0.0059	1.344
Skunk, Striped	10	97	3441	0.0282	1.702
Skunk, Western Spotted	0	0	0	NR	0.825
Weasel, Long-tailed	0	0	0	NR	0.583

Licensed fur dealers reported that no pelts were purchased in California (Table 6). 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. No fur price data was reported for 2018-19.

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Table 6: Furs Purchased by Dealers 2018-2019 (NR = No Report)

Species	Average Fur Price	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	NR	0	\$0.00
Beaver	NR	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

The 2018-19 season saw a decrease in the number of commercial fur/recreational trapping licenses sold and a decrease in the number of animals taken from 2017-18.