



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
NONGAME BIRD AND MAMMAL SECTION**



**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT
1987 -1988**

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Department 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 their annual take of furbearing or nongame mammals for profit in order to purchase a trapping license for the following season. As of January 1, 1983, anyone being issued a trapping license must pass a test of trapping competence and proficiency and pay a fee. For 1987-88 that fee was:

Adult: \$45.00 Juvenile: \$15.00 Nonresident: \$225.00

Over the years the take and monetary return to the trapper for his/her furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 1920s 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. The 1980s has seen a slight decrease and stabilization of both fur values and the number of licensed fur trappers, at level of revenue and number of trappers about half of that at the beginning of the decade.

METHODS

Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, requires that all licensed trappers report their season's harvest by the end of the trapping year (July 1) or not receive a trapping license for the next season. On these reports the trappers note the number of each species of furbearer or nongame animal taken for commercial purposes, the number of each species sold, the county of take for each species, and the dealers to whom the furs were sold.

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 1,370 trapping licenses were sold during the 1987-88 trapping season, an increase of 2% from the 1,347 licenses sold for the 1986-87 season (Table 1). This was the fifth successive year in which license sales were below 1,800. This level is well above the 450 to 1,000 licenses sold annually during the period from 1950 to 1976 but below the 3,000 plus licenses sold in the years immediately preceeding the increase in license fees and the mandatory proficiency examination. Current fur prices are not likely to encourage license sales to reach 3,000 in the near future.

Table 1. Numbers of trappers buying licenses and reporting their harvest.			
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Licensees who reported trapping effort	854	924	979
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	273	256	271
Licensees not reporting	290	167	120
Total licenses sold	1,417	1,347	1,370

Revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1987-88 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$1,513,803.25 (Table 2). This is well below the high of \$2,399,565 of 1978-79 but is similar to the average range of fur values seen since that date. The current fur value represents a 22% decrease in revenue from the 1986-87 trapping season, when a total of \$1,948,897.28 was received by trappers. The average income per successful trapper decreased by 27% from \$2,109.20 in 1986-87 to \$1,546.28 in 1987-88.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1987-88 season 14% was unsold, compared to 12% unsold during the 1986-87 season. Unsold pelts still have value, and for the purpose of this report they have the same monetary value as marketed pelts. Therefore, the estimated value of the 1987-88 fur harvest was \$1,728,224.10, a decrease of 16% from the \$2,046,325.17 of the 1986-87 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alameda, San Francisco and Santa Cruz (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals providing 69% of the total value of California's furs. Although 8,994 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1987-88 season in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses only reported the take of 8,266. This is a 4% decrease from the reported take of 8,617 during the 1986-87 season. The average price paid per bobcat was \$142.73, a 15% decrease from the average price of \$167.33 paid during the 1986-87 season. The lower value of bobcat pelts, along with the decrease in take, resulted in a 27% decrease in the overall value of bobcat pelts during the 1987-88 season.

Table 2. Number of animals taken, average price paid, and revenue received by species during 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Species	1986-87			Fur Value	
	Harvest				
	Sold	Unsold	Total	Average	Revenue
Badger	78	116	194	\$12.50	\$975.00
Beaver	992	459	1451	\$17.36	\$17,221.12
Bobcat	8483	133	8616	\$167.33	\$1,419,460.39
Coyote	5659	1241	6900	\$22.74	\$128,685.66
Gray Fox	9585	602	10187	\$19.67	\$188,536.95
Mink	323	33	356	\$11.82	\$3,817.86
Muskrat	33066	2380	35446	\$3.54	\$117,053.64
Opossum	349	789	1138	\$1.82	\$635.18
Raccoon	4398	454	4852	\$16.18	\$71,159.64
Spotted Skunk	41	206	247	\$3.18	\$130.38
Striped Skunk	506	3083	3589	\$2.41	\$1,219.46
Weasel	2	13	15	\$1.00	\$2.00
Total	63483	9417	72900		\$1,948,897.28

Species	1987-88			Fur Value	
	Harvest				
	Sold	Unsold	Total	Average	Revenue
Badger	52	183	235	\$5.34	\$277.68
Beaver	717	514	1231	\$9.82	\$7,040.94
Bobcat	7286	980	8266	\$142.73	\$1,039,930.78
Coyote	4143	2704	6847	\$10.99	\$45,531.57
Gray Fox	10329	941	11270	\$26.51	\$273,821.79
Mink	270	30	300	\$15.00	\$4,050.00
Muskrat	33906	198	34104	\$3.40	\$115,280.40
Opossum	193	686	879	\$0.68	\$131.24
Raccoon	2994	799	3793	\$9.04	\$27,065.76
Spotted Skunk	59	221	280	\$1.53	\$90.27
Striped Skunk	362	2877	3239	\$1.61	\$582.82
Weasel	0	5	5	\$0.76	- -
Total	60311	10138	70449		\$1,513,803.25

Muskrats, historically the most economically important furbearer, were third in importance behind bobcats and gray foxes during the 1987-88 season. The 4% decrease in average value of muskrat pelts, and the 4% decrease in take, resulted in an 8% decrease in the overall value of muskrats. The gray fox was the second most important furbearer, with a 35% increase in pelt value and 11% increase in take resulting in a 49% increase in the overall value of gray foxes. Coyote dropped to the fourth most economically important furbearer, with a 1% decrease in take, and a 52% decrease in average pelt value.

Once again more muskrats were taken than any other species. The 34,104 muskrats taken during the 1987-88 season represented 48% of the total take, a very slight decrease from the 49% that this species represented during the 1986-87 season.

Table 3. Number of animals reported taken by licensed fur trappers and by species and county during the 1987-88 trapping season.

County	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spot.Skunk	Strip.Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alameda													
Alpine		2	21	20	9				1	3	4	1	61
Amador		3	6	5	14			11	8		28		75
Butte		182	10	11	198	2	3808	23	227		10		4471
Calaveras			24	22	41			2	26		15		130
Colusa		27	71	38	115		2934	2	115		9		3311
Contra Costa		11		27	12	18	292	4	60		6		430
Del Norte		1	26		18				32				77
El Dorado			3	18	48			2	27		33		131
Fresno	1	19	305	278	238		256	18	69	1	49		1234
Glenn	7	30	84	45	434	1	4304	13	133	17	73		5131
Humboldt			406	24	478	1		3	687	7	105		1711
Imperial	3	16	49	38	52		57		15				230
Inyo	8	105	186	265	165	3	1		16	5	3		757
Kern	18	19	784	537	804		12	13	38	18	91		2334
Kings			13	6	2		60		2		8		91
Lake	2		99	61	597	9	372	29	223	11	367		1771
Lassen	9	75	125	206		2	448		5				870
Los Angeles	5		298	411	509			1	51	2	41		1318
Madera	1		111	61	125			6	18		23		345
Marin			22	2	15			27	37		16		119
Mariposa	7		99	172	126			24	92		122		642
Mendocino	1	1	126	29	515	4	7	23	290	18	84		1098
Merced	2	26	62	92	18	12	499	43	61		43		858
Modoc	11	35	249	278	15	25	3519		23	22	119		4296
Mono	6	20	72	244	53	3	3		5		2		408
Monterey	7		521	171	404		15	108	42	37	562		1967
Napa			21	38	89	2		8	67		33		258
Nevada			2	6	30			5	5		10		58
Orange			11	7	80			1	1		2		102
Placer		31	1	15	29	1	242	9	19		12		359
Plumas		60	26	71	46	15	16		10	7	10		261
Riverside	8	48	182	188	261	35	66	9	31	4	42		839
Sacramento		115		38	9		1610	33	103		22		1965
San Benito			74	55	37		4	4	18		62		254
San Bernardino	74		985	1367	767			26	73	10	62		3364
San Diego	3		406	194	632		1	20	36	26	59		1377
San Francisco													
San Joaquin		38				26	813	8	36		4	1	926
San Luis Obispo	3		347	169	430			70	99	5	269		1392
San Mateo					2				4				6
Santa Barbara	9		477	262	811			15	26	2	108		1710
Santa Clara	5		65	125	85			5	16		47		348
Santa Cruz													
Shasta	15	74	230	133	816	36	5359	19	87	12	69		6854
Sierra			1	27					6				34
Siskiyou	12	50	416	190	94	86	6605	1	146	5	74	2	7681
Solano		65		4			519	5	49		10		652
Sonoma	2		91	9	166		4	115	222	9	97	1	716
Stanislaus		21	34	75	47	12	451	18	125		11		794
Sutter		80		15	10	3	1057	22	53	5	18		1263
Tehama	1	32	43	141	204		36	25	83	2	88		657
Trinity		6	53	16	358	1			24	40	27		485
Tulare	4		502	118	402			40	25		7		1138
Tuolumne		8	78	60	172	1	2	18	74		96		569
Ventura	11		341	458	651			52	26	2	178		1919
Yolo		20	6	3	31		536	7	14	6	9		632
Yuba		11	2	2	6	2	196	2	12				233
Total Animals Trapped	235	1231	8266	6847	11270	300	34104	879	3793	280	3239	5	70449
% Total Take	0.33	1.75	11.73	9.72	16.00	0.43	48.41	1.25	5.38	0.40	4.60	0.01	

During the 1987-88 season there were 33 licensed fur dealers. Twenty-three (70%) licensed fur dealers reported on their 1987-88 activities; 20 dealers reported buying furs. Of the reporting dealers, 15 were from California. They reported buying 49,021 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$1,249,611.15. This represents handling 81% of the furs reported sold by licensed trappers. This is a 36% increase of California furs sold to licensed fur dealers last year. Two of the reporting fur dealers each reported buying over \$220,000 in furs and three reported buying from \$100,000 to \$200,000 in furs. The average prices paid by the reporting dealers is used to calculate the fur value for each species and the value of furs reported bought by the dealers.

Table 4. Furs Purchased by Dealers from Licensed Fur Dealer Reports, 1987-88.

Species	Range of Average Prices	No. of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	2.00 - 6.50	19	\$101.50
Beaver	4.00 - 14.80	445	\$4,369.11
Bobcat	25.00 - 239.75	6,252	\$892,359.53
Coyote	5.00 - 21.00	1,921	\$21,113.57
Gray Fox	19.43 - 28.43	7,741	\$205,228.09
Mink	8.00 - 21.63	129	\$1,935.08
Muskrat	1.90 - 3.80	29,914	\$101,805.22
Opossum	.06 - 2.00	71	\$48.09
Raccoon	4.01 - 14.00	2,498	\$22,570.84
Spotted Skunk	1.00 - 1.86	13	\$19.88
Striped Skunk	1.20 - 2.30	17	\$59.48
Weasel	.76	1	\$.76
TOTAL		49,021	\$1,249,611.15