

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

**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT**  
**1989-1990**

by

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**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

# LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT 1989-1990

## 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 1989-90 that fee was:

Adult: \$50.75      Juvenile: \$17.00      Nonresident: \$253.50

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. Until 1988-89 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. During 1988-89 the fur market returned to a level similar to that of the mid-1970s, just at the beginning of the resurgence in interest in furs that has dominated the market since that time. In trapping year 1989-90 fur revenue dropped to \$47,669.54.

## 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 834 trapping licenses were sold during the 1989-90 trapping season, a decrease of 33% from the 1,244 licenses sold in the 1988-89 season (Table 1). This was the seventh successive year in which license sales were below 1,800 and the lowest number of licenses sold since the 1975-76 season. 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 preceding 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.			
	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	979	706	382
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	271	271	214
Licensees not reporting	120	267	238
Total licenses sold	1,370	1,244	834

Revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1989-90 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$47,699.54 (Table 2). This is 90% below the revenue of \$489,850.54 received in 1988-89 and 98% below the high of \$2,399,565 of 1978-79. Fur revenue for the 1989-90 trapping year is the lowest since the 1967-68 season.

The average income per successful trapper decreased by 82% from \$694.00 in 1988-89 to \$125.00 in 1989-90. This is the lowest income per successful trapper in at least 25 years.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1989-90 season 37% was unsold, compared to 30% unsold during the 1988-89 season. Unsold pelts still have value, and for the purpose of this report are considered to have the same monetary value as marketed pelts. Therefore, the estimated value of the 1989-90 fur harvest was \$86,907.22, a decrease of 87% from the \$650,183.48 of the 1988-89 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte and San Francisco (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals, providing 61% of the total value of California's furs. Although 2,980 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1989-90 season in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses only reported the take of 2,493. This is a 57% decrease from the reported take of 5,165 during the 1988-89 season. The average price paid per bobcat was \$17.91, an 82% decrease from the average price of \$102.31 paid during the 1988-89 season. This year the lower value of bobcat pelts, along with the decrease in take, resulted in a 93% decrease in the overall value of bobcat.

Muskrats, historically the most economically important furbearer, were third in importance behind bobcats and gray foxes during the 1989-90 season. The 72% decrease in average value of muskrat pelts, and the 56% decrease in take, resulted in an 83% decrease in the overall value of muskrats. The gray fox, the second most important furbearer this year, had a 36% decrease in pelt value and a 66% decrease in take which resulted in a 77% decrease in the overall value of gray foxes. Coyote was the fourth most economically important furbearer and sustained a 43% decrease in take, and an 18% decrease in average pelt value.

**Table 2. Number of animals taken, average price paid, and revenue received by species during 1987-88 and 1988-89.**

1988-89						
Species	Sold	Harvest Unsold	Total	Average	Fur Value	Revenue
Badger	25	67	92	NR*		
Beaver	367	255	622	\$ 5.76		\$ 2,113.92
Bobcat	4083	1082	5165	\$102.31		\$417,731.73
Coyote	1614	3614	5228	\$ 6.39		\$ 10,313.46
Gray Fox	4540	2412	6952	\$ 5.92		\$ 26,876.80
Mink	140	31	171	\$ 10.34		\$ 1,447.60
Muskrat	18084	1982	20066	\$ 1.57		\$ 28,391.88
Opossum	172	440	612	NR		
Raccoon	883	862	1745	\$ 3.06		\$ 2,701.98
Spotted Skunk	26	205	231	NR		
Striped Skunk	143	2138	2281	\$ 2.19		\$ 313.17
Weasel	0	3	3	NR		
<b>Total</b>	<b>30077</b>	<b>13091</b>	<b>43168</b>			<b>\$489,890.54</b>
1989-90						
Species	Sold	Harvest Unsold	Total	Average	Fur Value	Revenue
Badger	4	68	72	\$ 2.85		\$ 11.40
Beaver	154	432	586	\$ 5.82		\$ 896.28
Bobcat	1621	872	2493	\$17.91		\$29,032.11
Coyote	592	2373	2965	\$ 5.26		\$ 3,113.92
Gray Fox	1666	1425	3091	\$ 3.78		\$ 6,297.48
Mink	102	46	148	\$ 8.23		\$ 839.46
Muskrat	8065	818	8883	\$ .60		\$ 4,839.00
Opossum	11	256	267	NR		
Raccoon	1040	64	1104	\$ 2.51		\$ 2,610.40
Spotted Skunk	5	46	51	\$ 2.18		\$ 10.90
Striped Skunk	17	1334	1351	\$ 1.43		\$ 18.59
Weasel	34	1	35	NR		
<b>Total</b>	<b>13311</b>	<b>7735</b>	<b>21046</b>			<b>\$47,669.54</b>
* NR = None reported sold						

**Table 3. Number of animals reported taken by licensed fur trappers and by species and county during the 1989-90 trapping season.**

County	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spot. Skunk	Strip. Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alameda									0				0
Alpine		1	12	14	5	1							33
Amador			16	8	15				20		7		66
Butte		88	3	20	38			786	10	163	59		1168
Calaveras			5	26					2		8		41
Colusa		1	5	1	16		443		25				491
El Dorado			8	9	16						5		38
Fresno	9		138	148	152				17	7	34		505
Glenn					60		343	5	117	2	12		539
Humboldt		4	120	53	195	1		2	131	4	90		600
Imperial	2		29	41	18				2				92
Inyo	15	69	176	97	111	21			8		2		499
Kern	4	15	119	104	162			1	20	4	33		462
Kings		2		3			17	2					24
Lake			31	9	150	12			11	1	19		233
Lassen	3	15	58	106		6	51	4	11	1	5		260
Los Angeles	3		156	81	281			8	20	7	12		568
Madera			25	31	66				2		15		139
Marin		5			2		34		28		7		76
Mariposa			1										1
Mendocino			9	5	57				24	2	99		196
Merced	3	10		21			5						39
Modoc	2		65	31			1325		2		20		1445
Mono		76	31	121	41	3	1		2				275
Monterey	3	30	109	34	67			1	6	1	58		309
Napa	1		7	8	21			1	8		2		48
Nevada			3										3
Orange			9	28	53			7	1		16		114
Placer					10	1	90	2	1		2		106
Plumas		23	42	22	15	2	1		9		10	1	125
Riverside			40	205	114			6	13	4	18	1	400
Sacramento		30		96	3		9	3	11		2		154
San Benito	8		50	78	7				2		53		198
San Bernardino	10		250	202	237			9	20		15		743
San Diego	1		170	115	211			23	2	12	43		577
San Joaquin		70		14		8	127	3	32		1		255
San Luis Obispo	1		125	236	117			6	9		149		643
Santa Barbara	1		77	260	200			10	4		178		730
Santa Clara	1		25	25	14				3		4		72
Shasta	3	13	112	83	97	7	1156	39	38	1	43		1592
Sierra			1		2								3
Siskiyou		25	110	65	28	36	3937		49	1	57	34	4342
Solano		2					4				5		11
Sonoma			30	4	23			47	43	3	65		215
Stanislaus		30	4	6	6	20	93	15	35		4		213
Sutter		49		2	16	2	272	55	119		35		550
Tehama		9	3	40	83		44	2	15		25		221
Trinity		18	7	17	73	26			43	1	12		197
Tulare	1		123	51	87				11		81		354
Tuolumne				23	4			1	10		7		45
Ventura	1		168	420	201			5	11		40		846
Yolo		1				1	55		2				59
Yuba					11	1	90		1				103
Unknown			21	2	6				1		1		31
<b>Total Animals Trapped</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2493</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>2965</b>	<b>3091</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>8883</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>1104</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>1351</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21046</b>
<b>% Total Take</b>	<b>.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>.7</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>99.9</b>

Once again more muskrats were taken than any other species. The 8,883 muskrats taken during the 1989-90 season represented 42% of the total take. This is a slight decrease from the 46% that this species represented during the 1988-89 season, but the total take is the lowest reported for this species since the 1934-35 season.

During the 1989-90 season there were 16 licensed fur dealers. Three (19%) licensed fur dealers reported on their 1989-90 activities and reported buying furs. All reporting dealers were from California. They reported buying 2003 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$7,970.44 (Table 4). This represents handling only 15% of the furs reported sold by licensed trappers and a 84% decrease of California furs sold to licensed fur dealers during this last year. The average prices paid by the reporting dealers are 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, 1989-90.			
Species	Range of Average Prices	No. of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	2.85	7	\$ 20.00
Beaver	3.00 - 10.00	90	\$ 523.47
Bobcat	15.00 - 17.92	268	\$4,801.14
Coyote	2.00 - 20.00	29	\$ 152.57
Gray Fox	3.67 - 19.75	220	\$ 833.67
Mink	6.50 - 8.41	11	\$ 90.63
Muskrat	.60	1004	\$ 610.73
Opossum	NR	0	0
Raccoon	2.27 - 10.00	368	\$ 923.79
Spotted Skunk	1.24 - 4.01	4	\$ 8.72
Striped Skunk	2.86	2	\$ 5.72
Weasel	NR	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2003</b>	<b>\$7,970.44</b>