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

**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT
1990-1991**

by

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WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

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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 1990-91 that fee was:

Adult: \$55.25 Juvenile: \$18.50 Nonresident: \$276.75

Over the years the take and monetary return to the trapper for their 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. During the 1980's, the number of trapping licenses sold decreased from 3,201 to 834, and the take decreased from 131,491 to 21,046. License sales and take continued to fall in the 1990-91 season.

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

Five hundred and eleven trapping licenses were sold during the 1990-91 trapping season, a decrease of 39% from the 834 licenses sold in the 1989-90 season (Table 1). This was the eighth successive year in which license sales were below 1,800 and the lowest number of licenses sold since the 1975-76 season. Current fur prices are not likely to cause license sales to increase substantially in the near future.

Table 1. Numbers of trappers buying licenses and reporting their harvest.			
	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	706	382	223
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	271	214	139
Licensees not reporting	267	238	149
Total licenses sold	1,244	834	511

Revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1990-91 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$48,082.64 (Table 2). This is 1% above the revenue of \$47,675.26 received in 1989-90 and 98% below the high of \$2,399,565 of 1978-79. Fur revenue for the 1990-91 trapping year is the lowest since the 1967-68 season.

The average income per successful trapper increased by 28% from \$125.00 in 1989-90 to \$160.00 in 1990-91.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1990-91 season, 39% was unsold, compared to 37% unsold during the 1989-90 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 1990-91 fur harvest was \$78,852.45, a decrease of 9% from the \$86,907.22 of the 1989-90 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alameda, Madera, Mariposa, Nevada, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Sierra and Solano (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals, providing 62% of the total value of California's furs. Although 1,148 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1990-91 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses only reported the take of 989. This is a 40% decrease from the reported take of 2,493 during the 1989-90 season. The average price paid per bobcat was \$49.50, a 176% increase from the average price of \$17.91 paid during the 1989-90 season.

Muskrats, historically the most economically important furbearer, were second in importance behind bobcats during the 1990-91 season. Coyotes ranked third (16%) in estimated fur value. Gray fox estimated fur value dropped from second rank in 1989-90 to fourth rank in 1990-91. The take of coyote and gray fox, compared to 1989-90, decreased by 49% and 37% respectively for 1990-91. The muskrat take increased slightly by 3%, probably because the average price per pelt increased from \$.60 to \$.91.

Table 2. Number of animals taken, average price paid, and revenue received by species during 1989-90 and 1990-91.

1990-91						
Species	Sold	Harvest		Total	Fur Value	
		Unsold			Average	Revenue
Badger	1	12		13	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00
Beaver	99	151		250	\$ 5.16	\$ 510.84
Bobcat	715	274		989	\$ 49.50	\$ 35,392.50
Coyote	428	1,023		1,451	\$ 8.85	\$ 3,787.80
Gray Fox	387	766		1,153	\$ 3.60	\$ 1,393.20
Mink	30	36		66	\$ 18.00	\$ 540.00
Muskrat	6,712	2,415		9,127	\$.91	\$ 6,107.92
Opossum	0	436		436	\$.35	---
Raccoon	174	705		879	\$ 1.87	\$ 325.38
Spotted Skunk	1	87		88	NR	---
Striped Skunk	13	920		933	NR	---
Weasel	0	0		0	NR	---
Total	8,560	6,825		15,385		\$ 48,082.64
1989-90						
Species	Sold	Harvest		Total	Fur Value	
		Unsold			Average	Revenue
Badger	4	68		72	\$ 2.85	\$ 11.40
Beaver	154	432		586	\$ 5.82	\$ 896.28
Bobcat	1,621	872		2,493	\$17.91	\$29,032.11
Coyote	592	2,373		2,965	\$ 5.26	\$ 3,113.92
Gray Fox	1,666	1,425		3,091	\$ 3.78	\$ 6,297.48
Mink	102	46		148	\$ 8.23	\$ 839.46
Muskrat	8,065	818		8,883	\$.60	\$ 4,839.00
Opossum	11	256		267	NR	---
Raccoon	1,040	64		1,104	\$ 2.51	\$ 2,610.40
Spotted Skunk	5	46		51	\$ 2.18	\$ 10.90
Striped Skunk	17	1,334		1,351	\$ 1.43	\$ 24.31
Weasel	34	1		35	NR	---
Total	13,311	7,735		21,046		\$47,675.26

NR = None reported sold

Table 3. Number of animals reported taken by licensed fur trappers and by species and county during the 1990-91 trapping season.

County	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spot.Skunk	Strip.Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alpine		1	1	2	2	2							8
Amador						3							3
Butte		73		5	40		917	10	166	7	65		1283
Calaveras			15		6				2				23
Colusa		12	54	6	8		1050		87				1217
Contra Costa		1											1
El Dorado				2	4								6
Fresno			68	75	39				4		21		207
Glenn				5	18								23
Humboldt		10	33	107	130				125	40	40		485
Imperial			4	84	4				2				94
Inyo	2		1	50	33								86
Kern		4	157	52	35				10	13	4		275
Kings					1								1
Lake			9	13	58	11			13		9		113
Lassen			27	61			72		1				161
Los Angeles	1	5	46	88	77			218	239	4	193		871
Marin								1	23	1	93		118
Mendocino				1	44			6	16				67
Merced		3											3
Modoc			26	11			1236						1273
Mono		9	9	58	22				2		11		111
Monterey	2	17	36	54			8	3			45		165
Napa			9	8	19			1	10		10		57
Orange			3	14	40			9	3		22		91
Placer		15		29				138	2	2			186
Plumas		17	5			2	1	1	2	2	7		37
Riverside			15	15	16			9					55
Sacramento		8		11	1	6	5				14		45
San Benito			3	15	4				2		33		57
San Bernardino			53	74	48			9	9		25		218
San Diego			58	39	100			42	2	17	24		282
San Joaquin		13					2	1	3				19
San Luis Obispo			39	46	45						64		194
Santa Barbara	1		4	73	36			25	13		32		184
Santa Clara	3		27	16							8		54
Shasta		6	18	74	134	16	1023	1	5	1	17		1295
Siskiyou		9	71	80	2	5	4259	1	56		45		4528
Sonoma	3		28	3	25			75	24	1	85		244
Stanislaus		6				5	2		2				15
Sutter		23		1	3		260	15	29		35		366
Tehama	1	4	5	13	25		5		4	1	13		71
Trinity			3	26	11	16			5	1			62
Tulare			115	38	36			2	5				196
Tuolumne			2		12								14
Ventura			45	202	75			5	10		18		355
Yolo		4					12		3				19
Yuba		10					137						147
Total Animals Trapped	13	250	989	1451	1153	66	9127	436	879	88	933		15385
% Total Take	.1	1.6	6.4	9.4	7.5	.4	59.3	2.8	5.7	.6	6.1		99.9

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 9,127 muskrats taken during the 1990-91 season represented 59% of the total take. This is a slight increase from the 42% that this species represented during the 1989-90 season.

During the 1990-91 season there were 11 licensed fur dealers. Three (27%) licensed fur dealers reported on their 1990-91 activities and reported buying furs. Two reporting dealers were from California. They reported buying 1,377 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$18,427.07 (Table 4). This represents handling only 16% of the 8,560 furs reported sold by licensed trappers (Table 2) and a 36% 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.

Species	Range of Average Prices	No. of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	25.00	3	\$ 75.00
Beaver	5.16	33	\$ 170.32
Bobcat	20.00 - 125.00	317	\$15,692.63
Coyote	7.00 - 33.00	112	\$ 991.44
Gray Fox	2.83 - 4.30	198	\$ 713.54
Mink	18.00	1	\$ 18.00
Muskrat	.91	589	\$ 535.58
Opossum	.35	1	\$.35
Raccoon	1.55 - 3.00	123	\$ 230.21
Spotted Skunk	NR	0	\$ 0
Striped Skunk	NR	0	\$ 0
Weasel	NR	0	\$ 0
TOTAL		1,377	\$18,427.07

NR = No Sales Reported