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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT
1991-92

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 1991-92 that fee was:

Adult: \$57.75	Juvenile: \$19.25	Nonresident: \$289.75
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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 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 1980's, the number of trapping licenses sold decreased from 3,021 to 834, and the take decreased from 131,491 to 21,046. License sales continued to fall in the 1991-92 season. However, the take increased by 870 animals.

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

Three hundred seventy-one trapping licenses were sold during the 1991-92 trapping season, a decrease of 27% from the 511 licenses sold in the 1990-91 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.			
	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	382	223	201
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	214	139	129
Licensees not reporting	238	149	41
Total Licenses Sold	834	511	371

Revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1991-92 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$99,798.47 (Table 2). This is 207% above the revenue of \$48,082.64 received in 1990-91, but is well below the high of \$2,399,565 of 1978-79.

The average income per successful trapper increased from \$216.00 in 1990-91 to \$497.00 in 1991-92.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1991-92 season, 23% was unsold, compared to 39% unsold during the 1990-91 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 1991-92 fur harvest was \$152,839 (Table 2) an increase of 93% from the \$78,854 of the 1990-91 season.

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

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals, providing about 50% of the total value of California's furs. Although ~~1,092~~ ^{1,080} export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1991-92 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses only reported the take of 1,080. This difference of ~~12~~ bobcats between the two reporting systems is a significant improvement over previous years. Last year 1,148 export tags were sold, but trappers only reported taking 989 bobcats. The average price paid per bobcat was \$70.42, a 42% increase from the average price of \$49.50 paid during the 1990-91 season.

Muskrats, historically the most economically important furbearer, were second in revenue and value importance behind bobcats during the 1991-92 season. Coyotes ranked third in estimated fur value. Gray fox estimated fur value remained at fourth rank for 1991-92. The take of coyote and gray fox, compared to 1990-91, increased this year. The muskrat take increased by about 8%, probably because the average price per pelt increased from \$.91 to \$1.73.

Table 2. Number of animals taken, average price paid, and revenue received by species during 1990-91 and 1991-92.

1990-91						
Species	Sold	Harvest Unsold	Total	Average	Fur Value Estimated Revenue	Estimated Value
Badger	1	12	13	\$ 25.00	\$ 25	\$ 325
Beaver	99	151	250	\$ 5.16	\$ 511	\$ 1,290
Bobcat	715	274	989	\$ 49.50	\$ 35,393	\$ 48,956
Coyote	428	1,023	1,451	\$ 8.85	\$ 3,788	\$ 12,841
Gray Fox	387	766	1,153	\$ 3.60	\$ 1,393	\$ 4,151
Mink	30	36	66	\$ 18.00	\$ 540	\$ 1,188
Muskrat	6,712	2,415	9,127	\$.91	\$ 6,108	\$ 8,306
Opossum	0	436	436	\$.35	---	\$ 153
Raccoon	174	705	879	\$ 1.87	\$ 325	\$ 1,644
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	\$ 78,854
1991-92						
Species	Sold	Harvest Unsold	Total	Average	Fur Value Estimated Revenue	Estimated Value
Badger	2	20	22	\$ 2.50	\$ 5	\$ 55
Beaver	203	348	551	\$ 8.00	\$ 1,848	\$ 4,408
Bobcat	955	125	1,080	\$ 70.42	\$ 67,251	\$ 76,054
Coyote	474	1,062	1,536	\$ 22.81	\$ 497	\$ 35,036
Gray Fox	807	523	1,330	\$ 8.23	\$ 6,642	\$ 10,946
Mink	228	-8*	220	\$ 21.80	\$ 4,970	\$ 4,796
Muskrat	9,368	570	9,938	\$ 1.73	\$ 16,207	\$ 17,193
Opossum	7	194	201	NR	---	---
Raccoon	366	280	648	\$ 7.04	\$ 2,380	\$ 4,561
Spotted Skunk	4	12	16	NR	---	---
Striped Skunk	24	689	713	NR	---	---
Weasel	0	2	2	NR	---	---
Total	12,438	3,817	16,255		\$ 99,800	\$152,839

* Furs taken in previous years sold this year.

NR = None reported sold

Table 3. Number of animals reported taken by licensed fur trappers and by species and county during the 1991-92 trapping season.

County	Badger	Beaver	Bobcat	Coyote	Gray Fox	Mink	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Spot.Skunk	Strip.Skunk	Weasel	Total
Alpine			5	6	7	4			3				25
Amador			2	1	4		1		1				9
Butte		126		1	1	25	852	2	78		6		1,091
Calaveras				2	1			1	1				5
Colusa			88	19	18		1,000		30				1,155
El Dorado			5	10	7				1		8		31
Fresno			14	32	18				1	1	10		76
Glenn		49			59			2	36		6		152
Humboldt			77	16	96			2	84		47		322
Imperial				65	1								66
Inyo	1	176		23	19								219
Kern	2		197	186	121				25		43		574
Lake	2		5	30	21	12			10				80
Lassen	1		24	54	1	6	110			3			199
Los Angeles	4		37	82	66			10	7		6		212
Madera				55					9		1		65
Marin								21	30	1	10		62
Mariposa					1								1
Mendocino			24	8	41			2	46		7		128
Merced		4		61					3				68
Modoc		7	35	51		2	466		4		5	1	571
Mono		4	15	17	5						8		49
Monterey			47	32	32		5		5	2	40		163
Napa	1		17	23	65			5	15		22		148
Nevada				11	1								12
Orange			5	13	16			8	3		21		66
Placer		30		1			29	2	19		8		95
Plumas					1	105			8				114
Riverside			47	43	109			8	1	2	21		231
Sacramento		36						4	21		2		63
San Benito			16	75	9				4		40		144
San Bernardino	9		57	149	72			9	9		29		334
San Diego			49	28	66			18	1	2	20		184
San Joaquin		14		15	1	1	3	2	17				53
San Luis Obispo				5									5
Santa Barbara			47	163	146			11	13		38		418
Santa Clara						19							19
Santa Cruz		9	45	49	92	29	1,980	6	12	2	16		2,240
Sierra				11									11
Siskiyou		3	37	70		8	5,388	9	22		6		5,543
Solano					1		16	5	1		2	1	26
Sonoma	1		8		4			36	15		251		315
Stanislaus		21				1	22	4	4				52
Sutter		16			1	1	35	3	3				61
Tehama	1	24	12	15	117		6	12	26		18		213
Trinity		1	37	2	63				32	3	8		146
Tulare			53	60	39			1	34		4		191
Ventura			52	56	25				2		2		137
Yolo		22			2	1	2	18	10		6		61
Yuba		9					23						32
Total	22	551	1,080	1,536	1,330	220	9,938	201	648	16	713	2	16,255
% Total Take	>.1	6.6	3.6	9.5	8.3	1.4	61.1	1.2	3.8	.1	4.4	>.1	100.0

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 9,938 muskrats taken during the 1991-92 season represented 61% of the total take. This is a slight increase from 59% that this species represented during the 1990-91 season.

During the 1990-91 season there were 18 licensed fur dealers. Two licensed fur dealers reported on their 1991-92 activities and reported buying furs. They reported buying 1029 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$22,466 (Table 4). This represents handling only 8% of the 12,438 furs reported sold by licensed trappers (Table 2) and a 25% 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 estimated fur value (Table 2) for each species and the value of furs (Total Spent in Table 4) reported bought by the dealers.

Table 4. Furs purchased by dealers, 1991-92.			
Species	Range of Average Prices	No. of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	2.50	4	\$ 10.00
Beaver	8.00	4	\$ 32.00
Bobcat	53.40 - 74.15	235	\$ 16,549.00
Coyote	22.81	9	\$ 205.00
Gray Fox	7.65 - 8.52	409	\$ 3,366.00
Mink	2.00 - 22.16	56	\$ 1,221.00
Muskrat	1.71 - 1.74	491	\$ 850.00
Opossum	NR	0	\$ 0
Raccoon	4.00 - 7.14	33	\$ 233.00
Spotted Skunk	NR	0	\$ 0
Striped Skunk	NR	0	\$ 0
Weasel	NR	0	\$ 0
Total		1,029	\$ 22,466.00

NR = None reported sold