

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
BIRD AND MAMMAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT  
1996-97**

by

William E. Grenfell Jr.

October 1997

**BIRD AND MAMMAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM REPORT, 97-10**

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fish and Game 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 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 1996-97 that fee was:

Adult: \$66.25          Junior: \$22.25          Nonresident: \$333.00

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 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 increased slightly in the 1996-97 season, and the take (compared to last year) increased by 9,125 animals, mainly due to increased harvest of muskrats.

## 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). If the trapper's annual report is not received by July 1, the trapper's license will be revoked. On these reports, the trappers note the number of each species of furbearing 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

Two hundred eighty-two trapping licenses were sold during the 1996-97 trapping season, an increase of 9 percent from the 257 licenses sold in the 1995-96 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	189	152	185
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	52	81	73
Licensees not reporting	72	24	24
Total Licenses Sold	313	257	282

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1996-97 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$ 1 36,830 (Table 2). This is 375 percent higher than the estimated revenue of \$36,507 received in 1 995-96.

The average income per successful trapper increased from \$240 in 1995-96 to \$739 in 1996-97.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1 996-97 season, 18 percent was unsold, compared to 42 percent unsold during the 1995-96 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 1 996-97 fur harvest was \$1 75,61 2 (Table 2), an increase of 274 percent from the \$64,111 of the 1 995-96 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alameda, Kings, Marin, Plumas, San Benito, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Sierra (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals, providing 42 percent of the total value of California's furs. Although 1,066 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1 996-97 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 837. Part of this difference is because some trappers fail to send in their annual reports.

Muskrats were second in value behind bobcats during the 1 996-97 season. Coyote ranked third in estimated fur value. Raccoon estimated fur value ranked fourth for the year.

**TABLE 2**  
**NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE RECEIVED BY SPECIES DURING 1995-96 AND 1996-97**

1996-97						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	17	32	49	6.87	117	337
Beaver	169	357	526	13.31	2,249	7,001
Bobcat	837	147	984	75.24	62,976	74,036
Coyote	534	833	1,367	11.00	5,874	15,037
Gray Fox	568	254	822	9.98	5,669	8,204
Mink	77	42	119	7.63	588	908
Muskrat	17,071	486	17,557	3.15	53,774	55,305
Opossum	25	501	526	1.37	34	721
Raccoon	488	569	1,057	11.20	5,466	1 1,838
Spotted Skunk	3	11	14	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	42	1,071	1,113	2.00	84	2,226
Weasel	1	1	2	NR	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,832</b>	<b>4,304</b>	<b>24,136</b>		<b>\$136,830</b>	<b>\$175,612</b>
1995-96						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	5	18	23	2.15	11	49
Beaver	103	196	299	5.80	597	1,734
Bobcat	548	171	719	33.66	18,446	24,202
Coyote	295	914	1,209	6.13	1,808	7,41 1
Gray Fox	507	344	851	8.01	4,061	6,817
Mink	23	19	42	3.00	69	126
Muskrat	7,145	1,545	8,690	1.50	10,718	13,035
Opossum	26	217	243	1.53	40	372
Raccoon	1 14	898	1,012	6.17	703	6,244
Spotted Skunk	5	28	33	2.59	13	85
Striped Skunk	19	1,858	1,877	2.15	41	4,036
Weasel	0	13	13	NR	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,790</b>	<b>6,221</b>	<b>15,01 1</b>		<b>36,507</b>	<b>64,11 1</b>

NR = None reported sold

TABLE 3  
TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 1996-97

County	BA*	BC*	BE*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Alpine	-	1	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	11
Amador	-	9	1	42	6	-	-	6	18	-	6	-	88
Butte	-	4	94	5	16	10	4,144	4	190	-	5	-	4,472
Calaveras	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	10
Colusa	-	16	43	6	10	-	287	6	37	-	-	-	405
Contra Costa	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	30
Del Norte	-	1	-	-	1	-	182	-	1	-	-	-	185
El Dorado	-	5	-	9	7	1	-	19	5	-	2	-	48
Fresno	-	34	1	47	19	-	-	-	3	3	20	-	127
Glenn	15	4	22	33	34	-	279	3	77	-	8	-	475
Humboldt	-	62	-	36	44	-	-	15	43	-	24	-	224
Imperial	-	-	-	74	-	-	-	-	2	-	7	-	83
Inyo	-	31	103	7	10	7	-	-	2	-	-	-	160
Kern	1	99	3	86	16	-	-	3	13	2	48	-	271
Lake	-	9	-	9	23	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	49
Lassen	1	59	1	77	-	6	1,479	-	1	4	-	1	1,629
Los Angeles	-	46	-	57	27	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	135
Madera	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mariposa	-	1	-	4	33	-	-	3	15	-	6	-	62
Mendocino	-	13	-	7	18	-	-	-	15	1	2	-	56
Merced	-	-	22	5	-	4	81	13	78	-	19	1	223
Modoc	5	97	7	48	-	-	2,219	-	5	3	16	-	2,400
Mono	2	16	-	67	21	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	108
Monterey	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	8
Napa	1	6	-	5	19	-	-	1	13	-	9	-	54
Nevada	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Orange	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	7
Placer	-	-	-	12	9	-	-	244	108	-	510	-	883
Riverside	-	10	-	25	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	40
Sacramento	-	5	22	30	-	13	112	43	33	-	111	-	369
San Bernardino	8	112	-	277	224	-	-	15	11	1	24	-	672
San Diego	-	14	-	13	-	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	34
San Joaquin	-	-	92	17	6	38	247	50	31	-	39	-	520
San Luis Obispo	6	15	-	116	21	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	160
San Mateo	6	1	-	65	20	-	-	20	200	-	123	-	435
Santa Barbara	-	17	-	7	50	-	-	2	-	-	7	-	83
Shasta	-	44	10	18	56	13	3,733	12	19	-	40	-	3,945
Siskiyou	2	110	5	78	9	7	4,454	3	45	-	6	-	4,719
Solano	-	-	2	-	3	2	15	23	1	-	-	-	46
Sonoma	2	22	-	5	11	1	34	18	20	-	24	-	137
Stanislaus	-	-	36	11	8	10	9	-	24	-	3	-	101
Sutter	-	-	21	-	6	5	205	-	4	-	13	-	254
Tehama	-	18	3	18	12	-	-	-	14	-	12	-	77
Trinity	-	29	6	3	45	-	-	-	10	-	12	-	105
Tulare	-	59	-	3	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	70
Tuolumne	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Ventura	-	13	-	32	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57
Yolo	-	-	4	-	-	1	70	-	-	-	-	-	75
Yuba	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	11	-	-	6	-	19
Unknown	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	49	984	526	1,367	822	119	17,557	526	1,057	14	1,113	2	24,136

\* BA = Badger; BC = Bobcat; BE = Beaver; CO = Coyote; GF = Gray Fox; MI = Mink; MR = Muskrat; OP = Opossum; RA = Raccoon; SP = Spotted Skunk; ST = Striped Skunk; WE = Weasel

Licensed trappers who did not send in their annual reports (Table 1) will have their licenses revoked pursuant to Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 17,557 muskrats taken during the 1996-97 season represented 73 percent of the total take.

Nine licensed fur dealers reported on their 1996-97 activities, and two reported buying furs in California. They reported buying 4,965 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$63,375 (Table 4). This represents 25 percent of the 19,832 furs reported sold by licensed trappers (Table 2). Many furs are sold out of state. 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.

Species	Range of Average Prices	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	5.00 - 7.18	7	48.00
Beaver	3.00- 13.50	56	745.00
Bobcat	48.16- 82.00	566	42,588.00
Coyote	11.00- 11.08	234	2,575.00
Gray Fox	9.92 - 10.00	467	4,661.00
Mink	7.63	38	290.00
Muskrat	3.15	3,431	10,808.00
Opossum	1.37	10	14.00
Raccoon	11.20	145	1,624.00
Spotted Skunk	NR	0	0.00
Striped Skunk	2.00	11	22.00
Weasel	NR	0	0.00
Total	-	4,965	63,375.00

NR = None reported purchased