

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
WILDLIFE PROGRAMS BRANCH  
BIRD AND MAMMAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT  
1997-98**

by

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## 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 1997-98 that fee was:

Adult: \$68.50          Junior: \$23.00          Nonresident: \$344.25

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 1997-98 season, and the take (compared to last year) decreased by 4,037 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). 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 ninety-two trapping licenses were sold during the 1997-98 trapping season, an increase of 3.5 percent from the 282 licenses sold in the 1996-97 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	152	185	177
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	81	73	77
Licensees not reporting	24	24	38
Total Licenses Sold	257	282	292

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1997-98 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$64,209.00 (Table 2). This is 113 percent less than the estimated revenue of \$136,830 received in 1996-97.

The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$739 in 1996-97 to \$362 in 1997-98.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1997-98 season, 33 percent was unsold, compared to 18 percent unsold during the 1996-97 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 1997-98 fur harvest was \$103,705 (Table 2), a decrease of 59 percent from the \$175,612 of the 1996-97 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Del Norte, Kings, Marin, San Benito, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Sierra, Solano, and Yolo (Table 3).

Bobcats continued to be the most economically important animals, providing 32 percent of the total value of California's furs. Although 1,165 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1997-98 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 1,059. Part of this difference is because some trappers fail to send in their annual reports.

Muskrats were second in value behind bobcats during the 1997-98 season. Coyote ranked third in estimated fur value. Beaver estimated fur value ranked fourth for the year.

**TABLE 2  
NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE RECEIVED BY  
SPECIES DURING 1996-97 AND 1997-98**

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	11,838
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>
1997-98						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	18	29	47	10.08	181	474
Beaver	185	607	792	13.92	2,575	11,025
Bobcat	837	222	1,059	31.11	26,039	32,945
Coyote	535	592	1,127	10.49	5,612	11,822
Gray Fox	569	698	1,267	7.46	4,245	9,452
Mink	47	29	76	6.15	289	467
Muskrat	10,675	2,695	13,370	1.96	20,923	26,205
Opossum	25	304	329	2.61	65	859
Raccoon	492	491	983	8.51	4,187	8,365
Spotted Skunk	3	95	98	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	42	908	950	2.20	92	2,090
Weasel	1	0	1	NR	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,429</b>	<b>6,670</b>	<b>20,099</b>		<b>64,209</b>	<b>103,705</b>

NR = None reported sold

**TABLE 3  
TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 1997-98**

County	BA*	BC*	BE*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Alameda								1	1				2
Alpine		3		2	1								6
Amador		2											2
Butte		4	117	3	10		1,552	5	96		1		1788
Calaveras		3		3	1				1				8
Colusa		33	20	11	31	1	2,029		55				2,180
Contra Costa			5						4				9
El Dorado		2	7	5	15			25	20		11		85
Fresno		28		42	21				4				95
Glenn	7	6	65	9	17		604		82		11		801
Humboldt		64		39	22			14	25	5	3		172
Imperial				104									104
Inyo	1	25	159	12	11	9			4				221
Kern		89		35	26						10		160
Lake		3		4	8								15
Lassen	1	50	12	30			185		5	3	3		289
Los Angeles	2	104		39	201					1			347
Madera	9	21	14	28	47			12	47	4	32	1	215
Mariposa		6		17	67			2	2	2			96
Mendocino		55		29	112		7	1	55	4	75		338
Merced			3						45	8			56
Modoc	6	118	32	42	3	8	975		11		3		1,198
Mono	3	20	11	52	32		3						121
Monterey	1	11		14	32				3		11		72
Napa		5		21	21			1	1		6		55
Nevada			2	1				2	1		8		14
Orange								12	25		7		44
Placer			16		1			24	11		64		116
Plumas						20							20
Riverside		14		26	49				1	7	4		101
Sacramento			31	16			254	78	39		280		698
San Bernardino		83		117	116				6	11	14		347
San Diego		16		17	33			12	1	6	10		95
San Joaquin			216	30	9	2	25	20	40		31		373
San Luis Obispo	4	10		47	11								72
San Mateo					1			19	147		222		389
Santa Barbara	1	67		49	185			13	3		13		331
Santa Clara	5			25				2	3		2		37
Shasta		13	47	16	34	13	3,470	10	43	5	24		3,675
Siskiyou	5	90	10	110	16	15	3,906	6	53	5	17		4,233
Sonoma		4		2	19	8	101	29	55		26		244
Stanislaus		1	7	6	6		2	10	18		11		61
Sutter			5	3			257	1	14		8		288
Tehama	2	13		51	12			2	4	4	35		123
Trinity		10	13	9	30				16		1		79
Tulare		67		3						6	2		78
Tuolumne					51			17	24	27			119
Ventura		19		53	16						1		89
Yuba				5				11	18		4		38
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1,059</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>13,370</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20,099</b>

\* 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 13,370 muskrats taken during the 1997-98 season represented 67 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 2,959 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$22,955 (Table 4). This represents 22 percent of the 13,429 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.

TABLE 4 FURS PURCHASED BY DEALERS, 1997-98			
Species	Range of Average Prices	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	6.50 - 8.00	6	60.00
Beaver	6.18 - 16.67	130	1,810.00
Bobcat	9.06 - 32.10	318	9,893.00
Coyote	6.59 - 10.75	114	1,196.00
Gray Fox	7.41 - 8.20	598	4,461.00
Mink	6.15	4	25.00
Muskrat	0.85 - 2.37	1,459	2,860.00
Opossum	1.17 - 3.33	15	39.00
Raccoon	6.51 - 8.82	304	2,587.00
Spotted Skunk	NR	0	0.00
Striped Skunk	2.15 - 2.30	11	24.00
Weasel	NR	0	0.00
Total		2,959	22,955.00

NR = None reported purchased