

State of California
The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Programs Branch
Bird and Mammal Conservation Program

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

1999-2000

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 1999-00 that fee was:

Adult: \$71.25

Junior: \$24.00

Nonresident: \$358.00

Over the years, the take and monetary return to trappers for their furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 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 1980s, the number of trapping licenses sold decreased from 3,021 to 834, and the take decreased from 131,491 to 21,046. License sales decreased by 42 percent in the 1998-99 season, and 46 percent in the 1999-00 season. The decrease in license sales is no doubt due to the passage of Proposition 4 on November 3, 1998. Passage of Proposition 4 eliminated the use of any body-gripping traps for commercial purposes.

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

Seventy-nine trapping licenses were sold during the 1999-00 trapping season, a decrease of 46 percent from the 170 licenses sold in the 1998-99 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	177	69	47
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	77	59	32
Licensees not reporting	38	42	0
Total licenses sold	292	170	79

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 1999-00 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$10,031.00 (Table 2). This is 27 percent less than the estimated revenue of \$13,685 received in 1998-99.

The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$242 in 1998-99 to \$213 in 1999-00.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 1999-00 season, 50 percent was unsold, compared to 42 percent unsold during the 1998-99 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 1999-00 fur harvest was \$21,653 (Table 2), a decrease of 37 percent from the \$34,212 of the 1998-99 season.

Furs were reported taken in all counties except Alpine, Del Norte, Fresno, Imperial, Kings, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Nevada, Orange, Plumas, San Benito, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Sierra, Sutter, Tehama, Tuolumne, Ventura, and Yuba (Table 3).

Muskrats were the most economically important animals, providing 47 percent of the total revenue for California's furs. Although 182 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 1999-00 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 178. Part of this difference is because some trappers hold pelts to be sold in the future.

Bobcats were second in revenue behind muskrats during the 1999-00 season. Beavers ranked third in estimated fur revenue. Gray Fox estimated fur revenue ranked fourth for the year.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE
RECEIVED BY SPECIES DURING 1998-99 AND 1999-00

1999-00						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	0	2	2	NR	0	0
Beaver	64	208	272	10.64	681	2,894
Bobcat	120	58	178	32.06	3,847	5,707
Coyote	25	176	201	6.95	174	1,397
Gray Fox	86	174	260	5.63	484	1,464
Mink	1	3	4	5.00	5	20
Muskrat	2,815	5	2,820	1.67	4,701	4,709
Opossum	0	333	333	1.15	0	0
Raccoon	34	1211	1245	4.08	139	5,080
Spotted Skunk	10	17	27	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	0	914	914	NR	0	0
Weasel	0	0	1	NR	0	0
Total	3,155	3,101	6,256		10,031	21,653

1998-99						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	0	5	5	11.01	0	55
Beaver	126	187	311	13.06	1,646	4,088
Bobcat	150	40	190	30.55	4,583	5,805
Coyote	14	287	301	10.80	151	3,251
Gray Fox	44	188	232	7.17	315	1,663
Mink	11	2	13	NR	0	0
Muskrat	3,529	3,104	6,633	1.81	6,387	12,006
Opossum	9	283	275	2.39	22	698
Raccoon	62	397	459	9.22	572	4,232
Spotted Skunk	0	11	11	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	4	1,046	996	2.30	9	2,415
Weasel	0	1	1	NR	0	0
Total	3,949	5,551	9,427	—	13,685	34,212

NR = None reported sold in California.

TABLE 3
TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 1999-00

County	BA*	BC*	BE*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Alameda								11	74		23		108
Amador				9									9
Butte			63				774		13				850
Calaveras				1					3				4
Colusa		10			10		1300		5				1325
Contra Costa			4					66	450		137		657
El Dorado		14			24			3	15		29		85
Glenn	2	5		10	3		13						33
Humboldt		13			5				3				21
Inyo		6	120										126
Kern		4			1								5
Lake		1		2									3
Lassen							127						127
Los Angeles		12		10	129				2		1		154
Modoc		24	9	5		1	432			8	5		484
Mono		13		2	3						1		19
Monterey				10									10
Napa								4	31				35
Placer			15	7	8		1	68	17		78		194
Riverside									1				1
Sacramento						1		74	32		103		210
S.Bernardino		6		48	8			20	4	10	2		98
San Diego								1					1
San Francisco								9	109		86		204
San Joaquin			40	16			31	10	32		28		157
San Luis				39									39
San Mateo								36	352		301		689
Santa Clara									8		11		19
Shasta		10	12	12	37	1	47	11	15	9	37		191
Siskiyou		34	9	24			95	1	11				174
Solano								12	25		35		72
Sonoma					4	1		3	9		6		23
Stanislaus				3							7		10
Trinity		10			28								38
Tulare		16		3									19
Yolo								4	34		24		62
Total	2	178	272	201	260	4	2820	333	1245	27	914		6256
Percent	0.0	2.8	4.3	3.2	4.1	0.1	45.1	5.3	19.9	0.4	14.6	0.0	99.8

* BA = Badger; BC = Bobcat; BE = Beaver; CO = Coyote; GF = Gray Fox; MI = Mink; MU = 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. This year, all licensed trappers sent in their annual reports.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 2,820 muskrats taken during the 1999-00 season represented 45 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 1,144 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$5,247 (Table 4). The average prices paid by the reporting dealers are used to calculate the estimated fur revenue and value (Table 2) for each species.

TABLE 4 FURS PURCHASED BY DEALERS, 1999-00			
Species	Range of Average Prices	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	--	No sales	0.00
Beaver	10.39 - 12.93	51	\$543.00
Bobcat	5.82 - 35.00	77	2,469.00
Coyote	6.95	26	181.00
Gray Fox	4.29 - 7.02	81	456.00
Mink	5.00	1	5.00
Muskrat	1.51 - 1.83	875	1,461.00
Opossum	1.15	1	1.00
Raccoon	3.09 - 5.08	32	131.00
Spotted Skunk	—	No Sales	0.00
Striped Skunk	-	No Sales	0.00
Weasel	—	No Sales	0.00
Total	—	1,144	\$5,247.00