

State of California
The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Programs Branch

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2001-2002

by

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October 2002

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 2001-2002 that fee was:

Adult: \$75.25

Junior: \$25.25

Nonresident: \$378.75

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 46 percent in the 1999-00 season, and one percent in 2000-01. 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. A surprising increase in license sales (211) occurred during the 2001-02 trapping year.

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 and eleven trapping licenses were sold during the 2001-2002 trapping season, an increase of 139 percent from the 76 licenses sold in the 2000-01 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	1999-00	2000-2001	2001-2002
Licenses who reported successful trapping effort	47	43	178
Licenses who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	32	24	33
Licenses not reporting	0	9	0
Total licenses sold	79	76	211

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2001-02 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$16,455.00 (Table 2). This is \$194.00 less than the estimated revenue of \$16,649 received in 2000-01.

The average income per successful trapper decreased to \$92 in 2001-02 from \$387 in 2000-01.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2001-02 season, 86 percent was unsold, compared to 43 percent unsold during the 2000-01 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 2001-02 fur harvest was \$41,991 (Table 2), an increase of 3 percent from the \$40,879 in the 2000-01 season.

Compared to the 2000-01 season, the furbearer take decreased by 22 percent. The take of muskrat, raccoon, and striped skunk was substantially less than in 2000-01.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 75 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although 186 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2001-02 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 188. Part of this difference is because some trappers hold pelts to be sold in the future.

Muskrats were second in revenue during the 2001-02 season. Beavers ranked third in estimated fur revenue. Coyote estimated fur revenue ranked fourth for the year.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE RECEIVED
BY SPECIES DURING 2000-01 and 2001-02

2001-02						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	3	2	5	NR	0	0
Beaver	66	118	184	\$13.12	\$866	\$2,414
Bobcat	188	26	214	66.00	12,408	14,124
Coyote	72	218	290	10.83	780	3,141
Gray Fox	67	136	203	7.74	519	1,571
Mink	0	1	1	NR	0	0
Muskrat	662	5112	5774	2.56	1,695	14,781
Opossum	3	211	214	1.00	3	214
Raccoon	27	512	539	5.66	153	3,051
Spotted Skunk	0	18	18	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	8	659	667	4.04	32	2,695
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Total	1,096	7,013	8,109		16,455	41,991
2000-01						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	0	18	18	NR	0	\$55
Beaver	55	117	172	\$11.51	\$633	1,980
Bobcat	177	43	220	38.47	6,809	8,463
Coyote	43	253	296	9.29	399	2,750
Gray Fox	78	100	178	7.44	580	1,324
Mink	0	2	2	4.40	0	9
Muskrat	4,051	3,139	7,190	1.89	7,656	13,589
Opossum	3	335	338	1.50	5	507
Raccoon	68	773	841	8.11	551	6,821
Spotted Skunk	0	25	25	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	3	1,080	1,083	5.02	15	5,437
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Total	4,478	5,885	10,363	—	16,649	40,879

NR = None reported sold in California.

TABLE 3 TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 2001-2002													
County	BA*	BC*	BE*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Amador		10			3								13
Butte			104				1002		11				1117
Calaveras		1			1				4				6
Colusa		3	2		15		759		8				787
Contra Costa			3	1				22	198		107		331
El Dorado								8	15		20		43
Fresno		7		8	4				1	1	1		22
Glenn	0	4	7	5			80		1		3		100
Humboldt		1			4			1	9				15
Inyo		3	6		3								12
Kern		10		5									15
Lake					10								10
Lassen		4		4			68				2		78
Los Angeles		2		3	76								81
Mariposa					11				3		3		17
Mendocino		5			24								29
Modoc	5	89	5	18			150		1	11	34		313
Mono		3	10	33	5				5				56
Napa								46	8		32		86
Placer							18	29	21		36		104
Sacramento			11					31	57		123		222
S. Bernardino		27		159	8								194
San Joaquin			14	8				19	21		40		102
San Luis				6									6
San Mateo								9	115		200		324
Santa Cruz									1				1
Shasta		17	5		12		1602		2		4		1642
Siskiyou		16		36		1	2089		19				2161
Solano								28	26		41		95
Sonoma				2	4			6	10		2		24
Stanislaus			3					9	3		7		22
Tehama		7			9								16
Trinity		5	14		12		6			6	12		55
Tulare					1								1
Toulumne					1								1
Yolo								4					4
Yuba				2				2					4
Total	5	214	184	290	203	1	5774	214	539	18	667	0	8,109
Percent	0.0	2.6	2.3	3.6	2.5	0.0	71.2	2.6	6.6	0.0	8.2	0.0	99.6

* 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 5774 muskrats taken during the 2001-2002 season represented 71 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 1,104 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$6,581 (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, 2001-2002			
Species	Range of Average Prices	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	--	None	0.00
Beaver	9.67 - 11.09	35	\$459.00
Bobcat	66.00	44	2,904.00
Coyote	10.83	22	238.00
Gray Fox	774	45	348.00
Mink	--	None	0.00
Muskrat	2.56	897	2,296.00
Opossum	1.00	1	1.00
Raccoon	3.83 - 6.26	57	323.00
Spotted Skunk	—	None	0.00
Striped Skunk	4.04	3	12.00
Weasel	—	None	0.00
Total	—	1104	\$6,581.00

Even though more trapping licences were sold in 2001-2002, less animals were taken. Bobcat pelt prices increased from \$38.00 last year to \$68.00 this year.