

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

**LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT**

**2002-2003**

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 2002-2003 that fee was:

Adult: \$77.75

Junior: \$26.00

Nonresident: \$391.50

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. A surprising increase in license sales (211) occurred during the 2001-02 trapping year. The downward trend resumed the following year with only 133 trapping licenses sold in 2002-2003.

## 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 suspended. 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

One hundred and thirty- three trapping licenses were sold during the 2002-03 trapping season, a decrease of 37 percent from the 211 licenses sold in the 2001-02 season (Table 1).

| TABLE 1<br>NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST |           |           |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Reports                                                                    | 2000-2001 | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 |
| Licensees who reported successful trapping effort                          | 43        | 178       | 79        |
| Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful               | 24        | 33        | 54        |
| Licensees not reporting                                                    | 9         | 0         | 0         |
| Total licenses sold                                                        | 76        | 211       | 133       |

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2002-03 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$64,378.00 (Table 2). This is \$47,923.00 more than the estimated revenue of \$16,455 received in 2001-02.

The average income per successful trapper increased to \$815 in 2002-03 from \$92 in 2001-02.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2002-03 season, 54 percent was unsold, compared to 86 percent unsold during the 2001-02 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 2002-03 fur harvest was \$82,625 (Table 2), an increase of 97 percent from the \$41,991 in the 2001-02 season.

Compared to the 2001-02 season, the furbearer take decreased by 3 percent. The take of bobcat, coyote, opossum, raccoon, and spotted skunk was substantially more than in 2001-02.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 98 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although 381 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2002-03 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 337. Part of this difference is because some trappers hold pelts to be sold in the future.

Gray fox were second in revenue during the 2002-03 season. Beavers ranked third in estimated fur revenue. Raccoon estimated fur revenue ranked fourth for the year.

| TABLE 2<br>NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE<br>RECEIVED BY SPECIES DURING 2001-02 and 2002-03 |         |        |       |                 |                      |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2001-02                                                                                                               |         |        |       |                 |                      |                        |
| Species                                                                                                               | Harvest |        |       | Pelt<br>Average | Estimated<br>Revenue | Estimated<br>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               |
| 2002-03                                                                                                               |         |        |       |                 |                      |                        |
| Species                                                                                                               | Harvest |        |       | Pelt<br>Average | Estimated<br>Revenue | Estimated<br>Fur Value |
|                                                                                                                       | Sold    | Unsold | Total |                 |                      |                        |
| Badger                                                                                                                | 2       | 0      | 2     | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Beaver                                                                                                                | 60      | 38     | 98    | 9.38            | \$563                | \$919                  |
| Bobcat                                                                                                                | 337     | 57     | 394   | 186.27          | 62,773               | 73,390                 |
| Coyote                                                                                                                | 60      | 336    | 396   | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Gray Fox                                                                                                              | 79      | 187    | 266   | 9.81            | 775                  | 2,609                  |
| Mink                                                                                                                  | 7       | 0      | 7     | 5.00            | 35                   | 35                     |
| Muskrat                                                                                                               | 3,367   | 2,052  | 5,419 | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Opossum                                                                                                               | 7       | 404    | 411   | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Raccoon                                                                                                               | 29      | 680    | 709   | 8.00            | 232                  | 5,672                  |
| Spotted Skunk                                                                                                         | 0       | 64     | 64    | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Striped Skunk                                                                                                         | 3       | 732    | 735   | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Weasel                                                                                                                | 0       | 0      | 0     | NR              | 0                    | 0                      |
| Total                                                                                                                 | 3,951   | 4,550  | 8,501 | -               | \$64,378             | \$82,625               |

NR = None reported sold in California.

| TABLE 3<br>TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 2002-2003 |         |     |     |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |     |     |       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| County                                       | BA<br>* | BE* | BC* | CO* | GF* | MI* | MU*   | OP* | RA* | SP* | ST* | WE* | Total |
| Amador                                       |         |     |     | 1   | 6   |     |       |     | 1   |     |     |     | 8     |
| Butte                                        |         | 52  |     |     |     |     | 632   |     | 4   |     |     |     | 688   |
| Calaveras                                    |         |     |     | 1   |     |     |       |     | 2   |     |     |     | 3     |
| Colusa                                       |         |     | 2   |     | 12  |     | 958   |     | 6   |     |     |     | 978   |
| Contra Costa                                 |         | 4   |     |     |     |     |       | 25  | 120 |     | 73  |     | 222   |
| El Dorado                                    |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 65  | 41  |     | 48  |     | 154   |
| Glenn                                        |         |     | 3   | 10  |     |     |       |     | 5   |     | 8   |     | 26    |
| Humboldt                                     |         |     |     |     | 9   |     |       | 1   | 7   |     |     |     | 17    |
| Inyo                                         |         |     | 4   |     | 5   | 1   |       |     |     |     |     |     | 10    |
| Kern                                         |         |     | 4   | 7   |     |     |       |     |     |     |     |     | 11    |
| Lassen                                       |         |     | 50  | 5   | 1   |     | 35    |     | 1   |     |     |     | 92    |
| Los Angeles                                  |         |     | 18  | 6   | 128 |     |       | 10  | 7   |     | 8   |     | 177   |
| Marin                                        |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 13  | 8   |     | 24  |     | 45    |
| Mendocino                                    |         |     | 8   |     | 4   |     |       |     |     | 1   |     |     | 13    |
| Modoc                                        | 2       |     | 119 | 3   |     |     |       |     | 2   | 17  | 29  |     | 172   |
| Napa                                         |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 31  | 12  |     | 26  |     | 69    |
| Nevada                                       |         |     |     |     | 1   |     |       |     | 1   |     |     |     | 2     |
| Orange                                       |         |     |     | 1   |     |     |       | 3   | 9   |     | 2   |     | 15    |
| Placer                                       |         | 3   |     | 3   | 4   |     | 37    | 51  | 43  |     | 64  |     | 205   |
| Riverside                                    |         |     |     | 6   |     |     |       |     |     |     | 2   |     | 8     |
| Sacramento                                   |         |     |     | 7   |     |     |       | 82  | 115 |     | 192 |     | 396   |
| San Bernardino                               |         |     | 61  | 200 | 25  |     |       |     |     |     | 8   |     | 294   |
| San Diego                                    |         |     | 8   | 20  |     |     |       | 8   | 7   |     |     |     | 43    |
| San Francisco                                |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 1   | 29  |     | 21  |     | 51    |
| San Joaquin                                  |         | 10  |     | 7   | 9   |     | 2     | 31  | 68  |     | 28  |     | 155   |
| San Luis Obispo                              |         |     |     | 29  |     |     |       |     |     |     |     |     | 29    |
| San Mateo                                    |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 3   | 84  |     | 77  |     | 164   |
| Santa Barbara                                |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 8   | 9   |     | 9   |     | 26    |
| Santa Clara                                  |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 3   | 23  |     | 15  |     | 41    |
| Shasta                                       |         | 29  | 14  | 6   | 35  | 6   | 1,625 |     | 19  |     |     |     | 1,735 |
| Siskiyou                                     |         |     | 63  | 75  | 1   |     | 2,130 | 7   | 24  |     | 7   |     | 2,307 |
| Solano                                       |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 57  | 58  | 38  | 41  |     | 194   |
| Sonoma                                       |         |     | 2   | 6   |     |     |       | 3   |     | 8   |     |     | 19    |
| Stanislaus                                   |         |     |     | 2   |     |     |       | 6   | 4   |     | 24  |     | 36    |
| Tehama                                       |         |     |     |     | 11  |     |       |     |     |     |     |     | 11    |
| Trinity                                      |         |     | 1   | 1   | 15  |     |       |     |     |     | 1   |     | 18    |
| Tulare                                       |         |     | 37  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |     |     | 37    |
| Yolo                                         |         |     |     |     |     |     |       | 3   |     |     | 27  |     | 30    |
| Total                                        | 2       | 98  | 394 | 396 | 266 | 7   | 5,419 | 411 | 709 | 64  | 735 | 0   | 8,501 |
| Percent                                      | 0.0     | 1.2 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 3.1 | 0.1 | 63.7  | 4.8 | 8.3 | 0.8 | 8.6 | 0.0 |       |

\* 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 by July 1 immediately following (Table 1), will have their licenses suspended pursuant to Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations. This year, six licensed trappers sent in their annual reports late which caused immediate suspension of their trapping licenses.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 5,419 muskrats taken during the 2002-2003 season represented 64 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 103 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$7,517 (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<br>FURS PURCHASED BY DEALERS, 2002-2003 |                         |                          |             |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Species                                         | Range of Average Prices | Number of Furs Purchased | Total Spent |
| Badger                                          | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Beaver                                          | 9.38                    | 32                       | \$300.00    |
| Bobcat                                          | 186.27                  | 37                       | 6,892.00    |
| Coyote                                          | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Gray Fox                                        | 9.81                    | 31                       | 304.00      |
| Mink                                            | 5.00                    | 1                        | 5.00        |
| Muskrat                                         | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Opossum                                         | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Raccoon                                         | 8.00                    | 2                        | 16.00       |
| Spotted Skunk                                   | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Striped Skunk                                   | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Weasel                                          | --                      | None                     | 0.00        |
| Total                                           | --                      | 103                      | \$7,517.00  |

Fewer trapping licenses were sold and less animals were taken in 2002-03. Bobcat pelt prices increased from \$66.00 last year to \$186.27 this year.