

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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2003-2004

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 non-game 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 2003-2004 that fee was:

Adult: \$78.50 Junior: \$26.25 Nonresident: \$394.75

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 42 percent in the 1998-99 season, 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. License sales increased to 211 during the 2001 -02 trapping year. Sales dropped to 133 in 2002-03, but increased 44 percent to 191 in 2003-04.

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 non-game 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 ninety one trapping licenses were sold during the 2003-04 trapping season, an increase of 44 percent from the 133 licenses sold in the 2002-03 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	178	79	102
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	33	54	52
Licensees not reporting	0	0	37
Total licenses sold	211	133	191

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2003-04 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$63,612 (Table 2). This is \$766.00 less than the estimated revenue of \$64,378 received in 2002-03. The average income per successful trapper decreased to \$624 in 2003-04 from \$815 in 2002-03.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2003-04 season, 62 percent was unsold, compared to 54 percent unsold during the 2002-03 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 2003-04 fur harvest was \$87,537 (Table 2), an increase of 6 percent from the \$82,625 in the 2002-03 season. In comparison to the 2002-03 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing mammals increased by 5 percent. Take of all fur-bearing species excluding muskrat and spotted skunk, increased dramatically during the 2003-04 season. The 2003-04 take of muskrat and spotted skunk was substantially less than in 2002-03.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 96 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although 395 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2003-04 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 409. Part of this difference is because some trappers hold pelts to be sold in the future. Gray fox pelts were second in revenue during the

2003-04 season. Coyote pelts ranked third in estimated fur revenue. Beaver pelts estimated fur revenue ranked fourth for the 2003-04 trapping year.

TABLE 2						
NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE RECEIVED BY SPECIES DURING 2002-03 and 2003-04						
2002-2003						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated 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	3367	2052	5419	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
2003-2004						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	0	1	1	NR	0	0
Beaver	55	220	275	9.07	499	1,995
Bobcat	409	20	429	148.75	60,839	63,814
Coyote	54	582	636	14.86	802	9,451
Gray Fox	60	266	326	16.58	995	5,405
Mink	4	7	11	5	20	55
Muskrat	2,696	173	2,869	NR	0	0
Opossum	7	1,980	1,987	NR	0	0
Raccoon	85	1267	1352	5.38	457	6,816
Spotted Skunk	0	4	4	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	20	1,008	1,028	NR	0	0
Weasel	0	1	1	NR	0	0
Total	3,390	5,529	8,919	-	\$63,612	\$87,537

TABLE 3
TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 2003 - 2004

County	BA*	BE*	BC*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Alameda					3			16	55		26		100
Amador			27						1				28
Butte		112					580		34				726
Calaveras				2					2				4
Colusa			4	5			1001						1010
Contra Costa		11						95	416		157	1	680
El Dorado				3	4			25	31		43		106
Fresno								10	4		2		16
Humboldt					2				11				13
Imperial			5										5
Inyo		101											101
Kern			10	2									12
Kings			12										12
Lake					2		1				4		7
Lassen			2	10	3		224						239
Los Angeles			12	24	82			22	39		19		198
Madera			17					6			2		25
Marin								52	21		36		109
Mendocino					21								21
Merced			4										4
Modoc				18					1	3	20		42
Mono			173										173
Monterey				27	5			6	12		2		52
Napa								22	44		18		84
Nevada		25		2	19	3	2	19	77		80		227
Orange				12				30	49		37		128
Placer		1			2		26	31	19		41		120
Riverside				268	82			1429	82	1	91		1953
Sacramento		7	8	11	5	1		42	64		136		274
San Benito					10								10
San Bernardino	1			194				5	2		5		207
San Diego			39	4	34								77
San Mateo								16	125		92		233
Santa Barbara								57	63		61		181
Santa Clara								23	68		59		150
Shasta		5		5	9	2	1001		14				1036
Sierra			21										21
Siskiyou		3		49	2	4	34	3	42		2		139
Solano			48			1		55	60		65		229
Stanislaus		10	1					13	6		21		51
Trinity					41				5		6		52
Tulare			12										12
Tuolumne			34										34
Yolo								10	5		3		18
Total	1	275	429	636	326	11	2869	1987	1352	4	1028	1	8919
Percent	0	3.1	4.8	7.1	3.7	0	32.2	22.3	15.2	0	11.5	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 do not send in their annual reports by July 1 (Table 1) will have their licenses suspended pursuant to Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations. This year, 37 licensed trappers failed to send in their annual reports by the required due date.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 2869 muskrats taken during the 2003-2004 season represented 32 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 155 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$10,083.99 (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.

Species	Average Price of Furs	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	-	-	0.00
Beaver	9.07	46	417.22
Bobcat	148.75	61	9,073.75
Coyote	14.86	7	104.02
Gray Fox	16.58	24	397.92
Mink	5.00	1	5.00
Muskrat	-	-	0.00
Opossum	-	-	0.00
Raccoon	5.38	16	86.08
Spotted Skunk	-	-	0.00
Striped Skunk	-	-	0.00
Weasel	-	-	0.00
Total	-	155	\$10,083.99

More trapping licenses were sold and more animals were taken in 2003-04. Bobcat pelt prices decreased from \$186.27 last year to \$148.75 this year.