

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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2005-2006

by

Jesse R Garcia

September 2006

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 2005-2006 that fee was:

Adult: \$82.50

Junior: \$27.75

Nonresident: \$414.25

Over the years, the take and monetary return to trappers for their furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 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. License sales for the 2004-2005 year increased 10 percent to 211. During the 2005-06 season, license sales dipped 4 percent to 202.

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

Two hundred and two trapping licenses were sold during the 2005-06 trapping season, a decrease of 4 percent from the 212 licenses sold in the 2004-05 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1			
NUMBERS OF TRAPPERS BUYING LICENSES AND REPORTING THEIR HARVEST			
Reports	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	102	91	105
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	52	43	26
Licensees not reporting	37	54	71
Total licenses sold	191	211	202

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2005-06 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$113,836 (Table 2). This is \$40,876 more than the estimated revenue of \$72,960 received in 2004-05. The average income per successful trapper increased to \$1084 in 2005-06 from \$802 in 2004-05.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2005-06 season, 29 percent was unsold, compared to 52 percent unsold during the 2004-05 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 2005-06 fur harvest was \$124,932 (Table 2), an increase of 54 percent from the \$80,960 in the 2004-05 season. In comparison to the 2004-05 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing mammals decreased by 31 percent. Take of beaver, coyote, opossum, raccoon, and striped skunk decreased significantly during the 2005-06 season.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 99 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although 723 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2005-06 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 580. Part of this difference is because some trappers hold pelts to be sold in the future.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF ANIMALS TAKEN, AVERAGE PRICE PAID, AND REVENUE RECEIVED BY
SPECIES DURING 2004-05 and 2005-06

2004-05						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	4	4	8	NR	0	0
Beaver	37	131	168	NR	0	0
Bobcat	456	50	506	160.00	72,960	80,960
Coyote	115	328	443	NR	0	0
Gray Fox	122	120	242	NR	0	0
Mink	1	5	6	NR	0	0
Muskrat	2,083	76	2,159	NR	0	0
Opossum	2	341	343	NR	0	0
Raccoon	47	982	1,029	NR	0	0
Spotted Skunk	1	0	1	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	13	1,079	1,092	NR	0	0
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Total	2,881	3,116	5,997	-	72,960	80,960
2005-06						
Species	Harvest			Pelt Average	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Fur Value
	Sold	Unsold	Total			
Badger	0	7	7	NR	0	0
Beaver	16	46	62	NR	0	0
Bobcat	580	47	627	194.50	112,810	121,951
Coyote	44	89	133	NR	0	0
Gray Fox	95	181	276	10.80	1,026	2,981
Mink	5	14	19	NR	0	0
Muskrat	2,118	390	2,508	NR	0	0
Opossum	42	66	108	NR	0	0
Raccoon	18	191	209	NR	0	0
Spotted Skunk	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	0	160	160	NR	0	0
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Total	2,918	1,191	4,109	-	113,836	124,932

**TABLE 3
TRAPPING TAKE BY COUNTY 2005 - 2006**

County	BA*	BE*	BC*	CO*	GF*	MI*	MU*	OP*	RA*	SP*	ST*	WE*	Total
Butte		41					743		10				794
Calaveras				1					1				2
Colusa		2					9		4				15
El Dorado	3												3
Fresno			5								5		10
Glenn			2	7									9
Inyo		6	26		5								37
Kern			28										28
Lake					2								2
Lassen			16	34	13				1				64
Los Angeles			33		103			1	2		15		154
Madera			4										4
Marin								12	30		46		88
Mendocino					4	13			4				21
Modoc	4	1	169	34	1	1	300		4		45		559
Mono			3										3
Monterey				17									17
Napa								51	76		31		158
Nevada					2			2	4		5		13
Sacramento		8											8
San Bernardino			199	4	17								220
San Luis Obispo					41								41
Santa Barbara			8	19	7				1				35
Shasta			7		11	5	1286		2		13		1324
Siskiyou			88	15	17		156						276
Solano		4					14	42	63				123
Tehama			39		43								82
Trinity					10								10
Tulare				2					2				4
Yuba									5				5
Total	7	62	627	133	276	19	2508	108	209	0	160	0	4109
Percent	.1	1	15	3	7	.4	61	3	5	0	3	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, three 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 2,508 muskrats taken during the 2005-2006 season represented 61 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 19 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$2,042.20 (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, 2005-2006			
Species	Average Price of Furs	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	-	-	0.00
Beaver	-	-	0.00
Bobcat	194.50	10	1,945.00
Coyote	-	-	0.00
Gray Fox	10.80	9	97.20
Mink	-	-	0.00
Muskrat	-	-	0.00
Opossum	-	-	0.00
Raccoon	-	-	0.00
Spotted Skunk	-	-	0.00
Striped Skunk	-	-	0.00
Weasel	-	-	0.00
Total	-	19	\$2042.20

Fewer trapping licenses were sold for the 2005-06 season, and fewer animals were taken during this period. Bobcat pelt prices increased from \$160.00 last year to \$194.50 this year.