

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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2007-2008

By

Jesse R Garcia

October 2008

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 2007-2008 that fee was:

Resident: \$96.50 Junior: \$32.50 Nonresident: \$483.50

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, 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 2004-05, 05-06, 06-07 license years were 188, 85, and 111 respectively. License sales for 2007-2008 remained essentially unchanged with a slight increase, totaling 117.

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 seventeen trapping licenses were sold during the 2007-08 trapping season, an increase of 5 percent from the 111 licenses sold in the 2006-07 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1				
Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest				
	2004-2005	2005-2006*	2006-2007*	2007-2008*
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	91	53	71	81
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	43	32	33	35
Licensees not reporting	54	0	7	1
Total Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	188	85	111	117

*Beginning in 2005, the trapping license application changed recording method to differentiate between commercial fur/recreational trappers and nuisance/pest control trappers. This accounts for the reduced number of licensees not reporting in 2005 and 2006, as nuisance trappers are not required to submit trapper annual reports.

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2007-08 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$115,458 (Table 2). This is \$22,137 more than the estimated revenue of \$93,321 received in 2006-07. The average income per successful trapper increased from \$840 in 2006-07 to \$986 in 2007-08.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2007-08 season, 28 percent was unsold, compared to 43 percent unsold during the 2006-07 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 2007-08 fur harvest was \$130,774 (Table 2), an increase of 10 percent from the \$118,818 in the 2006-07 season. In comparison to the 2006-07 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing mammals decreased by 37 percent in the 2007-08 season. Take of muskrat increased significantly during the 2007-08 season.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 82 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although only 642 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2007-08 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 704. Part of this difference is due to some trappers holding pelts to sell in the future, when the market is more favorable.

TABLE 2
Number of Animals Taken, Avg Price Paid, & Revenue Received by Species

2006-2007						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	15	9	6	NR	0	0
Beaver	276	154	122	NR	0	0
Bobcat	885	69	807	93	74,934	82,177
Coyote	226	146	79	13	988	2,825
Gray Fox	531	186	336	16	5,426	8,576
Mink	5	3	2	NR	0	0
Muskrat	6,643	2,560	4,083	3	11,351	18,468
Opossum	24	21	3	NR	0	0
Raccoon	588	506	82	7	538	3,857
Spotted Skunk	22	22	0	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	486	472	14	6	84	2,916
Weasel	8	7	0	NR	0	0
Total	9,709	4,155	5,534	-	93,321	118,818
2007-2008						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	9	1	8	NR	0	0
Beaver	136	64	72	NR	0	0
Bobcat	715	11	704	135	94,737	96,218
Coyote	204	151	53	18	928	3,570
Gray Fox	588	225	363	34	12,233	19,816
Mink	55	3	52	12	624	660
Muskrat	4,097	1,021	3,076	2	6,398	8,522
Opossum	24	19	5	1	6	30
Raccoon	210	153	57	9	532	1,959
Spotted Skunk	22	22	0	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	65	58	7	NR	0	0
Weasel	9	1	8	NR	0	0
Total	6,134	1,729	4,405	-	115,458	130,774
<i>NR = No Report</i>						

TABLE 3
Trapping Take by County 2007 - 2008

County	BA	BE	BC	CO	GF	MI	MU	OP	RA	SP	ST	WE	Total
Butte		121			1		431		11				564
Calaveras				2									2
Colusa		2	4	5			700		8				719
Contra Costa								1	5				6
El Dorado													0
Fresno				2					1				3
Humboldt			5		27			3			2		37
Imperial			17										17
Inyo			95		14								109
Kern			37	15									52
Lake			16										16
Lassen			8	11								8	27
Los Angeles			27	1	106								134
Madera			30		5								35
Mariposa					15				2		2		19
Mendocino			1		2								3
Modoc	8		114	3	1		776			1	20		923
Mono			25	4	8								37
Monterey				16									16
Sacramento								5	3		1		9
San Bernardino			155	6	56								217
San Joaquin						51	116		13				180
San Luis Obispo				37	16								53
Santa Barbara					27								27
Shasta		4	9	3	83	2	1031	5	15		7		1159
Siskiyou	1	3	127	70	206	2	1043	2	24	1	5	1	1485
Sonoma			4					5	111		1		121
Tehama				2									2
Trinity		3	4	2	21				2		2		34
Unknown			37	25					2	20	25		109
Yuba		3						3	13				19
Total	9	136	715	204	588	55	4097	24	210	22	65	9	6134
Percent	0%	2%	12%	3%	10%	1%	67%	0%	3%	0%	1%	0%	100%

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, 1 licensed trapper 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 4,097 muskrats taken during the 2007-08 season represented 67 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 254 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$14,874.39 (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 2007-2008			
Species	Avg. Reported \$ Paid per Fur	# of Purchased Furs Reported	Est. Total Spent
Badger	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Beaver	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Bobcat	\$134.57	82	\$11,034.74
Coyote	\$17.50	33	\$577.50
Gray Fox	\$33.70	89	\$2,999.30
Mink	\$12.00	1	\$12.00
Muskrat	\$2.08	24	\$49.92
Opossum	\$1.25	4	\$5.00
Raccoon	\$9.33	21	\$195.93
Spotted Skunk	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Weasel	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Total	-	254	\$14,874.39

The 2007-08 season saw an increase in recreational trapping licenses sold from 2006-07, but a decrease in animals taken. Bobcat pelt prices increased from \$92.86 average pelt price in 2006-07 to \$134.57 average pelt price in 2007-08.