

State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife and Inland Fisheries Division
Wildlife Branch

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2008-2009

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 2008-2009 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.

After legislation was passed in 2002, beginning in 2003, persons who provided trapping services for profit (nuisance/pest control trappers) were also required to obtain a trapping license as has historically been required of commercial fur/recreational trappers. Therefore, the number sold in 2003-04 could be a combination of both groups.

This report only provides trapping data generated by commercial fur/recreational trappers beginning with the 2004-05 license year. 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, but rose 55 percent to 181 sold in the 2008-09 license year.

METHODS

Section 467, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, requires that all licensed commercial fur/recreational 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 mammal taken for commercial or recreational 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 eighty one trapping licenses were sold during the 2008-09 trapping season, an increase of 55 percent from the 117 licenses sold in the 2007-08 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1				
Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest				
	2005-2006*	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	53	71	81	146
Licensees who reported but did not trap or were unsuccessful	32	33	35	28
Licensees not reporting	0	7	1	7
Total Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	85	111	117	181

*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 2008-09 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers, was \$47,407 (Table 2). This is \$68,051 less than the estimated revenue of \$115,458 received in 2007-08. The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$1,425 in 2007-08 to \$325 in 2008-09. Beginning this year, this value is based on numbers of successful trappers. Prior years were based upon total trapping licenses sold.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2008-09 season, 51 percent was unsold, compared to 28 percent unsold during the 2007-08 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 2008-09 fur harvest was \$63,002 (Table 2), a 52 percent decrease from the \$130,774 in the 2007-08 season. In comparison to the 2007-08 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing and nongame mammals increased 32 percent in the 2008-09 season.

Bobcats were the most economically important animals, providing 77 percent of the total revenue for California's furs (Table 2). Although only 623 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2008-09 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of 492. 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, Average Price Paid, & Revenue Received by Species						
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
2008-2009						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	18	17	1	NR	0	0
Beaver	160	111	49	NR	0	0
Bobcat	623	131	492	78	38,376	48,594
Coyote	149	103	46	7	322	1,043
Gray Fox	732	239	493	18	8,628	12,810
Mink	1	0	1	NR	0	0
Muskrat	5,465	2,723	2,742	NR	0	0
Opossum	88	79	9	NR	0	0
Raccoon	555	474	81	1	81	555
Spotted Skunk	4	3	1	NR	0	0
Striped Skunk	276	248	28	NR	0	0
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	0	0
Total	8,071	4,128	3,943	-	47,407	63,002
<i>NR = No Report</i>						

TABLE 3
Trapping Take by County 2008 - 2009

County	BA	BE	BC	CO	GF	MI	MU	OP	RA	SP	ST	WE	Total
Alameda									186		70		256
Butte	3	84					214	1	23				325
Calaveras				1					1				2
Colusa		4	18	1	13	1	1,143		22				1,202
Contra Costa		46						40	213		96		395
El Dorado													0
Glenn	4		32	9	155								200
Humboldt				5	37				1		12		55
Imperial			8										8
Inyo		2	93		29								124
Kern			98	15	3								116
Lake			13		13								26
Lassen			19	12	2								33
Los Angeles			21		82				1		1		105
Mariposa			9	18	20				8		3		58
Mendocino			4		19				12				35
Modoc	2		85	10	1		2,617		1		41		2,757
Mono			27	8	5				1				41
Monterey				14							1		15
Napa			2		2								4
Orange			1		9								10
Placer		3						8	6				17
Plumas			13										13
Riverside			2		14								16
Sacramento									4				4
San Benito			19						2				21
San Bernardino			9	1	1								11
San Luis Obispo			15	1	4				1				21
Shasta			10		38		851	8	5		7		919
Siskiyou			63	49	232		640	20	36	4	30		1,074
Solano		21		1					14				36
Sonoma			3	1	4			3	4		5		20
Stanislaus								3	13				16
Tehama			13		22			5			4		44
Trinity			6	1	25				1		6		39
Tulare			36										36
Unknown													0
Ventura			4	2	2								8
Yuba	9												9
Total	18	160	623	149	732	1	5,465	88	555	4	276	0	8,071
Percent	0%	2%	8%	2%	9%	0%	68%	1%	7%	0%	3%	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, 7 licensed trappers failed to send in his annual report by the required due date.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 5,465 muskrats taken during the 2008-09 season represented 68 percent of the total take.

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 4,037 pelts in California, amounting to a total purchase of \$52,578.50 (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 2008-2009			
Species	Avg. Reported \$ Paid per Fur	# of Purchased Furs Reported	Est. Total Spent
Badger	\$0.00	1	\$0.00
Beaver	\$0.00	49	\$0.00
Bobcat	\$78.00	545	\$42,510.00
Coyote	\$7.00	45	\$315.00
Gray Fox	\$17.50	553	\$9,677.50
Mink	\$0.00	1	\$0.00
Muskrat	\$0.00	2,742	\$0.00
Opossum	\$0.00	1	\$0.00
Raccoon	\$1.00	76	\$76.00
Spotted Skunk	\$0.00	1	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	\$0.00	23	\$0.00
Weasel	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
Total	-	4,037	\$52,578.50

The 2008-09 season saw an increase in the number of both commercial fur/recreational trapping licenses sold and animals taken from 2007-08. Bobcat pelt prices decreased from \$135.00 average pelt price in 2007-08 to \$78 average pelt price in 2008-09.