

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

LICENSED FUR TRAPPERS' AND DEALERS' REPORT

2013-14

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fish and Wildlife 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 2013-2014 that fee was:

Resident: \$1111.00 Junior: \$37.25 Nonresident: \$556.00

Over the years, the take and monetary return to trappers for their furs has varied greatly. The number of licenses sold increased during the 1920's 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. These decreases in license sales were 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.

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. Beginning with the 2004-05 license year, this report only provides trapping data generated by commercial fur/recreational trappers.

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). Beginning this year, trappers can now report their take electronically, utilizing CDFW's Automated License Data System (ALDS) accessible online at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/harvestreporting/>.

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

fur-bearing 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. Beginning this year, trappers may also note their “catch-per-unit-effort”, for taking individual fur-bearing and non-game species. The catch per unit effort (CPUE) for a target species, is equal to the number of individuals captured, divided by the total number of “trap-nights” (trap nights = number of traps set * number of nights traps were set).

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

A total of 267 trapping licenses were sold during the 2013-14 trapping season, an increase of twenty four percent from the 216 licenses sold in the 2012-13 season (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Numbers of Fur Trappers Buying Licenses and Reporting Their Harvest				
	2010- 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014
Licensees who reported successful trapping effort	90	128	118	149
Licensees who reported, but did not trap or were unsuccessful	63	72	64	113
Licensees not reporting	38	19	37	5
Total Recreational Trapping Licenses sold	152	200	216	267

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, 5 licensed trappers failed to send in his annual report by the required due date.

Estimated revenue received by trappers from the sale of furs during the 2013-14 season, based on average prices paid by fur buyers was \$437,587 (Table 2). This is \$131,439 less than the estimated revenue of \$569,026 received during 2011-2012 (the most recent season for which data are available). The average income per successful trapper decreased from \$4,446 in 2011-12 to \$2,937 in 2013-14. The average income per successful trapper (beginning in 2009-10) is based on numbers of trappers who indicated that they were successful during the current season. Average income in prior years was based upon total trapping licenses sold.

Each year a portion of the fur harvest is reported as unsold. During the 2013-14 season, 15 percent was unsold, compared to 2 percent unsold during the 2012-13 season. Unsold pelts still have value and, for the purpose of this report, are considered to have the same monetary value as marketed pelts. In comparison to the 2012-13 trapping season, the harvest of fur-bearing and nongame mammals decreased 6 percent in the 2013-14 season.

Although 1289 export tags were sold for bobcats taken during the 2013-14 season, in a program requiring tags for the sale or shipment of bobcat furs, holders of trapping licenses reported the sale of only 1258. Part of this difference is due to some trappers holding pelts to sell in the future, when the market is more favorable.

Once again, more muskrats were taken than any other species (Table 3). The 5,593 muskrats taken during the 2013-14 season represented 62 percent of the total take.

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

2012-2013						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	8	4	4	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	122	72	50	NR	NR	NR
Bobcat	1,214	-1	1,215	NR	NR	NR
Coyote	280	69	211	NR	NR	NR
Gray Fox	982	107	875	NR	NR	NR
Mink	11	5	6	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	5,745	-1,058	6,083	NR	NR	NR
Opossum	164	148	16	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	612	533	79	NR	NR	NR
Spotted Skunk	5	0	5	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	426	357	69	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	1	0	1	NR	NR	NR
Other	3	1	2	NR	NR	NR
Total	9,573	237	8,616		NR	NR
2013-2014						
Species	Harvest			Average Pelt \$	Estimated Revenue (sold)	Estimated Fur Value (taken)
	Total	Unsold	Sold			
Badger	7	5	2	NR	NR	NR
Beaver	60	5	55	NR	NR	NR
Bobcat	1,292	34	1,258	\$278.98	\$350,956.84	\$360,442.16
Coyote	169	64	105	\$10.29	\$1,080.45	\$1,739.01
Gray Fox	1,338	250	1,088	\$28.00	\$30,464.00	\$37,464.00
Mink	15	-9	24	NR	NR	NR
Muskrat	5,593	526	5,067	\$10.81	\$54,774.27	\$60,460.33
Opossum	60	58	2	NR	NR	NR
Raccoon	246	157	89	\$3.50	\$311.50	\$861.00
Spotted Skunk	59	59	0	NR	NR	NR
Striped Skunk	176	176	0	NR	NR	NR
Weasel	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR
Total	9,015	1,325	7,690		\$437,587.06	\$460,966.50
NR = No Report						

**TABLE 3
Trapping Take by County 2013-2014**

County	BA	BE	BC	CO	GF	MI	MU	OP	OT	RA	SP	ST	Total
Butte		29			11		682			3		5	730
Colusa		2	5	5	8	1	638	1				3	663
Contra Costa								1		3		3	7
El Dorado			1								4	4	9
Fresno					1			21		3		3	28
Glenn			14		80		304			1		2	401
Humboldt			1	10								15	26
Inyo	1		162	2	51					4		2	222
Kern			246		137					10			393
Lake			14	2	116					29			161
Lassen			64	22	16								102
Los Angeles			44	2	260			1					307
Madera			15										15
Mariposa			15	5	6					6			32
Mendocino					2							1	3
Merced										2			2
Modoc			93	25	32		1271			2		39	1462
Mono	1	2	67	5	18					9			102
Nevada			3										3
Placer			1		11					22		6	40
Plumas		2	8		16		5						31
Riverside			39		31								70
Sacramento				1	1			12		18	47	16	95
San Benito	1		140	11	95		3			16		5	271
San Bernardino	2		99		34								135
San Diego								1		4			5
San Luis Obispo			32	16									48
Santa Clara	1		2		9							2	14
Santa Cruz					1					16			17
Shasta		12	14		91	5	973			35			1130
Sierra			4										4
Siskiyou	1		155	50	189	2	1009			25		37	1468
Sonoma							2	10		9	1		22
Stanislaus										3			3
Sutter		1				2	706	3		2	7		721
Tehama			10	5	7					4		2	28
Trinity			2		38					3			43
Tulare			23		22								45
Tuolumne			3	4	7			2		2		7	25
Ventura					28								28
Yolo		12	2		1	5		2		9		8	39
Yuba				4						5			9
Unknown			14		19			6		1		16	56
Total	7	60	1292	169	1338	15	5593	60	0	246	59	176	9015
Percent	0%	1%	14%	2%	15%	0%	62%	1%	0%	3%	1%	2%	100%

BA = Badger; BC = Bobcat; BE = Beaver; CO = Coyote; GF = Gray Fox; MI = Mink; MU = Muskrat;
OT = Other; OP = Opossum; RA = Raccoon; SP = Spotted Skunk; ST = Striped Skunk; WE = Weasel

While the reporting of CPUE to take individual species is not required by law, 52% of all licensed commercial fur/recreational trappers reported this information during this, the first year of voluntary reporting. Catch per unit effort can be considered an indirect measure of the relative abundance for a given target species. However, CPUE is influenced not only by the intrinsic density of a target species local population, but also by extrinsic factors, including: local variation in landscape characteristics; changes in trapping regulations; and the experience/skill level of individual trappers. Therefore, CPUE should only be considered a coarse measure of differences in relative abundance of a given species and location from one year to the next, or between locations within the same year. Reported capture rates during the 2013-14 season were highest for muskrats (0.1243) and lowest for the long-tailed weasel (0.0, Table 4).

Species	Trappers Reporting	Reporting Trapper Take	Total Trap Nights	Capture Rate (CPUE)
Badger, American	6	7	7719	0.0009
Beaver, American	7	55	1919	0.0287
Bobcat	119	1225	102939	0.0119
Coyote	12	38	11378	0.0033
Fox, Gray	97	1175	80127	0.0147
Mink, American	6	15	10050	0.0015
Muskrat, Common	21	5535	44514	0.1243
Opossum, Virginia	14	60	8836	0.0068
Raccoon	43	185	26919	0.0069
Skunk, Striped	26	176	17398	0.0101
Skunk, Western Spotted	5	59	848	0.0696
Weasel, Long-tailed	1	0	14	0.0000

Licensed fur dealers reported buying 86 pelts in California (Table 5). The average prices paid by the reporting California dealers, in addition to sales reported by trappers (which may be out of state), are used to calculate the estimated fur revenue and value (Table 2) for each species.

TABLE 5 Furs Purchased by Dealers 2013-2014			
Species	Average Fur Price	Number of Furs Purchased	Total Spent
Badger	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Beaver	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Bobcat	\$390.00	86	\$33,540.00
Coyote	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Gray Fox	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Mink	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Muskrat	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Opossum	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Raccoon	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Spotted Skunk	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Striped Skunk	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Weasel	\$0.00	NR	\$0.00
Total	\$0.00	86	\$33,540.00
NR = No Report			

The 2013-14 season saw an increase in the number of commercial fur/recreational trapping licenses sold but a decrease in the number of animals taken from 2012-13.