

RESULTS OF THE 2017-2018 TRAPPING SEASON

Trapping Licenses

Despite the stagnant fur market, the total number of trapping licenses sold increased this year by 10%. Records indicate a total of 2,374 trapping licenses were sold during the 2017-2018 trapping season whereas, a total of 2,133 were sold the previous season.

The resident trappers 15 and older purchased 2,133 licenses. The number of licenses resident trappers 14 and under purchased increased from 64 to 100 and licenses purchased by non-residents increased from 32 to 36. Attached is a copy of trapping license sales from the season 1950-1951 – through the 2017-2018 season.

Fur Harvest

Prices of fur have remained low and the worldwide market has remained depressed; however, sellers saw a higher demand for some species as trends in fashion shifted. Coyote sold well at auctions as trim in the luxury sportswear market, lower grade inexpensive raccoon pelts sold well across Asian markets and demand for beaver remained steady in the felt market. The higher demand for these pelts contributed to increases in harvest of coyotes, beaver, and raccoons while most other species saw decreases in harvest

The total number of pelts sold in the 2017-2018 season was 5,542; this was a decrease of 642 compared to a total pelt harvest of 6,189 in 2016-2017. The total pelt value has also decreased in 2017-2018 and is estimated to have been approximately \$50,394.16 compared to the estimated total value of \$57,919.19 in the 2016-2017 season.

Nutria Harvest

The nutria harvest (170,471) decreased substantially from the previous season total of 216,052. A mail out survey sent to participants suggested that the decrease was due to issues participants had accessing property and the stagnant bounty price which may not be enough of an incentive for some trappers to continue to participate in the Coastwide Nutria Control Program.

In 2017-2018, approximately 4,205 nutria carcasses were removed from the marsh to be utilized for meat and or fur. This is a decrease from the previous season's total of 7,186. However, trappers and fur dealers only reported shipping 235 pelts.

Conservatively, the average nutria price paid by local dealers for green pelts during this past season was \$1.77. This price increased from the previous year (\$1.08). Also, an additional \$5.00 is paid for all nutria taken by registered participants as part of the Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP). The total value of the nutria harvested from the CNCP decreased substantially from \$1,080,260 to \$852,355.

Coastwide Nutria Control Program

There were 263 active participants in the Coastwide Nutria Control program this year. This is an increase from the previous year's total of 228. 103 participants (39%) turned in less than 200 tails. Seventy-five participants (28%) turned in between 200-499 tails. Twenty-three participants (8%) turned in between 500-799 tails, and sixty-two participants (23%) turned in 800 or more tails.

There were twenty-one parishes represented in the program with harvests of nutria ranging from 154 to 40,581. Terrebonne Parish reported the highest number of tails followed by Plaquemines and St. Mary Parishes with 29,474 and 26,869 respectively.

The method of take for nutria was identified as: 27% of the nutria harvested were trapped, 58% of the nutria harvested were shot with a rifle, and 15% of the nutria harvested were shot with a shotgun.

January was the most active month for harvesting nutria (47,951) while November (8,444 tails) was the least active month (see CNCP Report, Coastal Wetlands Protection Planning Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Project LA-03b).

Vegetative Damage Caused by Nutria

In the spring of 2018, a coast wide aerial survey was conducted covering the coastal parishes of Louisiana. The overall number of damage sites due to nutria herbivory had increased and the size of the sites had increased as well.

There were 21 sites included in the 2018 vegetative damage survey. Of the 21 sites, twelve were previously identified as damaged sites. Nine new sites were identified while four sites had grown so large that they merged into two sites and two other damage sites were flooded during the survey preventing the assessment of nutria damage. No sites were identified as recovered.

The 2018 vegetative damage survey yielded a total of 4,380 observed acres of damage, (extrapolated to be 16,424 acres coast wide). This is a dramatic increase from the previous season. When compared to 2017 (1,564 acres or 5,866 acres extrapolated coast wide), the present damage represents approximately a 180% increase in the number of damaged acres. The increase in damage could be related to the two years of decreased harvest.

Four parishes were observed to have nutria damage in 2018. Terrebonne and Jefferson respectively are the parishes that were the most impacted by nutria herbivory. Of the 21 sites currently being impacted by nutria herbivory damage, Terrebonne Parish contained the largest number of damaged sites, 17 sites (3,578 ac), followed by St. Charles, St. Mary, and Cameron with 1 site each. (See CNCP Report, CWPPRA Project LA-03b).

Fur Marketing

During this past year the Coastal and Nongame Division staff worked closely with the Louisiana Fur Advisory Council (LFAC) to wrap up the marketing program for fur and with both the LFAC and the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association (LTAHA) to expand trapper education and public outreach programs.

Due to a decrease in the LFAC's budget, the fur marketing program contract was terminated this past fiscal year. Prior to its termination, the marketing program saw a number of successes. Canchilla Furs, the fur marketing contractor, arranged for 9,970 nutria to be sold and shipped to Spain, 2,093 raccoon to China, and a variety of Louisiana furs to Greece. The contractor participated in the Hong Kong International Fur and Fashion Fair, the International Luxury Outerwear Expo in Chicago, USA, and the MiFur Fair in Milan, Italy. He also attended the North American Fur Action in Ontario and met with the International Fur Federation on several occasions regarding the trend to certify fur origins via the FURMARK label.

The Coastal and Nongame Division staff has worked closely with the LTAHA and the LFAC on trapper education this past year. The LFAC provided financing for this project and provided trapping supplies for the workshops. The purpose of the program is to preserve trapping as a management tool, a recreational activity, and an economic benefit to Louisiana citizens and to preserve the culture and heritage of Louisiana. The educational program hosted four hands-on trapper workshops and a three-day hands-on advanced trapper school. The online trapper course, developed with the assistance of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, continued to provide fundamental background and academic knowledge as a prerequisite for the hands-on workshops. The LFAC, LTAHA, and the Coastal and Nongame Division staff continued to work on a fur skinning video with the assistance of the LDWF media department.

The Coastal and Nongame Division staff worked closely with volunteers from both the LFAC and the LTAHA to promote trapping as a management tool through a public outreach program. Staff and volunteers presented at over a dozen events. Other LDWF biologists and educators were provided with furs and background information so that they could likewise talk about the fur industry at public events and schools. The LFAC also partnered with several educational organizations such as the Audubon Zoo and Nature Center and the Wetland Watchers group to carry this message further. These partner groups reached over 65,000 students and residents during the past year.

Education and marketing are valuable tools to enhance the management of Louisiana's fur resources. The fur industry still suffers from public misconceptions, and the Department and Council strive to balance the message through public education. This message of ethical and sustainable use creates an environment where a fur market can be publicly accepted. A strong fur market in turn facilitates a healthy marsh and helps control coastal vegetative damage from nutria. It also promotes economic growth within coastal communities.

Raccoon Harvest

The number of raccoon pelts sold by trappers increased from 1,624 to 2,097 pelts reflecting the increased demand with prices remaining relatively unchanged from last year. The number of raccoons harvested by hunters for sport was approximately 33,300 as reported by hunters during the annual LDWF hunter harvest survey. This is a decrease from the previous year's take of 34,200 while Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported a take of 670 raccoons during the 2017 calendar year; a decrease of the previous year's take of 691.

Coyote and Fox Harvest

146 coyotes were harvested by trappers for fur during the 2017-2018 season. Pelts sold for an average price of \$7.22, a decrease from the previous year's average price of \$10.74. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took 192 coyotes during the 2017 calendar year; an increase from 2016's take of 140. Hunters reported during the LDWF annual hunter harvest survey an approximate take of 31,600 coyotes. This is a decrease from last year's reported take of 45,500.

Twenty-three red foxes and 125 grey foxes were harvested for fur during the 2017-2018 trapping season. Red foxes and grey foxes commanded an average value of \$8.09 and \$7.03, respectively. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took a total of 23 foxes during the 2017 calendar year. Their reporting does not require them to distinguish the species.

There are currently 32 fox and coyote pens operating within Louisiana, which provide a market for live foxes and coyotes within the state. 175 coyotes were reported to have been trapped and sold for the live market.

River Otter Harvest

The average price for river otter increased slightly from \$24.42 per pelt last year to \$25.54, for a total value of \$21,325.90. The otter had the second highest average price of all pelts and the highest value. Harvest for fur decreased from 1,215 to 853 this past season. A total of 976 CITES tags were requested for river otter, which is an increase from the previous season's total of 865. A reported 26 otters were trapped by nuisance wildlife operators.

A healthy live market exists for river otter which may have helped increase interest in the trapping of them. Otters are an attractive exhibit for zoos and aquariums around the world and Louisiana trappers with proper state and federal permits have taken advantage of this.

Bobcat

The bobcat harvest by trappers for fur decreased from 349 in the 2016 - 2017 season to 245. The average price paid by dealers, buyers and at auction increased from \$29.59 this past season to \$36.31. Bobcat had the highest average price of all pelts and continues to be some of the most valuable pelts sold at international auctions.

A total of 196 bobcat CITES tags were requested. The disparity between the number of bobcat purchased by fur dealers and the number of CITES tags requested likely means that many dealers have opted to store the purchased bobcats instead of shipping them in hopes of getting better prices early next season.

In the 2017-18 season, approximately 4,100 bobcats were reported to have been harvested by big game hunters. This is a decrease from the previous season’s total of 5,700.

Bobcat Harvest by Big Game Hunters LDWF Hunter Harvest Survey		
Season	Reported harvest from hunter survey	Confidence interval
2005-2006	8383	1476
2006-2007	8132	1416
2007-2008	7926	1344
2008-2009	6711	1303
2009-2010	7205	1338
2010-2011	7132	1435
2011-2012	6427	1120
2012-2013	4282	1123
2013-2014	4722	1165
2014-2015	3554	959
2015-2016	3767	971
2016-2017	5,700	1,600
2017-2018	4,100	1,290

Table 1. Estimated take of bobcats by big games hunters since 2005. Holders of a big game license can take one bobcat per calendar year.

Beaver Harvest

The number of beaver sold increased from 1,256 to 1,352 pelts. The beaver price also increased from an average of \$6.62 to \$7.03. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported to have removed 918 beavers during the 2017 calendar year, an increase from the previous year’s total of 866. Harvest of beaver is beneficial in the control of timber, agricultural and road damage throughout the state. Some parishes offer incentives through the sheriff’s office or contract trappers to decrease beaver populations in areas where they have become overpopulated.

The 2017-2018 Trapping Season

The Trapping Season dates are November 20th to March 31st as set by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The rule became effective upon the publication of the Louisiana Register

on August 20, 2008. Federal approval to export bobcat and river otter from the United States requires that the department ensure only Louisiana bobcat and river otter are tagged with Louisiana CITES export tags. This requires that all bobcat and river otter pelts be accompanied by completed State Possession Tags once purchased from a trapper and that these tags be kept with the pelts until they are submitted to the department in exchange for CITES export tags.

There have been no changes made during the 2017-2018 season to rules affecting furbearer harvest.

Total Fur Harvest for the 2017-18 Season and Average Price Paid

Species	Totals	Average price paid *
Muskrat	32	\$1.50
Nutria	235	\$1.77
Opossum	66	\$0.52
Raccoon	2,097	\$2.80
Mink	367	\$7.29
Skunk	1	\$0.00
Otter	853	\$24.42
Bobcat	245	\$29.59
Coyote	146	\$10.74
Red Fox	23	\$12.25
Gray Fox	125	\$7.59
Beaver	1,352	\$6.62
Total Harvest and Value	5,542	\$50,394.16

Table 2. Total number of furbearers by species reported to have been bought by licensed fur dealers or shipped by trappers for the 2017-2018 season.

*Average price paid largely reflects the prices paid by local dealers for green fur which tends to be much less than what trappers may receive for tanned fur sold at auctions.

**Comparative Take of Fur Animals in LA
10 Year Average (2008-09 - 2017-18)**

Species	No. of Pelts	Approx. price	Value
Nutria	6,767	\$1.83	\$12,383.79
Muskrat	673	\$2.84	\$1,911.81
Raccoon	6,632	\$3.89	\$25,773.12
Mink	683	\$7.71	\$5,263.88
Opossum	166	\$0.66	\$109.63
River Otter	1,648	\$33.37	\$54,968.84
Red Fox	64	\$13.59	\$872.54
Gray Fox	346	\$11.54	\$3,995.03
Bobcat	488	\$34.88	\$17,027.93
Beaver	1,829	\$6.41	\$11,725.72
Coyote	<u>83</u>	<u>\$6.58</u>	\$544.82
Avg. total pelts	19,379	Avg. total value	\$134,577.11

Table 3. Average annual harvest, price paid per pelt, and value for the past 10 years by species.

LOUISIANA
NO. OF TRAPPERS LICENSED BY YEAR

1950-51	7,732	1977-78	12,069	2004-05	1,597
1951-52	6,120	1978-79	11,106	2005-06	1,504
1952-53	4,328	1979-80	12,239	2006-07	1,690
1953-54	4,986	1980-81	11,801	2007-08	1,616
1954-55	5,202	1981-82	10,867	2008-09	1,704
1955-56	5,520	1982-83	10,668	2009-10	1,623
1956-57	4,211	1983-84	8,793	2010-11	1,957
1957-58	3,868	1984-85	10,935	2011-12	2,054
1958-59	3,932	1985-86	9,458	2012-13	2,140
1959-60	3,743	1986-87	6,947	2013-14	2,848
1960-61	3,613	1987-88	5,038	2014-15	2,559
1961-62	3,004	1988-89	2,888	2015-16	2,375
1962-63	3,666	1989-90	1,877	2016-17	2,133
1963-64	3,029	1990-91	1,414	2017-18	2,374
1964-65	3,061	1991-92	1,543		
1965-66	3,088	1992-93	1,189		
1966-67	3,492	1993-94	1,274		
1967-68	2,495	1994-95	1,686		
1968-69	3,601	1995-96	1,700		
1969-70	4,444	1996-97	2,691		
1970-71	3,510	1997-98	2,442		
1971-72	2,761	1998-99	1,578		
1972-73	4,741	1999-00	1,024		
1973-74	6,295	2000-01	987		
1974-75	7,528	2001-02	871		
1975-76	6,404	2002-03	1,589		
1976-77	9,329	2003-04	1,432		