

## **SUMMARY OF THE 2018-2019 TRAPPING SEASON**

### **Trapping Licenses**

Despite the stagnant fur market, the total number of trapping licenses sold increased this year by 8%. Records indicate a total of 2,572 trapping licenses were sold during the 2018-2019 trapping season whereas, a total of 2,374 were sold the previous season.

The resident trappers 15 and older purchased 2,310 licenses. The number of licenses resident trappers 14 and under purchased increased from 100 to 234 and licenses purchased by non-residents decreased from 36 to 28. Attached is a copy of trapping license sales from the season 1950-1951 – through the 2018-2019 season.

### **Fur Harvest**

Prices of fur have remained low despite the increasing demand for certain species in the luxury sportswear market. This may indicate that the supply is available to meet the growing demand. Coyote sold extremely well at auctions as trim on hoods. Parkas in the style made by the Canada Goose brand have become trendy and feature wild sourced fur trim on many of their products. Raccoon pelts also sold well across Asian markets as an alternative to the more expensive coyote and are featured on off brand parkas that follow this trend. Harvest for both species in Louisiana remained steady but low.

Sale of muskrat also increased at auctions as the demand for fur lining in luxury parkas has increased. Auctions also saw increased sale of lynx and bobcats with clear spots to high-end designers; however, neither of these species saw an increase in harvest in Louisiana.

The total number of pelts sold in the 2018-2019 season was 5,395; this was a decrease of 147 compared to a total pelt harvest of 5,542 in 2017-2018. The total pelt value has also decreased in 2018-2019 and is estimated to have been approximately \$48,074.68 compared to the estimated total value of \$50,394.16 in the 2017-2018 season.

### **Nutria Harvest**

The nutria harvest (223,155) increased from the previous season total of 170,471 but was still well below the average annual harvest. It was decided during the 2018-19 season to pursue an increase in the bounty from the current \$5.00 to \$6.00. This will go into effect for the 2019-2020 season. As a result, we expect to see an increase in harvest next season.

In 2018-2019, approximately 16,122 nutria carcasses were removed from the marsh to be utilized for meat and or fur. This is a sharp increase from the previous season's total of 4,205. The trappers also reported that none of the carcasses carried out of the marsh were sold for meat or fur. According to shipping reports, trappers and fur dealers reported shipping 150 pelts.

Conservatively, the average nutria price paid by local dealers for green pelts during this past season was \$2.00. This price increased from the previous year (\$1.77). 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 increased from \$852,355 to \$1,115,775.

### **Coastwide Nutria Control Program**

There were 241 active participants in the Coastwide Nutria Control program this year. This is a decrease from the previous year's total of 263. The fewest number of tails turned in by a single participant was 8 and the greatest number of tails by a single participant was 10,994. Approximately 32% of active participants turned in 800 or more tails. Of the 78 participants who turned in 800 or more tails, 4% turned in more than 4,000 tails.

There were twenty parishes represented in the program with harvests of nutria ranging from 163 to 51,960. Terrebonne Parish reported the highest number of tails followed by Plaquemines and St. Mary Parishes with 39,657 and 31,257 respectively.

The method of take for nutria was identified as: 27% of the nutria harvested were trapped, 55% of the nutria harvested were shot with a rifle, and 18% of the nutria harvested were shot with a shotgun.

February was the most active month for harvesting nutria (75,307) while November (7,508 tails) was the least active month (see CNCP Report, Coastal Wetlands Protection Planning Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Project LA-03b, <https://www.nutria.com/site13.php>).

### **Vegetative Damage Caused by Nutria**

In the spring of 2019, a coast wide aerial survey was conducted covering the coastal parishes of Louisiana. The overall number of damage sites due to nutria herbivory increased with 910 acres converted to open water.

There were 25 sites included in the 2019 vegetative damage survey. Of the 25 sites, twenty-one were previously identified as damaged sites. Four new sites were identified and no sites were identified as recovered.

The 2019 vegetative damage survey yielded a total of 3,907 observed acres of damage, (extrapolated to be 14,652 acres coast wide). This is a slight decrease from the previous season. When compared to 2018 (4,380 acres or 16,424 acres extrapolated coast wide), the present damage represents approximately a 11% decrease in the number of damaged acres. The decrease in damage is due to the number of acres that have converted to open water.

Four parishes were observed to have nutria damage in 2019. Terrebonne and Jefferson respectively are the parishes that were the most impacted by nutria herbivory. Of the 25 sites currently being impacted by nutria herbivory damage, Terrebonne Parish contained the largest number of damaged sites, 18 sites (3,319 ac), followed by St. Mary (4 sites; 378 ac), Cameron (2 sites; 117ac) and St. Charles Parish (1 site; 93ac).. (See CNCP Report, CWPPRA Project LA-03b, <https://www.nutria.com/site13.php>).

## **Fur Marketing and Education**

The Coastal and Nongame Division staff has worked closely with the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association (LTAHA) and the Louisiana Fur Advisory Council (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 eight hands-on trapper workshops and two 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 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 other organizations such as the Louisiana Department of Agriculture, the Audubon Zoo and Nature Center and the Wetland Watchers group to carry this message further.

Education is a valuable tool 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 2,097 to 2,119 pelts reflecting the increased demand with prices remaining relatively unchanged from last year. The number of raccoons harvested by hunters for sport was approximately 15,900 as reported by hunters during the annual LDWF hunter harvest survey. This is a decrease from the previous year's take of 33,300.

## **Coyote and Fox Harvest**

68 coyotes were harvested by trappers for fur during the 2017-2018 season. Pelts sold for an average price of \$16.50, an increase from the previous year's average price of \$7.22. Hunters reported during the LDWF annual hunter harvest survey an approximate take of 27,400 coyotes. This is a decrease from last year's reported take of 31,600.

Nineteen red foxes and 119 grey foxes were harvested for fur during the 2018-2019 trapping season. Red foxes and grey foxes commanded an average value of \$7.32 and \$8.19, respectively.

There are currently 32 fox and coyote pens operating within Louisiana, which provide a market for live foxes and coyotes within the state.

**River Otter Harvest**

The average price for river otter decreased slightly from \$24.42 per pelt last year to \$23.05. The otter had the second highest average price of all pelts and the highest value. Harvest for fur increased from 853 to 1,091 this past season. A total of 945 CITES tags were requested for river otter, which is a slight decrease from the previous season’s total of 976.

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 245 in the 2017-2018 season to 164 in the 2018-2019 season. The average price paid by dealers, buyers and at auction decreased from \$36.31 this past season to \$26.67. 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 167 bobcat CITES tags were requested.

In the 2018-19 season, approximately 2,900 bobcats were reported to have been harvested by big game hunters. This is a decrease from the previous season’s total of 4,100.

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
2018-2019	2,900	1,050

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 decreased from 1,352 to 1,268 pelts. The beaver price also decreased from an average of \$7.03 to \$6.55. 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 which typically means there are more beaver pelts on the market than needed to meet the demand. Beaver castor (castoreum) is still in high demand and can sell for as much as \$70.00 a pound with many Louisiana trappers taking advantage of this. Castoreum is used in the manufacture of food and cosmetics.

### **The 2018-2019 Trapping Season**

The Trapping Season dates are November 20<sup>th</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> 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 that would affect the 2019-2020 furbearer harvest.

**Total Fur Harvest for the 2018-19 Season and Average Price Paid**

Species	Totals	Average price paid *
Muskrat	5	\$1.78
Nutria	150	\$2.00
Opossum	111	\$0.92
Raccoon	2,119	\$2.74
Mink	272	\$6.29
Skunk	9	\$0.00
Otter	1091	\$23.05
Bobcat	164	\$26.67
Coyote	68	\$16.50
Red Fox	19	\$7.32
Gray Fox	119	\$8.19
Beaver	1,268	\$6.55
Total Harvest and Value	5,395	\$48,074.68

Table 2. Total number of furbearers by species reported to have been bought by licensed fur dealers or shipped by trappers for the 2018-2019 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 (2009-10 - 2018-19)**

<b>Species</b>	<b>No. of Pelts</b>	<b>Approx. price</b>	<b>Value</b>
Nutria	6,911	\$1.91	\$13,165.24
Muskrat	670	\$2.90	\$1,938.20
Raccoon	6,348	\$3.96	\$25,139.66
Mink	662	\$7.89	\$5,220.53
Opossum	171	\$0.70	\$119.76
River Otter	1,657	\$34.06	\$56,423.80
Red Fox	59	\$13.15	\$780.99
Gray Fox	342	\$11.04	\$3,773.05
Bobcat	473	\$36.25	\$17,133.48
Beaver	1,790	\$6.73	\$12,052.07
Coyote	<u>84</u>	<u>\$7.76</u>	<u>\$652.87</u>
<b>Avg. total pelts</b>	19,166	<b>Avg. total value</b>	\$136,399.66

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	2018-19	2,572
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		