

SUMMARY OF THE 2020-2021 TRAPPING SEASON

Trapping Licenses

Even though the international fur market has remained depressed, trapping for recreational and nuisance control purposes has continued to grow. The total number of trapping licenses sold for the 2020-2021 season increased by 18% over the previous season. Records indicate a total of 3,127 trapping licenses were sold whereas, a total of 2,642 were sold in 2019-2020.

The resident trappers 15 and older purchased 2,749 licenses. The number of licenses resident trappers 14 and under purchased increased from 255 to 325 and licenses purchased by non-residents increased from 29 to 53. Attached is a copy of trapping license sales from the season 1950-1951 – through the 2020-2021 season.

Fur Harvest

For the 2020-2021 season, fur prices have remained low with auctions deeply impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. 2020 was a record low year for fur sales and the market only improved slightly in 2021 as dealers found ways to sell fur without the traditional in person inspections of the product. Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. (FHA) has stepped up to become the premier seller of North American fur products after North American Fur Auction (NAFA) declared bankruptcy in 2019 acquiring much of NAFAs key personnel and equipment after the company dissolved. Auctions were held in April and June of 2021 with promising sales and good interest from buyers in China. FHA has also invested in the Furmark certification process through the International Fur Federation (IFF) earning their certificate in March of 2021. Furmark is an audit process launched in 2019 that requires fur products sold meet certain animal welfare, sustainability, and traceability standards.

The species currently with the most demand on the international market are muskrat, mink, bobcat and coyote. Coyote continues to be a popular material for trim on luxury parkas and generally sold well at both auctions with the western and eastern coyotes selling better than pelts from central North America. Bobcat fur has become popular in Korean markets and demand may increase in the upcoming winter season. Wild mink sold well at both auctions which may be a result of the culling that occurred on several mink farms due to Covid 19 infections among the animals and the overall reduced availability of ranched mink. Ranch mink traditionally sells better than wild mink because the consistency of the pelt quality and color is attractive to manufacturers. Even though beaver pelts have gone largely unsold at auction, castoreum continues to be in high demand and is selling at approximately \$100 per pound.

The total number of pelts sold in the 2020-2021 season was 3,898 (Table 2); this was an increase of 1,526 compared to the record low total pelt harvest of 2,372 in 2019-2020. The total pelt value has also increased in 2020-2021 and is estimated to have been approximately \$26,403.46 compared to the estimated total value of \$14,488.04 in the 2019-2020 season (Table2).

Nutria Harvest

Many trappers and hunters found themselves out of work or with extra time on their hands during the 2020-2021 season. As a result, nutria harvest as part of the Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP) increased from 245,865 to 312,118. Commercial fishermen had some of the highest harvest numbers of all the participants as they switched from harvesting luxury seafood products to nutria. Oyster sales in 2020 were depressed because of the impacts of Covid 19 on the restaurant industry and many sought to make up for their lost income through nutria.

In 2020-2021, approximately 2,846 nutria carcasses were removed from the marsh to be utilized for meat and or fur. This was not much of a change from the previous season's total of 2,163. For the second season in a row, the trappers reported that none of the carcasses carried out of the marsh were sold for meat or fur and all were kept for personal consumption. According to shipping reports, trappers and fur dealers reported shipping 11 pelts. Likely, these pelts originated from nutria caught in parishes outside of the CNCP.

Conservatively, the average nutria price paid by local dealers for green pelts during this past season has stayed consistent at \$2.00. There is also a market for the meat within the specialty pet food market. This often allows trappers to sell nutria whole instead of having to pelt the carcasses first. An additional \$6.00 is paid for all nutria taken from coastal areas by registered participants as part of the CNCP. The total value of the nutria harvested from the CNCP increased from \$1,475,190 to \$1,872,708.

Coastwide Nutria Control Program

There were 284 active participants in the CNCP this year. This is up from the previous year's total of 259. The fewest number of tails turned in by a single participant was 11 and the greatest number of tails by a single participant was 27,209. Approximately 35% of active participants turned in 800 or more tails. Of the 99 participants who turned in 800 or more tails, 14% turned in more than 4,000 tails.

There were nineteen parishes represented in the program with harvests of nutria ranging from 1,150 to 62,617. Plaquemines Parish reported the highest number of tails (62,617) followed by Terrebonne and St. Mary Parishes with 60,750 and 46,572 respectively.

The method of take for nutria was identified as: 17% of the nutria harvested were trapped, 58% of the nutria harvested were shot with a rifle, and 25% of the nutria harvested were shot with a shotgun.

January was the most active month for harvesting nutria (88,585) while November (8,440 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 2021, a coast wide aerial survey was conducted covering the coastal parishes of Louisiana. There were 25 sites included in the 2021 vegetative damage survey. Of the 25 sites, 23 were previously observed locations of nutria herbivory. Two of the sites were identified as recovered and two new sites were recorded for a total of 23 sites to be checked next year.

The 2021 vegetative damage survey yielded a total of 2,250 observed acres of damage, (extrapolated to be 8,436 acres coast wide). This is a decrease from the previous season. When compared to 2020 (3,593 acres or 13,474 acres extrapolated coast wide), the present damage represents approximately a 37% decrease in the number of damaged acres. The decrease in damage is due to the 707 acres that have converted to open water and the 163 acres marked as recovered.

Four parishes were observed to have nutria damage in 2021. Terrebonne and St. Mary respectively are the parishes that were the most impacted by nutria herbivory. Of the 25 sites surveyed, Terrebonne Parish contained the largest number of damaged sites, 19 sites (1,971 ac), followed by St. Mary (4 sites; 162 ac), St. Charles Parish (1 site; 80ac) and Cameron (1 sites; 36ac). (See CNCP Report, CWPPRA Project LA-03b, <https://www.nutria.com/site13.php>).

Fur Marketing and Education

For the past five years, the Coastal and Nongame Resources Division (CNR) staff has worked closely with the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association (LTAHA) and the Louisiana Fur Advisory Council (LFAC) on trapper education. 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. Over the five years of the program, trapping license sales have increased a total of 46 percent.

The educational program hosted six hands-on trapper workshops, which educated about 150 trapping students. Over 60 of these students also attended one of the three end-of-season, intensive, three-day trapper schools hosted at Woodworth Education Center. The online trapper course, developed with the assistance of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, continued to reach a wider audience and provided fundamental background material as a prerequisite for the hands-on workshops.

Outreach remained an important goal for the Fur Advisory Council. CNR staff along with volunteers from both the LFAC and the LTAHA promoted trapping as a management tool 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 950 to 1,459 pelts reflecting the issues that trappers and dealers had with finding buyers during the pandemic (Table 2). The number of raccoons harvested by hunters for sport was approximately 30,500 as reported by hunters during the annual LDWF hunter harvest survey. This is an increase from the previous year's take of 21,800. The survey also showed an increase in the number of days each hunter spent coon hunting.

Coyote and Fox Harvest

39 coyotes were harvested by trappers for fur during the 2020-2021 season (Table 2). Pelts sold for an average price of \$7.85, a decrease from the previous year's average price of \$10.00 (Table 2). Even though coyotes are in demand pelts from western and northern states sell better due to their thicker coats and pale color. Hunters reported during the LDWF annual hunter harvest survey an approximate take of 35,200 coyotes. This is an increase from last year's reported take of 34,800.

Two red foxes and 56 grey foxes were harvested for fur during the 2020-2021 trapping season (Table 2). Red foxes and grey foxes commanded an average value of \$3.75 and \$5.82, respectively (Table 2).

As of 2019, there are currently 31 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 from \$18.75 per pelt last year to \$16.60 (Table 2). The otter had the second highest average price of all pelts and the highest value (Table 3). Harvest for fur increased from 218 to 572 this past season (Table 2). A total of 572 CITES tags were requested for river otter, which is an increase from the previous season's total of 468.

Bobcat

The bobcat harvest by trappers for fur increased from 91 in the 2019-2020 season to 111 in the 2020-2021 season (Table 2). The average price paid by dealers, buyers and at auction increased from \$21.16 this past season to \$27.00 (Table 2). Bobcat had the highest average price

of all pelts which coincides with increasing demand for the pelts in Korea. A total of 154 bobcat CITES tags were requested which is an increase from the previous season's request of 81.

In the 2020-21 season, approximately 5,200 bobcats were reported to have been harvested by big game hunters (Table 1). This is an increase from the previous season's total of 3,300.

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
2019-2020	3,300	1,200
2020-2021	5,200	1,300

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 500 to 1,210 pelts (Table 2). The beaver price also increased from an average of \$5.95 to \$6.95 (Table 2). 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 \$120.00 a pound with many Louisiana trappers taking advantage of this. Castoreum is used in the manufacture of food and cosmetics.

Regulation Changes and Discussion

The Trapping Season dates are November 20th to March 31st as set by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission and do not change from year to year. 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.

With the passing of HB691, fees collected for trapping licenses, fur dealer and fur buyer for both resident and non-residents will change for the upcoming 2021-22 season. With the fur program being entirely self-funded through the sale of these licenses, we are hopeful that the extra funds may better provide for the management of Louisiana's 14 furbearer species and help grow our trapper education program.

Total Fur Harvest for the 2020-21 Season and Average Price Paid

Species	Totals	Average price paid *
Muskrat	31	\$1.62
Nutria	11	\$2.00
Opossum	41	\$0.50
Raccoon	1,459	\$2.31
Mink	366	\$3.82
Skunk	0	\$0.00
Otter	572	\$16.60
Bobcat	111	\$27.00
Coyote	39	\$7.85
Red Fox	2	\$3.75
Gray Fox	56	\$5.82
Beaver	1,210	\$6.95
Total Harvest and Value	3,898	\$26,403.46

Table 2. Total number of furbearers by species reported to have been bought by licensed fur dealers or shipped by trappers for the 2020-2021 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 (2011-12 - 2020-21)**

Species	No. of Pelts	Approx. price	Value
Muskrat	630	\$2.55	\$2,748.78
Nutria*	5,685	\$1.97	\$12,161.30
Opossum	165	\$0.74	\$154.01
Raccoon	5,421	\$3.67	\$28,935.17
Mink	630	\$7.49	\$5,385.30
River Otter	1,427	\$31.79	\$58,915.25
Bobcat	439	\$36.23	\$19,528.95
Coyote	86	\$8.58	\$678.94
Red Fox	53	\$11.89	\$896.84
Gray Fox	301	\$9.96	\$3,870.75
Beaver	1,719	\$7.14	\$13,192.36
Avg. total pelts	16,556	Avg. total value	\$146,467.64

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	2019-20	2,642
1966-67	3,492	1993-94	1,274	2020-21	3,127
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		