

Fur Trapper Survey 2014-15

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Abstract

The number of licensed trappers actively trapping was down from the total of the previous trapping season. Fifty percent of respondents said they trapped during the 2014-15 season. Trappers used a total of 349,343 sets on 640,904 nights during the 2014-15 trapping season.

Methods

The Fur Trapper Survey was mailed to a sample of 6,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license, or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2014-15 resident trapping ($\approx 3,000$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 3,000$) license holders who indicated they were trappers. A second mailing was sent to non-respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I questioned trappers on their trapping season including; number and species of furbearers trapped, average number of sets used, number of days spent trapping, total trapping expenses, and number of furs sold in and out of Wisconsin (Fig. 1). Part I also included questions on the hunting of furbearers by trappers. Part II pertained only to beaver trappers and will not be discussed in this summary. Please refer to the Beaver Trapper Report in this publication for this information. Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Responses were received from 2,335 of 6,000 trappers surveyed. The resulting response rate was 38.9%.

Fifty percent of the respondents actively trapped for furbearers during the 2014-15 season. Fur trapper license holders were about two times as likely to trap as conservation patron license holders (70% vs. 34%). Conservation patron license holders were less active during the 2014-15 trapping season (34%) than during the 2013-14 season (37%) while fur trapper license holders were less active as well with 70% actively trapping in 2014-15 and 73% in 2013-14 seasons.

The largest number of respondents (27.7%) trapped in the West Central Region of the state (Table 1). During the 2014-15 season, trappers trapped an average of 39.4 days, higher than the 2013-14 season (34.9). The average trapper incurred \$381.60 of expenses on such things as traps, lures, gas, and a license. This is less than the 2013-14 average of \$443.65. The mean number of days spent trapping ranged from 35 to 45 days among regions, while the mean trapping expense ranged from \$319.95 to \$565.17 among regions (Table 2). Statewide, 19% of trappers also hunted furbearers in 2014-15.

When the results of this survey are expanded to the larger population of licensed furbearer trappers, we can approximate that 10,177 licensed trappers actively trapped and 4,672 trappers also hunted furbearers during the 2014-15 season. An estimate of \$3,883,543 was spent by 10,177 active, licensed trappers on basic expenses. Less than 2% of licensed furbearer trappers pursued bobcat, while 59% pursued raccoons (Table 3). Furbearers harvested by trappers while hunting include: red fox, 1,171; gray fox, 222; coyote, 15,527 and raccoon, 15,189 (Table 4). A summary of 2014-15 furbearer harvests and sales can be found in Table 5. Of the furs took, most trappers sold directly to fur buyers.

Wisconsin requires hunters and trappers to register all harvests for bobcat, fisher, and otter. The official harvest for these species are from registration data, (please see Bobcat, Fisher, and Otter Harvest Reports). The survey asked trappers the number trapped for each of these species. Survey results are not corrected for response bias, prestige bias or animals caught and released. These are obvious, as the harvest estimates for these species from the trapper questionnaire are higher/lower than the registered harvest totals.

Foot hold traps (48.5%) were more frequently used than any other type of trap, body grip 31.1%, enclosed trigger 10.9%, cable restraints 5.2%, cage trap 3.2%, and snares 1.1%. Trappers averaged 21.7 foot hold traps per trapper, followed by body grip, enclosed trigger, cable restraint, snares, and cage traps at 15.0, 13.8, 12.7, 8.8, and 4.5 respectively. All total, Wisconsin licensed trappers, during the 2014-15 regulated seasons accounted for approximately 7.1 million trap nights in legal pursuit of furbearers; this was more than the 6.9 million during the 2013-14 season.

Cable restraints became legal for fox and coyote during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1 – February 15) in 2004. During the 2009-10 season the cable restraint season was extended with the opening date moved up to December 1, while ending as usual on February 15. Fewer Wisconsin trappers used cable restraints in 2014-15, with only 5.2% using cable restraints and averaged 10.1 sets during the open season. During the 2013-14 season, 13 percent used cable restraints and averaged 9.4 sets. Trappers were asked, "Overall, how did cable restraints work for you"; 76.0% said "Excellent" or "Good", while 24.0% said "Fair" or "Poor". Ninety percent of cable restraint users reported not catching a dog. Of those that did, the mean number of dogs caught and released being 1.7.

Special Regulations were developed for the Marten Restoration Areas that would allow the selective take of canines, raccoons and some mustelids (fisher and skunk), yet would prevent the accidental trapping of martens. Less than one percent of the trappers took advantage of the opportunity to dry land trap in the Marten Restoration Area.

Sixty-three percent of trappers are aware of the term Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping. The most common way trappers have become aware of the BMPs effort is through articles/websites/videos. The ways in which trappers have used BMPs for trapping is either by currently using BMPs traps on the trap line or expanding the types of traps they use.

Table 1. *DNR regions where furbearer trappers did most of their trapping, 2014-15.*

Region	# of Trappers	Percent of Trappers
Northern	279	23.7
Northeast	202	17.2
West Central	326	27.7
Southeast	86	7.3
South Central	189	16.1
Unrecorded	93	7.9
Totals	1,175	100%

Table 2. *Percent of furbearer trappers that hunted, average number of days spent trapping, and average trapping expenses by DNR region during the 2014-15 trapping season.*

Region	% of Trappers who hunted	Average number of days trapped	Average trapping expense
Northern	17.6%	36.4	\$373.11
Northeast	19.8%	41.0	\$358.98
West Central	19.0%	39.1	\$351.92
Southeast	18.6%	38.2	\$319.95
South Central	20.1%	45.0	\$411.83
Unrecorded	21.5%	35.2	\$565.17
Statewide	19.2%	39.4	\$381.60

Table 3. *Estimated number of active furbearer trappers pursuing each furbearer species, and percent of active trappers trapping for each species, 2014-15.*

Species	# of Trappers	% of Trappers
Bobcat	142	1.4%
Coyote	2,626	25.8%
Fisher	1,313	12.9%
Gray Fox	763	7.5%
Mink	2,280	22.4%
Muskrat	4,631	45.5%
Otter	1,527	15.0%
Opossum	600	5.9%
Raccoon	6,035	59.3%
Red Fox	1,598	15.7%
Skunk	957	9.4%
Weasel	773	7.6%

Table 4. *Harvest of furbearers by trappers who hunted, and total harvest (trapping harvest + hunting harvest) for each of the commonly hunted species during the 2014-15 fur harvest season.*

Species	Number Trapped	Number Hunted	Total Harvest (Trapping + Hunting)
Coyote	14,756	15,527	30,283
Gray Fox	1,209	222	1,431
Red Fox	4,708	1,171	5,879
Raccoon	111,783	15,189	126,972
Total	132,456	32,108	164,564

Table 5. *The 2014-15 fur harvest summary based on responses from licensed furbearer trappers.*

Furbearer	# Caught in Traps	# Sets Used	Total Days Trapped	# Sold in Wisconsin	# Sold out of State
Bobcat	553	1,132	3,058	26	0
Coyote	14,756	34,790	95,040	6,963	4,250
Fisher	1,121	6,970	22,831	391	191
Gray Fox	1,209	9,244	26,194	501	423
Mink	11,482	31,948	59,827	6,142	4,406
Muskrat	241,371	125,398	108,517	98,962	90,954
Otter	1,253	6,480	31,436	322	217
Opossum	9,944	8,769	21,399	1,166	734
Raccoon	111,783	90,349	165,666	49,978	36,121
Red Fox	4,708	16,674	53,563	1,892	1,434
Skunk	8,734	11,205	30,902	1,434	950
Weasel	9,011	6,384	22,471	4,639	2,056
Total	415,925	349,343	640,904	172,416	141,736

<p>8. During the past trapping season, how many traps did you use?</p> <p>_____ foothold _____ cable restraints _____ colony trap</p> <p>_____ body-gripper _____ snare</p> <p>_____ cage _____ enclosed trigger trap</p>	<p>9. If you used cable restraints, overall how did they work for you?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor</p> <p>Did you restrain and successfully release any dogs?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, how many? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>10. Did you dry land trap in either of the Marten Restoration Areas in 2014?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Note: See page 17 of the 2014 Trapping Regulations for location of these areas.</p>	<p>11. Did you HUNT furbearers with a gun and/or dogs during the past season? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please give the number of each kind taken:</p> <p>_____ Red Fox _____ Coyote</p> <p>_____ Gray Fox _____ Raccoon</p>
<p>12. Of the coyotes and foxes that you hunted or trapped, how many had mange?</p> <p>_____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote</p>	

Figure 1. *The 2014-15 furtrapper questionnaire.*