

# Bobcat Harvest 2017

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## **Abstract**

Wisconsin's bobcat season had two zones each with two time periods for pursuing bobcat by trappers and hunters. For the fourth year bobcats were legal for harvest south of Highway 64. In each zone the first period ran from the 14<sup>th</sup> October through the 25<sup>th</sup> of December with the second period from the 26<sup>th</sup> of December through the 31<sup>st</sup> of January. During the 2017 season 574 bobcats were registered or reported with the state, including 530 taken with WDNR issued permits, 1 taken on reservations, and 19 taken off reservation by native hunters/trappers, with 24 incidental kills submitted. The non-treaty harvest included 382 bobcat that were trapped/hunted in the Northern Zone and 148 bobcat taken in the Southern. Three hundred sixty-three were shot over dogs, 149 were trapped, and 17 by calling. The counties of highest harvest were Taylor (41), Price (41), and Douglas (40). The sex ratio from registration data was 1.21 males to 1 female.

## **Background**

Pils and Bluett (1984) discussed the background of Wisconsin's bobcat harvest management system and Dhuey, et al. (2017) described the results of the 2016 bobcat trapping season. The whole state of Wisconsin had a bobcat season in 2017. The state was divided into two zones, with Highway 64 splitting the state in to Northern and Southern Zones. The season had two periods; 14 October through 25 December, and 26 December through 31 January. All hunters and trappers must obtain a special harvest permit before pursuing bobcats, and the annual bag limit is one bobcat per permit. The application fee for bobcat harvest permits is \$6.00, with \$3.00 earmarked specifically for bobcat research. Successful applicants are selected by random drawing based on preference points. Bobcat harvest goals are set annually based upon population size in relation to management goals. The number of harvest permits issued was based on the highest success rate during the previous three years for the first time period and a conservative, high success rate for the later time period.

## **Methods**

Like past bobcat seasons, it was a requirement that all state issued permit holders register their kill via the web or a 1-800 number within 24 hours of harvest. All bobcats must still be registered in person by DNR authorized personnel and their carcasses turned over to the DNR for research purposes. The area of kill (county and game management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, method of harvest, and the name and address of the state hunter or trapper were recorded for each bobcat registered. These data were entered into the DNR production server by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All bobcat carcasses collected were examined to document the sex and age structure of the harvest, and to determine reproductive and mortality rates in the population.

## Results

A total of 15,410 (7,029 applied for a kill tag, 8,381 for a preference point) hunters and trappers applied for 1,230 bobcat harvest permits available in 2017 (Table 1). This was more than double the number of permits made available in 2016, 585. Most of the increase came in the northern zone where the quota of harvest was raised from 176 in 2016 to 506 this year. In addition, a Chippewa allocation of 44 bobcats was determined for their use during the Chippewa off-reservation trapping season (1 November 2017 to 31 March 2018) on ceded lands in the state. State issued permit holders killed 530 bobcats; 382 in the north and 148 in the south. Total known bobcat take was 574 cats in 2017. This included the regulated harvest of non-tribal (530), tribal (19), on reservation (1), and incidental bobcat submissions (24). This was above last year's submissions of 385, above the 1980-2016 average of 245, and highest recorded harvest since 1980 (Table 2). A threshold agreement was developed for tribal harvest of 15% of the non-native harvest for each respective zone in the ceded territory. When tribal harvest exceeds the 15% threshold for a specific zone, a declaration is required in that zone for the following harvest season. A tribal declaration occurred for the 2016-17 Bobcat Northern Zone.

Sixty-eight percent of the bobcats killed in 2017 were shot over dogs, 28% were trapped, and 3% by other means (Table 3). In 2016, 68% of the bobcats were taken over dogs, 29% were trapped, and 3% by other means. Techniques varied by period as 47% of the first period harvest was hunted, whereas 89% of the second period harvest was hunted.

In 2017, Chippewa hunters/trappers took 19 bobcats on ceded lands (data provided by Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission; Nick McCann, April 2018 email). One bobcat was registered with a kill location on a Wisconsin reservation. These kills were included in the statewide totals.

Twenty-four bobcats killed incidentally were reported to the WDNR in 2017. These are cats that were trapped incidentally, found dead, hit by a vehicle, or died of unknown causes. This is less than the 46 incidental bobcats received in 2016.

The average pelt price for bobcats in 2017 was \$37.68 and was lower than in \$57.27 paid in 2016. Many bobcats in Wisconsin are not harvested for fur but as a life accomplishment for the hunter or trapper, subsequently tanned or made into a mount.

Taylor and Price Counties led all other counties with a harvest of 41 bobcat, followed by Douglas with 40, and Sawyer with 36 (Fig. 1). Game Management Unit 26 had the highest harvest at 28, followed by unit 2 (25), and unit 13 and 58 (21; Fig. 2).

Weather conditions, particularly the number of days with new snowfall, can have a major effect on the success rate of bobcat hunters/trappers. Weather conditions during the 2017-18 season were normal for temperature and participation in December when most of the hunters pursue bobcats with hounds in the first period and normal for temperature and below for precipitation in January which encompasses the second period. No prolonged weather events should have affected permit holders pursuit of bobcat. Non-tribal permit success was 43.1% in 2017-18 (Table 1); lower than the 52.8% in 2016-17.

The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a Northern Zone quota of 550 (the same as last season) and a Southern quota of 250 (an increase of 50 from last year) for the 2018 season.

## Literature Cited

Dhuey B. and S. Rossler. 2017. Bobcat Harvest, 2016. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report, August 2017. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Madison, WI 53716

Pils, C. M. and R. Bluett. 1984. The 1984 Wisconsin bobcat harvest summary. Wis. Dep. of Nat. Resour. 8pp.

**Table 1.** *The 2017 Wisconsin bobcat harvest quota and applicant results by zone and period. These data do not include incidental or tribal harvest.*

Zone	Period	Quota	Applicants for Permit	Permits Available	Permits/ Applicant	Harvest	% Success
Northern	1	253	1,828	505	0.28	188	37.2%
Northern	2	253	3,395	325	0.10	194	59.7%
<b>Northern Total</b>		<b>506</b>	<b>5,223</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>46.0%</b>
Southern	1	98	899	230	0.26	68	29.6%
Southern	2	98	907	170	0.19	80	47.1%
<b>Southern Total</b>		<b>196</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>37.0%</b>
Preference Point			8,381				
<b>Statewide Total</b>		<b>702</b>	<b>15,410</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>43.1%</b>

The total Wisconsin harvest goal was 750 bobcats which includes a tribal allocation of 44.

**Table 2.** Total number of permits issued, total bobcats reported, and average pelt price from 1980 to 2017. Includes state, on and off tribal reservation, and incidental harvest.

Year	# of Permits Issued	Total Reported Take	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1980	1,840	90	84.00
1981	2,675	208	78.93
1982	2,972	139	70.67
1983	3,214	206	61.91
1984	3,089	260	71.93
1985	4,191	189	61.78
1986	4,064	183	86.55
1987	5,114	247	85.37
1988	5,285	165	55.34
1989	5,051	136	48.08
1990	4,359	98	56.79
1991	2,358	71	35.24
1992	2,300	217	37.52
1993	2,000	160	45.02
1994	2,000	169	36.17
1995	2,000	111	45.47
1996	2,000	166	44.75
1997	2,000	216	43.70
1998	1,860	194	41.25
1999	1,540	187	46.24
2000	1,490	280	41.88
2001	781	152	41.81
2002	1,330	253	46.31
2003	1,380	371	67.23
2004	1,370	364	73.11
2005	1,540	497	90.88
2006	1,000	356	71.03
2007	1,030	477	74.45
2008	540	367	38.55
2009	475	271	45.58
2010	455	349	61.44
2011	475	357	91.67
2012	165	242	126.60
2013	216	226	97.60
2014	386	337	77.52
2015	595	383	48.67
2016	585	385	57.27
2017	1,230	574	37.86

**Table 3.** The 2017 Wisconsin bobcat harvest by zone, period, and method of harvest. These data do not include incidental or tribal harvest.

Zone	Period	Shot over Dogs	Shot without Dogs	Trapped	Unknown	Total
Northern	1	102	10	76		188
Northern	2	175	3	16		194
<b>Northern Total</b>		<b>277</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>92</b>		<b>382</b>
Southern	1	18	3	47		68
Southern	2	68	1	10	1	80
<b>Southern Total</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Statewide Total</b>		<b>363</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>530</b>

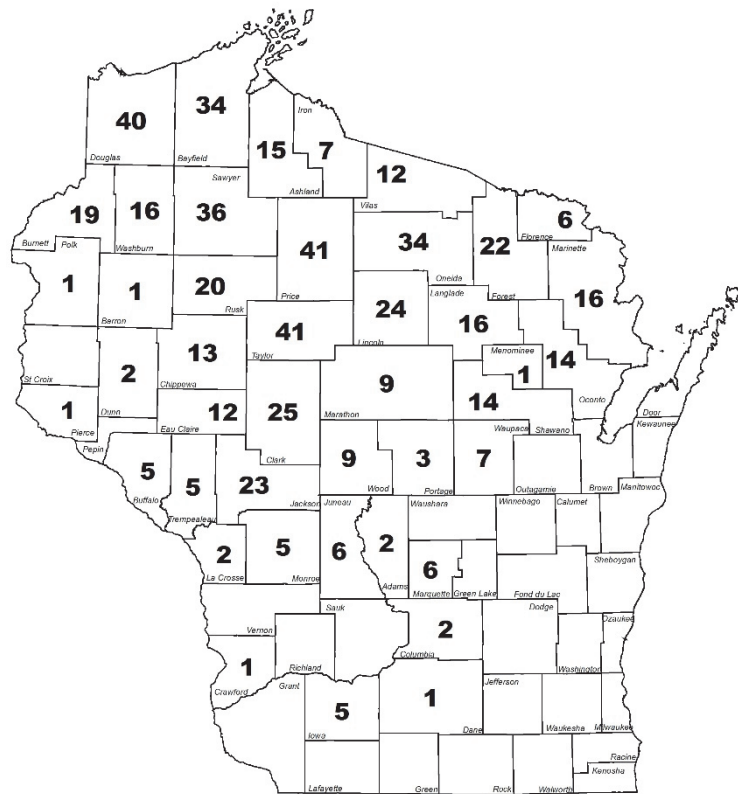


Figure 1. Wisconsin bobcat take by county during 2017.

