

Fur Trapper Survey 2007-2008

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Abstract

The number of licensed trappers actively trapping, the number of nights trapped, and the number of sets used, were all down from the total of the 2006-07 trapping season. Fifty-three percent of respondents said they trapped during the 2007-08 season. Trappers used a total of 326,000 sets on 551,000 nights during the 2007-08 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 2007-08 resident trapping ($\approx 2,650$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 3,350$) 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 UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Responses were received from 2,067 of 6,000 trappers surveyed. The resulting response rate was 34.5%.

Fifty-three percent of the respondents actively trapped for furbearers during the 2007-08 season. Furtrapper license holders were almost two times as likely to trap as conservation patron license holders (74% vs. 39%). Conservation patron license holders were less active during the 2007-08 trapping season (39%) than during the 2006-07 season (44%). The same holds true for Furtrapper license holders, with 74% actively trapping in 2007-08 and 86% in 2006-07 seasons.

The majority of respondents (32%) trapped in the Northern Region of the state (Table 1). During the 2007-08 season, trappers trapped an average of 27 days. This was less than the 2006-07 season (34 days). The average trapper incurred \$304.71 of expenses on such things as traps, lures, gas, and a license. This is less than the 2006-07 average of \$352.57. The mean number of days spent trapping ranged from 26 to 30 days among regions, while the mean trapping expense ranged from \$274.80 to \$352.83 among regions (Table 2). Statewide, 18% of trappers also hunted furbearers in 2007-08.

When the results of this survey are expanded to the larger population of licensed furbearer trappers, we can approximate that 9,468 licensed trappers actively trapped and 3,840 trappers also hunted furbearers during the 2007-08 season. Roughly 3% of licensed furbearer trappers pursued bobcat, while 62% pursued raccoons (Table 3). The estimated number of red fox,

gray fox, coyote, and raccoon hunted by trappers while hunting were 1,270, 165, 10,994 and 18,932, respectively (Table 4). A summary of 2007-08 furbearer harvests and sales can be found in Table 5.

Wisconsin requires hunters and trappers to register all kills for bobcat, fisher, and otter. The official harvest for these species are from registration data, (please see Bobcat, Fisher, and Otter Harvest Reports in this document). 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.

Body grip traps (41.4%) were more frequently used than any other type of trap, foot hold 38.0%, cages 13.4%, cable restraints 4.9%, and snares 2.4%. Trappers averaged 21.9 foot hold traps per trapper, followed by body grip, snares, cable restraint, and cages at 13.5, 10.6, 9.2, and 4.2 respectively.

Cable restraints became legal for fox and coyote during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1 – February 15) in 2004. Trappers were asked if they used cable restraints during the 2007-08 trapping seasons. Eleven percent of Wisconsin trappers used cable restraints and averaged 9.2 sets during the open season in 2007-08. This was down from 2006-07 season, when 13 percent used cable restraints and averaged 13.9 sets. Trappers were asked, "Overall, how did cable restraints work for you"; 54.6% said "Excellent" or "Good", while 45.5% said "Fair" or "Poor". Ninety-one percent of cable restraint users reported no problems with catching a dog. Of those that did, the mean number of dogs caught being 1.4. Most trappers surveyed, 54%, said they plan on using cable restraints in future years.

Table 1. *DNR regions where furbearer trappers did most of their trapping, 2007-2008.*

Region	# of Trappers	Percent of Trappers
Northern	3,003	31.7%
Northeast	1,394	14.7%
West Central	1,801	19.0%
Southeast	939	9.9%
South Central	1,725	18.2%
Unrecorded	606	6.4%
Totals	9,468	100%

Table 2. *Percent of furbearer trappers that hunted, average number of days spent trapping, and average trapping expenses by DNR region during the 2007-2008 trapping season.*

Region	% of Trappers who hunted	Average number of days trapped	Average trapping expense
Northern	15.3%	26.2	\$284.73
Northeast	25.6%	30.1	\$352.83
West Central	24.3%	27.6	\$307.95
Southeast	27.0%	27.8	\$274.80
South Central	25.0%	27.1	\$300.20
Unrecorded	14.0%	27.1	\$335.00
Statewide	18.0%	27.4	\$304.71

Table 3. *Estimated number of active furbearer trappers pursuing each furbearer species, and percent of active trappers trapping for each species, 2007-2008.*

Species	# of Trappers	% of Trappers
Bobcat	282	3.0%
Coyote	2,040	21.6%
Fisher	2,271	24.0%
Gray Fox	956	10.1%
Mink	3,107	32.8%
Muskrat	4,448	47.0%
Otter	1,776	18.8%
Opossum	487	5.1%
Raccoon	5,891	62.2%
Red Fox	2,066	21.8%
Skunk	291	3.1%
Weasel	717	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 2007-2008 fur harvest season.*

Species	Number Trapped	Number Hunted	Total Harvest (Trapping + Hunting)
Coyote	8,008	10,994	19,002
Gray Fox	1,776	165	1,941
Red Fox	6,614	1,270	7,884
Raccoon	97,830	18,932	116,762
Total	114,228	31,361	145,589

Table 5. *The 2007-2008 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	435	1,964	4,593	17	77
Coyote	8,008	23,973	57,013	4,192	2,689
Fisher	1,562	10,962	39,795	575	438
Gray Fox	1,776	11,645	26,270	768	563
Mink	19,243	43,584	70,613	11,269	6,412
Muskrat	255,499	103,559	87,235	165,788	72,858
Otter	1,428	9,596	35,109	513	316
Opossum	25,006	4,320	12,874	5,199	4,021
Raccoon	97,830	85,622	133,380	58,225	28,122
Red Fox	6,614	20,558	57,500	3,099	2,151
Skunk	8,179	2,749	8,930	2,279	803
Weasel	8,162	7,564	18,185	3,039	3,219
Total	433,742	326,096	551,497	254,963	121,669

Dear Wisconsin Furbearer Trapper:

You have been selected to help gather information on fur trapping. Completion of this survey is voluntary. You can make an important contribution to the future of Wisconsin's fur harvests and trapping activity by taking the time to complete the attached survey. If you did not trap furbearers, simply answer questions #1 and #6 and return the survey. If you did trap, please fill out Part I of the survey. If you trapped beaver, please also complete Part II of the survey.

The information requested from you and other trappers is essential in managing Wisconsin's valuable fur resource. Through your cooperation we can determine catch, trapping success, trapping pressure, and trapper characteristics on a statewide basis. These facts are necessary for a better understanding of how regulations affect your trapping and the welfare of furbearer populations. With your help, the future of regulated trapping as a public service will be assured as we face challenges locally and globally.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Reverse the flap on the survey, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management even though no postage is required to return the survey. *Please reply even if you did not trap this season or were not successful.*

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist

PART I.

1. Did you trap for furbearers in Wisconsin during this season? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No		2. In what DNR REGION did you do MOST of your trapping? ☐ (1) Northern ☐ (3) West Central ☐ (5) South Central ☐ (2) Northeast ☐ (4) Southeast			
3. About how many days did you trap? _____ days trapped					
4. Please fill in all five blanks for each kind of furbearer you trapped in Wisconsin during the past season:					
	Number caught in traps	Average Number of Sets	Total Days Trapped	Number SOLD in Wisconsin	Number SOLD Out of State
Otter	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Muskrat	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mink	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Raccoon	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Red Fox	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Gray Fox	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Coyote	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bobcat	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fisher	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Skunk*	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Opossum*	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Weasel	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
*If either skunks or opossums were caught incidentally, then put zeros for average number of sets and total days trapped.					
5. Estimate your total trapping expenses for the past season: (traps, lures, gas, license, etc.) \$ _____		6. Did you also HUNT furbearers with gun and/or dogs during the past season? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No If yes, please give the number of each kind taken: _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote _____ Raccoon			
7. Of the coyotes and foxes that you harvested, how many had mange? _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote					
8. During the past trapping season, on average, how many traps did you use? _____ footholds _____ cage _____ snares _____ body-grippers _____ cable restraints		9. Cable restraints have been legal since 2004 during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1- February 15). Did you use cable restraints in 2008? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No (Go to Question 12) If yes, how many sets did you have? _____			
10. Overall, how did cable restraints work for you? ☐ (1) Excellent ☐ (3) Fair ☐ (2) Good ☐ (4) Poor		11. It is important for trappers to document the release of dogs from cable restraints. Did you restrain and successfully release any dogs? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No If yes, how many? _____			
12. Do you plan to use cable restraints in future years? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No					

Figure 1. The 2007-2008 furtrapper questionnaire.