

Fur Trapper Survey 2006-07

By Brian Dhuey and John Olson

Abstract

An estimate of Wisconsin's furbearer harvest by licensed trappers is used to document the economic importance of trapping and to assist in the management of furbearer species. Seventy-seven percent of respondents said they trapped during the 2006-07 season. Trappers used a total of 385,000 sets on 685,000 nights during the 2006-07 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 2006-07 resident trapping ($\approx 4,780$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 1,220$) 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 1,849 of 6,000 trappers surveyed. The resulting response rate was 30.4%.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents actively trapped for furbearers during the 2006-07 season. Furtrapper license holders were two times as likely to trap as conservation patron license holders (86% vs. 44%). Conservation patron license holders were more active during the 2006-07 trapping season (44%) than during the 2005-06 season (36%). The same holds true for Furtrapper license holders with 86% actively trapping in 2006-07 and 81% in 2005-06 seasons.

The majority of respondents (32%) trapped in the Northern Region of the state (Table 1). During the 2006-07 season, trappers trapped an average of 34 days. This was more than the 2005-06 season (31 days). The average trapper incurred \$352.57 of expenses on such things as traps, lures, gas, and a license. This is more than the 2005-06 average of \$279.45. The mean number of days spent trapping ranged from 38 to 29 days among regions, while the mean trapping expense ranged from \$264.27 to \$472.51 among regions (Table 2). Statewide, 16% of trappers also hunted furbearers in 2006-07.

When the results of this survey are expanded to the larger population of licensed furbearer trappers, we can approximate that 10,744 licensed trappers actively trapped and 3,418 trappers also hunted furbearers during the 2006-07 season. Roughly 2% of licensed furbearer trappers pursued bobcat, while 58% pursued raccoons and muskrat (Table 3). The estimated number of

red fox, gray fox, coyote, and raccoon harvested by hunting were 1,103, 72, 11,501, and 29,742, respectively (Table 4). A summary of 2006-07 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.

Foot hold traps (53.0%) were more frequently used than any other types, body grip 38.0%, cable restraints 4.5%, cages 3.0%, and snares 1.5%. Trappers averaged 22.9 foot hold traps per trapper, followed by body grip, cable restraint, snares, and cages at 15.7, 13.9, 8.6, and 4.4 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 2006-07 trapping seasons. Thirteen percent of Wisconsin trappers used cable restraints and averaged 13.9 sets during the open season in 2006-07. This was similar to the 2005-06 season when 11 percent used cable restraints and averaged 13.8 sets. Trappers were asked, "Overall, how did cable restraints work for you"; 57.1% said "Excellent" or "Good", while 43.0% said "Fair" or "Poor". Eighty-seven percent of cable restraint users reported no problems with catching a dog. Of those that did, the mean number of dogs caught being 1.9. 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, 2006-07.*

Region	# of Trappers	Percent of Trappers
Northern	3,413	31.8%
Northeast	1,201	11.2%
West Central	2,203	20.5%
Southeast	1,024	9.5%
South Central	1,940	18.1%
Unrecorded	963	9.0%
Totals	10,744	100%

Table 2. *Percent of furbearer trappers that hunted, average number of days spent trapping, and average trapping expenses by DNR region during the 2006-07 trapping season.*

Region	% of Trappers who hunted	Average number of days trapped	Average trapping expense
Northern	12.3%	33.1	\$264.27
Northeast	19.9%	31.6	\$353.01
West Central	21.9%	33.7	\$357.29
Southeast	18.9%	29.2	\$472.51
South Central	20.5%	38.4	\$412.67
Unrecorded	10.9%	32.9	\$407.25
Statewide	15.7%	33.7	\$352.57

Table 3. *Estimated number of active furbearer trappers pursuing each furbearer species, and percent of active trappers trapping for each species, 2006-07.*

Species	# of Trappers	% of Trappers
Bobcat	226	2.1%
Coyote	1,977	18.4%
Fisher	2,632	24.5%
Gray Fox	784	7.3%
Mink	3,814	35.5%
Muskrat	6,210	57.8%
Otter	2,217	19.7%
Opossum	365	3.4%
Raccoon	6,210	57.8%
Red Fox	1,816	16.9%
Skunk	387	3.6%
Weasel	988	9.2%

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 2006-07 fur harvest season.*

Species	Hunted Harvest	Total Harvest (Trapping Harvest + Hunting Harvest)
Coyote	11,501	21,830
Gray Fox	72	2,414
Red Fox	1,103	9,236
Raccoon	29,742	167,195
Total	42,418	200,675

Table 5. *The 2006-07 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	300	968	3,341	38	54
Coyote	10,329	22,486	60,471	5,376	2,626
Fisher	2,477	12,788	45,422	1,169	697
Gray Fox	2,342	9,124	21,772	1,405	668
Mink	24,690	50,295	98,685	13,409	8,056
Muskrat	523,906	153,058	151,245	341,266	149,740
Otter	2,098	8,077	40,255	822	546
Opossum	31,533	4,462	14,161	6,889	2,089
Raccoon	137,453	93,094	165,338	79,086	43,890
Red Fox	8,133	18,239	51,001	5,007	2,312
Skunk	9,692	3,018	11,627	2,296	614
Weasel	9,308	10,037	22,456	2,588	4,815
Total	762,261	385,646	685,774	459,351	216,107

WISCONSIN FUR TRAPPER SURVEY

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.
Form 2300-103 (R 3/07)

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 2007? ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No 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 2006-07 furtrapper questionnaire.