

Bobcat Hunter/Trapper Survey 2005

By Jessica Kitchell and John Olson

Abstract

Hunting/trapping questionnaires were mailed to all bobcat hunters/trappers that received permits for the 2005 season (October 15 to December 31). The response rate was 69.8% following removal of any duplicates. Seventy-three (72.9%) percent of the hunters/trappers returning surveys pursued bobcats in 2005. Of these, 44.9% reported registering a bobcat. Just under three-fourths (71.7%) of the respondents indicated that the bobcat population in 2005 was about the same or more abundant than it had been in 2004.

Methods

After completion of the 2005 season, a questionnaire was mailed to each of the 1,541 hunter/trappers who received a permit to pursue bobcats. A follow-up second mailing was then made to nonrespondents. Bobcat harvest permit holders were asked specific questions about their hunting and trapping methods used during the season (Fig. 1). Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR UNIX production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool.

Results

Of the 1,541 bobcat hunter/trappers queried, 1,075 non-duplicates responded, for a response rate of 69.8%. Seventy-three (72.9%) percent of these respondents reported hunting and/or trapping bobcats during the 2005 season (Table 1, Question 1). The most common reason given for not pursuing bobcats was "other"; frequent definitions given for "other" were time, and work constraints (Table 1, Question 2).

Nearly forty-five (44.9%) percent of hunters/trappers who pursued bobcats were successful (Table 1, Question 3). Trappers spent on average 17.7 days afield with 5.9 sets/day and located on average 5.8 bobcats (Table 1, Question 4). Thirty-eight (38.4%) percent of these trappers were successful. Only 3.4% of trappers released bobcats from their traps during the 2005 season, and some trappers reported releasing more than 3 bobcats (Table 1, Question 5). Hunters who used dogs spent on average 5.6 days afield. Fifty-eight (58.5%) percent of these hunters were successful. By comparison, hunters who hunted without dogs spent on average 6.2 days afield, with a eighteen (18.1%) percent success rate (Table 1, Question 6). Twelve (12.2%) percent of hunters using trained dogs reported to have passed on treed bobcats (Table 1, Question 7). Hunting/trapping efforts were heaviest in Price, Sawyer, and Oneida counties (Table 1, Question 8), 24 counties within the state were utilized.

Most hunters/trappers (71.7%) indicated that the bobcat population was about the same or more abundant than the previous year. Since bobcat hunters/trappers spend many hours driving around and looking for sign, they were also asked to give their impressions of fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf populations. Most hunters/trappers indicated that the coyote (74.0%), fisher (59.9%), and gray wolf (82.2%) populations were about the same or more abundant than the previous year. However, most hunter/trappers (63.0%) felt that the fox populations were about the same or less abundant than the previous year (Table 1, Question 9).

The most common habitat (42.7%) where bobcats were hunted or trapped was lowland forest-swamp/regeneration brush. The next most frequently hunted/trapped habitat was lowland forest-swamp/large mature (14.1%). The least common habitat (1.4%) was upland hardwoods large/mature (Table 1, Question 10).

Table 1. Responses to the 2005 bobcat hunters/trapper survey.

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2005 season? (Percent)

Yes	72.9
No	27.1

No answer = 0

2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? (Percent)

Poor Weather	17.0
Too far to travel	9.4
Other	73.7

No answer = 596

The most frequently stated reasons listed under 'other' were time, and work constraints.

3. Did you register a bobcat during the 2005 season (Oct 15 through Dec 31)? (Percent)

Yes	44.9
No	55.1

No answer = 9

4. If you TRAPPED bobcat during the 2005 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean)

Number of days trapped	17.7
Average number of sets/day	5.9
Number of bobcats located	5.8

5. Did you release any bobcats from your traps during the season? (Percent)

Yes	3.4
No	96.6

If yes, how many? (Frequency)

1	12
2	5
≥3	4

6. If you HUNTED bobcat during the 2005 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean).

Number of days hunted with dogs	5.6
Number of days hunted without dogs	6.2
Number of bobcats run with dogs	4.2
Number of bobcats located	3.2

7. Did you pass on any treed bobcats during the season?

Yes	12.2
No	87.7

If yes, how many (Frequency)?

1	28
2	25
3	11
4	4
≥5	4

8. In which counties did you hunt and/or trap bobcats? (Please list the county you spent the most time in first) (frequency, percent).

County	# of Trips	Percent	County	# of Trips	Percent
Adams	4	0.4	Lincoln	66	6.4
Ashland	71	6.9	Marinette	64	6.2
Barron	1	0.1	Oconto	27	2.6
Bayfield	54	5.3	Oneida	81	7.9
Burnett	17	1.7	Polk	6	0.6
Chippewa	9	0.9	Price	114	11.1
Crawford	1	0.1	Rusk	39	3.8
Douglas	73	7.1	Sawyer	83	8.1
Dunn	2	0.2	Taylor	62	6.0
Florence	16	1.6	Vilas	36	3.5
Forest	67	6.5	Washburn	33	3.2
Iron	55	5.3	Unknown	1	0.1
Langlade	47	4.6			

9. In your opinion, how does the current bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf population compare to last year? Check one for each species. (Percent)

	Bobcat	Fox	Coyote	Fisher	Gray Wolf
More abundant than last year	29.0	22.6	45.3	27.1	74.1
Less abundant than last year	10.0	23.2	17.4	23.5	1.1
About the same as last year	42.7	39.8	28.7	32.8	8.1
No opinion	18.2	14.4	8.6	16.7	16.7

10. In which habitat type did you hunt and/or trap for bobcat the most? (Percent)

Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Regeneration Brush	13.5
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Thinned / Pole-sized	3.9
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Large / Mature	5.4
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Regeneration Brush	42.7
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Thinned / Pole-sized	12.5
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Large / Mature	14.1
Upland Hardwoods – Regeneration Brush	4.8
Upland Hardwoods – Thinned / Pole-sized	1.7
Upland Hardwoods – Large / Mature	1.4

Wisconsin Bobcat Hunting / Trapping Questionnaire

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.

Form 2300-232 (R 11/05)

Dear Bobcat Hunter/Trapper:

You have been selected to help the Department of Natural Resources gather much needed information on Wisconsin's bobcat harvest. Please help our furbearer management program by completing this voluntary questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaire, reverse the flap, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management, even though no postage is required to return the questionnaire. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist
Bureau of Wildlife Management

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2005 season? Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐	2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? Poor weather (1) ☐ Other (3) ☐ Please explain: _____ Too far to travel (2) ☐ _____																														
IF YOU DID NOT HUNT OR TRAP, STOP HERE AND RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU!																															
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Figure 1. The 2005 Wisconsin bobcat hunting/trapping questionnaire.