

2021-22 Illinois Fur Harvest Survey

Wildlife Diversity Program Note #22-3

The Fur Harvest Survey provides estimates of (1) numbers of pelts sold by Illinois furtakers, (2) values of pelts sold by Illinois furtakers, and (3) distribution of the harvest among resource users. This project is supported in part by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program (Project W-99-R, Job 102.7 and 102.8).

METHODS

State law requires licensed fur buyers to maintain records and submit reports of all raw furs purchased. We mailed report forms and written instructions to licensed buyers about 10 days before the opening of the muskrat trapping season. Buyers who failed to report by the deadline were sent 2 reminders by first classmail or by email.

Buyers provided estimates of (1) raw fur purchases from Illinois hunters and trappers, (2) average pelt prices for all sizes and grades, and (3) percentages of pelts taken by fur hunters. We corrected estimates for non-response and out-of-state pelt sales reported by Conat et al. (2016). Individuals who captured a river otter or bobcat were required to purchase a permit within 48 hours; sales of pelts were based on sales of permits.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Department issued 29 permits to fur buyers during 2021-22. Based on a 86% response rate, the total number of pelts sold by Illinois furtakers was 26,365, a decrease of 47% from 2020-21 (Table 1). Total value of pelts sold by furtakers decreased 54% to \$133,546. Raccoon, beaver and coyote accounted for 70% of the total harvest and 61% of its value. Raccoon Coyote pelts were just under 10% of the total harvest and comprised 18% of the total fur value.

Fur buyers' estimates of the proportion of pelts taken by hunters varied from 1% for striped skunk to 50% for coyote; they were intermediate for opossum (9%), red fox (23%)

and raccoon (29%).

Today, pelt values are very low across the board. Demand from foreign markets in Russia and China are volatile due to world events. Economic conditions, monetary exchange rates, political events and severity of winters in overseas countries shape fur markets in North America and contribute to their extreme volatility.

Overall, demand for wild furs remained poor during 2021-22 because of economic conditions in major markets and a surplus of goods from past seasons. Pelt values were up slightly for most species in 2021 but down for coyote and raccoon. Overall, prices remained at very low levels and harvest was very low as well.

Sales of trapping licenses decreased to 6580 in 2021-22, down from 7238 in 2020-21. 2020-21, approximately Estimates of coyote and raccoon hunters for 2021 were not available from the Illinois Natural History Survey at the time of writing due to circumstances beyond their control. In 2020-21, 7,164 raccoon hunters spent 62,610 days afield and 22,843 coyote hunters spent 205,170 days afield (Walberg et al. 2020). Based on the number of pelts sold, the number of coyote and raccoon hunters, effort and harvest were likely down for 2021-22.

Pelts sales fell short of historical averages during the 2021-22 season.

LITERATURE CITED

Williams, B.D., L.K. Campbell, C.A. Miller and L.J. Stephens. 2019. 2018-2019 Illinois Trapper Report: Harvest, Effort, and Marketing Practices. Job Completion Report, Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration W-112-R-28. INHS Technical Report 2019 (37). Illinois Natural History Survey, Champaign, IL. 61pp.

Table 1. Comparative fur harvest data for Illinois^a, 2021-22 vs. *2020-21.

Species	Number of Pelts Sold		Change in Sales		Average Price per Pelt (Dollars)		Total Value to Fur-Takers (Dollars)		Change in Value	
	2021-22 (#)	2020-21 (#)	Δ (#)	Δ (%)	mpv (2021-22)	mpv (2020-21)	value (2020-21)	value (2021-22)	Δ (#)	Δ (%)
muskrat	5,622	8,041	-2,419	-30.1	3.12	3.11	25007.51	17540.64	-7,466.87	-29.9%
mink	267	384	-117	-30.5	5.45	4	1536	1455.15	-80.85	-5.3%
raccoon	12,432	26,136	-13,704	-52.4	2.66	3.07	80237.52	33069.12	-47,168.40	-58.8%
opossum	474	552	-78	-14.1	1.15	0.57	314.64	545.1	230.46	73.2%
red fox	133	384	-251	-65.4	8.4	5.6	2150.4	1117.2	-1,033.20	-48.0%
gray fox	0	2	-2	-100.0	0	5	10	0	-10.00	-100.0%
beaver	3,374	4,135	-761	-18.4	7.39	6.2	25637	24933.86	-703.14	-2.7%
otter	911	1,065	-154	-14.5	20.49	16.07	17114.55	18666.39	1,551.84	9.1%
skunk	264	560	-296	-52.9	6.35	4.34	2430.4	1676.4	-754.00	-31.0%
weasel	0	4	-4	-100.0	0	0.5	2	0	-2.00	-100.0%
coyote	2,592	7,902	-5,310	-67.2	9.25	16.21	128091.42	23976	-104,115.42	-81.3%
badger	6	16	-10	-62.5	9	7.53	120.48	54	-66.48	-55.2%
bobcat	290	339	-49	-14.5	36.25	30.86	10461.54	10512.5	50.96	0.5%
Total/Mean	26365	49520	-23155	-46.8			293113.46	133546.36	-159,567.10	-54.4%

^aIncludes correction for non-response and allowances for out-of-state pelt sales as estimated by Conat et al. (2016).

^bNumbers in parentheses indicate percent change between years.

^cBased on sales of Temporary Pelt Permits.