

2024-25 Illinois Fur Harvest Survey

Wildlife Diversity Program Note #25-3

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 class mail 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 35 permits to fur buyers during 2024-25. Based on an 83% response rate, the total number of pelts sold by Illinois furtakers was 40,405, a 5% increase from 2023-24 (Table 1). Total value of pelts sold by furtakers decreased 49% to \$235,960. Muskrat, raccoon and beaver accounted for 92% of the total harvest and 74% of its value. The sale of almost every species was lower in 2024-25. Bobcat was the only species that increased, due to the increase in permits issued (from 1000 to 2000). But the average price for bobcat pelts was also lower in 2024.

Fur buyers' estimates of the proportion of pelts taken by hunters varied from 7.5% for skunk to 48% for raccoon; they were relatively high for

coyote (45%) and opossum (38%).

Today, pelt values remain low with mink, skunk, coyote and badger seeing very modest increases, the other species were all lower. 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 2024-25 because of economic conditions in major markets and a surplus of goods from past seasons. Pelt values were up modestly for badger and coyote, but remain very low for raccoon, muskrat, mink and opossum. Beaver, river otter and bobcat prices all fell. Striped skunk prices were the biggest increase for the year. Overall, prices and harvest remained at very low levels.

Sales of resident trapping licenses increased to 7205 in 2024-25, up from 7163 in 2023-24. Estimates of coyote and raccoon hunters for 2024 were not yet available from the Illinois Natural History Survey. In 2023-24, 4,762 raccoon hunters spent 56,350 days afield and 17,196 coyote hunters spent 186,115 days afield (Walberg et al. 2024). Based on the number of pelts sold in 2024-25, the number of coyote hunters and effort were likely down, and raccoon hunter effort and harvest were likely similar for 2024-25.

Pelt sales fell short of historical averages during the 2024-25 season.

LITERATURE CITED

Williams, B.D., C.A. Miller, L.J. Stephens, and E.M. Walberg. 2024. 2023-2024 Illinois Trapper Report: Harvest, Effort, and Trapper Opinions. Job Completion Report, Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration W-112-R-33. Human Dimensions Research Program Report HR-24-02/INHS Technical Report 2024 (29). Illinois Natural History Survey, Champaign, IL. 62pp.

Table 1. Comparative fur harvest data for Illinois^a, 2024-25 vs. 2023-24.

Species	Number of Pelts Sold ^a		Change in Sales ^b		Average Price Per Pelt (Dollars)		Total Value to Fur-Takers (Dollars)		Change in Value	
	2024-25 (#)	2023-24 ^d (#)	Δ (#)	Δ (%)	mpv (2024-25)	mpv (2023-24)	value (2023-24)	value (2024-25)	Δ (#)	Δ (%)
Muskrat	5,175	8,152	-2,977	-36.5	2.08	2.56	\$20,869.12	\$10,764.00	-\$10,105.12	-48.4
Mink	186	309	-123	-39.8	5.72	4.27	\$1,319.43	\$1,063.92	-\$255.51	-19.4
Raccoon	26,942	31,532	-4,590	-14.6	3.88	3.93	\$123,920.76	\$104,534.96	-\$19,385.80	-15.6
Opossum	378	1,217	-839	-68.9	1.12	1.33	\$1,618.61	\$423.36	-\$1,195.25	-73.8
Red Fox	100	101	-1	-1.0	6.87	7.14	\$721.14	\$687.00	-\$34.14	-4.7
Gray Fox	0	0	0	#DIV/0!			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Beaver	4,925	11,968	-7,043	-58.8	12.15	20.23	\$242,112.64	\$59,838.75	-\$182,273.89	-75.3
Otter ^c	1,062	1,399	-337	-24.1	22.95	29.27	\$40,948.73	\$24,372.90	-\$16,575.83	-40.5
Skunk	208	395	-187	-47.3	9.25	2.38	\$940.10	\$1,924.00	\$983.90	104.7
Weasel	1	1	0	0.0	1	1	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$0.00	
Coyote	768	828	-60	-7.2	6.09	5.75	\$4,761.00	\$4,677.12	-\$83.88	-1.8
Badger	11	9	2	22.2	8.78	6.33	\$56.97	\$96.58	\$39.61	69.5
Bobcat ^c	649	370	279	75.4	42.49	67.5	\$24,975.00	\$27,576.01	\$2,601.01	10.4
Total	40,405	42,612	-2,207	-5.2			\$462,244.50	\$235,959.60	-\$226,284.90	-49.0

^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.

^d2024-25 out-of-state pelt sales were not available at time of this report. 2023-24 percentages were used.

^eCorrected 2023-24 harvest based on % Fur buyer return and out of state sales