



**ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION
ANNUAL REPORT**



1999-00 Furbearing Animal Harvest

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Abstract

During the 1999-00 fur-taking season, 28,285 pelts valued at \$160,846.49 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 1998-99 season, the number of pelts harvested decreased 35% and the total value of the harvest decreased 30%. Harvests for the 1999-00 season and percent change from 1998-99 season were: raccoon 13,614 (-42%); opossum 251 (-76%); muskrat 898 (-20%); mink 1,812 (+37%); beaver 8,350 (-32%); gray fox 371 (-31%); bobcat 534 (-8%); coyote 107 (+11%); nutria 708 (-24%); eastern spotted skunk 1 (0%); river otter 1,619 (-31%); striped skunk 3 (-25%); red fox 17 (-82%); badger 0 (0%); and long-tailed weasel 0 (0%).

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INTRODUCTION

The harvest of furbearing animals is important both recreationally and economically to many Arkansans. The hunting and trapping of furbearers, accompanied by the subsequent marketing of fur pelts, contributes significantly to the state's economy. Hunting and trapping helps reduce wildlife damage and may help reduce disease in wildlife populations. Fur-takers, therefore, are an effective and vital tool for managing this renewable resource.

Statewide harvest totals are obtained from Fur Dealer Report Booklets and are calculated each year by county and physiographic region. Each county has been assigned to a specific physiographic region, even though a county may lie in parts of two physiographic regions. This data enables us to estimate the worth of the furbearer resource and, in conjunction with other biological data, helps us to objectively manage these species.

METHODS

Fur buyers are required to record all pelt sales in Fur Dealer Report Booklets. Fur dealers were supplied these booklets and instructed to complete and return them within 30 days following the close of the fur-taking season. All fur dealers were issued self-addressed, stamped envelopes for the return of these booklets. During the 1999-00 fur-taking season, 30 fur dealers were licensed (21 resident and 9 non-resident), a decrease of 3 (-9%) from the previous year. In addition to the fur dealer report booklets, each fur dealer was sent a questionnaire asking for the average price they paid for the various furbearing species. These prices were pooled for all fur dealers responding, and multiplied times the number of each species harvested, to obtain the total value of the fur harvest.

The general 1999-00 fur-taking seasons were from sunrise, November 20, 1999, through sunset, February 13, 2000. Beaver, muskrat and nutria season was from sunrise, November 20, 1999 to sunset, March 31, 2000. Coyote season was from September 4, 1999 - March 8, 2000 and from May 15 - June 13, 2000.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the 1999-00 fur-taking season, 28,285 pelts valued at \$160,846.49 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 1998-99 season, the number of pelts harvested decreased 35% and the total value of the harvest decreased 30%. Harvests for the 1999-00 season and percent change from 1998-99 season were: raccoon 13,614 (-42%); opossum 251 (-76%); muskrat 898 (-20%); mink 1,812 (+37%); beaver 8,350 (-32%); gray fox 371 (-31%); bobcat 534 (-8%); coyote 107 (+11%); nutria 708 (-24%); eastern spotted skunk 1 (0%); river otter 1,619 (-31%); striped skunk 3 (-25%); red fox 17 (-82%); badger 0 (0%); and long-tailed weasel 0 (0%).

Furbearer harvest pressure is affected by animal population fluctuations, by the current prices paid for fur and by the weather. Any of these factors can increase or decrease the harvest of furbearing animals. Also, harvest pressure changes geographically within the state over time.

Currently, most furbearer populations are high due to depressed fur markets for most species. River otter prices have held strong due to overseas demands. The bad economic situation in Japan and Korea has hurt wild fur prices, with only river otter, beaver from northern climates and ranch mink holding strong. Markets in China and Russia have given hope to sales of some species, mostly used for lesser-priced garments and trim.

In Arkansas, Act 1358 of 1997 (Conservation District Beaver Control Program) has continued to contribute to an increase in beaver trappers, and beaver pelts, although the bounties paid on 30,000 beavers annually under this program is not all reflected in the annual harvest in 1999-00 of only 8,350 beaver. Also, this increase in beaver trapping contributes to an increased trend in river otter harvest in the state.

Tagging of red fox was discontinued for the 1998-99 trapping season. The reported red fox harvest for 1999-00 was 17, although, undoubtedly, most red fox were sold to foxhound coursing pens, while others were sent to taxidermists for mounting purposes.

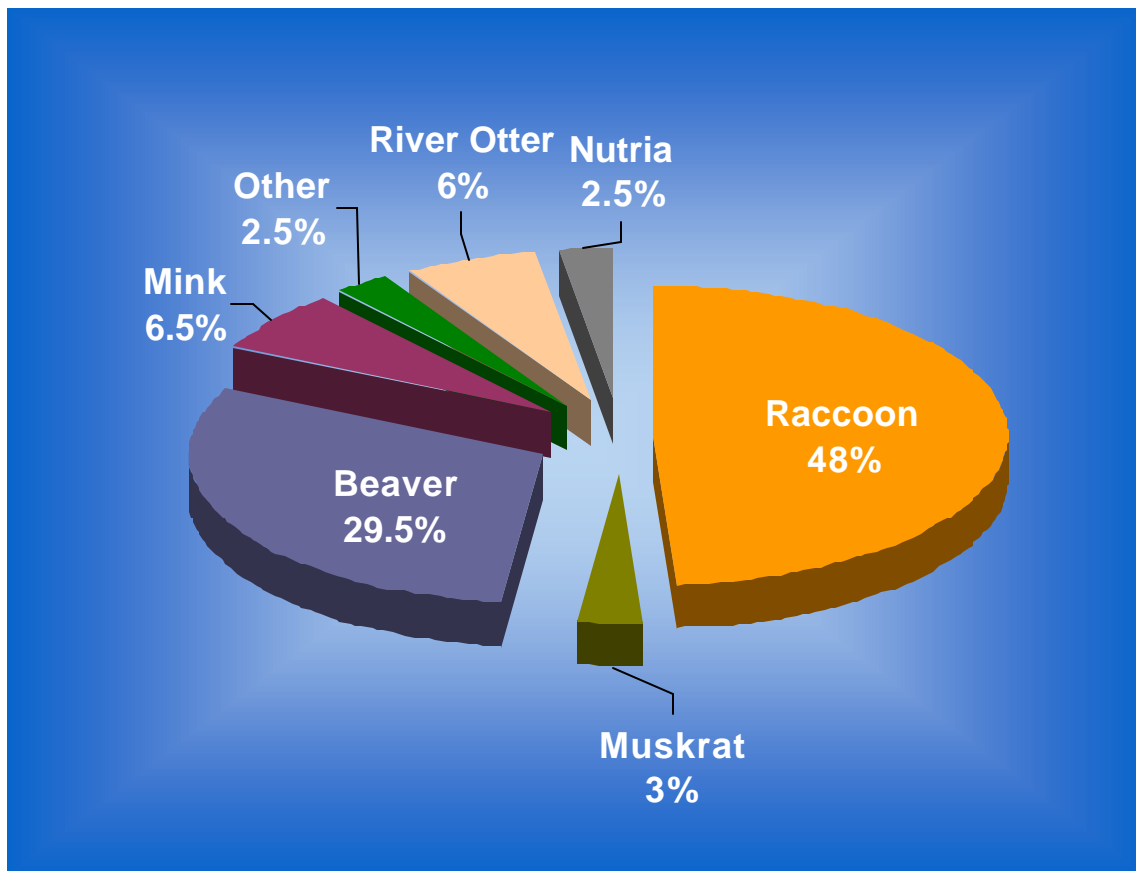
Table 1. 1999-00 FURBEARING ANIMAL HARVEST.

	Raccoon	Opossum	Muskrat	Mink	Beaver	Gray Fox	RedFox	Bobcat	Coyote	Nutria	Eastern Spotted Skunk	River Otter	Striped Skunk	Badger	Long-Tailed Weasel
	*\$2.40	\$0.44	\$1.30	\$7.47	\$5.37	\$6.79	\$10.86	\$13.06	\$4.53	\$1.67	\$0.00	\$35.31	\$2.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
DELTA	5,940	73	715	995	4,133	115	4	138	9	438	0	732	0	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	1,514	8	69	139	595	72	4	52	75	4	0	117	1	0	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	1,415	53	73	26	741	60	4	109	11	2	1	138	0	0	0
COASTAL PLAIN	3,231	42	36	209	2,547	119	5	213	6	260	0	608	2	0	0
Grand Totals **	13,614	251	898	1,812	8,350	371	17	534	107	708	1	1,619	3	0	0

* Average prices paid for pelts statewide.

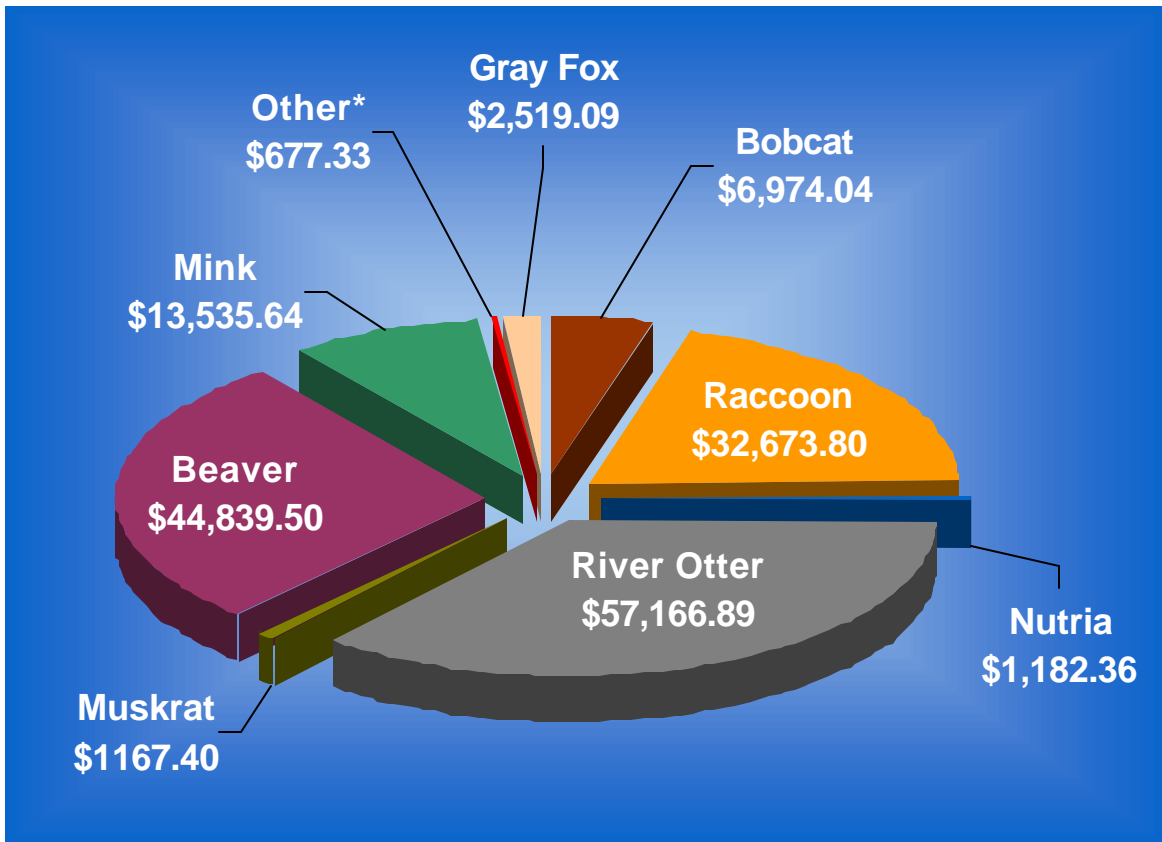
** Includes pelts that Fur Dealers did not record the county (therefore a region could not be determined).

Figure 1. Furbearer harvest for 1999-2000,
as a percentage of the total fur harvest



*Other species include Gray Fox, Red Fox, Bobcat, Coyote, Opossum, Eastern Spotted Skunk,
and Striped Skunk

Figure 2. Relative value of commercially harvested furbearers by species for 1999-2000



* Other species include Coyote, Opossum, Eastern Spotted Skunk, Striped Skunk, and Red Fox

TABLE 2. VALUE OF FUR HARVEST FOR 1999-00.

Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
Raccoon	13,614	\$2.40	\$32,673.80
Opossum	251	\$0.44	\$110.44
Muskrat	898	\$1.30	\$1,167.40
Mink	1,812	\$7.47	\$13,535.64
Beaver	8,350	\$5.37	\$44,839.50
Gray Fox	371	\$6.79	\$2,519.09
Bobcat	534	\$13.06	\$6,974.04
Coyote	107	\$4.53	\$484.71
Nutria	708	\$1.67	\$1,182.36
E. Spotted Skunk	1	\$2.00	\$2.00
River Otter	1,619	\$35.31	\$57,166.89
Striped Skunk	3	\$2.00	\$6.00
Badger	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Long-tailed Weasel	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Red fox	17	\$10.86	\$184.62
TOTALS	28,285		\$160,846.49