



ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION
ANNUAL REPORT

2000-2001 Furbearing Animal Harvest

Prepared by

MIKE PLEDGER
Furbearer Program Coordinator

and

Bill Hailey

HUGH C. DURHAM IV, DIRECTOR
SCOTT HENDERSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
DONNY HARRIS, CHIEF, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

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Abstract

During the 2000-2001 fur-taking season, 29,044 pelts valued at \$245,582.26 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 1999-00 season, while the total number of pelts harvested increased only 3%, the total value of the harvest increased 53%. Harvests for the 2000-2001 season and percent change from 1999-00 season were: raccoon 12,592 (-7%); opossum 530 (+111%); muskrat 714 (-20%); mink 665 (-63%); beaver 11,144 (+33%); gray fox 330 (-11%); bobcat 503 (-6%); coyote 66 (-38%); nutria 488 (-31%); eastern spotted skunk 1 (0%); river otter 1,956 (+21%); striped skunk 8 (+167%); red fox 47 (+176%); 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 to the state's economy. Hunting and trapping helps reduce wildlife damage and may help reduce disease in wildlife populations by preventing furbearer populations from reaching unhealthy levels. 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 2000-2001 fur-taking season, 25 fur dealers were licensed (19 resident and 6 non-resident), a decrease of 5 (-17%) 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 2000-2001 fur-taking seasons were from sunrise, November 18, 2000, through sunset, February 11, 2001. Beaver, muskrat and nutria season was from sunrise, November 18, 2000 to sunset, March 31, 2001. Coyote season was from September 2, 2000 - March 1, 2001 and from May 15 - June 13, 2001.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the 2000-2001 fur-taking season, 29,044 pelts valued at \$245,582.26 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 1999-00 season, while the total number of pelts harvested increased only 3%, the total value of the harvest increased 53%. Harvests for the 2000-2001 season and percent change from 1999-00 season were: raccoon 12,592 (-7%); opossum 530 (+111%); muskrat 714 (-20%); mink 665 (-63%); beaver 11,144 (+33%); gray fox 330 (-11%); bobcat 503 (-6%); coyote 66 (-38%); nutria 488 (-31%); eastern spotted skunk 1 (0%); river otter 1,956 (+21%); striped skunk 8 (+167%); red fox 47 (+176%); badger 0 (0%); and long-tailed weasel 0 (0%)(Tables 1 and 2)(Figures 1 and 2).

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 (Figures 3 and 4).

Currently, most furbearer populations are high due to depressed fur markets for most species. River otter prices have held strong due to overseas demands (Figure 5). 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 those used for lesser-priced garments and trim.

In Arkansas, Act 1358 of 1997 (Conservation District Beaver Control Program) has continued to maintain an interest in beaver trapping, and beaver pelts (Figure 6). Under this bounty program, 30,000 beavers are taken annually, while the annual reported harvest of beaver in 2000-2001 was only 11,144 beaver. Also, this increase in beaver trapping may contribute 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 2000-2001 was 47, although, undoubtedly, many red fox were sold to foxhound coursing pens, while others were sent to taxidermists for mounting purposes.

Table 1. 2000-2001 FURBEARING ANIMAL HARVEST.

	Raccoon	Opossum	Muskrat	Mink	Beaver	Gray Fox	Red Fox	Bobcat	Coyote	Nutria	Eastern Spotted Skunk	River Otter	Striped Skunk	Badger	Long-Tailed Weasel
	*\$3.62	\$0.61	\$1.57	\$7.35	\$7.10	\$6.90	\$14.11	\$15.74	\$5.00	\$1.60	\$0.00	\$52.43	\$2.94	\$0.00	\$0.00
DELTA	5,472	58	168	413	5,578	13	6	190	7	280	0	937	1	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	1,682	165	342	102	564	167	7	103	37	0	0	156	1	0	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	1,410	195	106	74	1,237	56	18	52	10	1	1	92	6	0	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	2,680	101	62	53	3,007	73	14	116	9	183	0	632	0	0	0
Grand Totals **	12,592	530	714	665	11,144	330	47	503	66	488	1	1,956	8	0	0

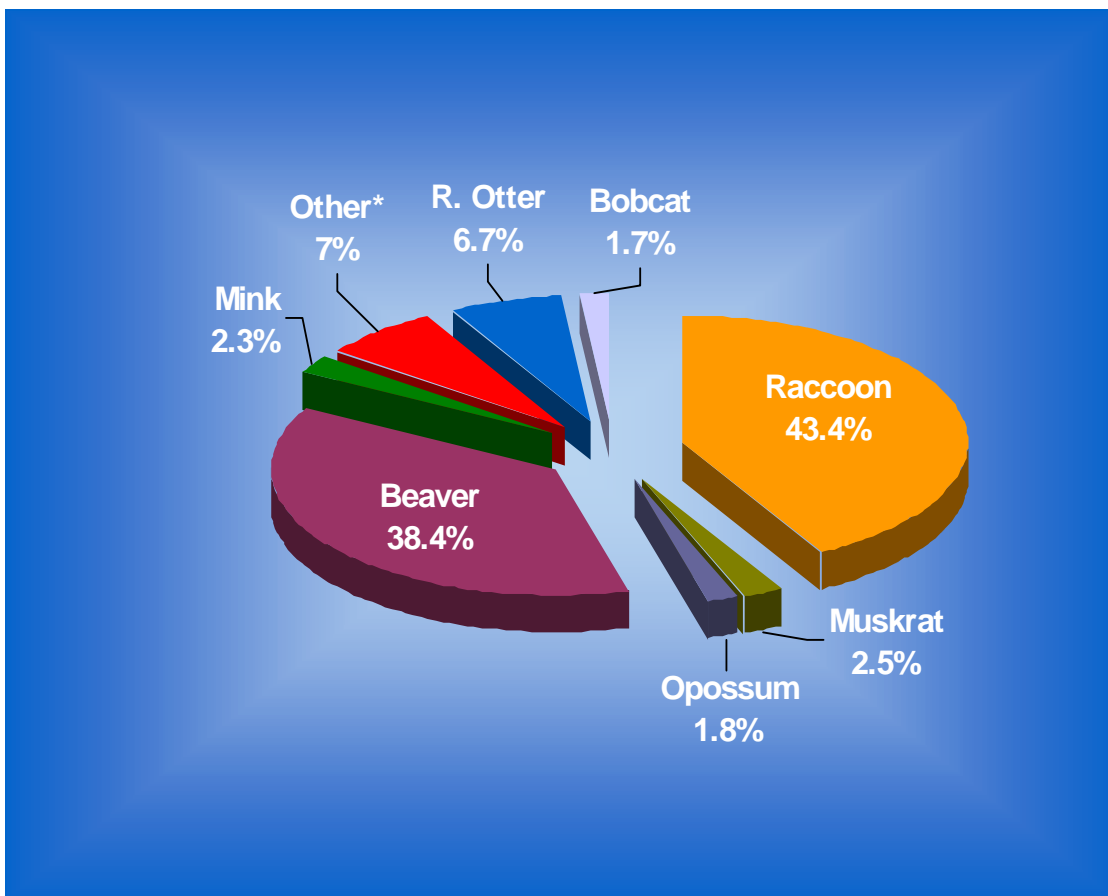
* Average prices paid for pelts statewide.

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

TABLE 2. VALUE OF FUR HARVEST FOR 2000-2001.

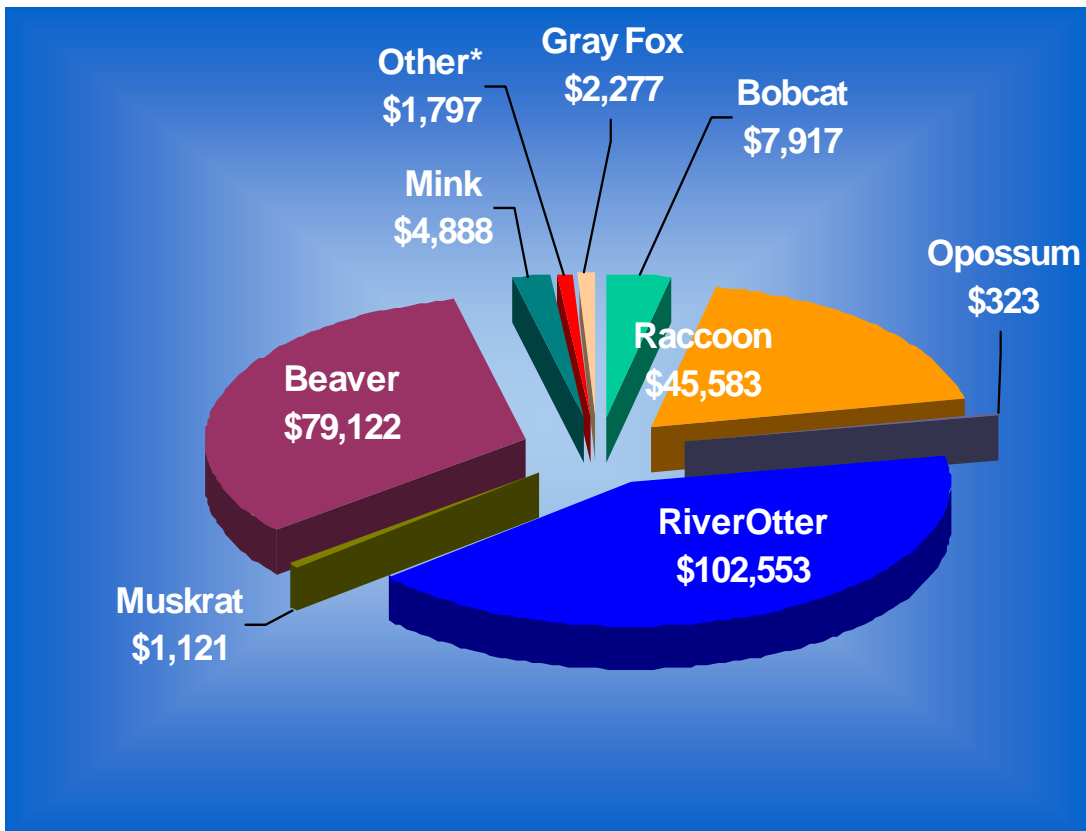
Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
Raccoon	12,592	\$3.62	\$45,583.04
Opossum	530	\$0.61	\$323.30
Muskrat	714	\$1.57	\$1,120.98
Mink	665	\$7.35	\$4,887.75
Beaver	11,144	\$7.10	\$79,122.40
Gray Fox	330	\$6.90	\$2,277.00
Red fox	47	\$14.11	\$663.17
Bobcat	503	\$15.74	\$7,917.22
Coyote	66	\$5.00	\$330.00
Nutria	488	\$1.60	\$780.80
River Otter	1,956	\$52.43	\$102,553.08
Striped Skunk	8	\$2.94	\$23.52
E. Spotted Skunk	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Badger	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Long-tailed Weasel	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTALS	29,044		\$245,582.26

Figure 1. Furbearer harvest for 2000-01,
as a percentage of the total fur harvest



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

Figure 2. Relative value of commercially harvested furbearers by species for 2000-01.



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

Figure 3.
RACCOON HARVEST
1976-2000

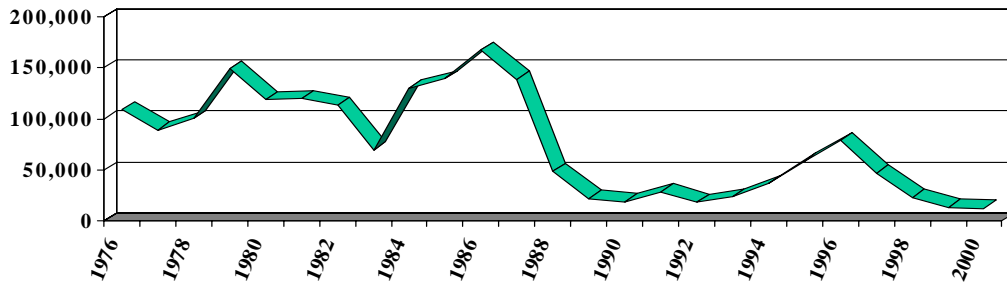


Figure 4. BOBCAT HARVEST
1976-2000

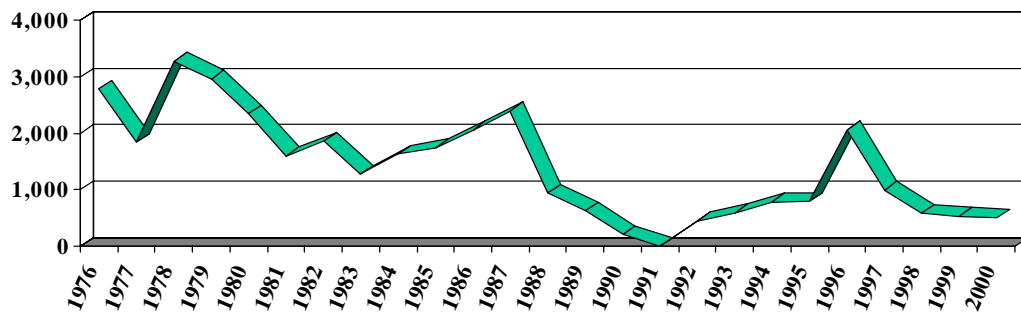


Figure 5.
RIVER OTTER HARVEST
1976-2000

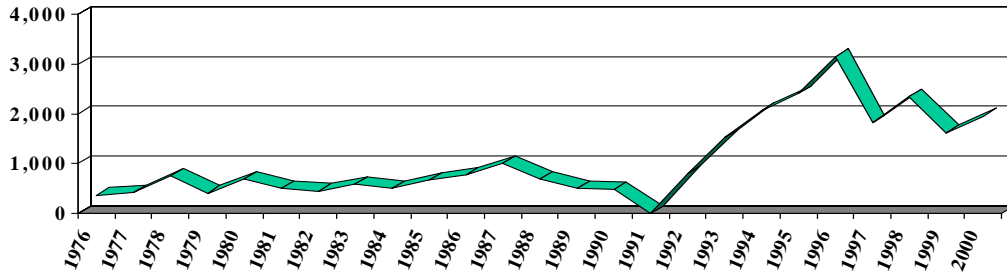
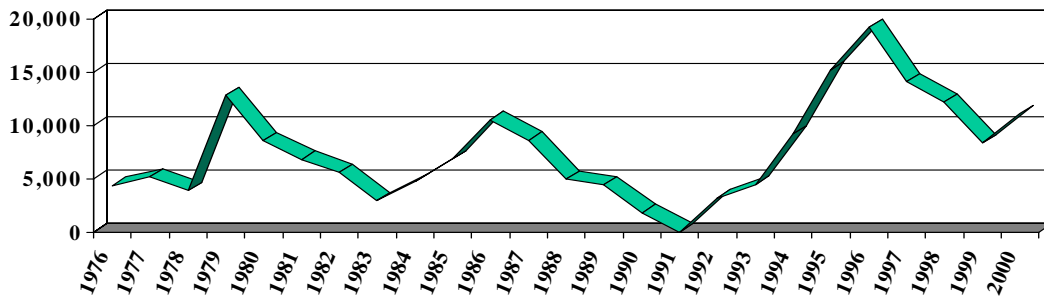


Figure 6. BEAVER HARVEST
1976-2000



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PREPARED BY: Mike Pledger
Furbearer Program Coordinator

APPROVED BY:

ASSISTANT CHIEF,
PROGRAMS _____

CHIEF, WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT DIVISION _____