

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

2001-2004 Furbearing Animal Sales

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2001-2004 Furbearing Animal Sales Report

Abstract

During the 2003-2004 fur-taking season, 26,280 pelts valued at \$544,241.22 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 2002-2003 season the number of pelts sold increased by 34% and the total value of the harvest increased 201%. Fur prices were higher for most species and the increase in total fur harvest value was led by a jump in otter and bobcat prices. Furbearer sales for the 2003-2004 season and percent change from 2002-03 season were: raccoon 12,546 (+46%); opossum 1,366 (+32%); muskrat 476 (+3%); mink 877 (+240%); beaver 6,095 (+5%); gray fox 868 (+26%); bobcat 1,140 (+67%); coyote 326 (+48%); nutria 133 (-287%); eastern spotted skunk 12 (+600%); river otter 2,253 (+19%); striped skunk 81 (+11%); red fox 105 (+40%); badger 2 (+200%); and long-tailed weasel 0 (no change). Information on furbearing animal sales from the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 seasons is also provided.

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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.

The 2003-2004 fur-taking seasons were:

General Furbearer Hunting,

Sunrise September 1, 2003 – Sunset, February 29, 2004 (Limit 2 per day per species)

General Furbearer Trapping,

Sunrise, November 14, 2003 – Sunset, February 8, 2004 (No limit)

Muskrat, Nutria, Beaver Trapping:

Sunrise November 14, 2003 – Sunset, March 31, 2004 (No Limit)

Raccoon Hunting:

July 31 – August 31, 2003 (night, with dogs, Limit 1); November 14, 2003 – March 31, 2004 (day or night, No limit)

Coyote Hunting:

September 1, 2003 – February 29, 2004 (dogs allowed, Limit 2 per day); April 3 – June 12, 2004 (no dogs, Limit 2 per day)

Statewide pelt sale 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.

Due to the retirement of former furbearer biologist Mike Pledger no furbearing animal harvest reports were produced for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 seasons. Basic harvest information from these years is included as Tables 2 and 3 in this report.

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 2003-2004 fur-taking season, 35 fur dealers were licensed (24 resident and 11 non-resident), an increase of 10 (40%) from the previous year. Pelt prices are based on the average of the reported average sale price at the two large fur sales held in Arkansas; Russellville (February 7, 2004, average price for all furs sold) and Malvern (February 14, 2004, average price of green furs). These fur sales amounted to 34% of pelt sales in Arkansas and should be representative of overall fur

prices. Previous reports have used a questionnaire sent to fur dealers in which they were asked to report the average price for fur that they paid over the course of the season.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the 2003-2004 fur-taking season, 26,280 pelts valued at \$544,241.22 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 2002-2003 season the number of pelts sold increased by 34% and the total value of the harvest increased 201%. Harvests for the 2003-2004 season and percent change from 2002-2003 season were: raccoon 12,546 (+46%); opossum 1,366 (+32%); muskrat 476 (+3%); mink 877 (+240%); beaver 6,095 (+5%); gray fox 868 (+26%); bobcat 1,140 (+67%); coyote 326 (+48%); nutria 133 (-287%); eastern spotted skunk 12 (+600%); river otter 2,253 (+19%); striped skunk 81 (+11%); red fox 105 (+40%); badger 2 (+200%); and long-tailed weasel 0 (no change)(Tables 1 and 4).

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. No information is available on the number of resident furtakers in 2003-2004 though in 2002-2003 residents were required to obtain a free furtakers permit prior to harvesting any furbearing animal (any method). The 8,365 permits issued represents a drop of 53% in the number of resident furtakers from 1983, which was the last time a resident furtakers permit was required. Non-residents are required to obtain a Non-Resident Furtakers Permit (\$100). The number of permitted non-resident furtakers increased from 92 in 2002-2003 to 136 in 2003-2004 (+ 48%).

Reported sales of bobcat and otter under-represent the number of these species taken within Arkansas. In accordance with federal law pelts of these species must be tagged by a Commission employee prior to leaving the state. While only 2,253 otter and 1,140 bobcat were sold in Arkansas a total of 4,211 otter and 1,880 bobcat were tagged in 2003-2004. In 2002-2003 a total of 2,368 otter and 988 bobcat were tagged while 1,887 otter and 681 bobcat were reported sold. While some of these animals may have been taken in previous years, it is clear that our current system of furdealer reporting is missing a significant percentage of otter and bobcat harvest which may have a serious impact on assessments of county and regional harvest trends. Additional information may have to be gathered as part of the tagging process to resolve this issue.

In Arkansas, Act 1358 of 1997 (Conservation District Beaver Control Program) has continued to maintain an interest in beaver trapping, and beaver pelts though the distribution of bounty funding among counties is somewhat haphazard. Under this program which is administered by the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission, approximately 30,000 beavers are taken annually at a cost to the state of \$150,000. The annual reported sales of beaver in 2003-2004 was only 6,095, some of which may have also had their tails submitted for bounty payment. While it is clear that bounties have encouraged the taking of beaver, the effectiveness of this program in reducing actual nuisance problems in high beaver-density counties has not yet been evaluated.

Table 1. 2003-2004 FURBEARING ANIMAL SALES.

	Raccoon	Opossum	Muskrat	Mink	Beaver	Gray Fox	Red Fox	Bobcat	Coyote	Nutria	Eastern Spotted Skunk	River Otter	Striped Skunk	Badger	Long-Tailed Weasel
PRICE*	\$7.38	\$1.30	\$2.39	\$9.27	\$7.53	\$21.14	\$22.31	\$54.74	\$17.49	\$1.82	\$7.50	135.55	\$2.34	---	---
DELTA	3,319	315	218	601	2,954	28	7	159	33	69	0	866	48	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	2,514	322	132	129	794	178	29	233	137	0	10	224	30	2	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	2,627	332	97	54	949	168	36	334	73	12	1	268	1	0	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	3,999	394	28	91	1,382	488	33	414	81	52	1	891	2	0	0
Grand Totals **	12,546	1,366	476	877	6,095	868	105	1,140	326	133	12	2,253	81	2	0

* Average prices paid for pelts statewide based on average of Russellville and Malvern fur sales.

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

Table 2. 2001-2002 FURBEARING ANIMAL SALES.

	Raccoon	Opossum	Muskrat	Mink	Beaver	Gray Fox	Red Fox	Bobcat	Coyote	Nutria	Eastern Spotted Skunk	River Otter	Striped Skunk	Badger	Long-Tailed Weasel
PRICE*	\$4.54	\$0.97	\$1.42	\$5.11	\$5.05	\$4.72	\$13.64	\$22.25	\$3.74	0.67	--	\$50.22	---	---	---
DELTA	1,862	87	145	155	3,229	11	5	62	2	47	0	534	0	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	1,625	126	190	91	616	129	15	155	96	0	0	124	11	0	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	1,811	171	212	175	954	95	13	113	21	4	0	126	11	0	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	2,972	125	61	114	1,303	186	21	168	7	123	0	466	0	0	0
Grand Totals **	8,471	509	628	538	6,885	421	54	498	126	274	0	1,351	22	0	0

* Average prices paid for pelts statewide based on results of February 27, 2002 Arkansas Trappers Association fur sale.

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

Table 3. 2002-2003 FURBEARING ANIMAL SALES.

	Raccoon	Opossum	Muskrat	Mink	Beaver	Gray Fox	Red Fox	Bobcat	Coyote	Nutria	Eastern Spotted Skunk	River Otter	Striped Skunk	Badger	Long-Tailed Weasel
PRICE*	\$4.26	\$1.56	\$2.78	\$7.71	\$3.26	\$8.63	\$21.14	\$26.22	\$21.80	\$1.55	\$59.00	94.30	\$4.46	---	---
DELTA	1,640	145	90	155	1,610	33	6	116	2	67	1	482	0	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	1,195	302	147	72	614	214	21	145	77	1	0	159	19	0	0
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	1,760	219	197	66	1,087	165	28	143	43	7	1	247	5	0	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	3,850	371	22	71	1,726	279	20	277	99	204	0	909	49	0	0
Grand Totals **	8,571	1,037	463	366	5,802	691	75	681	221	382	2	1,887	73	0	0

* Average prices paid for pelts statewide based on results of February 16, 2003 Arkansas Trappers Association fur sale.

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

TABLE 4. ESTIMATED VALUE OF ARKANSAS FUR SALES FOR 2003-2004.

Species	Number	Average Price	Total Value
<i>Raccoon</i>	12,546	\$7.38	\$92,589.48
<i>Opossum</i>	1,366	\$1.30	\$1,775.80
<i>Muskrat</i>	476	\$2.39	\$1,137.64
<i>Mink</i>	877	\$9.27	\$8,129.79
<i>Beaver</i>	6,095	\$7.53	\$45,895.35
<i>Gray Fox</i>	868	\$21.14	\$18,349.52
<i>Red fox</i>	105	\$22.31	\$2,342.55
<i>Bobcat</i>	1,140	\$54.74	\$62,403.60
<i>Coyote</i>	326	\$17.49	\$5,701.74
<i>Nutria</i>	133	\$1.82	\$242.06
<i>River Otter</i>	2,253	\$135.55	\$305,394.15
<i>Striped Skunk</i>	81	\$2.34	\$189.54
<i>E. Spotted Skunk</i>	12	\$7.50	\$90.00
<i>Badger</i>	2	\$0.00	\$0.00
<i>Long-tailed Weasel</i>	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTALS	26,280		\$544,241.22

TABLE 5. Average Arkansas fur prices (\$), 1999-2003. Not adjusted for inflation.

Species	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Beaver	5.37	7.10	5.05	3.26	7.53
Bobcat	13.06	15.74	22.25	26.22	54.74
Coyote	4.53	5.00	3.74	21.80	17.49
Gray Fox	6.79	6.90	4.72	8.63	21.14
Mink	7.47	7.35	5.11	7.71	9.27
Muskrat	1.30	1.57	1.42	2.78	2.39
Nutria	1.67	1.60	0.67	1.55	1.82
Opossum	0.44	0.61	0.97	1.56	1.30
Otter	35.31	52.43	50.22	94.30	135.55
Raccoon	2.40	3.62	4.54	4.26	7.38
Red Fox	10.86	14.11	13.64	21.14	22.31
Spotted Skunk	2.00	Not available	Not available	59.00*	7.50
Striped Skunk	2.00	2.94	Not available	4.46	2.34

* Small sample size – Only 2 spotted skunks were sold.

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