

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

2004-2005 Furbearing Animal Sales

Prepared by

Blake Sasse

**SCOTT HENDERSON, DIRECTOR
DAVID GOAD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
DOYLE SHOOK, CHIEF, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

September 27, 2005

2004-2005 Furbearing Animal Sales Report

Abstract

During the 2004-2005 fur-taking season, 27,063 pelts valued at \$317,465.55 were reported sold in Arkansas. Compared to the 2003-2004 season the number of pelts sold increased by 3% and the total value of the harvest decreased by 29%. Furbearer sales for the 2004-2005 season and percent change from 2003-04 season were: raccoon 11,596 (-8%); opossum 2,280 (+67%); muskrat 563 (+18%); mink 630 (-40%); beaver 6,507 (+7%); gray fox 1,167 (+34%); bobcat 1,212 (+6%); coyote 395 (+21%); nutria 197 (+48%); eastern spotted skunk 6 (-50%); river otter 2,305 (+2%); striped skunk 131 (+62%); red fox 71 (-48%); badger 1 (-50%); and long-tailed weasel 2 (+200%).

Permission to Quote

This is a progress report that may contain tentative or preliminary findings. It may be subject to future modifications and revisions. To prevent the issuing of misleading information, persons wishing to quote from this report, to cite it in bibliography, or to use it in other forms, should first obtain permission from the study leader under whose direction the work was performed.

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 2004-2005 fur-taking seasons were:

General Furbearer Hunting,

Sunrise September 1, 2004 – Sunset, February 28, 2005 (Limit 2 per day per species)

General Furbearer Trapping,

Sunrise, November 12, 2004 – Sunset, February 6, 2005 (No limit)

Muskrat, Nutria, Beaver Trapping:

Sunrise November 12, 2004 – Sunset, March 31, 2005 (No Limit)

Coyote Trapping

August 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005 (No limit).

Raccoon Hunting:

July 31 – August 31, 2004 (night, with dogs, Limit 1); November 12, 2004 – March 31, 2005 (day or night, No limit)

Coyote Hunting:

September 1, 2004 – February 28, 2005 (dogs allowed, Limit 2 per day); April 2-3 (in all Turkey Zones except 17 where it is March 26-27); April 9 (April 2 in Turkey Zone 17) – June 12, 2005 (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.

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 2004-2005 fur-taking season, 34 fur dealers were licensed (24 resident and 10 non-resident) which is a decrease of 1 from the previous year. Reports were returned from all dealers. Pelt prices are based on the average of the reported average sale price at the two large fur sales held in Arkansas; Russellville (February 5, 2005, average price for all furs sold) and Malvern (February 12, 2005, average price of green furs). These fur sales amounted to 52% of pelt sales in Arkansas and should be representative of overall fur prices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the 2004-2005 fur-taking season, 27,063 pelts valued at \$317,465.55 were reported sold in Arkansas (Tables 1-3). Compared to the 2003-2004 season the number of pelts sold increased by 3% and the total value of the harvest decreased by 29%. Price decreases were observed for all commercially important species. Furbearer sales for the 2004-2005 season and percent change from 2003-04 season were: raccoon 11,596 (-8%); opossum 2,280 (+67%); muskrat 563 (+18%); mink 630 (-40%); beaver 6,507 (+7%); gray fox 1,167 (+34%); bobcat 1,212 (+6%); coyote 395 (+21%); nutria 197 (+48%); eastern spotted skunk 6 (-50%); river otter 2,305 (+2%); striped skunk 131 (+62%); red fox 71 (-48%); badger 1 (-50%); and long-tailed weasel 2 (+200%).

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 2004-2005 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 that year 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 decreased from 134 in 2003-2004 to 104 in 2004-2005 (- 31%).

Reported sales of bobcat and otter are known to under-represent the number of these species taken within Arkansas. In accordance with federal law pelts of these species must be tagged prior to leaving the state. While only 2,305 otter and 1,212 bobcat were sold in Arkansas a total of 4,065 otter and 2,327 bobcat were tagged in 2004-2005. A similar pattern was observed in the 2003 and 2004 seasons. 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. The actual harvest of other furbearers is also probably under-reported since trappers and hunters may ship their pelts from the state to dealers who are not required to have Arkansas furdealer permits.

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 administered by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (formerly the Soil and Water Conservation Commission), approximately 30,000 beavers are taken annually at a cost to the state of \$150,000 (which is appropriated by the Legislature and not the AGFC). The annual reported sales of beaver in 2004-2005 were only 6,507, 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.

Information from a survey of Arkansas furdealers on the dates in which Arkansas pelts come into and out of prime is found in Appendix 1.

Table 1. 2004-2005 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*	\$3.37	\$0.43	\$1.39	\$9.63	\$3.29	\$11.49	\$13.75	\$31.62	\$4.80	\$0.67	\$9.75	\$86.55	\$2.18	\$21.00	\$5.00
DELTA	3630	505	317	320	3054	38	17	259	24	81	0	931	28	0	0
OZARK MOUNTAIN	1775	705	115	110	404	302	17	297	170	0	6	119	65	1	2
OUACHITA MOUNTAIN	1993	507	76	85	1172	235	17	336	99	2	0	322	12	0	0
GULF COASTAL PLAIN	4150	563	49	110	1842	591	20	416	98	114	0	906	26	0	0
Grand Totals**	11596	2280	563	630	6507	1167	71	1212	395	197	6	2305	131	1	2

* 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. ESTIMATED VALUE OF ARKANSAS FUR SALES FOR 2004-2005.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Price</u>	<u>Total Value</u>
Raccoon	11,596	\$3.37	\$39,078.52
Opossum	2280	\$0.43	\$980.40
Muskrat	563	\$1.39	\$782.57
Mink	630	\$9.63	\$606.69
Beaver	6507	\$3.29	\$21,408.03
Gray Fox	1167	\$11.49	\$13,408.83
Red fox	71	\$13.75	\$976.25
Bobcat	1212	\$31.62	\$38,323.44
Coyote	395	\$4.80	\$1896.00
Nutria	197	\$0.67	\$131.99
River Otter	2305	\$86.55	\$199,497.75
Striped Skunk	131	\$2.18	\$285.58
E. Spotted Skunk	6	\$9.75	\$58.50
Badger	1	\$21.00	\$21.00
Long-tailed Weasel	2	\$5.00	\$10.00
TOTALS	27,063		\$317,465.55

TABLE 3. Average Arkansas fur prices (\$), 2000-2004. Not adjusted for inflation.

Species	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Beaver	7.10	5.05	3.26	7.53	3.29
Bobcat	15.74	22.25	26.22	54.74	31.62
Coyote	5.00	3.74	21.80	17.49	4.80
Gray Fox	6.90	4.72	8.63	21.14	11.49
Mink	7.35	5.11	7.71	9.27	9.63
Muskrat	1.57	1.42	2.78	2.39	1.39
Nutria	1.60	0.67	1.55	1.82	0.67
Opossum	0.61	0.97	1.56	1.30	0.43
Otter	52.43	50.22	94.30	135.55	86.55
Raccoon	3.62	4.54	4.26	7.38	3.37
Red Fox	14.11	13.64	21.14	22.31	13.75
Spotted Skunk	Not available	Not available	59.00*	7.50	9.75
Striped Skunk	2.94	Not available	4.46	2.34	2.18

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

Appendix 1
Fur Primeness Survey
2004-2005 Season

During the 2004-2005 Arkansas furbearing hunting and trapping season licensed resident furdealers were asked to note when the pelts of species they buy came into an went out of prime. Surveys went to 24 furdealers and responses were received from 14 (58%). The number of replies used to compile information on each species varies since some of the respondents did not buy all species or bought too few to be able to make an accurate judgment of when the furs came into prime. Due to small sample sizes for badger, coyote, red fox, muskrat, nutria, opossum, striped skunks, spotted skunks, or weasels those species are not reported. The range of dates from all usable dates is given as well as a “Consensus” date for the starting and ending of each period that includes the most responses (usually within a 10-day period).

Results indicate that the fur trapping season dates may not be optimal for catching animals in their prime, though these dates can be expected to vary depending on annual weather patterns. Some adjustment may be necessary in order to achieve the greatest value for pelts harvested during the furbearing seasons.

RESULTS

	<u>Enter Prime</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Out-of-Prime</u>	<u>n</u>
<u>Beaver</u>				
Range:	Nov. 20 – Dec. 15	10	Feb. 1 – May 1	9
Consensus:	Dec. 1 – Dec. 10	6	Feb. 15 – Mar. 1	4
<u>Bobcat</u>				
Range:	Nov. 20 –Jan. 1	8	Feb. 1 – Apr. 15	7
Consensus:	Nov. 30 – Dec. 10	4	Feb. 25 – Feb. 28	3
<u>Gray Fox</u>				
Range:	Nov. 1 – Dec. 15	9	Jan. 20 – Apr. 15	8
Consensus:	Nov. 30 – Dec. 10	4	Feb. 15 – Feb. 28	4
<u>Mink</u>				
Range:	Nov. 15 – Dec. 15	9	Jan. 15 – Mar. 15	8
Consensus:	Nov. 25 – Dec. 1	5	Feb. 15 – Mar. 1	4
<u>Otter</u>				
Range:	Nov. 20 – Dec. 15	8	Feb. 1 – Mar. 30	8
Consensus:	Dec. 1 – Dec 15	7	Feb. 25 – Mar. 1	4
<u>Raccoon</u>				
Range:	Nov. 1 – Dec. 31	7	Jan. 31 – Mar. 15	6
Consensus:	Dec. 1	3	Feb. 25 – Feb. 28	3

Revision Date: September 27, 2005

PREPARED BY: Blake Sasse, Nongame Mammal/Furbearer Program Coordinator

APPROVED BY:

ASSISTANT CHIEF,
PROGRAMS

_____/s/_____
Brad Carner

CHIEF, WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT DIVISION

_____/s/_____
Doyle Shook