

# **Trapper Questionnaire**

**Statewide Annual Report  
1996–1997**

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

# CODE OF ETHICS

## A TRAPPER'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. Respect other trappers' grounds' particularly brushed, maintained trap lines with a history of use.
2. Check traps regularly.
3. Promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching nontarget animals.
4. Obtain landowner's permission before trapping on private property.
5. Know and use proper releasing and killing methods.
6. Develop set location methods to prevent losses.
7. Trap in the most humane way possible.
8. Dispose of animals carcasses properly.
9. Concentrate trapping in areas where animals are overabundant for the supporting habitat.
10. Promptly report the presence of diseased animals to wildlife authorities.
11. Assist landowners who are having problems with predators and other furbearers that have become a nuisance.
12. Support and help train new trappers in trapping ethics, methods and means, conservation, fur handling and marketing.
13. Obey all trapping regulations and support strict enforcement by reporting violations.
14. Support and promote sound furbearer management.

This code of ethics was copied from the Alaska Trappers Manual. The manual was created through a joint effort between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Trappers Association. The manual is available in Alaska book stores and from the Alaska Trappers Association for approximately \$20.00

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**Tony Knowles, Governor**

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**Frank Rue, Commissioner**

**DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
**Wayne L. Regelin, Director**

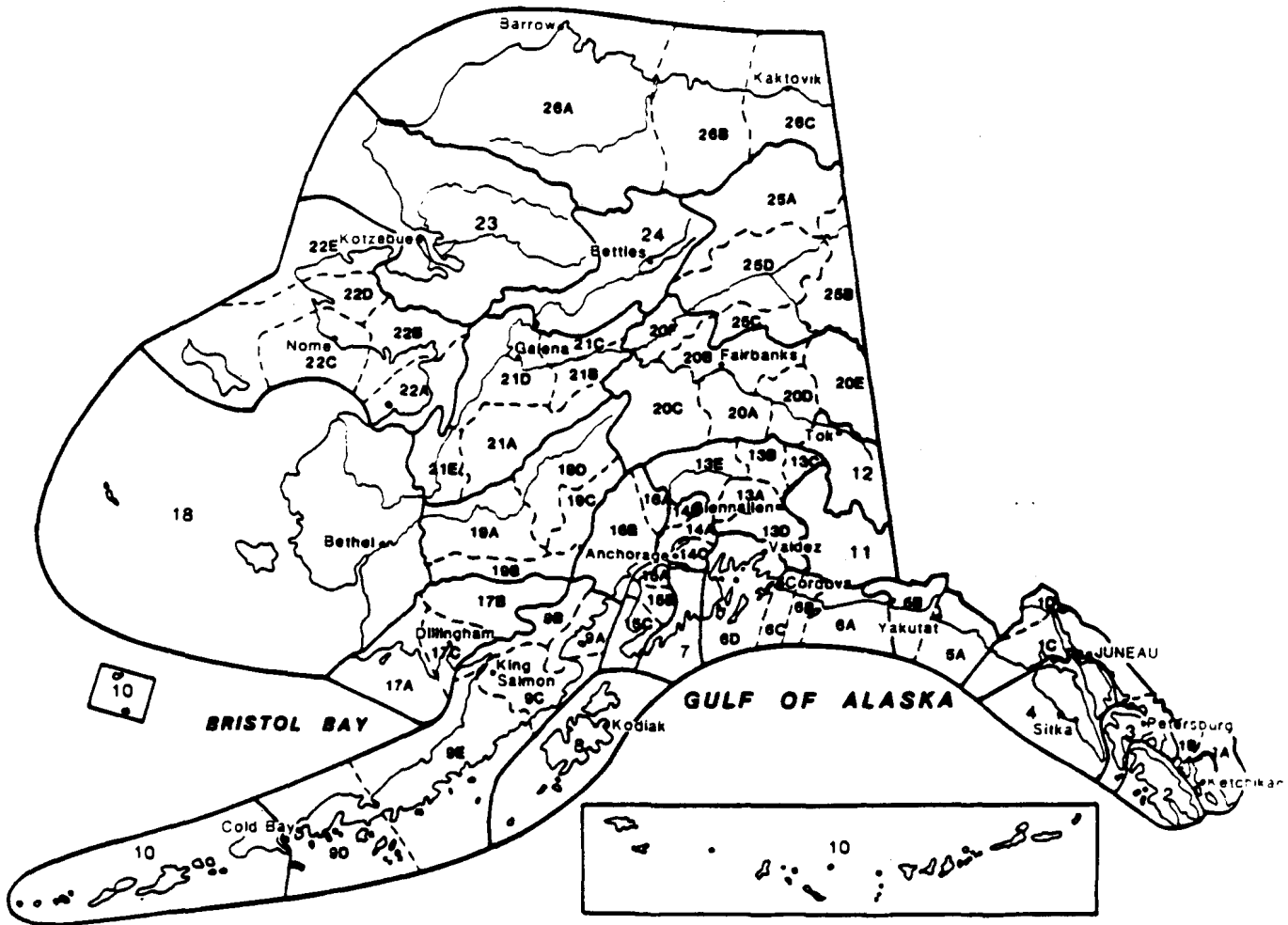
**Persons intending to cite this material should receive permission from the author(s) and/or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Because most reports deal with preliminary results of continuing studies, conclusions are tentative and should be identified as such. Please give authors credit.**

**Free copies of this report and other Division of Wildlife Conservation publications are available to the public. Please direct requests to:**

**Doreen Parker McNeill**  
**Wildlife Biologist**  
**ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation**  
**P.O. Box 25526**  
**Juneau, AK 99802-5526**  
**(907) 465-4190**

**The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 1-800-478-3648, or FAX 907-586-6595. Any person who believes she/he has been discriminated against should write to ADF&G, PO Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526 or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.**

# Alaska's Game Management Units



# ALASKA TRAPPER REPORT, 1996-97

## INTRODUCTION

This report includes information contributed by you, the Alaska trapper. Our mailing list for the 1996-97 season included 1006 trappers. We received information back from 376 individuals. Of these, 68 people trapped in Southeast, 134 trapped in Southcentral, and 174 trapped in Interior Alaska. On the following pages you'll find out how other Alaskans run their traplines, how much effort they put into catching fur, what their primary target species are, and how many furbearers were trapped in the state. You'll also find summaries of Department of Fish and Game furbearer activities, and comments of trappers that were written on the back of the questionnaires. As always, we strive to maintain strict confidentiality, and names of individuals and references to specific traplines are not included. We hope you find this report informative, and please let us know how we can improve it in the future.

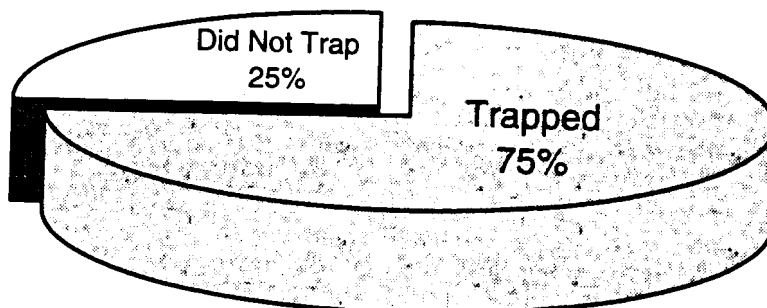
## A PROFILE OF ALASKA'S TRAPPERS

We requested trappers like you to answer the following questions to help us develop this report.

### Did you trap in 1996-97?

75% of the trappers who responded to this questionnaire said they trapped during the 1996-97 season. This is slightly higher than the last 5 year average.

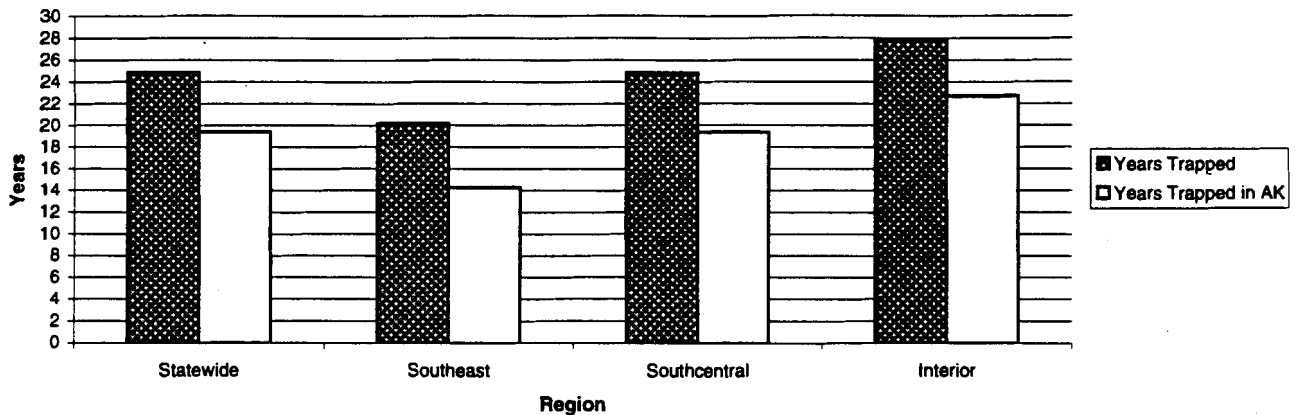
### Of The Trappers Who Returned the 1996-97 Questionnaire



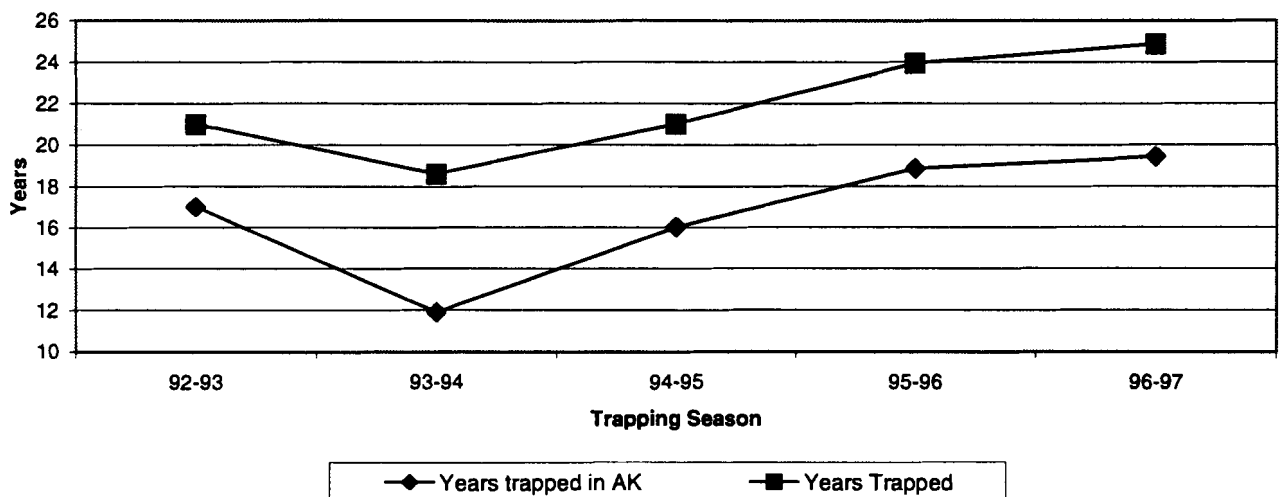
## How many total years of trapping experience do you have?

On average, trappers in Alaska have been taking furs for 25 years, 19 of those years in the state. The following graphs illustrate the breakdown by region and show the trend for past 5 years.

### Average Trapper Experience in 1996-97 - By Region



### Average Trapper Experience Since 1992-93

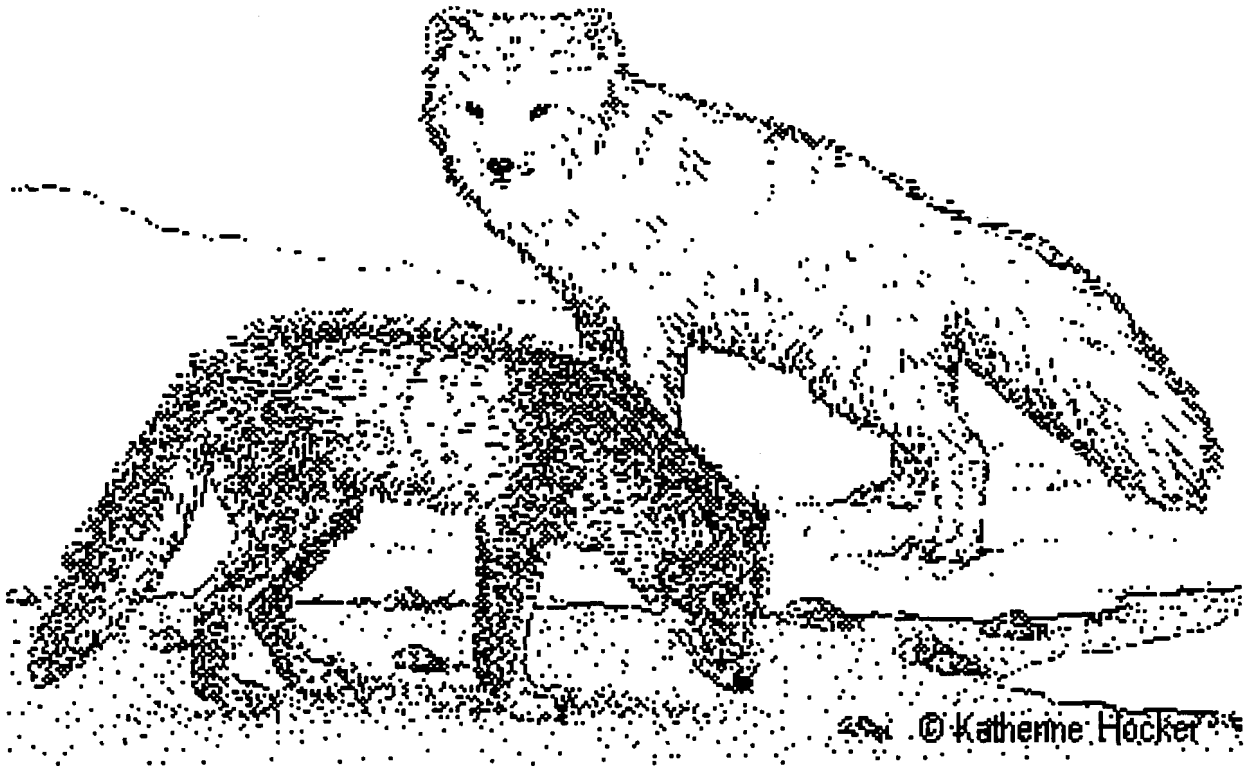
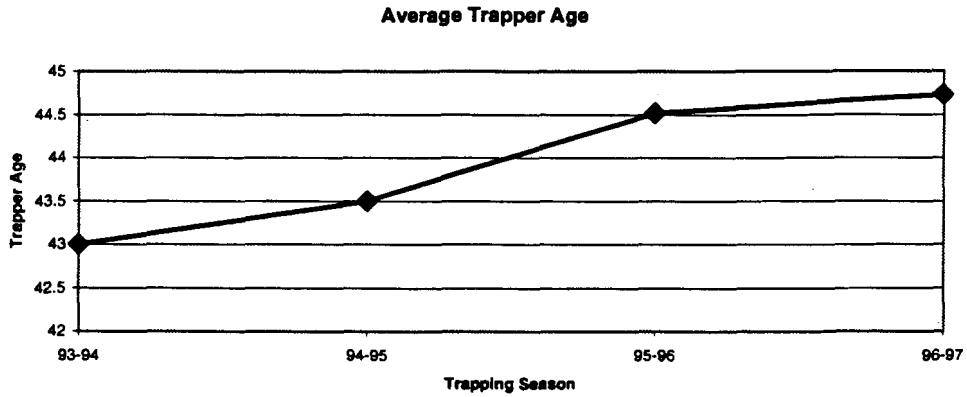


## Did you have a youngster (under 16) with you on your trapline this year?

48% of trappers had someone 16 or younger with them on their trapline at least once. Percentages were: 47% in Southeast, 48% in Southcentral, and 49% in the Interior.

## What is your age?

The average trapper in Alaska is almost 45 years old. Average age was 41 in Southeast, 45 in Southcentral, and 47 in the Interior. The oldest trapper reporting was 85 and the youngest was 10. Trapper age has steadily increased since we began asking this question in 1993-94.

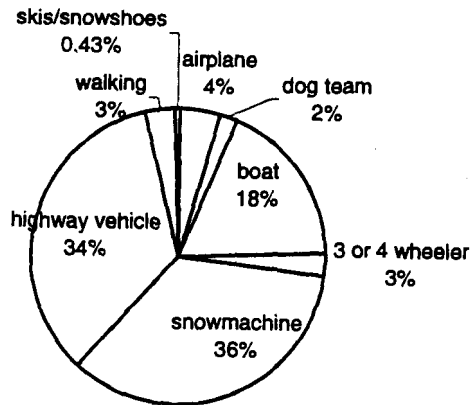


## What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

Transportation used by Alaskan trappers throughout the state to get to their traplines is summarized in the following pie charts:

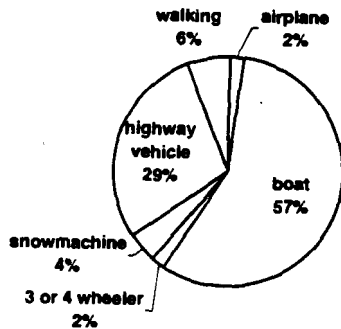
### Statewide Transportation to Trapline

(230 trappers reported)



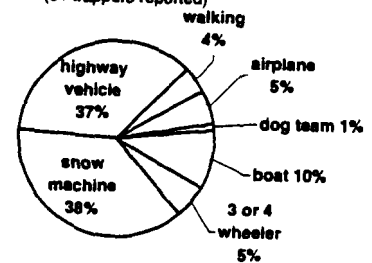
### Southeast

(49 trappers reported)



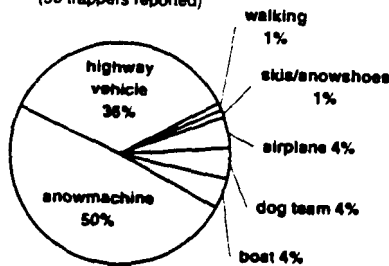
### Southcentral

(91 trappers reported)



### Interior

(90 trappers reported)

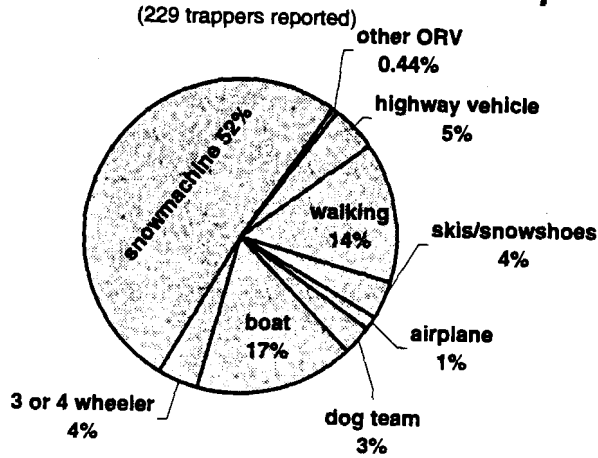




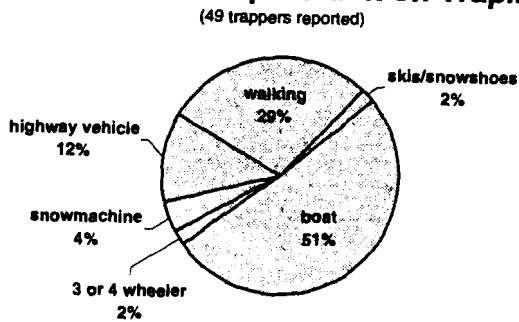
## What transportation did you use run your main trapline?

Overall percentages of transportation used by Alaska's trappers to run their traplines are summarized in the following pie charts:

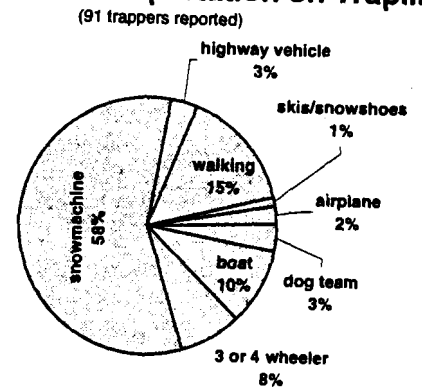
### Statewide Transportation on the Trapline



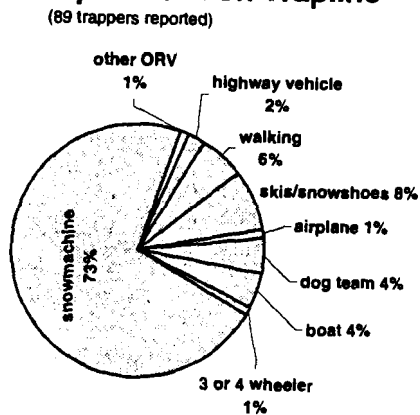
### Southeast Transportation on Trapline



### Southcentral Transportation on Trapline

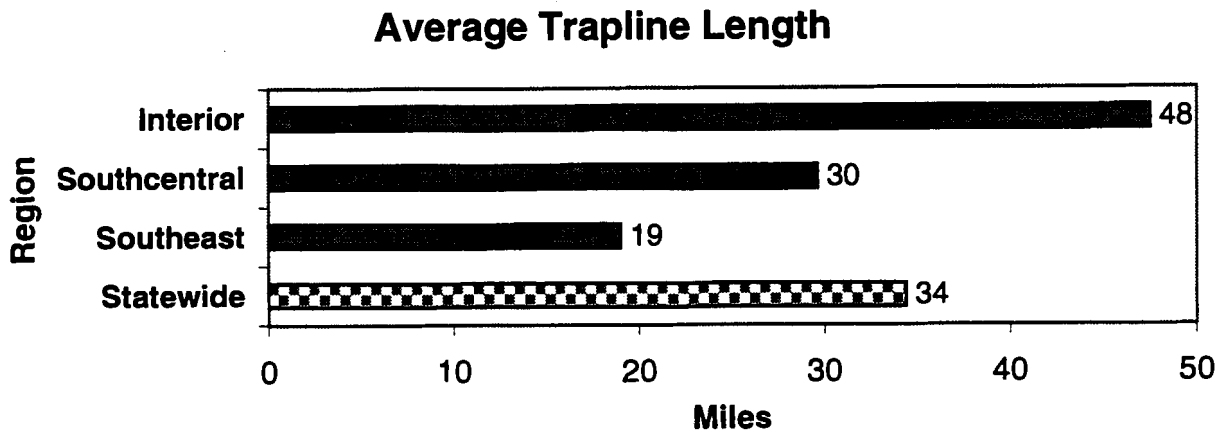


### Interior Transportation on Trapline

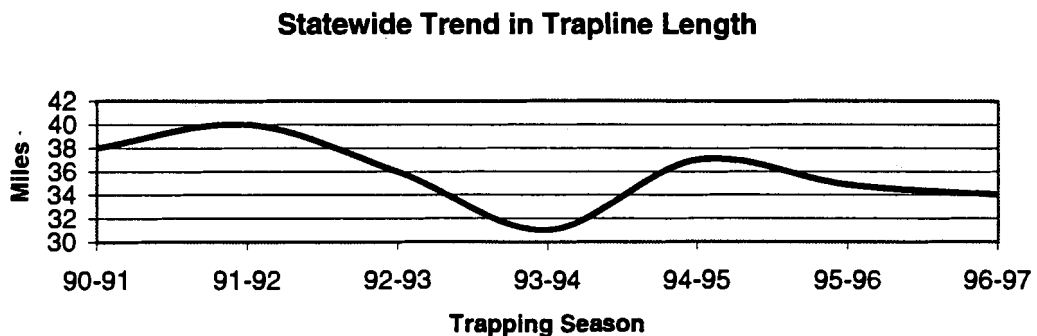


## How long was your main trapline in 1996-97?

The average trapline length in Alaska was 34 miles. Traplines varied from 1 mile in Southeast & Southcentral to 250 miles in the interior. In Southeast Alaska, average trapline length was 19 miles, and varied from 1 to 80 miles. In Southcentral, average length was 30 miles, and ranged from 1 to 150 miles. In the interior, traplines averaged 48 miles long, and ranged from 2 to 250 miles long.



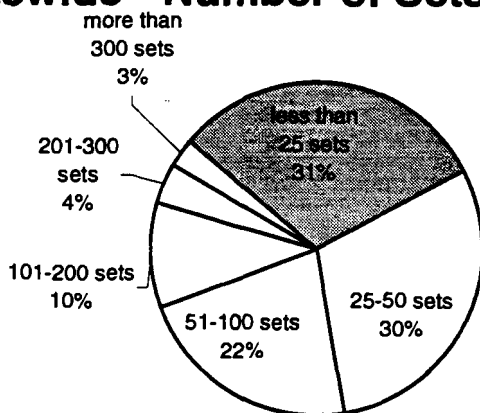
Since the 1990-91 season, when the average trapline was 38 miles, (the first season we included Southeast Alaska in the survey), average trapline length has remained between 30 and 40 miles, with a low of 31 miles in the 1993-94 season. The longest trapline in the state has fluctuated between a low of 220 miles in 1990-91 to a high of over 400 miles in 1992-93. These changes are likely due to different people answering the questionnaire, as well as trappers adjusting the length of their traplines for a variety of reasons, including weather, fur prices or abundance, and time spent doing other things.



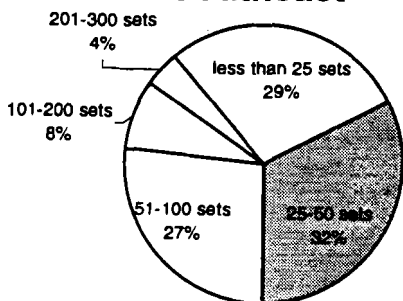
## How many sets did you make on your line in 1996-97?

As shown by the graphs below, the number of sets per trapline varied a lot. Most trappers (83%) put out 100 or fewer sets. Throughout the state, fewer than 3% of trappers put out more than 300 sets. Most Southeast trappers (61%) put out fewer than 50 sets, 27% put out 51-100 sets, and only 12% of Southeast trappers put out more than 100 sets on their lines. In Southcentral, 69% of trappers had 50 or fewer sets on their lines, 31% had more than 100 sets. Many interior trappers (51%) had 50 or fewer sets, while 28% had more than 100 sets on their lines

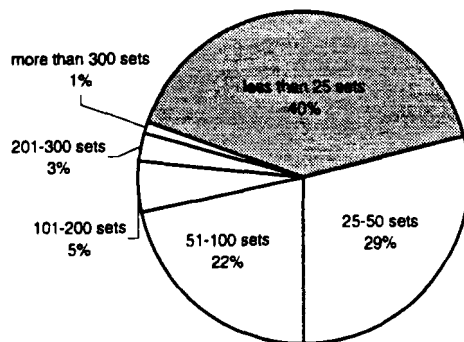
### Statewide - Number of Sets on Trapline



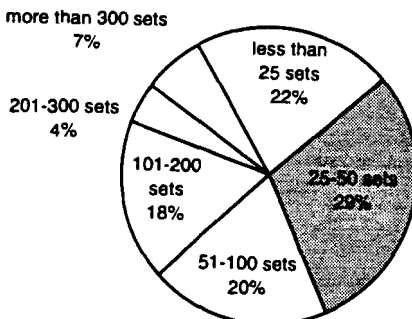
### Southeast



### Southcentral

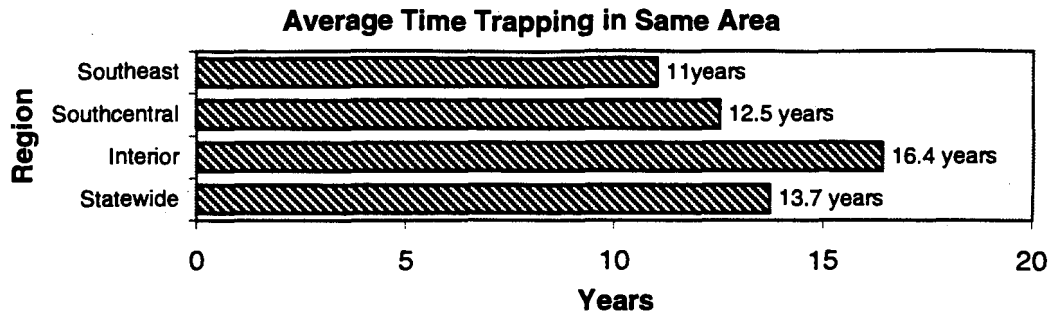


### Interior



### How many years have you been trapping in the same area?

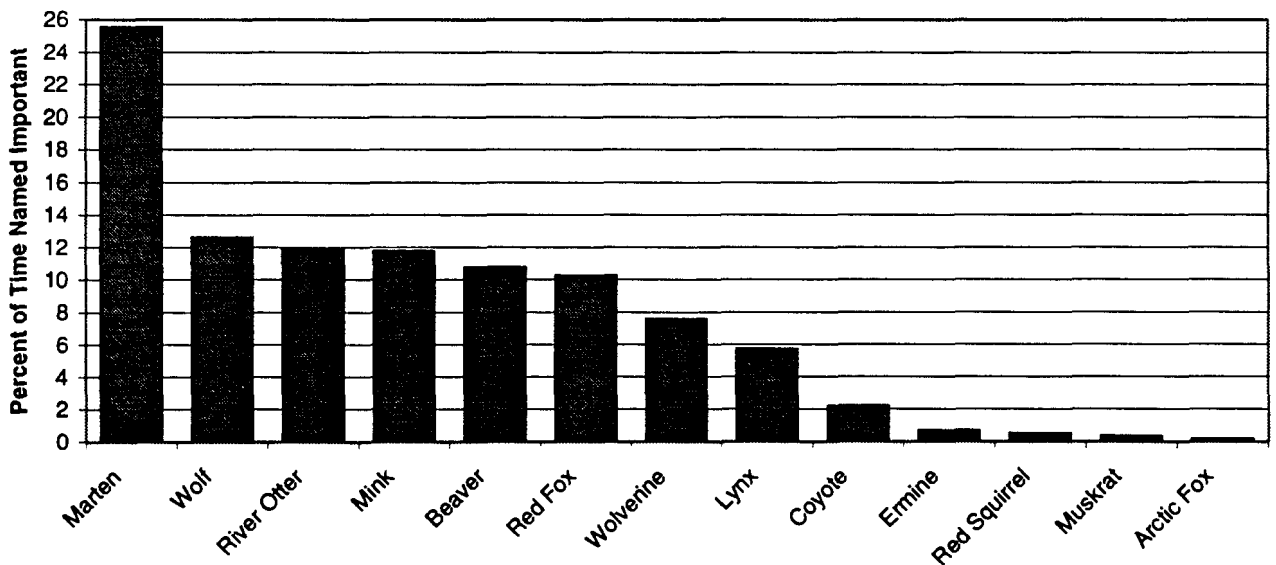
The average amount of time that Alaskans have been trapping the same area is about 14 years. The longest period of time in the same area is 60 years by a trapper in the Interior. In Southeast, the average time in the same area is 11 years, in Southcentral the average is almost 13 years, and in the interior trappers averaged over 16 years of trapping in the same area. On average, time spent trapping has remained about the same since the 1989-90 season, when the average trapper worked the same area an average of 12 years.



### What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1996-97?

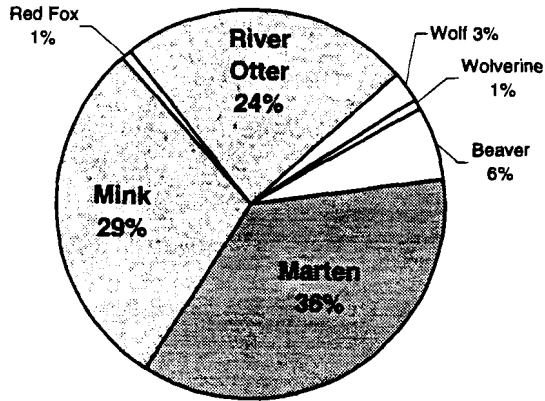
The three species most often listed as important by trappers statewide were Marten (36%), Wolf (13%), and River Otter (12%). Since we first asked this question in 1992-93, marten has remained species most often mentioned as important to Alaskan trappers. Wolf also continues to be an important furbearer.

#### Most Important Species Statewide

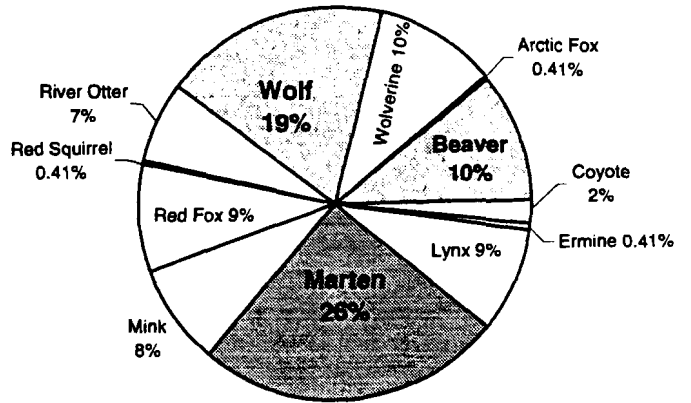


Broken down by region, the results are a little different: These obvious regional differences reflect which furbearers are available and current market value.

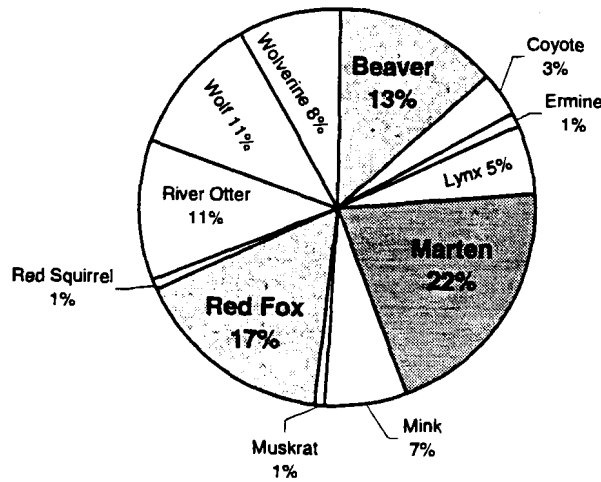
**Species Named Important in Southeast**



**Species Named Important in the Interior**



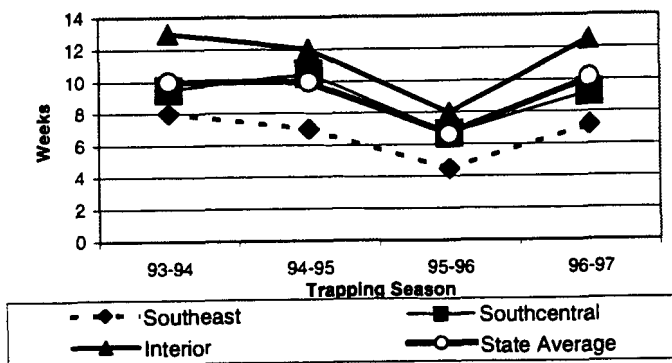
**Species Named Important in Southcentral**



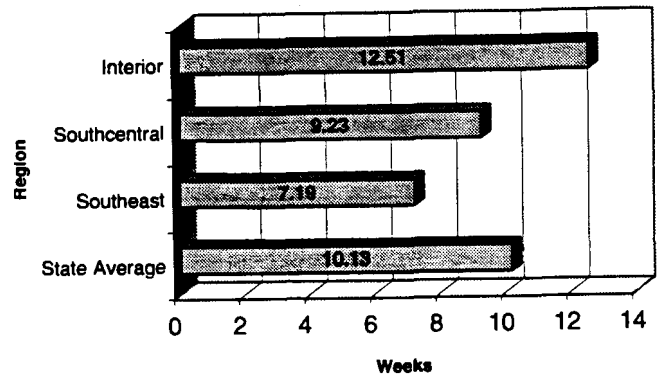
## How many weeks did you trap during the 1996-97 season?

The average trapper in Alaska trapped for 10 weeks. Trappers in the interior trapped the longest (12 weeks). Trappers in Southcentral trapped an average of 9 weeks, and trappers in Southeast averaged a little over 7 weeks of trapping. This is a reflection of the length of the trapping season in the different regions. Marten season is 4 weeks in most areas of Southeast, a little longer in others. Marten season in many areas of Southcentral is 6 weeks. Interior marten seasons are 16 weeks. Seasons for other species also are longer in southcentral and the interior than in Southeast.

**Trend: Average Weeks Trapped**



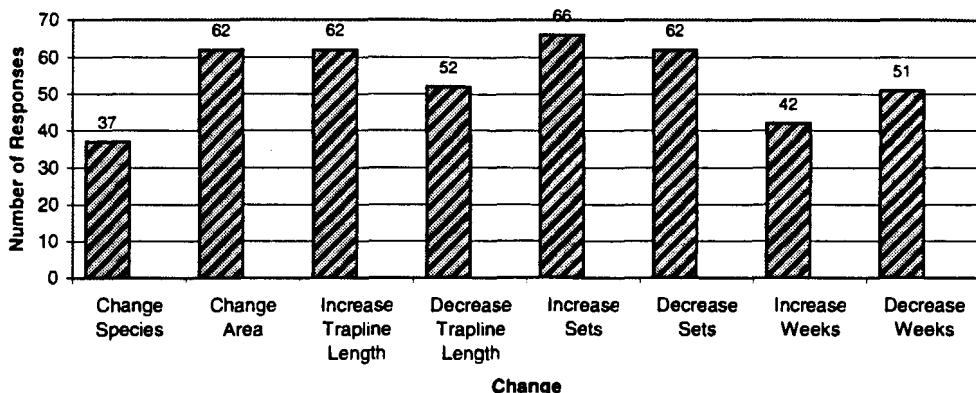
**Average Number of Weeks Trapped**



## How did you change your trapping effort for the 1996-97 season?

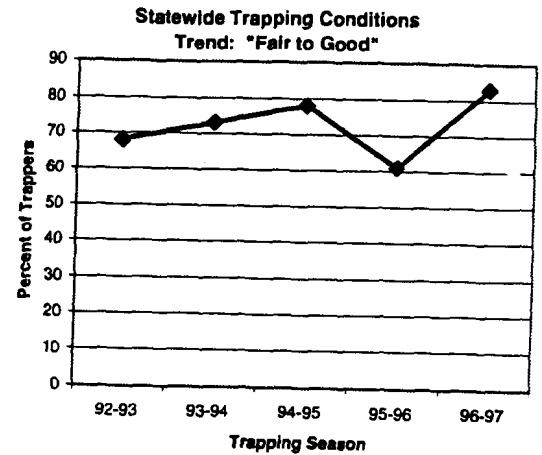
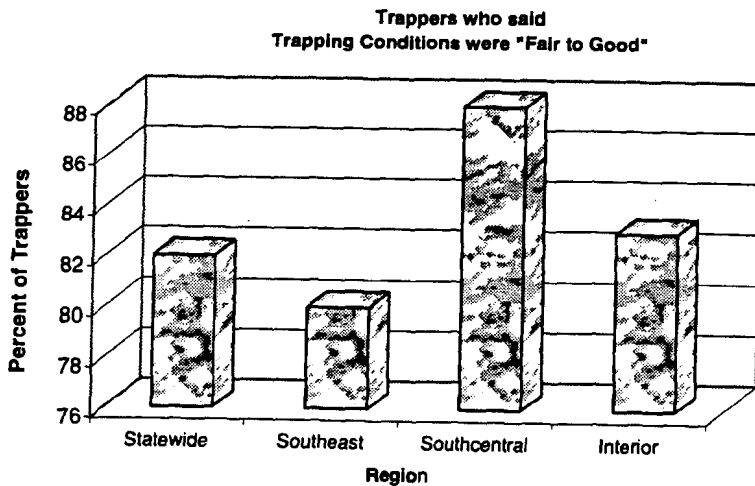
This chart shows which types of changes trappers made.

**Types of Changes in Trapping Effort**



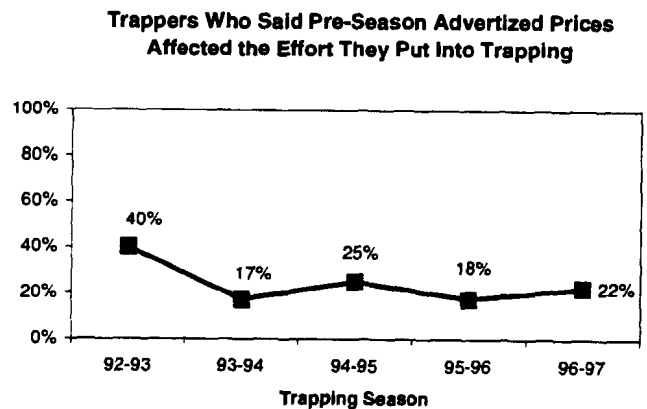
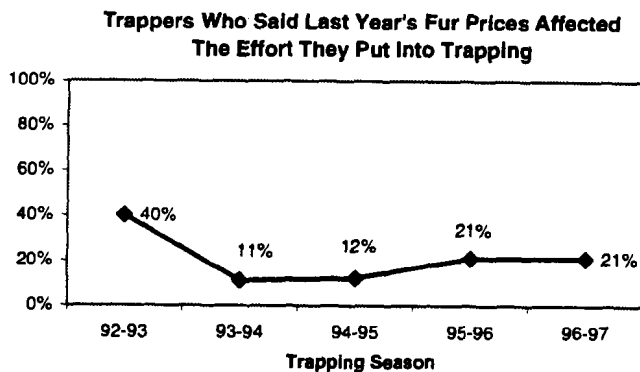
### What were trapping conditions like on your trapline?

Statewide, most trappers (almost 82%) said conditions on their traplines were good to fair. This is the highest percent of trappers satisfied with trapping conditions since we began asking this question in 1992-93. The following charts break this down by region and show the 5-year trend.



### Did last year's fur prices or the pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort in 1996-97?

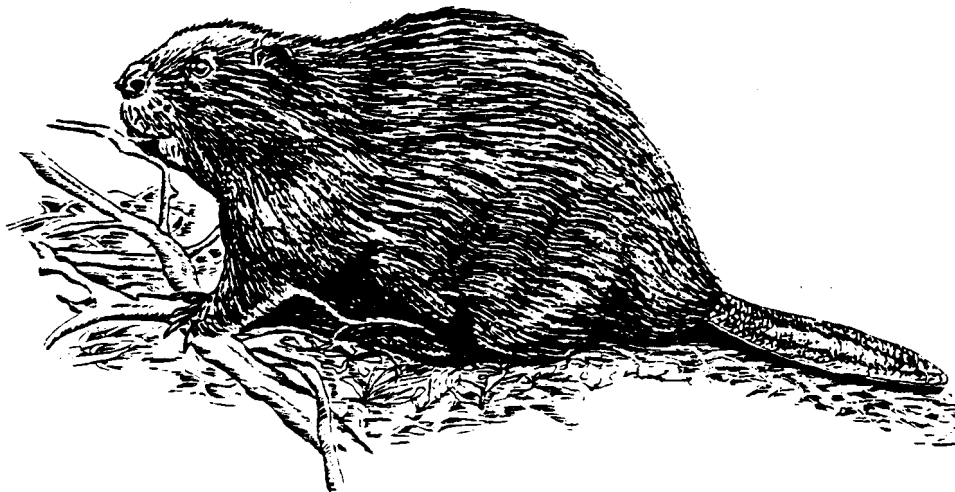
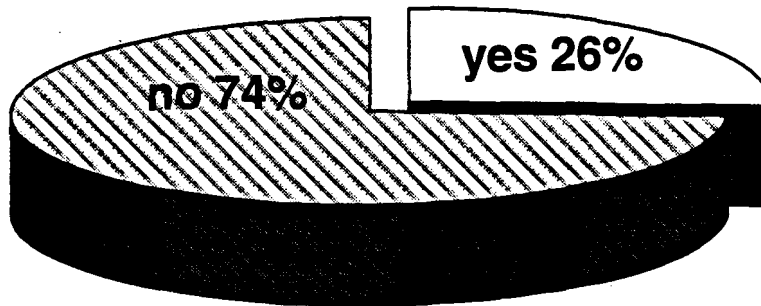
Throughout the state, 79% said last year's price didn't affect their trapping effort this year. In the Interior, 74% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. In Southeast 83% and Southcentral 80% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. Overall, 78% of trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their effort. In Southeast, 75% said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort, in Southcentral 80% were not affected by pre-season prices, and in the Interior 76% did not change their trapping effort because of pre-season prices.



**Did the presence of other trappers in the area that you trap affect your trapping effort in 1996-97?**

About 74% of trappers in the state said the presence of other trappers did not affect their trapping effort this year. Those changing their trapping effort because of other trappers were: 38% in Southeast, 17% in Southcentral, and 21% in the Interior.

**Did Other Trappers Affect Your Effort?**

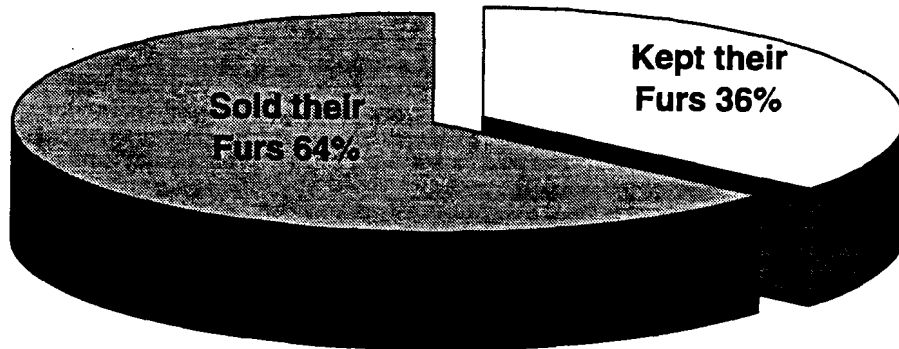




### Did you keep or sell most of your furs?

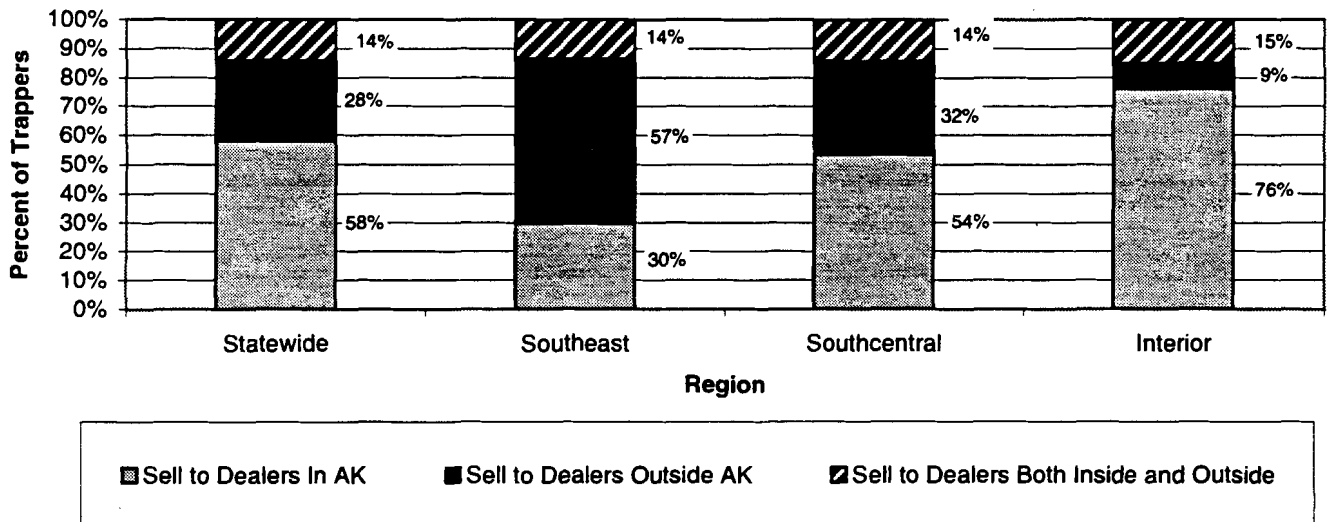
Statewide, most trappers (64%) sold the majority their furs to fur dealers, rather than keeping them for personal use. In both Southeast and the Interior 77% sold their furs, and 57% of trappers in Southcentral sold theirs.

### What Trappers Statewide Did With Their Furs



More trappers in Southcentral and the Interior sold their furs to Alaskan fur dealers, than trappers in Southeast did. This is most likely because Southeast trappers are less likely to have easy access to Alaska fur dealers.

### Where Trappers Sold Their Furs



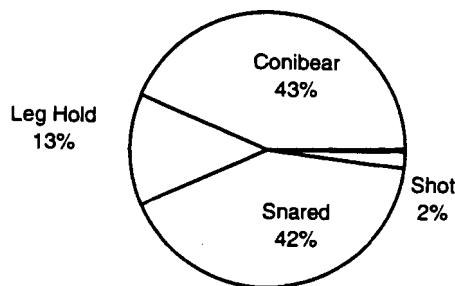
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

Trappers were asked to provide, for each furbearer species taken, the approximate percentage of animals taken by leghold trap, conibear, snare, shooting, or “other” method.

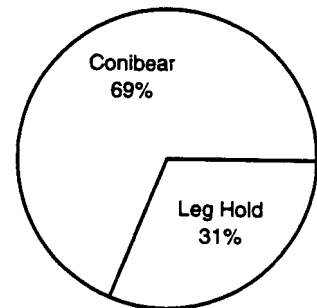
We asked this question because of the increasing pressure from animal rights activists to require more humane trapping methods. We want to document the extent to which Alaskan trappers rely on leghold traps, conibears, snares, etc. As time goes on, we want to be able to document what changes in trapping methods trappers initiate on their own.

The following pages show the average percentage of animals taken by leghold trap, conibear, snare, shooting, or “other” methods. There are 4 charts per species. The first is the average of all trappers statewide who reported this information, and the other 3 break the information down by region. You will note regional differences in traps used for some species.

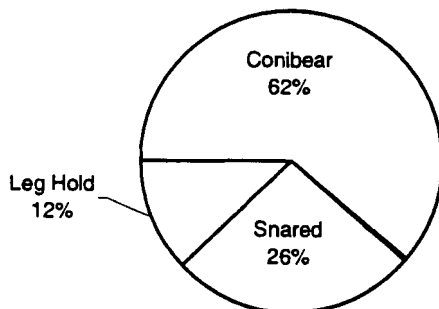
**Statewide - Beaver Trapping Methods**  
(73 Trappers Reported)



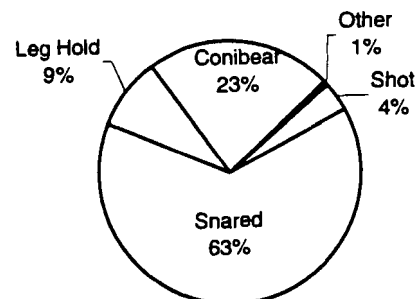
**Southeast Beaver Trapping Methods**  
(9 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Beaver Trapping Methods**  
(28 Trappers Reported)



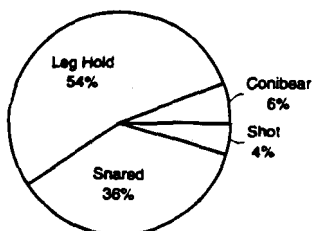
**Interior Beaver Trapping Methods**  
(36 Trappers Reported)



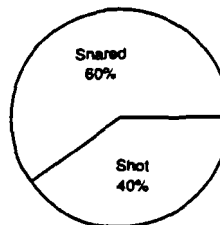
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

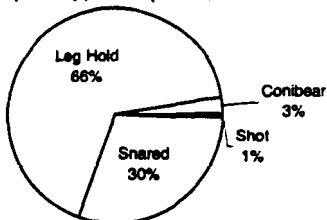
**Statewide - Coyote Trapping Methods**  
(35 Trappers Reported)



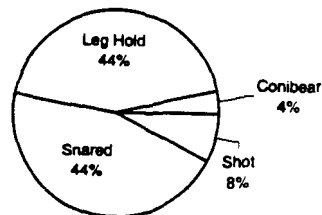
**Southeast Coyote Trapping Methods**  
(2 Trappers Reported)



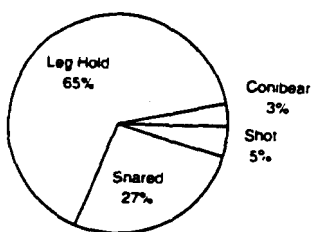
**Southcentral Coyote Trapping Methods**  
(19 Trappers Reported)



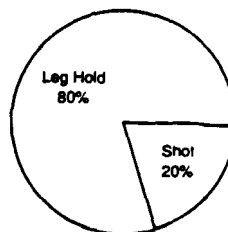
**Interior Coyote Trapping Methods**  
(14 Trappers Reported)



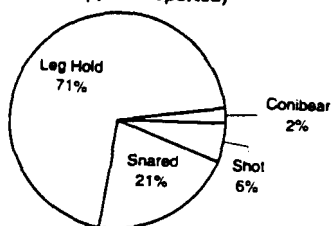
**Statewide - Fox Trapping Methods**  
(83 Trappers Reported)



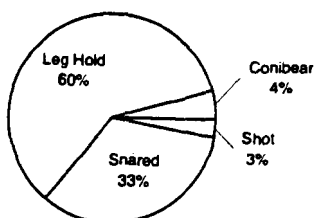
**Southeast Fox Trapping Methods**  
(1 Trapper Reported)



**Southcentral Fox Trapping Methods**  
(43 Trappers Reported)



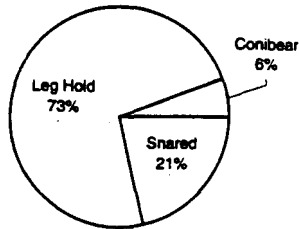
**Interior Fox Trapping Methods**  
(39 Trappers Reported)



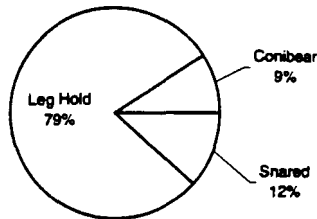
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

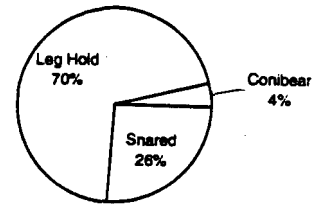
**Statewide Lynx Trapping Methods**  
(41 Trappers Reported)



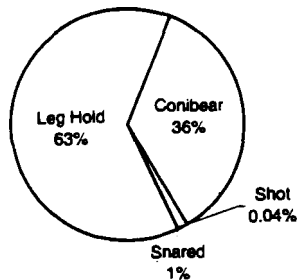
**Southcentral Lynx Trapping Methods**  
(13 Trappers Reported)



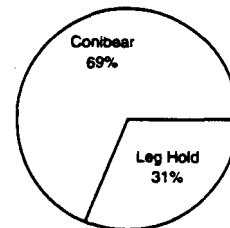
**Interior Lynx Trapping Methods**  
(28 Trappers Reported)



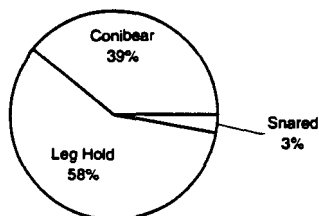
**Statewide Marten Trapping Methods**  
(137 Trappers Reported)



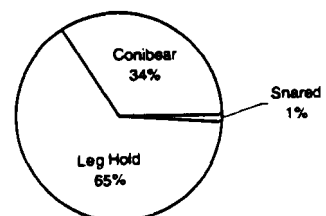
**Southeast Marten Trapping Methods**  
(33 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Marten Trapping Methods**  
(43 Trappers Reported)



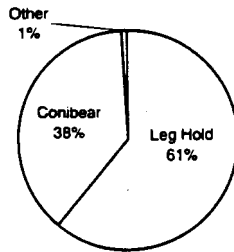
**Interior Marten Trapping Methods**  
(61 Trappers Reported)



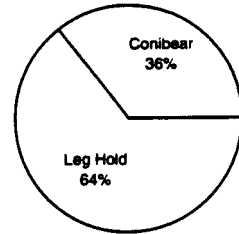
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

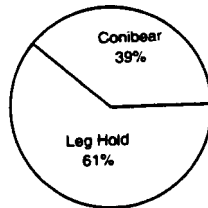
**Statewide Mink Trapping Methods**  
(100 Trappers Reported)



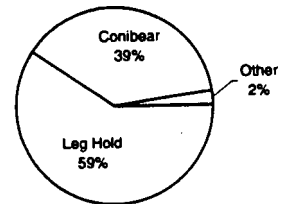
**Southeast Mink Trapping Methods**  
(33 Trappers Reported)



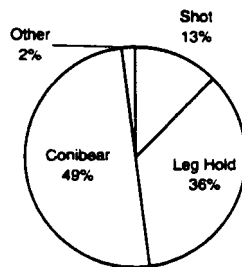
**Southcentral Mink Trapping Methods**  
(29 Trappers Reported)



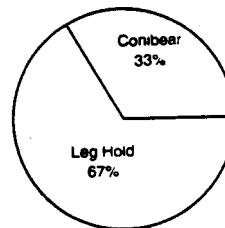
**Interior Mink Trapping Methods**  
(36 Trappers Reported)



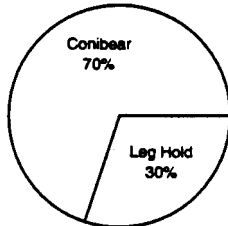
**Statewide Muskrat Trapping Methods**  
(18 Trappers Reported)



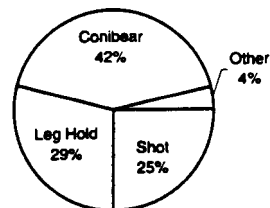
**Southeast Muskrat Trapping Methods**  
(3 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Muskrat Trapping Methods**  
(6 Trappers Reported)



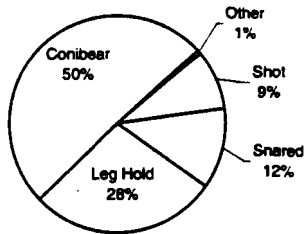
**Interior Muskrat Trapping Methods**  
(9 Trappers Reported)



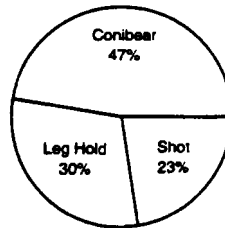
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

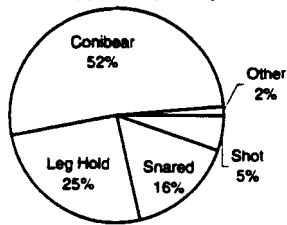
**Statewide River Otter Trapping Methods**  
(83 Trappers Reported)



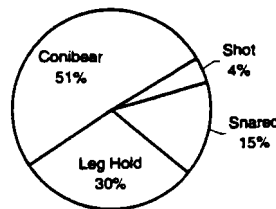
**Southeast River Otter Trapping Methods**  
(19 Trappers Reported)



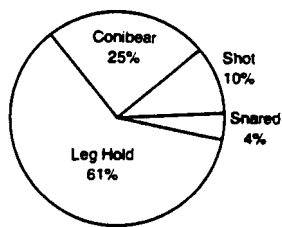
**Southcentral River Otter Trapping Methods**  
(33 Trappers Reported)



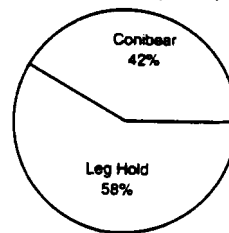
**Interior River Otter Trapping Methods**  
(31 Trappers Reported)



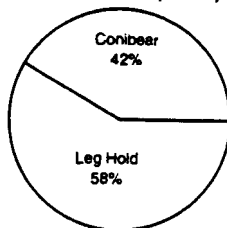
**Statewide Red Squirrel Trapping Methods**  
(26 Trappers Reported)



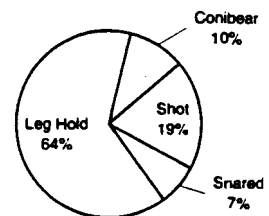
**Southeast Red Squirrel Trapping Methods**  
(6 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Red Squirrel Trapping Methods**  
(6 Trappers Reported)



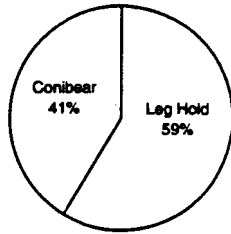
**Interior Red Squirrel Trapping Methods**  
(14 Trappers Reported)



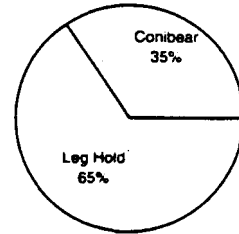
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

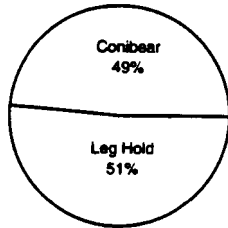
**Statewide Ermine (Weasel) Trapping Methods**  
(56 Trappers Reported)



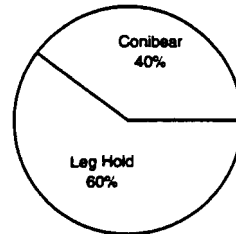
**Southeast Ermine (Weasel) Trapping Methods**  
(11 Trappers Reported)



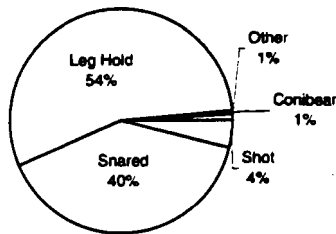
**Southcentral Ermine Trapping Methods**  
(17 Trappers Reported)



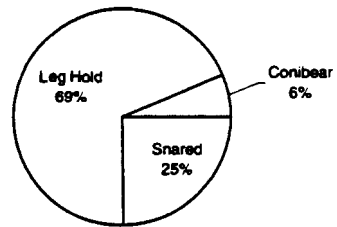
**Interior Ermine Trapping Methods**  
(28 Trappers Reported)



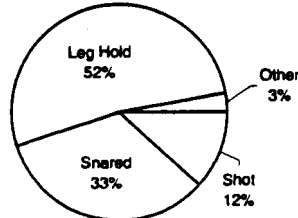
**Statewide Wolf Trapping Methods**  
(66 Trappers Reported)



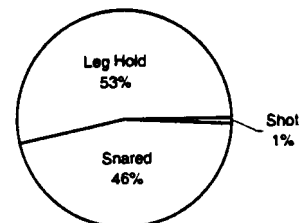
**Southeast Wolf Trapping Methods**  
(8 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Wolf Trapping Methods**  
(18 Trappers Reported)



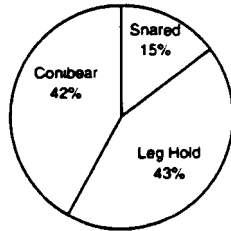
**Interior Wolf Trapping Methods**  
(40 Trappers Reported)



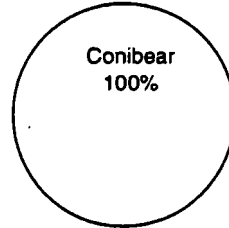
# METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

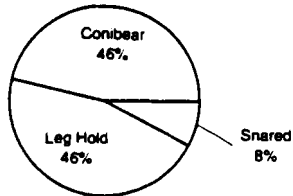
**Statewide Wolverine Trapping Methods**  
(50 Trappers Reported)



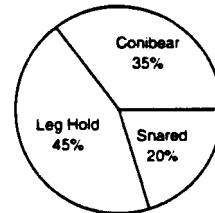
**Southeast Wolverine Trapping Methods**  
(2 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral Wolverine Trapping Methods**  
(19 Trappers Reported)



**Interior Wolverine Trapping Methods**  
(29 Trappers Reported)





## ALASKA'S FURBEARER POPULATIONS - TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING

Only 5 of the 15 species defined as furbearers require sealing statewide: beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, and wolverine. Marten are required to be sealed in some units, but not statewide. Consequently, information on the numbers, distribution, and utilization of many furbearers is limited. On this year's trapper questionnaire we are asking trappers for harvest information on all Alaska furbearers. Thanks for your help!

### SPECIES RELATIVE ABUNDANCE AND POPULATION TRENDS

The species relative abundance index is based on work done with snowshoe hares in Alberta, Canada by Lloyd Keith and Christopher Brand. They compared the results of responses to a trapper questionnaire with their estimates of hare densities based on their own field work and found there was a good relationship between these two measures. They developed an index for the responses received from trappers on the questionnaire. A numerical value was assigned to each of three responses: 1=scarcely, 2=common, and 3=abundant. The value of the abundance index then was derived from a mathematical equation that expresses the cumulative response value of trappers in a given region as a percentage of the range of possible values:

$$I = \left[ \left( \sum_{i=1}^n R_i - n \right) / 2n \right] \times 100$$

where  $I$  = abundance index

$R$  = numerical value (1=scarcely, 2=common, 3=abundant)

$n$  = number of trappers

The abundance index ( $I$ ) ranges from 0% to 100%. Index values of 0-19% indicated animals were scarce, 20-50% indicated animals were common, and values greater than 50% indicated animals were abundant. In the following tables, we converted these values back to the appropriate category: scarce, common, or abundant.

We do not know if the same ranges of percentages are appropriate for animals in Alaska, as they were for snowshoe hares in Alberta. However, this index does provide a way to generally compare trappers' interpretations of species abundance in a given area over time and can be very helpful when used in conjunction with other abundance indicators and sources of information.

# Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1996-97

	Southcentral Region									
	Lower Susitna Basin		Prince William Sound & N. Gulf Coast		Kenai Peninsula		Kodiak Archipelago		Alaska Peninsula	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
<b>Furbearers:</b>										
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	Abundant	fewer	Abundant	same	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same
Coyote	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	x	x	Scarce	same
Ermine	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Scarce	same	Common	same
Lynx	Scarce	more	Scarce	same	Common	more	x	x	Scarce	same
Marten	Abundant	more	Common	Scarce	Common	same	x	x	Common	same
Mink	Common	same	Abundant	Scarce	Abundant	same	x	x	Abundant	same
Muskrat	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	same	Scarce	same	Scarce	same
Red Fox	Abundant	same	Scarce	same	Scarce	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
Red Squirrel	Abundant	same	Common	Scarce	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same
River Otter	Common	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
Wolf	Common	same	Scarce	same	Common	same	x	x	Abundant	more
Wolverine	Scarce	same	Common	same	Common	same	x	x	Common	same
<b>Prey</b>										
Grouse	Abundant	same	Common	same	Common	same	x	x	Scarce	same
Hare	Common	more	Abundant	same	Abundant	more	Common	same	Scarce	same
Ptarmigan	Common	same	Common	same	Common	same	Common	same	Common	same
Mice/Rodents	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	same

	Southeast Region							
	Ketchikan, Prince of Wales & vicinity		Petersburg, Wrangell, Kupreanof & vicinity		Juneau, Douglas, Haines, Yakutat		Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
<b>Furbearers:</b>								
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	more	Scarce	fewer
Coyote	x	x	Abundant	same	x	x	x	x
Ermine	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Scarce	same
Lynx	x	x	Common	same	Scarce	same	x	x
Marten	Abundant	same	Common	fewer	Common	fewer	Abundant	same
Mink	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
Muskrat	x	x	Scarce	same	Common	same	x	x
Red Fox	x	x	Abundant	same	Scarce	same	x	x
Red Squirrel	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
River Otter	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same
Wolf	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	x	x
Wolverine	x	x	Scarce	same	Common	same	x	x
<b>Prey</b>								
Grouse	Scarce	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Scarce	same
Hare	x	x	Common	same	Common	same	x	x
Ptarmigan	Scarce	same	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	same
Mice/Rodents	Abundant	more	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1996-97, continued

	Relative Abundance and Trend											
	Statewide		Lower Tanana Basin		Upper Tanana Basin		Middle Yukon & Koyukuk		Upper Yukon Basin		Copper R. & Upper Susitna R. Basins	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
<b>Furbearers:</b>												
Arctic Fox	Common	more	x	x	x	x	x	x	Common	more	x	x
Beaver	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Scarce	same	Abundant	fewer	Abundant	fewer	Abundant	same
Coyote	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	same	Scarce	fewer	x	x	Common	same
Ermine	Common	same	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Common	same
Lynx	Common	same	Common	more	Common	more	Scarce	fewer	Common	fewer	Common	same
Marten	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
Mink	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	more	Common	same
Muskrat	Scarce	same	Scarce	same	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	fewer	Common	same
Red Fox	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	more
Red Squirrel	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
River Otter	Common	same	Common	same	Scarce	same	Abundant	same	Scarce	fewer	Common	same
Wolf	Common	same	Abundant	same	Common	fewer	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same
Wolverine	Common	same	Scarce	same	Common	same	Common	same	Common	more	Common	same
<b>Prey</b>												
Grouse	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	same	Abundant	same
Hare	Abundant	more	Abundant	more	Abundant	more	Common	same	Abundant	more	Abundant	more
Ptarmigan	Common	same	Common	more	Common	same	Common	same	Abundant	more	Abundant	same
Mice/Rodents	Abundant	same	Abundant	same	Common	same	Abundant	more	Abundant	more	Abundant	same

## WOLF HARVEST METHODS

The following tables are compiled from mandatory wolf sealing certificates from 1992 through 1997.

### 1992-93 Trapping Season

Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	194	44	23
Southcentral	223	37	17
Interior	566	209	37
Arctic	131	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1114</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>26</b>

### 1993-94 Trapping Season

Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	229	26	11
Southcentral	382	58	15
Interior	841	346	41
Arctic	148	11	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>28</b>

### 1994-95 Trapping Season

Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	208	47	23
Southcentral	438	58	13
Interior	697	241	35
Arctic	140	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1483</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>23</b>

### 1995-96 Trapping Season

Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	200	64	32
Southcentral	301	72	24
Interior	624	277	44
Arctic	126	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1251</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>34</b>

### 1996-97 Trapping Season

Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	224	65	29
Southcentral	360	75	21
Interior	664	333	50
Arctic	125	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>35</b>

## ALASKA'S FURBEARER HARVEST

Beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine require sealing statewide, whereas marten are required to be sealed only in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, and 14-16. Harvest estimates for these species are determined from sealing records. Please refer to the following table for a summary of furbearer harvest estimates (for species that require sealing) from 1992-93 through 1996-97.

### Reported furbearer harvest in Alaska.

Species	Region	Reported Harvest 1992-93	Reported Harvest 1993-94	Reported Harvest 1994-95	Reported Harvest 1995-96	Reported Harvest 1996-97
<b>Beaver</b>	Southeast	145	324	225	385	420
	Southcentral	1517	1720	1892	1450	2027
	Interior	956	1886	1720	1114	2290
	Arctic	621	685	520	665	1039
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>3239</b>	<b>4615</b>	<b>4357</b>	<b>3614</b>	<b>5776</b>
<b>Lynx</b>	Southeast	29	22	6	5	6
	Southcentral	268	188	172	113	330
	Interior	1047	999	587	439	1338
	Arctic	22	11	13	17	45
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1336</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>1719</b>
<b>Otter</b>	Southeast	327	409	557	496	410
	Southcentral	449	449	488	586	728
	Interior	79	139	97	126	168
	Arctic	353	118	220	298	436
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1208</b>	<b>1115</b>	<b>1362</b>	<b>1506</b>	<b>1742</b>
<b>Wolf</b>	Southeast	193	226	219	209	245
	Southcentral	218	368	413	292	333
	Interior	527	840	668	624	593
	Arctic	113	149	143	126	109
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>1583</b>	<b>1443</b>	<b>1251</b>	<b>1280</b>
<b>Wolverine</b>	Southeast	22	25	35	29	39
	Southcentral	151	186	246	165	222
	Interior	143	242	293	133	195
	Arctic	79	61	48	62	75
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>531</b>
<b>Marten*</b>	Southeast	1393	1560	2170	2787	3703
	Southcentral	192	159	277	416	781
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>1719</b>	<b>2447</b>	<b>3204</b>	<b>4485</b>

\*Marten sealing is required only in Southeast and Southcentral (GMU's 1-5, 7, 13E, 14-16)

## COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FURS

We also have records of commercial transactions involving furs. Individuals who engage in fur dealing and who purchase, or acquire through consignment or barter, raw skins of furbearers must report the transactions on department fur acquisition forms. Each transaction report shows the species, number of each species, and location in which furs were trapped.

### Average prices paid for raw furs by dealers in Interior Alaska

Species	1992-93	1993-94	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1997-98
	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Top \$
Beaver	17.50	26.00	31.50	35.00	32.50	96.00
Coyote	25.00	25.00	27.50	27.50	25.00	47.00
Fox	17.50	17.50	22.00	24.00	15.00	40.00
Lynx	70.00	85.00	77.50	77.50	61.00	146.00
Marten	35.00	42.50	38.50	42.50	27.00	50.00
Mink(wild)	15.50	17.00	12.00	18.50	12.25	25.00
Muskrat	1.25	1.25	2.00	2.00	2.00	5.00
River otter	35.00	60.00	60.00	45.00	50.00	105.00
Squirrel	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Ermine	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
Wolf	275.00	235.00	250.00	237.00	137.50	400.00
Wolverine	235.00	235.00	275.00	250.00	185.00	350.00



## FUR ACQUISITION AND EXPORT

The following table summarizes data from two forms: the Report of Acquisition of Furs and Hides filled out by fur buyers (dealers) who buy furs in Alaska and the Raw Fur Skin Export Permit (the blue card everyone must fill out when sending untanned furs out of state.) These reports are used only as a general indicator of harvest trends, and are not actual records of the number of furbearers harvested in a trapping season. Both reports may include furs harvested in previous years, and many trappers keep their furs for tanning and use at home. In addition, some individuals may not fill out the required forms. If you are seeking more information about fur harvest trends, contact your regional or statewide furbearer coordinator.

### 1996-97 Fur Acquisition and Export

<b>Species</b>	<b>Acquisition of</b>	<b>Furs Exported</b>
	<b>Furs By Alaskan Fur Buyers</b>	<b>out of Alaska</b>
	<b>Number of Furs</b>	<b>Number of Furs</b>
Beaver	1,724	3,124
Coyote	96	150
Fox, Blue (Arctic)	0	29
Fox, White (Arctic)	25	106
Fox, Red (Cross phase)	206	289
Fox, Red (Red color)	827	1,411
Fox, Red (Silver color)	30	29
Lynx	730	1,122
Marten	13,632	21,156
Mink	3,707	5,977
Muskrat	975	1,233
Otter, land (river)	516	1,091
Squirrel, red	102	651
Weasel (ermine)	249	409
Wolf	113	495
Wolverine	97	261
Other	22	45
<b>Total Furs</b>	<b>23,051</b>	<b>37,578</b>

## FUR VALUE

The following table summarizes the total estimated value of furs trapped during the 1996-97 trapping season. The estimated average price paid by Alaska fur dealers was used in this calculation.

### 1996-97 fur value in Alaska

Species	Total Number	Average Price Paid in AK	Total Estimated Value
Beaver*	5776	35.00	\$202,160
Coyote**	150	27.50	4,125
Fox, Arctic**	135	24.00	3,240
Fox, Red**	1729	24.00	41,496
Lynx*	1719	77.50	133,223
Marten**	21156	42.50	899,130
Mink**	5977	18.50	110,575
Muskrat**	1233	2.00	2,466
Otter*	1749	45.00	78,705
Squirrel, red**	651	1.00	651
Weasel (ermine)**	409	2.00	818
Wolf*	1280	237.00	303,360
Wolverine*	531	250.00	132,750
<b>Total:</b>	<b>42495</b>		<b>\$1,912,698</b>

\* Compiled from mandatory fur sealing records

\*\* Compiled from fur export records





# STATE, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FUR ISSUES FACING ALASKA

by

**Steve Peterson**

**Statewide Furbearer Coordinator**

This past year has been a busy one for me as I have tried to represent Alaskan trappers on a number of issues that directly affect your lifestyle. In this report I will try to bring you up to date on the more important things without boring or confusing you with the details.

## **Ballot Initiative on Snaring.**

In all likelihood this initiative will be on the fall 1998 ballot so the public can decide the fate of wolf snaring. It appears that the sponsors have collected the required number of signatures and the only way it will not be decided by public vote is if a pending lawsuit determines that the process is illegal. This initiative is a direct threat to an important method of trapping in this state that has been approved and is regulated by the Board of Game. In our recently released position statement on trapping and snaring furbearers, the department stated: "Like hunting, viewing and photography, trapping is a legitimate use of our wildlife resource."

As a trapper, you should be very concerned about this ballot initiative because, if it passes, it will take away an important method of harvesting wolves and change your lifestyle. It will be a portent of things to come. If trappers get involved, they can not only win this one, but they can win it decisively. If trappers don't get involved and the initiative passes, trappers have no one to blame but themselves.

## **Trapping on National Wildlife Refuges.**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's efforts to stop trapping on national wildlife refuges was stopped largely because of trappers in Alaska who took the time to write and express their opinion. During a July meeting in New York, I heard a report on this subject from a Fish and Wildlife Service employee responsible for summarizing the comments. He was very impressed with Alaska's efforts and stated that over half of all the letters received came from Alaskans. I often hear how good the animal welfare/animal rights organizations are at getting their memberships to write and express their opinion on controversial topics. Well, my friends, this is one issue where you can be proud of your efforts. Your letters made the difference in stopping this ill-fated attempt to take away your privilege to trap on our public lands.

## **The European Union (EU) Fur Ban.**

Hopefully, we have now put this problem to rest, but don't be surprised if similar trapping legislation continues to be introduced in the European arena. On December 1, 1997, the European Union ban on certain furs went into effect for those countries that had not adopted internationally acceptable humane trapping standards or, had not banned the leghold trap. Because the United States was one of those countries that had not met either of those conditions, our furs were not going to be allowed in. Intense negotiations during November and the first half of December allowed the U.S. and Europe to reach an "Understanding" (vs. a much more restrictive signed "Agreement") so we could continue to export our furs into Europe.

Canada had already signed a separate "Agreement" in which they indicated that conventional steel-jawed leghold traps would be effectively eliminated from their trapping program in a few years. Russia agreed to a similar document in concept, but that country has not signed on yet.

The U.S. agreed to give up leghold traps for taking muskrats on land (you can still use them in drowning sets) and leghold traps used as restraining devices for weasels (you can still set a larger leghold trap to kill a weasel as opposed to one that just holds them by the leg). For the remaining traps and species, the U.S. agreed to use "the

best traps available.” Our signed document removed the ban on our fur entering the EU, but the specific language does not go into effect until Russia signs their agreement. That could be next week, or never!

Compared to Canada, the U.S. got a **very good deal**. Canada is bound by some rather specific trap standards requirements that they will probably not be able to meet. Eventually, this will cause some problems for their trappers. The U.S. is under no such obligations and our document is also non-binding. I was absolutely “stunned” when Europe agreed to the language. Apparently, Europe really wanted to get out from under that law in the worst possible way and they were fearful that if their law went into effect, the U.S. would sue them in the International Trade Court (and most likely win). All they wanted in the end was a way out without losing face. When we said we were going to use the best traps available and develop, recommend and implement those traps under a process called “Best Management Practices,” they jumped at the chance to rid themselves of this time-consuming regulatory embarrassment.

### **Best Management Practices (BMPs).**

This concept is largely an outgrowth of our signed “understanding” with the European Union and our lack of agreement in the International Trap Standards process. BMPs are widely used in other fields such as forestry and water quality control so the idea is not new or unique to trapping.

BMPs are practical guidelines based on technological, economic and social perspectives. When we say we are going to recommend or use the best traps available, it does not necessarily mean that only the most humane trap available will be used. Other factors like efficiency, selectivity, practicality, economics and safety to the user must also be considered. If we tell a trapper he is expected to use a trap that is either not readily available, prohibitively expensive, impractical, or unsafe for himself to set, we are just not being realistic. This is the view I have taken in the past and will continue to do so as we search for and test the best traps to use in Alaska.

BMPs are not a broad public input process. The “best traps” are going to be recommended by trappers, for trappers. Also, BMPs are not a regulatory process even though some of your recommendations may eventually find themselves established in law. BMPs are an independent process to first satisfy our signed “Understanding” with the EU to use the best traps available and second, to gradually get trappers, nationwide, to use the best traps and methods available to them. Eventually, I am convinced these efforts will have a positive effect on the general public at large and the people will in turn conclude that trappers are doing the best they can within the limits of the law. Through this outreach program the public will also learn that trapping is a highly regulated outdoor activity, that trappers do not harvest endangered or threatened species and that through their efforts, trappers provide substantial benefits to society at no cost to the public.

I think Best Management Practices for trapping is a concept whose time has come and frankly, I think it’s “the right thing to do.” Later this summer, at least one or two workshops on BMPs will be held in Alaska (probably Anchorage and Fairbanks) by representatives of the National Trappers Association. Other workshops will be held around the country starting this spring. If you are going to the NTA national convention in Columbia, Missouri, this summer, several BMP sessions will be presented there. If you need more information, or want to get involved, either write me or the national coordinator at:

Samara “Sam” Trusso  
IAFWA c/o MO. Department of Conservation  
1110 S. College Avenue  
Columbia, Missouri 65201

Telephone: 573-882-9880 Ext. 3217 or  
E-mail: [truss@mail.conservaion.state.mo.us](mailto:truss@mail.conservaion.state.mo.us)

Good hunting, and

good trapping.

# AREA REPORTS

## INTERIOR REGION

by

**Interior Furbearer Biologist, Mark McNay**

The 1996-97 trapping season in the Interior was marked by an increase in the fur harvest, at least among the 5 species that have a sealing requirement. The interior beaver harvest doubled from about 1,100 in the 1995-96 season to over 2,800 in the 1996-97 season. Prices on beaver have been creeping upward in the last few years and with the good spring trapping conditions that persisted into April some trappers apparently decided to cash in on the increasing demand for beaver. During the February 1997 North American sale, western beaver averaged \$30 and topped out at about \$70, a fair bit better than the average of \$21 paid during the February 1995 sale.

The lynx cycle peaked in about 1990 or 1991 and lynx harvests in the last few years have been relatively low. As a part of our tracking harvest strategy the Department maintained short lynx seasons to promote recovery of the lynx population and it now appears that the lynx population is gaining some momentum. As a result we will be setting longer lynx seasons for the winter of 1997-98.

The lynx harvest in 1996-97 certainly indicated an increase in lynx numbers. Despite relatively low prices (about \$70-80 average) and despite the short 1-month season, the harvest of lynx increased in interior units from 439 in 1995-96 to 1,371 in 1996-97. We purchased 123 lynx carcasses from trappers during the 1996-97 season and found that 33% of those lynx were kittens, another good indication that lynx are now reproducing and that higher lynx harvests are on the way. We expect the 1997-98 harvest to be much higher with the newly expanded season and the increasing numbers of lynx. Hare numbers also seem to be increasing throughout the interior and should provide adequate food for another good crop of kittens in the spring of 1997.

Wolf harvests have been relatively stable over the past 3 years with 600-700 wolves reported taken in the interior units. Currently there are about 4,000 wolves in the interior so the recent harvests represent a harvest rate of about 16%, certainly a sustainable harvest from a healthy wolf population. Although relatively speaking, wolverine and otter are not major fur products of the interior, harvest of those species increased as well. About 130 wolverine and 130 otter were reported taken in the 1995-96 season, but harvests of over 200 were recorded for both species in 1996-97.

Research projects related to wolves and lynx are continuing in the interior. As part of those studies we have been buying carcasses from trappers in selected areas and as a part of the wolf projects we have ear tagged or radio collared a number of wolves. Trappers have made an essential contribution to those studies and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those trappers who have provided carcasses and who have returned radio collars or ear tags. Thank you and good luck!

# SOUTHEAST REGION

By Rod Flynn

## Southeast Furbearer Biologist

The status of furbearers in the Southeast Region are monitored by recording the number taken by trappers each year. The pelts of beavers, land otters, lynx, martens, wolves, and wolverines are "sealed" by area managers and other appointed representatives. Our other furbearers, primarily mink and ermine, do not need to be sealed, and fur export reports, trapper reports, and the trapper survey provide the only sources of information.

A fisher was caught near Juneau for the second straight year. This animal was an adult female indicating that the species may be becoming established in Southeast Alaska. Other furbearers seem to be quite rare in Southeast Alaska. For example, red foxes and coyotes are reported occasionally. We appreciate receiving any information on observations of our rarer furbearers. Currently, we are involved in cooperative research with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum on the distribution of terrestrial mammals in Southeast Alaska. For this project, we have been collecting specimens of several furbearers, including martens, minks, and ermines.

Martens are the furbearer taken in the largest numbers by trappers in Southeast Alaska. Since the 1988-90 trapping season, the number of martens trapped in southeast Alaska has averaged 2,310 animals. In comparison, trappers catch an average of 404 otters each year over the same period. By Game Management Unit, the greatest numbers of martens were usually taken from Units 4 (34%), 2 (32%), and 1A (12%). The remainder of the Units (1B, 1C, 1D, 3, and 5) provided less than 10% of the average regional catch. During the 1995-96 trapping season, 2,784 martens were taken by trappers in Southeast or 474 more than the 5-year average.

### Unit Reports

Beavers appear abundant throughout Subunit 1B and Unit 3 in available habitat and populations have remained stable. In recent years, little beaver trapping effort has been recorded in Subunit 1B until the 1996 season when 40 beaver were harvested. In Unit 3, 44 beavers were taken. In 1995, trappers reported martens abundant and the population increasing. Last year, they reported martens common, but numbers down. In Subunit 1B the marten harvest increased substantially to 235 in 1996 compared with 80 in 1994 and 74 in 1995. The Unit 3 marten harvest was also high in 1996 with 262 being taken compared to 79 in 1994 and 190 in 1995. Twenty four otters were harvested in Subunit 1B. Unit 3 had an otter harvest 67. Wolverines remain at a low but stable density. The wolverine harvest in Subunit 1B was 10 in 1996, 5 of these were caught by one trapper on the Stikine River. The Unit 3 wolverine harvest remained low. Lynx occur infrequently in these units and no harvest was reported. Mink and river otter populations are abundant.

In Unit 1C, the number of beaver harvested during the period fluctuated from 10 in 1994 to 26 in 1995. These harvest levels compare to an average harvest of 18 beaver for the five year period preceding 1994. These levels are below harvests recorded in the mid-1980's. It is unknown whether beaver populations are smaller now than formerly, but differences in trapping effort are likely responsible for much of this change. Nuisance beaver problems are becoming common in residential areas built near wetlands, so there is no indication that the animals are becoming less common. The river otter harvest varied from 16 to 26 during the period, well below harvests seen in the 1980's. There were no indications that otters were less abundant, so trapper effort may have been involved here also. An average of 5.3 wolverine were taken each year during the period, identical to the previous reporting period, although somewhat lower than longer-term averages (e.g., 7.8/yr. from 1986-1990). Wolverines continue to be widely distributed and not uncommon. Only a single lynx was reported harvested in Unit 1C during this period. The marten harvest increased throughout the period, from 190 in 1994 to 293 in 1996. The marten harvest ranged from 57% to 68% males during the period and no indication of overharvest was observed. Although a region wide decline in small mammal numbers during the previous reporting period probably affected marten populations, the trapping effort during the period seemed to be within the population's capabilities.

Marten harvests rebounded dramatically during the reporting period in Unit 1D, reaching levels typical of the late 1980's. The increase in harvest is coincident with increased harvests in other parts of the region. Wolverine harvest increased through the period, but remained at levels typical of earlier years. Because of the extensive suitable habitat, the wolverine population is probably stable. Lynx declined from the numbers seen during the previous reporting period to the low densities typical of the unit. These animals were relatively common and easy to catch in the early 1990's as the prey base in adjacent Canadian areas declined and lynx dispersed. River otter harvests remained similar to levels experienced during the previous five years. Beavers are present in the subunit in low numbers; the trapping season has been closed for this species for many years. While it would be desirable from the standpoint of rehabilitating moose habitat to have more beaver in the subunit, Division of Wildlife Conservation staff have received complaints that the few that are present are flooding roads.

In Unit 4, 1,559 marten pelts (962 males, 576 females, and 21 unknown) were sealed in 1996-97, an increase of 51% from last year. The high harvest probably occurred because nutritionally stressed martens were more vulnerable to trappers. Rodent numbers dropped to low levels on Chichagof Island in 1996. Land otters occur throughout the islands of Unit 4. No census data is available, but populations are probably stable. Trappers took 100 otters (64 males and 36 females). Beaver trapping remains prohibited in the area west of Chatham Strait. Mink occur throughout Unit 4 and populations are thought to be stable. Admiralty Island beaver populations are thought to be stable. Beavers occur in low numbers on Baranof Island, but no beavers were trapped in the unit. The season is currently closed on both Chichagof and Baranof islands.

In Unit 5, trapping pressure is generally light and harvest trends reflect several factors in addition to furbearer population levels. One or two individuals changing their trapping intensity can have substantial impact on harvests, as in the marten harvest during this period. Most furbearer populations are probably stable in Unit 5. The lynx harvest declined from the spike in the last year of the previous period, which was probably related to immigration of lynx following a decline of hares in interior habitats in Canada. Little is known of marten abundance, although logging road proliferation in recent years has provided trappers easy access to old-growth forest habitats. River otter are more common in Game Management Unit 5 than the harvest would indicate. The low trapping effort in the unit accounts for the scarcity of these animals in harvest records. As with other furbearers, no population estimate exists for wolverine. They occur at low densities in areas remote from habitation or roads. In Unit 5, the beaver harvest fluctuated during the period, but appeared to be about normal. The lynx take fell from the dramatic high seen in 1993, although lynx remained in the harvest throughout the period. The number of marten harvested increased markedly during the reporting period, almost solely as the result of one trapper's efforts. The harvest level for otter declined from the level seen in the previous period but still exceeded the long term average. Wolverine harvest increased from the level seen within the past decade; this, too was due to the activities of 1 or 2 trappers.

## **SOUTHCENTRAL REGION**

by

**Howard Golden**

### **Southcentral Regional Furbearer Biologist**

The furbearer program in the Southcentral Region continues to focus on the development of techniques to help manage furbearer populations. Current projects are designed to develop better ways to monitor wolverine, river otter, lynx, marten, and snowshoe hare populations and to develop a system to help our biologists set lynx seasons. Below are updates on some of our work on wolverines and river otters.

#### **Wolverines**

We have concentrated our research on trying to accurately measure wolverine density in several areas of southcentral Alaska and to see how their density relates to their harvest, food availability, and abundance of large predators. We are learning a lot about this elusive animal. Over the last few years, we have caught 22 wolverines in the eastern Talkeetna Mountains of GMU 13A west of Glennallen. We caught most of the wolverines by darting them with a

tranquilizing drug from a helicopter and a few were caught in live traps. On average, females weighed 23 pounds and males averaged 33 pounds. The average ages of our radiocollared animals were 1.6–2.7 years for females and 2.1–2.5 years for males. We had one female and one male that reached the age of 5 years. These ages are similar to the ages of wolverines harvested by trappers in GMUs 11 and 13 between 1991 and 1995.

Over the course of the wolverine study, 7 of the 22 study animals were harvested by trappers or hunters within the study area. Some of the radiocollared wolverines left the area or “dispersed”. Two males that left the area were also trapped. One was taken 25 miles to the west and another was taken 90 miles to the north. On average, about 70% of the juvenile and adult wolverines we had radiocollared survived from one year to the next. The current annual harvest of wolverines within the study area is probably at the maximum of what the population can sustain.

We estimated the density of wolverines in the Talkeetna Mountains study area at 1.2–1.3 wolverines per 100 square miles, or 1 wolverine per 77–83 square miles. This density is very similar to what we found in 3 other areas of southcentral Alaska. We expect there is a great deal of movement of wolverines into and out of the study area, and that areas with light harvest may provide replacements for animals trapped in other areas with higher harvest. We are continuing to examine the information we have on wolverine movements and to improve our ability to estimate wolverine density.

### **River Otters**

We have concentrated on developing methods to monitor changes in the abundance of river otters that live in coastal areas of southcentral Alaska. Although they are the same species of river otter found in inland areas, these animals spend most of their lives within 100 yards of the ocean shore. We are examining areas otters use as “latrine sites”, which are places where they rest and mark their territories. We are also determining which habitat features and foods are most important to otters. Most of this work has been with populations in Kachemak Bay, but we are doing similar work in western Prince William Sound in cooperation with researchers at the University of Alaska.

We are interested in seeing how well we can determine the relative abundance of otters by counting how many latrine sites they use along a section of coastline and how intensively they use them. We are doing this by counting the number of scats otters deposit at the sites during certain time intervals between May and September. Researchers at UAF are investigating the use of a special genetics test to identify individual otters from their scat, which contains little bits of tissue from the otter’s intestines. It is possible to distinguish otter DNA from DNA in tissues of fish and other animals otters eat that are also present in their scat. The ability to identify individual otters will be a great help in the development of techniques to monitor trends in otter abundance.

We have also found that coastal river otters eat a wide variety of foods. In our preliminary analysis of river otter diet, we identified 38 unique food items among 90 river otter scats sampled in Kachemak Bay in 1995. Saffron cod, flatfish, rock sole, gunnels, and sculpins composed nearly 40% of the items identified. Thirty of the food items were bony fishes. The remaining 8 items were snails, mussels, barnacles, clams, crabs, polychaete worms, chitons, and sea urchins. River otters in Kachemak Bay generally preyed on fish no larger than a small rockfish. Our data indicate a substantially lower diversity of food for river otters in Kachemak Bay than previous research found for otters in Prince William Sound.

For information on these and other furbearer projects, contact Howard Golden at his Anchorage office at 267-2177.

# 1996-97 FUR TRAPPER COMMENTS

## HOW DID TRAPPING CONDITIONS AFFECT YOUR TRAPPING EFFORT?

Conditions were mostly good, but I do not do this as a full employment because I work a few hours a day in town. I mainly trap as extra income.

First half of the season I didn't have enough snow to do wolverine sets further north. Gas usage increased later due to deep snow.

Not enough snow for big game trapping.

When trapping a full season conditions are never perfect. There are always periods of hard freeze, high water, or deep snow but also periods of good weather, a person adapts and usually has an average season when using the full time frame allowed.

No snow-mild temps-harsh temps

Early snows allowed access to some new places; frozen rivers let us travel faster.

Conditions were finally in our favor—snow early helped us get to an area we haven't trapped in several years—plus the river stayed frozen.

Mostly the same, the wolves weren't around, no caribou.

Lack of snow made getting into some areas tough. Good ice conditions.

Lack of snow made me use a four wheeler instead of snow-go.

Much overflow ice, little solid ice on most lakes.

No snow made it more difficult to track animals also the mice were more easily available to the animals. Everything frozen made it easier and more accessible for the four wheeler.

Easier to maintain sets.

Little snow caused shortened season, hard to detect sign.

We lost our snow mid-Jan.

It didn't -- perseverance.

Couple feet of snow had to make sets when tide was out. And set at high tide mark. Bait sets.

Wet—made access difficult, set hard to maintain.

Didn't see much otter around [the island] due to the closure.

No change.

Little snow—easy access.

Was unable to check traps and set traps due to limited snow and raining conditions melted river crossings.

Some real cold weather —slow down.

Late snow—hard to get to line.

Lack of snow mild temps Freeze/Thaw/Freeze

No snow for sno-go.

Extreme cold and no snow hurt.

Too much snow, so much it was difficult to get around and successfully maintain your traps.

Very cold windy conditions. Little snow. Mink seemed less concentrated around water. Appeared to be hunting the forest. Lack of snow made locating marten difficult.

Moved sets around more, dependent on sign.

Clear, cold windy late Dec. and early Jan. made boat travel impossible and water sets not practical.

Fewer critters. Marten low. Even miles from last year's areas.

Seas were less rough this year; used skiff more. Fewer creeks open (due to low snowfall/colder temps) meant fewer water sets for mink.

Lack of snow kept most animals up high. Winds limit boating activity.

Better traveling—Rivers frozen earlier.

Fair access to trapline (weather)

Does not affect effort.

Typical S.E. weather makes boating rough but got out as much as I could. Would have liked more snow, makes it easier to make judgments on how many marten sets to make, and plans for next year.

Didn't affect us.

Improved it.

Conibears more difficult to set on hard frozen ground—reduced otter catch. Difficult to catch mink on the beach in heavy ice.

Weather was mild-no snow- open road many trappers so didn't put in much effort. Pulled the traps before Christmas.

Not enough snow. Lots of overflow.

Deep snow limited the amount of leghold sets.

There were lots of fox and mink this year.

Conditions until Jan. travel at will after Jan. any new lines had to be snowshoed first to pack trail.

Right amount of snow for a good marten trapping season.

26" of snow this season in the [area where I live] made travel good. 5" was on the ground at the start. My effort was the same as last year, according to fur price and species abundance.

They really didn't as snow conditions were mild--eased walking.

Great snow conditions, could ride just about anywhere.

Less snares.

Early freeze-up made beaver trapping a bit harder and with the ice frozen on the creeks and the subsequent drop in water, caused some mink sets that I normally make, not to be made.

Good year.

It is hard to keep traps operational in [my area] due to constant changing of weather conditions.



Early creek freeze, lots of overflow to avoid.

Changes in weather always cause changes in game patterns and changes in trapping effort.

Poor weather (lots of thaws) cut mobility and effectiveness of sets.

Christmas break weather was tough massive freeze downs. My work schedule did not allow me to devote as much time as I wanted to! Besides weather, and the time factor of work I thought I did exceptionally well on fox based on last years fox catch. I've been workin' on 'em!

The first day I started recognizing sets and went home and got more traps. I caught five muskrats in one hour that day so I was pretty enthusiastic.

Otters did not show up on time and I had to go back [home].

Rain most of Nov. hampered my sets prefer freezing and snow.

Decrease in number of animals missed.

Bad weather, deep snow hampered effort.

A. No snow for snowmobiles.

B. Competitors setting traps in otter runs before season opened where I have trapped before. Also, using my old stakes, this happened two different locations.

The wind was crazy some days. Making it poor traveling on the water.

Changing river levels--especially rising water decrease the effectiveness of the sets and use.

If the water was frozen over we had to walk which took several hours more. If it was very rough we had to oar water, which takes time as well.

There was a large number of target animals during the season most of which seemed in good condition. Light snow conditions were helpful in keeping sets working.

Lots of marten sign so we really concentrated on them this year.

Too warm and no snow, poor quality.

Bays freezing up prohibited me from getting to some of my traps.

Trapping conditions were good, had no problems with frozen up traps, no real warm up after freeze.

Marten were abundant so I ran a few more traps and stayed at it a little longer.

Had to go farther out because of lots of people.

Very little snow kept the marten up quite high and I wasn't willing to spend that much effort to get them.

Weather hampered efforts to reach traps at times. Most of December was sub freezing and very windy which resulted in freezing spray.

I had no problems. Traps close to home, could check them anytime with no effort or trouble.

No snow and high temperatures.

Cold and snow we found traps to be full. Warm and rain very little activity.

I had to work during part of the trapping season.

The conditions were pretty good this year could have used more snow but all in all the conditions didn't really affect my effort.

Rule and Regs. that are interpreted differently. State, Fed, & Native lands & access rules different for each made a big headache and didn't want to risk violation.

More snow machines and dog teams on my trapline.

Little snow but it was good.

Thin snow got a little later start.

There was enough snow early on to make trail sets possible and travel fairly easy. Overflow wasn't too bad. The caribou passed through early so weren't a problem.

Stable weather made for long working time for sets, which made for a good catch ratio of sets made to animals caught.

It help with a good freeze, lots of snow.

Too many city folks ruining my life anymore. Build a big damn fence around the cities to keep them folk in an don't let them out.

Lots of ice-Could run rivers earlier- less snow- didn't have to keep raising my wolf snares-which was good-

Good trail so I was able to cover more trail in the same time, and good snow conditions.

Lots of rabbits but few lynx. Marten seemed to be on the increase & mink too. Lots of coyote & fox sign but didn't try to catch them. Did some calling for them.

Snow conditions early was minimal but improved by the end of Nov. and stayed that way through Feb.

Didn't have much snow. Took longer to put trails in. Had to cut a lot of brush.

Poor snow. Furbearers were not using snow machine trails, as they would in deeper snow.

Heavy winds put a lot of sets out of order--a lot of digging out and re makes as a result.

Noticed the lynx really moved around when it warmed up just before and during a snowfall. Lots of wind on the river hard to keep wolf sets covered up or no snow to make sets.

A good depth in snow made for good trails. Warm weather increased the movement of the furbearers.

Weather is harsh in [the] Creek. Wind is main condition the time a set remains working is the key factor most of the time. Sets are either buried or bare.

Competition made it so it wouldn't be worth it.

It was a very cold winter--Too cold to fly many days.

We got an early snow which enabled me to get out on the line on my sno-go. Cold temps. made ice thick so stopped beaver trapping early.

Conditions were fair, making fur easier traveling and sets working longer.

Trapping conditions would be good if I could keep recreation snow machines off of it!

Deeper ice meant poor creek beaver trapping.

Lack of snow kept us close to home and could not trap wolves very well, they had an easier way of getting around than I did.

Weather was good, lots of snow but part of line had lots of overflow. Marten and lynx were plentiful. Had a great season for a novice.

Bad snow year--hard to get around also hard on equipment.

Encouraged us to continue.

The short lynx season during the coldest and shortest days of winter reduced the catch of lynx due to much less lynx activity during this time and the difficulty in making sets and keeping them operating.

None or very little. I use three wheelers when the snow gets deep enough I switch to snow machines.

I enjoy getting out in the winter and this is a way I can enjoy the trapping as well.

Less snow made it easier to get around.

Was able to get most lines out.

Good conditions allowed me to operate as I had planned.

Good weather and snow conditions helped me for awhile (but also helped joy-riders infiltrate my area). Overflow in late Feb. was a BITCH!

A late start on the main line meant more trail-breaking due to deeper snow. Several cold spells delayed or slowed work.

Thin ice on some creeks I went through twice with snow machine.

Conditions were good but there was too much snow to break trail with the Elan so I had to snowshoe it out which slowed things up.

Ice reduced the line a few miles. Otherwise about normal.

No game, no fur.

Good weather and snow conditions allowed me to put in a longer line.

Very little snow to drive marten and wolverine down. Two periods of cold weather when I quit and came to town.

It was cold out then and the furbearers was not moving much and they had lots of food around.

Lot of wind made it hard to work the line right in some of the best areas.

I could write a book on this one: Simply put, trappers constantly modify sets to suit conditions as they change. I had no notable extreme conditions to deal with--Maybe some overflow if I had to pick one over another, but that's common too.

The early snow (and Big Lake fire)? Increased the number of animals caught and activity. When we encounter 40% females we try to move to a different area. We had about 45% female marten in [these units] so therefore the effort was two weeks in each location then we pulled traps.

Blowing snow and freeze/thaw made it hard for me to keep snares or sets working for fox. I didn't catch any in a two week try. There was abundant sign however. I'm not that good of a fox trapper.

## OTHER COMMENTS TO FISH & GAME

I would like to continue getting results of all areas, even though I don't trap to make a living, I still like to get out and for the extra income it brings. It is a very important income for some rural residents regardless of race, color, or creed. Thank you people for your continued support of this way of living!

I'm disappointed with Governor Knowles approval to subsistence hunting and trapping issues, especially problems associated with wolves and their prey. I believe more of these issues should be best handled by the professionals at Alaska Department of Fish & Game instead of with emotional ties to ALR groups, large urban populations, special interest groups who back up Knowles.

As you know, last Aug. '96 saw the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service enact new regulations allowing me to market my furs in [a foreign country] at an added fee to them. For years I've sent my furs to Vancouver but this year they sent me a letter saying it was not worth the risk of losing my furs at the Border because of the unknown legalities with the USFWS I was forced to go through an agent in Seattle for the North Bay Auction, this would never of been my first choice. Unfortunately it was a poor choice, not only were just part of my furs sold but their early auction was postponed without any word to me. The loss of legholds and the negative effects of massive clear-cuts are real threats to my trap line but I fear the inability of my being able to market my furs as I've done in the past, without agents or federal hoops and fees will be the real problem for my survival to run an active and profitable trap-line. What is or has the State done to counteract this Federal interference? The fastest way to stop the majority of trapping is to make it non-profitable. Just a word of "warning" we better all take notice, the back door is open and the jack Boots are marching in.

Very disappointed in the Dept. and the Governor and the wolf airplane issue.

Trapping Conditions in [my location] have been very poor last three years. Beavers, otters doing good with mink (lots). Would trap a lot harder if prices were better, wolfs are getting thick, they killed lots of beaver and moose. Conditions make it hard on equipment. They can (Europeans) have my footholds when the prey them our of my cold dead fingers. Keep up the good work ADFG!!

Since I'm a youth, I'd like to see more education of our American heritage in schools, promoting the sport I so love. My skin crawls when I see animal rights activists targeting my generation. TRAPPERS: Let's stop being passive; we surely outnumber the anti extremists, and as you're all heard before, "if we all do a little, we can do a lot," and now is a time when we need to stand up, or we'll all be pushed down.

I almost hate to see the trapper questionnaire arrive in the mail annually; it's a sure sign trapping season is over, yet I look forward to reading every page.

Snow conditions were some of the very best we've experienced allowing us access to areas unable to reach in the past few years. Marten numbers were satisfying. Rats, otter and beaver were disappointing. Wolf and wolverine evidence continuing to increase yearly. I'm perplexed as to why muskrat numbers have yet to rebound.

I would like to encourage anyone thinking about attending the wolf trapping school to do so—as my daughter, our new trapping friend and I found lots of good useful information when we attended. My daughter continues to out-do me on the wolf line But there's always next season!

I believe now more than ever we must become involved with pro-trapping associations efforts. The writing is on the wall. Anti movement members will continue to attempt to take our rights away. There's a push, as I write to eliminate the use of our snares. All user groups must join the effort against the anti-effort.

Keep up the good work thanks for the help with the moose last spring. Don't let the board of fish and game stop us from running snow machines and four wheelers in my [area].

Do something about Aerial trappers and snow machines illegally taking of furs. These slobbs have already taken away our right to shoot an animal the same day airborne and will probably hurt us more in the future. The worst part is they can freely brag about it in public without fear. Most are local "heroes"! it's no wonder we are called the names we are even though most of us try to use some ethics in the way we take our furs.

It's time for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to suck it up and start to manage wildlife like they use to in the 60's and 70's. Predators need to be controlled. Wolves and bears are killing all the moose calves. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game answer to this is to manage the hunters, seasons, and bag limits. Isn't there plenty of Federal Land around to let game populations rise then crash. Alaska needs bold game management to protect it's wildlife populations on State land.

Keep aerial wolf hunting because there are too many of them around and killing too many moose.

First year in 31 I missed due to training in a new career outside! Will not miss another year. I did share my experiences and knowledge with trappers in Oklahoma. Will try to find your video ASAP!

Didn't trap too hard. Mostly to get away from town and enjoy the area. Would like to see the deer season close Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>. Too many hunters hunt the beaches after deep snow and shoot from the boats and bring in 15-30 deer at a time. On some of the small Islands the deer are almost all killed and will take some time before the deer population returns. Especially on years with two deep snowfalls in a row.

I appreciate the good work you are doing in producing this information. I had a fair Marten year but didn't do anything on coyote. Had a small pack of wolves move into the river area and they pushed most game out. I was not able to connect with a wolf due to extremely wet weather making sets impossible to maintain. Keep up the good work. Will be looking forward to next year's report.

I didn't have much time to trap last year. Because of workload. Thanks.

1<sup>st</sup> wolves where I live this winter, presumably because of little snow these past two winters—too smart for me.

Why does the state support more restrictions on access to trapping areas?

How can the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game representative promote moose winter range no motorized closure areas when there is no or very little biological premises for this action. The state currently has open trapping season and promotes trapping in many of these proposed closure areas. Access to these areas is by snowmachine or plane only in the winter time. If the state has legal open trapping season in these areas why restrict access. The state is currently backing a proposed additional moose winter range closure (no motorized access) on the Copper River Delta to be implemented by the U.S. Forest Service no motorized laws.

Currently the state does not know how many snow machines are using this area. Has not documented any know cases of snowmachine moose interactions in any of these areas. Does not know the extent of the winter range and does not realize that snow machines and moose winter ranger are not well suited for each other. Moose populations are declining in these areas. Due to what? If access is denied to motorized use then no trapping of predators will occur. If the state could document the negative impacts of snowmachine use in these additional proposed closure areas for sound biological reasons. I would not be so upset. But they have no known use numbers and no known negative interactions between moose and snowmachines in these areas. As a trapper I use this proposed closure area and access it by snowmachine. I have seen little snowmachine use in these proposed closure areas and have never had an interaction with a moose in these areas.

It seems that the low rainfall and snowfall last year and cold winter of '95&'96 in my area, has killed a lot of the beaver that lodged up in shallow swamps and streams. I still have lots of beaver but it looks like this is the way nature takes care of different critters. The mice died out last winter ('95&'96) so the marten move too. The wolves are in the sheep country way out of my range. The lynx were not on my line until the end of the season, just like last year. The small game this winter seems to be coming back, the rabbits are in pockets.

Still seem it would be nice to shut season a few years to let animals get more abundant. We can't be anywhere near the max carrying capacity of the land.

With higher prices greed took over the trappers who you would think would be the most respectful of other trappers were in fact the worst violators of line jumping. It's nice to get a big catch but trappers must keep ethics in mind. Trappers must stay united to continue trapping as we know it (or at least for as long as we can). It's hard to stay united when your fellow trapper is setting on top of your line.

Register traplines & close wolf & wolverine season March 15—no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> Bears!

We need more education of fur harvesting on the grade school level—kids are highly influence by only the anti-faction—suggest source program be set up in these areas.

Beaver are over running the rivers. This is the most I have seen in the past 20 years. I did not need to consider extending season (or allowing thinning out by use of firearms) they are diverting water ways and flooding areas and killing off stands of timber.

Thanks for the effort to open more local trails in my area to trapping. Too bad non-trappers emotions won out over education. The trapping pressure on the open areas is heavy. The difficult terrain in this area, and lack of road systems concentrates effort to a small area. Last year's high winds and freezing spray severely limited boat access, leaving few alternatives to auto/hiking lines. It's becoming more and more difficult and time consuming to run a "hobby" type trap line. Help!

The U.S. should tell the European Community to kiss our ass and ban all trade with them until they allow us to sell our furs there.

Open bears! Marten were hard to find, even where I hadn't trapped in the past. Wolves came though late—hadn't seen them for a couple of years. Please quit trading with Europe—or the feds. Secede if needed!

As in past few years just trapping for fun—not setting many traps; It's good just to get outside during the winter.

I think there should be limits on larger animals such as wolf, wolverine, etc. In my area, 95% of these animals are caught by 1% of the trappers with no regard to leaving any for breed stock. Re evaluate your trail closures. Some of them are ridiculous. I can see no reason why someone couldn't trap near these trails if they are already five miles from roads by boat or snow machine. I have been on some of these "heavily used trails" and seen no sign of human activity miles from the road.

Marten are increasing radically and will crash if not harvested (season still too short) Wolf are increasing and are bringing moose numbers down.

Several first-time trappers that seemed to be uneducated in trap line ethics, and fur handling.

Please help us to try and convince the Forest Service not to clearcut the area where my trapline is. This area is far too important of an area to destroy by clearcutting.

If the state doesn't settle the subsistence question before Oct. and the Feds take over, how will this affect trapping?

Abundance of targeted species was good, lack of logging activity for the past 10 years or so has maintained marten numbers. My biggest fear is to be forced into using conibear type traps for marten. I've used them off and on since early seventies and have no doubts my catch rate would drop and fur damage would rise.

The wolf population is drastically growing on the east side of the island where I live and the deer population is next to nothing. Please protect our right to kill wolves!

Clearcuts sure don't help marten populations, but logging roads sure help the wolves get around and eat them deer.

Would like to know the reason why the taking of beaver by firearm is prohibited? You are allowed to take many other furbearers with a firearm, so why not beaver?

I think you are doing a good job. Continue to do what you can to support the trapping industry. Personally, I believe trappers and the trapping industry should keep a low profile. Discourage trapping in area of high multiple use for winter recreation. (Along popular hiking trails etc.) In my area one or two very beautiful dogs were put to sleep after being tangled in otter traps in an overnight camping area. Even people who normally would support trapping had a bad taste in their mouth. I believe trappers are, for the most part, in a no-win situation.

The overall take of marten on the island where I live has been very high the past three seasons, though the far northern end has had less pressure due to the distance from population. No one traps mink because of low prices.

Beaver were trapped hard in 96-97 on North part of my island. Too many wolves have been taken the past seven years. Advise limiting their trapping time. The deer population is down 80% from 12 years ago. Poaching at night has increased yearly since the doe season was established. Their excuse is "what's the difference? All the does along the roads will be killed anyhow."

I did not trap on my own this winter [where I live], although I did go out by dog team with [a friend] on his short line near [the] creek. I sold my tent camp on the [river] to [another friend] because it was too far to fly from [where I live]. I will be looking to set up another tent camp closer to home when I get a breather from current activities. Right now I have a girlfriend in town, so I opted to work for [a certain company] for the summer instead of [on the Islands]. Hope you are enjoying ["the acres"]—it's neat country!

Continue to advocate the use of the leghold trap by State of Alaska as I don't really have a replacement for wolves. Don't give in to Animal Rights groups as far as trapping goes in Alaska. Continue to expand marketing of furs besides the EU.

Trapping conditions were good here. I have been in a reduced trapping mode for the past few seasons. Price, overhead, and fur numbers have dictated this. Hare numbers are starting to increase rapidly now and there is about 25% willow girdling in places. I am waiting on lynx numbers to build up before trapping heavy on them. Wolves were lower in number and we had them move

out of our area to where there were more caribou. Voles have had a better winter after the low snow past season, die off. We see many more birds of prey hunting hare than the past quite a few years. Thanks for sending the questionnaire, it is the most economical survey method as we trappers have already paid the field costs of travel.

There seems to be a higher pop. of lynx this year along with Showshoe Hares. In my area this is the first in six years. Other populations of furbearers were near the same.

Biologist should decide what is good for the game populations, not popular opinion or the ballot box.

Need a longer lynx season and try to do something with the wolves.

I enjoy trapping very much and appreciate all that the ADF&G does to promote and enhance this activity for the management of the resource and a chance to harvest these valuable furbearers for sport and personal use.

Only trapped 1/2 the year as I broke my leg at X-mas.

Love the sport-will keep it up next year.

Was a good year-all but for marten- good sign in November, then the marten left and never came back-good lynx sign on both my trap lines.

Wolverine totally absent by end of the winter. Wolf in evidence every trip (very unusually abundant). Beaver population down-not due to trapping. Possibly from wolf predation-or at least wolves seem to visit every live beaver house as they travel.

The wolf population on this side of the bay are having to feed on goat but the local F&G animal man tells me that goat are on the increase.

Great job, great management, great enforcement officers I was approached six times this winter out the road. (They were very helpful and answered all of my questions.) good to see them out there keep down the poachers and game hogs. I will have a skiff for this season. I'm hoping I will have more time to trap this winter especially on fox! I'm eagerly anticipating my first fox set of 97-98 season!

Dear friends! I hope to spend more time trapping this coming season. Land otters are everywhere, but weather can give us very hard time since here on our island. I think we have to find better market than Europe for our excellent furs, perhaps in Asia? (China, Korea, Japan) You print very humorous comments about conibear traps. Who are those "trappers"? Keep up good work and good luck!

It would appear all furbearer species have increased on my line. Marten sightings are frequent this last spring. Fox are very abundant.

I worked on my house most of the trapping season didn't hit it very hard. Next year!

Thanks, keep up the good work and the questionnaire. Wouldn't mind seeing the beaver season closed on the road system here for awhile but I suspect we would have "beaver fever" in the public water supply pretty quick!

I would like to thank ADF&G for their involvement in Alaska's fur trapping industry. I have trapped in another state and we received no help from it's department of Natural Resources which controlled trapping. As discouraging as the news is about the profession of trapping now and in the future I still have hope. Why are we considering letting people in Europe tell us how to trap or worse that we can't trap at all? Trapping is a sport for many but mainly it's an industry as is commercial fishing. The state should seriously consider limited entry for trapping just as they have done with the fishing industry. This would give trapping a more professional image to the public and to trappers, and would increase trapper participation in protection of our trade. The anti-trappers could reach into their pockets and buy the permits from the trappers who wished to sell and the rest of the trappers could harvest natural resources in a regulatory manner. Just like fishing! It looks like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife is not going to help trappers in Alaska. What can we do about this?

Not much to do in Feb. How 'bout extending ermine season for a month? And off the road system extend otter season 'til Feb. 20. Hard to trap in some areas as bears are too numerous and disturbed traplines.

River otter, cross fox, and beaver populations seem to be in a very healthy condition in the area that I trapped.

When I do trap I trap just one or two for my self I don't trap to sell. Just for my wall. Thank you keep in touch.

Limit [Island] and [Island] to one month for marten. I've said it before and I still firmly believe that this would greatly relieve pressure on the female marten population.

There were an abundance of marten this season. The light snowfall made it easier to keep the sets working. Many of the marten were extremely fat, nearly as fat as mink. There seems to be a sufficient prey species.

More marten than I've ever seen around.

a need to enforce and discharge yearly trappers! Conibear are very bad for the quality of the fur animal. Rot very fast in southeast Alaska. Also I release a lot of females that are caught by leg holds which cannot be done with conibears. Reproducing the following season is a must!

About 8-10 years ago before they started the marten studies the marten were trapped very hard around here and the population was reduced so bad you could hardly catch one. Now for several years before that I had only seen two ptarmigan and all of a sudden they were every where and the grouse population increased also. Then when everyone quit trapping because of low population it wasn't very long and the marten were up again and the ptarmigan were down. I think that there's balance between the marten and the ptarmigan and am wondering why I have not read anything in any of the reports about this. Please respond to this now or have one of the marten people give me a call.

Season for trapping in my area not long enough for us weekend trappers. Another two weeks would be good. Four weeks would be better. Four weeks to trap marten and mink is just not long enough for the people that work 40 hours a week to really manage a trap line the way it should be managed.

High marten population has kept ptarmigan and grouse at an all time low. We have more marten than any other yet we have the shortest season and restrictions of no motorized vehicles making most drainages untrappable without going by boat. My boat was swamped trying to get my boy off the beach after he checked traps. This was totally unnecessary when there was a road a mile inland.

Not every body has a Boston Whaler. Colored marten bring a very poor price.

None at this time thank you! I am a new trapper and have spent time experimenting with sets and techniques.

The season is too short. We need another month.

In the nine years I have trapped my area I have never seen another trapper in the area. Although the State has a 2 1/2 month trapping season the Forest Service allowed one month this year and even completely closed it a couple of years ago. The abundance of animals fluctuates from year to year but it is not due to trapping pressure. When the animals are plentiful, I trap hard. If not the traps are pulled early so there is no over harvest. What the Feds are doing has nothing to do with game management and more for creating jobs for their overstaffed bureaucracy.

I reduced my trapping to a few marten sets because any set that can catch a wolf can catch and hold a caribou. We catch caribou and an occasional moose and some die. ... I will be trapping this year. Manage well as I will always protect the obligation we have to manage.

As of 96-97, I finally made a loop out of my land-line, where I leave directly from the house with sno-go. Also, in 96-97, I and a partner completed work on a total all water-line by canoe on the upper river. Although rather dangerous, it worked out enough to continue as long as special precautions are taken. I drive the truck w/canoe about 3 miles to where I put in. As I employ only tree sets and snares on that line, it is checked according to weather patterns. The land-line employs foothold traps also, and is checked much more frequently, weather patters not affecting travel as much. Also, I have not trapped my other trapline in two years, but plan to next season. That line is in a different unit.

Report was interesting Pie graphs and bar graphs for some info wasn't necessary. Too busy to trap this year, always would like to do more but realize that it doesn't pay for the time, equipment, gas... but it is a fun hobby.

Continue to have problems with "recreational" snowmobilers stealing traps, running down fox, wolves, etc. harassing moose-

I got to the trapline late and spent most of my time cutting trail and expanding my line. Rabbit (hares) are roaming back and I seen lots lynx kitten tracks, but did not want to catch them. Next year should be better, wolverine stable, wolves, stayed high for sheep. Coyote increase, first time since I've trapped the area. Marten stable, Beaver slowly roaming back, but not really elusive country.

There are more and more un-knowledgeable or uncaring recreational snowmobilers and caribou hunters out and about. It takes a lot of enjoyment out of trapping to find all your traps sprung and your trails four to five snowmachines wide.



With all the nutty political pressures in this day and age of wildlife management, you somehow keep the animals welfare at a #1 priority. Keep up the good work.

In the area in which I trap trapper/non trapper conflicts are on the rise. Not sure of the answer but as time continues this will be a very big problem to trappers.

There were wolfs only once but there were no caribou. Muskrat: there was lots of snow and couldn't use pushups.

Regular traplines--these damn city folk don't know a darn thing about critters or their populations or they have a tendency to out trap a area-wipe-our is more like it! Damn city folk!!!

I really enjoyed the early beaver season in Oct. Got a good price for the early beaver, was able to trap some ponds that otherwise too dry later after freeze up. Would like the marten season extended longer in [my area].

Week end warriors on snow machines are getting real popular. I've seen snow machines in places that I never really imagined they could go. If I was a wolverine this noise and people would really bother me.

Happy to see the wolverine limit changed in my unit. I'm one of those trappers who has traditionally trapped in that unit for 24 years--but I do not live in that unit. Keep up the good work. The pressure you guys are under must be worse than hell and I don't think it's going to get better. but keep in mind that's the tactics of these groups of people. They say--keep the pressure on the game department biologists until we wear them down and they finally give in.

Lots of hares not very many lynx around though coyote & red fox were pretty common and seemed to be on the increase.

Winter caribou is the main reason there is so much pressure on wolverine, fox, two wolf. These people kill anything that moves. They travel on packed trails that trappers spend hard work and time putting in and signs don't seem to detour. There should be stiff penalties enforced on these people. Trails is an issue that should be recognized by all snow machines going into the back country. Trappers spend much time and money to help F&G to determine species abundance and help conserve a fur industry that is a heritage of our forefathers who explored and discovered this country.

Lynx are on the build-up. Season extension for lynx should be increased into Feb. Season for cats should be Dec. 15-Feb. 15. for a bunch of units.

Would be nice to have longer lynx season. Nov. 10-Jan 31 or just a little longer than it's been when the lynx are on an incline here.

Increased snow machine traffic made trapping efforts harder, people should be educated to respect trappers trails.

For the first time in five years I can report at least three moose calves survived until early April on my trapline. In previous years there were none by February. I'd like to think our cropping the wolf pack (seen in Sept.) from nine to six was a factor. At season end the pack has split and running as a pair and group of four. The huge single wolf track seen for several years were seen in November once but not again all winter. I'd like to know if another trapper took a huge black wolf in the \_\_\_\_ area.

I used to trap caribou for years but there got to be too many people on my line. [One individual] from [a place] took 10 to 15 people at a time for trail rides on my line quite often because the trails were always broken. [Another man] came by the cabin one morning on [a creek] below [another creek] and he had 17 machines following him. That was when I knew that would be my last year on [that creek].

I've been busy running the Iditarod so I've not had the time to run a trap line but I plan to continue monitoring the area I trap and resume trapping again after I finish racing dogs full time. So I would like to continue to help ADF&G any way possible. I am an avid hunter and will be a trapper again in the future. I appreciate all the work you people put into keeping our wildlife healthy and our rights to hunt and trap them.

Thanks for the questionnaire, sorry for being so late, I do like the report please keep doing it.

Looks like a bad year coming up for all fur prices--I still have 144 marten, at an auction house, that were not sold (as of 7-25-97). The way it looks now I will only trap enough to hold down the area I call mine. I think ADF&G is doing a good job of showing the importance of trapping in Alaska. I don't know what else we can do.

I thought I mailed this in this spring....Don't really remember all the numbers so if you can find my earlier copy those numbers are more accurate.

Have the weasel season paired with the marten season rather than the mink season.

I think we should be able to shoot Red Fox in [my area] again!

Lengthen the lynx season until Feb. 28th as cats are now building up after the rabbits. And most of the cat sign is showing up in Feb.

People and other trappers (newcomers to the area) are not respectful of other trappers lines anymore. If you leave your line or a portion of it untrapped for a season to let game build up-someone will try to more in on it. It's not like the "old" days anymore.

This report may be a duplicate. I remember filling it out earlier. It is possible it never got mailed. So I am submitting this report. But you should check to be sure you are not double counting this data.

Held mink over because of dropping prices. Mink abundant in some areas, scarce in others. Seems to be a conflict between sea and river otters for food or range. They don't seem to mix well.

Personal reasons kept me from trapping 1996. However I will be trapping this year. So will keep all information and send to you. I think you're doing a great job.

Had back surgery in Nov. so I didn't trap. Looking forward to trapping this winter.

I'm 70 years old now and slowing down. Last year I had to eliminate one line or one girlfriend-so I let [Girlfriend #3] go. This next season I'm reducing the number of sets but am trying to keep both [Girlfriend #2] and [Girlfriend #1] at least another year. I have a gimpy leg now-actually nothing works as it used to. I had to go to the clinic for an exam-I don't have health insurance except for Medicare and the nurses threw away my underwear. What with low fur prices and upkeep on [Girlfriend #1] I'm having a hard time. Maybe things will be better on that great trapline in the sky.

I would like to see registered traplines so that the fur populations could be built up for a larger harvest. Trappers come in and trap out the mink and marten and then move on to somebody else's trap line. It takes two to five years for a mink or marten population to rebuild so that I can take a good harvest without hurting the breeding stock. When you get the stocks built up somebody comes in and rapes it.

I have received a lot of help and information from the local biologist and hope he keeps up the good work. It's nice to have someone who will listen to the trappers and hunters and work with them for a change. It makes a lot of difference in how much information you get from us and kind too.

I keep hearing rumors of registered traplines. I suggest these folks visit Canada and discuss it with trapper using them. Registered traplines come with annual quotas of catch. Two seasons under quota and you can lose your line. Also no recreational trapping for kids and the next generation. so if you want quotas and the end of trapping lets get registered. Ace out the kids. We'll have ITQ like (IFQ's). Think about it.

Yes, I have trapped this area for the last 10 years every other year and caught about the same amount of marten. This past season another person started putting traps right by mine and there not a thing I can do anything about it. But trap it every year now and not manage it like I have in the past.

Marten are very abundant in this area. I feel the season for them should be lengthened. Rabbits are becoming abundant in this area and lynx numbers are increasing. Both were at about zero when I first started trapping here. The area is being overrun by snowmachines and dog mushers.

One of my most negative memories of [this year] trapping controversies is of other users taking snares or traps or otherwise interfering with legal trapping. I would like to see the state make an effort to educate the general public with TV ads or something as to the law regarding these acts. I think also some clinics on avoiding unwanted catches (moose, etc.) and how to handle releasing them would be beneficial to trappers. I'm still upset about Gordon Haber freeing that trapped wolf on TV; and getting away clean sets a bad precedent. People may get the idea it's O.K.

Due to me building a house I did not find much time to go trapping. This is the reason for the low catches and time involved on the trapline. I sure like the fall and spring open water trapping.

Marten were very abundant. Beaver suffered by the snowless winter of '95-'96 and lots of below zero and the light snowfall and very cold winter past. However very few trappers trapped beaver this year or last. Marten season is too short. Snowshoe hare were abundant this winter. Shrews were extremely abundant and would climb the trees and eat the bait in marten buckets so that much of the time sets were out of order. Can't remember so many shrews for many many years. Mink were common but very few trappers set for them this year. Over all trapping pressure has been very light.

I think for beaver in south central AK should be closed before May 15 and start in October 1 when some trappers can do some open water trapping. I like open water trapping for beaver, otter, muskrat, much better.

I still think the late season general moose hunt should be closed it puts too many thieves in the woods. Also out of all the moose hunters I saw this year in Nov. only one had a pair of snowshoes with them. It just shows how many people just ride around on snowmachines harassing moose and trappers trails. One morning there was at least 25 people in the parking area on the [area] and not one of them had a pair of snow shoes and I know for a fact at that time of year you can't move around without them. I used the signs from the trapper association this year marking my lines along with a sign asking people to please stay off of my trail. I had good results in every month except during the late moose season. Nov. 15 to Dec. 15.

I did not trap marten because by the time the river froze the season was over. I would also like to see the late spike/fork season stopped. I know of several Bulls killed that were not legal. Snowmachiners do a lot of harassing game also. I would like to see marten season extended to at least the end of Dec. in [my unit]. Keep up the good work.

The Big Lake fire moved marten to our area. In years past, we did not see or trap as many as we did in '96-'97. this is my thoughts--not proven! I am not sure I would extend the marten season in [a unit] at this time. If numerous animals did move from the Big Lake Fire area and the success rate is high for all trappers in this area, we may decimate the marten in this area with an extended season. We need to wait for the fire area to recover before messing with season length.

I very much enjoy trapping, we sell some fur and keep some for our own use. Due to the necessity of a full time job my time available to trap is limited. I do get out as much as possible and do observe the woods pretty close. This might make my questionnaire be on a much smaller scope than a full time trappers. I hope it was helpful.

Coyotes are moving out of my area. Never saw so much fox sign as I have this past season. Caught more fox than in any of my previous 25 seasons in this area. I miss the coyotes--Hope they return next season. No lynx tracks, very few muskrat push ups, and few beaver houses. Keep up the good work--keep the bunny huggers at bay.

Once again the marten season was too short in [my units]. [This unit] is where I usually trap and access was not possible until the season was almost over on Dec. 15th. I heard of one trapper living across the [unit] who took over 100 marten this season--so the reason for this short season was not to conserve this animal--but rather to keep outsiders out until too late. I won't be trapping any longer--I enjoyed it while it lasted.

You guys are doing a good job. How about a bounty on trap thieves?

Rabbits are really coming back, hope with this next projected El Nino for the coming winter brings rain again like the late 70's. Bob Stevenson told us maybe that's why we didn't see a high cycle them. Hate the late season spike fork moose season. Too many bandits out to steal fur and gear.

Thanks for the questionnaire and the opportunity to comment. Even if you don't listen, still makes me feel better! Was nice having the Caribou Calf Protection Program going. Makes it worthwhile to go after those stinkin' wolves! Hope it goes again next season.

Animal populations have been relatively stable up here, but with the increased pressure of people with air craft for the use of locating and then pursuing on snow mobile, will have its impacts as this area cannot support heavy pressure of illegal activities. Example--I caught nine wolves and 28 fox this season, one group of four people run down and shot 80 fox, 54 wolves, this season (between [certain areas]). Also had these same people pursue animals on my line, and run parts of my line regularly. There are four other trappers in this area who are having problems with these people. It's hard to manage a healthy animal population on a trap line when you have others who are not concerned and just want maximum harvest and then when it goes down, they move to another area leaving the local trappers with the over kill damage.

Game is a state resource that should be managed by the state agencies only, no fed or native group should be allowed to manage our game; maybe in management due to the nature of game not knowing that in boundaries in one system, but not in nature's way of migration. Outside interest groups ought to stay home and take care of things on extending and pushing the game into tighter wilderness areas, and carrying the extension of their pride and obligation etc. Hang in there and try to keep these other groups out of our state management.

Not all the furs is for sale. Beaver is for meat we trap only for about 10 days of enough to eat. Wolf, wolverine we keep for our own personal use. Trapping is a big part of the way I live and survive the dark winters in Alaska.

ADF&G should be more adamant about protecting and promoting the fur industry. Work with the U.S., Canada, Russia, in preventing actions by Governments such as the European countries who are farming fur bearers, then banning the importation of Alaskan and Canadian furs because we use leg hold traps. The bottom line is economics and the Alaskan trappers were trapped by political games in Alaska, U.S.A., and the European Countries.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

**If you have questions about your specific area, please let your local area biologist know that you would like to hear from him or her regarding your concerns. Thank you for your comments. We appreciate hearing from you, and I am sure other trappers enjoy reading about what's going on in areas outside their trapping grounds.**

**Sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doreen Parker McNeill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

**Doreen Parker McNeill  
Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203 or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.

For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-6077, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-6078.