Statewide Annual Report

TRAPPER QUESTIONNAIRE

July 1, 1998–June 30, 1999

Jackie Kephart

March 2000

Trapper Questionnaire

Statewide Annual Report
1 July 1998–30 June 1999

Jackie Kephart
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation

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. Properly dispose of animal carcasses.
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

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Frank Rue, Commissioner

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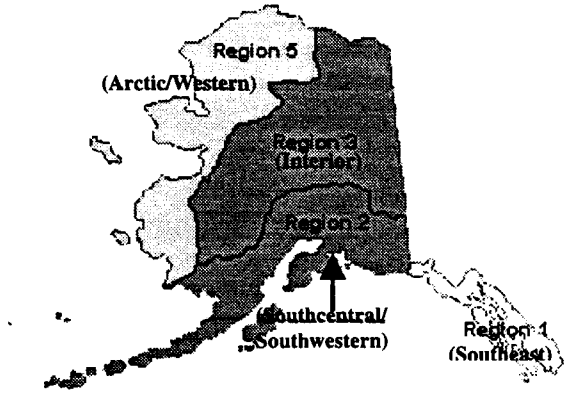
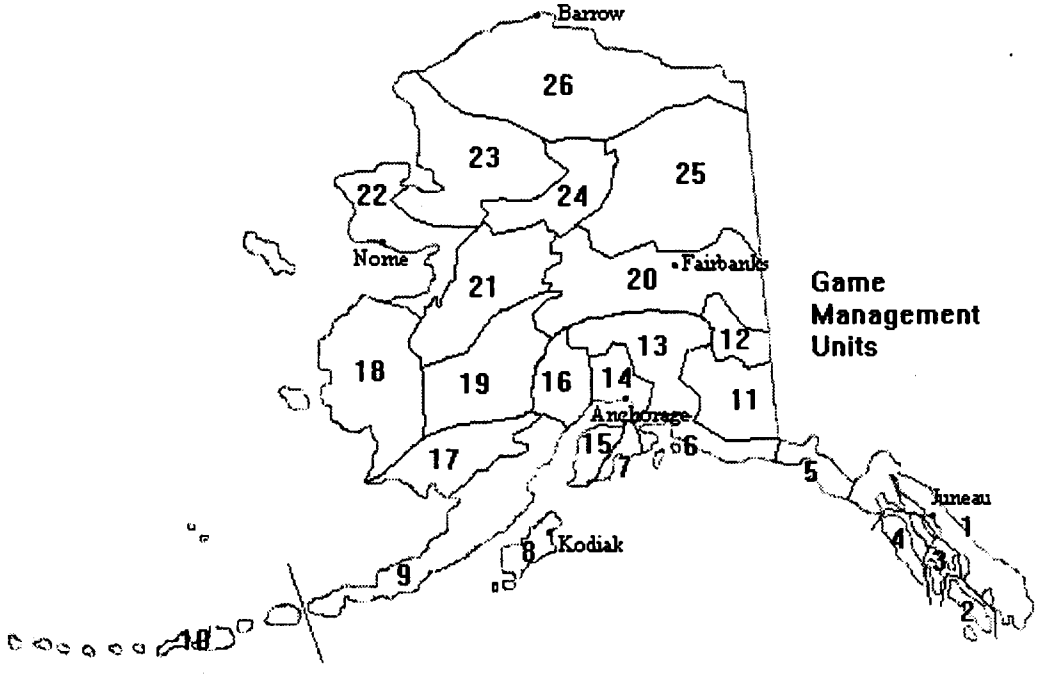
ALASKA'S REGIONS AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS

REGIONS





CONTENTS

ALASKA TRAPPER REPORT
1998–1999

INTRODUCTION

This report includes information contributed by you, the Alaska trapper. Our mailing list for the 1998–99 season included 1301 trappers. We received information back from 427 individuals. Of these, 61 people trapped in Southeast, 106 trapped in Southcentral & Southwestern, 69 trapped in Interior Alaska, and 34 trapped in the Arctic/Western region. Others returned the questionnaire but did not trap. 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.

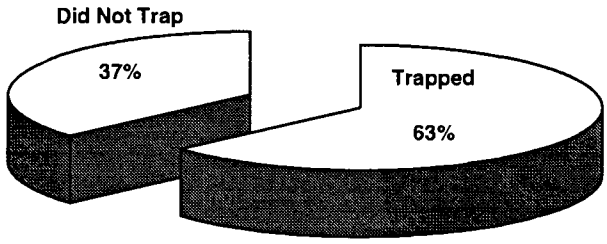
A PROFILE OF ALASKA'S TRAPPERS

We asked trappers like you to answer questions to help us develop this report. In the following pages you will find how your fellow trappers answered those questions. Where possible, we show how trappers answered those questions over the past few years. Issues facing trappers and reports by Fish and Game's regional furbearer biologists begin on page 34. Comments by trappers begin on page 43.

Did you trap in 1998–99?

63 % of the trappers who responded to this questionnaire said they trapped during the 1998–99 season. This represents the lowest percentage of trapping effort in the last ten years.

Of the 427 Trappers Who Returned the 1998-99 Questionnaire

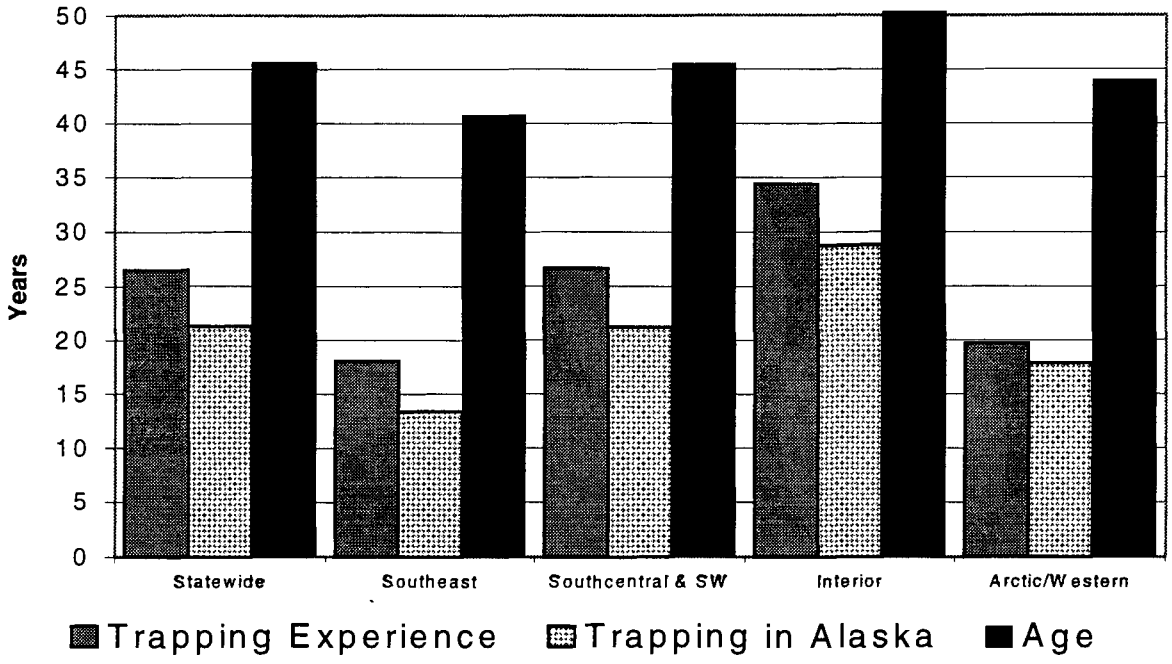


Trapper Age and Experience

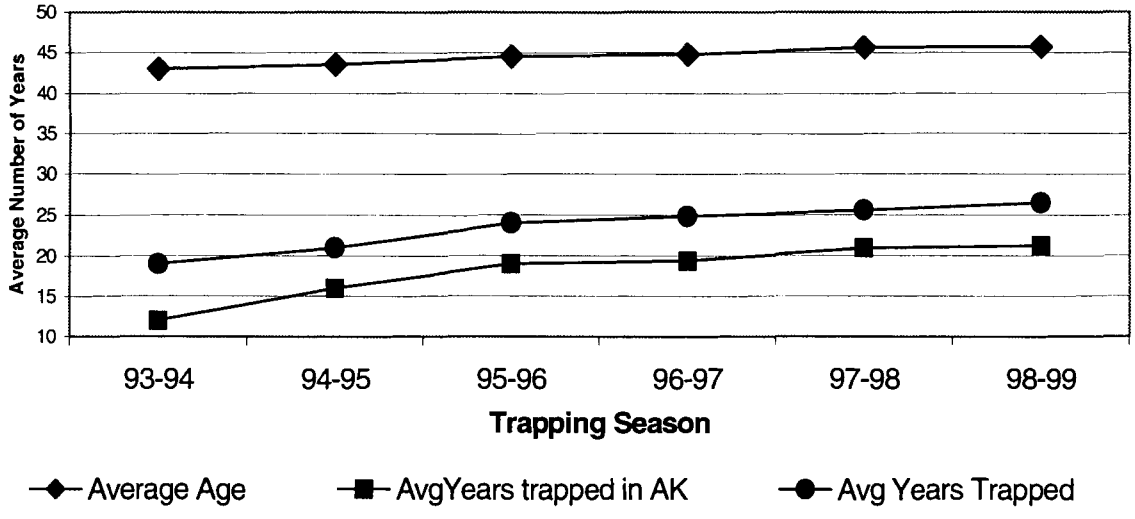
On average, trappers in Alaska have been taking furs for over 26 years, 22 of those years in the state. The average trapper in Alaska is almost 46 years old. Average age was 41 in Southeast, 46 in Southcentral and Southwestern, 51 in the Interior, and 44 in the Arctic/Western region. The oldest trapper reporting was 85 and the youngest was 13. Trapper age and experience has steadily increased since we began asking this question in 1993–94. This suggests we either need to send the trapper questionnaire to more (younger) trappers or trappers need to recruit young people. If you know a young trapper who would like to get this report, please send us their name and address with your questionnaire.

The graphs on the next page illustrate the breakdown by region and the trend over the last six winters.

Average Trapper Age & Experience

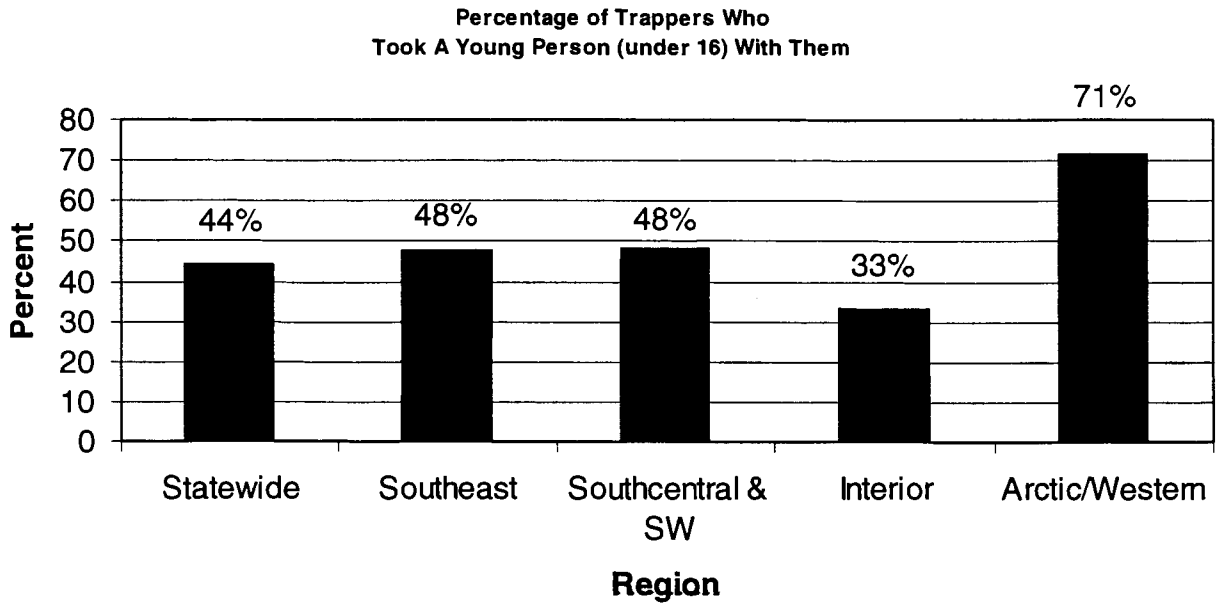


Trappers Get Older & More Experienced



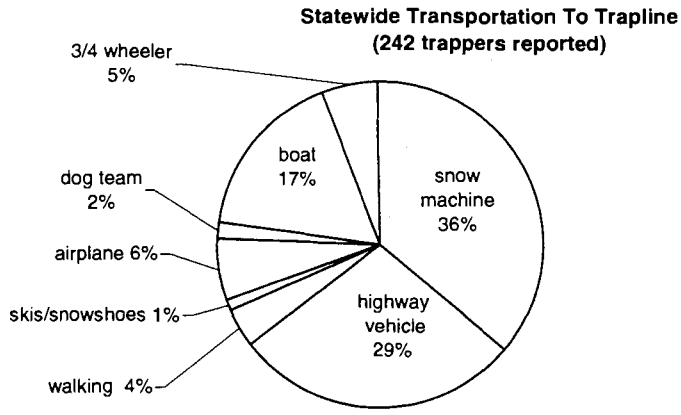
Did you have a youngster (under 16) with you on your trapline this year?

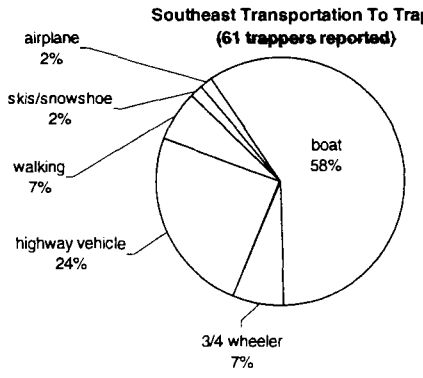
44% of trappers statewide had someone 16 or younger with them on their trapline at least once. Percentages are listed by region in the graph below.

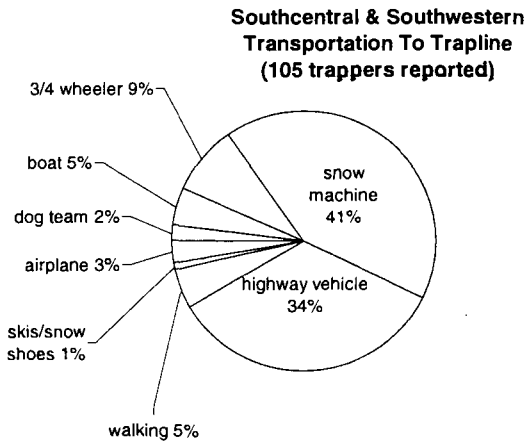


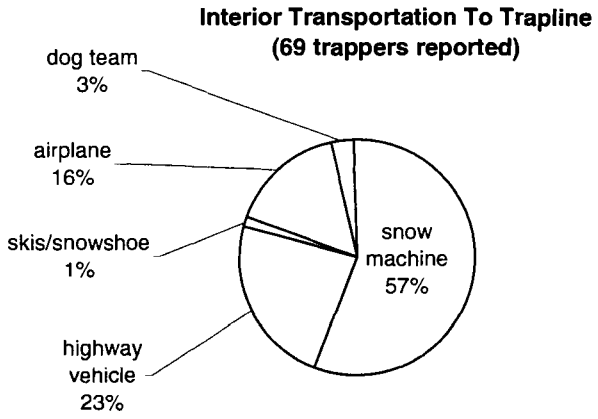
What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

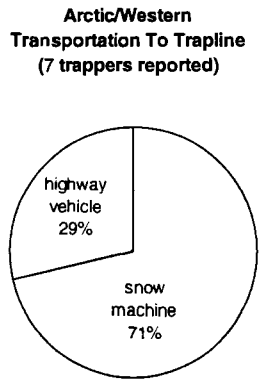
Transportation used by trappers throughout the state to get to their trap line(s) is summarized in the following pie charts:







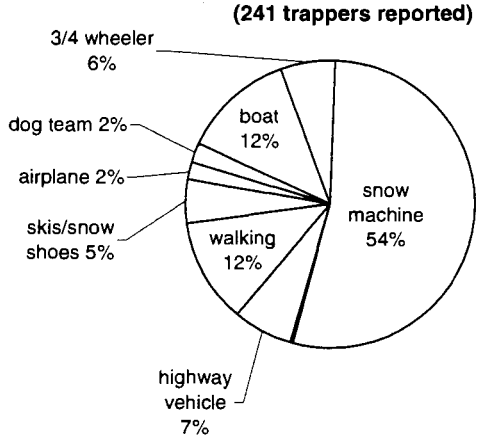




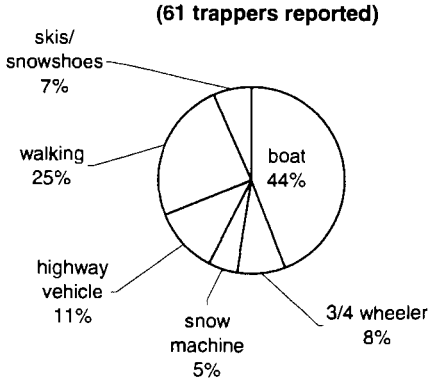
What transportation did you use to run your main trapline?

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

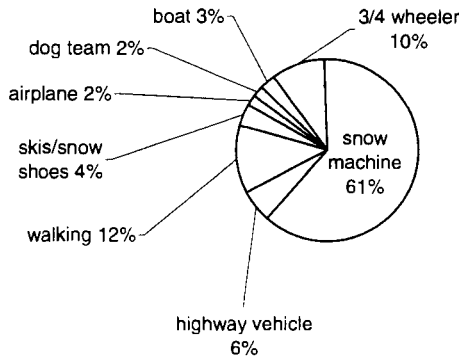
Statewide Transportation On Trapline
(241 trappers reported)



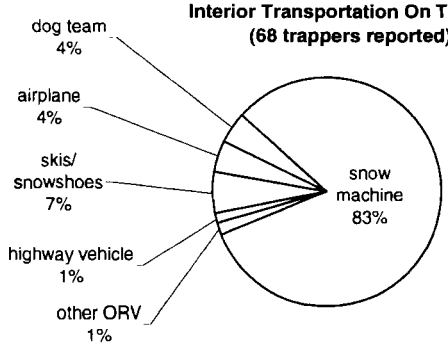
Southeast Transportation On Trapline
(61 trappers reported)



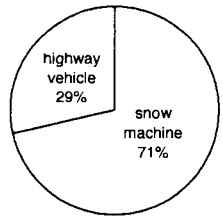
Southcentral & Southwestern Transportation On Trapline
(105 trappers reported)



Interior Transportation On Trapline
(68 trappers reported)

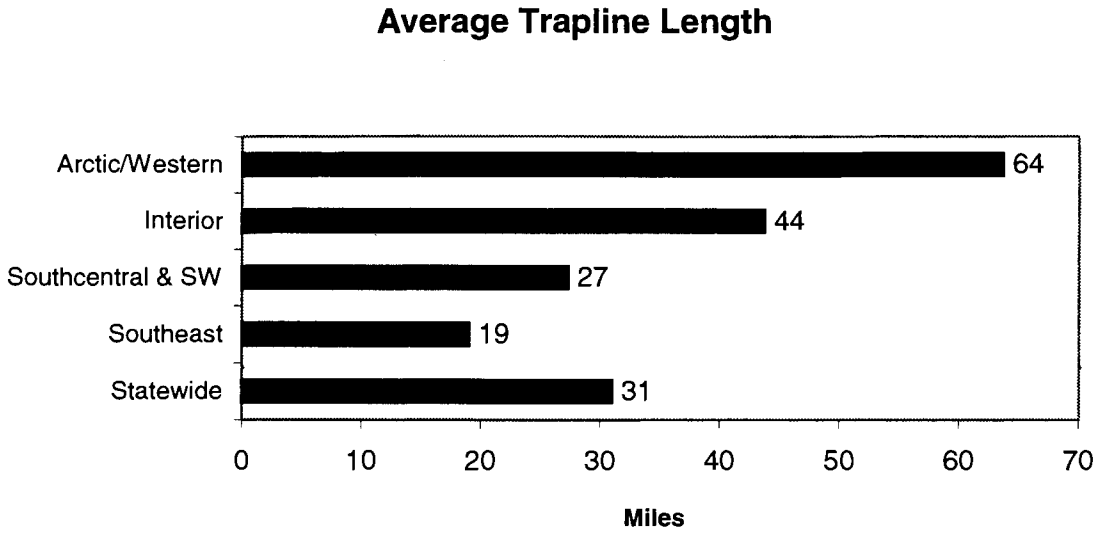


Arctic/Western Transportation On Trapline
(7 trappers reported)

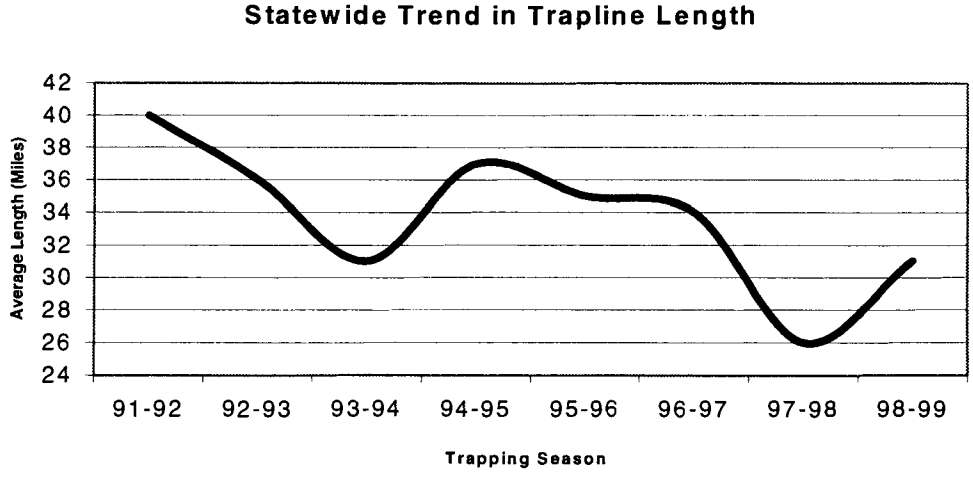


How long was your main trapline in 1998–99?

The average trapline length statewide in Alaska was 31 miles. Traplines varied from less than 1 mile in Southeast & Southcentral to 300 miles in the Arctic/Western region. In Southeast Alaska, average trapline length was 19 miles, and varied from less than 1 to 150 miles. In Southcentral, average length was 27 miles, and ranged from 1 to 155 miles. In the Interior, traplines averaged 44 miles long, and ranged from 2 to 200 miles. In the Arctic/Western region, traplines averaged 64 miles and ranged from less than 1 to 300 miles long.



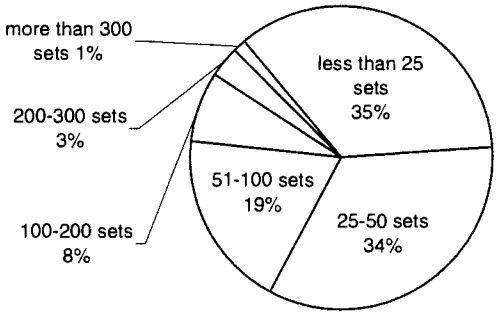
Since the 1991–92 season, when the average trapline was a little under 40 miles, trapline length had remained between 25 and 40 miles, with a low of 26 miles in the 1997–98 season. The longest trapline in the state has fluctuated between a low of 220 miles in 1990–91 to a high of over 400 miles in 1992–93. 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.



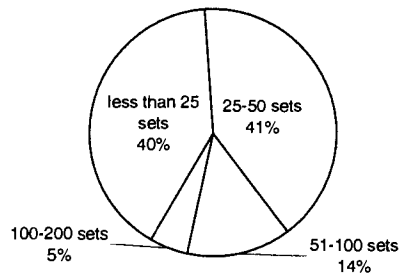
How many sets did you make on your line in 1998–99?

As shown by the graphs below, the number of sets per trapline varied a lot. Most trappers (88%) put out 100 or fewer sets. Throughout the state, less than 1% of trappers put out more than 300 sets. Most Southeast trappers (81%) put out fewer than 50 sets, and only 5% of Southeast trappers put out more than 100 sets on their lines. In Southcentral and Southwestern, 68% of trappers had 50 or fewer sets on their lines, 11% had more than 100 sets. Many Interior trappers (56%) had 50 or fewer sets, while 21% had more than 100 sets on their lines. In the Arctic/Western region, 100% of the trappers had 50 or fewer sets.

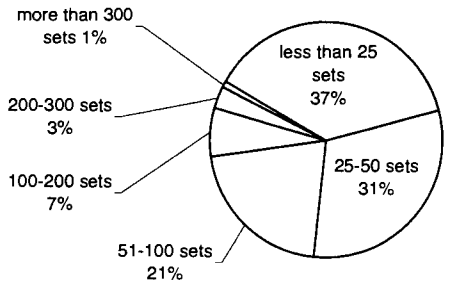
Statewide - Number of Sets on the Trapline



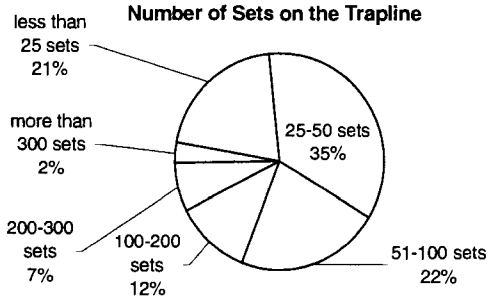
Southeast
Number of Sets on the Trapline



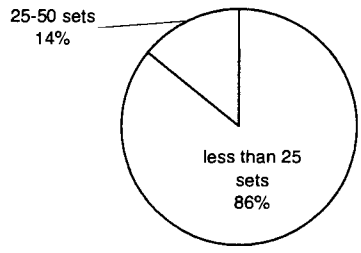
Southcentral & Southwestern
Number of Sets on the Trapline



Interior
Number of Sets on the Trapline

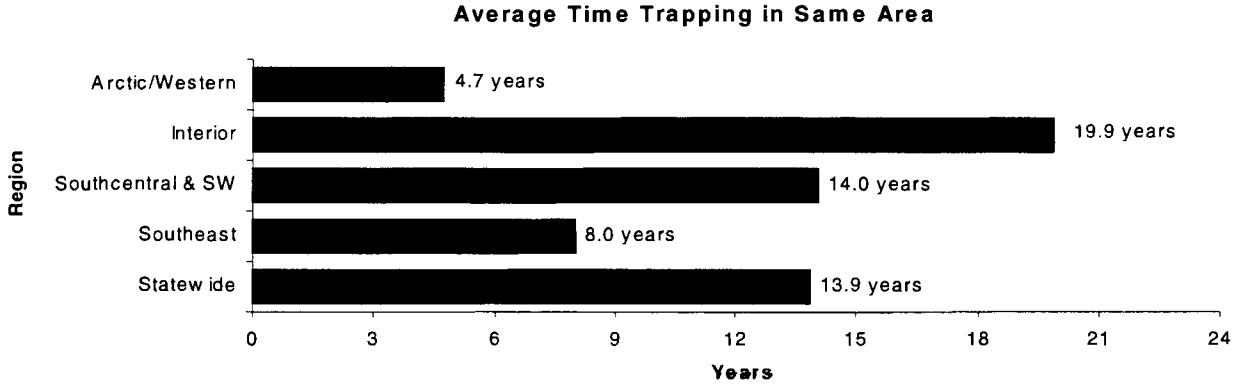


Arctic/Western
Number of Sets on the Trapline



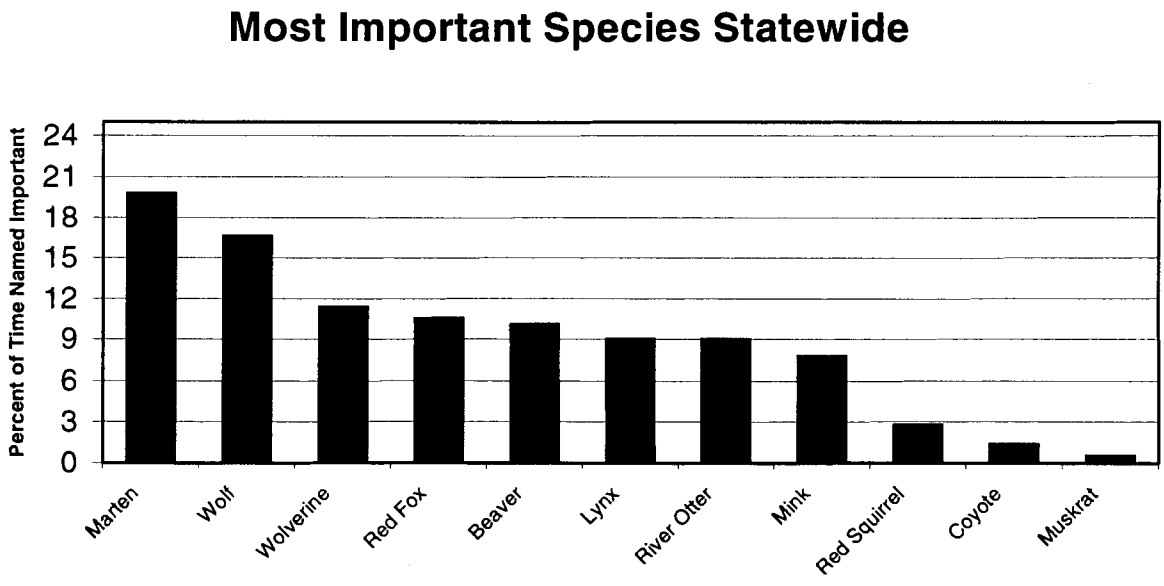
How many years have you been trapping in the same area?

The average time Alaskans have been trapping the same area is almost 14 years. The longest period of time in the same area is 60 years by a trapper in the Galena area. In Southeast, the average time in the same area is 8 years, in Southcentral and Southwestern the average is 14 years. In the Interior trappers averaged close to 20 years, and, in the Arctic/Western region, trappers averaged almost 5 years of trapping in the same area.



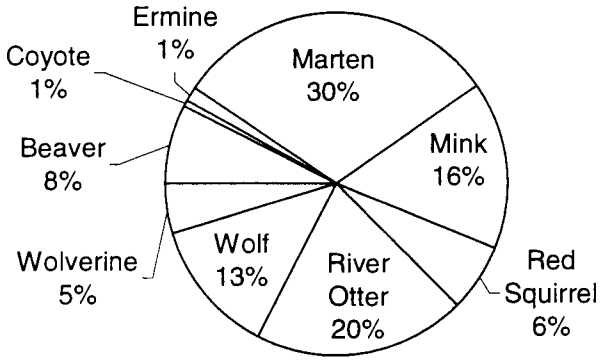
What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1998–99?

The two species most often listed as important by trappers statewide were marten and wolf. Since we first asked this question in 1992–93, marten has remained the species most often mentioned as important to Alaskan trappers. Wolf, beaver and otter also continue to be among the top species named as important, although their rank changes from year to year.

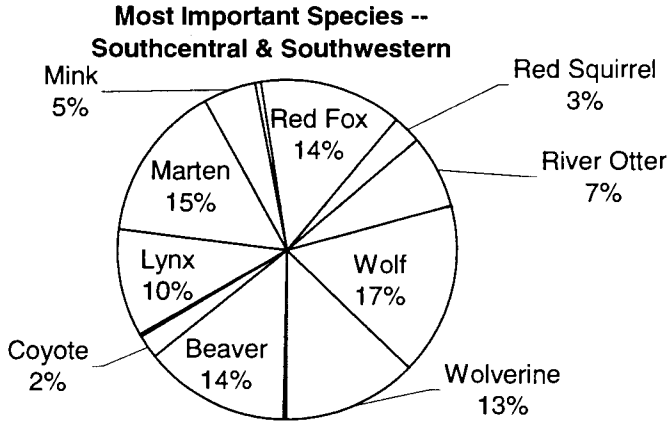


Broken down by region, the results are a little different: These regional differences reflect which furbearers are available and current market values.

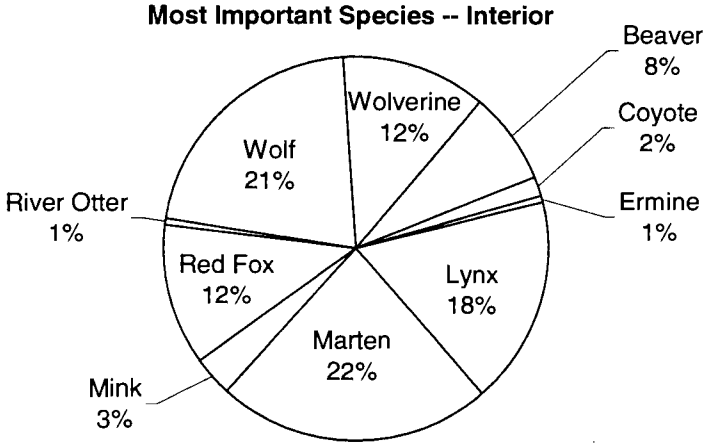
Most Important Species -- Southeast



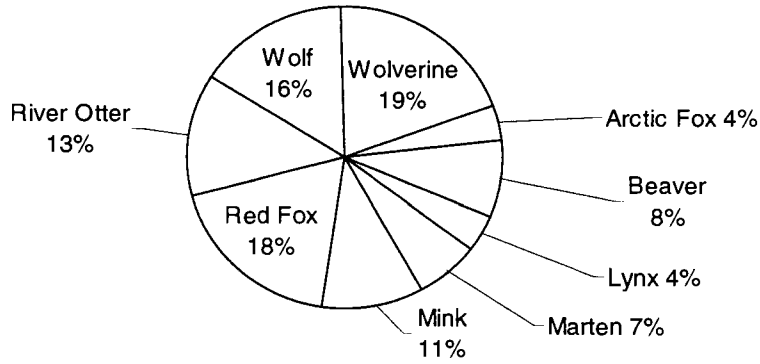
Most Important Species -- Southcentral & Southwestern



Most Important Species -- Interior

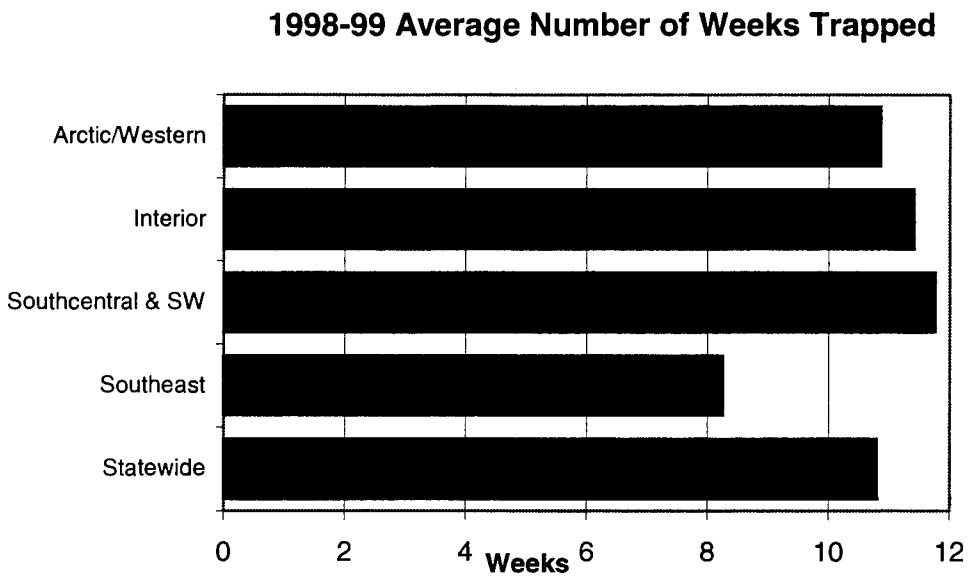


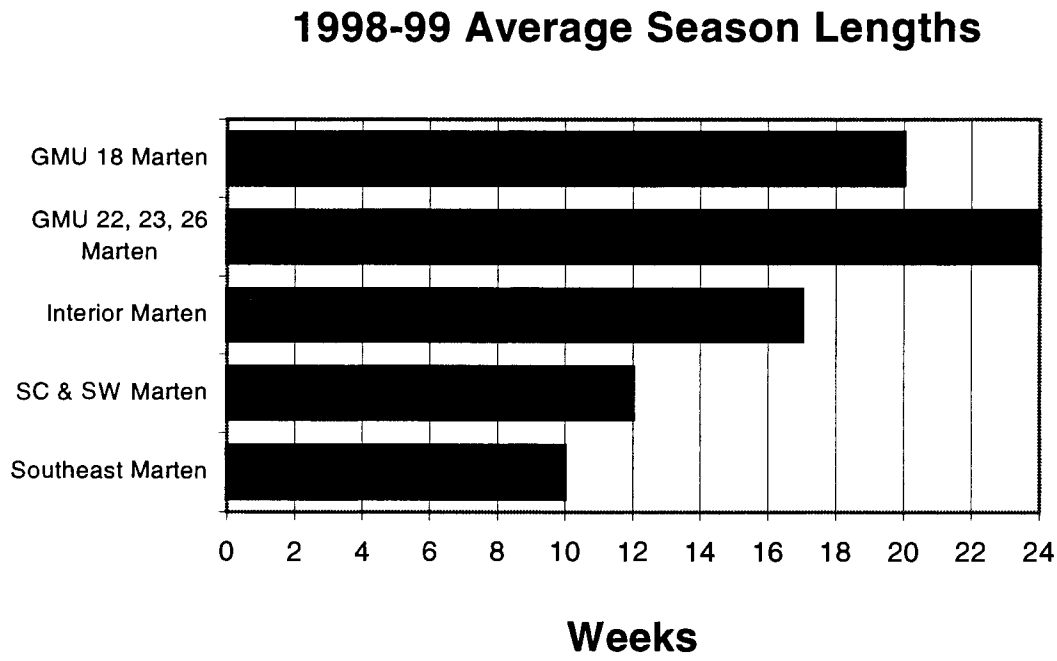
Most Important Species Arctic/Western



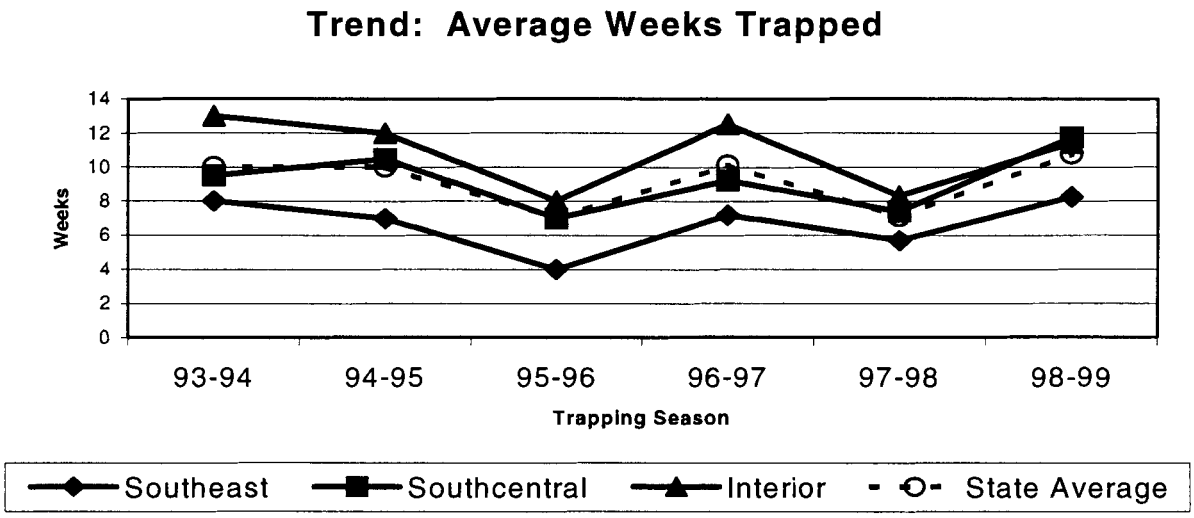
How many weeks did you trap during the 1998–99 season?

The average trapper in Alaska trapped for almost 11 weeks. Compare the graph of average number of weeks trapped with the average season length for marten.



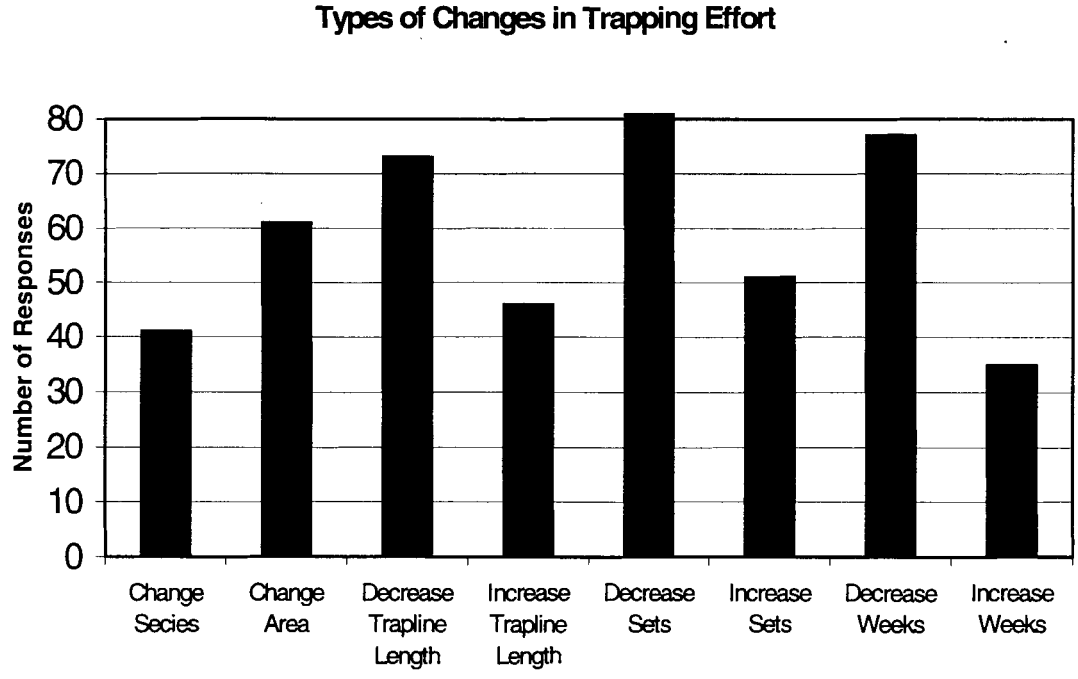


Notice the average number of weeks trapped has increased this year from a low in 1995–96.



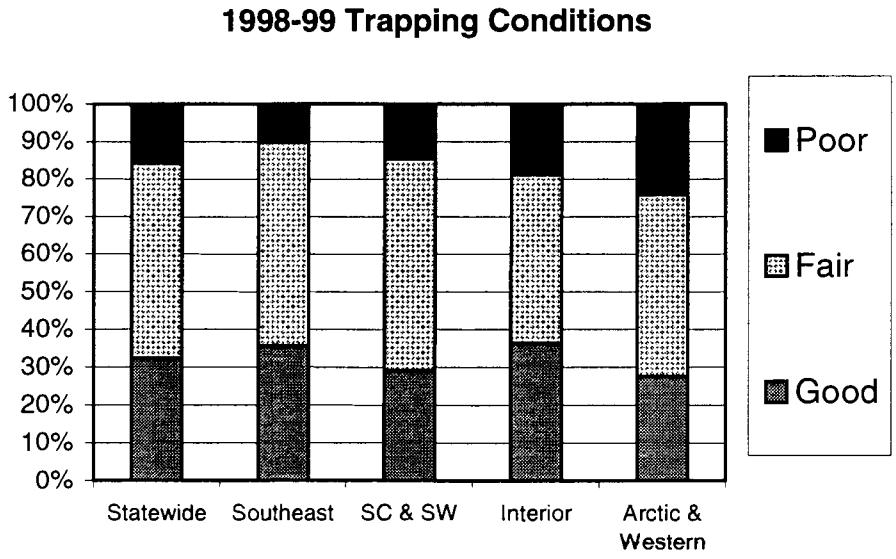
How did you change your trapping effort for the 1998–99 season?

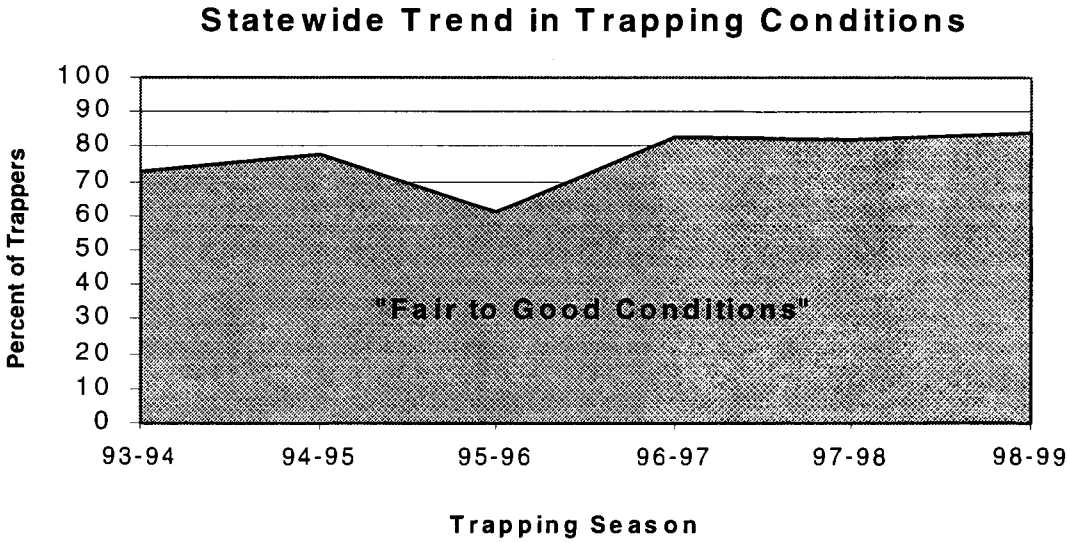
This chart shows which types of changes trappers made.



What were trapping conditions like on your trapline?

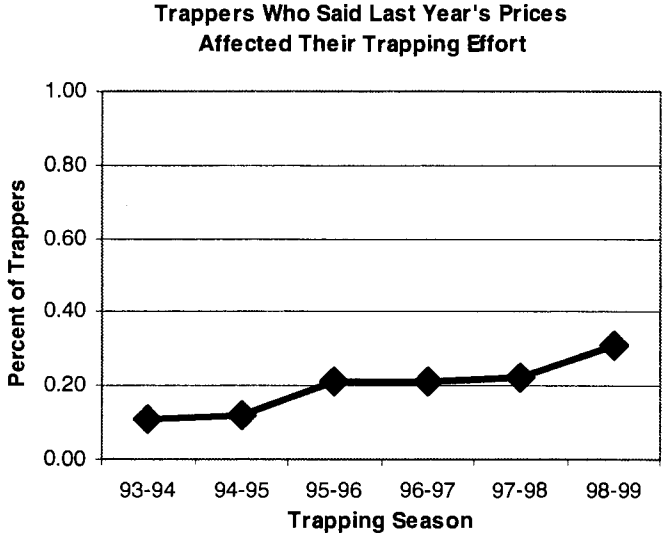
Statewide, most trappers (82%) said conditions on their traplines were good to fair. The following charts break this down by region and show the 6-year trend.

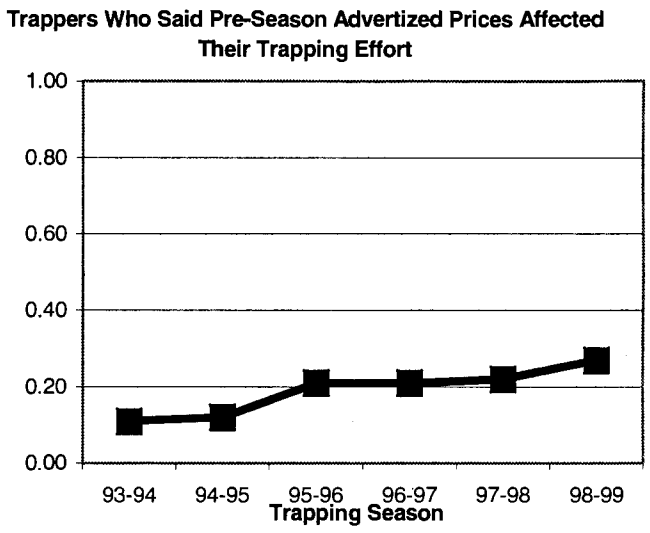




Did last year's fur prices or the pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort in 1998–99?

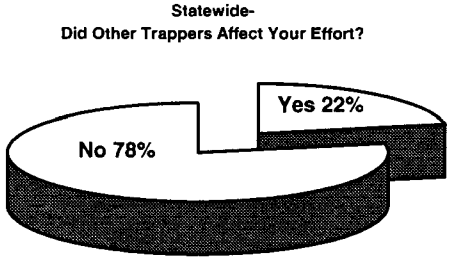
Statewide, 69% of the trappers said last year's price did not affect their trapping effort this year. In the Interior, 57% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. Most Southeast (75%) and Southcentral and Southwestern (75%) trappers said last year's price didn't affect their effort. 57% of the Arctic/Western region trappers said last year's prices did not affect their trapping effort. Statewide, 73% of trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their effort. In Southeast, 84% of trappers said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort. In Southcentral and Southwestern, 77% of trappers were not affected by pre-season prices. In the Interior, 65% did not change their trapping effort because of pre-season prices. 59% of the Arctic/Western region trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their trapping effort.

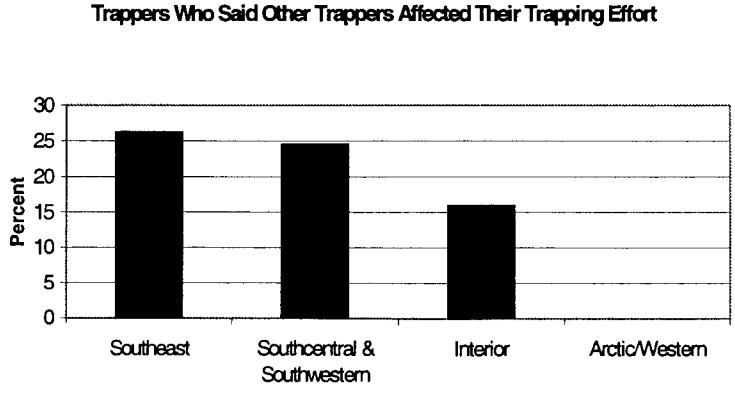




Did the presence of other trappers in the area that you trap affect your trapping effort in 1998–99?

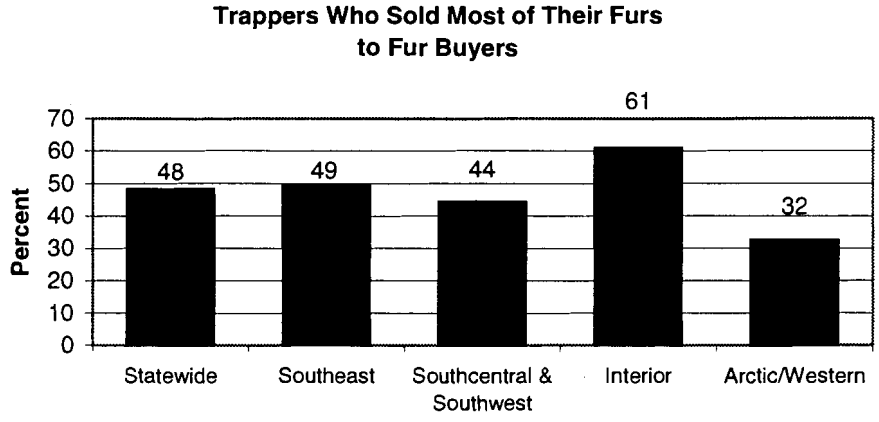
About 78% of trappers in the state said the presence of other trappers did not affect their trapping effort this year.

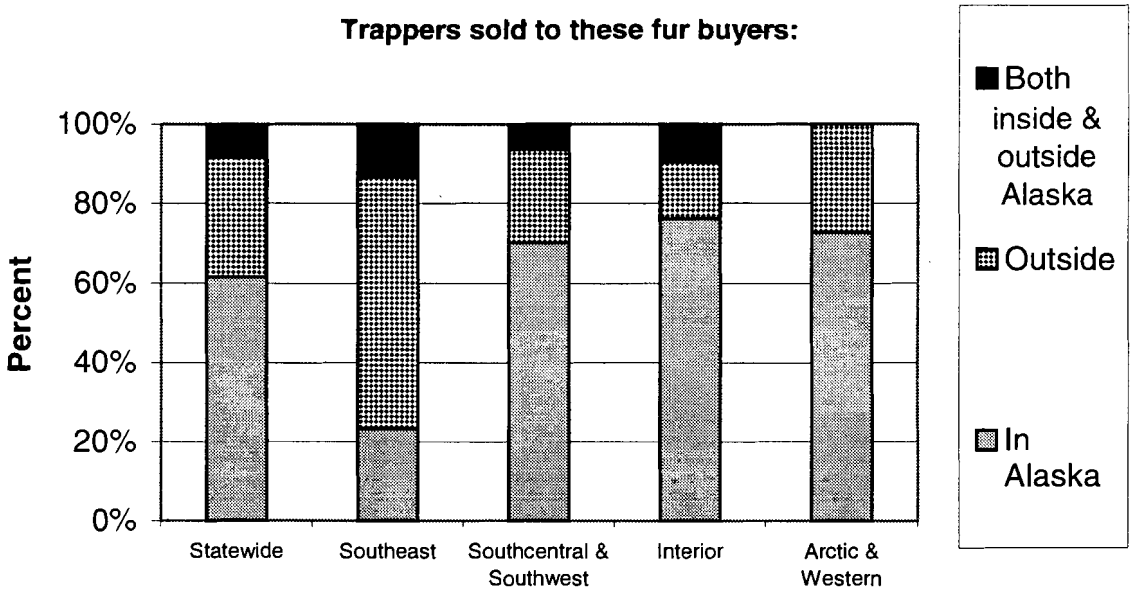




Did you keep or sell most of your furs?

Statewide, most trappers (48%) sold the majority of their furs to fur buyers rather than keeping them for personal use.





Most trappers from the Southcentral/Southwestern, Interior, and the Arctic/Western region sold their furs to Alaskan fur buyers. Trappers in Southeast tended to sell furs to fur buyers outside the state. This is most likely because Southeast trappers are less likely to have easy access to Alaska fur buyers.

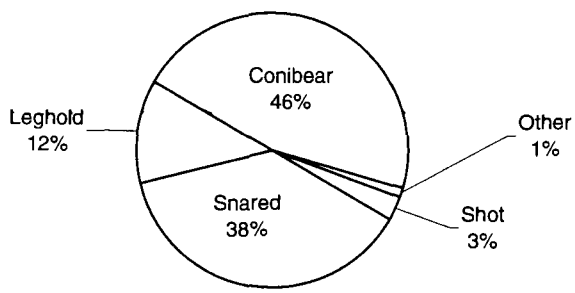
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

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.

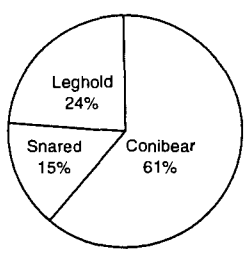
We asked this question because of the increasing pressure from animal rights activists to require more humane trapping methods. We want to document the extent to which Alaskan trappers rely on legholds, conibears, snares, etc. As time goes on, we hope to document what changes in trapping methods trappers 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 5 charts for most species. The first chart is the average of all trappers statewide who reported this information, and the other 3-4 break the information down by region. You will note regional differences in traps used for some species.

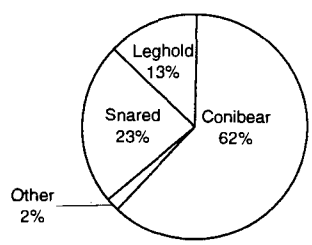
Statewide - Beaver Trapping Methods
(153Trappers Reported)



Southeast Beaver
(30 Trappers Reported)

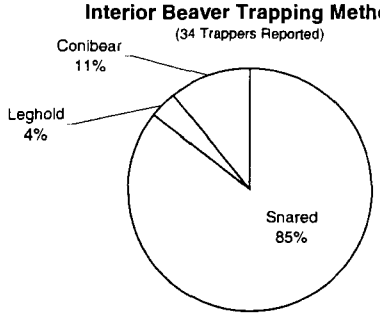


Southcentral & Southwestern Beaver Trapping Methods
(82 Trappers Reported)

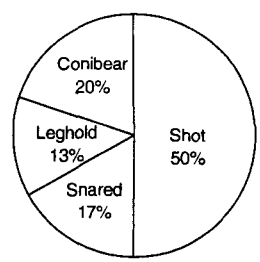


Note the difference in trapping methods in Southeast where a lot of beaver trapping is in open water (drowning leghold sets) and the rest of the state where beavers are trapped primarily under the ice. Also note the percentage of beaver shot in the Arctic & Western region where beaver may be shot in the late-season open water.

Interior Beaver Trapping Methods
(34 Trappers Reported)



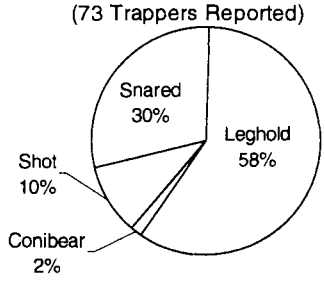
Arctic/Western Beaver Trapping Methods
(7 Trappers Reported)



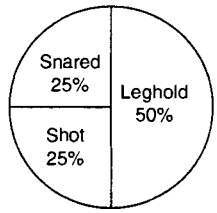
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

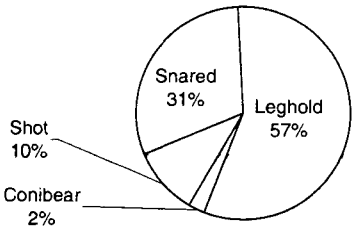
Statewide - Coyote Trapping Methods
(73 Trappers Reported)



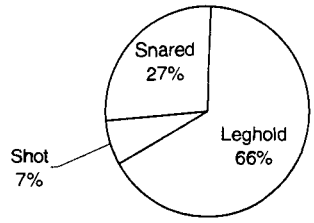
Southeast - Coyote Trapping Methods
(3 Trappers Reported)



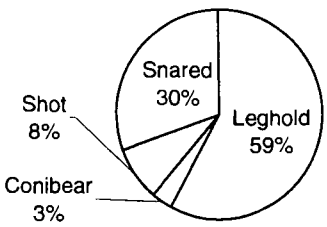
Southcentral & Southwestern Coyote Trapping Methods
(54 Trappers Reported)



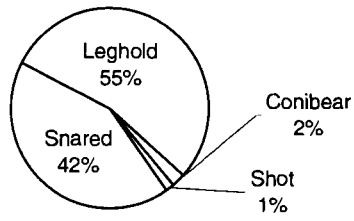
Interior Coyote Trapping Methods
(16 Trappers Reported)



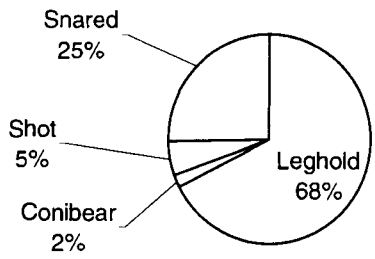
Statewide Fox Trapping Methods
(155 Trappers Reported)



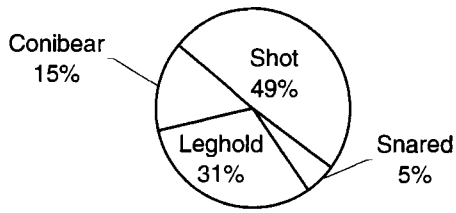
Interior Fox Trapping Methods
(59 Trappers Reported)



Southcentral & Southwestern Fox Trapping Methods
(79 Trappers Reported)

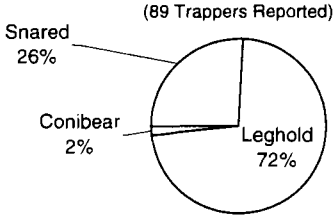


Arctic/Western Fox Trapping Methods
(17 Trappers Reported)

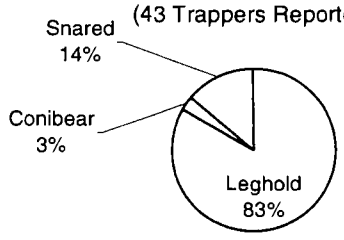


METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

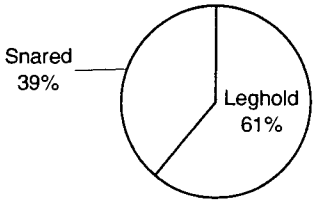
Statewide
Lynx Trapping Methods
(89 Trappers Reported)



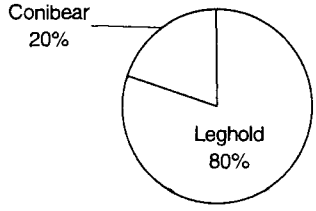
Southcentral & Southwestern
Lynx Trapping Methods
(43 Trappers Reported)



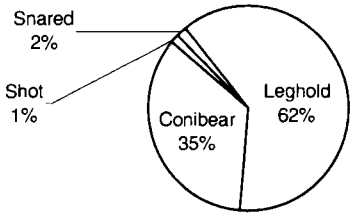
Interior
Lynx Trapping Methods
(44 Trappers Reported)



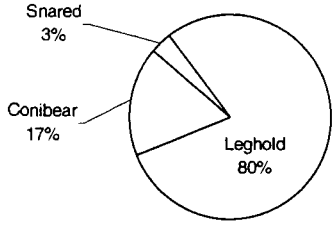
Arctic/Western
Lynx Trapping Methods
(2 Trappers Reported)



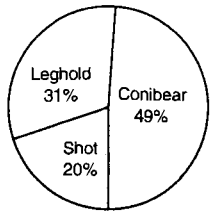
Statewide
Marten Trapping Methods
(201 Trappers Reported)



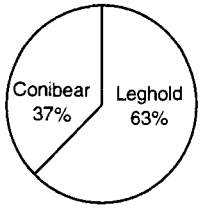
Interior
Marten Trapping Methods
(52 Trappers Reported)



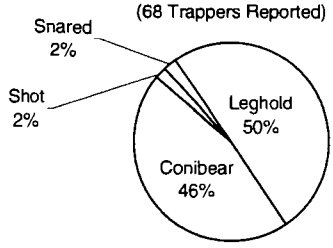
Arctic/Western
Marten Trapping Methods
(6 Trappers Reported)



Southcentral & Southwestern
Marten Trapping Methods
(75 Trappers Reported)



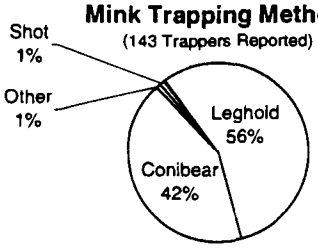
Southeast
Marten Trapping Methods
(68 Trappers Reported)



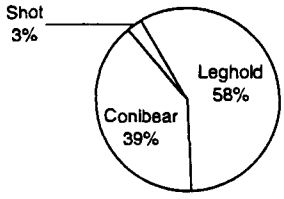
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

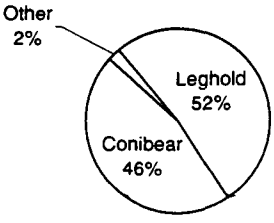
Statewide
Mink Trapping Methods
(143 Trappers Reported)



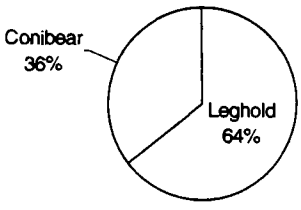
Southeast
Mink Trapping Methods
(51 Trappers Reported)



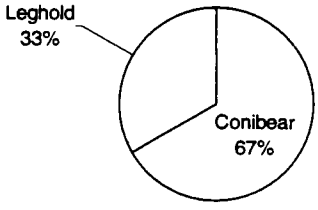
Southcentral & Southwestern
Mink Trapping Methods
(58 Trappers Reported)



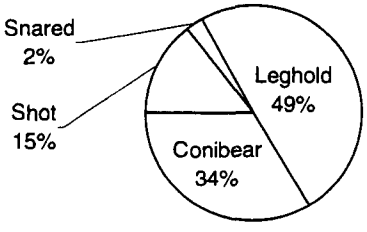
Interior
Mink Trapping Methods
(31 Trappers Reported)



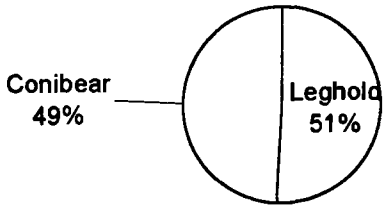
Arctic/Western
Mink Trapping Methods
(3 Trappers Reported)



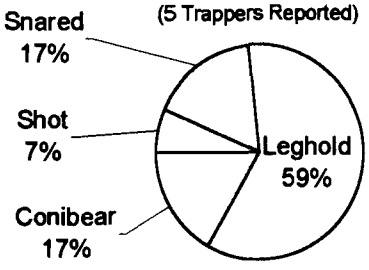
Statewide
Muskrat Trapping Methods
(28 Trappers Reported)



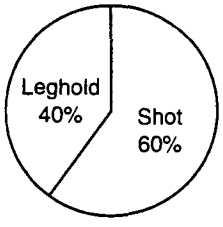
Southcentral & Southwestern
Muskrat Trapping Methods
(13 Trappers Reported)



Interior
Muskrat Trapping Methods
(5 Trappers Reported)



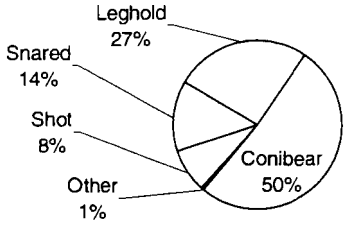
Arctic/Western
Muskrat Trapping Methods
(5 Trappers Reported)



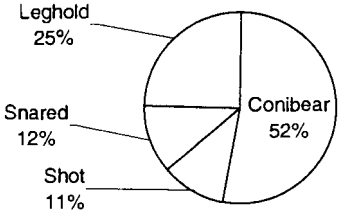
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

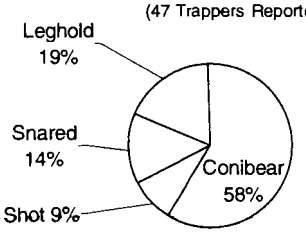
Statewide
River Otter Trapping Methods
(113 Trappers Reported)



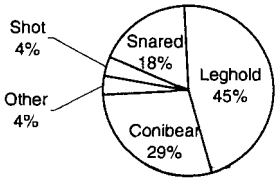
Southeast
River Otter Trapping Methods
(46 Trappers Reported)



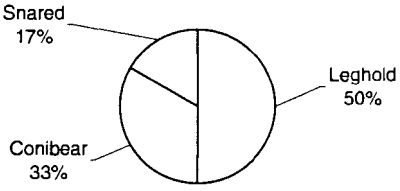
Southcentral & Southwestern
River Otter Trapping Methods
(47 Trappers Reported)



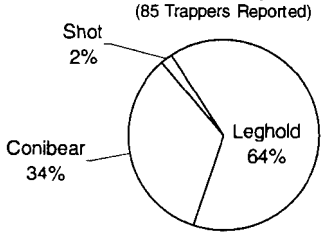
Interior
River Otter Trapping Methods
(17 Trappers Reported)



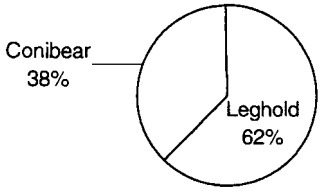
Arctic/Western
River Otter Trapping Methods
(3 Trappers Reported)



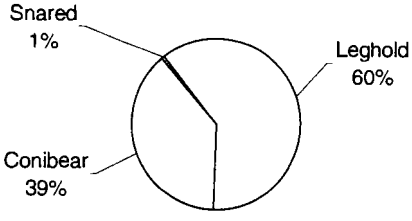
Statewide
Ermine Trapping Methods
(85 Trappers Reported)



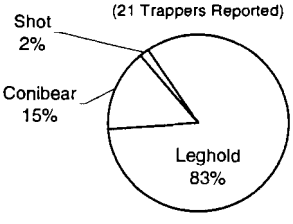
Southeast
Ermine Trapping Methods
(19 Trappers Reported)



Southcentral & Southwestern
Ermine Trapping Methods
(42 Trappers Reported)



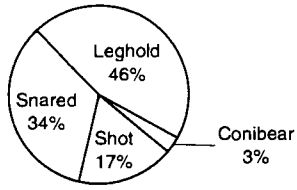
Interior
Ermine Trapping Methods
(21 Trappers Reported)



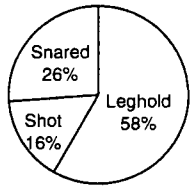
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

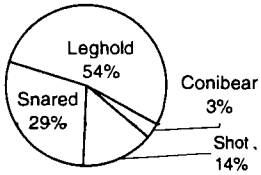
Statewide
Wolf Trapping Methods
(139 Trappers Reported)



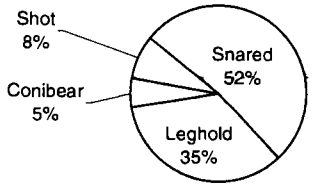
Southeast
Wolf Trapping Methods
(24 Trappers Reported)



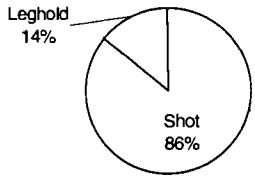
Southcentral & Southwestern
Wolf Trapping Methods
(56 Trappers Reported)



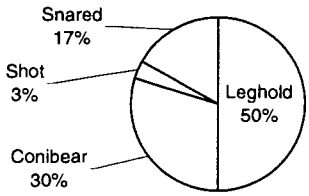
Interior
Wolf Trapping Methods
(50 Trappers Reported)



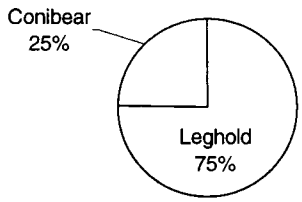
Arctic/Western
Wolf Trapping Methods
(9 Trappers Reported)



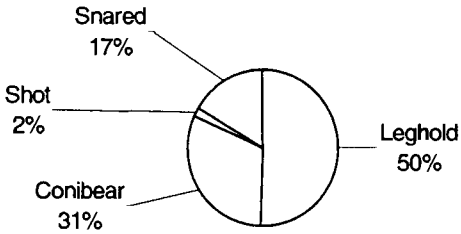
Statewide
Wolverine Trapping Methods
(88 Trappers Reported)



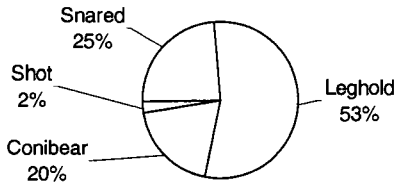
Southeast
Wolverine Trapping Methods
(4 Trappers Reported)



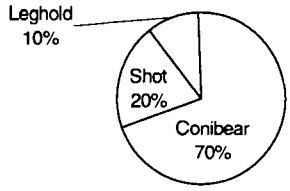
Southcentral & Southwestern
Wolverine Trapping Methods
(44 Trappers Reported)



Interior
Wolverine Trapping Methods
(34 Trappers Reported)



Arctic/Western
Wolverine Trapping Methods
(6 Trappers Reported)



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

Only 5 of the 15 species defined as furbearers are required to be sealed throughout Alaska: 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=scarce, 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:

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

Where I = abundance index

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

n = number of trappers reporting

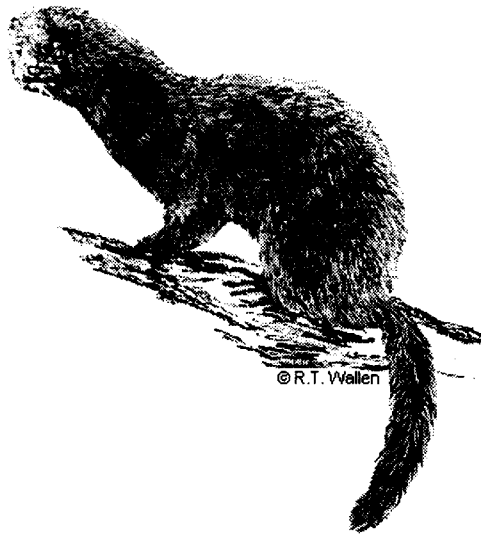
The abundance index (I) ranges from 0% to 100%. Index values of 0-19% indicated animals were scarce, 20-50% indicated animals were common, and values greater than 50% indicated animals were abundant. In the following tables, we converted these values back to the appropriate category: scarce, common, 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, 1998–99

	Statewide Average		Arctic & West Coast Region	
			GMUs 18, 22, 23, 26A	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:				
Arctic Fox	scarce	same	scarce	same
Beaver	common	same	abundant	same
Coyote	common	same	x	x
Ermine	common	same	common	same
Lynx	common	same	scarce	same
Marten	common	same	common	same
Mink	common	same	common	same
Muskrat	scarce	same	common	same
Red Fox	common	same	abundant	same
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	scarce	same
River Otter	common	same	common	same
Wolf	abundant	same	common	same
Wolverine	common	same	common	same
Prey				
Grouse	common	same	common	same
Hare	abundant	more	abundant	more
Ptarmigan	common	same	abundant	more
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	abundant	same

x means no data available or
species does not occur in the area



Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1998–99, continued

	Interior Region									
	Lower Tanana Basin GMUs 20ABCDF, 25C		Upper Tanana Basin GMUs 12, 20E		Upper Kuskokwim, Innoko, & Nowitna GMUs 19, 21A		Middle Yukon & Koyukuk GMUs 21BCDE, 24		Upper Yukon Basin GMUs 25ABD, 26BC	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:										
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	scarce	same
Beaver	abundant	same	scarce	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same
Coyote	common	same	common	same	scarce	same	scarce	same	scarce	fewer
Ermine	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	same
Lynx	common	more	abundant	more	scarce	same	common	more	common	same
Marten	common	same	scarce	fewer	abundant	more	abundant	same	common	more
Mink	abundant	same	scarce	same	common	same	common	same	scarce	same
Muskrat	scarce	same	scarce	same	scarce	fewer	scarce	same	scarce	same
Red Fox	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	same	common	same	common	same
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same
River Otter	common	same	scarce	same	common	same	abundant	same	scarce	same
Wolf	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	more	abundant	more
Wolverine	scarce	same	scarce	same	common	same	common	same	scarce	same
Prey										
Grouse	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	more	scarce	fewer
Hare	common	more	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	more
Ptarmigan	common	same	common	fewer	abundant	same	common	same	common	same
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same

x means no data available or
species does not occur in the area

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1998–99, continued

	Southcentral Region									
	Copper R. & Upper Susitna R. Basins GMUs 11, 13		Lower Susitna Basin GMUs 14, 16		Prince William Sound & North Gulf Coast GMU 6		Kenai Peninsula GMUs 7, 15		Kodiak Archipelago GMU 8	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:										
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	more
Coyote	common	same	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	x	x
Ermine	common	same	abundant	same	common	same	common	same	common	same
Lynx	common	more	scarce	same	common	same	common	same	x	x
Marten	common	same	abundant	more	common	same	common	fewer	abundant	same
Mink	common	same	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	x	x
Muskrat	common	same	common	same	scarce	same	common	same	common	same
Red Fox	abundant	same	common	same	common	same	scarce	same	abundant	more
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same
River Otter	common	same	common	same	common	more	common	same	abundant	more
Wolf	abundant	same	common	same	common	same	common	same	x	x
Wolverine	scarce	same	scarce	same	common	same	scarce	fewer	x	x
Prey										
Grouse	common	same	abundant	same	scarce	same	common	same	x	x
Hare	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	more	common	more	abundant	same
Ptarmigan	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	same	scarce	same
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	more

x means no data available or
species does not occur in the area

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1998–99, continued

	Southwestern Region				Southeastern Region							
	Bristol Bay Area GMU 17		Alaska Peninsula GMUs 9, 10		Ketchikan, Prince of Wales & vicinity GMUs 1A, 2		Petersburg,Wrangell, Kupreanof & vicinity GMUs 1B, 3		Juneau, Douglas, Haines, Yakutat GMUs 1CD, 5		Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof GMU 4	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:												
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	abundant	more	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same	common	same
Coyote	common	same	abundant	same	x	x	x	x	common	same	x	x
Ermine	common	same	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	scarce	fewer
Lynx	scarce	same	common	same	x	x	scarce	same	common	same	x	x
Marten	common	more	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same
Mink	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same
Muskrat	scarce	same	common	same	x	x	scarce	same	scarce	same	x	x
Red Fox	abundant	more	common	fewer	x	x	x	x	scarce	same	x	x
Red Squirrel	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	more	abundant	same
River Otter	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	more	common	same
Wolf	abundant	more	abundant	more	common	same	abundant	same	common	same	x	x
Wolverine	common	same	common	same	scarce	fewer	common	more	scarce	same	x	x
Prey												
Grouse	common	same	common	same	scarce	same	common	same	common	same	scarce	same
Hare	common	more	common	same	x	x	x	x	common	same	x	x
Ptarmigan	abundant	more	abundant	more	common	same	scarce	same	common	same	scarce	same
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	same

x means no data available or
species does not occur in the area

WOLF HARVEST METHODS

The following tables are compiled from mandatory wolf sealing certificates from 1994 through 1999.

1994–95 Trapping Season Region	Total Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	208	47	23
Southcentral	438	58	13
Interior	697	241	35
Arctic	140	2	1
Total	**1483**	**348**	**23**

1995–96 Trapping Season Region	Total Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	200	64	32
Southcentral	301	72	24
Interior	624	277	44
Arctic	126	7	6
Total	**1251**	**420**	**34**

1996–97 Trapping Season	shot	trapped	snared	other	unknown	Total Wolves Sealed
Southeast	57	110	77	0	1	245
Southcentral/ Southwestern	147	104	60	4	18	333
Interior	139	139	297	2	16	593
Arctic/ Western	72	28	1	1	7	109
Total Wolves Sealed	**415**	**381**	**435**	**7**	**42**	**1280**

1997–98 Trapping Season	shot	trapped	snared	other	unknown	Total Wolves Sealed
Southeast	33	98	38	0	3	172
Southcentral/ Southwestern	175	124	70	2	3	374
Interior	103	157	187	4	8	459
Arctic/ Western	29	38	4	0	5	76
Total Wolves Sealed	**340**	**417**	**299**	**6**	**19**	**1081**

1998–99 Trapping Season	shot	trapped	snared	other	unknown	Total Wolves Sealed
Southeast	55	70	50	0	1	176
Southcentral/ Southwestern	206	155	116	2	1	480
Interior	154	177	233	3	0	567
Arctic/ Western	72	18	0	0	5	95
Total Wolves Sealed	**487**	**420**	**399**	**5**	**7**	**1318**

ALASKA'S FURBEARER HARVEST

Beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine require sealing statewide. Marten are required to be sealed only in Game Management Units 1–5, 7, 13E, and 14–16. Harvest estimates below are determined from sealing records.

Species	Region	Reported Harvest 1994–95	Reported Harvest 1995–96	Reported Harvest 1996–97	Reported Harvest 1997–98	Reported Harvest 1998–99**
Beaver	Southeast	225	385	420	430	183
	Southcentral/Southwestern	1892	1450	2027	1293	1122
	Interior	1720	1114	2290	1998	1147
	Arctic/Western	520	665	1039	1185	351
	Total Beaver	**4357**	**3614**	**5776**	**4906**	**2803**
Lynx	Southeast	6	5	6	0	0
	Southcentral/Southwestern	172	113	330	618	540
	Interior	587	439	1338	2040	2027
	Arctic/Western	13	17	45	56	33
	Total Lynx	**778**	**574**	**1719**	**2714**	**2600**
Otter	Southeast	557	496	410	645	541
	Southcentral/Southwestern	488	586	728	511	365
	Interior	97	126	168	100	48
	Arctic/Western	220	298	436	456	126
	Total Otter	**1362**	**1506**	**1742**	**1712**	**1080**
Wolf	Southeast	219	209	245	172	176
	Southcentral/Southwestern	413	292	333	374	480
	Interior	668	624	593	459	567
	Arctic/Western	143	126	109	76	95
	Total Wolf	**1443**	**1251**	**1280**	**1081**	**1318**
Wolverine	Southeast	35	29	39	25	18
	Southcentral/Southwestern	246	165	222	220	152
	Interior	293	133	195	166	164
	Arctic/Western	48	62	75	85	57
	Total Wolverine	**622**	**389**	**531**	**496**	**391**
Marten*	Southeast	2170	2787	3703	3125	2345
	Southcentral/Southwestern	277	416	781	571	601
	Total Marten	**2447**	**3204**	**4485**	**3696**	**2946**

* Marten are sealed only in Game Management Units 1–5, 7, 13E, and 14–16.

** Preliminary data. Totals for the 1998–99 season may change slightly when data entry is completed.

COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FURS

AVERAGE PRICES PAID FOR RAW FURS BY BUYERS IN ALASKA

Several fur buyers in Alaska were asked for the average and top prices they paid for furs. The values they gave were averaged to produce the table below.

Species	1995–96 Average $	1996–97 Average $	1997–98 Average $	1998–99 Average $	1999–00 Average $	1999–00 Top $
Beaver	31.50	35.00	32.50	25.75	21.77	60.00
Coyote	27.50	27.50	25.00	21.67	22.17	40.00
Fox	22.00	24.00	15.00	16.13	21.97	50.00
Lynx	77.50	77.50	61.00	42.50	54.75	125.00
Marten	38.50	42.50	27.00	24.00	26.89	50.00
Mink(wild)	12.00	18.50	12.25	10.25	13.14	30.00
Muskrat	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.31	1.47	2.00
River otter	60.00	45.00	50.00	38.75	41.13	55.38
Squirrel	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.92	1.00
Weasel	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.75	4.00	10.00
Wolf	250.00	237.00	137.50	231.25	213.75	500.00
Wolverine	275.00	250.00	185.00	281.25	233.75	450.00

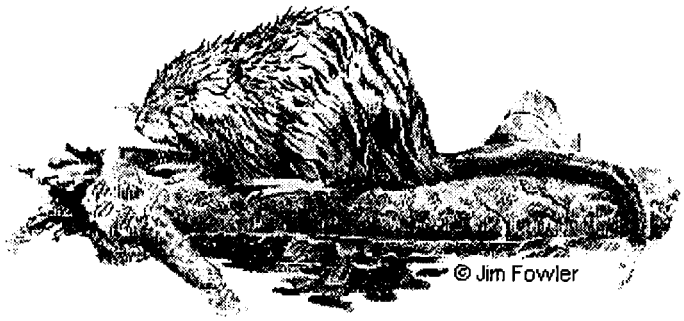
FUR VALUE

The following table summarizes the total estimated value of furs trapped during the 1997–98 trapping season. The estimated average price paid by Alaska fur dealers was used in this calculation.

1997–98 fur value in Alaska (1998–99 data not yet available)

Species	Total Number	Average Price Paid in AK	Total Estimated Value
Beaver*	4906	32.50	$159,445
Coyote**	151	25.00	3,775
Fox, Arctic**	51	15.00	765
Fox, Red**	1029	15.00	15,435
Lynx*	2714	61.00	165,554
Marten**	8120	27.00	219,240
Mink**	1905	12.25	23,336
Muskrat**	618	2.00	1,236
Otter*	1712	50.00	85,600
Squirrel, red**	556	1.00	556
Weasel (ermine)**	433	3.00	1299
Wolf*	1081	137.50	148,638
Wolverine*	496	185.00	91,760
Total:	**23772**		**$916,639**

* Compiled from mandatory fur sealing records
** Compiled from fur export records

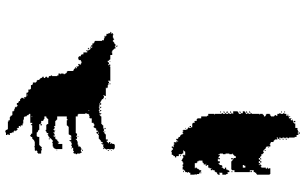


FUR ACQUISITION AND EXPORT

The following table summarizes data from the Report of Acquisition of Furs and Hides filled out by fur buyers (dealers) and the Raw Fur Skin Export Permit (the blue card everyone must fill out when sending raw furs out of state.) These reports are a general indicator of harvest trends, but 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 people may not fill out the required forms. If you want more information about fur harvest trends, contact your regional or statewide furbearer biologist.

1997–98 Fur Acquisition and Export (1998–99 data not yet available)

Species	Acquisition of Furs By Alaskan Fur Buyers (Number of Furs)	Furs Exported out of Alaska (Number of Furs)
Beaver	529	2373
Coyote	24	151
Fox, Blue (Arctic)	0	1
Fox, White (Arctic)	2	50
Fox, Red (Cross color)	57	227
Fox, Red (Red color)	97	782
Fox, Red (Silver color)	5	20
Lynx	392	1,638
Marten	3,683	8,120
Mink	298	1,905
Muskrat	111	618
Otter, land (river)	149	933
Squirrel, red	202	556
Weasel (ermine)	194	433
Wolf	50	380
Wolverine	25	165
Other	6	80
Total Furs	**5,824**	**18,432**



FUR SEALING REQUIREMENTS

Beaver, lynx, land otter, wolf, or wolverine taken anywhere in the state and marten in Game Management Units 1–5, 7, 13E, 14, 15, and 16 must be sealed by an authorized department representative. If you ship furs to a buyer or auction house out of the state, they must be sealed **before** you ship them.

All raw skins of wild furbearers shipped from Alaska just have a Fur Export Permit (blue shipping tag) attached to the shipment. Also a Fur Export Report (a postage-paid postcard attached to the permit) must also be completed and mailed to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The U.S. Post Office Domestic Mail Manual Regulation 124.65 also requires compliance with this regulation. This 2-part form is free from any Alaska Department of Fish and Game office or authorized fur sealer.

If there is no authorized fur sealer near you, contact the nearest office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. A list of area biologists is on the next page. We can help you make arrangements to seal your furs. If you or someone you know wants to become a fur sealer, contact one of the following Regional Fur Sealing Officers.

Interior Region	Bob Hunter Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1300 College Road Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-1599 (907) 459-7211
Southcentral/Southwestern Region	Dr. Bill Taylor Alaska Department of Fish and Game 333 Raspberry Rd. Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1599 (907) 267-2216
Arctic/Western Region	Peter Bente Alaska Department of Fish and Game P.O. Box 1148 Nome, Alaska 99762 (907) 443-2271
Southeast Region	Chris Bedegrew Alaska Department of Fish and Game P.O. Box 240020 Douglas, Alaska 99824-0020 (907) 465-4265

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FISH AND GAME FURBEARER BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS

STATE, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL FUR ISSUES FACING ALASKA

Steve Peterson
Statewide Furbearer Coordinator

During the past year I continued to represent Alaskan trappers on issues that directly affect their lifestyle. These efforts have primarily involved membership on the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) Fur Resources Technical Subcommittee (FRTS). This year's work on that committee continued to focus on testing more restraining traps, developing a model Best Management Practices (BMP) document, and going forward with a national pilot outreach project to test public knowledge on trapping related issues.

AT THE STATE LEVEL

I wrote an article for the National Trappers Association magazine, the *American Trapper,* expressing my views on why we no longer need to seal beaver in Alaska. The Board of Game, in their October 1999 meeting, repealed the requirement to seal beavers in Game Management Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A. I think that is good news for trappers and it is progressive furbearer management because at this stage in beaver management, we do not need to keep track of every beaver taken in the state to manage our populations effectively. State and countrywide, beavers are doing very well thank you.

I continued to coordinate a trap efficiency test for catching marten in Interior Alaska. Two trappers used 120 conibears and No. 1 Longsprings set in Newspaper Route Boxes (see *American Trapper*, 1999, Vol. 39 (2), pages 42–46, on how to use these boxes) to determine which trap is more efficient in catching marten. I also initiated a test comparing the effectiveness of Belisle foot snares and No. 3 Victor coil spring traps for catching lynx. We will use these data in developing BMPs for these two species in Alaska. Some of our marten testing results will be available later this spring in the first progress report on trap testing at the national level.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

I attended two meetings of the FRTS, one in Syracuse, New York, and one in Louisiana, to discuss BMP related matters. My attendance in these meetings is paid for through a grant the subcommittee receives from the Department of Agriculture so ADF&G funds do not have to be allocated to support our work in this area.

While at the Syracuse meeting, I took some time to attend the National Trappers Association annual convention being held there at the same time. If you ever have the opportunity to attend one of these summer get-togethers, I encourage you to do so. The event goes on for several days, attracts several thousand people (largely families), and is absolutely the biggest trapping paraphernalia garage sale you're ever going to see. Besides being fun, the practically nonstop

demonstrations, seminars and workshops on everything from taxes to snaring, are very informative. This summer's convention will be held in York, Pennsylvania.

To develop BMPs for harvesting furbearers in various regions of the US, the subcommittee has been testing many kinds of restraining traps for a variety of furbearers. Initially we used the idea of a BMP to help avert a possible EU regulation that would have prohibited trade with most furs caught in the US. When BMPs are eventually implemented, we want to use them in trapper education courses to improve the image of trapping in the eyes of the public and to educate trappers in the use of the best traps and trapping techniques available to harvest furbearers efficiently, selectively and humanely. I am confident the BMP process will avert additional and unnecessary regulations that would further restrain trapping in the US.

The subcommittee has largely stayed away from testing conibear-type traps because these traps have been extensively tested in Canada, but relatively little research has been accomplished on leg-hold type traps. Our primary goal is to make recommendations based on good science while incorporating selectivity, efficiency, practicality, safety to the user, and humanness to animals. We have pretty much completed our testing on raccoons, opossum, fox and coyote and a draft model BMP using hypothetical data will be available later this year for review and comment. A detailed report on the 1997 and 1998 field seasons will be available later this spring. Trap testing will continue for a couple more years.

This year the FRTS initiated a national pilot outreach project to help states "*maintain the regulated use of trapping as a safe, efficient, and acceptable means of managing and harvesting wildlife for the benefits it provides to the public, while ensuring the welfare of wildlife.*" We obtained a grant worth in excess of $600,000 to contract with a private firm to help states "*develop and test an integrated education and outreach strategy to more effectively communicate to the public the difficult choices that wildlife professionals face related to furbearer management. The primary goal of this effort is to ...increase the awareness, knowledge, and understanding of furbearer management among the audiences critical to maintaining regulated trapping for the benefits it provides.*" The audiences tested in this pilot project are trappers, state fish and wildlife agencies, wildlife professionals, natural resource professionals, and the general public. The initial three states selected are Connecticut, Wisconsin and Indiana. A final report will be available in March 2001.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Things have been relatively quiet on the international scene related to furbearers. I keep getting signals that the Europeans are not doing much trap testing as agreed to in their side of the "bargain" signed a couple of years ago. Fur appears to be more widely used with fashion designers this year than in the past couple of years but the Asian and Russian economies have still kept the price down on some wild fur (especially raccoon and coyote) and this continues to affect our overall market.

Good Hunting and
Good Trapping

Steve Peterson

SOUTHEAST REGION

Rod Flynn, Southeast Furbearer Biologist

In Southeast Alaska, the American marten continues to be the furbearer taken in the largest numbers by trappers. Since marten pelts were first sealed after the 1984–85 trapping season, the annual marten catch in Southeast Alaska has averaged 2,716 animals. During the 1998–99 trapping season, 2,286 martens were sealed by trappers in Southeast, or about 19% fewer compared with the 14-year average. By Unit, the greatest number of martens were taken in Unit 2 (583) followed by Unit 4 (462), Unit 1B (365), Unit 1C (267), Unit 3 (221), and Unit 1A (206). Based on the long-term average, the greatest numbers of martens have been taken from Units 4 (35%), 2 (30%), and 1A (9%). The remainder of the Units (1B, 1C, 1D, 3, and 5) provided less than 10% of the average regional catch.

Deep and changing snow conditions limited access in some areas, especially on Prince of Wales Island. These weather conditions also hampered trapping efforts. Unit 1A was less affected because trappers use boats more as their primary transportation to traplines. The deep snow also made keeping traps open and operational very difficult and labor intensive. Thus, lower harvests may have been caused more by weather than by reduced numbers of furbearers. The marten population in Unit 1B appears high right now. In Unit 4, the low marten harvest was due more to low prices and reduced effort than to population declines. Results of carcass necropsies revealed favorable ratios of males:females and total young:adult females in the harvested segments of the marten and otter populations.

Numbers of other furbearers sealed by Unit for 1998–1999.

Species	Beavers	Wolves	Otters	Wolverine
Unit 1A	14	23	68	0
Unit 2	100	91	285	0
Unit 1B	0	13	13	9
Unit 3	35	34	33	0
Unit 1C	7	4	13	6
Unit 1D	0	4	0	0
Unit 4	0	0	143	0
Unit 5	3	7	3	3
Totals	159	176	558	18

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SOUTHCENTRAL/SOUTHWESTERN REGION

Howard Golden, Southcentral Furbearer Biologist

Wolf and marten harvests reported for the 1998–99 trapping season in south-central Alaska were greater than last season, but harvests of beaver, lynx, river otter, and wolverine were down. Low fur prices again this year for most species reduced trapper incentive and was probably the main cause of the decreased harvest. March 1999 North American auction prices averaged $21 for beaver, $58 for lynx, $37 for river otter, $91 for wolf, $146 for wolverine, and $24 for marten.

In Southcentral beaver harvest was highest at 1,122, which was a decline of 13% from last year and the lowest harvest of the past 5 years. Trappers took the most beavers in Units 13, 14, and 17 with harvests of 181, 142, and 436, respectively. River otter harvest in the region was 365, which was a 28% decrease from last year. The highest take of otters was 155 in Unit 8 followed by Unit 9 at 60 otters. The wolf harvest in Southcentral increased by 28% from last year to 480 with most taken in Unit 9, 13, and 17. Wolverine harvest declined by 31% from last year to 152 with the highest harvests again in Units 9, 13, and 17. The harvest of marten in the region that had to be sealed increased by a slight 2% to 601 with the majority (441) taken in Unit 16.

Reported lynx harvest declined across the region by 13% to 540 lynx . However, late-arriving sealing records may change that figure once the final tally is in. Hare and lynx populations are still high throughout much of Southcentral. The combined harvest in Units 11 and 13 for 1998–99 declined from 386 in 1997–98 to 337 but was still one of the highest harvests on record. Kittens comprised 33% of the harvest in Units 11 and 13 in 1998–99 compared with 35% in 1997–98 and 23% in 1996–97. The harvest and carcass data indicate lynx and hare populations may be close to their peak even though both species are relatively abundant. Lynx harvests peaked in Units 11 and 13 in 1982–83 and 1991–92, suggesting an approximate 9–year cycle. If the 1998–99 season was not the peak, we expect the lynx population to peak again in either 1999–2000 or 2000–2001, with hare populations peaking about 1 year earlier.

Lynx and hare populations on the Kenai Peninsula (Units 7 and 15) may be at or near their peak as well. The last hare population high was 14 years ago in 1984. Hare numbers are higher than they have been since 1984 in most areas of the Kenai but seem to be declining in some areas. Lynx harvest for 1998–1999 was the highest reported for the peninsula at 154 compared with 145 in 1997–98. However, the percentage of kittens in the harvest dropped from 37% to 21% last season. The carcass data indicated kitten production and survival were lower than previous years, which supports the observations of fewer hares in portions of Unit 15C. Lynx and hare populations in Units 6, 14, and 16 are nearing population highs, but remain well below high lynx producing units. There have been greater than normal incidental observations of lynx and hares in towns and along roadways. No carcasses were examined for Units 6, 14, or 16.

Because of the high populations of hares and lynx throughout the region, we recommended leaving the lynx trapping seasons unchanged for the 1999–2000 season. Recent studies in western Canada strongly suggested that lynx mortality from harvest during the peak of their cycle and for 1 to 2 years afterward compensates for natural mortality. During a normal cycle, lynx

produced in response to abundant food during high hare years begin to die from starvation as hare numbers decline rapidly from their peak. We expect to have liberal seasons and high lynx harvests until 1–2 years after the peak in their populations, which is when season lengths will begin to be shortened in keeping with the tracking harvest strategy. For more information on the lynx tracking harvest strategy and a management tool we use to help follow that strategy, please see our web site at http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/fur/trapping.htm.

Following the department's treatment of over 2 dozen louse-infested wolves in the Mat-Su Valley in January 1999, several staff members prepared a briefing paper for the Wildlife Conservation Division director and other supervisory staff. The paper was intended to be an objective review of the issue of lice among wolves and coyotes in the Mat-Su Valley and on the Kenai Peninsula. Below is the summary of that paper. You can read the entire document on our web site at http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/fur/trapping.htm, or let me know and I can send a copy to you.

> Several biological and social concerns regarding louse infestations in wild Alaskan canids were identified following the recently discovered infestation of lice on wolves (*Canis lupus*) and coyotes (*C. latrans*) in the Mat-Su Valley. The biting dog louse (*Trichodectes canis*) was first identified on a coyote and then on several wolves harvested on the Kenai Peninsula during the winters of 1981–82 and 1982–83. The department attempted to eliminate the louse infestation among the wild canids by capturing and treating them with injections of the antiparasitic drug ivermectin and with ivermectin-treated baits. This effort was not successful in stopping the spread of the infestation, because of the difficulty in catching and treating all infested animals, and funding was stopped precluding treatment after the second winter. In November and December 1998 trappers reported catching wolves and coyotes with evidence of lice in the Mat-Su Valley. Similar efforts to those on the Kenai resulted in all known infested wolves being treated. The results of trying to eliminate lice in coyotes with treated baits were not known. The operational cost of the effort in the Mat-Su Valley was $60,000. The rapid spread of lice among wolves on the Kenai and the recent outbreak in the Mat-Su Valley raises serious concerns that a similar infestation can happen elsewhere in the state. The source of lice in both areas was believed to be domestic dogs, which are infested with lice in a low-level enzootic stage throughout Alaska. The spread of lice to Interior coyotes and wolves, in particular, could have significant effects on the trapping economy and on the quality of wolf viewing. The relationships between parasites and their hosts can be complex, involving lengthy adaptations to each other. With the spread of lice, we may see higher morbidity of wolves and coyotes, particularly among young animals. However, there is no evidence of direct mortality from lice or of a negative population effect from lice on wolves or coyotes in Alaska or the lower 48 states.

The director and his staff decided not to continue treatment of potentially infested packs in 1999–2000. The plan is to see if new infested packs show up or if any treated packs become reinfested. We will also explore research ideas and alternative treatment options. We greatly appreciate all the help trappers have given us in reporting infested wolves and coyotes.

Good luck on your traplines.

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INTERIOR REGION

Mark McNay, Interior Furbearer Biologist

The main news from the interior continues to be the lynx population that provided a harvest of over 2000 interior lynx in both 1998 and 1999. The lynx population has not been this high since the early 1980's and it appears we will see at least one more year of lynx abundance. Aerial surveys flown in March of 1999 showed that snowshoe hares remained abundant in the Tanana Valley, and until the hare populations crash, trappers can expect continued high lynx numbers and harvests. In the past, peaks in the lynx harvest occurred at 9-year intervals in 1964, 1973, 1982, and 1991. If that pattern continues, we expect to see the peak harvest of lynx during the winter of 2000–2001.

Biologists purchased 553 lynx carcasses from trappers in the Tanana Valley during the 1998–99 trapping season and examined the carcasses to evaluate nutritional condition and reproductive performance. The percentages of kittens in the harvest was high (23%) suggesting that adult cats were in good condition and were producing healthy kittens that could survive the winter. The 1998–99 harvest of lynx in interior Alaska was almost exactly the same as the 1997–98 harvest (2, 027 vs. 2,037) and, it appears the 1999–2000 harvest will be similar. Average lynx pelt price in 1999 ($58) was similar to that paid in 1998 ($61), but well below the $84 average paid in both 1996 and 1997.

Among other fur species in 1998–99, harvest of beaver and otter were down but wolf and wolverine harvests increased compared to the previous winter. The biggest change occurred in beaver harvests. Interior trappers are apparently losing interest in trapping beaver at current prices. Harvest dropped to 1,147 beaver for winter 1998–99, a 42% decline from the previous year. In the past, interior trappers have taken as many as 7,000 beaver in a single winter (1986–87), and the 15-year average beaver harvest (1984–1998) is about 3,200 beaver. Beaver pelts averaged $21 at the March 1999 North American Fur Auction, down a dollar from 1998, but down $10 from 1997.

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ARCTIC/WESTERN REGION

This report will give summary statistics for the fur harvests during the 1998–99 trapping season and some additional observations from the area biologists in Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue and Barrow. If you have additional information or more observations that you are willing to share, you are encouraged to contact your local area biologists (telephone numbers listed at the end of the reports).

Unit 18 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

Furbearers in Unit 18 are abundant throughout their habitats. Red fox, beaver, otter, and mink are particularly abundant. Suitable habitat for Arctic fox, marten, and Arctic ground squirrels is less

extensive in the unit, but numbers of these furbearers are high where they occur. Lynx numbers are high as one would expect when hares near the peak of their cycle. Wolf populations have grown and increased their range due to the successes we've had with moose populations increasing on the Yukon and the continued winter use of Unit 18 by a portion of the Mulchatna caribou herd. Wolverine numbers have followed suit. The only furbearer species which appears to be less abundant in the Unit is muskrat but even there, we still have adequate numbers. Coyotes have made their appearance, but have not really established a population.

Active trapper numbers are still low. Inadequate fur prices have been cited by trappers as a reason for lower trapping effort. This being the case, it is clear that the fur resource in Unit 18 is severely underutilized.

Furbearers are still important for local uses. All furbearers as well as marine mammals are utilized for garments sewn locally. In addition many furbearers are used for food. Beaver, otter, mink, and muskrats are common table fare in many villages with varying preferences. Lynx and arctic ground squirrels are also eaten. As such, furbearers are still an important part of the economy of Unit 18.

For more information about GMU 18, contact Roger Seavoy at 1-800-425-2979

Unit 22 Seward Peninsula

Most of the furbearer harvest in Unit 22 is by subsistence or recreational hunters or is done opportunistically by local residents while engaged in other activities. Relatively few serious trappers operate in Unit 22. The reported harvest of furbearers in Unit 22 during the 1998–1999 trapping season is 26 beaver, 6 lynx, 11 river otter, 24 wolverine, and 51 wolves. These are minimum harvest estimates; many of the furs taken are used locally and not sealed, so harvest data is incomplete.

Wolves are becoming more abundant in Unit 22, likely resulting from the large number of Western Arctic caribou that have wintered on the central Seward Peninsula in the last three years. Observations by staff, hunter/trappers and other members of the public indicate that wolves in 22A and 22B have become quite common and pack sizes are increasing. In the rest of the unit, wolves seem to be increasing but are still fairly scarce.

The reported harvest of 51 wolves during the 1998–1999 reporting period was double the harvests taken in the last few years. The high harvest probably resulted largely from excellent spring snow conditions in 1999 that provided a long period of good snowmachine access for wolf hunting and trapping. As in previous years, the majority of wolves were harvested in Units 22A and 22B. For the first time ever though, there was reported harvest from Unit 22E where 4 wolves were sealed. In 1998–1999, more hunter/trappers reported harvesting wolves in Unit 22 than ever before; 30 individuals sealed wolves compared to the previous high of 18.

Staff observations and reports from hunter/trappers around the unit indicate that beavers in Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D were common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing. We had no reports from Unit 22E, but beaver numbers are believed to be increasing in the Serpentine

River drainage. In 1998–1999, the beaver trapping season was lengthened in Units 22C, 22D and 22E, creating a uniform season throughout Unit 22 from November 1 through June 10. However, this did not result in increased harvest during the 1998–1999 season. Complaints about beavers continue, particularly in the Nome area. Boaters complain about blockage of waterways, there are increased reports of giardia and concern that beaver dams are preventing salmon from returning to their spawning grounds.

Observations by staff, hunter/trappers, and the public indicate otters in Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D were common and their numbers stable last year. We have no information about otters in Unit 22E. Red foxes in Unit 22A were reported to be abundant and increasing. Elsewhere in the unit, red foxes were reported to be scarce and numbers stable or decreasing. Wolverines were reported to be scarce to common throughout the unit, and impressions were that numbers were stable. Lynx have been scarce since the mid–1980s, but their numbers seem to be increasing somewhat along with hares, their primary food source. In Unit 22A lynx were reported to be scarce but increasing. One trapper in Unit 22B also reported lynx to be scarce and increasing, but other respondents in 22B and respondents from the remainder of the unit said lynx were not present in their hunting/trapping areas. One lynx taken in Unit 22E was sealed.

For more information about GMU 22, contact Kate Persons at 1-800-560-2271

Unit 23 Kotzebue Sound [Goodhope River to Cape Lisburne]. Area Biologist Jim Dau reports that trapping efforts and results in this region were similar to previous years. Reported harvests of furbearers were low; however, noncompliance with sealing requirements continued to be high and actual harvests were much higher than the number sealed. We want all trappers to seal their furs so we can get better information on the abundance of fur species and their importance in the lives and economy of local residents.

Healthy populations of wolves and wolverines continued in Unit 23. Poor traveling conditions during early winter of 1998–1999 reportedly reduced the numbers of these species harvested. Additionally, wolves probably declined in the western portion of Unit 23 during 1998–1999, possibly as a result of distemper and rabies outbreaks.

Beavers continued to extend their range throughout Unit 23. Beavers are most abundant in the Selawik drainage with numerous animals in marginal habitat. In fact, residents of Selawik are concerned that beavers have become so abundant they will dam streams important for seining whitefish, an important subsistence food, and contaminate the village water source with giardia. Several regulatory changes will go into effect in July 2000 that will make it easier to take beaver throughout Unit 23. These are: 1) establish no closed season for hunting and trapping beavers; 2) establish no limit on beaver for hunting or trapping; and 3) eliminate the sealing requirement for all beaver taken in Unit 23.

Lynx numbers remained low throughout the unit but appeared to be slowly increasing in the Kobuk and Selawik drainages. Snowshoe hares were abundant in the Selawik River drainage where the highest number of lynx sightings have occurred, and hare numbers increased rapidly in the lower Kobuk and Noatak drainages. Arctic hares also seemed to increase in coastal portions of southern Unit 23, though much more slowly than snowshoe hares. Trappers in the Kobuk area

reported locally abundant populations of marten. As in past years most marten trapping occurred in the upper Kobuk River drainage. River otters continued to be abundant in the Selawik, Noatak and Kobuk drainages.

For more information about GMU 23, contact Jim Dau at 1-800-478-3420

Unit 26A Western North Slope

The wolf harvest was greater than last year but was not up to levels of past years. Thirteen wolves were reported harvested (8 males and 5 females). Most were ground shot using snow machines for transportation. The number of wolves in Unit 26A is relatively low. A wolf census in 1998 in the foothills of Unit 26A indicated that the wolf density had dropped to 1.6 wolves/ 1000 km2 from a high of 4.2 wolves/1000 km2 in 1992. The number of wolves harvested and reported is also highly dependent on whether a few key individuals are trapping that year. In order to assist with the recovery of the 40-Mile Caribou Herd, North Slope residents agreed to have 15 wolves relocated from the Tok area to the North Slope during the spring of 1999.

Twenty-one wolverines were sealed (17 males and 4 females). Snow machines were used for transportation and all were ground shot. This is the largest number of wolverines we have sealed during a year and was probably a combination of high wolverine population and more trapping pressure.

It is difficult to maintain fur sealers in most North Slope villages, so the department sealing program is not an effective measure of harvest. A North Slope Borough harvest study indicated that about 25% of wolves and wolverines were sealed during the year of the study.

Arctic foxes were fairly abundant in Unit 26A. Because hunters and trappers are not required to seal foxes, harvest data are not available for arctic foxes. Low fur prices resulted in relatively few foxes being trapped.

Coyotes, red fox, river otter, and lynx are very rare in Unit 26A. No population or harvest data are available.

Rabid furbearers, particularly arctic foxes, continue to be a problem around human settlements. We assisted the North Slope Borough Public Health Department in a program to educate people about rabid animals and having their pets immunized. Rabid arctic foxes are destroyed when they are reported near villages.

For more information about GMU 26A, contact Geoff Carroll at 1-907-852-3464

Trapper Comments

How Did Trapping Conditions Affect Your Trapping Effort?

Southeast

- Early and heavy snow made a big difference.
- Effort stayed constant.
- No effect. I trap while I am out deer hunting.
- Good weather early in December changed to deep snow late January. Trapping got better as weather got colder.
- The conditions had no effect.
- Trapped out of town, only went out a few times and since quantity was not a big concern, I did not get many traps. Personal use only-river otters were shot.
- Deep snow made for hard walking.
- Severe weather caused me to stop trapping earlier than last year.
- Heavy snow required traps to be monitored constantly once January arrived.
- Not much snow in December when I usually work it. Martin were a little bit higher up than I wanted to go.
- Didn't affect it this year.
- Too deep of snow, bad affect.
- Very little snow or cold so no wolverine came down.
- Conditions were very good but because of the low prices of fur, I just trapped for my own use. I couldn't see trapping my grounds with the prices so low.
- The weather didn't affect my efforts.
- Didn't effect my effort. Normal season.
- 5-6 weeks of freezing weather. Nothing working.
- Deep snow prevented us from reaching some of our traps on our regular schedule.
- Beaver ponds stayed iced over a lot later, so I had to wait until later in the season to trap them. I had to use deer hides for bait instead of beaver.
- After such a good season last year I trapped less this year so the stock would increase for the future seasons.
- There was a lot of snow so it was hard to get around a times.
- I had to quit because of too much snow.
- The road has no pull off spots to get good axes to go up the mountain or flats, so I did not trap as much as I would like to.
- Extreme snow hampered it.
- Getting too old to fight deep snow.
- A lot of snow seemed to help on the wolverine movement.
- Lots of snow forced a cut back on line length and number of sets.
- Warm weather forced me to pull my marten sets early because of prices also. Later snow and ice stopped my otter line after approximately 3 weeks.
- Same as every year. It blows, snows, and rains. Just trapper way.
- Record snow buried traps and snares.
- No effect.
- I would always like to see colder weather and more snow, but this year was better that the last few years.
- The trapping is always about the same because the passages are weather protected and don't freeze.
- Too much snow.
- Lots of snow made it harder to reach areas.
- We had an extreme around of snow from the end of January – March. It snowed non-stop day and night.
- Weather limits success.
- The tremendous snow load decreased the amount of animal movement. Tough to keep traps open.
- I usually set in an area only a few weeks, then move so I made several moves during season.

- More snow. More work.
- The snow.
- Lots of rain in December and early January. Then lots of snow in late January blocking roads.
- I work for me.
- Snow.
- Here in Southeast, by skiff, the weather is always a big factor in trapping effort and success. This year there were lots of days it was too windy and rough to check traps.

Southcentral/Southwest

- Hard for wolf and wolverine because of snow and cold.
- Too much snow for three wheeler.
- Took a lot of time going around because the snow was deep.
- They didn't-an injury forced me to quit early.
- Heavy freezes of –10° to –60° below affected my beaver trapping. The holes in the ice froze up making it hard to check my trap. Rain affected my red fox and wolf trapping. Rain melting the creek made it hard to drive up the creek on my four wheeler to check my beaver traps.
- Cold and thickness of ice probably slowed me a little.
- Too cold-few critters traveling. Conibears froze in under ice too much ice for snares.
- Too cold-too long. Then lots of snow all at once.
- Less effort, lack of snow early after it froze up.
- Not enough snow sometimes.
- Less catch.
- The conditions were the best I have ever seen.
- Freeze and thaw cycles affected snares and heavy "temporary" snows dropped snare loops. King Salmon creek overflow made checks difficult.
- No snow this year.
- Snow made it difficult to get to trap lines at times.
- The snow wasn't deep so we were able to go farther up by the mountains with our four wheeler.
- Thick ice made it difficult to trap beaver.
- Not much snow. What there was, was powder so I had to cut a lot of brush. This slowed my effort.
- Light snow conditions early made it difficult to catch wolves.
- No effect.
- -50° slowed down my time on the line on several occasions.
- Cold weather slowed me up somewhat. Lots of snow in my area every year, but I get used to it.
- Not much effect. Lack of snow reduced off-trail mobility and made tracking animal movements more difficult.
- Lack of early snow made travel difficult.
- Low snow depth changed animal behavior. The wolves stayed high with moose, other predators didn't have to cover as much country to secure food due to lack of snow and high rabbit population. Low snow also made it tough to reach some traplines, to rough.
- The weather was the worst factor. Windy the first half of the season and extreme cold temperatures –40° and –50° for almost a month.
- Low snow fall reduced early effort due to transportation difficulty and fur staying high.
- The rivers again this year did not freeze up till late. Lack of snow all winter made it rough.
- Low snow fall made setting trail sets harder. Wolfs stayed in the higher country.
- No effect.
- Thin snow at start of season.
- No effect.
- Trapped mostly creeks, much early overflow.
- Shortened my season.
- Little snow during November and December presented snowmachine use on my trapline trails.
- It didn't.

- Not much snow for wolves to stay on snowmachine trail.
- Lots of wind resulted in exposed traps and drifting. Also deep snow made areas less accessible.
- Late snow made for a late start. But other than that it was perfect.
- Early snow would have helped.
- Too much snow for trapping beaver.
- Conditions improved efforts.
- Bad weather.
- Thicker than normal ice made some beaver houses untrappable.
- Too much snow and too cold, I pulled out my traps.
- To much snow.
- Low catch.
- Too cold.
- It was too damn cold!
- Conditions were better this season than the past two years, but the snowmachine was in poor repair. I had a three year old foster son with me this season.
- Lots of snow, traps were hard to keep operating.
- The bitter cold made water trapping more difficult (thick ice). Deep snow helped and hurt. I was able to snowmachine to further and new areas, but some of my traps were regularly covered by too much snow.
- Bad snow conditions in Martin River valley. I traveled between 27-37 miles in high winds which prevented getting out and clearing traps of snow and rebaiting.
- March 1st is when snow conditions pretty much stabilized so the going was good.
- Snow prohibited travel and working sets.
- A lot of snow caused a fair amount of frozen up traps and snares. I missed quite a few catches.
- Heavy snow and fierce North winds made it difficult to keep traps working.
- Heavy snow slowed me down at times.
- Too much snow and ice to get to the beaver.
- Significantly, no snow.
- Lots more snow than normal, it made for easier tracking and set making, but harder walking.
- Coldest winter in Alaska since arrival, traps froze up in ice.
- This year the conditions to get to my sets were extremely tough.
- It did not effect it.
- Weather prevented trapping effort.
- Bad weather made for slower trapping.
- Conditions normal, no affect.
- A little scarce for snow to start-got a slow start.
- The cold weather in January hurt.
- I normally run two lines, but the warm weather this year eliminated the longest line this year. I had to start with my 4-wheeler on another line-rough. About three weeks of good traveling weather, but started to catch too many females, so I pulled traps early.
- Conditions were good. Easy travel on snowmachine. This, however, did not affect my effort.
- Early part of the season was extremely rough and wiped out the suspension.
- Big snow in January made set pulling very difficult.
- Very light snow cover made travel difficult and the cold froze the muskrat pushups fairly early.
- Lots of snow, harder to keep traps working.
- Wet in Kodiak, no change in 14 or 13.
- Little snow at first, then it was ok.
- I trap as much as I can every year no matter what the conditions are.
- I don't do as well when deep snow hits.

Interior

- We didn't have enough snow to get through the rougher part of the trap line until mid January. This also made it harder to set snares for lynx because rabbit trails were not really established. Deep snow makes hunting harder for lynx, driving them into sets better.
- Conditions were ok. Low snow fall made trails a bit rough.
- Started over a month late due to lack of snow.
- Too cold- no critter movement the month I trapped.
- Very little snow, cold weather and a lot of wind. I couldn't trap in Unit 11, didn't have any snow.
- Airplane trapping for wolves only. Rotten weather this winter. Airplane needed major repairs this winter. Low prices.....all things considered.....wasn't worth the effort last couple of years.
- Very little snow most of winter. I couldn't get anywhere early on. Warm weather early.
- Trapping conditions are ugly everyone including the department seems to work against trapping.
- Very little snow and the cold weather made it hard for trapping.
- Late snow limited early sets in some parts of the line.
- Not at all.
- Extreme cold during January and February limited opportunity and reduced effort. I didn't make any martin sets due to extended cold weather.
- I started late due to lack of snow and lots of open water. It was too warm and rainy travel to my trapline mostly no snow, till very late.
- Very late snowfall so I could not use snowmachine until almost Christmas. Very low snowfall made getting around difficult.
- More snow than usual less overflow but very little difference.
- Good weather-hardly any snow.
- Travel conditions were good. Fur numbers looked good but the depressed market conditions kept me from setting out over half the time.
- Trapping conditions did not effect my effort, but the low price of mink and marten did.
- Late freeze up got me off to a slower start then I wanted to.
- Good early snow.
- No effect.
- No snow-too many rough areas.
- We had good snow most all season enough to travel, but not so much I needed to use my snow shoes.
- Deep, loose snow and very low temperatures in March.
- Lot of cold weather and wind. Didn't get out as much as I wanted to.
- Rivers freezing later.
- Weather conditions were a major effect on trapping. Lack of snow made trapping my entire line difficult.
- Lots more snow and colder temperatures. Harder to get around at times due to deep snow in some areas.
- It didn't.
- No problem, adequate snow but not to deep.
- Too little snow to reach much of the line, reduced effort.
- No affect.
- Easy travel.
- Low snow restricted access to many areas the first half of the season. It also caused poor fur color and quality in early winter.
- Not enough snow keeps animals spread out. They won't follow your trail as much.
- Really rough trail. Killed my snowmachine. Ouch!!
- Severe cold in February affected some travel.
- No effect.
- Little snow made for rough trails. Poor martin prices so I pulled good lines in December to go for more fox, lynx, and wolves.
- No much snow, makes everything worse.
- Low snow made it easier to maintain foot traps for wolves, but harder to snare them. Fox were also harder to snare, which is the only way I catch them.
- Early in season no snow lots of caribou wintering in area-screwed up sets and trail.

- Busted bones, busted equipment, mad dogs.
- Extremely low snow did: A. Not allow me to access my usual areas and B. Allowed animals to wander wherever they wanted to go.
- Lack of snow made for a late start and length of line thru the woods. Prices were too low to put much effort in it.
- Cold and not much snow.
- Bad weather and snow conditions made intimate knowledge absolutely necessary to trap efficiently.
- Early season, was too warm so I waited until late November to start. Around mid season we got 42 inches of snow in two days and turned -50° -60° for extended periods of time. I still went out but not as frequent as things became critical in temps.
- No affect.

Arctic/Western

- Low snow until the end of January made travel easy. 29" of snow in January made the rest of the year bad.
- Not much, line was close to home.
- Extreme cold temperatures kept me in warm house until mid February, by then ice was thick making muskrats hard to trap.
- Not much snow and a mild winter kept my traps above the snow and animals active.
- No snow until late in the season.
- A lot of wind prevented too much hunting.
- A lot of storms, covering up the traps.
- Poor snow conditions early.
- Cold.
- Too cold for a long time. No snow until December.
- Little snow made traveling difficult until February.
- When the road snows shut, my ability to easily access the country is limited.
- Only trapped early beaver, freeze up ended my trapping.
- No affect.
- Well the trapping conditions were very good this year. Lots of snow, a lot of caribou and game for the animals.
- No affect.
- Due to blizzard conditions, fog, whiteouts, etc. I probably lost 30 days of travel.
- Harder to travel.
- Extreme cold weather for one month.
- No snow. Hard on snowmachines. Did not make enough to cover snowmachine parts.
- No affect.
- Not much—being a single father and helping to open a new school took up almost all of my time.
- Did not catch too many.
- The cold weather reduced animal activity somewhat, but kept the pelts in better condition (no belly rot, etc.)
- They were good. Little snow.
- Most of the winter was mild but one cold spell was too cold to operate the trapline.
- Made for decent traveling but a late freeze up. Cold weather made the fur move.
- It didn't affect hunting/trapping effort.
- Very poor.
- Cold temperatures kept animals and myself from doing too much roaming.

Did Other Trappers in Your Area Affect Your Trapping Effort?

Southeast

- Other trappers in my area caught martin and otter that I would have caught.
- I trap within 20 miles of town, so there is a lot of competition.
- Others took over a set I made.
- Since another trapper was concentrating on marten, I went for more minks. My trapping area and his overlap.
- My otter traps were stolen and I was loosing money.
- The intrusion of other trappers forced me out of my areas.
- Competition in beaver trapping.
- Increased pressure forced me to move.
- A friend trapped the same area after I was done on the Salmon Creek trail. He took all the brood stock that I left for next year.
- I lost multiple traps to thieves and eventually pulled my traps.
- My son took over the west arm of Chomley so I only trapped the south arm and Divide Head.
- I checked with other trappers before the season but we still competed for the same animals on part of the line.
- I'm restricted to my spot because there are trappers in Tokeen Bay and trappers on El Capitan Passage on the Price of Wales side. I went down to Tuxekan Island for two weeks and didn't catch anything and I also went up to Devil Fish Bay and didn't do any good there either.
- I just had to travel further from home.
- Trappers were everywhere. I like solitude. I lost 2 traps to thieves. First time ever. Got mad and quit for the year.
- Because of easy access, several trappers working the same area.

Southcentral/Southwest

- Took over parts on my normal line.
- There were trappers in areas I normally set. I adjusted.
- When I was trapping beaver on King Salmon creek, there were a few other people trapping the same lodges and around the same area that I was.
- Nine snares stolen. Trapped no leg holds this year.
- New trappers with no respect for established trap lines.
- Unaware individuals stopping in my snares on trail sets. Snow machines running snares over.
- My uncle took me to his trap lines and showed me how to catch lynx so we both traveled together to be safer and also to show me new land.
- More recreational roadside trappers with no consideration of local resident lines. They now are using motorhomes and snowmobiles.
- Someone who had trapped this line some years ago decided he still had rights to the line after I worked for three months to reclear brush and build bridges over washouts that had not been used for many years. This person snapped 27 of my sets and started trapping again in February 99. This action to me is very unsportsman-like.
- A few weekend warriors set in my area, but we had a "chat" and they agreed to leave and trap elsewhere. So I had no problems with other trappers, just recreational snowmobilers, skiers, and snow boarders.
- Caribou, wolf, and wolverine hunters are moving in more and more as the population of the state grows.
- A sonofabitch tried to bullshit me out of my territory.
- Previous year (97), pressure increased from others, saw dwindling animal signs.
- Trappers have no idea of the old Alaska respect for someone's life style. Even just 20 years ago one wouldn't even consider encroaching on someone else's area where they had been for years.
- Stolen traps.
- Too many trappers in area.
- Another trapper trapped a beaver house I planned on trapping prior to me getting there so I did not set.
- People are mostly hunting and trapping wolf where the money is.

- Major problems with a new trapper attempting to take over a trapline my partner and I have trapped over 30 years and committing crimes etc.
- There was a trapper where I had previously trapped along Goat mountain.
- It's difficult to find an area that others aren't using, or that's been trapped out.
- Not too much competition.
- Other people trap in some of the places I would like to trap.
- A lot of beaver spots were trapped out prior to our setting them. I think a lot more people trapped beaver last year (97-98).

Interior

- Right around Eagle the martins are all but wiped out, very few trappers this year. Only set one martin set in my fish house. Caught one martin.
- (Airplane shooters) not trappers.
- Too many trappers.
- Someone took over part of my trapline 10 miles of the other end. Please tell him or her to leave my camp.
- A lot of the trappers in my area did not trap this season because of the prices, and wanted to know what I was doing when there was no money in it.
- Reduced opportunity due to snowmachines visiting sets, humans urinating at wolf sets, etc (19A) Kuskokwim.
- Along the road system in November, I encountered a conflict or two. I also had conflicts with skiers and people walking their dogs on a foot path that I had broken through the snow, far from any maintained trail. People just took all the snares they found. I pulled them out immediately, because I'm not out there for conflict, I'm there to enjoy the experience.
- I have not consistently used my line over the last five years, but half of it was taken over by another trapper.
- When you have more trappers, the amount of fur each individual gets is reduced.
- The trappers from Wiseman work fairly well together and respect each others lines. No problems.
- Damn near came unraveled, they have no respect for anyone. These teachers should leave here, people never see them around town only on trap lines.
- Too many caribou on my trapline this winter. They messed up my trapping.
- I didn't trap the last couple of years because the lack of snow machines. The trappers comments are always interesting. Seems like the only furbearer worth trapping are beaver, otter, and maybe martin. I think the fur market and more jobs are the course for the decline of young trappers. One of the reasons at least.
- Keep up the good fight on not letting voters have a management voice thru voting when we have a department with the skills and hand-on experience that the average voter knows nothing about.
- Trapped beaver for food and personal use of fur.
- Most of the wolves this past season seem to have been to the west of my area, more over in the John River area. The caribou were over there in greater numbers. All the animals I caught seemed to be very healthy, somewhat skinny compared to previous years, but still healthy. Less available food for the wolves. I noticed more rabbit in their diet and in wolverine also. I use primarily steal jaw traps for wolf and wolverine as much as 65% of my line is above tree line. I build my own wolf and wolverine traps, their a heavy jawed (round) clawed coil spring, thicker jaws have less cutting force. PS. A blunter edged one released a female wolverine this winter, there were not broken bones or skin. I've also given some of my traps to trappers in Anaktuvuk Pass, Bettels and here in Wiseman, they seem to work well.
- A weekend trapper from Anchorage destroyed some of my traps and sets.

Arctic/Western

No comments were received for this area.

Do You Have Any Comments to ADF&G?

Southeast

Now I'm 72. We had a tough winter. Some deep snow and logging roads shut me down early. Can't walk as far through deep snow as before. My girlfriend, Eunice, is a little crippled up too, so I'm spending more time with Thelma. Eunice used to skin a mink in 2 minutes flat, but what with her arthritis and Thelma just won't learn it. She bought into the women's lib thing, says she wants to be her own person, and that doesn't include mink. I do the pelts in the basement and when Eunice couldn't skin I did the mink, but I've got arthritis too and cut the glands on a couple and the kitchen is right over the skinning corner. Thelma is so damned picky. I got tired of her complaining about that little odor. The truck is down too. If it wasn't for Viagra I'd be tempted to move to Palm Springs.

Even though I didn't set one trap this last season, I did see plenty of otter in the icy strait area. I did see good sign of martin and mink in certain areas, so if prices do manage to increase a few dollars, it could be a productive season this coming year. Would ADF&G open the trapping season, say mid December, instead of December 1st. The weather has seemed to be cooler and cold towards the middle and end of December. I would seem to make the martin and mink furs more prime. While closure would be say middle of January this would be possible. I know this would in all likelihood mean missing the January fur auction, that most people want to catch as that is when we usually get the best price for the furs.

I purchased a trapping license mostly to be able to set an occasional trap or two and be able to shoot river otters while out deer hunting and boating. I want to support trapping money and state management. Keep up the good work! I hope you can fund more local furbearer research to combine with trapper surveys to get a better picture of local populations.

I wasn't impressed with the prices.

If carcasses are needed we should be notified before season rather than after the fact. Lets work together. I vote for keeping leg hold traps!

I haven't seen or heard of an ermine on Baranof or Kruzof for several years. Mink are much less abundant than 10 plus years ago.

The postage paid envelope was nice!!

The price of furs is so low, it's not worth trapping.

Cougars should be declared non game with no closed season and no restrictions on the method of take. The deer have enough problems with wolves; bears and bad winters. We don't need another top of the line predator in Southeast Alaska.

Home tanned a few hides this year to try and sell. If I cannot get the prices I want, I will not trap my trap line. I will know next year. I trapped a mountain lion in a wolf snare on Kurprenof Island on my trap line this winter. Fish and Game took it away from me. I was sad because I would have liked to pass it on to my sons for family history. Knowing that it was very rare and probably will never happen again. I also would like to know what Fish and Game did with the hide. I will be waiting to hear from you.

Low prices kept us from trapping.

Once again I trapped with the 71 year old that now on viagra. Therefore our answers on the questionnaire will be the same. He just wasn't the same after girlfriend #2 passed away. With that and all the snow we had this winter he kept mumbling something about a beaver trapline in Las Vegas might be better. I sure hope we have an open winter next year so he doesn't run off and do something foolish.

Thanks for doing this survey on trapping, it is interesting to know what is happening all over Alaska.

As I have said in previous years the wolf population in the area I trap and hunt is multiplying rapidly. During the deer hunting season I encountered more than three packs of wolves in the same areas I hunt and trap. While trapping I saw two or more packs and heard more than a dozen. I personally think management of this species is poor. Wolves are not anywhere near endangered in the areas I trap.

We need Southeast fur buyers.

Fur is prime by mid November. Open sooner and close earlier. Prices will soon effect nearly all effort and participation. Stop the export of any live fur animals such as lynx to Colorado. Why help the anti trappers in that state? They shut it down, then beg for stock.

Trapping effort is greatly increased when you forget your snowshoes.

Wolf and wolverine seasons should close earlier like March 31st instead of April 30th. Bears and "B" grade fur.

I always renew my trapping license even if I don't plan on trapping in a given year. I have a strong interest in fur bearers and trapping, but fur prices definitely dictate if I trap or not. I actually did trap one mink this year that was raising hell on my commercial fishing boat. I think ADF&G is doing a good job with furbearer management. I hope fur prices come up soon.

The number of marten are down in my area. About 15 miles around Coffman Cove, ok. Only caught about 30 some in 1998 and December 1999. Should be closed for at least 2 years or more. Takes about 10 years to build back up to where it was.

I enjoy reading the information you publish. I didn't trap this year, not because I didn't want to, but because I was too busy coaching and then when I finally had time, the snow was too deep to get around...Hopefully next year will be better. (p.s. my wife isn't highly in favor of this great sport. She is praying for even more snow next year!!!)

Their were a couple of misleading problems that I, and no doubt the more experienced trappers noticed in the 1998-99 regulations. First, the fact that beaver may be taken by steel traps or snare only does not appear for Units 1-5 in this booklet. Since no doubt this regulation is still in effect, it should appear in the regulations. Also, it could be cleared up whether wolves, as big game animals, may be trapped within ¼ mile of Tongass Highway, Ketchikan. I spent the first months of the trapping season trying to find these answers. I asked numerous officers, some were uncertain, and I was even given incorrect information.

Rock bottom prices prompted me not to trap this season. I did catch 2 mink that got into the chicken house and killed 6 chickens and 2 ducks. I believe there are lots of mink on the beach and also a large population of otters. The statewide report was very informative and I don't mind making the comment on the recent defeat of the wolf snaring proposal. I thought it stunk like skunk essence to be put before the general public to determine how our furbearers should be managed. I'm sure the fight is not over yet. From report (statewide report) it was almost like getting a pat on the back for being a trapper than the traditional kick in the hind end that so many have received like in Colorado and California. Thank you for the space to make a comment and support for the trappers of this state.

I think there are more wolves on Revillagigedo Is. and Cleaveland Penn. than ADF&G realize. We do not need any restrictions or shortened season placed on the harvesting of them.

Had a wolf and trap stolen from a beach set. Not the first and probably not the last. Personally, I would like to see the December part of deer season shut down. Bucks aren't fit to eat then anyway.

Lots of wolves still. Hear them howling from home sometimes.

Do a no snow dance for next year in southeast.

Wolf population seems to have grown. I traped earlier this year and didn't start seeing others in number until January 99. Martin population was better.

The trapper numbers have increased some. I am a science teacher so I am introducing the sport to youngsters.

I don't catch as many non-target species since converting to more conibear sets.

Winter 1998-99 was extremely poor for trapping S.E. Alaska. The marten, wolf, and beaver needed the brake and should recover numbers nicely. Though I have no urge to take sea otters, I believe it an injustice to AK natives to select them for exclusive sea otter rights above white man. It smacks of degradation as though the native was not as capable as white man to survive as a United States citizen on equal terms. The over-abundance of sea otters is damaging the abalon, and sea urchin beds. A study of this damage in badly needed. Thank you for listening.

Beaver trapping Dec. 1 to March 31
Otter trapping Dec. 1 – March 31
Deer hunting Oct. 1 – Jan. 31
Wolf trapping Nov. 1 – March 31

I think that ADF&G are doing a great job in Southeast! Keep up the good job!!!

Southcentral/Southwest

Wolf have really exploded out here with a zero calf survival of moose this winter.

Wolverine at an all-time low (based on 58 year residence) in Unit 7. Need closed season for a time for their recovery. We only saw three sets of tracks last winter, as compared to a normal of three per month.

I have heard that the beaver season may open up in October in Unit 7 –15 etc. I support this change in the regulations.

I think that the population of red fox has gone down in my area.

24 hour check would be very hard on anyone with more than a few miles of trapline.

Running wolves to death with a snowmobile should be curtailed by enforcement. There should be a better way to kill them.

I tried snares and conibears, only had nine snares stolen (some with fur). I do not believe this was by other trappers but my snowmobilers and skiers. Under ice, sets were looked at but not bothered. Too warm beginning of season so I didn't start until way late then it became way too cold. Rabies killed off most of the red for population.

I eat lots of moose and caribou and they say I can get only one caribou! I need five. I think the number of wolfs to be hunted should be unlimited until caribou come back in numbers.

I will trap in 99-00.

Lack of salmon has animals more on mountains and high valleys than usual.

Over the last seven to eight years I have seen the wolf and bear population sky rocket and the moose population drop drastically. I had six wolf kill moose. They were never eaten entirely. In my area we have no shortage of bears or wolves but we are going to have a shortage of moose. The brown bear season needs to be more liberal, and same day airborne wolf should be brought back. I think ADF&G does a good job managing our game, and will continue to do so if they pay no attention to the Feds or the bunny hugger groups from the states. They don't live here, we do.

More public awareness off trapper's rights to trap without interference from others is stated in regulations.

Open the beaver season more, November 10 – March 31.

Trapping interest in the Cold Bay (Izembek NWR) area is extremely low. Populations of red fox, river otter, mink, and wolf were abundant or common. I was the only trapper in the area that I know of and enjoyed the resources of the S. AK peninsula immensely!

The wolf and wolverine in my area were scarce because we didn't have very many caribou around this winter. We did have a lot of lynx, and saw an increase of rabbit also.

Beaver season should open earlier to eliminate incidental catch in otter traps. They are fully prime in November and they would be easier to trap before the ice is three feet thick. Beaver are over populated on several drainages here because of the work involved in trapping under three to four feet of ice. If the wolf population keeps booming they might cure any over population of beaver however.

The reason for not trapping this season was very low fur prices. I missed it, the first time in 22 years . I will get out next year, even if prices are not good. Just to spend time in the woods.

Great job, thanks. I'm glad your trying to get more kids involved "Its our future". I read your report cover to cover every year and pass it to others interested in trapping and hunting. Thanks.

Keep up the good work ADF&G. I enjoy filling out the questionnaire. Just remember, our society is not based on common sense anymore, so every time we make a common sense decision which our lord intends us to do; all of the anti's are against it.

Try to educate the city people how important the trapper is in helping manage the fur population.

Thanks for the good work.

I would like to see more biologists in unit 13E. Also more Fish and Wildlife protection officers. We get a lot of out-of-towners in 13E.

Glad to see the questionnaire, keep it up. We trappers need all the info and help we can get with all the anti's out there.

In my 29 years of trapping this seems to be the worst year for fur prices. There have been years I only made about ten cents an hours, but this year I think I would have had to lose ten cents an hour. It was the longest winter without trapping and I know I will be doing some trapping next year if only for beaver for meat and wolves for the challenge.

Expecting trappers to skin, flesh and dry hides taken accidentally out of season, only to turn them over to the state is unrealistic. If you expect to get the hides, you are going to have to skin them yourself.

It may be a good idea to require name tags on conibear and leghold traps in case some are lost or found by people.

Just trap near my home for the fun of getting outdoors and matching wits with the animals. Gave away some furs to family members for mounting and kept the rest. Checked sets every three days.

Last year lots of rabbit and lots of lynx, this year some rabbits but no lynx.

Due to the low fur prices, I set out my lines more to maintain my presence than to catch fur.

Ban snares! Too many moose and caribou get caught and die needlessly.

I really enjoy the trapper questionnaire, keep it up. Had many more wolves this winter, less moose, not as much wolverine. I think they stayed high due to low snow

Support and promote trapping to the schools and general public.

Lousy fur prices and steady winter employment made me decide to give the critters a chance to repopulate for a year.

I would like to see the WPS subsistence trap season at least a long as the state season. I had a couple of skiers and dog mushers on my trapline the first time ever! I worry about recreational users using my trails! The bison and moose should have had a good winter because of lack of snow. Wolverine and ptarmigan are scarce. I believe they stayed high. Again, lack of snow. The 6 out of 7 coyotes I got were mangy. Also both wolves I got were mangy, but I did not notice lice or a bad smell.

Thanks for trapper support!

Low snowfall kept wolverine up at very high elevations along with other predators who target ptarmigan. High rabbit population kept well fed on low lands making bait sets ineffective.

The elder natives throughout the region commented that the beaver population is growing at a fast rate and are damming up the streams that the salmon spawn. This is very important we do something about the beaver population!

Minimum of 24 caliber for hunting big game, caribou and moose. There are too many wounded caribou shot with 223 ammo. I am glad the "snaring of animals", is still possible. If regulating abandoned traps is an issue, try making all trappers put name tags or license numbers on traps for documentation of abandoned traps, or trappers must check traps and snares every two days.

Most trappers I know have given up trapping due to the price of fur! Cost equipment wise-snares traps and transportation!

I caught my beaver for consumption, about five. You need to up the catch limit for wolves by firearm method. Too many wolves-probably the reason for fewer caribou in the area.

Pour river ice early in the season makes 80% of our beaver population inaccessible. A season that ran to the end of March would help trim a booming population.

Beaver season opens too soon. It should be open in March or a little earlier. January and February are so cold sometimes. So much snow.

Great video on fur handling! I trapped my main trapline for one week (12 traps). The other seven weeks I trapped, I had only 2 sets out (3 traps total).

We need SDA hunting as methods and means. Why the beaver? Save money.

The early season this year for beaver was a god send. We not only took a few good early beaver for pelts but also had fresh meat and bait. This season would be a good one from November 10th till April 30th, with a 40 per season limit . There is no pressure on this species and trapping is a great way to keep the population stable, helping all who feed on beaver.

I appreciate our local biologist being an ally for the trappers. It's nice to have the otter season open peninsula-wide until February 28th. Is there any hope for the Kenai wolves? With the coyotes infected as well, will we ever have any louse-free wolves on the peninsula?

Seems to me there are enough sea otter for everyone to take a few, after all, I was born in America; doesn't this make me a native American?

I and glad to here dates for martin and beaver have changed.

Don't let politics interfere with good common sense judgement. You know, our society is not based on common sense anymore!! That's why everything is going down hill!!

I would suggest the development of some form of coastal management zones because of the variations of species and eco-systems involved. The trapping trends shown in the state report aren't really representative of the coastal zones due to different species, weather, and eco systems. I am concerned about the populations of martin, mink, wolf, coyote, otter, and wolverine on the Copper River Delta. It is my opinion that the area is over harvested by road and snowmachine trappers.

Fur bearer numbers overall on my trapline appear to be very stable. We didn't see as much wolf sign this year during the season and I believe that they didn't move in because of the snow. During a post season snowmachine ride there were several sets of wolf tracks and even located two separate moose winter kills. This year there were several sets of wolverine and martin tracks present.

I am very concerned about the lack of furbearers in Glennallen to Valdez area! I am an avid snowmachiner who put on about 1,500 miles this last winter. I have seen only three wolverine and four lynx sets of tracks!

I still think the deer season on Prince William Sound should be closed December 15th because of the heavy snowfall some years. Damn boat hunters are slaughtering them during Christmas vacation time. Encourage the natives to kill more sea otter as they are starving to death and have eaten all the butter clams and crabs on Prince William Sound down to 50 fathoms. Any natives that will adopt me into their tribe I'll take care of the problem.

The last time I trapped was when I was a young teenager. I want to thank you all for sending me your information though. I hope to trap in the near future.

I would as always like to see a limited entry style hunt on sea otters in unit 8, for non natives. I truly believe there is enough in my management unit to support a limited hunt.

I wish I had more time. I will trap next year when I get a fur shed together. It will be a long time before I sell my traps! First time I didn't set traps.

Lengthen the river otter season to February 28th! Reasons: 1. November and December are very dark months without work, family etc. This would give a trapper 28 more days to harvest. 2. Day light gain in February is not enough to cause singing or slipping of hair! 3. Road system freezes over, so access is even harder (any form of travel) and storms. The fox season is perfect at November 10th-March 31st and Bear November 10th-April 30th, and Ermine and marten should be moved to February 28th!! Trappers need more than three months to harvest these animals and Afognak is so remote is so remote! Marten are higher! 5. Do not enforce a mandatory 24 hour check, this is not possible with daylight and weather conditions.

I believe a November 1st start on Afognak island would be ok. The fur would be just as prime. I don't start trapping fox until the middle of November but beaver and otter I start on the 10th. Plenty of furs out there to trap.

I appreciate your work, enjoy the questionnaire, glad I could be a part of it. Thanks again for all your efforts.

I still have a strong interest in trapping and wildlife in general. Some ways trapping is a thing of the past, but still serves one very useful purpose and that is to teach people about nature and to help people maintain some close ties with the land.

Trapped mostly to get out of the house and get a few pelts for my wife to sew. Prices are too low to expend much expense and effort.

Although I did not trap this year, I observed several coyotes in area 14 and fewer wolves than previous years. I did see a lynx in unit 14 also, while horseback riding. I will keep track for you again this year.

I was amazed at how many marten I caught. There are way more than I've seen in 14 years.

My traditional trapping area has become a joke with all the week-ender snowmobilers. I have my eye set on a new area for next year where I may be left alone. Hope it works out.

Appreciate a longer marten season. I will concentrate on wolves and beaver next year if time and conditions allow. Mice should come back this year.

If the early season warm weather continues as it has the past two seasons, the success rate for the first couple of weeks will continue to be low. Hopefully no one moved into our southerly line since we couldn't get to it this year until real late (no traps set). It's a shame we have to continually defend ourselves and our lifestyles to a bunch of politicians and greenies that have trouble getting off their back sides, except to ask for money. We need to keep biology in game management rather than managing with a ballot. Get the Feds out of Alaska! Thanks for the opportunity to respond and keep up the work for Alaskans-not out of staters!

Did not see very much coyote sign in the area that I trap which is very unusual. Also over the past ten years red fox have been increasing in this area, but this year very little sign. In a normal year I picked up 3 to 4 coyote and an equal number of fox, this year same area, same effort, and I caught no coyote and no fox. The muskrat on Goose Bay seem to be very scarce, very few push-ups, and a normal sign of rabbits and small rodents. No sign of lynx moving in yet. The marten population increasing. Normal to above normal otter and beaver sign. Thanks.

I believe the season starts too early. Some beaver are not as prime as they should be.

Early in season until early December there was almost no snow and because of the rainy summer and fall what were normally mossy humps and bumps were like rocks after the freeze. Once the snow came, about 2 ½ feet with very high winds, I seriously damaged my leg and was unable to ride a snowmachine or walk. I put out a short line that I was able to walk using crutches and picked up 23 marten. Marten were very abundant and was very little trapping going on. Mostly because of low prices. Marten season needs to be opened as it used to be on the 20th of October. Also wolves have increased dramatically and also should be opened on the 20th of October. To pick up 23 marten from such a short line on a wood trail is a good indication of marten abundance. Again they were chasing rabbits and were hard to get to climb pole set and cubby buckets off the ground. They entered ground cubbies with no hesitation.

Last year my comment was put under the interior section. It concerned a certain warning about a snow-go dealer in the south-central area. I hope people in the interior were not frightened away from interior ski-doo dealers. The happy ending too this story is the rumor that the offensive dealer is closing shop and will harm no more. With deep sugar snow I had fun with go-fasters by making dead end trails with Elan and no turn around. Fun was had by all and I'm sure by the size of snow excavations found on following days. They were my most productive sets all year. I need to know limit and season from ADF&G. (P.S. are underwater sets legal)?

Fur animal numbers seem strong in the back country areas we trap. Around the valley close to town the beaver numbers seem lower but we are just now getting into our beaver trapping. A little more looking will turn some up.

I would like to see the season for wolverine stay open longer. I would then trap later with less effort and be able to trap for wolf, fox, coyote without having to worry about catching a wolverine as a incidental catch.

Open lynx November 10th.

It is possible that one of the wolves that you took from Tok and introduced on the Kenai Peninsula has found its way back into the Su-Valley. I think this makes more since then domestic dogs. I think it was worth a try to "Breed out the Louse", but I also think we failed, this is not a gripe, only an opinion.

Wolverine and marten need to be longer in unit 14. The Alaska Fish and Game is shirking its responsibility by not doing anything to get rid of the lice problem on the Kenai Peninsula. As long as you do nothing, the problem will only get worse in the future.

I wasn't able to put the effort I would have liked into a trapline last winter. I regret that, because that is a most important part of my culture and I feel like it is being slowly taken from me. I don't trust ADF&G. I believe there are many people in the department that don't believe I should be able to trap under the "sustained yield" principle, or any principle, for that matter.

Interior

I enjoyed the lifestyle and independence that running a trapline allows. I certainly will trap again if the fur market improves.

No bag limit on beaver in 23.

This season my trap line had massive amounts of lynx, a lot of which are kittens. Of the 30 lynx I caught, 15 were kittens. This leads me to believe that my lynx population is still growing.

Low for prices.

No snow, no fur prices, not trapping!

I'm concerned about the hair loss on coyote and fox. Also the patch of short hair between the shoulder blades on some lynx (both sexes). Any ideas?

Need more free time so I can trap more! I'm an overworked skin sewer who'd rather trap, but not enough money in trapping to divert from sewing. Cold weather-no animal movements, sets didn't catch!

It seems to me that you're messing with the wolves last years has made them more scarce and more skittish then ever. Before my snare sets were visited often.

Wolf are so abundant in areas of 20 and 25, they are a major factor in moose loss every spring. Two areas where I hunt and trap, the moose numbers are down 75% over the last five years. Wolves used to avoid coming to a man made kill...this fall they would claim a carcass the first night, and or, be waiting before we left the kill site. We also saw more single wolves and they would come into camp at night; brazen and mostly hungry.

The fur prices are too low and transportation costs too high.

Ban aircraft.

Don't succumb to the idea that registering trap lines will help trappers. Every serious trapper knows where others are trapping, respect and courtesy keep them from encroaching on any active line.

Red Fox season in Unit 21E should be extended thru March 31st. It is impossible to keep red foxes out of wolf sets and few can be released due to injury caused by the big traps. Fur quality is as good as unit 19 fox when season remains open thru March.

Please open aerial wolf hunting here, there are too many and they are killing off all our moose. Keep up the good work. PS. Keep a close watch on the sport hunting for wanton waste.

Trapping is about numbers for some, but a life style for me and others in this area. The low prices greatly effects the amount of effort that I am willing to invest in the actual taking of fur but even if I don't set traps, I still go out and do trail and cabin maintenance in hope of better conditions next year. My wife and children lived on the trapline with me for 12 years, doing home schooling from 1978-1990. In 1992 we got a public school established in Minchumina and that changed the seasonal patterns of our life. I then found my self trapping alone most of the time. Having raised two children on the trapline I can say it is a wonderful family experience and makes for healthy independent young Alaskans.

I never made much effort due to fur prices. Just trapped marten and fox for my own use and to introduce my grandson to trapping.

I got my ten year old stepson on his grandfather's trapline this year. The trapline got too long and December got to cold for him. I had to quit trapping because he got too upset to not go. There seems to be a wolf problem around here 19A. Wolves don't bother me, I've killed lots of them. What bothers me, is my kids are old enough to walk to school (1.2 miles) and they are scared of the wolves running around the village so much.

Very few moose calf with cows. A lot of wolves! I saw fewer sheep while hunting moose last fall; I suspect it's the wolves.

Put in very little effort until March and February of 1999. First due to lack of snow, later to cold and poor snow conditions. My main effort is usually for martin, mink, and otter in the early season. However, low fur prices, especially for martin left little incentive to put out much effort. This year I took several non-resident clients on trapping adventures. Both were impressed by the abundance of marten, wolves, and red fox.

Not much furs and the prices are too low. Got five wolf this winter but prices too low.

Open same day land and shoot wolf in 9,17,19 or some subunits. The wolf population in the past two years has really jumped. Big packs, some with over 30.

You are doing a good job. Please help us get the Feds to eliminate expensive requirements for shipping out of the country. That is our little margin of profit.

Mink seemed to be all over the lower reaches of my martin line. I caught all mink in martin pole sets.

20A and 20B are old reliable trapping units. Lots of room and not great pressure but plenty of competition. We are likely headed into another big rabbit cycle. This is the first since the 70's. Lynx reproduction is good-unfortunately the price is no good. Lots of fun. Trapping is in my blood.

Due to low fur prices, bad snow and weather conditions, and other personal projects going on, my trapping effort was reduced drastically this season. The much lower take of furs should not be viewed as low numbers of animals in the area.

Low fur prices of course was the main reason I didn't trap this season. One suggestion though...now and then and in some areas there can be an overpopulation of wolves. Rather then use tax payer money to thin them out, I suggest reinstating a bounty or subsidize trappers to help with this. Perhaps selling wolf traps at a cow price that the state could contract the production of, cheaper then an individual could. I mentioned this because I have a lot of wolves (always have had) in my area but I can not afford money for traps, and snares are limited in their use.

Thanks!

It seems a shame that our dedicated field biologists cannot be allowed to manage our furbearers and game animals due to the political pressure from the Governors and Commissioner's offices. It would be such a relief to have again a Commissioner who was a wildlife manager!

Didn't trap much. Just showed my son some things about trapping. He caught his 1st lynx. Just out trying to spend time with him.

I would like to see a more organized effort to develop better management practices with statewide input from trappers and eventual publication of consensus recommendations.

Thanks, see ya next year.

Please don't cut this trapper questionnaire program with all the state budget cuts.

Due to the low prices on fur bearing animals, I quit trapping. It costs too much money to trap these days.

There is good lynx sign. Martin might be good next year.

The trapping season is pretty slow because of low fur prices. That is why nobody is trapping for a while, I hope in the near future the fur prices go high again. This way everybody will trap again.

I am assuming that I'm one of the few trappers who have an optimistic view on trappers and the future of trapping. My personal opinion is that trapping will be around a lot longer than people think.

Thanks for the fine work. We both appreciate your effort in defeating the wolf snares ballot vote. Thanks for running tests on the wolf hide samples for lice.

Your report is superb very good- I'm still favoring early martin season.

Prices do not really affect me, martin numbers were really low but not sure if logging had a part to blame or the fact the 8 inches of snow let them wander into feeding areas not usually accessible. Red-backed wolf population was way up. Hares still high. I thought two years ago was the high cycle? East of me lynx have been up for two years, but hares also still high. But the very dry summer caused almost no berries or rose hips possible this could be the cause of low numbers of martin.

Poor-running out of animals.

Nothing to trap.

Arctic/Western

I moved from Nome to Eagle River during January 99. This caused me not to be able to trap last season. Thanks for including me in the survey.

Wolverine are on a steep decline. The season needs to be shortened within the Kotzebue area by one month.

I would like to see the season and harvest limit on lynx restored to the same, November 1st thru April or March without unlimited catch. The lynx are rapidly expanding across the state from Canada westward. I don't know the reason for limiting lynx as opposed to other animals as all animal populations are cyclic. I feel we need to change the regulation before lynx numbers shoot up. The hare population is very high here on the lower Kobuk River. There are very few people trapping in our area and none of the trappers have targeted lynx this year. I don't believe that this will change until numbers increase and/or prices drastically increase.

I did not trap since 1984 when the lynx went down.

I think you guys are doing a good, fair job and your questionnaires are an important part of it all. I am a little confused as to "trapping" animals because I've been told shooting them is also trapping. Is shooting caribou trapping? I focus on caribou, mostly for meat and hides being valuable to us. Like shooting muskrats, 300 in a day or so-is that trapping? Do the Federal-allies have a different point of view on shoot/trapping? Will I go to prison for using a firearm "in the commission of a crime", if I shoot, say, too many ducks? I understand our president has a mandatory 5-year sentence for gun crimes on Federal land, is it the same for State land? I try to stay by State land, drainage as much as possible, but I make short trips everywhere and this question bugs me a lot.
Ed note: Shooting is a legal method of "trapping" many furbearers throughout the state. This includes fox, wolf, and muskrat, among other animals. Check the trapping regulations or call your local Fish & Game biologist for information about your area and the species you are shooting. Shooting caribou is considered "hunting." That's an interesting question you ask about shooting too many ducks. Kind of scary.

The two species that I have seen fewer of are the fox and wolverine. They may be marked due to migration and movement rather than population decline. For the red fox I know this is absolutely true. I have trapped them mostly near June Creek and by the Vor Lake. Prior to the new dump, I used to trap around 20 fox per year, one year 27 by June creek alone. Ever since the old dump site has been covered and the new one successfully enclosed (and bailed), the foxes don't hang around June Creek anymore for city meals. They are actually out on the tundra again fending for themselves. I don't know the wolverines story as well as I do the fox.

I am a recreation trapper only. Due to a new baby in the house, my time in the field is generally limited to a drive in the truck on the weekends. I have never made a "set" in my life. All of my trapping is done with a rifle. I buy a trapping license so I can legally take parka squirrels (my predominant quarry which I give away to elderly Eskimo women) and not be limited on other species as I would on a regular hunting license. I plan to harvest some Beaver before the 1998-1999 season ends. My "trapline" is the 300 miles of road system in the Nome area. I drive it when it is open and cruise around on a snow machine when it is not.

I really enjoyed the 97-98 questionnaire report. It was very professional looking and easy to read. Good job! Let's work together to maximize opportunities for furbearer harvest.

I hunted, but didn't get anything.

I have spent November 1st through May 6th in the field on dog teams or snowmobile.

1. More snowshoeing since 1977.
2. More arctic hares than most years.
3. High lynx population, lots of young ones traveling together.
4. High fox population, lots of mange.
5. Wolverine population average.
6. Wolf population over-average, noticed a lot of younger males on their own. Went on a guided hunt. A good number stayed behind when the NW arctic herd moved North.
7. Marten-average to below average. Cold temps probably kept them inactive.
8. Beaver-over reaching capacity due to low trapping pressure.
9. Otter-average to slightly above average population.

I do recreational trapping with my kids using only 8-10 traps.

I do not sell otter pelts to anyone. I keep them for personal or family use. They are worth more than what the market is offering right now. Next fall, if I trap, for mink, I will not sell them. In fact, I will probably never sell my furs again or fill out another application! Well, I have to go dry my otter pelts now! Enjoy the rest of the season.

I know that all fur bearing animals are scarce for three years and then become available and good for hunting in the forth year and then become plentiful on the 5th year and then more on the 6th year. Starting in the seventh year they stay stable. Then their population declines and their cycle starts over again.

My trapping which has never been more than hobby trapping really was curtailed due to time constraints. Low prices were not a factor. I'm a teacher and often trap with youngsters, I hope this helps in some small way to preserve our tradition. We've lost the Bethel Mink Festival. There wasn't one this past winter due to a lack of organizers. However, with fur bearers on the rise in the area and a lessor number of trappers, it is essential to invigorate trapping efforts in the area. I hope we'll be able to run one next season.

No money in trapping anymore. Can't afford fuel and gas bills.

Costs of rabbits. Caught 20 by snares. Lots of fox caught by snares. Foxes not too much money. $13.00. $10.00.

Yes. These numbers include my 2 boys (13 years and 16 years). They caught 3 of the wolves, 1 wolverine, 5 beavers, 9 fox, and 5 otters. I took them on a local trapline after work during Nov. and Dec. They also went on one trapping trip each with me to our mountain trapline during Jan,, and February. I began working in March again and wore myself out checking the trapline on weekends. Low prices kept me hedging by bets with a paycheck, but you'd just about have to kill me to get me to stop trapping altogether. Kids love to go along and really are fun to have. They make me remember that trapping is supposed to be for enjoyment as well as profit. Lynx were more common on the Kuskokwim River bottom and it's tributaries. I just wasn't trapping there. The Mink Festival needs to be started up again next year. that was a real sparkling incentive for young people to trap despite bad prices.

Beaver are ruining our rivers where salmon spawn. They built dams and the fish can't swim up river to spawn.

I have not hunted or trapped because I got no time for hunt. I've been airplane agent for 15 years and over trying to make money. Seems like I'm too old to trap or hunt cause I'm getting old. Over 60 years now.

I don't have much to tell you but it seems that some of the furbearers are showing signs of coming up like lynx, martin, and wolverine. Keep up the reports. Thanks.

F & G needs to patrol our area for snowmachines that run down fur. There's been some wolves showing up around here but the local heroes run em down. I know of 1 wolf and 3 wolverine for sure just from this village. And in St. Mary's just up river from here there were at least a half dozen run down and killed. The sad fact is the people here don't even know it's illegal. I'd like to see some wolves get a start now that we have a moose population to speak of. Maybe if F & G can't patrol the whole area, at least inform the locals of what they are doing and maybe do a few fly-bys as at least a scare tactic. Very few trappers this year. There's lots of beaver and otter and lots of fox but nobody wants to trap beaver because of low prices. And they just don't want to skin fox. I averaged $23 for my fox. I never saw any mange this year which is surprising because we have fox up the kazoo and I must of caught 20 with mange last year and there seems to be more fox this year. The rabbits are getting u to their high cycle. The first time I have seen this many in 15 years. Also saw a coyote shot here. I wish we could get some help with marketing our furs.

The fur buyer was a little too low on price in the year 98-99. Sometimes the price is high and low. Not the same each year.

I took my two small children with me to check my sets on one short loop of my line regularly. They both show interest in trapping and with our remote location this may be their only means of raising any income in the teen years. I only pray that for prices will not continue downward. And that trapping will still hold the possibility of profit! I appreciate your efforts to protect this tradition!

Author's Note

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. If you have questions about your specific area, please let your local area biologists know that you would like to hear from them regarding your concerns. Responses for this questionnaire have increased; thank you for your participation. Better data assures better management of trapping in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Jackie Kephart

Jackie Kephart
Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator