Wildlife Management Report ADF&G/DWC/WMR–2016–1

2015 Alaska Trapper Report: 1 July 2015–30 June 2016

Brynn L. Parr

2016

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Management Report ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2016-1

2015 Alaska Trapper Report: 1 July 2015–30 June 2016

Brynn L. Parr
ADF&G, Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
dfg.dwc.permits@alaska.gov

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811

This project was supported by Pittman-Robertson funds from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program. Monies come from a manufacturer's excise tax from the sales of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. State matching funds were provided from the Fish and Game Fund.

Wildlife management reports are used to document general wildlife management issues or information. They typically summarize information related to a specific management issue, review management activities, and/or provide information about why a particular management approach has been taken or is recommended. They may be produced primarily for general or technical audiences. These reports are professionally reviewed by staff in the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

This wildlife management report was reviewed and approved for publication by Brynn L. Parr, ADF&G Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

Wildlife management reports are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526; phone (907) 465-4190; email: dfg.dwc.publications@alaska.gov; website: www.adfg.alaska.gov. The report may also be accessed through most libraries, via interlibrary loan from the Alaska State Library or the Alaska Resources Library and Information Service (www.arlis.org).

Suggested citation:

Parr, B. L. 2016. 2015 Alaska trapper report: 1 July 2015–30 June 2016. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Management Report ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2016-1, Juneau.

Cover Photo: Red fox caught on camera outside Bethel, Alaska. ©2016 ADF&G. Photo by Patrick Jones.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Code of Ethics

A TRAPPER'S RESPONSIBILITY

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

This code of ethics is reprinted from the *Alaska Trappers Manual*. The manual was created in a joint effort between the Alaska Trappers Association and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The manual is available in Alaska book stores and from the Alaska Trappers Association for approximately $26.00.

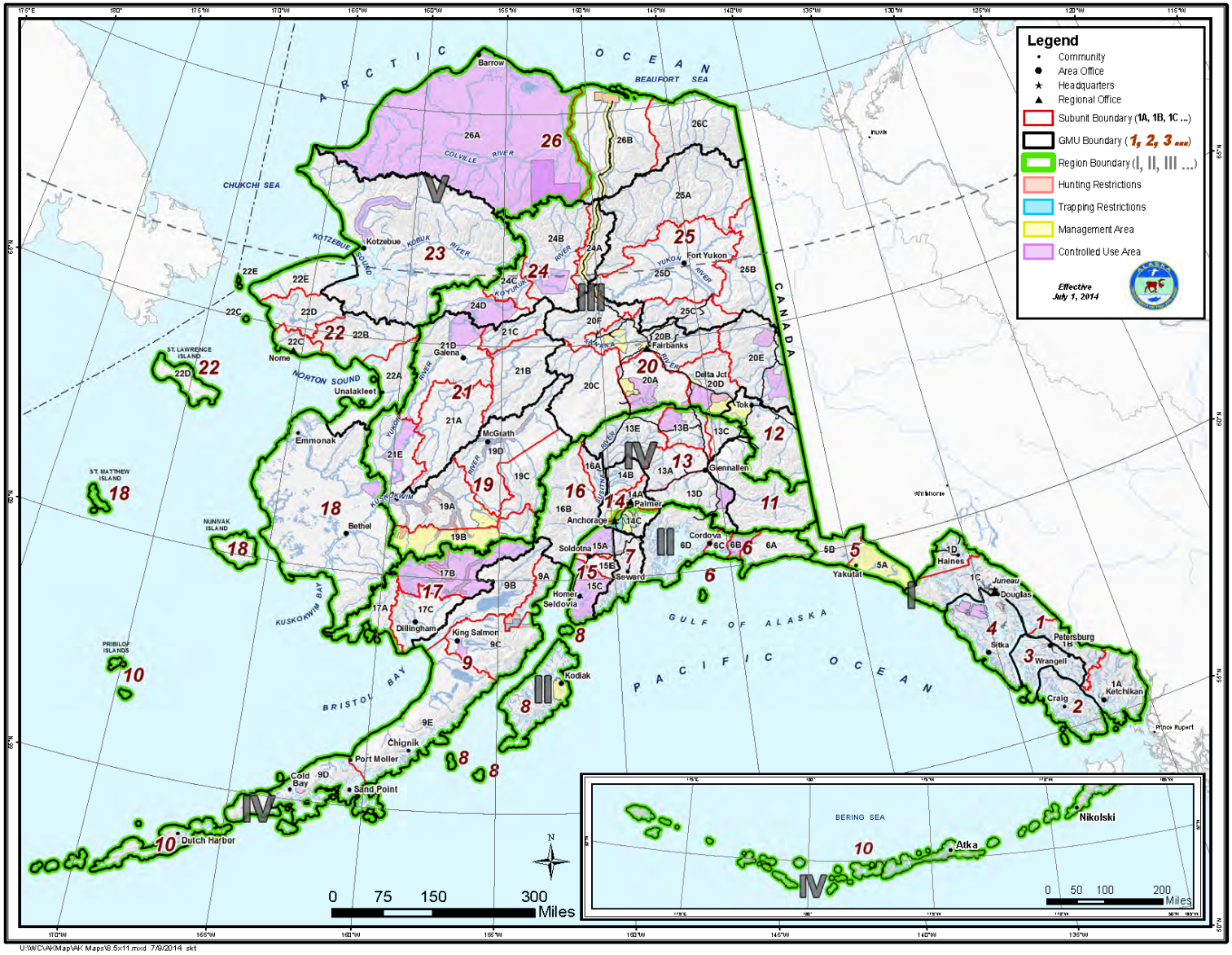


Figure 1. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation's regions and game management units.

Introduction

This *2015 Alaska Trapper Report: 1 July 2015–30 June 2016* contains information provided by trappers through the annual trapper questionnaire. On the following pages, you'll find out how other Alaskans ran their traplines, what their primary target species were, how much effort they put into catching fur, how abundant furbearer and prey species were on their traplines, and how many furbearers they trapped. You'll also find fur sealing summaries from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and comments from trappers throughout the state.

In 2010, ADF&G began using an optical scanner to compile data provided by trappers in an effort to improve the data. This year ADF&G offered the questionnaire in an online format by providing a hyperlink to the questionnaire when the paper version was mailed. We continue to work to improve the questionnaire and the reports generated from trapper information. We hope trappers and managers alike can use some of the information in this report to enhance their efforts during future trapping seasons.

The accuracy and value of information provided in this report depends on the numbers of trappers who reply. To help the 2015 questionnaire reach trappers, we identified active trappers using licensing and fur sealing records. Of the 2,715 questionnaires mailed out, we received 317 responses, an 11.7% response rate. Of those responding, 19.2% of responses were provided online, while the majority of respondents used the paper format. The total number of responses was down from previous years.

This year, trappers were assigned to the 5 standard regions found in Figure 1 based on their mailing address. If a trapper responded with his/her primary trapline in a region separate from their mailing address, we reassigned that trapper to the trapline's region. This was done in an attempt to accurately reflect trapping efforts and locations. Throughout this report, regions will be listed by a roman numeral in place of description (e.g., Region I instead of Southeast).

As always, we maintain strict confidentiality. The names of individuals and references to specific traplines will not be included in any reports. We hope you find this report informative and welcome your suggestions for improvement.

This trapper questionnaire report was mailed to all trappers who responded to the survey and who requested a copy. This report and all previous reports can be found on our website at:

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=trapping.reports

A Profile of Trapping in Alaska

TRAPPER INFORMATION

Did You Trap?

This year, 2,715 questionnaires were mailed throughout the state and 317 were returned for an overall response rate of 11.7%. The response rate was highest from Region I and lowest for Region V. Statewide, 47% of respondents trapped during the 2015–2016 season.

Table 1. Response to 2015 Alaska trapper questionnaire.

Region	Trapped	Did not trap	No response	Total	% Responding
I	31	24	288	343	16.0
II	29	71	891	991	10.1
III	41	31	453	525	13.7
IV	39	34	555	628	11.6
V	9	8	211	228	7.5
Total	149	168	2,398	2,715	11.7

Reasons for Not Trapping in 2015

Statewide, 142 individuals offered reasons why they didn't trap during the 2015–2016 season. Several respondents gave more than one answer. Overall, 77% of responses cited were in either the "personal" or "other" categories (poor health, no time, conflicts with job, etc.). In previous years, nearly 25% of Region I respondents have cited high fuel prices as a reason they did not trap. During the 2015–2016 season, only 5% of Region I individuals claimed high fuel prices kept them from trapping. Statewide, high fuel prices and too few animals both accounted for 3% of reasons cited for not trapping, while weather conditions and price of fur accounted for 11% and 5% of answers, respectively.

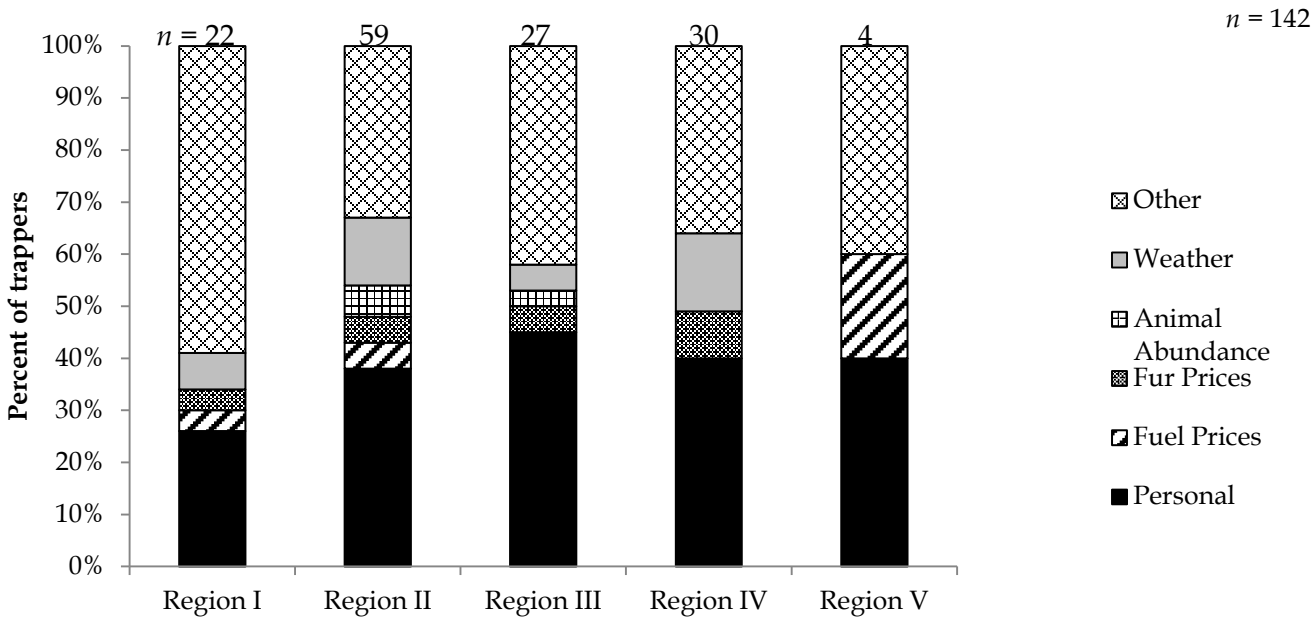


Figure 2. Regionwide reasons reported by trappers for not trapping in Alaska, 2015–2016.

Statewide, the majority of respondents (70%; *n* = 80) indicated they last trapped more than 2 years ago, 18% (*n* = 21) indicated they trapped last year, and the remaining respondents last trapped 2 years ago.

Trapping with a Young Person (Under 16) or Partner

During the 2015–2016 season, 36% of trappers statewide reported they took a young person (under 16) trapping with them. This continues a downward trend since 2006. The highest percentage of trappers taking youngsters trapping was in Region V, where 67% of trappers responding took someone under the age of 16 with them. Region III had the lowest percentage of 25%.

Photo by Patrick Jones

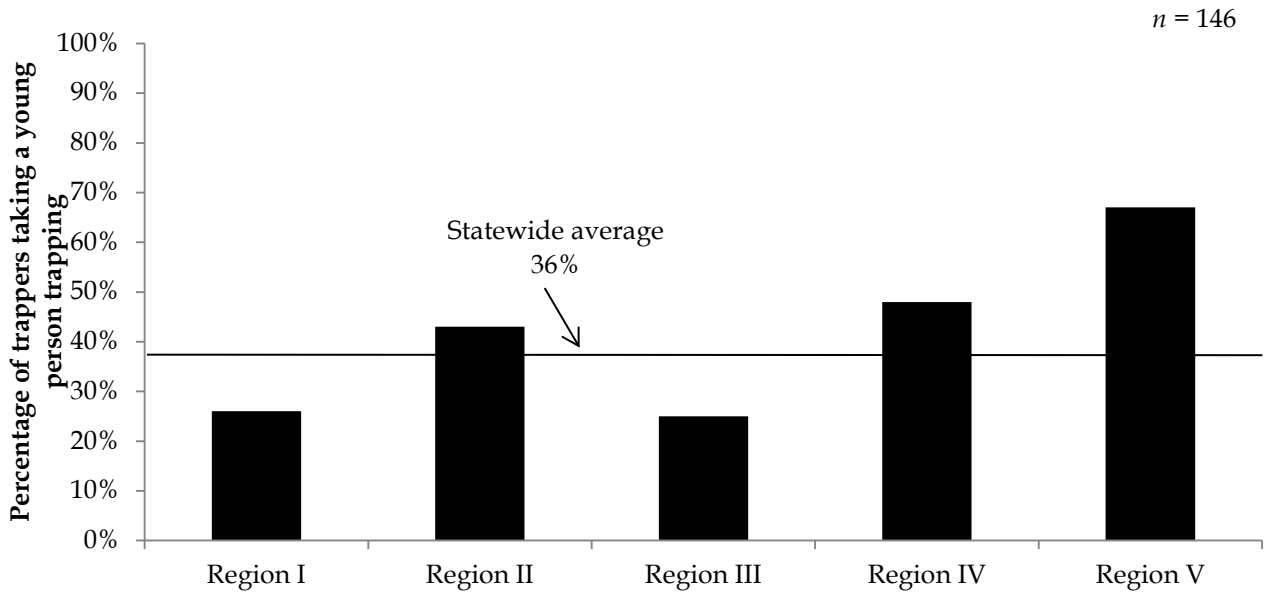


Figure 3. Percentage of Alaska trappers, by region, taking a young person (under 16) trapping during the 2015–2016 season.

Statewide, 31% (n = 46) of trapping respondents stated they trapped with a partner. Trapping partners were most often (n = 25) younger generation family members, while friends (n = 20) were a close second. Same generation family members (n = 10), older generation family members (n = 3), and other individuals (n = 3) rounded out the partners for the 2015–2016 season.

Photo by Kyle Ferguson

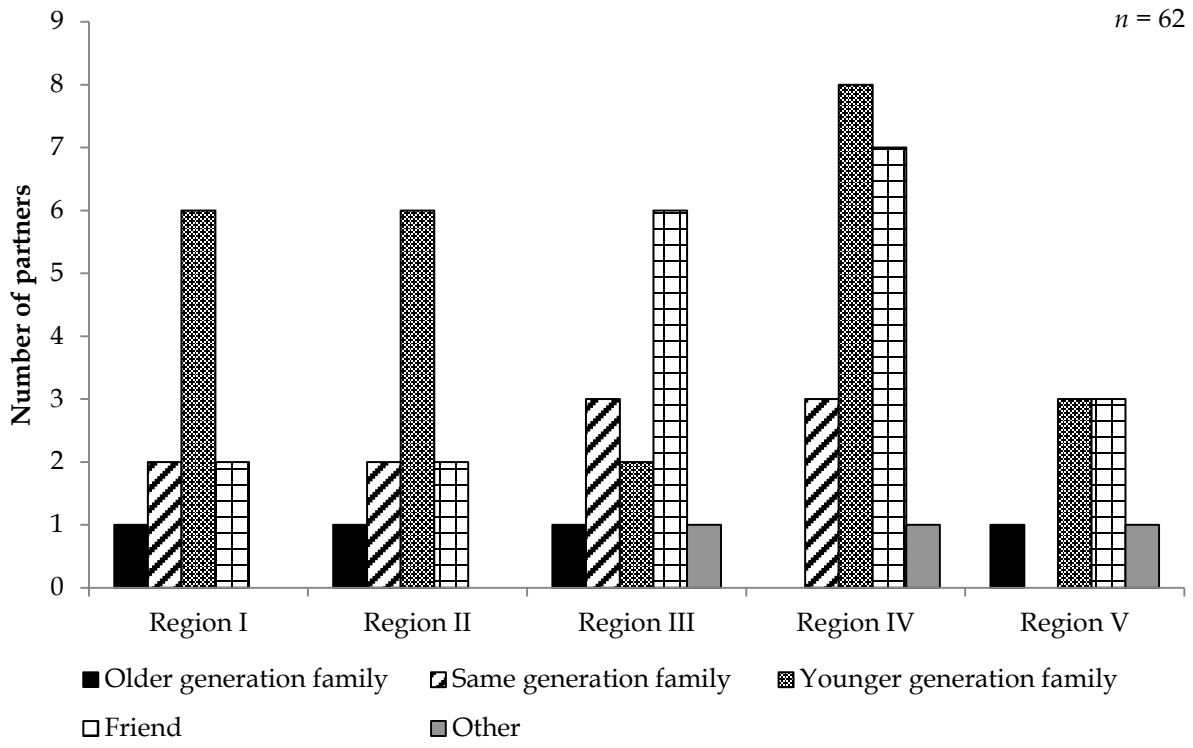


Figure 4. Compilation of trapping partners by region, Alaska, 2015–2016.

Trapping Experience

During the 2015–2016 season, trappers statewide averaged 15 years of experience trapping and 11 years of experience trapping in Alaska. This is down from the averages over the last 15 years, indicating there's a younger group of trappers in the field. No data were collected in 2009 or 2014. Region III trappers were the oldest on average (45), while trappers in Region V were the youngest on average (30). Trappers in Regions I and III averaged 15 years trapping experience overall; trappers in Region I also averaged 14 years of experience in Alaska, while Region III trappers averaged 13 years of Alaska trapping experience.

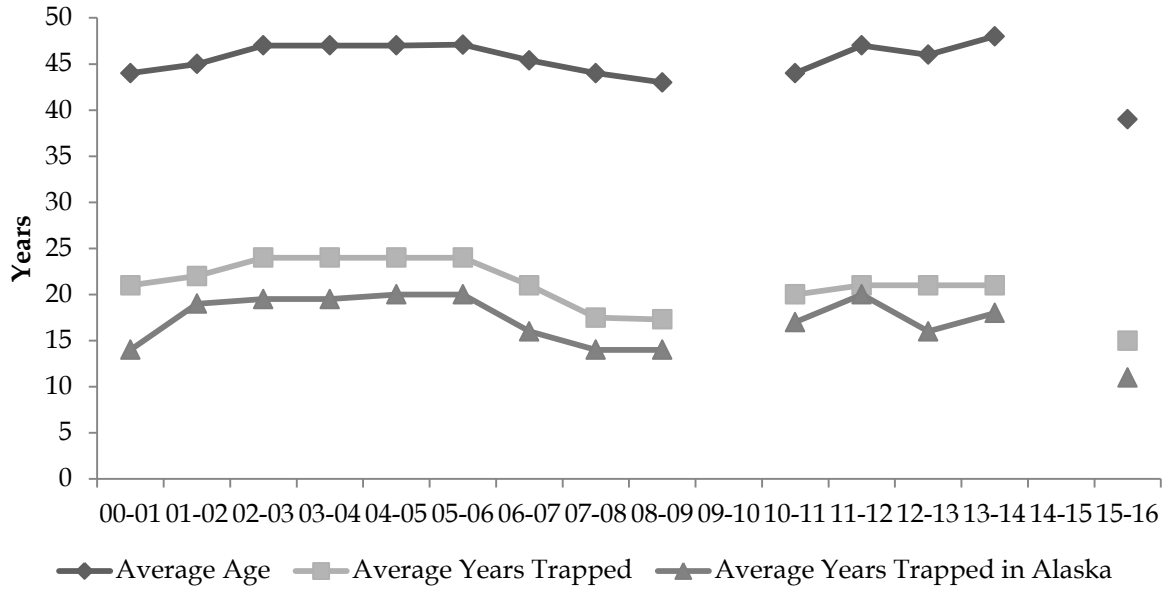


Figure 5. A statewide 15-year trend of trapper age and experience, Alaska, 1 July 2000–30 June 2016.

Motivation Behind Trapping and Primary Occupations

Recreation was the dominant reason people trapped throughout Alaska during the 2015–2016 season: 67% of respondents (n = 94) indicated recreation was the primary reason they trapped, while 16% of respondents (n = 23) trapped for a profit. An additional 16% of trappers (n = 23) indicated they trapped primarily for "other" reasons; these included trapping for both recreation and profit equally, trapping for food/subsistence, and trapping to teach younger individuals the art.

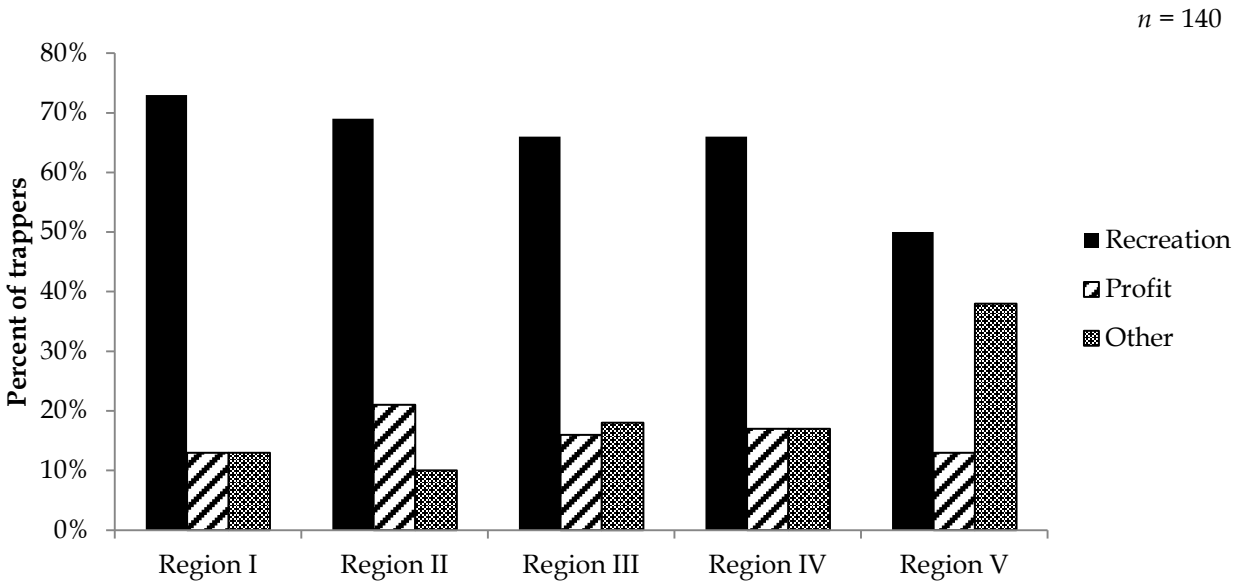


Figure 6. Driving forces behind trapping by region, Alaska, 2015–2016.

Statewide, trappers occupy a wide variety of jobs. Natural resources is the primary occupation field for Regions I (63%), II (38%) and III (33%). Education was the primary occupation of trappers in Region V (44%), and Region IV holds jobs in a variety of "other" occupations (38%). Statewide, natural resources was the top occupational field (35%), followed by construction/engineering (23%), other (17%), military/law enforcement (10%), education (7%), retirement (4%), oil (2%), and health care (2%).

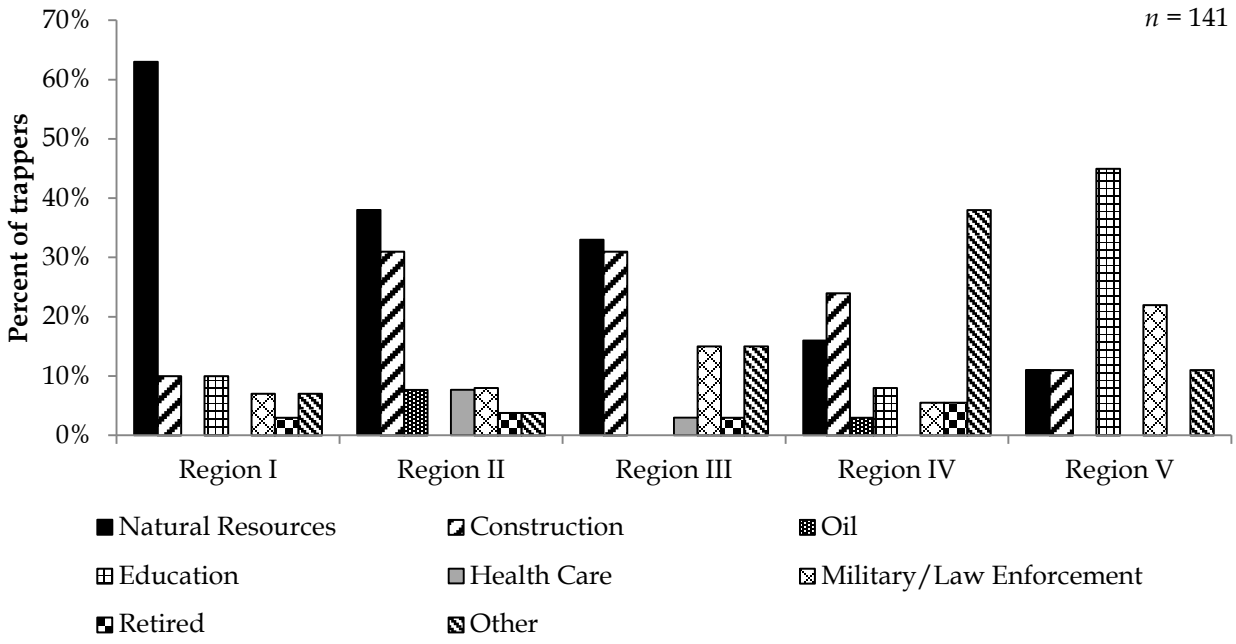


Figure 7. Alaska trappers' primary occupations by region, 2015–2016.

TRAPLINE INFORMATION

Trapping Area

Statewide, trappers have trapped in the same area for an average of 10 years. Trappers in Region I have spent the longest time trapping in the same area (12 years), while Region II trappers have spent the least amount of time in the same area (7 years). The longest time spent trapping in a single area was 41 years, reported out of Region III.

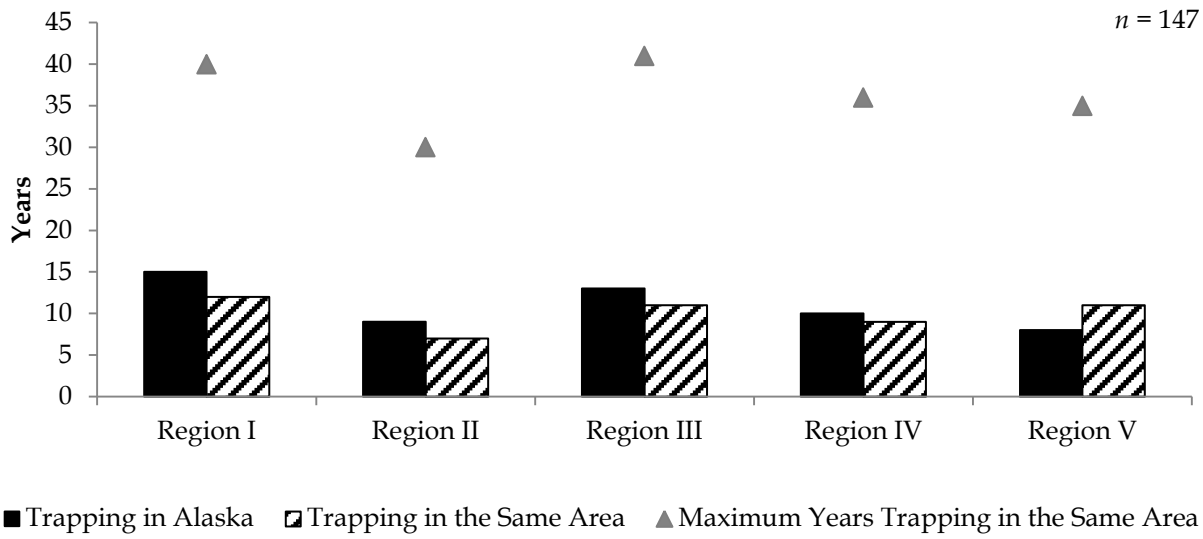


Figure 8. Length of time spent trapping by region, Alaska, 2015–2016.

Trapping Frequency

During the 2015–2016 season, trappers averaged 9.5 weeks of trapping. Region V trapped the longest (average of 12 weeks), while Region II spent the least amount of time trapping (average of 7 weeks). Statewide, 63% of trappers trapped 10 weeks or less.

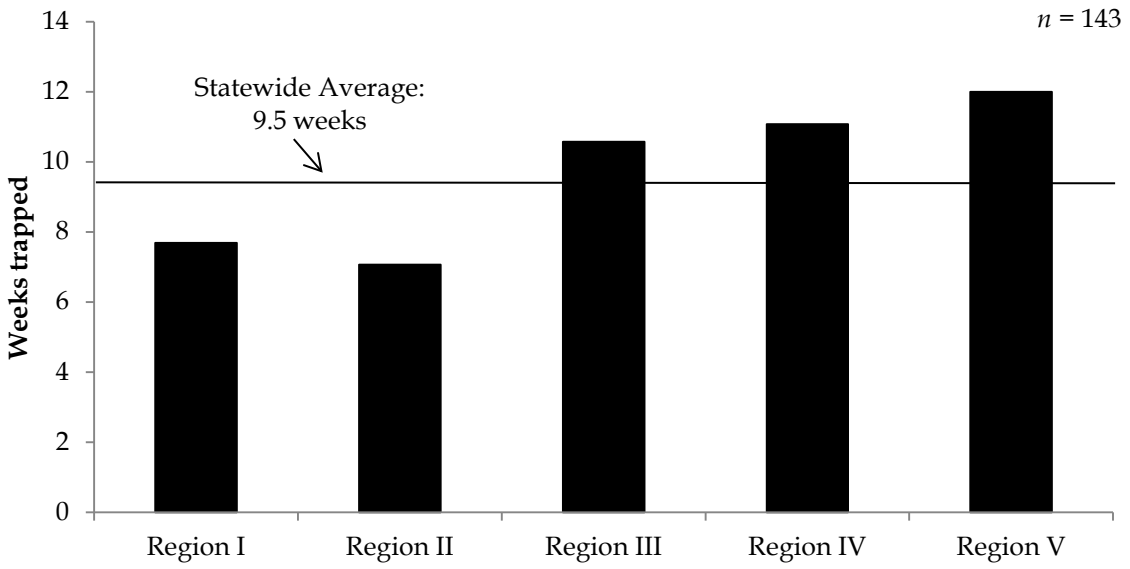


Figure 9. Number of weeks Alaska trappers spent trapping during the 2015–2016 season by region.

Statewide, trappers waited an average of 4 days between checking their traps. Region V checked traps most frequently (every 3 days), while Region III waited the longest (5 days). Statewide, 19% of trappers waited a full week between checking their traps.

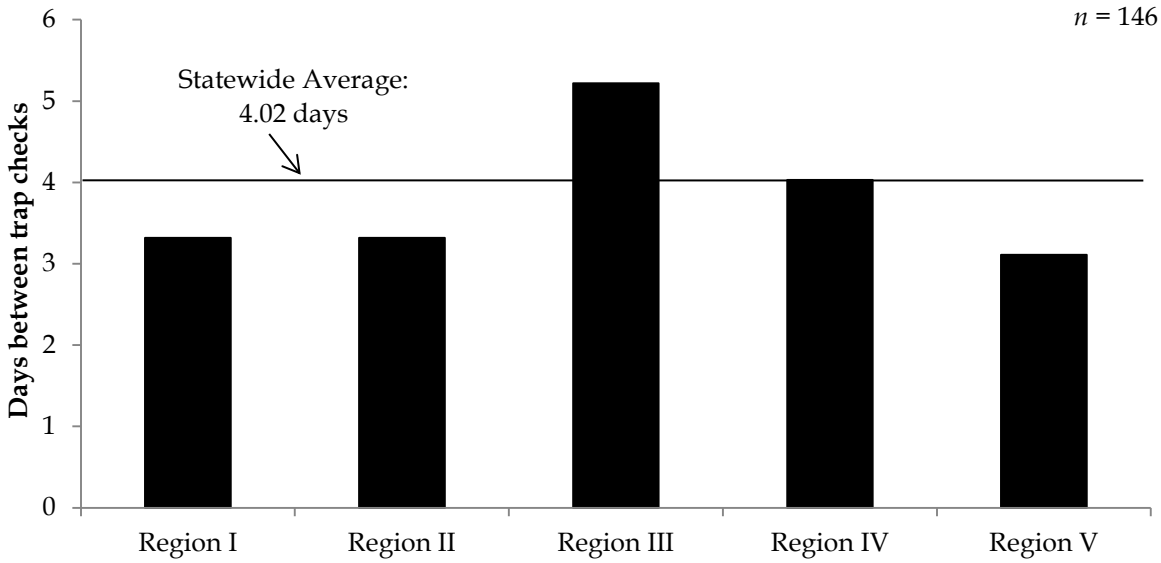


Figure 10. Number of days Alaska trappers waited between trap checks during the 2015–2016 season by region.

Primary Mode of Transportation from Home to the Traplines

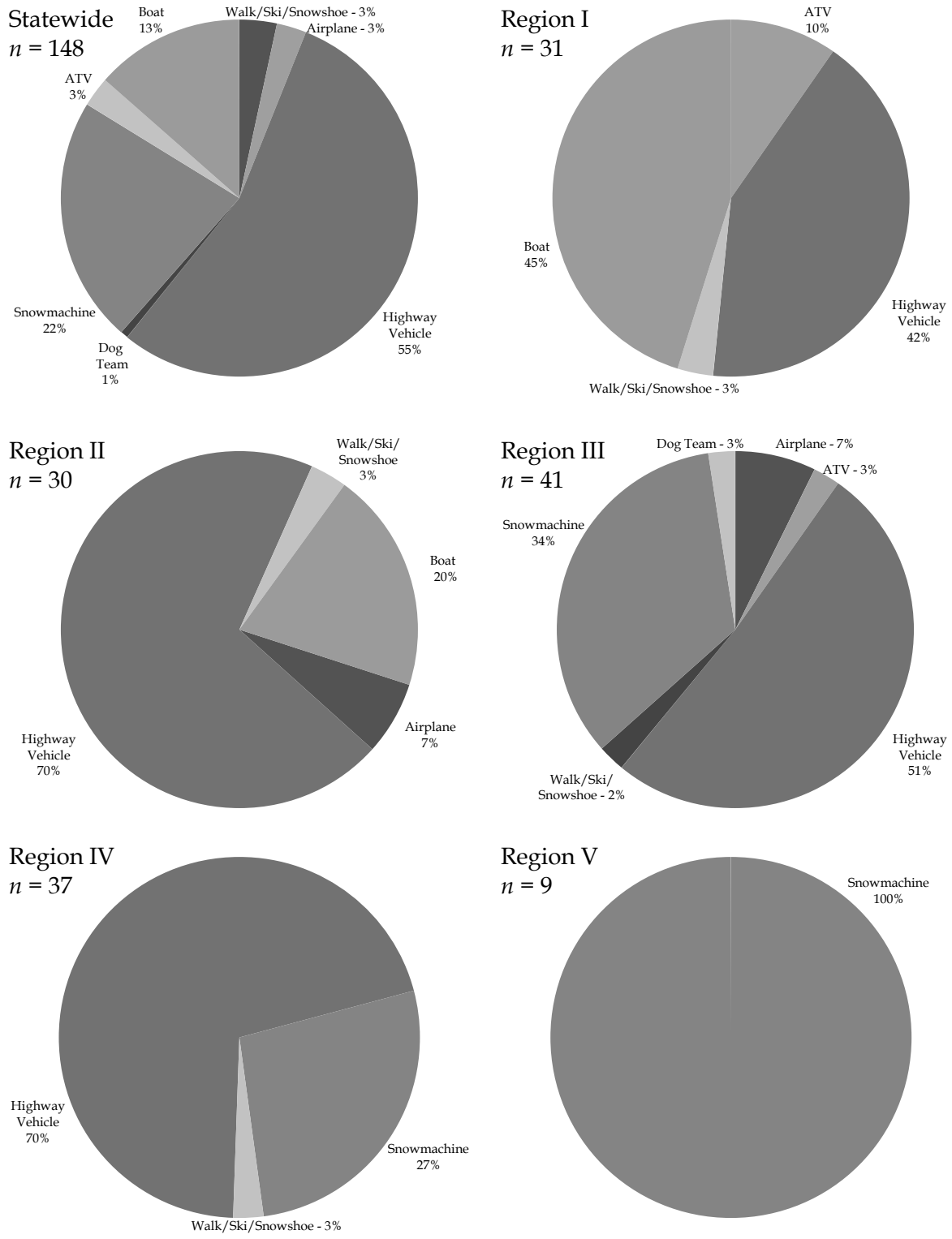


Figure 11. Primary mode of transportation used by Alaska trappers to reach their traplines during the 2015–2016 season.

Primary Mode of Transportation Used to Run the Trapline

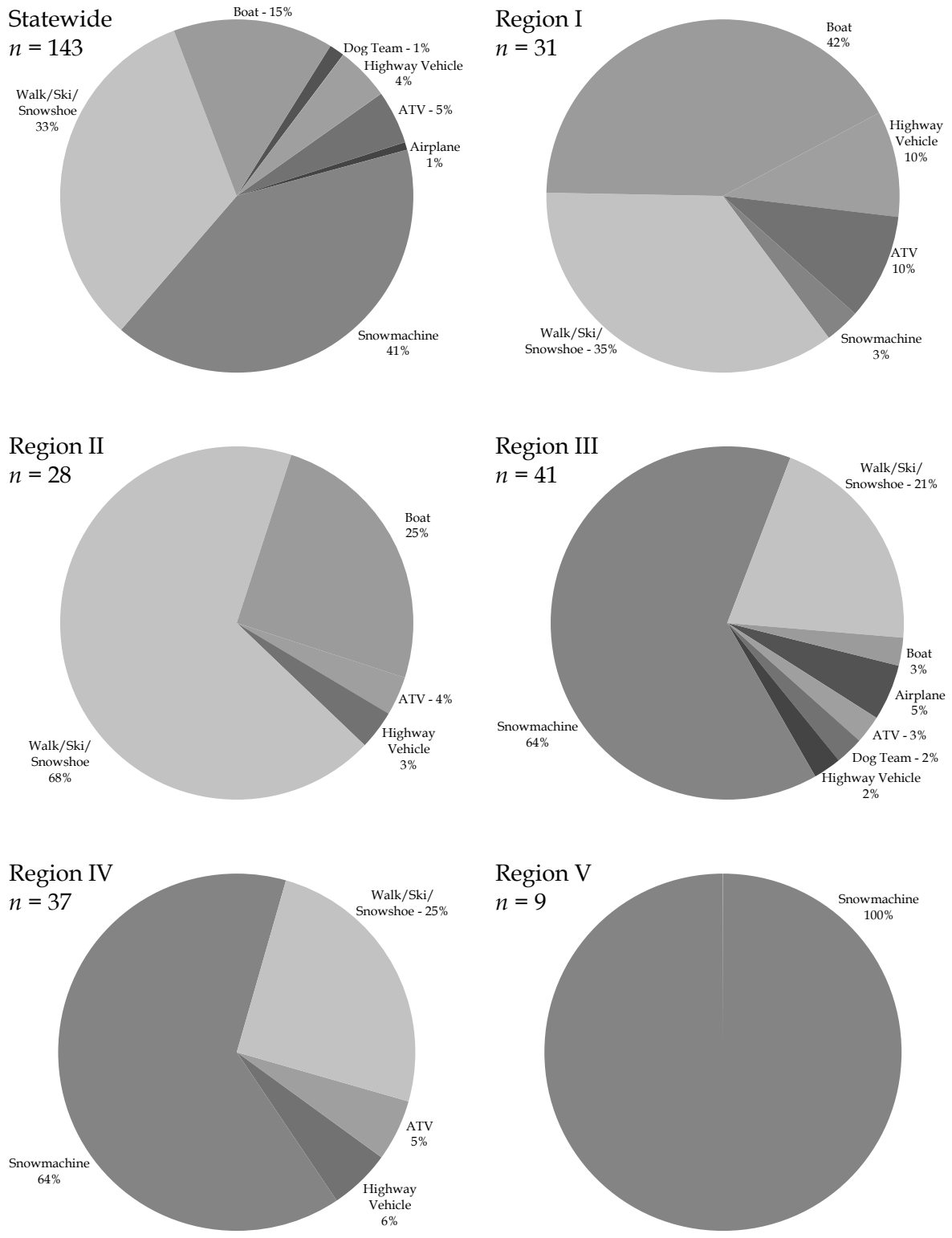


Figure 12. Primary transportation used by Alaska trappers to run their trapline during the 2015–2016 season.

Average Distance Traveled to Traplines

Statewide, trappers (n = 143) traveled an average of 49 miles to reach their traplines. Trappers in Region III (n = 39) traveled an average of 69 miles (maximum of 330 miles), while trappers in Region I (n = 30) only traveled 18 miles (maximum 60 miles) to their traps.

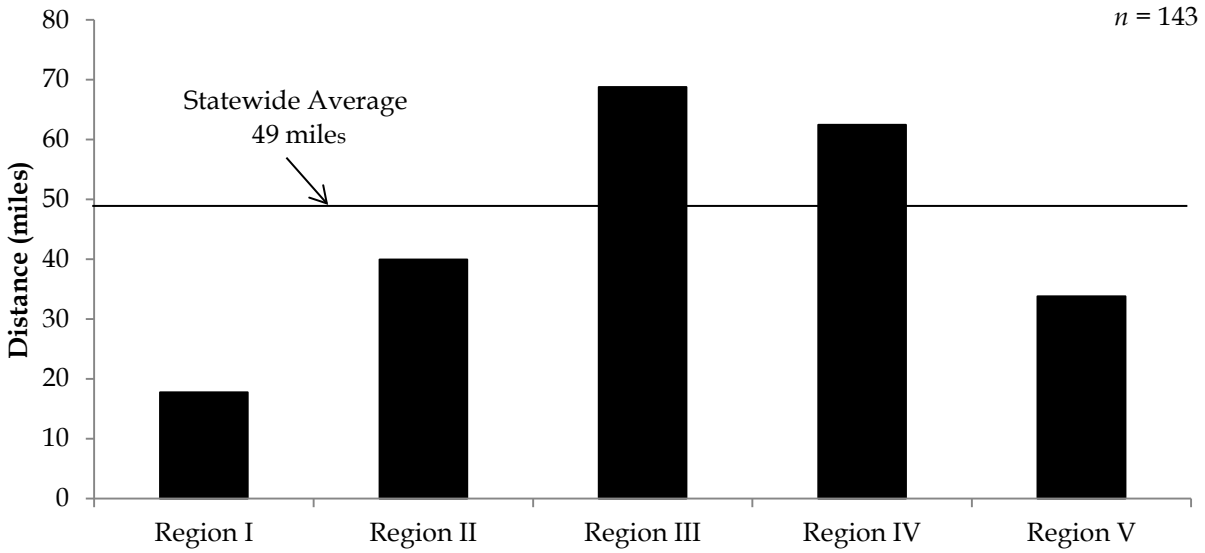


Figure 13. Average distance traveled by Alaska trappers in each region to reach their trapline during the 2015–2016 season.

Trapline Composition

Statewide, traplines averaged 20 miles in length with 32 sets. Region III had the longest traplines (26 miles) and highest number of sets per trapline (41) on average. Region II had the shortest traplines (13 miles) and the least number of sets (19) per trapline.

Table 2. Average trapline length and number of sets per trapline in Alaska for the 2015–2016 season.

Region	Average trapline length (miles)	Maximum length (miles)	Average number of sets per trapline	Maximum number of sets per trapline
I	15	70	35	250
II	13	200	19	100
III	26	110	41	250
IV	22	120	32	200
V	17	75	20	60
Statewide	20	200	32	250

Type of Land Trapped

Trappers (*n* = 143) were able to check multiple boxes if they trapped multiple lands. During the 2015–2016 season, 73% of trappers trapped on state land (*n* = 105), 48% of trappers used federal land (*n* = 69), 17% utilized private lands (*n* = 24), and 11% accessed corporation land to trap (*n* = 16). State lands make up 28% of Alaska, while federal lands compromise 60% of the landscape. State lands also surround the majority of communities in Alaska; still, nearly half of the respondents trapped on federal land.

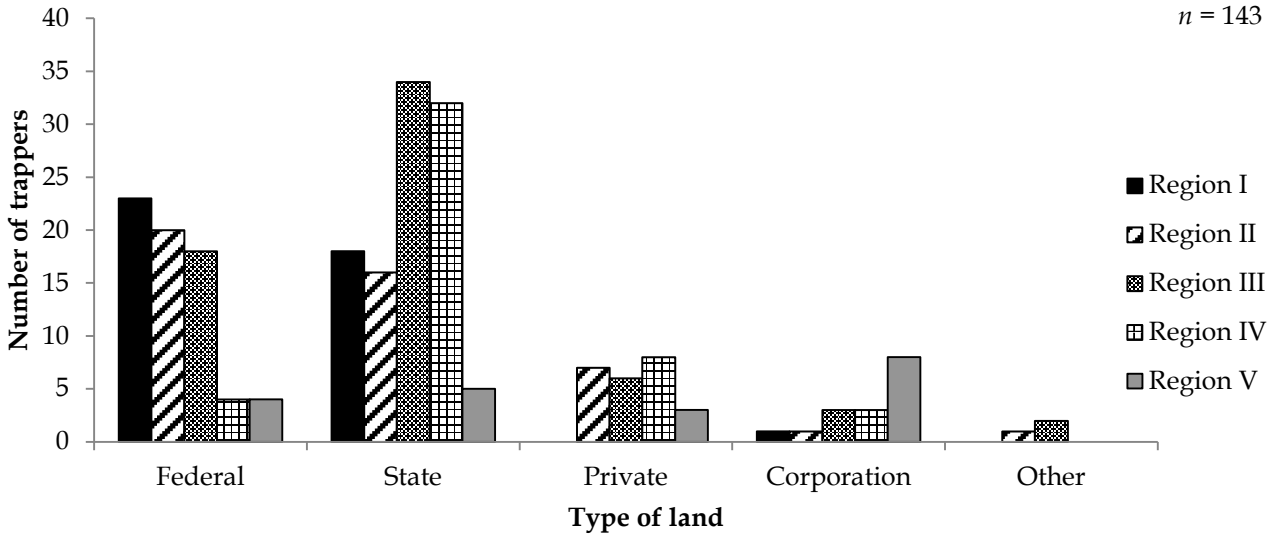


Figure 14. Type of land trapped by Alaska trappers during the 2015–2016 season.

Trapping Efforts

During the 2015–2016 season, 45% (*n* = 65) of Alaskan trappers did not change their efforts compared to last season. Of those who did change their efforts (*n* = 79), 57% increased their efforts. As a result of those increased efforts, 80% of trappers (*n* = 35) saw an increase in their overall catch.

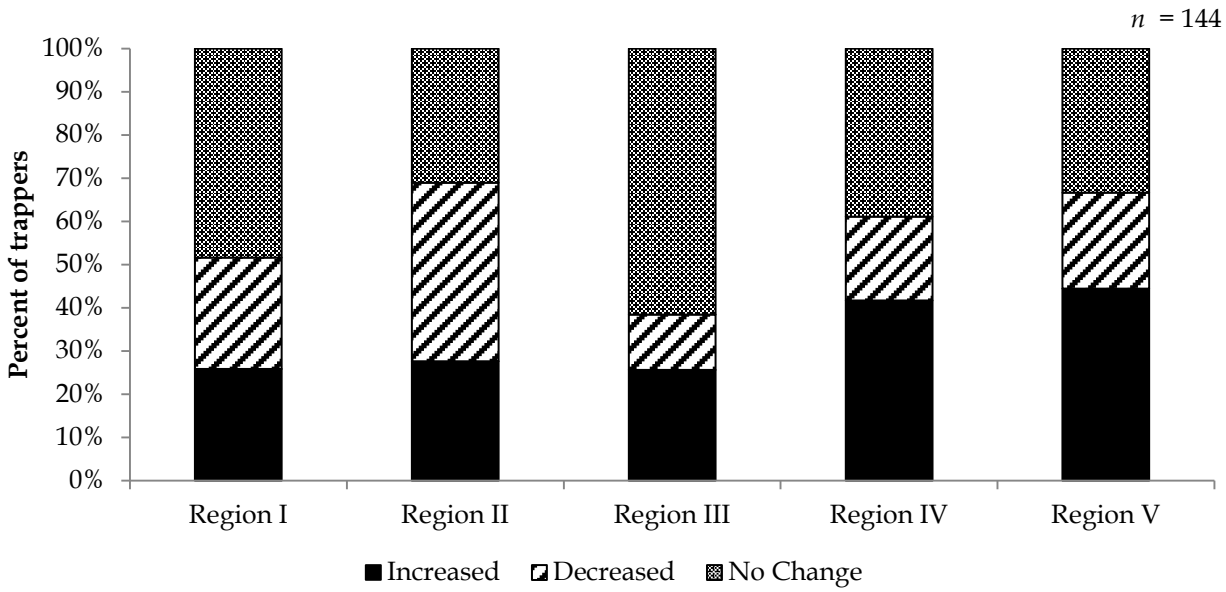


Figure 15. Change in trapping efforts for the 2015–2016 season by region, Alaska.

Trappers could choose multiple responses for how their efforts changed in the 2015–2016 season. The 2 most common changes in effort across Alaska were seen by increasing the total number of sets (n = 40) and trapping in a new area (n = 37). In Region I, trappers explored new areas (n = 10) most frequently. Trappers in Region II decreased the number of weeks spent trapping (n = 9) most often. Regions III, IV, and V changed their efforts most by increasing the number of sets (n = 7, 13, 4, respectively).

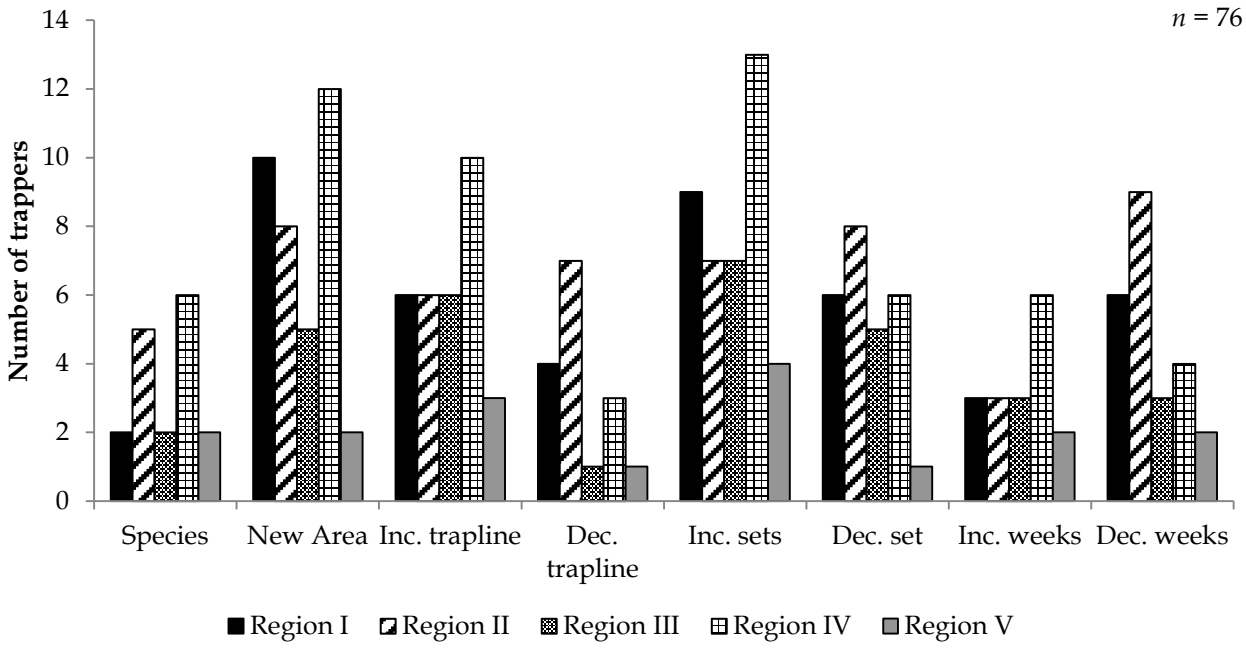


Figure 16. Types of change in trapping effort for the 2015–2016 season, Alaska.

During the 2015–2016 season, the leading factor statewide (n = 59) for both increasing and decreasing trapping effort was trapping conditions (weather, snow depth/cover, ice, etc.). The only region reporting a different leading cause for a decrease in effort was from Region I, which indicated the previous season's prices was the main factor.

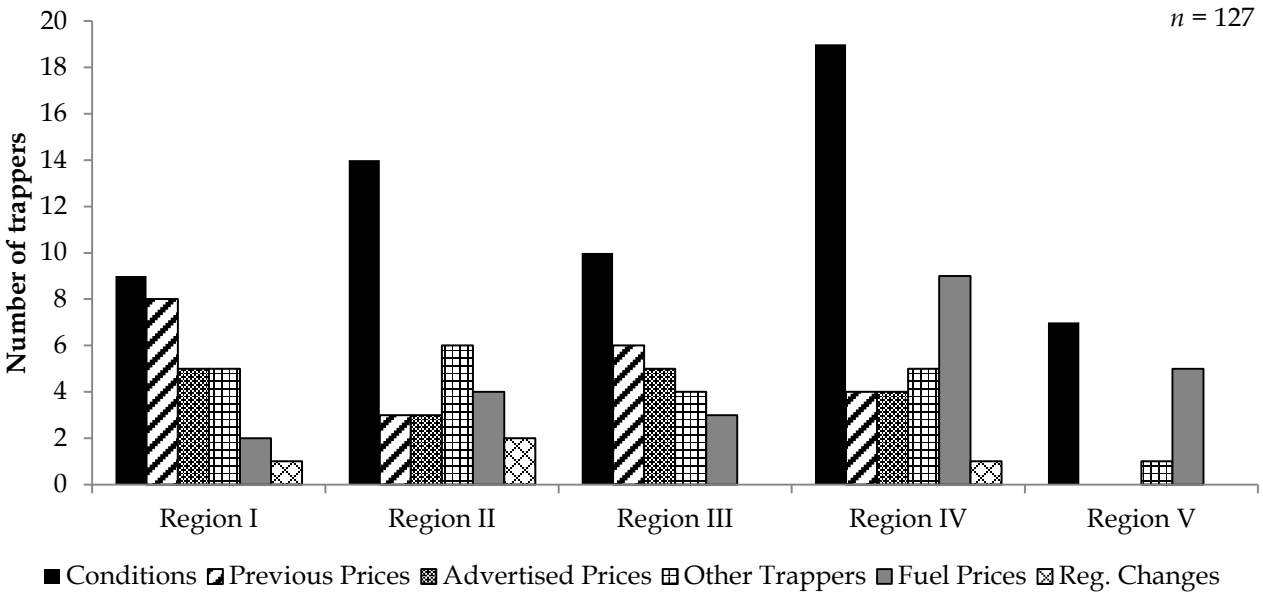


Figure 17. Factors affecting trapping effort by region during the 2015–2016 season, Alaska.

TARGET SPECIES AND FUR DISPOSITION

Target Species

Table 3 below shows how each species ranked in order of importance by region, with 1 being most important and 14 being least important. Rank was calculated by totaling the number of trappers who ranked that species as 1 of the 3 most important species they were trying to catch. Repeats of rank indicate that 1 or more species tied for that rank. A double-dash indicates no trappers ranked that species as one of the most important.

Marten was once again the most important species across Alaska. Marten ranked as the most important species in Regions I, III, and IV, second most important in Region II, and third most important in Region V. Statewide, wolves ranked as the second most important species, and red fox came in as the third most important species.

Table 3. Species ranked[a] by importance at both statewide and regional levels, Alaska, 2015–2016.

Species	Statewide	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
Marten	1	1	2	1	1	3
Wolf	2	4	5	2	8	3
Red fox	3	--	3	5	2	1
Beaver	4	3	3	7	6	1
Lynx	4	7	--	3	4	1
River otter	5	3	1	--	9	3
Wolverine	5	5	6	4	3	3
Mink	6	2	5	8	10	2
Coyote	7	--	3	6	5	--
Muskrat	8	7	7	7	7	--
Ermine	9	6	4	7	11	--
Red squirrel	10	7	8	--	10	--
Arctic fox	11	--	8	--	--	--
Fisher	--	--	--	--	--	--

[a] Rank = 1–14; with 1 being most important and 14 least important.

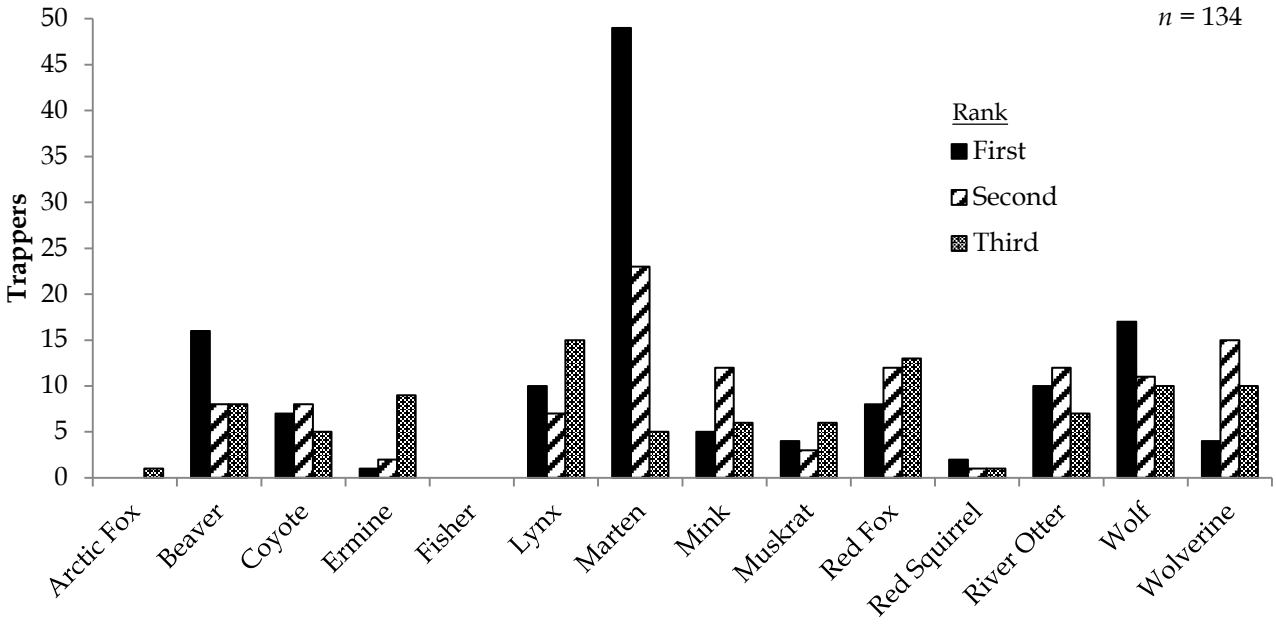


Figure 18. The number of trappers statewide ranking each species as the first, second, or third most important species they targeted during the 2015–2016 season in Alaska.

Fur Disposition

Over half of Alaska's trappers (n = 132) kept their furs in 2015–2016 (56%). Trappers sold 38% of furs and bartered 1%. Of furs that were sold, 55% were sold in Alaska and 45% were sold outside of Alaska.

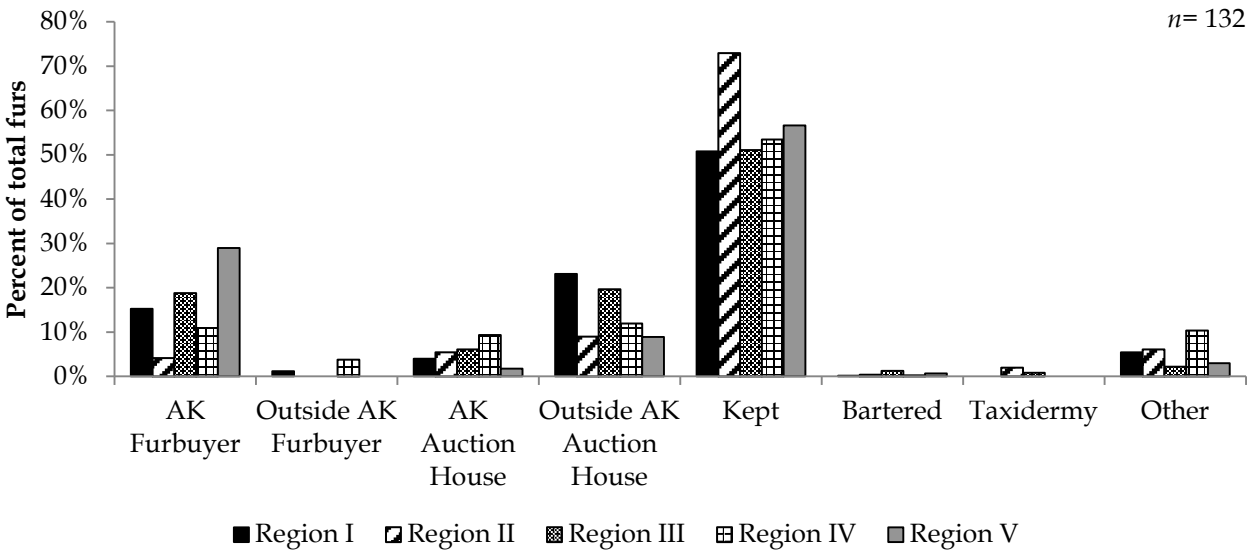


Figure 19. Outline of where Alaska's trapped furs were disposed from the 2015–2016 season.

Unsalvageable Furs

Statewide, a total of 8 furs were unable to be salvaged due to disease, 120 furs were unsalvageable due to the animal being eaten, 1 fur was unsalvageable due to spoilage, and 3 furs were unable to be salvaged due to other reasons. These totals are all inclusive, covering all species documented throughout the trapper questionnaire and report.

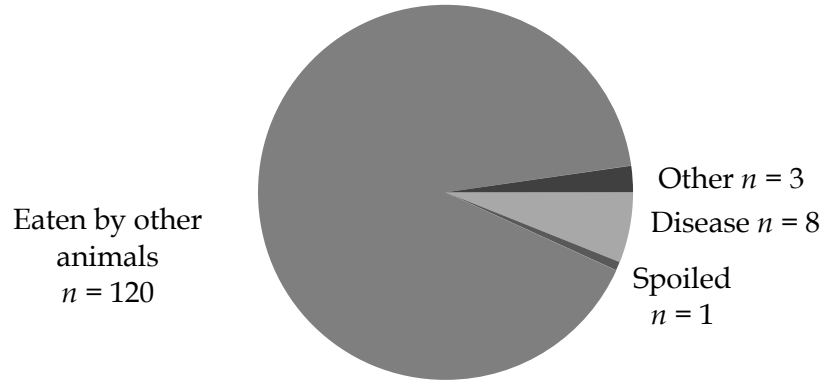


Figure 20. Breakdown of unsalvageable furs trapped in Alaska, 2015–2016.

Fur Quality

Trappers responding to the questionnaire overall indicated the fur quality of all animals harvested during the 2015–2016 season was prime. Furs ranking as fair included arctic fox, muskrat, and wolverine from Region V, wolverine from Region II, and red squirrel from Region I. The only fur ranking as an overall poor quality was wolf from Region II. Regionwide

fur quality was determined by placing a numerical value to each category (poor = 1; fair = 2; prime = 3) and averaging the sum of each region. We created arbitrary ranges of values to classify the average opinions of trappers in an area. For purposes of this report, fur quality values of <1.67 represent poor fur quality, values of 1.67–2.33 represent fair fur quality, and values >2.33 represent prime fur quality.

Table 4. Regionwide fur quality from the 2015–2016 season, Alaska.

Species	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
Arctic fox					Fair
Beaver	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Coyote	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	
Ermine	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Fisher					
Lynx	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Marten	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Mink	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Muskrat		Prime		Prime	Fair
Red fox		Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Red squirrel	Fair	Prime	Prime	Prime	
River otter	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime	Prime
Wolf	Prime	Poor	Prime	Prime	
Wolverine	Prime	Fair	Prime	Prime	Fair

We also asked this year when trappers thought each furbearer was in prime fur condition. We converted each date into an integer between 1 and 365, beginning with the start of the regulatory year (1 July; 30 June was assigned a value of 365). We then averaged start and stop dates for each region.

Table 5. Regionwide dates to harvest furbearers in prime fur condition, as reported on the 2015 questionnaire, Alaska.

Species	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
Arctic fox		15 Sep–31 Mar	16 Nov–3 Mar	14 Nov–2 Mar	1 Jan–31 Mar
Beaver	16 Nov–21 Apr	16 Nov–28 Mar	21 Nov–4 Apr	20 Nov–12 Apr	31 Dec–4 Apr
Coyote	1 Dec–15 Feb	19 Nov–12 Mar	9 Nov–19 Mar	7 Nov–20 Mar	1 Jan–31 Mar
Ermine	28 Nov–20 Feb	13 Nov–11 Feb	1 Nov–18 Mar	4 Nov–27 Feb	2 Dec–31 Mar
Fisher		1 Nov–28 Feb	16 Nov–23 Mar	12 Nov–5 Mar	
Lynx		7 Dec–5 Mar	1 Dec–7 Mar	21 Nov–11 Mar	17 Dec–19 Mar
Marten	29 Nov–17 Feb	17 Nov–16 Feb	12 Nov–5 Mar	10 Nov–6 Mar	9 Dec–31 Mar
Mink	29 Nov–26 Feb	17 Nov–26 Feb	1 Nov–10 Mar	5 Nov–16 Mar	4 Dec–4 Apr
Muskrat		21 Nov–12 Feb	26 Oct–23 Apr	7 Nov–18 Apr	21 Nov–20 Apr
Red fox		19 Nov–2 Mar	6 Nov–3 Mar	19 Nov–2 Mar	1 Dec–11 Mar
Red squirrel	1 Dec–23 Jan	11 Nov–6 Mar	29 Oct–10 Mar	30 Oct–23 Mar	
River otter	25 Nov–6 Mar	9 Nov–3 Mar	9 Nov–21 Mar	10 Nov–17 Mar	12 Dec–31 Mar
Wolf	29 Nov–9 Mar	27 Oct–27 Feb	17 Nov–17 Mar	7 Nov–25 Mar	1 Dec–17 Apr
Wolverine		19 Oct–10 Mar	14 Nov–19 Mar	13 Nov–12 Mar	9 Dec–1 Apr

Presence of Ectoparasites

Trappers responding to the questionnaire overall indicated ectoparasites were scarce or not present across the majority of furs they harvested. Lice were abundant on wolves in Region II, and fleas were common on lynx in Region III and beaver in Region V. Mites on marten and beaver beetles were common in Region I. Regionwide ectoparasite abundance was determined by reassigning a numerical value to each category (not present = 0; scarce = 1; common = 2; abundant = 3) and averaging the sum of each region. Similar to the fur quality values, we created the same arbitrary range of values to classify the average opinions of trappers regarding ectoparasite abundance in an area: values of <1.67 indicated scarce ectoparasite abundance, values of 1.67–2.33 indicated common ectoparasite abundance, and values >2.33 indicated abundant ectoparasite abundance.

Table 6. Presence of ectoparasites found on Alaska furbearers by species and region, 2015–2016.

Region	Ectoparasite[a]	Arctic fox	Beaver	Coyote	Ermine	Fisher	Lynx	Marten	Mink	Muskrat	Red Fox	Red squirrel	River otter	Wolf	Wolverine
I	F		S[b]		S			S	S			S	S	S	
	T		NP[c]		NP			NP	NP			S	NP	NP	
	L		S		NP			NP	NP			NP	NP	NP	
	O		C[d]		NP			C	NP				NP		
II	F		NP	S	S			NP	NP	NP	NP		NP	NP	
	T		NP	NP	NP			NP	NP	NP	NP		NP	NP	
	L		S	NP	NP			S	NP	NP	NP		NP	A[e]	S
	O		S	NP	NP			NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP		S
III	F		NP	S	NP		C	S	NP	NP	S	S	NP	S	S
	T		S	NP	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	L		S	S	NP		S	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	O	NP	NP	NP	NP		NP	S	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
IV	F	NP	NP	S	S		S	S	NP	NP	S	S	NP	NP	NP
	T	S	NP	NP	NP		NP	NP	S	S	S	NP	S	NP	NP
	L	NP	NP	S	S		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	O	NP	S	NP	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
V	F	NP	C	NP	NP		NP	S	NP	NP	S	NP	NP	NP	S
	T	NP	NP	NP	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	L	NP	S	NP	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
	O	NP	S	NP	NP				NP						NP

[a] Ectoparasites: F = fleas; T = ticks; L = lice; O = other.
[b] Scarce.
[c] Not present.
[d] Common.
[e] Abundant.

Harvest Methods

USE OF PREDATOR CALLS

Statewide, only 13 trappers used any type of predator call: 54% used only electronic predator calls, 31% of trappers used only manual (mouth) predator calls, and 15% of trappers used both electronic and manual predator calls.

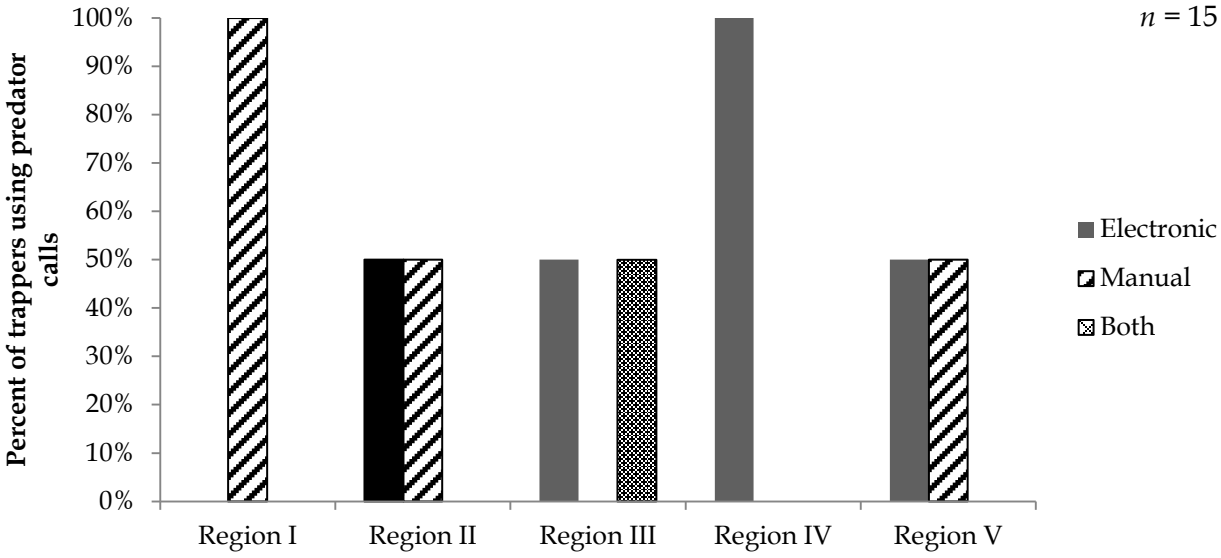


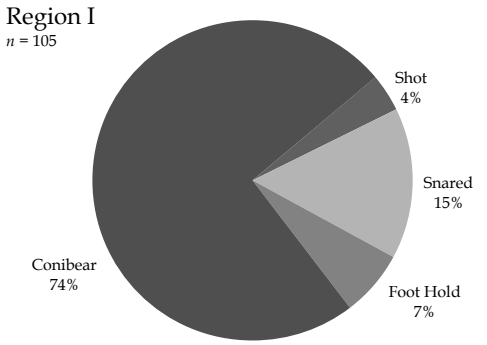
Figure 21. Use of predator calls by region during the 2015–2016 season, Alaska.

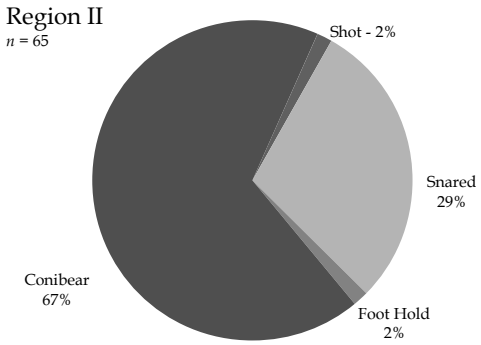
ARCTIC FOX

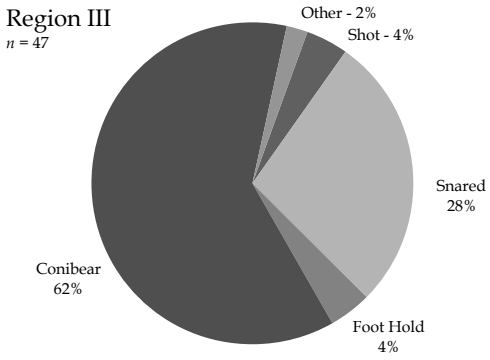
No take reported.

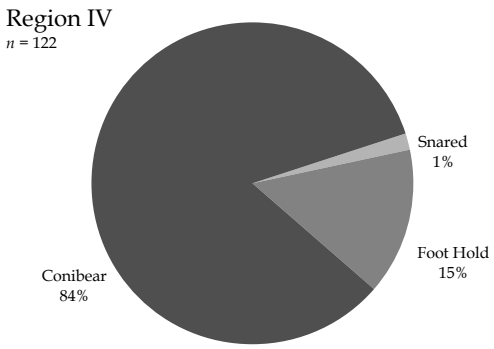
Photo by Ken Marsh

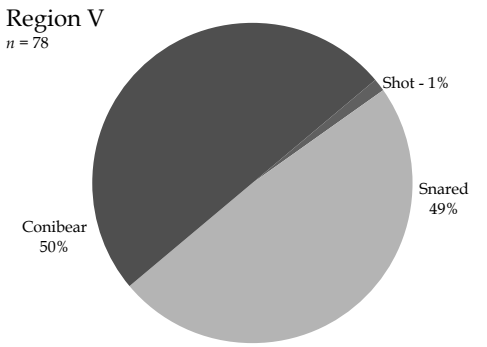
BEAVER

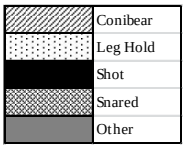




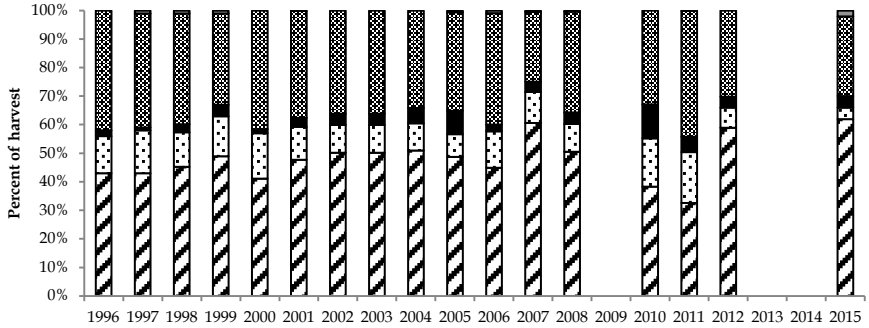






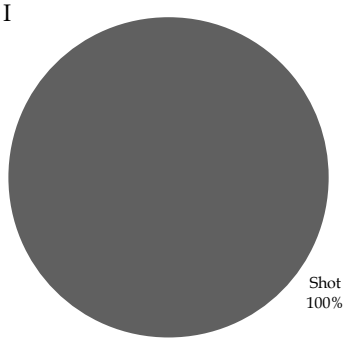


Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

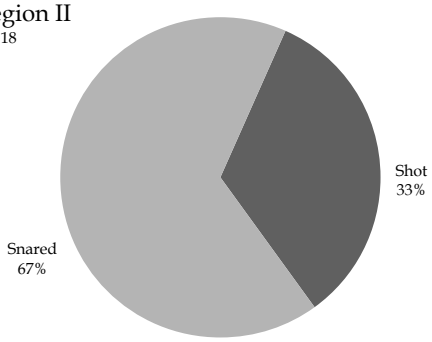


COYOTE

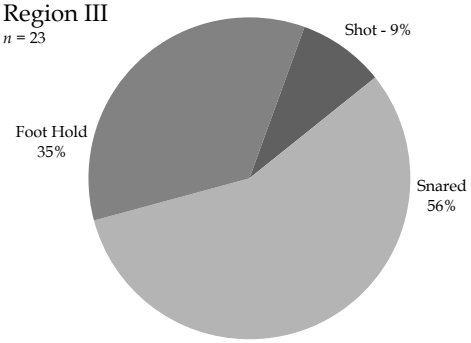
Region I
n = 2



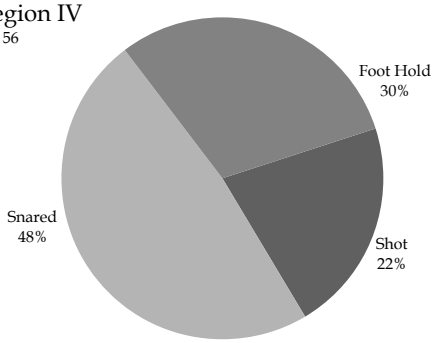
Region II
n = 18



Region III
n = 23

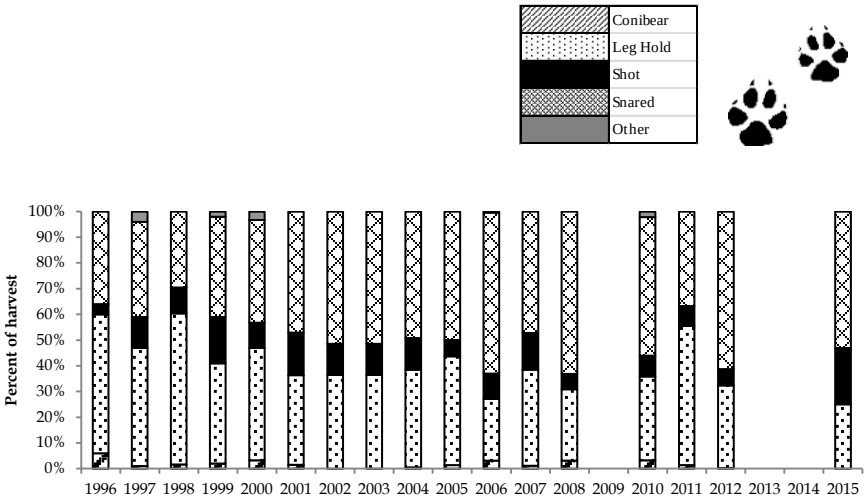


Region IV
n = 56

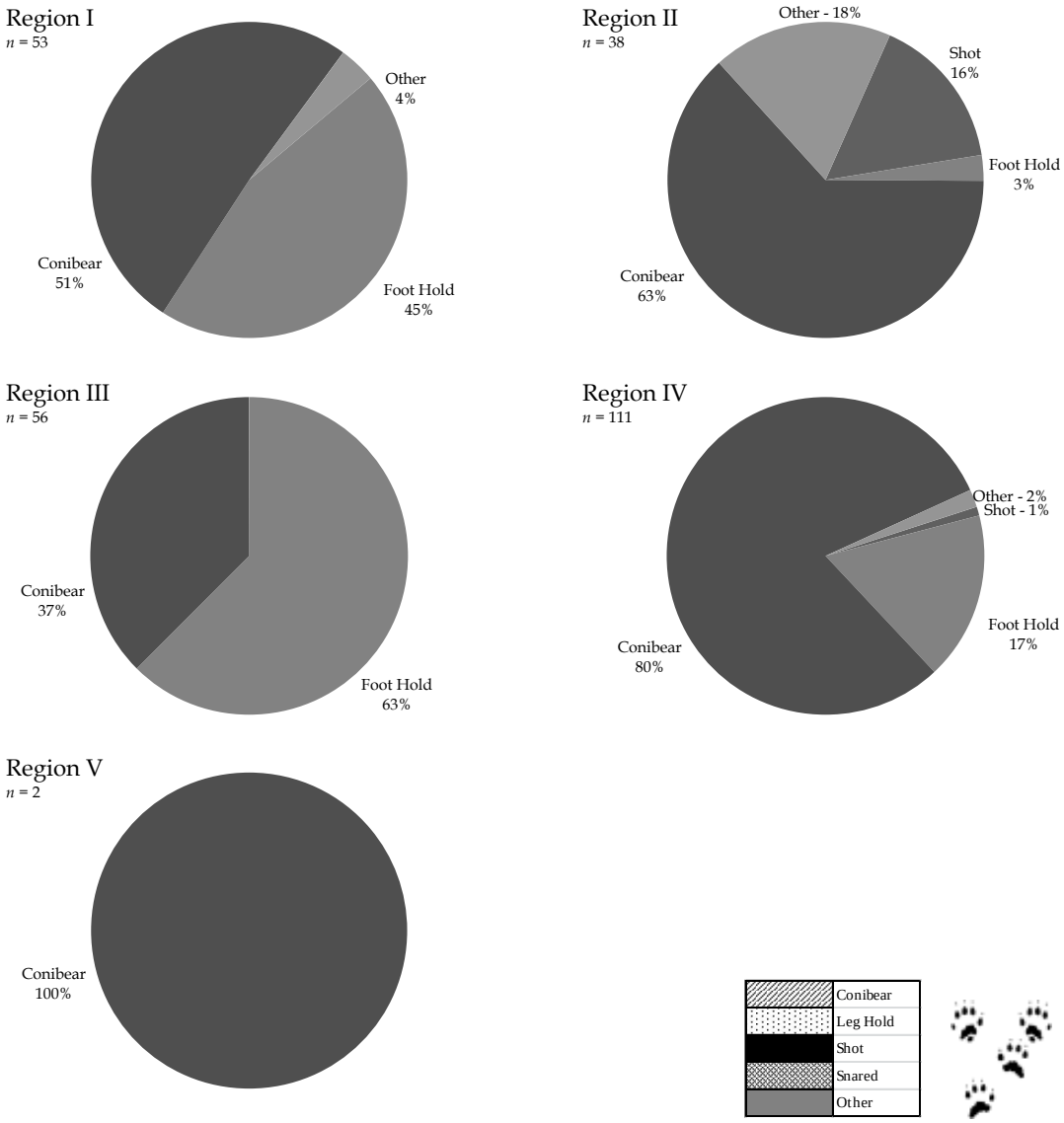


Region V
No harvest reported.

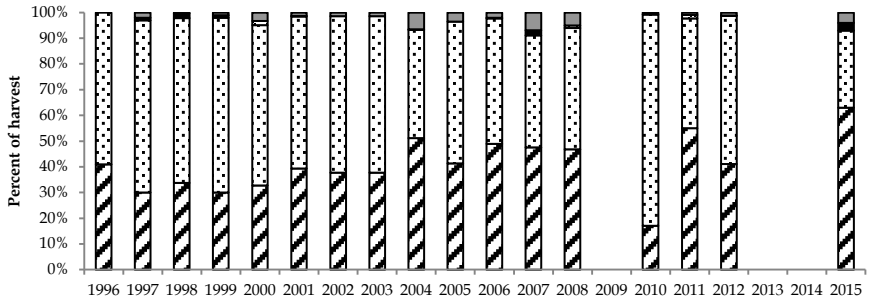
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods



ERMINE



Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods



FISHER

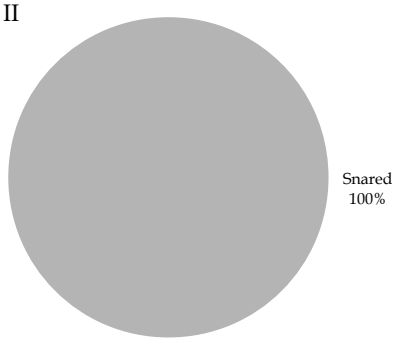
No take reported.

Photo by John Jacobson

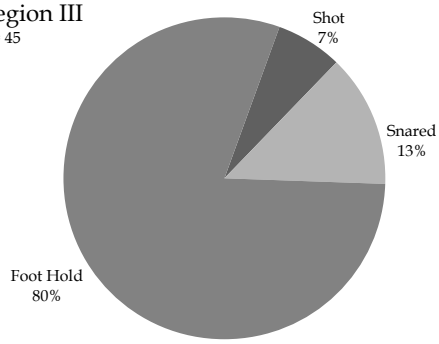
LYNX

Region I
No harvest reported.

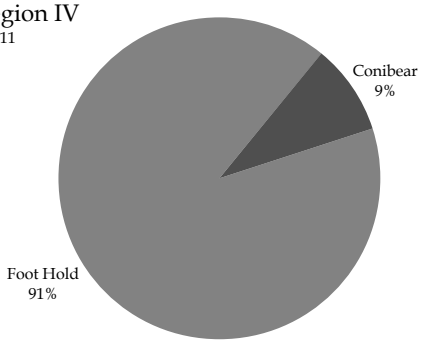
Region II
n = 1



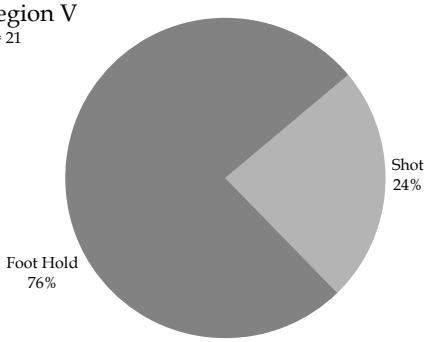
Region III
n = 45

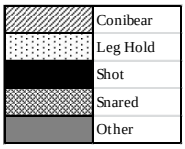


Region IV
n = 11

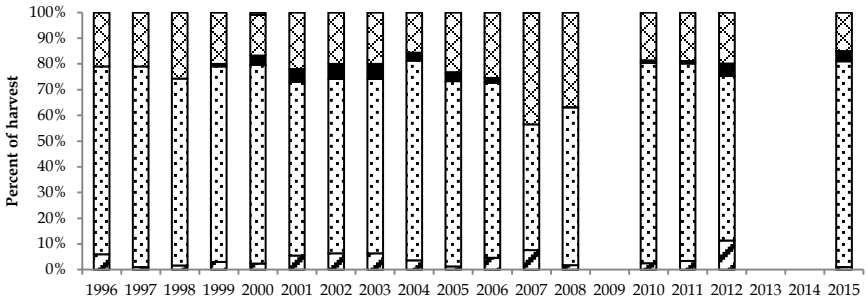


Region V
n = 21

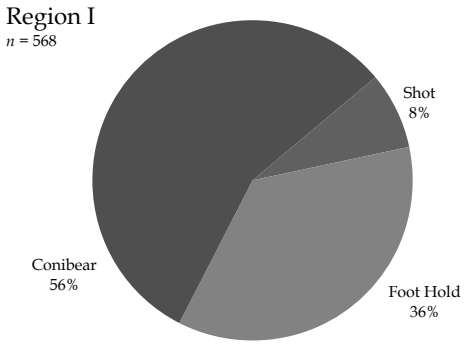


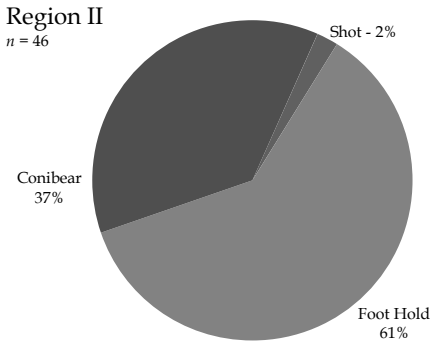


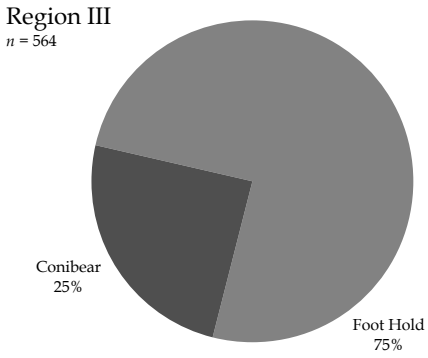
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

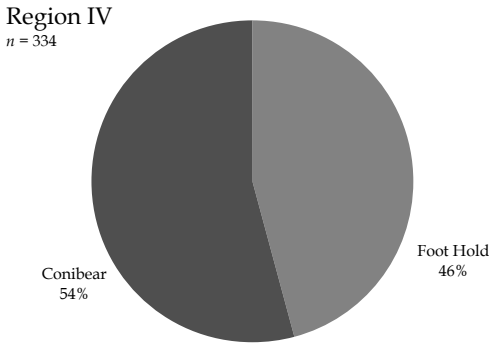


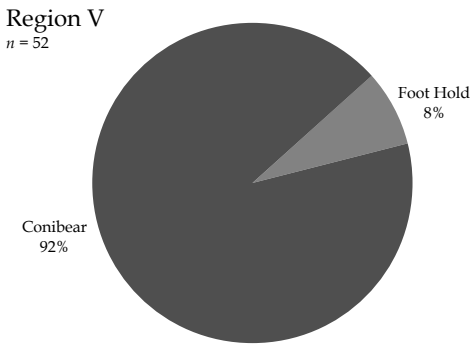
MARTEN

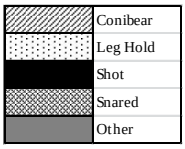




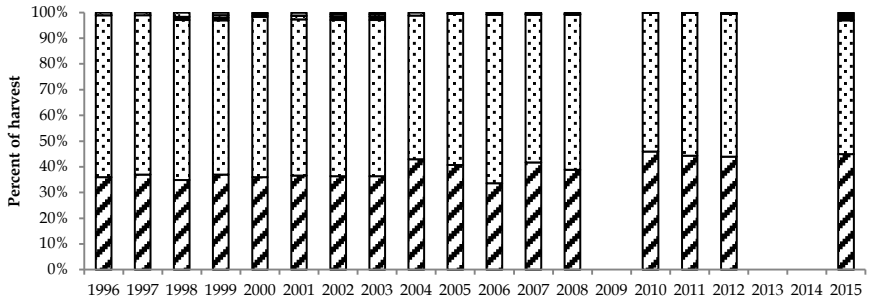




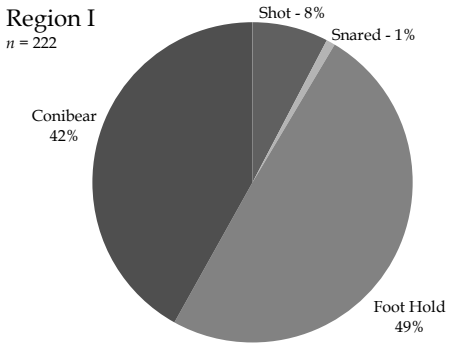


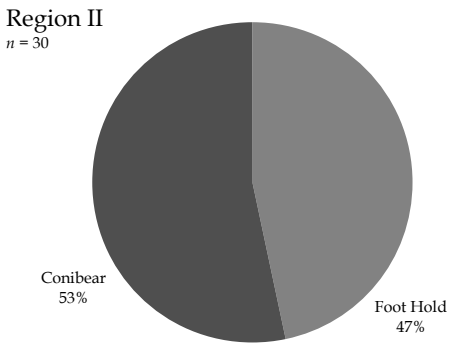


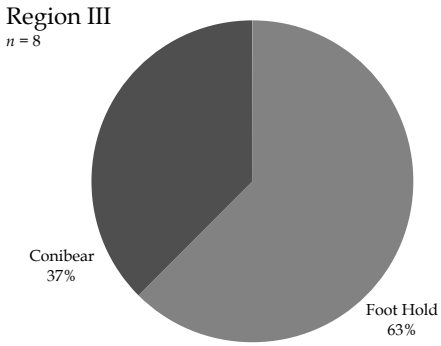
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

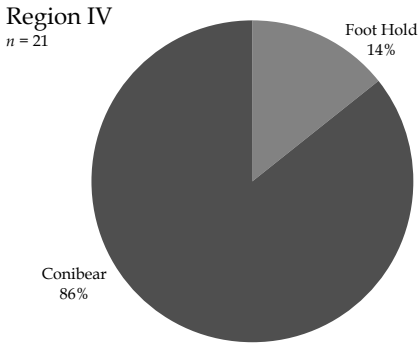


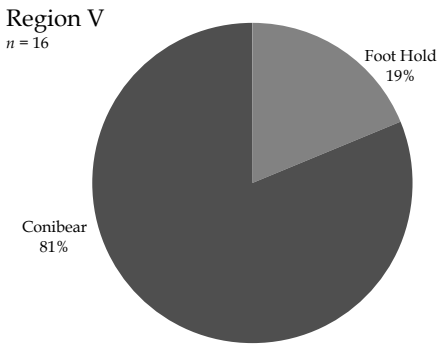
MINK

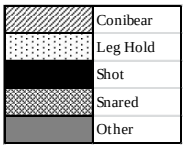




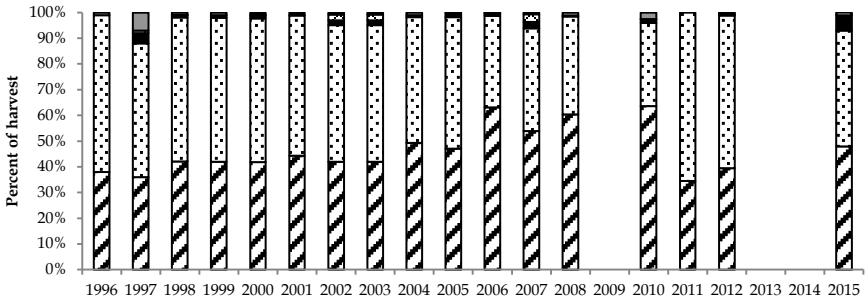








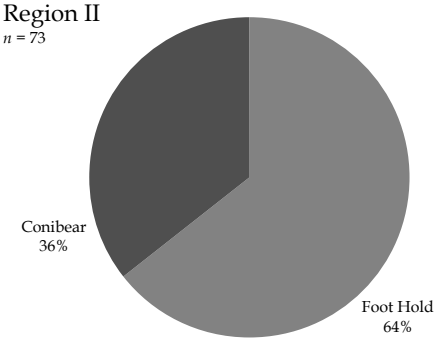
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods



MUSKRAT

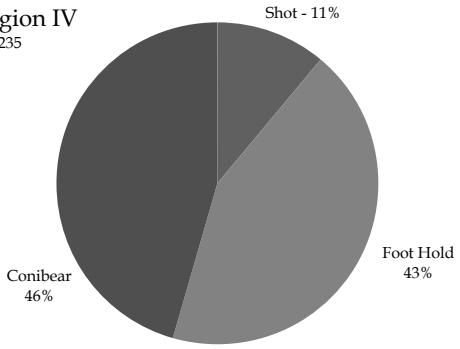
Region I
No harvest reported.

Region II
n = 73

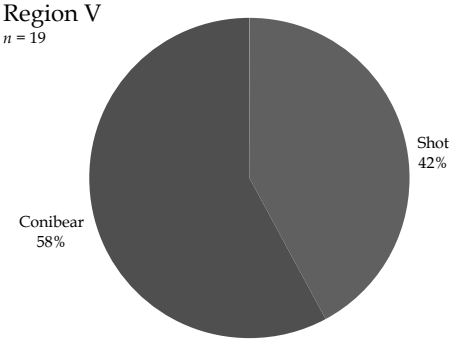


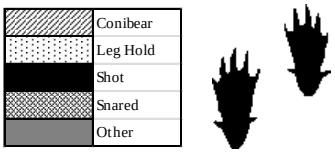
Region III
No harvest reported.

Region IV
n = 235

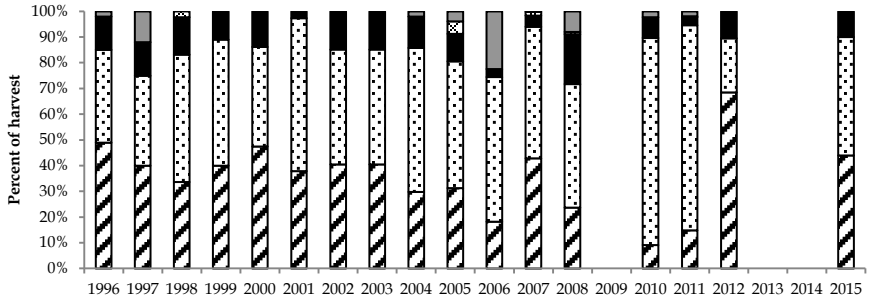


Region V
n = 19





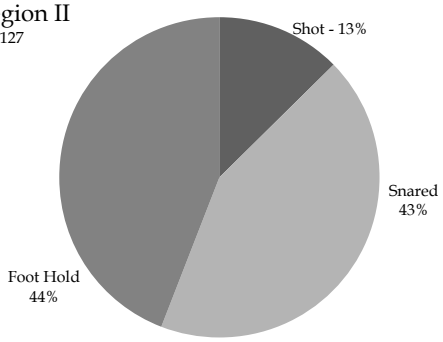
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods



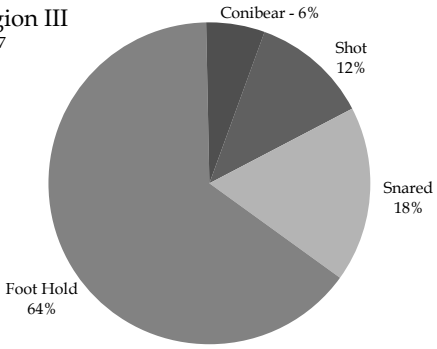
RED FOX

Region I
No harvest reported.

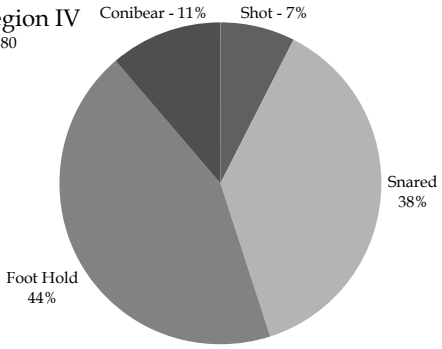
Region II
n = 127



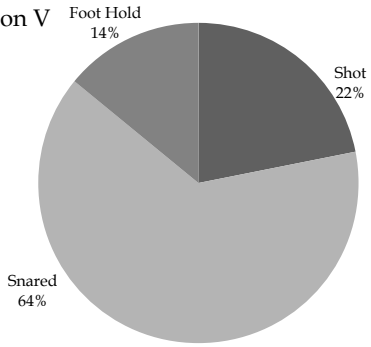
Region III
n = 17

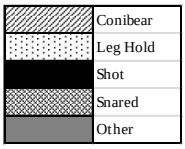


Region IV
n = 80

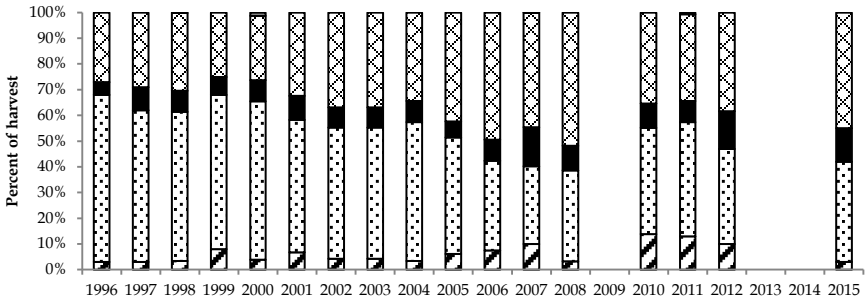


Region V
n = 64



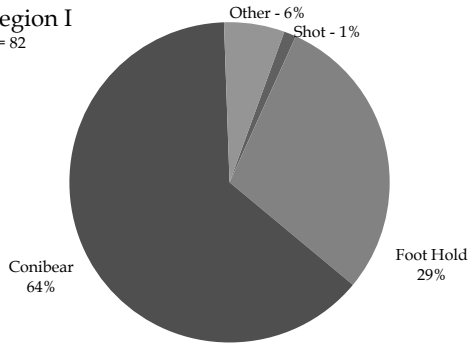


Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

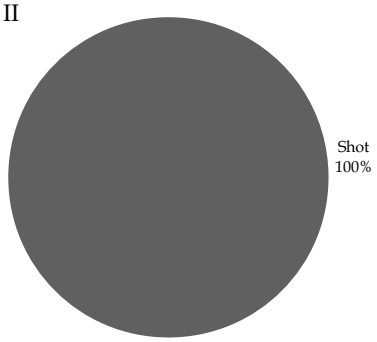


RED SQUIRREL

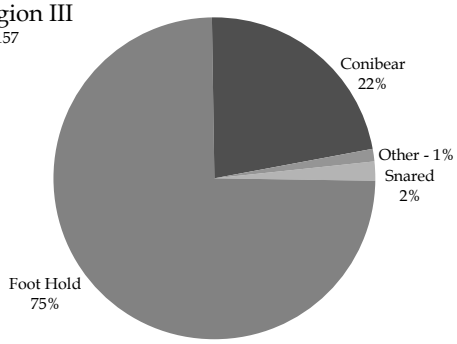
Region I
n = 82



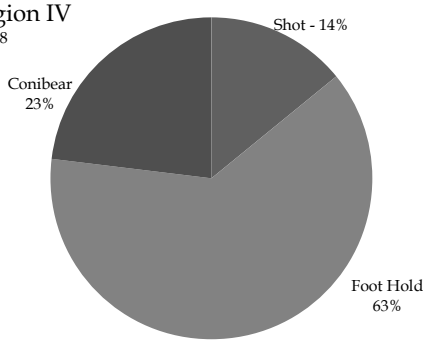
Region II
n = 12



Region III
n = 157

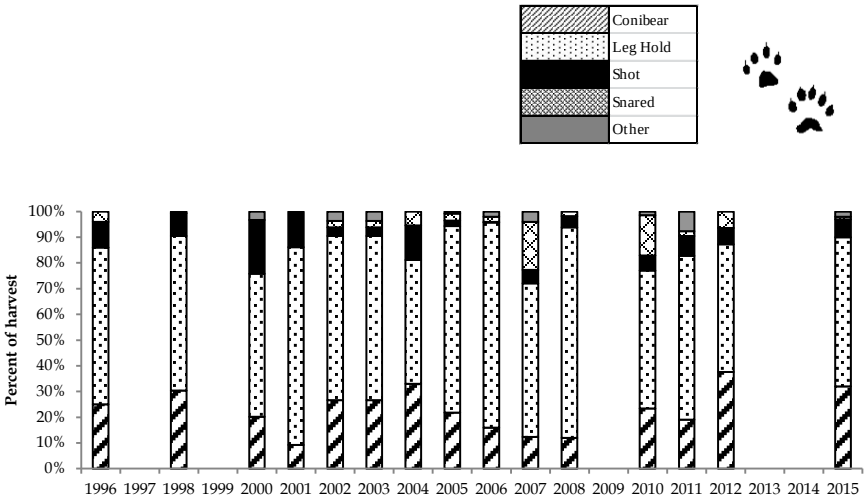


Region IV
n = 78

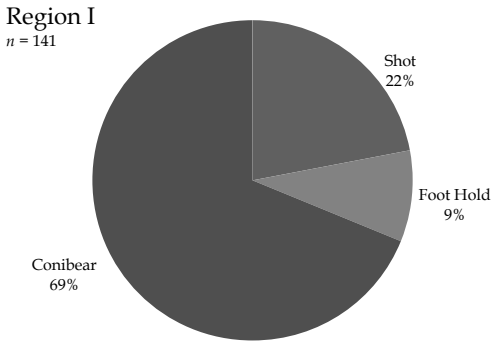


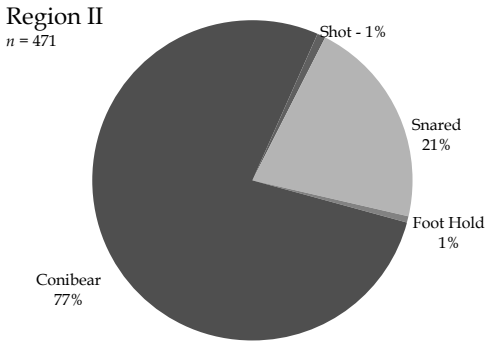
Region V
No harvest reported.

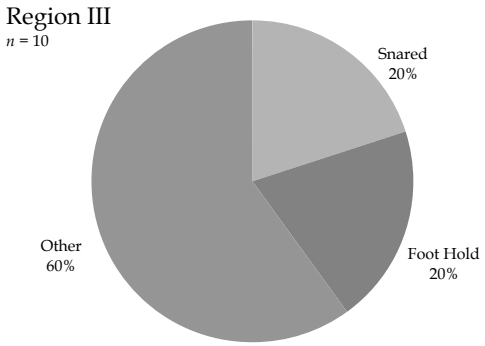
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

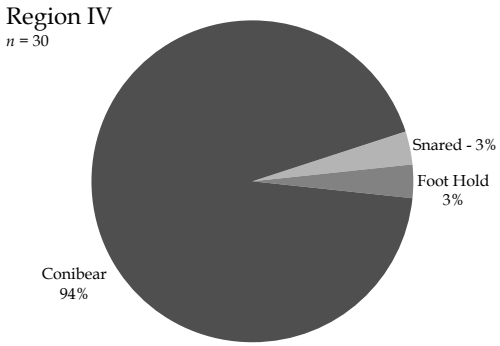


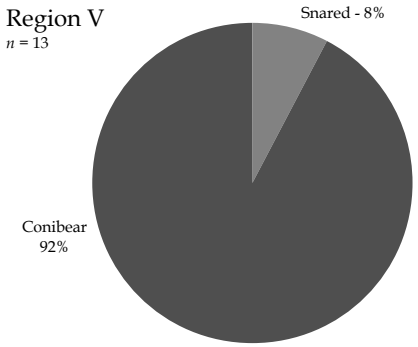
RIVER OTTER

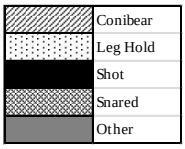




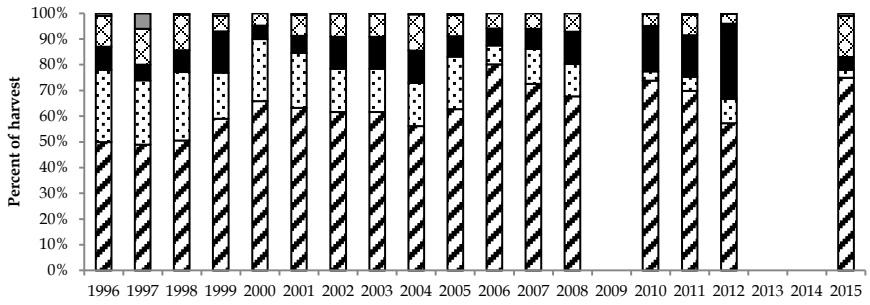






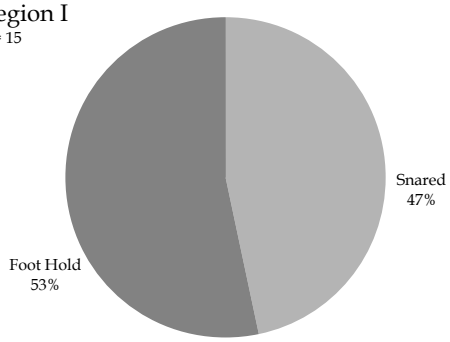


Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

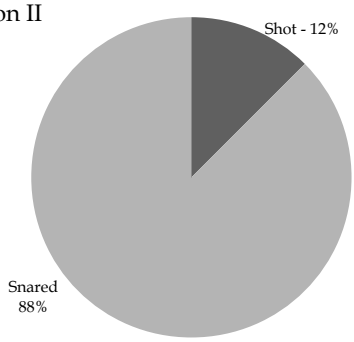


WOLF

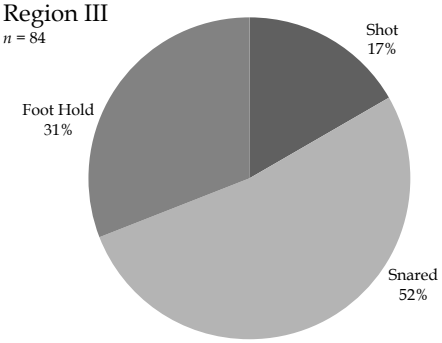
Region I
n = 15



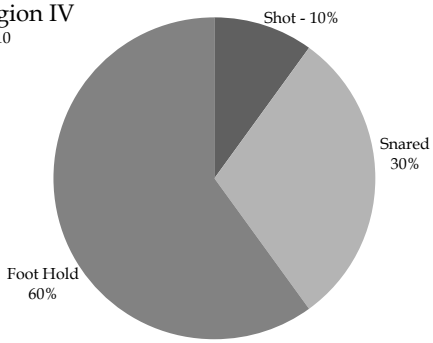
Region II
n = 16



Region III
n = 84

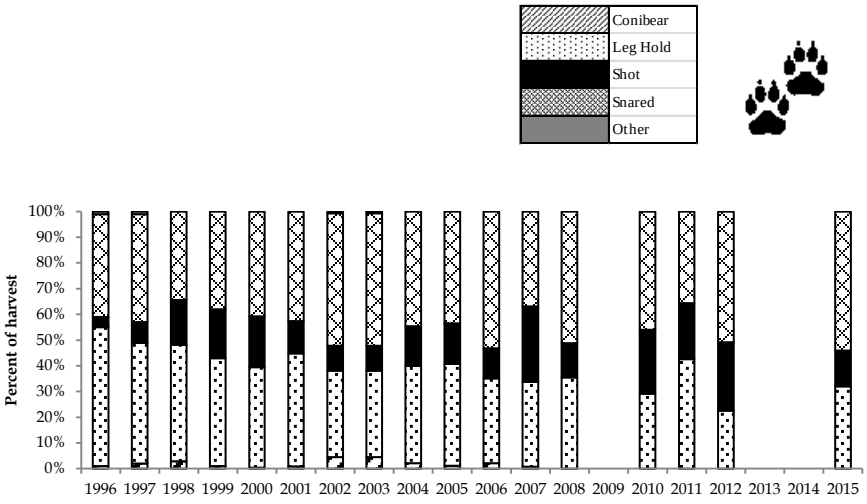


Region IV
n = 10

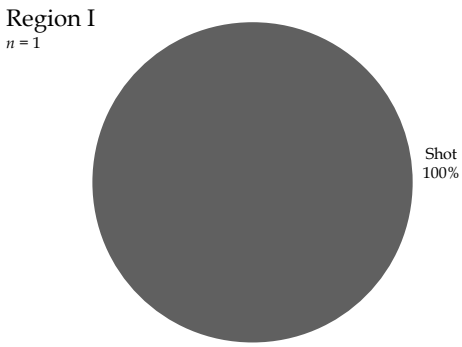


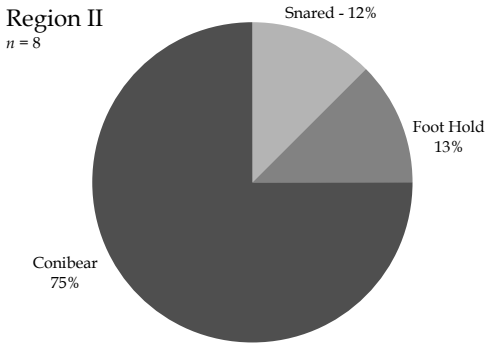
Region V
No harvest reported.

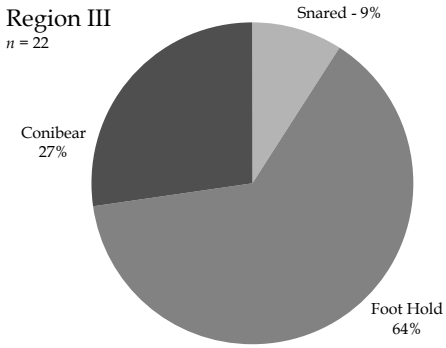
Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods

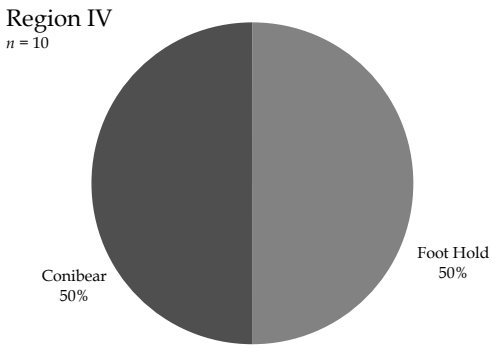


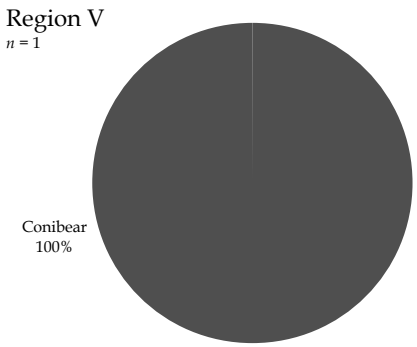
WOLVERINE

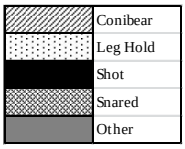




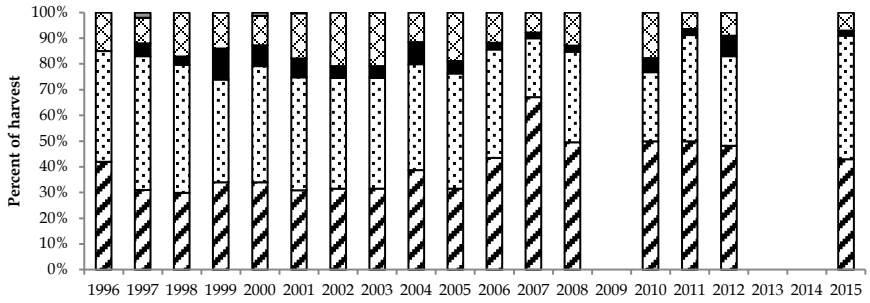








Statewide Trends in Harvest Methods



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 responses to a trapper questionnaire with their estimates of hare densities based on their own fieldwork and found there was a good relationship between these 2 measures. They developed an index for the responses received from trappers on the questionnaire. A numerical value was assigned to each of 3 responses: 1 = scarce; 2 = common; and 3 = abundant. The value of the abundance index was derived from a mathematical equation that expressed the cumulative response value of trappers in a given region as a percentage of the range of possible values:

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

Where I = abundance index

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

n = number of trappers reporting

The abundance index (I) ranged 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 the index values 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 established 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.

The numerical trend index indicates if trappers felt animals were fewer, the same, or more numerous than they were the previous year. This index is slightly different than the relative abundance index. The trend index was calculated by assigning a 1 if the 'fewer' box was checked, 2 for the 'same,' and 3 for 'more' animals. The average was then calculated for all trappers in an area. Since we don't have an independent measure of trend to compare the index values to as we did for relative abundance, it is necessary to select arbitrary ranges of values to classify the average opinion of trappers in an area. For purposes of this report, an average trend value of <1.67 represents fewer (−), a value >2.33 represents more (+), and intermediate values represent no change (n/c) in trend.

Due to the small sample size in 2015–2016, we presented species relative abundance and trend at a region-wide level as opposed to the game management unit (GMU) level seen in previous reports. Sample sizes were too small to provide useful data at a smaller geographic scale.

Table 7. Regionwide relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, Alaska, 2015–2016.

	Region I		Region II		Region III		Region IV		Region V	
Species	Relative abundance n [a] = 30	Trend n = 30	Relative abundance n = 29	Trend n = 29	Relative abundance n = 37	Trend n = 33	Relative abundance n = 38	Trend n = 35	Relative abundance n = 9	Trend n = 7
Furbearers:										
Arctic Fox	not present	–[b]	not present	–	scarce	–	not present	–	not present	n/c[c]
Beaver	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	abundant	n/c
Coyote	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	scarce	–
Ermine	scarce	n/c	common	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	common	–
Fisher	not present	–	not present	–	scarce	–	not present	–	not present	–
Lynx	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–
Marten	common	n/c	scarce	–	common	n/c	scarce	–	scarce	–
Mink	common	n/c	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	n/c
Muskrat	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	n/c
Red Fox	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	scarce	–
Red Squirrel	common	n/c	common	–	common	–	common	n/c	scarce	–
River Otter	common	n/c	common	–	scarce	–	scarce	n/c	scarce	n/c
Wolf	common	–	scarce	–	common	–	scarce	–	scarce	–
Wolverine	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–
Prey:										
Grouse	scarce	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	common	n/c	scarce	–
Hare	scarce	–	scarce	–	common	n/c	scarce	n/c	scarce	n/c
Mice/Rodents	common	n/c	common	–	common	n/c	common	n/c	common	n/c
Ptarmigan	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	–	scarce	n/c

[a] n is the total number of trappers who provided information on abundance or trend; not all trappers provided information on every species.
[b] Decrease in trend.
[c] Indicates no change in trend.

Furbearer Harvest Report

Only 4 of the 14 species defined as furbearers are required to be sealed throughout Alaska: lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine. Marten, beaver, and fisher are required to be sealed in some units but not statewide. Consequently, information on the numbers, distribution, and harvest of many furbearers is limited. Table 8 below shows the number of each species harvested in each subunit as reported in the 2015 trapper questionnaire. Letter Z means there are either no subunits or none was specified.

Table 8. Furbearer harvest as reported on the 2015 trapper questionnaire, Alaska.

Region	Subunit[a]	*n*	Arctic fox	Beaver	Coyote	Ermine	Fisher	Lynx	Marten	Mink	Muskrat	Red fox	Red squirrel	River otter	Wolf	Wolverine
I	1B	2	0	0	0	9	0	0	102	21	0	0	15	10	0	0
	1C	3	0	4	0	6	0	0	85	13	0	0	0	1	1	0
	1D	1	0	0	0	14	0	0	9	3	0	0	5	0	0	0
	1Z	3	0	27	0	16	0	0	97	30	0	0	0	4	3	1
	2Z	5	0	21	0	1	0	0	36	20	0	0	1	16	4	0
	3Z	3	0	5	0	5	0	0	34	7	0	0	8	15	7	0
	4Z	8	0	40	0	0	0	0	221	125	0	0	156	86	0	0
	5A	1	0	8	0	1	0	0	3	7	0	0	0	4	0	0
I Totals		26	0	105	0	52	0	0	587	226	0	0	185	136	15	1
II	6B	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	13	0
	6C	1	0	11	3	1	0	0	28	12	9	0	0	4	0	8
	6D	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	6Z	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	8	3	0	0	0	46	0	0
	7Z	6	0	5	1	13	0	0	18	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
	8Z	7	0	46	0	11	0	0	1	0	1	133	0	415	0	0
	14C	2	0	15	0	2	0	0	5	0	30	0	13	3	0	0
	15A	3	0	14	5	8	0	1	0	7	34	0	0	3	3	0
	15B	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
II Totals		26	0	91	19	40	0	1	60	31	74	133	13	475	16	8
III	12Z	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	13	4
	19C	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
	19D	2	0	1	5	0	0	6	87	2	0	5	0	0	28	3
	20A	5	0	0	2	0	0	7	5	1	0	6	4	0	9	1
	20B	9	0	34	9	32	0	11	102	3	0	5	114	0	2	2
	20C	3	0	11	1	0	0	8	1	0	0	0	0	2	6	3
	20D	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	4	0	0	0
	20E	4	0	0	2	0	0	2	190	0	0	0	2	0	9	5
	20F	2	0	0	0	19	0	14	110	1	0	0	21	0	0	3

Region	Subunit[a]	*n*	Arctic fox	Beaver	Coyote	Ermine	Fisher	Lynx	Marten	Mink	Muskrat	Red fox	Red squirrel	River otter	Wolf	Wolverine
	20Z	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	24A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
	25A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	0	0	3	0	0	4	0
	25C	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	37	0	0	1	32	0	1	3
III Totals		33	0	46	22	58	0	50	600	9	0	22	177	2	75	25
IV	9B	1	0	4	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
	11Z	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
	13A	4	0	3	4	12	0	3	6	0	20	19	13	0	5	2
	13C	3	0	0	4	5	0	3	18	0	0	7	0	7	5	2
	13D	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	13E	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	5	0	0	1
	13Z	1	0	1	2	6	0	2	0	0	30	1	0	4	0	0
	14A	9	0	4	8	21	0	0	1	5	184	13	57	3	0	0
	14B	5	0	1	0	3	0	0	6	3	1	0	8	2	0	4
	16A	3	0	36	5	0	0	0	28	0	0	6	0	0	1	0
	16B	3	0	28	28	54	0	1	176	16	0	8	0	4	0	0
	17C	2	0	30	2	0	0	0	101	1	0	24	0	6	1	2
IV Totals		35	0	107	54	108	0	12	341	25	235	82	83	26	16	13
V	18Z	4	0	37	0	4	0	20	0	11	19	60	0	10	0	0
	22A	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	52	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	22B	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	22C	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0
	23Z	2	0	12	0	0	0	7	0	3	0	6	0	4	0	0
V Totals		9	0	49	0	5	0	28	52	15	19	73	0	14	0	2
Statewide		129	0	398	95	263	0	91	164	306	328	310	458	653	122	49

[a] Z = Indicates no subunit or none was specified.

It would be helpful to know what proportion of the total harvest the questionnaire numbers represent. For species that require sealing, the number sealed represents our best information about the statewide harvest. Table 9 gives the harvest totals reported on the questionnaire as a percentage of the total number sealed. Assuming the proportions for species that are not required to be sealed fall within the ranges observed below, the statewide average of species reported on the questionnaire is 22% of the actual harvest. (See sealing records in Table 10 below).

Table 9. Trapper questionnaire totals as a percent of total number sealed, as reported on the 2015 questionnaire and in the 2015 regulatory year sealing records, Alaska.

	Species (%)							
Region	Beaver	Fisher	Lynx	Marten	River otter	Wolf	Wolverine	Average
I	34	0	0	26	32	10	7	27
II	35		17	32	100	73	22	80
III			5		2	17	12	9
IV	26		11	52	14	11	9	31
V			14		6	0	2	6
Statewide			7		52	13	9	22

Furbearer Sealing Records Summary

Sealing refers to the placement of an official marker or locking tag (seal) by an authorized department representative on an animal hide and/or skull. The sealing process may also involve recording biological information about the animal and the conditions under which it was taken, taking measurements, and collecting biological samples. Lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine are required to be sealed statewide. Fisher, marten, and beaver are required to be sealed only in certain GMUs. The harvest totals reported below are based on fur sealing records. Numbers reported here may differ from those in previous reports because additional sealing forms have been turned in.

Table 10. Reported harvest from regulatory year sealing records, Alaska, 2010–2015.

Species	Region	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Beaver[a]	I	265	292	378	372	398	311
	II	173	127	218	280	307	260
	III	62	110	121	21	50	11
	IV	1,105	724	683	634	574	409
	V	12	7	46	10	2	4
	Total:	1,617	1,260	1,446	1,317	1,331	995
Fisher[b]	I	0	0	0	2	6	2
	II	0	0	0	0	0	0
	III	0	0	0	0	0	0
	IV	0	0	0	0	0	0
	V	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total:	0	0	0	2	6	2
Lynx	I	4	4	1	0	1	0
	II	435	475	425	173	9	6
	III	2,160	1,526	1,302	1,113	990	953
	IV	1,767	1,127	631	191	128	113
	V	726	950	797	356	235	207
	Total:	5,092	4,082	3,156	1,833	1,363	1,279
Marten[c]	I	2,555	3,758	4,466	3,030	1,679	2,271
	II	235	259	232	206	106	188
	III	20	41	6	3	0	57
	IV	656	1105	704	556	310	657
	V	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Total:	3,466	5,164	5,408	3,795	2,095	3,175
River otter	I	528	622	887	820	387	423
	II	287	262	472	625	389	299
	III	71	62	82	88	71	108
	IV	255	231	253	208	203	182
	V	154	121	329	394	328	242
	Total:	1,295	1,298	2,023	2,135	1,378	1,254
Wolf	I	160	169	191	211	163	147
	II	52	45	63	27	51	22
	III	471	560	639	518	563	448
	IV	305	378	157	205	112	149
	V	221	105	209	144	122	173
	Total:	1,209	1,257	1,259	1,105	1,011	939
Wolverine	I	25	20	25	31	14	15
	II	25	29	50	31	16	37
	III	233	235	261	358	268	214
	IV	180	160	170	158	99	150
	V	140	110	135	133	109	111
	Total:	603	554	641	711	506	527

[a] Beaver are required to be sealed in game management units (GMU) 1–11, 13–15, and 17.
[b] Fisher are required to be sealed in GMUs 1–5.
[c] Marten are required to be sealed in GMUs 1–7 and 14–16.

Commercial Transactions Involving Furs

AVERAGE PRICES PAID FOR RAW FURS

Prices published by 2 major fur auction houses (North American Fur Auction and Fur Harvesters Auction, Inc.) during January–June in each of the previous 5 years were averaged to produce the prices in this table. Top prices were also from fur auctions. Prices for the 2015 regulatory year in Alaska were obtained from the 2016 January–June auction house prices.

Table 11. Average fur prices published by the North American Fur Auction and Fur Harvesters Auction, Inc., for the last 5 regulatory years, 2011–2015.

	Average price (U.S.)					Top price
Species	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015 (U.S.)
Arctic fox	52.82[a]	59.97[a]	40.87	43.29	39.91	76.00
Beaver	32.56	32.56	18.71	13.30	10.04	63.00
Coyote	65.99	76.27	56.49	51.75	39.87	340.00
Ermine	3.57	3.43	3.80	4.74	1.84	6.50
Fisher			83.14	63.33	35.62	290.00
Lynx	179.78	205.11	144.49	87.37	61.88	220.00
Marten	108.78	143.81	76.94	54.12	46.51	190.00
Mink (wild)	22.83	27.90	17.51	9.83	9.10	24.00
Muskrat	9.97	12.53	10.36	3.94	2.87	8.90
Red fox	52.82[a]	59.97[a]	40.18	23.84	16.53	115.00
Squirrel	0.97	0.74	0.94		0.38	1.00
River otter	86.76	100.75	53.95	38.65	20.00	56.00
Wolf	245.29	215.84	170.17	127.75	157.88	600.00
Wolverine	269.95	271.35	224.90	217.41	208.90	390.00

[a] All foxes were combined in 2011 and 2012.

MINIMUM ESTIMATED FUR VALUE

Table 12 below summarizes the minimum total estimated value of furs trapped during the 2015–2016 season. This table is intended to provide an estimate of fur values in Alaska and does not represent fur revenue. Average fur auction prices were used to calculate fur value. For beaver, fisher, lynx, marten, river otter, wolf, and wolverine, we used number of furs sealed. That means beaver, fisher, and marten values are certainly underestimated because the table only includes animals harvested from the areas in the state where sealing is required. For the unsealed species, we used the number of furs exported by hunters and trappers. All species of foxes were added together for Table 12.

Table 12. Fur value in Alaska, 2015–2016.

Species	Total number sealed or reported	Average price (U.S.)	Minimum value (U.S.)
Arctic fox	0	39.91	0
Beaver	995	10.04	9,989.80
Coyote	95	39.87	3,787.65
Ermine	263	1.84	483.92
Fisher	2	35.62	71.24
Lynx	1,279	61.88	79,144.52
Marten	3,175	46.51	147,669.25
Mink	306	9.10	2,784.60
Muskrat	328	2.87	941.36
Red fox	310	16.53	5,124.30
Red squirrel	458	0.38	174.04
River otter	1,254	20	25,080.00
Wolf	939	157.88	148,249.32
Wolverine	527	208.90	110,090.30
Total			533,590.30

Fur Sealing Requirements

Lynx, river otter, wolf, or wolverine taken anywhere in the state, marten in GMUs 1–7 and 14–16, fisher in GMUs 1–5, and beaver taken in GMUs 1–11 and 13–15, and 17 must be sealed by an authorized department representative. If you ship furs of these animals to a buyer or auction house out of state, they must be sealed before you ship them.

If there is no authorized sealer near you, contact the nearest office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. A list of area biologists is provided below. 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 listed below.

- The blue Raw Fur Skin Export permits are no longer required for shipping a raw skin of a furbearer from Alaska. There are federal licenses and permits needed to ship within or outside the country. Please check with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if you intend to ship fur out of Alaska to another country such as Canada. If you intend to ship a wolf, lynx, or river otter skin (raw or tanned) out of the country (for example from Alaska to a fur dealer in Canada) you must get a federal wildlife export permit (also called a CITES permit), a federal import/export license, and arrange for inspection of all furs by a federal agent.

Regional ADF&G Fur Sealing Officers

Region I (GMUs 1–5)	Paul Converse Alaska Department of Fish and Game P.O. Box 110024 Juneau, AK 99811-0024 (907) 465-4265
Region II (GMUs 6, 7, 8, 14 and 15)	Erik Bollerud Alaska Department of Fish and Game 333 Raspberry Road Anchorage, AK 99518 (907) 267-2344
Region III (GMUs 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, and 26B,C)	Laurie Boeck Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1300 College Road Fairbanks, AK 99701 (907) 459-7205
Region IV (GMUs 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, and 7)	Joel Holyoak Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1800 Glenn Hwy #4 Palmer, AK 99645 (907) 746-6398
Region V (GMUs 18, 22, 23, and 26A)	Esther Slaathaug Alaska Department of Fish and Game P.O. Box 689 Kotzebue, AK 99752 (907) 442-1710

Photo by Brian Powell

Area Biologists and Game Management Units

GMU 1(A), 2 Boyd Porter (AAB: none) 2030 Sealevel Drive, Suite 205 KETCHIKAN, AK 99901 Phone: (907) 225-2475 Fax: (907) 225-2771	GMU 1 (B), 3 Rich Lowell (AAB: none) P.O. Box 667 PETERSBURG, AK 99833 Phone: (907) 772-5235 Fax: (907) 772-9336	GMU 4 Steve Bethune (AAB: none) 304 Lake Street Room 103 SITKA, AK 99835-7563 Phone: (907) 747-5449 Fax: (907) 747-6239
GMU 1(C), 1(D), 5 Stephanie Sell (AAB: Carl Koch) P.O. Box 110024 JUNEAU, AK 99811-0024 Phone: (907) 465-4266 Fax: (907) 465-4272	GMU 6 Charlotte Westing (AAB: none) P.O. Box 669 CORDOVA, AK 99574 Phone: (907) 424-3215 Fax: (907) 424-3235	GMU 7, 15 Jeff Selinger (AAB: Larry Lewis and Jason Herreman) 34828 Kalifornsky Beach Rd Ste B SOLDOTNA, AK 99669-8367 Phone: (907) 260-2905 Fax: (907) 262-4709
GMU 8 Nate Svoboda (AAB: John Cyre) 211 Mission Road KODIAK, AK 99615 Phone: (907) 486-1880 Fax: (907) 486-1869	GMU 9, 10 Dave Crowley (AAB: Chris Peterson) P.O. Box 37 KING SALMON, AK 99613 Phone: (907) 246-3340 Fax: (907) 246-3309	GMU 11, 13 Frank Robbins (AAB: Heidi Hatcher) P.O. Box 47 GLENNALLEN, AK 99588 Phone: (907) 822-3461 Fax: (907) 822-3811
GMU 12, 20(E) Jeff Gross (AAB: Jeff Wells) P.O. Box 355 TOK, AK 99780-0355 Phone: (907) 883-2971 Fax: (907) 883-2970	GMU 14(A), (B), 16 (A), (B) Vacant (AAB: Tim Peltier) 1800 Glenn Hwy Suite 4 PALMER, AK 99645-6736 Phone: (907) 746-6327 Fax: (907) 746-6305	GMU 14(C) Dave Battle (AAB: Cory Stantorf) 333 Raspberry Road ANCHORAGE, AK 99518-1565 Phone: (907) 267-2185 Fax: (907) 267-2433
GMU 17 Neil Barten (AAB: none) P.O. Box 1030 DILLINGHAM, AK 99576 Phone: (907) 842-2334 Fax: (907) 842-5514	GMU 18 Phillip Perry (AAB: Patrick Jones) P.O. Box 1467 BETHEL, AK 99559 Phone: (907) 543-2979 Fax: (907) 543-2021	GMU 19, 21 (A), (E) Josh Peirce (AAB: none) P.O. Box 230 MCGRATH, AK 99627 Phone: (907) 524-3323 Fax: (907) 524-3324
GMU 20(A), (B), (C), (F), 25(C) Don Young (AAB: Tony Hollis) 1300 College Road FAIRBANKS, AK 99701 Phone: (907) 459-7233 Fax: (907) 459-7332	GMU 20(D) Bob Schmidt (AAB: none) P.O. Box 605 DELTA JUNCTION, AK 99737 Phone: (907) 895-4484 Fax: (907) 895-4833	GMU 21(B), (C), (D), 24 Glenn Stout (AAB: Nate Pamperin) 1300 College Road FAIRBANKS, AK 99701 Phone: (907) 459-7218 Fax: (907) 459-7332
GMU 22 Bill Dunker (AAB: Letty Hughes) P.O. Box 1148 NOME, AK 99762 Phone: (907) 443-2271 Fax: (907) 443-5893	GMU 23 Brandon Saito (AAB: none) P.O. Box 689 KOTZEBUE, AK 99752 Phone: (907) 442-1712 Fax: (907) 442-2420	GMU 25 (A), (B), (D), 26 (B), (C) Beth Lenart (AAB: Jason Caikoski) 1300 College Road FAIRBANKS, AK 99701 Phone: (907) 459-7242 Fax: (907) 459-7332
GMU 26 (A) Ryan Klimstra (AAB: none) P.O. Box 1284 BARROW, AK 99723-1284 Phone: (907) 852-3464 Fax: (907) 852-3465	RI Reg Supvr – Ryan Scott (907) 465-4359 RI Mgmt Coord – Tom Schumacher (907) 465-4267	RII Reg Supvr – Howard Golden (907) 267-2177 RII Mgmt Coord – Cyndi Wardlow (907) 267-2529
RIII Reg Supvr – Darren Bruning (907) 459-7222 RIII Mgmt Coord – Doreen Parker McNeill (907) 459-7381	RIV Reg Supvr – Gino DelFrate (907) 861-2123 RIV Mgmt Coord – Todd Rinaldi (907) 861-2105	RV Reg Supvr – Steve Machida (907) 267-2421 RV Mgmt Coord – Tony Gorn (907) 443-8189

Trapper Comments

We are looking for ways to improve the trapper questionnaire. This year, we asked the following: Do you have comments regarding vandalism, harassment, leaving/losing gear, nontrapper-trapper conflicts, or other anomalies encountered during the 2015–2016 trapping season? Do you have any other comments for ADF&G?

REGION I

- Trapping season should be earlier in Southeast to take advantage of better weather, prices, and fur quality.

- None at this time. I just am a recreational trapper learning. Thank you.

- No comment regarding vandalism, harassment or similar – folks here seem to respect one another within and outside of the trapping community.

- I pulled my traps in January this year. We had caught 13 male marten consecutively, and then 2 females and 1 large male. We found evidence of breeding on the females and the male. We have had this concern before and I am wondering if they are breeding earlier than normal. We do not intend to take any breeding females as we hope to continue to be able to trap in southeast Alaska. Maybe the season on marten in Unit 4 should be shortened or at least re-evaluated.

- No problems.

- Would be nice to move the duck season back to close on December 15th. The duck dogs are my main concern. Really can't stand trapping some areas until the waterfowl season closes. Nobody is hunting ducks that time of the year anyhow. Better to have the kids be able to hunt before school starts in Sept.

- No. I use the unbeaten path by following only game trails in and out. Therefore, I never run into people and people never run into my sets nor follow my line.

- More education and PSA for non-trappers helps in my opinion.

- Nontrappers must learn to respect the trapper's traplines. They cannot be allowed to disturb traps.

- I put the same comment every year about conflicts with others setting over your line. No recourse here in S.E. Just have to deal with it. Try to work it out with fellow trappers but nothing legal can be done. I try to manage my area and only trap 2–3 weeks. Others trap in same area and leave traps out until the last day. Very frustrating. Hope funding in AK allows us to manage our resources!

- Heard other trappers having problems with theft.

- I tried trapping some new area near town that was much higher use than what I am used to. I did my best to make responsible sets and fly under the radar. Based on people, at least a few people noticed sets. I am thankful and grateful that everyone left my gear alone and respected my right to trap. It would be really nice to open up marten in SE sometime in the second half of November. I applaud all the efforts of ADF&G makes to manage our resources responsibly.

- My traps/snares were harassed and threatened in a place I thought was a safe place. Someone's dog got into a snare set for beaver near a logging road. The dog owner was able to cut dog free. So no harm was done to dog. But the dog owner posted threatening letters at the post office. I reported it to State Troopers. Not sure what was done.

- I had a person check my traps that I had and still don't know who. This resulted in a loss of a trap and possibly a couple of marten where there were obvious signs of an animal that was in the trap. I don't trap for the money. I trap for something to do so I'm not too worried about this. I just figured I'd say something.

- Not too much. People are entitled to their opinion. I would like to know why you're not allowed to salvage accidental bycatch from your trapline. I understand some might take advantage of it but if you're consuming the meat and surrendering the hide and skull.

- No, but please open season two weeks earlier and end two weeks earlier for marten.

- We have had trappers set their traps on our trapline – again remind trappers it is in all of our best interests to disperse our traps and show respect for each other. Every year, we have trapper friends who trap around major recreational trails, and every year there are non-trappers who either set off their traps, take their traps, tell the trappers to leave the area, or are just hostile towards these young men/women. The trappers have never caught a dog and do not want to, but they are limited as to where and how far away from their home they can travel to trap. Unfortunately, dog owners feel their dogs have more rights to run loose through the national forest than people who trap there.

- Big problem in Petersburg this year with a trapper setting traps on recreational trails and parks. This trapper caught pets and birds and it was posted on Facebook by pet owners and trail users that saw trapped birds. It is not illegal at this time but it should be because it gives trapping a bad reputation and is just plain stupid to set traps inside city limits and on recreational trails and parks.

- I had one wolf snare taken.

- We haven't had problems, but we trap away from most people and other trappers. On this survey – save the paper and offer an email notification rather than mail. Good to have it online.

REGION II

- Have had nothing but friendly encounters with other trail users at Penguin Creek.

- Please work to continue trapping opportunities.

- I had a dog caught in a #4 conibear. This animal suffered for 14 hours. When I found her, I put her down. If you would like to call me and talk about this instance, please do. I take full responsibility for this instance could have been handled differently. Thank you.

- Would like to understand how to deal with any of these conflicts.

- All laws and rules on both sides should be followed and laws should be enforced.

- First year trapping. I wish these guys would put active trap signs up on the beaver areas. Instead, they put a strip of orange tape that could be there for years. Saw plenty of places to trap beaver but all had the orange tape. Some had no sign of traps, and at some the traps were just hanging in the bushes.

- The BOG needs to stop blaming bears and wolves for every species decline and start listening to the professional biologist when establishing seasons and bag limits. Here on the Kenai, we've had record low numbers of beaver, mink, and muskrat caught with effort increasing for each species. Rather than do the right thing for conservation and reduce or close certain species, they allowed the season to remain open and in some cases (beaver) increase the length of the season. Ted Spraker and gang are slowly killing all species of game in Alaska! I am afraid of what the next 20 years will look like!!

- Anyone participating in harvesting <u>any</u> natural resources in this state needs laws/rules so they can be held responsible and help ADF&G be able to do their job efficiently. Thank you.

- I only trapped a week last season but will do more in the future as my sons get older. They are interested in trapping.

- I have lost a few traps in recent years to theft by someone who I believe is opposed to trapping. Knowing that the person who stole or disposed of my trapping equipment is quite possibly opposed to trapping angered me even more than if someone had taken them for personal gain.

- Too many new trappers have little regard for other's established lines.

- It's time for Alaska's regulations to catch up with the rest of the U.S. in order to protect trapping. If we do nothing, we could lose trapping all together.

- I do not have vandalism, harassment, or loss of gear. I find that most of the conflicts are made by nontrappers to make us trappers look bad in the news. I like most of the things the way they are, but I would like to see the limit for beaver raised from 20.

- I had no conflicts or interference from anyone.

- I'm planning on starting a non-sanctioned, casual trapper training group for the youth in our area, stressing the ethics of trapping. My line will become the in-the-field training line for the youth in the group.

- ADF&G needs a concerted trapper education class aside from the political influence of the ATA. ADF&G should only partner with NGOs when this political influence will not disrupt user-group bridge building efforts and only when it will benefit the resource.

- Need regulations on requiring traps to be labeled similar to the requirement on fish wheels to be properly labeled and documented. Better regulations and enforcement on removing abandoned/old unused traps from wilderness.

- More education on vandalism/theft. Higher penalty for theft of trap and even tampering. Leash laws signs on all trails.

- I depend on Fish and Wildlife to make the right choices for trappers.

- If a protected species, such as bald eagle, is found in a trap and alive, then no harm, no foul for someone other than trapper to release the animal from the trap.

- I was upset to turn in a lynx I got because lynx is closed in 15A. It was open to hunt but not trap. I was not targeting lynx but rather I snared it on a coyote set. I believe it could have been kept if the rules were in place to keep incidental catch, but that is something that would be hard to control.

- We don't need more rules and regulations or more government involvement with paperwork and laws than we already have.

- None, I was left alone more than usual this year.

- I feel that anyone who vandalizes or harasses a trapper or his trap line should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I also feel that the owner of a dog/pet that is caught in a legally set trap should be prosecuted for failing to control said dog/pet, for vandalizing a legal trapline, and animal cruelty for allowing the dog/pet to be caught.

- I like to keep the regulations easy so that young people can get into it and have a reason to enjoy being outside.

- No comment…I love to trap but just don't have time to set and check with a full time job in Anchorage.

- Other user groups need to respect trapping.

- Perpetrators of vandalism and harassment against legal trappers should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

- Punish the offenders to the absolute maximum every time. There is no excuse for vandalism, trapping is legal and when done right very humane.

- Red fox numbers have declined extremely and harvest numbers should be limited. Unit 8 red fox seem to be over-trapped.

- Thankfully, I've never had any issues since I trap off the road system. But I feel that an effort to educate the public about the notion of sharing the trails would be of benefit to hikers, dog and child walkers, as well as the trapping public.

- There's a lot anti trapper sentiment around Copper Landing, but I saw many legal but unethical traps set right near homes, practically ON popular public trails and in picnic areas, and traps with animals caught in them that weren't routinely checked. I don't like rules but unethical trappers are ruining it for the rest of us!

REGION III

- No problems during moose hunting. I did notice a lot of nonnatives trying to trap and hunt near and on our native allotment. When I confronted them about it, they stated they stayed below the high water mark. I really didn't like that reply.

- Any time you trap, you take a chance of someone stealing game from your traps or screwing with your sets. It is the trapper's responsibility to hide and maintain the trap line away from people to reduce a conflict.

- Last year, I had all my traps stolen along the Little Willow.

- Need ability to stop other users from trespassing on trap line and using my hard work for opening trail and brushing.

- No major conflicts. Most things can be easily worked out if the people involved are just reasonable.

- I did not trap but I believe there should be strict penalties for nontrapper interference with traps/traplines and the taking of furbearers from traps.

- Too long of lynx season.

- Major recreational trails are not marked well enough. Larger (or any other) more current sign should be posted.

- I trap and live in small village, we all know each other. We do not have worry about vandalism/stealing. We have harder time dealing with weather than people.

- They should have to pay 10 times the amount they do.

- Haven't had much of a problem. We have left notes or a sign when there seemed to be impending conflict and it has always resolved fine.

- I think in more public units like 14, 15, and 7, people should have to mark their traplines so people's dogs or kids don't wander into them. It is only a suggestion in the regulations but should be mandatory.

- The old country is a burnt memory. A lot of traffic and the burn made major changes in my area, but the beaver and muskadoodlers are still doing it. Beaver meat is in high demand by the old timers and young alike. Muskrats made a major comeback. I hope this reflects on next year's harvest of other species. Maybe the other animals will do the same. If so, God bless them.

- I trap very remote areas, and the only way I would have conflict is if another airplane trapper decided to work my areas. The airplane trappers in this area stay out of each other's area, and we know everybody who flies in the area. I only listed the wolves I caught. I also harvested 11 wolves in 20E by SDA for wolf control. They were all taken in November.

- I believe that the trapping community is mostly reasonable; however, I find some peoples using the claim of "tradition" as a reason to be contemptuous. Yes, Alaska was exploited by the Russian American Company for the fur trade. It also led to the extinction of a number of species. Alaska's indigenous peoples (primarily the Aleut and Alutiq) were enslaved in the pursuit of the fur trade. That's also part of the legacy some trappers are trying to claim, and in my opinion if you're going to claim one as heritage, you better be claiming and recognizing the other. Since they obviously won't, without stating that times change, well, then, there you go – times change and the trapping organizations in Alaska need to learn better to play well with others in a modern era with changing values in a state that has a much larger state population than it did when they started. Most of the active trappers I know are over 50. When I was born in 1972 in Anchorage, the state had a total population about the same as Anchorage has today. We are a different place than we were, and the trappers need to recognize that.

- Please keep trail setbacks as small as possible.

- Seems like fur theft and trapline jumping is very much more common for me now. Surprising with the low fur prices. I fight encroachment annually.

- State parks that lay within the boundaries of a borough or municipality that have pet ordinances, State park rangers should enforce them. This would eliminate a lot of conflicts with pet owners and trapping. Borough and municipality ordinances do apply to state parks that lie within the boundaries of the borough or municipalities. Question 33 asks questions about "prime fur." Another term that has different meanings: 1) condition of the fur, or 2) condition of its leather/skin. 1) Condition of the fur varies from the habit, what the range consists of, health of the game, and weather. Depending on what type of environment you trap in will determine what quality your furs are. If you trap in a high venation, crusty snow, and very cold, the furs on canines tend to be shorter haired and have more rubs. Verses a trapline in very open county and dry snow, these animals tend to have longer hair and less rubs. With canines, fur conditions vary from year to year. Some years the early-season pelts are much better than mid- or late-season. Other years it is just the opposite. 2). Leather condition is very constant when it comes to what is prime (blue leather is unprimed and white leather is prime). This happens about the same time every year because it is biological and not environmental. Furs being bought and sold are graded on fur condition and skin condition. Skin condition is important to the garment industry because they sew with the skins and they need strong consistent leather for their products. This why the garment industry shies away from blue leather skins. The department should be more careful about the terminology used when asking the public for comments on questions. Kudus DWC, on the martian study going on in Region III. Great data and should be a help to trappers.

REGION IV

- Have not trapped in years due to work.

- I believe we need hard fines and laws to people that mess with any furbearer and traps that are not theirs.

- As said above, I don't go off my land because of traps being stolen, tripped, or run over, and then people would follow tracks back to my house. Even staying on my land, people see a track in my yard. Trespassing on private property.

- ADF&G should have a trapping school! I'll help design one!

- Wolverine season in Unit 13A should last 28 days longer for incidental catch in canine sets.

- We need to inform people when trapping season is open and enforce leash laws. Also, we need to educate trappers and new trappers alike.

- The low snow and no ice kept me off of over 100 miles of line I normally trap, and I was unable to trap 1 entire line of the 2 main lines I normally trap. Figures are from parts of lines I normally run and was able to get to this year. One question you might ask is the number of weeks trapped on each line. For example, one of my lines I only trapped 36 hours and accessed by skiff, but I primarily used a snow machine.

- Someone was leaving unchecked muskrat traps for weeks at a time on the creek at Matanuska spur. Rats are good for no more than 4 days in water.

- No conflicts. It seems like the trapping season starts too early and ends too early.

- I have lost traps due to theft, and this is also a reason I didn't trap this year!

- People have vandalized our trapline before. There needs to be other regulations for non-trappers.

- Nothing stolen in 2015–16 season.

- I have had quite a few issues with nontrappers threatening to steal traps and also with walking up to my sets and ruining the "Scent free" canine sets. I don't know how to fix that but I'm up for ideas.

- No comments. Thanks ADF&G for keeping trappers in the loop.

- Yes, we had traps stolen last time I trapped.

- Install signage (metal) indicating mixed use of recreational trails/areas at trailheads/parking lots stating ADF&G's full support of non-trapping persons being prosecuted lawfully for any encounter with trapping persons utilizing ethical practices in the field. (Remove the emotional aspect of their justification.)

- Luckily haven't had any problems with people or anything else.

- Some areas should be off limits now because of so many people moving into them.

- I have never had a problem with another trapper in this state. What I do have a problem with is how ADF&G handles how a trapper can get to his trap line. There are places that I used to trap as a kid that I can no longer get to because you cannot take an ATV in. I have since been back to these places and walk in and have found there is an over population of animals and lots of them have lost of hair and other disease. That is not good. From my time, I have seen things like that spread fast and wide.

- I am getting really tired of guys getting on my lines that I spend years cutting and maintaining about mid-season and lacing my trail with their gear. Most of my sets are off the trail so my gear does not get stolen and these guys come in and set right next to the trail. Confronted one guy this year and he would not move his gear and all he said was that he has every right to be there. No one wants to work together any more. Tired of sealing requirements if I am not selling my furs.

- Verbally threatened on air on talk radio after describing all of my efforts to reduce conflict with other use groups. My traps were stolen again, trails ran and messed up, signs

removed, animals stolen. The more signs I put up – the more problems I have, and the last thing trappers want to catch is a pet! We all have pets and we love animals. The public does not care about leash laws – they only care about themselves being able to do what they want, whenever, and however they want. We're being forced to shoot, shovel, and shut up and that's not right.

- No conflicts during 2015–2016, less trappers in my area.

- I haven't had any problems, but I am troubled by recent increase in negative press and news. I think people are irresponsible with their pets while hiking and like to blame trappers who follow the law.

- I had one trap stolen in the 2014–2015 season. Nothing negative in the 2015–2016 season.

- I have been a little discouraged by the attitude of some of the Alaskan trappers in terms of their concept of "entitlement" to vast areas of public land that they consider "their area." If it's public land, it seems like it should be open for any individual to trap. Claiming rivers and seismic lines? I don't know. How can you do that? Seems like if folks would just give others some space things would go better. I believe that this idea of "my area" is actually suppressing other individuals from picking up the pastime as they do not want the conflict. I know I went farther out to avoid areas that had evidence of trapping in the past but ultimately no one ever showed up. It is frustrating having to be "subordinated" by other individuals that have no more right to the lands than you do. I do not believe that the Alaskan trapping folks are "modernizing" quickly enough and that they will eventually suffer a greater loss of privileges because their attitudes are too "old school." I have limited time to trap; however, I adore the pastime. There was no sign other than a few fox/coyote tracks and occasional wolf track on the Nelchina River. However, it was my first season out there in that area. I literally did not catch a single animal. Not even a marten. I have trapped other areas in Alaska with good success. I had a little bit of trouble answering all of the survey questions accurately as the correct answer was not provided.

- I was approached by a wildlife trooper this season about a fellow trapper in my area who had traps stolen. This other trapper was trapping close to the highway along a popular trail. I was concerned that my traps could be stolen as well. I made sure to set all my traps well out of sight and away from the main trail, where people are not likely to go unless intentionally following my side trail and looking for my traps. Since I was well off the beaten path, nobody bothered my sets. If I ever feel that my sets will be easily found by other people, I avoid making the set and feel other trappers should do the same.

- I've had people caught on my game cams at bear bait sites. They WILL follow your trail. Guaranteed. No vandalism yet, but my camera is locked in a steel box and locked to a large tree, and my bait barrel is chained and locked to a tree. I don't trust people.

- If someone has the legal right to be somewhere, then I would like to see some additional support from LE for trappers during conflicts with nontrappers. I would also like to see more consistency in season dates. I am too worried about non open season bycatch to target only coyote or wolf in fear of catching fox or other nontarget animals. Water sets make sense, but leg hold sets with varying dates on species can be confusing. Would also like to see more time available to get furs sealed.

- Other trappers move in on established lines with little regard for overlap. This makes managing harvest difficult as total harvest numbers on your line are unknown. New trapper moved in this year on a line I have been trapping since 2012 without any competition.

- The SOA should require new trappers to take a trapping course since we have an increase in the number of folks moving to AK. The problem is that anyone can get a license and traps and place them close to residential areas, which is causing heartburn with non-trapping folks. I think there needs to be firm penalties for folks stealing, defacing, or disturbing someone's trapline with the intent of removing or freeing an animal that has been legally trapped during an open season.

- They do NOTHING toward holding someone accountable for tampering with your traps when/if they choose to tamper with your traps or trapline. I had (1) conibear trap taken while trapping for ermine in area 2, and (1) leghold trap tampered with while trapping coyote in area 1. I had a leghold tampered with while trapping coyote last year, and a float trap removed and staked to a bank while trapping for muskrat. All of the areas where I trap are available for trapping, and some of them have signs posted "ADVISING" citizens that they are in an "ACTIVE" trapping area.

- Traplines will always be disputed. I had another "discussion" with a resident that lives near my line. He has trapping history in the area. I have been there 6 years and he claims I need to leave so he can trap it again. I could go on and on about conflicts. Wouldn't mind registered lines.

REGION V

- The young are stealing from traplines for their bad habits (drugs and booze).

- A lot of the area that our trapline was set created issues with being covered by new snow. It was a learning curve to adjust for the deep snow drifts created by lack of trees.

- 3 of our bucket set conibears were set off by disgruntled sled team mushers who operate in the area. They started to use our trapline trail after we successfully created a trail after several months of trapping. To alleviate the continuing problem with them, we set up a new trail and trapline, but we're having difficulty adjusting to the continuous snow drifts.

- Lost 2 lynx footholds on my trail. Someone traveled my trail and picked them up. I do not know who it was.

- Many of my student's traps were stolen or tampered with.

- There are not a lot of trappers out here and we respected each other's sets, and even though we trapped the same areas, we had no conflicts.

Photo by Patrick Jones

Author's Note

I cannot thank ADF&G Information Services and our DWC Lead Webmaster enough for their efforts and assistance in creating the online version of the questionnaire, scanning and compiling data, and running some of the analyses for this 2015 report. Without their assistance, I would still be sitting here staring at all the data wondering where to start instead of completing the report.

I would also like to extend my thanks to everyone responding to the questionnaire, either via online or paper responses. While our response rate was down this year, I hope we can continue to improve the questionnaire in a way that will lead to an increased response rate. For many of the species involved in this report, you are our primary source of knowledge. We use your responses to determine what is happening with the furbearers to better manage those populations for future generations to enjoy. Please continue to respond to the questionnaire in the future and encourage others to do the same. If you know of anyone wanting to receive future questionnaires, please have them contact me by phone or email (below).

Lastly, I want to extend a special thanks to all the trappers who provided pictures. There's nothing quite like being out in nature and observing wildlife, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to share your experiences with myself and other trappers.

Thank you and best of luck this coming season!

Brynn L. Parr
ADF&G Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
(907) 465-4148
dfg.dwc.permits@alaska.gov

Photo by Brian Powell

Photo by Patrick Jones


ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME