

**FURBEARER
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-11

PROJECT NO.: 7.0 Furbearer

PERIOD: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide: Activities in Regions I, II, III, IV, and V

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Population.

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes Furbearer survey and inventory activities. Activities are listed by region and game management unit.

Region I—Southeast Alaska

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial furbearer management reports.

Reports are presently being reviewed and edited.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Data from furbearer sealing records was used during the January 2013 Board of Game meeting and provided important insight for the Board during their deliberations on proposals.

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they are harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, FWP Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed furbearer pelts harvested in the region. Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. Approximately 296 beaver, 4,352 marten 860 otter, 25 wolverine, and 1 lynx were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 4: Use trapper questionnaire, interviews, and other anecdotal information from reliable observers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

This was done as opportunities allowed. This type of information helped managers with recommendations about changes to current trapping regulations.

ACTIVITY 5: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

This was done as opportunities presented themselves through sealing fur and conversations with trappers and hunters. Efforts were made to improve communication with authorized fur sealers where trappers are using temporary sealing forms that have been incompletely filled out.

Submitted by: Neil L. Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

Region II—Southcentral Alaska

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY: Prepare a triennial regional furbearer management report.

Reports were finalized and submitted for publication. Area staff continue to collect information in preparation for drafting future reports.

ACTIVITY: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Staff routinely interact with federal staff and discuss management of furbearers relative to the respective regulatory systems. Staff attended the state Board of Game meeting during this reporting period.

ACTIVITY : Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

All furbearers that require sealing in Region II were presented to staff for specimen collection and sealing. See area specific activities for additional information.

ACTIVITY : Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

These are standard activities accomplished in each office. See Area specific activities.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY : Collected harvest data for 97 marten, 29 beaver, 24 wolverine, 21 lynx, and 197 otters. These harvest numbers are within the normal range of harvest.

ACTIVITY : Conducted river otter latrine surveys in western Prince William Sound. See research performance report for otters in unit 6D.

Units 7&15

ACTIVITY : Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Preliminary harvest results by GMU are:

	7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Unit15Z	Total
Beaver	8	20	3	16	0	47
Marten	39	3	0	0	0	42
Wolverine	11	0	1	9	0	21
Otter	5	3	0	27	0	35
Lynx	21	45	77	157	2	302

ACTIVITY : Conduct wolverine survey.

Sample unit probability estimator surveys (SUPEs) were conducted in GMU 7. Density estimates for this area were 5 wolverines/1000 km² (90% CI = 4.1-6.7). Trapping efforts to collar individuals to aid SUPE analysis and monitor habitat use and movements were also conducted and reported under a research project.

Unit 08

Activity : During the 2012–13 season, 26 trappers brought in 186 otters for sealing yielding an average of 7.2 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 100 males (54%), 64 females (34%), and 22 of undetermined sex (12%). Most trappers were local residents (85%), and trapping was the most common method of take (98%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (62%), and December was the most productive month (40%). Sixty-one otters (33%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 65 beavers brought in by 11 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 5.9 beavers/trapper. Most trappers were local residents (91%), and trapping was the most common method of take (94%). Highway vehicles were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (48%), and the harvest primarily occurred during the month of November. Thirty-six beaver (55%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Trapper questionnaire respondents reported that furbearer populations were high. With the current low harvest in most areas, developing management objectives for furbearers is not a high priority.

Unit 14C

ACTIVITY : Harvest data was collected when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. See below:

Harvest of furbearers where sealing is required:

Beaver: 5 all taken through depredation permits.

Lynx: 0

River Otter: 3

Wolverine: 3.

Marten: 3

Submitted by: Gino Del Frate

Date: 6 September 2013

Region III—Interior Alaska

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Mailed a trapper questionnaire to everyone who purchased a trapping license; interviewed trappers opportunistically.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored preliminary harvest of 1,145 lynx, 68 river otter, and 203 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, field observations and contact with trappers and hunters

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest information when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected data on preliminary harvest of 1,416 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide furbearer management information to State and Federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to 15 State fish and game advisory committees, the Alaska Board of Game, and 2 Federal regional advisory councils.

ACTIVITY 5: Prepare triennial furbearer management reports.

Prepared furbearer management reports.

Activities by Unit

Units 19, 21A, and 21E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct beaver cache surveys.

Beaver cache surveys not conducted because of insufficient personnel time to accomplish the task.

Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache survey in October (n = 24 caches).

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Region III Management Coordinator

Region IV—Southcentral and Southwestern Alaska

Project Location: Game Management Units 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A, 14B, 16, and 17

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1: Collect furbearer harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit	Beaver	Lynx	Marten	Otter	Wolverine
<i>Unit 9</i>	103	64	18 ^a	48	26
<i>Unit 10^b</i>	-	-	-	0	0
<i>Unit 11</i>	0	44	N/A ^a	5	4
<i>Unit 13</i>	148	332	N/A ^a	49	53
<i>Unit 14A</i>	84	17	52	19	6
<i>Unit 14B</i>	33	10	78	5	1
<i>Unit 16</i>	69	12	495	37	31
<i>Unit 17</i>	142	48	N/A ^a	53	30

^aMarten sealing is not required in Units 9, 10, 11, 13, and 17.

^bBeaver, lynx, and marten do not occur in Unit 10

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

The annual trapper questionnaire was completed.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 13

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial and ground transects to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

Lynx transects were flown in Unit 11 and 13 in April 2013.

Submitted by: Lem Butler, Region IV Management Coordinator

Date: 15 August, 2013

Region V—Western and Northern Alaska

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial regional furbearer management reports.

A furbearer management report was prepared during this reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented furbearer information to the State Board of Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

ACTIVITY 3: Maintain the ability in all units to monitor harvests by collecting data through the furbearer sealing process.

The area offices in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome maintained designated fur sealers in villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates. Staff supported 29 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 9 in Unit 23, and 6 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 4: Monitor harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, the annual hunter/trapper questionnaire, and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18: We analyzed fur sealing data for the RY12 trapping season. With improvement to the reporting process, these preliminary harvests should be very close to the final numbers. The reported harvests are 203 river otters, 355 lynx, and 33 wolverine. The high number of fur sealed in 2012-13 trapping season is related to better than average snow conditions, increased trapping effort, and presents of a local fur buyer.

Unit 22: The preliminary furbearer harvest based on RY12 sealing certificates indicates 118 lynx were sealed. The breakdown of lynx sealed by subunit is 90 in Unit 22A, 24 in Unit 22B, 3 in Unit 22C, and 1 in Unit 22D. River otters were harvested by all residents; 9 in 22A, 1 in 22B, and 5 in 22C. Thirty-six wolverines (11 females, 25 males) were harvested by residents; 3 in Unit 22A, 18 in Unit 22B, 3 in Unit 22C, 9 in Unit 22D, and 3 in Unit 22E. Community-based harvest assessment surveys were not completed in Unit 22 during the reporting period, however previous harvest surveys show beaver, marten, and red fox are also harvested by Unit 22 communities.

Unit 23: The preliminary harvest reported on RY12 sealing certificates included 127 lynx (47 females, 49 males and 31 unknown); all were taken by Unit 23 residents. Four lynx were shot, and 113 were trapped and 3 were snared. All of the lynx were taken using a snowmachine. Thirteen otters (8 males and 5 females) were taken during this regulatory year. All were taken with a snowmachine. Twelve were taken by Unit 23 residents and 1 was taken by a non-local resident. One otter was shot and the other 12 were trapped. Twenty-four wolverines were sealed (11 female and 13 males), two were taken by ground shooting and 17 by trap, and all were taken using snowmachine. Community harvest assessment survey data is not available at this time but usually indicates dramatically higher harvest than sealing records indicate.

Unit 26A: During RY12, 19 wolverines were sealed by 12 Unit 26A residents. Fifteen were male and 4 were female. Sixteen were ground shot and 3 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation for all 19. Two wolverines were harvested in November, 3 in January, 3 in February, 6 in March, and 3 in April. Two male lynx were

harvested and sealed by 2 Unit 26A resident trappers. The trappers ground shot them and used a snow machine for transportation. One was harvested in February and 1 in March.

ACTIVITY 5: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers and hunters to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data; and attended meetings hosted by local chapters of the Alaska Trappers Association.

ACTIVITY 6: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Unit 18: We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined there are no problems related to low furbearer populations in Unit 18. Lynx numbers and harvest are declining from record highs in Unit 18 due to decreased abundance of prey. Interest in trapping lynx increased and trapping pressure targeting these species is high in some localized areas however most of the habitat in Unit 18 remains untapped.

Unit 22: Furbearers appear abundant, particularly in Units 22A and 22B where snowshoe hare continue to be abundant. The reported average annual harvest of lynx from RY09 to RY12 is 111 per year (range 83-137) with 98% of the lynx taken from Units 22A & 22B. River otters are believed to be more common than harvest numbers would indicate, but their abundance is unknown. Observations and public reports suggest wolverines are common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E.

Unit 23: Furbearer populations appeared to be within the range of levels observed in previous years based on sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments. Lynx population levels appear to be high although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers appeared to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period however, the higher harvest this year may indicate an increase.

Unit 26A: Through opportunistic observations of fur bearers and interviews with local residents, we felt that the current population number of wolverines is fairly high and stable, while arctic and red foxes are both in a period of medium population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. Observations made during wildlife surveys, hunter reports, and pilot reports indicate that wolverines appear to be at high numbers. Sealing records and observations during moose surveys indicate that lynx numbers are low, but are probably fairly stable.

ACTIVITY 7: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

Project 7.0 – Furbearer S&I
FY13 Annual Performance Report

Work on trapper questionnaires and trapper responses have been delayed due to staffing changes in headquarters. All backlogged reports were finalized and distributed so regional staff will continue this activity with the current cycle questionnaire.

ACTIVITY 8: Develop updated population objectives in consultation with the local public and other agencies.

Furbearer information is available for discussion during Advisory Committee meetings. Beaver populations are considered too high by many members of the public because their dams impede boat passage on creeks and waterways, as well as spawning salmon.

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Survey and Inventory Coordinator, Region V

Date: 1 September 2013