

## ALASKA FURBEARER HARVESTS AND MANAGEMENT

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In Alaska, twenty species of mammals are classified as furbearers; however, only thirteen of these are normally harvested and enter the fur trade. These thirteen species are: beaver, coyote, lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, otter (land), red fox, red squirrel, weasel (ermine), white fox (arctic), wolf, and wolverine.

Populations of all northern species of land mammals fluctuate widely, both geographically and over time; Alaska's furbearer species follow this pattern. Although recently completed research and proposed research focus on developing economical and reliable methods for censusing selected furbearer populations in Alaska, at the present time we are unable to make population estimates for most species. However, from general observations and a few fall food cache surveys, we know that beaver are generally abundant throughout the state. On the other hand, lynx are near the bottom of their characteristic population cycle but increasing in some areas of the state. No marked changes appear to be occurring in the remaining species of furbearers.

Estimates of Alaska's annual statewide furbearer harvests are derived from three sources: furbearer sealing certificates, fur export reports, and reports of acquisition of furs. Since furs kept for personal use often are not reported, actual harvests probably exceed those estimated from these data sources.

Of the three sources, pelt sealing gives us the most accurate and complete information, but only for the five species (beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, and wolverine) that must be sealed statewide. However, sealing data underestimate harvest in some rural areas of Alaska, especially in communities lacking a department office or sealing agent. Rural people commonly home-dress and utilize beaver, wolf, and wolverine without bothering to get them sealed.

Alaska lacks individual species management plans for furbearers, except for the wolf. All other furbearers are managed as a group under general statewide furbearer management policies and guidelines. In most areas, furbearers are managed for their economic benefits under the constitutionally mandated "optimum sustained yield" principle. In recent years, Alaska's estimated total furbearer harvest has ranged from 80,000 to 178,000 pelts.

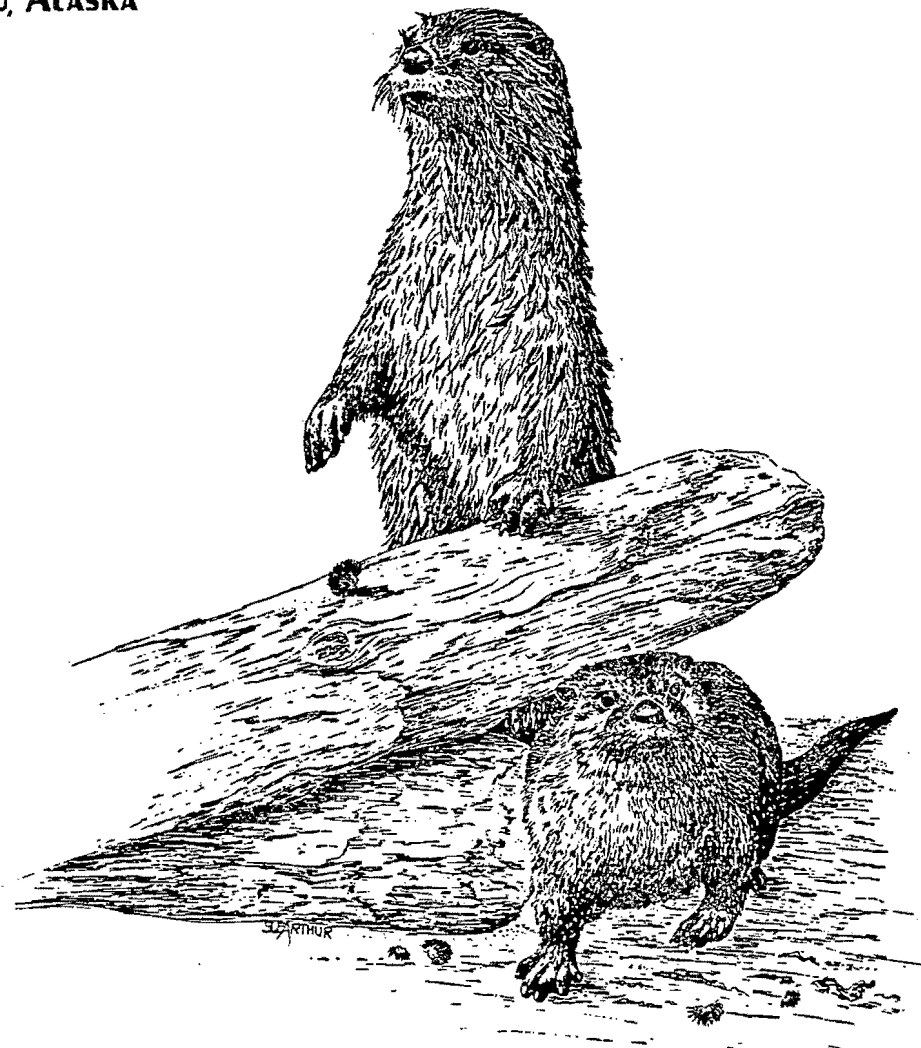
# **ABSTRACTS**

## **FOURTH NORTHERN**

### **FURBEARER CONFERENCE**

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