

Furtaker Survey from the Ohio Division of Wildlife
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by Suzanne Prange, Ohio Division of Wildlife

The Ohio Division of Wildlife recognizes all of the important benefits of fur trapping, and wishes to maintain current seasons and maximize opportunities for trapping furbearing species. Most furbearing species are quite abundant and we are confident that trapping does not negatively affect their populations. However, it is our legal responsibility to have information on their populations and the number of animals trapped annually to help provide the biological basis for our season frameworks. We are frequently asked to justify our furbearer seasons with harvest or population information. We are constantly looking for ways to improve our data collection methods and the quality of the harvest and population data we use to best manage Ohio's natural resources.

With that in mind, last year we initiated a new furtaker survey. The survey consisted of a biweekly summary of the trapping season and asked for the number of each species taken and the average number of traps set. This is information we need in order to determine furbearer harvest and population trends. The number of traps set allows us to determine if declines in harvest are due to lower population sizes or simply reduced effort, which may happen when pelt prices fall. Examining the take of furbearers closely across the season (that is, using a two-week summary) allows us to determine if weather or other environmental factors affected harvest.

Last year, we sent approximately 1,820 surveys to fur trappers statewide. We truly appreciate the effort put forth by those who returned their surveys. This year, we hope to encourage a greater response. A larger sample size will give us more precise results that will be representative of statewide fur resources. We understand that providing a two-week summary is time consuming, but it gives us very important information. For those of you who do not keep a journal or cannot supply the two-week summary for some other reason, we are including a seasonal summary section on this year's survey. We can use seasonal summaries to estimate the overall take statewide, and the two-week summaries to determine the influence of environmental factors, such as weather.

Please take the time to complete the survey and return it to us this year. If you have the information, please complete the two-week summary. Otherwise, simply complete a single summary at the end of the season. The survey will allow us to track the harvest of furbearer species over time and provide us with the needed information to evaluate our trapping seasons.

If you did not receive a furtaker survey last year and would like to participate in this year's survey, please contact Suzie Prange (suzie.prange@dnr.state.oh.us; 740-589-9924). Thank you for helping us to preserve our trapping heritage in Ohio! ### Suzanne Prange, Ph.D., Forest Wildlife Research Biologist, Waterloo Wildlife Research Station, ODNR, Division of Wildlife, 360 East State Street, Athens, OH 45701, Phone: 740-589-9924, FAX: 740-589-9925.