

UNITED STATES
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESS

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U. S. WILDLIFE BUREAU REPORTS DIMINISHING
FUR ANIMAL SUPPLY AND SUMMARIZES STATES'
FUR "TAKE"

Investigation of the number of fur animals being trapped annually for the nation's \$65,000,000-a-year fur market indicates that the United States is taking more animals annually than are being produced, the Bureau of Biological today reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

The danger of depleting this great natural resource was emphasized when Secretary Ickes made public a report compiled by the Bureau of the Biological Survey, now a part of the Department of the Interior. The report indicates that it is necessary for States to take more active measures to control the number of fur animals trapped annually if the demand for furs is to be prevented from depleting the American supply.

The report was based on an inventory of available figures on the national annual "take" of the animals made by the Section of Fur Resources of the Biological Survey. It pointed out that accurate figures are not as available as they should be if a careful check of the situation is to be maintained.

"It is unfortunate that reliable counts are not available in every State," Frank G. Ashbrook, Chief of the Section of Fur Resources said. "Although approximately \$65,000,000 worth of raw furs go to the markets from trappers in the United States and Alaska every year, we don't know whether the country is producing

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10,000,000 muskrats and trapping 17,000,000 or producing 5,000,000 and trapping 25,000,000. One thing is certain, as the inventory of the Biological Survey shows, and that is that more fur animals are being trapped than are being produced."

The report, which was assembled under the direction of Mr. Ashbrook, points out that although State estimates indicate that some 17,500,000 fur animals are trapped each year in the United States and Alaska, the Survey fur experts feel that these figures are far from accurate. It is known, for instance, that some 17,000,000 muskrat pelts alone reach the annual American raw fur market.

The inventory, however, indicated to some extent how the "take" of one species of fur animal compares with that of other species. Figures compiled from estimates of 27 States reporting for the 1937-38 season show that some 25 species were trapped. Heading the list were the muskrat, the opossum and the common skunk.

The report stated that Survey officials probably will continue taking annual inventories of fur trapping to the extent of figures that are available. Despite the results of the current study, which were termed "discouraging," the Survey is satisfied that various State game commissions will seek more accurate means of learning with some accuracy the extent of the annual take in their States. The report emphasized that effective management of fur resources cannot be expected until accurate data can be assembled about the annual population of animals; the extent of the season's trapping, and other information about this valuable commercial resource. It pointed out that trapping is a substantial industry that can produce income to farmers as well as professional trappers.

According to the report, fur animals constitute one of the nation's most valuable natural resources. So far, the Biological Survey said, comparatively little effort has been made to conserve effectively the various species. As a

result, indications are that an important industry is in some jeopardy. So critical is the situation for some of the more valuable fur animals such as martens, fishers, wolverines and otters that the Survey has appealed to all State game commissions to protect these animals with a five-year closed period to forestall their extermination.

"At one time," the report said, "the United States was the world's chief source of fur supply, but today this country does not produce enough to meet more than a third of its own demands. Twice as many foreign furs are now being used here as domestic pelts and the demand for raw furs is increasing. As a result of this pressure of demand, trappers are still taking fur animals from the wild without checking to see whether the stock is becoming depleted."

It further pointed out that regulation of trapping must come through State action as the fur animals are recognized as the property of the individual States.

The reports on the number of animals trapped during the last calendar year by States follow:

ALASKA reported a total of 481,479 animals of 21 species shipped from Alaska and the Pribilof Islands in the calendar year 1938 — muskrats 291,140; seals 58,364; and beavers 30,899. The Territory trapped more of the following animals than any State: Beavers, seals, bears, 193; Canada lynx, 2,130; foxes 34,150; martens 9,200; otters 2,500; and wolverines 248.

ALABAMA has never required annual reports from trappers or dealers.

ARIZONA ranks 28th with a total take of 3,000 animals of 11 species in the calendar year 1937 — coyotes 1,200; gray foxes 750; and muskrats 375.

ARKANSAS ranks 7th with a total take of 479,700 animals of 9 species in the fiscal year 1938 — opossums 370,000; common skunks 60,000; and raccoons 28,700.

CALIFORNIA ranks 23rd with a total take of 45,000 animals of 17 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 19,800; common skunks 6,500; and raccoons 5,000.

California leads all States and Alaska in the number of bobcats reported taken (2,300).

COLORADO has no law protecting fur animals other than beavers.

CONNECTICUT ranks 20th with Maine. Connecticut reports a total take of 65,000 animals of 10 species in the calendar year 1936 — squirrels 30,500; muskrats 17,500; and common skunks 6,700.

DELAWARE ranks 21st with a total take of 54,600 animals of 3 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 50,700; opossums 2,700, and raccoons 1,100.

FLORIDA ranks 25th with a total take of 37,800 animals of 2 species in the fiscal year 1938 — raccoons 31,200; and opossums 6,500.

GEORGIA ranks 26th with a total take of 19,500 animals of 13 species in the fiscal year 1938 — raccoons 11,700; opossums 3,600; and minks 1,700.

IDAHO ranks 24th with a total take of 38,500 animals of 19 species in the fiscal year 1934 — muskrats 34,300; minks 950; and weasels 930. State fur laws require trappers to report annual catch. Since season 1933-34 the fish and game commission has not compiled the number of fur animals taken. On basis of the 1934 report, Idaho leads all States in number of martens taken (480).

ILLINOIS ranks 8th with a total take of 411,600 animals of 6 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 324,000; common skunks 30,400; and opossums 25,500.

INDIANA ranks 5th with a total take of 711,800 animals of 6 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 433,100; opossums 170,000; and common skunks 49,500. Only licensed fur buyers are required to report annually.

IOWA ranks 11th with a total take of 366,200 animals of 11 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 176,700; common skunks 102,200; and spotted skunks 27,000.

KANSAS ranks 12th with a total take of 313,500 animals of 13 species in the fiscal year 1938 — common skunks 110,000; opossums 78,400; and muskrats 78,000.

The State does not require trappers to make annual report. These figures are taken from reports made by fur dealers. Kansas leads all States and Alaska in number of coyotes reported taken (10,900).

KENTUCKY does not require trappers to report.

LOUISIANA ranks first with Ohio. Louisiana reports a total take of 2,500,000 animals of 6 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 2,200,000; opossums 128,000; and raccoons 86,000. Louisiana leads all States and Alaska in number of muskrats reported taken, and in minks (81,500).

MAINE ranks 20th with Connecticut. Maine reports a total take of 65,000 animals of 12 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 40,000; red fox 6,100; and common skunks 6,000. Maine leads all States in the number of otters reported (166).

MARYLAND does not require trappers or fur dealers to make annual reports, but State game wardens estimate that 2,000,000 muskrats are trapped annually. Only Louisiana reported a larger take (2,200,500).

MASSACHUSETTS ranks 18th with a total take of 68,700 animals of 10 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 41,500; common skunks 12,600; and red foxes 6,500.

MICHIGAN ranks 3rd with a total take of 817,700 animals of 12 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 613,800; common skunks 105,000; and weasels 40,100.

MINNESOTA ranks 16th with a total take of 190,000 animals of 12 species in the fiscal year 1938 — weasels 76,300; common skunks 61,100; and minks 33,000. Minnesota leads all States and Alaska in the number of weasels reported taken.

MISSISSIPPI does not require trappers and dealers to make an annual report. The last estimate made in 1935, shows a total take of 110,800 animals of 7 species— opossums 54,000; muskrats 18,100; and raccoons 15,600.

MISSOURI does not require trappers and dealers to make annual reports.

The following data from fur dealers indicate that there was a total take of 786,200 animals of 8 species in the fiscal year 1935 — opossums 370,300; common skunks 205,400; and muskrats 110,600.

MONTANA requires annual reports only for beavers. The following data are compiled from shipping permits: 74,000 animals of 7 species shipped — muskrats 51,900; coyotes 7,000; and beavers 6,290. Montana leads all States in the number of beavers reported.

NEBRASKA requires reports only for beavers, of which 2,000 were reported in the fiscal year 1938.

NEVADA does not require trappers and dealers to make annual reports.

NEW HAMPSHIRE ranks 27th with a total take of 15,000 animals of 11 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 9,000; red foxes 2,300; and common skunks 1,200.

NEW MEXICO requires reports only for beavers, of which 867 were reported in the fiscal year 1938.

NEW JERSEY ranks 14th with a total take of 238,900 animals of 6 species in the calendar year 1936 — muskrats 143,600; squirrels 73,200; and common skunks 11,800.

NEW YORK ranks 9th with a total take of 408,000 animals of 13 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 165,800; squirrels 148,800; and common skunks 42,600. New York leads all States and Alaska in the number of fishers reported taken (117).

NORTH CAROLINA requires only fur dealers to make annual reports, but the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries has not compiled these figures.

NORTH DAKOTA does not require trappers or fur dealers to make annual reports.

OHIO ranks first with Louisiana. Ohio reports a total take of 2,500,000 animals of 8 species in the fiscal year 1937 — muskrats 1,200,000; common skunks

670,000; and opossums 470,000. Ohio does not require trappers to make annual reports. These figures were furnished by licensed fur dealers. Ohio leads all States and Alaska in the number of opossums and skunks reported taken.

OKLAHOMA requires annual reports from trappers and fur dealers, but the system is not organized sufficiently to supply complete figures. The State reports a total take of 1,100,000 animals of 9 species in the fiscal year 1934 — opossums 813,300; common skunks 173,500; and spotted skunks 49,100.

OREGON ranks 19th with a total take of 66,800 animals of 13 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 49,100; minks 6,600; and common skunks 3,600. Oregon leads all States and Alaska in the number of mountain lions reported taken (58).

PENNSYLVANIA ranks 4th with a total take of 741,700 animals of 10 species in the fiscal year 1938 — muskrats 319,400; common skunks 260,500; and opossums 87,600.

RHODE ISLAND does not require trappers or fur dealers to make annual reports.

SOUTH CAROLINA does not require trappers to make annual reports, but permits for shipments outside the State show a total of 65,800 pelts of 8 species in the fiscal year 1938 — raccoons 28,300; opossums 15,500; and minks 11,400.

SOUTH DAKOTA does not require trappers to make annual reports, but permit figures show 1,000 beaver pelts shipped out of State in the fiscal year 1938.

TENNESSEE ranks 15th. The State does not require trappers to make annual reports. During the fiscal year 1938, figures obtained from a fur tax law showed a total take of 211,400 animals of 9 species — opossums 134,000; common skunks 31,900; and muskrats 29,900.

TEXAS ranks 6th with a total take of 590,400 animals of 15 species in the fiscal year 1938 — opossums 397,300; common skunks 75,900; and gray foxes 28,900.

These figures were obtained from fur dealers, who are required to report the furs they handle. Texas leads all States and Alaska in trapping the following: Badgers 2,500; ringtail cats 14,400; and wolves 6,100. It leads all States in the total take of Canada lynx 1,000, and foxes 29,400.

UTAH requires reports only on beavers, of which 593 were reported taken in the fiscal year 1938.

VERMONT ranks 17th with a total take of 136,900 animals of 8 species in the fiscal year 1938 -- muskrats 88,300; common skunks 20,700; and raccoons 12,200. These figures were obtained from fur dealers, who are required to report on furs purchased. The State does not require trappers to make annual reports.

VIRGINIA ranks 10th with a total take of 376,200 animals of 11 species in the fiscal year 1938 -- muskrats 132,900; opossums 119,700; and common skunks 89,500. Virginia does not require trappers to make annual reports. Fur dealers, however, must report on furs purchased.

WASHINGTON ranks 22nd with a total take of 50,300 animals of 16 species in the fiscal year 1937 -- muskrats 35,159; minks 5,200; and coyotes 3,000.

WEST VIRGINIA ranks 13th. The State does not require trappers to make annual reports, but reports furnished by fur dealers show estimates of a total take of 307,400 animals of 9 species in the fiscal year 1938 -- common skunks 141,600; opossums 91,500, and muskrats 47,500.

WISCONSIN ranks 2nd with a total take of 1,100,000 animals of 14 species in the fiscal year 1938 -- squirrels 514,700; muskrats 426,800; and skunks 57,500. Wisconsin leads all States and Alaska in the number of squirrels taken, 514,700, and leads all States in the number of bears taken, 157.

WYOMING requires trappers to report only on beavers, of which 3,900 were reported in the fiscal year 1938.