

REPORT ON THE 1948 BEAVER AND OTTER SEASON

REGION II

Prior to the opening of the season, there were several days of thawing weather. Most trappers made plans to trap the more remote sites since travel was easy. It looked as though we were to experience another open water season and we feared that the take of beaver would be excessive. However, immediately preceding the season we had the most severe snow storm of the winter, which changed the situation completely. The storm was followed by a period of cold, stormy weather with temperatures ranging as low as twenty-eight below zero. Many beaver ponds had more than a foot of ice covered with a blanket of one and one-half feet or more of snow. There was considerable shelf ice along the streams. These conditions made trapping extremely difficult and only a small dent was made in the beaver and otter population. The more remote areas were inaccessible because of the newly fallen snow and many entire colonies of beaver were not trapped at all.

District 5: The take for the eight counties of District 5 was 290 beaver and 31 otter. There were 402 licenses sold in the district. One beaver was sealed from Beaver Island. Prior to the opening of the season, it was anticipated that quite a few Upper Peninsula trappers would take out licenses in this district. The records show that only one Upper Peninsula trapper was present. 164 trappers were successful in catching either beaver or otter. This figure may be in error, since most beaver trappers trap in pairs and only one usually seals when they have not caught the limit. Interviewed trappers indicated that fair to good stockings of beaver were left on the streams. Many of the trappers suggest a later open season and a few of them requested that it be lengthened to about ten days. There appeared to be a general demand to have the season open at noon and close at noon rather than midnight to midnight. The best prices offered for beaver were \$40.00 for beaver and \$25.00 for otter.

District 6: In the seven counties of this district there were 134 licenses sold. 154 beaver and 26 otter were caught. 61 trappers were successful in catching either beaver or otter. Most of the otter were taken along the Big Manistee River in Kalkaska and Wexford counties. With the ten trap limit, very few special sets were made for otter, most of them being taken incidental to beaver. The professional trappers felt that the regulations were OK and that plenty of beaver were left. The consensus of opinion among trappers and conservation employees indicated that the same regulations would be satisfactory another year. It is generally agreed that the trappers did not remove the annual increase. At Manton a license was issued to a five year old boy. This caused considerable comment and criticism and provoked many recommendations from those who knew about the incident. It was recommended by several that a clause be inserted in the regulations that required trappers to tend their own traps. In this district it was also recommended that the season open and close at noon rather than from midnight to midnight. \$38.00 and \$40.00 was top prices paid for blanket beaver and \$20.00 was offered for otter. Very few beaver or otter were sold at these prices.

District 7: In the six counties in District 7, 374 licenses were sold and 288 beaver and 38 otter were caught. These figures included 13 beaver taken in Ogemaw county and 4 in Roscommon county, sealed in the Gladwin District. The take had practically no effect on the beaver population. It is not felt that the annual increase was harvested and it is believed that another open season can be had in 1949. Many

trappers complained of the season being too short and too early -- especially those who wanted to run long trap lines. In this district it was also suggested by conservation officers and trappers that the season run from noon to noon.

District 8: In District 8, 188 licenses were sold and 171 beaver and 4 otter were trapped. One otter was taken in Mecosta county, 2 in Osceola, and one in Lake county. 96 beaver were taken in Mecosta county and it is felt at this time that the take was much too light and that considerable trouble will develop during the next year. It is estimated that there were about 300 beaver in Mecosta county prior to the open season. One-third of the present season population was removed and with the type of country that the beaver inhabit it is likely that we will have a lot of damage complaints. The majority of the trappers who considered only the trapping aspect of beaver management were dissatisfied with the season, claiming it too short and too early. Trappers who considered all angles believed the early season satisfactory. Most trappers and fur buyers agreed that these early pelts were in better condition than those taken the latter part of March. There is an adequate number of beaver left, and barring a poor breeding season, it is likely that we can have an open trapping season in 1949. Fur buyers offered \$35.00 for blanket beaver and few trappers sold at this price. Later the price was raised to \$50.00 for blankets -- even then but few pelts sold. The suggestion regarding the changing of the season most prevalent was that of having the season open at noon and close at noon. Our officer recommended that the regulations prohibit trappers from setting stakes and wires prior to the open season.

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>LICENSES</u>	<u>BEAVER SEALED</u>	<u>OTTER SEALED</u>
5	414	287	30
6	134	154	26
7	358	200	37
8	188	171	4
9	160	100	5
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1254</u>	<u>912</u>	<u>102</u>

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS: From all of the information gathered it appears that we have a good beaver population left and that barring unforeseen events we can have another season next spring. It is likely that the ten trap limit not only limits the number of beaver that would be taken but also the number of otter that we wished caught. Most trappers questioned regarding the type of set made, indicated that they had trapped primarily for beaver because of the limited number of traps. This in itself prevented a heavy take of otter.

Another condition limiting the catch of otter was the ice along the streams. The thaw, the high water, and the subsequent freeze destroyed all the former slides of the otter and trapping sites were hard to find. The consensus of opinion among trappers and officers is that the otter population is also high and that but a small percentage of the total number was removed by trapping.

It is recommended that the next season, that is in 1949, open at noon and close at noon rather than from midnight to midnight. This one recommendation was universally made by conservation officers and trappers alike.

F. F. Tubbs
Regional Supervisor
Game Division - March 23, 1948

REGION III

Game District II: Only two counties in this district, Calhoun and Hillsdale have beaver. None has been reported in Branch, Washtenaw, Jackson or Lenawee counties.

Prior to the open season on beaver, March 1, a rough estimate placed the Calhoun county beaver population at 35 animals. Fourteen trappers reduced this number by one-third. Of the 12 beaver taken, four were trapped by Paul Jones, a trapper from Hickory Corners. Neither the Calhoun County Conservation office nor the District Office has received complaints because an open season was declared.

In Hillsdale county six locations had beaver early in the year, but since then, the beaver have moved from one area. The present beaver population in this county is estimated to consist of about 20 animals. According to Conservation Officer C. B. Reason, Mr. Claud Van Wert, Hillsdale County Drain Commissioner, has complained on several occasions because beaver plugged drains. In one instance the state trapper was compelled to remove some animals from Section 29, Ransom Township.

If present beaver populations remain the same, or if they increase in Hillsdale and Calhoun counties, I recommend that an open season be declared in both areas in 1949.

Charles Shick
District Game Manager
April 12, 1948

Game District 13: Following is tabular breakdown of beaver season by counties. Totals are derived from county where beaver were trapped.

<u>County</u>	<u>Take</u>	<u>License Sale</u>	<u>Estimated Remaining Population</u>
Allegan	0	0	--
Berrien	22	14	25
Cass	1	3	10
Kalamazoo	13	7	20
St. Joseph	30	30	50
Van Buren	0	0	--
	<u>66</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>105</u>

The weather was decidedly adverse. Many trappers complained of traps iced and in high water; and as far as determined, three was the maximum number of beaver taken from any colony. In St. Joseph and Berrien counties where the bulk of the beaver were taken, the opinion is that less than half of the population was trapped out. Based on number of colonies, bad weather, small catches, and sprung traps the above residual populations have been estimated. In St. Joseph county a few colonies were not trapped at all. Van Buren and Allegan counties have been thought to have few or no beaver but in the last week, reports of one beaver observed and cutting signs, respectively have been received. In Cass county there were reports of five active colonies but only one beaver was taken. Undoubtedly, some of the sites have been abandoned but I am sure that some animals remain in the county even though only one was trapped.

With the relatively low take there may be recurring damage complaints to be considered in the coming year.

Wilbur Bartels
District Game Manager
April 8, 1948

Game District 14: Clinton was the only county in the district open for beaver trapping. Conservation Officer Goff estimated some 8 - 10 animals were present in the county, mostly in Bath Township, specifically in the drain between Park Lake and Chandler's marsh. Another pair had located in a woody swale north of the road to DeWitt from U. S. 27. In a pre-season opinion, Mr. Goff thought all of the beaver trapping would be handled locally with the land-owner keeping outside trappers out of the territory. This was done and, coupled with adverse weather, resulted in a take of no beaver in Clinton county.

It is recommended that any future damage complaints in Clinton county be handled by live trapping.

Marvin Cooley
District Game Manager
April 12, 1948