

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Game Division

Report No. 2055
June 3, 1955

THE 1955 BEAVER AND OTTER SEASON

T A B L E 1

1955 BEAVER AND OTTER TAKE

Region	Licenses sold	Beaver take	Otter take
Region I	3,357	13,413	378
Region II	1,320	3,248	231
Region III	46	43	0
Total state	4,723	16,704	609

Region I

In 1955, the Upper Peninsula beaver take approached the record of 14,245 set in 1953, while the otter take of 378 animals represented a new high for this species.

In order to fit the seasons to the expected weather conditions and to the beaver population, the Upper Peninsula was divided into two AREAS, similar to the pattern established during the last several seasons. (See attached map.)

In the western counties trapping conditions seldom, if ever, have been more favorable. Deep snow from a late March blizzard disappeared quickly with early April 70° to 80° weather. During most of the season streams were ice-free; water levels were stable and almost all back trails were drivable. Further east, it was not so mild and dry, but by the end of the season, conditions had improved and beaver were easy to take. East of Munising and north of M-28, the usual bad trapping conditions existed.

In all but a few areas the beaver population was generally high and the animals were moving. Trappers were enthusiastic over the pre-season report of \$35.00 for blanket beaver. However, by the end of the season \$25.00 was top price.

Seasons in both the western counties (AREA A) and in the eastern counties (AREA B) were similar in length, 14 and 12 days respectively, to last year's seasons. However, the AREA A season was six days later than last year's to insure good trapping weather and the AREA B season was advanced one week over last year so as not to hit the lower beaver population too hard.

On the swift streams that empty into Lake Superior from Keweenaw County watersheds, beaver ponds provide good fish habitat. In order to protect beavers on these waters, Keweenaw County was closed to beaver and otter trapping

in 1955. In addition to this closure, thirty additional areas and streams, including most of the Porcupine Mountain State Park, were closed to trapping. In 1954, a 3,000 square mile area east of Munising and south of M-28 was closed to trapping. This area was opened this year to permit a harvest of the surplus animals. A summary of the 1955 season with similar information for 1953 and 1954 is presented in Table 2.

Late winter reports of a substantial increase in beaver prices stirred up interest in trapping and license sales jumped from 2,251 in 1954 to 3,357 this year. Actual prices received during the sealing periods were about \$5.00 per size class over the 1954 prices, but substantially under the predicted values. Supers brought \$27.00, blankets \$23.00 to \$25.00, extra large \$18.00 to \$20.00, large \$14.00 to \$15.00, medium \$5.00 to \$7.00, small \$3.00, and kits \$2.00.

The average beaver take per license sold increased over that of 1954 (4.4 in 1955; 2.4 in 1954) in all districts except in the Marquette, Alger, and Delta county area. In these central counties the average take dropped from 3.8 in 1954 to 3.1 in 1955.

Beaver numbers in the Escanaba District were not as high as in other areas and apparently the die-off that had been observed in the more westerly counties in 1953 and 1954 had settled in the central counties. Many of the feed beds in the beaver ponds showed little evidence of winter use and beavers were completely absent from some drainages.

Only eight reports of dead beavers came from trappers in the Baraga and Crystal Falls districts this year. In the central and eastern counties, dead beaver reports were more common, though not nearly so numerous as in the western counties in 1953. Fresh beaver carcasses were recovered this year and examined for the tularemia organism without success. Beaver ticks were recovered from animals in all areas of the peninsula. The fact that ticks were discovered in areas where no evidence of a die-off was uncovered seems to indicate that beaver ticks have little or nothing to do with the transmission of tularemia. However, at the present stage of the tularemia investigation, this is speculation only.

As shown in Table 2, the last three years included two periods of relatively heavy trapping pressure separated by a year (1954) of light pressure. During these years the Upper Peninsula otter take seems to have been proportional to the number of trappers. The otter take per 100 trappers remained relatively constant. 11.3 in 1955, 10.7 in 1954, and 11.1 in 1953.

It is too early to estimate the population of beavers that will be available for trapping in 1956. The ideal water and road conditions permitted many areas in the western counties to be trapped that had been inaccessible in recent seasons. In some of these areas probably more beaver were taken than was necessary. However, in general, there appears to be a good residual population. We should anticipate less liberal regulations in 1956 with a few more closed rivers and streams.

Probably a larger proportion of the beaver population was taken in the Escanaba district than elsewhere. In view of the apparently mild die-off in this district the antiseptic value of a large take is an important consideration.

Some Lower Peninsula trappers took advantage of the later season in the Upper Peninsula and crossed the Straits to trap. Most of their activities were

confined to the eastern Upper Peninsula counties, though one or two trapped as far west as the Crystal Falls area. During the recent period of low fur prices, movement across the Straits has been at a minimum.

Region II

The northern part of the Lower Peninsula was divided into two AREAS somewhat like that of the 1953 regulations. (See map.) This was done to provide trappers in the northeastern counties and in Clare County with a more certain opportunity to take beavers under good trapping conditions, thereby insuring a higher take in this area where there was a larger population. In Clare County, a large number of beaver colonies located near agricultural areas have been a source of nuisance animals. Including Clare County in the area of more liberal regulations was designed to remove some of these animals. In northwestern Gladwin County, activity of beavers on the Cedar River Watershed Improvement Area has been impairing the effects of stream improvement measures. In order to lower the beaver population in this area, two townships were included in the later season AREA.

In general, trapping conditions were ideal in all areas, at least toward the end of the AREA D season (March 20 to 31). Water levels were stable, roads were passable, beaver were moving and trapping was easy. During the season in AREA C (March 27 to April 7) trapping conditions were excellent during the entire season.

Two entire counties (Isabella and Muskegon), and the major parts of three others (Manistee, Mason, and Wexford), and five small areas were closed to permit beaver numbers to increase. The Hunt Creek Fisheries Experiment Station was closed, as usual.

A summary of the 1955 season with similar information for 1953 and 1954 is presented in Table 3.

Individual trapper success in Region II (2.5 beaver per license) increased over that of last year (2.1 beaver per license). In the northeastern area (AREA C) trapper success was 3.0 beaver per license, compared to 2.0 in other northern counties.

Although a take of 231 otters in Region II represents a record high, the otter take per 100 trappers has not varied appreciably in recent years: 17 in 1955, 18 in 1954, 17 in 1953. Trapper interest in otters continued high, probably because of pelt values which ranged from \$17.00 to \$25.00. Fur buyers seemed to be interested in buying beaver pelts but were reluctant to pay more than \$25.00 for blankets. Smaller sizes averaged \$4.00 to \$5.00 successively less per size class.

There is a good post-season population throughout Region II. In southern Clare County colonies were trapped hard and less liberal regulations probably will be advisable for that area in 1956. Thirty-seven beavers were removed from the Cedar River watershed. This will benefit the stream improvement program. Additional beavers will have to be removed from this area before the 1956 trapping season to prevent interference with the trout program.

No diseased or dead beaver were reported for the Lower Peninsula during or following the 1955 season.

Regulations require beavers and otters to be sealed in the AREA in which they were taken. When a region is divided into one or more AREAS with different sealing periods in each AREA, trappers often find it inconvenient to seal at the required sealing station. In order to overcome this, they seal where convenient, then list the locality of their trapping to coincide with the appropriate sealing station. In order to eliminate this confusion and to provide the most accurate picture of the beaver and otter take, it is recommended that when a zoning system is used, it be required that sealing be accomplished only in the Peninsula in which the animals were taken.

Region III

Table 4 shows the distribution of the beaver take in the southern counties.

In 1955, two small areas were closed to trapping in the Barry State Game Area.

In the fall of 1954, beaver were released into the Shiawassee Flats Wildlife Management Area, northeast of St. Charles, to provide flooded areas for waterfowl. In 1955, Saginaw County was closed to protect these beaver colonies.

The 43 beaver taken in Region III is about an average catch for recent years. As usual, most of them came from the Kent-Montcalm area and from the southwestern counties.

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TABLE 3

BEAVER AND OTTER TAKE, REGION II
1953-'54-'55

	County	1955			1954			1953		
		Licenses sold*	Beaver take	Otter take	Licenses sold*	Beaver take	Otter take	Licenses sold*	Beaver take	Otter take
District 5	Alpena	60	204	19	49	88	9	43	158	16
	Antrim	4	17	9	2	3	3	4	20	4
	Charlevoix	18	51	2	8	7	2	17	23	0
	Cheboygan	57	235	12	57	140	15	59	214	14
	Emmet	29	80	3	16	43	3	14	47	2
	Montmorency	63	82	12	49	58	9	79	138	11
	Otsego	24	45	3	22	37	2	27	60	1
	Presque Isle	84	188	17	73	89	15	53	197	15
	Total District	339	902	77	276	465	58	296	857	63
District 6	Benzie	0	1	1						
	Grand Traverse	27	15	1	11	6	5	15	14	3
	Kalkaska	29	45	14	33	67	21	22	87	5
	Leelanau	0	5	0	4	14	0	0	9	0
	Manistee	16	35	5						
	Missaukee	26	34	5	24	69	12	18	58	4
	Wexford	20	44	5	23	64	9	14	No open season	
	Total District	118	179	31	95	220	47	69	168	12
District 7	Alcona	44	256	12	36	104	3	50	256	7
	Crawford	33	43	17	20	53	3	23	66	9
	Iosco	53	117	4	41	50	6	43	83	4
	Ogemaw	138	366	25	136	215	11	133	480	16
	Oscoda	28	54	8	20	36	11	35	77	13
	Roscommon	73	245	22	56	136	15	75	273	25
	Total District	369	1081	88	309	594	49	359	1235	74
District 8	Lake	22	44	1	10	34	4	21	24	0
	Mason	13	37	2						
	Mecosta	107	232	1	70	218	1	68	223	0
	Newaygo	20	45	0	26	89	0	No open season		
	Oceana	16	36	0	No open season			9	55	0
	Osceola	52	101	3	26	81	6	38	66	5
	Total District	230	495	7	132	422	11	136	368	5
District 9	Arenac	60	80	4	79	98	8	78	224	9
	Bay	0	0	1	No open season			No open season		
	Clare	95	304	12	56	96	8	49	171	14
	Gladwin	85	147	10	64	117	11	75	206	12
	Isabella	8	Closed season			18	45	1	4	No open season
	Midland	16	60	1	22	105	0	4	No open season	
	Total District	264	591	28	239	461	28	210	601	35
TOTAL REGION II		1,320	3,248	231	1,051	2,162	193	1,070	3,229	189

*Some trappers reside in one county and trap in other areas.

TABLE 2.

BEAVER AND OTTER TAKE, REGION I
1953-1954-1955

County	1955			1954			1953		
	Licenses Sold*	Beaver take	Otter take	Licenses Sold*	Beaver take	Otter take	Licenses Sold*	Beaver take	Otter take
District 1									
Baraga	198	876	30	146	289	9	174	743	33
Houghton	265	1044	10	225	482	8	271	1189	8
Keweenaw	No open season			16	48	0	21	132	0
Ontonagon	507	2291	21	369	936	16	341	1992	36
Gogebic	209	1002	29	165	406	31	189	927	31
Total District	1179	5213	90	921	2161	64	996	4983	108
District 2									
Dickinson	182	317	13	178	321	8	240	960	24
Iron	378	1878	62	281	659	30	315	1790	55
Menominee	64	287	17	26	43	4	93	369	12
Total District	624	2482	92	485	1023	42	648	3119	91
District 3									
Alger**	162	589	30	103	476	22	105	470	20
Delta	245	698	25	158	601	37	247	749	20
Marquette	332	983	34	319	1144	30	329	1299	38
Total District	739	2270	89	580	2221	89	681	2518	78
District 4									
Chippewa	207	1336	10	59	325	14	325	1542	11
Luce	177	320	28	132	286	17	144	461	16
Mackinac	186	854	29	No open season			129	839	6
Schoolcraft	245	935	40	74	278	15	184	783	34
Total District	815	3848	107	265	889	46	782	3625	67
TOTAL REGION	3357	13413	378	2251	6294	241	3107	14245	344

*Some trappers reside in one county and trap in other areas.

**A portion of Alger County is in District 4. In this table all of Alger County data is included in District 3.

T A B L E 4
BEAVER TAKE, REGION III
1955, '54, '53

COUNTY	1955		1954		1953	
	Licenses sold*	Beaver take	Licenses sold	Beaver take	Licenses sold	Beaver take
Allegan	2	0	0	0	3	0
Barry	8	5	3	3	3	11
Berrien	5	6	1	0	1	0
Branch	1	0	0	1	0	7
Calhoun	2	3	6	2	3	1
Hillsdale	3	7	5	6	8	14
Jackson	1	0	0	0	1	0
Kalamazoo	0	3	0	0	0	0
Kent	5	5	2	3	2	3
Lapeer	0	0	0	0	3	0
Montcalm	9	12	16	19	5	6
Saginaw	8	0	5	0	3	0
St. Joseph	2	2	1	3	1	1
Total region	46	43	39	37	33	43

* Some trappers reside in one county and trap in other areas.

D. H. Jenkins

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AREA A
April 1-13
6 Beaver & 3 Otter
Hides sealed by 5:00 PM
EST-April 15

AREA B
March 27-April 7
4 Beaver & 3 Otter
Hides sealed by 5:00 PM
EST-April 9

AREA C
March 20-31
4 Beaver & 3 Otter
Hides sealed by 5:00 PM
EST-April 2

AREA D

■ Areas and streams closed to trapping

MICHIGAN
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GAME DIVISION

MICHIGAN BEAVER SEASONS
1940 - 1955

