

REPORT ON THE 1941 RACCOON HUNTING SEASON

November 19 and from November 23 to November 26, inclusive, was spent in the field to secure information on the 1941 raccoon hunting season. It was soon apparent that contacting 'coon hunters in large numbers would be a difficult and time-consuming job. Therefore, fur-buyers in the various localities were visited whenever possible. From the purchases of pelts they have an indication of the number of 'coons being taken, and in some cases they also hear comments by hunters concerning success or failure, as well as on the ~~pos-~~
possibility sibility of hunting conditions.

The counties visited were Eaton, Ionia, Kent, Allegan, Van Buren, Berrien, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, and Ingham. No contacts were made in Berrien County. An attempt was made to see Mr. J. A. Stone^W at Coloma, who was in 1939 (and may be still) president of the S.W. Michigan 'Coon Hunters' Association, but he was out of town. Six hunters and ten fur-buyers were interviewed. Some of the hunters, especially Guy Teed of Allegan and E. E. Moran, president of the Southern Michigan 'Coon Hunters' Association at Kalamazoo, were able to give well-founded opinions regarding the success that many other hunters in their localities were having.

Hunters and buyers both report that good numbers of 'coons are being found this year, but two factors may curtail the kill. Much rainy weather has cut down considerably the number of good nights for hunting, and snow in some places (Allegan for one) caused the animals to become inactive for a short time at least. Secondly, as a result of abnormal rains, river bottoms and low ground throughout the southern half of the state have been flooded most of the season. A number of hunters said that though 'coons were plentiful and their dogs ran many, few catches were made because of high water and the resulting difficult

File

conditions. All said they were being hampered by wet grounds. The bumper crop of acorns is a boon to hunters as well as 'coons in some sections since the animals are feeding in the oaks where trailing conditions are much better for hunter and dog.

Guy Teed reported two hunters near Allegan had taken 9 and 11 'coons each during the first three weeks of the season. One interviewed hunter had taken only 2 but had trailed about 18. I saw 6 pelts that another had taken and 23 that two hunters had caught. Other sources reported that some of these 23 were taken before the season opened, which could have been the case as all but 6 were far from prime.

My opinion is that while raccoons are as plentiful or perhaps more so than in the past few years, the state kill may be somewhat lower because of conditions unfavorable for good hunting.

Hunters were also asked about difficulty in obtaining permission to hunt 'coons on private lands. They were unanimous in reporting no refusals to allow hunting except that sheep owners wanted dogs kept out of pastures. General opinion is that raccoon hunters have little trouble in getting on to hunt, although some fellows undoubtedly trespass, which can be done easily at night.

The statements of fur-buyers can be summed up as follows: Few hunters are selling their 'coon pelts now ^{but} ~~and~~ are holding them for better prices. Buyers are paying from \$1.00 up to as high as \$5.50 for the best pelts. Those who had bought any number of skins reported priming to be about two weeks earlier this year. One buyer believes the pelts are better than at any time during the past 10 or 15 years.

Roy Brown of Kalamazoo, who is one of the top ranking buyers in the state, has purchased about 1,000 raccoon skins this year, which is near his

average for this time of season. He, as most dealers, seems to be buying all furs cautiously because of the unpredictable market. The luxury tax and lack of foreign exports are contributing to a slow turnover.

At Swan Creek

At Swan Creek flooded grounds will surely reduce the kill this year. Even animals going to the oaks for acorns often can elude dogs by returning to the flooded bottoms. The Ottawa Marsh has been under water all season with the result that hunting is next to impossible on much of it. Three tags were obtained from hunters who had hunted near the Ottawa. One 'coon was taken on the tract and two others marked there were taken nearby. A fourth tag from another hunter marked a pen-raised animal taken about four miles from the point of release last summer.

The attached map shows the source of 'coon hunters who have permits to hunt at Swan Creek. Thirty-five of the 55 are from the local county of Allegany, 13 from Ottawa, 6 from Van Buren, and only one from Kent. I think this probably presents a picture similar to one of state-wide conditions. That is, 'coon hunters do most of their hunting relatively close to home. Few extended hunting trips are made; rather, hunting is done on favorable nights whenever they occur, and the hunter is back at his job next day.

SUMMARY

1. 'Coons are as abundant or perhaps somewhat more so this year than in the past few years according to hunters and fur-buyers.
2. It appears that abnormally rainy weather and the resulting flooded river bottoms and lowlands may result in a reduced kill this year.
3. Raccoon hunters report having little difficulty in obtaining permission to hunt on private lands.
4. Fur-buyers are finding raccoon pelts to be priming about two weeks earlier than usual this year.
5. Dealers are buying all furs cautiously because the market is unpredictable.
6. The Ottawa Marsh kill at Allegan is expected to be low because of flooded grounds.
7. The majority of 'coon hunters at Swan Creek are from the local county of Allegan.

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION GAME DIVISION

Source of 'coon hunters
at
Swan Creek
Wildlife Experiment Station

1941

TOTAL: 55

