



## 2017 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST SURVEY

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### ABSTRACT

*A survey was completed to determine the number of harvest tag holders who set traps for marten and fisher, the number of animals caught, the types of traps used, and the number of days spent trapping. In 2017, 5,671 furtakers obtained a harvest tag to trap marten or fisher, compared to 4,273 tag holders in 2016 (33% increase). About 10% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (550 trappers) and 9% set traps for fisher (517). Trappers spent about 4,428 days targeting marten, captured 226 marten, and registered 182 marten. Trappers pursuing other species caught an additional 61 marten but released 57 marten alive and registered 4 of the non-target fisher. The number of trappers targeting marten (550 versus 519 trappers in 2016) and their trapping effort (4,428 versus 3,972 days in 2016) did not change significantly between 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, the number of marten registered did not change significantly between 2016 and 2017 (186 versus 158 in 2016). Trapper effort per registered marten did not change significantly between 2017 than 2016 (24.3 versus 25.1 days in 2016). An estimated 517 trappers spent 4,585 days targeting fisher, captured 169 fisher, and registered 146 fisher. Trappers pursuing other species caught 54 additional fisher and registered 4 of the non-target fisher. The number of trappers seeking fisher and their trapping effort did not change significantly between 2016 and 2017. The number of fisher registered by all trappers decreased significantly by 26% between 2016 and 2017; however, trapper effort per registered fisher was not significantly different between 2017 than 2016 (31.5 versus 25.9 days in 2016).*



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## INTRODUCTION

The Natural Resources Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have the authority and responsibility to protect and manage the wildlife resources of the state of Michigan. Harvest surveys are important management tools used to help accomplish this statutory responsibility. The main objectives of this harvest survey were to determine the number of trappers who set traps for marten (*Martes americana*) and fisher (*M. pennanti*), the types of traps used, the number of days trapped, and the number of animals captured.

Efforts to restore the American marten and fisher have been successful throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) (Williams et al. 2007). As a result, the first modern fisher trapping season was initiated in 1989, and the first modern marten trapping season was initiated in 2000.

In 2017, the marten and fisher trapping season was December 1-15 in the entire UP, except Drummond Island, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and Seney National Wildlife Refuge. In order to trap either marten or fisher, trappers were required to obtain a free harvest tag, in addition to a Fur Harvester License. Trappers had to be a resident, 8 years of age or older, to obtain a kill tag. Harvest tags were available from May 1 through December 15. Trappers were limited to one marten or one fisher in 2017. Successful trappers were required to register all fisher and marten taken by December 20, 2017. Regulations mandated any fisher or marten captured in excess of the limit or outside of the season (i.e., incidental captures) must be released alive by trappers. If these incidental captures could not be released alive, trappers were required to transfer the incidental catches to the DNR. Trappers could use body-gripping (e.g., conibear) traps, foothold traps, and live restraining cage traps to capture marten and fisher.

## METHODS

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to everyone who obtained a marten or fisher harvest tag in 2017 (5,671 tag holders). Trappers receiving the questionnaire were asked to report if they set traps for marten or fisher, number of days spent afield (i.e., effort), number of marten and fisher caught and released alive, and number of marten and fisher registered (registration estimates included incidentally caught animals that were not returned to the trapper). The number of days spent afield was reported as the number of days in which a trapper had at least one trap set. Trappers were asked to report whether any marten and fisher captured were taken in traps set for them or taken in traps set for another species. Trappers were also asked to indicate their impression of the status of the marten and fisher populations in the county where they primarily trapped (i.e., absent, stable, increasing, or decreasing).

Questionnaires were mailed to all harvest tag holders during mid-January 2018, and up to two follow-up questionnaires were mailed to nonrespondents. Although all tag holders were sent a questionnaire, not everybody returned their questionnaire. To extrapolate from the tag holders that returned their questionnaire to all people obtaining harvest tags, estimates were calculated using a simple random sampling design (Cochran 1977).

A 95% confidence limit (CL) was calculated for each estimate. In theory, the CL can be added and subtracted from the estimate to calculate the 95% confidence interval. The confidence interval is a measure of the precision associated with the estimate and implies that the true value would be within this interval 95 times out of 100. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include failure of participants to provide answers (nonresponse bias), question-wording, and question order. Because it is very difficult to measure these biases, estimates were not adjusted for these possible biases.

Statistical tests are used routinely to determine the likelihood that the differences among estimates are larger than expected by chance alone. The overlap of 95% confidence intervals was used to determine whether estimates differed. Non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals were equivalent to stating that the difference between the means was larger than would be expected 95 out of 100 times if the study had been repeated (Payton et al. 2003).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2017, 5,671 trappers obtained a harvest tag to trap either marten or fisher, compared to 4,273 tag holders in 2016 (33% increase). Men obtained most of the marten and fisher harvest tags (5,413). Women obtained 249 harvest tags, and the sex of nine tag holders was unknown. Of the 5,490 people receiving the questionnaire, 2,960 responded (54% response rate). Questionnaires could not be delivered to 181 harvest tag holders.

### Marten

About 10% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (550 trappers, Table 1). About  $34 \pm 4\%$  of these trappers successfully captured at least one marten. The trappers targeting marten spent 4,428 days trapping ( $\bar{x} = 8.1 \pm 0.5$  days/trapper), captured 226 marten (44 released alive), and registered 182 marten (Table 2). Trappers targeting other species caught 61 marten (57 released alive) and registered 4 incidental catches. Among trappers seeking marten, the greatest numbers of marten were captured in Marquette (63), Chippewa (29), Alger (23), and Houghton (23) counties.

The number of trappers targeting marten (550 versus 519 trappers in 2016) and their trapping effort did not change significantly (4,428 versus 3,972 days in 2016, Figure 1) between 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, the number of marten registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting marten and trappers that caught non-target marten) did not change significantly between 2016 and 2017 (186 versus 158 marten in 2016, Figure 1). Among trappers targeting marten, the mean number of days of effort per registered marten was  $24.3 \pm 4.0$  days in 2017, which was not significantly different from the 2016 estimate (25.1 days, Figure 2).

The correlation between trapping effort and pelt prices (Pearson product moment correlation coefficient [ $r$ ] = 0.50, the probability of obtaining this result [ $P$ ] = 0.04) was significant, but the correlation between the number of trappers and pelt prices was not significant ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $P = 0.17$ ). The mean number of days of effort per registered marten was not correlated with the mean value of marten pelts during 2000-2017 ( $r = 0.23$ ,  $P = 0.35$ ) (Figure 3).

Most trappers used body-gripping type traps (e.g., conibears) to capture marten ( $85 \pm 3\%$ ), although foothold traps also were used frequently ( $29 \pm 4\%$ ). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was  $4.7 \pm 0.4$ . Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set per day was  $3.6 \pm 0.4$ .

Twenty-four percent of marten trappers ( $\pm 3\%$ ) believed marten numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while  $37 \pm 4\%$  thought marten numbers were stable,  $8 \pm 2\%$  thought marten were declining,  $5 \pm 2\%$  indicated marten were not present, and  $26 \pm 3\%$  did not comment on the status of marten.

## **Fisher**

About 9% of the marten and fisher tag holders set traps for fisher (517 trappers, Table 1). About  $29 \pm 4\%$  of these trappers successfully captured at least one fisher. Trappers targeting fishers spent 4,585 days trapping ( $8.9 \pm 0.5$  days/trapper), captured 169 fisher (23 released alive), and registered 146 fisher (Table 3). Trappers targeting other species caught 54 additional fisher (50 released alive) and registered 4 incidental catches. Among trappers seeking fisher, the greatest numbers of fisher were captured in Marquette (34), Iron (31), and Alger (23) counties.

Between 2016 and 2017, the number of trappers targeting fisher (517 versus 581 trappers in 2016) and their trapping effort was not significantly different (4,585 versus 5,011 days in 2016, Figure 4). The number of fisher registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting fisher and trappers that caught non-target fisher) decreased significantly by 26% between 2016 and 2017 (149 versus 203 fisher in 2016, Figure 4). Among trappers targeting fisher, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was  $31.5 \pm 4.3$  days in 2017, which was not significantly different from the number of days per registered fisher in 2016 (25.9 days, Figure 5).

The correlations between the number of trappers and pelt prices ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ) and between trapping effort and pelt prices ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) during 1997-2017 were significant. However, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was not significantly correlated with the mean value of fisher pelts ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $P = 0.30$ ; Figure 6).

Most trappers used body-gripping traps (e.g., conibears) to capture fisher ( $84 \pm 3\%$ ), although foothold traps also were used frequently ( $33 \pm 4\%$ ). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was  $4.7 \pm 0.4$  traps. Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set daily was  $3.6 \pm 0.4$  traps.

Twenty-four percent of fisher trappers ( $\pm 4\%$ ) believed fisher numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while  $37 \pm 4\%$  thought fisher numbers were stable,  $11 \pm 3\%$  thought they were declining,  $3 \pm 1\%$  indicated fisher were absent, and  $25 \pm 4\%$  did not comment on the status of fisher.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **LITERATURE CITED**

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Williams, B. W., J. H. Gilbert, and P. A. Zollner. 2007. Historical perspective on the reintroduction of the fisher and American marten in Wisconsin and Michigan. United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, General Technical Report NRS-5, Newton Square, Pennsylvania, USA.

Table 1. Estimated harvest tag holders that attempted to trap marten or fisher in Michigan during 2017 season.

Species sought by tag holders	%	95% CL <sup>a</sup>	Total	95% CL <sup>a</sup>
Trapped for only marten	3	0	176	25
Trapped for only fisher	3	0	144	22
Trapped for both marten and fisher	7	1	374	35
Trapped for either marten or fisher	12	1	694	46
Trapped for marten <sup>b</sup>	10	1	550	42
Trapped for fisher <sup>c</sup>	9	1	517	41

<sup>a</sup>95% confidence limits.

<sup>b</sup>Sum of trappers that trapped only marten and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

<sup>c</sup>Sum of trappers that trapped only fisher and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

Table 2. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, marten captured (including all incidental catches and releases), marten released alive, and marten registered (including incidental catches) during the 2017 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and area trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Marten captured <sup>a</sup>		Marten released alive		Marten registered <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL
<i>Trappers that set traps targeting marten</i>										
Alger	48	13	310	100	23	9	4	4	19	8
Baraga	36	11	216	86	21	11	6	8	15	7
Chippewa	86	17	609	140	29	11	2	3	27	10
Delta	13	7	119	65	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	10	6	82	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	27	10	241	102	11	7	0	0	11	7
Houghton	54	14	416	124	23	9	0	0	23	9
Iron	77	16	667	158	17	8	0	0	17	8
Keweenaw	19	8	180	85	6	4	0	0	6	4
Luce	25	9	138	63	11	6	0	0	11	6
Mackinac	21	9	144	70	2	3	2	3	0	0
Marquette	92	18	651	154	63	30	29	25	34	11
Menominee	13	7	142	78	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	31	10	197	75	10	6	2	3	8	5
Schoolcraft	40	12	314	109	10	6	0	0	10	6
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal <sup>d</sup>	550	42	4,428	427	226	39	44	27	182	25
<i>Trappers that captured marten in traps set to catch another species</i>										
Alger	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baraga	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chippewa	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Iron	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keweenaw	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luce	4	5	NA	NA	4	5	2	3	2	3
Mackinac	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marquette	11	6	NA	NA	56	44	54	43	2	3
Menominee	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schoolcraft	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
LP <sup>c</sup>	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal <sup>d</sup>	19	8	NA	NA	61	44	57	44	4	4
<b>Grand total<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>558</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4,428</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>26</b>

<sup>a</sup>All marten removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

<sup>b</sup>Included incidentally caught marten that were not returned to the trapper.

<sup>c</sup>Counties in the Lower Peninsula.

<sup>d</sup>Number of trappers does not add up to totals because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

Table 3. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, fisher captured (including all incidental catches and releases), fisher released alive, and fisher registered (including incidental catches) by trappers during the 2017 Michigan trapping season.

Type of trapper and county trapped	Trappers		Trapping effort (days)		Fisher captured <sup>a</sup>		Fisher released alive		Fisher registered <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	95% CL <sup>c</sup>	Total	95% CL <sup>c</sup>	Total	95% CL <sup>c</sup>	Total	95% CL <sup>c</sup>	Total	95% CL <sup>c</sup>
<i>Trappers that set traps targeting fisher</i>										
Alger	44	12	289	102	23	10	4	4	19	8
Baraga	21	9	171	82	8	6	2	3	6	4
Chippewa	56	14	387	111	6	4	0	0	6	4
Delta	15	7	148	76	2	3	0	0	2	3
Dickinson	21	9	176	80	8	5	0	0	8	5
Gogebic	27	10	259	107	8	6	2	3	6	4
Houghton	48	13	425	129	6	4	0	0	6	4
Iron	73	16	657	160	31	14	8	7	23	9
Keweenaw	21	9	174	83	2	3	0	0	2	3
Luce	29	10	180	74	13	7	0	0	13	7
Mackinac	17	8	132	69	2	3	0	0	2	3
Marquette	86	17	659	156	34	13	6	6	29	11
Menominee	34	11	395	132	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	31	10	228	87	13	8	2	3	11	6
Schoolcraft	40	12	305	105	13	7	0	0	13	7
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal <sup>d</sup>	517	41	4,585	450	169	28	23	11	146	23
<i>s that captured fisher in traps set to catch another species</i>										
Alger	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baraga	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chippewa	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	0	0	2	3
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Iron	4	4	NA	NA	4	4	4	4	0	0
Keweenaw	2	3	NA	NA	4	5	4	5	0	0
Luce	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mackinac	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marquette	10	6	NA	NA	34	25	33	25	2	3
Menominee	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schoolcraft	2	3	NA	NA	8	10	8	10	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal <sup>d</sup>	31	10	NA	NA	54	29	50	28	4	4
Grand total <sup>d</sup>	527	41	4,585	450	222	42	73	31	149	23

<sup>a</sup>All fisher removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

<sup>b</sup>Included incidentally caught fisher that were not returned to the trapper.

<sup>c</sup>95% confidence limits.

<sup>d</sup>Number of trappers does not add up to statewide total because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

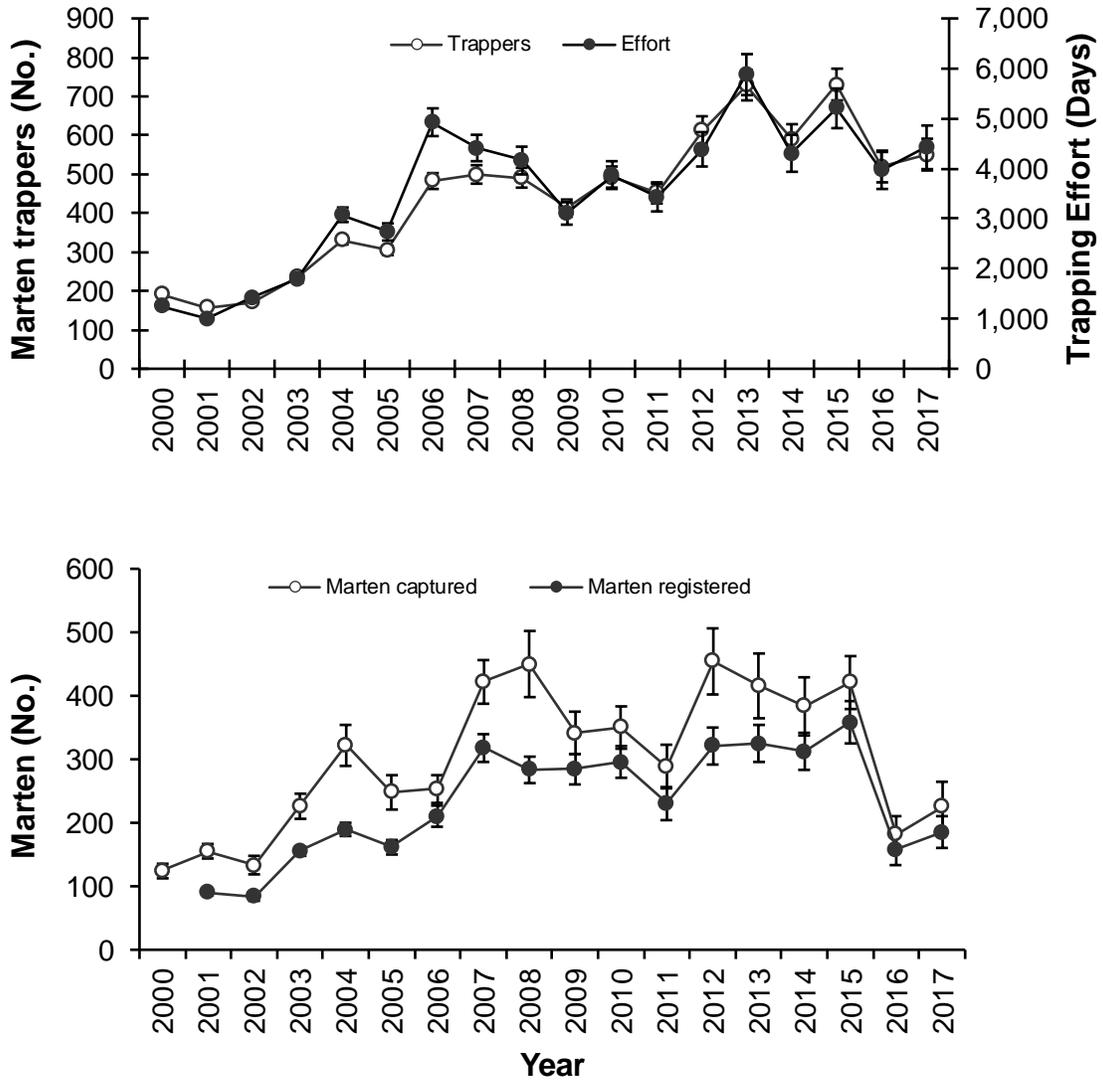


Figure 1. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of marten captured and registered in Michigan, 2000-2017. Registration total was not estimated in 2000. Beginning in 2006, the estimates of marten captured and registered included incidental animals that the trapper was not allowed to keep; estimates from previous years excluded incidental animals. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers specifically targeting martens, but estimates of marten captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included marten taken by trappers not targeting marten).

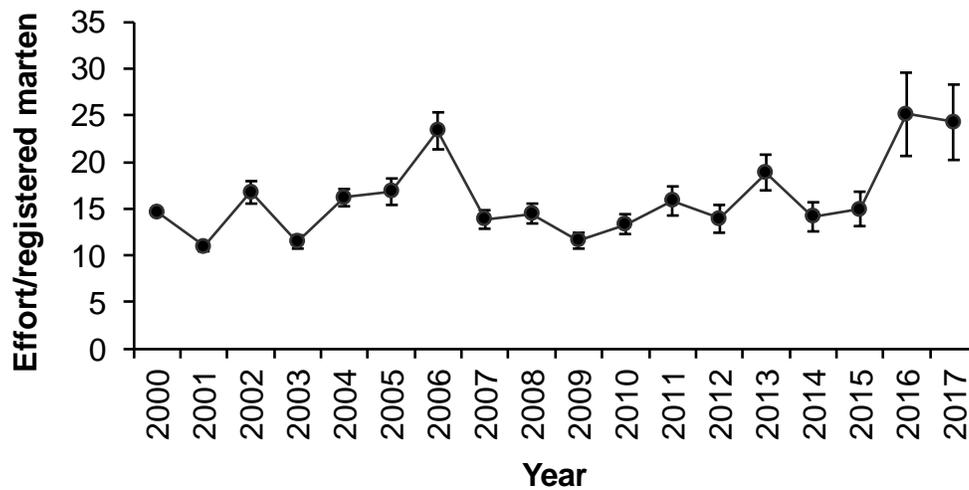


Figure 2. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan during 2000-2017. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting martens.

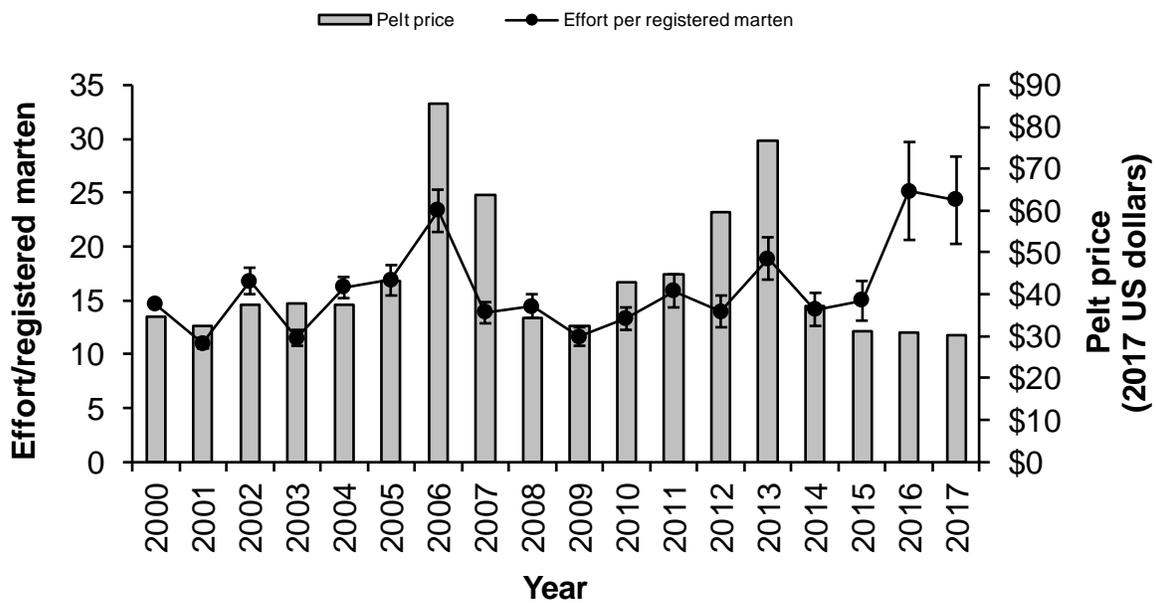


Figure 3. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 2000-2017. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2018). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2017 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting marten.

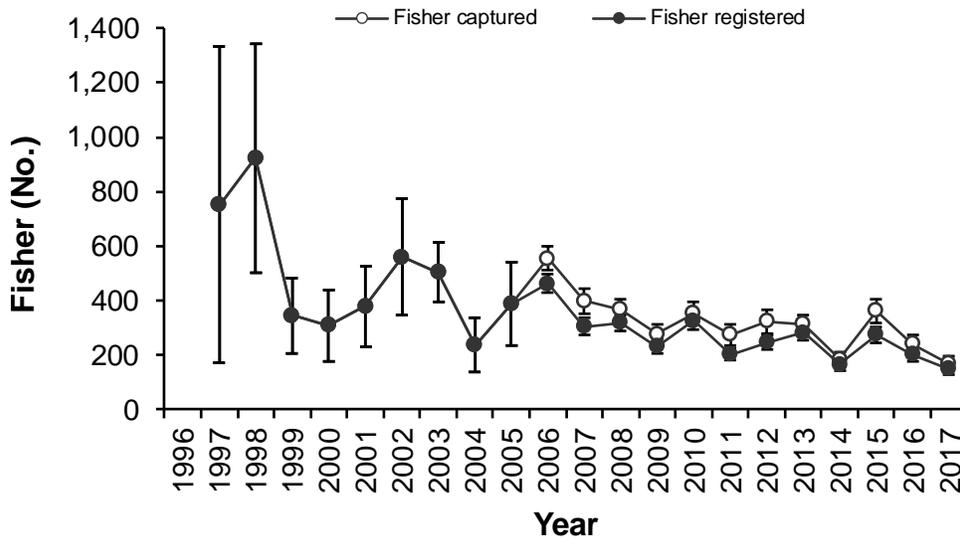
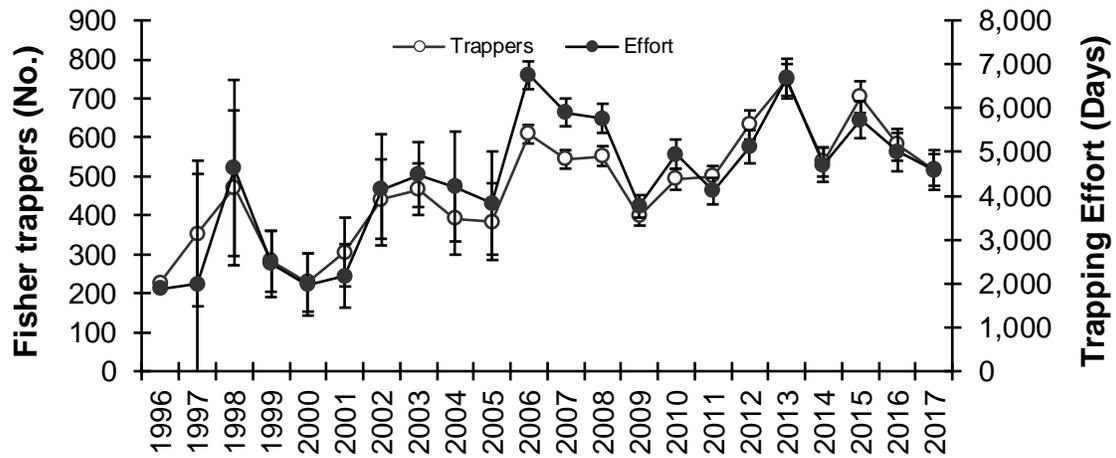


Figure 4. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of fisher captured and registered in Michigan, 1996-2017. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers targeting fishers, but estimates of fisher captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included fisher taken by trappers not targeting fisher).

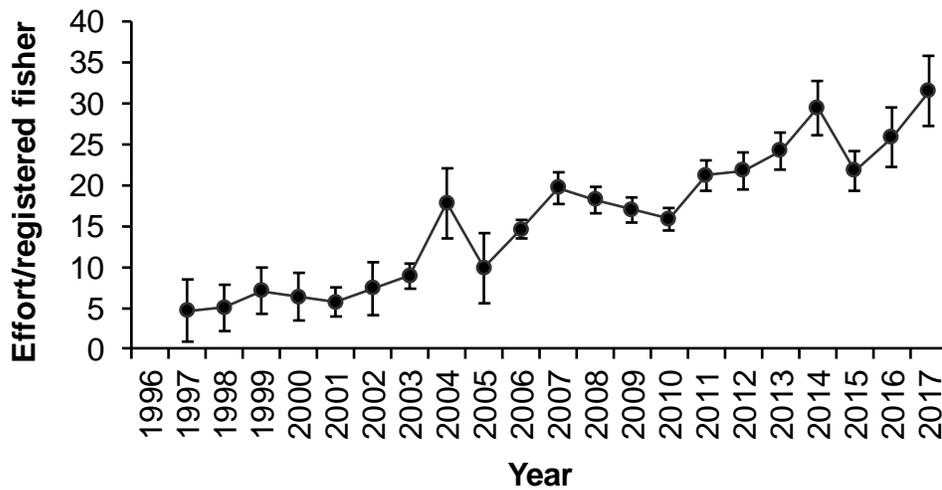


Figure 5. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan during 1997-2017. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

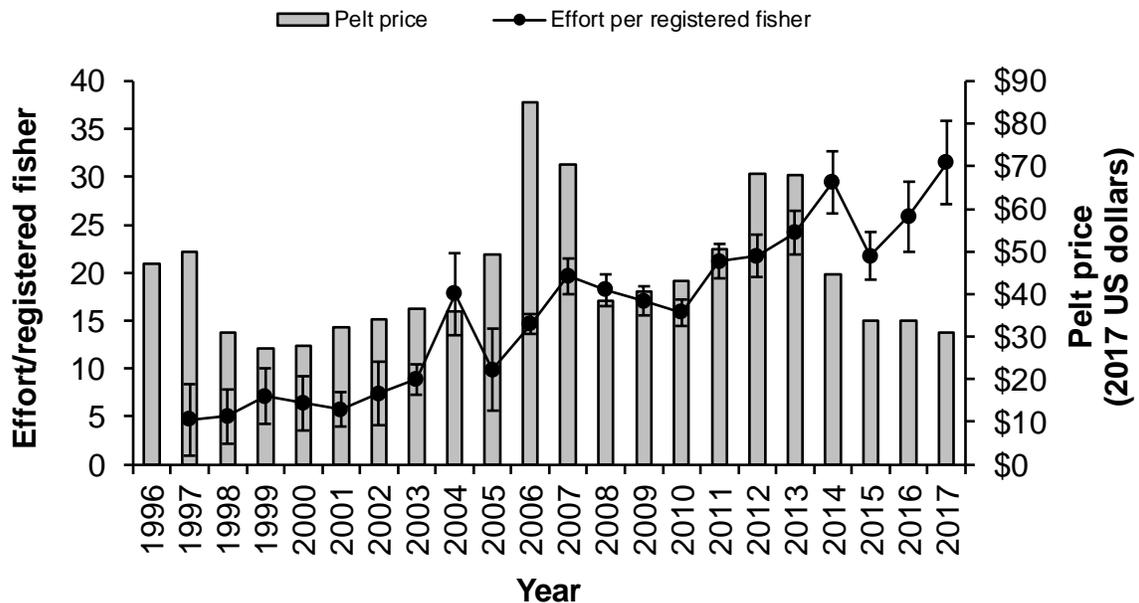


Figure 6. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 1996-2017. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Abraham and Dexter 2018) and Wisconsin (Dhuey 2018). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2017 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

Appendix A. The questionnaire sent to people who obtained a marten or fisher harvest tag in 2017.



# 2017 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST REPORT

This information is requested under authority of Part 435, 1994 PA 451, M.C.L. 324.43539.



*It is important that you complete and return this questionnaire even if you did not trap or capture a marten or fisher.*

1. Did you place traps for marten during the 2017 season (December 1-15)?

<sup>1</sup>  Yes      <sup>2</sup>  No, Skip to question number 5.

2. If you attempted to trap marten during the 2017 marten season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR MARTEN (List each county that you trapped for marten.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR MARTEN	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all marten that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

3. How many of the following traps did you set for marten in 2017?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Foothold  
\_\_\_\_\_ Conibear  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

4. What is the status of marten in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2017?

<sup>1</sup>  Increasing    <sup>2</sup>  Decreasing    <sup>3</sup>  Stable    <sup>4</sup>  Not present    <sup>5</sup>  Not sure

5. Did you incidentally catch any marten while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #2.

<sup>1</sup>  Yes      <sup>2</sup>  No, Skip to question number 7.

6. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental martens you captured. Please do not report marten already reported in question #2.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental marten.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental martens you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL MARTEN CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental marten that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

7. Did you place traps for fisher during the 2017 season (December 1-15)?

<sup>1</sup>  Yes      <sup>2</sup>  No, skip to question #11.

8. If you attempted to trap fisher during the 2017 fisher season, please complete the following table.

COUNTY TRAPPED FOR FISHER (List each county that you trapped for fisher.)	NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR FISHER	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only fishers you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all fisher that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)

9. How many of the following traps did you set for fisher in 2017?

(For each type, record the average number used per day.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Foothold  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Conibear  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

10. What is the status of fisher in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2017?

<sup>1</sup>  Increasing    <sup>2</sup>  Decreasing    <sup>3</sup>  Stable    <sup>4</sup>  Not present    <sup>5</sup>  Not sure

11. Did you incidentally catch any fisher while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #8.

<sup>1</sup>  Yes      <sup>2</sup>  No, Skip to question #13.

12. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental fisher you captured. Please do not report fisher already reported in question #8.

COUNTY WHERE INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT (List each county that you caught an incidental fisher.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental fisher you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental fisher that were registered including catches that were not returned to you.)

13. Do you have any comments or suggestions about marten or fisher management in Michigan?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please return questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.  
 Thank you for your help!

[www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)