Doug Langila demonstrates the use of a marten box at a trapping workshop. (YG Photo)

"...They live on rabbits, the lynx and all this -- coyote, wolverine. The wolf, they're doing okay because they live on moose, caribou and everything. But smaller animals, they can't get food. They can't kill a moose, they can't get a caribou, like lynx and all this kind of thing."

***Paddy Jim,** Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Whitehorse 2010*

For information about trapping programs or a copy of the full report on the Trapper Questionnaire analysis, contact Helen Slama at (867) 667-8403, or 1-800-661-0408 x8403, or helen.slama@gov.yk.ca.

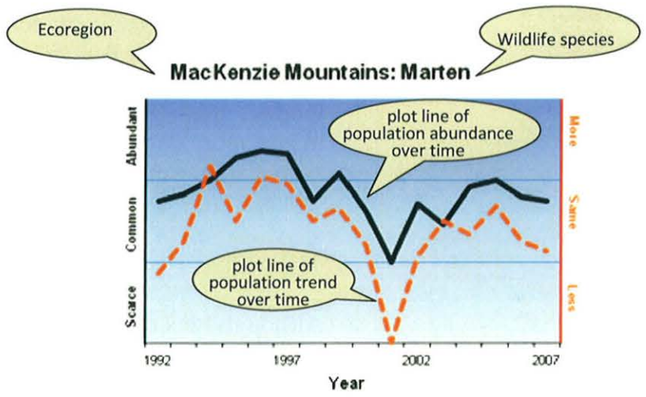
Yukon
Environment

Trappers are observant

The Trapper Questionnaire asks trappers to estimate the abundance of animals they see and changes in the population. The 14 furbearer species are covered, along with 5 prey species or groups such as mice/voles.

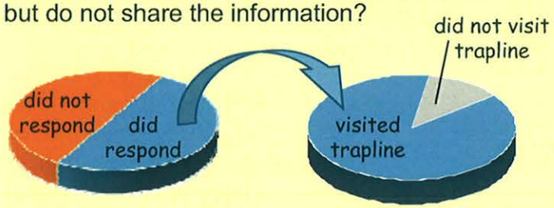
Analysis of 16 years of questionnaires found that Yukon trappers have a good feel for population changes over time. The graph below shows what trappers in the Mackenzie Mountains had to say about the number of marten they saw in a given year and the population trend based on what they saw the year before.

The categories for current population are: not present, scarce, common and abundant. The categories for population trend are: more, the same, and less than the previous year.



"Way back... 60's, 70's... there used to be lots of animals. I even remember wolves coming into town… there were so many of them around. Nothing like that now.
***Martha Benjamin** Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation, Old Crow 2010*

How many trappers visit their trapline and have valuable knowledge of the animal populations there, but do not share the information?



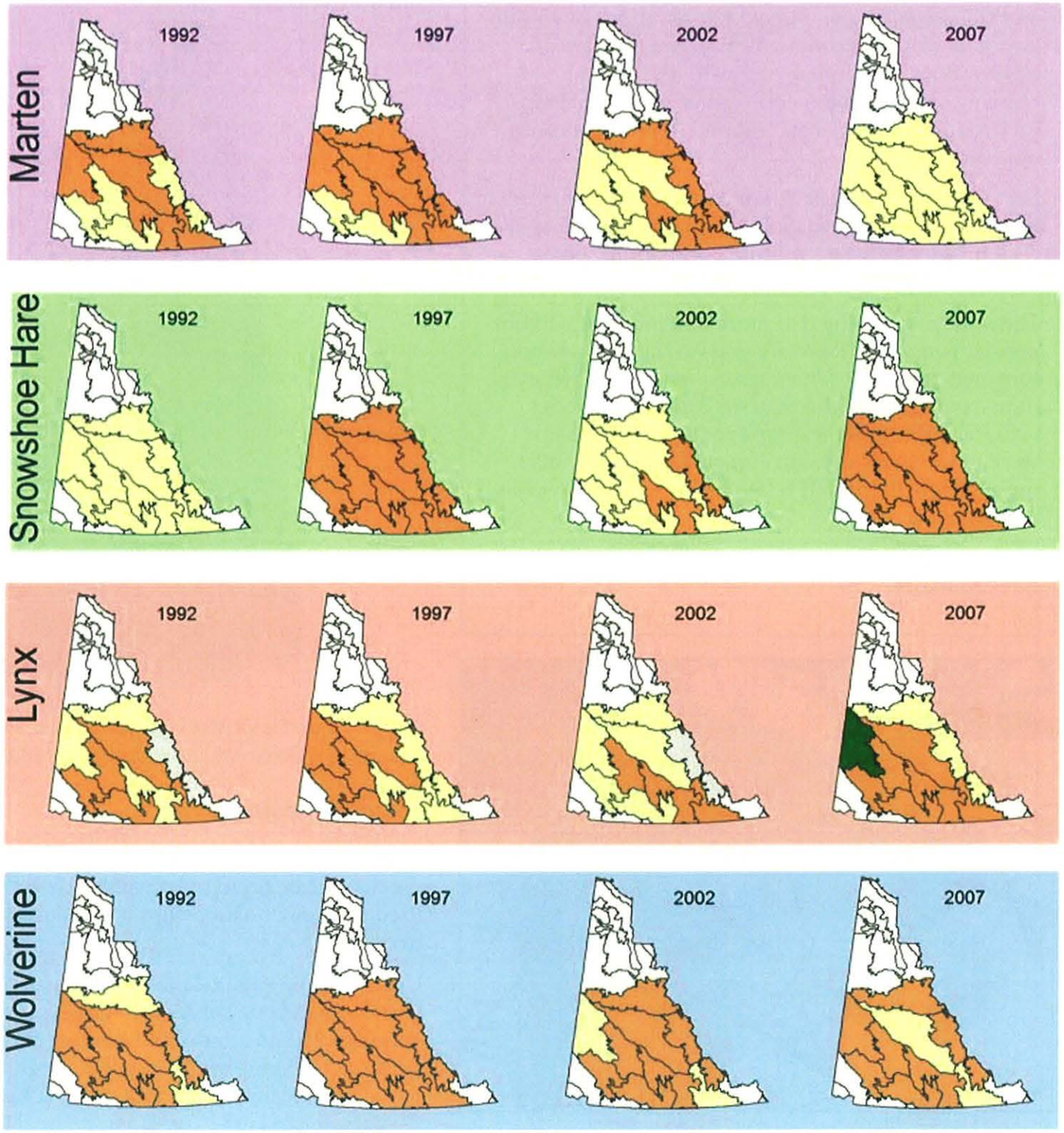
Response rate: on average, half of the questionnaires were returned each year.

Active rate: on average, 9 out of 10 respondents visited their trapline.

Trapping Talk:

Yukon Trappers' Perspectives on Wildlife Populations

Your responses to the annual Trappers Questionnaire from 1992 to 2007 helped us generate a detailed report with charts and maps to show the relative abundance of furbearing and prey species over many years and in different areas. Below are maps for four key species. Note the swing in populations, especially the snowshoe hare. A full report on 19 species and many regions, is available from Environment Yukon.



Sixteen years of data: patterns & gaps

Environment Yukon has asked all licensed trappers to complete an annual Trapper's Questionnaire since 1977.

Sadly, only about half of trappers return their questionnaire each year. But, the good news is that most of the trappers who completed their questionnaire did visit their trapline.

Trappers have a first-hand knowledge of the animals and trends on their traplines. Observations of wildlife populations become more meaningful as years of observations accumulate and patterns emerge. Hearing directly from people on the land also helps Environment Yukon staff respond to problems and opportunities.

Last year Environment Yukon had the data from 1992 through 2007 analyzed. Some interesting patterns and relationships between wildlife populations were found from your observations.

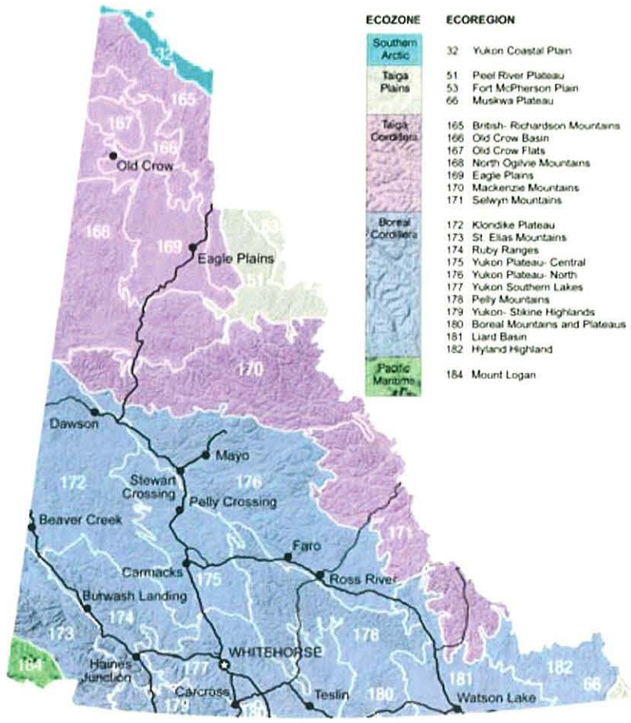
The information hinted at more patterns, but without regular responses, there are gaps in the information for some years and some regions. We would have more confidence in the patterns found if trapping activity and trapper response to the questionnaire were more consistent. Incomplete information also means the patterns and relationship we think we see are not 100% reliable.

Please be an active trapper and please return your questionnaire.

YG Photo

Ecoregions and Furbearers

Yukon has five 'ecozones,' which simply means 'areas that have similar land features (e.g. mountains, forests, tundra) and climate'. Within each 'ecozone' are smaller 'ecoregions', each with common habitats. So the furbearers and prey species found in an ecoregion will depend on its habitats. The richer the habitat, the greater variety and abundance of furbearers and prey species found there. With different ecoregions come different wildlife populations and different abundance levels. The species and abundance determine the trapping harvest that can be expected from an area, and may direct trappers to target some species and avoid others.



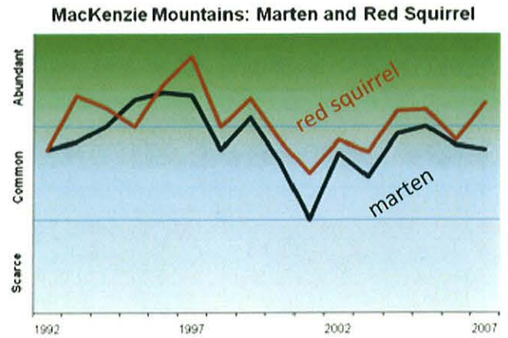
Trappers should learn what ecoregion their trapline is in so they can compare their own harvest results to overall trends found in that ecoregion.

Predators and Prey

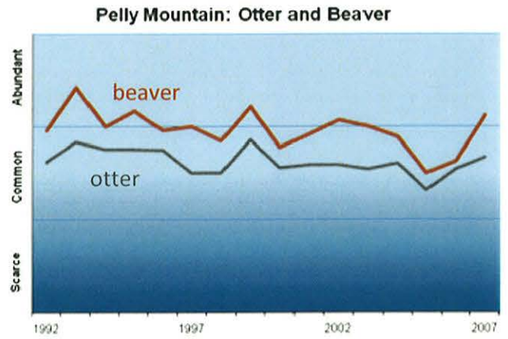
By comparing the patterns of population change for different wildlife species, we begin to see possible relationships between species. Predator-prey relationships are easier to spot, while others are harder to explain.

Understanding the relationship between predator and prey can help you manage your harvest sustainably. By monitoring changes in prey species, you can adjust your harvest to take only the harvestable surplus or change the species you target. Examples of applicable harvest strategies can be found in the Yukon Trapper's Manual.

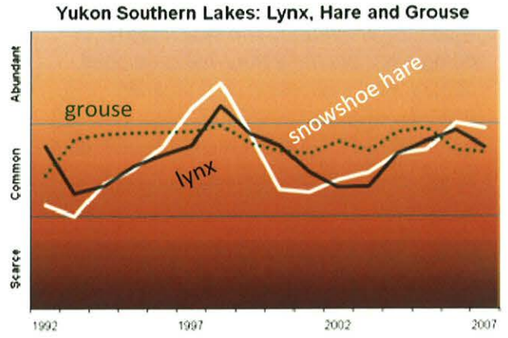
The relationship between marten and red squirrel is a simple predator-prey relationship. These species follow a similar pattern of population change.



For otter and beaver, populations follow a similar pattern, but not due to a predator-prey relationship. Wetland habitats suitable for fish are created by beaver dams, and fish is the main food of otters. More beavers means more dams, means more fish, means more otters.



Although lynx depend on snowshoe hare as their main food and follow their population numbers, other prey such as grouse may keep the lynx population from becoming extremely low when hares are less common.



The wolverine and fisher may have the same changes in population abundance because they are hunting the same prey. Both may be homing into areas with greater density of prey.