

Among the rodents, the beaver has the most valuable fur, but this animal has begun to show signs of decreasing and restrictions on the taking of beaver have been made more rigid in consequence. Muskrat is quite highly prized and, so far as numbers of pelts taken is concerned, is far in advance of any other species; under the trade name of "Hudson seal" its pelt has become a favourite moderate-priced fur.

Conservation.—At pp. 288-289 of the 1939 Year Book a short section appears dealing with conservation measures undertaken in regard to fur bearers.

Section 2.—Fur Farming*

In 1921 the value of pelts of ranch-bred animals accounted for only 3 p.c. of the total value of raw-fur production, while in 1938 it had risen to approximately 40 p.c.

In the early days of the fur trade it was the practice in Canada for trappers to keep foxes caught out of season alive until the fur was prime, and from this custom has arisen the modern industry of fur farming. Silver fox was the first important commercial fur bearer successfully raised in captivity and is still of greatest importance. The pioneers of the fox-farming industry raised the foxes chiefly for the sake of the pelts, as high as \$2,600 being received for a single pelt of exceptional quality; it was not until 1912 that there was any general sale of live foxes. With increased interest in fur farming came a large demand for foxes to be used as foundation stock in newly established ranches. Fabulous prices were obtainable for the live animals, sales of proved breeders in 1912 being recorded at from \$18,000 to \$35,000 per pair. The number of fur farms from this time forward rapidly increased and, as larger numbers of foxes became available for sale, prices naturally declined. In 1919 the Dominion Bureau of Statistics commenced the annual collection of returns of fur farms, and the records for that year show 424 fox farms and 5 miscellaneous kinds of fur farms in Canada. The number of silver foxes on the farms in the same year was 7,181, of which 5,401 were credited to Prince Edward Island. Meanwhile the average price of a pair of silver foxes had dropped to around \$650, although prices as high as \$1,100 for a single fox are recorded. By 1938 the number of fox farms had mounted to 8,073, with a total of 141,000 foxes, of which 137,819 were classed as silver. The record year to date for number of foxes was 1937, when the total was 157,053, comprising 153,822 silver foxes and 3,231 other kinds. The demand for live foxes is not as great as in the earlier years when fur farming was in course of establishment, but there is an ever-present market for furs. In 1938 the value of the pelts sold represented 89 p.c. of the total revenue of the farms in that year.

Two new types of fox, "platinum" and "white-face", are attracting much attention, and large sums have been received for pelts. Each is regarded as a colour phase of the silver fox, having originated as freak foxes in litters of silvers. No separate classification is made in the 1938 statistics for either kind, and all such entries in the returns of fur farms have been counted as silver foxes.

Second in importance to silver fox is mink. This fur bearer is easily domesticated and thrives in captivity if care is exercised in the selection of environment and proper attention given to its requirements in the matter of diet. Interest in mink farming is growing steadily and at the end of 1938 the number of minks on the farms was 106,283, or only 23 p.c. below the number of silver foxes recorded. Mink farms are reported in all provinces, but Ontario and Manitoba, respectively, have the largest numbers of farms. The high prices obtainable for fisher and marten

* Revised by Miss F. A. Brown, Chief of the Fisheries and Animal Products Branch, Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This Branch publishes detailed annual reports on fur farms and on the production of raw furs.