

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, 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.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARSHLANDS IN RELATION TO FUR PRODUCTION AND THE REHABILITATION OF FUR-BEARERS*

Canada's fur production has remained fairly constant during the past twenty years, a sufficiently long period to cover several so-called fur cycles. A comparison of the figures of total value of furs produced in Canada for the decades ended, respectively, 1930 and 1940, indicates a decline of approximately 18 p.c., or from a yearly average of \$15,904,000 to \$13,463,000. In the same comparison, the number of pelts marketed increased by approximately 36.4 p.c. This decrease in total value and increase in number of pelts was mainly accounted for by the increased sale in recent years of pelts of low price value, such as squirrel and rabbit. Fur is, therefore, a resource worth, let us say, \$15,000,000 a year to Canada and remains static, or nearly so, at that figure. This situation prevails in spite of the excellent progress made during the period by those actively engaged in the development of fur-bearers in captivity—the fur farmers—and had it not been for their contribution, the decline would be very marked. Taking into account the increased production of small pelts, the decline must have been even more pronounced in the fine furs that command high prices.

However, on the whole, this trend is not discouraging, nor should it be misunderstood. The influences at work against an increased production are recognized and some progress has been made toward the discovery of means of counteracting the tendency to decline. The first of such reconstructive measures was the development of the fur farm and the second and newer one was the development of fur rehabilitation programs where fur-bearers, particularly the two important rodents—the beaver and the muskrat—are actively assisted to increase their numbers in their natural habitat. A brief statistical and chronological history of the progress of this latter movement is the purpose of this article.

Muskrat.—Leaving out the work of the 'evangelists' who might have had in mind what ought to be done without formulating any remedial measures or charting practical courses of action, and leaving out the experiences of the early experimenters who tried and failed, the first sure step toward the goal was taken at The Pas, Man., in connection with rehabilitation of the muskrat. In 1932, 54,000 acres of land were leased from the Government of that Province by private interests with the object of increasing the muskrat population by the control of water levels on the marshes they once inhabited. The marshes were at that time in a state of virtual depletion. In 1931 only 125 rats had been trapped; in the spring of the fourth year 11,000 rats were taken and in the fifth year, 26,000. The area selected was not ideal but the thesis that muskrat population could be restored by water-control measures was amply proved. It is conservatively estimated that an increase in the muskrat population of from 300 in 1932 to 60,000 in 1937 took place, a result

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