

# CHAPTER XII.—FUR RESOURCES AND PRODUCTION

## CONSPECTUS

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### Section 1.—History of the Fur Trade

A historical outline tracing the development of the fur trade is published at pp. 281-282 of the 1946 Year Book. See also list of Special Articles under Fur Trade at the front of this volume.

### Section 2.—The Fur Industry

#### Subsection 1.—Wild Life

The fur resources of Canada are among its most valuable assets, and though, with the advance of settlement, trapping has moved farther and farther northward and the practice of fur farming has developed considerably, wild life still produces the greater portion of Canadian furs. Over an area of about 1,550,000 square miles, which is approximately 45 p.c. of the total land area of Canada, wild life is relatively more productive than agriculture and of the products of wild life, furs are the principal item and the principal support of the population of that area.

Many of the most valuable fur-bearing animals are subject to marked fluctuations in numbers. The periods of abundance and of scarcity recur with sufficient regularity to be called cycles and these cycles have an important bearing on the pelt take year by year.

The conservation of fur-bearers, which has marked the policy of Federal and provincial authorities to an increasing extent, has been made necessary by an increasing demand for furs coupled with decreasing supplies. The resulting substantial rise in prices also brought about a tendency to 'over-trapping', and it has been found necessary to control the 'take' by prohibition, close seasons and the enforcement of trapping regulations. However, in a country of such extent, where trappers, both White and Indian, are scattered over a vast wilderness, prohibition of capture of certain animals with the aim of conserving future catches is not always effective. Such furs become higher priced because of this scarcity and the temptation to violate protective measures is great.

One noteworthy reconstructive measure that appears to have had a very beneficial influence on the rehabilitation of certain fur-bearers, especially beaver and muskrat, is the organized development of marshlands where these animals are actively assisted to increase their numbers in their natural habitat.

All provinces to-day have their trapping regulations and license individual trappers. Some provinces register trap lines. The Saskatchewan Government has recently inaugurated a system whereby districts are assigned to individual licensed trappers. The licensee in his own interests will see to it that no poaching is carried on in his preserve.

Statistics of wild-life fur production are combined with the production of fur farms in Section 3, pp. 432-436.