

CHAPTER XIII.—FUR RESOURCES AND PRODUCTION

CONSPECTUS

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NOTE.—*The interpretation of the symbols used in the tables throughout the Year Book will be found facing p. 1 of this volume.*

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.—Fur Trapping

The fur resources of Canada are among its most valuable wildlife assets. With the increase in human population and the advance of settlement, the principal trapping of fur animals has moved farther northward. The raising of fur-bearers on farms has undergone marked development but the greater proportion of Canadian furs is still obtained from the wild.

Many animals, including some of the most valuable fur-bearers, are subject to marked fluctuations in numbers during successive years. In some species, the periods of abundance and of scarcity recur with sufficient regularity to be called cycles and these cycles influence the number of pelts taken annually.

The conservation of fur-bearing animals has long been a responsibility of federal and provincial authorities and is receiving increasing attention each year. It requires careful management of wild fur-bearers that is analogous in many ways to management of domestic animals, though the means of control are different. Scientific studies reveal much detailed information about the principal factors that cause fur-bearers to increase or to decrease. The principal factors are food, space, shelter, weather and enemies, including diseases, parasites and predators. At times a rising demand for furs, accompanied by higher prices, has brought about a tendency toward trapping too high a proportion of the available stock, which tendency must be met by increased restrictions. Great changes in the supply of food and shelter available to fur-bearers in large areas have resulted at times from forest fires, floods and drought but, if the damage is not too deep, skilful management practices can restore production in these areas more rapidly than was possible a few decades ago.

In northern Canada, where trappers are widely scattered over vast areas, control of the take of fur-bearers by prohibition, close seasons and enforcement of trapping regulations presents difficulties not encountered in other areas. Through