

CHAPTER XIV.—FURS

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.—The Fur Industry

The fur industry, at one time the most vigorous and remunerative industry in Canada still contributes many millions of dollars annually to the national income. Until the end of the 19th century practically all Canadian furs were wild-caught and, although fur farming has since developed rapidly, trapping still provides nearly 57 p.c. of the income from raw furs produced in Canada.

Wild fur bearers are still taken, even in settled areas of this country, but the populations of such animals have in general been so reduced by the advance of settlement that the principal trapping areas now lie in the northern parts of the provinces and the Northwest Territories. Many wild animals, including some important fur bearers, are subject to marked fluctuations in numbers from year to year, and these fluctuations are often greatest and most nearly regular in northern regions. The number of pelts of certain wild species taken annually is notably affected by these fluctuations.

Another and perhaps more important factor governing the 'take' of furs from wildlife is the fluctuation in demand and in price consequent on changes in fashion. Thus the vogue of recent years for short haired furs has caused a decrease in demand for fox and other long haired pelts and a corresponding decrease in the number of such pelts taken by trappers. In areas such as parts of the Northwest Territories where these furs were formerly a staple source of income, this style change has resulted in serious hardship. This is a problem that cannot be solved by wildlife management practices.

The most important aspects of management of the fur trapping industry are: constant practical scientific research, maintenance of suitable habitat and its improvement where possible, sound and balanced regulation of the trapping of fur bearers, provision of competent and adequate field staffs, and free education of trappers with respect to the principles of wildlife management. By these means many areas depleted of fur bearers have once again become productive. Such means will become increasingly important in maintaining Canada's position as a major producer of raw furs.

Most of the fur resources of the provinces of Canada are under the administration of the respective provincial governments. Exceptions include those resources within the boundaries of the National Parks and the Indian reserves, and the fur resources of Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories which are under the administration of the Federal Government. The Canadian Wildlife Service of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (*see* pp. 34-35) is responsible for all Federal Government interests in wildlife resources except for those activities closely related to Indian affairs. The Service co-operates with provincial governments and other agencies concerned and handles federal interests in relevant national and international problems.