

Other fur-bearers of economic importance are fisher, fox, lynx, marten, mink, otter, squirrel and rabbit. These animals have fluctuated in population and pelt value in the past but the increased production of beaver and muskrat has helped stabilize the income of the trapper. Most fur prices have declined in recent years, but the income received from Saskatchewan wildlife fur pelts has been maintained.

Badger, raccoon and wolverine are of little economic importance at present. Wolves, coyotes and foxes are on the predator list in settled areas and very comprehensive programs of control have been carried on to reduce the population of these animals. A paid hunter program has been in operation since 1948 to reduce the coyote population and these animals are no longer a problem in settled areas. In the autumn of 1954 the bounty on wolves was discontinued. Bait treated with poison, placed out on large lakes in isolated areas, is the present method of controlling wolves but only employees of the Department are allowed to handle the poison. This work is becoming increasingly important not only to protect game that is necessary to the welfare of people living in the north country but also to reduce the chances of spreading the rabies epidemic which has been apparent in the West during the past few years as well as hydatid disease which has been found in some species of big game. ●

The weasel is a valuable fur-bearer as well as a controller of rodents. Closure in large areas does not seem to increase the weasel population and the policy is now to hold a short autumn and early winter season in all areas where the normal winter season is not in effect. This gives the farm boys and others an opportunity to take some of these valuable fur-bearers.

The jack-rabbit is gaining in importance in recent years—approximately 100,000 were taken in 1956. The average price received for them was 58 cents.

**Alberta.**—The fur trade in Alberta has shown a steady decline over the past four or five years mainly because of the poor market for long-haired furs. There is practically no sale for pelts of such animals as coyotes, wolves, foxes, badgers and skunks and little for lynx and wolverine. Demand today is for squirrel, muskrat, ermine, mink and beaver in approximately that order of importance. There was a slight decline in fur prices during the fur season ended June 30, 1956, as compared with those obtained during the previous fur season. In 1956, beaver pelts sold at an average price of \$10.45 and muskrats at 91 cents per pelt compared with \$13.08 for beaver and 99 cents for muskrat in 1955.

The trapping industry has changed considerably in recent years. About 3,000 registered trappers operating registered traplines formerly provided the major part of the take. But the trapping of fur-bearing animals by owners and occupants of privately owned lands is becoming more prominent, especially of beaver and muskrat. In fact about 50 p.c. of the beaver trapped in Alberta now come from privately owned land, such trapping being permitted under a resident trapper's licence. Another noteworthy change is the gradual replacement of white trappers operating registered traplines by Indians and métis, who now make up nearly 43 p.c. of the total as compared with 30 p.c. three years ago; of the 2,800 registered trappers now operating, 1,200 are Indians.

In connection with the destroying of predators, it has been found that the paid hunter system gives better returns for the money invested than the old system of bounty payment. Bounties are now paid on cougars only, although certain well-equipped cougar hunters receive an additional \$25 from the Province for each cougar taken.

In 1956, the Game Regulations were changed to afford some protection for black and brown bear. These animals are now protected at all times except during the regular big game season.

The Wild Life Resources of Alberta are administered by the Fish and Game Branch of the Department of Lands and Forests under the supervision of a Fish and Game Commissioner.