

years passed before there was any field staff to enforce the regulations and then began an era of restrictive legislation to protect species threatened by the earlier exploitation. Progress beyond the restrictive enforcement of open and closed seasons has come about only in the past 20 or 30 years. The first steps in this direction involved the setting aside of special Indian hunting areas in which white men were not allowed to trap.

The registered trapline system was introduced in 1935 on a very small scale. This system is based on government recognition of an individual's rights to trap a certain area. In its early stages, surveyed townships were assigned as trapline areas but more explicit trapline boundaries, established in 1947-48, now cover the province and mostly follow natural physiographical features. At the same time, resident traplines were established in areas of patented land, which means most of southern Ontario; these are blocks of land on which trappers are licensed to trap, providing they make their own written agreements with the landowners. Trapline licences are renewable annually as long as the trapper meets the conditions of the regulations and continues to trap. Trappers may sell the equipment and improvements they have made on their lines and so have a vested interest in their traplines.

In full realization that fur is a natural resource that cannot in nature be stockpiled, and is harvested on a commercial basis only, the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests has assisted the Ontario Trappers' Association to establish their fur auction at North Bay. This allows the trappers to sell furs on a competitive market and realize their full value.

Much valuable research has been carried out on fur bearers, with present emphasis on beaver and otter. Transplantings have been successfully carried out to speed the recovery of reduced populations, particularly with beaver. A new aging technique was perfected for beaver in 1964 and an aerial beaver survey technique was developed recently.

**Manitoba.**—Trading in furs is Manitoba's oldest industry and the province produces some of the finest pelts on the world markets. The annual value of production varies widely, depending both on the cyclic abundance of fur bearing animals and on world prices for the pelts produced.

As the northern portion of Manitoba became more accessible following construction of the Hudson Bay Railway to Churchill, competition for fur and for trapping grounds became so severe that the fur resources were sadly depleted. In 1940, Manitoba started a program of trapline registration. The program provided security of tenure to individuals or community groups of trappers, weeded out the part-time trappers and changed harvesting of wild fur from fur mining to wild fur farming. At that time beaver were a rarity and a series of closed seasons had been declared. Since then, beaver have increased steadily and 46,361 pelts were harvested in the 1962-63 season. Within the past decade new records in the production of muskrat, beaver, mink, lynx, fisher and otter have been set for this century.

The wild fur industry is still of economic importance in the province, and particularly so for northern residents, both white and native. A program of trapper education, inaugurated in 1957 and designed to improve the general handling of furs by trappers and at the same time achieve a certain measure of standardization in pelt care, has shown gratifying results. It has been expanded to include improved trapping methods and the use of humane trap sets; a booklet, *The Trapper's Guide*, is available from the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

Manitoba has been working in close co-operation with federal and other provincial agencies in the promotion of quality furs by contributing a collection of representative wild furs for exhibit at the more important European fairs.

**Saskatchewan.**—Before the introduction of Saskatchewan's fur conservation and development program, little was done to control the trapping of beaver and muskrat. During open seasons, trappers took every pelt available and then the season had to be closed the following year in hope of natural population build-up. This "feast and famine" policy had a disastrous effect on both the fur resources and the livelihood of trappers.