

TRAPPING BEGINS SOON

To many of us, chill nights and lengthening nights herald the end of summer and the beginning of a period of reduced outdoor activity. Farmers are hastening the end of harvesting and fitting fields for next spring's sowing. Sportsmen will have a few weeks of hunting before the snow flies, but fishing seasons are closed or closing and the fly rod can be packed away until next spring. Skiing and skating enthusiasts will be out in force, of course, if the weatherman co-operates. But there will be no more gardening, no more lawns to mow---just a few sidewalks to be shovelled clean of snow!

But to about 4,500 trappers and their families in Northern Ontario, fall heralds greatly increased activity; in a few more weeks it will be time to begin a new trapping season. Although the season does not open until November 1st on most species of fur-bearers, a thin skim of ice on the lakes each morning warns that it is high time to set out for trapping grounds.

In the old days, trapping used to be pretty competitive business in Ontario, as elsewhere. In most areas it was a matter of "first come, first served" and there was keen rivalry among the trappers to settle on the better trapping grounds. With this in mind, there was little thought for the future. What was the use of "cropping" the fur resources and leaving more for "seed" for next year if someone else might be occupying that trapline next year?

Happily, those days are now passed in Ontario. Today, in all but the most highly agriculturalized areas of the Province, each trapper traps year after year in a well-defined area and he alone is licensed to trap there by the Department of Lands and Forests.

By working in close co-operation with the Province's trappers, mutually agreeable lines have been established between adjoining traplines, even in the vast, unmarked and unsurveyed areas of the north. Here natural topographic features such as heights of land, large lakes, and rivers are used as boundaries and in most areas each trapline is confined to a specific watershed. In the less-productive stretches of muskeg bordering Hudson Bay, individual traplines may extend over 100 square miles or even more. Farther south, traplines

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TRAPPING BEGINS SOON (Cont.)

of from 30 to 40 square miles are the rule.

In general, the areas of traplines are planned to conform with how much area a trapper can properly manage and how large an area he requires to support himself and his family adequately. This is an important aspect of the programme of trapline management, because many of the Province's trappers are solely or largely dependent upon the harvest of fur for their livelihood.

In Ontario north of the northernmost line of the Canadian National Railways which runs across the Province from the Quebec border through Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Nakina, Armstrong, Sioux Lookout and Minaki into Manitoba, the majority of the trappers are Indians who have no other source of income than that derived from their traplines.

South of the Canadian National Railways, the proportion of Indian trappers gradually decreases, until, south of North Bay, white trappers predominate. In the area between the Canadian National Railways and North Bay there are additional opportunities for trappers to earn a living, or at least to supplement their trapping incomes, but trapping of fur-bearers for their pelts remains extremely important in the economy of that part of the country.

For the trapping season of 1952-53, the latest for which complete returns are available, furs taken by Ontario trappers included 122,000 beaver pelts valued at \$1,612,000 and 840,000 muskrat pelts with a market value of \$1,216,000. The total value of the raw pelts of all fur-bearers taken in the Province that season was close to \$3,870,000.

For the Indians especially, the discontinuation of their former nomadic existence has been a long and somewhat revolutionary step. Formerly, both trapline boundaries and trapping seasons were unknown to them. Traditionally, there had always been among them a strong tendency to be careless in their husbandry of natural resources, and they held little regard for conservation principles as we know them today.

But with assistance and guidance provided jointly by the Department of Lands and Forests and Indian Affairs Branch of the Federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian and white trappers alike have been quick to appreciate the advantages to be gained by

(Cont. on page 8)