

FUR NOT FEATHERS

The Coyote controversy still continues. On one side are those who want the bounty on coyotes increased, so that more hunters will be tempted to go after "this scourge of Saskatchewan farming communities", while on the other hand another group think that the misdeeds of the coyote have been "grossly exaggerated" and that these animals play a valuable role in keeping ground squirrels and other rodents under control. As our members should know by now, the "Blue Jay" is completely in accord with Taverner's statement in "Birds of Canada" that - "when a species increases in numbers detrimental to man's interests, it is expedient and justifiable to reduce them." But at the same time we feel that, in an area as large and diversified as the province of Saskatchewan, any predator control should be a matter for the municipality or some other local unit. Often individual animals of a species may do great harm in a concentrated area while in another district the same species may be practically harmless or even beneficial. We also feel that an over-all bounty on any species tends to develop a wrong attitude towards wildlife in general.

With regard to the present abundance of the coyote, it appears that the coyote has a nine to ten year cycle and that at the moment they are at a peak of abundance. There are some observers, however, who state that the present peak of abundance is not as high as that in 1935 and comments on this would be of interest.

We continue to hear of Woodchucks becoming more common in southern sections of the province. F. Dunk, Director of the Provincial Museum, tells us that one was reported from Regina Beach last summer.

It is still hard to convince some people that the mounds of earth thrown up by the Pocket Gopher are the work of the pocket gopher and not the mole. Actually there are no moles in Saskatchewan and we suggest that any "unbeliever" trap a pocket gopher and examine the external cheek pockets in which this animal carries supplies of food to its burrow. The pocket gopher is a rodent or "gnawer" and one glance at its strong chisel-shaped incisor teeth will explain how it can make short shrift of a bed of carrots! Moles and shrews, on the other hand, are carnivorous and have fine, sharply pointed teeth for cracking small bones or the hard horny shell cases of beetles.

Jumping Mice were seen recently springing up from the grass at Leech Lake, by J.H. Wilson and Bill Carrick. Some species of Jumping Mice are said to be able to make bounds of from five to six feet with complete ease; although not actually uncommon, very few people ever see these agile little creatures, since they tend to lie close in the grass until the intruder is almost upon them.

We understand that an Otter was recently run over by a car on the highway near Tessier (S.W. of Saskatoon) but have not complete details. The Otter has been described as "the member of the weasel family best adapted to an aquatic existence" (webbed feet, dense fur impervious to water, etc.). At the same time the Otter is given to making long overland journeys between feeding grounds and this probably accounts for the presence of one on a main highway. We were under the impression that the Otter had been practically exterminated in Saskatchewan, and should like to hear of any others seen in recent years.

A lynx has recently been seen on several occasions close to the buildings at a farm north of Yorkton.