

Administration Building, Regina, and express their views on legislation that allows municipalities to issue permits for people to use snowmobiles to hunt predators.

Hopefully, 1974 will be the last year in which this practice is allowed. Saskatchewan, with its strong Natural History Society, its beautiful Natural History Museum in Regina and its rich diversity of wildlife and scenery is presently diminished by its winter snowmobile hunts. This is not something about which a thoughtful citizen can be proud.

**ABSTRACT FROM
SASK. D.N.R. POLICY
CONCERNING PREDATOR
PERMITS
(Oct. 2, 1972)**

From INTENT: "The practice of pursuing and killing wild animals with power snowmobiles has resulted in . . . the 1970 session of the legislature (amending) Section 29 of the Game Act (to read as follows:)

Unless expressly authorized by the minister, no person shall use a power snowmobile or vehicle for the purpose of:

(a) chasing or pursuing any wild animal or wild bird; (b) disturbing any wild animal or wild bird; (c) driving any wild animal or wild bird towards hunters; or (d) injuring or killing any wild animal or wild bird with such power boat or vehicle.

"Unfortunately, in certain agricultural areas in Saskatchewan, rural residents are confronted with local problems of predation by coyote and/or fox which are difficult to handle by conventional methods of control . . . Therefore, it is deemed necessary to issue permits to rural residents so affected to deal with these local problems. There is no intention whatsoever to permit the use of motor toboggans for sport hunting or pelt hunting."

From POLICY: "1. Special permits to use snow toboggans for hunting fox and coyote will be issued when these animals are causing depredation problems. The permits are to be issued by the Conservation Officer . . .

"2. Local Conservation Officers must be prepared to discuss the conditions of issuing such permits with the local R.M. council. The importance of restricting authorization for permits to bonafide cases of animals causing predation should be stressed.

"3. The R.M. or L.I.D. will only be required to pass one resolution authorizing the Department to issue permits to residents within the R.M. or L.I.D. . . ."

From APPLICATION: "List total losses of livestock or poultry during the past three months caused by coyotes or fox and dates (applicant's land only) . . ."

COUGARS IN MANITOBA

by ROBERT W. NERO*

In the early years, cougars were perhaps uncommon in Manitoba but

with the increase in White-tailed Deer populations, cougars seem to have increased in number. Since the 1960's, especially, there have been several well documented sightings of cougars. For the 71-year period from 1879 to 1950 there are only 16 reports of cougars in the province, but 21 reports

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exist for the decade from 1951 to 1960, 38 reports from 1961 to 1970 and more than 30 reports since 1971. This information has been obtained from the files of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature and, recently, through efforts to solicit records from government staff and the public.

These reports include about 86 sightings, eight observations of cougar tracks or deer kills attributed to cougars and five animals that were shot. A specimen in the Hales Museum at Brandon University is believed to have come from southwestern Manitoba, another specimen shot locally had been mounted and two skins have been reported. In addition, three plaster casts of tracks are known, including one taken in 1973. Observations of seven pairs and four family groups strongly suggest that the cougar is resident in Manitoba.

Observers who have reported cougars include trappers, farmers, housewives, foresters and even biologists, to name a few. The circumstances under which sightings were made and the detailed descriptions leave little doubt as to the authenticity of the records.

Plaster casts of tracks would seem to provide sound evidence, but even authorities disagree on the identification of track casts. The problem is complicated by the fact that a big lynx may have a larger paw print than a small cougar and a single track is less enlightening than a series. Examination of a trail is best in any case. Regardless of the size of its foot prints, a cougar usually drags its long tail on the ground and, at least in snow, leaves a tail mark that is undeniable evidence.

Male cougars travel alone and may range over considerable area, though in prime deer range they may keep within a home range of about 25

square miles. Mating takes place almost any time when a male encounters a female. The female cat looks after the one or two kittens by herself, defending them from males who seem to lack paternal care instincts. Thus, loss of a cougar to a gun would have a marked effect, especially in Manitoba where the cougar population is undoubtedly limited.

Photographing a Manitoba cougar would be an exciting accomplishment and a photograph should convince everyone. Several persons have said they would have been able to photograph a cougar if they had had a camera handy. Since cougars are often seen crossing highways during daylight hours it may not be long before one gets its picture taken. Here is a challenge for wildlife photographers and just about anyone who can snap a picture!

Cougar range in Manitoba probably coincides with that of white-tailed deer. It may be that cougars prefer less settled or remote areas, such as the Duck and Porcupine mountains, northern Interlake, Manigotagan River area, etc. Nevertheless, in addition to several records from each of the places, there are records for the southernmost part of the province.

As a symbol of wild nature the cougar ranks high. Sightings of this secretive animal invariably are thrilling experiences according to those who have had such good fortune. Simply knowing that there are cougars adds something to outdoor experiences in Manitoba.

Postscript: A cougar was shot and killed on the night of December 25, 1973, about 35 miles northeast of Winnipeg. The animal, a young adult male weighing about 100 pounds and measuring 83 inches from tip of nose to tip of tail, is now the property of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg, thanks to the cooperation of the Manitoba Naturalists Society. — *R. W. Nero.*