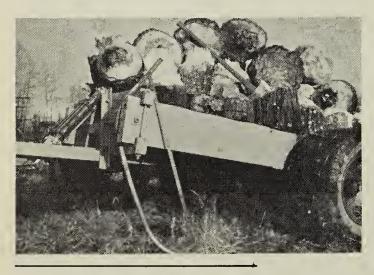
THE FOLLY OF THE BEAVER

by HAROLD E. HOBDEN*

Beavers, too, can err in judgement. So it would appear from some unique beaver-work, the like of which I have never seen in all my years spent in the woods.

I own a couple of miles of canyon on the Little Clear River, what I call my private game sanctuary. This is north of the Peace River and just within Alberta, east of Fort St. John, B.C. The beavers multiply and migrate from there. I find they make the best of company — and no finer relaxation can I wish for than watching them in late evening or on a rainy day when work can be put off, allowing time for a hike.

To my surprise, the beavers started a damming and falling project in a most unfavourable location — 5 miles from the nearest stream. The timber supply was exceptionally heavy — mostly white poplars 60 to 70 feet in height with diameters of 12 to 24 inches. These were felled to a depth of 5 feet in places. The beaver dam, if completed, would have to be at least 80 rods (1,320 feet) long. It could have retained water to a depth of 6 feet, if there had been any, and backed it up for a half a mile. No water was dammed up and I could see no sign of their constructing a lodge.



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I decided this was worth a few sna shots, but could not include all t stumps in one picture. So I hired a la with a power-saw to cut a heater-bloc length off of each stump and I pack these to the gravel road. Then I haule them to my house on the big trail shown here. When people ask what the objects are, I tell them "Peace Riv cabbages."

I suspect that this fall some road-sichunters saw where the beavers had ragged the tips of some of the fall trees to the gravel road; their attention thus drawn to the beavers' activities they killed them off.



Another picture demonstrates th beavers, too, have fallers accidents; the tree slipped off the stump gnawed by the beaver. The lower end of the tree pinner the beaver's hind leg to the earth, which tree remained upright, lodging against its neighbors.

MAN PLAYS WITH THE QU'APPELLE WILDLIFE DIES

by KEN L. EARL*

A trapper who is not a consevationist does not remain a trapper very long. As a part-time trapper, I a very interested in all aspects wildlife and conservation here in t Qu'Appelle Valley. I believe that w some forethought, man could have agricultural and recreational areas partnership with nature, but to date

am greatly concerned with the evident disregard for wildlife and its habitat.

As recently as 25 years ago, the Ou'Appelle River was clear enough to see the bottom — and to swim in. The banks had little erosion and seedlings rew in profusion along the river bank. In the mid-1950's, a family born and aised on the river bank began to notice the first effects of water flucuations and flushing resulting from nan-made dams. At times, there was not enough water in the Qu'Appelle to upply irrigation water — yet, sudlenly, 3 weeks later, great amounts of vater were let loose down the river. The effect on the aquatic mammals ind plant life has been devasting. Such ises in level may also flood eggs and kill nestlings of ground-nesting birds lear the river.

The government engineers appear to he totally ignorant of beavers and nuskrats in particular. In the Qu'-Appelle Valley, these animals tunnel nto the bank. In late September and October, there is feverish activity by oth species to gather the winter's tore of food. Muskrats will be seen wimming with mouthfuls of grasses nd then disappear — to stockpile hem in the bank. Beavers construct what is known as a feedpile, usually within 10 to 20 feet of their main bank urrow. After the ice forms, these food aches are the only supplies available o both species.

Winter, then, is the worst possible me for sudden changes in water level. Beaver and muskrat residence burrows hay be flooded and their food supplies vashed down stream. I have seen vater levels rise by 3 to 5 feet in as hany days with a flush of water eleased from the Aiktow Dam. The ydrostatic pressure lifts the thick ice nd any feedpiles frozen in it are ashed away. Sometimes the food is arried beyond the reach of the eavers and they are condemned to tarvation under the ice. A classic xample of this occurred near the Kenell Anglican Church, 4 miles east of raven, in late February, 1973.

When a sudden flushing of water of his type occurred in November, 1972.

I angrily phoned the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment. A member of their Commission accused me of being selfishly interested in possible loss of my traps rather than in the environment — and I was told that tampering with water levels was only on an experimental basis for the last 3 years. However, it has been going on much longer than that.

Beavers build dams on the Qu'-Appelle when this is necessary to maintain a reasonable supply of water. Two years ago, government engineers blasted the beaver dams all the way from Craven to the Piapot Indian reserve, a distance of about 13 miles. This was supposedly to clear the channel but, again, indicates a lack of understanding of nature. I know of no case where a beaver dam flooded land between Craven and Highway No. 6 and the construction of some of these dams was simply the animals' response to the engineers' manipulations: dams are made necessary because bank tunnels were no longer secure. If the engineers do not understand nature, they should ask for help from biologists, rather than compounding their own errors.

Finally, the quality of water coming down Wascana Creek from Regina is so rank with inadequately treated sewage and so high in phosphates and other nutrients that the death of aquatic plants and seedlings is evident as soon as the water recedes. The whole matter of environment quality in the Qu'Appelle Valley deserves immediate attention. Even rapid implementation of the survey recommendations would be another case of "too little and too late."

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