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FUR BUYERS' GUIDE

FUR BUYERS' GUIDE

Complete Instructions About Buying, Handling
and Grading Raw Furs, Including Size,
Color, Quality, as well as When,
Where and How to Sell

BY
A. R. HARDING

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INTRODUCTION.

PRACTICALLY all books treating upon the subject of raw furs heretofore have been from the view or standpoint of the large dealer, exporter and manufacturer. The author of FUR BUYERS' GUIDE not only trapped when a boy, but at the age of 14 began buying furs in a small way, and a few years later traveled horseback and in a two wheeled cart over Gallia, Meigs, Vinton, Athens, Lawrence and Jackson Counties in Southern Ohio and Mason in West Virginia. Later I was employed by an Ohio and a New York firm on a salary to represent them in Southern Ohio, West Virginia, Northern Kentucky and Southwestern Pennsylvania. Traveling now was mainly by rail. I kept at this job steadily for years — buying furs in the winter and hides, pelts, tallow and roots during the balance of the year.

After several years I became tired of traveling and gave up my position March 1, 1897, going to Gallipolis, Ohio, where I started in the fur business on my own account the following November. But as the active raw fur season there only lasted a few months each year, I

became interested in the publishing business and in June, 1898, founded a county newspaper, which led to my establishing the HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER in October, 1900. In the meantime I was buying thousands and thousands of dollars worth of furs each season, but from 1900 on, my time was largely devoted to the publishing business.

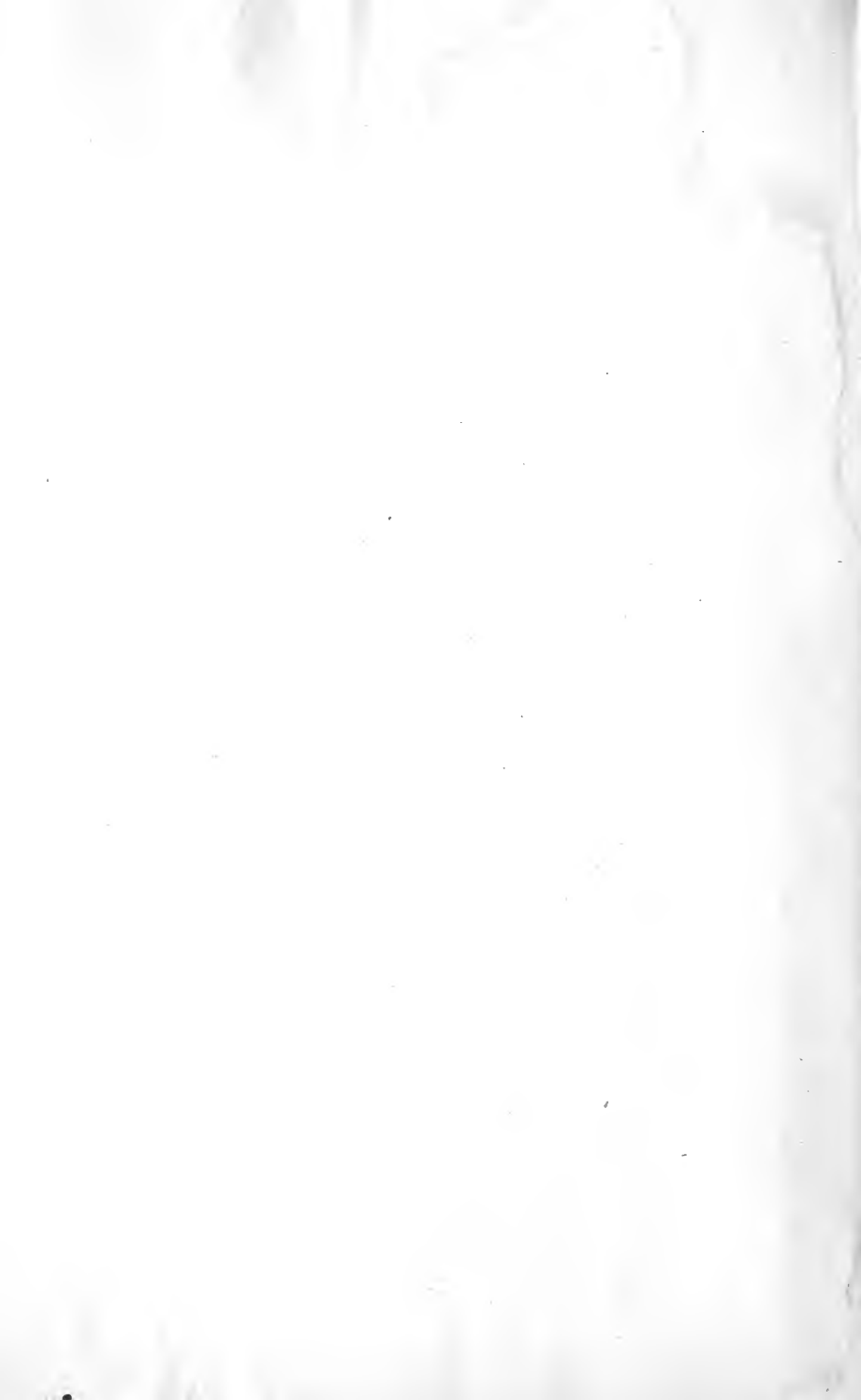
In November, 1904, I disposed of my county paper and moved to Columbus, Ohio, with my monthly magazine. For the next ten years I was in close touch with fur dealers, exporters and manufacturers, visiting the leading American raw fur centers from one to three times each year.

The various facts as outlined are mentioned only to show how wide an experience I have had. I feel that those interested in raw furs, whether trapper, country buyer, village or town collector will find much of practical value in this book.

Several persons of experience and knowledge of the fur industry have furnished facts, which have been used in various parts. Mr. J. A. Newton, a trapper and buyer of long experience; also Martin Hunter for forty years with the Hudson Bay Co., being among the number while Mr. C. M. Goodspeed supplied much of the information on Ginseng and Golden Seal. Numerous photographs have also been especially taken by trappers and collectors for this book.

While there are several varieties or species of some of the fur bearing animals, as a rule, no particular distinction or reference is here made. My object in giving range, description, size and color is for the benefit and guidance of the handler of the pelt or fur—not to classify the animal. Besides technical facts, grade and sort in connection with the buying, handling and selling of furs, much more is published, so that anyone at all interested in furs or the fur trade, will find something of interest in this book.

C. R. Harding.



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CHAPTER I.

“WILD” AND “TAME” FURS.

A NEW CONDITION. — Only a few years ago the raw fur buyer could travel from morning until night and encounter only one class of furs, the wild article. Then qualities were quite uniform in prime skins. Color, length, fineness, density and gloss were so common in the wild fur coat that contrary features were not expected. A prime skin might be quite lacking in fur and escape notice because not many of such pelts were to be found in any original collection.

Now there is a new condition with which to deal; it is the advent of the fur farm in all its phases, from an enclosure of several acres down to confines no larger than an ordinary chicken run.

In the early days beaver was the staple fur, although bear, otter, fisher, marten, wolf, lynx, fox, mink, raccoon and muskrat were all exported to Europe in considerable quantities as early as 1750 but not until 1843 was house cat and chinchilla (a South American animal) used or exported. American opossum and fur seal were added in 1849, but not until 1858 was skunk fur used. These furs became valuable, even at that early date, because the supply of others began to diminish — now there are no other animals that produce fur to add. Even rabbit, brown weasel and ferret pelts have a small fur value.

American squirrel and ground hogs are not fur bearing animals — they grow hair only.

There are practically no new or unexplored regions to trap in America or elsewhere. For years wild fur bearers have been hard pressed by trappers and fur hunters so that their numbers are becoming less. There may be and no doubt are exceptions with certain animals in a few states, where laws are in effect prohibiting early and late trapping. Again the demoralized condition of the raw fur trade during 1914-15, owing to the European war was largely the cause for a somewhat increase of certain raw fur bearing animals in many parts of America. In general, however, it can be truthfully said that most wild fur bearing animals are becoming more scarce each year. On the other hand the demand for furs increases with an increased population. The automobile has wonderfully helped the fur trade in the use of fur robes, coats, gloves, etc., for be it remembered that tens of thousands of automobiles are used in winter as well as in summer.

From where is the future supply of raw furs to come? No doubt there will be plenty but instead of practically all being from pelts of wild animals a greater per cent each year will be taken from tame fur animals, for most of the wild fur animals can and will be domesticated just as has been done with other animals—horses, cattle, sheep — when demand made it profitable to do so.

The future supply and demand will therefore not alone be governed by the catch of "wild" furs but to a considerable extent by "tame" furs—those from fur farms.

Until recently many of the large city fur dealers and exporters were of the opinion that the supply of wild fur bearing animals was practically inexhaustible—that when needed trappers would go out into the wilds, catch, skin, and send the pelts to market. On the other side of the question well informed persons foresaw that the supply of wild fur bearers would shortly not be sufficient to supply the demand. They saw that the draining of swamps, marshes and small lakes was destroying the homes and breeding places of muskrat and to a great extent mink and coon. Lumbering and clearing up of land was destroying as well as driving out coon, bear, wild cat and opossum from vast areas in the South and Central portions of the United States, while in the Northern states of the United States as well as parts of Canada the cutting of timber and clearing of the land was depriving the marten, fisher, bear and lynx of their homes. Otter and beaver do not usually linger long where people are too numerous and these as well are reduced. To partly offset all this there are a few fur bearers—red fox, skunk, mink and muskrat—that do fairly well in settled parts.

With fur raising from confined animals there is apt to be as many qualities as there are different sized pens and different foods fed and a diversity in care taking. As an example: twenty-five fur animals raised on an acre will be in better fur than if reared in a pen 20 x 40 feet, providing that both receive the same care and food. If kept on a ten acre tract, the chances are that the fur coat would be superior to that acquired if living on one acre.

The sort of food cuts a big figure in fur quality. The wild skunk in summer lives largely on grubs and insects which produce the finest oil in the world and it stimulates a coat of fur comprising good length, thickness and lustre. The confined animal does not get his natural food supply. Would it be surprising if the fur coat suffered as a consequence and not equal that of the wild brother?

Again, the animal raised in captivity may prove to have the largest pelt and the best furred. Much depends upon whether the fur raiser knows the habits and nature of fur animals. Why shouldn't animals fur properly if fed regularly upon the food that they like, with living quarters similar to those which they enjoy in the wild condition? They will and do. For proof we need only refer to the sale of a black fox, ranch raised, highest price ever realized for a fox skin. So far the ranch raised black, silver and cross fox skins have sold at an average of about one-third above the wild.

The average prices for all silver fox skins both wild and ranch raised, sold in London during two years, was as follows: 1910, \$414.37, 1911, \$290.01. During the year 1910 there were 27 ranch raised Prince Edward Island silver fox skins sold which averaged \$1,361.05, in 1911, from the same island, 10 skins were sold which averaged \$1,085.27.

On account of the demand for breeding animals at high prices, but few ranch raised silver fox skins were marketed prior to 1915. A somewhat remarkable sale was one sold in March, 1912, when a pelt from a fox that died on October 12, 1911, and owned by James

Rayner brought \$2,050.00, yet the skin would not have been at its best until some weeks later.

It is only a question of proper care of the animal, whether it be fox, mink, marten, skunk, coon, opossum, muskrat or any other fur bearing animal for it to grow a coat of fur as when wild. One fur raiser said that he had opossum that averaged fully one-half heavier than the wild ones in that locality. Thus it is seen from the high priced fox fur to the low opossum, it is in the management whether the pelt is worth more or less than if taken from an animal never in captivity.

The various collections of "wild" furs, except those caught by professional trappers, show more or less irregularity in skinning and handling, coming as they do from so many different persons. Among collections will be found not only blued skins, but torn, shot, dog chewed, rubbed, springy and otherwise damaged. This should all be overcome in "tame" furs for the fur raiser will only kill and market when the pelt and fur are prime. The skins will all be handled by the same person and should be uniform — all alike — which adds to appearance and selling value.

The time will probably come when there will be two quotations on furs, "wild furs" and "tame furs," just as there are on ginseng now. Owing to the fact that ginseng growers have not been able to grow to exactly resemble the wild in looks and taste, the wild sells at an advance over cultivated so that quotations on "wild ginseng" are considerably higher than "cultivated ginseng." Cultivated golden seal, however, has been selling as high as the wild.



RANCH RAISED SIL-
VER BLACK.

In 1914 when furs were not in active demand the silver black pelt shown brought upwards of one thousand dollars. This pelt was not perfect by any means, was killed early in November and had about one-third of tail missing. The fox was twelve years old and had been owned by a party on Prince Edward Island for years. It was a splendid breeder yet it furred properly and heavily each year until the fall before it was killed it began to show the effects of its age which as already stated was twelve years. The term Silver Black is used by some fox raisers to designate the better grades of silver fox skins from those of ordinary quality.

That foxes, if properly handled, fur better in ranches than in the wild state seems to be pretty well established. While many are still skeptical yet there is no doubt that the ranch raised pelts of not only fox, but most if not all animals, will eventually surpass the wild. In this connection three more ranch raised fox pelts from Prince Edward Island are shown. The raiser said that none of the three were prime, being killed in November and were small or medium size, not large. No. 1 was a three-year-old male, not being up to the standard of what that breeder wished, yet the pelt sold for \$910.00. No. 2 was that of a ten-year-old female, with part of tail missing,



THREE RANCH RAISED SILVER
BLACK.

yet the pelt sold for \$1,000.00. No. 3 was an eleven - year - old male, in fair condition, although showing more silver than either of the others. This pelt brought \$890.00. Remember, that this was in 1914 when all silver and black fox were selling off from former prices. In the London auction sales for the year 1914 those who had wild silver and black fox pelts on the market will tell you that the ranch raised sold best. When it is taken into consider-

ation that two of these foxes were old and had spent many years within enclosures, or ranch raised, it can be seen that “tame” furs are even now superior to “wild” in some instances at least.

If the fur raiser is able to produce healthy animals there is no reason why he can not produce fur pelts of better quality than those grown on the backs of animals that often have difficulty in finding enough food to keep them alive. So far those interested in “tame furs,” with

the exception of the far northern raisers, have not been able to improve upon the "wild" and in most cases the product has been inferior.

Whether "wild or tame" furs are made into articles of wear, the larger the pelt and the denser the fur the more valuable they will be. A buyer need only be on his guard, for if he is a judge of fur, he can tell pretty accurately the value of the various classes that he will get an opportunity to handle.

Breeding and raising of fur bearing animals as an industry has come to stay and is bound to increase but like any other business it must be mastered.

ADVERSE QUALITY. — The writer, some years ago, purchased the skins of skunk, mink, coon and foxes raised in confinement. As all came from the hands of those who knew but little of the habits and nature of fur animals, the fur was generally lacking. Improved methods of raising in recent years, including feeding and dens has brought about marked improvement. In the matter of skunk furs I feel safe in saying that less than 50 per cent of the number purchased possessed a full coat of fur. All were thin in fur and some were practically all hair with no growth of under fur. The poorest of such inferior furred skins are easily discovered but those that are partly furred are likely to be overlooked. In order to determine qualities, inspection of furs should be made only by daylight and in well lighted rooms.

Some years ago I knew of a buyer who purchased in a barn about 400 skunk skins. It was cold weather, compelling him to keep the doors closed and but little

light entered at the few windows. The day was also rather dark which made assorting still more difficult. He was only able to assort for colors and could hardly distinguish the blue pelted skins. When daylight of the right sort came to show up the purchase, he sorted out 75 skins of the "tame" variety which he could determine by their great lack of under fur, although they were prime in pelt. Most of them were detected by the buyer to whom he sold a large collection, being graded down in every instance which meant quite a loss on these skins.

Local dealers as well as traveling buyers now need to examine all lots of goods for quality as well as size, color and primeness. A buyer never knows when some of the poorly furred stuff has been sandwiched in among goods of first quality. Sometimes tame furs that are poorly furred are sent from a considerable distance to some friend who is engaged in buying wild furs to be mixed with the dealer's collection and their identity is lost until sold out as a whole with the rest to some traveling agent at first quality grade and prices.

The raw fur trade is full of tricks and pitfalls for the unwary and many times the most alert are swindled or juggled into a bad deal. Some skunk pelts from the fur grower's pen are affected with mange, the fur being out in spots and the skin scabby and covered with scales. These skunks had narrow quarters, the runs were filthy and the food was mostly tainted or rotten meat such as that from fly blown cattle heads and offal. Skunk, if kept on floors and improperly fed, do not fur properly; the *hide* is apt to be *thick* and the *fur thin*. Most of the mistakes of the skunk raisers of the early days have been



CENTRAL NEW YORK TRAPPER'S CATCH.

remedied and pelts of an AI quality are now being produced.

Buyers who have handled tame mink pelts say they average dark in color because of being housed and the runs sheltered so that the sun has no chance to fade them. The pelts were also prime but when it came

to quality the same was often lacking. The coat is short and the fur not so dense or silky, as a result of living in warm quarters and not being sufficiently exposed to cold weather and the elements in general.

Tame coon and tame foxes where kept in close quarters are equally affected. The coon especially so, if he does not have access to running water where he may wade and paddle to his satisfaction. Pet coon or foxes kept on a chain seldom fur well. It will be thin, rubbed and soiled and the neck bare to the hide from friction of the collar.

If tame furs are off in quality and are purchased as straight skins and on an equal footing with wild furs, they may sell to a country buyer or local dealer without comment, but if shipped to some fur house, look out for trouble. There all skins will be graded according to respective merits and the poorly furred skins meet their just deserts.

Some years ago when fur values went up leaps and bounds, not only more sporting goods dealers began selling steel traps but the raw fur houses began to handle hunters' and trappers' supplies, including steel traps. The sales about 1910 was several hundred dozen greater than ever before or ever will be again. This had its effect upon the catch for the seasons of 1910-11, 1911-12, 1912-13, as quantities offered at the London sales prove. The catch for the seasons of 1912-13 and 1913-14 was not nearly so large as the three previous years, even though quantities offered at the sales were greater. This is accounted for from the fact that the catch was greater than the demand and much of the 1914 offering had been carried over from previous years.

COMBINED MARCH OFFERINGS.

The combined offerings of Lampson, Nesbitt and Huth for March, 1915, and comparisons for the five previous March sales were as follows:

	1915	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910
Mink	27,150	157,596	70,194	60,326	76,563	81,700
Skunk	274,000	957,000	608,600	694,609	804,300	425,260
Muskrat	1,790,000	4,464,500	1,293,000	1,107,776	1,475,000	806,500
Raccoon	69,300	551,200	206,000	140,846	167,100	187,500
Opossum	136,000	889,600	535,800	661,340	588,600	328,815
Marten	8,900	15,861	10,964	12,708	11,900	15,100
Lynx	10,370	3,797	597	1,728	1,050	300
Fox, red	15,300	38,050	22,535	24,390	26,740	22,178

Fox, cross	2,245	2,211	1,984	852	820	958
Fox, grey	2,200	43,850	20,386	28,280	27,800	15,148
Fox, silver	338	645	384	428	412	486
Fox, kitt	4,160	14,585	6,300	8,360	5,050	1,179
Fox, white	12,000	4,718	2,000	6,136	4,962	2,595
Fox, blue	200	1,111	2,800	1,200	2,800	1,800
Otter	2,650	6,192	4,736	5,750	6,873	3,950
Fisher	1,176	1,573	1,102	167	493	620
Beaver	15,850	12,405	7,883	6,870	7,565	9,950
Bear	2,190	4,153	5,053	5,630	8,040	7,140
Wolf	14,200	80,725	34,200	45,390	36,000	25,326
Civet	29,500	125,700	47,820	162,225	216,700	86,000
Badger	5,400	8,850	4,400	12,440	7,300	2,855
Cat, wild	4,500	17,356	2,650	16,578	13,900	7,237
Cat, house	24,500	31,800	54,500	38,000	34,700	18,757
Wolverine	273	679	617	525	807	700
Ermine	75,100	300,500	114,500	136,200	131,750	106,963

HUDSON BAY COMPANY MARCH OFFERINGS.

	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910
Bear, Black	4,650	3,218	3,456	5,000	4,023
Bear, Brown	390	241	351	370	867
Bear, Grey	45	31	46	90	85
Bear, White	190	113	130	80	59
Badger	120	117	45	80	144
Ermine	49,500	26,785	34,307	49,400	19,935
Fisher	3,650	1,761	1,581	2,350	1,968
Fox, Blue	70	19	51	110	17
Fox, Cross	5,400	1,241	1,828	1,800	986
Fox, Red	17,000	3,492	5,755	4,700	2,269
Fox, Silver	980	246	410	380	212
Fox, White	8,950	3,441	6,623	14,700	3,975
Lynx	20,600	11,740	5,667	3,750	2,871
Marten	35,000	24,533	24,049	29,300	25,299
Mink	78,850	36,933	20,456	32,700	12,068
Otter, Land	6,450	5,857	4,802	6,500	4,401
Raccoon	400	187	74	200	227
Skunk	5,150	1,508	822	800	1,310
Wolf	3,850	3,601	1,286	2,400	2,751
Wolverine	550	504	666	900	737

This company offer their collection of muskrat and beaver at the January sales only and for the years as above were:

	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910
Muskrat	850,000	967,700	793,940	896,108	542,390
Beaver	38,000	38,600	37,256	36,767	35,889

The Hudson Bay Company have been selling nearly all their collection in January and March so that quantities offered by this company in either the June or October sales have not been of importance.

COMBINED JANUARY OFFERINGS.

The combined offerings of Lampson, Nesbitt and Huth for January, 1914, (no January, 1915, sales), and comparison for the two previous January sales were as follows:

	1914	1913	1912
Skunk	575,500	530,800	558,000
Muskrat	2,882,500	2,164,650	1,394,400
Opossum	464,800	406,500	407,000
Mink	33,909	38,404	38,366
Coon	175,150	87,300	83,000
Civet cat	38,400	55,260	61,100
Red fox	23,800	20,372	20,300
Grey fox	13,150	7,685	14,000
Cross fox	288	467	134
Silver fox	78	67	95
Kitt fox	43,110	20,000	9,600
White fox	3,500	6,150	5,060
Blue fox	200	100	40
Wolf	35,830	24,500	40,600
Otter	5,337	4,888	5,612
Lynx	3,681	1,590	536

Bear	3,646	3,292	5,385
House cat	42,100	19,800	23,400
Wild cat	10,180	7,565	6,350
Ermine	76,000	38,300	41,900
Badger	5,500	4,185	3,900
Beaver	9,050	8,700	5,870
Fisher	326	400	117
Marten	10,184	5,800	7,277

The offerings at both June and October sales of American raw furs is usually much less than either January or March, yet they are of interest, showing what articles are in demand.

Quantities at any of the sales do not furnish a reliable basis of the catch. A certain fur may be in demand in America and largely used here, so that quantity exported is small, yet the catch large. Again demand may be poor in America but better elsewhere, in which instance exports would be apt to be large yet catch was only an average one.

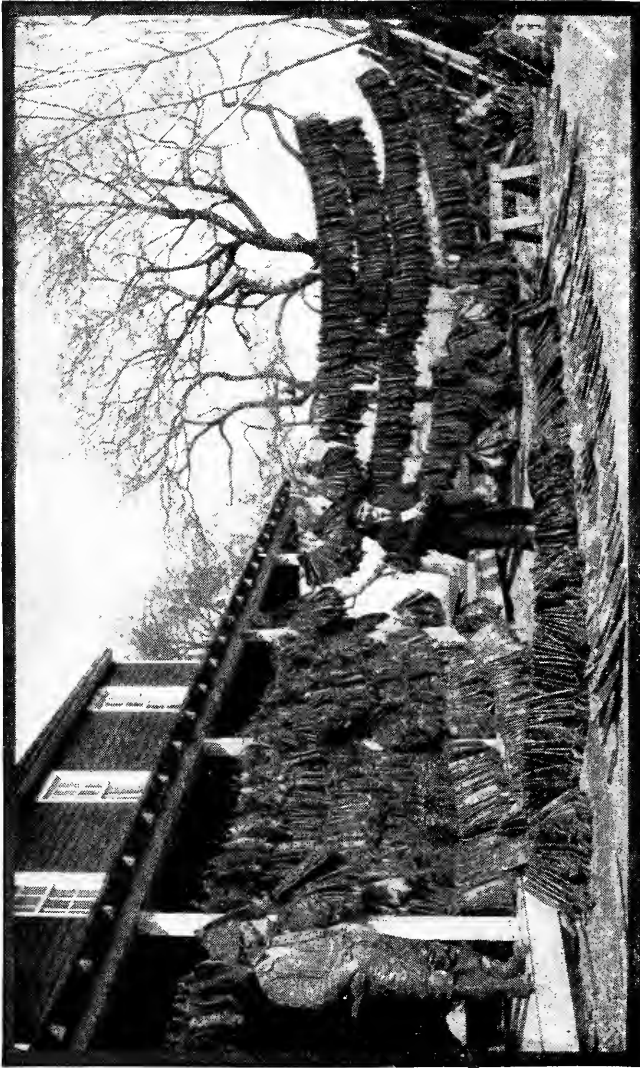
Owing to the European war which began August, 1914, no sales of raw furs were held in London in October, 1914, or January, 1915. In March, 1915, small quantities only were sold. The March sales are usually the largest and most important of the year — see table showing figures for March, 1915, 1914, 1913, 1912, 1911 and 1910.

The London sales will not be of as much importance for years, if ever, as they formerly were to the American dealer in furs. The war has brought great changes in the buying power of Europe and the fur trade as well as other lines has been hard hit. For years just prior to

the war Europe was using about two-thirds of the American catch of raw furs and paying good prices for them. However, before the war broke out prices on certain furs had become lower. It seemed that the catch of 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913 was greater than the demand especially at the prices which were then in effect. At the time the war began there was not only large quantities of furs in cold storage in Europe still owned by American exporters but millions of skins held by dealers in New York, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Twin Cities, Montreal, etc. There is no question but that the losses on 1912 and 1913 purchases were heavy — millions of dollars. Instead of conditions improving they did otherwise. Add to this the cost to carry in cold storage. Further, the fact should not be overlooked that skins held a year or two will not sell as well as the fresh caught.

It is hard for most trappers and a good many of the small collectors to realize that losses on 1912 and 1913 purchases by the large dealers and exporters amounted to millions of dollars. Such however is a fact. In some instances they did not get half what they paid.

There will always be a market for furs as they are a necessity in the more northern regions where no cloth will repel the piercing winds although by far the greater quantities are worn by the women to keep in fashion. Therefore, being largely an article of luxury, there is no telling when values will undergo change. Furs, however, are much like silk — a staple article — but what color is to be worn is the question. It may be black, dark, brown, grey, or white so that naturally that color will be in demand and sell best.



BUYER INSPECTING 4300 MUSKRAT SKINS — SEASON'S CATCH OF DELAWARE
MUSKRAT RAISER.

Close and persistent trapping, especially during the years 1910, 1911 and 1912 has reduced the supply of “wild” fur bearers so that no such quantities as sold in 1914, 1913, and 1912 are left to trap. The great European war demoralized fur values at the beginning of the season of 1914 so that trapping was not nearly so extensive as in former years.

Fur values have always fluctuated more or less but chances are that as the “wild” supply becomes less that values will increase. At any rate, with increased use of furs, the price is apt to be kept up well, at least until the fur bearers have become so numerous that fur farmers produce millions of pelts each year. So far the sales have been principally fox from the ranches of Eastern Canadian Provinces and Alaska; skunk, opossum, mink and coon in small quantities from various parts of the country; muskrat have been protected in certain places by land owners, who either rent the rat trapping privileges or catch the animals themselves, so that hundreds of thousands of skins are already being marketed each year mainly from along the coast of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

The combined offerings at London, by Lamson, Nesbitt, Huth and Hudson Bay Co., previous to the great European war, was usually about two-thirds of the total North American catch, the other third being manufactured here. While accurate figures of the value of the yearly catch in North America are not available, it is probably around \$25,000,000, and the world catch \$100,000,000.

CHAPTER II.

SIZE, COLOR, QUALITY.

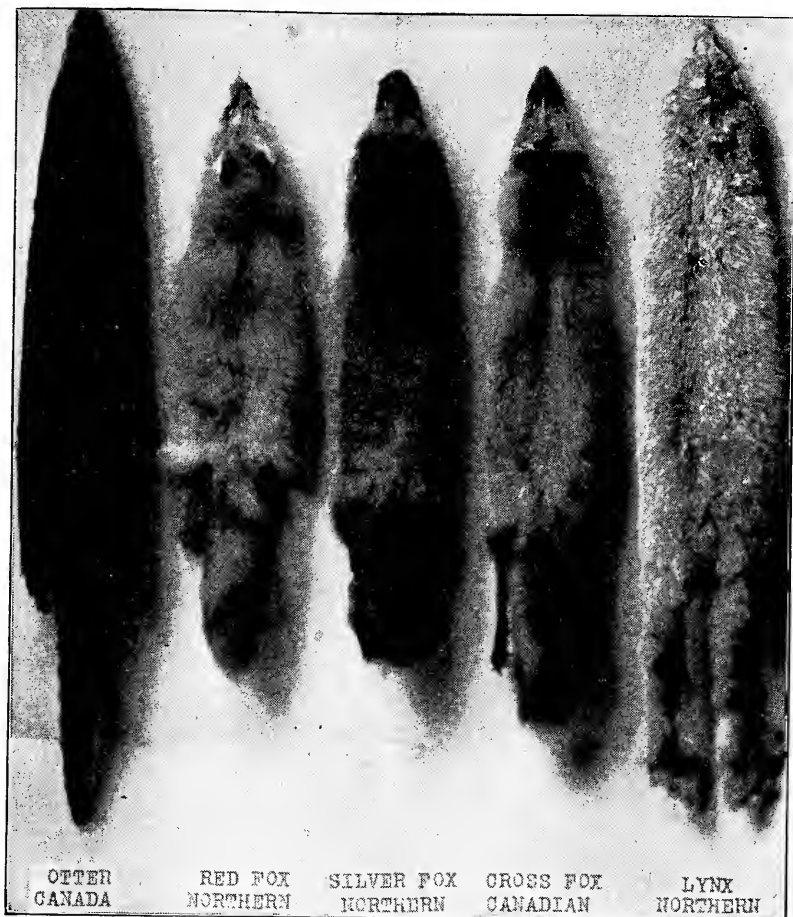
SIZE.—The chapters dealing with the various fur-bearing animals go much more into detail as to the *size, color, quality, grade* and especially grade and grading.

As a rule the raccoons of the North are larger than those of the South. They are also darker in color, and because of the difference in climate, have much heavier coats. The hide or pelt on the northern coon is also much thicker, heavier and stronger which tends to make northern caught skins more valuable.

The mink of the northeast (Northern Maine, New Brunswick, Eastern Quebec and Labrador) are smaller and darker than any others, although those found in the Lake Superior region and immediately north are usually quite dark. These mink are also small. The largest are found in the prairie districts of Canada, the Dakotas and other of the North Central States, but they are of comparatively poor quality, being coarse in texture and quite pale. Those from the south are also of large size and of poor quality.

Largest lynx are found north of the Great Lakes and eastward. In portions of British Columbia and the prairie districts of Canada they are also very large. This is probably because of the abundance of food (rabbits)

usually found in those parts. There is also some difference in color, the palest ones apparently being found in Alaska and the Far North.

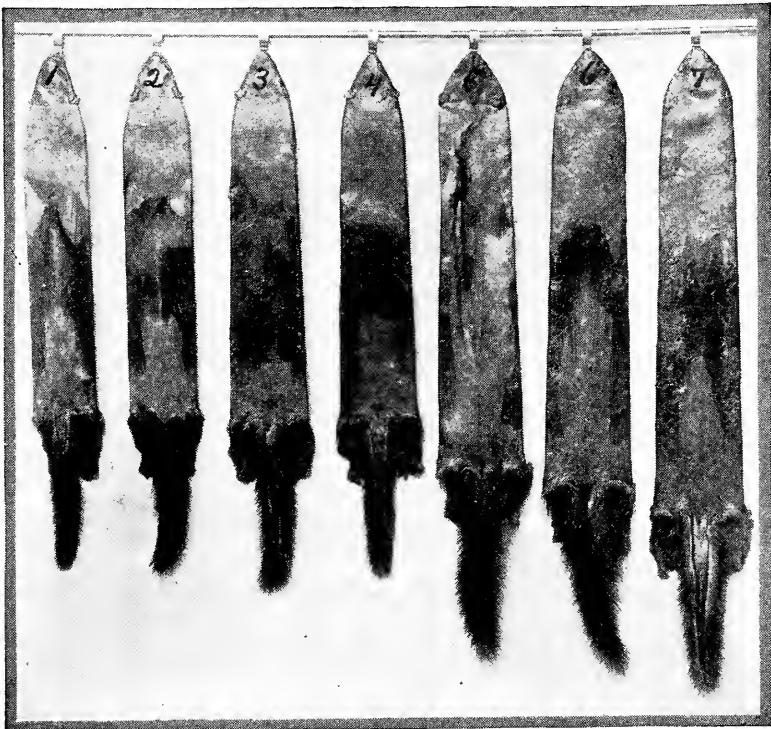


NORTHERN FURS — OTTER, FOX, LYNX.

Otters reach their largest size in Florida but the northern wolves are larger than those of the south. It

is the same in regard to bears, the largest being found in the north.

The largest red foxes come from the interior of Alaska, and naturally they are of fine quality. However, all of the northern foxes are well furred except along the Pacific coast.



AVERAGE SIZES CENTRAL WESTERN MINK SKINS.

The seven skins shown here were caught by a trapper November, 1914, in Harrison county, Iowa, and represent a good average for mink caught in Nebraska, North Missouri, Western Illinois and Iowa (except the

two north rows of counties in Iowa where the average is still larger). These skins were graded as follows: Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 small; No. 5 medium; Nos. 6 and 7 large. The dimensions of each skin was as follows:

(1) Length of body 16, tail 7, total 23; width at tail $3\frac{1}{4}$, shoulders 3 inches.

(2) Length of body 16, tail 7, total 23; width at tail $3\frac{1}{4}$, shoulders 3 inches.

(3) Length of body 17, tail $7\frac{1}{2}$, total $24\frac{1}{2}$; width at tail $3\frac{3}{4}$, shoulders $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

(4) Length of body 17, tail $7\frac{1}{2}$, total $24\frac{1}{2}$; width at tail $3\frac{3}{4}$, shoulders $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

(5) Length of body 19, tail 8, total 27; width at tail $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

(6) Length of body 20, tail 8, total 28; width at tail $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

(7) Length of body 21, tail 8, total 29; width at tail $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

The four small are almost as large as the No. 1 or large from Lake Superior and the Northeast Coast but they are not as silky or so fine furred, also lighter colored.

CARCASS AND PELT MEASUREMENT. — Buyers of furs will be interested in carcass measurements of fur animals compared with the pelt when stretched. Some fur animal pelts will stretch larger in proportion than others. The skin of the sea otter is very loose and will stretch about twice the size as when on the animal. Most furs, such as fox, otter, mink, etc., will stretch from one-fourth to one-third longer, depending much upon width and shape stretched. The following are exact measurements of two large Rhode Island mink:

1st Carcass, end of nose to root of tail $17\frac{1}{2}$, tail 8, tip to tip $25\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Pelt on Board, end of nose to root of tail $23\frac{1}{2}$, tail 9, tip to tip $32\frac{1}{2}$, width at hips $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 4 inches.

2nd Carcass, end of nose to root of tail 18, tail $8\frac{1}{2}$, tip to tip $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Pelt on Board, end of nose to root of tail $23\frac{3}{4}$, tail $9\frac{1}{2}$, tip to tip $33\frac{1}{4}$, width at hips $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 4 inches.

Mink from various parts of the country will vary from above sizes, yet the relative proportions of an unskinned to skinned and stretched, will be pretty much the same. The two mink from which the above measurements were taken were caught in November. With some fur bearers the skin will stretch larger, in proportion to carcass, when caught in the fall; others in spring, seem to shrink accordingly.

A good illustration of the carcass and stretched pelt of an otter with measurements can be seen by turning to page 273.

The largest muskrats are found in the New England and Central States. The smallest come from the plains region of the Northwest. Why, is not known, but the small size is supposed to be caused either by insufficient food or from the alkali in the waters of the Northwest.

The largest skunks come from the northern portion of the Mississippi Valley, but they run largely to the long stripe, in fact, from some portions, as in northern Minnesota, there is scarcely any other kind to be found. Large skunks are also found in Kansas and Nebraska, Northern Illinois and Indiana, and New York.

COLOR. — It is my belief that the finest mink, considering both size and color, come from the Massachusetts Coast. The rule is that the farther north we go, the finer the quality of the fur. But all rules have exceptions, and so we find very fine mink in parts of Georgia and the Carolinas, while those from the lower Yukon basin of Alaska are of poor quality.

With marten there is a remarkable variation in color, for they will run from a pale yellow to a very dark brown, in rare instances to almost black. Some of the very dark ones have silver hairs interspersed with the brown and it makes a fur of remarkable beauty. On the dark ones the light spot on the throat is a bright orange color, while on the pale ones it is usually a sort of cream, sometimes white.

In the Eastern States and the lower parts of Canada what few martens are found are of the pale variety and are worth from \$2.50 to \$5.00 only, while those of Alaska, British Columbia, Labrador and the Hudson Bay regions are sometimes worth \$25. Indeed, they are sometimes sold for much higher prices on the East Coast of Canada.

I do not wish to impress anyone with the idea that in the parts mentioned only dark martens are found, for such is not the case. All shades of color will be found in the same locality and in Ontario trappers have caught very pale ones and fine dark fellows in the same traps at different times.

The difference in the markings of skunks is interesting, and there is no apparent reason for it. In many sections, as for instance in parts of Ohio, East Tennessee,

Pennsylvania and Vermont, they run largely to black or No. 1. In other states No. 1 skunks are unknown, while in other localities the No. 1's are few only.

It is not perhaps generally known that the surroundings of most animals has a primary effect on the color



NORTHWESTERN FURS — WILD CAT, MINK, MARTEN, BEAVER, WEASEL, MUSKRAT, WOLF.

of their hair. Beaver, otter, mink and muskrat are dark or light colored, according to the water they live in. Clear, cold water lakes produce skins of a deep, glossy black, muddy lakes, on the other hand, furnishing light

colored fur. Having studied this in my own hunting and trapping, I have often surprised a trapper when buying his skins by saying, "You trapped this and this skin in a clear water lake," and he has admitted it as true.

Another peculiar fact in relation to deep cold water lakes, is that, while the skins they procure is of the finest quality, they are also much smaller in size than those trapped in brown or muddy water, and this applies to all the animals mentioned. Muskrat killed in clear water lakes are about two-thirds the size of those trapped in grassy, sluggish rivers, and it is the same with mink. This rule holds good also with land animals, such as marten, those living in and resorting to black spruce swamps being invariably dark colored, whereas those in mixed pine, birch and balsam hills are larger and lighter in color.

Along the Atlantic Coast from North Carolina to New Jersey, many muskrats are black. In some localities, especially in and around Delaware and Chesapeake Bays, the dark and black skins run as high as 30 per cent of the entire catch.

Skunk in some localities have a much *blacker* black than elsewhere. This is probably due to both food conditions and the character of the ground in which they live. The guard hairs on such skins are so black that they shine or "sheen."

The common brown weasel north of 41 degrees or thereabout, turn white during the winter months and the skins are then known as ermine.

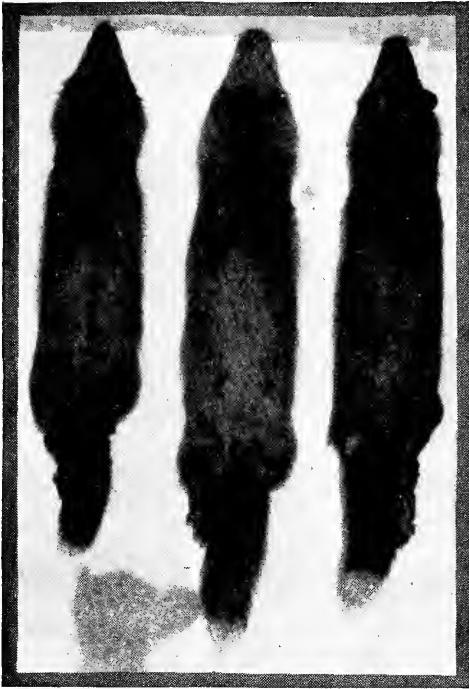
The Arctic fox which are usually blue at birth, turn snow white as fall and cold weather approaches. This fox is found only in Greenland and the extreme northern

parts of Alaska and Canada. During the summer the fur is known as "blue fox," although in reality it is a drab grey, much resembling the color of a maltese cat.

The color of the Arctic fox and weasel (ermine) are apparently much influenced by cold and snow. This is further substantiated by the opossum, an animal which is seldom found above 41 degrees. Its fur is the only kind produced in the Central and Southern States that is white, but unlike the northern weasel and Arctic fox, it does not change its color. Another peculiarity in connection with the color of the fur bearers is that the darkest opossum skins are secured in the south.

Throughout the north the snow shoe rabbit turns from reddish brown to pure white. While opossum are the only white fur bearers in the Central and Southern States, there is an occasional white coon and still more rarely a white muskrat. Not enough, however, of either to be of interest to the fur trade. The white under furred mink known as "cotton mink" are quite common in some parts of the country. So far the greatest number of such skins have been reported caught in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Iowa, Arkansas and other states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico.

QUALITY. — The most valuable fox, whether black, silver, cross, or the less valuable red, are from the coldest sections of Canada. On the other hand, the most valuable muskrat pelts are not from Canada but from localities as far south as Ohio. Why? If cold weather produces fox pelts, why not muskrats as well? Dealers all know that raccoon in parts of Dakota, Minnesota,



THREE SILVER FOX SKINS.

(1) Length, 32 inches. (2) 36 inches. (3) 34 inches. All measured from end of nose to root of tail and stretched on boards $6\frac{1}{4}$ at shoulders, $7\frac{1}{2}$ at hips. These skins when turned as shown measured 8 at shoulders and 9 at hips, representing average sizes as caught in Western Alberta, Canada.

but very dark and silky and are about as valuable as skins caught along the Atlantic Coast from Maine north. Not so with marten, for those caught around Lake Superior are usually pale or yellow and not worth nearly so much as those caught in other localities no farther north.

Ohio has long been known as one of the best skunk

Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska and parts of Kansas are large and dark and worth more than skins caught in other localities in the same latitude. Why are the skins larger and darker? It may be that the food is more to their liking or possibly not being so numerous as in other parts (the south for instance) they have not interbred so much and are therefore larger.

The size, color, as well as density of fur, all have to do with the value of a pelt. In the Lake Superior region mink are small

producers — both as to quality of fur and number of skins. New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois are all states that grow large and fine skunk. In these states the skins run well to black or No. 1. In many localities pelts taken in November and December will grade from 30 to 40 per cent black or No. 1. The northwest — Minnesota, Dakotas, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, etc. — produce large skunk but they are of the long, narrow stripe variety.

While opossum are found as far north as central Ohio, Indiana and Illinois in considerable numbers, many of the largest and best lots of skins are secured in the northern and central portions of West Virginia, while in the southern part, they are not nearly so good. It seems that fifty miles here makes a vast difference in the size as well as the density of the furs.

That fifty or a hundred miles makes a noticeable difference in certain of the fur bearing animals is clearly illustrated by the weasel (ermine). South of the fortieth parallel which passes through Philadelphia near Wheeling, West Virginia, through Columbus, Ohio, and near Indianapolis, Indiana, near Springfield and Quincy, Illinois, through northern Missouri and forms the line between Kansas and Nebraska, there are few if any white weasel (ermine) but just north there are some, while a hundred miles to the north, a fair per cent turn white each winter season.

The why of the various sections producing different colors, sizes, etc., is hard to explain fully. With some animals both the climate and food have something to do with the color and density of fur but not in all. As

already shown, muskrat from central sections are worth more than from the north — fur may not be as fine but pelt is heavier and better for tanning. Again mink from parts of North Carolina are small and dark, somewhat resembling Maine or Lake Superior skins and are worth much more than skins caught far to the north. Why? Marten in some of the sections far to the north are yellow or pale while in other localities, even to the south, are darker.

The Cascade or Coast Range of mountains extend two thousand miles north and south from California to Alaska. The climate west of this range from California to Alaska, is very mild and *moist*; flowers bloom nine months of the year and it rains for five months during the winter or wet season. East of this same range of mountains, in any of the above states, it is cold and dry for seven months of the year, besides the altitude is from two to ten thousand feet. Does it stand to reason that skins caught on the west or Pacific Coast side in any of the above named states are worth as much as skins caught on the east side of the Coast Range? Shipments of furs from Arkansas and Texas often contain better furred skins than those from the salt water coast of Oregon and Washington or Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Skins caught along the coast of Alaska and on the Islands of Southeastern Alaska, are not worth any more than furs caught in northern California.

The largest and poorest red fox in the world are caught on Kodiak Island, Alaska, the best and largest not selling for more than one-half as much as the same size red fox caught in the *interior* of Alaska. A silver

fox caught on Kodiak Island is worth about as much as a good *coyote* and does not look any better. A few of the reasons why fur is so poor on that island (which, by the way, is much larger than some of the eastern states) are: the island lies in the warm, Japan current: the wild animals of the island live and feed along the salt water beach on rotten fish or whatever food they can get.

Prime mink caught on salt water do not dress, blend or dye well, and soon fade out to a "ratty red." Such skins will not bring in London or any other market to exceed two-thirds as much as the same size and colored mink caught in the interior of Alaska among the fresh waters of the White, Stewart, Yukon, Tanana, Porcupine, Koyukuk or Kuskokwim Rivers. Would a list quoting a single price for a large, prime hide of any kind do for Alaska, a country almost as large as all the eastern states combined and with all kinds of climatic conditions? Perhaps not. At least a buyer issuing such a price list would secure but little business where competition is keen and to secure furs, a buyer has to go the limit.

There is not a season but trappers and shippers are wanting rats to be classed as Spring long before they become prime or Spring rats. Spring rats must show up red; there must be no dark spots on the flesh side. Skins that are damaged in any way will not pass for Spring. Very few rats of the prime sort come in until late in February, and will not be secured in any great quantities until in March. In fact, rats are at their best in March or April and trappers who have skins left on their hands by the local buyers quitting for the season, can ship them to market as late as May or even in the northern lati-

tudes some later. In this latitude rat trappers will find that their catch in March and April are at their best.

South of Minneapolis rats are worth the same as Wisconsin and southeastern Iowa rats, while those caught north and west of Minneapolis are thin pelted and worth less. The reason for this no one seems able to explain

satisfactorily. We all know that food and climate have much to do with the size and condition of certain fur bearing animals. It may be the food that makes these animals thin pelted. This is one of the subjects hard to understand from the fact that skunk caught in this section are large and fine, while south where the rats are better, the skunk are much smaller.



WESTERN AND NORTH-
WESTERN LONG NAR-
ROW STRIPE.

While skunk and muskrat are the two furs that become of value first in the Fall, do not make the mistake of buying them too soon. Some years ago skunk caught in the latitude of New York City or Chicago by November 1 would

often go for prime skins, but of more recent years, owing to the warm and open seasons, they have not been prime until some two or three weeks later, while to the south they have not been full-furred until in December. Muskrat are of some value in the north in October, yet it is well known that their fur is best and most valuable in March and April.

The average Western long stripe, or No. 3, has more black fur that can be used by the manufacturer than many of the Eastern short or No. 2. The stripe on the Western skunk is down farther on the sides, as a rule, leaving more good fur on the back. This accounts for the No. 3's from that part of the country being worth more than the wide stripe variety, also known as No. 3, found in the East and Central states principally.

Otter, beaver and muskrat do not become prime — at their best — until spring. Bear, of the land animals, is the latest to become prime but remains in good condition until early June. Marten and skunk are the first to “prime up” in the fall, followed by raccoon, fisher, mink and fox.

On the Pacific Coast, owing to the wet climate, furs are not as good as inland. The skins secured along the coast of California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and the islands are worth much less than inland and in the high mountain regions. A few miles there makes a vast difference in the quality of the fur.

The general impression prevails that the colder the weather and the longer the same continues, the better the fur. This is true to some extent only. Fur bearing animals in the more northern sections are better furred than those farther south. In the north such animals as fox, lynx, cats, marten, wolves, and ermine pay but little attention to the weather but travel pretty much the same at all times.

Other fur bearers such as beaver and muskrat have a supply of food laid up. Otter work under the ice more or less at all times, while mink do likewise, thus securing

some food which tends to keep the body natural and the fur healthy.

What about fur bearers in the Central Sections that as a rule continue active most of the year? In this class are skunk, coon and opossum. These animals, if the weather is warm, move when hungry, which may mean every night. In this section cold spells generally last but a few days or a week. Occasionally long, cold spells occur when these animals do not stir and when they do come out, are poor in flesh and the fur shows signs of deterioration. These animals, not being accustomed to long fasting, soon show the effect. After a long, cold winter, skunk, coon and opossum furs become faded, rubbed and lose the luster (bright color) much sooner than during a more moderate winter.

CHAPTER III.

METHODS OF GRADING.

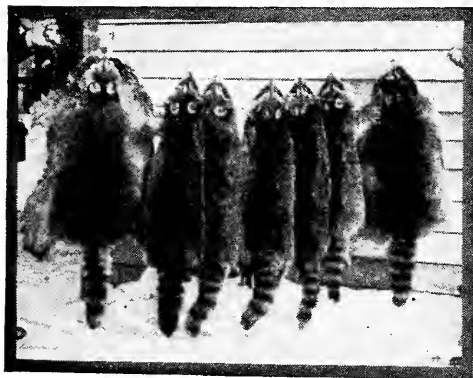
GRADE AND GRADING. — Be it remembered that every 69 miles that we advance north or south makes one degree of latitude and three degrees, 207 miles, brings a marked change in fur qualities.

On account of the wide difference that exists in fur qualities, colors and sizes in separate latitudes, there must be a large number of assortments naturally. But when hundreds of raw fur dealers, buyers and handlers, with varying ideas and intentions in all parts of the country get through grading, the number of assortments are legion.

No two fur graders even when competent and possessing the best of intentions, ever assort a lot of furs of considerable size just the same. There is likely to be some difference between graders in their views on a small collection. One will grade a certain coon large, while another buyer rates it a medium. One says to himself, "This is a well furred coon but a little blue in pelt. It is not quite prime, it will have to go in with the No. 2's." The other buyer, when examining the same skin, says mentally, "The pelt is a trifle blue but it is so well furred that it will go for No. 1."

We will suppose that we have a lot of one hundred and a few more of coon skins, that all come from one section. They are to be assorted for sizes and degrees of primeness. This collection may have come from the

hands of a dozen or more trappers and fur hunters and there will be just as much difference in handling as there were owners, in number. Two skins of equal size when green may appear of different dimensions when handled separately. Dry and ready for market, one is 20 inches wide by 22 long, while its mate measures 18 inches wide by 24 long. Then we encounter the poorly stretched, irregulars and shriveled, so that it is often difficult to establish a dividing line between large and medium and between medium and small. This would not be the case if all had been handled in uniform shape by one man.



SEVEN FINE, LARGE, DARK NO. 1
COON SKINS—2 OPEN, 5 CASED.

The result is that two buyers or six buyers will assort this collection of coon differently. Each one acts to the best of his judgment but we do not all look at a skin or skins with the same eyes.

After being assorted by buyer No. 1, there will be per-

haps 60 large coon, but buyer No. 2 will make but 45 large. Buyer No. 1 has 20 No. 2 coon but the other has found only 13. The other seven were graded No. 3. One buyer makes a larger number of No. 3 coon than the other who has placed some of this grade in with the trash or No. 4's. One grades 15 prime small coon and the other finds but nine, the other six being rated medium.

Both graders have acted according to their training and best judgment and yet their selection is widely different from one another. The chances are that he who graded the least liberal is the nearest correct as to what the assort should be. If buying in competition with another, who is more liberal, the correct man will be far short of making a purchase.

With so many grades in a lot of coon from one section, something can be imagined of the task that is presented to a buyer who enters the fur room of a large dealer having several thousand coon to assort. These are from all sections, in all sizes, styles of handling and every degree of primeness and are as thoroughly mixed up as scrambled eggs. If assorted correctly, there will be about 100 grades, for it is not difficult to find 16 grades in coon of one section as to sizes and degrees of primeness.

Skunk are about our most important fur, as regards the country's raw fur income and here there is the widest range of assorting made in grading any fur. Sections of country in which they are found, sizes, species, and the amount of white and the way nature has painted it on in all of its ramifications, requires much training to grade skunk of the entire country correctly.

So closely associated are the dividing lines between grades, that in many instances it is a toss up as to where it belongs. There may be a trifle too much white in length or width of stripe for a No. 1 but it will make an extra good No. 2. If the buyer is a close grader, and the owner is exacting, a quibble may arise, when it is pretty sure to be graded No. 1. The buyer must take his

chances in being able to sell it the same as he has been compelled to grade it. If the skin is of good size, he may make it go No. 1 but if a small pelt it probably will go for No. 2.



SOUTHEAST
NEBRASKA
SKUNK.

The same is true of poor No. 2's. If stripes run two-thirds the length of skin, or are very wide if only running half way, or are narrow but branched, or the skin is a good short stripe but very small, all these conditions bring a skin close to the No. 3 grade.

If skunk furs are in good demand, many of the doubtful skins are graded in favor of the seller. There is the same wrangle on the assort of No. 3's and No. 4's. Thousands of long stripes that are most too broad for anything but No. 4 are classed as No. 3's. The skin shown here is large, measuring on pelt side as follows: length of pelt, $22\frac{1}{2}$, tail 13, total $35\frac{1}{2}$ inches; greatest width $9\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Measured on fur side length same, greatest width $10\frac{3}{4}$, shoulders $8\frac{3}{4}$.

Muskrats should not, at first thought, be a difficult fur to grade, but our attention is taken up almost as much here as in other furs. One section produces heavy, well furred rats, while another yields short furred and papery pelted skins. Whether well or poorly handled, uniform in shape, or wedge shaped, long and narrow, or too short and wide, irregular in form or otherwise unsightly.

A straight collection of rats from one section will not be assorted the same by different buyers. If it is an autumn and early winter collection, one buyer will sort out quite a percentage of winter quality, while another will find it difficult to discover any but fall rats. One demands that the amount of red in a pelt must be at least 50 per cent to grade winter, while another will throw a good many in the winter pile which only have two red streaks of moderate width. One fur house will not allow its buyers to grade rats No. 1 or Spring if containing a single dark spot. Another agent may accept late February rats as Spring, or at least pay Spring prices while still containing a good many dark spots. One house contends that the pelt must be absolutely clear or the fur is not at its best. The other house says that no difference can be distinguished between the positive Spring rat and the "near spring" so far as one or two little dark spots in the pelt are concerned. Is it difficult under such ideas as these to guess who gets the rats?

Certain fur firms grade and value mink as to color, and instruct their buyers to buy on three shades of color, dark, brown and pale. They do not get many mink under such orders. What they do secure they are compelled to buy after the same custom as a certain few who pay the highest quotations for well furred, seasonable mink as they average for color. But few mink are strictly dark at any time and not many are very pale in late autumn and early winter.

One house appears glad to get good, well furred mink at full market prices without trying to buy for color, or according to color. Another firm clings to its old



WESTERN CANADA
RED AND CROSS
FOX.

(1) Red medium; length of pelt, 35; tail, 21; total, 56; greatest width, $8\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 7 inches.

(2) Cross large; length of pelt, $40\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 21; total, $61\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 8 inches.

policy year after year of trying to buy on the dark, brown and pale plan and do not get many mink and should not, for such a firm is a poor mink house.

Much haphazard buying is done in the matter of foxes — black, silver, cross — in particular. No other fur varies so much in color, quality and general conditions and each skin should be bought on its own particular merits. Though a fox is prime and well furred, it may not be worth full market quotations. The best skins of the red variety are a dark red or a lively bright red. Objectionable skins are yellow instead of red or in some cases about the color of dead grass. Some are grey on the hips as if mixed up with the wood's grey fox. Others are rubbed on the hips and some may be said to be flat in fur for the reason that there are no guard hairs or top hair and the under fur alone looks very deficient.

One buyer takes into account all these inferior colors, while another takes them as they come, bright colors or poor colors at equal value. A fox is a fox with him so long as it is prime, well furred and not damaged.

Excitement among raw fur buyers is responsible for the improper grading of furs that is so prevalent. Each striving to outdo the other in grading, in favor of the one who is selling, establishes a condition that makes it difficult for anyone to buy on a proper assortment or even nearly proper. When the fur market is satisfactory and prices are trending upward, it may not be unreasonable to pay large price quotations for a well furred medium fox, coon or mink. A good medium is worth more than a large skin that is not so well furred or is otherwise off in quality.

If skunk are assorted too liberally in regard to the amount of white and the grading is anywhere within reason, there is a chance to get out whole and perhaps make money; providing the market is strong and likely to advance. It sometimes requires a goodly amount of banter to unload furs bought on a strained assortment, the same as graded when purchased, but those who give the fur owner all that belongs to him in assortment and a little more, is going to stand in the best favor and secure the fur in the future providing the right prices accompany strained assortments.

Hundreds of town and country buyers are ready under normal conditions of trade to be just that liberal. There is a tremendous strife to see who shall make the biggest collection. If not on present money making terms, then buy them at the best bargains obtainable. "Methods of Grading," the title of this chapter, are not much in evidence if a big break comes in the market. Then methods are largely suspended and all systems set-

tle down to one plan, which is to grade the furs down hard without practicing the least liberality or else let them alone.

Now instead of too liberal assortments and advanced prices being given, low prices and severe, sometimes dishonest assortments prevail, whereas grading should be fair and honest under all conditions. Under a broken market we often see fur firms that bear the best reputation for fairness and who did not grade skunk as to size, have now fallen so far as to do that very thing and so array themselves with certain firms who have always quoted sizes and given themselves a wide range to work on. Sixteen grades in skunk sizes are quoted by the house that has planned to take every advantage. Extra Large No. 1, Large No. 1, Medium No 1 and Small No 1 is the way it reads and the same range is taken for short stripes, long stripes and broad stripes.

No fur owner of intelligence will permit a buyer to make any distinction between a large skunk and a medium sized skunk. So far as extra large are concerned, we do not get enough of them to make us rich, especially if we ship to those who quote them. No lot of skunks from good sections are burdened with small skins until late winter when the females begin to move, but somehow the large-number-of-grades firm has always succeeded in finding plenty of small skins in ours, if they did fail to find any extra large.

We have found too, to our sorrow, that often the order given such firms to hold separate until we have had time to accept or reject the returns, was not protection. For when we ordered the shipment back, we

found that quite a percentage of our skunk had been substituted with inferior quality pelts in place of goods similar to Northern Ohio and Michigan skunk.

The writer has been a spectator when large receipts of furs were being assorted both under a normal fur market and when the market was unsettled or weak and furs not really wanted. Houses who do not care for furs in time of adversity, should keep out of the market entirely until they do want the goods at market prices and on an honest assortment. In the first instance every effort is made to please the shipper, especially a first shipper. It will sometimes do to take advantage of an old shipper but if they trim a new one they may never receive another consignment from him. No, they must be careful not to kill off the new, first shipper. So we find them doing the right thing by all shippers when the furs are wanted badly. Sometimes a little sop is handed out in the way of extraordinary liberality as a bait to keep them coming. They give the shipper the best end of it on every doubtful skin. Medium sized, well furred coon were rated with the large. Good, well furred, well handled medium mink went in the large pile. Rats were only culled to take out the kits; the rest were assorted Fall and Winter; large, medium and small all figured together. Skunk were rated No. 1 with stripes an inch wide extending to the shoulders and if narrow and reached the middle of the skin, they were No. 1. The same liberality was seen in the assortment in the lower grades. Stripes reaching within three inches of the tail were counted No. 2 or short stripe. In the broad stripes or No. 4's, they often divided with the shipper, placing

half of them where they belonged and accepting the rest as No. 3 or long narrows.

Now let us witness some assorting of furs when a drop has occurred and the future looks bad. The fur house is a prominent one and furs are pouring in from all quarters because of big quotations that were sent out. The break in prices came before it was time to notify the shippers. Now the only way to avoid a possible loss, is to fairly butcher the receipts of furs in the matter of assorting. The proprietor is grading the furs now to be certain that they are assorted sufficiently favorable to the house. The shipper has had *his* day.

The helper lays a shipment on the table from Dodge City, Kansas. It consists of 25 skunk, all well handled long stripes. A slash with a very sharp knife lays the sack open from top to bottom. These skins are very dry and were no doubt secured very soon after the trapping season opened and yet they are prime. At the first glance the proprietor exclaims, "Another lot of blue pelts," and proceeds to grade them down accordingly. The long, narrow stripes go in with the No. 4 grade and the broads or 4's are cut below the market price for prime skins of that grade. No one who understands raw furs could call any of these skunk blue pelts, unless looking through blue goggles or affected by the blues, which a demoralized market might cause.

A bunch of rats is next opened from Appleton, Wisconsin. They are mostly winter quality and well furred. But how critically they are examined separately and certain ones graded down if it is imagined that the fur is a little short or thin. A buyer must be pretty small minded to examine the fur of every rat when assorting this fur.

In a little lot of mixed furs from Tarboro, North Carolina, there are two medium sized otter. They are prime and of good color but a little short in fur as compared with Northern otter. The proprietor seizes each one in its turn and raising it high brings it down on the assorting table with a wallop. At the same time he utters the one word, "Singed." He holds them up to the light, passes his hand over the fur and announces, "Both singed." The tally clerk who sits close by with book and pencil to take down the shipper's name and post office address and the assortments, writes down, "Two otter, small, singed."

Now it is a fact that once in a while an otter is seen that bears a "scorched" appearance but for two skins to be so affected and both coming from one party, looked pretty thin to us.

Now a little mail shipment from Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, is opened. It contains nine, large, prime, well handled mink. There is not a pale mink in the lot, but the assort was shocking. No dark \$5.00 mink were found, but five were figured brown at \$4.00 each, two medium brown at \$3.00 and two medium pale at \$2.50 each. Total \$31.00. These were all December caught skins and were as dark on an average as mink of Minnesota grow. The four graded "medium" were large mink but the others were extra large. The price should have been \$5.00 average, \$45.00. The price allowed trimmed the shipper out of \$14.00.

I said to myself, "No wonder you are rich. Much of it is unearned and is appropriated from the poor trap-

per's belongings sent to you in good faith that he will get a square deal." "How does our assorting compare with your ideas?" the proprietor inquired. This was just the sort of question I had been praying for to give me license to open my mouth. "Well," I answered, "seeing that you ask the question, I will tell you just what I think. If a buyer should come into our section and attempt to make such assortments as you are doing on these trappers' lots, we would throw him out of our place of business and I am not sure but what he would be tarred and feathered and rode out of town astride of a rail." Then the proprietor flared up. My answer had been too candid and severe in arraignment. "Yes, I know," he returned crossly, "your state is a tough proposition. Nobody can make any money on your furs because everyone wants the earth. I have about cut your state out of my list." These two scenes in fur grading at one of the centers of trade, represent the extremes. There is a middle course, which if followed, causes for complaint from the raw fur shipper would be few and far between.

Many trappers and not a few shippers do not seem to understand "figures" very well and it may be that some dealers use the "big figure" plan only to induce shipments. More than thirty years' connection with the fur industry has proven to the author that full values come fully as often from the "one price" and fewer grade houses, even though their quotations are much less. In this connection the following will bring out quite clearly this fact. Those who "know the game" by actual experience regard the "from and to" method of quoting as giving the buyer more leeway. If it is the *best* way to

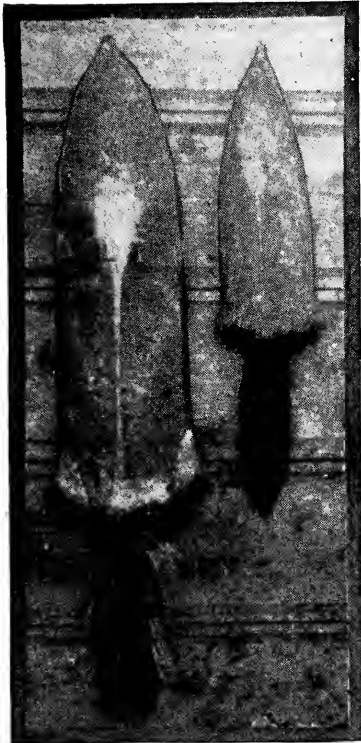
realize most out of furs why don't the "from and to" houses sell on that method? As is generally known, they sell on the one price plan and very few grades. In fact, they often sell their entire collection flat, so much per skin average. Fine furs may be assorted but the cheaper articles, — coon, skunk, civet, opossum, muskrat, etc., very seldom are.

The "from and to" method is concisely stated by a shipper of 25 years who says, "The house quoting more than one price for each grade, gives more as a rule, on the upper grades, but cut away down on the medium and small and their grading, even on the large, is unfair. I am in favor of the one price method of quoting and find that I get the most money from houses so quoting."

About the year 1910 several firms changed their methods of quoting from the "one price" or Eastern Assortment to the "from or to" or Western Assortment, but the most radical change was a firm that quoted two ways on the same list, designated as "Western Assortment" and "Eastern Assortment." This firm we will call The Twin Raw Fur Company and quote from their circular as follows:

"WESTERN ASSORTMENT. — Each pelt is graded to its individual value as to quality of fur, size of pelt, color, etc. We also grade an 'Eastern Assortment' — see explanation further on. After making comparisons, ship your furs and state which assortment you prefer.

"After looking over prices, no doubt you will ask yourself this question: I wonder why The Twin Raw Fur Company quotes the two different assortments? Well this is a question we want to answer no matter



LARGE WESTERN AND
SMALL EASTERN SKUNK
PELTS.

(1) Large Western long stripe, nose to root of tail, 28; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 9 inches.

(2) Eastern small, length nose to root of tail, 17; greatest width, $5\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 5 inches.

These pelts represent the extremes, that is, an unusually large Western and an undersized Eastern.

whether you want to know or not. You should know that there is a vast difference in the Western and Eastern assortments of Raw Furs.

“The Western assortment demands a larger pelt for large and medium sizes and assorts every pelt for color, shade, etc., while in the Eastern assortment the *average* size is classed as ones, twos, threes and fours and shoulder stripes on skunk are taken in as No. 1 grade which is not the case in the Western assortment. The same holds good on all other articles, a greater number of grades, and while the top prices are higher, the average when figured up in dollars and cents, is no greater. Still, we leave it to the shipper to decide which grade he prefers, and will give whichever assortment preferred. So in shipping, please

state “Western” or “Eastern” assortment, as we want to satisfy the shipper.

“EASTERN ASSORTMENT. — Average sized pelts are classed together and an average price is quoted for each

grade, making fewer grades. 'Western Assortment' has already been explained and after making comparisons ship us your furs and state which assortment you prefer.

"The Twin Raw Fur Company pays express charges on shipments large enough to warrant their doing so, and part on smaller shipments under the Eastern Assortment, and deducts expressage and five per cent, same as all concerns, when making Western Assortment."

At about the same time the Twin Raw Fur Company sent out their "twin" quotations several firms changed from the "one price" list to the "from and to" with the exception that they did not deduct shipping charges and 5% like the original ones. There are now firms in various parts of North America that have adopted the "from and to" or many grade method of quoting although some say that they only done so to meet competition and that the "one price" and fewer grade list is the better method.

PRICE LISTS. — The different methods or ways of quoting and grading as well as the manner in which returns are made out and sent to shippers has had considerable to do with securing shipments from trappers and small shippers. Some years ago the method of quoting known as "from and to" became quite general and no doubt induced many to ship as such quotations appeared to offer more than the lists making fewer grades. No buyer, dealer or exporter can be blamed for their method of quoting and classification so long as same are not misleading. Unless the fur owner is led to believe they can get more by shipping than selling at home there is no inducement to ship. The "from and to" method of quoting raw furs therefore can be said to

have originated from dealers soliciting to overcome as much as possible the selling at home. Fur owners that have shipped to the "from and to" quoter say that such quotations do not necessarily mean any more money for a shipment of fur than to a dealer who quotes one price only for each grade and makes the fewest grades possible. As has truthfully been said by some one, "it is the average that counts not the high price for one skin."

Some well known and reliable firms are using "from and to" quotations while others are using the "one price" method. If the sender of the list is inclined to treat shippers fairly it will be done under either method while if of the dishonest kind incorrect sort or classification can be given making no difference which way of quoting has been used.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INSPECTION ROOM.

THIS chapter was written by an Inspector or Grader as they are generally called and published some years ago in a fur magazine, when the Inspector was with a raw fur buying firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This chapter furnishes a pretty good insight to the "inspection room." If you are able to read between the lines it will reveal that this Inspector and the firm thought that their assortment and price were always correct.

It is only natural that there should be considerable difference of opinion as to the correct "inspection," sort, classification or grade of furs as looked at from the standpoint of trapper and dealer. Both are no doubt right in some of their views and both equally wrong in others.

Right here, however, is one of the principal reasons why traveling buyers, sent out by the various dealers, have eaten into the shipping trade, for they grade fairly, if they don't they cannot buy. Some years ago certain houses changed their method of quoting, assorting, etc., in hopes of offsetting the home selling. The method for a time was quite successful yet caused more or less dissatisfaction. Some say there would not have been so much complaint made by shippers if all dealers would only quote market value and grade more liberally.

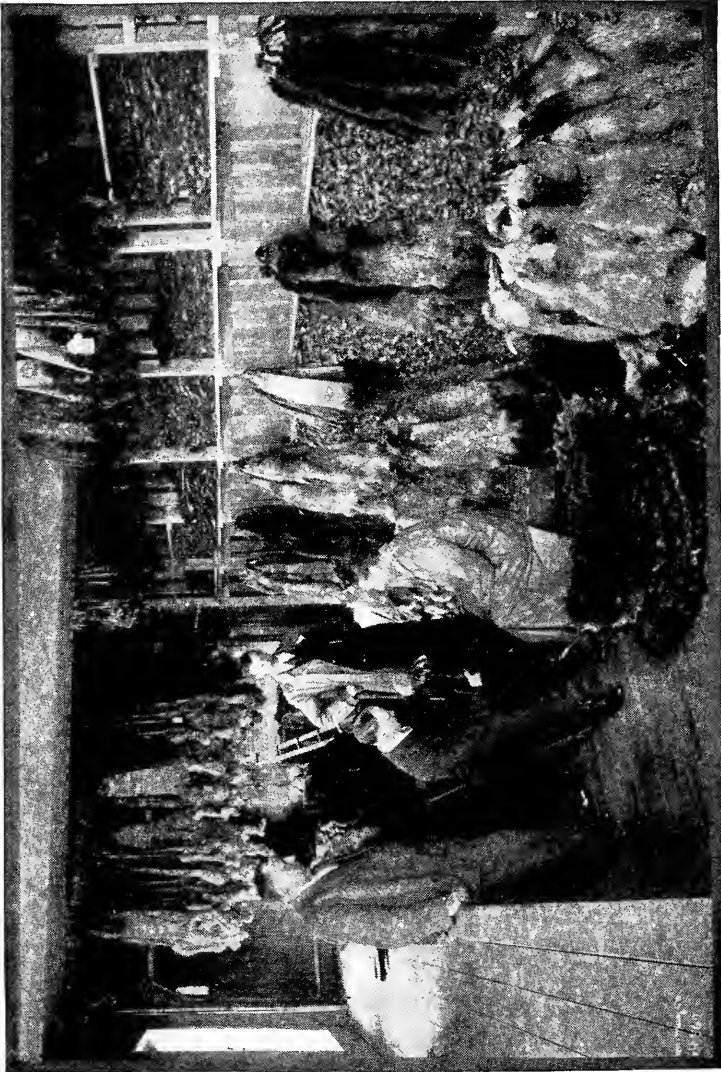
"I have for the past five years occupied a position in the inspection room of one of the largest raw fur concerns on this continent, and it has occurred to me that it would be interesting to the trapper and country fur buyer who, after delivering his furs to the express company, wonders how and what becomes of them; to know how they are handled and so on.

"A good many who ought to know better, look upon the fur dealer as an unscrupulous individual who lies awake at night thinking of schemes to 'Do them up.' With a reliable house, and their names are legion, this is not the case. There are more reliable houses than unscrupulous ones. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the shipper gets what the dealer considers fair value for his furs.

"Like wheat, corn and pork, the fur market fluctuates, and it depends in great measure on the ideas of the individual dealer as to the value of a skin. His ideas must, as in all business of such nature, be based on what he can sell that skin for.

"It is common knowledge that there are often two dealers in a town, one paying \$3.00 for a mink and his neighbor across the street paying \$3.25 or \$3.50 for the same skin. They both may be basing their prices on what they can sell for. A. may be able to sell 500 or 1,000 mink at \$3.25 or \$3.50 while B. may have an order for 100 mink at \$3.75 or \$4.00; then again the spirit of speculation may enter in and either one of those dealers, anxious to get the business, may *pay more than he can actually sell for*; if there happens to be an advance of course the dealer is safe; if a decline, why then the trapper is ahead that much and the dealer, unless his purse is long, mayhap becomes one of the 'Has beens.'

"The trapper, no matter where located, on the quarter section adjoining the North Pole or near that warm, imaginary line which geographers call the Torrid Zone, is kept pretty well posted by the circulars of the hundreds of dealers throughout the United States and Canada, and can generally figure on what his furs will realize; to do this intelligently though, he must not call a number three or a number four mink a number one. An old hand at his business will not do so.



FUR ROOM OF HUDSON BAY COMPANY.

This scene is taken at one of the principal collection points in Canada and shows probably \$250,000.00 worth of furs, which are stored there much of the time, including black, silver, cross and red fox, marten, fisher, mink, lynx, otter, beaver, ermine and muskrat.

"As a rule the trapper, if he is at all reasonable, will be satisfied with his returns when he knows that he is dealing with a reliable house.

"Please bear in mind that I am not referring to the country dealer. Some of them are good and a few are bad. I am referring to the dealers in the larger centers, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Detroit, and so forth.

"I am afraid that I have digressed considerably from what I started to speak of, that is, The Inspection Room. When your shipment reaches its destination it is taken directly to the inspection room; if it is in a sack, bale or bundle properly tied or sewed, the express company gets a receipt for it 'in good order.' If the package is open, torn or damaged in any way it is signed for 'in bad order,' so that in case of shortage, which often happens, the shipper can make a claim on the express company for the shortage. Moral: Before shipping be sure that you have counted everything correctly and sewed or tied, sewed is better, the package securely.

"The tag attached to the package, bearing the shipper's name and post office address, is handed to a clerk who refers to his files for a letter from that shipper; if the shipper requests his furs to be held, or makes a reference to any particular skin or skins, the inspector or 'grader,' as some call him, is notified and he governs himself accordingly.

"Mr. Grader, after opening up the package, proceeds to grade the contents in their respective order; he will take say first mink, then coon, etc., sorting into number one large, medium and small, then number twos, threes, fours, etc. Mink, marten and otter are also sorted for colors, some firms making dark, brown and pale, while others only sort dark and pale. Each skin is carefully examined, and it is very rarely indeed that an expert grader will throw a skin into the wrong 'sort.'

"After completing his grade or sort, he calls it to the clerk or bookkeeper, who enters in his books a record of each skin, giving the reasons for grading No. 2, 3 and 4 such as 'unprime,' 'damaged,' 'tainted,' 'summer caught,' and so on; the clerk now checks his book record with the shipper's letter,

and if everything tallies, the furs are carried to their respective places.

"In the course of my experience, I have run across some amusing instances. It is a common occurrence to receive the common house cat which, ignorantly or designedly, is sent as otter or black marten. Ferrets are often sent for mink or weasel. Common gray fox as silver grays, dogs as wolf, and lots of times have I seen muskrat stretched like mink with mink tails sewed on.

"That the shipper in those instances has been the victim of some joking or unscrupulous trapper is very evident from the indignant letter he will write to the dealer. He doesn't stop to think that he is the one who has been fooled, but immediately accuses the dealer to whom he has shipped of 'beating' him.

"Sometimes coon, skunk and so on will reach the dealer with fat on, or in a partly green state. This shouldn't be, both from the dealer's and trapper's point of view. Skins shipped in that condition are very liable to taint or slip. Sometimes they are rendered absolutely worthless, and the trapper thus loses the fruit of his labors. They are handed to the fleshers who scrape, stretch and dry them.

"Every section of the continent produces a different quality of fur; the mink from Texas and Louisiana differ from those of Kansas and Nebraska. Nebraska and Kansas differ again from Missouri and Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin differ from Canada, Eastern Canada differs from Western Canada, and so on. So you will readily understand, Mr. Trapper, that the man who does the grading must be an expert at his work; only after years of experience can a fur grader fill such a position. Each kind and class of fur is put in a pile by itself and is so offered to the manufacturers; if the dealer is doing an export business, that is, shipping to the London sales, his furs are compressed and baled and shipped across the Atlantic, there to be sold by auction at the quarterly sales, held in January, March, June and October of each year.

"These sales are largely attended. Buyers are there from every part of the world, including New York and Chicago, and it very often happens that the New York and Chicago dealers buy lots of fur in London and bring them back to this country at 20 or 30 per cent less than they cost the dealer.

"So you see, Mr. Trapper, that the dealer's lot is 'not all pie.'

"I close with this advice to trappers. First find a reliable house then *stay with them*. Stretch and dry your skins thoroughly before shipping, sew your packages securely, put on a tag bearing plainly your name and address, and write the same day stating the number and kind of skins you have shipped; it's then 'up to' the dealer to do the rest, and if he's reliable he will do it. He's in business to stay, and he knows that he can not keep a business up if he doesn't treat his shippers right."

CHAPTER V.

WHY TRAPPERS SELL AT HOME.

THE following was written under date of April 8, 1915, by Mr. G. S. Eddings from Southeastern British Columbia, some 300 miles from Vancouver, Canada, and about the same distance from Spokane, Washington, his trapping grounds being in the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Eddings has followed trapping for a quarter of a century and what he has to say should have some weight. While there are honest dealers it is too true that many take advantage of the shipper, whether trapper or small dealer, when furs are sent in to them. Requests to hold furs separate has helped to some extent yet the dishonest will find some way to take advantage. The quoting of more than market value is mostly done to induce shipments. Dealers know that when furs come from a long distance there is little danger of the owner showing up even if they are graded severely. Again the fact should not be overlooked that many dealers and exporters of raw furs lost heavily on purchases made in 1913 and early in 1914, yet there is no denying the fact that incorrect or dishonest grading has caused many trappers, country collectors and dealers to "sell at home" where they can see the grading.

"I have several of the books that you publish and seeing your advertisement wanting photographs and measurements of Raw Furs for a new book, I will give you a few measurements



LARGE BRIT-
ISH COLUM-
BIA MINK.

of some furs I caught in this part of British Columbia, Canada, that I happened to take measurements of, season 1914-15," writes G. S. Eddings.

"Largest beaver, length 40 inches, width 33 inches. This was the largest beaver I ever caught. The smallest ones caught here in the spring, almost one year old, vary from 24 to 27 inches in length and from 21 to 24 inches in width. The average size for large here is about 36 inches length and 30 inches width and they vary all sizes between small and large in a lot of 40 skins.

"The largest fisher, 33 inches from nose to root of tail, length of tail 21 inches, total length from nose to tip of tail 54 inches; width at base $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, at shoulders $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This one however was a little over the average for large ones. Smallest fisher, length nose to root of tail 27 inches, tail 17 inches, total length 44 inches; width at base $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches, shoulders $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. These measurements taken from a lot of twelve skins.

"Largest mink, nose to root of tail 24, tail $9\frac{1}{2}$, total $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width at base $4\frac{3}{8}$, shoulders $3\frac{5}{8}$. This though was over-size for average large ones. Smallest mink, nose to root of tail, $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches, tail 6, total $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width at base $3\frac{5}{8}$, shoulders 3 inches. Taken from a lot of fourteen skins from mink caught about the middle of March. While all mink are darker in the fall and early winter note the color of the one shown which was caught in March.

"White weasel, largest nose to root of tail 14, length of tail 7 to 9, total 21 to 23 inches; width at base $2\frac{3}{4}$, shoulders $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Smallest weasel, length 8 inches, tails 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$, total length 11 to $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width at base $1\frac{5}{8}$, shoulders $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Varying to all sizes between smallest to the largest. Taken



FURS READY TO MARKET, BUT OWNER UNDECIDED WHETHER TO TAKE
TO TOWN DEALER OR SHIP.

from a lot of fifty skins. Measurements taken from flesh side of all skins.

"The men that do all the hard work and furnish the raw material for the Fur Trade to do business with, take the risk, assume the hardships and finally accept one-half the real value



BRITISH COLUMBIA PRAIRIE WOLF AND SILVER FOX.

of their catch of raw furs. These are facts which no one can deny. I have never seen or shipped to any house that would give you a square deal all the time. In my 25 years of handling raw furs I have not found one. They will flood the country with fictitious price lists and market conditions. But that is only the least part of the skin game. If they should pay what their price list quotes on the different grades but they won't grade fair. Let me say right there is where you get it proper and you get it all the time. It is hard to take your bunch of skins in the months of December and January, prime, nice, clean, well handled, and have the large ones marked on the returns Large No. 2 or maybe some of them No. 1 medium. The medium will be small and No. 2s. The dark ones will be average color; brown will be pale; pale will be No. 3 and springy.

"The illustration shows two large, prime skins both caught in the month of December. The prairie wolf, or coyote, being of the following dimensions: Length of pelt 47, tail 16, total

63, greatest width $11\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 10 inches. The other pelt is a silver fox of the following dimensions: length of pelt 38, tail 19, total 57, greatest width $9\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 8 inches.

“Not only are skins of this size often graded as medium but are sometimes classed as rubbed, poorly furred or even shedders. When we trappers get grading of this kind is it any wonder that a price list means little or nothing?

“Now just take any price list at random from anyone of the different houses, look at the range of prices and grade. You can see quickly where you will get skinned from one-half to three-quarters of the real value. You have got to take their word for everything and three thousand miles, more or less, apart you have got a lot to say. Of course you can put a valuation on your skins and if they don't pay what you expect they will return them. But see here they sometimes do not return the bunch you sent in. I honestly believe some lots were returned that did not contain a single skin that was sent. Your furs were good and they wanted them, they have got them, they are going to keep them. If you send the bunch you got back from them to some other house you won't get enough to pay the express on them. What are you going to do? You can write and 'holler' all you are a mind to but you are a poor working man. You have got nothing. No one pays any attention to you. The laws of the country, it seems, are made to protect the same thieves that rob you. They are all after money, I guess, and you have none, so you are not in it anyway. Some magazines and publications say that the advertisers in their columns are honest and reliable; if not so will discontinue their advertisements. Well that should not fool anyone. If they should do that, cut out the dishonest ones, they would have very few fur advertisements. All publications are after the money and they have got to get it or can't live.

“Sometimes a fur house will give you the top price and grade on the first lot that you ship them. Nearly every time it is just a bait to catch you with your big bunch and of course all your friends every time. Even your friends will turn you down after that.

"It is amusing if you don't have any furs to sell to watch the price lists as they come out. Every one says the demand for furs is greater all the time as the season advances; that lots of manufacturers have delayed purchasing until late. Consequences are that furs of all kinds are advancing in price but they must soon go down. Ship all you catch and all you can buy at once. Every bunch you send you will get less than you did for the one before. Yet the price lists get higher each time!

"Another thing you will always see when you are away back in the woods or mountains and can't get out until March to ship your furs, that by the time the furs reach the dealer there has always been a slump in the market. Your skins that were caught in December and January are springy, faded, shedders, Nos. 2 and 3. Now you don't suppose they got that way in the baggage car in transit because the weather had turned mild and a thaw was on do you? For my part I know very well the skins were all right. Anyone that has trapped and handled furs for 25 years don't need to have anyone tell him when a skin is springy, faded, shedder, large, small, No. 1 or No. 2. I am in British Columbia, Canada, at present and I know part of the time what a skin is just as well as they do in New York, St. Louis or other markets.

Why is not a No. 1 skin sold in May or June just as good and worth just as much money as when sold in January? I am 300 miles from Vancouver, British Columbia or the same distance from Spokane, Washington. If you send furs to either city you will not get as much generally as to ship them east and sometimes you hardly get anything. On the other hand if you happen to be going into these places and take some furs with you going to the same places you shipped to—of course they don't know anyone. When you go in they will start to play you for a fool like they do everyone. Later, or as soon as they see you know something about the game, they will quiet down and you can soon make a deal.

"Two years ago the latter part of May we sold furs for one-third more than we had gotten by shipping east in the

winter and one-half to two-thirds more than we had received by shipping to the same houses earlier. It makes about a good one-half average more all around when you can walk right up face to face with Mr. Skinner and beard him in his lair. They want furs all right and will pay for them when they can't steal them. When you ship they have all the say and will surely skin you nine times out of ten. Say, that is hard earned money at best, at any season, for the trapper.

"Trappers that know what fur is and put it up to the dealer in shape are surely entitled to some part of its real worth. So long as the system they now have prevails I don't see how we can expect for anything better. If the trapper would do like the dealer he would be sent to the pen for defrauding people through the mails. Trappers could form an association if they would, but they won't stick together. The prices are all right, but the grading, with many it is down right thievery. The highway robber is entitled to some respect but this, The Royal Order of Skinners, seems to have none at all."

CHAPTER VI.

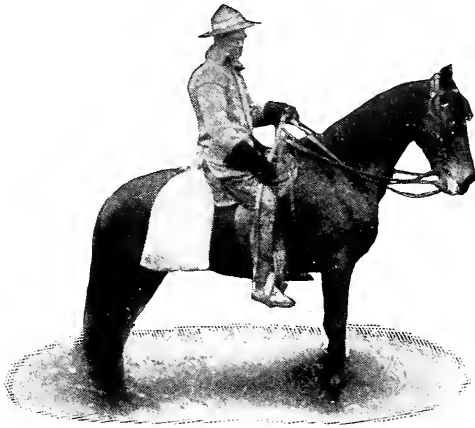
BUYERS AND COLLECTORS.

RECENT TACTICS. — The country fur buyer and local town buyer does not wait now-a-days for the trapper to bring in his catch, but go out after it, visiting him at home and on the trapping ground as well, in a large part of the old settled country. Such are the conditions that largely exist in the New England States, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, West Virginia and southern Quebec and Ontario, Canada. In Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma there are not so many traveling buyers and more furs go direct from trappers and small collectors to St. Louis, Mo. In the Dakotas, Rocky Mountain sections and much of Canada the fur catchers are so scattered that a large per cent is shipped direct to New York, St. Louis, Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. The last three named being in Canada, receive Canadian furs mostly.

San Francisco, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, Victoria and Vancouver dealers also receive more or less furs direct from trappers and buyers but principally from the states west of the Rocky mountains as well as British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska, although of recent years a greater per cent has been sent by mail direct to markets farther east.

Throughout Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia the furs are bought by hucksters, merchants and produce dealers to a greater extent than elsewhere. In the south and southwest they are bought by dealers in the larger cities although hucksters, merchants and produce men handle considerable quantities. The steam launch is much used to visit trappers located along the larger of the streams throughout the South, as the weather never

gets cold enough to stop water navigation. House boats are also used to some extent.



A HORSE-BACK FUR BUYER.

Perhaps the horse-back fur buyer is more numerous in the south than elsewhere, although their numbers are becoming less in all parts of America as roads become better, so that traveling with wheeled vehicles is possible. Automobiles are also being used and perhaps in greatest numbers in the East and Central West.

Within a radius of say a hundred miles of any important fur center, many trappers take their catch to market so that there is not much left for the traveling fur buyer in such localities, whether he resides in the country among the trappers or in some village. Trappers who take their catch to a city where there are several buyers

are more numerous in the south than elsewhere, although their numbers are becoming less in all parts of America as roads become better, so that traveling with wheeled vehicles is possible. Automobiles are also being used and perhaps in greatest numbers in the East and Central West.

usually manage to get about all their furs are worth by visiting several buyers, getting offers, then selling.

Once furs were low and the demand weak so that the trapper sold most of his furs through seeking a buyer. But under the conditions of higher prices and strong demand, a large share of his furs are sold at home. The earliest of these visiting buyers collected goods with a team. Now horses are too slow a means of conveyance when roads and the automobile has taken their place. With many buyers after the furs it is a question of picking them up quickly if a competitor is to be beaten and new customers can not be secured nor the old held, if horse travel is depended upon.

Not many years ago trappers did not expect to sell any furs green. Now the traveling buyer will generally buy the green and unskinned furs just as quickly as the cured skins. If he waits until he can call again, the chances are that such green furs will be sold to another buyer.

MONEY FURNISHED.— It is a common practice, in some localities, with local collectors at present, to furnish men and money to buy furs for them. At stated intervals they come and take up what has been collected or have it shipped in to them. These buyers are usually trappers who imagine that they understand assorting furs properly, but much haphazard work is done by them, partly to secure as many furs as possible and partly to beat some other sub-buyer and largely through lack of knowledge. But he who hired them is so anxious to secure a large lot of furs that he overlooks a lot of bad dealing on the part of his noncompetents, and then he is not proof

against making bad purchases himself. No matter how much in error some of his little assistants are, he must pay them the promised commission on all they collect.

GETTING BUSINESS. — To become a successful fur buyer and seller is not learned in a day, month or year as a knowledge is required not only of the various raw furs but experience in dealing with trappers as well as the large buyer is part of the game. The most successful buyers as a rule began in a small way, buying of trappers



A COUNTRY COLLECTOR OF FURS

in their neighborhood and extending their buying as they became better posted in fur values.

A good many years ago the writer furnished money to numerous buyers to collect

for him. During those years thousands of dollars was loaned buyers and not a cent lost. Money thus furnished buyers they regarded as honor bound to return. I never charged interest, seldom asked them to sign a note for the amount, treated such buyers fairly and received practically all the furs they collected. Towards spring the amount loaned was deducted from their purchases. No large amount was furnished any one buyer for at that time my buying was largely in the counties of Gallia and Meigs in Ohio and Mason, West Virginia. Traveling was mainly by horseback or horse and two-

wheeled cart (as roads were not piked then). I made the rounds about every two weeks during November, December, January, February and March.

The first years that I bought my collections were sold mainly to traveling buyers. Later I secured a position on salary and traveled parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky. I gave up the traveling position spring of 1897 and in November of the same year began buying at Gallipolis, Ohio, on my own account. I placed advertisements in the county and other papers and bought tens of thousands of skins the first year.

At that time competition was probably not so keen as now yet many today are buying thousands of skins each season from trappers and small collectors in numerous small towns and cities through advertising and price lists. Dealers of this kind, if reliable, soon become known to trappers and a good many furs are also brought to them.

Buying furs right is not all. Selling is fully as important. The town buyers and dealers in the East usually sell at home. In the South, West and North where traveling buyers are few and far between the majority of furs are shipped to some of the raw fur centers. During my years in the fur buying and selling business I sold mainly at home although have made numerous shipments to about all of the leading markets. Returns in some instances were quite satisfactory while others were not what they should have been by any means. One season I shipped several thousand dollars' worth to a New York firm by special agreement, that is, they allowed what I

considered market price and a per cent added. At times the grading was a little too severe. One year with another, best results — most money received — I found was had by selling to traveling representatives who called and looked at my goods at my place of business.

Under date of November 5, 1897, the Weekly Tribune of Gallipolis, Ohio, as a news item, published the following:

NEW RAW FUR HOUSE.

“A. R. Harding, who has been employed as traveling agent for some years by an Ohio firm, has established in business on his own account in the building occupied by J. M. Ruth on Third street near Court street. He will also handle hides, pelts, tallow, etc. Trappers and shippers will find him strictly honest and at all times paying full market value for goods sent or brought him.

“After looking around at towns in Southern Ohio, Mr. Harding decided on this, as shipping facilities suit him much better. His trade will not be of this county alone, but will extend over Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Pennsylvania.”

Perhaps it will not be out of place to here say that my trade the first season was not only from the states mentioned but included New York, Michigan, Illinois and Kentucky as well. I was one of the very first to advertise in newspapers for raw furs. Those advertisements, as near as I recollect, in various papers during the season of 1897-8 and for some years after, were as follows:

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 1.



SKUNK Coon, mink, muskrat
and all other raw furs
wanted to fill manufacturing and
export orders. Send for prices.
A. R. HARDING, Gallipolis, Ohio

This advertisement is one-half inch or seven lines. It was used in the farm papers mainly, including Farmers' Guide, Huntington, Indiana; Ohio Farmer, Cleveland, Ohio; National Stockman & Farmer, Pittsburg, Penn.; Farm Journal, Philadelphia, Penn., at a cost ranging from about 25 cents up to \$3.50 a line or \$1.75 to \$24.50 for each paper per insertion. These small advertisements appeared in the weeklies during November and the November issue of the Farm Journal which is published monthly. The advertising rates in these periodicals is considerable higher now.

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 2.



RAW
FURS
Wanted

\$50,000 WORTH

To fill American Manufactur-
ing and Foreign Export or-
ders. Send for prices,

A. R. HARDING

GALLIPOLIS, O.

During the months of November and December I ran an advertisement in adjoining county papers as well as a few other local or county papers in Southern Ohio and West Virginia, where I thought furs were most plentiful. The cost for this ranged from about \$1.50 to \$4.00 for the two months, in each paper, depending upon their circulation which was probably from less than 1,000 to nearly 3,000. See advertisement No. 2.

In the home or Gallipolis weekly papers I used larger space — 4 to 6 inches double column — occasionally at a cost varying from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per week depending upon number of consecutive weeks used as well as the circulation of the paper. Most publishers claim for their paper the largest circulation, greatest influence, etc., so that the buyers of space must judge for themselves largely. A pretty safe rule to follow is to use those carrying most advertising as chances are they have the largest circulation. Where the rates in your county papers are cheap it probably is advisable to use a little space in each. When I established in Gallipolis there were three county papers in the city and I used them all. The copy of this advertisement was as follows:

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 3.

Wanted Raw Furs!

To Fill an Eastern Order

10,000 Skunk	10,000 Muskrat	10,000 Opossum
5,000 Mink	5,000 Coon	2,000 House Cat
1,000 Red Fox	500 Grey Fox	500 Wild Cat
100 Bear	100 Otter	

For which I will pay highest market Cash Price

—ALSO DEALER IN—

Hides, Pelts, Tallow, Etc.

Bring your Raw Furs when coming to town, or ship them at my expense. Remember, that I am the only dealer in this part of the state that deals direct with MANUFACTURERS and EXPORTERS.

Reference: First National Bank or the editor of this paper.
Office with J. M. Ruth, on Third near Court Street

Write for my quotations, which will be cheerfully sent
at any time.

A. R. HARDING, Gallipolis, Ohio

The first season I purchased something like \$15,000.00. Remember, this was season of 1897-8 when skunk for best sold around \$1.00, opossum less than 25, mink and coon but little more than \$1.00 for best and other furs proportionately low. Had prices been as high as long about 1911-12 my purchases would have been well up to \$50,000.00. Thousands of dollars' worth of furs were brought direct to me not only by trappers but buyers in Gallia and adjoining counties, while those considerable distance away were shipped. All shippers were kept regularly posted. I wrote many of my buyers quoting prices for the various furs in their locality, good for a week, ten days or maybe two weeks, depending upon the condition of the market.

To make a success at buying furs, especially building up a shipping trade, requires thought and foresight. Your buyers must have prices as high as any reliable firm is sending out and as quick as the other fellow to be able to get their share of the furs.

Conditions have changed a great deal since I was in the raw fur business at Gallipolis. As already stated there were few advertising for raw furs then. It was also before the days of fur magazines and price lists were mainly of the one price kind. During recent years numerous dealers from not only the leading raw fur centers, but many of the smaller places, are advertising for raw furs. The best mediums to advertise in are of much importance. Briefly this may be said to include county or local papers to leading national publications and trade magazines, depending upon how much of the country it is desired to reach.

LOCAL BUYERS. — There are three classes of local buyers. One is the large town buyer who often collects from \$10,000 to \$15,000 worth before selling. The next is the village buyer who collects from \$600 to \$800 up to \$1,200 to \$1,500 worth before he will consider any offers, if buying on his own account. If he happens to be buying for the bigger town dealer then his collections do not accumulate to any great size before some one who is in the employ of the dealer, to whom the furs are contracted, comes along and gathers them up.

Many times agents for the large fur houses who travel only by rail, hear of a good bunch of furs at one of these small towns and stop off, hoping to buy the lot, only to find that the furs are being collected for the big speculator and are not for sale.

The third is the country buyer who is often a man with sufficient capital to make a collection of several thousand dollars' worth. Some of them have built a fur house while others keep their collections in the barn or grain house or other building that is dry and can be locked. This latter class are exceedingly shrewd and some of the hardest bargains are driven by them when they sell their collection.

The country dealer usually sends word to several important buyers stating that he will try to sell on a certain day. If interested, they may be on hand. It is seldom that any of those notified fail to appear and there may be another one or two who come uninvited. Only one of their number can buy the goods and a pretty strife ensues to see who shall land the collection. The offers having all been made, the owner may reject them entirely

if none are high enough to meet his ideas. It happens sometimes that he will close a deal before the crowd of bidders disperse by inducing a certain one to raise his own bid. It is not often that any money is to be made by the party who gets the goods at such an auction sale and the chance to lose is quite possible.

The traveling representative of a large fur house sometimes encounters the country buyer in town when a good sized lot of furs are for sale. The traveling buyer has hard and fast rules for assorting furs and the limit laid down that he may add to what the goods figure up. He can not forge ahead of the market price. His local competitor is buying with his own money and is not limited except that he expects to use common sense. But he wants the fur. It is a big bunch and he would have to travel quite a few days to accumulate so many furs. He has found out by experience that every thousand dollars' worth of furs he is able to add to his collection will make it so much more desirable on account of size. He lays his plan to beat the traveling agent by two different means. First, he assort the goods as liberally as he possibly can and do justice to himself. Next, he raises prices to a safe point, as he thinks, according to future prospects. Before leaving the fur room, he kicks his assort over and mixes up every grade with other grades so that his competitor will have nothing to work on except his own judgment when he comes to examine the goods. It is hardly worth while to say that the Country Buyer secures the furs, while the traveling agent who offered a good price, goes away wondering what sort of a bumpkin he encountered.

In the case of the large lots held at the principal towns, it is somewhat different. The owner usually sends word to a certain fur firm or agent in whom he has confidence, that on such a date he will be ready for an offer on his collections. It may require days to look at a large lot even when the muskrats are figured at a flat price. But it takes much time to turn and examine 3,000 skunks or more and perhaps 800 mink, 500 coon, etc. When the assort has been made and everything figured up and added together, let it not be supposed that he can buy the lot. Not at what it figures on the fairest assortment. It is rare that any sizable lot of furs ever is bought at actual value. Percentages must be added and often a little more on top of that to make even money.

The large dealer knows that after a buyer has spent several days looking at his furs, he will not leave them until he has added on the last dollar to his figures that can possibly be done. It is the dealer's opportunity to make some easy money and he takes advantage of it. The offer made may net him a good profit but he keeps his own counsel and without changing countenance he says, "Your figures will just about let me out even. I am afraid I can not sell to you unless you add considerable to your price. I've spent a lot of time on this fur and have hired help to buy and handle it here in the house. Now I'll tell you what is the best that I can do. You add 5% to your figures and the goods are yours."

If the truth had been told, the liberal assort given him and the advanced prices made him a reasonable profit, outside of all his expense, but the stakes have been stuck and it is meet the demands or leave it and lose all

the labor expended. The same buyer feels that such a demand in the way of percentage is plain extortion but he can not help himself. If he leaves the lot behind, the next place he visits the deal may be equally difficult and who wants to run around all the season and not buy any goods?

So the dealer makes a sale at his own terms and is secretly exultant. He knew how it would come out beforehand. He has made a study of human nature to such good purpose that it has enabled him to obtain a donation of several hundred dollars on top of fair profits. It is just like finding money. Once in a while a dealer that is particularly candid will tell you that the most of his profits these days are derived from what he forces the buyer to add on to his original offer. "In fact," said one, "that is the only way to make any money in the fur deal." Another says, "The trapper is continually posted on the market. He receives price lists from everywhere and knows what furs are worth just as well as we do. We have to pay him New York quotations and give him an assort that we can't get out on, so how are we going to make any money unless we get a percentage added to the first figures when we unload?"

The foregoing remarks refer to buying and selling methods in ordinary years, excluding depression in business, panics or foreign wars. In good times quite a number of raw fur firms endeavor to establish buying agencies in the larger towns, such agents being men who are engaged in handling furs, wool, hides and pelts. Such negotiations are usually begun early in the season, sometimes in mid-summer, so that when the active buying

season begins, a single fur firm of New York, Chicago, Detroit, or elsewhere has a large number of buying agents who are well established business men. Such buying points are distributed so that trade will be drawn from every county. This system makes a bad condition for the traveling agent who is employed to buy for fur houses who have no agencies. The field is so well taken up by agencies who buy on contract or commission that the traveling buyer is left but few places to visit. It has driven quite a number off the road or at least prevented them from even starting out.

These contracts are only binding for one season and must be renewed yearly. It frequently happens that one who has acted as agent for a certain house one season, makes a contract to buy for a different house the next season, depending upon the terms offered and what sort of experience was had with the former engagement. If the treatment was not deemed satisfactory, the contract to buy furs the coming season is made with another firm, or the grievances may have been so many and flagrant as to cause disgust with buying on a commission contract and hereafter they will buy on their own account.

Fur collectors of the North and Northwestern wilds, where there are no railroads, operate with boats when the lakes and streams are open and in winter with dogs and sledge, just as in the old days. If operating on Hudson Bay territory, the purchases are largely secured from the Indians. These small collectors cut into the trade and are a source of annoyance for the old company. To discourage them as much as possible, the Hudson Bay

Company will not sell supplies to the small trader or assist him in any way.

In a measure the Hudson Bay Company have the equity in the case, for they stake the Indians with needful supplies in advance of the fur catch, trusting them to bring in their furs in payment. If they sell to the outside dealer (known as Free Traders) the chances are that the



NORTHERN FUR BUYERS — MACKENZIE RIVER DISTRICT.

Indian who has received such supplies will continue in debt to the company. At the best, he usually owes them the year round.

The small or outside trader has found here, that by giving a little more for furs and more goods in trade than the Indian has been used to receiving, will induce him to put honor and obligation to the Hudson Bay Com-

pany aside. Those who have had much experience in the handling of furs have found others than Indians that do not always live up to agreements.

Years ago Revillion Freres Trading Company, Limited, established fur trading posts throughout Northern Canada. Many posts of this and the Hudson Bay Company were within a few rods of each other so that strong competition has been the result at such posts. The Revillion Freres Company has about a hundred trading posts in Canada and the Hudson Bay Company some three hundred. Neither company controls or owns the exclusive right to trade or buy furs of Indians and other hunters and trappers so that there are many independent buyers (called Free Traders) who buy where there are Posts as well as elsewhere in Canada.

When furs are in great demand, the strife between buyers is terrific, as each endeavors to secure the most furs. If opportunity is presented to crush a competitor it is done without the slightest compunction of conscience. As one buyer expressed it: "It is a case of dog eat dog."

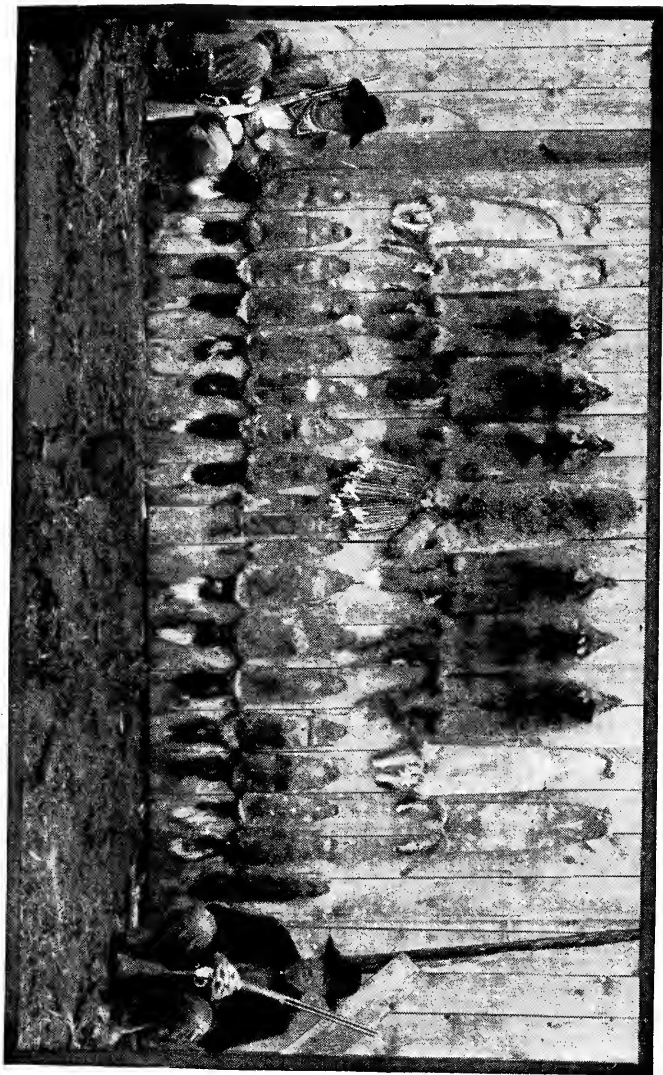
The above expresses boom times, conditions when any amount of capital is in sight and the speculator is hungry for furs, all he can get and pay for, at least. But let depression occur, so that the made up articles of fur do not sell or the world's market has been destroyed, then the great army of fur speculators with their branches and big resources as quickly halt and sink from view.

CHAPTER VII.

BUYING AND SELLING.

BUYING. — The inexperienced buyer will have more difficulty in buying the late caught furs than with any other. The early caught will turn blue and “speak for themselves,” as a rule. Opossum is an exception and even when caught early and with little or no fur, the pelt may appear prime. With “springy” furs you will have more or less trouble from the first of February; fox, coyote, wolves may be rubbed, coon and skunk are shedding and also become thin pelted; mink are shedding and have lost their best color. When badly rubbed or shedding it is easy to tell, but with furs that have only begun to shed is where the inexperienced lose out. During the spring months, nine times out of ten, the market is a declining one and in addition to furs being graded hard, prices generally tend lower each week. The water animals — otter, beaver, muskrat are at their best during the spring months and as a rule do not decline at this season of the year like the land animals. Bear is another animal whose fur is best during the spring months and even into June in the northern localities.

Trappers and fur catchers often have poor memories and some deliberately lie as to time a certain pelt or pelts were caught. A buyer that has had much experience can tell pretty close to the date. Suppose it is early in



THE OUTSIDE OF TRAPPER'S SHANTY SHOWING FOXES, WOLF, WILD CATS,
SKUNK, MINK, WEASEL.

December that a buyer is looking at a trapper's or fur hunter's catch. Certain skins are blue indicating that they have been caught for weeks — probably latter part of October. The buyer calls attention to these skins, saying they are early caught. While the fur owner need not tell when caught they are pretty apt to say that the first pelt was taken on a certain night only a week or two before. The experienced buyer knows better and if a good trader generally buys the furs graded down to where they belong. It is not advisable to dispute date that the owner says they were caught but show him the defects.

During my first years at buying I recall the following: On October 9th I had some business in a little town some fifteen miles away. Some five miles before reaching the village I passed a house where a medium coon and skunk skin (both fresh) were stretched and hung up to dry under a shed. About five weeks later, when I had begun to buy furs, I called on the party where I had seen the two skins. He had those two and several others as well which had been caught since. The coon was graded to No. 3 and the skunk, which was a short stripe, to No. 3. The owner wanted those skins to grade better. I told him that I presumed they had been caught about October 10. (I was pretty sure they had been caught on the night of the 8th). Oh, no! he replied, there is not a skin here that was caught until after November 1.

I took the two skins and laid them by some recently caught and had no trouble in buying them graded where they belonged.

Throughout the Central West and Northwest trading in dealer's lots is usually flat, regardless of size or color, also allowing a small per cent of blue pelts on such articles as skunk, civet, opossum, coyote, wildcat, muskrat and ermine. Higher priced furs such as mink, fox, raccoon, otter, beaver, marten, etc., are graded first as to primeness of pelt, then as to size, grading into three sizes — large, medium, small. The prime skins are assorted separate from the unprime.

In the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Dakotas and other parts of the Northwest, skunk are practically all long and narrow stripes so that a buyer soon learns how an original lot of skunk from a certain locality will grade out.

Sometimes a collector can profit by selling skunk to one house, mink to another, fox to another, rats to another, etc. The reason for so doing being, that the respective wants of the various houses or taking chances on London sales, causes them to give a liberal assortment and advanced prices. As a rule, however, it is policy to sell collections in original lots, that is, as bought.

SELLING. — Some may ask how the country fur buyer makes any money after spending his time and keeping a team or an auto in repair while he drives around over rough roads and pays outside prices for furs coupled with assortments that are much too liberal.

The question is not so difficult to answer as may be thought. The wise collector of furs keeps accumulating until he has a large bunch. Representatives of strong fur firms are out and hunting for good sized collections and he who buys a lot of several hundred dollars' worth

does not expect to secure it at actual quotations. He either offers special prices or if not able to do that, assort the lot in a most liberal way and after figuring up at his limits, frequently adds 5% or more to his figures.

The shrewd country buyer keeps account of all his purchases so that his book shows him at all times what he has paid out to the cent and the exact number of furs on hand of every kind. When he comes to sell he prompts the visiting buyer when he sees any sign of failing to be liberal in grading. Considerable bluffing enters into the transaction and if he finally sells, you can safely wager that with liberal grading and percentage added he has secured the last dollar that gab, bombast, feigned independence and indifference could achieve.

Bluff, banter and an independent mien and sometimes deceit is practiced and every trump card played to induce the traveling raw fur buyer to write a bigger check than the lot is worth.

When the deal has been made and to the satisfaction of the country buyer who sold, can you not see how he makes some profit, regardless of his liberality when he bought of the trappers?

To be lofty, arbitrary and dignified is a leading characteristic in the experienced local raw fur collector when he tries to sell his holdings if the market has been excited or advancing and traveling buyers are numerous. He is often too shrewd to commit himself in any way. If asked how much it will take to buy his collection he will not set a price for fear he will not ask enough. He merely answers, "Go ahead and look at it and give me

your offer and I'll tell you mighty quick whether you get it or not."

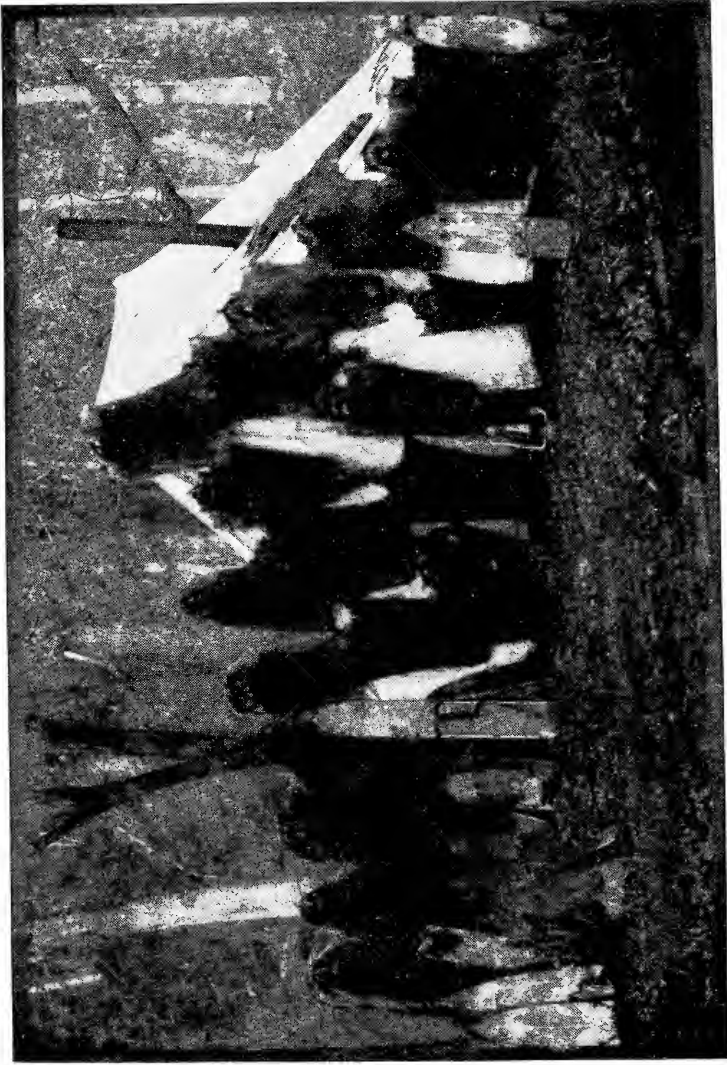
When the offer is made, if it happens to be more than he expected, he conceals his surprise and putting on a look of disappointment mingled with contempt for the agent and his small offer, demands a figure considerably above the offer. If the goods are nice and furs are in good demand, the owner frequently succeeds in securing a compromise, or split, between the high figure demanded and the original offer. Such an excess over valuation as this, when obtained, is all clear gain; we may say and rightly, that it is a gift and unearned.

Fur buying is largely a gamble and selling full of bluff as a game of poker, under a condition of high prices and an advancing market. When important fur markets of the world have been lost by a great war or business depression or unseasonably warm weather has occurred, then all confidence and independence and bluff formerly accompanying the selling of furs, is not seen.

This chapter is intended to show up some of the methods practiced in fur buying and selling not often mentioned. It is to reveal the strife among competing buyers and the length to which some go who are greedy and make the handling of raw furs not only a speculation but a gamble as well.

We can hardly brand it as dishonest to sell our furs as high as possible so long as deceit is not practiced. The trapper gets liberal assort and outside prices from us and we feel that we must sell in the same way to get any pay for our trouble.

The most money is made on furs, as a rule, when prices start moderately low at the beginning of the raw



THE FALL CATCH — UNDECIDED WHEN AND WHERE TO SELL.

fur season. If prices are low or even conservative, the chances of prices advancing while goods are on your hands, are far better than when prices paid were high. As prices usually do start at moderate figures and advance slowly for a few weeks, the bulk of profits secured for a season are made before the holidays or at the first big "clean up."

EARLY COLLECTIONS. — The continual rise of prices renders a collection more valuable each day and piles up the profits. Another way that money is made on autumn furs is that some skins purchased as No. 2's or blue pelts, sell for prime or No. 1, because they were not sufficiently unprime to be readily noticed by the big dealer while hurriedly assorting. In order to please the fur owner he also makes every slightly unprime skin a No. 1 that he dares and not get called down too hard by his employers.

In certain years mink which were purchased in November at a fair price have sold at one dollar rise each per skin six weeks later. This is a good fat profit for the country buyer and covers all unwise and overly liberal deals he has made and leaves a good margin of profit besides.

After mid-winter when mink are becoming lighter in color and no further rise in prices can be expected, there is practically no room for speculation and profits are generally small. What I wish to impress upon the buyer is, that he should endeavor to collect all the furs he possibly can, just as soon as the trapper has accumulated a bunch and will sell during November and the first half

of December. Then prices are often the lowest of the season and fall collections are the heaviest.

When the fall and early winter catch has been made and sold, the catch after that is much smaller and in some sections there will hardly any be caught because they do not exist. In cold regions winter largely curtails the trapper and fur hunter's movements.

So if you are going to buy furs, get out after them early and travel fast and work hard. You can rest a plenty a few weeks later. No matter how much capital you may have, it will be useless when your competitors have picked up part of the furs and the boys have shipped the rest.

FURS BROUGHT IN. — After you have become established as a buyer, some furs will be brought to you. Then is when opportunities will come to buy for what furs are worth. Not in all cases, for some fur owners drive the hardest kind of a bargain always. But as a general rule, you can buy furs or anything else nearer to what it is worth, when it comes to you, than when you are obliged to go after it. When you drum up trade, he who owns the goods, thinks you are anxious to have furs in your possession and so acts independent to get a big price.

If you live in the colder latitudes a good many skins will come in green and frozen which must be thawed and placed on boards. Sometimes mink are brought in unskinned and frozen. These should be bought at a price low enough to pay you well for thawing out and skinning. Usually the owner expects such deduction will be made.

You will find cases where you can never buy at a reasonable price from certain individuals. They seem to want it all, market price and profits, too. Some buyers steer clear of the inordinately greedy fur owner. It does not pay to banter half a day or more and not trade or else make a bad deal. There are other instances where too big demands are made because the fur holder is not ready to sell. Where this sort of fellow exists do not crowd him. Make your offer and then let him alone for a few days. He must sell somewhere and you do not want the fur if it can not be bought right. Every week that he holds his unprime furs they will look worse and more unprime and presently he comes across and informs you that you can have that fur now at the price you made him some days ago.

Now and then a pelt will be found that although prime, has no fur. Either mange or some obscure ailment has weakened the victim so that there was not sufficient strength to produce the winter coat. Such a pelt is worthless. Some skins are offered that have been badly bitten by dogs or thickly peppered with shot. Such damaged furs must be bought according to how much damaged. A mink with head and shoulders shot away is termed a "piece" at raw fur centers and the returns seldom exceed a dollar.

SHIPPING. — There are certain times when traveling fur buyers keep off the road — when the market is in bad shape or the country rather bare of fur collections. Then you may find it necessary to select some good fur firm and ship your collection. But by all odds it is preferable and most profitable to sell large lots to a traveling buyer

whose prices and assortments are satisfactory when he visits you at your home.

If you ship, keep flesh-out pelts together and those fur-out together, mink and other small skins should be



TWO LYNX, RED AND CROSS FOX PELTS.

- (1) Lynx, nose to tail, 40; greatest width, $10\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 9 inches.
- (2) Lynx, nose to tail, 38; greatest width, $10\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 9 inches.
- (3) Cross fox, large, length nose to root of tail, 39; greatest width, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 8 inches.
- (4) Red fox, large, length nose to root of tail, 41; greatest width, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 8 inches.

packed in bundles of six to a dozen and tied together. It is also well to wrap them in a strong paper before sacking them. Shipments should fit the sack snug so that there is no tumbling around when the sack is handled. If the sack is too large, rip it from top to bottom, lap it

about your package snug and sew it with sack needle and sack twine. Place your name and address on a tag or card and put inside your furs besides the tag attached outside after being sewed up. Always write a letter and send when you ship notifying the receiver of your shipment and state the number of skins contained in it of each kind, also state if you want your goods to be kept separate from other furs until you accept or reject their offer.

Never crowd valuable skins into a sack with other furs, for when rumped and doubled up any way to get them in, they arrive at destination mused and wrinkled and such a shipper does not receive the best returns. We must bear in mind that attractive appearances count as much in selling furs as does intrinsic worth and this holds true in all our dealings and in social life.

In some raw fur seasons conditions are such that indications point to higher prices later on. Do dealers and exporters in the fur centers tell in their circulars and price lists to hold collection or do they urge you to ship at once? Many dealers seem to think that not only the trapper but small collectors as well, are in business to enable them (the dealer) to get rich.

If furs are to be higher later in the season it is perfectly right for the trapper and country fur buyer to hold and sell when the market is higher. Of course, no one absolutely knows the future of the market but during years when business in general is normal they can form a pretty fair idea. Occasionally a dealer takes a chance and buys on an anticipated advance which does not come,

but usually prices and information sent are made up for the *sender's* benefit and not the *seller's*.

EXPORTING.— Now and then a country collector gets the idea that there is more money made by exporting than to sell to either a traveling buyer or ship. Occasionally the exporter does well, but there is an old saying, "Export all your furs and go broke." The charge of London commission merchants is 6% to sell, besides the expense of insurance, handling and freight or express so that on light furs it costs about 10% while on heavy and cheaper goods, such as beaver, otter, coon, skunk, opossum, bear the cost may be as much as 12 to 15% from some points.

If the market is at all active just before closing dates for goods to be shipped for the winter sales, dealers and exporters generally "buck" one another so that the seller is able to get all his goods are worth. This is supposing that he has a large lot on hand and traveling buyers visit him, or that he has been in business long enough to know the best houses to send furs to.

Some Canadian wholesale houses in Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, etc., make a practice of receiving furs for sale on 5% commission. On receiving one or more lots they notify all buyers in the city that they will receive bids on a certain date. In this way, when the market is active, the seller gets full value which, after deducting commission, means more money than consigning, according to certain large trappers and small collectors. Of course only lots of some size (at least \$100) can be handled to best advantage.

There are many good firms in the larger Canadian cities that treat shippers fairly, but like handlers of furs on this side of the boundary, there are those who do not treat shippers as they should.

WORLD'S CATCH. — The value of the world's catch of raw furs is around \$100,000,000, based on estimates made by Mr. Brass, who devoted considerable time to gathering statistics. According to his figures the yearly value, based on three years — 1907, 1908 and 1909 — was as follows:

North America, about.....	\$24,000,000
South America, about.....	2,000,000
Australia, about	6,000,000
Europe, about	24,000,000
Africa, about	2,000,000
Asia, about	26,000,000

According to the same authority the yearly catch of the various fur animals in North America for 1907, 1908 and 1909 averaged as follows:

Muskrat or musquash.....	8,000,000
Skunk	1,500,000
Opossum	1,000,000
Mink	600,000
Raccoon	600,000
Fox, red	200,000
Fox, gray	50,000
Fox, white	30,000
Fox, cross	15,000
Fox, blue	6,000
Fox, silver	4,000
Fox, kit	4,000
Weasel (Ermine)	400,000
Marten	120,000

Civet Cat	100,000
Lynx and Wild cat.....	90,000
House Cat	80,000
Beaver	80,000
Prairie Wolf	40,000
Timber Wolf	8,000
Otter	30,000
Badger	30,000
Bear, Black	20,000
Bear, Brown	3,000
Bear, Grizzly	1,200
Bear, White	400
Fisher	10,000
Wolverine	3,000

The approximate average of the world's production yearly for the three years, 1907, 1908 and 1909, exclusive of skins used by the natives, hunters and trappers for supplying their own needs, was as follows:

BEARS—White. Polar regions, Asia and Europe, 600; America, 400. Grizzly, American, 1,200. Brown, American, 2,000; Asia, 6,000. Black, American, 20,000; Asia, 1,000. Common Brown, Asia, 3,000; Europe, 2,000.

BEAVER. American, 80,000; Asia, 1,000; Europe, a few skins only.

NUTRIA. South America, 1,000,000.

MUSKRAT. America, about 8,000,000; Russia, 3,000.

CHINCHILLA. South America (Peru and Bolivia) 12,000. Bastard Chinchilla, Bolivia, 3,000; Chili, (South America) 25,000.

BADGER. Europe, 100,000; America, 30,000; Asia, Japan and China, 30,000.

SQUIRREL. Siberia, 15,000,000; China, 500,000. Squirrel-Tails, Siberia, 73 tons; China, 2 tons.

Fox — *Red*. North America, 200,000; Siberia, 60,000; Russia, 150,000; Mongolia, China and Japan, 50,000; Australia, 30,000; Western and Central Asia, 50,000; Norway, 25,000; Germany, 250,000; other European countries, 350,000. *Karganer Fox*, Siberia and Central Asia, 150,000. *Cross Fox*, America, 15,000; Siberia, 3,000. *Gray Fox*, North America, 50,000. *Kit Fox*, North America, 4,000; Central Asia, 60,000. *White Fox*, Asia, 70,000; America, 30,000; Europe, 5,000. *Blue Fox*, America, 6,000; Siberia, 4,000; Northern Europe, 1,000. *Silver Fox*, America, 4,000; Siberia, 300. *Japan Fox* (raccoon dog), Japan, 80,000; China, 150,000; Korea, 30,000. *South American Foxes*, Pampas Fox and Patagonian Fox, total about 15,000.

HAMSTER. Germany, 2,000,000; Austria-Hungary, 250,000.

HARES — Polar. Siberia, about 5,000,000; North America, 200,000.

WEASEL (Ermine). American, 400,000; Siberia, 700,000; Europe, 10,000.

POLECAT (not Skunk or Civet Cat). Germany, 60,000; Russia and Siberia, 150,000; other European countries, 80,000.

FISHER (Pekan). America, 10,000.

RABBIT, CONEY. France, 30,000,000; Belgium, 20,000,000; Germany, 500,000; Galicia and Russia, 1,000,000; Australia, 20,000,000.

HOUSE CAT. — Germany, 120,000; Holland, 200,000; Russia, 300,000; other European countries, 150,000; Asia, China and Japan, 150,000; America, 80,000.

KOLINSKY. Siberia, 150,000; Manchuria, 50,000; China (weasel) 500,000; Japan (mink) 200,000.

LYNX AND GRAY WILDCAT. America, 90,000; Asia, 30,000; Europe, 10,000. *Wildcat* (other than gray) South America, 10,000; Asia, 40,000; Europe and Western Asia, 10,000.

MARTEN — Hudson Bay Marten or Sable. America, 120,000; Siberia, 70,000; China, 20,000; Japan, 5,000. *Baum Marten*, Europe, 180,000; Northern Asia, 30,000. *Stone Marten*, Europe, 350,000; Northern Asia, 30,000.

MARMOT. Asia, 4,550,000; America, 30,000.

MINK. North America, 600,000; Russia and Siberia, about 40,000; Europe, a few.

OTTER, LAND. America, 30,000; Asia, 55,000; South America, 5,000; Africa, 500; Europe, 30,000. *Otter, Sea*, Northern Pacific, 400.

OPOSSUM. Australia, 4,000,000; America, 1,000,000.

PERSIAN AND BLACK LAMBSKINS. Central Asia, Persians, 1,500,000; Broadtails, 100,000; Russia and Central Asia, Astrakhan, 1,000,000; Crimean, 60,000; Schiras and salted skins, 200,000.

RACCOON. North America, 600,000.

FUR SEALS. Alaska, Northern and Southern waters, 68,000.

SKUNK. North America, 1,500,000; South America, 5,000.

CIVET CAT. North America, 100,000.

WOLVERINE. North America, 3,000; Siberia, 4,000; Europe, 1,000.

WOLF — Timber. America, 8,000. *Wolf, Prairie*,

America, 40,000; Siberia, 10,000; China, 5,000; Central Asia and Russia, 6,000; Europe, 1,000.

These figures are given for what they may be worth although it is well known that many species during recent years have been hunted and trapped so closely in various parts of the world that the annual supply is much less today. In fact some, such as grizzly bear and sea otter, are practically extinct. Muskrat, skunk, civet cat and raccoon are found in America only and nearly all mink and beaver as well are caught here, should be kept in mind by buyers and dealers.

The rise and fall in value of certain furs, owing to the demand or fashion fancies, is in reality best for the trade. To illustrate, take mink which was a fashionable fur from 1906 to 1912 but gradually lost out and the price in 1914, even before the war began, was less than half of a few years previous. By 1910 and 1911 trappers began complaining that mink were getting very scarce. True, as no animal can long hold its numbers if persistently hunted and trapped.

When black furs are in fashion, the brown and white fur bearing animals are not so persistently trapped; if brown are in demand, then black and white are not so closely trapped; if white are in vogue, then black and brown are not so high and are trapped less.

The Hudson Bay Company, when they had little or no competition, had the keeping up of the supply well in hand. If a certain fur bearer was becoming scarce, or too closely trapped, price was reduced on that article. After two or three years, or when the animal had increased, prices were advanced.

CHAPTER VIII.

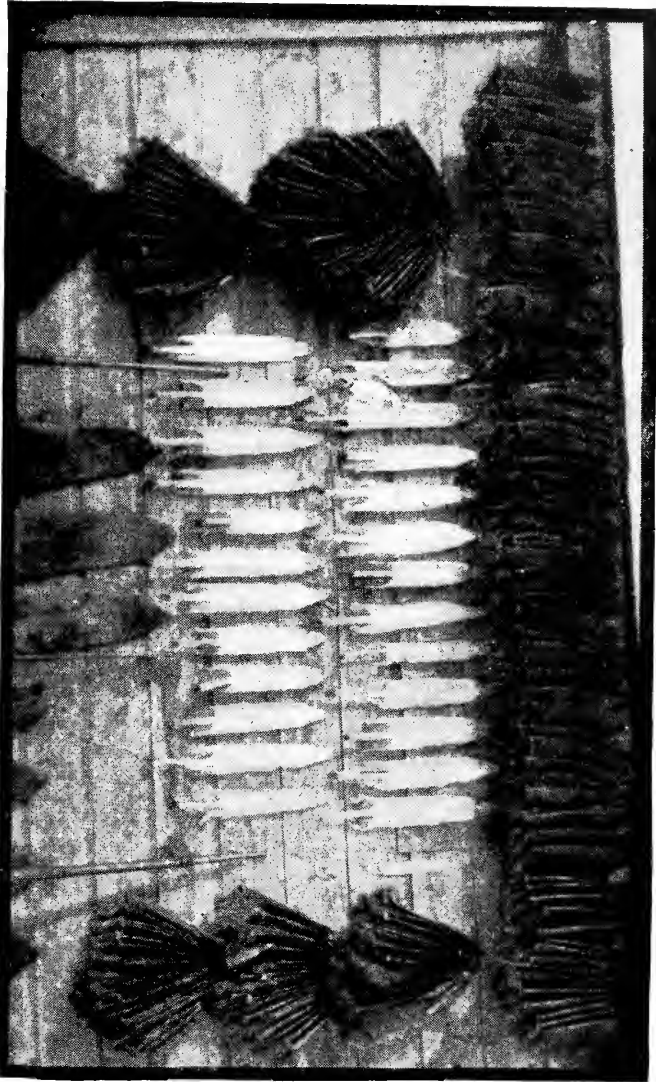
SPECULATING.

THE smallest speculator in raw furs is the trapper who can muster a few dollars and invest them in furs which he usually adds to his own catch and sells them together. The caught furs generally pan out all right but the bought ones may lose him a part of his money unless he understands grading properly. If the little dabbler in furs with from twenty-five to one hundred dollars capital loses ten or fifteen dollars, it hurts him just as bad in proportion as a loss of thousands by the big capitalist dealer in furs. There are hundreds of small irregular speculators in raw furs. Some make a collection every season except when the outlook to make money is exceptionally bad.

When furs are in strong demand some of these small speculators plunge into the buying field and put on prices of their own, regardless of quotations and give an assortment so out of reason in liberality that they can never hope to get their money back. The only way that they do see their money again is when they happen to sell to some reckless buyer who is determined to secure furs at some price. Such buying as this comes under the head of "Wild Speculation."

Practically all country buyers are speculators. Some of them have considerable capital at their command and

LOW PRICED FURS, YET MONEY HAS BEEN MADE AND LOST BY THE SPECULATORS IN THESE TWO ARTICLES — MUSKRAT AND WHITE WEASEL.



under normal conditions make a raw fur collection just as large as they can pay for, before they will sell or consider any offers on their holdings. There are two objects in holding furs a reasonable length of time. One is to receive all the benefits of an advancing market and the other is to acquire a good sized lot before selling for the reason that important buyers will bid stronger on a large collection of furs than they will on a small one.

The established dealer in town who handles wool hides, pelts, tallow, raw furs and roots can not really be termed a speculator. He buys according to conservative quotations and such furs as are offered that are held at too high a price for present profit, he lets pass on to some one else. There are exceptions to the foregoing when the fur buying excitement in its contagion spreads and overwhelms the local dealer as well. Becoming affected by it similar to the frenzied special fur buyer, the former well rooted, steady-going, business man gets out of his rut and goes after the furs, instead of waiting for them to come along in little dribs when the country buyer has happened to miss a few scattering lots.

The local hide man now makes a discovery. He finds that it is more difficult to buy furs at a reasonable price when you seek the owner at his home or camp than when he brings them in voluntarily. He thinks right away that the market must be booming or Brown, the dealer, would not come out from town and try to buy them. This feature, combined with the purchases of Mr. Country Buyer near by, the prices he paid and is paying and standing offers he has left all along, makes a pretty poor condition for the late comer. But Brown is an ag-

gressive man when aroused and he says, "I've got just as much money as your wild-eyed Country Buyer. I'll give you so much more than his offer."

Brown picks up some furs in competition with the mad crowd at prices and on such assortments as to make the outlook for profits rather dubious. This local buyer usually picks up furs as they come along and considers them a sort of side line to his general business. He sells regularly, let the profits be what they will; he does not haggle and drive hard bargains or hold auction sales. But now that he has accumulated a bunch of furs that are far more costly than common, he decides to hold them awhile, hoping for a still higher plane of prices and in this resolve he also becomes a speculator.

The many junk dealers throughout the country are largely handlers of furs, to some extent, but unless making special effort to make large collections of furs in competition with other buying forces, can not be termed speculators.

In years when furs are in good demand the little cross roads buyer is soon relieved of the few skins he has accumulated when the big country buyer comes along. If the owner of a few furs could hold them for a few weeks, they would often sell for more money, but unfortunately the money is needed immediately in most cases and the furs must be sold for what they will command as soon as dry enough to market.

The large country buyer makes this his opportunity. He buys early of those who must sell and his greatest profit is made on the rise of furs purchased while prices are moderate. It requires money to buy furs and a large

amount of it, to secure a small quantity, when the prices are high. The country buyer may possess considerable cash capital and yet if he is a good buyer and attempts to handle comparatively large lots, his capital will soon be tied up. If he is confident that it will be a good season to make money, he is prompted to borrow money. A buyer of responsibility who can give security sometimes borrows \$3,000 or \$4,000 for three months or more as he sees a need of it. With interest to pay on such a sum, which is high for a short time loan, and being compelled to compete with other buyers, grant the most liberal assortments, pay top notch prices, it may be wondered how he can make any money.

One way in which profits may be realized has been mentioned; that of buying the bulk of a collection early before excitement has raised values to the limit. The remaining way is his policy of selling out on competitive bids, whereby he endeavors to work the prospective buyers up to an unnatural degree of eagerness that may cause them to temporarily lose their heads. As an instance of what strife between buyers will amount to when bidding on a good sized bunch of furs, we remember one case where the low bid was \$1,350; \$1,650 was finally paid, \$300 more or 22 per cent added to the lowest offer, which was a fair price in itself.

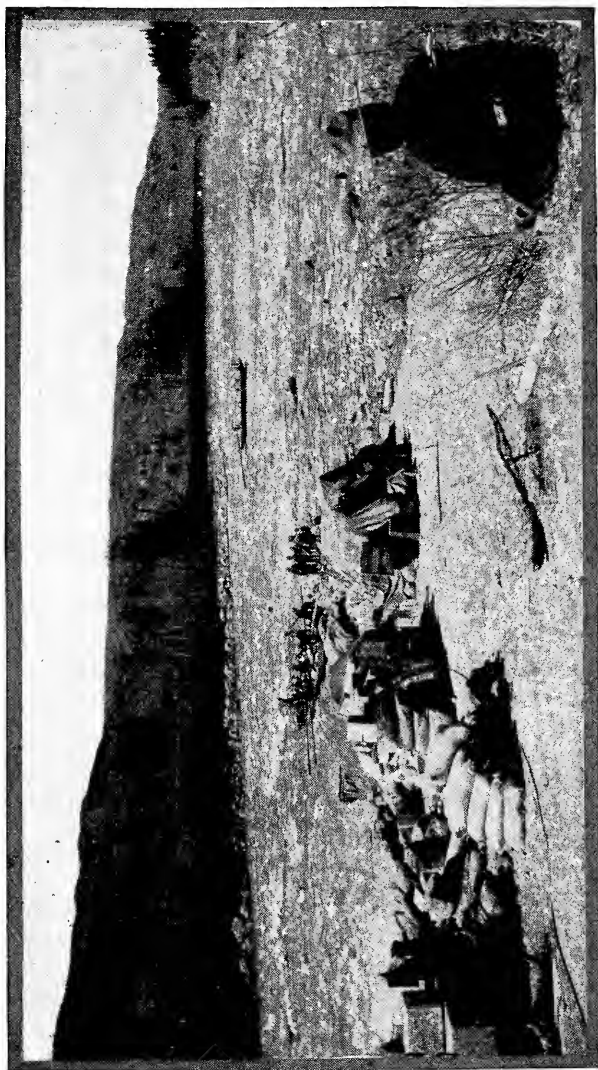
When furs are bought at highest market prices and under extremely liberal assortments, 10 per cent is a big addition and if any money is to be made at the time, 3 to 5 per cent is enough to add to the actual figures. The reason that big percentages are added to actual values is that competition compels it. And then there always ex-

ists that fascinating hope of an advance in prices. Assuming that \$1,350 represented the value of the furs mentioned and at that price would yield 10 per cent profit, which is low enough estimate, the percentage put on top of this by the one who secured the furs, added to the probable 10 per cent profit in the first offer, totals 32 per cent, \$384 profit on an investment of about \$1,200. It caused the buyer to remark exultantly, "I made money like hay that time."

But the country buyer works hard. He makes long drives in the cold, often goes without meals and gets home long after dark and has a lot of furs to fix up before he can retire for the night.

Whether the large fur firms are speculators depends upon what disposal they make of their collections. If they have been shippers to Europe, entering their goods to be sold at auction, we may say they are speculators because they sell on the chance of making money. There are certain large buyers of raw furs who never enter any goods to be sold at the auction sales in Europe or elsewhere. They have a direct outlet to the manufacturing furriers and often are directly interested in such business. Such firms know exactly what they are going to do with their furs and very close to what their margin of profit will be. This is regular business and can not be called speculation.

Such fur firms often purchase large lots of a certain kind of fur from those concerns who buy to sell again in the raw state. The article wanted may be skunk and if so, certain houses who hold large collections are communicated with in a quiet or round-about-way so as not



SPECULATORS OR "FREE TRADERS" GOING INTO THE NORTH COUNTRY.

Thousands of dollars worth of provisions, clothing, guns, traps, etc., are taken by the "free traders," as well as the Hudson Bay Co. and Revillon Freres into the interior of Northern Canada on flat bottomed scows.

to awaken suspicion that word of an advance in prices has been received. "What do you ask for the skunks that you have on hand for the four grades?" is about the way their question is worded. Sometimes the owners do not care to sell at present but if they do, the price they make to the inquiring firm is pretty sure to be above the market and not attractive unless a compromise can be made. If a price is agreed upon, it is usually contingent upon being able to agree upon the sort of grading the purchasers want.

It frequently happens that speculators get caught with considerable quantities of furs on hand, when a sudden break in the market occurs. Furs may really be worth no less but manipulation by those in control at the main trade centers, having forced prices down, all the lesser dealers throughout the country are victims of such action. Then there is a scramble to unload as quickly as possible before prices tumble still more. Perhaps no money can be made by selling at this time and is not expected, but they do endeavor to get out whole or with the least possible loss. If buyers do not call, they are sent for and the worst feature in selling on a declining market is that buyers are practically all alike. Their prices are about the same and there is no bidding against each other nor adding on percentages and every buyer is strict in grading. If traveling buyers are kept off the road by their respective firms the only recourse is to ship the fur in to them and be entirely at their mercy.

When furs are in demand, buyers are numerous and money plentiful. But let a substantial break in the market come and all that great array of formerly anxious



THE SPECULATOR'S RETURN FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY.
TWENTY-TWO SILVER FOX SKINS, VALUE, 1915, \$4,000.00.
NOT A VERY PROFITABLE RETURN—THESE SKINS TWO
YEARS PREVIOUS WOULD HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT \$10,000.00.

speculators fade from view like dew before a July sun. When conditions improve they all flock back again with a good many new ones added to their ranks and former reverses are forgotten.

In connection with speculating in furs, we feel it necessary to observe that honesty and fair dealing does not always prevail and tricks and hocus pocus are common. As proof of it we need only repeat the instructions of a large raw fur house to each of its buying agents before starting out on the road, which are as follows: "You must be guided at all times by your own judgment subject to our instructions. You are not to be influenced one iota by what a fur owner tells you he received for his last lot or what he can get now. You will sack up all furs yourself as soon as purchased and see that the count is correct. In some cases it will not do to leave a lot of partly assorted furs while you go to a meal. The assort may be changed in your absence, or some inferior grades substituted for a portion of those you have looked at. We also forbid you to leave a lot of furs you have purchased to be shipped after you leave town. Your drafts are often paid before the goods arrive and unless you attend to shipping them yourself, we have no means of knowing whether we are receiving the same goods you bought or not. If such an irregularity in the deal exists or there is a shortage in the count, there is no redress. Sack all furs purchased at once. Sew up securely and attach a tag to each sack, giving them a running number, hence: Lot No. 10, Number of sacks 6, as the case may be. Place all purchases in the express company's hands and get a receipt and mail it to us at once together with a list

of the furs and your assortment. If a lot is too small to warrant your missing a train while you attend to shipping the goods yourself, then do not buy them."

One buyer for a large firm made the somewhat pessimistic statement that in a sale of furs he would not trust his own brother. We are not so lacking in confidence as that. We have found many honorable men engaged in handling raw furs, but we do advise a buyer to be guided by his own judgment at all times and he must keep his eyes open for various tricks and fraud where he does not know the people with whom he is dealing.

Perhaps it will be well to add here that many raw furs are sold to traveling representatives who call on the buyers and collectors in the New England states, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and to some extent in a few other states and parts of Southern and Eastern Canada. This method is followed mainly where furs are of good quality, railroads or other means of travel good, and collections of fair size are made by the town, village or country buyer.

A traveling representative will come and examine lots of a few hundred dollars if on or near a railroad or the seller is a regular customer. When furs are in active demand numerous traveling buyers are seeking all large lots and even those of two or three hundred dollars value. There are far more dealers than is generally known in the states and parts of Canada named that collect several thousand dollars worth of furs each season, selling largely to traveling representatives from the leading raw fur centers.

Fur buying, at best, is somewhat of a risky business. Those who sell every week or ten days are operating on the safest plan and when followed regularly is a good method of keeping accurately posted.

Do not attempt to speculate on poor furs. There is some money to be made on furs that are a trifle unprime but there are no margins to be made in No. 3's and No. 4's, the slightly furred and all hair pelts. The best No. 2's that are only faintly bluish will sometimes go for prime skins when mixed in with prime furs in large lots. Remember, however, that a slightly blue pelt bought early is apt to get bluer the longer held unless weather is cold.

Some country buyers begin collecting just as soon as there is anything caught, buying as cheaply as possible, often holding until January or February before selling. This method is followed more or less by country collectors also village and town dealers in the skunk producing states of the East and Central West.

Buying of muskrat for speculation is followed more or less in all parts of the country. The holding and showing ahead of grades means great profit.

Numerous buyers, even in small towns, advertise, send out price lists in quantities which often quote more than the market. Some of these are taking a chance on prices advancing; others expect to grade the goods "worth the money."

The close observer of the best time to sell furs says that just before the closing date for shipments to reach the London January sales is best; others say early Feb-

ruary; still others say latter part of December. February has often proved the month of highest values, yet serious breaks in value have taken place in early February from prices ruling in January. A review of prices paid for years back will probably show January the best month to sell.

While speculating is done in all furs and in all parts of North America, yet skunk is the one article in which it is carried on most. Why? For two reasons, one being that the value of the yearly catch of skunk in America is greater than that of any other fur — even greater than all the foxes — black, silver, cross, red, gray, blue and white combined. The other reason is that skunk are classified not only as to primeness but stripe as well, thus offering an excellent opportunity, especially as many skunk are caught by boys and inexperienced men as to the actual value.

Skunk is usually started off by the trade at the beginning of the season at much lower prices than the article is really worth and prices advance from time to time until they may be anywhere from 20% to 75% higher before the season ends. Of course, this article, like all others, does go lower from the price at which it opens at the beginning of the season but from 1890 to 1915, a period of twenty-five years, figures will prove that it advanced twenty times to where it declined five. In other words, the "speculator" who bought and held, would have won twenty out of the twenty-five years and lost five. This is in the ratio of winning four times and losing once.

While other furs usually advance from opening figures, due partly to the better quality of fur, yet the buyer who speculates has found it profitable more times than otherwise. One great danger to the buyer and holder of raw furs is holding too long. In late February you have shedders, rubbed, etc., to contend with. Even though your collection is prime goods when springs begin to arrive, it usually hurts the others as well, for not only is price apt to ease off, but the assort will generally be more severe. Sell when goods are still prime — mid-winter — is a good rule.

Of course, water animals — otter, beaver, muskrat are prime, except in the South, until late in April. Bear is also prime until late May or even well into June in the more northern parts. A few dealers who sell some of their collection to manufacturers have found it profitable to have tanned not only certain prime skins but those that are early caught and slightly blue pelts also late caught which will not bring full price in the raw state, but tanned, generally go in at full value.

When furs are forced by speculators higher than actual values or market price, is a good time to sell. Trappers and dealers throughout the country want to give this careful attention and act accordingly. The demand now, late December or early January, we will say is good and prices high for nearly all kinds of raw furs. Is it not a good time to sell? An extremely cold winter with small catches might see prices stiffen some on certain articles later. At the same time is it not reasonable that

an open winter, with heavy catches, and only moderate sales of manufactured goods, prices will be lower?

Some years ago trappers and collectors held their furs until February and often profited by so doing. The conditions are often different now. Then skunk started at about \$1.00 for No. 1 and prices advanced. The same was true to a certain extent of other articles when the quotations were moderate, or low, at the beginning of the season.

In the far North and parts of the Rocky Mountain states there is not as great an opportunity to speculate as in the more settled states. Northern and Rocky Mountain trappers are usually many miles from a town or railroad so that they do not bring their catch in more than twice during a season and sometimes only once. The catch here include foxes — all kinds — lynx, mink, marten, fisher, otter and beaver.

Instead of dealers and collectors being speculators, as is the case elsewhere, in the parts of the country mentioned, trappers are the speculators not so much from choice as from the fact that the opportunity to market is not to be had. Usually they snow shoe to a trading post or some frontier village just before the holidays with their catch, which is apt to consist largely of fox, marten, lynx, mink and ermine. Taken year after year, this is a good time to sell, as values are quite often at their best then. The next sale is usually at the close of the trapping season and may be anywhere from April to June or even later, and includes not only fox, wolves, mink, marten, lynx, cats, fisher, ermine but otter, beaver

and muskrat. The water furs, otter, beaver and muskrat — they may be able to sell for full value but on the other furs prices have “gone off” from mid-winter even though there has been no decline in actual market value. Thus it will be seen that the “speculation” — necessary holding — by the trapper in the out of way places is to their sorrow. During recent years, those who are not too inconvenient to a post office have been sending out mail packages of the most valuable furs and the ones most apt to decline.

CHAPTER IX.

PRICES OF LONG AGO.

PERHAPS fur handlers of the present time are interested in values of former years, especially many, many years back. "An Old Time List" is reproduced in this chapter just as sent out by Mr. E. C. Boughton in 1879. At that time the writer was only eight years of age but remembers well his lists as sent out a few years later. Returns are a splendid guide to fur values and one of these, dated as far back as 1873, is herewith publish together with others in the 70's and 80's.

PRICES IN THE 70'S. — In looking over my files of fur sales of past years I came across the following which may be of some interest, writes a Massachusetts trapper and buyer, as far as a comparison of prices is concerned between those of some years back and those of the present day.

On March 4th, 1873, I received the following returns from John G. Hayes, of Portland, Maine:

2 Fox, No. 1.....@	\$2.00	\$4.00
1 Mink, No. 1, Small.....	....	3.50
1 Mink, No. 1, Medium.....	....	4.00
1 Mink, No. 1, Large, dark.....	....	5.00
2 Coon, No. 1.....@	.75	1.50
2 Coon, No. 2.....@	.50	1.50
11 Rats, No. 1.....@	.18	1.88

6 Rats, No. 1, Small.....@	.10	.60
2 Rats, Kitts@	.05	.10
		<hr/>
		\$21.58

At a later date, that of February 8th, 1877, I find returns from Pember & Prouty, of West Broadway, N. Y., the following:

2 Raccoon, No. 3.....@	.25	.50
2 Skunk, No. 3.....@	.30	.60
2 Skunk, No. 4.....@	.15	.30
1 Weasel .....	....	.05
2 Rabbits	@ .03	.06
9 Marten, No. 1.....@	1.35	12.15
1 Marten .....	....	.75
1 Mink, No. 1.....	....	2.25
1 Mink, No. 3.....	....	.40
1 Fisher, No. 1.....	....	13.00
1 Fisher, No. 2.....	....	6.00
46 Muskrats	@ .18	8.28
12 Muskrats, Small	@ .12½	1.50
15 Kitts	@ .06	.90
1 Otter, No. 2.....	....	7.00
9 Fox, No. 1.....@	1.90	17.10
11 Fox, Ex. No. 2.....@	1.50	16.50
4 Fox, Good, No. 2.....@	1.40	5.60
2 Fox, Poor, No. 2.....@	1.20	2.40
2 Fox, No. 3.....@	.60	1.20
2 Fox, No. 4.....@	.20	.40
1 Skunk, Half Stripe .....	....	1.00
		<hr/>
		\$97.94

In an account of sales received from the same party a month previous to this, best pale marten such as we



MOOSE FACTORY, A HUDSON BAY TRADING POST.

This is one of the main distributing points for this great company where during the past many million dollars worth of supplies have been brought from England and distributed to the various posts. Many ship loads of raw furs have left this point for Europe and even today the trade is large. This post is on Moose River, near James Bay, some 500 miles to the northeast of Lake Superior.

get in this region (Massachusetts) were worth \$1.50 for the best, and fisher skins sold for \$14.00. On March 2d, 1875, fox were selling for \$2.00, Marten \$2.75, spring rats 30 cents. On another list, that of January 25th, 1884, I find with other furs I sold four No. 1 mink at \$1.50 each, also four small No. 1 at \$1.00 each, one faded, 75c, one No. 2, 75c. Again on March 10th, 1883, No. 1 red fox sold for \$1.65, No. 1 raccoon, 90c, No. 1 skunk, \$1.30.

The lowest price at which I sold fox was during the year 1878, when I sold No. 1 skins for \$1.35. I have saved all returns from sales since 1872 and find them quite interesting at times as regards the variation of prices on the different skins.

AN OLD TIME LIST. — The following is reproduced from a list dated October 15, 1879. The firm is no longer in business, but no doubt many will be interested in prices paid at that time, as well as the way the list is gotten up.

I will pay the following prices, cash on delivery, for Raw Furs up to the 30th of October, 1879:

Black Skunk	Fall, 40 to 60
Small Stripe	“ 30 to 35
Wide Stripe	“ 20 to 25
Mostly White	“ 15 to 18

All skins very poor, with scarcely any fur on them, 6 to 10 cents.

Red fox from 25c for very poor to \$1.00 for pretty fair.

Wood grey fox from 10c for very poor to 30, 40 and 60.

Fall muskrat, large 11, medium 9, small 7, kits 3c.
Otter skins from \$4.00 for large, to 50c for very poor.

Mink from 8c for very poor to 20, 30, 40 and 60.

Opossum from 2c for "trash" to 12 for large.

Raccoon from 8c for "trash" to 40 for large.

Send in your skins as soon as you get a few of each kind together and I will assort them and send you a memorandum of prices and check for same on the day I receive the skins, and will keep the skins just as I received them until I hear from you. If not satisfactory, you can return the check and I will return you the furs and pay the freight to this city myself and you can pay it at the other end. Send skins by express or some other quick conveyance.

I will send List of Prices when requested.

Please drop a few lines and let me know if you are getting in any skins and give any other information you have. Also tell me if my prices are not fully as high as other quotations.

Acknowledge receipt of this circular as soon as received.

If you send me any skins, send this circular in your letter.

Muskrat, fox, mink, otter, opossum and wild cat should be taken off the animal whole and stretched out on a board about the shape of the animal and left to dry three or four days, when it will do to take off and be ready for sale. Raccoon skins should be cut open in the middle of the belly and nailed out on a board and left

three or four days. No skins should be allowed to dry in the sun or near the fire.

Pay the expressage at home, if possible, for I fear they overcharge sometimes at this end of the route. In case they will not receive it, send them without.

FOR SALE.

No. 1 whole buffalo robes.....	\$7.50
No. 2 whole buffalo robes.....	6.50
No. 1 seamed buffalo robes.....	6.50
No. 2 seamed buffalo robes.....	5.50

NEWHOUSE CELEBRATED TRAPS.

Newhouse, No. 0, no chains \$2.00 per dozen. With chains, \$2.66
 Newhouse, No. 1, no chains, \$2.25 per dozen. With chains, \$3.12
 Newhouse, No. 2, no chains, \$6.00 per dozen. With chains, \$7.00
 Less 30% discount.

E. C. BOUGHTON,
 33 Howard St., N. Y.

PRICES OF FURS IN 1885.—Mr. M. J. Wood, a traveling raw fur buyer of many years experience and who operated largely in the state of Michigan, furnishes the following in connection with a lot bought in Southern Michigan January 3, 1885. Mr. Wood bought furs for about fifty years but owing to advanced age and ill health retired in 1913.

JANUARY 3, 1885.

MR. M. J. WOOD,

Bought of L. D. Halsted, Coldwater, Mich.
 For Henry A. Newland & Co.

Five sacks and two bales.

3 Blk. Cat	@ .20	.....	\$0.60
4 Common Cat	@ .10	.....	.40

FUR BUYERS' GUIDE.

1 Sampson Fox .....	.....	.30
14 No. 1 Coon.....@	.80	11.20
8 No. 1 Ord. Coon.....@	.65	5.20
42 No. 2 Coon.....@	.40	16.80
50 No. 3 Coon.....@	.25	12.50
20 No. 4 Coon.....@	.10	2.00
31 No. 4 Small Coon.....@	.05	1.55
		<hr/> \$49.25

52 No. 1 Large Mink	@ .50	26.00
19 No. 1 Large Pale Mink...@	.40	7.60
47 No. 1 Med. Mink	@ .40	18.80
75 No. 1 Small Mink	@ .30	22.50
18 No. 2 Extra Mink	@ .30	5.40
52 No. 2 Mink	@ .25	13.00
49 No. 3 Mink	@ .20	9.80
46 No. 4 Mink	@ .05	2.30
		<hr/> \$105.40

63 Blk. C Skunk.....@	.80	50.40
1 Blk. Open Skunk.....	....	.70
74 ½ Ord. Skunk.....@	.60	44.40
1 ½ Ord. Skunk.....	....	.50
37 N. St. Skunk.....@	.35	12.95
47 Broad Skunk	@ .20	9.40
25 Unprime Skunk	@ .20	5.00
7 Stagy Skunk	@ .10	.70
		<hr/> \$124.05

\$278.90

\$280.00

Cost \$311.41. Too High.

\$311.41

\$311.41

Coon and mink are not desirable in quality at the cost in this lot. This same bunch of fur this season (1913) would bring over \$1,200.

PRICES OF LONG AGO. — I always shipped to C. G. Gunther's Sons, at that time a very good and reliable firm. I send you herewith one of their statements for furs I shipped them in 1887.

The statement referred to reads as follows:

W. W. HUBBARD, Monroe Co., N. Y.

80 Muskrats, 2 fall.....	\$0.11	\$8.80
30 Muskrats, kitts .....	.63	.90
74 Skunk, 1 cased.....	1.25	92.50
18 Skunk, 1 brown and woolly.....	1.00	18.00
55 Skunk, 2 cased.....	.75	41.25
33 Skunk, 3 cased.....	.40	13.20
27 Skunk, 4 cased.....	.20	5.40
4 Skunk, scabs .....	.03	.12
2 Mink, 1.....	.60	1.20
1 Mink, 2.....	...	.40
2 Mink, scabs .....	.10	.20
3 Red Fox, 1.....	1.25	3.75
6 Coon, 1.....	.80	4.80
6 Coon, 2.....	.40	2.40
5 Coon, 3.....	.20	1.00
9 Coon, scabs .....	.06	.54
		<hr/>
		\$194.94
Off freight		2.75
		<hr/>
Check		\$192.19

We enclose check for the above. We have allowed you full circular prices on skunk, but this article had de-

clined 20% last week at the London sales, making with the decline in June last, 15%, in all 35%⁶/₈ lower than one year ago.

We shall send you our new circular tomorrow, quoting No. 1 skunk at \$1.00.

Respectfully yours,

C. G. GUNTHER'S SONS.

This old record should prove interesting to present day fur shippers, and if they are inclined to kick about present day fur values it will make them feel better to remember that in 1887 No. 1 mink were worth 60 cents and No 1 skunk \$1.25.

W. W. HUBBARD.

CHAPTER X.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION.

PPRICE LISTS — Some large fur dealers send out prices that are much under the market. This is probably done so that their traveling buyers can more easily buy of dealers as they often allow their representatives to pay from 5% to 15% above quotations. Such houses seem to feel that it is best to protect the dealer trade and secure most of their collections through traveling buyers.

Other firms, not having traveling representatives, send out prices from 10% to 15% above actual market value to induce shipments, expecting to make up for the inflated prices in the assort — an easy thing to do after the goods come in. The two illustrations show the extremes. There are many firms that quote correct values, grade fairly and to whom shipments can safely be sent.

THE HIGH QUOTER. — This class of dealers are not only injuring the shipping trade but some at least have hurt themselves. How? By sorting so severe that returns were usually less than those quoting actual market values. There are others who start out quoting about correct values, but as some have raised skunk a nickel or quarter, they go them better and add more, which makes the article considerable above the market. Some think this is the only way to get shipments, when in fact

it does little good and only causes the dealers to "buck" one another and later perhaps take it out of the assortment.

Trappers and shippers, in all parts of America, are learning to rely upon market quotations. When they receive prices 100%, 50% or even 25% above, they feel confident there is something wrong. If they ship any furs to the extreme high quoter they generally request same held separate and value submitted for approval.

SALE REPORTS. — Some dealers and many trappers cannot understand how it is that prices do not decline or advance more in accord with the reports sent from the London Sales. Exporters and large dealers know, as a rule, whether or not such an article is in demand and about what the results of the sales will be, the quantity offered as well, having something to do with prices. The advance or decline of most articles is anticipated (foretold) by dealers so that most of the changes have been met or made in their prices. Watch prices of the various exporters and large dealers just before closing date for shipping to the sales. If demand is good prices are apt to be advanced; if catch large or demand poor, prices are apt to be lowered to meet expected changes in price at the sales.

SKUNK, MINK, MUSKRAT. — Throughout most of America these fur bearers are found and the value of their pelts is as much as all the rest — foxes, marten, lynx, otter, beaver, weasel, bears, wolves, etc., combined. Not only the great value of skunk, mink and muskrat but the fact that they are caught and handled largely by boys,

farmers, inexperienced trappers and bought more or less by this class before reaching the larger dealers, that so much detailed information is deemed advisable. This explanation is made especially for those in the far North and parts where foxes, marten, beaver, lynx, etc., are the principal fur producers.

Throughout the states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico and north to the Ohio River also Arkansas, Okla-



(1) FOX SQUIRREL. (2) BELGIAN HARE. (3) BROWN WEASEL.

homa and Missouri, opossum is another article of considerable importance and coon in the same states, even of greater value than opossum as they are found in good numbers much farther north. Civet cat is another fur producer of considerable worth to trappers and collectors, especially in the Central Western and Southwestern states.

WORTHLESS SKINS. — So far there has been little demand for moles or ferrets. Both of these animals produce a furred pelt. Brown weasel is variously quoted from worthless to five cents; rabbit about one cent each. These four articles will no doubt some day become of enough value that the pelts will receive more attention.

Groundhog and American squirrels have no fur value, in fact, the pelts have no fur on them — only hair.

CASED AND OPEN. — As is pretty generally known, bear, beaver, badger and timber wolf should be handled open and other furs cased. Some of the cased skins should be turned as soon as dry as dealers prefer them in that condition, especially fox, coyote, marten, lynx, wild cat and fisher; raccoon may be handled either cased or flat; otter and weasel either flesh or fur out; mink, muskrat, skunk and opossum should be flesh out.

HANDLING WET FUR.—How do you handle wet fur; that is, fur from animals that are drowned and which you skin immediately, such as mink, coon, civet cats and the like? A good way after removing the skin from the carcass is to take it by the nose and swing it to and fro, swinging it quickly as you would a whip to make it snap. Take care in whipping the skin to and fro that the tail does not tear off. In treating the skin this way, you will be surprised to see how much water you can get out of it. Change and swing the skin holding it by the tail and hind legs. However, I would not recommend this treatment for very large skins.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FURS. — What are unclean furs? They are the ones that are fat, fleshy, mud in fur, burrs in fur or tail, smeared with blood, etc. Clean furs are free from all these.

Does it pay to clean raw furs? Yes. Why? Because they show the quality, look better, require less work, less chance of spoiling and less risk. Good, clean furs seldom spoil if properly cured, while unclean ones

often do. Some lists say: "All furs must be well cleaned to be No. 1."

Up-to-date trappers realize that it pays to clean furs and their outfit includes three very important articles, namely: comb, brush, fleshing knife.

TAILS. — Tails of mink, coon, skunk and civet cat often spoil. This danger can be eliminated by splitting tail the entire distance, same as done with otter, tacking tail out flat. Even with bone taken out (and this should always be done) a good many spoil, especially in warm or rainy localities. Tails are split before tanning these skins so it does not lessen their value. Fox tails should not be split but if the tip end were split, say a half inch, and a little salt jabbed in with a wire or strong stick is advisable. Hang pelt head up so salty water will drip from end of tail. Do not put any salt on pelt. Other skins such as marten, fisher, wolf, can be handled same as fox.

FLESHING AND CURING. — A trapper and collector of many years' experience says: "I have always found that it pays well to give furs the proper attention as thousands of dollars worth are ruined every year by improper fleshing and stretching. Furs with the flesh and fat on may cause the pelt to be damaged and often fur slips so that pelts of this kind will grade Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

Get an old twelve-inch file, take it to a blacksmith, have him taper the front end to a point, same as the other end, so that a handle can be put on each. Now put on a grindstone and grind all the rough off on both sides and edges, leaving four edges. After all the roughness is off, grind so that each edge is sharp, then you have four edges to do the cutting.

Select a pelt of little value to practice on — an opossum is good — as they flesh easier than most any other. Slip the pelt on the fleshing pole, then take two nails and drive through the ears into the pole. Drive only deep enough to hold the pelt from slipping down and so that they can be easily pulled out. Use the knife edgewise. Use a little elbow grease to start the flesh. After you once have it started you need not push very hard as it will go easy, but be sure to have all burrs and mud off the fur or you will cut a hole the size of the burr. Fleshing may seem a little awkward at first but don't get out of patience and it won't be long until you can flesh easily and rapidly. Muskrat will seem to flesh different from any other animal but they can be fleshed under the same plan with a little practice. Muskrat, however, except the thick pelted or with flesh and fat on usually do not need the knife.

As soon as your pelts are fleshed they should be stretched. If they have to be left any length of time, turn them fur side out or they may shrink. After furs are stretched hang them up in a cool, dry place where the air circulates freely by leaving windows open. If they are kept in a closed room they will not cure well. Do not dry by a fire as skins so dried are brittle and crack.

This outfit is intended for small animal pelts such as skunk, coon, opossum, muskrat and others. Mink, marten, foxes, weasel and other thin pelted skins do not need fleshing. I have tried many different tools and ways but have never found anything equal to this outfit."

NORTHERN FURS. — In parts of the Far North furs do not reach market for some months after close of the

A CANADIAN TRAPPER AND HIS CATCH, CONSISTING OF CROSS AND RED FOX,
LYNX, WILD CAT, WOLF, SKUNK AND MUSKRAT.



trapping season. Perhaps the following from an Edmonton, Canada, paper showing date and number of each kind of fur brought in by a large trader will be interesting: "D. Desjarlais, a fur trader of the Lesser Slave Lake country, arrived in Edmonton from the north by way of Athabasca Landing on Friday, July 4, with his winter's trade of fur consisting of 1,051 marten, 243 beaver, 57 bear, 109 lynx, 125 mink, 7 wolverine, 12 cross fox, 15 red fox, 1 silver fox, 12 wolves, 29 skunk. 133 ermine (weasel), 12 fisher, 10 otter, 7,190 rats, 18 pounds of castoreum. These were sold the following Wednesday morning to the highest bidder for \$12,000."

DEALERS' CALENDAR. — *January.* — All fur bearing animals caught in this month are fully furred. Will grade No. 1 unless damaged in some way.

February. — Skunk, mink and marten, beginning to fade are still prime, but not so good in color as those caught in December and January.

March. — Most all rats caught the first part of the month will pass as Spring, and average better sizes. Coon, mink, skunk, etc., are springy or shedding.

April. — Beaver, bear, badger, otter and rats are fully prime. Most all the other animals are shedding. Some will grade as No. 2, others as No. 3. Unwise to catch.

May. — Otter, beaver, bear, badger are shedding. Most all animals are suckling their young. It's cruel as well as unlawful to kill them.

June. — All furs now are called shadders and have little or no value. It is against the law to kill them. Let them live and multiply.

July. — Same conditions as in June, have no fur on them, have no value at all. It is both cruel and unlawful to catch them. Conform to the law.

August. — All kinds of fur bearing animals caught this month will grade as unprime, being thin furred. It is unwise as well as unlawful to kill.

September. — There is an old adage that every month with R in it has fur value. It is true, but the first and last, September and April, they have but little.

October. — No fur bearing animals should be caught this month as they would only grade as No. 2, 3 or 4; it is unwise as well as unlawful to kill.

November. — Lawful to catch furs. Fore part of the month furs will grade mostly No. 2. Latter part of month Nos. 1 or 2, according to kind.

December. — Most all furs caught in December are fully prime, of good color, except beaver, bear, badger, otter, muskrat, which are best in the spring months.

SCHEMING. — Some skins in a certain locality are “pushed” by the large dealer into a section that is worth more. To illustrate: Central Ohio skunk, while quoted less than Northern Ohio, are really worth as much, for the Central Ohio has the size, luster and quality of fur equal to the best or Northern. Most dealers realize as much for furs caught in the Central part as the Northern dealer gets for those caught in that portion of the state. This applies to several species of fur bearers in various parts of the country, but not to all. Neither does it apply to all states — Texas and California being among the exceptions owing to their size. In others the various

climates owing to altitudes, which range from sea level to thousands of feet, mean considerable difference in fur values.

TRICKS. — It is a case of the "pot calling the skillet black," for there are trappers, buyers and sellers that will resort to mean tactics, practically stealing, to get more for their furs, yet they are all found out sooner or later, so that the old saying, "honesty is the best policy," holds good in the fur game as well as elsewhere.

During my more than thirty years' connection with the trapping, buying and selling of raw furs, numerous crooked transactions have been witnessed and otherwise learned. One of the most common deceptions practiced in the east and central west, especially by trappers, is the tampering with white on skunk. Some cut out the stripe, sew up and when partly dry turn fur out. Again the stripe may be blacked; others remove the white and draw the black fur and hair over the bare spot using some sticky substance underneath to cover up the defect; still others have been known to cut out the white strip when skinned, then turn the pelt fur out, not stretching but selling when frozen.

If the fur of fox, wolf, coon, skunk, is rubbed, nine times out of ten, such pelts will be flesh side out. As these, with the exception of fox, are mostly handled that way, unless the buyer is on his guard, "one may be put over on him." Cotton mink and "singed" otter are very apt to be offered the buyers flesh side out.

Muskrat smeared with blood, to give the appearance of Spring rats, is also resorted to in some localities by those who wish to make "spring rats" out of those that

belong a grade or two lower. Southern muskrat—largely Louisiana—sometimes find their way north where “somehow” they get mixed with other rats worth about twice as much. This trick was worked pretty strong some years ago. Louisiana and some other of the Gulf of Mexico state rats not only average small but the fur is short. Southern rats sent north is not apt to be practiced except when they are high. At such times they have been found not only among village and town collectors’s goods but in trapper’s and country buyer’s collections as well.

Some fur handlers, not only trappers but collectors, are poor at figures and counting. Dishonest buyers have been known to work the “forgot to pack” trick on them. It is done as follows: Suppose that the seller says that he will sell for certain prices, which he names for the various grades on the different articles he has to sell. They should say so much for the entire lot of furs but it seems certain ones would rather sell on price and assort. The buyer assorts the goods and figures them up but in totaling “forgets to pack” one, two or more, depending upon the size of the lot. Suppose the correct totaling of the lot is \$340.60. We will say that the first column under dollars was totaled fifty. Instead of “packing” five, the buyer only “packed” three, in which case, instead of \$340.60 the total would show \$320.60, or \$20.00 less than the correct amount. Of course the seller could get some one to figure up for him later providing he kept or secured a copy of the assort. Then, if discovered, the buyer would simply say a mistake in “adding and packing.”

A good many of the larger trappers as well as many country collectors like to have several buyers bid on their furs. A trick that I have known buyers to work on their competitors was to hand in a bid reading like this: "Providing no bid is over \$——, I bid 10 cents more than high man." While no business man would allow such methods, yet I have known it to be gotten away with.

NORTHERN VS. SOUTHERN FURS. — Many trappers as well as some country buyers and collectors in the south, southwest and west do not realize the difference in quality of furs from those sections compared with farther north. This difference is more noticeable on skunk, mink, coon, wolf, opossum and other land animals. Beaver and otter hold up better than any of the other fur bearers. The muskrat from all southern localities is much inferior to those caught in central and eastern sections.

Not only is the fur longer, denser and of better wearing qualities but the pelts average much larger on most of the different animals and what perhaps is least known of all, the hide is thicker and stronger — hence, better in the north. Why such is the case can be explained from the fact that where the fur grows long, thick and heavy it requires a thicker hide for the hair and fur roots.

While it is hard to define a dividing line between the thin and thick pelt and fur sections, yet in a general way the fortieth parallel, which passes through Philadelphia, near Wheeling, W. Va., Columbus, Ohio, north of Indianapolis, Ind., near Springfield, Ill., through northern Missouri, the northern boundary of Kansas, north of

Denver and through Colorado, then leaving the fortieth parallel and north along the western boundary of Wyoming and Montana. While some thick pelted skins are secured as much as a hundred miles south of the line mentioned they are from the mountainous and hilly parts. On the other hand, some thin pelts are secured north of that line.

Manufacturers are mostly wise, too, about where the best pelts come from and this accounts for dealers being able to pay more for furs from the best sections, namely, where the fur is long, heavy and the hide thick so as to turn out the best finished product. Manufacturers, dressers and tanners allude to pelts from the south as "soft," which means thin leather, thin underfur and tears easily.

Quality of fur is governed mainly by the weather. Altitude (height) don't make as much difference as many think. Along the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Coast, where it is warm, furs are of poor quality but along the Atlantic Coast from New York north, where it is cold, furs are of good quality. Down around Southern Florida or the extreme southern parts of Texas or California coon caught during mid-winter, that is in December or January, may and in fact are often blue pelts. This is explained from the fact that the fur growth is short and the hide thin. Nature does wonders in providing a coat of fur and a suitable hide for the root growth of fur bearing animals in the various parts of the country. This accounts for the difference in value of the various skins for commercial use.

CHAPTER XI.

FOXES — BLACK, SILVER, CROSS, ARCTIC.

SILVER FOXES.—These foxes are found more often in the provinces of Canada than elsewhere yet they are found in Alaska and occasionally in some of the most northern states of the United States. The best specimens are the most valuable fur bearing animals on earth. With an increased number of wealthy individuals who demand costly furs, the preservation and propagation of animals which produce such furs, is becoming an absorbing enterprise. The supply of the better grades of fox as well as certain other wild furs is not adequate to meet the demand of recent years therefore hunters and trappers can not be depended upon to furnish sufficient quantities. In fact, unless breeding animals under scientific fur farming methods is followed, some valuable species are sure to disappear from earth entirely.

Silver foxes in all their color variations are only chance colors of the common red, yet these valuable colors are only produced in the north. A black fox is merely a dark silver specimen, which may occur in a litter of pups from red parents. It is rather strange that a pair of silver foxes do not produce some red pups but experience has proved that silver parents breed silvers almost without exception. Realizing the tremendous possibilities in fox breeding, as a money making venture, a large number of individuals and companies have gone



RED, CROSS, SILVER FOX SKINS.

- (1) Red, length of body, 36; tail, $21\frac{1}{2}$; width, $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
- (2) Cross, length of body, $35\frac{1}{2}$; tail, $18\frac{1}{2}$; width, 7 inches.
- (3) Silver, length of body, $36\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 18; body, $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

into the business and some on a large scale. Most of such farms are situated in Eastern Canada, both on the mainland and several islands. In the years 1912 and 1913 more than \$12,000,000 capital was incorporated and invested or held in reserve for fox breeding. More than 7,000 red foxes and crosses were purchased for breeding purposes in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The market price of highest quality in black fox skins range from \$500 to \$3,000 but on account of the eager competitive demand existing to secure the best stock for breeding purposes, superior black foxes have sold for as high as \$35,000 per pair. It can not be foretold what effect increasing the supply of silver foxes to considerable numbers will have on market values; but if the supply is large, prices obtained in the past and at present can not be expected.

A large amount of data is obtainable in regard to previous attempts at fox breeding. Much of this information does not concern the average reader because of non-success. Some of the failures resulted because of poor fencing, lack of warm, dry nests for the young, mothers not being separated by family pens from the other adult foxes and many of the pups were killed. Prices were not high enough to warrant continued and extensive experiments by those who possessed the necessary capital and enthusiasts usually lacked the means to make further investigations. But when prices advanced along in the 90's and woven wire fencing came on the market, all was changed. Former doubt and hesitancy

gave way to optimism and capital to invest in Fox Farming was abundant.

COLOR VARIATIONS. — The prime object in silver fox breeding is to produce the darkest shades of color. The red fox is red on the back and white underneath with black ears and legs. The Bastard is red above and dark beneath the body and on the neck with darker points. An inferior cross fox is mainly red and dark above with silver patch down the back and over the shoulders and hips. A good cross is somewhat red on the sides, neck and ears, dark below and silvery over the back and rump. Light silver is silvery all over except possibly the neck; is dark underneath and white on tip of tail. Dark silver is black all



SILVER FOX CARCASS.

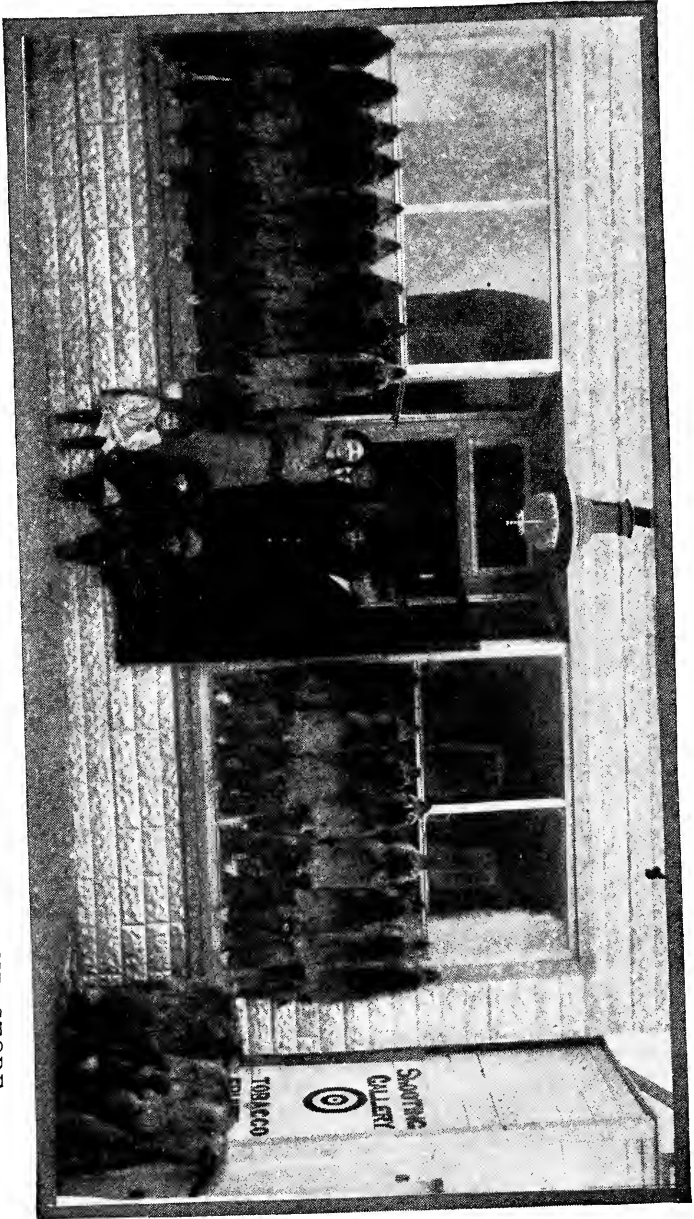
over except tip of tail which is white with some dark silvery hairs that are only noticed by close examination. Silver foxes produce the same colored young, never red or cross, except that an amalgamation of silver and red hairs sometimes occurs that is neither silver nor red but a sort of roan. Red foxes usually produce red but on occasions a litter will contain one cross or one silver pup.

When silver and red are crossed the product is red pups with blacker markings than is natural in the red fox. These foxes are spoken of as "Bastards" by furriers. If a bastard is mated with a silver, the results are usually 50 per cent of silver pups. Bastard reds have been known to produce one silver in a litter and sometimes dark enough to be termed black. Silver foxes are never alike in color unless black. In a collection of silver skins, it is seldom that any two will match very closely. One will have a white tip to the tail while another only shows a few hairs of white. Some have white patches on their legs or breast while the main coat is silver or black.

Cross fox skins are of various colors and value. The darkest are hard to distinguish from the silver while the pale are only a few shades darker than the best red skins. Some very good red fox skins are secured from parts of Montana, the Dakotas, etc. On the other hand the cross secured there are generally quite pale and often coarse haired. Such skins are worth little, if any, more than the best grade of reds.

Perhaps the illustration — Silver Fox Carcass — showing a good average size and color silver as caught by a trapper in Alberta, Canada, will convey the idea as to the relative shades from silver to cross, cross to red, remembering that the best shades of red are worth about as much as the poorer shades of cross.

THE BEST SILVER FOX. — A silver fox skin may possess many faults. It may be blue pelted, when it is termed unprime, or it may be springy or it is rubbed in places, which, if only slightly rubbed, damages greatly an



TWENTY-ONE SILVER FOX SKINS, TRADER, HIS FAMILY AND STORE.

These skins were bought by the trader at his store in Western Canada, winter of 1913, and sold for \$12,000.00.

otherwise valuable pelt. Some skins of valuable foxes have been poorly handled or damaged by dogs or badly shot or are greasy and heated. The best skins are black on the neck wherever silver hairs do not predominate. To be exact in our description, the color is a bluish black over the entire body and the under fur is of a dark shade also. The darkest of silver foxes have slate colored under fur that is dark to its roots.

In the best skins only a few silver hairs appear and are evenly distributed throughout the coat. Softness, termed silkiness, determines the value as well as the color. There must also be gloss. It is caused by fineness and general physical condition of the animal and locality where it grew. A good, well furred silver fox skin will weigh a pound or more, even as much as 20 ounces. Size also is taken into consideration. The finest and most valuable silver foxes are probably found in Prince Edward Island where fox farming is being carried on. However, few are killed by those engaged in fox farming except the culls and old ones. The fur here is prime in November but none are killed until December. A fox eight months old is full furred and as large as the old ones. The young fox has less silver than when three years old or more, but the fur of a young fox is usually softer on account of fineness than is found in the older animals.

Both silver and red foxes from Prince Edward Island have sold at the London sales for the highest prices, a fact that indicates their superiority. When black colors occur in any of these island foxes, they are usually possessed of exceeding fineness and luxuriant

fur. The finest silver or black foxes held in captivity on the island came from ancestors that were dug out in the same territory. The silver and red foxes found in Alaska in the regions of the Yukon and Athabasca Rivers



TWENTY-EIGHT SILVER FOX SKINS.

These skins were bought by a trader in the Peace River Country of Canada, from trappers in the spring of 1914, but owing to the war brought only \$3,200.00, as they did not reach the European market until fall. The pile on the ground are red fox skins.

are often very valuable, the fur being long, heavy and lustrous. Some valuable skins are also secured from Quebec and other eastern provinces.

When a black phase of color occurs in one of the pups of wild red foxes, the fur is usually of the finest

character and may command a small fortune. Silver foxes and their allies, the cross and patch foxes, inhabiting Labrador and Newfoundland are heavy furred but somewhat coarser than those found elsewhere. It is believed that the sea breeze here affects the fur but as the finest furred foxes are produced on other islands of the sea, the above theory does not appear reasonable.

Much must be known in order to grade silver or black foxes for what they are worth. A lack of such knowledge may be very costly. A Michigan fur buyer once found a supposed black fox pelt in the course of his travels. The price asked was \$1,000. He finally secured it for \$700. In time he sold it for \$40 and the purchaser was also beaten for it was only a dark red bastard fox and was worth about \$10.

No silver or black foxes are found in Southern and Central United States and are not numerous in Northern parts. The cross fox is more common and instead of being marked with red, black and silver like those in a far northern range, they are mostly red all over, except that a stripe several inches wide, almost black, crosses the shoulders and another starting from the scalp crosses the other in the center and extends well down the back. Of course markings vary in different foxes and scarcely any two are exactly alike but often differ materially.

In purchasing fox furs the buyer must ever be prepared for fresh surprises in the matter of quality and individual markings such as he has never seen before. This relates particularly to the different variations in silver, cross, patched and bastard foxes. The grading of straight red foxes is a simple matter compared to

handling and appraising foxes of various color phases, mixtures or blends.

FINAL VALUE OF SILVER FOX FUR. — Silver foxes of low value are worth from \$40 to \$75 or \$80 according to paleness and how well furred. Medium dark and fine will sell at \$150 to \$300. Dark and fine with luster, \$500 to \$1,500 and choice black as high as \$3,000. The majority run to pale and medium shades and often a whole winter will not see one black fox pelt taken in a wide region.

It requires experience as well as expert judgment to be able to determine the value of the varying shades of foxes from red to cross, cross to silver and the many different shades of silver to the very best specimens which are black. Of course the quality of fur in such valuable skins must be examined as well as the color considered. Size also is a factor in determining values when a pelt is being examined that is worth hundreds if not a thousand or more dollars.

The three pelts shown on page 153 vary but little in size or primeness. The first is an ordinary red secured in Central Canada sections and worth (1915) about \$6.00; middle one is a cross and worth three times as much or \$18.00; the third is a silver but not very dark yet worth thirty times as much as the red or ten times as much as the cross or \$180.00.

Measurements of various raw fur skins are usually as shown, that is, if the fur side is out the figures indicate fur side; if pelt side shown, measurements were taken on pelt side. Not only foxes but the measurements of various other furs are mostly taken on side as shown

in illustration. A skin measured on fur side must be larger (wider) before it classes large than if measurements had been taken on flesh or pelt side.

✓ ARCTIC FOXES, BLUE. — The blue fox ranges the more Southern latitude of the Arctic regions, rather between the habitat of the Arctic white fox and the land of reds and silvers. They inhabit Alaska, certain islands of the Behring Sea and other territory adjacent to the polar regions.



BLUE FOX PELT.

Large—Length nose to root of tail 35; tail 16; total 51; greatest width 11; shoulders 10 inches. This pelt represents an average large from the Blue Fox section which is Northern Alaska and Northern Canada including the islands in the Arctic Ocean.

SPECIES AND COLOR. — Both blue and white foxes are one and the same species. They are the polar or Arctic foxes, the only difference being phases of color. White is probably the natural color, as the number of blue fox skins secured are about one-tenth of the number of white pelts taken. The blue furred strain of the polar fox sells for \$20 to \$75, which is several times more than those of white fur command. The blue color in this fox is not an indigo or sky blue but more on the order of the blue seen in the fur of maltese cats.

SIZES. — The average weight of the blue fox is 10 to 13 pounds, live weight, though some specimens will weigh much more. The female weighs on an average of 7 to 11 pounds. About 8 pounds may be said to represent the weight of the largest number. The average length of male blue fox skins when cured and ready for market is 30 inches and the width 11 inches at rump. The tail is 14 to 16 inches in length, making entire length nearly 4 feet. The fur of the male is usually of better quality than that of the female and the fur of a male two or three years old is the choicest of all.



ARCTIC WHITE FOX SKIN.

Large—Length nose to root of tail 30; tail 15; total 45; greatest width 9; shoulders 8 inches.

WHITE FOX. — The white fox occupies or lives in the polar regions ranging much nearer the pole than the majority of blue foxes. On account of a less food supply, it is thought the white species are smaller than the blue, which are better fed. The white fox in winter has a coat of clear white fur externally,

of good length, but the under fur is not so white but of a yellowish hue. They are white in winter and brown in summer on back and sides and a drab color underneath the body.

Price of this fur has been low compared with the blue variety. Trappers have never made any great effort to catch white fox owing to its value. A change in fashion summer of 1915, when white furs were worn around the fair sex neck caused this article to rise in value. White fox, however, is one of uncertain value as the uses to which it is put are constantly changing owing to the peculiar furry fancies for white furs.

CHAPTER XII.

FOXES — RED, GREY, KITT OR SWIFT.

THE RED FOX — RANGE. — Alaska, Canada, its islands and practically all of the United States are inhabited by foxes. Aside from the common grey and kitt fox, all other foxes are red or of that species in chance colors and numerous variations. Freaks of color in the red fox are not common in the United States but occur often in Canada, Alaska, Labrador and other sections of the far North. As red is the prevailing color, our purpose is to discuss that natural coloring alone, only making such departure as is necessary to mention the several shades of this, so called red, production in foxes.

Naturalists have divided the red fox into at least five sub-species. Different strains might exist in the same breed of foxes or other wild animals just as they do in domestic animals or poultry but it is only fair to assert that any difference as to size, color and quality of fur in the red fox must be assigned to location in a geographical sense, character and quantity of food obtained, together with the survival of the strongest in a particular type; but after we are through speculating, the red fox of Alaska and the red fox of Southern United States are one and the same as regards species. If we should plant a Northern climate with red fox stock from

South Carolina, a few generations in the Northland would bring out a far different type of fox no doubt.

The largest, longest furred and most brilliant colored



WELL HANDLED CANADIAN RED FOX SKINS.

These pelts were from foxes caught, skinned and stretched by the trapper who had them and himself photographed before selling.

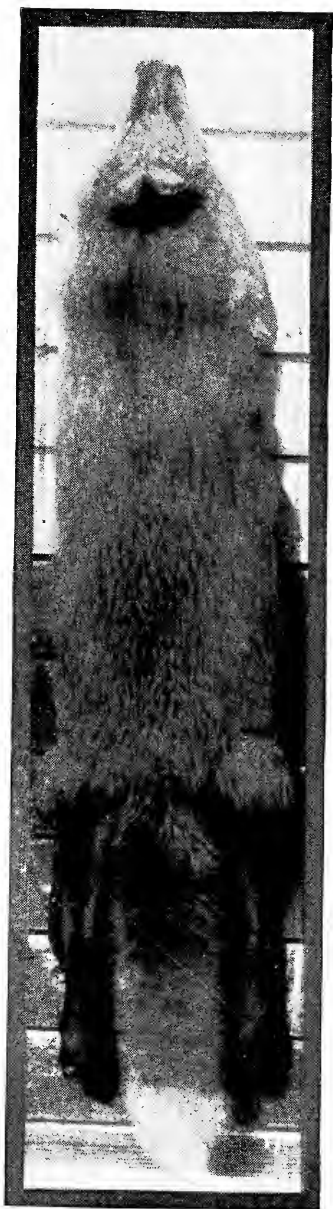
red fox inhabits Alaska and other sections of its most Northern range, although there is said to be a very few of an extra large type and the largest of all foxes which

inhabit Kodiak Island. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia red foxes are of good size, the fur long and heavy, but rather coarse and the colors pale. Quebec, New England and the Adirondack region of New York produce some splendid reds.

The fur and color of red foxes differ in every Northern district, as well as in the sections of the United States. The Kamchatka red fox is superior to all others in length, fineness and luster. The average red fox is red or yellowish red on the back and sides, the tail rather darker than the body and tipped with white. The belly is either white or a dingy white and the ears and lower portions of the legs are black.

SIZE. — The largest of the species mentioned will measure $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, tail included, and some specimens still more; depending upon length of tail, which measures from 16 to 18 and even 20 inches. In Northern and Central sections of the United States, 30 inches from tip of nose to end of pelt, where tail joins, and 8 to $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at base for the cured skin, represents a large skin. Medium size is about 2 inches shorter, a trifle narrower and the small sizes in the same proportion. In many cases the principal difference is in length. A small pelt will be shorter than a medium but not much more narrow. A skin may be appreciably shortened by stretching it wider than it should be.

This fur bearer varies wonderfully but is usually largest in the Northern states and Canada. An exception, however, is noted in a skin from Tennessee that stretched in correct proportions yet had a length of 5 feet and 5 inches. The fox was said to have weighed 19



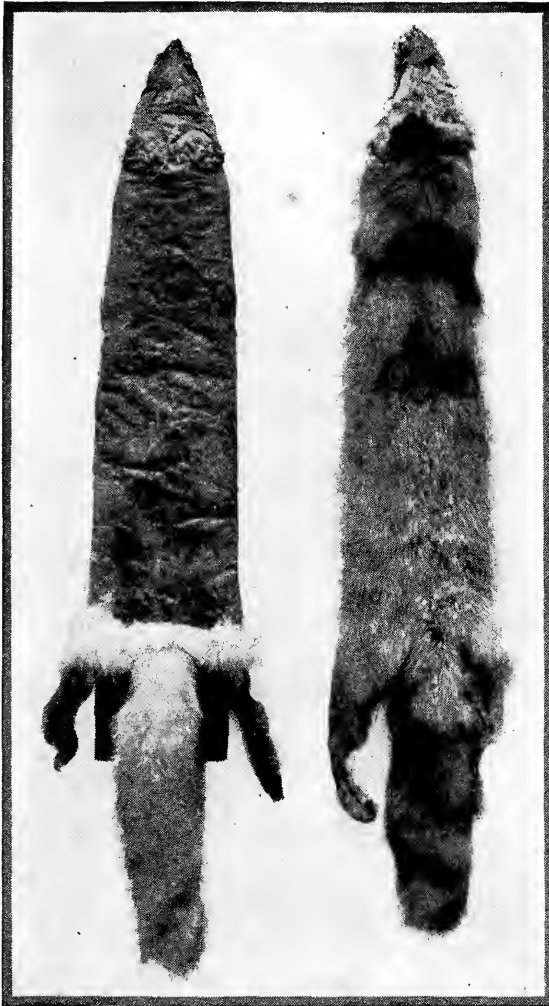
HEAVY FURRED NORTH
DAKOTA RED.

Large, length of pelt, 32; tail, 18; total, 50 inches; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$. Prime pelt caught February 18. Measured on fur side.



ONTARIO FULL FURRED,
GOOD COLOR RED.

Large, length of pelt, 36; tail, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$; total, 54 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; greatest width, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 9. Measured on fur side. Many skins from the Provinces of Eastern Canada and Northeastern United States are of this class.



MICHIGAN REDS—PELT AND FUR OUT.

Dimensions as shown (fur side in): Length of pelt, 32; tail, 18; total, 50; width at hips, 8; shoulders, 7 inches.

Dimensions same sized fox (fur out): Length of pelt, 30; tail, 18; total, 48; width at hips, 9; shoulders, 8 inches.

These skins are just ordinary sizes for Southern Michigan, Wisconsin, Northern Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Northeastern states. Other Central and Southern states somewhat smaller.

pounds. The average of good Northern fox is around 10 pounds and the pelt, including tail, is some 4 feet 6 inches in length, but of course depending upon width as well.

HANDLING. —

For a skin that will stretch 32 inches, it will require a board 36 inches long by about 8 inches at base. The board should begin to taper about 10 inches from the nose of the board. Foxes are thin and tender in pelt and care must be taken in skinning that the skin is not torn.

It will not do to have a fox pelt on the stretcher until fully dry. Not only is there danger of tearing it in removing but turning a fox pelt that is fully cured, may rip it. The head and nose will be especially difficult to turn. As the pelt is to be sold fur side out, it should be removed from the board and turned when about half dry. Three or four days will be sufficient for a partial drying as a rule. The fox pelt is thin and never burdened with grease and so dries quickly. When turned, a thin board should be inserted to hold the shape until fully dry. If the fur contains burrs or mud or is matted through, having been wet before skinning, should be combed and brushed out.

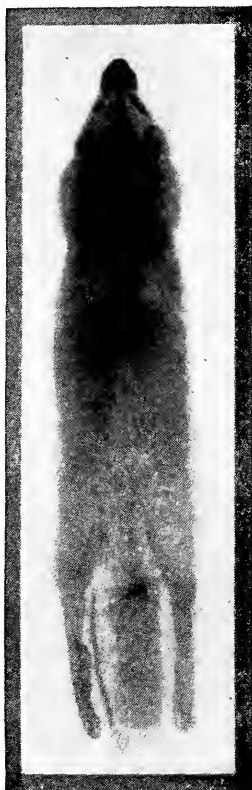


CENTRAL NEW YORK
LARGE RED.

Large, length of pelt, 36; tail, $18\frac{1}{2}$; total, $54\frac{1}{2}$ inches; greatest width, 12; shoulders, 8. An unusually large skin. Measured on fur side.

COLOR AND QUALITY. — A No. 1 fox pelt is prime as to color on flesh side when it is all red or white. The fur should be long, thick and fine and a bluish or mouse color from just below the surface to the roots. Outwardly there must be a liberal supply of guard hairs of even distribution, the tips of which are silvery, while the fur itself is a fine bright red. Such skins sell at the top market price when well handled. A skin

that is not quite so fine, will have all the requirements mentioned, except that the color, instead of being a deep



CAPE BRETON,
NOVA SCOTIA
RED.

Large, length nose to root of tail, 34; tail, 18; total, 52 inches; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8.



TWO NEW HAMPSHIRE REDS
— LARGE AND MEDIUM.

(1) Large, length of pelt, 34; tail, 18; total, 52 inches; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8.
(2) Medium, length of pelt, 30; tail, 16; total, 46 inches; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7.
Measurements taken on fur side.

red, is yellowish, and instead of a large, full furred tail with a shade of black mingled with the red, the tail in the second case is greyish and dull in coloring and per-

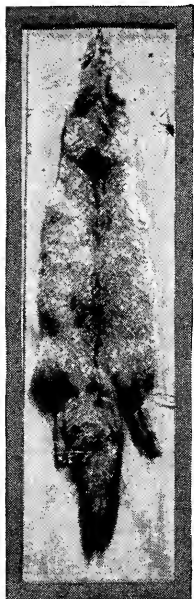
haps small and unattractive. Some foxes are of a very poor color in mid-winter, the worst ones being of a straw or dead grass shade. Such skins must sell at a lower value.

A young fox of one or two years, is usually well furred and the color good, while the coat of an eight or ten year old fox will be greatly faded. It may be from a buff or dun shade down to a smutty white. Again we have a prime skin of good color and the under fur is perfect but there are no guard hairs and the whole coat appears flat without them. Another prime skin is rubbed in spots, lessening the value according to how much it is rubbed. The cause may be lice or fleas or mange, which induced the victim to so chafe himself. Sometimes a fine, large, well furred pelt is defective through being rubbed at the hips. Another is well furred and of good color until the hips are met and here the fur is decidedly grey, as if crossed with the grey fox. All of these off colors and qualities are not worth top prices.

Primeness must also be taken into account. The slightly unprime are blue pelts termed No. 2. Such a pelt may seem well furred at a little distance but a closer view reveals its coarseness in a superabundance of top hair. If such a skin had been taken a month later, it would have been No. 1, but unprime it sells for one-fourth to one-third less. No fox should be taken of poorer quality than No. 2 but No. 3 and No. 4 are quoted.

A No. 3 is black on the pelt side and the growth of fur is small. No. 4 are trash and not to be considered. Skins that are torn, badly shot and much bitten by dogs, are damaged, and even if prime are not No. 1. The poor-

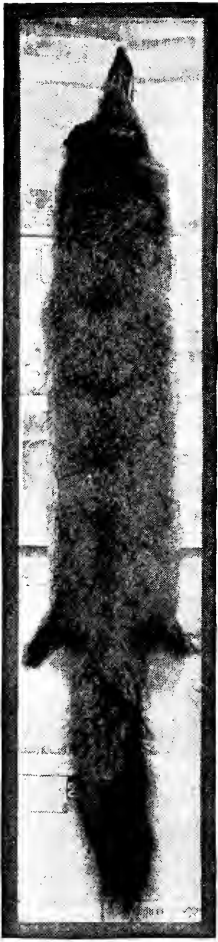
est sample of red fox is the Samson. Probably this name had its origin in the account of Samson and the foxes as told in the Scriptures. Certain it is that this poor specimen bears a singed appearance as if it had been through a burning bush. Not only is the coat burned in appearance but the growth is scanty, kinked and curled at the ends, which turn toward the head in little locks and is clotted and matted together. The Samson is of small size and the supposition is, that ill health is the direct cause of its being undersized and its fur a distorted perverted growth. The value is low—hardly enough to warrant skinning and handling.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN GREY.

Medium, length nose to root of tail, 24; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches; tail, 15; total, 39.

GREY FOX — RANGE.—The grey fox inhabits the Central and Southern states and portions of the West. It is also found on the Pacific Coast but is most plentiful in the Southern States. While differing somewhat in size, as to section, the general dimensions of the animal alive is about 36 inches including the tail. The fur is far inferior to that of the red fox and the value is correspondingly low. There is a mountain species or strain of the grey fox which is much better furred than those of the general country. The fur is longer and darker colored, the contrast being that between light and dark grey. The back is furnished with the longest hair, which is rather coarse, is darkest through



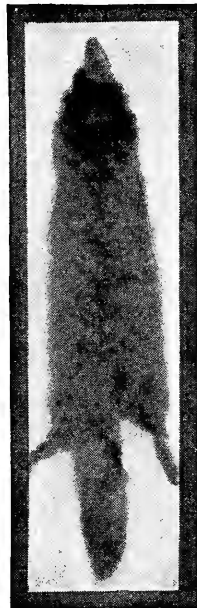
VIRGINIA GREY.

Large, tip nose to root of tail, 34; tail, 16; total, 50; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7½ inches. Although nose is stretched some inches too long, yet the pelt is large, representing the larger sizes from the hilly and mountainous parts of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, etc.

the center and lighter on the sides. The tail is long and darker than the body on its upper side and the sides are often tinged with red. The grey fox tail is not so large and full, as adorns the red fox.

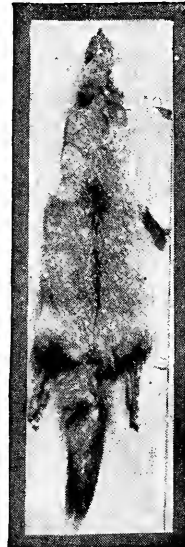
USES. — Although a cheap fur grey fox is serviceable and is made up by the furrier in great variety for the class of trade who must use furs of moderate cost, sometimes it is dyed black or blue and sold as imitation of other furs.

SIZES. — As to sizes of grey fox,



SOUTHERN GREY.

Medium, length nose to root of tail, 23; tail, 14; total, 37; greatest width, 7; shoulders, 5¼ inches.



EASTERN GREY.

Medium, nose to root of tail, 26½; tail, 15; total, 41½; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 6½ inches.

the value is so low that the grader will make but little difference in skins if disposed to be fair, the only distinction being to class the extra small ones by themselves. As to quality, the raw fur firm quotes four grades, but as a No. 2 or slightly unprime skin is only worth 60 to 75 cents, it can readily be seen how meagre a sum a No. 3 or 4 will bring. It is only a waste of time to skin, handle and deal in such poor peltries and it is hardly worth while to give any directions for assorting them. If compelled to buy No. 3 and No. 4 foxes of any kind along with a purchase of other desirable goods, class such where they belong, remembering that their value is but little.



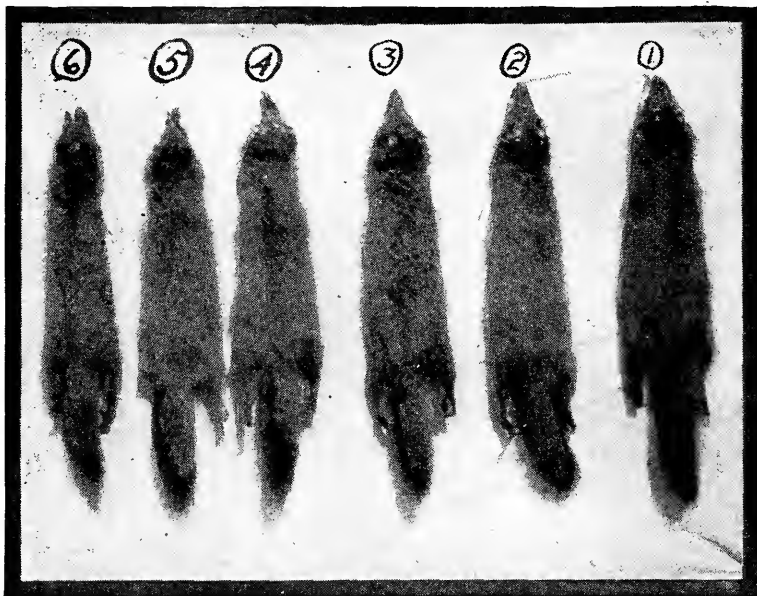
WEST VIRGINIA GREY.

Large, nose to root or tail, 27; tail, 15; total, 42; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7½ inches. The fur on head, hind legs and tail which shows dark on illustration is quite red especially around ears.

The grey fox falls far short of the red in cunning. He is much easier trapped and when driven by hounds, his run is short and only in small circles. It never leads away for a long run before the dogs and either goes into the ground or ascends a tree which it can do almost as quickly as a cat, while if the red is compelled to tree, it can only ascend a leaning trunk.

The illustration showing six grey fox skins brings out forcibly the fact that where furs are shipped and the dealer wishes to take advantage in the grade, that can easily be done. From description underneath these skins it will be seen that there is a difference in length

of five inches between largest and smallest, half inch in width at tail and one and one-half at shoulder, yet all were graded as large. These foxes were caught by a



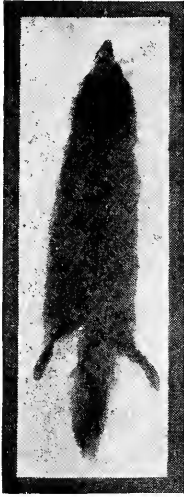
SIX SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA GREY FOX SKINS.

- (1) Length of body, 31; width at tail, 10; shoulders, $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (2) Length of body, 31; width at tail, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (3) Length of body, 30; width at tail, $9\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, 8 inches.
- (4) Length of body, 29; width at tail, $9\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (5) Length of body, $27\frac{1}{2}$; width at tail, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (6) Length of body, 26; width at tail, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 7 inches.

Length of tail varied 2 inches, being 15 on No. 6 and 17 on No. 1, others between these lengths.

trapper in Fulton County, Pennsylvania, which is one of the most southern in that state, bordering on the state of Maryland. A buyer who makes many classifications and usually sends out prices above market would have graded

about two large, two medium, two small and probably paid 10% to 20% less for the six than the buyer quoting much less but grading more liberal — in fact, to state it correctly, will say honestly.



SWIFT OR KITT
FOX PELT.

Large, length nose to tail, 22; tail, 12; total length, 34; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{4}$; shoulders, 6 inches.

KITT Fox.—This small fox only measures about 18 inches to two feet in length. It is a light grey in color with long, interspersed white hairs. The sides are a tawny yellow and the belly is white. It carries a full tail when in fur about one foot long, which is grey except on the under side, where it is yellow and the guard hairs tipped with black. The fur is rather dense, soft in quantity and the pelt is light in weight. Its fur value is somewhat less than that of the grey.

It is found principally in the Southern parts of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada and in the United States from the Dakotas west to the Pacific Coast, which includes Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, although it is in other parts of the West and Northwest. It is never found in the Eastern, Central or Southeastern states.

This animal is said to exceed in swiftness most other fur animals and is often called "Swift Fox." It has never been very plentiful, but of recent years has become scarce, yet its fur is quoted.

CHAPTER XIII.

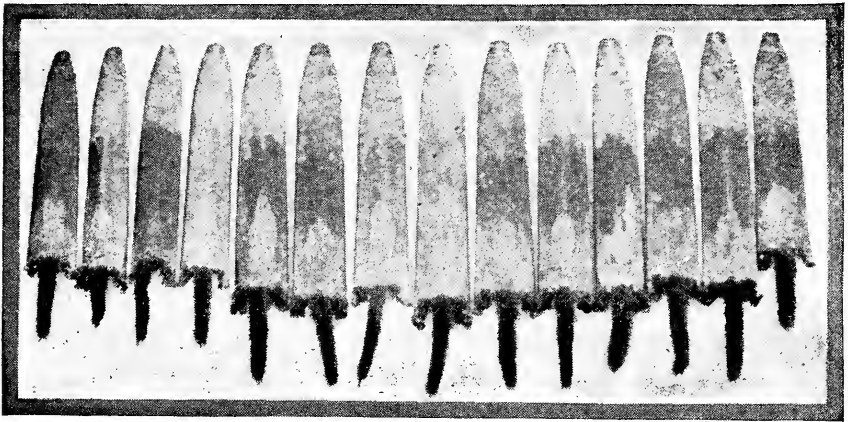
MINK.

RANGE. — This valuable fur animal inhabits an extensive range of territory, being found from the Arctic regions to the Gulf of Mexico. Alaska, Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Labrador, North Eastern United States and the Lake Superior region yield the most valuable skins on account of dark colors, fineness of fur and gloss. The least valuable mink come from the Gulf States, the climate being so warm that a thick winter coat would be a burden.

SHADES OF COLOR. — No mink is ever strictly black. A dark brown is the nearest approach to black. While more dark mink are found in the far North and East than in the Central Western and Southern sections of North America, still a good many skins taken in the best sections are only a medium brown and some are light brown or pale. The most valuable mink pelt is not only dark on the surface, but the fur is dark clear to its roots. The grader determines this and also its fineness and density by blowing into the fur until it separates. The mink along the Atlantic Coast from Massachusetts north are especially valuable, having both size and color.

Besides being dark, fine, thick and having luster or gloss, the perfect skin must contain a proper amount of guard hairs. They should be darker than the rest of the

fur and contain much of the gloss. They should stand out, bristling and lively in appearance also. Some mink pelts that have a good coat of fur in general are lacking in guard hairs, either having been rubbed off, or else for some unknown cause, none have grown. Many a well furred mink is dull in color and possesses no luster whatever. This statement does not apply to Northern mink



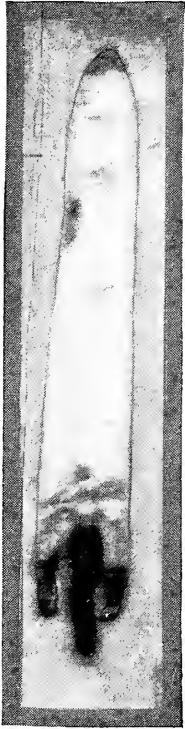
FOURTEEN NORTHERN WISCONSIN MINK SKINS.

The first four and last one are medium, the other nine large. The large average about 25 inches from tip to tip, $3\frac{1}{2}$ at hips, 3 at shoulders; medium average tip to tip 23 inches, 3 at hips, $2\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders. These skins class with the Lake Superior sections and Maine, where none are large but dark, fine furred and among the most valuable in America.

or any particular section but anywhere that mink are found.

SIZES AND HANDLING. — The next consideration is size and manner of handling. Northern mink are so much smaller than those of other sections that we are almost justified in pronouncing them a distinct species. A so-called large mink of the North country is smaller than a medium sized mink of Central United States and

a medium Northern mink is smaller than one rated as small a few hundred miles South. Canadian mink and those of Maine, North Michigan, North Wisconsin and similar latitudes require boards for the three sizes about as follows: Large, width at base $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, at shoulders 3 inches, length of board should be about 28 inches, length of skin when stretched, from tip of nose to end of tail 24 to 26 inches. Medium size, width at base of skin or hips 3 inches, at shoulders $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, length of board 28 inches, length of stretched pelt from tip to tip 22 to 24 inches. Small, width of board at base $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, at shoulders 2 inches, length of board 26 inches, length of skin from tip to tip stretched, about 20 inches.



NEW ENGLAND
PRIME MINK
SKIN.

Large, length, nose to root of tail, 22; tail, 8; total, 30; greatest width, 4; shoulders, $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

It will be readily seen that the Northern mink are very small compared with their cousins inhabiting Illinois and similar sections, which I shall mention and yet the small species are far more valuable, just as a five dollar gold piece exceeds the more bulky silver dollar in worth. As we move southward into Southern Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and similar sections we find mink much larger, a little coarser in fur, not so

glossy and fewer dark ones. They average a good brown in shade from November 1st to about January 1st. After that they begin to fade. Some pale skins are secured at



FOUR LAKE ERIE AND SIMILAR MINK.

(1) Large (fur out), length, end of nose to tip of tail, 27; greatest width, 5; shoulders, 4 inches.

(2) Large (pelt out), length, including tail, 28; greatest width, 4; shoulders, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

(3) Medium (pelt out), length, including tail, 24; greatest width, $3\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

(4) Small (pelt out), length, including tail, 22; greatest width, $3\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 3 inches.

Both large mink were of same size before being turned, namely, 28 long and 4 inches at hips. These sizes are about correct for the best grade of skins from the Lake Erie and Southern Lake Michigan sections.

all times. Mink of these sections average as to size for large, 28 to 31 inches, tail included when stretched, the board being $3\frac{3}{4}$ to 4 inches at base and $3\frac{1}{4}$ to $3\frac{3}{4}$ at shoulders. Medium size, length from end of nose to tip

of tail about 26 or 27 inches, width of board at base $3\frac{1}{2}$, at shoulders 3 inches. Small, total length boarded 24 inches, width at base $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$, at shoulders $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Aside from the sizes in boards given there are between sizes, such as large-medium, also extra large and extra small. An extra large mink, if well furred and the shade borders on the dark order, is worth more than ordinary large skins. On the other hand, if an extra large skin is pale and coarse, or poorly furred, it may not be worth so much money as a medium size well furred and of good color. It is often difficult to buy an extra large mink of poor quality at its actual value, the owner being of the set opinion that it should sell for a good price on account of size alone. An unusually small or kitt mink is worth less than the quotations on small skins. Sometimes a buyer will pay a large mink price for a large medium, taking his chances on getting his money back. He may do it to

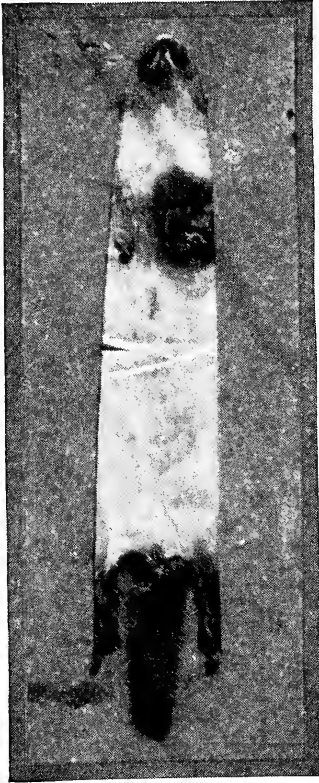


SOUTHWESTERN
MISSOURI MINK
SKIN.

Large, length of pelt, 20; tail, 9; total, 29; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. A fair average of the large mink in Southern Missouri, Northern Arkansas, Eastern Oklahoma and Kansas.

hold his trade to beat some competitor or through seeming generosity when he can do it because prices are advancing.

Mink taken in states bordering the Gulf of Mexico



SOUTHERN OR GULF
STATE MINK.

Large, length, nose to root of tail, 21; tail, $8\frac{1}{2}$; total, $29\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 4 inches. Note how nice and clean pelt is scraped. The dark spot on left shoulder is from hide getting bloodshot from being caught in steel trap by left fore leg.

are of moderate size but reddish in color and the fur is short and thin. They are the least valuable of any mink except the so-called "cotton mink." The latter appear to be a freak and occur in several states, Central, South Central and West. The general appearance of the Cotton mink, at first sight, is similar to any ordinary mink but blowing into the fur discloses that it is white as cotton from just under the surface to its roots, hence the term "cotton." They are only worth from 25 cents to \$1.50.

COTTON MINK. — It may surprise trappers, buyers and dealers to know that in some localities of the Central West, there are a good many "white underground" or cotton mink. The following letter dated December 28th, 1910, from a trapper of Howard County, Indiana, will prove interesting:

DEAR SIR:— I am sending you under separate cover one small, pale mink, what is called here a cotton mink. I don't see them quoted in any price list. Fully one-half of the mink that we get here are cotton. I have trapped in Arkansas, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana and never caught any any place but here. Local buyers pay from 25c to \$1.50 for them here, although I sold one this winter to a local buyer for \$2.50, but it was a large one, 33 inches long, tail and all.

W. E. WADDELL, Howard County, Ind.

The mink which Mr. Waddell sent was medium sized, but on parting the hair or blowing the fur, the under part was white— hence the name, "Cotton Mink." Howard County is some fifty miles north of Indianapolis, Indiana, being in North Central Indiana, a section that produces very good skunk, coon, rats, etc. Why there are so many cotton mink is a mystery.

In the Central Western States from Ohio to Iowa and south, there are more or less cotton mink, but in no section have we ever heard of so many as in Howard County, Indiana. Several years ago, when buying furs at Gallipolis, Ohio, a buyer in Pickaway County, Ohio, which is only about 25 miles south of Columbus, sent in a shipment containing 8 mink, 5 being cotton. Outside of this instance, we do not remember of seeing more than two cotton mink in a shipment containing 50 or more skins.

Through the section where cotton mink are found, it is doubtful if there are many sections where over 5% are cotton. This, of course, is only guess work. Dealers

seem to vary a great deal as to the value of cotton mink, all the way from 25 cents to \$1.50.



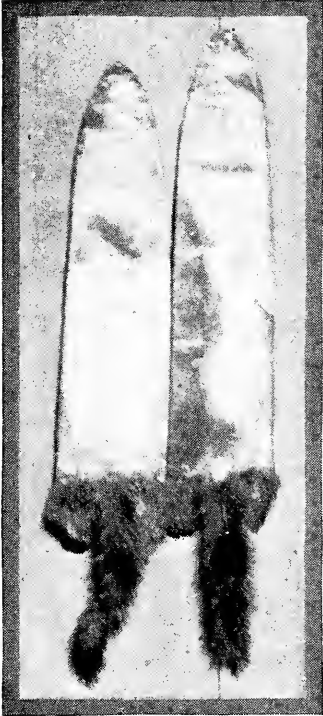
MINK SKIN, LARGE,
NORTH DAKOTA.

Length, nose to root of tail, 25; tail, 9; total, 34 inches; greatest width, 5; shoulders, 4½. This is only about an average of the large size secured in parts of Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, etc.

In certain sections such as Western Indiana, Illinois and portions of the West and Northwest, including parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada, mink of unusual size are found. Specimens have been caught that measured on the stretching board 36 inches from end of nose to tip of tail, 6 inches wide at base and 5 inches at shoulders. Such dimensions are rather unusual but the general run of this brand of mink is very large, the average being about 34 inches from nose end to tail end, 4½ to 5 inches wide at hips and 4 to 4½ at shoulders and the other sizes in proportion. The medium and small are about two inches shorter in length and a half inch less in width respectively.

Aside from Western large mink and the exceptionally small breed of the North and Northeast, it is not difficult to give the dimensions in boards required for the rest of the country. First I will observe that 28 to 31 inches from tip to tip will constitute a large

mink for the Eastern, Central and Southern states when on the drying board. Width about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches at base and 3 at shoulders. Certain large skins will exceed these dimensions, however, by an inch or more in length and a half inch in width.



TWO LARGE INDIANA
MINK.

(1) Length of pelt, 18; tail, 9; total, 27; greatest width, $4\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

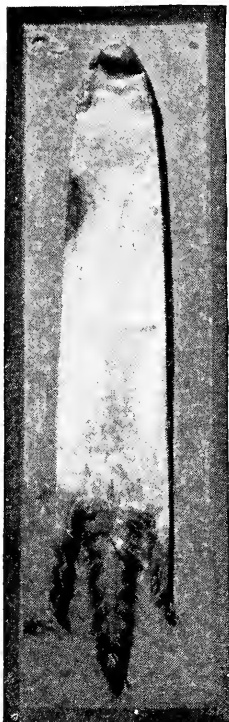
(2) Length of pelt, 19; tail, 9; total, 28; greatest width, $4\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

These pelts would have looked better if they had been stretched a little longer and not so wide. Measurements were taken as shown, pelt side.

It will be seen that skins vary somewhat in size in each of the three grades termed, large, medium and small. There can be no exact standard or hard and fast rule to follow for no two beans nor any two snowflakes are exactly alike. Even if two mink were of exact proportions before going on the drying boards, if two different trappers owned and had the handling of them, stretched pelts might be quite different in measurements. One might be overdrawn to its limit of length and cured on a board much too narrow and the other may be stretched on a board much too wide so that the pelt is greatly shortened. As

furs come from a legion of trappers and in all styles of handling, the eye of the fur sorter becomes so practiced that a glance is sufficient to determine

size, whether stretched wide, narrow, uniform, flaring or pointed. Practice alone is all that can accomplish this eye discernment in grading for sizes.



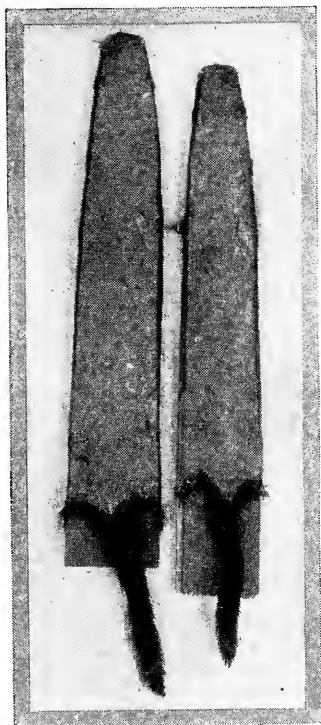
ALASKA MINK
SKIN.

Medium to large, length, nose to root of tail, $17\frac{1}{2}$; tail, $6\frac{1}{2}$; total, 24; greatest width, 4; shoulders, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Tail split and tacked out flat by trapper to cure.

I have given a range in each size in my remarks for the above reasons that handling differs with different trappers and also in stating length of skins, for one large mink may have a tail 6 inches in length and another of same size, carry a tail 7 or 8 inches in length. A mink should not be stretched too long and narrow. The stretcher should fill the body well as to width. If the dryer is too wide, the pelt will be shorter than looks well and justice has not been done to the head and neck. The proper shape is a board that fits the pelt fairly snug and is of uniform width until the point where shoulders will come on the board has been reached. Here the board or other stretcher should be a half inch narrower than where the hips come and should taper rapidly to the nose and still not finish with a sharp point. Such handled mink as this have the right appearance and will sell at highest market prices anywhere. There are instances where some amateur trapper

dries a nice mink pelt on a wedge-shaped board, much like the capital letter A. Such a cured pelt is worth about half the market price for well handled skins and do not sell well anywhere on earth.

The best timber for drying boards is white wood — poplar, basswood, cottonwood, and white pine — or any soft wood where straight grain and toughness is combined. Hard woods are not satisfactory. It is difficult to shape and dress, and nails driven into them draw hard, and some break off. Most hard woods when used in making thin boards, split easily. Stretching boards should be $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in thickness, no thinner, after they have been planed on both sides. When shaved into proper form, the corners are rounded and sanded, turning out a smooth finished board on all sides, to which fur will not stick obstinately when the pelt is dry and removal is attempted. Boards should be a little longer than the expected pelts so that there is



SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY MINK SKINS.

(1) Large, length, nose to root of tail, 18; tail, $8\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $3\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 3 inches.

(2) Medium, length, nose to root of tail, 16; tail, 8; greatest width, 3; shoulders, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

These skins represent those secured from the Southern ranges of the Allegheny Mountains and include parts of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina, being rather dark and silky, for so far south, although averaging small.

room for a half inch hole in the square end so that skins may be hung up on nails or be strung on wires while drying. Many a valuable pelt not hung has been ruined by mice.

The holder of mink pelts should see to it that the bones

are removed from tails or they may rot and fall off, damaging the pelt considerably. Trappers sometimes neglect to remove the tail bone and the buyer may find it a rather difficult job to remove the bone after the tail has dried



CENTRAL WESTERN
CANADA MINK
SKIN.

Length, nose to root of tail, 22; tail, 7; total, 29; width at hips, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 4 inches. This mink is fair size, for part of Canada caught in. Color, brown.

down but it can be done by using a sharp knife to rip it on under side from root to tip and by carefully cutting around the bone, peel it out.

Mink should not be taken off the stretching boards until thoroughly dry, or they will wrinkle and can not be made to look smooth afterwards. Avoid drying green skins in a close room, by the heat of stoves or other artificial heat. It turns the flesh side of prime skins dark and gives them an unprime appearance. Drying by the heat from fires or the sun, causes skins to become brittle so that they will break easily and go to pieces in the process of tanning. Drying should be done in the shade where it is cool and there is a good circulation of air so that curing is affected through natural evaporation only.

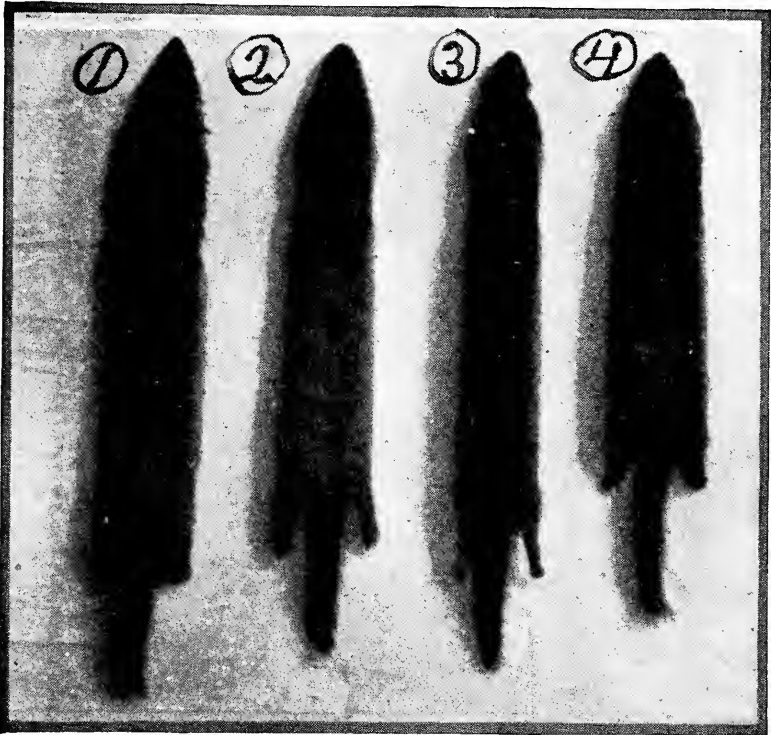
DEGREES OF PRIMENESS. —
No. 1 or prime skins are full

furred and entirely white on the flesh side, except that this appearance may be accompanied by a slight fleshy red where skins have not been closely scraped. No. 2's are full furred but there is too much top hair and the flesh side is of a bluish cast. No. 3's have about one-half of a winter coat, or growth of fur and the general appearance is hairy. The flesh side is dark, almost if not quite black. No. 4's have but a very small growth of fur and the pelt is black. In some sections mink can not lawfully be caught while in the No. 3 and 4 stages and dealers in such sections dare not buy them. No. 2's are not forbidden for the reason that certain ones prime up late and a few that are slightly off in primeness may be expected after the trapping season has opened legally.

Mink should be left as they come off the boards with flesh side outward and so presented when marketed. Why foxes and marten are turned fur side out before marketing and mink left unturned, it would be hard to tell except that it is a custom. There is one advantage in leaving mink fur inside. Mink fade quite rapidly when exposed to light so if skins are not turned, fading is largely avoided.

BUYING FROM THE TRAPPER. — General market quotations value mink not only for size and primeness but also as to color, whether dark, brown or pale. At this point the writer feels impelled to offer the beginner in fur buying a few words of advice. When mink are prime and at their best in color which is from November 1st until early January, do not endeavor to buy them and assort for color if you wish to accumulate mink furs in any quantity worth your time. He who assorted mink

for color has long ago been driven off the ground among country fur buyers. When mink are sent in to some house on consignment, grading can be done as they see



FOUR NORTHEAST CANADA MINK SKINS.

Length of body, inches.....	1	2	3	4
Width at tail, inches.....	24	22	22	20
Width at shoulders, inches.....	4½	4¼	3¾	4¾
Length of tail, inches.....	3¾	3¼	3¼	4
	9	8½	8¼	9

These skins are about an average for size and color as caught in the eastern half of Canada.

fit, but not when you try to buy of the trapper in person. Most country buyers work on the rule that a good, prime, straight mink pelt in late autumn and early winter is

worth full quotations for dark mink, unless the fur should be extremely pale. If a trapper has a collection of six, eight or more good mink he many times holds them at a flat or average price. Dark brown and pale all go together and he will sell in no other way. Of course there are cases where a mink or two can be secured at a real bargain but most trappers are well informed now-a-days and the novice soon learns to stick for every last cent.

Liberality is the keynote to successful fur buying and he who gives the trapper a little the best of it as often as he can, is sure to make friends who will hold subsequent furs for him. Buyers who have only handled skins of mink caught in their immediate locality can hardly believe the variation in size from different parts of the country. The following measurements are a few that have been brought to my notice:

A Minnesota mink, 37 inches from tip to tip.

An Oklahoma mink, 32 inches from tip to tip.

A New Jersey mink, 32 inches from tip to tip and 4½ inches wide at hips.

One from Alberta, Canada, 37 inches from tip to tip, 6½ inches at hips and 5½ at shoulders. Note especially the extraordinary width.

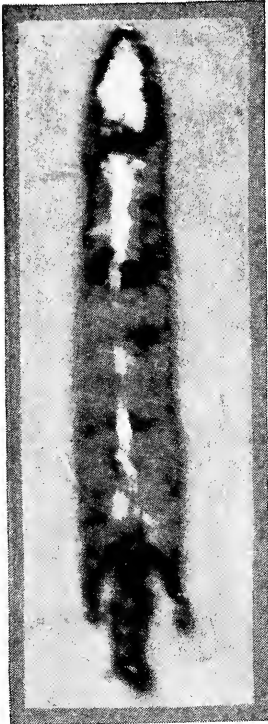
One from Minnesota, 38 inches from tip to tip, 5¾ inches at hips and 4¼ at shoulders.

Two South Dakota mink, each 38 inches from tip to tip.

A 32 inch mink caught along Houlston River, Tennessee.

Two North Dakota mink, each 36 inches from tip to tip.

Two Iowa mink, 33 inches from tip to tip. The largest weighed an even 5 pounds.



YUKON RIVER VALLEY MINK SKIN.

This is a dark furred pelt but note how much white it has on the belly. Neck and throat to fore-legs being nearly all white while a narrow strip extends entire distance. About an average sized skin from Yukon Valley, being 22 inches from nose to root of tail; tail, 8; total length, 30; greatest width, $4\frac{3}{8}$; shoulders, $3\frac{3}{4}$.

Two from the state of Washington (dressed) each 36 inches from tip to tip.

One from Central Ohio, 37 inches from tip to tip.

A $4\frac{1}{2}$ pound mink caught in the Riding Mountains of Manitoba, Canada.

Four Kansas mink, the largest stretching 35 inches and weighing $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds — the others about $4\frac{1}{4}$ each.

A Massachusetts mink, 35 inches from tip to tip and weighing 3 pounds 14 ounces.

A Lake Superior region mink, 33 inches from tip to tip, weighing 3 pounds.

Four from an Illinois trapper that measured from tip to tip: one, $35\frac{3}{4}$, one $35\frac{1}{2}$, two 34 each.

No doubt these measurements and weights are much above the average, for large, from the states and provinces mentioned, yet they are correct.

Mink caught in the Lake Supe-

rior region, Maine, Eastern Canada, are small — usually under 3 pounds and when stretched less than 30 inches from tip to tip. Owing to their color and fine fur they are worth more than skins from the Northwest that will average a half larger but much lighter in color and coarser fur.

The inexperienced mink collector will do well to remember that size alone does not represent mink values. Should over large skins for a certain locality be offered, and big prices accordingly wanted, more than likely such skins are not native. It only costs a few cents to mail one or more skins a few hundred miles.

CHAPTER XIV.

MUSKRAT.

RANGE. — Muskrat are like mink, one of our most common and widespread fur bearers. They inhabit territory from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Naturalists claim to have separated no less than five distinct species in this fur bearing rodent. Be that as it may, the dealer is unable to distinguish any difference, except that locality affects the rat as to length and thickness of fur and heft of pelt. The muskrat of the Western states is thinner in pelt and shorter in fur than the Eastern and Central states rat. Those of the Gulf states are so short in fur as to be worth only about 60% of what is paid for rats of the Eastern and North Central states. The most valuable of all are the black rats found on the salt tide water that overflows the marshes along the shores of the Eastern states, mainly from Virginia north to New Jersey, where, in some localities, the per cent is 25 or even more of the entire catch.

HABITS AND QUALITY. — When inhabiting rivers and streams, muskrat live in dens in the banks, the entrances of which are under water. The channel leading to the nest ranges upward so that the nest at its end is several feet above water where the banks are high enough to admit it. River bank dwelling rats are heavy in pelt and

well furred. Rats that inhabit lakes with muddy margins and swamps, swales and ditches live mostly in houses. The fur is thinner and the pelt lighter than that of the bank rat. The house is a conical dome erected about three feet above water. It is composed of flags, reeds, grass, roots and mud and is mud plastered to exclude the frost of winter. The house is three to four feet in thickness at its base. It is roomy inside and the walls are about 6 or 8 inches thick. A stool or seat is erected inside from the same material that comprises the house. This seat or rest is depressed and contains the nest where the rat lies comfortable and warm and feels no effects of the storms and biting wintry blasts. Here he lives in the darkness of an underground world for several months while thick ice covers the water. When food is desired he must dive to bottom and secure the roots of flags and pond lilies which he brings up to his snug home and devours.

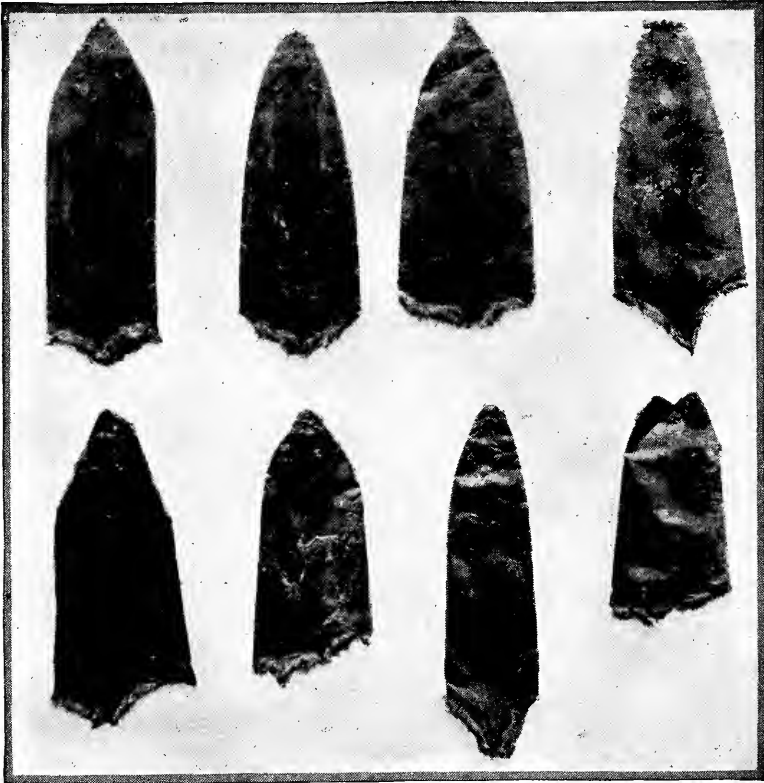
Where rats inhabit places that are poor in vegetation, not so good a coat of fur will be found as where the needed food is plentiful. This condition will be found in uninhabited regions where the forests keep out the sun and so retard the growth of grass, flags, lilies, reeds, etc., which rats require for food and house building. On the waters of such wild territory, rats are not numerous and their fur is thin and the pelt light and papery. Vegetable food is not departed from by the muskrat except that clams are eaten to some extent where plentiful and claims attention. The rat carries the mussel upon shore and leaves it until dead, when it is easily opened.

Mating occurs in March or early April and the kits are born the latter part of May or the first of June. Four to eight constitute the number in a litter. Old rats frequently produce a second litter and the early spring kits sometimes mature and rear one family the same season. This rapid increase is all that prevents the rat from becoming extinct under the persistent trapping and hunting by man and boy. The rat being easily trapped, it becomes a victim to the small boy's first efforts at trapping. Where plentiful, expert trappers often bend all their efforts in trapping rats alone.

USES OF MUSKRAT. — In recent years this fur has been employed in a wide range of uses and under several fanciful names to promote its sale. When plucked, sheared, and dyed, it is "Near Seal." Made up into capes, collarettes, boas and muffs, it becomes Canada Mink, Brook Mink, River Mink, etc. Men's caps are made of it and overcoats lined with it. It is used to trim cloaks and milliners use it in trimming and making winter hats. There are various uses not necessary to enumerate. Rat fur is attractive, whether made up natural, dyed or blended. The fur is popular and were it not for the fact that the leather is not very lasting, it would rival the mink on account of less cost. But it is warm, rich in appearance, the service fair and it will no doubt maintain its favor indefinitely. Several million skins are marketed annually and at a single London sale three million were offered.

PRIMENESS, GRADING AND SIZE. — Muskrat taken in late fall are furnished with a fair coat of fur but do not become full prime until early spring. The flesh side of

fall rats is dark or bluish, no signs of primeness, except a few red spots or streaks that will widen later as primeness advances. Towards the end of November some skins



MUSKRAT PELTS PROPERLY AND IMPROPERLY HANDLED.

Top row fairly well skinned, stretched and handled. Bottom row poorly skinned, stretched and handled.

have improved in quality to the extent that they are termed Winter rats. In such skins the pelt is at least one-half red. Some dark spots remain in the pelt until early March when the pelt becomes entirely red or flesh

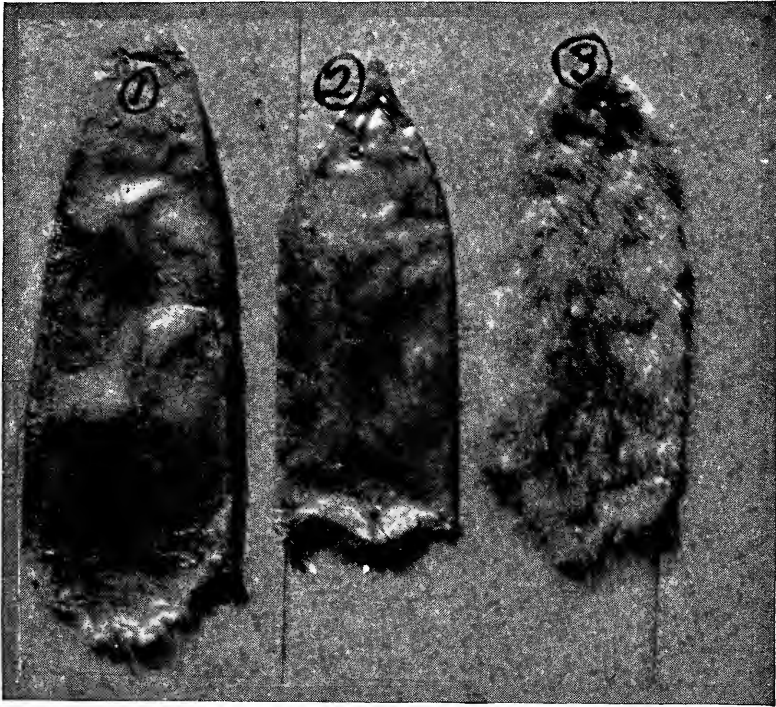
color with a white background, when they are entirely prime and are termed "Spring rats."

Only three sizes should be made in grading fall rats. Large and medium sizes go together. Undersized skins of fair thickness are termed small and very small papery skins are the kitts. Skins that measure $5\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at hips and a half-inch less at shoulders and are 14 to 16 inches in length, class large and medium. A few skins are taken with dimensions, when dry, 17 or 18 inches in length, 7 inches wide at hips and $6\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders. Skins 5 inches wide and 12 to 13 long are small. Kitts 8 to 10 inches long and 4 to 5 inches wide. Papery pelted mediums belong in the small grade of good heft and the papery pelted small go with the kitts. Winter rats large and medium class as one grade if of good weight in pelt and full furred. Thin skinned large and medium go with large Fall, and small papery Winter go with small good heft Fall rats.

In a lot of 30 muskrat skins as caught by a trapper in Wyoming, the largest measured 15 inches in length, 5 at hips and $4\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders. The average was much smaller, being only 12 long with a width of 5 at hips and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches at shoulder. This size would be graded as small from Ohio, or other rat producing states east of the Mississippi river. The pelt also was very thin, in fact, papery rattling when handled, yet the fur was good length, thick and heavy. Such skins, however, are not very valuable as pelt is thin and tender requiring care in tanning and manufacturing.

Quite a large per cent of rats in Spring are damaged by cuts received in fighting. These must be graded down

according to how much damaged. One or two cuts places a pelt one grade below and if badly cut and scored it is next to worthless.



SPRING MUSKRAT SKINS.

- (1) Large, length, 17; greatest width, $6\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (2) Medium, length, $13\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $5\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches.
- (3) Medium, length, $13\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 6; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

No. 2 is not properly stretched—too pointed. No. 3 is shaped all right but should be pelt side out.

In Central, Eastern and Northern sections primeness covers a good share of March and half of April. After this there will be some signs of shedding, such as becoming blackish around the fore legs, neck and head, as the result of numerous roots of summer hair that are coming

in. Taking rats much beyond the last of March should be discouraged, for early April finds most of the females pregnant. Such slaughter is folly and ruthless waste.

CARE OF SKINS. — In skinning rats the pelt should be taken off entire, ears, eyelets and noses. Pelts when torn off at the ears and eyes appear mutilated and it shortens them sufficiently to bring a full sized skin down with the small. All surplus fat and flesh should be removed at the time of being placed on the drying board. These forms should come near to fitting each size in pelts so that the skin may not be strained and make the fur thin through covering too large a surface. The back of pelt should cover one side and the belly the other, not stretching sidewise with a fore leg on each side of the board. Draw skin to full extent and use 6 or 8 nails to a side, pulling out the slack points and hold tight while driving nail. Do not remove pelts from boards until thoroughly dry. If partly green when removed, the pelt will wrinkle, perhaps shrivel. Avoid drying under the influence of the sun or fires. It turns pelts dark, giving an unprime appearance. It also makes them brittle so that they will break. Dry only by natural evaporation in cool, ventilated rooms. See that pelts are not hung in leaky barns or sheds where they will be dampened by rain. They will mildew and this nearly ruins them. Mildew also occurs when a large number are thrown in a pile and not turned over frequently and also when hung up together in compact bunches. Sweating and mildew both damage rats considerably. Cured skins should be strung on a wire, passing it through the noses and leaving a little space between each pelt and its neighbor.

STRETCHING BOARDS. — Boards for drying should be uniformly oblong, somewhat narrowed at the shoulders and taper rapidly from thence to the nose. However, rats do not want to be tapered so decidedly as skunk. Just taper enough so that the head and neck is stretched to its full extent, no more and no less. Boards should be $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch thick, planed both sides and after being formed, the corners are rounded and sand papered. The timber should be soft but tough such as whitewood, basswood, poplar, cottonwood, etc. Such timber as yellow pine, gum or sycamore is hard to work and splits badly when dressed thin. The board should be at least 18 inches long and near the base a half inch hole should be bored to hang up by when pelts are drying.

In making stretching boards, patterns of the different sizes should be made first and all boards laid out by these established forms so that sizes will be exact, instead of hewing them out by guess. Wire stretchers are used to a great extent and have the merit that skins will dry sooner on these open forms than when hugging a board, but where timber exists wood stretchers are still largely used. A good supply should always be made ahead and ready for use.

BUYING AND SELLING. — The matter of buying and selling are important topics. Not many muskrat collections in recent years have been purchased from trapper and country dealer on assortment. The custom prevailing is that of buying flat or average. So well established is it, that but few will sell according to grade. Buying flat is largely guesswork and the figure asked per skin, as they run, is usually high enough to make the odds

greatly in favor of the seller. Instances of substantial losses being sustained by him who secures the goods are not lacking. The writer has seen cases where 25 cents flat was demanded and paid and such collections only graded 19 or 20 cents average and even as low as 17 cents. A loss of \$5.00 per hundred on a large bunch amounts to a snug sum in pocket for one and out for the other. The usual reason for such shortage between price paid and real value lies in the large percentage of small rats and kitts the lot contains. On the other hand, collections have been purchased that sold for a ten or fifteen cent raise a few weeks later, \$10 to \$15 per hundred, \$100 to \$150 per thousand.

The buyer may be compelled to buy average and still he should not be expected to go it blind and buy a pig in the bag. If a speculator has his rat collection corded up and will not permit inspection the chances are that the skins underneath do not compare at all with the outside display. The shrewd possessor of a rat collection is not likely to place them on sale for a flat price with the worst side exposed or even as the lot will average. On the outside small rats are few and kitts none. On the interior 10% to 15% of kitts, large and small, lay concealed, if the buyer did but know it. And this proportion will hold as a rule in all collections of Fall rats. Every lot of much size also contains more or less of damaged skins. Shot, torn, mildewed, gnawed by mice, poorly handled, unstretched, shriveled, burned by coat of grease, all have to be deducted from the rest and as they each count the same as a straight pelt, averages are inflated and a fictitious value placed on the collection.

If a collection of rats are all of the swamp variety, there will be a far larger percentage of kitts and light weights than if taken from rivers and other streams and

large clear lakes. This fact often sees two collections in the same locality that differs very much. One buyer relates that he purchased two rat collections about 30 miles apart. Brass owned one lot and Bowser the other. Brass has a good lot of Fall rats mostly of good heft as to quality of pelts and a minimum number of kitts. "I paid Brass 30 cents flat," said the buyer. "Bowser's lot contained a large percentage of kitts and small and I could not offer but 25 cents average for them. The next time I visited Bowser he called me to account. 'I hear you paid Brass 30 cents for his rats,' he said. 'Then you come right along the same day and only allowed me 25 cents for mine. What kind of a man are you?' Explanations did



LARGE AND MEDIUM MUSK-RAT SKINS.

(1) Medium, length, 13; width at hips and shoulders, 5 inches.

(2) Medium, length, 14; width at hips and shoulders, 5 inches.

(3) Large, length, 15; width at hips, 7½; shoulders, 5½ inches.

None of these skins were stretched properly.

no good. Bowser did not listen to them, even when I showed a statement from my firm that the Brass purchase at 30 cents was a much better deal than the one where 25 cents was paid. Bowser would not sell me any furs during the rest of the season."

Every day brings the fur buyer new battles to be fought and he copes with his adversaries best who is prepared to pay the price asked for furs and grant the seller's own terms in assorting. The proprietor of one large fur house instructs his traveling buyers to make no deals for rats on a flat basis unless he is allowed to inspect the lot sufficiently to see how they run for sizes, kitts, percentage of Winter's, etc. Even then he would a little rather that no flat buying be done and such opportunities to trade be passed by. For he declares that seldom does a lot so purchased sort out the value that has been paid. This brings us to the question of fictitious values and selling furs by unfair methods, to make money. Often a collection that is held for a high average offer has been purchased at a flat price and a high price. If any money is to be made, the lot must sell at a still higher average when unloaded on the next man. It would be interesting to know how the big dealer at the main fur center comes out on such a lot of fur as we have been describing when a half dozen small buyers have handled them and each made a rake off in profit.

In most localities rats are trapped off so closely that but very few live to be old and of large size. We may expect then that the average in any collection will run medium for size with quite a proportion small, light and kitts. He who ships a lot of these young rats to some

firm whose price for "Extra Large" is attractive, is made to realize painfully in his returns that the large rat is woefully lacking. Seemingly they endeavored to assort them all to small sizes, so he thinks.



EXTRA LARGE ILLINOIS
MUSKRAT PELT.

This skin, on pelt side, measured as follows: "Length, 19; greatest width, $8\frac{1}{8}$; shoulders, $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Not one skin in a thousand is this size as the Extra Large quoters know.

The muskrat supply keeps up well considering the enormous numbers taken each year. Although thousands of trappers were at work harvesting muskrats in the Fall of 1912 and it was believed in some quarters that rats were wiped out, the Spring of 1913 saw more rats caught than ever known before. The Spring catch was heavier than the Fall. Where all the rats came from was a mystery.

So long as there is water there will be rats. But no matter how numerous they are in a certain place, drain the water off and in a month the rats which existed there are but a memory. Restore the water after a lapse of ten years and the rats as quickly return in a single season. Water powers are being developed on rivers everywhere and the widespreading ponds thus formed are very soon inhabited by muskrats. The delay is no longer than until

vegetation starts. Many such artificial ponds have become worthy of the best trapper's attention and thousands of rat furs are taken from them. Not only is this fur a valuable resource but the flesh is fast becoming an article of food and in some quarters it has a market quotation. Trappers in close touch with the large cities expect to market the carcass as well as the pelt. In dry seasons rats appear to be the least numerous and in wet seasons when swamps and ditches are filled and the lakes and streams are at a good head, rats are unusually plentiful. Considering the rapid natural increase, well watered sections will not see the rat extinct very soon.

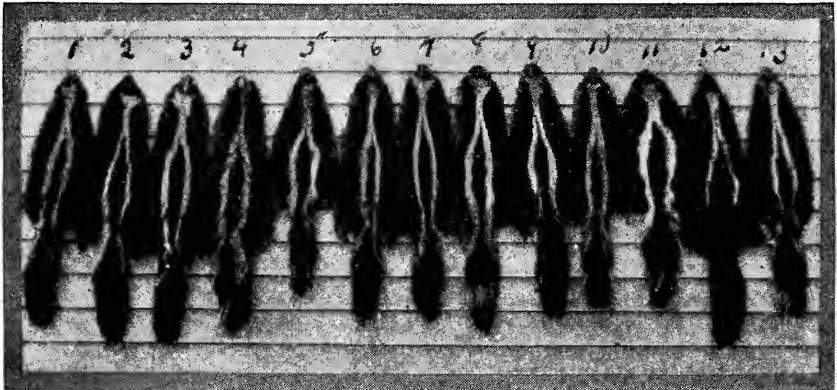
CHAPTER XV.

SKUNK.

RANGE.—Skunk inhabit practically all of the United States and a large portion of Canada — the southern part. This fur bearer is so common and of such value that it yields more money than any other fur taken in the latitudes where it abides. Such skunk as inhabit regions of snow and low temperatures are much superior in quality of fur to those taken in the milder zones as is true of all fur bearers. Northern and far Eastern prime skunk fur is long, thick, a blue black and glossy, while in the warmest sections fur is shorter, thinner, pelt smaller and fur not so glossy. Skunks are partial to a settled country and are never numerous in wild sections very far from man and his works. They are quite fearless and also lawless, frequently making quarters under deserted houses, barns and other buildings. If not molested they will bring forth their young and rear them in such proximity to human buildings.

SPECIES AND SIZES.—Skunk differ so much in size and in general appearance in various sections of the country that we are warranted in the presumption that there are different species of the same animal. In portions of the Northwest they are very large, exceeding those of all other sections for size to a marked degree. To illustrate: An ordinary sized male skunk of Central

and Eastern United States will require a stretching board 8 inches wide at base and 6 at shoulders and 24 inches in length; many a large Western long stripe will need a drying board 10 inches wide at base, 8 at shoulders and 30 inches in length for the pelt alone, tail not included. On account of superior size they are worth 50% to 75%



TWELVE LONG NARROW STRIPES AND ONE SHORT.

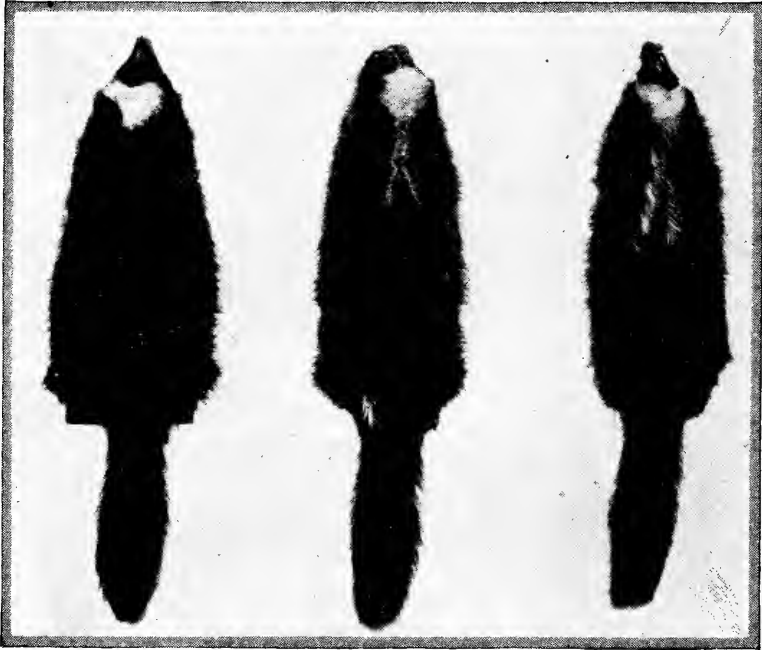
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Length of body, inches	21	22	22	21¼	18	22½	22	22¼	22	21	21¾	25	21
Width at tail, inches	9	8½	9	9	9	8	9¼	9	8¾	8½	10	9	8½
Width at shoulder, inches.....	6	6¼	6	6	5¼	5¾	5	6	5¾	5½	6½	6¼	6
Length of tail, inches	14	14½	14	13	12	14	13½	15	14¼	13	12½	16	13

These skunk were caught by a trapper in Wisconsin — note how uniform they are (with the exception of No. 12) in stripe and size. No. 12 is a No. 2 or short.

more than the same marked skins of similar latitudes where the average is much smaller. A part of the wide range inhabited by these large skunks is North Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas and Northern Wisconsin. Four grades as to amount of white a pelt may contain are com-

mon to all other sections, being termed Black or No. 1, Half or short stripe or No. 2, Long narrow stripe or No. 3, and Long broad stripe or No. 4, also called white.

Years ago a skunk skin to be a No. 1 must have no more white than that which covers the scalp, but as this



THREE NO. 1 OR BLACK SKUNK.

- (1) This is what is called a star black.
- (2) The two thin white stripes and the small spot of white at rump do not lessen the value.
- (3) Stripes are a little wider and longer than on the middle skin, yet this is a skunk of the No. 1 grade.

fur became more valuable and in strong demand, grading became so liberal that two thin forks of white extending from the crown two or three inches downward was permissible and later on good sized skins were rated No. 1

when short narrow stripes went down to the point of shoulders.

Such is the custom when assorting for No. 1's under ordinary conditions, as to business prosperity and existing world's markets. If the market is demoralized for any cause, then the assort becomes less liberal and sometimes so severe that it approaches the old days when a No. 1 could contain no more white than the palm of one's hand will cover. If a star black skunk is undersized, such as is locally termed a "Kitt," it is worth no more than a No. 2, or half stripe and should be so graded. If very small, it is not worth so much as an ordinary sized half stripe, because the amount of fur is less.



NO. 1 OR BLACK.

There are many variations in the markings and to assort some odd marked ones, requires careful judgment to place them where they belong. If stripes are broken or branched or of irregular width or length the total amount of white portion must be estimated after taking into consideration the size of the pelt that is being examined. Sometimes a skin exhibits a fork of white, one of which does not extend below the shoulders while the other reaches to the middle of the skin. Ordinarily such a skin would be classed as No. 2 but there are instances where it will pass for No. 1. To be so classed it must be a large, well furred skin and the stripes very slight, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in width.



NO. 2 OR SHORT. length or within three inches of the tail root.

If a skin is extra large, a wider stripe is allowed than if of ordinary size. Usually a stripe one inch wide is the limit and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide stripes make a good deal better No. 3. Extra small half stripes belong with the No. 3's and a large No. 3 with the narrowest stripes are really worth more money than a very small No. 2. Undersized No. 3's belong a grade down with the No. 4. Long stripes

No. 2's are those skins with stripes not more than an inch wide running to the middle of back or an inch less or an inch beyond the center. If very narrow the stripes may extend $\frac{2}{3}$ of the length of pelt and grade No. 2. An undersized half stripe belongs a grade below with the No. 3's. Especially is this true if the skin is very small and the stripes heavy as to width. Small skins with very short forks of white grade No. 2, when if the skin was of ordinary size, it would grade No. 1 or black.

No. 3's carry stripes not over an inch wide in ordinary sizes extending the entire



NO. 3 OR LONG.

having one narrow stripe and the other extra wide, should be graded as No. 4 or broad.

No. 4's are long broad stripes whose combined width will aggregate more white than there is of black in the back of a pelt. Also as previously stated, very small long



NO. 4 OR WHITE.

narrow stripes are graded No. 4. Liberality in grading depends somewhat upon circumstances. If a trapper, buyer or shipper should offer a lot of skunk that were all small, from a section where they average much larger, it is fair to suspect that the large skins have all been kept back, perhaps with a view of obtaining an extra price for them, and at the same time secure the full market price for the small sizes offered. The illustrations of the four grades will convey a good idea of these skins, as skunk are sold on these, or similar grade, by all dealers unless selling flat.

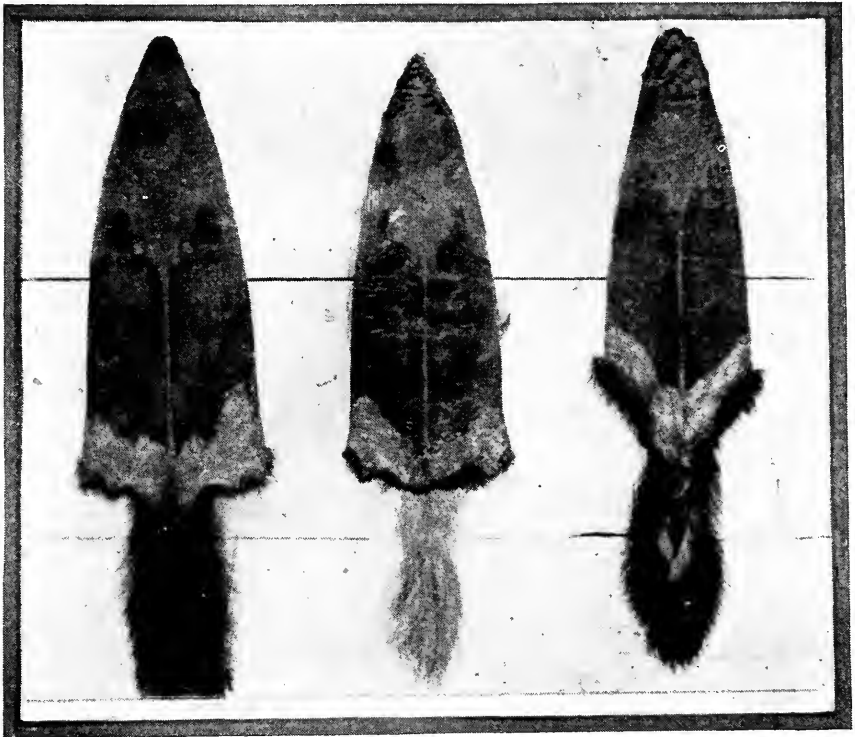
Some shipper sends a trial shipment about as follows: 25 No. 1, 7 No. 2, 17 No. 3, and 5 broad. Now in the entire list of 25 No. 1, there is not one straight skin for that grade. They are either undersized or stripes reach almost the middle of skin, or are too wide and other objections prevent them from even entering the doubtful list. Only 7 No. 2's and all ought to go No. 3. Faults, undersized, stripes reach almost to tail, exceeding broad if only extending half way. The 3's are mostly too broad

and should be graded No. 4. The small allowance for broads, there is no doubt about, for their backs are nearly all white.

When such a job as the foregoing is put up to test the buyer's generosity and common sense, can he be blamed if the owner of such a lot is disappointed with the returns? The dividing line is so closely drawn in the different grades of skunk as between buyer and seller, especially when this fur is in big demand and prices high, that many a quibble arises. Even under the most liberal grading, the owner sometimes demands assortments that can not be granted by any buyer that is sane. A fur hunter offers a single skin on the local market. It is an ordinary sized one, freshly caught and has never been on the drying boards. Two forks of white extend below the shoulders midway between that point and the middle of the back. He insists that it shall sell for No. 1. The buyer is liberal in all cases but declares this skin can never sell for No. 1. Not only do the stripes go most too far down to grade No. 1, but they are heavy as to width. The owner is confident of his position and goes away to try some other buyer.

Selling a skin for what it is not, many times means an extra dollar for the seller and a dollar donated by the buyer. Some raw fur firms make four sizes in each of the four grades of skunk. Their quoting is Extra Large, Large, Medium and Small. Now in such a range of sizes, it is easy to quote confusing prices and unheard of high prices for Extra Large. The facts are that the quotations for Extra Large are but a sop paraded before the eyes of the prospective shipper as a bait to induce ship-

ments and cover up the deficiency in prices quoted for medium and small. It is rare that you will ever ship any skins of such proportions that they will be invoiced Extra Large and net you that big, attractive figure.



SIZES OF MARYLAND SKUNK SKINS.

(1) Large, 22 length of pelt; (2) length of pelt, 19; (3) length of pelt, 18 inches. Greatest width, $8\frac{3}{4}$, $7\frac{3}{4}$, $6\frac{3}{4}$. Measured on pelt side. These dimensions were furnished by a trapper who selected three from a large number — largest, smallest and average.

In Fall and early Winter when the majority of skunk taken average good sizes, there should be no distinction in sizes, except where now and then a Kitt or

extra small may be found. If you do have an occasional small pelt in your lot, the buyer will not lose if he grades it merely for the amount of white. For every small skin he is getting a dozen or more large ones and some that are extra large. We will admit that a few extra large skins alongside of the small ones make the latter appear rather insignificant. Skunk skins average much larger early in the season than they do during the spring months. Evidently they go into winter quarters fat and hide in prime condition but towards spring when they become active again, they are not only poor in flesh but the hide has apparently shriveled, at any rate it is smaller on the same skunk than when that animal was fat. Skunk skins will not only average larger but are much more glossy and black during the months of November, December and part of January than later.

PRIME AND UNPRIME.—Prime skunk are full furred and will be white on the flesh side after being cleaned of fat and the red flesh which often sticks to pelt. The pelt that is not quite prime will be of a bluish cast on the flesh side and can even be seen through a coat of grease. When the skin has been scraped clean the blue appearance of unprime pelts will stand out clearly. If caught so early that there is but little under fur and the pelt side is black, the skin is of no value and is termed trash, scab, etc.

The blue pelt or unprime No. 1 as to amount of white is graded down with prime No. 2's and the blue pelts No. 2 go down in the grade of prime No. 3's. Unprime No. 4's are cut in price below market price for prime No. 4. Some fur bearers of the same species



IOWA LARGE SKUNK
SKIN.

Length, including tail, 44; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 8 inches. This skin is nicely handled—note how well fleshed and stretched, even the tail is split and tacked out flat.

prime up sooner than others. Two skunk caught at the same time and in the same neighborhood may find one prime and the other blue pelted. At first sight both may appear prime but comparing them side by side the difference will be noted, not only in regard to color of pelt but the blue pelt will be found lacking in under fur and will present too much top hair.

CARE AND HANDLING. — Skunk are universally fat in Fall and early Winter. A heavy blanket of fat covers the body which is left on the carcass in skinning and still a second coat of grease lies next to the skin. This should be scraped away clean from the skin when it is intended to hold this fur for any considerable length of time. The tools are a sharp wooden knife or a dull drawing knife. A beam of rounded timber flattened on upper side is made by chamfering it to such a taper that it will receive any sized skin. It should be incorporated in a shaving horse so that the operator sits astride as he works. However, in the large fur houses scraping beams are usually mounted so that the workers stand

but must bend over them as they work. Scraping is done by downward strokes from head to rump and care must be taken not to scrape so close as to draw out or expose the hair roots.

While skunk skins are being held, those that are dry and removed from the stretching boards, will remain in good condition if clean and they are strung on a wire which passes through the noses, and kept separate. Short wires or strong cord are attached to the main wire at intervals of a few feet and made fast to hooks or screw eyes overhead to prevent sagging. The pelts should be strung and not allowed to press each other and there should be ventilation and a circulation of cool air admitted much of the time to keep down any tendency in pelts to sweat.

If fat skins are not scraped and are held long in moderately warm rooms, there is much danger that the grease will heat the pelt and loosen the fur. Sometimes such skins exhibit a yellow or creamy color and are waxy to the touch. Ten chances to one they are burned and a slight pull on the fur will bring away a good lock of it. If burned, and the fur is loose, such skins are called "fur slips" or "pullers" by country dealers. Pullers have no value whatever. They are past redemption. Sometimes skunk furs that are free from fat but green and uncured are thrown in a pile or left in a sack closely packed until they become tainted. If the odor that arises is that of pronounced decay, the probabilities are that they have sweat, loosening the fur and that it is ruined.

Skunk should not be salted. Brine forms, drips on the fur and spoils its appearance. It also toughens the

pelt so that it resists the process of tanning. The bone should be removed from tails to prevent rotting, and one more word in regard to scraping. Green skins do not scrape well as the fat is tough in character but when pelts have hung two or three weeks, the fiber of this fat breaks down and becomes oil. This is the time to scrape, for it can be done easily and clean. When this oil stage is attained, therein lies the danger of heating, and every day they are neglected at this time is hazardous.

SHEDDERS AND RUBBERS.—After skunk become prime but few defects will be found for some weeks except that a skin or two may appear at times affected by mange. If mangy, the under fur will be lacking, the skin scaly and scabby. There is little or no value in such pelts. In the latter part of winter there are some rubbers. Lice or fleas cause the animals to get under some log or snag and chafe themselves until the fur is worn off down to the skin. This damages a pelt greatly. A spot rubbed in the back no larger than a penny places a skin one grade below and if rubbed the size of a half dollar it belongs two grades below. If the rubbed surface is as large as the palm of a man's open hand, it is about worthless.

By March 1st in central sections and two weeks earlier in South Central states, skunks begin shedding. All trapping and otherwise securing this fur should end abruptly before the shedding stage has arrived. But as it does not, something must be said in regard to marketing them. In a collection of these springy skunks, will be found shedders in different stages, some only slightly affected while others are bad shedders. To distinguish

skins that are shedders is not difficult. The flesh side has lost the flint white appearance of winter skins and is very red and bloodshot and the fur is thin or woolly or both.

There is no hard and fast rule for grading and valuing shedders. They must all be examined separately, regardless of white markings and valued according to condition. Many trappers and local buyers are not competent judges of springy skins and having accumulated a bunch, will fight strenuously against the poorest skins being placed one and two grades below, as they belong. Some may be about worthless and yet the owner can not or does not want to see it. About the best way to handle the springy skunk question is to grade strictly without liberality in regard to colors. Establish a reduced price on all grades and low enough to meet conditions or money will be lost for rarely can springy skunk be bought cheap enough.

In Winter a good many skins are brought in green and frozen with the fur outside. They are hung up in this condition or perhaps thrown in a heap. While it remains cold, this will do but when soft weather comes, they must be turned fur side in and stretched on boards or they will become slippery which is the next thing to spoiling and the fur loosening. If not placed on boards, they also shrink greatly in size in a short time and in a pronounced way, about the neck and head.

SIZES AND SHAPES OF BOARDS. — As previously remarked, the large Western long stripes sometimes require a board 30 inches long, 10 wide at base and 9 at shoulders. The medium and small in these skunk will require

boards about 2 inches less in dimensions all around for each succeeding size. All other states Northeast and Central for the full sized skins require a board about 8 inches wide at base, 7 at shoulders and 24 inches in length, not including the tail. Medium size, 22 long, $7\frac{1}{2}$ at base, $6\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders. Small, 18 long, base 6, shoulders $5\frac{1}{2}$. Southern skins are of smaller size. Southern Ohio and Indiana are smaller than those of Michigan and the Eastern states. Ohio skunk have a larger percentage of blacks or No. 1 than any other state. Often an Ohio collection will run 50% to No. 1. A large number in this section are star blacks, having no more white than a white scalp. Of course there will be skins that will require boards between sizes of those I have mentioned. There must be a little variation for each grade.



CALIFORNIA LONG
NARROW STRIPE.

Large, length of pelt, 24; tail, 16; total, 40 inches; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 9. Measured on fur side.

There is also a great difference in the way skins are handled by different men. The proper shape for skunk boards is uniformly oblong. They should taper quite rapidly from a little below where the shoulders will come, to the nose and yet not end in a sharp point. One trapper shapes his boards uniform and an-

other makes the head and shoulders portion too wide so that the nose is not filled and finally shrivels and dries down hard and pointed. It makes the pelt shorter than it should be. A third trapper forms his boards long and narrow as if skunk required an exaggerated mink board, or cat skins were going to occupy them. The result is that the hips and body lack much of being filled out to their full extent. The skunk is comparatively short in body with small neck and head and boards should be shaped accordingly. Buyers should always have a good supply of stretching boards on hand.

SPECULATION. — So far as the writer has been able to ascertain there is more wild, reckless buying of skunk furs than in any other when prices are high and demand strong. When there is undue excitement and over-confidence in the future exists, hardly two men can be found of the same mind when it comes to old established rules in grading. Both may be eager to buy, but one of them must be the victor and carry off the spoils even if his better judgment tells him he has beaten himself.

Brown, a country buyer, leaves a bunch behind without buying it because the owner wants to sell his half stripes for No. 1's and his broad stripes or No. 4's for No. 3. Brown is hungry for furs but prudence for once interposes and is heeded. He does not dare buy the lot on such an assort. Smith, a second buyer, comes along shortly afterward. His appetite for skunk skins is wolfish. He has just sold a bunch he had bought on an exaggerated assortment to a buyer in the pond of speculators who is just a little bit bigger fish than himself. He made a dollar and a half clear and it has greatly stim-

ulated him. Now with blood in his eye he says to the owner of the bunch Brown had left, "I'll take 'em on your assort." Having secured the lot Smith must now endeavor to find one a degree wilder than himself to unload on, if he is to make anything or even get his money back. If he becomes nervous over the deal, he may forget scruples of honesty and proceed to doctor up his purchase a bit, as a counterfeiter might a five dollar bill, to make a fifty of it. He pulls or shaves out some of the white stripes to shorten them by a half and so become good No. 1's. Others where such work would be too noticeable because of length and width of stripe, he blackens with shoe blacking or whisker dye. The broad stripes bought as No. 3 can not be improved, which causes some chagrin.

With all his cunning, skins thus tampered with are easily detected in daylight. The white stripe shows through on the flesh side although it has been blackened and there is a noticeable contrast between blackened fur and the real thing. So Smith makes it a point to sell some evening when the falling shades of night prevent a close inspection. One trick in severe cold weather is to shave the white portion from a half stripe while green, keep it fur side out, lap the shaved furrow together and let it freeze. I once saw a bunch of six or more which had been so treated and were all sold for black skins while frozen like a rock. Not many buyers will escape being taken in by this scheme. Aside from deceptions practiced, the prevailing excitement is sufficient to cause plenty of irregular if not dishonest doings.

Floating reports about the country as to what this one and that one received for his furs and what such and such ones have been offered is such stimulating gossip that buyers having a few dollars to invest become keyed up to a fever pitch. They race and run and hire teams, if not owning one, each striving to head the other off and get to the spot where a few pelts are held, as if the gold of the Klondike lay in them. They go without meals, are up early and late and the few hours stolen for sleep are restless and beset by dreams of battling to secure a share of the precious loud odored peltries.



SOUTHEAST NEBRASKA
SKUNK PELT.

Large, measured on pelt side, length, $22\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 13; total, $35\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Same pelt measured on fur side, length, same but greatest width, $10\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

The country buyers are not alone responsible for this excitement. It is promoted by the large fur firms who flood the country with specials every week, each succeeding list coming out higher than the previous ones of competitors. Certain firms

become so anxious as to say, "Send in your furs. We will take them on your own assort and valuation or return them and pay express both ways if our ideas are too

far apart." Trappers receive the same quotations that are sent to buyers which excites them accordingly and makes it hard to buy from them. Unless the local buyer will pay extreme prices and be extremely liberal in grading, the trapper will take a chance in shipping his furs or at least threatens to do so. For a time there seems to be no end to excited buying and exaggerated liberality in grading. Finally, all of a sudden there comes news of a drop. Prices have been forced too high, says the big fur firm and the market is demoralized. Values are about 20% lower and still further reductions may be expected.

The effect of this news on the army of small buyers is like a 12-inch shell sent from the forces of an enemy to explode among them. There is a great hurry to unload holdings now and this still further weakens the market. Losses are sustained and accepted with the best grace possible, after which there is a scurry to cover. Trappers and skunk diggers keep at work and the fresh catch must be sold but suddenly they come to realize that there are no buyers. Last week there were plenty of buyers but now they are conspicuous by their absence. They have all dug themselves into retreats before the enemy, a broken market.

Now a good many are driven to shipping their catch. The returns show, besides a big cut in prices, that liberality in grading has been supplanted by extreme rigor and severity in assorting. A skunk does not go No. 1 if having much white except the scalp. Unless a long stripe is really narrow, it is a No. 4. No doubtful ones go to the shipper's benefit now. Some are thrown a grade

below where they should stand and assort is made in sizes. This all represents the difference between a booming, over-confident condition in the market and the reverse when capital is timid and traders panicky.

Wild speculation in furs should not obtain any more than if dealing in grain or vegetables and perhaps would not were it not that there are so many grades in furs and such a difference in views as to sizes, qualities, colors, etc., which affords a wide margin for speculation. There is also a sort of fascination about handling furs which induces more middlemen dealers to enter the field than is necessary, more in proportion to what are needed than in the handling of any other commodity.

SHIPPING. — Of course, skunk skins in some states are larger than in others, but the average is pretty much the same in any locality. The quotations vary somewhat for the various states and localities but those best informed do not see any necessity for quoting extra large, large, medium, small. Many reports from those that have shipped tend to show that the "size" method of quoting is not for the best interest of the shipper although some reliable firms do so quote.

When sending furs out on consignment to the large fur houses, there is system to be observed as well as in buying. First, see that the skins are clean as to grease. Pack in sacks standing on tails or noses and snugly. Do not double up and wrinkle any dry pelts. Place your assort in an envelope and address on the outside. Put this in with the furs. See that the sack is well sewed up and properly tagged. Write a letter at the same time notifying the receiver of the shipment and request that the

furs be held separate until you can accept or reject the returns. Every trapper and handler of skunk furs should be interested in its conservation and continuance on the face of the earth. Such enormous wealth has accrued from it and will yet, under proper regulations, that it should be and is a concern of the nation. If the skunk should become extinct, it would be a greater calamity to us than the loss of a dozen dreadnought battleships.

CHAPTER XVI.

CIVET CAT.

RANGE. — In a general way the section inhabited by this animal may be said to be between 30 and 40 degrees north, although there are few if any north of the Ohio River in the states of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. Neither do they range east of the Allegheny foothills in the Carolinas or Georgia; there are, however, a few along the east coast of Florida. They are also found north of 40 degrees in the west in Iowa, Nebraska, southern Minnesota, southern Wyoming, all of Oregon and along the coast of Washington and north into British Columbia. They are much more numerous in parts of the Central West than a few years ago.

DESCRIPTION. — For some unaccountable reason this diminutive specie of skunk is generally called civet. It is also known as spotted skunk. This animal (call it what you please) is provided with a peculiar odor somewhat similar to the skunk, but not so powerful to carry a long distance through the air. To many the odor, at close range, is as nauseous and offensive as skunk perfume. It rarely, if ever, exceeds a foot in length and the tail is shorter than the head and body combined.

SIZE AND COLOR. — This fur producer, like the common large skunk, varies much in size and also in the amount of white in the fur as well as in the pattern of



NORTHERN OKLAHOMA CIVET.

Large, length, nose to tail, 16; tail, 11; greatest width, $6\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Measured on fur side.

the spots or short stripes. The skin is strong and the fur, especially from its northern range, good, but owing to so many white spots the fur is not very valuable.

In making up the so-called civet, no effort is made to eliminate the white as the fur is used natural and matched in such a way as to harmonize one skin with another. The made up article is really a novel and showy one, price considered. The illustration of North Oklahoma Civet is made larger than the others of these skins for the purpose of showing more plainly length and quality of fur.

The skin, while a large one, is not much longer or wider than two of the others shown and dimensions given. The illustration of the three average size furnishes a good idea of the pelt side.



CIVET CAT—AVERAGE SIZES.

(1) Small, length body, 11; greatest width, 4; shoulders, $3\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 9 inches.

(2) Medium, length body, $12\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 4; tail, 9 inches.

(3) Large, length body, 14; greatest width, 5; shoulders, $4\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 9 inches.

Average sizes for skins from Northern and Central civet states. Southern states smaller. Note these dimensions are pelt side.

Civet furs are secured in considerable quantities in parts of the Central West as well as most of the Southern states.

GRADE.— Value is not determined by the amount of white as is done with skunk for they are all well marked with stripes. Considering the small size and numerous spots and stripes if assorted, they would all be No. 4 or white. The skins, however, are classified as to size only—large, medium, small. A good many do not even classify as to size but buy flat, paying according to

primeness and locality from which received. Those from the northern localities, such as Southern Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, etc., being most valuable as not only are such best furred but the skin is stronger so that the manufac-

tured article has greater wearing qualities. Different states and localities produce skins of various sizes but the following dimensions of pelts, flesh side, for the three sizes will be found practically correct:



SOUTHEAST
NEBRASKA
CIVET.

A fairly large skin, measurements taken on fur side. Length, nose to root of tail, $15\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 11; greatest width, $6\frac{1}{4}$; shoulders, 5 inches.

Large, length from tip of nose to root of tail 15, width at hips $5\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 5 inches.

Medium, length from tip of nose to root of tail 13, width at hips 5, shoulders $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Small, length from tip of nose to root of tail 11, width at hips $4\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 4 inches.

Of course, the shape and thickness of boards used in stretching will have something to do with sizes but it is presumed that skins are stretched on boards properly shaped and not over $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. The following are actual dimensions taken from a Southeastern Nebraska skin: Length, from nose to root of tail $15\frac{1}{2}$, tail 11, width at hips $6\frac{1}{4}$, shoulders 5 inches. The illustration showing pelt side of three skins and measure-

ments on flesh side was furnished by a party who has handled large quantities of civet cat furs.

PRICE. — So far the price of civet fur has been low, ranging from about 25 to 75 cents for prime raw skins in ordinary years and 5 to 20 for unprime. To a certain extent this article is governed by skunk values, for when skunk are in good demand it naturally stimulates call for this article.

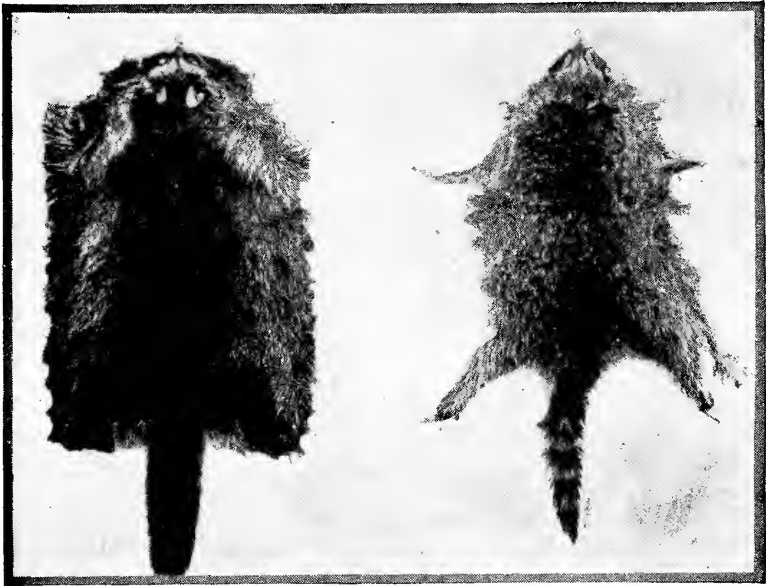
CHAPTER XVII.

THE RACCOON.

RANGE. — This fur bearer inhabits practically all of the United States and a portion of Canada. In widely separated sections there are considerable variations as to size, color, length of fur, etc., but as its habits appear to be essentially the same everywhere it can not be said that different species exist. Probably environment, climate and food have most to do in the matter of growth and character of the fur and as regards size.

SIZE. — The largest coon inhabit Wisconsin, North Iowa and the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas. Good sizes are found in Michigan, North Ohio, North Indiana, North Illinois and the Eastern States but the average is noticeably smaller than those of the North-western states mentioned. South Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and North Missouri coon are smaller than those inhabiting the North range of the same states. The farther south the coon is found the smaller is the average size, the thinner are they furred and it is also shorter. One feature that makes any well furred skins valuable is heft or thickness of leather in the pelt when tanned. North-western, Central and Eastern are possessed of good leather as to thickness. South Missouri and Arkansas coon are thin in leather and the lightest weights of all come from the Gulf States and Pacific Coast.

SIZE OF SKINS AND QUALITY. — Different sections produce so many sizes in coon and various styles of handling that it is practically impossible to set down very positive dimensions in the matter of measurement. The best we can do is to give the approximate sizes found in a certain locality or range of territory. The buyer in



RACCOON SKINS — WELL AND POORLY HANDLED.

(1) Large, dark Northwestern well handled, length nose to root of tail 30; width at hips and shoulders, 24 inches.

(2) Central section medium, poorly skinned and handled. Length nose to root of tail 20; width half way between hips and shoulders, 16 inches. Correct handling would have added at least one-fourth to its value.

each section must become informed as to what constitutes a large, medium or small pelt for his locality, not only as required by the large fur dealer but he will also be governed in a large measure by custom among local buyers with whom he must reckon.

In some quarters grading coon has become so liberal that small sizes have almost disappeared. Unless a skin is very small it is termed medium and good sized mediums, if well furred, grade large or at least bring a large coon price. Under such strained liberality in grading coon, the majority of all prime skins sell at one price, almost the only departure being that Extra Large bring a special figure over the ordinary sizes. No skins are termed small unless greatly undersized and on the kitt order. This, however, has nothing to do with correct grading or methods followed elsewhere. The object of these lines is not to set any new standards in grading as to measurements of pelts, but place before the reader such dimensions in inches for them as is fair to all concerned and likely to be accepted by the large dealer.

A fair standard of size for the Northwestern coon is as follows: 24 x 28 inches, 26 x 28 and 24 x 30. These are measurements for full sized skins and mean width across base of stretched skin and length from tip of nose to root of tail. Three dimensions are given as representing different ways of handling both square and flaring. Large sizes also are not exactly the same before being stretched. Two coon may each come under the head of large and one be two inches longer than the other. Medium and small sizes in Northwest coon measure about an inch less all around as sizes recede.

In North Central sections and the Eastern states extra large skins will equal those of the Northwest. Ordinary large sizes measure 22 x 24, 20 x 26, and 20 x 28 inches. Medium, 18 x 20, 18 x 22, and 20 x 22. Small, 16 x 20 and 14 x 22. These measurements represent va-

rious ways of handling as well as variation in coon of a certain grade before being skinned. South Central sections such as South Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, North Mis-



PRIME LARGE AND SMALL ARKANSAS COON SKINS.

Small—Length of pelt, $13\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 9; greatest width, 12; shoulders, 12 inches.

Large—Length of pelt, 21; tail, 9; greatest width, 19; shoulders, 19 inches.

These skins are what are known as square stretched—many skins are handled in this way by Southern hunters and trappers.

souri, South Pennsylvania and similar latitude find the coon an inch or so less in width and length than the skins of the North Central sections. The skins of Ar-

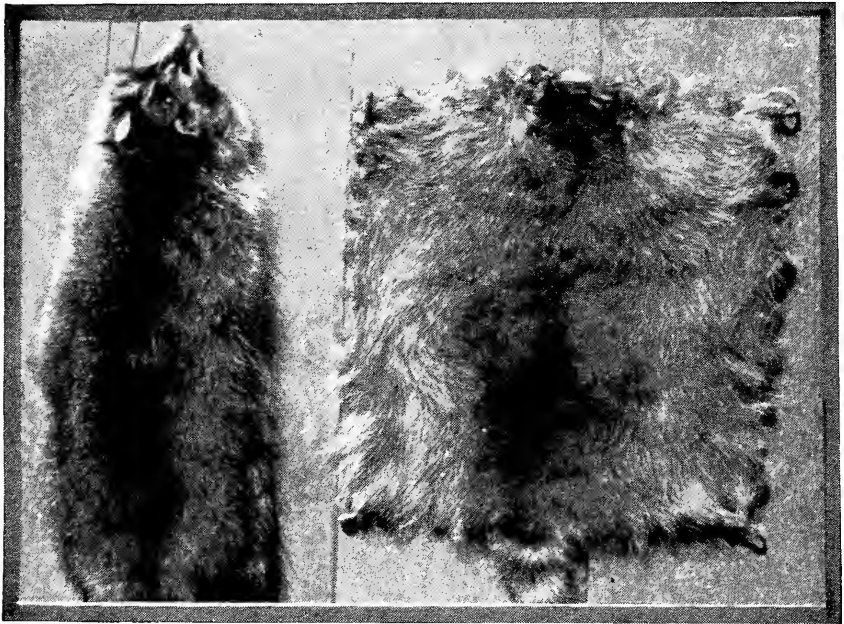
kansas and South Missouri and similar latitude are still smaller and the smallest coon of all inhabit the Gulf States and Pacific Coast.

The fur of Northwestern coon is long, thick and dark grey, sometimes tinged with dark brown. The pelt is heavy also. There are, however, some skins of light grey as found in all furs regardless of section. In the North Central states the skins are weighty as to leather and the color varies from light grey tinged with brown to dark greys with brown and black effects. Occasionally a decided black pelt is taken of superior value. The Ohio, Indiana and Illinois coon are lighter colored as a whole than those about three degrees of latitude farther North. The farther South we proceed the smaller are the sizes with thinner pelt and shorter fur. Arkansas and South Missouri skins are the last in fairly well furred skins. In the Gulf States the smallest, thinnest in pelt and shortest furred of all coon exist except those of the Pacific Coast which are only a trifle better in the fur market. Full sizes of these semi-tropical coon are 14 to 16 inches wide and 18 or 20 inches long.

The photograph showing Northern and Southern Coon Skins is an interesting one, showing as it does the general ways these skins are handled in the different parts of the country as well as the color of the fur. No. 1 shows a large, dark and silky New Hampshire skin, cased, which is the method used by most trappers and coon hunters in not only New Hampshire but most of the New England states where skins run well to this character. No. 2 shows a large, light colored, short furred, square and nicely handled Louisiana skin which is the

method used by the best trappers and coon hunters not only in Louisiana but most of the states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico as well as other Southern localities.

It will be seen by the figures given that there may be as many as three dimensions under one head. It de-



NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN COON SKINS.

(1) Large, Cased, New Hampshire—Length of pelt, 25; tail, 10; total, 35 inches; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8.

(2) Large, Open, Louisiana—Length of pelt, 22; tail, 9; total, 31 inches; width, hips and shoulders same, 19 inches.

pends upon a slight difference in the size of animals and also in what manner the pelt is stretched. If two coon of exact size were to be stretched by different men, one will make a large skin of his coon while that handled by the other man will only go medium. It depends upon

dimensions and shape. Give two large skins of equal size to different men and when stretched one measures 20 x 24 while the other is 18 x 26. One of them endeavored to stretch his pelt square but made it too long and consequently too narrow. But for all that the dimensions are different, they are both large skins.



COON SKIN, EARLY
CAUGHT.

Length of pelt, 23; tail, 8; total, 33; greatest width, 18; shoulders, 14 inches. Poorly handled, skin salted, size medium but owing to season caught No. 2 or lower.

PRIMENESS AND HANDLING.
— A No. 1 or prime skin is full furred and the flesh side is entirely white with a thin film of fleshy red covering it. A No. 2 in quality is full furred but still hairy and the flesh side bears a bluish appearance. A No. 3 contains about a half growth of under fur but the whole pelt is very hairy and the pelt side is black. A No. 4 possesses but a very small growth of fur, is nearly all hair and very short and the pelt side is

black. In one state where the fur bearers are protected by law during a closed season, no trapping can be done early enough to find pelts in the No. 3 and No. 4 stage. Trappers found with them in their possession are fined and the dealer who buys such pelts is fined and the pelts confiscated and destroyed.

All prime skins do not grade No. 1. It depends upon how well furred and other conditions to be mentioned later on. If a large prime coon is very poor in fur, it goes down into the No. 2 grade. If badly handled, torn or shriveled or perforated by many shot or is badly bitten by dogs, tail bone left in and partly rotted or darkly bloodshot from the manner in which it was killed, it is a No. 2 or No. 3 according to condition. A prime skin small and badly handled, is not worth so much as a large No. 2, well handled and not damaged.

Coon being an animal which lays on a heavy supply of fat, the pelt should be cleaned of all loose fat at the time of skinning. After the skin has been stretched two or three weeks, the fat will break down in tissue and assume an oily character. This is the time to scrape the pelt clean and it should not be neglected if these furs are to be held long or they may be heated by the oil and cause sloughing of the fur or at least loosen it so that it may be pulled away easily. Care must be taken not to scrape a pelt with such vigor as to draw out the fur or expose the roots. Scrape just close enough to remove the grease and no more.

Coon are sometimes stretched by the careless, indifferent, or ignorant with such a coating of fat that it becomes oil, turns rancid, yellow and thick and shortly the fur roots have been heated and sweating occurs, which loosens the fur. Such a skin is ruined. The long coated coon often become filled with burrs of the dock in the back and hips and the tail may be a solid knot of the fur matted with burrs. These should be removed with a curry comb and brush, being careful not to pull

out the fur. The whole coat should be cleaned and combed out and brushed so as to give it a presentable appearance. Certain trapped coon wallow in sticky clay in their efforts to escape until the fur is balled and matted together. When this condition becomes dry, whip it with sticks and after being broken up, comb and brush and shake it out clean.

The trapper of the Northern and Eastern sections believes firmly that there are two species of coon. He will tell you that there are the common grey coon inhabiting the hills which are not very large and do not care so much about being around the water as the other kind of coon. The other species he calls the swamp coon, decidedly larger, darker colored, longer furred, long legged and capable of a long run when pursued by dogs. Brought to bay, he is a very strong, fierce antagonist for any dog to cope with and sells his life dearly. This species inhabits the river bottoms, spring brooks, swampy lands, and never strays far from water. This is a pet view of the back country trapper and we are not disposed to contradict and disturb him in his opinion, if we had grounds for argument.

In some years the darker colored skins are worth an extra price and at other times no difference is made between them and ordinary colors, unless a pelt is strictly black. As a rule, coon are dyed and but few made up naturally so that dark shades are not in superior request or more valuable.

Coon are handled both square and flaring. If evenly done, either of the two styles sell equally well. If stretched square, a nail is driven in the end of the nose,

after which the principal efforts are directed in drawing the skin upward and outward at the shoulders to make square corners and attain the same width that the skin



HEAVILY FURRED CENTRAL
WESTERN COON.

This pelt, although not properly stretched, measured as follows: Length of pelt, 30; tail, 8; total, 38 inches; width at hips, 22; shoulders, 18. Neither front or hind legs included in measurement.

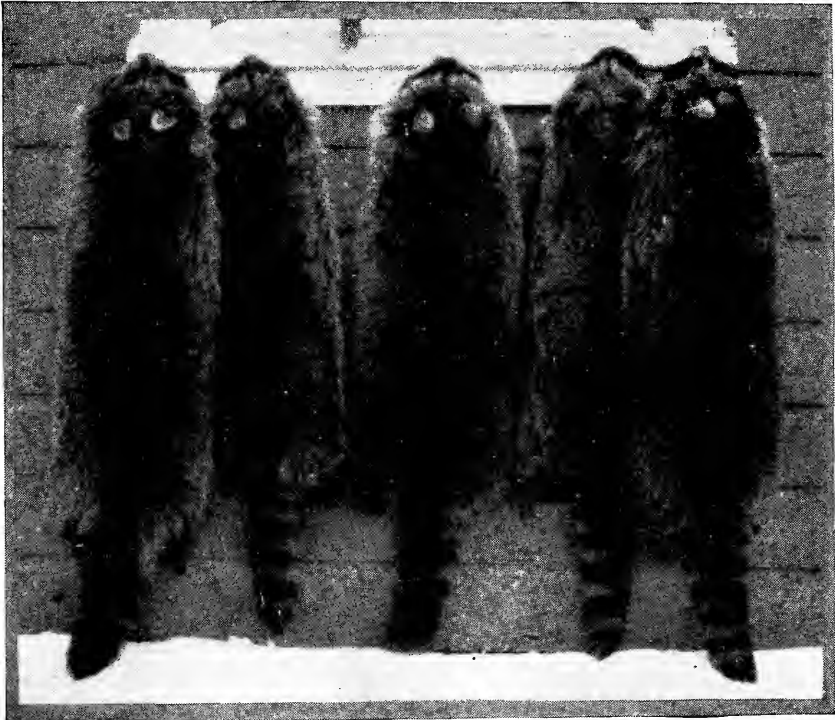
will be at its base when all is tacked. This method shortens a skin more than stretching slightly oblong but the average will be wider. A trapper known as one of the best square coon skin stretchers describes his method as follows: Skin as usual but split nose and head down even with ears; stretch out both points of nose—one each way—and nail. Next pull out and nail longest part of each front leg; then pull up and nail balance of fore legs.

You now have the top stretched and have used more than a dozen nails. Now be-

gin at top right hand side, nailing down, using a nail about every inch but do not stretch. Now begin at top on the other side and stretch and nail as you go down. You will now find that the skin is loose through the center.

Catch hold of tail and pull down and nail, also nailing from tail each way across. The job is now complete and if correctly done, the skin is square.

This fur is handled both cased and open. The large



PRIME NORTHEASTERN COON SKINS.

These five skins are all large and dark, representing the best skins from Pennsylvania, New York and New England States. Skins taken from full grown coon are usually 26 or 27 inches long with a width of 10 inches cased.

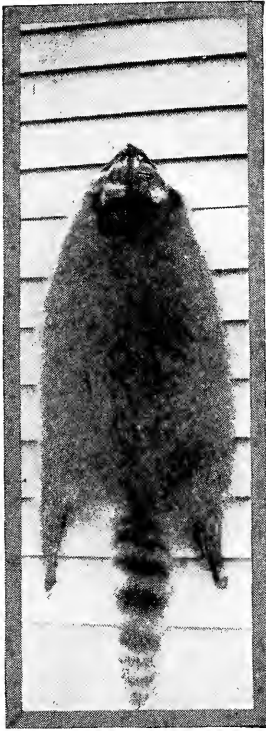
and heavy northern skins are preferred cased (skins from all other sections open), yet no difference is made in their value. Cased skins from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Northern Iowa and Nebraska require boards up to 10 inches

at base. If handled square, the largest would stretch about 26 x 32, or thereabouts. In any case, the first move is to tack the pelt at wide intervals all around to determine its size. Some points will be long and of no use to the skin. Tack them temporarily. When the probable dimensions of a pelt has been determined and laid out by boundary nails, begin and pull out the skin between these guiding nails and tack about one inch apart, keeping them in a straight line. This is the plan to follow for sides, bottom and all around. When fully nailed it should be tight like a drum head. The finishing touch is to trim off shanks and little flippers of skin that extend beyond the main dimensions and spoil the appearance of the pelt.

Custom in the handling of skins must be observed just as established requirements in grading can not be ignored. There are a good many defects in coon furs, some of which are: unprime, heated, faded, scorched, thin, rubbed, tails rotten from bone being left in, woolly, no guard hair, and shedders. It is rather difficult for the amateur buyer to make money on coon furs. Either he grades against himself for sizes, or buys unprime at prime prices, buys No. 3's for No. 2 and 4's for 3's. Sometimes a collection of November coon will not assort more than 25% prime. They may be well furred and good sizes and still a trifle blue. The longer held and dryer the unprime become, the bluer the pelt will be. We have seen pelts that when fresh were only slightly blue but became almost black after being held two months.

In Northern latitudes the majority of coon are prime by November 15th, a few earlier and some later, depending upon weather conditions, whether seasonable or not.

Shedding occurs in Central sections by March 1st and two or three weeks earlier in the South. Not all are shedding at the same time but the majority are and all will be in the same stage in a few days. At this time the flint white color that is seen in skins of winter quality gives way to a very red and almost crimson color as if drenched in blood and dried. The fur becomes thin or woolly and the guard hairs crumpled at their tip ends. In some skins of late winter the guard hairs are entirely absent, which gives an otherwise good coat of fur a flat appearance. When springiness becomes still more pronounced skins become bluish in spots, particularly around the head and fore legs. The taking of coon should stop at once when signs of shedding appears. The shedder is most difficult to sell. Nobody wants them. The blue pelts of late fall are far preferable.



WISCONSIN COON
SKIN, LARGE,
CASED.

Length of pelt, 29; tail, 13½; total 42½; width at hips, 14½; shoulders, 12 inches. Open, this skin would have stretched at least same length (29) and 29 across hips and 24 at shoulders.

Always remember that while buyer and seller are trying to deal, friendship is set in the background. The owner is going to drive as hard a bargain as possible. If you become charitable and so overpay the market and buy for quality that is not in the goods, he has fattened his pocket

while your purse has become correspondingly lean. You will not make any profit and it may be difficult to get the money back that you paid when you come to sell. Sanity should always govern a buyer and such lots of furs that he can not buy on a fair assortment and at prices somewhat near market values, he should pass by.

Do not strive to bag all the furs you come to and compete with the plunger and imprudent buyer you know of who has a hard time of it to swing out even when he sells. It is better to buy a hundred dollars worth of furs and make a profit than to secure a thousand dollars' worth and make nothing. And besides, the lack of profit is the larger amount of work to be done in caring for the big, unprofitable lot.

CHAPTER XVIII.

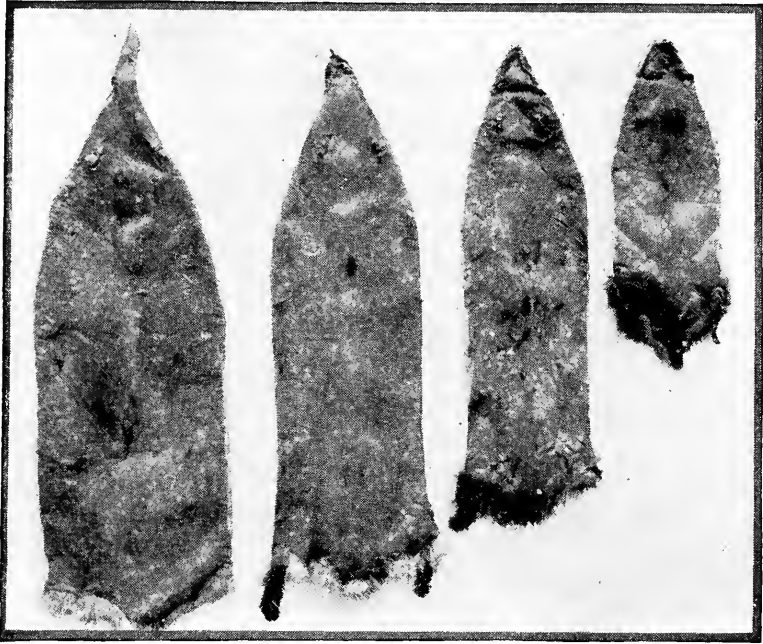
OPOSSUM.

RANGE. — The scope of country inhabited by opossum is more restricted than that which marks the bounds of any other common fur bearer in the United States. The so-called cotton states are the real opossum country, and still the northern boundary of its habitat extends into Central Pennsylvania, North Ohio, North Indiana, North Illinois, Southern Iowa, etc. It is not very plentiful, however, after leaving the central portions of the states last mentioned.

Opossum are the only marsupial, or pouched animal, of the Western Hemisphere. The young are born when so small as scarcely to be out of the embryo stage. They are at once placed in the pouch by the mother and each of these little blind, hairless mites seize a nipple and become so firmly attached that it is impossible to separate them from their hold. If the body be pulled sufficiently strong, the head will separate from the neck and still cling to the teat. In five or six weeks the young are about the size of mice and in two months are able to leave the pouch.

SIZE AND COLOR. — The length of a full grown opossum is about 18 or 20 inches excluding the tail, which is bare and scaly like that of a rat. The color is of a grizzly grey, often mixed with black in the half grown ones and

sometimes nearly white in the older animal. As to the character of its food, it consists of fruit, grain, vegetables, small mammals, young birds, eggs, insects and it will also make occasional forays on poultry. It grows to



OPOSSUM SKINS — VARIOUS SIZES.

- (1) Large—Length, 24; greatest width, $8\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 8 inches.
 - (2) Length, 22; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 7 inches. Will also class large.
 - (3) Medium—Length, 19; greatest width, 6; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
 - (4) Small—Length, 14; greatest width, $5\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 5 inches.
- These skins represent a fair average grade for the Northern opossum States. In Southern States average sizes are somewhat smaller.

full size in about eight months if food is plentiful. Approximate sizes are:

Extra large, 9 inches at base of skin, 8 inches at shoulders, 22 inches long.

Large, 18 to 20 inches long, 8 at base, 7 at shoulders.

Medium, 16 to 17 inches long, 7 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ at base, 6 to $6\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders.

Small, 12 to 14 inches long, $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 at base, 5 at shoulders.

Extra Small, about 5 x 12.



SIX MARYLAND OPOSSUM SKINS.

- (1) Small—Length, 14; greatest width, 6; shoulders, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (2) Small—Length, $15\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, $6\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (3) Medium—Length, 20; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 6 inches.
- (4) Medium—Length, 18; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{4}$; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- (5) Large—Length, $26\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 10; shoulders, $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
- (6) Large—Length, $22\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 7 inches.

These skins show the relative sizes—large, medium, small—yet No. 3, which is 20 inches long but only 6 wide at shoulders, is classed large by many.

There are also many kitt opossums caught, no larger than a half grown muskrat and some no larger than a large barn rat. Such sizes are worthless.

ITS FUR AND USES. — In its northern range the opossum is in fur of marketable quality about four months,

dating from November 1st to March 1st. Previous to this they are unprime and hairy with but little under fur. After March 1st they begin to shed the winter coat and return to hair again in a few weeks. The fur is made up both natural and dyed. When colored it is used to imitate skunk fur, called by the furrier black marten. Collarettes, boas and muffs and many other things are made of opossum.

GRADING, SIZES AND PRIMENESS. — Opossum furs are more difficult to grade than any other on the list of native furs. A skin may be prime in pelt but have no fur, a condition not often found in any other fur. The sizes are large, medium and small, and as to primeness, the grades are Nos. 1, 2 and 3. A pelt that measures 8x18 inches may be termed large and the two smaller sizes one inch less in width and about two in length successively. A No. 1 opossum is not only white on the flesh side but is full furred. If poorly furred it must be graded No. 2 or No. 3 according to how poor it may be in fur. If the pelt is prime but there is no fur, the skin is classed as trash and of no value.

The pelt side of No. 2 possesses a yellowish cast when dry and the fur is hairy. If containing no under fur, it is trash. If not well furred, a No. 2 is graded No. 3. No. 3's are unprime in pelt and have but a small growth of fur. The poorly furred and damaged prime skins also go into the No. 3 grade. All opossum which have no fur and only hair are trash and have no value. Among the early caught will be a good many that are trash. A collection of opossum skins that are all early caught and unprime are the most undesirable

peltries that the fur handler can purchase. The demand for early opossum is not good and the outlook for making a profit on them is not encouraging. More than 500,000 opossum are marketed in a season and besides the fur value, the flesh is quite highly prized. Not only is it eaten commonly by the inhabitants throughout its range,

but it finds a ready sale in the large cities.

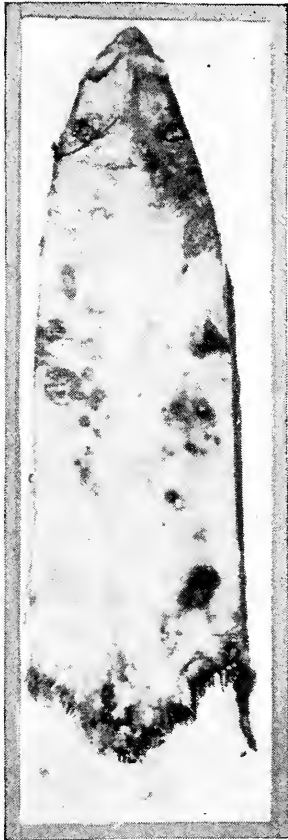
Opossum pelts are very fat in late autumn and early winter and should be scraped to prevent heating. Leave pelt side out. Opossum skins are often bought flat but unless the buyer is familiar with skins from that particular locality, the seller may try to work him by offering a skinned lot, that is, part of the largest and best taken out. In buying flat, all worthless pelts, either large, furless, badly dog chewed and very small are thrown out. Price fluctuates but is largely governed by skunk values which article, after being dyed, it is used to imitate.



LARGE CENTRAL WEST
OPOSSUM.

Length of pelt, 30; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8 inches. A very large skin, the largest out of hundreds, representing Southeast Iowa, Northern Missouri and Central Western Illinois.

Buyers who usually can quickly judge whether the fur is prime at a glance at the flesh side of pelts, may be mistaken on this article. Opossum caught weeks before the fur is full length and even with little or no fur, only



SOUTHERN OPOSSUM,
LARGE.

Length, 26; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 7 inches. Very few opossum are as large as this one. Considerably dog chewed.

hair, in some instances, have an apparently prime pelt. The experienced buyer, however, knows that when unprime they show a dark blue spot on the under side at the throat. The plainer such a spot or spots, the poorer furred. Some trappers also know this and those inclined to be tricky are careful to leave considerable fat on and around head and neck.

West Virginia being located south of the Ohio River, those not familiar with the fur produced there, will be surprised at not only the quality but the size of some of the fur bearers. This is especially true of opossum, which are also as well furred generally as those farther north. One of the best average collections of opossum that the writer ever saw was secured from territory lying between the Great Kanawha and Little Kanawha Rivers. This collection was secured from trappers principally in the counties of Jack-

son, Roane, Wirt and Calhoun. They were not only well furred but very large average size, perhaps 50 would class extra large.

At Catlettsburg, Kentucky, in the 90's I bought a lot of more than 1,000 opossum secured from the Sandy River country or Southwestern West Virginia and North-eastern Kentucky. These were fairly well furred but the sizes were much smaller than fifty to a hundred miles north. For many years I traveled and bought thousands of opossum and other furs on both sides of the Ohio River, from Pittsburg to Cincinnati, so I know the sizes from the different localities. It has also been my privilege to stand in the fur assorting room of New York and St. Louis dealers and see lots from all the opossum producing states opened and graded. Strange, but skins that came in from the territory between the Great and Little Kanawha Rivers of West Virginia, averaged better furred than other southern localities and apparently as well furred and larger than those north of the Ohio River. Some splendid skins are, however, secured in Southern Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, parts of Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia. Farther south, even though having size, the fur is not so dense and is shorter.

Probably 75% of the opossum are from the states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee. Several states immediately north of those mentioned are, however, really in the opossum country, including Virginia, Ken-

tucky and Missouri. Further north they are not so plentiful and as already stated very few are found north of Central Pennsylvania, North Ohio, North Illinois, Southern Iowa, etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

WOLVES AND COYOTES.

THE TIMBER WOLF — RANGE.— The large grey or timber wolf inhabit Canada, Alaska and the West and North sections of the United States.

There are a good many packs of these wolves at the present time inhabiting North Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Maine. They constitute a scourge among the deer supply and in spite of high bounties to encourage wolf trapping and hunting, the animals appear to be on the increase in places. Large bounties have been the means of some wolf hunters making wolf taking a dishonest source of revenue. They make a business of hunting up the young in Spring while they are helpless in the nest. From four to six pups are frequently secured from one lair. They are nursed and grown for a few months until large enough to claim the bounty paid for adult wolves, when they are killed. These men never kill the mother wolf if it can be avoided. It would destroy the "Goose that lays the golden egg." This manner of securing wolf bounties is unlawful and those who work such schemes are careful to keep it secret.

SPECIES. — Owing to a number of varieties, perhaps different species, there is considerable difference in size and color. In Florida there is a small black wolf; in Alaska and Northern Canada the Arctic wolf, the color



BLACK AND GREY TIMBER WOLVES.

Large—Length nose to root of tail, 60; tail, 20; total length, 80; greatest width, 25 inches. This pelt shows rare specimen of the black timber wolf and was secured in the Mackenzie River District of Canada.

Large grey timber wolf from Mackenzie District, Canada. Length nose to root of tail, 58; tail, 20; total, 78; greatest width, 24 inches.



WHITE TIMBER WOLF, NORTH-
WESTERN CANADA.

Length of pelt, 49; tail, 20; total, 69;
greatest width, $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This pelt is only
an ordinary sized one.

of which is pure white with black tipped tail, as well as a black specie; the Red wolf of Texas and the Brindle wolf of Mexico. The most common variety, however, is the grey wolf, often called the Timber wolf, Lobo and Wolf to distinguish it from the prairie species. All these, however, according to naturalists, belong to the group known as Timber wolves.

SIZE AND COLOR.

— Timber wolves are from 5 to 6 feet in length including an 18 or 20 inch tail. The color varies from plain grey to specimens that are almost white in the

far North and a litter sometimes contains one or more black whelps. In Northern sections prime, perfect skins are thick furred and silky. The hair between the shoulders is coarser and longer than that which covers the rest of the body. Occasionally blue wolves are found in the far North.

USES. — Well furred timber wolves are specially adapted for making sleigh and automobile robes and driving coats. They are also dyed black, brown and blue and are often sold under fictitious names when made up into boas, muffs, capes, collarettes, etc., being called blue wolf, blue lynx and other fancy names to help sell the goods. Wolf is also much used for floor rugs in homes and offices, especially west of the Mississippi River, and thousands of the best skins are tanned and made up by taxidermists. Wolf fur is moderate priced, although used throughout the civilized world.

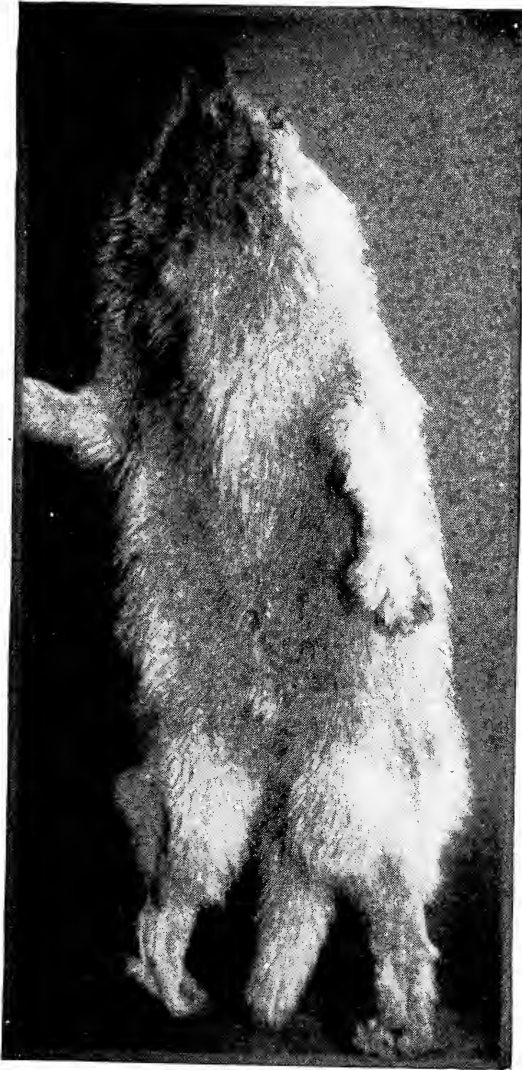
GRADING. — Not only sizes, but color, quality of fur and condition of pelt must be taken into consideration. The color may vary from almost black in the Florida pelt to white for the Arctic region skin. The majority are grey, being darkest on the back and dusky on shoulders and hips. The fur is usually long and shaggy. Wolves from the north and mountainous sections are usually darker, fur finer and silkier than the fur of those from a level or prairie country. In states or provinces where the topography varies from plains to high mountains, such as much of the Rocky and Cascade Mountain country, the quality of this article varies from good to poor. Take the state of Colorado, for example: The high mountain-caught will average with a level country

farther north, foot hills with Northern Kansas and Missouri, plains with Oklahoma and similar.

Sizes are hard for the inexperienced to determine, for remember that a large wolf may weigh anywhere from 75 to 150 pounds, depending upon where caught. One weighing 75 pounds, of the Florida specie, is large, while the largest from Alaska and Northern Canada may weigh up to 150 pounds. By far the majority of pelts, classed large, will be greys of the Southwest, West and North with weights varying from 75 to more than 100. It is from size of pelt that the dealer judges, but how is he to know, when receiving shipments, unless familiar with the peculiarities of the various skins from the various sections, but that the pelts were originally from another part of the country than from which he received them? Maybe where caught, skins which the dealer grades as medium are considered large. Again, the inexperienced dealer may put medium into large.

The buyer who expects to handle this article, from all parts of the country, will find that assorting sizes correctly is not learned in a day, week or month but takes years to master thoroughly. Shedders, rubbed, poisoned, scalped, early caught, summer killed, etc., are all met with in the buying of wolf to which must be included the assorting for sizes — large, medium, small — also Nos. 2, 3, and 4.

Wolf should be handled open. It is difficult to give the exact sizes for large, medium, small, owing to the varying size of this animal in different parts of the country. From end of nose to tip-of tail the average size for the skins from the Northwest are approximately:



NORTHERN LARGE GREY TIMBER
WOLF SKIN.

Length nose to root of tail, 64; tail, 21;
total, 85; width, $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Large, 5 feet, 6 inches.

Medium, 5 feet, 2 inches.

Small, 4 feet, 10 inches.

Nicely handled, full furred pelts are often taken for No. 1 of a smaller size than one not so well furred or improperly handled. A No. 2 is not full furred and pelt at least partly unprime or a prime scalped. No. 3 is apt to be unprime in both pelt and fur, although a prime pelt may be so badly handled or damaged by dogs to so class. No. 4, no fur, unprime pelt, badly damaged skins, torn by dogs or otherwise.

Wolves from the different parts of the country vary in size but undoubtedly the largest come from the far north including parts of Alaska and Canada. It seems that from the North country there are also more colors and in addition to the gray variety are a very few black and some white. The illustration of Northern Large Grey Timber Wolf Skin shows to what immense size the wolf in the North attain. This pelt, including tail, is 85 inches or 7 feet 1 inch long. Pelt is cased yet is 15½ inches wide, equal to 31 if split or open.

COYOTE OR PRAIRIE WOLF—RANGE.—The coyote is a small wolf inhabiting the Plains States. It is found as far south as Texas and north into the western portions of Canada. The Hudson Bay Company handles several thousand skins annually. The Canadian coyote is fuller furred than those of Western United States.

COLOR.—The color is grey or grizzly with dark tipped guard hairs. The under fur is slate blue as a rule but sometimes brown. The best, longest and thickest furred skins are inclined to coarseness. Prairie wolf take dyes well and it is used extensively in robes, coats, muffs, boas and for other purposes where long furs are wanted.

VALUE AND USES.—The fur varies from flat and coarse in the South, Southwest and parts of the West to fine and silky in the North and high mountain localities. The latter are much more valuable but numbers small compared with the less valuable skins. Thousands of the best specimens do not reach the regular fur buyer or collector but are sold to taxidermists and made into rugs, robes, etc., usually at prices above fur values. If skins have been scalped, it detracts about one-third from the value of the pelt.

GRADING. — Coyote are classified large, medium, small, Nos. 2, 3 and 4. Skins should be cased, for open they are not so desirable by about 10%. This fur from



SOUTHWESTERN CANADA DARK AND LIGHT COLORED PRAIRIE WOLF SKINS.

Large, Dark — Length of pelt, 46; tail, 17; total, 63; greatest width, 13; shoulders, 11 inches.

Small, Light — Length of pelt, 31; tail, 13; total, 44; greatest width, 12; shoulders, 9 inches. Both measured on fur side.

various localities varies and to the trade is known as soft, silky, ordinary, coarse, hairy. Different parts of the country produce various sized pelts. The following dimensions are of stretching board patterns much used by trappers:

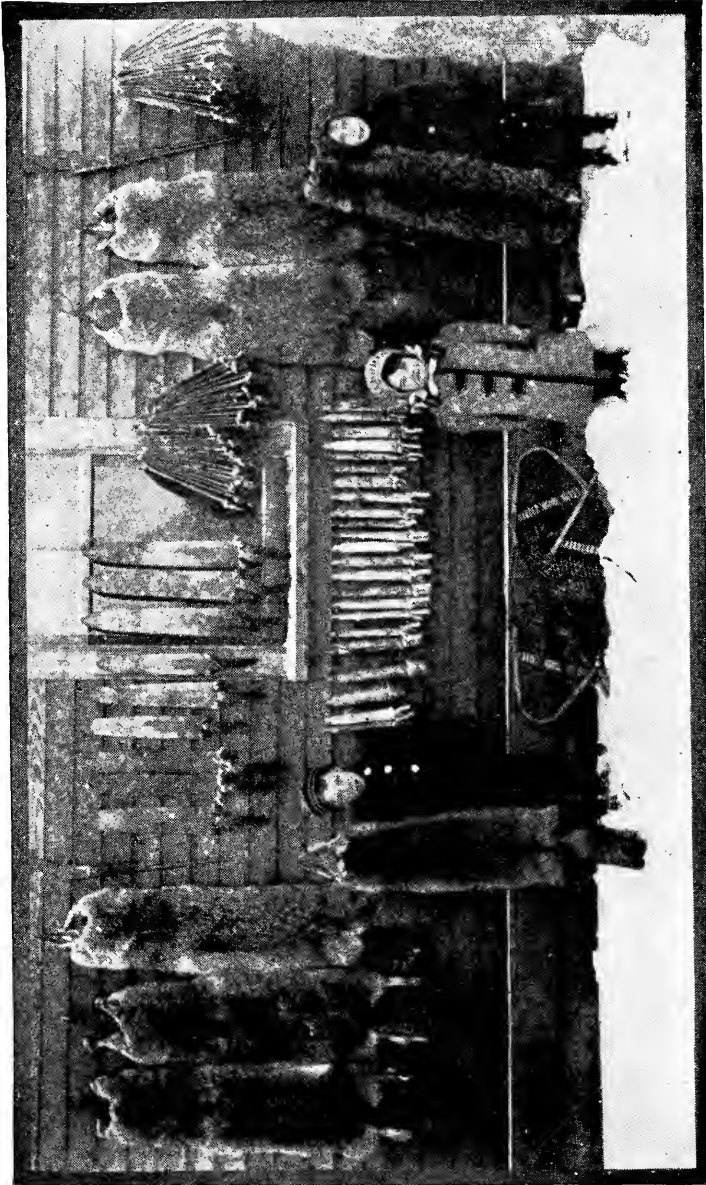
Large, hips 10 inches, shoulders 9 inches.

Medium, hips 9 inches, shoulders 8 inches.

Small, hips 8 inches, shoulders 7 inches.

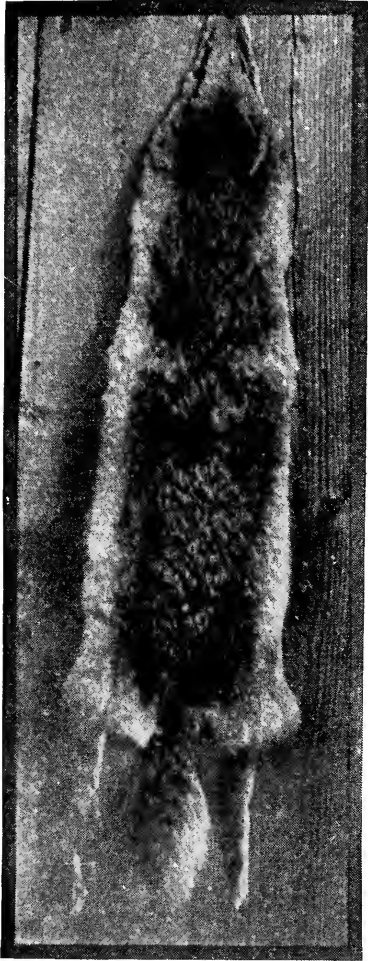
Length of board $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 feet, although the largest skins will be only about 4 feet from end of nose to tail.

A No. 1 large, medium or small must be prime in fur and pelt, but may vary somewhat from sizes as given. No. 2 skins are those secured before the fur is thick or



SCALPED (WISCONSIN) PRAIRIE WOLF OR COYOTE SKINS.

full length. A No. 1 pelt, scalped, becomes No. 2. No. 3 are those with their fur and pelt damaged, torn, etc. No. 4 are those with little or no fur growth, badly torn by dogs or otherwise.

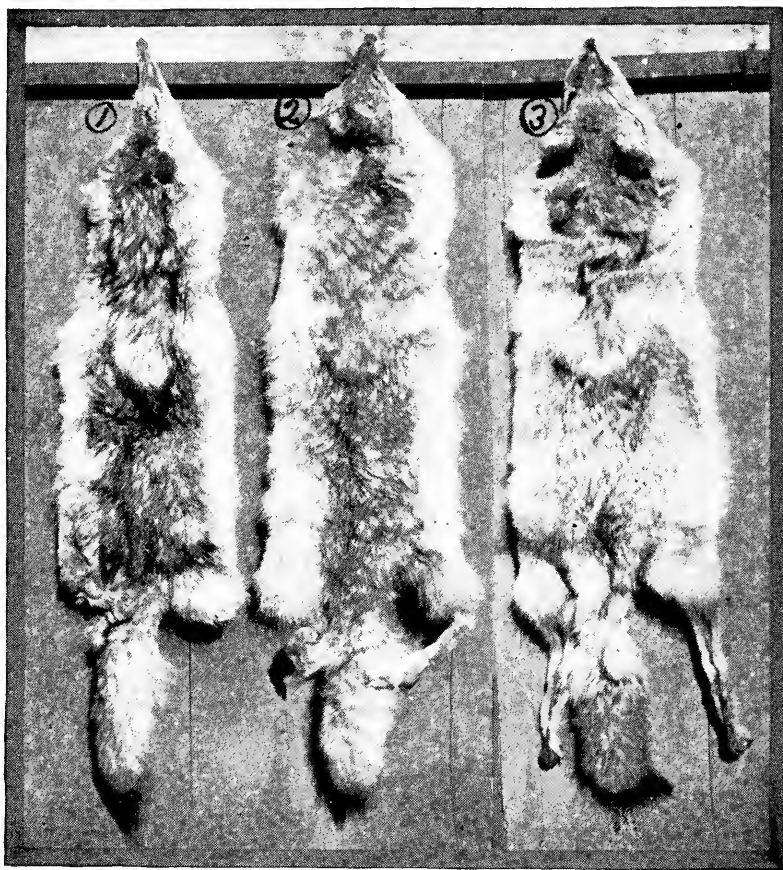


CALIFORNIA PRAIRIE
WOLF.

Length of body, 45; tail, 13; total length, 58; greatest width, 11½; shoulders, 9 inches. Fairly large for that section, but fur is not long or thick.

Coyote skins while varying in size, are stretched differently. One hunter or trapper may stretch as long as possible, regardless of width, while others use wider boards. The total length of large skins will, therefore, vary several inches. The long stretched skins will probably be 10 to 12 inches wide at root of tail and 1 to 2 inches narrower at shoulder. Other skins may be 13 inches but taper to 9 inches or less at shoulders, the wide stretched skin, of course, being the shorter. A medium is an inch smaller than large, both at hips and shoulders and 3 to 5 inches shorter. A small is about the same under medium as medium is less than large.

The buyer of this article must be on the look-



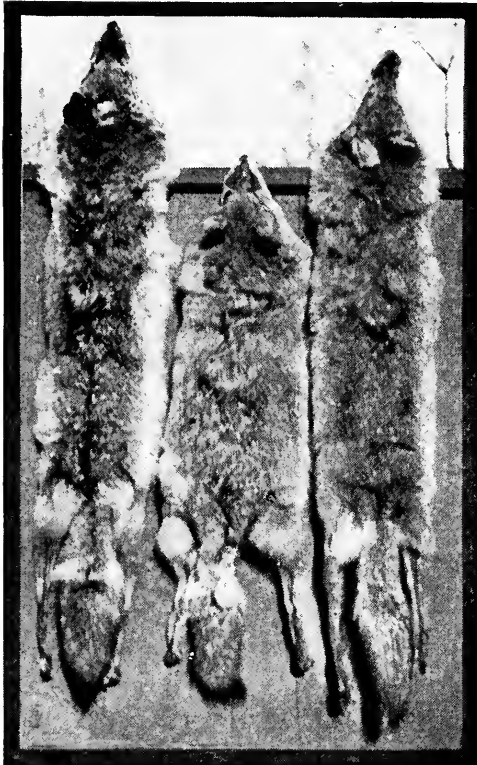
MEDIUM AND LARGE PRAIRIE WOLF SKINS.

(1) Medium — Length of body, 36; tail, 14; total, 50; greatest width, 12; shoulders, 10 inches.

(2) Medium — Length of body, 36; tail, 14; total, 50; width at hips and shoulders same, 12 inches. Both skins are from the Province of Alberta, Canada.

(3) Large — Length of pelt, 38; tail, 16; total, 54; greatest width, 13; shoulders, 11 inches. Skin should have been stretched longer and not so wide. This skin is from Western Nebraska. All three measured on fur side.

out for those affected with mange. Such skins are of little or no value. Many are also poisoned. Such skins are apt to be damaged, especially hair loose. When this article is cased and offered for sale pelt side out the fur should be examined.



TWO LARGE, ONE MEDIUM, COLORADO PRAIRIE WOLVES.

(1) Large — Length of pelt, 42; tail, 17; total, 59; width at hips and shoulders same, 9 inches.

(2) Medium — Length of pelt, 34; tail, 16; total, 50; greatest width, 12½; shoulders, 10½ inches.

(3) Large — Length of pelt, 42; tail, 17; total, 59; width at hips and shoulders same, 10 inches.

Although the center pelt is 9 inches shorter than the others width is greater. This pelt should have been stretched longer and not so wide. All measured on fur side.

The two Rocky Mountain Section Prairie wolf skins shown here are both large, measuring as follows: (1) Length of body 41½, tail 16, total 57½ inches; greatest width 14½, shoulders 9½. (2) Length of body 40; tail 16, total 56 inches; greatest width 14, shoulders 9. These skins are probably overstretched at the hind quarters as a glance at the skins will indicate. A further and somewhat more careful observation of the skins will

show that the skins are probably overstretched at the hind quarters as a glance at the skins will indicate. A further and somewhat more careful observation of the skins will

show that (1) is darker especially on hips and tail than (2) yet the two were caught on the same ranch and within a half mile of each other.

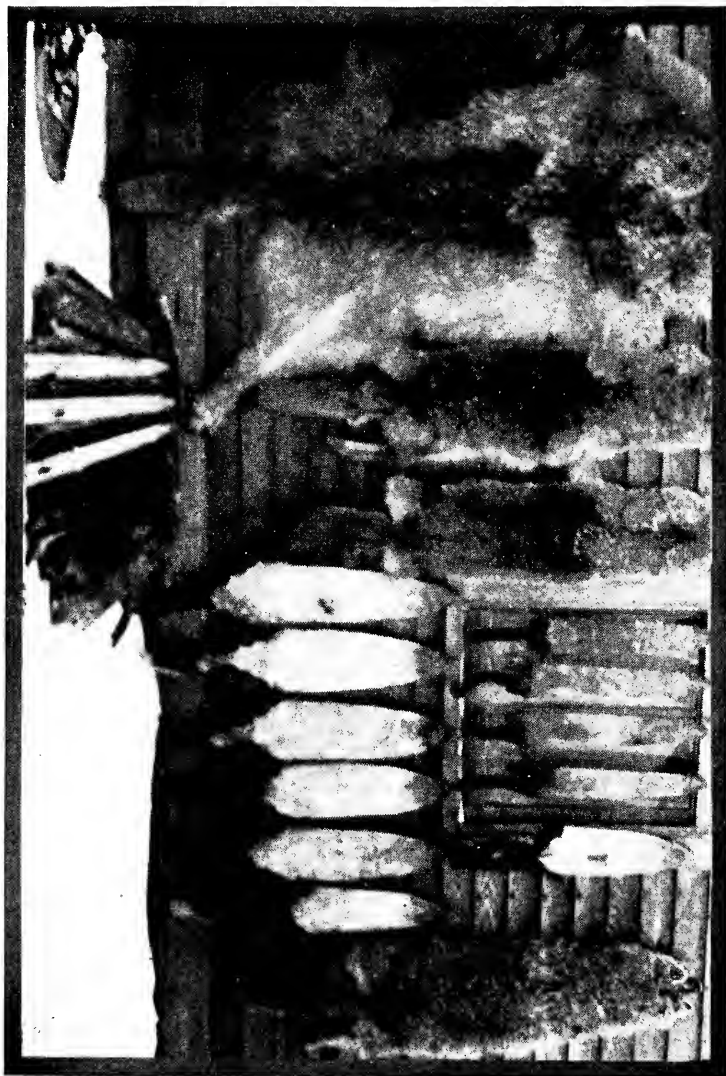
There is considerable difference in shade or color of the prairie wolf or coyote skins in the same locality as well as in the different parts of the country. Color does not have much to do with the value as it is the soft, silky skins that are most valuable and these may be the lightest colored as well as the dark.



TWO ROCKY MOUNTAIN SECTION
PRAIRIE WOLF SKINS.

The illustration — Timber and Prairie Wolf Skins — showing a hunter and trapper of the Lake Superior region holding up a timber wolf skin with three

of the prairie wolf skins hanging against the building shows the difference in sizes. The timber wolf is large, measuring from end of nose to tip of tail 7 feet, 9 inches; width across shoulders, toe to toe, 5 feet, 3 inches; width at narrowest part 2 feet, 6 inches. The three prairie wolf skins are also large but measure only from nose to tip of tail, 5 feet; width, cased, 12 inches. The three skins are practically all of the same dimensions.



TIMBER AND PRAIRIE WOLF SKINS. THIS HUNTER AND TRAPPER ALSO
CATCHES MINK, SKUNK, WEASEL, MUSKRAT, ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

OTTER.

RANGE. — There are at least ten species of the land otter, four of which are American. The otter in general outline is that of a giant or an exaggerated mink and its habits are much the same. It is never found living far from lakes and streams and its farthest departure from water is seen in its travels overland from one stream to another or from stream to lake as the case may be. The range of the otter covers practically the entire Western Hemisphere, that is, both North and South America. It does not take kindly to the encroachment of the settlers and is never numerous in a settled region.

QUALITY. — The finest furred skins come from Labrador, Canada, Nova Scotia and the York Fort district of the Hudson Bay Country. The best otter as to fur and color come from East Maine where they are very dark. The poorest qualities come from the Gulf and Pacific Coast, the pelt being heavy and the fur short and light colored. The average color is a liver brown, the under side of the body being still lighter colored. When the top hairs have been plucked out, the under fur assumes a shade from light tan to golden brown. From some sections certain otter appear singed, the guard hairs being wilted down as if burned. This condition detracts greatly from ordinary values. Con-

sidering that the otter is found from Alaska to Labrador and from near the Arctic Coast to the very southern parts of the United States (a distance of 3,000 miles north and south) this fur shows but little variation in size, color, or quality. This is because they are much in the water. The temperature of the water in Winter is about the same all over the United States, Alaska and Canada. While Southern otter average much lower, it is partly due to their being caught before mid-winter and before cold weather has primed them. Strange, but true, more otter are caught in October and November in the Southern states than farther north.



PRIMENESS. — There are four degrees of primeness in otter and the same considerations that apply to the different stages of primeness

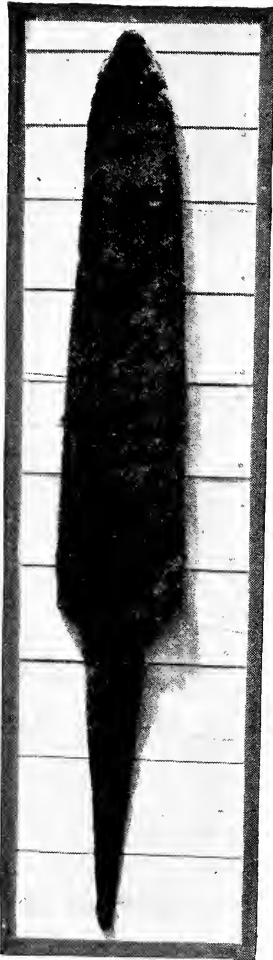
NORTHWESTERN OTTER SKIN.

Large — Length nose to root of tail, 40; tail, 17; total, 57; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 7 inches. This pelt represents a good average large for the New England States, New York, Pennsylvania, the Virginias, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Canada, etc. About the only sections where otter average much larger is from Florida and other states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, as well as parts of the Northwest — Oregon, Washington, British Columbia.

in mink, apply to otter, the prime being all red or white on the flesh side, while the No. 2's are bluish and the fur more hairy than the No. 1 and the whole coat may be short. The No. 3 is very short in fur and coarse hair predominates and the pelt is black. No. 4 are black in pelt and there is hardly any growth of fur as to quality and length, being mainly short hair.

SIZES. — Otter vary greatly in size. While the largest skins may measure $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length, not including tail when on the drying board and 9 to 10 inches in width at the hips, a small skin may not be more than 30 to 34 inches and 7 inches wide. The tail is 14 to 18 inches or longer occasionally.

STRETCHING BOARDS. — The general shape of otter drying boards is the same as for mink, holding their width well and not tapered until the shoulders are reached, where they should be about an inch narrower than at base of skin. For the neck and head the board tapers moderately rapid so that if a skin is 8 inches at the hips when on the board and 7 at shoulders, it will be about 6 inches across the ears and 4 inches where eyelets come on the board. Boards should be made of three sizes from such tough, soft wood as poplar, whitewood, cottonwood, basswood or white pine, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick, planed and sanded and in length from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Boards for medium should be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch narrower at hips and shoulders than for large; small, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch less at both hips and shoulders than medium. Some claim that otter should be stretched a little different and recommend boards of the following dimensions:



CENTRAL CANADA
OTTER SKIN

Large — Length nose to root of tail, 35; tail, 22; total, 57; greatest width, 10; shoulders, $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. This pelt was stretched too wide, especially neck and forequarters. Note great length of tail which indicates a large skin.

Large, hips $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, shoulders 7 inches.

Medium, hips $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches, shoulders $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Small, hips 8 inches, shoulders $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

The larger skins will often measure better than five feet from tip to tip. Tails should be split, stretched out and tacked. This fur is always cased and should be left fur side in, otherwise it will fade somewhat.

In buying otter skins it is necessary to know primeness and sizes or a blue pelt may be bought for No. 1 and a medium bought for large or a small graded medium. Shade of fur and whether singed or not must be ascertained. The next consideration is section from which skins come, Western and Southern being worth far less than the Eastern and Northern skins. Now and then an otter is caught in localities where none have been for years. Such skins, according to the opinion of the owner, are always No. 1 and large. Like mink, otter vary considerable in size in different parts of the country,

although skins averaging largest are from Florida, while the largest mink are caught on the plains of the Northwest. A few otter pelts brought to our notice measured as follows:

Two from British Columbia, 62½ and 65 inches from tip to tip.

One from Ohio, weight 40 pounds and measured 71 inches.

Three from Maine exactly alike being 61 inches from tip to tip and 8 wide.

One from Oregon, 75 inches from tip to tip.

Two from Michigan, each 66 inches from tip to tip.

One from Washington, 64 inches from tip to tip.

Three from Massachusetts, largest 57 inches and weighed 30 pounds.

Few animals are as difficult to skin as the otter. The hide is not only tough but can not be pulled or peeled off, necessitating much use of the knife. The tail is large, gristly, requiring the use of a knife constantly. To skin the tail is more of a job than to remove the pelts of a half dozen mink.

Some handlers of furs buy pelts occasionally on the animal, that is, carcass and all. Unless a party, so buying, has been a trapper, knowing about how a pelt will look when skinned and stretched, compared with same on the carcass, his judgment may not be of the best. No doubt many will be interested in the measurements of an otter as caught and after the pelt is on the stretching board. The illustrations herewith show a fair sized otter of the Lake Superior region the same day caught with trap on foot and pelt on board. The descrip-

tion under the two illustrations show that the pelt was stretched 10 inches longer than the carcass and the tail $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches longer. It will be seen from illustration, however, that the pelt was stretched rather long and narrow.



NORTHERN MICHIGAN OTTER AND PELT AFTER SKINNED AND STRETCHED.

Before Skinning — Length of body, $28\frac{1}{2}$; tail, $16\frac{1}{2}$; total, tip to tip, 45 inches; around hips, $14\frac{1}{2}$; around shoulders, 14 inches.

Stretched on Board — Length of pelt (nose to root of tail), $38\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 18; total length, $56\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width at hips, $7\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, 7 inches.



PEACE RIVER OTTER.

Large — Length, nose to root of tail, 38; tail, 18; total length, 56; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7 inches. Pelts secured in Northern and Western Alberta. Rocky Mountain sections of British Columbia and Yukon are similar.

The following information was furnished by a party who handled thousands of Canadian otter skins, principally from the Eastern Provinces, buying largely direct from trappers:

Otter get prime, that is, white smooth pelt, very late in the autumn, even in northern latitudes not much before the 10th of November. All amphibious animals change the looks and appearances of their pelts three if not four times during the twelve months. I mean otter, beaver, mink and muskrat. When unprime in the summer months the pelt is of a burnt greasy color, this is when the hair is thinnest, September and October the pelts become of a slate blue color, hair thicker and about October 20 the blue color becomes spotted with white and hair much thicker and of a rich appearance. From the latter date, if cold weather sets in, the pelt changes very quickly to pure white, with a smooth glossy finish. After the cold winter months have passed these changes take place in reverse order, back to the thin greasy skin of the summer.

The male becomes prime much before the old female as the latter suckle their young very late in the year. The otter is only really prime and well furred between November 15 and March 15. Like the beaver, when the March sun has its strength, the otter delights in sliding down crusted slopes and basking in the hot rays, both of which stunts are detrimental to the fur.

The ordinary size of a full grown male otter is: Length, from nose to root of tail, 40 inches; greatest width, 9 to 10 inches.

Female otter, full grown, length, nose to root of tail, 30 inches; greatest width, 8 to 9 inches.

Any buyer having skins offered him with the fur side out to be suspicious, either, that the pelt is damaged, or not prime. I maintain the only exception to this rule, of having the flesh side out, would be with the colored and valuable foxes. With them it is necessary to see the full hair to properly estimate the skin's value.

In Canada the darkest and richest otter skins come from the Labrador Coast, north of Lake Superior and the Mackenzie River.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEAVER.

RANGE. — The range of the beaver once covered about all of America where there was timber of the kind this animal used for food. At present this interesting fur bearer is found mainly in Canada and Alaska. There are few beaver today south of Upper Michigan, Northern Minnesota, Northern Wisconsin, Northern New York and Maine. There are, however, some on the Pacific Coast, in the Rocky Mountain States and a few in certain Southern States.

Years ago this fur bearer was nearly extinct in the United States, but under timely laws that afforded a perpetual closed season, it has increased surprisingly so that from some sections complaints are heard on account of dam building having flooded large areas, in killing valuable timber and doing other damage. The catch is now limited by law in most states and provinces so that nothing short of reckless law violation will bring them to the point of total destruction again.

SIZE AND COLOR. — As otter resemble the mink in outline, so does the beaver remind one of a giant muskrat, to which species it belongs. The length is from two to two and a half feet usually although some are as much as three feet, not including the tail, which is nine or ten inches. The weight of a full grown beaver varies from 40 to 60 pounds and even more.

The color runs from light brown to dark brown. The under fur is a mouse color, is less than an inch in length and is protected by stiff guard hairs two or three inches long on the upper part of the body. The fur is shorter and dense on the under side of the body and the whole coat is waterproof. While the ordinary color of



NORTHEAST SECTION
BEAVER SKIN.

Small—Length, 24; greatest width, 17 inches.

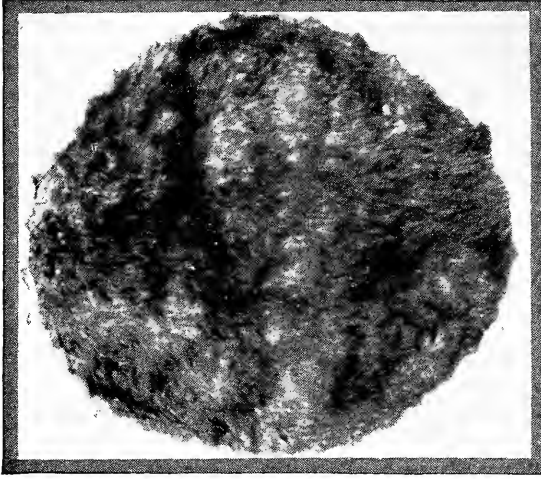


SOUTHERN BEAVER SKIN.

Medium—Length, 28; greatest width, 22 inches.

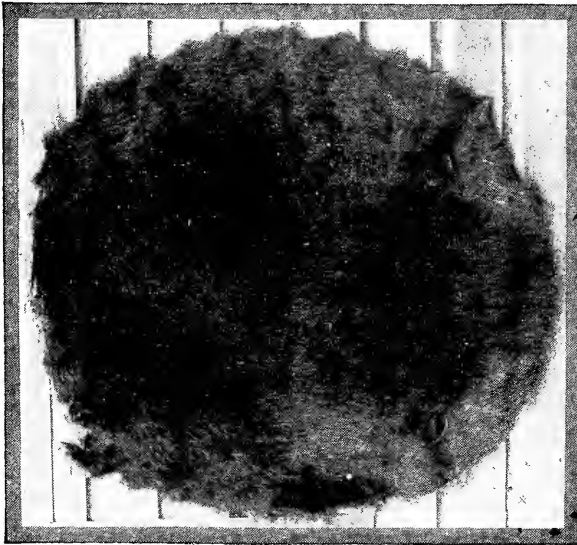
beaver is nut brown, there are extremes in paleness and dark shades. The lightest colored specimens, as well as largest, are found in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain states usually. Some skins that come from around Hudson Bay are nearly black.

HANDLING AND GRADING. — Beaver should be stretched round, rather oblong and open. Some are cased, handled, but this is not desired by the trade. Large,



LAKE SUPERIOR REGION BEAVER.

Large — Length, 36; greatest width, 32 inches.



NORTHWESTERN OREGON BEAVER SKIN.

Extra Large — Length, 38; greatest width, 36 inches. Largest one out of ten caught in Marion County, spring of 1915.

24 x 28 inches and up, providing furs are in good condition. Pelts, of course, are not all stretched oblong, many being round and in that condition, 26 x 26 is equal to 24 x 28. Many pelts are much larger, 27 x 31, and even larger. Medium, 21 x 25 and up to 23 x 27 inches or thereabout. Small, 18 x 22 and up to 20 x 23 or thereabout. Kitts, under 18 x 22. Skins from Rocky Mountain states average somewhat larger. Beaver



SOUTHWESTERN LARGE BEAVER SKIN.

Length, 39; greatest width, 30 inches.

Castor is bought by the pound. Beaver skins were bought by the pound during early days. A large skin, when properly fleshed, would weigh about 1½ pounds, an extra large one

up to 1¾ pounds. Beaver should be handled open, being one of the three B B B, or Beaver, Bear, Badger. The other fur mostly handled open is the Timber wolf.

PRIMENESS.— Beaver skins present different degrees of primeness, depending upon when caught, the same as muskrats. The prime pelt is red and white fleshed while the No. 2 will be bluish and the coat hairy. No. 3 are

still more dark pelted and coarse in coat and lacking in under fur which is short. A No. 4 may be termed a scab or trash, of little or no value. Beaver skins should be cleaned of flesh and fat to prevent heating the pelt and so destroy the fur.

The value of beaver pelts does not vary as much as

most of the other fur bearers of America. Between the largest and best Northern skins and those of the South or elsewhere there is but a variation of about \$2.00. Neither has this article undergone the radical fluctuations in price like some of the other articles of recent years. Beaver was one of the first animals hunted and trapped for fur in America and in the early days was one of the



WESTERN CANADA BEAVER SKIN.

Medium — Length, 28; greatest width, 23 inches.

chief articles of commerce with the Old World. Not only are beaver pelts valuable but the flesh is eaten and the castors are valuable, being used in the manufacture of perfume. They are also used by trappers in making scent to lure fur bearing animals. There is always a cash market for beaver castors.

Beaver, otter and muskrat being water animals, there is not so much difference in the priming up time of

fur and pelt as with other fur bearers in the various parts of North America. The pelt of the beaver averages pretty much the same thickness, making no difference where caught. This is accounted for from their being so much

in the water. The greatest variation is in color and quality of fur.

A trader who for almost fifty years bought beaver pelts by the thousands over much of Eastern and Central Canada says:

Prior to the American buyers coming over into Canada, beaver were always bartered or bought by the skin, large prime, middling prime and small prime. The buying of these skins by weight was



HUDSON BAY COUNTRY BEAVER SKIN.

Large — Length, 40 inches; greatest width, 31 inches. Some very large and dark skins are secured from waters flowing into Hudson Bay.

an unfortunate innovation, as many unscrupulous trappers and small traders called on their ingenuity to add weight to the skins passing through their hands. This was done in many ways. However, anyone used to handling clean, pure skins would at once detect any abnormal surplus weight.

Beaver in the three sizes mentioned and understood to be killed in prime season weigh, with very little variation: Large, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; middling, 1 to $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds; small, 10 to 12 ounces.

In dimensions the three sizes were:

Large, lengthwise 34, width 24 inches.

Middling, lengthwise 24, width 18 inches.

Small, lengthwise 21, width 14 inches.

Beaver in the Northern part of Canada become prime about the end of September and remain so up to about the twentieth of March. They are at their very primest both as to color and richness of fur during November, December and January. The darkest skins come from clear water lakes and rivers, while the browner and light colored ones are taken in grassy and swampy surroundings. This characteristic of darkness of color applies to all amphibious (water) animals. Beaver, otter, muskrat and mink are of richer and darker fur when they inhabit clear water. I have often astonished an Indian by picking out a certain skin and saying, "You killed or caught this in a clear water lake."

While the beaver retains his deep, rich, fur until May or June the fur has lost its value as a prime skin by the action of the March and April sun rays. These animals delight to pass hours in those months basking in the sun, the consequence is the color of the fur is bleached several shades lighter and the ends of the hairs are hooked and crinkly as if singed by a hot iron.

CHAPTER XXII.

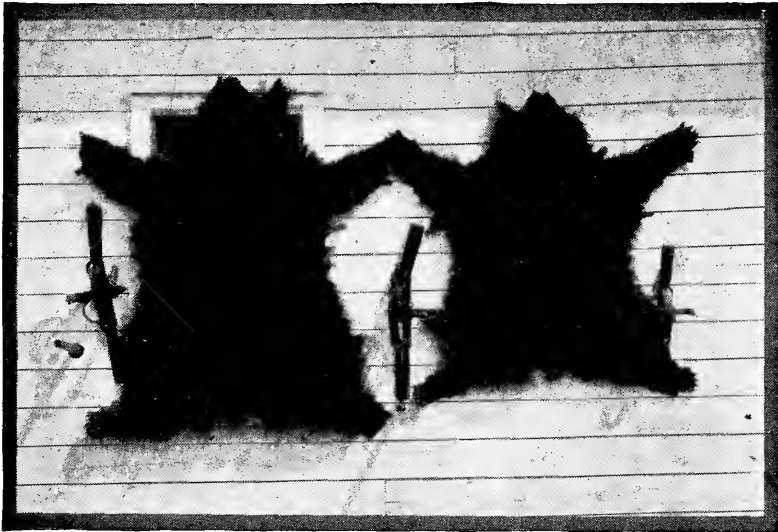
BEARS — BLACK, GRIZZLY, POLAR.

THE BLACK BEAR. — RANGE. — According to the naturalist there are only three distinct species of bears in North America, which are the Black, Grizzly and Polar. The Brown, or Cinnamon, is merely a color phase of the Black Species. This is the smallest bear of the three species. Its range is wide, covering at one time a good portion of the United States as well as Canada, Alaska, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

COLOR AND QUALITY. — The best skins come from Canada. Those from the interior of Alaska are good but along the southeast coast are somewhat coarser. The British Columbia Bear is coarse in pelt and thinner furred as the coast is approached. Pelts from the interior are generally long and heavy furred. The color is distinctly black on the surface and brown underneath, though in some jet black specimens the fur retains almost the same hue to the roots. A large Black Bear, when in good condition, will weigh 400 to 450 pounds or more, but the lower figures constitute a large bear. If one is found weighing around 600 pounds, it may be termed extra large.

Hundreds of skins are still secured from the Northern New England States, Adirondacks and Allegheny

Mountain regions. Those caught in Pennsylvania and North are well furred if taken in proper season, but in size seldom exceed 300 pounds. Some very nice pelts are also taken each season in the northern parts of Mich-



EASTERN BLACK BEAR SKINS.

Large — Length, tip to tip, 70; width at shoulders, 64; hind quarters, 58 inches. Had feet and claws been left on spread or width would have been about a foot greater.

Medium — Length, tip to tip, 58; width at shoulders, 64; hind quarters, 60 inches. Claws and feet on.

These skins are full, large and medium for bears from the New England States, New York and Pennsylvania. Those from the Virginias, Carolinas and other Southern States average somewhat smaller.

igan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. There are far more bear skins handled yearly than generally supposed. From the United States some 5,000 and Canada about 3,000 are sent to Europe for the sales each year. Others are used in this country so that the catch is probably around

10,000 annually. Of the brown, or cinnamon only a few hundred are secured each season — probably 200 to 500.

USES. — Black bear is used for many ordinary purposes where a long, shaggy, black fur is desired, the



WISCONSIN BEAR SKINS.

Medium bear, 5 feet 4 inches from tip to tip; width at shoulders from claw to claw, 5 feet; narrowest part, 3 feet.

Small bear, 4 feet from tip to tip; width at shoulders same; narrowest part, 2 feet 6 inches. Bears much larger than the medium here shown are secured from not only Wisconsin but Michigan, Minnesota, etc.

principal advantage being in its natural color which requires no dye to blacken. The fur of cubs is very soft and is suitable for coat collars, muffs and boas. Bear is used extensively for driving coats, rugs and sleigh robes.

SIZES, HANDLING, ETC. — This fur varies from large to cubs, including yearling and two years. It is also classed large, medium and small as well as No. 2, 3 and 4. The skins also vary considerable in size, owing to age and condition the animal was in when killed. A bear hunter and trapper who has caught more than two hundred during his time, principally in Michigan, sends the following dimensions of the largest of his catch: Length, 8 feet, 2 inches; width, 7 feet, 4 inches. The best bear is prime in pelt and the fur thick, even with a good growth of guard hairs, the entire coat being soft and glossy in the best. Off qualities are the unprime thin furred, rubbed on hips, flanks, neck, etc. No. 2, in primeness, are hairy and the supply of underfur is less than on prime pelts. Nos. 3 and 4 are practically all hair and of little use except in the making of the cheaper driving robes. A large per cent of bear skins offered the buyer are of the lower grades and smaller sizes from the fact that the animal is killed whenever possible. As a result many bear are killed during summer and early fall months.

CANADIAN SKINS. — The black bears of the Northern parts of Canada are at their best and primest just after the berry crop and just before they hibernate for the winter.

They mate in early July and bring forth their young in February. They generally have two at a birth, occasionally three, but this is the exception. The cubs of the last winter hibernate with the dam the second winter, thus, when the hunter digs out a den in March or April he generally finds cubs of two sizes.

Touching on the primeness of skins, the very finest for richness of fur is found on a two-year-old just before denning up. Good skins are also gotten from den bears up to the end of January, unless a he-bear has

denned in some ragged hole, or has been partly exposed to the weather. He retains his good coat of fur longer than the female.

Trappers generally take up their bear traps around the tenth of June. After that date both male and female shed their coats rapidly, and the skin for three months only represents the hide for leather. Approximate sizes for black bears in the North Country run about as follows:



ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLACK BEAR SKIN.

Large — Length, 79; greatest width, 49 inches.

Large male bear, length, 6 feet, width, 4 feet.

Full grown female, length, 5 feet, width, 3 feet.

Two-year-old cub, length, 4 feet, width, 2 feet, 6 inches. There are, of course, exceptions to these measurements but as an average or normal size the foregoing is a fair average.

The grading of bear skins for valuation is so evident that almost any handler of fur can do it correctly. When the skin is coming common the hair is off in patches, reaching up the sides, till at last there is only a ridge of old hair along the back bone. In August the new hair comes out all over, is a deep black, is full, but as yet short in length. From the end of this month, the hair becomes glossy and richer as the days go by.

In a year of mountain ash and other late fruit the bears keep out later, sometimes holing up only after considerable snow is on the ground. Pelts taken at this time are always good color and heavy furred.

GRIZZLY BEAR—RANGE.—The Grizzly Bear once inhabited all of the Rocky Mountain Range where it found a natural place to den in the rocky caverns. It inhabits Alaska and the Mt. St. Elias Grizzly is of the largest size and is frequently termed the Silver Tip. It is now extinct or practically so.

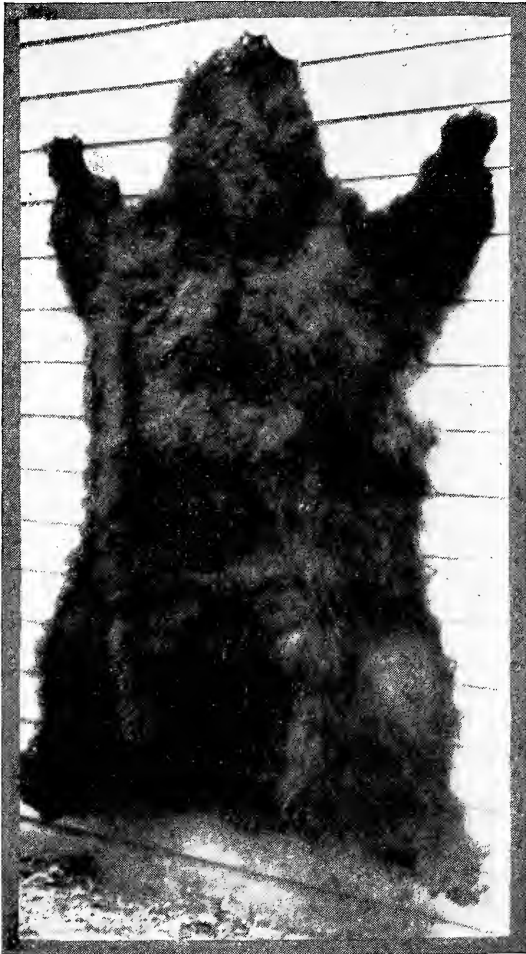
COLOR, SIZE, ETC.—The Grizzly attains to a length of 8 feet to 13 feet and weighs from 800 to 1,100 pounds. It is the largest of all bears. Probably the average weight of the males is about 800 pounds. The fur is rather coarse and while the general color is grizzly grey some specimens are light colored, almost white and yellow grizzlies occur and in fact all shades from light



ROCKY MOUNTAIN GRIZZLY BEAR SKIN.

This pelt is only about an average size for the large yet measured from nose to tail 10 feet 9 inches; greatest width (shoulders) 10 feet 6 inches; hind quarters 9 feet 3 inches. As these skins are largely used for rugs they should be carefully skinned around head as well as claws left on pelt.

to dark Grizzly are found. The skin is thick and heavy and there is a growth of hair between the shoulders of such length as to form a well defined hump. In



BRITISH COLUMBIA BROWN BEAR SKIN.

Medium — Length, 74; width at hind quarters and shoulders, 41 inches. Pelt heavy and full furred.

the best skins this hump adds greatly to beauty and value. The value of the skins is just about the same as the common black bear when sold to the regular fur trade to be used for lap robes, coats and rugs. Few skins, however, are thus sold but are tanned and made up by taxidermists where they command a much higher figure. The head and claws must be left on to command highest prices. In Alaska brown bear have been killed, the pelt of which measured 10 feet from tip to tip.



ARCTIC OCEAN REGION (GREENLAND) POLAR BEAR SKIN.

Large—Length nose to tail 10 feet 8 inches; greatest width (shoulders) 10 feet 2 inches; hind quarters 9 feet. This skin is off a fairly large only as the neck is longer than other species, which accounts for length. Most skins are either mounted or used for rugs, so must be carefully skinned to command highest value.

THE POLAR BEAR. — The Polar Bear has a wide distribution. It inhabits the western shores of Iceland, the coast of Greenland and the northern extremity of Norway and Sweden. It is found on St. Matthew Island in Behring Sea and in the Arctic Regions of Canada and Alaska.

COLOR, SIZE AND QUALITY. — The polar bear is white the year round. Both feet and legs are covered with long, coarse hair. The feet are provided with long, powerful claws. The Polar Bear grows to a large size, in fact, it is but little exceeded, if any, by the Grizzly. Specimens have been known to weigh 1,000 pounds and some skins measure 10 feet or more. The tail is only about 4 inches in length and the neck is longer than in other bears. It is bold in disposition and will fight fiercely, though not with the tenacity of the Grizzly.

FOOD. — Polar bears feed upon fish and seals and yet its own flesh is said to be palatable and is preferred to seal flesh by the Esquimaux. The best skins come from Greenland and being well cleaned of oil by the natives, the fur does not turn yellow as it would if left in the grease. This fur is made into rugs and robes and is sometimes dyed black. The milk white skins are the most valuable and in the best request. Off qualities are the dirty whites or dingy yellowish skins. The number of skins sold yearly in London is only some 200 to 300 although they do not all reach that market. The annual production probably does not exceed 500.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARTEN.

RANGE. — This animal is much like the mink in general form and is about like the mink of Western United States for size. The range is Canada, Alaska, Labrador, Nova Scotia and Northern, North Western and North Eastern United States. Pennsylvania is about as far south as it has been found.

COLOR, ETC. — The general color is nut brown, though pale skins are yellow, and dark skins almost black. The yellow colors are worth the least and the really dark skins are very valuable. The tail is thick and bushy, appearing more like fox fur than in being closely allied to the mink. There are many shades of color between dark, brown and pale, such as orange, cinnamon, golden yellow, etc. The guard hairs are tinged with a much darker color than the under fur.

SIZES AND HANDLING. — Marten are assorted for colors and also sizes, large medium and small. Most skins grade into the first two sizes, small skins being few in any original trapper's lot of this fur. Marten are dried on boards, shaped the same as for mink. Before being thoroughly dried, skins are removed from the boards and turned fur side out and in that way presented when offered for sale. Thin boards should be inserted after being turned to firmly establish the shape and prevent any

tendency to shrivel or wrinkle. The entire hind legs and feet are usually skinned out and left on the pelts of marten, even the toe nails being left in the fur of the foot after being unjointed from the foot itself. Why this is

done any more than with mink we do not know, except that it is a custom just the same as the entire leg and foot of lynx is skinned out and left on the pelt.



BRITISH COLUM-
BIA MARTEN
SKIN.

Large — Length of pelt, 21; tail, 10; total, 31; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

GENERAL REMARKS. — But few furs possess so wide a range of values. From about \$2.00 for small pale to \$30.00 for large, well furred skins of the darkest shade. Every section produces a particular type of marten. Some are fine in coat, some are coarse and different districts turn out various shades of color. Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and other Rocky Mountain States produce yellow shades of marten almost exclusively. Those from the New England States and the Adirondacks are never of the darkest shades.

As marten are usually found high up among the mountains their fur is fine but in some localities the color is orange, light brown, etc. Marten is the first of the fur bearers to prime up, even though not found in the high altitudes. A fur dealer

of Maine who has traveled along the coast north to Labrador, says: "Marten in that country are prime by October 1, having a beautiful and glossy coat." While marten prime earlier than other furs, as a rule, they shed out in the Spring a good deal earlier, becoming thin furred and woolly in March, even in the North, which greatly reduces their value. The buyer who knows furs, even though he has never handled many marten skins can detect the rubbed and shedding much easier than to value correctly the varying shades of color that are characteristic of this fur. It is not always the largest marten skin that is most valuable — a smaller dark one may be worth double a larger but lighter colored one.

This article is assorted large, medium, small, Nos. 2, 3 and 4 and further as to colors. There are few very small — mostly large and medium. Neither are there as many No. 2 and below as with most furs, the reason being that marten is the first fur animal to prime up in the fall. It is also largely caught by experienced hunters and trappers and is correctly skinned and handled. Skins on the stretching boards for the three sizes are approximately:

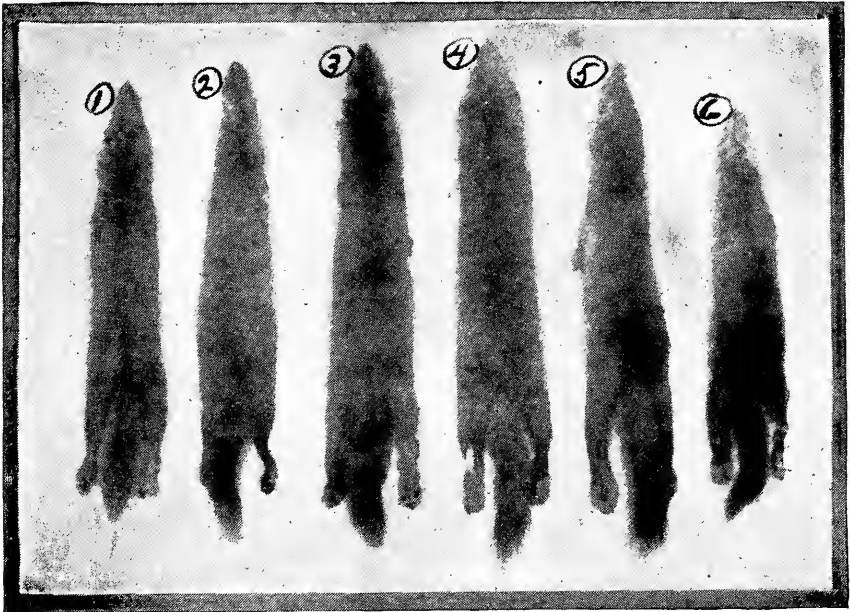
Large, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches at hips, $3\frac{3}{4}$ at shoulder, length, nose to root of tail, 19 to 20 inches.

Medium, $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches at hips, $3\frac{1}{4}$ at shoulders, length, nose to root of tail, 17 to 18 inches.

Small, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches at hips, 3 at shoulders, length, nose to root of tail, 15 to 16 inches.

Pelts are usually turned by trappers before they are thoroughly dry and kept and marketed fur out. Buyers, therefore, must take length of fur into consideration if

they judge sizes from dimensions of boards used in stretching. No. 2 are those caught before fur and pelt are full prime. Nos. 3 and 4 are few and far between. They are the summer caught, badly damaged, etc. Color



WASHINGTON MARTEN SKINS, PALE.

- (1) Small — Length of pelt, 16; greatest width, $3\frac{3}{4}$; shoulders, 3 inches.
- (2) Small — Length of pelt, 15; greatest width, $3\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 3 inches.
- (3) Medium — Length of pelt, 17; greatest width, 4; shoulders, 3 inches.
- (5) Medium — Length of pelt, 17; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{4}$; shoulders, 3 inches.
- (4) Large — Length of pelt, 19; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
- (4) Large — Length of pelt, 20; greatest width, $4\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 4 inches.

values can only be learned by experience and close observation. A very dark, fine furred marten may be worth \$30.00, a brown, fine furred, same size, \$15.00, same size in lighter shades from \$5.00 up to \$15.00. Very few skins class dark except from certain localities in Canada.

The average value of the Hudson Bay Company collection of marten for the past fifty years was only \$4.80, while mink averaged for same time, \$2.00.

Values since 1900, of course, have been higher. Perhaps the years from 1900 to 1915 the Hudson Bay Company collection of marten averaged \$8.00 and mink \$3.50 in London, but remember, about \$1.00 for marten and 50 cents for mink must be deducted for expense in selling. Marten are a difficult fur for the buyer and collector to make any money on. Trappers usually think that they do not get full value for this article. As values are determined by both size and color it is no wonder that those who handle a very few are often mistaken as to their value. The darker the skin, the more valuable, and as most marten are pale or of a yellowish cast they do not command anything like the darker shades.

Marten, like all furs, has its ups and downs. Prices since 1900 up to about 1913 were higher than for some years previous. Even before the outbreak of the great European war values had declined wonderfully, so that during recent years the average value of all skins — United States and Canada — was probably around \$5.00.

A trader, who for many years was in position to see and handle thousands of marten skins yearly from various parts of Canada, says:

Marten differ very much in darkness and richness of their fur. Those that are trapped in mountainous countries with a mixed growth of forests, being smaller and lighter in color. The best skins come from the black spruce country of Labrador and portions of the Mackenzie River country, especially down near the mouth of that

river, or around 65 degrees and north. They are large, of a rich, dark brown color and of a very rich appearance. They are from a half larger to twice the size of skins caught in the higher lands where the growth is birch,



VALUABLE MARTEN SKIN.

Large, Dark, Mackenzie River — Length, 19¾; tail, 9; total, 28¾; greatest width, 4½; shoulders, 4. Fur of under side or belly shown.

balsam, ash, white spruce and alder. Marten caught after October 25 are prime in the extreme North and in Labrador they are prime two weeks earlier than that usually.

Marten, having a thin skin, change from white, or prime, on the flesh side, very rapidly, especially the female. I have caught marten in February, after a three days' rain and thaw, the



NORTHEAST COAST, LABRADOR. MARTEN SKIN.

Large, Dark—Length, 20; tail, 10; total, 30; greatest width, 4¼; shoulders, 3¾ inches. Wrinkles in skin are from folding. A valuable specimen, being darker than the average taken from Maine or the Eastern Provinces of Canada.

bellies of which were as black as in summer, the hair, of course, being unaffected. A few days subsequent cold weather brought others back to the original state of primeness. The dark or finest martens are very easily graded or classed. They are all dark that come from the part of the country designated. They differ one from another only in the length of fur, size of skins and richness. Those, however, that are caught in the mixed soft wood country vary very much in size, color, and fullness of fur, and can even be graded into firsts, seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths in value.

Considerable value and appearance is taken away by the very slovenly way in which some of this class of skins are gotten up. These ordinary marten are caught by all manner of people, from shanty men, railroad men, down to farmers' boys. Many of these people use any kind of old thing to case the skin on, out of all proportion both in length and breadth. In buying furs along the frontier of civilization I have often had to have skins soaked in water and when thoroughly wet, re-cased into something like proper shape.

Marten, born in the Spring as they are, reach almost full growth by the time the trapping season commences. The female becomes unprime much earlier than the male. Generally, if the season remains cold, the trapper continues his endeavors for marten up to the first week in April.

The size of a well proportioned male marten is as follows:

Length, nose to root of tail 20, width at base 5, shoulders $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Female, length, nose to root of tail 17, width at base 4, shoulders $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

These measurements are for the dark and best as before mentioned, that is, those from Labrador and the Mackenzie River Country near the Arctic Ocean. Marten, both male and female, from other localities, will average considerable smaller.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FISHER.

RANGE. — The largest member of the marten family is represented in this fur bearer. The length of body is 24 to 30 inches and the tail from 12 to 18 inches in length. It bears a number of names, such as Pennants Marten, Pekan, Black Cat, etc. The former range of fisher covered the greater portion of North America but continued hunting and trapping has reduced its territory to parts of Canada, Alaska, California and other parts of the Pacific Coast. A very few are still found in the Rocky Mountain States, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, the Adirondacks and Northern New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. The name fisher is misapplied and not appropriate, for while it will eat fish, it does not catch them. Neither does it inhabit the shores of streams and lakes from choice but is partial to high, dry, wooded and rocky sections where the country is hilly and rolling or even mountainous.

FUR, COLOR AND QUALITY.—The fur is coarser and not nearly so valuable, size considered, as that of the marten. The general color might be said to be dark brown, yet some specimens are quite pale while others are almost black. The general color is black or very dark on throat, legs, belly and hind parts; head,

shoulders and upper back grizzly, with grayish white; tail, a brownish black. The fur is not as fine and soft as that of the marten, although longer. Fisher is made up largely into boas and muffs.

HANDLING AND GRADING. — This article is handled cased and should be turned fur out. Skins are classed large, medium, small and the darker, the more valuable, the grade for sizes being:

Large, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches at hips, 6 at shoulders.

Medium, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches at hips, $5\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders.

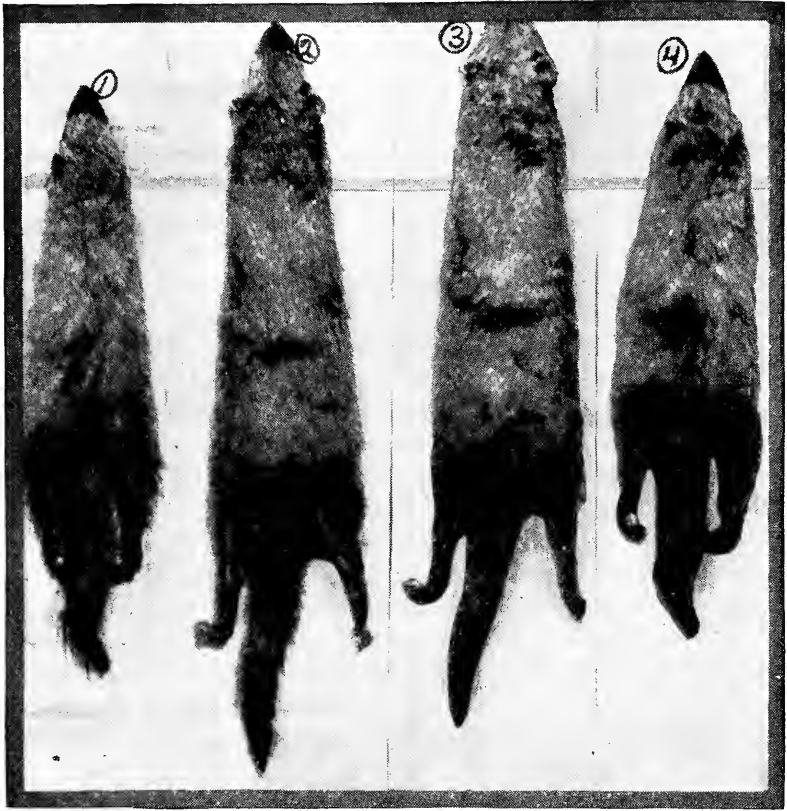
Small, 6 inches at hips, 5 at shoulders.

The length of an average No. 1 pelt from end of nose to root of tail is about 32 inches, although some are an inch or two longer, while others are as much shorter, depending much upon the width stretched. It is not uncommon for skins to measure upwards of 50 inches from tip to tip. The tail is long, full and bushy, being quite valuable, perhaps more so than the tail of any other of the fur bearers.

Fisher are also classified as to color — dark, brown, pale. The best — darkest — come from the North. This article should largely grade dark and brown for it is found only in the timbered localities.

No. 2 and lower grades are the poorly furred and unprime skins but with the exception of some rubbed and a few otherwise springy few classify below No. 2. The size also runs well to large, being more than both medium and small if correctly handled.

The yearly catch was never very large and of recent years has been somewhat further reduced. The



VARIOUS SECTIONS FISHER PELTS — LARGE, MEDIUM, SMALL.

(1) Small — Length, nose to root of tail, 22; tail, 15; total, 37; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 6 inches.

(2) Large — Length, nose to root of tail, 30; tail, 18; total, 48; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 7 inches.

Both are rather light-colored, being dark only on hind quarters and tail. Skins from the Hudson's Bay section.

(3) Medium — Length, nose to root of tail, 25; tail, 13; total, 42; greatest width, 8; shoulders, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This pelt is from the Rocky Mountains and is about an average color of those secured from either Canada or the United States.

(4) Medium — Length, nose to root of tail, $23\frac{1}{2}$; tail, $15\frac{1}{2}$; total, 39; greatest width, $7\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 6 inches. This pelt is from the Lake Superior region.

annual catch is now probably 5,000 or thereabout. The Hudson Bay Company offerings of recent years has varied from 2,000 to 3,000 and another 1,000 is sold by other firms in London yearly. Perhaps another 1,000 are used in America. By far the larger part of the catch is made in Canada. The average value of this article for fifty years prior to 1909 was only about \$8.00 in London. During the years of 1910, 1911 and 1912 it scored, in sympathy with other furs, a heavy advance.

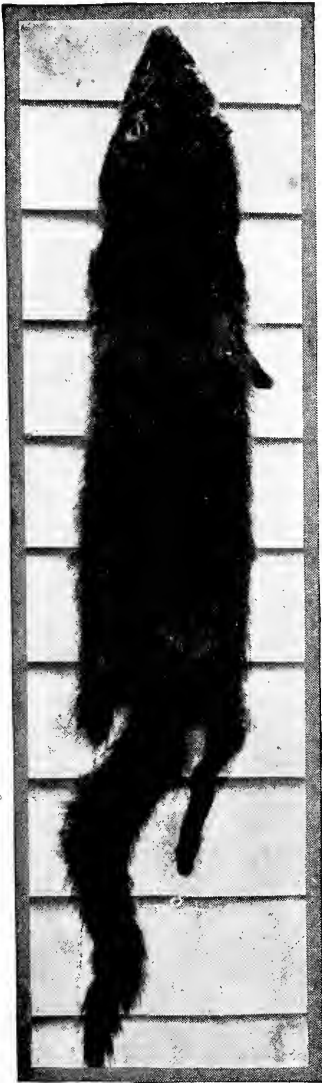
A buyer of fisher skins, in various parts of Canada, for some twenty-five years says:

I don't know how this animal got the name "fisher." There is nothing characteristic of the name about him. One might call him a "big marten" for he is of that family, resorts or lives in the same country, feeds on the same food and without any distinguishing appearance from his cousin, the marten, except in color and size. They at times are found in the low lands and swamps but their usual home and resort is the mountains and along the foot-hills.

The fur is of a brownish grey color and when prime, which is about the same time as the marten, they have a heavy, rich coat of fur. The skin itself is strong and durable. The principal market for its use, for many years, has been Russia.

The Indians trap them as readily as marten in figure four deadfalls only made heavier and larger. Fisher are more plentiful from the Ottawa River west, being seldom found east of the Saguerlay River or north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The length of a full grown male from tip of nose



FINE NORTHERN
FISHER PELT.

Large — Length, nose to root of tail, 31; tail, 19; total, 50; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7 inches. This pelt is not only large but about as dark as they get.

to root of tail is from 26 to 28 inches, width, 7 to 8 inches. The female is usually two-thirds this size. The tail on both sex is fully half the length of the body.

A very strong, pungent odor pertains to these animals. While not as objectionable as that of the skunk, it is still far from pleasant.

In grading these skins for value, size must not always sway the buyer, the darkest and finest fur being more often found on the smaller sizes and females than on the extra large ones. As already said the duration of the prime state of these animals coincides very closely with that of the marten, from October to early April. During most of this period the skin is white and the fur rich and glossy.

The fisher is not like the wolverine, maliciously destructive. In destroying marten deadfalls he is merely endeavoring to get at the bait. When the trapper constructs a deadfall sufficiently large he catches as readily as a marten.

CHAPTER XXV.

LYNX

THE CANADA LYNX. — RANGE. — The American or Canada Lynx is found throughout most of the wooded parts of Canada. It is fairly plentiful in Alaska and the Pacific Coast States. It is seldom found south of North Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Maine. Nova Scotia and Eastern Hudson Bay produce the softest and best furred skins. California and north-west lynx is coarser in fur and in shade more red than those of the best sections.

COLOR. — In the severest climate lynx are the lightest colored but the fur is thick and soft. The feet have great pads or cushions of thick hair to protect them from snow and frost. The upper part of the under fur is a sort of red brown but next to the skin it is drab or blue. The blue skins are quite rare but the drab or maltese color when found, is very handsome. The fur on the belly is much longer than on the back; it is about three inches in length, soft and white with rather dim, dark spots. The tail is only two or three inches long and the ears are furnished with tufts or tassels of dark hair. In all specimens there is a beard or fringe of whiskers which encircles the face. The whiskers are white and bristly and the claws keen and retractile.

SIZES AND USES. — A moderate sized lynx is about three feet in length and stands eighteen inches high. The hind legs are very much longer than the front



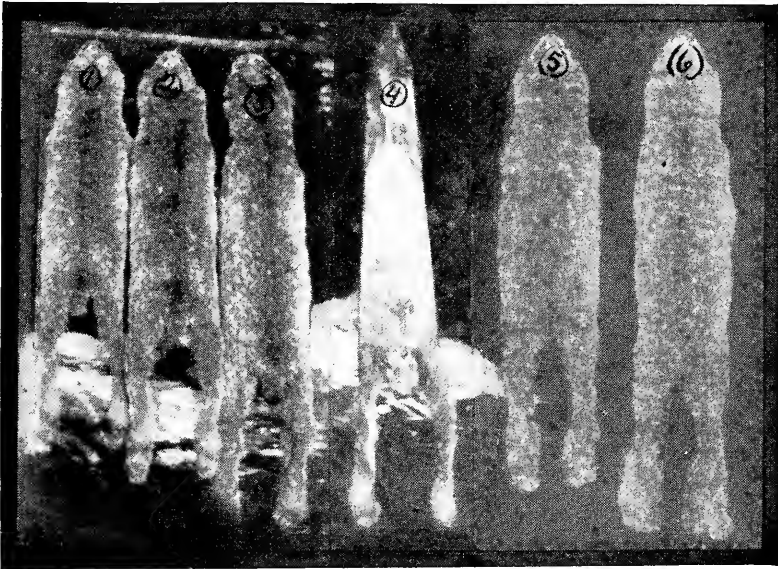
TRAPPER, LYNX AND SKINS.

The middle pelt is one taken from same sized animal as the one being held up. Note how large and furry the feet and legs are.

ones. Lynx lose their beautiful coat in summer and are covered with brown hair. The skin is rather thin except at the neck and head where it is much thicker as if it were a provision of nature to protect the males when fighting. Lynx fur is used both natural and dyed over a large part of the civilized world. Many skins are dyed black, some brown, blue or silvered. The

fur of the belly makes handsome boas, muffs and trimmings. Large increases in the catch of lynx occur every two or four years. On these occasions increase appears to be caused by rabbits being periodically plentiful, which is the natural food.

HANDLING AND GRADING. — Skins should be cased and turned fur side out by the catcher as soon as dry. Lynx is assorted for sizes and Nos. 2, 3 and 4. The



NORTHERN AND NORTHWESTERN LYNX SKINS.

(1) Small — Length of pelt, 31; tail, $4\frac{1}{2}$; total, $35\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 9 inches.

(2) Medium — Length of pelt, 35; tail, 5; total, 40; greatest width, 11; shoulders, 10 inches.

(3) Large — Length of pelt, 40; tail, $5\frac{1}{2}$; total, $45\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 12; shoulders, 11 inches.

Northern section skins, measured on fur side.

(4) Large — Length of pelt, 43; tail, $5\frac{1}{2}$; total, $48\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 10; shoulders, 8 inches. Ontario skin — measured on pelt side.

(5) Large — Length of pelt, 42; tail, $5\frac{1}{2}$; total, $47\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 12; shoulders, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

(6) Medium — Length of pelt, 36; tail, 5; total, 41; greatest width, 11; shoulders, 10 inches. Northwestern section skins — measured on fur side.

best, finest and heaviest furred are from the far North. This fur is not assorted for color. Grades according to sizes are:

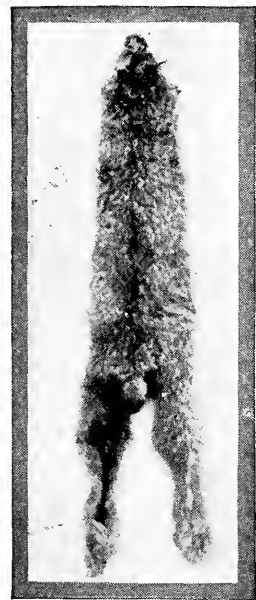
Large, 11 at hips, $9\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders; length, end of nose to root of tail, 38 inches.

Medium, $9\frac{1}{2}$ at hips, $8\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders; length, end of nose to root of tail, 34 inches.

Small, $8\frac{1}{2}$ at hips, $7\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders; length, end of nose to root of tail, 30 inches.

Very few lynx other than prime skins are secured. The No. 2 and lower grades will be the rubbed and shedding mostly, as few are caught in the fall before they are prime. Those early caught will be short in fur, having a "flat" appearance and the pelt as well may show unprime.

Sizes, as given, will, of course, vary somewhat in the skins from different parts of the country. Again some pelts may be handled different from measurements given. If stretched wider, length for large will be less, while if handled narrow, length will be more. A smaller, well handled and full furred skin will go for No. 1 than if not properly cared for.



ALASKA LYNX
SKIN.

Medium—Length of pelt, 36; tail, 5; total, 41 inches; greatest width, 11; shoulders, 8; hind legs when spread, 22.

The catch yearly is probably much more than the offerings at the London sales would indicate, as thousands are used in America by taxidermists and furriers. More than three-fourths of the catch is in Canada.

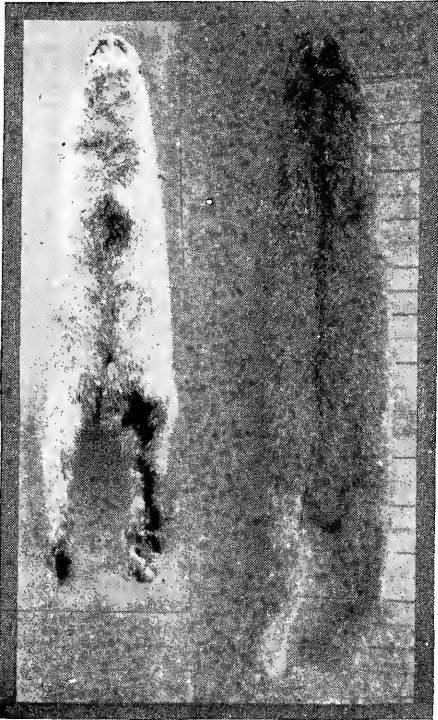
The following was furnished by a party who was so

situated that he saw thousands of lynx skins brought in and sold or traded to the Hudson Bay Company, at various Canadian posts :

The Canadian lynx (loup cervier) is common all over the wilds of Canada. Their stamping ground is in

and around young growth of timber, such places being the home of rabbits, partridge and other small game which constitutes the lynx's principal food.

The fur of these animals while not very long is of a fine, silky texture and of a pleasing grey color. Unless in an unprime state the skin is not very strong and has to be handled with care. In the summer months a lynx is the most dejected and miserable looking animal that roams the forest. They are almost utterly devoid of hair, so with his short stump of a tail and ungainly walk he must be the butt of all other people of "the glades."



WHITE AND BLUE LYNX SKINS.

(1) Small — Length of pelt, 23; greatest width, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This skin was secured near Great Slave Lake, in the Northwest Territory.

(2) Medium — Length of pelt, 38; greatest width, 8; shoulders, 7 inches. This pelt was well furred. In the Far North an occasional skin of this color as well as white are secured. The blue one was caught in Yukon.

The skins are classified as follows: Large (he); female; small. (Dealers in the United States, I believe, classify large, medium, small). By small I mean of either sex, kitts of the Spring. Many of these kitts are killed by the trappers early in the winter before they have reached their full growth. These kitts when killed in December and January are about half the size of the mother lynx. They are beautifully furred at that time, but lack in size. The three sizes are about as follows:

Large (male) length 48, greatest width 12 inches.

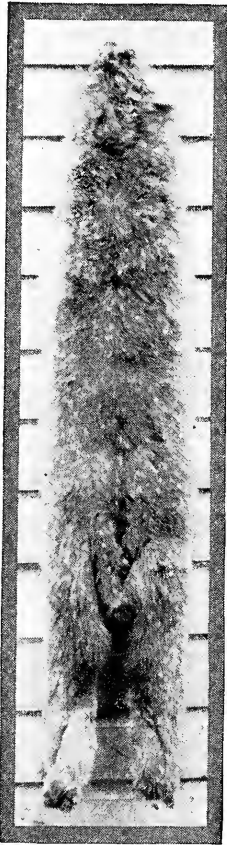
Medium (female) length 40, greatest width 10 inches.

Small, length 30, greatest width 8 inches.

These measurements are from tip to tip, not nose to root of tail.

Like all other animals, if they are well fed while growing, they develop out bigger. I wish to state here that the sizes I give, with reference to size of lynx skins, are more of an approximate to the ordinary run than a fixed size, just as some men are six feet tall and some only five.

When the lynx is prime the pelt side is pure white with a clean, waxy surface, while the fur is of a mottled steel-blue grey and very fine texture.



HEAVY FURRED
CANADIAN
LYNX.

Large — Length of pelt, $42\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 9; shoulders, 8 inches.

In the unprime state, or staged, the fur is scant, of a reddish color and the pelt side is either black spotted or all black. When in the common state the skin is utterly useless for either fur or leather.

Prime lynx became in great demand some years ago and the price bounded from three to four dollars each to twenty and twenty-five dollars. Fashion in furs makes the price and no doubt the future, as the past, will see fluctuations in the value of this article.

CHAPTER XXVI.

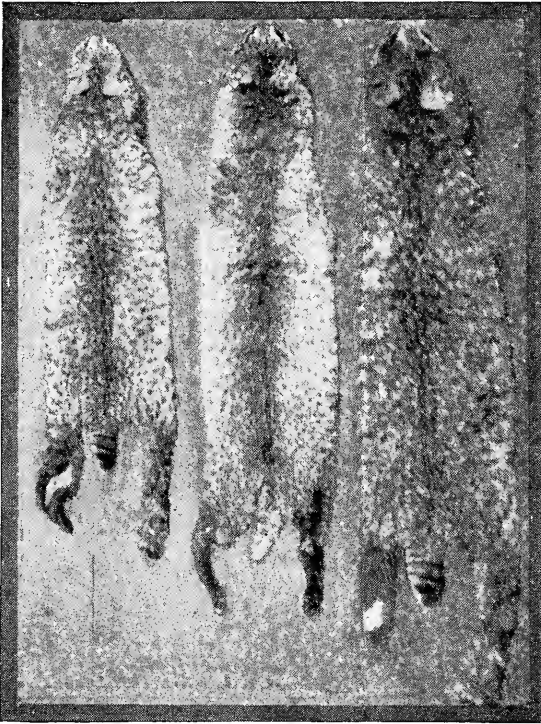
WILD CAT OR BAY LYNX.

RANGE. — The wild cat is really a small type of lynx but differs from the true lynx in being much smaller, short furred and mottled. The tail is very short like that of the Canadian lynx which has given it the name of bob cat in the western part of its range. It inhabits practically all of the United States, except the central portion and part of the west. It is found in the Eastern States, Virginia, Texas, California, Colorado and other Western states as well as those bordering on the Gulf of Mexico and the lower Mississippi River.

COLOR. — The color and markings of wild cats vary greatly according to section. Those of the Western states are pale grey; of California, a reddish cast; of the South, spotted. The coat is often ringed and mottled, but sometimes plain brown, and there are occasional maltese specimens. Skins are sometimes three feet in length by 10 or 12 inches in width when cased. Wild cat is a useful, cheap fur. A few are dyed to imitate true lynx.

GRADE AND HANDLING. — This article from the best sections (where the fur is soft, long and silky) is known to the trade and in some price lists as "Lynx Cat." Some years ago many skins were handled open but they should be cased unless sold to taxidermists for rug or robe pur-

poses. While it really makes little or no difference yet most cased skins are turned and marketed fur out. This



WILD CAT — LARGE, MEDIUM, SMALL.

(1) Small — Length, end of nose to root of tail, 28 inches; greatest width, 7; shoulders, $5\frac{1}{2}$.

(2) Medium — Length, end of nose to root of tail, 33 inches; greatest width, 8; shoulders, $6\frac{1}{2}$.

(3) Large — Length, end of nose to root of tail, 40 inches; greatest width, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $7\frac{1}{2}$. This is an unusually large skin. All measurements taken on fur side.

fur is assorted principally for sizes which are:

Large, 9 at hips, 7 at shoulders, length, nose to root of tail, 36 inches.

Medium, 8 at hips, $6\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders, length, nose to root of tail, 32 inches.

Small, 7 at hips, $5\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders, length, nose to root of tail, 28 inches.

These dimensions will, of course, vary somewhat for skins from the various parts of

the United States. Trappers using narrower or wider boards must be taken into consideration when assorting as well as primeness and quality of fur. The lower

grades will be the early caught, generally an unprime pelt and little or no fur. Such skins grade down to Nos. 2, 3, 4 or go into trash. The judge of fur skins will be able to tell into which they belong; others can best learn from experience. Total yearly catch is probably double the quantity offered at the London sales.

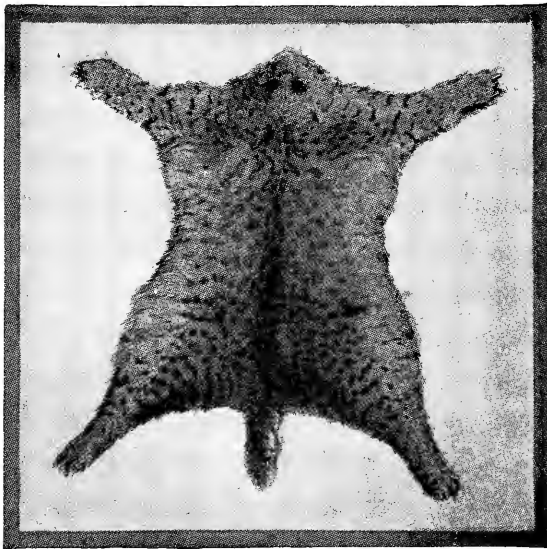


AN AVERAGE
LARGE WILD
CAT SKIN.

There is considerable difference in the size of wild cat in the various parts of the country as well as in the quality of fur. The illustration showing an average large wild cat is taken from one caught in the mountain regions of Pennsylvania and measured as follows: Length, end of nose to root of tail 38, greatest width $8\frac{1}{2}$, shoulders 7 inches. Some skins from the New England states as well as New York, Pennsylvania and even farther south in the Allegheny Mountains are somewhat larger. The dimensions of the skin shown are also a fair average for large from other sections of the country such as Northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota,

etc. Occasionally skins are secured that are much larger. A trapper who has trapped in various states east of the Mississippi River sent measurements of one he caught in Northern Michigan that was 4 feet, 11 inches from end

of nose to claws on hind legs when cased stretched, 8 inches across shoulders and 15 at hind quarters. This trapper, who has caught probably fifty wild cats in his time and seen as many more caught by other trappers,



LARGE WILD CAT SKIN OPEN.

In certain parts of the country a good many skins are used for rugs. Value for this purpose depends not only on size but claws must be left on as well as head properly skinned.

Rocky Mountain sections — many skins are handled open for rug purposes. Where taxidermists want the skins for rug or robe making they often pay more than the skins are worth upon the market for general use. Skins should be in perfect condition to meet the demand of taxidermists and while large skins are usually in best demand, others, of course, are bought. The open skin was taken in one of the Rocky Mountain ranges and repre-

says that the one described was the largest he ever saw. This would indicate that one in a hundred attain to this size even in the Lake Superior region, which may be said to include Northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Southwest Ontario.

In certain parts of the country—mainly

sents a skin of bright color. This skin is above the average for even large skins, being 40 inches from nose to root of tail, 34 from toe to toe across shoulders and 17 at narrowest part.

The buyer of this article should keep in mind that wild cat, bay lynx, catamount, lynx cat, or whatever name this fur may be known by in your locality, can readily be told from the Canadian lynx in that the hair is shorter and coarser, the feet smaller and not so heavily furred as the Canadian lynx. Wild cat furs are often covered with small spots, small dots or stripes, etc., as per the illustrations shown of these furs while lynx are practically of one shade of color, same as mink, marten, fox, coon, muskrat, beaver, otter, etc.

Wild cat are seldom found in Canada while the Canadian lynx inhabits, more or less, all states bordering on Canada. The lynx being the more valuable of the two furs, inexperienced buyers should keep in mind that a few black hairs apparently grown in the ears of a wild cat don't make it a lynx skin. There are "tricks in all trades" and some even change the saying to "the fur trade is all tricks."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CATS — HOUSE AND RING TAIL.

RANGE. — This fur bearer, of little value, house pet, game, poultry and bird destroyer, also mouse and rat catcher occasionally, is plentiful throughout America, being even more abundant in the cities than elsewhere. It is found under the kitchen stove to the deep forests. Scat!

USES. — Although the house cat pelt and fur commands a small price, from 25,000 to 55,000 have been sold during a year in London. Perhaps as many are used in America, so that the catch is well up to 100,000 yearly. This article is used extensively for children's furs such as boas, muffs and for trimming coats.

VALUE AND COLOR. — In the raw condition from first hands skins are usually worth 5 to 10 cents for kittens or half grown, 10 to 15 for mottled and sundry colors, 20 to 30 cents for prime, full sized, well furred black and solid maltese. How well or how poorly furred the domestic cat may be largely depends upon its living quarters. There are many homeless cats, living entirely in the open, upon what game they can catch. These wild or semi-wild cats live by day under barns, old deserted houses, etc. I say by day for when the house cat becomes wild, it quickly takes on nocturnal habits and is but little abroad in daylight.

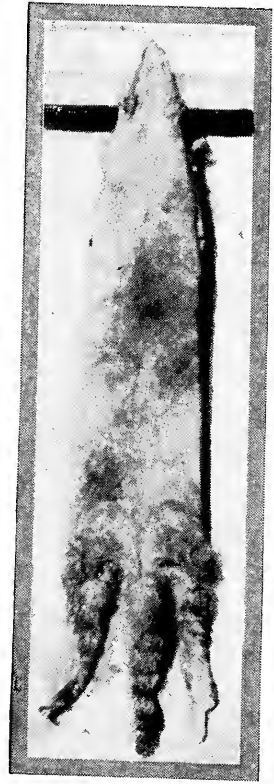
The fur of the wild house cat is far superior to that of the pet cat that has warm rooms to sleep in. Cats of this kind are frequently singed from getting too close to the stove. It is not uncommon to find such shedding during the coldest weather. The woods cat, as hunters and trappers sometimes term the wild house cat, is usually large, long and lank, often giving the hounds of the coon hunter a stiff chase to tree. Every one that is killed and skinned adds a few cents to the fur hunters. At the same time a small game and bird destroyer has been put out of the way.

Superstition exists today in the minds of many enlightened persons in regard to killing cats. They believe that such an act will bring bad luck. We are unable to see that life is any dearer to a cat than to a fox, mink, skunk, coon or any other animal that is killed for its fur.



HOUSE CAT —
MALTESE.

Large — Length, nose to root of tail, 26; greatest width, 7; shoulders, 6 inches.



HOUSE CAT—GREY.

HANDLING AND GRADING. — Boys and the inexpe-

Large — Length of pelt, 28; tail, 10; total, 38 inches; greatest width, 6½; shoulders, 5½. Measured on pelt side.

rienced trappers are the greatest cat pelt producers, yet thousands are killed and skinned by hunters and trappers if caught. This fur should be cased. The fur is of satisfactory quality during December, January and February. The best furred pelts are from the Northern states. While the article is of small value, yet it is classed not only for sizes large, medium, small but as well for colors, not dark, brown, pale, but black, maltese, sundry. Black and maltese are practically of the same value and worth more than sundry or other colors.



HOUSE CAT
BLACK.

Large—Length nose to root of tail 20; greatest width 9; shoulders 8 inches. Pelt should have been stretched longer and not so wide, also poorly skinned.

Cat skins should be stretched long and narrow, more the shape of fox or mink, rather than short like skunk. The following dimensions are much used by trappers in making boards for the various sizes:

Large, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches at hips, $5\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders.

Medium, 6 inches at hips, 5 at shoulders.

Small, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches at hips, $4\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders.

Length of large from tip of nose to root of tail, about 30 inches, medium 26, small 22.

RING TAIL CAT—RANGE.—They are found only in the warmer parts of the Southwest and West, namely Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Southern California and

North several hundred miles along the Pacific Coast. They are more plentiful in Mexico than any portion of the United States unless it would be Southwestern Texas.

SIZE AND HANDLING.—This fur producer is about the size of the mink or civet cat, the weight of a grown one being seldom much over four pounds. The skins should be cased and may be marketed either fur or flesh side out. The average hide will be only about 4 inches wide and 26 from tip of nose to end of tail—about half of which is tail.

GRADING. — Values have ranged from 10 to 75 cents. Ring tails (perhaps so called from the many rings on tail, having more than coon) are not graded for colors,



CALIFORNIA RINGTAIL.

Length, nose to root of tail, 18; tail, 18; total, 36; greatest width, 5; shoulders, 3¾ inches. Classed as large.



SOUTHWEST RING TAIL.

Large—Length nose to root of tail 20; tail 20; total 40; greatest width 5½; shoulders 4¼ inches. This pelt represents a large and well furred specimen—in fact one of the very best.

only as to sizes, large, medium and small and degrees of primeness. While the fur is soft and fluffy, absorbing dye readily, the quality of fur is poor. The color is a light, greyish brown on back, lighter on sides and belly. There are a good many unprime, both as to pelt and fur, offered the fur trade, coming as it does from so far south. The No. 2 may, therefore, be those not prime in fur or a damaged pelt, owing to warm or wet weather. Nos. 3 and 4 are those with little or no fur growth, or a badly damaged pelt. The total catch is only a few thousand yearly and mostly sold to dealers in the Southwest.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BADGER.

RANGE. — This thick pelted animal, and of rather small value, from the fur point of view, is found mainly west of the Mississippi, being most plentiful in the prairie sections of the West and Northwest. They are also occasionally found in Wisconsin, Michigan and other states as well as parts of Southern Canada. It is not found in Labrador or Alaska.

DESCRIPTION. — It forms a branch of the weasel tribe, characterized by a long body, short tail and it secretes an odor. This animal is one of the most powerful of the weasel species. They are great diggers, having long claws, strong feet, with neck and shoulders a mass of muscle.

COLOR AND VALUE. — The color of the hair and fur is grey and yellowish — grey on the outside and yellowish underneath; on legs and neck dark or nearly black. Two light colored lines mark the head from nose to base of skull. This fur has certain uses but the hair itself is of most importance, being used for paint and lathering brushes, depending upon length. In order to be of most value, the fur should be 2 inches long or even 3 if guard hairs are to be taken into consideration. Sometimes the coat of a prime badger is only about one-half inch in length. Such extremely short coated skins are almost worthless, even though the pelt is large and prime.



BADGER SKINS — OPEN AND CASED.

- (1) Large, Open — Tip of nose to root of tail, 32; tail, 7; greatest width, 22; shoulders, 20 inches.
- (2) Large, Cased — Tip of nose to root of tail, 30; tail, 6; greatest width, 11; shoulders, 10 inches.

HANDLING.—This is one of the few articles in which it makes little difference whether handled open or cased, being worth practically the same. Most skins are, however, handled open. Skins are usually in fur from November until March

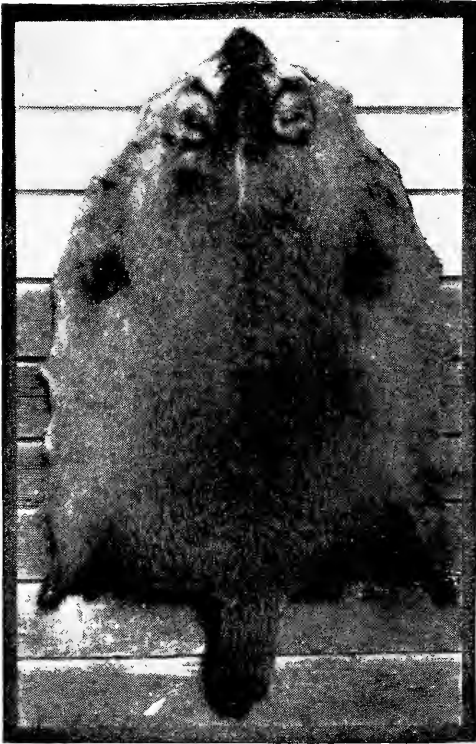


OREGON BADGER, OPEN.

Large—Length of pelt, 34; width, 20 inches at hips and shoulders.

or a little later, especially in Northern localities. Primeness of pelt is sometimes of no consequence as regards character or fur growth, in the badger's coat. The pelt may be prime but fur so short or entirely lacking that the skin has little or no value. Opossum is the only other pelt that may be prime or lacking in fur. The "prime" opossum pelt, but not having full fur growth is easily detected by the experienced opossum fur buyer by the small dark spot or spots on the neck of such pelts—see page 251. Badger have no such marks, although a glance at the fur side is sufficient.

Badger are assorted for sizes—large, medium, small. No attention is paid to colors but length and condition of fur is considered. As this fur is handled more or less



NORTH DAKOTA BADGER, OPEN.

Large — Length of pelt, $29\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 7; total, $36\frac{1}{2}$; greatest width, 23; shoulders, $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Short furred although caught February 21.

both cased and open a No. 1 skin handled either way is not only illustrated but the dimensions given.

Large, open, tip of nose to root of tail 32 inches, width at base 22, shoulders 20 inches, tail 7 inches.

Large, cased, tip of nose to root of tail 30, width at hips 11, shoulders 10, tail 6 inches.

Medium will be about four inches shorter and two inches narrower at hips and shoulders for open skins and one inch at hips and shoulders for cased.

Small will be about the same proportion less than the medium is under the large. Buyers of this fur should remember that a prime hide does not always mean a full furred one. The total catch of badger is something like 10,000 a year.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WOLVERINE.

RANGE. — The territory in which this animal is still occasionally found reaches north to the Arctic Circle and South to the Great Lakes on the Eastern side of the continent and as far South as Colorado and Utah in the West. They are probably most plentiful in Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia and the Northern portions of the Rocky Mountains, although not plentiful anywhere.

COLOR AND QUALITY. — The body is covered with a thick, wooly, under fur while the top hair is long and coarse. The general color of the body is a dark or dusky brown with a much lighter strip crossing the shoulders and extending down each side. The fur is of fair value, being used mainly for rugs and robes, although used to some extent in fur articles for wear — muffs, capes, trimming.

HANDLING AND GRADING. — This article should be cased. To the fur trade it is known as wolverine but hunters and trappers perhaps know the animal best (or worst) by some of the following names: carcajou, glutton, mountain devil, skunk bear. The average sized grown animal will measure 30 inches or thereabouts, from end of nose to root of tail so that the pelt will

stretch fully 3 feet from nose to root of tail. The length of tail is some 13 inches. The shape of the skins will be about the same as the larger coon skins when cased.



NORTHWESTERN
CANADA WOL-
VERINE SKIN.

Large — Length, nose to root of tail, 51 (tail off); greatest width, $9\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This pelt is stretched several inches longer than the average large.

This fur is graded large, medium, small and further as to color, the finer furred and darker being most valuable. Skins are prime from the middle of November until March. The No. 2 are usually the rubbed or shedding, as few are caught or killed early in the season. The yearly catch is not large, being probably under 3,000.

GENERAL REMARKS.—It is a most mischievous animal on the trap line. Being very difficult to trap itself because of an inordinate degree of suspicion, it visits the trap line, springing traps, carrying away baits and hiding them and also destroying any such furs, as valuable marten, it may find in the traps. Many a trapper has abandoned a certain neighborhood when a wolverine found it and began its depredations on the trap line. Some wolverines are trapped, however, by hiding the bait, as in a cache, instead of placing it out open and conspicuous. Through its efforts to break

into such a bait concealed place, it forgets to avoid traps that may lie concealed.

The wolverine feeds on mice, woodchucks and other small animals and on the carrion of large game, either left behind by hunters or that have been wounded by them and lost. Wolverines are active throughout the winter and are great travelers, covering many miles in a single night.

A trader who in his many years' experience was located in several places in Canada, says:



NORTHERN WOLVERINE,
OPEN.

Medium — Length, nose to root of tail, 30; tail, 12; greatest width, 18; narrowest part back of shoulders, 14 inches. This pelt was not properly stretched. The spot on back is of a different color than balance of fur. Spots or stripes of this or similar kind are on all wolverines.

This animal, under the name of wolverine (or carcajou) and several other names, is known all over Canada, being heartily detested by trappers wherever found. Its fur value is not great, size considered, but as a destroyer of fur in traps it has no equal, often following a line of traps for miles.

Except at the mating season you rarely find more than one at a time in quite an extent of country. Over this well defined country these solitary marauders beat up and down, destroying, devouring and defiling whatever they find. The wolverine can give points to any fox, in cunning, and he seems imbued with a

fiendish impulse to do all the mischief he can. Authenticated stories of what this "bush devil" has done would fill pages and from any one not conversant with the wilds, would hardly receive credence. With the cognomen of "Indian Devil" he is well named.

A full grown is about 34 inches long, nose to tip of tail, 10 inches broad and is, when prime, of a dark coffee color with an orange stripe, more or less well defined running down each side. The ears are rounded at the tip and the tail is about a quarter the length of the body. The skin or pelt is very strong and durable and the fur, which is thick, wears well and does not change its color by the sun's rays as most other furs do.

Cased, with the pelt side out, traders not well versed in skins have been known to purchase one of these, thinking it was a fisher. One can always tell the difference by the tail and ears. A fisher's tail tapers off to a sharp point while that of the wolverine terminates abruptly as if chopped off in infancy. The ears, as I have said, are rounded and set closer to the head.

Considering the skins of these animals are so rare and their durability unsurpassed, it is strange they do not command a higher price with the manufacturer.

Wolverine, like fisher, are very partial to the flesh of the porcupine and they are the only two animals I know of that deliberately attack and successfully compass the "quilly gentleman."

CHAPTER XXX.

WHITE WEASEL.

RANGE. — While the ordinary weasel covers a wide range of country, it is of practically no value except where inhabiting a latitude sufficiently cold, in the winter months, that the ordinary brown coat turns white. The “white weasel country” includes all of Alaska, Canada, Newfoundland, New England States, those bordering on Canada, Wyoming, Colorado, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Northern parts of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

COLOR. — The only milk white weasel skins are the ermine or stoat of Europe. They are more valuable than the American weasel, its near relative. The farther north the weasel is found in this country, the better furred and whiter as a rule. No weasel are strictly white. Even the best skins are tinged with yellow. All weasels everywhere are brown in summer. In the colder regions the coat begins to turn white in October and by the middle or last of November all are white. In the meantime there are many intermediate shades, such as white streaks, running through the brown, or else the coat is spotted, or half white and half brown. Others are a reddish grey when the turning white hairs are blended with the brown. None of the various color markings are worth more than the brown, which has been 5 cents or less.

VALUE AND USES. — Prior to 1900 white weasel was of little value, selling for about 10 cents for the best skins. About the years 1904-5 the price advanced wonderfully, as high as \$1.50 being paid. Of more recent years values have ranged both above and below the dollar mark for best. Weasel are used for trimming coats of some dark fur where the contrast between black and white or brown and white makes an extremely attractive and showy garments, suitable for riding coats, street wear, etc. The demand for this article seems to be greater in the European countries than on this side.

SIZES. — This fur animal varies greatly in the sections where it turns white during the winter months and what is large in some places would be called medium in others. Some of the largest sizes noted are:

Massachusetts, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, 21 from tip to tip, 6 of which was tail.

British Columbia, one of the largest of 61 caught measured $22\frac{1}{2}$ from tip to tip, 9 being length of tail. The smallest in this lot was only 8 inches from tip to tip.

One selected from a lot of over 100 as caught by trappers from all parts of the white weasel country measured $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, 26 from tip to tip, 9 of which was tail.

I have found three or four distinct sizes of the white weasel, writes a Central Minnesota trapper. The figures given are the measurements taken by myself from the skins of the white weasel last winter, and as I had forty skins to select from, the average from the figures given are correct. The measurements given are from tip of

nose to tip of tail. The length of tail runs from two and a half inches on a small weasel to six inches on an extra large.



MINNESOTA PRIME WEASEL SKINS.

Top row are medium, ranging from $14\frac{1}{2}$ to 16 inches long, including tail; greatest width, $2\frac{1}{2}$; shoulders, 2.

Bottom row are small, ranging from 13 to 14 inches long, including tail; greatest width, 2; shoulders, $1\frac{3}{4}$.

The length of these skins is sufficient to grade better, but they were stretched long and narrow.

LENGTH OF WHITE
WEASEL FROM
TIP TO TIP.

Extra Large— $17\frac{1}{2}$
inches.

Large—15 inches.

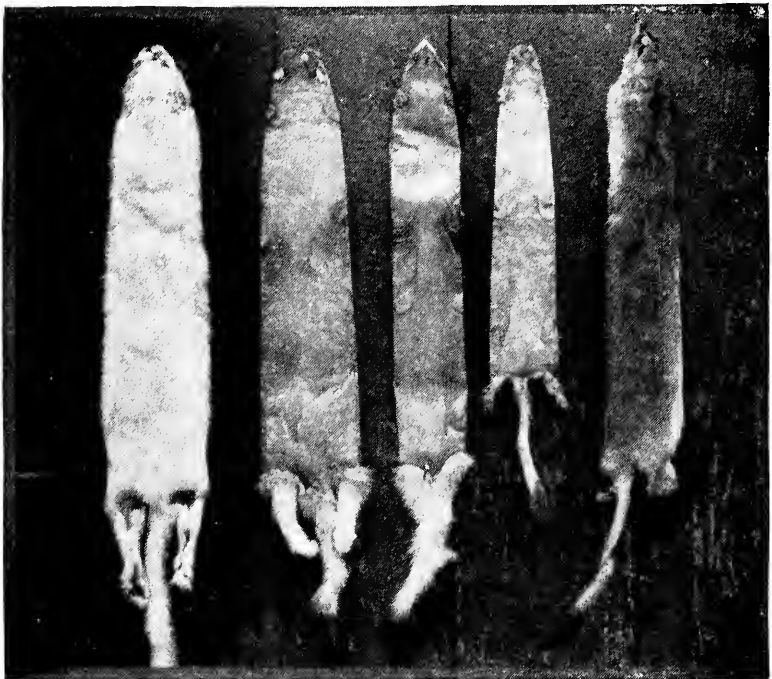
Medium—13 inches.

Small— $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

A traveling buyer, who has bought thousands of the skins throughout Michigan, Northern Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, says: "A large weasel on the drying board will measure 18 or 19 inches, tail included, the length of skin alone being about 12 inches, width in widest place

2½ to 2¾ inches. It is rare that width is 3 inches. Medium sizes are from one to two inches less in length and nearly the width of the large skins. Small, or kitts, are 13 to 14 inches in length including tail and the width at base of skin is about 2 inches.

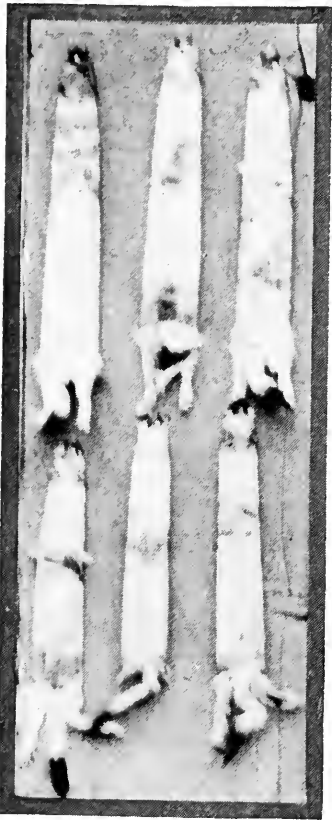
HANDLING AND GRADING. — Weasel should be cased and left fur side in when removed from stretching



WEASEL SKINS — FUR AND PELT SIDE.

- (1) Large, Fur Out — Length tip to tip, 19; greatest width, 2¾; shoulders, 2¼ inches.
- (2) Large, Fur In — Length, including tail, 18; greatest width, 2¾; shoulders, 2¼ inches.
- (3) Medium, Fur In — Length, including tail, 17; greatest width, 2; shoulders, 2 inches.
- (4) Small, Fur In — Length, including tail, 13; greatest width, 2; shoulders, 1½ inches.
- (5) Greyback, or in the turning stage from brown to white.

boards. This article is assorted for sizes, large, medium, small and also as to colors, white, stains, greybacks, etc. As already shown, sizes in the different parts of the country vary, yet the following figures are based on actual measurements of skins from various parts of the country:



SIX ONTARIO, CANADA,
WEASEL SKINS.

Top row are each $11\frac{1}{2}$ long, exclusive of tail; $2\frac{1}{4}$ wide at tail and 2 at shoulders.

Bottom row, 10 long, exclusive of tail; $1\frac{7}{8}$ wide at tail, $1\frac{1}{2}$ at shoulders.

Tails on all are practically of same length — 4 inches.

Large, length to base of tail 13 inches, tail 6 inches; over all 19 inches, width at base $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, at shoulders $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Medium, length to base of tail 11 inches, tail 5 inches; over all 16 inches, width at base $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, at shoulders 2 inches.

Small, length to base of tail 9 inches, tail 4 inches, over all 13 inches, width at base 2 inches at shoulders $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches. These measurements are about standard size but some variation should be allowed. A weasel measuring 12 inches to the base of tail is usually graded large, while others will be larger than the figures given.

Buying from first hand, that is the catcher, is usually on grade. In addition to large, medium, small, skins are further classified white, yellow.

greybacks, etc., the "yellow cast" from many localities being as high as two-thirds, including those badly "stained" to some only slightly. Dealers know all this and if buying flat, figure on same. No brown or grey backs are taken on a flat deal unless previously arranged.



LARGE MAINE
WEASEL.

Length of pelt,
15½; tail, 8½;
greatest width, 3;
shoulders, 2½
inches.

The dividing line between the brown and the "white turning," generally speaking, is near 41 degrees north latitude or Central Pennsylvania, North Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, South Iowa and Nebraska. In the Rocky Mountain region and high altitudes they are found somewhat further to the south. The annual catch is probably more than 300,000, two-thirds being secured in Canada.

This small animal, like most of the other fur bearers, varies in size not only throughout Canada but in the "ermine" states of the United States. A trapper of the Lake Superior region, who has probably caught a thousand since the writer became acquainted with him and in whom we have confidence, furnished the following from his returns:

Large, tip to tip 18, tail 5 to 6, hips 2, shoulders 1½ inches.

Medium, tip to tip 15, tail 4 to 5, hips 1¾, shoulders 1⅓ inches.

Small, tip to tip 12, tail 3 to 4, hips 1½, shoulders 1⅓ inches.

This trapper keeps a record of sizes, date caught,

shipped, etc., so that his figures must be correct. Measurements are for pelt side. If fur side is out, add about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch for hips and shoulders for the three sizes.

Note that a 6 inch tail is the longest mentioned (this perhaps is an average) for from other localities where the skins are an inch or two longer and proportionately wider, tails frequently measure two inches more, or 8 inches. The length of tail is usually considered a fair guide as to the size of skin but not always.

CHAPTER XXXI.

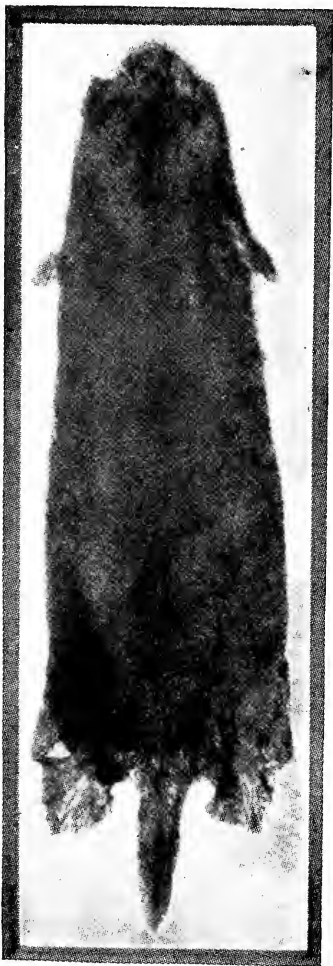
SEA OTTER.

RANGE. — The former range of this valuable fur bearer was from Santa Barbara Islands, just off the coast from Los Angeles, north along the coast of California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska to the Aleutian Islands and across to Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands off the northern coast of Asia.

Since 1912 the catch has been small and the range of the few remaining seems to be confined to the Aleutian and Kuril Islands.

SIZE AND HANDLING. — A full grown sea otter measures from nose to tip of tail, anywhere from 4 feet to 4 feet and 6 inches. The largest weigh up to about 80 pounds. The skin is very loose on the body and when stretched or "nailed out" on a frame, the largest have been known to be as much as 8 feet 6 inches from tip to tip by 3 feet wide. Skins are handled both open and cased. The white hunters, as a rule, skin by ripping up from end of tail along belly up to the under lip, then from the middle of the breast down each fore-leg and from the anus down the inner edge of each hind-flipper (leg). The pelt is then stretched in much the same way as a coon. The otter hunters call this "staked out."

The native hunters skinned their otter "on the round," that is, a cut being made along the inner edge of the flippers (hind legs) through the anus and down the tail. The skin is taken off by gradually cutting and pulling down over the body and head. The pelt being stretched on boards and when wedged a full grown skin will measure 6 feet 6 inches to 7 feet from tip to tip, having a width of 14 to 15 inches at hind quarters and 10 to 11 at shoulders. Regardless of which method is used in skinning and stretching, much care is taken to remove all fat, etc., and the skin scraped and dried. The cured skins when dried are turned fur side out.



SEA OTTER PELT.

FUR AND COLOR.—The fur is from 1 to 1½ inches in length, very fine, soft, dense and silky with many longer hairs which are coarser and stiffer. Near the pelt the fur is of lustrous, pearly whitish color, gradually darkening towards the ends so that the out-

side is black in the best skins and various shades of brown in others. The finest skins, black, have white silvery

hairs scattered quite evenly, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart all over. Pelts of this kind, if full size, properly furred and tipped, of a uniform color throughout (head excepted, which is probably white) is considered a No. 1 skin and commands a good price.

The next grade is somewhat lighter, yet dark colored, although it may be well furred and tipped. Next is the dark brown skins and then those of lighter shades, which may or may not have silvery tips. Next are the rusty brown and last the "woolly" skins which have short fur but few or no long hairs and the color may be an ash-grey or mouse. Some pelts of this description look as if the fur had been clipped with shears.

DEGREES OF PRIMENESS. — Of course, the various grades as described, have different degrees of quality. With perhaps the exception of the best grades of black fox, size, perfection of fur and evenness of color and tips are of first consideration. There are some pelts large, well furred, even in color, but the tips are not evenly distributed and in some pelts there are none, on others there may be a "woolly" patch (sometimes in the middle of the back) which greatly detracts from its value. Again other are of a beautiful black, furred evenly and tipped from shoulders to end of tail but the head and belly are white or practically so. In others the tips have a singed appearance or may be slightly curled up, while still others the ends appear broken off. The imperfect skins, as a rule, are those of full grown animals. Young and not full grown are usually even colored and fur of the same quality throughout but the silvery tips are often too

abundant and close. In some skins the longer hairs are not silvery, as they should be, but may be black or brown.

The buying of sea otter was a ticklish business, especially where competition was strong, for it took experience and judgment to be able to correctly classify the skins into the proper grade. The animal now, however, is so rare that very few traders, even along the Northern Pacific Coast or the Behring Sea, see a pelt much less get an opportunity to buy one. Skins are always prime and range in value from \$200 to \$1,000. This animal is now quite scarce, dwindling from upwards of 5,000 in the early 80's to 1,000 in the 90's and to a few hundred since 1900. In 1913 only 81 were caught.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MOUNTAIN LION.

RANGE. — The range of what used to be best known as panther once included all the timbered and mountain sections of the United States. At present it is found in the Rocky Mountain States and those bordering on the Gulf of Mexico; in Canada it is probably found in parts of British Columbia; it is pretty generally distributed over Mexico.

DESCRIPTION. — This animal, known under several names, such as cougar, puma, panther, catamount and mountain lion, is the largest of the cat tribe in either North or South America. Mountain lion is a powerful beast of prey, is short haired, of a light tan or fawn color, although some have a grayish coat and still others yellowish brown, according, no doubt, to age and season. A large male will measure nine or ten feet from end of nose to tip of tail. Ordinary sizes, however, do not exceed about 8 feet from tip to tip. The weight of the large ones is from 160 to 175 pounds. Heavier ones have been killed but the weight of the most are less than 150 pounds.

HABITS — This bloodthirsty animal is very destructive to deer and other game — even worse than timber wolves. It also kills stock for ranchers located in the foot hills near mountains. Owing to its game and stock killing, there is a large bounty on mountain lion scalps in

most of the states where it is found. Most of the blood-curdling tales told about panthers, painters, mountain lions (they are all one and the same animal) are lies pure and simple. Ordinarily, this animal is a coward, afraid of man.



WESTERN MONTANA MOUNTAIN
LION SKIN.

The mountain ranges of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and all states west to the Pacific, as well as those of Southern British Columbia and all of Mexico, are the section from which skins of this animal are principally received.

USES. — Skins are used largely for rugs and to some extent for robes. Large, perfect specimens command a good price, when acceptable, for rugs with mounted heads. For such purposes there can be no defects in the coat, neither can skins be scalped or otherwise mutilated to collect bounty. The toes and nails

must be left on and one missing is a defect.

HANDLING, PRICE, GRADE. — Strictly speaking, the skins do not belong in the fur class. "Mountain Lion, \$2.00 to \$6.00," is about the way this article reads on the fur lists of those who quote them at all. Not being what is properly a fur skin, many dealers in raw furs do not

handle the skins. The skins have a hair growth only — no fur — which is short and not dense.

Skins should be handled open for they are used mostly for rugs and robes. Those who trap or kill mountain lions derive the most money through the existing bounties paid by the respective states. The majority of skins that are sent to fur dealers are those on which bounty has been collected and many have been scalped or otherwise damaged. The value of such pelts range from about \$2.00 to \$6.00 or maybe a little more.

Dealers in furs classify the skins according to size, large, medium, small. Color makes little or no difference. The large sizes, measuring 10 to 11 feet, that we read about being killed, dwindle to 9 feet or less in reality. The average full grown, in fact, will measure 7 feet or thereabouts more often than 8 or more. A pelt that will measure 5 feet from end of nose to root of tail is a large skin; medium, about one foot less, and small, six inches to a foot under medium. Of course, these measurements will vary somewhat.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SEALS — FUR AND HAIR.

ALASKA FUR SEAL — RANGE. — This seal — the most valuable — inhabits Behring Sea and the rookeries (breeding grounds) are the St. Paul and St. George Islands which constitute what are known as the Pribilof Islands. Other than during the breeding season they range southward.

DESCRIPTION. — An average male seal will measure about 6 feet long and weigh near 400 pounds. They have been known to reach a length of $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet and a weight of 600 pounds. Females are much smaller, weighing 150 pounds or less and are usually a few inches under 4 feet in length. The color of the guard or long hairs is chestnut brown to black of males although the old are much mixed with grey, especially on the back; females are usually lighter colored than males.

HISTORY. — From millions of seals which came to the Pribilof Islands to breed when the fur first came into fashion, the herds dwindled to probably 50,000 by 1910. From 1890 to 1910 the North American Commercial Company had the exclusive right to the seal industry, paying an annual rental of \$60,000.00 to the United States, in addition to \$7.62 $\frac{1}{2}$ per skin and 50 cents for each gallon of oil shipped from either St. George or St. Paul Island. There was a further revenue tax of \$2.00 upon each skin.

The seal industry has been a very profitable source of income to the United States Government but owing to pelagic killing (unlawful) by not only Americans but



FUR SEAL SKIN, DRESSED, NATURAL.

This fur is very coarse looking in its natural state but when plucked is soft and rich.

is not apt to regain its former large numbers, yet with the protection now given, the herds should and no doubt will, largely increase.

others, in July, 1911, the United States, Great Britain, Russia and Japan entered into a treaty which provides for the prohibition of pelagic or open sea sealing for a period of fifteen years. During the same year (1911) the United States enacted a provision prohibiting land killing of seals on the Pribilof Islands for a period of ten years, except under certain conditions; a few thousand are killed as food for the natives and skins sold.

While this valuable fur producer

KILLING AND HANDLING. — During the palmy days of the industry, when 100,000 were taken annually, the



FUR SEAL SKIN PLUCKED.

A plucked skin is one having had the long outer or guard hairs removed.

flaying (removing flesh and fat) the skin becomes pinky.

entire number was handled in about six weeks, June 14 to August 1st. While the seals might remain on the islands longer, the fur deteriorates after the latter date. Expert skimmers can remove a pelt in a minute and a half, yet four minutes is the time usually required. After the skins are flayed off they are salted and placed in piles, "hair to fat and salt between." If this is not done at once and the weather is warm, an hour's delay will spoil it. If salt is not properly applied or skins allowed to lay too long without

GRADING.—The skins are assorted as follows.

Middlings, Middling and Smalls — 4 to 5 years.

Smalls — 4 years.

Large Pups — 3 years.

Middling Pups, Small Pups — 2 years.

Extra Small Pups, Grey Pups — 1 year old.

Odd, Faulty.

The general color of males is a dark grizzly, but sometimes yellowish or a light brown. The under fur is thick and heavy and of a deep red color. Skins not in prime condition are known as "stagey."

HAIR SEALS.—There are several different varieties, or species, such as the Greenland, Harp, Foetid and Hooded found in the North Atlantic around Greenland, Labrador, Newfoundland and south as far as the New England Coast. These should not be confused with the pelt and fur of the Alaskan fur seal which furnishes the valuable article, known as sealskin, to the trade. The hair seals are valuable for oil and the skins are used for making leather only.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PELTS, HIDES, SKINS.

WHILE the majority of those that handle furs will not be particularly interested in this chapter, there are fur buyers who handle more or less sheep pelts, hides, calf skins, etc.

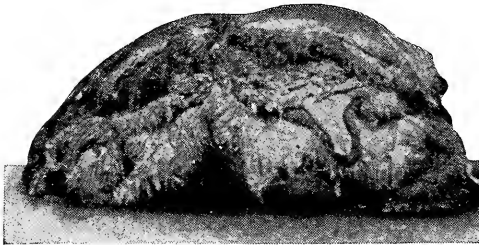
SHEEP PELTS. — In many states the sheep pelt trade is of more importance than is generally known. Traveling country fur buyers handle a good many thousand each year. The writer, during the winter of 1892-93, bought about 2,000 pelts from farmers in Gallia and Meigs Counties in Southern Ohio. At that time the hilly farms of that part of the state were covered with sheep (some of them dead) which I bought from 10 cents up. Those at 10 cents I skinned — hard, cold, disagreeable work — but I made good wages.

No doubt there are places now where the buying of sheep pelts would add materially to the fur buyer's income. In addition to pelts from sheep that have died from disease and improper care, farmers kill for mutton and often have a number of pelts ranging from shearling up. Country and town butchers at certain seasons have pelts for sale.

Wool on pelts with a growth of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or less is classed as shoddy. The wool is not worth as much per pound as longer growth. Pelts bought green should be

salted. A large pelt, during the summer season, will require about a half gallon of salt. Butchered pelts are worth more than those that have died from disease, as both pelt and wool are valuable; whereas the diseased pelt is of little value except for the wool. Pelts are classified as follows:

- Packer and Country sheep pelts.
- Packer and Country lambs.
- Packer and Country shearing.
- Montana Butcher dry pelts, full wooled.
- Utah butcher dry pelts, full wooled.
- Colorado and New Mexico dry pelts, butcher.
- Montana and Utah murrains.
- Dry flint shearlings, good stock.
- Dry flint shearlings, damaged.
- Colorado and New Mexico, country collections.



BUNDLE OF SHEEP PELTS.

Packer pelts are those taken off by the large packing houses where thousands of sheep are slaughtered each week. The average buyer will not handle any of these as they are sold in car lots direct to pullers, tanners, etc. Sheep pelts are done up in bales of some six to a dozen, depending upon length of wool. The two strings (hide sisal) should first be laid down and crossed. Bottom and top skins should be pelt out so as to keep wool as free from dirt as possible.

HIDES, CALF SKINS. — The opportunity to buy hides and calf skins will depend largely upon how near you are to some established hide dealer. Where there are such it may not pay to handle as the margin of profit will be small. If no dealer is near, you should be able to gather up a good many, especially during the fall and early winter months when farmers kill for their own use. In localities where the dairy business is carried on extensively most calves are either killed and skinned or soon vealed so that many skins are sold.

The classifications of hides and skins are as follows :

No. 1 and 2 heavy steers, 60 pounds and over.

No. 1 and 2 heavy cows, 60 pounds and over.

No. 1 and 2 buff hides, 40 to 60 pounds.

No. 1 and 2 side-branded steers, all weights.

No. 1 and 2 side-branded cows, all weights.

No. 1 and 2 bulls, all weights.

No. 1 and 2 extreme light hides — 25 to 40 pounds.

No. 1 and 2 calf skins, 8 to 15 pounds — no skins with kip hair.

No. 1 and 2 light calf skins, 7 to 8 pounds.

No. 1 and 2 kip, 15 to 25 pounds.

Deacons, 7 pounds and less.

Slunks, skin of an unborn calf.

No. 1 and 2 horsehides — all weights.

Pony, colt skins and glue stock.

Hog skins.

The usual difference between Nos. 1 and 2 hides is one cent a pound in extreme (25 to 40), buffs (40 to 60), and heavy cows ; one and one-half cent a pound on steers,

calf and kip. Bulls, branded steers and cows generally sell flat, not selected. Horse hides, hog skins, deacons and slunks sell at so much per skin. Size and free from rubbed(dragging) determine grade and value of horse hides.

Hides are also further classified green, green salted, dry and dry flint. A green hide is one as taken off the animal and includes tail bone, horns, sinews, etc., not



HIDE (CATTLE) DONE UP, TIED,
READY FOR SHIPMENT.

salted. A green salted is one that has been salted folded or spread out for at least 24 hours and up to six months or even longer. A dry salt is one that has been salted but left spread out where it will dry out within a couple

of weeks. A flint is one that has been dried without salt.

The price increases from a green to a flint but as the weight decreases there is little, or no difference, in the price that a hide will bring in the several ways that it may be handled. When hides were cheap there was but one cent difference between each classification, namely: green, 7 cents per pound; green salted, 8 cents; dry salted, 9 cents; flint, 10 cents. Now, that values are much higher, the spread between each classification is greater. Suppose a green hide weighs 60 pounds and is worth 10 cents a pound or \$6.00. The same hide, salted a few days, weighs about 50 pounds, therefore, the green salted must

bring 12 cents a pound to realize \$6.00. If made a dry salted, the weight is further reduced, say to 40 pounds, when price must be 15 cents to equal \$6.00. The same hide not salted becomes a flint and weight reduced, we will say to 30 pounds, when price must be advanced to 20 cents to equal \$6.00.

Although the writer spent several years upon the road buying not only furs, roots, sheep pelts, but hides from butchers, mostly green salted, yet he was not sure as to shrinkage of hides under the various conditions handled, therefore, secured the following from a dealer who has been in the business for years, buying and handling several car loads of hides each month:

“Green hides in summer will shrink out 12% to 15% by salting, making them green salted. These same hides in winter will not lose more than 10% and be green salted hides. Beef hides are better in August, September, October and November. After that they get long haired and shaggy up to March and in general worth 10% less in price. In the South hides get grubby in December and stay grubby about 90 days. In the North they do not get grubby until, say February, and stay grubby for about 90 days. Of course, in a great many sections, from lack of swampy land and care given to cattle, they have no grubs at all. In April and May cattle running on new grass, their hides will shrink 15% on account of moisture in hides. The weight of green hides is about 15% more than green salted, 30% more than dry salted, and 50% more than flint dry. This is a very close estimate of weight in different stages.”

In some sections grubs are much worse than others. In the latitude of Southern Ohio they usually make their appearance by the last of November or the first days of December. Further north they do not make their appearance before January and in some localities there are none whatever. One grub, if it has eaten through the hide, even no larger hole than a straw, makes it a No. 2. Grubs will be found on the back near the rump and can be detected by the appearance of the hide which shows a bloody or "jelly like" substance.

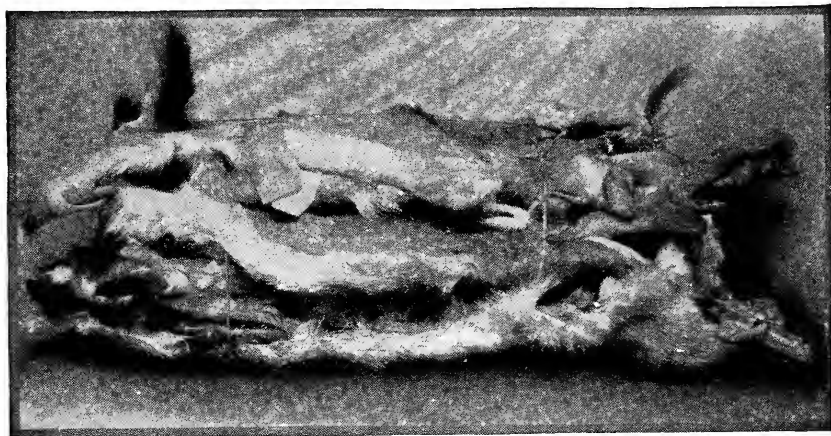
A cut anywhere in body of hide makes a No. 2, so that careful skinning should be done. Calf skins that are badly scored (so that the thumb nail can punch through) is as bad as a hole and such skins go into the No. 2 class. There is a class of hides known as "packer" but the hide buyer will not come in contact with any. These are the hides taken off in the large slaughter houses, principally of the West, being uniform, closer trim and only coarse special hide salt is used in curing.

Where salt is cheap it is safest to handle hides by salting, for during warm weather they may spoil instead of curing properly. The high altitudes, Rocky Mountain sections, produce many flint hides.

Hides are done up in separate bundles, hair out, for shipment and tied with a special hide twine or sisal. The fur dealer and country buyer of hides, if having no regular hide twine, use binder twine doubled or first class wool twine, yet neither are strong enough for large and heavy hides.

DEER SKINS.—The summer coat is short and the hide is of the best quality for leather then. When the

hair is long on deer or cattle, it detracts from the hide to support such growth. Deer skins should not be salted. The process of tanning and dressing deer skins to make the buckskin of commerce, is different from the preliminaries relating to preparing cattle or horse hides, which are cured in salt. Salt toughens deer skins and makes tanning difficult.



A BUNDLE OF DEER SKINS—WINTER COAT.

Summer deer skins are almost unknown now on account of game laws everywhere which prohibit such slaughter, it being unlawful to have in one's possession skins of grown deer in the red or summer coat or fawn skins in the spotted coat. Deer skins are bought by the pound and classed green, dry salted and dry. Like cattle hides, the value per pound increases from green to dry but as weight decreases there is little or no difference in price per skin. A few elk, antelope and moose hides are still marketed. They, like deer skins, are mostly sold by weight and classified green, dry salted and dry.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ROOTS — GINSENG AND GOLDEN SEAL.

GINSENG DRYING AND GRADING.—Wild ginseng should be dug carefully so as to not cut or bruise the roots as this hurts their sale. After digging, wash just enough to get the dirt off, but in no case attempt to make the root white. If a brush is used to get the dirt out of crevices it should be used very lightly and never so that when the root is dry it will not show dark or dirt color at the bottom of the creases that run around the roots. Gray or yellow gray is about the color desired but of the two extremes it is better not to wash at all than to wash too much.

In drying, the roots should always be placed in the shade and should be laid on a screen or sieve and in a place where there is free circulation of air. It is not necessary to remove the fiber roots of wild ginseng, the same as it is with the cultivated. The practice of stringing roots and hanging them up to dry cannot be too strongly condemned.

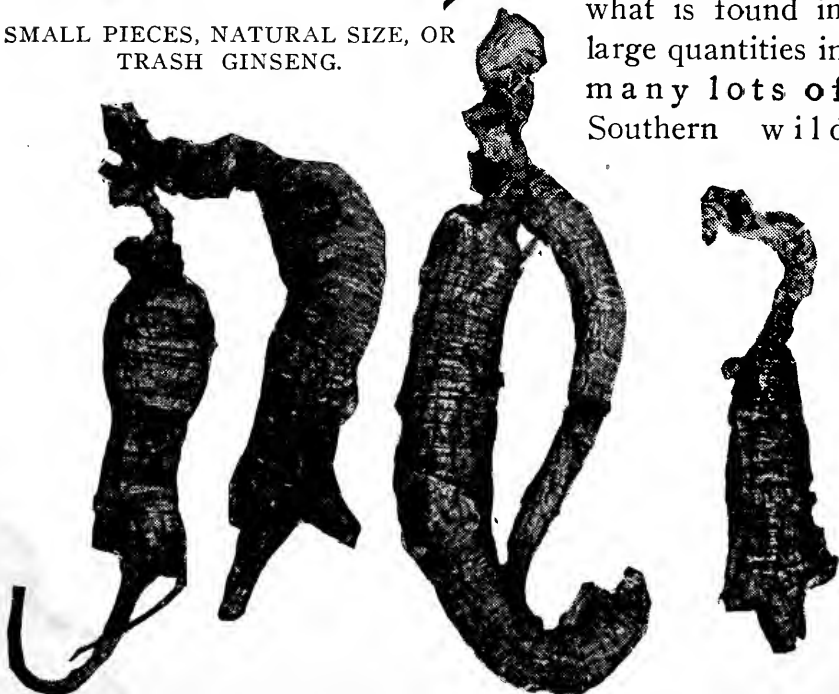
Fur buyers generally make about three grades of wild root — Northern, Middle and Southern — although some dealers go so far as to grade it by states. The practice of grading in this manner comes not from the quality of the roots in the different sections of the country but from the practices of the collector. In the North the



SMALL PIECES, NATURAL SIZE, OR TRASH GINSENG.

roots are never strung on strings, neither does the Northern man collect seedlings and pieces of stems. The Chinaman wants whole roots without blemish and no Chinaman or dealer can tell whether whole roots of fair size are from the North or South.

Note the illustration, showing at natural size, what is found in large quantities in many lots of Southern wild



GOOD WILD GINSENG ROOTS — REDUCED IN SIZE.

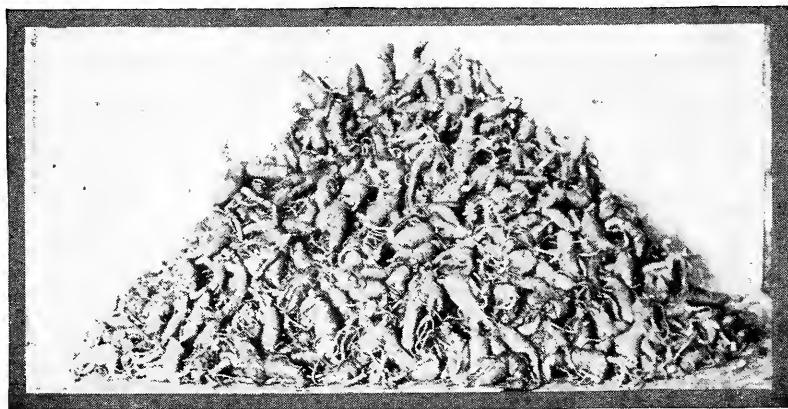
root. Such trash is absent in the wild collections from the North. The presence or absence of this trash really makes the difference in price between Northern and Southern wild root.



SMALL WILD GIN-
SENG.

The illustration — Good Wild Roots — are reduced in size. Roots of this class will demand top price for wild root if free from trash except the fiber roots that naturally belong.

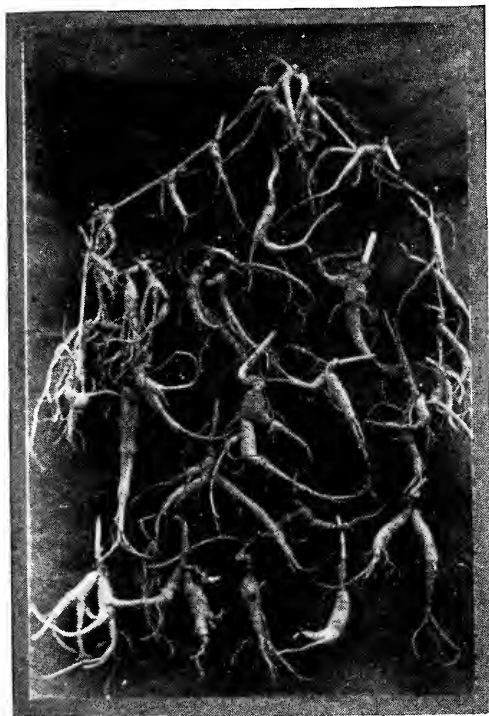
If the digger would leave the little roots to grow he would get as much money for what he did collect as he would if he added the trash. Later, he or some one else would have the pleasure of digging a good root in place of one almost worthless. The digger of wild ginseng finds not only small but all shapes of roots. This is caused from the hard soil, rocks and tree roots among which it grows. The illustration of



OREGON GINSENG, GREEN, JUST DUG.

small wild is natural size, but note as well the shape in which it grew — down, then up, then down.

Buyers may have some root offered them green, so they will be interested in knowing how much green it



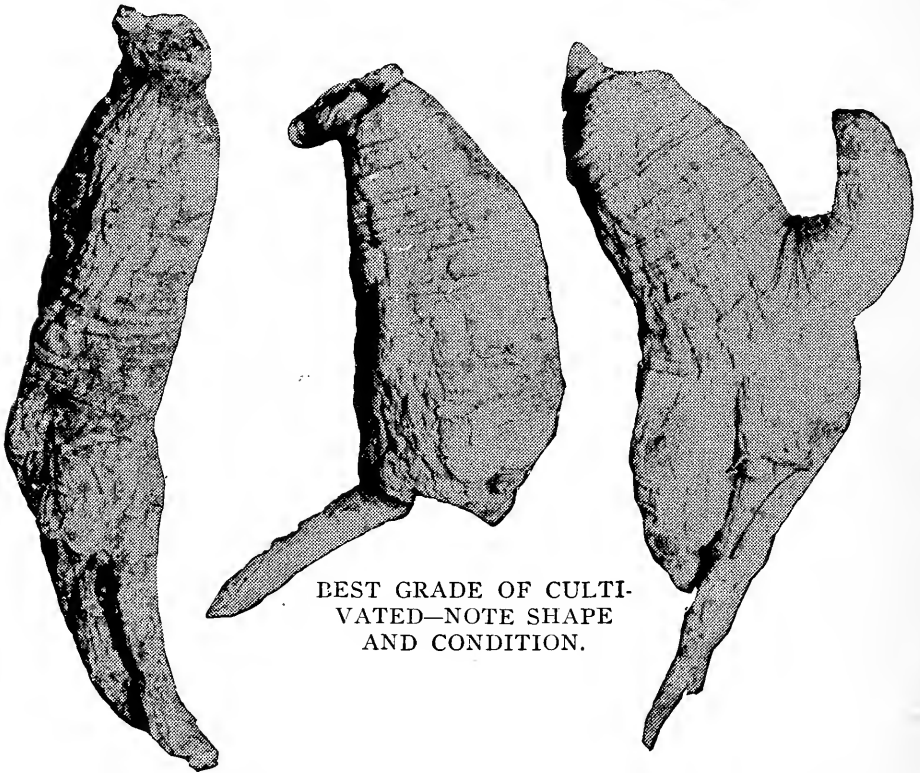
WEST VIRGINIA WILD GINSENG,
JUST DUG.

there was 90 pounds when dug. This root is short and thick set — chunky — with very little fiber root and will dry out 30 pounds, or very near it, of marketable root. The root is cultivated and was dug the latter part of September. Some raisers in the Northwest have tried to

takes to make a pound dry. There is no correct rule to go by, or rather one that will answer for all seasons and for both wild and cultivated. Spring dug, or say up to August, will require about 4 pounds to dry a pound; fall dug, about 3 pounds and 5 or 6 ounces. In parts of the Northwest, such as the state of Oregon, roots dry heavy and 3 pounds will about make 1 pound dry.

In the pile of Oregon green ginseng

dispose of ginseng similar to the roots shown as being wild. Eastern dealers say there is no natural wild growing in Oregon but that wild transplanted from some of the "ginseng country" farther east does well there.



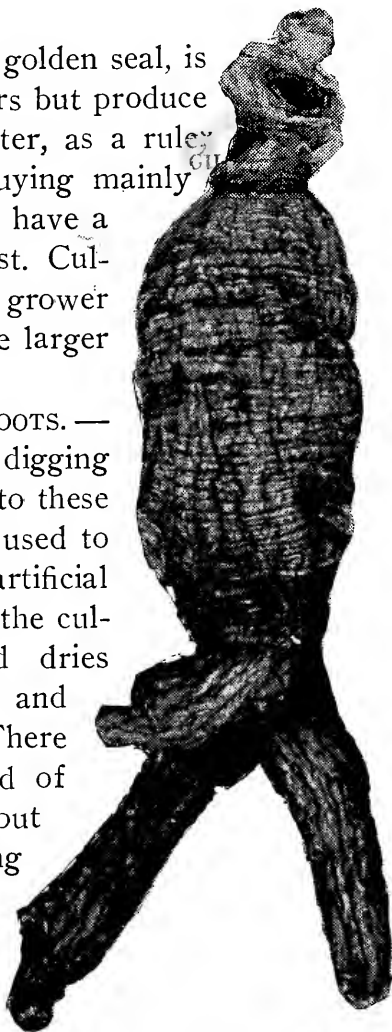
BEST GRADE OF CULTIVATED—NOTE SHAPE AND CONDITION.

The illustration of West Virginia Wild Ginseng Just Dug shows the genuine wild as it grows in that state. The majority of these roots are large and when dug in September and October about $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of green will make one of dry. This proportion will hold where the roots are very late dug regardless of sizes. Early in the season it takes about 4 pounds of green to make one of dry,

making no difference whether the roots are large, medium or small. These weights are based on green roots — just dug. If offered for sale after being dug a few days they are partly dry and, of course, less amount will make a pound when dry.

Wild ginseng, as well as golden seal, is bought not only by fur dealers but produce men and druggists. The latter, as a rule, do not handle large lots, buying mainly from diggers who are apt to have a few ounces, or pounds, at most. Cultivated is usually dried by the grower who then sells to some of the larger dealers.

CULTIVATED GINSENG ROOTS. — The same instructions as to digging and drying wild roots apply to these except greater care must be used to have plenty of air or use artificial heat. This is necessary, as the cultivated root is larger and dries slower, being liable to sour and spoil if not properly handled. There is really no accepted method of grading cultivated ginseng but its value is determined owing to its likeness to wild. The wild root, grown as it is, among trees and other plants that sap the soil of its fertility, takes up much

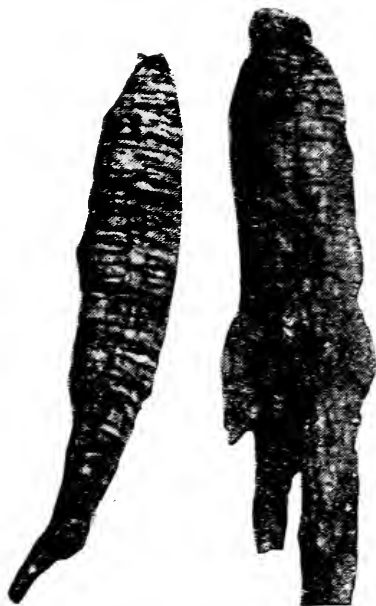


AN IDEAL SHAPED CULTIVATED ROOT.

of the moisture, makes a very slow growth and for reason acquires age before its size would tempt the collector to dig. This slow growth

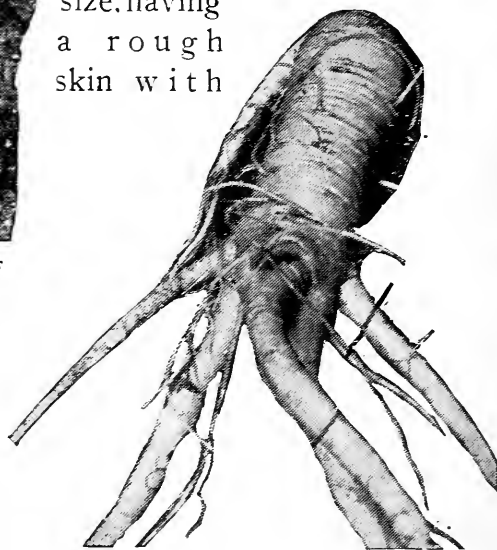
and great age gives it the quality the Chinese like. Cultivated, therefore, is classed largely according to its resemblance to the wild root.

Good wild root seldom has lateral branches, is of light weight in proportion to its size, having a rough skin with



CHOICE GRADE OF CULTIVATED.

wrinkles running around the root rather than up and down. The body of the root is spongy or corky and will bend somewhat before it will



IRREGULAR SHAPED ROOT.

break. In grading cultivated the first, or best grade, must come as near to having the above characteristics as possible. The illustrations of the three roots, page 360, are such while the single root, page 361, represents those of ideal shape.

This grade of root is light weight but not so light as the wild. A bushel basket well rounded up and shaken down will weigh just about 25 pounds. One other test for roots of this grade is that you should be able to take a sharp knife and shave off thin slices without their breaking. Roots of the same grade otherwise, if on attempting to shave off a slice will crumble and break into small pieces, are not as valuable.



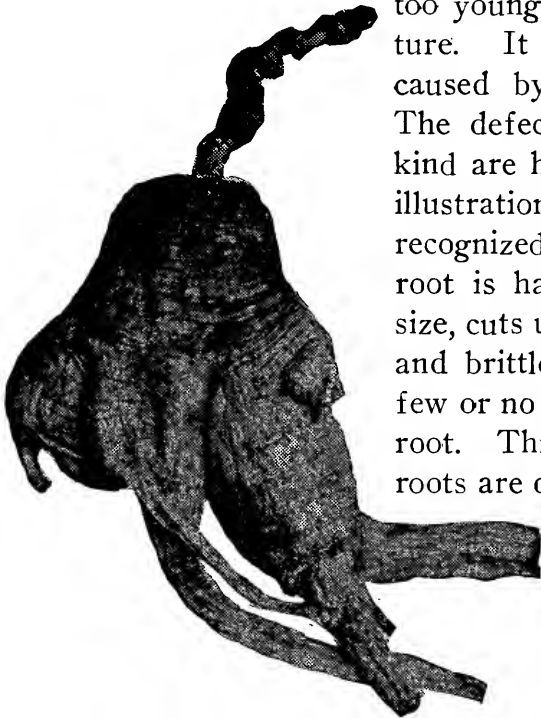
SMOOTH SKINNED
HARD GINSENG.

The two straight roots represent a choice grade of roots though not as large. These are small roots that have been crowded and stunted in their growth and closely resemble the wild. See page 362.

Next in value we would class roots that have the above named valuable traits except they are irregular in shape. Such roots when well wilted, in process of drying, can be helped in shape a little by bending in side roots and wrapping a narrow piece of cloth around them until dry. This quality of root is extremely sprangly and having many large straggling side shoots is of low value and at times practically unsalable. A root of this character can be helped some by breaking off the sprangles as indicated by the lines in the illustration.

Note marks or lines like this / across the small roots which are from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from main root. Root is still green. See illustration, page 362, Irregular Shaped Root.

A still poorer grade of root is the smooth skinned, hard root which is generally caused by digging the crop too young or before it is mature. It is also sometimes caused by light, sandy soil. The defects in roots of this kind are hard to bring out in illustrations but can easily be recognized by the eye. The root is hard, very heavy for size, cuts under the knife hard and brittle. The skin shows few or no wrinkles around the root. This and the sprangly roots are of the lowest grades,



TRANSPLANTED WILD GINSENG ROOT.

except diseased roots or roots of the shape of the three which are unsalable save when broken up and sold as coarse fiber at about \$1.00 a pound. Small roots when short and thick set are salable.

There is one other grade of dry ginseng root that is desirable but of rather uneven quality. We allude to transplanted wild root. Illustration—Transplanted Wild Ginseng Root — shows an exceptionally good root of this

class. The neck of the root is small, which is very desirable. Shape is also good and the wrinkles show well. Root is rather hard yet it represents a good type of root.

In preparing roots for market the fine fibrous roots should always be removed and kept separate. It is a question if the average grower should attempt to trim or sort his roots beyond this. He is not familiar with the demands or orders of the dealer, therefore is liable to trim off and lose weight where he need not. Better to send to an honest dealer and let him do the sorting and grading.

The Chinese are very expert and will look at a pile of root and decide very close what it is worth, even though there may be a half dozen grades in the pile. In other words, if you have ten pounds of root worth \$6.00 per pound and another ten pounds worth \$4.00 per pound and mix them together the chances are that you will get fully as much. The Chinaman wants to get the good root so will pay \$5.00 or maybe a trifle over, rather than under. At the same time he seems to know exactly, by looking at the pile, how much good and how much poor root there is in the lot.

All pieces of root should be sorted out and sold by themselves as coarse fiber.

GOLDEN SEAL. — There is little to be said about drying the wild seal root other than to wash clean and dry in the shade, taking care that it dries properly so as not to mould. Cultivated seal requires much more care in washing but must be washed clean even if the body of the root has to be broken in order to do it. After the roots are fully dried they should be placed in some tight package to keep them from the air and light as this root

loses strength fast. The fiber root should not be separated from the rhizome (main root) and no care need be taken to avoid breaking either the rhizome or the fiber (small) roots.

Golden Seal, fall dug, either wild or cultivated, dries out about same as ginseng, namely, $3\frac{1}{3}$ pounds of green making one of dry.

There is but little difference in the value of Golden Seal whether from the garden of the grower or the digger who secures the wild. Neither is there a difference in the value of this root from the various parts of the country. Buyers, however, must be on the lookout for frauds and deceptions as there is a root that very closely resembles Golden Seal found in some parts of the country which has little value.

NOTE. — Those especially interested in Ginseng, Golden Seal, Seneca and other marketable plants will find in "Ginseng and Other Medicinal Plants," a book of 367 pages, price \$1.00, a much more complete description of the various plants, where found, with illustrations of both the roots and tops.

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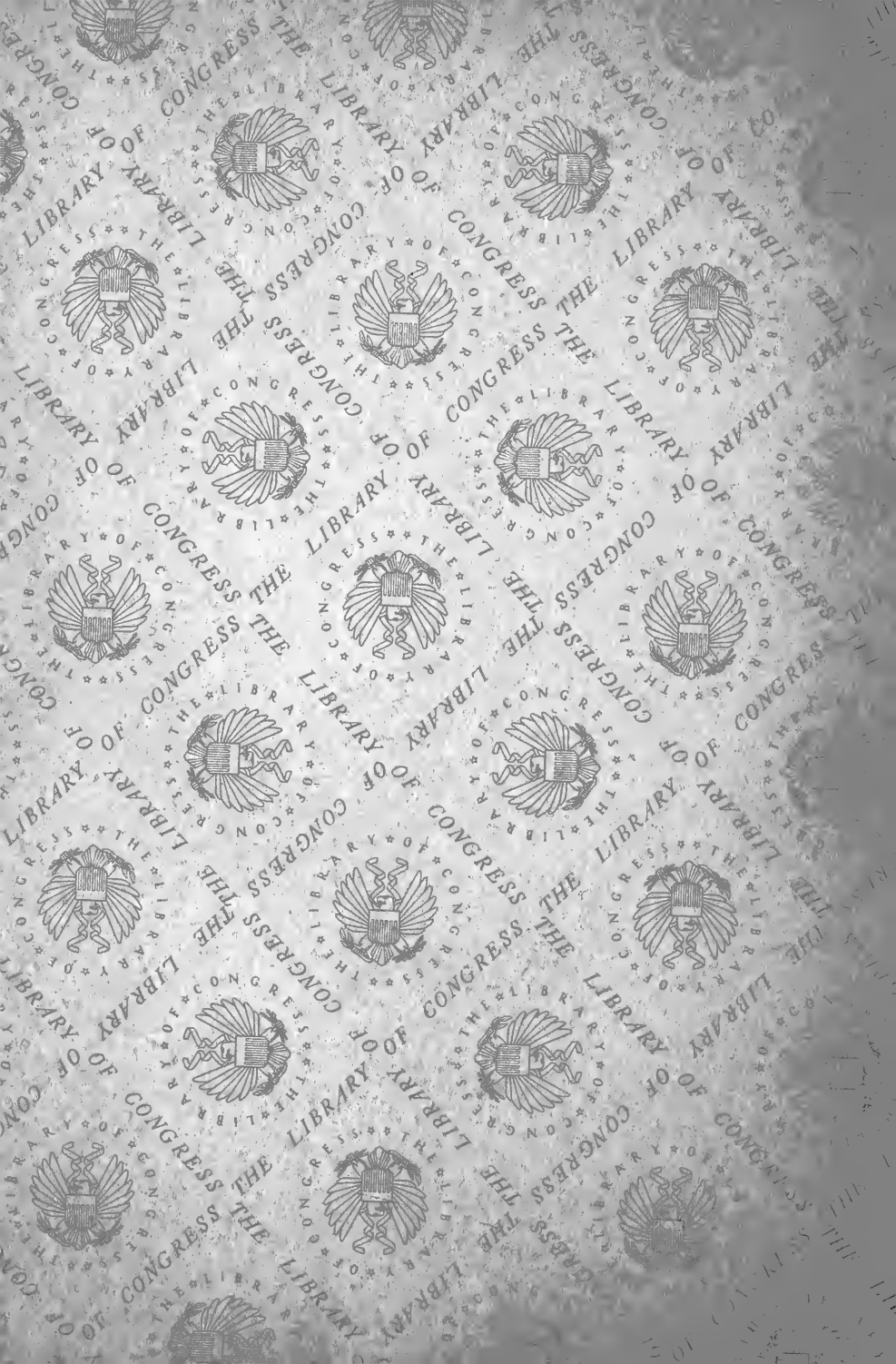
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