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ature often drops to 80 degrees below and where it may remain at 50 to 60 degrees below for a month." They can do this because their bodies maintain a high temperature, 39.4°C (103°F). They are insulated from the cold both by fur and by the curious fact that their legs and hooves maintain a much lower temperature, down to 10°C (50°F). They reproduce easily. The calf is born within minutes; it can stand and walk almost immediately; and in three days it can run as fast as its mother. Infant mortality is high — up to 40 per cent — and quite clearly the fittest survive.

The barren ground caribou eat whatever is available. They migrate most of the year, using centuries-old trails, some worn two feet deep. They eat sedges, grasses, willow shoots, leaves, dwarf birches, horsetails, mushrooms and lichens. Lichens are the food essential — they grow on rock and take their sustenance from the air.

At present, conservationists are concerned with the possible effects on the caribou of gas and oil pipelines and the increasing presence of man. The first problem involves the caribou's willingness to cross over or under pipelines while migrating. When a two-mile simulated pipeline was constructed across migration paths, out of 5,599 animals approaching the pipe, only 994 crossed over on gravel ramps. Some 300 used underpasses, about 2,500 went around the pipe, and some 2,000 turned back. The test results are suggestive, but they do not permit positive conclusions.

Beavers

THE BEAVER was — ten thousand years ago — as big as a bear. Now a large one weighs ninety pounds. It was Canada's first exploited natural resource and became, in time, its national emblem.

Beavers move gracefully in water and are as fast below water — two to three miles per hour

THE BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG — a yellowish-brown rodent, closely related to the ground squirrel — is now found only in a narrow strip of dry plains, between southern Saskatchewan and central Texas. It was once abundant, and the change from grassland to farms was to its apparent advantage, since it eliminated competitors and natural enemies. The prairie dog population exploded, making it a most conspicuous agricultural pest. Massive poisoning and trapping campaigns were arranged.



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THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET may be the rarest mammal in North America. Once it lived on the grasslands and preyed on the prairie dog. The destruction of its habitat and the extermination of its prey contributed to its marked decline. It is considered extinct in Alberta and extremely rare in Saskatchewan, where a few individuals may still remain in remote areas.