

CANADIAN FURS - SQUIRREL AND ERMINE

Canadian squirrel is used mainly in coats and jackets and is always dyed, usually in the same shades as mink. The "skin-on-skin" method of manufacture is used (the skins sewn together side by side in rows from top to bottom, after trimming and matching for quality). The finished piece is attractive, moderately warm and, though its wearing qualities cannot be rated above fair, with care a squirrel garment can outlast some of its hardier rivals.

Squirrel ranked fifth in importance among Canadian wild furs, in the 1967-1968 season - beaver, muskrat, wild mink and hair seal were ahead. Some 1,251,000 squirrel pelts worth \$700,000 were taken. Since 1930, the squirrel catch has fluctuated from 249,000 pelts to a record 5,761,000 pelts in the 1941-1942 season.

Most of the pelts come from the Western provinces, the largest and finest skins coming from the Yukon Territory. High-quality skins also come from northern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The chattering red squirrel ranges the evergreen forests of Canada, from the southern border to the northern tree-line. Its 13-inch length includes four inches of bushy tail. The fur is greyish-brown with a red streak down the center back. Usually a white band extends the length of its stomach.

Squirrels eat seeds, nuts and berries and in the autumn they store winter supplies in the ground or in tree hollows. Although the squirrel does not hibernate, it hides in its den during severe weather.

ERMINE

Ermine, a fur which throughout history has been associated with royalty and historic occasions, is one of the few Canadian fur-bearing animals whose numbers are decreasing markedly.

Output has declined from an average annual production of almost 750,000 pelts in the 1930s to below 150,000 pelts, averaging 90 cents each.

Like squirrel, ermine is worked skin-on-skin and is usually dyed brown so that when made up into



The ermine

garments, these two furs closely resemble each other.

Only two species of ermine are used by the fur trade - long-tailed and short-tailed. The long-tailed ermine, which often reaches a length of 20 inches or more, including a six-inch tail, has a rather flat, white fur that can be used in natural color. In capes, jackets and stoles the long-tailed ermine in natural white produces a soft, light fur-piece. The smaller, short-tailed animal - which biologists say is really a weasel - has a denser silkier fur with usually a yellowish cast so that it must invariably be dyed. It is about two-thirds the size of the long-tailed ermine. When made up, both furs are sold as ermine.

The ermine, one of the most ferocious of the small mammals, has a long, slender body, short legs and small feet. In the winter months the fur is white, changing to reddish-brown in summer. The tip of the tail remains black all year round. Ermine are found throughout Canada.

The ermine preys on all of the smaller animals and birds and will tackle many larger animals. Mating takes place in March, and the young, which number from six to 12, are born in April or May, usually in an abandoned burrow. They are raised by the female.

(This article is part of a series on the Canadian fur industry and fur-bearing animals.)

PLEDGE TO THE HUNGRY

Agriculture Minister H.A. (Bud) Olson headed the Canadian delegation to the recent pledging conference of the World Food Program at which a Canadian undertaking was given for \$30 million (U.S.) worth of food and cash for the 1971-72 period - 10 per cent of the WFP's total objective.

Canada's contribution to the World Food Program is the second largest. Since the WFP was established in 1963, it has pledged a total of some \$100 million in food and cash.

Activities of the World Food Program fall into two broad classes - emergency food-aid during disasters such as earthquakes, droughts and floods and long-term projects aimed at helping underdeveloped nations to help themselves.

These projects include such help as food to pay workers who are reclaiming land for agriculture, re-foresting barren areas, building schools, irrigation systems, roads and railways. Projects may also involve technical assistance offered in the form of highly skilled personnel and materials.