

THE WHOOPING CRANE is fully protected; it has been on the edge of extinction for decades. In 1850 there were perhaps fifteen hundred birds. Habitat destruction and over-hunting contributed to a swift decline, and by 1941 there were only fifteen birds remaining. Since then, extraordinary efforts have brought the number to about seventy, of which fifty are in a wild state, migrating between Canada and Texas. The others are in a captive breeding program in Patuxent, Maryland.



F. W. Lahrman

## Belugas, Birds and Mr. Justice Berger

The sometimes subtle conflict between the well being of animals and mankind's plans, ambitions and expanding interests has been underscored by testimony before the Berger Commission.

The commission, headed by Justice Thomas Berger, conducted hearings for almost two years to determine the impact of gas or oil pipelines on the peoples and animals of the Mackenzie Valley. Justice Berger said the commission considered "the whole future of the north" and concluded that "Canada is the guardian" of beluga whales, caribou, moose, polar bears, grizzlies, foxes and Arctic birds.

At public hearings the commission heard facts about the animals of the north, including these:

- All beluga, or white whales, in the Beaufort Sea

O. J. Murie. FWS



THE NORTHERN KIT FOX is almost extinct. At one time it thrived in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba; but farms replaced grasslands, and farmers killed it as a pest. Perhaps there are still a few in Saskatchewan's Cypress Hills.

(about four thousand) calve each summer in the warmer waters of the Mackenzie River Delta. Dr. D. F. Sergeant of Canada's Environment department said oil and gas activities in the delta could so disturb the whales that they would be unable to reproduce, causing the herd to die out.

- Nearly half of the birds breeding in Canada meet in the Mackenzie Valley — including such rare species as the peregrine falcon, golden eagle, Eskimo curlew and trumpeter swan.

Justice Berger's recommendations are expected soon.

## Caribou

THE CARIBOU run across the barren ground in enormous herds (the largest has some 240,000 members), and as they run their tendons snap, making a sharp clicking sound which can be heard for miles. They are remarkable animals. They survive the bitterest cold, howling winds, scant food, clouds of summer insects, Inuit hunters and swarms of scientists. There are perhaps four hundred thousand of them now in thirteen major herds. The largest, the Arctic herd, ranges over 140,000 square miles. It was once assumed that the number of caribou had declined drastically. Some scientists now suspect that though the number fluctuates, the general level has been much the same for centuries. Early observers who saw valleys full of moving caribou concluded that hundreds of other valleys were filled too; but this was probably never true. Each herd was surrounded by thousands of empty miles.

In a 1972 study of the Kaminurial Herd for the Canadian Wildlife Service, Gerald Parker concluded that "the caribou has survived because it has evolved marvelously to fit its environment. They seem to seek out the cold — the Porcupine Herd of the Yukon winters in the coldest spot in North America, Ogilvie Range, where the temper-