

CANADIAN FURS - THE MINK

Today's symbol of elegance in furs was once the poor relation of the fur industry. In the early days, the traders who avidly sought beaver, otter and marten pelts accepted mink reluctantly; indeed, it was not until the present century that the outstanding qualities of this fur were recognized.

The mink, a member of the weasel family, has a long, slender body, a small head with short ears and a long, bushy tail. Its color ranges from light brown to near black. A white patch is often found on its throat and chest. The male, which weighs up to four pounds, is about twice the size of the female.

TWO VARIETIES

There are two main types of this animal - the wild mink and the ranch-raised mink.

The wild variety is found in many countries, but the North American type is considered the most



A pearl male mink

valuable. The world's finest wild mink is found in the Canadian North, where the animal spends much of its time in and around water in search of food. Although it prefers a heavy diet of fish, it also eats birds, mice and other creatures.

Ranched mink are raised in many parts of the world. While the characteristics of wild mink fur may differ from area to area, ranched mink pelts are comparatively uniform throughout the world because they have all been developed from common stock, the North American wild mink.

Mink-farming originated in Eastern Canada about 1910 and developed steadily into the most important branch of fur-farming. By 1945, the mink industry had overtaken and passed the once dominant silver fox business, and it has not looked back since.

Originally all ranched mink, like the wild variety were brown or dark brown. But about 1936 the silver-blue, or platinum, was developed from dark-brown parents. This mutation was followed by others and today there are more than 200 natural colors of ranched mink.

The wide range of natural colors boosted the industry considerably, and the popularity of this fur increased rapidly, until today the value of the annual mink-pelt crop is far greater than the value of all the rest of the world's fur together.

Ranched mink account for almost two-thirds of Canada's fur-trade; over 1.5 million pelts are sold annually at Canadian fur auctions to international buyers. The Canada Mink Breeders Association is active in the sale of ranched mink pelts produced by its members. The pelts of finest quality are sold under the trade name "Canada Majestic".

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

CHANGES IN COAST GUARD FLEET

Seven new ships are being added to the Canadian Coast Guard fleet and ten are being removed from active service in a twofold program of increasing the fleet's efficiency while reducing expenses.

The fleet's major activities include icebreaking to assist shipping and to prevent flooding in the St. Lawrence River, summer re-supply of Arctic settlements and government outposts, maintenance of navigational aids, and search-and-rescue operations.

Based at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, are the new CCGS *Louis S. St-Laurent*, the world's largest and most powerful conventional icebreaker, and the *Provo Wallis*, a new lighthouse supply-and-buoy vessel. Also going to Dartmouth is the CCGS *Alert*, a large search-and-rescue cutter built at Lauzon, Quebec.

Three Dartmouth-based vessels will leave active service. The CCGS *Edward Cornwallis*, a light ice-breaking lighthouse-and-buoy tender built in 1949, will be held in reserve; the *Gannet* and the *Mink*, two northern supply vessels converted from British landing craft built more than 20 years ago, will be disposed of.

The new Gulf icebreaker CCGS *Norman McLeod Rogers* operates out of Quebec City. CCGS *C.D. Howe*, the Quebec-based vessel built in 1950 for the annual Arctic medical survey, is being disposed of since it is no longer needed by the Department of National Health and Welfare. The *Auk*, a northern supply vessel similar to the *Gannet*, which works out of Quebec, is also being disposed of.

CCGS *Robert Foulis*, a new workboat-and-buoy tender, is based at Saint John, New Brunswick, for service in the Saint John River. Canada's last lightship in active service, which was located near the