

are disliked, their pelts are highly valued by the Eskimos. The fur is used for trim on mitts and mukluks (moccasins) and, more particularly, on parka hoods, where its ability to resist the accumulation of frost helps protect the traveller from the biting arctic wind.

The other major fur-bearer of the tundra is the arctic fox, whose pure white winter pelt, which changes to grayish brown in summer, is highly valued as a luxury fur in the markets of America and Europe. The white fox is smaller than the red fox of more southerly regions but its pelt is much more valuable. A good skin may bring as much as \$50. A hard-working trapper can make a great deal of money in years when prices are high and foxes abundant.

The arctic fox extends its range far into the north beyond the sea-coast to the Arctic Islands, even to within a few hundred miles of the North Pole. It may be found far out on the pack-ice following the polar bear and living on scraps of food too small to interest the king of the North.

King of the Arctic

And the polar bear is truly a king in its own realm. It fears nothing except perhaps man, a fear it has only recently learned. It has no dread of winter cold; its shaggy yellowish-white fur protects it in all weathers. It spends much of its time in the water swimming among the ice floes, catching fish, searching for its favourite food, the seal, or just travelling. The female may lie up for the winter when she bears her young but the adult male is abroad at all seasons. The only animal reasonably safe from the male is the walrus, whose long tusks and gigantic (one-ton) size make it a fearful opponent. On land, however, the walrus does not care to dispute with the polar bear. Only in the water does it feel secure.

Many other animals inhabit the Arctic Ocean. In the days when whale-bone was a mainstay of feminine apparel, whaling ships penetrated far into arctic seas in search of huge whales. The large whales are no longer hunted so avidly but small ones such as the white whale, a mere ton in weight, are still hunted by Eskimos in small boats for their meat and blubber.

The narwhal is probably the most interesting of the sea mammals. One lower tooth projects before it in a long spiral that may reach six feet in length. Its exact use is questionable but it did inspire stories of unicorns, the one-horned creatures of legend. The narwhal has now received a prominent place on the coat-of-arms of the Northwest Territories.

The Adaptable Species

So far we have considered mainly the animals that have not been able to survive well in the face of changes brought about by the invasion of the white man with his guns and his ability to alter the landscape to suit his own purposes. There are, however, several animals that have found the changing conditions much to their liking and have increased their numbers.

Consider the beaver, chosen as Canada's emblem to indicate hard work and an ability to plan for the future. The beaver was actually one of the chief reasons for the development of the New World. Commerce in beaver pelts began as early as 1530, and the trade subsequently led explorers on long arduous journeys that took them eventually across the entire continent.