

CANADIAN FURS - MARTEN AND FISHER

Marten fur was at its most popular during the era of the choker - the neckpiece of two, three or four skins once worn by every lady of fashion. When the style passed, the marten became a trimming fur and its rich, silky fur is now a valuable accessory on dresses and coats. It is also used as a material for hats.

In the 1967-1968 season, Canada produced 43,152 marten pelts worth \$370,000. Most of these were produced in Ontario (14,040 pelts), the Northwest Territories (12,234), British Columbia (7,844) and Quebec (5,506).

The marten once ranged Canada's forested areas but because of intensive trapping is now found mainly in the more isolated wooded regions. It is an agile creature, which leaps from tree to tree with inexhaustible energy. Its lair is usually high in a tree hollow, where one to four young are born in April or May. It eats mainly squirrels, birds, mice and rabbits.

The marten, a member of the weasel family, is sometimes called the Canadian sable. It resembles a small cat, with fairly large ears, short legs, small feet and a long bushy tail. Its colour varies from pale yellow to rich, dark brown and in some cases almost black. There is a large irregular patch of pale buff or orange at the throat. Many marten pelts too pale to be used in the original state must be blended or dyed to a darker colour before being made up.

THE FISHER

The fisher, one of Canada's less-known fur-bearers, is a close relative of the marten, resembling it in many ways. It is found only in North America, where the annual production now never exceeds 10,000 pelts, and is often only half that number.

During 1967 and 1968, production of fisher skins amounted to 5,535 pelts worth \$69,000. The main areas of production were Ontario (2,264 pelts), Quebec (1,605), and British Columbia (750). The biggest season on record was 1919-1920, when 10,176 pelts, worth \$860,000, were taken.

In former years fisher pelts were used mainly in stoles and neckpieces, which were particularly popular in France. Today, this attractive, hard-wearing fur is used mostly for collars and other trimming and sometimes for capes and jackets. The small, silky pelts of the female are more valuable than the large male pelts.

The fur is dark brown to greyish brown, and is



The marten

generally lighter in colour and often somewhat grizzled towards the head. The head is short and broad, the ears quite short and its tail long and rather bushy.

The fisher, one of the larger members of the weasel family - about the size of a large cat - is probably the most agile of the arboreal animals. It is faster in the trees than either the squirrel or marten and on the ground it can run down a hare in open chase. It does not fish and has little inclination towards water.

Today the animal is found in isolated northern regions feeding on rabbits, porcupines, squirrels, mice and birds, though it will tackle successfully larger animals. It usually lives in a tree hollow, high off the ground, though it is sometimes found under a windfall or in a rock crevice.

Mating takes place in March or April and the young, usually three, are born after a long 350-day gestation period. Fisher are polygamous and the males do not assist in the raising of the young. They maintain a safe distance from the litter and keep a fearful and wary eye on the female.

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

BANK RATE DOWN

The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Louis Rasminsky, has announced that the bank rate has been reduced to 7½ per cent, effective May 12. Mr. Rasminsky stated that this move brought the rate more closely into line with current levels of short-

term interest rates in the market.

At the same time, he said that, concurrently with the announcement by the Minister of Finance of a new \$250-million issue of treasury bills, the Bank of Canada was announcing an increase in the minimum secondary reserve ratio of the chartered banks from 8 per cent to 9 per cent of their deposit liabilities.