

We are all endangered. To survive we must breathe safe air, eat safe food and drink safe water. We must not get too cold nor too hot.

By latest count, 22,598,000 people live in Canada. There are 163 species of land mammals (including mankind) and 33 species of whales. There are over 500 species of birds, some of which never leave home and some of which, like the Arctic tern, travel from pole to pole. There are many different kinds of fish in lakes, rivers, ponds and ocean seas. Some are flourishing; others are nearing extinction.

Many people assume that human beings are always responsible for the death of a species. This is not precisely the case. Other beings also alter environments — dam-building beavers and leaf-eating locusts to name two; and great changes in climates have caused the deaths of thousands of species.

Still, man has speeded up the natural processes. In the last four centuries, since the first great age of exploration, extinction rates have increased more than twelvefold. When man is at fault, it is not primarily man the hunter nor man the builder of golf courses. The great destroyers are the house and road builder, the farm fencer, the noise maker and the ingenious manufacturer. The bison did not disappear from the prairies simply because riflemen leaned out of train windows and shot them down by the tens-of-thousands. The bison herds, which once moved "like a brown carpet" over the grasslands, were gone by 1900, because prairie land had become farmland. The passenger pigeon was helped into oblivion by hunters who shot them out of the sky until their bodies formed feathered hills of carrion, but they were already doomed when other, less bloody men started cutting down the forests of oak and beech required for feeding and nesting.

The animal kingdom's greatest grievance against man is that he often needlessly destroys the life balances of other animals. He has found profitable ways to use chemicals in industry and has incidentally poisoned fish. Pesticides help produce abundant harvests, but birds who feed in the treated fields are rendered infertile. Washing detergents flushed into lakes foster algae which consume oxygen and choke fish. Modern man is also a clear and present danger to himself. He eats the mercury-poisoned fish, and the air over a traffic-choked city is as unfit for people as it is for robins.

In the following pages, we give a report on the status of some of Canada's more threatened animals. Some, like the caribou, are still abundant; some, like the northern kit fox, are now reduced to a few, isolated individuals. We also include information on the status of Canada's air, land and waters and on the efforts by governments and by private organizations to reverse the pollution that has occurred and to prevent that which is threatened.

M. E. Newman, Woodfin Camp & Assoc.

