

An abounding wildlife in a big land

It is a truism to observe that Canada is very big, and yet it is almost impossible for a Briton to appreciate the scale of the country unless he has experienced it at first hand. "It is that feeling of fresh loneliness that impresses itself before any detail of the wild", wrote the poet Rupert Brooke, who traversed the country just before the Great War. One of the two largest countries in the world, with the longest coastline of any, Canada has a population less than a thirtieth of China. "The soul, or the personality, seems to have indefinite room to expand", said Brooke. "There is no-one else within reach, there never has been anyone; no-one else is *thinking* of the lakes and hills you see before you."

In this daunting, colossal landscape *homo canadensis* is a lilliputian figure. In Britain it is possible to believe that man has tamed his environment, enclosed it and organised it so that it poses no more than a minimal threat. Hardy Britons who venture into the national parks on Dartmoor or Exmoor are not at risk from cougars or grizzly bears.

Man is only one of 163 species of land mammals now living in Canada. There are 33 species of whales as well, and over 500 species of birds. The country's three hundred thousand square miles of inland water are full of fish, and even great cities like Toronto have raccoons and skunks in their urban parks and back-gardens.

In this issue of Canada Today we report on Canada's wildlife and man's part in shaping its conservation.



Raccoons — see page 8