

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Biological Survey

DIVISION OF INFORMATION

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War Seen As Threat To Fur Conservation

If foreign supplies of furs which normally furnish this country with a great part of the fur it uses are cut off by war conditions, the supply of American fur-producing animals will be in danger of depletion and in some instances exterminated, the Bureau of Biological Survey reported today.

The Biological Survey made its report in response to a request from Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes that it determine the effects of foreign wars on this nation for resources.

In 1938, according to the Survey, this country imported furs to the value of \$45,837,088. Although it is difficult to ascertain the amount of fur produced in this country because of a lack of authentic reports, it was estimated that the 1938 domestic "take" of furs ran around \$50,000,000. Thus it is indicated that the nation depends upon imports for one-half of its fur supply.

If war conditions prevent normal importations of furs, it probably will mean dependence upon domestic fur resources. This, the Biological Survey reported, would bring the danger of taking more wild animals than the supply warrants and thus unduly depleting the breeding stocks. Even extermination was seen as a possible danger for some species.

The Biological Survey emphasized, however, that there is a great need for more effective fur-animal conservation, war or no war. So little headway has been made in this field of fur-animal conservation that adequate and reliable data are not available for use in planning the work. The regulation of the fur take in the wild is a responsibility of the States, the Federal Government having no jurisdiction over any fur animals except for their proper management on Federally owned areas.

At present, the Biological Survey said, it is not possible to obtain from many States a record of the animals taken in a year, but every indication points to the continuation of the decline in fur-animal numbers that has been going on for a long time.

"Not long after Columbus discovered America," said the Bureau's report, "the traffic in the continent's furs began. Since that time the fur resources of the country have been exploited with disastrous results. The persistence of any species in the presence of the almost overwhelming forces that tend toward its extermination is a striking natural phenomenon, and so far as the layman is concerned it completely conceals the decrease that is in reality taking place, creating the impression that there is no present or threatened danger of extreme shortage.

"It is difficult to conceive that in a civilized country so valuable a resource as fur animals has been so greatly neglected and wasted. We can't go on killing millions of fur animals forever without eventually coming face to face with their extermination. Surely a valuable resource that yields an annual income to trappers of \$50,000,000 deserves much more attention than

it is now receiving. A large majority of those who trap fur animals include farmers and their sons who depend upon this source of revenue to increase the farm income. The employment it furnishes and the income it supplies should be sufficient justification to arouse public sentiment for immediate action in order to save what is left of our fur resources."