

Sent to about
12 Fur
Magazines

FUR SMUGGLERS CAUSE

By

Frank G. Ashbrook

Bureau of Biological Survey
United States Department of Agriculture

For some time the fur farmers of the United States and the New York City fur merchants have complained that smugglers, operating between this country and Canada, have been selling illegal silver fox skins in the New York markets. Fur breeders as well as honest fur traders have suffered from such competition. With the recent conviction of three men in New York City, the U. S. Biological Survey believes that a fur-smuggling ring which, records indicate, has been operating for the past three years in the New York trade area, ~~has~~ been broken up.

Acting on information given by representatives of the Biological Survey, the New York Customs Officials together with Survey agents, located a number of suspicious silver fox skins in the shop of a New York furrier. The pelts had been left for fleshing, by men claiming to be Vermont fur farmers.

Since fur farmers take particular pains to see that pelts are properly prepared before being offered to the trade, the action of these men in leaving the skins "for fleshing" aroused suspicion. The agents determined to await the return of the "fur farmers".

A short time later a man, driving a car with an outstate license, called for and got the skins. He was picked up in his car across from the furrier's office with the pelts in his possession. His story concerning their origin was unconvincing. As a result of this arrest the Survey and Customs agents, assisted by the New York Police, made further raids. They apprehended a second man with a larger supply of valuable silver fox skins. In all, four men were taken into custody.

After posing for a time as Vermont fur farmers they finally confessed that the skins had been smuggled in from Canada. Additional illegal pelts were uncovered. Two cars and a quantity of smuggled silver fox pelts were finally impounded. Later it was discovered that one of the men had disposed of nearly \$1,800 worth of pelts to a single fur house during December 1936.

Study of the case by agents of the Biological Survey indicates that smuggling involving articles in addition to furs may have been checked by the breaking up of this gang. It is quite possible that many stolen furs have been smuggled into this country from Canada. At any rate one ring of smugglers, with extensive operations in the United States and in Canada, has been put out of business.

It is impossible to ascertain the amount of smuggled fur disposed of by the members of this particular outfit, but it is obvious that, if infractions are not vigorously prosecuted, such operations can work a serious hardship on the American fur farmer and honest fur trader.

Agents of the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperated with the New York police and the U. S. Customs men in catching these law violators. The guilty individuals have been sentenced and a damaging inlet to the fur trade has been plugged.