

# Carnivores

## Carnivora



*Red Fox: Linda Shaw*

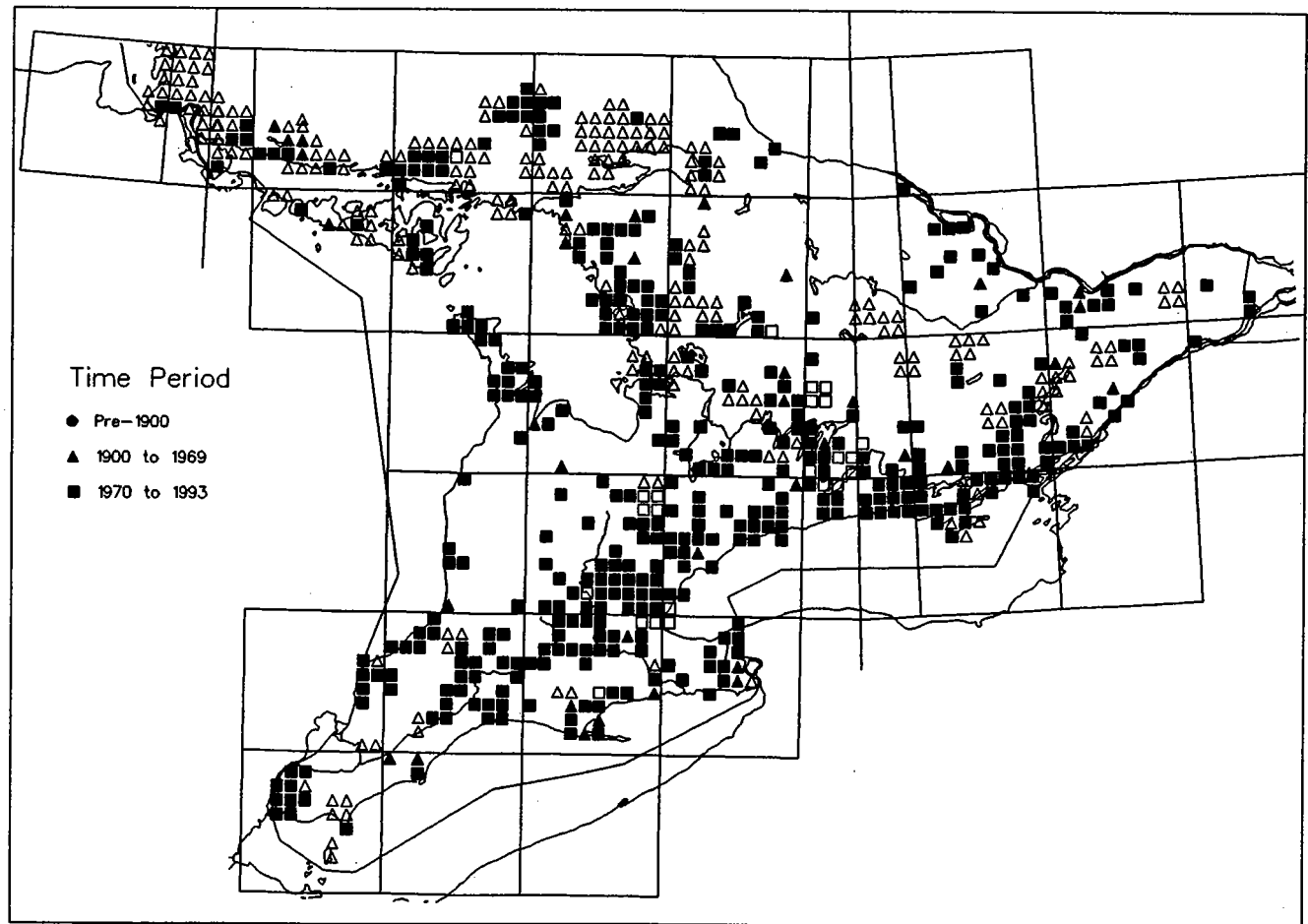
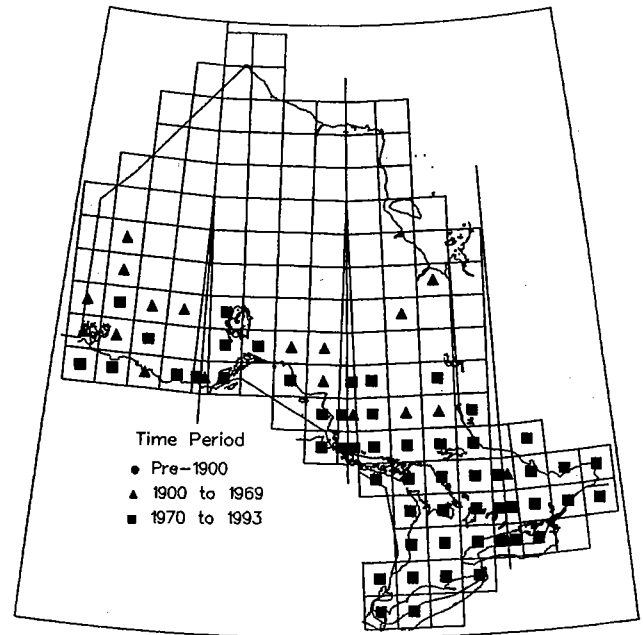
# Coyote

*Canis latrans*

The Coyote is a small relative of the Gray Wolf. While the wolf prefers more heavily forested areas, the Coyote is a common mammal of open woodlands and agricultural areas. The Coyote also fares well near human settlement.

Geographically, the Coyote can be found across Mexico, the US, and most of Canada. It is common throughout Ontario except in the far north. Coyotes are prevalent in the open forests and extensive agricultural regions of southern Ontario.

Prior to 1900, the Ontario range of the Coyote was restricted to the Rainy River area in northwestern Ontario. By 1956, however, it had spread eastward through all of central and southern Ontario (Peterson 1966).

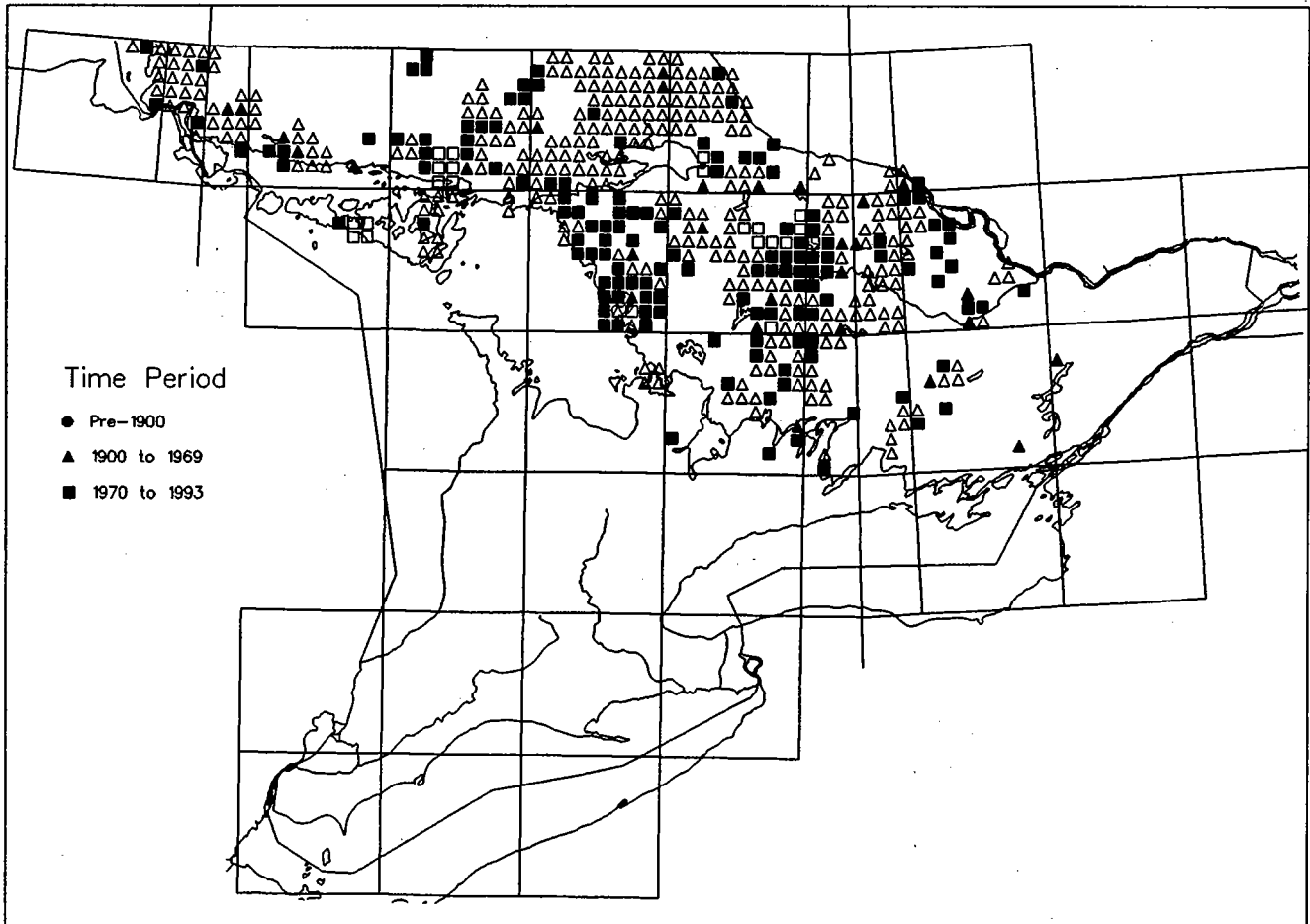
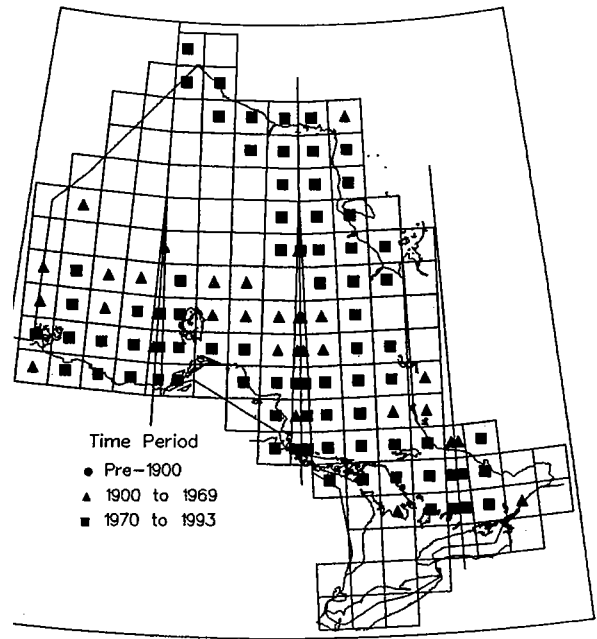


# Gray Wolf

*Canis lupus*

The Gray Wolf is the largest member of the dog family in Ontario and has long been a symbol of the Canadian north. It ranges throughout Canada except on the prairies and in heavily populated areas of the south. In Ontario, the range of the wolf extends from Lake Simcoe to the James and Hudson Bay shorelines, whereas the Coyote dominates areas south of this range and around some northern settlements. The Gray Wolf is the dominant species in Algonquin Provincial Park.

Distribution of Coyotes and Gray Wolves is governed by specific habitat preferences. The Gray Wolf prefers more heavily forested areas whereas the Coyote prefers open woodlands and agricultural areas. The Gray Wolf does not coexist with people as well as the more adaptable Coyote. As a result, the Gray Wolf dominates in northern regions where people are scarce, while the Coyote dominates everywhere else.



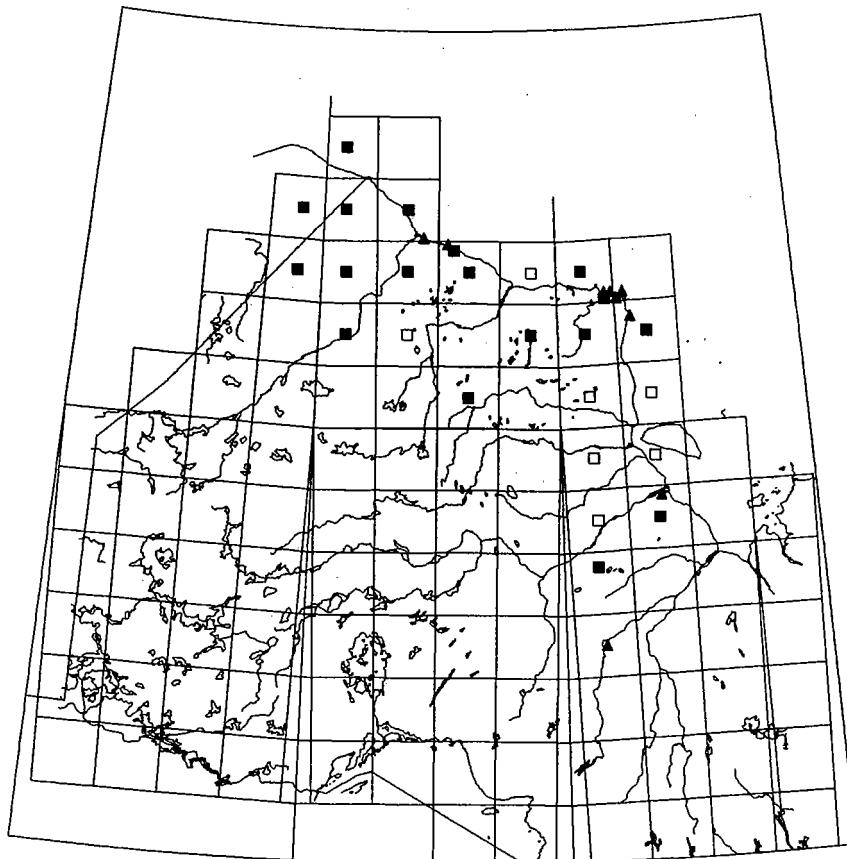
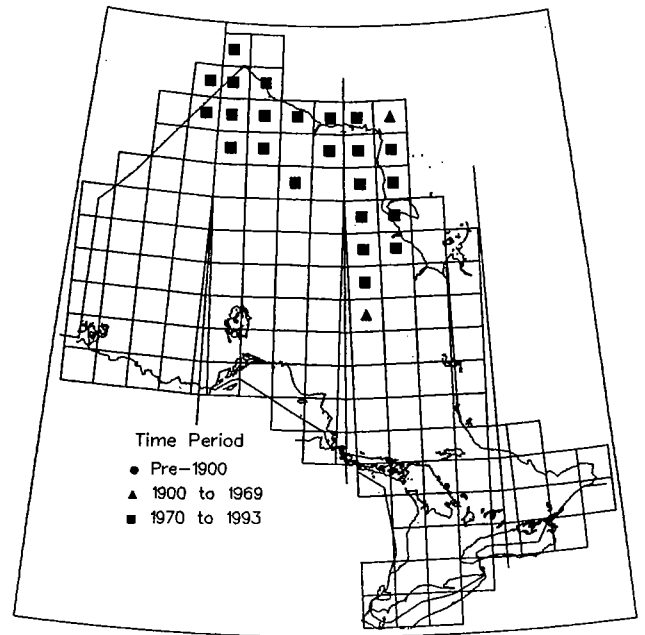
# Arctic Fox

*Alopex lagopus*

The Arctic Fox is a circumpolar inhabitant of the Arctic Tundra Biome. It is frequently found along Ontario's narrow Tundra region adjacent to Hudson Bay. Evidence of the Arctic Fox south of the Tundra is consistent with some winter dispersal records away from the breeding range (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982).

Arctic Fox range and population levels fluctuate with prey abundance, and some movement out of their normal range can be expected in response to low prey populations. However, records of this species venturing long distances inland from the coast likely represent isolated cases of wandering individuals.

.. Nancy Wilson

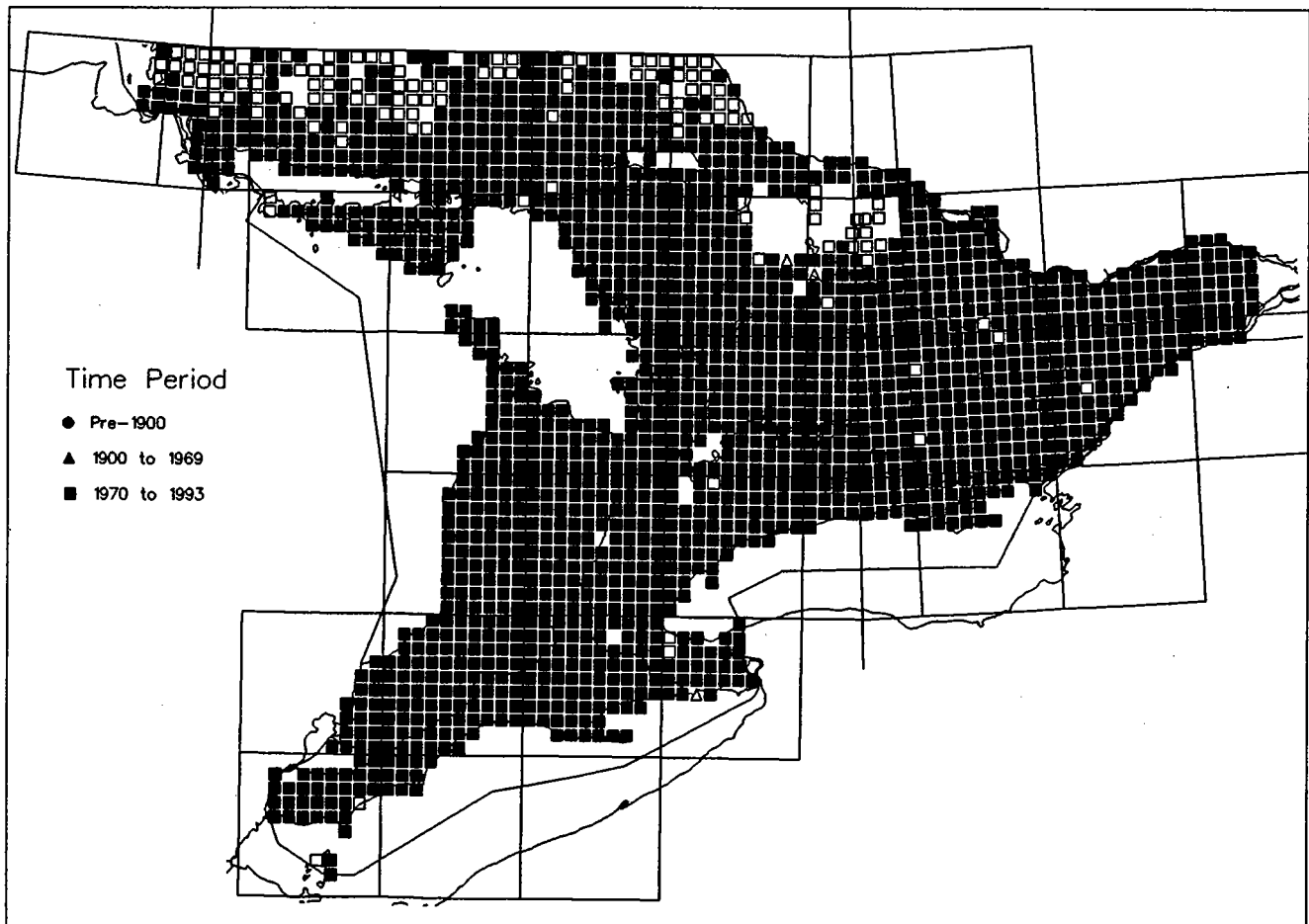
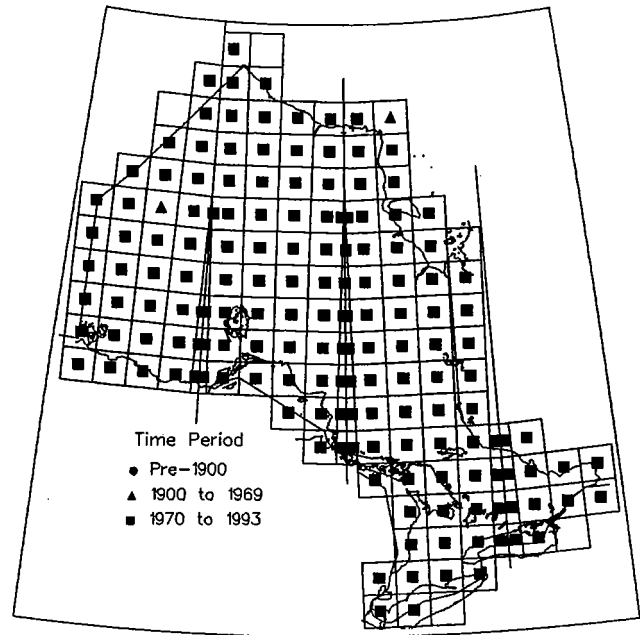


# Red Fox

*Vulpes vulpes*

The Red Fox is one of the most successful carnivores in Ontario. There are records for this highly adaptive mammal in every UTM block, and most squares in Ontario. The Red Fox also ranges throughout North America, except in the southwestern US and Mexico.

Aside from the normal red colour, the Red Fox has two other basic colour morphs: the cross fox and the black or silver fox. The cross fox is more brown than the red morph and has a characteristic dark cross on its back. The black fox is all black with varying numbers of white-tipped guard hairs on its back. When there are a lot of white-tipped hairs, the fox takes on a silvery appearance and is referred to as a silver fox. In all colour morphs, the feet, legs and outside tips of the ears are black, whereas the tip of the tail and much of the underparts are white (Peterson 1966).

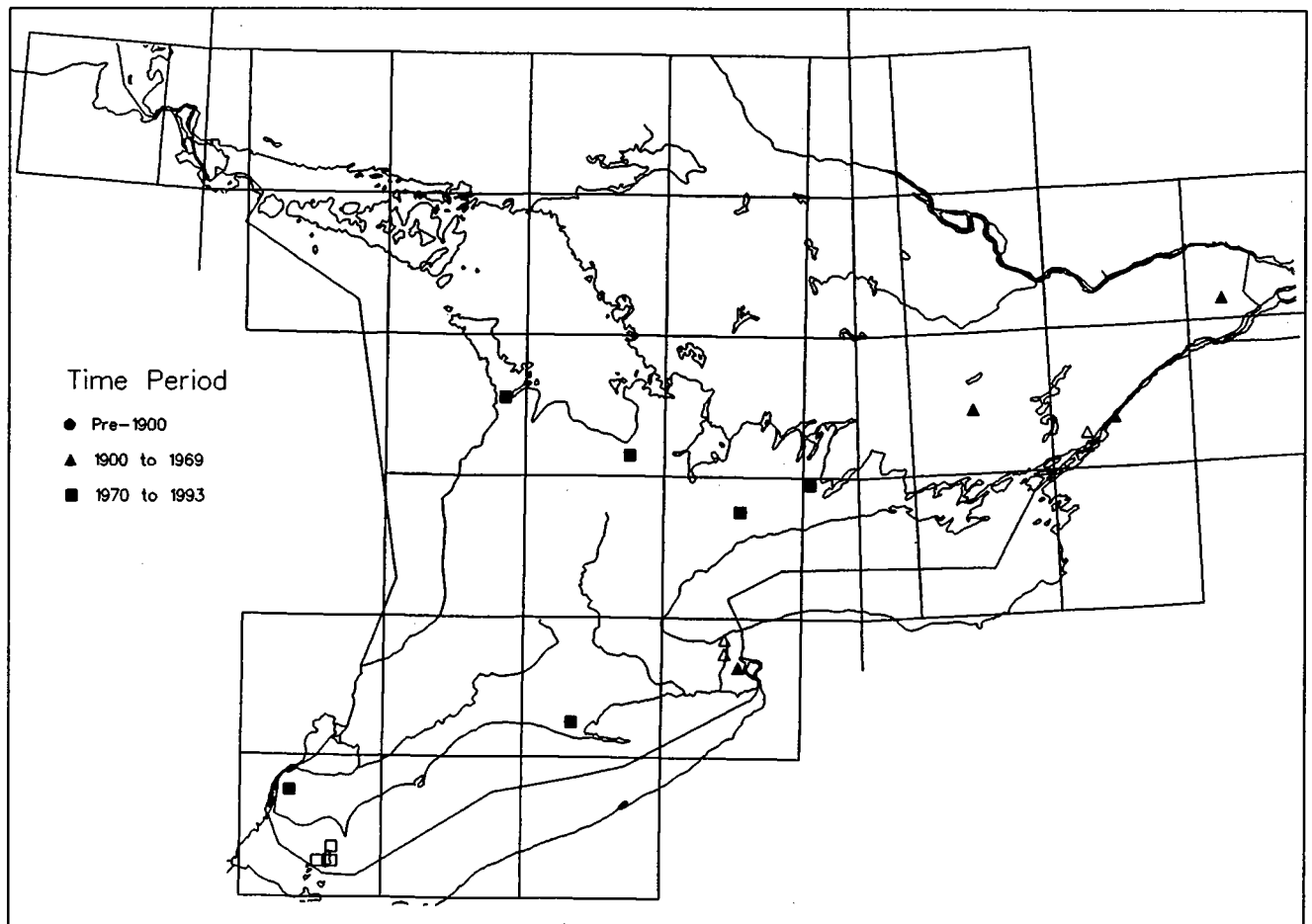
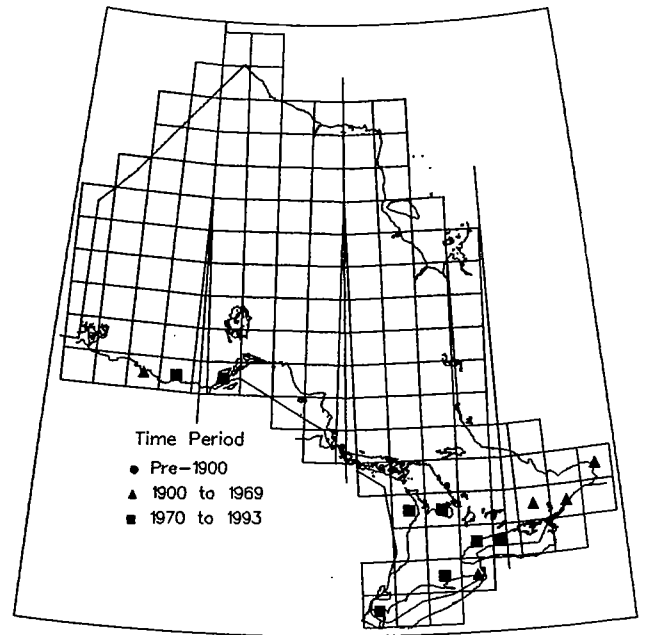


# Gray Fox

*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*

The Gray Fox is a southern mammal which is found across most of the US except in the northwest. Gray Fox range in Canada is marginal. Within Ontario, the Gray Fox is restricted to the south. It ranges north to Georgian Bay and east along the St. Lawrence River. The Gray Fox is also found in the Rainy River area where it has entered Ontario from Minnesota in recent years. There are no records of a Gray Fox having produced a litter in Ontario. Most Ontario Gray Foxes are thought to have come from the US.

The Gray Fox is about the same size as a Red Fox and is often confused with the cross fox morph of the Red Fox. However, the Gray Fox has a distinguishable black-tipped tail (Peterson 1966). The Gray Fox is designated a rare species on the provincial status list.

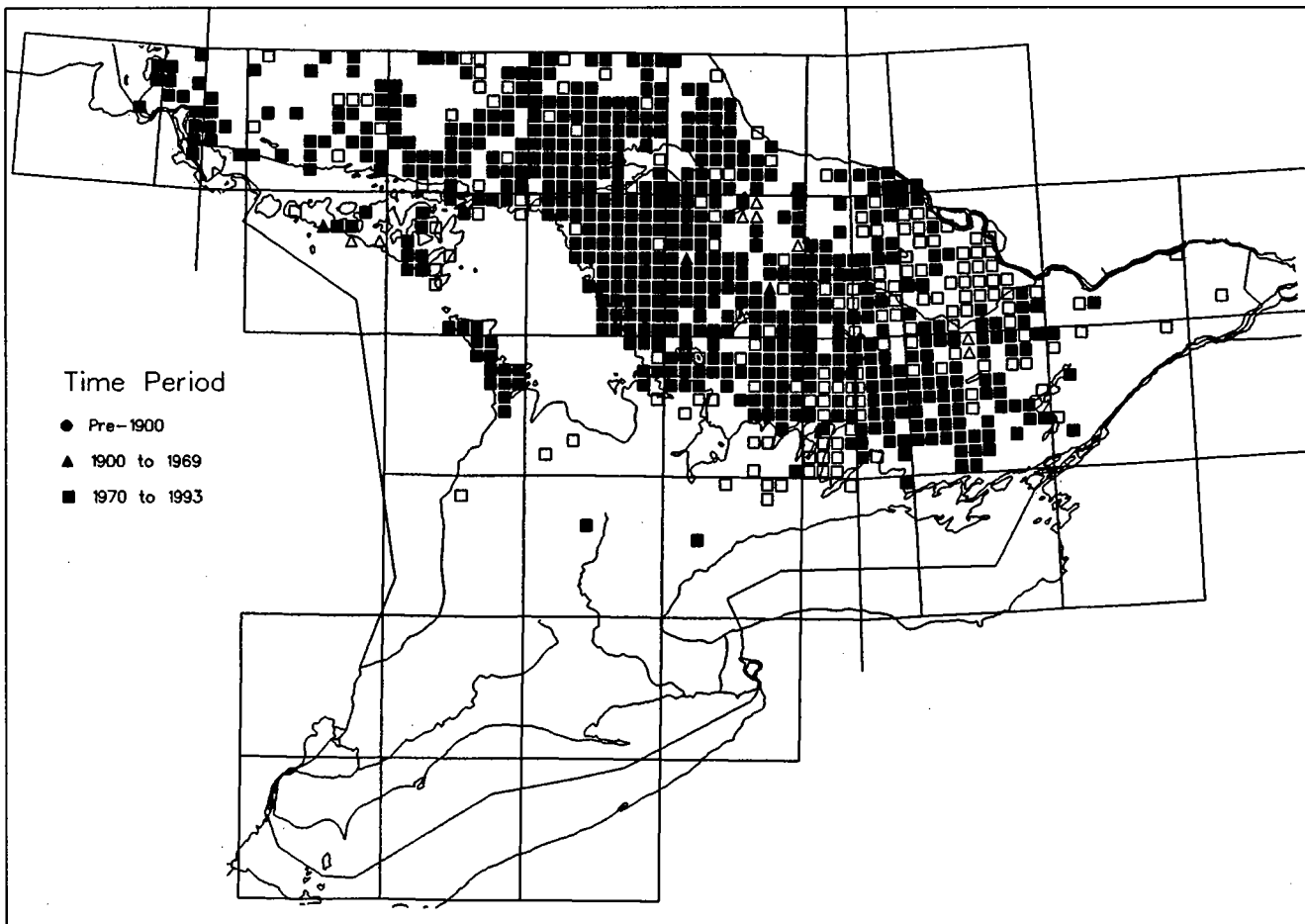
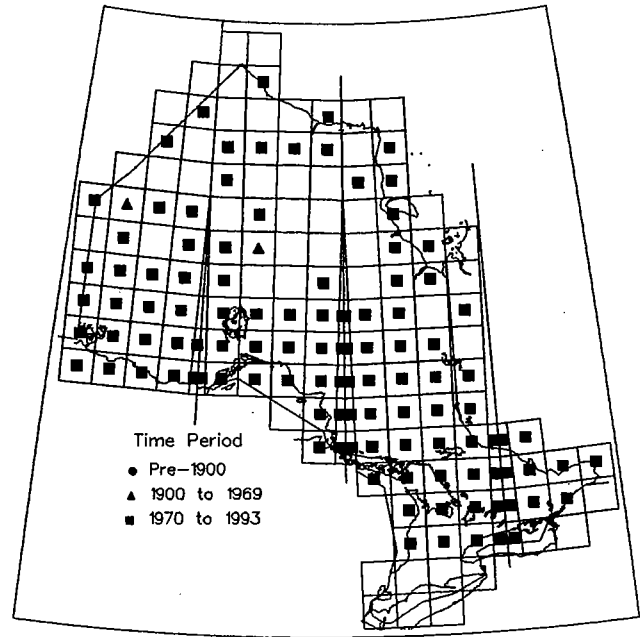


# Black Bear

*Ursus americanus*

The Black Bear is well documented in Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources big game harvest records, providing a detailed distribution map. Historically, the Black Bear has been found throughout the province, right down into southwestern Ontario (Peterson 1966). Currently, however, its range is restricted to the Canadian Shield, northern Ontario, and an isolated population on the Bruce Peninsula. Occasional records have been found further south, such as the one from Luther Marsh in 1978. Likely, records south of normal Black Bear range are examples of unusual dispersal movements.

Black Bears prefer to live in large, undeveloped tracts of forest with clearings and early succession vegetation. As a result, bears are generally not found south of the Canadian Shield where most of the land has been cleared for agriculture and settlement.



# Polar Bear

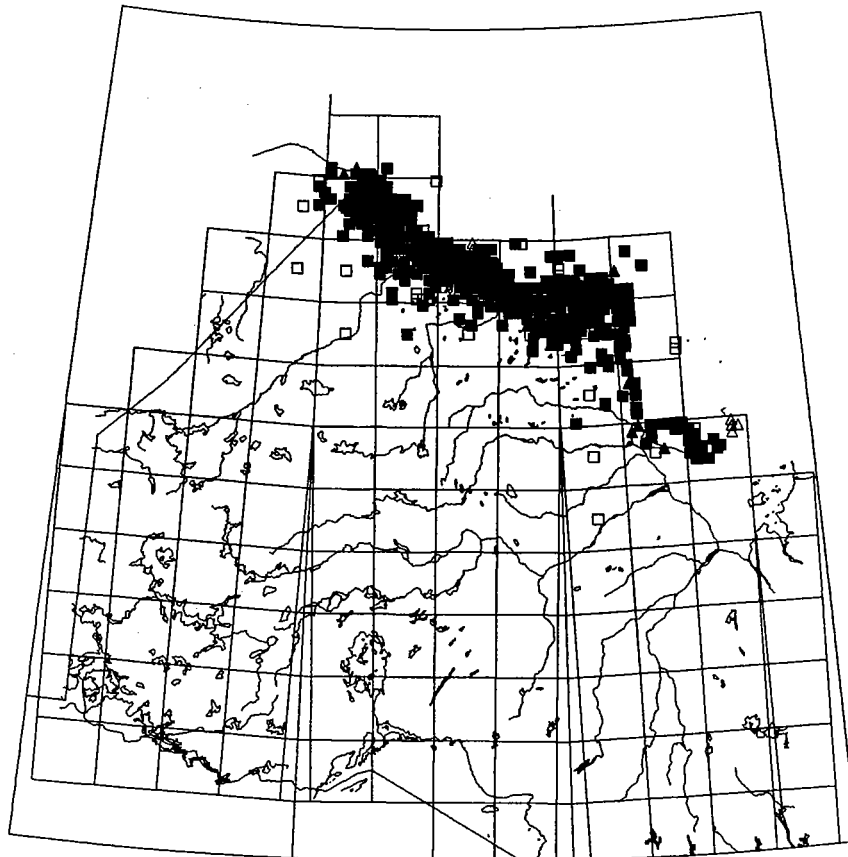
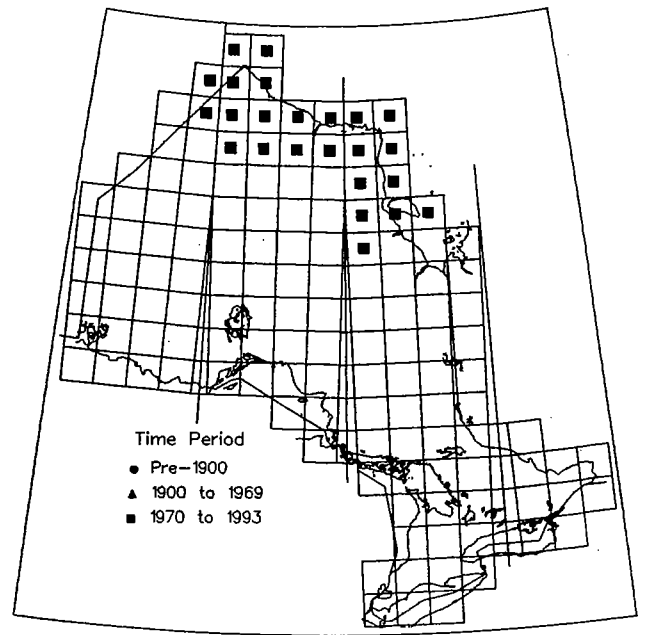
*Ursus maritimus*

The most southern range of this circumpolar, arctic species is found in Ontario. The Ontario Polar Bears are part of the southern Hudson Bay sub-population (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982).

The Polar Bear lives in close association with sea ice, coming ashore only when the ice has fractured substantially (approximately mid-July) and remaining there until the ice forms again (in the late fall). Pregnant females often travel over 100 km inland to den and give birth in late fall or winter. The southern Hudson Bay sub-population of Polar Bears is the only population that makes dens in the earth; the rest make their dens in snow.

Records south of Akimiski Island represent extralimital movements of these bears.

.. Nancy Wilson.



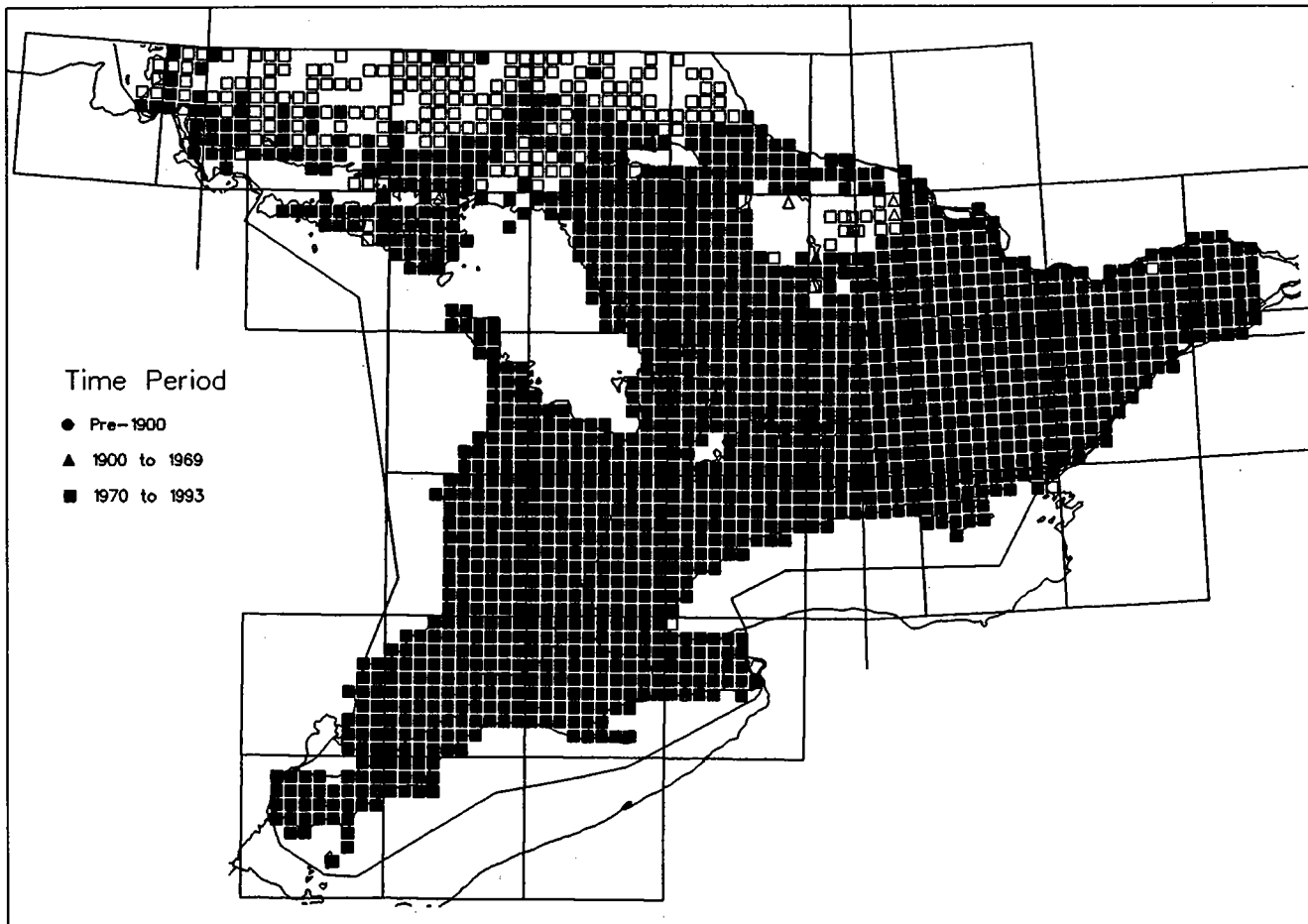
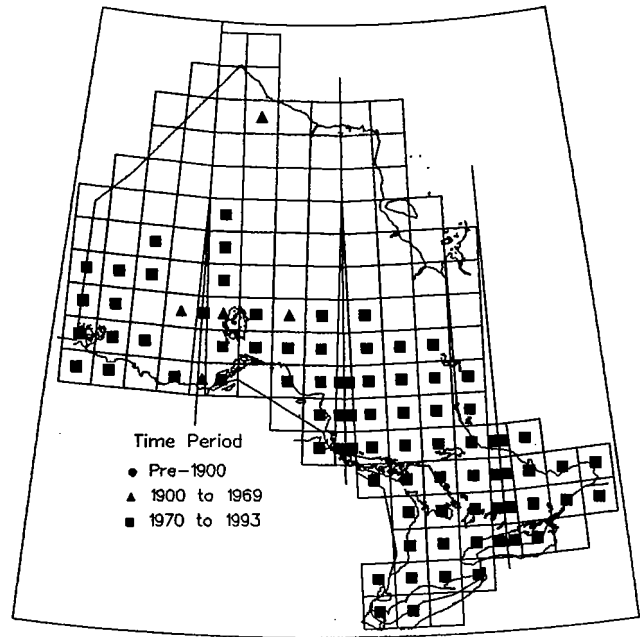
# Raccoon

*Procyon lotor*

Raccoons are familiar to most people, even those living in cities. The masked bandit is common in wooded areas, especially near lakes and streams.

In North America, Raccoons are found throughout most of the US, and parts of southern Canada. Raccoons are common in southern Ontario, but more scarce in far northern areas, likely because of the long winters (Peterson 1966).

An extensive amount of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources fur harvest data has contributed to a relatively complete map for this species. However, as is the case with the Red Fox and Muskrat, a lack of harvest data from areas such as Algonquin Provincial Park can lead to the misconception that Raccoons are absent from these areas. Raccoons do live throughout the park, and it is more than likely that further surveys in such areas would produce records.



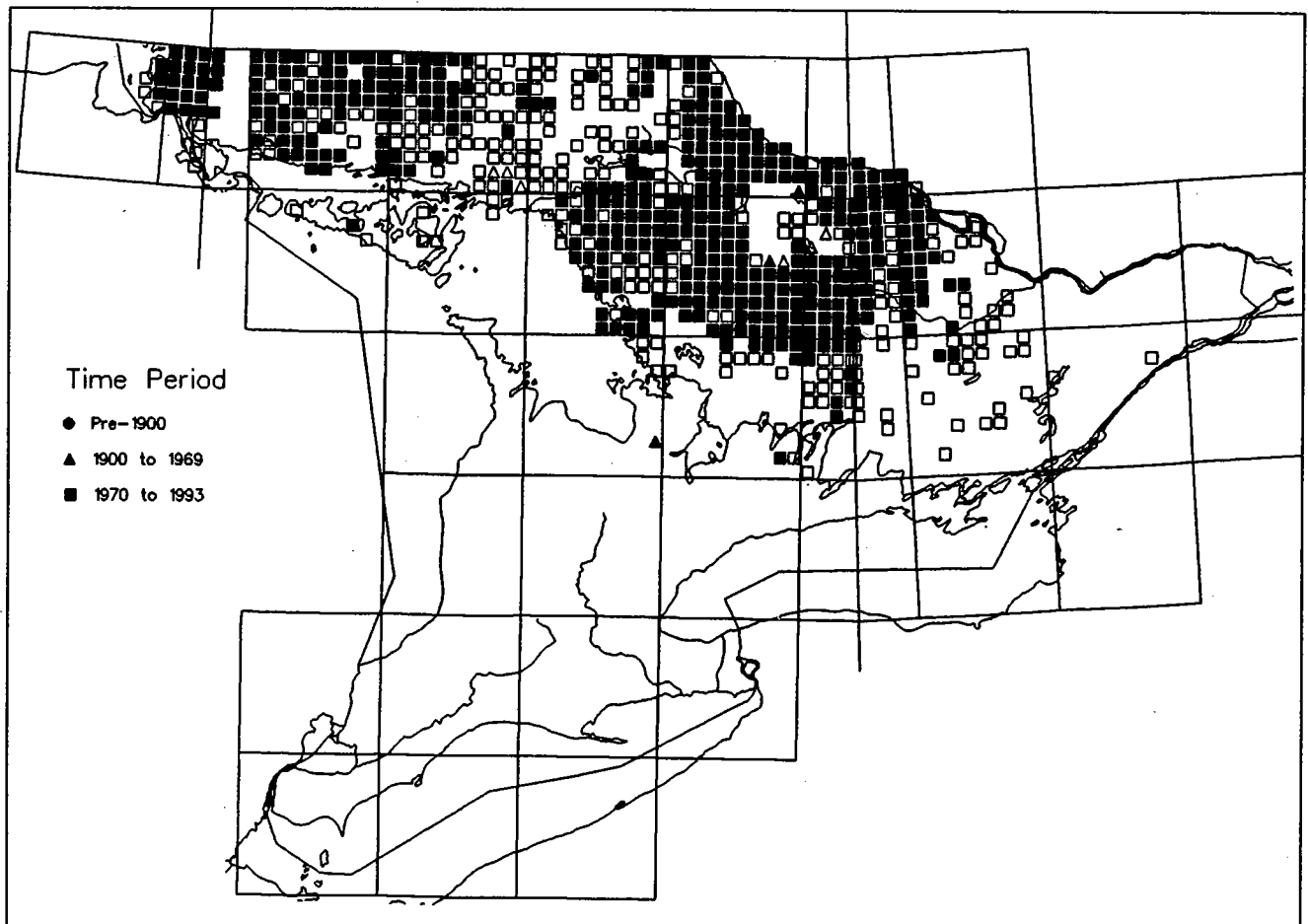
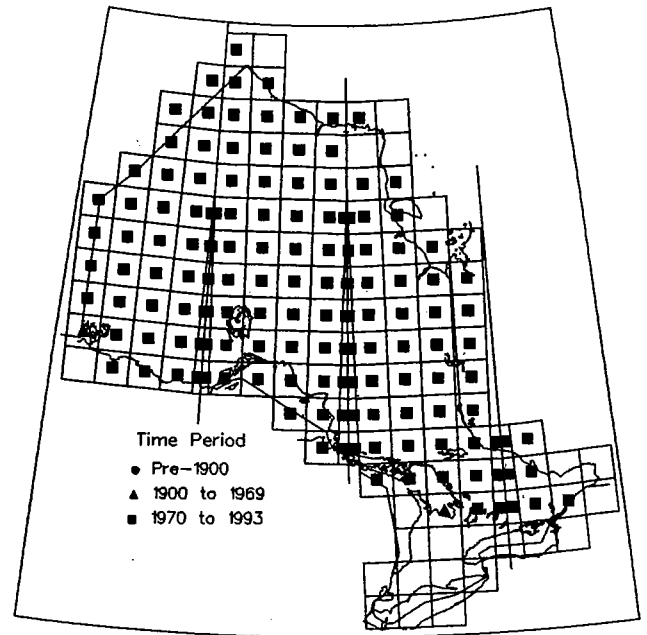
# Marten

## *Martes americana*

The Marten is a common mammal of the Boreal Forests of Canada, Alaska, and northwestern US. In Ontario, the Marten can be found from Lake Simcoe in the south and Arnprior in the east north to the tree line.

Although Martens and Fishers share a similar range, they have distinct habitat preferences. Martens prefer mature coniferous forests while Fishers prefer mixed or hardwood early succession forests.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Marten populations were significantly reduced by the trapping industry. But Marten populations eventually returned to original levels largely as a result of season closures, quotas, licensing, and a co-operative management program between trappers and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. At the local level, Marten populations fluctuate dramatically in response to small-mammal population cycles.

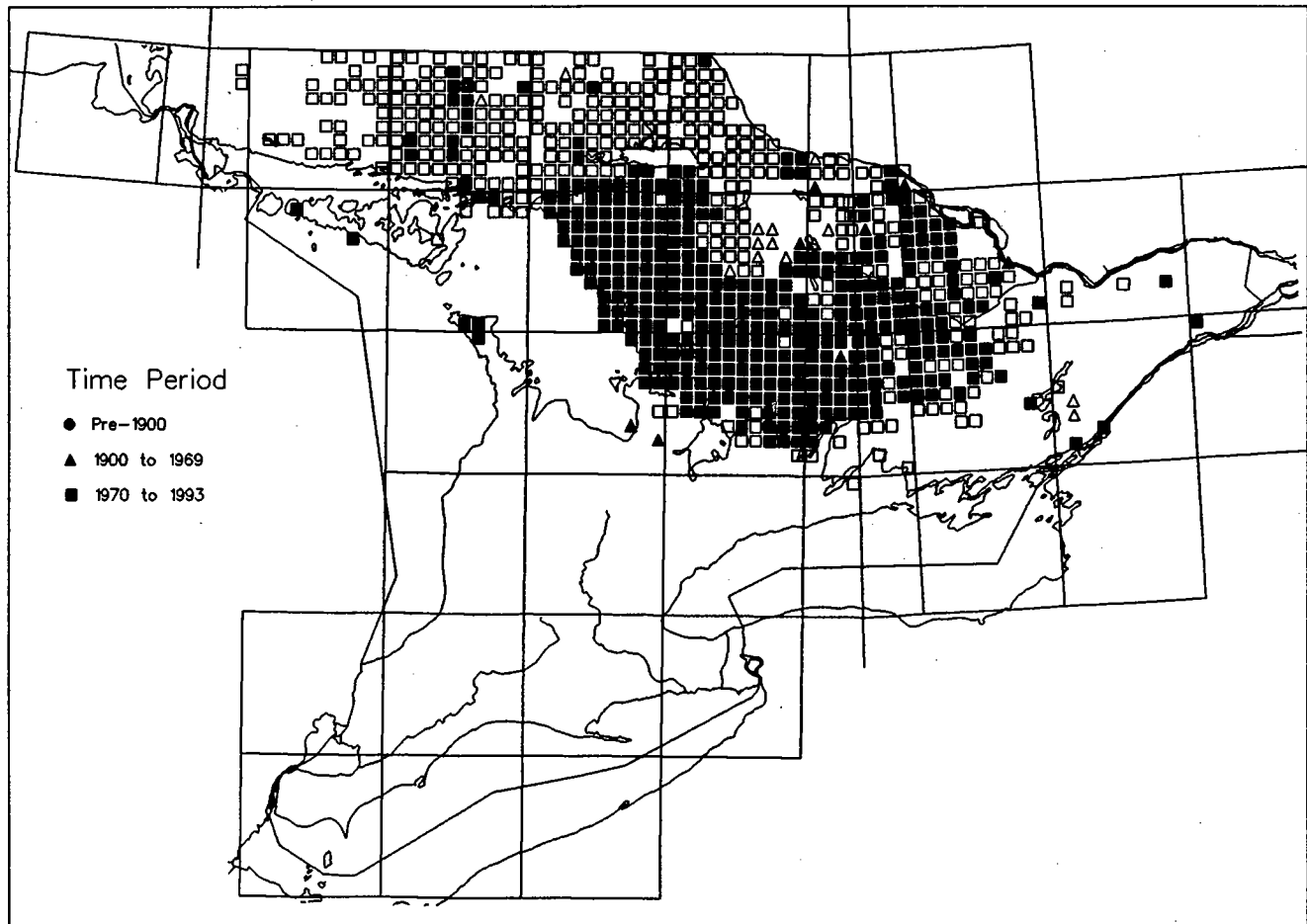
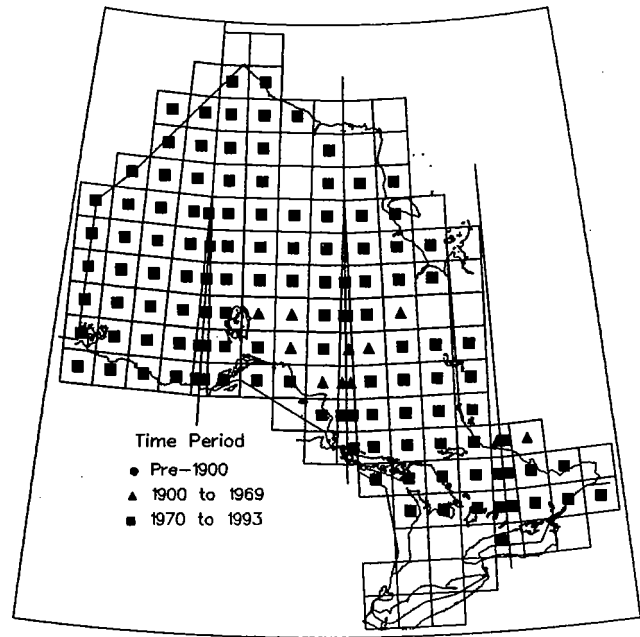


# Fisher

*Martes pennanti*

The Fisher is found throughout Canada and the northern US. In Ontario, Fishers range from Lake Simcoe to the tree line with an isolated population on the Bruce Peninsula. At one time, Fishers may have ranged as far south as southwestern Ontario (Peterson 1966). However, extensive forest clearing led to its disappearance from the southwest. Fishers prefer mixed or hardwood early succession forests whereas the Marten prefers mature coniferous forests.

The Fisher has always been prized for its high-quality pelt. Historically, excessive trapping resulted in a province-wide decline in its numbers. However, a co-operative management plan between trappers and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources resulted in the recovery of most of the Fisher's historical range and population levels. Recent Fisher reintroductions in several locations including the Bruce Peninsula, Manitoulin Island, and the Ottawa Valley have helped bring Fishers back to some of the areas from which they had been extirpated.

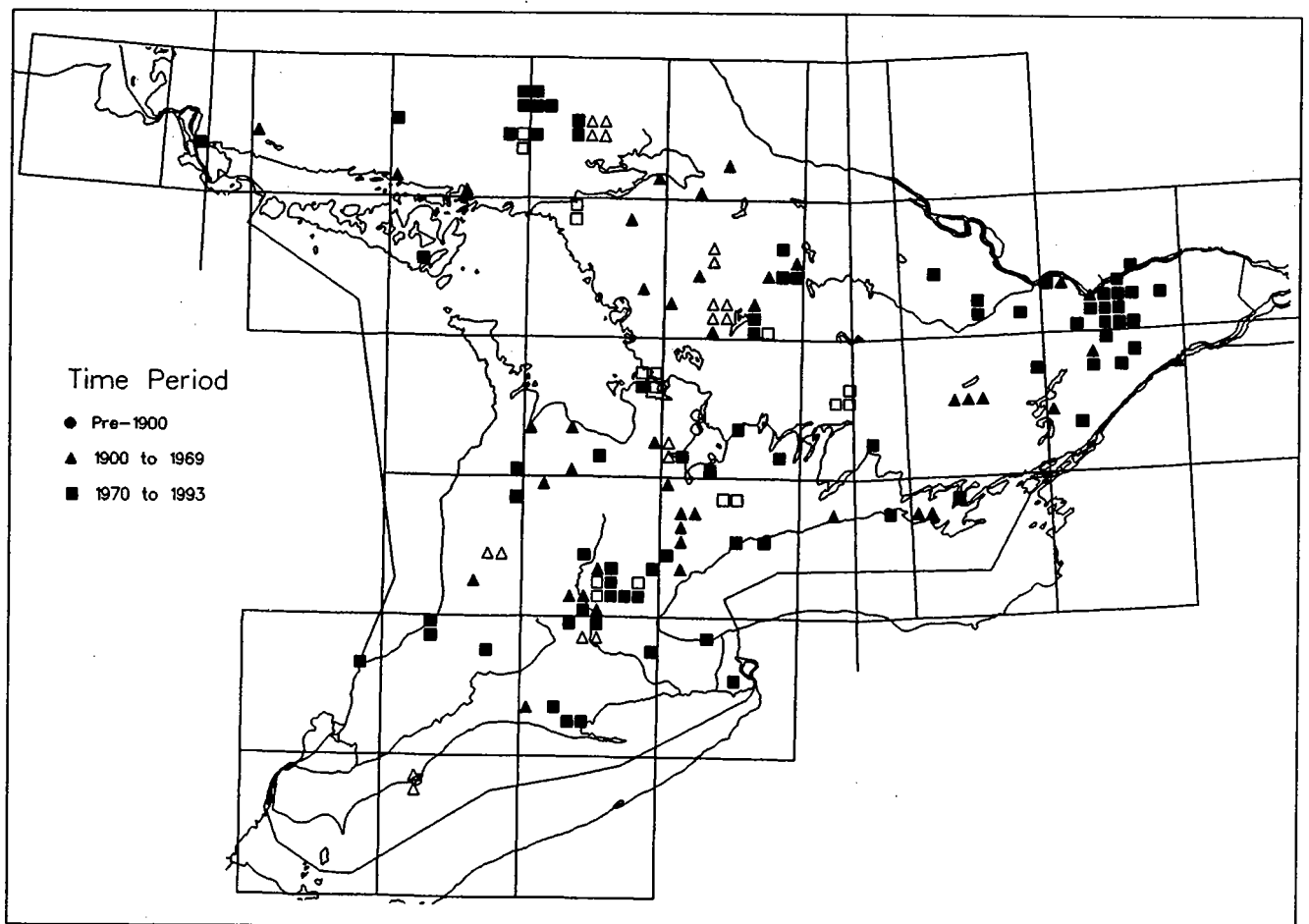
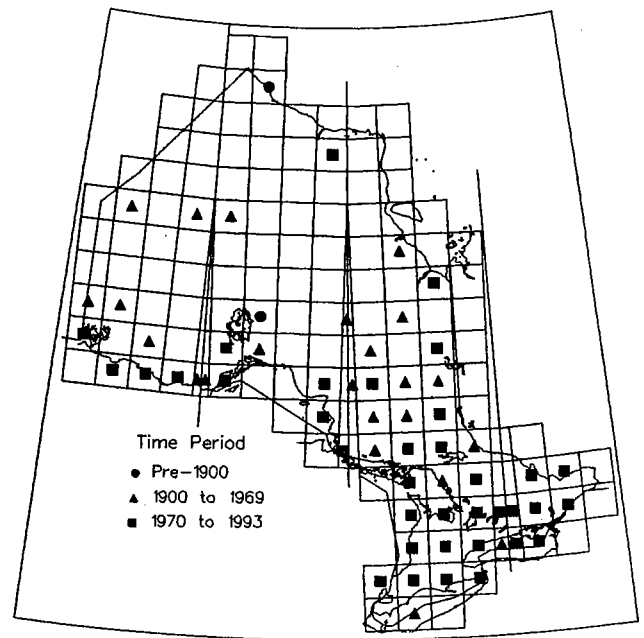


# Ermine

*Mustela erminea*

The Ermine or Short-tailed Weasel is the smaller of two similar-looking weasels. It can be found throughout Canada and the northeastern and western US. In Ontario, the Ermine is found throughout the province.

Data for Ermine are fairly limited because of identification difficulties. Although Long-tailed Weasels are larger than Ermine, sexual dimorphism causes an overlap in size between male Ermine and female Long-tailed Weasels. The best distinguishing method is to determine the sex and then measure the tail vertebrae. Females with tail vertebrae less than 70 mm are Ermine, while those with tail vertebrae greater than or equal to 75 mm are Long-tailed Weasels. Males with tail vertebrae less than or equal to 95 mm are Ermine, whereas males with tail vertebrae greater than 100 mm are Long-tailed Weasels. Specimens that have tail lengths between these values will require examination of other features, such as skull characteristics.

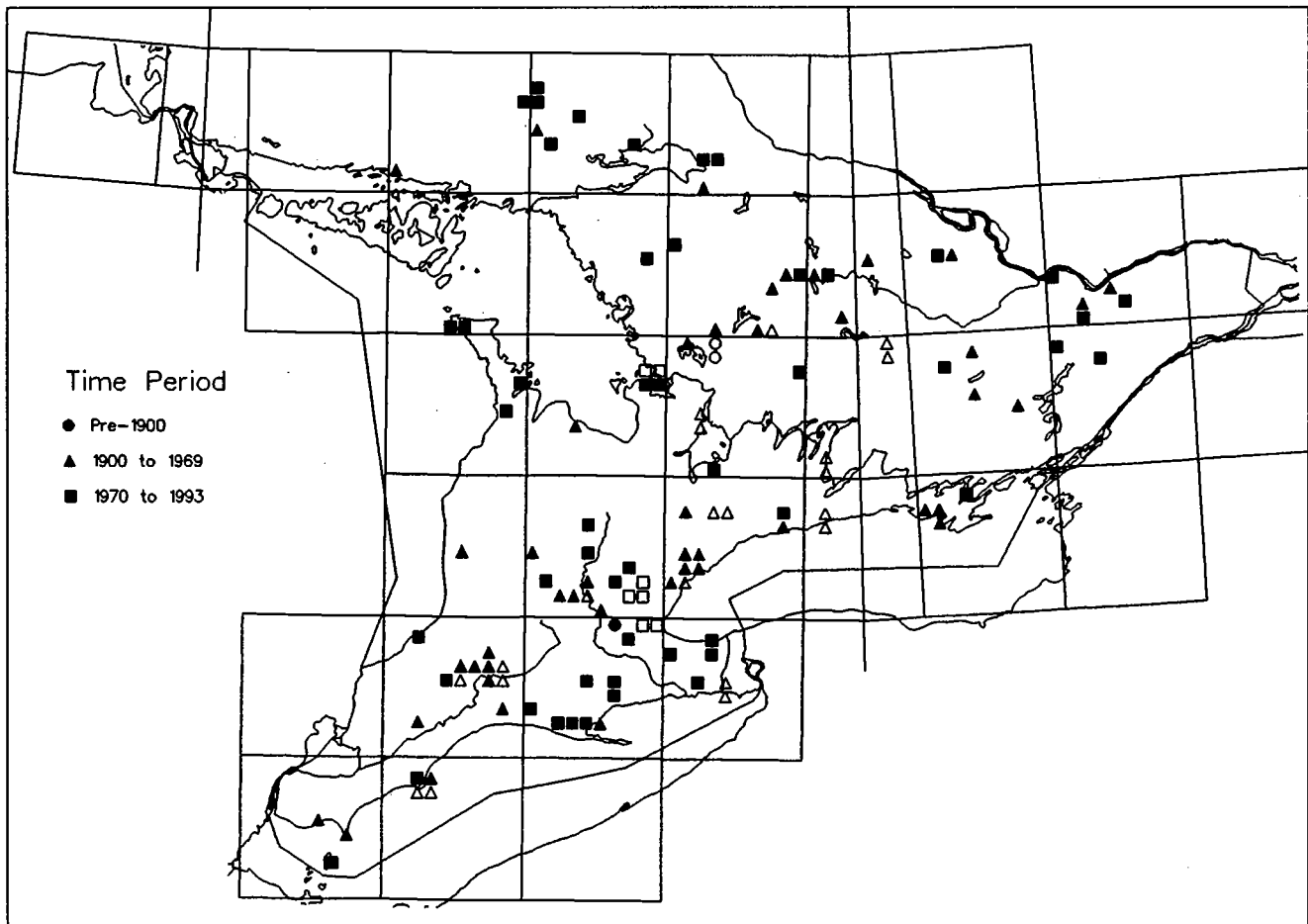
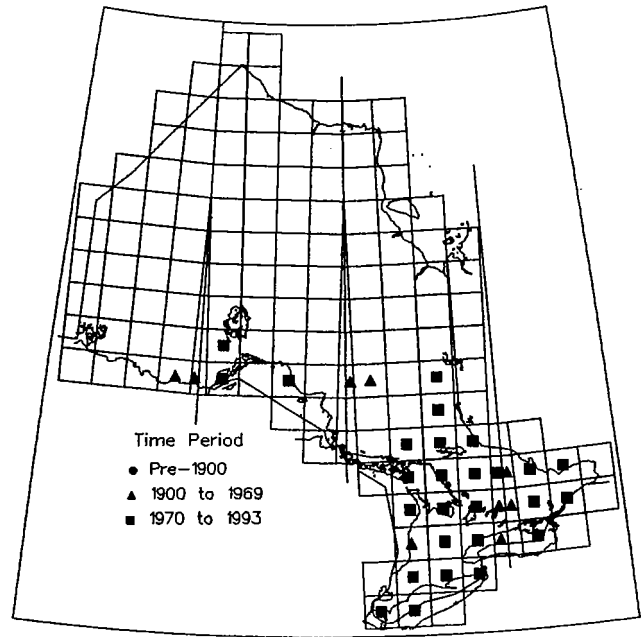


# Long-tailed Weasel

*Mustela frenata*

The Long-tailed Weasel is more southerly distributed than the Ermine. In North America, the Long-tailed Weasel occupies most of the US, Mexico, Canadian Prairies, and southern portions of the remaining provinces. In Ontario, Long-tailed Weasels are found in the southern portion of the province below the north shore of Lake Superior.

In southern Ontario, where the Ermine and the Long-tailed Weasel overlap in distribution, identification can be particularly difficult. Proper identification generally requires that the animal be caught and specific measurements taken. See the Ermine account for specific instructions on how to distinguish between these similar species.

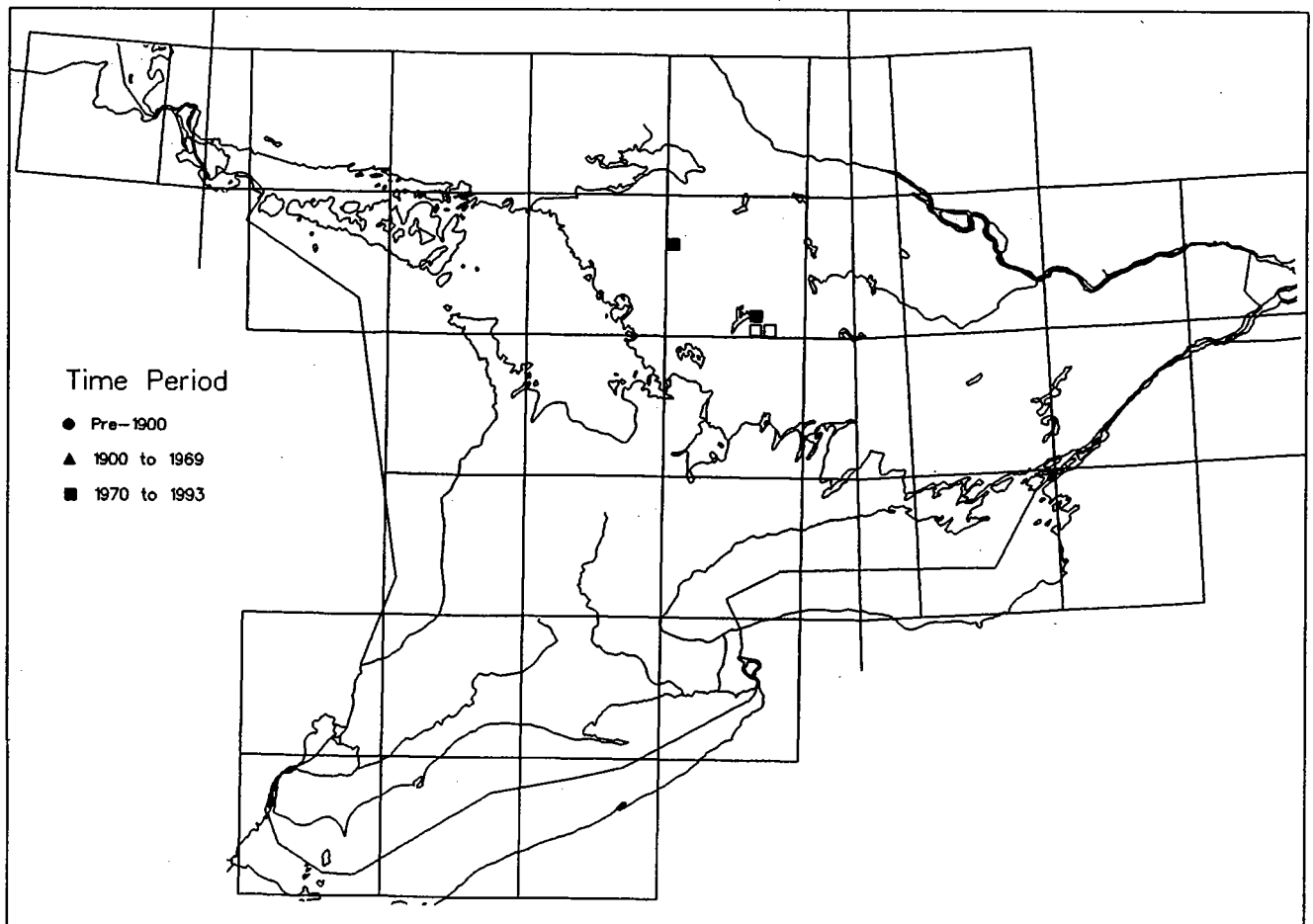
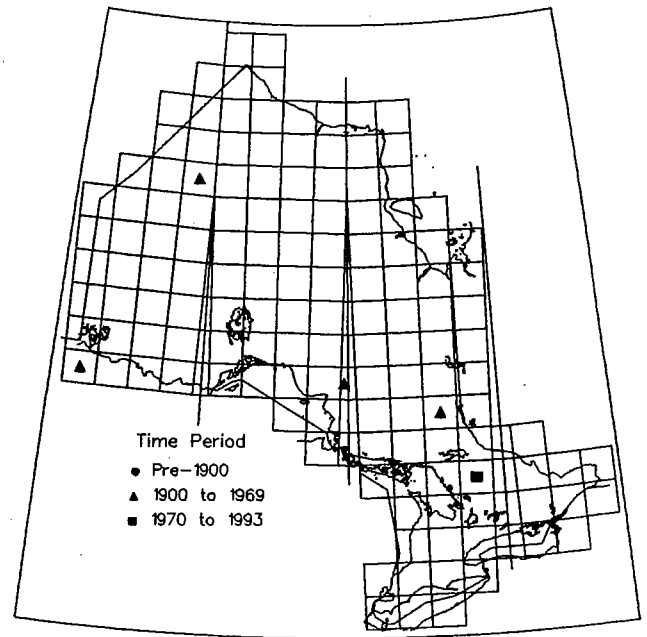


# Least Weasel

*Mustela nivalis*

The Least Weasel is a small, rare relative of the Ermine and Long-tailed Weasel. It can be found from the northern US to Hudson Bay. Peterson (1966) showed the Least Weasel range in Ontario to extend north from the northeast corner of Lake Superior. However, the Mammal Atlas has obtained records for areas much further south, including Dorset and Magnetawan. Insufficient data exist to identify the true range of the Least Weasel in Ontario.

The Least Weasel is often confused with small Ermine, although they are easily distinguished. The Least Weasel is smaller and has a very short tail (less than 38 mm) with no black tip, whereas the Ermine has a tail measuring at least 45 mm with a distinct black tip (Peterson 1966).

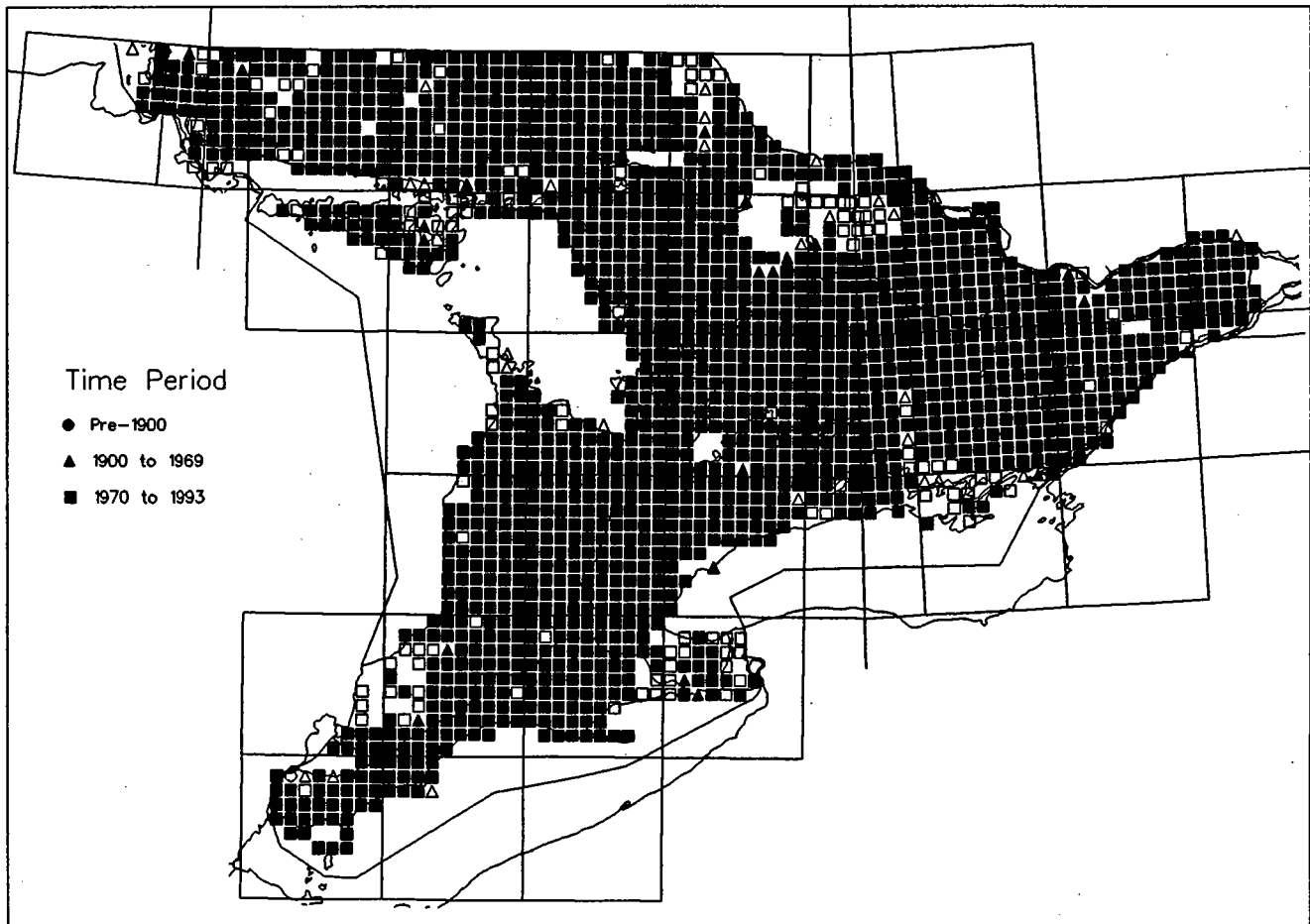
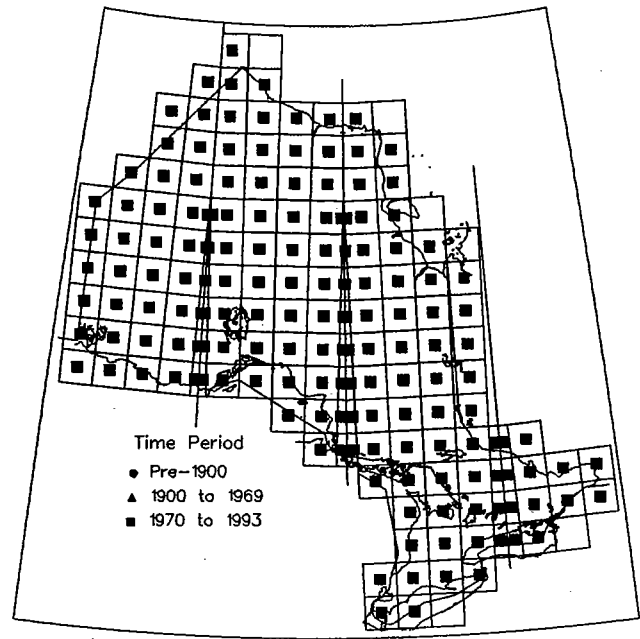


# Mink

*Mustela vison*

The Mink is one of the most commonly seen members of the weasel family. Its appears across most of North America except in the southwestern US and parts of the Arctic. In Ontario, there are records for this highly adaptable mammal in almost every UTM block from Windsor to Hudson Bay. An abundance of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources fur harvest data on Mink distribution contributed extensively to the formation of this map.

Mink, like River Otter, are adapted to life in aquatic environments (Peterson 1966). They can be found in streams, lakes, and Beaver ponds containing a good supply of fish, frogs and invertebrates.



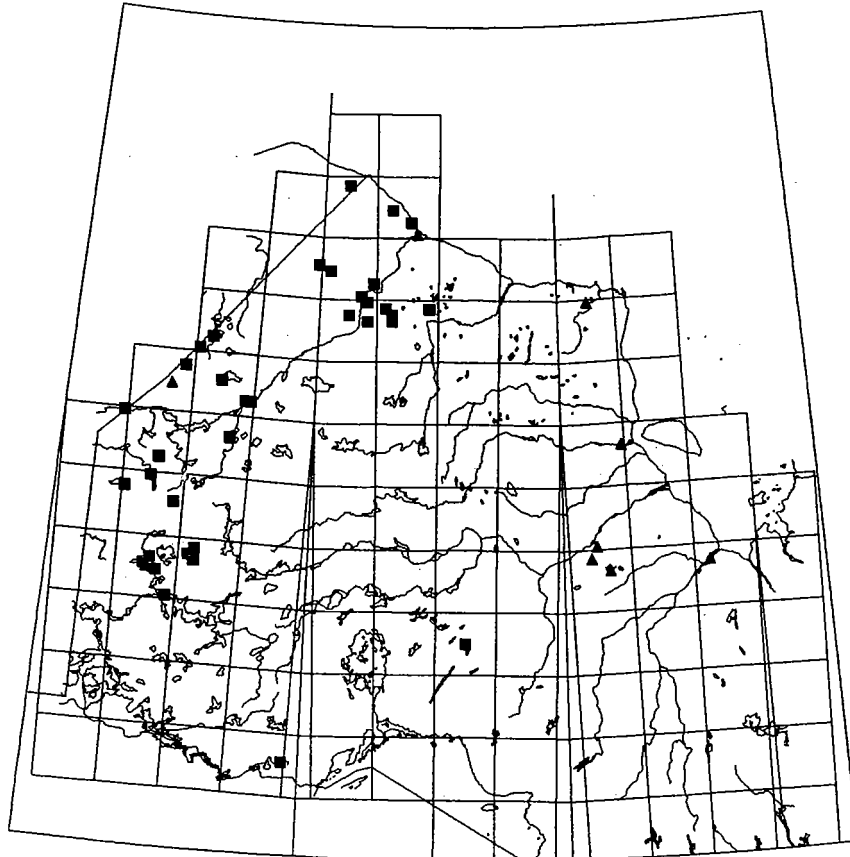
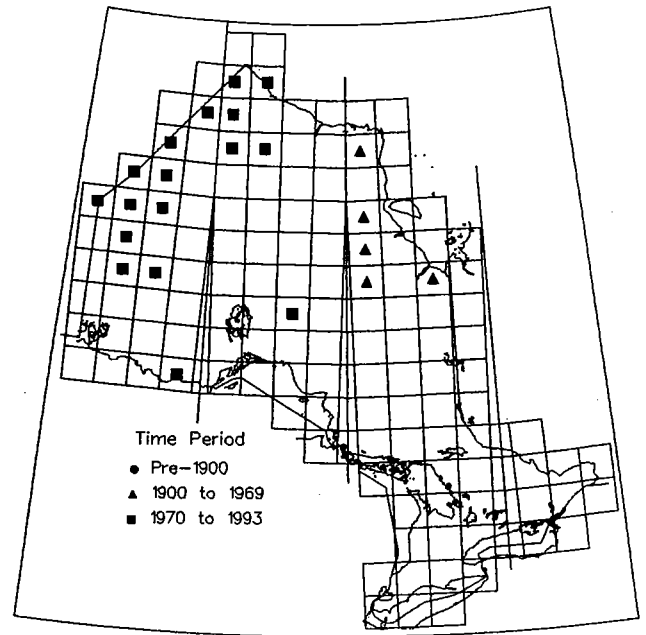
# Wolverine

*Gulo gulo*

Historically, Wolverines were widely distributed across the northern portion of North America but their numbers steadily declined during the early to mid part of the century, resulting in a much smaller range (Hash 1987). Small pockets of Wolverines are found in some of the montane regions of the US, but most live in BC, Alaska, the Northwest Territories, and the northern regions of remaining Canadian provinces. In Ontario, the Wolverine is present in the northwest portion of the Boreal Forest. Although historical trapping notes indicate the past existence of a few local populations of Wolverine in the Moosonee and Sutton Ridge areas, no evidence of such populations exist today.

Wolverine records in the Mammal Atlas are mostly derived from trapped specimens and tracks observed during aerial surveys.

.. Nancy Wilson



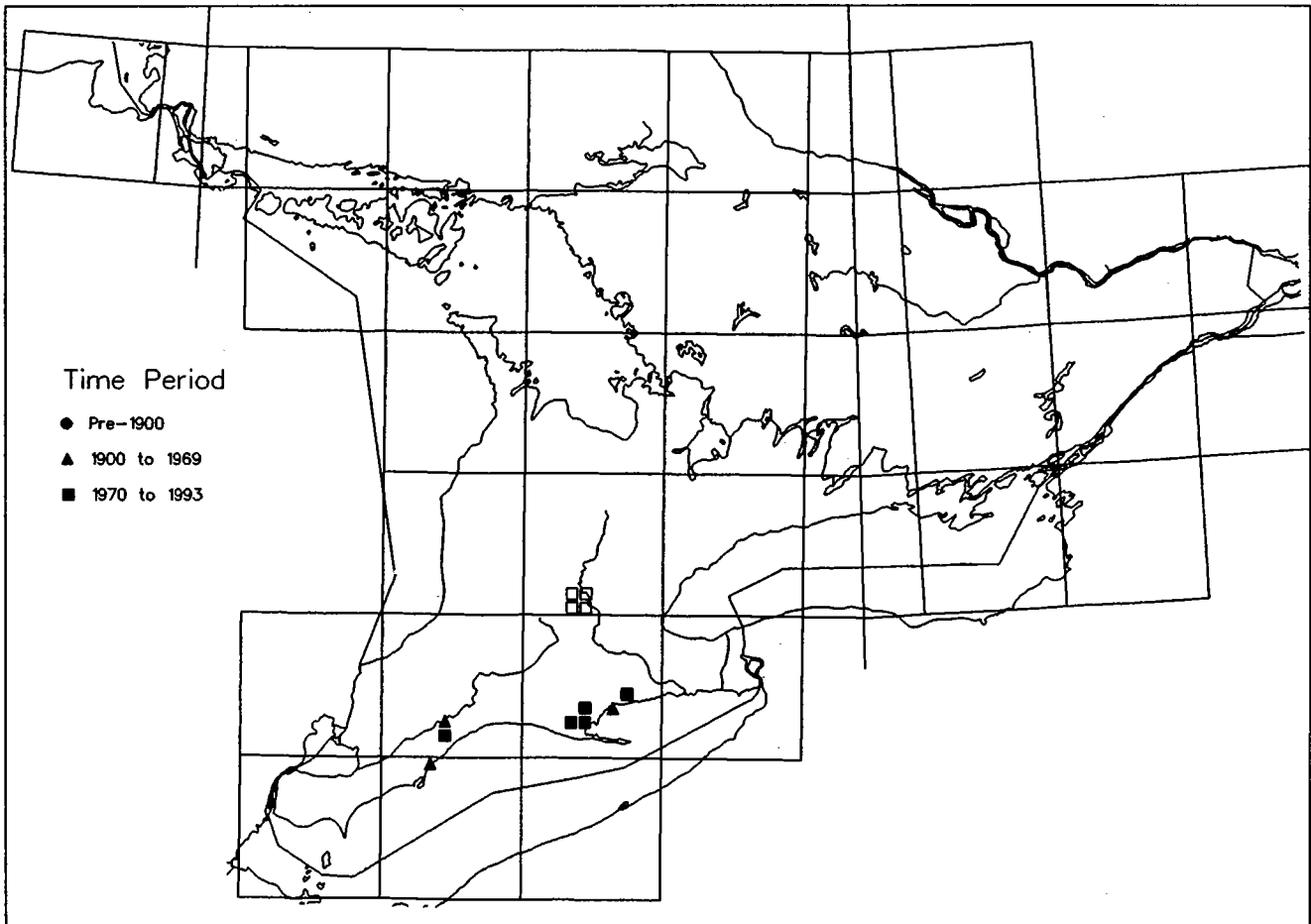
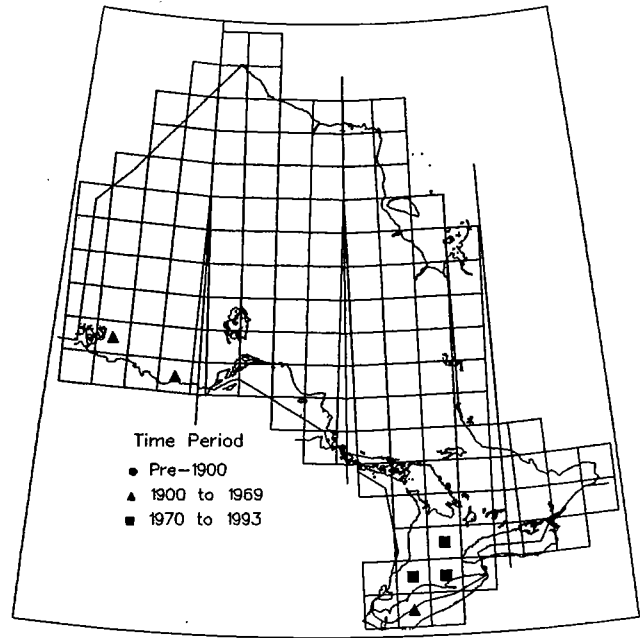
# Badger

*Taxidea taxus*

The Badger is a mammal of the open grasslands. It can be found throughout the western half of the US and parts of the Canadian Prairies. In Ontario, there are only two small remnant populations of Badgers: the first is found along the north shore of Lake Erie; the second is found in the Rainy River area of northwestern Ontario (Peterson 1957).

Badgers are fossorial mammals that live only in areas where there is sufficient soil depth for burrowing. Habitat preferences make most parts of the Canadian Shield unsuitable for Badgers, and consequently they are restricted to the southern agricultural areas where adequate soil conditions exist.

In Ontario the Badgers main prey are Woodchucks and Eastern Cottontails.

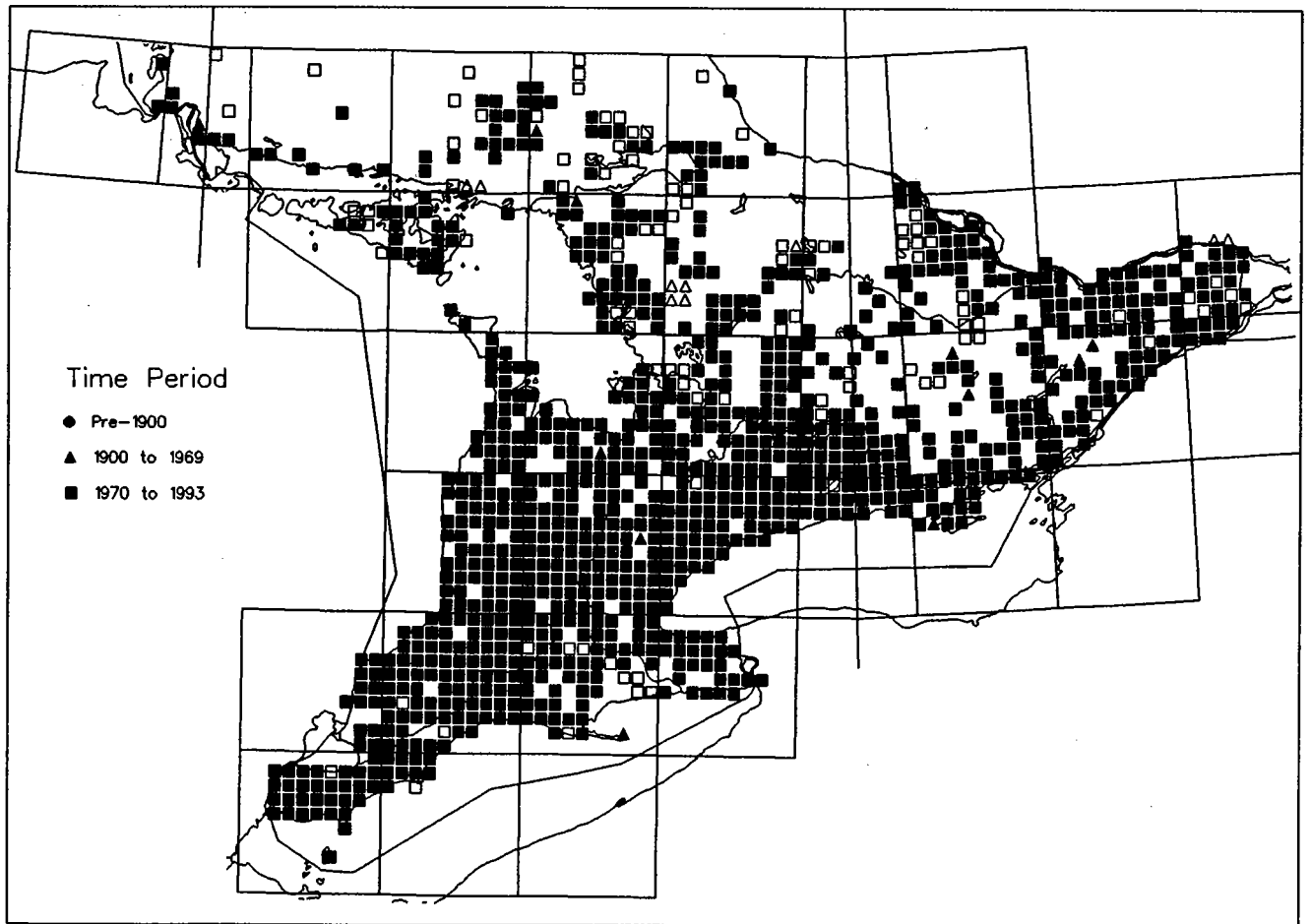
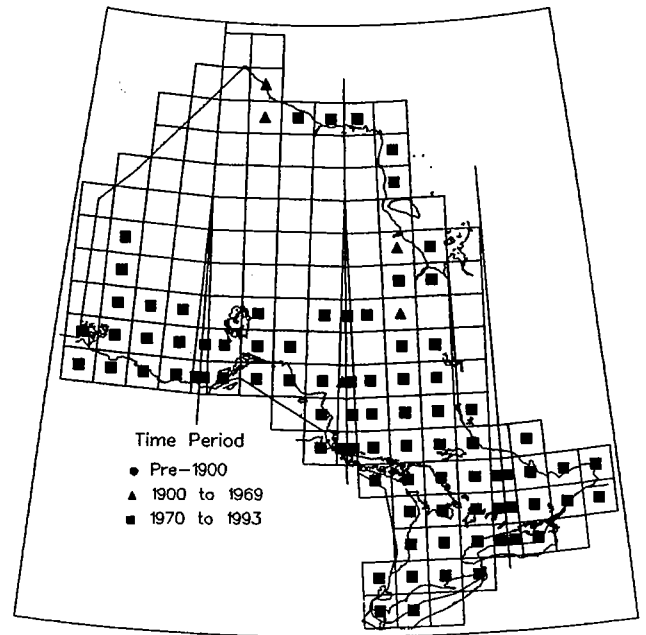


# Striped Skunk

*Mephitis mephitis*

The Striped Skunk is a familiar mammal noted for its strong odour and distinctive white stripes. Skunks range throughout North America, as far north as Great Slave Lake. In Ontario, skunks are found throughout the southern portion of the province as far north as the southern shore of James Bay. They are also found along the James and Hudson Bay coastlines. Like Raccoons, Striped Skunks are plentiful in both urban and rural areas.

Although skunks are classed as furbearers, pelts are not in high demand. Consequently, the Mammal Atlas has relied heavily on volunteers to provide Striped Skunk records.

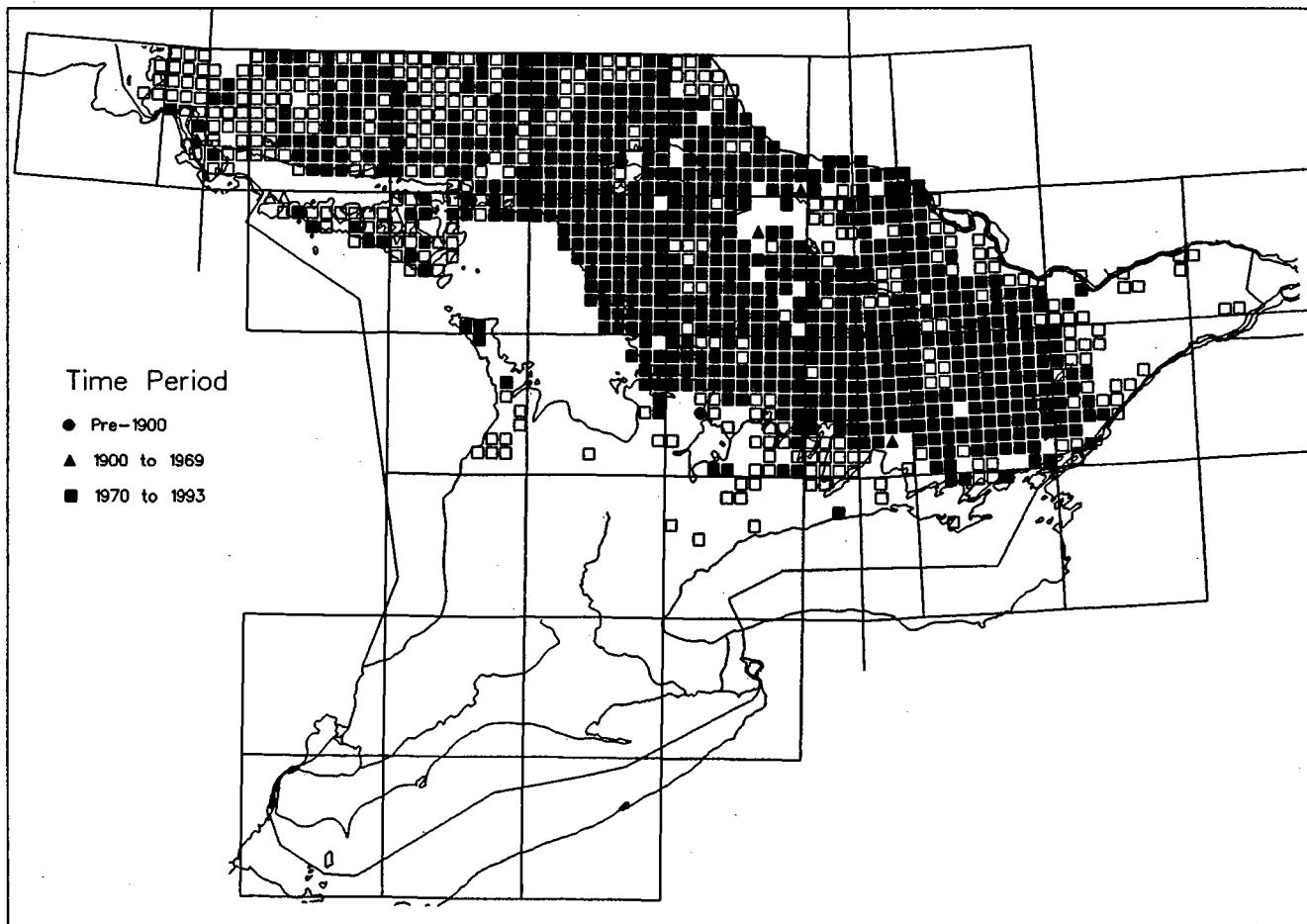
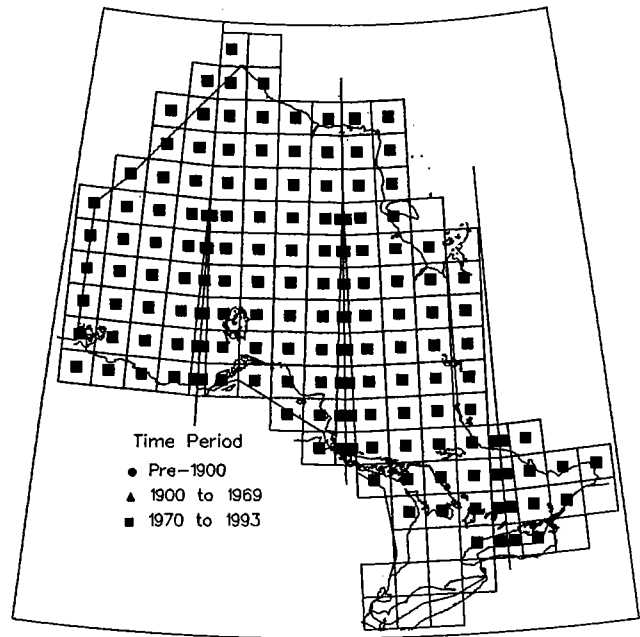


# River Otter

*Lontra canadensis*

The River Otter can be found throughout many areas of the US and Canada, although agricultural development has depleted its range in southcentral Ontario. Otters are most common north of Lake Simcoe, including on the Bruce Peninsula, where there are numerous small lakes and streams.

In Ontario, River Otters are classified as furbearers. Ample fur harvest records provide abundant data with which to map River Otter range. However, in some fringe areas of the River Otter's range (such as the Bruce Peninsula), there is a zero harvest quota for otters, and the Mammal Atlas has had to rely heavily on volunteers to provide information.



# Cougar

*Felis concolor*

Historically, the Cougar or Mountain Lion had one of the most extensive distributions of New World terrestrial mammals, ranging south from central and southern Canada to Patagonia (Young and Goldman 1946). With the encroachment of civilization, this species lost much of its original range (Peterson 1966). In Ontario, the Cougar was found in the southern part of the province as far north as Lake Timiskaming (Seton 1925). Historical records indicate that the Cougar had all but disappeared from the province by the 1860s (Peterson 1966). As southern Ontario was settled, the Cougar and the Wapiti (one of the Cougar's main prey species) were gradually eliminated.

In recent years there have been hundreds of unconfirmed reports of Cougars in Ontario, particularly in northwestern and northern Ontario. In 1973, the presence of Cougar was confirmed in eastern Manitoba within 80 km of the Ontario border (Nero and Wrigley 1977), which suggests that Cougar may be found in northwestern Ontario as well. A Cougar was shot recently in northwestern Quebec and has yet to be identified to subspecies. Transient Cougars have been known to make long journeys in search of new range and are, therefore, effective colonizers. Even though they are solitary mammals, they do not remain long in an area without other Cougars nearby (Seidensticker *et al.* 1973), which perhaps explains why Cougars are occasionally observed in areas and then never seen again (Nero and Wrigley 1977). Reports of Cougar sightings from southern Ontario are generally attributed to misidentification or escaped western Cougars kept as pets.

Although the Eastern Cougar was added to the provincial Endangered Species List in 1977, debate over its presence in Ontario continues.

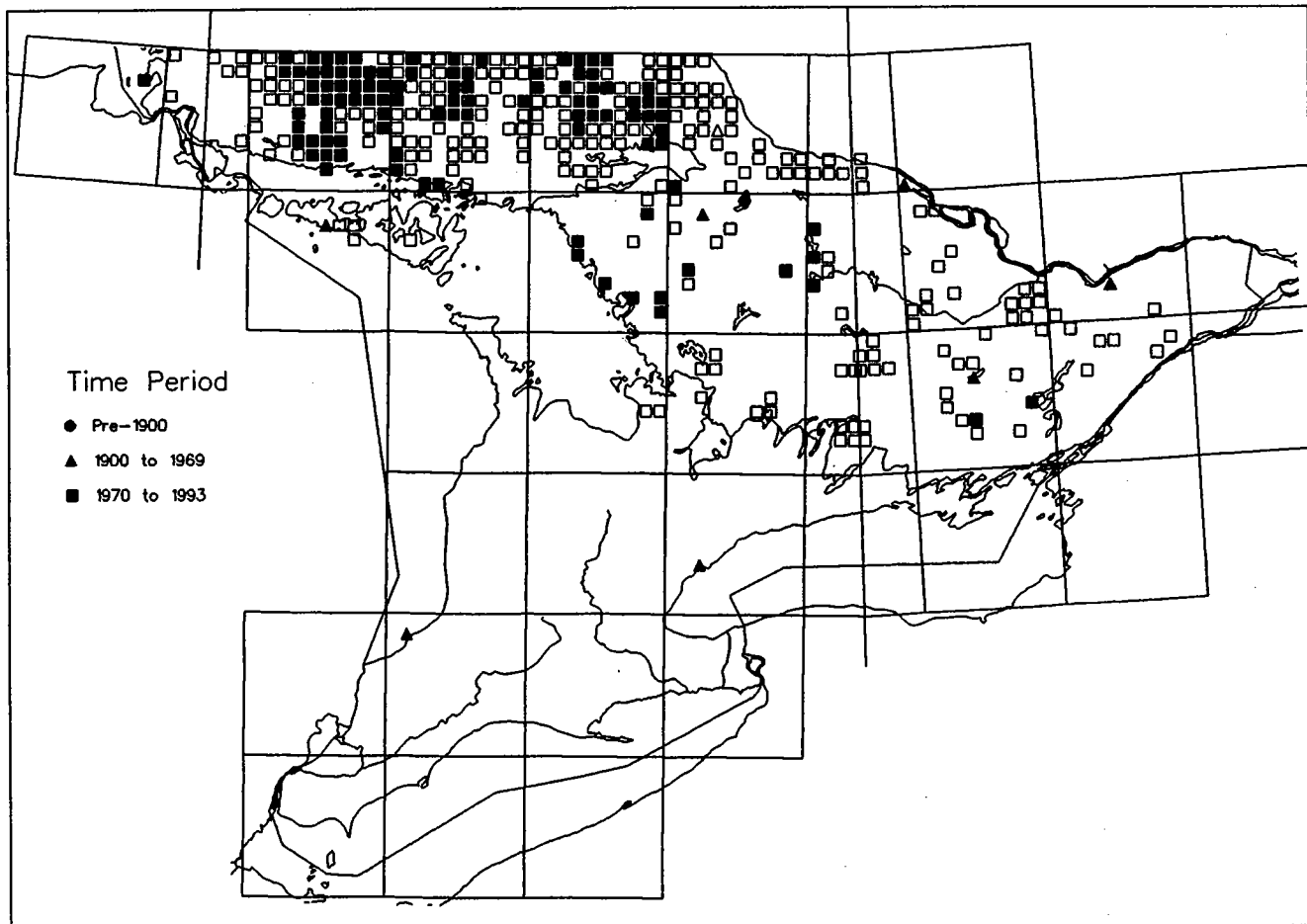
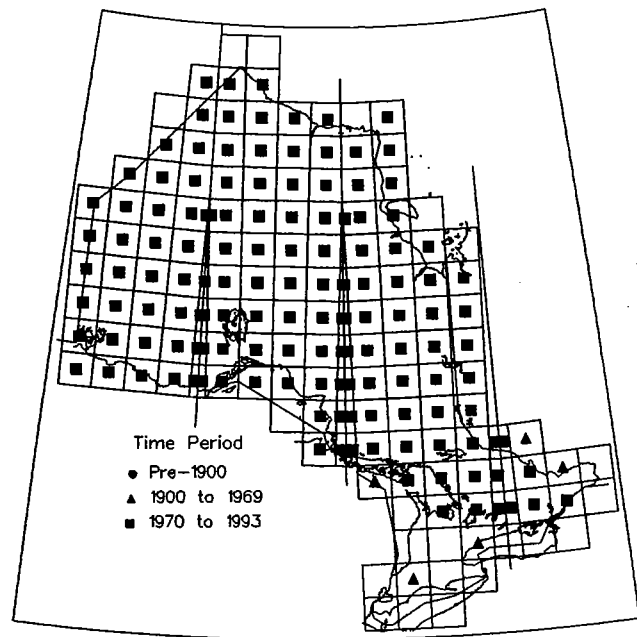
.. *Judith Eger*

# Canada Lynx

*Lynx canadensis*

The Canada Lynx ranges throughout Canada and the western US. In Ontario, it is common north of the French and Mattawa rivers. Records south of the French and Mattawa rivers likely represent animals that have dispersed from the north. Historically, lynx were found sparingly throughout most of southern Ontario north of the Carolinian Forest region (Peterson 1957). Consequently, records from Kettle Point and Toronto (both from 1905) may be representative of that former range.

Lynx are found only in forests where there are sufficient numbers of Snowshoe Hares. Hare populations cycle every 7-10 years depending on the amount of natural browse available. Because lynx are dependent on Snowshoe Hares as a primary food source, Canada Lynx populations also consequently cycle (with a lag of one or two years) (Peterson 1966).

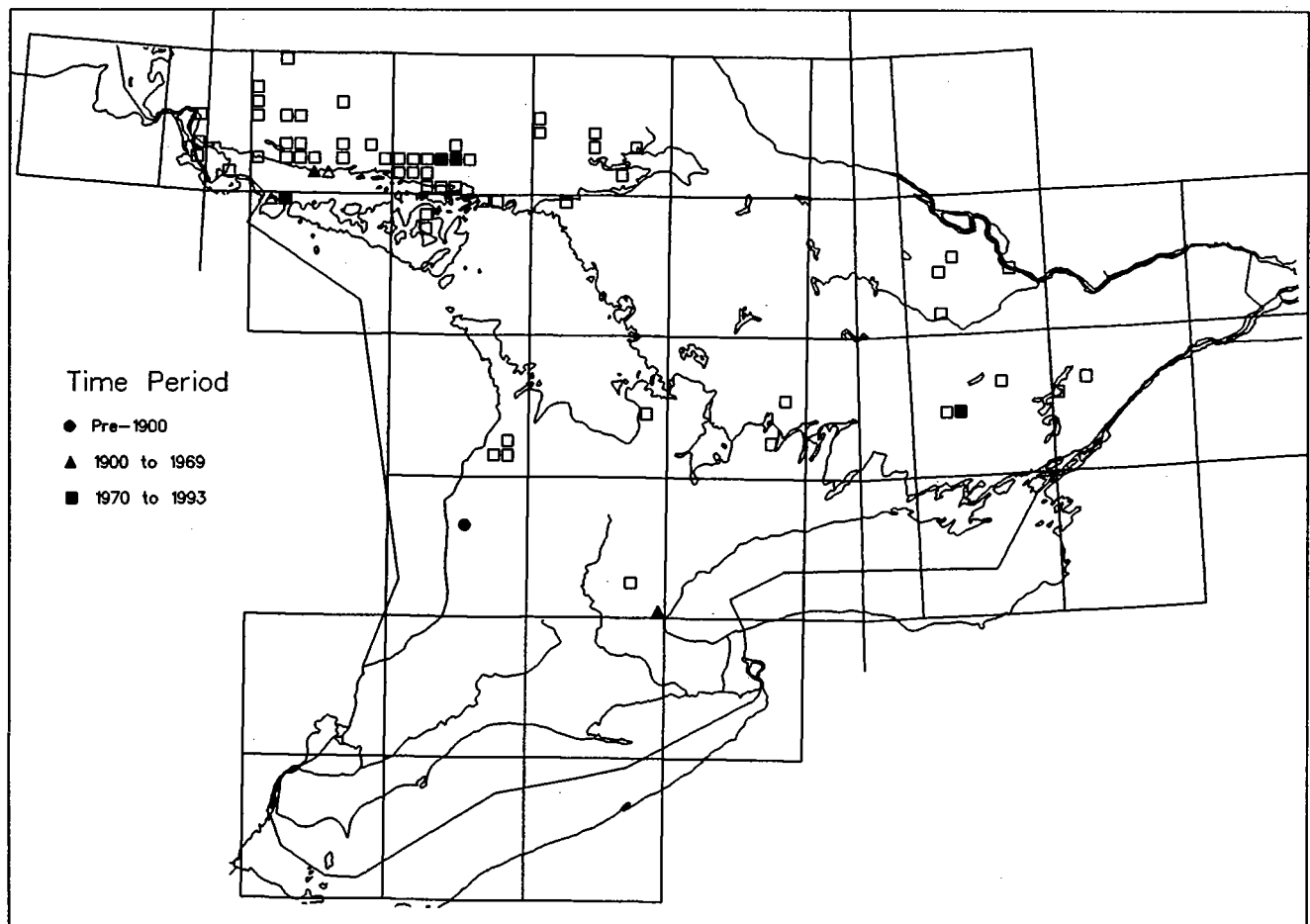
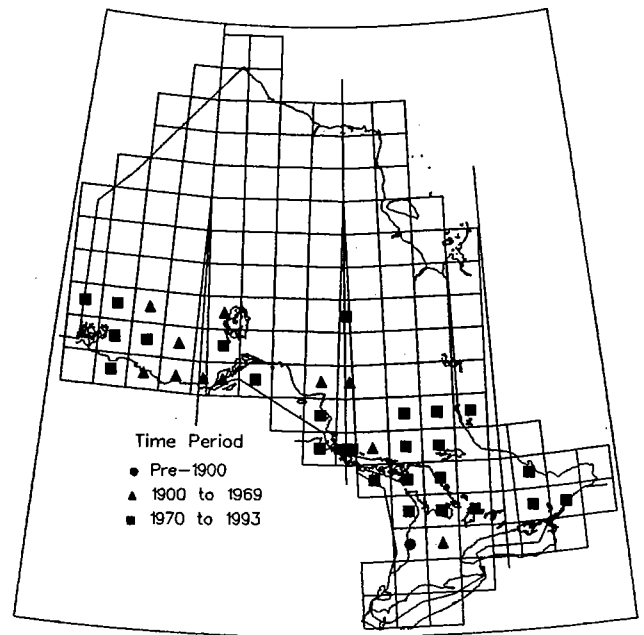


# Bobcat

*Lynx rufus*

Bobcat range in North America is generally south of that of the Canada Lynx. Bobcats are found throughout much of the US, and, less prevalently, southern Canada. Although there are a few Bobcat records in southern Ontario, the main population foci for this species occur around Lake of the Woods, and between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie (immediately adjacent to the north shore of Georgian Bay).

Bobcats are not as dependant on Snowshoe Hares for food as Canada Lynx (Peterson 1966), and are therefore able to live further south. In the north, where the large-pawed Canada Lynx thrives, Bobcats are hampered by soft deep snow because their small paws penetrate the snow too easily.



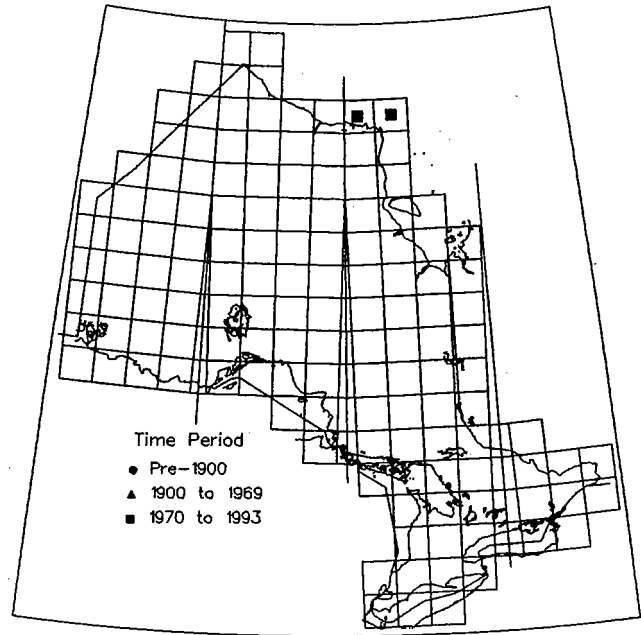
# Walrus

*Odobenus rosmarus*

Walrus can be found at only one Ontario site: a shoal off the Ontario coast of Hudson Bay. This site represents the most southern range of the Atlantic Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*) in North America (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982). Walrus are usually found in the shallow arctic seas of the continental shelves (Banfield 1974).

Photographs of the Ontario colony of this gregarious species indicate a viable population, with young age classes being present. Walrus are present on this shoal from the time that the ice fractures in late July until it forms again in late fall. Small variations in record locations likely represent feeding areas near the shoal.

.. Nancy Wilson



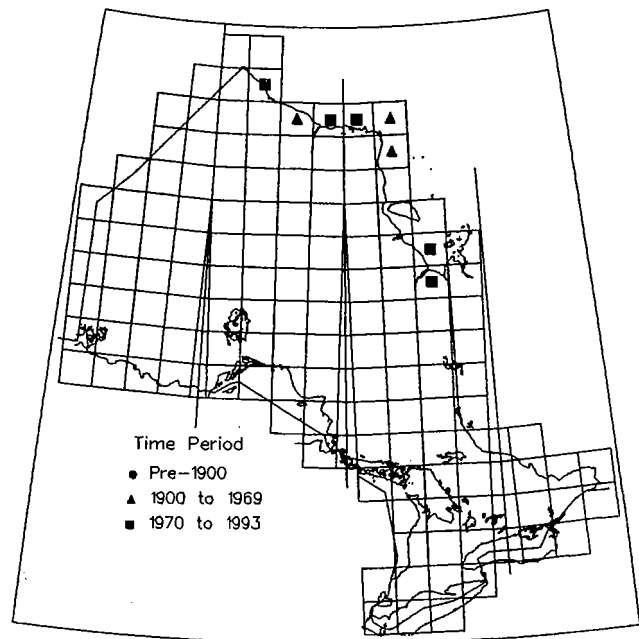
# Ringed Seal

*Phoca hispida*

The Ringed Seal rarely wanders far from ice. Its range is circumpolar, stretching from the North Pole to the southern edge of the pack ice and extending into Hudson and James bays (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982).

Despite being perhaps the most numerous of the seal species along Ontario's remote maritime coast (Smith 1975), the Ringed Seal can be difficult to sight because of its small size (the Ringed Seal is the smallest pinniped in North America) and solitary nature. Observations of single animals occur along the coast when the sea ice has fractured substantially. Ringed Seals make use of Ontario's entire maritime coast for feeding and resting during ice-free summer months.

.. Nancy Wilson



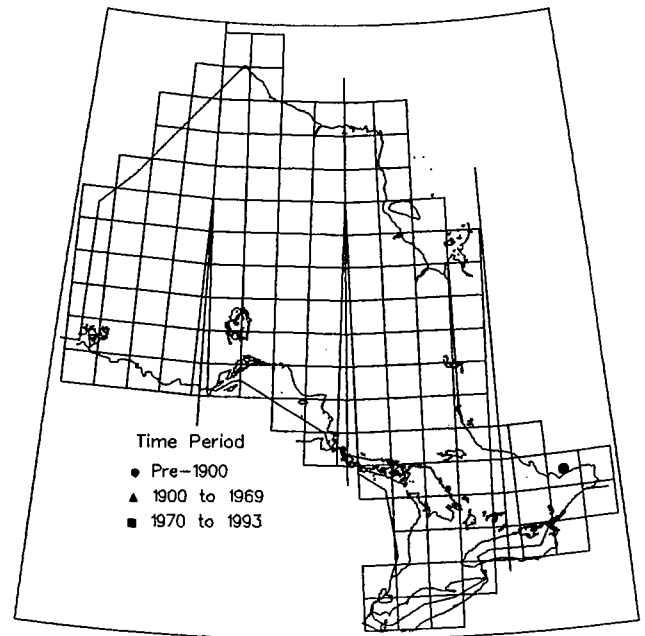
# Harbor Seal

*Phoca vitulina*

The Harbor Seal tends to be gregarious on land (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982) and more sedentary in water. No confirmed observations of Harbor Seals have been made in Ontario. However, historical reports indicate the possible presence of Harbor Seals in the Ottawa River and that one was reportedly shot off New Edinburgh, Ottawa, in 1882 (Rand 1945) or 1883 “opposite to New Edinburgh” (Small and Lett 1885), which may place the record in Quebec waters. The validity of this record remains unknown.

Although clearly less abundant than the Ringed Seal, the Harbor Seal’s presence along our maritime coastal waters should not be unexpected. Increased survey coverage in James and Hudson bays would likely confirm the presence of Harbor Seals in Ontario.

.. Nancy Wilson



# Bearded Seal

*Erignathus barbatus*

While the Bearded Seal inhabits circumpolar areas, its range stretches south into James Bay and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Bearded Seal’s solitary nature yields fewer observations than larger, more gregarious marine mammals such as the Beluga. The Bearded Seal has an intense curiosity (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982) and has been observed on boat docks in the Moosonee Area.

A benthic feeder, the Bearded Seal keeps to shallow water (less than 200 m) (Chapman and Feldhamer 1982) and consequently can be found along the entire Ontario coast during ice-free periods. Some areas along the coast are better haul-out sites for this relatively large seal and the documented sightings are primarily of seals resting on land.

.. Nancy Wilson

