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CONSERVE MARSH OR WATER AREAS  
FOR MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

If migratory birds are to be increased or their present numbers maintained, it is necessary to conserve water and marsh areas, say specialists of the Biological Survey, of the United States Department of Agriculture. Small lakes; swamps along coasts or inland; or marsh areas are used by these waterfowl for feeding, resting, and rearing their young, and it is absolutely essential that during their migration and in winter the birds have these necessary places in which to live.

Reports received by the Biological Survey during the last few months from all parts of the country agree that the former alarming decrease in migratory wild fowl, which preceded the Treaty and the Act of Congress for the protection of migratory birds, has changed to a marked increase. This successful outcome of a great conservation measure has become apparent even more promptly than was anticipated. Thus the first important step toward insuring the perpetuation of wild fowl--without question, a great national asset--has been achieved. Another step of almost equally vital importance, the specialists say, consists in the conservation of lakes and marsh areas.

Much Value Found in Swamps

The idea is prevalent that the drainage of almost any area is of benefit to a community, but it is stated that under proper conditions "water farming" of many lakes and ponds, and of marsh or swampy areas, will yield a larger return than would the same area drained and used for agriculture. Many such lakes and areas, however, can be used to produce food and game fish, fur-bearing animals, and a natural supply of ice. In some sections the profits from such use of marshes exceeds the returns from adjacent farm lands. These lands and water areas are valuable in maintaining the the underground water level of the surrounding farming section and help to hold back the run-off of rainfall and to prevent excessive erosion. They may frequently be used as State parks or reservations, thus lending

themselves admirably to educational uses and affording opportunities for healthful and interesting recreation.

"I believe," says Dr. E. W. Nelson, Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, "that a careful survey of the water and marsh areas in any State by men properly versed in the plant and animal products, as well as of the agricultural capacities of the areas in question, will result in the great majority of cases in definitely determining the superior value to the State of such water areas in their natural conditions as against the value of the lands which would be left after they had been drained. Furthermore, the existence of these areas in the State adds greatly to the varied character of the region where located and thus renders it more generally attractive as a place of residence for the citizens.

#### Draining Swamps Reduces Wild-fowl Resorts

"The Biological Survey is deeply interested in the proper conservation of water areas, since the rapidly increasing drainage of lakes and marshes throughout the country indicates that our wild-fowl resorts and feeding places will be practically eliminated from most of the States unless an effort is made to conserve a considerable number of the best of them. With the elimination of such areas there will disappear opportunities for wild-fowl hunting, and there will be a loss of other products and benefits provided by such water areas."

In connection with the administration of the Migratory-Bird Treaty Act, the Biological Survey is advocating the establishment throughout the country of Federal and State bird preserves. This is to be accomplished through cooperation with the State fish and game commissions. Throughout the country such water areas should be strictly guarded as breeding preserves, thereby resulting in largely augmenting the available supply of birds, the specialists say. A certain proportion of such areas should be maintained throughout the year as sanctuaries where no shooting should be permitted, but the majority of them should be made public shooting-grounds during the open season. This would in no way interfere with the use of these areas as nesting places for wild fowl during the breeding season.