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BIRD CENSUSES HELP SOLVE
ORNITHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Censuses of breeding birds furnish valuable material for use in solving many problems relating to the distribution of bird life, says the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, which administers Federal laws relating to birds, and with the help of volunteer cooperators has been conducting these censuses for several years.

A census of breeding birds is an exact and complete enumeration of the birds actually nesting within the boundaries of a selected tract of land. Birds that merely visit the area are not to be counted, no matter how close to the line their nests may be situated. Censuses should be made after the migration is over, at the height of the breeding season, when the greatest number of birds have eggs or young in the nest. Usually records over at least five years are needed before an adequate idea of the bird life of a given tract can be formed.

A convenient method is to count the singing males very early in the morning, when every male bird is usually in full song near the nest site. After migration is over each singing male may safely be considered to represent a breeding pair. It is advisable to repeat the count at least once a few days later or check it by subsequent observations throughout the breeding season. A tract of from 40 to 80 acres is of suitable size for making observations.

More detailed information relative to bird censuses is contained in Department Circular 261-C, The Purpose of Bird Censuses And How To Take Them, which has just been issued in revised form. A copy of the pamphlet may be obtained free, as long as the supply lasts, upon application to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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