



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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BIRD MINDING MADE EASIER AND  
CHEAPER BY IMPROVED METHODS

At this season of the year migratory flocks of bobolinks (ricebirds), which are protected throughout the year by the Federal migratory-bird treaty act and which may be killed only under special permit of the Secretary of Agriculture, begin to take their annual toll from ripening crops of rice, milo, and corn. Flocks of blackbirds are also active on the same crops. Though this sort of damage may be considered local in character, depending largely on the presence of near-by marshes or lakes that attract the birds, it frequently may result in serious injury to standing grain. In the few remaining ricefields on the South Atlantic Coast, bobolinks still are destructive to this grain in the "milk" and "dough" stages; on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Texas red-winged blackbirds are a menace on the southern borderline of the rice area, and in the ricefields of the Sacramento Valley and the mile fields of the Imperial Valley of California, these birds must be combated annually at a considerable expense to the farmer.

During the past year the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has experimented with the use of small-bore rifles in place of shotguns as a bird-frightening measure in large grainfields. Though this method is by no means a new one in the West, its utility has not been previously demonstrated in the ricefields of the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.

By using "long rifle" cartridges in a .22 caliber rifle in place of the shotgun it has been found that the ammunition cost of bird minding can be reduced to about one-fifth. The longer range of the rifle permits individual bird minders to patrol correspondingly larger areas, reducing labor costs to about