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DROUGHT HITS WATERFOWL IN  
UNITED STATES AND CANADA

CHIEF REDINGTON OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY  
DISCUSSES RECENT ALARMING  
REPORTS ON SITUATION

That conditions for waterfowl in the extensive drought-ridden regions of the United States are unsatisfactory will not be a matter of surprise to persons who have experienced a water shortage this summer. That the danger to wild ducks and geese is more far-flung, however, will come as a distinct shock to those who have thought the birds were in abundance on their breeding areas in the far North, says Paul G. Redington, Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers Federal laws protecting migratory birds. Mr. Redington explained that reports received by him directly during a recent visit to Canada, which is cooperating closely with the United States in the protection of migratory birds, showed an alarming condition for the waterfowl on the breeding grounds in Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as in the United States.

"In these Canadian Provinces," said Mr. Redington, "the shortage of water this year and the utilization of additional lands for agriculture on the breeding grounds of the birds have combined to reduce the hatch of the game species 50 per cent below that of last year, and the hatch a year ago was too far below normal to be at all satisfactory. The consensus of testimony of conservationists from many Canadian Provinces and from all parts of the United States is that a decidedly serious condition now confronts the waterfowl of the two countries.

"A partial remedy is found in the fact that throughout the United States the amended regulations under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act limit the individual hunter to 15 ducks and 4 geese a day and prescribe a possession limit of two days' bag. This reduction from last year's daily bag of 25 ducks and 8 geese and the establishment of a possession limit for the first time under the Federal regulations should have a salutary effect on the game birds at the principal shooting grounds. We are still greatly concerned, however, as to what may happen in the next few months. The unprecedented drought may upset calculations as to the effect the reduced bag limits will have on the protection of the birds.

"Local observers of bird abundance are likely to be misled in some remaining water areas, and to consider that local conditions are general throughout the country. As a matter of fact, however, the constriction of water areas in many States will induce the birds to concentrate in unusually large numbers on some of the noted resting grounds and in wintering areas. For example, the gunners in some areas may find thousands of ducks in places where last year there were but hundreds, and in such instances it may create the erroneous impression that ducks are still in great abundance or even increasing in numbers. Such fallacious reasoning may lead to excessive killing on many concentration areas.

"All who are engaged in game conservation in the Federal and State Governments must consider thoroughly and carefully what measures we can take to prevent unwise or possibly disastrous slaughter of these species of birds that are already suffering serious losses by reason of the drought. It may now be too late to take effective restrictive action, in view of the fact that the hunting season is about to open, but officials of the Biological Survey and members of the Advisory Board created under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act will have available all the facts that can be gathered on the wild-fowl situation during the open season. If further restrictive action is found to be necessary, I shall not hesitate to recommend such additional safeguards for the waterfowl as the conditions may dictate.

"I therefore make an urgent appeal to the sportsmen of the country to recognize the situation now menacing the waterfowl and to be governed thereby in taking ducks and geese during the present season."