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MANY DUCK SPECIES THREATENED
BY DROUGHT IN BREEDING GROUNDS

An alarming decrease in numbers of nearly all species of waterfowl has taken place during the past few years. This is revealed in a publication just issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The report, by W. B. Bell and E. A. Preble, biologists of the Bureau of Biological Survey, is based on several years of careful study of waterfowl conditions and on observations made by Mr. Preble and other experienced observers, who spent the spring and early summer in Canada in the breeding region north of the drought area. Other biologists observed conditions throughout the United States. Sportsmen, game officials, and naturalists also reported.

It is estimated that 85 percent of the ducks and geese that migrate along the United States flyways are raised on Canadian and Alaskan breeding grounds, and the outlook is dark now because these breeding grounds are not supporting anywhere near their capacity. Estimates of the observers ranged from 70 percent of normal in some areas to as low as 10 percent in others. The present drastic shortage of ducks and geese is in contrast with the incalculable numbers that even a quarter of a century ago reared their young in the marshes and sloughs of the Western States and of Canada.

It is estimated, says the Bureau, that more than 17 million acres of land, once marsh or lake, have been drained, largely to the detriment of both game and man. The Bureau is now acquiring some of this vast area and is restoring it to

875-35

its former state in an effort to create again the physical conditions that once made these areas ideal nesting and breeding grounds. Through the purchase of the land and the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, many old breeding areas will again be available next year.

The waterfowl conditions are explained, with tables and maps, in Miscellaneous Publication No. 210 of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, just issued with the title "Status of Waterfowl in 1934". The booklet contains 24 maps showing the outlines of the breeding regions of the more important game species and how these areas have been cut into by drought during the past few years. These maps thus show the range of the bulk of the bird population, where the young birds are raised, and also where most of the waterfowl shooting occurs. Copies are obtainable at 5 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

At one time the important waterfowl breeding grounds extended as far south as central Nebraska, but drought conditions have practically eliminated all breeding this year south of a curving line that extends across the Prairie Provinces of Canada some distance north of the boundary.