

(5,600 CCC boys Working on Refuges)

EMERGENCY CONSERVATION WORK
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Along the four principal flyways of American waterfowl - the Atlantic, the Mississippi, the Central, and the Pacific--twenty-eight Civilian Conservation Corps camps have now been established or approved, it was announced today by Robert Fechner, Director of Emergency Conservation Work. This means that a total of 5,600 young men are now working to restore to the ducks and geese a chain of natural habitats along their ancestral flyways. Just a year ago only four camps with 800 men had been assigned to the Bureau of Biological Survey for this work. The swift rise in this CCC contribution to conservation is due largely to the fact that within less than two years the acreage controlled mainly for the uses of migratory waterfowl has jumped from approximately 700,000 acres to a total of 2,100,000.

The locations of the refuges on which the CCC boys are working were determined after years of careful consideration by experts in the Biological Survey, drawing on the Bureau's data accumulated during fifty years of study of migratory birds.

"Undoubtedly winged congregations are thickest along the Mississippi Flyway, including also the ancestral breeding grounds in the Plains States," the Biological Survey reported to Director Fechner. "From Montana to Michigan, flocks of birds fly across the Canadian frontier in the fall or start from within the U. S. border, converging before winter on the muddy, food-laden delta of the Mississippi. Another flyway crosses the Appalachian States from the north and ends in temperate swamps on the southern Atlantic seaboard. One tributary migration route

to this flyway, curiously enough, crosses the continent transversely from duck and goose breeding places in Utah, so that a redhead duck hatched in the Bear River marshes of that state in the spring may be found as winter approaches on feeding grounds in Chesapeake Bay.

Civilian Conservation Corps assistance is most important where overshooting or soil erosion or the advance of industry and agriculture into the wild places has rendered wildlife problems most acute. A prime example is the restoration now being accomplished by four CCC camps of 200 men each along the Souris River loop in North Dakota. For unnumbered duck generations the birds nested here in the spring in herb-growing potholes and pools and marshes, sending their fledglings southward in the autumn. But by the time some 149,000 acres of this region passed under the control of the Biological Survey by Government purchase last year evaporation during drought had reduced most of these wet places to a caked desert. Duck food was destroyed. Last year engineers working under the Biological Survey built a dam on the Souris River after it enters this country to describe its North Dakota loop before returning northward toward Hudson Bay. Stored water will be released gradually to restore bird marshes on the lower river. Incidentally, a very effective flood control is provided for North Dakota cities along the lower river which have known disaster eight times in recent decades. The CCC camps maintained within the Souris loop are near Kenmare and Foxholm, North Dakota, and near Kramer, North Dakota, on the lower Souris. Throughout this area CCC work camps proceed along lines laid down by hydraulic engineers.

Instead of being a deathtrap for the migratory waterfowl, the Souris Loop area, restored with CCC assistance, will hatch in the near future thousands of ducks each year.

On the Gulf of Mexico, at the other end of the Mississippi Flyway, the Government is acquiring land for a chain of refuges on the Mississippi delta and the Gulf coast of Texas. These tracts are designed as wintering areas for the birds or resting grounds on their yearly commuting between northern breeding and southern feeding places.

Typical of these resting and wintering areas is the White River Migratory Bird Refuge in southern Arkansas. Here wild-duck and wild-geese food was once so good that heavy concentrations of waterfowl were traditional in the area. Now the area's hospitality to these birds is again becoming a reality. Game is now protected on the newly established refuge, which embraces 110,000 acres along the lower White River basin, and two CCC camps are busy at the work of restoration there. Four hundred young men are cutting fire lanes through the forest, improving roads, building observation towers and telephone lines between administrative points within the refuges, and constructing dykes and spillways to stabilize water levels in order that waterfowl food may grow again.

The teamwork of the CCC boys and the Biological Survey experts gives great hope for a repopulation within a few years of the Mississippi Flyway up to the level once had.

On one of the Western flyways a refuge so situated that its restoration will in a few years mean a sizable addition to the national game stock from this tract alone, is the Malheur-Blitzen Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Harney County, Oregon. Two CCC camps have been established on the tract. Wild ducks and geese breed in this region. The refuge, built around a nucleus of Government-owned land in the bed of Lake Malheur and now extended to a huge block of 156,786 acres by the acquisition of the Blitzen Valley and other territory, will furnish

one of the nation's outstanding wildlife refuges. In its present state Lake Malheur dries up completely in some years, destroying under-water fields of goose and duck food. CCC boys are stabilizing water levels by dykes, dams, and sluices. Roads and fire lanes are being cut through the cover, service buildings erected, and the banks of the Blitzen River confined to provide water habitat for wildlife. With the approach of spring and with certain water levels already assured of permanence, the replanting of some hundreds of acres of marsh with duck food has begun.

Another western refuge where CCC men are performing delicate hydraulic operations looking toward abundant generations of waterfowl in the future is the Bear River Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Box Elder County, Utah. Originally a huge mud flat gently tipping toward Great Salt Lake, it was the traditional feeding place of hundreds of thousands of waterfowl. A few years ago an epidemic of botulism, the well known "duck sickness", a form of bacterial food poisoning which occasionally decimates the waterfowl community, spread through the locality. As a remedy, Government naturalists have directed the diversion of fresh water from Bear River over the grounds and the stabilization of water levels to resist the development of the organism that causes botulism and to insure a permanent supply of wholesome duck food. Engineering problems involve the building of dykes against floods of salt water which are blown across the flats from Great Salt Lake. Since the establishment early last year of a 200-man camp on the Bear River Refuge, CCC men have been steadily building water-control structures, fencing, constructing service buildings, and linking them with roads.

In the nature of assignments under the Biological Survey, CCC work on wild-

life refuges is done mainly along the outer rim of continental United States. Most camps are placed either in southern areas visited by wildfowl for winter food or in northern areas where waterfowl rest in the spring before continuing the flight to sub-arctic regions. Four great refuges in the Southeastern Atlantic States feed the Atlantic Flyway with travellers early in the year and attract them back as winter approaches. CCC work is proceeding on all these feeder tracts to the Atlantic Flyway. They are: The Lake Mattamuskeet and Swanquarter areas, twin refuges lying near one another on the coast of North Carolina in the neighborhood of the city of Washington, North Carolina; the Savannah River area, a few minutes drive from Savannah, Georgia; the Cape Romain area near McClellansville, South Carolina; to which men from the CCC camp on the Wambaw Forest Reserve, South Carolina, have been assigned for work; and the St. Mark's Migratory Bird Refuge, lying on the Gulf of Mexico twenty miles from the dome of the Florida State Capitol at Tallahassee.

St. Mark's Migratory Bird Refuge, containing the second oldest lighthouse in the United States within its confines, is a large area bordering salt water. The aquatic vegetation in its scores of fresh water ponds has attracted northern waterfowl from time immemorial. Here an important CCC job is to remove the effects of destructive lumbering operations which have, in recent years, seriously modified the environment until it is no longer attractive to wildlife. In addition to this specialized work, which is done under instructions from hydraulic engineers and trained biologists, trails are being cut through swamps to connect administrative points. The removal of refuge quarters to higher ground on the area is planned.

The Savannah River Refuge covers a series of rice plantations abandoned long since. Difficult engineering is necessary to create a stable flow of fresh

water. Arterial channels are being cut through the entire area, and a power-driven mud scoop is at work. As the work proceeds, danger is always present from rattlesnakes and the cotton-mouthed moccasin. First aid equipment is ready for the CCC workers in case of an emergency which has fortunately not so far occurred. This refuge is the favorite haunt of the wood duck, a beautiful American waterfowl that has long been protected by the Federal Government from hunting at any time.

Cape Romain Refuge, with a waterfront of twenty-five miles, has recently been enlarged by the acquisition of Bull Island, a barrier reef which fronts the Atlantic off the coast of Charleston County, South Carolina. The place is a traditional haunt of many more species than the game birds so gravely reduced by overshooting. On this refuge, aside from building the usual water-control structures, the principal CCC task is to establish means of communication between sections of half-submerged territory. Radio telephones are projected between Bull Island and the mainland. Channels must be cut across tidal flats, docks built, and service structures erected.

At Lake Mattamuskeet on the coast of North Carolina a large brick power house, left by a drainage company whose property has been purchased by the Government, has been thriftily utilized by Biological Survey's Section of Restoration and Development. The power house is being transformed into an administration building with laboratories, a meeting hall, boat houses, and offices. A 100-foot cement smokestack, once the pride of the drainage company, is being converted into an observation tower overlooking the lake. The tower will be capped with a landing from which a view is to be had over many miles of blue water spotted during the winter feeding season with white swans, wild ducks, and the prized Canada goose. CCC work has been continuous for several months on the administration

building and on the road which leads to it from the State highway. With the gradual stabilization of water levels in Lake Mattamuskeet, CCC men will assist experts from the Division of Migratory Waterfowl of the Biological Survey in the planting of aquatic food.