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REBUILDING OF WILDLIFE  
HINGES ON USE OF LAND

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Annual Report of Biological Survey Chief Cites  
Important Role of Landowner, and Progress  
of National Program for Wildlife

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Many mistakes that led to America's riotous waste of wildlife can still be corrected, but the restoration of this valuable resource can take place only through the wise use of land, says Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the Biological Survey in his annual report to the Secretary of Agriculture. The success of rebuilding wildlife, he says, depends, therefore, on close cooperation of landowners and conservation agencies.

Practical plans that will provide for wildlife needs without interfering with other desirable objectives are being furnished by the Survey to Federal, State, and local agencies that administer land. The Survey also has put into operation this year nine cooperative wildlife research and demonstration units at land-grant colleges to show landowners that it is not only desirable but also practical to consider wildlife in their land use programs.

Dr. Gabrielson's report shows that the basic problem of migratory waterfowl restoration as well as of other wildlife conservation is closely associated with programs of land utilization. Since few natural waterfowl habitats of large size are left in this country the Survey has undertaken the restoration of areas former-

ly used but ruined for waterfowl by unsuccessful drainage or otherwise. During the year the Survey established 55 waterfowl refuges, bringing the total number under its supervision to 112. Many also have been enlarged and improved.

#### Refuge Program Advanced

A \$6,000,000 appropriation by Congress made it possible during the year for the Bureau to continue its program of land acquisition for wildlife refuges, and 28 C. C. C. camps helped greatly in developing these areas. In addition to the 55 waterfowl refuges, 3 big-game ranges with a total area of 3,020,671 acres were established on public domain in conjunction with the organization of grazing districts under the Taylor Act of 1934.

In all, there were 214 refuges supervised by the Bureau or in process of establishment in this country, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico on June 30. Of this number 50 were in the process of establishment.

"To save waterfowl from destruction by drought and drainage, from decimation by disease and depredations of natural enemies, and from overshooting by hunters, and at the same time restore them to numbers approximating their former abundance, has been and continues to be the primary consideration of the Survey's activities as related to migratory birds," says Dr. Gabrielson.

#### Wildlife Important Economic Factor immediately

Realizing the impossibility of restoring former favorable waterfowl conditions, the Survey is directing its energies toward building up the breeding stock on unoccupied nesting areas and providing additional refuges for the migrant birds during their sojourn in this country. Dr. Gabrielson points out that these activities for the welfare of waterfowl, together with similar work for fur animals, big-game, and other species of the wild, constitute a powerful influence on the economic and social welfare of the Nation because of their relationships to various phases of industry and recreation.

For the first time in years the Bureau's investigations indicate that more waterfowl returned to their breeding grounds than in the preceding year. The restrictions placed on hunting in 1935 were drastic, but they reduced the annual kill by hunters and were responsible for the return of more birds to their breeding grounds. The waterfowl regulations were generally respected and obeyed by a large percentage of the hunters, says the report.

#### 423 Violators Convicted

The Bureau instituted 482 new cases against violators of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or 133 less than in the preceding year, but as compared with the 1935 fiscal year 208 more cases were disposed of and 65 more convictions were on record. The convictions numbered 423, and cases disposed of 632. At the end of the year 390 cases were pending. Many large fines and jail sentences were imposed during the year.

The fur trade in the United States is depending more and more on foreign countries for furs and now uses more than twice as many foreign as domestic pelts. This emphasizes, Dr. Gabrielson says, the immediate necessity of conserving and restoring fur animals. The Bureau continued its efforts to impress the public with the serious plight of these animals, and recommended that further protection be given them by the States and that a close season on martens, fishers, otters, and wolverines be provided in States where these species still exist.

#### Research Activities Reported

The principal research activities during the past year included the following: Intensified investigation of waterfowl conditions and habitats; transplanting of Pacific-coast eelgrass at certain points along the Atlantic coast in an experiment to reestablish an important waterfowl food all but eradicated by disease; renewed efforts to insure preservation of wildlife habitat in areas where mosquito-

control work is planned or in progress; studies of the effects of crow-waterfowl relationships on breeding grounds and efforts to determine the effects of crow control on duckling mortality; and investigation of fox depredations on quail through a study of mortality at nests and studies of the local food habits of foxes. The bureau developed a self-feeding system at the Rabbit Experiment Station in California, that reduces feed costs with production of superior-quality meat and established a research center at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. Congress authorized the purchase of land in New York on which the Fur Animal Experiment Station is located.

Biologists of the Survey also continued research on forest wildlife relationships and investigations of Alaskan conditions for buffalo and musk oxen. Important bird colonies not heretofore mentioned in reports or literature were discovered on some of the major islands of the Aleutian chain by a field party, including two biologists, that spent 5 months in studying conditions of wildlife on these islands.

The report says that more than 225,000 birds were banded by the Bureau's cooperators during the year; 269 mammal specimens were added to the Survey's collection; and 305 bird specimens were acquired.

#### Predator Catch Increased

Coyotes and other predators have continued to **increase** in spite of larger numbers taken by the Bureau and cooperating agencies **than ever** before. This year's catch of 73,127 predators, including 64,566 coyotes, **exceeded** last year's record by 6,465. Control work has been extended to North Dakota **and** Missouri and early this coming year it will be resumed in Alaska, where wolves **are now** taking an excessive toll from reindeer herds.

Other outstanding features of the year's work summarized by Dr. Gabrielson in the early pages of his report are as follows:

Thirty-two small refuges were established in North Dakota on areas reserved for wildlife and water conservation by means of gratuitous easements. An allotment of \$286,240 from the Works Progress Administration made it possible to develop the refuges.

An act to make effective in this country a convention between the United States and Mexico for the protection of migratory birds and game animals was passed by Congress and approved by President Roosevelt. Two scientists of the Bureau cooperated with Mexican authorities in the preliminary work on the treaty. Mexico has not yet ratified. The convention will become effective upon exchange of ratifications.

By a cooperative arrangement with the Works Progress Administration the Bureau is to investigate all proposed drainage projects that may materially affect wildlife environment.

The number of injurious rodents was reduced on 32,547,769 acres for the protection of farm crops, range grasses, silvicultural plantings, reclamation waterways, and surface soils threatened by erosion. Rodent control was extended to Hawaii, where rats seriously interfere with pineapple and sugarcane production and menace public health as carriers of bubonic plague.

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