



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of Information  
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate

January 15, 1937

2,200-ACRE TRACT IN MARYLAND,  
ONCE PLANTATION LAND, BECOMES  
U. S. WILDLIFE RESEARCH REFUGE

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A 2,200-acre wildlife refuge where U. S. Biological Survey scientists will conduct research and experiments for the development of better wildlife management practices has been established by executive order in the historic Patuxent river valley in Maryland. It has been named the Patuxent Research Refuge.

The refuge, part of the National Agricultural Research Center of the Department of Agriculture at Beltsville, Md., is about 15 miles northeast of Washington, D. C. Wild turkeys, ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, beavers, muskrat, and other wildlife, once abundant in the Patuxent valley, are to be restocked on the refuge.

Certain areas of the refuge will also be set apart for demonstrating wildlife management practices. On these tracts the Biological Survey will show how the latest facts found through research and experiment can be applied.

Wildlife food and cover plants now on the refuge are to be encouraged, and others are to be planted. About two-thirds of this new wildlife sanctuary is covered with pine and hardwood trees. The refuge also contains marsh land, river bottoms, old farm lands, pastures, and orchards that furnish varied conditions ideal for wildlife. Three tracts of adjoining land comprise the area. One tract contains approximately 1,050 acres, another 800, and a smaller tract 350 acres. The Patuxent river borders these tracts on the east.

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Snowden Hall, an old-time southern mansion, once surrounded by thousands of acres of plantation land obtained by the founder through royal grants from England, is located on the refuge. The old mansion, according to present plans, is to be reconditioned for a refuge headquarters, and other necessary buildings will be provided. A new laboratory building will be one-story and basement. It will contain an office, three biological laboratory rooms, a room for housing wild birds and animals infected with disease, another for healthy animals and birds, and rooms for examining and storing specimens.

A detailed biological survey has been started to obtain basic information on the numbers and kinds of wildlife on the refuge and associated conditions of plant life, soils, and weather. Improvements also are under way, including boundary fencing by W. P. A. workers and C. C. C. improvement of roads and trails.

"There are many perplexing problems," says the Biological Survey, "in the administration of wildlife in the eastern United States, as elsewhere. The investigations on the refuge should help solve these. The demonstration areas will serve as practical object lessons for landowners and others interested in wildlife restoration and management."

Quail have been greatly depleted on the area but under proper management it is believed that their numbers will increase. Several wild turkeys obtained from the Maryland Conservation Commission have been released on the refuge. A marshy area along a creek flowing into the Patuxent river will probably be developed for waterfowl. The southeastern end of the refuge is swampy and contains plenty of food for beavers, but these animals must be introduced. Muskrats are fairly common along certain stretches of the river, and the smallest of the three tracts that comprise the refuge is covered with trees and is ideal for deer.

Studies of the food preferences of quail are already under way at the refuge. For experimental purposes groups of birds are fed various rations. Facts on how

these birds utilize food, and on weight gained on different rations, are recorded. Tests to determine the importance of bayberries in the quail's diet are also under way. The value of this fruit as a source of food for quail is a moot question. Many students of wildlife regard the bayberry as a favorite food of quail while others assert that it is eaten by the birds only when other food is scarce.

Part of the research program will deal with aquatic plants that are food for waterfowl. Many of these plants are propagated artificially on the Bureau's waterfowl refuges, but in some cases the soil and environmental requirements for successful growth are not fully known. Small pools of varying depths and different subsoil compositions are being constructed on the refuge for these investigations. Certain pools will also be used to determine conditions that tend to deter the growth of plants harmful to waterfowl and those that crowd out the good food plants.

Other research projects to be undertaken at the refuge include studies of fur animals with a view of developing improved restoration and management practices, and investigations of diseases that reduce the numbers of wild birds and animals.

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