



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



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release — Immediate

May 21, 1937

U. S. BIOLOGISTS ON WAY
TO DUCK NESTING GROUNDS

Will Survey Waterfowl Breeding Regions in Canada
and "Duck Hatchery" Belt in U. S. to Learn
Increase or Decline in Birds

— — —

Field parties of biologists and game management agents of the U. S. Biological Survey again are heading for marsh and lake regions in Canada to learn how wild ducks and geese are faring this season on the nesting ground. To reach the remote nesting areas these waterfowl investigators will travel in polar steamships, canoes, airplanes, and on foot. In the Arctic region dog teams may be used.

Refuge managers and field men of the Biological Survey already are investigating waterfowl conditions in the "duck hatchery" belt in the United States that extends across the northern Prairie States and westward. Studies of waterfowl nesting regions in both Canada and the United States have been carried on by the Survey for some time. At the end of each season, reports of field parties are analyzed and correlated with data on preceding fall and spring migrations and with nation-wide inventories made in mid-winter. This enables the Survey to determine trends in waterfowl numbers. Last year was the first time since the studies have been under way that investigators reported more birds returning to their nesting grounds in Canada than in the year previous. Up to 1935 the downward trend of waterfowl had continued for many years.

1584-37

Working along the Pacific waterfowl flyway, Luther J. Goldman, Survey biologist at Berkeley, Calif., is in British Columbia investigating lakes and marshes in the southern part of that Province. From this area he will work north through the Frazier Valley toward the low mountain pass in the northern part of the Province over which it is believed large flights of ducks pass on their way to Alberta or Yukon. If time permits he plans to go into northern Alberta or Yukon to investigate the breeding grounds that produce a large number of the birds using the Pacific flyway.

Others to Visit Canada

Three other field parties are on their way to other nesting regions in Canada. Dr. George B. Saunders, Denver, Colo., biologist of the Central flyway, and Robert Bach, are traveling to Edmonton, Alberta, while Edward T. Carter and Harry T. Maltby are enroute to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Both parties will work in southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, covering the waterfowl region that in recent years has been seriously affected by droughts. It is expected, however, that the great marsh areas at the southern ends of Lakes Manitoba, Winnipeg, and Winnipegosis in Manitoba will have abundant supplies of water.

Harold S. Peters, Washington, D. C., biologist of the Atlantic flyway, and E. R. Atkinson, will make a complete survey of waterfowl conditions in the Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and possibly the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. Within this region nest many of the black ducks sought by sportsmen along the Atlantic Coast. About the middle of June Mr. Peters will return to Boston, Mass., to join the Arctic expedition of Commander Donald B. MacMillan. This expedition will proceed to the northern part of the Labrador Peninsula and Baffin Island, where Mr. Peters will study the Atlantic brant on its nesting grounds, and also the snow goose and blue goose, as well as some of the sea ducks. Atlantic brant have been seriously affected in recent years because of the continued

shortage along the Atlantic Coast of their principal food, eelgrass. No open hunting season was allowed on these birds in the United States last year.

Hunt Nests of the Snow Goose

Charles E. Gillham, Ames, Iowa, biologist of the Mississippi flyway, will leave about the middle of June for Edmonton, Alberta. From there he will travel northward along the Athabaska River to Fort McMurray, where he will board a plane and travel in a northeasterly direction to the Arctic Coast. Waterfowl investigations have never been made in this part of the Arctic region, and Mr. Gillham believes it may contain the nesting grounds of the Ross's snow goose. This is the only species of North American waterfowl whose nest has never been found. Mr. Gillham probably will establish his headquarters in this region at some small Eskimo village and use dog teams or other local means of transportation in his investigations.

At the height of these investigations the Survey may have three biologists at one time in different regions north of the Arctic Circle while the other men are covering regions to the south. All the men will be in the field until the end of the waterfowl breeding season and are not expected to return to the United States until September.

- - - H - - -