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IMPROVE U. S. REFUGE
FOR DUCKS IN MONTANA

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The Biological Survey is continuing to develop and improve the Medicine Lake Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, in Sheridan and Roosevelt Counties, Montana, with a supplemental allotment of W. P. A. funds recently authorized by the President from the Emergency Relief appropriation.

This refuge, established by Executive order in August, 1935, includes 13,010 acres, with an additional 14,520 acres in process of acquisition and a further addition of about 20,000 acres being planned. The refuge then would contain about 47,530 acres.

Improvement work had so far progressed last July that about 12,000 ducks and other wild fowl were nesting on the refuge. This number has increased to almost 15,000 this May. The principal ducks are the redhead, shoveler, pintail, canvasback, gadwall, mallard, ruddy, lesser scaup, cinnamon, blue- and green-winged teal, American widgeon, merganser, and golden-eye--the last the only one not known to have nested on the refuge in 1936. Other birds observed are the coot, horned grebe, western willet, avocet, killdeer, semiplumbeous plover, long-billed dowitcher, sandhill crane, Wilson's phalarope, sanderling, spotted sandpiper, marbled godwit, sharp-tailed grouse, snow goose, and whistling swan.

Previous to August, 1936, when the first W. P. A. workers were assigned to the project, restoration work on this refuge had consisted mainly of heavy construc-

tion and recovery of marsh lands on newly flooded areas. Besides constructing dams, and dikes, the Biological Survey had also erected spillways and water-control gates. Several administration buildings--a refuge manager's residence, implements barn, boathouse, pumphouse, and a service building containing office, laboratory, and workshop--also were erected.

Since W. P. A. work began on the Medicine Lake Refuge, considerable rehabilitation under Biological Survey supervision has been accomplished with a maximum of 178 relief workers, reduced during severe winter months to as few as 10. Old dams and dikes have been refaced with much-needed riprapping and scores of badly eroded gullies have been filled. The entire headquarters site was landscaped. A two-and-a-half mile road was constructed connecting this building with the highway, and a 3-mile telephone line connecting headquarters and the lake. About 25 miles of old fencing was torn down, salvaged, and again set up as part of the fence which now surrounds the entire refuge, which likewise has been completely posted. A boat canal, to give access to the boathouse from the main lake, a mile long, was dug; seven water-level gauges set out on dams; a new lookout tower erected; and all necessary roads, trails, and bridges have been built.

A W. P. A. crew also rescued a large percentage of several hundred ducks suffering from botulism, the so-called western duck sickness, and later built several model pens for the convalescing birds. A total of 20 upland game shelters of the brush thatch type, and 15 box feeders were erected. Rushes for food and cover were transplanted around more than five miles of newly-formed lake shorelines. Four artificial nesting islands, crescent-shaped, 250 feet long and 10 feet wide, were built on the Homestead unit of the refuge, and food and cover planting done around each island.

Spring planting begun in April is continuing, with grain crops, rushes, and aquatic seeds sown for waterfowl food and cover. A total of 139 acres of barley, sweet clover, and wheat had been planted at latest reports.