

CELEBRATE GOC
ANNIVERSARY AT
WILDLIFE REFUGE

U. S. Biological Survey
Congratulates Boys
on "Good Job."

GOC boys, developing the Valentine Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Cherry County, Nebraska, are making an invaluable contribution to the national wildlife restoration program, says Dr. Ira N. Gabrielsen, Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey. His congratulations to the camp personnel came on the fifth anniversary of the GOC.

The Valentine camp is joining other camps throughout the nation this week (March 31 to April 5) in celebrating the anniversary and invites the public to visit the camp during an "open house" celebration on (insert date) to see the progress being made at this Nebraska wildlife refuge. Here the GOC boys, under the direction of the Biological Survey, are working to improve the refuge as they are in 31 other camps on refuges over the United States. They are making the refuges easier to administer and more attractive to wildlife.

"GOC boys," says Dr. Gabrielsen, "are familiar figures in many localities. The public is becoming acquainted with them and their work and sees the beneficial effect camp training has in preparing young men for good citizenship. It also learns of the GOC boys' contributions to the wildlife program."

The Valentine Refuge, in north central Nebraska, lies in the heart of the Nebraska sandhills about 30 miles below the South Dakota state line. Its location and conformation make it one of the Bureau's outstanding migratory waterfowl sanctuaries. Here such important lakes as Pelican, Dewey, Marsh, Dads, Hackberry and Whitewater offer nesting and feeding areas

that are heavy contributors to the annual crop of waterfowl produced in the "duck incubator" of the United States.

Created by an Executive Order of August 4, 1935, the Valentine Refuge will be expanded until it eventually contains 69,070 acres. Nesting ducks at this sanctuary are mallards, gadwalls, blue-winged teal, pintails, redheads and canvasbacks. Mink, weasel, badger, skunk, muskrat, coyote and beaver as well as raccoon are found on the refuge. The value of this naturally fine area has been enhanced by constructing five dikes for impounding water. A diversion ditch between Hackberry and Dewey Lakes conveys to Dewey the excess water from Gordon creek. This insures a permanent and stable water supply.

Since the sanctuary is heavily populated with nesting and migratory waterfowl, abundant food must be available. The CCC boys have collected more than a ton of flower, grass and other seeds and have sown 215 acres to cover and food plants. In addition, more than two million trees and shrubs have been moved and planted in strategic spots.

Forty-five miles of truck trail make points with the refuge easier of access. New fencing around nesting areas prevents livestock from damaging both the nests and the cover.

Other birds that inhabit the Valentine Refuge are prairie chicken, sharp-tailed grouse, eared grebes, white pelicans, great blue and black-crowned night herons, American bitterns and black terns. Ring-necked pheasants, which were introduced, have multiplied.

To protect the nesting birds and the young against predators, more than 15,000 acres of the refuge have been treated for rodent control. In the summer the boys destroyed rodents, snakes and turtles. During the winter months, they have been busy trapping coyote, raccoon, mink, weasel and skunk that make serious inroads on resident wildlife.

New fencing extends more than 100 miles in and around this refuge in the Nebraska sandhills and the boys have marked 183 miles of the boundary. Eighteen miles of telephone line have been completed and 10 wells, including pumps and pump houses, are now available for use.

Excavation, channel clearing, construction of cattle guards and special gates along the refuge boundaries are some of the additional activities that have employed the time of the camp. Fire fighting, for which the CCC boys must be ready, has been facilitated by 152 miles of fire breaks.

Despite the varied activities, the camp personnel has made an unusual safety record. In the past year, no time has been lost through accidents.

"Such a record, coupled with the achievements," says Dr. Gabrielson "is noteworthy of special praise. Migratory and nesting waterfowl, as well as other wildlife at Valentine are finding the improved area increasingly attractive. Emergency funds for acquiring and developing this and other areas and the help of the CCC have helped advance the wildlife restoration program that only 5 years ago was but a dream.