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WILDLIFE GAINING FROM WISE LAND-USE PROGRAM

**Chief Gabrielson Describes Advance
of Refuge Work in Biological
Survey Annual Report**

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Wildlife is benefiting in many ways from the Government's coordinated program for wise land-use. This fact is stressed by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, in his report for the fiscal year ended June 30, made public today (Dec. 30).

The wildlife-restoration program, says Gabrielson, is fundamentally one of land utilization. Fortunately, through the cooperation of those concerned with land use planning, it has been possible to make provision for wildlife in the sub-marginal land purchased by the Government. Unwise land use has ruined many wildlife areas that had greater value to man in their natural state, but many such areas are being restored.

Seventeen new units, Gabrielson reports, were added during the year to the system of national wildlife refuges, bringing the total on June 30 to 248, covering 11,650,358 acres. Of these, 232 were in the United States (7,557,221 acres), and 16 are in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico (estimated acreage 4,093,137). On 32 refuges development work was carried on by C.C.C. camps. W.P.A. and N.Y.A. help assisted the regular refuge personnel in improving other areas.

For the third consecutive year Gabrielson reports an increase in waterfowl, attributed in part to success in the refuge program. He points out, however, that of all factors limiting the birds' numbers the one that can be most effectively controlled is the annual kill by hunters.

"Regulations governing waterfowl hunting," Gabrielson explains, "have had to be drastic for the past few years and have been enforced as strictly as possible. The result has been a noticeable increase of waterfowl, and this year the prospects were the best the birds have had since their recent precipitous decline. Some liberalization in the regulations, therefore, was possible, so as to distribute more equitably such hunting as could be allowed. There is still great need for restraint in hunting and for adopting somewhat drastic regulations and enforcing them effectively. The restrictions may seem unjust to some hunters, but it must be remembered that an adequate game-law-enforcement program is necessary if waterfowl hunting is to be perpetuated."

The Biological Survey's action programs are based on the research and field observations of its technicians. The refuges are being used increasingly as scenes of studies, and the cooperative research units at 10 land grant colleges have been further developed.

Other features of the year reported upon are as follows:

Shortly after the approval on September 2, 1937, of the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act, organization plans were perfected and arrangements made for considering wildlife-restoration projects and disbursing funds to States. The program began in the fiscal year now current.

Successful prosecutions of violators commercializing game and conspiring to transport pelts illegally, together with gratifying cooperation from the States in increased enforcement of hunting regulations, combined to effect better observance of wildlife conservation laws throughout the country. Circuit courts of appeal in Illinois and California affirmed lower-court decisions sustaining the power of the Secretary of Agriculture to make regulations forbidding the taking of migratory waterfowl by means of feed or bait; and the United States Supreme Court denied applications for writs of certiorari in two of these cases.

Greater protection to domestic livestock and game animals and birds resulted from the destruction of 94,040 predatory animals in cooperative campaigns. This also lessened the danger of the outbreak and spread of rabies. For the control of economically injurious rodents, 29,204,282 acres were treated under Bureau supervision, to protect farm crops, orchards, ranges, and water-diversion systems, and to assist in checking soil erosion. In the New England States, cooperation in the control of orchard mice was made more effective by the development of improved methods. More intensive work in rodent control was inaugurated in areas reported by the United States Public Health Service as newly discovered plague centers in Nevada, Utah, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.

Discovery on the west coast of Mexico of adequate habitat for waterfowl that formerly wintered in California, and of the winter quarters of many ducks and geese of the Central flyway in the Mexican part of the Laguna Madre on the Gulf Coast, emphasized the importance of the wildlife treaty of 1937 with Mexico.

A biological survey of the Aleutian Islands Bird Refuge was completed, specimens of the fauna and flora were collected, and animal life filmed.

Completion of a survey in 48 States indicated that game management as a supplementary farm enterprise has varying degrees of success. The sociological aspects at present seem more important than the economic.

Quarterly quadrat counts were begun on nonmicroscopic faunas in both ditched and adjacent natural marshes to determine the actual biological effects of methods now employed in mosquito-control projects. Arrangements were also made whereby the Survey considers drainage projects submitted to the Works Progress Administration.

A new fur-animal field station was established for muskrat studies at the Blackwater (Md.) Migratory Bird Refuge; and through W.P.A. cooperation a new office and laboratory building was completed for the Fur Animal Experiment Station, N.Y., where many facilities have been provided for experiments with minks and foxes. A Nation-wide inquiry was begun, by means of questionnaires, to assemble basic statistics on fur farming, including numbers of operators and value of stock and equipment.