

# INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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### BIG LAKE MIGRATORY BIRD REFUGE IN ARKANSAS BEING IMPROVED

The recent improvement of the enlarged Big Lake Migratory Bird Refuge in Arkansas will considerably aid the migratory bird conservation program along the Mississippi River, says the U. S. Biological Survey. Big Lake Refuge was originally set aside by Executive order of August 2, 1915. Later orders enlarged the refuge until the area reached its present size of 9,379 acres.

A section of the Little River and situated in Mississippi County, Ark., the refuge lies a few miles west of the Mississippi River and is an important junction of migratory bird routes. Administered by the Biological Survey, Big Lake Refuge is frequented by spring and fall migrations of waterfowl that greatly need protection at this point.

Two species of ducks, the hooded merganser and the wood duck, nest on the refuge. During the migratory season last year as many as 20,000 migratory waterfowl were estimated to be on the refuge at one time, including mallards, pintails, ring-necked ducks, black ducks, wood ducks, shovellers, green- and blue-winged teal. Geese also feed on the refuge, and blue herons, American egrets, cormorants, white pelicans, and wood ibises are found there in considerable numbers. Many upland birds such as mourning doves, quail, and other smaller species also nest on the refuge.

At one time Big Lake was a larger open lake, but the construction of levees and ditches had reduced the water supply, often causing the lake to dry up completely in summer.

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Under supervision of the Biological Survey, reconstruction work in recent years has succeeded in raising the water levels and storing enough water during flood times for year around use. A WPA project assigned to the refuge has done considerable improvement work in the construction of dams, dikes, roads, and trails, and in landscaping and fencing. In addition to restoring the water supply the Survey is carrying on an intensive planting program to restore duck food plants that formerly existed on the refuge. Many new aquatic food species are being introduced.

Some fishing and recreation are permitted on the refuge. Certain lands and waters adjacent to the refuge were recently closed to migratory-bird hunting, to insure complete sanctuary to the many waterfowl using this important link in the chain of refuges along the Mississippi Flyway. The closure was effected by a proclamation of President Roosevelt on March 21, 1939.