

# INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

## United States Department of Agriculture

-----  
For May 28 papers :  
-----

WASHINGTON, D. C.

### FOODS OF DIVING DUCKS DESCRIBED IN BULLETIN

---

Knowledge of the feeding habits of wild ducks is essential to success in restoring and conserving these birds, says Dr. Clarence Cottam, of the U. S. Biological Survey, author of a technical bulletin, "Food Habits of North American Diving Ducks," recently issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The precipitous decline in the abundance of waterfowl in recent years, Cottam points out, has been of great concern to conservationists throughout the country. Developing natural habitat on refuges and elsewhere is helping to restore these birds to something approaching their former numbers. The success of this work is partly dependent upon accurate determination of the food requirements of the species considered.

The only safe guide in ascertaining the food requirements of a species, says Cottam, is to find out, by stomach analysis, what it actually eats under varying circumstances and in different localities.

The diving ducks described by Cottam in the new bulletin are divided into two general groups, sea ducks and inland divers. The sea ducks, or deep water divers, feed principally on animal life, including mollusks, crustaceans, insects, and fish. Inland divers are primarily plant feeders, using pondweeds and sedges as their main items of diet.

The importance of food and cover to these birds is discussed by the author in the light of information gathered by the Biological Survey over more than half a century.

Tables used in the bulletin are based on laboratory analyses of more than 6,800 specimens and on extensive field studies. Twenty-two species are described, covering all diving ducks, except the mergansers. Four plates in color by Major Allan Brooks include illustrations of 16 species. Six other plates and 5 text figures show stomach contents and foods of the ducks.

"Food Habits of North American Diving Ducks," Technical Bulletin No. 643, may be obtained at 30 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

- - - B - - -