

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Washington, D. C.

For June 3, P. M. papers :

REMARKS OF SECRETARY HENRY A. WALLACE ON THE OCCASION OF
THE DEDICATION OF THE PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE
ON JUNE 3, 1939, AT 3 P.M., E.S.T.

We are assembled today to dedicate the Patuxent Research Refuge. The chief purpose of this refuge is to assist in the restoration of wildlife -- one of our greatest natural resources. I have taken a deep personal interest in the development of this area. To me and to many other Americans, this occasion is one of unusual significance.

Only a few years ago a survey of the conditions confronting the wildlife of this country gave little cause for optimism. The great flights of waterfowl that once amazed the pioneers had dwindled to such an extent that many well-informed naturalists believed there was no longer any measure that could now possibly be employed to prevent eventual extermination.

In fields and forests the deer, elk, grouse, wild turkey, quail, and other game birds and mammals suffered from practices that destroyed their native haunts. The Great Plains had been plowed, and marshes and water areas to the extent of nearly 100,000,000 acres drained. Forest lands had been denuded. The protective vegetation so vital to soil building and water conservation had been stripped from the land, leaving the earth defenseless against the attacks of drought, wind, and flood. In the space of a few years the bison and the antelope had been brought to the very edge of extinction. To supply demands of domestic and foreign markets, expeditions had penetrated the last of our wilderness areas in search of beavers, minks, martens, and fishers.

Meanwhile, as the national population increased, the numbers of hunters and fishermen also increased. In spite of restrictive laws and regulations, applied in attempts to save a remnant of a resource that once was the richest and most abundant of any of its kind on earth, the wildlife continued to decline. Several species, among these the heath hen and the passenger pigeon, had literally vanished before our eyes, and others seemed about to follow them.

Then, at a time when the prospects were darker than was generally realized, there was a new conception of the needs of wildlife. Its application to the conservation policies of the Federal Government raised the hopes of every nature lover. The establishment and development of this Patuxent Research Refuge indicates the character of this change. Today we are dedicating much more than this single area with its experimental grounds, its watercourses and fields, and its laboratories. They mark also the culmination of years of patient effort to plan a national wildlife-restoration program that includes provision for the necessary basic research and scientific work. There is opportunity to coordinate it with plans to acquire and restore elsewhere denuded and submarginal lands for the production of wildlife

American life is no longer simple or as close to nature as it was in the days of the pioneer. The mechanization of modern civilization has invaded the primeval forests and the plains. It is changing much of the wildlife habitat known to the trapper, the prospector, and the homesteader. With it have come many complications affecting the adjustment of wildlife to agricultural and forestry practices and to the many other uses of land that conflict with the life habits and requirements of wildlife species that are desirable to man.

We are making progress, however, in our understanding of this complicated interrelationship of wildlife with the changing use of land and with man's social and economic activities. It is the realization of this fact that has brought about this Patuxent Research Refuge.

Long ago, leaders in agriculture felt that the future welfare of our farmers depended on the development of programs based on the facts derived from research. This gave rise to our present system of agricultural experiment stations. No one needs be told what these stations have meant to American agriculture.

Today we find a similar idea being applied to our first national wildlife experiment station. Through the vision and foresight of Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the Biological Survey, the opportunity for fundamental research into problems affecting wildlife has become a reality. He visioned a place near the seat of the National Government where lines of wildlife investigation could be undertaken under the leadership of men outstanding in their respective specialized fields. He visioned an area where wildlife could be studied in relation to the production of agricultural crops, and where also the lands poorly-suited for agriculture could be turned back into forests, fields, and meadows and again become productive of game and fur.

On this Patuxent Research Refuge, which is adjacent to the National Agricultural Research Center at Beltsville, Maryland, long-time studies on the inter-relationships of wildlife with agriculture and forestry will be made. Food-habits will be studied, and nutritional requirements of many species will be determined. Diseases as they affect wildlife and their relationship to the diseases of domestic livestock and human beings will be noted. The use made of the area by migratory birds and their response to water and cover will be a feature of the work. Efforts will be made to improve fur production and quality on fur farms and in the wild. An experimental game farm is also planned, the nucleus of which you see here.

It gives me great pleasure and a feeling of pride to have had a part in helping to build and equip this wildlife experiment station. I know I speak for others of my staff who have assisted in this undertaking. The Civilian Conservation Corps is entitled to our thanks and unqualified commendation. These young

men have constructed the fences, the dam on Cash Creek, and the roads, and they have carried out the general landscaping. The splendid buildings, the laboratories, the restoration of historic Snowden Hall, and the provision of quarters for the employees were all made possible through grants from the Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration. All this has been done under the leadership of Dr. L. C. Morley, Superintendent of the Refuge, with the aid and council of Mr. Earl E. Sanford, General Superintendent of the National Agricultural Research Center.

It is a great privilege that I am now to exercise. A worthy objective has been reached; a new and a better way has been marked out for those who will carry on the work that we have commenced. This wildlife-research station, the first of its kind, is the manifestation of a national determination and a national ability to conserve and administer wisely the organic resources and products of the soil — a priceless heritage to the generations of Americans yet to come. With hope, and with a strong feeling of confidence for the future welfare of American wildlife I now dedicate the Patuxent Research Refuge to its noble task.