



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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USE REVOLVING BEACONS ON FARMS TO PROTECT CROPS FROM WATERFOWL

If farmers follow the advice of the Bureau of Biological Survey, some fields will be lighted at night with revolving beacons and reflectors to protect field crops from waterfowl damage, the United States Department of the Interior announced today. F. M. Uhler and Stephen Creech, of the Biological Survey, developed the frightening devices when complaints were received from farmers that migrating wild ducks and geese stopped in the fields to feed.

It is thought that possibly the birds are frightened by the reflectors because the sudden flashes of light somewhat resemble the flashes from hunting guns. For daylight operations, the revolving reflectors alone are sufficient to keep the birds off the premises.

Both the reflectors and the beacons can be made inexpensively at home. An old bicycle wheel, tin cans, two inexpensive lanterns, and a couple of bolts are all that is needed to make a beacon.

Admitting that migratory waterfowl do damage some field crops, Uhler and Creech pointed out that it is best to control the damage by methods that are not destructive to the birds. In fact, destructive action, other than shooting in open season in accordance with regulations, can be legally taken only under permit from the Biological Survey.

The effectiveness of beacons as frightening devices was demonstrated in Arkansas rice fields, where large numbers of mallards had been feeding at night on domestic rice. These depredations were reported to have been stopped by the moving beam of an automobile headlight mounted on the frame of an oscillating electric fan that had been placed on top a 15-foot wooden tower.

Experiments in Michigan grainfields showed that revolving beacons, properly elevated and spaced, keep waterfowl from feeding in the protected areas. The greater proportion of damage by migratory wildfowl in grainfields, It was explained, occurs after the grain has been cut, frequently after it is shocked, and is most severe when excessive moisture during the rainy seasons delays threshing.

Uhler and Creech estimated that revolving beacons can be constructed for about \$5 each. If waste lumber and woodland poles are available for T-supports and if spinner reflectors can be made from tin cans, the cost will be dependent largely on the price of the swivels. In Michigan the fields were equipped with adequate reflectors at a cost of about 50 cents an acre. The swivels, which were the only items of appreciable cost, lasted several seasons.

A description of revolving reflectors and beacons and how they may be used was prepared by Uhler and Creech. It was issued as mimeographed leaflet, BS-149, entitled "Protecting Field Crops from Waterfowl Damage by Means of Reflectors and Revolving Beacons," prepared by Uhler and Creech, describing the revolving reflectors.