



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1941.

INVESTIGATORS FIND MOURNING DOVE'S STATUS UNSATISFACTORY

The South's severe storm of January 1940 has probably been forgotten in most places, but it caused a bird-conservation problem that game authorities are still facing, says the Fish and Wildlife Service in a report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes on the status of mourning doves.

Protected by the Federal Government in accordance with international treaties, the mourning dove has been the subject of intensive investigations by the Fish and Wildlife Service since the 1940 storm disaster, and the findings are causing the game authorities considerable concern, according to the report.

Regulatory action, it was pointed out, was taken last year to reduce the number of birds killed by hunters. Studies made this year indicate that the improvements hoped for were not fully realized and that the mourning dove's numbers are decidedly unsatisfactory.

Hopes for recovery with adequate protection are seen, however, in the fact that mourning doves lay two or more sets of eggs each season. While there are rarely more than two eggs to the set, the nesting season in southern

latitudes may include every month of the year, although most of it is in the period from March to September, inclusive.

"Surveys made in several southeastern States immediately after the January 1940 storm," says the Service, "showed that thousands of mourning doves were killed by freezing and starvation. In one State a study by the State game department resulted in the finding of hundreds of dead doves around hay stacks and even in barns.

"As the 1940 breeding season progressed, the disastrous effects of the storm became more and more apparent with the frequent receipt of reports telling of the scarcity of doves. Regulatory action was taken to reduce the kill by sportsmen, but as the hunting season opened in 1940 doves were so scarce in most areas that hunters voluntarily refrained from shooting them."

At a conference between Service officials and the heads of game departments of southeastern States last April, says the Fish and Wildlife Service, "the consensus was that the eastern mourning dove was in a condition that might be compared with that of the migratory waterfowl in 1934."

"Reports on the 1941 breeding season so far," it was concluded, "indicate that there is some improvement but that this bird is still in an unsatisfactory condition and must be managed carefully if it is to be preserved as a game species."