



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The hunting season for migratory game birds begins September 20 in the northern zone with the prospect that there will be fewer birds on the southward flight than last year, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today.

The annual inventory of waterfowl which took place last winter showed a drop of approximately 20,000,000 to 105,500,000 birds, Dr. Gabrielson said. It is believed doubtful that this loss was made up entirely during the summer breeding season. A survey by a Service biologist in the Prairie Provinces of Canada showed no improvement in breeding results over last year and in some species a loss was indicated.

Reports from 327 strategically stationed observers during the spring migration of the birds from southern wintering grounds to their northern breeding grounds have now been analyzed, Dr. Gabrielson said. These reports in almost every case confirm the population figures obtained during the winter inventory.

There has been much speculation as to the cause for the large reduction in migratory waterfowl population, Dr. Gabrielson declared, but it appears now that hunting intensity last year was responsible for much of it.

Figures which have become available recently show that the number of hunters out last season probably reached the record set in 1942. Reported sales of duck stamps which hunters of migratory waterfowl are required to buy had reached 1,426,535 by April 1. Since not all postoffices had reported their duck stamp sales for the year by that time, the final total may equal or surpass the record sale of 1,439,000 in 1942. In 1944 hunters bought 1,164,191 stamps.

Not only were duck stamp sales up, those of ammunition also showed an increase. Ammunition sales, measured by tax receipts from this source, were nearly three times as great as in the previous year.

Reports of erratic hunting last fall and winter led many people to believe that few ducks and geese were killed. In actuality, Dr. Gabrielson declared, the kill was exceptionally high.

Figures now available from states which require hunters to report their kills show a very material increase. Such increases were reported in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Arkansas, and a number of other states. In some cases the increase in the kill was as high as 40 per cent.

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