



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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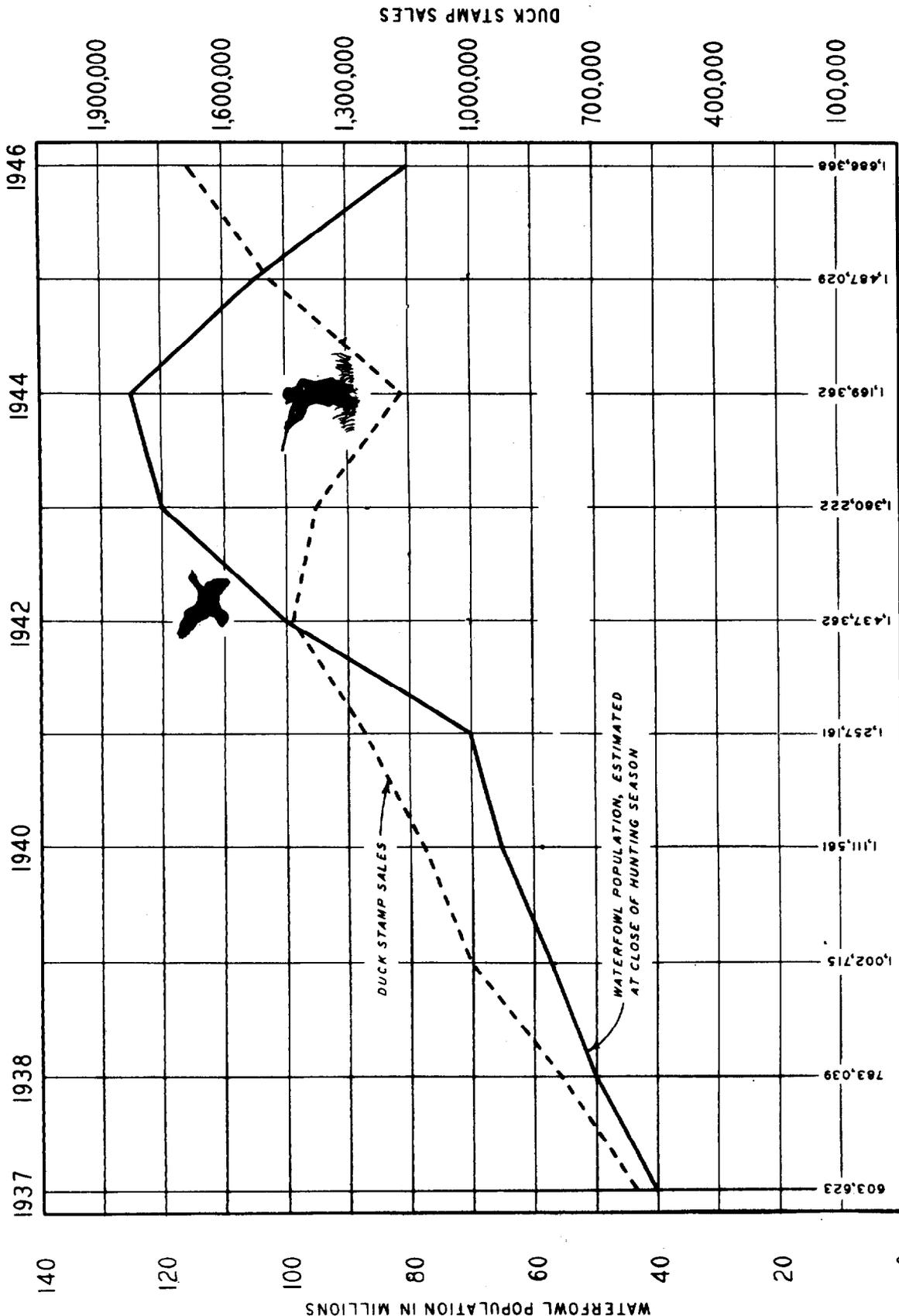
A shorter duck-shooting season or a reduced bag limit, or both, may be necessary to halt and reverse the alarming decline in the wild duck population, Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior warned today.

The direct correlation between the drastic reduction in duck population, averaging about 23,000,000 birds a year during the past two years, and an average increase in the sale of duck stamps of 250,000 a year was illustrated by a graph made public by Mr. Day.

This graph, which covers the period of 1937 to 1946, inclusive, indicates the trend of waterfowl population as estimated at the close of the hunting season. It also shows the exact number of duck stamps sold each year (except 1946 when sales are shown only through March 31). Since every migratory waterfowl hunter over 16 years is required by law to purchase a duck stamp, the number of duck stamps sold annually indicates the number of wildfowlers in the country.

The graph showed that since 1944, when the duck population hit a peak of 125,350,000, the number of ducks and geese has dropped to 80,000,000 in 1946—a decrease of 36 percent. The number of migratory waterfowl hunters, on the other hand, showed a rise of 517,006 from 1,169,362 in 1944 to 1,686,368 by March 31, 1946. This increase of 44 percent occurred during the same two-year period when ducks were declining 36 percent.

WATERFOWL POPULATION VERSUS HUNTING PRESSURE



EXACT NUMBER OF DUCK STAMPS SOLD EACH YEAR

NOTES

YEARS INDICATED REPRESENT JULY 1 OF PREVIOUS YEAR TO JUNE 30 OF YEAR SHOWN. 1946 REPRESENTS PERIOD OF JULY 1, 1945 TO MARCH 31, 1946.

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The graph shows that the duck population at the end of the shooting season of 1937 was estimated at 40,000,000 birds; 603,623 duck stamps had been sold.

In 1938 the number of ducks had increased to 50,000,000; duck hunters numbered 783,039. A year later, when the waterfowl numbers had climbed to 57,000,000, the number of duck hunters spurted to 1,002,715.

In 1940 the trend continued in about the same ratio; ducks numbered 65,000,000; duck stamp sales reached 1,111,561.

The upward surge of duck stamp sales which reached 1,437,362 in 1942 was halted by the war. In that year the duck population continued its upward climb to 100,000,000 birds.

From 1942 to 1944, when restrictions on gas and tires, and the shortage of ammunition helped hold the take to less than normal, the number of hunters fell to 1,169,362. The ducks, however, got a rest and continued on to 120,000,000 in 1943, and reached a peak of 125,350,000 in 1944.

In 1945 the continental population of migratory waterfowl began its downward plunge when only 105,500,000 birds were inventoried in January. Duck stamp sales jumped to 1,487,029.

The same trend continues into 1946, with wild ducks and geese dropping to 80,000,000, and duck stamp sales sky-rocketing to an all-time high of 1,686,368 by March 31, 1946.

"In the years immediately ahead, the wild ducks and geese of this country are going to face the greatest army of hunters in all history," declared Mr. Day. "A declining period in waterfowl is all too plain. Increased hunting pressure is fact and not fiction. It is going to take the best kind of management possible to prevent further cuts into the breeding stocks of waterfowl."

"The only quick means of adjusting hunting pressure," Mr. Day added, "is provided through the annual migratory hunting regulations. Back in the early 30's when the waterfowl population was down to 27,000,000 and on its way out, the regulations rigidly enforced by State and Federal wardens saved the day. The season was cut to 30 days, baiting and live decoys were eliminated and several species given complete protection."

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