



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ANNUAL POPULATION ESTIMATE OF WATERFOWL TO START JANUARY 10

The 16th annual waterfowl inventory designed to determine population trends of the continent's geese and duck resources is scheduled by the Fish and Wildlife Service for January 10 to 13, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman announced today.

Director Albert M. Day of the Service emphasized that the inventory cannot be considered a "census" of individual birds. "It is manifestly impossible to count all North American waterfowl with accuracy," he said, "but an accurate measure of trends in the population does supply data essential for the formulation of the annual hunting regulations. These trends are established by the annual inventory and by spring and summer field investigations on breeding areas and in the flyways."

The inventory of waterfowl is something like an inventory taken of any large business, Day stated. It is essential that the Service have at hand the best possible data on the status of waterfowl so that the resource can be managed on the soundest basis that is possible.

The winter inventory is made each year at the close of the last U. S. hunting season. During this period, birds from all breeding grounds and migration flyways tend to concentrate on the wintering grounds where they are relatively stationary. Their numbers, therefore, can be more easily appraised at this period.

Important wintering grounds from Alaska to Guatemala, including the large West Indies islands, will be surveyed. About 1,300 trained observers, using planes, automobiles, and boats will participate in the inventory. In addition to Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, specialists of Canadian, Mexican, and state conservation agencies and armed forces pilots will also take part.

The most experienced personnel, using planes, will count waterfowl in the areas of heaviest concentrations and in inaccessible regions. Photographs of large rafts of waterfowl are also taken to serve as a check on the methods and accuracy of the estimates. It has been shown that the errors in making estimates tend to even out in the average, making visual estimates by experts a reliable indication of population trends.

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