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WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY TO START IN JANUARY

The annual winter inventory of migratory waterfowl will be taken January 3-16 by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Acting Secretary of the Interior Clarence A. Davis said today.

More than 2,200 State and Federal waterfowl specialists will make the count. There will be 146 airplanes used in the survey in addition to vehicles used in ground counts. Every known wintering area from southern Canada to Yucatan in southern Mexico will be covered, Davis said.

Several of the planes will be from the armed services. These will be routine training flights with waterfowl specialists aboard. State fish and game departments and the Fish and Wildlife Service planes will also be used. All flights have been coordinated to prevent overlapping and double counting.

Altitude will be "low enough to determine the species but high enough not to frighten the birds to flight," according to Service officials. Since waterfowl do very little moving around in midwinter, the chances of counting the same birds in more than one place are remote.

This is the eighth "comparable" winter survey; that is the eighth such survey which can be considered as comparing with the counts of previous years.

The survey is of considerable value in showing the distribution of wintering waterfowl and particularly shifts in distribution resulting from major changes in land and water management. Information obtained from the program has value in showing numerical trends of birds and will have real value in demonstrating management needs as major modifications occur in waterfowl habitats.

Canadian and American officials cooperate in the winter survey but most of the observers are Americans. This year the Canadian government is sending two observers to the United States to participate in the aerial coverage on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts.

Two crews representing the United States will participate in the Mexican portion of the project, one on the west coast of that country and one in the Gulf area. A waterfowl technician from Idaho, representing the Pacific Flyway council and one from Texas representing the Central Flyway council will participate in the surveys of Mexican areas.

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