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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS ISSUED ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1955

Increased use of National Wildlife Refuges by sportamen, picnickers, photographers, and bird students is highlighted in the annual report of the Fish and Wildlife Service issued today by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay. The report covers the year ending June 30, 1955. Tabulations made for the calendar year indicate that a record-breaking total of 5,202,260 persons used the refuges for various types of recreation during the year.

The report summarizes the various activities of the Fish and Wildlife Service. These activities ran the scale from demonstrating how to prepare fish for a school lunch menu to managing the big fur seal herd on the Pribilof Islands of Alaska. Site of the Service's activities included both equatorial and arctic waters of the deep sea and land areas varying from subtropical swamps to tundra.

Some of the problems which came in for attention during the period of the report and which will have more attention in the future include such things as efforts to control the sea lampreys which are ruining commercial fishing in the Great Lakes, blackbird depredations in the rice fields of Arkansas, search for a repellent to protect forest seedlings from rodents and other animals, determination of the life cycle of the hookworm which is taking an annual toll of more than 100,000 fur seal pups, and studies to determine the effect on wildlife of insecticides commonly used to give the farmer protection from pests.

Biological research covered a wide field of activities in many parts of the world. Recently developed methods of predicting shad runs in the Hudson and Connecticut rivers proved successful; limited studies by the Service and coordination of striped bass research conducted by the States under the Federal aid program continued; encouraging results were obtained from experimental fertilization of Bare Lake on Kodiak Island to increase red salmon production; electrical devices to guide salmon over dams were further developed; numerous shellfish problems were given attention; a fleet of five vessels covered thousands of square miles of Pacific waters in a study of distribution, abundance and identity of salmon stocks; bacterial diseases of fishes, problems relative to Atlantic herring, yellowtail flounder, whiting, sea scallops and gulf shrimp and a number of other matters relative to the culture and habit of fish came in for field and laboratory scrutiny.

Exploratory fishing operations were continued in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and in the Gulf of Mexico. Discoveries of long-range importance to the tuna fishery were made in the central Pacific and in the Gulf of Mexico. New fishing areas for ocean perch shrimp, and albacore were found.

Funds available from the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act permitted added emphasis to fishery research and the development of new marketing outlets for fishery products.

Home economists of the College Park, Md., and Seattle, Wash., test kitchens presented 131 fish cookery demonstrations to school lunch personnel in 17 States. Special marketing campaigns were conducted to move surplus stocks of small haddock fillets and canned tuna. There was considerable interest on the part of the fishing industry in voluntary Federal standards for grade and conditions of fishery products. Certain standards had been developed during the previous year and others are being developed. Market News Offices issuing daily reports on price and market conditions in the fisheries were maintained at important trading centers throughout the United States.

The commercial fisheries in Alaska yielded products which were valued at \$78 million in 1954 compared with \$70 million in 1953. The salmon pack of 3,094,753 cases, however, was down 12 percent from the five-year average. Salmon fishing in some areas was considerably curtailed to permit a greater reserve for spawning. Enforcement of the Alaska fishery laws resulted in the convictions of 277 individuals, the acquittal of two and the dismissal of five cases.

The fur seal harvest on the Pribilof Islands in 1954 was 63,882 skins. This is 2,787 less than in 1953. At the semi-annual auction sales in St. Louis, Mo., 51,336 skins brought \$4,342,103. By agreement with Canada, 20 percent of the Pribilof harvest goes to Canada. In 1954 Canada received 12,776 skins.

The report indicates that to maintain sport fishing the trend is to plant greater quantities of trout of catchable size to keep up with the increasing pressure. During the period covered by the report, the Fish and Wildlife Service operated 89 hatcheries and distributed the product of these hatcheries to waters on Federal lands and to areas near Federal installations. The Service planted almost four million game fish which measured six inches or more at the time of planting. Practically all of these were trout. The total weight of these fish was 767,000 pounds. The Service also reared and distributed 120,000,000 fingerlings, 21,000,000 fry, and 43,000,000 eggs of various species of game and commercial fish.

Reports from the various States show that there were 18.5 million fishing licenses issued during 1954, an increase of nearly a million over 1953.

Increased cooperation with the 48 States was recorded for all phases of the Service's program. In particular, Federal and State problems concerning migratory waterfowl were thoroughly discussed at a series of meetings during the year. The meetings were held on the flyway council basis, since the States of each of the four main waterfowl flyways have kindred problems as far as migratory waterfowl are concerned.

More interest was seen in the waterfowl banding program, generally, and in Canadian banding operations, 23 State personnel participated compared with 20 in the previous year. Banding is essential to a better understanding of waterfowl movements and mortality. Weather conditions in Canada were favorable to the production of a bumper crop of birds but were unfavorable to the prairie banding program.

Enforcement of Federal wildlife conservation laws administered by the Service netted \$57,664 in fines and costs. A total of 1,057 cases were disposed of in Federal courts during the year; on June 30, 1955, 298 cases were pending. In addition to the cases concluded in Federal courts, United States Game Management Agency (acting as Deputy State Wardens) individually, or in cooperation with State game law enforcement officers, assisted in the apprehension and conviction in State courts of 5,485 persons charged with violations of State laws for the protection of game fish, resulting in the imposition of fines and costs aggregating \$148,345.66. Of these costs, 2,971 involved the unlawful taking of migratory birds and interstate shipments of game animals and fish which were subject to prosecution in Federal courts under applicable Federal laws.

More than 1,000 projects were carried on by the States during fiscal year 1955 as a result of the Federal aid programs. Under these programs Federal funds from the excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition and sport fishing gear are matched in the ratio of three to one with State hunting and fishing license revenues to restore and improve the living conditions for game birds and animals and sport fishes.

The Fish and Wildlife Service reviews and approves the projects that are presented by the States. The work is carried out by the respective State fish and game departments, with the resulting improvements belonging to the States.

During fiscal year 1955 Pittman-Robertson funds for wildlife restoration helped finance 706 projects, on which the 75% Federal share of the costs totaled \$11,153,472. Dingell-Johnson money for restoration of sport fishing amounted to \$4,692,000 and paid for 75 percent of the work on 372 projects. The various State projects under the Federal aid programs included research, land acquisition, construction and development, and maintenance of completed work.

The managed control of harmful rodents and large predators was continued. Mice replaced rats as the Nation's foremost animal pest and many reports of contamination of storage products were received. The Service was active in the Clean Grain Program sponsored jointly by industry and the government. Service activities included control operations on other animals such as prairie dogs, pocked gophers, ground squirrels, jackrabbits, field mice, cotton rats, kangaroo rats, woodchucks and moles. Attention was given also to the larger predators, coyotes, wolves, bobcats and mountain lions. In addition there was local control of bears destructive to valuable young timber growth in the Pacific Northwest. Little change was noted in the high post-war level of rabies outbreaks among wild animals in the east and south. County-wide projects to control rabid foxes were conducted in several States, notably Virginia and North Carolina. Even so, there were livestock losses from rabies in many States in the southeast. During the past two years six kinds of bats have been found to be carriers, but the actual role of bats in spreading the disease is not known.

Close cooperation between the Service and the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation was effected during the year. An agreement with the Soil Conservation Service opened the way for the Fish and Wildlife Service to make recommendations on small watershed projects for the protection and improvement of fish and game resources. A total of 265 reports were made on proposed water projects developed by other Federal agencies or which were being considered for Federal license. Plans for a national economic survey of hunting and fishing

activities were worked out. An inventory of permanent water areas, a follow-up of the previous year's wetlands survey, was made. Considerable attention was given to various areas in which present or proposed construction jobs were threatening wildlife, and encouraging results were achieved. Also, agreements were completed with construction agencies for making lands available at six reservoir areas for wildlife management by State conservation departments and by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Service was engaged with the activities of several international fishery conservation organizations during the year. Two major international conferences were held. Changes which the new International Pacific Halibut Convention made in fishery management resulted in a record catch of 71 million pounds of halibut, an 18 percent increase. Activities of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries commission resulted in big catches of sockeye salmon in the Fraser river; a research program was agreed upon by the recently organized International North Pacific Fisheries Commission. The fifth annual meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries was held in Ottawa, resulting in a recommendation to member nations that the size of mesh used in trawls for haddock and cod off the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland banks be limited. Agreement was reached with Canada on control of the sea lamprey which has done great damage to the fisheries of the Great Lakes. Service officers attended the United Nations International Technical Conference on Conservation of Living Resources of the Sea, held in Rome in April.

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