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5/21



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PERSISTENT WINTER RETARDS START OF WATERFOWL SURVEYS

Persistent winter conditions in the Canadian provinces have slowed the advance of the big wave of waterfowl which swept up through the Upper Mississippi Valley States late in April and early in May, delaying the start of the annual breeding ground surveys several days.

Reports reaching John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, indicate that there is a huge concentration of waterfowl just north of the United States-Canadian border, seemingly awaiting the ice line to be pushed back beyond their prairie nesting grounds. In the meantime, the birds have been spreading westward where spring is somewhat further advanced.

Field reports indicate that water conditions are excellent in the northern two-thirds of Alberta and in most of Saskatchewan. In southern Manitoba, most of the open fields are free of snow but the snow is still packed from one to four feet deep under the trees. Smaller potholes are open but the larger and deeper lakes are still icebound.

When water conditions are good, about two-thirds of all the ducks on the North American continent are raised on the prairies of northern United States and southern Canada, Fish and Wildlife Service officials say. Conditions on the breeding ground look good at present but additional rains throughout the summer are needed to maintain the breeding area in good condition.

The breeding ground surveys are conducted annually by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and personnel from many States, the Canadian provinces and from several outdoor organizations. The area covered includes all of the important nesting grounds in Canada and Alaska and about 30 of the States.

The survey is conducted in two units: the first—the one now being delayed—designed to measure adult populations arriving on the breeding grounds; the second to measure the results of the breeding season. The data secured is part of the information needed in fixing hunting seasons and bag limits. About 400 individuals take part in the survey. Thirty planes will be used, flying transects seven miles apart in the heavy breeding areas and as much as 60 miles apart over the more lightly occupied breeding grounds.

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