



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MAY 22, 1957

FWS PREPARES FOR 1957 MOURNING DOVE CENSUS AND BANDING PROGRAM

The Fish and Wildlife Service is moving into the second year of its five-year program of banding nestling mourning doves, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross L. Leffler said today. State fish and game departments are giving valuable cooperation in this program, the Assistant Secretary added. The banding operations will continue throughout the summer.

Secretary Leffler also announced that some 600 workers, most of them volunteers, are preparing for the annual mourning dove census which began May 20 and continues through June, utilizing 750 "call count routes" established by the Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with 44 States. Each route has 20 established stations at which the calls of the nesting doves are counted at specified morning hours. From these data an estimate of the year-to-year change in total dove population of the Nation is determined. This information is used in establishing annual hunting regulations.

Last year, more than 1,500 volunteer workers took part in the banding program and 45,000 doves, adults and nestlings, were banded. The goal for the five-year period is 200,000 nestlings banded.

The mourning dove is America's most popular migratory game bird if hunting-take is any criterion. In 1956, an estimated 19 million mourning doves were legally taken by hunters. Despite this heavy toll, careful analysis of census results during the last five years indicates that the nationwide dove population is being maintained at a satisfactorily high level. In fact, Service officials believe that there may be more mourning doves on the continent now than at any other time in history.

The mourning dove is the only native game bird which is multibrooded. Doves may nest five or six times a year with an average of three successful broods. There are usually two eggs in a nest. The eggs hatch in two weeks and in another two weeks the birds are flying. This persistent nesting is accompanied by heavy mortality, however.

In 1956, North Dakota led the Nation in the number of nestlings banded with 3,634. Louisiana was high in total nestlings and adults banded with 5,722 and California was second with total bandings of 3,943.

The mourning dove is found in every State in the Union. In 30 States the dove is rated as a game bird but in the others it is not hunted.

X X X