



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release AUGUST 4, 1959

WILDLIFE OFFICIAL SUMMARIZES WATERFOWL SITUATION

"The over-all situation on the North American waterfowl breeding ground can be summed up in two words 'not good'", Daniel H. Janzen, Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife told members of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee who met with him and other Bureau officials in Washington today.

Director Janzen indicated more stringent regulations would be necessary to meet the situation but declared: "We will try to give the hunters as much hunting as is consistent with our requirements to maintain breeding stocks to assure birds for future generations."

The Director declared that the decreases in duck population varied from "moderate" to "marked" according to the flyway involved, as a result of drought which dried up potholes in the best nesting areas, and an unusually late spring in the north. When the severe drought eliminated much of the nesting habitat in the best production areas, many of the birds moved north, seeking substitute nesting sites. However, they encountered the latest spring in the far north since surveys started in 1947, which delayed nesting attempts and severely limited nesting success of waterfowl in this area also.

The Waterfowl Advisory Committee which is composed of representatives of each of the four Flyway Councils and from various wildlife organizations is holding a two-day meeting with officials of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to review the waterfowl situation. Such a meeting is an annual affair. Today's morning meeting was open to the public. The afternoon meeting and all meetings tomorrow will be executive sessions.

At the public meeting a summary of the cooperative breeding ground survey made during the spring and summer, together with information on the winter survey, was presented by Bureau officials and generally discussed. In the executive sessions, the suggestions of the Committee and the recommendations of the Bureau will be considered.

Following the meetings the Bureau will make its recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior relative to the bag limits, opening and closing dates and number of days hunting to be permitted in each Flyway. At the later date, the Secretary of the Interior will issue the formal regulations which will be the framework for the coming waterfowl hunting season. States will fix their individual season and bag limits within that framework.

A summary of the cooperative breeding ground survey follows:

Atlantic Flyway: Over-all, it is anticipated that there will be a moderate decrease in the fall flight of ducks from the low population level of last year. It is estimated that there will be a drastic reduction in the flight of canvasbacks, readheads and ruddy ducks.

Mississippi Flyway: Over-all, it is anticipated that the fall flight of ducks in the Mississippi Flyway will show a marked decrease as compared with last year. It is estimated that there will be a drastic decrease in the flight of canvasbacks, redheads and ruddy ducks. A small decrease is estimated for the fall flight of blue geese; no change is anticipated for Canada geese. The reduction in numbers of coot broods averaged about 80 percent which will bring about a drastic reduction in the fall flight of this species.

Central Flyway: There will be a marked reduction in the fall flight of ducks compared with 1958. The fall flight of canvasbacks, redheads and ruddy ducks, will be drastically reduced. There will be a small decrease in the flight of snow geese and whitefronts; the fall population of white-cheeked geese will be about the same as last year. There will be a drastic reduction in the coot flight.

Pacific Flyway: There will be a moderate reduction from a high population of ducks. The reduction in pintails will be greater than that for mallards. The flight of canvasbacks, redheads and ruddy ducks, which are not so important in the Pacific Flyway as elsewhere, will be drastically reduced. There will be a small increase in the populations of geese. The fall flight of brant may be somewhat larger than last year but will still be below the average for the past several years. Coot population will be down sharply.

Breeding population and production surveys are conducted annually on the waterfowl breeding grounds for the purpose of estimating changes in the relative size of the fall flight from each of the breeding areas. Two surveys are required. The first is made during May and June to measure the distribution and relative size of the breeding population. The second survey is carried out during July for the purpose of forecasting the relative number of young produced.

The breeding ground surveys are cooperative in nature. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Provincial Game Branches, Ducks Unlimited, and the State Conservation Agencies combine their equipment and manpower to conduct the necessary surveys throughout the vast extent of the waterfowl breeding range.

x x x