



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MARCH 7, 1961

MORE WATERFOWL SEEN ON WINTER SURVEY BUT DROUGHT THREATENS NESTING GROUNDS

The number of waterfowl observed in the winter waterfowl survey was 11 percent higher than last year but the nesting grounds at this time are dryer than at any time in the past 25 years, the Department of the Interior announced yesterday.

Late winter snows and heavy spring rains are badly needed if the breeding area in the prairie States and Canadian Provinces is to provide satisfactory nesting sites.

An extended report on the winter survey conducted annually by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, and cooperating agencies was given to the National Waterfowl Council Sunday. The meeting was attended by a great many conservationists who are in Washington for the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and other conservation meetings being held in Washington. A summary of late reports on habitat conditions in the breeding areas was also given.

The waterfowl survey was made in mid-January, beginning shortly after the end of the hunting season. A total of 1628 employees of Federal, State, Provincial and private conservation agencies participated in the work. One hundred seventy-three airplanes flew 107,584 miles in 1097 flying hours; 1360 automobiles traveled 101,827 miles and 85 boats went 2,472 miles in making the survey. Alaska, Canada, Newfoundland, the 48 States, and Mexico were covered.

The Air Force, Coast Guard, Army and Navy cooperated by transporting waterfowl biologists and observers whenever training plans coincided with the survey schedule.

Compilation of the results showed an 11 percent increase in the number of waterfowl observed on a Continental basis as compared with last year--6 percent above the 12-year average. The number of ducks observed was up eight percent; geese 18 percent and coots 31 percent.

The popular mallard held its own but is still 5 percent below the 12-year average and 22 percent below the peak levels reached in 1958; pintail and baldpate also remained about the same but the much sought black duck advanced somewhat to bring it 20 percent below the 12-year average and 38 percent below the peak reached in 1955. Redheads and canvasback ducks responded to protection by showing increases but the redhead duck is still 11 percent below the 12-year mark and the canvasback is down 32 percent. The ruddy duck is down 24 percent from the 12-year figure. Canada geese showed a 35 percent gain and both the Atlantic and Pacific brant showed substantial gains.

x x x