UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

Most 343-5634

For Release June 2, 1966

INTERIOR PROPOSES ARCHERY DEER SEASON FOR ARANSAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN TEXAS

A special bow-and-arrow season to reduce a mushrooming whitetailed deer population on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas has been proposed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau Director John S. Gottschalk announced today.

Because the refuge is in Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties which have no archery deer seasons, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission is being asked to work with the Bureau to establish the special season.

In announcing the proposal, Director Gottschalk said that during the past 20 years, the State has live-trapped more than 13,000 deer on the Federal area for transplanting. But despite this program, there are an estimated 10,000 deer over-browsing the refuge.

"With the 1966 fawns added, probably 14,000 deer will be roaming the refuge before hunting season," Gottschalk added. "Deer must be reduced on the Aransas refuge or the hungry animals will do even more damage to the range before starving."

He emphasized that safety of the rare whooping cranes which winter on the refuge will come first, but "we feel that archery hunting can provide outdoor recreation, aid in control of the deer herd, and not endanger the whoopers in any way."

Under the Bureau proposal, the refuge would be opened October 1, 1966, for a 31-day archery season. When the first whooper is sighted, hunting would be restricted to areas not used by the birds. Since the early contingent of cranes arrives from its Canadian nesting grounds about October 21, the entire refuge would be open for approximately three weeks. Hunting would still be permitted on a sizable area after the birds arrive.

The Bureau's proposal will be presented at a public hearing held by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, scheduled for 8 o'clock the evening of June 9 in Rockport. The Parks and Wildlife Commission will then consider the proposal at its July meeting.

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