

## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIRD PROTECTION.

YOUR Committee on Bird Protection has considerable to report on trends affecting bird status and on constructive legislation.

No reports of serious nature of the destruction of bird life other than the continued drought have come to our attention. Perhaps emergency activities have drawn attention away from the usual competitive campaigns waged against hawks and owls. At any rate there appears to have been less publicity given such campaigns during the past year. We shall continue to be alert to discourage such activities.

Meanwhile, better protection for Hawks and Owls was secured in New York where the legislature provided protection for five beneficial Hawks and in New Jersey where protection was extended to the Duck Hawk. The National Association of Audubon Societies on April 9, 1934, passed strong resolutions favoring protection of Hawks and Owls and reported that a publication on the Hawks of North America treating of their distinguishing characteristics and feeding habits was under preparation as a result of a patron's contribution. The Annual Report of the Hawk and Owl Society indicates aggressive work. A summary of State laws relating to birds of prey given in the report shows that none, or very limited, protection is afforded Hawks in twenty-five states. With hardly half of the states on the right side of the ledger there is room for plenty of work in order to reach the goal.

Upland game birds may in some places show a favorable trend but the depletion of Ruffed Grouse which began last year is in full swing.

The status of the Trumpeter Swan remains favorable. A special publicity campaign was made this Fall by the National Park Service to secure the cooperation of Montana and Idaho hunters in protecting this species.

A recently published report relating to duck sickness indicates progress in the solution of this baffling problem.

Recognizing the need of general public education regarding the economic and esthetic values pertaining to birds, we are forced again to call attention to lessened activity of this type due to the depression. Nature studies have been curtailed in many schools. Every bird student must lend his support locally to an insistent demand for reinstatement and increased support of nature education.

Additional evidence that lighthouses still constitute a menace to bird life comes from the coast of Maine. Mr. Arthur Stupka, Park Naturalist of Acadia National Park, having solicited the aid of fifteen lighthousekeepers along a coast line of a hundred miles, has compiled records from the dead

birds sent in. Of 32 birds meeting death at Mt. Desert Lighthouse on May 5-7, 1934, 23 were Savannah Sparrows, 4 Yellow Palm Warblers, 2 Myrtle Warblers and one each of Chimney Swift, Swamp Sparrow, and Hermit Thrush. A collection made on May 15-17 netted only 12 with two each of Savannah Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow and one each of Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Leach's Petrel, Hermit Thrush, Flicker, Purple Finch and Northern Phalarope. On May 17, Libby Islands Lighthouse yielded one each of five different kinds of warblers and a Swamp Sparrow. Returns from other lighthouses were negligible.

We are glad to report that for some unknown reason losses of bird life at the Washington Monument the past year have been less than in previous years. The scaffolding recently erected around the monument may have some effect on the usual losses during the present Fall migration.

Bird banding continues to bring useful data on migration which gives a dependable basis for protective legislation and administration.

As an offset to destructive tendencies and adverse conditions, including the drought, the past year has seen many advances along conservation lines with the Government outlining long time plans and expending unusual sums for the improvement of wildlife conditions. The Congress passed the duck stamp law assuring a federal income for use by the Biological Survey in establishing waterfowl sanctuaries.

Under the Civil Works Program many a marsh was restored and made fit for waterfowl. The Emergency Conservation Work camps have improved streams, fields and forests to bring back game and instituted helpful erosion control. Early criticism of cleanup activities has lessened as it became evident that mistakes were corrected and wildlife restoration programs came to light. The National Park Service, anxious to see that no emergency activities injured habitats for wildlife, appointed fifteen naturalist foremen to check work done and to advise on methods of improving conditions for wildlife. Typical of improvement activities are the "tanks" constructed in the more arid portions of Grand Canyon National Park which are designed to catch and hold rain water for the benefit of animal and bird life, and the improvement of Roaches Run along the Mt. Vernon Highway to make a suitable refuge for ducks and shorebirds. The latter project not only involved labor from a nearby E. C. W. Camp but the expenditure of a considerable sum to fence a portion of the area against poachers.

Public Works funds have likewise furnished a long awaited opportunity to acquire refuge areas and improve conditions in many places. A series of projects will result in checking pollution of rivers and bays with consequent improvement for waterfowl.

The following advances have been made in the prevention of oil pollution:

- (1) All new American warships are being equipped with oil separators.
- (2) The need for international action on oil pollution has been placed before the League of Nations by the British Government.

Perhaps the most permanent accomplishment will come from studies and activities connected with land utilization. The idea that some lands are better utilized as game breeding grounds and refuges has gained a firm foothold as we have noted the adverse results of the drainage of marshes. With this idea established we may now look forward to the saving of many threatened areas and the restoration of the more important ones that have been destroyed by commercial incentive. The report on National Resources, now in preparation, will help draw attention to large-scale planning for restoration of suitable breeding and feeding grounds of wildlife.

Of interest to every bird protectionist is the reorganization of the U. S. Biological Survey in order that more effective service may be rendered. Under new leadership a revised program has been instituted. The plan involves the building of the Survey into a better consolidated technical research and wildlife management bureau with an improved field organization, more emphasis on police work, more on education. About three times as many law enforcement officers are to be employed and they will constitute a mobile force. Major units are entitled Game Management Division and Wildlife Research Division. A fund of several million dollars also has been allocated to the Bureau from emergency funds to start the restoration program suggested by the President's Special Committee on Wildlife Restoration and we can look forward, therefore, to wide extension of refuge and breeding areas for wildfowl.

The annual kill of game birds by hunters continues to present one of the most serious problems facing conservationists. It is somewhat encouraging to note that the bag limits on certain imperiled species of ducks have this year been reduced, but all conservationists should note the increasing length of the list of imperiled species, indicating that effective protection is lagging in spite of protective efforts. The species for which the bag limit was reduced this year include the canvasback, redhead, both scaups, ringneck, green-winged teal, cinnamon teal, shoveller, and gadwall, and total protection is given wood, ruddy, and bufflehead ducks, Ross' goose, both swans, and brant in the Atlantic seacoast region.

The outstanding menace of baiting continues, though the baiting of mourning doves has been prohibited and steps have been taken to regulate the practice as regards waterfowl. Shooting waterfowl, on baited premises, is allowed now only under permit issued without charge by the Bureau of Biological Survey and revocable by the Secretary of Agriculture. Under these permits the birds may not be shot after 3 p. m. nor while resting on

water or land, and each permittee must agree to keep an accurate record and report to the Biological Survey the number of persons shooting on the premises and of the species and number of each species killed, kinds of food employed, and other statistics. It is anticipated that these data will allow a better appraisal of the effect of baiting on waterfowl. Conservationists will hope, and should exert their influence toward the end, that the temporizing action of this year is the first step toward meeting the baiting problem adequately.

The use of live decoys, the subject of previous recommendations of your committee, is still permitted under the Federal regulations. This disastrous practice, rivaling the abuses of baiting, demands the strongest possible opposition of all conservationists.

As a measure to reduce the number of waterfowl killed this year, the number of shooting days were reduced to 30, but unfortunately this action was accompanied by a rest-day provision permitting each State to select its shooting days and spread them over a period that in some States is as long as 15 weeks. All who have the welfare of wildlife at heart will view with alarm the appearance and spread of this new type of game law, known as the staggered system. Its application to waterfowl hunting is especially deplorable, but it is also being adopted by States in their regulation of the hunting of other species. Pennsylvania has adopted it for the second year, providing for shooting of grouse, quail, ringneck pheasants, and wild turkeys on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, plus holidays. The rest-day system, of days of rest alternating with days of shooting, has often been used as a device for increasing the kill, its effect on the game being a resultant taming in periods of no shooting, worst when accentuated by baiting. This practice must be condemned.

Though we rejoice at the tangible evidences of progress summarized in the early parts of our report, we deplore the continuing adverse conditions affecting our bird fauna and therefore urge each member of the American Ornithologists' Union to give heed to the evidence of danger and give increased individual support to the cause of bird protection in order that such gains as are herein enumerated may be consolidated.

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