

CONSERVATION NOTES

BY FRANCIS H. ALLEN

THE United States Bureau of Fisheries, which was recently transferred to the Department of the Interior, has now been consolidated with the Biological Survey under the name of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The 'Service' will be administered by a Director and two Assistant Directors. Many ornithologists who have co-operated with the Biological Survey for years in one way or another and who have found it in general worthy of their confidence will regret the change of name, but it is hoped and believed that the Chief of the Survey, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, will become the Director of the consolidated bureau. It seems possible at this time of writing that Congress, when approving the Executive order, may adopt some such name for it as 'National Wildlife Service.'

NEARLY fifty thousand acres of land—and water—have recently been added to twenty existing wildlife refuges administered by the (former) Biological Survey. The largest addition is 20,323 acres to the Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge in Oregon, and 14,751 acres are added to the Malheur Migratory Bird Refuge in the same State.

THE planting of more than eleven thousand miles of windbreaks, including some 125,000,000 trees, under Forest Service supervision in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas has resulted in a large increase in the numbers of birds and birds' nests in those areas, according to information given out by the Department of Agriculture.

THE Biological Survey's investigations of reports of the starvation of waterfowl in the recent severe winter indicate that such reports are unfounded, the reported deaths being always found to be due to other causes, chief among which is lead-poisoning. The accumulation of shot in areas that have long been shot over is a very serious menace that is engaging the attention of experts. The undesirability of turning old shooting-grounds into refuges becomes evident, since the birds gather there in numbers and ingest lethal quantities of the shot with which the bottoms of the ponds and lakes are liberally sprinkled. The prohibition of baiting, by preventing the accumulation of shot in restricted areas, is reducing the lead-poisoning danger, of course, and that is one good reason for retaining that regulation. Technicians are trying to perfect an alloy of lead and magnesium that will insure the disintegration of shot in contact with water.

THE proposed change of the name of the Department of the Interior to 'Conservation Department' will doubtless meet with general approval, even from those who did not approve of the transfer of the Biological Survey out of the Department of Agriculture.

CONGRESSIONAL committees are, at the time of writing, considering two bills which it is to be hoped will have been killed before this number of 'The Auk' appears—one introduced by Senator Lucas of Illinois to permit the baiting of waterfowl under certain conditions and one introduced by Representative Holmes of Massachusetts permitting the use of live decoys. Apart from the merits and demerits of these bills—and most conservationists will consider them pernicious—the passage of either of them would set a dangerous precedent by taking to that extent the power of regulation of the killing of migratory birds out of the hands of the government bureau that knows the conditions that affect them and can act quickly when action is needed. The Wildlife Service should not be hampered by dictation from outside in matters of this kind.