

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Recent Federal Reports on Wildlife Conservation

Two reports of major importance on the progress of wildlife conservation in the United States have been published recently. These reports are (1) "The Status of Wildlife in the United States, Report of the Special Committee on the Conservation of Wildlife Resources," Senate Report No. 1203, 76th Congress, 3rd Session (Gov. Printing Office, Wash., 1940: 457 pp., 74 pls.) and (2) "Conservation of Wildlife, Hearings Before the Select Committee on Conservation of Wildlife Resources," House of Representatives, 76th Congress, 3rd Session (Gov. Printing Office, Wash., 1940: 429 pp., map). These reports present a comprehensive picture of what is being done and what needs to be done for wildlife in the United States.

The outstanding element in both publications is the emphasis placed on the importance of obtaining wildlife conservation on farm land. The Senate Report includes a list and discussion of subjects investigated by the Senate Wildlife Committee, the legislation enacted since the organization of the Committee, and the text of federal laws relating to the protection of wildlife. Reports on the wildlife programs of the eleven federal agencies make up the bulk of the publication.

Under the heading "Future Needs of the Conservation Program," in the report of the Biological Survey, it is stated:

"The most pressing need in the national movement to restore the Nation's wildlife resources is an effective means of reaching the owners and users of land to advise them of the many relatively simple and inexpensive practices which will restore environment conducive to increased wildlife populations."

"Wildlife is an organic resource, a product of the soil, inseparable from the land. It must depend on the land for its nourishment, its protection, and its very existence. On the other hand, the earth must have its protective cover of trees, shrubs, and grasses to check erosion and to return organic substances to the soil."

"Fortunately, practices designed to encourage wildlife production invariably conserve soil and water resources and build back some of the fertility wasted through unwise agricultural practices." . . .

E. G. Holt of the Soil Conservation Service pointed out a similar approach in his report, as follows:

"Eighty-five percent of the land of the United States is used for agricultural purposes, including grazing. Eighty-five percent of all hunting takes place on agricultural land, and on it 70 percent of the wild fur crop is caught by farm boys. Obviously, the pattern of use developed on agricultural land is of paramount importance to wildlife, and it is clear that unless plans for wildlife are developed as part of the plans for agriculture, most wildlife produced in the country will be largely accidental."

What has been emphasized for game conservation in these reports is true largely for all forms of wildlife. To facilitate the carrying out of conservation activities on farm land, an extension program for wildlife is advocated by the Biological Survey in their report.

The report to the House of Representatives includes the testimony of the various government agencies dealing with wildlife, relative to what they are doing and what needs to be done. In addition, testimony of State Game and Fish Commissioners from twenty-two states was presented.

Included in the hearings was a report of fundamental importance in wildlife conservation upon which any sound plan for future programs dealing with private land must be based. This report is the result of a joint study made by the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, entitled "An Economic Study of Wildlife as a Supplementary Farm Enterprise." It is no doubt the most thorough analysis of the wildlife conservation problem as it

relates to private land that has ever been presented. A few highlights from the report follow:

"Under present conditions of agricultural utilization of land and of wildlife production and utilization, there is little or no opportunity for farmers on good land to make wildlife a profitable supplementary farm enterprise, because farmers on such land are finding that producing wildlife on a sustained yield basis and allowing outsiders to harvest it costs them more than hunters and trappers are willing to pay for hunting and trapping privileges. However, when esthetic and recreational aspects are considered, properly controlled wildlife production and utilization can be made worth while on most farm land as it assists in making the farm and community a better place to live and it can often make use of otherwise waste land." . . .

"Although wildlife continually acts as a check on insect and rodent pests and is known to have helped in repelling pest outbreaks locally, it seldom acts as a complete control of a pest on farm land." . . .

"All of this would indicate that *the chief values of wildlife* to the community, state, or federal government* are its contributions as a foundation for various industries, its stimulus to business, and its contribution in providing esthetic, recreational, and social outlets for the people and *not its direct monetary return to the individuals or to the state*. Its chief value to the individual, whether farmer, hunter, or businessman, is the stimulus it gives his business by attracting people to his community and the esthetic, recreational, and social enjoyment he gets out of it." . . .

"The retirement of submarginal farm land by public purchase will not greatly increase wildlife or the opportunities for its enjoyment for the nation as a whole, because the use made of submarginal land in farms is generally much better than average for wildlife production and utilization, while the grazing, recreational, and residential uses to which much of the retired submarginal farm land is expected to be put in certain areas are adverse to wildlife and its utilization." . . .

". . . The wildlife user must become willing to pay an increased amount for his use of wildlife and the farmer must be willing to accept a large part of his remuneration for his efforts on behalf of wildlife in the form of such intangibles as recreational, aesthetic, and social enjoyment."

"The study indicates the need for a scientific, coordinated conservation program that will integrate wildlife production and utilization into all land-use and soil-conservation programs; and for recognizing the rights of the individual landowner as well as the rights of the wildlife user in all wildlife conservation programs."—Charles A. Dambach.

Pole-traps

The Oregon Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit has publicly advocated pole-trapping of "The great horned owl and hawks" in the interest of game management, with the further comment that "If* padded jaws are used and the traps are tended regularly, beneficial birds can be released unharmed" (see p. 11 of "Suggestions on Management of Small Game in Oregon," Arthur S. Einarson, *Ore. Exper. Sta. Circ.*, 140, Jan., 1941).

The latter quotation permits the clear inference that any concern for "beneficial birds" is secondary, an inexcusable slip. The whole treatment of raptor control shows a complete disregard of any interest in wildlife other than the hunters', and of the trends of modern studies of predation. One may disagree with the interpretations of the results of these studies, but no serious treatment of predation can afford to ignore them. It is unfortunate that this circular, published primarily for people with little knowledge of the complexities of predation, should so thoroughly do so; it is a reflection on its sponsors that a blanket recommendation of pole-trapping is given instead.—F. N. H.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE,
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* Italics by the reviewer.