

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Canada Goose Hunting at Horseshoe Lake

At its October meeting the Illinois Conservation Council conducted a symposium on a subject of great concern to conservationists generally—the Canada Goose situation at Horseshoe Lake, Illinois. Speakers were Livingston Osborne, Director of the Illinois Conservation Department; Albert M. Day, Assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service; Leo K. Couch, Assistant Chief of the Division of Wildlife Research of the same agency; and William H. Elder, of the Illinois Natural History Survey and the University of Chicago. The salient points discussed by the speakers are here summarized.

Since 1927, when Illinois established the Horseshoe Lake Refuge, thousands of Canada Geese that formerly wintered over a large area along the Mississippi River and the Gulf coast have gradually concentrated in this one small spot at the southern tip of Illinois. This concentration has made them increasingly vulnerable to hunting. The lake is so small that geese flying to or from it necessarily come within easy range of the pits on the surrounding, privately-owned farm lands, which for years have been leased on a \$10 per day per hunter basis.

Under this system of commercialized hunting the kill became excessively high, and it was clear that the decimation at this one point was having a serious effect upon the Canada Goose population of the entire Mississippi Flyway. In 1941, therefore, the Fish and Wildlife Service established special restrictions in Alexander County, hoping to reduce the total kill at Horseshoe Lake. These measures appeared to be successful in 1941 and 1942—fewer than 8,000 geese were taken each year in contrast with approximately 17,000 and 13,000 respectively in 1939 and 1940. In 1943, however, the kill rose to 14,000, and the implications of the excessive kill at this one point were shown when it was discovered that along the Louisiana coast the numbers of Canada Geese had dropped from the more than 100,000 recorded a few years ago to only 16,000. It was obvious that more drastic restrictions were necessary. The Fish and Wildlife Service with full cooperation from the Illinois Conservation Department, is taking steps to ensure that the kill at Horseshoe Lake in 1944 shall not exceed 6,000 geese.

The problem is complicated by the commercialization of hunting, which has caused an inflation of the value of the surrounding land. One landowner is reported to have received \$18,000 (far more than the income from agricultural products of his land) from hunting fees in 1943. These inflated values have blocked the efforts of the state to buy more land and increase the size of the refuge.

Intensive research on the problem at Horseshoe Lake has been conducted by members of the Illinois Natural History Survey, and studies of the breeding and wintering of Mississippi Valley geese have been made by Robert Smith of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Details of these investigations will undoubtedly be published later, but meanwhile conservationists will be watching with interest the efforts of the state of Illinois and the Fish and Wildlife Service to keep the kill of this group of Canada Geese within proper bounds.—Gustav Swanson.

Trumpeter Swan

Mrs. C. N. Edge, Chairman of the Emergency Conservation Committee, reported that the plan of that committee to raise Trumpeter Swans in captivity has been adopted by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project is under the direction of Jean Delacour.

At the end of August, 20 cygnets had been captured and transported from Red Rock Lake, Montana, to Malheur Lake, Oregon, where they will be raised in pens. At Red Rock Lake it was observed that many cygnets were hatched so late in the season that they were not yet able to care for themselves when cold weather set in and the lake froze.—C.A.D.

Machias Seal Island Bird Sanctuary

The colony of Atlantic Puffins nesting on Machias Seal Island, a small remote island in extreme southwestern New Brunswick, on the north side of the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, has attained some prominence in ornithological literature, for it has long been the largest nesting colony of Puffins on the Atlantic coast of North America south of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This colony of Puffins has increased in recent years and now contains a thousand or more breeding birds.

In order to ensure adequate protection for this particularly interesting colony and for other migratory birds nesting on Machias Seal Island, the Government of Canada, with the concurrence of the appropriate authorities of the Province of New Brunswick, adopted on April 17, 1944, an Order in Council making the island and the waters around it a bird sanctuary under authority of the Dominion statute known as The Migratory Birds Convention Act.

Ornithologists and bird lovers are free to visit Machias Seal Island to observe and photograph its seabirds, but they are expected to recognize its sanctuary status and to co-operate fully in protecting the birds of the island from harm.—Harrison F. Lewis.

Conservation Education

The state of Illinois has taken a very progressive step in its efforts to teach conservation to sportsmen. In October of this year 25 leading sportsmen of the state attended a 3-day school arranged for their benefit. The course of study was presented by the technical personnel of the Illinois Natural History Survey, Cook County Forest Preserve, U. S. Soil Conservation Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Illinois Coal Strippers' Association. Continuation of this school should go far toward developing a better understanding between the sportsman and the naturalist on conservation problems. In addition, the state has conducted a course of study for conservation officers and for a boy and a girl from each county. Plans are being made for a 3-week training period for 100 school teachers.

North American Wildlife Conference

The tenth North American Wildlife Conference is scheduled for February 26, 27, and 28, 1945, at the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City. There will be separate technical sections under the following titles:

- Production and Marketing Fur
- Forest and Wildlife
- Crop-lands and Wildlife
- Educational Forum
- Range-lands and Wildlife
- Recent Developments in Wildlife Research
- Commercial Fisheries
- Marshwater and Wildlife
- Parks, Refuges, Urban Lands, and Wildlife
- Waterfowl Forum

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Charles A. Dambach, *Chairman*