

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Crop Protection without Wildlife Destruction

Margaret M. Nice has recently called our attention to the development of a device to frighten wild ducks from grain fields. Recurrent serious damage to corn and grain in the Platte River Valley in Colorado and Nebraska, to wheat and barley in the Dakotas, and rice in California and Texas, has necessitated control measures such as, for example, the lengthened duck-hunting season and liberalized bag-limit of 1944.

The new device, developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Research Laboratory at Denver, employs an electric beacon so regulated that it rotates a beam of light over the area to be protected. A standard automobile spotlight, with clear glass lens and 50-candlepower bulb, is used as the source of light. Rotation power is furnished by a 6-volt phonograph motor operated from a storage battery or by another type of motor operating on 115-volt alternating current.

Three leaflets issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service (BS-13, August 1935; BS-149, November 1939; Wildlife Leaflet 256, June 1944) describe the mechanism in detail and discuss the results of its use. As a means of minimizing crop damage by wildlife, this seems far more satisfactory than the customary "shoot," the use of poison, or the establishment of bounties.—C.A.D.

Protection for Hawks and Owls in Minnesota

In 1903, the Minnesota Legislature adopted the A.O.U. "model law" for the protection of non-game birds (including most of the hawks and owls); in 1925, this act was rescinded, and legal protection was withdrawn from all hawks and owls. Efforts were then made from time to time to persuade the Legislature to restore protection but were thwarted by a few groups actively supporting an all-embracing "vermin control." This year, however, the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union organized a Bird Protection Committee, with W. J. Breckenridge as chairman, which, supported by the Minnesota Conservation Federation, asked the Legislature to provide protection for most species of hawks and owls. As a result, the new Minnesota game and fish code protects all hawks and owls except the Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk, the Sharp-shinned Hawk, and the Great Horned Owl.—Gustav Swanson.

Revival of the Bounty Question

The present high population of red and gray foxes (*Vulpes fulva* and *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) in the north-central and eastern states has resulted in renewed demands from farmers and sportsmen that fox bounties be established or—where they are already in effect—increased.

Apparently in an effort to ward off unwise pressure for a fox bounty, the state conservation departments of New York and Michigan have recently prepared for distribution popular bulletins dealing with the fox problem. The Conservation Department of Ohio, which has a fox-bounty law already before its legislature, is contemplating a similar publication. The New York bulletin, "The Fox in New York," by Clayton B. Seagears is a well-illustrated and carefully documented report on the life history, abundance, economic importance, and management of both red and gray foxes in that state. The demand for this publication quickly exhausted the first edition, and a second edition is now planned to meet more than 3,000 unfilled requests. The Michigan publication, "The Red Fox, Friend or Foe," by Donald W. Douglass and G. W. Bradt, is also well written and contains a candid discussion of the bounty system.

The current issue of the Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin (Vol. 10, No. 4) carries a discussion of the fox problem in an article, "Deer, Wolves, Foxes and Pheasants," by Aldo Leopold.—C.A.D.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
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