

000,000 (145,000,000 before the 1943 hunting season), according to Fish and Wildlife Service estimates. A new drought has begun. Despite the extensive water restoration program of the Canadian government and the smaller one of Ducks Unlimited, last winter the population was estimated at 80,000,000 at the close of the hunting season. And the drought has not yet been broken.

2. It is estimated that 70 to 80 per cent of the ducks and geese breed north of the United States. It follows that waterfowl management here cannot quickly improve breeding success to any marked degree. It can, and must, influence the factors causing destruction. The restoration of feeding and resting areas along the several migration routes, and of wintering grounds, are essential parts of this program. Although the northern breeding grounds offer a more spectacular problem, their complete restoration could not save a population which had no place in which to winter.

3. The hunters' kill must be governed by the size of the waterfowl population. With a reasonably large breeding stock to start with, if breeding success can be raised or migration- and wintering-losses lowered, the hunters' kill can safely be increased: such was the case between 1935 and 1944. Breeding success has been hard hit by drought. It is the *total* of all losses that determines how many will return to breed next year: of these, the hunters' kill can be lowered most quickly and surely. Hunting restrictions were increased this year.

4. When the rains come again, there must be breeding stock enough to make use of the improved circumstances. It takes ducks to produce ducks.

Some may argue that since drought has reduced the continental carrying capacity for waterfowl, there is a large surplus of doomed birds which may as well be harvested; or that, on the theory of flyway segregation, certain states should be permitted much larger kills than others. Waterfowl ecology is still too little understood to allow such proposals to be taken seriously. Local concentrations—"Plenty of ducks on my old hunting ground; what's all this talk of a shortage?"—may confuse the issue. During the next few years there will be no easy way to an understanding of the situation, and no simple remedy for it. The conservative course will be to work harder than ever on the known ways of increasing the population, to try harder than ever to find new ones, and to make certain that there will be enough breeding stock when the marshes are filled again.

These are the hard facts of the situation. If they are lost sight of, waterfowl may fall back to the low of 1934. They are about half way there already.—F.N.H.

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