



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Office of the Secretary  
Press Service



RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION, TUESDAY MORNING DECEMBER 2, 1924:

VARIETY OF WORK DONE  
BY BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

Hearty cooperation of States, local organizations, and individuals with the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has made possible marked progress in the control of the various predatory animals and rodent pests which are seriously injurious to agriculture, including many kinds of crops, horticulture, forestry, and stock growing on the western ranges. Well-organized campaigns under the leadership of bureau representatives have resulted. During the year ending June 30, 1924, covered in the annual report of the chief of the Biological Survey, just issued, work was conducted in 19 of the western States and in several eastern States. Federal funds amounting to \$287,951.81 were used for the destruction of predatory animals, and \$159,714.61 for the control of rodents. These sums were augmented by cooperative funds in the States totaling \$901,587.

The general distribution and abundance of livestock, especially in the Western States, together with widespread crop production, furnishes so dependable a food supply for both predatory animals and harmful rodents that, without organized control work, the aggregate losses from these pests would be enormous.

Coyotes probably destroy more domestic animals and game than any other single predatory pest. They are exceedingly prolific, and also travel great distances to get food. Constant control work is necessary for the reduction of their numbers. This has been accomplished effectively in many sections by active campaigns against them, with a marked decrease in losses of sheep and livestock, and a very notable increase in game. The spread of rabies by coyotes has been promptly checked, especially in Colorado.

While relatively few big wolves remain in the West, wolves from northern Mexico, Canada, and Alaska continue to invade the United States, and

constitute a problem to be handled by international cooperation. Mountain lions, bobcats, and lynxes have also been destroyed in great numbers.

Large-scale operations against rodent pests of all kinds, but particularly prairie dogs, ground squirrels, pocket gophers, rats, and mice, have been greatly facilitated by cooperation with the extension forces, both State and Federal, and with other bureaus and departments. Educational work done by the Biological Survey to show the public that rats can be eliminated at a reasonable cost has been successful, as evidenced by appeals from 45 States for aid in controlling these pests. More or less extensive campaigns have been organized in 22 States.

Among the interesting aspects of the work of the Food Habits Research Division was an investigation into the death of a number of canvasback ducks in Chesapeake Bay, Md., from phosphorous poisoning. In Louisiana lead poisoning due to hunting was found to cause heavy mortality among wild ducks. At the close of the year an investigation of the alleged destruction of birds by poisoning operations in cotton fields was in progress. Another survey carried on by this branch of the bureau resulted in showing that laughing gulls in Virginia were guiltless of depredations credited to them, and that no change in the protective status of this bird was warranted. The regular work of the division included surveys of numerous lakes and marshes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, used as feeding grounds of migratory game birds. The contents of 1,785 bird stomachs and over 200 owl pellets were examined.

The technical scientific investigations of the bureau have continued throughout the year. A large number of specimens of birds and mammals have been submitted for comparison and identification by scientific or educational institutions from all parts of the country. In addition the Division of Biological Investigations has received a large number of applications from other governmental departments or bureaus, State officials, scientific or educational institutions, and others for technical information on the wild life, mammal, and other vertebrate life of North America. The Biological Survey is being looked upon by the public as well as the Government service, as a dependable source of information on the technical characteristics of various species, and also their habits, distribution, and economic relation.

With the establishment of the new Division of Fur Resources, July 1, 1924, the bureau is now in a position to give closer consideration and assistance to the rapidly developing fur industry in this country and in Alaska. Cooperation with the fur trade has been highly satisfactory. In connection with fur farming, the improvement of breeding, feeding, and handling fur animals is being studied. Aid has been given to the reindeer industry in Alaska through investigations of the diseases and parasites of reindeer. Better methods of herd management and of marketing reindeer meat have been urged.

The Biological Survey's work is one of conservation, and its representatives have taken part in various conferences relating to the conservation of wild life, urging legislative and other measures that would promote protection. Prevention of unnecessary drainage of breeding places for wild fowl and the restoration of places that have been unwisely drained in the past have been some of the steps taken in this direction. The Biological Survey is charged with the maintenance and supervision of the various big game preserves and bird refuges, and reports satisfactory conditions on most of these. The administration of the migratory bird treaty act has resulted in 591 convictions, and the collection of \$12,318.25 in fines, including a number of cases involving hunting wild fowl from airplanes. The terrifying effect of airplanes on wild fowl is so great that if any general use should be made of them the result would be disastrous.

The importation of foreign birds and mammals is supervised by the Biological Survey to prevent the entrance of animal diseases and parasites, and of undesirable species. The most notable mammal entering the country under permit of the bureau during the year was a gorilla, which arrived in New York in April. Over 28,000 Mexican quail were imported for stocking game preserves, and about 4,000 Hungarian partridges, but the total importations of birds do not yet equal those brought in during 1913.

Copies of the report may be had while the supply lasts, by applying to the United States Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.