

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate.

July 15, 1930.

PLAN ANNUAL WATERFOWL CENSUS
BASED ON KILL OF BANDED BIRDS

The Bureau of Biological Survey now offers a new method for estimating the numbers of wild fowl present in North America in any season. This appears in a circular, "Calculating Waterfowl Abundance on the Basis of Banding Returns," just issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The author, Frederick C. Lincoln, associate biologist, bases his estimates on the relation that exists between the number of ducks banded each year and the number of these banded ducks killed in the next hunting season.

Mr. Lincoln's method is based on the assumption that, "given a fairly accurate statement showing the number of wild ducks killed in North America in any one season, then the total number of ducks present on the continent for that season may be estimated by a percentage computation, based upon the relation that the total number of banded ducks killed during their first season as band carriers bears to the total number banded."

"In order to test the theory," says Mr. Lincoln, "it would be necessary to obtain the whole-hearted cooperation of clubs and individual sportsmen in reporting their annual bags. Such figures never would be complete, as many birds would be killed and not reported for one reason or another, but, as a

compensating factor, many banded ducks are doubtless killed that are not recovered or for various reasons are not reported. If these two missing factors may be considered to balance each other, the figures obtained would be sufficiently accurate, for practical purposes, to determine the approximate annual fluctuation in the numerical strength of North American waterfowl owing to shooting.

"To assume a case: If in one season 5,000 ducks were banded and yielded 600 first-season returns, or 12 per cent, and if in that same season the number of ducks killed and reported by sportsmen were about 5,000,000, then 5,000,000 would be equivalent to approximately 12 per cent of the waterfowl population of 42,000,000 for that year. To assume further: if in the following season, another 5,000 ducks were banded, and should again yield about 600 first-season return records, but a total kill of 500,000 birds fewer, then the total duck population for that year would be about 37,500,000, or an indicated decrease of 4,500,000 in the continental waterfowl population.

"Although such figures would only be approximations, they would have merit because they would be based on facts that appear to stand in a definite relationship to each other. With the continuance of the banding work under the direction of the Biological Survey and with the resulting increase in comparable data, it should be possible ultimately to arrive at an average percentage that would serve as a standard, and in which the margin of error would be reduced to a negligible quantity."

Copies of Circular 118-C may be obtained by applying to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.