

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRESS SERVICE



Release - Immediate.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

August 14, 1933.

BRANT NUMBERS REDUCED BY EELGRASS SHORTAGE

Abundance of brant on the Atlantic Coast has been critically reduced, reports the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture. This diminution, the bureau finds, is chargeable in part to the eelgrass shortage throughout this region. Judging from the brant returning from the Arctic breeding grounds, the investigators conclude that few young brant have been reared during either of the last two summers.

Eelgrass, the principal food of the brant, explains the bureau, died out almost completely in many areas along the Atlantic Coast from southern North Carolina to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, and serious shortages occurred in other areas. The plant this year, says the Biological Survey, shows an encouraging improvement in the coastal region of North Carolina, but its condition in the more northern sections is growing steadily worse, or, at best, shows only local improvement. In some sections where a seemingly healthy crop of seedlings appeared early in spring the investigators later found that the plants had died back again.

Because eelgrass bears an important relation to many other forms of marine life along the coast the bureau considers the catastrophe to the plant of great importance. Besides being the principal food of brant, eelgrass is an important food for Canada geese and other waterfowl. It is the basis of subsistence for mollusk, crustacean, and fish life, and is also an article of commerce.

Charged with protection of waterfowl in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty between the United States and Great Britain, the Biological Survey and the Canadian National Parks Branch have therefore been keeping close watch of conditions affecting this food supply for the birds. Studies by these agencies indicate that a bacterial disease is chiefly responsible for the shortage.

-----T-----

331-34