



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



RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
SEPTEMBER 23 (SATURDAY)

WASHINGTON, D. C.

SEP 22 1938

SAYS REDUCED KILLS ARE ONLY HOPE FOR BIRDS
AND THE SPORT OF WILDFOWLING

The only hope for the future of migratory game birds and the sport of wildfowling is in reducing the number of birds killed, W. C. Henderson, associate chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, declared in an address on "The Condition of Our Waterfowl," delivered before the International Association of Game, Fish, and Conservation Commissioners in Columbus, Ohio, on September 22.

"I am not speaking," said Mr. Henderson, "of a catastrophe far in the future but of a thing so imminent that it may be seen by most of us."

If the situation in 1934 is less favorable than in 1933, or even if it is only as good, we shall be forced, he predicted, to adopt further restrictions or the sport of wildfowling will be doomed. Necessary emergency measures, he assured the commissioners, will have the strong support of the Government to make them effective, and he appealed to all sportsmen for cooperation.

Mr. Henderson summarized observations made by biologists in the Northwest Plain States, the Prairie Provinces of Canada, and over a vast area to the north. According to these observations, he reported, pintails, mallards, and black ducks may be present in fair numbers on favorable concentration areas during migrations

this fall, but canvasbacks, redheads, scaups, blue-winged teal, and certain other ducks, it is expected, will be at an exceedingly low ebb.

Conditions, he said, especially those in the more northern areas, indicate that the shortage of these birds can not be charged mainly to drought, but that over-shooting has not left sufficient stocks to utilize the breeding possibilities. The species, he emphasized, have reached a point where they can not make full use even of the favorable areas that remain.

"Almost the only encouragement that can now be found in the migratory game bird situation," said Mr. Henderson, "is derived from the fact that at last the sportsmen in this country and in Canada are alarmed and are ready to support any action that may be necessary." He urged sportsmen to practice strict moderation in shooting and to see that the kill is made chiefly from the more abundant species. Every effort, he emphasized, should be made to spare the kinds that are now seriously reduced.

In reply to claims that gunners would not observe additional restrictions, Mr. Henderson declared that it would be most unflattering to the vast body of sincere sportsmen to imply that there does not exist a majority unselfish enough to support any measures, however drastic, that may be found necessary to save the ducks and geese. "I can not believe," he said, "that sportsmen will tolerate the evasion of emergency restrictive regulations by a few greedy individuals."

Refuge areas Mr. Henderson described as of primary importance to the future welfare of the birds, but he pointed out that they are of secondary interest in the present emergency. So also, he showed, the problem of increasing water areas will be a secondary issue until the birds have shown considerable increases in numbers. At present, he said, the value of refuge areas is to be measured more by their effectiveness in reducing the kill of wildfowl than by the extent to which they may increase the nesting and feeding grounds. The wild fowl of this country, he declared, can not await the development of relief measures that are slow in maturing or those that will require the expenditure of millions of dollars.