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ESTABLISH WILD-LIFE
DEMONSTRATION AREA ✓

Preparing to set landowners an example in wild-life restoration, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has decided to devote 800 acres on its Beltsville (Md.) Experiment Station to the development of wild-life resources and the demonstration of management practices. The Bureau of Biological Survey will be in charge.

Typical of areas on many farms, the tract comprises cultivated sections, abandoned crop lands, timber, and marshes. A small stream with several branches runs through the area. Already there are foxes, opossums, and raccoons; squirrels, rabbits, and other rodents on the tract. More than 50 species of birds nest there.

In treating this tract as a demonstration area the Biological Survey plans to construct two simple dams that will impound water for wild fowl and also for muskrats and beavers. Wild-life food plants found on the area will be encouraged, others have been planted, and studies will be made of other means for the restoration, increase, and conservation of the wild life of the region.

Basic Surveys Made

The Department in its program of demonstrating wild-life management is first appraising conditions on the area. Soil-cover (including cover for game) and soil surveys have been made, and a topographic survey is nearing completion. Results of these surveys are being recorded on maps.

The bureau is taking a census of the wild-life on the tract. Soon after the demonstration area was established, Arthur H. Howell, a naturalist of the Biological Survey, counted the birds. Based mainly on the songs of the males, his estimate showed that the breeding birds on these 800 acres include about 275 pairs of 51 species. In timber Mr. Howell noted 159 pairs of 28 species. In grassy fields he counted 38 pairs of 13 species. Slashings, he found, contained 42 pairs of 5 species; 20 pairs of 2 species were in swampy thickets; 12 pairs of 4 species in orchards or dooryards; and one pair in a marsh. Only one species of game bird has thus far been noted--4 pairs of bobwhites breeding in grassy fields.

Plan for Increase of Game Birds and Fur Animals

The bureau has planted lespedeza, soy beans, millet, and other food and cover plants to make the area more attractive for upland-game birds. Provision will also be made for propagating these birds in captivity for later release.

The two ponds for waterfowl to be created by building dams will be about a mile apart. The impounded water in each case, it is expected, will cover 18 acres.

By impounding water the Bureau will also furnish suitable surroundings for muskrats and beavers--valuable fur bearers that contribute to the income of farms where they are encouraged. At the site of one of the projected ponds, workers have planted willows to furnish food for beavers, and additional provisions will be made for improving the food supply for fur animals. The area will include units for the production of fur animals in captivity.

Entire Tract a Laboratory

The demonstration area, the Biological Survey points out, will also serve as a wild-life experiment station. The results, it is expected, will be of value not only to farmers undertaking game management, but also to Federal and State agencies in the administration of wild-life refuges. Specialists of the Bureau will experiment with various methods of game-management and will study the factors influencing the abundance of wild life--including predators, rodents, and diseases. Plans are being made for a central laboratory for detailed investigations, and provision will be made for keeping birds and animals under observation.

This tract, say officials of the Biological Survey, is typical of the areas on thousands of farms, and the Bureau intends to show how such a piece of land can be made of great value in furthering the national program of wild-life restoration.