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WATERFOWL FACE CRISIS;  
RESTORATION IMPERATIVE

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The waterfowl of America are facing a crisis, W. C. Henderson, associate chief of the U. S. Biological Survey, told the International Association of Game, Fish, and Conservation Commissioners at their annual meeting held in Montreal, Canada, September 10 and 11.

Last year, said Mr. Henderson, more birds were killed than were produced, and since then breeding conditions have shown no improvement. The drought of 1934 has been the severest ever recorded by the Weather Bureau, and its worst effects have been felt in the areas that formerly constituted important breeding grounds for many of the highly prized species of our wild ducks. Several naturalists of the Biological Survey studied conditions in Canada this season and each found the breeding stock there insufficient to occupy even the comparatively small areas still favorable for nesting.

Our waterfowl population has reached its lowest point in history, and when the reduced numbers make their way southward this fall they will find ponds and lakes dried up where formerly they could rest and feed. He predicted greater concentrations than ever on the remaining water areas and warned against a "real danger of overshooting even with the shortened season, the lowered bag limit on certain species, and the other restrictions that have been added for the protection of the birds."

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"During the hunting season this fall sportsmen should cooperate to keep the kill at the minimum. All unsportsmanlike practices should be frowned upon, and law-enforcement agencies should have the active support of all hunters. The annual kill must be reduced if we are to maintain an adequate breeding stock for our restoration program."

#### Restoration Program a Remedy

The restoration program, already under way, is an imperative response to the critical condition. Special measures have been adopted to insure the adequate enforcement of hunting regulations, and land is being acquired rapidly for the restoration of marsh and water areas that will provide future resting, feeding, and breeding grounds for the birds.

#### Crisis Revealed by Extensive Studies

Mr. Henderson's address, entitled "The Waterfowl Crisis," was based on extensive studies recently made by the Bureau of Biological Survey.

Last fall and winter, the Bureau assigned 12 experienced field men to important parts of the United States for 1 to 3 months each. Nine naturalists during the late spring and summer were sent to observe conditions on the nesting grounds. Special short investigations were made at a number of concentration points during the migration seasons. In addition members of the Bureau who are constantly in the field submitted many reports on conditions in their respective localities.

Many outside sources aid the Bureau in the study. Twenty-one of the more important bird-banding stations at strategic points made detailed reports. Six hundred volunteer observers throughout the United States and Canada, 100 of whom were members of the American Ornithologists' Union, also made reports. State game commissions, the Alaska Game Commission, the Canadian Government, and Provincial Governments also cooperated.

Sharp Decrease Indicated

"In the main," said Mr. Henderson, "the data from these various sources portray about the same picture--a sharp decrease in the numbers of waterfowl when the continent as a whole is considered, and when it is viewed in the light of even so short a period as 5 years. When the present population is compared with that of 25 or 30 years ago the contrast becomes astounding."

The Bureau's investigators estimated that drought eliminated about 100,000 square miles of the birds' breeding areas, but almost everywhere they found that the remaining desirable breeding territory was greatly underpopulated.

"Without exception," Mr. Henderson emphasized, "each naturalist who studied conditions in Canada found the breeding stock there insufficient to occupy the areas that are still favorable for nesting."