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FAVORITE WINTERING GROUND
OF CACKLING GOOSE BECOMES
FEDERAL WATERFOWL REFUGE

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Spalding Ranch, 5 miles south of Willows, Calif., one of the principal wintering places for geese and ducks using the Pacific flyway, has been bought by the U. S. Biological Survey and designated the Sacramento Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. For the last 15 years waterfowl hunting on the extensive marshlands of the ranch has been limited by the owners, and as a result large numbers of geese and ducks have been using the area.

Containing 10,775 acres, the Sacramento Refuge is small compared with some other sanctuaries being set up by the Biological Survey in the national program of waterfowl restoration. Yet officials of the Survey regard the new California area as important. It is strategically located in the Pacific flyway of waterfowl, they point out, and will also afford wintering grounds for some species in special need of protection.

Among the species that will thus benefit particularly by the establishment of the Sacramento Refuge is the cackling goose, or "cackler." This bird resembles the Canada goose, except that it is much smaller -- only slightly larger than the average mallard duck. Its wintering grounds are mainly in California, but most of the marshlands in this State that formerly attracted this goose have been drained. Today the new refuge and the Tule Lake Bird Refuge in northern California are its

favorite wintering grounds. Its breeding grounds are in northwestern Alaska, principally in the tundra country and the delta of the Yukon River.

Canada, lesser snow, Hutchins, and white-fronted geese also winter in large numbers on the refuge area. Ducks that winter there include pintails, widgeons, green-winged teal, spoonbills, mallards, and redheads. Cinnamon teal and mallards also nest on the refuge. Shore birds commonly seen on this area are killdeers, stilts, jacksnipe, and Wilson's phalarope.

Because the Sacramento Refuge is naturally attractive to waterfowl the Biological Survey plans little development work there. Marsh and hay lands used by the geese and ducks have a good supply of water. Small dams, dikes and levees will be constructed, however, to impound water from spring run-offs from higher areas. The ranch buildings will be remodeled for use in administering and maintaining the refuge.