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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Biological Survey

DIVISION OF INFORMATION

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1939

6 Million Big-game Animals
In Country, Survey Reveals

Biological Survey Reports Results of
Second Nation-wide Inventory

Nearly 6 million big-game animals are in the United States, according to the second nation-wide big-game inventory conducted by the Bureau of Biological Survey which was released today by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

Present figures, taken in December 1938, indicate an increase of 1 million big-game animals since 1937, when the first annual inventory was made, but the Biological Survey stressed the fact that apparent increases or decreases in numbers of various species may actually indicate an improvement in counting and estimating technique rather than a change in animal populations.

Estimates are still far from satisfactory, Survey officials said, and no claim is made for the detailed accuracy of the figures.

The inventory was conducted with the cooperation of the National Park Service, the Division of Grazing, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Forest Service, State game departments, and other public and private agencies. The value of the inventory, it was explained, is to show trends in populations and the distribution of animals. This knowledge is invaluable for successful management of the species.

Included in the survey were the deer, elk, moose, antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, peccary, caribou, bear, buffalo, and the exotic European wild boar. Excepting buffaloes, the count did not include animals in captivity.

Deer account for more than 5-1/3 million of the 6 million big-game animals reported this year. Michigan, Pennsylvania, and California, in that order, lead all States in the number of big-game animals within their boundaries and also have the greatest number of deer. Michigan has 1 million whitetails; Pennsylvania, 773,000 whitetails; and California, 528,000 mule deer and black-tailed deer.

Attempts to analyze the figures on the basis of trends in population cannot profitably be made at this time, Survey investigators say. They believe, however, that the deer in Pennsylvania have passed their proper peak in numbers, as was predicted by those familiar with the decreased carrying capacities of the best ranges.

In Michigan white-tailed deer have pyramided to about the peak of the range-carrying capacity.

"In all other States that have adopted better protective measures, white-tails appear to be increasing", the report concludes.

Counts for other big-game species are as follows:

Wyoming leads in four groups, having 91,700 of the 228,800 elk in the country; 7,400 of the 16,300 moose; 5,000 of the 11,300 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep; and 890 of the 4,500 buffaloes.

More than 5,000 desert bighorn sheep were counted. California heads the list with 1,700; Nevada is second with 1,400; and Arizona third with 1,200. Mountain goats totaled 14,400, Washington being credited with 5,700, Montana 4,900 and Idaho, 3,800. Texas has 32,500 of the 40,200 peccaries, or javelinas, reported, the remainder being found in Arizona, 7,200, and New Mexico, 450.

The 845 exotic European wild boars found in this country are confined to Tennessee, 425; California, 200; New Hampshire and North Carolina, 100 each; and Mississippi, 20.

Black bears total 93,500, more than 15,000 being in Washington and 14,600 in California. Grizzly bears number 1,100, with 550 in Montana and 400 in Wyoming.

Only 16 woodland caribou were reported. Minnesota has 12 and Washington, 4.

Delaware is the only State in which no big-game animals are found.

The report, printed as a mimeographed circular, "Big-game Inventory of the United States, 1938", was compiled by the Section of Wildlife Surveys, Division of Wildlife Research.