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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Big-game animals in the United States have been increasing during recent years at a more rapid rate than the human population, although the present ratio of such large game to people is only about one to nineteen, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, reported today to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

According to a recently completed tabulation of figures received from Federal, State, and private agencies, the populations of all animals classified as big game within the United States totaled 7,148,422 in 1943, compared with 6,748,424 animals in 1941, or a gain of 5.9 per cent. During the same period the gain in the human population amounted to less than 1 per cent.

As an aid to the conservation of the Nation's living resources, the Fish and Wildlife Service began making annual inventories of the populations of big-game animals in 1937. Counts are made while the animals are on their winter range, as near to the last day of the calendar year as possible, although for a few species it has been found better to wait until early spring. Because of the great number of separate enumerations involved, the reports from the 1944 inventory have not yet been tabulated, and the actual taking of the 1945 inventory has not been completed for all species, it was announced.

A variety of methods is used in making the inventory, according to Dr. Gabrielson, depending on the kind of animal and the characteristics of its habitat. Airplanes are used in many regions without heavy forest cover, proving successful for

deer, elk, caribou, prong-horned antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and buffalo. Ground counts are made by men on skis or snowshoes for deer, elk, and antelopes, but with buffalo this method is dangerous and the enumerators travel on horseback. The high slopes frequented by bighorn sheep and mountain goats usually must be reached on foot. Bears in the National Parks are sometimes counted on their feeding grounds, but elsewhere it usually is necessary to locate their dens, or trace them by tracks and claw marks on trees.

The State with the largest big-game population in 1943 was Pennsylvania, with 1,104,655 animals, nearly all of which were deer. Michigan ranked next with 731,407, followed by Minnesota with 631,877, California with 597,625, and Oregon with 584,261. Kansas is the only State that has no big game.

Summarizing the inventory, Dr. Gabrielson said that during the two-year period from 1941 to 1943, there was no significant change in the numbers of elks, mountain goats, caribou, or grizzly bears. Black-tailed and mule deer showed a slight decrease, which was more than offset for the deer group by the increase in white-tailed deer. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep declined by 10 per cent. Populations of other animals gained as follows: peccary, 106 per cent; European wild bear, 98 per cent; desert bighorn, 69 per cent; black bear, 29 per cent; moose, 25 per cent; prong-horned antelope, 23 per cent; American bison, 21 per cent.

Of all big-game animals in the United States, 61 percent were on State and private lands. However, the heaviest concentration per land unit of 100 acres is found in the national forests. Refuges maintained by the Fish and Wildlife Service rank second in population density, national parks and monuments third.

Deer greatly outnumber all other big-game animals, the white-tailed, mule, and black-tailed deer together comprising 89 per cent of all the large game in the country. At the other extreme is the woodland caribou, now on the verge of extinction within the United States, with only 15 animals reported.

In addition to the deer, big-game animals found in the United States in numbers exceeding 100 thousand are prong-horned antelope, elk, black bear, and peccary. Relatively scarce animals with populations ranging from 1 to 16,000 are the bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, buffalo, European wild boar, and grizzly bear.

Populations of deer in the United States reached their lowest point about 1915, Dr. Gabrielson said, when there were only about three million of these animals in the country. Although the present distribution of deer is less than a quarter of their ancestral range, the general trend of the population has been upward during the period covered by the surveys. The increase, however, is in the white-tailed deer, the most numerous and most widely distributed species with 4,199,739 individuals reported. Mule deer, of which there are 1,756,801, have declined slightly since 1941, as have the Columbian black-tailed deer. The latter species is found only in the three Pacific Coast states, where there are 309,090 individuals.

The peccary or javelina, the only American representative of the wild pigs that are so numerous in Europe, showed a higher percentage of increase than any other species. In 1941 the reported population was 54,120; in 1943, 111,785. The peccaries formerly were much more abundant, however, inhabiting most of the brush area of central and southern Texas, southern New Mexico, and southeastern Arizona in droves. Despite their reputation for ferocity, peccaries are usually shy and retiring.

The prong-horned antelope, a small and graceful member of the deer family found on the western plains, is continuing to increase in numbers, Dr. Gabrielson said. As recently as the late 1920's this species seemed doomed to extermination, although early explorers had found it nearly as abundant on the Great Plains as the buffalo. Through the efforts of wildlife conservationists, however, refuges

for the antelope were acquired and through this and other means the population has been increased from a few thousand in the twenties to 246,090 animals.

Another animal traditionally associated with early American history, the American bison or buffalo, seems to have been rescued from the threat of extinction, although present herds are only a fraction of 1 per cent of the numbers that once roamed the plains. From an estimated population of more than 50,000,000 at the time of the early settlements, buffalo were reduced to about 500 individuals in 1889. From this low point, they have been brought back through the efforts of Federal, State, and private organizations to the present population of 6,047 animals in the United States and some 2,000 in Canada.

Most buffaloes are now in refuges, national parks, and reservations, although under primitive conditions these animals normally made migrations of hundreds of miles each year. At one time experiments were made in crossing the buffalo with domestic cattle. The experiments, however, were not successful from the practical standpoint, for the resulting hybrid, known as a "cattalo," was infertile.

The American elk now occurs in 25 States and is considered huntable game in eleven of them. The elk, which is one of the largest American members of the deer family, once occurred in territory corresponding to 42 of the present States. Hunted persistently because of its good food qualities and excellent hide, by 1910 the elk were reduced from original millions to about 60,000 animals in only seven States. By introductions into many States of stock from Yellowstone Park and the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming, the distribution of the elk has again been extended, and the population increased to 233,714.

Although moose show a 25 per cent increase compared with 1941, the continued welfare of this animal of the wilds is in doubt. The moose live for the most part in wooded muskeg and lake regions; when muskegs are drained and lake shores lined with summer cottages, the moose habitat is destroyed. Moose are now found chiefly in Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota, Maine, and Idaho.

Grizzly bears, once found in 15 States, now occur in five. Montana has 632 grizzlies and Wyoming 572; in Colorado, Idaho, and Washington there are only a few scattered individuals.

The scarcest big-game animal in the United States, the woodland caribou, dwindled to a population of three in 1937. The following year nine caribou were introduced from Saskatchewan, and latest reports indicate that the herd consists of 15 animals, in the Red Lake region of Minnesota. The woodland caribou is the southern representative of the species that inhabits the Arctic Barren Grounds, and is closely related to the European caribou of prehistoric times, drawings of which have been found on the walls of caves inhabited by primitive man.

A total of 739,396 big-game animals was killed throughout the United States during the 1943 season, according to records supplied to the Fish and Wildlife Service by the various State game or conservation commissions. In a few instances it was necessary for the Service to make an independent estimate.

Most of the kill records were for the legal kill in open season. The illegal kill over the country as a whole is no small item and in some localities may equal more than half the authorized kill.

The inventory of big-game animal populations by States is indicated in the accompanying table.

--Summary by States of big-game animals in annual inventories, 1943

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State	White-tailed deer	Male deer	Columbian black-tailed deer	Wood-land caribou	Moose	Front-horned antelope	Sandy Mountain bighorn	Desert bighorn	Mountain goat	Pecanary or javelina	Brown bear or wild boar	Black bear	Grizzly bear	American bison or buffalo	Total
Alabama	20,275	60,775	.....	.....	.....	7,045	.....	1,625	.....	3,210	.....	175	.....	.....	20,410
Arizona	29,266	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,264	.....	253	136,654
Arkansas	36,535	336,762	223,565	.....	.....	12,548	210	2,315	.....	.....	665	49	.....	.....	34,974
California	.....	189,528	.....	.....	.....	6,000	2,045	.....	.....	.....	.....	20,130	.....	.....	597,625
Colorado	100	.....	.....	.....	5	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4,051	12	45	226,786
Connecticut	7,500	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	7,500
Delaware	84	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	84
Florida	28,251	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,066	.....	.....	29,366
Georgia	13,619	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	650	.....	.....	14,469
Iaaho	21,900	139,625	.....	.....	1,560	19,510	2,700	.....	4,200	.....	.....	11,461	42	.....	229,363
Illinois	1,565	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,565
Indiana	915	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	915
Iowa	1,250	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,250
Kentucky	3,306	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	3,306
Louisiana	37,144	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	750	.....	.....	37,894
Maine	204,540	.....	.....	.....	2,506	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	20,000	.....	.....	227,046
Maryland	5,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	5,000
Massachusetts	10,011	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	10,011
Michigan	725,650	.....	.....	.....	265	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	5,112	.....	.....	731,407
Minnesota	610,925	.....	.....	15	2,672	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	18,105	.....	.....	631,877
Mississippi	12,830	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	11	.....	.....	12,841
Missouri	20,210	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,159	.....	5,250	.....	.....	.....	632	.....	20,210
Montana	29,562	86,444	.....	.....	3,445	17,292	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	7,561	.....	1,677	187,991
Nebraska	202	2,910	.....	.....	38	885	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	138	4,173
Nevada	.....	116,950	.....	.....	38	20,525	.....	4,442	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	142,282
New Hampshire	28,660	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	35	.....	.....	29,300
New Jersey	25,500	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	970	.....	.....	25,500
New Mexico	24,700	95,830	.....	.....	.....	35,856	.....	250	.....	500	.....	3,366	.....	13	164,945
New York	300,500	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,000	.....	.....	301,500
North Carolina	52,782	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	8,730	.....	.....	62,442
North Dakota	7,196	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,290	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	9,483
Ohio	4,400	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4,400
Oklahoma	31,352	.....	.....	.....	.....	111	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	50	.....	.....	32,630
Oregon	710	366,680	113,275	.....	.....	45,630	20	.....	.....	.....	.....	14,820	.....	.....	584,261
Pennsylvania	1,100,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4,500	.....	125	1,104,655
Rhode Island	560	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	560
South Carolina	36,397	.....	.....	.....	.....	11,958	23	.....	250	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	38,601
South Dakota	15,868	6,220	.....	.....	.....	10,000	.....	100	.....	80,075	.....	646	.....	1,362	38,046
Tennessee	5,647	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,190	115	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	7,044
Texas	303,735	20,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	520	.....	.....	415,060
Utah	.....	200,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	207,040
Vermont	35,008	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	35,658
Virginia	26,600	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	27,941
Washington	19,100	59,212	53,650	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	6,400	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	177,969
West Virginia	50,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	50	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	51,400
Wisconsin	300,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	303,020
Wyoming	4,970	74,982	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	208,148
Total	4,199,739	1,756,801	390,090	15	231,714	14,803	246,020	9,152	16,100	111,785	2,436	151,651	1,265	6,047	7,148,422

e/ 300 fallow deer included.