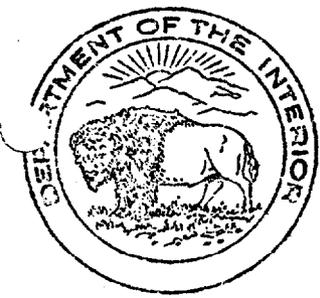


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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For release to the SUNDAY PAPERS OF FEBRUARY 24, 1946.

The decline in the waterfowl populations of the Atlantic coast which became apparent a few years ago is still continuing and at least in some areas has reached an alarming point, Acting Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman was informed today by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Preliminary reports from observers taking the annual January inventory of migratory waterfowl agree that at most points along the Atlantic coast there is a disturbing scarcity of ducks. The current scarcity continues the gradual decrease revealed by the annual inventories over a period of several years, Dr. Gabrielson said.

A detailed report of the ducks wintering in South Carolina, sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service by its Atlantic flyway biologist, Harold S. Peters, revealed that, on nine rivers of the State covered by an aerial survey, the duck population had dropped from around 114,000 birds in 1941 to about 25,000 in 1946.

Mr. Peters, who for the past nine consecutive waterfowl inventories has covered the coast of South Carolina by plane, reported that "comparison of the numbers recorded in these years shows an alarming decrease in the numbers of ducks found".

In Maine, a reduced population was noted for the wood duck, golden-eye, both greater and lesser scaups, and pintail. Black ducks were less plentiful than usual in Maine. For the waterfowl populations as a whole, observers at the Maine Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit reported a slight decrease, "in

line with the rather poor northward flights last spring and with the unfavorable breeding season in this region".

Annual inventories of the country's waterfowl populations have been taken each year since 1935 by the Fish and Wildlife Service in order to assemble the data on which hunting regulations are based. January is selected as the month for estimating the number of migratory waterfowl because this is the time of year the birds are most likely to remain in one locality and be included in the estimate only once.

Dr. Gabrielson said that the work of tabulating the many separate reports and arriving at an estimate of the waterfowl populations of the country as a whole will not be completed for several weeks. A complete report on the 1946 inventory will be issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service some time during the spring.

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