



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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1947 WATERFOWL INVENTORY TO BE CONTINENT-WIDE

Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service said today that the Service cannot predict what the 1947 duck hunting regulations will be until it has analyzed the results of the annual inventory of waterfowl populations which will be taken next month, and until it has completed its spring and summer field observations on the status of the birds.

The large number of requests now reaching the Service for a forecast of next season's hunting regulations cannot be answered for many months, according to Mr. Day, because the Service's recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on the new regulations will be made only after year-round scientific investigations are completed.

Data gathered on the results of the midwinter inventories, from observations on the northward movement of birds during the migrations in the spring, and from investigations in the summer of the breeding grounds in the northern United States, Canada, and Alaska must be analyzed before the Service can recommend changes in the hunting season. As a rule, these recommendations are not ready to submit before late in June or early in July.

As a part of the Service's efforts to keep advised of the status of migratory waterfowl, Mr. Day announced that the annual midwinter inventory of the birds will again be made in January. This thirteenth annual inventory, however, will be continent-wide instead of nation-wide, and will include Mexico, Central America, Alaska, and Canada in addition to the United States.

"In order to obtain the most accurate possible counts of duck concentrations that can be made, the Service's coverage during the 1947 inventory will be on a more extensive basis than ever before attempted," Mr. Day declared. "Reports on duck hunting this fall from most parts of the country have been discouraging. We proposed to do our utmost to find out what has happened to the ducks."

More complete coverage of duck wintering areas will be achieved this year through the greater use of airplanes and aerial photography, the Service Director pointed out. The Army, Navy, Coast Guard, several State conservation departments, and private planes will be used through the cooperation of these agencies, in addition to the Service's recently-acquired planes.

More than 1,000 observers will cooperate with the Service in making this inventory between January 7 and 17. These will include State and Federal conservation officers, wildlife technicians, ornithologists, and other field men selected for their qualifications and interest in waterfowl survey work.

Widespread aerial waterfowl surveys will be made in Mexico and Central America where a Service amphibian plane will traverse both coasts of Central America to the South American coast itself. "We hope to make the most complete waterfowl survey ever conducted in that region," asserted Mr. Day, "and for that purpose Dr. George B. Saunders, flyway biologist, and David L. Spencer, pilot-biologist, will spend considerable time this winter on this trip. When they return, we expect to have a pretty good idea of just how many birds winter south of the border---something we have never known for a certainty before."

Because Alaska and coastal Canada, particularly British Columbia, have been reported to harbor significant numbers of waterfowl in winter, these areas are being included in 1947 for the first time. The Alaska Game Commission and wildlife officials of the Canadian government are organizing comprehensive surveys of all important wildfowl wintering areas in their regions so that the continental picture may be complete.

Although Service biologists keep tab on the ducks throughout the year, during migration, on the breeding grounds, as well as in winter, January is selected as the month for taking the inventory because the birds are most likely to be concentrated in limited areas and are also relatively stationary so that they will be included in the estimate only once.

Mr. Day emphasized that the inventory cannot be considered a "census". "It is manifestly impossible to count all North American waterfowl with accuracy, but an accurate measure of trends in the population does supply data essential for the formulation of the annual hunting regulations."

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