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WATERFOWL REPORT -- SPECIAL

Waterfowl fans are asking three big questions:

1. What is the general waterfowl picture at the turn of the year?
2. Have current restrictions served their purpose?
3. Is the ebbing tide in waterfowl populations being turned?

Answers to these questions have been pouring into the Fish and Wildlife Service at the rate of several hundred weekly, and while there are the usual variances in reports from one section to another -- good and bad spots -- the over-all situation appears to be showing some improvement.

Typical Comments

Maine: "Improved populations especially black ducks."

New York: "Fairly warm weather all fall. Has held more ducks here later in the season than usual. Ten species showed decreased migration and five showed normal migration. Diving ducks reported scarce."

New Jersey: "An appreciable increase over last year. Black ducks were plentiful. Brant and Canada geese about the same as last year."

Virginia: "Migration earlier this year and peak concentrations built up at earlier date. Improved feeding conditions."

North Carolina: "An over-all favorable flight and increased populations."

South Carolina: "Normal or increased migration."

Florida: "No change in ducks. Abnormal concentrations in some areas, blanks in others."

Minnesota: "All information adds up to 'a poor flight and low kill.' Twenty percent fewer ducks through the state than last year."

Wisconsin: "Fair flight which occurred mostly after open season and passed southward without heavy losses. Apparently fewer hunters afield."

Mississippi: "Increase in ducks and Canada geese. Increase in natural food and decrease in water areas over the same period last year, but waterfowl hunting has not been too good anywhere in the state."

South Dakota: "During 1947 fall flight up to November 7 approximately 40 percent fewer ducks than last year. Weather brought sizeable flights after that date. As late as December 10, state still had fair population."

Tennessee: "After cold weather in early November, the flights were large and extensive. General tone indicates an increase."

Louisiana: "Spectacular flight of ducks on the Gulf Coast during the first half of November. Slightly subnormal populations in north Louisiana. Southeastern Louisiana fantastically low for any season."

Ohio: "Over-all waterfowl picture through the state not a healthy one."

Missouri: "Mallards down 50 percent from same time last season. Populations exceedingly low except in national wildlife refuges."

Iowa: "On December 16, northern half pretty well frozen up. Southern part offered good feeding territory and had some 65,000 mallards in three main concentrations."

Michigan: "Definite scarcity of mallards and pintail. Had it not been for widgeons, there would have been noticeable decrease except for redheads, plentiful during most of the season. Sportsmen of the Lake Huron area agreed that more birds were present after the close of the season than at any time during open season."

Kansas: "Look for January estimate close to last year's number."

Texas: "By middle of December, Lubbock district had increased from 15 - 20 percent over that of previous month. This gives the district approximately 120,000 ducks compared to 550,000 last year the same time."

New Mexico: "Ducks about half of what they were year ago at Bitter Lakes area."

Alaska: "More sportsmen and less ducks this year than ever before."

Washington: "About same as 1946. No apparent increase or decrease."

Oregon: "Malheur Refuge down in migration. Klamath Falls shows increase. Over-all, normal flight."

California: "Heavy increase reported at Tule Lake. Early fall flight through Sacramento Valley showed increase but later figures indicated smaller populations than for the same period in 1946."

Idaho: "The estimate is for fewer birds than in 1946."

Utah: "Good hunting in northern part of state. Population seems to be up. Southern part of state reports poorer hunting, smaller populations. Average bag as of November 24, 1947, was 2.65 compared with 2.25 in 1946."

"We'll know a lot more about duck and goose populations when the January inventory figures begin coming in," says Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "We're going to put on the most extensive surveys in the history of the Service."

"It is a critical period, quite possibly the turning of the low tide. But we want to make sure. We can't afford to gamble."

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