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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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DOGS WILL HELP IN SUMMER WATERFOWL BANDING OPERATIONS

Trained retrievers will be used this year in the summer waterfowl banding operations in Canada and on the northern prairies of this country, John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said today.

This is the first year that special dog crews will be used by the Service, Mr. Farley said, although individual members of Service banding crews and technicians from the Dominion Wildlife Service have used them successfully in past years. Experimental use of dogs has proven that they are more economical than other techniques for capturing immature birds.

The dogs will be used primarily on young mallards because of the tendency of that bird to leave the water when frightened and scurry to any available brush cover. One man and a dog will catch, band, and release between 20 and 50 birds a day, depending upon conditions.

According to present plans, four or five retrievers will be used. The dogs will be selected for their ability to perform properly, which means they they must be able to handle the birds without injury to them and to obey commands without hesitation.

The young mallard is the main target for the banding crews because of its importance to all four flyways. Other ducks to be banded will include the pintail, bluewinged teal, gadwall and baldpate. Some Canada geese will also be banded this year. The banding provides data important in the preparation of regulations on waterfowl hunting and management. Between 12 and 15 percent of the banded birds are recovered during the fall hunting season.

While most of the mallards are taken on land the other young birds are usually drive-trapped in the water. This process consists of placing the trap, or enclosure with side wings, in the end of the pond and gently herding the young birds into it. The brood hens are taken at the same time since the hen refuses to leave her young.

About 50 persons will participate in the banding. Of these about 35 will be Fish and Wildlife Service technicians and personnel from State game departments. The Canadian Wildlife Service, game departments of the Provinces and private organizations interested in the waterfowl program also contribute workers. Usually between 27,000 and 30,000 birds are banded each year.

The banding program is carried out in connection with the summer waterfowl breeding ground surveys. Banding will begin in the latter part of June and will continue through August 1, the exact dates depending upon spring and early summer weather conditions.