



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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FWS PUTS NEW CANADA GOOSE RESTORATION PROGRAM INTO OPERATION

Changes in procedure for establishment of "captive" flocks of Canada geese on national wildlife refuges in north-central and northeastern States are being put into operation this coming fall, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Under the new plan only goslings-of-the-year will be captured, raised to maturity in confinement, and released to establish the new flocks, a departure from previous methods which allowed the mixing of birds of various age classes.

Since the success of the goose restoration program depends on the natural reproduction of these birds in the wild following their release, efforts to establish flocks will be restricted to those refuges having suitable nesting site possibilities, officials of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife said.

While the program will be continued on any one refuge for as many years as necessary to establish a new flock, the restoration program will be handled in three-year cycles. An enclosure will include some pond space and at least one acre of ground for each 20 geese. A three-pen system will be used on most of the mid-western refuges having good opportunities for nesting. This permits a pen for each age class, with the goslings of 1958 released as breeding birds in 1961, making room for the 20 young birds to be caught in that year; the goslings of 1959 will be released in 1962 and those of 1960 in 1963. This assures a continuous annual increment to the breeding stock until the flock is self-sustaining.

On most eastern refuges the nesting area is not sufficient to justify annual additions to the flock and present plans call for only one pen on each selected refuge and the release of breeding birds only once every three years. On one or two eastern refuges the three-pen system may be used. In no refuge, however, east or midwest, will there be more than 60 goslings of any year class.

The young birds will be wing-clipped at first but flight feather growth will be permitted during the year prior to their release. During this time they will be "brailed" or wing-harnessed in such a way that flight is prevented but feather development is possible.

For the next year or two, at least, some of the goslings for this program will come from the Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan and other areas where resident flocks are well established. In most instances, birds will be net-trapped from migrant flocks such as those which occur on the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri.

The improvement of nesting facilities by the construction of nesting islands and the improvement of goose feeding grounds must be carried out with the introductions so made that excessive competition for breeding habitat will not result. Banding of the progeny is also planned in order to determine the effects of hunting pressure on each flock during and following its establishment.

Captive flocks of Canada geese have been maintained on Federal refuges for more than a score of years. The outstandingly successful flock introduced on Seney National Wildlife Refuge in 1935 marked the beginning of this program. Since then, about 40 other refuges throughout the country have engaged in this phase of goose restoration, including, from east to west, Missisquoi in Vermont; Parker River in Massachusetts; Montezuma in New York; Blackwater in Maryland; Necedah in Wisconsin; Rice Lake, Mud Lake, and Tamarac in Minnesota; the Souris Loop and other refuges in North Dakota; Sand Lake, Waubay, and Lacreek in South Dakota; Valentine and Crescent Lake in Nebraska; Fort Peck in Montana; Monte Vista in Colorado and Willapa in Washington. Most of these areas lie within the historic breeding range of the Canada geese.

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