



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### DATA COLLECTION FOR WOODCOCK HUNTING REGULATIONS BEGINS

Nearly 200 volunteer workers in the United States and Canada are going to spend some of their evenings in the next few weeks listening for the "peent" of the male woodcock, according to reports from the Department of the Interior.

The annual woodcock census, which actually is a count of male birds on their "singing grounds", begins during the latter part of March in some areas and progresses as the weather decreases until the task is completed in the Maritime Provinces in mid-May. The count is made along 191 established routes in 16 States and five Provinces.

As part of the breeding behavior during the spring, the male woodcock selects a small opening along the edge of the woods and establishes a "singing" ground. At frequent intervals, beginning 10 to 30 minutes after sundown, the male makes a short spiraling flight over his singing ground and after alighting utters a series of calls, or "peents". This "peent" can be heard from a considerable distance which makes possible a census of the number of males within hearing distance along established routes.

The purpose of the census is to obtain an index of the population, not to determine the total population in any area. Since the same routes and counting stations are used on succeeding years the tally of the "peents" of the male birds gives the statisticians the data needed to determine the trend in woodcock population. This in turn is used by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, as the basis for recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior for the next hunting season.

The woodcock is a popular game bird in the eastern part of the United States and in parts of Canada. It winters in the South, especially Louisiana. Birds banded by the University of Louisiana have been found throughout the eastern part of the country from just west of the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean, up through the States to the Canadian boundary and on into the Maritime Provinces.

The length of a route varies but is usually from three to four miles. The distance between stops varies according to the distribution of cover and other factors but as a rule they are less than half a mile apart. Two minutes are allowed at each counting station. Routes are covered only once a year unless circumstances justify another effort.

Maine led all the States and Provinces in 1958 with 49 routes and a total of 442 stops. Pennsylvania had 31 routes, New York 19, Michigan 16 and Connecticut 13. Other States in which woodcock call counts were made include Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Delaware and North Carolina. Ontario, with eight routes led the Canadian Provinces which include Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

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