DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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1941 DEFENSE EFFORTS HIGHLIGHT WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Under conditions of wartime emergency the Nation's supply of fish for food could be increased 185 million pounds "almost immediately" and reach a total of more than 6,200 million pounds after a few years, Director Ira N. Gabrielson, of the Fish and Wildlife Service, today advised Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, in submitting his annual report for the 1941 fiscal year.

In 1939, he pointed out, the fishermen of the United States and Alaska took 4,443,000,000 pounds of fishery products valued at 96½ million dollars. More than 160 species or groups of species contributed to this catch, but 11 of these accounted for 80 percent of the volume, and 21 made up 80 percent of the value.

"Estimates of the possibilities for increasing this food supply led to the conclusion that a 46 percent increase could be realized over a period of years and that under conditions of wartime emergency the yield could be increased to 4,628,000,000 pounds almost immediately and to 6,200,000,000 after a few years. Recommendations to the industry have been formulated for

carrying this out to a considerable extent, without materially increasing the capital outlay or cost of operation," Dr. Gabrielson declared.

So important is this source of food regarded that members of the Service were appointed to committees of the National Defense Advisory Commission and of the Office of the Administrator of Export Control. They have also contributed extensively to furnishing inventories of fishery commodities, assisted in drawing specifications for fishery products, and supplied information on fish cookery and nutritive values of fishery commodities and other data useful to military purchasing agencies and Federal food-planning organizations.

In his first report as director of the Service, a consolidation of the former Bureau of Biological Survey and Bureau of Fisheries, Dr. Gabrielson pointed out that the Nation's broad wildlife--conservation program is important to the defense program not only in the maintenance of morale but in supplying food, in protecting farm crops, and in other tangible ways. As a result, the safeguarding of wildlife to meet defense needs, coupled with vigilance to prevent needless damage and forestall exploitation of this resource in the name of defense, formed the basic objective of Service activities during the year.

Control Program Saves Food

In carrying forward this program, the Nation's food supply is safeguarded in another way by Service activities, he declared. Cooperative work in controlling predatory animals and destructive rodents afforded protection to livestock, poultry, game, and farm crops. Last year, Service control campaigns resulted in the taking of about 123,000 predatory animals, thus conserving wool and meat supplies.

Some 25,500,000 acres of rodent-infested lands and 104,000 rat-infested premises were treated under the Service's supervision. This work effected a great saving in cultivated crops, timber, and forage resources, irrigation and soil-conserving structures, and stored food and feed supplies.

Alert to see that every conceivable wildlife contribution is made to the national defense program, the Fish and Wildlife Service has also been vigilant to prevent needless damage to the resource during the emergency and to forestall exploitation that may be disguised as defense.

Defense Comes First

"It is fitting, of course, that wildlife should be subordinated to the defense needs of the Nation," Dr. Gabrielson states, "but no emergency is great enough to warrant destruction of the fisheries or cause irreparable damage to other wildlife on which the Nation's welfare depends."

At President Roosevelt's request, Secretary Ickes appointed a Fish and Wildlife Service official as a liaison officer to keep informed of the activities of defense agencies that affect fish or wildlife.

"The results so far have been excellent," Dr. Gabrielson reports. "Not only has the liaison been beneficial in connection with emergency activities, but it is probable that improved standard policies will develop for peace-time activities as well."

Depletion Faces Haddock Industry

Other events of the year highlighted in Dr. Gabrielson's report include the results of the Service's work as both a research and action agency.

Investigators warned that if small, immature haddock are captured by commercial fishermen, the haddock industry will be depleted. On the other hand,

letting the small haddock remain in the waters for an additional year or two of growth and spawning will increase the annual yield by at least 100,000,000 pounds and the fishermen's earnings by $4,000,000.

Other fact-finding work included a study of the races of shad, oyster-pest control, investigations of fishery conditions in Mexico and Peru, and study of depletion in the Great Lakes fisheries.

Wildlife on Increase

Waterfowl showed a continuing but small increase in most species of ducks and geese, demonstrating, according to Dr. Gabrielson, the soundness of the waterfowl-restoration program. The waterfowl population, which in January 1940 had been estimated at about 65,000,000, was estimated during the 1941 January inventory to number about 70,000,000.

Research in the management of Canada geese was partly responsible for the increase from 27 to 77 percent in the number of "honkers" nesting on the Bear River Refuge in Utah.

The third annual big-game inventory conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service with the cooperation of other Federal and State agencies showed a total of nearly 5,850,000 big-game animals in the United States. More than 5,270,000 were deer.

Investigations of fur resources on areas administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service yielded valuable data on the management of fur animals. Sales of the pelts of surplus stock of land fur animals at public auction netted the Government about $80,000.

46 States Get Federal Aid

During the year, the number of national wildlife refuges providing breeding, resting and feeding, and wintering grounds for migratory waterfowl, big-game animals, and other forms of wildlife increase to 267.

Refuges are maintained throughout the country and in Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii.

The number of States participating in the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program increased to 46 and the number of approved projects to 265. Florida, Montana, and Louisiana enacted assent legislation.

Important developments in the field of wildlife-management research included the completion of 25 major projects and specialized training for 56 graduate students at 10 wildlife-research units conducted cooperatively by land-grant colleges, State game and conservation commissions, the American Wildlife Institute, and the Fish and Wildlife Service in Alabama, Iowa, Maine, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Virginia.

Food-habits specialists of the Service developed a process of fortification whereby the active principle of red squill low in rat-killing power is concentrated to make the final product effective. This is important in the control of rats, particularly in Army areas, where these small rodents abound and can spread rat-borne diseases.

Game Agents Convict Violators

Preliminary summaries from 116 fish hatcheries indicate a total output during the year of nearly 6,000,000,000 fish and fish eggs.

Sixty-seven game-management agents of the Service either singly or in cooperation with State officers obtained evidence in 3,033 game-law violations. Prosecuted in State and Federal courts, 2,861 violators were convicted.

Responsible for the conservation and regulation of the fishery resources of Alaska, the Service completed construction of a permanent laboratory at Little Port Walter, where for the first time year-round investigations of the salmon resources of southeastern Alaska are being conducted.

Alaska fishery products were valued at nearly $36,500,000 in 1940. Over 25,000 persons were employed in the various fisheries branches.

Sealing on the Pribilof Islands produced 65,263 pelts from an estimated herd of 2,185,000.

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