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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The nation's wildlife resources, from deer to rabbits and from whales to sardines, are helping to win the war by furnishing food, furs, feathers, vitamins, essential industrial oils, and glycerine, as well as providing relaxing recreation for war workers - thus justifying their claims to intelligent protection and conservation, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service declares in its annual report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

The Service pointed out that:

Due to careful conservation and the development of refuges along the four chief flyways, the United States this year saw the greatest southward flight of ducks, geese, and other migratory birds since 1910;

Despite shortages of ammunition, this year's kill of big game was expected to be the largest in many years;

The commercial fisheries with few exceptions have shown a steady comeback in production from the lowpoint which resulted from the first impact of the war on the industry;

More Americans are eating carp, burbot, mussels, shark, squid, skate, and other varieties of under-utilized fresh and saltwater fish and shellfish than ever before;

The production of domestic rabbits this year will reach 9,000,000 pounds and interest in rabbit raising is such that next year 1[illegible],000,000 pounds may be produced;

New congregations of warworkers and industrial establishments, as well as the construction of military facilities, has necessitated an extensively increased program of rodent control and the production of more efficient raticides;

The taking of sealskins on the Pribilof Islands, interrupted by nearby military operations, was resumed, resulting in the largest take in the history of government operations: 117,000 skins, worth $5,000,000 after processing;

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A management plan under state control was proposed, and first steps taken toward adoption, designed to end the 50 year decline in oyster production;

A similar plan for the restoration of the East Coast's important shad fisher was proposed following a lengthy study of the species;

Reports indicated the success of the salmon salvage program on the Columbia River, necessitated by the construction of three large dams on the stream, and vital to the continuance of the $10,000,000 a year industry;

Despite the closing of 12 fish hatcheries since Pearl Harbor, 3,000 farm fish ponds have been built and stocked in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service and at least an equal number of ponds already in existence have been stocked with sunfish, crappies, catfish, and other pondfish.

Hunters are being encouraged to salvage all deer and elk hides and feathers from ducks and geese. The hides are used to make gloves and Artic shoes, called mukluks, for troops in cold climates; the feathers to line aviators' suits.

Reporting on the rehabilation of the salmon runs of the Columbia River, the Service reported that the attempt to transfer an entire run of salmon from spawning grounds above Grand Coulee Dam to lower tributaries of the Columbia has prove successful. Grand Coulee, three times as high as Niagara, is insurmountable to migrating salmon. For the past 5 years the Fish and Wildlife Service has trapped the salmon at Rock Island, 150 miles downstream, and transferred them to tributaries of the middle Columbia. This was done in the hope that the next generatio would return to these tributaries, instead of seeking the ancestral spawning grounds above Grand Coulee. This year, to test the success of the experiment, several thousand of the migrants were released from the Rock Island traps and allowed to continue upstream. Not a single salmon was observed at Grand Coulee; many of the released fish, however, were found in the tributaries where their par ents had been planted.

Success of the Columbia River salmon program lends encouragement to a similar salvage program just getting under way on the Sacramento River this year. There the Shasta Dam has shut off valuable runs of salmon from their spawning grounds, and the Service is undertaking to trap the fish and transfer them to hatcheries or to streams for natural spawning.

Oyster production on the Atlantic Coast, which has declined to a level only half that of 50 years ago, may soon show an upward trend as a result of the program of state management which the Service has advocated. The chief cause of the decline is the system of free fishing practiced in most states, and unaccompanied by planting and cultivating operations. The States are now being urged to set aside areas for growing seed oysters and other areas as growing grounds for adult oysters, and to direct the oyster fishermen in modern methods of oyster cultivation.

With war conditions shutting off normal imports of chemicals used to keep rats and crop-destroying rodents under control, Service Chemists have engaged ir a hunt for new poisons. Chief shortages are of strychnine, which comes from French Indo-China, thallium from Germany, and red squill from the Mediterranean

area. Although shipments of red squill - a plant of the lily family - have now been resumed, the bulbs are of inferior quality and as received are not an effective raticide. However, a Service chemist has developed a method of fortifying or concentrating the red squill so that it becomes as effective as the first-quality bulb. In tests of large numbers of native and South American poisonous plants, several promising new poisons have been found. These are being subjected to further tests. One of the new substances is already in use as a substitute for thallium.

Scarcity of seaweed products, formerly imported chiefly from Japan and essential in bacteriological research, caused other Service technologists to study dozens of native seaweeds in a search for new sources of the gelatinous agar. While no substitute for agar has been found as yet, domestic production has been stimulated and adequate supplies for bacteriological work are now on hand.

Waterfowl populations have increased from 27 millions in 1934 to between 115 and 120 millions in the spring of 1943, and some 25 million waterfowl are using Federal refuges for feeding and resting during their migrations. In a survey of the northern breeding grounds of ducks and geese, Service biologists found the condition of waterfowl populations generally good and indicative of good hunting conditions to come. In British Columbia and the prairie region of Canada a substantial increase in the duck populations was noticed: blue winged and green winged teal have increased in New Brunswick; on the Alaskan breeding grounds the populations of waterfowl were for the most part in satisfactory condition, although geese were still below normal. Service observers also reported that waterfowl breeding grounds in northern United States, a few years ago ravaged by drought, are now in excellent condition.

Among small game birds, some recovery of the depleted stocks of mourning doves, especially in the eastern states, was reported. The woodcock shows signs of recovering from the low point of a few years ago. However, careful management of this species is still needed.

The take of birds and large and small game animals last year totaled more than 141 million, the Service reports. In the big game category, the take included 614,000 deer, 34,000 elk, 9,000 antelope, and smaller numbers of bear, moose, sheep, and goats. The bag of upland game, including rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, and woodchucks, totaled 71,090,000, and of upland game birds - quail, pheasants, grouse, and the like - 41,410,000. The take of waterfowl - mostly ducks - was 16,700,000, and of other migratory game birds, 11,518,000.

Anticipating a sharp postwar increase in the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, the Service urges the states to make every effort now to keep their populations of wildlife and fish on a high level of productiveness.