UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

For Release **March 7,1968** Carroll 343-5634

COMPUTER AGE INCONVENIENCES OUTDOORSMEN

"We still believe computers will prove faster than carrier pigeons," Director John S. Gottschalk of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife said today in noting that a record 100,000 outdoorsmen who sent in bird identification bands have not received a reply from the agency since October.

The Federal wildlife chief says the problem is caused by increased banding--more than 1½ million birds are now banded annually in a practice begun in the 1920's--and by the switch to automated equipment for sending replies. Both causes "are really assets," Dr. Gottschalk said.

"But we are concerned that this temporary delay may discourage persons from returning the bird tags to us," he added. "Examination of returned bands, which come in from all over the continent, is our best way of determining migration."

The agency expects that within a few weeks its automated system will be fully working and band returners will again get a prompt reply, telling them a little more about the history of the bird they have killed or captured. The backlog should be cleared up soon, too.

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