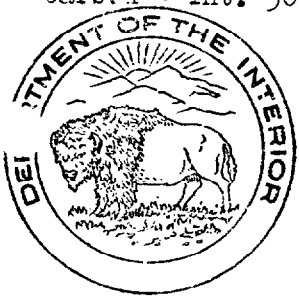


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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

"Peace can be harder on wildlife than war," Director Albert M. Day stated in the Fish and Wildlife Service's annual report to Secretary of the Interior J. A. Krug and made public today.

With America's peacetime army of hunters and fishermen now outnumbering the Nation's military forces during the war, with more gasoline, tires, jeeps, and civilian planes available to open up wilderness areas, and with the Nation's rivers undergoing vast engineering developments, Mr. Day called for "the most careful planning and the most unremitting effort" in order to prevent "serious and irreparable" damage to wildlife.

Citing the sharp upturn in the number of licenses issued to hunters and anglers even before the end of the war, Mr. Day predicted that the number of sportsmen would soon be double the prewar figure.

Waterfowl were among the first game species to show the effects of too much hunting. The heavy bag of ducks and geese during the 1944 and 1945 seasons, coupled with drought on the nesting grounds, has brought about an alarming decline in the population of waterfowl, Mr. Day said.

Fish and Wildlife Service estimates of the 1946 populations of waterfowl showed only about 80,000,000 of these birds in the entire continent, compared with 125,000,000 two years earlier.

On a continent-wide basis all species of game ducks except the black duck and the blue-winged teal were on the decline when the 1946 checks of winter areas, nesting grounds, and favorite resting places during migration were made. Among

geese, the Canada and white-fronted were both declining--the Canada so seriously that on the entire Mississippi flyway the shooting of this species had to be suspended in 1946.

Reporting on the status of game birds other than waterfowl, Mr. Day said that:

Woodcock populations are holding their own, according to studies of check breeding areas in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Maine, and Pennsylvania.

Wilson's snipe, on the other hand, is still regarded a "problem species" with only slight gains recorded although it has had complete protection for several years.

Mourning doves, hard hit by the severe winter of 1940, now seem to have made almost a complete recovery. To maintain this species on the game list, however, management based on scientific studies is needed.

The status of the white-winged dove, a popular game bird in the southwest, is satisfactory in some areas, disturbing in others.

The abundance of rails in general is satisfactory; coots, on the other hand, are becoming scarcer.

Cooperative projects for the restoration of wildlife were financed by a \$1,000,000 appropriation during the fiscal year 1946, Mr. Day reported. Money for these projects comes from an excise tax on firearms and ammunition, Congressional appropriations from this fund being supplemented by a State appropriation of 25 percent of the cost of each project.

Wartime rationing of gasoline and tires proved a blessing to the country's inland game fishes, Mr. Day said, and except near large centers of population the stocks of these fish had a chance to recover from heavy prewar angling.

Service hatcheries during the calendar year 1945 produced a total of 5.5 billion fish and eggs, the bulk of this production being the eggs of marine commercial species.

To meet the steadily increasing demand for fish to stock small farm ponds, Service hatcheries furnished 7,600,000 fish in 1945; enough for 13,276 individual plantings.

Haddock and rosefish, mainstays of the New England fisheries and of the fresh fish markets throughout much of the country, are both becoming scarcer, biologists of the Fish and Wildlife Service believe. Mr. Day reported that, on Georges Bank where the present haddock fishery is centered, a series of poor spawning seasons had affected the productiveness of this fishery. This failure of adequate numbers of young haddock to grow up is due, biologists believe, to lack of food. The ocean bottom in this area probably is not producing enough food for the present population of haddock.

As for rosefish, although the total catch is larger than ever, the individual boats are making smaller catches per day. Biologists cite another warning of decline: the landings are made up of much smaller fish than formerly. Rosefish grow only half an inch a year and take 10 or 12 years to reach maturity. Thus they are easily injured by too intensive fishing.

Service technologists are finding new ways of promoting more efficient handling and utilization of the products of the commercial fisheries, Mr. Day said. Among recent studies he cited tests which revealed DDT as an extremely efficient insecticide in and around fish processing plants; the testing of containers and wrappings suitable for air transportation of live lobsters, shellfish, and fresh fish; and studies on the sources of vitamin A oils. Research chemists of the Service found that the quantity and quality of vitamin A oil contained in the livers of the dogfish shark depend on the size and age of the fish. Processing of livers from dogfish less than 30 inches long was found to be uneconomical and wasteful. These findings have been adopted by shark fishermen, who now concentrate on the larger dogfish.

Predatory animals which prey on livestock generally increased during the war because of the shortage of men and materials for control, Mr. Day reported.

Nevertheless, under the cooperative control program carried out by the Federal Government and the States, 117,204 predators were taken during the year. These consisted of 108,311 coyotes, 1,557 wolves, 6,487 bobcats and lynxes, 730 bears, and 119 mountain lions.

Estimating the Nation's rat population at approximately 130 million and the damage to food by rats at some \$200,000,000, Mr. Day said that control of destructive rodents was even more seriously affected by wartime conditions than control of predators, because it requires a proportionately greater amount of manpower. However, the control of the rat and other rodents has been greatly aided by the carefully supervised use of 1080, a rodenticide developed by scientists of the Service during the war.

The text of the report, together with the other annual reports of Interior Department bureaus and offices, will be issued in printed form in the near future.

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