DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Good News for Dove Hunters

The Fish and Wildlife Service is finding low levels of DDT and other organochlorine chemicals such as dieldrin, heptachlor epoxide, mirex, and polychlorinated biphenyls in doves. Samples of doves shot last year in Eastern States have been analyzed by the Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Md.

DDT residues were only 1.4 percent of the amounts permitted in fish (5 parts per million in raw edible portions) by Federal regulations. Legal limits of DDT in beef, established on a fat basis, are set at 7 ppm; concentrations of DDT in the fat of dove muscle averaged 6.2 ppm.

Because of the small amount of fat in dove muscle, 28 pounds of dove meat would have to be eaten to obtain an amount of DDT equal to the quantity permitted in one pound of hamburger.

Bird Believed Extinct Is Sighted in Hawaii

The Kauai O'o, a bird believed extinct since 1964, was located deep in Hawaii's Alakai Swamp by a biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program, who found a nesting pair with two young.

The Kauai O'o (Moho braccatus) is the last surviving species of four species of famous Hawaii O'o's which were sought for the yellow feathers used in native robes.

Biologist John L. Sincock used a helicopter to penetrate into the tropical rain forests near Mt. Waialeale, where he found and photographed the rare birds in their nests.

The O'o is a slender, sooty bird with a slightly downcurved black bill, white-streaked throat, yellow thighs, white wing patch, and pointed tail.

Sea Lampreys On Increase

Fish and Wildlife Service biologists are reporting much greater numbers of adult sea lampreys captured this year at index barriers located on streams entering Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Other evidence that the lamprey population is up is the increased incidence of scarring on lake trout and steelhead in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Crews are treating streams with the lampricide TFM on Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

The eel-like lampreys virtually wiped out lake trout fishing before control measures were developed by the Service as part of a United States-Canadian program.

The lamprey entered the Great Lakes through the Welland Canal around Niagara Falls. It was first reported in Lake Erie in the 1920's. Then, in rapid succession, it destroyed the lake trout in Lake Huron during the early 1940's, in Lake Michigan in the late 1940's, and in Lake Superior in the 1950's.

The predator sucks blood from prey with its circular mouth, rasping tongue, and sharply piercing teeth.

Location of Transplanted Canada Geese Unknown

The 75 Aleutian Canada geese which the Fish and Wildlife Service transplanted from its Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Md., to Amchitka Island in the Aleutian chain in March have disappeared.

Service biologists speculate that the geese have migrated off the island or moved to its mountainous eastern portions where sighting is difficult. There is also the possibility that the birds have succumbed to predation (three or four were lost to eagles in the first few days following release) or weather elements. It was hoped the geese would remain in the release location long enough for breeding to take place.

The birds are descendants of goslings captured in 1963 on Buldir Island in the Aleutians, their only remaining occupied breeding habitat in the wild. They were reared at Patuxent.

Amchitka Island, site of the upcoming Cannikin test by the Atomic Energy Commission, is 1,600 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska. It is part of the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

If the transplanted geese can survive in the wild, the species, nearly wiped out by blue foxes introduced in the Aleutians to be harvested for their fur, will have a better chance to escape extinction.

Whooping Crane Captive Population Reduced

Recent deaths at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Md., and San Antonio Zoo have reduced the world's population of captive whooping cranes to 21, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced.

Rosie, one of two captive cranes at San Antonio Zoo, died in June of a cancer-like condition of the liver and kidneys, an autopsy at Patuxent revealed. She had been an adult bird since 1956, when she was disabled by colliding with a power line. Hardening of the arteries indicated that probably she was much older than 17.

Other recent whooper deaths came after a whooping crane egg pickup in the Canadian wilds in May. Of 11 eggs picked up, nine subsequently hatched at Patuxent, but mortality has reduced the number of apparently healthy birds to three. Two weak embryos, which had to be helped from the shell, lived only a short time. The four others lost succumbed to infections which developed after birth.

Of all captive whoopers remaining, 17 are at Patuxent, three at Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans, and one at San Antonio. Twelve of the total came from earlier egg pickups. About 60 cranes are believed to exist in the wild. The annual U.S. census will be taken by the Service this fall when the birds arrive at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas from their breeding grounds in Canada.

Cause of Alewife Dieoff Now Known

Remember the alewife dieoff that fouled Lake Michigan's beaches in 1967? Scientists at the Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Fishery Research Laboratory at Ann Arbor, Mich., who have been studying the fish's biology, ecology, physiology, and behavior, now believe they know why the 1967 incident happened.

As alewives, a herring-like marine fish, reached peak abundance in 1965 (the first alewife recorded in Lake Michigan was in 1949), they depleted their food supply of small crustaceans. Consequently, their physical condition deteriorated.

Alewives became more vulnerable to several hazards, one of them low temperatures, and a substantial dieoff occurred in the winter of 1966-67. Still in poor condition in spring 1967, alewives were vulnerable to thermal changes as they migrated inshore to spawn. They subsequently were struck by the huge dieoff in June and July 1967.

Alewives were much less abundant during the following three years, and smaller dieoffs occurred. At the present time, however, the population appears to be increasing gradually, although it is not expected to again attain the high level of the mid-1960's. Since that time large numbers of salmon and trout have been stocked in the lake to consume alewives and provide excellent sport fishing.

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