

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

U.S. Forests

During 1945 and 1946 the U.S. Forest Service made a reappraisal of the forest situation. About ten "Reappraisal Reports" were planned for publication; six have already appeared.

Report 1, 1946, "Gaging the Timber Resource of the United States," shows how much growing timber we have now, estimates our future need, and suggests what we must do to fill this need. "For three centuries we, as a Nation, lived in an era of timber abundance. Now we have passed into an era in which we must depend increasingly upon the timber we grow each year" (p. 1). In fact, "the present rate of saw-timber cutting exceeds our annual growth" (p. 37). The Forest Service estimates that we will soon require an annual production of about 20 billion cubic feet of all timber, including about 72 billion board feet of saw timber. This means that we must increase the present annual increment of all timber by 50 per cent and of saw timber by 200 per cent. There is enough forest land available. Growing stock, however, is inadequate. "Quality" timber is especially scarce—for example, Douglas fir for plywood, Sitka spruce of airplane quality, and even New England white birch for turning. Of necessity, smaller trees are now being used for saw timber, even in the West.

As a long-term program, the report recommends: (1) better forest management, especially on private lands; (2) better fire protection; (3) planting—about 5 million acres have been planted, but 30 to 35 million acres still need it; and (4) less logging waste and less mill waste. As an immediate expedient, the report recommends cutting more of the virgin timber of the West. Most of this timber is on national forests and other public lands: "More than anything else, this opening up will involve road construction and plenty of it" (p. 38). Even with the best possible progress, "it looks as though drain should be held below 50 billion board feet for several decades . . . before any large net expansion of forest industry could safely get under way" (p. 43). And even if we follow a conservative cutting plan, the Forest Service shows that the growth goal of 72 billion board feet *cannot be reached until the year 2020*.

The series of reports thus far treats forest lands as nothing more than timber factories. Wildlife is mentioned only once (Report 3, p. 21): "Except for certain lands (unusually dry and unfavorable sites in the West and lands used for special purposes such as game habitat or military training grounds), these areas should be restored to a reasonable productivity. As a rule this means planting." How much land they consider "game habitat" is nowhere specified. Planting of existing openings—although their continuance is *of prime importance to wildlife*—is recommended as a major point in the Forest Service's planting program. Further, Report 5 (p. 12) points out that a forest floor with little or no ground cover is desirable for suppression of the gypsy moth; the value of ground cover to other wildlife is ignored. The series is still incomplete, but "no report will be issued discussing forest wildlife" (letter, U.S. Forest Service, 1 August 1947).

It may be that the intent of these Reports is to cover only the technical and economic aspects of forest management and of wood processing and use. Even if one agrees (but I do not) that an adequate "reappraisal" of our forests really can be based on technical and economic values alone, there is still an intimate relationship between the techniques of forest management and the welfare of forest wildlife. The foresters themselves have assured us that on public land, at least, they are managing timber and wildlife together. The management plan which is taking shape in the first six reports seems to be singularly one-sided. Yet, this plan is projected into the future for at least 75 years. It seems fair to ask, therefore: What provision is to be made for forest wildlife?—F.N.H.

Waterfowl

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in a release dated 1 August 1947, reported these facts concerning the situation on the Canadian breeding grounds last summer:

New Brunswick: On the Wildlife Management Institute's 32,500 acre study area there was a 50 per cent decrease in the breeding population between 1945 and 1946. There was a further decrease this year, especially in the Blue-winged Teal and Wood Duck, and probably also the Black Duck (Bruce S. Wright).

Ontario and Quebec: Many of the early nests were flooded out in the south-east of Ontario and the south of Quebec. An extremely late season in the James Bay region apparently interfered with nesting. "A month's search for nests of black ducks in the marshes on the west coast of James Bay from Moose River to Albany River revealed none" (Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa).

Prairie Provinces: "Great floods have hurt nesting over much of Manitoba's principal nesting areas such as Whitewater and Oak Lanes in the southwest, Proven Lake to the Saskatchewan border in the west, Dauphin marshes in the central, Saskatchewan Delta in the north, and Netley in the east. The expected poor breeding success has been verified by the scarcity of broods making their appearance. . . . Any improvement in waterfowl numbers during 1947 must come from some place outside Manitoba" (Arthur S. Hawkins).

Waterfowl conditions were very poor in the Grande Prairie district; "the same conditions exist north of Peace River. . . . The situation is universal in the Northwest. . . . More water areas exist this year than there were ducks to inhabit them. Hundreds of sloughs, potholes, and small lakes in the Prairie Provinces were . . . underpopulated or completely destitute of ducks of any kind" (J. Dewey Soper).

Waterfowl populations were extremely low throughout northern Saskatchewan and Alberta, including the Mackenzie and Athabasca deltas and the Lake Claire marshes: "the duck picture in the north country looks much worse than it does on the Prairies" (Robert H. Smith).

In some areas in southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan, however, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported (without details) that the situation was considerably better.

British Columbia: Here also there were reports of good nesting populations of both ducks and geese.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's January 1947 estimate indicated a continental waterfowl population of 54,000,000. In the light of the situation on the breeding grounds this summer, the following statement from H. Albert Hochbaum (letter) is especially significant:

"The 54,000,000 is less than the original bison population, far less than the original Passenger Pigeon numbers. Yet this is not a number for one species. There are 32 game ducks and the coot to make up this total. If evenly divided, this would give little more than a million and a half for each species. But the kinds of ducks are not evenly divided in numbers; there are many more of some than there are of others. For some species there must be less than a million birds left. . . . In any event we don't know how many birds there are for each species, except that there are less than a million for some; and we don't know what is a "safe" figure for any species. . . .

"Still another disturbing matter is our inability to prescribe a remedy for the situation. In the 1930's more breeding and wintering waters were suggested as a means to restore numbers, and we entered upon the heaviest land management program in waterfowl conservation history. Ducks have declined nevertheless, and more of the same program cannot promise more ducks now, when many fine marshes are almost devoid of breeding birds. We need more birds rather than more marshes. . . ."—F.N.H.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Frederick N. Hamerstrom, Jr., *Chairman*



Hamerstrom, Frederick N. 1947. "Wildlife Conservation." *The Wilson bulletin* 59(4), 224–225.

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