

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIRD PROTECTION, 1937

THROUGH International Treaty now ratified by both countries, birds migrating between the United States and Mexico have received much needed protection. The new regulations, issued March 15, 1937, prescribe protection for one hundred and forty species. Commerce in songbirds such as mockingbirds, thrashers and buntings will be controlled, for transportation of game, mammals, or migratory birds dead or alive is prohibited except by permit.

Among species of birds dangerously near extinction is the Great White Heron of Florida. With a restricted breeding range this bird not only has been persecuted by fishermen but has to withstand hurricanes that occasionally sweep over its breeding grounds. The hurricane of Labor Day, 1935, struck the species a serious blow, but that it now numbers in the hundreds has been demonstrated by careful censuses made by field agents of the National Association of Audubon Societies. Plans are on foot to set aside as a bird refuge the series of islands in Florida Bay where this bird breeds. Likewise, fears have been allayed as to the status of the Glossy Ibis in Florida with the counting of some 650 birds found nesting in seven different localities. With an improved warden patrol in the Everglades section, dependable knowledge of the status and success of each nesting season is coming into print. Evidence that laws protecting eagles can be enforced and convictions obtained comes to us from the Province of Ontario where, through efforts of the Hamilton Bird Protection Society, another conviction has been obtained.

The publication of newspaper items relative to expeditions to view California Condors in the mountain fastnesses of Ventura County, California, led to the writing of a letter to the Forest Service expressing fear that such publicity would mean further disturbance of the few remaining birds. An answer brought the good news that plans were being made to create a "non-trespass" area for the protection of the Condor and that even scientific expeditions would be discouraged. Such an area has now been created under regulations authorizing the closing of designated areas "for the perpetuation and protection of rare and vanishing species." In issuing instructions, the statement was made that "the California Condor is an illustration of a species of rare bird requiring an undisturbed habitat and nesting places and an area sufficient to provide such refuge from human disturbance." This increased protection of the nesting grounds of the Condor on Sisquoc Falls Creek is timely and encouraging to those who know of the critical status of this great vulture.

The wildfowl situation is about what it was a year ago,—still something

to worry about. Drought and too heavy a toll by hunters has produced a situation that cannot be cured in a short time. The decreed hunting season will cover seventy-nine days with a maximum of thirty days in any one zone. The only changes in bag limit are an increase from fifteen to twenty-five on Coots (Mud-hens), four to five on Canada Geese, and decrease from twenty-five to fifteen on Sora Rail. We must continue to furnish wildfowl with extraordinary safeguards if they are to return to their former numbers. Some encouragement is to be found in the fact that newly established Government refuges are proving effective breeding and wintering grounds. Thousands of acres of land have been flooded and waterfowl have quickly found these safe new breeding sites. Doves received added protection through a reduced season in Texas and Arizona.

Oil pollution, unfortunately, continues. But the League of Nations has under consideration the calling of an international conference looking to the abatement or eradication of the pollution problem through international cooperation. While the Vinson Bill (H. R. 2711) provides no means for effectively controlling the pollution menace, it nevertheless was passed by the House by a vote of 187 to 121. It was amended in the Senate and sent to conference. The best provisions of the Lonergan Bill (S. 13) which provides for actual pollution control now have been incorporated in the Vinson Bill and support is needed to pass it for it will be actively opposed by industrial interests. This important bill declares that discharge of waste into navigable waters is a public nuisance, and provides for court action against polluters. The enforcing agency is designated as a Division of Water Pollution Control under the United States Public Health Service with a Director who would be a commissioned engineer officer of the Service. This is a conservation measure which deserves active support of all those who seek means of giving better protection to wildlife.

There is a pleasing trend toward the teaching of conservation of natural resources in the public schools. During May, the Federal Office of Education held a two-day conference of educators interested in furthering this type of teaching. Cornell University is making a survey of conservation teaching throughout the United States. Wisconsin has passed a law requiring that conservation be taught in the schools of that State. Complying with that mandate a bulletin was prepared on the purposes, content and significance of conservation to assist teachers in dealing with the subject. Also as an aid to teachers the Office of Education issued 'Conservation in the Education Program' by William H. Bristow and Katherine M. Cook (Bull. No. 4, 1937). This helpful bulletin outlines representative practices in conservation education in various States, lists various governmental and non-governmental agencies which engage in educational conservation activities and closes with a brief bibliography. Bird protection will certainly

find a place in any school curriculum including conservation teaching and we may hope that coming generations will have a better appreciation of the value of birds and a better knowledge of means of protecting them.

A report on an inspection tour of Texas sanctuaries states that an increase in number of Spoonbills was evident but that the Brown Pelican, still unprotected by either Federal or Texas law, has been systematically killed by fishermen and breeding colonies are showing a progressive decrease. This situation is a reminder that prejudice rather than accurate knowledge still determines safety of some species of birds. More accurate and convincing information on food habits and educational programs to make such information common knowledge to the public will best meet this situation.

Interest of the general public in bird sanctuaries is on the increase. Proof is to be found in the numerous Federal, State and even County programs which have been developed and in the augmented sanctuary fund of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

Drainage projects, although apparently less numerous than in the past few years, continue to reduce available nesting grounds for waterfowl. The National Association of Audubon Societies has actively opposed many projects and has aided in making the public aware of the real dangers to wildlife which follow drainage operations.

Your Committee has been informed that a special fund is at its disposal for current bird-protection activities. This is appreciated and plans are being formulated as to the best use to be made of this financial help. Your Bird Protection Committee still feels that a resolution expressing conservation ideals relative to scientific collecting would be an effective instrument in setting high standards for both present and future collectors. After a study of the International Committee resolution and other resolutions on the same subject, one was drawn and submitted last year which failed to be adopted by the Council and did not come to a vote in open meeting. The Committee again submits this resolution with but slight revision and urges its adoption in open meeting in order to establish a clear-cut policy on scientific collecting, as follows:—

RESOLUTION: The American Ornithologists' Union recognizes that increased exploitation of natural resources everywhere has placed pressure on many species of birds, and has brought about an alarming reduction in numbers of some species. Though standing staunchly, as heretofore, for adequate opportunity for the scientific collector to obtain specimens necessary to the furtherance of scientific study, the Union opposes the collecting of bird specimens or eggs as objects of curiosity, or personal or household adornment, and any scientific or other collecting or investigational activities which may in any way endanger or adversely affect the

status of seriously depleted species by molestation, invasion of territory or otherwise.

Respectfully submitted,
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