

COMMUNICATIONS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

Washington, D. C., February 1, 1922.

To the Editor of the "Wilson Bulletin."

DEAR SIR:—The Biological Survey began in 1914 to collect data on the numerical distribution of bird life in the United States. By such information, which is gained through counts made by volunteer collaborators, of the birds breeding on selected areas, it is possible to gain some knowledge of the yearly fluctuations in bird life and of the effect the present State and Federal laws may have on the increase of game and insectivorous birds. During the earlier years we received a very gratifying response to our request for assistance, but during the war many persons were unable to continue the work and interest in it has seemed to wane. It is desirable that these counts should be repeated on a large scale through a period of years in order that adequate data may be accumulated to make possible definite conclusions. Any one thoroughly familiar with the breeding birds of his vicinity can do this work, and will find it growing in interest from year to year. We are therefore again appealing to the readers of the "Wilson Bulletin" in the hope that all who are able to do so will make one or more bird counts this summer.

The general plan of this work is to select a tract of land containing from 40 to 80 acres and representing as nearly as possible the average conditions for the vicinity. Some day during the height of the breeding season, this land should be carefully gone over in the early morning and the male birds counted, which at that season are usually in full song and may be considered each to represent a breeding pair. The result of this count should be checked subsequently to be sure that all birds counted nest within the selected area, and that none have been missed. The count should not be made until the spring migration is over and the birds are settled on their nesting grounds. In the latitude of Washington, D. C., the best time for the first count is about the first of June, in New England and the northern states probably about June 10, and south of Washington during the latter part of May.

Anyone who is willing to do this work is requested to send his name and address to the Biological Survey, Washington, D. C. Full directions for making a count and report blanks will be sent in time for plans to be made before the actual time for the field work. Since the Bureau has no funds with which to pay for this work, it must depend on the services of voluntary observers.

An added impetus should be given to this work at the present time by the report that the British ornithologists are contemplating a census of the birds of the British Isles, planned along the same lines as our own.

Very truly yours,

E. W. NELSON,
Chief, Biological Survey.