

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Effects of the War on Government Wildlife Conservation Agencies

Funds, manpower, equipment, materials, and transportation are essentials which enable wildlife conservation agencies to plan and carry on their various functions. To determine what effect the war is having on wildlife agencies, it is necessary to determine the status of these factors at this time.

Funds: Shortly after the United States became involved in war Congress reduced the appropriations of a number of Federal conservation agencies. The Pittman-Robertson appropriations were cut from the Budget Bureau figure of \$2,225,000 to \$1,250,000. The result will be fewer wildlife restoration projects, but the full effect will not be felt for another year, since many states have carry-overs from last year, and Pittman-Robertson grants are valid for two years.

Food habits work by the Fish and Wildlife Service has been discontinued because no funds were appropriated for it.

The Soil Conservation Service has had to curtail the work of its biology division because of reduced funds. A number of the biologists have been reclassified as farm-planners: their services are still available to wildlife, but on a much more limited scale than formerly.

The Civilian Conservation Corps received no funds, and liquidation of that agency is well under way. Most of the enrollees are either entering military service or are finding places in industry.

A change of agricultural policy from one of restricting the production of food supplies to one of producing to the utmost has resulted in a curtailment of funds to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which had indirectly contributed to wildlife restoration by encouraging the planting of grasses and other soil-saving crops.

It is still too early to report the effects of the war on the finances of State game departments. To date the sale of fishing licenses has been about normal; some states have showed increases, others decreases. Figures are not yet available on the sale of hunting licenses. Some states expect reduced receipts, but on the whole it is expected that the numbers of hunters to take the field this fall will be little less than in the previous year.

Manpower: A majority of the men in active wildlife work are of military age, and many have left and others will leave for military service. Replacements are increasingly difficult to make, for most of the eligible candidates—technically trained men, such as engineers, surveyors, agronomists, and persons familiar with map reading—are in great demand by the Army and Navy, and by defense industries. Semi-skilled and unskilled labor are both attracted by the high wages of industry and so are temporarily lost from wildlife restoration projects.

Michigan and West Virginia are examples of what is happening in all State departments. The Michigan Department of Conservation has already had over a hundred of its employes enter military service. Others have found employment in defense industries, where high wages prevail. West Virginia reports that it has had a one-third turnover in its game warden force, due to men leaving for military service and industrial employment.

Equipment and materials: These items are subject to priority ratings, and many of them are becoming difficult, if not impossible, to obtain for wildlife restoration. After the outbreak of war, the Fish and Wildlife Service adopted a policy of starting no new developments, except to replace a very few buildings which had been destroyed by fire and which were essential for the maintenance of existing facilities.

Dealers' stocks of wire fencing are almost exhausted, but there is a tendency, which will undoubtedly grow as the war progresses, to go back to various kinds of wooden fencing. The limiting factor here will be the labor to cut the timber and build the fences.

Scientific instruments, cameras, and all but the most inferior binoculars, are being channeled to the war agencies.

The manufacture of sporting ammunition ceased June 15, 1942, but the effects of this will not be felt for another year as there were adequate supplies of ammunition on hand for this season. Certain types of new guns can no longer be purchased.

Transportation: Along the Eastern Seaboard, conservation law-enforcement agencies have experienced little difficulty in procuring enough rubber and gasoline to carry on their regular duties. The activities of wildlife research men have been curtailed somewhat, but the immediate result has been beneficial as more intensive work on limited areas is being emphasized. In some western states a few Pittman-Robertson men are using horses for short-distance travel. In the East it is expected that sportsmen will save their gasoline for hunting trips, will "double up" on the use of cars, and will use common carriers wherever possible.

In spite of limitations on personnel- and material-resources, the wildlife profession is presented with one of the biggest opportunities it has ever had. In the past, wildlife has been valued primarily as a means of recreation and only secondarily as a product to be utilized. From now until the war is won wildlife must be considered primarily as a renewable resource to be used in helping to preserve the Nation. Actually, the utilization of wild animal products is as old as man.

It is conservatively estimated that 135 million pounds of wild meat and 300 million pounds of fish are harvested by sportsmen and fishermen each year. If this is used in place of domestically produced meat it will free an equivalent amount to be sent to our fighting forces and to our allies. The total supply of game as food can be increased by not wasting any of it and by not allowing so many cripples to escape to die and rot.

In certain places there exist surpluses of large and small game which have been problems to game administrators. It is possible to devise means of reducing these surpluses and using the animals for food. This will call for real wildlife management.

Rough fishes have been considered by many as akin to pollution, but they have been commonly used as food in foreign countries and by many people in this country. Tightened belts can assist us in changing some of our food habits so that many fish products which formerly went to waste will now be used as food.

Commercial interests along our seacoasts have struck a bonanza in shark liver for vitamins and shark fins for a soup which is esteemed by many. A concern in Missouri has begun the manufacture of poultry- and hog-feeds from rough fishes, and commercial deep sea fishermen are saving livers which they once threw away. Ohio is raising both game and food fishes in its hatchery ponds.

Furs are in greater demand than ever before, both for civilian and military purposes, and ways of increasing the production of certain fur animals have been worked out.

If the time comes when restoration projects have to be further reduced or even eliminated because of inability to obtain equipment, supplies, and manpower, greater emphasis could be placed on the purchase of lands to be developed after the war.

The wildlife profession now faces the double challenge of managing and utilizing this resource to help in winning the war and of planning for the period after the war. Within the past decade of wildlife management we have conducted many experiments and demonstrations. The time has come when management for the utmost production and use should be practiced.—William Johnston Howard.

Conservation Notes from Canada

A pronounced increase in the numbers of Hudsonian Curlew that appear in July and August as southbound transients in Saguenay County, Quebec, on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was reported from that region in 1942 by bird protection officers of the Department of Mines and Resources. Flocks

containing from 100 to 20 birds each were not uncommon, and smaller flocks were numerous. Losses that this species may suffer during its annual sojourn in South America are evidently not so great as to prevent an increase in its population when conditions are favorable for it in North America.

The Arctic Islands Native Game Preserve, in the northern part of the Northwest Territories of Canada, was substantially enlarged on August 4, 1942, by Order in Council of the Dominion Government. The area of land and fresh water included in this addition is 281,392 square miles, which brings the total area of this preserve to 720,497 square miles. The total number of Native Game Preserves in Canada's Northwest Territories is five, and their total area is now 865,389 square miles. The policy under which these preserves are administered provides for hunting and trapping by aborigines and half-breeds only, except that in a small number of cases white men's hunting and trapping rights that existed prior to establishment of a preserve are continued.—Harrison F. Lewis.

Plant Sanctuaries

"The convention [of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs] favored a request made by the Michigan Wildflower Association that it back a proposal to legalize establishment of plant sanctuaries in Michigan, similar in nature to the present hundreds of wildlife sanctuaries. Under the proposal, sanctuaries with a minimum of five acres could be established on action of the Conservation Commission. Hunting in such sanctuaries would not be banned." (*Michigan Conservation*, 11, No. 7, p. 6, July-Aug., 1942)

Minnesota Caribou

A "filler" in the December, 1942, issue of *The Conservation Volunteer* (official bulletin of the Minnesota Conservation Department) reports: "Minnesota's last caribou herd in the Red Lake Game Refuge has been helped considerably by the past few mild winters. Most recent information reveals [that] these animals are at least holding their own. Their numbers are estimated at 15-20, including this year's calf crop." (p. 16)

The rest of the story, however, is not "revealed" in the article. It is this: The Red Lake herd is the last one in the United States, barring a few animals that occasionally drift south from Canada in winter. Early in 1938, when the herd had dwindled to three females, the Federal Government undertook to save it by adding to it a number of animals bought from the Canadian Government. Ten (one of which later died) were live-trapped and shipped to Minnesota—an extremely difficult job. Still more time and effort were devoted to a close study of the augmented herd in order to learn what more needed to be done to ensure their safety. This second phase of the work was continued, under increasing difficulties, until the spring of 1942.

About half of the herd has been kept in a 3200 acre corral. Recently, according to earlier agreement, the project was turned over to the State. This autumn the corral was opened and the caribou released; this same autumn a large block of neighboring land, formerly refuge, was opened to deer hunting. The boundary of the new deer hunting area is no more than five miles from the point of release, and the liberated animals have lost their fear of man.

The implications of these recent developments reach beyond the boundaries of the State: conservationists the Nation over will hold the Minnesota Department of Conservation responsible if a single caribou is lost as a result of this blunder.—F.N.H.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Frederick N. Hamerstrom, Jr., Chairman