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"Dry! that lake is dry now. Dry as a powder horn!"

This is what had happened. The Donner und Blitzen had been dammed. The water that once filled Malheur Lake had been spread out through ditches to irrigate a great hay and cattle ranch in the Blitzen Valley above the refuge.

(over)

W. L. FINLEY, nationally known naturalist, is likely to establish a reputation as an economist. Speaking before the City club he pointed out that we are at one and the same time demanding greater federal expenditures and a balanced budget. He referred to demands in Oregon for the Willamette valley project, for more dams, for more public buildings, for more roads. It is not likely his reputation as an analyst will suffer by his statement that we must stop assaulting the treasury if we are to be able to stand.



MALHEUR--A "BONHEUR" WILDLIFE REFUGE

A radio talk by Howard Zahniser, in Charge, Section of Current and Visual Information, Division of Public Relations, U. S. Biological Survey, broadcast during the National Farm and Home Hour, June 9, 1938.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

And now we're ready for another Thursday visit with Howard Zahniser, of the U. S. Biological Survey--the country's wildlife service. Last Thursday he told us about the rabbit experiment station at Fontana, California. Today he takes us out west again, this time to Oregon, central Oregon, into the valley of the Donner and Blitzen River--A "German" river that flows into a "French" lake--Malheur. This story deals with the Malheur Migratory Bird Refuge in Oregon. All right, Howard.

HOWARD ZAHNISER:

Thanks, Wallace. And, How-do-you-do, Farm and Home Friends.

I enjoyed Mr. Kadderly's reference to the unusual combination of foreign names on the Malheur Migratory Bird Refuge. I can understand the German name for the river. Donner and Blitzen--Thunder and Lightning. There are plenty of storms that come over the valley from the Steens Mountains to the east and southeast--plenty to explain the Donner und Blitzen name even today. But that French name for the lake--"Malheur," bad luck, or misfortune--that's something else. I believe that the only thing there is in that name is history. If we must have a French name, "Bonheur"--good luck, good fortune-- would seem to me to be a better name today. Yet if we go back a few years--well, I'll tell you.

In the early years of this century William L. Finley one day discovered heaps of dead birds there. His companion asked him if there had been an epidemic, and Finley replied:

"Yes. Plume hunters!"

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Drought and the effects of overgrazing brought this "Malheur"--bad luck--period to an end. Nature foreclosed on the great hay and cattle ranch, and in 1935 the Biological Survey acquired the 65,000-acre ranch that stretched along the river for 35 miles. That added the Blitzen Valley to the refuge. Other acquisitions have brought the total area to 165,000 acres. The Biological Survey has improved nesting and feeding areas, and a dam with a new purpose has been put across the river. Instead of destroying wildlife areas, this dam insures them for the future by controlling flood waters and stabilizing water levels. Malheur Lake is once more a lake.

The Malheur Refuge is a good example of what has happened in this country in a good many places. First the area was exploited for its fur animals and its game. Then the cattle came. After then, came the time when the river water was diverted in order to irrigate the valley for agriculture. All this time the wildlife suffered, and in the end it became apparent that wildlife could after all make the best possible use of the area. Other uses were unprofitable, but it was an ideal wildlife area.

It is indeed an ideal wildlife area, and an especially interesting one, too. Every naturalist who has been there has been excited and enthusiastic over its marvellous population of birds. There has been more written about it than any other wildlife area in Oregon. For many years it was the greatest waterfowl breeding ground in the entire West. Two hundred different species of birds use the refuge, and naturalists have noted 41 species of mammals there.

At least 116 species of birds breed there, and it includes the farthest north colonies of egrets, white-faced glossy ibises, and black-necked stilts.

Restoring and developing the area for wildlife has had remarkable results. In 1934 when the Malheur Lake bed was dry, farmers stacked hay there. The stacks were still there when the Biological Survey started restoring the water. When the nesting season came, these stacks were islands, nesting islands for Canada geese, pelicans, and gulls. And all over the area the bird population began to increase.

It's almost too good to be true, that there was a 650 percent increase of Canada geese from 1934 to 1937. But it is true. In 1934 there were 200 Canada geese breeding there; in 1937 (last year), 1,500.

Increases have even been more rapid in other species. Mallard ducks from 200 in 1934 to 2,000 in 1937--900 percent. Gadwalls and baldpates also have each increased by 900 percent, and redheads 700 percent.

I think you all will agree that this is now a "Bonheur" Refuge--an area that has been "fortunately" restored from its disastrous condition to the uses of wildlife. But the name is still "Malheur", and perhaps it is better so "lest we forget".

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