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BIRDS CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT HOMES

(These wildlife articles written by William L. Finley
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The most important factor today in the conservation of wild birds is to have refuges where they are protected and which serve as breeding areas and as summer and winter feeding places.

The first federal reservation for the protection of wild birds was created by President Theodore Roosevelt on March 14, 1903. This was Pelican Island in Florida. After that, different Executive Orders were issued setting aside areas of public lands. Between 1903 and 1916, seventy waterfowl refuges were established.

It was not until 1929 when Congress passed the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, enabling the government to acquire areas for the protection of waterfowl. When Dr. E. W. Nelson was Chief of the Biological Survey, from 1916 to 1927, he called attention to the fact that the draining of a large number of ponds, swamps and lakes in the western part of the United States and Canada was rapidly decreasing the resting places and feeding grounds for migratory waterfowl, and this constituted one of the most serious dangers to the future of these birds.

In 1919 the Biological Survey began making a survey to determine the most suitable areas for refuges. Congress had passed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918, which gave federal protection to birds while in this country. Spring shooting was abolished and the federal government had the authority to regulate all hunting of migratory birds. Congress authorized appropriations of about \$8,000,000 for refuges in 1929, which were to extend over a ten-year period. However, on account of economic conditions, these appropriations were not carried out.

On March 6, 1934, the Duck Stamp Bill became a federal law. This provided a one dollar license fee for all duck hunters. During the fall hunting season for that year \$635,344 were paid in from hunting licenses. The law provided that ninety percent of all the license money should be spent for bird sanctuaries.

In addition to refuges created by Executive Order, a bill was passed by Congress in 1924 establishing the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge. In 1928, the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge was established in Utah.

The first three federal bird refuges established in Oregon by Executive Order were Three Arch Rocks off the Oregon coast, August 4, 1907; Lower Klamath Lake, August 8, 1908; Malheur Lake, August 18, 1908. The latter was one of the largest and best waterfowl areas in the country. Twenty years later this whole region was dried up and the lack of water destroyed the area as a bird refuge. A few years ago when money was finally allotted to the Biological Survey for the restoration of duck areas that had been destroyed, a study was made of all parts of the United States. Malheur Lake was chosen as the first area to be restored.

When wide areas in a partly arid country are left without ponds, swamps and lakes on account of drought and drainage, the water table lowers and the region is too likely to revert to a desert. The best examples of this are through the middle West. One of the great duck nurseries in the United States was the Upper and Lower Souris in North Dakota. Formerly it was the effort of land promotion schemes that destroyed this area for waterfowl. This also lowered its value for farming. A region where ducks cannot live is of little value to man.

The total breeding area included in marsh restoration projects that are being carried on by the Biological Survey is about 1,000,000 acres. This will produce many birds, but nevertheless the restoration of a million acres is not is not sufficient to bring back the days of long shooting seasons and large bags. If there are any who dream of the return of times when a gunner might legally shoot twenty-five or fifty birds a day over a season of three months, they are indulging in vain hopes.

The best estimates concede that somewhere between fifteen and twenty million acres of the finest duck breeding in the United States have been destroyed by drought and drainage. A large acreage in southern Canada has also been destroyed in the same way. We cannot hope to restore the conditions that existed when that whole territory was a great waterfowl nursery by the rehabilitation of 1,000,000 or 2,000,000 acres of marsh, although every acre restored will help us toward our objectives.

At the present time there are about 220 different wildlife refuges under the administration of the Biological Survey. The Souris Refuge in North Dakota is a good example of restoration. The two units of this refuge enclose about 80,000 acres of duck-producing marsh. A series of eight dams has been thrown across the river valley, and the two units, the Upper and Lower Souris, together control about 166 miles of the river bottom. On the Upper Souris a big storage dam will control about 110,000 acre-feet of water. This water will be stored during the spring run-off and is used for maintaining the level on the marshes below during the summer months. On the Lower Souris is an area of about 50,000 acres

on which will be maintained a maximum growth of food and cover plants.

There are five major refuges in North Dakota. The farmers have co-operated thoroughly in this work because restoring water in the dry lakes and marshes increase pasturage by sub-irrigation and furnish good watering places for stock. This will be a great help in tiding over drought conditions so prevalent in North Dakota in recent years.