

Annual Report
Crescent Lake Refuge
1937 - 38

ANNUAL 37-38

Annual Report
Crescent Lake Refuge

1937 - 38

Introduction:

In submitting this report as an annual, it would be somewhat of a misnomer. We cannot give the required data for the months of July, August, and September. The early migration both to and from this unit, during these months would be of interest. We have the record of the work progress during the above months, which we are giving in the following pages. Will take up the wildlife as from October 15, or the date of our arrival at this Refuge. All improvements, completed and incompletd, were done under the W.P.A. program. All work of men and crews referred to in this report, with the exception of supervision, was paid from W.P.A. funds.

This type of labor has proved very satisfactory, despite rumors, and some public opinion. At any time, we could find a man in the crew that was experience in almost any type of work that the occasion demanded.

Wildlife:

At the height of the migration during the latter part of October and early November, about 150,000 waterfowl were using this area. This estimate is based as an estimate only. By this area, we include not only Crescent Lake Refuge, but the adjacent lakes, that adjoin the refuge or in close proximity. We felt that an estimate of the waterfowl on only the Refuge lakes would not give a true picture of the area, when all waters were so closely related. Mallards were the predominating species, with Pin Tail and Shovellers a close second. Large numbers of Green Wing Teal were also observed. Gadwall, Baldpate, Red Heads, Canvasback, and Ruddys were also using the area in numbers.

Early in November, at the height of the migration, the lakes froze over completely, causing the birds to leave. Almost overnight they were gone. Large numbers alighted on Blue Creek, an area of running water and live springs, only a few miles from the Refuge.

On warm days when the lakes would thaw to some extent, ducks could be seen sitting on the ice of the lakes, or around the shore line. This was a common occurrence during the entire winter.

Several coveys of Sharp Tail Grouse were seen on the Refuge, as were also Prairie Chickens. During the worst part of the winter these birds would use our bird shelters and at times were seen feeding in the yard at Headquarters. Pheasants were numerous at all times. On sunny

mornings they would be congregated at the sunny side of the Residence throught the winter.

Because of the warm weather and winds during January, some of the lakes showed open water. Almost at once, the Mallards returned; probably from the Blue Creek Concentration. From this time on, the ducks were returning in ever increasing numbers. These too, were perhaps from the unfrozen waters of the Blue Creek area, and the Platte River. Some feeding was done during this period, but only at times when all food was under snow, are frozen beyond the ability of a duck to get food. Perhaps we are wrong in our assumption that hand feeding of waterfowl can be as detrimental to the good of the species as a shortage of food. We did not encourage the birds to remain, and fed only until the lakes would soon open up and natural food would be available.

March brought the spring migration; a sight to gladden the heart of the most sceptical. All local people agreed it was the greatest migration in years. The first birds to arrive in numbers were the Mergansers closely followed by the Pin Tail. At one time over 500 Mergansers were counted on Hackberry Lake. The male Pin Tails could be seen on every small pond, feeding along the shore line of the lakes and out in the damp meadows. In a few more days the females arrived, and at this time many other ducks,, including the Green Wing Teal, Red Head, Canvasbacks, and Whistlers.

The next migration of any consequence was the Shovellers. It seemed, at one time, that there was not room for others at Crescent Lake. Around the shore line for a distance of miles, it looked as if the lake wore a band of shiny brown and white. These birds moving in the sunlight, were a sight that will be long remembered.

The Snow Geese arrived about this same time, remaining about 30 days. At least 10,000 were here at one time. Several Blue Geese were mixed with the bands of the above. A few bands, perhaps 250 in the aggregate, of Canada Geese stopped only for a short time. One band of White Fronted Geese were seen on Island Lake, but they too, soon moved on.

April brought the later migrants: Blue Wing Teal, Ruddy's, and numerous shore birds -- Avocets, Phalaropes, Willetts, Yellow Legs, Dowitchers, and many of the Sandpipers. The Long-billed Curlew could be seen almost on all parts of the Refuge. A few Upland Plover remained throughout the summer, as also did the other shore birds mentioned. Only 3 nests of the Upland Plover were found, but it is believed there were several more. Two Marbled Godwit were seen, but no nests were found. The Avocets were the most numerous of the shore birds. On one island on Goose Lake, not an acre in extent, 68 Avocets nests were found at one time.

The Long-billed Curlew seemed to have a very successful nesting season as many broods of young were seen. 38 different kinds of small birds were observed in the trees and meadow at Headquarters.

Nesting Studies:

Nesting studies were begun here on May 6, by Junior Biologist, Ralph. H. Inler, of the Division of Research. By June 30, 232 nests were under observation. Results were very disappointing, owing to the depredation of our principle predator, Bullsnares. From data now available, it will seem over 50% loss will be due to this reptile alone.

The nests found on islands and where peninsulas were cut away from the main land, the successful hatches will more than double the balance of the area.

Nesting islands have proved their worth and all efforts will be directed toward the construction of more islands during the coming winter, when possible to work to advantage in these areas. Only two nests that were found on islands failed to hatch the entire clutch, and these two hatched in part.

While Skunk were accountable for some loss, as were also the Coyote, these predators were only guilty of a small part of the loss compared to the Bullsnares.

Predator Control:

Very satisfactory results were obtained on our predatory animal control work. 43 Coyotes were caught beginning in November; also 100 Skunks, 3 Weasle, 2 Badger and 1 Raccoon.

From last year's records a decided decrease is shown from the damage done this year to the nesting birds.

Improvements:

Many improvements were made during the past year. The small residence building here at headquarters was rebuilt into an attractive office and laboratory, equipped with toilet and lavatory, clothes closet and supply room.

A new flag-pole was erected and placed in a new location. This pole was set in the front of the Residence. It was set in a concrete block according to specification. A flag-stone walk was layed from the Residence to and around the pole. Another flag-stone walk was layed from the Residence to our new office building.

A supplementary water system has been installed at Headquarters, giving us another 5000 gallon water supply.

Secondary Headquarters:

Considerable work has been done at the secondary Headquarters. The house was painted on the inside and the outside was repaired and the roof was painted. It now has a very pleasing appearance.

A water system is now being installed, and a garage is being built. The barn was remodded, the entire grounds were cleaned of debris, and a telephone is being installed. When all is completed it will be a very desirable place for an Assistant to reside.

Douglas Tract:

Two and one-half miles of new wire fence were built, making the newly acquired Douglas tract fully enclosed. The balance of the fence around this 1800 acres was repaired

North Platte Refuge:

Three miles of new fence were built by a W.P.A. crew on the North Platte Refuge. The work was directed from this unit.

Sod House Valley:

The cabin at Sod House Valley, on the extreme eastern part of the Refuge, has been completed. A combination barn and garage is now being built at this location. This will give a shelter for a man and horse at this outlying point. It will be used by a Patrolman or a Predatory animal hunter, or others doing work on this part of the Refuge. The Telephone line from Headquarters to this cabin, has been completely repaired. Phones are in good working order. This line also connects with the Secondary Headquarters, giving us

communication with each point from Headquarters.

Road Repair:

Several miles of the worst roads has been covered with rushes, giving us a temporary road during the dry season. Cattle guards have been placed through fences on all of our main roads, and most of our secondary roads.

Signs:

Regulation entrance signs have been placed at both the North and South entrances of the Refuge. Recreational area sign has been placed at the recreational area at Island Lake. Headquarters sign will be placed as soon as received from the Waubay Refuge, where it is now being made.

Tree Plantings:

At all of our willow groves, under plantings were made, with food producing plants. Large numbers of native trees and plants were transplanted. The following trees and shrubs were planted during April and May:

877 Chinese Elm	801 Catalpa	1386 Green Ash
8902 American Elm	3162 Black Locust	751 Native Willow
781 Chokecherry	297 Wild Currant	361 Cottonwood
313 Lilac	2882 Osage Orange	507 Caragana
153 Russian Olive	131 Wild Plum	15,870 Honey Locust
	83 Pine	

With the frequent rains, and warm weather during this

period all trees received a start, which was all one could wish for

wish for. The trees and shrubs leaved out almost without exception.

Then came the grasshoppers. First they took the leaves, then the bark, and now we only have the slender sticks, that a short time before were young healthy trees. A few may live.

Seed Crop Planting:

A few acres were planted to Corn and Milo Maize. As we were somewhat sceptical as the feasibility of trying to raise this type of crop, only about 10 acres were planted. As there is now, not one plant is alive, and we are thankful that more time was not spent on this work. In no sense of the imagination can this country be classed as a farming country. We believe with our system of refuges, that feed can be raised in localities where a crop is assured and then be transferred to this type of Refuge, rather than try to raise it where the country is not adapted to farming.

Water Levels:

With the dry year of 1936 all Lakes were at an extreme low level with many dry. At the end of winter with its scant precipitation, the lakes were still low. Then came the rains. Water levels raised in our test wells and lakes raised as much as a foot during one storm according to records. Now all lakes and test wells are at a high level. Many of the depressions in the Sand

Hills are still holding water. Ducks are nesting where no water has been for several seasons.

Recreational Area:

Not over 50 people visited the Recreation Area at Island Lake this summer. About 400 small Cat-fish (Bull-heads) were caught. The fish were poor this year. Roads were almost impassable from both Oshkosh, and Alliance, due to washouts. The Recreational possibilities of this Refuge will never be great. We do not believe this area will ever hold but very little attraction for the Sportsman because of the poor roads, the great distance from any center of population, its type of non-game fish, and no shade trees.

Grazing:

Some 3000 head of cattle are now grazing on the areas leased to the Boyd-Abbott Cattle Co. Until this lease expires, May 15, 1942, about all we can do is watch the hills being overgrazed, erosion start, and the meadows out to the waters edge, and trampled during the winter. Pages could be written of the damage done to the nesting areas, or areas that would be nesting areas. The example of the possibilities is the Gimlet Lake area. This area was fenced in 1934, there being no grazing since. This nesting area of not over 100 acres, produced over 50 Duck nests, besides large numbers of Coot, Grebe, and Shore birds. When in the future, when grazing and Haying

is regulated on the balance of the Refuge, it can easily be seen, how the production of waterfowl will be increased.

Mammals:

Antelope are seen more frequently on the Refuge. One Doe and twin Fawns were seen on the extreme East boundary of the Refuge. Several small bands have been seen on various parts of the Refuge. Nowhere are they abundant, nor do they seem to have a fixed range, moving from the table lands to the Sand Hills and returning.

Western Duck Sickness:

A severe outbreak of this Duck sickness occurred from reports, in August and September 1937. Many dead birds were seen after our arrival at this Refuge on October 15. A few sick birds were picked up and brought to Headquarters for treatment. 50% were saved and released. In April and the first part of May 1938, another occurred on Deer Lake, on the Refuge, and Black Steer Lake, a lake lying about one mile from Deer Lake, and off the Refuge. No other lakes were affected. We now have a Duck Hospital under construction. We hope to be able to save at least a good percentage, in case another outbreak occurs.

Law Enforcement:

No cases were made during the year, no violation reported, nor do we expect any, as the general public's

respect toward the Refuge is of the highest. During the open Duck season, a patrol was made daily, not a shot was heard anywhere near the Refuge boundary.

Public Relations:

The people of this community are very friendly toward the Refuge, and are becoming moreso. All adjacent property owners are large cattle ranchers, and show the highest type of Western Hospitality. The people in the towns have shown an interest in the work we are doing. We made it one of our duties to explain to them the work we are doing toward the conservation of wildlife. Have spoken before the Rotary Club and Commercial Clubs of Oshkosh. Boy Scouts were invited to spend a week-end at the Refuge, in observance of Wildlife week.

These contacts have led up to the subject of securing Easements of some desirable wildlife areas. Progress is being made, and believe we will secure some Easements on the Blue Creek area, and also adjacent lakes.

Respectfully submitted,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. J. Kardner". The signature is written over the typed name "Kardner" and extends across the width of the signature block.

LIST OF BIRDS SEEN
CRESCENT LAKE REFUGE (NEBR.)

1937-38

WATERFOWL

Eared Grebes
Pied-billed Grebe
Western Grebe

Ring-billed Gull
Franklin Gull
Black Tern
Forster's Tern

Cormorants (probably double crested)
Pelicans
American Mergansers
Mallard
Gadwall
Baldpate
Pintail
Cinnamon Teal
Whistler
Green-winged Teal
Shoveler
Redhead
Canvasback
Lesser Scaup
Ring-necked
Buffle Head
Ruddy

Snow Geese
Canada Geese
Blue Geese
White-fronted Geese
Glossy Ibis
Great Blue Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
American Bittern
Sand Hill Crane
Sora
Coot

SHORE BIRDS

Wilson's Phalarope
Avocets
Wilson's Snipe
Dowitcher (Long Billed)
Stilt Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Long-Billed Curlew

Least Sandpiper
Spotted Sandpiper
Marbled Godwit
Lesser Yellow Legs
Willet
Upland Plover
Killdeer

INSECTIVOROUS

White-Crowned Sparrow
Western Tree Sparrow
Junco
Towhee
Rose-Breasted Grosbeak
Lark Bunting
Barn Swallow
Bank Swallow
White-Rumped Shrike
Northern Shrike
Red-Eyed Vireo
Black-Pole Warbler ✓
Audubon Warbler
Oven Bird
Western Yellow Throat
Longtailed Chat
American Redstart
Mockingbird
Catbird
Brown Thrasher
House Wren
Prairie Marsh Wren
Olive-Backed Thrush
Robin
Blue Bird, Mountain
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo
Red-Headed Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

Western Night Hawk
Kingbird (Eastern)
Arkansas Kingbird
Horned Lark
Eastern Meadow Lark
Western Meadow Lark
Magpie
Blue Jay
Crow
Bobolink
Cowbird
Yellow-Headed Blackbird
Red-Winged Blackbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole ✓
Bronzed Grackle
Rocky Mountain Grosbeak ✓
Red Poll
Gold Finch
Pine Siskin
English Sparrow
Lapland Longspur
Vesper Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lark Sparrow ✓
Brewer's Blackbird



NE-CRL-091

Crescent Lake Refuge, Headquarters
October, 1937



NE-CRL-092

Crescent Lake Refuge, Headquarters

June - 1938



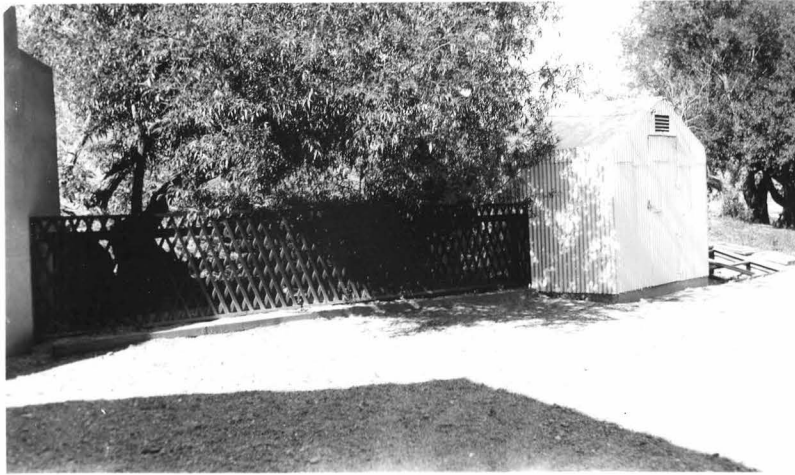
Hauling old cement for flag stone walks NE-CRL-093



NE-CRL-094
The start of walk and flag pole base



NE-CRL-095
Flag pole base complete, with walk



NE-CRL-096

Lattice fence both for "looks" and service



NE-CRL-097

The finishing of our Office building



NE-CRL-098

The secondary headquarters before work was started



NE-CRL-099

Trees trimmed



NE-CRL-100

The house Before work was started

- see next page-



Two views of the Residence at the secondary headquarters



NE-CRL-101



NE-CRL-102

Old cement platform at the secondary headquarters



NE-CRL-103

Building of garage and fuel shed on the above platform



NE-CRL-104

Rushes and hay left in field by
ranchers- hauling to roads



Haying roads

NE-CRL-105



This road impassable before "haying"

NE-CRL-106



NE-CRL-107

The start of a culvert to drain road



NE-CRL-108

Spreading loam on road



NE-CRL-109

Dragging road



NE-CRL-110

Cutting off peninsulas to make islands



NE-CRL-111

Another island almost completed



NE-CRL-112

Tree planting





NE-CRL-113
 These shelters are being rebuilt, bringing the back
 to the ground, leaving only small escape openings



Avocet Nest

NE-CRL-114

Another



Avocets on Island in Goose Lake NE-02L-115
68 nests found on this Island



Mallards coming into Crane Lake NE-CRL-116
January 1938



Same band as above NE-CRL-1170



Part of the furs taken on our NE-CRL-118
 Predator control project



This litter of skunks were all killed NE-CRL-119
 at one time.



One days catch of Coyotes NE-CRL-120



State crews seining carp through ice NE-CRL-121



Dead fish at Crane Lake NE-CRL-122