

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS FOR THE

BACK BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

1938

Nov - January 1939

NARRATIVE REPORT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

BACK BAY MIGRATORY WATERFOWL REFUGE

PUNGO, VIRGINIA

JANUARY 31, 1939

by

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BIOLOGICAL SURVEY STAFF

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Dgt.

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INTRODUCTION

The following report covers the work progress on the different jobs completed, those underway, also other statements pertaining to Wildlife Activities on the Refuge and adjacent areas during the period from November 1, 1938 to January 31, 1939.

Weather condition during this period have been most favorable for carrying on the different jobs in the field, included in these being: Boundary marking, sand fence construction, razing Ragged Island Clubhouse preparatory to reconstructing Labor-patrolman cabin, laying foundations for service building and Headquarters residence at Princess Anne site, clearing the Long Island property preparatory to farming, construction of boat and barge landing basins at Headquarters and Long Island, and experimental grass planting on sections of sand ridge along beach.

Approximately 105 to 110 men have been available for field service under the supervision of the Technical Service. Truck transportation has been adequate and road conditions good for transporting the field crews and materials to the different jobs in progress.

Water transportation has been carried on through the service of one cabin type utility boat during the progress of marking water boundaries, razing Ragged Island Clubhouse, clearing Long Island and constructing boat and barge basins.


Following the arrival of Mr. C. A. J. English, who assumed executive duty as Camp Superintendent on January 9, there has been a marked change in camp and field activities, and it is believed that through having the advantage of his experience the different jobs on the project will be stimulated.

BOUNDARY MARKING

The original proposal for marking the refuge boundaries was to use anchored buoys with signs attached, but owing to the difficulty of acquiring buoys at a practical cost, it was decided to carry out the job by using wooden posts spaced 500 yards along the water and land boundary lines. This job was completed on November 18 through the use of the utility boat acquired as camp equipment which proved most suitable for this type of job.

Weather conditions with practically no ice cover have been favorable for retention of these markings along the water boundaries. It is proposed that these markers will be more firmly established by jetting heavier piling when the boat and pump equipment is placed in operation which is being prepared for this purpose by the Technical Service.

Consideration is being given to the use of concrete posts in the construction of the stock proof fence along our Western land boundary and the smooth wire fence across the Wash Flats area on the East side between the bay and beach sand ridge. It is believed that concrete posts can be constructed at a practical cost, and their use will be justified due to their long life, compared to wood when used in marsh areas.



BEACH SAND FENCE AND GRASS PLANTING

Approximately 32,000 lineal feet of brush fence has been constructed along the beach between the Dam Neck Coast Guard Station and the Virginia-North Carolina State line. Weather conditions have been very favorable during the past three months for increasing the height of the sand ridge through the deposition of wind drifted sand.

It has required more time and effort, through longer hauls and scattered brush to place the brush fence material at the point of use, than during the first stages of construction on this job. Therefore, thought is being given to the production of future sand fence material by planting certain suitable areas on the refuge to seedling pine. It is believed in this way material will be available for future maintenance on the sand fence.

*not practical
REG*

Experimental grass planting has been tried on approximately 180,000 square feet along the West side of the present sand ridge. This was done on the refuge property, and observations of the root stock indicates the grass is becoming established. A longer time will be required before reliable results can be determined from this job. The supply of grass for re-setting this area has to be acquired from the low lying sand dunes Westward from the beach. The grass being re-set is a specie of "Ammophila".

WPK
Spartina alterniflora
also used. Advised
Bailey to plant
Ammophila only.
REG



OK
UAK.

Section of grass resetting along West side of sand ridge

RAZING RAGGED ISLAND CLUBHOUSE

In planning this job thought was given to the possibility of re-using a section of the clubhouse, by remodeling the large living room into suitable overnight quarters. Therefore, in razing this structure the section for remodeling was left, and floor measurements have been submitted to the drafting department for their information in planning design of final quarters to be constructed.

186 man days was required on this razing job with a recovery of reuseable material in the amount of approximately 22,000 board feet of lumber. This material is graded and stored in two remaining out-buildings. Approximately 147 man days was used in general cleanup and grubbing the yard and adjacent area of approximately two acres.

HEADQUARTERS DEVELOPMENT AT PRINCESS ANNE CLUB SITE

The plans are available and estimates have been completed of the materials required for construction of the Headquarters residence and the service building at the Princess Anne Club site. To date the job has progressed through the laying of the footings for the two buildings. This job should move forward with minimum interruptions.



Remainder of Ragged Island Clubhouse left for remodeling

CLEARING AND GRUBBING JOB ON LONG ISLAND

It being evident that a section of the Long Island property is adaptable to farming for the production of a good acreage of grazing for geese, clearing has been in progress preparatory to cultivation. The cleared area is being plowed with a double disc plow drawn by a Model 28 Caterpillar Tractor (Camp equipment) and operated by Camp personnel.

Rye preferable
With favorable weather conditions we should have this area sowed to rye and oats in experimental plots by February 15, and it is reasonable to look forward to the production of considerable grazing being available to the Northward migration of geese.

In carrying out this job it was necessary to develop a boat and barge landing on the property for landing men and equipment. Considerable effort was required in this construction on account of the amount of wet excavation encountered.

The tractor and farming equipment was transported to the Island by a borrowed barge towed by the camp utility boat. Bids are out for the purchase of lumber for the construction of a barge which is required for transportation of material to and from this island property.

All of the livestock which was grazing the Long Island property has been removed with the exception of approximately 15 to 20 head of hogs (wild) estimated by the owners. For final removal of this stock it is planned to burn the marsh area under favorable conditions and to have a sufficient crew for capturing the hogs which will be driven to the high open land on the island.



Showing section of Long Island
farm area



"The Limpkin" in boat and barge basin on Long Island

WATERFOWL AND FOOD CONDITIONS

(Practically all of the marsh ponds and quiescent waters on the refuge and adjacent areas produced large quantities of desirable food, such as Widgeon, Red Head, Sago, musk grass and celery. The "Wash Flats Area" produced considerable "Spartina" and "Three Square".

Throughout this period the refuge had held a large concentration of birds when the maximum number of waterfowl using the area approximated 11,000 Canada Geese, 6,500 Snow Geese, 1,000 Swan and 40,000 ducks.

Following practical depletion of the aquatic vegetation which lasted until about January 1, there was a diminishing number of birds using the area after around December 5 to 10. A number of geese are feeding on the "Spartina" on "Wash Flats" at the present time. Snow Geese are re-appearing on the "Wash Flats" at feeding area after disappearing for approximately two weeks.

The writer heard numerous expressions from reliable sportsmen during the season that, there has been a considerable larger number of geese and ducks on the Back Bay area than there has been during any of the last eight or ten years.



3600 Snow Geese rising off Sand Bay



Snow Geese rising from cove in Wash Flats

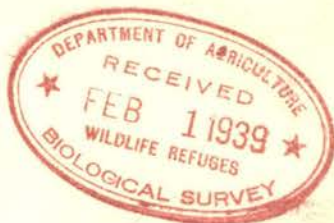
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Permits were issued to responsible local fishermen for commercial fishing in certain waters on the area during and following the shooting season. A large number of carp were taken by these fishermen which undoubtedly is a great help towards grass production in these waters, as their destructive habits to aquatic vegetation here are recognized.

Our boat "The Limpin" has operated with the minimum of trouble while used on patrol and other jobs.

Encouraging expressions have been made by local people and visiting sportsmen indicating the value of a waterfowl refuge to the Back Bay area.





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