

ROUTING SLIP

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE REFUGES

DATE: 12-10-1941

✓ MR. SALYER ✓

(1) ✓ ~~MRS. WOODIN~~ not 1/5✓ ~~MR. ELMER~~ acc 2/9/42~~MRS. GARVIN~~✓ ~~MR. BUMONT~~ PAD 1/30

SECTION OF HABITAT IMPROVEMENT:

~~Mr. Kabischok~~~~Mr. Smith~~ PWA 12/11/41~~Mr. Griffith~~ REC 12/11/41~~Miss Cook~~ rec 12-15-41

✓ SECTION OF OPERATIONS: ✓

~~Mr. Krumm~~ WS 2/24~~Mr. Gustafson~~ WS 3/20(2) ~~Miss Baum~~ not~~Mrs. Kricun~~

SECTION OF ERA:

~~Mr. Regan~~ WSR 2/1/42~~Dr. Bourn~~ WSB 2/26/42~~Mrs. Fishman~~

✓ SECTION OF LAND MANAGEMENT: ✓

~~Mr. Bernickow~~ PL~~Mr. Ackerknecht~~ 2-25 WSA

STENOGRAPHERS:

~~Miss Whorley~~ VW 12-13-41

✓ SECTION OF STRUCTURES:

~~Mr. Teylor~~ PL 4-8-42

REMARKS:

Crescent Lake Quarterly
August - October 1941

Return to:

Div. Files
Wildlife Refuges

Washington office

Narrative Reports

**CRESCENT LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
ELLSWORTH, NEBRASKA
DECEMBER 2, 1941**

**Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
500 National Building
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Dear Mr. Maurek:

I am enclosing my quarterly narrative report, covering the activities on this Refuge during the months of August, September, and October. I regret that I have not been able to get this report to you sooner, but, as you know, I was attending the In-Service Training School at the Patuxent Research Refuge (October 15 to November 21st) so this matter was delayed until my return.

Mr. Boultinghouse kept a splendid record of the bird migration, however he failed to take any pictures during this period. Therefore no migration pictures can be included with this report.

Yours Very Truly,

**Gene H. Crawford
Refuge Manager**



TRANSMITTED BY REGIONAL OFFICE

12/8/41

Handwritten signature

Narrative Reports

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TRANSMITTED BY REGIONAL OFFICE

12/5/41

CRESCENT LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Quarterly Narrative Report

August, September & October 1941

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Ellsworth, Nebraska

Gene H. Crawford

Refuge Manager

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TRANSMITTED BY REGIONAL OFFICE

12/8/41

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I GENERAL

A. WEATHER CONDITIONS

Snowfall	Rainfall	Max. Temp.	Min. Temp.
August	1.08 in.	99	45
September	3.08 in.	91	26
October	2.04 in.	78	16
Total Prec.	6.20 in.		

A comparison between the recorded precipitation of the quarter including August, September and October of 1941, and the same quarter of 1940, shows clearly that the sandhills enjoyed a much better fall season this year. It will be noted that 6.20 inches of precipitation were recorded as compared to 3.05 inches for the same quarter in 1940. This accounts for the fact that the shallow sandhill lakes did not dry up as they did last year. Consequently, a much larger number of waterfowl remained on the area during the summer season, and more birds on their southward flight used the lakes as resting areas.

Temperatures, too, were more moderate, with a maximum of 99 degrees in August and a minimum of 16 degrees in October. With cooler weather, evaporation took less from the shallow lakes. The area has not experienced the severe wind storms that are usual at this time of year.

FIRES

The quarter just past is generally considered the worst fire season of the year, and the increased growth of vegetation around the meadows and range lands kept us on the lookout for fires. The lightening storms which occurred last year and which started several small prairie fires on land adjacent to the refuge were not as prevalent during August, September and October of this year. We were very fortunate to have intermittent showers and moderate temperatures along with the absence of lighting storms and we went through the quarter without a sign of a fire on the refuge or adjoining areas.

II WILDLIFE

A. Migration (general)

Migration was not noticable on the refuge until the 15th of October. Northern pintail, bufflehead, canvasback, redheads, shovellers, ruddies, baldpate and gadwall began to put in an appearance on the 15th of October. On the 20th of October small flocks of lesser scaup could be observed on the lakes, but at no time did they number more than 1,200 birds. Between the 20th and 24th of October canada and snow geese arrived in about the same numbers. A count was made on the 27th and at that time approximately 8,000 of these birds were observed on the refuge and adjacent lakes.

B. Waterbirds

1. Population and Behavior

(a) Canada Geese

On the 20th of October small and large flocks of Canada geese began to wing their way from the north. Approximately 4,000 remained on the area until the close of the quarter. The larger portion of this flight didn't stop at the refuge, just continued on their way south.

(b) Lesser Snow Geese

We counted a flock of 182 snow geese flying southward over the refuge on October 9th but no more arrived from the north until about the 22nd of the month. Approximately 4,000 remained on (Crescent,) Island, (Swan) and Hackberry Lakes until the end of the quarter.

(c) Mallard

The mallard is our most common duck on the refuge, and approximately 1,000 ducks of this species were raised on the area this year. The northern mallards did not start coming in until most of the other species arrived. On the last two days of October they began to arrive in ever increasing numbers. On the last day of the quarter 25,000 ducks were scattered over our lakes.

(d) Gadwall

A few gadwall remained all summer and some were raised on Gimlet, Hackberry, Deer and Blue Lakes. Mr. Boultinghouse informed me that almost every hunter he checked near the area during the last week in October had one or two gadwall.

(e) Baldpate

A small number of baldpate arrived in September and on the 10th of October 250 were counted on the Refuge. This duck was very scarce during the first two weeks of the hunting season.

(f) Pintail

The pins were the first to arrive last spring from the south on their way north and were the first to arrive in any numbers on their southward journey this fall. The northern pintails started arriving on the 15th of October and by the 25th of October it was estimated 15,000 pintails were on the refuge, but by the end of the month their numbers had dwindled to approximately 10,000 birds.

(g) Green-winged Teal

This bird was somewhat like the mallard in that it was late in arriving. Between October 18th and 31st it increased in numbers, and at the end of the quarter was one of the most prominent ducks on the refuge.

(h) Blue-winged Teal

Approximately 500 BW teal were raised on the refuge during the summer, but by the time hunting season started very few teal remained.

(i) Shoveller

The shovellers started coming from the north on October 10th and continued to rest on the area until October 31st. Never were there more than 1,500 at any one time.

DIVING DUCKS

(j) Redhead

This duck remained with us all summer and approximately 70 were raised on Gimlet Lake. It is our belief that a few were raised on Deer Lake also, but we never could locate any young due to the heavy stand of hardstemmed bullrush which covered most of the Lake and marsh area. The northern redheads started arriving on October 12th and by the 25th their numbers dwindled. At no time were there more than 500 on the refuge.

(k) Canvasback

No canvasbacks remained on the refuge during the summer. The fall migration took place between October 12th and 25th about the same time as the redheads. Canvasbacks out-numbered the redheads about two to one during their migration, and the ones who remained on the area seemed to prefer the deeper lakes such as Crescent and Blue Lakes.

(1) Ruddy Duck

Ruddy ducks remained with us all summer and approximately 100 were raised on Gimlet Lake this year; Several broods were also located on Deer, Blue and Swan Lakes. The main flight of ruddy ducks this fall took place between October 12th and 20th. At the peak of their migration there were in the neighborhood of 7,500 on the refuge and adjacent lakes.

(m) Lesser Scaup, American Golden-eye and Buffleheads

There was a sprinkling of lesser scaup and buffleheads among the migrating ducks but their numbers were small. On October 20th 1,200 scaup were counted but at no time were there more than 200 buffleheads. By the end of the quarter these two species had disappeared from the Refuge. The golden-eye was very scarce and the only place they were observed was on a lake outside the refuge (Black Steer) and they were in about the same number as the buffleheads. By the end of October these too, at moved on south.

MISCELLANEOUS SPECIES

(n) Sandhill Cranes

On October 2nd we observed the first sandhill cranes going south over the refuge Headquarters. There were 400 in this flock, and from then on to the 18th of the month these birds could be seen or heard going south day or night. We had no way in which we could estimate their numbers but we know they were great.

(o) Long-billed Curlew

Again the sandhills were well populated with long-billed curlew and they showed a decided increase over last year. This area seems to be well adapted to this splendid bird, and thousands were raised not only on the refuge but all through this sandhill country. During the first two weeks of August large flocks of curlew could be seen on most any portion of the refuge and by the 19th of August all had winged on south for the winter.

(p) Other Misc. birds

During the summer the refuge was well populated with western willet, lesser yellow legs, avocets, Forester's and black tern as well as killdeer and sandpipers. Avocets increased over last year and they reared young in large numbers on Goose and Hackberry Lakes. Last avocets were observed on the area on October 25th.

2. FOOD AND COVER

Both the upland grasses and the aquatic plants made a much better growth this year than last, due to increased precipitation. The sandhill range land on both the east and west portions of the refuge improved one hundred percent. This was entirely due to improved moisture conditions. A complete examination has been made of the three areas on the western portion of the refuge which are covered by special use permits for grazing cattle. It is the writer's opinion that these special use

permits mentioned should remain in effect another year, because the range land has not only held its own but the cover has improved. The rest of the western portion of the range land which is controlled by Mr. Boyd, and whose lease expires next 15th of May has improved greatly. However it is the writer's belief that this area should remain idle next summer, because it has been severely over-grazed in the past.

On several of the lakes the aquatic plants made a exceptional growth. Both Gimlet and Deer Lakes produced a fair growth of sago pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*). Around the margin of all lakes we have a splendid growth of both softstemmed (*Scirpus validus*) and hardstemmed bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*). Near the northwest portion of Roundup adjacent to the shore line we have a three-acre patch of alkali bulrush (*S. paludosus*) which produced an abundance of duck food. Arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*) and smart weed (*Polygonum lapathifolium*) are abundant around Gimlet, Hackberry and Deer Lakes. These lakes were always abundantly populated by ducks.

3. DISEASE

(a) Botulism ✓

With the lakes at a higher level, very little botulism was found on the refuge this season. We had begun to think that we might escape it altogether this year, when the first signs of it were seen on Gimlet Lake. Student Assistant Braunwart, while

making a survey of the marsh area on Gimlet Lake, located one sick and 17 dead ducks on August 22nd. Between August 22nd and 27th 52 dead ducks and five infested ducks were found. The sick ducks were treated and released and the dead ones buried. Cooler weather followed this small out-break and no further signs of the disease were noted.

C. UPLAND GAME BIRDS

(a) Ringnecked Pheasants

The ringnecked pheasant is the only exotic specie of game bird found on the area. They have not increased in numbers to a great extent over last year, but are still very numerous around the edges of all the lakes which have splendid patches of sweet clover and weeds. These afford them both food and cover. The season on migratory waterfowl and ringnecked pheasants opened simultaneously in Nebraska on October 16th. It has been reported to the writer that several sportsmen bagged their limit of pheasants while hunting on areas adjacent to the refuge.

(b) Prairie Sharp-tailed Grouse

It was unusual during the first part of the quarter to locate any of these birds while going over the area by car or horseback, but during the latter part of September and October they appeared in numbers ranging from thirty to fifty birds. Several ranchers were contacted and all expressed the opinion that the grouse were more plentiful than in previous years.

(c) Grouse, Pinnated (prairie chicken)

Prairie chickens continued to be very scarce, however several broods were observed on the eastern part of the refuge and in the vicinity of Smith and Martin meadows on the western portion of the area during the first of the quarter.

(d) Big game animals

Antelope are the only big game animals on the refuge and they range on and off the refuge at will. This small herd numbers approximately forty animals. Only one young was observed this season. It is the common belief of the local people that either coyotes or poachers are responsible for the lack of increase in the antelope herd. We know that no poaching has taken place on the areas adjacent to the refuge as the ranchers appear to be very much interested in these antelope.

D. PREDATORS

Our bullsnake trapping for the season was brought to a close on September 30th. Traps which might be broken by cattle during the winter months were removed from the field and stored at Headquarters. During August and September we caught and destroyed 125 bullsnakes, making a total of 628 bullsnakes caught and destroyed during the 1941 season. In 1940 we caught and destroyed 832 bullsnakes, in other words the 1941 catch is approximately

25% less than the catch in 1940. We had every reason to believe that we would have a large catch of 17 inch snakes (young) in September as we did in September of 1940, however this did not materialize. It is the writer's opinion that we have caught the larger portion of the adult bullsnakes in the areas in which the traps were set before they had a chance to reproduce this summer. Next spring, summer and fall will be our third year of intensive bullsnake trapping on this area, and if our catch of snakes continues to decrease, we will know that it is a worthwhile enterprise.

Coyotes seem to be somewhat plentiful over the area and we intend to spend considerable time trapping this predator during the next quarter.

E. FISH

Bullhead fishing has been very poor on Island and Crane Lakes the last quarter. Bullheads are scarce because of the low water and the abundance of carp. At one time Island Lake was one of the best game fish lakes in the State of Nebraska. People using minnows for bait finally got the carp started in both Crane and Island Lakes. In September an order was placed for the purchase of 200 pounds of derris root containing not less than 5% rotenone for the purpose of poisoning the Carp in Crane Lake. I was advised that it takes twice as long to kill fish in water when the temperature of the water is 60

degrees F. as it does when the water is 70 degrees F. Therefore we have decided to wait until next spring to poison this Lake when conditions are satisfactory for poisoning. Upon the completion of the Crane Lake operations, a study of the results will be made, with the object in mind that if the treatment is successful, Island Lake will also be treated.

If it is possible to eliminate the carp from the two above mentioned lakes we can restock them with more desirable game fish and at the same time plant aquatic seeds and root stocks to make the areas more attractive to waterfowl.

III Refuge Development and Maintenance

During the last quarter Mr. Boultinghouse and the writer spent the major portion of our time in regular maintenance work such as repairing auto gates, fences, telephone lines, automotive equipment, mowing weeds along road lanes and hay-ing sandy stretches of road.

Student Assistant Braunwart was assigned to this Refuge on July 14th and he remained with us until October 11th. His work consisted of type mapping, bringing the tree and shrub planting records up to date and running the 67 bullsnake traps.

IV Visitors During the Quarter (Official)

1. Richard E. Griffith of the Washington Office who spent the evening of Sunday, August 17th on the Refuge and on Monday August 18th, thoroughly inspected the Refuge. A special study was made of the carp situation in Crane and Island Lakes.

*The Lake will
be checked if
it is too
poor
drugs
good
Feb*

2. On September 11th and 12th, Mr. F. C. Gillett, Refuge inspector, from the Regional Office visited the Refuge. The day of the 11th was spent in the office and in the field and an inspection of the North Platte Refuge was made on the 12th.

3. On October 6th Clyde L. Licking accompanied by State Warden Conover visited the area. A portion of the day was spent with these men discussing law enforcement problems.

Violations

Patrolling on the Refuge during the quarter took only a small portion of our time. However, the last two weeks of October which was the first part of the migratory waterfowl season, the writer was attending the In-Service Training School at Bowie, Maryland. It was necessary for Mr. Boultinghouse to spend considerable of his time patrolling the area, and he did a splendid job. He informed me that the first two weeks of the hunting season, duck hunters were scarce around the lakes adjacent to the refuge but all hunters out seemed to have good luck. Thirty one hunters were contacted during the first two weeks of the hunting season. All had duck stamps and licenses were in order. However they all complained of the warm weather and the scarcity of ducks and geese.

Grazing and Haying

The three men holding permits for grazing cattle on the area will remove all stock at the end of the summer grazing season November 15, 1941. The holder of the special use permit for the harvesting of hay will have all hay removed from the area by April 30, 1942. Accompanied by Mr Earl Douglas and one other person, the writer measured the hay which had been harvested on the Douglas Tract. We found that sixty six tons of hay had been harvested.

All fees for the special use permits for season 1941 have been remitted in full. Following is an itemized statement of revenue received.

Earl Douglas	Harvesting hay	66 tons	\$66.00
George J Dietlein	grazing cattle	90 head	\$91.08
Perry O. Campbell	grazing cattle	90 head	\$91.08
Wm. Keller	grazing cattle	75 head	\$70.50
Total			\$318.66

NORTH PLATTE REFUGE

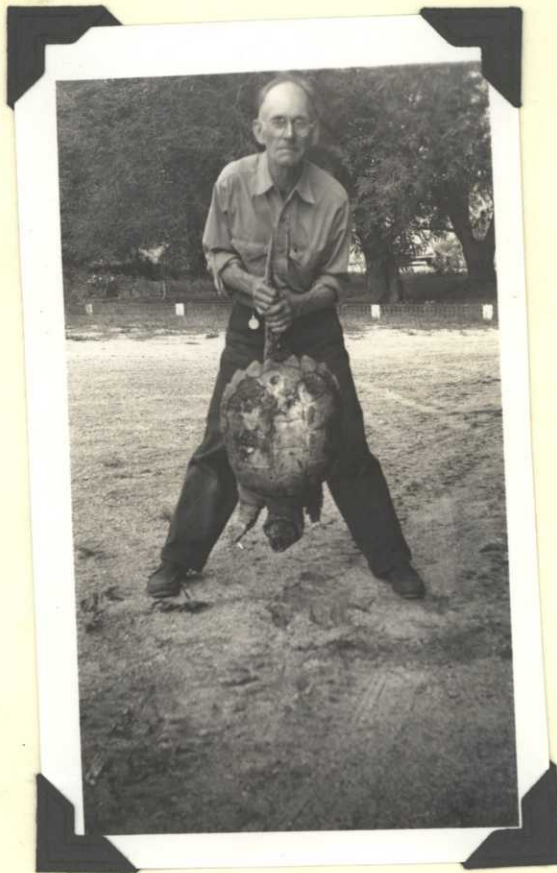
On September 12th, Mr. Gillett of the Regional Office and the writer visited the North Platte Refuge. This was the only inspection made of the area during the quarter. It was my intention to visit the Refuge during the migration. However, I was asked to report to the In-Service Training School on October 15th at Patuxent Research Refuge, Bowie, Maryland and consequently these plans did not materialize.

When I found that I would be unable to study the migration on the North Platte area, I contacted Mr. Clay Scott, Jr. Foreman of the V. C. C. Camp, who is stationed there, and I asked him to keep a careful check of the migration for my records. He estimates that on the last day of the quarter, October 31st, there were 325,000 ducks and geese on Lakes Alice and Minatare. I note that two years ago at this time, Mr. Maurek, Regional Director, estimated there were 250,000 ducks resting on this area, while last year there were only 80,000 on December 6th which date saw the greatest concentration of ducks during the fall migration. This latter decrease, of course, was due to the storms which struck the region causing the birds to continue their southward flight.

The North Platte Refuge has been completely posted with new Refuge markers. The need for recognition signs

for the area, has been brought to my attention as the local people refer to the place, as "Lake Alice" or "Lake Minatare".

Mr. Gillett solved this problem by ordering three No. 16 signs to be constructed, the work being done at the Sand Lake Refuge where labor and suitable materials were available.



One of eleven snappers shot on the Crescent Lake
Refuge in September.



Above is a picture of ducks on Gimlet Lake last August. Many broods of mallards, gadwall, redheads, ruddy's and B/W teal were noted on this Lake this summer.



A picture of Roundup Lake in September. This Lake is never very well populated with ducks. However this year several patches of prairie bulrush (*S. paludosus*) made a good growth around the margin of the Lake. It is our intention to try and make this lake more attractive to nesting ducks.



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A picture of Roundup Lake in September. This lake is never very well populated with ducks. However this year several patches of prairie burdock (S. paludosus) made a good growth around the margin of the lake. It is our intention to try and make this lake more attractive to nesting ducks.

