

FORT PECK

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS

FEBRUARY 1941 - JANUARY 1942

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ROUTING SLIP

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE REFUGES

DATE: 2-24-1939 42✓ MR. SALYER: JS ✓

SECTION OF HABITAT IMPROVEMENT:

① ✓ ~~MRS. WOODIN:~~ Nov 3/6~~Mr. Kubichek~~✓ ~~MR. ELLER:~~ ACE 3/9~~Mr. Smith~~ PRH 3/4/42~~MISS GARRISON:~~~~Mr. Griffith~~ VEG 4/9/42Longmont (PAD) 3/16/42~~Miss Cook~~ onc 4-3-42

✓ SECTION OF OPERATIONS: ✓

SECTION OF ERA:

~~Mr. Ball~~ WK 3/12~~Mr. Regan~~ NR 4/11/42~~Mrs. Watkins~~ NR~~Dr. Bourn~~ WSB 4/11/42~~Mrs. Kricun~~~~Mr. Sommers~~~~Mr. Gentry~~ NR 4/6~~Miss Riley~~

✓ SECTION OF LAND MANAGEMENT: ✓

STENOGRAPHERS:

~~Mr. Fennshaw~~ 3~~Mr. [unclear]~~~~Mr. Ackelmecht~~ 4-31

DIVISION FILES:

✓ SECTION OF STRUCTURES:

~~Mr. Saylor~~ Nov 5/2

REMARKS:

F.A. Peck Quarterly
November - January 1942Return to: Dist. Files


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fort Peck Game Range
Fort Peck, Montana

QUARTERLY REPORT

November, December, January

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QUARTERLY REPORT

November, December, January

I. General.

A. Weather Conditions.

	<u>Snowfall</u>	<u>Rainfall</u>	<u>Max. Temp.</u>	<u>Min. Temp.</u>
November, 1941	<u>11.25"</u>	<u>1.94"</u>	<u>61.5</u>	<u>-11.9</u>
December, 1941	<u>1.25"</u>	<u>0.18"</u>	<u>58.9</u>	<u>-21.4</u>
January, 1942	<u>2.00"</u>	<u>0.12"</u>	<u>48.8</u>	<u>-23.4</u>
Total	<u>14.50"</u>	<u>2.24"</u>	Extremes <u>61.5</u>	<u>-23.4</u>

Weather conditions were peculiar, even for Eastern Montana. November was mild, as to average, but with very heavy snow on the 17th, 18th, and 19th, followed by sub-zero weather. No appreciable damage to game came from this weather, though the combination of cold and snow was reaching the danger point for upland birds when the weather broke. Serious transportation difficulties were caused by this weather.

December was also mild, and very muddy for the first week from the melting November snow. A sub-zero wave started late in the month. Precipitation for the calendar year was 13.93 inches, some .62 inches above the accepted normal. Mean temperature for the calendar year of 1941 was 45.4 degrees, or 4.4 degrees warmer than average. Contrary to popular opinion, the prevailing wind direction for the year was East.

For two years in succession precipitation was above average, and the range went into the winter in ideal condition.

January, 1942, started with a very cold week, which moderated into warmer than average weather before serious damage to game was done. The month was rather mild after January 8th.

B. Water Conditions. The reservoir elevation was 2121.58 feet on November 1st, and 2134.49 feet on January 31st. The elevation is within some 3 feet of the all time high of 1938, but the War Department does not know whether water will be stored further for operating the less than half-built power plant, or whether power will be ignored and the water used as before for navigation in the lower Missouri.

C. Fire. There have been no fires reported and no apparent fire damage during the report period.

II. Wildlife

The waterfowl migrations, past its height at the beginning of the report period, dwindled rapidly after November 15th. A few mallards, largely drakes, stayed around such open water as existed, and are still staying. About a thousand mallards congregated in the Fort Peck seep ditch and below the tunnels by Christmas. The snow and sub-zero weather weakened the birds rapidly and I began feeding them on January 3rd. Up to January 10th I fed about half a ton of barley, originally obtained through the influence of Mr. Roahen for the Valley Sportsman's

Association. About January 10th there was a sharp break in the weather, the ducks started to again feed in the fields, while the channel opened up for several miles down stream, relieving the ducks from the restricted water area. Since January 10th we have occasionally given the ducks a sack or two of grain whenever there was enough snow to cover the ground. We have observed them every day or two for signs of starvation. There has been a small loss from normal winter kill, and perhaps a dozen ducks have been killed by the 32 wire electric lines. These dead birds and a few weak birds are cleaned up by magpies, hawks, and coyotes.

B. Upland Birds.

Counts or even estimates of upland birds in this vast country are futile, but the unimportant -- on the Game Range -- Hungarian partridges and pheasants have doubled in wintering numbers as compared to last year, there is a definite increase in sage hens, and sharptail grouse have doubled or more than doubled. The peak of the sharptail cycle locally should be 1942 or 1943, if the weather stays favorable.

There have been large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings in the locality during late December and January. These birds are said to not be regular winter visitors. I did not see any last year.

C. Big Game.

Following our last quarterly report, I was interrogated

on our failure to list numbers and observation dates as to big game. This was explained by letter, and may rate some repetition.

We rarely see deer, though my contacts with several coyote trappers who work within or near our boundaries indicate that deer are definitely increasing. Law observance has improved, shooting was legally prohibited in Phillips County, and this is, thus far, the second very mild winter.

Antelope are seen about every time I am out, and the opinion is that they are also on the up grade, but I am not seeing any more than a year ago. It may be due to the bands being smaller.

A State and Pittman-Robertson survey of this area, made last summer, has been in my possession since November, but I have been unable to get copies to the Regional Office because I could not get blank maps, even though I have been trying for many weeks. Copies of the Pittman-Robertson report will be sent in as an amendment to this report as soon as the maps can be obtained.

There is no record of game being injured by over-grazing with the single exception of the area on the East side of the Big Dry near where Garfield County crosses that stream. War Department lands over-grazing has apparently ruined some antelope range. There is not enough land involved to be serious

thus far, and there is nothing to be done until the War Department land policy is modified.

D. Fur-bearing Animals, Predators, Rodents and other Animals.

In spite of tremendous numbers of coyotes being taken, I have seen twice as many coyotes as I saw last year. We are at or near the peak of the cottontail rabbit cycle and mice are also abundant. There is thus much coyote food. Possibly there is a coyote drift toward the breaks to get away from the aerial hunters. The recent designation of four predator hunters for work exclusively on the Game Range may take care of the coyote situation.

Mice, we repeat, are numerous, and jack rabbits as well as cottontails are on the up grade. In the country in general, however, jack rabbits have been hunted extensively for their skins, which have been worth up to \$.42 each. If skins continue to be half that price, I doubt if jack rabbits will become a pest.

There are no records or indications of appreciable damage from either predators or rodents during this report period.

E. Fish.

Fishing this winter is restricted to ice fishing for ling, and catches are small. Fishing is legal all winter and set line for ling is permitted. There was sporadic wall-eyed pike fishing through November, but catches were small.

III. Refuge Development and Maintenance.

A. Physical Development

The only physical development was a continuation of

boundary location and boundary posting along roads and trails until the temporary appointees on this work were laid off December 8, 1941. The boundaries were cut by roads and trails were located and posted in all of Valley County, in Phillips County east of the mouth of the Musselshell, and in McCone County, and a little of Garfield County about half way down the Game Range sweep of the Big Dry. Temporary Patrolmen W. E. DuBeau and Charley E. Pierson did a very effective job for the time that was available, though the last half of November was most unsatisfactory for travel.

IV. Public Relations

During this report period, very important assistance has been given to the State of Montana in the establishment of a bird farm adjacent to Fort Peck. This farm is well along at the end of this report period. It is supposed to produce 10,000 pheasants this year, and eventually 25,000 a year. The superintendent, Mr. V. W. Bailey, has done everything he can to show his appreciation for our help. I think that this cooperation is desirable and natural, though the State development is likely to be so swift and spectacular that we will suffer by comparison.

Official visitors during this report period were few; they included Mr. Kreager of the Regional Office, State Fish and Game Commissioner Elmer Johnson, State Pittman-Robinson Coordinator Dr. Vosburg, and Paul Campbell, President of the Valley County Sportsman's Association. Local ranchmen, coyote hunters, State game wardens, the neighboring Refuge employees,

and local sportsmen have been frequent visitors. There have been many job hunters, largely low grade, who have called.

There have been many heavy demands through the school organizations, Scouts, American Legion, and so on, for various patriotic and civilian defence activities. This is especially true since the start of the war. Though little official time as such has been expended on these activities, spare time is absorbed to such an extent that there is scant opportunity to devote extra hours to official work. This situation is likely to be worse before it is better.

V. Economic Uses.

Though the methods for getting firewood cutting permits have been worked out fairly well, we have thus far had no wood-cutting permit applications forwarded through the Grazing Service. This condition I predicted. The relatively few inhabitants within the Game Range boundaries are such that we do not know whether they are cutting on State land, private land and War Department land, where they can cut legally as far as we are concerned, or whether they are trespassing on Public Domain. On the east two-thirds of the Range, we have largely stopped the 40 to 60 mile wood and post hauls, which often were incidentally hunting trips. This wood situation is going to be something of a problem for some years to come.

The Grazing Service has issued Taylor Grazing Act permits for grazing over a good share of the Range. Grazing

is not yet excessive, but I predict that we will have serious over-grazing in about two years, or perhaps less, no matter how favorable the precipitation conditions. Only agreements with the Grazing Service and the War Department, plus an adequate patrol force of our own, can stop it.

Some photographs are available but the fact that the Range was short of a clerk during a month of this period has made it impracticable to get the photographs mounted and captioned.



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