

NIOBRARA

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS FOR THE
NIOBRARA WILDLIFE REFUGE

1939

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS

FEBRUARY 1939 * JANUARY 1940

IN REPLY REFER TO

Fort Niobrara

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

406 Post Office Building

Omaha, Nebraska

February 10, 1940

Chief, Bureau of Biological Survey

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

There is enclosed quarterly narrative report
for the Fort Niobrara Game Preserve for the period
November 1, 1939 to January 31, 1940, submitted by
Refuge Manager Amundson.

Quarterly grain report for the same period is
also enclosed.

Very truly yours,

Burnie Maurek, Regional Director
By

M. J. Furness
Sr. Administrative Assistant

/ab

Encls.



IN REPLY REFER TO

Port Highbury

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

405 Post Office Building
Omaha, Nebraska
February 10, 1940

Chief, Bureau of Biological Survey

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

There is enclosed quarterly narrative report
for the Port Highbury Game Preserve for the period
November 1, 1939 to January 31, 1940, submitted by
Refuge Manager Lundson.

Quarterly game report for the same period is

also enclosed.

Very truly yours,

Barrie Munnick, Regional Director
By

M. J. Townsend
Sr. Administrative Assistant

Encls.



THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY
FORT NIOBRARA GAME PRESERVE
VALENTINE, NEBRASKA

IN REPLY REFER TO

R-Fort Niobrara,
Reports, Quarterly

January 31, 1940.

Regional Director,
Bureau of Biological Survey,
Post Office Box 1269,
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear Sir:

I have enclosed herewith in duplicate Quarterly
Report of Activities on Fort Niobrara Game Preserve
for the period of November 1, 1939 to January 31, 1940.

Also attached thereto is Quarterly Grain Report.

Very truly yours,

Geno A. Amundson

Geno A. Amundson,

Refuge Manager.

Encl.

2

enc

THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY
FORT NIOBRARA GAME PRESERVE
VALENTINE, NEBRASKA

IN REPLY REFER TO

R-Fort Niobrara,
Reports, Quarterly

January 31, 1940.

Chief, Biological Survey,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Quarterly report November 1st, 1939, to January 31, 1940, on the Fort Niobrara Reservation, Wildlife and activities appurtenant thereto.

1. Report on Weather during the period:

1. Weather:- The weather was very good for field work from November 1st., to December 23rd. It started snowing the morning of the 23rd., and we still have that snow. The weather turned cold and remained that way until January 27th., before there was a break. The weather warmed enough to enable us to open some roads, and get around the Refuge. The coldest was 23 below zero, and there were many days continuously that it remained below zero day and night.

There is not much frozen soil to date which enables us to work roads and rebuild fence.

2. Report of Wildlife observed during the period:

1. Buffalo:- The main herd of buffalo is in the east pasture, and a small bunch of 20 head, all bulls except

3, are in the north buffalo pasture.

The buffalo are all looking fine in spite of the long cold spell.

We disposed of 34 head this quarter, 18 of them were long yearlings, that is about 18 months old. They dressed out from 330 to 400 pounds each. We disposed of 9 females and 9 males and made it a point to always select the smallest animals so the larger ones remain to build up the herd.

The 16 remaining animals were mostly selected with the view in mind of improving the looks of the herd by removing animals with imperfect horns and animals that were very old.

A big game hunter who collects all kinds of game animal heads, Mr. Jack Lane from Winfield, Kansas, bought a very old bull, with an exceptionally fine head and we skinned it for mounting. He was very pleased with the head, but after looking at the dark stringy meat he decided to give that away to Charity.

We have been feeding hay to the herd in the east pasture since the snow came.

I butchered the bull that was in the pond pasture for exhibition purposes, as he was a very inferior animal and selected a good looking 3 year old bull to replace him.

2. Elk:- I opened the gates at the fence lane between the north buffalo pasture and the pasture south of the river where we winter the buffalo main herd. The buffalo herd moved back and forth between these pastures, and so did a part of the elk.

Our bridge across the Niobrara river is in this lane, and also our road used to drive to the north part of the Refuge. We had a fence stretched and suspended across the river on some cables above and below the bridge. This fence turned the buffalo, but the elk that like to play in the water waded in the deepest part of the river and ducked under the fence, and 11 of them were out on the river strip at one time.

The elk were all returned to the pastures except 3 very wild ones. One of these was an old bull that would show up in the evenings and mornings at a rancher's place east of the Refuge. I shot him one evening planning to ship the carcass to a buyer, but when I walked up to stick him, I found a large running wound rendering him unfit for sale, and he was very poor also, so we buried him the next day.

The second of these 3 elk shot was a very old cow and her carcass was transferred to the Indians, and the 3rd was a spike bull that was so wild I was unable to get him until after all our orders for elk were filled. He was also given to the Indians.

The spike bull was in excellent flesh, he had fattened on acorns, as the contents of his stomach was largely acorns and browse.

A nice pair of young elk was sold to a rancher in New Mexico for breeding purposes.

A total of 11 head of elk was disposed of this season.

The elk are partly in the north pasture this winter, a part of them are in the east pasture.

3. Deer:- The native wild mule deer were very numerous on the Refuge this fall. I counted 18 head one day on the river strip between the north and south pastures, and I know there were a number of them on other parts of the Refuge that we did not visit.

I saw a wild white tailed doe on the river strip, this was the first wild white tailed I ever saw.

Some of the deer in the pond pasture were not looking very good this fall, and during the cold weather 2 of them did not come for their feed of grain. We found 1 of them dead and have not located the other and have not reported ~~him~~ missing because of the possibility that it might have escaped.

One of the large does had a swelling on her left jaw for a few days, but it has receded and she is looking fine again.

4. Texas Longhorns:- The longhorn cows, heifers and calves are in the Stromberg pasture southwest of Headquarters. We have hauled some hay to them since the storm.

The 4 steers are on the Christopher place, north of the Minnechaduza creek. They have spring water and plenty of grass and during the worst weather hay was given them.

5. Predatory, Fur bearing, and Rodent Mammals:- The coyotes are quite plentiful again on all parts of the refuge, one sees from 1 to 3 while driving over the refuge. We will again soon receive complaints from ranchers living adjacent to the refuge that we are harboring and raising coyotes that come out and eat their poultry and young livestock.

In the north buffalo pasture the coyotes started eating the fruit from the prickly pear cactus and continued to eat from the bumper crop until the snow came and buried the cactus plants.

The beavers continue to increase on the refuge. In addition to plugging pond overflow pipes, they are cutting trees and blockading roads with them. They are felling trees on the big game fences and have cut more trees in the past two years than we were able to plant and get started to grow with the hundreds of dollars spent under ECW.

There are a few muskrats on the ponds. We have a good supply of raccoon and many skunks. There are a few bobcats and mink.

6. Reptile Life & Insects:- No observations made this quarter.

7. Birds:- By November 5th., there were approximately 5,000 mallard ducks staying on the refuge, and feeding in corn fields in South Dakota.

When the snow and cold weather came a part of these ducks moved up the Niobrara river to some spring fed creeks and on the 9th of January I counted 2,240 still remaining on the refuge.

We fed them some grain during the worst cold spells of weather when it was so windy and cold they did not, or could not fly out for feed.

On December 3rd., I saw a Golden eagle catch a mallard hen duck while both were in flight. There were a number of ducks getting off Crooked Creek pond. The eagle had been sitting in a tree, he left and flew in the thickest of the ducks and caught this duck very easily. I have seen the eagles try many times to get a duck, but this was the first time I ever saw one successful.

In November we had many more prairie chickens and grouse than we have now, they must have migrated south.

Each year our number of pheasants increase on the southwest part of the refuge, and this year there must be over 500. They have been eating acorns all winter, they scratch them out of 10" of snow on the sides of the canyons when the snow was the deepest.

I picked up 2 pheasants that had broken their necks on the barbed wire fence on the west side of the river where they come from the timber on the east side of the river each night to roost, and they return to the timber at dawn. 1 old male I picked up had 28 acorns, in his craw, in his gizzard he had some choke-cherry seed and coral berry seed, and he was a little short of ^{of} coarse grit.

Most of the crows and magpies left when the snow came the 23rd of December.

I counted 53 waxwings on the west arm, but was unable to determine which specie they were.

We do not have as many eagles staying on the refuge this year as we had last year.

3. Other Activities:

1. Grazing, Food & Cover Plantings:- When the snow leaves there will be plenty of grass for all the animals. The ground is very dry and much rain is needed to start the pastures growing and the hay ^Rground also.

2. Protection:- The refuge was patrolled as usual by refuge personnel and by having WPA crews scattered over the refuge gave added protection.

3. Improvements and Maintenance:- Some improvements were made to roads mostly hauling clay for surfacing and construction of rock dips at points where the roads start down a hill from

a flat. These dip like basins catch the water that comes off the flat and diverts to one side, thus preventing water from running down wheel tracks and cutting out the roads. We made some repairs to creek crossings on Crooked Creek and hauled some surfacing on roads there.

We rebuilt the big game fence lane that connects the north buffalo pasture and the pasture south of the river. This fence had been constructed so that the game animals would cross through the river, and we had fence stretched across the river suspended on cables. This was not successful because the elk would wade in the channel of the river duck under the fence and get out. The new arrangement will make it necessary for all the animals to cross back and forth across our bridge. This work is completed except for a few minor adjustments.

The fence around the Heimbürger pond in the east pasture was repaired, and this crew also removed fence used around the big piles of baled hay formerly stored in the east pasture and also a fence trap that was constructed at one time for transferring the animals south across the highway.

About 3" of the top soil was removed from in front of the office, and the dirt was hauled away and filled in the ditch at the highway entrance where we will install the new refuge sign. Grama grass sod will be transplanted to the area in front of the office.

Considerable cleanup work has been finished around the buildings north of Headquarters. However, there still remains a large amount of work to get this area cleaned as it should be.

4. Public Relations:- On November 1st., Ivan D. Wood, head of the Forestry Department and Professor A. L. Frolik head of the Agronomy Department, both from the University of Nebraska spent several hours going over the refuge.

5. Miscellaneous Activities:- Mr. F. C. Gillett was here November 7th and in addition to spending sometime in the office, he assisted us to corral some elk.

Mr. Maurek joined us at the breakfast table the 16th of November and after spending several hours with me in the office he left for Lake Andes.

We sorted out a number of old doors and windows and listed them as surplus material.

4 work horses were rented to expedite the work of road surfacing and we have used them for hauling hay to the game animals and in that way making the truck available for work on the projects at all times.

The grain binder surplus to our needs was crated and shipped to Mr. George E. Mushbach at Pablo, Montana.

Mr. B. N. Anderson was here January 15th and 16th ., checking files etc., in the office. At noon on the 16th I took him out to the Valentine Lakes Refuge. It started storming that night and Dr. Sharp called me the next morning to have me meet his car half way as he was bringing Mr. Anderson back in anticipation of a bad storm blockading the roads. The roads werenot open again for 8 days.

-10-

As I have no pictures of any interest there will be
none accompanying this report.

Very truly yours,

Geno A. Amundson

Geno A. Amundson,

Refuge Manager.

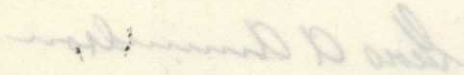
CC: Regional office.



As I have no pictures of any interest there will be

none accompanying this report.

Very truly yours,



Gene A. Anderson

Refuge Manager

cc: Regional office.

