

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

NIOBRARA GAME PRESERVE,
VALENTINE, NEBRASKA.

IN REPLY REFER TO

R-Niobrara
Reports

1934.
December 31, 1935.

Chief, Biological Survey,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Quarterly report from October 1 to December 31, 1934
on the Niobrara Reservation Wild Life and Activities appur-
tenant thereto.

I. Report on Wild Life observed during the period.

✓ 1. Buffalo - At the end of the quarter there were
111 buffalo on the Refuge; 25 having been disposed of under
the disposal program; 4 transferred to Custer State Park at
Hermosa, South Dakota; 1 death and an increase of 3 by birth
made a total of 138 at the first of this quarter. (31)

The herd is looking fine at the end of the quarter and
I hope I will be able to keep them looking that way till grass
comes next spring.

There were no animals in the herd this year with a large
part of their hair gone, like there has been the past two years.
Last fall I kept a cow in the pond pasture for observation, that
was so bad, and this fall she was in fine shape. I do not know
if this can be attributed to feeding the animals a mineral mix-
ture for the past year or so. At any rate, the herd looks much
better.

I corraled the buffalo the 13th of November; counted the
calves as the entire herd was run through the cut pen of the
corrals and held back all the yearlings and some of the two year
olds, and then returned the herd to the North pasture again.

The herd was driven out of the North pasture and corraled
in the same day this year; Two years ago it took four days and
last year three days.

One spring calf was hurt during the corraling process and
died about the first of December. At least there was a sick calf
in the North pasture the last of November and I attributed it to
an internal injury inflicted during the corraling of the herd.

Custer State Park at Hermosa, South Dakota, received, by
transfer, four nice young bulls. They came for them with crates

on a big truck and hauled them to the Black Hills. Mr. Wm. T. Collings who bought 15 head, during the solicitation of bids, hauled his animals in a stock truck with a top on. They were all loaded in the truck loose.

One heifer belonging to Mr. Collings was injured while they were in the corral waiting for the truck to back to the chute and it had to be killed and butchered. The other buffalo ganged up on this animal and gored her to death.

Nine were butchered for the Indians at Rosebud, South Dakota and one 4 year old bull was butchered for Mr. Smith at Ainsworth, Nebraska. This animal was purchased under the bids.

On the 30th of November the herd was again driven south of the River, from the North pasture, for the winter. They have hay stacked in the East pasture for feeding them this winter. Eight animals were left on the North side; seven of them young bulls that cut back from the herd as we nearly had them to the gate leading out of the pasture.

Elk - The Elk herd was cut down considerably this year to make more room for the buffalo and leave more hay for the buffalo. The elk herd was in good condition this fall in spite of the dry season and feed shortage.

Some of the Elk were in the North pasture, east pasture and on the strip of land along the River between the two pastures. Some of the elk between the pastures started to get out early this fall by wading out in the River to where the water was deep and then walking and crawling under the fence that was stretched across the River about ten inches above the water. One of them was shot the early part of October and the carcass was delivered to the Indians of the Rosebud Indian Agency.

Some of the Elk in the east pasture were corraled the 17th of November enabling us to cut out four head to be shipped to Texas and one young heifer for placing with the young bull in the Pond pasture, later to be moved into the new exhibition pasture west of the road west of Headquarters. The elk were corraled and worked over the same day.

Four elk, two bulls and two heifers were shipped to Spofford, Texas to Mr. R. W. Morrison of San Antonio, Texas for breeding purposes. Twenty-four head were butchered for the Indians at Rosebud, South Dakota and two were butchered for the V. C. C. Camp at Columbus, Nebraska; the same Company that used to be here on the Refuge. Mr. Morrison desired to purchase some additional elk.

Antelope - The antelope herd is the same as it was the end of the last quarter. They are looking in fine shape. A stack of

hay that was harvested out south was stacked and fenced off for them in their pasture, which they spend a good share of their time, during cold weather, eating from.

Deer - We tried to get a buck deer from Custer State Park at Heromsa, South Dakota last quarter but were not successful. About the middle of October I received a wire from the Superintendent of the above mentioned Park stating they had a buck deer for us. I left at noon; drove to the Park arriving a little before 6 P. M.; crated and loaded the buck deer, and drove back to the Refuge that night by 11.30. I unloaded the deer and the next day he was out and in a herd of cattle Southwest of headquarters one-half mile or so. He was returned to the Pond pasture and in a day or two he was out again and returned. The next time he got out I never heard of him again.

The first part of November I received word from the City of Ft. Dodge, Iowa stating they had a number of buck deer and that we could have one, as a donation from them. I drove after a buck and liberated him with the doe and two fawns and he is still with us.

I expect to get fawns from the old doe, next year, and probably from the fawns as they are long yearlings, and they very often breed at that age.

Predatory, fur bearing animals, and Rodents - There are a few coyotes, bob cats and wild domestic cats over the Refuge this winter, but not like they have been the past few years.

No trapping has been done on the Refuge this quarter. I destroyed several wild domestic cats with the shotgun. The beaver along the river are well under control, and are not cutting much timber this winter. They have been reduced in numbers the past two years.

The fur bearing animals are about the same in number as last spring and summer. There are a few rats in the ponds that will have to be removed as they may tunnel under a dam and let the water out which would wash out the dam.

Some work by pocket gophers has been done over the Refuge, indicating it will be advisable to cover the Refuge again with Poison grain.

Birds - About 300 Mallard ducks have stayed on the Refuge this quarter. There were more of them early but as there was no feed in this part of the Country they left.

About the same number of eagles are staying on the Refuge again this winter, both kinds. There is a large number of magpies and crows. The most magpies I ever saw on the Refuge.

Upland game birds are fairly well distributed over the Refuge. I don't think there are as many quail as a year ago. Prairie chickens are numerous, most of them migrated in from the North. Grouse are in numbers about the same as last year.

Reptile life - A den of rattle snakes were found at the foot of the lookout tower in the North pasture during October and a total of seventeen snakes were killed. I hope to get the balance of them next spring when they start to come out.

II. Other activities.

1. Grazing - The grass is very short over the Refuge. The big herds were left in the North pasture till the latter part of November and then driven to the east pasture south of the River for winter. As very few animals grazed in the east pasture, the past summer, the animals have had some grazing.

The north pasture is very short, and I hope to let the grass get a start in the spring before I turn the herds back on it.

The animals in the Headquarters pasture have been fed some hay and we will start feeding the buffalo and elk in the East pasture very soon. We have 55 tons of hay stacked in the east pasture and have 44 tons left out south for feeding. This is hay harvested by the Camp last summer.

2. Protection - The Refuge was patrolled during the quarter by horseback and by car. I never noticed any signs of trespassing on the Refuge and did not hear of any reports that anyone had.

3. Improvements - It seems rather odd to write on this subject when I have so little to write about compared to the past year of PWA and CCC improvements over the Refuge.

The interior of the Cabin on Little Beaver was painted after the cupboards were completed.

The interior of the Headquarters house, except the office, was redecorated, including the new upstairs, which was given a nice coat of paint.

Clay was hauled into the Headquarters barn and around the door to level the ground up and keep the water out.

Two wells were dug; one of them out south in the new Antelope pasture. This one was 160 feet deep; one was dug in the new fenced buffalo exhibition pasture south of the highway, south of the present or old pond pasture. A windmill was erected over this well and

the well tested out; water was pumped for several days.

The above buffalo exhibition pasture was completed and made ready for turning in. Some fencing had to be done in the southeast corner as we did not have the material to finish it when the Camp was here.

A hot air furnace was installed in the Tyler House. This plant was purchased under E. C. W. and was partly installed by them.

Miscellaneous Activities - The V. C. C. Camp buildings were vacated the first day of October and turned over to me for keeping. I put weights and boards over the chimneys and nailed the windows shut, and it is in good condition at this time.

During early September I assisted Mr. Ladd to get packed and moved to the Crescent Lake Bird Refuge.

We had to continue to water the trees and shrubbery around Headquarters because of the drought.

Mr. L. L. Laythe and Harold Hacker were here and inspected the Rodent Control work and found very good results over the entire Refuge.

Fenton and I worked on land acquisition during the quarter, and got under option land from 6 owners making a total of 2383.91 acres.

We received 20 tons of coal from the Rosebud Indian Agency, through their contract, making a saving in the cost of coal for this season.

Hay measured that was harvested by ranchers on the Refuge made a total of approximately 650 tons. Approximately 70 tons of the hay harvested by the V. C. C.'s was baled and shipped to the Wind Cave Game Preserve at Hot Springs, South Dakota, for feeding the herds this winter.

I worked up plans and an outline of work for a Fifth period Camp on the Refuge starting next April first and I hope we get a camp or some PWA money to execute the plans of improvements.

A lot of general clean up work was done during the quarter that was left over from the Camp and PWA.

It seems I havn't done much since the Camp left last October first. I spent most of the month of December honeymooning in Texas and old Mexico, while on annual leave. Have gained 25 lbs. since the PWA work and ECW work was finished this fall.

Very truly yours,

Gino A. Amundson

U. S. Game Management Agent



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Very truly yours,

James P. Chamberlain

U. S. Game Management Agent

