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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

IN REPLY REFER TO

NIOBRARA GAME PRESERVE,
VALENTINE, NEBRASKA.

R-Niobrara Reports.

October 7, 1932.

Chief Biological Survey,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Quarterly report from July 1. to Sept 30th, 1932. on the Niobrara Reservation wild life and activities appurtenant thereto.

I. Report on the wild life observed during the period.

3. m. 7 } I. Birds - Insectivorous birds were plentiful along the Niobrara river, creeks, springs, and ponds on the Reservation, on the more arid portions there were not as many. No waterfowl nested on the Reservation during the past season. Ducks mostly blue & green wing teal, mallards and a few pintail started feeding on the waters around the middle of Aug. Of the insectivorous birds nesting on the Reservation I would estimate 5 birds to the acre or 70,000 on the 14,000 acres. By the middle of Sept nearly all these birds had migrated south.

2. Animal Life - Predatory animals Coyotes and bobcats have been well under controll. During the past one and onehalf months quite a number of coyote tracks have been seen over the reservation, especially in the big pasture on the north side of the river. This is about the time of the year for them to start moving on the Reservation. There is an infestation of about 30 acres of prairie dogs in the Antelope pasture near the river. Pocket gophers are to abundant in places, and are destructive to grazing in places. Other rodents are not very plentiful. Small predators and other animals are very plentiful, consisting of skunk, civit cat, coon and mink. There are a few Badger, also.

3. Reptile Life - 8 rattle snakes were killed on the Reservation this season. Bull snakes, Hog nose snakes, Water snakes, and Garter snakes are quite plentiful near water, Sand lizards are plentiful.

II. Other activities.

I. Grazing -- At the end of the quarter grazing conditions over the reservation were about the same as last year at this time. The big pasture on the north side of the river is beginning to show the results of over grazing. However the condition is not serious providing the number of animals grazed on it are kept down well under the carrying capacity, this along with the use of the new pasture on the south side of the river will restore grazing conditions in the north pasture in a few seasons. Owing to the nature of the sandy soil in out big pastures they will not stand overgrazing for a very long period with out causing severe losses of plant life, destroying water shed, and starting the soil to blow in the most sandy locations. Our pastures if

properly grazed will handle from year to year a large number of animals, because of the extra good quality and kinds of grasses growing in them. At the present time there are approximately 158 buffalo, 125 or 130 elk, 14 antelope, 2 white tail deer and 6 horses grazing in our pastures.

2. Protection - The big game pastures are ridden by horses on the average of once a week, the west arm of the Reservation that extends up the Niobrara river is patrolled on horseback during open hunting season in the State, and is patrolled by car during summer months. The other parts of the Reservation are patrolled by car once a week or every ten days. I have 4 small fire, tool and water houses distributed at the furthest points on the Reservation, Fire guards are maintained on both sides of the highway running east and west across the Reservation, around the slaughterhouse and corrals and other out buildings. There are 4 qt. size fire extinguishers distributed around the headquarters buildings, these buildings are protected from prairie fires by roads that surround them.

3. Improvements & Developments - Fences have been constructed over the Niobrara River at the east and west boundries of the Reservation, and the fences of the new pasture have been extended, from where they were left off at when they were built, to the waters edge connecting with the fence over the river. 17 elk and three buffalo have moved in the new pasture. The big game fence has been repaired, new corners put in, and gate post repaired. The portion of the mess hall that was left standing a year ago has been disassembled, and stored in the big red barn used for a store house. Considerable cleaning up has been done of the wreckage and mess caused last year from construction work and wrecking of buildings. The appearance of the place has been keep up, all weeds have been cut and cleaned up. The plantation of 3000 pine trees has been fenced in with 4 barbed wires. An attempt has been made to establish a lawn around the house. One of the old adoby buildings that caved in during a storm has been removed, and the site cleared up, helping the appearance around the place.

4. Public relations - There was an increase of visitors this season over last year. A Forest service party of men stopped here to go over the new tree plantings on the Reservation.

5. Miscellaneous Activities. - Approximately 1200 tons of hay was harvested on the Reservation this season. Dr. Stirton, Paleontologist from the university of Calif. was here to examine our fossile beds in connection with his work. Mr. Dan Janzen and I investigated a report of sick ducks in the N. W. part of Cherry Co. We found it apparently to be Botulism. On half the shore line we counted 2250 dead and sick ducks. The investigation was conducted on Gay lake and it was reported to us they were dying on several other lakes in that part of the country, owing to the short time we had they were not investigated. I brought a few ducks back to the Reservation, gave them fresh water, and all but two recovered. I tried to interest the State in getting the local sportsmen in that vicinity to move the sick ducks to fresh water and scare the well ducks off the lakes.

Very Truly Yours,

Geo A Amundson

Asst Reservation Protector.