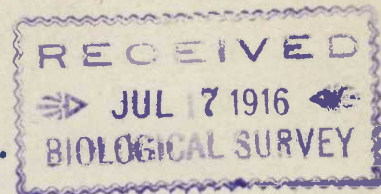


*Wichita Res*

*Ans. July 31, 1916*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.



Fort Totten, North Dakota.

July 12' 1916.

*Birds*  
**FILE COPY**  
Game and Bird Reservations

Bureau of Biological Survey

Washington D.C.

Dr. T. S. Palmer

Friend Dr. Palmer;-

In response to your letter of July 6' making special inquiry regarding the grouse at the Niobrara Reservation, I will submit some facts pertaining not only to the grouse, but the quail and prairie chicken also. Some of this I have mentioned before, in connection with reports from this place, but after several years work among the birds, it is in order to submit additional results.

The Prairie  
Chicken.

It will be difficult to afford this bird any protection, in spite of our large acreage, excepting with the opening of the hunting season, the early fall and during the nesting season.

It is of course no news to you to be told that the bird migrates to some extent and therefore what protection, we can afford them is soon lost, because they will pass beyond our boundary.

Nebraska is particularly weak with the practice of its game laws and the

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prairie chicken will soon be gone. Of the birds that have been killed during the past few years, the grouse are in the majority and the " chicken " being brought in, are less in numbers from year to year. To most of the hunters, both varieties are " chicken " but the grouse will soon be the one game bird left.

The Grouse. On the other hand, the grouse stay within the Reserve, summer, autumn and winter, and with that large tract of land, we have the opportunity to always have some under protection.

You will recall that all the lands, adjacent to the Reserve have now been embraced in homestead entries and settlement. Therefore the uses of the Refuge are more in evidence. Homesteaders will have fields of corn close to our line, the only crop that they can raise, and these fields of corn are death traps for the grouse. With the hunters hovering about the boundary line, in numbers all of the fall shooting season, the birds have quickly learned where the protected territory is and the Reserve is in reality a refuge. But they go to the cornfields once a day and that is where the hunters obtain birds otherwise protected. It is of interest to observe that flocks that are dislodged from the corn-fields on the west side of the Reserve, by the hunters, will take flight to the east and return to our protection. And over beyond the east side, the birds for the same reason fly to the west into our territory.



So they know where the Reserve is and use it.

Therefore it is obvious that when we plant some corn fields at localities in the centre of our tract, our grouse are going to stay at home. Such plantings are not going to require the expense and care given regular farming. In fact the crop can be neglected and if it does not produce certain yields to give it the dignity of legitimate farming, it will produce the desired results, just the same. I mention this to show that the expense of such a plan is no serious item.

Concerning the winter protection of the grouse, they do not perish like the quail do, because during the night and in blizzards, they roost in trees along the river course. During very heavy snows, they have been obtaining food from the pine trees, where they stay nights, and everytime that grain in the bundle, has been put out for them on top of the snow, they have responded satisfactorily.

At the time you obtained the second withdrawal of land for the Reserve, you will recall that I was particularly anxious to include some bluff land on the north side of the river, that was of no particular value to the homesteaders, but that would have been of big help to us with our grouse. This land has a lot of pine timber on it and the grouse during the entire first winter, kept

up a daily flight to our cornfields for the day, returning to these trees for the night. I can select some tracts about the centre of the Reserve and next to the river, put in some plantings and we will always have grouse and quail in numbers.

The Quail. This region has such severe blizzard storms in the spring or late winter seasons, that some times the quail of the country are almost obliterated. Scarcely enough left to stock up the country again. During a hard storm, they gather under a bank or bush and become crusted over with the drifting snow and there is no escape. This happens with regularity about everythird year. If they do escape, there is no food supply for birds that do not get anything to eat from trees or large bushes. Thrashed grain cannot be put on the snow to do any good, but grain in the bundle do great good.

The above is what I meant when I stated that there was no limit to what a man could do in the way of putting out feed for the grouse and quail during the winter season and of the numbers of quail that could be saved.

The shooting season and the hunters scatter the quail badly and they do not learn the boundaries like the grouse do. So that it is only the flocks that hang to the centre of the tract and which do not get disturbed that have a chance to remain.



For the succesful operation of the Reserve nothing will prove more satisfactory than to fence it with an ordinary fence such as I outlined last year, in my combination proposition of providing for the taking of a revenue the use of the same on the place and the construction of such a fence.

It would positively define the boundary and when a man went through the fence he would know that he was poaching and could not plead an excuse over ignorance of where the line was. We have the line posted with signs so plentiful that one sign can be seen from another, but the hunters in that country are no better than in some other regions and our signs disappear with regularity and people over run the hills.

Therefore my plan for protection of the grouse as well as winter feeding is to plant some patches of corn in the centre of the Reserve and to put out bundles of grain on the snow in the winter time. This latter plan, you understand we have done in a small way, with milo maize, feterita and wheat all grown upon our lands.

Most Respectfully Yours

*Frederick M. Dille*

Inspector Bird and Mammal Reservations