

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS FOR THE
LACREEK WILDLIFE REFUGE
1939

LACREEK

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORTS

FEBRUARY 1939 - JANUARY 1940

NARRATIVE REPORT

Lacreek Migratory Waterfowl Refuge

November-December-January

January 31, 1940

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swc
Carbed V. 24
TRANSMITTED BY REGIONAL OFFICE

2-12-40

GENERAL WEATHER AND WATER CONDITIONS

The first two months of this period were ideal winter months with relatively high temperatures, clear days and not much wind.

Such precipitation as we recieved, .68 inches, came in the latter part of December, and early January. The first few inches of snow fell without any blowing, which is a most unusual condition. However, when the wind did start blowing our roads were blocked for a couple of weeks and it required some manouvering to reach a destination.

Present water readings, by unit, are as follows:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Spillway Elev.</u>	<u>Outlet</u>	<u>Gauge Reading</u>	<u>Spillway Reading</u>
7	86.94	79.98	2.15	- 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
8	80.16	73.13		- 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
9	70.04	63.16	Heaved by ice	- 11 "
10	62.73	55.77	2.52	- 16 "

Units 1 and 2 are only part full, but Units 3-4-5 and 6 are near or up to elevation.

The water gauges on Lake Creek and Elm Creek show a variation in depth as follows:

	<u>ABOVE REFUGE</u>		<u>ELM CREEK</u>		<u>BELOW REFUGE</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
Nov.	1.16	1.13	.82	.76	Gates closed.	
Dec.	1.25	1.16	1.56*	1.03	No water released.	
Jan.	1.88*	1.15	2.18*	1.32*		

* Ice conditions caused high readings.

Due to the above mentioned ice conditions and lack of a late correction reading, we are unable to list the inflow with a figure that is anywhere near correct. However, judging from the pond readings we estimate the flow of the creeks to be between 15 to 20 second feet.

There are a few patches of open water in such locations as behind the dike gates and in spring holes, but most of the water area is covered with a layer of ice approximately 16 inches thick.

WILDLIFE

Waterfowl:

The number of waterfowl on the Refuge continued to increase over the previous period, reaching the peak numbers around the early part of December. We estimated a total of 85000 ducks, practically all of which were Mallards, and about 150 Geese were also here at that time.

There was no spectacular migration flights at any time during the fall. The birds came in gradually and departed the same way, leaving a "seed crop" of about 100 Mallards, two Goldeneyes and a dozen Red-Breasted Mergansers which are still here.

The following is a list of the waterfowl population for the period covered by this report:

November

B. W. Teal - 1st - 200 ✓	15th --	30th --
Mallard -----	15th - 40000 ✓	30th - 65000 ✓
Gadwall -----	15th - 250 ✓	30th - 50 ✓
Pintail -----	15th - 5000 ✓	30th - 7500 ✓
Shoveller -----	15th - 150 ✓	30th - 50 ✓
G. W. Teal -----	15th - 2000 ✓	30th - 1000 ✓
Redhead -----	15th - 1000 ✓	30th - 1000 ✓
Canvasback -----	15th - 500 ✓	30th - 500 ✓
Widgeon -----	15th - 250 ✓	30th - 50 ✓
Bufflehead -----	15th - 750 ✓	30th - 750 ✓
Goldeneye -----	15th - 100 ✓	30th - 100 ✓
A. Merganser -----	15th - 250 ✓	30th - 250 ✓
R. B. Merganser -----	15th - 25 ✓	30th - 50 ✓
Total 50275	Total 76300	
Canada Geese -----	15th - 150 ✓	30th - 150 ✓
Coot -----	15th - 400 ✓	30th - 1 ✓

December

Mallard -----	10th-75000 ✓	15th - 60000 ✓	25th-35000 ✓	31st - 5000 ✓
Pintail -----	10th- 7500 ✓	15th - 4000 ✓	25th- 500 ✓	31st - -- ✓
G. W. Teal -----	10th- 1000 ✓	15th - 250 ✓	25th- -- ✓	
Redhead -----	10th- 500 ✓	15th - 100 ✓	25th- -- ✓	
Canvasback -----	10th- 200 ✓	15th - 50 ✓	25th- --	
Bufflehead -----	10th- 750 ✓	15th - 500 ✓	25th- --	
Goldeneye -----	10th- 50 ✓	15th - 50 ✓	25th- --	31st - 2 ✓
A. Merganser --	10th- 150 ✓	15th - 50 ✓	25th- --	
R. B. Merganser	10th- 100 ✓	15th - 100 ✓	25th- 12 ✓	31st - 12 ✓
Total 85250	Total 65100	Total 35512	Total 5014	
Canada Geese --	10th- 150 ✓	15th - 150	25th 150 ✓	31st - --

January

Mallard -----	15th - 100 ✓	31st - 100 ✓
Goldeneye -----	15th - 2 ✓	31st - 2 ✓
R. B. Merganser -----	15th - 12 ✓	31st - 12 ✓

The birds fed away from the Refuge most of the time. In the early part of the period they settled on the harvested fields of wheat and corn, but as soon as the Milo ripened they flocked into these unharvested fields by the thousands, sometimes spending the entire night there and then returning to the Refuge, usually before 7:00 AM. This last feature of their feeding flight, as well as their regular departing time of 4:00 PM, was most discouraging to both hunters and Milo farmers alike.

The duck depredation in neighboring farmers Milo fields brought a number of complaints. These complaints increased over last year, both because of more birds and because there was a large increase in the plantings of the Milo. For a period of about two weeks we were doubtful whether to run or to hide, every time a car drove up to the Headquarters.

We advised the farmers in the use of scarecrows with rattling, bright cans, but these were not very effective since the birds often came in after dark when they were unable to see the "crows". However, if one drove into the fields at night the car lights usually "raised" the birds. Apparently it will be necessary to use a combination of "crows" and lights if any success is to be had in protecting the fields.

We plan on experimenting with the revolving lights, carbide gun and scarecrows for another season.

Some of the farmers cited losses of three to five hundred bushels of grain and our investigation of some of the complaints indicated there was a strong possibility of loss in this proportion.

Upland Game:

The Sharp-tail Grouse have shown a slight increase over the previous period. We estimate there are approximately 40 birds on the Refuge at this time.

There is an apparent increase in the number of Pheasants. However, this increase is not as great as was expected and our present estimate is between 2500 - 3000 of these birds on the area.

During the cold spell in early January we received reports of losses in the Pheasant population, but there was no indication of any unusual loss on the Refuge. However, we are of the opinion that if the cold spell had continued a few days longer there would probably have been a heavy loss from cold, and lack of feed which was covered by snow.

Neither of the resident species of Upland Game has made much use of the shelters this winter. The Pheasants are mostly concentrated in weed patches and, as usual, the Sharp-tails appear to be ignoring the winter conditions.

There are a few Marsh Hawks around and occasionally they strike at the Pheasants. To date we have not observed a successful kill by any of them.

Predator and Rodent Control:

We received a report on the turtle stomachs that were taken during the 1938-1939 seasons. Of a total of 39 stomachs that were examined by the Bureau's research laboratory in Denver, there appeared to be only two definite indications of turtles having taken ducks.

One stomach had the remains of a small beaver.

Bird Banding:

<u>Number</u>		<u>Species</u>		<u>Repasts</u>
313	--	Mallard	--	7

Other Animals:

A few coyote are observed on the Refuge, but not in very large numbers as yet.

We found two locations where some animal evidence indicated Badger, had dug turtles out of the bank on one of the Elm Creek pools. The turtles were partially eaten without having been pulled from the hole.

REFUGE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

After the departure of the CCC camp at the end of the previous period, development work was considerably curtailed, consisting of small jobs around and in the Refuge buildings and inside jobs that had been held up for winter weather.

Headquarters Work: (WPA)

A demountable storm door was constructed for the front door of the residence, out of salvage material. This door and frame was built flush with the exterior wall of the building, and painted to match the color scheme.

Two, interior coal bins were constructed for use in the Service building. These bins are 4' x 5' x 8' and can be removed, or installed, as needed.

A battery rack for storing wet batteries during winter months was constructed and placed in the Service building work shop. This rack will hold six batteries, and thus avoids damage to the batteries, or material with which they might come in contact.

We also constructed an outboard motor rack, with oil drip pan, for storing or working on the motors.

An experimental paint job was done on the cement floor of the unpainted office lavatory. We used a base coat of aluminum paint and a top coat of regular porch and deck paint. If it proves successful in withstanding the wear and tear we plan on painting the office and fire room floors in the same manner.

Four, salvage windows were fitted and installed as storm windows on the machine shed workshop. During cold days it was difficult to warm this building sufficiently to make close machine work possible, making the installation of storm windows very necessary.

General work at Headquarters consisted of re-covering seven turtle traps with heavy gauge wire, to avoid continuous repair caused by the rusting out of the light gauge chicken wire formerly used, painting the Refuge Case tractor, cultivator, mower, three bottom plow, and disc in the approved Bureau color, and the construction of two motor vehicle fire tool boxes.

Secondary Headquarters Work: (WPA)

A salvage door was fitted and installed as a storm door on the rear entrance to the residence, and two cold air registers were fitted in the dining room and one bedroom of this same building. Before these registers were installed it was impossible to warm either of the rooms due to lack of an opening from which the cold air could escape.

Maintenance:

Our Case tractor was overhauled, showing practically no evidence of wear. All farm machinery was dismantled and repaired as needed. New rings were installed in the Caterpillar tractor. Refuge motor vehicles and light plants were inspected at regular intervals and repaired as needed.

About one ton of hay was spread on the shore line of Dikes 4-8 and 10 during a day of high winds to prevent any danger of further wave erosion which was starting to cut into the dikes.

Riprapping around some of the control structures was re-laid where it showed evidence of breaking down.

It was necessary to clean about 15 miles of fence of Russian thistle. Many miles of this distance were packed solid with the "tumblers" and it was necessary that we remove it before a snow removed the fence.

The proper control of water levels has been a maintenance item that required some time until we could equalize gate openings with the inflow. The many, different sized controls were particularly confusing, especially where a main control was feeding into a pond where several sizes of pipe controls were the only outlets.

A few muskrat burrows were located in the dikes and filled with earth and clay.

The lumber yard was policed and all useable material separated and stock piled according to size and value.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Visitors were few and far between over the last half of the period. However, the nice fall weather of the first part brought many hunters and sightseers and we estimate a total of 150 people for the three months.

Officials visiting the Refuge were Mr. Maurek and Mr. Vroman.

ECONOMIC USES

Haying Permits:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Amount Removed</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
8	App. 455	457.99 tons (total)	\$457.99 (total)

OTHER ITEMS

Little White River Diversion Project:

All dike work on Little White River has been completed with the exception of approximately 10000 cubic yards of fill around the control structure in Dike B, and the clay capping of Dikes B and C.

Approximately 15000 cubic yards of dirt was moved during the period and about 75 cubic yards of concrete was poured, to complete the concrete work, and nearly finish the dirt work as stated above.

In the Recreational Area the bathhouse, two comfort stations and the shelter house were nearly completed.

The bathhouse has been erected, stuccoed, lined with plywood and the porches and floors poured. This building is 37' x 14' x 7' and is divided in the center by a brick wall. Approximately ten cubic yards of concrete was poured.

The two comfort stations are 6' x 6' x 7' and were constructed on the standard WPA privy plan. These buildings have also been stuccoed and are complete with the exception of two, small ventilating flaps.

The shelter, constructed according to the approved plan, needs only the construction of tables and benches, staining of part of the roof, and the under roof lining, to be complete.

About 3000 trees and shrubs have been transplanted on the area and nearly ten acres of diseased or unusable brush cleared from the basin of the pool.

A log, bumper guard rail was built in front of the parking area at each end of the bathhouse. These guards are each approximately 60 feet long.

A detail from this project salvaged the 20' x 80' CCC camp Educational building for material used on the Little White River structures. These men did a fine job of salvaging with very little waste of material.



Beach on Dike 8.



Water flowing over clay spillway
in Dike 5.



Thousands of ducks flocked into
these flooded weed patches.
(Note birds in near background.)



We cleared approximately 15 miles
of thistle covered fence lines.



Ducks and Geese on Unit 10.
(O.T.Long.)



Banding station No. 2.



Beaver lodge and food cache
in front of Dike 6 and part
of the muskrat houses in the
Dike 5 pool.





This muskrat burrow was traced down to the Refuge boundary fence and probably extended up to the knob from which the lower picture was taken.





Preparing to drive the last few feet of piling across
the old channel on the Little White River project and
transplanting shrubs in the Recreational
Area.





The control structure on Little White
River.



The control structure on Little White
River.

