

MONTHLY REPORT

APRIL - 1938



LOWER SOURIS MIGRATOR WATERFOWL REFUGE

UPHAM, NORTH DAKOTA

CORDIA J. HENRY
ASS'T REFUGE MANAGER

APR

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MONTHLY NARRATIVE REPORT

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Despite the fact that March was a very unusual month, the year finally got back into stride during April. During the early part of the month we experienced a cold snap of sufficient intensity to freeze over most of the water. However there was sufficient open water to accommodate the several thousand ducks and geese that were already here.

During this spell of bad weather we fed several barrels of grain daily. Most of the ducks and geese resorted to the corn field that we had left unpicked, and sometimes swarmed in like flocks of blackbirds. All of the birds came through in fine shape.

We feel that corn is the ideal food for refuge purposes. Other grains attract large numbers of birds in the fall, but these fields are soon cleaned up. The corn also attracts large flocks of waterfowl in the fall, but its period of usefulness does not end with the departure of the last duck. Large numbers of upland game birds resort to the corn fields all winter, and then in the spring the ducks flock back in again along with some nice flocks of geese. We sincerely hope that our share-cropping arrangement will be a success so that we will have more time for other important refuge work, plus the planting and care of a larger acreage of corn, letting the share-croppers raise most of the other grains.

WATER SITUATION.

The water situation at this time is the most important and most discussed (also cussed) subject on the refuge. Total precipitation for the month was around two inches. However this gave us little if any run-off. Very little water flowed into the refuge this month. A total of 4,500 acre-feet was released for us from the Upper Souris, but it never got here. The powers that control the Eaton project had promised to let it on through, but as usual failed to live up to their agreement. The following brief outline gives the condition of each unit as of April 30th.

Rubble-masonry Unit.

Lacks one foot of being full. Is in fairly good nesting condition, with cover greatly improved over last year.

Unit 320.

Empty, except for a little water in the channel. Due to the fact that most of the water from the Eaton project will flow into the refuge in May and June, we expect to retain the bulk of the water in this unit to prevent the flooding of nests in the lower units. This water can then be released in small amounts to keep the other units up.

Unit 326.

Lacks over three feet of being full. The lower half is in splendid shape for nesting. The upper half is dry however, and we hope to be able to raise the levels a couple of feet after the nesting season is over and thus to increase the amount of productive area.

Unit 332.

Lacks one foot of being full. Is in good nesting condition. We plan to raise the water in this unit a few inches as soon as possible in order to cover up a lot of bare flats, prevent the drying up of much of our plantings, and to give the camp better water for drinking purposes. This can be done without flooding out any nests.

Unit 341.

The gates are open, and the unit is empty except for the main river channel which is quite full, thanks to Dam 357. This unit is in rather poor nesting condition, but there is really not much object in filling it if we could because we only own about half of the land in this unit. When we did have it partially flooded it always caused us plenty of trouble, and was always over-run with livestock.

Unit 357.

Lacks about five feet of being full. However there is quite a lot of water, and it is backed well out of the river channel for a distance of nine miles, and is keeping the channel almost full all the way to Dam 332. There should be considerable nesting in this unit. Practically all of the water in this unit was derived from Boundary Creek.

The Eaton Meadows were completely flooded for the first time this year. However, some of the units have had water on them for two months, which is undoubtedly too long for the good of the hay. However, they refuse to part with any of it, greed being the only reasonable reason. As stated before, they even went so far

as to refuse to allow 4,500 acre-feet of our water to go on through to the Lower Souris as they had agreed to do. The only way to handle the situation under the present set-up, is to pass our water down in the fall, and then in the spring give them their minimum only.

This Hardy deal of which you already know, was typical of the farmers in the Towner area. The Hardy meadow and adjacent meadows are a few miles downstream from the Eaton project. Hardy, although he has no land in the Eaton project, is chairman of the water board. Just a very short time ago, this man Hardy in co-operation with others in that vicinity, threw a dirt plug across the river channel. This was done so quickly, waiting until the last possible moment, that we were unable to stop it even though we caught wind of it soon after work was started. Just as soon as the plug was in, water was released from the Eaton project to flood this other area. We were given no notice of the release which was also contrary to all agreements, as we are supposed to have ten days notice of any release. A small part of these meadows were flooded before Hardy was finally forced to remove the plug. Dougall deserves a great deal of credit for his work on this affair. After the plug was out, we did everything possible to hasten the flow of the water back into the main channel. We believe that no appreciable loss occurred. The plug itself was hidden in a most inaccessible spot, and Dougall found it necessary to enlist the aid of a native to assist him in finding it. This river bottom between Towner and the refuge is covered with vast areas of trees and brush, and adequate patrol is an impossibility unless someone could be assigned to it full-time.

Nesting.

Already large numbers of Pintails and Mallards are nesting. However, our greatest thrill was from the nesting of four pairs of our captive Canada Geese in the Goose Pen. With four pairs nesting, there was no room for any other geese, and we opened the pen so that the others could have access to the open marsh. Nesting geese are murderous animals, and I have seen many splendid birds that were killed by other geese.

It is hoped and believed that more of these geese will nest, especially the two that are paired off with two wild Canada Geese. One of these wild birds, a young female, is of another sub-species either Hutchins' of Lesser Canada. Furthermore, there is the possibility that the presence of these birds scattered through the marsh will induce other wild Canadas to stop and nest. We believe that the birds can be baited back into the pen again in the fall.

Food Crop Planting.

During this last month we put in 107 acres of Durum Wheat, including one field of 12 acres in which Sweet Clover was planted with the wheat. We also planted better than fifteen acres of Crested Wheat Grass with a nurse crop of Oats. This was planted between highway 14 and the headquarters buildings. If we include our fall rye with the above plantings, we now have about 190 acres already planted.

Share-cropping.

It was wonderful news to us to learn that we would be able to try out the share-cropping proposition this year. There are really too many other important phases of refuge work to do full justice to a large-scale food crop program. Many things must be neglected in order to get our planting done, but if we can have most of it done by share-croppers, it will be a wonderful help. I sincerely hope that we may eventually be able to restrict our farming work to the planting of corn, cover plantings, and soil-building crops.

During April we entered into fifteen agreements with local farmers, covering an approximate or estimated total area of 920 acres. If we can eventually have about three or four thousand acres of land planted each year, our share should feed a tremendous number of birds. We could easily do this without sacrificing nesting cover, or farming light or unproductive soils.

Predator Control.

Predator control operations have almost been discontinued during the month of April, primarily because we were too busy to do the project full justice. Furthermore, we wanted the minimum of disturbance in the marsh areas, hoping that geese would stop here to nest this spring. There are still plenty of predators left on the refuge, but we feel that we have again reduced them to a reasonable minimum.

NURSERY.

The Lower Souris Nursery was the scene of great activity during April. We dug and shipped out 56,000 trees and shrubs. We dug and planted on the refuge 1,500 trees and shrubs. We picked up 14,225 evergreens at Halsey, Nebraska, and received 850 Blue Spruce from Monument Nebraska, and planted them in the nursery. We planted approximately 115 pounds of tree seeds. The work on the irrigation system progressed rapidly, and it should soon be in operation.

FENCING.

Good progress was made on the fencing work this month, with the completion of $10\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and the partial completion of $9\frac{3}{4}$ miles. This includes considerable marsh work where the digging is tough, and all posts must be of wood. It shouldn't be so many months before we can thumb out noses at the livestock, provided of course that titles are cleared up in that time.

TRUCK TRAILS.

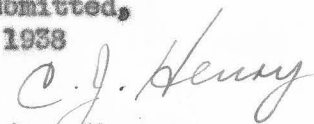
The work on truck trails has been pushed as hard as possible. *3½ miles complete with gravel*
I do not have the actual mileage, but good progress has been made.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The razing of buildings has continued in but a small way, giving way to more important projects. Additional boundary information markers have been erected. A few bird houses have been put up for hole-nesting ducks.

Respectfully submitted,
April 30, 1938

C. J. Henry
Ass't Refuge Manager



P H O T O G R A P H S



Our first goose nest. A pair of our captive geese began nesting early, and began incubating about April 5th. This is the first pair of Geese to nest here since this area became a refuge, although they nested here in large numbers in the days before the valley was dredged.





A flock of white-fronted Geese.



In some areas, Spartina produces a wonderful nesting cover.



These birds put on their best act early in the morning,
although they dance half-heartedly in the late afternoon.
These pictures were all obtained very early in the morning.





Sharp-tailed Grouse on their dancing ground. On the morning that these photographs were taken, there were more than eighty birds within shotgun range of my blind.





The tree plow produced satisfactory results, even in heavy three-year old Caragana stock.



The nursery cultivator in action.



The "home-made" tree plow digging nursery stock. This is an extremely rapid and satisfactory method of digging.



Planting evergreens in the Lower Souris Nursery.



A view of the Eaton Meadow showing large numbers of hay stacks in deep water. This project has so "gone to their heads" that they would rather leave the hay lay here and rot in the water than allow the farmers from the drought-stricken areas to purchase it for a reasonable price. ✓



Dam II showing local run-off flowing through the newly constructed flash-board controls.



A fifteen-ton FWD truck loaded with almost 50,000 trees and shrubs for other refuges.



The same FWD as it arrived from Mud Lake, Minnesota.