

BRANCH OF WILDLIFE REFUGES NARRATIVE REPORTS

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REFUGE NORTH DAKOTA EASEMENT # 6

PERIOD JANUARY-APRIL 1956

NORTH DAKOTA EASEMENT REFUGES - DISTRICT NO. 6

BONEHILL CREEK

CHASE LAKE

HOBART LAKE

LAKE GEORGE

STONEY SLOUGH

TOMAHAWK LAKE

HALFWAY LAKE

The spring run-off was light due to the light snow during the winter months. The thawing was very slow also; this caused much of the run-off to soak into the ground. The subsoil in this area was still lacking moisture by the end of the period. Only .12 of an inch of moisture fell in April at the Arrowwood Refuge station. The potholes dried up early in the cultivated fields; it is estimated that the breeding potholes decreased about 10% over 1955.

The number of divers using the refuge areas were up about 15%; this was also true of the divers using the water areas outside of the refuges. Mallards and Pintails were down about 30% on all of the refuges, as well as outside of the refuges. Blue-winged teals were just coming in at the end of the period. The cold late spring caused many species to arrive later than usual.

BONEHILL CREEK

Water levels at this refuge are in fair ^{condition} considering the amount of run-off and rainfall. The slough in the SW quarter in the pasture has a very good supply of water. The water structures are in good condition. The weed problem on the dike has been eliminated, so now the two land owners are satisfied; however, this meant a loss of some more nesting area for the birds staying on the refuge. Much of this refuge is grazed severely.

Lesser scaups were the most abundant divers during April; a few canvas-backs, redheads and ruddies have also been using the area. Pintails and mallards were the first ducks to return to the refuge, but fewer were staying on the area.

A few predatory animals were trapped by local farmers on the refuge, but the total number taken had not been received by the end of this period. It is estimated that about 2 red foxes, 6 skunks, 4 mink, 8 muskrats, and possibly a few raccoons are using the area. Since this refuge is located on a creek, some of these travel up and down through the refuge and do not necessarily stay on the area.

HALFWAY LAKE

Water levels at this small area were good. Lower water here would be an advantage. No rushes are present in the lake any more as was true in the past few years, since the water levels came up during the years with the heavy spring run-offs.

Populations were fair at this refuge when it was visited on May 3rd; 300 Lesser scaup, a few mallards, pintails and blue-winged teals were noted on the lake. The nesting cover is the poorest ever at this refuge; only a few patches of brush are present in the pasture where this refuge is located. The pasture is heavily grazed, and it is doubtful if any birds will nest in it.

No upland birds were noted at the time it was visited, and it is believed none are on the refuge.

Refuge signs were up and in a fair condition.

Predatory animals are scarce.

CHASE LAKE

It now looks as though this area is going to be a refuge again. Steps are being taken to purchase the water area, as well as some land surrounding it. This refuge attracts a large number of waterfowl in the fall, as well as a fair number in the spring. Nesting will also improve if some of the surrounding land is purchased so that the hay cutting can be eliminated.

Waterfowl using the area this spring consisted mainly of divers. Mallards, pintails, gadwalls, baldpates and blue-winged teals used the fresh-water unit mostly.

Due to the cold weather during April, the white pelicans did not get started nesting any to speak of. The population appeared to be about as great as last year. The ringbilled gulls appeared to be as numerous as a year ago, also.

Sharptailed grouse are very common in this area; no pinnated grouse have been observed for sometime. Nesting cover is fair in this area.

Red foxes are becoming more common in spite of the control by aerial hunters and trappers. Coyotes are becoming scarce. There are a few muskrats and mink on this refuge.

Refuge boundary signs are being put up again on the tracts that the Government owns.

HOBART LAKE

The spring run-off was very light, and, as a result, the alkali unit and the north marsh area did not receive any water to speak of. The north end of the marsh is dry. The fresh water unit filled to within 13 inches of spillway crest. Unless rainfalls are above normal, the water conditions by fall are going to be worse than last fall.

Waterfowl made good use of the fresh water unit besides the water areas in the marsh. Divers were the most common.

Good cover is available about this area for nesting, although, the farmers are trying to work up more and more of the poor land for agricultural purposes.

Sharptailed grouse were noted on the area several times when inspected this spring. A Hungarian partridge leg to-gether with some feathers was observed on the east end of the dam.

U. S. Highway No. 10 is till planned to be rerouted across the dam. The survey work has been completed. This work may not be done until 1957.

LAKE GEORGE

Water levels at Lake George were below spillway crest. The fresh water unit was six inches below spillway level when visited on May 3rd. Plenty of water is on hand to attract nesting birds. An abundant supply of rushes and grass lands are also present to supply the needs of birds in this area. Lake George proper was covered with a solid sheet of ice yet at the time of the visit. Hard to believe, but the spring has been slow in warming up.

Populations of ducks were light at this area, and at the time of the visit 15 canvasbacks, 30 mallards, 50 Blue wing teal, 100 lesser scaup, 20 pintails, a few gulls and shore birds were noted.

There was evidence of badgers on the dike. No trapping permit was requested by local land owner last winter.

The Refuge signs were in good condition except on the south east corner, where a few are missing.

STONEY SLOUGH

The area received very little water from the spring run-off. The control gate was kept closed to get all the water possible into the three main units. However, the supply of water by the end of April should be sufficient for the area even with only normal rainfalls.

Waterfowl use was less than a year ago. Lesser scaup made the most use of the area. Cover for nesting is fair in many parts of the refuge for surface feeding ducks. Grazing, haying and cropping has been more severe during the last couple of years.

There has been no change in the fur and predatory animals on the refuge.

Structures are all in good condition except for the ditch, which should be cleaned out with a dragline.

TOMAHAWK

Water conditions are fair, even though the water levels are down to 26 inches below spillway crest. Many of the bullheads in the lake winter killed due to low water levels.

Waterfowl use was down over last spring. Mallards, pintails, lesser scaup, redheads and canvasbacks were the most common during April.

Nesting cover is fair, since the land owner rotates his grazing on the refuge. An area has also been fenced off in the pasture for the wildlife tree planting made.

Upland game birds are scarce; cover is fair, and food is plentiful.

Predatory animals are below normal for the size of the area.

Prepared: May 10, 1956

Approved:

Nelius B. Nelson
Nelius B. Nelson, Refuge Manager

W. D. Sumner
5/14/56

Note: Some of this data was gathered and prepared by Maintenance Man Mr. Hall.

WATERFOWL

REFUGE NORTH DAKOTA EASEMENT REFUGES - DISTRICT NO. 6

MONTHS OF January TO April 30, 19⁵⁶

| (1) Species | (2) Weeks of reporting period | | | | | | | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---|---|----|
| | BONEHILL CREEK | CHASE LAKE | HALFWAY LAKE | HOBART LAKE | LAKE GEORGE | STONE SLOUGH | TOMAHAWK LAKE | | | |
| Swans: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Whistling | | 500 | | 800 | 200 | 80 | | | | |
| Trumpeter | | | | | | | | | | |
| Geese: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Canada | 200 | 3000 | | 800 | 600 | 800 | 60 | | | |
| Cackling | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brant | | | | | | | | | | |
| White-fronted | | | | | 100 | 80 | | | | |
| Snow | | 5000 | | 1200 | 800 | 600 | | | | |
| Blue | | 6000 | | 2000 | 1200 | 1100 | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ducks: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mallard | 3200 | 4000 | 800 | 1000 | 800 | 3000 | 3000 | | | |
| Black | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gadwall | 100 | 100 | 50 | 40 | 80 | 100 | 40 | | | |
| Baldpate | 400 | 900 | 300 | 200 | 300 | 1600 | 200 | | | |
| Pintail | 3000 | 6000 | 1200 | 2000 | 2000 | 3500 | 2500 | | | |
| Green-winged teal | | | | | | 30 | 20 | | | |
| Blue-winged teal | 400 | 700 | 80 | 800 | 350 | 300 | 550 | | | |
| Cinnamon teal | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shoveler | | 50 | 20 | 60 | 100 | 40 | 80 | | | |
| Wood | | | | | | | | | | |
| Redhead | 5800 | 5000 | 220 | 1000 | 800 | 400 | 300 | | | |
| Ring-necked | | 300 | | | 400 | | | | | |
| Canvasback | 900 | 7000 | 500 | 1900 | 1800 | 5000 | 1200 | | | |
| Scaup | 6500 | 30000 | 9000 | 5000 | 8000 | 8000 | 3000 | | | |
| Goldeneye | | 80 | | 40 | | | 20 | | | |
| Bufflehead | | 60 | | 30 | | 30 | 10 | | | |
| Ruddy | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | | | |
| Coot: | 40 | 2000 | 100 | 200 | 400 | 200 | 30 | | | |

