

RG 22 Narrative Report Ottawa NWR 1974

1974

NARRATIVE REPORT

1274

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
CEDAR POINT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
WEST SISTER ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
NAVARRE UNIT                      DARBY UNIT  
OAK HARBOR, OHIO

REGULAR PERSONNEL

John R. Frye . . . . .	Refuge Manager (Trans. to Seney NWR 2/15/74)
Robert H. Timmerman . . . . .	Refuge Manager (Effective 2/15/74)
James M. Carroll, Jr. . . . .	Assistant Refuge Manager (To 2/15/74) Resident Manager (From 2/15/74)
Jalie E. Pepas . . . . .	Clerk-typist (Retired 6/28/74)
Virginia L. Behnke . . . . .	Clerk-typist (E.O.D. 6/17/74)
Alson J. Radnick . . . . .	Maintenanceman
Wood Holbrook . . . . .	Maintenanceman (to 6/9/74) Engineering Equipment Operator (From 6/9/74)
Nelson Dornbusch . . . . .	Maintenanceman (Retired 4/19/74)

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This was .33 inches over the previous record high observed in November of 1972.

Precipitation for the year was 2.73 inches below normal. In spite of floods and the threat of floods we experienced two severely dry periods during the year, one from mid-August to mid-October and the other, beginning after the March "flood", continued through June.

## 3. Habitat Conditions

### 1. Water

Water levels in refuge pools were generally good throughout the year. This occurred more by chance than by design. Because of eroded and broken dikes, control was maintained over only six of the refuge's fifteen pools. Lake Erie's above average water levels generally corresponded with desired pool levels allowing these nine uncontrolled pools to continue functioning as marshes. Strong southwest winds periodically dewatered these pools exposing mud flats for shorebirds.

Planned water levels were maintained in the six controlled pools until spring when high Lake levels prevented gravity discharge. Severe erosion occurred on the interior of the dikes from water levels two to three feet above those planned.

### 2. Food and Cover

Aquatic food production was excellent in the marsh units. In addition, volunteer stands of wild millet and smartweed on previously tilled acres in Farm Units 1 through 6 provided a substantial food supply. This helped to offset the serious drought-caused shortage of supplemental waterfowl food in farm crops. It appears that these flooded farm units may be most productive of waterfowl food as moist soil units, although in a more controllable condition.

Nesting cover was abundant however most of it was subject to flooding of from several hours to several days duration. Many early-laid eggs were destroyed because of this.

## II. WILDLIFE

### A. Migratory Birds

#### 1. Waterfowl

Early waterfowl migrants, primarily Mallards fed in grain stubble southwest of the refuge. Locally produced Canada geese and some

migrant geese began feeding in late-planted soybeans which generated some complaints. As winter wheat emerged on private lands the geese, lacking green browse on the refuge, moved into it yielding a few additional complaints.

In November our peak goose population of 18,000 was reached which was about average. Ducks however, peaked at 33,000 which was about half of what Ottawa should normally have. Diving ducks peaked in November at slightly over 100. This was well below average.

Cold and stormy weather during the first part of December caused a major waterfowl exodus leaving only locally hatched geese to overwinter.

Nineteen hundred common mergansers made their usual spectacular appearance in February. Lack of ice and generally wet conditions in March encouraged waterfowl to feed on adjacent private land. Refuge concentrations were low but the mix was good. Divers were more abundant in April than in the fall. Only about 600 swans were observed on the refuge as opposed to our average spring peak of 2,000. Again, lack of ice and adjacent flooded farm fields were the primary cause.

Annual use days for ducks were 13% below objective levels and Canada geese were 29% above. Erratic weather and varying habitat conditions both on and adjacent to the refuge were contributing factors to the deviation from objectives. Planned conversion of two food production units from cultivated crops to moist soil should bring use days closer in line with objectives.

There are several very important factors, which contribute to the number of waterfowl use days, over which we have no control. To the west and south of the refuge private cropland extends for at least ten miles. Harvested soybean fields and emerging winter wheat in this area can support a widely varying number of use days. On the north side of the refuge are the marsh units with breached dikes which produce quantities natural foods varying from year to year from almost nothing to abundance. Lake levels coupled with wind direction, speed and the timing of all three are the determining factors. Bordering on the east is the State's Magee Marsh. Managed almost as a moist soil unit, this 2,000 acre area produces an abundance of natural food. When the hunting season opens most of the ducks which feed there move onto the refuge. Dikes were breached on the Magee Marsh so, for this year, it also is a "natural" marsh.

The 190 geese produced were all giant Canadas. Production was primarily from elevated nesting structures. The park-type characteristics of this particular subspecies, while popular with the visitor from the city, are not consistent with their "cousin's" traditional herald of the changing seasons.

## 2. Coots

Use days for coot were about half of what should normally be expected. The particular reasons for this reduction are unknown.

## 3. Other Water, Marsh, and Shorebirds

Ottawa's increasing number of marshes with uncontrollable water levels, while marginally productive of waterfowl food, provide excellent shorebird habitat with large mud flats frequently exposed.

The following species are listed because they are on the Refuge Bird-list as "rare" or accidental" during all seasons of the year. Observations occurred as follows: Hudsonian Godwit 8/73-2, 10/73-6; Louisiana Heron 8/73-1; Ruff 8/73-1; Marbled Godwit 9/73-1, 10/73-6; American Avocet 10/73-1; Baird's Sandpiper 10/73-1, 5/74-3; Sandhill Crane 3/74-1, 4/74-3; White Pelican 5/74-1; Western Sandpiper 5/74-1; and Snowy Egret 6/74-1.

## 4. Gulls and Terns

No noteworthy observations were made.

## 5. Doves

Mourning doves were present in their usual numbers. No unusual observations were made.

## B. Upland Game Birds

Two bobwhite quail were observed in May. The last previous observation was one bird in July of 1969. These two birds were seen on the north-east dike of Pool 1. Very little suitable habitat is available in that particular area.

## C. Big Game Animals

White-tailed deer are the only species in this category at Ottawa. The population is estimated to be from 25 to 30 animals which is suitable for the amount of habitat available. Apparently the quality of the habitat is excellent as triplets were observed. The undesirable but effective limiting factor on the population is probably feral dogs.

## D. Fur Animals, Predators, Rodents, Other Mammals

### 1. Fur Animals

Maskrat are the most abundant fur animal on the refuge. Their abundance is decreasing annually as dikes are breached on additional marsh units making habitat in these areas only marginal.



## 2. Predators

As previously mentioned feral dogs are probably the limiting factor on the deer population. The abundance of other predators appears to be at desirable levels.

## 3. Rodents

Nothing significant to report.

## 4. Other Mammals

Nothing significant to report.

## E. Hawks, Eagles, Owls, Ravens, Crows and Magpies

One Northern Bald Eagle was produced on the refuge this year. The most recent previous hatching in northwestern Ohio was also on Ottawa in 1969. The nest, which the parents located and built this year, is in a tall cottonwood on the north dike of Pool 5. Geographically this is the most ideal location on the refuge being at least one-half mile from the boundary, farming operations or interpretative facilities.

## F. Other Birds

Monthly bird counts by the Toledo Naturalists Association led by Bob Crofts are in their fourth year. The information these competent birders provide is the type all Refuge's should be acquiring. The most noteworthy observation, in addition to those previously listed, was a Kirtland's Warbler in May.

## G. Fish

Nothing to report.

## H. Reptiles

The fox snake still remains relatively abundant on the Refuge. This species is rare in Ohio. Since it is popular as a pet, care must be taken to prevent it's illegal collection.

## I. Diseases

A DVE meeting for the State of Ohio was held "next door" at the Crane Creek Wildlife Experiment Station on May 7. The State of Ohio will adopt the Bureau's DVE Plan.

### III. REFUGE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

#### A. Physical Development

In an effort to bring facilities at Ottawa up to Service Standards under NFIO planning a portion of the Refuge, indicated in red on Map No. 1, was set aside for intensive management. The remainder of the Refuge, including the Darby and Navarre Divisions, Cedar Point NWR and West Sister Island NWR, will only be posted and, as reasonably possible, patrolled. Censuses and fur trapping will also be conducted when possible. If flooding from Lake Erie continues to erode the dikes Pool 1, "Goosehaven", may have to be deleted from the NFIO area.

Within the NFIO area initial flood damage repairs were begun. Dikes along the west side of F-8 and the east and south side of F-12 were raised to a safe elevation with the dragline. Shaping will take place later with slopes a minimum of 4 to 1 to facilitate maintenance.

Wiring and control boxes on Farm pumps 7B, 8A, 8B, 9A and 12A were brought up to prescribed electrical and safety standards.

Four hundred tons of 4" x 8" rip-rap was stockpiled for later use in controlling erosion around water control structures. A flood water discharge tube was installed on the east dike of F-8.

Toledo Edison relocated about one mile of power lines along the south side of tank ditch approx. 25 feet to the south. The old poles were about to fall into the ditch. This line terminates within the Refuge. Tank ditch was cleaned out with a dragline from west to east to a point 1,000 feet inside the refuge boundary. Work on the Refuge portion of the ditch was done by Refuge Personnel with a used dragline newly transferred from Shiawassee NWR.

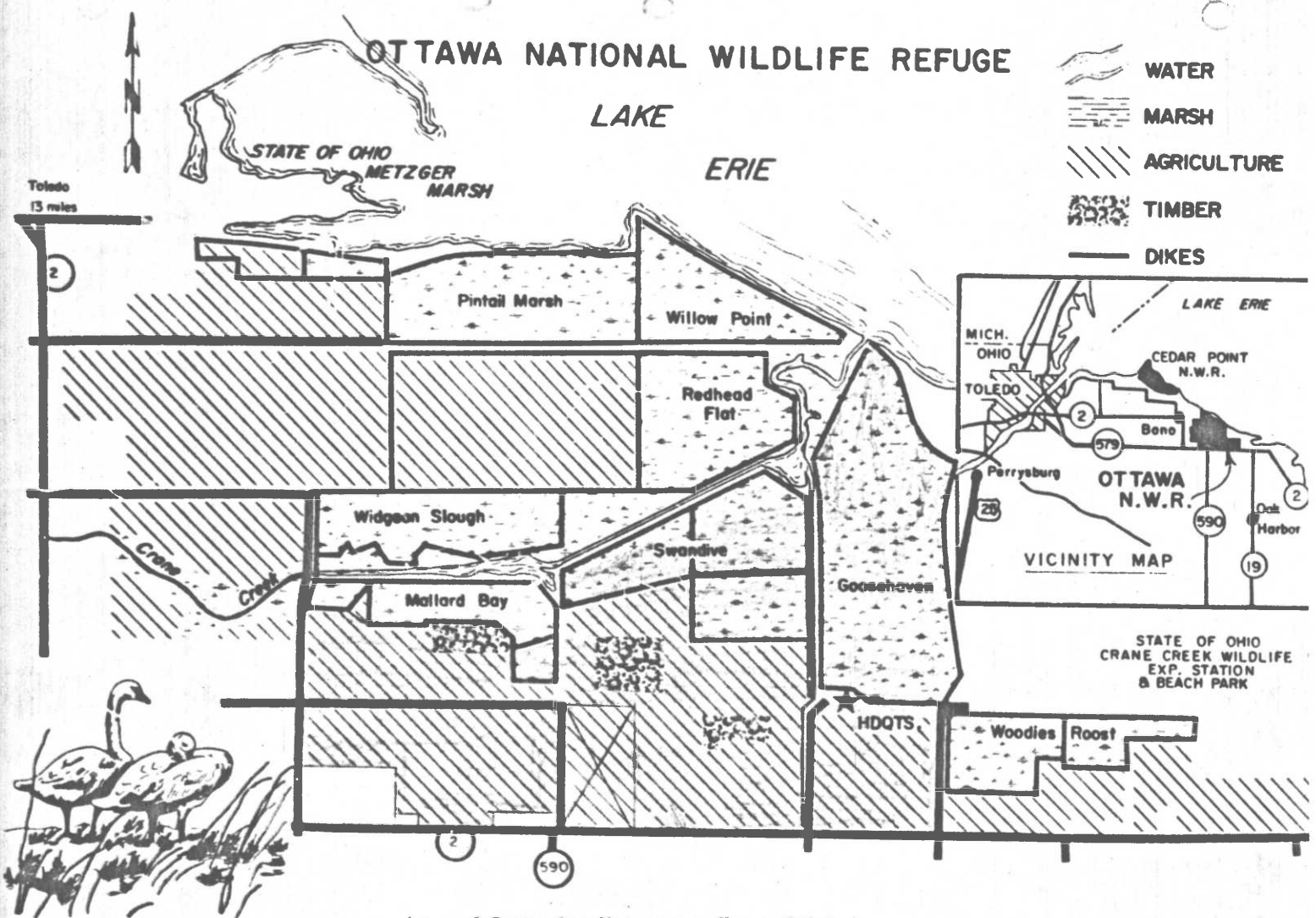
A new road gate and vehicle turn around were constructed on Veler Road. This project and the ditch clean out took place because of legal obligations even though they are outside the NFIO area.

The flood-damaged foot trail and parking area were returned to standard.

A new station wagon was received during the year. Two decrepit dump trucks from Job Corps were sold and an old station wagon was donated to a local school district.

Flood water from Lake Erie has caused damage to numerous private homes along the Lake. Deteriorated dikes at the Darby Division and at Cedar Point NWR have, on several occasions, allowed floods to pass over or through Refuge land flooding private homes and land.





Area of Intensive Management Under N.F.I.O.

At Cedar Point the Refuge is donating \$2,000 toward a pump to remove surface water from private land and at Darby costs of dike repairs are being developed.

The Refuge telephone line was converted to a private business line after many years of 8-party "business" line "service".

As a pollution control measure septic systems were improved at Q-3, Q-9 and headquarters bringing them up to local and National Standards. At Q-3 and Q-9 this included construction of a "NoDak" or elevated leach bed.

Other projects included reroofing of Q-3, varnishing the woodwork, and painting several rooms; constructing cab guards on three pickup trucks; wiring several boat and utility trailers; refinishing office furniture, and repainting the office interior.

## B. Plantings

### Cultivated Crops

Because of flooded ground and the potential for additional flooding only 42 acres were planted during the FY 73-74 season. Unit F-8 was flooded during September to encourage smartweed utilization by ducks. Other idle farm units were mowed for browse.

During FY 74, 638 acres were farmed by seven cooperators. Unit 9 was farmed by one cooperator for the first time this year. Isadore Lowe the former landowner and cooperator declined to farm on the refuge.

One third of the acreage was planted specifically for waterfowl food; corn 57, sorghum 43 and buckwheat 99. The other two thirds of the acreage was planted to soybeans, harvested by the cooperator, and planted to annual rye grass which served as a cover crop and green browse for waterfowl.

## C. Collections and Receipts

### 1. Seed or Other Propagules

None

### 2. Specimens

None

## D. Control of Vegetation

None

## E. Planned Burning

None

**F. Fires**

None

**IV. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**A. Grazing**

None

**B. Haying**

None

**C. Fur Harvest**

A total of 5,795 muskrat were harvested over four units. The Refuge share sold for \$2.81 each. A good price in the area this year was about \$2.50. Total receipts amounted to \$8,353.99.

**D. Timber Removal**

None

**E. Commercial Fishing**

None

**F. Other Uses**

Three trappers harvested 282 snapping turtles. The Refuge 50% share sold for \$545.55.

**V. FIELD INVESTIGATIONS OR APPLIED RESEARCH**

**A. Cooperative Canada Goose Propagation Project**

The Canada goose propagation project involving the refuge and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources terminated during the year. All but about 1,200 feet of fence surrounding the 60 acre protected nesting area was removed. The remaining fence is intended for use as a drive trap for banding geese.

**B. Characteristics of Giant Canada Goose Gang Broods Near Southwestern Lake Erie**

(R. A. Warhurst, Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.) Research completed and M. S. received June 1974.

A total of approx. 140 locally hatched goslings were banded with FWS bands. Blue, orange, and yellow plastic neckbands were placed on 40 goslings from three gang broods. The activities and movements of these three broods were followed.

C. (WMS #5) The Translocation of Tritium In a Freshwater Ecosystem

(Lowell W. Adams - Tony J. Peterle, Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit). This study is being conducted on the Navarro Division and relates to radiological monitoring of the environment both before and after the adjacent Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station is activated. Sample collection, preparation, and data analysis continued.

D. (WMS #6) The Significance of the Concentration Factors of Mercury in Herons and Egrets of Southwestern Lake Erie

(R. D. Hoffman, Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit). The heronary at West Sister Island NWR was one of four in this area where fecal samples, marsh samples and birds were collected. Data is to be compiled and analysed and thesis writing will begin.

E. Environmental Assessment, Darby Marsh Dike Rehabilitation

(Kermit D. Dybbetter, FWS, Twin Cities). Field investigation and writing were completed and the Assessment submitted.

## VI. PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. Recreational Uses

The Blue Heron Foot Trail, a self-guided interpretive trail, was developed and brought up to Service Standards last year. About 7,300 people used this facility during the year.

An Environmental Education orientation for 24 teachers from EGSU was held at the refuge office in August.

Refuge Open House activities were scheduled for National Hunting and Fishing Day. Only 28 visitors showed up and most of those were Refuge families. Many people attended activities at conservation - hunting clubs in surrounding towns to celebrate the event. That's the kind of competition we like to generate.

The Refuge sponsored Explorer Post received an award for "Outstanding Specialty Program" from the Toledo Area Council, BSA.

National Wildlife Week programs were presented to 4,100 students in the surrounding area by Refuge Personnel.

Ottawa again hosted the Soil Conservation Service Field Day with all 5th graders in the County, approx. 800, in attendance.

B. Refuge Visitors

Following is a list of official visitors to the Refuge:

Date	Name	Affiliation - Address	Purpose
<u>Jul.</u>			
6	Willard Hesselbart	FWS, Crosby N. D.	Visit
7	Robert Obanoun	U.S. Marshal, Toledo	Evidence
16	Doug Andrews	FWS, Sandusky	Pop. Mgmt.
<u>Aug.</u>			
6	Robert Timmerman	FWS, Shiawassee NWR	Visit
8	Bob Hodgins	FWS, Minneapolis	Enfor. ent
17	John Ramsour	FWS, Minneapolis	Contract Inspection
17	Harlan Pierstrue	FWS, Central States Fish Station	Visit
17	Charles C. Barnes	FWS, Central States Fish Station	Visit
<u>Sep.</u>			
7	Jim Goeth	FWS, Minneapolis	Surveying
7	Paul Hagquist	FWS, Minneapolis	Surveying
13	Bill Fuchs	FWS, E. Lansing, Mich.	Enforcement
13	Bill Shale	FWS, Lansing, Mich.	Pop. Mgmt.
19	Brooks Meanley	FWS, Pontiac	Visit
20	John Brinkley	City of Toledo	Waterworks Dike
28	L. G. Seidel	N.O.O.A., Columbus, Ohio	Ck. Weather Station
<u>Oct.</u>			
2	John Ellis	FWS, Minneapolis	Visit - Inspection
9	Wm. Harrison	FWS, Minneapolis	Realty
25	John Ramsour	FWS, Minneapolis	Contract Inspection
25	Wm. Aultfather	FWS, Minneapolis	Inspection
<u>Nov.</u>			
8	John Jones	FWS, Washington, D. C.	Safety Inspection
15	Gordon Jensen	FWS, Minneapolis	Realty
15	Edmund Simda	FWS, Minneapolis	Realty
<u>Jan.</u>			
29	Larry Reed	N.U.S. Corp., Pittsburg	Navarre Assessment
29	T. Gottshall	N.U.S. Corp., Pittsburg	Navarre Assessment
<u>Feb.</u>			
13	Jim Hutcheon	Corps. of Eng., Detroit	Visit
14	Russ Miller	FWS, Minneapolis	Refuge Complex
14	Wm. Aultfather	FWS, Minneapolis	Refuge Complex
20	G. E. Cummings	FWS, Mark Twain NWR	Land Mgmt.



### B. Refuge Visitors (Cont.)

Date	Name	Affiliation - Address	Purpose
Mar. 19	John Milliron	Ohio DNR	Enforcement
Apr. 10	Lanny Reed	N.U.S. Corp, Pittsburg	Navarre Assessment
May 7	Wm. Aultfather	FWS, Minneapolis	Inspection
Jun. 20	John Ramsour	FWS, Minneapolis	Inspecting Darby
20	Kenneth Dybbetter	FWS, Minneapolis	Inspecting Darby

### C. Refuge Participation

Has been included under "Recreational Uses".

### D. Hunting

None

### E. Violations

Date	Person Apprehended	Officer Initiating Action	Violation	Disposition
1973 9-02	Wesley Clouse	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	20/0
9-02	Keith Clouse	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	Juvenile
9-02	Alan Grajczyk	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	Juvenile
9-02	Edwin R-barczyk	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	Juvenile
9-02	Jeffery Rybka	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	Juvenile
10-27	Lawrence Foley	Leach, S/A	Hunting on Refuge	17/8
7-19	Benito Garosa	Leach, S/A	Fishing Trespass	75/0, 8 65/0



### E. Violations (Cont.)

Date	Person Apprehended	Officer Initiating Action	Violation	Disposition
<u>1973</u>				
7-18	James Griffith	Leach, S/A	Trespass	50/0, S 40/0
7-19	John Heringhamer	Leach, S/A	Fishing Trespass	25/0 S 20/0
7-31	Julian Herrera	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	75/0, S 65/0
7-19	Patrick Higgins	Leach, S/A	Trespass	50/0, S 40/0
9-03	Nathan Jeremy	Leach, S/A	Trespass	20/0
8-31	James Marble	Frye, RMA	Fishing Trespass	10/0
7-31	Daniel Morales	Carroll, RMA	Fishing Trespass	75/0, 35/0
10-19	Terry Plunadore	Holbrook, RMA	Early Shooting	67/8
7-19	Dalton Rasmussen	Leach, S/S	Fishing Trespass	25/0, S 20/0
10-27	Matthew Schall	Leach, S/A	Hunting on Refuge	17/8
9-03	Jacky Skaggs	Leach, S/A	Trespass	20/0
9-03	Jerry Wagner	Leach, S/A	Trespass	20/0

### F. Safety

As of June 30, 1974 this station has 4,613 days without a lost time accident. This record began when Ottawa was established in 1961 and remained unblemished during Jack Frye's period of Managerhip. Responsibility for monthly safety meeting is rotated among the entire Refuge Staff. Every fourth meeting deals with Defensive Driving. Subjects of other meetings are at the discretion of the monthly chairman. This system seems to maintain safety conscientiousness which, when coupled with knowledge, minimizes the number of preventable accidents.

## VII. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items of Interest

1. The most noteworthy occurrence was the complexing of Ottawa and Shiswassee National Wildlife Refuges. This took place on February 15, 1974 when Manager John Frye departed to assume the Managership of Seney NWR. Robert Timmerman, the Manager of Shiswassee NWR, became the Manager of both Refuges. Assistant Manager, James Carroll became the Resident Manager at Ottawa.

Maintenanceman Nelson Dornbusch retired on a RIF Action on April 19 with 25 years of Government Service.

Clerk Typist, Julie Pepas chose to retire on June 28 on a RIF Action with more than 28 years of Government Service rather than change to a part-time 24 hour per week employee.

Virginia Bahrke, EOD on June 17 as the part-time Clerk Typist.

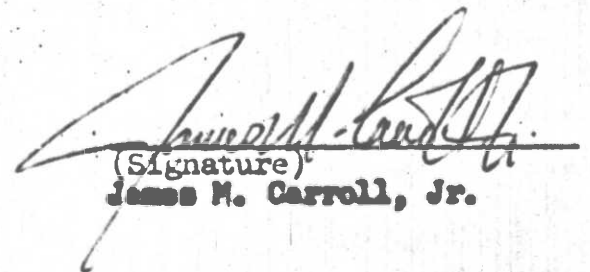
In a nutshell, Jim, Alson, and "Woody" said goodbye to Jack, "Dorney", and Julie & "Hello to "Timie". It was hard enough to say goodbye to one person and their families but three in five months was "ch". Timie was welcomed onto the Staff under rather un- conditions.

2. Wood Holbrook was reclassified from Maintenanceman to Engineering Equipment Operator on June the 9th.
3. Special Agent Rick Leach moved his office from Port Clinton, Ohio into the Ottawa Refuge Office. His presence on the Refuge is an asset to our law enforcement efforts especially with the reduction in Refuge Personnel. He and his wife Susan occupied residence Q-3, April the 1st.
4. Refuge Receipts Sharing Act

Checks were delivered to Lucas and Ottawa Counties in the amount of \$22,052.90 and \$14,907.95 respectively under the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Submitted by:

  
(Signature)  
James M. Carroll, Jr.

Date: July 31, 1976

Resident Manager  
Title

Approved, Regional Office:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Regional Refuge Supervisor