

OKEFENOKEE

NARRATIVE REPORTS

JANUARY-DECEMBER 1943



## ROUTING SLIP

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE REFUGES

DATE: 1-21 1944☒ MR. SALYER

SECTION OF HABITAT IMPROVEMENT:

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Mr. Kubichek

☒ MR. EIMER

Mr. Smith

☐ MRS. CARVIN☒ Mr. Griffith☒ MR. DUMONT☒ Miss Cook

SECTION OF OPERATIONS:

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Mr. Gustafson

☒ Dr. Bourn

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SECTION OF STRUCTURES:

☒ Mr. Taylor

REMARKS:

OKEFENOKEE NARRATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER\*DECEMBER 1943

Return to: Habitat Improvement

OKEFENOKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

NARRATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1943

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# OKEFENOKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## NARRATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1943

### I. GENERAL

#### A. Weather Conditions

	<u>Precipitation</u>	<u>Max. Temp.</u>	<u>Min. Temp.</u>
September	2.47	96	51
October	.05	95	31
November	1.31	87	29
December	3.27	87	15

The above data secured from official weather station at Waycross, Georgia.

#### B. Water Conditions

With only 7.10 inches of rain for the four months, the water standing at 120.40 at Cornelia at the beginning of the period gradually dropped till December 10, when the reading was 119.46, then some rains from December 14 to 31 raised the water to 119.83 on the gauge at this point. During the four months trips by boat from Cow House Island to Dinner Pond and Canal to Grand Prairie were not attempted a second time. During the same period in 1942 the gauge readings at Cornelia ranged between 120.52 and 121.90. The lowest water for this period in 1942 was twelve hundredths of one foot above the highest for the period in 1943. Some rains as the year closes allow us to hope that the law of general averages will give us enough water to make these areas accessible for the next few months.

#### C. Fires

Lack of precipitation during this period coupled with an overall deficiency of rainfall in this area during the preceeding eight months created the most hazardous fall fire season in several years.

There were four fires on Refuge lands during this period, three of which were small. The first occurred on October 3 in Lots 397 and 398 and was quickly brought under control. Mop-up and patrol con-



tinued for three days before the fire was out.

The largest and most stubborn fire since Okefenokee became a Refuge started on October 27 at the lower end of Strange Island. Unfortunately, it was into the swamp before help arrived and so few men were available for fire fighting that the fire in the swamp never was brought under control until it rained on November 8. The upland side of the fire was fought continually from October 27 to November 8, and only the cooperation of the Daugharty Bros., Suwannee TPO, Superior Pine Products Co., and local help, with the Fish & Wildlife Service, prevented the fire from spreading further and more rapidly than it did.

The third and fourth fires occurred on November 24; one on and near Lloyd's Island, which was suppressed with the aid of the Charlton County TPO; and the other on Lot 25 at the south end of the Refuge, which was suppressed with assistance furnished by L. Knabb & Sons.

In addition to the Refuge fires, there were a large number of fires all around the Refuge. Fire standby man Martin was busy in November checking and helping on fires near the northwest boundaries of the Refuge. On November 23, 24, and 25 Refuge personnel helped fight fire on Cow House Island between Ft. Mudge and our Lots 66 and 67. On December 12 Refuge personnel, after receiving an urgent SOS from the State Forest Service at Braganza, played an important part in bringing under control a fire that had jumped a railroad, U. S. Highway No. 1, and a County road, before it could get into the State Park Area (formerly Resettlement Adm.)

All of the above fires were either "set out" or resulted from gross negligence of parties unknown.

In spite of the acute manpower shortage and difficulties of securing equipment and materials, every effort has been and is being made to have our fire fighting organization fully equipped and ready for an expected high fire-hazard spring. Looking back over the records, we find that after the dry fall of 1940, we had ten fires in the spring of 1941. It seems logical to conclude, therefore, that the 1944 spring fire season will be as bad - perhaps worse than any since 1932 - unless we have abnormal rains between now and next June.

## II. WILDLIFE

### A. Migratory Birds

#### 1. Populations and Behavior

For this period opportunity for observation being denied us to such an extent, by dry boat routes, any figures regarding populations of most of our water birds would be rather wild guesses. Water enough in Grand Prairie, parts of Chase Prairie, Sapling and

Honey Island Prairies for ducks and other water birds but lack of water between these areas prohibited travel to them by boat. The winter population of ducks may have arrived on time and not observed because of the inaccessibility of their usual haunts. No Mallards and Black ducks were observed before the second week in November, while some Ringnecks were observed a month earlier. And in early September some Bluwinged Teal were seen in their southward flight; some stopping for a few days in Okefenokee, and on September 8, Bryant Crews reported 21 Ringnecks which was most unusual.

In the areas covered more Woodducks were observed than were noted in the same areas for the same period last year.

Wood and White Ibises had, apparently, left us long before this period began but a number of Wood Ibises were observed between the 12th and 22nd of October.

Blue Herons and American Egrets were reported each month but trips through areas where most of these are usually noted were discontinued during the greater part of this period.

There seem to be more Wilson's Snipe in the Swamp this year. We will learn more of these when we can cover more ground.

With a few inches more water as the period ended, we are hopeful that during the next month we will be able to learn something of populations and comparative percentages.

Since Mourning Doves occupy areas where boats are not required, we have had opportunity to learn something about them, and they are certainly "coming back." They are in every field around the Refuge usually used by doves and they are now seen in greater numbers than last year.

Woodcocks are occasionally observed in the marginal areas but no change in numbers from last year was noticeable.

## 2. Food and Cover

No supplemental feeding - unless it be considered so with Mourning Doves where many fields near the Refuge supply peanuts, peas, beans, etc., but even the fields that have lain fallow and generally filled with what is locally known as "chocolate weed" that supplies an abundance of food in addition to some bur-marigold and other plants.

## B. Upland Game Birds

### 1. Populations and Behavior

Immediately about the compound at Cornelia there are not as many Quail as last year and other areas of Refuge upland that have grown too rough are, apparently, not occupied by as many. Bobwhite hunters we have contacted say they do not find as many birds in the open woods as they found last year but do find them plentiful in the



branches and other low grounds.

Wild Turkeys are still increasing; they do not occupy the islands within the swamp, but are found about the swamp edges.

Last year we stated that there was something wrong with the Robbins - they had not appeared in anything like the number as the year before. This year they are as numerous as I have ever seen them. In traveling between Waycross and either Cornelia or Billy's Lake, Robbins are flying away from the road for almost the entire distance and they are all over the swamp.

### 3. Disease

We have observed nothing to indicate any disease.

## C. Big Game Animals

### 1. Populations and Behavior

Nothing to add to, or "take back" from our last report on Deer.

While our black Bears do not hibernate they, for some reason, seem to have, at least temporarily, given the cattle a respite. We have heard of only two cows being killed by Bears in several months. It may be that of a number of Bears killed during that time some were the most destructive.

Bob Cats, apparently, are (or were) more numerous than we thought. Mr. Brown, of the Federal Aid Game Project at the north end of Okefenokee, has taken about 20 Bob Cats with traps or hounds in the short time he has been located there, and I would not say it is a particularly good season for Bob Cats.

### 3. Disease

All appear to be quite healthy.

## D. Fur Animals

Raccoons are, as last reported, on the increase noticeably.

This is the season when Otters occupy boat runs and other waters where they are more apt to be seen and it seems they are all back with additions to each family. The few routes that can be traveled by boat are well populated. Sam Mizell saw 15 Otters on one trip up Minnie Lake run on October 12, although it was warm enough for 23 alligators to be up where they were seen on the same trip.

## F. Fish

When the water in Okefenokee gets as low as it has been for the past few months, many small and some large fishes are destroyed by birds in addition to those ordinarily destroyed by birds, mammals and reptiles. But with many thousands of acres covered by sufficient water, we usually

find the fishes plentiful when the season and water are again right for fishing.

### III. REFUGE DEVELOPMENT (Maintenance)

#### A. Physical Development (Maintenance)

No development projects have been undertaken during this period, but a considerable part of our energies have been expended on maintenance work. Among many jobs done were the followings:-

Shelves were installed in the oil house; the office and laboratory given a thorough cleanup; and a large amount of general cleanup around the Cornelia headquarters accomplished. To solve the problem of rats entering the guest cabin, we installed a tight-fitting screen door with spring on the back door. This eliminated the need for a rodent-proof back porch.

Bridges were repaired on both the Cornelia and Jones Island roads. Every rain shows up new bridge defects, but repairs will be made as rapidly as possible.

Realignment of the Anhinga's motor and a motor tune-up job eliminated an annoying vibration and contributed to an increase in RPM. The outboard motorboat FWS-560 was removed from the water, scraped, repaired, and repainted. Two outboard motors were completely overhauled and placed in good operating condition. *? we should have this in*

Ford pickup truck 17269 was overhauled. Ford pickup truck 17272 was completely overhauled and after major repairs received the priming coat of paint. The finish coats of paint will be sprayed on shortly and it is hoped this truck will then be ready again for hard service.

Fire truck 17273 installations were completed and actual field use of the truck on three fires proved that it is an excellent piece of equipment for fighting fires in the forest conditions found in this vicinity.

Our old back-pack pump tanks were repaired where possible, but it soon became evident that further repairs were impossible. A dozen new pumps and a complete line of repair parts were obtained none too soon.

Just before the period ended, an investigation was made of work necessary to repair the board walk to Floyd's Island and the cabins on the island. Work on these projects will get under way early in January.

### VI. PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### A. Recreational Uses

5127 Man days were used by fishermen and besides these 616 individuals used picnic facilities or made trips to see something of Okefenokee. Visiting the Refuge this period were Messrs. A. F. Miller and Maynard S.



Refuge OkefenokeeMonths of September to December, 1945

(1) Species	(2) Density	(3) Young Produced	(4) Sex Ratio	(5) Removals	(6) Total	(7) Remarks	
Common Name	Cover types, total acreage of habitat	Acres per Bird	Number broods obs'd. Estimated Total	Percentage	Hunting  For Re- stocking  For Research	Estimated number using Refuge	Pertinent information not specificoally requested. List introductions here.
Bobwhite Wild Turkey	Nothing new to report for this period. Nothing new to report for this period.						

## INSTRUCTIONS

Form NR-2 - UPLAND GAME BIRDS.\*

- (1) SPECIES: Use correct common name.
- (2) DENSITY: Applies particularly to those species considered in removal programs (public hunts, etc.). Detailed data may be omitted for species occurring in limited numbers. Density to be expressed in acres per animal by cover types. This information is to be prefaced by a statement from the refuge manager as to the number of acres in each cover type found on the refuge; once submitted, this information need not be repeated except as significant changes occur in the area of cover types. Cover types should be detailed enough to furnish the desired information but not so much as to obscure the general picture. Examples: spruce swamp, upland hardwoods, reverting agriculture land, bottomland hardwoods, short grass prairie, etc. Standard type symbols listed in Wildlife Management Series No. 7 should be used where possible. Figures submitted should be based on actual observations and counts on representative sample areas. Survey method used and size of sample area or areas should be indicated under Remarks.
- (3) YOUNG PRODUCED: Estimated number of young produced, based upon observations and actual counts in representative breeding habitat.
- (4) SEX RATIO: This column applies primarily to wild turkey, pheasants, etc. Include data on other species if available.
- (5) REMOVALS: Indicate total number in each category removed during the report period.
- (6) TOTAL: Estimated total number using the refuge during the report period. This may include resident birds plus those migrating into the refuge during certain seasons.
- (7) REMARKS: Indicate method used to determine population and area covered in survey. Also include other pertinent information not specifically requested.

\* Only columns applicable to the period covered should be used.



att. L. Hare. Rep.

Refuge OkefenokeeYear 1943

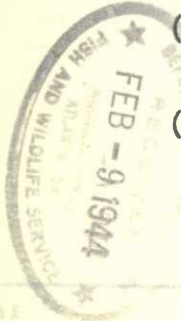
(1) Species	(2) Density	(3) Young Produced	(4) Removals				(5) Losses			(6) Introductions		(7) Estimated Total Refuge Population as of Dec. 31	(8) Sex Ratio
Common Name	Cover types, total Acreage of Habitat	Number	Hunting	For Re- stocking	Sold	For Research	Predation	Disease	Winter Losses	Number	Source		Percentage
White-tailed Deer	150,000 acres as previously reported	No chance to Estimate					Estimated 40 killed by hunters with guns and dogs and night hunting when animals wander out- side of Refuge				NONE	1,000	No Est.
Black Bear	Also, bears use so called "houses" in the marshes						Estimated 40 killed by cattle owners when animals get outside of Refuge				NONE	500	No. Est.

We can only estimate numbers by tracks and trails to be found in different parts of the Refuge.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Form NR-3 - BIG GAME

- (1) **SPECIES:** Use correct common name; i.e., Mule deer, black-tailed deer, white-tailed deer. It is unnecessary to indicate sub-species such as northern or Louisiana white-tailed deer.
- (2) **DENSITY:** Applies particularly to those species considered in removal programs (public hunts, etc.) exclusive of fenced herds. Detailed data may be omitted for species occurring in limited numbers. Density to be expressed in acres per animal by cover types. This information is to be prefaced by a statement from the refuge manager as to the number of acres in each cover type found on the refuge; once submitted, this information need not be repeated except as significant changes occur in the area of cover types. Cover types should be detailed enough to furnish the desired information but not so much as to obscure the general picture. Examples: spruce swamp, upland hardwoods, reverting agriculture land, bottomland hardwoods, short grass prairie, etc. Standard type symbols listed in Wildlife Management Series No. 7 should be used where possible. Figures submitted should be based on actual observations and counts on representative sample areas. Survey method used and size of sample area or areas should be indicated under Remarks.
- (3) **YOUNG PRODUCED:** Estimated total number of young produced on refuge.
- (4) **REMOVALS:** Indicate total number in each category removed during the year.
- (5) **LOSSES:** On the basis of known records or reliable estimates indicate total losses in each category during the year.
- (6) **INTRODUCTIONS:** Indicate the number and refuge or agency from which stock was secured.
- (7) **TOTAL REFUGE POPULATION:** Give the estimated population of each species on the refuge as of December 31.
- (8) **SEX RATION:** Indicate the percentage of males and females of each species as determined from field observations or through removals.





Refuge Okefenokee Year 1943

Species	Relative Abundance	Sport Fishing		Commercial Fishing		Restocking		Number removed for Restocking
		Man days Fishing	Number Taken	No. of Permits	Pounds Taken	Number Stocked	Area Stocked	
Perch			39,282					
Large Mouth Bass			2,012					
Jack (Pickereel)			1,178					
Mudfish			2,242					
Catfish			10,969					
		5127	<u>55,683</u>	None	None	None	None	None

## REMARKS:

Fishermen were about equally divided between the Cornelia side and Fargo side - 2570 on Fargo side; 2557 on East side. - 25596 perch taken on Fargo side; 13686 on East side; 457 bass for Fargo side; 1555 on Cornelia side. - Total all species - 35507 Fargo side; 20176 East side.

Johnson on September 6; Messrs. Silver, Taylor, and Dittman October 16 and 17; Mr. Silver on November 15; Mr. A. F. Miller on December 31, for a couple of days; and on October 19, a party of County Commissioners from Nassau County Florida who came to Folkston as guests of the Charlton County Georgia Commissioners. The Charlton County Commissioners have kept our Refuge road up for us and are always pleasantly cooperative and for these we gave their Florida guests a trip into Okefenokee.

#### E. Fishing

Fishing conditions were fairly satisfactory till the last three or four months - water enough for fishes from other areas to keep restocked the waters open for fishing. The average catch was approximately 11 fish per man day.

#### F. Violations

No violations were reported for this period.

### VII. OTHER ITEMS

#### A. Items of Interest

On one patrol up the north branch of Suwanee River to Pine Island, partly on foot because of low water, Sam Mizell reported that he saw more signs of Bears, Deer, Raccoons, Otters, and other wildlife than he remembers ever seeing on such a trip - said it looked as if wildlife generally had certainly appropriated that area, and said he saw at one place about 50 shells where Otters had eaten soft-shell (snapping) turtles and yellow-belly terrapins.

B. No photographs this time, but shall try to have some of interest for next report.

*Arthur Mizell*  
1-19-44

January 8, 1944.

\*\*\*\*

John M. Hopkins,  
Refuge Manager



## MIGRATORY BIRDS

Refuge Okefenokee Months of September to December, 1943

1612

(1) Species	(2) First Observed		(3) Became Common	(4) Peak Concentration		(5) Last Observed		(6) Young Produced			(7) Total
Common Name	Number	Date	Date	Number	Date	Number	Date	No. Broods Obsvd.	Avg. Size	Esti- mated Total	Number Using Refuge
Anhinga	2	9/1				2	12/11				
American Egret	Some observed during entire period										
Great Blue Heron		9/1		10 to 20			12/31				
Night Heron	3	9/1					12/31				
Wood Ibis	1	9/20		None observed except 1 on 9/20; 34 on 12/12; 7 on 10/13; 3 on 10/15; and 4 on 11/22			11/22				
Wood Duck	18	9/1				Every trip					
Black Ducks	10	11/9				Any trip					
Mallard	20	11/9				"					
Ringneck	21	9/8				Any trip					
Blowwing Teal	5	9/7				36	10/22				
Canada Goose	21	Stopped in	Okefenokee 9/28; 100 on 10/2			and 5 on 11/4					
Mourning Dove	No Est.	9/1					12/31				
Woodcock	1	9/10				2	12/25				
Wilson's Snipe	9	11/18				20	12/23				
											2500

REMARKS: (Pertinent information not specifically requested)

The percentage of the area we were able to get over for observations was not sufficient to make estimates of any value; Bryant Crews reported 21 ringnecks Sept. 8, then observed none till Oct. 9; Crews knows ringnecks, but we wondered if these 21 were blue bills.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Form NR-1 - MIGRATORY BIRDS (Include species in families  
Gaviidae through Strigidae; also doves and  
woodcocks)\*

In case a resident form occurs, such as mottled duck  
on the Gulf Coast, use only the columns that apply.

- (1) SPECIES: Use correct common names as found in the  
A.O.U. Check List, 1931 Edition, and list  
in A.O.U. order. General terms are to be  
avoided, such as "scaup", "teal", etc.;  
use "green-winged teal" or "lesser scaup".
- (2) FIRST OBSERVED: The first refuge record for the species  
during spring migration, fall migration,  
wintering, or summering, and the number  
observed. In the case of resident species  
this column may be disregarded.
- (3) BECAME COMMON: The date the species became common on the  
refuge.
- (4) PEAK CONCENTRATION: The greatest number of the species present  
on any one date or limited interval of time.
- (5) LAST OBSERVED: The last refuge record for the species  
during the spring or fall migration,  
wintering, or summering, and the numbers  
observed exclusive of obvious cripples  
or non-migrants.
- (6) YOUNG PRODUCED: Estimated number of young produced based  
upon observations and actual counts on  
representative breeding areas. Brood  
counts should be made on two or more areas  
aggregating 10% of the breeding habitat.  
Estimates having no basis in fact are to  
be omitted.
- (7) TOTAL: Estimated total number of the species using  
the refuge during the period. This figure may  
or may not be more than that used for peak  
concentrations, depending upon the manner in  
which birds come through; i.e., in waves or  
all at once. On refuges representing the  
terminus of the flight lane, the figures  
would probably be the same in many cases.

\* Only columns applicable to the period covered should be used.