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CANADA GOOSE TRANSPLANT PROGRAM
Progress Report - May 1964

Following is a report of progress on the Canada Goose transplant program involving certain Federal and State refuges in the Mississippi Flyway in 1963-64.

HOLLA BEND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

- A total of 1,500 geese were received in two shipments from Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge during the period November 3-8, 1963.
- 1/3 were rendered flightless by removing 10 primaries from one wing
- 1/3 were rendered semi-flightless by removing 5 primaries from each wing
- 1/3 were released full-winged.
- 25 birds were lost in transit due to net injury and for other reasons
- Semi-flightless and flightless birds were placed in two wire enclosures of several acres each.
- Grit, green forage, and corn were available in each enclosure.
- Free flyers at first remained with flightless birds but soon began making normal flights to surrounding fields and the river and sand bars nearby.
- Flightless birds regained flight and joined the first group.
- A few transplant geese were recorded five miles to the northeast on Adkins Pond.
- Most birds stayed on the refuge throughout the winter.
- 1,800 migrants were present at Holla Bend during the winter, in addition to the transplants.

WHITE RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

- A total of 1,500 geese were received in two shipments from Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge during the period November 13-16, 1963.
- 16 were lost from causes associated with capture and transplant
- 1,000 were made semi-flightless, 500 were released as free-flyers.
- Transplants joined with migrants and were content for the most part to remain on the refuge. About 300 transplants were believed to have left the refuge for two weeks and returned when the duck season opened.
- 2,800 migrants, an increase of about 500, were recorded on the refuge during the wintering period
- No trapping was done to determine if any of the 500 bird increase was due to 1962 transplants.

LACASSINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

- A total of 742 birds were received in two shipments from Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge during the period November 19-21, 1963.
- 36 died in transit or shortly thereafter
- All birds were released as semi-flightless, 5-7 primaries were pulled from one wing.
- Birds were released on the farm unit.
- Immediately following release they half flew or walked to the extremes of the farm unit -- some were reported walking north from the refuge; one was reportedly seen about five miles north of the refuge seven days after release. The major portion of the group remained on or near the refuge, however.
- Corn and green browse were utilized heavily by transplant geese as well as wild migrants in the vicinity. Transplants also were noted feeding on aquatics in refuge pools.
- In February, transplant geese were observed feeding in local rice fields
- Some birds were recorded about 25 miles from the refuge in February; however, as many as 456 gold banded birds (transplants) were recorded still on the refuge on February 14, 218 on February 28 and 100 on March 5

WAPANOCCA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

- 412 transplants were received on December 19 from State refuges in Southern Illinois, 200 from Union County, and 212 from Horseshoe Lake.
- Four were dead on arrival or died shortly thereafter.
- Eight primaries were removed from one wing of each bird.
- The lake from which the birds were to have obtained water was frozen over except for small pockets at the time of release.
- About 50 geese headed east (walking), however, about 380 remained at or near the release site on the refuge.
- 18 birds were killed by wild dogs when the lake completely froze over and 15 inches of snow rendered the birds incapable of escape.
- Green browse and corn were available in sufficient quantity for the birds.
- About 250 birds were present on January 12.
- An additional 200 migrants used the refuge on an intermittent basis during the wintering period.

On the whole progress on the transplant program is viewed as very satisfactory. Three major shortcomings are evident and should be corrected including (1) time of trapping, (2) enclosures for released birds, and (3) trapping on the release site to determine the success of the program.

It is believed imperative that geese be trapped just as soon as possible after arrival at Swan Lake and in Southern Illinois. The longer they stay on these areas before they are trapped and transplanted, the stronger their desire is likely to be to return next fall. It is recommended, therefore, that transplant birds be captured and moved in late October if at all possible. This may pose a problem at Horseshoe Lake because of the tendency for birds to arrive here somewhat later; however, in any event they should be obtained as early as possible after arrival. The transfer of birds during the last half of December as occurred last year was felt to be too late to have any chance for success. If birds cannot be obtained at Horseshoe by December 1, it is recommended that they not be transplanted that particular year.

It is recognized that enclosures are needed at the points of release to protect flightless birds from predators and hold transplants on the area until they become somewhat acclimated and full flight is regained. Pens for this purpose will be constructed at Wapanocca and Lacassine where some difficulty was experienced last year.

It is recognized too that in order to fully evaluate the success of the program it will be necessary to trap geese at the release sites to recover previously banded birds. While there is some reluctance to fire a cannon net at these birds for fear of frightening them away, this method of capture will be tried if the use of drop door type traps is unsuccessful. A concerted effort will be made to trap birds during the coming year.

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