

CLEAR LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges
Tulelake, California

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT
Calendar Year 1981

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

JUN 28 1982

1981

PERMANENT PERSONNEL

1. Robert C. Fields	PFT GS-13	Refuge Manager (Project Leader)
2. Earl H. McCollum	PFT GS-12	Refuge Manager
3. Edward J. O'Neill	PFT GS-12	Wildlife Biologist (Management)
4. Pauline R. Chapman	PFT GS-7	Administrative Officer
5. Blake F. Chapman	PFT WG-10	Retired 1/17 Heavy Mobile Equip. Mechanic
6. Lowell D. Green	PFT WS-9	Eng. Equip. Operator Foreman
7. Jeffrey W. Fleischer	PFT GS-9	Refuge Manager
8. Richard W. Voss	PFT GS-9	Refuge Manager
9. James L. Hainline	PFT GS-9	Wildlife Biologist
10. Claudia D. Schurwanz	PPT GS-4	Resigned 12/26 Clerk Typist
11. Samuel D. Merriman	PFT WL-10	Eng. Equip. Operator Workleader
12. John F. Matthews	PFT WG-10	Eng. Equip. Mechanic
13. Billy E. Sellers	PFT WG-10	Eng. Equip. Operator
14. Donald C. Griffith	PFT WG-10	Eng. Equip. Operator
15. Lawrence F. Bigoni	PPT WG-10	Eng. Equip. Operator
16. Henry A. Ebinger	PPT WG-8	Eng. Equip. Operator
17. Ted Mann	PPT WG-8	Disability Retirement 6/4 Maintenance Worker
18. Thomas E. Downs	PPT WG-7	Maintenance Worker

TEMPORARY PERSONNEL TFT

19. Carlos D. Rey	Furlough 3/13	GS-5	Student Trainee (Wildlife Biology)
20. Sara M. Brown	10/4 -	GS-4	Biological Aid
21. David M. Mauser	6/16/80 - 2/21/81	WG-2	Laborer
22. Allen W. VanDyke	4/13 - 12/12	GS-4	Biological Aid
23. John F. Olthoff	8/25/80 - 5/4/81	GS-4	Biological Aid
24. Kathleen A. Engle	10/20/80 - 4/4/81	GS-4	Biological Aid
25. Alan R. Dyck	2/16 - 5/2	GS-4	Biological Aid
26. Robert J. Henszey	10/13 - 12/26	GS-4	Biological Aid

Review and Approvals

Robert Childs 6/1/82
Submitted by Date

Ed Collins 6/15/82
Area Office Review Date

Klamath Basin Nat'l Wildlife Refuges

Bob L. Burkholder 6/22/82
Regional Office Review Date

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J. OTHER ITEMS

- 1. Cooperative Programs (Nothing to report)
- 2. Items of Interest (Nothing to report)
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K. FEEDBACK
(Nothing to report)

A. HIGHLIGHTS

Duck and coot production up. (Section G.3)

Migrant mule deer exceed 300. (Section G.8)

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Total precipitation for 1981 was 14.90 inches. This is one of the highest years on record and exceeded the 10 year average by 38%. Although the spring months provided normal rainfall, the lake was at a very low level entering the summer. Storage was at only 62% of normal and inflow at 25% of normal. After a period of over 100 days without precipitation during the summer, the lake was at one of the lowest levels seen in recent years. The rains finally came in late September and continued through December making that four month period the wettest on record. As a result, the lake had recovered to 86% of normal storage by the end of the year.

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

1. General

Due to limited funds and higher priorities at other refuges in the complex, almost no habitat management activity occurs or is planned for the Clear Lake NWR. It is essentially a protection operation of remaining wildlife values.

2. Wetlands

The Clear Lake water levels are manipulated by the Bureau of Reclamation solely for irrigation purposes. As a result, there is no active wetland management for 50 remaining acres of emergent aquatic vegetation in the lake.

7. Grazing

Approximately 1½ miles of woven wire fence (originally built by Bureau of Reclamation in 1924) along the south boundary of the "U" was removed by the Forest Service. It was replaced with a combination of three and four strand fence to allow passage of antelope and to control cattle with adjacent Forest Service allotments.

The Fish and Wildlife grazing lessee paid \$4,113 for 628 AUMs within the 5,500 acre "U". The cattle grazing occurred between July 15 - November 15 and was intended to provide goose browse along the edge of the lake.

9. Fire Management

As at Tule Lake NWR, pre-suppression coverage and suppression assistance is provided by the U.S. Forest Service on a cost reimbursable basis.

Antelope hunters' vehicles were restricted to the first mile of road into the "U". The remainder of the unit was open to only foot traffic to reduce the hazard of grass fires from catalytic converters.

10. Pest Control

A local sheep rancher flew the Clear Lake Highlands "off the refuge" and shot 30+ coyotes in March.

G. WILDLIFE

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

There was no change in the status of the bald eagle or the Lost River sucker during the report period.

Bald eagles were seen during the winter, spring, and fall months numbering from 1 to 11. Heaviest use occurred in late winter months when concentrations of waterfowl were present.

3. Waterfowl

Waterfowl maintenance use during the spring months was down 14% from 1980, but up 163% in the fall period. Canada goose production at 280 was down 13% from 1980 and 2% from the five year average. Duck and coot production at 1,304 was up phenomenally from the preceding year and the five year average. The previous year was 481 and the five year average is 703.

4. Marsh and Waterbirds

Although the low water levels had little or no detrimental effect on the waterfowl species, we had a very low production of white pelicans and cormorants at 481 and 65 respectively. Cormorant production was off 30% from the five year average and 28% from 1980. Pelican production was down 38% from the five year average and 45% off from 1980. Grebe and heron production remained at a similar level to previous years.

5. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns and Allied Species

The declining water levels of Clear Lake during the summer months was attractive to many shorebird species. Production of several species, including avocet, black-necked stilt, willet, and killdeer, was higher than normal. Fall use by other species such as dowitcher, yellowlegs, and "peeps" was substantial. Population levels and production in California gulls, ring-billed gulls, Caspian terns, and Forester's terns remained at similar levels to 1980, and in the case of the terns, was up substantially over the five year average.

6. Raptors

Although they occur in small numbers, there is an interesting population of raptors that use Clear Lake. Breeding raptors include marsh hawks, red-tailed hawks, kestrels, barn owls, short-eared owls, and burrowing owls. Other common to uncommon visitors included golden eagles, rough-legged hawks, Swainson's hawks, prairie falcons, and great horned owls.

7. Other Migratory Birds

Mourning dove production remained constant at about 100 with the pre-season total in August estimated to be 250. Dove hunting is not permitted on the refuge.

8. Game Mammals

Pronghorn antelope production was down 36% from the five year average and down 9% from 1980. A cold and wet month of May undoubtedly had some effect on fawn survival. The pre-season census showed the herd size to be unchanged from 1980.

Mule deer migrate through Clear Lake in large numbers in spring and fall and peak numbers exceed 300 animals. The fall migration in 1981 was almost a month early due to inclement weather in the summer range. This, in fact, happened during the California deer season much to the delight of deer hunters.

A small resident mule deer herd numbering less than 20 animals resides on the "U" and they produced 8 fawns this year.

10. Other Resident Wildlife

Sage grouse occur in good numbers on the Clear Lake "U", and the population has remained rather stable for the last three years. Other areas around Clear Lake, which years ago had grouse, now have none. An uncontrollable cattle and sheep trespass problem may have something to do with this. Clear Lake provides the only stock water in the area. The narrow unfenced portions of the refuge are continually crossed by thirsty critters from Forest Service grazing leases.

Valley quail experienced a "boom" year and production at Clear Lake, like other local areas, was excellent.

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

Public use on Clear Lake NWR is very restricted. The majority of visitations occur on a Forest Service road that traverses a small portion of the south end of the refuge and is open for use year round, weather conditions permitting. The only other permitted visitation occurs during the pronghorn antelope and waterfowl hunting seasons. This year, 470 visits were made to the refuge, a 33% decrease over 1980.

The spillway bridge was declared unsafe and closed by the Bureau of Reclamation.

8. Hunting

Waterfowl hunting was light for the second year in a row. An estimated 80 visits were made. Muddy road conditions (access roads are unimproved dirt trails) most of the season forced most hunters to walk a few miles. Those that did, had good opportunities of getting limits of Canada geese.

The refuge antelope hunt on the "U" unit was held the first two weekends of the state season, August 29-30 and September 5-6. The normal operating procedure is to allow a maximum of 5 hunters on the unit at one time. Twenty three hunters, some camped at the entrance for 4 days prior to opening, were waiting for a chance to hunt the "U" on opening day. The late arrivals thought that a lottery would be more appropriate than the first come first served procedure used to fill the 5 hunter quota. California Department of Fish and Game runs the program.

Aerial census of the "U" was made prior to the hunt and a quota of 12 bucks was established. Eleven bucks were taken by the second Saturday. It is interesting to note that nobody wanted to hunt the last day even though three mature bucks could be seen from the unit's entrance point. A total of 15 hunter visits were made to harvest the 11 animals.

11. Wildlife Observation

All 470 visits made to the refuge were considered as wildlife observation even though some visits were primarily for hunting purposes. We feel that all visitors, no matter what their purpose may be for visiting, will see and enjoy the wildlife in the area.

15. Off-Road Vehicling

This activity, independent or in conjunction with artifact hunting, continues to be a problem. Several individuals were caught using three wheeled Hondas this summer and cited for trespass. The distance from complex headquarters to Clear Lake complicates the issue as far as enforcement of off-road vehicling and other illegal public use activities are concerned. We usually are too late to do anything about a problem.

16. Other Non-Wildlife Oriented Recreation

Surface artifact hunting occurs annually, more so when lake levels are down sufficiently to expose Indian sites. This year summer/fall levels were nearly identical to 1979 levels which were the lowest since 1968. Several alleged artifact hunters were cited for trespass this year, but more were not apprehended as evidenced by tracks on the refuge. Low management priority at Clear Lake results in little time spent on routine patrol or work projects. Contacts have been made with Forest Service personnel to ask for their assistance in monitoring use on the refuge during their activities on Modoc National Forest lands adjacent to the refuge. Hopefully, "more eyes" looking will help us reduce illegal use problems in the future.

17. Law Enforcement

Distances from and higher priorities at the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath Refuges permit only marginal enforcement effort by refuge personnel.

J. OTHER ITEMS3 Credits

R. Chapman	A
J. Hainline	B; G
J. Fleischer	H
R. Voss	F
S. Brown	Typing
H. McCollum	Editing