

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE  
FEDERAL BUILDING, WINONA, MINNESOTA

ADDRESS REPLY TO SUPERINTENDENT  
UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE  
AND REFER TO

NARRATIVE REPORT  
UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE  
INCLUDING TREMPLEALEAU AND TALCOT LAKE REFUGES  
NOVEMBER 1 THROUGH JANUARY 31, 1939

Ray C. Steele, Refuge Manager



I. Weather Conditions:

Temperatures were slightly above normal in November but abnormally warm in December and January, especially the latter month, when the mean was 25.9° and the normal 14.1°. November precipitation was 5.07 inches, while the normal is 1.56 inches. December and January, however, were dry. Normal precipitation for the two months combined is 2.23 inches. Only 1.19 inches fell. No fires occurred during this report period.

II. Wildlife.

A. Waterfowl:

1. The October 31, 1938, narrative report indicated general trends as to the fall migration of waterfowl which was not materially changed during November. The fourth high water period of the calendar year occurred early in November and as a result of the high water the birds were scattered and shooting was more difficult during the latter part of the open season.

Our observations during November substantiate our estimate in the previous narrative report that there was a slight decrease in wild fowl on the Upper Mississippi Refuge during the fall of 1938. The decrease was particularly noticeable among mallards. Hunting conditions continued to be favorable, and as a result of a fifteen day longer shooting season it is reasonable to assume that the kill was proportionately larger than last season although I believe hunting conditions on the whole were about equal. Very few birds have remained within the confines of the Refuge during the winter. A few golden-eyes and mergansers have persisted in open water areas which are limited. A small flock of some fifty mallards have frequented an open water area adjacent to the Trempealeau Refuge throughout the winter.

Burn

swc

Predators, especially hawks and owls, continued to concentrate in the bottomlands, to feed on wounded birds. They drifted out to a great extent after the freeze-up. There is no appreciable predation on healthy birds as the migrants are gone before the cripples are cleaned up. There has been little evidence of disease or serious parasitism on this Refuge at any time.

B. Upland Game Birds:

1. The Upper Mississippi Refuge is not particularly attractive to large numbers of upland birds; however, reasonable numbers of pheasants take advantage of the marginal cover during the severe winter weather and about the normal numbers of birds have been found in areas suitable as a winter habitat.

The upland bird situation on the Trempealeau Refuge shows some improvement. There are more pheasants and quail frequenting the area than I believe have been present during any previous winter. Very few sharp-tail or pinnated grouse have frequented the Trempealeau Refuge this season.

The Talcot Lake Refuge is carrying a large number of pheasants during the winter. Cover is especially favorable for pheasants in the northern section of this small Refuge.

2. Because of the relatively mild winter a minimum of artificial feeding has been necessary.

C. Predator and Rodent Control:

1. There is no necessity for predator or rodent control on either the Upper Mississippi, Trempealeau, or Talcot Lake Refuges.

D. Fur Take By Refuge Personnel:

There has been no fur taken by Refuge personnel.

E. Fur Take By Other Trappers:

There has been no open trapping season on either the Upper Mississippi, Trempealeau, or Talcot Lake Refuges.

F. Other Animals:

1. There is no appreciable change in the status of other animals on the three Refuges, Upper Mississippi, Trempealeau, and Talcot Lake. Beaver are present in considerable numbers on several areas of the Upper

Mississippi Refuge. Deer, I believe, are showing a slight increase on both the Upper Mississippi and Trempealeau areas. Raccoon are about holding their own. The mink population on the Upper Mississippi is satisfactory and there is every indication that an open season for taking mink will be warranted during the season 1939 and 1940.

The muskrat situation has not changed appreciably since the last narrative report was submitted; however, the early November flood unquestionably took an additional toll of these animals and the prevailing high water had a tendency to cause muskrats to build a large number of houses on exterior margins off the Upper Mississippi Refuge and without question many of these houses will freeze out during the winter because of being located in shallow water and in situations unfavorable as winter habitat. Estimates indicate that muskrats have decreased over the previous year from one-half to two-thirds; however, there are a sufficient number of animals present on most areas of the Upper Mississippi Refuge to provide adequate breeding stock for the coming season.

A considerable number of jack rabbits have been observed on the Talcot Lake Refuge.

#### G. Bird Banding Operations:

1. No bird banding operations have been carried on at either the Upper Mississippi, Trempealeau, or Talcot Lake Refuges. A considerable number of bands have been recovered by hunters during the open season and turned in to this office and we have in turn forwarded them direct to the Bureau.

### III. Refuge Development and Maintenance.

#### A. Physical Development:

1. Clearing and posting of exterior boundaries has continued during this report period both by regular and W.P.A. personnel. Isolated units on the Upper Mississippi Refuge have been well posted and lines cleared where future acquisition is not anticipated. The Talcot Lake Refuge has not been posted because title has not yet been conveyed.

A new floor has been completed in the washrack portion of the Winona warehouse occasioned by reason of the original floor settling badly and endangering water and sewer connections. The filling around the storehouse near La Crosse, Wisconsin, has been completed and heavily riprapped to protect it from flood waters. Large outdoor signs, 5 x 8 feet, are being carved with W.P.A. assistance. These signs will be of inestimable value in attracting public attention to the Upper Mississippi Refuge. The garage portion of the Winona warehouse has been insulated, which will add materially to the value of the structure.

The fencing of the Talcot Lake Refuge has been completed and a majority of the willows and brush removed from the lake portion of the Refuge. Additional rail fences have been constructed with materials removed from the lake bed, brush piles constructed at strategic locations on the area, and the riprapping and raising of dikes completed.

A small W.P.A. crew has been continued on the Trempealeau Refuge and they have insulated the service building and garage, constructed a coal bin, light well covers over basement windows at the family cabin and lodge, completed road barriers on service roads, and continued a general improvement and clean-up of the premises.

The type mapping of the Upper Mississippi Refuge has continued with a small W.P.A. crew.

B. Plantings:

No planting has been done during this report period.

C. Collection:

No collecting has been done during this report period.

2. No cultivated crops are being grown during this report period.

D. Distribution of Seed and Nursery Stock:

No seed stock has been distributed during this report period.

IV. Public Relations.

A. Recreational Uses:

1. No recreational uses, such as camping, of any consequence has occurred on either the Upper Mississippi, Trempealeau, or Talcot Lake Refuges.

2. Fishing continued to the end of January. Winter fishing through the ice is quite popular and average catches have been recorded.

3. Hunting continued to be popular until the close of the waterfowl season.

4. Visitors: Mr. M. Y. Pillow of the U. S. Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, spent November 2, 3, and 4 studying ash trees in the Mississippi bottomlands.

## B. Refuge Violations:

Six cases involving violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act were reported to the Washington office during this report period. Two of these offenders were arraigned in Federal District Court at St. Paul where they were found guilty of shooting waterfowl after 4 p.m. and fined \$5.00 each. One offender was arraigned in Federal District Court at Winona on a charge of taking and possessing wild ducks during the closed season, and upon a plea of guilty was fined \$25.00. Three cases involving shooting wild ducks after sunset are yet to be disposed of.

Eighteen violations of the Refuge Act were reported by Refuge personnel during the report period. The Bureau concurred in our recommendation to not forward one of these cases for prosecution (Robert Liesen). One offender was arraigned in Federal District Court at Dubuque, Iowa, where he was sentenced to ninety days in jail upon a plea of guilty to invading the Refuge. The sentence was suspended and the offender placed on probation for one year.

Four State cases were reported by Refuge personnel during this report period and disposed of in the following manner: One offender paid a fine of \$50.00 and costs of \$3.50 for hunting ducks after 4 p.m. One offender was fined \$10.00 and costs of \$3.50 for hunting ducks after 4 p.m. Two offenders were each fined \$50.00 and costs of \$7.21 for hunting mink with the aid of a dog and spear; however, \$35.00 of the fine was suspended in each case.

## V. Economic Uses of Refuge.

### A. Grazing:

No grazing permits were issued during the report period.

### B. Haying:

There were no hay permits issued during this report period.

### C. Timber Removal:

There has been no timber removal except that cut in connection with boundary clearing and posting.

### D. Share Cropping:

No share cropping was carried on during this report period.

### E. Cabin Permits:

No new cabin permits have been issued during this report period.





No new certain benefits have been issued during this report period.

E° Certain benefits:

No game clothing was certified on during this report period.

D° Game clothing:

with reasonably clothing and housing.

There has been no timber removal except that cut in connection

C° Timber removal:

There were no new benefits issued during this report period.

B° Housing:

No housing benefits were issued during this report period.

A° Grazing:

A° Economic cases of poaching.

The case was abandoned in each case.

During this report period with the aid of a dog and several pointers \$32.00 of the  
of B.M. Two offenders were each fined \$20.00 and costs of \$1.50 for  
one offender was fined \$10.00 and costs of \$2.20 for pointing ducks after  
bird a fine of \$20.00 and costs of \$2.20 for pointing ducks after a B.M.  
report period and disposed of in the following manner: One offender  
both state cases were reported by Wildlife personnel during this

the offender placed on probation for one year.

One of Wildlife to investigate the matter. The sentence was abandoned and  
dismissed. Some where he was sentenced to ninety days in jail upon a  
plea of guilty. One offender was arraigned in Federal District Court at  
Washington to not forward one of these cases for prosecution (Wildlife  
personnel during the report period. The process completed in only twenty-  
fourteen violations of the Wildlife Act were reported by Wildlife

cases including pointing wild ducks after sunset are yet to be disposed of.  
The closed season and upon a plea of guilty was fined \$32.00. Three  
Court at Chicago on a charge of taking and possessing wild ducks during  
and fined \$2.00 each. One offender was arraigned in Federal District  
Court at St. Paul where they were found guilty of pointing waterfowl after a B.M.  
Two of these offenders were arraigned in Federal District Court at  
were reported to the Washington office during this report period.

Six cases including violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

B° Wildlife violations: