

OREGON STATE
GAME COMMISSION

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The Cover

Wildlife has many uses. One of the hobbies growing in popularity is wildlife photography. In 1904, William L. Finley used equipment that was a bit more cumbersome than the modern camera.

Photo by H. T. Bohlman

HUNTER SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAM

Instructors Approved

Month of January..... 9
Total to Date..... 3,742

Students Trained

Month of January..... 223
Total to Date..... 136,042

Firearms Casualties Reported in 1969

None



Winter Conditions

The Game Commission was briefed at the February 14 meeting on game conditions during the current winter.

Two severe storms dropped considerable snow on western Oregon in late December and again in late January. The January storm in particular was of concern since valley areas as well as highlands were blanketed for more than a week.

All available employees were assigned to the field during the emergency and game officers of the State Police also assisted in distributing feed. It proved difficult to reach large numbers of big game since deer and elk in western Oregon do not concentrate during the winter and 2 to 5 animals was the normal number in a group. The deep snow blocked all roads into game country, limiting access to most areas. While feed was distributed to animals which could be reached, an equally important objective was assessing the condition of game to predict what losses could be anticipated.

Moderating weather conditions improved the outlook along the Coast Range by mid-month, but conditions remained critical along the west slopes of the Cascades. Areas of concern include the Clackamas River drainage, the South Santiam in the vicinity of Green Peter Reservoir, Molalla River, and the Breitenbush drainage. The condition of elk herds wintering at higher elevations on the McKenzie, North Fork of the Willamette, and elsewhere along the Cascades is unknown but will be investigated from the air at the earliest opportunity.

The extent of mortality will not be known until loss surveys can be made after the snow leaves. April and May are the critical months, so the final analyses will be delayed.

The weather has been critical in parts of eastern Oregon, but periodic thawing spells have provided some feeding areas on most ranges. Deer entered the winter in less than average condition due to the early summer drought and continued inclement weather will have a telling effect before spring.

Quail suffered more than other game birds except where coveys could reach feed lots or other sources of food. Considerable feeding was done in areas which were accessible, thus saving some brood stock. Reports indicate that pheasants and chukars have survived well to date.

The Commission expressed concern over game conditions and instructed the staff to keep them informed of further developments. Those taking part in the briefing voiced the hope that moderating weather conditions would alleviate any further hardships and that 1969 hunting potentials would not be jeopardized.

Commission Meet

The Game Commission, at their meeting on February 14, cancelled the coastal archery season and called for a public hearing to review the McKenzie River angling regulations. The Commission also endorsed making steelhead a game fish.

Following a review of the effect of the harsh winter on game, the Commission cancelled the spring agricultural elk season for archers originally scheduled for the agricultural areas along the north and south coasts.

Sportsmen present, including representatives from the Oregon Bow Hunters and outdoor clubs from Vernonia, testified in favor of the closure. Some groups, according to spokesmen, continue to haul
(Continued on Page 7)



Why Wildlife?



by Ron Shay

As explorers, trappers, and the first settlers moved into the Oregon country, it is doubtful that anyone would have questioned the value of having wildlife. Though early explorers found a definite shortage of big game at times, they still supplemented their provisions with game whenever possible. One of the big events of the Lewis and Clark expedition was when they reached the coastal area of Oregon and were able to shoot an elk. True, they had trouble keeping the meat very long, but when fresh, it was a welcome change from the diet they had been existing on.

Further exploration of the Oregon territory was caused largely by its rich fur resource. Trappers seeking beaver, otter, and other animals for their furs established trails which eventually led to the development of trading posts and cities.

Much of Oregon's early political history was strongly influenced by the fur-bearer resource in that many of the earliest permanent settlers of the state were employees of the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Fur Companies.

The value of wildlife to the various Indian tribes of the state was rather apparent. Fish was the mainstay in the diet of the Columbia River dwellers, and though some of the big game animals were less numerous than at present, game generally was an important item in the diet.

As white man moved in, tilled the soil, and homesteaded, there was still little doubt as to the value of having wildlife. The deer, elk, ruffed grouse, and other species provided an important part of the food supply. Though pheasants,

chukars, and several other species hadn't arrived on the scene as yet, the undisturbed habitat of the native birds and animals provided a good supply of game.

During the early part of this century, it still would have been difficult to find individuals who couldn't see the value of wildlife. The people of the state were still very close to the land and had a tradition of using fish and game for recreation and food.

But the land and the people have changed. Past relationships with the land no longer exist in many persons. Youngsters grow up never having seen a deer cross a frosty meadow or a grouse burst from cover just under your feet.

In the past, interest in wildlife was largely pragmatic. The animals and birds provided food or clothing or both. As agriculture became more widespread, the necessity for taking fish and game for food and clothing diminished. Though the sporting challenge of taking game was undoubtedly always part of hunting,

trapping, and fishing, this aspect became more important.

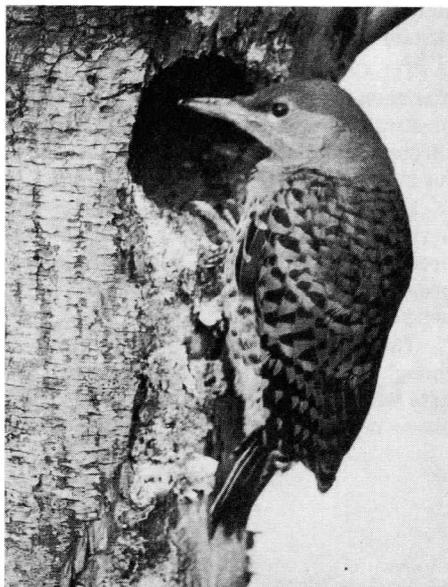
As this direct need for the wild products of the land has decreased, a specialized group of individuals has assumed the stewardship of the wildlife resource. Fish and game managers, largely supported by fees paid by hunters and anglers, are now the guardians of the wild birds and animals.

In the past, the commercial use of big game and birds gave industries a direct vested interest in the resource, but now this remains only in the case of some fish. True, manufacturers of sporting arms and fishing tackle are concerned about the state of the resource, but not as directly as were the sellers of the past.

However, in recent years the voices of a once small group of individuals have become increasingly louder. For many years the wildlife conservation battles were fought by the hunters and anglers. They are responsible for the survival, and increase in many cases, of various birds and animals. While they were fighting for the game species, a group of other persons was putting forth efforts on behalf of the songbirds and the nongame animals. Often these two groups crossed swords, neither side being able to see the views of the other. It was a matter of consumptive users of wildlife battling nonconsumptive users.

Advances in the biological sciences have shown that there need be no battle between these groups. The consumptive users, or hunters and anglers, can have their recreation and food without jeopardizing the desires and pursuits of the

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Why Wildlife

(Continued)

nonconsumptive users or "bird watchers."

The true sportsman in the ranks of the hunter and angler has always thrilled as much at seeing game as he has at bagging it. Certainly a trophy taken on a good hunt is the ultimate thrill, but any trip is enhanced by the nongame birds and animals.

We can no longer justify wildlife's existence on the basis of the meat it supplies. Indeed, many individuals wonder if it is worth the trouble to keep populations of deer and elk and various upland birds. Some may counter that birds are important in controlling insects—but so are pesticides.

Why bother then? Why bother to try to maintain and improve the habitat needed by wildlife? The hunter can always become a spectator sportsman or take up other hobbies. Perhaps the answer lies in some of the other uses of animals and birds. Not to belittle the hunter—he has contributed much money and energy to the preservation of wildlife species. However, in this day and age there are increasing numbers of individuals who would condemn the hunter or who just don't understand that he can have a great feeling for wildlife even though his great desire is to kill individual birds and animals.

We end up looking to a word that is either completely understood, or completely meaningless. The word aesthetics needs no explanation to anyone who has become thrilled at the song of a bird . . . to anyone who has felt his heart beat a bit faster when a deer wandered in to a picnic to investigate the lunch spread upon the ground. The word means nothing, however, to those unfortunates trapped in the asphalt jungle or limited by their imagination to a cost-benefit evaluation of everything on earth.

As human populations continue to increase, the nonconsumptive uses of wild-

life are going to continue to grow in importance. In some cases, simply because it will not be possible to produce a harvestable surplus of game because of habitat limitations. In other cases, lack of space for hunting will make it impractical.

The need for protection of the cougar here in Oregon illustrates the first point and demonstrates also how the hunters and nonhunters can work together. Diminishing habitat has caused a steady decline in cougar numbers over the past several decades. When a bill was entered in the legislature to give the animals some kind of protection, the Game Commission, the two major sportsmen's clubs of the state, and the Audubon Society all lent their support to its passage.

For many years, certain individuals have appreciated birds just because they exist. Bird watching is a major hobby with many persons, and it certainly is one of the best types of hobbies we know to teach youngsters patience. In addition to patience it can help develop an inquiring mind and at the same time teach a youngster to be precise and observant of details.

At one time wildlife photography was thought to be limited to the expert, but with the development of new and less expensive cameras and equipment it is a hobby within the reach of most persons.

Game management agencies throughout the country are broadening their programs to include the wider values of wildlife. A plan recently proposed by the Oregon Game Commission staff will, if funds become available, provide for a big game viewing area in one of the north coast valleys. The area is one where elk cause perpetual problems to the landowners, and several of them have indicated a willingness to sell to the Commission. If the necessary lands can be acquired, the basic use of the area will be to produce good elk habitat. A limited hunt to take annual surpluses of animals will be held, but the area will be designed to provide maximum opportunities for viewing of deer and elk.

The Commission's Sauvie Island Game Management Area hosts many hundred bird watchers every year, and other areas throughout the state are popular spots for students of wildlife.

But why bother? It's all a part of our heritage and an irreplaceable part of the present. Birds control bugs. Big game provides several thousand tons of meat per year, etc., etc.

The basic reason "why" is deeper, though. If man can live with and perpetuate wildlife, his chances of providing for his own survival on this globe are much



better. Aldo Leopold said, "Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." Such a harmony between men and wildlife may indicate whether the former survives.

But perhaps even deeper is the philosophical question as to whether man should allow the extermination of any of his fellow animals. In the past, nature has eliminated species by changes of weather and habitat. Currently, man theoretically rules the world and its creatures. As a hopefully benevolent ruler he won't allow the extermination of one of his subjects.

His benevolence at times is overshadowed by his greed, thoughtlessness, and preoccupation with destruction, but in the long run it is to be hoped that his concern for and appreciation of his compatriots on this spinning ball will prevail. If such isn't the case and the last bird and animal are allowed to die, a part of civilized man will undoubtedly die, too.

Regardless of one's views toward the proper use of wildlife, the time has come when those interested must work together to determine not **why** wildlife should exist, but **how** are we going to make it possible in the future? Those who believe there is a reason why must come up with the how.





NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK, MARCH 16-22

“PROVIDE HABITAT—Places Where Wildlife Live” is the theme for National Wildlife Week, 1969. The week launches a conservation effort to tell all Americans of the need to protect and provide natural areas for animal populations.

More than half of America's wetland acreage has been lost by draining, dredging, filling, and pollution. Marshes and estuaries are vital and valuable wildlife areas. Other important natural areas are disappearing at an equally rapid rate.

During Wildlife Week, the Wildlife Federation is stressing that to have wildlife we must “Provide Habitat—Places Where Wildlife Live.”



BIG GAME HERD COUNTS COMPLETED

The first half of the main winter big game counts has been completed by field biologists of the Game Commission. Final results of the herd composition tallies indicate a 9 per cent decrease in blacktail deer fawn production last year, while the fawn production on mule deer ranges equalled that of the previous year.

A point important to hunters is that the number of buck deer available is down from a year ago, probably a result of the excellent buck deer season last fall. In all probability hunters will find bucks harder to come by this fall, however the ratio of bucks to does is satisfactory for proper reproduction in the herds.

Statewide figures indicate a decline of 23 per cent in the ratio of bucks to does and a 3 per cent decline in the ratio of fawns to does. Although not uniform, the declines are marked on certain ranges and will demand careful consideration of the seasons by the Game Commission in May.

Biologists are now concentrating their efforts on population trend surveys to determine relative numbers of animals on each range. While herd composition counts determine the ratio of bucks to does and fawns to does, the trend counts compare the numbers of animals on winter ranges to the counts of previous years. Trend counts are run at approximately the same time each year and follow the same routes. These surveys will be completed about the last of April.

Waterfowl Counts

The annual mid-winter waterfowl inventory recently completed by Game Commission field biologists working in cooperation with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reveals a total of almost 301,600 waterfowl of all species wintering in the state, a decrease of around 100,000 birds from the wintering population a year ago.

Chet Kebbe, waterfowl specialist in charge of Game Commission operations, said that ducks totaled 225,200; geese, 55,600; and swans, coots, and others made up the remainder. A decided decrease was noted in most species of dabblers such as mallards, widgeon, while the divers compared favorably with previous years. The decline in the number of dabbling ducks is a direct result of severe drought last summer on the major breeding grounds in Canada. Mallards were scarce in Oregon until late December when severe weather in eastern Washington forced many birds into the Willamette Valley.

Biologists reported considerable difficulty in making the surveys this winter. Snow, fog, rain, and floods which caused the birds to disperse made counting difficult. Severe weather in late December apparently forced many of the widgeon and several other species into California.

Kebbe said that in general waterfowl hunting was poor last fall in most parts of the state but did improve when severe weather hit late in the season. Willamette Valley hunters enjoyed a good season as flooded fields and large acreages of unharvested crops held large numbers of birds. Hunting pressure, however, was down considerably on a statewide basis, the result of poor hunting conditions and a general lack of birds.



1968 Fish Liberations

Game Commission fish liberation tankers made more than 2,100 individual trips last year. This averaged 131 trips per tanker for the 16 liberation trucks making up the fleet. Peak distribution of fish took place during the summer months.

Liberation crews with these 16 tank trucks hauled almost 22,713,000 fish of all species to the lakes and streams of the state. The number of fish stocked is an increase of some 1½ million over the total released in 1967. Weight of the fish totaled more than 1,377,200 pounds, an increase of approximately 150,000 pounds over the previous year.

In 1968, additional emphasis was placed on expansion of the salmon and steelhead rearing program which boosted the number of smolts released as well as the poundage. Smolts are fish reared to the migratory stage, which takes about a full year, to insure maximum survival during their downstream migration and growing period in the sea.

More catchable trout which likewise boosted the poundage were also reared and released from Game Commission fish hatcheries. These were the result of expanded programs and excellent growing conditions. In some areas, rainbow trout and salmon growth rate had to be slowed to keep the fish from crowding themselves right out of the ponds.

Some new ponds constructed in 1968 will result in further expansion of salmon, steelhead, and catchable trout production in 1969.



From pail to large container, seined fish are poured for transfer to their new home.

SCOUTS SALVAGE FISH

Over two thousand salmon received an assist last year when Scout packs 310 and 192 of the Reedsport-Gardiner area took on salvage operations. Under the guidance of Ron McDivitt, fishery biologist for the area, the group moved into Miller Creek, a tributary to Schofield Creek, near Reedsport.

The fry and fingerling coho salmon rescued by the scouts would have perished as the potholes in which they were trapped gradually dried up. Local landowners, scoutmasters and cub scout leaders all joined in the seining and hauling process.

This is the second year the scouts have taken on the chore of moving the small fish from the diminishing creek to waters where they can reach the ocean.



Coho fry and fingerlings are put into a stream with good water supply.

Commission Meet

(Continued from Page 2)

hay, pellets, and other food back into the coastal mountains where elk and deer have been hard hit by the cold and deep snow. Biologists for the Commission reported that many animals have lost condition, and any undue harassment during the next few months could result in increased mortality.

The Commission advised archers who purchased elk tags for the spring hunt that refunds would be allowed to those who wished to turn the tags in. Archers have until April 15 to return the tags but were warned that those who did turn the tags in would be unable to purchase another if they decided to hunt elk this fall.

Because of a technicality in the McKenzie River hook regulations which would prohibit fly fishermen from using a dropper fly, the Commission set a public hearing for March 28 to review the matter with the objective of changing this regulation. Although the single hook rule is working well on the Rogue River, it was not intended to include McKenzie fly fishermen when the one-hook rule was adopted for the McKenzie. The intent of the law is to prohibit the snagging of salmon.

The Commission also endorsed a bill now being considered by the Legislature making steelhead a game fish but emphasized that some provision would have to be made to take care of steelhead taken incidentally in the commercial fishing for salmon or other food fish.

Editor's Note

The revision of our mailing list is underway. This issue has been mailed out on the basis of the old list. The April issue will go out according to the revised list.

We have received some letters from readers who apparently did not get a copy of the Bulletin containing one of the return cards. If the copy was one picked up at a license agency or other bulk outlet, this was the way it was planned. If you didn't receive the card in your home delivered issue, but sent in a letter, your name will be retained on the list.

If you want to continue to receive the Bulletin, but don't receive the next couple of issues, better drop us a line. We don't want to drop anyone who wants to continue their subscription; however, in the process of paring out those who aren't interested, we may do so accidentally. Our mailing list contained over 62,000 names throughout the world. If we "goof," please be a bit patient.

GAME BULLETIN



The Downy Woodpecker

The downy woodpecker is the smallest and, next to the flicker, the most common of 13 species of woodpeckers inhabiting Oregon. It is a permanent resident of all wooded areas in the state but is most abundant in the willow thickets and cottonwoods along the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

This small black and white woodpecker is almost an exact replica of the larger hairy woodpecker which it parallels in all plumages. They are the only common woodpeckers in Oregon with white underparts and clear white backs. Males of both species are marked with a small scarlet patch on the back of the head—a mark which is absent on the female. With the exception of size, the principal difference between these closely related woodpeckers is in the bill and outer tail feathers. In the downy the bill is small and the white outer tail feathers are heavily barred with black in contrast with the large bill and solid white feathers of the hairy woodpecker.

Many of the small cavity-nesting birds depend on the carpentry of the downy woodpecker for their very existence. In addition to building a new nest hole each spring the downy excavates other holes in the fall in which to roost during the cold winter nights. Each of these cavities becomes the future home of swallows, wrens, or bluebirds.

The downy woodpecker is well adapted for its life in the willow thickets and hardwood forests. Its hard, sharp bill is ideally suited for drilling, and its feet and tail are well developed for climbing

or clinging to trees. Two of the four toes on each foot face backward in contrast with the three front toes and a vestigial hind toe of most other birds. Arrangement of toes in this manner, along with a stiff tail containing terminal spines, provides the bird with a solid three-point foundation from which to work.

Practically the entire diet of the downy woodpecker is composed of wood-boring insects which it excavates from decaying limbs and snags. The task of removing these wood-borers and grubs is obviously made easier by a long, barbed tongue which can be inserted deep into their tunnels to capture the prey.

In late April the female downy selects a nesting site in a decaying stub, usually within 10 to 12 feet of the ground. Except for the excavation, no attempt is made at nest construction and the three to six white eggs are laid on a few remaining wood chips. Both sexes take turns in excavating the hole and in incubating the eggs.

The downy woodpecker is a friendly bird, tame and unsuspecting. It has adjusted to the encroachment of civilization and has become a common sight in orchards, parks, and wood lots throughout the state. It is frequently found during the winter months foraging through the wooded areas with loose flocks of chickadees and nuthatches and, along with these birds, becomes a regular customer at feeding stations where peanut butter or suet is supplied.

—C. E. Kebbe

WOLVERINE

Gulo luscus

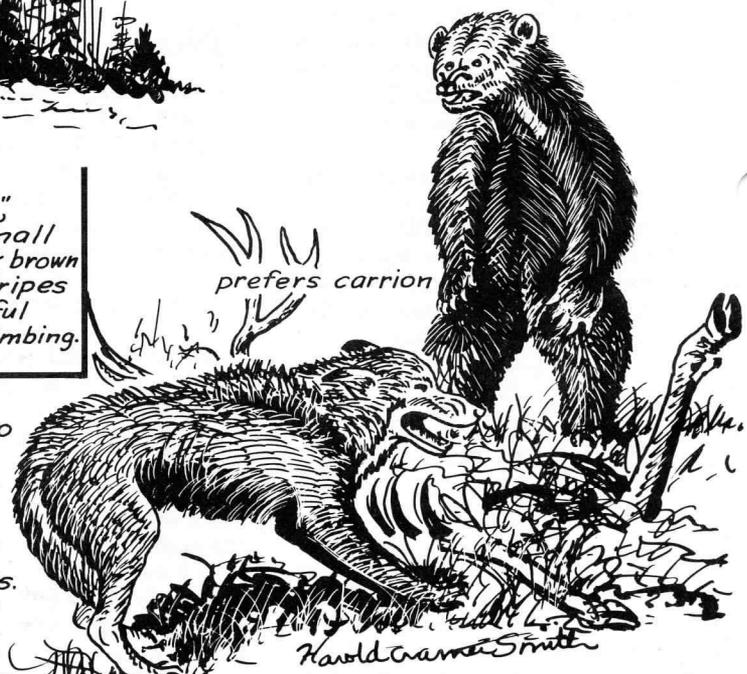


Has loping gait



Head & body 29"-32", tail 7"-9", weight 20-55 lbs. Looks like small bear with bushy tail. Color dark brown to black with 2 broad yellowish stripes joining on rump. Large feet, powerful semi-retractable claws aid in tree climbing.

Lives in high mountain forests. Found in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon in rare numbers. Three recent sight records: two in 1965 and one in 1967.



prefers carrion

Harold Gammie Smith



Mate between April & August. 2 to 5 cubs born from Feb. to June in nest in rocks, tree roots, or hole in ground. Blind at birth, cubs nurse 8 to 10 weeks, remain with mother 2 years.

Feeds on bird eggs in spring, wasp larvae in summer, berries in fall. Living animals preyed on in winter when deep snow helps in running down his food. Caches of prey or carrion are covered with dirt or snow.



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