



OREGON STATE  
GAME COMMISSION  
**BULLETIN**  
APRIL 1970

# OREGON STATE GAME COMMISSION BULLETIN

Volume 25, Number 4  
April 1970

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Published Monthly by the  
OREGON STATE GAME COMMISSION  
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### The Cover

A Roosevelt elk showing the effects of a hard winter as he munches on new spring growth. Though west side areas appear to have much game food, the plants are often of low nutritional value.

Photo by Ron Shay

### HUNTER SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAM

#### Instructors Approved

Month of February ..... 13  
Total to Date ..... 3,854

#### Students Trained

Month of February ..... 413  
Total to Date ..... 150,413

#### Firearms Casualties Reported in 1970

Fatal ..... 0  
Nonfatal ..... 2



## Swainson's Thrush

The Swainson's thrush is a common summer bird of the Oregon forests and brushlands but because of its drab coloration and retiring habits is seldom seen by anyone but a keen observer. However, learning to recognize its beautiful song and distinctive call note will lead to an awareness of the bird's presence.

This secretive thrush is on its breeding grounds only a short period of time, arriving in late May and departing for winter quarters in Central America in early September. As is characteristic of most song birds the migration takes place entirely at night when danger from predation is relatively low. Most of the flights are within 500 feet of the ground and cover up to 200 miles a night. Daylight hours are spent in feeding and resting.

During the brief summer this songster spends in Oregon it constantly pours forth a series of beautiful melodies. Singing takes place from daylight to dark but is most frequent in the early morning hours and late in the day, long after most other birds have retired for the night. One exuberant bird was recorded singing over 4,300 refrains in one day. Each song is a rolling series of flute-like notes, rising up the scale.

As with most other species of birds, singing is related to the breeding season. When the nesting period approaches, the intensity and frequency of the renditions increase. By the end of July when the young thrushes are on the wing, the singing stops and the

birds become quiet. Not even the distinctive call note, a sharp whistled **whit**, is to be heard.

Like all members of the thrush family, the Swainson's thrush has the characteristic spotted breast, both as a juvenile and as an adult. The underparts are white while the back, wings, and tail are a uniform dull gray-brown, and even from a distance the buffy cheeks and conspicuous buffy eye ring can be seen. It is not likely to be confused with any other bird on the Pacific slope except its close relative, the hermit thrush, which can be distinguished by a reddish tail.

One can always identify the nest of the Swainson's thrush by the location and the materials used. As a rule it is built in a small tree or bush and within a few feet of the ground. It is made almost entirely of green moss with a few dead leaves and dried grasses for lining. When the neat cup-shaped home has been completed, it looks like a ball of moss fastened in a bush or in the crotch of a tree. In early June three or four spotted blue eggs are laid and a month later the young are on the wing.

Early in the spring the diet of the Swainson's thrush is composed almost entirely of ants, beetles, moths, and other insects which it finds in abundance on the forest floor. But this thrush is also fond of wild fruits and wild berries, and as the season advances these items make up more than 80 percent of the food supply.

—C. E. Kebbe

# PLEASE EXPLAIN - - -

by Robert U. Mace  
Chief, Game Division

In answering the mail, particularly letters received after the hunting season, it is apparent that many questions and comments are repeated each year. Hence, a Bulletin article devoted to answering the more common inquiries concerning game management appeared advisable. We hope this article will serve not only to inform Oregon citizens but to eliminate the need for writing some of those letters.

The volume of correspondence tends to vary with hunter success. A year when the number of deer bagged falls

below expectations, for example, will see a flood of comments and advice on how to remedy the situation. On the other hand, successful hunters apparently find little reason to write.

The topics are not necessarily on the basis of importance or number of inquiries received. The difficulty of presenting all of the background information and reasoning on any particular topic should be recognized. No attempt has been made to provide a game management course in the limited space available. Subject to these qualifications, we will get underway.

## IF YOU WANT TO SHOOT DOES, WHY NOT HAVE AN EITHER-SEX BAG LIMIT?

We have too many hunters to support such a regulation. Experience reveals that hunters build up their enthusiasm for the opening day and nearly all participate the first weekend. An opening for bucks only requires that the hunter identify antlers before shooting which undoubtedly has some effect in reducing accidents. Not only is a buck regulation important for safety reasons but it does encourage trophy hunting and emphasizes recreation, the most important value to be derived from the sport. With the later opening for antlerless deer, the doe has an opportunity to become more wary and is a better sporting animal.

A later opening for antlerless deer tends to distribute activity throughout the season and encourages those hunters holding unit permits to delay their trip until after the first weekend. The result has been a substantial increase in the amount of recreation provided by the deer season.

Weather, predators, and other factors account for some annual surplus of deer but hunters can harvest substantial numbers of deer without affecting total numbers. Deer such as the winter-killed one being examined are wasted animals.

## DEER

### WHY SHOOT DOES AND FAWNS?

The basic consideration in managing deer, as is the case with all grazing animals, is the need to balance numbers with food supplies. Winter ranges are particularly critical and it can be safely stated that most deer herds exist at the very edge of survival during winter months since limited moisture supplies and poor soil conditions produce only limited amounts of food. True, some range improvement can be accomplished and the Game Commission currently cooperates in rehabilitating upwards of 20,000 acres of winter ranges yearly. Despite such efforts, each range does have an upper limit of animals that can be supported.

Adult males seldom make up more than 10 percent of a deer population which means that does and fawns represent most of the animals. Obviously, some of these have to be harvested if we expect to level off a population before malnutrition does the job for us.

Some of the healthier deer herds will increase by as much as one-third each year. While weather, predators, and other factors do account for some of the surplus, hunters can harvest a substantial portion of the mature bucks without affecting total numbers. This means taking some females and young to stabilize populations.

GAME BULLETIN

### WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO ALLOW DEER HUNTING AFTER THE HEAVY LOSSES OF LAST WINTER?

There is little justification to deny the privilege of hunting bucks even in areas where the mortality was heaviest. Deer are polygamous and there is no shortage of bucks for breeding purposes, so some males can be taken.

A season on antlerless deer following a hard winter is another matter. The Game Commission considered the information available at the time 1969 regulations were established last May and chose to issue no unit permits in western Oregon or on those ranges in the central and southeastern portions of the state where the effects of weather were most severe. Only in north-eastern Oregon where deer survival appeared normal were antlerless permits authorized in usual numbers.

A review of the 1969 regulations reveals that the Commission responded to the effects of the winter and adopted very conservative bag limits. This indicates one of the main advantages of the unit system whereby the state is divided into 66 separate management units, permitting adjustments in regulations as the need becomes apparent.





## ELK

### WHY DO YOU ISSUE SEPARATE ELK TAGS FOR EASTERN AND WESTERN OREGON?

Separate elk tags for hunting either Rocky Mountain elk in eastern Oregon or Roosevelt elk in western Oregon have been in effect since 1964.

Authority to issue separate tags was granted by act of the 1963 Legislature in response to a request by the Game Commission. The purpose for issuing separate tags is to more equitably distribute hunting pressure. Prior to 1964 many hunters participated on the opening weekend in western Oregon and then journeyed to the northeastern portion of the state for their major hunting effort later in the season if unsuccessful on the west side. Doubling up of the hunting pressure has been eliminated by separate tags which also permit different seasons in eastern and western Oregon where conditions are not comparable.

### EVEN WITH SEPARATE ELK TAGS THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY HUNTERS, WHY NOT LIMIT ELK HUNTERS BY AREA?

We have had some experience with this type of regulation. The Clatsop Unit, for example, was limited to 5,000 elk hunters yearly from 1961 through 1963. There was considerable dissatisfaction on the part of local people and others who were used to hunting in the unit but failed to draw a permit. The quota system was discontinued in 1964 when the separate elk tag became effective.

While restrictions by area may become necessary due to the increasing number of hunters, there is strong support for continuing the freedom of choice as long as possible. The major benefit realized from elk hunting is the recreation involved. To deny a large segment of interested hunters the opportunity to go afield is a major concern.

### WHY IS THE ELK SEASON OPENED LATER IN WESTERN OREGON THAN IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE STATE?

Deer hunters in western Oregon enjoy better success if the season extends into late October or early November after deciduous leaves have been shed. This improves visibility and the chances to see deer. Since it is not advisable to overlap the deer and elk seasons, elk hunting is set at a later date.

The Cascade Mountains are also in-

(continued next page)

An extended deer season has been permitted in the vicinity of agricultural lands in the Willamette Valley for several years in an attempt to take some of the deer responsible for crop damage.

### IF DEER STARVE DURING THE WINTER, WHY NOT FEED THEM?

Deer, like all ruminating animals, depend on microorganisms in the paunch for digestion. Since the microorganisms are specific for various types of forage, it takes some time to adjust to new types of food and a sudden change in diet can be fatal to a weakened animal.

Deer can be fed successfully if ample time is allowed for adjustment and feeding starts while the animals are in good condition. Unfortunately, weather conditions cannot be predicted in advance and it is not logical to initiate a widespread feeding program in anticipation of a severe winter which occurs once in ten years.

When an emergency does arise, there is concern over the fate of deer and both the Game Department and groups of citizens attempt to respond. Such efforts can reach only a small segment of the deer involved since the animals are widely scattered or inaccessible. The winter of 1968-69 is fresh in our memory and revealed the difficulty of feeding distressed deer, many of which were too weak to be helped.

It is wise long-range management to spend efforts on the improvement of natural range and to continue harvesting surpluses.

Studies have been carried on to test various types of artificial feeds that might be suitable for use in extreme situations.

### WHY HAVE A LATE SEASON IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY?

An extended season has been permitted in the vicinity of agricultural lands in the Willamette Valley for several years. This is authorized in an attempt to crop some of those deer responsible for damage problems. Normally these animals are not hunted during the general season due to the fact that they are too close to home and the cover is too thick.

Numerous damage complaints are received each year involving berries, orchards, truck gardens, and other crops. Efforts to solve such complaints through the use of chemical repellents, deerproof fences, hazing, and the issuance of permits to kill the offending animals have proved inadequate.

The Commission would prefer that the deer involved be harvested by hunters and has encouraged this by authorizing a season late in the year after the leaves have been shed and hunting opportunities are not available elsewhere. An extended season is more effective than issuing kill permits which necessitate considerable effort on the part of the landowner in dressing and delivering the animals to charitable organizations. The season is confined to within a mile of croplands and is available to anyone with an unfilled tag.

Admittedly, there are problems since not all landowners in the open area suffer damage or agree that the deer should be removed. It does appear to be the best alternative but must be reviewed periodically in the light of changing conditions, particularly where urban development is encroaching on agricultural areas.

## ELK (continued)

cluded in the western Oregon season and hunting in that area improves after snow forces the elk to move to lower elevations. Hence, an opening around mid-November has been desirable for both coastal and Cascade areas.



Liberalization of hunting seasons to allow the taking of spike elk in Clatsop County resulted in more than doubling the legal bull kill without any effect on calf production.

### WHY NOT START THE EASTERN OREGON ELK SEASON LATER AND EXTEND IT THROUGH THE THANKSGIVING WEEKEND?

The timing of any season must consider not only the desires of hunters but weather conditions and game management needs as well. Much of the elk range is at high elevations where snow can block access at any time after early November and concentrate excessive numbers of hunters on the lower areas. A season opening around the first of November usually assures access to enough hunting area to provide an enjoyable experience.

Increased elk hunting pressure has reduced the survival of mature bulls. Since most of the older bulls are taken late in the season, a closing date prior to Thanksgiving is designed to protect some of these animals. Experience the past two years indicates that this regulation has had some effect.

### SINCE MOST OF THE ELK KILL IS MADE UP OF SPIKES, WHY NOT LIMIT HUNTING TO BULLS WITH THREE OR MORE POINTS AND GIVE THE YEARLINGS A CHANCE TO GROW UP?

The main function of the bull is to fertilize the females. Research on the Millicoma Tree Farm in Coos County reveals that spikes are capable breeders and produce calf crops comparable to those where mature bulls are available. Since elk breed before the hunting season and male calves become spikes which are available for breeding the following year, hunters could theoretically take all yearling and mature bulls without affecting reproduction.

For several years prior to 1961 spikes in the Clatsop Unit were protected and only bulls with three or more points were legal. The illegal kill of spikes became a serious problem as hunters apparently could not resist shooting the animals in hopes that additional points would be found on closer examination. The regulation was changed, allowing the taking of spikes to reduce the illegal waste.

Liberalization of the bag limit resulted in more than doubling the legal bull kill without any effect on calf production. An average of 592 bulls were taken during the three-year period from 1958 through 1960 when hunting pressure was unlimited and only bulls with three or more points were legal. Calf survival through January averaged 36 calves per 100 cows while the three-point regulation was in effect. Spikes became legal in 1961 but participation was limited to 5,000 hunters yearly through 1963. No limitation has been placed on hunters in recent years, making it possible to compare statistics with the period when the three-point regulation was in effect.

An average of 1,240 bulls have been taken yearly from 1964 through 1968 compared to 592 bulls harvested under the three-point law. Spikes have represented 57 percent of all bulls taken since 1964. Calf survival through January averaged 42 calves per 100 cows from 1964 through 1968 compared to the 36 calves recorded during the 1958-1960 period, indicating no loss in production resulting from the spike law.

### WHY DO YOU ALLOW A WINTER ARCHERY SEASON FOR ELK IN COASTAL AREAS?

Elk have a habit of concentrating on bottomland pastures during the winter and early spring months, particularly in Clatsop and Coos Counties. In addition to competing with livestock for pasture, elk also damage fences, which is of concern to landowners.

Efforts to resolve the many damage problems have been less than effective. The shoestring valleys are too extensive for fencing and attempts at hazing by both landowners and Game Department employees have not been successful since the animals simply move from one field to the next.

The law does provide that landowners suffering damage can appeal to the Game Commission and secure a permit to kill the offending animals. Regulations specify that the complainant must dress out any animal killed on a permit and deliver it to a charitable organization or other public facility. Kill permits are not only a nuisance from the standpoint of the landowner but the Commission does not feel that such action results in the best use of the resource.

A law does exist whereby a group of hunters who have applied in advance for listing on an emergency hunt roster are supervised in taking animals causing damage. Emergency hunts have been employed in Clatsop County but created considerable controversy from the standpoint of safety and public concern over eliminating all the animals involved.

An extended archery season was proposed as an alternative in 1961 and has been continued since that time. Hunting is restricted to within 400 yards of agricultural lands and experience with the season indicates some effectiveness in harassing the animals away from damage areas without taking many of them. The elk soon adjust to the situation and are not found in the near vicinity of farmlands during daylight hours. As with all types of control, there are problems with archery seasons, including some crippling loss and trespassing on posted property. The extended archery season has proved better than the other alternatives available and reduces damage problems without substantially affecting elk numbers.



Some does and young deer must be taken from the herds to stabilize populations. Hunters can harvest substantial numbers of bucks without affecting total numbers.

## GENERAL

### **I RECEIVED A QUESTIONNAIRE INQUIRY ABOUT MY HUNTING SUCCESS LAST SEASON. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY LUCK BUT MY HUSBAND WAS SUCCESSFUL. HOW COME HE WASN'T ASKED TO SEND IN A REPORT?**

As is true in any business, successful management depends on some knowledge of how much of the product is being consumed. The annual game harvest is estimated on the basis of a statistical sample of hunting license holders. Approximately 20,000 names are drawn from those who purchase hunting licenses and each licensee has an equal opportunity of being selected to receive a questionnaire. No attempt is made to question all hunters. The survey is a random sample, not a complete tally for every hunter, which would be very expensive.

The sampling procedure was designed by the statistics department at Oregon State University and is similar to that employed in the other states.

Results of the survey are projected to determine total harvest, the number of days spent hunting, and the sex and age of animals bagged. It is equally important to receive answers from both unsuccessful and successful ones. Response from hunters has been excellent and statistical tests of the results indicate a high degree of accuracy in the estimated totals.

### **WHAT DO YOU PEOPLE DO WITH ALL THAT LICENSE MONEY?**

Well, we don't spend much time sitting around smoking big black cigars as one irate gentleman accused us of doing.

The annual Game Division budget averages about \$2½ million but may vary dependent on revenue. The expected reduction in license sales following the loss of deer last winter required a 7 percent cut in the current budget, for example.

Approximately 62 percent is expended on big game, 17 percent on upland game, 19 percent on waterfowl, and 2 percent on furbearers. The breakdown by function provides 27 percent for management which includes such programs as inventory, trapping and transplanting, predator control, and damage control; 43 percent for habitat improvement which includes operation of 11 game management areas totaling 80,000 acres, and financing the statewide food, water, and cover development program for game birds and animals; 4 percent for propagation to produce 20,000 pheasants and a total of 1,500 other game birds for trial release; 7 percent to finance five research investigations; and 19 percent to pay for automotive expenses, engineering and secretarial services, information and education activities,

(next column)

and the purchase and distribution of licenses and tags.

In addition, the Game Division budgets over \$1,375,000 per biennium to the State Police for game law enforcement.

### **NOW THAT I HAVE FIVE UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS, HOW DO I GET A COW ELK PERMIT?**

A new regulation is in effect for the first time this year. Beginning in 1965, applications which were unsuccessful in elk, antelope, and deer drawings were marked "unsuccessful" and returned to the hunter. Hunters have been advised to save these notices since the Commission does not keep a record of unsuccessful applicants and cannot issue duplicates.

The 1970 synopsis of big game regulations will contain information on how to apply, so do not send unsuccessful applications in before reading the instructions. In the 1965 ruling the Commission specified that anyone to whom five unsuccessful applications for a particular species have been returned will receive priority in issuing controlled season tags and permits. This does not assure that anyone submitting the five unsuccessful applications will automatically receive a tag or permit since there may be more priority applicants than there are tags or permits available, necessitating a drawing. In such an event, persons failing to draw would receive a sixth unsuccessful application, giving them a higher priority the following year. Priority applicants can reduce the chance of having to enter a drawing by applying for a less popular area.

Other persons may apply, regardless of past success in drawing, with the understanding that the priority applicants will be considered first. If priority applicants do not exceed the number of tags or permits authorized, the remainder will be issued by drawing.

### **WHAT CAN I HUNT WITHOUT A LICENSE?**

A hunting license is required to hunt any wild birds or wild animals regardless of whether or not they are protected.

The only exceptions to this regulation are that persons under 14 years of age are not required to have a license except for hunting deer, elk, and antelope and landowners also do not need a license to hunt on their own property for species other than deer, elk, and antelope.

**COYOTES ARE KILLING ALL THE DEER, WHY DON'T YOU PAY A BOUNTY TO GET RID OF THESE PREDATORS?**

**I AM INTERESTED IN PROTECTING GAME. HOW DO I GO ABOUT HAVING A REFUGE ESTABLISHED ON MY PROPERTY?**

There are three types of refuges, namely: 1) those established by proclamation of the Governor setting aside state lands, 2) those established by legislative action, and 3) contracts between the Game Commission and landowners setting aside private property as a refuge for a term not to exceed ten years.

Refuges established by Governor's proclamation apply only to state lands and have limited application.

Legislative refuges are generally confined to metropolitan areas where large numbers of people are concentrated and actually serve to protect people rather than game, the Multnomah-Clackamas Refuge in the vicinity of Portland being a prime example. Such refuges prove inflexible for game management purposes and none have been established in recent years.

Many requests are received each year for the establishment of contract refuges, particularly during or after the hunting season, and it appears that the main reason for such requests is to control trespass problems. A game refuge cannot be established as a substitute for enforcement of the general trespass law but must serve a game management need. If contract refuges were employed to control trespass, many of the private landowners in the state would request such action.

From the standpoint of game management, there appears little need for refuges to protect wildlife populations. A substantial amount of private land is posted against trespass, thus effectively serving to control hunting. Furthermore, natural cover offers considerable protection as anyone attempting to take a blacktail buck in dense regrowth would agree. The Game Commission does have authority delegated by the legislature to close areas to hunting, which provides much more flexibility than a refuge.

Coyotes and other predators do take some deer, particularly fawns during the early months of life, but weather and seasonal food shortages have much more effect on game populations. When predator control is necessary, it can be most efficiently accomplished through properly supervised trappers who can remove problem animals. The Game Commission contributes \$40,000 annually to a cooperative federal-state-county predator control program administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The state discontinued bounty payments in 1961 and most counties have followed suit. One of the major problems with bounties is that there is no control of where the animals come from and fraudulent claims are made for predators taken in adjacent counties or states. Also, bounty hunters tend to expend efforts where trapping is easiest rather than selecting the individuals responsible for game and livestock losses.



Predators such as coyotes do take some game animals but the bounty system of control has long been proven ineffective as a control measure.

**WILDLIFE BELONGS TO ALL THE PEOPLE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THOSE OF US WHO DO NOT HUNT?**

The Game Commission recognizes a responsibility to manage wildlife for the benefit of everyone who may be interested in photographing or otherwise enjoying birds and animals under natural conditions. Since Game Department activities are financed primarily from fees supplied by hunters and fishermen, there are practical limitations on the amount of development possible for other users without additional means of financing.

Department programs currently supply a considerable amount of recreation to nonhunters. Game management areas furnish an estimated 500,000 man-days of recreation annually, more than half of which involves uses other than hunting. On the Sauvie Island waterfowl area, for example, recreational use averages more than 200,000 man-days a year and duck hunting accounts for only 5 percent of this total. Water skiers, picnickers, and bird watchers are among the many other groups enjoying the facilities.

A project now being developed involves a new concept of wildlife management in Oregon. An area near Jewell in Clatsop County is being purchased to provide a place where Roosevelt elk can be seen by the public. The animals are being encouraged to utilize pasture lands in a natural setting and nature trails, picnic areas, and parking and viewing facilities are planned for the use of visitors. Other wildlife species will be encouraged to utilize the area and native plant species will be displayed. It is anticipated that the Jewell Wildlife Meadows project will produce a surplus of elk for trapping and transplanting elsewhere in western Oregon and a portion of the animals wintering on the project are expected to move onto adjacent lands at other seasons of the year where they will provide considerable recreation for hunters.

Every interest related to wildlife must be accommodated and the Game Commission willingly accepts this responsibility, recognizing that additional financing will be necessary to develop all potentials.



Game birds and animals are marked to gain knowledge of their distribution and habitat.

#### WHAT IS THE REASON FOR MARKING GAME ANIMALS AND BIRDS?

Trapping and marking game birds and animals is important in gaining knowledge of wildlife distribution and habits.

It would be helpful to know more about the distribution of mule deer, for example, to aid in the design of hunting regulations in areas where several herds intermingle during the season. Migratory waterfowl are examples of game species which move considerable distances from wintering to nesting areas and the flyway concept of waterfowl management is

based on knowledge of distribution obtained through banding programs.

The success of any marking program depends upon observing the marked individuals or reporting the recovery of bands and ear tags from game taken by hunters. Accurate reports from hunters are essential to gain information from banding and tagging projects.

#### Commish to Discuss Columbia Salmon

At the May 23 big game regulations hearing the Game Commission will also take time to discuss Columbia River chinook runs and possible modification of sport fishing regulations.

#### IF THERE IS SURPLUS GAME, WHY NOT TRAP AND TRANSPLANT RATHER THAN SHOOT THE ANIMALS?

Trapping and transplanting of wildlife and hunting are both important parts of game management and one cannot serve as a substitute for the other. The major objective of a transplanting program is to provide game for hunting by establishing new populations.

Transplants of native as well as exotic or foreign species must be carefully planned as there is always the danger of upsetting environmental balances by introducing new forms. Fortunately, spontaneous releases are no longer made and careful studies precede all transplanting efforts.

Capturing big game is a time-consuming and expensive operation since the traps must be sturdy and special equipment is needed to handle the animals. The only justification for moving big game is to establish herds on unoccupied range. Some potential exists in the case of Roosevelt elk and current efforts are being devoted to stocking suitable habitat in western Oregon. Approximately 200 animals have been captured and released at a dozen different locations in the past four years. The white-tailed deer is another species being considered for transplanting to extend the range of this rare animal.

Considerable success has been experienced in the introduction of new species to Oregon. Some of the more recent programs include the establishment of the California bighorn sheep in Lake, Harney, and Malheur Counties; the introduction of mountain goats to the Willowa Mountains and the Columbia Gorge; the release of Merriam's turkeys at ten locations east of the Cascades; and the excellent results achieved with the chukar partridge which was first released in 1952. All of these species have since been hunted.

#### Editor's Note

We limited the variety of our articles this month to present as many questions and answers as possible as prepared by Bob Mace. In a future issue we will present a series on upland game.



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