

Your Stake in WETLANDS

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What Wetlands Are
Their Importance to You
What's Happening to Them



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Circular 140

FOREWORD

On October 4, 1961, the "wetlands bill" became Public Law 87-383 and the Congress was authorized to appropriate up to \$105 million as a loan fund to accelerate the program of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to acquire by purchase or lease a nucleus of wetlands for waterfowl management purposes.

In the face of increasing demands on the lands and waters of our Nation, it has become apparent that a vital nucleus of our most valuable habitat can be preserved for wildlife only through public ownership or control.

This acquisition program will involve all parts of the country and many types of wetlands. While the loan fund is repayable from duck stamp sales and the primary goal is preservation of waterfowl habitat, the maintenance of sufficient wetlands to supply the needs of the various species of waterfowl will also contribute greatly to the requirements of most wetland-dwelling plants and animals. It is truly a far-reaching program in which we all have a stake.

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

Lowlands covered even temporarily by water not more than 6 feet deep are wetlands. They are classified into many types. The water over all is shallow, but all hold water long enough to grow moist-soil plants. The pasture pond is a wetland. The vast coastal marshes are wetlands. The mountain beaver meadow is a wetland. The river bottoms of the south, the potholes of the northern prairies, and the marshes around Great Salt Lake—all are wetlands. In 1956, we had 74 million acres of them.

WHAT WETLANDS MEAN TO YOU

Wetlands are a part of our national resource estate. They are important to—

The hunter
The fisherman
The photographer

All of us—for sport, hobby, relaxation, and as a place just to get out of doors. This resource estate yearly provides dividends to millions of us in the form of hunting and fishing alone. We cannot estimate the number of Americans who make withdrawals from the estate in the form of intangible recreation.

Wetlands are also important to—

The trapper	The farmer
The commercial fisherman	The resort owner
The oysterman	The sporting goods storekeeper
The hunting guide	The gasoline serviceman

For all or part of their income

Some of these people make their living from the wildlife and fish of the wetlands. Some profit from the nearly \$4 billion spent annually for hunting and sport fishing alone.



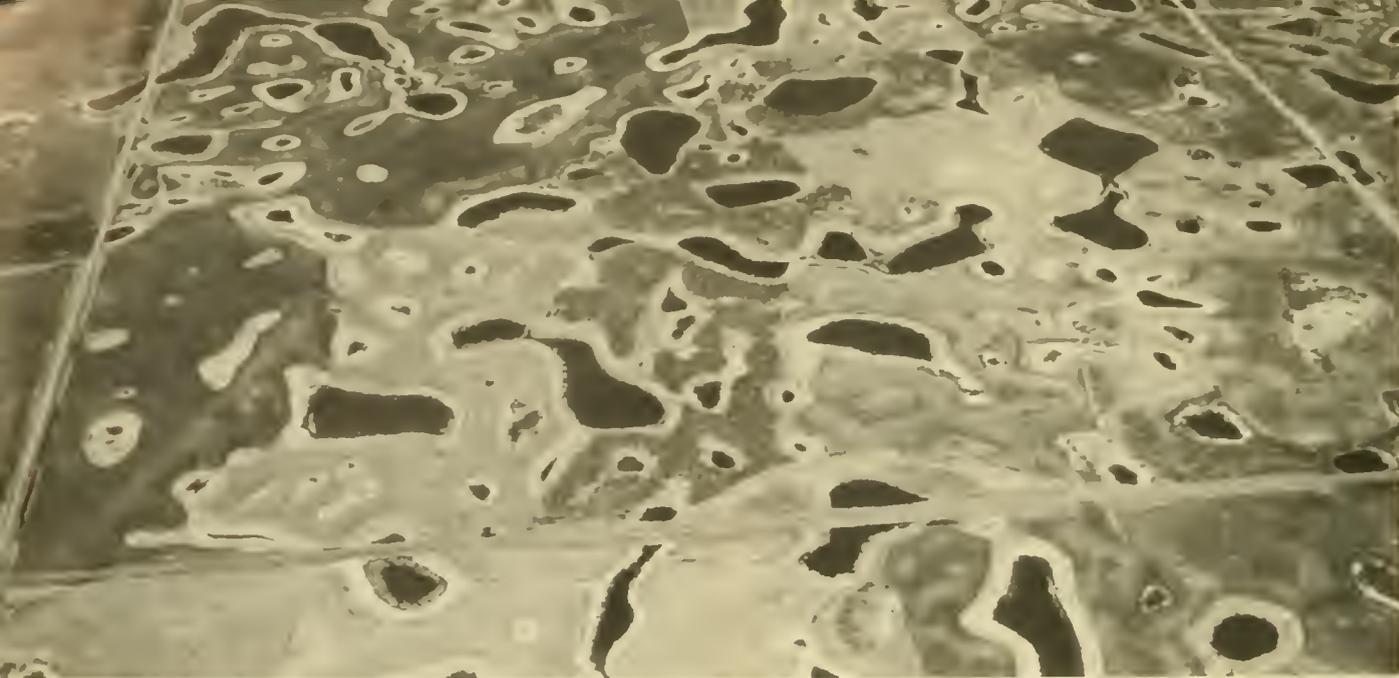
W. L. Miller

The Dividend

Whether he hunts or not, the wildfowler understands the value of these wetlands. Areas that attract waterfowl in autumn come high. They are the harvest areas, and may sell or lease for more than good cropland.

WATERFOWL





The Duck Factory

Water, vegetation, and sky are only part of the autumn marsh. It is the birds that give it life. Prairie potholes of the North Central United States and South Central Canada raise slightly more than half of the continent's ducks. Both shallow and deeper water areas are needed on the breeding grounds. Adults use the small temporary water areas for resting spots, courtship, and nesting sites. When these areas go dry the deeper ponds raise the broods. A shortage of one type reduces the value of the others.



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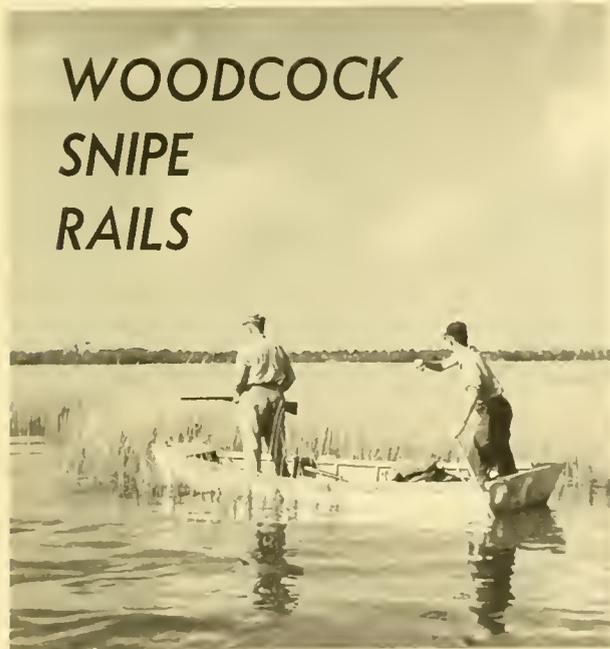
Other duck breeding grounds throughout the United States are widespread and varied. Individually, few are impressive. Together, they raise the flights of waterfowl that give the autumn marsh life—and value.



The Safe Deposit

Many refuges are man made and are sanctuaries by law. Others are broad open waters difficult to hunt. Each refuge plays a part in sending waterfowl north to renew the flights the following year.

The true value of the autumn marsh—its birds—depends on the preservation of varied and widely spaced wetlands.



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

A sora rail bursting from a Carolina marsh, a snipe careening from an Oregon meadow, a woodcock exploding from a Connecticut thicket are all products of many widely scattered wetland types.

Many a hunter has filled his bag of ruffed grouse



U.S. Soil Conservation Service

by following the edge of an alder swamp. Pheasants often use weedy marsh edges for roosting and for winter cover. Some upland game birds could more accurately be considered dwellers of wetlands than of uplands.



WETLANDS BIG GAME

The wooded swamplands in the North and Southeast are some of the best white-tail deer and turkey range in the country. These large tracts provide ample room for rambling hunts.

In only a few places is the moose now abundant enough for hunting. He is even more important as a symbol of remote wilderness. In fly season and when the lily roots are their richest, this valued animal is a wetland dweller.



U.S. Forest Service

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission



FUR

From the common muskrat, found on almost any pond or stream, to the more secretive otter, furbearers are an important source of livelihood for a few and of supplemental income for many. Our major furbearers are all inhabitants of wetlands.



For Recreation

The bluegill sunfish coaxed from the weedy margin of a small pond and the largemouth bass lunging near the marshy edges of a tidal estuary are both products of wetlands. Some of our most productive sport fisheries, particularly in the South, are in shallow wetland areas.

FISHERIES

For Commerce

The oysters produced in salt marshes and shallow bays are an important source of food and income. Many marine fishes, such as menhaden and shrimp, depend on wetlands as nursery areas. These important species spend crucial parts of their life cycles in tidal estuaries and marshes.

Alabama Department of Conservation





Canvasback Duck

RECREATIONAL DIVIDENDS FOR ALL

Those who have seen a prairie marsh or woodland beaver pond come alive in spring, or watched a flock of waterfowl wheel over a lake or into a tidal marsh feel that they have as real a stake in our wetlands as do the hunter and fisherman.



Jack Dermid

No technique has yet been devised to express the full value of this heritage in monetary terms to the picnicker, the hiker, the camper, the photographer, the bird watcher. These people, among whom are many hunters and fishermen, are diverse in their appreciation of wildlife—all types of wetlands contribute to their enjoyment. Unfortunately, the importance of this interest is often underrated.



Blue-winged Teal

Massachusetts Audubon Society

Snow Geese





THE ESTATE DWINDLES

Farm Drainage

In the 100 years before 1955, our wetlands were reduced by 45 percent. Losses to agriculture have been extensive, and more than a million acres of prairie potholes have been drained since 1943. Larger drainage systems may include several farms. Many drained lands produce good crops—the cost of preserving wetlands is high.



Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission

Dredging—Siltation—Pollution

Coastal wetlands are seriously damaged when channels are cut for mosquito control or for navigation. The intricate balance between wet and dry areas, fresh and salt waters—the key to productivity—is disrupted.

Stream Channelization

When stream channels are straightened, floodwaters no longer overflow to attract ducks to the bottom lands. The dredged spoil from channel maintenance fills many marshes and the silt destroys the productivity of downstream estuaries. Pollution reduces and frequently destroys the value of wetlands for fish and wildlife near urban areas.

REDUCING LOSSES



Prairie Potholes

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has two programs in the pothole country:

A combination of purchase and easement.

Organized field contacts by Bureau personnel to point out wetland values to landowners and agencies assisting in drainage. Subsidies paid for drainage and the landowner's anticipated returns from crops raised on the additional land limit the effectiveness of this program.

Stock pond construction in the rangelands of the western Dakotas and eastern Montana, produces some new habitat but does not compensate for the natural wetlands lost.



U.S. Soil Conservation Service

Other Wetlands

Conservation agencies, mainly State and Federal, are purchasing other types of threatened wetlands as rapidly as funds permit. These areas remain as wetlands but they may be managed to increase their value to wildlife and to people: some to be sanctuaries and some to provide hunting and fishing.

Many State conservation departments and the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its small watershed program, create small wetland areas. When properly designed and managed, these areas are valuable for fish and wildlife.

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SAVE OUR WETLANDS—



Our wetlands are varied. In many forms they have great value to many people. Efforts of conservation agencies to purchase and manage wetlands cannot alone do the job of preserving them: most wetlands must remain in private ownership *as a trust*. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, in programs coordinated with other wildlife agencies, seeks to preserve by public ownership or control a nucleus of some of the best remaining wetlands. It also seeks to encourage preservation of those wetlands still in private ownership.

The importance of preserving the larger marshes and wildlife concentration areas is obvious to most of us. However, the national significance of small prairie potholes in the northern plains is more difficult to appreciate. This circular explains why all of the programs to preserve wetlands are important and warrant your support.

—A RESOURCE WORTH PRESERVING

The Department of the Interior, created in 1849, is our Nation's Department of Natural Resources, concerned with management, conservation, and development of water, wildlife, fish, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As America's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States, now and in the future.

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Washington 25, D.C. - Price 15 cents



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1962 O-637954