

Basin Deer Herds • Show Big Increase

The estimated deer population in the Swan Lake, Poe Valley and Langell Valley area has doubled in five years, according to Kenneth R. Cochran, game and fisheries agent since 1950 for the Klamath district.

Cochran, who will leave in October to become fisheries agent in the Portland district, discussed reasons for the Oregon Game Commission's action in setting a special antlerless season for that

growth when measurements are taken in November.

"We are trying to keep our bitterbrush growth at a constant level and to do that we must manage our livestock and deer herds on public range lands. We must maintain a balance between livestock and deer use of the browse. Bitterbrush is used as an index because the deer seem to prefer it to other browse. Cattle eat it but it is not their preferred food."

The Oregon Game Commission maintains experimental plots where the growth of bitterbrush can be observed. One such plot was started in 1953 at the Hermon National Forest above the Coffee Pot.

Bitterbrush grows slowly at first and it takes about 10 years for a plant to mature to the point of producing seed. Some of the plants in Klamath County are estimated at 45 to 50 years old. A single bush may have as much as a quart of seed. The seed matures in the fall and all drops at once.

Three years ago bitterbrush seed was gathered in the Klamath Basin, with game management men and Boy Scouts working on the project. A cloth is spread below each bush and the bush shaken gently to scatter the little seed where it can be collected. Cochran said he collected more than five pounds from the vicinity of Reames Golf and Country Club.

Most of this seed is used by the state for experimental purposes. The seed must be stratified to produce best results, he added, and the process is accomplished by keeping the seed under refrigeration for a period before it is planted.



KEN COCHRAN, game and fisheries agent for the Oregon Game Commission here for six years, explains the use of bitterbrush as an index for game and livestock management.

area from December 1 to 4 this year. The section, he said, can be roughly described as the area from Hatfield, California, north to the Klamath Indian Reservation on Highway 97 and east on the reservation line to Highway 66 and south to the Bonanza cutoff, then southeast on the Langell Valley road to the California state line.

Although there are no official deer herd counts in the state, deer populations are estimated by counting the number of deer per mile in designated areas. In the Swan Lake area, there were 17 per mile recorded in 1951 and 34 in 1956. Cochran's department received 19 complaints that deer were damaging hay stacks, so 500 permits will be issued for the antlerless hunt in December.

Another method of estimating deer populations in order to determine what a reasonable harvest should be, is by keeping accurate checks on bitterbrush which is a preferred winter food for deer.

"In this district I have maintained 10 or 12 transects," Cochran explained. "Each is about 100 yards long on which grow approximately 20 bitterbrush plants. We measure the amount of livestock use in November, usually just before the snow. Then in the spring we measure the amount of deer use and adding the two together, we get the amount of use. Specifically, we measure five or six ungrazed leaders and five or six grazed leaders on each plant. The difference between the two figures gives the per cent of the twig that is grazed. By estimating the percentage of twigs on the bush that has been grazed, we get the total use of that bush. The transects are in winter range areas used by deer and cattle on open range."

"The bitterbrush will not reseed if 60 per cent or more of the annual leader growth is eaten," Cochran said.

In 1955 this area showed 57 per cent use, with about 33 per cent of the use occurring during winter months which showed that livestock use amounts to about 19 per cent, deer use 35 per cent.

"We also use the annual leader growth as an index to show how the plants are doing," Cochran said. "New growth will vary from one inch to five, depending on protection and moisture. This year we expect to find above normal



BITTERBRUSH, which is indigenous to this area, is the preferred winter browse for deer. Deer herd management agents estimate the use of the browse must be kept below 60 per cent a year in order for the plants to reseed. When use exceeds that figure, special hunts are permitted to cut the deer populations.

Modoc Forest Fire Warning

The Modoc National Forest is experiencing the most severe fire weather of the 1956 season. Neal M. Rahm, forest supervisor, announced today that fire danger has varied from high to very high for the last two weeks. He urges deer hunters to be particularly careful. Any fire started can be a potential conflagration endangering resources and the safety of hunters themselves.

To date, the Modoc Forest has taken action on 165 fires, of which eight were man-caused. Historically, a forest fire record is possible since, to date, only 33 acres have

been burned over.

All hunters should obtain a campfire permit at the nearest ranger station or the supervisor's office in Alturas. Forest maps are available free of charge at any of these locations. Campers should clear away all inflammable material a distance of five feet from their campfire. It is a violation of state and federal fire laws to leave any going fire unattended. Rahm states, so extinguish all fires with water before leaving camp. Smoking is permitted only in camps or cleared areas, and no smoking is permitted while in motion.

Deer are plentiful this season, and sportsmen are welcome, but "Keep California Green" by hunting carefully and safely.



Waterfowl Laws Listed

The Oregon State Game Commission reported that they have asked the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for an 80 day waterfowl season from October 31 to December 31. These dates fall within the option period granted the state by the federal government and they favor those sections which enjoy an early flight of birds such as Klamath County.

Last year the later dates gave the advantage to other parts of the state where the main migration does not take place as soon as it does here.

The daily possession and bag limits will be the same as they were last year. For ducks the limit is six birds daily and twelve in possession, with an additional three birds a day allowed if they are pintails or widgeons. One wood duck and one hooded merganser may be included in the daily limit.

For geese the limit will be six birds daily or in possession. Only three of these birds may be of the dark species.

The general regulations will be essentially the same as last year with shooting hours running from a half hour before sunrise to sunset.



NEXT WEEK

The Herald and News Magazine Section of Klamath Basin Living next week will be devoted to the Klamath County United Fund-Red Cross drive. The work of this excellent campaign will be described in detail and a full account will be given of the various ways in which your donations are used locally.



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