

Wildlife Experts Take Census In Refuge

Biologists Began Count Of Birds During April

By DICK BRIGGS

The four-wheel drive pickup slid erratically along the slippery field, its wheels churning up soft earth which flew above the roof of the cab and fell lazily back to the ground.

The field was wet and the air contained the moist, frosty quality that comes to the Klamath Basin so frequently following an early morning spring rain.

Despite the winter temperature, the turbid condition of the earth, and the cirro clouds which foretold the imminence of rain or snow, staff members of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at Tule Lake were that day cruising the levees and fields of the Tule Lake Bird Refuge to take a head-count of the fuzzy goslings which were making their temporary home within the refuge.

Ed O'Neill, manager of the pickup and wildlife management biologist for the bureau, was among those taking a census of the broods which hatched from some of the 3½ million wildfowl making their home in the Basin this spring, and I was along to observe him do it.

The field we traversed by pickup, alternately sliding around soft spots and bouncing over high places, had been planted in rye the year before but already the grasses had been nipped to the ground by foraging birds.

Thousands of downy goslings plain with their parents, almost inconspicuous at a distance but easily discernible from within 50 yards.

Curious from a safe distance, the fledglings scattered in all directions when O'Neill drove the truck among them. Once we left the pickup to capture part of a brood to use as props for a picture. They darted off in six different directions and ran until winded.

Then they plopped, their necks outstretched along the ground, and waited for us to harvest them as one would collect eggs.

After we released the goslings, they scampered off to an open part of the field as a trio of seagulls watched the proceedings while in flight overhead.

O'Neill observed the gulls until the parent geese, calling from a distance, gathered their brood.

Seagulls have been observed stalking a brood of goslings and then swooping down to kill a fledgling that strayed too far from its kind. The seagull then feasts upon the gosling within sight of its resigned parents.

A more wanton enemy of goslings is a portion of those creatures who seek most to protect them—mankind.

Many nesting geese set up housekeeping along roads near the refuge. When the goslings leave their nests they meander along the roadside, panicked by the whirr of passing automobiles, they rush onto the highways and under the wheels of speeding cars.

In an effort to curb the useless slaughter, the Wildlife and Fisheries Bureau proposed to the California State Department of Highways that it erect a road sign urging the heedless motorist to slow down. The bureau suggested the punchy message, "Slow down, don't run down your wildlife," but California officials thought the message read too much like a command and changed it to "Please! Don't run down your wildlife."

Late during the year begins a vast southward migration of birdlife which sets the program of the Wildlife and Fisheries office at Tule Lake into motion.

As the first nippy breath of fall announces the coming of winter, millions of American Pintails

(*dafila acuta iztzihoia*) prepare to leave their annual nesting grounds in Alberta and Saskatchewan for warmer climates in the southern part of the hemisphere.

Meanwhile, thousands of other birds of the Pacific Northwest and farther north begin their annual fall migration southward along the Pacific Flyway and veer inland across the Cascade Range.

On the east edge of the vast flyway, countless other species of waterfowl swing sharply westward at the Snake River in Idaho or the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

For approximately 70 per cent of the three flights of waterfowl—and others to follow—the Klamath Basin forms one of the more important stopping points on their annual migrations south.

Early this century the Klamath Basin, comprising a part of Northern California and Southern Oregon, was vast network of large marshes spreading over nearly a million acres.

But during the past 50 years, most of the wetlands of this area have been drained and converted to agricultural use with the result that the vast acreage which forms the natural habitat for more than 3½ million birds has been condensed to about one-tenth of its former size.

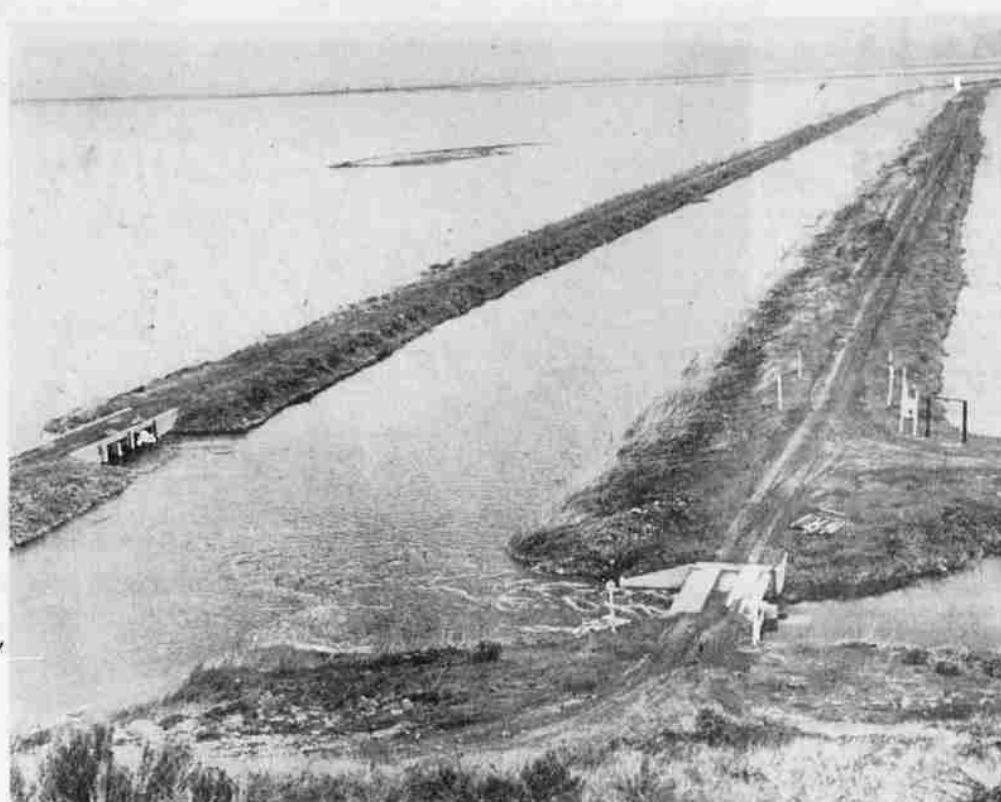
Despite the reduction of facilities attractive to wintering birds, the Klamath Basin has continued to be one of the major feeding and resting places for waterfowl proceeding north and south along the Pacific Coast Flyway.

So important is the Basin to the waterfowl within the flyway, that the Federal Government established five refuges here to provide food and protection to the water birds and preserve their wetland habitat. The first was established more than 50 years ago, another was formed in 1911, two more were set up in 1928, and the most recent was organized in 1958.

Concentrations of seven to eight million birds have been noted in past years on the five refuges which include the Upper Klamath, 12,533 acres, west of Chiloquin; Klamath Forest, 15,000 acres, at the headwaters of the Williamson River; the Lower Klamath, 22,800 acres, east of Dorris; Tule Lake, 37,000 acres, south of Tule Lake, and Clear Lake,



SPUNKY GOSLING HAS LAST WORD — A spunky gosling roosted from its quarters in a tule patch scolds Game Management Biologist Ed O'Neill for his intrusion. The downy youngster and others of its kind were included in brood counts conducted this spring in five bird refuges throughout the Klamath Basin. Each year game management workers conduct censuses of broods and their parents to keep check on the population trends of waterfowl inhabiting the refuges.



CANALS MAINTAIN WATER LEVELS IN LOWER KLAMATH SUMP — Water flows through the headgates of one of a series of canals which divide the Lower Klamath Lake into "units." The Lower Klamath marshes are maintained through the use of surplus irrigation water pumped from the Tule Lake Sump via a 6,600-foot tunnel through the intervening Sheepley Ridge and by water diverted from the Klamath River through the Ady Canal. Picturesque names such as Poverty Flat, Sheepley Peak and Panhandle Hills are common to the geography of the area.



BASIN NEWCOMERS — Four newcomers to the Basin fill the cap of one of the staff of game management biologists who adds their number to other goslings hatched here this year. In future years, O'Neill will probably have some of the same birds in his census of mature geese or nesting pairs.



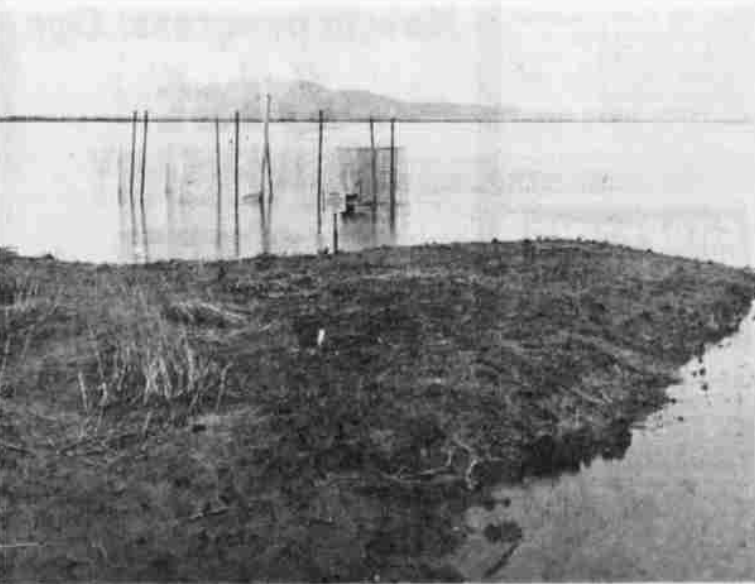
PELICAN VICTIM OF WIRE FENCE — Ed O'Neill observes a pelican which apparently ended its life in a collision with the strands of a barb wire fence during foggy weather. Earlier the same morning a Northern Phalarope (*Lobipes lobatus*) injured a wing in a similar accident and was placed in the "convalescent pen" near the headquarters where it improved rapidly.



SOARING WATERFOWL FORM GRACEFUL PATTERNS — Some of nearly 250 different species of birds observed in refuges in the Klamath Basin soar skyward from Tule Lake in a graceful pattern of whirring wings. The birds known to have visited the Basin include 22 kinds of shorebirds, a large segment of the entire Ross goose population, and 26 different species of hawks and owls. More than 160 species have been recorded as nesting.



REFUGE WATERS MATCH LEADEN SKIES — Part of the waters forming the 37,000 acre Tule Lake Refuge lap near the base of a ridge where Gen. E. R. S. Canby [USA] established an encampment for his troops during the U.S.-Modoc Indian War in 1872-73. The plateau along the ridge forms the range for herds of deer and antelope. In a saddle along the ridge where U.S. troopers once marched, duck hunters hide in rock blinds and shoot at their quarry as they soar over the hill to the refuge below.



DUCK TRAP — Later during the year personnel of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife bait the wire enclosure with food and wait for hungry ducks to enter and trap themselves inside the pen. The ducks, which are banded and released, enter the trap through a funnel-shaped opening and cannot find their way out. Banding provides bureau with information on the habits of ducks and the patterns of their migratory flights.



MOTORISTS WARNED OF GOSLINGS ON ROADWAY — A highway sign urges motorists to be watchful of goslings as they speed along roads in the vicinity of Tule Lake. Game Management Biologist O'Neill stresses the word "please" in requesting drivers to slow down as they approach the refuge. Each year large numbers of goslings wander onto highways in the Basin and are crushed by passing automobiles.



DOWNY TAKES SCURRY FOR COVER — A goose and her downy family of 19 glide toward the protective cover of weed beds growing from a portion of Lower Klamath Lake. The horde she escorts are not all her own. Geese average about five goslings per brood but they frequently acquire the chicks of other parents and care for them as well as their own.

Features

KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON, SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 1963

The population pattern of some species of ducks is much less promising.

Four such species that are among the favorites of hunters have declined in number in the Klamath Basin during recent years, and two of them, the Redhead (*Nyroca collaris*) and the canvas-back (*Nyroca valisneria*), are being protected until the trend reverses.

The other ducks in a downward cycle population - wise are the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), protected in most states, and the Gadwall (*Chaleclasmus streperus*). The decimation of the Redhead and Wood Duck has been attributed to the drought in the Canadian nesting grounds in recent years.

One member of the bureau believed that certain birds would be better protected if the location of their natural habitat were closed to hunting rather than taking

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