

BIRD SANCTUARIES IN SASKATCHEWAN 1887 — 1965

by **L. H. Murray**, 24 Cornwall Crt., Regina

The first bird sanctuary was set up in Saskatchewan on the shores of Last Mountain Lake as early as 1887. By an Order in Council, June 8, certain lands "then vacant and unsold, were reserved from sale and settlement and set apart as breeding grounds for wild fowl". The area described contained approximately 2500 acres adjacent to the shore line at the north end of the lake. Sanctuaries in other provinces were not established until 1920 so Saskatchewan has the distinction of having the first bird sanctuary in Canada.

As early as 1910 biologists, conservationists and hunters in North America were aware that with the clearing of land for settlement and with the draining of marshes formerly used as nesting areas, certain birds were in danger of extinction. To prevent this and to give more adequate protection to migratory game and non-game birds than was provided by the Game Laws, the Federal Migratory Bird Law was passed in the United States in 1913. Thus in the United States, the open season was made uniform not exceeding three and a half months. A closed season for a period of years was given to certain birds, particularly shore-birds, and the shooting of insectivorous birds was entirely forbidden (Hewitt, 1921, p. 266). Since these birds were migratory, such a law was ineffective if the adjoining nations, Canada and Mexico, did not pass a similar law. In July 1913 the President was asked by the Senate to negotiate a treaty for the protection of migratory birds with Canada. After three years the terms were drawn up and the treaty signed in 1916 between the United States and Great Britain. This was later ratified by The Migratory Birds Convention Act which was passed by the Canadian Parliament in 1917.

The closed season for migratory game birds was to be between March

and September, thus eliminating the spring shooting of these birds. The closed season for migratory non-game and migratory insectivorous birds was to continue throughout the year. Thus any birds important to agriculture were protected. No open season was to be longer than three and a half months. Certain provisions were made, however, to allow Eskimos and Indians to kill game and non-game birds for food but they were not permitted to sell them. Closed season could be announced for game birds needing special protection. Thus in 1917 a closed season of ten years was given to band-tailed pigeons, little brown, sandhill and whooping cranes, swans, curlew, and all shore birds (except the black-breasted and golden plover, Wilson or jack snipe, woodcock, and the greater and lesser yellow-legs (Hewitt, p. 272). The taking of the nests and eggs of all migratory birds was prohibited except under a permit issued for collections made for scientific purposes. Measures necessary to the carrying out of the terms of the treaty were to be undertaken by each of the contracting parties. Thus regulations stating the open season for game birds in each province must be passed each year by an Order in Council.

In Saskatchewan, Mr. Bradshaw, the game guardian, hailed this treaty as the most advanced legislation proposed for the protection of wild life and he pointed out that over 1,000 species and subspecies of birds were affected (Department of Agriculture Report, 1916, p. 233). He further proudly commented:

Our game laws are so nearly in accord with the provisions of the treaty . . . it was only necessary to make two minor changes in The Game Act. One for the protection of cranes and the other for the protection of certain shore birds.

Apparently Saskatchewan had early been aware of the need for conservation and had already taken some steps to achieve this. In 1909 Dominion Forest Preserves were declared game preserves and thus birds were protected in these areas. Game guardians, however, were aware that further protection of migratory birds was necessary if many birds were to survive. In 1910 it was reported that ducks were harvested near Buffalo Lake at the rate of 100 a day, 600 a week and that already two wagonloads of geese had been taken from Lake Johnstone (Department of Agriculture Report, 1910, p. 139). In 1911 a Moose Jaw dealer was being supplied with 100 birds a day and by September 27 the hunter who supplied them had marketed 2,500 and had hired two men to help him slaughter the birds (Department of Agriculture Report, 1911, p. 171). Such reports not only reveal the abuse by hunters in slaughtering birds but also the great numbers of birds in the country and the importance of the participation of Saskatchewan in any North American conservation policy.

In 1915, while negotiations on the treaty were in progress, steps were taken to facilitate the setting up of bird sanctuaries in Canada. On May 18 the Minister of the Interior approved the reservation of all vacant quarter sections immediately adjoining certain lakes. In Saskatchewan the following were named: Quill, Lenore, Basin, Bitter, Cabri, Bigstick, Crane, Goose, Redberry, Johnstone, Chaplin and White Bear. In 1917 and in 1918 Dr. Anderson, zoologist for the Geological Survey and a member of the Advisory Board in Wild Life Protection, visited the areas and reported on their suitability as sanctuaries. Their use as breeding grounds and as resting areas for migratory birds, the existence of adequate food, and other essentials of reserves were all considered before he recommended any as permanent bird sanctuaries. Of Last Mountain Lake he wrote:

This is a very good breeding ground, with many large ducks, canvasbacks, redheads, and mallards; a

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few Canada geese nest on the islands, also cormorants and gulls. It is well posted as a provincial game refuge. It should by all means be retained as a sanctuary (Hewitt, p. 302).

His description of Lake Johnstone is interesting because after giving the numbers and species of birds seen he states his opinion of the use of surrounding area as farm land.

It has one large island, Isle of Bays, in the north part of the lake, which is also a provincial game refuge. This island is a very valuable reserve, comprising about 200 acres. Large numbers of white pelicans, cormorants and great blue herons breed on it, also black-headed gulls. . . . In October, 1918, I saw about 500 Canada geese resting on it in the afternoon, and about 200 whistling swans in the water near the island. . . . The lake is said to be one of the chief resting-places . . . in migration through this country. The land around the lake is mostly poor agricultural land and seems

suitable for wild-fowl breeding. Lake Johnstone is a good preserve for pelicans and cormorants, as there are no valuable fish in the lake. Where there is reserved land in blocks of fair size it should be retained. There is so much privately owned land around the lake, and the lake is of such size, that it can hardly be retained as a sanctuary complete. With the island reserved as a refuge, and some breeding-ground reserved along the shores, the main shore of the lake might be left open to shooting in season (Hewitt, p. 302-303).

In the main the lakes he considered were in land unsuitable for farming yet suitable as good breeding grounds for wildfowl. In this category he placed Lake Johnstone, Chaplin Lake, White Bear Lake, Crane Lake and Bigstick Lake. Of the Quill Lakes he reported that some of the land there was more suitable for farming than for wildfowl. Basin Lake with its high timbered shores was not so important as the swamp area near Middle Lake, which lies between Basin Lake and Lake Lenore. Lenore Lake, he felt, qualified as good breeding ground and if the district was shot over when settlement was heavier, the Lake would provide a resting place for wildfowl. Redberry Lake he noted was in a settled area and the land cultivated so close to the shore that he recommended the islands be reserved but he questioned whether the fragments of land available on shore were worth reserving. He had the same comments to make of the fragments of land left on the north, northwest, and southwest sides of Bigstick Lake. In his appraisal of land and its value agriculturally he showed an awareness of the pressure which would be put upon sanctuaries reserved in settled districts. This, however, did not prevent him from being enthusiastic about such well used breeding grounds as Last Mountain Lake and Lake Johnstone. On the basis of his reports, bird sanctuaries were established in Alberta by an Order-in-Council June 15, 1920, but in Saskatchewan an effort to bring Last Mountain Lake

Sanctuary into line with the regulations of the Migratory Birds Convention Act delayed the setting up of sanctuaries.

The regulations governing bird sanctuaries passed by Order-in-Council June 22, 1920, were based on this act. No person was to use any part of a bird sanctuary, unless he had a permit, licence, or a lease, issued by the Director, or had obtained a lease prior to 1920. No person in a bird sanctuary was permitted to kill, capture, take, injure, or molest migratory birds, or take, injure, destroy or molest their nests, or eggs. The carrying of firearms or any appliances for killing birds was prohibited in a sanctuary. However one clause to cover all exigencies, scientific or otherwise, was inserted in the regulations and seemed a contradiction of this rule. The Director could, "by permit, authorize in any year a person to shoot wild ducks and geese in such portion of a bird sanctuary and during such time as the Minister may from time to time decide. . . ." In line with this the regulation prohibiting dogs and cats in a bird sanctuary was modified to permit sporting dogs to be taken into a sanctuary where shooting, by permit, of wild ducks and wild geese during the open season has been granted. When Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary was finally brought into the federal scheme certain changes in these regulations as well as in the boundaries of the sanctuary were noticeable. By an Order-in-Council certain islands and small land areas were added to the sanctuary and the entire lake was reserved with the approval of the Province of Saskatchewan. Use of the land for grazing and haying was prohibited and the destruction of the migratory birds or their nests was strictly forbidden. But a new clause appeared in 1921 stating that "lawful shooting of game birds on all portions of Last Mountain Sanctuary, except islands north of and including Pelican Island was permitted." The sanctuary had long been a game preserve and apparently unless hunting was permitted it could not be brought into the federal



Photo from Archives, Regina

The steamboat, "Qu'Appelle", formerly called "Lady of the Lake", at Port Hyman on Last Mountain Lake, ca. 1905?

scheme. This is a complete misunderstanding of the purpose of a sanctuary. The act remains in force today but no use is made of this special permission so firmly is the concept of a sanctuary established in the public mind now. It took us 30 years or until 1950 to abolish this "lawful shooting" in our bird sanctuaries, this violation of the basic rule governing all sanctuaries or refuges.

An Order-in-Council passed in Ottawa on March 9, 1925, stated as the purpose of establishing bird sanctuaries in Saskatchewan:

That for the better protection of wildfowl it is desirable to create certain areas as bird sanctuaries.

That the Great Plains region of Canada contains probably the most valuable breeding grounds in North America for the wild water-fowl of the Continent and that it is important that measures should be taken to set apart permanently certain

areas for the propagation of bird life, a resource of economic value in providing sport and food;

That a careful examination has been made by an eminent zoologist of the areas occupied by this valuable bird life and his report has been made the basis of selection as bird sanctuaries of the more important breeding grounds in the said provinces;

That the Provincial authorities are in full accord with the scheme;

That the advance of settlement, followed by cultivation of the land, the drainage of lakes and marsh areas for development purposes, has seriously restricted the areas suitable for the propagation of wild water-fowl and under present conditions it is necessary that proper means should be taken to check the decrease in the number of these birds to guard against the danger of extermination; and

That it is worthy of note that the United States has created a series of Bird Refuges, notably in Louisiana, for the protection of migratory wildfowl on their winter feeding grounds. . . .

Obviously Canada considered the setting up of bird sanctuaries an obligation which they assumed when the Migratory Bird Treaty was signed.

Twelve bird sanctuaries were described: Last Mountain Lake, Lake Johnstone, Quill Lakes, Lenore Lake, Basin and Middle Lakes, Chaplin Lake, Crane Lake, Bigstick Lake, Cabri Lake, Whitebear Lake, Redberry Lake, Manito Lake. With the exception of Cabri they all included land areas as well as the land covered by water. The areas occupied by these sanctuaries is shown in the table. Six of the 12 had 2,270 to 3,916 acres; two were in the 1,000 acre range while two others had 5,760 to 7,080 acres. Chaplin had over 32,000 acres reserved, 21,760 of which follow Chaplin Creek south for 10 miles and include the marsh at the east end of the lake. Redberry Lake included only fractional sections at the north end of the lake.

Since bird sanctuaries on the prairie were established for use as breeding grounds, seven of them were in the grasslands, three in aspen or parkland and one (Quill Lakes) included both grass and parkland. The lakes reserved were scattered over the central and western part of our prairies and extended only as far north as the Battlefords. In 1925 Public Shooting Grounds were established on the following lakes: Good Spirit, Willow Bunch, Lake of the Rivers, Twelve Mile, Eagle, Jackfish and Murray, Ponass, Muddy, Shallow, Goose, and Cypress. Thus the twelve sanctuaries and the twelve public shooting grounds reserved most of the big lakes in the southern half of the province. Only the Qu'Appelle Lakes, which had already become resort areas, were not included. Chaplin, already drying up in 1917, was in such poor land that its marsh areas made it seem the natural place for development, on a large scale, of a good breeding area. Thus

full consideration had been given to the importance of establishing bird sanctuaries in the plains region of Saskatchewan in order to carry out the terms of the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

The regulations of 1920 governing bird sanctuaries were modified in an interesting fashion. When the Experimental Farms at Indian Head and Sutherland were established as bird sanctuaries in 1924 they remained under the management of the Forestry Department and their officers were allowed to use firearms in the sanctuary. In 1925 conditions governing grazing leases which pre-dated the establishment of bird sanctuaries were also modified. Such leases remained valid only if the restrictions on wildlife were observed. For non-observance of these restrictions the lease could be cancelled by a twelve month notice. The Order-in-Council (September 21, 1897) which set apart certain lands adjoining Crane Lake as a stock-watering reserve was validated. The right of riparian proprietors to claim fractional sections (should such land become available as the water receded) was acknowledged. Otherwise the regulations set down in 1920 remained in force.

The history of the development of the sanctuaries shows that from 1925 to 1930 the interest in them was perhaps only desultory. In 1927 a fractional quarter section of land was added to Johnstone's Lake, while a half section was withdrawn from the Crane Lake area. In 1928 over a quarter section of land which had become available was added to the Quill Lakes Sanctuary. Such attempts apparently to keep the books balanced were, of course, upset by the years of drought in the thirties. About a section of land was withdrawn from Chaplin and three sections from Johnstone by Order-in-Council in January, 1930. In the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement between the Dominion Government and the Province of Saskatchewan completed on March 20, 1930, the clause relating to sanctuaries ran as follows:

The Province will further continue

APPROXIMATE AREAS OF BIRD SANCTUARIES IN SASKATCHEWAN 1925 - 1956

	1925		1930		1948		1951		1953		1956	
	Land	Water	Land	Water	Land	Water	Land	Water	Land	Water	Land	Water
1. Last Mountain Lake	3200	38400	3200	38400	2720	38400	3180	7680	3180	7680	3169	7680
2. Johnstone Lake	7080	77400	5320	77400	5320	64400	0	64400	0	64400	0	64400
(Old Wives Lake)												
3. Quill Lakes	5760	162573	5760	162573	4420	162573	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Lenore Lake	2270	21858	2270	21858	2110	21858	0	21858	0	21858	0	21858
5. Basin and Middle Lakes	3030	21546	2390	21546	2390	21546	0	21546	0	21546	0	21546
6. Chaplin Lake	32480	13664	32160	13664	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Crane Lake	3916	12148	3596	12148	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Bigstick Lake	2500	9135	2500	9135	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. Redberry Lake	1250	17886	1250	17886	1250	17886	0	17886	0	17886	0	17886
10. Cabri Lake	0	2746	0	2746	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Whitebear Lake	1150	3375	1150	3375	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Manito Lake	3120	29124	3120	29124	3120	29124	3120	29124	0	0	0	0
13. Sutherland Experimental Station	320	0	320	0	320	0	320	0	320	0	320	0
14. Indian Head Experimental Station	80	27	80	27	80	27	80	27	80	27	80	27
15. Duncairn Reservoir	0	0	0	0	0	3840	0	3840	0	3840	0	3840
16. Murray Lake	0	0	0	0	0	2880	0	2880	0	2880	0	2880
17. Scent Grass Lake	0	0	0	0	0	1920	0	1920	0	1920	0	1920
18. Upper Rousay Lake	0	0	0	0	0	4480	0	4480	0	4480	0	4480
19. Val Marie Reservoir	0	0	0	0	0	1280	0	1280	0	1280	0	1280
20. Neely Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1960	0	1960	0	1960
21. Opuntia Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3840	0	3840	0	3840
22. Wascana Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	220
Total areas	66156	409882	66156	409882	21730	370214	6700	182721	3580	153597	3669	153817

and preserve as such the bird sanctuaries and public shooting grounds which have been already established and will set aside such additional bird sanctuaries and public shooting grounds as may hereafter be established by agreement between the Minister of the Interior and the Provincial Secretary or such other Minister of the Province.

However, as the years of the drought continued, lakes dried up and some sanctuaries were not serving the purpose for which they had been set up. On August 14, 1941, an Order-in-Council permitted the sanctuaries at Chaplin and Bigstick to be used as community pastures until the former water conditions were restored. This had also been done earlier (June 24, 1941) permitting the land in the public shooting ground at Eagle Lake to be used as a community pasture. Agriculturalists, concerned over the need of land for more pasture, over the unsupervised use of reserve areas in which the no-trespass rule was not enforced, and over the infestation of such areas by weeds, put such pressure on the authorities that on December 6, 1946 an amendment to clause 20 in the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement was passed:

20 a. The Province may discontinue any bird sanctuary or public shooting ground . . . [when] an Agreement is entered into between the Minister of Mines and Resources of Canada and the Minister of Natural Resources and Industrial Development of Saskatchewan. . . .

Now that machinery to abolish such areas was set up the whole situation came under review. At the request of the Department of Agriculture in 1948 two officials, one federal and one provincial, inspected the bird sanctuaries and found that drought had made some of the land unsuitable for the purpose for which they had been set up — as breeding grounds and a resting area for migratory wildfowl. The recommendation was that five of these bird sanctuaries be discontinued: Chaplin, Crane, Bigstick, Cabri and Whitebear. Before this became law

(by Order-in-Council, November 24, 1948) five replacements were established by Order-in-Council November 3. These five were: Duncairn Reservoir, Murray Lake, Scent Grass Lake, Upper Rousay Lake, and Val Marie Reservoir. The policy now was to make only "the land covered by water and the islands therein" sanctuary so that while the number of sanctuaries was kept the same the acreage was not. The total area of the five discontinued sanctuaries was 39,406 acres of land, and 41,068 acres of water while that of the five replacements was 14,000 acres of water (see table).

As was to be expected the new policy of establishing bird sanctuaries which did not include land areas increased the pressure from agriculture requesting a revision of the boundaries of all sanctuaries. Further inspection was carried out in 1949-1950 and it was recommended that all bird sanctuaries be water areas except two: Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary and Manito Lake Sanctuary which were to be left with land or shore areas. Two replacements were set up, Neely Lake and Lake Opuntia, with a total of 5,800 acres water, for the Quill Lakes Bird Sanctuary now discontinued with its 4,420 acres of land and 162,573 acres of water. In 1953 Manito Lake Bird Sanctuary was discontinued, a further loss of 3,120 acres of land and 29,124 acres of water. Although in 1956 Wascana Bird Sanctuary was set up, its total area of land and water was only 320 acres. Thus the total loss in area reserved as bird sanctuaries was 62,487 acres of land and 256,065 of water. In Last Mountain Lake Sanctuary a point of land (eleven acres) was leased in 1954 to the Fish and Game League of Govan, and in 1962, 180 acres were withdrawn for use as a regional park.

The loss of land in Sanctuaries which was intended as breeding ground for waterfowl in the prairie or pothole country increases Canada's difficulties of living up to the obligations assumed in the Migratory Bird Treaty. For the last 20 or 25 years

various projects have been undertaken to maintain and re-establish nesting areas for migratory waterfowl. In the main this has resulted in an attempt to save our marshlands in the face of an agricultural policy of drainage and reclaiming such areas for farming.

The greatest pressure against preserving marshlands has come from agriculture, as might be expected in a province which in the past has been almost exclusively agricultural. As settlement increased land was at a premium. During the drought years large areas of marsh dried up and became suitable for grazing and haying. As a marsh dried up, use was made of it by neighboring farmers. The use of such low-lying land in the dry years meant that in the good years of rainy weather the cry for more and more drainage of the land went up. On the prairies we have more or less accepted drainage as an agricultural necessity but few of us realized the consequences of draining indiscriminately. In fact, public and government have both supported the programme. The Saskatchewan Provincial Government participates in considerable drainage for flood control and land reclamation on private and public lands. The work is done under authority of the Conservation and Development Act of 1949, with the Government paying up to 50% of the cost of land reclamation on private lands and the full cost on government land. In addition, as is pointed out by Burwell and Sugden (1964), the existence of a main Conservation and Development ditch often makes it possible for individual farmers to drain their wetlands by means of short lateral ditches. It is startling, however, to read that according to the report of Herb Moulding of Ducks Unlimited (Burwell and Sugden, 1964) on registered drainage in Saskatchewan up to 1960:

Wetland loss is of greater magnitude in that Province than in Manitoba and Alberta. There were 563 registered ditches and drainage projects that affected 115 thousand wetland acres. Ninety-five percent

of the wetlands affected were under 40 acres. Of 843 licensed flood irrigation projects, 257 drained 27 thousand wetland acres. The drainage of 21 large marshes and lakes involved 55,580 acres. Thirty-nine additional lakes and marshes, totaling 115,149 acres, have been proposed for drainage.

To this gloomy picture must be added the result of the investigations by Ducks Unlimited of the extent of the damage caused by *unregistered* drainage, described as follows by Burwell and Sugden:

In an area of 605 square miles, 80 water areas each more than 10 acres in size were inspected. Twenty-three had been ditched—13 by farmers, 8 for roads, 1 for railway, and 1 by authority of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act. In a 245-square mile block, 5 of the 18 lakes were lowered or drained by farm or municipal ditches. Twenty-nine percent of the wetlands investigated in these surveys had been affected by drainage.

Little attempt seems to have been made in the thirties and forties by the provincial government to re-establish or even to maintain the water levels in the marsh areas. Various conservation projects, by Ducks Unlimited, the Fish and Game League and the federal authorities through such organizations as the CWS and PFRA, were acknowledged in the annual reports of the Department of Natural Resources. In 1943 Ducks Unlimited was praised for its completion of 15 projects varying from small earth-filled dams to the Willowbrook diversion scheme near Yorkton. The report for 1943 also announced that the Dominion Department of Agriculture had, over a period of 15 years, completed 12,000 small water projects. The magnitude of this work by outside organizations is perhaps indicated more realistically in the following statement by Angus Gavin (1964):

In the 25 years of work on the Canadian prairies, Ducks Unlimited has built more than 600 projects. These control water on more than

one million acres with a shoreline in excess of 5,000 miles. Since 1938, a total of 8.3 million dollars has been spent on conservation in Canada. The major part has been used for building and developing waterfowl projects.

Extensive as such work has been, some of it, such as earth-filled dams, must now be renewed if they are to be maintained. In the last five years review of the whole situation has been recognized as a necessity if some management of our water resources and the preservation of some of our marshland is to be achieved.

One would expect that in this concern over the loss of marshland, the breeding areas for waterfowl, the Game Branch would exert the greatest pressure against any encroachment on such areas. From 1905 until 1918 they pursued a farsighted policy moving quickly to establish game preserves before any conflict with settlers should arise. At first all Dominion Forest Preserves were declared provincial game reserves but as these areas proved too large for efficient management, smaller areas were set up as provincial game reserves. The Department of Agriculture Report, 1918, shows that by 1918 ten of these, with a total area of 3,825 square miles, were established as well as three wildfowl reservations. Work on the Game Act was just as progressive, necessitating only three minor changes to bring it into line with the Migratory Bird Convention Act. But they do not seem to have understood or agreed with the policy of setting up bird sanctuaries following the passing of this act. This, in Saskatchewan, might well have been based on a faith that the game preserve was established "for the propagation and the perpetuation of birds and animals" and that since "all shooting, hunting, or trapping within said preserves is forbidden" bird sanctuaries were unnecessary. While it is true that game preserves were closed to hunting throughout the year they could be declared "open" if the increase in wild-life warranted it. The sanctuary as its name implies, should remain closed

throughout the year. Apparently provincial authorities in the west felt that sanctuaries were a further limiting of areas available for hunting. In Saskatchewan in 1921 they insisted that "lawful shooting" in open season be permitted on Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary and they apparently applied this rule to all bird sanctuaries in Saskatchewan. According to the Department of Natural Resources Report, 1951, shooting was permitted on all bird sanctuaries except two (the Forestry Farms at Indian Head and Sutherland) until 1950. In 1925, the policy of establishing public shooting grounds as well as sanctuaries was adopted and 12 public shooting grounds were set up. In an Order-in-Council, July 29, 1925, the purpose of establishing public shooting grounds was given as:

. . . certain lands were set apart and reserved . . . for public shooting grounds pursuant to a broad scheme to encourage and foster a spirit of sportsmanship, and, moreover, as an auxiliary provision for the protection of wild life in the closed season, and such lands are not available for disposal by sale or under homestead entry or by lease under the grazing regulations.

Such areas remained in effect until 1951 when at the request of agriculture public shooting grounds were abolished.

Until the fifties the main concern of the Game Branch seemed to be the enforcement of the Fur and Game Act and the establishing of game preserves. While in 1918 these preserves numbered 10 with an area of 3,825 square miles, in 1945 there were 76 with an area of 7,792 square miles, and in 1956 there were 144 with an area of 9,200 square miles. By 1964 the number which had remained, about 153 since 1957, now covered an area of 12,000 square miles. Of the 153, 70 were PFRA pastures and 12 were provincial community pastures. In an Order-in-Council, June 1, 1939, an explanation of this policy was given that it was "in the public interest to have the areas so established." All community pastures in

Saskatchewan now are game preserves although opinion is still divided on the effectiveness of this as a protective measure for wild life.

The whole situation of bird sanctuaries needed review. In 1953 nine game preserves were set up at the request of the Fish and Game League who wished them as a means for protecting migratory birds. When the province requested that Manito Lake Bird Sanctuary be abolished, they announced that they were ready to set up a game preserve "on that portion of the sanctuary . . . suitable for such purposes." Some sanctuaries were being made game preserves and game preserves were being made sanctuaries. Other sanctuaries were being discontinued and immediately some of that land was declared a game preserve. As early as 1939, when Redberry Lake Bird Sanctuary was declared a game preserve the Department of Natural Resources report read:

This is a bird sanctuary where hunting is permitted during the open season. The Department felt that migratory waterfowl should not be disturbed on the islands or around the water of this particular lake in order that suitable hunting can be found in the adjoining districts over a longer period of time.

Another problem arose out of the policing of the vast reserve areas administered by both federal and provincial governments. In 1932 the enforcing of regulations in federal bird sanctuaries was turned over to the RCMP after having been entrusted for years to the provincial game guardians. Later, in 1948 the responsibility for this enforcement was extended to include game and fishery officers. To enforce game laws areas had to be well posted. This led to some confusion when a federal bird sanctuary was also a provincial game preserve. In 1962 there was a move to rescind the orders making sanctuaries game preserves and federal signs were posted on bird sanctuaries.

The independent working of various pressure groups had brought about a



strange situation for bird sanctuaries. They were still regarded as of great importance in providing migratory wildfowl with adequate breeding grounds but few had areas left where this was possible. The uplands of lakes had been taken over for agriculture and recreation; their islands were now vulnerable to boats and to picnickers. Birds resting in migration were free to use the waters of the lake but by feeding on the adjacent land areas they created a depredation problem. Those who drafted the Migratory Bird Convention Act had provided, they thought, for this age old complaint. Owners of crops destroyed by migratory waterfowl could apply for a permit to shoot such birds. In 1948 they were required to submit a list of the birds shot and of the hunters who participated in the shooting. When crop damage in the Lake Johnstone area was very heavy in 1953 the whole area was declared "open to shooting under Section 40 of the Migratory Bird Convention Act." Less extreme measures to reduce crop damage were being worked out in other areas by crews of Ducks Unlimited, Canadian Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources. Lure crops were planted on sanctuary ground, swathed and left there during the period of migration. The loss of upland areas in sanctuaries limits the

government's use of this method of controlling depredation. Moreover these lands previously used for nesting when sown to farm crops are heavily damaged by wildlife. Some financial protection from this depredation was offered to farmers in the Wildlife Crop Insurance plan introduced in 1952. Fifty cents—this was later made one dollar—was added to each hunting licence and a 12 per cent—later reduced to 2 per cent—premium was offered to each farmer. The table presented in the 1960 report of the Department of Natural Resources shows that between 1953-59 the number of farmers insured increased from 20—407, the number of claims from 9—275 and the losses paid from \$2,377.75 - \$150,000. While the farmers in the first two years of the scheme numbered only 49, a reserve fund of \$200,000 was being built as many hunting licences (52,000 in 1959) were being taxed to provide the funds necessary for the Wildlife Crop Insurance scheme.

In the sixties Saskatchewan seems to be moving towards a scheme to save our wetlands. Ducks Unlimited conducted a survey of marsh and wetlands. In 1957 the province changed the structure of the Game Branch and set up two new divisions, Wildlife Research, and Statistics. The Wildlife Research personnel have undertaken various projects to determine crop depredation, waterfowl disease, water pollution, etc. In 1959 a program for the preservation of wetlands was declared necessary. Land was to be purchased, leased or transferred to the Department of Natural Resources after surveys had been made to determine the number and kinds of wetlands involved. Later, in 1965, money to buy such land for wildlife management was granted to the Department. In the meantime the federal Canadian Wildlife Service, established in 1947, was given as one of its tasks the administering of bird sanctuaries across Canada. In addition they are carrying out a program of research which must precede any development of a policy of wildlife management in a land becoming more and more

heavily settled, facing greater and greater demands for recreational areas and, in consequence, being threatened with the disappearance of natural areas and migratory waterfowl. In 1961 the Water Rights Act was amended to state that water could now be used for the benefit of wildlife. In 1964 Dr. Munro announced that a Dominion-wide land inventory was to be undertaken in 1965.

Something must be done and done quickly or we will be in the situation faced by Canadian Wildlife Service in its proposal to offer easements to farmers to maintain the pot-holes on their farms. With the further mechanization of farming and the use of bulldozers such pot-holes are being fast eliminated and with them the scheme of easements. All of us find it hard to visualize a prairie in which spring is not heralded by the wild cries of migrating geese and crane or in which autumn does not bring those great skeins of waterfowl filling the sky with their clamor and excitement. We were pleased to see that sanctuaries were established but we left them to struggle along facing the increasing pressures which threatened their very existence. We have not supported the protests which a few naturalists and conservationists have raised against these threats. Our excuse has been that we were ignorant or unaware of the seriousness of the situation. There may be others who will conclude that we are apathetic, even indifferent, to the shaping of policy governing bird sanctuaries.

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