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Wildlife Survey through Wildlife Reporters

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NEBRASKA Gen Com Invest Proj 15-R Job
Completion Report No. 32-54.
3-page mimeo. June 23 1955.

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Objectives: "To obtain information
on local wildlife population
and local conditions."

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JOB COMPLETION REPORT
INVESTIGATIONS PROJECTS

State of Nebraska

Project No. 15-R

Job No. 32-54

Title of Job: Wildlife Survey Through Wildlife Reporters

Objectives: To obtain information on local wildlife population and local conditions.

Techniques Used: Postal card questionnaires were mailed to an already existing list of farmer and rancher cooperators. The cards were mailed April 1, 1955. Two questions were asked for each of the following species: pheasant, quail, prairie chicken, sharp-tailed grouse, hungarian partridge, chukar partridge, cottontail, and jackrabbit. The questions were how many were on their farm April 1, and whether there were more, less or same than the year before. The size of the farm or ranch was also asked for.

Findings: Wildlife reporters (farmers and ranchers) returned 333 usable cards, reporting on 186,000 acres.

Pheasant: The percentage of reporters indicating that pheasants wintered on their farm was 91.3 per cent compared to 92.3 per cent a year ago. Statewide, 4018 pheasants were reported wintering on 177,295 acres, for an average of 2.27 birds per 100 acres--the same as last year. The principal sand hills counties showed an increase over 1954 from .53/100a. to .80/100a. The remainder of the state declined from 3.75 to 3.00/100a.

In answer to the question, "How did the number of birds wintering on your farm compare with a year ago?", 32 per cent thought there were "more", 35.5 per cent "Same", and 32.5 per cent "Less".

Quail: The bobwhite results indicates a wider distribution than in 1954, 52.2 per cent reporting quail on their farm compared to 46.7 per cent the year before.

All parts of the state showed an increase per area also. Eleven southeastern counties increased from 4.98 birds per 100 acres to 6.62/100a. in 1955. Eight southern tier counties to the Colorado border, increased from 1.86 to 2.05 birds/100 acres. These two areas comprising the main quail range, indicated an increase from 3.46 to 4.37/100a. The remainder of the state increased from 0.45 to 0.56/100a. For the state as a whole the change was from .79 to 1.04 birds per 100 acres.

In reply to the question of whether there were more, less or the same number of birds than the year before, 33 per cent reported more, 38 per cent the same number and 29 per cent less birds.

Prairie Chicken: In the main prairie chicken range, cooperators reported 1.02 birds per 100 acres compared to 0.41 in 1954. For the remainder of the state, they indicated a decrease from 0.29 to 0.17 birds/100a. Of the 66 reporting prairie chickens 22.7 per cent thought there were more, 50 per cent thought they had the same number, and 27.3 per cent reported less than the year before.

Sharp-tailed grouse: This species appears to have maintained about the same population as the preceding spring. On the basis of birds per 100 acres, the results are the same for both years 1.29/100 acres for the main grouse range. On a state-wide basis for 1954, reporters indicated 0.92/100 acres and 0.99 per 100 acres for 1955. In answer to the question of how the population compared to the year before, 44 per cent thought they had about the same number, and 23 per cent thought there were more and 32 per cent thought less.

Rabbits: On a per area basis cottontail populations appear to be similar to 1954, whereas jackrabbits appear to be nearly twice as numerous as last year. In 23 eastern and southeastern counties, cottontail density increased from 5.4 to 7.4/100 a. in 1955, and jackrabbits from 2.1 to 2.7/100 a. In the remaining 70 counties, cottontail density dropped slightly from 3.8 to 3.6/100a., and jackrabbits increased more than two fold from 1.5 to 3.2/100 a. Many of the reports from the western half of the state voluntarily commented on the jackrabbit increases over the year before.

Forty-two per cent thought they had more cottontails than they did in 1954, and 41 per cent thought there was about the same number and 16 per cent thought there were less. For jackrabbits, 49 per cent thought there were more and 32 per cent reported the same number and 19 per cent reported less than a year ago.

The relative abundance of the two species (cottontails and jackrabbits) as reported, indicate that cottontails outnumber jackrabbits 3.5 to 1 in the 23 eastern counties in 1955 whereas last year's ratio was 2:1. In the remainder of the state in 1955 the ratio was nearly even, 1 jackrabbit to 1.1 cottontail. In 1954 the ratio was 1:2.4.

General Comments: Most notable among the voluntary comments on the cards was the scarcity of remarks on raccoons and skunks. Skunks were mentioned only twice, both stating they were numerous. Raccoons were only mentioned 5 times, twice stating there were fewer and twice stating they were numerous.

Recommendations: It is recommended that this survey be discontinued under its present operation. Other surveys in operation give similar and more accurate data.

Table 1. Game Trends 1955 Compared to 1954

		Pheasant	Quail	Prairie Chicken	Sharp-tailed grouse	Cottontail	Jack Rabbit
More	No.	97	57	15	12	131	138
	%	31.9	32.8	22.7	23.0	43.2	49.3
Same	No.	108	66	33	23	124	88
	%	35.5	37.9	50.0	44.2	41.3	31.4
Less	No.	99	51	18	17	48	54
	%	32.6	29.3	27.3	32.8	15.5	19.3
No. Reporting each Spp.		304	174	66	52	303	280
% of Total reporters		92.3	52.2	19.8	15.6	91.0	84.0
Av. #/100 a. statewide		2.27	1.04	.83	1.00	3.95	3.14
Av. #/100 a. in mapped Co's		3.00	4.37	1.02	1.29	7.42	
*Map outline in July 1952 P-R. Quarterly Progress report.							

Summary: Wildlife reporters returned 333 usable postal card questionnaires giving their opinions of the over-wintering populations compared to the year before.

The results indicated pheasant populations similar to 1954. The sand hill region showed some increase while the remainder of the state some decrease.

Quail populations appear to be substantially greater.

The results of the prairie chicken data showed twice as many birds per unit area as the year before. However, more reporters (28 per cent) thought there were fewer birds than last year (22 per cent reported more).

Sharp-tail reports indicated their population similar or a little better than 1954.

Cottontail populations were indicated about the same on a state-wide basis but showed increases in the extreme eastern and south-eastern parts.

Jackrabbits showed a small decrease in the eastern part of the state and large increases in the western sections.

The abundance of comments about high raccoon and skunk populations of the past surveys were missing from this survey.

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Approved by J. Henry Sather
Project Leader

Date June 23, 1955