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FOREWORD

The game statistics contained and referred to in this report are purely estimates. The man-kill and elk census figures are based on physical facts and are the only figures whereby any reliable conclusions can be drawn. The remaining census figures concerning other phases of wild life may be classed as field opinions. Regardless of the error in the census figures, it is the consensus of opinion that trend is shown. But how inconsistent it must appear to the public that the efficient "Forest Service" can continually, year after year, plague the public with figures which we ourselves have little faith in. Any sound game management program must have for its foundation a reliable inventory.

It was with these thoughts in mind that Region One has placed 12 crews into the field, besides rangers, to the extent of 31 man-months, during the winter season, all of which are working toward obtaining field data under a guiding systematic outline. At the conclusion of the winter studies, all the data collected will be correlated and analyzed. This, of course, is only the beginning and tireless, concentrated efforts over a period of years will be necessary before a real, sound understanding of the wild life within Region One is had.

The past accomplishment relative to the wild life within the Region, while perhaps not all that could be hoped for, is to be lauded rather than lamented. The time has arrived, however, to recognize our responsibilities as land managers and come to grips with this game problem. We must recognize that this is a field in which there is going to be a lot of pioneering work and that training of our personnel is going to play an important part in any success we may attain.

It should be... report that the... equals, if not exceeds, the legal bill.

# FIVE-YEAR FISH AND GAME REPORT

## REGION ONE

1934

### I. General Statement

In discussing each species of big game animals, an endeavor has been made to give the reader a general digest of the conditions and welfare of the big game animals as they exist in Region One.

#### 1. Deer

##### A. Increases and Causes

Deer have shown a steady increase in all more or less remote areas and in counties where the buck law is in effect, but all areas accessible and close to populated centers continue to be overshot. Tabulation number one shows a 7½ percent increase of deer in Montana for the five-year period, but this does not complete the analysis, as little or no increase has occurred in counties west of the Continental Divide, and largely all the increase is in the counties east of the Divide, which harbor the buck law. The Forests of Idaho, where either sex can be killed, show a 12½ decrease. Mild winters, generally throughout the Region, have, of course, been favorable to feeding and breeding conditions, but on the other hand, the severe fire years 1931, 1933 and 1934 have been a handicap to the deer population of the western part of the Region in that some areas of winter game range have been destroyed.

##### B. Drain

(1) The legal kill by men over the five-year period was 34,359 deer, which is not exorbitant, as our 1934 population is estimated at 77,382. No measure of the illegal kill is available other than the general opinion that it is far in excess of what it should be. For instance, local Forest officers report that the illegal kill on the Kootenai Forest equals, if not exceeds, the legal kill.

(2) Winter loss has been negligible, excepting during the winters of 1931 and 1932, when west of the Continental Divide extreme low temperatures, plus crusted snow conditions, existed which so handicapped the deer in securing forage that the starvation loss was estimated at 35 to 75 per cent on the different Forests and weakened the breeding stock so that a subnormal fawn crop resulted.

(3) The estimated predatory animal kill for the five-year period is 25,606, which is excessive. The U. S. Biological Survey predatory animal control on the game ranges in Montana is wholly inadequate. In fact, I believe the Survey has been very indifferent to control work where game only is involved. In Idaho the opposite is true of the Survey. Mr. Owen Morris, of Lewiston, Idaho, who has charge of the field work, has had in effect a most efficient and intelligent control plan for the past two or three years. It is my opinion that the Survey could do a great deal more work on the Montana Forests if local men really wanted to. Lack of funds has been their stock excuse for not doing more work in Montana. The Montana Fish & Game Commission contributes \$7,500 yearly to the predatory animal fund but has no voice in how or where this money shall be expended. Besides this sum the Commission pays bounty on mountain lion.

The Idaho plan is as follows: Direction of the work is done by the Survey which also furnishes poison. The State Game Department pays each trapper \$25.00 per month. The Forest Service furnishes grub and cabins to the men. All hides taken are the property of the trappers. An attempt is being made to extend this system to Montana and the Game Department has signified its willingness to co-operate.

Coyotes and mountain lions are the chief predators. Wolves are no longer important in this Region and no control of bears is contemplated on account of the value of these species as game animals.

The principle of control rather than complete extermination of predatory animals, as adopted by the policy committee at the Ogden meeting, will be followed in this Region.

(4) That the deer are subject to disease has in recent years come to light. Mr. Rush, in charge of game management for this Region, has inspected and collected adequate evidence, relative to the foot-worm disease and the liver fluke in different localities, to warrant the statement that both these diseases are probably pretty well localized throughout this Region. Other diseases of importance are known to exist in the deer, but as to the incidence of these diseases, sufficient data are not available.

### C. Problems

(1) The deer population of Region One, due to topography and climate, is and will always be directly proportional to the amount of available winter range. Forest boundaries largely throughout the Region are at elevations which exclude more open lands desirable as winter range, and which are now heavily grazed and depleted by livestock operations. Future utilization of the deer crop may call for a greater deer population than now exists, but for the present much can be done with what is available. All conflicts between deer and the livestock industry are in localized areas. Our grazing surveys are recognizing the game problem, and providing for game needs in the final plans. Some of our lower C&H units are in conflict with game, in that many of them are suited for winter deer range, and wherever this condition exists and is recognized, efforts are being made to correct the situation. The entire winter range problem is one requiring definite study, and this phase of game management will be discussed next.

(2) In analyzing the available data with reference to managing the deer population of this Region, it is readily realized little or nothing in the way of a foundation is had. A study program is decidedly in need. Only qualified men, trained in the basic sciences of botany and biology, with a natural instinct and leaning toward the mysteries of the children of the wilds, can unearth the facts needed for management purposes. Such men must have training ability so that their technique and knowledge can be extended to others. It will be necessary to know how many deer the population consists of, what are the natural enemies, and how many deer these natural enemies partake of the population, where are the deer

located, what forage is eaten during different seasons, how much winter range is available for respective herds, what role that disease plays, what are the carrying capacities of certain areas, and hundreds of other pertinent questions. Of the questions listed, have we any answers? No, only opinions, and until studies are conducted and answers made available, we cannot hope to approach real management.

(3) Illegal killing of game throughout the Region has increased to some extent during the past five-year period due to the increased number of unemployed men. Convictions in local courts are hard to secure when the accused is out of work and his family needs meat. The States' funds are also much less than in normal times so they cannot put as many wardens in the field as is desirable. Also Forest Service activities along protection lines is much less, due to the emergency load carried by all of our field men. As the unemployed situation is corrected and the States' income increases, this condition will be corrected. The only other remedy in sight is Reg. G-20A.

(4) The recent road development for fire protection purposes during the past few years has opened up many remote areas. Much alarm was expressed by local sportsmen's organizations two or three years ago over this road expansion program because they felt that making the game areas accessible to hunters would mean the extermination of the game. Largely through educational measures, this concern has been largely dispelled. More and more the thinking public is beginning to realize that the best solution of the game problem is through management by regulated hunting.

(5) The mechanical drain, such as kill by automobile and railroads is becoming more and more a factor. Very often through western Montana and Idaho, train kills

are reported, and the recent, fast road development of both arterial and main highways shows increased reportings of kill by autos.

## 2. Elk

### A. Increases and Causes

The statement that elk is a prolific propagator is well born out in the facts that a 58 percent increase during the five years has occurred in Montana, and a 17 percent increase in Idaho. The causes of the increases are lack of utilization by man, legal hunting periods not in accord with migration records to allow utilization by man, closed seasons on certain herds, mild winters, the hardiness of the animal, and the physical size of the animal in its relation to predatory enemies.

### B. Drain

(1) During the five-year period, the legal man-kill in Montana was 9,088 head out of a total population in 1934 of 20,420. In Idaho, the five-year kill was 2,723 out of a 1934 population of 6,799 head.

(2) The illegal kill of elk is a factor throughout the Region. In Montana, especially the Lewis & Clark and the Judith Rim herds, elk become a menace to ranch pastures and haystacks and the ranchers kill a few in chasing them away with mounted men and dogs in an effort to protect their property. The kill for meat during the closed season, while existing, is not as great as with deer.

(3) The predatory animal drain on elk is estimated at 549 head for Montana, and 350 head for Idaho during the five-year period. This, of course, is very small compared to the toll on deer. Mountain lions, coyotes and grizzly bear are the predatory animals concerned. While, of course, this is a factor, it is thought to be rather minor in proportion. However, should the deer population become less, and predators remain stationary, the drain from this source would undoubtedly increase.

(4) Disease, with present knowledge, is not present to any depredating extent in elk. Diseases have been found and identified by Mr. Rush in his study of the "Northern Elk Herd." Parasites such as