Source: Bitterroot NF Hist Files, Hamilton

R. E. THOMAS, WARDEN

Department of Fish and Game

J. W. KEEFFE, CHIEF CLERK

State of Idaho

C. C. MOORE, Governor

Boise

D. Cooperation
State of Idaho

Kooskia, Idaho.

May 11, 1925.

J. W. Lowell
Forest Supervisor
Bitterroot Nat. Forest.
Hamilton, Montana.

Dear Sir:

Please find inclosed herewith, a copy of my report to the State Game Warden of Idaho.

As most of the teritory mentioned is under your supervicion, I thought perhaps you might be interested.

Would greatly apriciate any comment you might wish to make.

Very respectfully yours C. K. Ufford.

Deputy Warden

Kooskia, Idaho.

May 1, 1925.

R. E. Thomas,
State Game Warden,
Boise, Idaho.

Dear Sir:

I hereby submit to you a report of conditions on the upper Selway, as observed during my work last winter.

The upper Selway river, opened to the sportsmen of Idaho with the completion of the trail between Bear and Whitecap Creeks, offers many advantages. While rather rough, it is excellent hunting ground, being covered sparsely with Yellow Pine and Douglas Fir. It is what is known to hunters as open timber. The soil is mostly decomposed granite and rather loose. Considerable areas burned over during the season of 1919. All south slopes are fairly open and covered with a fine stand of bunch grass, above Whitecap considerable Mountain Mahogany is found.

On unburned areas Service berry, Black Haw and Mountain Ash are plentiful and these species seem to be re-establishing from stump sprouts, on the burned over areas.

The Selway River is well stocked with Cutthroat and Bull trout. The tributaries also are full of Cutthroat and Bull trout in their lower course, while higher up the native Brook trout predominate.

Blue and ruffed grouse are plentiful, but the big game is the chief attraction.

Elk are found well distributed over this territory, mule deer are found by the thousand, but seem to be in rather poor condition. Whitetail deer are farly well distributed where ever suitable cover is found along the creek bottoms, but not numerous. These deer do not winter above the mouth of Running Creek. Goat are very plentiful, especially around McGruder Mountain and on several short creeks above the McGruder crossing. Bear suffered a severe loss during and after the fire of 1919, but are still plentiful.

The trail leading into this country is good, there are few grades of any consequence and safe so far as severe storms are concerned.

Above Bad Luck Creek on the Nezperce National Forest are many fine campling places, kept in excellent condition by the Forest Service.

The horsefeed is unexcelled, the grass remaining in fine condition until long after the hunting season closes.

Condition of Game.

Elk are found on nearly all tributaries to the upper Selway but not in great numbers. Just why there are so few elk in this locality, I have not been able to determine. Judging from the amount of mule deer, it does not seem possible that excessive hunting is the cause. It is not the lack of feed, for although this winter was a very severe one in this locality, the elk wintered in fine shape, I did not not find one elk dead from weakness. I am of the opinion that it

is the scarcity of licks that is the main cause, as it is noticed, elk are very fond of salt in any form.

As you have authorized me to distribute a great quantity of salt in this locality, I will try to observe if it has any effect on the number of elk.

The elk seem to be badly infected with ticks, but I have not noticed any case of scab.

Mule deer are the principal game here. To avoid criticism I will not give an estimate as to numbers, but deal only with percentage, as my own estimate differs so greatly with other estimates made.

The fawn crop of 1924 was the largest I have ever seen, fully 150 per cent at the close of the hunting season. Very little loss was observed until early in February, at that time we had a rainstorm lasting 12 days and nights, it ceased as abruptly as it started, the temperature dropped to Zero in a few hours. Many deer died, particularly fawn, in their beds, others weakened by the cold and handicapped by a hard crust on the snow, fell an easy prey to coyotes, so by the time the grass was green, the fawn crop had been reduced to a scant 50%.

Usually 75% of the winter loss is old bucks, weak from their battles during the mating season, but this winter comparatively few bucks died.

Another cause contributing to the poor condition of the deer, was an unusual amount of green grass last fall. The deer left the browse early in November and the grass softened them so they were in poor shape to withstand the intense cold of

early winter.

It was noticed last fall that the majority of the deer were in rather poor condition, this seemed strange to me at that time, because there is an abundance of summer feed. However, I saw a buck killed near a place where horses had been salted all summer, he was the fattest deer I have ever seen at that time of the year.

When spring came, I discovered the source of the poor condition of the deer; they were literally covered with ticks. I have seen hundreds of deer the last month, so covered that the ticks lay like the scales of a fish on the front of their necks.

Another pest with which these deer are infected, is a grub, gray in colour 1½ inches long and 3/16 inch in diameter. These grubs fasten in large cluster around the larynx of the deer and seem to cause them great distress.

Predatory animals prey on the deer constantly, cougars kill deer in great numbers, but it is my belief, that the coyote has become the greatest enemy to the deer of all. It is not alone the deer actually killed by coyotes, although that is a great number, but by constantly prowling among the deer, driving them out of their beds and causing them to run for safety through deep snow, at all hours, they create a state of nervousness in the deer, similar to ~~have~~ what a horserunner seeks to accomplish by "camping on the trail of a band of wild horses". Anyone who has tried that stunt knows how quickly he can cut down the flesh of an animal simply by keeping it nervous. This is true also on the Salmon River Reserve. The condition is nothing to be alarmed about, the deer have weathered other

drawbacks as bad or worse and survived, but it seems a needless waste.

I might add that the deer in this locality are taking a distinct local type, differing from the ordinary mule deer in the shape of the bucks horns. The antlers of these bucks are long and slender and the points almost meet over their heads.

Goat are well distributed, but most numerous on the south side of the river. There is probably no other place in the state where goat can be so easy bagged. It is nearly always possible to see goat from the river trail.

I have not been able to give much attention to the goats as their range is too rough to travel on snowshoes.

There is a small band of sheep rangeing between Sheep and and Indian Creeks, sometimes rangeing over onto the Bitter Root river in Montana. It might be possible to save these animals, I have had littly opportunity to learn much about them.

Bear are plentiful and have a fine range here. The fire of 1919 destroyed a great deal of fruit bearing shrubs, but as these are reproducing from stump sprouts, it is likely the range will soon be as good as ever. Black and Brown bear are the common species, occasionally a Grizzly shows up but they are rare.

Fur bearing animals have been trapped and poisoned to such an extent, on the north side of the river, that they are threatened with extinction. On the south side they are still fairly numerous.

I suggest the follwwing to remedy the big game condition:

Would suggest salting very heavy on the winter and spring ranges, using ordinary stock salt mixed with 20% sulphur and a

quantity of bicarbonate of soda. I believe there is a cheap grade of soda on the market, used extensively for flushing and fire extinguishers.

Through the courtesy of Forest Supervisor F. J. Jefferson of the Selway Forest, I obtained an analysis of the water from one of the best licks in this section. The water contained 143 milligrams of bicarbonate of soda, 36 Milligrams of sodium sulphate and 12 milligrams of sodium chloride to one liter of water.

An animal would have to drink approximately 8,000 gal. of water to get one lb. of salt. But as there are no licks to speak of in this territory, they do not get even the small amount of salt they could obtain by drinking the water.

Would recommend a vigorous campaign against predatory animals. Cougar in winter and Coyotes in summer. After much experimenting I have come to the conclusion hunting coyotes in winter does not pay. Some winters they can be successfully poisoned on the ice of the river, but this can not be depended on as the river sometimes keeps breaking up. This was the case this winter and nothing could be done. On the Salmon river preserve, the canyon is so rought it is impossible to cover enough territory in winter to do any good. Also the coyotes on the upper Selway seem to eat only their own kills, refusing deer and horse carcasses with which the hillsides were littered.

I would recommend that good men be employed trapping during the summer months when coyotes are easily caught and a man can cover four times the territory he can in winter. By cooperation with the Forest Service many cougars could be killed during the summer, when the network of telephone lines

are working, as a hunter could be quickly notified if a cougar track was seen.

As the best men can not be hired for what the Game Department can pay, I would recommend that a co-operative agreement be made with the Forest Service,, whereby the hunter serve as a patrol man and, for this service, he should receive from the Forest Service his subsistence and perhaps a small amount for his horses. Such a man should prove valuable to the Forest Service, especially when the visibility is low.

My opinion is that fewer hunters should be employed, the culls weeded out and the good men paid a fair price for their work.

Would suggest that the Game Department consult the State Veterinary in regard to the grubs with which the deer are infected, some remedy might be found that can be given with the salt.

I do not believe we can eliminate all these pests, but I do believe we can effect a great saving. The cougar killed last winter, should effect a saving of about 1,000 deer in that territory during the next 12 months. I believe by building up the condition of the deer, by salting and ridding them of the ticks, we can cut the winter loss 50%, which would mean a great many deer annually. It is doubtful if 10% of the deer that have died in this territory have been killed by hunters.

Would recommend that all the territory draining into the Selway River from the north, from the head of the river to Bear Creek be closed to trapping, until the fur-bearing animals have re-established themselves.

Would suggest that Gun Clubs and Game Protective Associations

join forces in an effort to induce the Forest Service to save the feed on the upper Selway for a wintering ground for games, as the soil is so loose that even the light grazing by the Forest Service pack stock, has in some places caused erosion.

In any event, the Forest Service should make an intensive study of soil and forage conditions in that region before permitting indiscriminate grazing. It is probable that if such a study be made in the near future it would result in closing the area permanently. The recreational value will continue to over balance all else, if nature be not interfered with.

Very respectfully yours,

C. R. Hart.