

**PREFACE**

**Narrative Report  
September - December 1956**

**Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge  
Hollandale, Mississippi.**

**Personnel**

**Raymond R. McMaster**

**Position**

**Refuge Manager**

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NARRATIVE REPORT SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER  
YAZOO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to our first narrative report at Yazoo, I thought it would be well to give a brief background and description of the project.

The Refuge was begun in 1936 with the purchase of 2500 acres of land. At that time the Service had 20,000 acres under option for purchase which included the old Swan Lake area. Drainage district problems caused a conflict with the Services plan to build a dam across Steele Bayou below Swan Lake. The attitude of the Service was that unless they could construct such a water structure the whole project would be useless. The drainage district members would not agree to such a program so consequently no more land was bought.

The land that had already been purchased became a problem in itself. It was rented to local farmers on a cash rent basis but no supervision could be given.

This type of management went on until 1947 when the land was leased to the Mississippi State Game and Fish Commission as a State Refuge. All the State did was to continue leasing the land to local farmers at a give away price. Their wardens did a good job of keeping out hunters. The State lease was released recently, thus the Yazoo finally comes under management.

Of the approximately 2500 acres in the refuge there is approximately 800 acres under cultivation, 200 acres in brush, 150 acres in lakes and Bayous, 400 acres in willow breaks that flood in the winter and the remainder is in mixed bottomland hardwoods.

The cultivatable land is considered ridge land or it contains a lot of sand, which causes the moisture to leach out rapidly. At least 60% of this land is solid in Johnson grass. It will be necessary to fallow this land for two summer seasons, and follow with winter grain crops in the fall to reduce this grass so crops can be grown.

At the present the crop land is being leased on a cooperative farming agreement with local farmers. The refuge will gradually expand its own farming operation.

The water area consist of Deer Lake 70 acres, Big Lake 30 acres, Lizzard Lake 20 acres and Bayous 30 acres. All of these areas usually go dry except Deer Lake which hasn't been completely dry since about 1943, when it burned over by fire.

The 200 acres in brush, for the most part is reverted agricultural land which is proposed to be recleared and returned to production.

The 400 acres of willow and cypress breaks is all a part of old Swan Lake which dries up during the summer and fills during the winter rains. These areas furnish perfect areas for wood duck and feeds a good many mallards when they are first flooded.

The bottomland hardwoods are not very desirable from a waterfowl standpoint. The principle species are: wild pecan, sweet gum, cottonwood, white oaks, willow and cypress. Other species include hackberry, elm, white ash, black locust, hickory, water oak, willow oak and sycamore.

There are 5 houses that are in a fair state of repair but are not suitable for occupancy. There are two other houses in very poor condition.

In relation to flyway, the refuge is some 10 miles from the Mississippi River and 2 miles from Lake Washington which covers approximately 5,000 acres.

All of the refuge is drained by Steele Bayou which heads in Swan Lake. Black Bayou drains several square miles of land West of Hollandale into Swan Lake.

With this introduction maybe it will be simpler to get a clear picture of our narrative report.

### I. GENERAL

- A. Weather Conditions. The following data was taken from a weather station observer on Washington Lake, two miles from the Refuge.

	<u>Precipitation</u>	<u>Annual Precipitation</u>
September	.65	Total 51.87
October	5.50	
November	4.37	
December	8.76	
Total	18.78	

No previous annual or period data is available for comparison.

Temperatures were not available but the temperatures for the period have been mild with the mercury staying above 20 degrees all during the period.

- B. Water Conditions. No gauges are present to give water data but the dry lakes have partially filled and Deer Lake has rose approximately two feet since November 1. None of the refuge lakes are flowing through their outlets. Control structures and an irrigation well are proposed to supplement runoff in the three lakes.

According to local reports we have more water than during the past 5 years.

- C. Fires. Previous bad fire seasons have left their brands on refuge timber stands. However, most fires have been caused from careless farmers burning their fields to prepare seed beds. This practice will be stopped.

No fires have occurred on the refuge this period but a certain amount of pre-suppression work needs to be done in future years to prevent further damage to refuge fields and timber stands.

## II. WILDLIFE

### A. Migratory Birds.

#### 1. Populations and Behavior.

Ducks- Deer Lake is remarkable in that the large numbers of ducks keep using it continuously day after day. Beginning on November 1, Deer Lake had approximately 500 ducks, by December 1, this number had increased to 2800, and by the end of the period 5000 ducks were present. The peak population as of December 31 on the refuge was 8375.

In the late afternoon these birds fly to nearby rice fields to feed and sometimes do not return to the refuge until early morning. As soon as shooting starts on nearby reservoirs and hunting clubs ducks immediately return to Deer Lake. I have observed as many as 2000 returning to the refuge before the sun rises.

Mallards compose only about 1/3 of the total population using the refuge. Green winged teal are a close second with Gadwall and Baldpate next.

As soon as rain put water in the timbered areas wood duck population dropped. Then at the close of the period shooting pressure must have caused these species to frequent the refuge lakes.

Geese. On December 26 approximately 25 Canada geese flew over the refuge but there was nothing in significance to attract these birds and they continued toward the Mississippi River.

Coots. These birds are present in Deer Lake with a peak of 300 on December 31.

Doves increased in numbers around December 1 when the last soybeans were harvested on the refuge. On December 26 a flock of 100 was observed in one flight.

Wilson's Snipe are present with only an occasional observation.

Woodcocks are present only one actual observation.

2. Food and Cover. No artificial feeding is available on the refuge. All feeding has been from natural aquatics and rice fields. One local reservoir owner had about 30 acres of milo which was demolished after about 20 days of feeding. In the willow breaks snail life and small insects are plentiful. On the South tract of the refuge where natural flooding of timber has occurred ducks are feeding heavily on mostly large acorns. The North tract of the refuge has 170 acres of fall planted oats available but no use has been made by ducks or geese.

3. Botulism. None.

4. Lead poisoning and other diseases. None noted.

B. Upland Game Birds.

1. Population and Behavior. Quail are present with two separate coveys having been observed.

2. Food and Cover. Is excellent on the refuge for quail.

3. Disease. None noted.

C. Big Game Animals.

1. Population and Behavior.

Deer are present with no sight observations but several tracks have been observed. No deer were using the refuge before the hunting season opened on November 20. Immediately tracks were observed in the refuge fields. Hunting pressure is light in the vicinity of the refuge.

2. Food and Cover. Food and cover is plentiful for deer on the refuge. Illegal hunting methods within the area will probably keep this species from increasing.

3. Disease. None noted.

D. Fur Animals.

Squirrels are plentiful. There are approximately 2000 using the refuge. They are fox, gray and black squirrels. Wild pecans is plentiful but all of this mast was cleaned up by November 1. Large acorns and shrub plant fruits are still available.

Raccoon are present in average numbers.

Mink are present but seem to be scarce.

Beaver are present but not in great numbers.

Muskrat are present but their quantity is unknown.

Rabbits are more than abundant. They are predacious on winter grain crops.

Opposum are normal.

Bobcat are present but no trapping program seems advisable at this time.

Fox are normal.

Other fur bearers present include Weasel and Skunk.

Dogs are abundant. It seems that all the people who have moved out of this county in the past few years have left their dogs behind. It will be necessary to control these animals somehow. Mr. Rife Wade, Sr., a local sheep producer, will probably be glad to assist me in some type of dog removal program.

Alligators inhabit Deer Lake. The number of these reptiles is unknown, but according to their sign they are plentiful.

#### E. Predaceous Birds.

Bald Eagle - There is a nest on the lower end of Big Lake, must be several feet in diameter, that appears to be an Eagle nest. I have not observed a Bald eagle.

Hawks are plentiful. No time has been spent trying to identify the different species but there are several.

Crows are sparse.

Blackbirds rank a statement here since they are considered the number one predator in the Mississippi Delta. When rice fields approach maturity local farmers spent up to \$100.00 per day to keep these birds from shattering their crops. They will certainly be a problem on small grains left unharvested for waterfowl use.

- F. Fish. Deer Lake is the only possibility for fishing on the refuge and it would not be considered a good fishing lake in its present conditions. Probably as soon as the water elevation is raised, either by means of a small dam or irrigation well or both, this lake will become a fine place to fish. Fish life present is most likely rough fish such as carp, catfish and grinnel.

### III. REFUGE MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- A. Physical Development. Posting of the Refuge was begun during the period. Several man hours was spent on patrolling, inspecting and investigation of the refuge lands to determine wildlife populations, use, flight patterns, potential waterfowl possibilities and physical developments.

A 1951 Chevrolet car, 1950 Chevrolet pickup and a 1½ ton Ford stake truck was acquired from the Army at Ft. Benning.

#### B. Plantings.

1. Aquatics and Marsh Plants. None.
2. Trees and Shrubs. None.
3. Upland Herbaceous Plants. None.

4. Cultivated Crops. No crops have been planted by refuge personnel. All farming this period has been done by cooperators who formerly had leases with the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission. Approximately 260 acres of oats have been planted by all of these cooperators. Wildlife use of these fields has been limited to Deer and rabbits.

C. Collections. None.

D. Receipts of Seed and Nursery Stock. None.

#### IV. ECONOMIC USE OF REFUGE

A. Grazing. Only one cooperator has pasture land on the Refuge and this land is so situated on the South tract that it is best suited for pasture land. It will not be necessary to fence the refuge to keep out trespass cattle.

B. Haying. None.

C. Fur Harvest. None.

D. Timber Removal. 100 black locust post were removed during the period to be used to post refuge.

It seems that when the Service bought the North tract that there was a reservation in the deed for the seller to cut wood from Service owned land until 1945. It appears that this custom was continued on through the years until the present. I think we have all of the illegal wood cutters notified and no wood is being removed at the present time.

#### V. FIELD INVESTIGATION

A. Progress Report. None.

#### VI. PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. Recreational Users. There has been approximately 100 people drive to Deer Lake to see the ducks. We have discouraged this with all that we have seen. After posted penalty markers were placed at entrance roads this seems to have stopped. Deer Lake is small and a long blast on a car horn or loud hand clapping causes at least half of the ducks to remove themselves to some other resting place.

B. Refuge Visitors.

Date	Name	Organization	Hrs.	Subject
12-11-56	W. H. Turcotte	State Game & Fish Comm. Jackson, Miss.	2	Duck pictures.
12-11-56	L. S. Givens	FWS Atlanta, Ga.	9	Refuge inspection
	W. A. Dunaway	Farmer		Several visits relative to farming.
12-15-56	C. G. Spragins	Landowner	1	Land leasing.

Date	Name	Organization	Hrs.	Subject
12-18-56	C. G. Spragins,	Landowner	1	Land leasing.
	John Cosser	Landowner	1	Land leasing.
12-20-56	Frank Oakes	Farmer	1	Land leasing.

- C. Refuge Participation. The writer attended the Hollandale Rotary Club on November 7, 1956 as a guest. Also I was elected as President of the Men's Brotherhood, an organization of the Hollandale Baptist Church.
- D. Hunting. So far waterfowl hunting has been good according to the local hunters compared to the past few years. The refuge is surrounded on three sides by Hunting Clubs and shooting areas. Larry Pryor, Greenville, Miss., a local land owner has two reservoirs conatining around 425 acres. He permits controlled hunting four days per week with Sunday being his main day. The Swan Lake Hunting Club with some 30 members controlls approximately 3000 acres of willow breaks which flooded this year in early december. They hun this area 5 days per week and have reported several good hunts. On our Southeast side Mr. Duncan Cope, Banker of Hollandale, has two small reserviors with about 80 acres of water whcih has provided some good shooting. Straight Lake which is situated on the North side of Steel Bayou and just over the Refuge Boundary has provided some good shooting. On the South side of the refuge there is approximately 600 acres of rice fields which have been used heavily by ducks from the refuge and adjoining reservoirs. These fields have furnished a limited amount of shooting due to weather conditions and the time of day the birds feed.
- E. Fishing. No local pressure is evident for fishing in refuge waters due to the tremendous amount of lakes and streams in the vicinity.
- F. Violations. No cases have been made by refuge personnel even tho it is evident that several violations have occurred on adjoining lands. The greatest of these has been wood ducks taken. Approximately one out of ten hunters kills a wood duck by error of identification. These birds are left to waste where they are taken. It appears that wood ducks are plentiful in this area and should a closed season be continued on this specie the Service should initiate a thorough educational program to help apprentice hunters in identification of this duck. Other violations consist mostly of over the bag limits.

VII. OTHER ITEMS

- A. Items of Interest. It is with great pleasure that we report the favorable public interest that has been and is being expressed toward having a National Wildlife Refuge in this area. I have not heard of one dissenting opinion.
- B. Photographs. Picture did not return from the developers in time to be included in this report.

- C. N R Forms. Forms 5 thru 9 were omitted since there was no activity for this period under their respective headings.

Date January 8, 1957

Submitted by

Raymond R. McMaster  
Refuge Manager

Approved:

15/ Howard A. Miller  
Regional Refuge Supervisor

1/14/57

WATERFOWL

REFUGE YAZOO

MONTHS OF NOVEMBER TO Dec. 31, 1956, 1956

(1) Species	(2) Weeks of reporting period										
	Nov <sub>1</sub> 9	Nov <sub>2</sub> 10	Nov <sub>3</sub> 16	Nov <sub>4</sub> 21	5	Dec <sub>6</sub> 7	Dec <sub>7</sub> 14	Dec <sub>8</sub> 20	Dec <sub>9</sub> 30	10	
<b>Swans:</b>											
Whistling Trumpeter											
<b>Geese:</b>											
Canada											
Cackling											
Brant											
White-fronted											
Snow											
Blue											
Other											
<b>Ducks:</b>											
Mallard	200	300	400	1000		2000	2000	2000	3000		76,300
Black			25	25		50	50	100	100		2,450
Gadwall	50	75	100	500		1000	1000	1000	1000		33,075
Baldpate	50	50	100	500		400	400	500	500		17,500
Pintail				75		100	100	100	150		3,675
Green-winged teal	25	100	100	500		1500	1500	2000	3000		61,075
Blue-winged teal	50	50									700
Cinnamon teal											
Shoveler			25	25		25	25	25	25		1,050
Wood	100	100	100	100		50	50	25	100		4,375
Redhead											
Ring-necked											
Canvasback											149,220
Scaup											
Goldeneye											
Bufflehead											
Ruddy											
Other											
Merganser				50		100	100	200	200		4,550
<b>Coot:</b>				50		50	100	200	300		4,900
Int. Dup. Sec.,	475	675	850	2475		5275	5375	6150	8375		

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
III. <u>Doves and Pigeons</u> : Mourning dove White-winged dove	25	11/3/56	100	12/26/56		290
IV. <u>Predaceous Birds</u> : Golden eagle Duck hawk Horned owl Magpie Raven Crow	resident					25
Other resident species not listed as they have not been observed.						
Reported by <u>Raymond R. McMaster</u>						

INSTRUCTIONS

Raymond R. McMaster

- (1) Species: Use the correct names as found in the A.O.U. Checklist, 1931 Edition, and list group in A.O.U. order. Avoid general terms as "seagull", "tern", etc. In addition to the birds listed on form, other species occurring on refuge during the reporting period should be added in appropriate spaces. Special attention should be given to those species of local and National significance. Groups: I. Water and Marsh Birds (Gaviiformes to Ciconiiformes and Gruiformes)  
II. Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns (Charadriiformes)  
III. Doves and Pigeons (Columbiformes)  
IV. Predaceous Birds (Falconiformes, Strigiformes and predaceous Passeriformes)
- (2) First Seen: The first refuge record for the species for the season concerned.
- (3) Peak Numbers: The greatest number of the species present in a limited interval of time.
- (4) Last Seen: The last refuge record for the species during the season concerned.
- (5) Production: Estimated number of young produced based on observations and actual counts.
- (6) Total: Estimated total number of the species using the refuge during the period concerned.

MIGRATORY BIRDS  
(other than waterfowl)

Refuge **YAZOO** Months of **NOV. 1** to **DEC. 31, 1956** 195

(1) Species	(2) First Seen		(3) Peak Numbers		(4) Last Seen		(5) Production			(6) Total
	Number	Date	Number	Date	Number	Date	Number Colonies	Total # Nests	Total Young	Estimated Number
I. <u>Water and Marsh Birds:</u>										
<b>Great Blue Heron</b>	2	11/3/56	6	12/26/56						6
<b>American Egret</b>	1	12/26/56								2
<b>Little Blue Heron</b>	4	11/3/56								10
II. <u>Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns:</u>										
<b>Killdeer</b>	4	11/3/56	4	11/3/56	frequently					25
<b>Wilson Snipe</b>	1	12/7/56	1	12/7/56						5

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

Refuge YACCO Months of Nov. to Dec. 31, 1956, 19  

(1) Species	(2) Density		(3) Young Produced		(4) Sex Ratio	(5) Removals			(6) Total	(7) Remarks
Common Name	Cover types, total acreage of habitat	Acres per Bird	Number broods obs'v'd.	Estimated Total	Percentage	Hunting	For Re- stocking	For Research	Estimated number using Refuge	Pertinent information not specifically requested. List introductions here.
<b>Quail</b>	<b>Bottomland Hard 1600 acres Agricultural lands 900 acres</b>	<b>25</b>							<b>100</b>	

## INSTRUCTIONS

Form NR-2 - UPLAND GAME BIRDS.\*

- (1) SPECIES: Use correct common name.
- (2) DENSITY: Applies particularly to those species considered in removal programs (public hunts, etc.). Detailed data may be omitted for species occurring in limited numbers. Density to be expressed in acres per animal by cover types. This information is to be prefaced by a statement from the refuge manager as to the number of acres in each cover type found on the refuge; once submitted, this information need not be repeated except as significant changes occur in the area of cover types. Cover types should be detailed enough to furnish the desired information but not so much as to obscure the general picture. Examples: spruce swamp, upland hardwoods, reverting agriculture land, bottomland hardwoods, short grass prairie, etc. Standard type symbols listed in Wildlife Management Series No. 7 should be used where possible. Figures submitted should be based on actual observations and counts on representative sample areas. Survey method used and size of sample area or areas should be indicated under Remarks.
- (3) YOUNG PRODUCED: Estimated number of young produced, based upon observations and actual counts in representative breeding habitat.
- (4) SEX RATIO: This column applies primarily to wild turkey, pheasants, etc. Include data on other species if available.
- (5) REMOVALS: Indicate total number in each category removed during the report period.
- (6) TOTAL: Estimated total number using the refuge during the report period. This may include resident birds plus those migrating into the refuge during certain seasons.
- (7) REMARKS: Indicate method used to determine population and area covered in survey. Also include other pertinent information not specifically requested.

\* Only columns applicable to the period covered should be used.

3-1753  
Form NR-3  
(June 1945)

BIG GAME

Refuge YASOO

Calendar Year 1955

(1) Species	(2) Density	(3) Young Produced	(4) Removals					(5) Losses		(6) Introductions		(7) Estimated Total Refuge Population		(8) Sex Ratio
			Hunting	For Re- stocking	Sold	For Research	Predation	Disease	Winter Loss	Number	Source	At period of Greatest use	As of Dec. 31	
Common Name	Cover types, total Acreage of Habitat	Number												
White Tailed Deer	2500 acres of bottomland hdvd and open fields											20	10	

Remarks:

Reported by Raymond R. Mcmaster

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Form NR-3 - BIG GAME

- (1) SPECIES: Use correct common name; i. e., Mule deer, black-tailed deer, white-tailed deer. It is unnecessary to indicate sub-species such as northern or Louisiana white-tailed deer.
- (2) DENSITY: Detailed data may be omitted for species occurring in limited numbers. Density to be expressed in acres per animal by cover types. This information is to be prefaced by a statement from the refuge manager as to the number of acres in each cover type found on the refuge: once submitted, this information need not be repeated except as significant changes occur in the area of cover types. Cover types should be detailed enough to furnish the desired information but not so much as to obscure the general picture. Examples: spruce swamp, upland hardwoods, reverting agriculture land, bottomland hardwoods, short grass prairie, etc. Standard type symbols listed in Wildlife Management Series No. 7 should be used where possible. Figures submitted should be based on actual observations and counts on representative sample areas. Survey method used and size of sample area or areas should be indicated under Remarks.
- (3) YOUNG PRODUCED: Estimated total number of young produced on refuge.
- (4) REMOVALS: Indicate total number in each category removed during the year.
- (5) LOSSES: On the basis of known records or reliable estimates indicate total losses in each category during the year.
- (6) INTRODUCTIONS: Indicate the number and refuge or agency from which stock was secured.
- (7) TOTAL REFUGE POPULATION: Give the estimated population of each species on the refuge at period of its greatest abundance and also as of Dec. 31.
- (8) SEX RATIO: Indicate the percentage of males and females of each species as determined from field observations or through removals.

TIMBER REMOVAL

Refuge YAZOO ..... Year 1956

Permittee	Permit No.	Unit or Location	Acreage	No. of Units Expressed in B. F., ties, etc.	Rate of Charge	Total Income	Reservations and/or Diameter Limits	Species Cut
<b>Refuge Use</b>		<b>North tr.</b>		<b>100 post</b>			<b>4 to 6 inches DBH</b>	<b>Black Locust</b>

Total acreage cut over..... Total income.....

No. of units removed B. F..... Method of slash disposal.....

Cords.....

Ties.....

**Post 100**.....