

Basic data on the protection and utilisation of wild animals in the U. S. S. R.

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THE word "protection" as used in relation to any natural resources is at the present time understood by us as signifying both *protection and rational utilisation*. Rational utilisation is carried out according to definite rules, confirmed by the head institution which is conducting and planning the exploitation of the resources in question. All wild animals and birds, including wildfowl, which inhabit the territory of the U.S.S.R., either permanently or at certain times of the year, form the state hunting stock.

According to the existing hunting rules, all citizens of the U.S.S.R. who have attained the age of 18 (16 in the case of northern nationalities) and who have in their possession a certificate giving them the right to hunt (a hunting ticket) have the right to utilise the state hunting stock. In order to receive a hunting ticket it is necessary to pass a special examination establishing a minimum knowledge of hunting and to pay an entrance fee of one rouble, a state tax of one rouble and membership fees of three roubles. By a minimum knowledge of hunting is meant a definite total amount of knowledge about (1) the rules of hunting, (2) the rules of handling firearms and (3) some information about the biology of the animals which are hunted. In the hunting rules it is stated which species of animals may not be hunted in this or that part of the U.S.S.R.

Wildfowl the hunting of which is forbidden over the whole territory of the U.S.S.R. are: all swans (*Cygnus*), eiders (*Somateria*), the Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (L.), the Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus* Sevast., the Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* Lath., the Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Pall. and the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (L.) and some others.

In a number of districts the males of the remaining species of wildfowl may be hunted in spring during a period of ten days after the time of their arrival. Autumn hunting is usually permitted from 7 p.m. on the second Saturday of August up to 30th November.

All localities inhabited by wild animals are termed hunting grounds. These are divided into: 1) hunting grounds reserved for state, co-operative and public organisations; 2) hunting grounds for general use and 3) grounds closed to hunters (reserves, sanctuaries).

In the hunting reserves there are hunting establishments which carry out various measures designed to increase the number of game animals. These measures are paid for by the organisations for which the hunting grounds are reserved. In these establishments hunting is allowed only on certain days—two or three days a week—and the number of game which can be shot is fixed.

In each republic hunting is managed by a state administration attached to the Council of Ministers of the republic. Thus, for example, in the R.S.F.S.R. this is the Chief Administration of Hunting and Reserves attached to the Council of Ministers of the Federation. Special state hunting inspectorates are set up in order to see that the rules of hunting are observed. They

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are also charged with the protection of species the hunting of which is prohibited. There are representatives of the inspectorate in each district. Besides the state inspectorate, the protection of animals is carried out by the special hunting service. by the state forest inspectorate, the public hunting inspectorate, the protection of hunting territories, the militia and by the village councils.

For the discovery of acts involving the illegal obtaining of animals a reward of 50% of the fine imposed on the offender is payable to any citizen. A resolution of the Council of Ministers forbids hunting on wintering grounds.

Scientific investigations into wildfowl are mainly centred at ornithological stations: the Oka Station, the Kandalaksha or Northern Station and the Far Eastern Station and also at a number of reserves, the Gasankuli, Astrakhan, Black Sea, Darwin, Ilmen, Azovo-Sivash, Naurzum, Kurgaldzhin and Kyzylagach and Zhuvintas Reserves. Separate investigations are carried out by the Zoological Institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and their branches.

The ringing of swans, geese and ducks is very popular in scientific investigations. The central body in charge of matters relating to ringing is the "Ringing Centre" of the Commission for the Protection of Nature attached to the State Planning Board of the U.S.S.R. Swans and the Greylag Goose are ringed with aluminium rings of the "A" series. The remaining grey geese and black geese are ringed with "B" rings and ducks of various species with "C", "D" or "E" rings.

Ring series	internal diameter	Ring dimensions width	thickness
"A"	20.0 mm	12.0 mm	1.5 mm
"A"	17.0 mm	12.0 mm	1.5 mm
"B"	14.0 mm	12.0 mm	1.2 mm
"C"	12.0 mm	10.0 mm	1.2 mm
"D"	10.0 mm	10.0 mm	1.0 mm
"E"	8.0 mm	9.0 mm	1.0 mm

Wildfowl are ringed both during moult and as young birds. In the ringing returns the age of each bird ringed is recorded. The different age groups are ringed in approximately the same numbers. The total number of wildfowl ringed annually amounts to about 10-12,000. The percentage of recoveries averages from 6-8% to 12%. Nets into which the birds are driven are usually used for catching. In addition "shooting" nets* are used at the Oka Ornithological Station and also clap nets (two mounted nets of a diameter of 70-80 cm.).

The study of migration is also carried on by means of visual observations by individual ornithologists, scientific workers at the reserves who bring out every year the so called "Chronicle of Nature" (a phenological bulletin). An account of all the game obtained (including wildfowl) is kept in the hunting establishments with the object of rationally planning their numbers. Thus, for example, in 1960 in the R.S.F.S.R. 630,380 wildfowl were obtained (Materials of the Council of the Union of Hunting Societies of the R.S.F.S.R., Moscow, 1961).

At the present time in most of the republics of the Soviet Union laws for the protection of nature have been passed at sessions of the Supreme Councils.

*Presumably "cannon" or rocket-propelled nets (Ed.)

At the XXII Congress questions relating to the rational utilisation of natural resources, their protection and reproduction found a reflection in the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In the Criminal Code of the republic the penalties for violating some of the rules for the utilisation of natural resources have been increased. In agreement with the laws that have been passed steps are being taken to work out the most progressive rules for reserves, sanctuaries and nature memorials.

In school textbooks many themes are impregnated with the ideas of the protection of nature. A number of universities have special courses on the protection of nature.

The number of citizens joining voluntary societies for the protection of nature has increased considerably. Such societies are to be found not only in every republic of the U.S.S.R. but in most areas, districts and even regions.

In all republics there are commissions for the protection of nature, at the head of which stands the Commission for the Protection of Nature attached to the State Planning Board of the U.S.S.R. Every year these commissions convene all-union conferences at which further measures of nature protection are worked out. The reports of these conferences are published.

Thus in recent years much has been done for nature protection but much yet remains to be done. Cases of poaching still occur, including the poaching of wildfowl. This sort of thing is due to the difficulties of organising protection on such a huge territory as that of the U.S.S.R. and to survivals of the old predatory attitude towards the abundance of wild life in the country. At the present time enlightenment grows not daily but hourly and education and the pressure of public opinion will, without doubt, lead in the future to the complete liquidation of this evil.

