

Hunting In Mattamuskeet Gone From Boom To Bust

By Jim Dean

Lake Mattamuskeet used to be one of the best Canada goose hunting spots in the world, but the lake has gone from boom to bust in the past decade. Water-fowl hunters are keenly aware of this sad situation, but not everyone knows why the goose population at Mattamuskeet has declined so sharply.

Mattamuskeet's goose problem is the subject of a rather extensive article in the July issue of Wildlife in North Carolina. The article has been written by North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission Waterfowl Biologist Jack Donnelly, U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist Otto Florschütz and Mattamuskeet Refuge Manager John Davis.

These men have studied Mattamuskeet's problems for a long time, and they tell what has happened, why and also what might be done to help. In short, the article is a "must" reading for every waterfowl enthusiast.

Space is not available to outline all the information in the article, but the findings can be highlighted.

Following the establishment of Mattamuskeet as a wildlife refuge in 1934, the goose population steadily increased. From 1940 to 1948, the wintering population fluctuated between 30,000 to 50,000 geese. Then, in 1949, the

goose population began to increase again until, by 1959, the lake's wintering population peaked at a whopping 144,000 geese. Soon, hunting became a major industry for Hyde County, and the lake became known as the goose hunting capital of the world. Unfortunately, since 1959, the goose population has declined sharply until there is now only a remnant flock. Last winter, only about 7,000 geese wintered at the lake.

Surprisingly, the total population of Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway has increased at the same time that Mattamuskeet's population has declined. Since 1951, the Atlantic Flyway's population has increased from some 495,000 birds to roughly 1,000,000 in 1972. In 1972, Maryland alone had 462,000 birds, or nearly as many as the entire flyway in 1951.

Therefore, while wintering flocks south of Virginia have fallen, they have increased greatly in the Delmarva area (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia). They have also increased in Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts.

There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the most important is that farming practices have changed both in the northeast and in the south. In the Delmarva area, corn is being planted in abundance where once vegetable

farming was the major crop. Meanwhile, North Carolina's corn and soybean production declined while vegetable farming increased. Also, new grain harvesting techniques have left barren fields in the winter.

From a goose's point of view, stopping up north makes sense. Why fly farther for less food?

The biologists also point out that excessive hunting pressure at Lake Mattamuskeet contributed to the decline. Hunter harvest was high during the 1960's, and adding to this pressure was an extension—by law, not Commission or Federal regulation—of the hunting hours from sunrise to sunset. Previously, hunting stopped at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. During the mid-60's the season was extended by Federal authorities, and the bag limit raised from two to three geese. To counter this, large flocks of geese flew to the fields to feed only at night. Others left to feed in areas where pressure was not so great. Most, however, began to stop farther north for the winter where food was plentiful and hunting pressure was less severe.

Hunters have also learned to encourage farmers to use agriculture practices to encourage geese to stop in the Delmarva area, and the populations there are increasing, and will

no doubt continue to do so.

The conclusion reached by Donnelly, Florschütz and Davis is that the previous bonanza in goose hunting at Lake Mattamuskeet, Hyde County and the entire south is gone forever, largely because of changing farming practices.

But, they express hope that with the proper management, the population can be built again to higher levels than now exist. Their recommendations include reduction of hunter harvest, and some biologists suggest even closing the lake to hunting for a few years.

They also recommend the leasing or acquisition of several thousand acres of private farm land adjacent to the refuge where corn and other crops could be planted to

feed geese. A cooperative farm program to increase the food for geese is also suggested, along with the development of "decoy" flocks to attract geese.

The biologists make no guarantees, even if all these things are done, but they say quite candidly that if these things are not done, there will be no hope at all for the future of the Canada goose at Mattamuskeet.



Airman Rosetta Nixon, daughter of Mrs. Irene Nixon of Rt. 1, Hertford, N.C., has been assigned to Keesler AFB, Miss., after completing Air Force basic training. During her six weeks at the Air Training Command's Lackland AFB, Tex., she studied the Air Force mission, organization and customs and received special instruction in human relations. The airman has been assigned to the Technical Training Center at Keesler for specialized training in the communications field. Airman Nixon is a 1972 graduate of Perquimans High School. The airman's father, Mason Nixon, also resides in Hertford.

Legals

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION
Having qualified as Executor of the estate of Lloyd A. Chenoweth, deceased, late of Perquimans County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at P.O. Box 245 Hertford, N.C. on or before the 25th day of January 1974 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.
This 14th day of June 1973
Walter G. Edwards
Executor of Lloyd A. Chenoweth, Dec'd.

First Golf NC Coastline

By Jim Tyler

This is the time of year jellyfish are numerous along the tarheel coast. How big is the problem? According to a year long study report, for 1972, by Dr. Frank Schwartz and Dr. A. L. Chestnut of the University of North Carolina, Institute of Marine Sciences, Morehead City, jellyfish reach peak numbers here June through October. They found jellyfish the other months but not near as many or as widespread.

Besides temperature, the amount of salt in the water has a lot to do with where you find jellyfish. If the water is salty, like it is in the ocean and near the inlets, and in the narrow sounds south of Pamlico Sound, there is not a jellyfish problem. And if the water is too fresh, like in Albemarle and Currituck Sounds, there is no problem. Consequently, the two scientists found the half-salty waters of Pamlico Sound and the mouth of the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers the jellyfish country, especially during warm weather.

They found eight species of jellyfish during the year. One species, Chrysaora quinquecirrha, was by far the most abundant. All the jellyfish can sting; some mild, some severe. And they found two species of Ctenophore jellyfish here (no tentacles, small, egg-shaped, clear) which are harmless to man. Ctenophores do pose an aggravation to commercial men by clogging nets and making it worrisome to cull the good from the bad in their catches. The dreaded jellyfish, the purple Portuguese man-o-war, is an offshore species of the nearby Gulf Stream and is apparently blown to shore by northeast winds. During 1972 the greatest incident of Portuguese medical stings were reported in April from Morehead City to Wrightsville Beach.

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Thoughts Of Wildlife Protector

By JIM DEAN

In North Carolina, game wardens are called Wildlife Protectors. There are 188 of them, and they cover 100 counties in cars, boats and airplanes.

What do you think of them? If your pastime is poaching, it's not hard to guess. But what if you're one of the more than a million citizens in the state who hunt and fish legally?

C.J. Overton, assistant chief of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's Division of Protection (that means game wardens) believes that the public image of Wildlife Protectors is generally good, though it tends to vary from individual to individual.

"One of the problems," says Overton, "is that some people do not understand either the duties or the responsibilities of a Wildlife Protector."

"A Wildlife Protector is not a trained naturalist or biologist, though many of them have such interests," continued Overton. "A Wildlife Protector is a law officer responsible for keeping game and fish laws from being violated."

"It is," says Overton, "somewhat like expecting a highway patrolman to be an expert automobile mechanic. He may be, but not because it's necessarily part of his main job."

How, the question was asked, does this create a problem?

"Well, some people do not understand why a Wildlife Protector doesn't usually spend a lot of time chewing the fat about fishing or hunting with people who are getting their licenses checked," said Overton.

have an air of professionalism. There are dangers in being overly friendly when you are checking a man or woman you have never met.

"One of the problems is that you may find a violation, and if you have been too palsy-walsy, the relationship will certainly be more difficult if a citation must be written. If a protector has been polite, but professional, this problem does not occur as often.

"Then, of course, we know that many people have very few chances to hunt or fish, and they don't want to be disturbed any longer than necessary," said Overton. "Therefore, we ask our Wildlife Protectors to conduct their checks as quickly and as thoroughly as possible."

Isn't there also another reason for adopting a professional bearing?

"Yes," said Overton. "Remember that during six or seven months of the year, our Wildlife Protectors are checking people that are

armed. "We've had men shot, some killed. By conducting our checks with professionalism, we tend to keep our guard up and treat everyone alike. You never know when the next man or woman you meet might pull a gun. It happens often enough, and we feel that the chances of this happening are lessened if we act like law officers—which we are—rather than like hypocritical long-lost buddies."

Another question Overton is often asked is why Wildlife Protectors do not issue warnings for violations.

"The laws that govern us are different," Overton explained. "We have no authority under the law to make such judgements. In other words, we can't tell someone we'll let them off this time."

"We are charged by law to issue a citation whenever we observe a violation, even when the violation is a small one. We cannot judge whether there might be extenuating circumstances.

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