

1925 to 20

GAME RESOURCES OF OREGON.

Are these state assets, to be handled from a scientific and business basis of as a political football?

As a business resource the game birds and animals that live in our fields and forests, and the fish that live in our streams, are worth millions of dollars to the citizens of Oregon. Are we burning the Game candle at both ends? Are game conditions improving or failing? Is the state getting its money's worth for every four hundred thousand dollars expended annually? Have we no proof that when we buy thirty million fish eggs for one hundred thousand dollars that trout and salmon in our streams are more abundant now than they were last year, or two years ago, or that they are really holding their own? Are we merely counting our eggs and trusting to luck as to food fish in our streams?

We all know that game in the fields and forests and fish in the streams of Oregon were abundant when our forefathers came here years ago. A great change of conditions have vitally affected game of all kinds, and for the settlement and development of the country it is impossible to expect these same conditions to remain. In the pasturing of domestic stock and the fencing of large areas everyone knows that in the very nature of things deer, elk, antelope and others must be driven out, yet there are many wild sections of the state today where even big game animals may live without approaching the point of final disappearance. The pasturing of great flocks of sheep has undoubtedly exterminated mountain sheep in our state, has driven out antelope, deer and elk in eastern Oregon. Domestic flocks are of more importance to the citizens of Oregon than wild flocks, yet it is also important to see to it that in at least a few wild sections of

the state that big game animals, at least a certain number of them, may have a chance to live and survive.

There are certain vital problems in the protection of our state game resources that are easily overlooked. It is easy for the average person to think that we can accomplish everything by the making of a few laws. It is the height of absurdity to think that we can keep game abundant by the making of game laws. The past twenty years we have perhaps had two thousand game statutes written on the books in the various parts of the country, and yet game is gradually disappearing. Season's bag limits and other such things are of course important, but these are not as fundamental as some other things. For instance, if we want to save the fish in our streams, the most important problem today, and the one that receives least attention, is the continued pollution of our public waters. The filth of factories and cities if scattered on the highways and byeways would spread disease among people. Vast quantities of this filth is turned into public waters and here, hidden from view, it spreads disease not only to people but to the fish that live in these waters. At the rate population is growing in Oregon it is merely a question of time when these conditions alone will destroy food fish if some action is not taken. Here is a clear case where laws are of no value. Legislature of Oregon has written into the code that it is unlawful to cast the sewage of cities, the waste of mills and factories, into the streams, yet this law is violated every day of the year in all parts of Oregon, and we pay officers to enforce this law, but the laws are not enforced.

The vital point today in the future protection of water fowl is that they must have places to breed as well as places to feed and rest. Some of these have been supplied but they are not sufficient. We need more water fowl refuges. Game refuges have been established

in past years but have been utterly useless because funds have not been supplied for their maintenance. It is easy enough to establish game refuges but it is a difficult thing to properly protect game on these reserves. The last session of the Legislature established an antelope reservation in southern Oregon. The important factor in the protection of antelope is not only to protect them from wanton hunters but to see that they have something to eat. Of what permanent value can these antelope reservations be when there is no regulation of grazing whatever and large numbers of herds of alien sheep owners are allowed to use all the pasturage and antelopes are driven out by starvation. How do we profit if we prevent sportsmen killing antelope and then let the flocks of alien sheep herders destroy the pasturage and continue to reduce the antelope numbers by starvation?

In conclusion, are we destroying native species by the introduction of foreign species that are not as good food or as attractive as the ones we now have? Are we trying to save water fowl and at the same time destroy their feeding and breeding places? Are we trying to stock our streams and keep fish abundant and at the same time destroy vast numbers by the diseases attendant upon stream pollution?

The report of the Game Commission shows that sixty million trout have been released in the streams of the state during the past two years. If even a part of these grew to any size our streams would be so full with fish that anyone could go out and catch the limit with little trouble. Of course in the protection of trout anyone knows that as it is carried on today it is purely a system of numbers, so following the old adage of counting your chickens before they are hatched. If there have been sixty million trout fry released in the

streams of Oregon during the past two years it shows that the artificial system of handling trout and the whole hatchery system is a gigantic failure. Anyone who is familiar with conditions knows that these are purely reports, and the sole idea is to boost these reports just a little each year to make the sportsmen feel that they are still satisfied to pay in two or three hundred thousand dollars each year.

I do not want to give the impression that some of the hatcheries of the state are not turning out a very fair number of fish and that in some streams the angling conditions have remained about the same during the past few years. The point is for the vast amount of money expended conditions should improve more, even with the greater number of people visiting streams that are made easily accessible through automobiles over good roads. What does it profit if we spend a hundred thousand dollars in stocking the streams and then permit conditions to continue where ten fish out of a hundred are caught and used for food and fifty out of a hundred are destroyed by the disease of pollution and interference of their natural spawning ground.

It must be remembered that large numbers of trout in our streams are there because of the natural spawning of wild fish. I know of certain streams that have been fished year after year and numbers seem to remain about the same through natural spawning, because in these particular streams no fish have been planted. There are no streams in Oregon that are kept up purely by the work of hatcheries. In large streams like the Mackenzie, the Rogue, the Deschutz and others, the hatcheries cannot take the entire credit for fish caught in these streams, because large numbers of fish are undoubtedly produced from natural propagation.

What proof have we that out of a hundred million fingerlings that are supposed to have been planted from the hatcheries ~~that~~ a liberal proportion ^{of the} ~~trout are~~ in our streams today are really artificially propogated? Natural propogation is continued season after season. If upon the liberation of ten thousand fingerling trout in a certain stream a thousand of these were marked, and then an effort made to have sportsmen who angle in this stream watch, and keep check of the fish caught, we would have some proof that if even ten or twenty of these marked fish were caught later on we were getting at least some return from the vast amount of money put into hatchery work. Yet year after year the money ^{is} spent without any business system or scientific method to prove that something is really accomplished or that it is a gigantic failure.



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