



CANADA

## REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 107

### CANADIAN WILDLIFE

(Prepared in the Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa)

As Autumn approaches in North America, as the leaves begin to change colour and the crops begin to ripen, the waterfowl hunter takes out his shotgun in the secure knowledge that the ducks and geese will soon begin their annual migration to the south. How many ducks will there be? This, too, is known in fairly accurate terms. The scientists of the Canadian Wildlife Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and a number of co-operating agencies have been on the job all summer gathering data on the number of ducks on the nesting grounds, the number of ducklings hatched, and the number surviving the first few difficult and dangerous weeks of life. They are thus equipped to forecast the prospects for good hunting.

The co-operative approach to North American waterfowl studies is possible because of the foresight of the Canadian and United States Governments, which, recognizing the international status of wild birds, signed the Migratory Birds Treaty in 1916. Co-operation between the two nations is essential, since the major nesting grounds are on the Canadian Prairies and the major wintering grounds on the southern coasts of the United States. The Treaty made it possible to protect the birds through the year.

#### Rescuing the Whooping Crane

Protection came almost too late for one species, the whooping crane. This crane is the tallest bird in North America, standing almost six feet with a wing spread of eight feet. The number of cranes reached a low of 15 in 1941; since then the species has held its own, but the maximum number in the wild has been 36. In addition, six are held in zoological gardens. Constant efforts have been made to save the species from extinction through protective laws and education. The response of the people of Canada and the United States has been very encouraging. The press has carried frequent stories of the cranes' struggle for survival, and the public has shown a lively, sustained interest in them.

Wildlife has not always had this degree of public interest. The last passenger pigeon died in 1914. The great auk became extinct about 1850. Several Canadian mammals were reduced to very small numbers at one time - the buffalo (more properly, bison), the antelope of the Prairies and the musk-ox of the Arctic tundra all suffered from over-hunting and came to the very brink of complete extinction. Wise management has increased the numbers of all those mammals to a level where they are now considered safe for continued existence.