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OF THE
COMMISSIONERS
ON
FISHERIES AND GAME
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Moving Pictures of Heath Hen. — In April of this year moving pictures of the heath hen and its characteristic mating antics were made by Mr. Norman McClintock of 504 Amberson Avenue, Pittsburg, Pa., for use in his lecture work throughout the country.

Myles Standish State Forest.

This State forest is a tract of about 7,000 acres, located $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles from South Carver and about 6 miles from Tremont, the nearest railroad station. A State road runs to South Carver, and continues thence as a dirt road.

Parts of the land are covered with either scrub oaks or pitch pines in various stages of decay, the land having been swept several times by forest fires. The northern and western parts are the most heavily wooded, with pitch pines of fairly good growth; the eastern part more level, sparsely wooded.

Within the boundaries of the reservation are numerous natural ponds varying in size from 50 acres down to water holes or catch basins, — bowl-shaped depressions, probably formed in glacial times by the melting of masses of ice around which sand and other material had gathered. The larger ones as a rule have sandy bottoms and little vegetation except reeds along the shore; the smaller, many of which dry up in summer, have usually muddy bottoms, and contain practically no life except frogs and turtles.

A brief description is given of the largest ponds: —

College Pond, 50 acres, is a slightly body of water with clear water, sandy bottom, and gradual slope to deep water; good bass, perch and pickerel fishing.

Charge Pond, 15 acres, has a sandy bottom, is fed by springs and affords good fishing.

Long Pond, 20 acres, has a mud bottom, with quantities of lilies and rushes; a good duck pond, and affords good pickerel and yellow perch fishing.

Barretts Pond, 11 acres, has a sandy bottom, deep water, containing yellow perch and horned pout.

Round Pond, $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is not deep, but never dries up; muddy bottom with abundance of rushes and lilies.

Bumps Pond, $24\frac{1}{2}$ acres, has a muddy bottom full of lilies and rushes, and when not frozen there are always ducks in the pond. It is one of the best in the State for black and wood ducks.

Three-cornered Pond, 11 acres, is also a good duck pond, having shallow water with plenty of feed.

Little College Pond, 3 acres, has no fish; muddy bottom with quantities of lilies.

Rocky Pond, 23½ acres, Wiggin Pond, 26 acres, and Clew Pond, 11½ acres, are only partly within the reservation.

In addition, there are eight water holes varying in size from 1 to 4 acres, all of which are frequented by ducks.

East Head Reservoir, the largest body of water (82½ acres), is owned by private individuals, and was made by cranberry bog owners for flowing their bogs for early and late frosts, or winter flowage. The shores of this reservoir are covered with low shrubs and a good many tangles of briars. It is well suited naturally for duck breeding, but before it can be used successfully for this purpose the great numbers of large turtles which now infest it must be eliminated, for these are deadly enemies to ducklings.

The only buildings in the reservation are an old farmhouse, a new bungalow and a large stable.

In 1907 Mr. C. W. Dimick of Boston became interested in this tract of land, regarding it as a most suitable area on which to establish a private shooting preserve. After an investigation of the possibilities of the tract, a number of others joined with Mr. Dimick for the purchase of the property, notably John E. Thayer, Bayard Thayer, Clement E. Houghton, Paul Butler, Dr. C. G. Weld, Thomas W. Lawson, John L. Saltonstall, Charles H. Taylor, Jr., and Percival Lowell.

Mr. Dimick endeavored at first to work out plans for an association with a larger membership to actively operate the property as a game propagation plant, but being at the same time at work with others in forming the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, and becoming one of the original directors of that association, he felt that a satisfactory solution would be found in having the property taken over by the association, which was done by a lease signed in 1912. In 1915, on account of unusual expenses incident to work on the migratory bird law, the association did but little at the reservation. In 1915 the owners canceled the lease and sold the property to the Massachusetts State Forest Commission, which on



Dec. 7, 1915, had voted to acquire the tract for reforestation operations. The purchase was completed in February, 1916, and the land thereafter was designated as the Myles Standish State Forest.

When the property was taken by the State it was apparent that the forest did not contain as much bird and animal life, except vermin, as should be expected of an area of this size. The trees were in poor condition, and the whole area was overrun with foxes, skunks, cats, rats and predatory birds. Conferences were held between the State Forest Commission and the Fish and Game Commission, and plans laid for the care of the forests by the former, and the restoration of game by the latter. On Sept. 8, 1916, Fred R. Cushing, formerly connected with the Sharon Bird Farm, was put in charge of the place as deputy and caretaker.

The work as contemplated by the Fish and Game Commission involved: —

1. Thorough posting.
2. Patrol against poaching.
3. Elimination of vermin, — foxes, skunks, stray cats, hawks and owls, as well as the turtles in the ponds.
4. Providing food for the birds and animals by setting out nursery beds of fruit-bearing shrubs, to be transplanted as required to the best localities for attracting the birds in summer, and to provide feed for such as stay through the winter; planting patches of grain in suitable parts of the reservation, to be left standing to furnish food and shelter for birds, and to attract deer and rabbits; for the ducks, pond lilies and wild rice to be planted in the muck-bottomed ponds, and wild celery in quiet spots and sheltered places in the large, deep ponds.
5. Measures to provide more of the sort of cover that birds prefer, namely, reeds and heavy grasses to accommodate the numbers of black ducks which stop on the reservation for food and water, but at present do not stay to breed, and tangles of bull briars in suitable places to make cover in which quail can take refuge from their enemies.
6. Examination of the ponds, including soundings; stocking with the most suitable kind of fish.

7. Putting up nesting boxes to induce the song and insectivorous birds to breed here.

8. Liberation of stock from the State game farms.

As an indication of the bird population in the reservation when the work began, it may be said that in October, 1916, there were quantities of ducks in the ponds and holes, and almost any day one or more flocks could be seen, some flocks containing as high as a couple of hundred birds. Thirty Canada geese were seen to come into one of the ponds, and they were seen the following day. Migratory birds seemed to use the reservation as a resting place in their flights.

Quail and partridge, on the contrary, appeared to be very scarce. Only 8 of the former and 6 of the latter were observed. Though but half a dozen deer were actually seen, tracks were found at all the ponds, in the roads and in the brush. One came regularly every morning to drink in the East Head Reservoir.

While the State Forest Commission was busying itself with clearing the forests and repairing the roads, the Fish and Game Commission thoroughly posted the reservation with cloth signs on substantial signboards, covering not only the outer boundaries but the crossroads and the larger ponds as well.

This work was completed before the opening of the deer season. Reports were current that in previous years hunters with both rifles and shotguns had hunted all through the reservation, and that similar plans were on foot this year. The district deputies were instructed to give special attention to the outskirts of the reservation, and the superintendent covered the territory itself. He examined thirteen hunters, only one of whom had shot a deer, about half a mile from the reservation. Only one gun was fired within the reservation, and investigation showed that the hunter secured nothing. At the salt lick near the northern line of the reservation there were no evidences of anything having been killed, though the ground was well trampled down by deer.

During the fall of 1916 applications were made to the Commission by several persons for permission to hunt foxes or trap within the boundaries of the reservation, which was gladly granted to responsible persons, covering the species it was

desired to reduce in numbers. As illustrating the number of undesirable animals on the reservation, it may be said that one trapper in 1915 took 37 foxes, 26 skunks and several weasels in that vicinity. Three permits were issued in 1916, as a result of which 8 foxes, 5 skunks, 2 rats, 2 cats and 1 large and 2 small snapping turtles were taken.

On Nov. 1, 1916, the superintendent shot a large and savage wild, hunting cat. It measured 3 feet, 5 inches, from nose to tip of tail, and weighed 22 pounds, and doubtless had been the means of destroying a large amount of game.

On Dec. 27, 1916, the superintendent tendered his resignation, which was accepted.

During 1917, owing to the lack of funds, it was financially impossible for the Board to go ahead with any constructive work. Four permits were issued in that year for fox hunting or trapping, under which 3 foxes, 3 skunks, 2 cats and 2 rats were destroyed.

In 1918 the work of restoring the Myles Standish State Forest to proper conditions was resumed along the lines laid down when the work was first undertaken. William Day, Esq., formerly superintendent of the Marthas Vineyard Reservation, was appointed caretaker and deputy, entering on his duties May 20. The cost of his salary was borne equally by the State Forest Commission and the Fish and Game Commission.

Extensive operations could not be started this year, for the superintendent did not enter on his duties until near the end of May, and his time was fully occupied in getting acquainted with the reservation, and putting the dwelling house, barn and equipment in proper condition to use.

Japanese barnyard grass, clover, buckwheat and rye were planted for winter food for the birds. Wild rice was planted in the muck-bottomed ponds, but did not grow. When the American Game Protective Association controlled this reservation a ton was planted, with the same result, doubtless because there are here none of the sluggish streams in which this rice thrives. Trials will be made with wild celery and other duck foods.

The superintendent reports the amount of vermin reasonably well reduced. There are some foxes, but probably not as many as in other sections of the State; also some skunks. Hawks are not so numerous as on Marthas Vineyard, and no great

horned owls have been seen as yet. Turtles are present in large numbers, as nothing had been done to keep them down. The superintendent this year has shot 16 large ones with the rifle and destroyed 130 eggs. The owner of the East Head Reservoir has given the use of it for duck breeding work, but until it is free of turtles it will not be advisable to hatch out many ducks. As a test to learn what chance the birds will have against vermin, a hen was set on White Rock eggs, and she and her seven chicks were allowed to run at large. They were not shut up night or day, and have grown to maturity. The same experiment was tried with a clutch of bantam chicks, with the same result. On August 27, 31 pheasant chicks were hatched. After two days the pens were taken from the coops and the chicks allowed to roam with the hens. Two chicks died and 29 were raised.

The superintendent has killed the following undesirable animals during the year: 3 red-tailed hawks, 2 marsh hawks, 1 sharp-shinned hawk, two cats, 1 skunk and the above-mentioned turtles. Six permits for trapping vermin were issued during the year, as a result of which there were destroyed 19 foxes, 10 skunks, 4 snapping turtles, 2 weasels and 6 cats.

In addition to the 29 pheasant chicks which were hatched from eggs on the reservation, there have been liberated by the Commission 48 mallard ducks, 43 wood ducks and 10 ring-neck pheasants.

At present deer are very numerous, have gotten into the crops being raised for bird feed, and have visited the superintendent's garden regularly. There are a few partridge, but no pheasants other than the ones liberated; very few quail; a few rabbits in some sections. Black and wood ducks are very numerous and breed on the reservation. During October and November they were fed with the Louisiana rice feed, to hold them here until the ponds freeze up.

The reservation has been patrolled regularly early and late, and on moonlight nights as well during the open season. No violations have been found, and no indications that the law has been broken. With the coming of next spring, the preliminary work having been accomplished, the constructive work as laid out can be prosecuted without hindrance.