

**MICHIGAN GAME AND FISH.
BIENNIAL REPORT 1915-1916.
STATE GAME, FISH AND FOREST
FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE PUBLIC
DOMAIN COMMISSION**

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Michigan Game and Fish. Biennial Report 1915-1916. State Game, Fish and Forest Fire
Department of the Public Domain Commission by Various

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VARIOUS

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MICHIGAN

GAME AND FISH

BIENNIAL REPORT
1915-1916

STATE GAME, FISH AND FOREST FIRE DEPARTMENT

OF THE

PUBLIC DOMAIN COMMISSION



LANSING, MICHIGAN
WYNKOOP HALLENBECK CRAWFORD CO., STATE PRINTERS
1917

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

To the Public Domain Commission of the State of Michigan:

Gentlemen—Pursuant to the requirements of Section 5, Act 290, Public Acts of 1909, known as the Act creating the Public Domain Commission, I have the honor to transmit herewith the game and fish report of this department for the current year, submitting and signing same in conformance with Act 28, Public Acts of 1915.

Very respectfully,

WILLIAM R. OATES,

State Game, Fish and Forest Fire Commissioner.

HON. WOODBRIDGE N. FERRIS, *Governor:*

Sir—We have the honor to transmit herewith a report of the Game, Fish and Forest Fire Department of the Public Domain Commission for the year, 1915-1916.

Very respectfully,

JUNIUS E. BEAL,

Member Board of Regents of the University.

ALFRED J. DOHERTY,

Member of State Board of Agriculture.

ORAMEL B. FULLER,

Auditor General.

WILLIAM KELLY,

Member of Board of Control, College of Mines.

FRED L. KEELER,

Superintendent of Public Instruction.

COLEMAN C. VAUGHAN,

Secretary of State.



FOREWORD.

Now that *education*, which has been a supplementary policy to the police wardenship of this department since the first days of my incumbency, has brought the people of the state to a realization of the value of its wild life and the necessity for conserving same, it is my conviction that the opportune, logical and imperative time has come for earnest consideration of *ways and means* for the maintenance and increase of our game, birds, fish and forests.

For five years our departmental reports have been largely in the nature of argumentative appeals to the people. Sentiment in the State of Michigan, finally established as an almost unanimous desire, devoid of individual selfishness, for employment of measures which will conduce to the preservation and possible increase of useful wild life, affords a basic advantage in securing proper regulations which should be utilized, now.

I am therefore submitting, through your commission, to the legislature of the State of Michigan my earnest recommendation for certain regulations which I believe represent the desire of the sportsmen, the commercial fishermen and the public in general; recommendations based on determinations of the best American authorities on wild life conservation.

BLANKET LAW LACKS ELASTICITY ESSENTIAL FOR SCIENTIFIC CONSERVATION.

The different conditions of climate and topography make it impossible to conserve our game and fish along scientific lines by strict adherence to one general or blanket law for the whole state.

Essential and important, to afford the game we have left a chance to reproduce and redistribute itself, is to vest the game and fish department of the Public Domain Commission with discretionary authority to declare certain zones of territory closed for a time for the killing or taking of certain or all kinds of game fish; to regulate size of net mesh to be used at certain times or in certain waters, but only in a manner tending to conserve the fish supply of such waters; to curtail or close the regular open season in zones or in the state as a whole; to curtail or close the regular open season for the taking of commercial fish, where local conditions of breeding in Michigan waters of the Great Lakes necessitate zone divisional regulations for best measures of conservation.

RUFFED GROUSE DEPLETED IN 1916.

Continued inclemency of weather, 1915, prevented breeding of ruffed grouse or "partridge." This left us in 1916 with about one-fifth of the birds which normal conditions would have given us and an urgent necessity for conserving the old breeders. Yet, under the present system, nothing effective could be done to stop the regular season killing until the convening of the legislature, 1917.

If we had been empowered to stop the killing of ruffed grouse in the fall of 1915, we would have continued a close season on them for several years if necessary.

Nature has endowed useful wild life with a natural sagacity to defend itself against most of its enemies. There is one enemy against which it is helpless—selfish man. Keep him away for awhile from the scarce game and it will become plentiful. The millions of passenger pigeons which we saw in this country only a few years ago were not exterminated by vermin, but by man.

As far as bird life is concerned I believe that Nature's principles are superior to man's. As Nature reforests the land if we keep the fires out, so will bird life reproduce itself, if we keep the hunter out.

Proper exercise of discretionary power to restrict the killing of game at any time or place will not only conserve the game we have left, but would increase the supply.

The "zone" idea would not as a rule mean the absolute closing of season on all kinds of game even in limited areas.

We might close a certain territory on ruffed grouse and still allow the killing of rabbits, woodcock, rail, etc., giving the local sportsman a chance to hunt some game while conserving other game according to its needs.

We should have discretionary power to take all action necessary for the protection and increase of game.

Some contend that delegation of such authority as I cite is unconstitutional. Is it any more so than delegation of authority to other commissions to perform discretionary acts? I believe that the Public Domain Commission is authorized by law to exercise its discretion in exchange of lands. The railway commission is empowered to exercise discretionary authority in certain cases.

Game or fish zones cannot be determined by artificial lines without considering natural conditions. The federal law on migratory birds, providing for their protection in certain areas during their nesting periods, is extension of this zone idea on a national scale.

The best conservation policy is to stop the killing as conditions warrant such restriction. It can be effectively worked out by enlarging the scope of the refuge plan, to embrace larger areas or districts depending on faunal, geographic and climatic conditions.

CONSERVATIONISTS APPROVE DISCRETIONARY PLAN.

Indicating the attitude of American Conservation authorities and of the People of the State of Michigan as reflected in Michigan publications, I am respectfully submitting the written and published views which support this policy together with citations of laws of other states and Canadian provinces which have vested game executives with discretionary power.



THE "MICHIGAN" IDEA.
Fall shooting and a "two-barrel" gun.

