

# Idaho Wildlife Review

VOLUME VIII

No. 1

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY

BY

IDAHO FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT  
518 FRONT STREET  
BOISE, IDAHO

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

RAY SIMS - - - - - Bonners Ferry  
O. W. McCONNELL - - - - - Grangeville  
ARLIE JOHNSON - - - - - Boise  
R. J. HOLMES - - - - - Twin Falls  
GLEN STANGER - - - - - Idaho Falls

**Ross Leonard, Director**

## DIVISION HEADS

JAMES C. SIMPSON  
*Chief, Fisheries Management*

LEVI MOHLER  
*Chief, Game Management*

P. J. McDERMOTT, JR.  
*Chief, Conservation Enforcement*

E. K. BROWN  
*Chief, Information and Education*

R. E. HOFFMAN, *Chief Clerk*

MARSHALL EDSON, *Editor*

### NOTICE

Subscribers who change their address should notify the Fish and Game Department immediately if they wish to receive copies in the future. The Post Office Department does not forward copies and any returned to the office will automatically be taken off the subscription list.

The magazine is mailed free to Idaho residents upon request; subscription rate to non-residents is \$1.00 per year.

Entered as second class matter June 30, 1948, at the post office, Boise, Idaho, under act of August 21, 1912.

### COVER

South Fork of the Snake River upstream from the Palisades Dam site. This area will be flooded when the dam is completed.

## The Laws of Nature . . .

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse!" How many times have we heard that phrase when someone was involved with our man-made rules, regulations, statutes and ordinances?

The Laws of Nature are not promulgated by man (for which we are thankful) so would our ignorance exonerate us when we violate Nature's laws?

We are still held responsible. The thinking is presented in the introduction to John H. Storer's book, *The Web Of Life*, in one basic, simple, sentence . . . "Nature will not accept ignorance of her laws as an alibi."

Our wildlife is one small part of a huge pattern of living things. We seldom see fish, birds or animals, except when the fish is being creeled; the bird taken in the field; or the deer being carried to camp. As we have difficulty in observing wildlife, at least in quantity, we find a blank space in our understanding of their requirements for existence. Because we do not have wildlife under constant observation does not make the birds, fish and animals any different. We are to be charged with the fault because we do not always understand what is taking place.

Our lack of information and knowledge should not cause us to be discouraged. On the contrary, we should be all the more interested in finding out what is going on, and why. And, once we get a basic understanding of the pattern of life, we can do a better job of resource conservation.

As Mr. Storer so ably says it, "Many of (the secrets) can probably never be unraveled, but the basic principles of ecology are known, and on the functioning of these known principles depends the future of all human lives.

"Life is such a personal thing, wrapped up within the being of every living creature, that it is sometimes hard to realize how intimately each life is connected with a great many other lives.

"Life is a flowing stream, forever passing away, and as constantly being renewed. The energy that supplies us life is being supplied from many different sources, most of them beyond our vision or experience."

So, perhaps, with a little observation and simple reasoning, we may appreciate the problems of wildlife today. We will realize that it takes just so much food—a certain amount of space—and so much water—to enable the animals, birds and fish to survive and take their place with other living things on the earth.

To be sure, the wild creatures can get by for a while with poor cover, crowded living quarters, low water supplies and little food. But not for long. It will be only a matter of time before populations diminish. In many cases some species pass out of existence. History provides us with factual records of these happenings.

We are the ones in control—so why not accept the responsibility? The wildlife resource is at our mercy. We have the mobility, reasoning power and machinery to eradicate wildlife in short order. It's easy. But we also have the same mobility, reasoning power and machinery to conserve, protect and perpetuate the wildlife resource.

# Letters to the Editor:

## CARIBOU?

Dear Editor:

I note that caribou are listed among the game animals of Idaho, but I have never even heard of this animal in our state. I have lived here for nearly 40 years and don't recall a season on such critters. Can you give me some information about this?

Fred Olney  
Pocatello

Caribou are listed among the game animals of Idaho because they lived in North Idaho in the old days and they still migrate in and out of the upper Priest Lake drainage in small numbers.

Our authority is W. B. Davis, *The Recent Mammals of Idaho*, pp. 371-372. He states the caribou formerly occurred in northern Idaho as far south as Elk City. Quoting Merriam he states, "... A hunter named N. C. Linsley states that he and his partner killed 25 caribou on Pend Orielle River during the winter of 1888-'89."

George Bird Grinnell writes, "Thirty years ago (in the 1880's), there were a few caribou in northern Idaho . . . We have seen camps of Kootenai Indians bring into Sineauqueteen—the old crossing place of the Pend Oreille River—fresh skins which they said had been taken only a few miles north of there . . ."

## RED FISH - KOKANEE - SOCKEYE?

Editor, Wildlife Review:

What is your idea in running down the blueback salmon as a sport fish? In the article by Mr. Hauck in the May-June issue it states, "they have very little value because they do not readily take a hook." I have read where thousands of them are taken by hook and line in Idaho, and they are good eating fish. They are sometimes slow to bite, and they don't fight back like a rainbow, but they furnish a lot of fishing. Is that a misprint in the article?

"Confused"

Not a misprint—just misunderstanding, my friend. You and Mr. Hauck are talking about two different fish. The little redfish, or silverside, that you have in mind, is a landlocked relative of the big redfish that was discussed in the article. Both are often commonly called "bluebacks."

Your fine eating fish is the kokanee—the one discussed in the article is the sea-going sockeye salmon. Their appearance (other than size) and life history are alike except that the kokanee is with us all the time, while the sockeye migrates to the ocean and stays there except when it comes home to spawn and die.

You are absolutely right—the kokanee furnishes a tremendous amount of fishing in Idaho and other states—but the anadromous sockeye is here only at spawning time, during which, as Mr.

Hauck says, "they do not readily take the hook."

He is being conservative in that statement, as many people have tried fishing for them with hook and line in the conventional manner, with no luck at all.

The confusion between these two fish is due to their having the same general appearance and common names. Calling them kokanee and sockeye might help to clear the air. Scientifically speaking, the sea-going sockeye is *Oncorhynchus nerka nerka*; the kokanee is *Oncorhynchus nerka kenerlyi*.

## RABBITS, HARES OR WHATS?

Editor, Wildlife Review:

I noticed the article in the *Review* regarding jack rabbits. This led me to think about other rabbits and hares in Idaho. Could you advise me about the snowshoe rabbit and the Canadian hare?

From observation, I believe the big hare, light gray in summer, and pure white in winter, is the Canadian hare. It has a five or six inch tail, and is very good to eat, especially in late fall and winter. The true snowshoe is much smaller, with heavier hind-quarters, and large hind legs.

I saw another species while hiking across country from Midas to Edgemonth, Nev., in 1903. It was very large, and had the coloration of an antelope. I found it listed as the Antelope rabbit, and was the largest member of the rabbit family.

Yours truly,  
Paul Swayne,  
Star, Idaho

According to our authority, W. B. Davis, *The Recent Mammals of Idaho*, we have the white-tailed jack rabbit; the Rocky Mountain snowshoe rabbit; the desert black-tailed jack rabbit; two species of cottontails, and the Idaho pygmy rabbit.

From the description of what you call the Canadian hare, I believe it is our white-tailed jack rabbit. This animal is not a rabbit, but a hare, as you claim. It is the largest of the hares in Idaho with upper parts light gray, with a pure white tail. In the winter the color changes to pure white except for top of head and ears, which are fawn-colored and partly white.

They range in the foothills and higher valleys, and are active and nomadic in habit. They usually live above 5,000 foot elevations in the summer, and descend to the foothills and valleys in the winter.

The Rocky Mountain snowshoe rabbit is also a hare. It has large hind feet and relatively short ears. In summer the upper cards are brownish, overcast with dark color on the rump. In the winter it is pure white except for black-rimmed eyes and ears.

This hare usually lives in alpine meadows, streamside thickets and forests. It migrates very little. It is well adapted to rigorous winters in the mountains; the white coat making it inconspicuous, and the large, densely furred, snowshoelike hind feet carry it with ease over loose, soft snow.

## MORE ON STURGEON?

A bunch of we fellows stationed here got into an argument about fish recently. We wrote an outdoor magazine and they referred us to your department.

It started when one fellow made a brash statement about a fish caught in the Snake River near Twin Falls. He said it was so big they had to pull it out with a team of horses, and supposed to weigh around 760 pounds.

Now, I'll admit this sounds fantastic, but since that time we found that sturgeon weighing around 1800 pounds had been caught near the mouth of the Columbia and from the Fraser River in British Columbia. Now that big fish thing seems settled—but did they actually pull fish from the Snake River using horses?

Cpl. Daniel Hill  
Fort Bragg, N.C.

I thought it was about time for another Sturgeon letter, Danny, as nearly a month had passed without an inquiry.

Yes, they did pull large sturgeon from the river with either a team, or one horse as the case may be, depending upon availability and weight of the fish. We have a photo of a sturgeon caught near the mouth of the Weiser River in 1898. It weighed approximately 1200 pounds, and would certainly take horses to drag it onto the bank.

## SALMON EGGS

Sirs:

While fishing Salmon River last year I saw guides sprinkle white powder on fresh eggs taken from female fish they caught. Could you advise me what this powder contains?

Marion Wright  
Milford, Utah

We have checked with our salmon egg preserving authority, and here is what he tells us.

Borax is used if the eggs are to be kept fresh for a week or so. Application of borax gives off a milky fluid when the eggs hit the water, and this seems to attract fish. A mixture of borax and (of all things!) powdered sugar, is used to make the eggs tougher and last longer.

Get a stout wooden box. Put in a layer of salt; a layer of eggs; a layer of salt, etc., until you run out of material. Have small holes drilled in the bottom of the box to permit draining. The eggs cure and will last indefinitely.