



Mosquitoes and Ducks

CREATORS of watery refuges for ducks and other forms of aquatic wildlife should take heed lest they raise malaria mosquitoes along with the ducks, warned Dr. L. L. Williams, Jr., of the U. S. Public Health Service, speaking before the Third Annual North American Wildlife Conference.

Much of the Midwest was once malaria country, Dr. Williams stated. In the course of settlement and development of agriculture the old breeding waters of the mosquitoes were drained. Now the program for the restoration of American wildlife calls for the development of many new ponds and marshes where wildfowl, fish, and other water-using creatures may feed and breed.

If these refuges are near human habitations, especially if they are in areas used for camping or resort purposes, a very few human malaria carriers might equip the "right" kind of mosquitoes for serious trouble-making, the speaker pointed out. He added that something of this kind has already occurred in several places.

Dr. Williams' discussion was one contribution in a very lively panel discussion of the whole mosquito control prob-

lem, in which his co-participants were Clarence Cottam of the U. S. Biological Survey, Dr. F. C. Bishopp of the U. S. Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, and William Vogt of the National Association of Audubon Societies. General discussion from the floor followed, and was at times quite vigorous.

The principal bone of contention was over the question, to drain or not to drain. Nobody had a good word to say for the mosquito, but many of the friends of wildlife feel that drainage as practiced at present is destroying great areas that have in the past been dependable providers of sport and food.

Mr. Cottam pointed out that in the coastal area from New Hampshire to Maryland a total of 30,000 miles of drainage ditch has been dug, with an additional 36,000 miles in the South. Much of this, he believed, was unnecessary.

Unrestricted drainage not only removes the water that wildfowl like and fish must have; it also upsets the whole biological balance. As the soil dries out the marsh grasses and other good food plants perish, to be replaced with weed species that will not support wildlife.

Small forms of lower animal life, used as food by wildfowl, also disappear.

Use of oil to smother mosquito larvae came in for condemnation second only to that bestowed on excessive drainage. It was pointed out that equally effective mosquito control can be achieved by spreading Paris green, pyrethrum powder, and other insecticides. In rebuttal to this it was urged that for many large areas where control is needed these methods are too costly.

However, differences do not appear to be beyond reconciliation, the floor discussions showed.

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