

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

**SALTON SEA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**BRAWLEY, CALIFORNIA**

**September 22 to October 31, 1940**

**Submitted by**

**LUTHER C. GOLDMAN  
Jr. Refuge Manager**

**Note: Since the author did not return to the Salton Sea Refuge from Parker, Arizona, until September 22, this report covers only the last 39 days in the August-October quarter.**

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## I

GENERAL WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather conditions were more normal during September of this year (as compared with last September, when six inches of rain fell during 48 hours). Imperial Valley received a good rain on the 11th of September, when 1.37 inches fell during 24 hours. October of this year was comparatively warmer by  $7.2^{\circ}$  over last October. Only .08 inches of rainfall was recorded for October, 1940.

Following is given the weather for the months of September and October:

September

Highest temp.---- $113^{\circ}$	Average high---- $102.4^{\circ}$	Precipitation-- $1.59''$
Lowest temp.----- $61^{\circ}$	Average low----- $70.4^{\circ}$	6 cloudy days

October

Highest temp.---- $102^{\circ}$	Average high---- $94.8^{\circ}$	Precipitation-- $.08''$
Lowest temp.----- $48^{\circ}$	Average low----- $59.5^{\circ}$	1 cloudy day

## II

WILDLIFE1. WATERFOWL

Very few ducks were noted during the last week in September and the first week in October. Little bunches of green-winged and cinnamon teal were scattered over the Salton Sea Refuge, and some shovelers were in evidence. The most abundant duck on the Refuge prior to the middle of October was the ruddy. Approximately 2000 of these birds were observed feeding in the shallow Sea water. One flock of white-fronted geese were heard flying toward the Salton Sea on the night of September 24. These were the first geese noted since the author's return to the Salton Sea Refuge. Large numbers of ducks did not begin to arrive until October 13th. There was an influx of birds as the duck shooting got under way on the 16th of October and for several days thereafter. Perhaps excessive shooting farther north drove the ducks south. The main flight that winters on the Refuge had not gotten in by the 31st of October.

The increase in numbers of ducks over last year has been noticeable. Mr. Russell Reedy, (Refuge Manager of the State Game Refuge on the Alamo River, just 3 miles south of Calipatria) compared his figures (on widgeon and pintail that concentrate at his refuge) with those of last year. He found 50,000 ducks at his place on the 18th of October, compared with only 2,000 last year on this date. On the 20th of October of 1939, he had approximately 10,000, as compared to about 50,000 on the same date for 1940. This would indicate either that the ducks came down in greater numbers earlier

than last year, or that they were on schedule and have increased in number over the last year by 500%. This is a very high percentage of increase, but hunters' bags are larger than last year and more birds are in evidence, so that it is reasonable to assume that there has been an increase in numbers of waterfowl for Imperial Valley. More common mallards and gadwall were noticed in the hunters' bags than during this part of last year's shooting season. One fulvous tree duck was shot from a small flock of these birds on October 19th. Green-winged teal, shovelers, and pintails were the ducks most frequently shot by the hunters during October.

Geese were not as abundant during October as they were the previous October. Approximately 200 snow geese and about 150 Canada and white-fronted geese made up the goose population on the Salton Sea Refuge.

Waterfowl species observed during the period covered in this report included:

mallard	cinnamon teal	buffle-head
gadwall	shoveler	ruddy duck
baldpate	redhead	fulvous tree duck
American pintail	canvasback	Canada goose
green-winged teal	lesser scaup	lesser snow goose
		white-fronted goose

Duck crop damage was reported as early as October 6th where a few thousand ducks were feeding at night in the alfalfa fields east of Calipatria. The ducks soon located the rice fields 4 miles

west of Imperial, California, and it was necessary to assist the farmers in this section in keeping ducks out of their fields. An Army Rifle with tracer ammunition was used to good advantage here. Bombs were also used successfully.

Frequent complaints from other places were followed up, and help given in some cases. The State Game Department stationed a man here on October 26 to help the farmers with their crop damage problems. He will remain in Imperial Valley until March.

## 2. UPLAND GAME BIRDS

The Salton Sea Refuge proper supports few upland game birds because of the shortage of dry land within its boundaries. However, Imperial Valley is noted for its large numbers of doves. Thousands of them are killed here each hunting season. No increase in the dove population was noted this year over last year.

The little brown cranes were observed for the first time on October 5, on Section #8, T. 11 S., R. 13 E. near the delta at the mouth of the old channel of the Alamo River. 130 birds were counted in this flock. They are occupying the same area as last Spring, and are feeding in the fields to the southeast of the Refuge.

## 3. FISH

Mullet from the Salton Sea are working up the Alamo and New Rivers in considerable numbers apparently to spawn. Many of these fish are stranded in water that is too shallow, or jump out on silt bars where they die. Many turkey vultures are feasting on their remains.

## III

REFUGE MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Salton Sea Refuge has not acquired necessary additional land for development purposes as yet.

The Refuge rowboat #781 was painted on October 4. Later, it was hauled out to a point  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile northwest of Mullet Island, where it was kept through October.

A refuge boundary marker was put up on the south boundary of Section #4, T. 11 S., R. 13 E. The corner marker of Section #2, T. 12 S., R. 13 E. was moved north 30 feet to a point on a dike where it can be more easily seen by the many hunters visiting this area. This sign will be moved back to its original position after the hunting season is over.

## IV

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Many dove and duck hunters, full of questions, dropped in at Refuge headquarters at all hours.

Farmers suffering crop damage from ducks have called at the office frequently.

Official visits were made by the following:

Mr. L. J. Goldman, September 27- October 2; annual check-up of waterfowl in this region, and dove investigation.

*GAMLE TIT. 1/6/50*  
*6000*  
Mr. Alvin F. Elder, Law enforcement, and aid to rice growers in duck depredation control.

Mr. Robert Hart, October 26-, State Game Department, duck depredation control.

Mr. H. C. Mackey, County Warden, law enforcement.