

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

Acadia Copy
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MHR. M42
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TO : Superintendent, Acadia

DATE: 2/25/65

FROM : Regional Biologist (Wildlife Management)

SUBJECT: Long Range Wildlife Management Plan

Enclosed in duplicate is a draft of a Long Range Wildlife Management Plan for Acadia. It will be appreciated if you and your staff would review this proposal and make any corrections or suggestions you deem desirable and return to me or to the Regional Chief, Division of Resource Management.


Merle E. Stitt

DRAFT
MESTitt:dls
2/24/65

Long-Range Wildlife Management Plan
For Period 1965 Through 1969
Acadia National Park

Acadia National Park is located ^{CHIEFLY} on Mt. Desert Island which is situated at ^{midway} ~~the northern end of the Gulf of Maine.~~ ^{along the northern shoreline} The Island is separated from the mainland by a tide channel less than 100 yards wide. Somes Sound penetrates the Island from the south to a distance of about six miles or nearly two-thirds its diameter. The areas lying east and west of the Sound are known locally as the "east side" and the "west side."

The Park currently consists of approximately 31,000 acres. Approximately 26,000 acres are located on Mt. Desert Island. The remaining 5,000 acres are distributed over nine different islands and the Schoodic peninsula. The management of wildlife and its habitat is complicated by the extremely irregular Park boundaries, mingling of Park and non-park lands and the widely separated parcels of Park lands.

Acadia National Park had its beginning when Sieur de Monts National Monument was created in 1916 with about 6,000 acres of land donated to the government by a private corporation established for the purpose of preserving land for public purposes. This area was given National Park status by act of congress in 1919 and became known as Lafayette National Park. The name was changed in 1929 to Acadia National Park to preserve the name given the region in 1604.

A 17,000-acre fire swept Mt. Desert Island in October 1947, burning approximately ^{10,800} ~~5,750~~ acres within the ^{present} boundaries of the Park east of Somes Sound. The fire caused extensive alterations in vegetative types, animal

habitat and populations. There is no vegetative type map of the Park in existence. Vegetative types for the Mt. Desert Island portion of the Park are estimated to consist of the following percentages: pioneer hardwood, 40 percent; spruce-fir, 25 percent; mixed hardwood-conifer, 25 percent; barren and shrub covered, 5 percent, (^{chokeberry} black choke-cherry, blueberry, green alder, mt. holly, withe rod, etc.); mature hardwood, ³4 percent, (Total is 10190 without reducing mature hardwood to 370) (beech, yellow birch and sugar maple); white cedar, 1 percent; pitch pine, 1 percent.

Beaver were entirely eliminated from Mt. Desert Island in colonial days through trapping. The current population is descended from two pair released in 1920 on (Bubble Brook) a stream between Bubble Pond and Eagle Lake. This introduction prospered to the point their damming activities and subsequent elevation of water levels resulted in damage to physical facilities, streams used as migration routes by spawning fish and unique species of vegetation. A trapping and transplanting program became necessary in the late 30's. This time consuming and expensive program has been conducted intermittently to the present time. Nearly all suitable beaver habitat on the Island has been utilized. The ^{maine} Department of Inland Fisheries and Game has its own beaver problems and is not interested in live beaver for transplanting.

Archaeological investigations reveal that deer were present on or in the vicinity of Mt. Desert Island before white man visited the area. No records have been located which indicate how plentiful deer may have been prior to 1900. The population is reported to have been small during the period 1900 to 1920. A general increase in population occurred between 1920 and 1939; however, a significant decline was noted thereafter. Factors contributing

to this decline are reported to include: (1) Decline in number, vigor and palatability of browse plants as the forest matured and the forest canopy closed; (2) movement to nonpark lands where lumbering and other land uses resulted in more favorable food conditions; (3) poaching; (4) mortality due to stray dogs and automobiles; (5) severe winter die-off during the spring of 1939, possibly as a result of starvation. Following the decline of 1939 the population remained relatively static until 1950 when a significant increase was noted. The overbrowsed condition of the vegetation which occurred in the late 30's had not improved by 1947. The large fire of 1947 altered the course of biological events and set the stage for much improved browse conditions and a subsequent increase in the deer population. The first indication of severe overbrowsing and malnutrition following the fire was reported in the spring of 1956 following a severe winter. Annual observations of browse conditions made subsequent to 1956 revealed continued deterioration as a result of overuse.

The National Park Service and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Game for the State of Maine recognized the acute overpopulation of deer and associated problems and a meeting was held in April of 1960 between representatives of the two agencies to explore means for corrective action. Representatives of both agencies recognized there was ample justification for the reduction of deer on the Island's Park and nonpark lands. While some Island residents recognized the overpopulation problem, the majority were opposed to an open hunting season for deer on nonpark lands.

The long opposition to public hunting by local residents is borne out by the fact deer hunting on Mt. Desert Island has been limited to a short

season in 1905 and about 10 days in 1931. While it was recognized by both agencies it would be more practical to manage the Island as a unit under a coordinated management plan, it was the consensus of the group a reduction program in the Park might reduce local opposition to an open hunting season elsewhere on the Island.

A deer management plan for the Park was prepared and approved in September 1960 which provided for the removal of not more than 250 deer during the winter of 1960-61. Reduction programs conducted annually from 1960-61 through the winter of 1964-65 have resulted in a reduction of ⁵⁶⁴~~577~~ animals. Annual browse studies have revealed limited improvement in range conditions since implementation of the reduction program. A proposal to make Mt. Desert Island a wildlife management unit and permit hunting under State supervision on the nonpark portion of the Island was voted down at the ^{four island} town meetings in March 1964. The State is therefore without its traditional tool for population controls.

Objectives

The Park was established for the primary purpose of conserving the scenery and wildlife in a natural condition for enjoyment of the public. The primary objective of wildlife management programs therefore must provide for such management of animal populations and vegetation as may be necessary to maintain natural conditions, wherein all species of indigenous plants and animals will be perpetuated and adequately represented.

Management Program

Beaver

While beaver currently occupy nearly all suitable habitat within the Park, their presence and associated activity in some areas is not compatible with the management of other Park values. In addition forage supplies are in danger of being eliminated despite the fact beaver are desirable in certain locations for visitor observation and interpretation purposes. *So what?*

A beaver management plan will be developed which classifies specific habitats into three categories for management purposes. These categories will be delineated as follows:

- (a) Areas where beaver can be perpetuated without damage to habitat, physical facilities, and other values without population manipulation.
- (b) Areas where beaver can be perpetuated without damage to the physical facilities and/or habitat through periodic cropping of surplus animals. *why not?*
- (c) Areas where beaver activity is not compatible with the conservation of natural values and/or physical facilities and total elimination is necessary.

Necessary removal of beaver will be accomplished through live-trapping and shooting by authorized personnel. Requests for live beaver by nonprofit zoos will be honored whenever possible and those from individuals or non-government agencies will be filled only with the concurrence of the State agency responsible for the management of wildlife resources in the State from which the request originates. Live beaver or beaver carcasses may be turned over to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Game when they indicate a desire for them.

Deer

A complete study by a competent wildlife technician is necessary to determine numbers of deer present, distribution, rate of increase, range conditions and carrying capacity of the range. Efforts will be continued to have this study included in the National Park Service resource study program.

The annual spring range studies will be continued to provide information on the degree of browse utilization and condition of the range. Population counts will be continued from established transects to provide information on sex ratio and population trend.

The reduction quota for a given season will be based largely on the results of the annual browse survey and population counts until such time as more refined information is available.

Reduction quotas and procedures will be included in the annual wildlife management plan which will be prepared by the Superintendent and submitted to the Regional Director for approval prior to November 1 each year.

A deer population and range study is programmed for Isle Au Haut during ¹⁹⁶⁴ the summer of 1965. The study ^{is being} will be conducted by a graduate student from the University of Maine. The results of this study will be evaluated for use in the management of this deer herd.

Range inspections will be made periodically to determine range conditions on those portions of the Park located on outlying islands and the Schoodic peninsula.

Other Species

While there are currently no particular problems associated with other Park fauna, it is conceivable certain problems could develop in the future.* Certain species of animals present in the Park are susceptible to diseases transmissible to man. One example being rabies in such animals as foxes, raccoons, skunks and bats. Animals exhibiting indications of disease, causing damage or depreciation to buildings or other improvements will be controlled by most appropriate means including trapping or shooting when necessary. Diseased animals or animals suspected of disease will be examined to identify the infecting agent and facilitate remedial management action.

Exotics

The only exotic species known to be present at this time are the Norway rat and house mouse. The number of towns, settlements and associated development make it impractical to eliminate these species. Efforts will be made to keep populations of these animals at a minimum level.

Restoration of Extirpated Species

Species indigenous to the Park but not now present include the black bear, fisher and sea mink. Wolf, lynx, and elk are reported by some writers to have been present in the past, but there appears to be some doubt by other scientists.

The fisher seems to be the only extirpated species which could be reintroduced from the practical standpoint. Further evaluation is necessary to determine whether this would be technically feasible.

* Believe one has already developed: That of an over population of snowshoe hares. Beginning in 1961, my browse survey field notes indicate a steady increasing hare population through 1963 when their browsing was found to be very prevalent over large portions of the east side of Mts., especially the Champlain mtn., Great Mt. White Hole and Parkman mt. areas. R.S.F.

General

The use of toxic chemicals for the control of any faunal species will be conducted within the guidelines approved by the Director for the use of such chemicals.

A vegetative type map is a necessary tool for effective management of the wildlife and range resources. Efforts will be made to acquire this tool through contract with an appropriate institution or competent individuals.