

Too Many Deer

► DEER, not so long ago a worry to conservationists because of their growing scarcity, are now a cause of headaches to wildlife administrators because of the very opposite condition—there are getting to be too many of them. A survey of the deer over-population problems in this country, by Prof. Aldo Leopold, Lyle K. Sowls and David L. Spencer of the University of Wisconsin, is published in the March issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

There are deer in 47 of the 48 states of the Union, the report states, and 30 of these states report deer trouble of one kind or another. Even prairie states like Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois have spots where deer are too abundant for either their own good or the farmers' comfort.

Biggest deer-problem areas, however, are in natural deer country: northern Wisconsin and Michigan, New Hampshire, New York and Pennsylvania, south central Texas and central Utah. Smaller deer-trouble spots dot the whole of the West. The only section where deer are present, yet do not make trouble for someone, is the Southeast.

Deer difficulties are chronic in some areas, but in most of them the animals stage, at irregular intervals, sudden growths in population which the three researchers term "irruptions". Largely freed of the regulating influences of such predatory animals as timber-wolves and pumas, and protected by both game laws and local sentiment, they feed and breed to a point where the authorities charged with their welfare are unable to cope with their numbers.

During such an irruption, the animals crop their best browse-plants closer and closer, finally wiping them out over considerable areas. Other plants, not relished by deer, take their place. Finally mass starvation ensues, frequently triggered by some weather disaster such as a heavy glaze storm or a prolonged blizzard. This reduces the deer population—but in the hard way.

So thoroughly has the "spare-the-deer" campaign of the early part of the century worked, that now it often works the wrong way. Sportsmen will not shoot does even when the welfare of the herd demands the removal of some of them. Indignant local sentiment has been known to prevent selective killing by wildlife administrators, even when mass starvation lay immediately ahead.

The only effective education to the new state of affairs, the three researchers conclude, is to take groups of interested citizens to over-browsed areas where deer are starving, and let them actually see for themselves.

Science News Letter, April 12, 1947

ORNITHOLOGY

Radar Waves' Effect On Birds' Direction

► DO RADAR WAVES upset birds' sense of direction? Dr. R. B. Roberts, physicist with the Carnegie Institution of Washington, is wondering.

During the war, he was at a point on the Virginia coast, conducting experiments that involved the use of radar. A number of times, when he and his companions saw a well-arrayed flock of wild ducks flying along, they gave them a "squirt" of radar rays. The ducks'

orderly formation would break up and the birds would fly wildly in all directions.

Dr. Roberts isn't certain that the radar did it, because there were other possible disturbing factors at work in the same area, such as small-caliber gunfire making a lot of noise. So he would like to hear from anyone else who had a similar experience with radar and flying birds.

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HORTICULTURE

Chemicals Can Prevent Cracking of Cherries

► CRACKING of cherries after rains, through gorging with too much water, can be prevented in either of two ways, Prof. W. L. Powers and W. B. Bollen of Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station have discovered. Inclusion of a little anhydrous copper sulfate in the protective spray with which the trees are dusted will do it, and so will the application of about one pound of borax per tree, with the fertilizer. Similar good results have been obtained with prunes, they state, in reporting their results in *Science* (March 28).

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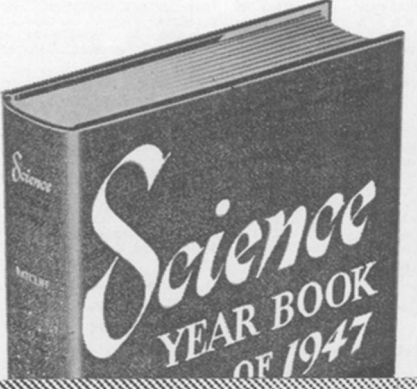
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