

## SHOOTING PRESERVES IN MICHIGAN

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Michigan's experiments with licensed shooting preserves were discussed in detail at the last Conference and, as this report appeared in the Transactions, there is no need to go into greater detail now regarding them.

The desirability of the Michigan shooting preserve law continues to be a much debated subject. Those who believe that its principles are not compatible with the American system of hunting sought to repeal the law in the 1931 legislature, but those in favor of the law were able to block its repeal. When the 1933 legislature sent a bill repealing the preserve law to the Governor, he vetoed it, and the two houses were unable to pass it over his signature.

Michigan shooting preserves do not affect any game except the ring-necked pheasant. The general open season on pheasants has been 12 days with a season's bag of four cocks. On preserves a minimum number of one hundred full-winged ten-weeks-old pheasants must be liberated. Cocks to the number of 50 per cent of the total number of birds released may be shot during the 52-day open season. At each preserve a special seal must be attached to each bird killed, affidavits certifying the number of pheasants released are required, and inspections are made so that there has been little question as to compliance with the requirements of the statute. The controversy has been largely one of equity and game law principles.

The following table briefly summarizes the activities under that law since its initiation in 1929:

Year	Number of Preserves Licensed	Total Acreage Covered	Total Birds Released	Number of Birds Licensee Might Shoot	Number of Seals Purchased	Birds Reported Shot
1929	8	21,021	3,569	1,786	1,470	635
1930	11	22,716	7,770	3,887	2,372	921
1931	12	23,658	8,554	4,280	2,337	1,646
1932	16	31,390.77	11,046	5,525	2,695	1,319
1933	14	23,432.77	7,712	3,852	2,329	*

\* Records not complete for 1933 season.

It seems apparent that the preserve statute has not accomplished all of the results that its supporters have expected. Just how much the threats and danger of repeal may have stifled preserve activity is a matter of opinion, but it seems to have retarded progress considerably through the continued uncertainty of the situation.

Up to the present time the preserves in Michigan seem to have fallen short of the expectations of the supporters on four counts:

1. The number and extent of preserves have not reached proportions sufficient to be a major factor in state-wide pheasant management. This is evident when the total preserve acreage, which approximates one geographical township, or about 23,000 acres, in area, is compared with the 6,000,000 or more acres of good pheasant range in the state, and the several additional millions of acres which probably could be fair-to-good pheasant land if properly managed.
2. Farmers have not become particularly interested in operating shooting preserves. During 1932 there were four shooting preserve organizations in which farmers participated to some extent, but in 1933 the two with the most active farmer interest dropped out. The other two probably would collapse if the sportsmen's leadership in the organization were removed.
3. The emphasis at most preserves still remains on artificial propagation and release of birds, and little progress has been made in making other phases of management an integral and important part of the operations.
4. The release of privately propagated birds prior to the hunting season, to insure that preserves provide their own game instead of depleting the original supply, has not been generally accepted among hunters as a satisfactory payment for the privilege of an extended season and increased bag limit.

The defenders of the shooting preserve plan point to the individual equities involved and claim that the preserves can not be expected to accomplish the best



results until the security of the investment has been reasonably insured for several years. Those opposed to the act maintain that the general disapproval and consequent lack of good will generated by the shooting preserve plan reacts against other conservation activities and far outweighs the good which shooting preserves might do.

So long as each side bases its opinions on two different phases of the question and ~~some~~ cannot agree as to the character of the final objectives to be secured by game regulations, there can be no agreement as to what is good state policy in regard to shooting preserves.