

Program 9 - "THE LAW SAYS -----" - November 18, 1940  
(Biological Reasons Behind Game Laws)

SOMETHING TO DO AND TALK ABOUT FIRST

Why do we have game laws?

The law requires that all persons sixteen years of age or older must have licenses to fish (with reel) or hunt. Why is this license imposed?

Do you think that most people hunt and fish more for fun than for game?

Locate Green Lake, Wisconsin, on a map. If you have a book of Wisconsin fish and game laws you will find that the bass season opens later at Green Lake than elsewhere in the state. Why? You will find also that the trout season opens earlier in the northern tier of counties than elsewhere in the state. Do you know why?

DO YOU KNOW THESE WORDS?

biological      penalty      federal      migratory      cycle

LISTEN FOR THESE IDEAS

1. Game laws are based upon a knowledge of the behavior of animals and their abundance or scarcity. The Conservation Department makes all game laws after getting the best advice from men in the field.
2. Why does the trout season close September first although the season on other fish is still open?
3. What other instances can you mention showing that laws are based on behavior of animals?
4. Who makes the laws covering migratory birds?
5. Do you think the law stipulating the minimum size of fish that may be caught is a good law?
6. What is the proper way to handle a fish that must be returned to the water?

SOMETHING TO DO AND TALK ABOUT LATER

1. Why does it seem wise to leave game laws in the hands of a few competent men instead of delegating them to the legislature?
2. Why does the open season on partridges come at long intervals?

Wisconsin School of the Air  
Afield with Ranger Mac  
November 18, 1940.

"The Law Says -----"

Hello Boys and Girls:

The weather can be cruel. So it was last week. We had no sooner returned from our trip afield than the wind started, accompanied by rain here and snow in the northern part of the state. The thermometer which stood at about 50 degrees in the morning, went down and down to 20 degrees by bedtime. Such sudden changes bring their sorrows. It caught people unawares with storm windows still to be hung and coal bins empty. But it caught game fowl as completely unawares. Stories have been coming in of ducks and mudhens by the thousands frozen in the ice of many lakes. Many of these were dug out by the inhabitants to be used on their tables. Conservation Wardens rescued many of them, shipped them to Foyette Game Farm, where they were fed and released. Sad as all of this may seem, the death that came to hunters because of this sudden storm - hunters marooned on islands in some of our rivers, or drowned in an attempt to reach shore - bringing sorrow into the homes of at least a dozen Wisconsin families - is one of the saddest tales of outdoor life that has come to us in many years. Man and ducks are both nature's creatures and treated just alike by her; she shows no partiality.

There isn't a boy or girl listening in today but is guided in his behavior each hour of the day by some regulation. We have our regulations at home which require of us certain work and sacrifices for the good of home life. We have our regulations at school which direct our individual behavior for the good of the entire group, so that each one can share alike in the opportunities for growth that the school offers. We accept these regulations as a part of life, and we become good members of the group when we abide wholeheartedly by those regulations that are good for everybody. That is a part of good citizenship. A school is a little society where we learn how to live with one another, and whatever rules and regulations we may have, tell us the way by which this can be done in the best way.

In the larger society called the state, these regulations are called laws. In a democracy, such as ours, these laws are made by the representatives of the people, and they are intended to tell us how to regulate our lives so that we can all share alike in the good things that life has to offer. So if everybody were as thoughtful and well-meaning as humans could be, we would still need laws to point out the best way to conduct our lives with respect to other folks. But because all human beings are not as thoughtful and well-meaning as they might be, laws become even more necessary. Suppose for instance that there was no law regulating the hunting of deer - the time of year to hunt deer, where deer should be hunted, and how many deer might be taken - without such laws there soon would be no deer. On the other hand, people who like to hunt deer, want to know when deer should be hunted and where, and what is one person's rightful share. So laws tell the unthoughtful and thoughtful, the selfish and unselfish, alike, just what they should or should not do. So you can see that it is only fair and just to have laws in that larger society called the state, just as it is in our schools, or in a game which we like to play on the schoolgrounds.

In front of me are five little books of laws. One is called "Wisconsin Forest, Field, Marsh Fire Laws", another "Wisconsin Forest Crop and Woodland Tax Laws"; another "Wisconsin Conservation Laws", a book of 307 pages that deals with all manner of things related to the outdoors. In it we find the law requiring the teaching of conservation in public schools of our state.

So, Ranger Mac wants you to see that without these Conservation laws, each person would be allowed to go his own sweet way and our fish, game, trees, frogs, crabs, flowers, and other of nature's gifts would be without protection and soon come to an end. Not only that, but these laws define certain ways and means and provide moneys not only for the protection but the increase of these gifts of nature. These laws establish our tree nurseries and fish hatcheries, our game farms, our bird rearing activities. If you have a wild life refuge near your home, that was made possible by law.

Yesterday I took about three dozen frogs from the pool in my garden. That severe storm of last week found the pool still full of water, and cold weather froze it tight. So yesterday, I chopped out the ice, drained the pool and found all those frogs in the mire at the bottom where they expected to spend the winter. I took them down to the spring pond where I am sure they will find deeper mud and a safer place for their winter's sleep. Upon my return, I looked up in the conservation laws to find out if frogs are protected, and sure enough, I found a law which most of Ranger Mac's Trailhitters never knew existed. Here it is:

"No person shall take, catch, or kill, in any of the waters of this state, or have in possession, any crawfish or crab of any variety between the first day of March and the next succeeding first day of July; or any frog from March first to May first of each year, except those who are in the business of raising frogs or where the same are used for scientific or educational purposes."

Now why should the state step in and prevent us from catching and killing at any time all the crawfish, crabs and frogs that we choose to. Well, here is the reason. These lowly animals have an important place in the scheme of nature, maybe as important a place as birds, who knows. Anyway, upon investigation the Conservation Commission found that it is reasonably necessary in order to have a sufficient number of these lowly creatures in the waters of our state that they be protected. You did not know that frogs are protected, did you? And why did the law state between the first of March and the first of May? Why did it prohibit taking them at that time? And not at any other time? Because that is the time that they lay their eggs, and that is the time they should be protected. To kill a female frog at that time would mean taking from nature one frog and all the frogs that would hatch from the eggs which she would be sure to lay, or spawn. Such a method of thinking and placing a law is called the biological reason behind the law.

When I was a boy, I used to wade the sand bars of the Wisconsin River

in search for clams, hoping to find a pearl of such great beauty that it would make me rich. I did not know that clams are protected by law. But they are. The law says: "There shall be a close season for clams in all inland waters of the state, from March first to May 29 in each year." Ranger Mac wants you to get the fact that even clams must have protection or they would disappear from the waters of our land - and clams have an important place in nature's scheme. The time for protecting them is placed just when it is because that is the time when clams by their own unusual process have their young.

Let's take some other examples. The law says that we must not catch bass until after the middle of June. The authorities who made this law know that bass lay their eggs - it is called spawning - after the sun has warmed the water in the spring. To catch a mother bass before she has spawned would mean not taking one bass but perhaps hundreds of bass. After spawning, the father bass protects the nest of eggs from all enemies. If a man were to throw a bait near the nest, the father bass would attack it just to protect the eggs - out of pure devotion to his duty. If the bass is caught, the eggs are sure to be devoured or at least not hatch. That is the reason for placing the time of year when bass shall not be caught.

There is a rather large, deep lake in the central part of our state called Green Lake. It does not warm up as soon as the other lakes, and the bass do not spawn as early. For that reason the law says no fishing until July 1st in that body of water. On the other hand, trout spawn in the early winter and so the closed season for trout is September 1st to May 15th. But in the northern part of our state winter comes earlier than in the southern portion, so the trout spawn earlier, and that is why the season is opened two weeks earlier in the northern tier of counties than in the southern counties. So you can see that the men who make the laws must know how the animals live, and it is equally important that those who hunt and fish should know the reasons behind the laws as well. That is a part of good citizenship. Ranger Mac believes that when we know the reasons behind the game

laws, we are quite sure to be better citizens in the open.

People who frequent the woods notice that there are certain years when partridge are plentiful; then in a few years, they can walk for hours those same woods and not be startled by the sudden whirl of the wings of a single partridge. The reason for this is that partridges are subject to a disease. When partridges are plentiful this disease spreads among them, reducing their numbers by taking the weakest ones. Only the strongest are left to build up the race of partridges again. So partridges have their times of plenty and times of scarcity - their ups and downs. These are called cycles. We are on the downward phase of the cycle now, and probably next year the law will say there will be no open season on partridges, except in certain localities where the disease may not be prevalent. That is the reason why some years we are allowed to shoot partridges and in others the law says "thou shalt not."

The law in our state gives the smallest size of each kind of fish that we can remove from the water. The intent of the law is that we will remove the fish of illegal size from the hook in the proper way and return it to the water to become a fish of size worthy to be caught. The proper way to remove the hook from any fish is first to wet well the hand that grasps the fish, then remove the hook without injuring the gill. The reason for wetting the hand is this: you know that all fish are covered with a slime, which is a mucus secretion. This limy covering not only reduces the friction of the water, making it possible for fish to swim swiftly, but it protects the fish from bacteria and fungus spores that are everywhere in the water. If these get on to the skin of the fish the fish are quite sure to become diseased and die. When our hands are dry, this mucus sticks to them, exposing the fish to disease and the life of the fish is endangered.

Before we go on another trip afield, the woods up north will be filled with deer hunters. Thousands upon thousands of men with high powered rifles will station themselves on deer trails and at lookout points hoping to get a shot at a male deer - called a buck. Because so many hunt deer, the law says very definitely and with many limitations how deer shall be shot and the size or age of the buck.

Because so many hunt deer, the law says very definitely and with many limitations how deer shall be shot and the size or age of the buck. Otherwise hunters would, in a very short time, reduce the numbers to the point where deer would seldom be seen, or kill them off completely. The most important regulation is that each hunter, properly licensed and with a deer tag, is allowed one deer and that a buck and this buck must be old enough to have an antler that is forked, and this fork must be at least one inch long. Female deer - called does, must not be shot. There is a reason behind the shooting of bucks only. To shoot a doe means the shooting of the mother of deer, while a buck may be the father of many deer. So it is not necessary to have as many bucks as does. Some people say that there are too many does for the number of bucks, but the conservation commission after studying the deer population says this is not so. Now when you see deer on cars passing over your roads, you will know why they all have antlers.

It is a great task and responsibility to look after the resources of our state, and to make the laws which govern our attitude toward them. The legislature could not make these laws as needed because it meets once in every two years, so this power and authority are given by the legislature to the Conservation Commission, to establish open and close seasons, size limits, bag limits, and in other ways tell us what is proper and right so that all citizens of the state will have equal chances to enjoy fishing, hunting, trapping, and other activities out in the open.

This equality of rights is one of the things we can be thankful for at Thanksgiving time.

Good Bye, and

May the Great Spirit  
Put Sunshine into your Heart  
Today and forevermore,  
HEAP MUCH!