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# Outdoor Life

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JUNE

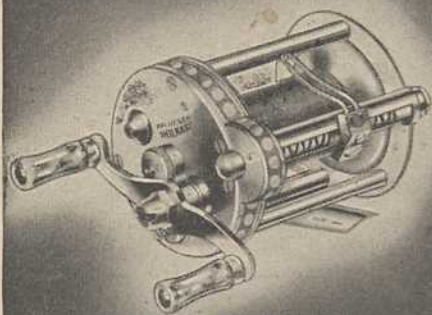
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IS  
COMING  
BACK**



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VOLUME 97  
NO. 6

# Outdoor Life

Reg. U. S.  
Pat. Off.

RAYMOND J. BROWN, Editor

• REGINALD A. HAWLEY, Art Editor •

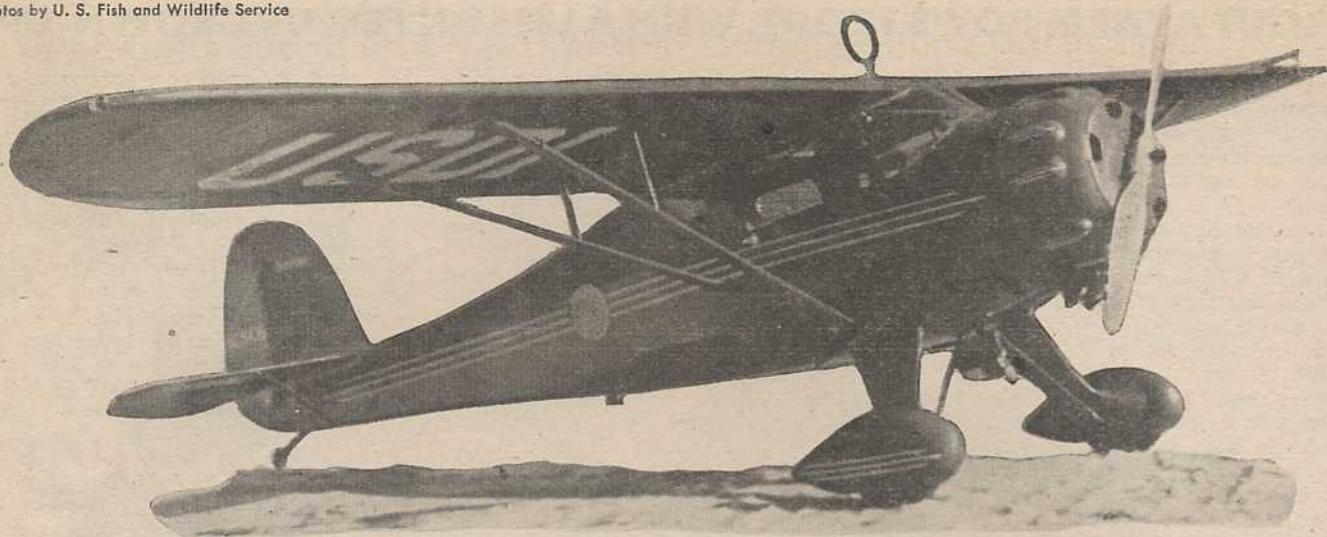
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Recent missions have been flown either in two-place Monocoups, one of which is shown above, or in the larger three or four-place Fairchilds

# WARDENS *with* WINGS

*By*  
**ROB F. SANDERSON**

**T**HE use of airplanes for conservation-enforcement work in this age of flight has been hailed as a great new idea, untried but full of promise. Such is not the case. The idea has been thoroughly tried—and has more than fulfilled its promise.

As a matter of fact, pilot agents for the Alaska Game Commission have used planes for more than fifteen years, and have not only proved the plane practical and economical but have established a remarkable record for safety and efficiency.

When and how did the airplane idea start? In 1929, four years after the Alaska Game Commission was founded, one of its agents—Sam O. White—

bought himself an old Swallow biplane and began roaring around the skies above Fairbanks teaching himself to fly. White put the plane on skis, began using it on his patrols, and so became the terror of back-country poachers.

His enforcement record convinced skeptics, and in 1932 Congress was prevailed upon to pass legislation empowering the Alaska Game Commission to purchase, own, and operate planes. Since that time the agents have been fairly well supplied.

Today airplanes are indispensable to Alaska operations. Without their wings, the enforcement agents would be like horseless cow-punchers. In 1943, for example, a skeleton staff of ten agents and two administrative men were responsible for patrols covering 590,884 square miles, or an average of 49,240 square miles for each officer. That year Alaska

was flooded with newcomers who lived outdoors and had access to guns: men in uniform, men in labor camps, men in technical corps. The resulting enforcement crisis was one of the biggest in Alaska's history. In speaking of the tremendous job done by its agents, the Alaska Game Commission frankly states: "Their work would have been impossible to accomplish without the use of five Commission airplanes."

With many former employees back from service in the armed forces, the air enforcement fleet will soon mushroom. Three main air bases, at Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Ketchikan, were already established before Pearl Harbor. But the coming of war in 1941 halted all expansion, and retraction set in as personnel was lost. Simultaneously the enforcement problem increased.

Now the Commission is free to move ahead with the backlog of ideas accumulated since 1940, when it published this



Headquarters men map a raid. Some poacher is in for a rude shock



Sam O. White, who in 1929 bought and flew Alaska's first patrol plane



## How Alaska's plane-piloting agents blazed a sky trail to better game-law enforcement and other conservation work....Will your state follow suit?

statement in its annual report: "Airplanes flown by Commission officers are by far the most effective and economical method yet devised for enforcing the fur and game laws, and for checking on the wildlife in Alaska."

Airplanes account for more travel miles in this work than any other means of transportation. For years the dog team was the stand-by for land travel. By 1943, dog-team miles fell to 675 for the year, whereas air patrols covered 120,031 miles.

In spring and fall, when other transportation is difficult or impossible, plane travel is particularly important to enforcement work. In former years poachers chose these seasons for their worst depredations, knowing they were beyond the law's reach in most cases. Nowadays they can never rest easy, for they know that a flying agent may come out of the blue in the wink of an eye.

After White bought his Swallow, one of the first enforcement problems he tackled was that of illegal traplines. By dog team, it took a full week of hard travel to visit a trapping camp only 100 miles away. With his plane, he could do the job in three hours.

A snowshoe trail is easily followed from the air, and within a short distance an experienced warden can tell not only whether the snowshoer is trapping or hunting but also what game or fur he seeks. A trapline along the timbered high ridges is set for martens. A line along small streams is for minks and otters. A trail that visits all the beaver ponds in a given vicinity suggests a beaver trapper. By flying low the warden can tell about how many traps a mile are used, and how often the line is run.

Law-abiding trappers welcome visits from the Commission planes, if only to break the monotony of the short arctic days. Besides, they like the assurance that, if a flying agent notices the traplines have not been run recently, he will land to make sure the trapper has not succumbed to sickness, cold, or foul play.

Woods dwellers in distress or with important information for the agents sig-

nal to the planes by placing cut spruce boughs on the snow to spell the desired word, such as "L A N D," and often lay out an arrow pointing to the nearest spot which could be made to serve as a runway. These spruce-bough messages to pilots are common, and by their use information can be delivered to agents even if the signal maker is not at home when the plane arrives. In return the pilots drop notes or late newspapers to these isolated humans.

Such patrols perform these missions while simultaneously keeping poachers and renegade trappers under control and thus protecting lawful operators from illegal competition.

However, complete patrol coverage is not possible with the present small enforcement unit, and illegal operations still exist much as they did in the late autumn of 1941, when flying agents made a surprise airplane patrol of the lower Yukon River district. In three weeks agents seized more than 3,000 unprime muskrat, mink, and fox pelts from several traders in the area.

If this trip had been made by river boat, the only other possible transportation, the grapevine would have spread a warning in advance of the agents and the furs would have been tucked out of sight before they arrived. Fur seizures have run as high in value as \$18,000 annually. However, they have diminished somewhat in recent years because of the discouraging effect of the highly efficient plane patrols upon illegal operators.

Outlaw hunters can be detected from the air almost as easily as outlaw trappers. In November of 1940, after several hours of air reconnaissance in the Mt. Hayes area, flying agents landed their

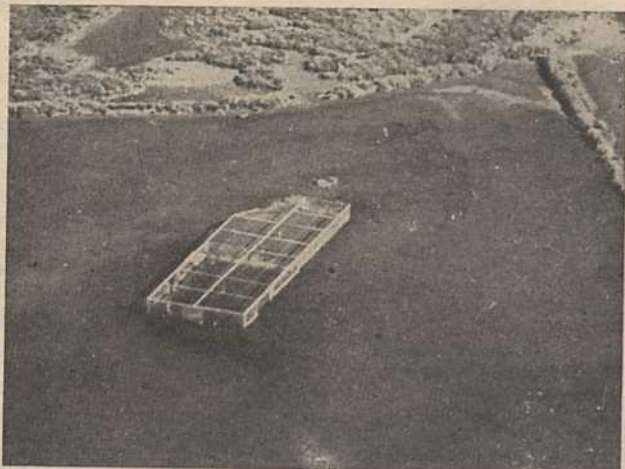
plane in the clearing nearest an alien's cabin and set out on snowshoes for their objective, several miles farther on.

At the cabin they discovered the remains of at least twenty-one animals—moose, caribou, and mountain sheep included. A good deal of the meat, all recently killed, was spoiled, and some of it had been fed to dogs. Needless to say, the alien got a free plane ride to Fairbanks, where he was prosecuted to the limit.

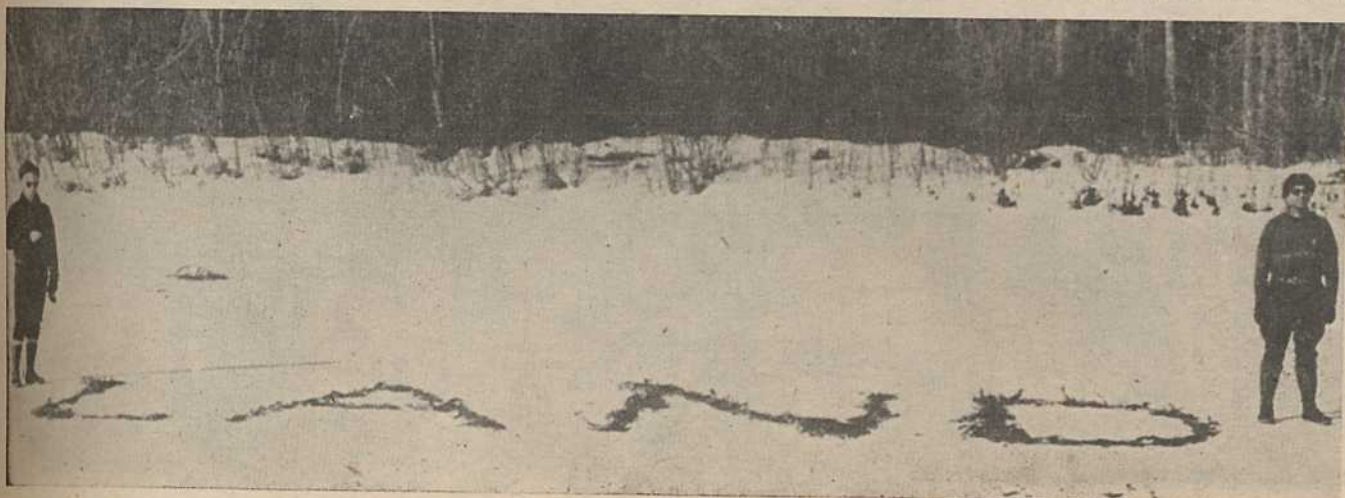
Agents traveling on snowshoes often required weeks to investigate a single suspect. Now a few days' plane trip will usually clean up an entire area. As an example, in 1939, in the course of a thirty-day flying patrol which took them to the Alaska-Yukon border country, pilot wardens completed seven cases and, in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, started action against several violators on the Canadian side of the line.

One defendant, a flagrant poisoner, admitted using twenty-four bottles of strychnine in three years. In the Dawson area a fur smuggler was caught red-handed with eighty-four coyote and wolfskins, ready to be sneaked across the border from the Yukon, where no

(Continued on page 134)



Illegal duck traps like this are easily spotted from the air



That word spelled out in spruce boughs on the snow tells pilots that these wardens want a ride. Sometimes it means a trapper needs help badly



# Wardens With Wings

(Continued from page 35)

bounty was in effect. Once over the line, he planned to collect Alaska's bounty illegally, and smuggle U.S. tobacco or other goods back into the Yukon on the returning dog team.

Keeping the planes flying in sixty-below-zero weather is not easy. Specially designed close cowlings prevent the cylinders from cooling below minimum operation limits. But as soon as an engine is turned off, the oil must be immediately drained lest it congeal within minutes to a tarlike goo. Before starting again after a stop of several hours, a canvas hood is placed over the plane's power plant to keep heat in, and a gas-burning fire pot lighted underneath. When the motor thaws out, perhaps two hours later, the cylinder oil is heated over a flame until it bubbles, and is then poured into the crankcase. If the engine fails to start at once, the ritual must be repeated.

Are planes worth all this trouble? Well, in terms of area covered, one hour by plane is worth three hard days by dog team.

In the first years of operation many planes were forced down. From these experiences wardens gathered a wealth of first-hand data on surviving in the cold after a forced landing. Much of this hard-won information went into the Army's distress handbook for downed flyers—and many an airman owes his knowledge of how to make signals, keep from freezing, find food, and locate the nearest inhabitants to the dope passed on by Alaska's conservation agents.

They're a resourceful lot, these men. For instance, Sam White had a sudden engine failure over a swamp. Instantly selecting a favorable opening, he completed a successful forced landing, erected an emergency shelter, and set out signals to any passing plane. By and by a fellow pilot spotted those signals, flew to the nearest town, and sent a dog team to his aid. When the rescuers arrived, White helped them remove the engine and load it on the sled. Then they took it—and him—to town. After supervising the repairs, he returned to his plane, re-installed the motor, and flew home.

Ray Renshaw is another experienced agent and pilot who has had close calls. He was ferrying a new Monocoupe from the States when he encountered bad

weather in the Yukon Territory which blew the plane off its course and eventually forced it down because of heavy icing conditions. Luckily, a gravel bar along a river provided an emergency landing strip.

It was the fall of the year, and winter in the north comes early. Renshaw was not sure of his position, and although the ship had a radio it was impossible for him to direct searchers accurately. Which way to go for help also was a mystery. So he decided to stay right where he was, and burrow in for a long stay. Preparing a dugout in the sand, he lined it with spruce boughs, then holed up in his sleeping bag. It was well that he did all this, for soon the temperature dropped to thirty degrees below zero.

Two weeks passed, during which Renshaw eked out his emergency rations by snaring game for food. He was feeling as much at home as a snowshoe rabbit, and more snow had fallen, when one day he heard the faint drone of airplane engines. In the distance a Pan American airliner crossed the white-peaked mountains and disappeared beyond the cold horizon. Immediately Renshaw warmed up his radio, sending the exact time he saw the plane and his location in relation to its course.

The transmitter was weak, but a radio operator at Whitehorse caught the message and relayed it to the Juneau office of the Alaska Game Commission. Its agents contacted Pan American to ascertain the airliner's position at the precise moment the downed pilot spotted it. A search plane was dispatched immediately, found the Monocoupe, and dropped a map with a note telling Ren-



Ray Renshaw, whose forced landing was something to write home about

shaw where he was—only fifteen miles north of the little town of Selkirk. The rescue plane landed in that settlement and the pilot sent a dog team upriver.

Meanwhile Renshaw fire-potted his engine with a wood fire and a blowtorch and, despite the fact that heavy snow covered the ground and more was falling, managed to coax his heavily iced plane into the air, and flew in to town—not knowing relief was already coming. The ship was so heavily incrustured with ice when it arrived that people could not understand how it ever got there. The pilot was thin from his rigorous diet and somewhat weakened from exposure, but says he could have held out until spring.

Such experiences support the Commission's theory that it is easier and better to train woodsmen to be pilots than to try to teach pilots to be first-class woodsmen. All the pilots are men who have proved their mettle on the ground, know the country, and have learned how to fly with the Commission. So far as possible this policy is to be continued.

Usually, of course, the Commission pilots are the rescuers rather than the rescued. One spectacular job of this kind was undertaken in the spring of 1938, when agents spotted the wreckage of a multiengine plane among high mountain crags. The scene of the crash was at least eight days distant from help by dog team, if, indeed, a land party could scale the sheer cliffs.

In a light, two-place Aeronca equipped with skis, two pilots set out. When they landed, the mountain slope proved to be so steep that one pilot held full throttle to keep the ship from sliding backward over the cliff, while the other jumped out and roped the airplane down.

The pilot of the wrecked craft was suffering from both a broken neck and broken back, and they wanted to take him out first. The Aeronca, now facing downslope, was held only by a strong rope attached to the tail. At a signal the pilot at the controls blasted full power while the agent staying behind chopped the rope. Down the mountainside like a bullet the little plane roared, zipped off over the cliff, and, just before a threat-



Evidence that swift "air raids" are successful—536 illegal beaver pelts found in a single cache



ened crash in the canyon below, gained flying speed. Within a couple of hours it returned safely to the wreck, where the adventure was repeated.

There are many such cases in which the crash victims would perish in the cold long before land expeditions could reach them, but plane rescues spell the difference between eventual safety and disaster.

People are not all the agents rescue. About five years ago, flying in the country west of Mt. McKinley, they spotted two bull moose fighting horn to horn out on the ice of a frozen lake. Circling overhead, the agents realized that the animals had locked horns. A short time later they returned to the scene with assistance and equipment, landed, and with some difficulty roped the two moose. That done, they sawed off the interlocking antlers—and saved the lives of both animals, which otherwise would have died of exposure on the ice or been devoured by wolves.

In the summer months all planes operate off pontoons, and in winter from skis, except in the Ketchikan area, where there is open water all year round. As the freeze-up in fall is swift and sharp, the transition time from floats to skis is usually only about five days. Hence there is little need for regulation wheels except in those years when the freeze comes before the snow.

In recent operations two types of planes have been employed—the speedy, two-place, ninety-horsepower Monocoups and the larger three-to-four place Fairchild 24's. Both are easily adapted to wheels, skis, or floats. Larger types of aircraft now becoming available presumably will be used in the future for longer hops and heavier loads. The pilots are dreaming too about the day when helicopters will see service, as these will eliminate the snowshoe trips now necessary in rough country when the destination point lacks near-by level ground for landings.

In this postwar era the Alaska Game Commission will expand its fleet greatly. Not only are more aircraft necessary to patrol the vast wilderness adequately, but many hunters and trappers will soon be using planes themselves, introducing a whole new problem. For example, in the area around Anchorage alone, in the 1943 season sixty-two small planes were used by hunting parties. More enforcement planes will be needed to keep an adequate check on such parties.

So in this respect at least, Alaska has for several years been facing a problem which will soon be commonplace in the States.

Now that Alaska has set the pace, what are we sportsmen in the forty-eight states going to do about providing wings for our own wardens?

Frank Dufresne, who recently wound up twenty-four years in Alaska—most of them with the Alaska Game Commission—thinks an airplane is about as practical a possession as a conservation agency can have. And Dufresne knows whereof he speaks.

"The individual states are missing a good bet," he says. "Planes would be especially useful in the Western states and such areas as the Florida Everglades or our wide coastal marshes." Dufresne, now at U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters in Chicago, Ill., is surprised that the idea didn't catch on long before now.

From any viewpoint, the plane is a great asset to conservation. One glance from the air reveals the presence of hunting parties, the directions they are moving, where cars are parked and camps located. And though the warden



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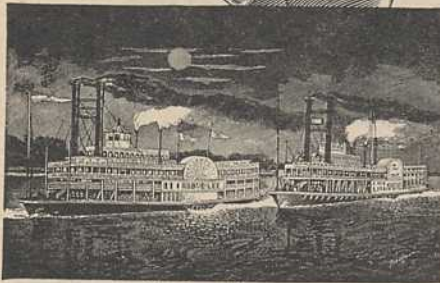
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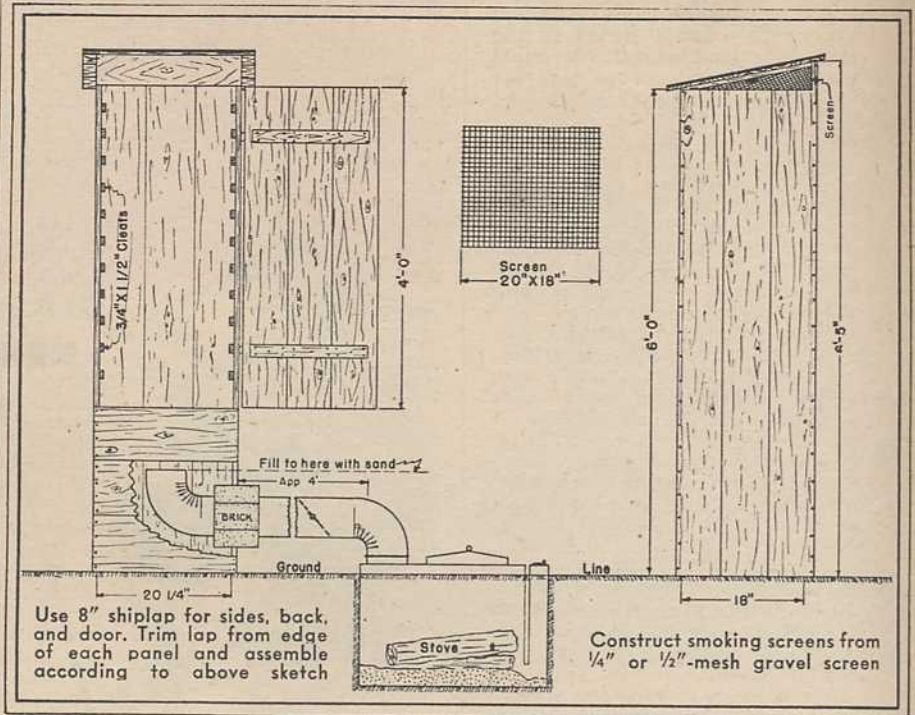
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FEW fishermen are familiar with the delicious flavor of properly smoked trout or salmon. The rest, not realizing how easily this delicacy may be obtained, are passing up their chance to sample a dish that makes the ambrosia of the ancient Greek gods taste like a candidate for the used-fats drive.

Anyone used to working with tools can build a smokehouse in a short time. The one I built (see sketch for full details) consists of an underground, wood-burning stove, a stovepipe which channels the smoke into the structure itself, and 11 removable smoking racks—consisting of fine-mesh gravel screening on wood frames—each of which rests on a pair of cleats. The structure is 6 ft. 5 in. high in front and 6 ft. in back, with a sloping roof immediately under which, on two sides, there is a screened triangular smoke vent.

Personally, I claim smoked trout from ½ to 6 lb. make the best eating, although heavier ones probably are just as good—for those who can catch them. The main thing is to smoke them over wood from deciduous trees having broad leaves; alder, oak, maple, willow, apple, peach, cherry, and birch are good. Never use evergreen or larch.

Preparing the trout is easy. Start by cutting off heads and tails and cleaning the fish as usual. Now split them length-

wise, starting next to the backbone and working out through the belly. Spread the fish open, skin side down, dry with cloth or paper, and sprinkle generously with table salt. They'll keep for some time in a refrigerator, if you need still more fish to warrant smoking operations.

In smoking, have a small but hot fire which will dry as well as cook the trout. Put them skin side down, on the removable trays, making sure that no fish touches another, otherwise they may stick together or even prevent the smoke and heat from rising.

Interchange the lower and upper trays when the fish on the former become dry. When all the trout have dried, place plenty of green wood in the stove and regulate the draft to give the maximum amount of smoke with a minimum of heat. Smoke fish which dress at ½ lb. from 3 to 4 hours; those up to 6 lb., some 12 hours or more. When the fish are done you can easily pull the skin off them. Just watch your first few batches carefully until you learn the peculiarities of your smokehouse, then you'll be able to prepare a quantity of fish with very little effort.

Smoked trout probably can be kept indefinitely under proper refrigeration. We've never had a chance to find out in my house; the fish never last that long.—*H. Hawkins.*

may not always land, just the knowledge that he is watching from overhead every day or two is enough to discourage most violators.

As our states begin to adopt air patrols, we can expect two stock questions: "How safe is it?" and "Isn't it expensive?" As to safety, the Alaska Game Commission points out that in all its seemingly hazardous operations, not one flyer has been lost, or even injured. As to expense, in 1939 one Alaska pilot flew 17,000 miles at an average cost of three cents a mile! It's hard to beat a record like that.

In addition to law-enforcement duties, planes spot fires, make the most accurate waterfowl and big-game census obtainable, plant fish, control predators,

do rescue work, and are useful in breaking up concentrations of ducks whenever they endanger farm crops. With an airplane, administrative officials could make regular trips to all parts of their state and actually see what is going on instead of having to rely largely on annual reports. And they'd only be away from the office a few short hours at a time.

The idea of planes for enforcement officers has proved its practicality in one of the toughest natural laboratories we have. Within a short time flying conservation men will be commonplace. Will your state be among the first to have a "cons-air-vation" department? It's up to you and your fellow sportsmen to see to it that wardens get wings!