



(ADFG photos by Dimitri Bader)

**ENHANCEMENT PROJECT—**  
Waterfowl habitat enhancement project at Potter Point is designed to replace nesting habitat lost in the 1964 earthquake. Ponds and berms provide new resting, feeding and rearing areas for waterfowl.

## *A haven for waterfowl*

# POTTER MARSH STATE

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ON APRIL 28 a v-shaped flock of nearly 1,000 ducks flew into upper Cook Inlet. Along the Seward Highway south of Rabbit Creek, the marsh was already host to 30 nesting pairs of lesser Canada geese. Other species, such as pintails, mallards, green-winged teal, red-breasted mergansers, and horned grebes were looking for suitable places to nest.

This annual spring migration of thousands of birds to Potter Marsh is a main attraction for both young and old citizens of the Anchorage area. In 1973, approximately 6,000

persons enjoyed the marsh and the sense of freedom associated with its waterfowl.

Potter Marsh serves waterfowl which use the Pacific and Central flyway systems by offering them a nesting place on their way south and again on their northward spring migrations. Returns from banded birds show that in the spring, the ducks and geese stopping at Potter Marsh are headed for nesting grounds of the Yukon/Kuskokwim River deltas, the North Slope and Siberia. In the fall, the thousands of ducks and geese that filter through

upper Cook Inlet are bound for wintering areas in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada and Mexico.

There are few wetland marshes in the United States that can provide residents of large population centers the opportunity to hunt, photograph, watch and scientifically study a marsh ecosystem with birds and wildlife as does Potter Marsh.

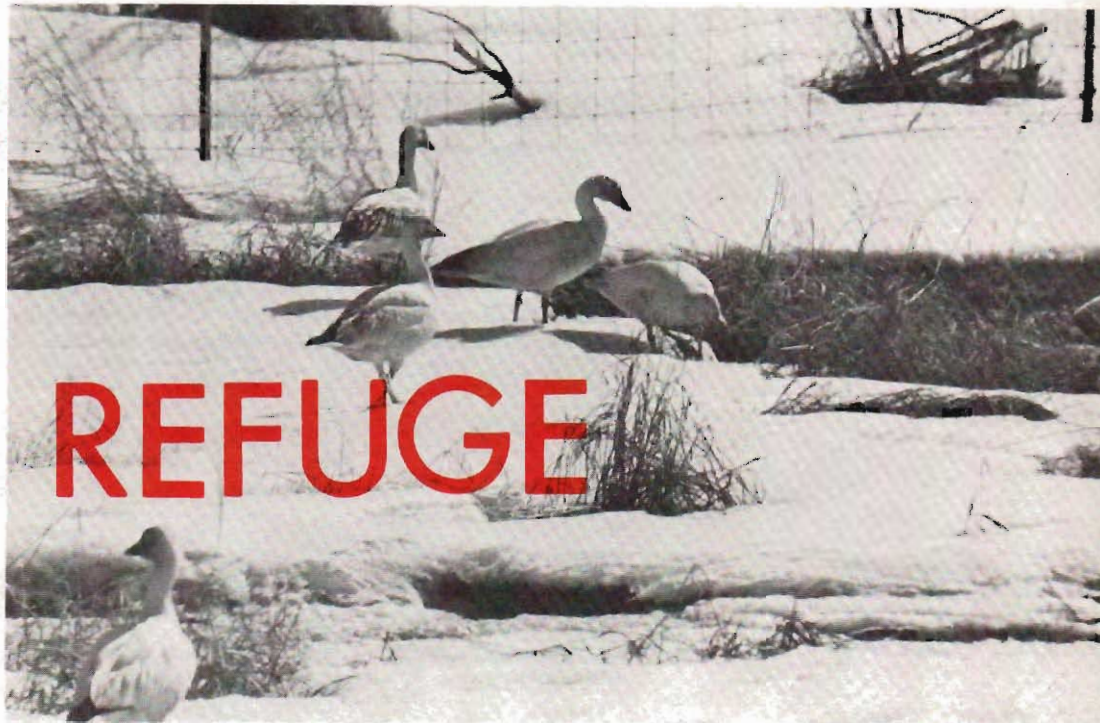
Wetland areas throughout the United States produce millions of waterfowl. However, through the efforts of man in draining and fill-





← **MARSH DENIZEN**—Lesser yellow-leg is one of many species of waterfowl which utilize Potter Point State Refuge.

**PAUSE FOR FOOD**—Snow geese feed on tubers and roots before heading on to nesting grounds in Siberia. →



# GAME REFUGE

ing these areas for agricultural, industrial and residential development, the total amount of natural nesting and wintering habitat has drastically diminished.

Waterfowl nesting areas are being lost to human development in Alaska and because of this, Gov. William A. Egan in 1971 signed into law a bill designating this 4,000-acre tidal marsh as the Potter Marsh State Game Refuge.

The Good Friday earthquake of 1964 physically altered Cook Inlet's waterfowl nesting habitat and significantly reduced the an-

nual waterfowl production.

Full development of the Potter Point State Game Refuge would need major nesting habitat enhancement projects in order to replace this lost habitat. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the Greater Anchorage Area Borough has already become involved in such projects. For example, just south of the outlet of Campbell Lake, nearly two-thirds mile of ponds and berms were constructed in 1973 to replace some of the nesting habitat lost in the earthquake. This project cost

\$118,470 and even before the construction of the project ended waterfowl were utilizing the new habitat for nesting, feeding and eventually rearing young.

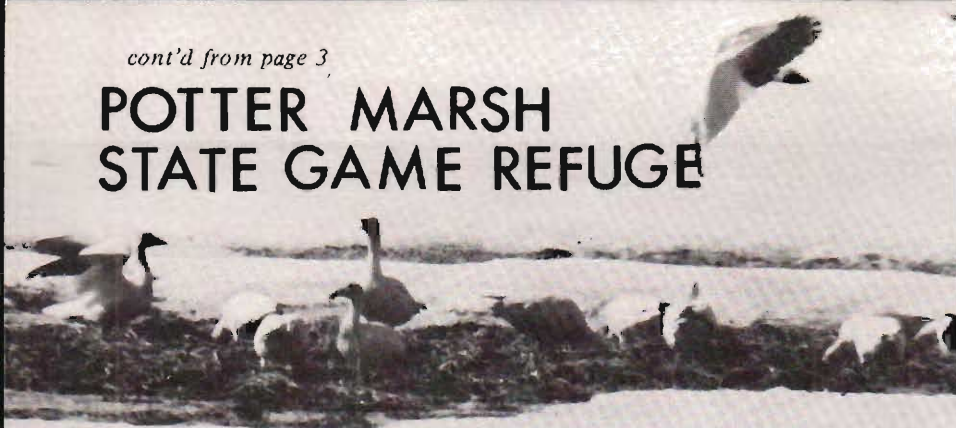
However, the entire picture of Potter Marsh is not bright. Nearly 20 per cent of the marsh lands within the refuge are privately owned. This checkerboard pattern of land ownership and control prevents any meaningful, long-term management programs from being initiated.

An attempt to purchase these private lands was made earlier this

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## POTTER MARSH STATE GAME REFUGE



*MANAGEMENT JOB—Young ducks and geese were banded at Potter Marsh this spring as part of the refuge management program. Participating were John W. Hendrickson, left, president of the Alaska Waterfowl Assn., Dimitri Bader, game biologist. —>*



year when the newly formed Alaska Waterfowl Association introduced a bill into the Alaska State Senate requesting a \$50,000 appropriation from the general fund. Had this money been appropriated, it would have been matched with \$150,000 in federal matching funds from the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act. Although passed by the Senate, the bill failed to pass the House of Representatives.

There are two areas in the marsh which are of great importance to the public as well as to the waterfowl resource. One of these areas possesses the quality habitat which waterfowl utilize heavily. The

numerous birds, in turn, provide the public with a high level of recreational use. The other area encompasses one of the few remaining public access corridors to the marsh. Because these areas are privately owned, they may be lost to development.

Even though a land ownership problem exists in the refuge, there are state-owned parcels of waterfowl habitat which are large enough to lend themselves to productive management. For instance, in just that portion of the refuge located south of Rabbit Creek and between the two Seward highways where Department of Fish and Game time and space management zoning

policies were in force, from 1972 to 1973 Canada goose production increased from less than 20 young to approximately 150 and duck production from less than 50 to approximately 400.

The potential development of the Potter Point State Game Refuge in conjunction with the identification and management of other local marsh areas promises to make upper Cook Inlet one of the most important waterfowl production and migration areas in Alaska. However, the future of this refuge, its management and realization of its potential depend completely on the desires of the people. ■



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