The Migratory Birds Convention Act was passed in 1917 to give effect to the Migratory Birds Treaty signed at Washington in 1916. It provides a measure of protection for numerous species of birds that migrate between the two countries. The Canadian Wildlife Service, in its capacity as administrator of the Act, is responsible for the annual revision of the Migratory Bird Regulations, which govern such matters as open seasons and other waterfowl hunting details, taking and possessing migratory birds for scientific or propagating purposes, eiderdown collecting, etc. The Act and Regulations thereunder are enforced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and in both administration and enforcement co-operation is received from provincial authorities. There are 108 migratory bird sanctuaries in Canada, having a total area of 39,136 sq. miles. A sanctuary may be established on the initiative of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources or of a provincial or municipal government, or on petition by a private person or organization. Bird banding provides valuable information on the migration of birds and their natural history and is especially useful in waterfowl management. Serially numbered bands supplied by the United States Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife are used in Canada as well as in the United States.

Many research projects under way were continued during 1961. These included the study, in co-operation with the Government of Manitoba and the Council of the Northwest Territories, of barren-ground caribou and of animals that prey upon caribou—wolves, grizzlies and wolverines. With better understanding of caribou physiology and of the effects of destruction of winter range by fire, factors associated therewith have assumed increasing importance, although human utilization still heads the list of recognized mortality causes. Studies continued of such fur mammals as mink, muskrat and beaver in the Mackenzie District, and of polar bear and white fox in Keewatin and Franklin Districts. A systematic aerial survey of the Queen Elizabeth Islands in the Far North was undertaken to assess the resources of large mammals available there. Big game mammals in the National Parks were also the object of continued study, special attention being given to mountain sheep and wapiti in the mountain parks of Alberta where large populations of those species facilitate investigations, and to the competition for food between wapiti and the livestock still allowed to graze in Riding Mountain Park in Manitoba. In Wood Buffalo Park, investigations into the problems of disease and low reproductive rates among the animals were continued as a long-term project in the hope that some control of each might be achieved.

Damage to cereal crops by wild ducks and sandhill cranes continued to receive intensive study and much time was devoted to other species greatly reduced in number or in danger of extinction such as Ross's geese, trumpeter swans and whooping cranes. Nationwide investigations of migratory waterfowl included kill surveys in the Provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario and a crop-damage survey in Saskatchewan. In addition, a mourning dove census was begun and the Arctic bird-banding program was continued.

At the end of 1961 the research staff included 41 wildlife biologists stationed at various centres throughout Canada. Ornithologists were located at Vancouver, B.C., Edmonton, Alta., Saskatoon, Sask., Winnipeg, Man., Ottawa and Aurora, Ont., Quebec, Que., Sackville, N.B., and St. John's, Nfld. Mammalogists were stationed in the Northwest Territories at Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Aklavik, and at Edmonton and Ottawa. Two limnologists were located at Edmonton and a range specialist and two pathologists at Edmonton and Ottawa, respectively. A number of university graduates and undergraduates are engaged annually to assist in summer field work. Ottawa headquarters has an administrative staff of about 30 in addition to supervisory research officers and about 25 part-time migratory bird wardens and sanctuary caretakers are employed.