

Aviator to Detect Forest Fires

QUITE the latest development in the protection of the forests from fires is the appointment of an aviator to detect any forest fires near Big Trout Lake in Wisconsin. He is L. A. Vilas, a relative of the late United States Senator William F. Vilas, of Wisconsin. Using his hydroaeroplane and arising from Big Trout Lake, Mr. Vilas in a few minutes can reach an altitude of 1,000 feet and from that height can survey some 200,000 acres of forested land. If he detects smoke indicating a fire in the forest he can report in a few minutes more to the State Forestry headquarters for the district and in a very short space of time state forest rangers can be placed along the line of the fire.

The use of a flying machine is particularly valuable for this kind of work where the country is flat or where there are no high elevations upon which lookout stations may be placed. In flat or rolling lands lookout towers enable the observer to guard a territory of rather small area, whereas Aviator Vilas at the height of 1,000 feet can detect a fire thirty or forty miles away from the lake.

While appointed by the State Forester, Mr. Vilas accepts no remuneration, volunteering his services. In writing to AMERICAN FORESTRY about the work, Mr. Vilas says:

"I greatly appreciate the interest you show in the part the flying boat is taking in detecting forest fires. The

machine I am using is a standard Curtis four-passenger flying boat with a Curtis eight-cylinder V type 100 horsepower motor. This machine has an average speed of about sixty-two miles an hour in the air and forty miles an hour in the water, with a climbing capacity of 1,000 feet in three minutes. At an altitude of 1,000 feet a fire thirty or forty miles away is distinctly visible.

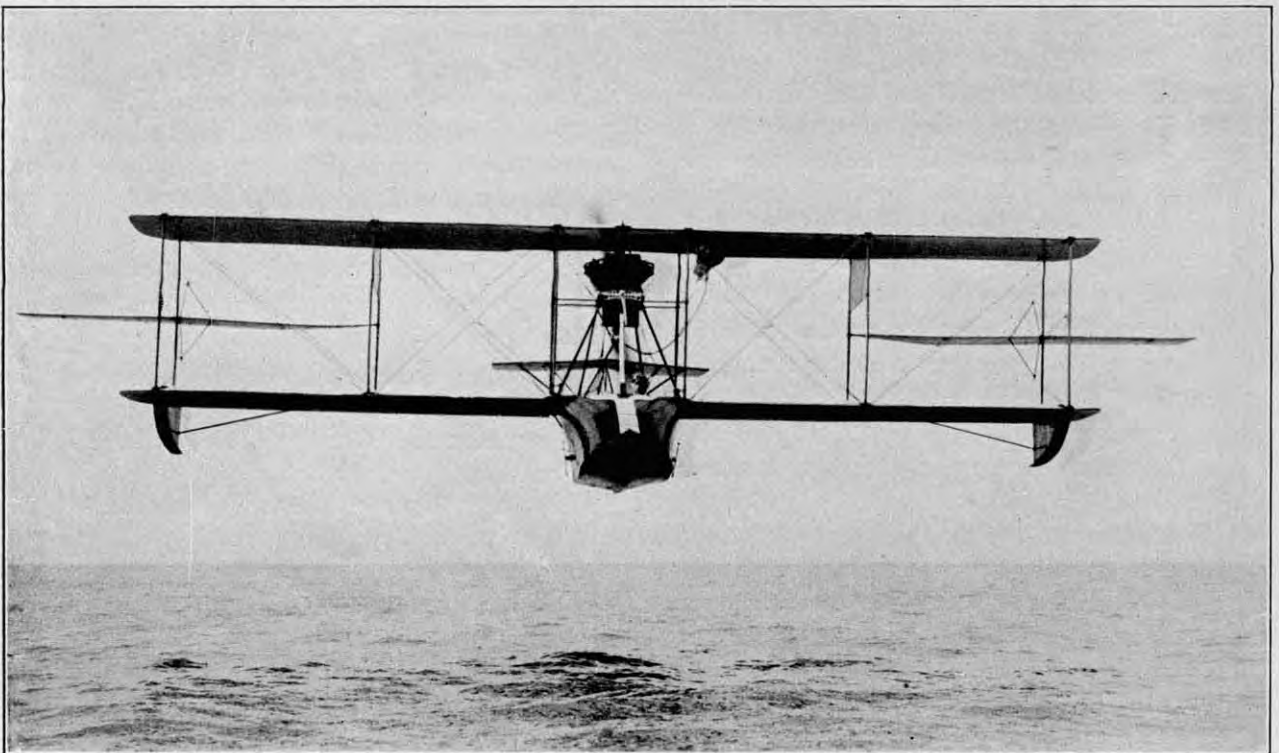
"I usually am flying every evening around six o'clock and I always reach an altitude which enables me to see about forty miles in every direction and if I do see indications of fire I can report to the Forestry headquarters at Trout Lake within three minutes."

E. M. Griffith, who has recently resigned as State Forester of Wisconsin, said:

"It is generous of Mr. Vilas to offer these services to the state without charge. The other day I made an ascent with him and we detected a fire. By communicating with the rangers when we came down, we found that it was a settler doing some clearing. The hydroaeroplane will reach the place of a fire in only a few minutes, where otherwise hours would be consumed."

Mr. Vilas recently discovered a fire thirty miles off and on investigation it was found that he had made an accurate estimate of the distance.

Mr. Griffith said that at an altitude of about 1,000 feet it is possible to clearly view all of the state forest



HYDROAEROPLANE USED FOR FOREST FIRE PROTECTION WORK

This machine which has an average speed of 62 miles an hour in the air and 40 miles on the water, with a climbing capacity of 1,000 feet in three minutes is used by L. A. Vilas who has volunteered his service to protect the forests near Trout Lake, Wisconsin, from fire. At a height of 1,000 feet he can survey 200,000 acres of forested land and in a few minutes can report any indication of a forest fire to the State Forestry Department headquarters for the district.



AVIATOR L. A. VILAS

With his hydroplane Mr. Vilas is aiding in protecting the forests near Trout Lake, Wisconsin, from fire. His work in behalf of the State Forestry Department being the first time that a flying machine has been used for forest fire protection.

reserve lands in Vilas county. He declares that the ascent which he made with Mr. Vilas was 1,600 feet and the 1,200 lakes in the county at that high altitude was one of the finest panoramic views that he has ever seen. The hydroaeroplane is known as "L. A. V., II." This is the second machine that Mr. Vilas has owned. Mr. Vilas is familiarly known in aviation circles as "Jack" Vilas, and about a year ago came into prominence by reason of his flight in a machine across Lake Michigan.

TEXAS STATE FORESTER

TEXAS, which recently passed a State forestry law, has selected J. H. Foster, professor of forestry in the New Hampshire State College and forester of the State's Agricultural Experiment Station, as State forester.

Mr. Foster is a native of Massachusetts, and is thirty-five years old. He was graduated from Norwich University in 1903 and from the Yale Forest School in 1907. After leaving Yale he entered the United States Forest

Service as a forest assistant, and in 1910 was promoted to assistant chief of State cooperation. His principal assignments were studies of forest conditions in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, the examination of forest conditions on the watersheds of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, and the taxation of forest lands in New Hampshire. Mr. Foster left the service September 1, 1911, to become professor of forestry in the New Hampshire State College and forester of the State's Agricultural Experiment Station.

The position of State Forester of Texas, which he will assume about September 15, is one of the best positions of this kind ever offered, combining, as it will, all the forestry work undertaken by the State—administrative, teaching, and investigative. The work will be centered at the Agricultural and Mechanical College, at College Station. There will be a forestry department on equal footing with other principal departments of the college, which will administer the forestry law, including the fire protective system, management of State forests, and cooperation with private owners; and the State Forester will supervise the teaching work in forestry under the direction of the School of Agriculture, and the forest investigative work under the direction of the Agricultural Experiment Station. He will have an exceedingly free hand, and will be removed from politics as far as possible. It is expected that the relatively small appropriation of \$10,000 will be considerably increased by the next legislature as the result of a constantly increasing interest in forestry work throughout the State. Mr. Foster will bring to the position a broad experience, and the State is certainly to be congratulated on the selection.

JAPAN'S FOREST LANDS

THAT the Empire of Japan has a forest preserve more than ten times the area of the New York State Forest Preserve was stated by R. Nakai, a director of the Japanese Forest Service, when he visited the Conservation Commission at Albany recently to inquire into New York State forestry methods. Mr. Nakai is in the United States on behalf of the Japanese Government, and is making a special study of reforestation and fire protection. He visited the New York State nurseries and tree plantations, and made a tour of a large part of the Adirondacks to observe the detailed workings of the State's system of fire prevention. Mr. Nakai expressed much interest in the struggle in the New York State constitutional convention to permit the commercial utilization of the forest preserve. In Japan, he said, which has a forest area of sixty-seven per cent of the total area of the country, the forests were sharply classified into "utilization forests" and "protection forests." The object of the "protection forests," he explained, is to preserve the safety of the land and further the welfare of the people. The protected area is over 18 million acres, against 1,821,614 in New York State. The forest land not owned by the state is subject to the control of the Government, according to the provisions of the Japanese forest law.