



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN FIELD & GAME ASSOCIATION (Inc.)

G.P.O. BOX T1718, PERTH 6001
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS:

FIELD & GAME FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA
JOINT SHOOTING FOUNDATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CLAY TARGET ASSOCIATION
WILDFOWLERS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

R. MOTTERAM
J. LITHGOW
D. GREATREX
~~J. THOMAS~~

THANKS

We appreciate being invited to this meeting again this year and offer our thanks.

CO-OPERATION

We have received a high level of co-operation from the Department, and all enquiries have been promptly answered.

The real co-ordination which occurred with Jim Lane and Don Munro this year is really appreciated and we do hope this continues into future years.

The depth gauge programme is a fine example of this co-operation and we are sure all appreciate the importance of this work. Water depth and quality is, as we see it, the first concrete step towards the waterfowl understanding. We applaud Jim and Don for the initiation of the scheme and thank them for their efforts to have us involved.

The invitation extended to our Association by Jim Lane for the flight north of Perth which took place early in September, was greatly appreciated as we had been planning such a venture ourselves, had the funds been available.

Again, I thank the Department for such co-operation.



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FIELD AND GAME RESEARCH

EXCLUDING DEPTH GAUGE INVOLVEMENT

King Street, Bayswater sanctuary

This is truly a grass roots study. Eric Singleton has visited this sanctuary at least fortnightly, observed and studied the bird population.

He has installed 14 nest boxes: all but two are 4-5 gallon drums with half of each cut out. The other two, a 4 gallon drum, half cut out one end only and a plastic nest box, the same as those used by the Department.

Departure from past methods included -

- a. Shaded tree areas.
- b. Allowing walk-up for birds where possible.
- c. Local scraps were used to line the nests.
- d. All erected close to water level.

I have taken the trouble to give you some insight into Eric's efforts because of his high success rate.

Eight nest boxes were used, including the two variations. Bird types to breed in the boxes were:-

Teal Grey
Black Duck
Coot
Blue Bill Duck (considered a freak)

Of interest, the Blue Bill. It is our belief that we have a lazy Blue Bill because last year the egg was found in with 8 black duck eggs. The blackies had hatched and the egg was cold.

By using hand temperature, then a light globe, the duck was successfully hatched and eventually found its way to the zoo.

This year we have located a similar egg on its own in a nest similar to a coot's nest (again, not a normal Blue Bill's nest). This egg is chalkier than the one last year but two factors are considered.

- a. Variations do occur from year to year.
- b. This year it is in an open area whereas it was in a box last year, so the surface would be dryer.



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RESEARCH (Cont'd)

Yealering

Because of the dry year experienced, not a great deal could be accomplished. However we have constructed two stick and sand islands as well as a floating raft.

We have also set up Eric Singleton-type nest boxes but higher out of the water and mostly without lead up for the birds.

Organisers

Bob Burking
Brad Kneebone
Dennis Walker

Emu Lakes

Several visits have been made and the vegetation, encroaching farming, water depth, quality of water, in-coming water path and out-going water path have been considered by Laurie Anderson, who is in charge of this programme.



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OUR PREPARATION FOR THIS MEETING

Jim Lithgow and Laurie Hateley flew the south coast area, coming back through Kojonup, to Perth and with your permission Jim will explain his observations and experiences.

Jim, also an ex-resident of Kalgoorlie, will also explain what he has learnt from east of Kalgoorlie.

(Jim to speak)

Dennis Greatrex flew with Jim Lane and Don Munro north of Geraldton and again with your permission, Dennis will explain his experiences and observations.

(Dennis to speak)

THE BASIS FOR OUR DECISION MAKING

Australia wide the Field and Game place a great deal of importance on wildlife management principles.

We make every effort to have all decisions based on those principles.

Last year we opted for a nil season for the following reasons:-

1. Evidence of low breeding.
2. Low water supplies for the birds.
3. The concentration on those limited waters.

Last year we received wide criticism because of:-

1. Expanse of water on the south coast coupled with the inability of shooters to cover all areas for most are inaccessible to shooters. Thus very low percentages could be shot.
2. The expanse of water east of Kalgoorlie where again the bird populations are safe because of the shooters' inability to get to the birds.
3. Both areas reported a great deal of breeding, so harvesting numbers was not seen as damaging especially when considering the water available for those birds.
4. The past conclusions that the wheat belt must be good for duck survival is now a very shaky argument because in the history of W.A., such times as now have been experienced before and the birds have survived.



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5. The birds will be where the water is, and there will be as many birds as there is water available.
6. Because of the ability of the birds to move quickly out of the reach of shooters, except in certain given circumstances, the shooters' effect on the overall situation is minimal.

Incidentally, 4, 5 and 6 above concur with the thinking in N.S.W. and Victoria, who are people just as concerned with wildlife management as are your Department and our Association.

In the east a season is held every year and they know that the birds will fly from Queensland to Victoria if conditions are right.

Because of reasons given above and because of the experience of the past few years and the awareness that the same has occurred in the past, we the Field and Game Association are beginning to doubt that the south west-Eucla land division is in fact a biological unit unto itself. If the birds are not in this area we believe they still exist - because we believe in their survival instincts which history shows they possess.

Nevertheless, we agreed that we did not know enough of the above so the nil season recommendation took place.

WHY DO WE CONSIDER THIS YEAR DIFFERENT?

1. Existence of the birds

We know there is still substantial water in the south coast. There is substantial water east of Kalgoorlie and a lot of it will last through the summer.

There is also plenty of water north of Yalgoo.

2. Breeding

I am sure that all agree that breeding has occurred as it did last year, along the coast and south coast, east of Kalgoorlie as well this year north of Yalgoo.

3. Wheat Belt

The wheat belt is a disastrous area and apart from isolated pockets virtually no damage can come to the duck numbers because there are so few.



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4. Distance

The areas to shoot are so far from Perth where the bulk of the shooters are, that the pressure of the hunters will be minimal.

5. Poaching

Last year rumours of shooting in areas indicated that some of these shoots were organised - indicating again that the honest people are the only ones to suffer.

A short season would probably see very few increases in shooting in these good local areas.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

That a season be declared open in the south west - Eucla land division.

That the opening be prior to Christmas.

That the season be open ended.

That the bird take be ten (10) legal species (possession 20).

These last two suggestions are made after considering the following points:-

- . There is a large area of the state in the south-west land division where there is no water and therefore no birds;
- . What limited water there is with a limited number of birds, will not be heavily shot because it is mainly on private property.

It is considered by our Association that a limited number of shooters will travel to the areas where there is a permanent open season, therefore we believe it should be made worth their while.

Some areas of the south-west coastal strip which are relatively inaccessible, hold good water and bird numbers, and to maintain credibility with the duck shooting population, it is our considered opinion that the Department should not restrict them unduly.



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C O N C L U S I O N S

It is our Association's belief that a season in the south west - Eucla land division will create very little pressure on the birds from hunters, as most will not go to the trouble to travel so far afield.

Also, it will help ease the feeling that the Fisheries and Wildlife are prepared to take away the rights of the shooters without allowing any concessions. The past few years have seen this feeling grow.

People who believe that a government department is unfair to them generally, tend to follow their beliefs despite rules and regulations.

The Field and Game Association ^{does not} condones law breaking and in an endeavour to overcome the possibility of this arising this year with regard to a duck season, we see a tremendous psychological benefit in the granting of a season this year for the long term good in the relationship between the Department and shooters.

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DENNIS GREATREX'S REPORT

Key: * Denotes good shooting

1. Lake Karrakin -
Not impressive; half to three-quarters full.
Not many birds of any kind.
2. Off Snagg Island - (White Lakes)
One-third full of water. 500 Mounties; a few of several other species.
3. Lake Logue -
Almost dry. No birds at all.
Lake Erindoon - $\frac{1}{2}$ full. 500 mounties, blackies, teal.
4. Greenough River -
Not flowing, plenty of large puddles.
Numerous groups (10) mounties and teal.
5. Due west Tallering Peak
Still plenty of water in pools and groups of birds.
6. Lake Nerramyne -
Dry.
7. Murchison River - (West of Mullewa Road)
Wood duck and blackies; groups approx. 10.
8. Lake Muggon -
Three-quarters full; thousand teal; hundred swans and few mounties.
9. Lake Breeberly -
Water full; thousand teal with young.
10. Wooramal River -
Not flowing; odd pools; low birds.
11. Gasgoyne River -
Not flowing, pools full; groups of 10 ducks.

12. Upper Murchison -
Plenty of water; small groups Blackies.
13. *Murchison - (Near Mt. Gould)
Small groups blackies; one large group (500) of teal, blackies and wood duck.
14. *Hewitt's Find
30 teal and blackies; few wood duck.
15. Lake Anneen
Lot of water - near full; few hundred teal, some mouties, thousands of stilts, 100 swans with cygnets; white eyes and teal about 500 one flock; 100 wood duck.
16. Lake Austin -
Over full; pink ear, teal, blackies, banded stilts, aveson. Salt 8 parts per thousand. Lots of breeding, mostly pink ear, teal, swans. Several thousand teal with young. One huge concentration of moulting mouties towards the western end. Huge mobs of coote. Magnificent breeding - lots of islands. Wood duck about 100. More large groups of moulting teal, pink ear. 10% blackies overall.
17. Roderick River -
Wood duck, teal and blackies groups 10-20.
18. *Lake Wooleen -
Over full. Mainly coote with pink ear, white eye, grey teal, blackies with 1,000 or so of young teal, few Freckle Duck. Two miles north Murchison River - plenty shags, coote, pelicans and water. Few ducks, small trickle of water flowing.
19. Turn east past Twin Peaks -
Cockney Bill Creek -
Not much water; some grey teal.
20. East of Wagga Wagga -
Half to three-quarters full; very shallow; will be dry by January 1981 without rain. Plenty of young teal, wood duck, lots of coote; over 500 teal. Some mouties.
* Good duck shooting Lake Noongal.

21. Lakes just south of Yalgoo -
Three-quarters full; 500 teal and mouties; couple of hundred swans with cygnets; 1,000 moulting mouties and teal; hundreds of coote.
22. Few miles south of Thunderlarra -
Full of water; hundreds of grey teal and blackies.
23. Mongers Lake -
 $\frac{1}{2}$ full; thousands of banded stilts; few hundred drey teal, blackies.
24. Lake Moore and south -
Dry.

DUCK SURVEY

1st Section

Jandakot - Forrestdale - Armadale.

Large quantity of casual water and natural swamps.

Lake Cooloongup - full

All the recognised marsh and swamp in the Cockburn Sound hinterland are full and there is also casual water.

Hinterland from Warnbro - Mandurah good supply of water.

Harvey River and Harvey Flats area inland from Lake Preston hold good water.

Land between Waroona and coastal strip is excellent.

There is also plenty of large water expanses suitable for bird refuge if subjected to shooting pressure, i.e. Lake Preston and Lake Clifford.

This area extends all the way to Bunbury virtually.

Coastal region extending from Bunbury - Capel - Busselton all area carries suitable water in good supply.

2nd Section

Busselton to Lake Quilaijup - Lake Jasper and surrounds holds numerous small swamps - inland from Cape Beaufort. NUMEROUS DUCKS ALL THIS AREA.

Many access roads into this region are underwater and not passable at this time.

Flight path was then taken from Lake Jasper to Lake Muir - the country in area was abundant with natural water holes, Swamps and man made dams and dammed creeks and water courses.

Lake Muir is holding a fair cover of water but it does appear shallow.

The surrounding areas have good water and there are several large swamps in the near vicinity with small type lakes evident.

Approaching Cranbrook there are numerous lakes and amounts of surface water but it was not possible to ascertain which are fresh. In addition there are countless dams and excellent habitat for maned geese.

3rd Section

East from Cranbrook and immediate proximity to ranges was poor, the approaching flats area leading down to Albany holds quite a few small waterholes.

Warburton Lake, Ten Mile swamp area and White Lake group were holding good water and cover.

Mettler Lake and surrounds inland from Cape Riche are holding abundant water. Very little water was then available until the Bremmer Bay area - from Beaufort Inlet to Bremmer Bay was excellent within ten mile radius of the coast and east to Dempster Inlet.

No further water was visible then until Hopetoun where immediate area and Jindacuttup complex looked good and several small lakes held good supplies of water.

From Jindacuttup and Hopetoun to Dumbleyung was poor with no prospects.

Dumbleyung to Wagin - poor.

Wagin and adjacent areas hold some water and ducks were evident, possibly 50% water capacity only though.

Beaufort River flats and area towards Kojonup hold some water and birds with countless dams available in cropping areas, would no doubt be excellent habitat for Mountain Duck and Maned Geese. NUMEROUS DUCKS THICK AREA

Lake system between Wagin and Kojonup appears the best in this area.

Lake Yealering appears to hold water but no assessment of depth was possible.

Delays were experienced in refueling at Narrogin and it was not possible to undertake a visible inspection of this area.

A lake system north east of Brookton comprising 4/5 lakes of considerable size held good water (Yenverring Lakes?), and covered a considerable area in length.

The next area to hold abundant water was in the metro area surrounding Forrestdale which would provide refuge for any birds under shooting pressure.

Summation

Although poor areas were encountered, this is reasonably to be expected considering the magnitude of the area surveyed.

Alternatively many areas were above average in quality and quantity of water and habitat.

The only areas not considered suitable for a season, would be those where farm dam levels were very low in addition to lack of natural surface water, i.e. Dumbleyung.

The main coastal strip where recognised habitat is documented, hold ample supplies of water and terrain of such type, that should birds be put under shooting pressure then suitable refuge places are readily available in close proximity.

It would not be possible with a heavy influx of shooters to any of the recognised areas for birds to be wiped out for lack of alternative refuges within easy flight distances.

Due consideration should also be given to the proliferation of man made dams in the cropping areas which are very popular with our more numerous species, i.e. Mountain Duck and Maned Geese which have bred very strongly on domestic dams throughout the great Southern Region.