

SURVEY OF SALT LAKE 14th NOV 1974.

Salt Lake is situated $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres North of Lk. Namming in the Dandaragon Shire. The survey was undertaken to determine the reason why a large population of Mountain duck utilize the lake as observed the previous week during an aerial survey.

Access was gained from the Eneabba Highway a short distance past the 92 mile peg. The track, though fenced across near the Highway is a gazetted road and open to public access.

The following facts were established from the inspection of the lake and its surrounds.

- i. The lake on the day of inspection was nine (9) feet deep at the centre which is approx. one (1) foot below the max. depth attainable. The water's edge was only several feet out from the max. perimeter.
- ii. Small feeder creeks have ceased flowing while the main supply from Lk. Namming is still flowing in very slowly.
- iii. The water flowing in from Lk. Namming is quite fresh to taste while the salinity of Salt Lake was much higher. A water sample was obtained from the East side of the lake.
- iv. The only aquatic animals observed were "Boatmen" but even these were few with no large concentrations being observed. Weed and grasses, etc., were not present in water up to 2 feet deep; we were unable to ascertain whether it was present at greater depths due to the murkiness of the water.
- v. An inspection around the shore on the windward side failed to locate any of the Blue-Green Algae nor were any dead birds or animals found.
- vi. The population of Mountain duck (though difficult to establish positively) was approx. 12,000. Of these, 10,000 are incapable of flight as they are in moult while many of the remainder appear also to have commenced moulting.
- vii. An attempt was made to capture birds to determine their age but this proved unsuccessful as the water was very dirty making it difficult to trace the birds when they dived. They did appear, however, to be mainly adult birds with only a few juveniles being noted.

An examination of secondary feathers recovered from around the lakes edge would seem to confirm that the moulting birds are in fact adult as none were found to have obvious white tips on the under-side. The sample feathers attached are typical of those found and inspected.

- viii. Other water-birds noted were:- approx 200 Black Swans (a few of which were in moult) a small flock of Grey teal and several White-eye duck.

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Comments:

As stated, there is no sign of sickness apparent at this time in the birds, though there is very little food available (that we could determine). With a supply of fresh water still present and grasses, etc., around the lakes perimeter I expect the birds will receive sufficient sustenance to survive through the period of the moult.

Further inspections of the lake are recommended to determine the accuracy of these assumptions.

The feasibility of trapping the ducks during their moult period is suspect. At this time they are very timid and are reluctant to be driven ashore. When an attempt was made to do this the birds dived and swam toward the centre of the lake. They are, however, heavily concentrated in flocks of 1-2,000 for a quite some time (10-15 minutes) before they disperse. At this time they are around the lakes edge in water up to 2-3 feet deep.

Any successful attempt at trapping employing this method would be a large scale exercise requiring much preparation, equipment and also a large body of men. It would be necessary to engage a large team of experienced handlers and processors to expediate the banding and recording in a short period.

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