

CONSERVATOR OF WILDLIFE

Attached please find a summary of wildlife officers' comments on the opening of the 1979 duck shooting season. A report from Wildlife Officer Lambert (now on leave) has been mislaid.

The 1 am opening was opposed by all shooters (other than areas which opened at 5 am) even when it was explained that it was generally expected by the Department that shooting would not start until daylight. The more reasonable shooters said that that is what they had interpreted also and they would wait until species were identifiable.

In several areas involving a 1 am opening, by agreement, shooting did not in fact commence before daylight.

In most other areas, shooting commenced at, or just before, 1 am with little or no results. Cloud cover reduced the possibility of shooting in some areas whereas in others, moonlight permitted shooting, but with little ability to identify species or recover birds shot or wounded. Shooting then re-commenced at various hours before and after daylight.

There was a 5 am opening at Wannamal, Coomelberrup and Benger. There was a suggestion by the wildlife officer at Wannamal that the shoot should have started there half an hour after sunrise to eliminate the accidental shooting of protected species. Some shooting started at Benger (private property) at 4.30 am. Most shooting at Benger commenced at 4.45 am. Some persons were apprehended.

At Coomelberrup no shooters were present. No problems.

At Wannamal (5 am opening) one shooter was accidentally shot in the hindquarters without serious complications. No other accidents were reported from any other area where wildlife officers were present.

At all of the three aforementioned areas, shooters expressed dissatisfaction with the bag limits, but after explanation to the Wannamal shooters begrudged acceptance was noticeable. Benger shooters felt that more game species could have been granted because of the "one shoot weekend" when most shooting occurs.

As a general rule, shooters were dissatisfied with the bag limit. This criticism, I feel, was highlighted because many shooters would only get the "one shoot" and to travel long distance with the expense involved for only "3 decent ducks" was unacceptable.

Conservation considered, it was felt that more game species ducks (other than Mountain Duck) could have been included with a consequent shorter season. A shorter season of course would not

be acceptable to all persons, especially residents of country areas who can shoot throughout the season as distinct from the restricted metropolitan shooter.

Another factor affecting the "one shoot for 3 decent ducks" was the \$5.00 license fee for 1979. The combination of these factors produced a lot of criticism.

Others felt that bag limits should be lifted on Mountain Duck and Wood Duck. Many farmers in the South West can destroy these ducks on damage permits because of property and dam pollution. An open bag could have been considered for these. It would also assist those farmers incurring damage. An open bag on Mountain Ducks would probably not mean that any more would be shot, as they are not particularly popular or palatable.

After analysing the wildlife officers' reports it was found that -

- 1 Wildlife Officer recommended a return to a 5 pm Saturday opening.
- 3 Wildlife Officers recommended a return to a 6 pm Saturday opening.
- 2 Wildlife Officers agreed with the 1 am opening because of the conservation of the ducks.
- 6 Wildlife Officers recommended an opening in "daylight hours" either 6 pm Saturday or "daylight" Sunday (to facilitate easier enforcement).
- 1 Wildlife Officer recommended a 5 am opening if the opening occurs again on a Sunday.
- 2 Wildlife Officers had no strong particular preference, but I believe would rather have shooting in "daylight hours".

In my comments at the last meeting of the Bird Committee on December 20, 1978, I said that irrespective of opening times, enforcement would always be a problem.

I now believe that any 1 am opening is not a suitable time and in future seasons the opening times should be restricted to "daylight hours". Whether it be a 5 pm or 6 pm opening on the Saturday evening, or 5 am or daylight opening on the Sunday. The changes in Saturday or Sunday opening will obviously be as a result of aerial surveys and recommendations by the Waterfowl Research team.

Another thought submitted by wildlife officers was that an aerial survey should be carried out just prior to the season so that the distribution of ducks and the lakes which carry the most water could be noted and passed to wildlife officers so that enforcement deployment can be better calculated.

I feel that the question of bag limits will always be difficult to allocate and will obviously depend on good and bad breeding

seasons, which in turn are dependant on good or bad winters.

I do believe, however, that in the cases of bad breeding seasons and if a season is declared, a shorter season with an increase of edible ducks should be considered. Conservation would be served by the reduction of shooting time.

In all, complex questions which arise can only be sorted out annually when surveys and seasons are analysed. However, I cannot see myself agreeing to a 1 am opening again. Some reasons for this are listed, i.e. -

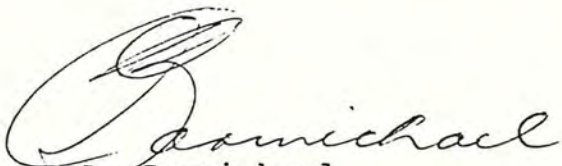
1. Shooters who commenced before 1 am could not be located.
2. Terrain and geography of areas, in darkness, difficult to negotiate.
3. Easier for shooters to hide total (if any) ducks taken.
4. Identification of other protected fauna, rare species and non game species impossible (specifically prohibited to shoot until able to identify).
5. Many shooters thought we expected them to start at 1 am rather than our thoughts to wait until daylight.
6. When ducks shot or wounded many would be unrecoverable because of darkness. Also, fall flight cannot be accurately determined.
7. Moonlight in some areas allowed the shooting to commence at 1 am (or before) and not as anticipated - at first light. In other areas darkness limited the 1 am opening.
8. Checking of shooters/licenses, difficult for wildlife officers as many arrived after dark and during the night.
9. High risk factor evident for all persons present with firearms and alcohol.
10. 1 am opening encourages shooters to shoot at "sitting ducks" (specifically prohibited).
11. Night shooting generally is discouraged (see Duck Shooter's Guide information to shooters).

Another suggestion by wildlife officers was that duck shooter's licenses not be granted to persons who do not hold a Firearm's License. Some persons believe that possession of a duck shooter's license because of the specific requirement to use a shotgun automatically means they can get a Firearm's License. Fremantle Police have rejected some applicants because of their unsuitability as license holders. A change in regulations should be made to make the applicant for a duck shooter's license produce a current firearm license before the duck shooter's license is issued. I agree with that suggestion.

Approximately 12 prosecutions are pending involving -

1. Exceeding the bag limit.
2. Shooting rare ducks.
3. Shooting before season opened.
4. Shooting other protected fauna

I trust the foregoing comments are satisfactory and suitably explained for your edification.



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CHIEF WILDLIFE OFFICER

February 19, 1979

Att.

1979 DUCK SHOOTING SEASON (OPENING DAY) SUMMARY

Name of Officer	Area Patrolled At Opening Shoot	Shooters' Comments on Bag Limit	Shooters' Comments on Opening Time	No. of Shooters	Ducks Taken	Predominant Species	Wildlife Officers' Comments
IGGOTT	Lake Yealering & Lake Brown (White-water Lake) (1 am opening)	Not enough game species.	Most suggested 4-5 am opening - "1 am bloody ridiculous"	90 + 90 on Lake Brown	See tally sheet.	See tally sheet.	1 shot at 12.50 am. Others at 1 am for 20 mins. Re-opened at 4.10 am (Yealering) and 0430 (Browns). Recommend 5 am for policing and safety factor.
MILLER	Lake Eganu (1 am opening)	Not happy with bag limit.	Resentment - not one person agreed to the 1 am opening. First light or 5 am.	42 checked	See tally sheet.	Grey Teal	First shot at 4.25 am (by agreement). Some shooters suggested weekend season - more ducks over limited period. Agreed daylight starting better for enforcement.
PEARSON ROBERTS	Wannamal Lake (5 am opening)	Disappointed with high m/d numbers. Should have been more g/s, i.e. 5 g/s and 5 m/d.	Okay at Wannamal. Other lakes unnecessary and dangerous.	73	206	Grey Teal (161) Black Duck (29)	0450 two shooters commenced. 5 am start too early. Should be ½ an hour after sunrise.
BOYNE	Lake Corakin (1 am opening)	Too many m/d.	"Ridiculous" - unfair to all shooters, especially metro. 1 shoot.	11	18	1 000 (m/d 80%)	Shooting commenced at 0400 hrs
DOOKE	Esperance (1 am opening)	6 g/s and no limit on m/d. Shorten the season, increase the bag limit.	All shooters against 1 am 50% in favour 5 am. <i>OTHER 50% FAVOUR EVENING OPENING</i>	45	See tally sheet.	See tally sheet.	Shooting commenced at 4.15 am. Shorten the season and increase the bag limit.

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NEAL	Gundaring (1 am opening)	Should be 4-5 game species - open bag on w/d on farmers' dams.	6 pm opening on a Saturday. Distance to travel expensive, dangerous with drunks on any early morning.	50 shooters left the area 15 remained	Nil	100 m/d 20 g/t 15 b/d	Shooting commenced at daybreak - lift bag limit restrictions on w/d and m/d. 6 pm opening on a Saturday and earlier in the year.
HABERLEY	Lake Coomelberrup (5 am opening)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2-2 500 m/d 400 g/t 250 b/d	Water at 1/4 capacity. 1 am opening acceptable for odd reasons. Has no strong preference. Identification difficult. Full moon helped.
WILSON	Beverley Lakes System (1 am opening)	See comments by J. QUINN.	See comments by J. QUINN	-	-	-	10 shots at about 1.15 am. Shooting commenced at about 4.00 am. Opening on Sunday pressure off duck populations. Moon phase must be considered if 1 am again. No preference.
OSBORN	Lake Noring, Quairading and Murduralmurrin (1 am opening)	No complaints.	Shooters didn't like the 1 am opening mainly because 1 day shoot.	5	12	7 m/d 5 g/t	A few shots at 0100 because of moon. Re-commenced at 0500. Identification almost impossible at 1 am and to locate ducks if they were shot 6 pm easier all around.
MASTERS	Busselton, Capel-Boyanup (1 am opening)		Should be 4.30 am "first light" but first choice 6 pm.	Estimated 80 Interviewed 44.	111	63 b/d 28 g/t 16 m/d 2 w/d 2 b/w/s Av. = 2.8 ducks	Recommended opening time 6 pm. Extensive media coverage. Some shots heard at 12.17 am - 95% at 1.00 am.

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SMITH	Coyrecup (1 am opening)	General disagreement.	Completely unacceptable. Should be 5 pm Saturday or 5 or 6 am Sunday.	77	300 - 5 per person	(3 000 sighted) m/d b/d	Shooting commenced 3.50 am (daylight was 5.20 am). 5 pm Saturday opening with appropriate bag limit most efficient. Use flares to open the shoots.
KELLY	Lake Ewylarmartup (1 am opening)	Too many m/d - divide bag equally - game species/ m/d.	"Ridiculous" - should be 5-6 pm Saturday.	15	54	m/d g/t b/d	Shooting commenced 4.10 am.
QUINN	Beverley Lakes System and †38008 (1 am opening)	Too many m/d.	All critical of 1 am opening. Should be 5 am (first light).	132 (115 checked)	139 g/t 6 b/d 193 m/d <u>338</u> Av. 2.93	m/d g/t	Some shooting 1.10 am. Majority 4.30 am. 1 am successful but should have been dark night. If dawn shoot - shorter season.
COUGHRAN	Benger (5 am opening)	General disagreement.	Some were quite hostile re 1 am in other areas. Other sensible people would shoot at daylight. Most wanted 2 day shoot.	33	14 m/d 2 b/d 2 g/t	2-300 m/d 40 g/t	Shooting started 4.30 am on private property, then in earnest at 4.45 everywhere. 1 am beneficial to waterfowl - just as difficult to police as any other time.
MELL	Murchison River areas and pools (1 am opening)	Travel from Perth to shoot 3 ducks. Very few m/d in this area - therefore shoot only 3 game species.	None favoured 1 am opening. 50% favoured pm Saturday & 50% said daylight opening better - can't identify at dark.	39	83 (av. 2.13)	Very few m/d b/d g/t w/d	2 shots fired at 1 am. All shooters commenced at 5 am. Night shooting should be banned. All opening times difficult. Perhaps "sunrise" suitable.

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MAHONEY	Dumbleyung Lake and Coblinine River (1 am opening)	General disagreement.	Dangerous to shoot during darkness. 6 pm Saturday allows more time to shoot and safer.	2	5 m/d	2-300 m/d odd g/t and b/d	1 am opening also dangerous for wildlife officers. Shooting started 4.45 am.

Abbreviations:

- . = bag limit
- l = black duck
- : = grey teal
- l = wood duck
- l = mountain duck
- : = game species
- /s = blue-winged shoveler