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1987 DUCK SHOOTING SEASON      KIMBERLEY, NORTH WEST AND  
EASTERN LAND DIVISIONS.

BACKGROUND

Twelve month open seasons for the taking of game species of ducks have been declared for the Kimberley, North West and Eastern Land Divisions each year from 1957 to the present.

During this time it has not been considered necessary or practicable to declare annual or occasional closed periods (as occur in the South West and Eucla Land Divisions) due to the vastness of the area concerned, the small number of human inhabitants, the difficulty of access to breeding areas following rain and the unpredictability of rains over most of the area concerned.

While the duck shooter licensing system does not enable us to determine precisely how many shooters are active each year in these parts of the State some indication can be gained from the numbers of licences sold in W.A. in years in which no seasons have been declared in the South West and Eucla Divisions. These have varied between 487 (in 1978) and 81 (1981) since 1973.

Prior to the formation of CALM the 12 month open season in the Kimberley, North West and Eastern Land Divisions was "rolled over" each year on the consensus view of the Bird Committee of the W.A. Wildlife Authority. A formal recommendation from the Wildlife Research Branch was not required.

1986 DUCK SHOOTING SEASON

In December 1985 it was recommended to the CALM Policy Directorate that the 12 month open season again be "rolled over" for 1986. This recommendation was accepted. Specifications of the current open season are as follows.

Opening Date	1 January 1986
Closing Date	31 December 1986
Bag Limit	10 ducks per person per day

MONITORING OF WATERFOWL ABUNDANCE

At its 2 December 1985 meeting the Policy Directorate also decided that the possibility of introducing some process for monitoring waterfowl numbers in the Kimberley, North West and Eastern Land Divisions should be investigated.

In January 1986 the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union commenced a 3 year contract with CALM inter alia to develop

a procedure for annual monitoring of waterfowl abundance in the south west. In response to the Policy Directorate's decision it was arranged for the south west waterfowl count held in March 1986 to be extended to include a small number of localities in the remainder of the State. Local volunteer observers visited twelve sites in the Goldfields, Pilbara and Kimberley. 1655 waterfowl (ducks and swans) were counted.

The RAOU has also been contracted by CALM to undertake expeditionary surveys of a number of remote wetlands of probable international importance during the next three years. The first was undertaken in August this year and involved 10 days of surveys of Lake Argyle in the Kimberley and Lake Gregory in the Great Sandy desert. A team of 13 observers (including 10 volunteers) using 4WD vehicles, boats and an aircraft counted 420,000 waterbirds of 66 species, including 183,000 waterfowl.

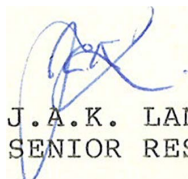
Given the above experience it would appear that a meaningful program of annual waterfowl abundance monitoring to cover the Kimberley, North West and Eastern Land Divisions is unlikely to be achieved solely through the use of individual volunteer observers and would require a substantial commitment of resources to either well-organized "expeditionary" surveys or extensive aerial survey or a combination of both.

Further experience will be gained next year. In March 1987 the RAOU intends recruiting more volunteer observers to cover a larger number of waterbird sites outside the south west. Expeditionary surveys with teams of observers will also be made to other remote wetlands of probable international importance. These efforts will put us in a better position to determine the practicability of an annual waterfowl monitoring program in these parts of the State and how it might best be undertaken.

#### 1987 DUCK SHOOTING SEASON

I am not aware of any data or other information which would indicate that it would be irresponsible to continue the current open season in the Kimberley, North West and Eastern Land Divisions. On this basis it is recommended that the open season continue during 1987.

As advised at the 31 October 1986 meeting of the NPNCA Fauna committee, in 1987 I intend to visit the North West to begin a review (with the assistance of CALM regional staff) or the adequacy of duck hunting controls outside the south west. Further advice will be provided prior to determination of the 1988 open season.



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November 25, 1986