

BOTULISM KILLS WATERFOWL

In the last issue of the Bulletin for Honorary Wardens, it was forecast that further outbreaks of botulism might reasonably be expected towards the end of this summer. It seems, however, from the recent discovery of sick and dead ducks along the Como foreshore, that the disease commenced earlier than had been expected. Dr. H. Bennetts, of the Animal Health and Nutrition Laboratory, Nedlands, diagnosed the disease as botulism and it is thought it has probably been caused by the dredging undertaken east of the new Narrows Bridge preparatory to the construction of the new non-access highway. The disease is caused by a very small organism which occurs in decaying vegetation and flesh. When circumstances are favourable, the bacillus multiplies very rapidly and generates a particularly potent poison known as botulinus toxin. The botulinus bacillus is related to two other well known organisms which are the causative agents of gas gangrene, a disease which was prevalent in France in World War I, and tetanus.

A minor outbreak of botulism has also occurred among the ducks in Queen's Gardens where carp and a tortoise have also died recently.

The birds picked up at Como included grey teal, little pied cormorants, little stints (sandpipers) and a banded plover, while those at Queen's Gardens included a domesticated khaki-campbell, a mallard-black duck hybrid and two black ducks. One of the black ducks was carrying band no. 1044, which had been placed on its leg on June 6, 1952, at Queen's Gardens.