

life reserves. The opponents of the reserve were unremitting in their fight to reduce or abolish this fauna sanctuary, however, and in 1957 the Government decided to divide the reserve into two areas, one to remain as a flora reserve and the other as a flora and fauna reserve. This decision appeared to placate, at least temporarily, the forces requesting its abolition although several applications for alienation of parts of it were made from time to time. The most recent serious attempt to reduce the reserve was made in May, last year, when the Northampton Shire Council submitted to the Premier a request that a substantial portion of the sanctuary be thrown open for agricultural development. This time, however, the defence of the reserve was not limited to professional conservationists, for an appreciation of the need for reserves has grown in recent years and local residents pointed out its value to the preservation of wildflowers. On the recommendation of the Lands Department, the Premier has agreed to the setting up of a committee which will inspect the reserve and make a recommendation in regard to its future. The Director, as Chief Warden of Fauna, is a member of the committee which will be led by the Lands Department's Divisional Surveyor (Central), Mr J.F. Morgan. Other members are Mr R.D. Royce, Botanist, and Mr C.F.H. Jenkins, Government Entomologist, of the Department of Agriculture; Dr D.L. Serventy, Principal Research Officer, Division of Wildlife Survey, C.S.I.R.O.; and Dr W.D.L. Ride, Director of the Western Australian Museum.

#### REPORTS ON OPENING DUCK SHOOT

Taking an overall view, the opening of the 1962-63 season for wild ducks could be regarded as generally satisfactory from the shooters' point of view. Reports from departmental officers who visited different localities, and from honorary wardens and shooters all indicate that varying successes were met in different districts. Fauna Warden S.W. Bowler and Inspector E.H. Barker, of Bunbury, attended the shoot on the Stirling estate near Capel. It proved to be rather disappointing. They found the lakes were at a low level, but approximately sixty guns took part in the shoot which commenced only two minutes before the official opening time. Before then ducks appeared to be reasonably plentiful, about 1,500 grey teal being observed with smaller numbers of mountain ducks and black ducks. At the commencement of shooting, however, the bulk of the birds appeared to make their way to the close areas. Shooters averaged slightly less than 3 ducks per gun, the bag consisting

of 80% grey teal, the remainder being mountain ducks and black ducks in about equal proportions.

Fauna Protection Officer H.B. Shugg, and Cadet Research Officer J. Jacoby, went to a spot known as the Casuarinas, which is a billabong of the Coblinine River, east of Katanning. They found that the private land surrounding the foreshore had recently been cleared, but a lot of water was held in the lake. This latter phenomenon was a result, they were told, of a bar across the river having been constructed downstream by the local authority which was carrying out improvements in Lake Ewlyamartup. At the Casuarinas, too, the opening got away almost on time, shooting starting one or two minutes before 5 a.m. As shooters took up their positions the ducks rose and some thousands of birds were in the air when shooting commenced. Despite the strong and persistent easterly wind, most of the forty-odd shooters did reasonably well and quite a few had obtained their bag limit by 8 a.m. By this time 312 grey teal, 14 black duck, 43 pink-eared ducks, 11 blue-winged shovellers, 3 maned geese and 1 freckled duck had been taken - a total of 384 birds, of which just over 80% were grey teal.

At the extensive Yenyening Lake system east of Beverley, where Fauna Warden N.E. McLaughlan went, some sporadic shooting broke out as early as 4.20 a.m. He reported that the shoot began in earnest at 4.45 and by 7 a.m. some shooters had taken their bag limit of fifteen. Quite a few more were found to have their bag limit when shooting stopped about 11 a.m. The extensive nature of the Lake system made it impossible to obtain an accurate count of the number of shooters or of the total bag. However, of the birds inspected, Mr McLaughlan found that about 70% were grey teal with mountain ducks comprising the remaining 30%. No other species, he said, were shot or seen during the shoot. One unsatisfactory feature was his finding the 25 dead white-headed and banded stilts around the lakes after the shoot. They had apparently been shot in mistake for ducks in the early morning light. One local warden described the conditions in the adjacent County Peak Lakes as being solidly overcrowded with shooters and added that generally poor bags were obtained.

At Benger Swamp, honorary wardens led by Mr R. Taylor organised what some described as a most successful shoot. The first guns were checked in at 2 p.m. and the total guns passed the 200 mark before opening time. Eighty guns were checked out and those shooters were found to have averaged just less than 3 per gun. Perhaps

that was why they were leaving and it must have been those who stayed later who did better. Mr Taylor said that shooters interviewed next morning, considered it to have been a huge success. They included many who were attending a really controlled opening for the first time and they seemed to appreciate the organisation even though the birds flew high after the opening signal.

Other reports from shooters and honorary wardens indicated that some very successful shoots were held at the lakes on the coastal plain out of Coorow, particularly at Lake Eganu which is reserved as waterfowl habitat under the Department's programme of wetland conservation.