

# NO S.W. DUCK SEASON

In November, the Minister for Fisheries and Fauna, the Hon. A. W. Bickerton, announced that there would be no duck shooting season in the South-West and Eucla Land Divisions this summer.

The last occasion when there was no duck shooting season was in the summer of 1969 and the pre-season conditions this year have followed a similar pattern to those of three years ago.

"In making my decision," said the Minister, "I have been guided by the recommendations of the Game Management Committee of the Western Australian Wildlife Authority. I feel that the Committee's recommendation echoes the thoughts and sentiments of responsible duck shooters and other conservation-minded people in the State".

Short seasons were declared in 1970 and 1971 and it had been anticipated that normal rainfall patterns would return, but the average rainfall in the South-West and Eucla Land Divisions this year was again well down on a normal season; this is the fourth year in succession that these Divisions have experienced low average rainfall.

From aerial surveys carried out by the Waterfowl Research Branch of the Department and by the W.A. Field and Game Association, it was observed that the majority of the wheatbelt wetland areas are dry and that there is a marked reduction in the refuge areas along the south coast. There are exceptions to these areas, notably at Moora, but these good areas do not balance the dry conditions experienced in the drought refuge areas further south.

Generally, breeding has been low throughout the two land divisions, and two of the major game species, Grey Teal and Black Duck, have been the main sufferers because of the deepening drought and lack of freshwater. On the other hand, Mountain Duck and Wood Duck (Maned Geese) have bred successfully because they utilise artificial areas such as farm dams.

The Department realises that Mountain Duck and Wood Duck could create problems in some areas and special arrangements have been made to control these species in such areas where Shires request assistance and if the Department agrees.

[FOOTNOTE: A restricted open season on Mountain Duck and Wood Duck was gazetted on December 22, 1972. Ducks may only be taken on private property in certain Shires with the written permission of the owner or occupier.]