

1974/75 DUCK SHOOTING SEASON

The 1974/75 Duck Shooting Season opened at 6 p.m. on Saturday January 11, 1975 and closed at midnight on April 30, 1975. The season was three weeks longer than the 1974 season and this had been made possible because the wetlands throughout the South-West Land Division had been flooded in most cases or at least attained their maximum depth. There were great numbers of birds on the wetlands and the production of young this season was estimated the maximum possible from the existing stock of mature birds.

During the previous 4-5 years, the stocks of birds had been depleted through poor breeding and migration when drought conditions had prevailed.

The bag limit this season was 10 ducks per person per day out of the nine game species available. A license (fee \$2.00) had to be obtained before game birds could be taken and these licenses were obtainable from all district offices of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife or by post from the Head Office at 108 Adelaide Terrace, Perth. Revenue from these game licenses was paid into the Fauna Conservation Trust Fund which is used for Game Management.

The opening was successful and, in general, the shooters attitude was good. Early shooting was a problem in many areas, but this was, and would always be difficult to alleviate. It was found generally throughout the State, that shooters were frustrated with the extra hour of daylight-saving in the evening and the larger expanses of water. This gave the ducks more chance to disperse when shooting started at 6 p.m. on opening day.

There was an abundance of water and birds at Oak Park, Yealering and Naremben right through to Esperance and there were still birds around when the opening shoot was over.

The Department's officer in charge of Waterfowl Research, Dr. T. L. Riggert was disappointed at the response from shooters in relation to return of bands and score cards. Twenty-four thousand Black Ducks were banded and only 25 bands had been handed in, and of 5 000 cards issued only 300 had been returned. He believed that the closing of Wannamal, and in particular the late closing of Toolibin, was responsible for the lack of response from shooters. Dr. Riggert added that in future it would probably be necessary for the Wildlife Officers and Waterfowl Research staff to handle research projects without relying on public support. Dr. Riggert said that the main problem areas during the opening were the new closures at Lakes Toolibin and Wannamal. Shooters were reluctant to quit these areas when approached by the Department's Wildlife Officers. Lake Toolibin, approximately 19 km south-east of Wickepin, was closed on December 16 in order to protect five pairs of the rare and endangered Freckled Duck of which one pair was incubating nine eggs.

The closure will in future provide local birds with a refuge within a chain of lakes where shooting is allowed. Also it was the only fresh water lake in the area and supported Egrets, Crested Grebes, Little Grebes and five other species breeding on the lake.

The northern half of Lake Wannamal was closed to shooting this year because of the sighting of a pair of Freckled Ducks last winter and the need for a refuge in the area.

Closure of a section of the Collie River north of the Brunswick and Collie Rivers junction was also considered necessary in order to provide a duck refuge against shooting pressures further upstream.

A total of 6 225 Duck Shooters Licenses were issued for the season.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT 1950-1975

On December 5, 1975 the Fauna Conservation Act Amendment Act was proclaimed and came into operation as the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950-1975.

Under the new "Act" several name changes have occurred, viz:

The Western Australian Wild Life Authority becomes the Western Australian Wildlife Authority and in abbreviated instances will be known as W.A.W.A.

The Chief Warden of Fauna becomes the Conservator of Wildlife.

Wardens of Fauna become Wildlife Officers.

Honorary Wardens of Fauna become Honorary Wildlife Officers.

Changes in the definitions of reserves are:—

"nature reserve" means an area of land which is vested in the Crown and which the Governor, subject to such conditions and limitations as he thinks fit, reserves to Her Majesty or disposes of in the public interest pursuant to the provisions of paragraph (g) of subsection (1) of section twenty-nine of the Land Act, 1933, for the conservation of indigenous flora or fauna;

"wildlife sanctuary" means an area of land which is the subject of an agreement made between the Minister and the owner of the land for its use as a sanctuary;

(As a result of the above it is no longer permissible for previously known "wildlife Sanctuaries" to be called as such unless an agreement has been entered into with the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife in accordance with the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950-1975).

The responsibility for the protection of native flora will be taken over by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife later this year and therefore included in the "Act" is the following reference:

"indigenous flora" means any wildflower, palm, shrub, tree, fern, creeper, vine or other plant which—

(a) is native to the State;

(b) is not growing under cultivation; and

(c) is not a noxious weed,

and includes any part of any indigenous flora and the seeds thereof.