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OUTLINES PROSPECTS FOR  
FALL WATERFOWL HUNTING

What the sportsmen of the United States can expect in the way of duck hunting in the future is a fixed season from October 1 to January 15 with the number of days of shooting varying from year to year in accordance with the abundance of waterfowl.

These are the prospects for the future outlined by J. N. Darling, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, following the recent annual meeting of the Advisory Board, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, in Washington.

Favoring a reduction this year in the number of hunting days because of the diminished supply of ducks, the Board has recommended that a 30-day shooting season be permitted between October 1 and January 15, but that the time and spread of the season in each State be recommended to the Biological Survey by the State Game Department.

"This provision," says Darling, "cuts down the number of days that the birds may be shot, but it gives each State the privilege of suggesting its own season. A State may take 30 days consecutively. It can choose 5 consecutive days each week for 6 consecutive weeks. It can take 3 consecutive days each week for 10 consecutive weeks, or it can choose 2 consecutive days a week for 15 weeks.

The ducks are having a hard time and we had to reduce the kill of birds, but we also want to increase the sportsman's privileges if we possibly can. This was the plan we suggested. The Board discussed other plans but finally decided that the Bureau's recommendation was the best way of dealing fairly with both the birds and the sportsmen. It fixes the outside limits of the time when the birds may be taken but allows flexibility in the actual number of shooting days so that these may be increased or decreased each season in accordance with the abundance of the ducks."

The Advisory Board also recommended that the baiting of waterfowl in the vicinity of a shooting stand or blind be prohibited except under permits to be issued without charge by the Secretary of Agriculture. Permits would be limited, according to the Board's recommendation, to use at stands or blinds where baiting is not abused and is not unduly destructive to the birds or where insufficient natural food makes baiting or feeding desirable. The Board also recommended strengthening of the regulation which prohibits the baiting of mourning doves.

Hours of shooting, according to the Board's recommendations would extend from sunrise to sunset on each day of the season, thus cutting out the shooting formerly permitted for a half hour before sunrise. It would also permit shooting to begin at sunrise on the opening day instead of at noon as provided by previous regulation. The daily-bag limit, it was recommended, should remain at 12 for ducks in the aggregate and limited to 5 for birds of certain species which need this additional protection. The list of fully protected waterfowl, in the Board's judgment, should remain the same.

With regard to zones within the States, it was learned upon inquiry at the Biological Survey, the Board adopted a resolution recommending that when in the discretion of the Biological Survey the equitable distribution of shooting could best be obtained by zoning, the Bureau be "authorized to do so in cooperation with the State Game Department." Under the new provision permitting State Game Departments

to select the shooting days, Mr. Darling pointed out, however, that a need for a Federal zoning for individual States is much less likely to occur.

The Advisory Board, appointed by the Secretary to represent sportsmen and conservationists from all regions of the United States, met on July 11 and 12. Its recommendations were adopted in an executive session following an open session during which experts of the Biological Survey graphically presented a report on the status of migratory waterfowl in North America.

Based upon the most intensive and widespread waterfowl investigations ever undertaken, it demonstrated conclusively that the waterfowl population has decreased seriously. As a remedy, Chief Darling presented a program of restoration, including the conservation of an adequate breeding stock, a stricter enforcement of protective laws and regulations, and the provision of sanctuaries as nesting, wintering, and feeding grounds.

"It was clear," says Mr. Darling, "that the members of this Board were convinced that we are facing a critical duck situation. We have a hard job on our hands, but the enthusiasm shown by these sportsmen and conservationists is a big inspiration. We expect to have about \$-1/2 million dollars to devote to the restoration of wild-fowl areas. There are a lot of strings on some of these funds, but if the sportsmen and conservationists of the country respond the way the members of their Board did, we are going to succeed in our restoration program."