



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MARCH 9, 1949

### DAY LAUDS CALIFORNIA COOPERATION IN RECORD ILLEGAL DUCK SEIZURE

Fish and Wildlife Service Director Albert M. Day today praised California Fish and Game Commission wardens for coordinated action with U. S. game management agents, resulting in the arrest of three "duckleggers" trying to sell 829 ducks February 14, near Yuba City, California.

Mr. Day said it was the most flagrant violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act on record. The arrest was made after three months of cooperative investigations by the Service and the state commission, and is part of an intensified Federal effort to break up out-of-season shooting and the illegal marketing of wild ducks.

Now awaiting a Federal grand jury hearing on charges of conspiracy to violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (under which the annual Federal hunting regulations are issued) are Donald E. Smith, Del Paso Heights, Calif.; E. L. Ziegler, Sacramento, Calif.; and Albert L. Ford, Yuba City, Calif.

Smith has a long record of game law violations during the past 20 years. When arrested, he was on a five-year probation imposed last spring for a similar offense.

The three men were trapped after selling 177 ducks to game agents posing as wholesale buyers, four days before. On February 14, they tried to sell the 829 birds with which they were seized. Their truck was spotted by airborne game agents who directed agents on the ground by radio to make the arrest.

The "duckleggers" were seized with what would have been the combined legal daily bag of 200 sportsmen during the prescribed hunting season.

Automatic shotguns with magazine extensions holding up to 13 shells had been used to slaughter the ducks feeding in a rice field, the game agents reported. About 250 of the ducks for sale were dressed and frozen. The rest were only drawn, and had been killed a few days before.

In 1947-48, the Fish and Wildlife Service nabbed 3,061 game-law violators, many in cooperation with state game wardens. Fines and costs to violators amounted to \$124,602; jail sentences, to 734 days. Four-hundred and fifty-seven of the convictions were made against violators of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

x x x