



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR DENIES REQUEST TO EXTEND DUCK HUNTING SEASON IN MARYLAND

There will be no extension of the waterfowl hunting season in Maryland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler declared today in response to numerous requests for such extension.

The Maryland season closed on January 15, the last day on which duck and goose hunting was permitted in any flyway under Federal regulations. The additional time was requested because of the freeze-up in the Chesapeake area which curtailed the actual shooting by several days.

In refusing the extension, Assistant Secretary Leffler pointed out that freeze-ups are not unusual and that several States have had like experience this year and in previous years; that other States in the Flyway have an interest in the birds and that it would be unfair to permit additional hunting days to one State; that the population of ducks in the Flyway has been declining and additional shooting time would threaten several species.

Under migratory bird legislation the Secretary of the Interior determines the "outside dates" for hunting of waterfowl, the length of seasons and the bag limits. In the regulations issued last August the outside dates were October 1 and January 15. In the Atlantic Flyway hunting was permitted for 60 days, 10 days less than in the previous season. Maryland chose the 60 days beginning November 17, 1958. In addition to the shortening of the season there was a curtailment in the number of canvasbacks and redheads which could be taken.

These curtailments were found necessary because of a shortage of birds in the Atlantic Flyway as evidenced by the annual surveys and inventories made by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The shortages which the Bureau predicted have been apparent all over the Flyway during the hunting season, according to reports from hunters and Bureau personnel. The Bureau is engaged in the annual winter waterfowl count right now and in February should be able to give a comparison of the number of ducks on wintering grounds this year with the number there last year.

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