



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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QUICK INTERIOR MOVE DISCOUNTS REPORTS OF DYING DUCKS ALONG CHESAPEAKE

Ducks and geese which had not moved out of the Chesapeake Bay area because of the snow and cold weather are in good physical condition, the Department of the Interior reported today. The report was based upon a special investigation January 30 by Fish and Wildlife Service personnel after stories circulated that the birds were starving.

The special flights in a chartered plane were made by Joseph D. Withers, game agent in charge of Federal enforcement activities in the area, and agent-pilot Hugh B. Hines who scouted the Chesapeake Bay north of Choptank River.

The fliers reported that most of the ducks--including canvasbacks and red-heads--had already left that part of the Bay area when the recent cold weather set in and that those remaining flew normally when "buzzed" by the low-flying craft. They reported only three dead birds, one swan and two geese.

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall had instructed the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to act swiftly and to do everything possible to alleviate any emergency situation.

The special investigation flights were continued Tuesday, January 31, south of the Choptank River.

On Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge there are approximately 15,000 geese and between 10,000 and 15,000 ducks. Refuge personnel are banding the ducks at the rate of about 300 birds a day. They report these birds in good condition.

The winter waterfowl survey was recently completed and the results are now being compiled. No dead or distressed birds were noted in this survey except those few which were wounded during the recent hunting season and faced the winter under severe handicap.

Department of Interior personnel moved quickly upon hearing the reports of birds in difficulty. Ice conditions did not permit the use of the Service-owned plane but a private plane was immediately chartered for the investigation.

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