

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate

February 8, 1935

3-SHELL LIMIT PLACED
ON WILDFOWLERS' GUNS

Waterfowl Conservation Measure
Approved by President
Roosevelt

The long-looked-for reduction in the killing capacity of magazine shotguns has at last been realized.

President Roosevelt has approved an amendment to Federal hunting regulations that places a 3-shell limit on auto-loading and other repeating shotguns, the Bureau of Biological Survey announced today. This reform in wildfowling long advocated by sportsmen and conservationists was made urgent by the alarming decrease in the number of ducks.

The regulation, which becomes effective immediately, applies only to automatic-loading or hand-operated repeating shotguns used in hunting ducks, geese, and other migratory game birds. Users of these types of weapon are required to have the magazines stopped with plugs that cannot be removed in the field, or must have the magazines cut down to the required shell capacity.

Repairs necessary to bring guns within the provisions of the new regulation, it is pointed out, will cost little, and arms companies, having in mind the interest of sportsmen now in possession of such guns, have agreed to cooperate in this conservation measure.

The new amendment, recommended by the Biological Survey, adopted by the Secretary of Agriculture, and approved by the President on February 2, in

1546-35

accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, provides that migratory game birds may not be taken "with or by means of any automatic-loading or hand-operated repeating shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells the magazine of which has not been cut off, or plugged with a one-piece metal or wooden filler incapable of removal through the loading end thereof, so as to reduce the capacity of said gun to not more than 3 shells at one loading."

Conservation Measure Meets Widespread Demand

This regulation, said Secretary Wallace in forwarding the amendment to the President, will be of "incalculable advantage in the preservation of our migratory waterfowl." The Secretary pointed out that the measure "will deprive no one of the privilege of hunting such birds and will meet an exceedingly widespread demand throughout the country."

The demand for the action, it was said, was insistent and pretty generally made even by the sportsmen themselves, and was unanimously favored by conservationists.

J. N. Darling ("Ding"), Biological Survey Chief, hailed the amendment as an outstanding conservation act. "Pressure from all quarters," he explained, "has become exceedingly great during the last few years as the annual toll of the hunters, plus the natural causes, have threatened with extermination some of our choicest species among the migratory waterfowl groups and reduced to the danger point nearly all the varieties of ducks and geese popularly sought by the hunters."

Multiple-shot Guns Coincident with Decrease of Game

The advent of the repeating shotgun, the Biological Survey relates, came at about the same time as the rapid decrease in migratory birds, to which it contributed, but for which it was not totally responsible. The rapid development in the efficiency of all arms and munitions and the invasion of game-breeding areas by civilization, together with the increase in the number of hunters, have thus brought the American sportsman and conservationist to the realization that if wild-fowl shooting is to be preserved it must be as a skilled sport and not in mass killing.

It early became apparent, says the Bureau, that the abuses of multiple-shell guns far exceeded the advantages to the true sportsman. Magazine-shotguns holding five or six shells at a loading, contributed both to careless marksmanship and to excessive destruction of birds. The large-gauge guns had been ruled out, but in their place, through man's ingenuity, had come an even more deadly killing device.

Type of Gun Opposed by Sportsmen

As early as 1913, the first protests among sportsmen's groups began to be heard, and the pressure for restriction has progressively increased as the need for wildlife preservation has become more evident. State and National organizations of sportsmen, one after another, have passed resolutions requesting the outlawing of the auto-loading gun, and as the sentiment has grown against the auto-loader, the hand-operated repeating shotgun has been included in the protest. Canada in six Provinces and the Northwest Territories has legislated a prohibition against them, similar action has been taken by two States, and at recent sessions of the Advisory Board, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the demand was insistent that the Federal Government act.

In the meantime, says the Bureau's statement, the majority of gun clubs in the country have imposed upon themselves a prohibition of both auto-loaders and pump guns on their own grounds. Manufacturers have already put on the market modified models of both the auto-loading and the pump shotguns that can accommodate only three shells at a loading. The trend, says the Bureau, has apparently been to the double-shot gun or to a single-barreled weapon of 3-shell capacity, and the new regulation is thus in harmony with developments among sportsmen.