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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release Upon Receipt

Hunting wild geese in Alexander County in southern Illinois will not be permitted during the 1946-47 migratory waterfowl shooting season, according to an announcement made in Chicago today by Albert M. Day, Director, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The area involved includes the Horseshoe Lake Refuge owned and operated by the Illinois Department of Conservation.

"The flock of Canada geese which winters at the Horseshoe Lake Refuge presents one of the most serious and difficult problems in wildlife conservation at the present time," stated Mr. Day. "The only way to maintain this flock of geese in numbers approximating its present size is to give it absolute protection from shooting for an indefinite period."

In 1945, as Mr. Day pointed out, Alexander County held the record for having the shortest and most intensive Canada goose hunting season in the history of American game shooting when the recorded kill of geese reached the staggering total of 5,150 in exactly 22½ hours of legal shooting. Cripples probably sent the total up to 6,000. In 1945 the pre-hunting season size of the flock had dropped from an estimated 45,000 in 1940 to 26,000 in 1945.

In 1938 the kill of geese in Alexander County was about 1,200. In 1939, however, the kill rose to 17,300 birds. Since that time the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Illinois Conservation Department have endeavored to cut down this overshooting by such measures as decreasing the bag limit; shortening the season;

regulating the take by establishing a certain quota and then closing the season after it had been reached (in 1945 the quota was 5,000); placing restrictions on the spacing of blinds in relation to each other and in relation to the closed area; and requiring hunters to shoot only from blinds and limiting the number of hunters per blind to two.

In 1945, when the Fish and Wildlife Service was advised that 2,100 geese were killed during the first two days of shooting, the agency moved promptly to stop the organized slaughter by having the Secretary of the Interior issue a closing order, effective at 4:30 p.m. on November 28, in accordance with the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Federal hunting regulations for 1945-46 had provided a season from November 24 to December 31 in Alexander County.

"Had the shooting been permitted to continue at that rate," Mr. Day declared, "the entire flock of some 26,000 honkers might have been completely wiped out in a single season. Approximately 275 birds an hour--five a minute--fell to the hunters' guns in the 22½ hour 1945 season, spread over five half days of 4½ hours, from noon to 4:30 p.m. We discovered that on the opening day, from noon to 4:30 p.m., the total kill in that time equalled the total season's kill for 1938, and every day's kill in 1945 exceeded the top day in any previous year.

"Since the controls instituted by this Service and the Illinois Conservation Department have failed to achieve the desired results, the prohibition of shooting for an indefinite period is our only recourse if this flight of Canada geese is to be saved from serious damage or extinction."

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