



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

*Office file*  
*1/12/53*

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 1953

WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON SUMMARIZED

Weather conditions conspired to make the movements of wild ducks and geese gradual and spotty during the waterfowl hunting season which closed throughout the Nation on Saturday, according to a season summary today by Albert M. Day, Director of the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Not at all spectacular," are the words Director Day used to describe the fall migrations. "Weather, rather than any dearth of birds," he said, "was responsible."

The early part of the migration period, the Director recalled, was characterized by warm, sunny days and below-normal rainfall. In general, this period lacked the push that cold, blustery weather sometimes gives to fall flights. Mass movements, thus, were rare and concentrations on the wintering grounds built up from the filtering in of small flights. As a result, some northern sections of the country saw fewer birds than usual. Many of the wintering grounds, on the other hand, reported increased numbers of both ducks and geese.

Reports gathered from all sections of the country, the Director said, indicated that the migrations got under way in late August and early September. Sizeable early flights, particularly of pintail ducks, were observed. Some of the waterfowl moved into Louisiana during this early period, while others concentrated in California in sufficient numbers to create a serious crop-depredation problem.

Following these early flights, the Director pointed out, there came a quiet period when hunters began to wonder about the whereabouts of all the birds. Flights dribbled through a number of States, particularly those in the north-central sector. Reports from the north told of large numbers of birds still present in Canada in November. Then, just before Thanksgiving Day, winter set in with blizzards and freezing temperatures, bringing about the largest mass movements of the season. Unfortunately, these movements came too late for many hunters in the northern tier of States.

Reviewing impressions gained from field reports, the Director described conditions according to flyways. In the Atlantic Flyway, he recalled, there appeared to be an increase over last season of both ducks and geese. In the northern portion, however, there may have been fewer black ducks available to hunters.

In the Mississippi and Central Flyways, where northern hunting was most adversely affected by the weather, waterfowl concentrations were late in developing. By mid-December, however, reports of increased numbers of birds were coming in. In the Illinois Valley, the concentration of mallards was exceptional.

Hunters in the Pacific Flyway experienced the early flights of pintails and then a leveling off with no great change apparent in the availability of ducks and geese. Hunter success in many areas appeared greater than in recent years, but in some sections adverse weather reduced the take of birds.