

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release September 8, 1976

Levitt 202/343-5634

## FEW CHANGES IN 1976-77 WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS

There are few changes in the 1976-77 waterfowl hunting regulations, but this year's fall flight of ducks may not match last year's better-than-average flight.

The regulations, adopted by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and published in the September 7, 1976, Federal Register, are based on scientists' predictions of the number of ducks and geese flying south this autumn.

Hunting of brant in the Atlantic Flyway will be closed because of poor production and marginal population levels. In all flyways using the point system, the point value for redhead ducks, except in closed areas, is reduced from 100 to 70. The canvasback point value remains at 100 except in closed areas. In the Central Flyway there is a reduction of the basic daily bag limit on ducks hunted under conventional regulations from 6 to 5, only one of which may be a female mallard.

This year's hunting regulations also contain a number of special restrictions for the protection of the whooping crane, Aleutian Canada goose, and other endangered species. Various warning and information posters will be displayed on public hunting areas to alert hunters to the protected status of the peregrine falcon and all other birds of prey.

The Fish and Wildlife Service also adopted "frameworks" for season length, shooting hours, and daily bag and possession limits on migratory waterfowl hunting. Earliest and latest season dates in the United States for conventional waterfowl seasons are October 1, 1976, to January 23, 1977. Shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Maximum season lengths for ducks and geese were set for each flyway.

The outlook for geese is again good to excellent. In the Pacific Flyway excellent flights of snow geese are predicted with most Canada goose populations having average flights. Snow geese nesting on Wrangel Island, U.S.S.R., are thought to have experienced a successful production year. The white-fronted goose migration into the Pacific Flyway and the mid-continent flyways are expected to be normal.

In the Central Flyway flights of most geese other than the Tall Grass Prairie population of Canada geese and snow geese are expected to be above 1975. Poor production on Southhampton Island and areas farther north will result in reduced flights of Tall Grass Prairie Canada and snow geese.

(over)

Early snow and ice disappearance from the Canada goose breeding grounds in northern Ontario suggests that production will be above average, and a large fall flight is expected for the Mississippi Flyway; however, poor production of the dark phase of the snow goose will result in a depressed flight.

The Atlantic Flyway Canada goose flight should again be at a high level despite slightly reduced production. The delayed melting of snow cover from traditional nesting areas in eastern Arctic Canada suggests that goose production was poor. For the second year, satellite imagery was used to monitor conditions of goose production habitat in the Arctic.

The 1975 duck breeding population index for surveyed areas was 38.6 million, down 9 percent from 1975 and 3 percent from the 1955-75 average. Substantial increases in breeding populations were recorded in northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Minnesota. A small increase was recorded in Alaska. Substantial decreases occurred in northern Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and North and South Dakota.

The number of ponds where ducks nest and breed in May declined appreciably from 1975. This year's decreases in breeding ducks and ponds were partially offset by an early nesting season and by better than expected summer water conditions. However, other than for mallards which increased production over last year, it is expected that fall flights of ducks will be smaller than those of 1975.

The fall flight of ducks by flyways is estimated as follows:

Pacific Flyway: Duck flights from Alaska, southern Alberta, and Montana will be similar to last year, while those from northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories will be smaller. The overall fall flight of ducks to the Pacific Flyway will be similar to that of 1975.

Central Flyway: Fall flights of ducks from the Northwest Territories, northern Alberta, the Dakotas, and Nebraska are expected to be smaller this year than last. Flights from Alaska, southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan, and Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado will be similar to those of last year. Flights from northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba will be larger than those of 1975. The overall fall flight of ducks in the Central Flyway will be smaller than that of 1975.

Mississippi Flyway: Fall flights from northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba and Minnesota will be larger this year than last, but those from the Northwest Territories and the Dakotas will be smaller. Flights from other production areas will be unchanged. The overall fall flight in the Mississippi Flyway will be similar to that of last year.

Atlantic Flyway: Fall flights of ducks from the Northwest Territories and the Dakotas will be smaller this year, and flights from Alaska and the prairie Provinces will be similar to those of 1975. Increased flights are expected this year from northern Saskatchewan, northern Manitoba, and Minnesota. The 1976 fall flight of ducks into the Atlantic Flyway is predicted to be similar to that of 1975.