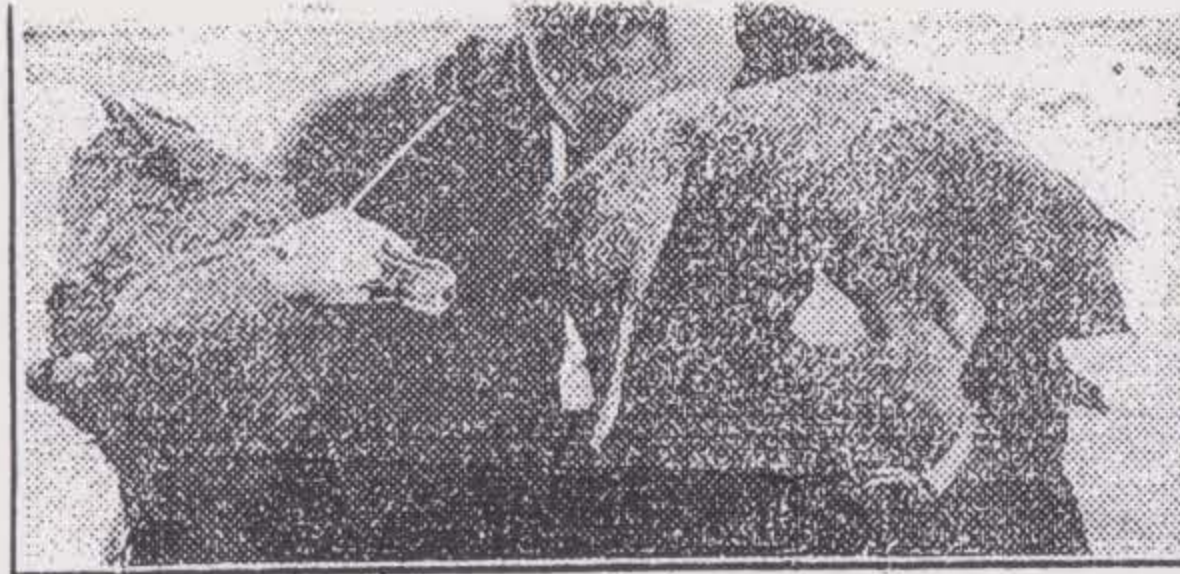


goon for uncollected birds.

Six protected birds had been found shot and six wounded birds taken to a veterinarian.

Mr Levy said: "If a 17-year-old lad wants to risk his life going out to help a wounded duck and he gets arrested, there is something wrong with the community's values.

"The guys the Government is supporting are out there in battle fatigues carrying their big guns, as though they were in Vietnam, to shoot defenceless birds."



Lagoon.

LEFT: The Australian Wildlife Protection Council campaign director, Mr Laurie Levy, with a legally shot duck, left, and a protected freckled duck.

Pictures: JOHN MILLER

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The Advertiser

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1986

OPINION

Why a duck?

Times change, but old bad habits often linger. By this stage in our sophisticated late 20th-century society, we have learnt many lessons — usually the hard way — about the need for preservation of this island earth's wildlife population. We now place greater value on the lives of the other creatures of the world than at any other point in the history of civilisation. Such concern gives most of us a

warm, humanitarian feeling, even though very few of us have actively brought about the changes in attitude. Yet every year at about this time — early in the duck season — most of us raise a quizzical, worried eyebrow when a small group of special-interest sportsmen sets about blasting our ducks out of the sky. And every year, the quizzical, worried eyebrow is lowered just as quickly as the dead ducks fall to earth.

There seems no reason, in the context of these times, why the slaughter of harmless birds, however well-policed, should be allowed at all. SA's ducks — and quail — do not need to be culled, and even if they did, the job could be carried out humanely by qualified National Parks and Wildlife Service officers. Nor are they needed for food, no matter how tasty they may be. And nor, we must hope, does the State Government need the \$16 a head it demands annually from eager prospective duck-killers. Yet the Government takes this blood money, knowing full well that protected species such as the freckled duck, as well as the unprotected variety, will fall victim to a rain of enthusiastically dispatched pellets of hot lead every year. This killing of rare birds is not always the fault of the duck-shooter; more often it is the way of things, sometimes caused by

ignorance and sometimes by plain bad shooting or a hair-trigger finger. Few hunters are deliberately cruel, but it must be presumed that more than one freckled duck has died because of the sheer lust to kill that seems to be the main motivation for this activity.

Serious opposition to duck-killing is growing. Last weekend at Bool Lagoon, in the South-East, a group of animal liberationists interfered with the enjoyment of about 500 hunters when they tried to rescue wounded birds. This action may have been as foolhardy as it was brave, because duck-shooting is a dangerous pursuit with its fair share of human culling, too. But the demonstration nevertheless emphasised the lengths to which people have decided to go to express their disapproval. As duck-shooting has been going on for as long as guns have existed, there is little justification for its practitioners suddenly becoming outcasts of society in 1986. Equally, though, there is little justification for the senseless killing of harmless, defenceless creatures in 1986. It is pointless and it is time we stopped it.