

## Media release

Wednesday, January 31, 2018

### **Crackdown for illegal possession on the opening of 2017 duck season**

Two men from Ballarat have pleaded guilty at the St Arnaud Magistrate Court for being in possession of a threatened waterbird during last year's duck season.

Both men received \$750 fines and will now be required to resit the Waterfowl Identification Test again if they choose to renew their game licences.

The hunters' ducks were inspected at Wooroonook camping ground by Authorised Officers on the opening weekend of the 2017 duck hunting season.

During the inspection, the officers discovered the men were in possession of a partially plucked Freckled Duck, a threatened species which is illegal to hunt in Victoria.

Game Management Authority (GMA) Chief Executive Officer Greg Hyams said both men stated that they had mistakenly identified the duck as a black duck, retrieved it from the water and included it as part of their bag.

"Failure to correctly identify protected wildlife or shooting or retrieving a non-game species is unacceptable and can result in significant fines, forfeiture of equipment and loss of Game and Firearms Licences," Mr Hyams said.

To ensure a higher standard of bird identification skills, the GMA is set to raise the minimum pass mark for the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT) from 75% to 85% next month. In addition, all protected species must be correctly identified to pass. All hunters applying for a duck hunting Game Licence will need to meet these requirements in order to obtain their licence. Hunters who are found guilty of a relevant offence may also be required to resit the WIT in the future.

Mr Hyams is encouraging all hunters to take full advantage of the world class education and training materials the GMA provides and to plan ahead and refresh their bird identification skills before the 2018 duck season commences.

"The Duck WISE educational video is available in HD DVD and there is a practice test on the GMA website so hunters can practice before sitting the test and revise regularly to maintain their identification skills," Mr Hyams said.

"Hunters who want to really test their identification skills are also encouraged to resit the WIT from time to time, especially if it has been a while since they went duck hunting."

"The GMA's website <http://www.gma.vic.gov.au> also has A Guide to Australian Waterfowl which includes diagrams on Victoria's game ducks with important information on their distribution and habitat, and colour diagrams of key identifying features, including images of

game ducks in flight.”

“The Duck Wise video also contains important information on how to hunt proficiently and safely.”

The 2018 duck season will commence at 9am on Saturday 17 March, and last 12 weeks, closing on Monday 11 June. The bag limit will remain at the standard 10 birds per person per day however hunting of the Blue-winged Shoveler will be prohibited due to persistent low numbers of the species.

The GMA and partner agencies, including Victoria Police, DELWP, DEDJTR, and Parks Victoria, will be out in force in 2018 to ensure compliance with hunting and public safety laws.

Report any illegal hunting to the GMA through its website [www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au) or on 136 186 or by contacting Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000, or Victoria Police.



**Is this a huntable gamebird ?**



**If you're not sure  
DON'T SHOOT**



RESPECT