

FACT SHEET

2019 Duck Hunting Season

Bag limit, season length and species

In 2019, the duck season length and bag limit have been reduced and the hunting of Blue-winged Shoveler will not be permitted.

- The bag limit is four (4) game ducks per day over the opening weekend and five (5) game ducks per day for the remainder of the season.
- The **Blue-winged Shoveler** is not permitted to be hunted.
- The duck season will commence on 16 March 2019 and close half an hour after sunset on Sunday 19 May 2019.

The changes to the 2019 duck hunting season are in response to the dry conditions which have reduced game duck abundance, breeding and habitat across eastern Australia.

Game ducks that may be hunted in 2019 are Pacific Black Duck, Mountain Duck, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Wood Duck and Hardhead. In response to continued low numbers, Blue-winged Shoveler cannot be hunted for the 2019 duck season.



Male (left) and female (right) Blue-winged Shoveler **cannot** be hunted in 2019

Make sure you can identify your ducks in the field. To maintain your identification skills, watch the GMA's Duck WISE video on the GMA website or pick up a copy from selected offices listed on the GMA website (www.gma.vic.gov.au).

New opening times - opening weekend

The trial of later opening times over the opening weekend will continue in 2019. On opening Saturday (16 March 2019), the season will open across the state at **09:00 am**.

On the opening Sunday (17 March 2019), hunting will commence across the state at **08:00 am**.

Hunting ceases half an hour after sunset for each day of the opening weekend.

Hunting times - rest of the season

For the remainder of the season, duck hunting is permitted from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset.

Download the *Game Hunting in Victoria* manual (www.gma.vic.gov.au) for details on how to calculate this.

No shooting of non-game species

Non-game species are occasionally shot when mistakenly identified or when flying among game birds. Heavy penalties apply for the illegal shooting of non-game species. To avoid shooting non-game species:

- positively identify the target as a game species.
- make sure the bird is within your effective shooting skills distance.
- target single birds or trailing birds – do not fire at lead birds or into flocks (this may injure other birds including non-game species).

Hunters should also be alert for Freckled Duck (appearance in flight is similar to Black Duck or Hardhead) as there is a total ban on the take of this threatened species. Please read our Freckled Duck Fact Sheet for more information at www.gma.vic.gov.au

Where can I hunt ducks?

Duck hunting is permitted in State forests, unoccupied Crown land and State Game Reserves. Hunting is also permitted on leased and licensed Crown land or private land with permission of the leaseholder, licensee or land owner/manager respectively.

There are only three parks (Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, Cape Conran Coastal Park and Lake Albacutya Park) where duck hunting is allowed in designated areas. Go to the Parks Victoria website (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) for further information.

Wetlands may be closed to hunting at certain times to protect concentrations of threatened species or colonies of breeding waterbirds. Wetlands can also be closed to provide refuge for waterbirds in dry conditions. Hunters should check the GMA website for the latest information.



Make sure you have your licences

All hunters, including juniors (12-17 years), must hold a valid Game Licence endorsed to hunt duck. People less than 12 years old are not permitted to use a firearm and, therefore, are not permitted to hunt or take game ducks.

When hunting duck, carry your current Game Licence endorsed for duck and Firearms Licence.

To obtain a Game Licence endorsed for duck, a hunter must first pass the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT). Test exemptions exist for Junior Provisional and Non-resident of Australia Game Licences. In both cases, the hunter will require a relevant

Firearms Licence and be under the direct supervision of a fully-licensed adult duck hunter. Full details can be found at www.gma.vic.gov.au

Compliance with game laws

There are heavy penalties if you breach the law, which may include losing your Game and Firearms Licences and/or your firearm or other hunting equipment. Make sure you obey the hunting laws to protect you and the game that you hunt.

Recently introduced regulations

The following regulations were introduced in 2018.

Hunters must make all reasonable efforts to immediately recover a downed game bird. Once a bird is downed, a hunter must focus on that bird only and make all reasonable efforts to retrieve it immediately. You must not continue to shoot at other birds. As per existing game laws, you must immediately kill any game that is still alive when recovered.

To ensure game birds are not wasted, game regulations also now require hunters to salvage at least the breast meat from harvested birds. If a hunter decides not to keep and take home the whole game bird, they will be required to recover at least both breasts of the game bird they have harvested. Hunters must remain in possession of the bird or duck breasts until immediately prior to cooking or until it is taken home.

Important regulations to remember

Hunting on private and public land

Game laws apply to both private and public land. Authorised Officers can access and enforce the game laws on all land tenures.

Non-toxic shot

The use of lead shot for duck hunting is prohibited throughout Victoria. This includes duck hunting on all wetlands, waterways and dry lands on public and private land (there are some exemptions). Authorised Officers actively test hunters' shotgun ammunition during the season.

It is illegal to high-grade your ducks

High-grading involves reaching your bag limit then discarding or giving away ducks in order to take more ducks than the daily bag limit. Some hunters do this when they want to take a more preferred species or when they share their bag with someone else. You are only allowed to take the daily bag limit and no more.

Retaining a fully-feathered wing

To ensure Authorised Officers can quickly and accurately identify all waterfowl in your possession, you must leave a fully-feathered wing on any harvested duck until immediately prior to cooking or the duck has been taken to your ordinary place of residence.

Hunting from a boat

On waterways (such as rivers, creeks and streams), you **are** allowed to hunt duck from a boat under power, up to a speed of five knots. On open waters (such as lakes or swamps), you **are not** permitted to hunt duck from a motor boat if the motor is running, whether in gear or not.

All boat occupants must comply with Marine Safety Victoria boating safety requirements, including wearing any required lifejackets, while duck hunting from a boat. For detailed information, visit www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au

Improve your chances

To improve your chances of bringing birds home and reducing the risk of wounding, practise the following:

- Pattern test your gun to ensure you are using the correct choke and shotshell combination to take the birds you are hunting (see Tom Roster's Lethality Table in the *Game Hunting in Victoria* manual)
- Only shoot at birds within your effective shooting skills distance (for most hunters this is within 30 metres)
- Have a retrieval strategy and don't hunt in areas where it is difficult to recover downed birds
- Use a well-trained gundog to retrieve downed birds
- Make sure you practice regularly to improve and maintain your shooting skills
- Hunters can download a free copy of the *Be a better game bird hunter* handbook and introductory brochure from the GMA website. Visit the Shotgunning Education page at www.gma.vic.gov.au
- Attend the Gamebird Hunting Essentials Masterclass prior to hunting ducks in 2019. Sign up at www.gma.vic.gov.au

Report illegal hunting. Call 136 186

The irresponsible or illegal behaviour of some can create unsafe or unsustainable situations. It is important that hunters act responsibly and encourage the rest of the community to do the right thing.

Don't tolerate illegal hunting. Report any illegal hunting to the GMA through its website www.gma.vic.gov.au or the Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or by contacting Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000, or Victoria Police.

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For more information about Game Management Authority go to www.gma.vic.gov.au