

Media Statement

18 March 2016 | Media contact: Nick Talbot 0408 473 278

Further protections in place for Threatened Blue-billed Ducks at Lake Elizabeth

The Victorian Government will close to the public Lake Elizabeth State Game Reserve near Kerang for the beginning of the 2016 duck hunting season to protect a significant population of threatened ducks found on the lake.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) announced the decision to close Lake Elizabeth State Game Reserve after Government received advice that approximately 155 Blue-billed Ducks (*Oxyura australis*) were present there.

Ahead of each Victorian duck season, there is a process to check species numbers and types across wetlands which enables us to make decisions about protecting species. Wetlands with more than 50 Blue-billed Ducks present are considered for closure to duck hunting as part of measures to protect the threatened species in Victoria.

The closure, which applies to all people, is being enacted as an interim arrangement by the DELWP Secretary under the *Wildlife (State Game Reserve) Regulations 2014* until a longer term closure is considered by the Government as part of the ongoing monitoring and management of wetlands.

Government acts swiftly to close wetlands whenever we receive information about significant or threatened species. This helps ensure the sustainability of the Victorian duck season.

While this closure will be disappointing news for hunters and local communities ahead of the opening weekend, authorities are asking for everyone's cooperation to make sure the decision to close the wetland can be undertaken safely, swiftly and without incident.

DELWP, Parks Victoria, Victoria Police and the Game Management Authority will work together to make sure hunters are informed about the closure and that no-one attempts to hunt or enter Lake Elizabeth while the closure is in place.

Five other Victorian wetlands are already closed for the duck season including Johnsons Swamp, Heywood Lake State Game Reserve at Boundary Bend, Round Lake at Lake Boga, Kow Swamp near Gunbower and Reedy Lakes at Kerang.

All closed wetlands will continue to be monitored throughout the season and may be opened to hunting if circumstances change and the threatened birds move to other locations. It is possible other wetlands will be closed this season and hunters should ensure they are aware of these before hunting by checking the GMA website or calling 136 186.

The 2016 duck hunting season will last 12 weeks, opening on Saturday 19 March and closing on Monday 13 June.

Blue-billed Duck (*Oxyura australis*) is listed as a threatened species in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act.