

Submission and recommendation for 2023 Victorian Duck Season.

The following submission and recommendation for the 2023 Victorian Duck Season is made on behalf of Ducks in Flight Geelong and its 417 members.

Background – Ducks in Flight Geelong is a network of enthusiastic duck hunters. Originally comprising of local Geelong duck hunters, our network has expanded to include people from all over Australia as well as North America, New Zealand and Europe. Our members have a diverse range of backgrounds and interests but a shared love of the outdoors, waterfowl, hunting, wetlands and conservation.

This submission and recommendation have been made following an assessment of the Considerations for the 2023 duck season from the Game Management Authority (GMA) and input from our members including their own personal observations from on the ground.

Recommendation – A full length 12 week season with a bag limit of 10 ducks per day comprising of all 8 Victorian Game Bird species of which no more than 2 should be Australasian Shoveler.

The season should commence on the 3rd Saturday in March (18th) at Sunrise and conclude 30 minutes after sunset on the 2nd Monday in June (12th).

Reasoning – Our members report improved wetland conditions. This is supported by evidence in the considerations showing Spring rainfall across Eastern Australia was well above average, as was the 2022 totals and the 4 year average showing the majority of Eastern Australia receiving average or above average rainfall. The considerations also show soil moisture, runoff and water storage levels are all high.

Our members have reported prolonged and widespread breeding.

Our members have observed game duck populations to be widely dispersed across a diverse variety of wetlands.

Victoria provides vast volumes of refuge and sanctuary for our game bird populations. This incorporates both public and private waterways and wetlands where hunting is not permitted. This refuge provides a safeguard for game bird populations.

Increased wetland availability has lead to wider dispersal of game birds. Birds being less concentrated means hunters are less likely to be concentrated too, leading to less pressure on game bird populations.

The Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey (EAWS), by its own admission only provides an Index of waterbird abundance, not a total count and of its 3 transects within Victorian borders, 2 barely intersect the state at all. As a result our members feel it is given too much significance in the Interim Adaptive Harvest Model (IAHM). There is no recognition for game birds or wetlands that exist outside of the EAWS area.

Further Recommendations – Our members are concerned about the ongoing harassment, interference and intimidation they are facing from coordinated activist groups. There are genuine concerns that these activists have been empowered in recent years following their inclusions as stakeholders, being given special considerations as “wildlife rescue” and their use of both Game Licenses and in many cases Firearms Licenses to avoid prosecution for breaching section 58B, 58C, 58D & 58E of the Wildlife Act 1975. Our members feel there needs to be a much improved focus on the following areas -

The sale of game licenses to those who DO NOT intend to use it for the purpose of hunting.

The use of firearms license for purposes other than the genuine reason they were obtained for.

Protecting duck hunters right to hunt without harassment, disruption and interference from activists.

Regards,

Duck in Flight Geelong.