

FACT SHEET

2024 Stubble Quail season

Stubble Quail season

In 2024, the Stubble Quail season will open 30 minutes before sunrise on Saturday, 6 April and close 30 minutes after sunset on Sunday, 30 June 2024.

Stubble Quail

The Stubble Quail is the only native quail species that can be legally hunted in Victoria.

It is the most common native quail species occurring in Australia and is found across a range of habitat types in Queensland and much of south-eastern and south-western Australia. Stubble Quail prefer areas of tall, dense ground vegetation with open patches, particularly natural or improved grasslands, as well as areas of other low cover, including cereal crops, stubble and leafy crops. Generally, quail hunting occurs on private property in stubble paddocks and grasslands, however, 16 State Game Reserves are open to Stubble Quail hunting during the season (see right for details).

Bag limit

The bag limit is 20 birds per day for the entire season.

Opening times

For every day of the 2024 Stubble Quail season, hunting is permitted from 30 minutes before sunrise and must stop 30 minutes after sunset each day.

Regulations

To ensure game birds are not wasted, the Wildlife (Game) Interim Regulations 2023 require hunters to make all reasonable efforts to immediately recover downed game birds and to salvage at least the breast meat from harvested birds. For further information, please visit gma.vic.gov.au

Prohibition of electronic quail callers for the 2024 Stubble Quail season

The use of electronic quail callers is prohibited during the 2024 Stubble Quail hunting season.

The use of gundogs for hunting Stubble Quail

Using a well-trained gundog has the potential to increase

hunter success while reducing wounding losses. They are particularly useful when hunting quail in long grass and locating downed birds.

Gundog owners should spend time training their gundog so it is obedient and an asset in the field. Hunting and trialing groups run training programs so explore what programs are offered.

Make sure you care for your gundog in the field by not overworking it in the heat, ensure it has plenty of water to drink and takes adequate rest breaks. During warm weather, consider resting your gundog until late afternoon or hunting earlier in the morning when conditions are cooler.

Be alert for signs of snake bite and carry a first aid kit. At the end of your hunt, check that your dog doesn't have any grass seeds embedded in its skin, paying particular attention to around the eyes and between the toes.

Stubble Quail hunting on State Game Reserves

Stubble Quail may be hunted on the following 16 State Game Reserves:

Title of reserve	Locality
Mansfield Swamp	10 km west of Stanhope
Gaynor Swamp	10 km north of Colbinabbin
Wallenjoie Swamp	10 km north of Colbinabbin
Rowan Swamp	15 km south-west of Yarrawonga
Jack Smith Lake	30 km east of Yarram
Lake Coleman	20 km east of Sale
Jones Bay	5 km south of Bairnsdale
Macleod Morass	Near Bairnsdale
Clydebank Morass	12 km north-east of Sale
Dowd Morass	10 km south-east of Sale
Blond Bay	20 km south of Bairnsdale
Lake Connewarre	South-east of Geelong
Heart Morass	5 km east of Sale
Hateleys Lake	10 km west of Natimuk
Bow Lake	40 km east of Edenhope
Darlot Swamp	10 km north-east of Horsham

Under the Wildlife (State Game Reserves) Regulations 2014, dogs are prohibited from State Game Reserves (SGR) unless the dog is an approved gundog breed that has been brought onto the SGR by a person who holds a Game Licence that allows the hunting of Stubble Quail

and is there for the purpose of flushing or retrieving Stubble Quail. Gundogs are permitted to be on an SGR 48 hours prior to the first day of the open season and no more than 48 hours after the end of the season.

There are penalties for failing to have a gundog under the effective control and where it is causing danger or unreasonable disturbance to other people or wildlife.

Non-game quail and Plains-wanderer

In Victoria, all native quail species are protected and may not be hunted, except Stubble Quail which may be hunted in accordance with the Wildlife (Game) Interim Regulations 2023.

The threatened Plains-wanderer, a different species that sometimes resembles a quail, also occurs in Victoria and is fully protected.

Plains-wanderer

The Plains-wanderer is a small ground-dwelling bird found in north-western and central Victoria, especially around Mitiamo. The species was formerly much more abundant and widespread, however changes to agricultural and pastoral practices have eliminated the bird from many areas, reducing its range.

In Victoria, the Plains-wanderer is listed as threatened (critically endangered) under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. If factors causing its decline continue, the species could become extinct.

The Plains-wanderer is a plump, tailless bird with brown plumage, straw-yellow legs and is sometimes mistaken for a quail.

The Plains-wanderer inhabits sparse native grasslands, old stubble and grazed pasture. Plains-wanderers are fully protected in Victoria and must not be shot. Although

hunting is not regarded as a threatening process, hunters should be aware that Plains-wanderers may be present in their hunting area.

How to recognise the Plains-wanderer

The Stubble Quail and Plains-wanderer show distinctively different flight characteristics which can be used to distinguish birds in the field.

Stubble Quail flush with a whirring of wings at a shallow angle to the ground, fly straight, far and fast, just above cover, twisting slightly then dropping tail-down into cover.

The Plains-wanderer has a laboured, fluttering flight and often its long, yellow legs can be seen trailing behind, in much the same fashion as a coot.

Non-game quail

When hunting, you may encounter several other quail species that could be mistaken for the Stubble Quail. These include: Brown Quail; King Quail; Painted Button Quail; and Little Button Quail. These birds are protected all year and may not be hunted.

Distinguishing between Stubble Quail and non-game quail

It is important that hunters can readily distinguish between Stubble Quail and protected quail species while hunting and pay particular attention to the:

- size and flight characteristics of the bird
- habitat that you are hunting in
- the social organisation of the birds.

The general description below can be used as a guide for recognising the differences between the Stubble Quail and non-game quail species.

Remember, if you are not sure, DON'T SHOOT.

Stubble Quail	Non-game quail
Large, plump bird (compared to other native quail species)	Generally smaller than Stubble Quail (except Brown Quail which is slightly larger).
Bold, pale streaks on shoulder, back and breast	Uniformly darker wings (King, Brown, Little Button)
Prefer open grasslands (improved and natural), cereal crops, stubble, lucerne and often found along weedy margins of irrigation channels. Avoid woodlands or areas with many trees.	Found across a range of habitat types including: woodlands; rank, dense grasslands; swampy coastal heaths; bracken; scrublands; grassy forests.
Mostly found singly or in small pairs and, occasionally, small groups	Often found in small groups or coveys (Brown may be found in groups of up to thirty birds).
Chirp when flushed, but not as loud as other quail species, such as Brown Quail.	Often chirp or chatter when flushed.
Loud whirring of wings when flushed. Fly with fast wing beats and may travel as far as 500 metres. Never glide when flying. Curved flight before dropping tail-down in cover.	Quieter wing beats, not as rapid. Often fly only a short distance. Glide in flight (Brown, King) may drop head-first into cover (Brown).