

## FACT SHEET

# Hunter Bag Surveys

Hunter bag surveys have been conducted on the opening weekend of the duck season at Victorian wetlands since 1972. They are important for collecting harvest data from a sample of hunters at wetlands across the state. The information is important in assessing the impact of the open season on populations of game species.

The surveys involve government staff inspecting the ducks a hunter has taken in order to gather biological and statistical information. Hunters who participate in the hunter bag survey play an important role in wildlife management as the information provided is used for many purposes, including making informed decisions about ensuring duck hunting remains sustainable.

Specifically, the hunter bag survey provides useful information on:

- the number and species of duck harvested
- the number of hunters on the wetland
- the location of the harvested birds
- the age of harvested ducks harvested which provides information on breeding and productivity, and
- whether the ducks are moulting (losing or regrowing feathers).

## What is involved in a hunter bag survey?

Survey staff will typically approach you after you have finished hunting for the day, most often at camp, and ask if they can check the ducks you have taken. In order to collect biological and statistical information they will:

### Visually inspect the ducks

Survey staff will examine the ducks and record data on the number and species of ducks.

### Collect feather samples

Staff will take up to five of the longest tail feathers, where possible, which will be used to age the bird. Juvenile birds have one or more notched tail feathers and expert assessment will determine if the bird is an immature or adult bird. When bird populations are healthy with good breeding occurring, it is expected that the majority of the harvest will be juvenile birds.

One of these feathers will be sent to the National Feather Map Project and used to track the movement of waterbirds around Australia from wetland to wetland based on an analysis of the feathers. This project runs until 2018 and detailed information can be found at: [www.feathermap.ansto.gov.au/](http://www.feathermap.ansto.gov.au/)



Up to five tail feathers will be collected

### Collect a wing sample

Where possible, survey staff will remove a wing and take it for expert assessment. The assessment will determine the age of the duck and whether the duck is in the process of moulting. The moulting cycle for most Australian waterfowl occurs once a year and is a process to replace old and damaged feathers.

Ducks cannot fly through the advanced stages of moult making them more vulnerable to hunting. Data on moult helps ensure the duck season avoids these moulting periods.

By law, you must keep at least one wing attached to the duck you have harvested until you get home or just before you cook it. If survey staff remove this remaining wing from your duck, they will provide you with a "Wing Removal Receipt" so that you have a valid reason for not retaining a wing on a duck.

### Take a bird swab

Biological swabs from the duck may also be taken for biosecurity purposes, specifically to test and help monitor wild bird populations for avian influenza.

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a contagious disease of animals which has the potential to cause serious problems for Australia's poultry industry. Bird flu viruses are usually specific to birds but they have, on rare occasions, crossed the species barrier to infect humans and other mammals, including pigs and sheep.

For more information on topics covered in this fact sheet, visit the GMA website: [www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au)

### Will I get in trouble if I don't provide information or a sample?

No. The hunter bag survey staff are not authorised officers and are not looking for hunting offences. They are merely interested in collecting data about the game birds that have been harvested.

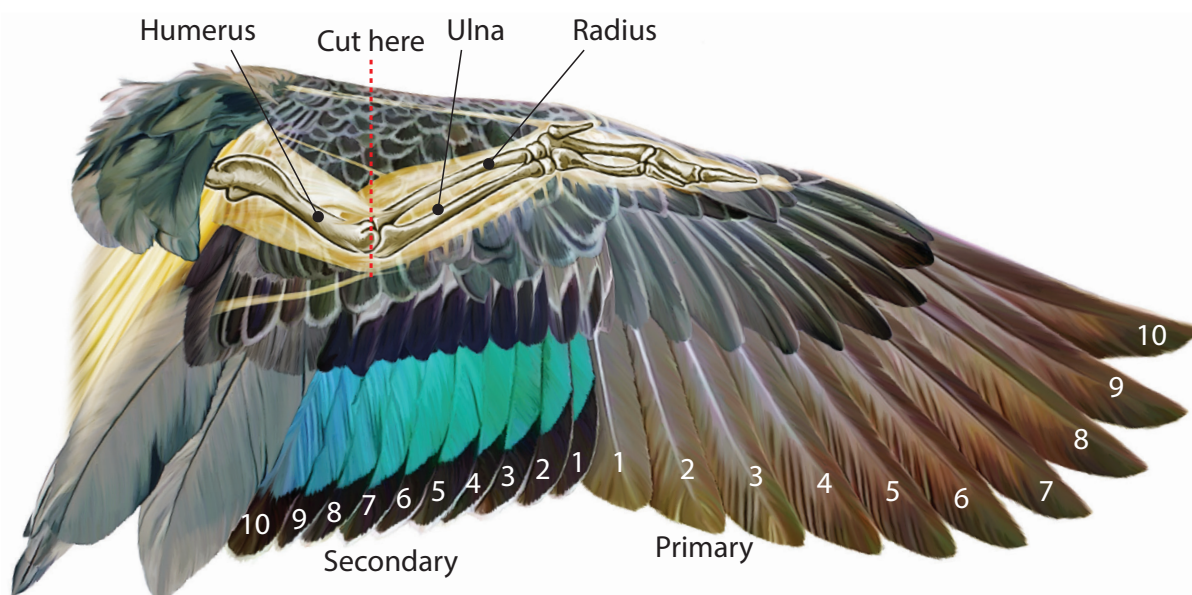
Hunters have voluntarily provided information and samples to hunter bag survey staff since the surveys commenced in 1972. By assisting with the surveys, hunters carry on the proud conservation tradition of helping resource managers ensure duck hunting remains sustainable.

### Why do you conduct these surveys during the opening weekend?

The opening weekend is an important time to sample because almost a third of the birds taken by hunters during the season are harvested during the opening weekend, so this period provides a great opportunity to get a large and reliable data sample.

Thank you for helping ensure duck hunting remains sustainable in Victoria.

Hunting's future depends on you. Show respect and hunt responsibly.



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