

FACT SHEET

2024 Duck Season

Bag limit, season length and species

In 2024, the duck season will be 57 days in length, with a bag limit of six birds per day. Hunting the Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead is not permitted. The season arrangements are:

- The duck season will open at 8am on Wednesday 10 April 2024 and close 30 minutes after sunset on Wednesday 5 June 2024.
- The bag limit is six game ducks per day for the entire season.
- The Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead **must not** be hunted.



Male (left) and female (right) Blue-winged Shoveler



Male (left) and female (right) Hardhead

Be sure to positively identify your target. If you are NOT SURE, DON'T SHOOT.

To maintain your identification skills, watch the GMA's Duck WISE video on the GMA website and complete the practise test. You can view or download Duck WISE on the GMA [YouTube channel](#).

Game ducks that may be hunted in 2024 are Pacific Black Duck, Mountain Duck, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and Wood Duck.

Hunting times

For every day of the 2024 duck season, hunting starts at 8am. Hunting finishes 30 minutes after sunset each day. Download the [Game Hunting in Victoria](#) manual for details on how to calculate this. Alternatively, there are sunrise / sunset apps available that will calculate these times. Make sure the times are specific to the date and place you are hunting.

No shooting of non-game species

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 maximum shooting skills distance (up to 30 metres for most hunters)
- target single or trailing birds or birds to the side of a flock – do not fire at lead birds or into flocks. Shooting into flocks may injure other birds including non-game species.

Hunters should be alert to the potential presence of threatened Freckled Duck which can be confused with game ducks. They will also fly with flocks of game ducks. Freckled Duck must not be shot. In flight, the Freckled Duck can appear similar to Black Duck and Hardhead.

Please read the [Freckled Duck Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

Where can I hunt ducks?

Duck hunting is permitted on a range of public land types, including State Forest, unoccupied Crown land and State Game Reserves. Hunting is also permitted on leased and licensed Crown land and private land with permission of the landowner / manager.

Download the [More to Explore](#) app for maps of public lands that are open to duck hunting. There are three parks where duck hunting is allowed in designated areas (Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, Cape Conran Coastal

Park and Lake Albacutya Park). Visit the Parks Victoria website for more information at parks.vic.gov.au

Wetlands closed to hunting or additional restrictions

Wetlands or parts of wetlands may be closed to hunting at certain times to protect concentrations of rare or threatened species or colonies of breeding waterbirds. Additional restrictions on hunting methods (e.g. no hunting from boats) may also be imposed.

Regularly check the [GMA website](https://www.gma.vic.gov.au) for details of wetland closures or additional restrictions on hunting.

Make sure you have your licences

All hunters, including juniors, must hold a valid Game Licence endorsed to hunt duck and a current Firearms Licence. People younger than 12 years old are not permitted to use a firearm and are not permitted to hunt or take game ducks.

To obtain a Game Licence endorsed for duck, hunters must first pass the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT). Test exemptions exist for Junior Provisional and Non-resident of Australia Game Licences. In both cases, hunters require a relevant Firearms Licence and must be under the direct supervision of a fully-licensed adult duck hunter.

Compliance with game laws

Duck hunters failing to comply with season arrangements, regulations and hunting laws may face significant penalties, have their equipment seized or forfeited, and lose their Game Licence and their Firearms Licence. Make sure you keep up to date with the current laws by regularly checking the GMA website, including Chapter 9 of the [Game Hunting in Victoria](#) manual.

Important regulations

Recovery and salvage laws

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. Hunters must not continue to shoot at other birds once a bird has been downed and must immediately dispatch game that is still alive when recovered.

Hunters must salvage at least the breast meat from all harvested game ducks. If a hunter decides not to keep and take home the whole duck, they are required to recover at least both breasts of the harvested bird.

Hunters must remain in possession of the duck or duck breasts until immediately prior to cooking or until it is taken home.

For further information, including how to humanely dispatch a downed duck, please visit the [GMA website](https://www.gma.vic.gov.au).

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 possession and use of lead shot while duck hunting is prohibited throughout Victoria.

This includes duck hunting on all wetlands, waterways and dry lands on public and private land (with some exemptions). Authorised Officers can actively test hunters' shotgun ammunition while in the field.

It is illegal to high-grade your ducks

High-grading is not permitted. High-grading involves reaching the daily bag limit then discarding or giving away ducks to continue hunting. Some hunters do this when they want to take a more preferred species or when they share their bag with someone else. Hunters can only shoot six ducks per day in 2024.

Retaining a fully-feathered wing

To ensure Authorised Officers can quickly and accurately identify all waterbirds in a hunter's possession, hunters must leave a fully-feathered wing on any harvested duck until immediately prior to cooking or the duck has been taken to the place of residence. If a hunter chooses to breast their birds, a fully-feathered wing must remain attached to each breast if they are separated. If they are not separated, one fully-feathered wing must remain attached to the joined breasts.

Hunting from a boat

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

All boat occupants must comply with Maritime Safety Victoria boating safety requirements, including wearing any required lifejackets. For detailed information, visit [Transport Safety Victoria](https://www.transport.vic.gov.au/safety).

Be responsible

The GMA promotes responsibility and sustainability in game hunting in Victoria. To be a responsible hunter and to reduce the risk of wounding game ducks, all hunters should:

- pattern test their shotgun to ensure they are using the correct choke and shotshell combination for the specific birds being hunted
- use decoys and calls to attract birds within effective shooting range
- not skybust (shoot at birds at excessive ranges) and only shoot at birds within your personal shooting skills distance, which for most hunters is no more than 30 metres. Duck callers and decoys can bring the birds within range
- have a retrieval strategy and don't hunt in areas where it is difficult to retrieve downed birds
- practise and use the recommended humane dispatch methods in the [Guidelines for the humane dispatch of downed ducks](#)
- use a well-trained gundog to retrieve downed birds
- practice regularly to improve and maintain shooting skills
- read the [Be a better game bird hunter](#) handbook and introductory brochure on the GMA website for tips and techniques for how to effectively and efficiently hunt and reduce wounding
- attend the [Gamebird Hunting Essentials Masterclass](#) run by Field and Game Australia and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Vic).

Report illegal hunting and public safety law breaches - call 136 186

It is important that hunters act responsibly by complying with hunting laws and encouraging other hunters to do the right thing. Non-hunters must comply with public safety laws to ensure the safety of Authorised Officers,

hunters and themselves throughout the duck season.

Irresponsible or illegal behaviour will not be tolerated. Only those people who are authorised (e.g. hold an appropriate Game and Firearms Licence) may be on specified hunting areas during prohibited times or approach to within less than 10 metres of a hunter, regardless of whether they are hunting ducks or not. No-one may hinder, harass, interfere with or obstruct a hunter, regardless of whether or not a person holds an appropriate Game and Firearm Licence.

People are urged to report illegal hunting and breaches of public safety laws to the GMA through its website at gma.vic.gov.au, the Customer Contact Centre on 136 186 or by contacting Victoria Police.



Be a better hunter and take steps to prevent wounding. Simple actions make a big difference.

Visit gma.vic.gov.au

- R Regularly practice
- E Effective retrieval strategy
- D Don't shoot beyond 30 metres
- U Use decoys and calls
- C Correct loads and chokes
- E Every shot matters

WOUNDING

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