

FACT SHEET

2020 Duck Hunting Season

Bag limit, season length and species

In 2020, the duck season length and bag limit have been reduced and the hunting of Blue-winged Shoveler is not permitted.

- The duck season will open at 8am on Saturday 2 May 2020 and close half an hour after sunset on Monday 8 June 2020.
- The bag limit is three game ducks per day for the entire season.
- The Blue-winged Shoveler **must not** be hunted.

The changes to the 2020 duck hunting season are in response to prolonged dry conditions that have reduced game duck abundance, breeding and habitat across eastern Australia.

The Blue-winged Shoveler must not be hunted in 2020.



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

Make sure you can identify your ducks in the field. 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 our You Tube channel or pick up a DVD from our Traralgon, Benalla, Bendigo or Ballarat offices.

Game ducks that may be hunted in 2020 are Pacific Black Duck, Mountain Duck, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Wood Duck and Hardhead.

Hunting times

Hunting on the opening weekend can start at 8am on both Saturday and Sunday across Victoria. Hunting must stop half an hour after sunset on both days.

For the remainder of the season, duck hunting is permitted from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset.

Download the *Game Hunting in Victoria* manual for details on how to calculate this. The manual can be found on our website at gma.vic.gov.au

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)
- 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. 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 in State forests, 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. View the More to Explore online maps at the GMA website, or download the More to Explore phone 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 threatened species or colonies of breeding waterbirds. Wetlands can also be closed to provide refuge for waterbirds in dry conditions. Additional restrictions on hunting methods (e.g. no hunting from boats) may also be imposed.

Regularly check the GMA website 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, a hunter must 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 licenced adult duck hunter. More information can be found at gma.vic.gov.au

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 / or their Firearms Licence.

Important regulations to remember

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 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 game bird, they will be required to recover at least both breasts of the harvested game bird.

Hunters must remain in possession of the bird 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.

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 use of lead shot for 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 during the season.

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 three ducks per day in 2020.

Retaining a fully-feathered wing

To ensure authorised officers can quickly and accurately identify all waterfowl in a hunter's possession, hunters must leave a fully-feathered wing on any harvested duck or the breast meat until immediately prior to cooking or the duck has been taken to your ordinary place of residence.

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.

All boat occupants must comply with Marine Safety Victoria boating safety requirements, including wearing any required lifejackets, while hunting from a boat. For detailed information, visit transportsafety.vic.gov.au

Be responsible

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

- pattern test their shotgun to ensure they are using the correct choke and shotshell combination for the specific birds being hunted
- don't shoot into flocks and only shoot at birds within 30 metres. Use callers and decoys to bring birds within range
- have a retrieval strategy and do not 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
- practise regularly to improve and maintain shooting skills
- read the *Be a better game bird hunter* handbook and introductory brochure on the GMA website
- attend the *Gamebird Hunting Essentials Masterclass*.

Report illegal hunting - call 136 186

Irresponsible or illegal behaviour will not be tolerated. It is important that hunters act responsibly and encourage other hunters to do the right thing.

Report any illegal hunting online at gma.vic.gov.au or by contacting the Customer Contact Centre on 136 186 or by contacting Victoria Police.

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