

Coalition Against Duck Shooting

3 January 23

Submission to the GMA regarding the 2023 duck shooting season

On the opening of the 2022 duck shooting season at Lake Bael Bael, with only about 50 duck shooters present, they still illegally shot protected and threatened species (Australasian Blue-winged Shovelers and Hardhead). Yet even with a contingent of GMA compliance officers present, they were unable to protect those threatened species. The GMA compliance officers were also unable to protect the breeding Swans that had been sitting on eggs. These protected birds were frightened off their nests by the shooting and didn't return (see attachments).

At some point of time, the Game Management Authority must be held accountable for recommending that shooting seasons go ahead. These recommendations unleash heinous gun violence and cruelty crimes against Australia's sentient native waterbirds, just for the recreational enjoyment of duck shooters who make up only 0.2 per cent of Victoria's population.

Last year, two game species were removed from the game list and were put straight onto the threatened species list. If these native waterbirds had been removed from the game list 10 years ago, they wouldn't be on the threatened list today. There are three other game species that will also soon wind up on the threatened list.

With climate change and illegal shooting, including overshooting of native game birds and the illegal shooting of threatened species, duck shooting must be banned in Victoria as it has been in three other progressive Labor states.

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Fearful swans abandon their nests at start of duck-shooting season

The Age, By [Miki Perkins](#) and [Rachel Eddie](#)

March 18, 2022

Black swans have abandoned their eggs after being scared away by the sound of gunshots on the opening day of Victoria's duck-hunting season.

Animal rescuers who have been working at Lake Bael Bael, near Kerang in the state's north, say the parents had flown from at least six black swan nests, leaving their eggs behind.

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Gunshots frightened black swans from their nests

Wildlife rescuers at Lake Bael Bael near Kerang, in Victoria, say gunshots have frightened black swans and forced them to abandon five or six nests.

[lost an opening weekend of the hunting season.](#)

Also this week, two blue-winged shoveler ducks and one hardhead duck – all endangered species – were either killed by hunters or had to be euthanised.

Bird rescue volunteer Gavin, who did not want to use his surname for professional reasons, said before the duck hunting season began on Wednesday he saw swans sitting on the nests at Lake Bael Bael.



An endangered blue-winged shoveler duck- being examined by a Wildlife Victoria vet. It was later euthanised.

But when he went back on Wednesday morning, there were about 15 hunters in the same area of reeds as some nests, and the swans had flown.

“I went down to have a look when I could and all the nests were empty,” he said.

“We saw one parent circling over where the nests were and calling, frantic, she looked stressed. She did come down, but the shooters ended up entering the water not long after, and she took off.”

Wildlife rescuers said the eggs in one nest had been scattered into the water.



One of the abandoned black swan nests at Lake Bael Bael, near Kerang.

Lisa Palma, chief executive of Wildlife Victoria, said her organisation had sought expert advice on the nest abandonment, and were advised that after a few hours without a parent sitting on the nest, there was a high likelihood the swan eggs would be unviable. Black Swans are not an endangered species.

“There are multiple bird species at this wetland and with the duck season we’ve observed birds taking off in fright every day when the guns go off in the morning,” Ms Palma said.

“We are concerned because other species of birds are at the site which are threatened species.”

A total of 19 ducks have been treated at Wildlife Victoria’s veterinary tent since Wednesday. Although it is against the law to shoot birds and leave them, lead vet Dr Natasha Bassett has seen birds each day that have been left to die. The majority showed shotgun pellets inside their bodies.

Earlier this week, Premier Daniel Andrews resisted calls to end duck hunting and urged hunters to follow the rules.

“Some of us play golf. Some people go shooting. That’s a choice they are free to make, but there are rules and I do see some reports the rules seem to have been broken,” he said on Thursday.

Justice Helen Rofe dismissed the interim injunction filed by the Coalition Against Duck Shooting on Friday afternoon.

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The Game Management Authority, Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and Agriculture Minister Mary-Anne Thomas were named in the failed application.

Jo Soren, for the coalition, argued the authority and ministers were in breach of Commonwealth environment and conservation laws by allowing the full 90-day game season to go ahead.

She said waterbird species had not recovered from the recent drought, and birds that were not shot were still displaced from critical habitat and could be traumatised by the noise of gun shots: "The birds don't get a chance to bounce back."

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'Terrible tragedy unfolding': Threatened species gunned down during duck season

Michael Dahlstrom
•Environment Editor

17 March 2022

WARNING - GRAPHIC CONTENT: Protected birds threatened with extinction have been [gunned down by shooters as Victoria](#) begins its controversial duck season.

Photos supplied by the state's peak rescue charity Wildlife Victoria show a number of ducks left dead or dying since the season began on Wednesday.

Among the dead are blue-winged shovelers and a hardhead, species which the state government has this year explicitly warned are ["listed as threatened due to declining populations"](#).



Wildlife Victoria have catalogued the deaths non target species including a blue-winged shoveler, an Australasian coot and a hardhead. Source: Supplied
Wildlife Victoria's CEO Lisa Palma warned she is seeing evidence of a "terrible tragedy unfolding".

She is leading a triage mission to care for injured ducks left at Lake Bael Bael in Kerang, near the NSW border.

“Duck shooting is horrendous given the ever diminishing state of our water bird population and the fact that many of the shooters can’t differentiate between one species over another,” she said.

“Surely the ducks that we have witnessed coming through Wildlife Victoria’s triage facility are evidence enough to confirm the fact that duck hunting is indiscriminate, cruel and senseless.”

Duck season 'out of step with community'

Under Victorian Government guidelines, shooters have a “bag limit” of four ducks a day and must make “all reasonable efforts to immediately recover” those they have shot.

Despite this regulation, [Wildlife Victoria vet Dr Natasha Bassett](#) has examined a number of dead and injured birds retrieved at Kerang.

As a medical professional, she is frustrated having to administer treatment to preventable injuries, inflicted by a practice she describes as “out of step with community standards”.

“It’s disappointing the government hasn’t done the right thing and ended this across the state,” she told Yahoo News Australia.

“These are species protected throughout much of the year and then left to be shot with not enough oversight.”

Authorities investigating death of protected species

Duck hunters must score 85 per cent on a waterfowl identification test before they are granted a license, and must correctly identify all non-game species.

Those who ignore guidelines face penalties including official warnings, infringement notices, prosecutions and licence cancellations, however Game Management Association (GMA) is yet to confirm how many hunters they have sanctioned.

They advised Yahoo News Australia they are aware of an incident involving a threatened species recovered during the 2022 season.

"The GMA has identified a person who is alleged to have shot a threatened species. Enquiries regarding the matter are ongoing," a GMA spokesperson said in a statement.

"Illegal hunting and irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated."

Amid ongoing concern from wildlife lovers that hunters are continuing to leave birds dead and dying in the water, the Victorian Government has initiated a duck wounding reduction action program.

Known as the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan (SHAP), it will aim to educate hunters about how to reduce wounding of birds.

GMA confirmed they are already running a communications campaign called Respect: Reduce Wounding to tackle the issue.

Victoria Government stands firm on duck season

As the world faces a biodiversity crisis, many conservationists believe Victoria's duck season should end.



Wildlife Victoria have administered treatment to ducks with gunshot injuries at Kerang.
Source: Supplied

With numbers of duck shooters believed to be declining, pressure has been growing on the Andrews Labor Government to phase out the annual slaughter.