

Skybusting

Educate yourself – not the ducks

The following information will assist you and everyone else on the wetland have a safe and enjoyable hunt, while complying with the law and hunting responsibly.

Irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated

'Skybusting' is an irresponsible behavior which sees hunters shooting at ducks beyond the distance at which they can reliably and effectively take a bird. Skybusting (taking unrealistic long-range shots) is a major cause of wounding as shot patterns become more open with distance and pellets lack sufficient energy to penetrate vital organs for a clean kill.

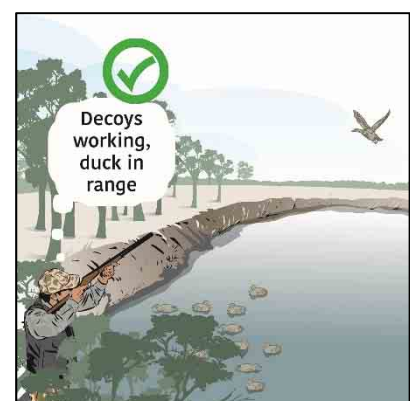
Skybusting frustrates other hunters because shooting at distant birds makes them more wary and deprives other hunters of taking more realistic shots.

Hunters must be aware of their maximum shooting skills distance and only shoot at birds within this distance. The Shotgunning Education Program (SEP) Handbook *Be a better game bird hunter* explains how to determine your effective shooting skills distance and pattern your selected choke and load combination to effectively harvest birds within this distance. Download a copy for free at www.gma.vic.gov.au



DEFINITION: Maximum effective shooting skills distance = the maximum distance at which you can constantly hit a target with the first shot.

Generally, most hunters have a maximum effective shooting skills distance of no more than 30 metres. Shots taken within this range will put more birds in your bag with fewer shots and reduce wounding losses.



Ways to improve your efficiency as a duck hunter

Recognise and understand the limits of your skill and equipment. A duck hunter needs to pattern test their gun with several choke sizes and ammunition loads to find out which combination is most effective. Refer to **Tom Roster's 2012 Nontoxic Shot Lethality Table Adapted to Australian Gamebirds** found in the *Be a better game bird hunter* to ensure you are using the correct choke and load combination for the species and distances you will be hunting.

Take the time to become a better hunter. Learn to arrange decoy spreads, improve calling, use better camouflage and less conspicuous hides. Importantly, learn how to accurately estimate distance and use marker (e.g. decoy, log etc) to make sure you only shoot within your effective shooting skills distance. Better techniques will bring ducks closer allowing for more opportunity to take realistic shots, which will reduce wounding and put more birds in your bag.

Hunters need to be respectful of other hunters in the same area by only taking realistic shots and allowing the decoys, callers and hides to bring ducks into their shooting skills distance.



Bring the ducks closer to you with decoys, callers and camouflage. A well-trained gun dog can improve recovery of downed birds.

Hunters need to have a retrieval strategy in place **before** they start shooting. Don't shoot over heavy cover, such as cumbungi or reeds. Remember to watch where the struck bird falls and retrieve immediately. The use of a well-trained dog will help with the retrieval of shot birds or work with a hunting companion to mark, locate and recover downed birds.

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