

Open letter to the Victorian Premier and Ministers for Agriculture and Environment

Dear Premier and Ministers,

At its November 2019 conference, the Victorian Labor Party committed to review its policy on recreational native waterbird shooting.

We call on the Andrews Government to honor this commitment.

Here's why.

Cruelty. Expert ballistics reports show at least one in four of the hundreds of thousands of birds shot each year in Victoria will not be killed outright but flap away to die a slow painful death. Many others will live to suffer permanent injuries.

Economics. Studies show there would be an economic benefit in banning the activity as other states have done. With rural communities crying out for a financial lifeline and 866,000 domestic tourists engaging in birdwatching last year, it makes sense to protect our natural wildlife assets.

Sustainability. Populations of our native waterbirds – many species unique to our country – are in significant long term decline.

Biodiversity. Considerable numbers of threatened and protected species are killed as collateral damage of duck shooting seasons including the Freckled Duck, Australia's rarest native duck also thought to be one of the world's rarest.

Safety. It is not possible to monitor the thousands of public waterways where recreational waterbird shooting is allowed, placing our wildlife and the public at risk. More people live around the waterways now than they did in the 1950s and many have expressed fears about their personal health and safety during duck shooting.

Democracy. Less than half of one percent of the population shoot ducks. Professional polls continue to show that the majority of Victorians – city and country – want duck shooting to end.

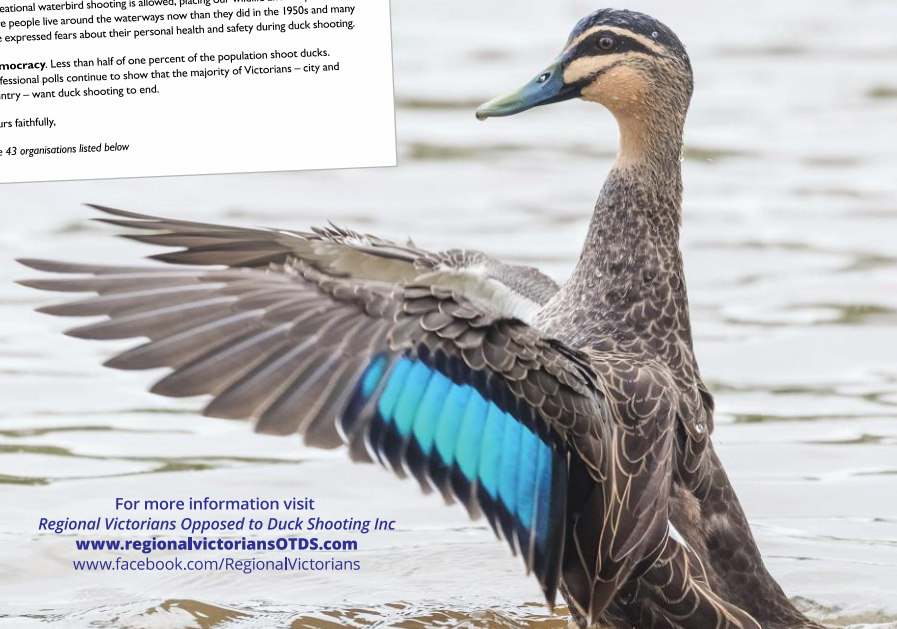
Yours faithfully,

The 43 organisations listed below

Our warming climate is bringing longer droughts and fire seasons. We can save struggling waterbirds by removing additional man-made threats.

The next native duck shooting season is often decided by Christmas.

IT'S TIME VICTORIA BANNED DUCK SHOOTING



For more information visit
Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc
www.regionalvictoriansOTDS.com
www.facebook.com/RegionalVictorians

- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Humane Society International
- Australian Education Union Victorian Branch
- Wildlife Victoria
- United Firefighters Union of Australia Victorian Branch
- Australian Ethical Investment
- Environment Victoria
- BirdLife Australia
- Animals Australia
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education (WIRE)
- Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc
- Environment East Gippsland Inc
- Goulburn Valley Environment Group
- Coalition Against Duck Shooting
- Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club
- Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
- Peninsula Field Naturalists Club
- Portland Field Naturalists Club Inc
- St Arnaud Field Naturalists Club Inc
- Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
- Friends of The Box Ironbark Forests (Mount Alexander Region)
- Friends of the Earth
- East Trentham Wildlife Shelter
- Warraling Conservation Society
- Lawyers for Animals Inc
- Barkers Creek Landcare and Wildlife Group
- Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
- Australian Wildlife Society
- Australian Wildlife Protection Council Inc
- Friends of Mallecoota
- Nillumbik Environment and Sustainability
- Carriage in The Bush
- Five Freedoms Animal Rescue
- Choose Cruelty Free
- Australian Wildlife Assistance Rescue and Education (AWARE)
- Animal Active Australia
- Friends of Bats and Bushcare Inc
- Wildlife Carers Group
- Advocating Wild
- Ocean Legal Animals Rights Lawyers
- Kangaroo Wildlife Shelter

Photo by Nalini Scarfe

Protecting our Waterbirds and Waterways.

IT'S ABOUT THE AUSTRALIA OUR GRANDCHILDREN WILL GROW UP IN.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc.

www.regionalvictoriansOTDS.com

Ecosystems = Health & Wealth

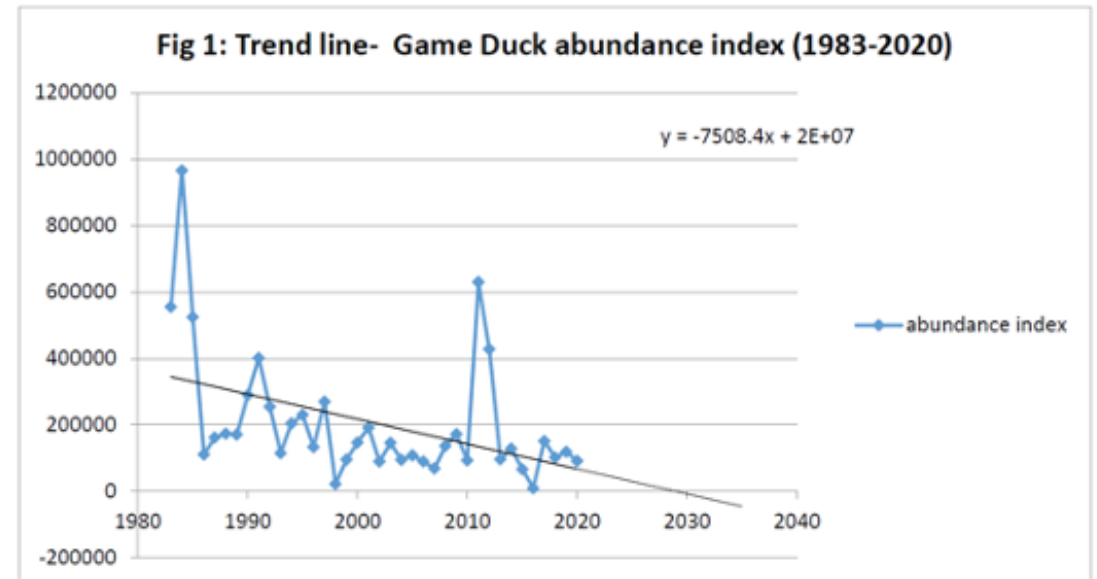
- ▶ 75% all emerging diseases are zoonotic.
- ▶ The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat.. life depends on healthy ecosystems & biodiversity.
- ▶ Costs of unhealthy ecosystems: health care costs, costs of “lock downs”, lost tourism, rectification costs: captive breeding programs, costs of toxic clean ups (lead).
- ▶ Australia one of most vulnerable countries to species loss through climate change, and we are adding to the pressure with man-made threats like hunting.



Illegally shot Freckled Duck– thought to be one of the world's rarest ducks. Photo Sue Jeffers

Shooting native waterbirds: an example of Australia's failing.

- ▶ Ducks are good for ecosystems! – They eat crop pests, algae and liver fluke, saving the need for chemical controls.
- ▶ Waterbird numbers down 90% since the 1980's.
- ▶ In 2020, “game birds” fell a further 23% from 2019 & there was little to no breeding despite rainfall.
- ▶ In Vic, waterbird numbers fell a further 50% in 2020.
- ▶ In NSW, waterbird numbers are half what they were just five years ago.



East Australian Aerial Survey Data.
(University NSW)

****Note that if the trend remains linear, game bird extinction could occur on or before 2030.**

The Number of Birds Killed is Far Higher than Published.

- ▶ Only a tiny percentage of shooting areas are monitored.
- ▶ “Harvest estimates” do not include wounded birds (add 25– 67% - Norton & Thomas 1994), nor birds left behind, nor the ripple effect through the species of shooting one of a monogamous pair.

| Estimates | 2014 | 2015 ³ | 2016 ⁴ | 2017 ⁵ | 2018 ⁶ | 2019 ⁷ | 2020 ⁸ | Aver 2009 -2020 |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Licensed hunters | 26,261 | 25,837 | 25,681 | 26,324 | 25,799 | 24,925 | 23,378 | 24,225 |
| Total# hunter days | 118,800 | 91,264 | 100,749 | 96,508 | 91,570 | 81,023 | 29,501 | 89,680 |
| Total harvest | 449,032 | 286,729 | 271,576 | 438,353 | 396,965 | 238,666 | 60,408 | 347,160 |

Number of birds reported killed by duck shooters in Victoria is grossly underestimated.

*GMA Victorian harvest estimates according to a phone survey of hunters.

Impact to Threatened / Protected Species?

“that is a separate question that can only be properly addressed by gathering robust data on the rates of non-target species being killed or injured by hunters. Such data does not exist and would be extremely difficult to gather”

(ARI 2019 Report “Waterbird Susceptibility to Disturbance from Hunting”)



Table 29 Number of specimens of non-game wildlife found dead around waters used for hunting during the 1993 duck open season. The data for birds collected by members of animal welfare organisations are counts made by CNR officers of birds delivered to CNR Heidelberg during the season.

| Species | Collected animal welfare | Collected by CNR | Total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Freckled Duck <i>Stictonetta naevosa</i> | 229 | 57 | 286 |
| Eurasian Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> | 242 | 35 | 277 |
| Blue-billed Duck <i>Oxyura australis</i> | 84 | 7 | 91 |
| cormorant species | 44 | 4 | 48 |
| Black-tailed Native-hen <i>Gallinula ventralis</i> | 0 | 43 | 43 |
| Black Swan <i>Cygnus atratus</i> | 29 | 14 | 43 |
| Galah <i>Cacatua roseicapilla</i> | 21 | 11 | 32 |
| small grebes | 19 | 5 | 24 |
| Musk Duck <i>Biziura lobata</i> | 19 | 1 | 20 |
| Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | 14 | 1 | 15 |
| Australian Magpie Lark <i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i> | 0 | 13 | 13 |
| corella species | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| ibis species | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| White-faced Heron <i>Ardea novaehollandiae</i> | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Red-necked Avocet <i>Recurvirostra novaehollandiae</i> | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Yellow-billed Spoonbill <i>Platalea flavipes</i> | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| migratory waders | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Australian Magpie <i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Silver Gull <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i> | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| tern species | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i> | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| raven species | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i> | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Dusky Moorhen <i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i> | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| raptor species | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| kingfisher species | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Noisy Miner <i>Manorina melanocephala</i> | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Australian Pelican <i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i> | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Fairy Martin <i>Cecropis ariel</i> | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Little Friarbird <i>Philemon citreogularis</i> | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Brush-tailed Possum | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 813 | 159 | 972 |



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FOI results show heartbreaking collateral damage.



& Other Factors Often Forgotten

- ▶ Migratory birds particularly vulnerable to disturbance.
- ▶ Toxic lead still illegally used in duck shooting legally for shooting quail and other animals. Horrific impacts to protected species like eagles.
- ▶ Birds are twice as vulnerable to climate change as mammals, (Global Change Biology, Zoological Society of London).



It's not only ducks.
The case for quail.

- ▶ Little data kept on abundance.
- ▶ Close resemblance to critically endangered Plains Wanderer.
- ▶ No accuracy tests required of shooters.
- ▶ Cruel "quail callers" are NOT "fair chase".

Restricted or Stopped Around the States (except Tas).



People Impacted by Duck Shooting - Our Survey Results.

"This is not just an animal welfare issue but a human rights issue".

- ▶ Over 80% held concerns for safety.
- ▶ Over 50% had never seen any authorities.
- ▶ Over 90% do not believe duck shooting benefits their communities.
- ▶ None were consulted by regulators in any social or economic research.
- ▶ Over 25% reported children were upset/frightened.
- ▶ Over 90% reported suffering distress/anxiety from duck shooting near their homes.
- ▶ Over 30% reported adverse impact to animals/stock.
- ▶ Over 30% reported Issues with illegal camping, trespass, removing habitat, leaving rubbish, fires unattended.

"We feel we aren't safe in our own back yard when the shooters are in the wetlands behind our house."

"..shooting too close to a retirement village. Dangerous and distressing"

"we often have shot pellets fall onto our roofs and if we are outside it falls on our heads."

"..firing across my boundary with shot gun pellets striking the house. One occasion saw a member of the family struck."



You Can Help!

- ▶ Follow us on Facebook.
- ▶ Subscribe to our news.
- ▶ Volunteer/Donate.
- ▶ **Make your vote count** next election(s)!

www.regionalvictoriansOTDS.com

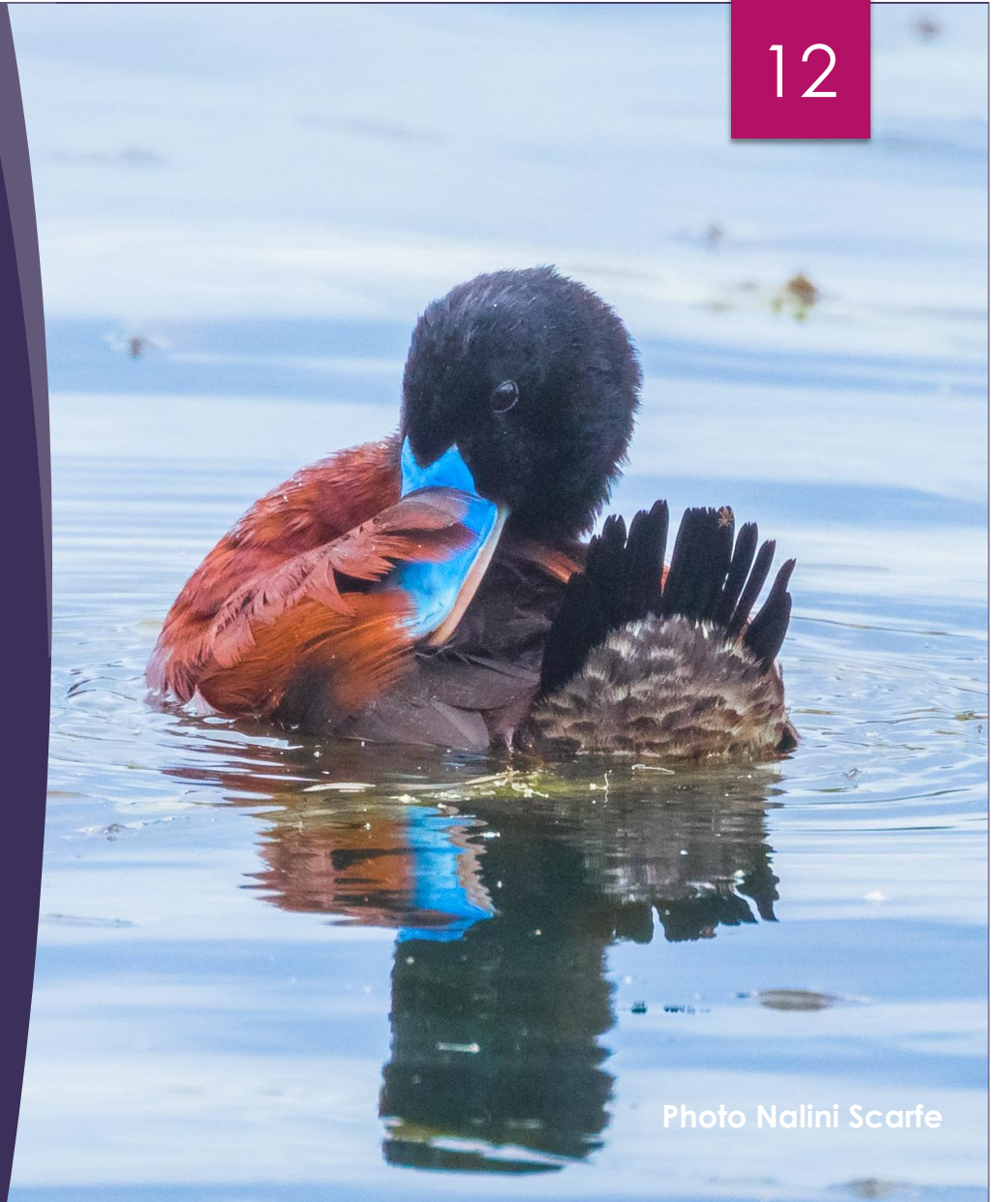


Photo Nalini Scarfe