

Game Management Authority No 1615

Legislative Council
60 Parliament First Session

Question

Asked: 1 August 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

Why did the Game Management Authority refuse to recommend wetland closures, even just for a season, when the community has provided clear evidence of adverse social and economic impacts, noting examples at Broken Creek in Barmah, Richardson's Lagoon in Torrumbarry and Cairn Curran Reservoir.

Answer

Answered: 18 September 2024

The Game Management Authority (GMA) plays a key role in making recommendations about how best to manage wetlands for duck hunting seasons. Closures of wetlands to game duck hunting may be considered before or during a game duck hunting season under powers provided in the *Wildlife Act 1975* and are for environmental considerations, e.g. the presence of threatened species.

32 wetlands were closed ahead of the 2024 duck season. Conditions were monitored throughout the season with further wetlands closed and some reopened as conditions changed.

Hunting is a legitimate recreational activity but it must be safe, sustainable and responsible. The *Firearms Act 1996* has strict laws regarding the ownership and use of firearms. Any member of the community with concerns as to the unsafe use of firearms for any activity should immediately report their concerns to Victoria Police.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Member for Oakleigh
Minister for Outdoor Recreation
11/09/2024

Native bird hunters No 1616

Legislative Council
60 Parliament First Session

Question

Asked: 1 August 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

In relation to native bird shooting areas and hunters:

- (1) What percentage of native bird shooting areas were monitored during the 2024 hunting season, and for what percentage of time were they monitored throughout the season.
- (2) Will laws be put in place to require hunters to register with authorities in advance where and when they will be hunting, to allow for effective compliance monitoring and to better ensure public safety, noting that these laws are in place in other states.
- (3) Will the Minister ensure go-pro type devices are attached to all hunting firearms to allow for effective compliance monitoring and to better ensure the safety of all Victorians.
- (4) For the 2024 duck shooting season, did the Government ensure that there were a small number of waterways at least three kilometres from residents that are open to native bird shooters during the season so that the regulator could monitor them at all times, like other outdoor shooting ranges.

Answer

Answered: 18 September 2024

I thank the Member for their question.

The Game Management Authority's (GMA) compliance and enforcement statistics for the 2024 game duck season are publicly available on the GMA website at <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/>.

These statistics note that a total of 511 wetland and waterway patrols were undertaken by Authorised Officers who also checked more than 1,550 Game Licences and inspected more than 1,200 hunter bags. The GMA takes an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to where and when it will deploy its compliance and enforcement operations in any one season.

The Allan Labor Government recently announced sensible new changes to recreational hunting to ensure the activity remains safe, sustainable and responsible.

These changes came into effect through the new Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 on 7 September. In making these changes, the Government consulted extensively with peak hunting groups, animal welfare advocates and traditional owners to ensure that the right protections are in place for both the environment and the public.

You can find more information about these changes at: djsir.vic.gov.au/game-hunting

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Member for Oakleigh
Minister for Outdoor Recreation
11/09/2024

Native bird shooting No 1769

Question

Asked: 31 October 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

What data did the Game Management Authority (GMA) compile regarding any non-game species shot during duck shooting season across all the thousands of permitted shooting areas in Victoria in 2024, given that a key function of the GMA is to protect threatened species.

Minister Failed to Answer

(GMA did NOT monitor the thousands of waterways open to duck shooters and did NOT make any effort to compile a list of non-game species shot other than react to (seemingly attempt to discredit) lists compiled by wildlife groups. Previous governments did at least make an effort to gauge hunting impact on threatened

Answer

Answered: 10 December 2024

The Game Management Authority (GMA) is committed to ensuring that hunting is conducted safely and responsibly. The GMA records compliance statistics for persons detected shooting or alleged to have shot non-game species during the open season for duck.

For the 2024 duck hunting season, the GMA did not detect any instance of the shooting of non-game ducks by hunters. The GMA received one formal complaint from the public regarding the alleged shooting of non-game ducks. However, after a thorough investigation, it was determined that the ducks were in fact game species.

- The GMA published a report detailing its assessment of data relating to non-game species shot during the 2024 duck season, which is available at:
https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1031600/X-ray-assessment-of-protestor-collected-birds-summary-FINAL.pdf
- A report the GMA received from Wildlife Victoria summarising the findings of their in-field deployment during the opening week of the 2024 duck hunting season.
 - The report provided a summary of eleven waterbirds presented to the Wildlife Victoria veterinary team. Among these birds, two were classified as non-game species, however they did not contain embedded pellets and showed no obvious signs of gunshot injury.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Outdoor Recreation
6/12/2024

Public areas opened to hunters No 1770

Question

Asked: 31 October 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

What percentage of public areas are open to hunters compared to not opened to hunters, given that the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action maps do not show all areas, such as public rivers, streams and creeks in which native bird hunting is permitted.

Answer

Answered: 10 December 2024

Information about visitor sites, navigation maps and where recreational activities are permitted, including hunting on public land, is available from a wide range of sources, including MapShareVic and the More to Explore App. The More to Explore App is maintained and continuously improved by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The App is available at <https://www.exploreoutdoors.vic.gov.au/where-to-start/more-to-explore>.

Public land in Victoria covers approximately 8 million hectares in area. DEECA advises that approximately 4.1 million hectares of public land is available for hunting as a permitted activity.

While hunting may be a permitted activity on an area of public land, hunting may not necessarily take place for various reasons. This includes a lack of access due to seasonal road closures or wetland closures, lack of game, periods outside of an allowed regulated game season and areas where habitat is not suitable for the hunting of deer or game birds.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Outdoor Recreation
20/11/2024

That's over 50% Minister
Of public land open to hunters which represent a tiny percentage of Victoria's population.

Impact of hunting No 1771

Legislative Council
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Question

Asked: 31 October 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

Has there been a cost-benefit analysis carried out on the impact of hunting.

Minister Failed to Answer

Answer

There has been NO cost-benefit analysis. Why not? Why are taxpayers forced to continually fund biased hunters' guesstimates instead?

Answered: 10 December 2024

The Victorian Government has commissioned reports on the economic contribution of recreational hunting in Victoria. These reports were published in 2014 and 2024 and are publicly available at <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/research/hunting-research>.

The latest report estimated that recreational hunting's gross contribution to the Victorian economy in 2019 was \$356 million and supported 3138 jobs.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Outdoor Recreation

27/11/2024

Lost tourism due to hunting No 1772

Legislative Council
60 Parliament First Session

Question

Asked: 31 October 2024

Questions on Notice

Minister Failed to Answer

And hunting is NOT included in the tourism revenue captured by Tourism Research Australia. Why? Because it's minuscule – in fact likely negative. Conversely, birdwatching, fishing, bushwalking and visits to state parks (all hampered by hunting) bring the highest revenues to Australia -mainly to QLD and NSW (where there is no recreational native bird shooting).

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

What is the cost of lost potential tourism due to hunting.

Answer

Answered: 10 December 2024

The Victorian Government has commissioned two reports on the economic contribution of recreational hunting in Victoria. These reports are publicly available at <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/research/hunting-research>.

The latest economic report estimated recreational hunting's gross contribution to the Victorian economy in 2019 was \$356 million and provided 3138 jobs, with the majority of these benefits in regional Victoria.

A significant proportion of recreational hunting is classified as tourism activity according to definitions published by the United Nations, which Australia and Victoria also use to allow meaningful international comparisons. As such, recreational hunting is included in total visitor numbers of 87.3 million and visitor spend of \$39.2 billion for the year ending June 2024 in Victoria.

The Victorian Government recognises that Victorians enjoy a wide range of outdoor recreation pursuits. Whether Victorians and visitors choose hunting, fishing, boating, camping, hiking or biking, the Government's role is to ensure that these activities can be enjoyed safely, responsibly and sustainably.

Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Outdoor Recreation 20/11/2024

Native bird hunting No 1803

Legislative Council
60 Parliament First Session

Question

Asked: 28 November 2024

Questions on Notice

KATHERINE COPSEY — To ask the Minister for Skills and TAFE (for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation):

In relation to the approximately 2,300 public wetlands as well as public rivers, creeks and streams and private wetlands where hunting of native birds is permitted, and noting that hunting is permitted during the duck hunting season on 54 per cent of the area of wetlands on public land:

- (1) What percentage of public hunting areas are signposted as hunting areas and monitored by authorities for public safety.
- (2) What percentage of all public and private hunting areas are monitored for the presence of threatened species.
- (3) What checks have been implemented to gauge the impact of hunting on other recreational users or nearby residents.
- (4) How many residents live within three kilometres of hunting, noting that three kilometres is the distance that shotgun noise is audible.

Answer

Answered: 15 January 2025

Minister Failed to Answer

I thank the Member for their questions.

- (1) What percentage of public hunting areas are signposted as hunting areas and monitored by authorities for public safety.

Over recent years several initiatives have been implemented that have increased awareness of hunting locations, conditions and opportunities, aided hunter compliance and improved public understanding.

The Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2016/2020 (SHAP 1) facilitated the development of a map set for Victoria showing all areas where game hunting can occur on public land. These maps are accessible through web-based platforms and on the More to Explore phone app.

The web-based platforms and the More to Explore app have been developed and maintained by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and can be accessed on its website at www.exploreoutdoors.vic.gov.au/where-to-start/more-to-explore and also the Game Management Authority (GMA) website at www.gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/hunting-maps.

Additionally, SHAP 1 facilitated the replacement or upgrade of 360 signs and information totems at 130 State Game Reserves, contributing to public safety in hunting areas and helping hunters understand the boundaries and conditions for safe and responsible hunting.

The GMA and other Authorised Officers from partner agencies, including Victoria Police, regularly monitor Victorian wetlands to ensure compliance with duck hunting and public safety laws. The percentage of public hunting areas monitored by authorities for public safety is not available.

The GMA produces an annual compliance summary for duck seasons, detailing, among other matters, the number of wetlands that were patrolled. The summaries can be found on the GMA website at <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/>

(2) What percentage of all public and private hunting areas are monitored for the presence of threatened species.

Wetland surveys, known as the Priority Waterbird Count, are coordinated by DEECA each year prior to the commencement of the duck season. These surveys help identify large-scale breeding or the presence of significant concentrations of threatened species in wetlands throughout Victoria.

The Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research (ARI), DEECA, produces a report on the Victorian Priority Waterbird Count each year. These reports contain detailed information on the number of wetlands surveyed and are available on the GMA website at www.gma.vic.gov.au/research/duck-research

In addition to the Priority Waterbird Count, third-party reports about the presence of threatened species/breeding colonies are often received prior to and during the game duck season. DEECA or GMA regional staff will visit the wetland to conduct a count to verify whether there are significant numbers of threatened species/breeding waterbirds at the site. Dependant on the survey results the wetland may be fully closed to hunting or have additional limitations to hunting placed on it.

(3) What checks have been implemented to gauge the impact of hunting on other recreational users or nearby residents.

The Victorian Government recognises the recreational hunting of game duck and quail as a legitimate activity on public and private land. The impacts of hunting on other recreational users are managed under various laws including the provisions of the *Firearms Act 1996* and under land management and hunting regulations.

Should recreational users or residents near to areas where hunting is permitted have concerns, these should be raised, dependant on the nature of the concern, with government agencies, such as: Victoria Police, Local Councils, the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, the public land manager or DEECA.

(4) How many residents live within three kilometres of hunting, noting that three kilometres is the distance that shotgun noise is audible.

The Victorian Government does not collect data that relates to the number of residents that live within three kilometres of areas where recreational hunting is permitted in Victoria.