

Wetlands closures anger duck hunters



DUCK hunters are furious with the Outdoor Recreation minister, Sonya Kilkenny, for the closure of 13 wetlands right before the opening of the season and what they said was an anti-science agenda.

The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party (SFFP) Victoria slammed the minister and said it confirmed the minister's bias against duck hunters.

The SFFP said the minister had closed or partially locked off 13 wetlands due to supposed large numbers of threatened or non-game bird species.

They said it was baffling that a large number of flying foxes, which were in plague proportions in Melbourne's metropolitan region, was the cause for a portion of a wetland closure in the state's north.

On the issue of threatened species, SFFP vice chairman, Ben Collyer, said "duck hunters who have gone through a waterfowl identification test should have no problem identifying game and non-game species". "That is what the test is for," he said.

SFFP were calling for a look at the threatened listing of some game birds, particularly Shoveler and Hardhead and that closing wetlands because a large number of these birds would preclude that their populations must be sustainable.

Jeff Bourman MP has had a gutful of the outlandish reasons the Victorian Government used to restrict and hamper this year's duck hunting season.

"Casually dismissing the GMA recommendations was pure political bastardry but closing wetlands because of flying foxes is bordering on the insane," he said.

"It's time the minister for Outdoor

Recreation pass on this ministry to someone at least competent enough to listen to their own departments."

Conversely, the Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) urged the public to register their opposition to duck hunting with the Parliamentary inquiry presently taking submissions until May 8.

RVOTDS said the inquiry; Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements, was a chance for people opposed to duck hunting to be heard.

RVOTDS project officer, Sue Williams, said "the government is listening".

"Please take a few minutes to lend your voice for the protection of our native birds who cannot speak for themselves, and for the risk-exposed communities who love being home to them."

RVOTDS said it seemed the fact that tonnes of toxic lead and millions of plastic shotgun components were entering the environment each year by duck shooters was well known to the regulator.

"In our view the fact they continue to allow this, is negligence," they said.

"Sadly, the authorities have no idea how many threatened species are trying to survive at other shooting sites around the state.

"If they were serious about regulating duck shooting, they would have restricted it to areas which can be monitored."

The Game Management Authority is an independent authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria.

Together with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria, they assist shooters to

identify areas that are available to hunting.

Hunters are personally responsible for acting in accordance with the *Firearms Act 1996* including informing themselves about any prohibited locations.

The most recent wetlands to be closed

to duck hunting include Lake Muirhead State Game Reserve (north-west of Willaura) to protect a significant number of Brolga, and Andersons Inlet (near Venus Bay) due to a sighting of the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot.

For a list of wetlands closed or partially closed to hunting for the 2023 duck season, visit gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/wetland-closures-duck-season

The season started at 8am on Wednesday and will close 30 minutes after sunset on Tuesday, May 30, 2023.