

“Recreational” Native Quail slaughter ends 30 June

The “recreational” shooting of native stubble quail in Victoria has flown largely under the radar.

The three month recreational shooting season ends this Thursday June 30.

Elizabeth McCann of Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc (RVOTDS) said today, “It’s hard to conceive that when we are trying to protect and conserve biodiversity, the Victorian government is allowing such a barbaric practice to continue in our state, and with such little understanding of impacts to species”.

RVOTDS say they asked the hunting regulator Game Management Authority (GMA) when the last population counts were performed for quail in Victoria, and the regulator confirmed there had been none. Yet a full three month shoot was allowed to go ahead of 20 birds a day per shooter.

There are no identification tests required of quail shooters and shooting often starts before sunrise, proceeding until after sunset. Quail closely resemble the critically endangered Plains Wanderer of which it is estimated there are less than 1000 left in the wild. Taxpayers are funding a breeding program to try to save the species.

A hunting knowledge test published by GMA in 2020 showed bird shooters had the least understanding of hunting laws of all hunters.

GMA has confirmed it monitored hunters compliance at just 216 wetlands open to duck shooters during the three month duck shooting season. “There are anywhere from 8000 to 30,000 public lakes, streams, creeks, rivers, wetlands and reservoirs open for duck shooters, so they have monitored about 1 percent. Typically the regulator’s monitoring of quail shooters is even more lack-lustre. Who knows what is getting shot across

our state - other than these defenseless quirky little birds?”

RVOTDS’ concerns extend beyond the impact to birdlife , to other fauna and even humans, due to the fact toxic lead ammunition is still legally used in quail shooting. According to a Department of Sustainability & Environment report*, each ammunition cartridge holds 30-45g of lead. Multiply 30g by the average number of 175,000 shot quail each year in Victoria (GMA harvest estimates) and one gets a staggering 5 tonnes of lead potentially pumped into Victorian (including food-producing) environments each season - without even adding in the lead deposited by missed shots. Lead is harmful even in tiny traces.

Recreational bird shooting is banned in QLD, ACT, NSW and WA. In Victoria, professional polls continue to show most Victorians want it banned here too, with the strongest support for a ban coming from regional Victoria.