

Group calls for 2023 duck shooting season to be canned

DUCK HUNTING

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Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) have called for the 2023 duck season to be cancelled, in a submission made to the overseeing body last week.

In a 20-page submission to the Game Management Authority (GMA), which was also sent to Premier Daniel Andrews, the group called for the 2023 duck and quail season to be completely closed based on the long-term decline of game ducks and their lack of breeding, a decline in stubble quail numbers and adverse impacts of hunting on protected species.

In its submission, the RVOTDS provided details, obtained through Freedom of Information, showing thousands of threatened species killed as collateral damage, tourism operators' concerns for customer safety and economic loss as well as the fears of landowners for their families and concerns around trespassers.

While no date has been set for the 2023 season as yet, it is expected to open in mid-March and close in mid-June.

RVOTDS claims the GMA have failed on their functions set out in the Game Management Authority Act 2014, specifically promoting the sustainability in hunting, to research social, economic and environmental impacts and make ministerial recommendations in relation to declaring public land open or closed to hunting and open and closed seasons.

"It (the GMA) has never closed a shooting season despite presiding over the worst environmental conditions recorded," RVOTDS said in a statement.

"Previous governments closed shooting seasons in 2003, 2007 and

2008 for less dire circumstances. It refuses to close public waterways to shooting when community have requested it, despite there being so many thousands of them open to shooting they can't possibly be monitored.

"Why does less than half of one percent of the population need to have access to tens of thousands of public waterways to kill birds for fun? Don't landowners matter?"

The 2022 Eastern Australian Waterbird Aerial Survey found three major indicators for waterbird population — total abundance, number of species breeding and wetland area index — continued to show significant declines over time.

The survey also found that while total waterbird abundance increased significantly in 2022 compared to 2021, however this number remained well below the long-term average.

"Closing the 2023 shooting season is the only sensible and appropriate way to allow the birds a chance to recover and the regulator a chance to conduct overdue due diligence of social/economic impacts to community and that includes impacts to mental health," RVOTDS said.

