

# Shooting match over game

## ENVIRONMENT

BY JESSICA GREENAN

### Region

A 90-DAY hunting season has been announced despite more than 60 organisations calling the shots on an end to duck shooting across regional Victoria, with one organisation taking aim at Tower Hill.

The Victorian Game Management Authority on Saturday announced the season would begin at 8am on March 16 with a reduced bag limit of four birds.

Some bird species including the blue-winged shoveler and hardhead will be off-limits during the season after being recently listed as threatened.

It comes as a major blow for the First Nations clans, businesses and wildlife groups including the Portland and Hamilton Field Naturalists clubs which had been urging action to end duck shooting.

A Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting spokeswoman said permitted hunting at natural tourist destinations including at Tower Hill was 'counterintuitive'.

Hunting has been permitted at the extinct volcano since 1961.

"There are beautiful locales like Corangamite (rich in Indigenous heritage) and Tower Hill and so many others, where most would agree bird shooting is not in keeping with the beautiful

natural assets these areas are lucky enough to still have," she said.

"This is exactly what we and many other groups made a submission for in the Future of Tower Hill consultation by Parks Victoria about a couple of years ago."

In response to the announcement, Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick said pressure was mounting on a ban.

"I'm angry and upset at this heartless decision, but I am also more determined than ever," Mr Meddick said.

"This is the longest we've waited for a decision on the season and it's clear that the pressure for a ban is mounting."

Latest GMA data shows Koroit has 20 game licence holders endorsed to hunt game ducks. Elsewhere Warrnambool has 106 while Port Fairy, Hamilton, Portland, Terang and Port Campbell have 15, 50, 12, 19 and two respectively.

A GMA spokesperson previously told *The Standard* conservation would be taken into consideration while hunting and animal welfare groups would also be consulted.

"The GMA's recommendation will be based on assessments of rainfall data, wetland conditions, waterfowl abundance and distribution, harvest data and whether hunting activities could impact on the conservation and sustainability of waterbird

populations," the spokesperson said.



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**Andy Meddick**