

Debate over duck season

HUNTING

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Region

WIMMERA'S lakes and wetlands are set to see an influx of shooters in the coming months, as Victoria's duck hunting season kicks off - however, not all are welcoming the activity.

The Victorian Game Management Authority released 2022's duck hunting season arrangements, which will begin on March 16 and end on June 13.

Changes from 2021's season include an additional three days of hunting and an increased bag limit of four game ducks per day.

The electorate of Lowan has 1074 licensed duck shooters, or 2.48 per cent of voters, representing a high proportion compared with the rest of the state.

Hunting group Wimmera Duck Pluckers member Tom said shooters were happy with 2022's rules and would like to see an additional bag limit increase.

"Very happy on the season we have been given this year compared to last year's season, this year allowing us three extra additional days to hunt on top of a full-length season," they said.

"Although we are confused on the hunter's daily bag limit, considering the amount of rain central and eastern

Victoria; which has caused a large breeding boom in the last 12 months."

Two species excluded from this year's hunt were the blue-winged shoveler

and the hardhead, which were both listed as protected species due to population decline.

In 2021, the duck hunting season was moved into a partial hiatus due to the state's COVID-19 restrictions.

Victorian Game Management Authority said the full-length season was recommended based on modelling from two experts in waterfowl ecology and population dynamics.

In 2022, the duck hunting season has been met with

vocal opposition from a variety of animal rights and ecology groups.

An open letter advertised in newspapers across the state saw almost 70 community groups and organisations call for an end to the practice

The group behind the letter, Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc. argued hunters have become a small minority and the activity was longer deemed to be acceptable to most in the community.

A spokesperson for the group said the letter, which received support from a wide range of community voices, represented an unheard

majority wanting to end duck hunting.

However, hunter Tom said the majority of duck shooters he knew obeyed the rules and were interested in sustaining the region's bird numbers.

"As a duck hunter we don't just go out to shoot up wetlands or kill protected species," he said.