

HUNT IS ON

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DUCK hunters say the only positive from the 2022 duck season arrangement was the return to the legislated season length, with an extra three days.

The season was announced by Game Management Authority (GMA) on Saturday, including start times, daily bag limits and hunted species.

Hunters can head to regional wetlands and waterways from 8am on Wednesday, March 16, with the season to close 30 minutes after sunset on Monday, June 13.

The bag limit is four birds per day.

Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead may not be hunted across Victoria as both species were recently listed as threatened due to declining populations.

Hunting organisation Field and Game Australia (FGA) said it was disappointed in the outcome of the decision-making process used to determine the duck season for

2022, despite the hope that was held for the Interim Adaptive Harvest Framework.

“FGA has for some time now been stating we remain committed to being part of the genuine consultation process and assisting the implementation of the interim model for future season setting,” conservation and hunting manager Glenn Falla said.

“This year, however, the interim framework has some gaping holes in the transparency around the decision making, clarity in explanation and what appears to be an overly cautious approach in the modelling.

“The model utilized in the 2021/2022 interim framework has a lot of improvement to be made before FGA or hunters will accept the process is an improvement.”

Mr Falla said the only positive was the return to the legislated season length, with an added three days.

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“It is still disappointing to see that Blue-winged Shoveler continue to be left off the hunting list and yet there’s still no real commitment from anyone to do further scientific research to determine justification for such a move,” he said.

“Even more disappointing is that Hardhead have now been added to the list, due to being added to the threatened species list. This action is not a surprise, has been a focus for hunting organisations and is being chal-

lenged.

“Collectively, we need to challenge these actions where the evidence and data support our cause.

“The biggest positive impact members can assist with though, is to improve habitat and conditions to help their abundance numbers recover, please get involved in our projects.”

GMA said the arrangements for the 2022 season were based on analysis and modelling of habitat and waterbird abundance surveys conducted across eastern Australia, and other data relating

to game duck abundance, habitat distribution and climate.

The full-length season was recommended based on harvest modelling by two experts in waterfowl ecology and population dynamics, Professors Klaassen and Kingsford.

"They advised that reducing the bag limit is a more effective way to reduce the overall harvest of game ducks rather than reducing season length," the game hunting regulator said.

"As in previous years, the GMA will continue to monitor conditions in the lead up to and during the season.

"Where warranted, wetlands may be closed to hunting or hunting may be further regulated to protect concentrations of rare or threatened species."

Anti-hunting group Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) said the announcement "seemed a pretty gutless attempt to keep the unpopular announcement under the radar".

"The Andrews Government has again shown it is more concerned with a minority group of bird shooters, than regional residents and businesses" a spokesperson for RVOTDS said.

"No social/economic impact studies have ever been done on anyone other than a small group of shooters.

"No cost-benefit analysis has been done to account for the cost

to Victorians of compliance monitoring, or lost tourism, of stock being sent through fences or the inability to work from home because of shooting."

The group challenged Premier Daniel Andrews to bring his family to stay by a waterway during the season.

"It's time he experienced the carnage he condones," they said.

"At least one in four of the tens of thousands of birds shot each season are wounded only, flapping off to die slow painful deaths elsewhere.

"This is a very disturbing decision made by our government during an age when we are better educated on the fragile status of our environment.

"All our efforts and resources should be put toward protecting our native wildlife and their habitats.

"We are dumbfounded at the ignorant short sightedness and 'head on the sand' approach this government is taking."



The 2022 duck hunting season will begin at 8am on March 16.