

# Environmentalists cheer closure of Lake Modewarre to duck hunting

BY ELLIE CLARINGBOLD

ENVIRONMENTAL advocates are this week celebrating the closure of Lake Modewarre to duck hunting after campaigning for its closure ahead of this year's season opening.

The wetland was closed to duck hunters on April 13, only three days into the season, after significant numbers of blue-winged shovelers, which cannot be hunted this year, were recorded at the site located near Winchelsea.

Friends of Lake Modewarre campaigner Melissa Tinney said the closure announcement was met with "joy and amazement".

"We've been working with Lake Modewarre for three years now in our aim for sustainability and biodiversity.

"It's home to so many different endangered and protected species of flora and fauna.

"We're very excited about [the closure]. It's about protecting the wildlife and making it a safe place for people to walk as well, and visit."

While the group had also previously advocated for the closure of Browns Swamp, which at the time of writing remains open to duck hunters, Ms Tinney said low water levels had so far kept most duck hunters away.

"It's just crazy that anyone should shoot there.

"We live next to Browns Swamp. Last year it was just shooting all day for four weeks."

She said families with young children now lived 50-metres from the wetland and expressed concern that proximity to local residents did not appear to factor into the government's closure decision-making process.

Lake Modewarre joins 33 other wetland closures across the state, many due to an increase in the presence of threatened bird species, including the Lake Murdeduke State Game Reserve in Winchelsea.

Field & Game Australia (FGA) chief executive Lucas Cooke said the state government's approach to wetland closures this year had been "overly cautious" and suggested that all viable management options had



At the time of writing, 34 wetlands across the state have been closed to duck hunters. Photo: FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA

not been considered first.

"Trigger points [for wetland closures] are supposed to trigger a management conversation, not a closure," he said.

"The closures process, or the management of these wetlands to allow for sustainable, responsible hunting to take place on them, does rely obviously on duck hunters being exceptionally compliant, and I think we'd probably ask the government to take note of the fact that that is the case."

FGA previously stated it was "particularly disheartened" by the significant closures throughout the Lake Connewarre wetland system, which was closed to hunters this year due to the presence of orange-bellied parrots.

The small migratory parrot is one of Australia's most threatened bird species, according to BirdLife Australia.

"We're super supportive of that endangered species program, but there's actually almost no evidence at all that hunting has any effect on those birds," Mr Cooke said.

"We see hunting existing with those parrots exceptionally well in the past and yet a very noisy, opinionated minority are using them as an excuse to close down a wetland that only exists because hunters put it there."

This year's duck hunting season will end on June 5.