

Media release

Sunday, 7 April 2024

Wetlands closed to hunting

The Victorian Government has closed or partially closed thirty-two wetlands to hunting for the 2024 duck season to prevent losses or disturbance to significant numbers of threatened species and breeding waterbirds.

The number of wetlands closed to hunting in 2024 is partly due to an increase in the presence of threatened species currently present at Victorian wetlands.

The increase in the presence of threatened species is due to favourable environmental conditions, including extensive flooding in late 2022, resulting in increased waterbird habitat and breeding activity. As wetlands dry, birds are concentrating on remaining wetlands.

Wetlands have been closed to duck hunting to protect significant concentrations of threatened species including the Blue-billed Duck, Blue-winged Shoveler, Freckled Duck, Curlew Sandpiper and Brolga.

Other wetlands have also been closed to prevent disturbance to colonies of breeding waterbirds, and three wetlands (Kow Swamp, Reedy Lakes and Richardson River) are routinely closed each year to reinforce their status as wildlife sanctuaries where game hunting is prohibited.

Signage will be installed to alert hunters to the closures and wetlands will be monitored throughout the season. If the reason for closure no longer exists, the wetland may be reopened to hunting.

Closing wetlands or regulating hunting methods at wetlands ensures that threatened species are protected and duck hunting remains sustainable.

Other wetlands may be closed or further regulated if significant concentrations of threatened species are found.

Hunters should check the GMA website regularly for updates to wetland closures at gma.vic.gov.au or [Wetland closures – 2024 duck season](#).

Hunters are reminded that the hunting start time is 8.00am every day of the season, from Wednesday, 10 April 2024 to Wednesday, 5 June 2024 (inclusive). Hunting must stop 30 minutes after sunset. The daily bag limit is six game ducks.

The Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead must not be hunted in Victoria this year.

Hunters are responsible for understanding their legal, ethical and safety obligations when hunting, including knowing where it is legal to hunt.

GMA Game Officers, Victoria Police and Authorised Officers from DEECA, DJSIR and Parks Victoria will be patrolling wetlands across Victoria.

For more information on game hunting in Victoria, visit gma.vic.gov.au.

Wetlands closed to hunting

The wetlands listed below will be closed to duck hunting for the 2024 duck season. Check the GMA website regularly for updates to this list.

Table: 2024 duck season wetland closures as of 6 April 2024

Wetland name	Nearby town	Threatened species present / reason for closure	Regulation / Restriction
Andersons Inlet	Inverloch	Orange-bellied Parrot	Full closure
Big Reedy Lagoon State Game Reserve	Yarrawonga	Great Egret	Full closure
Bullrush Swamp	Hamilton	Brolga	Full closure
Clydebank Morass State Game Reserve and adjoining public land	Clydebank	Blue-winged Shoveler	Full closure
Cundare Pool	Cressy	Brolga	Full closure
Dowd Morass State Game Reserve	Sale	Breeding waterbirds	Partial closure (see gazette)
Koorangie State Game Reserve, including the Marshes, Lake Bael Bael and Little Lake Bael Bael	Kerang	Freckled Duck, Breeding waterbirds	Full closure
Kow Swamp	Gunbower	Wildlife sanctuary	Full closure
Greens Lake	Corop	Brolga	Full closure
Hird Swamp State Game Reserve	Macorna North	Australasian Bittern	Full closure
Lake Bolac	Lake Bolac	Musk Duck	Full closure
Lake Boort	Boort	Grey-headed Flying-fox	Full closure
Lake Buloke (which includes Little Lake Buloke)	Donald	Blue-Winged Shoveler	Full closure
Lake Buninjon State Game Reserve	Willaura	Blue-winged Shoveler Blue-billed Duck	Full closure
Lake Colongulac	Camperdown	Blue-Winged Shoveler	Full closure
Lake Connewarre (except Reedy Lakes and Hospital Swamps)	Barwon Heads	Orange-bellied Parrot	Full closure (Reedy Lakes and Hospital Swamps are open to hunting)
Lake Cullen State Game Reserve	Kerang	Blue-Winged Shoveler	Full closure
Lake Goldsmith State Game Reserve	Beaufort	Blue-winged Shoveler, Freckled Duck	Full closure
Lake Linlithgow	Hamilton	Blue-billed Duck	Full closure
Lake Martin	Cressy	Curlew Sandpiper	Full closure
Lake Muirhead State Game Reserve	Willaura	Brolga	Full closure

Wetland name	Nearby town	Threatened species present / reason for closure	Regulation / Restriction
Lake Murdeduke State Game Reserve	Winchelsea	Blue-billed Duck	Full closure
Lake Natimuk	Natimuk and Horsham	Blue-winged Shoveler	Full closure
Lake Stewart (private land)	Corop	Brolga	Full closure
Lake Tutchewop	Mystic Park	Blue-billed Duck	Full closure
Lake Wat Wat	Orbost	Blue-winged Shoveler	Full closure
Lake Wongan State Game Reserve	Streatham	Blue-winged Shoveler	Full closure
Pine Lake	Horsham	Blue-winged Shoveler, Blue-Billed Duck	Full closure
Reedy Lakes (Reedy, Middle and Third Lake)	Kerang	Wildlife sanctuary	Full closure
Richardson River	Donald and Lake Buloke	Wildlife sanctuary	Full closure - from Lake Buloke up to and including the Sunraysia Highway Bridge
The Green Swamp State Game Reserve	Glenthompson	Brolga	Full closure
Tower Hill State Game Reserve	Warrnambool	Blue-winged Shoveler	Full closure

Contact: Nick Foster | 0417 293 365 | nick.foster@gma.vic.gov.au

Frequently asked questions

Why are these wetlands closed?

Many of these wetlands have been closed to duck hunting to protect significant concentrations of threatened and breeding waterbirds.

Favourable environmental conditions, including extensive flooding in late 2022 resulting in increased waterbird habitat and breeding activity, has led to an increase in waterbird numbers at wetlands across Victoria. As wetlands dry, birds are concentrating on remaining wetlands.

There are special processes in place, including trigger points (number of birds present) that are used by authorities to consider whether a wetland should be closed to duck hunting or if additional protective measures are needed.

The trigger points for certain threatened species have been reached or exceeded in many of the wetlands closed to hunting. Some wetlands are closed to prevent disturbance to breeding waterbirds and for the protection of habitat (i.e., for the Orange-bellied Parrot).

Kow Swamp, Reedy Lakes and Richardson River are routinely closed to duck hunting to reinforce their status as wildlife sanctuaries where game hunting is prohibited.

Are these wetlands closed for the entire season?

The wetlands listed above will be closed for the entire 2024 duck season (10 April to 5 June 2024) under a section 86 notice under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

The GMA and DEECA will monitor these wetlands during the 2024 duck season. If the reason for closure no longer exists, the wetland may be reopened to hunting.

I have passed the WIT and can identify birds; can I still hunt at these wetlands?

The wetland closures will be in place to ensure that significant concentrations of threatened waterbirds are not disturbed or mistakenly shot as a result of hunting.

Brolga are currently flocking in some wetlands. Flocking is where birds gather in large numbers to feed and roost and facilitates young adult birds in forming breeding pairs. Any disturbance during this sensitive period could impact the Brolga's ability to breed successfully and help in the species' recovery.

What are the penalties for hunting at these wetlands?

Breaching a section 86 notice under the *Wildlife Act 1975* carries a maximum penalty of 25 penalty units (approximately \$4,800) and offenders must face court. There is no infringement notice available for breaching a section 86 notice.

The extent of the fine imposed is at the discretion of the courts. Courts may impose further penalties, including the loss of equipment, and hunters may lose their Game and Firearm licences.

What about the lost hunting opportunities?

The number of wetlands closed to hunting will result in fewer hunting opportunities in some areas.

Ensuring that hunting remains sustainable and does not negatively impact threatened species or breeding waterbirds is a priority. There are still plenty of areas open to hunting across Victoria. Hunters may be required to hunt in different locations to previous years.

What is the process for recommending wetland closures?

Hunting areas can be further regulated, closed or partially closed through a legal notice prior to, or during the duck season. The DEECA, with assistance from the GMA, conducts surveys and wetland monitoring activities prior to the duck season to gather information on game and non-game species.

The GMA, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJSIR) and DEECA consider the potential impacts of hunting on breeding waterbirds and threatened species.

Each government body subsequently provides advice to the responsible Minister on the temporary closure of wetlands or further regulation of duck hunting, where there are risks to significant concentrations of breeding or threatened waterbirds.

For more information, visit [Wetland closure process](#).

What is the process for reopening wetlands?

Further regulated or closed wetlands are monitored throughout the duck season. If the reason for further regulation or closure no longer exists, the legal notice can be revoked and hunting can occur.

If the reason for closure or further regulation no longer exists, a recommendation will be provided to government to reopen the wetland to hunting.

If a wetland is reopened to duck hunting, the GMA will advise hunters through its website and [GMA Facebook page](#), and the wetland will be removed from the [Wetland closures](#) list.