



A duck on the Wimmera River.

## Duck-rescue team based in Stawell

26 May 2021

Anti-duck-shooting activists hope to establish a 'rescue base' in Stawell to deal with wounded waterbirds during the opening week of duck-shooting season, starting today.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy said Wildlife Victoria, with its mobile veterinary clinic and volunteer veterinarians, had joined rescue efforts this year.

He said a rescue group would be in Stawell and be ready to deploy rescue and veterinary teams to cover surrounding wetlands.

He added that native waterbirds flying overhead were usually shot in the belly and 'suffered internal and nerve injuries as well as shattered and broken bones and smashed legs, wings and bills'. "Without the dedicated help from volunteer rescuers and veterinarians, wounded native waterbirds would be left to suffer slow, agonising deaths," Mr Levy said.

"We don't expect duck shooters to show any empathy for their wounded victims, but we would expect today's progressive Labor politicians to show more empathy and concern for the suffering of the shooters' sentient victims."

Mr Levy said Coalition Against Duck Shooting surveys across the main shooting wetlands in Victoria had revealed 'dangerously' low numbers of waterbirds.

He suggested Game Management Authority might 'have fudged the numbers of birds still in Victoria' to justify increasing a bag limit for duck shooters during a shortened 20-day shooting season.

"We believe the GMA used a helicopter survey conducted five months ago in November 2020 to justify increasing the bag limit, but ignored the fact that most waterbirds would have flown north out of Victoria following the floods in Queensland and New South Wales," he said.

“The GMA had originally said its own survey was a ‘trial’ only and was never intended to be part of considerations for a 2021 season.

“Duck shooting is legalised recreational animal abuse on a large scale.

“The question is why do both major Victorian political parties continue to support this outdated recreational animal abuse, when other Labor state premiers banned recreational duck shooting decades ago because of the unacceptable cruelty?

“Victorian governments continue to allocate millions of taxpayer dollars to prop up a dying activity for a dwindling number of duck shooters who make up only 0.2 percent of all Victorians. Yet no government money has ever been spent for the rescue and veterinary care of the tens-of-thousands of wounded victims that shooters always leave behind.”

Victoria Police Acting Superintendent Paul Marshall said Victoria Police respected the rights of the community to express views peacefully and lawfully.

“But we will not tolerate people breaking the law,” he said. Game Management Authority announced last month its pilot aerial survey of game ducks over 650 water bodies in Victoria had revealed a higher than expected number of the birds across the state.

The survey found an estimated population of 2.5-million game ducks, leading to authorities increasing a sustainable harvest level for hunters.

Changes to 2021 duck-season arrangements included increasing a bag limit from two to five game ducks a day and removing a geographic restriction on hunting teal species. Other details for the 2021 season remained the same.

The duck-hunting season closes on June 14.