

Recreational Hunting Policy

Updated 28th Feb 2017

'Birds SA opposes the recreational hunting of all native birds.'

Reasons why we are opposed to the recreational hunting of all native birds:

- A large majority of Birds SA members are opposed to recreational hunting.
- Birds SA are not satisfied with the current survey/monitoring of birds. There is a lack of independent surveys and monitoring of waterfowl in the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin, with the exception of the excellent aerial survey of wetland birds in eastern Australian conducted by Richard Kingsford *et al.* (The University of New South Wales) annually, but their reports appear to be ignored in the hunting quota assessment each year.
- Birds SA are also unsatisfied with the total lack of scientific data and surveys for Stubble Quail numbers across the state, and the government appears to rely on hearsay and anecdotal evidence from one or two hunters. This lack of research is acknowledged by the government. We are amazed that large bag limits continue to be allowed, with no idea of Stubble Quail numbers and the sustainability of the species into the future.
- Birds SA also feel that scientific protocol is not being followed adequately in the annual setting of hunting regulations, when it's very clear that 5 of the 6 duck species targeted by hunters are in serious ongoing decline.
- The attitudes of most members of the public have changed in recent years and the support for recreational duck and quail hunting is confined to a minority. It is therefore difficult for a body trying to sell a conservation message if it takes a stance that is not clearly opposed to hunting which is not needed for subsistence.
- There are many unwanted by-products of hunting such as non-fatal wounding of an unknown number of target animals, killing of non-target species, damage to wetland habitat, and disturbance to birds.
- Wetlands have deteriorated steadily over the past years for a variety of reasons – drought and water shortages as a result of excessive extraction by upstream irrigators increasing salinity levels etc. In addition most scenarios of changes to the environment likely to be experienced across the Murray-Darling Basin as a result of climate change indicate increasingly dry conditions with more frequent droughts. We are very concerned with the extreme weather events, such as the millennium drought, and climate change is creating an uncertain future for our wetlands and birds. As a result the environment is less capable of supporting the population levels of previous years. This greater uncertainty indicates we should be conservative in the setting of any level of exploitation allowed. There is much we do not know about the population dynamics of waterfowl in Australia.
- Hunting birds usually involves the use of shotguns. These weapons do not enable the shooter to always achieve a 'clean kill'. Many birds are badly wounded and have to be retrieved and dispatched by wringing their necks. Many are not retrieved and die of their wounds or are taken by predators. The fate of birds injured but not brought down is not clear. This is not a humane sport. Birds SA, along with BirdLife Australia and other birding associations cannot support an activity that on the balance of probability causes pain and suffering to animals, for no real purpose other than recreation.
- When hunting birds is legitimised, and becomes part of normal economic activity on which businesses and communities depend, ecological considerations are likely to be sidelined.