

Duck season cut but bag limit doubles for 2010

Herald Sun /AAP
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VICTORIA'S duck hunting season will be cut by two weeks again in 2010 but hunters will be able to increase their hauls by three to five ducks per bag.

Acting Minister for Environment and Climate Change Tim Holding said the compromise struck a balance between ensuring sustainable duck numbers and the interests of hunters.

The season will run from March 20 to May 30, two weeks shorter than normal.

Mr Holding says population data collected across eastern Australia indicated duck numbers had increased since the last duck season.

"On balance the Government is convinced that hunting will not adversely affect populations of ducks at the levels allowed for the 2010 season," he said.

However, anti-duck shooting protesters said native waterbirds were under extreme stress.

"With wetlands drying and waterbird numbers down by 82 per cent since 1983, Premier Brumby is acting like a climate change sceptic who lacks the vision to understand the serious plight native waterbirds face," Coalition Against Duck Shooting director Laurie Levy said.

"Calling another season simply for political reasons to accommodate a small number of duck shooters is corruption and must be investigated by a crime commission."

The RSPCA also joined the call to ban the duck shooting season.

RSPCA Victoria President Dr Hugh Wirth said the decision to go ahead with a duck shooting season was "irresponsible and displays a blatant disregard for the welfare of Australian wildlife".

"It is no secret that thousands of ducks are wounded horrifically each and every season and die a slow and painful death," he said.

He said 87 per cent of the community supports a ban, but the community's voice had fallen on deaf ears.

One group that did welcome the announcement was Field and Game Australia which said the prospects for a good season had been enhanced by major floods in northern Australia over the past 18 months.

FGA chief executive Rod Drew said ducks were well protected with hunters only having access to about one per cent of Victoria's 20,000 wetlands and 355,000 farm dams.

He said waterfowl hunters provided a boost to Victoria's regional economy with thousands travelling to rural areas.