

Ducks dumped outside premier's office in protest

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Activists opposed to Victoria's annual duck hunt have dumped 20 dead waterbirds in front of the premier's office.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy said the birds included two protected coots, shot during last weekend's opening of duck hunting season.

He said there would have been more dead birds, but officers from a government department had confiscated some of the carcasses activists had collected from Lake Murphy, in northern Victoria, on Saturday.

"A lot of birds we brought in were confiscated," he said.

"In fact we had those birds stored in our mobile veterinary clinic.

"One of the department officers here in the city telephoned and threatened the vet and the wildlife people up there that if they didn't hand the birds over they would lose their licences to look after native wildlife.

"The Department of Conservation, I think under orders from the government, confiscated the birds on Saturday mainly because we had a freckled duck there and obviously the freckled duck was going to embarrass the government."

It is illegal to shoot the freckled duck, which is protected.

But Denise Garrett, from the Help for Wildlife group which runs the mobile clinic where the dead birds were stored, denied she had been threatened.

"We did receive a freckled duck that was handed in to this unit, and as per regulations it was handed in to wildlife officers," Ms Garrett said.

She said it was "totally untrue" that a large number of birds had been taken by authorities or that she had been threatened.

Environment Minister John Thwaites also denied Mr Levy's claims.

"The advice I have is that that is quite wrong, and indeed I think the claims that have been made have been refuted by the woman that was involved," Mr Thwaites said.

He said there was no plan to permanently ban duck hunting in Victoria, but the hunting season would only be allowed if the duck population was sustainable.

"We only allow a season based on sustainability but if, in individual cases, duck hunters do the wrong thing then they will be pursued and dealt with appropriately," Mr Thwaites said.

In response to Ms Garrett's denials, Mr Levy said his group would never again work with Help for Wildlife.

- AAP

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