

Ducks thin in the air

ALISON RIBBON

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THE opening of the duck season has been branded a fizzer by anti-shooting campaigners.

Victorian protesters in Tasmania for the opening said there were not any birds for hunters to shoot.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting director Laurie Levy said rain had also deterred hunters.

"There were only two birds shot that we saw by 10am," Mr Levy said yesterday. "I haven't seen it like this in 20 years."

Tasmania is the only state to allow duck hunting this year, after South Australia and Victoria abandoned their seasons because of drought.

Hunting is already permanently banned in Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland.

Victorian hunters and protesters have all converged on Tasmania as a result of the moratorium on bird hunting in their state.

"We've been telling your government, as has Birds Tasmania, that bird numbers are down," Mr Levy said. "That was evident this morning.

"We had expected, or hoped, Tasmania would do the same as Victoria."

The Department of Primary Industries and Water said in December waterbird numbers were not down in Tasmania.

It later announced that duck season in Tasmania would be cut by two weeks, a move that didn't appear to affect duck hunters and did not satisfy animal welfare groups.

"It's the equivalent of dealing with the water shortage issue by imposing watering restrictions for two weeks then leaving the taps running for the next 27 months," Mr Levy said.

"Native waterbirds are nomadic so we can't have recalcitrant state governments making political decisions without considering the overall population numbers across the mainland."