

# Shooters migrating south for duck hunt

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HUNDREDS of duck hunters are expected to head for Tasmania this season. The Tasmanian Government is ignoring bans set by the mainland governments, and has declared a full 12-week duck-hunting season.

Victorian shooters are tipped to make up most of those making the trip south in March, with the State Government last month cancelling this year's season due to low waterbird numbers.

It leaves Tasmania as the only state to allow the practice this year, with Victoria and South Australia issuing a moratorium for 2008, and duck hunting permanently banned in the other states.

Tasmania's Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, conceded that duck numbers were in decline, but said if monitoring found that more waterbirds were being hunted than in past years the season would finish early.

"While surveys of some species show a decline in numbers since 2002, this decline has been from historically high levels to levels still equal to or above those seen through most of the 1980s and '90s," he said.

Rod Drew, chief executive of Field and Game Australia, said he expected Victorians to lead the 300 or so hunters across Bass Strait for the start of the season on March 8. "The ducks will look after themselves," he said. "There is no suggestion that the hunting pressure can impact on the species and, in Tasmania's case, you have a far lower number of duck hunters."

Graeme Hamilton, chief executive of Birds Australia, slammed the Tasmanian decision, saying evidence showed that bird numbers were falling away because

of the drought.

"We don't think recreational duck shooting should be allowed anywhere in Australia," he said.

"If in any year there was a conservation impact it would be this year, with duck numbers near record lows, and we need several years for the duck numbers to recover properly."

Laurie Levy, the campaign director of the Coalition Against Duck Shooting, said the Federal Government should ban duck hunting across Australia.

"It makes sense to hand control of waterbirds to the Federal Government, because birds are nomadic," he said. "So, it would appear, are shooters. In 2003 we wound up battling more Victorian shooters. They ought to stay at home this time."

<http://www.duck.org.au>