

## Hunters and activists jump the gun on duck season

NATALIE CRAIG

DUCK hunters and activists alike were caught jumping the gun on the start of the Victorian season yesterday by starting too early.

Eight hunters face court summonses for shooting before strictly monitored start times about 7am, intended to

prevent accidental shooting of protected species in dim light.

Hunters shooting early or without a licence can be fined more than \$1000, while shooting threatened species can incur fines of more than \$20,000 and imprisonment of up to two years.

State police booked 15 protesters for breaches of the Wildlife Act, including

entering the wetlands before their designated time of 10.30am.

Two protesters who destroyed duck hunters' camouflaged "hides" were also arrested at Dowd Morass in Gippsland.

Protesters said ducks were scarce and only a few were killed at the popular spot, highlighting the need to

ban hunting. "It's been a bit worrying in the sense that there's no ducks," said Victorian Greens MP Sue Pennicuik, who helped duck-rescue teams.

But Field and Game Australia chairman Russell Bate said that floods in Queensland and northern NSW were helping to restore bird populations.

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