

Media Release

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Rescuers protect 10,000 waterbirds at a Ramsar listed wetland, but shooters commit many alleged offences at other wetlands during record short duck season

Coalition Against Duck Shooting (CADS) rescuers attended Lake Cullen, part of the internationally recognised Kerang Ramsar Wetlands, to protect around 10,000 waterbirds on this recently filled wetland over the final long weekend of Victoria's record short 2021 duck shooting season.

Campaign Director, Laurie Levy, said today: "The gun groups want us to believe that only a few duck shooters do the wrong thing, but this is simply not true.

"The Game Management Authority received a funding boost of millions of taxpayer dollars to employ more staff. But despite the record short season and very few active duck shooters this year, CADS rescuers yet again witnessed and documented unconscionable cruelty to native waterbirds and other alleged offences on just a few wetlands.

"For two years' running, the COVID lockdown further restricted the season and saved thousands of birds, with Melbourne shooters unable to access regional areas after the first two days. The Gippsland wetlands were also unreachable due to flooding on the final weekend. Yet volunteer rescuers still found wounded birds and documented many alleged offences under wildlife, hunting, anti-cruelty and environmental protection laws.

The CADS rescuers documented blatant cruelty to a shot and wounded bird on the opening of the season at Lake Lonsdale, near Stawell. The shocking footage shows what appears to be a shooter 'blooding' his dog with a live wounded bird: <https://youtu.be/CAa1-7awR4Y> The volunteer rescuers also filmed the prolonged suffering of wounded birds at Little Lake Buloke, Levy said. The shooter was unable to quickly kill the birds by hand, and an injured bird on the water was still alive after being shot at close range. There is also no evidence that the birds were dead when hung on the shooter's belt: <https://youtu.be/SbfCpmm1ois>

"Inevitably, when a trigger is pulled, birds will suffer."

In addition, Levy said: "Duck shooters were also recorded illegally shooting from a moving boat; shooting above the bag limit; shooting in the dark, outside the legal times; shooting out of range; illegally shooting rare and threatened Freckled Ducks; illegally flushing birds into the air with a motorboat; not picking up wounded birds before targeting other birds; taking small children onto a shooting wetland; littering with spent plastic shotgun cartridges; and not safely breaking shotguns when walking from the wetlands.

"Compliance officers can only patrol very few wetlands where duck shooting is allowed, so duck shooters will always breach the wildlife hunting regulations," Levy added.

"Victorians are tired of waiting for this brutal activity to be banned. It is now time for the Victorian Labor Government to put an end to this unnecessary cruelty."

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