



No.9 Destruction of birds to reduce damage

This note provides information on the methods and legalities of destroying native birds causing damage to crops. The destruction of ducks causing damage is covered by Fauna note nNo. 10
Destruction of ducks to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.

Legislation

Some native birds are declared pests of agriculture under the provisions of the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*, administered by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food. This declaration signifies that a management program for the species should be implemented for certain areas of the state.

Native birds are also protected under the provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Under the provisions of this Act, problem birds can be destroyed on private land, under certain circumstances and in certain locations, but destruction should generally be viewed as a last resort after all other damage control options have been attempted.

Shooting

Open seasons, which cover certain parts of the State, can be gazetted for problem native birds. In these areas, bird populations are secure and damage to agriculture is likely to be a continual problem so the birds can be shot without the need to obtain a damage licence from DEC. Examples of species for which an open season is currently gazetted include the little corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*), the Australian ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*) and the silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*).

Outside the specified open season areas, shooting can only be carried for species not covered by open season notices with written approval (by obtaining a damage licence) from DEC.

Firearms and shooters must be licensed with the Western Australia Police and firearms must be used in accordance with the *Firearms Act 1973* and associated *Firearms Regulations 1974*. Shooting and disposal of birds may be carried out only on the affected private property, where there is a reasonable expectation that the birds are causing, or may cause, damage.

Some species may not be shot

Some problem native birds require special protection because they are rare or likely to become extinct. Such species may not be destroyed by any means. Shooting to scare may be permitted but a damage licence from DEC is still required. Examples of threatened native birds that may not be destroyed include Carnaby's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*), Baudin's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*) and Muir's corella (*Cacatua pastinator pastinator*).

Your local DEC office can provide information on when damage licences are needed to scare native birds.

Live trapping

DEC has assessed trials evaluating the live-trapping of parrots. This technique is now allowed in some parts of the lower south-west, to reduce damage by species such as the Australian ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*) in bluegum plantations.

Poisoning

Poisoning native birds is illegal. The contamination of crops by poison threatens export markets for all landholders because many countries will not accept crops containing pesticides. It is also difficult to poison target birds without affecting other species.

Effectiveness of shooting to reduce bird populations

Australian ringnecks and red-capped parrots are sedentary species. Destroying resident birds of these species can reduce the damage they cause. Studies of medium and high value apple crop varieties show that shooting is a cost-effective means of reducing damage to the crops and large areas of uniform age blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) plantations.

Shooting appears to be ineffective for reducing large populations of corellas and galahs (*Cacatua* spp.), Australian ravens (*Corvus coronoides*), silvereyes and emus (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*). However, shooting may be effective for managing or eliminating a few problem birds or small flocks.

Effectiveness of shooting to scare birds

Most birds react to unusual things in their environment or to things that simulate a threat, such as a gun or a predator. Shooting can scare birds from the area or reinforce the effect of other scaring devices on the property.

Shooting method

General points

- Shoot as part of a coordinated scaring program throughout the damage period to ensure effectiveness.
- Shoot sedentary species like parrots over a large area to reduce recolonisation.
- Undertake shooting-to-scare occasionally throughout the year, to maintain a degree of wariness in the birds and to indicate that the area is not safe for feeding.
- Measure the effectiveness of a shooting program by a reduction in the damage level rather than by the number of dead birds.

Specific points

- Ensure that sites behind the target area are free of property, people or stock to eliminate any risk of collateral damage from spent shot.
- Do not use firearms in settled areas or on small properties where shooting can present a danger to people and their property.
- Contact the local Shire prior to shooting to check if there are local laws governing the use of firearms. As a courtesy, the police and neighbours should also be contacted in advance.
- Shoot-to-kill only during daylight hours to ensure accuracy.
- Sight-in firearms against an inanimate target prior to shooting birds.
- Shoot during the first one to three hours of each morning, beginning an hour after sunrise when birds are most active.
- Ensure the birds are in the range of the firearm (see the table below). They must be clearly visible and able to be

killed with a single shot. Do not attempt to shoot if the prevailing conditions may significantly decrease shooting accuracy.

- Never shoot from a moving vehicle or when the birds are on the wing.
- Aim at the head or heart of the bird and after shooting, immediately ensure that the shot bird is dead. Locate and humanely destroy a wounded bird before targeting the next one.
- Humanely kill wounded birds with a shot to the brain, a blow to the rear of the skull with a heavy instrument, or by dislocation of the neck.
- Target only one bird at a time. Shooting indiscriminately at flocks is unacceptable and very inefficient, particularly if using a rifle.

Health and safety

Hearing and eye protection is recommended for shooters. Parrots and cockatoos can carry the organism *Chlamydia psittaci*, which causes the disease Chlamydiosis in birds and Psittacosis in humans. Handling of birds should be minimised and clothing and skin washed after handling.

Further reading

- [Guidelines for the safe use of firearms](#). Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.
- TreeNote No. 26. [Parrot damage in agroforestry in the greater than 450 mm rainfall zone of Western Australia](#). Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.
- TreeNote No. 29. [Rectifying parrot damage in eucalypts in the greater than 450 mm rainfall zone of Western Australia](#). Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.
- [Shooting of pest birds](#). Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra.

References

Marsack, P.R., Hector, J.M., Massam, M.C., Long, J.L. and Mawson, P.R. (1989) Agriculture Protection Board research trials to control parrot damage in apple orchards, January, February 1989: Report for information and discussion. APB, Unpublished Report.

Recommended range, firearm and shot for shooting birds.

Distance from	Firearm, shot size or type and shot charge (g)
<i>Parrots</i>	
< 30 metres	.22 rifle Z Long, short (29 grains) .410 shotgun 4 (14 g)
30-100 metres	.22 rifle (32 g) long rifle
> 100 metres	firearms not effective
<i>Emus</i>	
< 30 metres	12 gauge shotgun BB or larger
< 100 metres	.22 hornet, .222, .223, .224, .22/250, .44 mag, 44/40
> 100 metres	.30-30, .30/06, .308
<i>Ravens</i>	
< 30 metres	12 gauge shot gun 4 (32 g)
< 100 metres	.22 rifle (32 grains) long rifle
<i>Silvereyes</i>	
< 30 metres	.410 shotgun 10 (14g)
<i>Corellas and galahs</i>	
< 30 metres	12 gauge shotgun. 4 (32 g) .22 rifle (32 grains) long rifle

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Further Information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the Department's website for the latest information: www.dec.wa.gov.au.



Department of
Environment and Conservation

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