



No.10 Destruction of ducks to reduce damage

Destruction of Australian shelducks (*Tadorna tadornoides*) and Australian wood ducks (*Chenonetta jubata*) by shooting can be an effective way to reduce the damage they cause.



Figure 1 Australian shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*) (Photo Babs and Bert Wells/DEC).

Effectiveness of shooting to reduce duck populations

Shooting appears largely ineffective as a primary population reduction technique for ducks. However, it may be effective in managing or eliminating a small localised flock. It may also assist in moving the flock away to another site.

Advantages

- Results in sudden and painless death if properly carried out.
- Can be used on an ad-hoc basis during normal farm duties.
- The noise of the firearm may scare birds from the area.

Disadvantages

- The use of firearms is not usually suitable in built-up and populated areas.

Effectiveness of shooting to scare ducks

Most birds react to unusual things in their environment or to things that simulate a dangerous threat, such as a gun or a predator.

Shooting can scare birds from an area or re-enforce the effects of other scaring devices in use.

Ducks and legislation

Shelducks and wood ducks 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 approved by the Agriculture Protection Board and implemented in certain areas of the State.

As native species, these ducks are 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, ducks can be controlled by shooting on private land, under certain circumstances and in certain locations but shooting should be viewed as a last resort after all other options have been attempted.

Shelducks and wood ducks can be shot between the 1st January and the 30th June each year without the need to obtain a damage licence from DEC, in accordance with a restricted open season notice. However in some circumstances a licence is needed (see below).

No other duck species may be shot under this restricted open season notice and the information below applies to shelducks and wood ducks only.

Area covered by the restricted Open season

The restricted open season area covers the south-west land division and the Eucla division, excluding the Perth Metropolitan Region and the Mandurah District.

General restrictions

Under the restricted open season, ducks may be shot:

- By a person (or the person's nominated agent or nominated shooter) on managed farmland or other damaged land that the person owns or occupies.
- On managed farmland, when they are causing damage, or can be reasonably expected to cause damage.
- On other damaged land, when authorised by a DEC wildlife officer.

- By means of a 12 gauge shotgun only (size three or smaller shot size is recommended). Firearms must be licensed and used in accordance with the *Firearms Act 1973* and associated Firearms Regulations 1974.
- Only between the hours of sunrise and sunset.

Nominated agents and shooters

A nominated agent is a person who is the owner or occupier of land adjacent to the land on which the ducks are to be taken and who has the verbal approval of the owner of that land to take the ducks.

A nominated shooter (maximum of three people at any one time) is:

- Nominated in writing for a specified period by the owner or occupier of the land where the ducks are to be shot., and is
- Approved by a DEC wildlife officer.

The nominated shooter must carry evidence of their nomination by the owner or occupier whenever on the land for the purpose of shooting ducks or when transporting shot ducks.

Other requirements under the restricted open season:

- Ducks may not be shot at or killed unless the species has been positively identified.
- No eggs or newly flying young ducks (fledglings) may be taken.
- A person can not shoot over or from land or water outside the open season area or from any land or waters vested in the Crown. Neither can a person flush, drive or otherwise induce ducks from these areas in order to shoot them.
- A person may not take a duck to sell, for aviculture or to keep in captivity.
- A person may not possess or transport a duck unless at least one fully feathered wing is attached to the duck.

When a damage licence is needed to shoot ducks

A DEC wildlife officer may, after inspecting land, prohibit the shooting of ducks on that land without a damage licence. However, it may still be possible to shoot a specified number of ducks under a damage licence issued by DEC. The local DEC office can provide more information.

Shooting method

General

- Shoot as part of a coordinated scaring program throughout the damage period to ensure effectiveness.
- Undertake shooting-to-scare occasionally throughout the year, to maintain a degree of wariness in the ducks 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 ducks.

Specific

- Ensure that sites behind the target area are free of property, persons 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 within the range of the shotgun, 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 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. Handling of birds should be minimised and clothing and skin washed after handling.

Further reading

- [Guidelines for the safe use of firearms](#) for the safe use of firearms. Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.
- [Shooting of pest birds](#). Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra.

Poisoning

Poisoning of native birds is illegal. Contamination of crops by poisons 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.

Further information

Contact your local DEC office .

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

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