

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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Hon. Lisa Neville
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water
Parliament House, Spring St, East Melbourne, Vic 3002

23 June 2015

Dear Minister

re. Restoration of Sanctuary status for Lakes Linlithgow and Bullrush in SW Victoria

On 17 Dec 2014 I wrote to you on behalf of the Hamilton Field Naturalists, following up earlier correspondence pertaining to the restoration of Sanctuary status to the Lake Reserves of Lake Linlithgow and the adjacent Lake Bullrush. These lakes had Sanctuary status from 1928 to 1975, when the revision of the Wildlife Act was presumed by DEPI to have resulted in that status being overturned, allowing duck hunting.

Please refer to my letter of 17 Dec 2014 for background information and discussion on our submission, rather than me repeating it here. Since that date, however, a flock of Brolga has been chased out of those Lake Reserves as a result of the Game Management Authority (GMA) and DELWP allowing duck hunting on Lake Bullrush in 2015.

Except for a pair of Brolga that appeared at odd times, the flock of 50 birds has not returned to the lakes after the first day of the Duck Hunting Season and has apparently dispersed. You would be aware that disruption to the birds on flocking sites is regarded as most undesirable prior to the breeding season, yet the GMA could not agree to the closure of one wetland from the hundreds that were available for shooting over.

GMA stated that shooting was disallowed on the adjacent small Krauses Swamp, in order to provide refuge for the Brolga, but that wetland was dry before the open season began and, even if there had been water there, was too close to the shooting to be of any use at all. The proclamation of that closure appeared to be a blatant attempt to deceive the public.

Lakes Linlithgow and Bullrush are of major significance for waterbird conservation in the region. From 3000-5000 migratory Sharp-tailed Sandpipers have been recorded on these wetlands and the threatened Freckled Duck and Blue-billed Duck also feed there. Shooters have access to a host of small wetlands and many large wetlands, including Bryans Swamp, Bradys Swamp, Lake Muirhead, Rocklands Reservoir and Mount William Swamp. There are NO large wetlands in the region that are free from duck hunters and therefore waterbirds have no significant refuge from disturbance by shooters.

We respectfully request that you consider our case for restoration of the sanctuary status of Lakes Linlithgow & Bullrush and implement action to achieve that change, to prevent future disruption to Brolga and other wetland species on those lakes.

Yours faithfully

Dr Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club