

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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Hon Jaala Pulford
Minister for Agriculture & Minister for Regional Development
Level 20, 1 Spring St, Melbourne, Vic 3000

04 April 2017

Dear Minister

re. DUCK HUNTING Lakes Bullrush & Linlithgow

We have corresponded with you previously on the issue of sanctuary status for these lakes and for banning of hunting in 2015 when a flock of 50 Brolga were displaced after the Game Management Authority (GMA) refused to prohibit hunting on Lake Bullrush.

The events of the past few weeks in the Wimmera wetlands and at Kerang Marshes have shown that something must be done to control duck-hunting in Victoria. One solution that might be acceptable to the public would be to confine it to private land, where the hunters could restore drained wetlands and manage them for their purpose.

GMA cannot control duck-hunting and there is no effective policing at the wetlands. Few, if any, are charged for flagrant breaches and the regulations are held in contempt by a significant percentage of the hunters. The outrage that was perpetrated by shooters at Kerang Marshes this year, when many hundreds of ducks and other species were slaughtered and left on the water, happens on a lesser scale across Victoria. It is not reported because only the hunters attend most of the wetlands in the open season and there are no police or officers of government to see the action. Law-abiding members of Field & Game Australia do not 'dob in' hunters that breach the rules, so nothing changes.

Even when large numbers of threatened species are found prior to the hunting season, as they were by our members at Lake Linlithgow on 14 March 2017 (466 Blue-billed Ducks) and on 27 March 2017 (530 Blue-winged ducks and 32 Freckled Ducks comprising about 80% of the waterbirds there), GMA merely banned boats there (for a week only, according to the Gazette). Clearly, the threatened species could be shot (many were seen near the shore) and chased off this lake to other wetlands where they would be more vulnerable. How is it possible that the Department could allow that to happen?

Other wetlands were closed with less than a tenth of those numbers, so why not Lake Linlithgow? The GMA appears to be targeting Lake Linlithgow and the adjacent Lake Bullrush, refusing to compromise when the needs of the wildlife are concerned. In 2015 the GMA cynically dealt with the issue of 50 Brolga at Lake Bullrush by 'giving them' the small, dry adjacent Krauses Swamp, which of course they could not use. Lake Muirhead, with only 36 Brolga seen, was closed this year.

Lake Linlithgow has been dry in autumn in 15 of the last 17 years and is also NOT a prime hunting wetland because of its size. The lack of large sanctuaries for wildlife in Victoria is a critical issue that continues to be resisted by the GMA.

A former Chairman of the GMA, Roger Hallam, has publicly stated in a deputation to a meeting of the Southern Grampians Shire Council that Lake Linlithgow is not a significant wetland for hunting but he (and presumably the GMA) will resist any change to hunting on that Lake Reserve. The implication was that such a move might start a landslide.

We urge a review of the membership of the GMA, with a view to obtaining a balance where environmental values are given an appropriate consideration.

Yours faithfully

Dr Rod Bird
Secretary

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