



Department of
Primary Industries

DON'T WING IT



BE AN EFFECTIVE GAME BIRD HUNTER

THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION
ABOUT BEING A LEGAL, SAFE AND ETHICAL GAME
BIRD HUNTER IN NSW.



dpi.nsw.gov.au



Department of
Primary Industries



NSW Police Force

Front cover photo: Patrick O'Brien

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THE NSW NATIVE GAME BIRD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The NSW Native Game Bird Management Program (the Program), managed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Game Licensing Unit, allows landholders to protect their crops and mitigate game duck impacts by engaging responsible, licensed hunters.

The program, which began under the DPI in 2014, is a successful model of how licensed and responsible hunters can be engaged to assist landholders who need to manage wildlife. It ensures that landholders are able to protect their crops, whilst ensuring populations of native game birds remain sustainable and viable into the future.

Protecting rice crops

The Australian rice industry employs and supports thousands of people and contributes significantly to the wellbeing of regional towns in the Riverina Region of NSW. If not effectively managed, native game ducks can devastate a single rice crop in one night. Across a district, this can cause thousands of dollars of forgone farm and export income.

Sustainably managing native game ducks

To protect the larger populations of native game ducks across NSW, a maximum harvest level is determined for each species that may be hunted under the Program.

The NSW State Quota is based on the best available scientific information on regional populations of each game duck species. Significant time and resources are expended each year to survey duck populations across Australia and in the Riverina to ensure the quota is as accurate as possible and sets sustainable harvest limits for each species.

Individual property allocations provided to rice farmers as well as the harvest of ducks by hunters is managed by the DPI Game Licensing Unit each year to ensure each species is harvested within the sustainable limits set by the NSW State Quota.

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet forms part of the **Don't wing it – be an effective game bird hunter program**. This program has been developed jointly by the DPI Game Licensing Unit and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia (RGA) to inform and educate both landholders and hunters about the community and industry standards for native game bird hunting in NSW.

For more information on this program and regulated hunting in NSW go to DPI's hunting website: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting



Photo: Patrick O'Brien

LICENSED HUNTERS HELPING LANDHOLDERS – A LONG HISTORY

The Hehir family have been growing rice on their Finley properties since 1981. Each year they grow rice, they call upon their regular licensed hunters to help sustainably manage ducks that impact their rice crops.

“We’re extremely appreciative for the job that our licensed hunters do each year.

“We’ve been significantly impacted by ducks in the past, especially during the really wet years. Having licensed, insured and effective duck hunters each year complements our non-lethal duck control methods and allows us to get on with our other farming duties.

“The great thing about our hunters is that they always seek our permission before going onto our properties, they always clean up their mess before leaving, and more importantly they are always safe and responsible”.



Photo: Patrick O'Brien



THE 4 CORNERSTONES OF BEING AN EFFECTIVE GAME BIRD HUNTER IN NSW

Being an effective game bird hunter means you possess detailed knowledge of the game ducks being hunted and you are highly skilled in the use of your hunting equipment.

Based on feedback provided by industry groups, Government and other stakeholders, the following 4 cornerstones of being an effective game bird hunter have been developed:

1 BE LICENSED AND LEGAL

Know and follow the rules and regulations when hunting native game birds in NSW.

2 KNOW YOUR GAME BIRDS

Always correctly identify your target species and if you're not sure - don't shoot!

3 BE ETHICAL

Learn and practice shotgunning techniques, know the limitations of your hunting equipment and your personal skill level.

4 BE RESPONSIBLE

Always be safe and respect the hunt.

1 BE LICENSED AND LEGAL

Know and follow the rules and regulations when hunting native game birds in NSW.

Get with the Program!

In NSW, both landholders and hunters need to hold a licence to participate in the Native Game Bird Management Program.

A. Landholders – Native Game Bird Management (Owner/Occupier) Licence.

B. Hunters – Restricted or General Game Hunting Licence that is endorsed for hunting native game birds.

Hunters, including landholders who wish to hunt ducks in NSW, must complete the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT) before they can participate in the Program. The WIT is based on information in the DuckWise DVD and assessments are conducted by your State's game management agency.

For more information on the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT), Native Game Bird Management (Owner/Occupier) Licences and Game Hunting Licences go to DPI's hunting website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting or call the Game Licensing Unit on **(02) 6363 7650**.

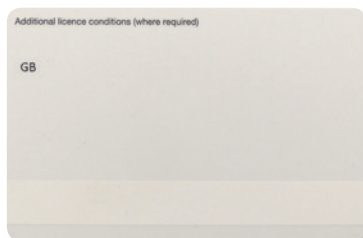
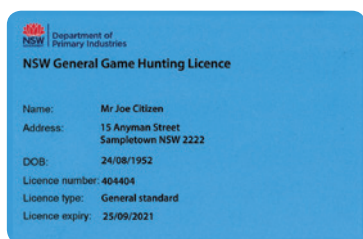
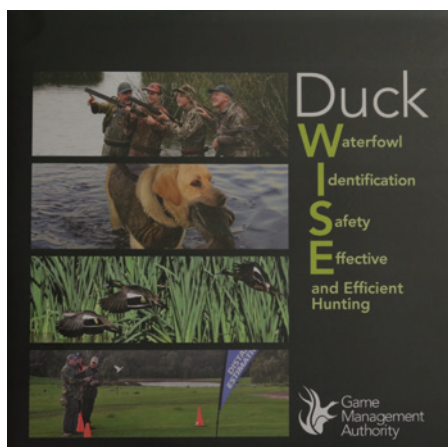




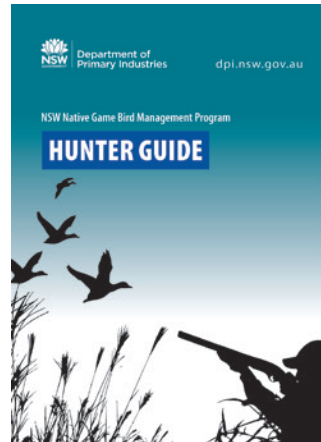
Photo: Karl Hofman

Follow the rules!

There are a number of conditions that hunters need to adhere to each time they hunt game ducks as part of the program. It's important that hunters not only follow these rules themselves but also educate other hunters who are not conducting themselves in the right manner.

The following conditions must be followed by all hunters each time they harvest game ducks as part of the program:

- » You must hold a current Category A or B firearms licence endorsed for Recreational Hunting/Vermin Control or Primary Production.
- » Only hunt ducks on private agricultural lands covered by a Native Game Bird Management (Owner/Occupier) Licence– not on public land or any public waterway.
- » You must ensure that you have permission from the owner or occupier of land each and every time you hunt.
- » Landholders must have an individual property allocation along with their Native Game Bird Management Licence before legal hunting can occur.
- » You must check the available property allocation for each property and only target the species that are available.
- » You must populate the hunter diary before you go hunting with each property's available allocation of game ducks and also fill in the number of each species harvested before you leave a property.
- » You must provide a harvest return within 14 days of completing each hunt.



Transportation of firearms in NSW

For your information, parts of the *NSW Firearms Act 1996* and its' regulation that relate to transporting firearms are included at the end of this booklet.

Where can you hunt?

In NSW, duck hunting can only take place on privately owned or managed agricultural land that is licensed under the program. Duck hunting is not permitted on public land or any public waterway in NSW.

The majority of duck hunting takes place on rice farms situated in the Murrumbidgee, Coleambally and Murray Valley Irrigation areas in the southern Riverina of NSW. Rice crops are sown from October – December each year, which is the period when rice crops are most vulnerable to duck damage.



2 KNOW YOUR GAME BIRDS

Always correctly identify your target species and if you're not sure – don't shoot!

Know your game extremely well!

The best duck hunters can differentiate between species in flight from just a glimpse. This ensures ample time to assess whether it's 'game' or 'non-game' and whether you should take the shot.

In NSW, there are a variety of non-game species that inhabit the rice growing region. This includes a number of rare and threatened species such as the Australasian Bittern and the Painted Snipe.

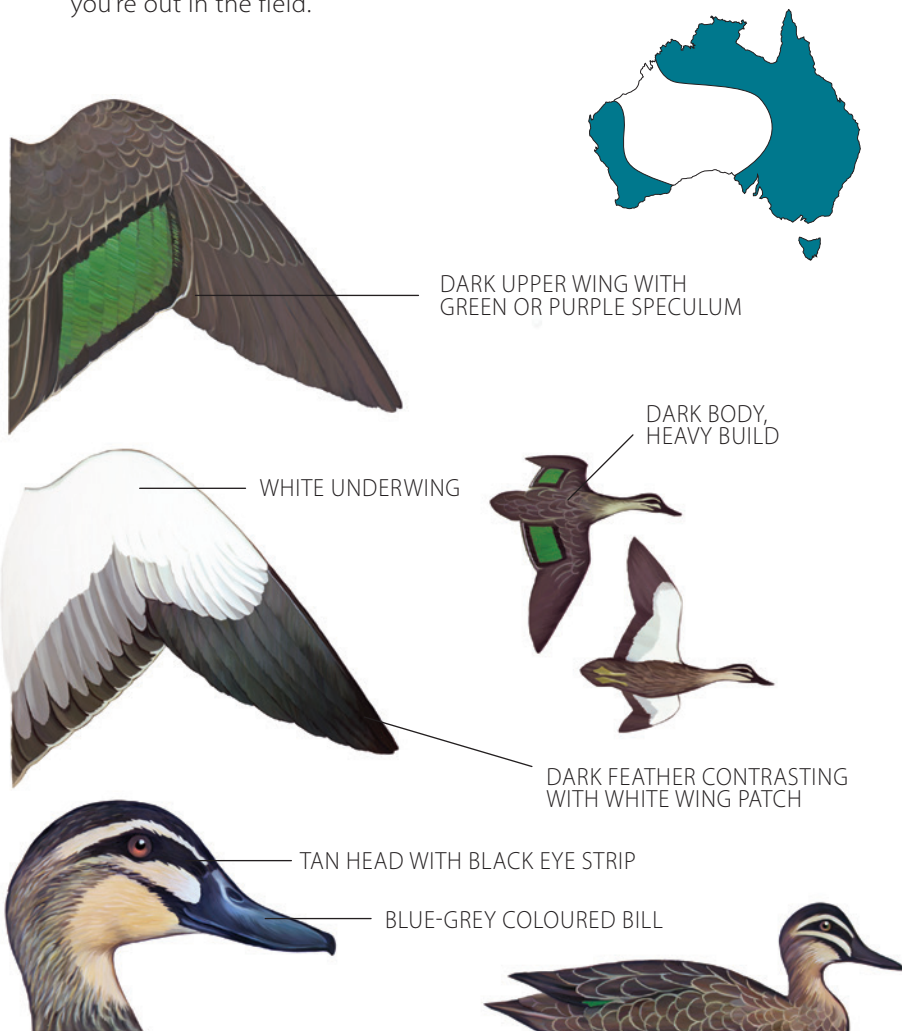
The following 10 duck species can be hunted in NSW provided they have been approved to be hunted through the NSW State quota and individual property allocations.

- » Australian Shelduck or Mountain Duck
- » Australian Wood Duck or Maned Duck
- » Black Duck or Pacific Black Duck
- » Blue-winged Shoveler or Australasian Shoveler
- » Chestnut Teal
- » Grass Whistling Duck or Plumed Whistling Duck
- » Grey Teal
- » Hardhead or White-eyed Duck
- » Pink-eared Duck
- » Water Whistling Duck, Wandering Whistling Duck or Whistling or Wandering Tree Duck

Some tips for observing birds

- » **First impressions** – Try to see your bird clearly, remain quiet and watch it for as long as possible.
- » **Size and shape** – Look at the whole bird first. How big is it – tiny, small, medium, big, very big, huge? What shape is it – thin, plump, tall?
- » **More detail** – Now scan the whole bird again. Look at its major body parts in turn – head, back, upper body, underside of the body, the wings, legs and feet, and finally the tail.

- » **Plumage** – Now look directly at its feathering. Zero in on the two or three noticeable feather groups or most obvious colour features of the bird.
- » **Listen** – What does your bird sound like? What calls does it have? Learn a few common bird calls.
- » **Behaviour** – How does your bird walk, run, swim or fly? How does it feed? Where does it drink? What environment is it living in?
- » **Practice makes perfect** – Use these basic observational skills anytime you're out in the field.



Black duck characteristics. Illustration: Stuart Billington

3 BE ETHICAL

Learn and practice shotgunning techniques, know the limitations of your hunting equipment and your personal skill level.

The 5 basics of being an ethical game bird hunter

1. Know your range

Always remember to shoot within your effective killing range. This range varies between individuals and is also affected by the type of hunting situation you are in.

2. Be familiar with your equipment

Understand the mechanics of your hunting equipment. Regular maintenance can prolong your firearms longevity and minimise defects and the risk of injury in the field.

3. Pattern your hunting loads

Using ammunition that performs well in your firearm can lead to more effective and efficient hunting. Pattern testing your hunting ammunition allows you to identify which brands and shot size work best in your firearm.

4. Dispatching wounded game

You shouldn't assume that downed birds have been killed outright. Once a bird is struck, stop shooting and immediately recover the bird. If you have wounded a bird, you must take all reasonable steps to locate it so it can be killed quickly and humanely. Follow up the shot using swatter loads to assist with dispatching wounded game on water or land.

5. Practice makes perfect

Shooting simulated clay targets is one of the best ways to improve your field shooting ability. Understand the key shotgunning lead techniques (forward allowance) such as maintain lead, pull-away and swing through shooting.

Check with your local clay target club for more information regarding open days for practice and membership fees.

Have a retrieval strategy

Plan your retrieval strategy before you start hunting. You must make every effort to retrieve downed game birds you have shot and to ensure retrieval is done efficiently and humanely.

When planning your hunt, consider the following:

- » Identify hunting areas or shooting zones where downed birds can be readily retrieved.
- » Don't assume that downed birds have been killed outright.
- » Once a bird is struck, stop shooting and retrieve it straight away.
- » If possible, work with another hunter to assist in retrieval of downed game birds.
- » Use equipment that aids retrieval of downed birds, such as gun dogs and swatter loads.

A well trained retriever dog can significantly increase the chance of recovering downed birds; however, hunters must ensure that the landholder has approved the use of dogs on each property.

There are many hunting organisations and kennel clubs that have programs specifically for training working gun dogs. You must ensure any animals assisting you are tightly controlled and that their use does not contravene the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

Poorly-trained gundogs can hinder a successful recovery, so take the time to train your dog before using them in the field.



Photo: Patrick O'Brien

4 BE RESPONSIBLE

Always be safe and respect the hunt.

Respectful hunting

Think of yourself as a guest on each property and observe the hunting conditions the landholder sets for you and your hunting party.

Respect all properties you hunt on by:

- » Getting permission before you hunt.
- » Leaving all gates as you find them.
- » Picking up your spent shotgun cartridges and empty packets.
- » Not leaving game bird remnants or carcasses on site.
- » Taking all your rubbish home with you.
- » Not lighting fires on total fire ban days or in areas with long grass.
- » Be mindful of livestock, farm machinery and equipment.

Steel vs. lead shot

Some evidence suggests that lead shot may persist in the environment and may be ingested by some waterfowl species. Based on this evidence the use of lead shot during recreational game bird seasons has been phased out in some States. In NSW the use of lead shot has not been prohibited because all game bird hunting is for mitigation purposes. However hunters participating in the NSW Native Game Bird Management Program are encouraged to use steel shot.

Hunting safely at night

- 1.** Notify the landholder of your intention to spotlight game birds at night.
- 2.** Know the hunting environment extremely well. During daylight hours, familiarise yourself with the hunting area before you begin to spotlight.
- 3.** The shooter must always be in front of the spotlight operator.
- 4.** Spotlights and gun-mounted lights must be of sufficient brightness to enable you to positively identify the species of native game birds – do not shoot if you are unsure.
- 5.** Always have a safe backstop, do not shoot over a crest or hill.
- 6.** Be extremely careful of ricochet when shooting over water.
- 7.** Only spotlight in a small group and maintain a safe shooting zone.

8. Always unload your firearm and ensure it is safe before collecting any harvested game birds.
9. Avoid using untrained gun dogs at night – they can be a distraction to yourself and others.
10. Pay particular attention when shooting close to fences, boundaries, roads and tracks.

Snakes on the rice

The rice environment is a host to many animals, including venomous snakes. Each time you intend on taking your gun dog out on a rice farm, you should always consider snakes and the risk of snake bite to you and your dog.

Common snakes in southern NSW



Photos: NSW DPI Game Licensing Unit

To avoid your dog being bitten:

- » Always keep your dog close.
- » Don't walk your dog through long grass.
- » Avoid walking along irrigation banks.
- » Avoid using a gun dog once the rice has established.

When first bitten, your dog may show signs such as collapse, vomiting, excessive salivation and trembling and panting.

These signs are referred to as 'pre-paralytic signs and indicate that your dog has received a lethal dose of venom and therefore requires anti-venom as soon as possible.

The most important thing you can do for your dog if you are suspicious of a snake bite is to keep calm and take them straight to a vet clinic. The quicker anti-venom is administered, the higher your dog's chance of survival.



EFFECTIVELY HUNTING THE RICE

The following information provides a guide for the effective hunting of ducks on rice fields in NSW.

Gathering intelligence

Ask the landholder where they have observed most of the duck activity. This information can assist in determining flight zones and other areas to spread your hunting party.

Scouting the rice first

Ducks can alternate feeding locations each night, so it's important that you check every rice paddy to identify which areas display the most recent duck damage.

Identifying duck sign

Ducks will always leave sign in the form of feathers, clippings and turbid water, indicating their specific feeding areas from the previous night. Being able to distinguish between duck sign and non-duck sign will get you in the right spot.

Know the daytime resting areas of ducks

Most ducks will reside on irrigation channels, storage dams and other water bodies during the heat of the day. Check these areas out during the day to try and identify any flight zones from these areas to the nearest rice bay.

Selecting a place to hunt

For small areas of rice, try to set up on the end or along the side bays or areas where there is cover from grass or weeds to help conceal your profile. Try to utilise as much natural cover as you can including trees in and around the rice.



TRANSPORTATION OF FIREARMS IN NSW

All firearm licence holders must comply with the general requirements for safe storage and transportation of firearms under Part 4 of the *Firearms Act 1996*.

Any person in possession of a firearm must take all reasonable precautions to ensure the firearm is kept safely, and is not stolen or lost, and that it does not come into the possession of a person who is not authorised to possess the firearm.

Part 4 (39)(1) *Firearm Act 1996*

1. A person who transports a firearm to which a category A or category B licence applies and that the person possesses under the authority of a category A, category B or firearms collector licence must convey the firearm in accordance with the following requirements:
 - a. the firearm must be conveyed in a manner that ensures compliance with section 39 of the Act,
 - b. the firearm must not be loaded with any ammunition while it is being conveyed,
 - c. while the firearm is being conveyed in a vehicle it must not be visible from outside the vehicle.
2. This clause does not apply to the following persons if, during the course of conveyance, there is a reasonable likelihood that the firearm will be required for the purpose of killing vermin or stock:
 - a. a primary producer or an employee of a primary producer,
 - b. a person employed in or by:
 - i. the Department of Primary Industry, or
 - ii. the Office of Environment and Heritage, or
 - iii. Local Land Services, or
 - iv. the Border Fence Maintenance Board.
3. This clause does not apply to a firearm that is being used while it is being conveyed in a vehicle. Part 15 (148) Firearms Regulation 2017

In addition to the general requirements above there are specific legislative requirements for the transportation of category A & B firearms in NSW.

Part 15 - Clause 149 of the Firearms Regulation 2017

149 Requirements for non-commercial transportation of Category A and B firearms

- 1.** A person who transports a firearm to which a category A or category B licence applies and that the person possesses under the authority of a category A, category B or firearms collector licence must convey the firearm in accordance with the following requirements:
 - a.** the firearm must be conveyed in a manner that ensures compliance with section 39 of the Act,
 - b.** the firearm must not be loaded with any ammunition while it is being conveyed,
 - c.** while the firearm is being conveyed in a vehicle it must not be visible from outside the vehicle.
- 2.** This clause does not apply to the following persons if, during the course of conveyance, there is a reasonable likelihood that the firearm will be required for the purpose of killing vermin or stock:
 - a.** a primary producer or an employee of a primary producer,
 - b.** a person employed in or by:
 - i.** the Department of Industry, or
 - ii.** the Office of Environment and Heritage, or
 - iii.** Local Land Services, or
 - iv.** the Border Fence Maintenance Board.
- 3.** This clause does not apply to a firearm that is being used while it is being conveyed in a vehicle.

CALLING ALL DUCK HUNTERS



Licensed hunters are needed to assist landholders sustainably manage game birds in NSW.

Get your NSW Game Hunting Licence and successfully pass the waterfowl Identification test to access the NSW Native Game Bird Management Program.

Your game hunting licence includes \$20 million public liability insurance.

We use your game hunting licence fees to combat illegal hunting and to fund research into game and feral animals.

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