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12 January 2009

The Hon Gavin Jennings MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale St
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Minister,

Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia urge you to cancel the open season for duck shooting in 2009 on the grounds that duck numbers remain critically low not just in Victoria but throughout much of eastern Australia.

There is a compelling case for this decision. You cancelled the open season for duck shooting in 2008 because duck numbers were so low; and this followed the cancellation of the 2007 season. The wisdom of this decision was born out by your Department's Summer Waterfowl Count conducted from 23 February to 2 March 2008 in which a total of only 58,628 game species were observed at 191 wetlands compared with the long term average of over 200,000 birds. By far the lowest number recorded in the 20 years of the survey.

Duck numbers do not appear to have recovered in 2008. For most of Victoria and southern NSW, 2008 was drier than average. Under such conditions most ephemeral wetlands remain dry and permanent wetlands have low productivity, and as a result duck breeding success is poor. Your Department has not yet released to us Professor Richard Kingsford's report on his aerial survey in spring 2008. However, Professor Kingsford has indicated that the wetlands surveyed in Victoria and southern NSW are probably in worse condition than in 2007 and waterfowl numbers are lower. In short, there is no sign of widespread recovery in the duck populations.

Against this background of critically low duck numbers, the licenced duck shooters, claim to have "harvested" over 300,000 ducks in the 2005 and 2006 seasons (Source: 2006 survey of duck licence holders by Richard Barker commissioned by Field and Game Australia Inc.). We assume here their figures do not include birds wounded but not bagged. In 2009 there are simply not enough ducks in Victoria to sustain such a high level of mortality.

Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia remain opposed to recreational duck shooting on ethical, conservation and animal welfare grounds. Ultimately, nothing short of a permanent ban on this inappropriate activity will be acceptable to our Members and supporters. However, in the interim, we urge you to cancel the 2009 season on sustainability grounds and will publicly support that decision.

Yours sincerely



Dr Graeme Hamilton
Chief Executive Officer
Birds Australia



Richard Hunter
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