

# TARANAKI REGION



## HUNTING NEWSLETTER 2022



*Jakson Stewart with Ranger  
and a fine Taranaki rooster  
(photo Glenn Stewart)*



# Season Prospects

Mallard numbers are looking good this season.

Several years of lower harvest meant there were good numbers of mallard hens going into the 2021 breeding season and well distributed spring rainfall, including a wet first half of December, resulted in excellent survival of juvenile mallards and a strong overall population.

Dry conditions, interspersed with some heavy Waitangi weekend rains, have concentrated mallards onto areas of permanent water, with flocks of up to several hundred birds observed flying out to feed in stubble fields in the evenings in recent days.

Hopefully we will get some decent rain to top up ponds and wetlands prior to opening weekend. If not, lakes and ponds that have retained water throughout summer and autumn will be the places to be. Duck camps on river and stream pools that provide cover and places for ducks to rest in the sun will also be good places to hunt, along with the usual farm oxidation ponds.

Paradise shelduck will provide plenty of hunting opportunities on the Taranaki ringplain, where substantial aggregations of birds at some moult sites have resulted in significant demand for Fish & Game gas guns to disperse paradise (and mallards) from chicory crops. The two-

weekend summer hunting season did not completely break up post-moult flocks, which continue to range widely over farmland.

Numbers of paradise shelduck in the Whanganui and Waimarino areas are lower, but very similar to recent years. However, not all sub-populations appear to be doing so well and if you are hunting in these areas then consider limiting your harvest to just what you need for the table.

Pheasant are widespread in the region and will continue to provide opportunities for keen hunters in coastal dune country and associated pine forests, and in the backcountry in scrubby areas with lots of weeds and rough pasture or ungrazed riverbanks. Permits are also available from Taranaki Fish & Game to hunt several coastal forests near Whanganui.

Pukeko are relatively abundant in the northern and central Taranaki ringplain areas and with an extended season through to 28th August, why not undertake a pukeko drive with a few mates and their dogs?

Finally, our rangers will be out and about and accompanied by local police so make sure you have both your gamebird and firearms licences on hand.



*Abe Herbert with a good bag of mallards from last season (photo Curly McEwen)*





Wellington Fish & Game Manager, Phil Teal, demonstrates good banding technique.

Volunteer Lee Cook covers trapped ducks to shade them from the sun prior to banding.

## Banding update

In February this year, Eastern and Wellington Fish & Game staff and volunteers helped local Taranaki staff band 554 grey and mallard ducks at three sites on a farm near Whanganui.

This involved feeding ponds over 14 days to attract the ducks and then trapping them in large wire-mesh cages. Each duck was marked by placing an individually numbered metal band on its leg and the band number, species, sex and maturity of the duck was recorded.

Of the total number banded, 545 were mallards and 9 were grey duck. There were an additional 33 mallards caught in the traps that were already banded, with most of them remaining at the trap sites from last year. This year's effort brought the total number of ducks banded in

the Whanganui area over the last three years to 917, with another 518 ducks banded in the Waimarino in 2017-19.

If you are fortunate enough to shoot a banded duck this season, please return the data (band number, date and approximate location where the bird was shot) so we can use it for population monitoring. The band itself does not need to be returned so by all means keep it as a 'trophy' on your call lanyard.

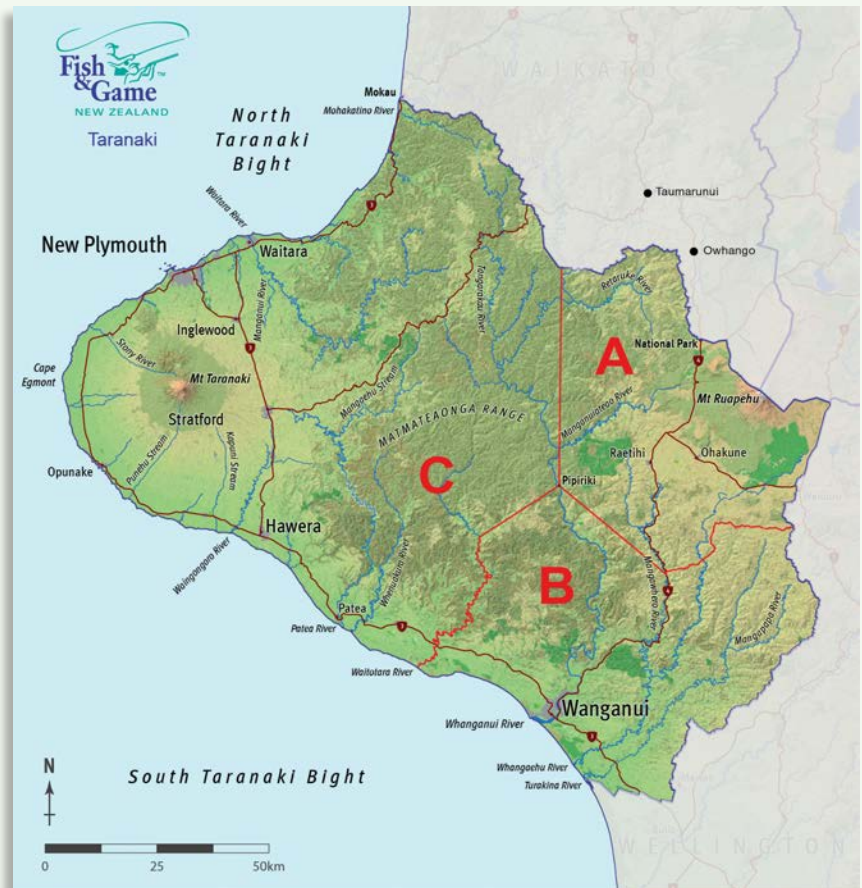
To return the band data please go to the Fish & Game website, follow this link: (<https://fishandgame.org.nz/game-bird-hunting-in-new-zealand/banding-form/>) or give Fish & Game's Whanganui office a ring on 021 270 0239.



# Regulation Changes

Taranaki Fish & Game has retained the usual daily bag limit of 10 mallard/ grey duck and 10 paradise shelduck per hunter for the 2022 season. In response to a request from local hunters with permits to rear and release bobwhite quail and red-legged partridge, these species have been added to the licence for the first time, with a bag limit of five and two respectively.

For more information on gamebird hunting regulations see the Game Regulation Guide that comes free with your hunting licence and is available from local licence agents or by contacting Taranaki Fish & Game. Note that a property occupier, their spouse/partner and one child do not require a licence to hunt on that property, however they must comply with all other regulations (and only one occupier can exercise this privilege on each property).



## Shooting Hours:

6.30am to 6.15pm.

## Decoy Limit:

No limit.

## Special Conditions:

- No person shall hunt, as specified, within 200m of any urban sewage oxidation pond.
- No person may wilfully leave on the hunting ground any game bird(s) shot or parts of any game birds shot.

# Game That May be Hunted or Killed - 2022/23 Season

Species	Season Duration (dates inclusive)	Daily Bag Limit	Hunting Area
Grey/mallard duck	7 May to 3 July 2022	10	All areas
NZ shoveler duck	7 May to 3 July 2022	2	All areas
Paradise shelduck	7 May to 3 July 2022	10	All areas
	25 and 26 February 2023	10	Area C
	4 and 5 March 2023	10	Area C
	11 to 13 March 2023	10	Area C
Black swan	7 May to 3 July 2022	2	All areas
Pukeko	7 May to 28 August 2022	5	Area A&B
	7 May to 28 August 2022	10	Area C
California quail	7 May to 28 August 2022	5	All areas
Cock pheasant	7 May to 28 August 2022	2	All areas
Bobwhite (Virginian) quail	7 May to 28 August 2022	5	All areas
Red legged partridge	7 May to 28 August 2022	2	All areas



# Paradise shelduck monitoring results

Paradise shelduck are endemic to New Zealand and are one of the few native species to thrive with the development of a pastoral landscape. From late December through February each year, adult paradise (both breeding and non-breeding birds) gather together at 'traditional' river, lake or pond sites to moult their flight feathers. While the adults are flightless during the moult, the newly fledged young that accompany their parents to the moult site are not and they often roam over surrounding farmland.

January is the time when Fish & Game staff undertake their annual paradise shelduck moult counts in game bird management areas A, B & C. Not all moult sites in the region are known, but enough sites are monitored to allow us to see how the populations are doing within each area, to assess population trends over time and make changes to season bag limits if need be.

In January 2022, a total of 14 moult sites were visited in the Waimarino district (Area A) with a combined total of 3,129 paradise shelducks counted between all sites. This tally was lower than in 2021 (5,877 birds) and indicates that the Waimarino population remains at the 'low end' of

its historical range of abundance.

A total of 11 moult sites were visited in the Whanganui district (Area B) with a combined total of 2,418 paradise shelducks counted between all sites. This tally was lower than in 2021 (2,948 birds) and is the lowest count recorded since monitoring began in 1990. This indicates that the Whanganui paradise population is also trending towards the 'low end' of its historical range of abundance.

A total of 41 moult sites were visited in Taranaki (Area C) with a combined total of 13,415 paradise shelducks counted between all sites. This tally was also lower than 2021 (14,390 birds) but is still above the long-term (2007 – 2022) average of 11,672 birds. This indicates that the overall Taranaki paradise population remains towards the high end of abundance.

If you are a landowner and have congregations of moulting paradise shelduck on your lakes, ponds or rivers from late December each year give us a call and we can incorporate the site into our monitoring programme. If paradise are causing damage to your pasture or crops at any time of the year, then also give us a call.



*Paradise shelduck gather for the moult, sometimes in large numbers.*





# Watch out for threatened native waterfowl this season

## *Pāteke (Brown teal)*

The Brown teal, or Pāteke is one of New Zealand’s rarest native waterfowl species. Once widespread throughout New Zealand, Pāteke populations have decreased greatly due to predation, competition and habitat loss.

After being regionally extinct in Taranaki for 100 years, Pāteke were returned to the region in May 2019 with the release of 20 birds at the Lake Rotokare Sanctuary, located 11km east of Eltham. Since then, there have been several more releases at Rotokare, totalling more than 150 birds and including 81 birds so far in 2022. Pāteke have also had some breeding success and the local population may now number more than 200.

Pāteke are a mobile species that quickly moved outside the Rotokare Sanctuary boundaries and it is up to us as hunters to identify our targets and not have any impact on their population by mistakenly shooting any. Pateke often visit farm ponds during the day and forage actively after dusk so take extra care at dawn or dusk when light is at its lowest.

*Image above: Pāteke are a small duck similar in size to grey teal and scaup, which are all fully protected (photo Tom Lynch).*

## *Whio (Blue duck)*

Whio, or Blue duck, are a threatened, ‘ancient’ species of river-dwelling waterfowl with a strong cultural, spiritual and historical significance to Māori. Whio were once widespread across New Zealand but due to predation, disturbance and habitat loss their numbers have dropped significantly, with populations now patchy and isolated. Taranaki is fortunate to have a re-established population of whio centred on the streams and rivers within Egmont National Park and there are now at least 200 whio present.

Whio don’t always remain within the confines of the heavily predator trapped eastern side of Taranaki Maunga and can venture further out into the ringplain, with birds seen as far downstream as SH3. Although you’re less likely to see these unique birds on your farm dam, you may come across them if you are walk-up shooting along a river or stream, so please be aware and identify your target before pulling the trigger.

Penalties for killing a protected species (Wildlife Act 1953) are up to 2 years imprisonment or a fine up to \$100,000. Repercussions could also include potential loss of your firearms license.

*Image above: A pair of adult whio with three fledglings resting on the stream bank outside Egmont National Park (photo Curly McEwen).*



*Photo Curly McEwen*

## Pheasant Hunting Access Permits

Permits to hunt Harakeke Forest south of Whanganui, Nukumaru Recreation Reserve south of the Waitotara River and Tauwhare Forest north of Whanganui on Tokomaru East Road are available this season by ringing Taranaki Fish & Game’s Whanganui office on 021 270 0239.

Tauwhare Forest is just over 200 hectares of 11-year-old pines and while it provides limited opportunities walking the forestry tracks, for someone who wants to get away and walk with the dog it is well worth exploring. There are cameras and it is essential that hunters stick to the permit conditions, in particular that access is granted for gamebird hunting only.

To address requirements that only one party at a time is hunting in each block in Harakeke Forest, a weekly draw system is being operated for both Harakeke and Tauwhare forests. This requires that hunters obtain a permit from Taranaki Fish & Game (0212700239 or taranaki@fishandgame.org.nz). You'll need to provide current gamebird licence and firearms licence numbers.

Then before noon each Thursday, contact Taranaki Fish & Game to go in the draw for the coming weekend. Harakeke is divided into two blocks available Saturday and Sunday. Tauwhare Forest is a single block only available on Sunday during May and then both Saturday

and Sunday after this. You can apply for one or more blocks and/or days, but if hunting as a group then just one application per group. Applicants will be advised whether they are successful or not on Thursday afternoon. Being successful in the draw is a condition of a valid access permit for that particular time and place. Hunters then know they are the only group hunting their particular block on that day.

For Nukumaru, there is no weekly draw. However, hunters need a permit from Taranaki Fish & Game and must then contact the respective grazing lessee listed on their permit when they wish to go hunting.

## Hunting Code of Practice

Gamebird hunting is a treasured pastime for many New Zealanders. The ongoing enjoyment of this natural resource relies on the use of sustainable hunting methods, positive behaviour and ethical harvest, which allows us to safeguard the future of hunting for all New Zealanders. Fish & Game actively promotes ethical hunting practices and as gamebird hunters we have a responsibility to support these practices. Fish & Game has developed a Code of Practice grouping key ideas under four responsibilities, to show the expected standard of behaviour for license holders.

### 1. Hunt Humanely

- Shoot only within the effective range of our firearm and your own capabilities, and only when a quick, clean kill is likely
- Promptly retrieve all birds shot and humanely dispatch wounded birds
- Respect the resource and eat what you shoot

### 2. Protect Game Bird Resources and our Hunting Traditions

- Understand and abide by all hunting regulations and licencing requirements
- Support gamebird management and habitat enhancement activities
- Take only what you need
- Share knowledge, ethical attitudes and behaviour with companions and younger generations

### 3. Care for the environment

- Take all rubbish with you and dispose of offal and carcasses appropriately



Use steel shot with biodegradable eco-wads if available.

- Use non-toxic shot and biodegradable products
- Use established tracks and never shoot from or across formed public roads

### 4. Respect the rights of others

- Never access, shoot onto or across private property without permission
- Be considerate of others, both hunters and non-hunters
- Be aware of your safety and the safety of others when hunting
- Comply with the Arms Act 1983 and always practice positive firearm use through the 7 Firearm Safety Rules.

For a more in-depth description of each key responsibility go to the Fish & Game NZ website and type 'Hunting Code of Practice' into the search bar or copy the link below:

<https://fishandgame.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Hunting-Code-of-Practice-National-Policy-Nov19-Web.pdf>

## Introduction to Gamebird hunting

For anyone who is new and wants to get involved in gamebird hunting, there are plenty of resources available through Fish & Game. The Fish & Game website is full of hunting tips and information to help anyone starting out, from the art of decoying to how to cook gamebirds.

If you're a visual learner, the Fish & Game YouTube channel has quality videos to introduce people into duck hunting and how to set up choke spreads for opening morning success at your optimum range. Or, if you want some face-to-face information, call into your local Fish & Game office and see what staff have to say, they may have some inside knowledge they can share.





*Arranmore Wetland near Whanganui was created with assistance from the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust and the Taranaki Habitat & Hunting Scheme.*

## Funding for Wetland Habitat

If you're interested in building or restoring a wetland on your property or in conjunction with a willing landowner, then now's the time to contact us to get your project underway. Fish & Game staff can provide free advice on designing and building wetlands and they can also act as referees for applications for financial assistance from the NZ Gamebird Habitat Trust and the Taranaki Fish & Game Habitat & Hunting Scheme.

The NZ Gamebird Habitat Trust receives \$4 from every gamebird hunting licence sold and offers grants for wetland development which include funding towards the cost of machine hire for damming or excavation to create areas of open water. Applications to the NZ Gamebird Habitat Trust need to be in by 30 June 2022 and Fish & Game staff can help with the form filling. Applicants are usually notified of the outcome by early September, leaving plenty of time to organise works in the following summer. However, successful applicants have two years to uplift the grant should wet weather or other factors mean that works need to be deferred for another year.

Another funding option is Taranaki Fish & Game's Habitat & Hunting Scheme which uses funds from the 2006 sale of the Tom Watt Wildlife Area at Tarata. The usual process is for an application to go to the Gamebird Habitat Trust first and the local Habitat & Hunting fund can then be used to supplement the amount received. The same application form can be submitted to both funds, thereby minimising paperwork.

Successful wetlands do not need to be large. From a duck breeding perspective, the key is to build shallow wetlands which have a fluctuating water level and 'soft' edges provided by rushes and the like. The good news is that these wetlands are often easy and cheap to build if you have a damp corner somewhere.

So, if you're keen to create or restore a wetland for waterfowl breeding, as a hunting opportunity or for wider biodiversity purposes, then give Fish & Game a call and we can come out to assess the options and recommend a way forward with your project.

## TARANAKI FISH & GAME CONTACT DETAILS

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