

# Game Bird Regulations 2014

## Council Policy

Council policy is that the game season regulations set in 2013 in accordance with staff recommendations shall be for a three year duration, subject to any material extraneous circumstances that might occur during that period (set 8 October 2011 and reaffirmed 6 October 2012).

## Draft Waterfowl Strategy

The Draft Waterfowl Strategy (not yet adopted by Council) recommends that the setting of harvest regulations should move towards an Adaptive Harvest Management process – a process of acknowledging that decisions are made with some degree of uncertainty, but with an aim of reducing uncertainty over time via close monitoring of outcomes.

Therefore, more restrictive regulations should be imposed in times when monitoring reveals a decrease in population levels and other parameters e.g. survival that we have partial control over. Inherent, is an acceptance that there are uncertainties, especially regarding unpredictable changes to hunter behaviour. The overriding goal of active management is to maximise cumulative harvest and hunter opportunity over time.

## Sport or purely a harvest

Another question that councillors should form an opinion on is whether regulation setting should pertain solely to harvest or whether regulations that preserve the integrity of the sport are also warranted. For example, restrictions to magazine capacity and banning baiting of waterfowl have ethical/sporting considerations as well as possible implications on harvest. If the sole goal of setting regulations is to maximise harvest and hunter opportunity there is little sense in having rules such as shooting game birds in flight. However, these laws are part of the fundamental principles which have governed game bird hunting since its introduction to this country.

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# Summary of Staff Recommendations

## Change Recommended

<b>Season Length</b>	3rd May to 2nd June 2014 (include Monday of Queen's Birthday weekend).
<b>Pukeko</b>	To include pukeko as a target species during any special shoots.
<b>Partridge</b>	That there is an open season for partridge in 2015 with a 10 bird limit. Season length similar to other upland game.

## Swan regulations (to be confirmed by trend counts)

<b>Waikato Swan: limit/season length</b>	Unless there is a substantial increase in the black swan count the limits should remain at 1.
<b>Auckland Swan: limit/season length</b>	Maintain the Manukau Harbour black swan limit at 20. Reduce the Kaipara Harbour and north of the Harbour Bridge limit to 5. These numbers to be confirmed following this summer's aerial swan counts.

## No Change Recommended

<b>Bag Limits for Mallards/Greys</b>	Daily bag limit of 10
<b>Three shots</b>	No change. Continue with 3- shot restriction.
<b>Mechanical decoys</b>	No change.
<b>Baiting</b>	No change. No exemption applied for (pond feeding restrictions remain unchanged).
<b>Sub-gauges (steel shot)</b>	No change for the 2014 game bird hunting season, however, the potential for a move to non-toxic shot in sub gauges continues to be critically evaluated.

<b>Maximum number of decoys</b>	No change.
<b>Canadian Geese</b>	Outside of Fish and Games control.
<b>Hawks</b>	Outside of Fish & Game control.
<b>Ban Electronic Duck Calls</b>	No change.
<b>Hours of Shooting</b>	No change. Inform & educate hunters, and consider regulation review if no change in behaviour.
<b>Birds in Flight</b>	No change.
<b>Shoveler Duck</b>	No change in season length and limits.
<b>Flexible Opening</b>	No change.
<b>Upland Game Shooting Season</b>	No change.
<b>Paradise Shelduck Season</b>	No change. The longer season for black swans and paradise shelduck, (to the end of June), continue for 2014.

## **Bag Limits for Mallards/Greys**

### **Staff Recommendation**

To keep the daily bag limit at 10 for the 2014 dabbling duck hunting season.

### **Staff Comment**

Changes to bag limits as a mechanism to decrease harvest receives little support in population models and bag limits would need to be reduced by a number which would be unacceptable to many hunters for them to be effective tool in reducing harvest(Klee 2013, McDougall unpublished data). In the 2013 season less than 7% of hunters reported shooting more than 6 birds on any given hunt day, whilst 78% shot 2 birds or less. One valid point regarding bag limits is the social component, i.e., why set bag limits that only a very small number of hunters will ever achieve? If bag limits are seen as a goal to aspire to, and the overriding aim is to set limits accordingly, so hunters can say “I got my limit” then a reduction may be warranted.

Compliance with restrictive bag limits is another issue in the Auckland Waikato/ Region. There is evidence in the literature that compliance is poor when daily bag limits are very low. Out of the 88 hunt days that exceeded 6 birds in 2013, 70% fell on opening weekend, showing how harvest and hence hunters ability to exceed daily limits is concentrated over this period. With circa 7000 licence holders and unknown number of hunters who shoot on their own properties without licences, it is always going to be difficult to check compliance over the entire region with current Ranger numbers and effort.

Differential hen and drake limits are common in a number of overseas countries and they could have some merit here. Our trap samples show a disproportionately larger number of juvenile drakes compared to juvenile hens which is uncommon for banding programmes. In most studies a close to 50:50 split is expected in the primary (juvenile) population. We also know that juvenile females have a lower average survival rate than their male counterparts and therefore the sex imbalance will become greater as that particular cohort ages.

Currently we do not have a consistent and similar trend for band recoveries. Adult females often exhibit a higher harvest rate than adult males and it is therefore unlikely that there is any harvest selectivity occurring through the voluntary “go for green” campaign. Internationally, research has indicated, that surplus drakes above a 50% threshold can be harvested without any detrimental effect on the population. Once again, the main issue with any change to bag limits, whether conventional or sex-based is they are likely to be ineffective unless restrictive. i.e. even with an 8:2 split, we would only expect a circa 10% reduction in female harvest. This may be a worthwhile initiative given the very low juvenile female survival rates in this region, however; there are a number of problems associated with this particular regulation change. It is impossible to accurately sex grey ducks on the wing and therefore these would need to be exempted from any sex based limit. When sex based limits were trialled in the Eastern Region, staff there quickly became aware that these limits would be difficult to enforce given the large amount of genetic introgression between these species. It was also felt that prosecuting someone would be fraught with difficulty

given that we refer to grey and mallard ducks as grallards and accept that the two species have shared genetics. Moreover the sex based limits were deemed to be ineffective at regulating female harvest despite being relatively restrictive with a bag limit of 7 and a 5:2 drake: hen split. A 6:1 split was deemed to be too restrictive (M McDougall pers. Comm. 2012). Other issues involve mallards in eclipse plumage especially at the start of the hunting season, hunter's ability to differentiate between drakes and hens in low light conditions and the potential for high grading of harvested birds in order to avoid reaching a limit.

A reduction in bag limits received one of the lowest levels of support in the 2011 GBHS from a total of 6 commonly requested regulation changes. Differential drake and hen limits received greater support. (For further details and figures see harvest regulations report).

### **Summary of submissions**

- For a limit of 6 mallard/grey: 10 submissions
- For a limit of 8 mallard/grey: 1 submission
- For a lower limit and longer season: 7 submissions
- For no change to the limit of 10: 5 submissions (includes three club submissions)
- For a lower limit: 1 submission
- For a "sustainable limit": 2 submissions
- For a limit of 10 for opening weekend and then 5: 2 submissions
- For a limit of 8 for opening weekend and then 6: 1 submission
- For a limit on hens (includes voluntary & point system): 6 submissions

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for a lower limit**

- Lower limit but a longer season, most genuine hunters don't require a big tally of birds, just the opportunity to hunt.
- More acceptable to hunters than a change in season length.
- Most sports shooters would have been happy with 5 birds a Day
- It seems rather incongruous to introduce other changes to the regulations but put the limit back to ten
- Some hunters are dumping ducks because they can't be bothered to process them.

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for no change to the limit**

- Give the effectiveness of the current regulations a chance to show through, duck numbers are down, but I saw an increase in numbers between 2012 and 2013 seasons in the areas I shoot.
- No evidence that harvest is affecting duck numbers.

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for a limit on hens**

- Reduce hunting pressure on hens. Hunting of drakes only, or a points system put in place; for example one point for a drake and 4 points for a hen, with a limit of ten points per day.

### **Ward/Club submissions**

That the 2014 daily limit for dabbling duck remain the same as the previous year

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3

Andrew Kerr

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We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard

Secretary

Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty

Secretary

The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

### **Individual submissions**

Would prefer a longer season and lower limits, knows hunters who are thinking of quitting due to short season.

John Witty

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Happily have 6 bird limit for 2014 – most genuine hunters don't require a big tally of birds, just the opportunity to hunt. I can't see the point in reducing the season length but increasing the limit back to 10. I am also in favour of a drake to hen limit and suggest hens should have a limit – if the limit is 6 birds then no hunter should have more than 3 hens in his possession. This caters for the night shooter (me on many occasions) whereby you can't identify sex in poor light.

Steve Dickson.

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Reduce the daily duck bag limit to 6.

Roger Buchanan.

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The total for mixed number should be 6. The total allowance for mallard Hen's in that bag are 2. The rest of the bag can be as previous season rules states.

Serge Kingi

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Although harvesting limits appear to have the most direct impact on hunters and it may have some effect on overall populations, its looks to me research on this is sparse, so how much, no one really knows it seems.

Stu Montgomerie

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No one liked the bag limits reduced from 10 to 6 birds, but this was accepted.

Troy Balderston

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In regards to bag limits and season length I had no problem with the 6 bird limit and 8 week season for the 2 previous years. It seemed to me to be a bit of a nonsense this season to have a 4 week season and 10 bird limit. I can't see how that numbers wise would conserve the ducks. I know the F&G's purpose is to assist in the saving / creating wetlands and also retaining hunters in the sport. Their licences fund F&G. I can remember back when I first started duck shooting there was a 10 bird limit and a 2 week season. Lets no go back there.

John Rehm

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I would prefer to see the May / June – 8 week duck shooting season, with duck limits set at a sustainable limit .

Colin Munro

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The question I ask is why should hunters be penalised or compromised in their duck shooting when there is no clear evidence to date to show they are actually having any great impact on duck numbers? Section 7.1 (pg 18) of the Draft Strategy states ..."there appears to be no consistent relationship between mallard harvest and annual survival"... indicating

that other factors (eg. predation and habitat loss/changes, etc) are far more important.

Reducing the limit down to 6 had little effect on me - I very rarely shot a limit when it was 10.

Paul Addison.

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Licence drakes only for shooting.

Lawrence Kovaleski  
Reuben Kovaleski

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If you thought it would make a tangible difference, call for two years voluntary drakes only seasons.

Robert van Duivenboden

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I have no doubt that all hunters would be supportive of a shortened season with a smaller bag limit if they were assured it would lead to more ducks in future. I support a shorter season and lower take, and think council should limit. The number of mallard hens to no more than 50% of the daily bag.

Ian Baily

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6 duck limit per day is enough (plus parries).

Vaughan Martin

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What thought has been given to researching a gender bias in the bag.

Does it make sense to shoot more drakes than hens, this is something many shooters already do and is wide spread in North America.

Is the research undertaken by the likes of Murray Williams still valid on the role hunting plays in population mortality

Graeme Garchow

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Some of my other thoughts, I would like to see the bag limit back to 5 per day after opening weekend of 10 per day.

A.Jesperson.

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Duck bag limits - With duck numbers improved last year from our point of view I think 6 birds is still fair to all and hopefully assist the number to build.

Russell Easton

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I would also like to see the hunting of drakes only, or a points system put in place; for example one point for a drake and 4 points for a hen, with a limit of ten points per day. Also have shoveler ducks limited to one drake per day per hunter.

Daniel McMillan

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I would also like to see the hunting of drakes only in mallards and shovelers, to help boost breeding hen numbers. Or if not drakes only implement a points system, for example 1 point for a drake and 4 for a hen with a total of 10 points per hunter per day.

Callum Wells

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It seems rather incongruous to introduce other changes to the regulations but put the limit back to ten which I believe is too many with limited duck numbers available. It disturbs me to see bags of ducks on the roadsides and at the local dump because hunters can't be bothered to process them. Perhaps the limit should be 10 on opening Saturday and then 5 for the rest of the season.

Tim McGowan.

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Supports the limit staying at ten

Greg Straker.

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In conclusion I would like say leave the limit and season length as is for this coming season, give its effectiveness a chance to show through, duck numbers are down, but I saw an increase in numbers between 2012 and 2013 seasons in the areas I shoot.

Dave Stack

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The limit where we shoot is 10 ducks - if there are sufficient numbers of ducks for hunters to shoot 10, why would you then try to make it more difficult for them to achieve this. If there aren't sufficient numbers, would it not make more sense to reduce the limit to say 6? Surely

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limit reductions and season-length reductions are the easiest way to control the harvest, as has been the case in Auckland/Waikato over recent years.

Brendon Stone

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... the season should be put back to two months as well because some years there no rain until June I would rather have a limit of 6 and the season two months long. I think if you keep making changes people will just give up because its a expensive sport and to spend a lot of money on a month long season it not worth it.

Drew Robertson

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Limit bag of 8 ducks for the length of the season.

Shane McGrath

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Numbers wise 8 ducks per day for the first two days then 6 ducks there after would be my suggestion. With a season that was 6 weekends long. With all the effort and cost of duck shooting hunters want to be able to shoot a reasonable bag of ducks and have time to get out during the season.

Lance Davis

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There was talk last year before regs came out that daily limits would also drop. I have no objections to this, as I think 10 birds a day is overly generous considering our present bird population.

However I would still like to see the opening weekend left at 10 per day then reducing after opening weekend as most people put all their effort for this one weekend.

Tony Schuller

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Supports a lower limit (comprehensive submission)

R Gaston

## **Baiting**

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommend that the exemption in the first schedule of the game bird regulation guide, continues to exclude the Auckland/Waikato Region for 2014. There appears to be little justification in relaxing this law when we are trying to increase survival rates.

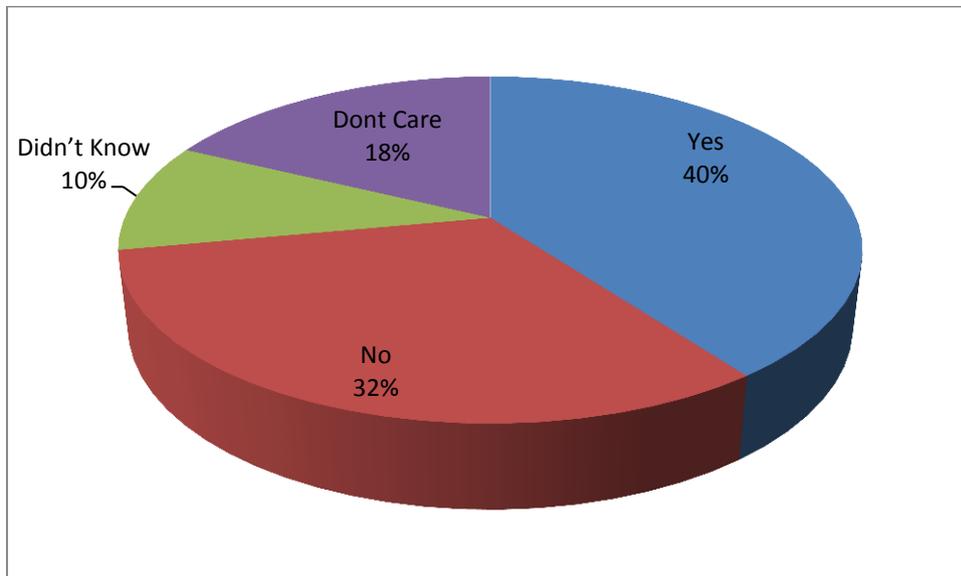
### **Staff Comment**

Reading through historical documentation from Caithness and Williams it is clear the pond feeding restriction was exempted because there was a feeling at the time (late 70s early 80s), that the burgeoning mallard population might cause so many problems for farmers crops that they could be relegated to schedule 5, as has been the case with geese some 30 years later. Mallards were viewed as cunning and difficult to hunt compared to the native grey duck. Unfortunately, the “mallard explosion” that led to this regulation change is no longer evident today. Feeding leading up to and during the hunting season is still expressly banned in the Wildlife Act 1953 *“Every person who, without the consent of the Minister, hunts or kills waterfowl in any designated area where, during an open season for game or within the period of 30 days immediately preceding the open season, any food has been cast, thrown, placed, or planted commits an offence against this Act and is liable on conviction to the penalty set out in section 67E(3).”* The only reason hunters can currently circumvent this rule is that it is annually exempted, in the first schedule of the Wildlife Regulations.

Baiting for waterfowl prior to the season is banned in many countries around the world as feeding alters duck behaviour making birds less weary and more susceptible to harvest. Feeding vast amounts of grain also allows certain areas to monopolise the local game bird resource. Staff are of the opinion that baiting waterfowl is inappropriate at this juncture given the low population levels. As previously mentioned, research has shown that bag limits and season length are relatively blunt tools when it comes to regulating harvest and therefore other management options become viable in times when population levels and survival are low. Feeding can still be conducted for 9 months of the year to help boost mallard condition during drought years and only the 30 day period leading up to and during the season would be banned. Banning pre-season feeding ranked 4<sup>th</sup> behind reducing season length, shot restriction and differential drake and hen limits in the 2011 GBHS. When hunters were canvassed during the 2013 season 40% were in favour of the restriction (Figure 1).

The baiting of waterfowl has ethical considerations and an underlying question of whether or not duck shooting is considered a sport or simply a harvest. The majority of reasons given by hunters to allow for baiting for waterfowl appear to be self-serving and focused on their own ability to increase harvest. Compliance has potential issues, but no more so than with other regulations. In fact, it is one of the few regulations that can be policed prior to opening weekend. Staff have received a few tip offs in regards to feeding which can be checked prior to the 2014 season. If hunters are found to be feeding ponds, an abatement

notice will be served warning them that they will be prosecuted if they shoot that area. As with all regulations, there are ways that hunters will attempt to circumvent the legislation to suit their own means.



**Figure 1:** Response when hunters were asked if they supported the restriction on waterfowl baiting. 2013 GBHS,  $n = 118$ .

### **Summary of submissions**

- For pond feeding: 7 submissions
- Against pond feeding: 10 submissions (includes three club submissions)
- Retain pond feeding up to Opening Weekend: 1 submission
- Retain ban prior and during mallard season only: 1 submission

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for pond feeding**

- Unfair to those willing to spend the funds.
- Attracts pheasants.
- Some hunters get free feed.
- A matter of ethics, best left up to the hunter.
- Hard to police.
- No difference between shooting on a farm crop and feeding out.
- Allows for reasonable shooting in marginal spots.
- Provides food for ducks during drought years.
- Maintains condition of ducks.

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders against pond feeding**

- Maize may affect breeding.
- Regulations were relaxed as the duck population declined.

### **Ward/Club submissions**

That there be a complete ban on pond feeding within the Auckland/Waikato region

Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

### **Individual submissions**

Considers the ban on pond feeding unfair to those willing to spend the funds.

John Witty

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The use of feeder should be looked at. Our family feeds ducks and pheasants most of the year. Our feeders are to bring more pheasant to our shooting areas. Eight years ago there was less pheasants in our area but with predator control and feeding we have now got a good number of birds in our area.

Colleen Cooling

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I would like to see the feeding ban lifted as I get a free source of feed and without that my small pond gets very few ducks due to being surrounded by large ponds in the area.

Carl

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So Yes, ban powered decoys, electronic callers, recordings, pond-feeders, and multi-shot magnum automatic shotguns. Maybe then the duck population wouldn't continue on a hiding to nothing and the thousands who have abandoned duck-hunting in disgust and frustration (like all my three sons) might return.

Warwick Thompson

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In regard to no pond feeding in 2013 - this did considerably reduce the number of mallards shot on my pond at Hinuera - 2012 - 53 shot; 2013 - 25 (I did feed out in the paddock 100+ metres from the pond and while this did pull mallards in at night they avoided the pond and were very difficult to shoot out in the paddock). All this did though was to change where we went shooting. Given that pond feeding was originally illegal and only introduced to reduce duck numbers because of the increase in numbers in the 70/80's I probably support the ban more than I am against it. However, I would like to see it apply only prior to and during the dabbling duck season. If like this year, the mallard season was shorter than the parry season then I would like to be able to feed for parries after the mallard season has closed.

Paul Addison.

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No feeding ponds.

Lawrence Kovaleski  
Reuben Kovaleski

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Birds feeding on maize. I met a gamekeeper about 20 years ago from the UK. He claimed that birds feeding on maize were big and healthy but not as fertile. He said that game farms had gone off feeding maize for other grains. Where do we check that out?

Michael O'Donnell

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The only regulations relevant to a hunter are the timing of the season, the length of the season, the bag limit and safety considerations i.e. the distance between mai mais. Anything else should be up to the individual's ethics. E.g if I wish to pour into my pond a ton of grain, set out 200 decoys including flappers, shoot my limit with a 8 shot semi-auto and be home by 7.30 to cook egg and bacon breakfast in bed for the missus and do the dishes and

laundry and wash the floors that's my choice. Or I could sit for 6-8 hours on my unfed pond with 2 decoys and my trusty side by side and get my limit. The end result is the same numbers of ducks have been shot.

Robin Niblett

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Ban any feeding of wild ducks.

Vaughan Martin

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Feeding, I'm not sure about this change

I have heard shooters boasting last season about shooting on areas that are fed out for dairy cattle and applying additional food, enforcement of this rule is always going to be problematic.

What is the difference between shooting on a farm crop and feeding out, yes I realise that the food is concentrated when feeding out however you don't shoot all the birds that are feeding.

I understand that there have been some large pond feeding exercises that seem excessive and that they are used to justify the change away from feeding however does not the limit kick in then and you only shoot the limit? Is this not similar to shooting a flooded field that is temporary in nature?

Graeme Garchow

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I commend you on going to 3 shots and stopping pond feeding for 4 weeks before opening day.

Bert Laing

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Also it appears a lot of people ignored the one month ban on feeding ducks prior to the opening of the season. This needs far more policing by your people somehow, we know it's a bit of a difficult ask.

Dick Featherstone.

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Finally I agree with banning feeding prior to the season, but once the season has commenced I feel feeding on public land should be allowed as the shooting is for everybody.

Daniel McMillan

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Pond feeding: Again this does nothing to reduce the duck take but it does mean that hunters with marginal spots do at least get a chance of shooting a few and encourages them to return in the following weekends.

Tim McGowan.

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As far as stopping people feeding ponds it's a joke if the ponds dumping lots of grain and are shooting large numbers of ducks. Then they are shooting more than their daily bag. If that is the case then they will break the law and keep feeding their ponds any way. In a year like last with a big drought the feed might have saved a few more ducks.

Russell Summers

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No baiting of game! Regardless of proximity to shooting areas.

....baiting shooting areas and mechanical decoys play a major part in decreased bird numbers. The juvenile birds are attracted to the food and motion decoys.

Shane McGrath

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Pre feed up to opening weekend to improve the condition of ducks in that area.

Neil Francis

# **Birds in Flight**

## **Staff Recommendation**

That the existing law be left as is.

## **Staff Comment**

Shooting of gamebirds not in flight, except the recovery of wounded birds, is prevented by Section 22 of the Wildlife Act, 1953. We would require the Minister's express permission by way of an exemption for this law to change it. While this could be applied for, it shows that there is a process that has to be followed and the final decision is not ours.

In and around 1984, certain Acclimatisation Societies obtained such an exemption at a time when mallard ducks were increasing so rapidly that there was a danger they would be classified as pests. With hunters geared up for hunting grey ducks, not the more wary mallard, a number of the existing rules were relaxed. Some felt that "down-hill" shooting was not ethical and the commentary in the media at the time showed that this decision did bring the sport into disrepute with some. In the 30 years that followed, we're not aware of any region that has resurrected the idea.

It is sometimes argued that juniors, especially very young hunters, should be exempted from this restriction. In fact, we have never taken a prosecution of a junior or their guardian in these circumstances that anyone can recall. Ethics is something that should be instilled in every hunter, whether there is a law or not. We could just trap our ducks and wring their necks, it would have the same effect to their populations. However, it is a sport and a certain standard of behavior is expected both by fellow hunters and by the public that look on and judge us by our actions. Fish and Game is, in fact, required by law to promote ethical standards among its licence holders.

## **Individual submissions**

I know it's traditional, but I don't really see the need for the bird in flight rule - i.e. why not shoot on the water if you have a chance. I think limits and season length are the best way to control the number of birds shot.

Vaughan Martin  
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I know this suggestion will go down like a lead balloon, I have witnessed numbers of duck which have been shot at and hit but manage to fly away only to die and are not recovered especially with the advent of steel shot, perhaps if we were allowed to shoot on the water any ducks that settled in the decoys there may be less ducks lost as hawk fodder. I don't think it matters how the limit is obtained as long as there is less ducks lost and shooters may get their limit earlier.

Roy Dench

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# Canadian Geese

## Staff Comment

As council is aware, the removal and any subsequent reinstating of game bird status for Canada Geese is outside of Fish and Games control.

## Individual submissions

A.W.F.G should bring Canadian Geese back on as a game bird in our region and demonstrate that they can be managed. The geese are a magnificent game bird.

Colleen Cooling

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Geese back as a game bird if at all possible.

Vaughan Martin

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# Electronic Duck Calls

## Staff Recommendation

No change for the 2014 hunting season.

## Staff Comment

Unlike with other technological advances in particularly spinning wing decoys, there is little in the literature that documents the effectiveness of electronic callers. They can certainly be annoying especially if played on a repetitive loop.

## Individual submissions

Electronic duck calls and all duck calling except traditional human mouth operated types.

Lawrence Kovaleski

Reuben Kovaleski

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# **Flexible Opening**

## **Staff Recommendation**

That the traditional first weekend in May remain the opening weekend for the Auckland Waikato Fish & Game region.

## **Staff Comment**

The date on which opening weekend occurs has been varied in years past in different areas. The anticipated improvement in results was, however, always elusive. Many different factors come into play, moon times, tide times and the weather especially. If one region had a later or an earlier start than all the rest, we'd probably have a lot of new neighbours who had travelled from other regions to join us in dividing up the spoils.

## **Individual submissions**

Have a flexible date for opening morning. A full moon on opening weekend greatly reduces the chance of a good opening and this one weekend is most shooters chance at a decent bag. Align opening weekend with a waxing moon to increase chance of better weather conditions and better night shooting.

Richard McKenzie

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# Hawks

## Staff Recommendation

The current legal status of hawks prevents Fish & Game authorizing anyone to cull hawks simply to benefit general gamebird interests, unless it's a on a specific Fish & Game project site. However, there is nothing to stop hunters applying to DoC for their own permits to cull hawks on private land to protect gamebirds generally. Fish & Game will assist with these applications whenever we're asked. However, DoC would be well within their existing authority to simply say "no". Only by asking will we find out.

## Staff Comment

Hawks were for decades controlled in the interests of game management and bounties were paid by Acclimatisation Societies for them. However this fell out of favour when rare and endangered native bitterns were killed by a handful of ignorant hunters who mistook them for hawks. With bitterns being so rare, even a few such cases were just too many. Harrier hawks then enjoyed a long period of protection where only landowners could control them and only if they were causing direct damage to their livestock. Recent hard lobbying of DoC in Wellington by Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council staff has produced the Wildlife, (Australasian Harrier), Notice of 2012 that amends this situation. This gives gamebird hunters much more flexibility where hawks are directly impacting on Fish & Game activities. However, the much needed ability to be able to shoot or trap hawks that are consistently targeting waterfowl broods on private land has yet to be provided for. It's hoped that, if the results of our current gamebird monitoring using radio-tracking, video surveillance and other sophisticated techniques, shows scientifically that hawks are indeed the very important predator they're believed to be, that the laws protecting hawks might be liberalised further. No one wants to wipe out our native harrier. In fact, it's never been so common at any time in history – that's part of the problem. But we do need the ability for hunters who know what they're doing to be able to control the worst cases of waterfowl brood destruction - not only of mallard ducklings but also for the benefit of our declining native grey duck which decidedly needs the balance tipped in it's favour.

## Individual submissions

Hawks around the lake used to be an uncommon sight and on quiet occasions were used as a source of frustration. Since the inception of full protection hawk numbers have increased

considerably to where they now compete with the dog to get to the game first. What has also been noticeable is the huge decline in Pukekos on the lake, to the point now that we don't shoot them and have imposed our own regulatory control to allow numbers to remain constant.

Hawks used to have a bounty on them 50+ years ago, I am not saying bring it back but maybe a limited cull could help.

Jim Coe

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The hawk is in a lot of ways our number 1 problem, little ducks never get a chance to get their first breath or see daylight for the first time because these bastards have eaten them in their shell, and they have been all eaten. Bert and I watched one hawk destroy 5 duck nests in 6-7 hours one day on his canal! At say 10 eggs per nest average, that was 50 future ducks by one hawk in one day. Disgraceful happenings and we can count up to 20 hawks in a 20 minute car cruise from around the roads of Ngatea & Turua & Waitaharuru, so there is thousands of eggs destroyed each and every duck breeding period or season.

Dick Featherstone.

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For quite some time now I have been concerned that the Harrier Hawk is one of the main predators of baby ducks as I have witnessed the hawks taking over 200 ducklings on my pond during one breeding season. I have also witnessed a harrier hawk climbing down through a blackberry bush to consume the ducks eggs from a nest on the ground under the bush.

Fish and Game was one of the organisations that were responsible for hawks being protected. Wild cats and eels also have an effect. I have watched eels pulling ducklings down and consuming them. While building a deer house at the Kiwi House we saw 12 ducklings consumed by eels in one day on a pond beside where we were working.

I know this suggestion will go down like a lead balloon, I have witnessed numbers of duck which have been shot at and hit but manage to fly away only to die and are not recovered especially with the advent of steel shot, perhaps if we were allowed to shoot on the water any ducks that settled in the decoys there may be less ducks lost as hawk fodder. I don't think it matters how the limit is obtained as long as there is less ducks lost and shooters may get their limit earlier.

Roy Dench

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Over this last weekend, while out hunting canadas, disappointingly I wish to report that again as we have witnessed, continually, over successive breeding seasons the hovering of large numbers of hawks, over mallard hens with young systemically killing the ducklings, and also whilst driving we saw four cats in different areas, on the road side nowhere near housing, but all within mere meters of pheasants. It is my firm belief as a hunter out in the field more than most, seeing this regularly, that predators are killing more bird than we realise. We must act.

Dave Stack

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.... more relaxation of the rules on shooting Harrier Hawkes.

Wayne Kirk

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# **Hours of Shooting**

## **Staff Recommendation**

Inform hunters that they are responsible safe and ethical hunting and this includes ensuring that there is enough light to adequately identify their targets. If staff and rangers continue to witness unsporting and unsafe behaviour from a minority then we may be forced into regulations that will affect all hunters.

## **Staff Comment**

There is little consistency between shooting hours in our region and those in neighbouring ones. Northland and ourselves share the same regulations however Eastern have moved to 6.15am-6.15pm and Taranaki 6.30am-6-15pm. Staff have discussed the situation with counterparts in adjoining regions with the view of trying to find a mutually acceptable time and streamline regulations. There is only a 9min difference for sunrise hours between Gisborne and Auckland at the start of May, however, in a 2 month season the Sunrise hours vary by 31mins in Auckland between May 1 and June 30. In many countries game bird hunting hours are regulated by sunrise and sunset times and these move during the course of a season. It is acknowledged that at some stages of the season and depending on conditions, hunters may struggle to differentiate species particularly dabbling ducks. The firearms code clearly states that a hunter must identify their target at all times, therefore, if the situation arises where they cannot do so, they should stop hunting. Late in the 2012 season staff witnessed a number of hunting parties shooting at ducks when they shouldn't be, it was clearly too dark to adequately identify their targets. These hunters were spoken to, however, they were within the legal times for shooting. Staff will monitor this situation and inform hunters yet again that the onus is on them to ensure that they only hunt at appropriate times, when they can accurately identify their targets. If this rule continues to get flaunted then regulation may be the only option. Restricting shooting hours could certainly influence harvest for decoy hunters if morning and evening hunting times were greatly restricted, but would do little to restrict harvest for those jump and drift shooting.

## **Individual submissions**

I propose that hunting hours also be revised. At present the 6.30am to 6.30pm time encourages hunters to shoot in the dark, at targets they cannot positively identify. Apart from the game bird identification aspect of this, these times encourage hunters to break one of the basic rules of gun safety. I suggest hunting hours should be changed to 7.00am to

6.00pm in May, and 7.30am to 5.30pm in June. These times would still allow hunting in twilight, but less so in complete darkness.

Ian Baily

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Would reducing shooting hours i.e. 30 minutes start and end of each day assist in bird identification and reduce crippling and the loss of cripples?

I know birds fly actively during these times.

A.Jespersion.

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Hours of shooting are probably in my opinion about Right May be to stop at 6 or 5.30pm would help guys get out of swamps a bit safer . It wouldn't worry me to much

Wayne Turei

# Maximum number of decoys

## Staff Recommendation

No change to maximum decoy numbers.

## Staff Comment

Some local decoy restrictions currently exist and these should be maintained if hunters are happy with the status quo, however, a region wide restriction is not warranted at this stage.

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## Ward/Club submissions

We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

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That the limit of decoys per stand on lake Waikare remain at a total of 50 Maximum. This 50 decoy limit is inclusive of all types of decoys including goose decoys and motorised decoys.

Andrew Kerr  
Ward 3

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## Individual submissions

We would also like to see the use of decoys reduced to a maximum of 15 decoys per pond or gun boat or such, but this suggestion from us is totally up to your people of course.

Dick Featherstone.

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Maximum decoys of 50 per maimai.

In conclusion F&G would benefit more from increased licence sales if they gave something back (season length and increased magazine capacity) to the hunters and made minor changes like no motion decoys and maximum decoy numbers.

Shane McGrath

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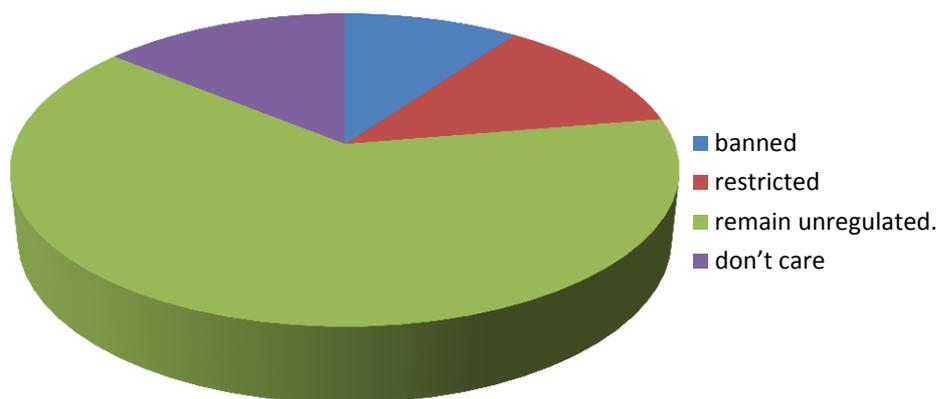
## Mechanical decoys

### Staff Recommendation

No regulation change on the use of mechanical decoys for the 2014 game bird season. Any potential regulation should be implemented over a long time period that retailers and hunters can adequately prepare for such.

### Staff Comment

Mechanical decoys, especially spinning wing decoys have proven to increase harvest and research has shown that Juvenile birds are particularly susceptible. Given the low survival rates in our region particularly those of juvenile hens, regulation may make some sense. There has been a move to ban mechanical decoys in some areas internationally. The argument against any restrictions will be; that a limit, is a limit, irrespective as to how it is achieved. As previously discussed, limits are largely ineffective at regulating harvest unless they are very restrictive (Klee 2013, McDougall 2012). Therefore, hunters and managers do have a right to question the unmitigated acceptance of new technologies into the sport and whether these are indeed in the best interest of hunters. In some situations, especially on public waterways, the decoying of birds has become a veritable arms race of one-upmanship. If hunters see their neighbours shooting more birds than themselves due to the use of mechanical decoys they feel compelled to purchase more themselves in order to compete. No doubt, the hunting industry will be happy to have this competition, however, judging by some remits not all hunters believe it should continue unmitigated. There are a number of valid arguments for the continued use of mechanical decoys. Leaving aside the issue of capital expenditure, the use of these devices can allow hunters to get birds in closer proximity and therefore increases the likelihood of a clean kill. It also gives less proficient licence holders a greater chance of harvesting ducks. The majority (64%) of surveyed hunters requested that the use of mechanical decoys remain unregulated (figure 1) as did the majority of submissions.



**Figure 1 :** Hunter response when asked whether the use of mechanical decoys should be banned, restricted or remain unregulated 2013 GBHS, n= 121.

### **Summary of submissions**

- For the banning of mechanical decoys: 22 submissions
- Against the banning of mechanical decoys: 32 submissions (includes three club submissions)
- Ambivalent: 6 submissions
- Ban first two weeks only: 1 submission

### **Summary of arguments from licence-holders for the banning of mechanical decoys**

- Ban for a couple of seasons at least to see if this has an impact on numbers.
- Electronic toys are spoiling our hunting skills. Far too much reliance on technology. Crutches for the inexperienced and lazy hunters who do not know how to set decoys or how to call ducks.
- As ducks became fewer, the regulations were liberalised to make it easier to attract and kill/wound ducks.
- Too effective on juveniles on opening weekend.
- I do feel that with all the toys we have now, it's all stacked in our favour, so would be more than happy to give them up.
- Un-sporting piece of equipment that has crept into waterfowl hunting.
- Puts hunters, especially the retired, at a disadvantage due to the high cost of mechanical decoys.

### **Summary of arguments from licence-holders against the banning of mechanical decoys**

- Essential for hunting over land and on open water.
- More effective, allows more opportunities and increases harvest rates dramatically.
- Help novice, and less skilled hunters enjoy at least some success
- Too many restrictions already.
- The limit is the limit. Harvest should be controlled by limits and season length only.
- Hunters have invested large money to purchase.
- Any ban should be voluntary. A decision left up to the hunter ethics.
- Worrying about a 5% gain when there's 30% to be gained elsewhere. A token gesture.
- Lack of research/statistics, with no clear evidence to date to show they are actually having any great impact on duck numbers. The connection between harvest and population size is not proven, and recruitment and habitat is likely to be a much greater driver.
- Just progress.
- Law abiding hunters will be at a disadvantage.
- What is classified as mechanical?
- Impact on retailers who probably have already ordered next year's supplies.

- The difference between having good opportunity and very little opportunity.
- Mechanical decoys can get the birds in closer and also into better positions for successful shooting, and thus limiting the number of wounded birds (especially since the introduction of steel shot).
- Banning mechanical decoys will be the last straw for many and that they will refuse to buy a licence. Many are already very close to this point after several consecutive poor seasons. *A bridge too far.*
- The chances of greatly reducing income by banning mechanical decoys is likely to have a much greater effect on population size through reducing management funds than by any effect on harvest amount.
- Juveniles make up a large percentage of the harvest no matter what the methods used.
- No research that they are having an impact on juveniles.
- Hunters have invested a lot of money in them so it is too late to turn around and ban them.

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**Ward/Club submissions**

That the use of motion decoys remains the status quo.

Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

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In 2012, the Ohinemuri Fish & Game Association requested a complete ban on mechanical decoys.

## **Individual submissions**

Ambivalent about mechanical decoys (doesn't use one)

John Witty

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Mechanical decoys: I would be in favour of trying a ban for a couple of seasons at least to see if this has an impact on numbers. I am aware that most of the opening bag is made up of juveniles which are our next seasons breeding stock. It may be hard to police but I would be in favour of a ban to see the effect.

Steve Dickson.

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100% of our duck hunting is done over land and we would struggle to get ducks without the use of mechanical decoys. I'm of the opinion that rather than imposing more rules and regulations some how you need to enforce the rules you already have. I think the ban on motorised decoys would destroy my hunting techniques thus my and i would probably give up the sport we love.

Andrew Welch

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Postpone the use of mechanical decoys until duck numbers are back up to 2000 levels.

Roger Buchanan.

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Yes I have several and they are all home made. For years I hunted without them, using still, lifeless, 'dead in the water' floating decoys and regardless of how many I used and how much I called I would watch mobs of high flying Mallards pass overhead totally disinterested and often NOT shot at any birds on opening morning. And that's an anti-climax to the opening morning magic. I never expect limit bags but do like some trigger-time.

When I made my Wing Spinner decoy I not only had the pleasure of seeing far off Mallards over the Harbour turn and head in my direction but also the satisfaction of knowing it was my home made motion decoy that did it. This really rekindled my love for the sport.

With regards to a total ban on motion decoys, don't do it. If you have to, restrict the number of motion decoys. Perhaps one wing spinner or one ripple decoy per Hide/ DuckBlind. I have spoken to Duck Hunters that use five wing spinners together on a spread of decoys on a field of Maze Stubble.

Also pond shooting is different to OpenWater shooting. Waterfowl can see the water of a pond kilometres away and will home in on it long before they spot any decoys but with OpenWater shooting like a harbour a spread of motionless floating decoys next to the mangroves on a massive expanse of water are going to be insignificant specks, I'm not saying Pond Hunters shouldn't use motion decoys but that there are some hunting situations that really do require an attention grabber.

If too many restrictions are placed on this sport,( especially with the price of the Game Bird Licence creeping up every year ) you may see an increase in hunters not obeying the rules or more disgruntled hunters simply pulling out of the game which will mean a drop in the number of licences sold.

And besides, if a hunter adheres to the Limit Bag number, then if it's reached by 8am using a motion decoy or 3pm using still decoys it's still the same number of ducks harvested, correct?

Greg Penn

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... it would be stupid to introduce a blanket ban, hunters have invested big money to purchase the equipment and now you want to ban them, if you think its relative do some research first then report back or get hunter feedback to voluntarily not use robos and see what the results are. If they are to be banned there should be a 5 year phase out.

Greg Straker

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My thoughts on the mechanical wing spinning decoys are simple they should remain open with the exception of only having a maximum of 3 on open lakes, I think having spinning wing decoys are essential part of any hunters tools just like having a caller and decoys, boat and dog.

Serge Kingi

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I think focusing on mechanical decoys and mag limits is like, worrying about a 5% gain when there's 30% to be gained elsewhere.

Stu Montgomerie

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I have no problem with banning mechanical decoys if it can help the duck population recover (even though I do use one)

Jim Norman

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What difference does it make if I shoot 2 a day with a motorised decoy, or 2 a day without?....whats next, no duck callers, no decoys at all

Eric Major

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I won't beat around the bush. F&G allowed us to use feeders, mechanical decoys and multi shot shotguns. Auckland F&G are now introducing restrictions to their use along with reduced open seasons and bag limits. Surely the reduced bag limit and shorter season is sufficient. I invested heavily in feeders, decoys etc. Are you going to re-imburse me -----Yeah right !!!

Banning mechanical decoys will be the last straw to myself and my family (and many of my friends). The fact that you can control bird harvest with limits and reduced seasons (as you have already done) should be sufficient

Chris Brenan

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Regarding mechanical decoys. While they may be very good, I myself do not see the need for the current electronic birds and prefer to have a few decoys on a bungy cord to create a few ripples as being far more satisfying from a hunting decoying perspective. But then I might be regarded as old fashioned! Electronic toys are spoiling our hunting skills.

Keith Smith

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Also I strongly disagree with banning Mechanical Decoys, if the bag limit is set at 6 ducks (or 10 bags) what is the problem with having Mechanical decoys? Note we shoot on a private Irrigation Dam and the closest hunters to us are about 400metres away, then the next lot about 2-3km's away, so with the combination of calling and mechanical decoys we bring the birds in, without the decoys our harvest rates drop dramatically.

Troy Balderston

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Happy for mechanical decoys to be banned.

Damien Toman

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.....you should provided some statistics as to why you are doing this,and if it is again because people feel they have to "keep up with the Jones",then this has nothing to do with

Fish and Game.....why not ban camo gear, camo guns, electric callers, cars to get to the ponds, outboards etc etc.....Quite frankly, mechanical decoys are really just put of progress, and whether they work or not is a moot point. Whether it means people in other maimai's feel they need one to keep up, is a society issue and nothing to do with fish and game.....

Peter Merton

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The issue you raise about mechanical decoys is valid in part. I have used them and when I first did the results were amazing. However since that initial rush of blood to the head I have noticed that ducks have become more cautious and wary of such decoys so there continued use is debatable. I didn't use mine this season and whilst I had a crap season numbers that was due to the lack of ducks rather than no mechanical decoys.

I am of the persuasion that tends to believe that mechanical decoys, callers, etc. are crutches for the inexperienced and lazy hunters who do not know how to set decoys or how to call ducks! I hunted part of the duck season with a 20g flintlock smooth bore so I realise that I maybe at the extreme end of "doing it the old way"!!

John Rehm

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In response to your email, I personally do not use mechanical decoys but the idea of banning them is just as pathetic as limiting shotguns to 3 shots and stopping those that can bothered feeding ponds prior to opening, these sort of measures are only a token gesture doing nothing to increase the Duck population.

Your draft report does cover all the areas of concern, mainly clearing of farmland as dairy farming becomes ever more profitable there is no cover left for waterfowl, predators, spraying natural habitat on waterways etc

Glen Butts

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Mechanical decoys should be limited to 2 per stand. We have invested a fair amount of money in them and feel that once opening weekend is over they are not as effective.

Colleen Cooling

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On opening weekend I shoot the Waikato River on an island. I do not use mechanical decoys, duck caller only, but the maimai behind me use between 3 and 5 mechanical decoys

at each maimai of which they dominate the decoying so these things certainly have a strong influence on their bag of ducks.

T J Hulme

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I would have no problem with the banning of mechanical decoys=there is far too much reliance on technology in fishing and hunting these days-the game /fish are not getting a reasonable and fair chance=lets get back to basics.

D moloney

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Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the latest Fish & Game draft strategy, my view on mechanical decoys is that, I have had mixed results with my one over the last 8 years, after opening week end in my area I believe ducks become a bit mechanical decoy- gun shy with some limited effect through out the remainder of the season. A concern I have if mechanical decoys are banned, is that law abiding citizens like my self will be at a disadvantage as there are those shooters out there that will keep on using them, with greater effect due to there being less used by the likes of myself, resulting in ducks being less mechanical decoy shy.

Colin Munro

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If you can remember a few years ago I put a remit in to ban Robo duck decoys and was turned down by council. The reason was too many had invested a lot of money to ban them. My attitude has not changed, and a ban would see many ducks that would decoy to robo fly on to other places. ie, a good decoy placement with good calling. In other words hunters with good skills will harvest ducks. That is what its all about.

Tom Mills

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Re motorised decoys, I can take or leave them, don't really care to be honest.

Nick Foster

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I have had a good read of the draft and think the banning of mojo style decoys would be a fair idea I dont use them as I shoot on a tight budget.

Cheers Carl

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In my view, F & G have followed a disastrous course in recent years.

As habitat and ducks have become less and less, you have made the means of attracting and killing them easier and easier.

First, you allowed shotguns capable of firing magnum shells.

Then you allowed mechanical decoys, electronic callers, recordings, and so on.

Then you allowed multiple-shot automatic shotguns.

As ducks became fewer, you progressively made these adverse regulation-changes so that ducks were easier to attract and easier to kill/wound. It all took place as we had four years of drought in the Waikato, warm water conditions causing botulism, reduction of habitat, and all against a background of rising public opposition to the whole concept of shooting ducks. Result - a destroyed duck population, less shooters and declining licence sales.

So Yes, ban powered decoys, electronic callers, recordings, pond-feeders, and multi-shot magnum automatic shotguns. Maybe then the duck population wouldn't continue on a hiding to nothing and the thousands who have abandoned duck-hunting in disgust and frustration (like all my three sons) might return.

Warwick Thompson

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The question I ask is why should hunters be penalised or compromised in their duck shooting when there is no clear evidence to date to show they are actually having any great impact on duck numbers?

What are you going to classify as mechanical - electrically powered?, wind spinners?, decoys on pull strings? - all these are mechanical.

I would not support an outright ban on these decoys. I think an outright ban would do considerable damage to AWFG by further alienating a considerable number of duck hunters. You would also cop flak from retailers who probably have already ordered next years supplies.

I would support to some degree:

- No mechanical decoys to be used in any situations on opening weekend.
- No mechanical decoys to used on any ponds or waterways during the whole of the mallard season.

Paul Addison.

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By saying that you are now going to take the mechanical duck away when many have invested in this device is for me another shot in the foot to fellow shooters and for a further decline in the numbers buying licenses and supporting the sport overall. Simply there are less birds about flying because they are not breeding as well as they used to, your document also suggests this, to say that it is the fault of the robo duck is just B.S. and again another reason why many will hang up their guns to do other things that aren't quite so flippant in their rules and constant changes, requiring more investment or money down the drain.

Marty Johanson

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In our opinion the ban of mechanical decoys and any other sophisticated equipment and practice for attracting and shooting ducks is a very good idea including the following:

All mechanical decoys, larger than life anchored decoys and partial decoys.

Lawrence Kovaleski  
Reuben Kovaleski

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I think it should be up to the shooter and change to regulations not needed.

We only use 1 mojo for the first 3 hours of the opening weekend and the put it away as the birds get scared of them.

I think shooters will slowly find this out for themselves and I know others working this way. Calling is the same as they get quacker shy.

Mike Billett

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I have never shot using mechanical decoys. My brother in law has one or two and shoots just down the river from me. For the last two seasons the mechanical decoys have made the difference between the birds dropping in to our standard decoy stand and his. The mechanical decoys have definitely been the difference between having good opportunity and very little opportunity.

It does seem that like fishing, hunters have to be more inventive to get the birds. These days we are lucky to get 3 birds a season. Historically we would get our limits on opening day. It does appear there are many reasons for the duck population decline. I am happy to abide by the decision of Fish and Game, however I will probably buy a mechanical duck this year if there is no rule against it.

Roger Stringfield

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Mechanical decoys: are here to stay!

Mechanical decoys have been used for years. I have personally been using one for 15 years as we used to make them from remote control cars. So now the council is going to make me a criminal for using one? Give me a break. There are more pressing issues in our region than mechanical decoys and it is absurd to think that we would regulate against these. The argument that they impact heavily on the juvenile birds. I would suggest that any decoy static/wind/bungee activated decoys would also impact on juvenile birds...I have not seen any convincing evidence to suggest otherwise. If the council can show a survey done on both mechanical decoys and static/wind/bungee activated decoys which shows a heavily skewed harvest result then I would be prepared to listen.

Scott Taylor

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While I would accept a restriction on the number of electronic decoys, I am opposed to them being banned outright. I think they help novice, and less skilled hunters enjoy at least some success and without that our sport will go the same way the mallard population has.

Ian Baily

---

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the upcoming shooting regulations. The only regulations relevant to a hunter are the timing of the season, the length of the season, the bag limit and safety considerations i.e. the distance between mai mais. Anything else should be up to the individual's ethics. E.g if I wish to pour into my pond a ton of grain, set out 200 decoys including flappers, shoot my limit with a 8 shot semi-auto and be home by 7.30 to cook egg and bacon breakfast in bed for the missus and do the dishes and laundry and wash the floors that's my choice. Or I could sit for 6-8 hours on my unfed pond with 2 decoys and my trusty side by side and get my limit. The end result is the same numbers of ducks have been shot.

Robin Niblett.

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I have taken up duck shooting again in the last 3-4 yrs.after an absense of 30 odd yrs.As my old shotgun could not fire steel i bought a semi-auto 20#,now i can only have 3 shots,also have a few motorized decoys of different types,now i hear they might be banned !!!! What does it matter if there is a limit,That is the problem you have,you cannot control as there many ponds on private property/out of the way places.

Nigel Hanmore

---

One which was put forward and I agree with it, is that when using mechanical decoys we tend to get a lot less woundies, this is due to the fact that we work the birds in closer and also into better positions for successful shooting. This is particularly noticeable with less experienced shooters (most of us have children we have, or are introducing to shooting). It is also true for night shooting and in our experience has led to a lot higher recovery rate of shot birds whether we are using dogs or not.

The other idea which was discussed was that the one time that we could see that limiting the use of mechanical decoys would be effective would be opening weekend itself. The duck's are less wary and there are more shooters to move them around.

I truly believe that mechanical decoys have had a huge effect in limiting the amount of wounded birds since the introduction of steel shot, not all of us are crack shots and I still cringe at my first season with steel.

If they are removed from use you may cure one problem (too many ducks being shot) but it will lead to another one, a lot more wounded ducks because people will start having a crack at passing birds that they would otherwise have left.

Chris Brennan

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Mechanical decoys. I don't use them myself but overall have a neutral view on them. I hear that they are good early in the season and then the ducks get a little shy of them - a bit like normal decoys and callers even. So don't see a problem with them really. If they bring the ducks closer, the better chance of a clean kill, and that's a positive.

Vaughan Martin

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If mechanical decoys are banned the definition must be clear so that there is no confusion i.e. battery powered versus pull string etc.

Does a flapper on a string still become a mechanical decoy?

Is a stick on flapping plastic wing mechanical?

Graeme Garchow

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I'm wondering about mobile ducks as they wipe out most of the young on opening weekend.

Bert Laing

---

... great to see the research happening and the communications that follow. I am fully in favour of these studies, but want to share my concerns over the proposals to potentially ban mechanical decoys. My argument goes thus:

- There is no doubt that mechanical decoys are effective, although this has waned in recent seasons. I consider this is due to the smaller numbers of naïve juveniles who are easily sucked in by them
- My observations when Ranging are that most opening day shooters are not hunters and they have little idea about decoy placement, calling, range estimation, hitting a target or dog control. I would put more than 50% of shooters in this category. Mechanical decoys are essential to enable them to harvest a duck or 2, and many of them have invested significantly in these contraptions. They are unlikely to be happy with a ban.
- I am quite comfortable hunting without them over ponds as would be many real “hunters”, however I would be loath to do without them over public lakes or night shoots on paddocks.
- The number of licence holders is continually reducing as hunters consider they do not get an adequate return on their licence fee. I suspect that banning mechanical decoys will be the last straw for many and that they will refuse to buy a licence. I note that many are already very close to this point after several consecutive poor seasons.
- The bottom line is that we have to sell licences to fund your salary and pay for the research.
- It is unfortunate that ducks have to die to fund the research that might save them!
- I understand that the connection between harvest and population size is not proven, and it seems to me that recruitment and habitat is likely to be a much greater driver.
- The chances of greatly reducing income by banning mechanical decoys is likely to have a much greater effect on population size through reducing management funds than by any effect on harvest amount.

As well as making regulations based on science, it is obviously important that consideration be given to ensuring hunters continue to purchase a licence. I think you would be doing the long-term future of the duck population a grave disservice by banning mechanical decoys.

Dave Malcolm

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Mojos etc.,...we all know how well they work. Our population of young ducks are suckers for them, and when hunting paddocks for a night shoot - they're great. They also can work against you.

I do feel that with all the toys we have now, it's all stacked in our favour, so would be more than happy to give them up.

A.Jespersion.

---

Having read your latest email through I just wanted to state that I am in full agreement with remits put in relating to the ban on mechanical decoys for 2014 season. I feel that they are an un-sporting piece of equipment that has crept into waterfowl hunting and because of their effectiveness they have put we older shooters in an unfair disadvantage of affordability.

Barry Brungar

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Mechanical decoys - Have never used but would expect Hunting & Fishing to be upset to see them go. I would have no issue with a ban.

Russell Easton

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...we want all flapping ducks not to be used especially on maize crops for night shooting etc., a total ban on them and their use.

Dick Featherstone.

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....I am pretty skilled at calling and have no problem getting my ducks but I was staggered to see no ducks circling while the flapper was in my pond, they instead came straight in and landed.

I believe that this is when the dramatic changes occurred and the downfall of our sport began due to the use of flapping decoys. After 2004 which was my best personal season ever at that stage, I remarked to my brother that those flappers had to go and if they didn't the potential duck population would be ruined.

You can see a flapping decoy from 1k away. However when calling a duck upwind you can't call much further than about 100m away and downwind the maximum is approx 600m. The attraction of the visible flapping decoy is outweighed by the ducks ability to hear duck calling, especially on windy days.

By 2012 things were looking grim as there was a hugely reduced base breeding population and there was an increased pressure for ducks to breed and survive.

In my opinion I believe in the past few years most of the juveniles are shot in the first week, which does not say a lot for our sport's future. We need to save the juvenile ducks. We need to ban flappers and other motorised decoys so we can call it a sport again.

I use motorised decoys because I am competing with other shooters who use them. What is needed is a change so that all shooters are bound by the same guidelines for the use of motorised flappers.

Owen Murray.

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Flapping decoys and all mechanical decoys are banned for the first 2 weeks of the season to allow juvenile birds to become aware of their situation, as young birds especially are susceptible to the flapping/mechanical decoys. After the first 2 weekends the number of hunters has reduced.

Daniel McMillan

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The banning of all flapping decoys and all mechanical decoys as juvenile birds are very susceptible to them.

Callum Wells

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Moveable decoys: Restricting the use of these next year would also fall into the very ill-conceived file! Surely they might increase the take of 'first season' ducks but these make up a fair percentage of the opening weekend take anyway as they are more easily decoyed irrespective of the type of decoy used.

Tim McGowan.

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Doesn't support a change to the regulations for motion decoys. Any change would have to be phased in over an extended period.

Greg Steraker.

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I am in favour of banning mechanical and wind operated decoys...

Roy Dench

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And as for mechanical decoys do not touch this regulation, as it may be bridge to for many shooters, people out there have large amounts of money invested in "big boys toys" and

some only a little, it is true some days these decoys help but nothing will get you more ducks than good old fashioned effort. I do not believe that a ban or limit on such decoys will save or create more ducks, it will just upset the bulk of shooters further, and in turn you will sell even less licences which is the last thing we need.

Dave Stack

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These decoys have been on the market for some time, and given the number of people who use them they are obviously effective. I purchased one last year and for the first time in a number of years we had ducks decoy into us. As a result, we shot more ducks this year (albeit I shoot in the Wellington region at opening weekend) than we have in past years. However, we shot on a different spot on the river this year, enabling us to actually get a decoy spread out, and there seemed to be more birds flying, so these factors may all have contributed to the result.

I am not sure of the rationale behind banning mechanical decoys though, just because they may help me to shoot more ducks. The limit where we shoot is 10 ducks - if there are sufficient numbers of ducks for hunters to shoot 10, why would you then try to make it more difficult for them to achieve this. If there aren't sufficient numbers, would it not make more sense to reduce the limit to say 6? Surely limit reductions and season-length reductions are the easiest way to control the harvest, as has been the case in Auckland/Waikato over recent years.

.... you are now proposing to penalise people that have made a financial investment in a mechanical decoy. At what point does it stop? Will we see limits of 10 decoys per hunter brought in, and semis/pumps restricted to 2 shots? I think it is safe to say that without the hunting fraternity there would be significantly less wetlands, so maybe it is time to encourage hunters rather than discourage them.

Brendon Stone

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Mojo,s & Mechanical decoys . pumps etc They are just too successfully, especially on juvenile Birds I have 6 of various types . Band them as they have done in some states in the USA But don't shorten our season

Wayne Turei

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I think the ban of mechanical decoys would be pointless I don't think they are to blame for the low duck numbers.

Drew Robertson

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Yes I agree, ban all mechanical decoys....

Wayne Kirk

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No motion decoys.

...baiting shooting areas and mechanical decoys play a major part in decreased bird numbers. The juvenile birds are attracted to the food and motion decoys.

In conclusion F&G would benefit more from increased licence sales if they gave something back (season length and increased magazine capacity) to the hunters and made minor changes like no motion decoys and maximum decoy numbers.

Shane McGrath

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As far as mechanical decoys if they get banned people will use duck kites and other decoys that move in the wind etc so it will just move the goal posts.

Lance Davis

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Mechanical decoys to be brought back into use as there is no scientific evidence that it is decimating the juvenile duck population.

If this is so then there needs to be a ban on static decoys and duck callers until the population increases.

Neil Francis

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Keep mechanical decoys. Life span of mallard ducks in the wild is 1.5 years so basically all of the ducks we shoot are young, mechanical decoys or not.

Richard McKenzie

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I would fully oppose the banning of mechanical decoys these have been allowed and people have invested a lot of money in them so it is too late to turn around and ban them.

Colin Henderson

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On the issue of banning mechanical decoys for the 2014 game bird season I am against this move as I see it as a kneejerk reaction to something that has been happening over many years (reduced duck population). I would like to see the effects of our reduced season and shotgun magazine limit for another season before resulting to this. I have shot for nearly 40 years in the Auckland Waikato region, and in my opinion the the gradual decline has started since the late 80s.

We have used a mechanical decoy for the last maybe 10 years and we certainly have not seen big bag increase due to it, in fact after opening weekend they seem very wary of them.

Tony Schuller

# Paradise Shelduck Season

## Staff Recommendation

That the longer season for black swans and paradise shelduck, (to the end of June), continue for 2014.

## Staff Comment

We are not aware of any conflict arising between the dabbling duck season ending June 3 in 2013 and the shelduck / swan season extending to June 30th. Shelduck in particular, tend to be shot in open paddocks by those targeting them and this spatial separation ensures little disturbance in wetlands occurs. Few people target swans especially these days. There have been few law enforcement issues over this split season, and those that have occurred tended to involve the same few perpetrators – who were caught. It's probable that, apart from these individuals, that goose hunters create far more disturbance by hunting year round.

## Ward/Club submissions

That the 2014 Gamebird season for Paradise Duck, Dabbling ducks and Swan end at 6.30pm on the Monday of long weekend June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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# Partridge

## Staff Recommendation

That there is an open season for partridge in 2015 with a 10 bird limit. Season length similar to other upland game.

## Staff Comment

Partridge have not been legally hunted in the Auckland/Waikato Region to allow populations to become established by natural recruitment. However this has not occurred, and is no longer considered to be a valid reason for prohibiting harvest.

There is interest by licence-holders in the release of partridge and there is no reason why this should not be encouraged. In addition, partridge released on properties with special conditions will spread out on to other properties where they should be available for harvest.

## Individual submissions

Re the Partridge limit being available for everyone I totally support such a move for council to approve it for the 2015 season and a 10 bird limit.

My rationale behind such being

1. It will encourage hopefully people to rear and release more partridges, however no-one knows about this incentive as of yet so isn't preparing for this coming season. There isn't an abundance of partridges available this season for the public to acquire from the Likes of NZ Gamebirds .
2. I think indicating that this bird will be on the licence from 2015 gives people an incentive to build up stock a year in advance.
3. My rationale for a 10 bird limit is that it would be in common with Bobwhite quail. It is unlikely that anyone will build up a breeding population unless they have a very intensive predator control program, therefore we should allow individuals to maximise harvest of the resource they have created.
4. This is probably selfish however in light that in reality the only two properties releasing partridges will be the two I am involved with, the significant social issues with our application been very public. It would be nice to operate at the SOEL for a season without creating problems. If you liberalise the limit this year, SOEL being new rather than an already existing game bird management area is likely to draw considerable interest from hunters to approach the neighbours to hunt our boundaries. I would hope that you can see merit in us operating for one season

bringing the community along with the project and singing its praises. i.e. how they love seeing the birds about. Rather than getting feedback from neighbours annoyed at people constantly approaching them to hunt their properties.

As I say totally support it and would like to maybe write an article or series of articles “of how too” for the website so that we breed success not failure.

Guy Ralph

# Pukeko

## Staff Recommendation

To include pukeko on as a target species during any special shoots.

## Staff Comment

We have liberalised the season on pukeko and actively promoted hunters to get involved in initiatives to manage populations. Despite this, evidence suggests that localised pukeko populations continue to grow in some areas with few hunters actively targeting them during the open season. To further enable hunters to target pukeko, especially in areas where they cause issues to crops, pukeko could be included as a target species during any special shoots that occur in the Auckland/Waikato Region.

## Individual submissions

The biggest problem is shooters do a lot of moaning about the lack of ducks or pheasants but do not do anything about shooting pukeko and if they do would become very good shots as we have as they make great shooting practice.

The people who own some of these farms look forward to us going every year. I feel “take the protection off the pukeko” as they have become a major enemy to the duck population and no one seems to realise this as they are taking over the territory that ducks once had to themselves.

T J Hulme

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Increase the “limit and season” on Pukekos as they are a predatory bird damaging duck numbers.

Neil Francis

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I feel the season is too long for Pukeko hunting, as hunters are out along our rivers when ducks are paired up and looking to nest.

A. Jespersen.

## Season Length

### Staff Recommendation

3<sup>rd</sup> May to 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014

Given the generally low survival rates and depressed population estimates in the Auckland/Waikato Region there is little justification for an increase in dabbling season length for the 2014 game bird season. Staff recognise that Queen's Birthday is important for hunters and therefore the season should extend to incorporate the Monday of the long weekend.

### Staff Comment

The two main options we have in regards to setting harvest regulations are season length and bag limits. Both options have proven to be relatively blunt tools and ineffective at regulating harvest (McDougall 2012, Klee 2013). Harvest is strongly correlated with hunter effort, but effort does not appear to tightly couple with season length. Hunter effort explains changes in survival better than any other competing models in the Eastern Region (McDougall 2012). Average hunter effort appears to be correlated to population size and is in general decreasing over time in most regions throughout the country. Seeing lots of game birds in their hunting area was viewed as the single most important variable for hunters in the Auckland Waikato Region in the 2012 GBHS. It is likely that in years where population levels are low or hunters experience less success they will hunt less, (the law of diminishing returns) and vice versa.

Despite these issues, season length receives a high level of support in population models. It is impossible to prove unequivocally what effects harvest have on subsequent season populations without randomized and replicated experiments designed to test various hypotheses. It is for this reason that visiting waterfowl biologist Jim Nichols recommended that Fish and Game implement a closed season for a certain region for a set period of time and monitor population response. Not surprisingly there were no volunteers at the time nor do we imagine there would be any today.

Historically season regulations were liberalised to cope with the burgeoning mallard population. At this stage there was a real risk that mallards could be made a pest bird due to the increase. It's fair to say that this would hardly be a relevant argument today. It was also accepted and in fact one of the desired outcomes that increasing the season would impact on mallard productivity. *"When traditionally the season closed on Queens Birthday weekend, every bird that survived almost certainly took part in the subsequent breeding process. Each of these birds is a fit strong bird and all those shot will reduce the breeding population. So in some areas where there is concern about the Mallard population it is eminently sensible to extend the hunting season and so give hunters the opportunity to continue to shoot while at the same time carry out the only reasonable strategy we have available to us to contain or even reduce the population"* (Caithness 1982). Today we are once again faced with concern about the mallard population but unfortunately not in the same context as above.

Caithness (1982) also made the assumption that there was a strong and predictable linear relationship by which a 5% increase in harvest could be attributed to every extra week of season length. As we have shown, changing harvest regulations, the subsequent affect on hunter behaviour and therefore harvest, is fraught with uncertainty (Klee 2011, McDougall 2012). The strong linear relationship Caithness reports is likely due to the bias associated with the harvest surveys of the time, where harvest rates were based on a non-random selection of hunters. If we canvassed only dedicated hunters similar to those used for the earlier analysis it is likely that the same relationship would still be evident today.

When hunters were surveyed for their opinion in the 2010 GBHS the feedback was mixed with a shorter season length being favoured by a small majority over a reduction in bag limits when only given these options. This was further elucidated in the 2011 survey where a reduction in season length was favoured over other regulation changes closely followed by restricting magazine capacity and separate drake and hen limits. In both the 2012 and 2013 GBHS hunters were asked if they supported the reduction in season length to 6 and 4 weeks for each of those respective seasons. In both instances the majority of hunters surveyed supported the changes citing a reduction in mallard numbers as their primary reason.

It is acknowledged that having more birds to shoot is not necessarily what hunters consider most important. Hunter opportunity is also about the social aspect, the wilderness experience and therefore hunter opportunity in regards to a longer season length plays a role.

### **Summary of submissions**

- For a four week season: 11 submissions
- For a longer season: 12 submissions
- For a six week season: 2 submissions
- For a shorter season: 1 submission

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for a four week season**

- The majority of hens have eggs in them in June.
- Leave the limit and season length as is for this coming season, give its effectiveness a chance to show through, duck numbers are down, but I saw an increase in numbers between 2012 and 2013 seasons in the areas I shoot.

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for a longer season**

- No evidence that early pairing up occurs, so a shortened season has no effect on breeding.
- Some hunters don't have the time to get out regularly in a short season.
- The length of season has no relationship to the number of birds taken as most shooters stay longer and shoot more often.

- Only the very keen hunt in the last two weeks of a long season and their harvest is insignificant, and thus reducing the season by 2 weeks has very little effect on the overall population.
  - A 6 week season sounds better value for the high cost of a licence.
  - For guys that shoot on tidal areas , it can be only once a fortnight that the Tide is suitable So they didn't get value for money paid
  - There wasn't time to take out non shooters/kids & Introduce them to our sport Thus limiting growth in shooter number
  - In some years there no rain until June I would rather have a limit of 6 and the season two months long. Better shooting conditions in June.
  - I think if you keep making changes people will just give up because it's an expensive sport and to spend a lot of money on a month long season it's not worth it.
- 

### **Ward/Club submissions**

That the 2014 Game bird season for Paradise Duck, Dabbling ducks and Swan end at 6.30pm on the Monday of long weekend June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

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**Individual submissions**

Would prefer a longer season and lower limits, knows hunters who are thinking of quitting due to short season.

John Witty

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Season length: 4 weeks this year was too short. I suggest 6 weeks for 2014 as your stats prove most harvest occurs on opening weekend. No early pairing up occurred this year nor where ducklings seen even during July and August on the many farms I hunt pheasants on. These farms are often farms that I hunt ducks on so a shortened season had no effect on breeding.

Steve Dickson.

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Keep the season lengths the same as the 2013 gamebird season.

Roger Buchanan.

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The season itself is a point of conjecture why enable to let parries be shot longer than mallards when they live in the same environment bloody stupid keep them the same. it will be interesting to see if there are more ducks around with last season being shorter there might be less ducks around in some areas but ask hunters down on SI irrigated farms and they will tell you there are shitloads more down there than they used to have[have wings will fly].

Greg Straker

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The season opening and closing dates for waterfowl hunting shall remain as 2013, ie 1 month only.

Another thought is if the numbers are significantly reduced due to all the issues raised in the draft copy why not cancel a season, ie let's not hunt 2014 but hunt 2015?

Serge Kingi

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We live in Auckland and don't have the time to get out regularly over a shortened period.

Neil McDonald

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Harvest we need research, and we need hunter support, the short season has worked, I don't know if I agree that hunters have increased pressure, all the staunch hunters I know hunted nearly every day regardless of the length of the season.

Richard Radonich

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For me personally I do not know one Hunter who is/was in favour of reducing the season length and as mentioned in the email we tried to get out as much as possible, but 4 weeks is simply a joke and with all the time and money that is invested each season I know guys who have said they probably won't bother next season if it is still only 4 weeks.

Troy

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I think bag limits and season length modifications make some sense (obviously subject to verification through research).

Peter Merton

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It seemed to me to be a bit of nonsense this season to have a 4 week season and 10 bird limit. I can't see how that numbers wise would conserve the ducks. I know the F&G's purpose is to assist in the saving / creating wetlands and also retaining hunters in the sport. Their licences fund F&G. I can remember back when I first started duck shooting there was a 10 bird limit and a 2 week season. Lets no go back there.

John Rehm

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I would prefer to see the May / June – 8 week duck shooting season, with duck limits set at a sustainable limit.

Colin Munro

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Shortening the hunting time meant that to get the benefit of the \$90 odd dollars we paid we went out every weekend hunting, something we hadn't done in the past. With the short season we concentrated our hunting.

Jim Coe

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Revert to a 2 week, 3 weekend shooting season for 3 years.

Lawrence Kovaleski  
Reuben Kovaleski

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I feel that the length of season had no relation to the number of birds taken as I saw shooters staying longer and shooting more days.

Mike Billett

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I support a shorter season and lower take, and think council should limit the number of mallard hens to no more than 50% of the daily bag.

Ian Bailey

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Personally, I like the longer season. I get more enjoyment out of going more often and only shooting a couple of ducks at a time. But if shorter season lengths are required for the duck population, I support it.

Vaughan Martin

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I am sure most hunters are happy with a shortened season if preseason duck numbers dictate, however I wonder how many ducks are shot in the 2 weeks after Queens Birthday (6 week season). I believe that only the very keen hunt in this time and that the take is probably so insignificant that reducing the season by these 2 weeks has very little effect on the overall population. A 6 week season sounds better value for the high cost of a licence.

Tim McGowan.

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Supports the short season length but it should include the Monday of Queen's Birthday

Greg Steraker.

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For some years now I have been concerned with the length of the shooting season, we have refrained from shooting ducks in June and concentrating on drakes, the majority of ducks have eggs in them in June and so reducing the length of the season was a good move.

Roy Dench

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Being out all season it is very apparent to me that, most birds are taken over the opening period, as it is most common that after the opening week there are no other shooters about or within earshot of me anywhere I hunt. It is on this basis that I can comfortably state that

the idea that a shorter season makes shooters go harder is simply false, as I'm out there and no one else is.

In conclusion I would like say leave the limit and season length as is for this coming season, give its effectiveness a chance to show through, duck numbers are down, but I saw an increase in numbers between 2012 and 2013 seasons in the areas I shoot.

Dave Stack

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Shortening our season was also considered to be a detrimental step

Several things happened

1/ because the season was short they concentrated on shooting more often to get their money's worth from the licence & their wives accepted that it was a short season so pressure did come on them to stay home for the weekend & Garden or take the kids to football etc

2/ For guys that shoot on tidal areas , it can be only once a fortnight that the Tide is suitable So they didn't get value for money paid

3/ There wasn't time to take out non shooters & Introduce them to our sport Thus limiting growth in shooter number

4/ Time to introduce our Younger kids to our sport & the outdoors . Shooting is the excuse to get away for the weekend

Mallards are randy all year round To me to stir them up & delaying their breeding will ensure Ducklings hatch when there is an abundance of spring food around & the risk of getting frozen by frost has passed So don't Shorten our season

Wayne Turei

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I think the season should be put back to two months as well because some years there no rain until June I would rather have a limit of 6 and the season two months long. I think if you keep making changes people will just give up because its a expensive sport and to spend a lot of money on a month long season it not worth it.

Drew Robertson

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Six week season. Starting on the first Saturday in May 2014.

I don't believe that a short season or a decrease in magazine capacity has impacted on the duck harvest or population.

The game bird harvest survey shows that the reduction in season length gives the average hunter more determination to hunt more.

In conclusion F&G would benefit more from increased licence sales if they gave something back (season length and increased magazine capacity) to the hunters and made minor changes like no motion decoys and maximum decoy numbers.

Shane McGrath

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Numbers wise 8 ducks per day for the first two days then 6 ducks there after would be my suggestion. With a season that was 6 weekends long. With all the effort and cost of duck shooting hunters want to be able to shoot a reasonable bag of ducks and have time to get out during the season. With work commitments and social functions if the season is to short then some hunters might only get out for two or three weekends.

Lance Davis

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Season length needs to be at least 7 weeks/8 weekends. In a usual year we get our rising water after 21 June. A longer season gives people a better chance of getting out more rather than a couple of times and being able to take advantage of better shooting conditions that we don't often get in May.

Richard McKenzie

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Last season's one month season was too short for myself and my son , but if this is what it takes to rebuild the population then am totally for it. Would rather have the bag limit cut than shorten season any more.

Tony Schuller

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Supports a reduction in season length (comprehensive submission)

R Gaston

# Shoveler Duck

## Staff Recommendation

That the length of the shoveler season and limits should not change.

## Staff Comment

Shoveler ducks are monitored in all 12 Fish & Game regions by a national trend count involving a large number of F&G personal and volunteers counting many different sites right across NZ over the same period each year. The results are collected, tabulated and published by Matthew McDougall of Eastern Region and these are available for anyone to read. The NZ shoveler, or spoonbill as it is also known, is a wide-ranging species that banding studies have shown flies the length of NZ. As such, its numbers may be down in one region but the same birds 100's of kilometres away in another. The overall trend of this 12 years monitoring programme has been essentially a steady population with a slight upward trend.

## Individual submissions

Take spoonies off the game list and protect them (I see more grey teal than spoonies!)

Vaughan Martin  
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Also have shoveler ducks limited to one drake per day per hunter.

Daniel McMillan  
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I would also like to see the hunting of drakes only in mallards and shovelers, to help boost breeding hen numbers.

Callum Wells  
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## Sub-gauges (steel shot)

### Staff Recommendation

No change for the 2014 game bird hunting season, however, the potential for a move to non-toxic shot in sub gauges continues to be critically evaluated.

### Staff Comment

This issue has previously been voted on by council and the following motion was carried “that licence holders in the Auckland/Waikato Region be asked during the annual game bird harvest survey for their opinion as to whether a ban on the use of lead in sub-gauge shotguns be introduced”. Accordingly, during the 2013 GBHS the following question was asked of hunters “Should the use of lead shot when hunting waterfowl within 200m of open water be banned for all other gauges of shotgun as it currently is for 10 and 12 gauge users.” (Table 1). Note that the results have been split into sub gauge and 12 gauge users.

**Table 1:** 12 gauge and sub gauge user responses when asked whether they supported a ban on lead shot for sub gauges as is currently the case for 12 and 10 gauge users.

12 gauge, n = 110			Sub gauge n = 14		
Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
35	56	9	21	71	7

### Ward/Club submissions

We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

### Individual submissions

Ensure sub gauge guns are still allowed to use lead, so young shooter ( the future of our sport ) can take part at a reasonable cost.

Roger Buchanan.

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... stop steel shot( it takes 3 ducks to die for everyone we pick up and I am sure they also die).

Neil McDonald

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Steel shot is another matter. I believe that using steel shot in NZ is a copout to the non shooting public who don't like the sport, don't understand it and don't want to! In the Auck / Waikato area I don't believe that there is / was many ducks lost to lead poisoning. As you say there has been a steady decline in the duck population not reflected in the bags being taken. Maybe that is due to the poor performance of steel shot. Both my son and I use 20g guns very successfully in our type of shooting. They have their limitations. Our bags are achieved by good decoy spreads, good calling and good shooting using lead shot. I have witnessed ducks being hit 2 and 3 times by my son using a 12 g and steel shot and continue to fly away and he is a very good shot! That is not good for the ducks, the hunter or for the general public perception. I would strongly resist the proposal to introduce lead shot to 20g guns for that reason.

John Rehm

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The sub gauge regulations should stay in place as they are now. Both our young sons are keen to hunt with us and steel shot is not as effective in the sub gauges.

I use a 20g and find that steel loads are just too much for me. My husband likes steel shot in his 12g.

Colleen Cooling

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Furthermore I support the continued rule for sub gauge shotguns to be exempt from having to use non-toxic shot. As a lot of youth run the smaller gauges and need all the weight behind their shells

Daniel McMillan

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## Swan

### Swan: limit/season length Waikato

#### Staff Recommendation

Unless there is a substantial increase in the black swan count the limits should remain at 1.

#### Staff Comment

Swan limits and Season Length will be finalised post trend counts in the New Year. Some areas within the north Waikato appear to be experiencing a small increase in Black Swan populations which is pleasing, but it should be noted that total counts are still well below historical levels.

### Swan: limit/season length Auckland

#### Staff Recommendation

Maintain the Manukau Harbour black swan limit at 20. Reduce the Kaipara Harbour and north of the Harbour Bridge limit to 5. These numbers to be confirmed following this summer's aerial swan counts.

#### Staff Comment

Swan counts done by Northland Manager Rudi Hoetjes in the northern part of our region, (Kaipara Harbour and surrounds), pointed to a substantial drop in swan numbers last summer. Where the flocks of swan are on the harbour depends on such facts as which way the wind is blowing and how hard, and so it's possible that large numbers of birds could have been tucked up in a bay somewhere that was outside the counted area, (the Kaipara is, after all, a very large harbour). However Rudi is reasonably confident that he would have seen them even if that were the case and this year our staff will assist with concurrent ground checks. If same aerial count flight this year comes up with a similar result, we'd have to conclude that black swan numbers there have taken a dive.

Some of these birds may have moved to the Manukau Harbour, where the Auckland Airport authorities this year had a large cull in the immediate vicinity of the international airport in the interests of aircraft and passenger safety. The limit on black swan is currently 20 birds per day, per hunter, in this northern area, including both those harbours named. It may be that we need to look at keeping a liberal limit for the Manukau Harbour so that recreational hunters can take advantage of the numbers there, rather than leave these birds to be shot by professional cullers. However the Kaipara Harbour limit may need to be reduced proportionate to the decline being experienced there.

**Ward/Club submissions**

The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

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That the 2014 Gamebird season for Paradise Duck, Dabbling ducks and Swan end at 6.30pm on the Monday of long weekend June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

That the limit for swan in 2014 increase to 2 birds per day.

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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We believe that the swan population is so low and having a limit of only 1 bird that it should also finish at the same time as the duck season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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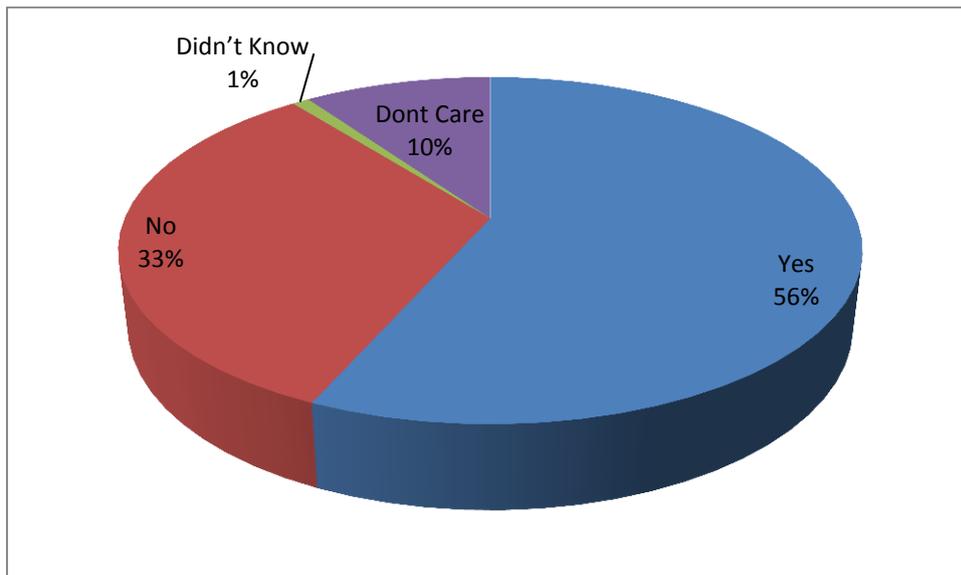
## Three shots

### Staff Recommendation

Continue with 3- shot restriction, particularly given that the majority of hunters in both the GBHS and written submissions supported the change.

### Staff Comment

There are a number of reasons why restricting shot may be beneficial, particularly on public land where shooting pressure and hunter density is high. Restricting the number of shots available to hunters is not likely to have a major impact on overall harvest, instead the goals should be reducing the level of disturbance and likelihood of shooting at game once out of effective killing range and hence decreasing crippling loss rates. Whilst the onus should be on hunters to restrict their shooting to acceptable ranges unfortunately, the behaviour that is witnessed in the field indicates that the voluntary approach is not working. Whilst ranging, particularly on opening weekend, we regularly witness maimais unleash a full barrage of shots at birds that are at the edge of a hunters range and continue to fire until birds are over 100 yards away. Apart from having a quiet word to the people involved there is little rangers can do in regards to enforcement action. Sky busting and unleashing a hail of steel at birds out of range is the number 1 complaint we receive from hunters whilst out in the field and shot restrictions also ranked highly on the relative level of support when hunters were canvassed during the 2011 GBHS. Hunter opinion regarding the new 3-shot restriction was canvassed in the 2013 game bird harvest survey (figure 1), with 56% of respondents being in favour of the new regulation.



**Figure 1:** Hunter response when asked if they supported the new 3-shot restriction for the 2013 season. 2013 GBHS, n = 118.

### **Summary of submissions**

- For limiting to three shots: 14 submissions (includes 3 club submissions)
- Against limiting to three shots: 7 submissions
- For limiting to five shots: 1 submission

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders for three shots**

- Shooters take more care with their shots... less wounded birds with long range last shots.
- Regulations were relaxed as the duck population declined.

### **Summary of arguments by licence-holders against limiting to three shots**

- Couldn't finish off wounded ducks that were then lost.
- Reducing the season length and limit should be adequate.
- Licence holders were forced to buy modern guns that were capable of using steel shot and thus they should be allowed to use them to their full magazine capacity.
- No evidence that harvest affects duck numbers.
- Difficult to police in back country areas.
- It's nice to have the extra shots available when that big flight of geese comes in.
- Such regulations should only be imposed if NZ wide.
- F&G would benefit more from increased licence sales if they gave something back (season length and increased magazine capacity) to the hunters and made minor changes like no motion decoys and maximum decoy numbers.

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### **Ward/Club submissions**

That shotguns be plugged to hold no more than 3 shots in total.

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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We are happy with the status quo for the gamebird regulations with the exception of swan season.

William Howard  
Secretary  
Franklin Acclimatisation Society

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The Cocks Wetland Society support the regulations for the 2014 game bird season to remain the same as those gazetted for the 2013 game bird season.

K.M. Lafferty  
Secretary  
The Cocks Wetland Society Inc.

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### **Individual submissions**

3 shots: Totally agree with 3 shots – suggest keeping the same in years ahead.

Steve Dickson.

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Regarding the limiting of multi action guns to 3 shots last season, it is my belief that that this will have little or no effect of helping the duck population to recover.

It would be nice to have the extra shots available when that big flight of geese comes in.

By contrast (because I live rurally) I personally know a number of duck hunters who almost exclusively hunt small ponds on private property. These guys do not care about regulations as they know they are unlikely to ever be confronted by a ranger and openly laughed at the idea of pinning their semi autos. When jump shooting on small ponds it is often possible to use the entire magazine of 5 shots as they are flushing out small groups of ducks at close range.

Jim Norman

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Another thing to add might be the reduction to only 3 cartridges, which I initially did not see as to much of an issue. But it ended up in the loss of one mallard and 2x Canada Geese as we couldn't finish them off (especially the geese) before the current took them out of range and the dogs couldn't track them down.

Not sure if others experienced this at all.

Troy Balderston

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I won't beat around the bush. F&G allowed us to use feeders, mechanical decoys and multi shot shotguns. Auckland F&G are now introducing restrictions to there use along with reduced open seasons and bag limits. Surely the reduced bag limit and shorter season is sufficient. I invested heavily in feeders, decoys etc. Are you going to re-imburse me ----Yeah right !!!

Chris Brennan

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...the limitation of number of shots seems a little unfair. Several years ago, lead shot over water was banned, leading to steel shot as its replacement. Most of the traditional guns could not take steel shot, so new guns had to be purchased....many (probably the majority) were capable of more than 3 shots. This cost the hunting community a substantial amount of money, and to then turn around a couple of years later and basically render these guns "outlawed" (I accept not quite outlawed) seems ill conceived, and if the thinking is along the lines of the words in this years hunting booklet that duck hunting must not become elitist or something, then I think Fish and Game are stepping way outside their remit.

Peter Merton

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In response to your email, I personally do not use mechanical decoys but the idea of banning them is just as pathetic as limiting shotguns to 3 shots and stopping those that can bothered feeding ponds prior to opening, these sort of measures are only a token gesture doing nothing to increase the Duck population.

Glen Butts

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The 3 shot rule should stay in place for at least 5 years.

Colleen Cooling

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The restriction to a maximum 3 shots I believe has been a good move...

Colin Munro

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In my view, F & G have followed a disastrous course in recent years.

As habitat and ducks have become less and less, you have made the means of attracting and killing them easier and easier.

Then you allowed multiple-shot automatic shotguns.

As ducks became fewer, you progressively made these adverse regulation-changes so that ducks were easier to attract and easier to kill/wound.

So Yes, ban powered decoys, electronic callers, recordings, pond-feeders, and multi-shot magnum automatic shotguns.

Warwick Thompson

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Last year the reduction to 3 shots was a good move.

Jim Coe

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I have taken up duck shooting again in the last 3-4 yrs.after an absense of 30 odd yrs.As my old shotgun could not fire steel i bought a semi-auto 20#,now i can only have 3 shots,also have a few motorized decoys of different types,now i hear they might be banned !!!! What does it matter if there is a limit,That is the problem you have,you cannot control as there many ponds on private property/out of the way places.We listened to many of the guns going off and a lot where not pinned.!! I have just bought a excavator to make a pond,but i'm wondering if its worth it if the reg's keep changing.My total duck kill this seson, O, my son in-law 1, Yet i hear of some shooters getting 100's. I'm an ex-commercial fisherman from THAMES and there used to be hundreds of birds around the waihou & piako river mouths during duck season,this year we went out on the second w/end,not a duck in sight.!!!

Nigel Hanmore

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3 shot rule is good - keep it. Means shooters take more care with their shots... less wounded birds with long range last shots.

Vaughan Martin

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I commend you on going to 3 shots...

Bert Laing

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Restricting shotguns to 3 shots does nothing to regulate the take and simply puts pressure on warrant holders when conducting shooter checks as well creating agro with licence holders who have upgraded to expensive new autos.

Tim Mcgowan.

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Doesn't support the 3 shot restriction, but not a major concern. However strongly believes that any regulation should be NZ-wide

Greg Steraker.

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I'd be ok with limiting guns to two Shots, Autos have stuffed up a lot of shooting with sky Busters, Ok for the commercial guys But I have observe a lot of birds get hit by the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> shot at the limit of steels Range & they gone on to fall out of the sky a mile away never to be recovered.

Wayne Turei

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Maximum of 5 shot automatic shot guns.

I don't believe that a short season or a decrease in magazine capacity has impacted on the duck harvest or population.

I do believe that Fish & Game need to be seen to giving a little back to the hunter as well as taking a little to save the ducks.

In conclusion F&G would benefit more from increased licence sales if they gave something back (season length and increased magazine capacity) to the hunters and made minor changes like no motion decoys and maximum decoy numbers.

Shane McGrath

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Keep magazine capacity of 3 shots or more. Remember if you start banning auto shotguns and it will become the beginning of the end for all semi-automatic guns. Police, government bodies and anti-gun lobbysts are all waiting for a chance, don't let us be the ones to get this ball rolling.

Richard McKenzie

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I also endorse the 3 shot limit. I myself think that the open magazine policy we have had for so long has been a big factor in our decline in bird numbers (along with waterway collapse). Even in my early years of hunting when birds were plentiful I was only allowed 2 shots with my first semi auto before laws were relaxed to give 3 shots.

Tony Schuller

# Upland Game Shooting Season

## Staff Recommendation

That the upland game and pukeko seasons for the May to August period remain unchanged.

## Staff Comment

The present upland game season in this region is four months long. This also allows hunters to control pukeko in that period, to reduce the number that are left to steal eggs and kill ducklings. We're not aware of any direct conflict of the extended upland season with waterfowl interests. It's called 'upland hunting' because in many cases, it is in fact in the uplands – the hills in other words. While staff once witnessed a pointer catch a breeding duck in the upland seasons, it's also fair to say that the surprising number of cats found and killed in these walks much offsets these occasional incidents – which of course hunters are careful to avoid happening again. Our gamebird hunter surveys would suggest that only the keenest of hunters persist in these later months and the potential for such conflict is therefore small.

Ward/Club submissions

That the Upland game season length and bag limits for 2014 remain the same as previous year.

Auckland/Waikato Ward 3  
Andrew Kerr

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## Individual submissions

Cut upland game shooting back to end of July. If you are worried about disturbing pairing ducks, pheasant hunting around swamps and rivers in August is not ideal.

Richard McKenzie