

CONSERVATION & HUNTING

ISSUE 12 – SEPTEMBER 2018

2018 politician clay target shoot

VICTORIAN ELECTION: Our policy stocktake

Wetlands are kings of carbon capture

Don't ignore history at Tower Hill

60 Years of hunter conservation

Field & Game Australia (FGA) have had a busy year so far and will be equally busy for the remainder of the year, including celebrating our 60th birthday.

We appointed a new CEO, Richard Light and one of his first priorities was to prepare for a Duck Season with significant changes to the Regulations and the need to get a clear message out to all hunters to ensure they "hunt with Respect".

We were all very pleased with the results.

We are now preparing for our 60th anniversary of the formation of FGA, to be celebrated in October, and our National Carnival in November.

This is the premier clay target event in Australia and will be held at our Bairnsdale Branch which boasts marvellous new facilities thanks to the Victorian government Shooting Sports Facilities Program (SSFP). It means we can raise the bar and allow more competitors than ever before.

The district will benefit from hosting more than 600 competitors and support staff for the two day Carnival.

The other big item for the end of the year is, of course, the Victorian State election. FGA, The Australian Deer Association, Sporting Shooters Association Australia and Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia will be working closely together to ensure that the issues of concern to us are brought

to the attention of those seeking election.

There are 5 major issues:

- public land access; a number of VEAC investigations and other campaigns are underway in Victoria. We would like a commitment that there will be no changes in land tenure which would result in any loss of access for hunters
- Victorian Game Management Authority: realign and resource GMA so that it can work efficiently and effectively for community benefit;
- Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee: recall and reaffirm the role of the VFCC in ensuring regulations reflect and uphold community standards of safety and security;
- waterfowl harvest; legislated sustainable waterfowl seasons and associated cultural practices.
- sports funding; a commitment to continue the successful Shooting Sports Facilities Program at similar levels (13.48M from 2014/2018)

The three main activities of FGA are hunting, conservation and clay target shooting. For hunting we require sustainable game bird populations, and land on which to hunt. Clay target shooting requires land, facilities and firearms for our members.

All of these things are controlled or influenced by government legislation and regulations, and hence we spend

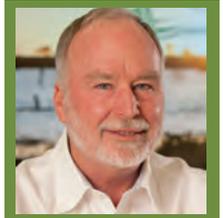
a great deal of our time working with government. Conservation is usually the one area where we do not require political assistance. However, this is no longer the case.

The WET Trust property at the Heart Morass outside Sale has been contaminated by PFAS runoff from the RAAF East Sale. Although the EPA has been given extended powers under recent Victorian legislation, it has no power to make an order against a Commonwealth body, such as the Department of Defence.

Defence has released a large Management Plan (128-pages), which can be condensed down to four actions :-

- continue to employ consultants to produce voluminous reports
- put concrete caps over the worst areas on the RAAF Base
- initiate a study of the drainage system (hopefully to stop material leaving the site, but when?)
- continue to advise affected neighbours of how much, if any, meat they should consume from animals on their properties (i.e. ducks and fish for us)

Needless to say, we do not draw any comfort from this.



Bill Paterson
Field & Game
Australia chairman

Mixed bag for Tasmanian hunting

In mixed news for Tasmanian game hunters the Hodgman government has delivered on establishing deer hunting in National Parks, a new Game Services Tasmania Unit in the bureaucracy and a new independent advisory forum—the Tasmanian Game Council, but it has abandoned its pre-election commitment to firearm law reform.

Primary Industries Minister Sarah Courtney has unveiled plans to have hunters in parks as soon as February 2019 in order to "...provide opportunities for appropriately licensed and registered shooters to hunt wild fallow deer in national parks, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, conservation areas, regional reserves and all game reserves".

Recreational hunting permits will be limited to designated areas away from those areas frequented by visitors and will be informed by the state-wide deer population census.

In another major step forward, members of the Tasmanian Game Council have also been announced. The Council will be the peak body providing advice to the Minister on delivering Quality Deer Management in Tasmania, management of game and browsing animals, and deer farming matters. It will be chaired by former Western Tiers MLC Greg Hall.

There will be 11 other members with skills and experience in a range of areas such as hunting and game animal management, commercial farming and grazing management, deer farming, natural resource management, private land conservation, public land management, meat processing and value-adding.

In far less positive news, the Hodgman government has completely capitulated on its pre-election commitment to make sensible reforms to firearm licensing and administration. The proposed changes were clear and unambiguous and were provided to stakeholders in writing.

The first sign of trouble was when the changes were referred to a Legislative Council committee for an inquiry. Our clear fear at this stage was that the government were looking for a way to walk back on their promises following pressure from a small but vocal anti-firearm lobby.

Notwithstanding our concerns we diligently prepared a detailed submission for the inquiry only to be notified in the days before hearings were scheduled to commence that the government had dropped the charade and given in to the bullies, abandoning their promises altogether—it is difficult to recall such a swift and decisive betrayal of a clear commitment by a government and it will be difficult for the Tasmanian Liberals to now regain the trust of shooters. If you cannot believe their written words what can you believe?



David Voss
Australian Deer
Association national
president



Field and Game Australia inc.
65 Anzac Avenue (PO Box 464), Seymour, Victoria, 3661
www.fieldandgame.com.au
(03) 5799 0960 ceo@fieldandgame.com.au



Australian Deer Association
PO Box 299, Warragul, Victoria, 3820
www.austdeer.asn.au
(03) 9111 0102 eo@austdeer.asn.au

Broken promise a betrayal of trust

A few weeks before March's Tasmanian election the Police Minister wrote to Tasmanian shooters outlining the Hodgman government's commitments should they be re-elected.

The promises were common sense, appropriate, clear and unambiguous. They included—

- establishment of a Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council
- improving the interaction between Firearms Services (FAS) and firearms owners—and higher service levels
- establishing a new Tasmanian competition shooting range
- broader firearms training and testing provisions
- extending periods of licences
- addressing infringement notices for minor storage offences
- finalising an MOU between the Government, Tasmania Police and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
- clarifying requirements for responsible firearms owners

The document went on to state that:

“Only a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government can deliver on this policy. Single interest, or limited interest parties, will not be in any position to deliver any meaningful change for the law-abiding firearms owning community. Neither will Labor as they will need to be in partnership with the anti-firearms Greens in order to form a Government”

The Government was re-elected with a clear majority, and the Greens were reduced to a solitary seat.

At a press conference two days later, when the Premier was asked if he had a mandate to deliver all of the policies he had taken to the election, he responded with a simple “yes”

In the wake of the election victory the media campaign against the firearm policy intensified, the common thread being a proposition that the proposed changes would somehow contravene the National Firearms Agreement (NFA).

No evidence was proffered to support this charge. Nor was the fact that then Federal Justice Minister Michael Keenan clearly advised that the NFA is non-binding, having previously stated:

“It is up to the states and territories to determine whether, and how, they will regulate firearms in accordance with the

updated agreement.”

Nevertheless, just a couple of weeks after the election the new Police Minister, Michael Ferguson, announced that the Government would be kicking their firearms policy up to the Legislative Council (a house it does not control) for an inquiry.

In the interim, several excellent submissions were prepared for the inquiry. The Australian Deer Association believes that the evidence which would come out from the inquiry would make it impossible for the Hodgman government to do anything other than stick to their promises.

However, in August, just a few days after the deadline for submissions closed and before any public hearings could be held or submissions published online the Hodgman government announced that it would “not progress the previously announced firearms law proposals and will review firearms policy after consideration of the recommendations from the Committee”

Not surprisingly, given that the Committee was established specifically to examine the Government's proposed reforms, it has decided that it has nothing to do.

What the Hodgman government needs to do now is muster the integrity and the political will to fulfil its promises and not kowtow to a few vocal bullies.

Hunter numbers growing

Victoria's Game Management Authority (GMA) has released a report on game licensing statistics showing a 72 per cent increase in all game hunting since 1996.

The report updates licensing statistics across all permit types to June 2017.

Over the same 20-year period, the biggest increase was in deer hunters (365 per cent), quail (16 per cent) and duck (10 per cent).

The majority of Game Licence holders predominantly hunt a single species of game with 23 015 (43 per cent) only hunting deer and a further 14 703 (28 per cent) only

hunting duck. The remaining 29 per cent of licence holders hunt a combination of game species.

The number of duck entitlement holders has fluctuated over the years depending on the season, but even in the four years where the duck season was cancelled (1995, 2003, 2007, 2008) multi-year entitlements ranged between 17 156 in 1995 and 19 141 in 2008.

The majority of licence holders across all categories (62 per cent) currently hold a long-term entitlement.

The licensing data indicates there is no significant drop-off in hunter numbers in years where reductions in bag limits and/or species are imposed, a reflection of the

passion duck hunters possess.

Hunter effort during the season may change to suit the conditions, but the desire to participate doesn't wane even when opportunity is limited.

Duck hunter numbers increased from 25 646 in 2016 (a restricted season) to 26 357 as of June 30, 2017, a rise of 2.77 per cent.

The GMA data shows that hunting of all types is male dominated, and duck hunting has the lowest female participation rate of 1.8 per cent.

While the base is low, female hunter numbers are growing slowly (up 0.3 per cent from 2016) and more importantly for the future of hunting, that growth has been predominantly in the 10–17 age group (25 per cent) and 18–25 age group (12.6 per cent).

Female participation in deer hunting grew a healthy 28 per cent in the year to June 2017.

Year on year the number of junior duck hunters aged 10–17 increased 3.4 per cent while the 18–27 category rose only slightly. Deer continues to attract youth with a 20.6 per cent rise in the number of 10–17-year-old licence holders in the year to June 2017, and a 14.7 per cent rise in the 18–27 year-old category.



Game Management Authority

Organisations such as Field & Game Australia and the Australian Deer Association argued for years for the need for a statutory game authority and opposed from the beginning the role of the GMA being limited to that of a regulator.

Both organisations are committed to working with government and the GMA to ensure that the GMA is able to meet the expectations of the Victorian community and of game hunters.

A 2018 joint paper developed by FGA, ADA and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia raised concerns about the GMA's ability to effectively enforce the Wildlife (Game) Regulations, staff turnover, the Authority's limited role and its isolation from

the departments with responsibility for land management.

The latest game licence data for Victoria again shows strong growth driven particularly by the rise in popularity of deer hunting. The economic, social and environmental benefits of growth in hunting can't be overstated, and it highlights, more than ever, the need for a strong, well-resourced, and empowered GMA that regulates and promotes hunting.



Fast facts

- The GMA could more accurately be titled the Game Regulation Authority; because unlike the Victorian Fisheries Authority created by the Andrews government, it has no role in promoting and developing hunting.
- The GMA's sole role as regulator is at odds with the fundamental principle of the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan that: "Victorians will gain from growing the economic, environmental and social benefits of responsible, sustainable and safe hunting, now and into the future."
- GMA needs a broader scope, more resources and a true mandate to manage game and game reserves in Victoria based on the same model as the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

Shooting Sports

Field & Game Australia branches conduct around 100 competitive clay target events every month at more than 50 shooting grounds.

Australian Simulated Field originated as a way for hunters to maintain their marksmanship out of season but for many competitors it is their primary pursuit.

The Victorian Government Shooting Sports Facilities Program provided \$12.48 M

(2014–2016) and a further \$1M (2017–18) to increase access and opportunities for participation in shooting sports, improve the quality of facilities and ensure the long-term viability of shooting sports in Victoria.



Fast facts

- SSFP grants have successfully delivered significant infrastructure and equipment to FGA branches
- These investments have improved access, facilities, the quality of competition and safety at shooting grounds
- The SSFP is highly valued and further rounds are desirable
- There is significant scope for growth in female participation in Australian Simulated Field and for the use of shooting grounds as a base for youth engagement and education on the safe use of firearms. FGA branches have run successful school competitions for more than 50 years
- Shooting grounds continue to face the challenges of encroaching urban development and contamination.

Water for wetlands

Victoria has many wetlands which are recognised for their environmental significance and 12 are listed under Ramsar.

They are important environmentally, absorbing pollutants (wetlands are far more effective at carbon storage than rain forests) and improving water quality, acting as a

buffer in times of flood and supporting a diversity of life that in many cases is found nowhere else.

Fast facts

Field & Game Australia has argued for a systems approach to management with the aims of:

- healthy habitat
- mosaic of cover and food sources
- optimised (timing, delivery) to enhance breeding opportunities and vegetation growth
- creation of 'edge' and a variety of habitat (banks, shallows, protected areas, deeper areas)
- avoiding creating isolated oases bordered by man-made boundaries that create sanctuary for predators or make it easy for predators to hunt
- availability of nesting structures
- shelter for new broods to successfully hatch and emerge from nests
- active predator management programs to control numbers
- monitoring—ecological health, improved biodiversity, breeding success and predator control.

Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2016–2020

After a slow start this whole of government policy is now having a tangible, positive impact on hunting in Victoria.

SHAP is a \$5.3million investment that supports and guides the game hunting industry's long-term growth.

The approach is to ensuring the long-term sustainability of hunting in Victoria through practical actions that maximise benefits for the environment, the

economy, and the whole Victorian community.

The impact of SHAP can be seen not only in the direct actions, but also in the recognition of the economic, social and environmental value of recreational hunting in policy and management plans.

Fast facts

FGA and ADA support the continued implementation of SHAP through to 2020 including;

- promoting responsible hunting
- growing hunting's benefits
- improving hunting opportunities
- ensuring sustainable hunting

- facilitate game meat processing

Work should commence in 2019 to audit the progress of SHAP to ensure all practical measures are deliverable by 2020. A new set of goals should be developed with key stakeholders including FGA and ADA for a 2021–2025 SHAP.



Game bird research

The peak for scientific research into Australian game birds was reached in the middle of last century. Sustainable hunting requires a parallel research program to help us better understand distribution, abundance and recruitment of game species.

Significant technological advances place us in a much better position to track and monitor dynamic wild populations than we were in the 1950s and 1960s when the doyen of waterfowl research Harry Frith would climb a suitable tree and spend hours observing ducks.



Fast facts

The Sustainable Hunting Action Plan includes a strategy for research, monitoring, and evaluation including;

- a game species research strategy to better understand the distribution, abundance and recruitment of game species and the impact of hunting activity has been developed
- researching land and habitat management techniques to benefit native game species
- tagging, banding and monitoring game to better understand movements and breeding cycles
- assessing relationships between hunting seasons and local ecosystems around hunting reserves
- implementing a Waterfowl Conservation Harvest Model to ensure the sustainable management of game ducks.

Hunter conservationists already contribute to annual habitat assessments, bird counts and nesting support for game ducks and for more than a decade have contributed head and wing samples to a research project into movement, health and inter-breeding of game duck species. Hunters are motivated and willing to contribute to research projects.

Fast facts

- Work must continue to build on the audit of SGRs, which found 69 per cent did not have a management plan, and many had issues with signage, access, encroachment, pest animals, invasive weeds, and fuel loads.
- The results of the Audit reinforce the suspicion of hunters that Parks Victoria and the Environment Department at best have no empathy for hunting and at worst are antagonistic towards it. Parks Victoria should be relieved of responsibility for the management and administration of SGRs.
- SGRs support threatened species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998. Hunter conservationists value these reserves as habitat for all creatures.
- 18 SGRs are listed under the Ramsar Convention which recognises the important role of the sustainable use of wildlife resources at these sites.
- Cultural values should not be hijacked as means for activists to prevent hunting on SGRs. 79 per cent of SGRs sit within an area of Aboriginal cultural significance because for 35 000 years, wetlands were an important place for indigenous hunting and ceremony.
- SHAP includes a commitment to establish two demonstration sites in collaboration with hunting organisations (FGA/ADA) where new SGR management principles will be put into practice.



State Game Reserves

Victoria's network of 200 State Game Reserves is the legacy of duck hunters, who in the 1950s volunteered to pay a government levy which funded protection of critical wetland habitat.

Today, more than 75 000 hectares of wetlands are designated as SGRs and hunters maintain a close connection with these wetlands, conducting conservation, nest box programs and hunting in equal measure.

Recent amendments to the Wildlife (State Game Reserve) regulations 2014 to allow pest animal hunting on SGRs during the legislated Duck Season allows hunters

to make a significant contribution to the control of red foxes, rabbits and hares.

Government should consider extending pest animal hunting on SGRs to cover the crucial waterfowl breeding period.

The fox is an apex predator and decreasing predation though appropriately managed hunting during this period will have a direct impact on nesting success.



Managing wild deer

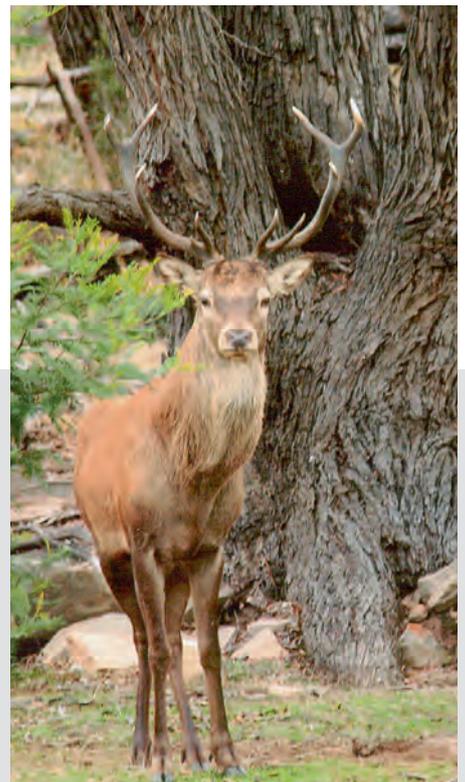
Recreational deer hunters have an important role to play in co-operative management of Victoria's wild deer populations.

The big question at this time of booming herds and rapidly increasing deer distribution is whether they will be managed as game or managed as vermin

as is the usual Australian way. The Australian Deer Association believes that it is essential that deer are managed as game!

Fast facts

- In 2017, 106 000 deer were taken in Victoria by 37 000 licensed hunters
- There are 10 000 more licensed hunters now than in 2013
- Reclassification of deer as a 'pest' species would create additional financial burdens on government and private land managers in terms of compliance
- It is clear the status of deer as a 'game' animal in Victoria is not an impediment to effective deer management
- ADA's experience is that deer management programs which enable the highest level of flexibility for hunters (whilst maintaining necessary controls) are the most effective
- ADA members have a demonstrated commitment to working with government agencies to achieve positive management and an environmental outcomes through strategic and co-operative programs.
- ADA supports the adoption of a Victorian Deer Management Strategy that retains their value as a 'game' species



Game meat

One of the primary motivations for hunting game species is the harvesting and consumption of wild food.

The Victorian Meat Industry Act, 1993 prescribes game as rabbit, hare, kangaroo, pig and goat that are living in a wild state. The Government proposal is to exempt processing of game meat for personal consumption from licensing requirements, allowing deer hunters to maximise their utilisation of harvested animals.



Fast facts

- An estimated 50 tonnes of game meat is imported into Victoria each week from other states
- The Sustainable Hunting Action Plan includes allowing the commercial processing of wild harvested deer, thereby allowing hunters to maximise the use of their animals and create jobs in regional Victoria
- All that is required is the enabling legislation
- In 2013, game hunters contributed approximately \$439M per year to the Victorian economy and of that \$142.1M was generated by deer hunters.

Duck Season

Duck hunting contributes millions of dollars to regional economies during a short, highly regulated season. It is ethical, sustainable, and growing in popularity yet it is constantly under attack.

Unrepresentative but vocal activist groups have gained a foothold as 'stakeholders' yet the same defenders of waterfowl contribute nothing to help sustain waterfowl habitat and populations.

Hunters have a long, uninterrupted history of volunteer conservation, caring for wetlands, purchasing and restoring wetlands, managing water, planting trees and plants, suppressing invasive weeds and pest animals, and supporting waterfowl nesting and breeding success.

In return, hunters participate in a 12-week game season, harvesting game birds for the personal consumption.

In 2018 activists argued the Duck Season should be abandoned because the Game Management Authority was unable to properly regulate hunting — using a report prepared by an AA linked organisation that was leaked to them as the basis for the argument.

Faced with new regulations, including a late start times on opening weekend, duck hunters cooperated with the regulator, self-regulated and demonstrated ethical and responsible hunting is the norm.

Fast facts

- Water and habitat, not hunting, has the biggest impact on waterfowl populations
- Hunters are continually harassed by activists during the Victorian Duck season and if there is any failure in regulation; it is the failure to prosecute protesters who break the law by interfering with, or preventing hunters from conducting their legal activity
- Duck Season is legislated and the certainty provided by season announcements made months (rather than weeks) before commencement would advance the Government's aim to grow the economic value of hunting in Victoria.
- Activists increasingly use 'Disturbance' of non-game birds as a tool to force closure of game reserves to hunting. A proper scientific basis needs to be developed to define disturbance.
- An appropriate adaptive harvest model should be implemented to manage the setting of Duck Season in Victoria.

Willowmavin shooting range

Field & Game Australia purchased this greenfield property at Willowmavin because of its proximity to Melbourne and its potential as a centre of excellence for shotgun sports and hunter and conservation based education.

The 2014 acquisition was supported by the Shooting Sports Facilities Program. The Willowmavin property covers approximately 202 hectares of land 13 km west of the Kilmore and is currently used for limited clay target competitions

and events.

Nestled in rolling hills, which create a natural amphitheatre, future development of the site is currently subject to a feasibility study funded through the Shooting Sports Facilities Program.



Fast facts

- Funding will be required to develop a master plan for the Willowmavin complex
- The catchment for Willowmavin includes the fast growing Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne
- Metropolitan shooting grounds face increased pressure from urban growth, particularly residential development, and continuing growth in clay target participation will require new investment in long-term facilities.
- Inclusion of a large conference/dining facility in the development would create a venue for use by the broader community.
- A future home for the Australian National Hunting Archive, a museum quality collection.
- A demonstration site for conservation projects, a venue for hunter and gundog training and a centre of excellence for firearms safety training.



Wetlands are carbon capture kings

Sixty years ago when hunters banded together to save wetland habitats, they couldn't have foreseen just how valuable their efforts would be.

Field & Game Australia (FGA) emerged in response to concerns about the future of the iconic Pacific black duck bringing hunters together to save the wetland habitats crucial to a healthy population.

Hunters volunteered to pay licence fees to fund the creation of the network of State Game Reserves, which continue to provide important habitat for not only ducks but all waterbirds.

We still have a major role to play in forging a new model for wetland conservation with the added environmental benefit of helping to reduce our impact on the planet.

According to researchers from the Deakin University School of Life and Environmental Sciences' Blue Carbon Lab, Victoria's wetlands already lock away the annual emissions of 185 000 people, or roughly the population of Geelong.

The tally, which came to 3 million tons of CO₂ each year, increases our understanding of how the environment helps to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

Lead researcher Dr Paul Carnell said inland or non-tidal wetlands were an integral part of Australia's carbon budget.

"While a lot more is known about how trees suck up and store carbon, freshwater wetlands can actually sequester 20 to 40 times more carbon than forests on dry land," he said.

The key to wetlands' success in carbon storage is the mixture of plant material and sediment in the soil, which contains little oxygen, and makes it hard for the carbon to be broken down and re-released into the atmosphere.

"Instead the carbon in this material is stored in the ground, that's called carbon sequestration, and each year new material is added to the wetland's overall carbon store," Dr Carnell said.

"It's the reverse process of digging up and burning coal or oil, here wetlands are taking that gas and putting it back into the ground."

Victoria has about 530 000 ha of inland wetlands, which include marshes, peatlands, pools and lakes, making up about 2.33 per cent of the state's land area.

As part of their study, which was funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, ecologists from the Blue Carbon Lab worked with Victoria's 10

Catchment Management Authorities to take soil samples from more than 100 different wetlands across the state including private wetlands purchased and rehabilitated by FGA members.

The research makes it clear that losing wetlands has the reverse effect, releasing tonnes of CO₂ equivalents, so the imperative is to keep what we have and where possible, create more.

The researchers have unlocked a pathway for wetland to benefit from money raised through participation in current carbon offset schemes.

"Right now, if you purchase a carbon offset for your flight to Sydney for example, that program will most likely plant a certain number of trees they estimate will grow to store the CO₂ equivalent to your plane trip," Head of the Blue Carbon Lab, Associate Professor Peter Macreadie said.

"But we know that wetlands are far more efficient at storing carbon than trees. Here in the Blue Carbon Lab, we're collecting the information so that governments and carbon offset providers may one day be able to offset carbon emissions by restoring wetlands."



Public land belongs to the public

Current calls for Tower Hill to be declared a National Park ignore history, and would exclude duck hunters, the very people who voluntarily helped to rescue it from a century of environmental decline.

An e-petition sponsored by Victorian MP James Purcell gives a brief, and misleading history of Tower Hill in the "grievance" stating "It was declared a National Park in 1892, but after years of degradation from clearing, over grazing and quarrying it was classified as a Game Reserve in 1961. This classification remains in spite of years of planting to revegetate the grounds plus construction of a visitor centre designed by Robyn Boyd and run by the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Co-operative."

A more fulsome history would include the enormous amount of work done by hunters following the 1962 declaration to restore Tower Hill based on Outlook, an 1855 painting by Viennese artist Eugene von Guerard.

In the 1960s, Max Downes, the superintendent of Game Management was conducting a process to declare reserves, including Tower Hill, and wrote to FGA branches, local authorities and landholders.

"It is essential to secure the areas and save the existing habitat before it is finally destroyed," he wrote.

"Once the areas are safe, then the slower work of rehabilitation and development can proceed."

Tower Hill, a volcanic formation created 30000 years ago, is the largest nested maar formation in Victoria but as it pushed through the earth's crust it also forged a shallow crater, which later filled with water to create the lake.

The initial request to investigate the establishment of a State Game Reserve came from Koroit Borough Council.

Max Downes' report said the 1860s settlement and early agriculture had been "cataclysmic" and the original prolific vegetation was destroyed in less than a decade and declaration as a national park did not stem the destructive uses.

A century after settlement the park needed saving and among its saviours were hunters.

The Victorian Parliament approved the creation of a State Game Reserve, which Max said: "...appealed to the imagination of, and received considerable support from the local public, shooter and naturalist alike."

Warrnambool Field & Game volunteers erected the first trial fences to keep out rabbits and the Field Naturalists group from the same city prepared the ground to plant trees.

By the 1980s, 250000 trees had been planted and the 60 species of birds surveyed in 1960 had grown to more than 160.

Hunters contributed significantly to the success at Tower Hill, which is now a major tourist asset for the region, and while duck hunting is permitted during season, it is not allowed between 9am and 5pm each day in recognition of the multiple users who enjoy this natural attraction.

Tower Hill stands as a beacon for what can be achieved when a value is attached to public land. The only real return to hunters for years of effort is the satisfaction of their conservation achievement and access to hunt.

Public land should be available for public use, especially by those who helped rescue it.

Clay target experience

Friendly competition is the aim of Field & Game Australia's annual Politician's Clay Target Shoot but that doesn't mean political rivalries are parked at the entrance to the Willowmavin shoot ground.

Bragging rights and a perpetual shield are up for grabs each year so the teams, which are formed along political lines, are keen to outdo each other.

Experienced FGA members act as safety officers and instructors during the event, ensuring that every competitor gets to enjoy the feeling of smashing a clay target.

The squad from Mitchell Shire Council collected the shield this year, a first for the event.

Away from the spirited competition, the event is a friendly and social.

Chef Riccardo Momesso served up delicious wild food for lunch and Matt Fowles from Fowles Wines provided the accompanying drinks and prizes for the top team and individual competitors.

Thank you to all the politicians and their staff who attended and participated in the shoot. We hope you left with a better understanding of what it means to be a responsible firearms owner and how much fun clay target shooting is.



(l-r) Cr Bill Chisholm, Cr David Atkinson, Melissa Desantis and Geoff Addison



The Nationals Luke O'Sullivan MLC



Liberal Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC with FGA chairman Bill Paterson



Daniel Young MLC



Nationals MPTim McCurdy



The winning Mitchell Shire team (l-r) Cr Bill Chisholm, Cr David Atkinson, Melissa Desantis, Geoff Addison. Vanessa Wiltshire was the 5th member of the team.



Rachel Carling-Jenkins MLC gets some tips from Daniel Young MLC (Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party)

FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA

Preserving Cultural Traditions



JOIN AUSTRALIA'S MOST SURPRISING CONSERVATIONISTS

OUR MISSION:

"To be the most effective organisation in the promotion of hunting, recreational shooting and habitat conservation."

FGA TODAY...

- Ethical
- Sustainable
- Influential
- Respected
- Confident
- Liability Insurance
- Member Services

The respected voice of FGA and its members is heard throughout the country. Strength is found in numbers – do you belong to Australia's strongest and most successful shooting association?

WHO'S PROTECTING THE FUTURE FOR YOUR FIREARMS LICENCE?

Firearm sports in Australia must have:

- Respected representation
- A knowledgeable and unified voice
- All party support and acceptance
- Consistency in media messages
- New opportunities to shoot
- A code of ethics and high standards of conduct



fieldandgame.com.au

www.facebook.com/fieldandgame

65 Anzac Avenue (PO Box 464), Seymour VIC 3660

P: 03 5799 0960 F: 03 5799 0961

membership@fieldandgame.com.au



ESTABLISHED IN 1969
EXPERT ADVICE
ON WILD DEER MANAGEMENT
REPRESENTING THE
INTERESTS OF 60,000+
RECREATIONAL DEER HUNTERS
RESPECTFUL,
CONSISTENT AND
TRANSPARENT APPROACH
TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



Australian
Deer
Association

THE DEER PEOPLE
WWW.AUSTDEER.ASN.AU