



Wildlife Victoria Inc

ABN 27 753 478 012

T. 03 9445 0310

PO Box 100, Abbotsford VIC 3067

info@wildlifelifevictoria.org.au

www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au

Inquiry into Auditor-General's Report No.202: Meeting obligations to protect Ramsar wetlands (2016).

Ramsar Wetlands and Wildlife

Ramsar wetlands provide habitat for many native species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, including many threatened and vulnerable species. Threats to biodiversity are greater now than at any time in the recent human history of this region. The extent of habitat destruction through human activities, and the emergence of a hotter, drier climate, make the RAMSAR wetlands of enormous importance to present and future biodiversity. The criteria for listing under the Ramsar Convention indicate just how important and valuable these internationally important wetlands are. The values that make the 11 Victorian Ramsar wetlands meet the Ramsar criteria must be effectively protected, and indeed further wetlands should be proposed for Ramsar listing. Victoria should aim to have more than only 11 Ramsar sites, which is only 16% of the total number of Australian sites.

Effective protection from deliberate killing of wildlife

Threats to Ramsar wetlands include direct impacts of human recreational activities and we submit that these impacts require additional attention. There are those who wish to exploit the values of the wetlands to the detriment of wildlife who rely on the wetlands to survive. The most impactful activity on waterbirds is the annual slaughter of native ducks currently permitted during an annual "duck season". We submit that Ramsar wetland management plans should exclude the shooting of waterbirds due to the profound impacts, not only on birdlife in the wetlands, but also as an activity that is inconsistent with other, more benign recreational activities.

Although shooting is officially restricted to certain species, it is annually observed that many non-target species are shot, including threatened species. The presence of (mainly) men with guns dressed in camouflage roaming the wetlands means that these areas are not perceived as safe for other recreational activities during the duck season. People living or visiting in proximity to the killing zones experience emotional distress due to the sounds of wildlife being killed. The presence of groups of sometimes alcohol affected and occasionally belligerent armed men is not something most people wish to put themselves or their families near. The lack of a proscribed blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for shooters means that drinking is an inherent aspect of many of the "shooting parties" and increases the

perceived and real risk to the community. The amenity of Ramsar wetlands for other users is further reduced by the building of “hides” and the large amounts of rubbish left behind by shooters.

With decreasing rainfall and increasing temperature set to be a continuing trend due to climate change, water-bird populations are expected to continue to decline. Ceasing “recreational” shooting will remove at least one unnecessary threat to Ramsar wetlands.

Dr Megan Davidson

CEO

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]