



# 2025 Tri-annual Gamebird Regulation Review

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2025/2026

# 1 COUNCIL POLICY

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Council has the following policies that may affect the setting of the game season regulations:

1. Following 2012 F&G election, game season regulations set in accordance with staff recommendations shall be for three-year duration, subject to any material extraneous circumstances that might occur during that period (set 8 October 2011 and reaffirmed 15 October 2022).
2. Dabbling duck season to be from 1st Saturday in May.
3. Pukeko are included as a target species during any special shoot.
4. Thresholds set for the special paradise shelduck season in the King Country.
5. Criteria adopted for Upland Game Properties with Special Conditions.
6. Approval for applications for Upland Game Properties with Special Conditions is delegated to the Chief Executive.
7. The season length for partridge on Upland Game Properties with Special Conditions be from 4th April to the last Sunday in August.

## 2 SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

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Regulation	Staff Recommendation
Mallard and Grey Duck Season Length	Council considers and votes on options A, B or C.
Mallard and Grey Duck Bag limit	No change
Baiting	No change
Paradise shelduck Season Length and Bag Limit	Paradise shelduck limit north of Auckland increases to 25. No other change
Red-legged partridge April season	Council change policy on upland game property season length and remove the April season for red-legged partridge.

## 3 MALLARD AND GREY DUCK SEASON LENGTH

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### 3.1 STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend council consider and vote upon the three broad regulatory pathways (A, B and C) outlined below.

### 3.2 STAFF COMMENT

In 2013, after several years of increasingly restrictive regulations, the Auckland/Waikato mallard season was reduced to four weeks in response to concerns over declining population size. At the time, hunters generally supported these measures. The key premise was that limiting the season length would reduce hunting pressure, lower total mallard harvest, and consequently allow more birds to survive into the breeding season, thereby contributing to future population recovery. Reducing season length may also prevent hunting encroaching into the start of the breeding season and promote increased productivity.

The results of the Gamebird Harvest Assessment, however, suggest that current season regulations have been relatively ineffective at reducing harvest rates (Auckland/Waikato Gamebird Harvest Assessment, 2025). Despite more than a decade under the current regulation

framework, there has been no sustained increase in population size, and current estimates remain well below those observed in the early 2000s (Grallard Population Report, 2025). Over this period, hunter sentiment has gradually shifted, with many now expressing a preference for a longer season.

Hunters provided the following reasons for preferring longer seasons:

- Limited hunting opportunities and therefore lower value for money compared to other regions. A restricted time frame also puts pressure on hunters' other commitments to family, work commitments and other hobbies.
- Less return on investment (e.g., wetland conservation, maintaining maimais, keeping a dog etc).
- The current four-week season often misses optimal weather and water conditions.
- Some hunters believe bird numbers are healthy enough to allow a longer season.

While many hunters stated they would be happy with a later season to align with the wetter weather in June, it is a council policy and a long-term tradition for the waterfowl season to start on the first weekend of May, meaning council policy would need to change before this is considered.

### 3.2.1 Hunter Perception

To gauge licence holder perception towards season length and bird numbers, we randomly surveyed 438 full-season 2025 licence holders as part of periods 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Gamebird Harvest Survey. We asked two questions:

- In your opinion, should next year's Auckland Waikato mallard season length be shorter, the same, longer, or don't know?
- How would you rate the number of mallards in your hunting area – from 1 (not enough mallards) to 5 (more than enough mallards)?

The hope here was to assess what a random portion of licence holders wanted regarding season length as well as their perception of the relative number of birds in their hunting area (enough vs not enough).

We found that of the 438 respondents;

- 50% (95% CI between 45.3% and 54.7%) felt that next year's mallard season length should be **longer**.
- 38.1% (95% CI between 33.7% and 42.8%) felt that next year's mallard season length should stay **the same**.
- 9.1% were **not sure**, or did not care (95% CI between 6.8% and 12.2%)
- 2.7% felt it should be **shorter** (95% CI between 1.6% and 4.7%)

Regarding the number of mallards in their hunting area, the average score was 3.42, just above 3 - the middle value on the scale, with 1 being "not enough mallards" and 5 being "more than enough mallards".

Binomial regression<sup>1</sup> indicates that individuals who voted for a longer season were more likely to be active hunters ( $\beta = 0.41$ , SE = 0.20,  $z = 2.08$ ,  $p = .038$ ). On average, individuals who wanted

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<sup>1</sup> With longer (1) or not longer (0) season as the dependent variable, and hunted (during that period) age and perceived number of birds as independent variables.

a longer season also felt that bird numbers were greater compared to those who did not want a longer season ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $z = 2.71$ ,  $p = .007$ ). However, the latter is likely driven by an enthusiastic few who felt there were more than enough birds<sup>2</sup> and wanted a longer season. Figure 1 shows the distribution of perceptions on the number of birds in a random selection of hunters' hunting areas based on whether they supported a longer season. Overall, the pattern is quite similar – for the most part, people's perception of the number of birds in their hunting area does not appear to be a significant factor in determining whether they want a longer season.

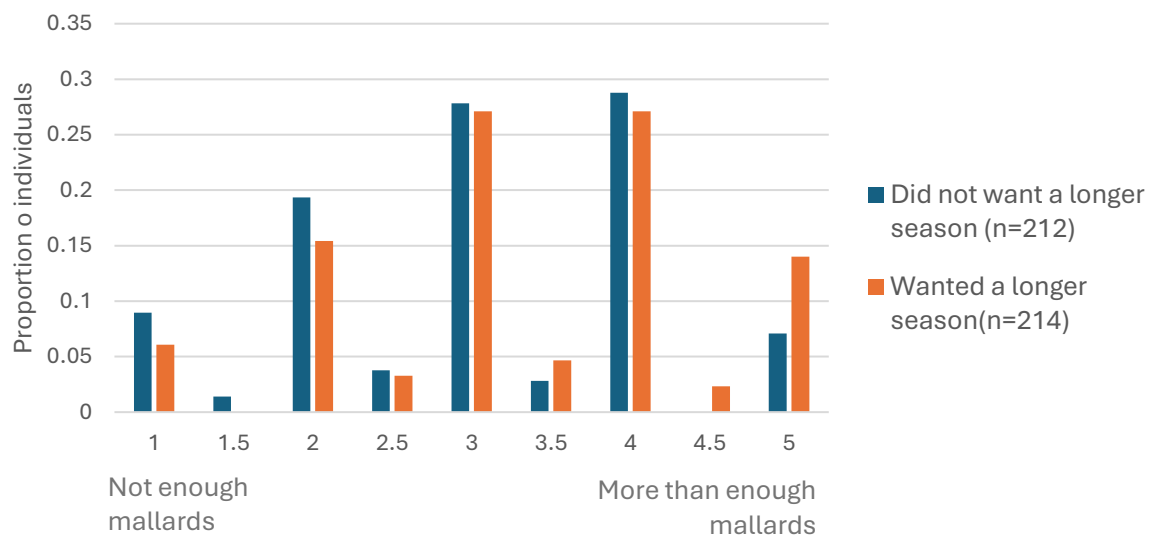


Figure 1: the distribution of hunters perceptions on the number of mallards in their hunting area (1 = not enough, 5 = more than enough) based on whether they wanted a longer season or not (combining same, shorter, and not sure).

### 3.2.2 Effectiveness of season length at reducing harvest

In New Zealand we hunt relatively sedentary populations of grallards and a high proportion of our total season harvest is constrained to the first two weeks of the hunting season with opening weekend being particularly important. Season length needs to be viewed in that context, acknowledging that even under relatively restrictive conditions, season length may not constrain hunter effort and will therefore have minimal impact on overall harvest in any given season.

Recent analysis shows that the decline in hours hunted observed in Auckland/Waikato post-2009 is not significantly different from that seen in neighbouring regions such as Taranaki and Northland, where season lengths have remained liberal (Harvest Report, 2025). There are general national trends of reduced hunter effort, regardless of season regulations across the country and hunter effort in the Auckland/Waikato may have declined to similar levels regardless of the more restrictive season length.

This is not to say that season length cannot be effective at reducing hunter effort (and therefore harvest, given they are closely linked), but rather that the decline in hunter effort we observe coinciding with season length may well have occurred regardless. This is backed up by our

<sup>2</sup> If you remove 5 as an option, the effect of “perception of number of birds” is no longer significant.

estimates of harvest rate, which, for the most part, have remained stable since 2002 (Grallard Population Report, 2025).

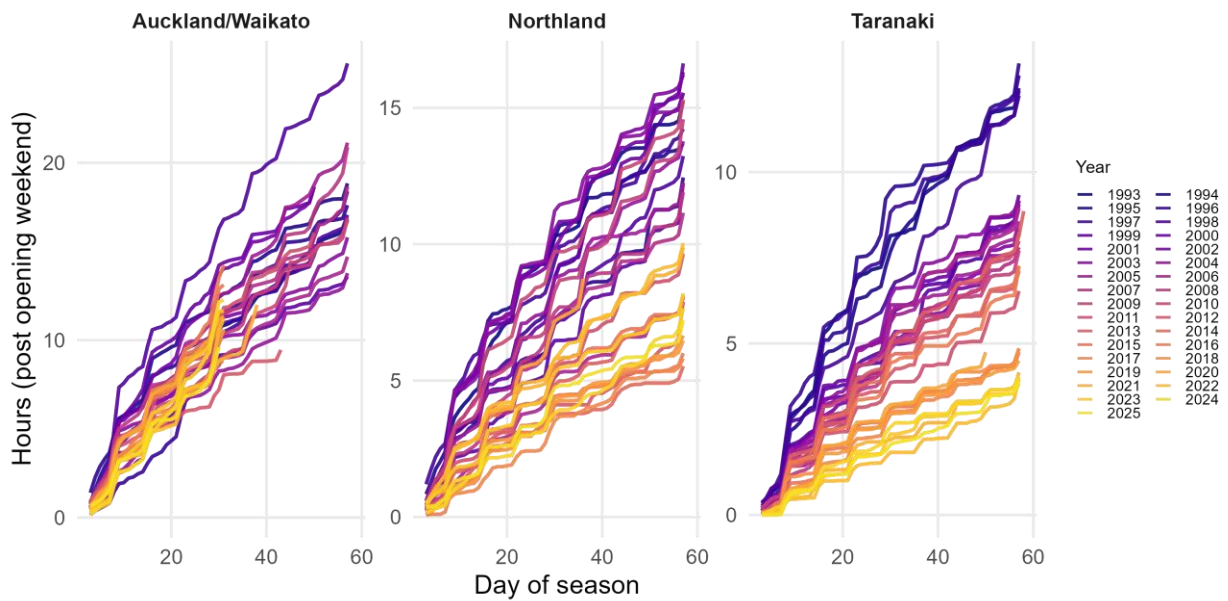


Figure 2: Cumulative daily mean hours spent hunting waterfowl per licence holder from 1993-2025, excluding opening weekend in the Auckland, Waikato, Northland and Taranaki regions. As shown in the 2025 Harvest Report.

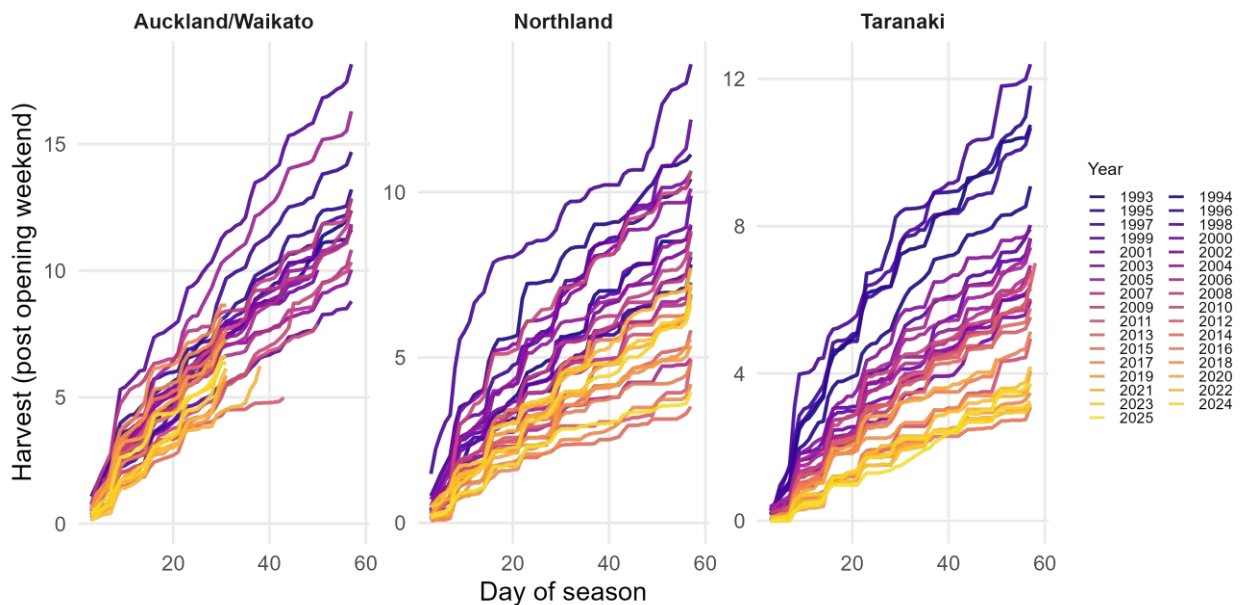


Figure 3: Cumulative daily mean grallard harvest per licence holder from 1993-2025, excluding opening weekend in the Auckland, Waikato, Northland and Taranaki regions. As shown in the 2025 Harvest Report.

These findings indicate that, under current population conditions, season length may not meaningfully limit hunter effort/harvest beyond what would occur under more liberal regulations. For example, a shift to a six-week season would likely yield a similar harvest. The Eastern Region’s recent regulatory change illustrates this. Following an increase from a four to

a six-week season in 2025, mallard harvest estimates rose only modestly from 23,922 (2023) and 22,639 (2024) to 25,603 in 2025 (Table 1).

*Table 1: Estimates of total hours hunting waterfowl and total mallard harvest in the Eastern region in years with a four-week season (2021-2024) and, more recently, a six-week season (2025).*

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total hours	47,796	45,553	54,270	45,436	54,337
Total mallard	22,114	20,953	23,922	22,639	25,603

We also observe this in harvest rates, which have remained relatively constant for the last two decades (Grallard Population Report, 2025). In this sense, while we are shooting fewer birds than we did 20 years ago we continue to harvest the same proportion of a smaller population.

### **3.3 OPTIONS A, B AND C**

Staff recommend that the council consider and vote on three broad regulatory pathways, acknowledging there may be some trade-offs between setting highly restrictive harvest regulations that would be required to achieve a reduction in the number of birds shot and encouraging ongoing participation in the sport by providing sufficient hunter opportunity.

#### **Option A: Status quo (No change)**

Maintaining the status quo of a four-week season will likely continue trends in harvest and harvest rates as we have observed for the preceding 10 years. While links between harvest and population size are uncertain, we should expect the grallard population to remain reasonably stable, albeit with a slight downward trend. Hunter satisfaction is expected to be lower, given the strong desire for a longer season. There is a risk here that we continue to significantly restrict hunter opportunity without any meaningful reduction in harvest.

#### **Option B: Mild liberalisation (Six-week season)**

A six-week season will align with the preference of many hunters who desire a longer season to increase opportunity and take less pressure off competing interests (family, other hobbies etc). If trends in hunter effort match those in our neighbouring regions, we would expect the increase in total harvest to be minimal. Six weeks would also put us in line with our close neighbours at Eastern.

#### **Option C: Ultra restrictive (2-day season)**

While acknowledging that the link between harvest and population dynamics is largely unknown, we have likely never had sufficiently restrictive regulations to test it in our region. An ultra-restrictive regulation structure would allow us to test this. For example, a harvest rate of approximately 10% may allow us to observe if a lower harvest has a positive impact on population growth (although the exact rate at which harvest comes at a detriment to the population is unknown). However, to achieve this, we would need to reduce the total harvest by around 50%. This could potentially be done through ultra-restrictive regulations, such as a two-day season with a normal bag limit. However, we anticipate that ultra-restrictive regulations would be highly unpopular with hunters (less than 3% supported a shorter season, let alone ultra-restrictive regulations), and that such a change would be detrimental to compliance, participation, and sentiment towards F&G.

### **3.4 REMITS**

Four-week season: Steve Dickson.

Five-week season: Bruce Inwards.

Six-week season: Jed Claude, Trent Robertson, Henry Van Hellemon.

Six-week season (with reduced bag after opening, or in the latter part of the season): Daley Jones, Ian Bailey, Eric Best, Tony Schuller.

Eight-week season: AJ Buttimore, Gary Edwards, Lance, A E Buttimore.

Eight-week season (with reduced bag after opening weekend): Blythen Wetland Pondholders.

Split season (i.e., close gamebird hunting for 12 days over Mother's Day): Bruce Inwards.

## **4 MALLARD AND GREY DUCK BAG LIMIT**

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### **4.1 STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Retain a bag limit of 8 mallard/grey duck to signal that the population is low.

### **4.2 STAFF COMMENT**

In 2022, the Auckland/Waikato Council reduced the mallard/grey bag limit from ten to eight birds. The intent was not to substantially reduce harvest but to signal to hunters that populations were low and that sustainability should remain at the forefront of their minds.

Recent analyses support this rationale. At current population levels, bag limits have limited influence on total harvest unless they are highly restrictive. Even a substantial reduction to two birds per hunter would likely only decrease total harvest by approximately 50% (Harvest Report, 2025). Some remits suggested that lower bag limits could offset a longer season.

Bag limits are most effective at constraining harvest during opening weekend, when hunting success is highest. As a result, they disproportionately affect hunters who only participate at this time. For these individuals, a lower bag limit may be perceived as reduced value for money, especially compared with frequent hunters who pay the same licence fee. Trade-offs between season length and bag limits, therefore, need to be assessed not only in terms of their biological effectiveness but also their social implications.

Complex regulations—such as an “eight-bird opening limit followed by a six-bird limit”—add confusion without delivering meaningful conservation benefits. After opening weekend, only a small proportion of hunters reach the bag limit, meaning further reductions do little to affect overall harvest.

Overly restrictive limits may also create compliance issues, as hunters may view them as unreasonable. By contrast, moderate restrictions, such as shifting from 10 to 8 birds, can still play a valuable role. While their direct effect on total harvest is small, they communicate that the resource is under pressure and reinforce a conservation mindset. Unpublished work by M. Garrick (North Canterbury) also suggests that more “realistic” bag limits may positively affect hunter satisfaction by aligning expectations with typical harvest outcomes.

### 4.3 REMITS

Mallard bag limit of 10: Trent Robertson

## 5 BAITING

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### 5.1 STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend continuing to exclude the Auckland/Waikato Region from the Waiver of Restrictions on Baiting for Waterfowl, especially if the season is extended.

### 5.2 STAFF COMMENT

Staff recommend that the Auckland/Waikato Region continue to be excluded from the Waiver of Restrictions on Baiting for Waterfowl. This means that baiting, i.e., casting, throwing, or placing food near water to attract ducks, will remain prohibited within 100 metres of any water body for the 30 days preceding and during the hunting season.

Historically, the exemption allowing baiting was introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when mallard numbers were high. At that time, there was concern that the growing population could cause damage to crops and even lead to mallards being classified as a pest species. Baiting was therefore permitted to increase harvest pressure and help control numbers. However, the situation has since changed substantially. Mallard populations are now low, and the original justification for allowing baiting no longer applies. Continuing to prohibit baiting aligns with the current population status and the broader goal of supporting sustainable waterfowl management.

Feeding or baiting waterfowl before or during the season also raises ecological and ethical concerns. Artificial feeding can alter bird behaviour, making ducks less wary and more vulnerable to harvest. It can also allow some hunters, particularly those more likely to be able to afford the extra cost of grain, to monopolise local game bird populations. There is also evidence that feeding contributes to pest or vermin issues around feeding sites. From a welfare perspective, baiting blurs the distinction between hunting as a sport and simply managing for higher harvest. While some hunters argue that feeding improves bird condition, the benefits are likely limited. Feeding is still allowed for most of the year, and birds require high-protein diets from natural sources, especially before the breeding season, meaning grain feeding during autumn and winter is unlikely to be beneficial.

Despite some opposition, staff conclude that continuing to prohibit baiting remains the most appropriate course of action. It also provides a practical compliance advantage, as it can be monitored before opening weekend. If hunters are found feeding ponds in contravention of the regulation, an abatement notice can be issued before the season.

From a research perspective, it would be advantageous to adjust season length and baiting regulations at different times so their individual effects can be identified in the harvest data. In other words, if both baiting and a longer season were introduced in the same year and harvest increased, we would be unable to determine which change was responsible.

### 5.3 REMITS

**Remove restriction on pond feeding:** Henry Van Hellemon, AJ Buttimore, Blythen Wetland Pondholders, Eric Best, A E Buttimore, Steve Dickson

## 6 PARADISE SHELDUCK BAG LIMIT & SEASON LENGTH

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### 6.1 STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That bag limit for the main paradise shelduck season north of Auckland is increased to 25 to match Northland. Season length and summer season regulations to stay the same.

### 6.2 STAFF COMMENT

#### 6.2.1 North of Auckland

As shown in the 2025 Trend Count Report<sup>3</sup>, estimates of relative abundance for paradise shelduck north of Auckland have increased considerably over the last 10 years. While there is no significant demand to liberalise bag limit restrictions, there is some logic in increasing the bag limit to match Northland as (1) the boundaries between the two regions intersect where a number of people hunt and (2) there is nothing separating the two regions that would mean they are separate “populations” either side of the border. Tables 2 and 3 show the 2025 regulations for Northland and Auckland/Waikato.

Table 2: Auckland/Waikato 2025 Gamebird regulations for paradise shelduck

Paradise shelduck	3 May to 29 Jun 2025	10	The region south of Auckland Harbour Bridge
	3 May to 29 Jun 2025	20	The region north of Auckland Harbour Bridge
	14 Feb to 15 Feb 2026	15	The region north of Auckland Harbour Bridge

Table 3: Northland 2025 Gamebird regulations for paradise shelduck

Paradise shelduck	3 May to 27 Jul 2025	25
	14 Feb 2026 to 22 Feb 2026	25

Looking at the last 5 seasons, it is clear that a few, albeit a small proportion of Northland hunters, shoot 20 or more in a day (Figure 4). On the other hand, Auckland/Waikato had almost none (11 out of 3251 surveyed hunts resulted in more than 10 paradise shots). In this respect, an increasing bag limit is unlikely to have a realised impact on harvest.

The special summer season in February should remain the same, as (1) the aim is primarily to disperse the birds that are causing issues with crops, and (2) we do not collect harvest data for this period, so we cannot say how much the bag limit is restricting harvest.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/assets/DMS/About-us/FG-Regional-Councils/Auckland-Waikato/Staff-Reports/Game-Reports/2024-2025/Trend-Count-Report-2025.pdf>

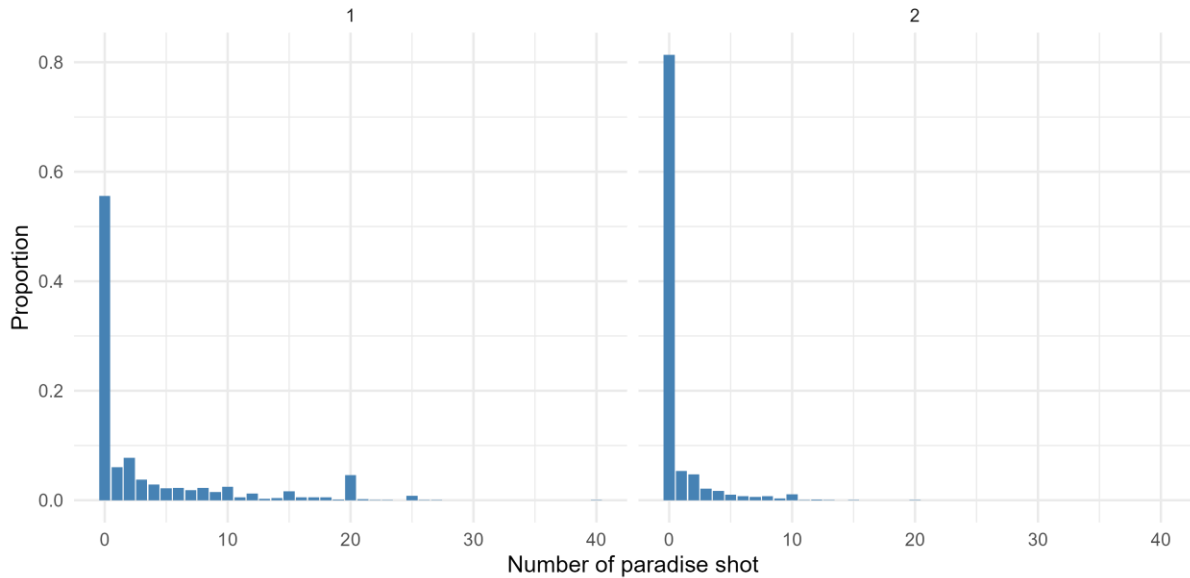


Figure 4: Distribution of paradise shot in Northland (left) and Auckland/Waikato (right) during the main season from 2020 to 2025.

## 6.2.2 South of Auckland

Analysis of trend count data (Trend Count Report, 2025) for paradise shelduck in the King Country indicates that the population declined from levels in the early 2000s but has been reasonably stable in recent years (2010-2025). Given that counts have been below the threshold for a summer season for the last three years, there is little justification for increasing bag limits or season length, as this is the first step in managing a growing population. If farmers are having issues with birds, they can request permits to disturb or cull them out of season.

## 6.3 REMITS

Extend paradise season to the end of June: Eric Best, Steve Dickson

# 7 RED LEGGED PARTRIDGE APRIL SEASON

## 7.1 STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Council change the policy “The season length for partridge on Upland Game Properties with Special Conditions is from 4th April to the last Sunday in August” to exclude April.

Remove the April season for Red-legged Partridge on Upland game properties (Lighthouse Station and Glen Massey).

## 7.2 STAFF COMMENT

Neither registered release site in our region wish to maintain an April season. Issues with the timing of our regulations have also been raised by NZC staff and therefore removing these regulations is straightforward.

## 8 REMITS

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First off just want to say thanks and what great work you all do for us. I personally help and got to see some for you people while doing the banding in Parakai last year was super cool to meet your cool people and the work that you do. The banding program is very cool and would love to see that continue.

I would love to see Mai mais on fish and game land have a 5 year ballot allocation. This would allow more people more chance to experience shooting in the waikato not just reserved for a selected few. Also allow the people to move to different spots around the area to try.

I think our season in auckland waikato could be longer to... I feel after opening weekend it's few and fair between to have lots of people shooting. If the season was 2 weeks longer it would be better. Even if duck limits were lower on the last 2 weeks.

That's all.

Thanks for reading.

Have a great day.

Daley Jones

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I believe the season length should be extended to 6 weeks at least

My reasoning is as follows.

There is a common attitude developing of the lack of value of participation due to the short season, a lot of people only get out once or twice after opening weekend.

I believe mallard numbers are healthy and that your harvest study data isn't an accurate representation of what we are seeing in the field. From a quick read there are many issues with harvest data that suggest it shouldn't be the sole factor in determining season length.

One of the major issues with the short season is the lack of suitable weather in may. After opening weekend weather can be the biggest factor in the success of a hunt.

I believe the majority of licence holders will support a longer season and not appreciate being dictated to in contradiction of what they are seeing in the field

Regards,

Jed Claude

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Hi there,

Please see below my recommendations for changes in the Auckland/Waikato region.

Duck movement depends on weather, not region. We already have the shortest season, yet the recent banding studies show that ducks move widely based on conditions. For example, many birds were taken in the Far North at the start of the season when flooding pushed them there. Ducks are very mobile, so limiting Auckland/Waikato hunters to such a short window doesn't reflect how the birds actually move. For example the first weekend after the season finished there were thousands of ducks gathered because the water had finally come up in the swamp.

The short season also puts pressure on specific areas, with only a few weeks available, hunters crowd into specific spots regardless of whether conditions are right. This puts pressure on certain areas and the birds.

Young hunters are less likely to spend \$120 on a license if they only get a handful of opportunities to shoot, once work and other commitments are factored in. If we want to attract new people into the sport, we need to give them a fair opportunity.

Increase the limit to 10 as there are more than enough ducks, if the conditions are right the ducks will come. People assume there are barely any ducks when they are shooting the same place every time and the weather isn't right - this is caused by the short season as mentioned above.

Effort put into maintaining habitats and wetlands are sometimes wasted. Hunters put significant time and money into maintaining swamp blocks, but if the weather doesn't line up in a short four-week season, those efforts don't get rewarded. A longer season would help ensure this isn't wasted.

Thank you,  
Trent Robertson

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Hello David.

I'm writing this out of sheer frustration and deep disappointment.

Duck shooting has always been a cornerstone of my family's way of life - and by extension, that of our close friends as well.

We've been fortunate enough to own land dedicated solely to this tradition, which speaks volumes about how important this has been to us over the years.

We live in suburban Auckland and originally had a block in Kumeu, just 20 minutes from home, where we'd stay and shoot. That land now borders a housing subdivision, and being mindful of safety and the changing environment, we made the call to stop shooting there.

About 12 years ago, we bought a new block in South Head, Helensville - the one you and I met at a few seasons back.

Our land is part of the dune lake system that runs parallel to Woodhill Forest. For most of the time we've owned it, the lakes were dry. But over the past 18 months, nearby logging in

Woodhill Forest has caused the water table to rise. Now, for the first time, we've got open water and a thriving wetland taking shape.

Last year was my first season shooting at the block – and while we had ducks, the infrastructure left a lot to be desired. This year, I've put in serious time and money to improve things. Ironically, the ducks didn't show up. But that's how it goes.

What matters most is that our family now has a place to return to – a reason to come together, share a few laughs and steaks, crack a beer, and give each other a bit of grief over old and new antics. It's more than just shooting. It's connection, its tradition, and it's ours.

I apologise if the above seems long-winded, but I felt it necessary to paint a full picture to explain my deep frustration and disappointment.

Around 10-12 years ago, the waterfowl season in the Auckland/Waikato region was cut from two months down to one. At the time, many of us agreed with the decision—we'd noticed a drop in duck numbers and accepted the shorter season in good faith, assuming Fish & Game would reassess and possibly reinstate a longer season when conditions improved.

That never happened.

And while I'm sure there are sound ecological or regulatory reasons for this, the reality is that this change has caused real issues for families like mine—ones who've built traditions and made long-term commitments to this pastime.

Back when the season ran for two months, we'd shoot opening weekend, then pick three or four other weekends to head out. It allowed us to balance family life, work, and our passion for duck shooting.

Now, with only a single month to work with, our flexibility is gone. We're forced into a very narrow window, and the pressure on that time is enormous. It's genuinely affected our ability to enjoy and justify the effort—something that's spanned three generations in my family.

Take the current season layout as an example:

- **Opening weekend in early May** – Fantastic. No calendar clashes. It's now a firmly locked-in date for our family.
- **Second weekend: Mother's Day** – This is where it gets tough. I might not fuss over Father's Day, but ignoring Mother's Day is a fast track to trouble. It's not just the wife—it's also the mother, the mother-in-law, and now apparently the expectation of a nice lunch out, or at least a well-thought-out afternoon tea. Like it or not, that weekend is off the table unless you're single, divorced, or socially reckless.
- **Closing weekend: King's Birthday long weekend** – On paper, a great time to go shooting. In practice, if you're married with kids, it's a minefield. With weekend sports and family plans, the idea of duck shooting for three straight days is unrealistic. For most of us, it's reduced to a single rushed night, which feels like a poor return on what used to be a key weekend in the calendar.

This limited season doesn't just reduce the time we can spend in the field—it also erodes the sense of *value* that duck shooting once had.

I'm 44. And I'm finding it increasingly difficult to convince my mates to join in. Sure, they come along—but it's my gear, my dog, my guns, my land. Last season, I even paid for my best mate's licence. This year, when I invited another mate, his first complaint was the cost of the licence—he wasn't convinced it was worth buying.

What I'm seeing – and feeling – from my own group of mates is a real lack of value.

The value just isn't there for them. It's a sharp contrast to the older generation I grew up shooting with—those blokes had their own gear, pitched in, and made some big effort. They saw value because they had *opportunity*.

Even my father, a lifelong shooter, has given up. No licence. No dog. He used to renew his licence out of principle, even on his own land. Now? Lost interest, reduced opportunity, lack of value.

To me, the real value of duck shooting lies in bringing people together, getting outdoors, and maintaining a connection with our environment. Sure, more ducks would help—but in over 30 years, I've never come close to shooting a full bag. My best day? Probably five birds.

So, it's not about the numbers. It's about time, access, tradition, connection, opportunity.

Right now, we're losing that. And if nothing changes, I worry that I can't justify this to myself and will quietly drift away. And I'm a lucky one with private land access and financial means.

Over time, a few ideas have come up within our group that we believe could help improve the duck shooting experience in a realistic and meaningful way:

**1. Shift the season end date so it doesn't fall on King's Birthday weekend.** Even just extending the season by one additional week would make a world of difference. It would decouple the closing weekend from a key family/public holiday and give shooters more flexibility.

**2. Introduce a split season.**

For example, start with a nationwide opening weekend, then close the Auckland/Waikato region for about 12 days over Mother's Day. Reopen for the third weekend of May, giving us a second 'opening weekend' feel. Then close the season the weekend *after* King's Birthday. This format creates more defined and manageable windows for shooters to plan around, while also reducing clashes with important family commitments.

**3. More ducks.**

Yes, I know, send some more birds my way please. In my experience, the bigger issue isn't the number of birds—it's the *opportunity* to get out there and enjoy the experience without sacrificing family goodwill.

Frankly, points 1 and 2 are far more highly relevant and quite achievable and would go a long way toward improving participation and satisfaction.

Simply moving the season's closing weekend would instantly improve the perceived value for every licence holder in the Auckland/Waikato region. It's a small change with a significant impact—it gives shooters a better shot at fitting their passion into modern family life.

In my case, it would absolutely reduce the stress levels in our household. I've got three energetic daughters and a wife who's fully involved in weekend sport. Finding time to shoot without upsetting the balance is increasingly difficult. Even my daughters' schools have aligned with Kings Birthday and have allocated Friday as Teacher Only Day. And because of the long weekend my wife's family organised a Family Reunion.

We're not asking for miracles—just a bit of flexibility that reflects the reality of life today, because at its core, this is about much more than regulations or bag limits.

I've held a game licence most of my life, except for the few years I was living overseas. But as far as I know, there's never been any proper discussion beyond the committee level about this. So the question is – what would it take to raise this issue formally? Because right now, the gap between continuing and walking away feels very small.

Just the other week, I spent three full days – dawn to dusk – building bridges just to reach our two maimais, after rising water levels went over the top of our gumboots. Then, last weekend, after Saturday sport, I shot up to the block to throw together a platform – all because my old man decided to come up for the first time. His interest has faded over the years, but now he's suddenly keen and talking about getting his mates up too. Great. Except there's only one weekend left as Mum expects him at the family bach for Kings Birthday Long weekend....

Our family has put over a million dollars toward our block. And what is the return? Four solid days a year, if we're lucky – with low duck numbers. From a return-on-investment point of view, it's hard to justify. From my wife and kids' perspective, I'd be better off packing it in altogether.

But then I think about the memories – the good times, the tradition, the mate ship. That's what keeps me hanging on, stubborn as ever. But maybe I'm just clinging to the glory days.

-Or maybe those days are still worth fighting for. But honestly, it's bloody disappointing, especially of late watching my old man's interest decreasingly fade. He was invited barramundi fishing across Opening Weekend this year. And went. Historically that invitation would have been heartily declined.

My apologies again for the length of my ramblings but I hope you endeavour to review the issues I have outlined above. I also extend my previous invitation for you to return and have a hunt on our block in the foreseeable future.

Kind regards

Bruce Inwards

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Hey there, you guys rang me a few weeks ago for feedback on the Auckland/ Waikato region. And one piece of feedback from me and everyone I talked to is that the season should be extended for 15 days longer for mallards, shovelers, and greys. Because a lot of the time we don't get any good weather (rain and wind) in may and if the season gets extended it allows more time for the weather to come in june.

Another common piece of from people from our area is not being able to feed in April, when other regions can feed whenever. Feeding in a region keeps the ducks in the area and if we aren't feeding and other people are the ducks go to other regions

Yours sincerely

Henry Van Hellemon

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I wish to submit the following remit for the game bird regulations

The Grey / Mallard season length run from the first Saturday in May until the last Sunday in June

- Drier conditions in May have meant the Whangamarino has not flooded properly until the last weekend of the Mallard season 6 out of the last 10 seasons ( wouldn't have flooded at all in Covid year if it was a standard season )
- Reduced season length has resulted in less people committing to game bird shooting, F&G are selling a product by reducing season length it reduces incoming to expand our sporting options
- Families with children have sports on Saturdays making Sunday the only possible hunting option
- Bird numbers have been healthy last season and observing this breeding season numbers are in good shape again
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Feeding of Waterfowl

- Auckland Waikato should allow feeding of Waterfowl through the whole of the season, We are the only region in the country that doesn't permit this activity
- It can create flights of birds on days when they are not moving
- Feeding does not necessarily guarantee shooting opportunities but gives the birds better conditioning

Thank you

AJ Buttimore

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Thank you for the opportunity to make the following submission to the 2025 review of the gamebird hunting regulations.

**That the hunting season for grallards be extended in length by 2 weeks, with a daily bag limit of 8 birds/day for opening weekend and 6 birds/day thereafter.**

I consider the bird numbers experienced last season, combined with the number of breeding birds we are currently observing, are more than sufficient to justify lengthening the hunting season, especially when combined with a reduced bag limit after opening. This will give enhanced hunting opportunities for licence holders and more time to include junior hunters and introduce mates to the sport. We should be encouraging the

use of dogs for hunting, and an added bonus will be an extra 2 weeks work for the dogs, further justifying the expense of keeping them for the rest of the year.

Ian Bailey

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## 2025 F&G Auckland/Waikato Submission #1

Thank you for the opportunity to make the following submission to the 2025 review of the gamebird hunting regulations. Our submission represents the unanimous agreement of the UPWMA committee and represents over 130 F&G license holding members.

We wish to submit the following:

That the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game council properly debates and evaluates all submissions and does not rubber stamp the assessment of them done by management, and that no vote is taken until the advertised meeting to consider them.

In 2022 we put in submissions at the 3 yearly hunting regulations review and indicated our willingness to speak to them at the relevant council meeting. At the start of the meeting our two representatives were informed by the chairman that management had done an assessment on all submissions, and that their recommendations would be adopted. In other words our representatives were wasting their time. We elect councillors to represent us as license holders and expect them to be given the chance to do so, by having open and minuted discussion after all opinions have been heard. We expect democracy, not bureaucracy.

Mike O'Donnell

Secretary  
Upper Piako Wetlands Management Association

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The Blythen Wetland Pond Holders wish to make the following submission:

1. *EXTENDED SEASON - we wish to propose extending the season to 8 weeks and below are the points we currently have to motivate our submission:*
  - a. *We recommend an 8-bird limit per day on the Saturday and Sunday of opening weekend, then to reduce to a 5-bird limit per day for the rest of the 8-week season. Motivation:*
    - i. *Weather conditions are not suitable in the first 6 weeks from the beginning of the season.*
    - ii. *If extended to 8 weeks, more people will not shoot fine weekends, but pick a weekend more suitable later in the season, when historically we get the better shooting weather in June*
    - iii. *Families with young kids are tied up with weekend sports. By extending the season, it will provide more opportunities to involve young hunters in the sport*

iv. *More opportunity can create more license sales, especially in this economic climate. License sales have been dropping.*

2. **FEEDING AT PONDS**

a. *We recommend that feeding be done throughout the year, as per other regions.*

*Motivations:*

- i. Due to having to cease feeding one month prior to opening weekend, ducks are being pushed to farmers, on private properties, for feeding*
- ii. By feeding the ponds throughout the season, the birds will be kept in the high-quality water areas.*
- iii. This may also keep them away from high-risk botulism areas*
- iv. We are the only F&G area that ceases feeding of ponds a month out from opening season*

*Sincerely*

*Martin Bester*

Blythen Wetland Pond Holders

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**POND FEEDING:**

Pond feeding should be allowed all year round.

Reason : To bring us into line with the rest of the North Island.

Why is it People can shoot on freshly cut maize paddocks, without fear of prosecution, yet I can be fined and prosecuted for shooting with maize present within 100 meters of my pond.

Hardly a level playing field under current regulations.

**SEASON LENGTH:**

I would like to see the season extended by 2 weeks, with 8 bird ( Mallard) limit per person, for opening weekend, and then the limit reduced to 6 birds (Mallard) per day for the duration of the season.

Reasons:

- It is becoming the norm now for a lot of ponds and swamps in particular to be dry for most of the season, only getting water towards the end of our current season's dates
- A lot of hunters have children who are committed to Saturday sport. This only gives them, limited opportunities to hunt, when we need to be encouraging younger people to remain active and engaged in our sport, or we risk losing them.

**PARADISE DUCK SEASON LENGTH:**

Extend to the end of June.

Reason: Extended hunting opportunities and keeping farmers happy who sometimes have large flocks congregating on paddocks needed for stock feed throughout the winter months.

Regards

Eric Best

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I live in Auckland and would like the duck season to be extended for another 4 weeks to the end of June

The reason for this is towards the end of May it starts to rain and the weather is better for Duck hunting

The last two years in the Whangamarino Swamp it has been Dry and we could only hunt it the last week of the season

Also if we have a longer season I would have more time to take my kids out hunting so they can get into the sport

Regards

Gary Edwards

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Hi All

I hope this note find you all well as we move into the longer days of spring.

I would like to put a remit in for next season. With the modern day work patterns and family commitments it is not easy to get out over the season for duck hunting. Last season I got out 6 times and mostly week days after opening weekend.

I would like to suggest an 8 week season with a daily bag limit of 7 to 8 ducks.

Cheers Lance

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1. I support an 8 week waterfowl season.

Reasoning : with the weather patterns changing April and May are now mostly dry months and a number of major popular hunting swamps in the AWFG region remain dry going into the opening day and have remained that way for most of the current 4 week seasons with only a few days at the end of the season getting enough rainfall to maintain even marginally levels of water to attract waterfowl and be shootable.

Hunters who have stands in these swamps are continually marking up, maintaining them, predator control and trapping for no opportunities to shoot them within the current 4 week season. There is also weekend work, kids sports etc which restricts when hunters can partake in their chosen sport.

Also we are seeing less young people taking up hunting and particularly game bird hunting and this must be a worry for AWFG. One way to offset that is to offer a Game Season that gives value and time to participate.

2. I fully support Game Bird Feeding before and during the Hunting Season.

Reasoning : The Game Bird Limit is the limit and not everyone wants to / or has to shoot their limit and does not mean more ducks will be shot.

Feeding restrictions is not a problem in any other F & G Region in NZ !! Are we the only F & G Region that is doing the right thing or are we one that is out of step with the rest of NZ ?

More importantly in my opinion feeding ducks gives them a better chance of growing up healthy, strong and being able to have bigger clutches.

A duck that is strong and healthy has a better chance of warding off predators. I also think you will find dedicated hunters will feed throughout the year, although some will only feed before and during the season, is this a bad thing ? ....ducks that have been fed on a pond won't stay around once the shooting starts.... they will disperse to other wetlands in the area for other hunters to get the benefit. I have noticed in dry years / seasons the ducks in our region leave totally and it can take weeks for them to return after water levels get back. Feeding on permanent wetlands during these times, including closed game areas, would tend to hold birds in the region for licence holders' benefit.

Thank you

A E Buttimore

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Please find my submission below for your consideration.

**POND FEEDING :**

I believe pond feeding should be allowed all year round.

Reason: To bring us into line with the rest of the North Island

**SEASON LENGTH:**

Keep the status quo, same season length with 8 bird per day limit.

**PARADISE DUCK SEASON LENGTH:**

Extend to the end of June.

Reason : Extended hunting opportunities and keeping farmers happy who sometimes have large flocks congregating on paddocks needed for stock feed though out the winter months.

Regards

Steve Dickson

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As far as changes go, I would like to see Auckland Waikato season start date either delayed or our season extended into the month of June so we have a chance of some decent wet weather and the public waterways we shoot on get some water flows into them to attract game.

I have hunted ducks for well over 50yrs now in this area and generally May is a lot Drier than years ago, we have not used our opening weekend Whangamarino Wetland pond for probably 5 years now due to lack of water in the month of May.

I would rather have an extended season into June, maybe a reduced bag after opening weekend if game bird numbers were low.

I am also in favour of keeping the 3 shot maximum capacity.

Regards

Tony Schuller