

AGENDA ITEM 12.3

West Coast Game Bird Harvest Summary

Prepared by: Baylee Kersten

West Coast Gamebird Harvest – 2025 and Short-Term Trends (2010–2025)

Background

Fish & Game has a statutory role under the Conservation Act 1987 to monitor hunter satisfaction. An annual telephone survey is performed during the regular game bird season from May to July. The data is considered an estimate of actual harvest and is intended for internal management purposes only.

2025 Season Overview

- 376 adult and junior full-season West Coast licence holders harvested an estimated 5,427 game birds within the region.
- Including out-of-region hunters, total estimated harvest rises to 10,831 birds.
- Average harvest per licence holder: 14 birds (compared with 15 in 2024 and 19 in 2023).
- Average per hunter: 7 Greylard, 6 Paradise Shelduck, 1 Pukeko, and less than 1 Swan or Shoveler.
- Opening weekend accounted for 53% of total season harvest.
- Hunter efficiency: 1.92 birds/hr over opening weekend (highest since survey inception), 1.96 birds/hr across full season (among highest recorded).

Licence Sales and Participation Trends (2010–2025)

- Whole season adult and junior licence sales declined from averaging 470 around 2010 to 370–400 in recent years.
- Sales have stabilised since 2019, but at a lower base.
- Hunting hours have dropped from approximately 7,000 around 2010 to 2,774 (lowest since survey inception) this season.
- Effort per licenceholder has reduced going from averaging 15 hours around 2010 to 2025 record low of 7 hours.
- Harvest efficiency remains strong at just below 2 birds/hr, indicating reduced total harvest is due to fewer hunters and less field time, not lower success rates.

West Coast Licence Holder Harvest and Effort Trends

	2010-2015 Average	2020-2025 Average	Trend
Greylard	5,428	3,116	Declining
Paradise	3,086	2,442	Declining
Pukeko	1,098	1,039	Gradual decline
Swan	98	112	Gradual increase
Shoveler	135	39	Declining
Total Gamebirds Harvested	9,843	6,747	Declining
Total Hunting Hours	6,263	3,981	Declining

Conclusion

West Coast hunters continue to achieve high success rates, and overall West Coast game bird populations remain stable. Declines in harvest are primarily due to fewer hunters and less time spent in the field, rather than any reduction in hunter effectiveness or bird abundance. The focus should therefore remain on supporting participation while sustaining healthy game bird populations.

Staff Recommendations:

That current season durations and bag limits be maintained. That Council continue to allocate staff time to support hunter participation through organised events and initiatives to enhance game bird hunting opportunities.