

EASTERN

Game Bird Hunting Regulations 2026/2027



Eastern Region does not include Lake Taupo fisheries.

Eastern Office: c/- Ngongotaha Hatchery,
1130 Paradise Valley Road, Ngongotaha

Postal Address: Private Bag 3010, Rotorua 3046

Phone: (07) 357 5501 / 0800 434 742

Report Poaching: 0800 762 244 (0800POACHING)

Email: eastern@fishandgame.org.nz



SCAN FOR
ALL REGIONS
REGULATIONS

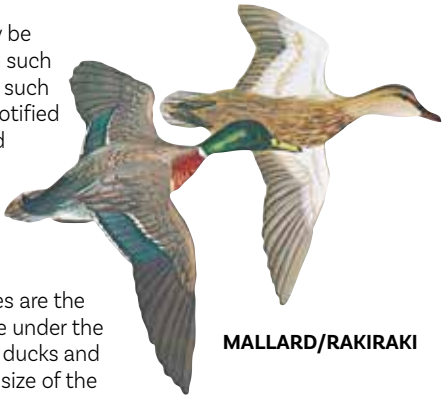
NEW ZEALAND DUCK SPECIES

GAME SPECIES

(NAMED IN BLACK)

These species may be hunted, but only in such regions and during such open seasons as notified in the New Zealand Gazette each year by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

NOTE: Important recognition features are the large areas of white under the wings of the game ducks and the smaller overall size of the protected ducks.



MALLARD/RAKIRAKI



**PARADISE SHELDUCK/
PŪTAKITAKI**



**SHOVELER/
KURUWHENGI**



GREY DUCK/PĀRERA

PROTECTED SPECIES

(NAMED IN RED)

These species are absolutely
protected at all times.

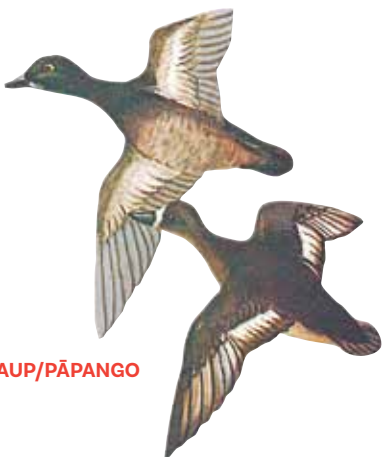
DO NOT TARGET



BROWN TEAL/PĀTEKE



GREY TEAL/TĒTĒ-MOROITI



SCAUP/PĀPANGO

Regulations

The regulations printed in this guide booklet are subject to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing's approval. A copy of the published game notice in the New Zealand Gazette is available on www.fishandgame.org.nz along with further information on game bird hunting.

GAME BIRD HUNTING Code Of Conduct

Fish and Game New Zealand actively promotes responsible and ethical hunting practices. As game bird hunters we all have the following responsibilities, as detailed in the Game Bird Hunting Code of Conduct:

Hunt Humanely

- Shoot only within the effective range of our firearm and our capabilities, and only when a quick, clean kill is likely
- Retrieve all shot birds promptly and dispatch wounded game birds quickly and humanely
- Respect the resource, value our game birds and eat what we shoot

Protect Game Bird Resources And Our Hunting Traditions

- Understand and observe all hunting regulations and licensing requirements
- Support game bird management and habitat enhancement activities
- Take no more than our immediate needs
- Share our knowledge and foster ethical attitudes and behaviour in hunting companions and youth

Care For The Environment

- Remove all rubbish from the hunting area and dispose of offal and carcasses responsibly
- Use non-toxic shot and biodegradable products.
- Use established tracks and roads

Respect The Rights Of Others

- Respect private property and always obtain access permission
- Be considerate of non-hunters
- Be aware of our safety and the safety of others when hunting

- Comply with the Arms Act 1983 and always follow the 7 Firearms Safety Rules:
 1. Treat every firearm as loaded
 2. Always point firearms in a safe direction
 3. Load a firearm only when ready to fire
 4. Identify your target beyond all doubt
 5. Check your firing zone
 6. Store firearms and ammunition safely
 7. Avoid both alcohol and drugs when handling firearms

For further guidance about responsible game bird hunting read the full Code of Conduct at www.fishandgame.org.nz

Stop The Spread Of Aquatic Pests

Protect our waters: **CHECK, CLEAN, DRY.** Check dogs, boots, decoys, boats and their trailers before you leave the area.

Hunting Licence Valid Nationwide

All game bird hunting licences can be used in all Fish & Game New Zealand regions. Day licences are valid only on or after the second Monday of the new season. It's important to note that if you're hunting in other regions you need to read up on the local regulations at www.fishandgame.org.nz. Fish & Game New Zealand sports fish and game licences are issued online, are processed electronically and comply with the Electronic Transactions Act 2002. Licences are issued centrally by a person authorised to issue licences on behalf of each Fish and Game Council.

Game Bird Habitat Stamp

A game bird habitat stamp must be displayed on every licence to hunt or kill game¹. The purpose of the Habitat Stamp Programme is to raise funds for habitat enhancement. Five dollars (\$5)² of the game licence fee is assigned to the stamp as income for the programme.

If you own or help manage suitable game bird habitat including wetlands, you are welcome to apply for funds raised from the habitat stamp programme. To apply see the Game Bird Habitat Trust website <https://fishandgame.org.nz/environment/protecting/protecting-nz-game-bird-habitats/the-nz-game-bird-habitat-trust> for details. Applications close June 30.



¹ Section 19A(1) of the Wildlife Act 1953

² Section 72(3A)9e) of the Wildlife Act 1953

Shotguns And Use Of Non-Toxic Shot

Game bird hunting can only be undertaken with a shotgun of a 10 gauge or smaller (including 12, 16, 20, 28, .410). Mandatory use of non-toxic shot applies to all waterfowl hunting, (C15, Hunters Notice)).

This ban is mandatory across all lands (public and private) whilst hunting waterfowl within 200 metres of all waterways and wetlands.

For more information refer below or to www.fishandgame.org.nz

Wildlife Act 1953

The hunting of game is governed by the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1953. The Minister for Hunting and Fishing declares an open season for game annually in the New Zealand Gazette (see below). Some important provisions of the Wildlife Act are covered here. The Act and its companion Wildlife Regulations 1955 can be viewed in full online: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/>

Wildlife Declared To Be Game ³

Hunters are reminded that only the following lists of species are game birds that they are permitted to hunt and kill.

Waterfowl

- Kakiānau/black swan (*Cygnus atratus*) (except on Chatham Islands).
- Duck:
 - Pāpera/grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and any cross of that species with any other species, variety, or kind of duck (except on Chatham Islands).
 - Rakiraki/Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and any cross of that species with any other species, variety, or kind of duck (except on Chatham Islands).
 - Pūtakitaki/paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*). Putangitangi
 - Kuruwhengi/Australasian shoveler duck (New Zealand shoveler) (*Spatula rhynchotis*).
- Pūkeko (*Porphyrio melanotus*) (except on Chatham Islands).

³ Schedule 1 Wildlife Act 1953

Upland Game

- Chukar (*Alectoris graeca chukar*).
- Red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa rufa*).
- Pheasant (any bird not being a domestic bird, of the genus *Phasianus* and any cross of any such bird with any other species, variety, or kind of pheasant).
- Quail:
 - Australian or brown quail (*Synoicus*). *Synoicus ypsilophorus*
 - Californian quail (*Callipepla californica*).
 - Virginian or bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*).

Restrictions On The Taking Of Game

(S18, Wildlife Act 1953)

No person shall use more than one shotgun or any live decoy.

Use Of Lead Shot Ammunition Over Water

(C15, Hunters Notice)

It is an offence to possess, or hunt waterfowl with 200 metres of open water using lead shot ammunition.

Licence To Hunt Or Kill Game

(S19, Wildlife Act 1953)

It is an offence to hunt or kill game unless the person holds a current game licence, except in some circumstances where that person is a resident occupier as defined in the Wildlife Act.

Occupier of Any Land

(S19(3), Wildlife Act 1953)

“...the occupier of any land, and the spouse or partner and any one son or daughter of the occupier, may, during an open season, hunt or kill on that land without a licence (but subject to all other restrictions imposed by game regulations.” The occupier of the land is normally the owner if she/he personally resides on the land, but this privilege can be transferred to farm manager or sharemilkers by a written statement indicating such to Fish and Game if the owner does not personally reside on the land. Note that the Act allows for hunting by three people; the occupier, his/her wife/husband/civil union partner or de facto partner and one son or daughter on that land - but no other land. Except a run-off farmed in conjunction with that land.

Shooting Of Game Not In Flight Prohibited

(S22, Wildlife Act 1953)

It is an offence for a person to shoot or attempt to shoot at any game bird not in flight except where a game bird is already wounded by shooting.

Obstructing Rangers

(S40, Wildlife Act 1953)

It is an offence to obstruct a ranger. The maximum penalty is 2-years imprisonment and/or \$100,000 fine.

Taking Protected Wildlife

(S67A, Wildlife Act 1953)

It is an offence to hunt or kill protected wildlife. The maximum penalties for hunting or killing absolutely protected wildlife is up to two years imprisonment or \$100,000 fine.

Game Hunting Exclusion Areas

Closed game areas means a part of a region that is for the time being excluded from the open season in the region, but does not include a wildlife sanctuary or a wildlife refuge or any area in which the shooting or hunting or killing of animals is prohibited under or pursuant to paragraph (j) of subsection (2) of this [Wildlife] Act or any other Act. There is no open season for game birds on property in a closed game area. It remains legal to have a dog or a gun on such land, but not to use them to hunt game birds (which also applies to the landowner). (s2. Wildlife Act 1953). Each closed game area is administered by a Fish and Game Council.

Wildlife Refuges

It is illegal to take a dog or a gun onto Wildlife Refuge land, unless specifically permitted in writing to do so, or to harm or disturb any wildlife including game birds on that land (s14(3) Wildlife Act 1953). Wildlife Refuges are administered by the Department of Conservation.

The remainder of this hunting guide is made up of regional details and hunting conditions contained in the Gazetted Game Notice. These conditions are set out in the:

SCHEDULE 1

Hunting Conditions Common To All Fish And Game Regions

1 Bag limits

- 1.1** No person shall take or kill, on any one day, more than the number of game birds specified as the daily bag limit for the Fish and Game Region in which the game is taken.
- 1.2** No person shall possess, on any one day, more than the number of game birds specified as the daily bag limit for the Fish and Game Region in which the game is taken, except on Sunday 3 May 2026, when that person may have in their possession twice the number of game birds specified as the daily bag limit for Saturday 2 May 2026.
- 1.3** A person may possess more game than specified in clause 1(2) of this Schedule, if all such game is labelled with the following details:
- (a) The name and address of the person by whom the game was taken;
 - (b) The number of the licence to hunt or kill game held by the person by whom the game was taken;
 - (c) The name of the Fish and Game Region by which that licence was issued;
 - (d) The name of the Fish and Game Region in which the game was taken; and
 - (e) The date on which the game was taken.

2 Waiver of Restrictions on Baiting for Waterfowl

A person may hunt or kill game of the family Anatidae (waterfowl) during the open season for game in all Fish and Game Regions, except Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Region, where food has been cast, thrown, placed or planted any time during the year.⁴ In the Second Schedule, Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Region, Special Condition 4(10), applies to restrictions on baiting.

3 Magazine Shotguns

A person may hunt or kill game birds, as specified, in any Fish and Game Regions with any magazine shotgun of a calibre 10 gauge or less, which includes magazine extensions that comply with the Arms Act 1983,⁵ other than in the:

- (a) Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Region;
- (b) Eastern Fish and Game Region;

⁴ Section 17 of the Wildlife Act 1953.

⁵ Amended notification to section 18(1)(c) (iii) and (v) of the Wildlife Act 1953 as authorised by the Minister of Conservation under section 18(1) of that Act.

- (c) Hawke's Bay Fish and Game Region;
- (d) Wellington Fish and Game Region;
- (e) West Coast Fish and Game Region.

For these five Regions the special conditions in Schedule 2 apply.

4 Shot Size

No person shall use, in any shotgun used for the purposes of hunting and killing game, any cartridge containing any shot size having a larger retained, per-pellet energy at 90 metres than BB.

5 Use of Lead Shot Prohibited

5.1 No person may possess lead shot, or use lead shot, while hunting or killing waterfowl within 200 metres of open water with any gun. Non-toxic alternative shot must be used, such as steel.

5.2 For the purposes of this requirement, "waterfowl" means any of the following game species:

- Black swan (*Cygnus atratus*);
- Grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and any cross of that species with any other species, variety, or kind of duck;
- Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and any cross of that species with any other species, variety, or kind of duck;
- Paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) also known as Paradise duck;
- Australasian shoveler duck (New Zealand shoveler) (*Spatula rhynchotis*);
- Pūkeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*).

5.3 For the purposes of this requirement, "open water" means either:

- (a) any area of land or seabed covered permanently or seasonally by water wider than 3 metres; or
- (b) any area which is temporarily covered by water wider than 3 metres at the time of such possession or use, and that is contiguous to an area referred to in paragraph (3)(a).

6 Camouflaged Rowboats

A person may hunt or kill game within the following Fish and Game Regions, from unmoored camouflaged rowboats, subject to the excluded periods for the regions specified below: ⁶

- **Northland** - no excluded period
- **Auckland/Waikato** - excluding 2 and 3 May 2026 for

⁶ Section 18(1)(f)(vi) of the Wildlife Act 1953.

the whole Auckland/Waikato region and excluding 2 to 4 May and 9 and 10 May 2026 for the Waikato River north of the boat ramp at the confluence of the Mangawara Stream

- **Eastern** – excluding 2 and 3 May 2026
- **Hawke’s Bay** – excluding 2 and 3 May 2026
- **Taranaki** – no excluded period
- **Wellington** – excluding 2 and 3 May 2026
- **Nelson/Marlborough** – no excluded period
- **West Coast** – no excluded period
- **North Canterbury** – excluding 2 and 3 May 2026
- **Central South Island** – excluding 2 and 3 May 2026
- **Otago** – excluding Clutha River 2 to 10 May 2026 inclusive
- **Southland** – excluding 2 and 3 of May 2026, and the Mataura River downstream of the State Highway 1 Bridge at Gore for the month of May, and that part of the Oreti River below the Dunn’s Road bridge for the whole season.

7 Restriction on Taking of Game

No person shall use any vehicle propelled by mechanical power (including motorised watercraft) to chase or kill game, except in such circumstances and at such times as authorised by the Conservation Act 1987 and Wildlife Act 1953.⁷

8 Mark-up Day

- 8.1** Stand claimants who claimed and occupied a stand during the 2025 Game Season may claim that stand at any time prior to Mark-up Day (up to 10.00 a.m. on 29 March 2026) following the purchase of the 2026 game licence. If you are in the Auckland/Waikato Region, then the above mentioned applies **only to Adult Whole-Season Licence Holders** and does not apply to Junior Licence Holders as it does in all other Fish and Game Regions.
- 8.2** Otherwise, unclaimed stands can only be claimed any time after 10.00 am on 29 March 2026 in all Fish and Game Regions.
- 8.3** A stand may be claimed by planting on it a stake having either a board or identifying label attached, plainly identifying the name of the claimant and the number of his/her licence. The hunting stand claim tag provided with the licence must be completed with

⁷ Section 18(1)(f)(v) of the Wildlife Act 1953.

Regulations

the name of the claimant and affixed to the board or identifying label.

- 8.4** The licence holder claiming a stand must be present in person at the stand when marking it up.
- 8.5** No one can claim more than one stand.
- 8.6** A stand cannot be claimed closer than 90 metres to a stand already claimed by another person without that person's consent.
- 8.7** Any stand not occupied by the claimant within one hour after the opening hour of hunting, on any day, can be occupied by another licence holder for the remainder of the day.

9 Conditions

These conditions will expire at the end of the open season for game.

PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS

STOP THE SPREAD OF FRESHWATER PESTS



CHECK



CLEAN



DRY

SCHEDULE 2

Hunting Conditions Applicable To Particular Fish And Game Regions

EASTERN FISH AND GAME REGION⁵

1 Game That May be Hunted or Killed

–Duration of 2026/2027 Season

Species	Season Duration (dates inclusive)	Daily Bag Limit	Hunting Area
Grey/mallard duck	2 May to 1 Jun 2026	6	All areas
NZ shoveler duck	2 May to 1 Jun 2026	2	All areas
Paradise shelduck	2 May to 28 Jun 2026	6	Area A1, A2
	2 May to 28 Jun 2026	10	Area B2 and that part of B1, which lies south of the true right bank of the Uawa River Mouth, Tolaga Bay
	2 May to 12 Jul 2026	20	That part of B1, which lies north of the true right bank of the Uawa River Mouth, Tolaga Bay
Pūkeko	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	10	All areas
	27 Mar to 4 Apr 2027	10	All areas
Black swan	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	No limit	Area A1
	27 Mar to 4 Apr 2027	No limit	Area A1
	2 May to 28 Jun 2026	5	Area A2
	Closed season	0	Area B1 & B2
Bobwhite (Virginian) quail	Closed Season	0	All areas
Brown quail	Closed season	0	All areas

⁵ Reference to description: New Zealand Gazette, No. 83, of 24 May 1990, at page 1861.

Fish & Game Regions

California quail	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	No limit	Area A1 & A2
	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	5	Area B1 & B2
Cock pheasant	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	5	All areas

2 Definition of Areas

The following descriptions refer to Management Units within the Eastern Region (described on Infomap 242B-2 Land Information New Zealand). The Management Units are defined using both District Council and Eastern Region Fish and Game boundaries. The coastal boundaries of Management Units A1, B1, and B2 follow the coastline as per Infomap 242-2.

2.1 Area A1: Tauranga District, Western Bay of Plenty District, that part of the South Waikato District within the Eastern Fish and Game region and east of State Highway 1, Rotorua District, Kawerau District, Whakatane District and Opotiki District.

2.2 Area A2: Those parts of the South Waikato District west of State Highway 1 within the Eastern Fish and Game region, Taupo District and Ruapehu District, which lie within the Eastern Fish and Game region.

2.3 Area B1: Gisborne District.

2.4 Area B2: That part of Wairoa District within the Eastern Fish and Game region.

3 Shooting Hours

6.15am to 6.15pm in all areas for all species during their respective seasons.

4 Decoy Limit

No limit.

5 Special Conditions

5.1 No person may hunt or kill game birds, as specified, within the Eastern region with any magazine shotgun unless the shotgun:

- (a) has a magazine of any type adjusted with a one-piece filler which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun; or
- (b) the magazine is pinned in accordance with Regulations made under this Act; so that the magazine shotgun is incapable of holding more than 2 shells in the magazine, with no more than 3 shells in the magazine and chamber combined, at any one time.

- 5.2** Any game bird licence holder who has a Department of Conservation authorisation to take or kill wildlife for the purpose of hawking or falconry may hunt with an Australasian Harrier (*Circus approximans*) to take game birds. This is subject to the season length and bag limit for game birds specified in clause 1 of this notice for this Region and subject to any condition imposed by the Director-General of Conservation under such a permit.
- 5.3** No person shall wilfully within the Eastern Fish and Game Region, in or on any public place, or in or on any private land without consent of the land occupier:
- (a) deposit any type of litter, including any carcass or part of it, of any shot game.
 - (b) having deposited any type of litter, including carcasses or parts thereof, of any shot game, leaves it after having been deposited.
 - (c) for the purposes of this regulation litter includes any refuse, animal or game remains, or waste matter or items of any type used in the course of hunting, which is abandoned or intended to be abandoned.

5.4 A person must not use a drone to disturb game birds.

6 Hunting From a Boat Under Power

No person may possess a firearm that can be rapidly deployed in or on any unmoored vessel, except (1) where the unmoored vessel is not being propelled at the time by a motorised device, or (2) the firearm is needed to retrieve wounded game. For the purpose of this subclause a firearm is considered unable to be rapidly deployed if it has been dismantled or secured in a case, gunslip or other secure compartment.

Hunting In The Eastern Region

We have produced a pamphlet on gamebird hunting in the Eastern Region. Inquire at your local sports shop or the Eastern Fish and Game Office for a copy. Eastern Fish and Game hold annual ballots for hunting sites in wetlands managed by the Council.

Hunters may register for the ballot before the end of the first week of November. All you have to do is phone or write to us with your name, address, and phone number and we will send you a ballot application form before

Hunting In The
Eastern Region
SCAN HERE



it's held. Hunters from the previous year will automatically be sent an application form.

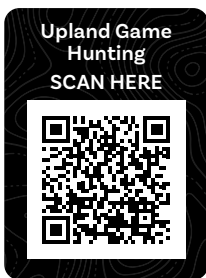
If you have changed your address, make sure you notify us of the changes. Access information to the reserves can be obtained from the website <https://fishandgame.org.nz/game-bird-hunting-in-new-zealand/where-to-hunt/regional-info/eastern/>

Casual Permits To Hunt In The Wetlands

Casual permits, for non-ballot holders to hunt wetlands administered by Eastern Fish and Game, can be obtained by phoning or writing to the office in Rotorua. Casual permits are available after the first two weeks of the season. This allows successful ballot holders two weeks of undisturbed hunting.

Upland Game Hunting

Some of New Zealand's best pheasant and quail hunting is found in the Eastern Region. A lot of this hunting is in the production forestry areas of the Bay of Plenty managed by Timberlands Limited. Permits to hunt in the forest are issued by FIRST Security 07 347 0297. https://www.tll.co.nz/recreational_access_permits



Wetland Creation

For information and advice on wetland creation contact the staff at your local Fish & Game offices. Wetlands in the Eastern Region are now rare. In some parts less than 1% of the original wetlands remain.

The Habitat Trust fund is one source of funding for enhancement, purchase or development of wetlands.

If you have a proposal to create or enhance a large area of wetland, we may be able to assist you obtain funding.

Photo: Barry Harcourt



BLUE DUCK - WHIO, A THREATENED SPECIES.

In parts of the country whio (blue duck) populations are increasing in response to predator control, and birds are being seen from time to time on farmland in the vicinity of forested streams. They commonly do low level flights up and down streams in early morning and evening meaning a quick shooter can easily mistake them in low light. This threatened species is fully protected, and apart from setting conservation efforts back a step, killing one can mean a \$100,000 fine.

Please take care to identify your target beyond all doubt so whio, along with all of our other protected birds, are not mistakenly shot.

CHECK ON YOUR MATES

Need support?
Text/free call 1737
anytime anywhere



Or contact your GP or Health
Improvement Practitioner



**Public access to your
next special spot?**



Pocket Maps

Offline public access maps of Aotearoa.
Anytime. Anywhere.



Keep your ducks in a row.



This duck season remember to always handle firearms safely, wear hearing protection and save the drinks till after the hunt.

For more information on hunter safety head to firearmssafetyauthority.govt.nz

PLAN > **ACT** > **STAY**
SAFE > **SAFE** > **SAFE**



Te Tari Pūreke
Firearms Safety Authority