

NELSON/MARLBOROUGH

Game Bird Hunting Regulations 2026/2027



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SCAN FOR
ALL REGIONS
REGULATIONS

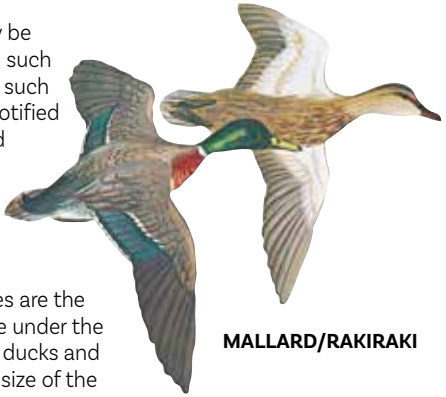
NEW ZEALAND DUCK SPECIES

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.

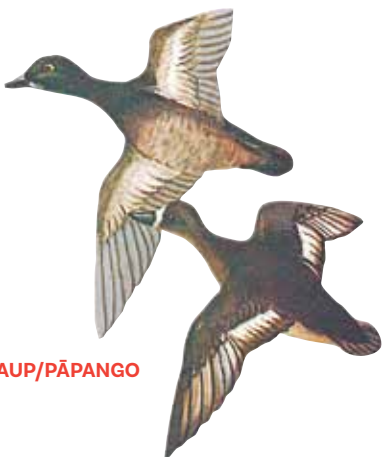
DO NOT TARGET



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

NELSON MARLBOROUGH FISH AND GAME REGION ⁵

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 and any hybrid of those species	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	8	All areas
NZ shoveler duck	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	2	All areas
Paradise shelduck	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	10	All areas, except Tasman/Golden Bay area
	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	15	Tasman/Golden Bay area
Pūkeko	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	10	Except East Coast/Kaikoura & Tasman/Golden Bay area
	2 May to 25 Oct 2026	20	Tasman/Golden Bay area
	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	2	East Coast/Kaikoura area only
	2 Jan 2027 to 21 Feb 2027	20	Tasman/Golden Bay area only
Black swan	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	10	All areas
	8 Aug to 30 Aug 2026	10	All areas
California quail	2 May to 30 Aug 2026	10	All areas

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

Fish & Game Regions

Species	Season Duration (dates inclusive)	Daily Bag Limit	Hunting Area
Cock pheasant	2 May and 3 May 2026	1	All publicly administered land
	30 May to 1 Jun 2026	1	
	20 and 21 Jun 2026	1	
	18 and 19 Jul 2026	1	
Cock pheasant	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	1	All privately owned land including Crown Forest Land
Chukar	2 May to 26 Jul 2026	2	All areas

2 Definition of Areas

2.1 Wairau Lagoons: That area defined as all open waters, islands and the peninsula between Chandlers Lagoon and Big Lagoon, south of the Wairau River mouth, including Te Aropipi Channel and south to the White Bluffs.

2.2 Tasman/Golden Bay area: The area west of the Bryant/Gordon Range, north of State Highway 63 from St Arnaud to Kawatiri Junction encompassing Tasman & Golden Bays.

2.3 East Coast/Kaikoura Area: The area to the south of the Awatere Valley/Molesworth Road and the Redwood Pass Road.

3 Shooting Hours

6.30am to 6.30pm during May, then 6.45am to 6.15pm until 25 August 2024. For the remaining pūkeko season, sunrise to sunset.

4 Decoy Limit

No limit.

5 Special Conditions

5.1 All permanent hunting stands/maimais used for the purposes of hunting of game on the Wairau Lagoons must be situated above the mean high-water level.

5.2 Moored camouflaged boats are permitted for hunting or killing game in the Wairau Lagoons, but shall not be within 200 metres of any other hunting stand.

Hunting Opportunities In Nelson/ Marlborough

Tasman/Golden Bay/Murchison

Populations of mallard duck occur throughout this area, including coastal estuaries and lower country farm ponds. While most of the ducks are a mallard/grey (greylard) cross, there are reasonable populations of grey-type ducks in Golden Bay and the Murchison/ Maruia area. Paradise shelduck can be found throughout this area in good numbers, especially on dairy farms in Golden Bay, Tasman and the Murchison area. Hunters are encouraged to approach owners of farms who are often willing to allow access in order to reduce the shelduck population. Black swans are in large numbers around Western Golden Bay, including Westhaven Inlet. There are high populations of pukeko in the Tasman/Golden Bay areas, and as a result of increases in the population and crop damage complaints in the past few years, the pukeko season length and area have been extended to try to alleviate the problems in Nelson/Tasman/Golden Bay only. There are balloted hunting opportunities for Kainui Dam and Gibbs Road - please apply to the Richmond office.

With a cycleway nearby, those hunting the Pearl Creek and Neiman Creek on the Waimea Estuary and the mouth of the Riuwaka River are advised to use caution.

Hunters are advised not to hunt the area between Pugh Road and Brightwater, and the Waimea Park fishing facility and wetland, due to safety issues with high public use of these areas.

Upland game

Limited numbers of pheasant can be found scattered throughout orchards, foothills, forestry edges and river bermlands, particularly in the Waimea, lower Motueka plains and the Moutere. Populations of quail exist on bush/forestry margins, recently felled forest areas and rough land in the warm drier country throughout the district. This hunting is often challenging due to the thick scrub that makes any follow-up (after the initial flush) very difficult. NMF&G has an access agreement with forest management companies Tasman Pine Forests Ltd and OneFortyOne - contact the Richmond office for details.

Marlborough

The many rivers, streams, flats, estuaries, wetlands, and Marlborough Sounds offer excellent hunting opportunities.

Fish & Game Regions

Mallards occur throughout the region, and paradise shelduck can be found in good numbers on farms with improved pasture or crops, including estuary margins and rivers adjacent to these farms. Black swans occur in moderate numbers in estuarine reaches. Two excellent public land waterfowl hunting areas close to Blenheim are the Wairau Lagoons and Para Wetland (see below). Top Valley Wetland is also available for balloted hunting opportunities.

Hunting The Wairau Lagoons

The Wairau Lagoons cover about 2000 hectares of saline marsh and mud flats between the Wairau River mouth and the Vernon Estate to the south. Besides the obvious main channels in the northern part of the lagoons and Te Aropipi Channel, which runs along inside the seaward Boulder Bank, few parts of the lagoons are more than a metre deep. The mud in some areas can be very deep, and care should be taken in unfamiliar areas. There is a large population of protected grey teal, and hunters must take care to positively identify their target. Access can be gained via the end of Hardings Road, off Redwood Pass Road (via permit only with strict access conditions - apply to Vaughan Lynn for gate code and access rules), or from the Wairau Bar using a boat. A permit is required to hunt this area, which is now issued through the Richmond Fish & Game office on behalf of DOC Renwick. An access and information pamphlet is available from either Fish & Game office.

Para Wetland

Para Wetland is a Fish & Game owned wetland with several balloted hunting sites within the wetland. Hunters who wish to hunt the wetland on Opening Weekend are invited to make an application on a ballot form available from the Blenheim office before 31 March. Para Wetland is being developed to improve game bird hunting opportunities, and new sites are becoming available with time.

Upland game

The Marlborough high country offers some of the country's prime quail hunting, although much of this is on private land and requires permission from the landowner. Populations of quail can also be found scattered throughout most riverbeds, notably the Awatere, Wairau and Waihopai catchments, where broken cover and scrublands exist. Marlborough District Council generally allow quail hunting in the Wairau above the Waihopai, but please check out maps on the Walking Access Commission website for private land boundaries before hunting. NMF&G have negotiated weekend access to some OneFortyOne forest blocks in Marlborough; contact the Richmond office.

Public land chukar hunting is available on Molesworth Station for a limited period, contact the Fish and Game Council office in Richmond for more information.

Farmers who hunt their own property under section 19 of the Wildlife Act 1953 are allowed to do so without having to purchase a licence, although they are subject to this notice and the Regulations. Those farmers who wish to do so can receive a current copy of the regional newsletter and national magazine. Contact the Nelson Fish and Game Council office to place your address on the mailing list.



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