



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Waterfowl Hunters Urged to Behave

Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service officers today described the recent behaviour of several waterfowl hunters as illegal and greedy.

“While most waterfowl hunters continue to act within the confines of the law and their hunting permits, there are a few who are not,” Parks and Wildlife Service senior wildlife officer Ray Chatto said.

“The latest example of illegal activity was noticed during a weekend helicopter patrol of Howard Springs Hunting Reserve where more than 155 Magpie Geese and at least 30 ducks were found freshly shot on one swamp.

“This included one Burdekin duck which is a species that cannot be shot.

“Aerial and ground examination of the area where the geese and ducks were found indicated they had been shot by a maximum of only eight hunters operating in two areas on either side of the swamp.

“In the case of the number of Magpie Geese shot, this is nearly 100 over the combined bag limit and three times the total numbers of geese that could be legally taken by eight hunters, which appears to be a disgraceful example of greed and illegal activity.”

Mr Chatto said some hunters managed to get away while those who were spoken to denied shooting more than their bag limit of seven geese each.

He said these same hunters denied using lead shots although freshly used and unused lead shot cartridges were found in their vicinity.

The ban on lead shot is the result of the identified serious problem of lead shot poisoning of waterfowl that exists at many wetlands and is part of a national strategy to combat the problem.

Mr Chatto said people exceeding bag limits could have their hunting permit cancelled and be prosecuted under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* with a maximum \$55,000 fine or five year jail term.

“The hunters we spoke to claim most of the geese and ducks around them had been shot by a third group of hunters on quad bikes from a nearby area but investigations revealed no signs of any fresh tracks there on that morning,” Mr Chatto said.

“An on-the-spot ticket was issued for a firearms offence and a second firearms offence is likely to be followed up with further action.

“While it is difficult to prove bag limits have been exceeded in this situation, investigations are also continuing into the possibility of charges relating to this matter.

“We are urging people, including hunters, who notice illegal activity such as this to contact Parks and Wildlife Service or NT Police so that future waterfowl hunting seasons are not put in jeopardy, regardless of whether matters are proven in court.

“As such it is in the interests of all hunters to put pressure on each other from within to ensure that waterfowl hunting is done ethically and within the law.

“Regular patrols will be conducted at Top End hunting reserves until the end of the waterfowl hunting season on 30 December.”

Mr Chatto reminded waterfowl hunters that lodging permit returns is a condition of permit and that returns should be submitted by 28 February 2007.

“Lodging of permit returns is an essential part of the overall management of the waterfowl hunting season and failure to lodge a permit return may reduce our capacity to appropriately manage future waterfowl hunting seasons and place the long term maintenance of the season in jeopardy,” he said.

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Ray Chatto on 0401 110 205**

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