

Wildlife Management and Welfare

- A Community Perspective



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The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) Inc is the largest sports shooting and recreational hunting community group in Australia. With more than 130,000 members, the SSAA is committed to providing hunter education and promoting ethical hunting practices. SSAA members are obliged to follow The Hunters Code - a code of practice that includes animal welfare considerations - during any activity, regardless of the status of the animal concerned. The SSAA, along with other hunting groups in Australia, have been active conservationists for more than 50 years, as demonstrated in the Conservation programs list in Table 1. The hunting community consider themselves to be custodians and stewards of our wildlife resources.

The model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods, developed in conjunction with the RSPCA, highlights shooting to have the lowest overall welfare impact when compared to other pest animal management tools (Sharp & Saunders, 2008). Not only is shooting a relatively humane method from an individual animal perspective, it is extremely target specific. Ethical hunting, as promoted by the SSAA, ensures that only head and heart/chest shots are taken to minimise the potential for unnecessary pain and suffering.

The SSAA continues to be involved in conservation-based wildlife management projects and strategies throughout Australia, as shown in Table 2. Just one small group of SSAA members based in South Australia have volunteered more than 16,000 hours and travelled 349,000km to undertake wildlife management and conservation activities in the past three-year period. In dollar terms, their contribution exceeds \$544,000 for the same period. Recreational hunters are a legitimate tool of wildlife management, which is widely accepted around the world (Organ & Fritzell 2000).



Table 1: Conservation programs instigated by hunters throughout Australia

Type	Organisation	State	Activity	Area	Since
Wildlife sanctuaries	SSAA	Nation-wide	Wildlife protection areas and management programs	SSAA ranges are declared wildlife sanctuaries	1948
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Driving force behind the creation of the first state game reserve	Jack Smith Lake near Woodside	1959
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Instigated Australia's first game licence and establishment of the Conservation Trust	Funds from trust lead to the part purchased of 180 state game reserves across Victoria	1959
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Identified 40 key habitat areas to become game reserves in its first year of operation	Various locations across Victoria	1960
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Hird Swamp, Kerang	1960
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Johnson Swamp, Kerang	1960
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat, water regulation	Dowds Morass, Gippsland	1966
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Hospital Swamp, Geelong	1982
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	South Australia	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Loveday Swamp, Riverland	1984
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	South Australia	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Noora Evaporation Basin, Riverland	1984
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat, carp exclusion	Reedy Lake, Geelong	1994
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Kanyapella Basin	1998
Land purchased for wildlife	SSAA	Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia	Wildlife protection areas and management programs	Various locations across the country	2002
Wetlands and waterfowl	Field & Game	Victoria	Land purchase, restoration and rehabilitation of critical habitat	Heart Morass, Gippsland	2006

Table 2: Pest animal management programs involving SSAA members

Program	State	Species controlled	Benefits	Since
Bounceback	South Australia	Goats, foxes, cats	Wallabies	1992
National Parks & Wildlife Australia, various activities	South Australia	Goats, foxes, cats, pigs	Native wildlife and habitat	1992
Property-based game management plans	Tasmania	Over abundant grazing animals	Habitat and pasture	1993
Stewartdale	Queensland	Goats, foxes, cats, pigs	Native wildlife, habitat	1998
Parks Victoria, various activities	Victoria	Goats, foxes, cats, birds, rabbits	Native wildlife, habitat	2002
Flashjack	Queensland	Foxes, cats	Wallabies	2004
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service, various activities	Queensland	Goats, foxes, cats, pigs	Native wildlife and habitat	2007

References

Organ, JF & Fritzell, EK 2000, 'Trends in consumptive recreation and the wildlife profession', *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, vol. 28, pp.780-789.
 Sharp, T & Saunders, G 2008, *A model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods*, Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, ACT.

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