

FACT SHEET

Freckled Duck - Not sure, don't shoot

In Victoria, the Freckled Duck is declared a threatened species and must not be hunted. While not a common sight, hunters may encounter Freckled Duck, particularly in times of drought. Freckled Duck should never be confused with Victoria's game duck species.

The following information will help you identify Freckled Duck. Importantly, if you are not sure, don't shoot, otherwise you could be facing a substantial fine, imprisonment or both.

Description

The Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*) is a medium-sized duck, similar in size to a Pacific Black Duck. They are heavy bodied and dark grey/brown in colour.

The whole body is speckled with off-white markings which are visible up close. However, don't rely on this freckled pattern to identify a bird in flight. From a distance, the bird appears a uniform grey/brown.

The bill of the Freckled Duck is a distinctive, narrow, up-turned shape (dished with a heavy base) which, in breeding males, has a bright red base. On the water, you will also notice that the Freckled Duck has a tuft of feathers sticking out at the back of its head. This tuft of feathers and up-turned bill make it easy to identify the Freckled Duck on the water.

Freckled Duck has no distinctive markings on its upper wing. The female plumage is similar to the male but is generally lighter in colour.

In flight, the bird appears as a uniform grey/brown colour with the underwings and belly appearing paler than the rest of its plumage. The Freckled Duck typically flies with a head down or hunched appearance.

In flight and on the water, the Freckled Duck will often mix with game duck species, so you need to be careful and be sure you can identify the birds you are hunting.

Importantly, if you are not sure, don't shoot.



Distribution

Freckled Duck are found mainly in south-eastern and south-western Australia and inland along the Diamantina River and Coopers Creek.

In Victoria, Freckled Duck have been recorded mainly from wetlands throughout the northern, western and Gippsland areas.

They most commonly appear during times of drought when they seek refuge on Victorian waters.

Habitat

Freckled Duck have been recorded on permanent, open freshwater, deep freshwater marshes and saline wetlands in Victoria.

Permanent swamps or freshly flooded creeks containing cumbungi and tangled lignum are favoured inland breeding habitat, while in coastal districts, the densest tea-tree swamps are most favoured for breeding.

Freckled Duck use different wetlands under different conditions. During dry periods or under drought conditions, Freckled Duck are forced from non-permanent breeding swamps and occupy large permanent open waters, particularly lakes and reservoirs larger than 100 hectares. In wet years, they are largely sedentary.

Tips for identifying Freckled Duck

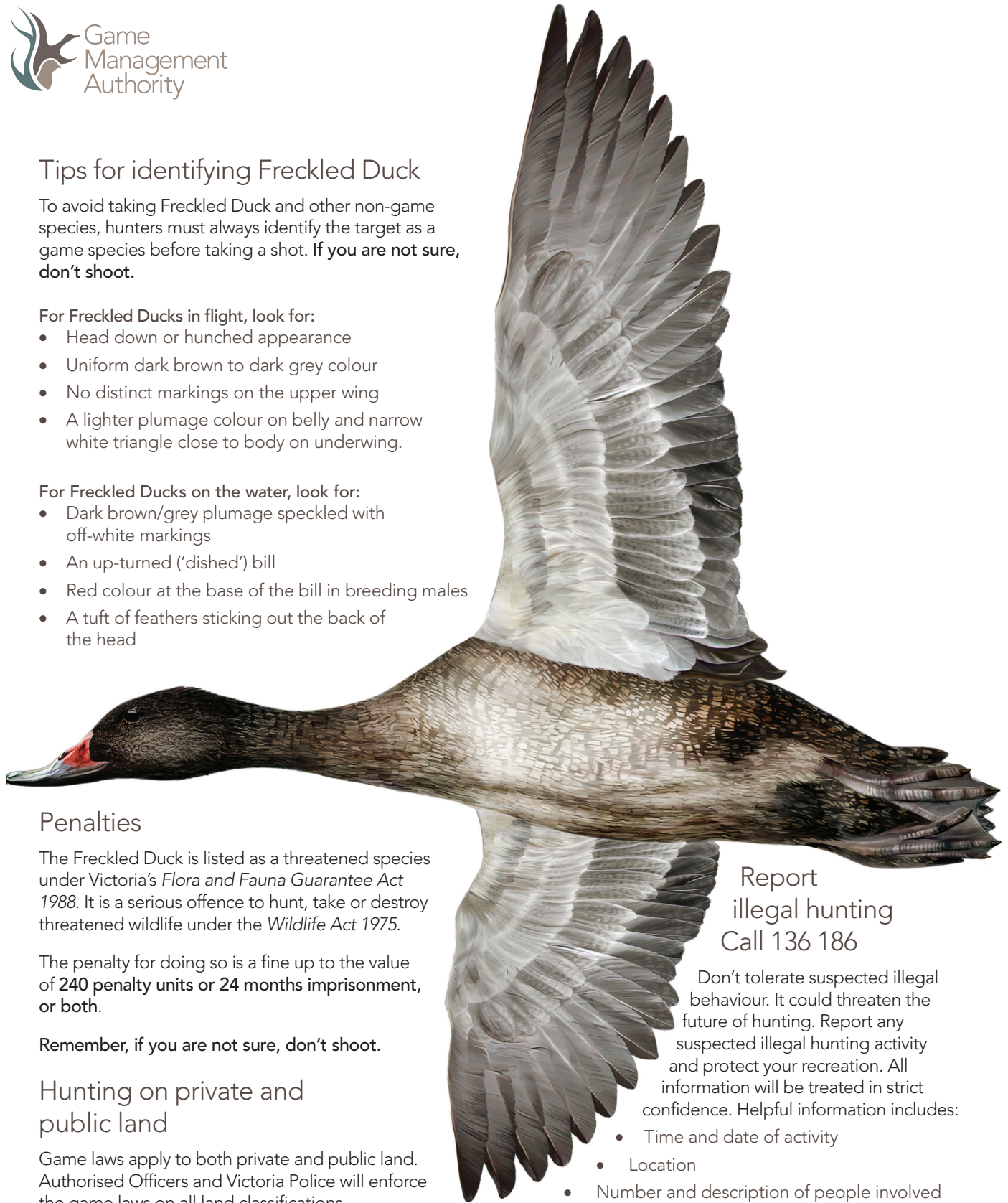
To avoid taking Freckled Duck and other non-game species, hunters must always identify the target as a game species before taking a shot. **If you are not sure, don't shoot.**

For Freckled Ducks in flight, look for:

- Head down or hunched appearance
- Uniform dark brown to dark grey colour
- No distinct markings on the upper wing
- A lighter plumage colour on belly and narrow white triangle close to body on underwing.

For Freckled Ducks on the water, look for:

- Dark brown/grey plumage speckled with off-white markings
- An up-turned ('dished') bill
- Red colour at the base of the bill in breeding males
- A tuft of feathers sticking out the back of the head



Penalties

The Freckled Duck is listed as a threatened species under Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. It is a serious offence to hunt, take or destroy threatened wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

The penalty for doing so is a fine up to the value of **240 penalty units or 24 months imprisonment, or both.**

Remember, if you are not sure, don't shoot.

Hunting on private and public land

Game laws apply to both private and public land. Authorised Officers and Victoria Police will enforce the game laws on all land classifications.

Report
illegal hunting
Call 136 186

Don't tolerate suspected illegal behaviour. It could threaten the future of hunting. Report any suspected illegal hunting activity and protect your recreation. All information will be treated in strict confidence. Helpful information includes:

- Time and date of activity
- Location
- Number and description of people involved
- Vehicle registration and description
- Suspected illegal activity (e.g. shooting non-game species)

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