



Frankston Branch News

Official Newsletter of Frankston Field & Game A.B.N. 97 827 331 728

December 2009 - January 2010

TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY - CLAYS, DUCKS, SPRING RABBITS AND RAIN!

With the Christmas break comes a rare opportunity for many to take rest from work and enjoy life's simple pleasures. Many will no-doubt find themselves pottering around doing odd-jobs and employed in what my wife jokingly refers to as the "department of dodgy projects".

Something I always find myself doing in Jan is sorting, preparing and maintaining the hunting equipment piled up in my shed.

This year I have a new project, tidying-up a well used but very sturdy twelve foot duck boat purchased from a mate in July. It was probably fine as-is but the trailer, boat and motor have been overhauled, resprayed and will emerge from my garage the greatest waterfowling vessel of all time! At least in my eyes...

It's not a bad time to take on a project or pull out hunting gear for a tidy it up. Boat owners are well advised from not only an effectiveness perspective, but for the sake of safety, to maintain their vessels before the season. Hunters are likewise well-set for March if they invest a few summer hours into re-stringing decoys, patching waders or taking retrievers down to the local park for dummy practice.

Many hunters will head for the rice over summer, taking the opportunity to chase ducks, get in some cod fishing and relax by campfire under the stars. Others will head to the bay chasing snapper in what is shaping up as a brilliant season for fishing Pt Phillip Bay. Given time I personally hope to target some bunnies!

Most hunters would have chased rabbits at some stage. Older hunters may indeed regard bunnies as the main-stay of Australian small-game hunting. One thing is for certain, the humble wild rabbit has carved itself an iconic place in Australian culture.

Officially introduced to Australia near Geelong on Christmas day 1859, Rabbits occupy all states and have reached their 150th year as residents of our shores. This is a milestone recently commemorated at the historical Geelong homestead once owned by Thomas Austin, the sponsor of the original release.

As we know, rabbits are an agricultural and environmental disaster !

A rabbit can breed from the tender age of four months and at any time of the year, particularly when food is plentiful. Five or more litters of four to five young can be produced annually!

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From the President . . .

I'd like to start off by wishing members all the very best for a fun, happy and safe Christmas! It's hard to believe the calendar year is drawing to an end, but then again with all of the goings-on that 2009 involved, it's not surprising this busy year went fast.

Since I penned my October report, the branch and members have been very active. One of their pursuits was duck hunting on rice fields north of the Murray in the annual crop mitigation program. When committee met in October the universally held view was that rice hunting had a bleak outlook in 2009 due to very poor conditions. Committee's personal farming contacts were not panning-out and we decided not to pursue an organised rice trip. Our traditional partners, Bendigo FGA agreed.

Fortunately things aren't nearly as bleak as predicted. Against the odds a number of farmers are growing albeit at a fraction of ordinary capacity. Great news, I'm sure you'd all join me in wishing them well! Lets hope they achieve a measure of success and the recovering industry is buoyed by it!

Despite these positive signs, hunters still report locating properties remains problematic. Working hard for their bags, hunters are guarded in sharing specific information but what I can say is reports are filtering back that despite hit and miss hunting, birds are present on the rice in fair numbers.

Our sporting clays competitors have also been busy. On home soil members have been treated to some tremendous days, the best of which was the October Carlson Classic. The biggest event of the Frankston calendar, this event attracted 104 competitors - a record attendance for recent years.

Travelling competitors have also had many opportunities. Of particular note a substantial contingent of Frankston members travelled to Albury Wodonga on Melbourne Cup weekend for the 2009 FGA National Carnival. A fantastic weekend of fun, great targets and comradery were enjoyed by all.

Committee have been flat out too! Some general news in no particular order:

You will have noticed an ABN printed above. Our recent ATO registration and updated Consumer Affairs status now position us to pursue council and state government grants.

As previously reported, the old FFGA web-site has now been decommissioned. Thanks to Ben Drakely for generously volunteering to setup and run a new one. The domain name www.frankstonfga.com.au is registered and the site will be up and running mid December.

We've confirmed our attendance at the FGA annual general meeting in Seymour late November and will report back on relevant outcomes in the next newsletter and at the December hunters hangout.

The final 2009 hunters hangout is planned with a barbeque supper to be provided. Our Christmas clay shoot is also being organised with the traditional prize pool of christmas hams and puddings.

Our range closes over Christmas, reopening Jan 23rd. Dave Jencke and Graeme Lewien plan substantial earthworks through that break. We'll then start 2010 with the 2010 Carlson Classic event, moved forward at sponsors request from October to Jan 23rd - we plan it to be bigger than ever!

Treasurer Larry Lambrou is busy upgrading banking facilities including a switch to Westpac, taking statements on-line and organising higher interest bearing terms for our deposits.

Last but not least we have been pushing FGA for updates and information on the 2010 duck season negotiations with Minister Jennings and the Department. At this stage we're told there's every indication a season will proceed but no decision has been made. Fingers crossed!

As I write, spring rain is falling heavily outside where I'd been putting finishing touches on a fresh paint job for my duck boat. My plans thwarted, it's no matter. In fact I think I'll ask Santa for a wet summer... It might be crap for painting but it's great weather for ducks!

Ho Ho Ho - Merry Christmas!

FRANKSTON FGA PROUDLY PRESENT THE 100 TARGET

2010 CARLSON CLASSIC OVER \$3,000 IN FANTASTIC PRIZES!

BRING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH A BANG - 23RD JANUARY (10AM NOMS)

Frankston Field & Game - Hunting

FEATHERED MARAUDERS - HUNTERS LEND RICE FARMERS A HAND

Most duck hunters appreciate that to a rice farmer the difference between a profitable year and a disaster can be measured in feathers...

It's been said a single bird can consume a cup of rice per night. Multiply that by the thousands of ducks flourishing in man-made rice farm water courses, and it's not hard to see why rice farmers regard ducks as feathered marauders.

Unlike game birds found on public wetlands, ducks on a rice bay are considered vermin.

Harsh words indeed, the vermin viewpoint is held not only by those who's livelihood is planted in New South Welsh rice bays, It's inscribed in state legislation. The NSW Crop-Mitigation program not only enables duck hunting, it actively encourages it to assist the multi-million dollar rice industry against crop losses by duck.

It's a strange state of affairs that NSW which banned "recreational" game-bird hunting under the guise of animal cruelty in 1996, allows; no encourages hunters to take as many birds as possible... Just so long as they're over rice.

So there you have it, you can't spend your time and tourist dollars, ethically and sustainably hunting NSW game-birds for fun and sport. Accordingly to the NSW government that's wrong, cruel and you should be ashamed of yourselves (yeah right) However with a WIT certificate and crop mitigation permit you can "destroy" vermin over rice at your leisure 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year with no bag limit!

A generation of hunters have been glad for this ridiculous double standard. It stands nonetheless, a first class illustration of government hypocrisy.

The NSW government's misguided 1996 convictions were, and continue to be paper-thin! Both in '96 and today, they're prepared to overlook their holier than thou animal cruelty position, promoting duck hunting when it suits them for the sake of industry and job creation.

Cynics would rightly wonder if substantial taxes on rice profits payable to state and federal coffers had a part to play...

Well thought-out proposals to reintroduce duck hunting in NSW are in play but progress is slow!

Anyway, enough politics. How are members doing? Shooters are generally protective of their spots but some have taken time to share stories of their excursions north of the mighty Murray:

Wakool region: "Plenty of ducks (mobs in the low dozens) mostly blackies and teal. Problem was we were shooting over new bays with little growth so opportunities were a bit limited. A half dozen birds each were taken and a good weekend was had by all!"

Griffith region: "Shot over bore-fed bays. Lots of birds and we shot plenty! Only problem was the large number of snakes. Had a ball - we're going again in a few weeks!"

Dennilquin region: "A quick report. Flew up to

our secret spot a way out of Denni after a call from one of Dad's mates saying his small bore-fed crop was being hit. We arrived late Friday and slept in swags by the road. Two dozen birds were shot Sat but but we worked hard for them. Anyhow, had a great time and caught up with a few mates. The birds moved on during Sunday and shooting was lean Sunday night".

Location not provided: "Me, Justin and family headed up to the rice on Monday for a couple of days. Numbers weren't big compared to our normally big bags but we had a ball. Heaps of rice around this year so get out there!"

To summarise, no one I've spoken with has filled their deep-freeze with rice fed duck. However if you hunt on the rice in 2009 you're helping farmers who are doing it tough and according to reports and comment you're in with a chance!

A common thread of reports - Go looking and you'll find a property! Everyone is having a great time! The hunting may be difficult but then again the rice was always hit-and-miss. But on a good day...Wow!

Stop the Press!

Alarming reports passed to the branch this week alleged "behind closed doors" negotiations between the NSW Govt and the Greens Party will see the long awaited private-members bill to reintroduce NSW duck hunting on public lands defeated! We're seeking comment and will report back to members on this important issue.

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Up Coming Events

DECEMBER

3rd Hunters Hangout
12th 75 Target sporting clays Christmas shoot
17th Committee Meeting

JANUARY

21st Committee meeting
23rd 100 Target CARLSON CLASSIC

FEBRUARY

4th Hunters Hangout
13th 75 Target pre duck season shoot brought to you by DKS Outdoor Promotions
18th Committee meeting
27th 75 Target sporting clays

All members are welcome to attend committee meetings.

Committee meetings are held 6:30 PM Thursdays

Please Note: Watch future issues of the newsletter and attend Hunters Hangouts for date changes.

Frankston Field & Game - Sporting Clays

At the time of writing many clay shooters will likely be drawing breath!

What with the FGA Nationals at the start of November and a great many big competitions in recent months, it's been a busy time to say the least.

The office:

Jess Walker has continued to run our office on comp days and has performed tremendously.

Taking maternity leave shortly, we wish Jess and her family all the very best. During her absence we welcome her sister Rachel who will take to the reins in her absence having been trained up during our October and November competitions.

Pricing change:

A reminder to competitors, effective December we are changing our competition pricing:

Veterans nominations will remain \$25 for standard 75 target competitions and Juniors will continue to shoot to free.

Adult shooters will now pay \$35 for standard 75 target competitions rather than \$38. This brings us in line with other Melbourne clubs.

Please note the \$3 dollar per shooter subsidised lunch on the fourth monthly Saturday competition will not continue in 2010.

Prize pools:

Further to the last newsletter our ammunition based prize pools has been fixed at a minimum of 5 boxes of shells for grade 1st place winners, 3 boxes for 2nd, 2 boxes for 3rd.

We have been trialling some new cartridges being 1 oz. Spartan brand shells in 7.5 shot.

The branch has negotiated a tremendous price for these shells and importantly, shooters have been using them and feedback has been great.

Thanks to Dave Jencke, we have an ammunition safe set up now, capable of storing bulk lots allowing us to acquire ten cases or more per purchase to make the most of bulk discounts.

FFGA members return from Albury Wodonga and the 2009 FGA Nationals:

A great many Frankston members travelled up the Hume on Melbourne Cup weekend to be treated to a tremendous show put on by the host branch in difficult, hot and dry conditions.

As usual three grounds were set in the names of each of the three major sponsors, Miroku, Beretta and Winchester. The course totalled 150 targets over the two days of competition.

The targets were all first class and catered to competitors of all grades. The wide terrain of the Wodonga range was well utilised with much variation ranging from high falling and crossing targets to some classic close snappy shooting.

More detailed results will follow in the next edition of Feathers and Fur magazine and as you'll see from the text and photographs, the crew at Wodonga did a tremendous job!

COMPETITION RESULTS:

26th Sept 2009 - 75 Target Sporting clays:

With our shoot running on the same day as the AFL Grand Final, we could be forgiven for being a bit pessimistic about likely attendances.

Heavy rain, hail and wind reduced our expectations even more so but we were pleasantly surprised with 37 competitors plus several birds-only shooters attending.

While it wasn't the busiest day ever, we had a ball! Finishing early many members later watched the game over a cold drink in the club rooms. It don't get much better than that!

AA – Peter Onley, Shaun Burns, A. Thomas
A – Gerry Thomas, Terry Mitrakis, A. Backman
B – M. Waldron, Alex Xenidis, Tom Tryp
C – Brett Murray, C Pappas, Larry Lambrou
Vets - Vaughn Ruddick, J. Robbins, R. Carter
Ladies – Michelle Carton
Jun – Jeremy Thomas

24th Oct 2009 - 100 Target Carlson Classic

A huge day - we thank our loyal sponsors and each and everyone who contributed to a record turn-out for Frankston for recent times of 104 competitors plus birds-only shooters!

Competitors came from far and wide, from regional Victoria, Melbourne clubs and even a couple driving down from NSW.

Printed flyers had been handed out far and wide including 200 off that had been placed on car wind-shields at major Melbourne clubs leading up to the event. All this and the \$3,000 plus prize pool combined to bring in a wonderful crowd!

The guys on the ground had worked particularly hard during the week and a tremendous layout was set for the competitors!

With committee on deck plus extra volunteers to fill traps and help on the grounds, the flow of squads was great and a conclusion achieved at around 6pm after a number of shoot off's

Overall Champion- Sox Phillipsidis
AA – Brenton Irons, Frank Vella, Neil Peart
A – D McLeod, Joe Contarino, Pedro
B – Alex Xenidis, Brett Murray, James Grech
C – Rod Leibe, Chris Pappas, Matt Bryan
Vets - Bryan Sanger, Vic Smith, Len Box
Ladies – Renae Birgan, M McDonald, M Carton
Jun – Jeremy Paglia, B Spencer, D McIntyre

Door Prize - Joe Contarino

14th Nov 2009 - 75 Sporting Clays

A hot and overcast day, we arrived unsure whether to expect a crowd or an empty carpark. Close after the FGA Nationals and with the FITASC World Championships at Warnanbool only days away, numbers were hard to predict.

Some 50 shooters attended and enjoyed novel targets set in a 37/38 format. Something new, multiple pairs and three singles were set per stand. Different sure... it was complemented

AA – Marton Holmes, Angelo Thomas
A – Terry Mitrakis, J. Unsworth, P. Maltezos
B – Hercules Thomas, A Hjorth, J Markham
C – Larry Lambrou, A Panetta, C Pappas
Vets - Rob Carter, Len Box, Terry Preston
Jun – Jeremy Thomas, Dclntyre

Thanks to the core group of volunteers and committee members who work hard before, during and after our shoots. On the grounds, in the office and at presentations, they make their mark on FFGA events because they love our sport. Our events arent possible without them.

DECEMBER 2009 - JANUARY 2010 COMPETITIONS

76 target Christmas Shoot - December 12th, 11am

100 target, 2010 Carlson Classic - Sat January 23rd, 10am

75 target Pre Duck Season Shoot - Saturday February 13th, 11am

75 Sporting Clays - Saturday Febuary 27th, 11am

Location: FRANKSTON FGA, Rossiters Road Carrum Downs

Contact Dave Jencke and refer FGA shoot-book

Christmas Hunter's Hang Out

Thursday, December 3rd - Start 8.00 pm

BBQ Supper Provided

Frankston Australia CTC Club Rooms
Rossiters Road, Carrum Downs

Sponsor's Honour Roll

PULSE OFFICE SERVICES
WATTMASTER

WHITEHORSE ARMS

BRANCA SAND & SOIL

CARLSON CHOKE TUBES

SCERRI BROS BILLIARDS

DKS OUTDOORS PROMOTIONS

AUSTRALASIAN SPORTS HUNTING ALLIANCE

BRIAN WALKER FAMILY

BARRY HOWE FAMILY & FRIENDS

Please support those who support your sport

FRANKSTON FIELD AND GAME ARE ON THE WEB!

The committee proudly invite you
to visit our all new website:

www.frankstonfga.com.au

Featuring:

Latest events and competition calendar

Downloadable newsletters

Competition results

Branch info, history and contacts

Photo archives - Social, hunting and competition

Useful links

Sponsor honour roll

All that and more...

Going live mid Dec 09, we thank volunteer web-master Ben Drakely and many contributing authors and photographers for providing content

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The result of high rabbit populations has been massive competition with native wildlife, damage to vegetation and farm land degradation. It's not all bad though, the humble rabbit has provided a steady source of food and sport and was notable as an abundant source of sustenance to our forefathers during the great depression.

Highly rated for the table overseas, it's gained an undeserved poor reputation in many Aussie households. This is changing now and upmarket restaurants often plate fashionable rabbit dishes while specialty butchers charge up to \$14 a bunny!

Cooked properly rabbit is magic but abused on the stove, old boots can taste better! Here's an idea:

Soak rabbits in salty ice-water to lift bruises and clean away blood. Joint them and then marinade overnight in garlic, cracked-pepper, rosemary and white wine (be sure to use wine good enough to drink). Drain, flour, brown then return to the liquid and braise for 2-3 hours on low heat. Add thickened cream to pan juices before serving.

Best rabbit dish ever and even the most game-wary diner will go back for seconds!

Attempts to control rabbits have been varied in method and success. Combined shooting programs, 10-80 poisoning, gassing and warren ripping have worked on local populations. The 1950's release of myxomatosis reduced rabbits more dramatically by around 90%. Rabbits are one of nature's great survivors though, and the species eventually established resistance and regenerated.

The mid to late 1990's saw a new and deadlier disease, rabbit calicivirus or RCV make a massive impact on rabbit populations. I recall my regular spots in Kyneton and Euroa yielded dozens per morning back in 1995. Recently little more than field mushrooms have been brought home!

Despite the odds it seems rabbits have established a resistance to RCV and populations are climbing! Recent scientific studies have shown pregnant rabbits pass on a small measure of immunity to their young and particularly in areas of high rainfall, the effectiveness of the RCV is reduced.

The government is understandably concerned. A "rabbit-scan" project has been established to track populations and the CSIRO has been tasked with producing new strains of the RCV virus for release.

In the meantime, make the most of them and hunt hard! I think methods of hunting make the trip. Rabbits have been taken by just about every way possible from centerfire rifles to rimfires, with traps, shotguns, grey-hounds and ferrets. Personally I favour pushing through bracken fern on foot with a 12 gauge loaded with 32gm #4;s and a utility dog to flush and retrieve. To each his own...

Plenty of areas are reporting good numbers so take a look and you might be pleasantly surprised! Be patient and recognise many areas have seen increased hunting pressure, pushing rabbits into nocturnal activity and feeding. In these areas spotlighting is by far the most successful method.

RITCHIES
SUPERMARKETS AND LIQUOR STORES