POSITION STATEMENT
Gamebird Hunting

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The hunting of indigenous game birds as legal quarry for recreation requires a balanced approach. It involves actively hunting indigenous wild bird species under specified constraints to ensure fair pursuit and sustainable use of birds.

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA POSITION STATEMENT

BirdLife South Africa is neutral on the ethics of shooting wild or released birds. Game birds have been utilised by humans for food and sport for centuries because they are believed to withstand 'sustainable harvesting' and have also been domesticated for food production and for ornamental aviculture. Game bird hunting is recognised as a restricted activity, governed by established legislation, self-regulation ethical and standards of consumptive sustainable utilisation. It is accepted in both national (National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998) and international (IUCN Convention of Biodiversity, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species, Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds) practice, and contributes to the economic value of wildlife, with recognised benefits to rural communities.

BirdLife South Africa supports the sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources but, however, is cognisant that the hunting of indigenous game birds requires a balanced approach.

BirdLife South Africa's objective in this matter is to promote:

- Broadly acceptable ethical codes of conduct and humane standards of practice.
- Sustainable utilisation (through scientifically-defensible shooting seasons and bag limits).
- Compliance with regulations, including licensing and permit conditions.

Species which may be hunted in each province are stipulated by provincial legislation in the annual hunting proclamations. Regulated bag limits and shooting seasons are informed by the distribution, population status and breeding season of each species and may differ between provinces. The hunting of globally and regionally threatened (red-listed) species and of game bird species within their breeding seasons is prohibited and not condoned by BirdLife South Africa.

BirdLife South Africa strongly encourages the replacement of lead shot ammunition with non-toxic alternatives and the introduction of legislation regarding this matter[1].

BirdLife South Africa is opposed to the introduction of exotic species and the captive breeding of indigenous game birds for wingshooting purposes because:

- Exotic bird species pose a genetic risk (interspecific hybridisation) to indigenous waterfowl and terrestrial game birds.
- They have the potential to introduce new parasites and diseases, or spread already existing diseases amongst indigenous species, and displace naturally occurring populations.
- South Africa's game birds are still abundant, widespread and the target species are not of conservation concern. Ecologically sound habitat management that maintains local game bird populations at levels that allow sustainable utilisation is encouraged. The release of captive-bred birds for game bird hunting is not supported.

BirdLife South Africa does not support game bird predator control practices solely to enhance game bird populations for wingshooting.

BirdLife South Africa recognises that abuse of restrictive measures is possible and therefore urges all participants to fulfil both the spirit and letter of codes of ethics and legislation.

[1]Refer to the BirdLife South Africa position statement on lead poisoning for further information on lead toxicity in birds.

BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings