

Non-Commercial Short-tailed Shearwater (Muttonbird) Season

FACT SHEET

A Hunting Licence is required to harvest Short-tailed Shearwaters (muttonbirds) during the period of the annual open season for muttonbird.

Licence requirements

A muttonbird Hunting Licence must be purchased before undertaking any harvesting. Licences can be obtained from a Service Tasmania shop or online at <https://hunting.nre.tas.gov.au/>.

Where can you legally harvest muttonbirds?

Certain muttonbird colonies in Bass Strait may be opened for non-commercial harvesting. Details of expected open colonies for 2026 are on the second page of this sheet. These details may change following muttonbird surveys undertaken prior to the season. Details of changes will be made available online, through Wildlife Services or from Service Tasmania Service Centres.

Harvesting regulations

Muttonbird harvesters must note:

- Night-birding is prohibited (night is between 1 hour after sunset and 1 hour before sunrise).
- The use of pointed, sharpened, barbed or hook-shaped or sharpened implements is prohibited.
- Dogs must not be used.
- Interfering with, damaging or destroying burrows is prohibited.
- Licences are issued to one person only. The taking of muttonbirds under another person's licence (including family members) is unlawful.

Burrow damage

Muttonbirds use the same burrow each year; please reduce damage by minimising the distance you travel in colonies and trying to avoid damaging burrows.

Guidelines for the humane killing of muttonbirds

The *Animal Welfare Act 1993* prescribes penalties for persons who inhumanely kill muttonbird chicks. It is your responsibility to kill any harvested chicks quickly and humanely.

The following methods have been approved as Animal Welfare Guidelines under s44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*. These guidelines provide instructions to ensure that the killing of muttonbirds is as efficient as possible with minimum suffering.

It is the responsibility of the harvester to use the method that that does not cause unreasonable or unjustifiable pain or suffering to the chick.

The following method is suitable for more experienced muttonbirders, including those killing chicks for commercial or cultural purposes:

1. *Immediately upon removing the bird from the burrow, secure the head firmly between the index and middle fingers of one hand, just below the skull.*
2. *Secure the head in place with the thumb.*
3. *Raise the bird in a pendulum movement to a near vertical position (head now facing down).*
4. *In one fluid movement drop the bird (or allow the bird to fall) until it reaches a position just lower than horizontal (when the weight of the bird is felt), then snap the hand and wrist upwards and towards yourself (as when cracking a whip) while pressing the thumb firmly into position below the base of the skull.*

The following method is suitable for less experienced muttonbirders:

1. Hold the bird by the feet, head down, in one hand.
2. Place the index and middle fingers of the other hand in the form of a V immediately behind the bird's skull.
3. Finally turn the bird's head upwards and away. This method immediately dislocates the neck and results in a quick, painless death.

2026 season dates

The 2026 season dates are 4th April 2026 – 19th April 2026 unless changed as per the *Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004*.

Bag limit

Bag limit is 25 birds unless set by Special Permit or it is changed as per the *Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004*.

2026: Colonies Open for Non-Commercial Harvesting of Short-tailed Shearwaters (Muttonbirds)			
Colony	Land Status	2026 Season date and other requirements	Bag Limit
Hunter Group:			
Harbour Islets Conservation Area	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Petrels Game Reserve	Game Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Ranger Point Rookery on Three Hummock Island State Reserve	State Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Stack Island Game Reserve	Game Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Bird Island Game Reserve	Game Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Walkers Island	PRIVATE LAND	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Robbins Island	PRIVATE LAND	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
King Island Group:			
Badger Box	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Barrier Creek	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Bold Head	Conservation Area & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Boulder Point	State Reserve & Private	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Catarique Point	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Fraser Bluff	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Grassy	PRIVATE LAND	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Naracoopa Beach	Crown – Leased	As above + Permission for access required from lessee.	25
New Year Island Game Reserve	Game Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Red Hut	Conservation Area & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Rocky Point	State Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Sandblow Point	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Seal Rocks State Reserve	State Reserve	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Wash and Springs	Crown Reserve & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Whistler Point	Conservation Area & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Wickham Lighthouse	PRIVATE LAND	As above + Permission for access required from landowner.	25
Furneaux Group:			
Big Green Island East Kangaroo Island	Nature Reserve Nature Reserve	Harvesting under Special Permit ONLY . Permit from P&WS Whitemark, Flinders Island. Contact P&WS Whitemark on Ph: (03)6359 2217 for details.	
Inner Sister Island Conservation Area Outer Sister Island Conservation Area	Conservation Area & Crown - Leased	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004+ Permission for access required from lessee	25
Little Chalky Island	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Little Dog Island Game Reserve	Game Reserve & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner	25
Little Green Island Conservation Area	Conservation Area & Private	As above + Permission for access required from landowner	25
Little Island	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Marriot Reef	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Pasco Islands	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Passage Island	Conservation Area - Leased	As above + Permission for access required from lessee	25
Pelican Island	Crown Land	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Prime Seal Island	Conservation Area- Leased	As above + Permission for access required from lessee	25
Puncheon Island	PRIVATE LAND	As above + Permission for access required from landowner	25
Roydon Island	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25
Sentinel Island	Conservation Area	As per Nature Conservation (Open Seasons) Order 2004	25

