

# Greens oppose recreational hunting in national parks

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In their sights ... clockwise from top left: red kangaroo, shelduck, black swan and galah.

A NEW bill that would open the state's national parks and reserves to recreational hunters who could be licensed to shoot native animals and birds has been condemned by the NSW Greens, the Liberal Party and environmental groups.

The NSW Shooters Party has introduced the private members bill to Parliament. It allows for private game reserves to be set up for professional safari hunters, overturning NSW laws that prevent the enclosing of animals on land solely for hunting purposes.

A Shooters Party MP, Robert Brown, said the bill would not allow the hunting of threatened species and, in the case of native waterfowl, licensed game hunters would be required to pass an official identification test of the ducks.

But the Opposition's environment spokeswoman, Catherine Cusack, attacked the bill, saying key elements were unacceptable. "We totally reject the idea of shooting in national parks and the concept of shooting native animals in national parks is repugnant to almost anyone."

Among the birds and animals that could be hunted are the Australian wood duck, the chestnut teal and grey teal ducks, galahs, corellas and eastern grey, western grey and red kangaroos.

The Shooters Party hopes to gain the Government's support for the bill but the Environment Minister, Carmel Tebbutt, is already signalling she will oppose key provisions in it, including allowing recreational hunters into national parks and the hunting of native animals.

Her spokeswoman said the Government would consider the bill's merits but it did not support "the hunting of native animals or hunting in national parks".

Mr Brown said the bill drew on many of the recommendations of a government-backed review of existing laws undertaken with staff from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Game Council.

He said that under his bill, the environment minister would be responsible for declaring any national park or reserve open to hunters.

He told the *Herald* that opening national parks to recreational hunters to shoot feral animals would save the Government significant amounts of money and the hunting of native animals and birds in parks would require ministerial approval.

The Greens leader, Lee Rhiannon, called on Ms Tebbutt to reject the entire bill, not only the provisions concerning national parks. "Opposing shooting in national parks may well be a tactic Labor is using to divert attention from the fact it will support other equally regressive changes being pushed by the Shooters Party," Ms Rhiannon said.

The Greens are also concerned about provisions in the bill that would make it an offence to approach anyone or interfere with anyone "lawfully hunting game animals" on any land that had been declared public hunting land.

The Shooters Party has provided critical support for the Labor Government in the upper house, especially since the 2007 election. Last week the Shooters voted with the Government and the Reverend Fred Nile of the Christian Democratic party to defeat a bill backed by the Greens and the Opposition to preserve prime agricultural land from mining developments.