

## Consequences of Eurasian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) Hunting on the Population in Hungary

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**Abstract** – In our Institute we have researched the migrating population of Eurasian Woodcock in Hungary for 2 decades. According to our monitoring project we have declared, that springtime hunting of woodcock is selective in Hungary. The determinative part of hunted birds are cock. There are twice- three times more females proportionally in the hunting bags of the countries that hunting practice is autumn – winter methods, than in Hungary. Summarized it can be declared, that the Hungarian springtime hunting of Eurasian Woodcock has been both in quality and quantity a sustainable use without unpleasant consequences on the European population.

**Keywords:** Eurasian Woodcock / selective hunting / sex ratio

Researches of Eurasian Woodcock has been going on since 1990 in Institute of Wildlife Management and Vertebrate Zoology of the West Hungarian University, results have been published continuously in the Hungarian Waterfowl Publications. The first part of the researches finished 2008 pursuant to the act 85/2008 (VII.05) what has modified the former act 79/2004 (V.04) of the Ministry of Rural Development. According to this order the species has a game status, but does not have a shooting season in Hungary after the following year (2009).

The Institute of Wildlife Management and Vertebrate Zoology joined 2009 to the Woodcock Monitoring of the Hungarian Hunters' National Association. As a primary purpose of the project surveys are being conducted to improve knowledge of the number of migrating Eurasian Woodcock. Further aim is to understand the effect of hunting on the Hungarian population. On the basis of the previous project results 2009 we prepared a new methodology for monitoring and collecting samples. The new monitoring program started at 2010 with the collaboration of 500 sample gatherer in about 900 sampling points. The quantity of samples is statistical satisfying. (Figure 1.).

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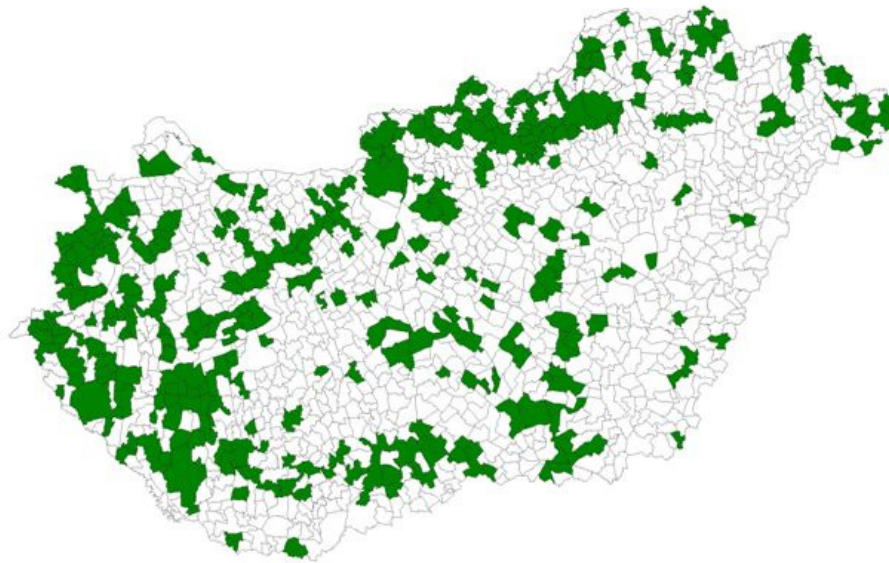


Figure 1. The areas of participating wildlife managers in the monitoring

According to literature data (HEPBURN, 1983; FERRAND & GOSSMANN, 2001) we examined the proportion of Hungarian woodcock bag to the total European hunting mortality. We asserted that the ratio of Hungarian shots is insignificant (0,1-0,2%). The major part of the hunting mortality comes from the shots in the breeding and wintering territories (France, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom and Russia).

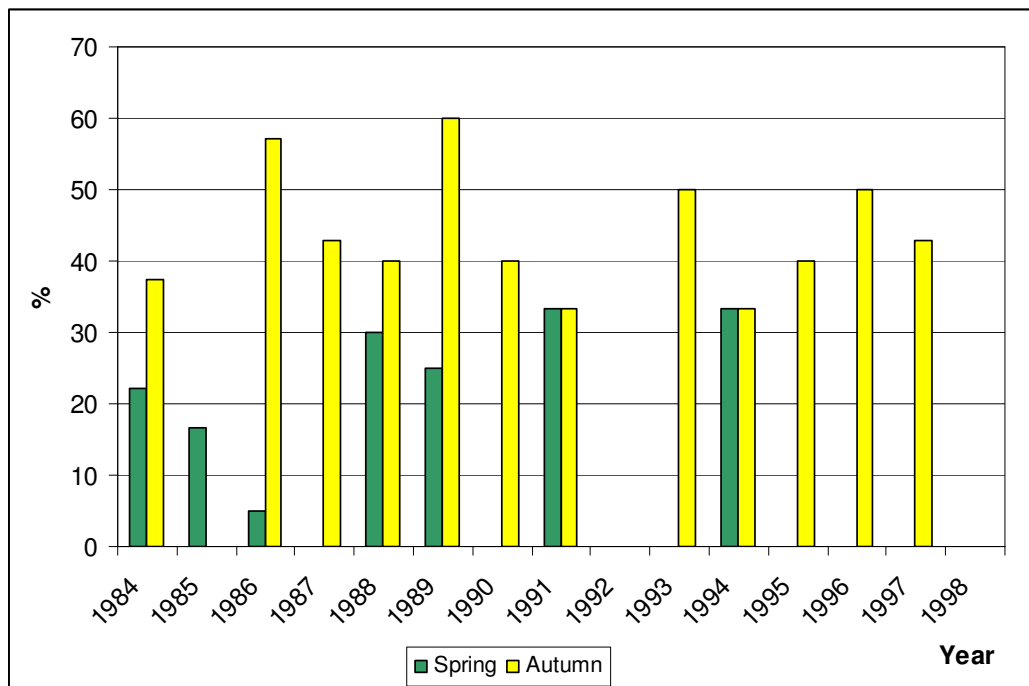


Figure 2. Yearly sex ratio of woodcocks bagged between 1984-1998 in Austria according to Merán's data (Faragó et al, 2000)

Compared to the data from abroad it can be revealed, that the ratio of hens is during the autumn and winter hunting much higher. According to FADAT ET AL, (1991) is the average proportion of hens in France 56-59%, in Austria 41% in autumn and 22% in spring (MERAN 1985-1999 cit. FARAGÓ et al, 2000) (Figure 2.).

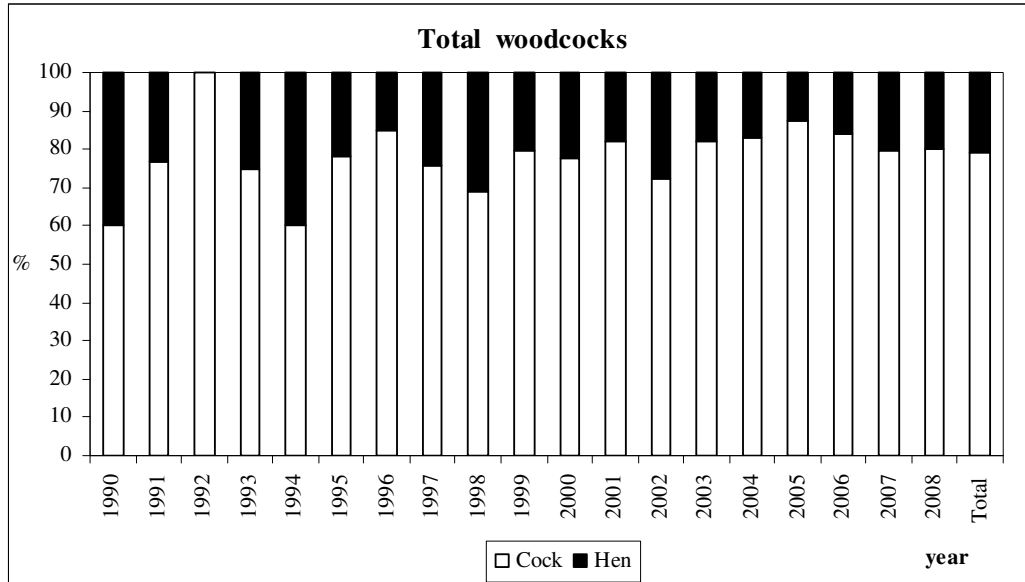


Figure 3. Yearly sex ratio of woodcocks bagged between 1990-2008 in Hungary

Sex ratio of woodcocks was 21 % in spring time hunting in Hungary according to the project between 1990-2008, except the beginning of the monitoring project, when there was found a bigger difference, because of the low number of elements. (Figure 3.) (FARAGÓ-LÁSZLÓ, 2010)

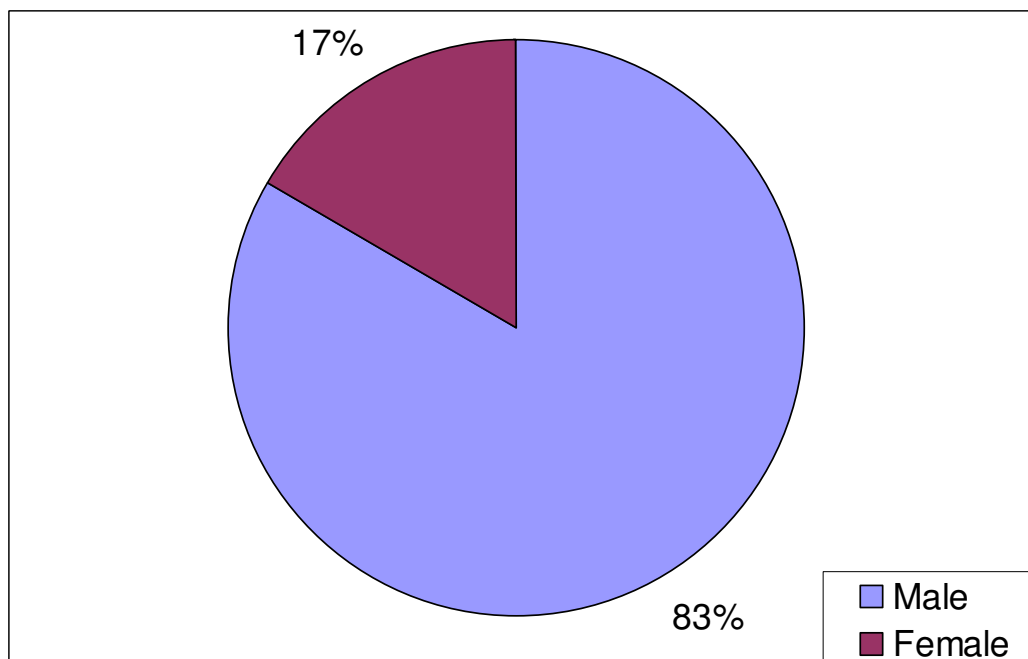


Figure 4. Sex ratio of woodcocks bagged during the monitoring in 2010

Results of the analysis of the newly started monitoring (2010) with 2449 specimen data confirms, the selectivity theory of springtime hunting in Hungary, because the ratio of hens came only to 17% (Figure 4.).

Because of the Eurasian Woodcock's promiscuity (FARAGÓ, 2002) is obvious, that the springtime hunting does not affect the breeding efficiency as much as the autumn and winter hunting with higher hen losses.

Summarized it can be declared, that the Hungarian springtime hunting of Eurasian Woodcock has been both in quality and quantity a sustainable use without unpleasant consequences on the European population.

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