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MIGRATORY BIRD SECTION

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WATERFOWL HUNTER OPINION SURVEY OF CARLYLE LAKE

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Abstract: During the 1972 waterfowl season at Carlyle Lake, 714 questionnaires soliciting opinions concerning the hunting system were distributed. Some 80 percent of the hunters were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. Satisfaction was related to success with very satisfied hunters having a daily success ratio of .94, somewhat satisfied .73, somewhat unsatisfied .63, and very unsatisfied .31. Weekday and late season hunters were more satisfied than the weekend or early season hunter. There was a high nonresponse rate of 55 percent for open-ended questions. Hunters liked the habitat management and the lack of restrictions. They disliked high water, lack of enforcement, not being permitted to build permanent "non-owned" blinds, and being crowded. Suggestions for improvement were limited and included restriction of hunter numbers, permanent blinds, state built blinds, "stake" blinds and space assignments. A change in the system was favored primarily by the dissatisfied or unsuccessful hunter.

INTRODUCTION

A wide array of hunter management systems exist ranging from absolute regimentation to complete freedom. Waterfowl hunters also differ markedly on the degrees of control and quality they are willing to accept. On one end of the spectrum is a small group of hunters who wish to be isolated in an esthetically appealing location and to be allowed to manipulate a blind, decoys, and a call to produce the ultimate in hunting quality. On the other end of the spectrum is a group of hunters to whom waterfowling is a shooting sport in which competition with other hunters is expected. The problem arises in that hunters seeking some degree of quality are not willing to accept restrictions or crowding beyond their predetermined tolerance level. The group on the other end of the spectrum will happily move to any place on the scale, provided he is not eliminated from hunting.

The bulk of Illinois hunters fall between these two extremes and it becomes the task of the Wildlife Resources Division to establish regulations which will provide an equitable balance between quality experience and the quantity of those experiences. The purpose of this study was to determine preferences for present and future hunter management techniques from the existing users of the Carlyle Lake Wildlife Management Area.

Appreciation is expressed to Dave Erickson and Ed Huffman for designing the questionnaire, to Ernie Lewis for assistance in evaluating the results, and to Floyd Kringer, Paul Moore and their staff for collection of the data.

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METHODS AND MATERIAL

To solicit opinions concerning hunter management, a questionnaire was designed asking the following questions: 1) resident county, 2) ducks harvested, 3) very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the present system of hunting at Carlyle, 4) What are some of the things you especially like about the hunting system at Carlyle? 5) What are some of the things you especially dislike . . . ? 6) How would you improve the hunting system . . . ? and 7) How many times do you usually hunt during the season at Carlyle?

Questionnaires were distributed at randomly selected parking areas on the subimpoundment, the flooded dead timber area, and the open water area. Seven days were selected throughout the season to include opening weekend, early season, late season, weekend and weekday hunters. The dates selected were October 28, 29, and 31, November 20 and 25, and December 10 and 11, 1972.

Hunters were requested to complete the questionnaires at the end of the hunt when they returned to their cars. They were not to fill out the form if they had previously done so.

Due to the variance in responses to the open-end questions, numbers four, five and six, response categories were established for each question. These categories isolated responses concerning hunter management and lumped responses concerning habitat management and enforcement. Response categories for question four requesting "especially liked" items were: 1) lack of restrictions, 2) spacing, 3) well managed, 4) decoy requirement, and 5) no response. Categories for question five requesting "especially disliked" items were: 1) too crowded, 2) no permanent blinds, 3) 200 yard space allocation, 4) management and enforcement, 5) decoy requirement and 6) no response. Question six categories asking for suggestions were: 1) restrict number of hunters, 2) allow permanent blinds, 3) have state built or "stake" blinds, 4) remove 200 yard space assignment, 5) remove decoy requirement, 6) improve management and enforcement and 7) no response.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 714 questionnaires completed or about 23 percent of the 3,000 individuals hunting during 1972 (Kennedy and Arthur, 1973). Of this number, 283 were collected from the subimpoundment, 368 from the flooded dead timber, and 63 from the open water area. Freezing conditions late in the season prohibited or limited hunting on the final two questionnaire dates. Low hunting pressure on the open water area resulted in only three days of questionnaire receipt. Sixty-nine percent of the questionnaires were taken on opening weekend.

Due to the numerous comparative tables used in evaluation, only the more important ones are included in this report. Complete working tables are on file and available at the Union County Field Office.

Fixed Questions

Some 43 percent of all hunters were very satisfied and an additional 37 percent were somewhat satisfied. There were no significant differences between the various hunting areas (Table 1).

There is an apparent correlation between hunter success and satisfaction.

Very satisfied hunters had a success ratio of .94 birds per effort, while the other groups had the following success ratios: somewhat satisfied .73, somewhat unsatisfied .63, and very unsatisfied .31.

Very satisfied hunters tended to increase after opening day while the somewhat satisfied group decreased (Table 2). The majority of this shift occurred within the two satisfied groups. The weekday hunter tends to be more satisfied (48 percent, very satisfied and 32 percent, somewhat satisfied) than the weekend hunter (42 percent, very satisfied and 38 percent, somewhat satisfied). The unsatisfied groups are consistent.

Satisfaction groupings by counties from which most hunters come are found in Table 3. Fayette, Madison, and St. Clair County hunters were the most satisfied while some 33 percent of the Marion County residents were unsatisfied.

The number of times hunters expected to hunt at Carlyle during the season was unusually high; 7.7 trips in the subimpoundment, 15.7 trips in the flooded dead timber, and 17.4 trips in the open water area. These figures tend to cluster around 10, 20, and 30 trips and are thought to represent a reporting bias.

Open Opinion Questions

The basic response categories for each question and hunting area are found in Tables 4, 5, and 6. The no response category was the largest group in each question and this category got larger as the complexity of the questions increased. To "likes" questions, 35 percent did not respond, to "dislikes" questions, 42 percent did not respond and to "suggestions" 55 percent did not respond.

Generally the marginal or less enthusiastic hunters are found in the field on opening day and weekends throughout the season, while the experienced and dedicated group will be in the weekday crowds. The latter tends to appear as a more "pure strain" on weekdays and later in the season. Table 7 compares response categories of weekend versus weekday hunters and Table 8 compares opening day and late season hunters.

Each major item mentioned in the response categories will be discussed separately.

Lack of Restrictions and Crowding:

Of the 760 possible responses, 19 percent reported favoring a lack of restrictions (266 failed to respond). Of the 491 respondents, 145 or 30 percent favored the lack of regimentation (Table 4). Weekend hunters in the subimpoundment favored the lack of restrictions more than the weekday hunters. Flooded dead timber hunters favored it slightly more than hunters in the subimpoundment (Table 7).

Crowding was mentioned on 6 percent of the questionnaires and by 11 percent of those responding to question five. Pressure from crowding was felt more in the subimpoundment (Table 5). Weekday hunters in the flooded dead timber area report more disturbance by crowding than do weekend hunters (Table 7). This reflects a differential tolerance level in the two groups. Only 2 percent of the questionnaires (or 5 percent of those responding) suggested a direct restriction of hunter numbers but other suggestions would indirectly restrict. Hunters from the subimpoundment felt the greatest need to restrict numbers (Table 6).

The 200 Yard Spacing Regulation

The 200 yard spacing rule was favored on 9 percent of the questionnaires and by 13 percent of those responding (Table 4). It was liked more by the weekday hunters in the subimpoundment and the weekend hunters in the flooded dead timber area (Table 7). Late season hunters were more in favor of the rule than opening weekend hunters (Table 8). Only one percent of the questionnaires recorded disfavor (Table 5). The need for increased space restrictions was recorded more by weekend and early season hunters in the subimpoundment (Tables 7 and 8). Much of the criticism of management was for lack of enforcement of this regulation.

Management and Enforcement

Some 32 percent of the questionnaires and 50 percent of those responding like the management of the area (Table 4). Late season hunters in the subimpoundment and subimpoundment hunters in general were more appreciative of management practices (Tables 4, 7, and 8). The most frequent comment concerned food availability.

There were also some strong "dislike" comments. Some 38 percent of the questionnaires and 65 percent of those responding to question five found something they especially disliked (Table 5). The majority of these comments concerned: high water or low water (1972 was an atypically wet fall), lack of enforcement, and too great of distance to walk (in subimpoundment). The group showing the greatest discontent was the opening day and weekend hunter from the subimpoundment (Tables 7 and 8). Comments for improvement were limited and generally were similar to: "raise water", "lower water", or "better enforcement".

Mandatory Decoy Requirement

Five percent of the hunters liked the decoy rule (Table 4), four percent disliked it (Table 5), and one percent suggested that it be removed.

Blind System

As possible management alternatives, all mention of blind systems in the responses were isolated to adequately measure the public desire for blind hunting (other than the boat blind system now in use).

Some 10 percent of the questionnaires (72 individuals) and 17 percent of those responding recorded a dislike for not having the freedom to build permanent "non-owned" blinds. This feeling was stronger in the flooded dead timber and open water areas than in the subimpoundment (Table 5).

Suggestions for improvement included three blind systems: Permanent non-owned blinds, state built blinds for daily allocation and "stake" blinds for annual allocation. Five percent of the questionnaires (39 individuals) or 12 percent of those responding to question six favor implementation of permanent non-owned blinds. Five percent of the questionnaires (37 individuals) or 11 percent of those responding suggested a state or "stake" blind system (Table 6). Strongest supporters for the blind systems come from the weekend subimpoundment hunters and the weekday flooded dead timber area hunter (Table 7 and 8).

In comparing the satisfaction groupings to the response categories concerning spacing and blind systems it is apparent that the satisfied hunter who is also the successful hunter is reasonably satisfied with the present system and the unsatisfied hunters with lower success are the ones seeking change (Table 9).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

It is generally concluded from the results of this questionnaire that hunters using the Carlyle Lake Wildlife Management Area during the 1972 waterfowl season are content with existing hunter management systems. There were considerable "dislikes" and suggestions for improvement but some 80 percent of the hunters were very or somewhat satisfied.

Such agreement for existing programs may partially be attributed to a certain faction of hunters who have tried and rejected the hunting at Carlyle Lake and hunt only where systems they approve of exist or do not hunt at all and consequently were not included in the sample.

Perhaps the overriding factor concerning acceptance of hunter management is the quality of habitat management. A hunter tends to be satisfied under the system that produces success and consistency.

Literature Cited

Kennedy, D. and G. C. Arthur, 1973. Waterfowl harvest and hunter use at Carlyle Lake during the 1972 season. Ill. Dept. Cons., Wildlife Res. Div., Migratory Bird Section. 17pp.

Table 1. Comparison between the satisfaction groupings from each hunting area.

Hunting	Percent of Total		Percent of Total		Percent of Total	
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied	Total	Percent of Total
Subimpoundment	118	115	29	21	283	.07
Flooded Dead Timber	156	135	48	29	368	.08
Open Water	32	16	6	9	63	.14
Total:	306	266	83	59	714	.08

Table 2. Distribution of the satisfaction grouping percentages by date of the questionnaire.

Satisfaction Group	October			November		December	
	25	29	31	20	25	10	11
Very Satisfied	.38	.43	.47	.44	.56	.25	.73
Somewhat Satisfied	.38	.40	.28	.37	.30	.50	.18
Somewhat Unsatisfied	.13	.12	.16	.11	.06	.17	.00
Very Unsatisfied	<u>.10</u>	<u>.06</u>	<u>.09</u>	<u>.08</u>	<u>.09</u>	<u>.08</u>	<u>.09</u>
Total:	.99	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.01	1.00	1.00

Table 3. Distribution of satisfaction groupings by county of hunter origin.

	Percent of Total		Percent of Total		Percent of Total		Total
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Percent of Total	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Percent of Total	Very Unsatisfied	
Clinton	37	45	.41	15	.14	8	105
Madison	59	59	.40	15	.10	14	147
St. Clair	98	63	.32	22	.11	13	196
Marion	17	20	.36	11	.20	7	55
Fayette	19	16	.39	4	.10	2	41
Bond	5	18	.62	4	.14	2	29
							573

Table 4. Distribution of response categories by hunting areas for question four: "What are some of the things you especially like about the hunting system at Carlyle?"

Response	Area	Number of Responses	Total Questionnaires from Area	Percent of Questionnaires
1) Lack of restrictions	Subimpoundment	45	295	.15
	Flooded Dead Timber	87	396	.22
	Open Water	<u>13</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>.19</u>
	Total	<u>145</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>.19</u>
2) Spacing	Subimpoundment	22	295	.07
	Flooded Dead Timber	40	396	.10
	Open Water	<u>3</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>.04</u>
	Total	<u>65</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>.09</u>
3) Well managed	Subimpoundment	117	295	.40
	Flooded Dead Timber	103	396	.26
	Open Water	<u>24</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>.35</u>
	Total	<u>244</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>.32</u>
4) Decoy requirement	Subimpoundment	10	295	.03
	Flooded Dead Timber	22	396	.06
	Open Water	<u>5</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>.07</u>
	Total	<u>37</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>.05</u>
5) No response	Subimpoundment	101	295	.34
	Flooded Dead Timber	141	396	.36
	Open Water	<u>24</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>.35</u>
	Total	<u>266</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>.35</u>

Table 5. Distribution of response categories by hunting areas for question five: "What are some of the things you especially dislike about the hunting system at Carlyle?"

Response	Area	Number of Responses	Total Questionnaires from Area	Percent of Questionnaires
1) Too crowded	Subimpoundment	29	291	.10
	Flooded Dead Timber	15	382	.04
	Open Water	<u>1</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.02</u>
	Total	45	736	.06
2) No permanent blinds	Subimpoundment	12	291	.04
	Flooded Dead Timber	44	382	.12
	Open Water	<u>16</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.25</u>
	Total	72	736	.10
3) 200-yard space allocation	Subimpoundment	2	291	.01
	Flooded Dead Timber	3	382	.01
	Open Water	<u>0</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.00</u>
	Total	5	736	.01
4) Management and enforcement	Subimpoundment	120	291	.41
	Flooded Dead Timber	142	382	.37
	Open Water	<u>15</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.24</u>
	Total	277	736	.38
5) Decoy requirement	Subimpoundment	17	291	.06
	Flooded Dead Timber	11	382	.03
	Open Water	<u>0</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.00</u>
	Total	28	736	.04
6) No response	Subimpoundment	112	291	.38
	Flooded Dead Timber	163	382	.43
	Open Water	<u>31</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>.49</u>
	Total	306	736	.42

Table 6. Distribution of response categories by hunting areas for question six: "How would you improve the hunting system at Carlyle?"

Response	Area	Number of Responses	Total Questionnaires from Area	Percent of Questionnaires
1) Restrict number of hunters	Subimpoundment	12	287	.04
	Flooded Dead Timber	4	364	.01
	Open Water	0	66	.00
	Total	16	717	.02
2) Allow permanent blinds	Subimpoundment	11	287	.04
	Flooded Dead Timber	13	364	.04
	Open Water	15	66	.23
	Total	39	717	.05
3) Have state built or "stake" blinds	Subimpoundment	9	287	.03
	Flooded Dead Timber	24	364	.07
	Open Water	4	66	.06
	Total	37	717	.05
4) Remove 200-yard space assignment	Subimpoundment	8	287	.03
	Flooded Dead Timber	8	364	.02
	Open Water	1	66	.02
	Total	17	717	.02
5) Remove decoy requirement	Subimpoundment	4	287	.01
	Flooded Dead Timber	2	364	.01
	Open Water	0	66	.00
	Total	6	717	.01
6) Improve management and enforcement	Subimpoundment	77	287	.27
	Flooded Dead Timber	120	364	.33
	Open Water	14	66	.21
	Total	211	717	.29
7) No response	Subimpoundment	166	287	.58
	Flooded Dead Timber	198	364	.54
	Open Water	32	66	.48
	Total	396	717	.55

Table 7. Comparison of weekend versus weekday response categories by hunting area.

Question and Response	Subimpoundment		Flooded Dead Timber	
	Percent of Response from		Percent of Response from	
	Weekend Hunter	Weekday Hunter	Weekend Hunter	Weekday Hunter
What are some of the things you especially like about the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Lack of restrictions	.17	.07	.22	.20
2) Spacing	.06	.14	.11	.05
3) Well managed	.40	.38	.26	.25
4) Decoy requirement	.02	.10	.05	.07
5) No response	.35	.31	.36	.42
What are some of the things you especially dislike about the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Too crowded	.10	.12	.03	.09
2) No permanent blinds	.05	.00	.11	.16
3) 200-yard space allocation	.01	.00	T	.04
4) Management and enforcement	.42	.37	.41	.16
5) Decoy requirement	.04	.17	.03	.04
6) No response	.39	.37	.41	.52
How would you improve the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Restrict number of hunters	.04	.03	.01	.04
2) Allow permanent blinds	.04	.00	.04	.04
3) Have state built or "stake" blinds	.04	.00	.06	.13
4) Remove 200-yard space assignment	.03	.00	.02	.02
5) Remove decoy requirement	.02	.00	T	.02
6) Improve management and enforcement	.26	.33	.35	.20
7) No response	.57	.64	.54	.56

Table 8. Comparison of opening weekend versus late season response categories by hunting area.

Question and Response	Subimpoundment		Flooded Dead Timber	
	Percent of Response		Percent of Response	
	Weekend Hunter	Late Season Hunter	Weekend Hunter	Late Season Hunter
What are some of the things you especially like about the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Lack of restrictions	.16	.14	.22	.21
2) Spacing	.06	.12	.10	.13
3) Well managed	.32	.41	.25	.25
4) Decoy requirement	.02	.02	.05	.07
5) No response	.38	.35	.36	.37
What are some of the things you especially disliked about the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Too crowded	.10	.10	.03	.03
2) No permanent blinds	.05	.00	.12	.09
3) 200-yard space allocation	.01	.00	T	.00
4) Management and enforcement	.43	.33	.40	.38
5) Decoy requirement	.04	.14	.03	.03
6) No response	.36	.45	.41	.47
How would you improve the hunting system at Carlyle?				
1) Restrict number of hunters	.04	.04	.01	.02
2) Allow permanent blinds	.05	.00	.05	.01
3) Have state built or "stake" blinds	.04	.00	.06	.05
4) Remove 200-yard space assignment	.04	.00	.02	.02
5) Remove decoy requirement	.02	.00	T	.00
6) Improve management and enforcement	.26	.33	.32	.38
7) No response	.56	.63	.56	.52

Table 9. Comparison of satisfaction grouping to response categories concerning spacing and blind systems.

Question and Response	Subimpoundment			Flooded Dead Timber		
	Very and Somewhat Satisfied Number	Very and Somewhat Unsatisfied Number	Percent of Response	Very and Somewhat Satisfied Number	Very and Somewhat Unsatisfied Number	Percent of Response
What are some of the things you especially like about the hunting system at Carlyle?						
1) Lack of restrictions	43	2	.04	74	11	.13
2) Spacing	19	3	.14	32	8	.20
What are some of the things you especially disliked about the hunting system at Carlyle?						
1) Too crowded	23	6	.21	9	7	.44
2) No permanent blinds	10	2	.17	17	27	.61
3) 200-yard space allocation	0	2	1.00	3	0	.00
How would you improve the hunting system at Carlyle?						
1) Restrict number of hunters	8	4	.33	3	1	.25
2) Allow permanent blinds	7	4	.36	4	9	.69
3) Have state built or "stake" blinds	4	5	.56	8	16	.67
4) Remove 200-yard space assignment	6	2	.25	3	5	.63

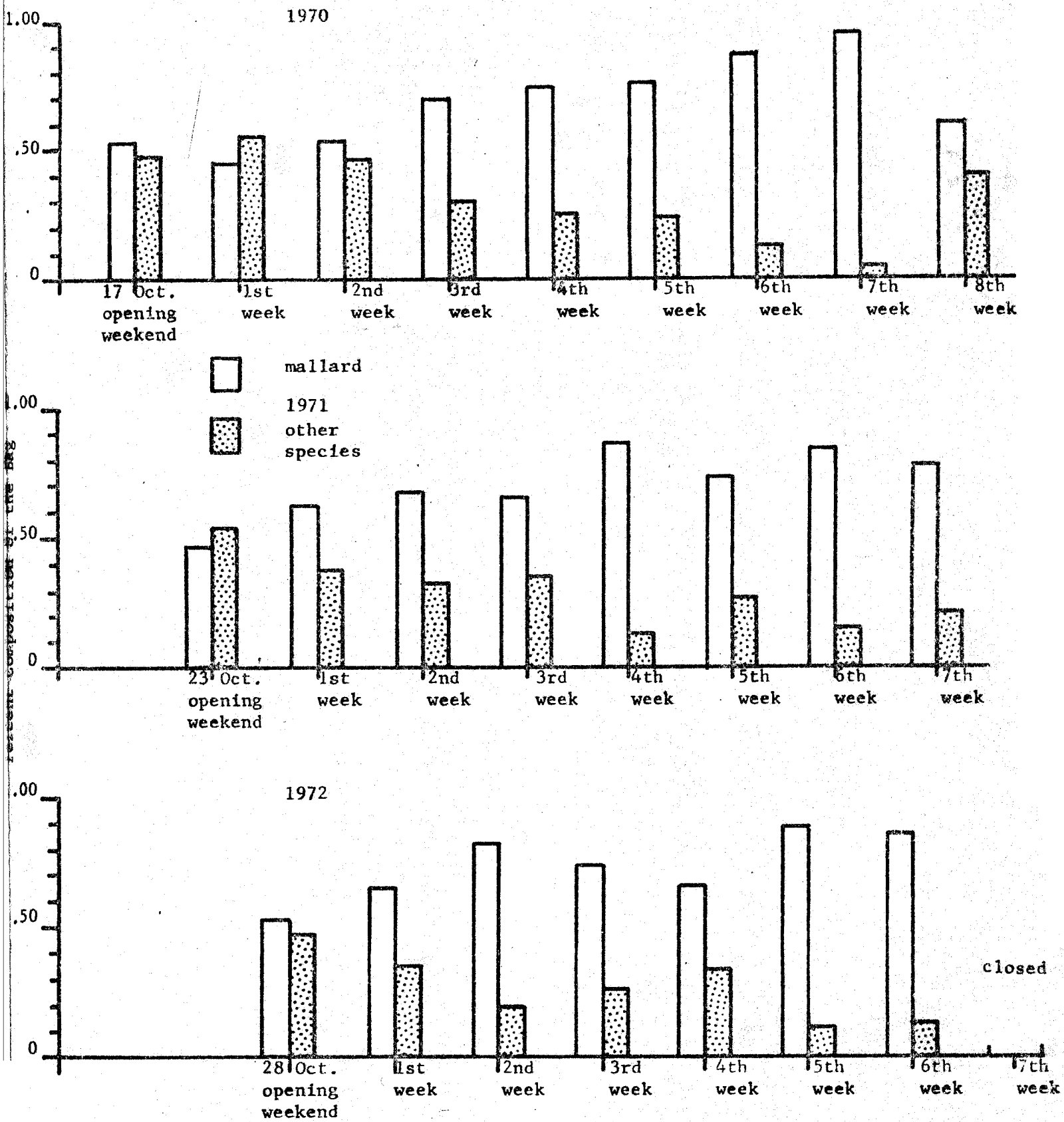


Figure 15. Composition of the bag from the Woodford County Area by weekly periods during the 1970, 1971 and 1972 waterfowl seasons; comparing mallards to all other species.