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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

**RESULTS OF THE 1998 ILLINOIS WOODCOCK
HUNTER SURVEY**

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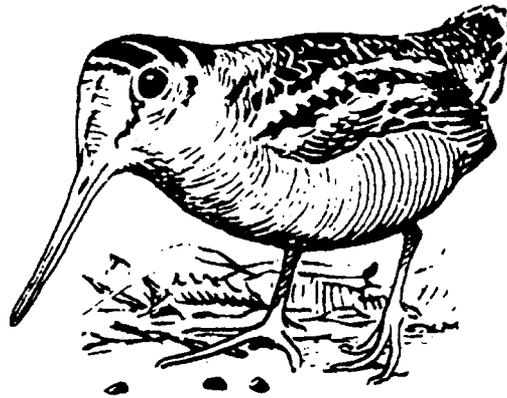
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Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Wildlife Resources
Administrative Report
10 August 2001

RESULTS OF THE 1998 ILLINOIS WOODCOCK HUNTER SURVEY

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Abstract: Potential woodcock hunters were surveyed via mail-letter questionnaire to determine their activities, harvest, opinions, and personal characteristics, in 1998. The mailing list consisted of all (1,251) Illinois residents who registered with the National Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program in 1998 and indicated they had hunted woodcock the previous (1997) season. Respondents returned 866 usable questionnaires, for a response rate of 69%. Because 585 of the respondents did not hunt woodcock in Illinois again in 1998, the effective sample was reduced to 281 hunters. Of these hunters, 61% were afield October 17-November 6 (before opening of the upland game season) and were classified as *proactive* woodcock hunters. The other 39% were afield only November 7-November 30 and were classified as *passive* woodcock hunters. For all woodcock hunters, 34% of their days afield occurred before November 7 and 66% took place on/after this date. The hunters spent an average of 4.9 days afield and harvested an average of 1.72 woodcock (0.35 per day afield). They harvested 0 woodcock on 76% of their days afield and 3 birds (daily bag limit) on 2.5% of their days. Most (73%) successful woodcock hunters harvested some/all of their woodcock while pursuing other game species. Crippling losses averaged 5.7 birds per 100 woodcock bagged. Thirty-one percent of the woodcock hunters had much difficulty in finding a place to hunt in Illinois in 1998, and 68% preferred that the woodcock season open on/after October 17. The proportion of hunters who had used nontoxic shot to hunt woodcock increased from 16% in 1993 to 30% in 1998. The average woodcock hunter was male (98%), 39 years of age, married (73%), and had hunted woodcock for 14 years. Management implications of these findings are discussed.

The American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) is a popular game bird in eastern North America, providing an estimated 3.4 million days of recreational hunting annually in the mid-1980s (U.S.

¹Illinois Natural History Survey.

Department of the Interior 1998). This unusual species breeds primarily in northeastern portions of the United States and adjacent Canada, and winters in the southern states (Straw et al. 1994). Woodcock nest in low densities in Illinois (Ellis and Anderson 1975, Straw 1994). Most hunters in the Prairie State view the woodcock as a "secondary" or "bonus" bird that is taken while pursuing more common game such as quail and pheasant (Anderson and David 1995).

Because of long-term declines in the North American woodcock population (Bruggink 1999), hunting regulations for this species have become more conservative in recent years. In Illinois, the regulations included a 65-day season and a 5-bird daily bag limit in the early- and mid-1990s, compared to 45 days and 3 birds in 1997-1999. Interestingly, the restrictive regulations were imposed after a precipitous decline in woodcock hunting activity in Illinois in the 1990s (Miller et al. 2000). To illustrate, the number of woodcock hunters decreased from 7,724 in 1991 to 2,661 in 1996. There were 1,974 woodcock hunters in 1998.

The purpose of the present survey was to profile woodcock hunters with regard to their hunting activities and harvest, opinions of hunting regulations and related issues, and personal characteristics, in 1998. Surveys such as this improve the Department of Natural Resources's (DNR) understanding of the attitudes, opinions, activities, and characteristics of the average hunter. Armed with such information, the DNR is better prepared to establish biologically responsible and sociologically

acceptable hunting regulations. A previous woodcock hunter survey was conducted following the 1993 season (Anderson and David 1995).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A 4-page, 20-question questionnaire was developed specifically for the 1998 Woodcock Hunter Survey (Fig. 1). This questionnaire and a letter of explanation (Fig. 2) were mailed (bulk rate--address service requested) to 1,251 potential woodcock hunters on 11 December 1998. Non-respondents were sent 2nd and 3rd copies of the questionnaire, and accompanying letters (Figs. 3 and 4), on 13 January and 26 February, respectively. As of 16 April 1999, 866 usable questionnaires were returned (via first class postage) for a response rate of 69%.

The mailing list for this survey included all residents who registered with the National Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program in Illinois in 1998 and indicated they had hunted woodcock during the previous (1997) season (D. Newton, DNR, personal communication).

Data on returned questionnaires were transferred to a computer file using a data management program (Ashton-Tate dBASE IV). The data were analyzed with a statistical program (SPSS Inc. SPSS/PC+V2.0). Results were tabulated for *proactive* hunters (pursued woodcock before the upland game season opened), *passive* hunters (pursued woodcock only during the upland game season), and all woodcock hunters (proactive and passive combined). Proactive hunters may or may not have hunted woodcock after

opening of the upland game season.

HUNTING REGULATIONS IN 1998

Hunting season lengths and bag limits for woodcock and other migratory birds are regulated with frameworks promulgated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). States select season dates that conform with these frameworks. In Illinois, the 1998 woodcock season was 45 days in length: October 17 to November 30. The daily bag limit was 3 birds, and the possession limit was 6. The same regulations were in effect in 1997 but, in previous years, the FWS allowed a 65-day season (October 1 to December 4) and a 5-bird daily bag limit. In all years, legal shooting time was from sunrise to sunset.

FINDINGS

Of the 866 residents who filled out and returned questionnaires, 98% purchased an Illinois resident hunting license, 91% purchased a habitat stamp, 32% hunted woodcock in Illinois, and 7% hunted woodcock in another state, in 1998 (Table 1). Of those who ventured out of state, 16% did so specifically to hunt woodcock. The other 84% viewed woodcock as a bonus bird to be taken while hunting other species such as ruffed grouse.

Of those respondents who did not hunt woodcock in 1998, 29% indicated they had "no interest in hunting woodcock" and 27% said there were "very few woodcock to hunt" (Table 2). Other major reasons for not hunting woodcock included "too busy/had to work" (18%) and "no place to hunt" (17%). The additional reasons for

not hunting woodcock collectively accounted for only 9% of the hunters who did not pursue woodcock in 1998.

Hunter Activity

Almost all (276) of the 281 woodcock hunters in the sample provided data for the number of days they spent afield in 1998. Of these hunters, 168 (61%) were afield October 17–November 6 (before opening of the upland game season) and 215 (78%) were afield November 7–30 (during upland game season). Further analyses of the data revealed that 61 (22%) of the hunters were afield October 17–November 6 only, 108 (39%) were afield November 7–30 only, and 107 (39%) were afield during both time periods. Thus, there were 168 (61%) proactive woodcock hunters, and 108 (39%) passive woodcock hunters, in the sample.

Woodcock hunters (proactive and passive combined) expended one-third (34%) of their days afield during the first 21 days of the woodcock season--i.e., before the upland game season opened on November 7 (Table 3). Another one-third (35%) of the days afield occurred concurrently with the first 8 days of the upland game season. The remaining days afield (31%) were associated with the next 16 days of the upland game season. Proactive hunters were credited with 68% of the days afield and passive hunters 32% (Table 4). In 1993, the percentages were 72% and 28%, respectively (Anderson and David 1995). It should be noted that in 1993 the woodcock season opened 37 days prior to the upland game season, whereas in 1998 the woodcock season opened only 21 days before the upland game season.

All woodcock hunters combined reported spending an average of 4.9 days afield in Illinois in 1998 (Tables 3 and 4). Proactive hunters spent an average of 5.5 days afield, whereas passive hunters spent an average of 4.0 days. In 1993, with a longer season, proactive hunters spent an average of 7.6 days afield and passive hunters 4.5 days (Anderson and David 1995). Among all hunters in 1998, 51% were afield ≤ 3 days and 69% were afield ≤ 5 days. For comparison, the annual Hunter Harvest Survey indicated that woodcock hunters spent an average of 3.1 days afield, and that 91% of them were afield ≤ 5 days, during the 1998 season (Miller et al. 2000).

Two-thirds (68%) of all woodcock hunters usually or always used a dog to hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998 (Table 5). Proactive hunters (71%) were slightly more apt to (usually/always) use a dog than passive hunters (65%). For comparison, 73% of quail hunters, and 63% of pheasant hunters, used dogs for some or all of their hunts in Illinois in the mid-1990s (Anderson and David 1997 and 1998).

Woodcock Harvest

All woodcock hunters in the survey reported harvesting an average of 0.35 woodcock per day afield, and 1.72 woodcock per hunter per season, in Illinois in 1998 (Table 3). These harvest rates are lower than the rates Anderson and David (1995) reported for the 1993 season (0.47 and 3.00, respectively).

In 1998, woodcock harvest rates were slightly higher before opening of the upland game season (0.39 per day afield and 1.07

per hunter per period) than after (0.29-0.37 and 0.84-0.93, respectively) (Table 3). However, harvest rates were not necessarily higher for proactive hunters (0.34 per day afield and 1.84 per hunter per season) than for passive hunters (0.38 and 1.53, respectively) (Table 4). For all woodcock hunters in 1998, 50% took 0 woodcock and 43% took 1-5 woodcock. Only 7% of the hunters bagged ≥ 6 woodcock during the 1998 season.

The hunters surveyed reported harvesting ≤ 2 woodcock on 97.5% of their days afield (Table 6). They harvested 0 woodcock on 76% of their days. Conversely, the hunters bagged their daily limit of 3 birds on 2.5% of their days afield. These findings reinforce Anderson and David's (1995) conclusion that woodcock hunters are rarely successful in bagging their daily limit in Illinois.

Three-fourths (73%) of the successful woodcock hunters in 1998 harvested some or all of their woodcock while pursuing other game species (Table 7). The percentage was lower for proactive hunters (63%) than for passive hunters (89%). The other game species most frequently associated with woodcock harvest were quail (42%), pheasant (26%), and rabbits (12%). In 1993, 87% of the woodcock hunters pursued woodcock some or all of the time while hunting other game species (Anderson and David 1995).

In the 1993 survey, 16 counties were identified as "high" harvest counties for woodcock. That is, each of these counties were credited with $>2\%$ of the statewide harvest, and collectively they accounted for 69% of all woodcock taken in Illinois (Anderson and David 1995). In the 1998 survey, 14 counties fell

into the "high" harvest category, and their combined take represented 51% of the statewide harvest (Fig. 5). When the results of the 2 surveys were superimposed, 24 individual counties emerged as being "high" harvest for woodcock (Fig. 5). Most of these counties are associated with rivers, large lakes, or other wetlands. Sheldon (1967:122) has pointed out that wetland areas must be in close proximity to forest cover to qualify as woodcock habitat. The counties of Will, Kankakee, Iroquois, and Vermilion--which border Indiana in northeastern Illinois--are characterized by small rivers that apparently provide suitable habitat for woodcock.

The hunters surveyed for the 1998 season reported harvesting a total of 474 woodcock and crippling an additional 27 birds that were not recovered. Thus, the crippling loss rate was estimated at 5.7 birds per 100 woodcock bagged. In the 1993 survey, an estimated 9.7 birds were lost per 100 bagged (Anderson and David 1995).

Attitudes and Opinions

Difficulty in Finding a Place to hunt. Twenty-five percent of the woodcock hunters in the survey indicated they had much difficulty in finding a place to hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998 (Table 8). The percentages were somewhat different for proactive hunters (27%) and passive hunters (22%). In comparison, 30% of quail hunters, 27% of pheasant hunters, and 14% of dove hunters said they had much difficulty in finding a place to hunt in 1995-1997 (Anderson and David 1997, 1998, and

1999). It appears that woodcock hunters experience less difficulty than quail hunters, about as much difficulty as pheasant hunters, and more difficulty than dove hunters, in securing areas to pursue their respective sports in Illinois.

Season Dates and Bag Limits. More than one-half (58%) of the hunters preferred to have a woodcock hunting season that began on or after October 17 (Table 9), which was the opening date in 1998. Proactive hunters were about evenly split as to whether the season should open before October 17 (49%) or on/after this date (51%). However, passive hunters much preferred the later date (71%).

Whether proactive (61%) or passive (71%), majorities of the woodcock hunters opted for having daily bag limits of 2 or 3 birds (Table 9). For all hunters, 65% voted for 2 or 3 birds, and 35% voted for 4 or 5 birds.

Nontoxic Shot. Nearly one-third (30%) of the hunters indicated they had used nontoxic shot to hunt woodcock (Table 10). This compares to 16% who said they had used nontoxic shot for their sport in the 1993 survey (Anderson and David 1995).

When asked whether they would continue to hunt woodcock if the use of nontoxic shot became mandatory for woodcock hunting, 41% responded with a "yes" (Table 10). In 1993, 42% answered in the affirmative to the same question (Anderson and David 1995).

Assessment of Woodcock Population. Nearly one-half (45%) of the hunters had no opinion as to whether the woodcock population was up or down (Table 11). However, of those who did express an opinion, the "downs" outnumbered the "ups" by more than 2 to 1.

Clearly, the more observant hunters think the woodcock population decreased in Illinois from 1997 to 1998.

Characteristics of Woodcock Hunters

Illinois woodcock hunters who participated in the 1998 survey were, on average, male (98%), 39 years of age, married (73%), and had hunted woodcock for 14 years (Table 12). One-half (52%) of the hunters were between 31 and 50 years old.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present survey reinforce the profile of Illinois woodcock hunters that emerged from the 1993 survey (Anderson and David 1995). That is, most woodcock hunters are inconsistent in their activities from year to year, and when they do shoot woodcock, it is usually coincidental to hunting other game species. Of the 866 participants in the present survey, only 281 reported that they hunted woodcock in 1998 (Table 1). However, all of these participants had indicated that, when registering with the National Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program in Illinois for the 1998 season, they had hunted woodcock the previous (1997) year. Based on these data, only 32% of the hunters who pursued woodcock in Illinois in 1997 hunted woodcock again in 1998. It appears that many hunters identify themselves as woodcock hunters only if they happen to bag ≥ 1 woodcock. In this regard, note that three-fourths (73%) of the successful woodcock hunters in 1998 harvested some/all of their woodcock while pursuing other game (Table 7). We conclude that, for most

hunters in Illinois, the woodcock is a bonus bird that is harvested while hunting more abundant upland species such as quail, pheasants, and rabbits.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the 1993 survey (Anderson and David 1995), there is a small group of Illinois hunters who avidly pursue woodcock. Nine percent of all hunters in the 1998 survey were afield for woodcock for ≥ 11 days and 7% harvested ≥ 6 woodcock (Table 4). We also note that 10% of the hunters traveled out of state to pursue woodcock (Table 1). The avid hunters hold the woodcock in high regard for its sporting qualities and the opportunity for good dog work.

As pointed out in the INTRODUCTION, the continental woodcock population has been in long-term decline. Because of this decline, the FWS imposed more restrictive hunting regulations for woodcock beginning in 1997. In Illinois, the number of woodcock hunters, days afield, and harvest decreased by $\geq 70\%$ from 1991 to 1998 (Miller et al. 2000). These decreases were almost certainly manifested by the declining woodcock population. However, the restrictive hunting regulations probably had a secondary effect in 1997 and 1998.

With a 45-day framework, most woodcock hunters prefer that the season not open until at least the middle of October (Table 9). Most woodcock hunters also view a 3-bird daily bag limit as adequate or more than adequate (Table 9). These findings, along with biological data and other pertinent information, should be taken into consideration when making recommendations for woodcock season dates and bag limits in Illinois.

The DNR requires the use of nontoxic shot for all waterfowl, coot, snipe, and rail hunting in Illinois (Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1999). Nontoxic shot is also required for dove hunting on some sites (25 in 2000) where the use of lead shot poses an unacceptable risk to waterfowl. With minor exception (Ten Mile Creek FWA - Waterfowl Rest Area), there are no requirements to use nontoxic shot for woodcock hunting in Illinois. In light of this information, it is interesting that the proportion of woodcock hunters who had used nontoxic shot to hunt woodcock increased from 16% in 1993 (Anderson and David 1995) to 30% in 1998 (Table 10). Illinois hunters are becoming increasingly familiar with the use of nontoxic shot and, given the frequent and consistently negative publicity regarding lead and its toxic effects, they may be raising their threshold of environmental awareness. Similar revelations have been suggested for dove hunters in Illinois (Levengood et al. 1999).

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Table 1. Percentage of respondents to the 1998 Illinois Woodcock Hunter Survey who purchased a 1998 resident hunting license or habitat stamp, and the percentage who hunted woodcock in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

License, Stamp or Hunting Activity	All Respondents ^a	Woodcock Hunters ^b
Resident hunting license	(866) 97.7	(281) 99.6
Habitat stamp	90.5	95.0
Hunted woodcock		
In Illinois	32.4	100
In another state	7.3 ^c	10.3

^aAll were residents.

^bProactive and passive combined.

^cFor these 63 hunters, 15.9% hunted specifically for woodcock and 84.1% considered woodcock a “bonus” species taken while hunting primarily for another game bird such as ruffed grouse.

Table 2. Reasons given by respondents to the 1998 Illinois Woodcock Hunter Survey for not hunting woodcock in Illinois during the 1998 season (n=506).

Reason	Percentage
No interest in hunting woodcock	29.0
Very few woodcock	26.9
Too busy/had to work	18.0
No place to hunt	16.5
Friends didn't hunt	3.2
Unfavorable weather	2.4
Age/health	2.2
Cost too much	0.2
Too many hunters	0.2
Too dangerous	0.0
Other miscellaneous	1.4

Table 3. Temporal distribution of hunting activity and woodcock harvest in Illinois in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Hunting Activity or Characteristic	Oct. 17-Nov. 6 ^a	Nov. 7-14 ^b	Nov. 15-30 ^b	Entire Season
Hunters	(168) ^c	(184) ^d	(145) ^d	(276)
Percentage	60.9	66.7	52.3	100
Days afield				
Percentage	34.2	34.6	31.2	100
Per hunter	2.7	2.5	2.9	4.9
Woodcock harvested				
Percentage	38.0	36.3	25.7	100
Per day afield	0.39	0.37	0.29	0.35
Per hunter per time period	1.07	0.93	0.84	1.72

^aBefore opening of upland game (quail, pheasant, and rabbit) season on Nov. 7.

^bDuring upland game season.

^cIncludes 61 (22.1%) hunters who pursued woodcock only during Oct. 17-Nov. 6.

^dIncludes 108 (39.1%) hunters who pursued woodcock only during Nov. 7-30.

Table 4. Hunting activity and woodcock harvest by proactive and passive woodcock hunters in Illinois in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Hunting Activity or Characteristic	Proactive Hunters ^a	Passive Hunters ^b	All Hunters
	(168)	(108)	(276)
Hunters			
Percentage	60.9	39.1	100
Days afield			
Percentage	68.1	31.9	100
Per hunter	5.5	4.0	4.9 ^c
Woodcock harvested			
Percentage	65.2	34.8	100
Per day afield	0.34	0.38	0.35
Per hunter per season	1.84	1.53	1.72 ^d

^aHunted woodcock before the upland game (quail, pheasant, and rabbit) season opened on November 7. Most (64%) of these hunters also pursued woodcock after opening of the upland game season.

^bHunted woodcock only after the upland game season opened.

^c50.7% hunted 1-3 days, 18.5% hunted 4-5 days, 21.4% hunted 6-10 days, 6.5% hunted 11-15 days, and 2.9% hunted 16-28 days.

^d50.0% harvested 0 woodcock, 42.8% harvested 1-5 woodcock, 4.7% harvested 6-10 woodcock, and 2.5% harvested 11-19 woodcock.

Table 5. Frequency that woodcock hunters used a dog to hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998.
Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Frequency	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
Always	(167) 64.7%	(105) 55.3%	(272) 61.0%
Usually	6.0	9.5	7.4
Occasionally	4.8	9.5	6.6
Never	24.6	25.7	25.0

Table 6. Mean number and percentage of days that woodcock hunters harvested 0, 1, 2, or 3 woodcock in Illinois in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Number of Woodcock	<u>Proactive Hunters</u>		<u>Passive Hunters</u>		<u>All Hunters</u>	
	Mean	Percentage	Mean	Percentage	Mean	Percentage
		(912)		(428)		(1,410)
0	4.2	77.5	2.9	72.2	3.7	75.8
1	0.7	13.4	0.7	17.5	0.7	14.7
2	0.4	6.8	0.3	7.3	0.3	7.0
3 ^a	0.1	2.3	0.1	3.0	0.1	2.5

^aDaily bag limit.

Table 7. Proportion of woodcock harvest taken while hunters were pursuing other species in Illinois in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Characteristic	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
Proportion of woodcock harvest taken while pursuing other species	(82) ^a	(53) ^a	(135) ^a
All	41.5%	67.9%	51.8%
Most	7.3	15.1	10.4
A few	14.6	5.7	11.1
None	36.6	11.3	26.7
Frequency for other species	(65) ^b	(72) ^b	(137) ^b
Quail	36.9%	45.8%	41.6%
Pheasant	27.7	25.0	26.3
Rabbits	7.7	15.3	11.7
Waterfowl	13.8	9.7	11.7
Dove	9.2	0.0	4.4
Others ^c	4.7	4.2	4.3

^aNumber of hunters--those who harvested ≥ 1 woodcock.

^bNumber of reports.

^cSquirrel, snipe, and rail.

Table 8. The level of difficulty that woodcock hunters experienced in finding a place to hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Characteristic	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
	(165)	(104)	(269)
Level of difficulty			
None	30.3%	30.8%	30.5%
Little	13.3	11.5	12.6
Moderate	29.1	36.6	31.6
Much	27.3	22.1	25.3

Table 9. Attitudes of woodcock hunters toward season dates and the daily bag limit for woodcock hunting (Illinois 1998). Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Question	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
Responses to the following questions:			
*In your opinion, what should the Illinois woodcock season dates be next season (1999)?			
	(158)	(97)	(255)
Oct. 1-Nov. 14	23.5%	8.2%	17.7%
Oct. 10-Nov. 23	25.9	20.6	23.9
Oct. 17-Nov. 30	24.7	39.2	30.2
Oct. 24-Dec. 7	25.9	32.0	28.2
*In your opinion, how many woodcock should be allowed in the daily bag limit in Illinois next season (1999)?			
	(158)	(97)	(255)
2 per day	30.4%	41.2%	34.6%
3 per day	30.4	29.9	30.2
4 per day	18.4	16.5	17.6
5 per day	20.8	12.4	17.6

Table 10. Attitudes of woodcock hunters toward using nontoxic shot for woodcock hunting (Illinois 1998). Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Question	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
Responses to the questions:			
*Have you ever used non-toxic (steel, bismuth, tungston) shot for hunting woodcock?			
Yes	(164) 32.9%	(104) 25.0%	(268) 29.9%
No	67.1	75.0	70.1
*If the use of non-toxic (steel, bismuth, tungston) shot became mandatory for hunting woodcock, would you continue to hunt woodcock using non-toxic shot?			
Yes	(157) 44.0%	(102) 36.3%	(259) 40.9%
No	31.2	29.2	34.4
Don't know	24.8	24.5	24.7

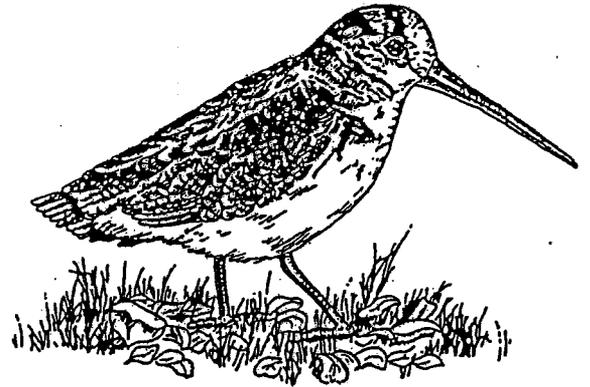
Table 11. Assessments of woodcock hunters as to changes in the woodcock population from 1997 to 1998 (Illinois 1998). Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Change in Population	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
	(165)	(107)	(272)
Up	14.5%	17.8%	15.8%
Down	40.0	37.4	39.0
No opinion	45.5	44.8	45.2

Table 12. Some characteristics of woodcock hunters (Illinois 1998). Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Characteristic	Proactive Hunters	Passive Hunters	All Hunters
Gender	(167)	(107)	(274)
Male	97.6%	99.1%	98.2%
Female	2.4	0.9	1.8
Age in years	(166)	(106)	(272)
Mean	40.8	37.2	39.4
Distribution: ≤ 15	4.2%	3.8%	4.0%
16-20	2.4	5.6	3.7
21-30	17.5	23.6	19.9
31-40	25.9	29.3	27.2
41-50	27.1	20.7	24.6
51-60	17.5	14.2	16.2
61-64	0.6	0.0	0.4
≥ 65	4.8	2.8	4.0
Marital status	(166)	(106)	(272)
Married	70.5%	75.5%	72.5%
Never married	18.7	17.0	18.0
Widowed	1.2	0.0	0.7
Divorced or Separated	9.6	7.5	8.8
Years hunted woodcock	(165)	(104)	(269)
Mean	14.4	12.7	13.7
Distribution:			
1-5	30.3%	34.6%	32.0%
6-10	16.4	24.1	19.3
11-20	32.7	25.9	30.1
≥ 21	20.6	15.4	18.6

1998 ILLINOIS WOODCOCK HUNTER SURVEY



INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer the questions on the following pages for your woodcock hunting activities in Illinois during the 1998 season. A woodcock is not the same as a woodchuck, which is a burrowing mammal in the rodent family. The woodcock is a migratory game bird from the shorebird family (see drawing above). During migration woodcock may occur over nearly all of Illinois.

If you did not hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998, answer only the questions that apply to you (PART I and PART III). Your opinions are important even if you did not hunt.

Report only your kill. DO NOT report the kill of others with whom you may have hunted. Your responses are strictly confidential and will never be associated with your name. Since you are a part of a small, randomly selected group, your participation is very important.

If you can't remember exact figures, give your best estimate. When completed, insert questionnaire into the self-addressed envelope and mail. Comments are welcome, but please write them on a separate sheet of paper to receive proper attention.

PART I. General Information

1. What is your county of residence?

_____ , Illinois

2. Did you purchase a resident Illinois hunting license (i.e. regular hunting license, sportsman's combination hunting/fishing license, or senior citizen's hunting license) for the 1998 season?
(circle number of appropriate answer)

Yes.....1 No.....2

3. Did you purchase a 1998 Illinois Habitat Stamp for your personal use?
(circle number of appropriate answer)

Yes.....1 No.....2

Figure 1. The questionnaire used for conducting the 1998 Illinois Woodcock Hunter Survey (continued).

4. Did you hunt woodcock in another state (i.e., outside Illinois) during the 1998 season?
(circle number of appropriate answer)

Yes.....1 No.....2

4a. If you hunted woodcock in another state during 1998, were you hunting specifically for woodcock, or was woodcock a "bonus" species taken while hunting primarily for another gamebird such as ruffed grouse? (circle number of appropriate answer)

Specific for woodcock....1 Woodcock as bonus....2

5. Did you hunt woodcock in Illinois during the 1998 season?
(circle number of appropriate answer)

Yes.....1 No.....2

5a. If you answered "yes" to question 5, go on to Part II.

5b. If you answered "no" to question 5, why did you not hunt woodcock in Illinois in 1998?
(circle number of the one most appropriate answer)

- Age or health.....1 No place to hunt.....2 Cost too much.....3
- Unfavorable weather....4 Friends didn't hunt.....5 Too dangerous.....6
- Very few woodcock.....7 Too many hunters.....8 Too busy/had to work.....9
- I have no interest in hunting woodcock.....10
- Other (write in) _____

IF YOU DID NOT HUNT WOODCOCK IN ILLINOIS DURING THE 1998 SEASON, SKIP TO PART III - QUESTION # 14.

PART II. Woodcock Hunting Activity

6. If you answered "yes" to Question #5 above (you hunted woodcock in Illinois in 1998), please answer the following questions about the number of different days you hunted woodcock in Illinois and the number of woodcock you harvested for the specified portions of the 1998 season? (write in number of days and number of woodcock)

Number of days Oct. 17 to Nov. 6	_____	Number harvested	_____
Number of days Nov. 7 to Nov. 14	_____	Number harvested	_____
Number of days Nov. 15 to Nov. 30	_____	Number harvested	_____
Total number of days hunted	_____	Total woodcock	_____

7. On how many different days during the 1998 season in Illinois did you bag (kill and retrieve):
- a. no woodcock (zero)? ___ days
 - b. 1 woodcock? ___ days
 - c. 2 woodcock? ___ days
 - d. 3 woodcock? ___ days

8. In which county, or counties, did you hunt woodcock most in Illinois in 1998?

	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Days</u>
Hunted most	_____	_____
Second most	_____	_____
Third most	_____	_____

9. How often did you use a dog when hunting woodcock in Illinois in 1998?
(circle number of appropriate answer)

Always...1 Usually...2 Occasionally...3 Never...4

10. In your opinion, was the Illinois woodcock population in 1998 up or down compared to 1997?

Woodcock were up.....1 Woodcock were down.....2 No opinion.....3

11. Of the woodcock you harvested in Illinois in 1998, how many did you shoot while actually hunting other species? (circle number of appropriate answer)

All.....1 Most.....2 A few.....3 None.....4

11a. If you harvested any woodcock while hunting other species, please list the other species.

_____	_____
_____	_____

12. How many woodcock did you cripple but did not retrieve while hunting in Illinois in 1998?

Number of cripples lost _____

13. Please rate the level of difficulty you experienced in finding a place to hunt woodcock in Illinois during the 1998 season? (circle number of appropriate answer)

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| No difficulty.....1 | Little difficulty.....2 |
| Moderate difficulty.....3 | Much difficulty.....4 |

PART III. Opinion Questions. Please answer even if you did not hunt woodcock in 1998.

14. Have you ever used non-toxic (steel, bismuth, tungsten) shot for hunting woodcock?

- Yes.....1 No.....2

14a. If the use of non-toxic (steel, bismuth, tungsten) shot became mandatory for hunting woodcock, would you continue to hunt woodcock using non-toxic shot?

- Yes....1 No.....2 Don't Know....3

15. In your opinion, how many woodcock should be allowed in the daily bag limit in Illinois next season (1999)? (circle appropriate number)

- 2 per day 3 per day 4 per day 5 per day

16. In your opinion, what should the Illinois woodcock season dates be next season (1999)? (circle dates for your first choice, assuming a 45-day season)

- Oct. 1 - Nov. 14 Oct. 10 - Nov. 23 Oct. 17 - Nov. 30 Oct. 24 - Dec. 7

17. How many years have you hunted woodcock?

Number of years ____

18. How old were you on your last birthday?

Years of age ____

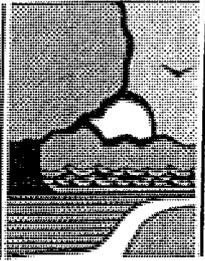
19. What is your gender? (circle appropriate number)

- Male.....1 Female.....2

20. What is your marital status? (circle number of appropriate answer)

- Married.....1 Never married.....2 Widowed.....3 Divorced or separated...4

Thank you for your cooperation.
POSTAGE IS PREPAID



ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

You are one of a select group of Illinoisans asked to furnish information on your woodcock hunting activities during the recently completed (1998) hunting season. You were selected because you indicated when you registered with the Harvest Information Program (HIP) that you are a woodcock hunter.

The information supplied by you and other selected hunters is vital to the management of Illinois woodcock. Our goals are to safeguard populations, to grant maximum hunting opportunity to licensed hunters, and to maintain an attractive level of hunter success.

The information you provide will be used to better understand the characteristics of woodcock population and woodcock hunters. It also will help us understand how woodcock hunters view the sport.

Your reply is very important, even if you did not hunt woodcock or were not successful. Only a limited number of hunters can be contacted, therefore, your response is urgently needed.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the parts of the questionnaire that apply to you. If you do not remember exact figures, please give your best estimate.

Drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Postage is prepaid.

Sincerely,

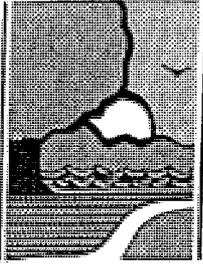
Jeffrey M. Ver Steeg
Chief

Division of Wildlife Resources

JMV:LD:ld

Enclosure

Figure 2. The letter that accompanied the first mailing of the questionnaire.



ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

Recently we mailed you a Woodcock Hunter Questionnaire, and requested that you fill it out and return it as soon as possible. We have not received your form at this time. Perhaps you have misplaced the questionnaire or haven't found time to complete it.

We are enclosing another questionnaire which we hope you will complete and return to us. If you have already returned a questionnaire, please discard this one. The information supplied by you and other woodcock hunters being sampled will be of great value to the Department of Natural Resources in better directing the management of our woodcock resources.

Please fill out the questionnaire completely and return it even if you did not hunt woodcock or were not successful.

Please drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Postage is prepaid. Your prompt attention will be sincerely appreciated.

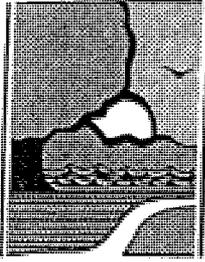
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Ver Steeg
Chief
Division of Wildlife Resources

JMV:LD:ld

Enclosure



ILLINOIS
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NATURAL RESOURCES

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

This letter is to remind you that we still would like to receive a report of your woodcock hunting activities for the past season. We don't like to keep bothering you, but this information is very important and only you can supply it.

Another copy of the questionnaire is enclosed. We hope you will complete it and return it as soon as possible. If you have already returned a questionnaire, please discard this one. Your response is needed, even if you did not hunt woodcock or had an unsuccessful season.

Postage is prepaid for returning the questionnaire. Please drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Your prompt attention will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Ver Steeg
Chief

Division of Wildlife Resources

JMV:LD:ld

Enclosure

Figure 4. The letter that accompanied the third mailing of the questionnaire.

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