Newsletter 36

Compiled by Yves Ferrand
Coordinator

Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage
Research Department
Migratory Birds Unit
BP 20
F 78612 Le Perray-en-Yvelines Cedex

December 2010

This Newsletter is published with financial assistance of Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage

This Newsletter seeks to be a contact organ to inform the members of the Woodcock and Snipe Specialist Group (WSSG), a research unit of Wetlands International (WI) and of IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The subjects of WSSG are species of the genera *Scolopax*, *Gallinago* and *Lymnocryptes* that in several respects differ remarkably from all other wader species. For this reason a separate research unit was established.

CONTENTS Page

Editorial

As the previous ones, this Newsletter reports the scientific and technical activities of the Woodcock & Snipe Specialist Group in 2010. Additionally to the usual contributors (Russia, Belarus, France, Italy, Great Britain, Finland...), the effort made in Hungary to develop research has to be underlined. This country must face an important challenge in so far as its entrance in European Community imposes the application of the rules of the Bird Directive, in relation to the spring hunting. The contribution of Portugal is also important because it shows a growing data collection effort in this wintering area. Of course, other countries are involved in Woodcock and Snipe studies but are not represented here.

A great opportunity for all of us to present our research and monitoring programs will be the 7th WSSG Workshop. Difficulties encountered in 2010 to organise this event have been solved and we are now able to do it thanks to three sponsors : the Embassy of France in Russia, the Federation of Russian Hunters and Fishermen – CIC and the *Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage*. The Workshop will held at the Novotel Hotel in Saint-Petersburg on **16-18 May 2011**, as I informed most of you by electronic mail. It will be a post-event of the 54th CIC General Assembly (GA). From a practical point of view, a web page will be created as quickly as possible on the 54th CIC GA web site to inform you on registration, accommodation, visa support,..... From now, **please reserve these dates** on your agenda to attend this important event in the life of the Woodcock and Snipe Specialist Group.

Herby Kalchreuter at the 6th WSSG Worshop at Nantes (France), in 2003.

In 2010, we were saddened to learn that Prof. Dr. Heribert Kalchreuter passed away on 14 March. Herby has been the Coordinator of our Group for 22 years (1980 – 2001). During his work, he always aimed to make hunters and conservationists work together and left a great impress on WSSG. Herby was a Woodcock lover and published a book on this species in 1979. He also played a great role in the development and negotiation of the Agreement on the Conservation of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). Between 1999 and 2005, Herby represented the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) at the AEWA Technical Committee. Within this framework, he provided a determinant document on Jack Snipe which led to keep this species as huntable in some countries while emphasizing it depends on a threatened habitat.

When I met him just before filling the position of WSSG coordinator, he told me to base the activity of the Group on scientific research. I think that this Newsletter and those published since 2000, are a great homage to Herby and the proof that we have fully followed his advice.

I wish you a happy new year 2011, a good success in your research work and hope to see you in St Petersburg in mid-May.

Yves Ferrand
Coordinator
Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage
Research Department – Migratory Birds Unit
BP 20
F – 78612 Le Perray-en-Yvelines Cedex
Telephone : +33 1 30 46 60 16/00 ; Fax : +33 1 30 46 60 99
e.mail : yves.ferrand@oncfs.gouv.fr

2010 Belarus Woodcock Report

EDWARD MONGIN, APB-Birdlife Belarus, Lyn'kova str. 17A-22, 220104 Minsk, Belarus
E-mail: edward.m@list.ru
YURI BOGUTSKI, Berezinski Biosphere Reserve, Domzeritsi, Vitebsk Region, Belarus
ELENA DAVIDYONOK, APB-Birdlife Belarus, Minsk

This season is the sixth year of Woodcock studies in Belarus with the financial assistance of the *Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (French Hunting and Wildlife Agency).* The main task of the project was Woodcock ringing during the autumn migration, however Snipe species (*Gallinago gallinago, Gallinago media* and *Lymnocryptes minimus*) were also included if encountered.

Woodcock ringing and study of migration were carried out in the Berezinsky Reserve vicinities on several stationary plots. The main study period was 16 September – 9 November. This autumn season was sufficiently warm and rainy. Soil was moist and soft during the majority of days.

We recorded 391 birds during 51 night trips, i.e. 7.7 contacts on average per ringing trip. This is the highest number of contacts over our study period (Figure 1). During the season, 76 woodcocks were caught. Among them, one bird was ringed three years ago at the same place and one bird was ringed one year ago. We also retrapped 6 woodcocks ringed 1-26 days before at the same places. The catching success rate was 21%, which was similar to that of the last year (20%). Few birds were caught in the full moon nights.

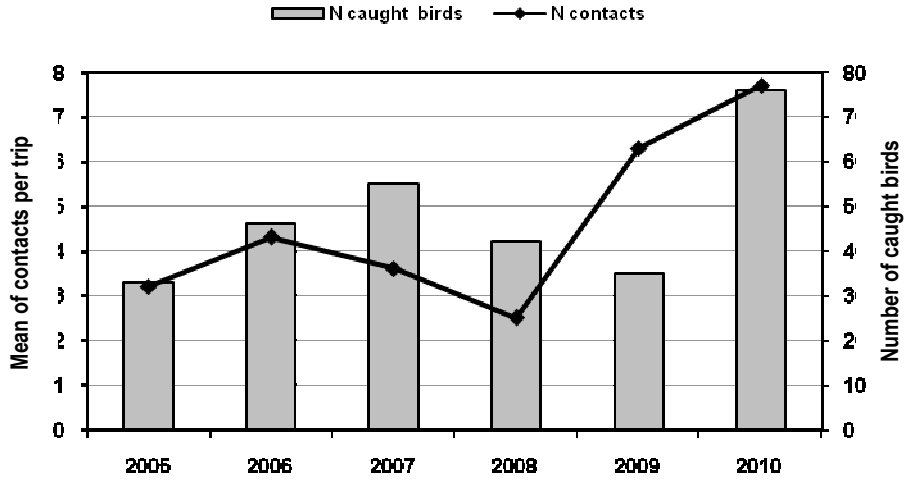


Figure 1 : *Mean number of contacts per ringing trip (2 hours) and numbers of caught woodcocks for each year of studies.*

Weight changes of retrapped birds (including data of previous years) are presented in Figure 2. The majority of birds gained weight very quickly. Some birds gained up to 3-5 g per day. Bird that stayed during 26 days in the same place gained 83.5 g. The statistical analysis did not reveal significant differences between years in mean weights (Figures 3 & 4).

The age ratio (juv/ad) among caught woodcocks was 0.65 (1.2 for the last year) and first-year woodcocks thus represented only 39.5% of all ringed birds. It is likely that this season was unfavourable for breeding woodcocks since we recorded a small (number) proportion of juveniles among caught birds. The proportion of "early brood" juveniles was 0.9 (0.6 in the last year), which probably means a lower breeding success for "late broods" in this season.

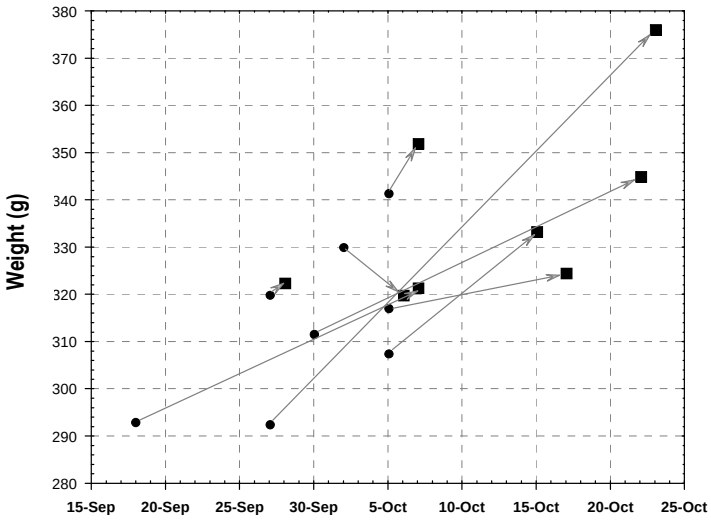


Figure 2 : *Weight changes of retrapped woodcocks during the same season. Arrows indicate change of weight during the season.*

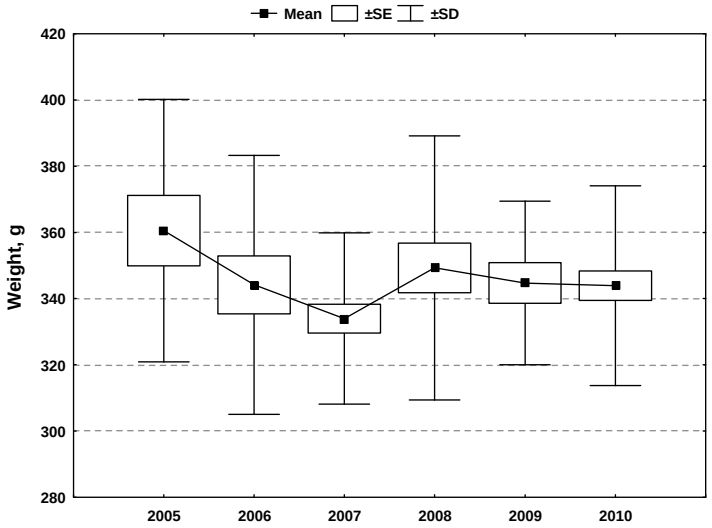


Figure 3 : *Mean weights of adult woodcocks caught over 2005-2010 ($F_{(5, 154)}$=1.53, p=0.18).*

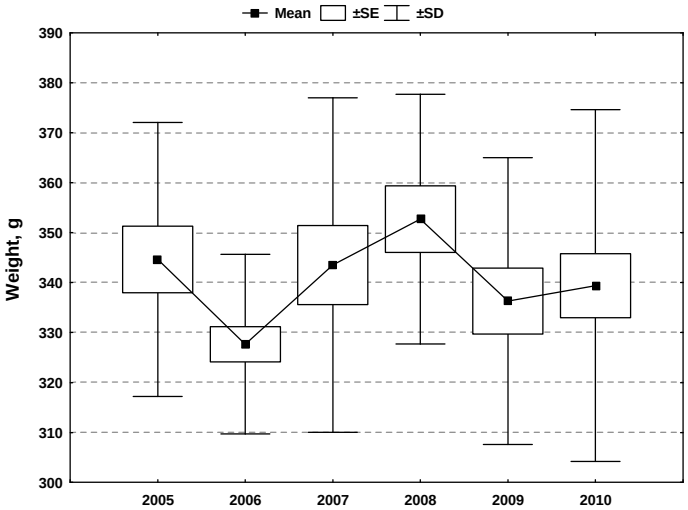


Figure 4 : *Mean weights of juvenile woodcocks caught over 2005-2010 ($F_{(5, 118)}$=1.69, p=0.14).*

Passage dynamics according to records of nocturnal contacts on the monitoring plots are given in Figure 5 and according to grouped observations by pentads in Figure 6. We recorded two waves of woodcock passage. The first wave was observed in the sixth pentad of September and the first pentad of October. The second peak occurred in the fifth pentad of October. Thanks to warm weather, woodcocks were recorded in the second pentad of November.

In addition, we caught and ringed 4 Common Snipes and one Great Snipe during night trips. The Great Snipe juvenile was caught on 20 September and stayed at the same place for several nights. Two Common Snipes caught in the last pentad of October had maximal recorded weights (143 and 158 g).

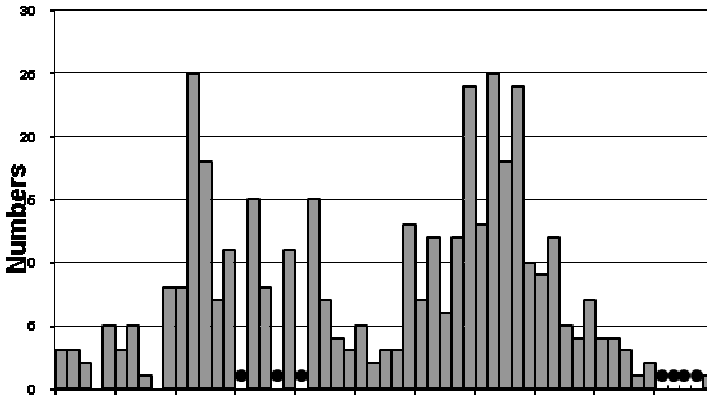


Figure 5 : *Passage dynamics of Woodcock according to records of nocturnal contacts in vicinities of the Berezinsky Reserve in 2010. The black dots indicate days without counts on the plots.*

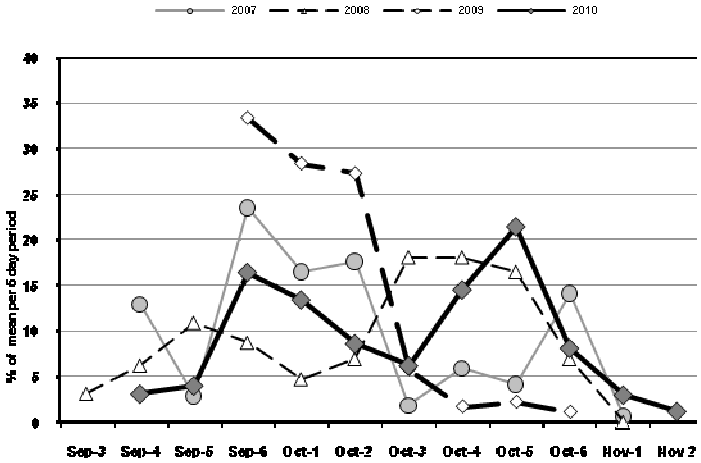


Figure 6 : *Passage dynamics of Woodcock according to records of nocturnal contacts in 2007-2010. Data grouped in five-day periods.*

Ringing recoveries of the Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) migrating through the Southern Belarus in autumn

PAVEL PINCHUK & NATALIA KARLIONOVA, Institute of Zoology NASB, Academichnaya Str., 27, 220072 Minsk, Belarus
E-mail: ppinchuk@mail.ru

During autumn migration, a huge number of common snipes *Gallinago gallinago* originating from the more eastern breeding areas pass through Europe towards the wintering grounds in the western part of the continent. The snipe is also a popular game bird in Europe with an annual hunting bag of more than one million individuals (Devort, 1997). Thus, the ring recovery rate of this species is high.

The common snipe is a breeding bird and passage migrant in Southern Belarus. During autumn migration it is one of the most numerous wader species in the Pripyat floodplain. The results of snipe ringing in Southern Belarus during the last 10 years are presented in this paper.

Methods and study area

Common snipes were ringed during autumn migration in the1999-2009 period at a ringing site situated in the Pripyat River floodplain. A more detailed description of the ringing site was given in Pinchuk *et al.* (2005).Two catching methods were used. From 1999 to 2004, the majority of birds were trapped in walk-in traps (Meissner,1998). Occasionally, mist-nets were also used. From 2005, we started to catch snipes with mist-nets and playback of recorded snipe calls (Pinchuk & Karlionova, 2006). The number of ringed common snipes varied among the seasons (Table 1). In total 3,507 birds were ringed.

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	**Total**
N birds	19	198	21	145	118	85	566	272	1,016	636	431	**3,507**

Table1: *Number of common snipes ringed in Southern Belarus in the 1999-2009 period.*

Results

In total, 70 common snipes were recovered by the autumn of 2010 (Table 2), which gave a mean recovery rate of 2.0 %. The recovery rate differed among years and the highest value was registered in 2003 (5.9 %). However, recovery rates for the last years were quite low owing to a very short period available after ringing, so we can suppose that they will increase in the future.

In total, recoveries from 14 countries were obtained. Most of the recoveries came from France (52.9 %) and Italy (24.3 %) which reflects a high hunting pressure in these countries (Table 2, Figure 1). All recoveries were obtained from wintering grounds and along migration routes and any recovery was reported from breeding grounds.

Most of the birds were recovered during autumn (Figure 2). Fifty-seven (83.8%) common snipes were shot, seven (10.3%) were caught and released and no information was provided for two birds. Finally, one was found dead and the remains of another bird were found in the nest of a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. Most of the recoveries (68.1 %) were direct ones. The longest period between ringing and recovery was 4 years, 11 months and 9 days. The fastest journey concerned a bird ringed on 14 July 2000 and recovered 6 days later in central Poland (103.7 km/day). The longest distance between ringing and recovery sites was 5,722 km for a juvenile bird ringed on 18 August 2007 and shot on 18 February 2008 near Diakali, Senegal.

Country	Number of recoveries	Proportion
France	37	52.86
Italy	17	24.29
Spain	2	2.86
Portugal	2	2.86
Greece	2	2.86
Germany	2	2.86
Ireland	1	1.43
Great Britain	1	1.43
Netherlands	1	1.43
Poland	1	1.43
Czech Republic	1	1.43
Croatia	1	1.43
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1	1.43
Senegal	1	1.43
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 2: *Number of recoveries of common snipes ringed in Southern Belarus in the 1999-2009 period.*

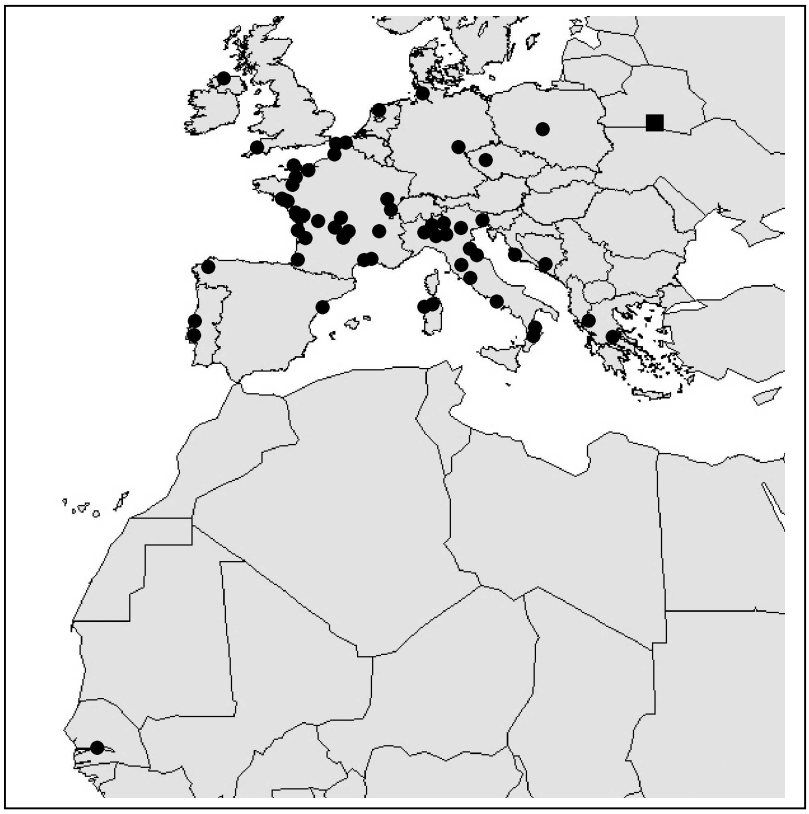


Figure 1: *Distribution of recoveries of common snipes ringed in Southern Belarus (location of the ringing site is marked by the black square).*

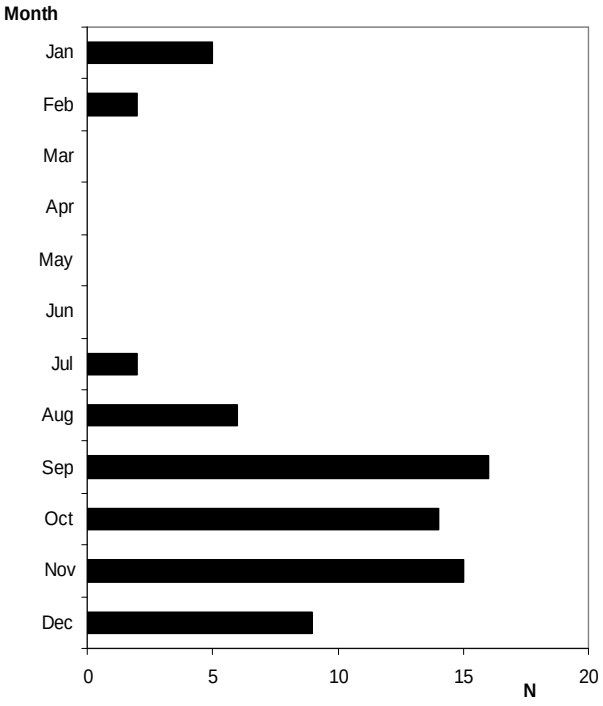


Figure 2: *Monthly distribution of recoveries of common snipes ringed in Southern Belarus.*

Discussion

It was previously supposed that Belarus is located on a dividing line between two different flyways. Birds breeding in Northern Belarus migrate to Northern Europe, and those breeding in Southern Belarus migrate towards the West Mediterranean region (Mongin, 2002). However, our data showed that wintering places of snipes migrating through Southern Belarus are located in Western Europe and theMediterranean region as well as in Northern Europe. Some birds can continue their migration along the Atlantic coast and reach even Central African wintering grounds as indicated by a recovery from Senegal.

Svazas & Paulauskas (2006) suggested that there are four Common Snipe flyways in the Western Palearctic. This assumption was based on ring recovery data and results of genetic studies. According to this assumption, snipes migrating through Southern Belarus used three of four described flyways – most of the birds used Continental Europe and North-West Europe flyways and some birds used a South-East Europe flyway.

Our data showed that there is a shift in migratory direction between sites in Northern and Central Poland (Minias *et al*., 2010) and Southern Belarus. The distribution of snipe recoveries from Southern Belarus differed from data in Northern Poland and was quite similar to Central Poland. However, birds from Central Poland were never recovered further east than Central Italy. We found that snipes migrating through the Pripyat floodplain winter in Southern Italy and the Balkan Peninsula. Thus, common snipes migrating through Southern Belarus use a more south-eastern direction than snipes migrating through Poland.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all colleagues from the TUROV Ringing Station for their help during fieldwork. Thanks are also due to Tatiana Pavluschchick for comments on this manuscript and for assistance with language correction.

References

Devort M. 1997. The Common Snipe. Elements of an action plan. OMPO, Paris.
Meissner W. 1998. Some notes on using walk-in traps. Wader Study Group Bulletin 86: 33-35.
Minias P., Wlodarczyk R., Meissner W., Remisiewicz M., Kaczmarek K., Czapulak A., Chylarecki P., Wojciechowski A. & T. Janiszewski. 2010. The migration system of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* on autumn passage through Central Europe. Ardea 98: 13-19.
Mongin E. 2002. Snipes in Belarus. In: S. Svazas (ed) Snipes of the Eastern Baltic region and Belarus. OMPO Vilnius, Vilnius: 15-36.
Pinchuk P., Karlionova N. & D. Zhurauliou. 2005. Wader ringing at the Turov ornithological station, Pripyat Valley (S. Belarus) in 1996-2003. Ring 27: 101-105.
Pinchuk P. & N. Karlionova. 2006. Use of playback calls for catching migrating Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* in autumn. Wader Study Group Bulletin 110: 64-65.
Svazas S. & A. Paulauskas. 2006. Identification of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* flyways in the Western Palearctic by analysis of ringing recoveries and genetic studies. Waterbirds around the world. Eds. G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK: 522-523.

News from……. RUSSIA

Abnormal hot and dry summer in Russia in 2010 : impact on the Woodcock breeding success and autumn migration

SERGEI FOKIN, YURI BLOKHIN, PETR ZVEREV, YURI ROMANOV & MARINA KOZLOVA , Russian Society for Conservation and Studies of Birds, Moscow, Russia.
E-mail: fokinwoodcock@mail.ru; fokin@mk.ru

In spring 2010, the majority of woodcocks arrived 7-10 days later than usual in Russia. The individual hunters'questionnaires collected this year showed that the majority of hunters (52,9 % ; n = 435) consider that the roding season was worse than in the previous years. One hypothesis could be that spring migration was delayed in relation to harsh weather conditions in winter in Europe and late spring arrival in Russia. Roding censuses carried out at the end of May-June showed that woodcock numbers in 2010 were lower than usual.

Results of the 12th National Woodcock Roding Census

The 12th National Woodcock Roding Census was organized by the Moscow scientific "Woodcock" group, the Association *Rosokhotrybolovsoyuz*, several hunting offices and the "Russian hunter" newspaper. It was carried out on 29 May 2010.
In total, 3,000 forms were sent to 35 provinces of the European part of Russia and Ural through the system of hunter societies of *Rosokhotrybolovsoyuz*. One issue of the

"Russian hunter" newspaper presented the census form and the census methods, so that every reader was able to send a press-cutting with his own census results. The total number of forms distributed in Russia in 2010 was similar to that of the previous years. The form and the census methods remained exactly the same.

By 2010, 2,455 forms (= points) were collected from 32 provinces of Russia. 896 forms (36.5 %) were rejected. The Central and Ural regions are the best represented (Table 1). In total, 10,722 contacts (≥ 1 bird) were registered at the 1,559 validated census points. 12,374 woodcocks were observed, i.e. 1,2 individuals/contact. No woodcocks were seen at 51 points (3.3 %) in 11 different provinces. This is the highest proportion of "zero" points since 2001 (range : 1.3 % - 2.9 % ; Figure 1). The highest number of contacts was registered in Lipetsk, with 30 contacts. This is also the worst result since 2001 (range : 34 – 50).The mean number of contacts per point for the whole provinces was 6.9 **(**7,9 individuals**).** This is the lowest value since 1999 (range : 7.3 – 9.8).

The National Woodcock Roding Census showed that roding intensity was the lowest in the last 12 years.

Owing to hot and dry weather conditions in summer (see below), roding stopped by 10 July, approximately 2 weeks earlier than usual.

	Province	Number of points	Number of contacts	Mean of contacts	Maximum of contacts	% "0 contact" points
"Poor" roding (1.5 ≤ mean of contacts ≤ 5)	Saratov	27	41	1,52	6	44,4
	Belgorod	32	65	2,03	10	37,5
	Tula	43	126	2,93	13	25,6
	Kursk	27	99	3,67	8	3,7
	Voronej	21	85	4,05	16	4,8
	Moscow Region	7	30	4,29	11	0
	Tambov	26	117	4,5	10	0
	Komi	33	150	4,55	20	9,1
"Average" roding (5.1≤ mean of contacts ≤ 10)	Penza	56	281	5,02	18	3,6
	Orel	12	64	5,33	13	0
	Lipetsk	26	148	5,69	30	11,5
	Tatarstan	34	197	5,79	17	5,9
	Ivanovo	84	529	6,3	19	0
	Leningrad	95	621	6,54	21	0
	Ulyanovsk	73	492	6,74	19	0
	Ryazan	32	224	7	15	0
	Sverdlovsk	211	1489	7,06	21	1,4
	Yaroslavl	92	678	7,37	21	0
	Udmurtia	6	45	7,5	11	0
	Nizhniy Novgorod	74	588	7,95	21	0
	Vologda	286	2301	8,05	28	0
	Perm	11	89	8,09	15	0
	Vladimir	106	886	8,36	23	0,9
	Chelyabinsk	53	469	8,85	16	0
"Good" roding (10.1 ≤ mean of contacts)	Bryansk	31	311	10,03	25	0
	Novgorod	8	85	10,63	16	0
	Tver	3	32	10,67	18	0
	Smolensk	13	139	10,69	28	0
	Chuvashiya	6	67	11,17	16	0
	Kirov	5	61	12,2	16	0
	Pskov	4	58	14,5	20	0
	Kaluga	1	15	15	15	0
	Karelia	2	31	15,5	17	0
Total / mean		**1559**	**10722**	**6,88**		**3,3**

Table 1: *Results of the 12th National Woodcock Roding Census in Russia in 2010.*

Weather conditions in spring and summer

The weather conditions from April to October are summarized for the Vladimir Oblast in Table 2.

April was warm and very dry in Central Russia. It rained only during 5 days. However, the large snow reserves ensured soil humidity after snow thaw. May was warm and rainy. June as a whole was warmer than usual and precipitations took place mainly in the first half of the month. From 20 June, heat and dry weather were settled . The highest air temperature was + 34.3 °C on 26 June. July appeared extremely hot. The highest temperature was + 37.1 °C on 24 July. August also appeared very hot. The highest temperature was + 36.5 °C on 8 August. Rains occurred at the end of the month. September was also warmer than usual. Finally, October was slightly colder than the norm and precipitations were insufficient.

Fires numbers and areas

The basic forest fire period lasted from 7 July to 26 August. From the end of July to mid-August, up to 400 fires arose every day in the country, mainly in the European part. The official data of the Ministry of Extreme Situations showed that 30,376 natural fires occurred from July to mid-September in the Federation of Russia (Table 3).

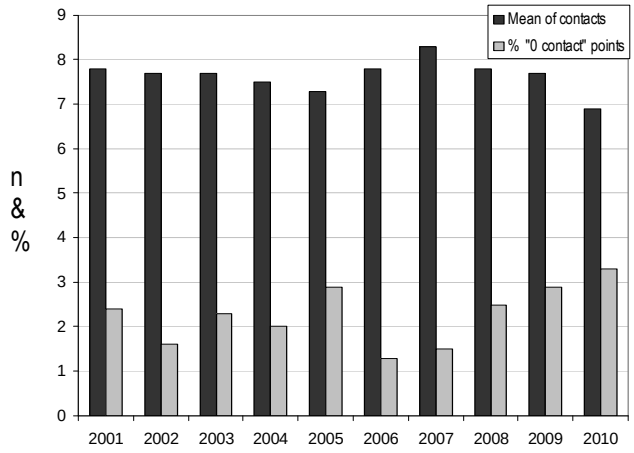


Figure 1: *Results of the National Woodcock Roding Census in Russia from200 to 2010.*

	Mean air temperature (°C)	Difference from norm (°C)	Precipitation (mm)	Proportion of norm
April	7.7	+ 2.3	38	68 %
May	16.5	+ 4.2	97	190 %
June	18,3	+ 1.7	46	71 %
July	25	+ 7	13	15 %
August	15,8	+ 4.9	49	83 %
September	10,2	+ 1.1	48	84 %
October	3,9	- 0.8	39	67 %

Table 2 : *Weather data collected at the Vladimir meteorological station from April to October 2010.*

Regions	Number of fires	Area (ha)	Observations
Arkhangelsk	351	11,800	4.9 times more forest fires and 65.8 times larger concerned area than in 2009
Bryansk	416	1,922.4	
Kirov	517	4,407	3 times more forest fires than in 2009
Karelia	455	6,761.3	176 fires on 1614,1 ha in 2009
Komi	544	15,500	82 fires on 400 ha in 2009.
Kurgan	1,539	20,374	
Lipetsk	300	8,000	
Mari-El	421	55,400	
Mordovia	284	10,500	
Moscow	1935	43,17	
Nizhniy Novgorod	1,083	112,000	
Orenburg	604	4,737.8	379 fires in 2009
Penza	641	6,509	
Ryazan	1,150	200,000	3-5 % of the region
Sverdlovsk	1,762	253,000	
Tver	421	1,650	
Udmurtiya	302	207,2	
Ulyanovsk	671	1,503	
Far East	987	240 000	Kamchatka taken into account

Table 3: *Official data of forest fires in 2010 in the Federation of Russia (no large forest fires were registered in Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Kaluga and other regions).*

About 1.25 million ha burned of which 2,092 ha of peat bogs (1,162 fires). Based on data of the Ministry of Forests, the forest fires concerned about 1.5 million ha.
According to the Institute of space research of the Russian Academy of Science (MODIS devices with Terra and Aqua satellites), 5.8 million ha were burned in Russia at the date of 18 August 2010. According to the Institute of Forests of the Siberian Department of the Russian Academy of Science (AVHRR devices with NOAA satellite) about 5.9 million ha burned. More than half of fire areas were forests. According to the Global Fire Monitoring Center, on the basis of space imagery, the fire areas in the Federation of Russia were not less than 10-12 million ha from the beginning of 2010 to mid-August. Fires have been mentioned in 60 Federal Reserves and National Parks in which relic woods and rare species of plants and animals were lost.

Impact of weather conditions on Woodcock

The main Woodcock hatching period (end of May) was warm and rather dry, and then probably led to a good breeding success of "early broods". By the end of July, the forest soil was very dry and it was difficult for woodcocks to find damp areas suitable for feeding. In early August, woodcocks were observed in atypical places : vicinities of lakes, non-dried up bogs, wet willow and alder around reservoirs and canals, despite these sites not being ideal for feeding. Due to the absence of rain, woodcocks stayed in woods at night or went on meadow roads. They obviously suffered from a lack of food in summer when they need to (restore their energetic reserves to finish moulting and prepare autumn migration. During autumn migration the main woodcock feeding habitats long remained unsuitable and dry. As a whole, both the second half of summer and autumn were a bad period for Woodcock. Undoubtedly, forest fires had a negative impact on this species by destroying habitats and reducing feeding capacity. Because of these conditions, migration was slightly delayed and irregularly distributed.

In the majority of Russian regions, the state of emergency came into force from mid-July to 1 September. Hiking in woods and hunting were forbidden.

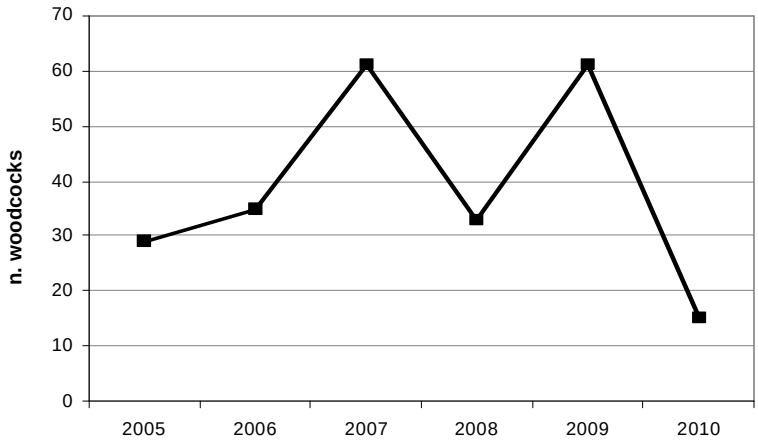


Figure 2 : *Inter-annual fluctuations of numbers of woodcocks observed at a regular ringing site in the Tver region from 2005 to 2010.*

Autumn migration

Woodcock ringing and information from Woodcock hunters in autumn 2010 showed an extreme unequal distribution of woodcocks. In the majority of regions, the number of woodcocks was lower than usual in typical habitats. At the same time, in Vladimir, Kostroma, Pskov, Leningrad, Kaluga, Tula, Penza, Nizhniy Novgorod regions, concentrations of woodcocks were observed practically all November long. Obviously, this was related to optimum breeding conditions for local birds and sufficiently wet habitats to provide food during migration.
During migration, 98 woodcocks were ringed by the Moscow Woodcock Scientific Group. The proportion of juveniles (age-ratio) strongly differed among ringing sites. In the Kostroma and Tver areas, the age-ratio was 78.4 % and 78.6 %, respectively, but in the Vladimir area, the age-ratio was only 56.0 %. Among

juveniles, the "late broods" only represented 8.4 %. Such a low proportion illustrates the impact of drought in the second half of summer, which probably led to an exceptionally high mortality of "late brood" chicks.
In the Tver area, the number of woodcocks observed at night during ringing operations at a regular ringing site (Maksatihinsky district), and during the day with pointing dogs, was almost 4 times lower than in 2009 (Figure 2). In the Vladimir area as a whole, the number of woodcocks was 2 times lower than usual even if some concentrations of birds were found in optimal sites.

The hunting season was opened from 4 September (later in some regions) and ended in the majority of Russian regions on 15-30 November. An estimation of 2010 Woodcock hunting bags in spring and autumn 2010 in Russia will be available in the next months. However, according to the data presented above, the 2010 Woodcock season will probably be classified as "unsuccessful".

Conclusion

A large part of European woodcocks wintering in South-West Europe (France, Spain and Italy) originates from Russia. Considering the harsh weather conditions in summer in Russia 2010, but also the cold wave in January 2010 in Western Europe which probably led to an over-mortality in potential breeders as shown by the roding observations results in Russia in Spring 2010, management regulations should be set in winter 2010-2011 in wintering grounds (mainly in France), in order to reduce the level of hunting bags.

Low breeding success of NW Russian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) in 2010

VADIM VYSOTSKY, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, Universitetskaya nab., 1, St.Petersburg, 199034, Russia.
E-mail: avesvgv@zin.ru
IVAN ILJINSKY, St.Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya nab., 7/9, St.Petersburg, 199034, Russia.
E-mail: ivi-2008@yandex.ru

The ratio of juvenile to adult individuals can be a valuable metric for estimating woodcock productivity because it can be estimated across large geographic and temporal scales. Estimating age ratios may be an effective way of monitoring changes in reproductive success.

Ringing was conducted during the 1994-2010 period near St. Petersburg, Russia. Woodcocks were captured during the night in open field habitats, using the spot light technique (Gossmann *et al*., 1988). All trapped birds were aged (juveniles = first-year hatched during the calendar year of ringing, and adults = hatched before the calendar year of ringing) using plumage characteristics, moult and wear, following Clausager (1973) and Ferrand & Gossmann (2009). Local and migrating woodcocks were ringed during September, October, and beginning of November. Most woodcocks were ringed during autumn migration. According to recoveries during the breeding period (Vysotsky & Iljinsky, 2007), these migratory birds belong to populations from north-western Russia. To estimate the juvenile/adult ratio we have analysed a total of 2,566 captures.

The average yearly proportion of juveniles among captured woodcocks was 70.0 % (on average 2.34 juveniles per adult). In 2010, the proportion of juveniles was 45 % (on average 0.8 juveniles per adult). This value is the lowest during study period and reflects a very poor reproductive success in 2010. This poor reproductive success can be explained by dry conditions in the breeding season. The proportion of juveniles clearly decreased since 2000 (Figure 1).

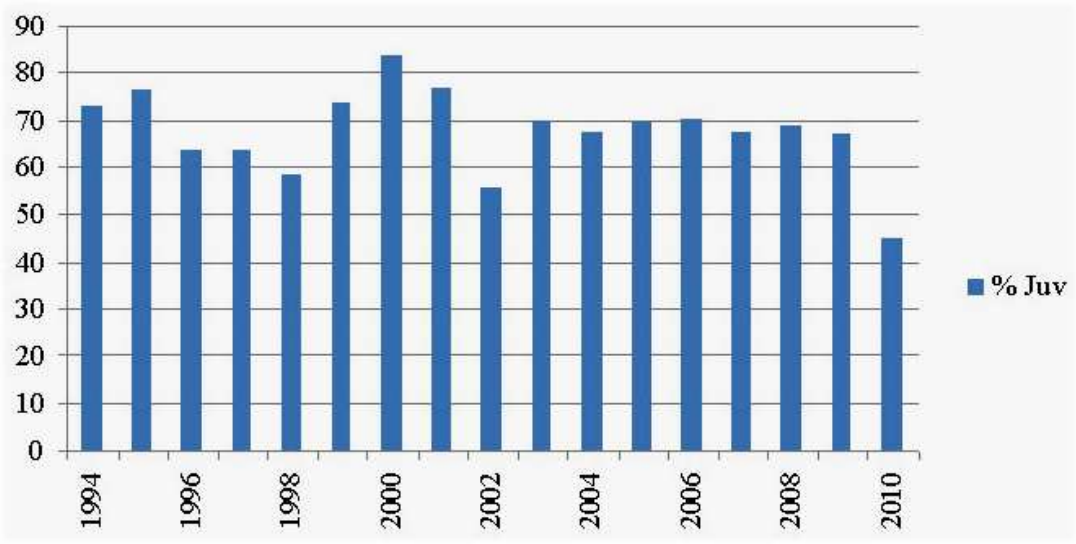


Figure 1: *The autumn age ratio of the woodcocks from NW Russia.*

Robust estimation of productivity with age-ratios requires that both age classes are sampled in an unbiased manner. Juvenile and adult individuals must be equally trappable. If juveniles are more likely to be sampled than adults because of age-specific differences in behavior, age ratios will yield productivity estimates that are highly biased. We did not test the assumption that juvenile and adult woodcocks were equally trappable.

It is well known that differential age vulnerability to harvest in game birds can occur. We estimated differential age vulnerability to harvest using the ratio of direct recovery rates for juveniles and adults. According to our estimation, woodcock juveniles were 1.8 times more likely to be harvested than adults. This leads us to believe during ringing, woodcock juveniles were more likely to be trapped than adults. Correspondingly, the proportion of juvenile woodcocks in the wild in 2010 was less than the estimated 45 %.

Acknowledgments

The census of autumn woodcock migration would be impossible without the active participation in bird catching and ringing of all the members of the working group, in addition to the authors of this article: first of all V.A. Buzun, D.V. Chistyakov, V.I. Golovan, V.A. Fedorov, A.V. Kondratiev, V.G. Pchelintsev, M.V. Verevkin (St.Petersburg State University), and also Y. Ferrand, F. Gossmann, L. Barbier (ONCFS, France). We are grateful also for the help of the staff of the Moscow Ringing Center. The study of Woodcock was financed by the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, France. The data analysis was additionally supported by the Programme “Russian Biological Resources”.

References

Clausager I. 1973. Age and Sex Determination of the Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*). Danish Rev. Game. Biol. 8(1): 1-18.
Gossmann F., Ferrand Y., Loidon Y. & G. Sardet. 1988. Methodes et resultats de baguages des bécasses des bois en Bretagne. In: Third European Woodcock and Snipe Workshop, IWRB. p. 34-41.
Ferrand Y. & F. Gossmann. 2009. Ageing and sexing series 5: Ageing and sexing the Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. Wader Study Group Bulletin 116(2): 75-79.
Vysotsky & Iljinsky, 2007. Factors affecting on annual survival rate and abundance of woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) ringed in north-west Russia. Proc. The IV International Symposium: Dynamics of game animal populations in Northern Europe. Inst. Biol. Rus. Acad. Sci. Petrozavodsk, p.183-189.

Eurasian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) monitoring in Buda Mountain (Hungary)

NORBERT BLEIER, Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Páter K. u. 1., 2103 Gödöllő, Hungary, *Email:* bleier.norbert@gmail.com
ZSOMBOR FÁCZÁNYI, Fairy Bird Woodcock Research Association, Petőfi u. 42., 8085 Vértesboglár, Hungary, *Email:* faczanyi.zsombor@verteserdo.hu
GERGELY SCHALLY, Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Páter K. u. 1., 2103 Gödöllő, Hungary *Email:* sgergo@ns.vvt.gau.hu

In 2010, as in the previous year (Bleier & Faczanyi, 2009), the Fairy bird Woodcock Research Association made roding observations in the area of Pilis Forest Administration Zrt., in the woodland surrounding Julianna-farm-stead from 1 March to 10 April. The study area and the methods of data collection were the same as last year. Numbers of contacts (Ferrand *et al*., 2008; Machado *et al*., 2008) have been recorded at three listening points between 1 March and 10 April during dawn and dusk survey sessions. The number of observations and the number of contacts are shown in Table 1.
To evaluate our results we also compared them with the previous year's observation data. At the beginning of the observation period, the weather conditions differed greatly from those of the last year in that there was no snow. The first woodcock contact occurred on 3 March (Figure 1) with a silent pair of woodcocks. From this date they were detected each day during a week, but usually only single birds. Then no bird was seen till 18 March (except on 14 March when two single birds were observed). In the previous years, woodcocks were regularly observed in this period. Last year, for example, the first observation was made on 1 March, after which there was a smaller pause until 5 March, followed by daily observations from 6 to 18 March (Figure 1).

	Point 1		Point 2		Point 3		total	
							6	(26)
1-5 March	2	(10)	1	(6)	3	(10)	9	(28)
6-10 March	5	(10)	2	(9)	2	(9)	2	(26)
11-15 March	0	(10)	0	(8)	2	(8)	16	(17)
16-20 March	12	(8)	2	(4)	2	(5)	75	(27)
21-25 March	36	(10)	20	(10)	19	(7)	28	(28)
26-30 March	8	(10)	15	(10)	5	(8)	30	(23)
31 March - 4 April	13	(6)	7	(9)	10	(8)	4	(15)
5-10 April	2	(8)	2	(6)	0	(1)		
41 days	78	(72)	49	(62)	43	(56)	170	(190)

Table 1: *Number of contacts by five-day periods for every point of observation and for all points (in brackets, number of observation sequences).*

Temperatures registered at the beginning of dawn and evening roding flights may explain the low number of contacts in 2010. The first half of the "no woodcock" period was significantly colder than the previous or following days (Figure 1). These unfavorable weather conditions concerned not only Hungary but the whole European continent and could have led to a pause in migration, which had just started.
Local weather conditions could also have had a real negative effect on roding and explain why we did not observe any bird. However, observers walking to their observation points did not even flush any woodcocks in 2010, whereas they flushed 5 of them in 2009.
Clear differences appear in annual fluctuations between 2009 and 2010 when comparing the number of contacts pooled by 3-day periods at each observation point (Figures 2).
During the 5th and 6th 3-day period (13-15 March and 16-18 March) observers censused a total of 44 and 35 woodcocks in 2009, but only 2 in 2010 (Figure 3).

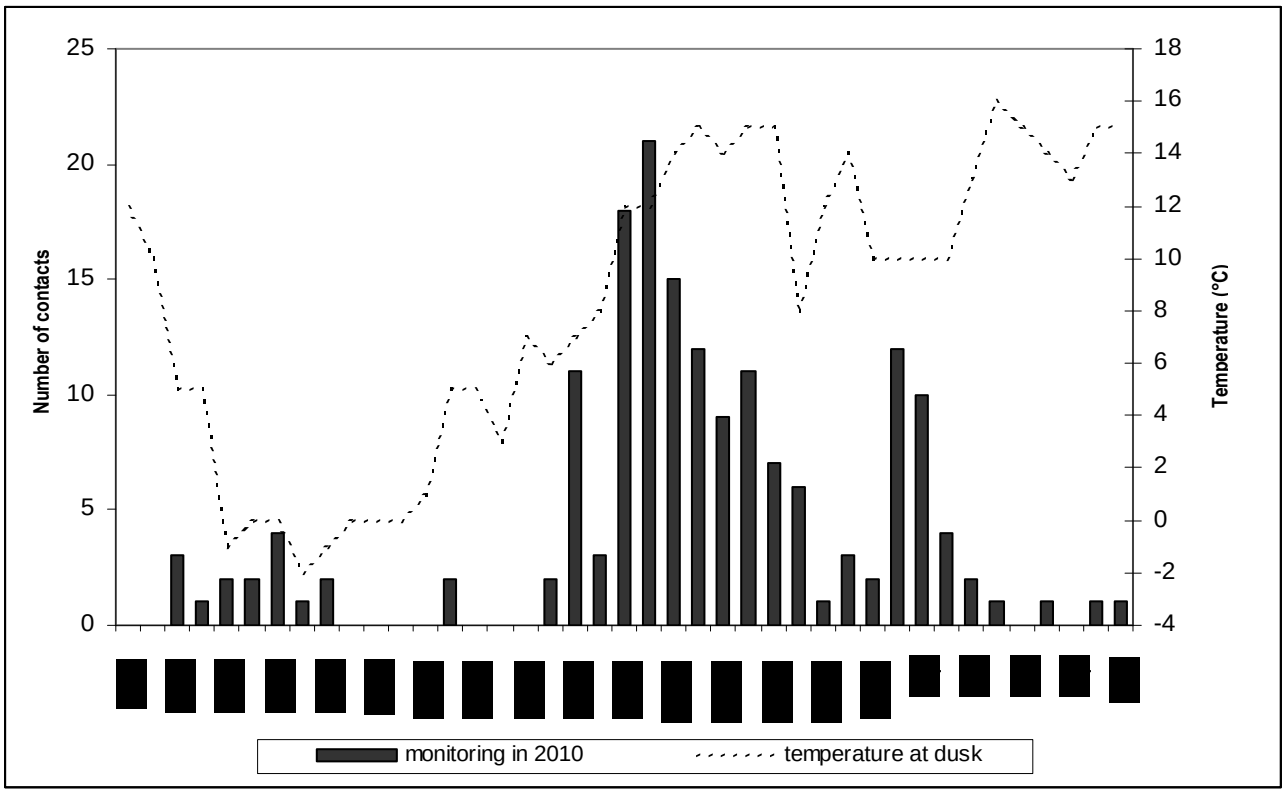
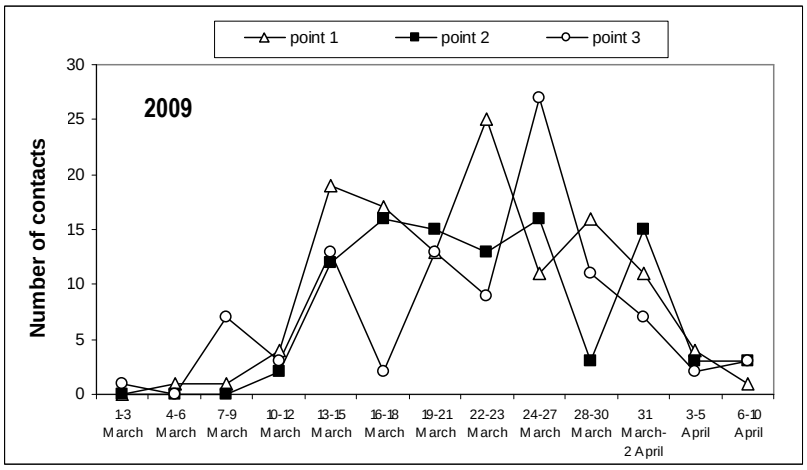


Figure 1: *Total number of Woodcock contacts observed in 2010 in the study area and temperatures registered at dusk in the same time.*



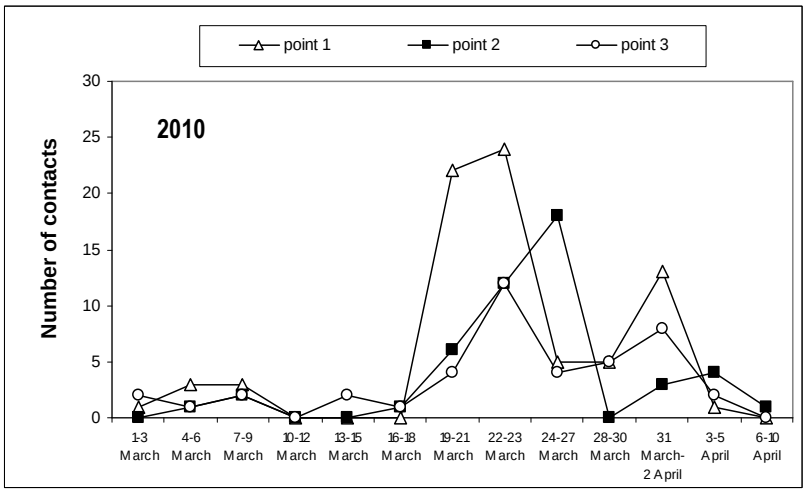


Figure 2: *Number of Woodcock contacts pooled by 3-day periods for each observation point in 2009 and 2010.*

In 2010, the number of contacts increased significantly in the 7th 3-day period, then reached the yearly peak in the following period (48 birds/3 days). However, it decreased quickly (only 10 contacts in the 10th 3-day period). A smaller peak was registered afterwards, then roding intensity dropped very quickly until the end of the 13th 3-day period. During the last five days, only 3 woodcocks were observed, the last one on 10 April. In 2010, the peak of roding activity appeared almost at the same time as in 2009 (one 3-day period earlier) and the peak values did not differ significantly (54 in 2009, 48 in 2010). In 2010, the number of woodcock contacts reached or exceeded 30 only during 2 3-day periods (7 in 2009). The total number of contacts reached 170 in 2010 *vs* 323 in 2009. The difference is substantial despite the fact that there were more observation occasions this year than the year before (190 in 2010; 182 in 2009).

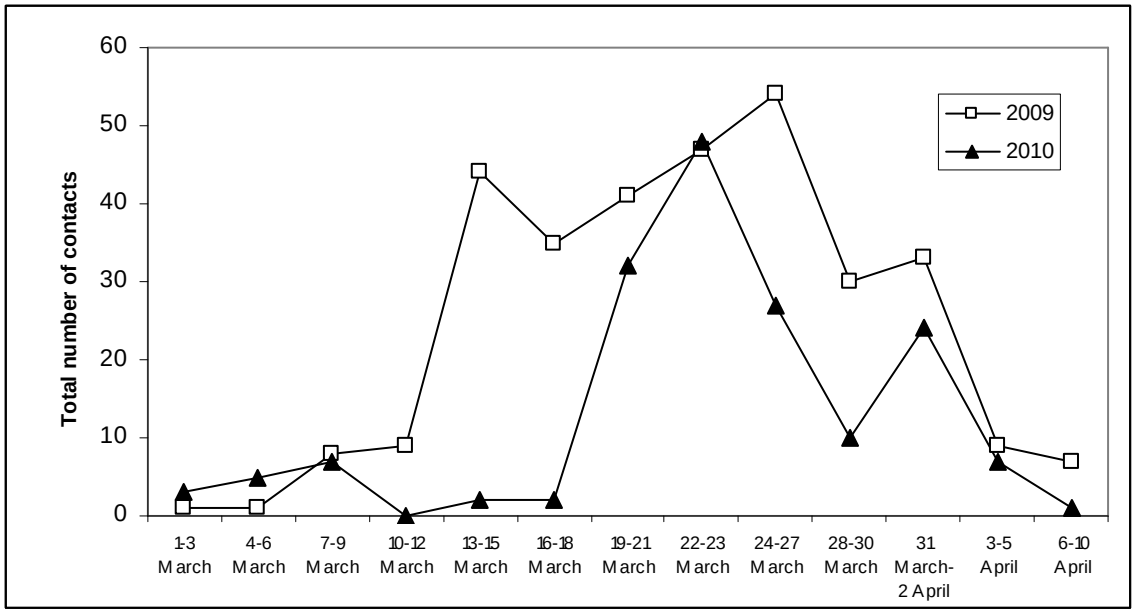


Figure 3: *Total number of contacts pooled by 3-day periods in 2009 and 2010.*

Even if the aim of this monitoring was to investigate population dynamics, and not to make a population census, it is advisable not to draw direct conclusions regarding the population change. However, these results are in accordance with the results of the Hungarian Woodcock Monitoring Programme (Szemethy *et al.*, 2010). Woodcock monitoring over a small study area may provide data on the intensity of roding rather than on the magnitude of the migrating population.

Detectability is often below 100 %, especially in the case of silent birds. It may well happen that more birds fly very close to observers without being detected. Furthermore, a single bird or a roding pair may be detected several times in a roding observation sequence (Hoodless *et al*., 2008).

Weather conditions are recorded during the observations. As indicated above, the fluctuations in Woodcock contacts during the 2010 observation period may be related to a temperature decrease.

Because of the importance for a migratory species of reaching the reproduction area in time [the nesting areas in Hungary are located mainly in the northern part of the country (Hoodless & Saari, 1997)], a delayed or interrupted migration does not necessarily mean that the migration ends later. Presumably, the migrating individuals try to counterbalance the lost time by a shorter migrating time which also reduces resting and foraging, and strive to reach their breeding site as soon as possible. Knowing that under normal circumstances a woodcock is able to

cover a distance of 400 km/ day (in fact a night; Ferrand & Gossmann, 2009), it is likely that unfavorable environmental conditions require a higher performance, and consequently we have no opportunity to observe the migrating birds at the observation points.
The number of contacts in 2009 and 2010 differ in the 5th and 6th 3-day periods values (Figure 2 and 3), probably due to different weather conditions. This could explain why it is possible to detect only half of the birds seen in former years even if the size of the total population did not change that much.
Our objective is to continue our surveys and gather data from further research to improve knowledge on Woodcock migration.

References

Bleier N. & Zs. Fáczányi. 2009. Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) monitoring in Pilis (Hungary). WI- WSSG Newsletter 35: 10-12.
Ferrand Y., Gossmann F., Bastat C. & M. Guénézan. 2008. Monitoring of the wintering and breeding Woodcock populations in France. Revista Catalana d'Ornitologia 24: 44-52.
Ferrand Y. and F. Gossmann. 2009. La Bécasse des bois, histoire naturelle. Effet de lisière – éditeur. 224 p.
Hoodless A. and L. Saari. 1997. Woodcock. In: Hagemeijer E. J. M., Blair M. J. The EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds: Their Distribution and Abundance. T&AD Poyser, London. pp. 292-293.
Hoodless A., Inglis J. G., Doucet J.-P. & N.J. Aebischer. 2008. Vocal individuality in the roding calls of Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and their use to validate a survey method. Ibis, 150(1): 80-89.
Machado A. L., Ferrand Y., Gossmann F., Silveira A. M. & D. Gonçalves. 2008. Application of a roding survey method to the sedentary Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopx rusticola* population in Pico Island, Azores. European Journal of Wildlife Research 54: 205-214.
Szemethy L., Schally G., Bleier N., Lehoczki R. & G. Kovács. 2010. Az erdeiszalonka-monitoring 2009-ben. In: Csányi S., Heltai M. (eds.) Vadbiológiai olvasókönyv: Szemelvények a vadbiológia új eredményeiről a Vadvilág Megőrzési Intézet munkatársainak ismeretterjesztő cikkei alapján. Mezőgazda Kiadó, Budapest. pp. 65-70.

Country-wide monitoring of the migrating Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) populations in Hungary

GERGELY SCHALLY, Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Páter K. u. 1., 2103 Gödöllő, Hungary, *Email:* sgergo@ns.vvt.gau.hu
NORBERT BLEIER, Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Páter K. u. 1., 2103 Gödöllő, Hungary, *Email:* bleier.norbert@gmail.com
LÁSZLÓ SZEMETHY, Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Páter K. u. 1., 2103 Gödöllő, Hungary, *Email:* Szemethy.Laszlo@vvt.gau.hu

Eurasian woodcock is a popular game species in Hungary and in several European countries. As it is a migratory species, capturing, hunting, or other activities, can only be allowed if they are in accordance with EU Birds Directive (79/409 EGK).
Spring woodcock hunt is a centuries-old tradition in Hungary. The annual bag has always been less than 10.000 individuals in the last decade (Csányi *et. al*, 2009; http://vmi.info.hu/adattar/index.html).
However, it is problematic from the Directive's point of view, because hunting season coincides with the migration to breeding areas. An autumn hunting season seems to be a legal solution, but in the Hungarian context, it could also cause more difficulties than it would solve.
The Directive allows derogations under controlled conditions and only for a small number of birds [1% of total mortality (natural + hunting) at maximum]. In order to be able to fulfill the requirements of the EU Birds Directive it is essential to initiate and maintain a country-wide monitoring system.
Several migration routes are known among the wintering areas in South-West Europe and the Mediterranean region and breeding areas from Scandinavia to Ural Mountains, and it is likely that two or more flyways cross each other in

our country (Fluck, 2009). Although there are many former observations on the migration, there is still a lack of information. To broaden our knowledge about the species and to estimate the size of the migrating population in Hungary, a monitoring program was initiated by the former Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Hungarian National Chamber of Hunters (HCH). The program started in 2009. Data collection and processing and assessment of results have been carried out by Szent István University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation (IWC).

Methods

The objective is to collect data from as many observation points as possible at the same period of time. These give us snapshots about different states of the migration. With the comparison of consecutive snapshots we can estimate dynamics, speed and extent of migration.
In spring, the basis of the monitoring program is a roding survey (Bibby *et al*., 1997; Ferrand *et al*., 2008; Machado *et al*., 2008) weekly performed by observers on every Saturday (from 28th February to 2nd May in spring 2009, from 13th February to 1st May in Spring 2010). The observers recorded the following data on standardized forms: number of contacts (birds seen and/or heard), estimated size of the visible area, duration of the survey, weather conditions and habitat types surrounding the observation point.

The monitoring-network can be divided into different levels, each for different tasks: county coordinators, representatives of game management units (GMU) and observers (participating hunters). Observation data recorded by the observers were sent to the GMU representatives each week. The paper forms were collected by the county coordinators (HCH active members) each week. They uploaded the observation data electronically to a web server created and maintained by IWC weekly.
The total number of observation points was 899 in spring 2009 and 908 in spring 2010. Figure 1 shows their distribution.

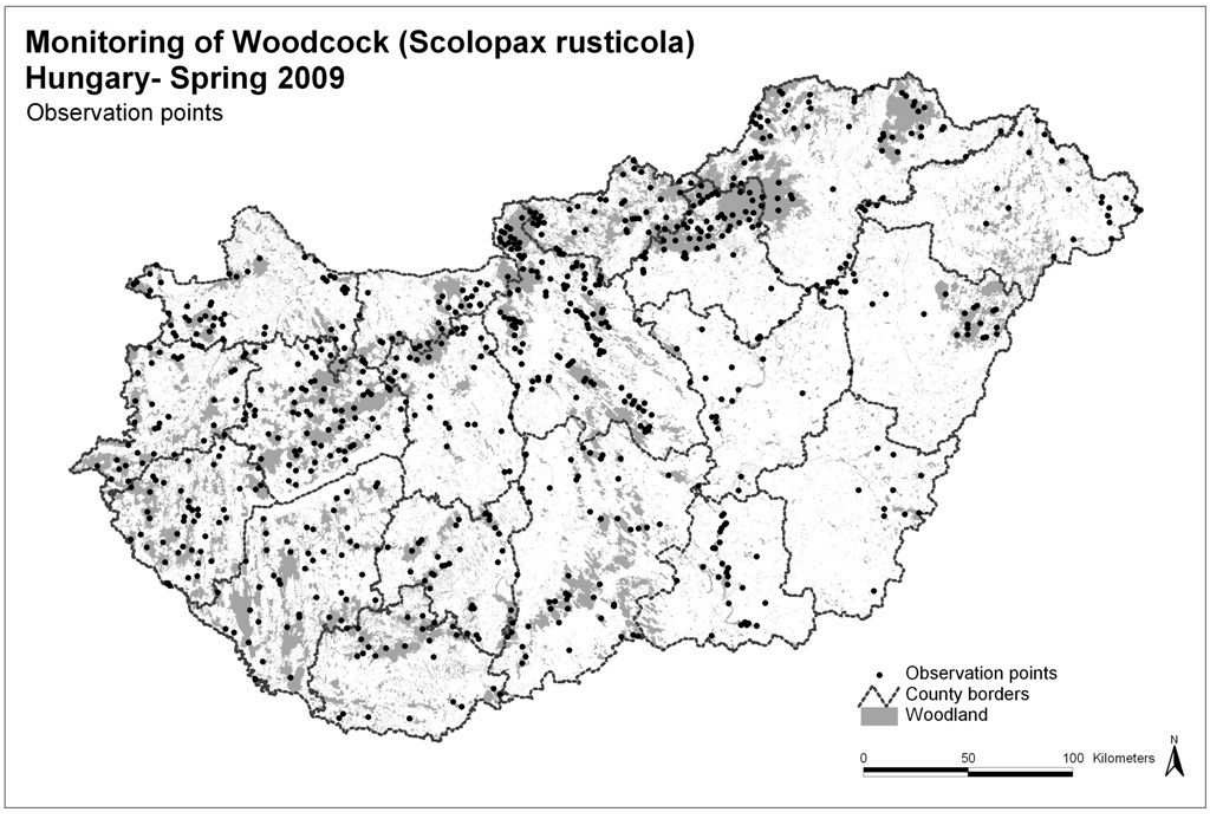


Figure 1. *Distribution of the observation points in spring 2009.*

We calculated the mean densities of contacts (woodcocks seen/hectare/hour) for each observation week in each county. Their distribution represents the temporal dynamics and intensity of migration.

Additional data collection was performed by the participating hunters during autumn migration from 15th September to 15th December in 2009 and from 14th September to 14th December in 2010. The total number of observation points was 755 in autumn 2009, evaluation of 2010 autumn observation data is not complete at the moment.

The aim of autumn surveys is to discover the characteristics of migration in autumn, using very similar methods as for roding surveys in spring.

Observers recorded data at the same points as in spring, on each Tuesday at dusk when woodcocks perform their "connecting flight" from woods to meadows. However, there is a great difference between the seasons in the probability of detection: in spring, woodcocks can be detected by sight and listening but only by sight in autumn, flights are slow in spring but fast in autumn, the same bird can be observed several times in spring, which is not typical in autumn at all. Observations in autumn can provide information about migration, but the comparison with spring data is problematic owing to these differences.

Results

Figure 2 shows the distributions calculated from 2009 and 2010 spring observation data. The distributions of spring season's mean densities followed one-peak curves in both years, however a temporal difference between their peaks is observed. The distributions of values are very similar year by year, but densities were higher in 2010. Such high densities are not typical on a county level, and can also be explained by the fact that the size of the estimated visible areas may vary between distinct years. Besides the mean density values, we also calculated standard deviations. The results show that there are great differences even between results registered at the same period of time.

The temporal dynamics of migration in autumn 2009 is shown in Figure 3. The distribution of mean densities in autumn cannot be described with a one-peak curve. It seems to be long-drawn-out and more balanced than in spring. However, the comparison of spring and autumn values is problematic because the behavior of the birds is completely different in distinct seasons.

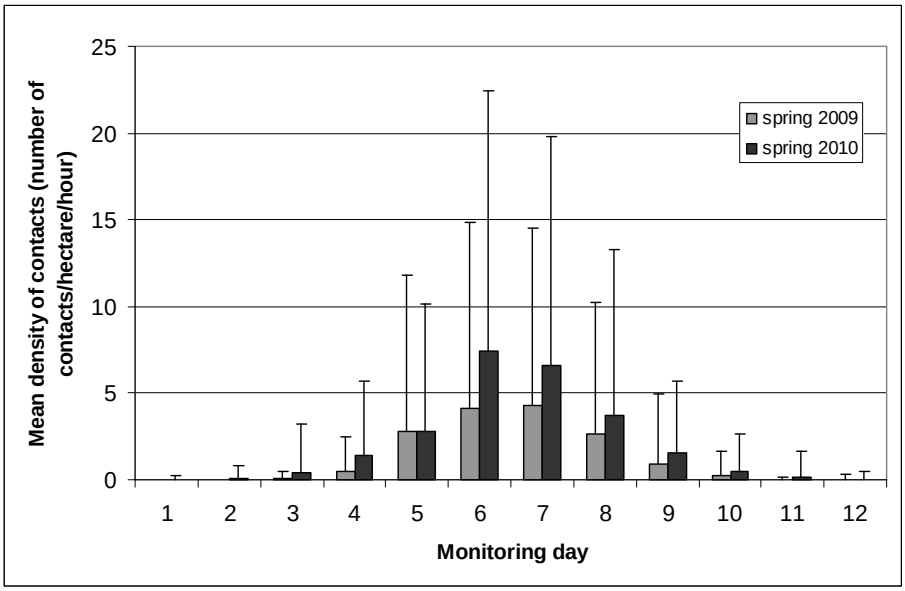


Figure 2: *Mean densities of contacts in spring 2009 and 2010.*

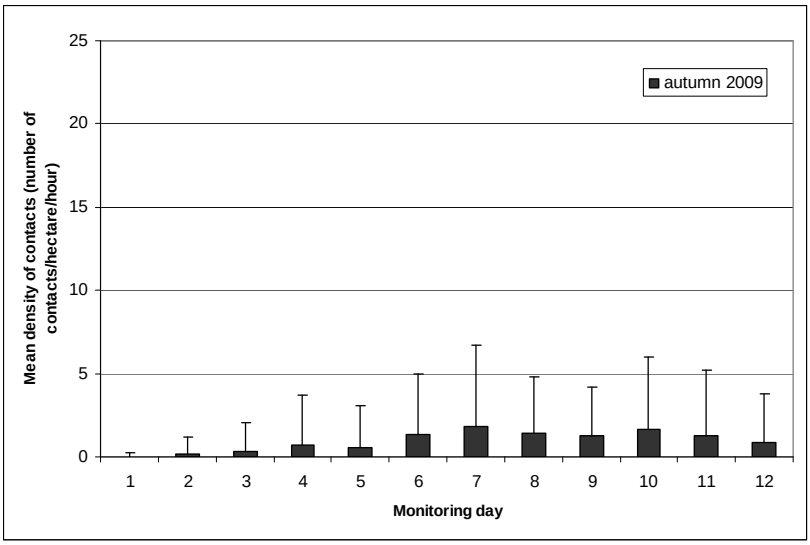


Figure 3: *Mean densities of contacts in autumn 2009.*

Discussion

One of the greatest results of the program is the design of the methods. Testing the workability, gathering methodology experiences and further development were the most important aims in the first stage. From this point of view the program started successfully. The system of data collection and processing is functional, only a few modifications are needed. The participants work well together in cooperation. It is clear now that the Hungarian hunters are able to cooperate with each other and to achieve a task of such a magnitude.

Although the program takes hard field work and a complex organization, the series of spring surveys proved to be successful for the second time in 2010. In spite of the unusual timing and other difficulties (for example, the incompatibility with big game hunting seasons) the observations carried out in autumn 2009 and 2010 ran also successfully. The season - especially the start - of the surveys overlaps with big game hunting seasons in autumn (mainly red deer and wild boar), and several observations had to be cancelled for this reason. Another difficulty is that the detectability of woodcock in autumn is significantly lower than in spring.

It is obvious that there are differences between the characteristics of migration in spring and in autumn. There was a relative quick and intensive migration activity in spring, which can easily be understood from a biologist's point of view. The birds that reach the breeding areas faster have the opportunity to occupy better quality territories. They can be more successful, they may have more time to raise their broods and the young ones can start the migration to the wintering areas in a better condition. Wading in autumn lasted relatively longer, and birds probably arrived in Hungary in several smaller waves. It is possible that some of them stay in the Carpathian basin for winter.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those who participated in the woodcock monitoring, especially those who persisted in collecting data from the beginning of the program.

References

Bibby C. J., Burgess N. D., Hill D. A. 1997. Bird Census Techniques. Academic Press Limited, London. 257p.

Csányi S., Lehoczki R., Sonkoly K. 2009. Vadgazdálkodási Adattár - 2008/2009. vadászati év. Országos Vadgazdálkodási Adattár, Gödöllő, 56pp.

Ferrand Y., Gossmann F., Bastat C., Guénézan M. 2008. Monitoring of the wintering and breeding Woodcock populations in France. Revista Catalana d'Ornitologia 24: 44-52.

Fluck D. 2009. Nouvelles de l'étranger. La Mordorée - Organe Officiel du Club National des Bécassiers. 249. 48p.

Machado A. L., Ferrand Y., Gossmann F., Silveira A. M., Gonçalves D. 2008. Application of a roding survey method to the sedentary Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* population in Pico Island, Azores. European Journal of Wildlife Research 54: 205-214.

Evaluation of the 2009/10 Woodcock hunting season in France

JEAN-PAUL BOIDOT, Club national des bécassiers, Le Moulin du Buis, Beg Aël, 29940 La Forêt-Fouesnant, France - *E-mail:* jpboidotcnb@wanadoo.fr

This report is the 16th to be published by the *Club national des bécassiers* (CNB; a French Woodcock Hunter Association). As the previous ones, it is based on information collected during hunting trips (mainly the number of seen and shot woodcocks) and on a wing collection.
In 2009/10, 1,217 CNB members sent information on their hunting trips and 1,280 participated in the wing collection. In total, 10,622 wings were analysed, 9,799 birds were weighted and 1,990 were sexed. The data were collected in the major part of the Woodcock wintering area in France (Figure 1).

Hunting index of abundance (ICA)

The hunting index of abundance (ICA) used by CNB has been defined as the number of different woodcocks seen during a hunting trip, the standardized duration of which was 3.5 hours (Cau & Boidot, 2005)
In 2009/10, ICA was estimated from 33,417 hunting trips. Its national annual value is 1.70. This value is high and corresponds to an excellent hunting season (cf. Gossmann *et al*. in this issue). The monthly variations of ICA (Figure 2) show high values in January and February (2.19 and 2.12, resp.). These high values are related to a cold spell in January which, as usual, led the birds to be concentrated in the main French Woodcock hunting area (*départements* along the Atlantic coast). However, because of Woodcock concentrations along the Atlantic coast, ICA could be overestimated in so far as data are mainly provided by a small number of hunters who are located in favourable regions. Thus, the hunting pressure should be taken into account to weight ICA. Such weighting could be made by a new index "ICARE" as follows :
ICAREi = ICAi * (ti/T)
where "i" is a territory (*département*, region,….) or a time period, "ti" is the hunting duration for "i" and "T" is the total hunting duration for the total of territories or time periods (T = Σti).
The fluctuations of ICARE and ICA by decades (Figure 3) show the weighting effect.
From all the data, we can consider that, in 2009/10, a "mean" French Woodcock hunter made 27 hunting trips, saw 47 woodcocks and shot 12 of them.

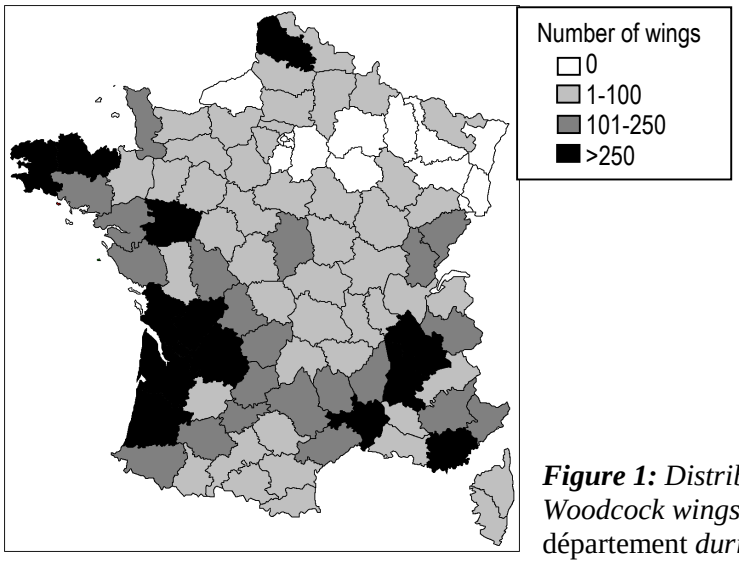


Figure 1: *Distribution of the number of Woodcock wings collected in every French* département *during the 2009/10 survey*.

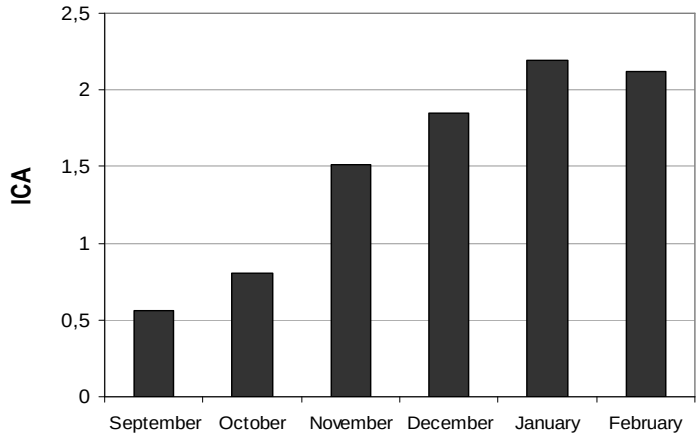


Figure 2: *ICA monthly variations in France for the 2009/10 hunting season.*

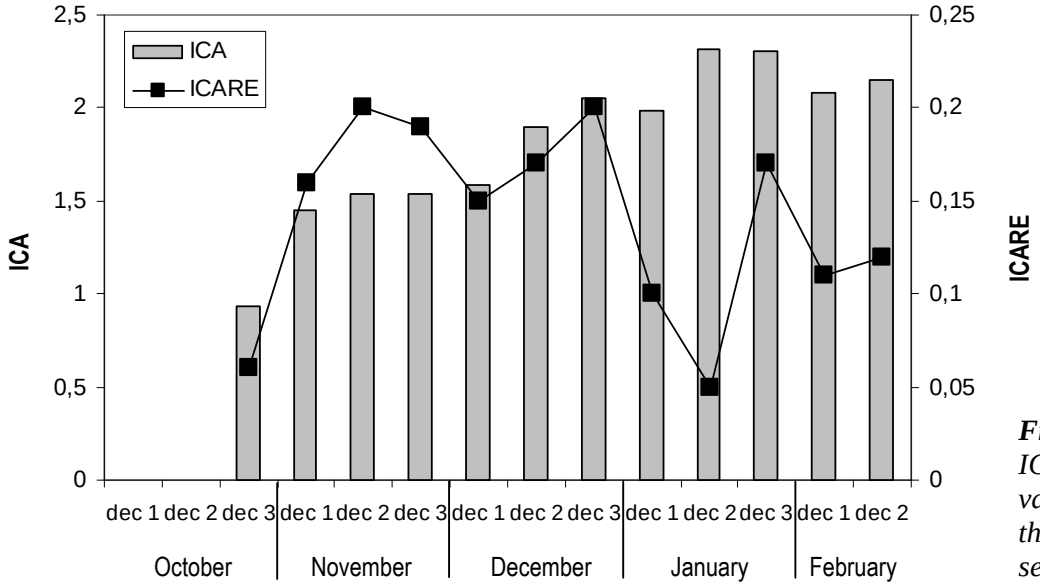


Figure 3: *ICA and ICARE (see text) variations by decade for the 2009/10 hunting season.*

Ratio juvenile/adult

For 2009/10, the proportion of juveniles in the French Woodcock hunting bags is estimated at 63.2 %. This value is 5.5 points lower than in 2008/09.

Ratio male/female

In 2009/10, the proportion of Woodcock males in the CNB members hunting bags was 38 %. This value is extraordinarily stable from one year to another.

Variations in weight

The mean weight of a woodcock shot in 2009/10 was 317 g (316 g in 2008/09). As usual, the weight of adults was slightly higher than that of juveniles (320 g *vs* 315 g).
Adult females were the heaviest, 326 g in average. The mean weight of juvenile females and adult males was 316 g. The mean weight of juvenile males reached 312 g.
After a peak in mean weights in the 1st decade of January, a slight decrease is reported in the 2nd decade of January due to weather conditions. During this period, females lost 20 g on average.

Conclusion

According to the data collected by CNB members, Woodcock abundance was rather high everywhere in France in November. At the end of December – beginning of January, a large number of woodcocks arrived in the Channel-Atlantic and Mediterranean coastal regions. In the most favourable sites, the birds stayed till March. Due to a cold spell, hunting was banned in 90 *départements* during 5 to 20 days, generally on Woodcock hunters' initiative.

The decrease of the age-ratio could be due to a lower breeding success in spring 2009. The high value of ICA (the highest since CNB monitoring started) shows a good conservation status of the European Woodcock population.
In summary, the 2008/09 Woodcock hunting season was excellent and characterized by a relatively homogeneous distribution all over France. However, we must remain vigilant and continue to monitor the European Woodcock population in France and in its distribution range.

Acknowledgements

We thank all volunteers who contributed to help us in wing analysis and also the members of CNB scientific and technical commissions or report writers: J.C. Blanchard, G. Aurousseau, A. Mesplède, R. Fulchic, J.M. Desbieys, J.F. Cau, N. Lefeuvre and J.P. Lepetit.

Evaluation of the 2009/10 Woodcock hunting season in Europe from FANBPO members reports

JEAN-PAUL BOIDOT, FANBPO & Club national des bécassiers, Le Moulin du Buis, Beg Aël, 29940 La Forêt-Fouesnant, France - *E-mail:* jpboidotcnb@wanadoo.fr
GÉRARD AUROUSSEAU, FANBPO & Club national des bécassiers, Villa Kiluma, 771 Chemin de Fontmerle, 06250 Mougins, France

The Federation of European Woodcock Hunters Associations (FANBPO) collects information on Woodcock, Woodcock hunting and Woodcock hunters in Europe in order to achieve a monitoring and a sustainable use of the Woodcock populations at the scale of the Western Palearctic.
In 2009/10, 8 national or regional associations participated in the data collection:

- the *Club national des bécassiers* (CNB) in France,
- the *Club de cazadores de becada* (CCB) in Spain,
- the National Woodcock association of Ireland (NWAOI),
- the *Club della Beccaccia* (CDB) in Italy,
- *Amici di Scolopax* (ADS) in Italy,
- *Beccacciae di Italia* (BDI) in Italy,
- l'*Association suisse des bécassiers* (ASB),
- the *Association nationale des chasseurs de bécasses* (ANCG) in Portugal.

Every year, wing collections are organized by these associations in their respective countries. In 2009/10, about 17,500 woodcock wings have been collected in France, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland.

The proportions of juveniles, juveniles with a complete moult of coverts and alula and mean bird weights in Irish, Spanish, French, Italian, Swiss and Portuguese woodcock hunting bags are presented in the table below.

Country	sample size	% juveniles	% juveniles with a complete coverts and alula moult / juveniles	mean weight	ICA
Ireland	1,218	55	-	-	-
Spain	1,419	51	25	307	1.3
France	10,622	63	19	317	1.7
Italy	3,525	68	26	311	1.45 (ADS)
Switzerland	589	62	33	321	0.98
Portugal	166	53	-	305	1.14

Proportions of juveniles in 2009/2010 appear lower than in 2008/09 in every country. This could confirm a low breeding success in spring 2009 for the whole European woodcock population. As in the last season, the proportion of juveniles with a complete moult is particularly high in Switzerland compared with other countries. All national ICAs appear much lower than France's ICA which probably means than this country received larger woodcock numbers in 2009/10 than in the other parts of the wintering range.

Acknowledgments

We thank N. Lefeuvre (CNB), J.P. Lepetit (CNB), A. Tedeschi (ADS), S. Spano (CDB), P. Pennacchini (BDI), P. Leresche (ASB), F. Diez (CCB), L. Taaffe (NWAOI), D. Gonçalvès (ANCG) and D. Fluck (CBH) for their help in data collection needed for this report.

© Dominique Gest FDC Seine-Maritime

2009-2010 French Woodcock report

FRANÇOIS GOSSMANN, **CLAUDINE BASTAT, MICHEL GUÉNÉZAN,** Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, Research Department – Migratory Birds Unit, 39 Bd Albert Einstein, CS 42355, F -44323 Nantes Cedex 3
E-mail: rezobecasse@oncfs.gouv.fr
YVES FERRAND, Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, Research Department – Migratory Birds Unit, BP 20, F -78612 Le Perray-en-Yvelines Cedex
E-mail: y.ferrand@oncfs.gouv.fr

In 2009/10, all the factors were present to ensure high numbers of wintering woodcocks in France:

- a good breeding success, especially in Russia, and good weather conditions in summer till the start of migration;
- early migratory departures pushed by cool temperatures in the 20 first days of October in Scandinavia and mid-October in Russia;
- a slowing down of the migratory flow during almost 6 weeks, from end-October to the beginning of December, due to a long period of mild temperatures with precipitations in all of Europe, which allowed woodcocks to roam in Germany or in Denmark;
- a first cold offensive in mid-December which consolidated wintering and was an incentive for latecomers;
- finally, a cold spell in January which concentrated the woodcocks, particularly in the coastal regions.

From November, high densities were observed in nocturnal sites in the majority of the French regions, mainly in the North and East of the country. These high densities were confirmed in December for all of France till the cold spell which started on 3 January and ended on 18. During this harsh winter period, the ONCFS/FNC/FDC Woodcock network was able to inform hunting stakeholders and administrations about the Woodcock status, thanks to the active help of local observers. A first information bulletin to alert on a foreseeable cold period was published on 22 December. Four other bulletins followed in January during the cold spell, within the framework of the "Cold spell protocol" (see Newsletter 35) activated on 6 January.

Ringing results

Quantitative ringing results

In total, 6,668 woodcocks were ringed in France during the 2009/10 wintering season (Figure 1). The success rate was lower than in the previous season (25 % *vs* 26 %). About 27 500 woodcocks were found by the ringers, which is higher than in 2008/09. This explains that the 2009/10 ringing season is the best since the network's creation.

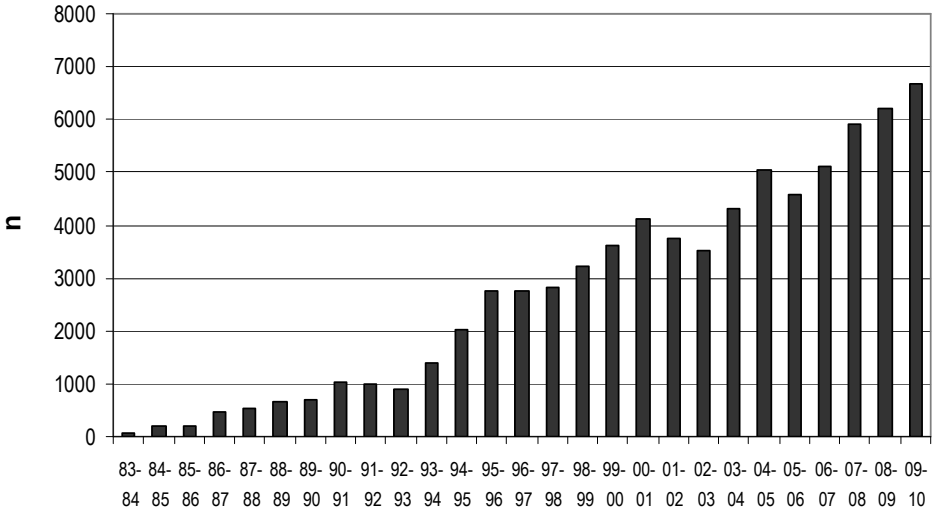


Figure 1: *Inter-annual fluctuations of ringing results.*

As in the previous season, the woodcock distribution was rather homogeneous even if the densities in the coastal regions were high during the cold spell. Captures started quickly and their numbers reached a peak in November. Then, the capture numbers decreased slowly till February. In March, a slight increase was reported, probably related to pre-nuptial migration.

2008-2009 ringing season in numbers

N. *départements* :	89
N. ringing sites :	1,578
N. ringers :	378
N. nocturnal trips (hours) :	3,273 (6,805)
N. contacts :	27,557
N. ringed woodcocks :	6,668
Success rate :	25 %
N. direct retraps :	147
N. indirect retraps :	187
N. direct recoveries:	464
N. indirect recoveries:	643
Annual direct recovery rate:	8.0 %

Proportion of juveniles

The proportion of juveniles among ringed birds was 58 % (63 % in 2008/09). This value is in the average of those registered since 2000.

Monitoring of abundance during the migratory and wintering period

Two indices allow the monitoring of woodcock migratory and wintering numbers in France: the mean number of contacts/hour (IAN) registered during ringing trips and a hunting index [ICA : number of seen woodcocks / standardised hunting trip (duration = 3.5 hours)] collected by the *Club national des bécassiers*.

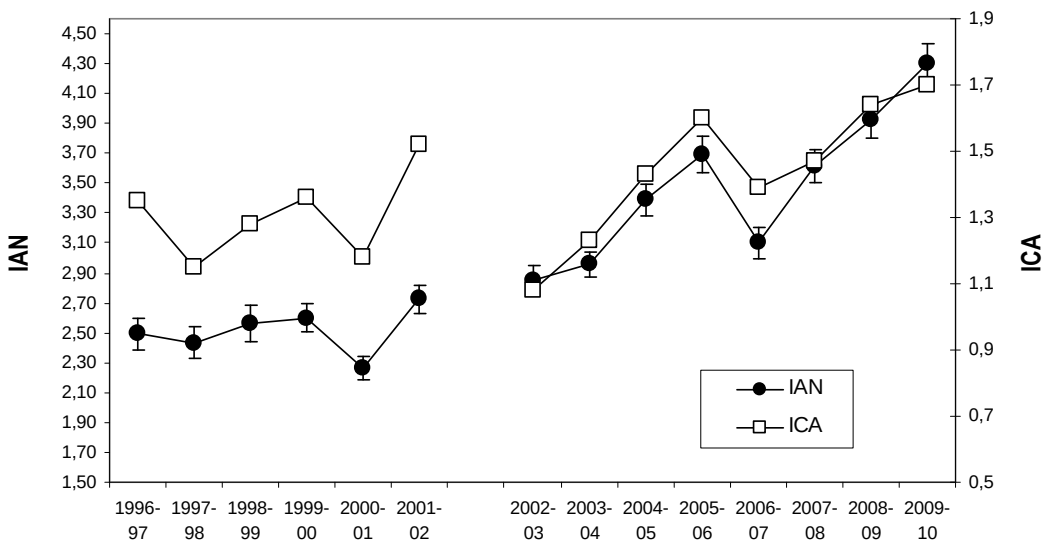


Figure 2: *Annual fluctuations of the number of contacts/h during ringing trips (IAN: nocturnal index of abundance) and hunting trips (ICA: hunting index of abundance; Source:* Club national des bécassiers*).Data have been divided into two periods due to a change in the method of calculation of IAN in 2002/03(see Newsletter 34).*

In 2009-10, IAN was estimated from more than 27,500 contacts noted during 6,805 hours and ICA from a sample of 1,217 hunters and slightly more than 33,417 hunting trips. For this season, IAN amounts to 4.3 and ICA to 1.7 (Figure 2). These values are the highest ever registered.
Of course, the cold spell played a role in concentrating birds, however, this means that migratory and wintering woodcocks were particularly abundant in France during the 2009-2010 season.

Such abundance confirms the increase trend observed since the mid-1990s. As for the last season, tests were made for the 1996/97 – 2009/10 period for ICA, and for the 2002/03 – 2009/10 period for IAN and ICA, due to change in the IAN data collection (cf. Newsletter 34).

ICA clearly increased during the last 14 hunting seasons (p = 0.0034). Of course, a similar increase is also observed for ICA and IAN from 2002/03 (p = 0.0019 for both). According to these results, we consider that woodock populations migrating and wintering in France are in a good conservation status for the study period.

The IAN monthly distribution shows high numbers all along the season (Figure 3). As soon as November, the migratory flow reached a high level, with the highest IAN value in the last 6 seasons. In January and February, the registered values were the highest ever observed. Contrary to the 2009 cold spell, in January 2010, this concentrated the woodcocks in all the Channel-Atlantic regions and, consequently, led to very high IAN values. In March, woodcock numbers were still high compared with the last seasons.

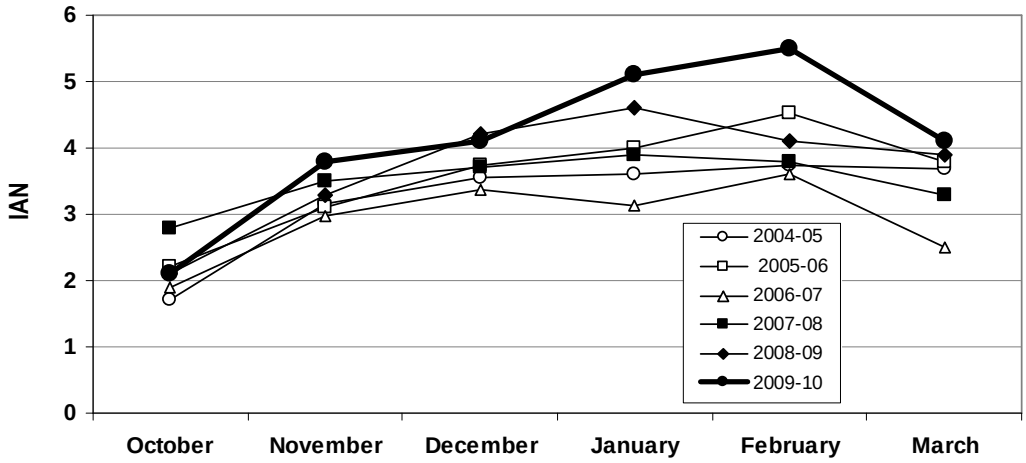


Figure 3: *Monthly fluctuations of IAN from 2004/05 to 2009/10.*

For the second consecutive year, a cold spell occured in January 2010. During this period, the woodcock behaviour can be classified as "classic". The birds flew away to the coastal regions in great numbers and high concentrations were observed in the north-western part of France as soon as the beginning of January. The situation was critical in *Nord – Pas-de-Calais, Picardie* and Normandy, where heavy frost and snow lasted for12 consecutive days. Around the 10 January, large numbers of woodcocks were observed in the South-West. Finally, the coastal regions of Spain served as refuge to more cold sensitive birds. Contrary to what happened in 2009, a part of wintering woodcocks stayed in central regions, waiting for better weather conditions. Hunting ban was imposed in 80 % of French *départements*. In average, hunting was stopped for 10 days (range: 5 – 25) around 10 January.

Again in 2009/10 , Woodcock migratory and wintering numbers were monitored in the course of the season. Data were collected every 10 days by electronic mail. In total, information collected in this way represents 81 % of the final field work time. Again, a quite accurate idea of the situation was provided in the course of the season in so far as the IAN and age-ratio values were very close to the final ones. Moreover, a joint analysis of ICA, also estimated in the course of the season by the *Club national des bécassiers,* supports IAN results. Three bulletins and three short reports have been published from November to February.

Roding results

In 2010, roding censuses took place in 56 *départements* and 860 listening points were visited.

National occupation rate

This rate corresponds to the % of listening points at which at least one roding male was observed (= positive site). In 2010, the value was 23.6 %. After 2 consecutive years of decrease, this value increased again. A similar trend was registered for the proportion of high abundance sites (n.contacts ≥ 5), with a value of 7.9 % (6.6 % in 2009).

Breeding population trend

The population trend of the French breeding Woodcock population has been analysed for the last 10-year period. In total, 53 *départements* censused roding woodcocks without interruption from 2001 to 2010 (Figure 4).
The stability for the proportion of positive site (p = 0.253) and for the proportion of high abundance sites (p = 0.831) characterizes the 2001-2010 period.

The stability trend noted in spring 2009 is clearly confirmed in 2010. After a period of increase observed since the end of the 1990s, the breeding woodcock numbers in France seem to have reached a plateau. One should still watch for a possible decrease.

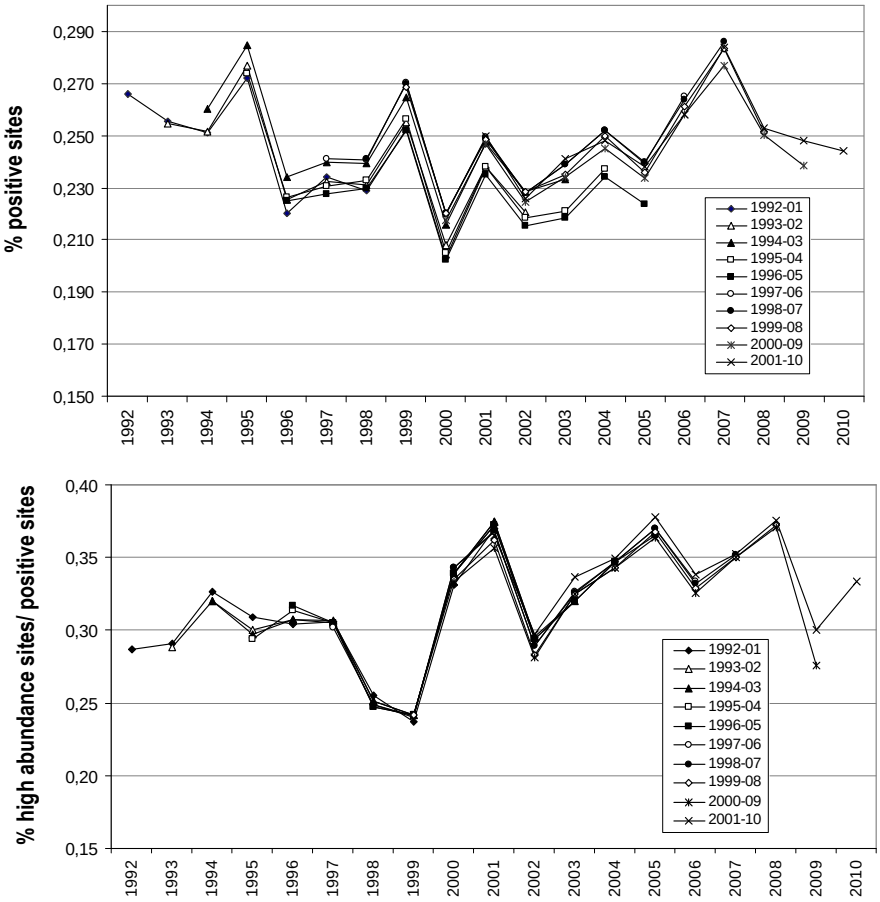


Figure 4: *Inter-annual variations of the proportion of positive sites and high abundance sites/positive sites for the10 available 10 year-periods.*

Conclusion

The 2009/10 season is remarkable for the high abundance of woodcocks observed in all French regions. Thanks to a good breeding success, the numbers at the start of migration were large. Due to cold periods, the majority of birds reached their wintering sites and a cold spell drove the most northern birds to Channel-Atlantic regions.

However, the other side of the coin is that hunting bags were excessive owing to bird concentrations, especially when hunting was again allowed around 20 January. Although it is impossible to estimate this over-mortality which could have been added to winter losses due to harsh weather conditions, we think that its impact on breeders has not been negligible.

Acknowledgments - This report is the result of an important field work carried out by members of the ONCFS/FNC Woodcock network. We thank all of them : professionals of ONCFS, *Fédérations départementales des chasseurs* and volunteers. We also thank the *Club national des bécassiers* for allowing us to use the data collected by Club members.

2009-2010 French Snipes report

GILLES LERAY, Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, Research Department – Migratory Birds Unit, 39 Bd Albert Einstein, CS 42355, F -44323 Nantes Cedex 3
E-mail: g.leray@oncfs.gouv.fr
PATRICE FÉVRIER, Club international des chasseurs de bécassines, 5 avenue des Chasseurs, F-75017 Paris**.** *Web site:* http://www.cicb.asso.fr
YVES FERRAND, Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Research Department – Migratory Birds Unit, BP 20, F -78612 Le Perray-en-Yvelines Cedex
E-mail: y.ferrand@oncfs.gouv.fr

Ringing results

The French Snipes ONCFS/FNC network gathers 104 active snipe ringers spread over 43 French *départements*. In total, 1,784 snipes were ringed in 2009 by the network: 1,627 common snipes (*Gallinago gallinago)* and 157 jack snipes (*Lymnocryptes minimus*).

Plumage collection

In addition to ringing , an analysis of Common Snipe and Jack Snipe plumage (wing and/or tail feathers) collected during the 2009/10 season was carried out to improve our knowledge on the fluctuations of the proportion of juveniles in the shooting bag and to get information on the phenology of migration.

In total, the plumage of 4,864 common snipes and 1,004 jack snipes were gathered mainly by the CICB (International Club of Snipes Hunters) members and by the *Fédérations départementales des chasseurs* of *Cantal*, *Lozère* and *Gironde*. This collection is the most important one in the last 6 years for the common snipe.

Common Snipe

Geographical distribution of analyzed plumage

As in the last years, data collected in 2009/10 were analysed after dividing the total sample into two parts that correspond to two flyways: a Fennoscandian one and a continental one (Rouxel, 2000; Figure 1). The sizes of each sample are similar (2,438 plumages for the Fennoscandian flyway and 2,426 plumages for the continental flyway), which validates this approach.

Temporal distribution of analyzed plumage

Under the same assumption as in the preceding reports (i.e. the number of collected plumages (*ncp*) is positively correlated with real numbers), the post-nuptial migration took place mainly from mid-September to the end of October with a clear peak around mid-September (Figure 2). Then a slow decrease was registered till the end of December. Contrary to the previous years, a slight increase was noted in the second two weeks of January. We think that this is related to a concentration of birds in coastal regions due to the January cold spell.

A constant increase was observed in the Fennoscandian flyway with a clear peak in the second half of September (Figure 3). From mid-November, the decrease in numbers showed a plateau which lasted about 4 weeks. The 2010 cold spell disturbed this pattern with a lack of samples in the first half of January due to hunting ban and an increase in the second half of the month due to bird movements to the Atlantic coasts, from Britanny to Aquitaine. For the continental flyway, the peak is less clear and occurred by the beginning of October. The decrease was more progressive with almost no birds in January. In these regions, of course, cold weather pushed snipes to milder regions.

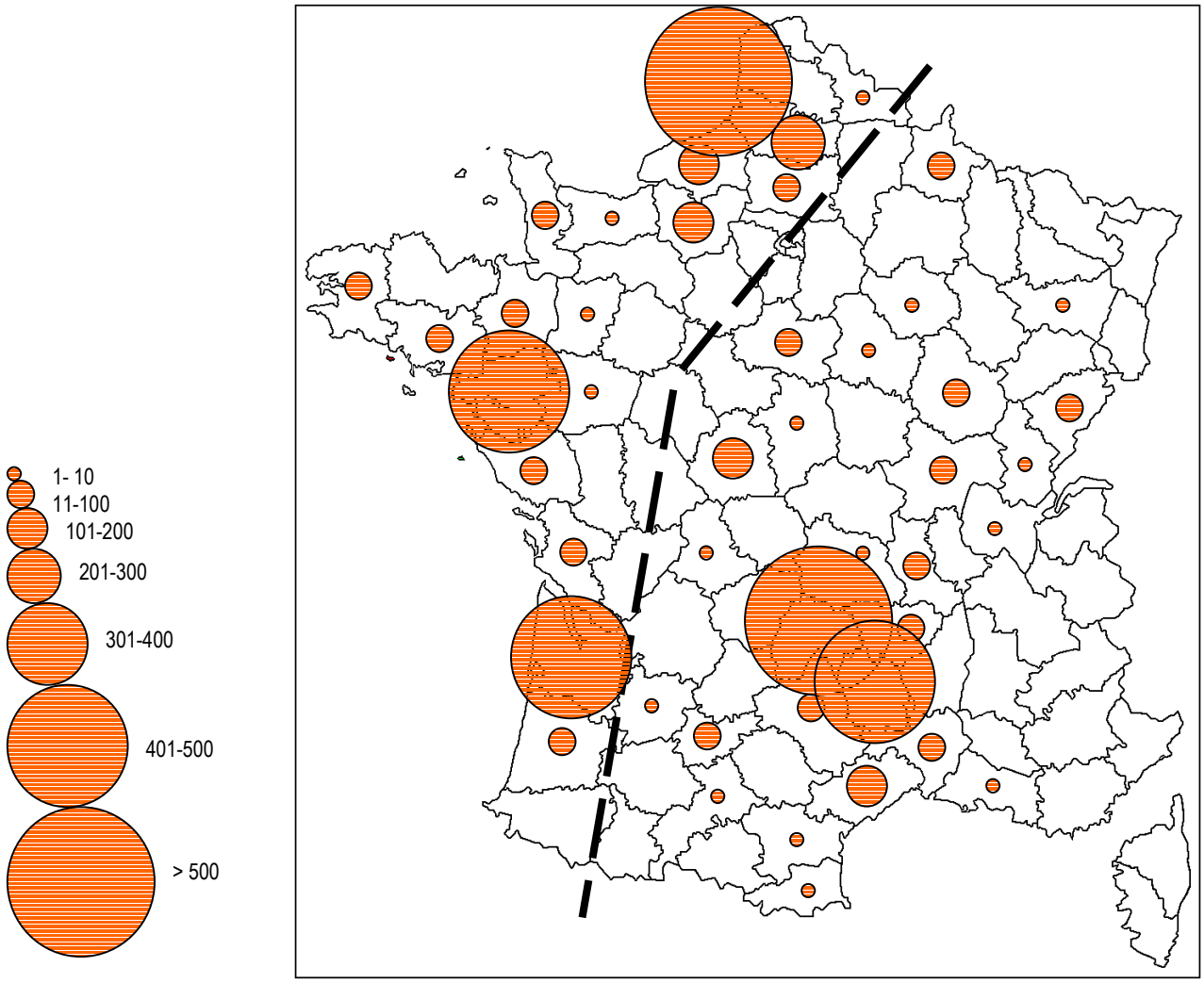


Figure 1: *Geographical distribution of numbers of common snipes whose plumage was collected in 2009/10 and limit between the two sub-samples corresponding to a distinct migratory flyway.*

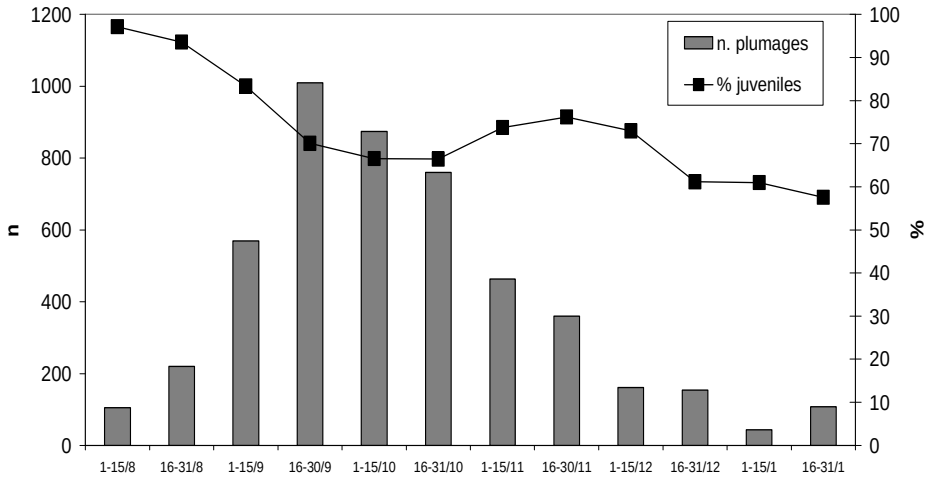


Figure 2: *Temporal distribution (per 15 day-period) of collected plumage and of the proportion of juveniles for the whole Common Snipe sample.*

The results of 4 study years allow one to compare the post-nuptial migration chronology of common snipes from one season to another (Figure 4). This shows similar patterns for 2006/07 and 2008/09 with a clear peak at the end of September followed by a rather quick decrease and a plateau of about one month, just before a fast collapse. The last season was very similar to this pattern: the end-September peak was present but the decrease was more progressive. On the other hand, no peak was observed in the 2007/08 season, when migration spread over 2 months. Of course, a more precise analysis is needed, but a standard pattern already seems to appear.

Proportion of juveniles

For the whole collected plumages, the proportion of juveniles amounts to 72.4 % (age-ratio = 2.6). If we do not take August into account (as recommended by Devort, 1997), the proportion of juveniles is 70.7 % (age-ratio = 2.4). These values appear below the average estimated since the mid-1980's (74 % for all data; 71.9 % for data without August; Figure 5).
Juveniles represent 71.1 % of birds in the Fennoscandian flyway and 73.7 % in the continental flyway.

The difference is slightly statistically significant for the whole data set [Fisher exact test ($p = 0.044$)] but clearly signficant for data without August ($p < 0.001$) with a higher proportion of juveniles in the continental flyway (73.4 %) than in the Fennoscandian flyway (67.8 %). As usual, a significant decrease in the proportion of juveniles was observed from August to January [Cochran-Armitage test ($p<0.0001$)].

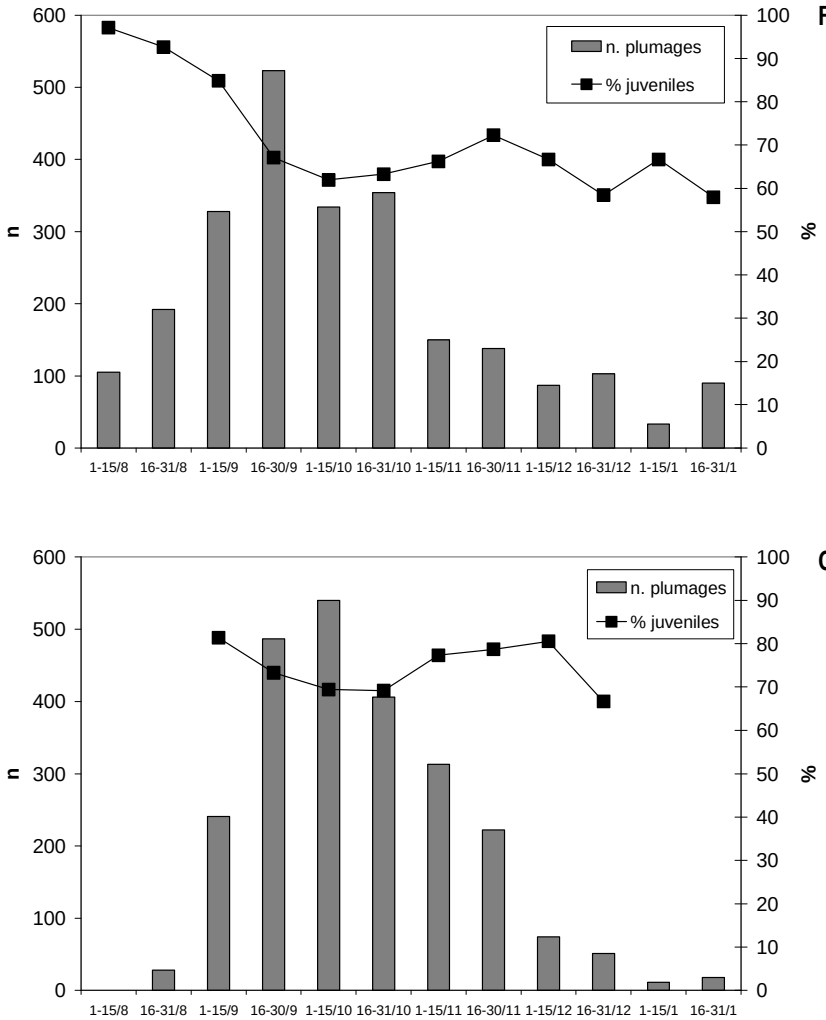


Figure 3: *Temporal distribution (per 15 day-period) of collected plumage and of the proportion of juveniles for Common Snipe in each flyway.*

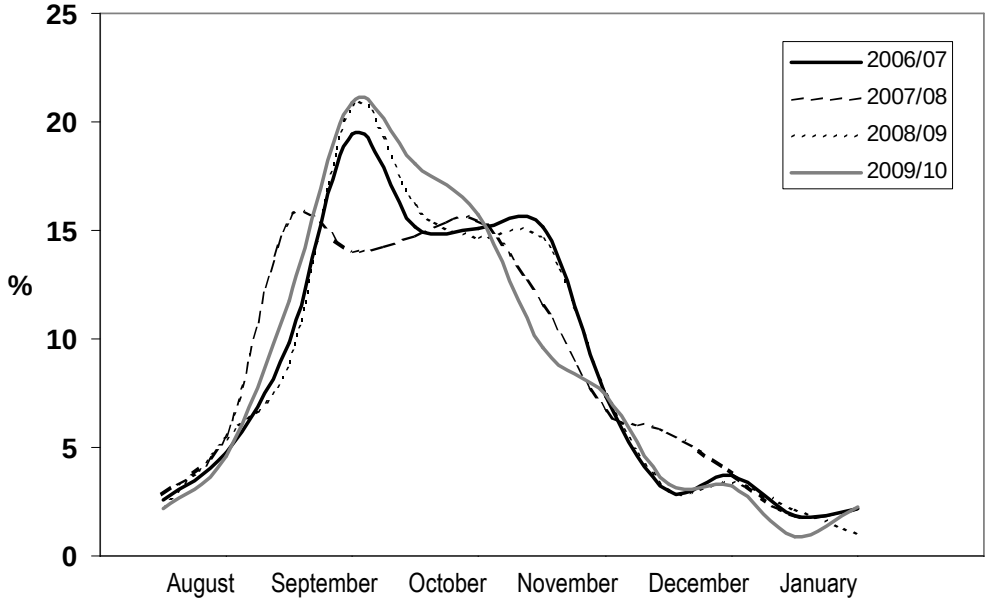


Figure 4: *Intra-annual variations of the proportion of Common Snipe plumages collected in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.*

As for the numbers, a comparison of the intra-seasonal fluctuations of the proportion of juveniles can be made for the last 4 seasons (Figure 6; see also Devort, 1992). For all of them, we observe a very high proportion of juveniles in August followed by a fast decrease in September owing to adult arrivals. From October, a great heterogeneity is noted among seasons. No rule appears and it seems that the migratory movements in autumn, then the winter movements, occur at random regarding age classes. A more precise analysis could be useful to test hypotheses based on different sensitivity of juveniles and adults according to the carrying capacity of habitats.

As indicated in every report, remember that several factors (hunting pressure, weather conditions, annual productivity) can play a role in the proportion of juveniles in hunting bags, making its interpretation difficult. Moreover, with no sampling design we cannot be sure that the estimated value accurately characterizes the whole common snipe population. Thus, the relative intra-annual variations of this index are important. The 2009/10 estimation is rather similar to the average registered since the end of the 1980's. Thus, we think that the common snipe breeding success was normal in spring 2009.

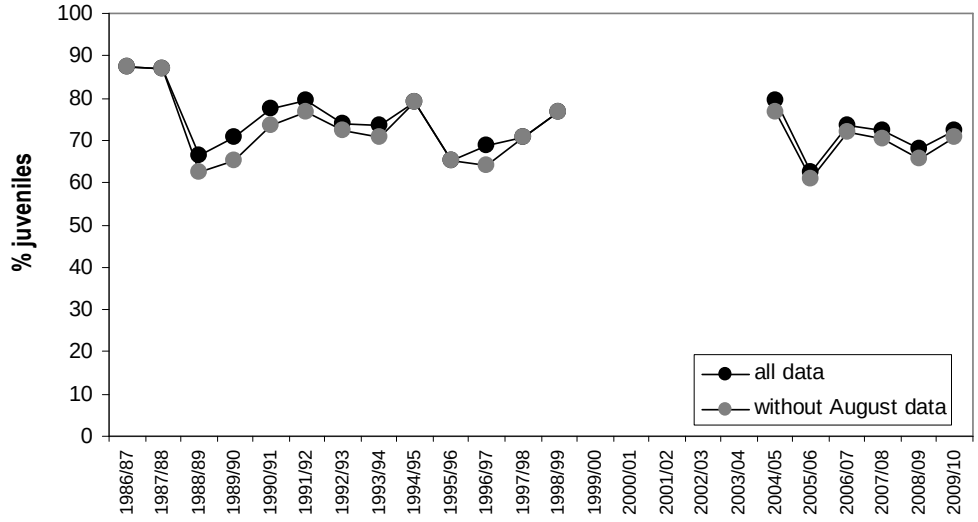


Figure 5: *Inter-annual variations of the proportion of juveniles among Common Snipe plumages collected in the 1986/87 - 2009/10 period for all data and for a sub-sample without August data (No collection in 1999/00 - 2003/04 period).*

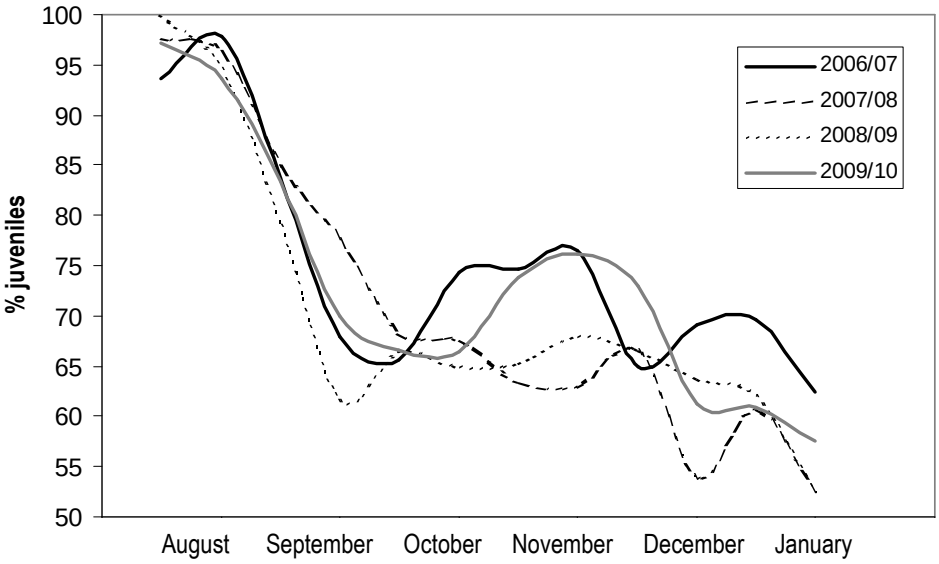


Figure 6: *Intra-annual variations of the proportion of juveniles for the Common Snipe in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.*

Proportion of males/females

Sex was defined for 1,123 adult birds and the proportion of males was 29.0 %. If we take into account all birds (juveniles + adults) for which sex determination was possible (n = 4,250), the proportion of males reached 39.0 %. The high deficit in males noted in 2008/09 still appeared in 2009/10.
In contrast to the last season, the proportion of males was very different among flyways according to whether or not juveniles were taken into account (Fisher exact test; $p < 0.01$).

Jack Snipe

Geographical distribution of analysed plumage

In 2009/10, Jack Snipe plumages were collected in 30 *départements* in France. As for the last season, we defined a "coastal flyway" and an "inland flyway" (Figure 7). 491 plumages were collected for the "coastal flyway" and 506 for the "inland flyway". However, "coastal" samples were distributed in a homogeneous manner among *départements*, whereas ¾ of "inland" samples were concentrated only in 2 *départements: Cantal* (n = 244) and *Lozère* (n = 119).

Temporal distribution of analysed plumage

Under the same assumptions as for Common Snipe data analysis, the pattern of 2009 migration was very similar to that of the previous seasons: a peak in the second half of October after a fast increase in numbers and followed by a progressive decrease till December (Figure 8 & 9). This pattern was similar in both flyways with a more marked peak for the "coastal flyway".
A synthesis of variations in the post-nuptial Jack snipe migration chronology based on plumage collections clearly shows a great stability (figure 10). A marked peak is observed every year around end of October – beginning of November. Then, the decrease in numbers is progressive with sometimes slight jumps as in 2008/09. This very typical chronology, with a short migration window, seems to us remarkable for this species and means a massive movement of the quasi-totality of the population. A similar phenomenon has been described by Koch & Paton (2009) for Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*), Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) and the Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) in North America. This could be related to (1) a sub-arctic origin which forces birds to start migration at a relatively fixed date and (2) a dominant long-migratory status in the population, not very disturbed by meteorological hazards. A strong genetiec basis "controlled" by the variations of day and night periods is highly probable.

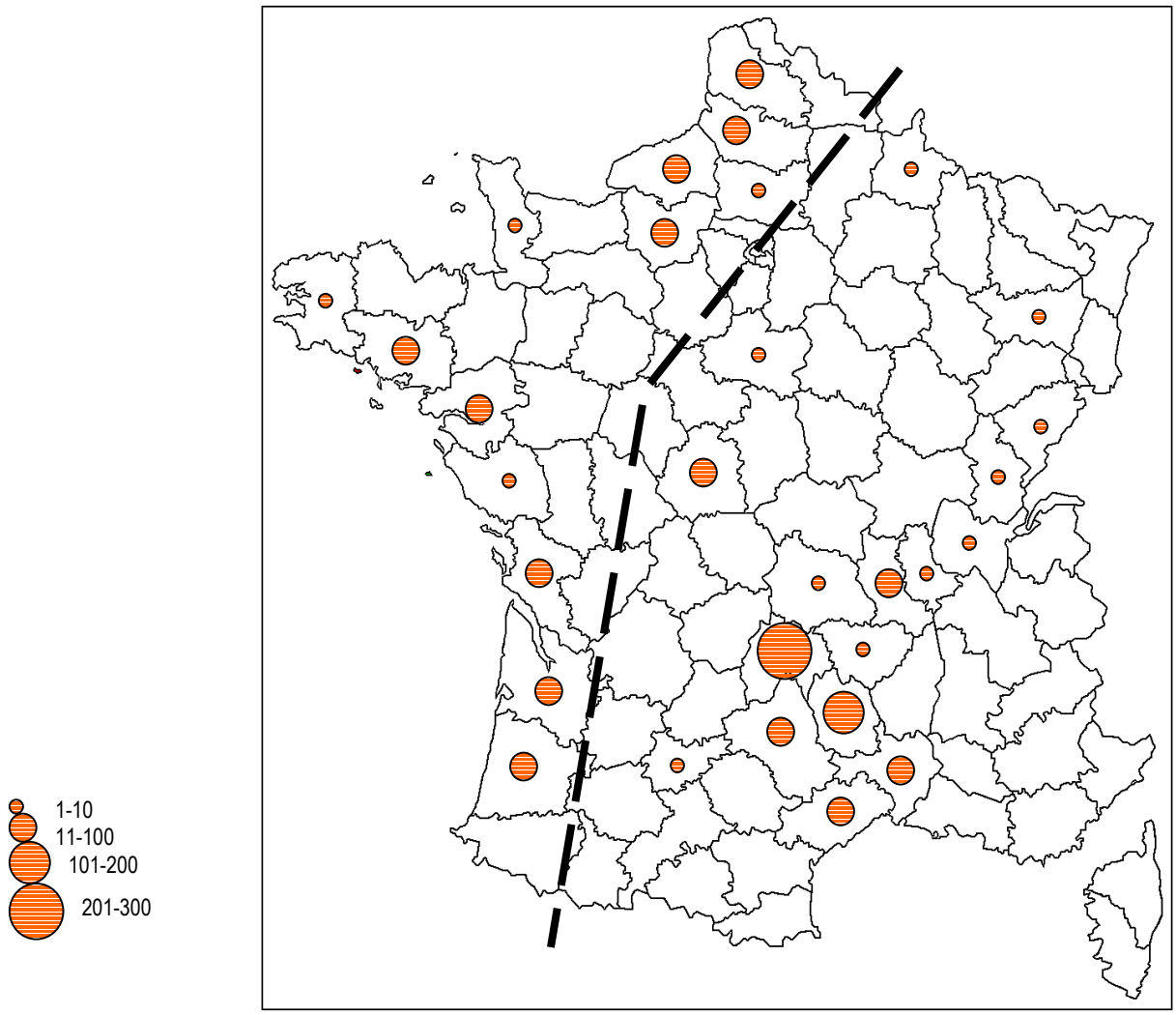


Figure 7: *Geographical distribution of numbers of jack snipes whose plumage was collected in 2009/10 and limit between the two sub-samples.*

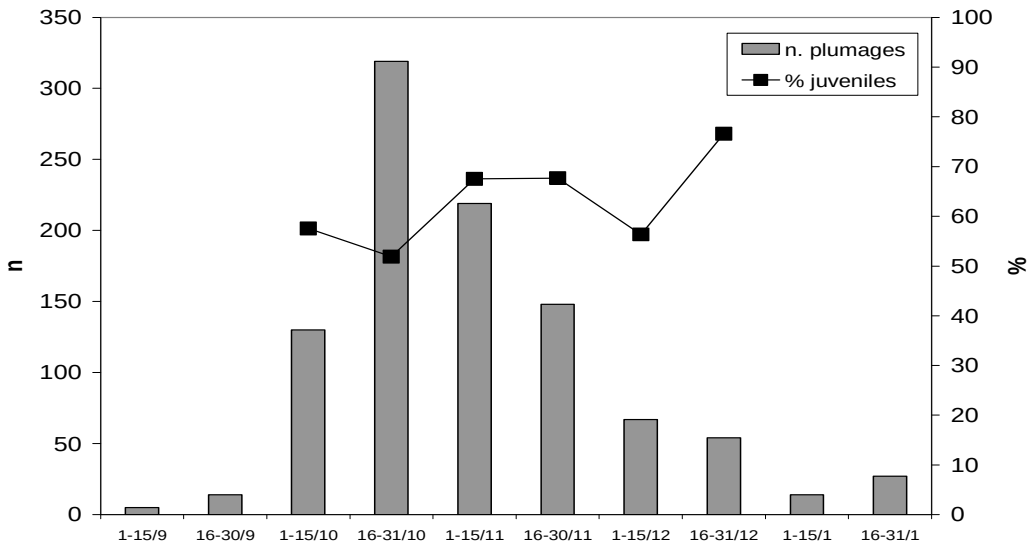
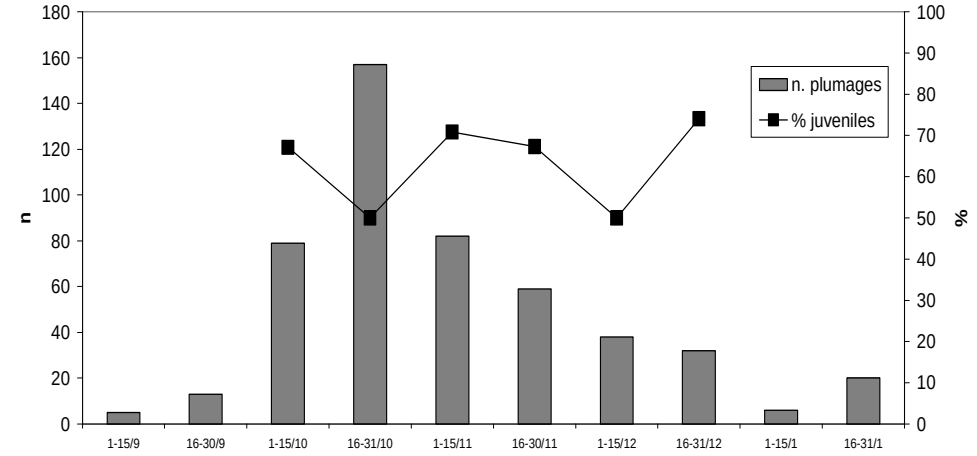


Figure 8: *Temporal distribution (per 15 day-period) of collected plumage and of the proportion of juveniles for the whole Jack Snipe sample.*



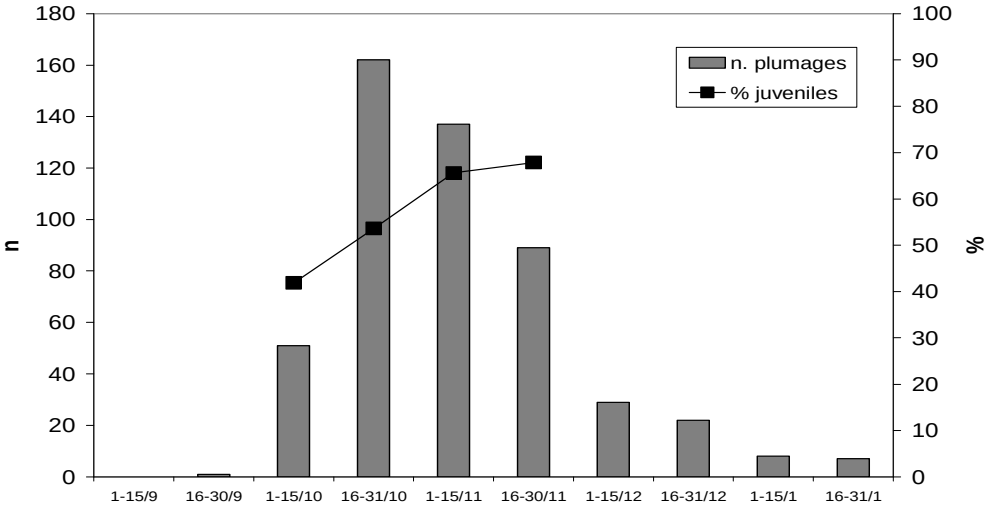


Figure 9: *Temporal distribution (per 15 day-period) of collected plumage and of the proportion of juveniles for Jack Snipe in each "flyway".*

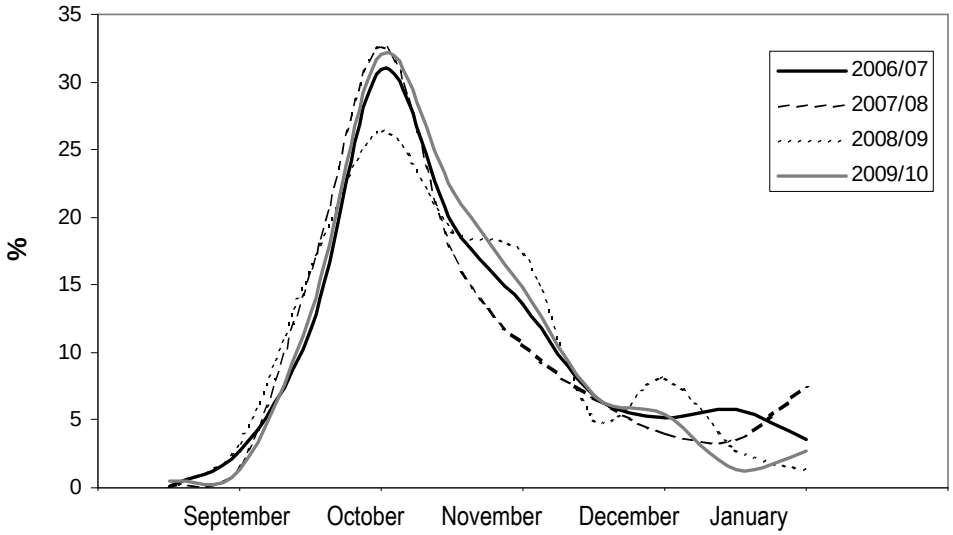


Figure 10: *Intra-annual variations of the proportion of Jack Snipe plumages collected in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.*

Proportion of juveniles

Age determination in Jack Snipe can be made by examination of tail feathers (Devort *et al.*, submitted). In 2009/10, the proportion of juveniles amounted to 60.9 %. This value is very similar to the 2008/09 value (60.2 %) and is always low in comparison with values estimated since the mid-1990's, which probaly means a low breeding success in spring 2009.
The proportion of juveniles was 61.4 % for the "coastal flyway" and 60% for the "inland flyway". The difference is not significant [Fisher exact test (p = 0.731)].
The temporal distribution of the proportion of juveniles appeared to slightly increase in the course of the season for the whole data [Cochran-Armitage test (p = 0.025); Figure 11)].
Contrary to the post-nuptial migration chronology, no clear pattern appears in the intra-annual variations of the proportion of juveniles for the 4 last seasons, except a relative stability in the course of the season (figure 12). Important differences are shown from one to season to another.

Proportion of males/females

Following preliminary studies on sex distinction from wing measurements and on muscle retraction due to freezing, we estimated for the first time the sex ratio in the collected samples.
In the first study, jack snipes with a wing length of < 115 mm were classified as "female" and those with a wing length >117 mm as "male". The second study allowed us to correct the measurements made on dried wings by adding 1.7 mm to obtained values. On this basis, the proportion of males in the whole samples is 35.6 %. Thus, as for common snipe, a sex ratio biased in favour of females seems to appear. The difference between flyways is important: 30.6 % for the "coastal", 41.6 % for the "inland" [Fisher exact test (p<0.01)].

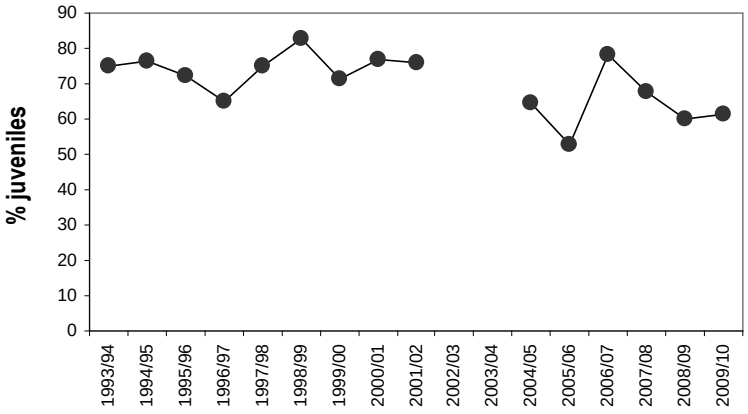


Figure 11: *Inter-annual variations of the proportion of juveniles in Jack Snipe plumages collected during the 1993/94 - 2009/10 period (No collection in 2002/03 and 2003/04).*

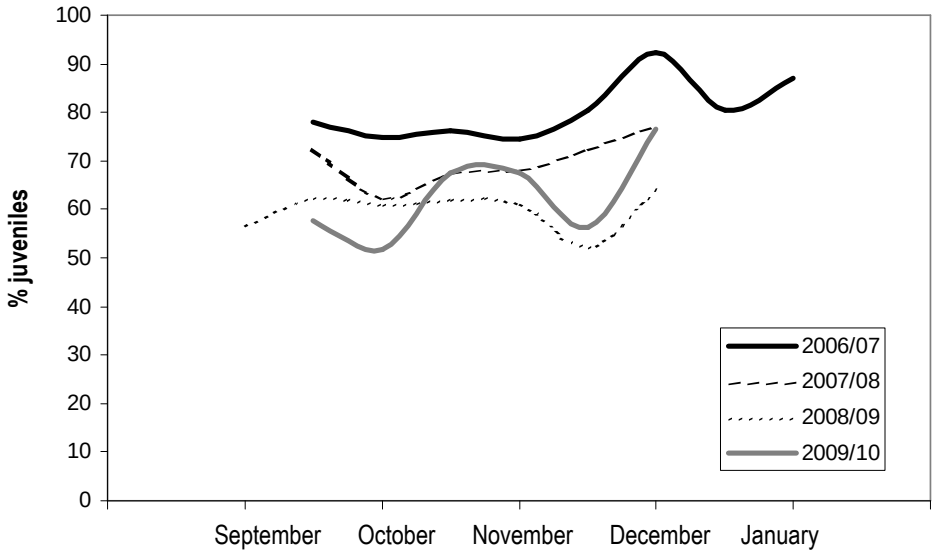


Figure 12: *Intra-annual variations of the proportion of juveniles for the Jack Snipe in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.*

Monitoring of hunting bags

The inter-annual evolution of hunting bags is one of the tools for the monitoring of game populations under the assumption that hunting bags are directely correlated with numbers in the field. The larger the network of sites is, the more reliable the results are.

CICB has had such a network for 10 years, with 27 sites mainly located in the north-west of France (Figure 13). Details of hunting bags are shown in Table 1.

The annual mean total hunting bag in the 27 sites is about 4,600 common snipes and slightly more than 1,000 jack snipes. The mean snipe hunting bag per site can work as an annual index of abundance (Figure 14).
For Common Snipe, the 2009/10 value is 155.6. This is low (8 points below the average) and prolongs a rather bad series started in 2006/07. In spite of rather large inter-annual variations, no trend can be defined for the last 10 years (Page test; p = 0.282).
For Jack Snipe, the 2009/10 season also appears bad. The value is 29.9 birds / site. This is the lowest since 2000/01 (mean fo the last 10 seasons: 41.0). A slight decrease trend can be defined since 200/01 (Page test; p = 0.032).

The Common Snipe/Jack Snipe ratio is always remarkably constant (Figure 15). In 2009/10, the Common Snipe represents 83.9 % of the total Snipe hunting bag. Average for the 2000/01 – 2008/09 period is 81.4 % (74.1 % - 84.4 %).

From data collected in the 27 reference sites, no demographic trend can be shown in common snipe since the early 2000's. However, an almost significant decrease trend appears for Jack Snipe.

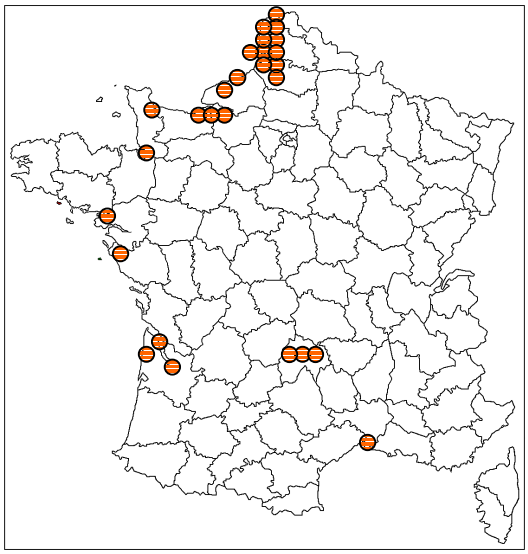


Figure 13 : *Localisation of 27 reference sites for the monitoring of hunting bags during the 2000/01 - 2009/10 period.*

Season	Common Snipe	Jack Snipe	Total
2000/01	4,003	738	4,741
2001/02	3,783	1,324	5,107
2002/03	4,373	1,036	5,409
2003/04	5,309	1,431	6,740
2004/05	5,718	1,220	6,938
2005/06	5,578	1,283	6,861
2006/07	4,090	953	5,043
2007/08	4,575	865	5,440
2008/09	4,311	855	5,166
2009/10	4,200	807	5,007
Mean and total	4,594.0	1 078.3	56,452

Table 1: *Detail of hunting bags per season for 27 reference sites.*

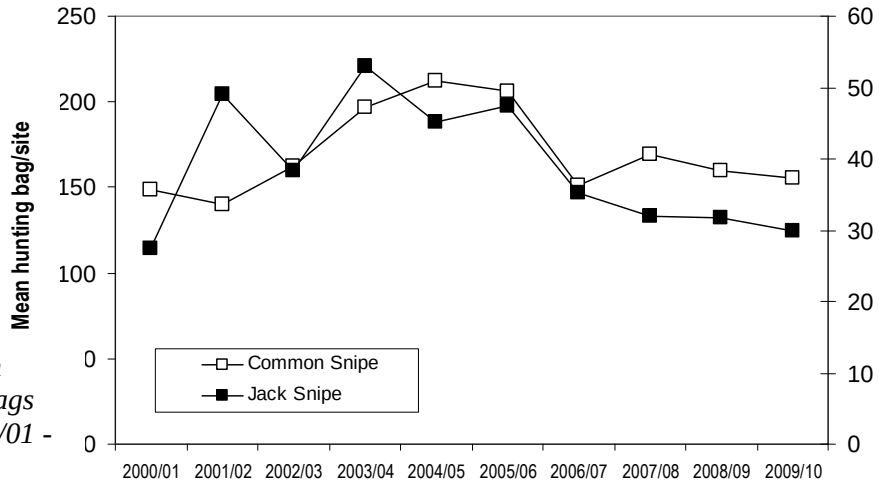


Figure 14: *Average of Common Snipe and Jack Snipe hunting bags for a reference site for the 2000/01 - 2009/10 period.*

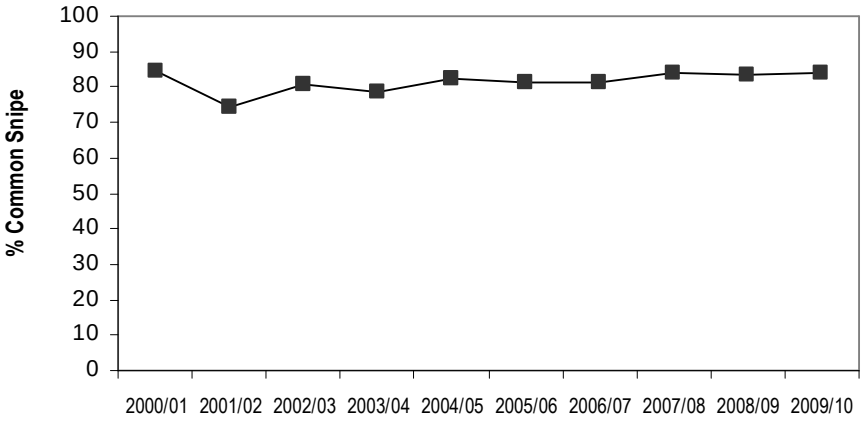


Figure 15: *Proportion of Common Snipe in total Snipe hunting bag (Common Snipe + Jack Snipe) collected on 27 reference sites from 2000/01 to 2009/10.*

Conclusion

On the whole, the 2009/10 results are not very different from the previous ones for bird abundance. Since 2006/07, snipe abundances appear low. But were the snipe numbers really so low in 2009/10 ? This is not certain , because hydrological conditions were very particular. An abnormal drought in September disturbed the first part of the snipe migration and, on the contrary, heavy rains in November flooded stop-over and wintering sites. As a result, a very heterogeneous snipe spatial distribution characteristized the autumn-winter 2009/10.

The abundance indexes related to hunting activity and to fixed hunting territories show these effects: their values clearly remain below average. In regions not impacted by drought, like the Loire estuary, the snipe numbers remained at good abundance levels. In so far as the proportion of juveniles in hunting bags do not suggest a major problem in breeding success, we think that we have to watch the situation without being too optimistic or pessimistic.

Acknowledgments

This report is the result of an important field work carried out by members of CICB and by the ONCFS/FNC Snipes network. We thank all of them : volunteers, *Fédérations départementales des chasseurs* and professionals of ONCFS.

References

Devort M. 1992. Contribution à l'étude des migrations et de la biologie des bécassines. CICB & ANCGE, Paris, 64 p.
Devort M. 1997. La Bécassine des marais. Eléments pour un plan d'action. CICB & OMPO, Paris & Confluences, Bordeaux, France ; 103 p.
Koch S.L. & Paton P.W.C. 2009. Shorebird migration chronology at a stopover site in Massachussets. Wader Study Group Bull. 116(3): 167-174.
Rouxel,R. 2000. Les bécassines du paléarctique occidental. Publ. OMPO. Ed. Eveil Nature, Saint-Yriex-sur-Charente, France. 304 p.

A « cream-coloured – pastel » Jack Snipe

PATRICE FÉVRIER, Club international des chasseurs de bécassines, 5 avenue des Chasseurs, F-75017 Paris *Web site:* www.cicb.asso.fr
Email: patrice.fevrier@wanadoo.fr

© J.P. Henry

A cream-coloured Jack Snipe was shot on 29 November 1994 in Camargue, a large wetland in south-eastern France. This atypical bird is the first that has ever been observed for this species. To our knowledge, only 2 jack snipes with an abnormal plumage have been reported in the literature. One with white primaries and another with a black plumage (Février, 2010). A description of its plumage was made by Jean-Paul Boidot, a specialist in this matter.

The plumage shows the usual pattern of *Lymnocryptes minimus.* Some areas are reddish brown coloured, more or less marked, on a general colour which is beige, sometimes grey brown. This plumage suffered several mutations: black became brown and brown became reddish brown. This association of brown and reddish brown gives a cream-coloured pattern. In this case, an additional mutation occurred, the pastel one which reduces melanisation. Pastel lightens the general colour. In fact, the distribution of melanin is not different, but it is reduced, with different intensities according to the area. This reduction of melanin pigment is more efficient on brown melanin than on black melanin, knowing that in case of cream-colouring, black is already reduced. The cream-coloured factor stimulates the effect of pigmentation spreading. Thus, in this case, we have a jack snipe with a "cream-coloured – pastel" plumage.

Acknowledgments
I am very grateful to Jean-Pierre Henry who informed me of this rare specimen and provided the photo.

Reference

Février P. 2010. Les bécassines en France. Comportement, Habitats et Aménagements, Chasse durable. CICB, Paris. 304 p.

Jack Snipe in North America

PATRICE FÉVRIER, Club international des chasseurs de bécassines, 5 avenue des Chasseurs, F-75017 Paris *Web site:* www.cicb.asso.fr
Email: patrice.fevrier@wanadoo.fr

Several specimens of Jack Snipe (*Lymnocryptes minimus*) were registered in North America. If one of them was observed in Newfoundland, in the north-eastern part, all the others were amazingly collected in the States of Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington, in the north-western part, i.e. in an opposite migratory direction than expected.

Two specimens came from Pribilof Islands, 300 km from Aleutian Islands in north, probably in the 1950's and 1990's. Two other were observed in the1930's and 1980's in California, in the Sacramento Valley.
Four observations were made in the last decade:

- in October 2004 and November 2007, along the Oregon coast, in an area known as the Deflation Plain area, in Lane County; the two birds were shot by the same Snipe hunter;
- on 18 October 2008, just east of Astoria, Oregon;
- on 16 October 2010, at Beluga Slough, Homer, Alaska; this bird was flushed and photographed.

As written in the November 2010 Birding Community E-bulletin of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, "these recent discoveries may beg the question: might there actually be a few semi-regular wintering birds or late-migrating Jack Snipes to be found elsewhere in our Pacific coast wetlands? Birders afield in these regions and habitats should perhaps be aware of this possibility".

News from……. PORTUGAL

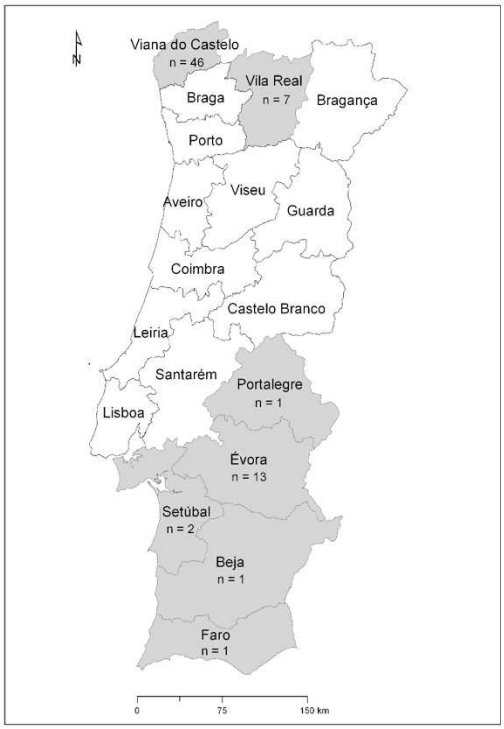
2009/10 Woodcock hunting season in mainland Portugal

DAVID GONÇALVÈS, CIBIO - Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos, Campus Agrário de Vairão, Rua Padre Armando Quintas, 4485-661 Vairão, Portugal; Departamento de Biologia, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Rua Campo Alegre, s/n, 4169-007 Porto, Portugal
Email: drgoncal@fc.up.pt
TIAGO RODRIGUES, CIBIO - Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos, Campus Agrário de Vairão, Rua Padre Armando Quintas, 4485-661 Vairão, Portugal; Departamento de Biologia, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Rua Campo Alegre, s/n, 4169-07 Porto, Portugal
MANUEL RUSSO, ANCG - Associação Nacional de Caçadores de Galinholas, Apartado 107, 7050-097 Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal

In mainland Portugal the Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) is only present during autumn and winter (Catry *et al.*, 2010). Its hunting season usually lasts from the beginning of November till the middle of February (1/11/2009 to 14/02/2010 in the 2009/10 hunting season). Hunting has been allowed on Sundays, Thursdays and national holidays, with a bag limit of three birds/hunter/day. Woodcock hunting can only be practiced by tracking the birds with or without dogs.
This report presents, for the first time, results for a Woodcock hunting season in mainland Portugal. It is based on information collected during hunting trips (number of woodcocks seen and shot; duration of hunting trips) and on wings collected by hunters during the 2009/10 hunting season.

Hunting trips

The Woodcock hunters were encouraged and instructed to fill in a form (report) concerning each hunting trip, including information about the time spent hunting, the number of hunters participating, the number of dogs, the number of different woodcocks seen and the number of bagged woodcocks.
A total of 71 hunting trip reports, from seven districts, were analysed (Figure 1). Unfortunately, the sample size per district was frequently very small. The hunting trip duration (mean ± SE) was 3.6 h ± 0.12 h.
Concerning the number of hunters per hunting trip, the most frequent situation was a single hunter (69% of the hunting trips), followed by the groups of two hunters (24%) and, less frequent (7%), the groups of three hunters. In the majority of hunting trips (77.5%), each hunter had two dogs.The hunting index of abundance (ICA), defined as the number of different woodcocks seen, per hunter, during a hunting trip, was 1.28 ± 0.14. The monthly variation in the ICA value (Figure 2) shows an important increase in the abundance between November and December, followed by a continuous decrease until the end of the hunting season, in February.



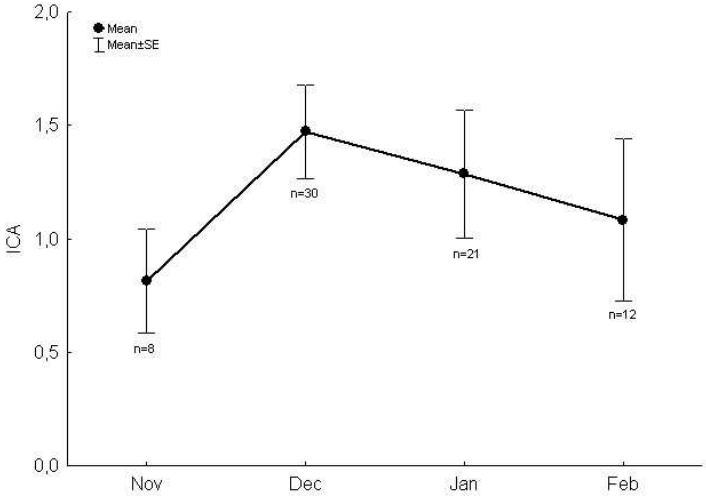


***Figure 2**: Monthly variation in the hunting index of abundance (ICA, number of different woodcock seen, per hunter, during a hunting trip) in mainland Portugal for the 2009/10 hunting season.*

***Figure 1**: Distribution of the number of Woodcock hunting trip reports obtained from some of the mainland Portugal districts (in grey), during the 2009/10 hunting season.*

Wing collection

The Woodcock hunters were also encouraged and instructed to weight the birds, determine their sex and collect a wing for age class determination. Each wing was placed in an envelope and stored frozen until the analysis.
A total of 182 wings were analysed, 125 from 9 districts (Figure 3) and 57 with any geographical information. The sex was determined for 58 birds (Table 1) and 86 birds were weighted (Table 2). For two birds it was not possible to determine the age class due to the small portion of the wing that was collected.
The young/adult ratio was 1.14, corresponding to 53.3% of young birds. The male/female ratio was 0.93, corresponding to 48.3% of males (Table 1).
The mean weight of a Woodcock in the 2009/10 season was 302.3g; females and males weighted 305.0g and 305.5g, respectively (Table 2).

		Age			
		Adults	Young	Indeterminate	**Total**
Sex	Females	15	15		**30**
	Males	10	18		**28**
	Indeterminate	59	63	2	124
	Total	**84**	**96**	**2**	**182**

***Table 1**: Age and sex class frequencies among the bagged Woodcock, analysed in the 2009/10 hunting season in mainland Portugal (N = 182).*

	Weight (g)					
	n	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	SE
All birds	86	302.3	300.0	240	355	2.5
Females	30	305.0	307.5	260	355	4.0
Males	28	305.2	302.5	240	345	4.8

***Table 2:** Weight statistics of a sample of woodcock bagged in the 2009/10 hunting season in mainland Portugal (N = 86).*

Discussion

Owing to the reduced number of hunting trip reports and wings collected, these results should be carefully considered.
The Portuguese Woodcock hunter seems to prefer to hunt alone using two dogs, and spends the same time as other European hunters per hunting trip (e.g. the French hunters: 3.5 h; Boidot, 2009).
The percentage of young birds (53.3% of the bagged birds) appears below the expected level, considering the geographic location of Portugal, in the south-western extreme of the European wintering area, and the higher values usually obtained in other European countries, such as Spain, France, and Italy (Boidot, 2009; FANBPO, 2009). However, in Spain, the percentage of young birds was also 53.3% in the 2009/10 season (Font, 2010).
The value estimated for the hunting index of abundance (ICA), 1.28 woodcock seen/hunter/hunting trip, seems to be close to that obtained in Spain, also during the last hunting season: 1.30 (Font, 2010).

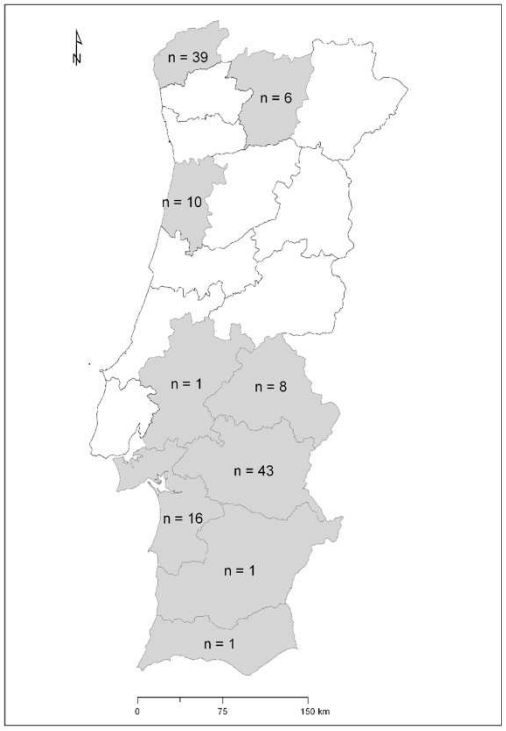


Figure 3: *Distribution of the number of Woodcock wings collected in some Portuguese districts (in grey) during the 2009/10 hunting season.*

In conclusion, the contribution of a higher number of hunters is needed, and the majority of the 18 districts must be well represented annually. Due to efforts already done, to stimulate and instruct more hunters to participate, we expect to have a larger sample for the current hunting season (2010/11).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank to all the hunters who provide information.

References

Boidot J.P. 2009. Evaluation of the 2008/2009 Woodcock hunting season in France. Wetlands International - Woodcock and Snipe Specialist Group Newsletter nº 35: 38-39.
Catry P., Costa H., Elias G. & R. Matias. 2000. *Aves de Portugal. Ornitologia do território continental*. Assírio & Alvim, Lisboa.
FANBPO. 2009. Bulletin N°5 (available at: http://fanbpofr.blogspot.com/2010/01/bulletin-n-5-2009.html).
Font P.C. 2010. Biología: resumen de la Temporada 2009-2010. Scolopax rusticola 19: 49-51.

Wintering Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* monitoring in Ticino Valley Natural Park (Northern Italy) from 2005 to 2009

SILVIO SPANÒ, CARLO CONTE, LORIS GALLI & MATTEO CAPURRO
Università di Genova (DIP.TE.RIS.)- C.so Europa 26- 16132 Genova (Italie)
E-mail: spano.silvio@gmail.com

The total woodcock wintering population is far from being known and available estimations are based on imprecise data (Wetlands International 2002; BirdLife International, 2009; Hoodless,1994; Heath *et al*.,2000; Fadat, 1999).
Following publishing of first results (Galli *et al*., 2005), the 5-year monitoring of wintering woodcocks in Ticino Valley Natural Park was achieved. The aim of this study is to estimate the trend of woodcock populations wintering in hunting-free areas to which birds are very faithful and where a high survival leads to the protection of breeders (Wilson,1983; Spanò, 2001; Duriez. *et al*., 2005; Aradis *et al*.,2008, Fadat, 2009; Ferrand & Gossmann, 2009). In Italy, the total surface area of such areas under 1,500 m altitude is estimated at 50,000 – 60,000 km² (Genghini & Spagnesi, 1997).
The protocol based on counts with pointing dogs, presented in Galli *et al*. (2005), was established by the *Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica* (INFS, now ISPRA) in collaboration with the *Università di Genova* and the *Club della Beccaccia*.

Study area and method

The Ticino Valley Natural Park covers 6561,11 ha along a river with many loops in the Novara Province. This wooded area is very suitable for woodcock wintering owing to numerous springs where water temperature is constant throughout the year. The study area is made up of 5 sampling plots of 100 ha each. These represent 30 % of the woodcock suitable surface area and 10 % of the total park area .
Monitoring is carried out by observers allowed to use their pointing dogs specialised in woodcock. Censuses are made by 2 observers with 2 dogs per plot, once per week between 20 December and 31 January. Some censuses were also carried out in February.

Results

The highest woodcock density in one plot was registered in winter 2008/09 with 8.5 birds/100 ha. The mean densities fluctuated from 2.3 (2006/07) to 4 (2007/08) birds/100 ha (Table 1). No significant difference appeared between years ($p>0,05$, ANOVA for paired data.
Again, no significant difference between months and plots is shown for seasons 2004/05, 2005/06, and 2006/07 ($p>0,05$, ANOVA for paired data).
However, during winter 2007/08, woodcock density was significantly lower in February than in the two previous months ($p = 0.07$, ANOVA for paired data) and densities in the plots 4 and 5 were significantly higher than in the others ($p = 0.012$, ANOVA for paired data).
In the same way, woodcock densities in the plots 3,4 and 5 were higher than in the others during winter 2008/09 ($p = 0.013$, ANOVA for paired data).
However, no significant difference appeared among densities in February for the five study seasons ($p>0,05$, ANOVA for paired data).
Finally, woodcock densities seem basically higher in the plots 3, 4 and 5 than in the others (Figure 1).

No differences were registered in monthly mean temperatures (always > 0°C, except in January 2006 with 0°C) during the study period (Kruskal-Wallis test, $p>0,05$). In the same way, no difference was found in precipitation (Kruskal-Wallis test, $p>0,05$), but a maximum precipitation occurred in November 2008.

Year	Number of woodcocks	Mean /100 ha	Min	Max	St. Dev.	Census area (ha)
2004/2005	90	2,452	0	5,83	1,63	3,620
2005/2006	112	3,349	1,11	5,29	1,34	3,540
2006/2007	43	2,257	0	4,28	1,17	2,070
2007/2008	137	3,962	0	8,5	2,53	3,190
2008/2009	67	3,494	1,43	5	1,36	1,880

Table 1: *Detail of monitoring data.*

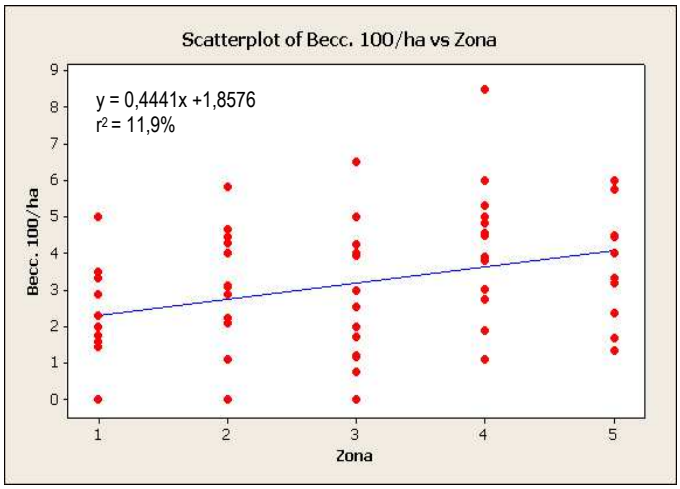


Figure 1: *Regression analysis of mean Woodcock densities in the 5 census plots.*

Conclusions

The mean densities observed in the hunting-free study area show its high carrying capacity and its interest for woodcock conservation. Woodcock distribution appears to be relatively homogeneous, particularly in case of bad weather conditions. Further research should include a study of wintering habitats in order to set up experimentations to increase the carrying capacity.
This work has contributed to validate the INFS (ISPRA) protocol in the field and to reinforce the collaboration between the Ticino Valley Natural Park, the *Università di Genova* and hunters to improve knowledge and conservation of woodcock.

Aknowledgements

We would like to thank Gerolamo Boffino, Alessandra Parodi, Giovanni Liberini , Danilo Manfrin and all volunteers in field work.

References

Aradis A., Miller M.W., Landucci G., Ruda P., Taddei S. & F. Spina. 2008. Winter survival of Eurasian woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* in central Italy. Wildlife Biology, 14(1): 36-43.
BirdLife International. 2009. Species fachtsheet: *Scolopax rusticola*. Downloaded from http://www.birdlife.org.
Duriez O., Fritz H., Binet F., Tremblay Y. & Y. Ferrand. 2005. Individual activity rates in wintering Eurasian woodcocks: starvation versus predation risk trade-off? Animal Behaviour, 69: 39-49.
Fadat C. 1999. Bécasse des bois *Scolopax rusticola. In*: Rocamora G. & D. Yeatman-Berthelot - Oiseaux menacés et à surveiller en France. Soc. Etude Orn. France: 350-351.
Fadat C. 2009. La vie de la Bécasse de bois. Écologie et chasse raisonnée. Charles Fadat ed., Clermont- l'Hérault, F.
Ferrand Y. & F. Gossmann. 2009. La Bécasse des bois. Histoire naturelle. Effet de Lisière ed., Saint Lucien, F.
Galli L., Spanò S. and C. Conte. 2005. Wintering Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* monitoring in protected areas in Italy. First results. Wetlands International, WSSG Newsletter 31: 28-32.
Genghini M. & M. Spagnesi. 1997. Le aree protette di interesse faunistico in Italia. Ric.Biol.Selvaggina, 100: 1-325.
Heath M., Borggreve C. & N. Peet. 2000. European bird populations: estimates and trends. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.
Hoodless A. 1994. Woodcock. *In.* Tucker G.M. & Heath M.F. (Eds.). Birds in Europe – their conservation status. Conservation Series N. 3, Birdlife International, Cambridge, UK, 270-271.
Spanò S. 2001. Il punto sulla Beccaccia. III ed., Olimpia, Firenze.
Wetlands International. 2002. Woodcock. *In*: Waterbird population estimates, WI Global Series n.12, Wageningen,The Netherlands (eds): 164.
Wilson J. 1983. Wintering site fidelity of Woodcock in Ireland. 2nd European Woodcock and Snipe Workshop, Fordingbridge, UK, IWRB : 18-27.

Recent Woodcock and Snipe publications

MINIAS P., WLODARCZYK R., MEISSNER W., REMISIEWICZ M., KACZMAREK K., CZAPULAK A., CHYLARECKI P., WOJCIECHOWSKI A. & T. JANISZEWSKI. 2010. The migration system of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* on autumn passage through Central Europe. Ardea 98: 13-19.

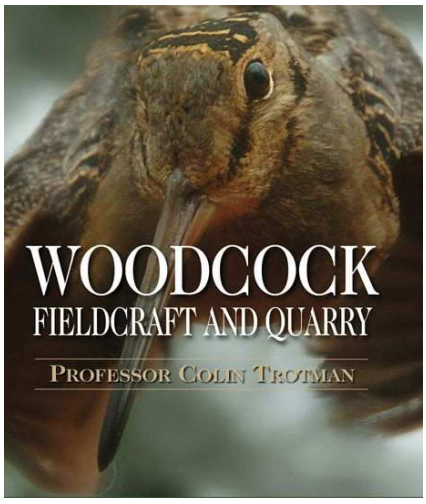
MULHAUSER B. & J.L. ZIMMERMANN. 2010. Fidélité des mâles de Bécasse des bois *Scolopax rusticola* à leur site de reproduction. Alauda 78(1) : 27-39.

MULHAUSER B. & J.L. ZIMMERMANN. 2010. Individuelle Erkennung und Bestandserfassung bei der Waldschnepfe *Scolopax rusticola* anhand von Gesangsmerkmalen balzender Männchen. Ornithol. Beob. 107 (1): 39-50. (Individual recognition and monitoring of male Eurasian Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* by characteristics of their roding calls)

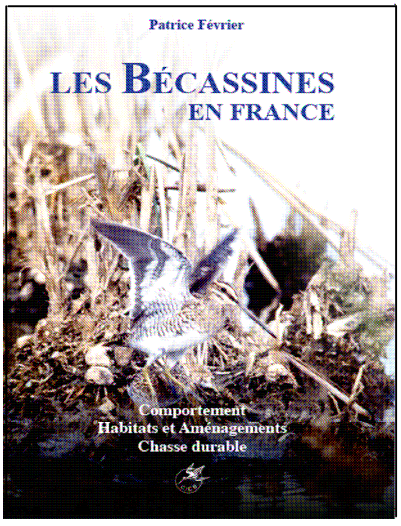
MULHAUSER B., ZIMMERMANN J.L. & S. REGAZZONI. 2010. Reprises de bécasses des bois Scolopax rusticola nichant dans le Jura Franco-Suisse. Nos Oiseaux 57: 37-40.

BRAÑA F., PRIETO L. & P. GONZÁLEZ-QUIRÓS. 2010. Habitat change and timing of dusk flight in the Eurasian woodcock: a trade-off between feeding and predator avoidance ? Ann. Zool. Fennici 47: 206-214.

GUZMÁN J.L., FERRAND Y. & B. ARROYO. 2010. Origin and migration of woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* wintering in Spain. Eur. J. Wildli. Res. DOI 10.1007/s10344-010-0475-9



COLIN TROTMAN. 2010. Woodcock - Fieldcraft and Quarry. Ed. Quiller, UK, 176 p. Price: 25 £
It can be ordered from the website: www.countrybooksdirect.com
This book is not just about shooting woodcock, but also takes a comprehensive look at the species in the UK and in the continent.



PATRICE FÉVRIER. 2009. Les Bécassines en France – Comportement, Habitats et Aménagement, Chasse durable. Ed. CICB , France, 304 p. (In French), Price: 25 euros.
It can be ordered to CICB, 5 Avenue des chasseurs, 75017, Paris, France or directly to patrice.fevrier@wanadoo.fr
This book is dedicated to snipes visiting France. Their biology, the management of autumn-winter sites and also snipe hunting are reviewed.