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MANAGEMENT IN CANADA.

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A REVIEW OF THE POINT SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS
POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO WATERFOWL SPECIES MANAGEMENT IN
CANADA.

by

William A. Morris
Wildlife Biologist
Canadian Wildlife Service

Prepared at request of Canadian Wildlife Service Office,
Edmonton, Alberta, February 8, 1971.

The increasing number of waterfowl hunters together with the diminishing waterfowl production habitat suggests that if waterfowling is to continue as a sport in Canada and the United States then better use of the resource will have to be made. Most hunters appear to prefer the larger puddle ducks thus a majority of birds taken are mallard, widgeon or pintail. These birds come under heavy gunning pressure throughout most of Canada while there are many other waterfowl species which go virtually unharvested. An important phase of management is to foster an equitable kill by species.

A number of different ways have been devised to divert hunting pressures to other species. One is by closing the season entirely on scarce species such as redhead, canvasback and woodcock. This type of closure may be applied to entire provinces, states or even flyways themselves. Another method of restricting the bag limit for one or more species within the overall bag limit. For example, a bag limit may be 4 ducks of which no more than one may be canvasback or redhead. There is also the method of a seasonal quota which may be established for a species such as Canada goose or the one which has been advocated for the black brant. The kill of such species as Canada geese may be limited to a specific number in a particular state or province. A "bonus" system has been used where one or more species may be taken in addition to the regular daily bag. The daily bag limit of 4 ducks for example may be 4 ducks but 6 would be allowed provided the last 2 of the 6 are a more abundant species.

Other adjustments are made by opening the dates within the regular season in order to discourage the harvest of specific species, or by

opening the season after the main migration has taken place thus leaving other species which may be taken legally by the hunter.

Most of these modifications within the seasons and bag limits have been designed to protect one or more species and it is based on the assumption that the hunter can determine waterfowl species of birds in flight prior to shooting. This is not always the case as indicated by (Evard, 1970).

It has been demonstrated in studies conducted by (Geiss, Crissey 1969) that the recovery rates for mallards during the '60's demonstrated the advantage of species managed through a restricted daily bag limit. Mallard production was reduced by a drought in the important breeding area during early 1962 and it was necessary to restrict the harvest of the species. By 1962 the bag limit on the Mississippi Flyway had been reduced to 1 bird daily with 2 in possession. The subsequent annual kill survey reported a sharp decrease in the number of mallards harvested and the reduction in band recoveries demonstrated that there was also a marked reduction the proportion of birds available that were harvested. In spite of the production ratio in 1962 that was less than average there was an increase of 16% in the mallard breeding population the following year (Crissey, 1964). This indicates that the reduction of harvest rates even with drawbacks resulted in an increase in the survival rate. Crissey has indicated in conversation that unless the bag limit is restricted to 4 birds or less than the prescribed season and bag limit has little effect on the population. This statement appears to verify his findings.

In 1965 it was necessary to restrict the mallard bag in an attempt

to increase the number of breeding birds in the Mississippi and Central Flyways. Only 1 mallard was allowed in a basic bag of 4 birds, which compared to 2 to a basic bag in the previous year. In both Flyways recovery based on the winter bandings decreased from 40 to 70% (Sorenson, 1966), a recorded increase of 29% in the 1966 breeding population (Marin-son and Henny, 1966), indicated that the survival of the 1966 population was increased by the action of the restricted season. Conversely, the species regulation has been used to increase the kill of lightly har-vested species. For example, the September teal season in the central Mississippi Flyway during recent years has added an appreciable amount of waterfowl hunting recreation without adversely affecting the teal population level and without killing a significant number of other ducks (Martin and Kacznski, 1968).

The disadvantage of this method of species control while affecting some results is it gives rise to unintentional violation and fosters poor public relations. During these seasons hunting parties were watched from spy-blinds and many were observed to reach the daily limit of 1 mallard per hunter. After this, over half the parties who had reached their daily limit had an opportunity to shoot at more mallards and among these nearly three-quarters did so. Nearly 20% of the hunters actually killed an additional mallard after reaching their mallard limit (Kimball, 1969). The same kind of problem arises in conjunction with special teal and scaup season outside the regular duck season and although an effort was made to establish these areas at times when scaup or teal are not usually mixed with other species, nevertheless a number of other species are usually present. Several thousands observations of hunting parties from

concealment revealed that about 40% or more of the hunters who had an opportunity to fire at an illegal species did so (Martin and Kaczynski, 1968). Other hunters seem to be firing at everything that goes by, in or out of range. The problem is that the hunters are unable to identify species in the air before shooting. It also has been demonstrated that where a bonus regulation is in effect in order to increase the harvest on species that are available and an analysis on the 1969 bonus season on blue wing teal in Minnesota reveals that the fifth and sixth duck in the daily bag accounted for an additional kill of about 30,000 birds. of these about one-third were blue-winged teal suggesting that the bonus regulation had increased the kill on the blue-wings by about 10,000 birds but the kill on ducks other than blue-winged teal was increased by about 20,000. In effect, it would appear that the bonus regulation on such species as scaup, teal, pintail simply increased the daily bag limit on all species in the area where bonus species are commonly taken.

It is evident that trials of species management to date have only been partially successful because of side effects on waterfowl and hunters.

Point System: - Species Management

The point system implimented by the U.S. Bureau Sports Fish and Wildlife in an attempt to alleviate some of these problems. It allocates different point values to different species and sex of ducks hunted. A hunter may shoot until he has reached the maximum "points" but if he is unable to identify the ducks killed the practical result is that he can take no more than 2 under point rules. The general idea of the point system was suggested by a duck hunter. The point system is a method

to distribute the kill since species that are less abundant or with higher mortality rates received more points. Species withstanding greater shooting pressure are allocated fewer points. Until this trial season waterfowl hunting had been regulated mostly on a species-by-species basis, hunters had an unenviable problem by attempting to identify ducks in the air. The point system is an advantage since it allows the hunter to identify birds in the hand. Species identification is accomplished with bird in the hand and reference material such as pocket identification booklets or keys can be used. Although the point system does not require that the hunter be able to identify birds in the air before he shoots, there is a definite advantage if he can. By this advantage it would appear that the point system provides the possibility of a greater incentive for hunters to learn species identification than existed before.

A disadvantage of the point system is the possibility to rearrange or reorder the bag. For example - with a 100-point total a hunter might take a 90-point bird first, after which 1 duck would cause him to reach his daily bag limit. On the other hand, the daily bag limit could consist of 9 ten-point birds, plus a 90-point bird, providing the 90-point bird was taken last. The basic difference however is that under the conventional species regulation the hunter is neither legally or ethically wrong if he continues to shoot. The individual attempting to reorder knows that he is in violation. One of the major advantages to this system is that it allows the honest hunter to stay honest and provides the basis for clearly separating him from the wilful violator. Hunter performance surveys conducted in San Louis Valley in the Shiawasse area indicated that reordering and discarding higher point birds was a problem (Table 1). There is a

possibility that as hunters become more familiar with the point system the rate of violations may increase. It should be pointed out at this time that where two daily bag limits are allowed the legal possession is even more difficult to determine.

Recommendations:

1. After an intensive review of the literature on the subject, it is my opinion that the point system is not required in Canadian regulations because our hunting has not reached the severe competitive stage as has occurred in the United States.
2. The literature indicates that while the point system has distinct advantages it presupposes that hunters do not intentionally violate the law. Studies to date indicate during the initial trials of this method some violations were observed and it is my opinion that this would become greater as more hunters become familiar with manipulating the point system regulations.
3. I would strongly recommend that the Canadian Wildlife Service withhold any final decision on whether this system should be given a trial in Canada until the major report is tabled by the U.S. Bureau of Sports Fish and Wildlife in March, 1971, since it may contain facts which are not clear in preliminary reports available to date.

1969 HUNTER PERFORMANCE BY REGULATIONS

TABLE 1

	<u>Shiawassee</u>			<u>Outstate</u>
	<u>Point</u>	<u>2-Bird</u>	<u>SWR-Mich.*</u>	<u>SWR- Colo.**</u>
No. Performance Checks	130	80	46	73
% Parties Achieving bag limit	30	48.7	2.1	5.5
% Individuals taking-				
0 mallards	39.8	35.6	19.9	77.5
1 mallards	36.8	39.1	81.1	22.5
2 mallards	13.8	25.3	-	-
3 mallards	9.6			
% Parties who achieved mallard or bag limit who attempted to take additional mallards	1.5	45.4	70.0	30.0
% Parties Violating	13.1	17.5	30.4	30.5
<u>Types of Violations</u>				
Attempt to Overbag	9	25	5	19
Overbag	5	25	37	15
Wanton Waste	43	19	42	22
Reordering	19	-	-	-
Shooting Outside Time	14	19	16	11
Outside Designated Area	-	7	-	-
Other	10	7	-	33

Data Above Expressed in Percent.

* SWR-Mich. Statewide Waterfowl Regulations - Michigan.

** SWR-Colo. Statewide Waterfowl Regulations - Colorado.

Adapted from Preliminary Report 1969 Experiment to Test Different Forms of Waterfowl Regulations, Shiawassee River State Game Area, Saginaw County, Michigan.

by - E. Mikula, Jerry Martz, Carl Bennett, Marvin Johnson.

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