

SASA



PISCIVOROUS BIRD LICENSING

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Wildlife Management

SASA

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Licence criteria

- ❖ Licences may be issued by SEERAD under section 16(1) of the WCA 1981 to kill or take wild birds, providing
- ❖ birds are causing or likely to be causing **serious** damage to fish stocks or fisheries;
- ❖ all other non-lethal, anti-predator methods have been tried and proved to be ineffective at resolving the problem, or are impractical for use at the site, not just difficult to implement.
- ❖ other factors are not likely to be responsible for causing the damage;
- ❖ shooting will help to prevent the damage;
- ❖ there is no other satisfactory solution.

- ❖ Licences to shoot are normally issued as an aid to scaring.

- ❖ For ‘closed’ water bodies, this is usually possible, although it can get problematic where large water bodies are concerned.

- ❖ For river systems, aim to shoot at the
 - most vulnerable places;
 - most vulnerable times.

Shooting to scare on rivers

- ❖ There are arguments that scaring the birds up and down the catchment will only increase their energetic output and subsequent food intake.
- ❖ but we don't know if birds move between catchments in response to shooting and scaring;
- ❖ and a specified cull of birds would be difficult to justify in the legislation, and would require detailed data on the movements, behaviour and numbers of birds within and outwith the catchment (e.g. might create a wildlife vacuum).

Bird Counts

- ❖ **Advantages of bird counts**
- ❖ provides guidance for setting the bag limit;
- ❖ provides information to help establish the level of damage, since we can estimate mean daily intake of birds (from carcass analysis);
- ❖ allows a flexible licensing system that is sensitive to local changes in the bird population;
- ❖ helps fulfil UK and European legislation.

Bird counts on 'closed fisheries'

- ❖ 'Closed' fisheries (farms, P&T) - single, on-the-spot counts at times of day when damage most likely, usually within one hour of sunrise.
- ❖ Counts usually performed daily, or several times a week (not cumulative counts).

Bird counts on rivers

- ❖ For river catchments, methodology based on scientific literature (Marquiss and Duncan, 1994).
- ❖ Methodology is necessarily broad to accommodate the different topographical and manpower problems potentially encountered by the different Boards.
- ❖ Using simultaneous or consecutive counts along river, or spot counts, or roost counts.
- ❖ Counts must take place the same day to avoid recount errors. Same time of year each year.

Bag limits

- ❖ Based on bird count data for catchment, taking into account:-
 - ❖ - previous counts
 - count reliability;
 - extent of the survey;
 - count precision, e.g. weather;
 - changes in the count from previous years.

Problems with the bird counts = variation

- ❖ quality of counts between Boards (possibly between counts by a single Board);
- ❖ quantity of counts between Boards (usually 1 or 2 a year);
- ❖ skill and experience of counters;
- ❖ coverage of the catchment;
- ❖ timing (within Boards from year to year and between Boards);
- ❖ environmental conditions during the count.

Overcoming problems

- ❖ Encourage repeated counts per season, but logistically quite difficult for many of the larger catchments.
- ❖ SNH and bird conservation bodies (BTO, RSPB) participation - provide skill and manpower with counts. Joint ownership of the data.
Little positive response - possibly don't want to be associated with the licensing system? Tweed?
- ❖ Some Boards have a more scientific approach than others. Biologist usually provides excellent support.

Further development of the licensing system

- ❖ Encourage Boards to reduce any variation, and increase number and quality of counts.
- ❖ Audit of original bird count data sheets (randomly select one or two DSFBs each season).
- ❖ Accompany DSFB staff on a count day (randomly select one or two DSFBs each season).

May licences: under discussion

- ❖ For most catchments, the smolt run takes place in April and May, but licensed shooting stops at the end of April.
- ❖ Only adult male sawbills are shot in May.
- ❖ Only in lower stretches of the river.
- ❖ Would require a May count & nest site survey.

Key features of shooting in May

- ❖ NOT an increase in the bag limit, merely a shifting in the timing of when birds are shot.
- ❖ Adult male birds only (distinguishable by their plumage at this time of year). The number of males does not limit the size of the population.
- ❖ Only a small percentage of total number of birds are shot, and only a small proportion of these would be shot in May.
- ❖ Restricted to the lower reaches of the mainstem, and less likely to impact on main nesting sites upriver.

Research

- ❖ Monitor the daily and seasonal movements of sawbill ducks on a river catchment.
- ❖ Probably require satellite transmitters, which have been successfully used on diving ducks elsewhere.

