

DUCK SHOOTING

Did you know?

Did you know that “good” duck shooters wound more ducks than poor shooters? This is because their aim is better, so their shots get closer more often. The poor shooters more frequently don’t get close enough to wound the duck.

Background

Catch a sample of ducks in any area in which shooting occurs and X-ray them. What will you find? The first such study was in 1947¹ and describes their astonishment at finding ducks with pellets throughout their bodies.

They found ducks with healed wing fractures and even ducks who had been wounded multiple times as revealed by different types of shot in their bodies. In following decades, similar studies kept finding the same things. Shotguns fire between 150 and 200 pellets and many ducks will be hit, but keep flying. Some will succumb after minutes, hours, or weeks, but others will recover to become representatives in such studies. If you think about it, these studies can only ever reveal the tip of the wounding iceberg. Obviously, ducks who die from their wounds won’t be around to be found in such studies.

In the 1970s and 1980s, US shotgun ammunition makers hung up living ducks² by the thousand and shot them from a variety of ranges with a variety of types of shotgun shells. These macre studies show clearly that even with perfectly aimed shotguns, wounding is both unavoidable and significant.

Many studies by wildlife authorities estimate wounding rates by asking hunters. There are two problems with this approach. The first is that hunters can’t know whether or not they hit a duck unless it falls from the sky. If it keeps flying, then they can’t know if they hit or missed. The second problem is that hunters may not remember or confess to all the ducks they know they hit but didn’t pickup. A Canadian study³ in the 1980s is the only study where scientists watched duck shooters from hidden observation posts and found the hunters typically admitted to less than half the number of ducks that the scientists scored as being hit

but not retrieved. But even this study will have missed the ducks which keep flying but are wounded.

Imagine a slaughterhouse where about half of the animals that arrive to be killed escape wounded. This is the reality of duck shooting. The reasons that shotguns don’t kill reliably come down to the basic physics of the way shotguns operate can’t be fixed by any kind of legislation. You can’t legislate to change the laws of physics.

Where does it happen?

Recreational duck shooting is banned in Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. Some crop-protection shooting still occurs but this has declined steadily as farmers change their methods of producing rice so that less water is used. Shooter numbers have also declined significantly in recent decades in all states which still allow the sport. This is due to duck rescue campaigns and continued public opposition. In South Australia, most shooting occurs in organised shoots on private property making duck rescue campaigns impossible.

Policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to shooting flying birds with shotguns, regardless of the purpose.

Key Objectives

1. That recreational duck and quail shooting be immediately banned.
2. That an enquiry be established to consider the cruelty aspects of any use of shotguns in killing animals. We are confident that the scientific evidence will lead such an enquiry to recommend a ban on the use of shotguns for the killing of any animal.

¹https://www.jstor.org/stable/3796289?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

²http://www.jstor.org/stable/3830469?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

³https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297382726_Monitoring_hunter_performance_in_Prairie_Canada