

Hunting bag and distance from nearest day-roost in Camargue ducks

"Reserves that are closed to hunting are important to wintering wildfowl Anatidae. Reserves can also benefit local hunters, because they are often used as day-roosts by birds prior to nocturnal feeding in surrounding wetlands. In this study, we used annual hunting bags from 45 hunting estates in the Camargue, southern France, to study the relationship between hunting success and distance to the nearest duck day-roost, which are generally located in protected areas. Five dabbling duck species *Anas* spp. and a diving duck species (pochard *Aythya ferina*) were studied. The relationship between hunting bag and distance from roost was negative in all cases except mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, which is subject to specific hunting management practices (i.e. raise and release). However, a significant trend was not found for wigeon *A. penelope* and shoveler *A. clypeata*. This supports the hypothesis that hunting estates closer to protected areas are more successful. However, the decrease in hunting bags with increasing distance from the nearest roost could be seen in as little as a few thousands of metres in all species. This suggests that only hunting grounds with a distance of <2–3 kilometres from the nearest roost may actually have increased hunting accessibility for certain duck species."

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