## DANISH REVIEW OF GAME BIOLOGY Vol. 11 no. 1

## Studies in Migration and Mortality of Common Snipe (Gallinago gallinago) Ringed in Denmark

by Jørgen Fog

Med et dansk resumé: Trækforhold og dødelighed for dobbeltbekkasiner (Gallinago gallinago) ringmærket i Danmark

Резюме на русском языке.

Условия перелета и смертность дупелей, Gallinago gallinago, помеченых кольцами в Дании

ISSN 0374 - 7344

COMMUNICATION NO. 156 FROM VILDTBIOLOGISK STATION Vildtbiologisk Station, Kalø, 8410 Rønde, Denmark 1978

## DANISH REVIEW OF GAME BIOLOGY

The journal is published and distributed by the

## Game Biology Station, Kalø, 8410 Rønde, Denmark

Each paper is issued separately and when a number of papers have appeared (comprising ca. 200 pages) these will be collected in a volume together with a table of contents. The price will be set separately for each volume. For volume 5–10 it is 50 Danish Kroner per volume.

Editor: Ib Clausager. - Assistant editor: Else-Marie Nielsen. - Russian summaries: Axel Mortensen. - Linguistic consultant: Dr. Robert Russel. - Printed by Clemenstrykkeriet, Århus.

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Continued cover page 3

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### CONTENTS

Migration	2
Introduction	2
Material and methods	3
Periods of trapping	3
Recoveries from Denmark	6
Recoveries from abroad	6
Mortality	9
Material	9
Estimation of mortality	9
Discussion of the required production	10
Dansk resumé	11
Резюме на русском языке	11
References	12

Author's address: Game Biology Station, Kalø, DK 8410 Rønde, Denmark

## Migration

### INTRODUCTION

The scientific reserve known as Vejlerne (57° 04′ N, 09° 02′ E) in north-western Jutland, Denmark, is a marshland of international importance as a breeding, moulting and resting area for waterfowl (Fog 1975). It is included in Project MAR (1962) and in the Danish list of wetlands in accordance with the Ramsar convention. Three study groups carried out research in the area concerning its productivity, land-use and management from 1967 till 1971 as part of the International Biological Programme, IBP, (MATHIESEN et al. 1969, MATHIESEN & FOG 1975).

This paper discusses the trapping and ringing of the Common Snipe (Gallinago

gallinago) in the area. Times of trapping are compared with the occurrences of Snipe killed at lighthouses, and with Snipe ringed abroad and recovered in Denmark. Results are compared with recoveries of Snipe ringed at localities in eastern Denmark by the Zoological Museum, Copenhagen.

Thanks are due to the owners of the area, in particular Mr. Jørgen Rasmussen, and to the Nature Conservancy Council, for permission to work in Vejlerne. Mr. NIELS OTTO PREUSS is thanked for allowing the author to use unpublished data, as is Mr. Tommy Asperg for statistical aid.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The Snipe is a common breeding bird in Veilerne, but no population figures exist (Fog & Kortegaard 1973). It is numerous during migration, especially late summer and autumn. In the spring the area also plays an important role as a resting place, but far fewer birds occur than during the autumn.

During the 4-year period, 1968-1971, a total of 660 Common Snipe was ringed, comprising 649 during the months of July-November and 11 in April-May. All birds were fully-fledged, and it was not possible to differentiate between local birds and migrants.

The majority of birds were trapped in types of the Clover-Leaf and the Lundy Wader traps, and a few in a duck-trap. By the end of 1977 a total of 64 Snipe (9.7%) had been recovered (Table 1). If retraps within the ringing area are excluded, the recovery figure is 45 (6.8%); of these 16 (2.4%) were recovered in Denmark and 29 (4.4%) abroad.

## PERIODS OF TRAPPING

The distribution in time of the 649 Snipe trapped and ringed during the summer and autumn, 1968-1971, is shown in Fig. 1.

It is not to determine from these data whether the birds trapped in July and the first half of August are part of the local population, or whether migrants are beginning to occur. Around August 20th, an increase in the number of trapped birds strongly suggests the arrival of Snipe from elsewhere. The number at lighthouses throughout Denmark 1886-1957 (Fig. 2), suggests a li

Year of

ringing

1968

1969 1970

1971

Total

No.

ringed

57

291

183

129

660

hout De	umber killed nmark from s a limited	31
	veries n brackets)	2
No.	0/0	
4 (0)	7.0 (0.0)	
8 (13)	9.6 (4.4)	11
8 (4)	9.9 (2.1)	
4 (2)	10.9 (1.6)	
64 (19)	9.7 (2.9)	

Table 1. The number of Common Snipe ringed at Veilerne during 1968-1971, and recoveries, including retraps, obtained by December 31st, 1977.

28 (13)

18 (4)

14 (2)

64 (19)

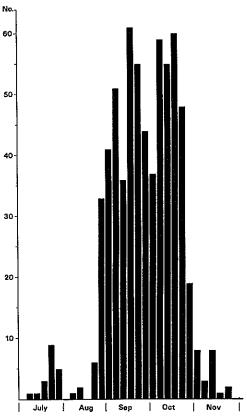


Fig. 1. The distribution in time of 649 Common Snipe trapped and ringed at Veilerne 1968-1971. Months are divided into 5-day periods.

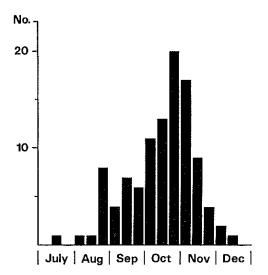


Fig. 2. The distribution in time of Common Snipe killed at lighthouses 1886–1957. Months are divided into 10-day periods. Based on Hansen (1954) and Preuss (unpublished).

migration from the beginning of August, and a considerable migratory activity from the last third of this month. The distribution in time of Snipe ringed in Norway, Sweden and Finland and recovered in Denmark is shown in Fig. 3. A comparison of Figs. 1, 2 and 3 suggests that the August catches at Vejlerne in fact contain migratory birds. Braun (1977) similarly found that the autumn migration of Snipe over Heligoland commences early August.

The number of birds trapped during 1968-1970 is shown in Fig. 4. Variations in the numbers trapped are due partly to changes in the water level with subsequent local movements of Snipe, and partly to waves of migration as also reported by Braun (1977) from Heligoland.

Snipe were trapped as late as November 23rd (Fig. 1). During the study period, 1968–1971, trapping was terminated on October 29th, November 23rd, October 28th and October 22nd, respectively.

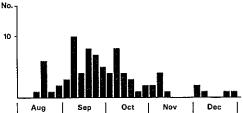


Fig. 3. The recovery dates of 81 Common Snipe ringed in Finland (22), Sweden (54), and Norway (5) 1957–1976. Months are divided into 5-day periods. The records are extracted from ringing reports.

Only the three first dates indicate a greatly reduced number of Snipe. In 1971 the traps were removed on October 22nd, in spite of the fact that Snipe were still present, the last being seen on November 18th.

It is a general impression that the last Snipe leaves the Vejlerne area at the start of the first actual frosty weather. This view is confirmed by comparing the de-

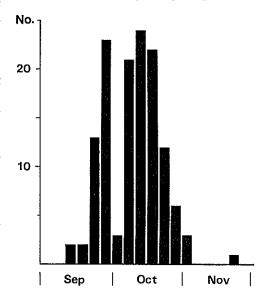
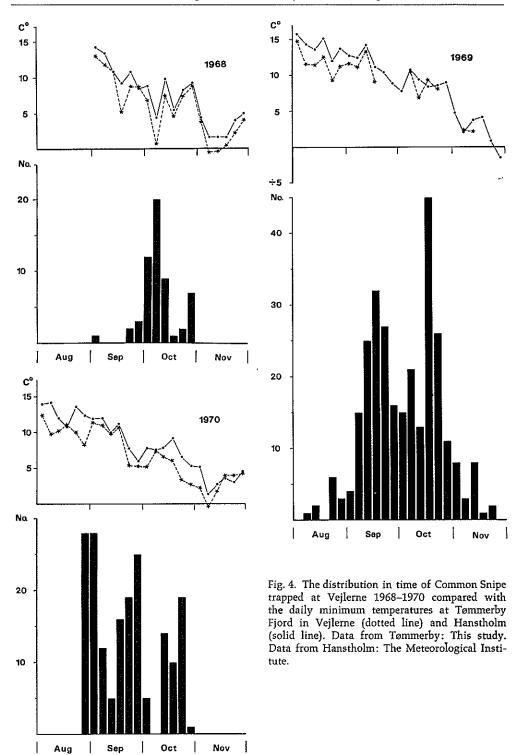


Fig. 5. The distribution in time of 132 Jack Snipe trapped and ringed at Vejlerne 1968–1971. Months are divided into 5-day periods.



parture of birds each year with minimum temperatures from the study area and from the nearby Hanstholm (Fig. 4).

The number of Snipe trapped during the spring (11) is too small to be of any help in evaluating the extent and timing of this migration. The first sightings during the study period varied from March 18th to April 8th. The Jack Snipe, Limnocryptes minimus, is not a breeding bird in Denmark but occurs as a common migrant. During the study period, 1968–1971, a total of 132 of this species were trapped at Vejlerne (Fig. 5). The Jack Snipe arrives later than the Common Snipe during the autumn migration.

## RECOVERIES FROM DENMARK

Of all the Snipe ringed, 23 were retrapped within the study area; 20 during autumn and spring in the year of ringing, 2 after one year, and 1 after two years. Two of the retraps were later recovered from Denmark, and two from abroad.

In the Vejlerne area, 12 of the ringed

Snipe were shot, and one ring was found on a severed leg. These recoveries all occurred during the year of ringing. Only 3 were recovered (shot) from elsewhere in Denmark, 2 in the year of ringing and one 4 years later.

### RECOVERIES FROM ABROAD

The geographical and monthly distribution of the 29 recoveries from abroad is shown in Fig. 6 and Table 2. Of the 29 recoveries 7 are found in the year of

Country	Month of recovery									
of re- covery	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	Total
Denmark		3	10	3						16
British										
Isles		1	1	1	1	4		1		9
Holland			1							1
France			1	2	1	4				8
Spain			1		1	3				5
Portugal					1					1
Morocco				1			1			2
Italy					1					1
USSR	1								1	2
Total	1	4	14	7	5	11	1	1	1	45

Table 2. Recoveries of Common Snipe, ringed at Vejlerne. Retraps are omitted.

Country of recovery	Place of ringing Eastern Denmark Vejlerne			
USSR	2	2		
Finland	1			
Sweden	7	_		
Norway	2	-		
British Isles	42	9		
W Germany	1	_		
Holland	10	1		
Belgium	6	-		
France	110	8		
Spain	22	5		
Portugal	9	1		
Italy	4	1		
Morocco	3	2		
Algeria	2	_		
l'otal	221	29		

Table 3. Foreign recoveries of Common Snipe ringed in eastern Denmark by the Zoological Museum, Copenhagen, and at Vejlerne by the Game Biology Station, Kalø.

ringing, 12, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1 and 2 in the following years.

If the limited data obtained reflect the actual situation, the most important winter quarters for Snipe ringed at Vejlerne are the British Isles, northern and western France, northern Spain and Morocco. The two recoveries from the USSR show that

birds from Russia pass through the Vejlerne area; one bird was found dead in Estonia on April 26th, while the other was shot near Okulovka in the Novgorod area on August 18th.

The general picture emerging from Fig. 6 does not differ much from that in Fig. 7, which comprises recoveries of Snipe

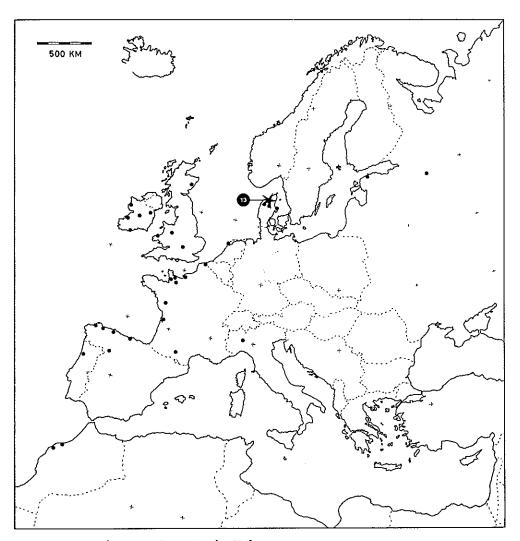


Fig. 6. Recoveries of Common Snipe ringed at Vejlerne.

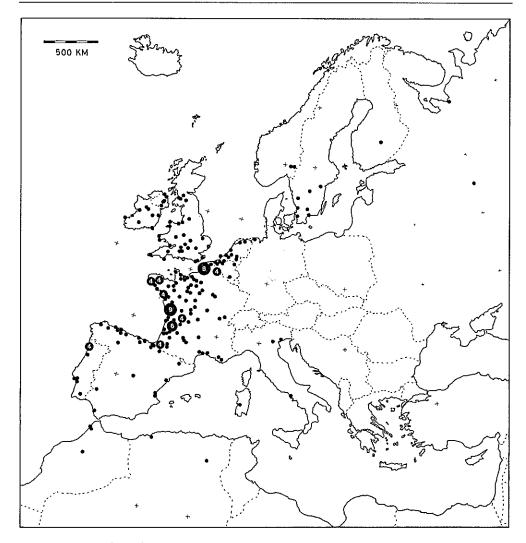


Fig. 7. Recoveries from abroad of 209 Common Snipe ringed in eastern Denmark by the Zoological Museum, Copenhagen.

ringed in eastern Denmark (mainly on the island of Amager) by the Zoological Museum, Copenhagen. Nørrevang (1959) analysed recovery data of Snipe ringed in several European countries and found that the Scandinavian and northern European populations migrate towards west, westsouth-west and south-west; Snipe from eastern Europe migrate mainly to Italy, which may become their winter quarters. Both sets of data (Figs. 6 & 7 and Table 3) appear to fall within Nørrevang's category of Snipe from Scandinavia and northern Europe.

## Mortality

## MATERIAL

Using recoveries from the Zoological Museum and the Game Biology Station until December 31st 1977, the adult mortality of the Common Snipe is estimated and discussed.

Reported as	No.	0/0
Shot or found wounded	315	90
Found dead	29	8
Killed by bird of prey	3	1
Severed leg with ring	2 }	
Hit wires	1 }	1
Ring found in owl-pellet	1 J	
Total	351	100

Table 4. Causes of death.

In the period 1949-1975, the Zoological Museum ringed 3,688 Snipe, of which 306 (8.3%) were recovered, either as shot  $(7.5^{\circ}/_{\circ})$  or dead from other causes  $(0.8^{\circ}/_{\circ})$ . The Game Biology Station ringed 660 individuals during 1968-1971, of which 45 (6.80/0) were recovered, either as shot  $(6.2^{\circ}/_{\circ})$  or dead from other causes  $(0.6^{\circ}/_{\circ})$ . Table 4 illustrates the causes of death, 90% being reported as shot; probably some of the birds included in the group »found dead« were in fact shot. If retraps are excluded in a similar material from Belgium, then 93% were recovered as shot, and 7% as »found dead« (DHONDT & VAN HECKE 1977).

## ESTIMATION OF MORTALITY

In estimating the mean adult mortality, only birds recovered as shot are included. The 146 Snipe recovered during the year of ringing are omitted, as division into first year birds and older is impossible.

In Table 5 the first age-group includes those birds killed during the calendar year after ringing, the second age group the following year, and so on. According to Haldane (1955), the survival is calculated to be  $\hat{s}=0.529\pm0.028$ , and consequently the mean annual adult mortality is  $47.1\pm2.80$ /o.

A chi-square test was applied to check the hypothesis that mortality is independent of age, the mean annual survival being constant during the period 1949-1977. The estimate for  $\hat{s}$  was used in calculating the expected frequencies, and the fit to the observed frequencies was very good ( $\chi^2 = 3.05$ , P > 70%).

The adult mortality among Common

Snipe ringed in England was 51.9 ± 5.4% (Boyd 1962), no changes in the decades from before 1920 to 1958 being recorded. The estimate of the mean annual mortality (including birds recovered in the year of ringing) of Snipe in Belgium was 56.7% (shot birds) and 52% (birds found dead). The mortality in the first 12 months was 62% (DHONDT & VAN HECKE 1977). These figures must be a little higher than actual figures, as in the calculation, ringing figures up to 1969 are included without correction for expected future recoveries. In the second year, mortality was 53%, and the mean for the following years 45%; the difference between first year mortality (62%) and the latter value of 45% is significant. The adult mortality for the Wilson Snipe (Gallinago g. delicata) ringed in North America was 50.2 ± 5.8% (Tuck 1972).

## DISCUSSION OF THE REQUIRED PRODUCTION

With an annual adult mortality of about 50%, the population of adult birds on January 1st (the beginning of the first age-group in Table 5) will thus comprise 50% individuals hatched in the previous breeding season, and 50% raised earlier, if a constant population is to be maintained. As the material appears to show that mortality is the same in all age groups, it may be assumed that this age distribution is also applicable in the population at the beginning of the breeding season.

The Common Snipe is mature at one year old (Tuck 1972). Mason & MacDo-NALD (1976) found that the mean clutch size in England was 3.89, with 2.2 young hatched per nest (both successful and failed). They found little evidence for second clutches, other than repeats. Tuck (1972) states that references in literature seem to refer to replacement clutches rather than second clutches. However, the actual production of young per pair must be higher, because of replaced nests. In the English material, 41% of the clutches were lost. Assuming that 2 young hatch per replaced nest, the total mean would be approximately 3 young per pair annually. This assumption allows for a mortality rate of 67% during the first 12 months, if a balance is to be maintained between production and mortality in the population.

Year of ringing	No. re- covered	Year of ringing	No. re- covered
1949	1	1963	10
1950	10	1964	9
1951	20	1965	2
1952	1	1966	8
1953	3	1967	7
1954	4	1968	3
1955	2	1969	12
1956	5	1970	17
1957	4	1971	5
1958	5	1972	2
1959	7	1973	0
1960	14	1974	2
1961	6	1975	2
1962	8		
		Total	169

Age- class	No. re- covered	Age- class	No. re- covered
1	84	8	0
2	41	9	0
3	21	10	0
4	13	11	0
5	2	12	2
6	4	≥13	0
7	2	Total	169

Table 5. Recoveries of Common Snipe divided into year of ringing and into age-class. The age-class follows the calendar year.

## Dansk resumé

# Trækforhold og dødelighed for dobbeltbekkasiner (Gallinago gallinago) ringmærket i Danmark

Vildtbiologisk Station har 1968–1971 ringmærket 660 dobbeltbekkasiner i Vejlerne, Nordvest-jylland. Indtil udgangen af 1977 var 45 eller 6,8 % genmeldt som døde, nemlig 2,4 % fra Danmark og 4,4 % fra udlandet. I Vejlerne aflæstes yderligere 19, som ikke senere er genmeldt på anden måde. Inkluderes disse, er genmeldingsprocenten 9,7 (Tabel 1).

Fangsttidspunkterne afspejler nogenlunde trækkets forløb (gennemsnitsforholdene ses af Fig. 1). De første trækgæster kommer om efteråret ca. 20. august, fuglenes mængde er størst i september og oktober, og de sidste fugle ses i november. Fig. 4 viser årsfangsterne 1968, 1969 og 1970 og døgnets minimumtemperaturer ved Tømmerby Fjord i Vejlerne og ved Hanstholm. Figuren bekræfter det almene indtryk, at de sidste dobbeltbekkasiner det givne år forlader Vejlerne, når den første egentlige frostperiode sætter ind.

Fig. 2 og Fig. 3 viser henholdsvis tidspunkterne for fund af fyrfaldne dobbeltbekkasiner i Danmark og for genfund i Danmark af fugle mærket i lande mod N og NØ. Også disse figurer giver indtryk af trækgæsters ankomst i august, især i denne måneds sidste tredjedel. Figurerne viser yderligere, at dobbeltbekkasiner andre steder i Danmark kan forekomme så sent som i december.

Om foråret er der kun fanget 11 fugle, så materialet afspejler ikke trækkets forløb. I 1969– 1971 så man de første fugle mellem 18. marts og 8. april. Fig. 5 viser den tidsmæssige fordeling af 132 enkeltbekkasiner (*Limnocryptes minimus*), fanget i Vejlerne 1968–1971.

Fig. 6 og Tabel 2 antyder, at England, Irland, Nord- og Vestfrankrig, Nordspanien og Marokko rummer de vigtigste vinterkvarterer for de dobbeltbekkasiner, der er mærket i Vejlerne. To fund i USSR antyder gennemtræk af russiske fugle. Til sammenligning viser Fig. 7 udenlandske fund af dobbeltbekkasiner mærket af Zoologisk Museum i Østdanmark. De forskelle på materialerne, der ses af Tabel 3, giver ikke anledning til konklusioner, da materialet fra Vejlerne talmæssigt er spinkelt.

Genmeldinger af Zoologisk Museums mærkninger af 3.688 dobbeltbekkasiner i årene 1949–1975 og af Vildtbiologisk Stations 660 er benyttet til beregning af den årlige dødelighed. Det anvendte materiale, der er på 351 stk., omfatter de fugle, der pr. 31. december 1977 er genmeldt som døde (Tabel 4).

Den gennemsnitlige årlige dødelighed blandt voksne dobbeltbekkasiner er beregnet til 47,1 ± 2,8 %. Genmeldinger fra mærkningskalenderåret er udeladt. Dødeligheden synes at have været konstant i perioden 1949–1977 og ens for de forskellige aldersgrupper.

Med en årlig voksendødelighed på ca. 50 % må bestanden ved yngletidens begyndelse rumme 50 % individer udruget foregående ynglesæson og 50 % ældre fugle, hvis bestanden skal forblive uændret.

## Резюме на русском языке.

# Условия перелета и смертность дупелей, Gallinago gallinago, помеченых кольцами в Дании

Станция Исследования Биологии Дичи с 1968 по 1971 г. пометила кольцами 660 дупелей (Gallinago gallinago) в заповеднике Вейлерне в Северозападной Ютландии. До конца 1977 г. о 45 или 6,8% из них получены возвраты, указывающие, что они были убиты, а именно 2,4% в Дании и 4,4% за границей. В Вейлерне кроме того считаны метки 19 особей, о которых не получено возвратов другим образом. Включая последних, процент возвратов составляет 9,7 (Табл. I).

Времена ловли приблизительно отражают

ход осеннего перелета (Фиг. I). Первые перелетные гости прибывают осенью около 20 августа, численность птиц наиболее высока в сентябре и октябре, а последние птицы наблюдаются в ноябре. Фиг. 4 показывает годовые ловли 1968, 1969 и 1979 годов и суточные минимумы температуры у Тёммерби-фиорда и Ханстхольма. Фигура подтверждает впечатление того, что последние дупели в отдельные годы покидают Вейлерне, когда начинается первый настоящий период морозов.

Фиг. 2 показывает распределение по временам года дупелей, погибших налетая на маяки в Дании, а Фиг. 3 – возвраты из Дании о птицах, помеченых кольцами в Норвегии, Швеции и Финляндии. Эти фигуры также дают впечатление того, что перелетные гости прибывают в августе, особенно в последней трети этого месяца. Фигуры кроме того показывают, что дупелей в других местностях Дании можно встретить и позднее, даже в декабре.

Фиг. 5 показывает распределение по временам года 132 болотных курочек (Limnocryptes minimus), пойманых и помеченых кольцами в Вейлерне с 1968 по 1971 г. Первые были пойманы в середине сентября, последние в ноябре.

Весной в Вейлерне поймано только 11 дупелей. С 1968 по 1971 г. первые особи наблюдались между 18 марта и 8 апреля.

наблюдались между 18 марта и 8 апреля. Фиг. 6 и Табл. 2 показывают возвраты из за границы о дупелях, помеченых в Вейлерне. Две встречи в С.С.С.Р. указывают на возможность перелета через Данию советских птиц. Для сравнения в Фиг. 7 и Табл. 3 показаны встречи за границей дупелей, помеченых кольцами Зоологическим Музеем Копенгагена в Восточной Дании, предпо-

чтительно на острове Амагер. Оба материала содержат значительное количество возвратов из Франции, Британских Островов и Испании.

Возвраты с 1949 по 1975 г., касающиеся 3.688 дупелей, помеченых кольцами Зоологическим Музеем, и 660, помеченых Станцией Исследования Биологии Дичи, использовались для вычисления годовой смертности. Использованный материал, составляющий 351 особей, охватывает тех дупелей, которые по возвратам до 31 декабря 1977 г. были встречены мертвыми (Табл. 4.).

Средняя годовая смертность взрослых дупелей по вычислениям составляет 47.1 ± 2,8%. Возвраты из годов, в которых птицы были помечены, не приняты в учет. Кажется, что смертность в течение периода с 1949 по 1977 г. держалась постоянной, и была одинакова для всех возрастных групп.

При годовой смертности взрослых особей, равной около 50%, следует считать, что 50% популяции в начале периода выводки должна составляться из особей, выведенных в предыдущем сезоне выводки, и 50% из птиц старшего возраста, если популяция должна остаться постоянной.

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