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Spring migration of the Eurasian Woodcock (Scolopax rusticola) in 41 Cralovat hunting area, comparative results from 2017 and 2025

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Abstract:

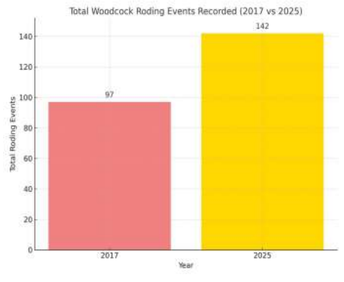
We conducted a spring migration survey from 20 February to 4 April 2025 at Didactic Hunting Ground 41 Cralovăț (managed by the University of Life Sciences King Michael I of Timișoara, USVT) in western Romania, through direct observation of woodcock during their evening display flights. Four fixed observation zones near forest edges were monitored by forestry students, following the same timing, locations, and methodology as an earlier 2017 survey, enabling reliable year-to-year comparison.

Introduction

- Amid growing concerns regarding habitat fragmentation, climate variability, and hunting pressure, long-term population monitoring has become an essential tool for understanding the conservation status of woodcock across its range. Romania, situated along key migratory flyways and hosting a diversity of semi-natural forest habitats, offers unique opportunities for such research. Within this context, the Didactic Hunting Ground 41 Cralovăț—managed by the University of Life Sciences “King Michael I” of Timișoara (USVT)—has served as a field training site and ecological monitoring area. The area features a mix of deciduous forest, clearings, and edge habitats that are highly suitable for woodcock during the spring migration period.

Results and discussions

- The comparative results demonstrate a consistent increase in woodcock activity in all four observation zones. The average number of roding events per session rose from 3.4 in 2017 to 5.0 in 2025—a 47% increase. These findings suggest a positive shift in either local habitat suitability, regional population levels, or both. Possible contributing factors include favorable weather during the migration period, changes in land use that have improved forest edge quality, or the cumulative effects of local conservation measures such as reduced disturbance or game management regulations.



Woodcock observed in 41 CRALOVAT HUNTING AREA

Material and Method

At 15 pre-selected survey stations distributed throughout the hunting ground, electroni callers were used to broadcast jackal-specific vocalizations. The callers emitted a standardized sequence of howls and yips designed to elicit vocal responses or attract jackals to the area. Each broadcast session lasted 10 minutes, followed by a 10-minute silent listening and observation period. Calls werplayed during twilight and nighttime

Internet

Conclusions

- This study highlights a clear increase in Eurasian woodcock (Scolopax rusticola) roding activity at the Didactic Hunting Ground 41 Cralovăț between 2017 and 2025. By replicating the original observation protocol after an eight-year interval, we were able to detect a consistent upward trend in roding events across all four monitoring zones. These results suggest either an improvement in local habitat conditions, a broader population recovery, or a combination of both factors.