

AUTUMN FEEDING AND LEAD POISONING OF GAME DUCKS IN DNIEPER RESERVOIRS, UKRAINE

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There are six reservoirs in the Dnieper region. 16 species of game ducks use the areas of wetlands in the basins during autumn migration. In autumn the vegetable food prevail in nutrition of dabbling and diving ducks. Such food as duckweeds (*Lemna minor*, *L. trisulca*, *Sridodela polyrrhysa*), winter buds of frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), axilliary shoots of soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) and vegetative parts of other higher aquatic plants are the most energy rich value for game waterfowl birds in this season. Mollusks, insects and small crustaceans, which are the inhabitants of these plants, are also consumed.

There are species differences in using food resources by ducks. For instance, Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) prefer to ingest the soft parts of aquatic plants. 92 % of food samples studied contained the water plants seeds with hard cover, namely the following: *Potamogeton sp.*, *Sparganium erectum*, *Schoenoplectus lacustris*. In ducks' gizzards these seeds are grinded up slowly and help to break down the food.

In 2,8 % of food samples of Mallards and 23 % - Red-head Duck (*Aythya ferina*) - lead shot was observed (from 1 to 9 shots). The lead was present in gizzards of other game duck species.

The lead is easily oxidized by organic acids and is transferred through the food chains. Thus, the lead is found in mollusks tissues (*Limnea stagnalis*, *Viviparus viviparus*), in liver of such fishes as *Perca fluviatilis*, *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*, in liver of Mallards, red-headed Ducks, Coots (*Fulica atra*).

The shot made from other metals hasn't been used in Ukraine for the present. It is obvious, that is necessary to prohibit the using of lead shot cartridges all over the Ukrainian wetlands and in Dnieper reservoirs in particular.