



## McCabe Chapter

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### **Resolution**

Subject - "Spinning Wing Decoys" (Robo Duck)

#### BACKGROUND

In the past several years various manufactures have introduced a variety of spinning wing decoys to aid duck hunters in their efforts to decoy and shoot birds. The use of spinning wing decoys in both fields and over water have become very, very popular and very, very controversial.

Those who oppose the use of these devices cite many reliable anecdotal accounts that some species (mallards and ring-necked ducks in particular) are very vulnerable, especially the young-of-the-year ducks. These decoys appear to be most effective early in the season, so much so that hunters in inferior locations, and hunters who do not have other skills, end up being as successful as skilled hunters in prime locations. There are many concerns about the potential biological effect, (over harvest of birds). This has lead to vigorous debate, and proposals in California to eliminate them in the early part of the season, a ban altogether by the state of Washington, and a move in 2001 by the state of Minnesota to deny the use of remote controls, but not to prohibit the device itself. Other states are reviewing the issue.

Opponents of the spinning wing decoys also point out that there are ethical and public relations problems with their use, especially about the concept of fair chase. Stories abound that normally wary birds act similarly to ducks lured in by bait, which is already illegal. The opponents of spinning wing decoys believe that fair chase is abandoned, and that technological gadgetry is substituted for the skills of scouting good locations, setting out decoys, proper concealment, and learning how to handle a duck call.

Additional concerns in the public relations area are that, as the debate broadens from the hunting community to the general public, the use of these devices will be indefensible and create the image that hunters are willing to go to any length to kill a limit of birds.

The proponents of spinning wing decoys defend their use as being biologically unimportant since bag limits control the number of ducks killed. Some very respected commentators indicate that it is just another gadget to which the ducks will "wise up" and the devices will then become less effective. Still others maintain that spinning wing decoys bring ducks in very close which allows for more clean kills and fewer crippled (lost) birds.

The various professional organizations representing biologists, state wildlife agencies and in particular the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, have indicated that issues of fair chase and ethics are not their concern. They believe that if indeed the devices are as effective as many believe, then the agencies will simply protect the birds by reducing the limits, shortening the seasons, or both, and that decisions about ethical issues will have to come from the ranks of hunters themselves.

There is considerable precedence for banning from the sport of waterfowling methods or devices that appear to give the hunter an unfair advantage. Some examples are the banning of the use of live ducks as decoys (which spinning wing decoys attempt to replicate) and electronic calling devices (though electronic calling devices are allowed during the recent years of spring mid-continent snow goose reduction hunts). It is our belief that as effective as these spinning wing decoys now are, they are quite primitive compared to those yet to come. If they are to be banned, they must be banned now before they become the norm, and before they become even more realistic and efficient.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources believes that there should be a moratorium on their use until the biological impacts, if any, can be proven.

#### RESOLUTION

Therefore be it resolved that the W.J. McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America supports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in an immediate ban of the use of spinning wing decoys until the issue of their effectiveness and impacts, if any, on duck populations is resolved. The W.J. McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America further recommends to state and federal wildlife agencies that, when creating policy on the use of these devices, they err on the side of conservation. Finally, the W.J. McCabe Chapter believes that fair chase and ethics are essential issues; that waterfowlers should be among the leaders in examining how the use of technology impacts the resource, the concept of fair chase, and the perception of hunters by the non-hunting public; and also that leadership in these matters is a responsibility of natural resource agencies.

Respectfully Submitted:  
David Zentner  
December 21, 2001

**Voted on and passed by unanimous consent by the McCabe Chapter Board of Directors, January 2, 2002.**