**TALK – STUDENT AS PRIMARY AUTHOR**

**Population reduction efforts and spring nutrition in midcontinent lesser snow geese**

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Previous research suggested that foraging by an increasing midcontinent population of snow geese was sufficiently intense to imperil arctic ecosystems. Consequently, a spring conservation harvest was implemented in 1999 with the primary goal of reducing the abundance of these birds by decreasing adult survival probability. A secondary benefit of increased harvest during spring migration could be a reduced ability of geese to acquire nutrients for reproduction, leading to a further decline in the population growth rate. We tested the hypothesis that spring harvest has impeded nutrient storage on the Canadian prairies, an important spring staging area for midcontinent lesser snow geese (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*). We sampled adult and subadult lesser snow geese staging in southern Manitoba in years before the spring conservation harvest (1983, 1984, 1988-1993), and during the conservation harvest (2002-2007). We estimated mean body mass, total body fat and lean dry mass standardized to two sampling dates each year (13 April and 2 May), and compared body composition be-tween the two periods. Models that included spring harvest ranked poorly among *a priori* candidate sets using an AIC framework. Contrary to our predictions, snow geese were in equal or better nutritional condition after spring harvests began than they were before. After spring harvests began in 1999, geese maintained or increased daily rates of nutrient deposition relative to body size during the staging period. Our results show that disturbance from spring harvesting by hunters did not reduce spring nutrient storage on prairie staging areas. Nonetheless, a long-term decline in the production of young is evident for this population, and is likely an outcome of density dependence. Density dependence may influence the ability of midcontinent snow geese to complete nutrient storage north of the prairies, as they converge toward arctic nesting colonies.