The following editorial appeared in the Broomall County Times-Picayune:

"The Gordon Act, which established a wildlife refuge in the Big Dark Swamp, is currently up for reauthorization. The act prohibits the building of roads or cutting of old growth trees in the swamp, though it permits hunting. Many blamed logging activities for the decline of the bird population, especially that of the dappled grackle. The grackle population has continued to decline since the passage of the law, demonstrating that the Gordon Act has not been sufficient to protect the species. Another nearby refuge, the Wayne County Marsh Habitat, bans all mining, logging, and hunting. Wayne County officials have not reported a decline in the grackle population there. This proves that hunting, not logging, was responsible for the population drop in Broomall County. Thus, Broomall County should not reauthorize the Gordon Act unless it is amended to include the same provisions as those in Wayne County."

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on these assumptions and what the implications are for the argument if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

The editorial from the Broomall County Times-Picayune reaches the conclusion that the Gordon Act must not be reauthorized unless it is amended to have the same provisions as that of a nearby refuge, the Wayne County Marsh Habitat. This conclusion was drawn on the premise that the ban on hunting has preserved the population of the dappled grackle in Wayne County, and that the current ban on development of roads and logging did not suffice to preserve the grackles of the Big Dark Swamp. There are three main unstated assumptions that have been made in the editorial, which must be discussed in detail to deduce the implications of evidence arising against them.  
  
First, the argument makes the assumption that the Wayne County Marsh Habitat and the Big Dark Swamp have the exact same conditions. In other words, it assumes that a measure taken in one of them must also apply in the other. But what if their climate differs, or if one of the habitats was hit by a heat wave or some other weather condition? Are they really similar enough to warrant the banning of hunting in the Big Dark Swamp? Will any change made in habitat A also work in habitat B? Sufficient evidence has not been provided in the editorial to deduce the answers to these questions. Hence, if this assumption proves unwarranted as a result of any potential evidence, then the argument falls apart.  
  
Second, the argument assumes that hunting is the cause of the declining grackle population of the Big Dark Swamp, and that there is no other possibility. This is a causal assumption, that assumes that just because hunting has not been banned unlike in other counties, the decline of the bird population must be a result of these permissions. However, the decline could also be a result of some other factors, such as increase in local populations of a predator species. There is not enough evidence to prove that hunting, by itself, is the main cause of the population decrease, and that there is no other potential cause. Thus, the argument makes an assumption along the lines of 'correlation equals causation'.  
  
Finally, the editorial assumes that the Gordon Act was properly enforced in its first version. It may be the case that the Act were passed, but no further actions were taken to enforce and effectively execute it. Another associated assumption made is that a new version of the act, drafted along the lines of that of Wayne County, would solve the problem of the declining grackle populations. It may be possible that non-legislative measures could help, and that simply passing an Act may not solve the problem. Evidence must be provided to support the real need for amending the act before its reauthorization  
  
In conclusion, the argument made in the editorial, in its current form, is considerably flawed and fails to address the issue effectively. Multiple unstated assumptions are made with no substantiative evidence, and with incorrect conclusions drawn. The county lawmakers should perhaps make a comprehensive report of the grackle populations in the Big Dark Swamp and in other nearby habitats, and must not leave a single stone unturned, in terms of exploring the possibilities for the root cause of the problem. If they are able to logically identify that hunting is indeed the culprit of the problem, then they can go ahead and make a valid argument. To reiterate, the current form of the argument would require significant overhaul to make a convincing proposal.