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First Words image: Mark Ripley
Cover image: Cervus UK

As John Lennon says 'another year over, and a new one just begun'. So here we find ourselves, having already experienced every culinary possibility for turkey, gained half a stone in weight, and already used to lying in past 9am. Sick of everything festive (with the obvious exception of alcohol and chocolate), and doing little more in terms of exercise than jumping up and down in the recycling bin in a desperate bid to get the lid to shut.

Hopefully, lots of you will have been able to escape the festive horrors with a day or two of shooting here and there. I was lucky enough to be invited on a shoot day just before Christmas where I'd not shot before, and I have to say there was some extremely challenging birds, (not that they need to be particularly high or fast for me to find them a challenge).

The first drive had a 'no hen birds' policy, and to enact such a ghastly deed would result in an eye-watering fine. With a combination of high birds, a bright sky and the eyesight of a mole, I stood nervously at my designated peg, which looked like it would be in the heart of the impending action.

It was at this point I realised, to my horror, an error of judgment here could well cost me the 'secret money' set aside for Mrs Rips's Christmas present, meaning I was risking more than a fine – I was gambling with my life.

Fortunately, my right-hand neighbour was blessed with the gift of sight, and duly warned myself and the rest of the Guns down the line of incoming hen pheasants. As it happened, the couple of cock pheasants I did dare raise a gun to were too fast and high for my rusty skills and rustier gun, and pasted over with their undercarriages intact.

As the day progressed, I relaxed a little more and surprised myself with a few high birds, making for an exciting and memorable day, both for the shooting and for the company of friends, old and new.

So moving forward, I'd like to wish you all a very Happy and prosperous New Year!

We've kicked off 2022 with a wildfowling special and following on from this one we have a pest control special for next month, with all our regular contributors covering all the main pest species we can legally control (no, politicians aren't included).

But for now, undo the belt a notch, sit down with the dregs of the Baileys that's been sat in the cupboard since last year and a stale mince pie, and enjoy the magazine!

Mark Ripley
Guest editor





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OPEN DAY - SATURDAY 3 SEPTEMBER



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Imports of hunting trophies to the UK banned



PICTURE: JANE RIX 2019 / GETTY

Defra has announced a ban on "imports of hunting trophies from endangered and threatened animals into Great Britain".

Whilst there are no legislative proposals on the table as yet, BASC is already receiving reports from UK and overseas companies that are now suffering financial losses from cancelled trips and orders due to the uncertainty created.

A press release on the BASC website stated that: "In November, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs select committee discussed the impacts of a ban on the import of hunting trophies of endangered animals.

"The only people invited to speak to MPs at the hearing were representatives from the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, Humane Society International and Born Free Foundation."

These groups were pressed by MPs at the hearing on whether a hunting trophy import ban would address biodiversity loss and support conservation of endangered species. They could not give a coherent answer; the best they could offer was that "it will send a very important political message". Defra's press release announcing the ban contains quotes from those very same organisations.

The BASC article went on to state that: "Ministers have made repeated statements in the House of Commons that banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species will 'help protect thousands of species worldwide'." Yet government figures show that there were 12 imports of hunting trophies in 2020 from species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)."

Schöffel Country raise over £12,000 for the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust

Last November, Schöffel Country ran a promotion online with £5 from every order placed during a set period being donated to the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust, the total sum eventually reaching £12,025. GWT Chief

Executive Helen Benson commented: "We are completely blown away by this marvellous result and the support Schöffel have given the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust for which we are so very grateful. This means we can go ahead with

our 'Keeping Warm' campaign for the people who need it most especially when so many have been suffering through the storms and extreme cold of late, it will make a real difference to so many. Thank you."



PICTURE: SARAH FARNWORTH

Truth about the number of licences being revoked finally revealed

You may remember the spate of sensationalised news stories that came in the wake of the Plymouth shootings last year, many of which featured conflicting information. For example, *The Express* ran a story with the headline: "Thousands of guns seized after August mass shooting" claiming that "Police sources say up to 40 guns a day are being seized in Devon and Cornwall alone, with forces nationwide replicating those efforts and reviewing licences".

Meanwhile, the very next day, *The Telegraph* published its own coverage of developments with

the headline: "Just eight gun licences revoked in wake of Plymouth shooting."

With such wildly contrasting press coverage, it was impossible for anyone to know what the truth of the matter really was so in order to clarify things and provide you with some hard facts that you can actually rely on, we sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Devon and Cornwall Police Firearms Licensing department, asking them to state exactly how many licences they had revoked since the Plymouth shooting.

The response we received reveals that *The*

Telegraph was an awful lot closer to the real figure than *The Express*, and considering our response came a full month after they published their article, it's certainly possible that they were correct at the time. According to information received on 3 December 2021, since the Plymouth shooting, a total of five firearms licences and 16 shotgun licences have been revoked by Devon and Cornwall Police, bringing the total in those counties to 21 to date. We do not have details of the circumstances under which these were revoked, but we hope that's cleared the matter up.

GWCT's 41st annual ball raises over £92,000

The countryside community joined together on Wednesday 24 November for the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's 41st Annual London Ball, which was held at the prestigious Victoria and Albert Museum.

The ball is a chance to celebrate the GWCT's unique role in providing the science that underpins good game management, and the fact that it goes hand in hand with better biodiversity. In addition, it provides the opportunity to raise much-needed funds for the charity. To help in this endeavour, during the evening there was the opportunity to take part in the silent and live auction conducted by Charlie Thomas, director of private collections and house sales at Bonhams. As part of the live auction, there was a selection of experiences in shooting, fishing, fine art, and culture on offer on the night. A menu derived by London's Michelin-standard caterers, Food Show, was produced for the evening, which was rounded up with live music, dancing and cocktails. All told, the event raised a staggering £92,547.



James Golding joins the Eley Hawk team

Eley Hawk have confirmed that celebrity chef James Golding will be joining the ambassadors for the British cartridge brand. James is a stalwart of sustainable produce and an avid game shot, who promotes the shooting and eating of game and other wild, responsibly-sourced ingredients. He said: "I am delighted to represent such a fantastic heritage brand in a sport that I truly love. Eley has a commitment to innovation demonstrated over almost 200 years and produce the best steel cartridge options available on the market today. This is key to ensuring

game and wildfowl is featured on the menu of more restaurants and in supermarkets and, indeed, the longevity of this wonderful sport."

James has been cooking game since becoming a chef, and truly accepts it as a fantastic source of protein with fantastic environmental credentials: "I hope as an ambassador for Eley, I am able to do my part in promoting sustainable shooting and this wonderful way of life to the wider public so that we see more of this wonderful produce in more eateries and on supermarket shelves," he said.



WIN A MULTI GUN CLEANING KIT

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Find the creature hiding in this issue to win. To enter the Creature Finder competition, send us the page number, your name, telephone number and address by email to: ispy@sportingshooter.co.uk. PLEASE DON'T SEND ENTRIES BY POST DUE TO OFFICE CLOSURES.

CLOSING DATE: 1 FEBRUARY. Unless you have chosen to receive other information, Archant Community Media Ltd will solely use the data you provide for the purpose of running the competition, including contacting winners and the distribution of any prize.

CAN YOU FIND: STEVE SNAPPING TURTLE?



CONGRATULATIONS:

ED BOYDON who found PAUL PROBOSCIS MONKEY on p23 of the December issue. See p88 for more successful creature finders.



Kindly supplied by UK Shootwarehouse, market leader in pigeon decoying equipment and accessories, the Multi Gun Cleaning Kit contains all the tools you could possibly need to keep your shotguns and rifles in tip top condition, neatly presented in a UK Shootwarehouse-branded wooden box so you won't lose any of them! The high-quality kit contains the brushes, mops and patches you'll need to clean many of the most commonly found calibres/gauges, including 10-, 12-, 20-, 28-bore and .410 brushes/mops, .17, .30, .270 and .280 calibre brushes, two cleaning patch tips, and aluminium rifle/pistol and shotgun rods. For more information on the full range of products stocked by UK Shootwarehouse go to: www.ukshootwarehouse.com

There may be delays in the sending out of prizes due to office closures – please bear with us!

Take part in the GWCT's 2022 Big Farmland Bird Count!

Farmers, gamekeepers and land managers across the country are being urged to make a crucial difference to wildlife by getting involved in the latest GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count which runs from 4 to 20 February 2022.

"2021's GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count was record-breaking and we want to thank all those who took part," says Dr Roger Draycott, organiser and head of advisory services at the GWCT. "Now we are challenging the UK's land managers to beat their own record and make 2022's count bigger than ever. The latest assessment of the status of the UK's birds, the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) list, published this month, sadly shows that more than one in four species is in serious trouble. Land managers and gamekeepers can make a real and immediate difference by adopting effective conservation measures. The UK's farmland birds are counting on you!"

The Big Farmland Bird Count is organised by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) to encourage land managers to support farmland birds and to highlight the hard work already done by many farmers and gamekeepers in helping reverse species' declines. The count also gives a vital national snapshot of the overall health of the UK's birdlife. 2021 saw the number of counts submitted leap from 1,500 to 2,500, with participants counting across a massive 2.5million acres of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and organisers hope that even more people will get involved this year.

"71% of the UK's countryside is looked after by farmers and land managers, many of whom care deeply for the wildlife on their land, so they are in a position to make a real difference," continued Roger. "A few small changes, such as providing supplementary winter feeding or growing crops specifically to provide seed for birds, can have a significant impact. Carrying out a count on your land takes just 30 minutes and gives you a chance to measure the impacts of your conservation efforts and get GWCT's science-based advice on boosting biodiversity. Your results help

give GWCT scientists a crucial insight into which bird species are thriving and which are struggling."

For the fourth year running, the 2022 count is sponsored by the National Farmers' Union (NFU), demonstrating the farming community's continued commitment to conserving our native bird species. NFU president Minette Batters said: "[Last] year's results were fantastic with farmers and growers across the country responding to the count in record numbers spotting many different threatened species such as lapwing and linnet. Not only are farmers producing climate-friendly food, they are also maintaining and protecting the great British countryside, creating habitats for wildlife and additional feeding for farmland birds. I encourage all farmers to get involved in the 2022 GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count as it is such a great way to monitor and record the birdlife found on farms."

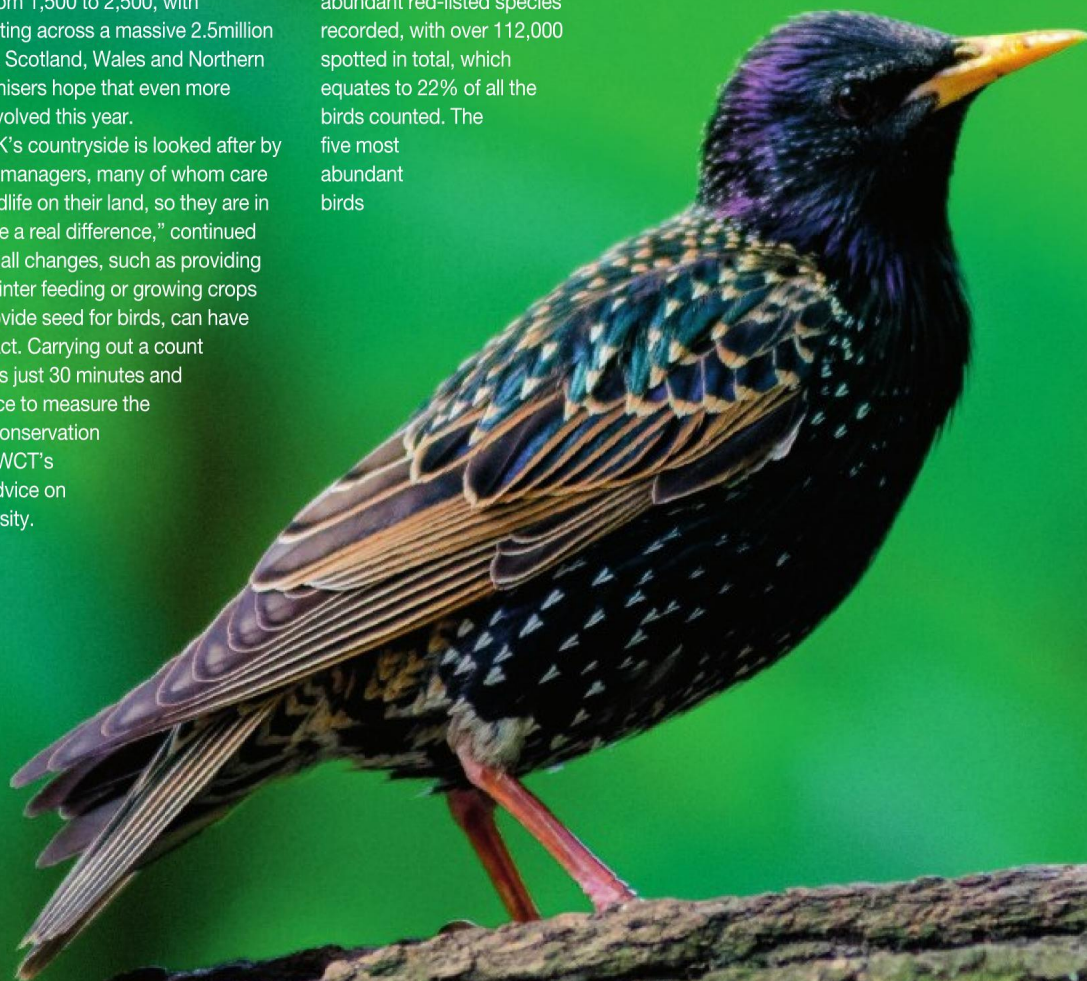
Encouragingly, a total of 25 species from the red list for Birds of Conservation Concern were recorded in the 2021 GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count, with eight appearing in the 25 most frequently seen species list. Of these, starlings, fieldfare, lapwing and linnet were the four most abundant red-listed species recorded, with over 112,000 spotted in total, which equates to 22% of all the birds counted. The five most abundant birds

HOW TO TAKE PART IN THE BIG FARMLAND BIRD COUNT:

- 1** Download your count sheet from the BFBC website: www.bfbc.org.uk
- 2** Count your birds! On a day between 4 and 20 February, spend about 30 minutes recording the species and number of birds seen on one particular area of the farm.
- 3** Once you've completed your count, simply submit your results at www.bfbc.org.uk

counted were woodpigeons, starlings, rooks, fieldfare and chaffinch. A total of 190,000 were seen, making up over 37% of the total number of birds recorded.

There is a wealth of information and free supplementary materials available on the website to aid you in your task, including bird profiles, spotter's guides, and guidelines on gamebird and songbird feeding, and you can also sign up for updates and reminders.



PICTURE: CHARLIE PORTLOCK



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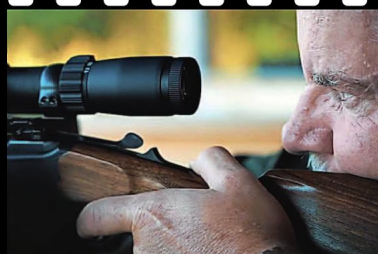


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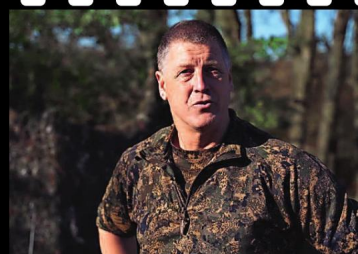
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FLIGHT OF FEET

With the numbers of migratory pinkfeet picking up over the crop fields, Owen Beardsmore heads to Aberdeenshire with his two sons to take part in a spot of early-season decoying

As a teenager, I spent much of my spare time helping a gamekeeper on a local estate. His love of wildfowl was a major influence on me and encouraged a passion within me that has lasted throughout my life. I would take any opportunity to get out under ducks or geese, and as soon as I had a shotgun, I would join the keeper and his friends on their annual foray to the Solway for February 'fowlin on the foreshore. It was here my passion for wild geese developed and where I first experienced vast skeins of pink-footed geese moving inland from their estuary roost sites to find food.

Living in rural Staffordshire, the frustration was always the distance we had to travel to get to do this, so our Midlands staple became the good ol' Canada goose. Now, this is fine and good sport decoying them onto September stubble fields, whilst helping with a cull to support the arable farms that are plagued with them, but it's nothing to replace the real call of the wild, of two or three thousand pinks passing over as light breaks.

Last autumn, myself and two of my sons travelled up to Aberdeenshire to experience inland decoying of pinkfeet with my friend Scott who has been a local goose guide for over 20 years there. Scott's skill and experience, knowledge and fieldcraft in pursuit of geese is legendary and the reason his clients return regularly to enjoy the wild sport.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) estimate that over half a million pinkfeet visit the UK each year on their winter migration from their breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland. They start to arrive in early October and stay until early spring; Scott thinks that a quarter of this population comes through the Loch of Strathbeg, north of Aberdeen, and he provides valuable crop protection south of this area, whilst providing sport for shooters from home and abroad.

Aberdeenshire is a popular destination for tourism goose shooting and it is a competitive situation where many guides are vying for the best farms favoured by the geese on the flight

lines from their coastal roosting areas and good money must now be paid to secure them.

This trip was early season, mid-October; we were booked for the last week of the red stag season and thought we should squeeze a 'wee goose' adventure whilst up in Scotland. Two of my sons were also with me, Tom shooting and Dan filming and photography so it would also be nice for them. We checked into a local B&B the night before and prepared our kit for the morning. It was an early start and all three of us were excited as we drove up, in what seemed like the middle of the night, to the meet Scott at the rendezvous point. As we arrived, there were half a dozen vehicles, including Scott, with his 'kit' trailer on the back, ready to go.

He explained that we were part of two groups and his assistant was taking one group and he the other. We were trying to cover a big arable farm and would split up as we arrived. There was an urgency in his voice, and I knew that we had a lot to do before dawn broke and the geese (hopefully) began to move.

HIDE MAKING

Dressing your hide nets with local foliage is important to blend in – in this case, gorse and straw was used.



With the geese previously being shot at, staying well hidden was paramount

The dogs were kept busy all morning, retrieving the shot geese



We arrived at the farm and drove out onto some large fields of stubble, along a track that had a broken hedge line running along it with some long clumps of gorse. Scott explained that we would use this cover as a background to the hides we would build against it, with the pattern of decoys set out in front.

It was action stations, as on the horizon the night sky was starting to shift. We pushed the hide poles into the ground and hung the netting, whilst Dan started transferring our kit into the hide. Everything was carried out under the illumination of head torches and as we dressed the netting with straw and gorse branches, we could hear the rattle of decoys being sorted in front of us. No one really spoke, we all had a job and as soon as we had the hides sorted, we helped with setting the 'deeks', all of us with an eye on the approaching sunrise.

Now I have a few decoys for my Canada geese back home which number 50-60, but Scott's stock of decoys was, to say the least, impressive. He had close to a thousand, a mixed variety of Silosocks and full body, with stack after stack of shell decoys too. Scott explained that he had to deploy massive patterns of birds to give the geese confidence to join the field.

So, there we were seven people all working in torch light for at least another half hour, putting out decoys of all shapes and sizes, I now realised why our alarm clock was so early!

Finally, Scott was happy, and we moved the vehicles to an adjacent block of woodlands, and we slipped into our hides as daylight began to break.

"Perfect timing," grinned Scott, as he nodded easterly into the brightening sky and the first plumes of geese on the wing could be seen in the distance. As the first skeins got nearer, I realised just how high they were and the sound of their



Setting out close to a thousand decoys by head torch was quite a task!

honking chatter could be heard as they communicated to each other their breakfast plan.

A few hundred passed high to our left.

"They know where they're going," said Scott, not even bothering to call them.

Scott is keen on recon' and his success not only depends on his fieldcraft but also time spent locating the geese every day, before communicating with the farmers to sort his permission.

"Heads down boys," he called, as in the distance a line of geese, much lower, were heading our way. He picked a call from the string of calls he had around his neck and started to

use it, using tones and pitches in response to the chatter of the lead geese, who then responded back. Very quickly, they were on us and setting to land at the back of our massive pattern just out of distance of shot. As they landed, the tail end of the birds in the skein swung round and committed on the open area within the decoys, within our range.

"Take 'em boys!" he shouted, and a volley of shots rang out. The pinks lifted and a handful of birds fell from the sky. "Dad this is awesome," our Tom grinned and having shot his first bird. I ran out of the hide with Scott to turn over the dead birds and set into the pattern of decoys, as a bird



on its back does not look natural and ruin what you are trying to achieve.

We settled back in, and Scott explained just how many geese he had seen on the fields the previous days and I now understood why he had left the first geese and waited for the ones he knew would commit.

In the distance, we could hear the occasional 'boom, boom boom!' of other shots. Scott explained that these were other guided teams of guns shooting geese.

"Heads down, boys!" he shouted again, as another skein appeared over the skyline – in they came and again success! I was using a Fiocchi Semi-Magnum (2¾"), size No.3 lead shot, through my Hatsan Escort auto and was happy with my success. It is still within the law to use lead in Scotland, in land, over dry fields and is favoured by the guides due to its better kill ratio over long distances; for me, it was certainly a change from the norm as I only use steel back home, and it was a stark reminder just how efficient lead is at killing humanely at a distance.

The geese continued to come to the field but were now much more wary. Round and round they would go, with Scott and his friend doing



their best to coax them in, but it was a big field and they started to land at the far end of it. Scott explained that the birds now arriving may have already been shot at and are so much more nervous of committing. Therefore, you need a large number of decoys to build confidence.

There was a steady flight of geese for over an hour and for the hour that followed them only a few stragglers coming to have a look. All the Guns

got shots at geese and when we finally decided to stop and pack up, we were all looking forward to breakfast and a cuppa!

It took another good hour to collect in the decoys, take down and tidy the hide area, but we left it as we found it all smiling and 16 geese in the bag. What a great morning and we all look forward to our return – especially Dan, who wants to shoot instead of film next time! ■



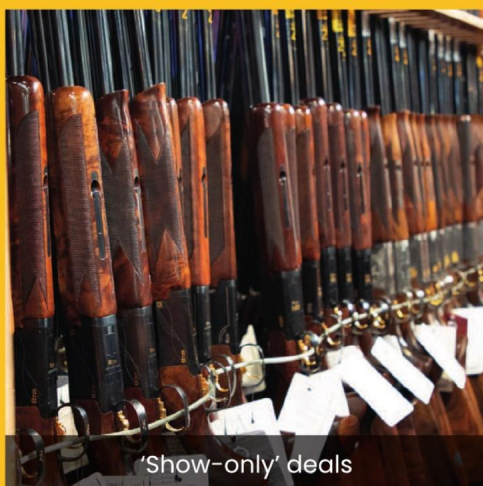


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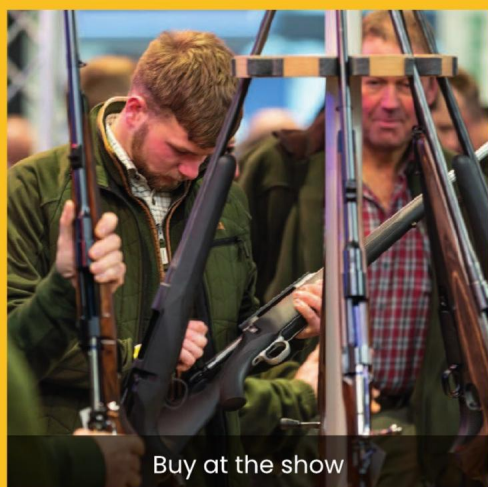
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Holiday season

Forget summer holidays on sandy beaches; for a farmer like Andy Crow, winter is the time of year to plan some fun trips abroad, and this time it's boar hunting in Germany

After last year's Covid-19 crisis interrupted Andy's planned trip to Germany to shoot driven boar, the time finally came to try again, successfully this time, in late November.

The invite had come from Blaser's Frederic Hanner, a native German who rents hunting grounds just 20 minutes from Frankfurt airport. He and Andy regularly shoot pigeons and deer on the farms Andy manages, and in the way shooting people often do, the favour was returned and the whole crew packed up and made haste to Frankfurt (the whole crew being Andy, his wife Michelle, shooting buddy Gary and his wife Monica, work colleague Justin, daughter Michaela and, of course, Michaela's son Regan, who refused to be left out!).

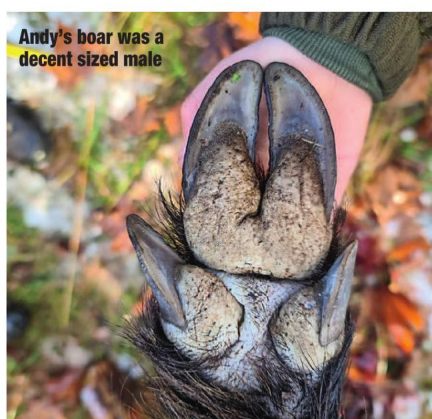
Driven shooting takes on a new meaning in Germany, and is a far cry from the game days us Brits would associate the word with. Andy and the rest of the shooters would be stationed in elevated wooden stands throughout a thick forest, and the boar would be driven towards them by beaters and a team of wire-haired dachshunds and German pointers, all wearing Kevlar vests to protect them from boar attacks. The goal is to shoot the boar on the move as they come running through the trees, never pausing to offer the kind

of simple, stationary shot we would be used to taking on a deer. It requires serious skill to be in with a chance of cleanly taking one down, and Andy decided to have a practice session in Holland and Holland's Schiesskino (or shooting cinema) to get his eye in first.

"We spent an hour shooting in the cinema the day before we left," said Andy. "You can simulate shooting moving boar at a range of speeds to prepare for a driven hunt – running fast, mooching through slowly. It's a great way to get your eye in and get a feel for the speed they are likely to be coming at and where you need to be aiming. I'd highly recommend it if you're going to go all the way to Germany to shoot boar."

Fully prepped and ready for some action, the morning of the hunt dawned cold and fresh, and Andy, Gary, Justin and little Regan were delivered to their wooden stands in the snow-covered trees at 9am. As always, Regan was paired with his Grandad, and Freddie even had a special stand made up for him (with his name painted on it) so he had an elevated view to watch the action from.

As well as being good sport, these driven hunts are an essential form of pest control in Germany, where boar cause unbelievable damage to farmland and crops.



Andy's boar was a decent sized male

"They are a nightmare over there," explained Andy. "They completely smash up maize crops, they get into wheat crops and destroy them. They are so much worse than the fallows are over here, if you can imagine that. They're just really destructive animals, and they breed at such a fast rate that they have to be kept on top of all the time. Despite our trip being cancelled last year, the boar were still shot by a small team of locals, because it really is a necessity."

Also on the menu for Andy and the team were any foxes that happened to pass through the



A happy band of hunters at the end of the day

ANDY'S TOP DRIVEN BOAR TIPS

■ Practise first! If you get an invite, don't waste the opportunity. Get over to Holland & Holland and get your eye in at the shooting cinema. It really will help.

■ Use a scope you can turn the mag right down on, to 2x for example. You don't want too much magnification; you want as wide a field of view as possible. The vast majority are going to be at close range, and you're very unlikely to shoot much past 50 yards.

A red dot sight would probably be ideal. Illuminated reticles really help too, as it all happens so fast... it's up and bang!

■ Take lots of handwarmers, really decent boots, and don't wear too many pairs of socks as it'll cut the blood off and make your feet even colder. A really decent thermal pair of loose socks is the way to go. You also need to wear blaze orange on the top in Germany; this is non-negotiable and ensures other shooters can see you, so make sure you have a blaze orange hat and a gilet or jacket.

■ Get to know your surroundings as soon as you get on your stand, and think about where the boar might come from. Knowing that comes with experience, but even if you're completely new to running boar, you can look around and decide where you might be able to get a shot off if the boar come from this direction, or that direction. Familiarise yourself with your surroundings, and note the more open areas where you want to be trying to shoot them.

■ Safety is the main thing, so listen very carefully to all instructions, follow them to the letter, and be aware of the dogs and beaters. Shooting the wrong thing is very frowned upon, so be sure to stick to exactly what you've been told you can shoot, and if in any doubt at all, do not shoot it. You will never get into trouble for shooting nothing, but you won't get another invite if you shoot the wrong animal.

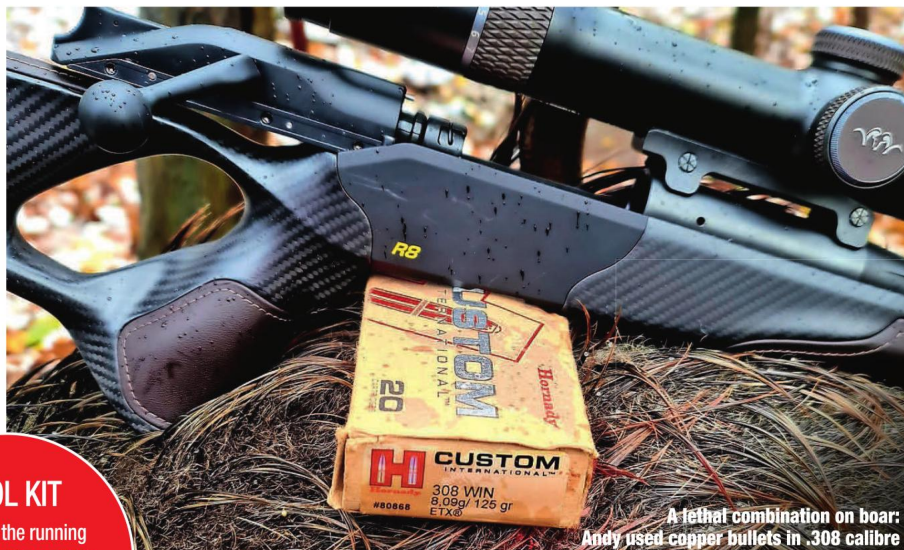


woods, and any roe kids. Strict instructions were issued on which boar they could shoot; nothing with following young, and no milky sows, which can be spotted by their dramatically enlarged teats. So, it was just the unlucky males and the females with no dependant young that were the targets for the day.

"Regan spotted two pigs just as we got on the stand," said Andy, "but we weren't loaded or ready to shoot yet. He helped me spot for the day; he's sharp, and two sets of eyes are always better than one. He spotted a couple of roe coming through a little later as well, which didn't really present a decent shot, and to be honest in my mind I was there to shoot boar, so I probably would have left them anyway.

"We sat for another two hours without seeing much, and at that point little Regan's feet were getting seriously cold. It was freezing. I'd brought a hot water bottle along for him, so I took off his boots, had him stand on the water bottle for a bit, then wrapped his feet up in my jacket and gave them a good rub to warm them up. While this was happening, I just caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of my eye, and before we knew it a big male boar had come up from behind us, over the ridge. It must be the unluckiest boar on the planet, because I somehow managed to get a shot off and drop it stone dead at about 90 yards! That seemed to warm Regan up a bit!"

About an hour later, Freddie and his team of beaters appeared below them in the woods, and



TOOL KIT

Andy shot the running boar using a Blaser R8 in .308, with copper Hornady ETX 125gr bullets.

A lethal combination on boar: Andy used copper bullets in .308 calibre

stopped for a chat. Regan was desperate to see the boar up close, so they climbed down and Freddie took them over to it, lying in the snow in all its shockingly huge, dark, hairy glory.

"Regan got the shakes!" Andy said, laughing. "I mean, a serious dose of the shakes. As soon as he got up to it, he started going like a leaf. I asked him if he was cold, and he just shook his head and went 'naaaahhhhhhhh' and kept on grinning at the boar. He's clearly got the lifelong bug already!"

After another quiet hour on the stand, it was time to head back to base camp where they

could watch the shot boar being gralloched and processed. It is tradition in Germany and many other European countries to honour the animals shot on a driven hunt with a ceremony, in which the animals are laid respectfully on the ground, often with a 'last meal' of spruce bow in their mouths, and horns are played to honour their deaths.

With light fading fast, the boar were hung for the ceremony this time instead. Hunting horns were blown to pay respects, and the hunters were awarded with one branch per animal shot. Andy left with one, while Gary had managed to bring down three and was awarded accordingly with three branches.

The boar shot here are all tested on site for parasites or other health issues to ensure they are safe to enter the food chain, and many are then sold on to restaurants while the rest are taken home by hunters or beaters to be eaten.

"It was an awesome day," said Andy. "Running boar are so challenging to shoot. You never know which direction they'll be coming from or what speed they'll be running at, and often they are moving quite fast. You're surrounded by thick forestry, so you generally only have a tiny window between trees to get a shot off. It can also be a long, cold wait between boar, so you have to keep your focus as you need to be ready if one does appear. Luckily, I've got my little mate Regan to help with me that!" ■

'Running boar are challenging to shoot. You never know which direction they'll be coming from – or at what speed!'



The unluckiest pig in Germany?

New Year, New Gear!

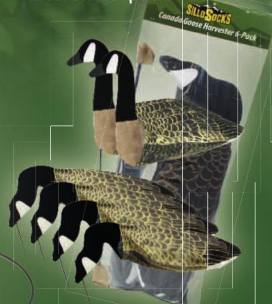


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WILDFOWLING TECHNIQUE

Want to get into wildfowling? Alan Jarrett offers some technique tips to help you break into what may be one of the most complex yet rewarding of all our shooting sports

When our editor suggested an article about wildfowling techniques, any wildfowling writer would be only too pleased to agree. There was no doubting the magnitude of the task, for having published 11 wildfowling books to date without yet completing the subject, there were no illusions I could cover everything!

Wildfowling is arguably the most complex and varied of all shooting sports. Habitats vary and different species require differing approaches dependant on the season and indeed the place, whilst preferred guns and ammunition are always guaranteed to cause rancour!

This season I have been coaching one of my adult sons in the ways of the sport – he did dabble in it during his mid-teens, but now in his mid-40s he has returned to his ancestral home of the saltmarshes. I have tried to distil some of my knowledge for him, concentrating on the very basics which, as with all things, is the only place to start. So far his exploits have been modest, but a couple of greylag and mallard have kept the wildfowling flame burning in him. My advice at this early stage has been rather rudimentary, and centred on the seaward side of the seawall.

Species identification

First of all, before you even step foot on the coast, study the species you plan to pursue. In my emerging years, it was a case of relying on traditional bird handbooks, and matching that with personal observation.

Things have moved on immensely since the advent of the internet. Now it is possible to see each species in glorious colour, both moving and still. We can also hear their calls, and get a real early taste of what it is going to be like on the shore. Fortunately for us, most wildfowl species are fairly vocal, and that is an essential path to identification. A decent pair of binoculars and a few trips to one of the many bird reserves around the coast will do much to hone those identification skills. This is an exercise which can be carried out during those pre-season weeks, or as part of an ongoing exercise whenever there is a spare hour. It can also serve to inspire the novice by being in close proximity to the birds of the shore.

Kit

Choice of gun can be complex, and depends to some extent on whether



Calling is effective, but does take practice

or not wildfowling is going to be the sole sport you undertake. If not, then an all-round gun, probably with 3" chambers, will suffice.

If you are after a gun solely for wildfowling, a modern 3½" semi-automatic would be my first choice. These modern guns are designed to work with the full range of cartridges you may fire, and with your choice of choke. For decades now, my choice of choke has never changed, finding Half

TOP TIP

While more is often better, even a small amount of decoys can still bring the birds in.



Use a mother line for decoys laid in creeks or rivers

PICTURES: TIDEPOOL



choke to be an excellent all-rounder, while changing cartridges to suit the circumstances.

For me, the maxim of 'pattern kills' holds as true as it ever did. For close-in work, perhaps over decoys, my choice of cartridge would be 32g of No.5s. For flighting birds with the likelihood of longer ranges, 36g of No.3 suffices, whilst for geese 42g of either No.1s or 2s, or BBs if you fancy swapping pattern for killing power.

Whatever you do, avoid ringing the changes with cartridges because different brands perform differently in terms of muzzle velocity and penetration. Consistent performance is essential in a sport where chances can be few and far between. Remember for wildfowling, we only use non-toxic shot in England and Wales.

The basics of flighting evolve around the concept of birds moving from roost to feed and back again every morning and evening. Trial and error will locate likely flightlines on the shore, then it is a case of waiting at dawn or dusk for the birds to move. There are a plethora of variables in between, with birds coming to feed or rest in the saltmarshes or on the mudflats. This then

'Trial and error will locate likely flightlines on the shore, then it is a case of waiting at dawn or dusk for the birds to move'

becomes a more specialised facet of the sport, and there are as many variables as you can think of with the tide having a major impact.

Once you branch out into shooting on the saltmarsh, there will be a need for decoys and a substantial bag in which to carry them. My preference is not for one of the many specialized decoy bags on offer but for a substantial rucksack of at least 60 litres – which is large enough to hold decoys, hide and a few birds!

There is an almost bewildering array of decoys available, some of which are amazingly lifelike and authentic-looking in every detail. If you are going to be doing a lot of walking, then a few teal decoys have the advantage of being lighter and smaller. Only experience is going to solve the decoy problem, but these days I seldom use more

than eight, whilst some of my best bags have been to just two well-sited decoys.

If decoys are going to be floated in a river or tidal creek, then you will need to have some sort of mother line to enable retrieval. If you can walk out to them in a pool or low tide creek, then consider using lightweight plastic pegs. For the long-distance tramp, everything needs to be as light as possible.

Calling

Due to the vocal nature of most wildfowl, the ability to call effectively is a trick to be learned. When practising, try to avoid doing so on the shore where you are going to irritate others. Once you have graduated to the shore and learnt the ways of decoying and calling, it is then possible to



experience the full enjoyment offered in mastering the sport.

However, there is a lot more to buying a load of calls and thereafter quacking or whistling at everything that comes by. Watching one of the many American videos will largely teach you how NOT to call in a UK setting, largely because we are dealing with smaller decoy spreads, and far smaller numbers of birds.

In general, flying birds travelling from one place to another will not respond to calling; it is in the saltmarsh where birds are coming to rest or feed that effective calling comes into its own. I have called birds in from 200 yards away, but this certainly doesn't happen all the time.

A series of calls to capture and hold their attention may be needed; if birds are a long way off then loud and persistent calling may well do the trick, but once the birds are committed it's time to keep quiet in case they spot the difference. If birds are circling, as mallard and pintail in particular are prone to do, use the call to bring them back once they have turned away. I never call when they are directly overhead apart from perhaps soft chuckling from ostensibly feeding birds.

Geese are often more prone to calling, and may be diverted from their line of flight. If you are fortunate enough to decoy geese on inland fields, match the amount of calling to the number of decoys you have out – more decoys will mean more goose talk to be expected from an approaching skein.

JOIN A CLUB

Head to basc.org.uk for a full directory of wildfowling clubs.



There's a huge variety of decoys available, so chat to a seasoned 'fowler for advice

Safety

The splendidly varied nature of the coast is something to be marvelled at – open mud and sand flats and wide saltmarshes interspersed with creeks both large and small, and narrow coastal bands with seawall giving way directly onto mud flats. All these and more offer different sporting possibilities, and added complexities.

Once you leave the comfort of the seawall, the first priority is staying safe. By studying local tide tables and watching how the tide affects the

shore, it will be possible to enjoy the sport without coming to any harm.

Being prepared to deal with the foibles of the long wildfowling season is essential. What works well in the balmy days of September will probably be less effective in the depths of February. For all that, there are some simple basics to remember: birds have to feed and roost, and if you can intercept them as they travel, then, all being well, you can have some exciting and rewarding sport, as well as a good meal to follow. ■

This hardworking dog delivers the goose to hand



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ONE FOR THE POT

Venison Stew with Herb Dumplings



CONTACT

If you would like to talk to Mark and Chris about catering for an event you are planning, you can contact them via their website, www.gameforanything.co.uk, where you will find more details about what services they can offer.

One-pot wonder

With the winter really upon us now, there's nothing that will please the family more than a good old venison stew! Here's Game for Anything's delicious version with dumplings

Whatever you are planning on cooking, I think it is really important to make time for shopping – rather than making a list, it's a much better to just go and see what is fresh and in season and then start planning your menu from there. This way, you will be working with ingredients that are in season together and you

can follow the old saying 'if they grow together, they go together'.

With the game bird season now well underway, there is lots to choose from and to think about when planning your menu.

When the nights (and days come to think about it) are a little cooler, there is nothing better than a winter warmer and so this month I think we have to turn to one of everyone's favourites.

- ◆ 2 carrots, roughly chopped
- ◆ 2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
- ◆ 200ml ale
- ◆ 500ml venison stock
- ◆ 1tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- ◆ 1tsp soy sauce
- ◆ 1tbsp tomato puree
- ◆ 2 dried bay leaves
- ◆ 2 sprigs of thyme
- ◆ ½tbsp crab apple jelly
- ◆ 3tbsp olive oil
- ◆ 10g unsalted butter
- ◆ Salt & pepper to season

VENISON STEW WITH HERB DUMPLINGS

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE STEW

- ◆ 750g diced venison shoulder
- ◆ 150g diced pancetta
- ◆ 1 large onion, finely diced
- ◆ 50g plain flour

FOR THE DUMPLINGS

- ◆ 100g self-raising flour
- ◆ 50g suet
- ◆ ¼tsp salt
- ◆ ½tsp baking powder
- ◆ 10g parsley finely chopped
- ◆ 5tbsp water (approx.)

Flour the venison, ready for browning





Brown the meat in two batches



Add water until the mixture has a sticky consistency

FOR THE MASH

- ◆ 800g potatoes (choose a fluffy variety like King Edwards)
- ◆ 50ml double cream
- ◆ 50g butter
- ◆ 50g cream cheese
- ◆ ½tsp table salt
- ◆ ¼tsp white pepper

METHOD

STEW

1. Turn on the oven to 150°C.
2. Place the flour in a bowl and season with salt & pepper and combine. Add the diced venison and toss the meat so that all the pieces are coated well.
3. Heat a large oven-proof casserole dish with a tbsp of olive oil, then add half of the venison and fry until nicely browned on all sides. Remove and

place into a clean bowl and set to one side.

4. Repeat with the other half of the venison, and remove.
5. Add a little water to remove all the bits stuck to the base of the pan – this holds lots of flavour so we don't want to waste it – then add this to the bowl with the venison. Add the final tbsp of olive oil with the butter and onions and gently fry until softened.
6. Now add all the other ingredients including the venison into the casserole dish.
7. Stir to combine well and bring to the boil.
8. Place the lid on and put in the oven.
9. Cook for 3-4 hours, checking every hour. If it looks like it is too dry, just add a little water.

DUMPLINGS

1. Place all the ingredients into a bowl except the water and use a spoon to combine. Then gently add the water bit by bit while stirring; it wants to

be well mixed and a little bit sticky.

2. 30 minutes before you want to serve, remove the stew from the oven and, using two spoons, place 8 blobs of the dumpling mix on the top of the stew.
3. Replace the lid, return to the oven and cook for 20 minutes.
4. Remove the lid and cook for a further 10 minutes.

MASH

1. Peel the potatoes and cut up into golf ball sized pieces.
2. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and add the potatoes.
3. Boil for 20-30 mins until they are soft (test using a knife).
4. Drain off the water then, using a potato ricer (a great addition to the kitchen if you don't have one) or a good old potato masher, mash the potato as smoothly as you can.
5. Add the cream, butter & cream cheese using a spatula, and whip it all in to the potato.
6. Add the salt & pepper to your own taste. ■



Place the dumpling mix on top of the stew

Recipe cards

Some of the recipes featured in this column over the past few months now form part of a new range of recipe cards that Game for Anything is offering to shoots.

If you'd like some GFA cards to hand out to the Guns at your shoot, or if you'd just like to find out more, please contact one of the guys at GFA:
 Chris Marney: chris@gameforanything.co.uk
 Mark Robson: mark@gameforanything.co.uk





Deciphering your footprints

While many people have no thoughts to the impact of their actions on the world, this simple exercise will show your kids how even their little feet cause an effect to the earth below them

When you walk on the ground, you always leave a track, whether that be due to the displacement of the soil, crushing some grass, or transferring some mud or water from a puddle to a small patch of dry soil via the edge of your boot.

We all do it. We can't not do it. What we don't appreciate is how different all these prints are. Most people in the UK walk around with footwear on, and, of course, there is a wide range of soles that will appear very different to any observer who

is paying attention. From flip-flops and running shoes to walking boots and wellies, the variety is staggering.

It's not just the soles of our shoes that vary. There is a range of variables that, when looked at as a whole, can be almost as unique as your fingerprints.

When we walk, we leave our prints in a pattern **1**. This is called our gait, which is made up of three main parts:

Straddle

The first part is the straddle. When you walk, imagine dangling an inky string between your feet or walking either side of a stick **2**. When you move, it leaves a line in the middle of your gait. This is the median line. You usually place your feet on either side of your median line.

The distance between the median line and the innermost edge of your footprint is called your straddle **3**. It is made of two figures: your left and your right **4**. You'll find that they are not always the same distance.

This figure can be negative – think of the walk that catwalk models use. It can even slightly overlap, in which case, it is a negative value.

Pitch

The second part of the gait is your pitch. The pitch is the angle at which you place your feet when you walk **5**. Most people walk with their heels striking the ground first and then their toes last. Also, most people walk with their toes slightly further apart than their heels. That angle is measured twice, once for each foot, giving you another two values. These values can be negative if you are tracking someone who is 'pigeon toed' or possibly injured.

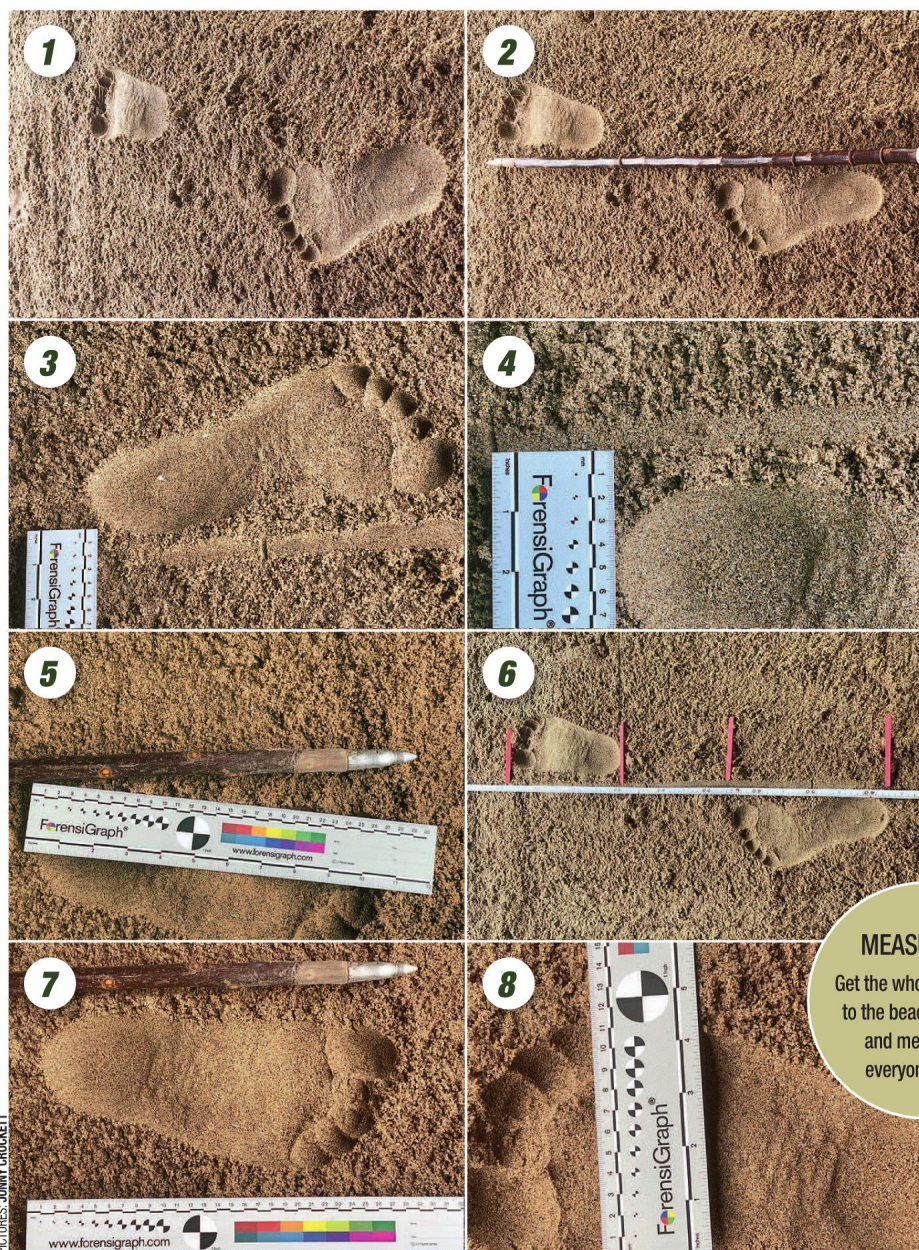
Injury can also result in the value being different on each foot. For example, I broke my right ankle years ago and as a result the value for my right foot was larger than for my left. I then injured my right knee, and the result was that it brought my right foot pitch back again. The point here is that as you get older, the values can change.

Stride

The third aspect to our gait is our stride. This is measured from heel strike to heel strike but can be broken down to 'heel-toe' and then 'toe-heel' **6**. This is the least stable of the measurements,

as it will vary depending on speed, frame of mind, terrain, going underfoot and topography. For example, if you are walking fast, your stride will be longer. If you are absent-mindedly wandering or intently searching for something, your stride will be shorter. If you are on uneven ground, your foot placement will not be even. If

you are walking through brambles, you'll be restricted in your advance. If you are walking uphill, your stride will shorten and lengthen when walking downhill. Other measurements include the length **7** and width **8** of your footprint. ■



MEASURE UP

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Will is an APSI-qualified shooting coach



TOM ESLER

LEGAL MATTERS

Tom is a partner at mfg Solicitors, providing services for rural sectors



MARK RIPLEY

SHOOTING

Avid foxer and rough shooter, Mark is currently sitting in as guest editor

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Send your questions to news@sportingshooter.co.uk for a chance to win this fabulous Eley cap

White pheasants?

Q My husband tells me there is such a thing as a white pheasant and there is a fine for shooting one on a day. Is he pulling my leg?

A TONY JACKSON replies: No leg-pulling! Your husband is perfectly correct. Yes, white pheasants are often found on driven shoots. A few of these albinos are retained on some shoots and come with a warning from the Guns that a substantial fine has to be paid if one of them is shot during a drive. The fee can be anything from £25 to as

much as £50, and is usually paid to a local charity. As one can imagine, most Guns are extremely careful when these birds are likely to be seen! There is also a genuine reason why some gamekeepers prefer to keep several of them as they are more readily seen in a drive or on the ground. If albino birds are found to be missing it will immediately arouse suspicion that poachers may have shot or netted them. However, a wily poacher will make sure that he does not kill any white birds. I suspect some shoots may prefer a donation to a named charity or even the shoot!



PICTURE: COURTESY / GETTY

Do you have a question for one of our experts? Email us at news@sportingshooter.co.uk

Can I shoot roe with a shotgun?

Q I have several roe deer destroying crops on my farm, but I don't own a rifle. Can I legally shoot them with a shotgun?

A MARK RIPLEY replies: This is a very touchy subject and one that is met with mixed feelings. The simple answer is: yes, under certain conditions. Importantly, the deer must actually be causing significant damage and you believe they will continue to do so.

In terms of kit, you must use a 12-bore

shotgun only and use AAA cartridges to stay within the law.

From a humane point of view, you should keep ranges to within 20-25 yards and aim for the head/neck area to ensure a quick dispatch.

Although a shotgun is legal, a centrefire rifle of appropriate calibre is a far better choice. If you do not own a suitable rifle, why not consider seeking the help of someone who does? There are many stalkers out there who I'm sure would be more than happy to undertake a cull on your behalf.



PICTURE: PAVOL KLIMEK / GETTY

The Calling

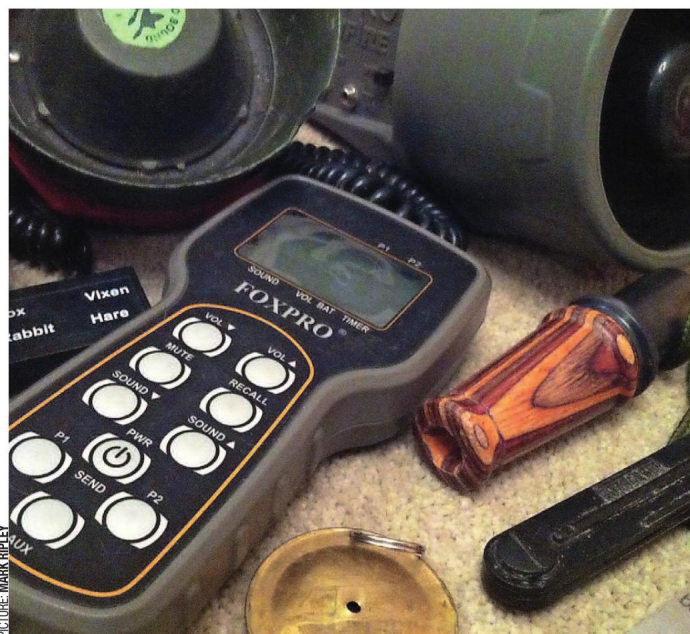
Q I think it's about time I started using calls when I go foxing, but there's such a bewildering array on the market and I am clueless as to which one to get. Do you think I should go for a plastic one or a wooden one? And what about the electronic variety a lot of people seem to be using these days?

A DEAN HARRISON replies: All of us fox shooters have a favoured call that we use most of the time. It's really a matter of personal choice, but I must say I prefer the SS style plastic one. They take a bit of practice to get the exact sound you need, but this call will travel long distances drawing in any hungry foxes that may be in the area, which is exactly what you want to happen.

It's not a given, as some calls just won't do the job, but I shoot so many all year round with this call so if you only have one, make it this one.

With foxes pairing up this time of the year, the 'vixen in heat' electronic call can be a useful option if you have it.

I only really change things in the summer, when I usually opt for more subtle calls such as mouse calls, or squeaks using the back of my hand. In fact, I did a video about calling for S&C TV earlier in the year, which you might find useful.



PICTURE: MARK RIPLEY

Countryside restoration

Q One tends to be bombarded by so much information about aspects of the countryside and wildlife that it is confusing. Is there a single operation which explains the aspects of the environment and how one can perhaps assist in some manner?

A TONY JACKSON replies: I would suggest that you make contact with The Countryside Restoration Trust, formed in 1993 by Robin Page, the remarkable author of over 34 books dealing with aspects of the countryside. In a straightforward fashion, he has always dealt with countryside and environment matters in a fashion which is far-removed from the passing trends that we have seen come and go over the year. Instead, the charity aims to "restore a living, working countryside," and indeed The Countryside Restoration Trust was the first charity to discuss wildlife-friendly farming.

THEIR AIMS ARE TO:

- Encourage sensitive and sympathetic farming practices that protect wildlife and produce high-quality products
- Provide lower rates for farming tenants
- Teach the current and future generations about farming that involves wildlife

The full remarkable story of the creation of the CRT is told in a new book from Robin Page. Called *Wild Farming*, it is published by Bird's Farm Books, and you can obtain all the information you need at countryside restoration trust.com.



PICTURE: ANTHONY KING / GETTY

Where are all the acorns?

Q Where have all the acorns gone? I've hardly seen any at all this winter.

A JONNY CROCKETT replies: Last year was a 'mast' year, meaning a year when there is a bumper crop - and last year truly was amazing. Mast years happen roughly once every seven years.

There is a trade-off though. It takes huge amounts of energy to produce the mast and the trees need to recover. While we still don't understand the process completely, it is true that 2013 was a bumper year and 2014 was the exact opposite. There was almost none at all and it is the same this year.

The mast years are synchronised by the trees with a release of chemicals; this seems to be a strategy that the trees all take part in. It's an 'all for one and one for all' tactic.



PICTURE: DULLEN / GETTY

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Online SGC renewal

I just wanted to share my recent SGC renewal experience. My local constabulary in Lincolnshire has recently switched to an online portal for applications and renewals. As something of a technophobe, I was very concerned about this and worried it would be hard to do. However, so far the experience has been pretty straightforward. Firstly, I was called by the firearms team to notify me that my medical letter had arrived from the GP and that I would be able to commence with my online application.

You have to create an account and a login and there is a two-factor authentication code that I had sent to my mobile phone. But nothing particularly different to most online business these days. The form seemed very clear and well laid out and didn't take too long (make sure you have all your reference details handy, though!) to complete. I missed a couple of bits and they were flagged up automatically before I could



PICTURE: IGOR KELL / GETTY

submit it, which was very helpful. I was even able to pay there and then with my credit card and upload a photo from my computer.

Time will tell how smoothly the application progresses. Perhaps I can report back once it

has been sorted? For now, fingers crossed and hopefully this new approach will ensure easier, more efficient processing for all applicants.

Name and address supplied

ONE
FOR THE
POT

Coronation Partridge Pie



Festive feasts

Whether you're hosting dinner and children on a Boxing Day shoot or just looking for a game dinner recipe for Christmas Day, the team at Game For Anything have you covered.

Coronation Partridge Pie is a classic British dish, perfect for a festive meal. It's made with partridge, which is a game bird, and is served with a rich gravy. The pie is easy to make and can be served hot or cold.

King of pies!

I just wanted to write in to say thanks to Game for Anything for their coronation partridge pie recipe in the January issue. I had a small number of partridge from a recent day out and thought this sounded like a superb way of using them. It was truly delicious – definitely a recipe to keep for future years. Thanks!

Josh Minton, email



Coronation partridge pie

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QUIZ QUESTION

Q YULE JAB is an anagram of which American cousin of a bird often found in our gardens?

EMAIL US YOUR ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

Please email your answer to competitions@sportingshooter.co.uk

DECEMBER ISSUE WINNER

Congratulations to KEV SCOTT

The answer was RED-TAILED HAWK

RULES: Closing date is 1 February.

Answer published in the April issue. Please bear with us as there may be a delay in sending out prizes due to office closures. Normal Sporting Shooter rules apply. For full terms and conditions; email the address above.

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A therm believer!

I don't do very much night shooting and when I do it usually just involves a torch and a bit of rapping in the barn with the air rifle or the occasional rabbit so I've never found the urge to use a thermal device or even look through one.

This all changed last Saturday when I went out with a friend for a walk round with the shotguns in an attempt to thin out the squirrel population in my friend's wood and he brought along a thermal spotting device he has recently purchased from. To say I was impressed was an understatement! What a clever little product!

I always thought these things were for night use but was amazed how well they worked during the day as well as how much detail they show! It made spotting squirrels hiding in the trees an absolute doddle and we ended the afternoon with a good bag of 18 grey squirrels which has been the most we have shot in one day!

As much as I'd like one myself, I'm not sure I can justify the cost for the amount I'd use one but I'm certainly tempted! It's a shame I didn't get one for Christmas – but I guess there's always next year!

Dillon Parks, Lincs



PICTURE: VICTOR BURNSIDE / GETTY

The early bird...

I write this after the gales and cold snap during the first week of December 2021. My neighbour has a rookery in his wood and from my kitchen window I get a good view of the birds' activities as the seasons pass.

During the gales and cold earlier in the week, I noticed a behaviour I had never witnessed before. Several rooks could be seen sitting in their nests and it became a discussion point in the household. Although the rook is one of the earliest birds to start laying (often in February and March) we can't believe that the birds were sitting or even preparing the nests for use next spring.

Could it have been that by hunching down in the nest they were actually keeping warm by getting out of the bitterly cold winds? It sounds plausible – maybe other *Sporting Shooter* readers might have noticed similar behaviour?

M. Lorne, Norfolk



PICTURE: SHOOTING / GETTY



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POND PROTECTION

Canada geese are an unwelcome bird for most farmers, what with the amount of mess they make wherever they go, and Mark Ripley is happy to oblige when asked if he could cull a few

I pulled up at the farm early, a couple of hours early; I knew the geese were unlikely to be moving this soon but I wanted to get in position just in case. There had been at least a dozen Canada geese regularly coming in each evening to the farm's pond. The pond had been dug out a few years previous and the farmer and his wife rather enjoyed sitting at a picnic bench by the pond whenever the weather allowed.

A few mallard on the water were quite a welcome charm (although the odd one fell to the farmer's son's .410 whenever his parents weren't within earshot!) but the geese were not so welcome. It's amazing how much a goose can deposit out of its rear end around one picnic bench – times that by 12 over daily visits and it becomes a little much.

Ultimately, that along with their noise and general bullying of the other waterfowl, proved their downfall and the farmer asked if I would "shoot a few and see if it would put the others off".

The farmer's son, however, was told to "leave 'em be till ya get ya 12-bore lad - that little gun of yours ain't really man enough for them things" (little did he know one or two had already dropped to his 'little gun' and a well-placed shot).

So, armed with a pocket full of cartridges on a cold but sunny afternoon, I trudged across the field towards the pond to wait and see what would drift in. There were always a few pigeons that would drift along the hedgerow by the pond so I'd also brought along a good handful of No.6's just in case. Tucking myself back against the hedge with the pond behind gave me a good view across the maize stubble field in front, over which the geese would always fly en route to the water.

A few pigeons were moving about so I loaded up with No.6s and waiting for one to drift close enough for a shot. Just then my phone rang and it was the farmer's son. "I've just been out by the gas gun on the bank and put up a fox," he exclaimed! "Are you close by?"

Annoyingly, I was the other end of the farm and I knew a fleeing fox would be long gone, most likely over the boundary, by the time I got there.

"No worries. Your lights are on on your truck by the way!" he replied. With that, I trudged back to the truck to save a flat battery and no doubt miss an opportunity at a pigeon or two as a result.

Back in position and the sun was beginning to drop in the sky and the last of the pigeons were now flighting in to roost.

Standing still against the hedge, one silly bird swooped in to land in the oak tree beside me but failed to make its destination as he flew into a dose of No.6 shot at my first attempt, sending him crashing through the branches and into the long grass and brambles at the foot of the hedge with a trail of white feathers.

As dusk began to settle, a lone crow drifted over the hedge from behind me unseen until its coarse 'caw caw' call caught my attention and we both seemed to see each other at the same time. Although it tipped its wings in an attempt to rapidly change direction, there was no wind to wisp it away leaving it an easy target.

My first shot was rushed and either completely missed or caught it with a few pellets, which it chose to ignore. The second shot delivered the killing blow up under the feathers as it departed, turning it limp in the air before plummeting into the stubble.

As the field began to darken I heard the first sounds of geese in the distance shortly followed by the sight of a skein of geese coming low over the trees to my right. I quickly cycled the Beretta's action ejecting the top cartridge, which was another pigeon cartridge, and chambering the

TOP TIP

Geese are very vocal and you'll often hear them before you see them – so, listen up!

Canadas are big, heavy birds, so arm yourself well!



PICTURE: MATTHEW TROKKE / GETTY

heftier BB cartridge lurking in the magazine below. I slotted another BB cartridge into the magazine giving me three shots if I needed them.

Unfortunately, they flew in too far to the right and I could see that even if I dashed along the hedge line I wouldn't be able to get underneath them in time for a shot.

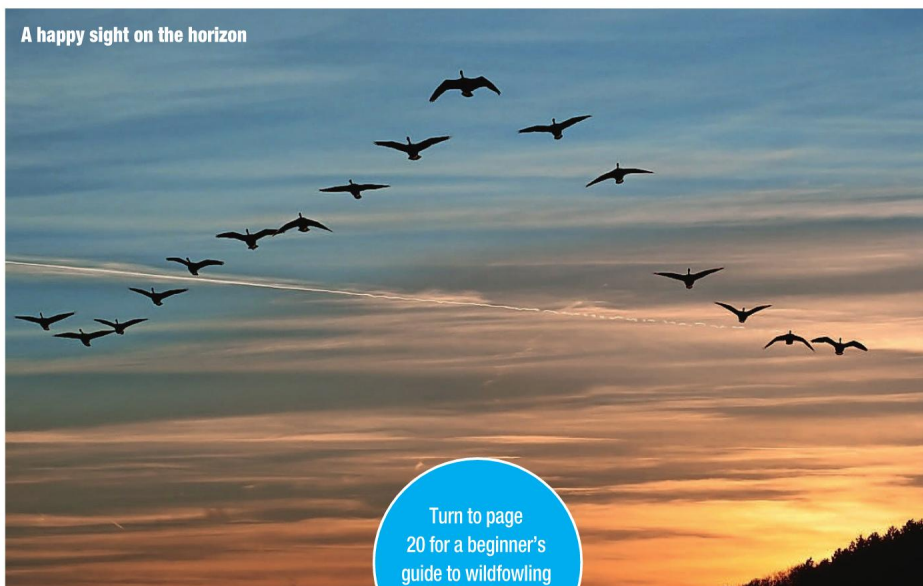
I spotted and heard other skein in the distance shortly after which were also headed for a different destination. I could also hear there were two or three geese on the pond behind me which must have either flown in from a different direction or already been paddling around the pond when I arrived and where now voicing up in response to the calls of their airborne friends.

The field was now quiet of any twittering of blackbirds and magpies, and in the stillness I heard the quack of a pair of approaching mallard, but they were over me almost before I even spotted them, dropping into the water with a splash behind me.

I was beginning to wonder if perhaps the usual number of resident geese visiting the pond had maybe found another pond or splash of water this evening, when the soft honks of geese calling to one another in flight could be heard in the distance. Sure enough a few moments later the dark line of around 10 geese could be made out clearing the tops of the trees on the other side of the field, headed my way.

They were slightly to my left so I began to walk further along the hedge watching for the first sign of a change in their direction. As they approached I could see as long as they continued in a straight line they were headed straight for me. Seeming to travel slowly, they suddenly seemed to go from the middle of the field to directly overhead in the blink of an eye, almost catching me off guard.

A happy sight on the horizon



PICTURE: ZIJAR2002 / GETTY

Turn to page 20 for a beginner's guide to wildfowling on the foreshore.

Quickly bringing up the gun with the mental note of 'aim for the head' going through my mind, I let loose with the first shot at the second-to-lead goose. Its head snapped back and its wings hunched, hanging in the air for a moment as its momentum carried it forward before it began its descent earthwards.

By the time I had recomposed myself to line up on a second bird, the skein had almost passed leaving me a fleeting chance at the final couple on the closest flank. A second shot staggered the rear bird (a little surprising as I was actually going for the one just in front of it!). It flew on for a few more wing beats before planing down to crash land onto the field behind. With a couple of thrashes of its giant wings it lay still, putting a nice brace of Canada geese in the bag.

It always amazes me just how big these birds actually are when you get close to them. They are also pretty heavy!

One advantage is that at least with such long necks, you can sling the body of the bird over your shoulder holding onto the neck just below the head, and despite their weight they are actually quite easy to carry. Even so, trudging back to the truck lugging two geese and a shotgun proved quite strenuous!

As I loaded the birds into the back of the truck, I watched as another small skein passed in the distance silhouetted against the orange sky towards the pond. As they drifted out of sight, there came the soft pop of a distant shot, or maybe one a little closer, a smaller gauge, something like a .410 perhaps...? ■

Though beautiful, Canadas are destructive and tend to bully other species



PICTURE: APENAMP/PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY

‘Quickly bringing up the gun, with the mental note of ‘aim for the head’ going through my mind, I let loose with the first shot’

THE MACNAB

Join the Rough Rovers as their members attempt their version of what is widely considered the ultimate test of shooting skill and prowess, inspired by the 1925 novel by John Buchan

One of the positives I have seen within the Rough Rovers following the pandemic has been a surge in enthusiasm, not just in shooting but in all aspects of life. We all have things that we put off year after year and many of my friends have put together an attainable bucket list of things they would like to achieve. Some of the best ones have been being on stage, going busking, working for a charity, learning how to drift a car and so on. Many people have certainly booked more shooting and perhaps treated themselves to a driven day on an estate they have always wanted to shoot.

One of those bucket list items that we all whimsically talk about when we are together is a Macnab – the hugely romantic and challenging attempt at hunting a red stag, a wild salmon, and a brace of grouse in a single day. It is not a goal that is easily achieved and for the majority a significant expense can be incurred in any single attempt. I read an article recently where one dedicated pursuivant had finally succeeded on his eleventh attempt.

The Rough Rovers was started nearly 10 years ago with the intention of finding accessible, exciting shooting at an affordable cost. Although it has grown a fair bit since then, we still strive to make our days as inclusive as possible, encouraging those new to game shooting whatever their age, sex, colour or religion. We even have a couple of vegetarians! Back in October 2019, a group of us met up in Stratford-upon-Avon to formulate a plan, applying this ethos to our own Rough Rovers Macnab Challenge. The basic goal would still be the same to hunt fur, feather and fin in a single day, but not to be restricted to the traditional quarry.

The three basic rules were:

1. The target species must be nominated at least 24 hours in advance
2. All species must be in season and, of course, legal
3. All species should be eaten (where possible)

In order to compare the varied Macnab attempts

we were encouraging, it was agreed we needed to have a winner each season and devised a simple points-based system for all potential species from red stag to rat, from salmon to sprat, and from grouse to wood pigeon. For each completed Macnab, the victor must submit a written summary of their day detailing where and how each quarry was bagged. This would then be submitted to a panel of judges who might, for example, award additional points for a wild brown trout caught on a dry fly rather than a stocked fish caught with a worm.

Sadly, we did not manage to generate much enthusiasm in the first year as the pandemic got in the way of life in general. I made the first attempt pretty much in my garden and the fields behind my house. I got a rabbit, a wild brown trout but sadly only one pigeon which was incredibly frustrating. There were a few other half-hearted attempts from others, but it does take a fair bit of thought and some planning.

Back in the game

Last year, we had numerous attempts, the first of which was at the beginning of August by Simon Fowler. His target species were roe deer, a brace of pigeons and a dace. Thanks to

WhatsApp, an enthusiastic and encouraging audience were able to follow his progress step by step.

Having watched a likely spot for a couple of days, he had a roe buck by 6.15am. He went home, changed dogs, ate his breakfast and put the roe buck in the chiller and set out for the mighty dace. After an hour fishing with no luck, he opted to walk a wood close by where he planned to shoot the brace of pigeons later in the day. Naturally, like any true professional, he was armed and flushed a couple of pigeons from a beech tree and managed a left and right by 9.10am. It was all looking a bit too easy when he set off to fish a shady, muddy swim on the River Stour, and sure enough by 10.20am he had his dace and was the first to complete the Rough Rovers Macnab.

Naturally, he was thrilled, although slightly surprised that he had done it so quickly having put the whole day aside. The best thing was that it inspired a raft of other attempts.

The next was Nick Parker at the end of October, aiming for a roe buck, a brace of pheasants and a rainbow trout. He opted again for an early stalk and could have taken a muntjac

Ian Cooke managed a dream haul of all three nominated species, plus two bonus pheasants!



(and been marked down) but held out for the roe. Sadly, he didn't get another opportunity and then got sidetracked trying to buy Adele tickets for his wife's birthday present (last minute) but unfortunately he failed at this too. Perhaps it wasn't going to be his day.

He set off to a private lake for his rainbow and managed to catch a beautiful 3.5lb fish by 12.30pm. Now on to the feather. By his own admission he was shooting badly and after three hours of walking-up hedgerows and spinneys with his dog, he had a pheasant and a duck in his game bag.

Thankfully, after another half an hour and nine shots, the brace of pheasant was complete. Buoyed by unexpected success, Nick returned to his stalking permission with a good few hours of daylight left. After an hour, he had not seen a sign of any roe deer but a good sized fallow buck did present himself and knowing the farm was struggling to control the numbers, he took the shot.

In spite of getting only two out of three of his intended three species, Nick said it was a brilliant way to spend a day testing various aspects of fieldcraft as well as one's mettle and determination.

Where there's a will...

Ian Cooke, our final success story so far, took a very different approach. Like many of us, he did not have permission on ground where he could attempt the RRMCM solo and did not have a great deal of stalking experience. A friend put him in touch with a local gamekeeper (Mike) on a small private estate in Hampshire who was thrilled at



Nick's rainbow trout was soon in the bag

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To find out more about the Rough Rovers, visit www.roughrovers.co.uk

the prospect of making an attempt on his ground.

The target quarry were to be roe deer, a brace of mallard and a brown trout. Ian and Mike set up overlooking a wide valley between two woods. After about an hour and a half, a roe deer finally came into comfortable range and Ian shot it cleanly at 166 yards by 9.30am.

Teamed up with Moby, his faithful spaniel, Ian set off on the feather quest. We all have those days when everything just clicks into place and Ian was having one. Moby, his faithful spaniel, put up a couple of pheasants on the way to the ponds which were dutifully shot, retrieved and added to the bag as insurance just in case the mallard proved elusive. However, when it's your day nothing can go wrong and on reaching the ponds there were good numbers.

Moby was sent in to flush the birds and Ian got a brace without too much bother. His guide for the

day then took him to a stocked tributary of the Avon where he hoped there would be a few fish. By his own admission, Ian was a bit rusty having not been out fly-fishing for a year or two and passed a couple of frustrating hours getting back into the rhythm. He finally managed to get a fish on, the hook held this time, and after a lengthy battle a beautiful brown trout was in the net and on the bank. Job done.

All of those who made attempts, whether successful or not, agreed it was a wonderful way to spend a day in spite of experiencing a slight comedown once the challenge was over. We had decided when setting up the RRMCM that a dinner should be held for all those who have made attempts so they can relive the day and compare notes. We also had some very special badges made for those lucky few who had managed to see it through to the end. ■



In the absence of a roe deer, on this occasion a fallow buck would have to suffice for Ian



The brief was for two pheasants, but you'd be mad not to take a duck when the opportunity arises



Let the madness commence

With so much attention focused on deer rutting season, it's easy to forget that the same phenomenon can be witnessed elsewhere in the animal kingdom, says Dean Harrison

In the deer stalking world, so much attention is given to the rut. Has it started yet? Is the weather right? To answer that last question first, you really want warm thundery weather for the roe in the summer and cold, frosty conditions for the fallow and sika in the autumn. It's all about being out enjoying the excitement of the rut, even if it's just to watch. Or perhaps it's that one and only chance you may get to take that big old buck or stag that never normally shows itself. I have been very lucky myself over the years, taking some cracking animals or just sitting and watching.

And let's not forget the hares. You've all heard the saying 'mad as a March hare'. Well, that's not quite true. The madness starts in February, and I love watching them boxing and chasing each other about at this time of year. They have entertained me for decades, while I have been sitting on a cold winter's evening waiting for a fox to come by.

Just this year, I took Emily from S&C TV out for a stalking trip during the roe rut. After a crawl through the stubble to get ourselves in a good position, I

called in a lovely buck which Emily took perfectly. I have seen the roe rutting many times, but it was a real pleasure to share it with someone else.

This also applies to foxes. If you look it up, they will say the rutting season starts in earnest in January or February, but you will hear them start to call from November – which always springs me back into action. Once the harvest is finished and I feel we are as fox-free as we can be, I tend to leave my main permission alone. Yes, foxes will move back in, but as long as they are not targeting the piglets or anybody's poultry I leave them alone. This method has worked well for me over the years.

In the bag

We have always held the partridges, and if I'm not out there spooking them, by the time any foxes move in they are pretty switched on and not likely to be killed in big numbers.

The only other time I will go back out is if they start to be a menace on shoot days, emptying the drives or sending the partridges back over the beater's heads.

Like the deer stalkers, this is a good time for us fox shooters as hunting is all about taking advantage of the movements of your targeted species at their most active times. Working out a plan to intercept them, stalking around hoping to spot them before they spot you, that's fieldcraft and one of the most rewarding types of hunting.

My preference when I'm out after foxes is to sit and wait, covering an area of ground. I find this the most successful way to get results. Like I say, you're tapping into a time when they are out in an active way. As always, I have my favourite places and I concentrate on these first.

But to gather information, in the past I would be out with the lamp beforehand and still sometimes do. I use a thermal spotter a lot of the time now, and it's at its best when its freezing out. With the ground nice and hard, you can drive around without getting a roasting off the farmer – or worse chucked off your permission. Always remember, the farming is the farmer's first priority – not your shooting.

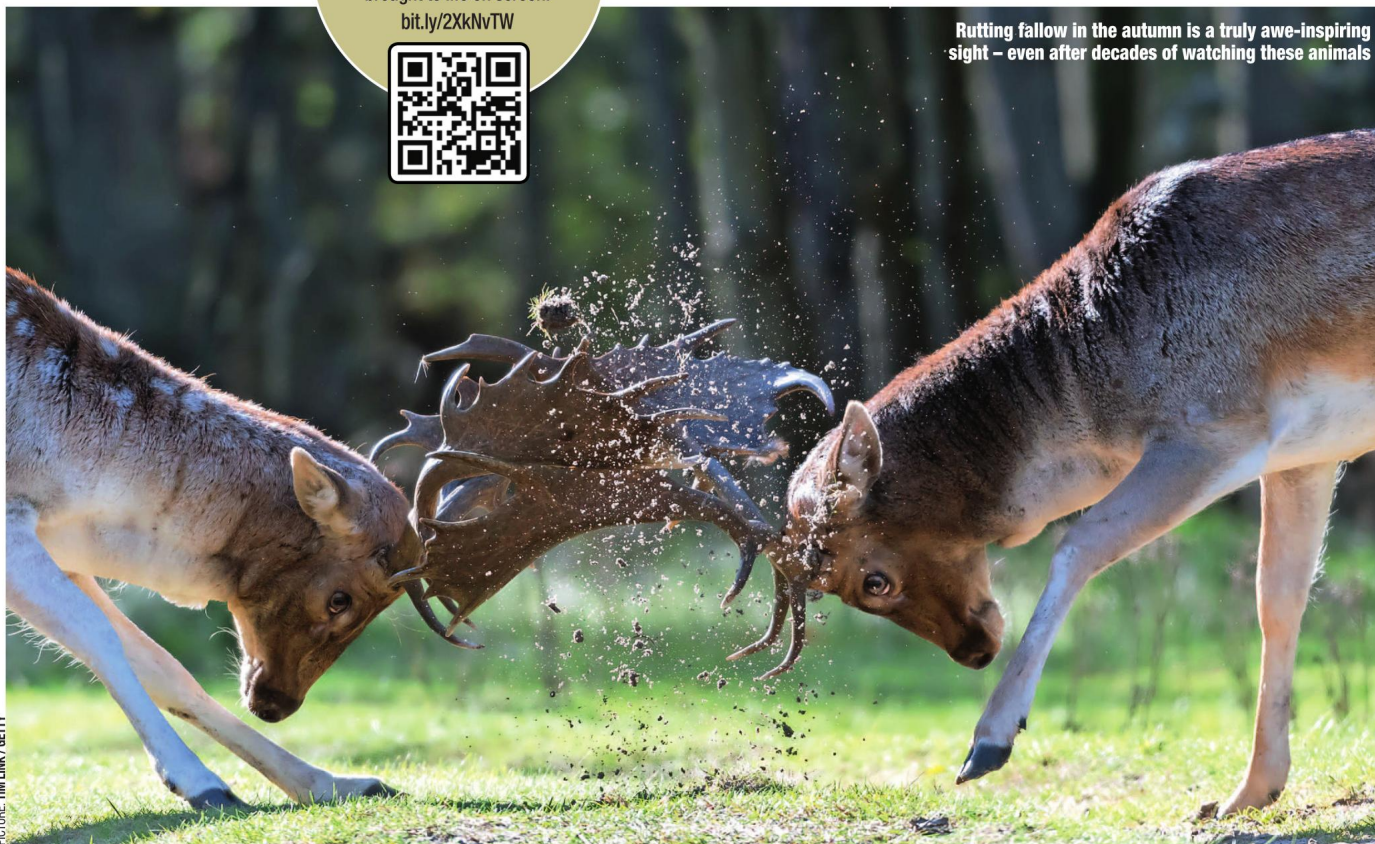
Driving is a great way of covering all your ground, and it's something you can do on your own. Not everybody is so keen to come out on

S&C TV

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bit.ly/2XkNvTW



Rutting fallow in the autumn is a truly awe-inspiring sight – even after decades of watching these animals



'I love watching hares boxing and chasing each other about. They have entertained me for years, while waiting for a fox on cold winter evenings'

those cold winter evenings, but it does help if you can get a good team together – driver, lamper/spotter and shooter, and get out and take a few foxes while building up a picture of what might have moved onto your ground. It's also worth talking to farmers and gamekeepers who are regularly on the ground to find out if they have heard foxes calling or seen them moving about. Once I know where they are, it's back to where I like to sit out to get my best chance of a shot, considering wind direction, backstop, and making sure I am not silhouetted against the skyline.

There is always a chance you will see the dog and vixen together, so try and consider the possibility of a second shot. If you think you know which one is the vixen, take her first. There is a good chance the dog fox will stop for you to get a shot at him too, but obviously there are no given rules. The second fox may give you the chance of a shot, be it dog fox or vixen, or it might take off into the distance like a scolded cat! Increase your chances by taking the one closest to cover first.

It's also a good time to try out that electronic caller if you have one. The fox sounds can work well at this time of year and even though it makes little sense to us with cubs not being present till the spring, the cub sounds can also work quite well, too.

Second vision

As I said about the deer, it might be the one chance you get to shoot that crafty old fox you've been after all year. I can recall one fox that would never stop in the lamp, this being before I had night vision. I was out with Joe, the farmer, one freezing cold evening, sitting in his truck lamping out the window, when I picked up some movement on a fence line. There was no eye flash, just a shape, but it looked foxy so I checked through my scope. I spotted a fox trotting up the fence line, his nose stuck to the ground – I reckon it was on the scent of a vixen.

I handed the lamp to Joe, and guided him to where I'd last seen the fox. Picking it up in the scope, I shouted and the fox stopped. With the crack of the rifle, there came a welcoming thud, confirming the shot had been good. It turned out to indeed be a superb dog fox that had not once looked back at us. If I hadn't caught the shape of him moving up the fence line, we would never have known he was even there. ■



Many people fail to realize that many animal species, including foxes, have a rutting season

The rare sight of hares boxing in the English countryside is a privilege to behold



PICTURE: NICK HURST / GETTY



Wonders of woodcock

Rupert Butler recalls a few encounters he has enjoyed with this prized long-billed wader, whose flighty, jinking appearance on our shores heralds the beginning of winter

For many, the onset of winter, with its darkening evenings and biting northerly breezes, is a time for battenning down the hatches until brighter weather and more clement conditions prevail once again. For others, it's the time of year they have been dreaming about throughout those sultry summer evenings, counting the days until they can once again pit their wits against these

delightful visitors from the north. They will begin to arrive in dribs and drabs before the main legions arrive with the advent of the November moon. Woodcock, these shy, secretive birds of our forests, glens and marginal spaces, hold the imagination of the Irish shooting community like no other. Their travels to our milder and more clement shores at this time of the year is often marred by adverse weather conditions. On more than one occasion in recent memory, we have been blighted by pictures of hundreds of these waders marooned at sea within touching distance of some north sea oil rigs.

So what is the attraction of these long-billed waders that invade our shores at the advent of winter? Personally, I think that it is a combination of factors that make them our most prized game bird. Unpredictability has to be high on the list because, if nothing else, they are certainly far from predictable. Yes, they can be found in frequent haunts with reasonable regularity when conditions are suitable, but not always. I remember some years back

spending an afternoon combing some glens high above that always held the promise of a bird or two, sometimes in good numbers. On this occasion, however, I was baffled by their scarcity. That very evening, I decided to try a wee pond in the hope that a teal or two might put in an appearance. In a dampish corner, not 50 yards from my vehicle, not one but three woodcock took flight. In my eagerness to record a double, I missed woefully with the first before managing to scrape one down at the second time of asking. I have yet to see another at this precise location before or since. Their elusiveness when flushed can be both frustrating and mesmerising in equal measure. How many times do we think we have an area covered only for a bird to flicker out unsaluted? Combine this with their jinking flight, especially in heavy cover where they have the innate ability to put a tree or some other obstacle

between them and the shooter at the precise moment one is about to fire, and you get some idea of how difficult they can be. How many times have you heard a bird rise, a noise that's not unlike

It's estimated that around 50% of woodcock wintering in Ireland come from north-west Russia and the Baltic States.

This month has also seen Rupert out pheasant shooting – here, is his pal Ben Frazer, doing some picking-up duties



PICTURE: RUPERT BUTLER



PICTURE: FIELDSPOOTSCHANNEL

Woodcock often prefer to nest and feed in fairly dense woodland

A really good 'cock dog' is prized among Irish shooters



PICTURE: NICK RIDLEY

A prize well worth the effort!



PICTURE: DON HOLLAND

somebody stepping on a dry branch, only to be left frustrated because you caught only the briefest of glimpses as it disappears towards distant horizons? On very rare occasions, a bird will propel itself from some heavy cover to fly across a meadow in front, offering a very shootable target. This, however, is the exception rather than the rule.

Woodcock dogs

As with all forms of shooting, one is only as good as one's canine companion, and in the case of woodcock shooting this is particularly true. A good woodcock dog is worth their weight in gold and is not easily found. I remember many moons ago when I had in my possession a wee springer bitch that went by the name of Willow. She excelled out hunting. By and large it was here, high above where mountains and glens collide, that she was truly at home.

Often during her reign, I would be invited down for a shot at some 'cock' by some kind soul or other, but the invite more often than not stressed the importance of bringing Willow along. If she could have navigated those laneways on her own steam I probably wouldn't have got a mention. Like most springers, she would go into overdrive when hot on a scent, but where woodcock were involved she went into a total frenzy. Alas, she is with us no more, having departed for greener fields many moons ago. I have had some good dogs since but none to match her drive and enthusiasm, although I am ever hopeful. At this juncture, you probably think I have rambled away from the main theme of these scribblings but you couldn't be more wrong, because if there is one thing Irish shooters prize more than their beloved woodcock it is their woodcock dogs. To own a truly outstanding woodcock dog at least once in a



PICTURE: ALEX HATTON

lifetime is indeed a rare privilege. Many will say they have had several, but I bet if they think long and hard, one or possibly two will rise to the top.

Woodcock shooting in wild surrounds has few equals. We are indeed blessed to be able to pit our wits against these magical birds in wonderful locations. I can also say that where banter is concerned it has few equals. I bet more lead finds its way into empty space whilst shooting 'cock' than the rest of our shooting expeditions put together, and because of this it lends itself to some quick-witted retorts. I remember many moons ago somebody bringing along a buddy to

try his hand at some 'cock shooting high above. The man in question had apparently acquitted himself well the day before on some lowland mallard and pheasant and his confidence was buoyed. At the start of the day, both he and his dogs gave off an air of competence that was a delight to see. Fast forward a couple of hours, and not only did his dogs get lost, so did he. To say he couldn't hit an elephant with a banjo would be doing a disservice to the saying. Needless to say, we haven't seen sight of the man since. Woodcock shooting isn't for everyone, but for many Irish shooters it is an obsession. ■

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Contact Jonathan on Tel: 01189 742525
Email: jonathan.breen@archant.co.uk

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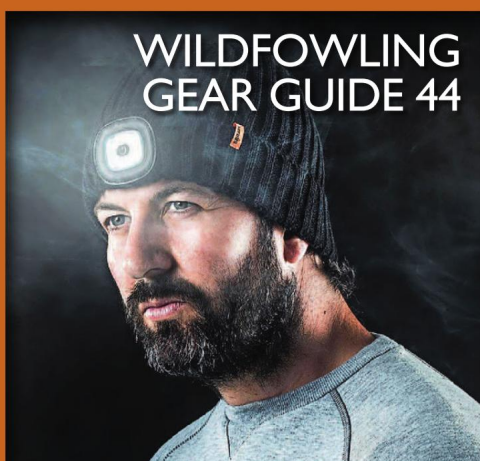


Your one-stop shop for shooting gear

Welcome to the Marketplace. In this section you will find everything you need to know about the kit you need to go shooting with – from product tests and reviews to in-depth features.

Whatever you want to know about or buy, we've got it covered. And if we've missed something that you'd like to see tested, drop us a line by post, telephone or email at the usual addresses.

INSIDE THE MARKETPLACE THIS MONTH...



WILDFOWLING GEAR GUIDE 44



GUN TEST 48

PRODUCT NEWS

Ariat Catalyst VX Defiant 8" GTX

TESTED BY:
BEN PALFREYMAN

For a couple of years now, I have spent many hours each week out with the dogs in a pair of Ariat Burford wellies, and I've been very happy with their performance. However, this winter has been so mild, and we can expect this trend to continue, so I have been thinking I really need a pair of good quality, high-performance boots that will do the job of covering a variety of terrains, while keeping my feet warm – but not too hot.

I've been testing the Catalyst VX Defiant 8" GTXs from Ariat for a couple of months now and I have been very happy with the results. I did find they rubbed my outside toes a little at first, but playing around with the lace configuration solved that, and I now find I can go on long dog walks with ease.

In terms of comfort, you couldn't ask for more, with luxurious cushioning in all the right places. The hefty, rigid sole offers excellent grip and traction, while the upper is flexible and soft – exactly what I am looking for in a boot!

TECHNOLOGY

The waterproof leather and waterproof, breathable Gore-Tex membrane offer excellent protection from the wet, muddy ground I often encounter.

The 400g Thinsulate Ultra insulation provides warmth in cold and damp conditions, while the X-STATIC layer simultaneously manages the temperature within the boot, offering 'odour protection', as manufacturers like to call it, as well as comfort for the wearer.

The Vibram outsole is well known for its superior traction and durability, and the boots also feature Ariat's own Cobalt VX technology, which is there to stabilise and support your feet. The Catalysts also feature a moulded TPU heel cradle, which, along with the cushioned midsole and pad creates a very comfortable boot indeed!

FURTHER DETAILS

Ariat have extended their size range for this popular boot, and you can now get these in sizes 4 to 12, with most half sizes also available. From my own experience, and looking at reviews online, the size runs pretty true, but you can get more



The supple uppers provide comfort out of the box



TX Caption Contrast 2

assistance in deciding which size to purchase on the Ariat website. If you like a higher boot, look out for the 10" version, plus some stockists also hold wide versions of these boots.

£300
ariat.com

These unisex boots are available in sizes from 4 to 12.



WILDFOWLING GEAR

Jack Pyke gun slip

Jack Pyke are one of the main players on the stockist scene, operating an invaluable one-stop shop ideal for grabbing essential accessories like this soft-lined foldable gun slip, which you can simply roll up and attach to your belt when it isn't in use. It comes in a choice of English Oak Evo or Hunter's Green and boasts a fully-adjustable shoulder strap and quick-release buckles. When it isn't protecting your gun or hanging from your belt, it can also be used to sit on!

£14.95

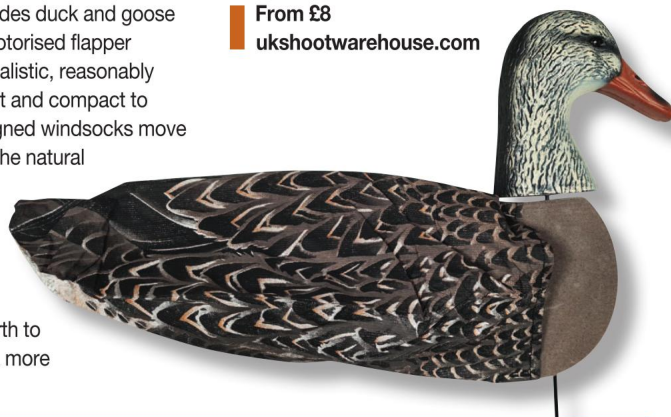
jackpykeshop.co.uk

Sillosocks decoys

The Sillosocks range includes duck and goose decoys including some motorised flapper options, all of which are realistic, reasonably priced and also lightweight and compact to carry. These cleverly designed windsocks move with the wind to simulate the natural movement of live birds. Because these decoys take up so little space in a decoy bag it's easy to carry 24 or more decoys saving lots of back and forth to the truck and making for a more realistic pattern!

From £8

ukshootwarehouse.com



Sealskinz ultra-grip gloves

Constructed using multiple premium materials bonded together to make one highly waterproof and breathable all-weather, ultra-grip glove, Sealskinz have pioneered the use of a unique hydrophilic membrane that's 100% waterproof yet pulls moisture away from your skin at the molecular level, keeping you dry and cool at the same time. The gloves are also touchscreen compatible, which is always a handy bonus when you need to communicate with other shooters – or are going to be late home!

£40

sealskinz.com



UK Shootwarehouse hide net

Where hides are concerned, you need to melt into your surroundings with the minimum of fuss. The more anonymous and low-key, you can be, the better. These 3D-effect 4x1.5m hide nets from UK Shootwarehouse come in a range of patterns to suit whatever surroundings you find yourself in – we find the 'Hedgerow' (pictured) useful inland, while the 'Stubble' design may be better suited to the foreshore.

£22.50

ukshootwarehouse.com

Bisley wading stick

Of course, you can go down to the woods and fashion your own, but if you want to look smart, take a look at the options available from Bisley or Orvis. This one, with its lead-weighted bottom and attached lanyard, is top of the range. Made from all-natural products it even has a thumb-shaped groove so you can maintain a firm grip on the staff at all times.

£69.95

philipmorrisdirect.co.uk



Deerhunter Mallard waterproof jacket

The new Deerhunter Mallard Jacket Realtree Max 5 Camo is an extremely functional hunting collection that has been specially developed for waterfowling. The entire Mallard series is available in Realtree Max 5 camouflage which has been developed specifically for hunting in and around reeds and comes packed with clever features such as magnetic-closing pockets, and much more.

£289.99
bushwear.co.uk



Snowbee Classic chest waders

Made from a tough 4mm, double-lined neoprene, these waders offer excellent flexibility, warmth and waterproofness. Screen-printed double neoprene PU knee pads give greater protection against wear and are puncture resistant, while a high-back style with integral neoprene brace straps give additional warmth across the shoulders and top of the back. These waders now also come with a full felt sole fitted with sharp, hardened alloy studs for superior grip on slippery rocks.

£135.99
snowbee.co.uk



Scruffs LED beanie

When out wildfowling, two things you'll undoubtedly need in your equipment locker are a torch and a hat. You can kill two birds with one stone with this combination LED beanie hat from Scruffs. The integrated light allows you to get on with the job in poor light without having to hold a torch. The LED is charged via a USB port and can be removed when the hat needs washing. Also very handy for any other night shooting.

£16.95
scruffs.com



Illinois River duck and goose calls

The Illinois River range of mouth calls can be extremely effective with a little practice! It doesn't take too much effort to get some basic realistic call sounds from these callers to lure your quarry in, but a quick YouTube search will bring up a wide range of tutorial videos by some true master callers.



From £30
ardmoor.co.uk

Additional accessories

TIDE TABLES

Buying a tide table for your area will ensure you always know what the tides are doing.

BINOCULARS

Spending time getting to know your local 'fowling landscapes is time well spent.

COMPASS

Save the added weight and expense by downloading a GPS compass app on your phone!

The British Shooting Show is back in business!

This year sees the return of the UK's largest and most prestigious trade and retail shooting show, which will run for three days on 18-20 February at Birmingham NEC. Determined to take things to the next level after an enforced break, the British Shooting Show team has been working tirelessly behind the scenes for months to snare the very best exhibitors and have already succeeded in securing some iconic brands such as Westley Richards, Boss & Co. Browning, Highland Outdoors, RUAG, Edgar Brothers, GMK, Viking Arms, Umarex, BSA, Swarovski Optik, and many more.

Most regular manufacturers were keen to increase their presence this year and requested extra space to facilitate some of the most expansive exhibitions seen yet. Visitors can expect to see numerous demonstrations, shooting ranges and a tactical training area, alongside new innovations such as viewing platforms. To give some idea of how much the event has grown, upon finishing the last show in 2020 Browning immediately took up an option to increase their stand size by an additional 50%, Sportsman Gun Centre added a further 40% of floor space to their already impressive island

site, and RUAG simply doubled their already enormous footprint. It didn't take long for the Edgar Brothers stand to triple in size, all of which has been described by the organizers as simply incredible.

The National Gamekeepers Organization will also have a full presence with their Gamekeepers' Lounge, providing a superb meeting location where they will be delivering talks on the NGO and related topics. This will be a 'must attend' for all gamekeepers, assistants, guests or anyone who just wants to learn more about conservation, wildlife management, countryside life or any of its associated industries.

Other highlights promise to be Fieldsports Channel TV presenters hosting talks and interviews with celebrity guests, cooking demos by famed restaurant owner Ralph Sripek, and displays and tutorials from sporting professionals like Andy Cullen MBE of Laochin Gundogs and Chris Green. Plus, of course, the opportunity to spend time with like-minded people.

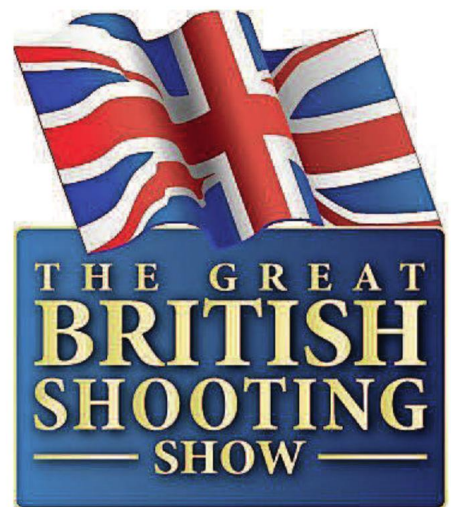
The initial response to the revamped 2022 show from the public at large has been spectacular, resulting in ticket sales far surpassing those of the same period in previous years.

TICKETS

Advance tickets bought via the website cost £25 per person per day for adults and £15.50 for children under 15, with discounts given for groups of 10+.

They will also be available on the door for £30. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

For tickets and information, visit: shootingshow.co.uk



This year has seen social media play its part more so than usual with an increased presence across channels like Twitter and Instagram opening up the show to a whole new demographic. New exhibitors are always encouraged to get involved and 2022 will be no exception, with 17 brand-new companies exhibiting to date. Available space is now at a premium so anybody interested in snapping some up is advised to get in touch asap.

Whether you're in the trade, an active participant, or just a keen observer, the 2022 British Shooting Show is certain to have something for you.



TESTED BY:
RYAN
KAY

Animal Health Company cleaning products

The Animal Health Company are a leading manufacturer of animal-related products, so I was very happy to test out some of their main offerings relating to dog kennels and bedding.

Supa-Clean is a multi-purpose disinfectant, which I used to great effect in the kennels for general cleaning and also to tackle more stubborn areas. I also used this as a steriliser for washing down and cleaning surfaces where food bowls have been, cleaning feeding/drinking bowls etc. It is reassuring to know that this is a product specifically designed for animal use, therefore fully safe to use for this purpose. It can also be used around the home and outside spaces to keep surfaces free from harmful bacteria, including patios, artificial grass, decking areas. This versatile product was certainly enough for our general needs and being highly concentrated, a

little goes a long way, making this good value for money.

If you need something a little more specialised, though, they also offer a Parvo-viricide disinfectant which is specifically designed to destroy organisms causing or contributing to a range of health issues including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and ringworm. This product boasts supreme germ-killing power which has been tested and proven by The Central Vet Laboratory to be effective against the parvo-virus. Impressive – as this is recognised as one of the most difficult organisms to inactivate.

Another very useful product is the Pet Bed Wash, a laundry detergent designed specifically for washing pet bedding, towels, dog coats, etc. Simply use as you would a regular detergent. As you would imagine, this gets dog related

paraphernalia clean, and has the added benefit of leaving it free from harmful organisms. Whereas we have previously used general laundry detergents, it was again reassuring to know that this product has been tailored specifically for this purpose.

The final product I tried which complements the range is Odor-kill. This is a deodoriser which kills the strongest and most persistent of smells. It can be sprayed as needed and can also be used in the hoover to combat stale smells.

They pretty much have a product that will cover all your cleaning needs in and out of the kennels. And on a slightly different area, if any of our readers are keepers of a few chickens, I happened to notice they also have a range of cleaning products designed for use around poultry. animal-health.co.uk



Dog and Field have done it again!

The Original Clone Dummy was the winner of the Innovative Product category from The Great British Shooting Awards 2021. Dog and Field's unique Original Clone Dummy range really hit the gundog training market with a bang! I now know of few trainers that haven't got one of their clone dummies in their training bag or vest! The clever 3D-printed image on the canvas/nylon dummy makes it, well, just different! And that's always a good thing when it comes to keeping retrieving training interesting.

The range was exactly what the gundog training camp were crying out for – something to be more appealing than the usual green canvas-based dummies. The good news is that Dog and Field have taken their Clone formula and applied it to other well-known dummy formats and also to some not so well-known shapes. You can get your hands on all the new products in The Original Clone Dummy Pheasant Bundle.

I tested all the new additions during a recent training day with some clients. The Pheasant Launcher Dummy was an obvious development from the Original Clone but the Bird Launcher Dummy probably less so; yet this was definitely a favourite on the day. Akin to a penguin shape with its pointy wings, it matters not, as when projected from the launcher, it created the closest effect to a shot bird falling from the sky I've seen. It most definitely stirred the young dogs up as they were fooled by the flapping-like stimulus in the air.

Another really effective inclusion in the bundle is the Pheasant



Dummy Bird. With an attached floppy head to replicate the real thing, it's a nice soft bird-shaped dummy, which gives the dog something to really get its mouth round.

However, it's the smallest in this new group that I find the most useful. The new Pheasant Dummy Ball is the most handy, and has become my new favourite. It's around the size of a tennis ball but is weighted much heavier, meaning the practical toggle enables it to be thrown long distances, or just flung in some nearby cover as a reward when doing some closer hunting work. dogandfield.co.uk



Beretta 694 Sporting

This special edition Beretta may be rather more weighty than its '694' siblings, says Mike Yardley, but it's an attractive option for clay busting and high-bird days

I thought we would look at something that might bring with it a hint of sunshine this month – the Beretta 694 Limited. It was offered to celebrate GMK's 50 years in business (40 plus as the UK importer for Beretta). They've been snapped up, apparently, even with a price tag of £4,000 (£200 more than the standard model). Special editions often do well with shooting punters. The gun itself is intended as a clay-buster, but with 31" barrels, might do occasional double service on high birds.

First impressions are of a modern, attractively styled, machine with a fulsome stock and a fairly plain, quite large, action reminiscent, in my

mind at least, of the old silver 682 competition guns. It's quite a big gun overall – hitting the scales at 8lb 6oz – which is heavier than the 694s I have tested previously (which typically weigh around 8lb with 30" tubes). The difference is explained because this one has had its 'B-fast' balance weights fitted at the factory (they may be easily removed) and has relatively heavy barrels.

The test 694 is well presented with uprated wood and the high standards of finish expected from Beretta. The plain nickel-plated action is attractive with blue line stripes as most other 694s (the DT11 has similar decoration which is not as bold). Wood apart, the only

things that really set this anniversary model apart are its rarely seen 31" barrels, a small commemorative engraving to their monobloc, and a smart ABS case (which contains three more Optima HP extended chokes). Otherwise it is the 694 we already know.

The unusual 31" barrels seem to suit when you dry mount the gun. The old-style, 10-8mm ventilated rib is good with a shallow centre channel (and unique to this special edition in the current range). There are full length side ribs which would allow for the fitting of additional balance weights under the forend if required. Both barrels are marked 18.6mm for bore diameter and they

weigh 1,530g. Barrels on 694s are usually in a tight range for weight (around 1,520g – even for 32" guns). This is on the upper end.

Our anniversary model is future proofed for steel shot, chambered for 3" (76mm) cartridges. I have shot very few 3" cartridges in anything but semi-automatics over the years (even wildfowling). I am not a great fan of long case 'Roman Candle' loads in double guns, but it is nice to know the gun can accommodate them when we don't know precisely what the future holds with mandatory non-toxic loads a looming possibility.

Looking at the stock of the test 694, the wood has a new 'shiny oil'



Thanks to
Lyalvale Express
for the cartridges
used in this test.

BERETTA 694 SPORTING GMK 50TH ANNIVERSARY 31

finish which looks smart and fills the grain well. The full grip is tightly radiused (more so than on the 692) and has a palm swell. The grip is quite short, and there was a tendency for my hand to slip forward on bringing the gun up. This could be easily remedied by bringing the nose of the comb back slightly. The comb is fairly wide, comfortable, and without much taper. The intention is to increase facial support (as some competition shooters prefer). I liked the rounded, but not bulbous, fore-end.

The dimensions were typical Beretta with 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (35mm) drop forward and 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (55mm approx) to the rear of the comb. Beretta noted that most guns in this edition would be 50mm to the rear (that is, a whisker under 2"), but this one seems to have slipped through at an atypically low 57mm (and 37mm to the front). GMK are trying to get everything through at 35/50mm for sporters now – a great standard dimension. The length of pull as tested is 375mm (14 $\frac{3}{4}$ ") including an 18mm Microcore pad. There is another 23mm pad in the box for a 380mm (15") length of pull.

Technical

The 694 was introduced in 2019, and is, in essence, an improved 692 – already a good gun. The 694 gained 'Steelium Plus' taper-bored barrels, and the stock was re-worked as noted (made a little fuller than the 692). A new shorter fore-end iron was also introduced. A sliding fore-end latch sits independently of the main iron, replacing the old lifting latch. There are, effectively, two loops on the barrel – one for the fore-end iron to attach to and another for the redesigned latch mechanism. There are also replaceable studs to the rear to allow for fore-end tightening.

Otherwise, the gun is familiar with bifurcated lumps, trunnion hinging, and conical bolting. The safety is slightly different to other 694s. In the forward position, you can't change the barrel selector, you have to take the safety off first – useful on a competition gun, less so in the field.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

This 694 showed few vices, but it needed driving to work well and overcome its mass. 31" is an interesting barrel length compromise. Competition guns need extra length for consistency and precision. I do most of my recreational clay shooting these days with a 7lb 30" 20-bore (though I used an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb 32" Kemen 12 and a 32" Beretta semi when I was serious about winning). 12- or 20-bore 30" barrels are always right in my opinion, while 32s usually need more muscular effort. The same applies to 31" in this case.

The barrels are well matched to the 10-8mm sighting rib and the rounded fore-end was excellent aiding control. The stock comb is comfortable if a little thick. The grip didn't quite anchor my hand as noted. Recoil was modest.

The gun shot well and was forgiving of error. Overall, this is a solidly made and attractive clay crusher, it could do double service on high bird days and it is future proofed for steel. It benefits from a 10-year guarantee too.

WE LIKE



- The 31" barrels
- The 10-8mm old-style rib
- The snazzy travel case

WE DISLIKE



- The short grip and forward comb nose
- The gun is a little heavy, but that will suit serious competitors

TECH SPECS

- Make: Beretta
- Model: 694 Limited GMK 50th Anniversary
- Action type: Beretta trigger plate with conical locking
- Barrels: 31" (no options in this special commemorative model)
- Chambers: 3" / 76mm (accommodating shorter, 65, 67 and 70mm too)
- Rib: 10-8mm with shallow channel
- Proof: Italian Superior Steel
- Weight: 8.4lb

Save for this, it's all identical to other 694s. Internally, many key parts are interchangeable with 69 and 68 Series guns. ■

UP CLOSE



A plain nickel-plated action with blue line stripes adds to the 694's attractive styling



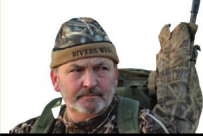
Mike found the action reminiscent of the old silver 682 competition guns



The 694 incorporates a full, tightly-radiused grip with a palm swell and the woodwork has a nice shiny, oiled finish



The barrel selector is better suited to a competition gun rather than for use in the shooting field



Winter creeks

Alan Jarrett recalls two challenging tales that highlight the need for perseverance when chasing success on the foreshore – wildfowling isn't for the faint-hearted!

In many ways, come the turn of the New Year, we have often had the best of the wildfowling season. This is of course quite a generalisation, but unless suitable weather arrives (that is cold and wind!) the sport becomes even more of a challenge than usual. The Christmas break these days gives us almost two weeks of unremitting opportunity for sport, and as a consequence the birds may be increasingly attuned to the evil ways of the wildfowler! Birds which were already cautious in the extreme are ever more wary as the season progresses.

Notwithstanding the undoubted fact that birds frequently move from place to place, by the turn of the year plenty of birds have settled on a suitable estuary or coast for much of their winter stay. This means they soon become aware of the places to avoid, or over which places to fly high and fast.

Changing supplies of food are also a factor in determining bird movements. The rich autumn feeding grounds provided by the saltmarsh, where the marsh samphire often grows in profusion, will have become somewhat depleted with birds having to forage far and wide in search of a meal.

Even if the birds are wiser and more challenging, conditions on the coast will often help to offset this problem. Come January weather conditions are often more favourable, with colder conditions and winter gales tipping the balance in favour of the wildfowler.

As ever, perseverance is the name of the game, and there is invariably a direct correlation between time spent on the shore and the number of birds in the bag. Observing bird movements and changing patterns of behaviour are crucial if success is to be enjoyed.

Good fortune can often play an important part in any success, for birds may be here today and gone tomorrow. For me success is about doing the right things in the right way, and eventually success will surely follow.

Two examples of perseverance bringing success come to mind. Both areas were on the same stretch of shore, but with bird behaviour entirely different.

It had been cold for quite a while, with some of the inland flashes and ditches frozen. The wigeon had largely left the inland marshes, and were packed up many thousands strong in the main

tidal channel, seemingly like a great black smudge against the grey water. Twice that week, my ambush had been in the wrong place, for most of them had flighted wide of me off to the west. Those that had passed overhead had been too high for a worthwhile shot. But if at first you don't succeed...!

Tucking down in the edge of the saltings as the afternoon drew on was to present yet another opportunity to watch the wigeon 'rolling': that is as the flocks drifted downtide, birds lifting and flying back to the head of the drifting mass of birds.

As the light drew in, the heavy loads were slipped into the gun in anticipation of any birds being as high as they usually were, and sure enough the first packs were far too high for a shot. The shore began to reverberate with the wild whistling and growling from the fighting birds, and for me this is one of the magical moments of wildfowling – the massed flighting of the wigeon flocks.

At length, some were overhead, a touch lower than the others and presenting me with my first chance in three trips. The magnum load sped true



Teal often fly low over the marsh, leaving the high skies to other species



TOP TIP

Take a range of ammunition with you, suitable for different species – you never know what might come your way.

‘As the light faded, this wildfowler and dog sat in the saltmarsh, listening to the air being torn asunder by the racing birds’

and a bird was falling, it seemed for an age, until it thwacked onto the saltmarsh to my rear.

Twice more the feat was repeated, to give me three wigeon to take home. Three fine birds, hard won, as reward for endless trudging and all-consuming persistence. The lack of teal had been notable, for they love these saltmarshes and hurry in as the light fades to guzzle in the slushy margins in search of samphire and spartina seeds. After the turn of the year, if they come at all, they will be late and it is necessary to have your wits about you.

The dog and I were tucked down on the edge of a wider creek waiting for the wigeon, and it gave me time to reflect on the changing saltmarsh. My first visits to this place some 40 years before had found this creek a gunshot and more wide; now the remorseless advance of the spartina beds had seen it shrink to barely 20 yards in width.

For all that, it is one of many such creeks to which the duck would come at times – it was just necessary to have the good fortune to be there at the right time. Again, perseverance is key.



A trio of wigeon in flight

PICTURE: KOLJIRAND / GETTY

On this evening, as the light drew in and my attention was fixed on the sky above in the hope for a shot at the wigeon, there came a great tearing of wings as a small pack of teal dived past to my rear. Now fully alerted my gaze was directed lower down, just in time to see more teal rushing out of the west.

The gun thumped three times and a single teal skidded across the surface of the mud in the creek bed. Now I was confronted with a potential teal flight, and seriously over-gunned with 36g of No.2 shot to combat the high-flying wigeon.

Flight they did, for over the next few minutes an almost ceaseless avalanche of teal came to this creek and the surrounding saltmarsh edge. Again and again they came, and the heavy loads

punched skyward time and again.

Sometimes a bird fell, but on plenty of occasions I was left to rue the heavy loads throwing a tight pattern at close range when something more modest would have perhaps yielded better results. All thought of the wigeon vanished as the battle continued until the light had all gone.

Wildfowler and dog sat in the saltmarsh to listen to the air being torn asunder by the racing birds. Then with all birds gathered in, we crept away to leave the place for the teal.

Why they had chosen to come this night and on no other will always remain a mystery. Just one of the foibles of shooting after the turn of the year. ■

The link between time spent on the creek and birds in the bag has been proved time and again



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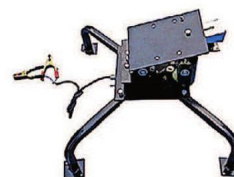
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CREATING A POND

Feeling inspired by the wildfowling tales in this issue? Why not create your own pond?! Use Alex Hatton's advice to encourage all manner of wildfowl and other wildlife to your land

If you were to ask a digger driver to dig a pond and left him to it, it would almost certainly be round, deep and have steep edges, but how suitable would it be for your shoot's goals? What are your goals? Before you embark on a pond creation project, take some time to plan it out so that what you create is fit for purpose and ultimately money well spent.

The first stage is to decide what you wish your pond to achieve. Ducks fall into two categories: dabbling ducks, such as teal, wigeon and mallard, and diving ducks which include goldeneye and pochard. Dabbling ducks feed in shallower areas so a new pond does not necessarily need to be very deep, otherwise you will find your chosen species will spend all its time on the edges. If you want to encourage both types of ducks, a variety of depths will help.

Another consideration is the type of shooting you aspire to – are you releasing large numbers of ducks, or is this to attract wild ducks? Will this be for just a Gun or two, or a team?

Location, location

Where you put your new pond may largely be down to what land you have available. It really is worth doing your homework before you start. I have a series of ponds that are fed by natural flushes that run year-round and each pond links to the next. The ground was a little rough so the farmer was quite relaxed about their locations. If you plan on digging your pond in an area that is not naturally wet, I would suggest you dig some trial pits and see what the water is doing through the year, as you may need to go a little deeper to get below the water table so it does not dry up.

My ponds are sited on a tree line which ducks have always used to navigate the area. Placing ponds alongside it acted as a safety area, and they found the ponds quickly. We keep the edges strimmed so that the ponds can be seen easier from a bird's eye view.

The design

When setting your depth, consider how cold the area is. My own ponds get a good throughput of water so do not freeze up, even though they are shallow. However, a shallow pond more suitable for dabblers that is fed by the water table may well freeze up at the very time of year you want to shoot it. You can combat this with some deeper areas.

Ducks will thrive on ponds with good insect and plant diversity, but that does mean it has to be a healthy pond with a clean water supply. Consider where you site it as to the potential for surface run-off from agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and farm yard manure – if you get excessive nitrates in your pond, it will not flourish.

The design links back to your goals and available land – for my shoot, the area we had was a long narrow strip of wet ground and the decision was made for several small ponds of varying

LOST PONDS

The natural succession of a pond is to silt up. By checking an OS map, you may find historical ponds and reestablish them.



Alex's doughnut pond is surrounded by trees and is a big hit with ducks – particularly teal

PICTURES: ALEX HATTON



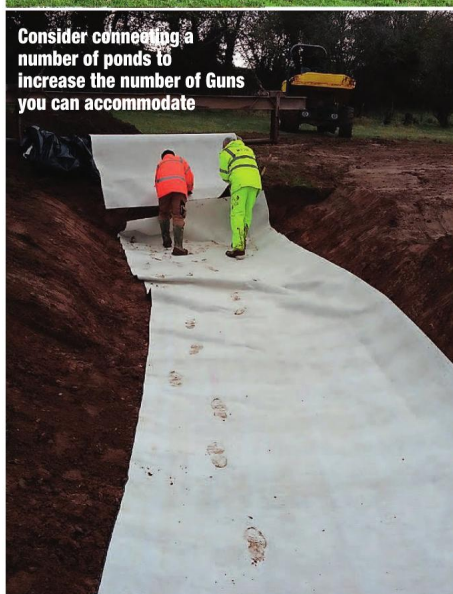
Unsure of the perfect location? Dig a trial pit



Some soil is certainly easier than others



Geotextile lining will ensure the pond has water all year



Consider connecting a number of ponds to increase the number of Guns you can accommodate



When infilling, pay attention to the gradient of the pond's sides



Siting your pond near a tree line offers the birds safe entry



Fill her up!



Visiting birds will bring vegetation so you can allow nature to take its own course

design. We have a doughnut pond with a small island that the teal love in the daytime as it provides shelter from predators, a shallow scrape and a deeper pond at the end (to name a few). All are small and offer something slightly different.

Because they are in a line, stretching over a few hundred metres, we can sit up to six Guns if needed. The topography works as each Gun sits with a bank behind him. This set-up would not work for large numbers of released ducks, as a much bigger pond would be needed.

Your soil type will determine its ability to hold water. For a scrape to work, the water will need to be near the surface in the winter or have a clean drain flowing into it. Scrapes are a valuable wildlife feature and even in the right place they do dry out in the summer, but they come into their own in the winter. They are also much cheaper to create, although they will need fairly regular desilting.

Fit for purpose

Sometimes where you want your pond just is not suitable without extra work – as pictured, lining the pond is the best option. Although it can be done with clay, in this instance it was a wiser idea to line it with Bentomat, which is a geotextile lining sandwiching a layer of clay. It was a large expense but the purpose of this pond was not just to attract ducks, but was a training pond for dogs year round. As you can see in the series of pictures, this pond was a superb design, with very



With enough thought at the design stage, your pond could double up as a useful resource for dog training

shallow edges leading to a large deep section in the middle and some stepped areas, providing habitats for all species.

Ponds do not need to be round; an irregular edge offers so much more in terms of shelter as well as edge habitat. A gentle slope to the middle is much better, and an ideal slope is deemed to be about 7° or thereabouts.

The time of year you dig your pond is entirely dependent on the soil type. Gravel soils will fill rapidly, which can be a problem for your digger during construction! Clay will take some time to fill naturally. In the summer, you will need to ensure you are not affecting nesting birds or, indeed, flooding nests.

Establishing vegetation

It's a common misconception that ponds need

help establishing vegetation. The best thing to do is to allow nature to take its course; the ground will start to vegetate on its own, and as waders and wildfowl start to visit the ponds, they will bring aquatic vegetation.

Legal considerations

There is some ambiguity regarding the need for planning permission. If a new pond is created to water livestock, then no permission is needed for the change of land use – although it may still need planning as engineering works. If you are on a SSSI or SAC/SPA, you will need consent from the statutory body.

Other things to consider include an extraction licence if you are drawing water off a river, and you will need consent if you are digging a new pond close to a main river. ■



Shooting sports threatened in Wales

Over recent months, the anti-shooting rhetoric of the Welsh government has strengthened, and Tim Weston believes that we must act now if we aren't to lose our sport in Wales for good

When we are looking at serious threats to shooting, we don't need to look any further than the Welsh Labour government. In April 2021, the Welsh people went to the ballot boxes and voted in the Welsh Labour party once again, on the back of a manifesto that for those of us who shoot or are employed in related businesses was not great.

Within the party's manifesto, they made a commitment to ban the use of snares in Wales. This not only affects gamekeepers but many hill farmers trying to protect lambs from foxes in areas where shooting just isn't viable. Another area of concern for the game shooting sector was the pledge to regulate commercial breeders of game birds, which came on the back of the Welsh government, banning all recreational shooting on any land it owned – basically the land run by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

We can look at the snare debacle as a good example of where the Welsh government is showing a total lack of knowledge or understanding of how proper wildlife management is undertaken. In late November, a 10-year recovery plan was announced to save the curlew. It said: "The aim of the Gylfinir Cymru partnership is to halt, and if possible reverse this decline by the implementation of its 10-year action plan." The plan brings together many interested parties including the National Gamekeepers' Organisation as well as the RSPB, and recognizes that predator control is vital in the protection of species like the curlew. By asking gamekeepers to be part of the plan, NRW at least must recognise the important role that they can play in saving this iconic species, which is on the brink of extinction in Wales.

Curlew nest in the uplands and in some of the most inaccessible areas of the countryside, where the only practical way to protect the nests from foxes is by snaring. So not only is the government in Wales actively trying to save a species, they also want to take away one of the best tools we have for doing just that. It's a bit like telling everyone in Wales they have to use an electric car but not allowing them to plug it in to charge it!

Knock-on effect

As well as a snaring ban that is obviously not thought through properly, the Welsh government has also been discriminating against shooting businesses by refusing to help them with the Economic Recovery Fund that was centrally

funded by the UK government to help struggling enterprises through the Covid-19 pandemic. In North Wales in particular, shooting was hit especially hard because of the local restrictions and lockdowns imposed on that primarily rural part of the country.

Small businesses that rely on the shoots in the winter will also suffer. If the shoot goes bust, teams of Guns will no longer stay in the area and even on a more local scale, the village shop won't do a trade in sandwiches and drinks from the beaters on the morning of a shoot. It all adds up. Shooting businesses that applied for the funding were turned away and told that funding would no longer be offered to "any kind of activity which in our opinion could bring the Welsh government into disrepute". This included businesses involved in recreational live quarry shooting. The National Gamekeepers' Organisation were at the forefront of taking the government to task over this, and wrote to the first minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford. A YouTube film was produced featuring a heartfelt plea to help rural people in Wales who were involved in shooting. It fell on deaf ears.

The real intentions of the Welsh government were set out in black and white in a recent letter sent to a group of organisations involved with shooting from Julie James, the Welsh Minister for Climate Change. She was replying to an introductory letter from the group of shooting organisations which included the Countryside Alliance, the National Gamekeepers' Organisation,

and BASC. Her last paragraph stated: "I understand the control of certain pest species is sometimes necessary, but just to be clear the Welsh government do not support the shooting of live quarry as a leisure activity."

To my mind, there is no basis for this view other than those in power in Wales not liking what you are doing and resolving to put a stop to it. They don't want to know or understand how shooting improves biodiversity and helps species on the brink of extinction, nor do they care that the government's main aims can be achieved far more easily, quickly and expertly if they have gamekeepers involved and actively helping.

Is there anything we can do? Well, the shooting organisations are, as we speak, making representations on your behalf, so please don't think that they are standing idle. As individuals, we can all put pressure on the Welsh Labour government and even the Labour Party in Parliament in London. Speak to your membership organisation and get a steer on what to put in an email to Mark Drakeford, Keir Starmer or your local Senedd member. Make your views known in a measured and reasonable but firm way. Members of Parliament are elected to represent the people, not to impose their views upon us. But if we don't make our views known, not only by the organisations that represent us but by the people in general, they will not understand the harm they are doing to their own constituents and reputations. The power to change attitudes and views lies with all of us, so let's make it happen. ■

Snares may look crude, but if utilized correctly they can be extremely effective



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

To join the NGO, go to www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk and help defend your sport.

PICTURE: JAMES MARCHINGTON

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Culling crows

SIR – The RSPB is right to call in
 gamekeepers and follow the evidence
 (“RSPB defends crow cull as members
 fly off the handle”, report, August 7)
 that predation can and does have an
 impact on prey populations.

Our upland predation trials show
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 of African-Eurasian
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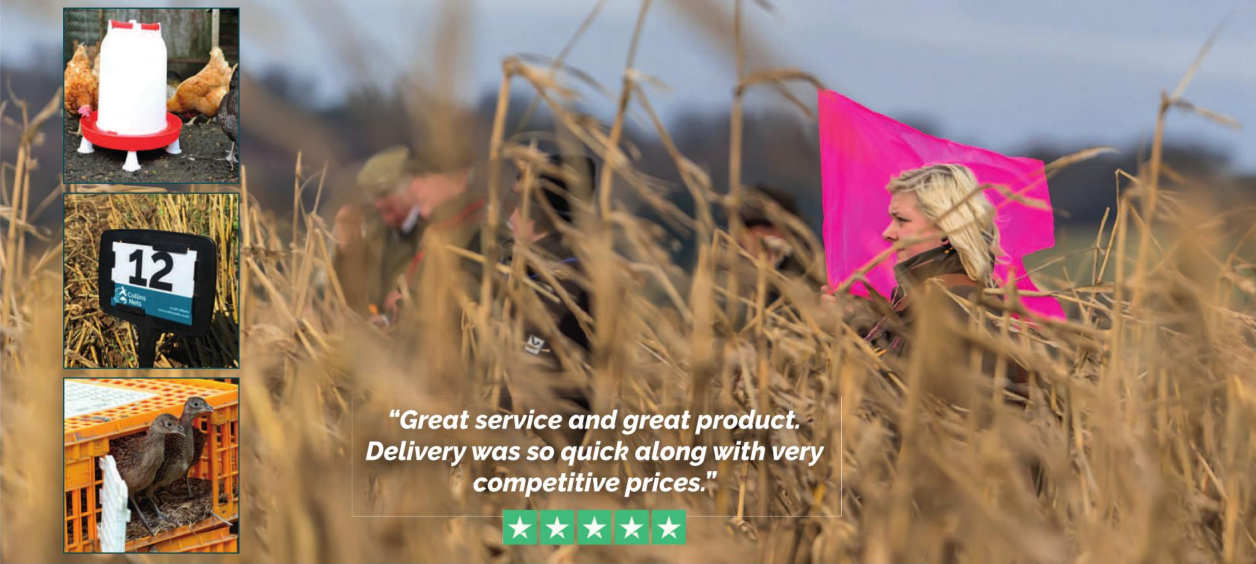


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Double or quits

All sorts of rules and opinions apply where 'rights and lefts' are concerned. For Adam Smith, their infrequency makes each occasion a memorable one. Or two.

Journalistic integrity demands total honesty, so I have to admit my first right and left was a bit of an anticlimax. In fact, you could say it didn't even begin to match the definition at the time, though my excuse would be that I was overcome by the excitement of the occasion. Today, I look back with sadness on a half-completed experience, unfortunately made worse by ribald laughter from my companions.

There were four of us involved: Mike, who drew the short straw as walker, Stan to my right, and Trevor on my left; we were a privileged trio waiting in eager anticipation of Mike's efforts to bring us success. Shielded by a dense wall of laurel, hearts pounding at the sound of wingbeats whipping the water, a raft of mallard lifted from the lake as the first glimpse of Mike's silhouette drove them into frantic flight. The moment of truth had arrived.

And it arrived, in the main, right over my head. A tightly-bunched flight of quacking, squeaking mallard, rocketing successfully for height, all seemingly aimed straight for me.

To be fair to the event, and to my own credit, I swung through a plump drake and dropped him cleanly. He fell directly behind in open ground – at which point any credit I may have gained became lost in the excitement of it all.

Despite being presented with a classic, not to say simple, chance of a double and with the air still full of immensely tempting targets, all was forgotten as juvenile elation took over from cool, calm professionalism. Breaking my gun to eject the shell and tip the live one into a hand, I turned and took half a pace towards my first ever duck, as keen as any child at a party promised a mystery parcel. Seconds later, with sanity and decorum, if not footwork back in place, I fumbled to reload, swung pointlessly and feverishly at a duck, missed, and replaced a truly memorable – if only potential – left and right with a left and a 'might have been'.

At least pride was restored to some degree later in the day. Blanking in one flank on my own while the others walked a reed bed, a spring of teal rocketed into the air from a reed-edged ditch directly in front and, to my immense pride, I dropped a drake and a duck. No-one was there to

Incoming brace of mallard



PICTURES: CERVUS UK

Traditional side-by-sides were fitted with a tighter choke on the second barrel in order to help connect with departing game



PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN

appreciate or applaud the significant moment of my first true right and left at wildfowl, but it's still a picture to treasure.

The odd thing is that, despite a long series of opportunities, my r/l tally remains low – low enough for almost each and every such event to stay red-lettered – though quite why this is remains a mystery. It doesn't apply to clays. Enough of those have been consigned to powder over the years to provide a sense of satisfaction. But for some reason, the same doesn't happen anything like as regularly on the live stuff. Flocks of avian targets may, however infrequently, sail overhead but pairs dropping to consecutive shots remain exceptionally rare. Time and again, rather than swinging gracefully onto a second, valuable moments are wasted in appreciation – or perhaps surprise – at the successful fall of the first. Or, the more likely reality, both barrels have been spent fruitlessly missing the target(s).

Luck would have it

That brace of teal was my first ever double, and all the more memorable for that, but others have since included jackdaws, rooks, coots, rabbits and hares, plus the more predictable yet even less frequent pheasants and partridges.

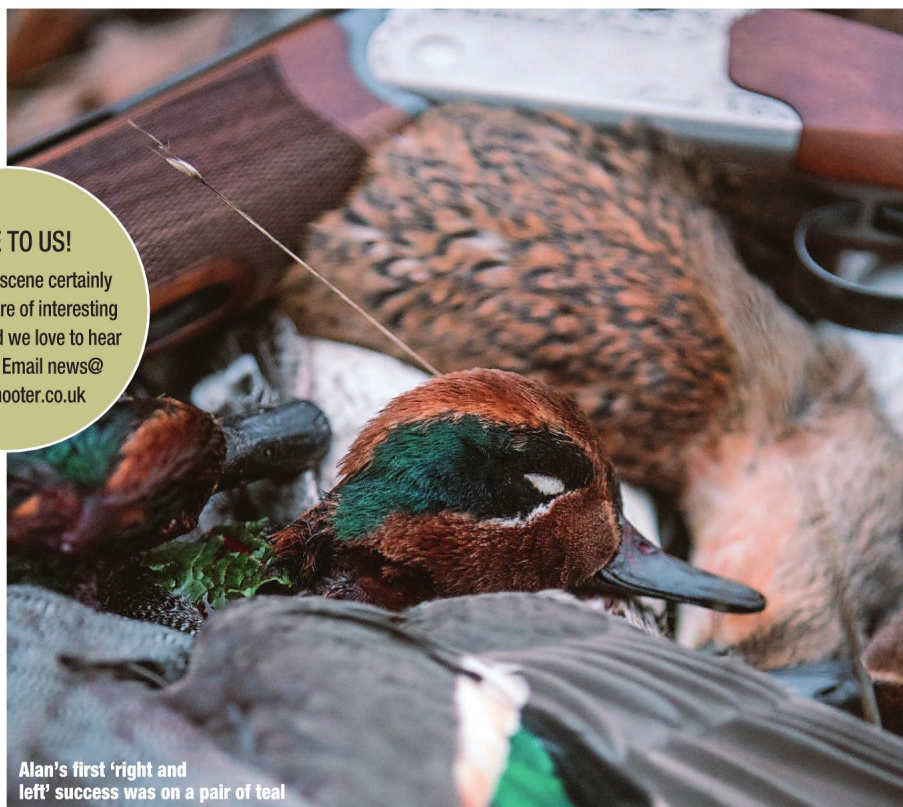
One particular memory involved a pair of pigeons, although they could also be defined as unlucky, due to my laziness as much as anything. I know sitting down can limit swing and style but, never keen to stand for hour after hour behind leafy net curtains when decoying, I have always much preferred a comfy seat – even before old age began to play havoc with my hips and other parts. So on this occasion I'd chosen an old 10-gal drum. A fine and stable base of course, combined with a folded sack cushion. But more laziness – not being bothered to build the hide net up another foot or so – meant I laid the drum down and sat on its side, cross-legged. And that's not an ideal stance for stylish swings, either. In fact, it compromised movement, but comfort took precedence, enhanced by a deeply contoured dent imposed by an oversized rear.

At first this seemed ideal, but then it spoiled things by reverting to shape as I eased up a touch

'That brace of teal was my first ever double, and all the more memorable for that. Others since have included jackdaws, hares and pheasants'

WRITE TO US!

The shooting scene certainly has its fair share of interesting characters, and we love to hear your stories. Email news@sportingshooter.co.uk



Alan's first 'right and left' success was on a pair of teal

while swinging onto the brace of woodies. The deep 'boinggg!' as the dent popped out caused both birds to flare in alarm and yet both snowballed in as crisp a right and left as anyone could wish for. Whether the result would have been quite so spectacular without the musical accompaniment I'll never know, but I like to think it gave the moment a rather sporting edge.

Perhaps the most memorable twin success was a brace of foxes, dropped with Gytorp three-shot shells from a Remington 1100 20-bore. Those Swedish cartridges were gifted to me from the personal store of Clive Wordley – who ran the Marlborough Gun Shop – and who swore by them for goose shooting. But then he was a major 20-bore fan, especially for high pheasants, a good decade or more before the 20 became recognised as a proper pro calibre and not simply a beginner's pop gun.

Back to the theme – what of the term itself? Is it 'right and left' based on the accepted configuration of a double trigger side-by-side shotgun, which is designed to fire the lesser choked right-hand barrel, followed by the tighter left barrel for a going-away target? Or 'left and right' based on the predictable swing through, from left to right, of a pair of birds? What, then, if your birds are crossing from right to left? And what if your chosen gunsmith's delight is an over-and-under – a far more common design today than when original definitions on choking were decided? Or a single-barrel semi-auto? What then? As usual with any shooting scenario, opinions will vary. Some are bound to remind us

that the 'normal' configuration of more choke in the left barrel than the right dates from the early days when all game was walked-up and second shots were at longer ranges than first. Based on that theory, with driven game yet to transform shooting sport, you could say that all modern guns (save for multi-chokes, of course, which can be choked to suit) should have less rather than more choke in the second barrel, or even be swapped over, so the right-hand barrel holds tighter patterns.

Provided you're shooting the way the books suggest, taking your first bird well out in front and the second more overhead, that should work to your advantage. Many over-and-unders have selective triggers, of course, but I'd suggest that while this might seem the perfect answer, adding another decision to the complications of mounting, swinging and pulling a trigger can confuse the issue for some.

And then, shelving for now any hopes of consecutive success, there's the morality of taking a second shot at the same bird. This brings a lot of 'what ifs' into the argument, not least for those who firmly believe that banging away with your second barrel at a bird you've stylishly missed with your first is a distinct no-no. It might seem strange, even pedantic for some, but certainly old-school shooters still hold the firmly unshakeable opinion that taking two shots at the same bird is simply unsporting. Whatever, a right and left remains the aspiration, one which driven game birds have brought closer to reality, even for me. Very occasionally. ■



Supplementary feeding

Ben Dolbear from Bright Seeds takes a close look at supplementary feeding and explains why the upcoming Mid-Tier funding has as much to do with the gamekeeper as it does the farmer

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme will open in 2022 and will remain open for applications until 2023. Within the new agreements, Mid-Tier supplementary feeding (code AB12) has a particular relevance to the game sector. It supersedes the previous

Higher Level Stewardship scheme (code HF24) and has a Capital Grants element as well as Mid-Tier funding.

The Capital Grants provides funding for water and air quality improvements as well as for hedges and dry-stone wall improvements. Mid-Tier provides capital grant funding for the same elements, but crucially offers greater funding than the capital grant on its own.

Access to Mid-Tier funding requires structures to be in place to improve the natural environment and the diversity of wildlife, water, and air quality. This will then provide environmental benefits and result in reduced carbon admissions.

Supplementary feeding

The role of keepers in helping to reduce winter mortalities of farmland song birds is long established, yet plugging the hungry gap (December to April) continues to be a great challenge. This is the reason supplementary feeding has featured in stewardship schemes from the early days, and is a vital component of Mid- and High-Tier agreements (code AB12) and will be included in the upcoming Environmental

Land Management Schemes (ELMS).

Many shoots have been planting conservation margins and winter bird food mixes long before government funding was available. At present, many stewardship options are compatible to use within a shooting estate. Winter Bird Feed (AB9), for example, can be tailored towards the game cover market, and new Mid-Tier options such as Autumn Bumble Bird (this autumn-planted mix works well as brood-rearing cover) can be another useful option. By working alongside the farm in establishing options that will be most financially rewarding, shoots can directly benefit from the increase in stewardship area.

How does Mid-Tier work?

Farmers and land managers can enter five-year agreements for revenue and capital payments and Wildlife Offer revenue-only agreements. These fundings will support practices that deliver a range of environmental benefits.

With Mid-Tier you can apply for as many or as few options as you like and can include revenue as well as capital options. There are 150+ options to choose from with the most common being:



Bright Seeds provide both a pre-mix for use with home grown wheat and a full mix where the wheat is included



Mid-Tier winter supplementary feeding must include 70% cereals and 30% small seeds

‘The role of keepers in helping to reduce winter mortalities of farmland songbirds is long established, and is real challenge’

- Permanent grassland with very low inputs (£95/ha)
- Management of hedgerows (£8/100m)
- Winter bird food (£640/ha)
- Overwinter stubble (£84/ha)
- 4–6m buffer on cultivated land (£353/ha)
- Tree surgery, coppicing (£96.50–200/tree)
- Fencing (£4/m)
- Wooden field gate (£390/gate)
- Planting new hedges (£11.60/m)
- Concrete yard renewal (£27.14/sqm; high water quality priority areas only)
- Livestock and machinery hardcore tracks (£33/m; high water quality priority areas only)

This is just a small selection of options which are available within the grant, the scheme can be tailored to the individual and particular areas.

The current AB12 option is only available to those growing a minimum of 1ha AB9 in their agreement. Under the arrangement, the grower gets paid £632 per tonne feed they make available between December and April.

Tonnage is limited to 1 tonne per 2ha of AB9 in the agreement and it has to be ratio of 70% cereals with 30% specialist small seeds and must be fed at a rate not less than 25kg at two designated ‘feeding areas’, which must be firm and free-draining, and in close proximity to enhanced overwinter stubbles, game cover or wild bird mixtures.

Only agreements with the AB12 option can have feed rides and feed hoppers in AB9 (winter bird feed) plots.

Bright Seeds provide both a pre-mix for use with home grown wheat and a full mix where the wheat is already included.

Records must be kept and only 10% of the feed can be fed through hoppers. This option is incredibly attractive to any farm that accommodates a shoot as the keeper/farmer is already having to go out and place feed, so might as well get paid to do it! The option also makes extending the feed period post-shooting financially viable



The autumn-planted Autumn Bumble Bird mix can be another useful option for Mid-Tier funding

Prohibited activities

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you have not carried out any prohibited activities. Mid-Tier rules prevent the:

- use hoppers to supply more than 10% of the total amount of feed provided during the specified feeding period
- use of tailings (small seeds and chaff removed from the harvested crop) as supplementary feed
- use of a mix which contains more than 70% cereals
- use any one species to supply more than 50% of the non-cereal seed component by weight

Small seed species that can be used:

- Canary seed
- Linseed
- Oil seed rape
- Red millet
- Sunflower hearts
- White millet

The certified mix can be achieved through using Bright Seeds AB12 pre mix (for the 30% of small seeds) with 70% farm saved wheat. Once the regulatory mix has been satisfied, maize can be fed in addition, and a popular option is Bright’s Cut Maize with aniseed to give extra starch/protein to help farmland and game birds ride out the colder months.

Benefits to shooting

- Diverse feeding for game birds – variety is the spice of life!
- Keepers/farmers are already out feeding so this makes financial sense
- It pays the farmer/keeper to extend feeding past the end of the shoot season
- Wild game birds will benefit from the option as it will help to improve the bird’s condition coming in to the breeding season
- Decreases the mortality rate of farmland songbirds

GOLDEN RULES

Make sure the winter supplementary feeding mix includes cereals (not maize) at 70% and other small seeds at 30% (this is a minimum of 30% of the total mix by weight). The small seed mix must contain at least three species with no individual species being more than 50% by weight.



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Make the most of Beaters' Day

The practice of thanking beaters and pickers-up with a free end-of-season shoot day is a much-loved tradition – be sure you make the most of the day with Simon O'Leary's tips

Well, what a comeback from last year – it still wasn't 100% but nonetheless a spirited return indeed. The game shooters have been out in force, and all seems very healthy and upbeat. Most shoots have been booked out and some have even been providing extra days where possible – it's so good to see an upturn and it's not before time!

I particularly enjoy my January shooting, as it

extends the fun times, steering the mind away from the otherwise bland sensation that descends post-festivities. Expense, indulgence and consumption all catch up with you, but, as ever, it's always worth the pain!

January also heralds the end of the season, with its bare landscape, sparse and static, the calm before the growing storm that is spring. However, it is also, in my mind, the best month to shoot, and apart from the possibility of dwindling numbers, the birds are strong and powerful, perfectly tuned to their surroundings. The shooter must be on his or her best form and yes, there is a need for lead!

It is therefore no coincidence that the end of this month will see the long-served tradition of the Beaters' Days, the big thank you for all the arduous work throughout the year, and yes, I do mean the entire year. I think some may still assume that the beater is somebody that turns up to the first shoot and finishes on the last. Consider the amount of work that is required through the months leading up to that first day. Clearing or building pens, repairing water pipes, tidying the shoot shed, moving feed, etc. These are all annual

tasks and not for the faint-hearted. So, a little shooting action at the end of the season is clearly the least that a land or shoot owner could provide.

As I said earlier though, these birds are now high octane, fast, cute and unforgiving. This will excite the seasoned shooter no end, as he or she pits her wits against the skittish partridge or the rocket-propelled pheasant, but what about the less seasoned Gun, or indeed the young shots amongst the team? They have committed just the same, so how do they get the best from the day?

The obvious suggestion, of course, is the clay ground, but not necessarily the clay shoot. Try and get to a school where one can practise, firstly without hordes of other shooters, and secondly with the focus on say two or three relevant stands (i.e. targets that best represent the flight of a game bird). Another option is the same, but to extend this to a guided round, or 'instructor practice' as it is otherwise known. This is absolutely NOT a lesson, but will give you, the shooter, a little more confidence with some light pointers – depending on how forgiving the instructor is feeling! It will also give you access to the tower targets, the most relevant of all. Try to approach these targets

The beaters' wagon – where the greatest of friendships are formed!



SIMON O'LEARY



Simon is the co-founder (alongside Benita Wright) and head instructor of Hownhall Shooting School. He has been coaching for over 10 years, focusing strongly on training for game shooting.

With expert tuition at Hownhall provided by Simon and a selection of highly trained professional coaches, and with access to a range of simulated game targets including grouse butts, Hownhall is a great place for game shots to tune up between seasons.

Hownhall is in association with Hull Cartridge and in partnership with Le Chameau.

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'In January, the birds are strong and powerful and shooters must be on their best form'



Beaters' Days offer a great chance to introduce youngsters to the field in an informal environment



Here's to a day of successful shooting
and carriers full of birds!

exactly as you would in the field, gun down and focused. Possibly have the targets randomly, without the call of “pull”. Get as near as you can to the real thing; it is all invaluable practice.

Do not forget your footwork either, as this is equally essential when in the field, allowing more time to prepare your gun for the line of the bird. A simple sidestep left or right will ensure a neat placement of the muzzle, ready to swing-through, or away from your quarry. Correct foot placement will also ensure the muzzle travels through the line of the bird, rather than being pulled below, as an overzealous, over stretched swing will undoubtedly do.

Mirror mounting at home is also invaluable, especially for the young shot, as not only does it perfect the mount process but it also aids an overall feeling of familiarity – an absolute must. Practise closing the gun correctly (i.e. barrels pointing downwards and lifting the stock up to the action). On this note, we have created a series called The Basics on our Hownhall Shooting YouTube channel, a free source of information for all budding shooters. Do a little practise as often as possible, reinforcing good habits and maintaining condition.

So, the Beaters' Day arrives with much excitement. You may be lucky enough to shoot through, or it could be a beat and shoot affair; either is very good. For the younger shot, who will of course be teamed with a suitable chaperone, the choice of peg is essential. I realise we all pick random numbers, but a little kindness is required in this delicate situation. You all know the ground, the hotspots, the low points and indeed the blanks. Set a youngster up with the chance of mid-range birds, tucked near a spinney or thin low tree line, giving them that chance to not only

experience the magic, but even better that of connecting with a bird – creating a truly memorable moment, a memory etched in the mind! Wonderful!

As for the rest of us, just enjoy the day you have earned. You will probably miss-mount, you'll possibly stop the gun, and the word “behind” will be echoed throughout the day, I am sure!

Conversely, you could all be amazing shots and wipe the board clean, so to speak. The key to all these events is calmness and consideration and more than anything else, enjoyment.

Life, day to day, as we are all well aware can be testing enough. Switch on, put it in the cheek and keep it moving – this will take care of 90%, the rest is up to you! ■



BEAT THAT!

Often, beaters work on the shoot all year, ensuring everything is ready for the season ahead. Legends in their own lifetime!



Hunting high and low

Happy to be back on the peg once again, Tony Jackson and his faithful dog enjoy a successful morning under pheasants – that is, until hardworking Elvis fails to reappear from the cover

In the December issue, you may recall that I reported on my one and only driven day's shooting last year and it had been, for my part, an unqualified disaster! While my companion Guns fared well, my shooting, to put it gently, was appalling. I failed to connect with a single bird over the first two drives, despite a dozen or so reasonable birds and it was not until the third drive that I managed to scramble a crossing hen. That was for me the first and last day's sport of the season, as the remainder of the shooting month was brought to a Covid conclusion.

So, when I was invited once again to join this modest but delightful shoot, I practised at home, read the wisdom offered by the books of those outstanding shots Robert Churchill and Percy Stanbury, and enjoyed a brace of tuition lessons from a renowned local coach. The day was bright and genial and I was looking forward to forgetting my earlier shame, while my wife, Charlotte, kindly agreed to act as my dog

handler. What could go wrong?

At 9.15am, I met the team of Guns and the beaters, most of whom I knew well, while another picker-up, an old friend Nigel, turned out with his excellent red Labrador. Meanwhile, the keeper told us that there were numerous pheasants, while several dozen duck might offer some really high birds on a nearby pool. The day looked very promising! However, we fell into an uneasy silence as we approached the first drive, a field of game cover adjacent to a long, dense wood, as the birds were jittery. The beaters departed, while the team of Guns and pickers-up quietly walked across two grass fields by a hedge and a line of tall oaks. Here, the Guns sorted out their pegs.

My number was No. 7, behind a belt of tall trees on my left while in front was a high hedge.

My wife held the dog, Elvis, and we could see no other Guns, though two were hidden by my left. I loaded the old Cogswell & Harrison; although it was made in 1889, the Damascus barrels had

passed the Birmingham Proof House with 1oz of lead shot. The keeper blew his horn for the first drive and I raised the hammers of the gun. There was a long pause and then I heard several shots from my left, while several birds thumped to the ground. Then, a reasonable hen appeared, high enough in front. I swung and, to my delight, the bird fell dead in the wood's edge. A few moments later, a second hen also fell dead in the same spot, but a high bird overhead was missed! There were several further shots from the other Guns, and then a whistle to end the drive.

All hands on deck

My wife left Elvis to quickly return with the two birds, and then he was sent to pick any further birds in the nearby wood. We walked into the open clearing as he came back with another two birds and then hunted again.

It was then the drama started. The birds were being collected and the Guns were slowly walking toward the second drive, but my dog was missing! I blew my whistle again and again, but Elvis was nowhere to be seen.



Tired Elvis after his woodland escapade!

All the dogs were behaving well at the beginning of the day



'I swung the barrels of my old Cogswell & Harrison and, to my delight, the hen pheasant fell dead in the wood's edge'

This was, to say the least, extremely uncharacteristic for he would normally appear from cover, with or without a bird. Twenty minutes passed and the remaining Guns were forced to continue to the next drive, a pool for a duck drive nearby. Dogless, my wife and I trudged round the side of the previous cover for half an hour as we listened to shot after shot fired at several packs of high mallard over the Guns. I whistled again and again, but there was no sign of my dog and we both began to wonder if he had collapsed and died in dense bramble cover. Yet he was a fit, healthy dog, even at 11 years old.

Eventually, we decided to return to the house and yard where the beaters and Guns had originally set out in the hope that Elvis had gone back to look for us. But he was not there. The Guns and beaters had now returned from the duck drive, but no one had seen any hint of the dog. The third drive was now underway but my good friend, Nigel, whose dog Ned frequently works together with Elvis, decided to help with the search. We could hear distant shots from the next drive, but my gun was now in its case and locked up in the car.

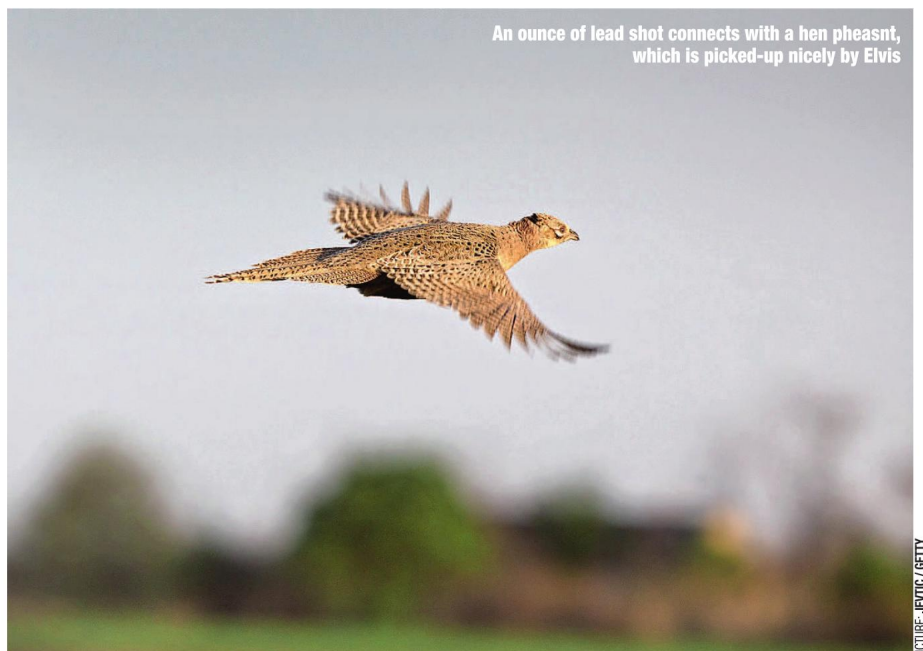
My wife and I set off to check the outlying hedges and coverts, while Nigel headed towards the long, deep wood in the first drive. By now, the dog had been missing for nearly an hour-and-a-half, and while one kind beater had phoned to check with any local villagers who might have come across him, there was still no sign. Suddenly, to our joy, we heard a distant call from Nigel to say he had found Elvis! Very tired and exhausted, the missing dog had been discovered in the far end of the distant wood. It was apparent he had sent off for a pricked bird which he'd followed but eventually lost. Bewildered, he had meandered through the wood and not been able to hear my distant whistle.

Relief on both sides! Elvis was extremely muddy and drank an entire bucket of water, and there was, of course, no question of carrying on. Exhausted, he collapsed in the car. The keeper was extremely relieved the dog had not come to harm and he insisted I take home a brace of birds. Next day, Elvis was very stiff and only too pleased to lie down in his basket. But three days later, after being checked out by our vet, he was back to his own self. For my part, at least I had shot a brace of birds! ■



The beaters worked the woodland edges well, sending plenty of birds up for the Guns

PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN



An ounce of lead shot connects with a hen pheasant, which is picked-up nicely by Elvis

PICTURE: JEVITIC/GETTY



Lock, stock & barrel

Diggory Hadoke is overjoyed to come into possession of a classic 1885 Stephen Grant 12-bore, but soon discovers that everything isn't quite as it seems

Any phone call resulting in the chance to buy a nice hammer gun is welcome, and when I received a call last month from a chap saying his father had left him a Stephen Grant a few years ago and that he now wanted to sell it, my interest was, naturally, aroused.

We arranged a meeting, and out of the gun slip came a bar-action hammer gun in apparently good condition, but it did not look like any Stephen Grant I had ever seen. Nothing is engraved on the locks by way of maker's name, so I looked at the rib. Sure enough, it read 'Stephen Grant', with the correct address of 67A St James's Street, London. The barrels are Damascus, of fine quality, and look exactly like those one would expect a Stephen Grant hammer gun to sport. The serial number dates the gun to 1885 and many would assume this is, therefore, an 1885 Stephen Grant 12-bore in good condition.

However, the style and quality of the lock and stock is not what one would expect from a maker of Grant's pedigree. Stephen Grant made very

few hammer guns of less than top quality. Even those with simpler engraving are of the highest build quality. While nicely made and retaining a lot of original colour hardening, this gun simply does not match Grant's standards. Yet, the barrels are exactly what I'd expect to see on one.

On closer inspection, the lumps show a drilled hole where a rotating cam would normally engage with the extractors. It is no

longer there, and the extractor action is totally different, acting on a stud on the knuckle.

The answer? I'd put money on the barrels having been fitted to a new action. It is well filed-up, and the fences angle in to a very well-shaped shell to begin the line of the rib. It has all been done very nicely. Perhaps this

was an 'in the white' action that someone finished and stocked to fit the barrels. The bar sports 'London View' marks from the Proof House and the barrels show re-proof marks dating post-1925.

The fore-end wood has been done to match. Inletting, wood-to-metal fit and chequer is all of a

decent standard and it has an Anson pushrod release. The semi-pistol grip stock has dark lines running lengthwise, not fancy but attractive, and the colour is a nice deep red/brown. It even has a nicely fitted and engraved heel plate. None of the pins or screws look like they have been worked and they line up correctly. The woodwork, locks and action look like they have seen very little use.

Mystery solved

This seems like a lot of work just to accommodate an old set of Damascus barrels. Yet, there is the evidence. As Sherlock Holmes observed: once you have dismissed the impossible, what you have left, however improbable, must be the truth. A set of old, worn, but good Damascus barrels on an essentially new, lesser-quality, later action with stock and fore-end to match.

It looks like someone decided the (not inconsiderable) cost of a set of barrels could be saved by reusing these and building a new gun around them. They measure very well (over 30 thou') and they have been shortened; now measuring 26½".

The barrels would have been 30" originally, but shorter lengths were fashionable from the 1930s

GET IN TOUCH

Diggory Hadoke runs Vintage Guns, the specialist site for buying, selling and repairing classic British shotguns and rifles. Contact him on 01584 878485 or go to www.vintageguns.co.uk

The style and quality of the lock and stock is not what one would expect of a genuine Stephen Grant



PICTURES: DIGGORY HADOKE



Despite its dubious history, this is undoubtedly a beautifully-made gun

until well into the 1990s. Several makers specialised in certain lengths; Churchill with his 25" 'XXV' guns and Cogswell & Harrison with 27" as a preferred length. Much of the gun trade settled on 28" as ideal, but the peculiar 26½" length was most closely associated with Holland & Holland, who named their short gun the 'Brevis' and favoured this. The vogue was for light, fast-handling guns and 30" barrels were seen as old-fashioned. What we have here is not especially light or whippy. It feels solid in the hands but shoots nicely. It has 2½" chambers and nitro proof marks, and it is in very good condition. There is no reason to think that it would not be a great field companion for a lifetime of fun.

However, it cannot honestly be described as a Stephen Grant, even if the barrels do say it is. Good Stephen Grant hammer guns command high prices. I handled one recently for a customer who had paid over £7,000 for one at auction. So, what value to put on this?

If it had no Grant association and was a Birmingham trade gun, or manufactured by one of the many factories turning out all grades of gun, based on quality and condition, it should be worth £1,000. How does the Stephen Grant name on the barrels affect this? Only the market will tell us that, when it sells. ■

'As Sherlock Holmes observed, once you have dismissed the impossible, what you have left must be the truth'



The extractor action is totally different than what you might expect, acting on a stud on the knuckle



At first glance, this would appear to be a fine-quality 1885 Stephen Grant 12-bore

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Sporting Gundog

The essential guide to owning and working a gundog

with
Howard Kirby
Gundog Trainer

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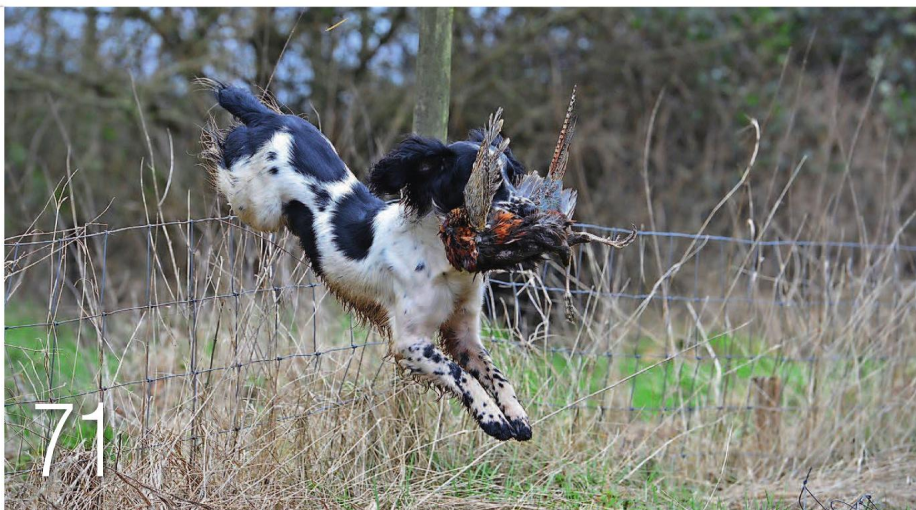
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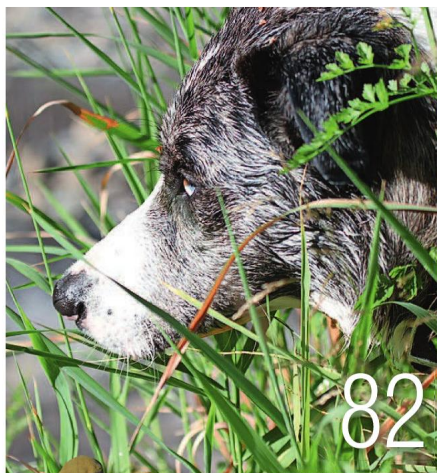
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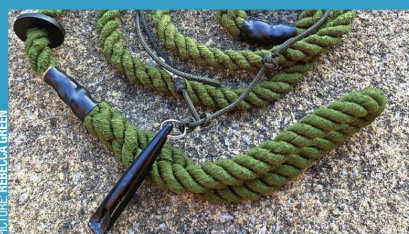


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**HOWARD'S TIP
OF THE MONTH:**
Spare parts!

Kit your vehicle out with a spare whistle and lead. It sounds obvious, but it really is a game changer if you end up on a shoot or training day without one or the other.



PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN



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Elbow problems

A reluctance from your gundog to obey commands may not necessarily be due to disobedience, as Vicky Payne explains

Recent data from veterinary practices across the UK suggests that more than 1 in 200 dogs suffer from problems with their elbows. More alarming for the gundog community is that Labradors, golden retrievers, and English springer spaniels are all in the five most commonly affected breeds.

Symptoms include lameness and reluctance to exercise, but highly-driven gundogs may work on despite the pain, and if both elbows are affected lameness can be more difficult to spot. Pain can make dogs grumpy, or to appear stubborn during training, even if lameness isn't obvious. Dogs with elbow problems may develop a gait where the legs swing outwards as the dog avoids bending the elbow joint, or they may become reluctant to jump in and out of vehicles. Some dogs with elbow pain sit with their elbows turned out from the body, and in others the joint is obviously

enlarged. As dogs carry 60% of their weight on their front legs, and this is added to when carrying a heavy cock pheasant, even retrieving issues can be linked to elbow pain. Elbow arthritis was one of the reasons for euthanasia in 40% of the dogs that died during the study.

Although traumatic injuries can result in elbow arthritis, most cases will be due to developmental problems such as Elbow Dysplasia (ED) and Humeral Intracondylar Fissure (HIF).

Elbow Dysplasia is a term which covers four different conditions: Fragmented Medial Coronoid Process (FCP), Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD), Ununited Anconeal Process (UAP) and Medial Compartment Disease. Dogs can have more than one of these problems at the same time. Your vet may suspect elbow pain based on watching your dog move and manipulating the joints. A position called flexed supination should cause no

discomfort in a normal dog, but can be very painful in a dog with ED. The next diagnostic tool normally comes in the form of x-rays, but referral for a CT scan may be required due to the complex 3-D nature of the elbow joint.

Affected dogs can often be managed medically with a combination of weight management, controlled exercise, hydrotherapy, joint supplements, and prescription medications. Surgery can help some dogs and can include removal of bone fragments, removal of cartilage flaps, tendon releasing operations, or even surgery to cut the ulna (a bone in the forearm).

The risk of Elbow Dysplasia can be reduced by choosing a puppy from parents who have been graded under the KC/BVA Elbow Grading Scheme, where orthopaedic specialists scrutinise two x-rays of each elbow and give an applicable grade.

0 Radiographically normal, but these dogs may have faults which can't be seen and may still pass poor genetics on to their puppies.

1 Mild arthritis.

2 Moderate arthritis or a primary lesion with no arthritis yet.

3 Severe arthritis or a primary lesion with arthritis.

Only dogs with a 0 score should be used for breeding, and attention should be paid to the scores of their relatives.

Spaniel breeds have an additional elbow problem to be concerned about, but the cause of Humeral Intracondylar Fissure (previously known as Incomplete Ossification of the Humeral Condyle – IOHC) remains unclear despite extensive research. Originally thought to be a developmental abnormality, it is now considered more likely to be a stress fracture. Pedigree analysis suggests that the risk can be inherited, so the current advice is to avoid breeding from affected dogs. HIF can cause mild pain and gait abnormalities, or may go unnoticed until the joint fractures, often due to a very minor trauma. Joints with a fissure can be stabilised with a screw to minimize the chance of a fracture and to reduce pain.

There is no screening scheme available as early signs of HIF are often not visible on plain x-rays, and CT scanning is too expensive for a screening scheme. In addition, some dogs have had normal CT scans and later developed HIF. Medial Coronoid Disease is more common in spaniels with elbow lameness than HIF, so elbow grading is advised in spaniels as well as retrievers. ■



PICTURE: RAY HOOD / COUNTRY TRAIL IMAGES

FEET FORWARD

Dogs carry 60% of their weight on their front legs, and even more when carrying a cock pheasant.

Gun sense in field and foreshore

Knowing how to behave around guns and gunshot is an essential part of your gundog's skill set. Use Howard Kirby's top tips to train a dog that is both hard hunting and steady in the field

If you take the time to watch experienced dogs at work in the shooting field, you will immediately see just how aware they are of the Guns. You'll notice dogs sitting in wait on the foreshore, around a teal pond, in a pigeon hide, on a peg, in the beating line, sat on peg or stalking deer (my goodness, that's some list) each individual dog acutely aware of any movement from the shooter. The click of a safety catch or the shouldering and swing of the gun will see an instant response. I have a wonderful piece of video in which one of my early Labradors, Apollo, starts to frantically wag his tail every time I push the safety catch forward.

This awareness, or 'gun sense', comes with experience, so my intention is to use this month's

article to explore some of the techniques we use to build this essential skill. Dogs that have been properly trained to understand the function of the gun and the benefits it will bring them will make it their business to 'mark' the fall of game.

From the beginning

Almost as soon as a puppy has a drive to race after a thrown retrieve, we can start to throw the dummy and immediately clap our hands. This 'clap' is done to initiate a positive connection to a noise. Clearly, the clap of your hands carries nothing like the volume that a gunshot will produce, but after just a few short sessions you'll see the youngster look expectantly for a thrown dummy when you clap your hands. This relatively

insignificant behaviour development is actually really quite important; we have a positive association with a sharp noise, and the pup is already learning to expect and use his eyes to locate the 'shot' dummy. We are teaching the puppy to use two of his senses to catch the prey: ears, then eyes, and then ears again. Have you figured out where the secondary use of his hearing fits into a retrieve?

Early retrieving generally relies on the pups eyes to mark the fall of the dummy. For the rough, tough, mud-plugging wildfowlers among us, your dog will often be working inside a hide or behind a screen during the hours of darkness. That's a pretty tall order! Therefore, teaching the dog to listen out for the thud of the dummy or splash of a bird in water is going to be essential.

Although I've related the need for this to wildfowling, this knowledge and use of their senses will, of course, assist any retrieving dog. Often, as birds expire after being shot, their nervous system triggers a rapid beating of their wings. This can really help a dog out on a tricky retrieve.

Armed with all these objectives, let's think about some of the exercises and techniques you might use during your training sessions to develop this knowledge in your gundog.

Carrying a gun

As most of you will be well aware, it is much easier to make a dog gun shy than it is to fix it. In spite of all the readily available information, people still manage to terrify their dogs with gunshot. We all make mistakes and need to learn, but making a dog frightened of a gun can make life really difficult for them. Some dogs are absolutely terrified by gunshot, and this can lead to them becoming frightened by any loud noise. So be careful to ensure that you do everything possible

Some dogs hate the sound of the gun at first – so start gently

Howard is now offering online, tutor-led gundog training courses to suit a variety of levels of experience. Go to: mullenscote Gundogs.co.uk for more info.



PICTURE: NICK RIDLEY

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PICTURE: RAY HOOD / COUNTRY TRAIL IMAGES

‘Teaching your dog to listen out for the thud of a dummy or splash of a bird in water is essential for dogs sitting in darkness within a hide’

»

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PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN

to build a positive understanding between the dog and guns.

As I mentioned earlier, we like to introduce a hand clap each time we throw a dummy. If it's possible for you to carry an 'empty' gun, then we can start to mount the gun and point it at dummies as they're thrown. I know of several people that achieve this part of the process using a toy gun; the husband of one of my clients made the most fantastic imitation shot gun!

In due course, we can introduce a shot. It's essential that early shots are fired at a distance of 100m, ideally using a blank cartridge to reduce the noise. Taking the time to introduce a gun and gunshot might be seen by some as being overly

cautious. Most dogs are fairly robust when it comes to noise – but for some, while they will show no signs of fear, it only takes one thoughtless or unexpected shock from gunfire to make them incredibly nervous.

Careful introduction to gunshot is a necessary aspect of these techniques, but we are actually here to discuss how we can give a youngster a headstart with its gun sense. Subconsciously, the dog will be seeing and absorbing everything a 'gun' does before, during and after taking a shot.

Once you get as far as being able to use a real shot, we can fire at the ground and throw the dummy into the area where the shot has struck. This will help a youngster to make an association

Steadiness to the gun off the lead is the end goal – but don't rush to get here before building in the basics



PICTURE: RAY HOOD / COUNTRY TRAIL IMAGES

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with the shot scent. This quite unique scent will be on shot quarry once we move onto the real thing. Clearly this is evoking what we best know our dogs for – their incredible nose and ability to 'take scent'. Because we will be firing the shot at a low angle, it is also likely to leave a stronger shot trail in the air.

Absolute reality

There is no substitute for the real thing. Dogs that get 'shot over' regularly will obviously have an advantage over those that aren't. For many gundog owners, this is one of the most difficult aspects of training to create. I hope this article will give you just a few ideas as to some of the many things you can do at home and in your training fields to enhance both your dogs and your own enjoyment.

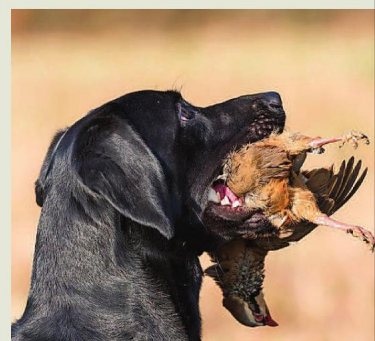
Concluding an article on a negative is not my thing. However, when a newcomer to dog training announces, "I'm going to get one of those dummy launcher things," alarm bells start to ring in my head. For all of my talk about teaching your dog to celebrate the sound of gunshot, many young dogs are accidentally taught to go ballistic at the sound of a gun. When I say 'ballistic', I mean their brain goes into overdrive and they get over-excited. This state of excitement is way too much, and is not what we are trying to achieve.

There's loads of fun to be had. But don't frighten your neighbours with the toy gun, remember to enjoy your dogs, and keeeeeep training! ■

LATE NIGHT RETRIEVING

While discussing training dogs for wildfowling with a good friend of mine, he was telling me how he'd trained some dogs by doing retrieving sessions in the dark, which really encouraged his young dogs to listen out for the fall of dummies and birds. This is something that can easily be done indoors with a young pup. Do be careful that you don't frighten a youngster so that he tears off at the sound of a falling dummy and runs into furniture.

To help encourage the dog to use its ears, you can sit a slightly older youngster up and throw a dummy over a hedge, or leave the dog in a Sit/ Stay and walk around some trees or bushes that will obscure their vision. Consider the ground, as differences in the cover that the dummy falls into will give off a variety of different sounds.



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Breed-specific training

Ryan Kay discusses training with your breed of dog in mind and the difficulties of transitioning from achieving in a boring environment to getting results in the most exciting one

The other day, I happened to catch a snippet from Graeme Hall (TV's The Dogfather) on my Facebook feed. He was offering his three best tips for dog training. Tip one: "If you want a behaviour to increase, you've got to reward it one way or another". Tip two: "If you want a behaviour to decrease... well, you've got a couple of choices. You might be able to ignore it, or you've got to make it uncomfortable in an appropriate way". And the last tip: "Get your timing right. If you tell a dog off, or even praise them after the event, they won't understand what you're on about". Now I happen to like these tips, but many don't. Mr Hall seems to come under some criticism for what some people call out of date methods; especially for tip two.

You can interpret tip two how you want, but I'm guessing that for some behaviourists the word 'uncomfortable' is not a word they would want to associate with any methods when it comes to training a dog. I'm not a behaviourist but I am a realist and it appears to me that with any training methods or advice out there, there seems to be one aspect that may be often overlooked; that is the breed's specific traits. I'd be stupid to apply

the same train of thought to all the different breeds that arrive here for a lesson with their owner. I say this because the 'one rule for all' definitely looks to be a current trend notwithstanding the many new pop-up trainers that have appeared recently as a result of an online course that states they are now in fact a qualified dog trainer! To a large extent, this is a knock-on effect of the lockdown. More dogs, needing more trainers, needing more courses to create and qualify trainers. I'm primarily talking about general dog trainers here, which is where I feel some problems lie. Respectable gundog trainers usually have a different outlook to the 'all dogs are the same' style of training that I'm seeing with many of the new general dog trainers. I maintain that it is hugely important to train with the breed in mind – training which accommodates and caters for that particular breed and its traits.

Following on from breed specifics, the next consideration is the personality we have in front of us: a meek and soft nature or maybe a jovial and

daft sort. A soft type or hard-headed type can obviously exist within the same breed, even the same litter, but the genetics will present its instinctive behaviour.

With all these things to consider, I'd like to go back to Graeme Hall's tip two and why his statement causes such a stir. You see, dog training is evolving all the time; driven by an ever-changing understanding, there are new methods and teaching techniques

emerging constantly. Many new trainers know just one way to train... the latest and most recent. But just because it's the most up-to-date doesn't mean it's the best or that it gets the best results.

Many traditionalists go against using treats as a training aid, claiming the dog should do it because it wants to. I understand their point of view, but in my mind, treats are just that, a training aid, something that will reward the dog for its most recent behaviour.

In a boring environment where the surroundings are pretty uninteresting, a treat is a high-value thing, but anyone working a gundog in the

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Moving from toys in a small area of garden, to more exciting environments such as a pond or field without game is an important step

When out in the field, you should know that your dog is steady and on the whistle



PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN

shooting field will know that those treats have little value whatsoever and even waving a roast chicken under the dog's nose is unlikely to rank anyway near as high as a shot pheasant falling from the sky or a rabbit running across its path! And this brings me back to breed specifics. It's the promises from the new trainers that claim to be able to shape behaviour of a high-drive spaniel by gaining a perfect recall or heel in their class environment and thinking this is training the dog. Of course, it is, to an extent, for something like a pug, a miniature poodle or a King Charles spaniel, it'll transfer quite well to the real world outdoors away from the village hall environment. But for a well-bred gundog of any breed, there's no chance we can simply switch that nose off and achieve that same indoor perfection straight away. Unfortunately, new owners fed this unrealistic expectation have to find out the hard way.

So, we're out in the countryside where the treats are worthless, the dog has discovered other animals out there, fun things that move and look chaseable. They've maybe even discovered scent and game. Their inner drive from inherited genetics is bringing out that required persistence. Now what are you going to do?

'It is hugely important to train with the breed in mind – training which accommodates and caters for that particular breed and its traits'

A solution

As I say, training aids, such as treats and toys, are absolutely fine in my book. They're useful training aids for us to help condition a behaviour, but we mustn't get stuck in that comfort zone of achieving in an environment that doesn't replicate the real world. This is where I feel some new trainers are not taking into account the hunting gundog and what they were bred for. For those

folk wanting to work their dog, having achieved a good standard of training in the classroom etc, there needs to be a transitional level of training that helps ease dog and handler to the real world. A world where the initial high-value training aids don't work. The achievable area for my clients and their dogs is our outdoor menage/training paddock. Fenced in from the neighbouring fields so no wandering hares or rabbits can venture in

Treats and toys do have their place in gundog training, says Ryan



»

and leave a distracting scent. In there we have some agility equipment, some hoops, marker polls, and a little retrieving alley. Outside of the menage and in the immediate vicinity are other paddocks, a pond, some Indian runner ducks knocking about and a couple of hedgerows. Further on from there, there's a small strip of white grasses and a strip of saplings. After that, there's horses, pigs and chickens. After that, there's rushes and a grass hunting area which is adjacent to the final area – a large training pen (otherwise known as 'the sweetshop') containing chickens, quail, rabbits and the odd wild pheasant that drops in.

Now to get to the sweetshop, a client's dog must transition from the menage and through the other areas first, so everything that CAN be achieved in the menage, must be firstly nailed in the menage.

Moving to the next area ups the ante and reveals a little more for the dog. Treats may still be of value here but are probably less so. The important thing now is interaction. In the menage, we're always interacting, just like in the village hall for others, but a big mistake is to then go to an outside environment and not interact, as the dog then thinks 'ah so we don't interact here and I get to learn about this new environment by myself'.

The reward

When the initial training aids like treats don't work, have lost their value or simply need moving away from, here's an example of providing a different reward. A canvas dummy can be quite exciting in the menage, but just by moving to the next place the dummy can then easily become less exciting. It's a common problem for those with hunting dogs that are wanting to do working tests. In a working test, we're basically asking a dog to hunt gamey or interesting ground in pursuit of something that isn't a canvas dummy and then instructing it to retrieve a thing that they haven't been hunting for. If we're insistent on working tests, then we need that dummy retrieving.

For that to start happening, I like to make the reward the very thing that they want to be doing instead of retrieving the dummy – the hunt! This does rely on you already having control in the

'Anyone working in the shooting field will know that a bit of roast chicken is unlikely to rank as high as a shot pheasant falling from the sky'

Don't get bogged down training in the same environment. As soon as your dog achieves in one environment, you must start the transition to the next.

Hunting for game is the ultimate reward for a high-drive spaniel



PICTURE: NICK RIDLEY

form of a Stop whistle and some form of steering (i.e. a hunting aid whistle command).

I sit the dog up next to the interesting place where we're about to interact and hunt. I throw a simple seen retrieve out nearby. I send the dog. If the dog doesn't pick it and instead goes hunting, I quickly pop it back on the lead and walk away for a short while before returning and starting again.

I sit the dog up and throw it again. I send the dog with some added enthusiasm in my voice or I may even send it at the same time as throwing the dummy – just a way to capture that moment when it feels excited to be moving. Now this may not work again, but after repeating the process by walking away etc, there's a high chance it will do. The important thing is that when it does eventually pick it and return with the dummy, is that I give it an instant reward, which is the hunt!

So, it arrives back with the dummy and the instant it's in my hand I excitedly cast it off to hunt and be rewarded with thrilling scents. I hunt the

dog a little further, blow the Stop whistle and throw out the dummy again. If it doesn't pick it, the dog goes promptly back on the lead and we walk away. Eventually, the penny drops and the dog realises that in order to go forward and hunt new ground, it must retrieve the dummy. A rather nice side effect is that the dog realises that the quicker it returns with the dummy, the quicker it gets its reward of hunting, thus speeding up the return! Once three or four basic retrieves have been done each time, I may then be able to start with more complicated retrieving scenarios.

There's no doubt that we're fortunate here at Farlaval to have the training areas that we do, but even with all the incremental steps and measures of exposure we can provide, a dog can still become conditioned to the training ground. There is of course a higher tier of stimulation than our sweetshop. It's known as the shooting field. And never forget that's the environment you're aiming to be working your dog in eventually. ■



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Return to sender

Lez Graham steps up Emrys's training to include memory retrieves and multiple retrieves

What a great month I've had with this little dog. Thankfully, the attack from a few weeks ago doesn't seem to have affected him and his confidence and sass is right up there, which is such a relief! This month, we've been working on increasing the duration of the stays, while adding distractions to them, as well as

combining retrieves and adding a bit of distance to develop both Emrys's eye and his trust.

Stay training with distraction

We've been building up to doing my non-retrieve clock which involves leaving Emrys in a Sit/Stay and walking in a circle around him, dropping toys at various points and then walking round again picking them up. What I'm looking for is that Emrys stays on the spot and doesn't swivel around or get up and turn to reposition himself so he can watch me all the way round; rather he should be sitting still and just be looking back over his shoulder.

It's a tricky exercise for a young dog to master as you walk behind them twice, in effect going out of sight, and until they develop self-control and self-confidence at distance, they will want to turn with you.

The way I trained it initially was to walk halfway around him, always staying within his eyeline, and

every now and again pat the ground or pick the grass, until I could walk a smallish circle around him. I then started adding toys as I was walking round, and then walking back around and picking them up.

Combining retrieves

Now that Emrys is confident doing marked retrieves, as well as leaving him in the Stay while I put a dummy down, I've started combining retrieves to make it more interesting for us both as I stretch the Get On command.

One of my favourite ways of doing this is with the 6s and 12s routine. Working with the image of an analogue clock, I walk to 12, drop a dummy and then, about-turning towards my dog, I heel them down to 6 and drop another dummy before returning to the centre of the clock to send him for the 12 o'clock dummy.

It's a great exercise as it introduces the dog to

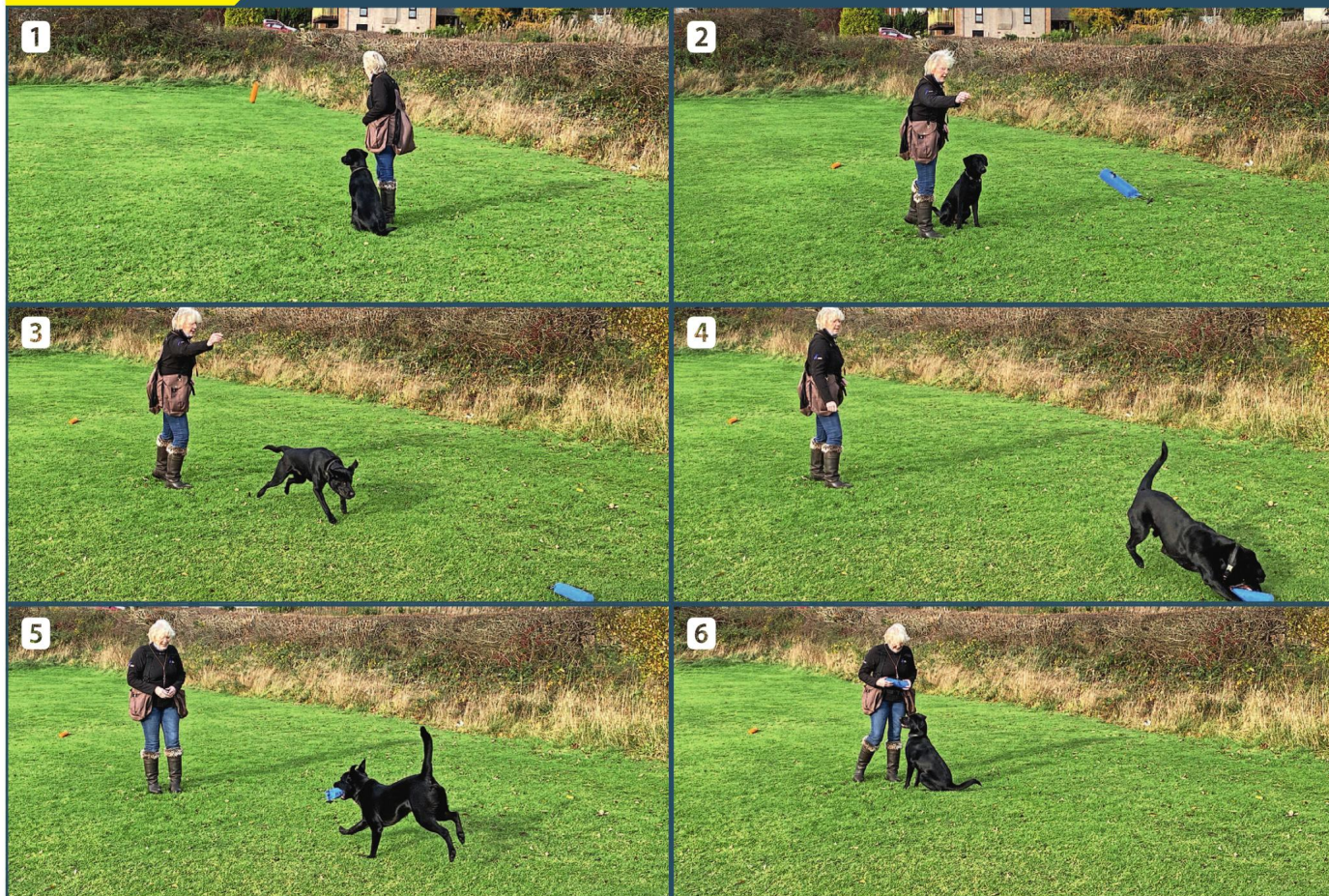
Missed the start of Emrys's diary? Head to magsdirect.co.uk for previous issues of Sporting Shooter.

LEZ'S TOP TIP

Whenever you do a memory retrieve or leave your dog in a sit and walk out to place or throw a dummy, always count your steps. Not only will this give you a guide as to how your dog is progressing, but it will give a good indication of what your dog is capable of doing in a training session. Like us, some days our dogs are more 'on the ball' than others. It also means that when you up the ante and go to a new area, you'll know how much to decrease the distance by in order to set your dog up to succeed.

A 'GET ON' RETRIEVE

Here, Lez throws one dummy to 6 o'clock, about-turns, and throws to 12 o'clock. She then sends the dog to the second marked retrieve.



DEVELOPING THE EYE

Leaving the dog in a Sit, Lez walks out, throws the dummy, and then returns to Emrys before sending him out for the retrieve.



having two dummies down on the field (or in the hallway) at the same time. However, because you are in effect blocking one of the dummies as it's positioned behind you, you've less chance of your dog learning to switch the retrieved dummy for the dummy on the ground.

I don't always do two memory retrieves as described above; sometimes, I'll throw them to develop my dog's marking ability and sometimes I'll walk out with a memory and throw the other. It all depends on how Emrys is on the day and what I want to work on with him.

Developing the eye

Because I can only throw a certain distance and it's a bit too early to introduce a launcher, I've been leaving Emrys in a Sit while I walk out a few

paces before throwing the dummy. Sometimes, I only walk a couple of steps, other times I'll walk out 10 or 15, but I keep it varied so that Emrys doesn't expect to find a dummy a certain distance away from me. It also helps to develop his marking ability, or 'his eye', at different ranges.

Teenage challenges

At eight and a half months, Emrys's maleness is making its presence felt. Although he hasn't started cocking his leg yet, his testosterone is at its peak and will be until he's roughly 12 months old, when it will start to level out and reach the point that makes Emrys 'Emrys', and will stay that way pretty much for the rest of his life.

There's a lot of gesturing and posturing going on at home, which I'm allowing to a degree as I

don't want to suppress his nature. However, as soon as he starts getting amorous or moving towards a dominance stance, then I'm nipping it in the bud.

This is probably the most challenging (and exhausting) period in a dog owner's life, and is the age when dogs are most likely to be rehomed or given to rescue centres. However, it is a phase that we need to go through and as the saying goes, 'this too shall pass'. ■

ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Focused on training the next generation, she runs the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme which is now in its 5th year.

Contact her via lez@thepetgundog.co.uk or visit www.thepetgundog.co.uk

'The retrieves I do in each training session depends on how Emrys is doing on the day'



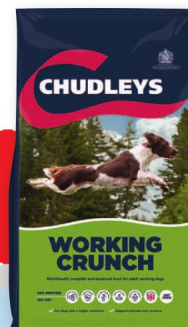
The no-retrieve clock is a great way of teaching your dog to ignore distractions in the field

PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WIN! Chudleys dog food

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Food for thought

Q My cocker will be two years old this year. When I first had him, I carried on feeding him on the food that I was given by the breeder, but by the time he was six months old his poo was very loose. I asked my local dog food supplier and they advised me to change, which did seem to improve things for a while but didn't last so I went to my local vet.

They advised my to have his poo tested and to be wormed, and the sample came back with campylobacteria. The vet gave me antibiotics to clear it up. I gave him the worming tablets at night and the following morning he had been sick and worms were in the sick. Since then, I have moved on to raw food which helps, but when he has dog treats, the loose poo returns.

Might he have a wheat allergy? I intend to work him this season on a local shoot (beating) so can you advise me on what supplements to give him during the day when out working?

A VICKY PAYNE replies: Dogs can become very sensitive to ingredients in food, especially things they were eating when they suffered a bout of vomiting or diarrhoea. Treatment for infections with parasites and bacteria can also upset the gut microbiome, leading to difficulties in digesting certain ingredients. The most common intolerance are to common ingredients including chicken, wheat, beef, and lamb.

If your dog suffers from diarrhoea when fed dog treats containing cereal, switch to those made from meat instead. A large range of freeze-dried, dried, and pate-style meat treats are available.

If your dog is being fed a balanced diet (raw or otherwise), additional supplements should not be required when he is working. I give my dogs a little extra feed on shoot days when they get home, and they do get a small snack during



PICTURE: BEN PALFREYMAN

our elevenes break. Most dog 'energy bars' will be cereal based, so if these don't suit your dog try making your own fish and potato or liver cake snacks so you can be sure of the ingredients.

in association with

CHUDLEYS

How important is gender in a gundog?

Q I have just lost my dog and I have a springer spaniel puppy coming in December which is a bitch. Is there any difference in training a dog to a bitch?

A HOWARD KIRBY replies: Personally, I would say no and then yes, in that order. There are so many variations in character that require more thought when working with a youngster than gender. However, as dogs and bitches mature you will need to be aware of the obvious differences that can arise. These differences and changes in behaviour are linked primarily to reproduction. Males are likely to become more territorial, and some will

constantly be in search of an opportunity to mate. This means that they can be totally distracted by other dogs and a bitch in heat will turn them into lunatics. They are more likely to be intolerant of other males, and in the presence of a bitch in heat two otherwise perfectly compatible males will fight. Females are only in heat twice a year, so may become territorial and less tolerant of other dogs around this time. Some become very distracted with all that being 'in season' brings, and are best given a few weeks away from any training whilst they deal with the physical and mental changes they face.

Both can be extremely capable and trainable, so I'd suggest you simply go with what you like.

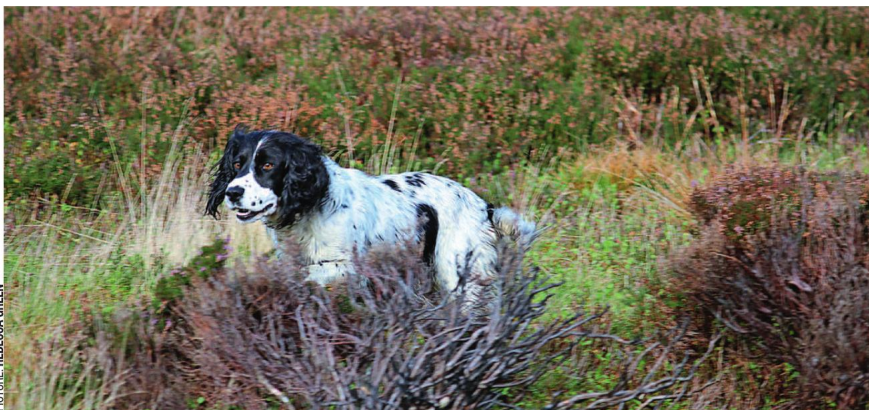
Introducing your lurcher to water



PICTURE: ROBBART / GETTY

Q How can I get my lurcher to enter water? I thought she'd follow my spaniel in, but she won't even try.

A JACKIE DRAKEFORD replies: This isn't the time of year for water training, so hold off until the warm weather. Lurchers don't have the water affinity that gundogs display, but most will swim well if introduced the right way. First, let the dogs get warm running about, and choose somewhere shallow with wide sloping banks. Slowly walk in just far enough so the water covers your feet, then walk out again. Don't encourage her in, just paddle about in the shallows. It's fine to have your spaniel along enjoying himself in deeper water. In her own time, and this may take several sessions, let your lurcher approach the water and retreat, and she will eventually venture in. By letting her decide, you will achieve your objective.



PICTURE: REBECCA GREEN

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1

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2

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3

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6

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7

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8

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11

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12

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13

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17

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18

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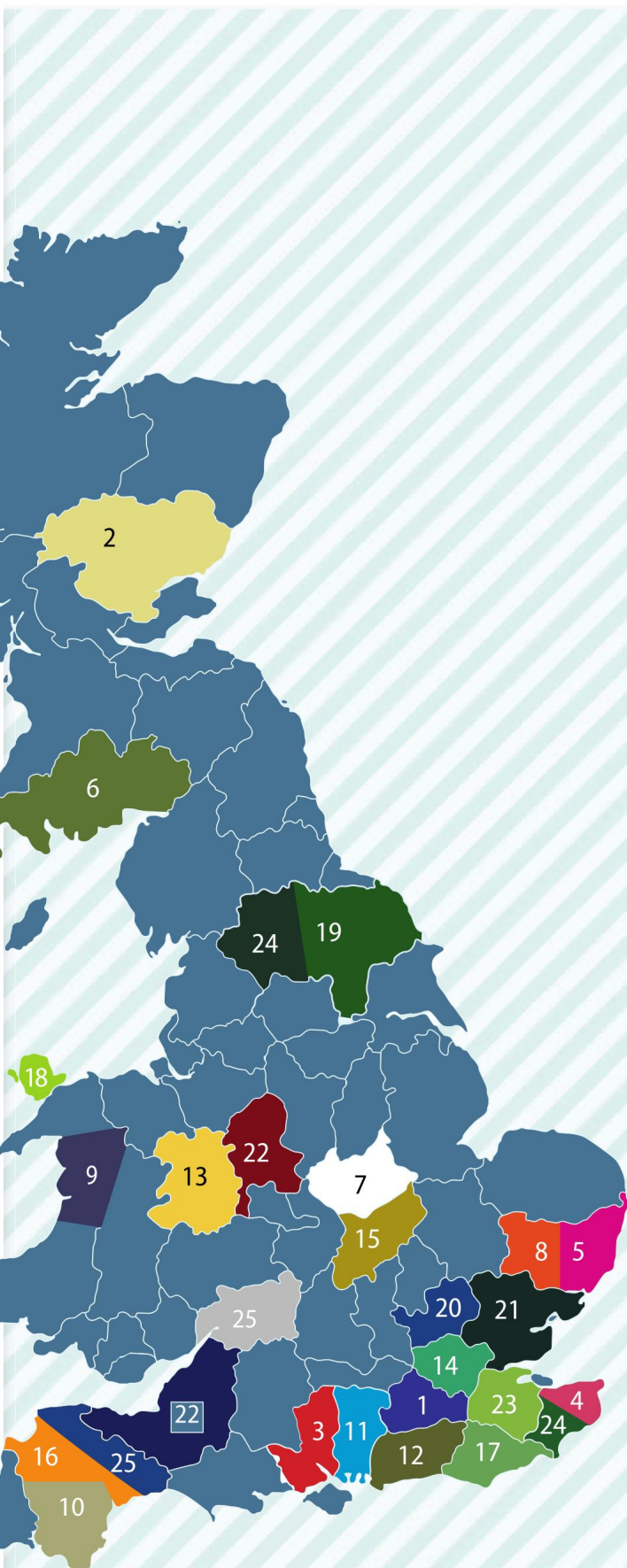
23

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CLAY SHOOTING CLUB

4

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5

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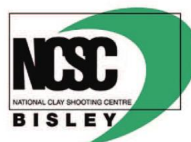


10

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Open for clay practice 5 days a week – please book through our website. Skeet and DTL, 25 Bird Compact Sporting, 100 Bird Sporting, ABT, Double Rise, Bolting Rabbit & 150ft High Tower. Advanced and novice tuition available by appointment. Wed to Sat: 10am – 5pm, Sun: 10am – 1pm.

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14

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15

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— Pay & Play. Tuition by Appt. Tel:
01242 870391 www.iancoley.co.uk

LONGRIDGE SHOOTING GROUND
Bromsbarrow Heath, Ledbury Tel:
(07971) 447138

MORK CLAY CLUB
nr St Briavels. Sporting. Tel:
(01594) 530102

**STROUD & DISTRICT CLAY
SHOOTING CLUB**
nr Bisley. Skeet, OS, DTL.
Tel: (01453) 764443

WESTFIELD SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, tuition, groups, corporate
& simulated game. Tel: 0870
6091751 www.theclayshooting-
company.com

SOMERSET

BROOK BANK SHOOTING GROUND
nr Cheddar. Sporting, Skeet, UT,
DTL, ABT, tuition & corporate. Tel:
(01458) 447120 or 07970 151321

www.brookbanksporting.co.uk

IVYTHORN SPORTING
nr Street. Compact Sporting under
cover. Tuition & corporate. Tel:
(01458) 447120 or 07970 151321

www.ivythornsporting.co.uk
MENDIP SHOOTING GROUND
nr Wells. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT,
clubhouse, gunshop.
Tel: (01749) 673471

PODIMORE SHOOTING GROUND
Ilchester. Sporting, Fitasc, Sportrap.
Tel: (01935) 862510

www.podimore-shooting.co.uk

SHIPHAM SPORTING CLAYS
nr Clevedon. Sporting, tuition,
practice. Tel: (01275) 877851

VALLEY SHOOTING GROUND
info@valleyclaysshoot.co.uk

WOODSPRING CLAY SHOOT
Wick St Lawrence, nr Weston super
Mare. Sporting/ 50-bird practice/
private parties. Tel: 07503 766373

WILTSHIRE

BARBURY SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Swindon. Tuition, corporate,
Sporting, FITASC, Compact, Skeet.
Tel: 07872 666154
www.barburyschool.com

BASSETT BREAKERS GUN CLUB
Flaxlands Shooting Ground, nr
Swindon. Sporting.
Tel: (01793) 750801

CADLEY CLAY SHOOTING GROUND
nr Marlborough. Sporting, practice,
tuition, corporate. Tel: (01672)
512052 www.cadleyclays.co.uk

URCHFONTS CLAY PIGEON CLUB
nr Devizes. DTL, Sporting.
Tel: (01380) 721218

WOOD FARM CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
nr Warminster. Skeet, DTL, Sporting.
Tel: (01747) 860471

MIDLANDS

DERBYSHIRE

BAKEWELL & WIRKSWORTH CPC
nr Brassington. Sporting.
Tel: (01629) 814395

DARLEY DALE CPCSC
nr Brassington. Sporting.
Tel: (01629) 733161

DOVERIDGE CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
nr Doveridge. Skeet, DTL, Sporting.
Tel: (01889) 565986

LOWES LANE SHOOTING GROUND

nr Swadlincote. Sporting, Skeet,
DTL, high tower, flush, tuition. Tel:
(01332) 866800

OCKBROOK SPORTING CLAYS
nr Derby. Tel: (01773) 714731

YEAVELEY ESTATE
nr Ashbourne. Sporting, Tuition. Tel:
(01335) 330247

HEREFORD & WORCESTER

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M50 (Jn 2) Tel: 07971 447138

SOUTH WORCESTER SG
nr Upton-upon-Severn. DTL, Sport-
ing, Practice, tuition. Tel: (01684)
310605 www.swsq.co.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE GUN CLUB
Illey, W Midlands. ABT, Sporting. Tel:
07836 225580 www.w-g-c.co.uk

WYRE FOREST GUNS
nr Button Oak. Sporting.
Tel: (01299) 403730

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BAGWORTH MINERS CPC
nr Coalville. DTL, Sporting, ABT.
(01530) 260816

GRANGE FARM SC
nr Desford. Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL,
ABT. Tel: (01455) 822208

HOTON CLAY CLUB

Sporting. Tel: 0116 230 2311
www.hoton-clay-club.co.uk

KEGWORTH SHOOTING GROUND
(YS) Sporting Tel: 07973 111 650
Long Lane, 1 1/2 miles due north
of Kegworth Village, at its junction
with Ratcliffe lane. Nearest Sat
nav: one mile south of the ground
DE74 2GA.

KIBWORTH SHOOTING GROUND
Off A6 Kibworth-Market Harborough
Rd. Sporting Skeet, DTL, Tower,
Fitasc, Sportrap, flush. Tuition.
Tel: 01162 796001 rose@kibworth-
shootingground.co.uk

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DISTRICT SC**
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(01858) 463698

NORMANTON SHOOTING GROUND
nr Thurlaston. Sporting, ABT, DT
Tel: (01455) 888210

SPA VALE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Lutterworth. Tel: 0116 247 8917
www.spa-vale.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE

GRIMSTHORPE ESTATE SG
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591128

HAVEN CLAY SHOOTING CLUB
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Enquiries to Graham Fordham
07854227175. 30-bird Sporting, DTL,
family days, friendly club.
Visit havencpc.webs.com for shooting
dates.

LINGS CLAY CLUB

Church Lane, South Clifton, Nr
Lincoln, Lincolnshire NG23 7AW,
www.lingsclayclub.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE SHOOTING GROUND
Sutton Bridge. Sporting, Skeet, ABT,
Sportrap, tower, tuition, restaurant,
corporate. Tel: (01406) 359300/ (01945)
700622 www.shooting4you.co.uk

PINEWOOD SHOOTING GROUND
nr Gainsborough. Sporting, Skeet,
DTL, OT, D/T, Compact. Tel: (01427)
628900. www.pinewood-sg.fsnet.co.uk

SINCLAIRS SHOOTING GROUND

Whaplode Drive, nr Holbeach. Skeet,
Sporting, Compact, ABT & DTL. Open
Weds-Sun, all year.

Tel: (01406) 540362.

SPA VALE SHOOTING GROUND
Coventry Road (Near to Magna Park)
Lutterworth, W. No. 0116 2478917
www.spa-vale.co.uk

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

A614 SHOOTING GROUND

Near Nottingham, tuition. Tel:
(0115) 9656144

COCKETT FARM SHOOTING GRND
nr Mansfield. Sporting, Skeet, STR,
White Gold, tuition. Tel: (01623)
882244 www.cockettfarm.com

NOTTINGHAM & DISTRICT GC
DTL, Skeet, OS. Tel: (0115) 9273492

ORSTON SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, Skeet, Sportrap, DTL, ABT,
D/Rise, Trench, practice, tuition,
corporate and shop. Tel: (01949)
851181 or 07831 221110 www.
orston.com

OXTON SHOOTING SCHOOL
Sporting, Skeet, Compact, Sportrap,
ABT, DTL, Fitasc, tuition, shop. Tel:
(01623) 882523

STILEHOLLOW SHOOTING SCHOOL
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ABT, tower, tuition. (01623) 823930
www.stilehollow.com

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NORTHAMPTON SHOOTING GRND
Skeet, DTL, ABT, tuition. (01604)
642252 northamptonshooting-
ground.co.uk

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BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
nr Wolverhampton. DTL. Tel:
(01562) 883092

WEST MIDLANDS SG
Sporting, Skeet, ABT, Compact,
Fitasc, ABT, gun room.
Tel: (01939) 200644
www.wmsg.co.uk

STAFFORDSHIRE

CROSS GUN CLUB
nr Kinver. Sporting year-round, ABT
in summer. Tel: (01384) 873017 or
07973 875449

GARLANDS SHOOTING GROUND
Tamworth. Sporting, OT, DTL, Skeet.
Tel: (01827) 383300

KINGSLEY MOOR SG
nr Alton Towers. Sporting. Tel:
(01782) 550371

LEEK & DGC
Sporting. Tel: (01538) 386127

QUARNFORD SHOOTING GROUND
nr Leek. Sporting.
Tel: (01298) 22204

RANTON CLAY TARGET CLUB
DTL, ABT, Sporting. (01782) 611775.

RODBASTON GUN CLUB
Sporting & tuition, Weds eves. www.
shotgun.me.uk

MILLRIDE COUNTRY SPORTS
Sporting, Skeet. Off junction 1 of
the M54, WV11 2AZ.
Tel: 01902 725165

www.millride-country-sports.co.uk
OAKEDGE SHOOTING GROUND
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Skeet, DTL. (01889) 881391

WERGS GUN CLUB
nr Essington. Sporting, Skeet.
(01922) 476508

WARWICKSHIRE

BARBY SPORTING CLUB
nr Rugby. Sporting, Skeet, DTL,
Compact. Tel: (01788) 891873
www.barbysporting.com

EDGEHILL SHOOTING GROUND
nr Banbury. Sporting, Skeet, OS,
DTL, ABT, Compact. Tuition &
corporate. (01295) 670100

HONESBERIE SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, tuition, corporate. Tel:
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shooting.co.uk

RUGBY & DISTRICT TRAP CLUB
ABT.
Tel: (01788) 573257

WEDGWOOD SHOOTING GROUND
Sporting, Skeet, DTL, Sportrap.
Tel: 01926 491948
www.adventuresport.co.uk

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SPENNYMOOR & DISTRICT
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ABT, DTL. Tel: (0191) 3772412
www.keithbutterwick.com/
spennymoor

EAST YORKSHIRE

EAST YORKSHIRE GUN CLUB
nr Beverley. Skeet, OS, Skd, DTL,
ABT, UTR, Sporting.
Tel: (01964) 551134

HUMBERSIDE SHOOTING GROUND
nr Beverley. Skeet, DTL, ABT,
Compact, White Gold.
Tel: (01964) 544357.

www.pthorn.co.uk/shootingground
MONCKTON SG
N. Newbald. Tel: 01430 827229.

www.moncktonshoot.co.uk
NORTH WOLDS GUN CLUB
Sporting, DTL, tuition.

Tel: (01759) 368314
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Practice and lessons available.
Tel: 07919 694587

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CONISTON SHOOTING GROUND
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KNARESBOROUGH & DISTRICT GC
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NORTH OF ENGLAND CTC
nr Rufforth. Sporting, Skeet, OS,
DTL, ABT. Tel: (01904) 738120.

NORTH YORKSHIRE SHOOTING
School nr Thirsk. 07966 387273
northyorkshireshootingschool.com

THIMBLEBY SHOOTING GROUND
nr Osmotherley. Sporting, Sportrap,
tuition, corporate.
Tel: (01642) 351725
Mob: 07776 223609

WARREN GILL SHOOTING GROUND
nr Ripon. Tel: (01765) 689232
www.warengill.co.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND

BYWELL SHOOTING GROUND
nr Felton. Skeet, DTL, ABT, tower,
shop. Tel: (01670) 787827
www.bywellshootingground.com

STEVE SMITH SG
nr Dinnington. Sporting, DTL, Skeet,
ABT. Tel: (01661) 822444.
www.stevesmiths.co.uk

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FOX HOUSE CLAY SPORTS
Sporting, tuition, corporate. Tel:
(0114) 2663822 or 07976 5211369

SYCAMORE SHOOTING GROUNDS
Sporting, DTL, D/R, tuition, corpo-
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WEST YORKSHIRE

BATLEY & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
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EMLEY CLAYSHOOT
Sporting every 2nd Sunday. Tuition
available. Mob: 07814 538927

GREYSTONE WOOD SHOOTING GRND
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Mob: 07960 352123

HOLMFIRTH SHOOTING SCHOOL
nr Huddersfield. Skeet, DTL, ABT,
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FOYMORE LODGE
off the A4 in Co Armagh (signed
from Portadown & M1 j12).
Sporting, instruction, club house.
www.foymorelodge.com

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CRYNANT SHOOTING GROUND
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porate. Tel: 07855 828167; Email:
firstcorporate2003@yahoo.co.uk

DOVEY VALLEY SHOOTING GRND
Llanwrin, Machynlleth, Powys.
Sporting, Skeet, DTL, sim game,
practice, tuition, corporate. (01650)
511252. www.doveyvalley.co.uk

GRIFFIN-LLOYD SHOOTING GRND
Mid-Wales, Welsh Marches.
Sporting, ABT, OT, tuition. Tel:
(01547) 550634 www.griffinlloyd.co.uk

FAUXDEGLA SHOOTING GROUND
North Wales. DTL, ABT, Skeet.
Tel: 01978 790198

MID WALES SC
nr Llanidloes. DTL, ABT.
Tel: (01686) 430654

NORTH WALES SS SEALAND
nr Chester. DTL, OT.
Tel: (01244) 812219

SOUTH WALES 2000
nr Newbridge. Sporting, Skeet, OT,
ABT, DTL, tuition, clubhouse.
Tel: (01495) 201182
www.southwales2000.com

TREETOPS SG
nr Newport, 5 min from M4 j28.
Sporting, tuition. (01633) 681197

**WOODLAND PARK SHOOTING
GRND**
Brecon. Sporting, tuition, corporate. Tel:
078111 89413 www.wpschool.co.uk

SCOTLAND

AUCHTERHOUSE COUNTRY SPORTS
nr Dundee. Sporting, Fitasc, Skeet,
DTL. Tel: (01382) 320476
www.treemac.co.uk

ARRAN GUN CLUB ISLE OF ARRAN
nr Altnaharra. Tel: (01549) 411245

BRAIDWOOD SG
nr Selkirk. Tel: (01835) 870280
www.braidwoodsc.co.uk

BURNKETTLE SG AULDGARTH
nr Dumfries. DTL, Skeet, Sporting.
Tel: 01848 331131.

BUTE CLAY TARGET CLUB
Kingarth. Tel: (01700) 500274
Cairndow Clay Target Club Argyll.
DTL. Tel: (01499) 600201

CARLISLE & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
nr Wigton.
Tel: (01697) 331452

**CENTRAL SCOTLAND
SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Falkirk. OSK, DTL, ABT.
Tel: (01324) 851672

**CLAY TARGET SHOOTING
SCHOOL**
Houston, Renfrewshire. Sporting.
Tel: (01505) 873547
www.claytargetshootingschool.co.uk

CLUNY CLAYS
Fife. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, Compact,
flush, tuition, restaurant.
Tel: (01592) 720374
www.clunyclays.com

COWANS LAW MOSCOW
Ayrshire. Sporting, DTL. Tel: (01560)
700666 cowanslaw.com

CORTACHY GUN CLUB
nr Ennismore. DTL, practice.
Tel: (01307) 860239

DALVENNAN COUNTRY SPORTS
nr Kirkmichael. DTL, ABT, Sporting,
Skeet, gun shop, tuition.
Tel: (01292) 531134

DRUMMOND SHOOTING GROUND
at Drummond Castle Estate. Tel:
(01764) 681262

DUNOON & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
Tel: (01369) 704362

DUNS & DISTRICT GUN CLUB
nr Cockburnspath, off the A1. Sport-
ing usually last Sunday of month.
Tel: (01361) 883500

FORREST ESTATE SHOOTING GRND
St John's Town of Dalry, Dumfries
and Galloway. Sporting / Sportrap /

Practice / Tuition / Corporate
Tel: (01644) 430469 or 07747 691447
www.forrestestateexperiences.com

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Shoots every Sunday, mainly
sporting birds to simulate game.
Based Ayrshire. Tel: John Noble,
01560 482162 garnockvalleygun-
club.webs.com

GLENDARUEL GUN CLUB
Tel: 07845 211102

HARRIS GUN CLUB
nr Urgha.
Tel: 07919 037588

HIGHLAND DEEPHAVEN CPC
nr Evanton. Tel: (01349) 864315
Isle of Jura nr Craighouse.
Tel: (01496) 820396

KINGSCLIFF SHOOTING LODGE
Aberdeenshire. Sporting, Skeet, DTL,
ABT, Fitasc. Tel: (01651) 806375

KIPPEN GUN CLUB
nr Stirling. Tel: (01786) 465125

KIRKCUDBRIGHT GUN CLUB
nr Gibbhill. Tel: (01557) 330447

KNAPDALE GUN CLUB
Achnamara. Tel: (01546) 606989

LINDERTIS WOODS SG
3 miles west of Kierriemuir on
A926. Sporting, Fitasc, tuition. Tel:
(01575) 572501

LOCH NESS GUN CLUB
DTL, Skeet. Tel: (01320) 351295
Lorn Gun Club Tel: (01631) 564431
Millport Clay Pigeon Association.
Tel: (01475) 530367

MONKDALE & DISTRICT GC
nr Carmichael. Tel: (01555) 840562

MORTON CLAY TARGETS
Midcaldar, nr Edinburgh.
Tel: 01506 884500
www.mortonclaytargets.co.uk

**NORTH AYSRSHIRE SHOOTING
GROUND**
nr Dalry. Sporting, DTL, Skeet,
tuition. Tel: (01294) 833297

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St Ola. Tel: (01856) 874853

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skeet
Tel: (01862) 810291

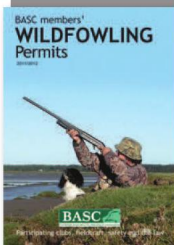
ROTHENMURCHUS SG
apx 3 miles East of Aviemore. Sport-
ing, DTL, tuition.
Tel: (01479) 81272

SCOTTISH CLAY SHOOTING CNTR
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For a copy of the latest BASC Members' Wildfowling Permit

Scheme Booklet, send an SAE to Wildfowling Management, BASC, Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 OHL or email your name and address to wildfowling@basc.org.uk

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CARTER'S COUNTRYWEAR
North Yorkshire
Tel: 01439 770688
www.carterscountrywear.co.uk
Pheasant and grouse shooting

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SOUTH SOLWAY WILDFOWLERS
www.solwaywildfowlers.co.uk
MC Slater, Lancs.
Tel: 07779 934563 Pinkfoot geese, pigeons, driven duck & evening duck flights

TUFTON ARMS HOTEL
Appleby-in Westmorland, Cumbria. Tel: 01768 351593
www.fishing-shooting.co.uk

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THE BARTON ON HUMBER
Gundog Club Tel: 01724 734700 www.bohgc.co.uk
stephanie@bohgc.co.uk

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KEADBY WILDFOWLING & CONSERVATION SOCIETY
www.kwacs.org.uk

LEICESTER WILDFOWLERS
Contact: www.leicswa.org
feedback@leicswa.org

PESTWISE
Contact Richard Tel: 01664 850287 or 07764 485726
www.pestwise.co.uk

DELTA DEER SERVICES
Tel: 01536 761978
or 07850 380923 www.deltadeerservices.co.uk

WEST RIDING WILDFOWLERS
Contact Graham Teale,
Tel: 07711 555295 wildfowl-ers@gmail.com

EAST

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www.aldeandorewildfowlers.com

ALKBOROUGH WILDFOWLERS
www.alkboroughwildfowlers.co.uk

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Guided pigeon shooting, deer stalking; rough and driven shooting; wild duck flights.
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www.angliasporting.co.uk

BASC NORFOLK

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andrea.green@basc.org.uk

BLACKWATER WILDFOWLERS

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FENLAND WILDFOWLERS
www.fenlandwa.org.uk

GEDNEY DROVE END
Wildfowlers Cambridgeshire.
Tel: 01945 420359

NBC BIRD AND PEST
Tel: 0800 169 9646 www.nbcbirdandpest.co.uk

KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK WILDFOWLERS
www.klwa.co.uk

LEIGH-ON-SEA WILDFOWLERS
www.loswa.co.uk

NORTH SUFFOLK W'FOWLING CLUB
Tel: 07810 122404 www.northsuffolkwildfowlers.co.uk

NORWICH & DISTRICT WILDFOWLERS
www.norwich-wildfowlers.co.uk

PETE'S AIRGUN FARM
nr Chelmsford, Essex. Contact:
Peter Mallett, Tel: 07973 509198 www.airgunfarm.co.uk

RIFLE CRAFT LIMITED
Tel: 01379 853745
www.riflecraft.co.uk

SPALDING WILDFOWLERS
www.spaldingwildfowlers.co.uk

LONDON & S.E.

WILLIAM & PHILIP BEASLEY
Tel: 01869 277534 for Philip,
Tel: 07831 572247 for William,
Tel: 07831 195736. Pigeon shooting, also deer stalking.

Really Wild Clay Days with the Royal Berkshire

Really Wild Clay days are due to start back up again this month. Hosted by the Royal Berkshire Shooting School, and running from February to October at a number of prestigious locations, these days offer everything you need for a great day's shooting. The RBSS is often credited with having pioneered simulated game shooting, having hosted their first event over a quarter of a century ago. Since then, they have gone from strength to strength, providing guests with "everything but the feathers".

They make full use of each location's unique topography and use manual traps to present a realistic and exhilarating shooting experience. They are able to accommodate all levels of experience, so whether you are a single gun joining a syndicate day, a full team of 16 people,

or part of a larger charity event, you are guaranteed some fantastic simulated game shooting in a safe, friendly environment.

The itinerary

Meet and greet over breakfast, followed by a safety briefing and peg drawing.

Four drives as standard with each drive having eight pegs and two Guns to a peg.

Each drive is split so that one Gun loads for one half and then swaps and shoots for the second half. Mid-point break for elevenses, after which guests partake in the 'Top Gun' competition.

The day also includes lunch, limited edition RB Purdey caps, hearing and eye protection, prizes, and a complimentary gun cleaning service.

For more details, go to:
rbss.co.uk



PICTURE: SARAH FARNWORTH / RBSS

CREATURE FINDERS



WE FOUND PAUL PROBOSCIS MONKEY ON PAGE 23 OF THE DECEMBER ISSUE

William A Dickson, Monmouthshire • Andy Philp, Forfar • Tom Jones, Carmarthenshire • Chris Pashby, Staffs • R Stimson, Bucks • David Moran, Kent • Sarah-Jane Dodd, Urmberleigh • Ben, Surrey • Liz Harper, Norwich • Philip Kent, Lincolnshire • Brian Matthews, County Do • Natalie Matthews, Downpatrick • Wendy Sables, Fremington • Mark Ruggier, Dorset • Gary Aitchison, Yorks • Kester Warden, Bradford • Shona Morris, Kidderminster • Ernie Booth, Cheshire • Brian Harper, Norwich • Miles Hall, N Yorks • John Boog, Southampton • Mike Lloyd, Hengoed • Ian Legg, Stockbridge • Greger Jackson, Loftus • J H Brown, Norfolk • R C Brown, Norfolk • Steven Smith, Hereford • Ann Owen, Corwen • David Rogalski, Wick • Gudi Grange, Beighton • Arthur Davy, Lincoln • Colin Clarke, Berks • Grahame Warrick, Brighton • Richard Gaylor, Cambridgeshire • Carol Hall, E Yorks • John Gosling, Kenford



MARK BOULTON

HORNDEN

Deer stalking in south;
Boar shooting in Europe
and Sussex. Tel: 02392
595925/07854 985006 mark-
thederstalker@hotmail.co.uk

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www.chwa.org.uk

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SPORTING AGENCY
www.georgedigweed.com
Duck & pheasants.

EMSWORTH & DISTRICT

WILDFOWLERS
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SPORTING CLUB

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297122; www.frobury.co.uk

HOLBOROUGH SHOOT

SOUTH (KENT)

Driven pheasant shoot.
01622 891940, 07774 839319,
07876 542579
info@holboroughestate.co.uk

KENT DEER SERVICES

Contact Andrew
Tel: 07754 272214
or 01892 680327
www.kentdeerservices.co.uk

KENT WILDFOWLING & CA

Tel: 07836 771715
www.kentwildfowling.co.uk

LANGSTONE & DISTRICT

WWCA
Langstone Harbour, SE Hants.
www.ladwaca.com

SHAVESGREEN SHOOTING

07706 395979.
www.shavesgreen.com
info@shavesgreen.com

DRIVEN & WALKED-UP

DAYS
Pigeon
Trevor Robinson Tel: 01273
600683 or 077499 35864.

WEST LONDON SHOOTING

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tion@shootingsschool.co.uk

WEST SUSSEX SPORTING

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www.westsussexgunco.com
Pheasant & partridge.

SOUTH WEST

ARUNDELL ARMS DEVON

Tel: 01566 784666 www.
arundellarms.com

CORNWALL WILDFOWLERS

ASSOC.
Tel: 01872 864021. Mike
Holmes. Weekly shoots

COTSWOLD SHOOTING

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www.go-country.co.uk

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