**GUN TEST** BERETTA'S 31" DT11 SPORT: **A SERIOUS CLAY-BUSTER**




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Sporting Shooter



# First Words

I was privileged to watch gundog trainer Howard Kirby and his partner Linsey Whitley in action with their dogs recently, during filming for a new series of videos soon to air on Shooting & Country TV. It never ceases to amaze me the bond these two have with their dogs and how effortless they make it all look. It isn't, of course, as any of us who has ever trained (or attempted to train) a gundog will know! Indeed, to train to their standard requires consistency and dedication, not to mention natural ability – or dogmanship, as Howard calls it. Thankfully, there's hope for us mere mortals, with the help of Howard's articles in these pages, and now his new aforementioned video series on S&C TV – keep an eye out for the first one in the coming weeks.

I can hardly believe it, but we are careering towards Christmas at a rate of knots. With that in mind, we've put together a gift guide that will hopefully help you to add to your own wishlist or tick things off someone else's! We've also got a double helping of gun tests for you this month. Two very different beasts (and I'm not referring to the writers!) – one, a slick Beretta clay-buster, and the other, an indestructible Mossberg workhorse. Turn to pages 50 and 56 to find out more.

Yet again we seem to be facing a season of uncertainty, with the dark cloud that is bird flu currently hanging over us. It remains to be seen what impact this current outbreak will have as we head into winter, but there are fears we will see more cancellations and, even worse, shoots folding as they are unable to weather this current storm after the sea of challenges that shooting has faced over the past few years.

Let's hope that the biosecurity measures now in place are effective and that the season continues without too much disruption.

Rebecca

REBECCA GREEN
Editor


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## PRINTING/DISTRIBUTION

**News distribution** Seymour Distribution Ltd, East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT.
Tel 020 7396 8000
simon.kirkham@seymour.co.uk
Printed in England ISSN 1741-1939
**Printing** MRC Print Ltd


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We welcome contributions from readers. Photos, stories and information should be sent by email to rebecca.green@fieldsportspress.com. By submitting unsolicited material, you agree that we may publish it without payment, in its original or edited form, without crediting the source.


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Published monthly © Fieldsports Press Ltd 2022


**First Words image: Rebecca Green**
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SHOOTING & COUNTRY

# SHOOTING & COUNTRY TV

Our brand-new YouTube channel, Shooting & Country TV (S&C TV), brings all your favourite magazine content to life on the screen.

Combining five market-leading shooting titles into one big video hub, S&C TV will provide you with a monthly feature show, punctuated with regular tips, recipes, reviews and how-tos uploaded throughout the month.

Whether you want to see the latest airgun tested in the field, discover how to create the perfect decoy pattern, or settle down with a cuppa and enjoy the excitement of a deer hunt, our goal is to provide content that entertains and informs, with the same integrity you have come to expect from our magazines.

Watch our team of industry experts doing what they do best as the action unfolds. Shooting & Country TV is produced by the same passionate teams that have made our magazines the successes they are today - and we can't wait to take things to the next level!

With content from...

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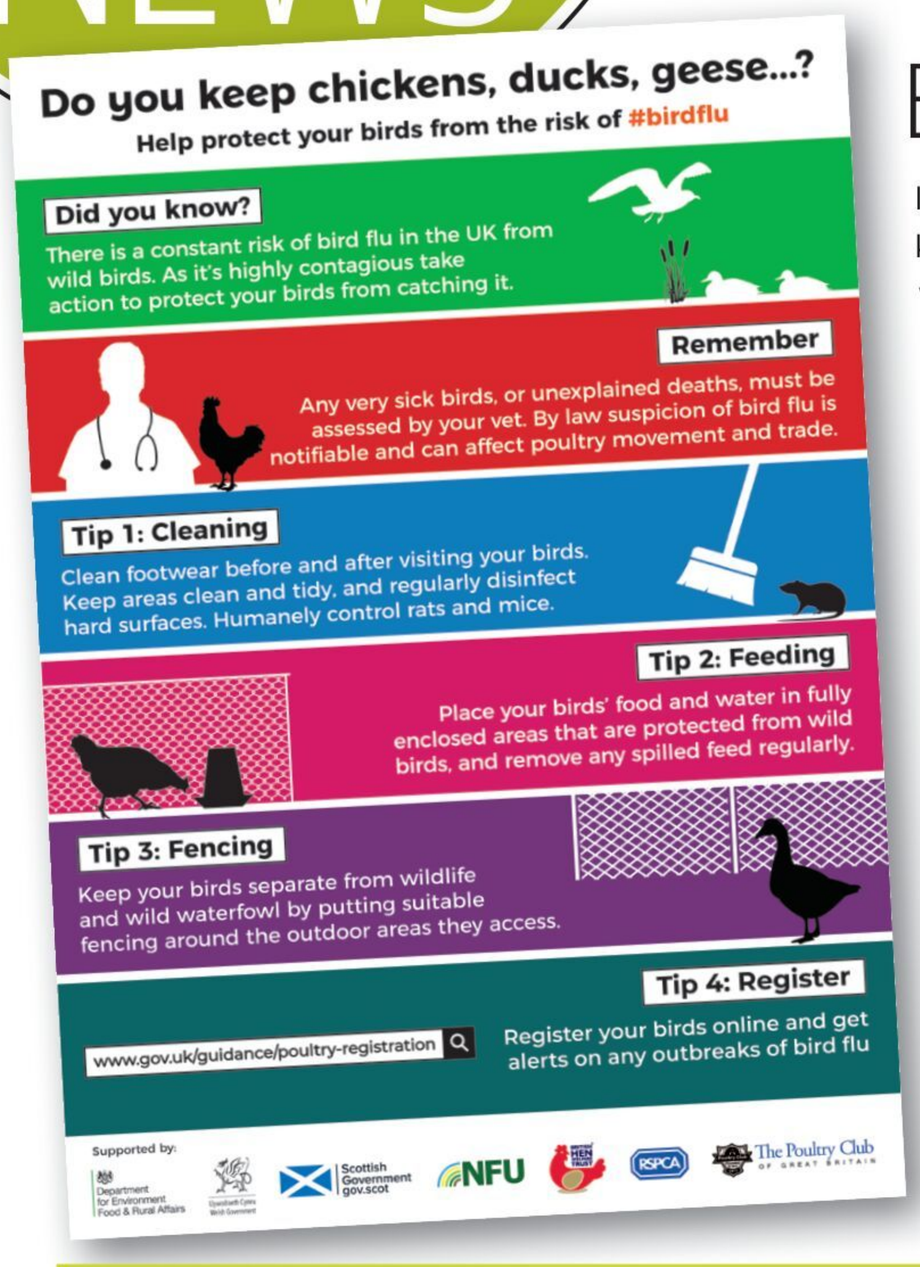
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# Bird flu measures now a legal requirement

It is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers in Great Britain to comply with various government biosecurity regulations. Since October 2021, there have been almost 200 cases of avian influenza – the UK's largest ever outbreak – with 30 of these cases since the beginning of October 2022.

Bird flu circulates naturally in wild birds and when they migrate to the UK from mainland Europe the disease is transmitted to both poultry and captive birds. People are advised not touch any dead birds.

The official risk level in the UK has now been raised so currently all captive, poultry and wild birds are at 'high' risk of catching avian influenza. The East of England has been particularly badly hit with outbreaks in poultry and captive birds. There have also been outbreaks in the south-west.

READ MORE
For more insight into the bird flu situation turn to page 59

In response, Chief Veterinary Officers from England, Scotland and Wales have declared Great Britain an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ). All bird owners must follow government guidelines in an attempt to control and contain the disease.

The introduction of an AIPZ means every bird keeper (whether you keep a few birds or thousands), is legally required to meet enhanced biosecurity requirements to protect their birds from this highly infectious disease.

Keepers with more than 500 birds must now restrict access for non-essential people on their sites, everyone needs to change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures, regularly disinfect vehicles in order to maintain their 'medium' risk level and comply with the law.

If you suspect any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds, you must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301.

# RSPB continues to attack conservation by shooters

The RSPB used their Annual General Meeting on Saturday 15 October to lobby Defra into further restricting the release of game birds – yet offered no rhyme or reason to the request.

A BASC spokesman said: "In the face of a nature and climate crisis, game management and shooting activities deliver for the environment and the RSPB should be seeking to work with the shooting sector instead of promoting division."

In 2022, the release of game birds in the UK was already down by 30-40%. There are already restrictions on the release of game birds within certain boundaries of protected sites in England and the RSPB offered no new evidence to suggest that the release of game birds is harmful.

Shooting is involved in the management of two thirds of the UK's rural land area, contributing £250 million to conservation each year and 3.9 million workdays equivalent to 16,000 full time conservation jobs – far greater than the resources the RSPB puts into its reserves.

BASC went onto say: "Policy should be led by evidence, not impulsive ideas based on theory."



PICTURE: JACK SCRIVENER

# John Rigby & Co appoint new apprentice



London gunmaker John Rigby & Co. has appointed a new apprentice gunmaker as the company looks to the future, preparing for continued expansion and preserving niche gunmaking skills for future generations.

Joshua Dunbar is based at the company's Pensbury Place workshop and showroom in London. He is the first apprentice to join the newly launched Rigby Academy, which will see him try his hand at all the different specialisms of gunmaking during a structured five-year training programme. Joshua has already shadowed gunmakers specialising in stocks and metalwork and hopes to have the chance to try his hand at engraving in his spare time. While working at John Rigby & Co. is Joshua's first foray into the world of gunmaking, he is more than at home in the workshop environment having worked alongside his goldsmith father since the age of 14.

Joshua commented: "I am very happy to have joined Rigby as I believe they are the best bespoke rifle makers in the UK and beyond. I'm finding the apprenticeship very interesting and it's certainly pushing my ability as a craftsman to reach new levels. One of the projects I'm working on now is my first gunmaker's hammer, which I hope will be by my side in the workshop for many years to come."

Rigby managing director Marc Newton added: "Joshua's appointment is fantastic news for Rigby. We are seeing continued growth and plenty of orders coming in, and project that we will need more gunmakers in the future as that trend looks set to continue. It's also satisfying to see the first apprentice joining the Rigby Academy training programme, an initiative I feel is essential to ensure the niche skills involved in gunmaking are preserved for the future. I look forward to seeing Joshua make progress and learn to work to the exceptionally high standard we demand at Rigby."

# Young Lanarkshire keeper crowned Scotland's best

A multi-skilled South Lanarkshire youngster who volunteers for Mountain Rescue and community causes in spare time has been crowned Scotland's best Young Gamekeeper.

SGA Chairman Alex Hogg, MBE, presented the prize to 20-year-old Cole Stewart from Braidwood, described by the head stalker of Black Corries Estate in Glencoe as 'one of a kind', at Moy Country Fair in Inverness-shire.

When it became known that the youngster was to collect the prize, colleagues and deer stalking visitors in his shoot party stopped to offer the 20-year-old a deserved round of applause.

Cole, introduced to rabbit and roe deer management as a young boy, has undertaken formal gamekeeping qualifications at North Highland College UHI in Thurso.

At Black Corries Estate he combines deer, grouse, low ground and habitat management while turning his hand to seasonal fishing ghillie-ing on the estate's trout lochs.

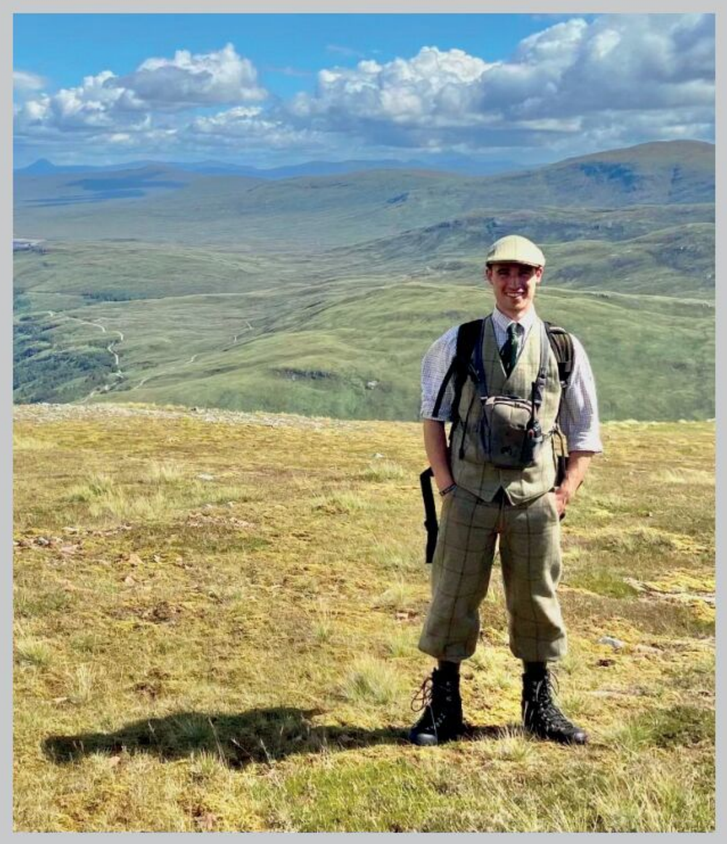
Black Corries, a mixed estate, is home to conservation-listed black grouse, golden eagle and black throated diver.

"I couldn't be in a better place," said the new SGA Young Gamekeeper of the Year 2022. "It is the variety which appeals to me as a gamekeeper. You can wake up in the morning and you might be going out to the hill with a stalking party and the next day you might be doing a walked-up grouse shoot with trained pointer dogs.

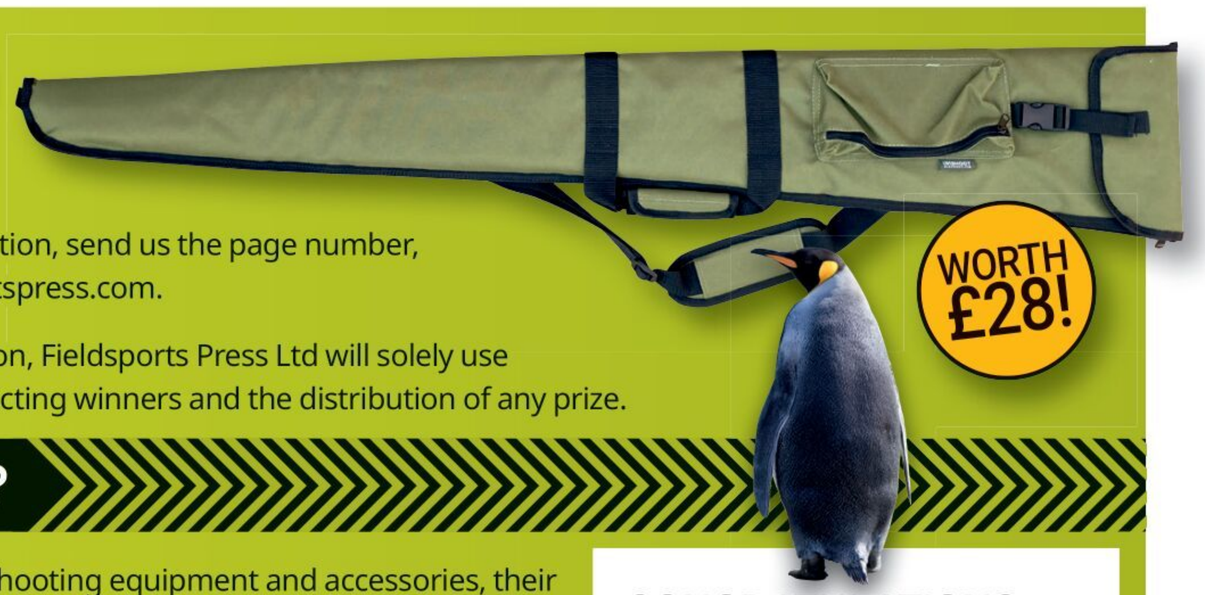
"Another thing that drives me is seeing the biodiversity which arises from good management. When you walk onto the estate, you can see the wider benefits of the predator control work we do. We have greenshank, snipe and wading birds in abundance. I believe that good gamekeeping is part of the solution for our countryside in Scotland."

Alex Hogg, said: "It is clear, from those who spoke so highly of him, that his willingness to work hard, learn and take responsibility makes him the type you don't find every day.

"Not only that, he is willing to help out in the community, including with the Mountain Rescue, and is exactly the type of youthful ambassador that our sector requires in the modern day."



# WIN A SHOTGUN SLIP




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: competitions@fieldsportspress.com.

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

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### CONGRATULATIONS:

SYLVIA BINOVEC who found LILY LYNX CUB on p15 of the October issue. See p88 for successful creature finders.

PICTURE: ISTOCK

* Please don't send entries by post due to office closures.

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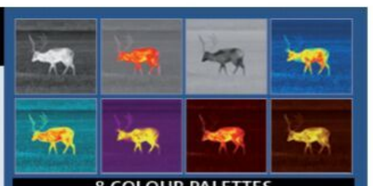
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- Thick 100% polyester fleece
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- 2 zipped chest & hand pockets

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NEW

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## Seeland BENJAMIN FLEECE

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A very lightweight yet warm and beautifully soft fleece, which excels as a midlayer in brisk weather. Being light and quite thin, it is easy to pack and carry with you. The fleece has a high collar, two zipped front pockets and elasticated cuffs for a snug fit at the wrists.

- Full zip
- Super light weight fabric
- Adjustable bottom hem
- Zipped front pockets
- Elasticated cuffs

| | RRP | NOW |
|---|---|---|
| Pine Green | £34.99 | **£29.99** |
| Dark Navy | £34.99 | **£29.99** |

PINE GREEN • DARK NAVY

## Seeland AVAIL

NEW

Simple, practical hunting clothing series with no superfluous frills. Avail is made from a brushed, low-noise tricot fabric and features a windproof / waterproof SEETEX® membraneto keep you dry even if you get caught out in a passing squall or two.

| Pine Green Melange | RRP | NOW |
|---|---|---|
| Jacket | £164.99 | **£147.99** |
| Smock | £199.99 | **£179.99** |
| Trousers | £119.99 | **£107.99** |
| Cap | £32.99 | **£29.99** |
| **InVis Green Camo NEW** | | |
| Jacket | £189.99 | **£169.99** |
| Trousers | £144.99 | **£129.99** |
| Cap | £32.99 | **£29.99** |

## Seeland HELT II

NEW

The Helt II jacket is a good-looking, warm jacket, designed for stand hunting, from late autumn and well into winter. As well as being windproof and waterproof due to Harkila's own SEETEX® membrane, it includes a wealth of useful functionality, prompted by the feedback they have received from experienced hunters. In combination with the Helt II trousers, the jacket offers a hunting suit that will meet your needs for many seasons to come, when the temperature dips and you are sitting waiting for the game to show.

| | RRP | NOW |
|---|---|---|
| Jacket | £254.99 | **£229.99** |
| Trousers | £164.99 | **£146.99** |

JACKET • TROUSERS

## Seeland CLIMATE HYBRID

Seeland's Climate range offers the ultimate package for the cold autumn and winter months. Climate hybrid will keep you warm and dry - no matter whether you are actually sedentary or on the move.

| | RRP | NOW |
|---|---|---|
| Climate Hybrid Jacket | £274.99 | **£247.99** |
| Climate Hybrid Trousers | £189.99 | **£169.99** |
| Climate Beanie | £27.99 | **£24.99** |
| Climate Gloves | £38.99 | **£34.99** |
| Climate Socks | £21.99 | **£19.99** |

## HÄRKILA VENJAN FLEECE JACKET

NEW

The Venjan Fleece Jacket is a soft and warm fleece with a high collar that is perfect as a midlayer or an outerlayer on chillier days. Made from soft, recycled Polartec 200® fleece fabric, that is insulating, quick-drying and highly breathable. The jacket has two front pockets and a chest pocket, all zipped.

Willow Green.....**£109.99**
Duffel Green / Black.....**£109.99**
Black / Grey.....**£109.99**
Shadow Brown / Willow Green..**£109.99**

WILLOW GREEN • DUFFEL GREEN / BLACK • BLACK / GREY • SHADOW BROWN / WILLOW GREEN

## HÄRKILA METSO HALF ZIP

NEW

The Metso half zip sweater is a stylish, warm garment made from a TeckWool blend, which is not only warm, but also relatively hardwearing, stretchy and very breathable. This makes the sweater an ideal choice as elegant outerwear in spring and autumn, or as a warm midlayer on your deep winter hunts. It has a zip down to mid-chest height, a large handwarmer pocket, and a hidden radio pocket on the left chest.

Willow Green.....**£169.99**
Shadow Brown.....**£169.99**

SHADOW BROWN • WILLOW GREEN

## HÄRKILA ATAMMIK WALKING BOOTS

NEW

Attack any environment with confidence wearing the Harkila Atammik GTX . These waterproof boots are designed to take on the harshest of environments and they deliver this by having some great features. Wear on the shoot or out for a hike - they won't let you down.
Constructed from durable Cordura, these boots have an advantage over leather boots in a way that they're very quick-drying and breathable.

Dark Brown
**£269.99**

**FOC MUDDY BOOT WALKING BOOT BAG** (WORTH £9.99)

## HÄRKILA FOREST HUNTER GTX WALKING BOOTS

NEW

Light weight boots despite their leather construction. In designing these boots, Harkila created extra space around the toes. Not only does this provide excellent comfort, but it is also useful in cold weather, because it gives you more room to move your toes, even when wearing thick, insulating socks.

**Available in Willow Green or Dark Brown**

Forest Hunter Mid GTX.....**£269.99**
Forest Hunter Hi GTX.....**£299.99**

MID • HIGH • Dark Brown • Willow Green

**FOC MINK OIL** (WORTH £12.99)

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OVER **14 MILLION** PAGE VIEWS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS

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# CAIRNGORM GROUSE ADVENTURE

## The Rough Rovers have a challenging, but spectacular day out on the moors with friend and chef Tim Maddams, where a change of plan pays off and almost saves the bag

As soon as I realised that we were facing another interrupted season and would probably struggle to book days at the start of it. I decided to take steps to ensure we got some varied shooting into the Rough Rovers calendar.

Many of us have scaled back our shooting this season due to the reduced opportunities and over-inflated prices. We have had several teams out shooting grouse for the first time on walked-up days in Cumbria, Yorkshire and Scotland, in addition to booking half a dozen back-to-back days in Anglesey, north Wales and Somerset for wild bird shooting. All of these are signs that people are looking for more of an experience rather than an overpriced driven day.

Without too much difficulty, I got a team of five of us together to make the trip up to the Cairngorms. It is a trip I had been meaning to make for quite a while especially as Rough Rovers friend, Tim Maddams, had recently upped sticks and moved to Scotland, only to discover the type of shooting he knows we relish.

We would be shooting walked-up grouse on the first day, aiming for 10 brace, followed by a mixed species day which would hopefully include teal, mallard, partridge, snipe, rabbit and possibly a brown hare if anyone would take it home and eat it. The simple plan was to stay in two of the estate cottages and Tim would ensure we would not go hungry with his sustainable and unique style of catering.

We all arrived in good time on the Thursday night via planes, trains and automobiles complete with a mass of kit and enough alcohol to keep a boatful of press-ganged sailors happy. The two cottages were perfect; located down a quiet track with views out over the lowland ground with tomorrow's moors looming majestically beyond. We met Tim at the larger of the two cottages for a meal of smoked halibut and cured meats, followed by roe deer, greens, polenta, foraged ceps and chanterelle sauce, and chocolate mousse to finish.

As you'd expect, being grown men, none of us got over-excited, drank too much or stayed up too late so we were all as fresh as daisies the following morning ready for a gentle yomp up the moor.

We met two keepers and two beaters at about 9am and squeezed our team of 10, plus 12 dogs, into the old Defenders provided by the estate for a

**The Rough Rovers is a roving syndicate created to seek out the best walked-up, mini-driven and driven shooting on different estates across the country at a sensible price.**



A walked-up grouse day in the Caingorm mountains conjurs up some tricky birds and tough shooting terrain for the Rough Rovers

PICTURES: PHIL MOOROSOM



stunning off-road journey to the top of the moor. It was quite a bit cooler at that altitude but we left all non-essential equipment in the vehicles as we knew we would soon warm up. Guns, cartridge belts, spare ammo and a bottle of water completed the bare necessities. We needed to be on top form because the grouse had been shot over several times and would be lifting quite far ahead on such a cool and still day. It would be very, very different from shooting in early August.

And off we went.

The first 500 yards were a killer but as soon as the adrenaline and oxygen got into our blood and the moor eventually levelled out some, we all settled into the pace. The keepers had opted for an extended line so I could not see the result of some early shooting on the far right of the line and the silence on the radios was only broken by Ian, one of the keepers, at the far end exclaiming, "It's going to be a long day!"

'We needed to be on top form because the grouse had been shot over several times and would be lifting quite far ahead'

It was all very quiet my end and the first chance came when a lightly clipped bird curled round and landed about 70 yards behind me and Bryce, the other keeper. He summoned me to come with him back down the gully we had just scaled and his dogs started to work the rough area where the bird had been marked. With differing shouts directing us from afar, we were struggling to find the bird when it got up about 20 yards away. Thankfully, I saw it lift and managed to bring it down with a single shot much to the relief of us both.

My next opportunity came when a bird lifted out to my right and that came down as well. A ruthless walked-up shot but the way they were rising, one had to take every chance. I then had a gorgeous chance of a left and right but sadly wasted two shells on the first bird.

We continued to walk over some extremely challenging ground and when we reached the next ridge we could see the bothy in the distance. Lunch and a welcome rest seemed not far away. However, we continued on our line and the bothy disappeared behind us! It did pay off though as a few more of the team had some extra shooting and it only took an hour to get back to the hut.

Tim brought out a light lunch with soup, meats,



It's been a tough day, but the team of Guns are still smiling!

cheeses and various chilled drinks. We were all grateful for a break and finally had a chance to catch up and compare our views on the morning. It turned out we had not shot well at all, although we'd definitely had the shooting. Two of the team had not managed to bring down a bird yet and had found the terrain tough. We debriefed with the keepers and they decided to change the plan for the afternoon and visit less gruelling ground that would hopefully be well populated with grouse. It was a 15-minute drive to get to the other side of the 18,000-acre estate but thankfully it meant we avoided the rain that had just begun.

We set out again with renewed vigour and I volunteered for the hard walking end of the line because I'd had it relatively easy in the morning. There were birds about but after getting wet in the recent rain they stood proud of the heather drying off and consequently had a good view of the approaching line.

It turned out to be a very frustrating couple of hours as birds got up either a long way out or nowhere near any of the Guns. The line had slowed up a lot on the left and it transpired that one of the team was really struggling and he opted to call it a day in order not to spoil the rest of the team's afternoon.

We battled on and I could tell that everyone, beaters, dogs and Guns, were getting a bit frustrated as the majority of the grouse were simply not shootable. Another quick conflab and the keepers decided that the Gun line would walk 25 yards in front of the beating line to hopefully stop the birds rising so far in front. Now, by this time, I have to admit that my spirits were down. I was feeling exhausted and I wasn't shooting well, so I had to remind myself just how lucky I was to be out hunting wild grouse in such dramatic, beautiful scenery.

My shooting did not improve but I was presented with two of the best grouse I have ever shot at on a walked-up day. The first barrelled down a gulley towards me about 15 yards off the ground and 20 yards out and at full tilt. In a millisecond, my adrenaline level soared and I imagined the bird would soon be safe in my game bag once I pulled the trigger. I lifted my gun and made direct eye contact with the bird – a fatal move. Both barrels discharged and not a feather was ruffled as my bath time bird of the day disappeared from view.

The next one got up 50 yards to my right, curled on the wind and crossed in front and neither of my two shots troubled it. It then continued straight over my neighbour's head who also missed it and it turned again to come behind me as I cack-handedly stuffed a single cartridge into the gun. I did wonder if maybe I'd clipped it and as it rose I imagined it was going to tower. But it kept lifting higher and higher until it was a speck in the distance, and disappeared.



Having Tim Maddams on lunch duty was a real treat for the hungry team of Guns!

The plan of walking in front of the beaters definitely made a difference and we managed to add a few more birds to the bag and ended with six and a half brace. Secretly, we were all relieved to get back to the vehicles after a testing but thoroughly enjoyable day's shooting. Even the keepers admitted that it had been their most challenging day of the season. Keen to make sure that we ended on a high, they suggested that we finish with an evening duck flight. It was an inspired idea and we managed to bag a brace of teal and 15 mallard, which of course lifted the spirits of the whole team.

The post-shoot analysis that evening was brilliant. I love sitting down with a team after a day in the field when we can discuss every bird and opportunity in depth, debate who shot which bird and generally wind each other up. Tim prepared an incredible meal with seared slithers of grouse breast as an appetiser, then a crab and lobster broth, followed by one of last season's woodcock a piece before finishing off with a delicious crumble. Needless to say, we could hardly keep our eyes open and were all making our excuses to get to bed by about 10.30pm, comforted by the thought that tomorrow's day would surely be a walk in the park – but that, as they say is another story! SS



The bag didn't quite reflect the hard work the day's sport demanded

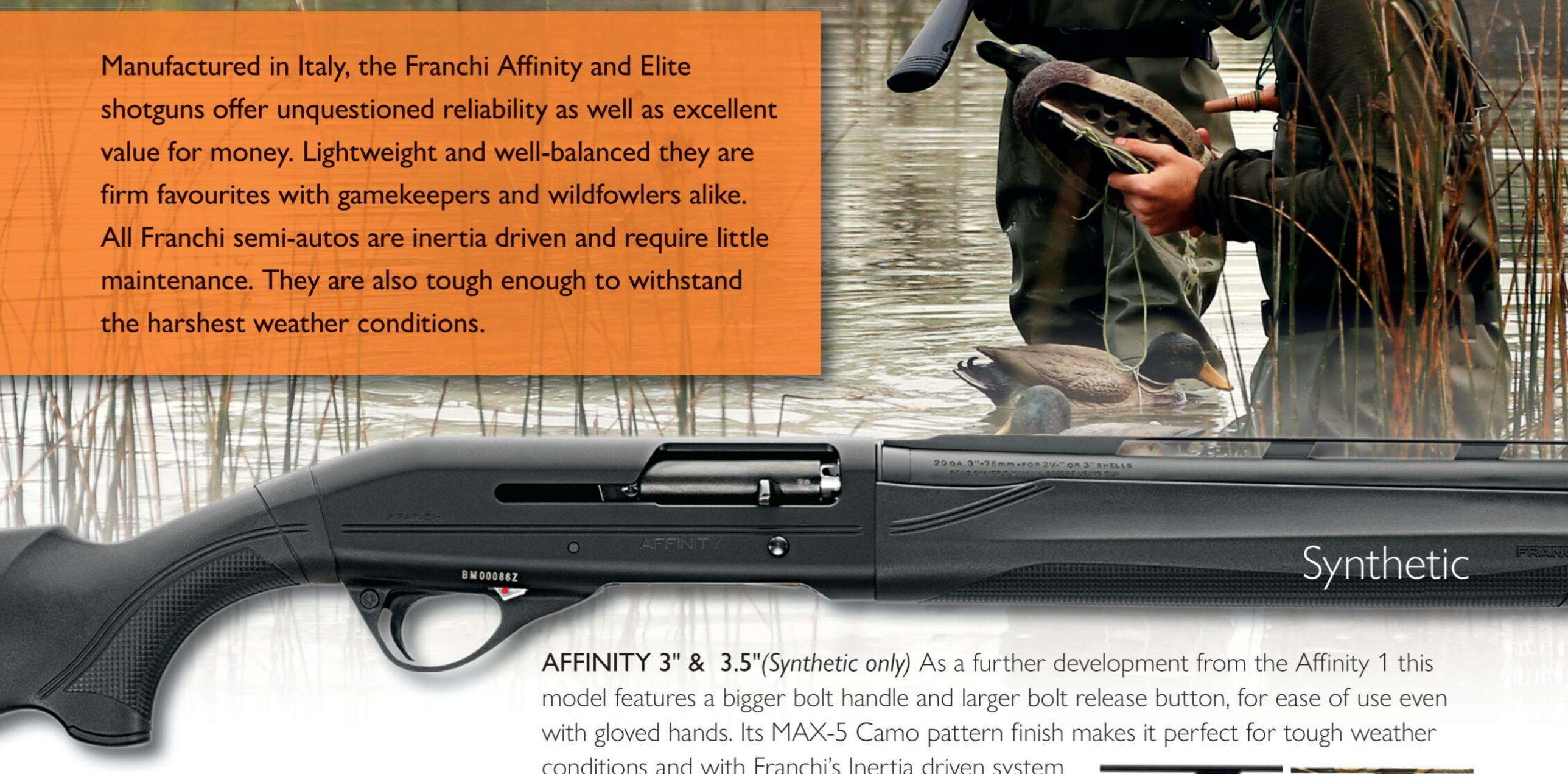
**TOP TIP**

**If the day isn't quite going to plan, don't be afraid of discussing options with the keeper – after all, he will want you to have the best day possible. Just don't scrimp on the tip at the end of the day!**

FRANCHI
FEELS RIGHT

# THE TOUGH ITALIANS

Manufactured in Italy, the Franchi Affinity and Elite shotguns offer unquestioned reliability as well as excellent value for money. Lightweight and well-balanced they are firm favourites with gamekeepers and wildfowlers alike. All Franchi semi-autos are inertia driven and require little maintenance. They are also tough enough to withstand the harshest weather conditions.




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PART TWO

# Pheasant shooting style

## Maintained lead or swing-through? Pull away or snap shooting? There's a style of shooting for every shot and every scenario. Simon O'Leary takes a look at a few common ones

Last month, we covered how to approach three types of scenarios relating to how birds fly. However, there are many variants on any given theme so an approach processed by one shooter may not be of best benefit to another. Therefore, I recommend firstly identifying your own style and approach so that you can select the best exercises for a specific scenario you may face in the field. As I always say when giving lessons, and as most shooters already know, the foundation must be solid and strong because this is where all form and stance are built from.

Just in case you are new to the sport (which, by the way, is brilliant!), there are generic standards that one must be familiar with – such as the smooth mounting of the gun and a light foot movement to extend your flat line of travel. These two combined will account for a large part of the shot. Both actions fall into the realm of 'conditioning'. It is important to remember that the art of shotgun shooting is an ever-morphing cycle; even if you think you have a technique mastered, it's worth revisiting!

### How to handle long distance/high birds

These will predominantly be pheasants. Birds that have been pushed off and have ramped up to speed, with their line of flight now firmly set. Such birds remind me of bomber planes flying in formation, almost floating, cruising towards a landing patch in the approaching distance. Obviously, I'm not old enough to have seen bomber planes in formation, but you know what I mean. For me, the neatest approach for this type of shot is Maintained lead. Maintaining lead on a bird is a very calm method of shooting, perfectly suited to a fixed, higher target. The bird is picked, the feet are adjusted, the gun is mounted up into the cheek with muzzle positioned by instinct, immediately followed with a fluid match of muzzle to quarry speed. Remember, the above is a suggestion only, to try but only if refinement is required! If your success rate with these types of birds is questionable, Maintained could be a useful tool. If nothing else, the immediate sensation should be that of timing. Time is paramount, no matter which style you entertain.

### How to handle curling birds

The curling target in comparison is a very different bird indeed, due to the line being curved in one shape or another (clue in the name)! Now, if we're being really picky, the style is dependent on where the initial pick-up point is created. So without huge detail and to generalise a little, I would probably instinctively select the Pull-away method, the idea being that I can watch the bird initially, for it to either curl on the wind or to the side of a flanker, then take the shot. The time spent in the air could be the same as above, but excitement may kick in and you could


## 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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PICTURE: ISTOCK

## THE STAGES OF GETTING A GOOD GUN MOUNT



Stage one: Get ready! Remember, nose over toe, and don't clamp the stock under your arm, place it to the side of the chest and look over the muzzle to the bird



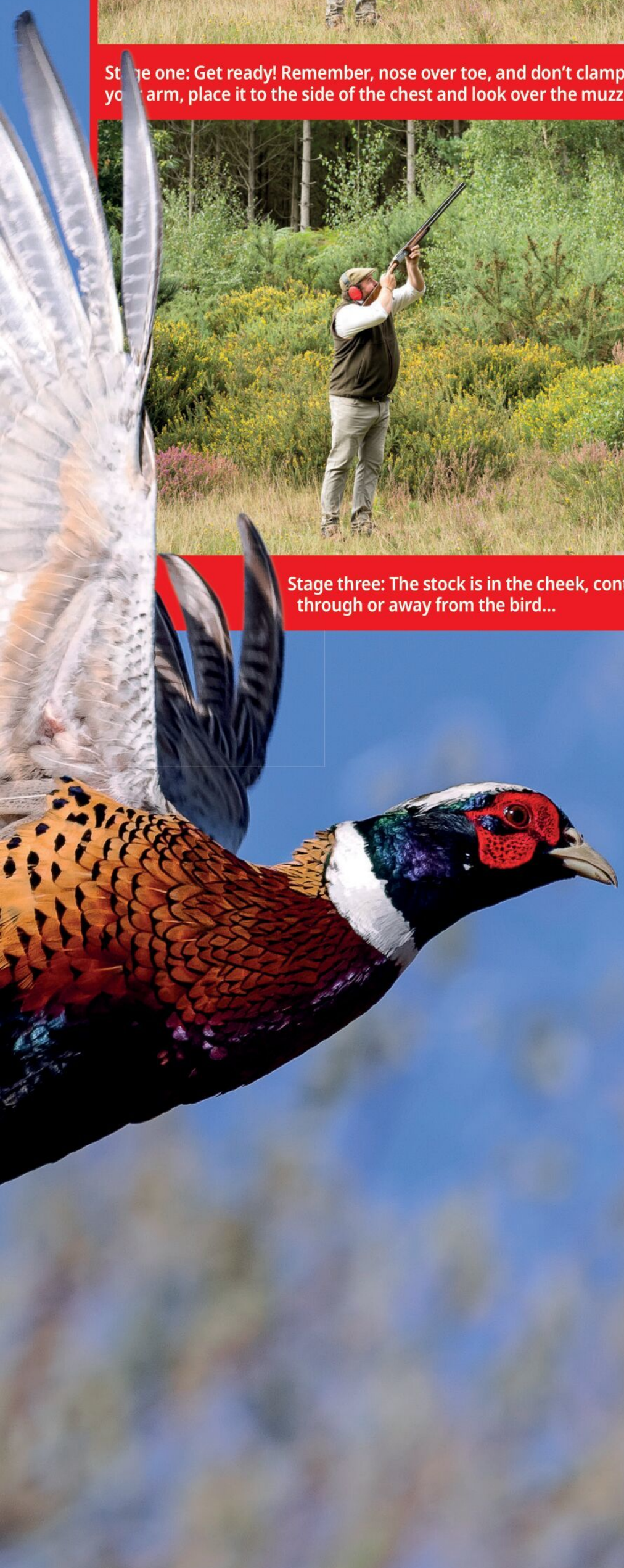
Stage two: The mount. Bring the stock into your cheek (not the other way round) as the muzzle comes up to, or behind, the bird in one fluid movement



Stage three: The stock is in the cheek, continue to push through or away from the bird...



Stage four: Take the shot, remembering to keep the barrels moving. Remember 'move, mount shoot' and continuous muzzle speed throughout



'The neatest approach for birds that have been pushed off and have ramped up to speed is Maintained lead'

rush the shot. One could possibly shoot Maintained, but this is purely dependant on your circumstances – mainly, is there enough time for the bird to straighten its line? This would also be the reasoning as to why a Swing-through shot could be most awkward!

## How to snap shoot

The snapshot approach can be any style, the common link being that the shot is taken bloody sharpish! The reaction followed by the action is quick, stabby and sharp. The snap approach is all about mount. The eye will see the lead immediately. The skill is how well one can position the stock to align with the eye. Perfect mount will produce a damn good chance of a perfect shot, but as ever... practice makes perfect. This style can often be seen in use when out in woody conditions. The time of year will see deciduous trees without leaf for sure, but often where birds are sent across, you're the Gun in the pine forest with only a small patch of sky. No time to visually pick up, to slowly mount the muzzle into position, or to follow with that perfect Stanbury-style delicate swing. No, you're going to listen and react, or worse still, you could rely purely on sight only.

Pre-season tower work with clays is one obvious way to get the eye sharp. This would also be the opportune time to experiment with the other styles. Don't push this idea too hard; these alternatives are meant to add value only, rather than screw up your current skill set.

## Try something new

However, shooting Maintained at a true straight driven bird (albeit a rare bird in the field) would immediately block out the bird, giving no indication of line or speed of flight. Now the obvious solution would be to stand sideways onto the line of the bird and shoot as a crosser, but I have a client who does something to the contrary.

The chap in question has a canny way of judging the bird, purely by the speed of his mount. You could say he swings the muzzle through the bird, only then to mount the stock into the cheek followed with a small movement, then pulling the trigger. Almost a Swing-through motion prior to the mount. He didn't realise he did this until he came to the school for a tidy up. This was yet another occasion where I also learnt something new... and better still, it works for him with devastating effect, so all good.

Then there is the young lady that shoots with us regularly who also uses a variation on a theme. Her go-to on long crossing birds is to mount just in front of the bird (OK, so Maintained lead then), but then she accelerates away to the desired lead for the shot. It's a hybrid of Maintained and Pull-away, nothing too ground-breaking, but a variant that enables her to clearly and cleanly judge and ultimately kill the bird.

The point I'm making is it's good to try new ideas. If you're proficient, then as I said earlier, just go and practise. But if you're not sure and need a second opinion, then go and see a good instructor. By this I mean one that reads you and your shooting, as opposed to one who just likes the sound of their own voice, or who favours one style to the exclusion of all others.

Understand your own shooting and its parameters and only then will you better your chances. Reactions should be sharp, but with a measured approach. With a keen eye and a well-practised mount, you can buy some time, most of the time. But perhaps just now and again, do that silly, rushed miss-mount, zero timing, appalling looking, foot fixed blunder in the field, because as we all know, it is just a sign of excitement, and long may this sensation last. SS

**MOUNT UP!**

**One of the ways to practice your gun mount is to do it in front of a mirror indoors. This helps to build the all-important muscle memory.**



PICTURES: BEN WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

**Any successful shot is going to start with a good mount – and practice makes perfect!**



# SPEED AND PRECISION





## THE NEW VENGEANCE ADVANCED 5-25X56MM FFP

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# Autumn opportunities

## This month, Crowman explains how to make the most out of your autumn pigeon shooting with advice on what to look out for and how to plan your day

As the weather turns colder and the nights longer, there's still plenty of success to be had on the pigeons. The variety of crops being drilled throughout October provided multiple food sources for the birds, meaning their movements became a little more erratic and a little less predictable...

"The pigeons spread out a lot more in smaller groups due to all the drilling going on and the various food sources available, so rather than getting big flocks on specific fields, you'll tend to see a few here and there on different fields," explained Andy. "If the farmer has sileaged the maize, you tend to get cobs left on top which the birds love. It's the same with bean stubbles – when the cultivator has gone through and broken up the ground, ready to be drilled again, the birds knock any pods that have beans in them still, and the beans get chucked onto the ground. Also, any that were covered with straw or something get lifted onto the surface. This can cause pigeons to get back onto stubbles that you thought were already finished for the year, so it really pays to keep an eye on the maize and bean fields at this time of year. Any wheat that's being put in late can also produce a good day.

"Their feeding patterns can also change quite dramatically at this time of year. Not only are there multiple food sources, but beans and maize are high in protein, meaning the birds don't need to eat so much to fill up. All this means they don't need to start feeding until later, basically because they don't need to spend as long feeding to get the nutrition they need. We've been finding that we'll get to a field around 10 or 11 o'clock, and there's no movement at all. And then, at around half two to three o'clock, it'll just switch on like a light!"

As we move into November, things begin to settle down a little more. If you're clever about it and time your attack well, you can find there are some great days to be had.

"The last thing to go in will often be the winter beans," said Andy. "These are usually drilled in very late October or the first few weeks of November, and winter beans are a great crop to keep an eye on as they can produce a really good day. Towards the end of the drilling, you can very often get some bigger bag days in, because surrounding fields and farms will have finished and so the birds are more concentrated into one area.

"By November, you also get an abundance of natural food appearing for the pigeons. This year, there's a bumper crop of acorns and beech mast, so the pigeons will be switching onto that, along with the rape fields. They will often get on any headlands around rape fields that have oak trees in them, and they'll flit between the two to feed. They'll also be getting onto any late harvested maize, so if any of that applies to your ground, keep your eyes peeled!"

Despite being a little easier to pin down to one area, November shooting can still pose its own problems, one of which is the older and wiser birds who may not be quite so attracted to your painstakingly arranged decoy pattern!

"By this time of year, they've been seeing flappers and whirlies all season, and might not be so keen on them if they've been shot at," explained Andy. "So, be aware that you may need to change tack. Don't be stubborn

**HIDE AND SEEK**
**Andy finds that hides do just as well out in the fields as they do along the hedgeline. Using material from the surrounding area is the key to hide success.**



Andy's trsuty Blaser never lets him down

PICTURES: EMILY DAMMENT

‘When they break up the ground with the cultivator ready for drilling, it can knock leftover beans off and make for a good day’s shooting!’

PICTURE: GTMEDIA_ISTOCKPHOTO

about leaving your pattern as it is if you can see they're not responding well to it. You might need to bring a flapper or a whirlie in if you can see them veering off from them, and sometimes going old school with a floater and just some real birds on cradles can be a good move. The key here is to watch carefully and respond to what's happening. On the subject of whirlies, I've got a nice new rotary from UK Shoot Warehouse that has been running nicely so far, and that will be making an appearance in an upcoming video on Shooting & Country TV soon enough."


Andy's trsuty companion and retriever, Rosa, keeps a look out for any shot birds

## In the hide

After the long summer, during which Andy (like all farmers!) was working non-stop, sometimes sleeping on the tractor for a few hours and carrying straight on in an effort to bring the harvest in, it's a relief to be able to get out and enjoy more of his own shooting. Andy gets so busy over summer that, on occasion, he's brought in other people to control the numbers of birds. Now, things begin to wind down a little.

"We've had a few smallish days, bagging 70 or 80 birds, on some of the early drilling," said Andy. "And the last time you came to film with us, right at the end of September, was a really decent day too. Proving the point I made earlier, that day was actually on a bean stubble that had been cultivated, and the birds were coming in to feed on the leftover beans that had been exposed. I was shooting with a mate of mine, who has permissions on the farm where I work. This is great because Mat keeps an eye on everything and watches the birds, doing a lot of the reconnaissance legwork to work out when and where is most likely to give us a good day. When the day comes, we can sometimes go out together and shoot from two hides. Mat's a great shot too, so I always enjoy a day in the hide with him.

"That day we shot about 180, despite the day starting out as wet and as miserable as they come! Luckily, it settled down after an hour or so. The birds had been feeding on a field of cover crop next door, as well as hammering those beans, and were tending to move back and forth between the two. We set up on the beans because the wind was in the wrong direction to set up on the cover crop – it would have been in our faces, meaning the birds would most likely have come from behind, which only makes for hard shooting and isn't that enjoyable.

"Typically, as it was, they didn't come in to us that well anyway! Most were tending to go wide, and we pulled off some cracking long shots and some really high flighting stuff, which is what I like anyway. You'll sometimes find they don't decoy that well on beans, which might be because they can't see the decoys so well, but who knows!? Sometimes they decoy lovely! That's the thing with pigeons – you can never 100% predict what they're going to do. That's why I love them." SS

**S&CTV**

**You can now watch Andy's rainy day in the hide with his pal Mat on Shooting & Country TV**


Real birds can work well later in the season when the pigeons may be more educated!

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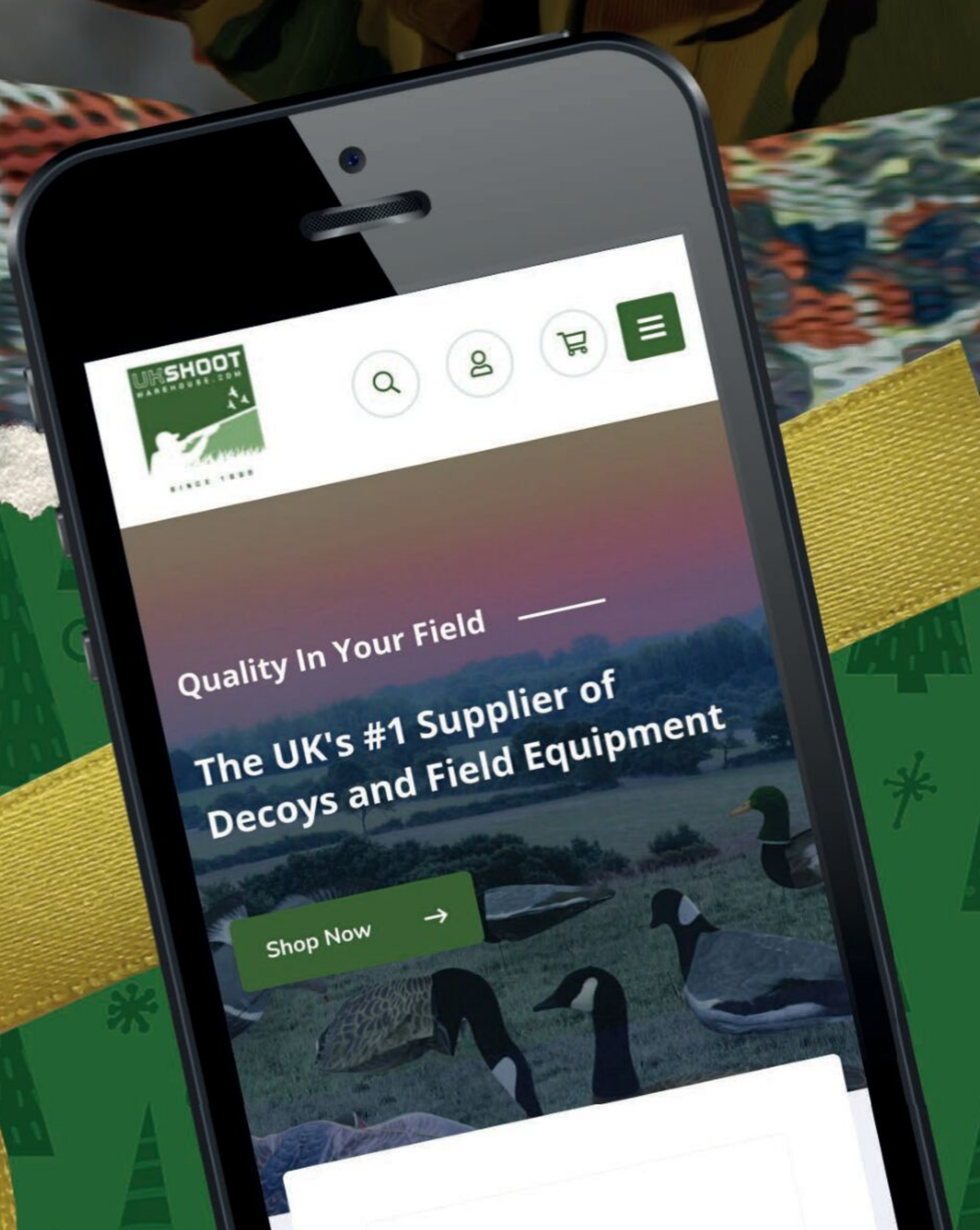
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PICTURES: CHRIS MARNEY

**Korean Pheasant and Red Pepper Stew**

# Winter warmers

## This brace of spicy curries from Chris Marney will take your game cooking to a new level – and is bound to convert anyone who has never tried game before!

The season is in full swing and we should all be out there collecting a good number of birds from the game cart, whether we are shooting or beating. And don't forget to pick up a few extra birds for your neighbours, too! I have found that while some of my friends are happy to receive birds in the feather you may need to dress a few extra as a nice gift – plus it's a great opportunity to spread the word.

As we have spoken about before, game works perfectly when you are adding a bit of spice and this month we have two great recipes, one which has a bit of a kick and the other for those with more sensitive taste buds.

There is always that debate when cooking a curry, should it be rice or breads, so this month we have saved any arguments and made both.

Here in the GFA kitchen, we normally skin our partridges and pheasants to save on the plucking. We can often be doing dozens at a time so for speed we find this works well for us. Please do let us know how you like to pluck and dress your birds.

Don't forget when you are freezing your birds, whether they be whole or breasts and legs, remember to freeze them in the portions you expect to be cooking them in.

Please do visit our website or follow us on Instagram for further details about some of the things we are up to. And if there are any recipes or game meats you would like to see us use in the months ahead, please do get in touch.

### 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.**

### 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**

### Korean pheasant and red pepper stew

**Serves 4**

#### Ingredients

- 2tbsp olive oil
- 600g pheasant breasts, diced with the sinew removed
- 1 red onion, peeled & finely diced

- 2 red peppers, deseeded & cut into strips
- 1 red chilli, deseeded & finely diced
- 1tsp crushed chilli paste
- 1tsp crushed ginger paste
- 10g light muscovado sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed (use some salt flakes to help)
- 2tbsp dark soy sauce
- 2tbsp oyster sauce
- 300ml pheasant stock
- 3 spring onions, cut in strips

### Method

1. Heat the oven to 150°C.
2. Heat 1tbsp of the olive oil in a casserole dish (that you have a lid for).
3. Add half the pheasant and fry until browned, remove and set to one side, and repeat with the other half.
4. After you have removed the second batch of pheasant, add the other tbsp of olive oil and onions and fry of 5 minutes.
5. When the onions are nicely softened, add the garlic and ginger and fry for a further 2 minutes.
6. Place all the other ingredients, including the pheasant, into the casserole dish except the spring onions and bring to the boil.
7. Place in the oven and cook for 2 to 3 hours until the meat is nice and tender and the sauce has reduced down.
8. Serve with the rice and some spring onion.

## Butter partridge curry

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### Marinade

- 600g partridge breasts, diced with the sinew removed
- 150g natural yogurt
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1tsp crushed ginger paste
- 2tsp garam masala
- 1tsp ground cumin
- 1tsp mild chilli powder
- 1tsp turmeric powder
- 1tsp salt flakes

#### Curry

- 2tbsp groundnut oil
- 1 red onion, peeled & finely diced
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1tsp crushed ginger paste
- 1tsp ground garam masala
- 1tsp ground cumin
- 1tsp ground coriander
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1tsp mild chilli powder
- 1tsp salt flakes
- 200ml double cream
- 2tsp caster sugar

## HOW TO MAKE THE PERFECT RICE

SERVES 4

### Ingredients

- 300g long grain rice

### Method

**1.** Place the rice in a sieve and wash off the starch under a cold running tap until the water runs clean.
**2.** Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and drop in the rice and pop the lid on. Cook for five minutes.
**3.** Strain the rice in the sieve.
**4.** Add some boiling water back into the pan, then place the rice in a veg steamer over the pan, place a lid on and steam for 8 minutes.

### Method

#### Marinade

1. Place all the marinade ingredients, apart from the diced partridge, into a bowl and mix thoroughly until combined.
2. Place the partridge into the marinade and stir so that all the meat is well coated.
3. Cover the bowl with cling film.
4. Leave to marinade for a few hours or overnight.



**Butter Partridge Curry**




## Curry

1. Heat 1tbsp of the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onions for 5 minutes.
2. When the onions are nicely softened, add the garlic and ginger and fry for a further 2 minutes.
3. Add the garam masala, cumin, coriander, and cook off for 30 seconds.
4. Add the chilli powder, salt and tomatoes, bring to a simmer, and cook for 15 minutes.
5. Place in a food processor and pulse until you have a smooth paste.
6. Add the rest of the oil to the frying pan, then in two batches fry off the marinaded partridge until nicely browned and set to one side.
7. Place the curry paste back in the pan and add the browned partridge.
8. Add the sugar and cream and stir to combine well. Bring to the boil and you are ready to serve.

## Naan bread (makes 4)

### Ingredients

- 300g strong white bread flour (extra for rolling)
- 7g dried yeast or 20g fresh yeast
- 1tbsp clear runny honey
- 50g salted butter, melted
- 3tbsp natural yogurt
- 1tbsp nigella seeds

### Method

1a. If you have an electric mixer with a dough hook, place all the ingredients into the bowl but keep back half of the butter and nigella seeds, then work the dough for 10 minutes until the dough is nice and smooth. Move on to step 2.

1b. If you do not have a mixer, combine the ingredients in a bowl and then empty out onto the work surface and knead for 10 minutes until you have a smooth dough.

2. Place into an oiled bowl, cover with cling film and place in a warm place and leave for 1.5 hours or until doubled in size.

3. Empty out onto a well-floured worktop and divide the dough into four.

4. Using a well-floured rolling pin, form each piece into an oval shape about 1cm thick.

5. Place the dough into a very hot frying pan and cook for 2 to 3 minutes per side.

6. When you remove from the pan, brush on some of the remaining melted butter and sprinkle on some of the leftover nigella seeds.

7. Repeat for the other three breads. SS

**HUNT & GATHER**

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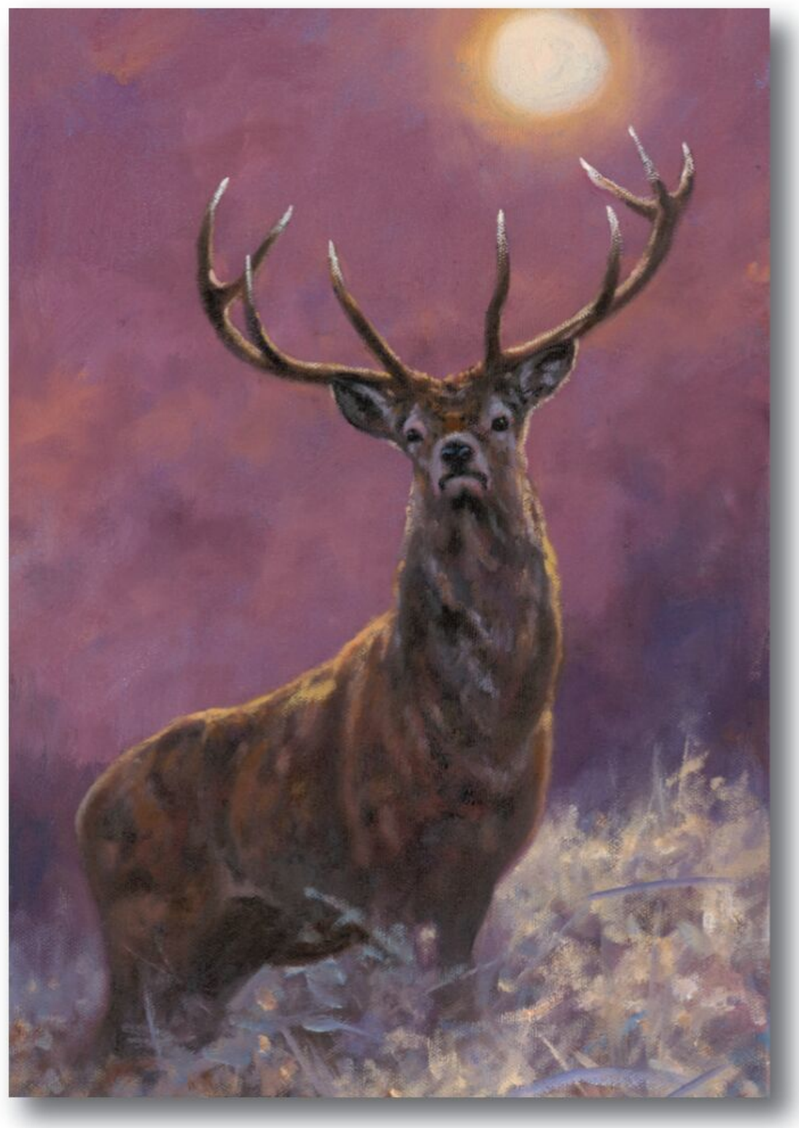
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WITH DR CONOR O'GORMAN

# When to shoot woodcock?

## Would a later start to the open season help our breeding woodcock population? Or should we back a ban on shooting them altogether? Conor O'Gorman takes a look into the world of these migratory and resident birds

Before I discuss woodcock shooting and conservation I wanted to update readers on firearms licensing. Last month I used this column to encourage readers to contact their Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), copying me in at conor.ogorman@basc.org.uk raising concerns about the resourcing and management of firearms licensing by their force.

So far one reader has acted on this, for Northumbia, and this is having a positive impact. The worst performing forces are: Cumbria, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, Durham, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Humberside, Metropolitan, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, Staffordshire & West Midlands. If your force is listed, please contact your PCC today.

Turning to woodcock, our resident breeding population is in decline and political pressure has been growing for the species to either be removed from the quarry list or the shooting season shortened.

Between 2003 and 2013, the national woodcock survey revealed a 29% drop in the number of breeding woodcock males, with the next survey taking place in 2023.

There are currently an estimated 57,000 breeding woodcock males in the UK, equating to a breeding population of roughly 180,000 individuals. Approximately 1.4 million individuals overwinter in the UK, arriving from mid-November onwards, mostly from Russia and Scandinavia.

The British Trust for Ornithology explains that the reasons for the decline are unclear but may include recreational disturbance, drying out of woodlands, increased browsing by deer, declining woodland management, and maturing of new plantations.

The GWCT agrees and adds in 'increased predation' as another possible reason.

The RSPB offers the primary reason as less habitat because conifer plantations have become too mature for woodcock to find open enough breeding areas.

There is no evidence that shooting is responsible for the decline in the breeding population but that is not to say that shooting might not be having an impact.

Thus, as a cautionary measure, based on GWCT advice, BASC recommends the following to reduce the chance of shooting resident breeding birds:

If you are certain no resident woodcock are present in the area then shooting of migratory woodcock can start without delay, although we recommend allowing them a week of good weather to recover from their journey before shooting.

If you are unsure or know you have resident woodcock in the area then refrain from shooting woodcock until the majority of the migrant population arrives to reduce the chance of a resident bird being taken. As a guide, don't shoot woodcock until late November.

Woodcock are very site faithful, so even if no woodcock are resident in your area, you could still shoot yourself out of your own sport if you shoot too many of the visiting migrants. Once the migratory link is broken, it may never recover.

Take care if you shoot woodcock flighting along woodland edges at dusk. It is very easy to overshoot an area this way and you may be shooting yourself out of your own sport.

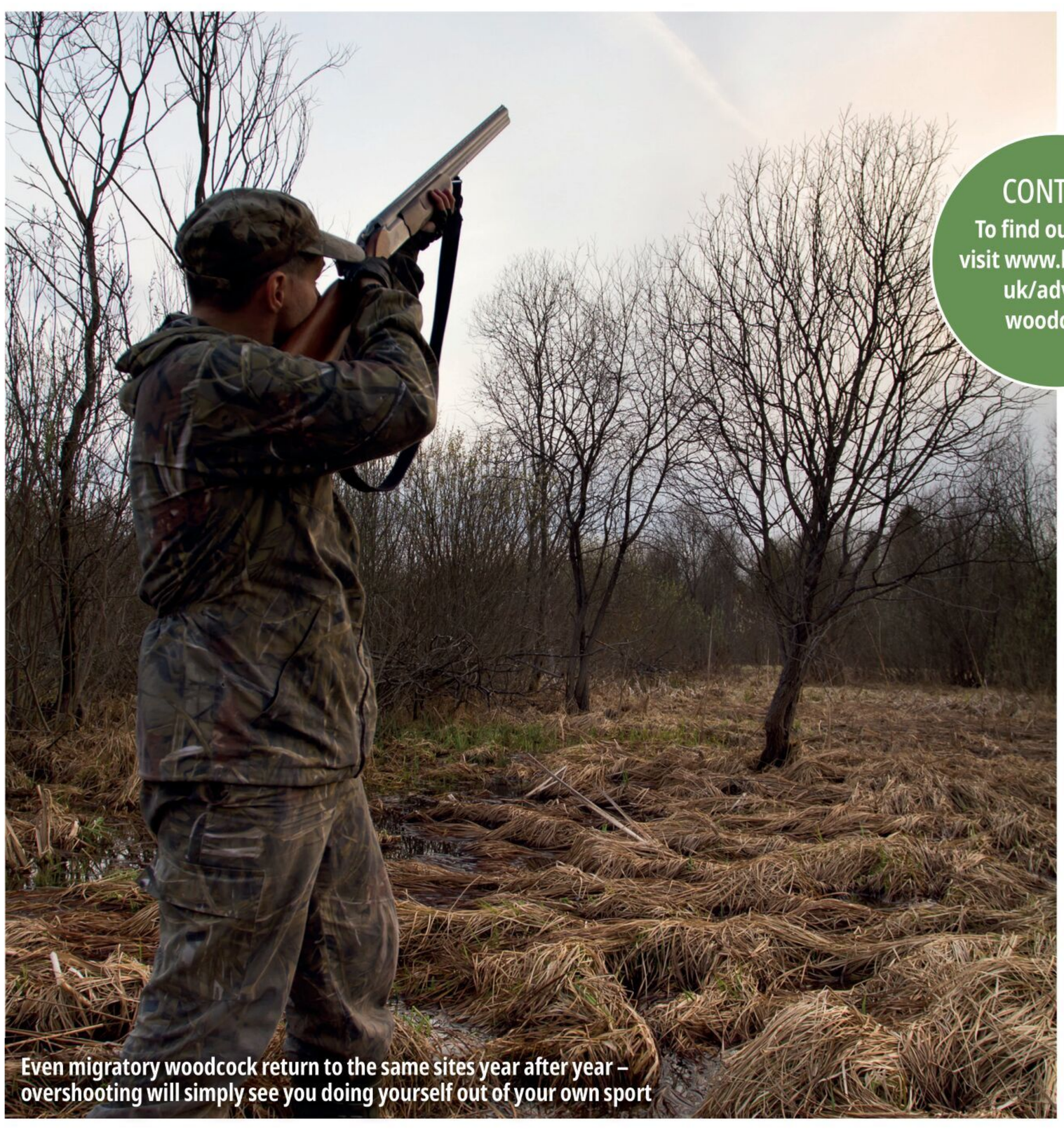
Many UK shooters will be aware of the severe weather protocols we have in place to protect ducks and geese after 14 days of prolonged severe weather. However, the evidence is now suggesting that woodcock may be particularly susceptible to cold weather, especially lying snow. You should stop shooting woodcock after 7 days with temperatures below freezing, or after significant snowfall, and allow the birds to recover for a week before starting shooting again.

The opportunity to shoot woodcock sustainably provides the incentive for shoots to maintain conservation work for the species, providing habitats for resident breeding birds and over-wintering birds. The shooting community has the greatest incentive to preserve woodcock numbers. Most of the research into the species has been funded by the shooting community.

Shooting pressure on the species is reducing with some shoots over the last two decades voluntarily deciding not to shoot woodcock until late November or indeed not at all. Combined with growing levels of restraint, this suggests that shooting is not a population driver for resident birds.

With all of that in mind, BASC is opposed to changes in the shooting season or the removal of woodcock from the quarry list in the UK. SS

**CONTACT**
**To find out more visit www.basc.org.uk/advice/woodcock**



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# READERS' LETTERS

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## A shared love of shooting cut short

Sadly, my partner passed away recently, leaving me dealing with life on my own. We did a lot together, especially our love of pigeon shooting. Every weekend we'd pack a picnic and disappear into the countryside watching for flightlines. After building the hide and waiting for hours sometimes we were rewarded with a few spoils. Cooked and eaten in a casserole, no bird was ever wasted. He taught me everything there was to know about shooting pigeons from building a hide to setting up the flapper in the hope we could draw birds into the decoys.

My love of shooting has not dwindled since his passing, and this strong tie with him and our shooting is giving me comfort and support. In fact, I am busier than ever planning the days when I can shoot pigeons, clays and I've also been researching ladies-only gun clubs to continue shooting with others and have already booked days in with our joint friends.

Upon my partner's death, his shotguns were added to my certificate as they were gifted to me. His .22 rifle was, however, a different matter. Not owning a firearms licence, I emailed the local constabulary and volunteered the information that they needed. The following day, collection was made and the .22 rifle is now stored at my local gun dealer awaiting my visit to collect it upon receipt of my firearms certificate, which is being processed.

Three days after the rifle was collected, I received a phone call from the constabulary notifying me that all my shotguns need to be housed elsewhere for a "period of time" – I presume in case I wish to harm myself. Whilst the death of a loved one is totally devastating; I have no wish to join my partner! In addition, there are three other family members and two extremely close friends who all actively shoot, yet there is no mention that their guns need to be surrendered. To say I am angry is an understatement. I am of sound mind, always have been and I feel like the local constabulary is requiring a box to be ticked.



PICTURE: DOM HOLTAM

This is also a defamation of character, tarring me with the same brush as other shotgun licence holders who perhaps do not have the level of support which I do, and perhaps are sadly not of sound mind.

By taking away the one hobby which I hold dear they are crushing me as an individual. As if I have not suffered enough already.

Whilst I do appreciate that this is the local constabulary policy it should not be seen a "one size fits all" approach. Surely, a physiological evaluation should be conducted to ascertain the mental state of an individual licence holder prior to removing any shotguns and upon the decision that they can be returned, a second physiological evaluation should be carried out.

What organisation has the right to make a decision without any form of qualified evaluation to determine the mental state of an individual, and what changes should be made to safeguard those at risk and those who are not?

**Name supplied**

## SNAP SHOTS




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# Ronnie's got the shooting bug!

My son Ronnie has got the shooting bug big time! He shot his first pigeon a few weeks ago, but this weekend he got his first red letter day – not bad for a lad who is seven in two weeks' time.

We set up on a field of drilled wheat in perfect conditions.

Using a side-by-side .410 and a 28-bore he continued to amaze me by pulling off some shots that I, as a grown man, would have been happy with.

He ended a memorable afternoon with 21 to his name (19 pictured). Yes I'm still in shock!

**William Blackwell, by email**



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## QUIZ QUESTION

**Q** TEQUILA BULBS is an anagram of which Australian species with an open season of June to August?

## EMAIL US YOUR ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

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## *OCTOBER ISSUE WINNER*

Congratulations to FRANK HOLMAN from NEWMARKET
The answer was PUDEL POINTER

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# That's classy

I just read the article by Adam Smith in the November *Sporting Shooter*. I think that Adam has summed it up nicely. It's nice to know that there are people out there that see right through these presenters and the misinformation they spread via the media (i.e. the BBC). I have grown up in the countryside; it's been my way of life for the last 70 years, 50 of which have been involved with fieldsports in some form or another, whether it be shooting or angling. Let's keep up the pressure to safeguard our sport, and my congratulations to Adam on a piece well written.

**Alan Collyer, by email**



KEEPER'S COUNTRY
WITH ADAM SMITH

## That's classy

**Adam Smith returns to a popular theme, the BBC and bias – this time delving a little deeper into what might lie behind the all-too-frequent anti-shooting prejudice**

I see the BBC is getting some stick, again. This time it's Countryfile – despite that programme being well accustomed to critical countryside viewers airing their grievances – but now they've been joined by Springwatch where the kiddies' fave Christopher Packham has come in for some particularly scathing appraisal.

Apparently, people who actually live and work in the countryside are more than miffed at what they see as his biased assessments and opinions being aired, very often as asides, slipped in to help paint a picture. Such comments are always unchallenged yet cleverly establish a negative view with an impressionable and largely uninformed audience.

To paraphrase one online contributor: 'It's like having a well-known and deeply biased atheist continually promoted as an expert to disparage religions. An influencer allowed free rein without any sort of challenge or contrary view to balance his opinions....'

Because that is the rub. We all know the BBC seems to have a deep and visceral hatred of country sports, with hunting and shooting top of the list of course, and the feeling is that this is why CP gains star status. What about fishing though, number three in the HS&F litany then? No, no, no, that's far too popular, the chosen sport and pastime of too many 'working men' to be included as a blood sport, so that's AOK with the BBC. Quite happy to provide primetime TV on that one. Which could leave the logical conclusion that the other two in the trio are unsuitably class-based to fit. See?

And since to the BBC CP is an expert, his words are regarded as scripture, most especially by his core audience who are essentially ignorant of the countryside and country people. And that's ignorant, not through disinterest or even by implied snobbish criticism, but simply because they're never given the opportunity to examine the other side of the argument. They are told exactly what Countryfile and Springwatch think they should know.

As a result, since so much of what viewers see of country life is based on and affected by class – because that's the basis of metropolitan BBC thinking – it's class that seems to run throughout country sports. Ask any urban-based viewer for an opinion on hunting or shooting and you can near enough guarantee that it will be summed up as: 'Toffs on horses in red coats chasing wildlife with dogs and killing it' or 'Toffs with guns blasting tame birds by the thousand that serfs and yokels have beaten into the air with sticks.'

An unsavoury picture, no doubt, but one that has been contrived and cultivated over the past few decades to become firmly entrenched – the very idea of challenging or rebutting the belief seems a near impossible task. To be fair, some are supposed to have tried, at least technically. Ofcom certainly seemed to think it worth a go, a few years back, when they advised the BBC of the urgent necessity to appoint a knowledgeable, competent country sports person in order to promote and encourage informed debate. That was a while ago and so far they don't seem to have found anyone suitable. Or perhaps they haven't looked very hard. Or perhaps the people they might have approached found getting on with their studio companions a bit challenging. Who knows?

> 'So much of what viewers see of country life is based on and affected by class – because that's the basis of metropolitan BBC thinking'

What is known is that Countryfile's prejudice is also promoted by another favourite, the seemingly irascible Tom Heap, who once jabbed a side-by-side towards the camera while barking the question: 'Do you think it's right to use one of these (pregnant pause to get 'scary gun' message across) to kill wildlife?' The item had ostensibly been about crop damage and pigeon control, but Tom had a far more important point to make.

So, why do I think so much BBC prejudice is class based? Well, because it's rooted in a combination of assumptions and lack of knowledge, or more precisely a disinterest in knowledge. Game shooting, they constantly imply, is a toff's sport carried out predominantly by rich, callous and boorish men whose sole appreciation of the day is based on numbers. Which is just like saying that all motor sport is for a multi-millionaire privileged few, solely concerned with going round in circles at great speed in staggeringly expensive racing cars. And some, I appreciate, might see that as a clear description of the F1 scene, the highest of hi-tech with bills to match, but that definition would also depend on ignoring a dedicated world-trotting fan base numbered in the millions, plus all the other formulas and the active participation of keen drivers and riders in grass-track, hill climb, banger, stock-car, classic, vintage, touring, TT, superbike, scrambling, trials and all such variations on a motorised theme, enjoyed by as broad and unselective a group of humanity as you could wish. That huge group undoubtedly includes a few toffs, too, but they are no more fully representative of motor sport than rich bankers with pairs of Purdeys solely epitomise game shooting – despite this being the picture so cleverly crafted by bias, the BBC and the Guardian. That is what turns the sport of tens of thousands into a class-based elite-fest, based on distortion and pandering to prejudice.

The reality is just the same with fishing. For every dedicated fly-fisher prepared to pay mega bucks for a beat on the Test, Tay or somesuch, there will be hundreds of calm and contemplative canal, lake and riverbank anglers devoted to their craft, clever, gifted and knowledgeable – and including some, frustratingly, brainwashed into believing that theirs is not a bloodsport and those that hunt and shoot are all toffs.

What we all know is that just as there is elite game fishing, there are also the far wider worlds of coarse and sea fishing, and just as there is driven game bird shooting, so is there rough, walked-up, and pigeon shooting, plus wildfowling and rabbiting of course – all of which are practised and enjoyed by a broad cross-section from all walks of life, incomes and conditions of men and women. And even within the dizzy heights of driven game, for every double-gun mega shoot, there's a hundred little DIY set-ups, reflecting the dedicated diligence of small groups of keen shooters, very much content with the fruits of their own labours, whether that's two brace or ten.

So, for all the prejudice against country sports, as a shooter you will know that the reality is very different. Even without a particularly deep knowledge of fox hunting you'll know that the great majority in any hunt are simply keen riders desperate to try to keep up, jump a few hedges and enjoy the 'thrill of the chase' – even though the chase is an aniseed drag these days and their involvement is three or four fields back from the pack.

As for us shooters, we too know the bottom line basis of our chosen sport: that it has very little to do with killing for the sake of it and very much more to do with communing with nature, going back to our hunter-gatherer days – not for one moment that those opposed would accept this simple truth. We're all bloodthirsty toffs, see?



Alan Jarrett is Chairman of the Kent Wildfowling & Conservation Association and author of several books on wildfowling

# The delight of greenheads

## As rumours abound of the number of mallard being released on game shoots this season, Alan Jarrett recounts some of his memorable encounters with this humble, ubiquitous duck

Whenever I watch an American duck 'hunting' (as they call it) video, there invariably seems to be a preponderance of mallard. Greenheads, as they are affectionately called in North America, are a waterfowler's delight, such are the huge numbers of this ubiquitous bird to found on that continent.

I have enjoyed the delights of shooting mallard there in Canada, and have been amazed at the sheer numbers to be seen. Flocks in excess of 100 are not uncommon, which is of course beyond the wildest dreams of us here in good old Blighty.

Lying prone among goose decoys on some prairie stubble field is a good way of seeing mallard up close as they bomb the decoys in great swirling, stuttering packs. Fire the first shot and they scatter in all directions, giving some splendid opportunities for fast and furious shooting – that is until the bag limit has been reached, usually around eight.

In this country, unless dealing with released mallard on a driven shoot, we would be lucky to see more than half a dozen in a flock, whilst most of the time they are to be found flighting in pairs. The one blessing with mallard is their wide distribution and their wide-ranging diet, which means they can be found almost anywhere.

Whether on a village pond; a secret splash way back in the marshes; a driven shoot; or ranging far and wide over the foreshore of the estuaries, mallard are to be found wherever there is water and food to be found. Long may it be so!

The prompt for me to choose mallard as my theme for this month is the paucity of partridges! Few if any partridges are finding their way to this country from the continent, and that has apparently led to some of the commercial shoots turning to mallard as some sort of substitute.

Believing rumours is often fool's gold, but the old saying there is no smoke without fire is often true. The rumour in these parts is that 10,000s of mallard have been released as a make-weight for the lack of partridges, although of course the sport on offer will be very different to the low-flying birds often whipping over a hedgerow in the traditional partridge manner.

In some ways, we are all hoping the rumours are true, for some of those mallard would inevitably find their way to the shore, thereby augmenting the sport we wildfowlers have on offer. Time will tell in that regard.

Many mallard have fallen to my gun since my first ever duck – that was shot alongside an inland river in Kent on 6 September 1968, and the memory is still as fresh today as it has ever been. Mallard are not the mainstay of my sport, but are



'Whether it is the swirling packs of mallard over a Canadian prairie, or pairs coming to a dripping saltmarsh edge, the enjoyment is immense'

always a welcome addition to the bag. A few memories stand out for me, and in each case exemplify the varied diet of these birds. It is not for nothing that the mallard is arguably the most numerous worldwide of all ducks; they will scratch a meal where ever one is to be found, and sometimes in some surprising places too.

## Mallard memories

It was a sunny September day and I was alone with the dog in a great sea of browning marshes. The grass was unkempt in places, with thick tussocks from which we periodically kicked out rabbits, whihc were in abundance here. Clouds of crane flies rose from the grass as we walked.

Eventually, a pair of mallard rose from the dry grass for one to tumble back to the ground. Over the next hour, several mallard rose from the grass, although no others were secured. They were feeding on the prolific crop of crane flies, and would no doubt be as fat as butter as a result.

A few weeks later, on that same marsh, the dog and I were tucked down out of sight beside a narrow ditch from which mallard had been disturbed on more than one occasion. The ditch was full of ripening sea club rush, and there was food aplenty for the hungry birds. On the far side of the ditch was the marsh boundary, marked here by a high chain-link fence, Great care would need to be exercised in order to avoid anything dropping over the fence and thereby becoming irretrievable and as a result wasted.

At the gloaming, mallard, mostly in pairs, came dropping over the fence to the ditch. There were a lot of mallard that evening, and even though they were widely scattered along that long ditch enough came my way for me to get five and return from the marsh very happy with the sport enjoyed.

By way of complete contrast, I had gone right up the shore for the evening and moon flight in search of wigeon. It was an ideal scenario, for the tide had recently left the saltmarsh, leaving everything wet and squelching, with the water gurgling out of the creeks as it made its remorseless way to the estuary and thence the sea.

Nothing came at evening flight, with the only wigeon going over two gunshots high with all bands playing as only wigeon can. Long after the whistling and growling packs had departed, it was good to sit there in a narrow side creek hoping against hope they might return, even though it was likely they had gone on to feed elsewhere.

It was one of those glorious winter moonlit evenings, and as the moon continued its rise out of the eastern sky the whole panorama before me became mesmerising as the light changed, with a still breeze nudging white clouds across the sky. It is one of those occasions when it really does not matter whether a shot is fired or not.

Eventually, a pair of mallard passed wide to my left, and as they lost height to on their journey down to the slushy edges, they responded to my calling and came right to me. A few minutes later another pair did exactly the same and there were four plump mallard to accompany me home.

But it was not over, for during the next 30 or so minutes three more mallard were duped by my calling and joined their brethren beside me. Seven mallard was enough to carry back along the shore, and with that we headed for home.

Whether it is the swirling packs of mallard over a Canadian prairie, or these same birds coming to a dripping saltmarsh edge, the enjoyment can be immense. Mallard driven to the Guns is one thing, but finding them for yourselves in the time honoured way is surely the pinnacle of our sport SS

### OPEN SEASON

**In England, Wales and Scotland, the open season for mallards is 1 September to 31 January, with an extension which applies below the high water mark of ordinary spring tides on the coast until 20 February.**

PICTURE: ISTOCK




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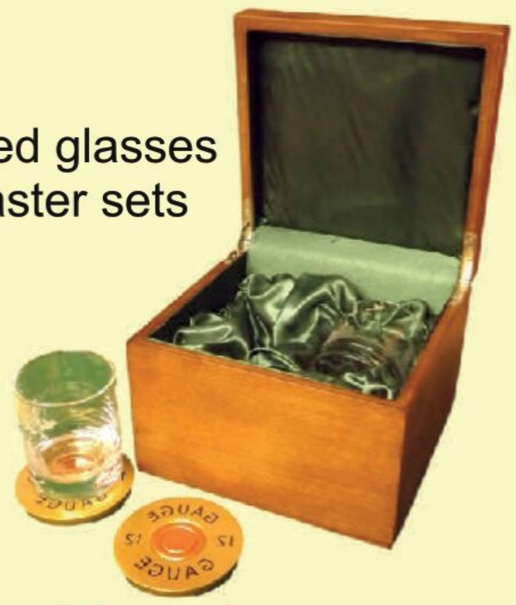
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WITH MICK GARVEY

# Saim but different

## Mick Garvey takes the new Saim SCD35 night vision unit out on test to see how it compares to the earlier similar models he has used over the years

As soon as I saw the post on social media regarding InfiRay's Saim SCD35 digital night vision unit, I knew that it would be perfect for my needs. What I didn't realise was how good it would actually be – not only for sub-12 work but for FAC and small-bore rifles too! My constant pestering of InfiRay worked and I managed to purchase the (allegedly) only one in the UK. To say I was delighted is an understatement.

The unit shares the same outward appearance as the superb Saim SCT35 thermal scope but with digital viewing (hence, the title Saim but different). There was never any doubt where the SCD would start its work for me and that would be on top of the .22 sub 12ft/lb FX Dreamline Compact Tactical. It really compliments the tactical rifle and there's no more suitable air rifle than the FX DLC Tac, with its folding stock, full blown tactical looks and extreme compactness.

The Saim comes with a nicely manufactured one-piece mount for Picatinny/Weaver rails with multi-position placement options to suit all head positions. The usual downloading cable is also supplied along with a lens cloth and extended battery cover for use with 16650 batteries instead of the standard c123s. Batteries are not supplied but I sourced a set of 16650s for just over a tenner which give up to seven hours of life, which is more than enough for most shooters and cheap enough to have a back-up set in the backpack. The supplied 940 IR is basic but will suffice for my sub-12 work and the offset-beam, adjustable mount works perfectly. When the time comes to stretch out of the Saim's range, I may have to find an IR with the same diameter body so as to use the supplied mount but for now the standard IR torch will be plenty good enough.

**I have been speaking with InfiRay and Highland Outdoors regarding the huge levels of interest I have received on this thermal unit, as I really think this should be more readily available in the UK. Here's hoping!**

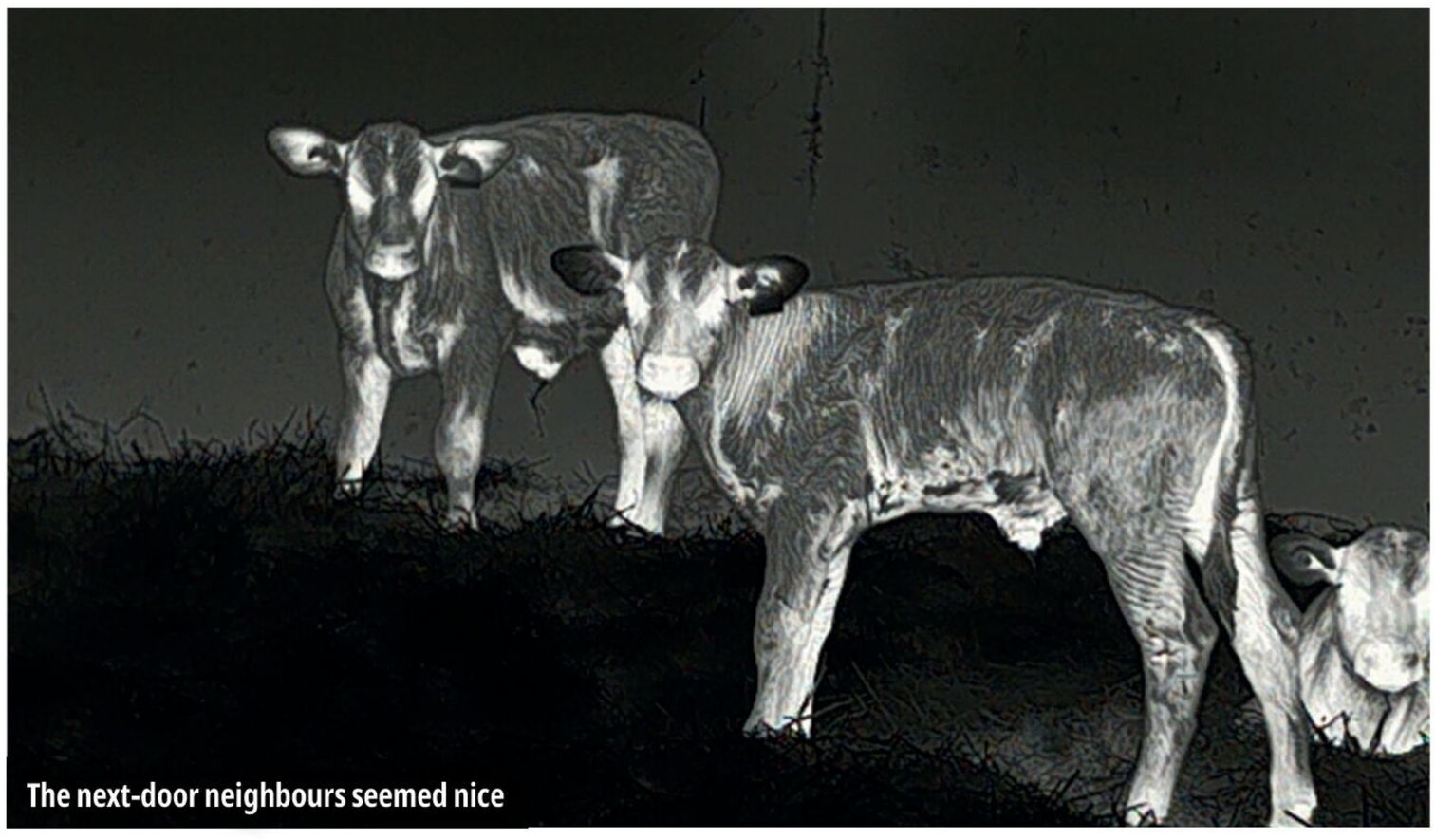
### In the field

Between the short timescale of receiving the SCD35 and the looming deadline for this month's write up, I had very little time to get out in the fields and woods with it, but I had a plan fall into my lap. The red squirrel conservation work is always harder at this time of year as there is so much natural food available, which keeps the grey skinnies up in the treetops and reluctant to visit feeders or baited traps. The reds on the other hand are constantly being seen on the feeders, probably knowing the place is mostly grey-free. It's not 100%, though, as a couple of the trail cams in my area are picking up the odd grey, and if I feel happy that it's more than just a fleeting visit, I'll set the traps and also arm the Remoti unit that notifies me when a trap has been activated. I'll set traps and check them




Six of the best using the InfiRay Saim SCD35 NV scope

PICTURES: MICK GARVEY


The next-door neighbours seemed nice

every eight hours or less, even if I don't get a notification. This may sound a little time-consuming but when you consider that some of the estates I'm working on are thousands of acres I can easily spend a day there without seeing the same feeder twice if need be.

One trail cam in particular had been showing a grey for a couple of days in succession and bang on time the notification came through. It was early evening and the plan was unfolding nicely. I could take Zeva with me, as he loves a run through the woods, check out the trap then call into the hay storage barn that, according to the keeper, was attracting a few ferals which were spoiling some stored feed with their droppings. Once done, I planned to call into another permission where there were a few rabbits that needed to be thinned out. Sounds like a perfect day out to me and I would be able to set the zero while on the hoof.

Zeva knows the land and the location of every trap like the back of his paw and once through the gate he'll set off like a bat out of hell to the first trap and sit waiting for me under the trap – unless we have a captive, that is, when he'll be showing a little less restraint and more interest in getting to the grey.

The trap in question was right at the top of the track, and is named 'top drey', but Zeva waited for me at every position before setting off to the next one on my arrival until we got to our destination. True to form, there he was on his back legs trying to see into the trap – he's keen as mustard for the skinnies but the dispatch is my job. I'll let him carry the skinny back to the truck sometimes but not every time... I want to keep his interest sharp.

## Pigeon patrol

Next stop was the hay barn and even from a distance I could see a handful of feral pigeons circling the barn and dropping onto the roof, before ultimately making their way inside. The daylight was fading – not so much that I'd need the IR lamp but the thermal spotter would definitely be used as it would easily pick out those hard-to-spot ferals that were tucked right into the corners. I had set the zero at 15 yards and stored it in the G2 profile in the zeroing menu as I would set a standard distance of 30 yards in the G1 profile leaving G3 G4 profiles for other distances or even other rifles. It is a simple affair to set the zero and you can either use the freeze screen method or the more traditional method of moving an auxiliary cross hair to the POI while holding a white dot on the POA.

On entering the barn, a couple of the flying rats took flight but a few remained. The NV unit identified these immediately and cycling a RWS Superdome pellet then sending it up into the rafters saw me record the first kill for the Saim/FX combo. I have to say, these pellets have surprised me recently with their accuracy and reliability. Scanning the rooftop with the thermal highlighted one tucked in behind one of the purlins but it was only showing its head. With full confidence in the set-up, I placed the crosshairs squarely on its head and down it came with a humane, clean kill.

The remaining ferals took off, obviously not liking what was going on; if it had been total darkness they would have stayed and maybe just shuffled along the woodwork. I gave it another half an hour and managed another four that came back in. I had been sat on a haybale, keeping my movements to a minimum with the DLC Tac resting



Zeva is as keen as Mick is to catch up with the skinnies!

'Red squirrel conservation is harder at this time of year as there's a lot of natural food, keeping the greys up in the treetops'


Constant scanning will bring results – you just need a bit of patience sometimes

in the KJI tripod and I know if I had made a move to retrieve the IR from the truck, the ferals would have taken flight and at this time of evening probably not come back. All useful info for my next foray on the ferals, but I was eager to check out the rabbit situation on the other farm and give the Saim another notch under its hunting belt. The shot birds were gathered up and a couple of photos taken before setting off to the next port of call.

The reports of "a few" were not an exaggeration – there must have been 30-40 out there in the viewfinder of the Finder and I was straight onto the KJI with the DLC Tac. My zero of 15 yards was of no use at all in this situation, and with the IR now fitted I attempted a holdover check with a shot or two into an old fence post. Once satisfied how much hold was needed, the shot was taken and the rabbit just lunged forward with a clean headshot. That was enough for me as the rabbits were all over the fields and having to range-check every shot would certainly be a pain in the butt. I will spend a few hours setting the different gun/zero profiles and then as, someone once said, I'll be back! SS

## TRIPOD ON TEST

Another delivery that arrived this week was from the guys at Sellmark, in the shape of a KJI carbon fibre tripod with the 'reaper grip' clamp. I plan to use this in the barn and in the fields on the rabbits so it will be interesting to see how it stacks up against the trusty Rekon CT1. One thing has become apparent though and that is the reaper grip doesn't clamp down enough to hold the thin action of the Dreamline Tac but would be fine as an assisted support.




Just the one rabbit for the night but "I'll be back"!





# The dark days are (nearly) over!

## As Deano recovers from an op, he shares with us some top tips for baiting and positioning when going after your fox, and starts to get to grips with a new thermal scope

I'm five weeks down, two to go, and then I can be let loose again on those foxes. Fortunately, in the weeks before my eye operation, which was pretty major, I'd set up a trail cam and by my reckoning had wiped out most of them I'd seen on it.

Were it not for the op, I'd still be coming down on the foxes – at least until all the game birds are a bit bigger, more 'switched on' and far less vulnerable to being predated on in large numbers. They are on my mind as I recover, as is the empty territory I had created. Now there is no control, there will be young ones coming in from over the boundary and foxes will be moving into my patch all the time.

> 'Baiting is something that is best done with some thought – as I drive around, my eyes are always searching for evidence of foxes'

As autumn progresses, I'm really looking forward to getting back out – although I have to say, with the nights drawing in, it's been quite nice to have fewer of the really late nights, which does sound a bit selfish I know! Of course, I do always enjoy what the seasons have to offer, each one something different.

My permission applies to mostly arable land although there are a few bits of woodland and game cover strips included. This means I tend to cover quite a lot of land while I'm out. The plotting of my return is something I'm enjoying and it's nice to be able to come up with a battle plan. Naturally, there are my favourite spots, but it's time to get a few bait stations going in other areas too.

Baiting is something that is best done with some thought. As I drive around, my eyes are always searching for evidence of the predator: fresh scats, dismembered birds or rabbits. It's always worth getting out and walking the hedgerows, as you may catch the smell of one that's been hunting the night before. Even try walking up the side of the covers in the morning, as there might be footprints, fur or other evidence. And of course, the info you gain from speaking to the people that work on the land in invaluable. The more work you put into understanding your quarry, the more successful you will become.

Then comes the small matter of positioning yourself for the kill. Foxes usually follow set patterns and have certain routes, but although I like to plan where I am going to sit to get my fox, things can change. Because I cover quite an acreage and am able to see large areas, I am regularly in with a good chance of calling one in from a distance if I spot one out of range. If for some reason that doesn't work, I'll generally take note of its route and intercept it next time!

Another thing I love about autumn is the chance to see my mate James. He has perms over roughly 1,000 acres of woodland which forms

### SCOPE IT OUT

**This month, Deano has been using the Infiray Tube TL35 VZ thermal imaging scope – and no doubt we'll be hearing how he gets on with it in future issues.**



Foxes usually follow set patterns and have certain routes they take, so look out for these as you walk your ground

PICTURE: ISTOCK


Zeroing the new scope was a piece of cake


The tin foil on the board helped with visibility through the thermal scope

part of a massive forest. As you may imagine, the area is packed with plenty of fallow, roe and muntjac. As I write this, I can feel the excitement of the days ahead as the rutting season begins. I have roe on my own permissions, and hearing and seeing them remind me of the happy 15 years I spent managing the deer and foxes on a huge estate. Even now all these years later I still get a buzz at the thought of taking down a fallow or munty. James is a good friend of mine who I love to spend time with. This is another thing about this great sport, it offers solid friendship, such as James, and his recently departed father who used to have neverending stories about hunting. There's something wonderful about chatting for hours with likeminded people and this sport is full of them.

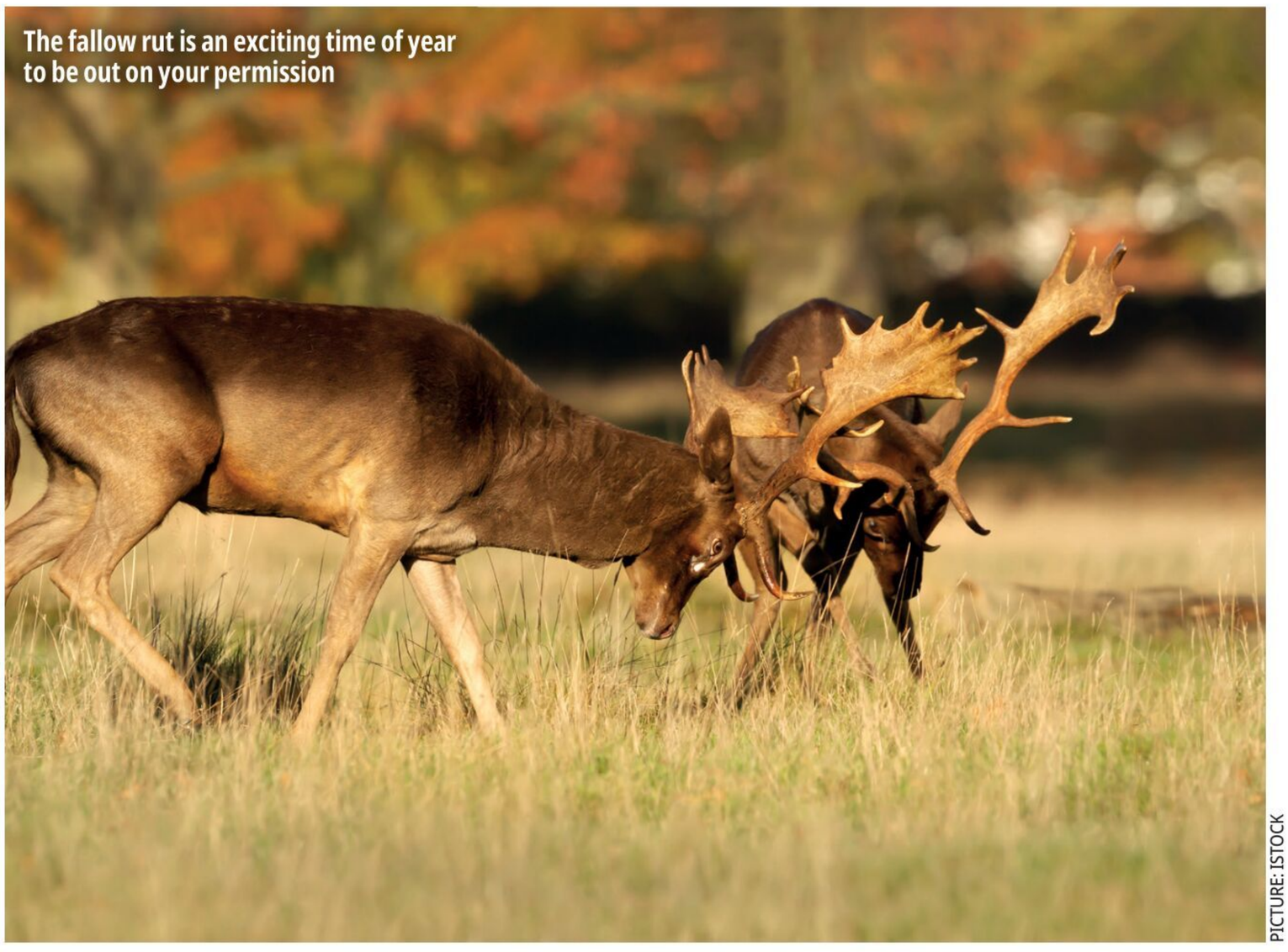
And here's another other reason why I'm looking forward to going out so much again – I've got some new kit to try out. A thermal. This is going to be the first time I've ever gone hunting with a thermal scope. InfiRay sent it to me and I really can't wait to get going with it. I have used a thermal spotter in the past of course and digital to shoot but I am really looking forward to combining the two.

I got it out the box, digested the instructions, and fitted it to my .243 ready for zeroing. I placed a piece of tin foil on a bit of board to help with visibility and found it zeroed very easily. I will try it out in action, but at first glance I must admit I'm very impressed with the clarity.

I'll let you know how I get on – both with the new set-up and on my outing with James. That will be with my .308 set-up with the Schmidt daytime scope, but I do like to 'cheat' a bit and take my thermal spotter with me. It helps so much with the muntjac. I know the purest old school stalkers don't agree with using thermal, but the technology is there for us now and I guess we all have to move on. The spotters aren't just good for spotting though. They are great for following up on a beast that has taken a shot and dashed into cover. We all know this is very common with a chest shot. As a guest of mine once said: "They are dead, they just don't know it yet." What a good way to explain it! SS



Deano is keen as mustard to get out and put his new thermal scope to the test


The fallow rut is an exciting time of year to be out on your permission

PICTURE: ISTOCK

Sporting Shooter

# Christmas Gift Guide 2022

## THE MARKETPLACE

*Shooting products and services*

Welcome to the Marketplace. In this section, you will find everything you need to know about what's on the market right now – from the kit you need for the coming season, to behind-the-scenes looks at the shooting world's much-loved brands, gun shops and shooting schools.

Whether you train gundogs, work on the beating line or shoot a variety of quarry, we've got you covered!

## GAME SHOOTING

### Ariat Burford wellies

Ideal for beating and dog walks, Ariat's Burford wellies combine a traditional style with useful design features. Created with waterproof, vulcanised rubber to ensure your feet stay dry, the wellies also feature a shock-absorbing sole for added all-day comfort.

£125
www.ariat.com/gb/en

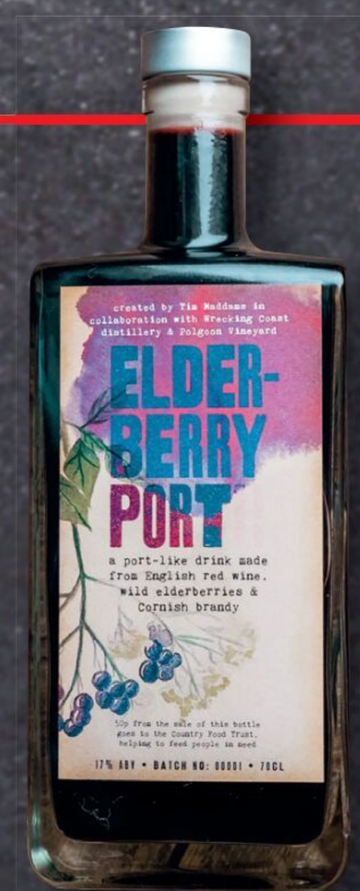




### Alan Paine Ilkley flannel shirt

Ideal for shoot days, this 100% soft cotton flannel shirt boasts a shooting fit, button-down collar and is cut to a longer length for comfort. It is available in sizes S to 5XL in Red, Olive & Blue Check options.

£59.95
www.alanpaine.co.uk




### Shoot day tipple

Direct from renowned chef and forager Tim Maddams, this Elderberry 'Porth' (a delicious take on a classic port, made from English red wine, wild elderberries and Cornish brandy) ticks all the boxes; not only does it have a deep flavour rich in elderberry but it is produced using local wine and the spirit distilled from it. With an excellent rich and complex flavour, oodles of sweetness balanced by the punch of raw brandy spirit! Described as smooth and defined on the palate, with sweet red berries melting into brandy. Hints of spice and the unique mystery of elder are finished with a breath of spice and a desire for more! The perfect shoot day tipple!

£32.50, 70cl
www.thewreckingcoastdistillery.com

### Beretta Silver Pigeon V

You can't go wrong with a Silver Pigeon, so one for if you're feeling generous. The Silver Pigeon V is the latest evolution in this iconic family of guns. The beautiful, deep relief engravings are created using state-of-the-art, 5-axis laser technology, while the superior Grade 3 wood benefits from a rich gloss finish. Featuring the famous Optima HP Steelium barrels, it is currently available in 12-bore with 20-bore arriving in 2023. A shotgun that will not disappoint.

£3,900
www.gmk.co.uk for stockists



# Pinder Brothers hunters flask



**With a classic green leather cover, this spirits flask from Pinder Brothers shines in company with four stainless steel cups included. The cups sit neatly at the lid of the flask, held in place by a leather case that securely clips to either side. Clever, compact and sure to make the trip a spirited occasion. Perfect for elevenses!**

**For £5, add a personal touch to your flask with a short engraved message along the stainless steel plate. 8oz flask with four 1oz cups**

**£29**
**www.farrar-tanner.co.uk**

# Parker-Hale leather gun slip

Parker-Hale's Stockbridge leather shotgun slip is a hard-wearing and beautifully-made leather shotgun slip made from specifically selected tanned hides for a natural finish that retains its individual character and features a textured finish. The Stockbridge features a full-length zip and a flap and buckle opening for ease of use. To transport easily, this smart gunslip is equipped with a sturdy shoulder sling with padded section that sits securely on your shoulder. The slip is finished with brass fittings and YYK zips for reliable durability, extra protection at the barrel end, thick pile fleece lining and exact, neat stitching. Available in Dark Chocolate and in 30" and 32" barrel lengths.

£165.50
www.ardmoor.co.uk





# Dedito gaiters

Made from a tough waterproof fabric, these gaiters have a front zip fastening and weather flap with strong Velcro and popper fastenings. An adjustable elastic cord around the top ensures a comfortable fit. An adjustable underfoot wire and strong lace hook keeps the gaiters securely on your boots. All topped off with some subtle Dedito branding. Available in black or green.

£38.50
www.deditoboots.com

# Lyalvale Express Power Blue cartridges




I'm dreaming of a BLUE Christmas! Good value, low recoil and available in plastic or fibre wad. Available in shot sizes No. 7.5, 8 and 9. There is also now a 24g in fibre only in shot size 7.5 as well as 28g in both. Let's get smashing some Christmas clays!

£273 per 1000
www.lyalvaleexpress.com

# Swazi Cairnsman jersey

Made in New Zealand, the two-layered hooded jersey features a 100% pure New Zealand wool outer layer, while the inner is woven from a blended mix of wool, possum and nylon, which is soft and gentle against the skin. Ideal for keeping you warm in the cool and dry winter months; the longer back covers your vitals when bending or working, snug cuffs help prevent heat escaping, while the hood keeps your noggin warm.

Available in black, olive or tussock, sizes S-2XL.

£249.99
www.swazi.co.nz



# Rydale pheasant puddlesuit

Don't let the cold and rain stop you from taking your little one out on shoot days this season. With its pheasant print, this splashsuit is made from lightweight and breathable materials, keeping your mini-me protected from head to toe. Available in a variety of different colours and patterns, and to fit age ranges from 6-12m to 4-5 years.

£23.79
www.rydale.com



# LADIES



## Alan Paine Calsall waistcoat

**Pop this on and you'll feel like you're having a giant hug without the weight; it's super light but incredibly warm. Featuring a water repellent 100% recycled Polyester outer, with DuPont Sorona thermal filling for ultra-lightweight insulation. The faux-fur-trimmed Arctic hood is removable and there is an adjustable belt with antique brass buckle. Available in size range 8 to 20 in Olive & Navy**

**£194.95**
**www.alanpaine.co.uk**



## Alan Paine Lawen shirt

**New prints have been added to this range of ladies shirts from Alan Paine, including floral, birds and puppies. The 98% Cotton/2% Elastane blend fabric offers stretch and is soft to wear, with a longer length for comfort and a darted feminine fit. Available in sizes 8 to 20.**

**£74.95**
**www.alanpaine.co.uk**



## Chunky knit H J Hall socks

**Warming chunky knit wool and cotton socks with a marl effect rib. Available in an autumnal colour palette and with a 6-month guarantee.**

**£12**
**www.hj.co.uk**



## Foxy Pheasant & LWDG leggings

**The Ladies Working Dog Group active wear leggings in Baxer Brown Tweed are perfect for wearing in the great outdoors, out dog training or under some overtrousers when beating or picking-up. Tailor made from Xtralife Lycra (87% Polyester, 13% Lycra) 250g/m² weight, they offer excellent shape retention and a perfect fit.**

**£49.95**
**www.foxypheasant.co.uk**

## Bespoke feather pin

**Give a stylish country lady a gift which is totally unique, beautiful and suits her character down to the ground with a bespoke feather pin from Hayfield England. Whether the recipient loves accessories which are big, bright and beautiful or prefers subtle, underrated and undeniably chic, Hayfield founder Hayley works closely with her customers to bring their vision to life. Feather pins can be carefully colour matched to coordinate with a favourite coat or handbag or be a vivid statement all on their own. Hayfield feather pins are mounted on hand-engineered and polished rifle casings.**

**From £25**
**www.hayfieldengland.com**






## Orca Bay Harris boots

**Waterproof, breathable country boot with deep tread rubber sole, waterproof pull-up and nubuck leathers. The cushioned footbed and breathable membrane offer all-day comfort, while a full-length zip with inner leg gusset offers a great fit. Available in sizes 37-42.**

**£225**
**www.furfeatherandfin.com**

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# FLIGHTPATH

# FOXXI

# UTOPIA

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# Sporting Scene

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**MODERN GUNDOG TRAINING LABRADOR RETRIEVER Part 4** *Joe Hipwell* ..... £29.95

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**+44 (0)7879 626691**
**or order online from www.sporting-scene.com**

# STOCKING FILLERS

## Le Chameau slippers

A little bit of luxury at home from welly boot maker, Le Chameau, which has launched a range of sheepskin slippers. The men's Moccasin slipper and women's Mule slipper are made from European suede which is softer to touch than normal leather. Sheepskin as a lining easily moulds to the shape of your feet whilst the lanolin wicks away moisture. A real night-time staple from your welly boot maker.

£80
www.lechameau.com






## Harkila toiletries bag

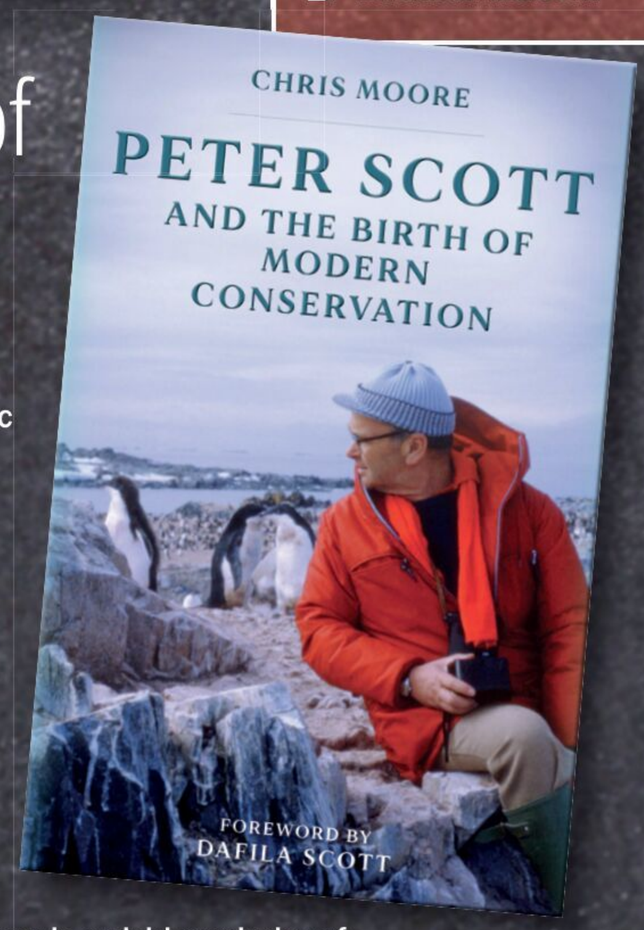
What do you buy the discerning country gentleman that already has everything he needs in his shooting kit bag? Look no further than the Harkila toiletries bag. This luxurious canvas and genuine leather bag features mesh inside pockets to store smaller items, a large three-litre space for all your toiletries for a shooting trip away and a tough two-way zip allows for quick easy access. The luxurious Harkila logo covers the leather strap. This bag is part of a wider collection of Harkila bags.

£76.99
www.harkila.com

## Peter Scott and the Birth of Modern Conservation

This new biography charts the life of writer, artist, broadcaster, conservationist and sportsman Peter Scott; from the young boy who grew up in the shadow of the tragic death of his famous father to the co-founder of the World Wildlife Fund and a major international figure in wildlife conservation. Along the way he became a passionate wildfowler, an internationally renowned artist, Olympic medal winner, wartime hero, British national glider champion and popular broadcaster. The book draws in part upon previously unpublished letters and papers discovered in his home during preparations to open it to the public, and casts a new light on some of the events that helped change a passionate hunter of wild geese into the most fervent champion for their survival. Peter's story is a vivid reminder of the challenges we face and of what we stand to lose.

£20
www.quillerpublishing.com




## Sophie Allport Woodland Walks range

The latest beautiful Woodland Walks design has been inspired by Sophie's love of nature and visiting National Trust parks and woodlands. The design features her illustrations of dog and walkers exploring woodlands against a teal blue ground. The range includes oven gloves, towels, hob covers, dog beds, table runners and much more!

From £11
www.sophieallport.com






## Rigby beanie hat

Take the chill off this winter with the new Rigby beanie. Classically designed, this charcoal-coloured beanie features the iconic Rigby 'double R' logo threaded in gold on the front. This one-size fits all, roll-over style beanie is perfect for keeping in your pocket just in case and it also fits over and under ear defenders.

£30
www.johnrigbyandco.com

# STOCKING FILLERS

## Flikshot Air Pistol & Air Gun Self-Righting Aluminium Shooting Target




Have hours of fun and hone your shooting skills with this hi-visibility walking target made from a durable solid aluminium. Features 4 x double-sided target faces and 24 target stickers to keep your targets looking smarter for longer. Suitable for air pistols, air rifles and .22 or .17 HMR rimfires. Each pack contains: 2 x target wings, 2 x fixing screws and 24 x target stickers.

£12
ukshootwarehouse.com

## Countryside matters




Written by one of Britain's first female gamekeepers, this book takes a broad sweep of the countryside, looking at the role of farmers and land managers in the UK today. Jill Mason has lived and worked in the countryside all her life, and in her research, she has visited a huge range of producers, from small organic farms to huge country estates, and spoken to fruit pickers, major manufacturers and country craftsmen such as modern-day thatchers and hedge layers. She also explores topics such as green energy, forestry, hay meadows, heather moorland and bogland with a pragmatic approach that is both informative and fascinating.

What exactly is a croft? When is a pig a gilt? And how does grazing help the environment? If you are looking to brush up on your understanding of how the British countryside works today, this book will answer all of your questions in laymen's terms.

£30
www.merlinunwin.co.uk

## Bronze sporting sculptures



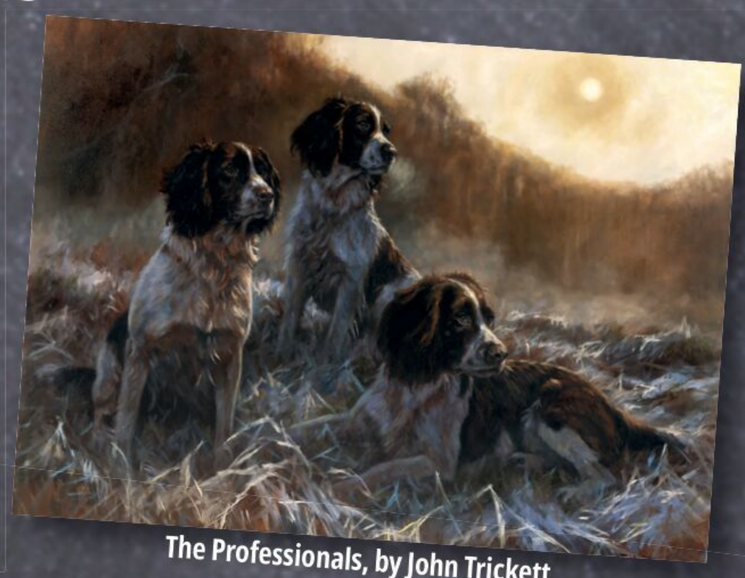
This season, Bisley is offering eight handmade country sport sculptures made from cold cast patina bronze. From Scottish-based Bowbrook Studios, these mini statues from one of just a handful of studios today that produce figures exclusively within the UK. Great gifts for the country sportsman in your family and excellent keepsakes of a day's shooting.

£39.95
www.bisley-uk.com

## Sally Mitchell cards

One of over 300 beautiful country and sporting Christmas card designs from Sally Mitchell. Available in packs of 10 with envelopes. Special offer of four packs, P&P paid. The cards feature beautifully painted realistic images by leading country artists.

£6.50
www.sallymitchell.com



The Professionals, by John Trickett




## Contigo water bottle

The ideal gift for those who are always on the move, Contigo's 100% leak-proof and spill-proof AUTOSEAL Chill Couture bottle keeps drinks cool for up to 28 hours. Adorned with unique patterns, the camo version is perfect to put in your backpack for a day's shooting, beating or picking-up.

£27
amazon.co.uk

## Seeland neck gaiter



This neck gaiter is the perfect stocking filler for anyone who loves spending the winter outdoors. Fleece lined with air holes so the gaiter can be pulled up over your nose to keep the cold out. Made from a 4-way stretch material, this neck gaiter is incredibly comfortable and easy to wear. Available in Pine Green, one size. Head to your local Seeland stockist to get yours.

£21.99
www.seeland.com

# FOXING/STALKING

## Harkila Deerstalker camo waist pack

When you are out stalking, you need many tools for the job. This spacious 4-litre pack sits around your waist and allows you to have everything on hand to make life easier. Made from a silent fabric with robust waterproof zips and cushioning comfort, there are several pockets that can also carry your phone, keys and much more.

**£99.99**
**www.harkila.com**



## Rovince Ergoline men's trousers

With UV 50+ protection, these robust trousers not only repel ticks, but also the elements. The trousers have a permanent anti-tick and mosquito-repellent treatment that's active for up to 100 washes. They are windproof, have 7 pockets and 1 knife pocket, are very fast drying with an elastic waistband and extended hem of 5cm.

Over the past 10 years, Rovince has become an authority in the field of tick-proof clothing and their garments are used in many professional sectors, including the German Army. From outdoor professionals to dog walkers, Rovince Clothing is proving invaluable in the prevention of tick bites and their serious health outcomes.

Rovince's fabric is factory-treated with Permethrine, which causes the so-called "hot feet effect" – when a tick comes into contact with the fabric, it almost immediately becomes paralysed and falls off the garment.

**£119.99**
**www.rovince.co.uk**



## 3-Gun kit with torque driver

Designed for the three-gunner, this super compact kit will help keep your firearms in top form when it counts the most.

This kit contains a comprehensive assortment of tools designed to help maintain your rifles and shotguns and tighten down your optics and accessories to the correct torque. With everything you could ever need to prepared, either in the field or on the range, from ratchets and bronze scrapers to choke wrenches, a sight tool and torque limiters – and much more! See website for full kit contents.

**£425.99**
**www.fixitsticks.co.uk**



## Triggercam 2.1

Triggercam 2.1 offers live rifle shot analysis, enabling you to record, save, view and share your shots.

The scope-mounted 4K 30fps video camera sends 360° true sound recording livestreams to your mobile via the app. You can also control the recording of your Triggercam from your mobile and record, save and view videos directly from your device.

**£599.99**
**www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk**




## Beautiful Christmas Cards from the GWCT

The GWCT has a range of beautiful cards again this year, depicting country scenes and quarry. All cards are in packs of 10 with the greeting: 'With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year'. Remember, by purchasing Christmas cards from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust you are helping to support the Trust's great work.

**£5.95**
**www.gwctshop.org.uk**

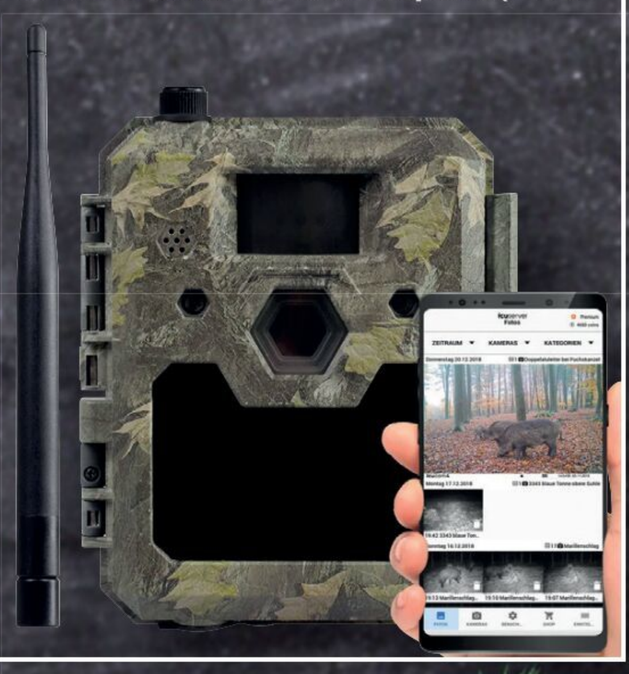


## ICU Cam 4 12MP cellular trail cam

When you need to know what's on your permission, but you can't be there 24/7, the trail cam can do all the reccy for you!

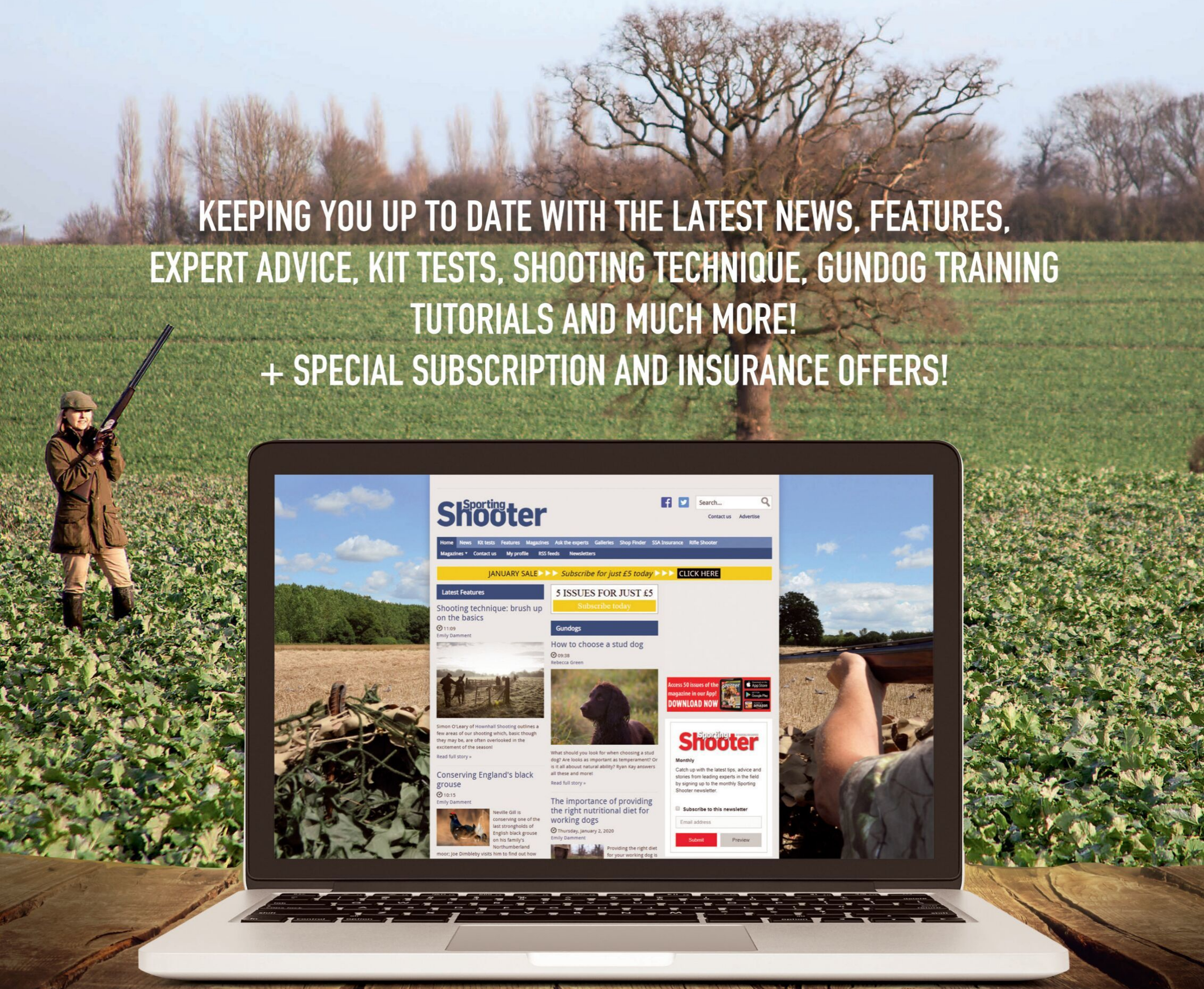
Featuring 50° lens, 0.3 seconds trigger time and with 4G/LTE Celular Network (SIM card included), the ICU Cam 4 12MP trail cam offers full HD recording of video and storage on an SD card. It is weatherproof (-25°c to +60°c), has 52 Infrared LEDs (940nm), Day & Night Mode and can create a picture series (up to 9 images). It saves to the SD card along with video. Features an iCATCH V33 processor for faster, sharper and stronger recordings. Fits 8 x AA batteries or 3 x 18650 Lithium Ion batteries.

**£265.99**
**www.natureobservationuk.com**



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# PIGEONS

## MK6 Turbo pigeon flapper



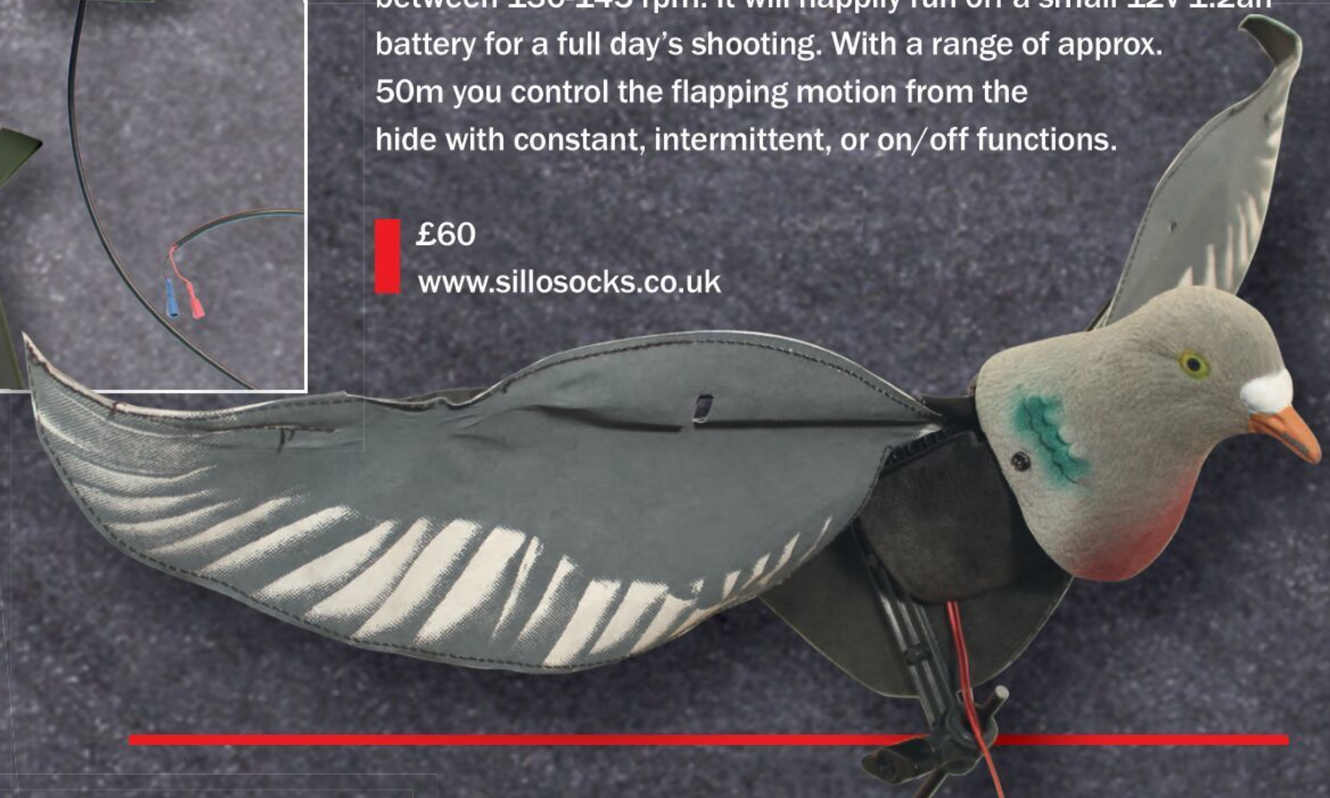

The UK Shoot Warehouse Mk6 pigeon flapper motor features full metal gears and a turbo charged flapping motion. This light compact unit features DUAL bushings on moving arms which won't seize up. The unit and ground spike are powder coated in a tough nato green and once a dead bird is mounted on the unit it cannot be seen. It is British made, built to last and is supplied with a ground-mounting spike as standard. Comes with a two-year guarantee.

£80
www.ukshootwarehouse.com

## Sillosocks remote controlled motorised pigeon Hypa-Flap decoy

This decoy brings the effectiveness of a Sillosocks Hypa-Flap pigeon and a motorised flapper together in one lightweight unit. Weighing in at just 345g and folding down for easy storage you hardly know that you are carrying it. The wings will flap at between 130-145 rpm. It will happily run off a small 12v 1.2ah battery for a full day's shooting. With a range of approx. 50m you control the flapping motion from the hide with constant, intermittent, or on/off functions.

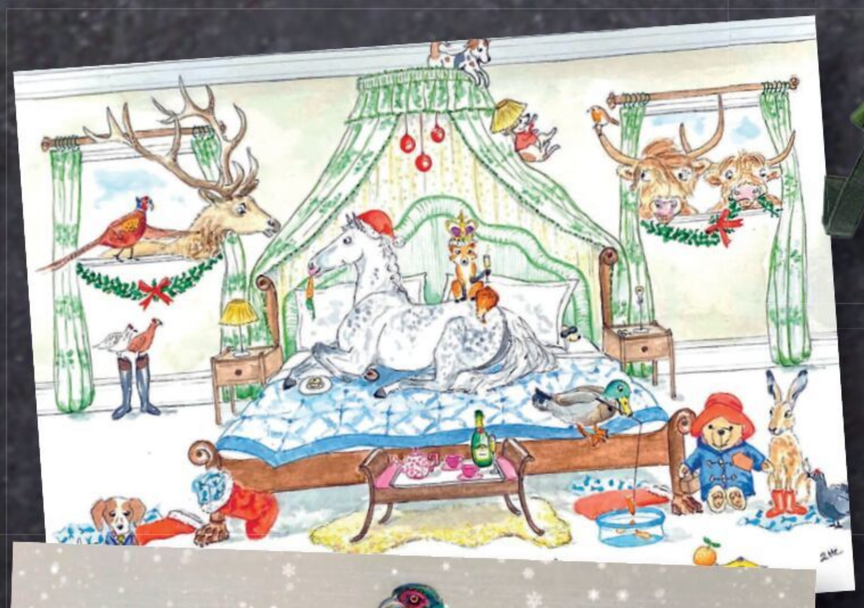
£60
www.sillosocks.co.uk



## Countryside Alliance Christmas cards

Support your sport and way of life with cards from the CA this year. Choose from designs such as Mr and Mrs Pheasant by Camilla Gardner, or Christmas Morning, an original artwork for the Countryside Alliance by Zoë Carmichael. Cards come in packs of 10, with envelopes. Message inside reads: With Best Wishes for Christmas and New Year.

£6.99
shop.countryside-alliance.org





## UKShoot decoy bag



This is a strong, purpose-built decoy bag not just for decoys but carrying nets and other ancillaries into the field, with adjustable straps for maximum comfort, carry handle, draw-string closure.

This bag is great for helping you take an array of shooting equipment to and from the field. The colour of this bag is Field Green and blends in with the surrounding environment.

£30
www.ukshootwarehouse.com

## FF6 flapper combo

The FF6 Combo is Flightline Decoys' most advanced flapper. It incorporates both remote control and random timer options which you can select via the button on your remote control. Again, you can select the speed in timered mode and remote mode. So, you have two flappers all rolled into one!

£145
www.flightlinedecoys.co.uk



# GUNDOGS

## Dog & Field 2in1 waterproof coat



The Dog & Field microfibre-lined waterproof drying coat is perfect for the working dog. The fully waterproof outer shell protects against the elements, keeping your dog dry and warm, while the microfibre lining wicks moisture away from the wet dog. A strong Velcro girth and chest straps keep the coat secure. Available in sizes XS to XXL.

£27-£38
Www.dogandfield.co.uk

## Sporting Saint training vest



A high-quality, well-considered design made in the UK by Fortis exclusively for Sporting Saint. The vest is a mix of mesh and ripstop fabric, with – amongst other features – a large rear waterproof game/carrying pocket with an adjuster, double front cartridge/utility pockets, D Ring either side of the vest to hang extra dummies off plus an elasticated back area and eyelets in all pockets for drainage. Sizes M - XXL.

£150
www.sportingsaint.co.uk

## Hicks & Hides Stanway dog collar



The Stanway field dog collar is a premium dog collar with a brass roller buckle and loop and rifle bullets all the way round. It has been created with a thinner design especially for small and medium sized four-legged friends. Available in Brown and Black, sizes XS-L.

£39
hicksandhides.co.uk



## Black and White Flush, by John Trickett

Treat someone you love to a hand-stretched and finished canvas print which looks like an original oil painting! Published in a very small edition of only 49 copies, they are artist signed and numbered on the back. This one measures 16x20" (41x51cm) for the canvas and approximately 22x26" framed. Canvas only £345; framed £410.

From £345
www.sallymitchell.com

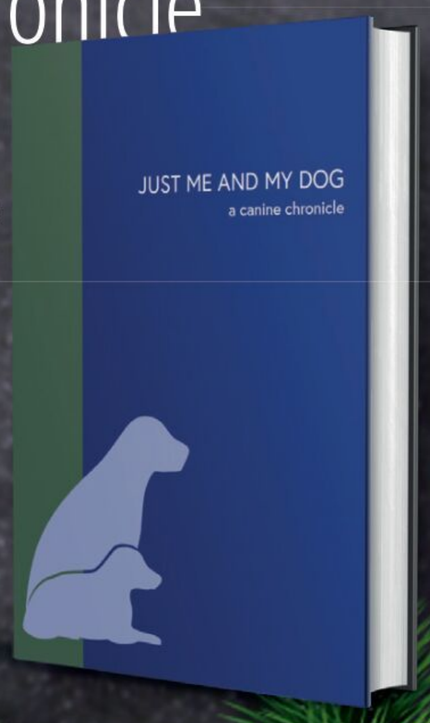
## Dog & Field 'dead bird' dummies

The Original Clone Dead Bird Dummy range has been designed specifically to stimulate your gundog's three primary hunting senses – sight, smell and touch.
The Dead Bird Dummy bridges the gap between dummy training and gets your dog closer to the real thing. The high-definition photographic canvas print of real-life game birds' feather patterns are designed for better marking visibility and to be eye-catching and realistic. Combine that with the real feel and scent-absorbent, robust fabric adds tp the realism of the types of game birds your dog may be retrieving in the field. Available in cock pheasant, hen pheasant, partridge and snipe.

From £14.99
www.dogandfield.co.uk



## Just Me and My Dog, a canine chronicle



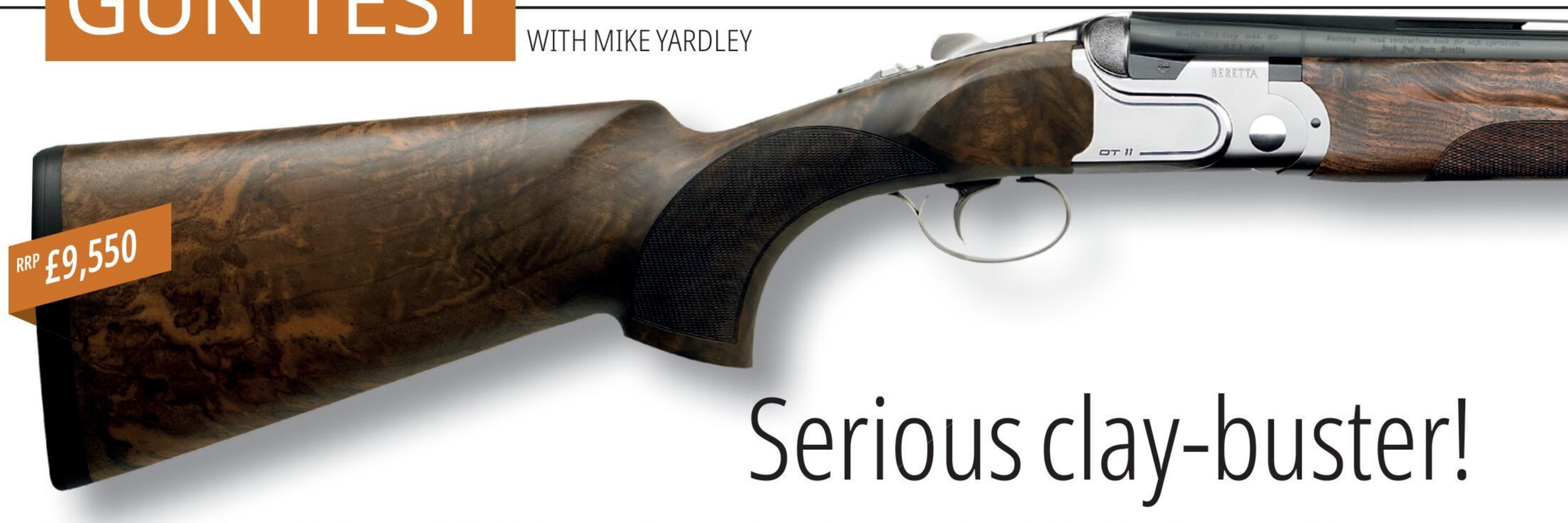

Whether you're wanting to keep a note of your puppy's development and training, are looking to keep notes on your dog training journey, or simply looking for a daily journal and notebook, then *Just Me and My Dog, a canine chronicle* is just what you need.

A soft-touch notebook with over 120 dot-grid and blank pages, featuring inspiring quotes by award-winning author and canine behaviourist Lez Graham, will help you track all of those fun and important moments in your dog's life.

£8.99
www.amazon.co.uk

# GUN TEST

WITH MIKE YARDLEY




RRP £9,550

# Serious clay-buster!

## The 31" barrels on this Beretta's DT11 Sport set it apart from the rest, making it ideal for the competitive shot or for high-bird shooting, says Mike Yardley

This month's test gun is an upmarket Beretta DT11 Sport 31" imported by GMK of Fareham. It's intended as a premium clay-breaking machine, but might be used for high birds, or even wildfowling with its 3" (76mm) chambers and steel-friendly proof. It's a big beast, weighing in at 8lb 9oz, but this is typical of dedicated clay guns now. The featured gun, moreover, is one of three recent 31" models: a 694, the DT11 Sport as tested and a black action 31" model. Although the action mechanics are distinctly different, the first two mentioned – 694 and DT11 Sport – look quite similar with silver actions and blue detail striping.

The styling here is business-like and there is an echo of the old silver-actioned 682s aesthetically. Mechanically, the DT11 is a development of the DT10 and the old (and excellent) ASE, a gun which I would be buying now were I a gun collector; much hand work went into its production. We've looked at DT11s in these pages before, but what makes this test especially interesting are the 31" barrels as noted, a length that is surprisingly rare. Some Continental trap guns used to come in at 79cm/31½" (and some Berettas had 75cm/29½" barrels).



PICTURE: MIKE YARDLEY

My thanks to Lyalvale Express for supplying the Super Comp cartridges used in this test

Barrel length is very personal. Most top clay performers opt for 32" or, occasionally, even longer. The length is also popular with high bird specialists who may push 34 and 36g loads of lead through them and are now no doubt working on steel equivalents. Personally, I favoured 32" when competing. I found the longer barrels more pointable and more precise. They seemed to change the perception of lead too (seemingly requiring a little less than shorter barrels). I also preferred the sight picture they created, especially with a taper rib. The rib on the test gun is a 10-8mm parallel design; my ideal pattern would be just a little narrower at the muzzle but this one is still fine.

Most DT11s employ a sophisticated form of taper boring with a long forcing cone, but the 31" test gun has a parallel bore throughout and shorter, more traditional cones. This should work well with increasingly prevalent fibre-wad cartridges. The Beretta taper system is worth mentioning, nevertheless, as it has been seen in most DT11s to date. It combines an element of back-boring with a taper for most of the barrel length leading to a much shorter parallel section before the choke area. Multi-choked sporter and fixed choke trap gun models differ slightly. The sporter barrels (but not the test gun) typically reduce to a bore diameter of 18.6mm before they lead into the chokes; the trap guns go down to 18.4mm before reaching their three-quarters and full chokes.

The chokes on the DT11 are of the Optima HP extended pattern and five




are supplied with the gun in a transparent box with a simple but efficient Beretta 'Universal' choke key. I have found Optima HP chokes to be exceptionally good. I like the clear marking and colour coding.

Let's now move onto the stock and fore-end. The butt is made from walnut that shows some reasonable figure. The grip is quite large and has a palm swell. It is comfortable and finely chequered. My only criticism was the position of the palm swell itself, which tended to push the hand just a little too far forward in my case.

The fore-end was good – hand-filling with finger grooves to the top. My preference would be slightly narrower without the grooves (and Beretta do offer one listed as 'rounded' as well as a schnabel type). The comb profile was generous, with some taper, but not too thick. Overall, I thought the stock well-conceived and, as noted, especially comfortable. The B-Fast balancing system allows balance to be adjusted to preference too.

### Technical

The DT11 has a forged action machined by CNC. It is an evolution of the earlier ASE and, essentially similar, the DT10 – the immediate predecessor of the DT11 (although it is 3mm wider overall in action width). As with all those guns mentioned, there is a detachable trigger mechanism with hammers powered by V springs. The hammers themselves, tumblers as gunsmiths call them, are reminiscent of the SO sidelock guns, the V springs which drive them allow for fine adjustment of the trigger pulls (usually set at about 3lb to 3½lb). The single trigger mechanism is inertia/recoil operated with the usual bob-weight system.

The gun has normal Beretta trunnion hinging too with replaceable stud pins at the knuckle, but instead of conical bolts to the rear, there are small projections either side of the top chamber, engaging with slots cut in the top of the action face and cross-bolt locking.

The DT11, like its predecessors (and most Beretta shotguns) has short shoulders to the rear of the monobloc too which dovetail into recesses in the top rear of the action wall. The 'Steelium' alloy steel barrels themselves are made by a combination of deep drilling and hammer forging. SS

## SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

I am always especially interested in shooting guns when I have tried other versions. The DT11 was an excellent performer in earlier tests. I found it quite heavy (but serious clay busters want weight). The test DT11 is not overweight for purpose at 8lb 9oz. It promotes steadiness, and the gun balances on the knuckle, as adjusted at the factory (over 30", I don't favour a hinge pin balance). The gun's shooting qualities impressed. I didn't miss anything (honestly), and my companion actually expressed some frustration thinking my shooting with Half and Three-quarter chokes fitted looked a bit too effortless (actually I was working pretty hard!). The stock shapes were good with a full but tapered comb and a big, comfortable grip as noted. I didn't need to move the adjustable comb. The DT11 31 was forgiving and moved well. The only negative was a tiny bit of movement in the fore-end on firing. But, by any standard, this is a first-class modern competition gun. It might make an occasional high bird or duck gun too. The bottom line is rising, but for those who can't stretch to it, the 694 is worth consideration too.

## WE LIKE

- Great engineering
- Comfortable stock shapes
- The adjustable comb

## WE DISLIKE

- The blue action stripes

## TECH SPECS

- Make: Beretta
- Model: DT11 Sport 31"
- Bore: 12
- Chamber: 3" (76mm)
- Choke: Optima HP Extended 5 supplied (there's a fixed-choke trap model too)
- Proof: fleurs-de-lys steel
- Barrels: 31" (30 and 32" options available)
- Rib: flat, tapered 10-8mm
- Weight: 8lb 9oz

## UP CLOSE




The 31" barrel length is an unusual one, but is worth considering if you find the sight picture of the 32" isn't quite right for you.




The forged CNC-machined action features V springs that allow for fine adjustment of the trigger pulls.




The single trigger mechanism is inertia/recoil operated and is detachable, which will appeal to competition shooters.



The grip is comfortably large and has a palm swell. The walnut is finely chequered with some reasonable figure.

# Lead-free loads

## Thinking about trying some 'greener' loads through your gun this season? Take a look at these non-lead options to help you decide what to go for...

We are now in the third shooting season since the UK's shooting organisations made their statement announcing the proposal to move away from lead shot and plastic in shotgun cartridges within five years. So where have we got to? And what are the options available on the market in terms of lead-free and eco loads?

The following is a selection of eco-friendly loads to help you decide what will work for you and your gun this shooting season, if you are beginning to look at lead- and plastic-free options. We'll bring you further details and in-depth analysis as the season progresses.




### GAMEBORE 12G DARK STORM PRECISION STEEL WITH BIO WAD

Building on Gamebore's Quad Seal design, the Bio Wad Gen II is a new full cup wad utilising the same cutting-edge material which is 100% environmentally safe. Now in brown to minimise visual impact in the field throughout the biodegradation period.

Standard Steel comes in 32g shot size No.4 and 5, in a 2¾" case. High Performance Steel is available in 32g shot size No.3, in a 2¾" case and 35g shot size No.1, 2 or 3 in a 3" case. For HP Steel cartridges, ensure the gun is suitable for HP Steel and is stamped with a Fleur de Lys symbol. Proof house guidance suggests a maximum of Half choke is used for all steel.

**From £508/1,000**
**gamebore.com/dealers**

### GAMBORE 12G REGAL STEEL GAME

Gamebore's new crimp-closed 2½" steel game cartridge, incorporating the new Gen-II Bio-Wad for complete barrel protection and reduced recoil.

Available in Standard Steel, 30g shot size No. 4 and 5.

**From £497/1,000**
**gamebore.com/dealers**

### ELEY HAWK VIP STEEL

The impact force of Eley's VIP Steel cartridges is a firm favourite in wetlands; with purpose manufactured steel shot, consistent shot patterns and manufactured-for-purpose powder. This steel range is perfect on smaller, fast-moving wildfowl, says Eley. The plastic shot cup ensures a VIP delivery out of your gun.

The unique SSB+ 150 powder excels even in humid conditions and is manufactured to ensure excellent ballistics on steel loads and designed to work in semi-autos. This load is the ultra-high performance steel load.

**£299 per 1,000**
**www.eleyhawkltd.com/dealers**

### LYALVALE EXPRESS HIGH PERFORMANCE ULTIMATE STEEL

Lyalvale claims its Ultimate High Performance Steel offers the highest lethality in a non-toxic steel game cartridge. With the new Greencore Wad that is 100% biodegradable and compostable, it offers an excellent alternative to lead. Apart from its non-toxic credentials, the custom-made iron alloy shot conforms to the CIP softness requirements, but won't deform like lead – resulting in a tighter shot pattern over long distances, says Lyalvale.

The Ultimate Steel is a 76mm / 3" cartridge. Designed within CIP high performance steel regulations it offers maximum lethality above and beyond 2¾" based cartridges with biodegradable and compostable wads.

**From £519/1,000**
**Contact your local Lyalvale Express dealer**









## ELEY HAWK VIP LIGHTNING STEEL

Eley Hawk's VIP Lightning Steel is manufactured with a powerful blend of powders to achieve incredible performance while still conforming to CIP regulations.

The unique SSB+ 150 powder excels even in humid conditions and has been specifically created to ensure excellent ballistics with steel loads. The VIP Lightning Steel allows you to shoot at outstanding ranges with convincing knockdown power on even the largest of waterfowl species. A perfect load for all large 3" chambered semi-automatic shotguns.

**£363/1,000**
**www.eleyhawkltd.com/dealers**

## ELEY HAWK VIP STEEL PRO ECO

Eley Hawk says its VIP Steel Pro Eco wad cartridges have changed the game for lead-free loads. The first of their kind loaded by a UK manufacturer, VIP Steel Pro Eco cartridges allow wildfowlers, game and clay shooters alike to be able to shoot steel cartridges safely with a non-plastic wad that is harmless to the environment.

Eley's unique, certified Pro Eco wad is 100% water-soluble and compostable, made from natural, non-toxic, and fully biodegradable materials, ensuring that no trace is left in the field or marshes. It dissolves fully submerged in water in approximately 24 hours and within up to three months in natural elements.

Adding to the makeup of the VIP Steel Pro Eco, the cartridge is created with only the finest powders and premium steel shot, delivering superior ballistics and patterning, and is heat-sealed on the crimp to prevent the ingress of moisture. They have been rigorously tested for safety and ballistic confidence and are available in 32g and No.3 and 5 shot.

**£373/1,000**
**www.eleyhawkltd.com/dealers**

## BASCHIERI & PELLAGRI PRIVILEGE STEEL

The Privilege Steel line is loaded with a Green Core wad, made with 100% biodegradable material, which allows perfect ballistic performance in different climatic conditions, regardless of temperature and humidity.

This green core wad, suitable for non-toxic pellets, is exceptionally resistant to low temperatures and has been designed to protect the barrel and guarantee compact patterns.

Available in 28 and 32g No. 3, 4 and 5 shot. B&P recommend users check their shotgun proof marks and make sure they understand that the cartridge they are buying is suitable for their gun. For advice, contact the Fiocchi UK team: 01827 383 466.

**Price on application**
**www.lyalvaleexpress.com**




## BIOAMMO BLUE

The first 0% plastic cartridge on the market with 100% biodegradable, bio-compostable case and wad. Both the cases and the wads are made in-house with state-of-the-art new machinery, with both primers and powders bought in from other producers.

The alloy shot is what really sets this cartridge apart from the others. It is made from aluminium, bismuth, tin and zinc. This mixture gives a density similar to steel, but is a lot softer. Lead has a hardness of 40-45 Vickers, steel is 120 Vickers and BioAmmo Blue's alloy shot is 60 Vickers.

"It means you are getting a shot that is discharging energy faster into the game to produce clean kills," says Alex Levett-Scrivener of distributor Shooting Star. "As the shot is a softer it can be shot like lead in any choked gun."

Cartridges are available in 67mm in 25g No.4, 5 and 6, and in 70mm in 27g No.4 and 5. The 2½" 67mm (deemed suitable by proof house) cartridges can be shot through old English guns.

**£595/1,000 (67mm); £620 (70mm)**
**www.shootingstarcc.co.uk**



# CARTRIDGES

## ELEY HAWK GRAND PRIX TRADITIONAL STEEL PRO

This is Eley Hawk's latest, market-leading innovation which blends tradition with cutting edge technology. Featuring Eley Hawk's exclusive fully bio-degradable Pro Eco Wad, the Grand Prix Traditional Steel Pro Eco opens shooting a standard steel load in traditional, nitro-proofed guns, meaning that a future remains for old English shotguns. The Grand Prix Traditional Steel is loaded in a 30g, No.4 shot and comes in the iconic Grand Prix orange case.

**£370/1,000**
**www.eleyhawkltd.com/dealers**

## ELEY HAWK VIP BISMUTH

Eley Hawk's VIP Bismuth cartridge is perfect for all wildfowling and wetland shooting, offering almost identical performance qualities to lead. Available in 12, 16, and 20-bore.

This lead alternative works well in all guns proofed to work with lead and has been proven to be effective in the field since the early 1990s. The unique formulation of the Bismuth alloy has many properties similar to lead in terms of density and hardness. The alloy mix ensures there is a certain malleability, which in turn transfers energy into the target to deliver good knockdown power. Bismuth has no toxic properties and is very safe to handle.

VIP Bismuth cartridges are an ideal option for mixed bag pheasant and duck days, all the while using your favourite old English gun. If you only occasionally go wildfowling, they represent a cost-effective alternative to investing in a new steel-proofed gun.







**Starting from £915/1,000**
**www.eleyhawkltd.com/dealers**

## LYALVALE EXPRESS ULTIMATE BISMUTH

The new Ultimate Bismuth range has been designed as the go-to solution for those who want the very best in non-toxic shot for lethality. Designed to offer a non-toxic alternative to lead without any of the restrictions of other non-toxic loads.

The new Supremacy Bismuth (9.6g /cm3) shot is designed to give maximum energy transfer to ensure clean kills at range.

The Ultimate Bismuth is designed for 2½" / 65mm and larger chamber length and utilises a fibre wad and card obturator.

**From £1,389/1,000**
**Contact your local Lyalvale Express dealer**

## LYALVALE EXPRESS HIGH GAME NON TOXIC LOAD

This development on the Ultimate Bismuth 34g is designed for 2¾" / 70mm and larger chamber length. The extra performance now available enhances this as a great non-toxic high bird load. The new Supremacy Bismuth shot (9.6g/cm3) is designed to give maximum energy transfer to ensure clean kills at extreme range. A fibre wad and card obturator complete this stunning cartridge.

**From £1,595/1,000**
**Contact your local Lyalvale Express dealer**




## GAMEBORE 12G DARK STORM WITH BISMUTH

The latest addition to Gamebore's award-winning Dark Storm with Quad Seal range, their ultra-high performance Bismuth HD game load has been developed especially for the most testing of high birds. Delivering a 15% higher performance than its HP Steel counterpart, 12-bore Dark Storm Bismuth HD is Gamebore's ultimate non-lead ammunition for game.

Bismuth HD shot is produced and perfected by Gamebore using a unique, patented process which ensures malleable shot with no breakdown, compared with Bismuth shot made using the traditional technique. Coupled with their groundbreaking Quad Seal technology, it achieves lower recoil yet higher velocity with devastating knockdown power at long range.

With a High Density of 9.6, Gamebore says its Bismuth HD premium loads work just like lead and can be used in all shotguns with any choke. One size larger shot than your preferred lead load is recommended. With no choke or pre-1954 proof house limitations, these represent the latest innovation from this UK cartridge manufacturer, delivering excellent performance and patterns.

**RRP: From £1,649/1,000**
**www.gamebore.com/dealers**



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# THE ULTIMATE WORKHORSE

PRICE £1,025

## Drennan Kenderdine has been getting to grips with the indestructible might of the Mossberg 940 Pro, and discovers an American-made tank of a gun that will never let you down

Mossberg is an American manufacturer, ingrained in the culture of our brothers and sisters across the pond, but not so well-known over here. I'm familiar with Mossberg guns, having lived (in the words of Kenny Everitt), in the Good Old U S of A for some time and used them both in the field and, occasionally, on clays. So, when the team at Viking Arms asked me to rattle the 940 PRO Field through the mill, I kind of had an idea what was coming my way.

My face must have said it all because, when removed from its packaging and finally assembled, my American wife, proud as punch because I had a native to her country in my hand, turned to me and said, "really, it's that bad"? Now, if the 940 Pro were to be in a beauty competition, it would come second, and first place would go to a pig with a wig. It's not Mossberg's fault though; I find most American-designed shotguns as dull as an English November morning... they just are! However, the stars and stripes folk always value reliability and performance above aesthetics, and this ethos is precisely what makes this gun an all-out right-hand man workhorse of a thing, and then some!

This thing is designed to be fastened to the side of a horse and taken across the great open wilderness of Montana; to be racked onto a snowmobile and still function in the artic conditions of Alaska. It's made to be bundled into boats in the swamps of Louisiana, cope with the tropics of Florida, repel the wind and rain of Illinois, be chucked in and out of an F150 pickup by millions of rednecks on the wetlands of Pennsylvania, handle the toughest breed of cowboys from Texas and conquer the hottest place on earth in July – Death Valley in the Mojave Desert. So, looks are a mere distraction, considering what this gun will cope with. But does that fit into the UK market? In my best American redneck voice: "Well, hell to the hell yeah, it sure does!" If it works in those conditions, the weather and climates of the UK are child's play compared to what the land of the free and the brave serves up in its 50 states.

So, who's it going to suit over here, and why? Well, just about every gamekeeper in the country needs a no-nonsense, bombproof gun that can be chucked in and out of a Land Rover or fastened to a quad bike, or that will work in all weathers from the Highlands of Scotland to the hills and valleys of Wales. Similarly, it would suit any rough shooter who enjoys getting out on the pigeons or corvids, safe in the knowledge that cleaning the Mossberg 940 Pro can be done next week... or whenever. Because of its synthetic stock and fore-end, it's also ideal for the wildfowler, especially as it is bored with 3" chambers (76mm) and will take high-performance ammo. More to the point, it would suit someone that wants to do a little bit of all of the above. Let's take a closer look at some of its features.




PICTURES: DRENNAN KENDERDINE

## TECH SPECS

- Type: Gas-operated semi-automatic shotgun
- Gauge: 12-bore
- Chamber length: 3" (76mm)
- Magazine: 3-round capacity (2 + 1)
- Sights: Front fibre optic hi-viz bead
- Stock: Synthetic adjustable stock with adjustable length of pull, cast & drop
- Length of pull: Adjustable 13-14.25"
- Barrel length: 28" vented rib barrel
- Weight: 7lb 12oz
- Barrel Ffnish: Matte blue
- Chokes: Interchangeable Accu-Set chokes

### Gas-operated system

This seimi-autto has a gas-operated system that, according to Mossberg, doesn't need cleaning for at least 1,500 rounds, which suits someone like me. Various corrosion-resistant internal parts and finishes allow the working parts to operate faultlessly in extreme weather conditions.

### Stock & fore-end

An adjustable stock by way of shims, and as easy to do as age 5+ Lego. The cast can be set to right- or left-handed. The length of pull can be lengthened or shortened by a simple, yet very effective, shim system. Both the stock and streamlined fore-end include Mossberg's distinctive texturing for a tight grip, which works like Gorilla glue when wet or cold.

### Safety catch

This brings a smile to my face. It reminds me of the game Tin Can Alley. It's almost toy-like, but very cowboyish, and it is extremely functional. The placement alongside the heavy grooving allows its operation to be manageable in any condition, with or without gloves. It's one of the best in terms of operations on a semi-auto designed for field use.

### Barrel

I do have to get this one off my chest. I love the thought patterns of the Americans; they think of things that would never cross the minds of us Britonians. So, what have Mossberg done? Well, they've made a barrel that, should you find yourself confronted by a grizzly bear and clean out of ammo, you could use as a bludgeon in a life and death battle with said bear. Made from properties not on our periodic table, it's heavy as a London Bus. However, when assembled as a whole gun, its weight is remarkable and gives birth to a pointable shotgun. Indeed, when shooting, it soaks recoil up like white bread does gravy. The multi-choke system allows any shooter to select a choke for any form of field use, or even for use on the clay line.



The bolt handle and release are both oversized, allowing for easy operation in the field

CONTACT
Viking Arms
Tel: 01423 780 810
Email: info@vikingarms.com

Visit vikingshoot.com for more information

### Bolt handle

An oversized handle with a rubberised coating, allowing a viper-like grip when operating it. It is no-nonsense, straight to the point and very functional.

### Bolt release

The release is oversized to allow easier use to operate the bolt – plus, it also doubles up to release the cartridges from the magazine tube, which saves having to operate the action. I found this to be a bit of a faff, and operating the working parts with the oversized bolt handle unloaded the Mossberg 940 Pro in the blink of an eye anyway.

### What's it like to shoot?

While no gun is perfect, the Mossberg 940 Pro works and shoots well. I borderline abused the thing to see if it lived up to the claims made by Viking Arms of it being virtually indestructible. Of course, you could break it if you tried hard enough; anything is breakable. But I used it on hot, cold, and rainy days; I even ran 100 rounds through as fast as I could, which got it up to a temperature you could light a cigar off, and it still worked faultlessly.

I put a range of cartridges through it from 24g up to 36g, including 3" (76mm) high-performance steel loads, and it never jammed once. I only wiped the excess water off when it rained, and left it at that. It's not been cleaned and has been in and out of my motors, into the field on various quarry, and also out on the clays... and it's still going!

So, if you're looking for a no-frills, virtually indestructible, reliable semi-auto that will make you feel like Buffalo Bill, this is a gun you should buy. SS


The pad and springs soak up recoil efficiently, offering a very comfortable shooting experience

Not the best looker – but the 940 Pro's affordability and reliability more than make up for that!



*Tim is Development Officer for the National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO)*

# Keep contagion at bay on your shoot

## As avian influenza continues to affect the 2022/23 season, Tim Weston looks at the impact it is having on our sport and urges all shoot managers to ensure they are following the latest biodiversity advice

Last month I wrote about the possibility of avian influenza becoming a real problem to shooting on these shores. We saw how it affected the rearing season when avian influenza ravaged commercial flocks of ducks, chickens and geese in France during the early part of 2022 and those impacts are still being felt in the UK even now we are well into the shooting season. Although the game birds themselves were not as badly affected as those intensively reared poultry units, the very fact that there was avian influenza in the specific region of France where our main supply of game bird eggs comes from meant they were unable to export the product to the UK.

What none of us knew was that avian influenza (AI) was going to stick around throughout the summer months at a relatively low level and be in the United Kingdom even before the bulk of the migratory birds came over from the continent; this in itself is highly unusual. Outbreaks of AI were reported sporadically throughout the summer in commercial flocks of poultry as well as in many sea birds. An outbreak of bird flu killed at least 60 birds at an RSPB reserve in June 2022. Birds were tested at RSPB Minsmere, on the Suffolk coast, by Defra officials. In a statement the reserve said: "We can confirm that dead birds tested by Defra for avian influenza at RSPB Minsmere last week have tested positive for the disease."




PICTURE: ISTOCK

It is thought by many that sea birds such as gulls are one of the main vectors for spreading AI inland. Gulls are notorious for travelling inshore, and anecdotally I have heard many reports of dead gulls along the coast of southern England and the south-west of England, not to mention puffins on the north-east coast.

At the time of writing, we had seen one confirmed outbreak in kept game birds on Exmoor this autumn and a few confirmed cases in wild pheasants in Norfolk, Cornwall and Cheshire. The Norfolk outbreak was reported to be quite close to an RSPB reserve and I have been told that birds from the reserve could have spread AI to the wild pheasants, however this is not confirmed or proven. Either way, AI is being spread from wild birds to other wild birds and Defra, the National Gamekeepers' Organisation and Trusted Game




**Even dogs are a risk of contagion if they travel from shoot to shoot – so ensure all visitors are following the NGO's advice**

PICTURE: NICK RIDLEY

have all put out their own advice to shoots on what to do going forward.

"Bird flu is HIGHLY contagious and can survive for very long periods on surfaces, vehicles and clothes, in feathers and in infected carcases," said a spokesperson from Trusted Game, an accreditation scheme run by game bird vets for shoots. "Beaters, loaders, pickers-up, deer stalkers and even dogs that go from shoot to shoot present a significant risk to each shoot. Guns perhaps less so, unless they assist in collecting the game.

"Any person/dog that encounters a site with dead wild birds/game and/or has been in a restricted AI zone should not visit any other shoot for a minimum of 72 hours. All clothing, footwear, vehicles and equipment should be thoroughly washed and disinfected."

The advice they have issued can be found on their Facebook page. The National Gamekeepers' Organisation emailed all their members directing them to where they can find the full and relevant information on different aspects of AI including protecting wild birds. The advice also included picking up dead game, biosecurity for shoots and importantly how to register your flock.

It is a legal requirement that all bird keepers, including those who intend to release the birds and who have more than 50 at any one time, must register on the DEFRA poultry register. You must register using the compulsory registration form within one month of keeping 50 or more birds on your premises. You're breaking the law if you do not register. The law applies if you keep:

- 50 or more birds captive for any period of time
- flocks made up of different species, such as chickens, ducks or geese
- birds for the consumption of meat and eggs; other commercial purposes; restocking game birds; or breeding for these three purposes

This legislation is not new, it came into effect in 2006 to help stop the spread of AI in commercial and kept flocks of birds. The term 'kept' with regards to AI means game birds that are unable to leave the pen, so partridges in netted pens or pheasants that are still unable to fly out over the wire. Don't get confused with the word commercial either, that doesn't relate to the shoot being a business.

All shoots with 50 or more game birds kept for the purpose of rearing or releasing need to register

'We seem to find ourselves for the third year on the trot in a situation where we can say we are in unprecedented times'



Bird flu is highly contagious, so strict protocols must be followed if you encounter a dead bird

PICTURE: ISTOCK

with Defra. There is one simple form to fill out and return which you must do within one month of taking the birds onto your premises. Registering does bring some advantages; you will be informed directly of what is happening locally to you via email or sometimes text message, which can really help you to implement extra biosecurity measures should you need to do so.

On the whole, shooting wild birds is not impacted by AI outbreaks, but if you fall into a surveillance or control zone you should consider what is the best thing to do and check the specifics of that particular situation on the Defra website.

We find ourselves for the third year on the trot in unprecedented times. This is something that is frustrating me. I want a 'mundane' year with no drama or problems where keepers can go about their business of conservation and game management without having to wonder about the future. Only time will tell if next season will bring just that. SS



UPDATE
Great Britain has been declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. Read more about this on p6.

PICTURE: CERVUSE UK



WITH ADAM SMITH

# A hard day's night

## Devotion and sleep deprivation can be a necessary part of a keeper's lifestyle, as Adam Smith's career in poult protection often showed

Once upon a time, when I was a-keepering, I spent the night sitting on an upturned bucket wedged in one corner of a rearing pen. I'd agonised over whether 'going with intent' should include an air rifle or an old and not particularly reliable double .410 with a dodgy back trigger – though both guns would have been unbalanced by a torch Gaffer-taped beneath the barrel.

In the end, I opted for the superior firepower of the .410, deciding that the disruptive effect on several hundred three-week poults of a small cartridge exploding in the wee hours was better than the silent uncertainty of air-powered pellet precision.

And what, you must by now be asking, was this fully armed vigil about? Well, a couple of dozen (23 starling-sized poults to be precise) of my birds had decided to forgo the claustrophobic brooder and 'jug' out for the night, safe in the long grass of a 30x30 pen, netted against avian predators with tin sheet sections cut in at ground level. Vermin proof, you might have said, save for the discovery of 23 forlorn little carcases the following morning. Each had the back of its skull neatly sliced open with a small sample of brain snacked on, before moving to the next. Hannibal Lecter would have been so proud.

But this was in the days long before Hannibal had made his mark; this was simply a rat's calling card. Of course, I regretted not shutting the birds away within the greater security of the nursery run, or the brooder itself, but with every year and every hatch there comes a time when the birds embark on a bit of independence. Denying them their self-assertive pleasure can result in tantrums and a lack of co-operation that can do more harm than good. Anyway, I'd had no problems with vermin before: no signs of scrapes under the tin and no giveaway droppings. Plus it was mild, and dry, and they were well-feathered and they have to start sometime, so, why not now?

Why not now was confirmed in a sad and infuriating bucketful of bodies, but what to do next? Detective work disclosed a tiny trace of rat fur on the edge of the tin sheet it had scraped and squeezed under, mocking my trust in my 'vermin-proof' set-up. I was sure it was a rat, and that fur ruled out stoat or weasel despite the mustelids' voracious reputations, yet rats can be far more cunning. Even though they are too clever by half at self-preservation, avoiding any strange new attractions, trapping the culprit seemed the only obvious answer – but what about the birds? Despite a network of narrowed-down tunnels, the inquisitive little poults would still be at risk, so a mass exodus was needed. With the help from wife, children and a couple of mates we shooed the contents of the suspect pen into what I prayed would be the safety of the next one in line. It was only a stopgap decision (you can't double up the density without risking more problems) but needs must, at least for a day or so.

And with nothing else at risk other than the target, I did without the complications of tunnels and restricted access and simply laid Fenns all over the pen, around the inner perimeter and in the runs made by the birds in the grass. Whether

> 'I agonised over whether 'going with intent' should include an air rifle or an old double .410 with a dodgy back trigger'



Were the sounds Adam heard during his long nighttime vigil made by otters? He'll never know!

PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; ISTOCK

the confines of an isolated pen would legally constitute a 'tunnel' was debateable, but my losses defined the decision as far as I was concerned.

Some traps were artfully camouflaged, some invitingly out in the open – on a 'butter wouldn't melt' basis, though it was unlikely *Rattus norvegicus* would see the joke. Some were baited with a smear of peanut butter on the pan, while others had a liver sliver as attraction, but baited or not overkill was the plan, in the belief that one would be more than enough. The rest could sit, primed and ready. And if unnecessary, so much the better.

In the event, the whole lot proved unnecessary. Ratty was evidently far too clever to risk pottering round an empty pen, so the Fenns stayed tense with anticipation while I pondered a re-think. Baits were out, too long a timescale, so that left the potential of Plan B.

Plan B was of course The Vigil. It seemed the only answer left, to spend the night silently waiting with gun and hope in equal measure. Luckily – if any aspect of the scene could include luck – the weather was mild. I'd had a doze in the afternoon so the body clock was prepared to stay on full alert for the next few hours and, armed with my .410 and a flask, I settled on my bucket to await fate. Quite why, with hindsight and a couple of hours' cramped posture, I'd opted to sit so low became an increasing mystery, but I persevered – at least until pain forced a major re-think and I gently and slowly changed position to sit on the grass in the corner. And there I stayed, silent and motionless in alert anticipation for several hours.



They might have felt safe in the long grass, but Adam's birds were at risk, and he had to take action, fast!

**WRITE IN!**

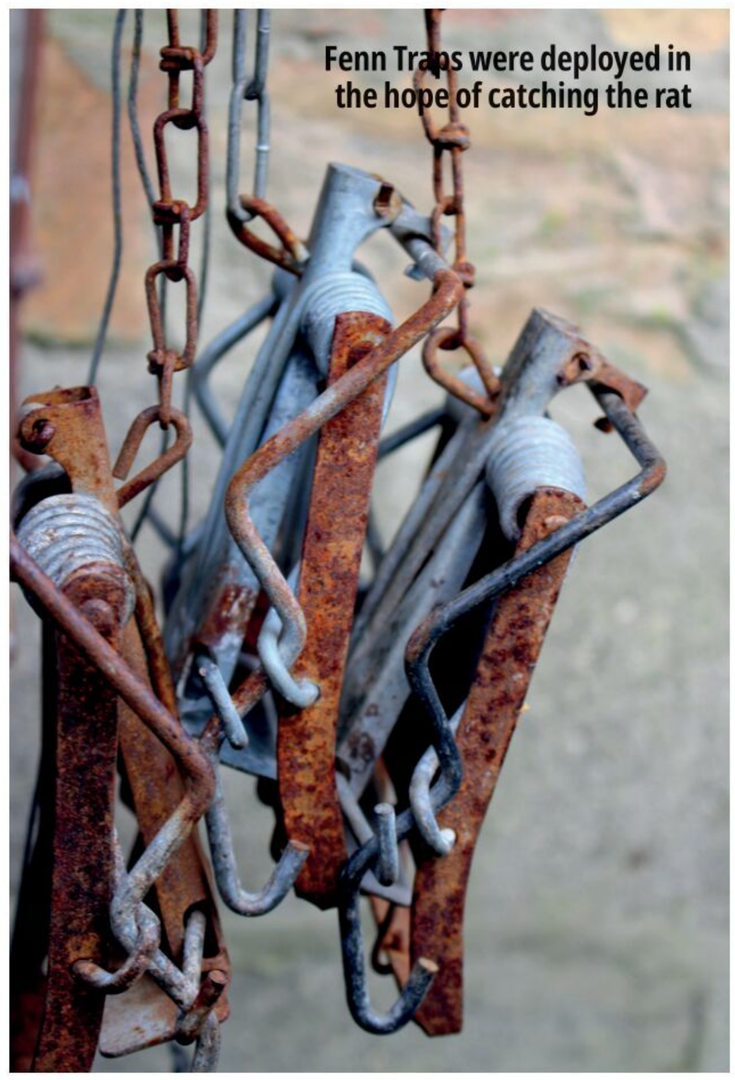
**If you have a story from the peg that you would like to share with other readers, email us at ben.palfreyman@fieldsportspress.com**

Well, I've got to be honest, not fully alert. The clack of a trap springing accompanied by a brief but rewardingly rat-like shriek, woke me from a doze at around 4am. All the firepower had proved pointless since one of the Fenns had done my work – the way they do 24/7 (or they did in the 1980s anyway, when we had fewer of today's restrictions). Struggling stiffly to my feet, the growing dawn light showed me a pained and pinned bitch rat, with head and tail slowly twisting as the last few seconds of her life was squeezed out between the trap's jaws.

That morning's breakfast was well earned and all the better for it. Traps were sprung, collected and hung in the shed, waiting for the next task. One inner pen section was opened enough to allow half the pen's contents to be shepherded back to their own patch again. Bit of enforced diversity of course, but they seemed to get along well enough over the remaining weeks before being moved to the release pens. Life returned to normal.

That problem was sorted, though whether staying up all night was justified remained uncertain. Anyway, that's what happened and the rat paid the price. Job done, except for one remaining mystery. Around 2am, in the still, chill night air, I'd heard some strange sounds. The lower boundary of the rearing field, around 100 yards away, was a river – more a wide stream really and a foot or so deep at most – and as I sat silent and waiting something was splashing and 'plopping' in the water. Accompanied by scuffling sounds, the splashes seemed to follow a pattern as, to my perhaps fertile mind, something was sliding down the steep bank between the alders and plopping into the stream.

I became convinced that I was listening to young otters, playing in the night. Obviously, I couldn't move to investigate but searched the bank for some signs the next morning. There was nothing, not a trace, no pug marks, no spraints (otter droppings), no muddy skids or claw lines, nothing. So I imagined it then. There was no evidence to support such a fanciful theory, but the sounds were clear, something made them, even though I never discovered what it was. Was it a roebuck taking a bath? A solitary carp jumping for joy – or knocking lice off its scales? I'll never know, but what if it had been otters? SS



Fenn Traps were deployed in the hope of catching the rat

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# Long live the Sandringham Labs!

## The Countryman recalls time spent with royal kennel manager Bill Meldrum, who revealed to him some of the high expectations and genuine enthusiasm our late Queen had for her outstanding Trialling dogs

So here we are at the end of an era. It has been a momentous period which has seen the sad passing of our late and magnificent Queen and the new reign of King Charles III with his Queen Consort by his side. There have, of course, been numerous tributes to our late Queen. Many included her love of dogs, not just corgis (she owned over 30 of these little dogs during her reign), but also the Labradors and cocker spaniels she would keep at her kennels at Sandringham. The Queen well understood her dogs and was known to handle, train and pick-up with her cocker spaniels and black and yellow Labs.

Her Majesty was fortunate to obtain the service of a remarkable gundog trainer, Bill Meldrum. A tall and charming Scot, he had won the Retriever Championship in 1963 at Woburn Abbey with a dog called Glenfarg Skid. Shortly afterwards, both he and his wife Annie were invited for three days to stay at the Queen's kennels at Sandringham, and during his time there, he and his wife were invited to manage the Queen's kennels. What a wonderful opportunity for the pair of them!

The Queen had a keen interest in the management of her kennels and liked to know how the dogs performed in the field. Initially, Her Majesty owned two black Labradors, Snare and Sabre, before she went on to acquire a bitch called Sherry Biteabout out of Glenfarg Skid. The Queen and Bill worked together to ensure that Sherry became a Field Trial champion. When Sherry died in 1978, a memorial plaque was hung for her at Sandringham. Arguably, the Queen's most famous dog was FT Ch Sandringham Sydney. This outstanding dog won the Game Fair Trials three times, only to be beaten in the fourth year by a dog gifted to Bill Meldrum's father, FT Ch Lugwardine Jade.

I vividly remember Bill and Annie back in the early 1960s. I was invited to visit their aforementioned Sandringham kennels. The kennels had been built almost 200 years prior, in 1879. Despite their age, they were superbly built and capable of holding well over 40 dogs. In fact, Bill told me that when he first arrived at the Sandringham kennels he was greeted by 37 dogs, most Labradors and nearly all were black.

Bill was a tall, kind, stalwart man, who proudly displayed for me several of his best dogs demonstrating their use of dummies. He went on to tell me that The Queen liked to work a dog up to the ability to pick-up a bird at least 200 yards away. She was, said Bill, 100 per cent interested in her working dogs and was always very keen to ensure that one or more would become Field Trial champions. This approach meant the overall standard of the Sandringham dogs continued to improve.



**Queen Elizabeth II at Balmoral Castle in December 1977, accompanied by her dog trainer and gamekeeper, Bill Meldrum, and three of her dogs, Sandringham Sherry, Sandringham Dipper and royal favourite Lugwardine Jade, who belonged to Bill's father.**

PICTURE: PA IMAGES / ALAMY

# ‘Hopefully the Sandringham dogs will be long remembered for their ability and the fact they were so beloved by our Queen’



This is how the grand Sandringham kennels looked in 1898, originally built in 1879 to house almost 100 gundogs

PICTURE: FLICKR / BIT.LY/3RQ0OL4

Hopefully these Sandringham dogs, which have enjoyed world-wide fame for their abilities, will be long remembered for their ability and the fact they were so beloved by our late Queen.

## Boxing Day

Have you ever wondered why Boxing Day has been known as the day after Christmas Day? It was simply known as the traditional day when servants were allowed a free day and also were given a present, usually money, in a box which they could bring home as a present to their families. It is also known as St Stephen’s Day, the first Christian martyr, who was stoned to death in around 34 AD.

Boxing Day now represents relaxation when you can work off the excessive food and drink of the previous day. For many country folk who enjoy field sports, a few modest hours’ exercise, spent walking-up a few pheasants or pigeons or giving the ferrets some exercise in the hope of a few rabbits, is an ideal way to spend Boxing Day. I must confess though that my Boxing Days are usually brief. If I can pick-up up with a friend or two for a few birds, that will be quite enough for me!

I still have at least a few days’ shooting to look forward to before the season comes to an end and several days booked to pick-up with my new Labrador. I hope you will enjoy some sport in January, and of course, the lucky wildfowlers will still have a few forays out on the marshes this February.

I hope you all have a Happy New Year which brings peace across the world and in this country, the best of good fortune to our new King, his Queen Consort and those who serve them. SS



The traditional Boxing Day shoot is a great chance to work off some of the excesses of the day before

PICTURE: ALEX SAYER

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# Testing lead alternatives on the moors

## With a trip to the grouse moors of Cumbria on the cards, Diggory Hadoke takes on the extra challenge of a little experiment – to see if a selection of lead alternatives would work in his old Damascus barrels

We have all read a lot about the data comparing lead shot with the various non-lead alternatives – and it is clear that the latter will become the norm in the future. For users of British guns, especially older ones, there is a natural concern that the new alternatives will either be unsuitable for the guns we use or ineffective in the field.

With these concerns in mind, I decided to conduct an informal experiment this September when I headed to Cumbria, with a boot full of kit, for a couple of days on the grouse.

Allenheads and Muggleswick were to be the moors hosting our party; Nick Harlow and Dan Jago from Purdey would be wielding modern Purdey over-and-unders; Trigger, the managing director of Westley Richards, was using a battered pair of Mirokus; and Kiri was using his Brownings.

I could have packed a pair of sidelocks, but these days I shoot to please myself and so I packed two non-rebound lock under-lever hammer guns (one by Thorn, the other by John Emme), my 16-bore Grant side-lever hammer gun and 'Trusty Rusty' my old J. Thompson hammer gun. Between them, they should keep me amused – and my loader on his toes!

As for ammunition, I gathered together a very mixed bag of 12-bore lead cartridges, some sensible 16-bore lead loads and some non-lead shells with which to compare them.

The plan was to start shooting with lead and, once in the swing of things, to swap to an alternative and see if there was any change in my fortunes. Would I see fewer birds hitting the heather after the change?

Now, I realise this is not a scientific study and results are subject to lots of irritating variables which would rightly draw challenges to any conclusions I eventually make. However, most shooting men I talk to really just want to know if the new stuff works when you shoot at birds with it.

I took the following non-lead ammunition with me:

12-bore BioAmmo Blue (67mm cases), No.5 shot 27g load

12-bore Dickson 'Steel Thistle' (made by Hull)

16-bore Eley VIP Bismuth (65mm cases), 26.5g load.

With BioAmmo, steel and bismuth being the front runners as alternatives to lead shot, we have all bases covered.

All the guns I was using have Damascus barrels, so I was willfully ignoring the labels on the boxes warning against this practice. I probably should justify that statement. Makers put that warning on boxes to 'cover their collective arse' to use a common vulgarism. Many old guns with Damascus barrels are in poor condition, with thin walls and enlarged bores. It is unreasonable to expect the general public to know how to determine barrel condition, so a blanket 'ban' or warning protects manufacturers of ammunition from legal jeopardy in case of mishap.

I measured all the bores and barrels of my guns to make sure they were in good order and examined them carefully to satisfy myself they were in materially sound condition.

For the record, Damascus steels were put into trials in the 19th century, alongside fluid-pressed steel barrels, and proved to be just as robust (in many cases more so) when tested to destruction.

So, with guns and ammunition packed into the boot of the GT, I ventured into the early afternoon sunshine, turned northwards and headed for the

### CONTACT

**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 good news is BioAmmo Blue is shootable in old guns like this and it is a lot cheaper than bismuth**

PICTURES: DIGGORY HADOKE



My loader quietly swapped back to lead when he observed the shot-to-kill ratio drop

M6. In a little over four hours, we would be pulling into the gravel driveway of Naworth Castle, our home for the next three nights.

I began shooting with the composed pair of non-rebound lock, under-lever hammer guns by Thorn and Emme. My loader, Caleb, coped manfully with my non-standard kit and we were able to keep up with the pace nicely, though the grouse were already starting to pick up and some came through in big numbers.

Shooting lead for the first day, we were getting a bit of shooting and accounted for 30 birds in total.

On day two, we started with the BioAmmo Blue and I have to say it was not a good start. My shot-to-kill ratio dropped noticeably, but towards the end of the drive I started to connect more reliably and commented that they were now bringing birds to bag. Unfortunately, the reply from Caleb was that he had switched back to lead without telling me as he didn't feel the BioAmmo was doing the job.

Confidence rather battered by the experience, we reverted to lead shot for the rest of the day. That is until the last drive, where I switched to the 16-bore Grant and a mixed bag of bismuth and lead in blue cases. Both were pleasant to shoot and I don't know which cartridges bagged the grouse and which did not. I have some experience with bismuth and previous trials have shown it to be effective on waterfowl.

And so concluded my small experiment with non-lead alternatives on the grouse moor. I will continue my trials in October during a trip to Inverness for back-to back pheasant and partridge days and in November when I have four days of the same here in Shropshire.

I hope to ascertain a discernible in-field confidence (or lack of it) when using these new loads. I also hope to be able to report back that they become more familiar and allow for success in the kind of driven shooting situations most of us find ourselves in at some point each season.

For now, the jury is out, but the informal experiment goes on. SS



The 16-bore Grant loaded with Eley VIP bismuth works well. We know bismuth is effective but it is quite expensive. Not as expensive as grouse, however!

'I decided to conduct an experiment when I headed to Cumbria, with a couple of vintage guns, for a couple of grouse days'



NOTES FROM IRELAND

WITH RUPERT BUTLER

# New pond, new habitat

## The club's newest venture is attracting all sorts of interesting wildlife, says Rupert Butler, to the benefit of all, not just the shooters

There is always something exciting about creating a new pond because one never knows what might appear from one day to the next. Not only are you creating a new body of water, but a new habitat as well.

Our newest venture, which came into existence earlier in the year, is already showing promise on a number of fronts. First to put in an appearance were a pair of egrets who meandered around in the shallows for several days before departing for pastures new. They were soon followed by a pair of sandpipers whose white rumps and shrill whistles are clearly identifiable, even at a distance. My favourite visitor, however, has to be the lone kingfisher that has adopted our ponds. This flash of turquoise was far too fleeting for much of his sojourn, apart from one evening when I spent several minutes watching him hover, hummingbird-like, as he devoured dragonfly after dragonfly. Such was his obsession with these winged insects that he was totally oblivious to my presence. In an era where we spend far too much time engaging with our mobiles, the one time I actually needed it, it was sitting on my passenger seat some hundred yards distant. I will probably never again witness such a display of acrobatics from one so colourful, but I live in hope.

On a weekly basis, one can see the landscape change, both in the pond and its immediate surrounds, be it the emergence of some reeds from beneath the water surface or some wild flowers popping their heads up from amongst the spoil that was deposited to one side. Every year I randomly scatter several boxes of wildflower seed around the ponds, both to brighten it up a wee bit and to provide some substance to our smaller winged visitors. We have also added a hut with an area of timber decking outside, which in time will double up both as a meeting point and a hide for some of our older members. To screen it from those beady eyes we have planted a wildflower meadow on the roof and surrounded it with a bank of willow and alder. To this end, I have to give credit to all our lads who gave unsparingly of their time in this endeavour, in particular Seamus Butler who supplied all of the materials, most of which were recycled from his building projects. When the harsh winds blow down from the north, this little treasure will be invaluable in keeping us warm while we await the first patter of wings to descend from the heavens. When they do decide to move, it will be a mere hop, skip and a jump to our choosen vantage points. Some might decide that the prevailing weather is not to their liking and view the proceedings from one of the viewing hatches with a wee dram in hand.

In late August, I noticed that some teal were starting to use our new creation, and as we crept into September I counted upwards of 50 early one morning. Such numbers of these little rockets is indeed unusual as their numbers normally start to build up from late November onwards. As I watched them circle ever higher, I noticed that a whisp of snipe had joined them,



PICTURE: RC KELLER / ISTOCK

**Late summer saw the arrival of tens of teal to Rupert's new pond, which was unusual for this early in the season**

**HOME BIRD**

**While more commonly seen now, the UK has only been home to breeding pairs of cattle egret since 2008, after a large influx of birds migrated here the previous winter.**



PICTURE: TRIPLE H IMAGES / SHUTTERSTOCK

**The first visitors to Rupert's new pond was a pair of egret, who paddled in the shallows for a few days before moving on**

but on closer inspection it turned out to be a bunch of golden plover, also very early. I remember thinking at the time that we could be in for a spell of harsh weather.

Ideally in the year to come, we will be able to build another large pond adjacent to this new one with areas of deeper water scattered throughout. We could do this in the hope that some pochard or tufties might find it to their liking, after all variety is the spice of life. We have also flirted with the idea of perhaps adding a few brownies or rainbows so that on a lazy summer afternoon one of us might like to cast a fly or two. Now that we have built our

‘As well as mallard, teal and wigeon, some shoveler have shown a keen interest – they often fly with wigeon as their escorts’

shed we could combine this with a barbecue evening, and perhaps a dram or three to loosen the banter cords.

But for now we will concentrate on our new creation which is already showing lots of promise. As well as mallard, teal and wigeon, some shoveler have also shown a keen interest in recent weeks. They often fly with wigeon so are sometimes not noticed until your trusty companion arrives back with one. Many moons ago, as Dad and I flighted a likely looking splash in the depths of winter we were sure, given the amount of feathers present, that several packs of wigeon were regular visitors. And regular visitors they were as we departed sometime later with close to double figures each, as well as six shoveler, none of which had arrived without some wigeon as escorts.

It always amazes me how quickly a new water body will get colonised both inside and out. One of our ponds, which was constructed two years ago, looks like it has always been there. Even some of the spoil which was mounded to one side has been colonised by both alder and willow, some of which are already more than ten feet high and home to a variety of birds – in particular a pair of reed buntings, which seem to be constantly in residence. For an area that was once almost devoid of life, it is now a hive of activity, in both summer and winter. I often wander down here for some quiet time and watch as the world unfolds; every time is different and there is always something new to catch one’s eye. As we develop the area even further, it in turn attracts even more species of plants, animals, insects and birds. It is not just a habitat for shooting purposes but for all flora and fauna, a fact that will be forever lost on many of our detractors. SS



The hut is the perfect place to sit and do some recon – or just enjoy the view of the ever-changing wildlife



A visiting kingfisher offers Rupert a rare spectacle

PICTURE: AALTAIR / SHUTTERSTOCK

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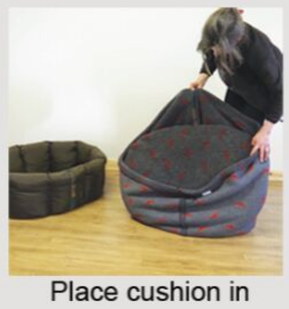
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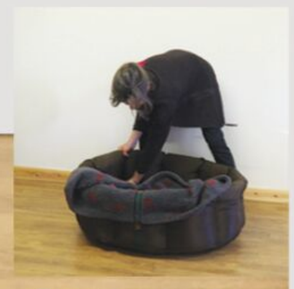





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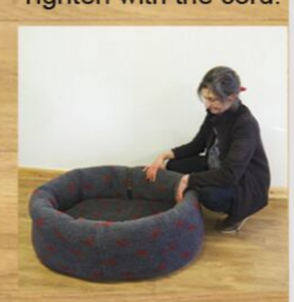
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# First aid for the field

## From cuts and eye injuries, to muscle strains and hypothermia, Vicky Payne runs through some common issues in working dogs and how to treat them

Hopefully everyone has managed to get some days out with their dogs on the shoots, even if they have been smaller or less frequent due to bird flu. I started teaching dog first aid to gundog owners after a few close calls with my own rather headstrong first springer, Quincy. It is rare for my team to get through the season without somebody needing my veterinary attention, so it never hurts to review some common shoot day injury risks and what to do about them.

### Wounds

Skin tears are the most common injury I see in working gundogs, especially the bramble-bashing spaniels. When the skin is ripped rather than cut there can be minimal bleeding, especially on a cold day, so have a quick check of areas that can be easily damaged such as the armpits, groin and belly after each drive.

If you find a wound, stop working your dog and seek veterinary help for all but the smallest of wounds. Wounds from the field are often contaminated with mud and debris and may need flushing out. If the wound is on the leg or belly, it may be possible to apply a bandage to keep the wound clean and prevent further damage. I am often asked if handlers should carry a skin stapler. These can be used to tack a wound together in the field, but the wound can't be properly cleaned, and such repairs usually break down.

### Eye injuries

Thankfully, these are not as common as you might think for dogs hurtling head-first through cover! If you notice your dog is blinking a lot, is holding the eye closed, or is pawing at the eye, they may have scratched the surface of the cornea. I carry lubricating eyedrops which can give quick relief from dust or grass seeds in the eye, but if irritation continues you may need to see your vet. If the pupils are different sized or something seems stuck in the eye, then that appointment becomes an emergency.

### Sprains, strains and broken bones

Sometimes dogs will go lame whilst working; other times they seem fine during the day when the adrenaline is flowing but are lame after rest. Most injuries are muscle damage which will heal with rest and dog-safe anti-inflammatories. See your vet for any lameness which is not improving after a few days. Ligament damage and broken bones can look similar and usually (but not always) the dog will not be able to put their weight on the damaged leg. In most cases it is fine to carry the dog to your vehicle, but if there is an open wound and you suspect a fracture you may need to apply a protective and supportive bandage first.

### Collapse

Early in the season, the most common cause of gundog collapse is hyperthermia (overheating). Early signs include the dog reacting sluggishly to commands, a wobbly gait, and panting with a large dark pink tongue. If you stop at this point and cool your dog with running water, they should recover quickly. Offer small drinks of tepid water to avoid your dog vomiting and becoming dehydrated. If heat stress is not treated, it can lead to collapse, fitting and death.

Another common cause of collapse in gundogs is hypoglycaemia, low blood sugar. The symptoms look similar to heat stress, though with less panting. As long as the dog is conscious, they can be offered something to eat. I carry glucose gel in my pocket as the sugar can be absorbed through the gums. Unfortunately, I have had to use this a few times for dogs that just couldn't pace themselves and ran out of energy. Feeding a small breakfast and giving a dog-safe energy bar at elevenses can help.

### Hypothermia

Cold can really sap the energy, and especially if dogs are repeatedly retrieving from icy water they can suffer from hypothermia. I have experienced this with one of my dogs who went from retrieving energetically to just standing still shivering uncontrollably. Getting the dog warm and dry is the key to a speedy recovery and as they will often have low blood sugar too some food will help. Using drying coats between drives and during breaks will help keep them warm and reduce the chances of both chilling and low blood sugar.

Make sure you keep your first aid kit topped up and maybe think about taking a first aid refresher course! SS



Apply a bandage immediately to avoid any mud or debris getting into a wound, before seeking the help of your vet



Howard Kirby runs Lains Shooting School and Mullenscote Gundogs in Hampshire

# Handling at distance

## Howard Kirby shares some training techniques to help you direct your dog onto a retrieve at distance

My last two articles focused on improving our skills as trainers. Both encouraged you to better understand and perceive distances, the objective being to improve your ability to accurately mark the fall of a dummy or bird. As these skills improve, you will be much better placed to offer clear and concise instruction to your gundogs.

In this article, I'm going to concentrate on handling them at distance, but this time the focus is going to be on the dog and some of the training techniques you might wish to use. We need to develop the dog's understanding of the commands and signals we use to direct them, and the behaviour needed when these are offered.

Let's start by taking a quick look at the signals we will use when giving instruction to the dog at distance. The great news is that these are universally agreed by most gundog trainers and you are unlikely to be given conflicting advice. We will need to teach our dog to go left, right and back, and to move towards us. The first three will be given using arm signals with accompanying vocal commands. The 'come towards me' signal is best delivered using a whistle command. Take a look at the pictures over the page....

### From the beginning

Once a youngster has learned the basics (sit, stay, and recall) and is reliably able to complete marked retrieves, we can begin to teach the dog to take direction. Don't forget that introducing a second dummy is a significant stage in your training and needs to be carried out with care. The '180° split retrieve' is a great way to bring the second dummy into training sessions and will need to be thoroughly learned before using two dummies in directional retrieves.

These directional retrieves are going to start with the dog sat out in front of us. If you use placeboards, hoops or any other form of target, you will need two for this exercise.

It might be helpful to do these early exercises against a fence line, hedge or wall. Place the first board beside the fence and set the second about three paces back from it. Leave the dog in a sit/stay position on the board nearest to the fence line. Walk about 10 paces along the fence and quietly give the dog a mark. Return to the second placeboard. There should now be a 90° angle between the handler, dog and dummy. Slowly raise your arm until it is parallel with the ground, with the palm of your hand facing forward. Wait until the dog is focused on you; if it is not looking at you, don't nag, just wait silently until it chooses to look. At this point, blow your Stop whistle, turn towards and look at the dummy; now gesture with your arm and body towards the dummy whilst vocalising your chosen command. This might be left, right or out.

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In most cases, the dog will immediately move towards the dummy. Some careful dogs will not understand this new command and choose to stay put whilst looking whimsically at you. Don't panic or 'machine gun' the dog with rapid fire commands. Continue your movement sideways, arm outstretched and use the Fetch command that your dog is familiar with. With gentle and clear encouragement, the dog will move towards the dummy.

At this early stage, it's OK to gently vocalise your approval. Think of your voice as the 'click' of a dog

### HOW TO // Perform a split retrieve



Using a fence line, set your dog up with two retrieves, both alongside the fence. Line your dog up with the first one...



... and gesture with your arm and body to towards the dummy, whilst vocalising your chosen command.

PICTURES: REBECCA GREEN



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‘Blow your Stop whistle, turn towards and look at the dummy, and gesture with your arm and body towards the dummy whilst vocalising your command’




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training clicker. You are using your voice to mark the precise moment that the dog turns thoughts into movement.

Whilst we are on this subject, it's essential that we 'mark' (not to be confused with the mark in a retrieve) the correct behaviour. Inexperienced handlers accidentally give off the wrong signals, saying "good boy" at the wrong moment. This incorrect timing will start to either encourage unwanted behaviour or confuse the dog.

If you are new to dog training, I highly recommend that you go online and study the basic principles of using a clicker. This will be extremely helpful in teaching you when and how to mark, reward and the timing principles of this.

## Layering up

Once the retrieve has been delivered to hand, you will need to make a few simple choices. I like to do things in sets of three. If the retrieve was inch perfect, I might choose to increase the distance. When working on Lefts and Rights I tend to 'top out' at 30m either side of the dog, whilst the 'back' exercise will need to be encouraged to out and beyond 100m.

Besides the distance to dummies you will also need to increase the distance from yourself to the dog. This element must not be overlooked. Dogs that appear perfectly compliant at 20m often show a different mindset when out at distance. As with humans, a physical presence can be significant when trying to grab someone's attention.

In short, build these distances slowly but surely.

### PLACEBOARDS

**Of course, many gundogs are successfully trained without placeboards, but I refer to them because those of you that have chosen to use them as part of your training schedule will probably benefit from their ongoing use.**

Try to ensure that each set of three finishes positively. At this early stage you might choose to do a set on the opposing side.

## The Back command

Arguably the Back command will need more input than the Left and Right but is nevertheless fairly straightforward to establish. Getting the dog to hold its line and continue in a straight line away from you will require many months of carefully planned schooling.

Again, we will need two placeboards, if you are using them in your training. Once again we can use the fence line. Put both boards beside the fence about 5m apart. Sit the dog up on one of the boards, then walk out and put a dummy about 10m along the fence line. Now walk back past the dog, returning to the vacant place board. You might choose to gently reassure him that you need him to stay where he is and not to follow you.

There will now be a nice straight line: yourself, the dog, and the dummy positioned directly behind. Slowly raise your hand directly above your head, ensure the palm of your hand is facing the dog. It's important to wait in silence until the dog is staring at you, blow the Stop whistle and then gesture, push your hand towards the dog whilst giving the Go back command.

Of all the new commands that we offer to dogs, this is often the one that perplexes them most. Many will not move and will need you to quietly encourage them to make the retrieve. Don't worry because just as with the Left or Right commands it will only take a few attempts before the dog will be flying back towards the dummy.

So there's an overview of how you can teach a young dog to understand the stages of the left, right and back directional commands. Obviously, there's a lot more to be done before we will be in a position to use these at distance. It won't be the first or the last time that you hear it, but you really must keep things simple, clear and enjoyable for the dog. Don't over face him with too greater distances or overly complex exercises.

Next month, we'll continue to look at how to further develop these skills. I've got several young dogs to train and two older ones to prepare for trialling, so I don't know about you, but I'm off out to get on with it. Have fun and Keeeep Training! SS




**Make all your movements slow and precise**




**When working on Lefts and Rights, Howard tends to top out at about 30m**




**Ensure you don't blow that Stop whistle until you have your dog's full attention**

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Ryan Kay is a keen trialler and trainer and is a Kennel Club Accredited Instructor for Working Gundogs. He runs FarlaVale Gundogs in North Yorkshire. www.farlavale.co.uk

# Flying the flag for beaters' dogs

## Ryan Kay believes that the small syndicate shoots can be the ideal place to work your dog (even your trialling dog) and looks at some of the most common mistakes handlers make when they're out on the beating line

The pheasant season is well underway and if your local syndicate shoot has been fortunate enough to obtain birds this year despite the overwhelming troubles and knock-on effects that bird flu brought to the proceedings, then you should count yourself lucky. It's been a struggle for many shoots and for some it has indeed been an expensive affair to get birds on the ground again. With many small shoots usually looking to hold their first day toward the end of October there'll no doubt be a sigh of relief at finally being out and about and enjoying the occasion, having endured the uncertainty of the rearing season.

For me, a syndicate shoot means the chance to work and enjoy my dogs. It is, in fact, the environment I appreciate working my dogs in above any other; over Field Trials, over gundog demonstrations, over pigeon shooting, over duck flighting and even over rough shooting.

I'm specifically talking about 'small' syndicate shoots here, rather than a commercial shoot, because although there can be some enjoyable dog work to be had from a smaller commercial shoot, generally speaking the lesser bag days of a modest syndicate shoot enable a spaniel and, in some areas, an HPR to really earn their keep. And as for the retrievers, small shoots can represent a less overwhelming environment to engage in picking-up and peg duties.

The syndicate shoots that my family and I are a part of are incredibly important to us all and aside all the other enjoyable aspects that come along with a shoot day – like the camaraderie, the topography, the fresh air, the food and drink and the actual shooting – it's the hunting of our dogs that really ticks the box. Having first experienced beating with a dog over 40 years ago, I'm going to share a little food for thought on being a gundog owner and being part of a syndicate shoot. These are simply my ramblings and opinions based on my own experiences from over the years.

I'll start with the divisive subject of whether a field trial spaniel and a spaniel used for beating can be one and the same. There is a common misconception that there's no place for a field trial dog on a shoot or in the beating line. A mistaken belief that a trialling dog can't work all day, can't find game properly like a beating dog, is too highly strung etc.... These beliefs are often blurted out by folk of little experience or by those in need of an excuse or some comfort for not training their own dog properly in the first place. Harsh words? Perhaps! But it's an opinion I've built up over a long period of time based on personal experience. The dogs can absolutely be one and the same. And in the right hands, a trial dog can shine and stand out in the beating line. In truth, I would not be able to trial my spaniels without the opportunity to work them on a small shoot. The syndicate shoot is without doubt my biggest asset in getting a dog ready to trial. It's by far the best training ground there is! And to add to the fallacy of field trial spaniel vs beating spaniel, the vast majority of spaniels working on a lowland shoot will usually have a healthy dose of field trial bloodlines in their pedigree anyway.

From a dog training point of view, the start of the season is a baptism of fire. In an ideal world, we

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PICTURES: RYAN KAY

## RYAN KAY'S TOP TIPS

Be careful what you reveal to a young dog and be mindful of what lesson you are trying to teach.

Get to know your shoot and the drives well. Then picture hunting your dog in certain places that will best allow him to gain experience gently in a more measured way.



Leaving the flags at home, and fully concentrating on your dog, will vastly improve your working relationship, says Ryan

could do with a complete switch around and instead of having larger numbers of docile pheasants wandering around at the start of the season and fewer more jumpy birds at the end of the season, have a few birds at the start and an increase in numbers as the season goes on. The reality, though, at many shoots on the first couple of days can be somewhat wild dogs, often a little unfit, itching to get going amongst a sea of scent and slightly domesticated young adult birds. A basic recipe for a stressful situation! It's one of the reasons why here at Farlavale, during October, we offer training mornings to small groups of likeminded spaniel owners who want to prepare their dog and brush up on their handling skills ready for the season. Here we can offer hunting and flushing on rabbits and quail in a more controlled situation. We're wanting to instil a

> 'In the right hands, a trial dog can shine in the beating line – and the syndicate shoot is a real asset in getting a dog ready to trial!'

behaviour that will become engrained with a systematic sequence of Hunt - Flush - Sit, a sequence that becomes second nature and runs like clockwork. I've stated before that the hunting of a spaniel should be a relaxed and enjoyable affair where the handler feels in control and connected to their dog at all times; in short, an in-tune game-finding partnership!

### Young dog's introduction to a shoot day

A question I frequently get asked with regards to first experiences for a young dog is: 'Should I just take him on a couple of drives on the lead to start with'? The simple answer is NO! Think about the lesson you're wanting to teach here. Yes, he'll get exposure, but he'll also just get more and more wound up. A dog's favourite thing is running. You're then restricting it from doing its favourite thing, yet showing it temptation. In other words, it's like saying to a toddler, 'let's have a look round this sweetshop but we're not buying any'. Initial

Getting your dog ready beforehand will pay dividends – you don't want to waste those first couple of outings in the season with an over-exuberant, unprepared gundog

exposure, I've always stated, should be at drinks time when everyone (including other dogs) is more relaxed. Here a young dog either on the lead or milling around, will get used to the smells of a day (warm game, blood, spent cartridge, pork pie etc), plus if he's given a little pie, then he'll love the situation all the more. After that, selective hunting can be done on quiet drives where game is scarcer and there's less chance of transgression. Or perhaps a little hunt after a drive, back on ground that's just been covered, which again allows for the chance to ask for control on scenty ground without there being too much of a big deal if your dog was to lose the plot.

## Thoughts on cover

Another important thing to bear in mind is the cover you're faced with hunting. A sure-fire way to ruin a young, eager dog is to hunt your dog in maize, or indeed anywhere where you can't see it for long periods and subsequently try to stay connected to it. There's little to no point in hunting through crops such as maize as your dog can see everything running along in front, yet you can't see your dog and what he's getting up to. Maize-like crops are also the only place I would heel a dog through a drive and use a flag or stick instead; I'll explain below.

## Concentrate on the dog

Over the years I've come to understand that my version of beating is perhaps a little different to the norm and this is only confirmed to me by my customers who tell me theirs. Perhaps my version and belief used to be the same as everyone else's until I really understood how little many of us actually concentrate on or interact (correctly) with our dogs in the beating line. This next bit of advice I'm going to lay out is really what I'm getting at, but I realise it may not be an option for many of you. If you have a dog and you're willing to train it and hunt it properly, then put down the flag or stick and stop shouting! I find it bizarre, I always have; the person who first decided that a flag or a stick would be a good way to find and produce game obviously didn't have a dog, so they made up for it using a stick or a flag. The people with spaniels perhaps then decided that they should have a flag and a stick also. Then, let's all shout!

In my mind, in an ideal world, and providing that the drive has no requisite flushing point that we're all trying to steer the birds to, everyone beating would have a trained dog of sorts, and no one would have a flag/stick, nor would they shout. Surely a dog can find and produce game better than anything else, and if we handled a dog quietly, aiding it with a whistle and body language, then not only would that be more conducive to finding game, but would it also not be more befitting of the countryside?!

Take this as an example of why we should question the use of noise and flags, even though we've come to accept it as the norm. If you were rough shooting down a hedgerow with a friend, one of you on either side, and one or both of you with a dog, you'd be concentrating on your dog and I dare say you'd be fairly quiet. Take the same hedgerow on a shoot day, with guns swapped out for flag or stick, and you'd be bashing away and shouting out, and concentrating less on the dog. Yet the end result that is desired in both scenarios is the same: you want to flush a bird from where it sits, rather than to get it to walk on to a flushing point. Some will say, well why not just make noise and bash away anyway, it doesn't really matter. True, and I guess if you're a little light on able bodies for the day, then having more of a commotion provided by those that are there will undoubtedly lift more game, but what I want to do is hunt my gundog well, so we can be a prolific game-finding duo. And that only happens if my attention is on my dog.

Granted, the shoot and the drives do have to lend themselves to this quieter approach with enough beaters overall, enough beaters with dogs, the right landscape and cover, all factoring in the equation. But I can tell you that this quieter scenario does actually happen on several drives on one of the small shoots we attend, and it's brilliant – the drives work better, and there are no panic-stricken shouts of 'Fenton' anywhere! SS



**TAKE COVER**

**Don't hunt your dog through cover crops where you can't see it... as for maize, this is somewhere you would do well to heel the dog, rather than hunt it, and use a flag or stick instead.**

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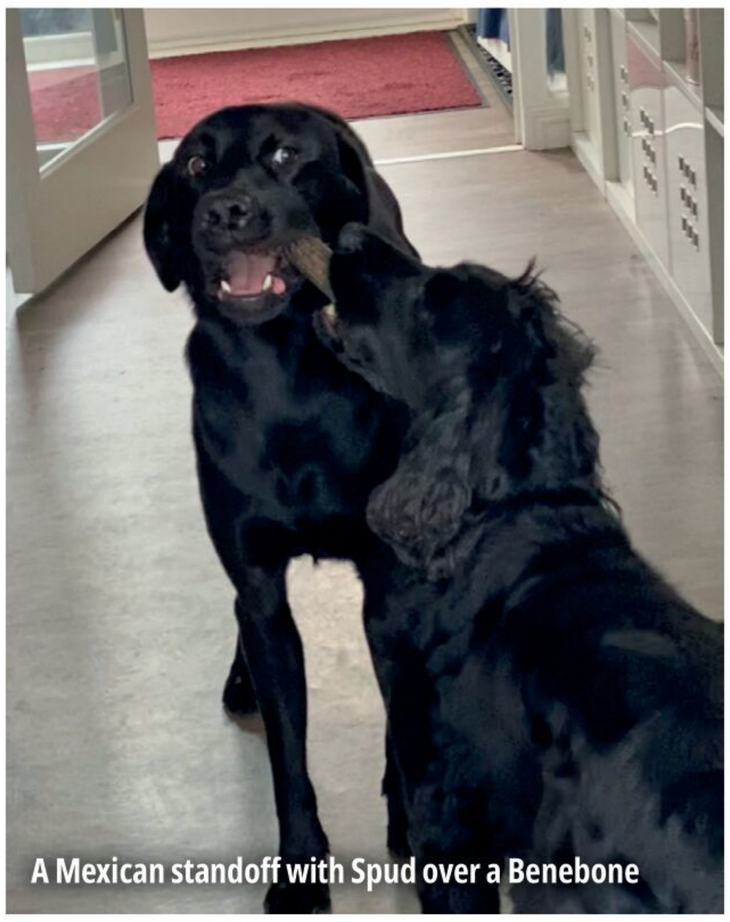
You can follow Emrys's journey on his own Facebook page here: www.facebook.com/LifeandTimesofEmrys

# The three amigos!

## We're preparing for change in the Graham household this month as Spud and Emrys start having Mexican standoffs over toys – and puddles!

### Pack dynamics

It's been really noticeable over the last couple of weeks that the dynamics between our three dogs is starting to change. Dante, my older Labrador, has started to play more outside with Emrys, which indicates that the youngster isn't playing as hard as he was; like most Labs, Dante hates his ears being pulled and bitten and used to avoid Emrys when on the field. They are also snuggled up in the open crate in the mornings when I go in the office which is so good to see.



A Mexican standoff with Spud over a Benebone

Spud and Emrys are another story, however. Spud is a real wannabe and has the classic working cocker psychology of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and I'm sure he thinks his name is Spud, Dante and Emrys as no matter what I'm doing with the other dogs Spud wants to be in the thick of it. He wasn't like that with Dante, because his focus at the time was being with Ziggy my old Lab. However, my thoughts are that he is feeling that his place in the hierarchy is being threatened by Emrys, who is very calm in the home (for the most part), zipping with energy outside but is incredibly focused and prey driven.

Emrys seems to be making a point of winding Spud up at every opportunity when we're on the field, more so when there's puddles involved – they are both puddle mad and Spud will get quite possessive over the one that appears at the hedge on the field and will snap at Emrys, which just excites Emrys into goading Spud even more.

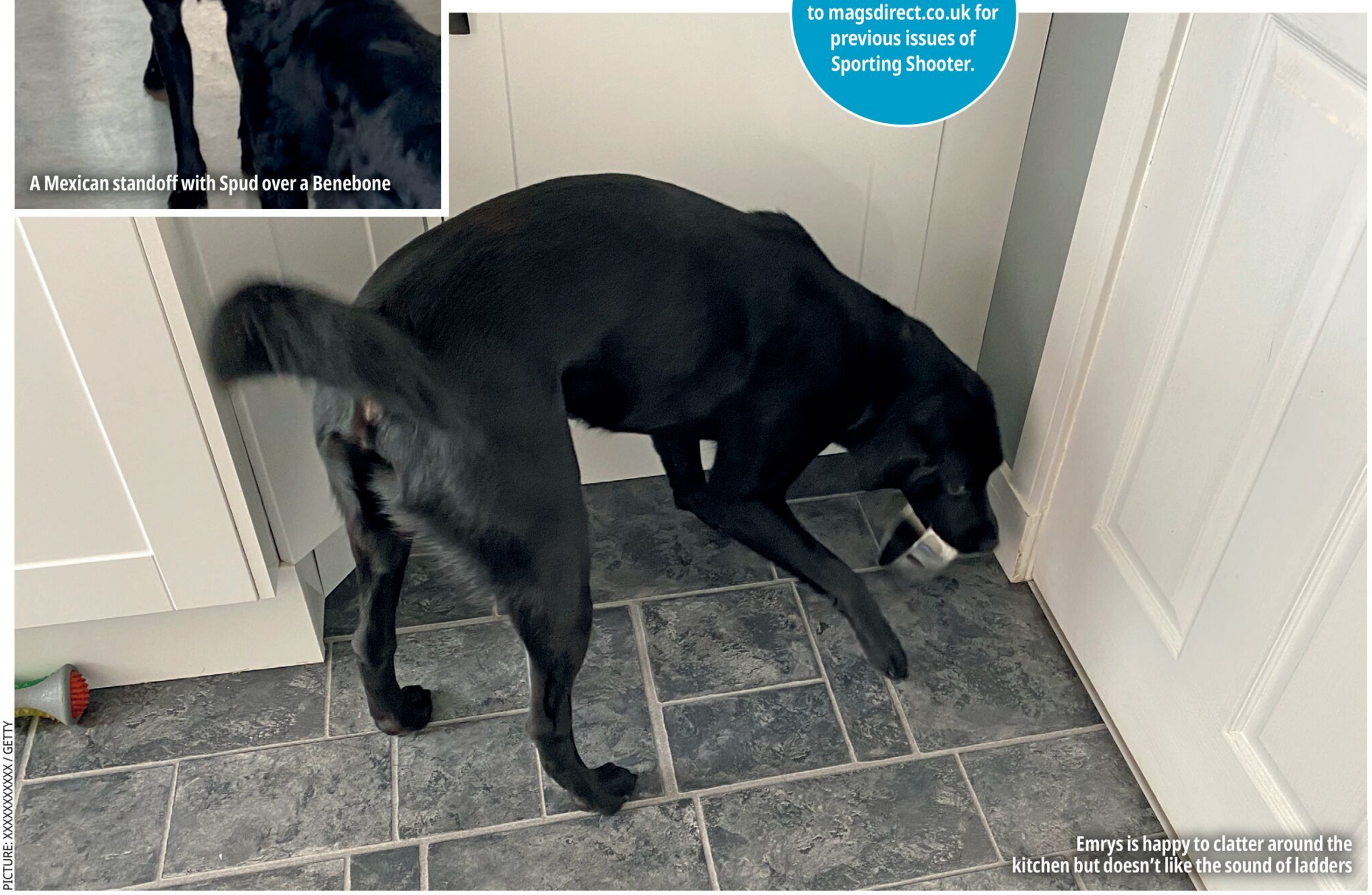
Mexican standoffs are starting to become a bit of a daily event at the minute with one dog picking up a toy and one of the others wanting it. When Emrys takes a toy up that Dante has in his mouth, Dante just walks away, whereas when it's Spud who has the toy the pair of them stand, both holding the toy and slowly moving back and forth or slowly turning a circle around each other. Spud will do a huffy sounding growl a couple of times and Emrys will drop the toy and walk away. It's these moments that I have to really monitor and hope that Emrys will continue to drop the toy when Spud growls.

When dogs have a resource, such as a toy, and another dog wants it, then the dog has, at that moment, to decide how much of a value they place on the toy, the ultimate being is the dog prepared to die for it. It sounds rather dramatic, but in their world getting an injury from another dog is something to be avoided at all costs... unless the resource is worth it.

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

### Second fear period

Just as Emrys was becoming really sensitive a couple of months ago, and I



Emrys is happy to clatter around the kitchen but doesn't like the sound of ladders

PICTURE: XXXXXXXXXX / GETTY



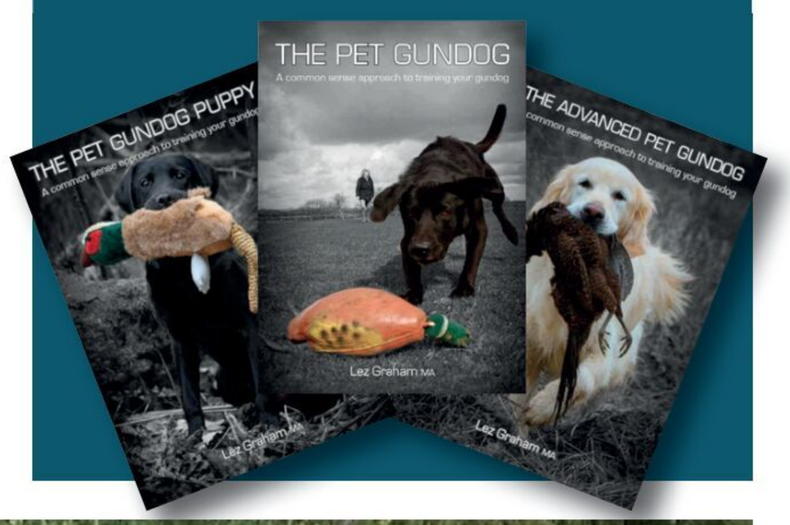
Getting Emrys to focus on something other than the noisy ladders helps him to overcome his fear

## ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and is a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Training gundog trainers via the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme, which is now in its sixth year, Lez also supports and mentors owners in The Pet Gundog Club.

The Pet Gundog series is available via amazon.co.uk for £19.99

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




‘When Emrys was in his second fear period, we changed window cleaners. He had the fright of his life – it was awful’

suspected he was in his second fear period, we changed window cleaners. They came into the garden so quietly that we didn’t hear anything until the rattling ladders were put up against the window; then Spud was off, barking like mad at the ‘intruder’. Not Emrys, he had the fright of his life and hid under the desk. It was awful.

It’s a tricky time that needs a bit of balance in relation to how to handle it. Our human response is to reassure, soothe and cajole, but the part of the brain that deals with reasoning doesn’t exist in dogs so I can’t tell him there’s nothing to be worried about and it’s just the window cleaner...

### Focus on Training

The next time I see the window cleaner’s van pull up, I’ll have to go outside with Emrys and do some training while the ladders are clattering around and get his focus on something familiar and unscary to desensitise him to the new person and their different set of ladders in the way that I did when he was a puppy and unsure of the noise. He really doesn’t like metallic sounds at all and can get quite upset by them, even as he enjoys chasing his metal dog food bowl around the kitchen and bouncing it off the skirting boards as he tries to pick it up. SS



At the slightest movement, Emrys freezes and goes into predatory mode

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### Pain management options

Q I have a 10-year-old golden retriever that I have had to retire from most picking-up work due to arthritis. He still enjoys a quiet day in the pigeon hide with me but is sore for a few days afterwards. My vet prescribed some painkillers but they didn't agree with his stomach and caused vomiting so we stopped giving them. Is there anything else I could try?

A VICKY PAYNE replies: The good news is that there are a whole range of medications which could make your dog more comfortable! Traditional non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can irritate the stomach, but more modern ones are often better tolerated. There is a novel drug which targets the binding site of just one pain-causing molecule, making it very safe to use, and there are injections which can modify the cartilage and joint fluid, or which use monoclonal antibodies to target pain with minimal side effects. I highly recommend a consultation with a vet who is interested in pain management to help you choose the best medication for your dog.



in association with CHUDLEYS

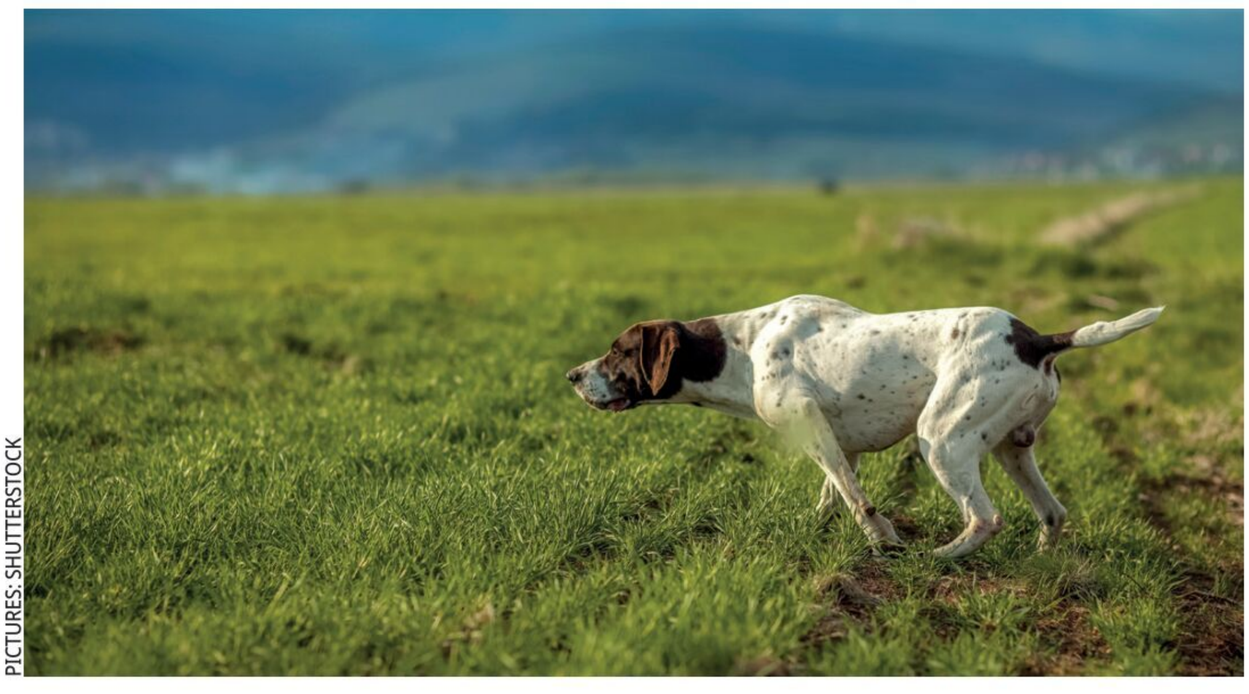
### A reluctant retriever

Q My GSP doesn't like dummies and she seems to prefer putting her nose down to hunt more than retrieving. I have bought one of those rabbit balls and she will retrieve that about three or four times before losing all interest. I wanted to do working tests with her next year but I'm worried that if I keep using the rabbit ball, she won't get any better at dummies. Any advice?

A HOWARD KIRBY replies: This is sometimes the case with hunting breeds; they simply prefer hunting to retrieving. Sometimes this type of dog will be excellent in the shooting field and will happily retrieve shot game. Stating the obvious, shot game has a great deal more value to the dog than dummies. Too much free hunting/walking will often be a massive contributor to this behaviour. However, some breed lines just aren't that fussed or occasionally have been put off by too much retrieving drill.

With working tests high on your wish-list, I think you should review your daily exercise plan. If you practise any retrieving, do it in an environment that is as free of distraction as possible. We are lucky here at Mullenscote and have a big indoor training barn; dogs that show very little interest in retrieving often come good in this type of environment. I appreciate that you probably don't have this facility, but it can be done. Lawn, tennis court, lounge.

Occasionally high-reward practice can help to encourage a young dog to gain a renewed interest in retrieving. Don't forget to take a really good look at daily walks and hunting, you may need to restrict these.



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK

### Picky eater



Q My deerhound lurcher always looks half-starved. She isn't interested in food and will leave her bowl halfway through a meal if she's had enough. The vet says she is healthy.

A JACKIE DRAKEFORD replies: Deerhound types are often indifferent to food. It's worth giving smaller amounts more often when work allows and adding a little warm water or meat juices will bring out the scent of the food. Find out if she prefers to eat on her own: other dogs present can put them off eating, especially if another tries to take her food. Mine used to like me being in the same room, but others may prefer to be alone. Good for you for having her vet checked, and do have her bloods tested for liver and kidney function if that wasn't included.

She isn't doing this to be awkward, and it's worth trying different food. After all, we don't eat what we don't like either. Few dogs can resist warm game casserole, I've found!

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**www.auchterhousecountrysports.co.uk**

3

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Our English Sporting layout is open Wednesday through to Saturday from 9am, for practice, tuition, groups, stag & hen do's. Pre-booking recommended.

**Tel: 01264 810 312**
**www.spitfireshoot.co.uk**

7

### Kibworth Shooting Ground

Whether you are a beginner looking to take your first steps and 'Have-a-go', a seasoned shooter looking for some practice or just for that something different for a special occasion.

**Tel: 01162 796001**
**www.kibworthshootingground.co.uk**

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### Eriswell Lodge

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**Tel: 01638 534045**
**www.eriswell-lodge.com**

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**www.simulatedgame.co.uk**

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### West Midlands Shooting Ground

Gun Room: Tues: 8.30am – 9.00pm. Wed–Sat: 8.30am–5.00pm. Shooting Ground: Tues: Apr–Sept 3.00pm– 9.00pm / Oct– Mar 10.00am–4.00pm. Wed–Sat: 9.00am–4.00pm. Tues is Open Practice for shotgun certificate holders. Wed–Sat all shooting is by appointment only.

**Tel: 01939 200 644 | www.wmsg.co.uk**

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### Sporting Clay Shooting in Surrey

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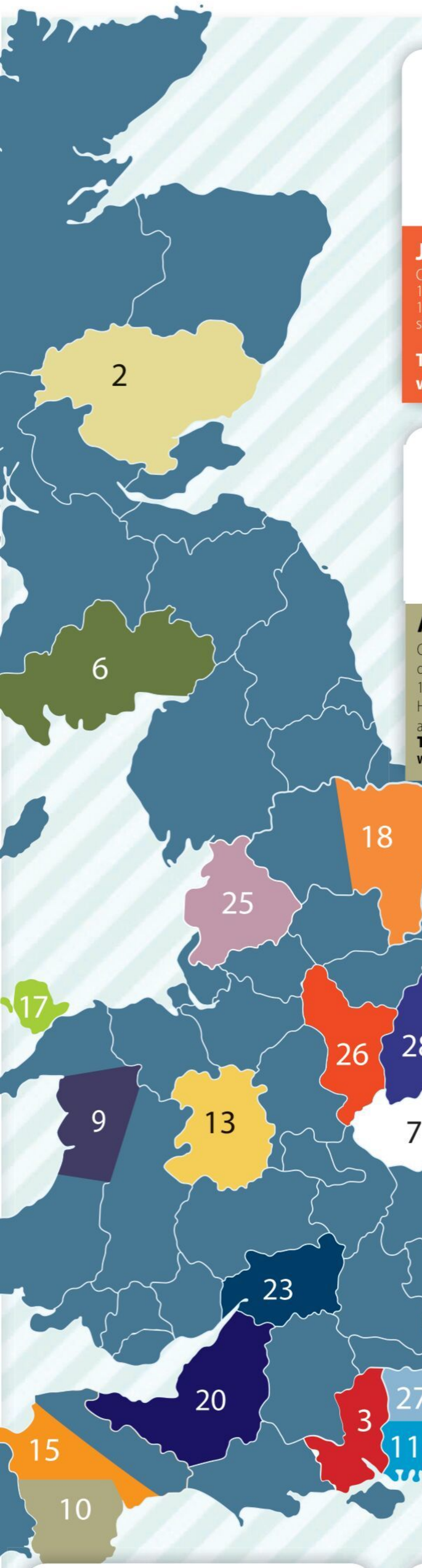
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4

## JJ's Clay Shooting Club

Opening times: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10:30am till 3:30pm l/e Sunday competition day 10am till 2:00 l/e Dartford in Kent (near blue water shopping centre). Lesson and corporate days.

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**www.jjscsc.co.uk**

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**Tel: 01626 8666766**
**www.ashcombeadventure.co.uk/clay-shooting-grounds**

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## Chalky Hill Shooting Ground

We have two shooting grounds, shooting alternate Sundays through the year. Dates and prices can be found online. Or call Duncan.

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**www.chalkyhill.co.uk**

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**Tel: 01233 758 703**
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**Email: info@doveridgeclaysports.co.uk**

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Lucy Hall won silver at the European Championships securing a place in Women's Trap.

Amber Hill won gold at the European Championships securing Women's Skeet.

Nathan Hales won silver at the World Championship to secure Olympic Trap.

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Meanwhile, Sophie Herrmann has become the first junior GB woman ever to become world champion gold in Olympic Skeet. And Great Britain's Olympic Trap Men's team are world champions after defeating Czech Republic in the final in Croatia.













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www.wwsg.org.uk

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Skeet, SKD, DTL, Sporting Tel: 07769 701842. www.gatwickclayshooting-school.org.uk

**HORNE CLAY PIGEON CLUB**
Sporting shoots, tuition, corporate at Gatton Bottom, Markedge Lane, nr Reigate and Court Farm, Chaldon, nr Caterham on the Hill. Tel: (01342) 842986 or 07711 332097 www.clayandcountry.f2s.com

**NATIONAL CLAY SHOOTING CNTR**
Bisley. Four OTr layouts, Skeet, OS, ABT, Double Trap. T: 01483 797666
www.nsc-clays.co.uk

**THE STAR GUN CLUB CHESSINGTON**
Sporting. Tel: (020) 8898 3129

### SUSSEX

**BLACKDOWN SHOOT**
Midhurst: 50 Sporting 4th Sunday of month. Fibre wads only. Also at School House Farm, Northchapel: 50 Sporting every 2nd and 5th Sunday. Tel: (01428) 707584 Mob: 07770 777679.

**NORTHALL CLAY PIGEON CLUB**
Sporting, Compact, ABT, D/T, Skeet, tuition, corporate. Tel: (01825) 791783

**OAKESFIELD SPORTING GUN CLUB**
Compak, Sporting, tuition and corporate Rudgwick, West Sussex Tel: 01306 740537/ 01737 222998

**SOUTHDOWN SPORTING GUN CLUB**
nr Worthing. Sporting, Skeet, Fitasc, Sportrap, DTL, ABT, tuition. Tel: (01903) 877555
www.southdownsgc.co.uk

## EAST

### CAMBRIDGESHIRE

**CAMBRIDGE GUN CLUB**
Cottenham. Sporting, Sportrap, ABT, Skeet, DTL Tel: (01353) 648004

**FENLAND GC**
Washbrooke Farm, Benwick Road, Doddington. Tel: 01354 655583

**GRANSDEN AIRFIELD SG**
Tel: (01767) 627663 www.gransden-shootingground.co.uk

**HIGH HARTHAY SG**
Tel: 07956 293390, www.hhsg.co.uk

**MOVING TARGETS**
Gt Eversden 50 ESP practice 2nd & 4th Sundays. Contact:
Tel. 07811815499
www.mobileclayshooting.co.uk

### ESSEX

**BUSH HILL CLAY CLUB**
nr Billericay. Sporting.
Tel. (01277) 220974

**CLACTON GUN CLUB**
Little Clacton. Esp, Skeet, DTL.
Tel: (01255) 673146

**COLCHESTER GARRISON**
Clay Pigeon Club Sporting. Tel: 01206 576 756 (Chairman), 01206 392 357 (Secretary)

**ESSEX SHOOTING GROUND**
nr Harlow. Tel: 01245 283534, www.essexshooting ground.com

**FENNES SHOOTING SCHOOL**
Braintree CM7 5PL Tel: 01376 324599 www.fennesclays.co.uk

**FOWES CLAY CLUB**
Belchamp Otten. 01787 312930
www.fowesclayclub.org.uk

**MAYLAND & DISTRICT GUN CLUB**
ESK, DTL, compact. (01268) 470 323

**ORION GUN CLUB**
nr Brentwood Sporting, Skeet, DTL. 07000 486258 www.gunclub.co.uk

**PARKFORD SHOOTING CENTRE**
Skeet, Sporting, DTL.
Tel: (01255) 820230

**SOUTHEND GUN CLUB**
nr Rochford Tel: (01702) 219395

**THREE ACRES SPORTING CLAYS**
Leaden Roding. Sporting, pool. Tel: 07768 742117

**WALTHAM ABBEY SHOOTING GRND**
Sporting, tuition. Tel: 07768 742117
www.claypigeonshoot.co.uk

**SPELLBROOK CSC SPORTING**
Tuition. Tel: (01279) 419427 www.spellbrookclays.co.uk

### NORFOLK

**MID NORFOLK SHOOTING GROUND**
Taverham, nr Norwich. Sportig, Skeet, ABT, DTL, Airgun range 121 & Corporate. Tuition by appt.
www.midnorfolkshootingschool.com

### SUFFOLK

**BADWELL ASH GC**
nr Bury St Edmunds. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT. Tel: 01359 259547

**BARROW HEATH GUN CLUB**
nr New- market. Sporting.
Tel: (01322) 405226

**HIGH LODGE SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Saxmundham. Skeet, SkD, DTL, Sporting. Tel: (01986) 784347
www.highlodge.co.uk

**LAKENHEATH CLAY TARGET CLUB**
Between Mildenhall and Brandon. Skeet, DTL, Sportrap, gun room, tuition. Food. Tel: (01638) 533353
www.lctc.co.uk

## NORTH WEST

### CHESHIRE

**SOUTH CHESHIRE CLAY CLUB**
Alasger Nr Crewe, 1/2 mile from junction 16 M6, Cheshire, North West

**ENGLISH SPORTING SHOOT**
tuition, refreshments, Tel: 07768570132 Catton Hall Shooting Ground nr Frodsham. Practice, tuition, corporate. (01928) 788295

**CLOUDSIDE SHOOTING GROUND**
nr Congleton. Skeet, DTL, Compak, Sportrap, ABT, OT. Tel: 01260 226392. www.cloudside.co.uk

**MIDDLE FARM CLAY SHOOT**
Bredbury. Tel: 0161 4302492 North Wales Shooting School nr Chester. Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, tuition, practice. Tel: (01244) 812219
www.shootingschool.net

### CUMBRIA

**PENRITH & DISTRICT GUN CLUB**
DTL, Sporting, ABT. 01697 342062

**KENDAL & DISTRICT TARGET CLUB**
Kendal, Cumbria. DTL esc b trap Tel Colin Phillips 01539 560298

### ISLE OF MAN

**AYRE CLAY PIGEON CLUB**
Skeet, DTL, ABT, Double-Trap, UT, OT and Sporting. Tel: 01624 880744
www.bluepointshooting.co.uk

### LANCASHIRE

**A6 CLAY TARGET CENTRE**
Westhoughton, nr Bolton. ABT, DTL, Skeet, Sportrap, tuition, restaurant. Tel: 01942 843578
www.a6ctc.co.uk

**BLACKPOOL GUN CLUB**
nr Kirkham Preston. Sporting.
Tel: 07730 409415

**KELBROOK SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Foulridge. (01282) 861632

**RUNNING HILL CLAY PIGEON CLUB**
Sporting clays, Saddleworth
www.running-hill-cpc.co.uk

**WITHETS SHOOTING GROUND**
Nr. Carnforth Lancashire M6 J35 Sporting; ABT; DTL; Skeet; Practice; Tuition by appointment Tel 07967 194120 www.withetsclayshoot.co.uk

**MANCHESTER CLAY SHOOTING CLUB**
Sporting, Skeet, tuition, club house. Tel: 0161 653 4438
www.manchesterclayshooting.com

## SOUTH WEST

### CORNWALL

**CART RIDGE SHOOTING CLUB**
1/2m east of A38 btwn Landrake & Tideford. Sporting, tuition.
Tel: 01752 851262

**COUNTY GUN CLUB**
Tel: 01579 363301
Imerys Gun Club 01726 823895

**NORTH CORNWALL GUN CLUB**
nr North Petherwin. DTL, tuition.
Tel: (01566) 785550

**TRAX AND TRAILS ACTIVITY CNTR**
Tamar Valley. Tuition.
Tel: (01579) 384714
www.traxandtrails.co.uk

### DEVON

**ASHCOMBE SHOOTING GROUND**
nr Dawlish. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, high tower, tuition. Tel: (01626) 866766
www.ashcombeadventure.co.uk

**AXMINSTER GUN CLUB DTL**
tuition. Tel: (01404) 881588 Bradford Shooting Ground, Skeet, Sporting, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01409) 281341

**CULM VALE GUN CLUB**
nr Cullompton. Sporting.
Tel: (01460) 234245

**CWA SHOOTING GROUND**
Winnards Perch, Wadebridge, Cornwall. Skeet and Sporting clays, contact Mike Holmes 01872 864021

**FOUR SEASONS GUN CLUB**
East Hill Strips, nr Ottery St Mary. Skeet, Sporting, Compact.
Tel: (01395) 278862

**NEWNHAM PARK SG**
nr Plymouth. Sporting, Skeet, ABT, DTL, Sportrap, tuition. Tel: (01752) 343456 www.newnham.co.uk

**NORTH DEVON FIELD SPORTS**
Southdown Adventure Centre Nr Barnstaple. DTL, Sporting, Sports Trap, Practice and tuition
Tel: 01271 858791
www.devonfieldsports.co.uk

**NORTH DEVON SG**
nr Ilfracombe. Sporting, practice & tuition.
Tel: 01271 863959 or 01271 850393
ndsg@hotmail.co.uk

**SHALDEN SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Shillingford. Sporting.
Tel: (01398) 331021
www.shaldenshootingschool.co.uk

**SOUTH WEST SHOOTING SCHOOL**
Lynton Cross. Sporting, Compact.
Tel: 01271 862545

**TAMAR SHOOTING GROUND**
Bradworthy. Tel (01409) 241839
www.waterland-days.co.uk

AGENTS: Send any updates to ben.palfreyman@fieldsportspress.com



## DORSET

**PURBECK SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Poole. Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, Sportrap. Tel: (01929) 405101 www.shooting.uk.com

**SOUTHERN COUNTIES SHOOTING GROUND**
Sporting, Skeet, OS, Fitasc, Sportrap, DTL, ABT, tower. Tel: (01935) 83625

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE

**COTSWOLD CLAY PIGEON CLUB**
Fosse Way, nr Stow. Sporting, pool. Tel: (01451) 821431

**GLOUCESTER CLAY SHOOTING CLUB**
on the A38 between Tewkesbury & Gloucester. Skeet, OS. Tel: (01452) 739472 or 07785 508238.

**IAN COLEY SHOOTING SCHOOL**
Nr. Cheltenham ESP & DTL Practice – Pay & Play. Tuition by Appt. Tel: 01242 870391 www.iancoley.co.uk

**LONGRIDGE SHOOTING GROUND**
Bromsberrow 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.the clayshooting-company.com

## SOMERSET

**BROOK BANK SHOOTING GROUND**
nr Cheddar. Sporting, Skeet, UT, DTL, ABT, tutition & corporate. Tel: 01749 871055. www.brookbankshooting.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@valleycalyshoot.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.barburyshoot.com

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

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

**URCHFONT 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 CPSC**
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

**LONGRIDGE SHOOTING GROUND**
M50 (Jn 2) Tel: 07971 447138

**SOUTH WORCESTER SG**
nr Upton-upon-Severn. DTL, Sporting, Practice, tuition. Tel: (01684) 310605 www.swsg.co.uk

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

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

## LEICESTERSHIRE

**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

**MARKET HARBOROUGH & DISTRICT SC**
Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL. Tel: (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**
nr Eden-ham. Sporting. Tel: (01778) 591128

**HAVEN CLAY SHOOTING CLUB**
Haven Bank, New York, LN4 4XR. Enquiries to Graham Fordham 07854227175. 30-bird Sporting, DTL, family days, friendly club. Visit havencpc.webs.com for dates.

**LINCS CLAY CLUB**
Church Lane, South Clifton, Nr Lincoln, Lincolnshire NG23 7AW, www.lincsclayclub.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 Drove, 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, Tel 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**
nr Mansfield. Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT, tower, tuition. (01623) 823930 www.stilehollow.com

## NORTHAMPTON

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

## SHROPSHIRE

**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. 01902 725165 www.millride-country-sports.co.uk

**OAKEDGE SHOOTING GROUND**
Sporting, Fitasc Sporting, High 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: (01327) 260302 www.honesberie-shooting.co.uk

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

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

# YORKSHIRE & N.E.

## CO DURHAM

**SPENNYMOOR & DISTRICT**
Clay Pigeon Club Sporting, Skeet, 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

**PARK LODGE SHOOTING SCHOOL**
East Yorkshire DTL, ESK, ESP, ADT. Practice and lessons available. Tel: 07919 694587

## NORTH YORKSHIRE

**CONISTON SHOOTING GROUND**
nr Skipton. Tel: 07831 399860

**KNARESBOROUGH & DISTRICT GC**
Sporting, Skeet, DTL, ABT. Tel: (01423) 561174.

**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.warrengill.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

## SOUTH YORKSHIRE

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

**SYCAMORE SHOOTING GROUNDS**
Sporting, DTL, D/R, tuition, corporate. Tel:(0114) 272 4602

## WEST YORKSHIRE

**BATLEY & DISTRICT GUN CLUB**
nr Morley. Sporting Tel: (01484)711874

**EMLEY CLAYSHOOT**
Sporting every 2nd Sunday. Tuition available. Mob: 07814 538927

**GREYSTONE WOOD SHOOTING GRND**
nr Otley. Sporting. Mob: 07960 352123

**HOLMFIRTH SHOOTING SCHOOL**
nr Huddersfield. Skeet, DTL, ABT, Tel: (01484) 685464

# N. IRELAND

**FOYMORE LODGE**
off the A4 in Co Armagh (signed from Portadown & M1 j12). Sporting, instruction, club house. www.foymorelodge.com

# WALES

**CRYNANT SHOOTING GROUND**
Port Talbot, South Wales. Sporting, Skeet, OS, DTL, ABT, tuition, corporate. 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.wpshoot.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

**BURNTKETTLE 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 Egnomoss. 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. Sporting 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

**GARNOCK VALLEY SPORTING GC**
Shoots every Sunday, mainly sporting birds to simulate game. Based Ayrshire.Tel: John Noble, 01560 482162 garnockvalleygunclub.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

**KIRKCUBRIGHT GUN CLUB**
nr Gibbhill. Tel: (01557) 330447

**KNAPDALE GUN CLUB**
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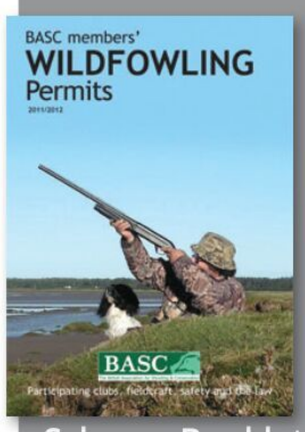
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# Nominations now open for 2023 CPSA Awards

The CPSA awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals, clubs and other organisations that help to promote and develop clay shooting in England.

There are eight different awards which will be presented on the night, each focusing on a different aspect of the sport to acknowledge outstanding achievement in that field:

**Disabled Shooter of the Year**
This award recognises the success of a disabled shooter over the course of the last year.

**Club/Ground of the Year**
This category rewards a club or ground that has made a significant contribution to the shooting experience of CPSA members.

**Coach of the Year**
This award recognises the contribution of a CPSA-qualified coach in developing their shooters to make excellent progress and/or achieve great success. If there is a coach who has contributed to your success after you felt the need to gain further experience or qualifications, then this is the category to nominate them in.

**Young Shot of the Year**
This category rewards the success and progress made by an outstanding young shooter over the year. The nominee must be 16 or under on 31 December 2022. Young Shots are the future of our sport, and if you feel there is a budding Olympian waiting to shine, then let us know by making a nomination.

**Clay Shooter of the Year**
This award recognises the Clay Shooter of the Year for their achievement at the highest level, or consistent high performance throughout the season. Regardless of age or discipline, we are looking for someone who has excelled within their chosen discipline and who has shown all round sportsmanship.

**Emerging Shooter of the Year**
This category recognises a shooter of any age or discipline, who is really starting to show brilliant talent, but may not have been recognised yet for their shooting ability.

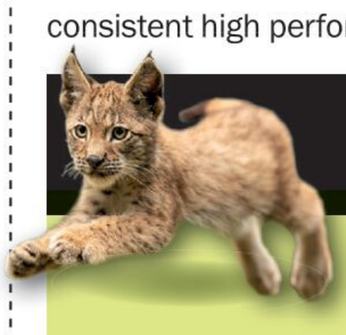
**Recognition Award: Course Setter of the Year**
This category recognises the success of a course setter over the last year.

**County Committee of the Year**
This award is presented to the county committee that has 'gone the extra mile' and made positive contributions to the sport of clay shooting, from grassroots participation through to team management, growing and governing the sport while underpinning the core demands of a county committee.

**Go to www.cpsa.co.uk/cpsa-annual-awards-nomination-form for details.**

**VOTING IS LIVE!**

Be sure to not only nominate for different categories, but also make sure you are there on the evening to help celebrate with the CPSA. This year, the awards ceremony will take place on Saturday 11 March 2023 at The Hilton St Georges Park in Burton on Trent. You have until Monday 28 November 2022 to submit a nomination for any of the categories. As soon as nominations have been reviewed, the CPSA will invite you and all CPSA members to vote on the winner from those shortlisted within each category.



## CREATURE FINDERS

**WE FOUND LILY LYNX CUB ON PAGE 15 OF THE OCTOBER ISSUE**

Paul Warby, Emneth • Dennis Watling, Southend on Sea • Martin J Tiney, Finedon • Richard Gaylor, Eaton Socon • David Moran, Whitstable • Ann Owen, Corwen • Aneurin Owen, Corwen • Barry Grange, Beighton • Gudi Grange, Beighton • Martin Gibbons, Bodham • Philip Palmer, Keighley • Dave Lambourne, Brixworth • Steve Ingram, Redhill • Christopher Sansom, Taunton • James Garwood • Edna Philp, Castle Hedingham • Graham Jeffery, Gravesend • Alan Bunting, Colchester • John Ahearn, Westmeath • Arthur Davy, Lincoln • Colin Ashley, Audley • Miles Hall, Stainton • Jackie Hall, Stainton • Colin Clarke, Theale • Terry Smith, Andover • John Stevenson, Maidenhead • Ian Hugill, Scarborough • Steve Simpson, Pickering • David Rogalski, Wick • Kester Warden, Bradford • Nick Tanner, Peebles • Liz Harper, Banham • Barry Putnam, Kenilworth • Andrew Spencer, Coventry • Ernie Booth, Congleton • Brian Harper, Banham • Gary Aitchison, East Riding • Paul Leavey, Oldbury • Shona Morris, Stottesdon • Gillian Egdell, Morpeth • Stephen McCotter, Newtownabbey • PT Rooney, Poyntzpass • Denise Trainor, Kilkeel • William A Dickson, Chepstow • Paul McAleese, Newry • Kevin Bramham, King's Lynn • Michael Rooney, Dungannon

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