

LET'S GO WATERFOWL HUNTING!

If you want to bag your limit every time, try these top tips.



GO WHERE THE BIRDS ARE

Ducks and geese change locations frequently as food and water conditions vary. Savvy hunters scout continuously to find areas of high bird concentration, and they maintain a mobile capability for setting up where prospects for success are best.

ADD "LIFE" TO YOUR DECOY SPREAD

The more realistic the decoy spread, the more effective it will be at attracting ducks and geese. Hunters should keep decoys freshly-painted and mud-free. They should also attempt to add movement by using jerk strings, wobblers, spinners, etc. Live birds on the water typically move about and create ripples on the water's surface. Decoys should do likewise.

LOAD YOUR BOAT PROPERLY

Decoys and other supplies can be heavy. Make sure the total weight of hunters and gear does not exceed the limit posted on your boat's capacity plate. Patches of rough water, or even an excited retriever, can swamp an overloaded boat and lead to fatal accidents.

TAILOR CALLING METHODS TO THE MOOD OF THE BIRDS

Some days ducks and geese respond better to loud, aggressive calling. Other days they prefer quiet, subtle calling—or no calling at all! Experiment with different calls and calling styles to see which works best on each given day.



The U.S. Coast Guard presents:

Waterfowl Hunting Tips from Wade Bourne

I'm a big advocate of hunting safety—and that means boating safety, too. Take it from me, Wade Bourne, and my friends at the U.S. Coast Guard...

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MUDY THE WATER IN SHALLOW HUNTING SPOTS

When waterfowl are feeding in shallow marshes and flooded fields, they muddy the water by pulling up grass and roots and grubbing for grain. This is why hunters should muddy the water by wading or driving an ATV (where practical) through their decoy spread. Decoys floating on clear water look unnatural—hence suspicious—to birds flying overhead. Muddy water appears natural and inviting.

WEAR A FACE MASK ON SUNNY DAYS

Bright sunshine reflects off human skin like a mirror. This is why hunters looking out of a blind or pit can flare ducks and geese working overhead. To keep this from happening, wear a camouflage face mask, and keep your cap bill pulled low to shadow your eyes.

WEAR A LIFE JACKET OR FLOAT COAT

Wear—don't just carry—U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets any time you're in your boat. Accidents happen too fast to reach for stowed life jackets. There are many options available for hunters, including camo inflatables, belt packs, and float coats that look just like a parka, but will keep your head out of the water if you go in.



TAKE A SURVIVAL KIT

I never go hunting without a survival kit. In a compact waterproof pouch, I keep fire-starting materials, a VHF radio, flares, a flashlight, a space blanket and first-aid supplies. If I'm stranded in a remote location, I may not be comfortable, but these items will provide warmth and crude shelter to keep me alive until I'm rescued or can get myself to safety.



TAKE ONE BIRD AT A TIME

When it's time to shoot, make a habit of focusing on one bird and staying on it until it drops. When a large number of ducks or geese decoy, too many hunters simply shoot into the flock at large. The normal result is a poor shooting percentage and a smaller bag. Instead, concentrate on taking one bird at a time.

TELL SOMEBODY WHERE YOU'RE GOING AND WHEN YOU'LL BE BACK

Take an extra minute to make sure a responsible party knows your plans. If you're lost or injured, someone will notice you're missing and have an idea of where to send help. Boaters call this a "float plan," and it's a good idea for hunters too. Speaking of good ideas, I strongly recommend that you get a free Vessel Safety Check (VSC) for your boat every year—and never hunt or boat under the influence (BUI) of alcohol or drugs.