

## The Pintail Flight.

I found G hidden up in the grassy salt marsh. G apologetically showed me a drake Pintail he had shot earlier here on the estuary. Pangs of jealousy were not too far away from the surface as I congratulated him on that fine success, for Pintail are hard to come by here. However with the tide a good 1 1/2 hours away from the full there was a chance that another Pintail or two maybe be encountered on this tide flight....

It had been a funny couple of days up in my neck of the woods shooting with G. A couple of nights ago we had lain up in the dunes and hardly heard a wink wink. It appears from looking back my shooting log that the pinks seem to stop using the sands as a roost after the turn year. It had been a long cold vigil out on rock hard sand - then the long walk back dejectedly to the car was made interesting by us stalking the many mallard that were tight in to the bay, G managed a nice fat mallard for our efforts, so it wasn't a blank night for us.



A mallard duck by far the most popular wildfowl to grace the table

And now this afternoon the wind was howling out of the north, driving rain before it, the estuary as I walked along the sea wall resembled the North Sea, I was soaked by the time I got there, not so much from the rain but the waves crashing off the sea wall, covering me. I did manage to shoot a wigeon on the way, which had been disturbed by G shooting - Mal as always was keen to retrieve but I was concerned for his safety so I let the tide bring it in for me. A skein of 20 Brent geese raggedly swept by at high speed, not through choice but governed by the wind. I actually found the weather conditions rather exhilarating, it made me feel alive. There was also duck constantly moving looking for somewhere to pitch down out of the wind but the estuary in its wild state offered no respite. So by the time I took up position beside G and his decoys I was in high spirits.

Tucking myself down in to the grass it was clear to see that this situation could be a red letter day as there were Pintail everywhere, fluttering on stiff wings looking for a bit of water to settled down on and see the tide out. Of course we were where the safest bit of water was with the salting taking the worst of the energy out of the tide.

I have to confess that I was very nervous about getting a pintail and I made a few excuses about them being a bit too far for me and I never saw those ones. I knew G was getting slightly frustrated at me for passing up on shootable birds. However he still called them expertly with his mallard call towards the decoys for us both.

A small lull ensued and G decided to stretch his legs and headed off in the direction of the sands with his dog, Wigeon, leaving me to guard the decoys.



Teal decoys small and easy to transport over long distances

Then it happened.

A single drake Pintail was noted swinging further over the golf course than the other packs of Pintail had done and if it stayed on that line there was every chance of a shot. Thankfully it did but I was even more thankful for the semi autos 3rd shot as the first and second shot found fresh air before my last shot had my first ever drake pintail down on the saltmarsh some 30 yards from me.

Seconds later the Pintail was in the hands of a proud Scottish wildfowler and a dream of mine was complete. And what a fine specimen he was, that chocolate brown head and neck in contrast to his white chest - beautiful! And I wondered how many times he had made the journey to and from this particular estuary. With a large element of sadness I realised he would no longer make that journey, he had lived wild and free and met his end the east coast of Scotland.

The day did not finish there however as I was extremely lucky to bring another 2 drake pintail in to the game bag that succumbed to the decoys after a move further west on the salting on the ebb tide. It truly had been a red letter day in wild conditions, wonderful surroundings and with great company. A day G and I will never forget!

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