

Planning pays off on a seasons first fowling morning



My first wildfowling morning 2019 actually started on a Sunday, I had planned a day scouting out some new areas taking along with me a younger fowler keen to explore an estuary and river not too far from home. Where to park and reasonable distance walking to the river edge were our main priorities, also remembering that the next time you come back it will be early morning and dark!! After 3 hours driving to various spots 2 areas looked like they would be worth a try especially as Canada and Pinkfoot were spotted in small numbers although widely spread and over a large area. Unfortunately Samuel would not be available to make the next low tide that would be required for us to get in the correct position however he did go away with knowledge that would assist him later on in the season especially when the geese numbers increase.

Moving on 5 days later and on a dry breezy morning I arrived at the appointed parking space it was dark and I had to nose by a ditch however all went well and 15min later I was making my way through tall reed beds. Roosting starlings weren't too happy at being woken up early, and neither was a cock pheasant that made plenty of noise as it powered shoreward. I hadn't put on too many layers which was just as well as I could feel my body temperature slowly warming up. Eventually I neared the edge and stopped to listen for a minute or so, it's always disappointing when you hear nothing but that's what I heard nil

Because more than a few days had passed since my last sightings there was no guarantee that I would see any birds at all and that's the way it seemed, and as the sun started to rise my hopes slowly faded. Then minutes later I heard a not so familiar honking unmistakably Canadas. Automatically I lowered my ear defenders and lifted my browning to the ready position, peering carefully over seaweed strewn boulders I could see a small group edging to my right hand side, now shooting from the sitting position with your game bag on a boulder for cushioning isn't everyone's cup of tea but years of practice make it only one of the many awkward stances a wildfowler has to deal with. Staying calm I selected the right hand bird then the left, both crumpled and dropped like stones onto the mud with no further movement



The steel gamebore BB cartridges I have been using over the past years have been well pattern tested and proved time and time again on our bigger wildfowl and in my position without a dog important as my retrieving skills as a 2 legged animal are limited!!

As I picked both birds then washed them in a nearby splash I could see more skeins further up river, my browning was already empty and slipped into its sleeve, 18lb is enough weight to carry on one shoulder with an 8lb gun on the other then a 35 min walk. Fowling on foot is not for the faint hearted!!

JM