



It's only the occasional year that we are faced with temperatures below zero degrees so it was unfortunate that we found ourselves having to show a wee bit of restraint especially after 7 days of freezing conditions. As us fowlers know getting unusually close to wildfowl and then on inspection discovering a breast bone like a razor blade are obvious hints as to what's going on. No one wants to take a bird back home for the table if it's lost weight and in poor condition.

After 7 days of persistent frost BASC call for voluntary restraint when shooting wildfowl and it's not to say that a few of us will have stopped before the 7 day period after seeing what's happening out there on the estuaries. If the freezing weather continues for another 7 days a statutory ban is then introduced for any birds on schedule 2:1 of the countryside act 1981. The statutory ban lasts 14 days and is looked at after 7 if a continued improvement on the weather is forecast .Then consideration along with the birds recovery time will be taken into account before ending the ban. However if the freezing conditions continue then an extended second statutory period of 14 days comes into effect.

A couple of years ago myself and a few club members headed up to BASC Scotland Headquarters and listened to a young student who's task it was to study disturbance on wildfowl as part of her degree course. On estuaries the tide comes and goes giving wildfowl and waders a small window in which to feed. If they are disturbed for any length of time their feeding time is cut down. Flying also uses up their energy stores which together adds to weight loss. So when you see waders gorging non-stop on the tides edge, remember that phrase of old (*The Time and Tide Waits For no man*). Next time you are at the beach and a family are enjoying watching their precious pooch run after those same waders I will let you explain things to them!



I must add that during voluntary restraint it might well be the case that in your area birds are doing well and showing no signs of stress or lack of condition. This could be due to crops that are well above ground allowing them to feed as normal or maybe there is simply no frost on your patch. Common sense should prevail and allow you to take a few birds home with a clear conscience. Hopefully the info on voluntary restraint will help any youngsters or non-club members out there, if more details are required on this subject see BASC Scotland on line.

I haven't mentioned covid! Obviously Travel restrictions will be making it a quiet end to the season for some of us, take care out there! JM