



Now that travelling is back on the agenda some Wildfowlers may be thinking about getting out and about especially those who find themselves having moved via work commitments or better still retirement.

I've certainly had a couple of requests from chaps who will be moving into the Tayside area and would like to know a bit more before the coming season. It does help considerably though if they are already competent when it comes to Wildfowling. They will also understand that basic knowledge is all that is required and not handed info taking them to the nearest square metre of mud flats. That would make it far too easy!!

Looking back at some old shooting times magazines I came across a 40 year old article by A. L. Jarrett which explains it all perfectly and saves me from boring you with more of the same it's on my second page and is good reading should you require it.

It's a breath of fresh air to hear about up and coming planned days incorporating fishing and shooting, hopefully shoots have made it through the recent tough times and likewise our local councils and Fife Countryside Trusts that jointly operate our local estuaries.

Gamekeepers, Farmers and Ghillies work hard to maintain the countryside to a very high standard which in turn ensures that our special wild areas remain wild and are not abused. Keeping our fields full of game and rivers the same with fish is what we all want to see. ( Custodians of the countryside)

# Search for success

A. L. Jarrett



... The foreshore is not the kindest of places ...

IT is one of the facts of life that any club or association or syndicate, even one with a fairly small membership, will be subjected to a continually changing membership from year to year. This can have advantages, for new blood will often benefit any body, but often the disadvantages outweigh those on the plus side.

A new member must be educated in the ways of those he has joined, and some people are easier to teach than others. The new member might well be a less valuable acquisition than the man he replaces – the old adage of "Better the devil you know" is so often proved to be true.

The reasons for any sort of turn-over in membership are of course varied: they could be financial, unfortunately an increasingly common reason in these inflationary times; they could be domestic, or simply a sudden lack of interest. But all these reasons are probably related to a common factor – a key to the whole problem. This key could well be success, or the lack of it.

Let us take wildfowling as an example, as this is the sport that is so fickle in its allocation of success; furthermore let us examine foreshore wildfowling – dare I say it, proper wildfowling. The foreshore is not the kindest of places for the tyro; many a spirit has been broken in these wild settings.

Given a reasonable degree of success most men will work hard to overcome any problems that stand in the way of their sport. But without this success the tyro is denied the incentive so vital for continued effort – hence a gradual lack of enthusiasm and the eventual discarding of the sport.

As in all walks of life, success in wildfowling does not come easily – one must be prepared to work hard and long in pursuit of a canny quarry. Often an apprenticeship lasting several seasons will be necessary before any consistency is forthcoming, for it is consistency that should be the main target.

Experience is a costly commodity, demanding a high price in time – something which is so valuable, and irreplaceable, to us all. But until this experience has been attained one cannot expect a high degree of success – too many do expect precisely this; hence the high number of disillusioned novices.

There is no real substitute for experience; even beginner's luck will eventually fall at the ultimate hurdle, leaving one sadder but hopefully wiser. Of course, there is only one way to gain the right kind of experience – that is by going wildfowling as much as time and pocket will allow, and by carefully observing the habits and behaviour of birds when out.

A man who is in a position to go out regularly, and often, is fortunate indeed, for in this way it is possible to shorten the period of time needed to gain experience under normal circumstances.

The normal wildfowler, probably an ordinary working man and therefore restricted in the amount of spare-time available to him, may go out shooting no more than once a week, or even less – though more often

when on holiday. This could amount to 25 or 30 trips to the foreshore in a season. But someone who is fortunate enough to live very close to the coast; or to be a shift-worker, or engaged in some other work which allows a great deal of time off, could probably go out wildfowling three or four times a week – amounting to 80 to 100 flights in a season!

This may sound a great deal of wildfowling, but there are many people who shoot as often as this – admittedly mostly fanatics. Someone who is able to do this should reap rich rewards for his efforts, for he can cram several years wildfowling into one. Theoretically, such a tyro should learn very quickly indeed – but this will depend on the individual.

I frequently talk to relatively new members of the association to which I belong; they often express great disappointment at being unsuccessful, some even tend to blame the association for their own faults. But when cross-examined they usually admit to the usual faults of not going out very often, and when they do go to a variety of different places in a vain attempt to shoot a few duck.

They often fail to grasp that it is far better to stick to one or two stretches of the coast, initially, and to go as often as possible – thereby learning their piece of foreshore, and all its idiosyncrasies. If they do this success should follow as a matter of course. Unfortunately some people never learn, and would not do so if they lived on the foreshore for the entire season.

Of course there are those that cannot, or will not, put in this amount of effort; unfortunately these people can expect little more than the occasional reasonable bag. Consistency will continue to elude them.

Once the tyro has gained his experience – whether through several seasons of hard work, or a shorter period of intensified wildfowling – then he will be in the happy position of being able to pick and chose his times, and always with the reasonable chance of some success. It is a state of affairs well worth striving for if one really enjoys wildfowling.

Then he can, if he so wishes, move further afield, gradually extending his knowledge and understanding of the rivers and estuaries in his part of the world. It is in this way that the masters in the wildfowling world are born; there is no easy way.

Another vital stop on the road to success for the tyro is undoubtedly the ability to listen to any snippets of information that more experienced, though not necessarily older, wildfowlers might be willing to impart. Wildfowlers are, as a rule, somewhat reluctant to part with too much information – which is understandable when you consider that it took them years of learning too, probably with little help from anyone else – and when they are in a talkative mood it is wise to listen carefully. Vital information can be gained in this manner; something which could save hours of painstaking observation.

Success. What is the yardstick by which success should be measured! If Joe Bloggs shoots 100 duck plus every year and you shoot only 50 are you a failure! Certainly not. Success should be judged by one's own standards, not by someone else's.