

Almost a costly mistake

Things were going great, 4 Teal lay on the bank beside as I tideflighted an area newly discovered to me on the big estuary. I'd known about this place for a long time and a friend had promised to show me but for some reason that had never happened so like every good fowler I'd taken the leap to find it myself. I'm glad I did.

A few hours earlier I'd arrived and after bursting through the reeds I selected my stand. A mother line with a collapsible anchor was heaved out in to the river channel. A large cluster of stones was noted exposed so I made sure to feed the line well away from them. At the far end of the line 3 very expensive goldeneye decoys were clipped on then closer in to the bank I clipped 6 teal decoys on. All set I retired to hide at the bank.

As soon as the tide turned teal began to move in front of it. Some seen the decoys and dive bombed in with no hesitation. With no wind it was confusing in the sense of not knowing which way to expect them. Some would twist and turn in from nowhere and others came directly from behind. Many got in and away as I wasn't quick enough to see them. However 4 succumbed to my shooting.

As I soon discovered this part of the estuary doesn't allow you long to shoot as you are flooded off quick. So I began to pull the mother line in very quickly I had the teal decoys unclipped and back in the bag. I pulled in the other decoys only to find when they were 6 or so feet away the line was stuck fast. Everything I tried from walking up and down, even wading in which revealed leaking waders could not free the line. I stood for a long time ignoring the ducks going by at shooting range and tried to figure out what to do. There was only one thing, return the next day at low tide and hope they were still there. With much dismay I turned my back on £100 pounds worth of decoying equipment and went home but in all honesty there was nothing else I could do.

As daft as it seemed I worried about the decoying equipment all night. The next afternoon myself and my wife returned to the estuary. As we approached where I hoped they would be my heart sunk there was no sign of them. However as we cleared the reeds there they were. The decoys tangled up around each other and the motherline. They refused to say exactly what they had been up to all night but they were there thankfully.

I waded out to retrieve them and I discovered what had happened. I had misread the tide I believed it would have kept the mother line away from the cluster of stones but it had in fact pushed the line directly over them. So when I pulled the line in the anchor had gripped onto the stones and no matter what I had done the anchor wasn't going to free off. So another valuable lesson had been learnt and will be acted on.

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