



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSOCIATION
A NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION OF, BY, AND FOR THE DUCK
HUNTERS.



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WIDGEON'S FIRST HUNT (SORT OF)

Widgeon's training was going great. He was turning out to be a hard charger, loved the water and willing to returned dummies to hand at the heal. I graduated him to get used to birds in the mouth. Since I did not have any whole birds but I did have wings, I tied duck wings to the dummies and he had no issue with those retrieving. All was going well. Decided to graduate him to the next level of his training, which was starting to introduce him to the hunting environment in the water.

We started training on top of an Avery stand that I had on dry ground at first so he could get used to doing retrieves from the stand and returning to the stand while returning the dummy to hand. Then moved him out to 18 inches of water at a near by lake doing the same with no issues. I built a boat blind for a fourteen foot Sears fiberglass boat (another story in itself but it weighed a ton) and built a home made dog ramp for him to get back into the boat with. Took him out several times for him to get used to launching from the boat, making retrieves with dummies and getting back into the boat. All with no problems. He was about 14 months old at this time and the waterfowl season was upon us in South Carolina so I decided to take him out on his first hunt.

We hunted Lake Marion in South Carolina, and if my memory serves me correctly it was a hot and humid day, typical South Carolina weather. We motored out to the spot I wanted to hunt, which I had hunted in the past where I shot a few Ring Necks but not much more and set up. This was also the baptism of the new duck blind on its first hunt. So after much cussing and sweating I got the blind all set up. Widgeon and I sat there swatting mosquitoes and watching the sun come up on a blue bird day with no wind. We did not see bird one, but Widgeon was having a grand time since this was all new to him. Looking around, trying to eat mosquitoes and just being a young lab. I was really proud of him on how he stayed calm in the boat and was constantly alert, but the mosquitoes got the best of me and decided to pull down the blind and head to the house.

Couple of weeks later we went out again. Same lake, different location on the lake and the weather was a little bit more ducky, at least it was cloudy. We motored out to the spot I wanted to go to, set up the blind (got better the second time around) and threw out the decoys and sat and waited. Shooting time came and went and sunrise was happening when a loan Wood duck came screaming in, I shouldered my 12 gauge and pulled the trigger and it fell stone dead about 30 yards away. Widgeon was looking right at it. Thinking to myself, here is the moment of truth. I released him and he launched after the bird like he was shot out of a cannon and swam straight at it. Now, he had to go through a lot of tules, but that did not bother him, he was a dog on a mission. He reached the bird, grabbed it, turned around to start swimming back, all the while I am yelling encouragement and every other word was good boy! Then he spit the duck out and swam back to the boat and got in. I drug him back out and tried to force him but he refused to touch it. That image of him spitting out the bird is burned into my memory like it was yesterday. Back to training.

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AUGUST MEETING

THERE WILL BE NO MEMBERS MEETING THIS MONTH DUE TO HEAT!

PRE SEASON DRAW

The application time frame for the managed waterfowl hunts at MDC conservation areas begins on 1 September.

Go to the MDC website and select hunting and trapping link off of the main menu, top navigation. Under the popular species listing on the right hand side select Waterfowl. On the left hand navigation screen of the next page select Managed Hunts Waterfowl. On that page on the left hand side select Waterfowl Reservations. Scroll down the page and you will see a link for Apply For a Waterfowl Reservation. On the next page you will be able to put in your reservation on 1 Sept. Draw registration period is from Sep 01 2022 to Sep 18 2022.

Draw results will be available Oct 01

GOOGLE REVIEW

One last time, we need some Google reviews to try and get the word out about us. If you are willing, open up the Google Search Engine. Type in MVDHA and hit enter. You will see on the right hand side of Google info about us. Please create a POSITIVE review. You will see an example of a review left by Jerry. He is the only one who has submitted a review.

MDC QUESTIONS

As stated previously in this newsletter and also in our members meeting last month we are compiling a listing of questions concerning waterfowling in Missouri to be addressed by the MDC of our concerns about the future of waterfowling in our great state. Below are those questions we are sending to

MDC. Once we receive answers we will add them here.

1. What factors contribute to delays in the timely maintenance of water pumps? Who is responsible for such maintenance?
2. Have considerations been made to implement a nominal fee for hunters, perhaps \$5-10, to help cover expenses in designated hunting areas? If so, what considerations were made?
3. Have there been any discussions regarding the possibility of collaborating with farmers to share crops, such as corn, to enhance conservation efforts more effectively?
4. Could reservation holders be promptly notified if water availability becomes limited or nonexistent in their respective hunting area?
5. Regarding the preseason draw process, what is the rationale behind providing ADA hunters with five choices while others receive only three?
6. Have there been assessments done on the viability of drawing down water on Dresser Island during the summer months?
7. Instead of eliminating a blind if not drawn on the second attempt, is there a possibility of repositioning the blind spot to a more suitable location?
8. Over the past two decades, how many blind sites have been eliminated among the numerous Mississippi River blinds?
9. Is there a plan in place to support native trees and plants with supplementary resources like corn or rice?
10. What research has been conducted on the impact of wind-powered generators on migrating waterfowl? Are there con-

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cerns about electric discharge affecting the magnetic homing ability of these birds?

11. Could Swan Lake consider opening three days a week, similar to Marais Temps Clair, for duck hunters?
12. Due to an increasing number of hunters, is there a plan to expand hunting opportunities at Otter Slough, similar to the accommodations made at Eagle Bluffs?
13. Would it be feasible to flood water to trees in MDC wade and shoot areas (e.g., Duck Creek) at the start of waterfowl season and draw it off at the end, without causing harm to the trees?
14. For areas with split seasons, has the idea of draining water down when the first half is closed, and re-flooding after two weeks been considered?
15. Is there a strategy to drain areas closed for waterfowl hunting at the end of the season to facilitate movement of ducks? Additionally, will these areas be re-flooded to support returning waterfowl during their northern migration?
16. Are there any discussions about consolidating Missouri's hunting zones into just a North and a South Zone, rather than having three separate zones?
17. What specific factors contribute to the preference of using corn and rice in MDC areas instead of moist soil, considering the limited availability of food for waterfowl due to efficient farming practices?
18. How is the Missouri Department of Conservation active-

ly promoting minorities and urban recruitment of new hunters? Additionally, what efforts are being made to educate suburban and urban schools and communities about the significance of conservation, the North American model of conservation, and the funding from Pittman Robertson and Dingle Johnson acts?

19. What is the allocated budget for the annual sunflower show, including the expenditure on sunflower seeds, fuel, and labor costs?

COLUMBIA BOTTOM

If you have not heard about the news release about Columbia Bottom, see below:

From MDC

MDC undertakes new vision for Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

Management of the area going forward will focus on working with nature and containing flood damage costs.

SPANISH LAKE, Mo.—The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is implementing a new vision for Columbia Bottom Conservation Area in Spanish Lake. Going forward, MDC's strategy will focus on managing the area to work with the natural flooding cycles of the river and cultivate the habitat benefits of a healthy floodplain. This will provide important wetland habitat for wildlife, flood relief for neighboring areas, and unique recreational opportunities for area users.

MDC purchased the 4,318-acre tract in 1997 to create an urban conservation area. Columbia Bottom is at the Confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, North America's largest rivers. Located in the natural flood-

plain of these two rivers, the area has always been prone to flooding.

The frequency of major flood events has increased over the last decade with high water events occurring in 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019. Each of those times, Columbia Bottom has been inundated with water to the extent that MDC has been required to close the area until waters have receded. Water covered the area for almost six months during the 2019 event.

This has created expensive damage and resulted in a repetitive and unsustainable repair cycle. Significant debris and sediment have been deposited on the area, existing wetland pools, and at the confluence, where sediment is two-to-four feet deep.

Efforts to hold back the rivers with levees, repair damage, and manage the area for waterfowl hunting are incurring costs to Missouri taxpayers through expenses, MDC staff time, and resources that are no longer practical.

MDC has identified the need to re-think the management goals of Columbia Bottom in order to create a sustainable balance between natural resources, human recreation, and responsible financial investment in one of St. Louis County's most important natural assets.

As part of a new management strategy, MDC will remove portions of the existing levees, which have been compromised by previous flood events, and allow the area to flood naturally during high flow events. This will enable Columbia Bottom to assume its natural ecosystem function of a wetland, to slow, hold,

absorb, and dissipate water during flood events.

MDC will construct a setback levee on the south side of the area to help protect downstream neighbors. This will restore floodplain connectivity to an additional 3,500 acres on the conservation area and will reduce flood impacts downstream. MDC is budgeting \$12 million to supplement \$15 million in funds distributed from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to pay for the new setback levee.

A benefit to this strategy is connecting the river and wetland habitat during natural flood cycles, which has largely been disconnected across these major river floodplains. During floods this will benefit many riverine fish. As the waters recede, other wetland dependent species, including migratory birds, reptiles, and amphibians will take advantage of flooded and drying pools.

The costs to repair and maintain Columbia Bottom's aging river pump station make it impractical to continue the area's intensively managed waterfowl hunting program. Therefore, MDC will discontinue strategies that depend on artificially manipulating area water levels. Future waterfowl management at Columbia Bottom will focus on creating dry field hunting opportunities by planting winter wheat. This will produce opportunistic waterfowl hunting during wet conditions.

MDC will continue to provide dove hunting opportunities by planting and manipulating sunflower and small grain crops. The new management strategy should also increase the diversity of birds and wildlife drawn to the area, which will

benefit birders, photographers, and wildlife watchers.

Under this new vision, Columbia Bottom will function with the river to resume its important ecosystem role as a floodplain and wetland, which will better mitigate the effects of future flood activity. It will create important habitat for native plants and wildlife. And it will continue to offer unique outdoor recreational opportunities just 20 minutes from the urban St. Louis core.

SHOOTING TIPS

From the DU website:

By Wade Bourne

Making a good shot is one of the great joys in waterfowl hunting. Indeed, shooting is the pinnacle of this sport. Everything else - scouting, building blinds, setting decoys, calling, everything is a lead-up to that moment when you shoulder your gun and fire. Making a clean kill gives you an immediate sense of pride in a job well done.

So, how do you become a good shot? How can you convert misses into hits? What can you do to improve your accuracy and hold your own with more seasoned shooters in the blind or pit?

Good shooting is a mix of coordination, concentration and confidence. Good shooting is more instinctive than mechanical. It's a skill that is honed through adept coaching and lots of practice, similar to other athletic endeavors.

Here's a list of 10 tips for becoming a better shot on ducks and geese. Put these suggestions into practice and you'll shoot better and enjoy your hunting more.

1. MAKE SURE YOUR SHOT-GUN FITS

2. PRACTICE SHOOTING IN THE PRESEASON
3. DON'T GET IN A HURRY
4. SHOOT ONE BIRD AT A TIME
5. SHOOT THE TRAILING BIRD IN A FLIGHT
6. RELY ON INSTINCT TO CALCULATE LEAD
7. DON'T STOP SWINGING
8. ON LONG PASSING SHOTS, LEAD MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED TO
9. WHEN WATERFOWL ARE COMING HEAD ON, BLOT THEM OUT AND FIRE
10. ATTEND A SHOOTING SCHOOL

MDC GOOSE BANDING

The MDC goose banding was a huge success!!! Over 16 kids showed up and helped band over fifty geese! Huge thanks goes out to Erin Shank from MDC out of Powder Valley Nature Center for coordinating this! Below are some pictures of that event.



The round up.



Pulling them out to be inspected and banded.



Getting Banded



Tim's Daughter assisting



Tim's Mom and his Son assisting



Kids having fun while learning



The volunteers and MDC staff.

BANDS

Some interesting things that Jerry shared with us that came out of this banding session.

Goose bands are now black to blend in better with the goose's feet to discourage hunters from shooting only banded birds and also give the bird more of a fighting chance of not getting harvested sooner.

If you do shoot a banded bird, which leg was the band on? If the band is on the left leg then it is a female, if the band was on the right leg, then a male.

2023-2024 Season

Teal Season: Sept. 9-24

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in posse

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Ducks Season:

North Zone: Oct. 28 - Dec. 26

Middle Zone: Nov. 4 - 12 and Nov. 18 through Jan. 7, 2024

South Zone: Nov. 23 - 26 and Dec. 7 through Jan. 31, 2024

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

4 mallards (no more than 2 hens)

2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days

3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2 hooded mergansers, 1 pintail, 2 canvasbacks, 2 black ducks, 1 mottled duck

Up Coming Events

Aug 9 : NO MEETING

Sept 13 : Waterfowl Forecast

Oct 11 : Boat Maintenance

Nov 8 : NO MEETING

Dec 13 : Holiday Party

General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgett's Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are held at various locations, contact Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548 for this month's location. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to mvdha@mvdha.com. I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

Next members meeting: NO MEETING

Next Board Meeting: August 28, 2023

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00

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"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

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