



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



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WIDGEON ON A DIET

Back to Widgeon, after he recovered from the heart worm ordeal it was time to address his overall health condition and to see if I can get him back into being a hunting duck dog again. Granted, at this time he was about nine or ten years old, time to retire him and start a new pup, but I wanted to give him a chance. In order to do that I had to address his weight and his coat/skin problems.

I found out he had been living off of Ole Roy dog food all these past years, but I could not confirm that if he was, that is one of the worst foods, in my opinion, to give a hunting dog. He also developed skin allergies, it appeared to me. After talking to the vet he agreed and we had to put him on a better food which was grain free. I had to find a food to help him with his skin and coat but that would also help him with his weight. After searching various different dog foods to meet his needs I settled on Blue Buffalo Salmon dog food.

Now, if you are a dog owner, you know that premium dog food is not cheap, one 40 pound bag of Blue Buffalo Salmon dog food at the time cost about \$80 a bag which at the time for me was quite pricey but he was worth it. The salmon gave him everything he needed for his skin and it was a full diet to help him with his weight. At the time his weight was between 89 and 95 pounds where he should be around 70 and 75 pounds. Understand, Widgeon was a big blocky headed black lab, but that weight was just going to cause even more problems with his joints and hips down the line.

During his feeding of this new food, I had to reduce the amount he was normally getting, when I put his food down, he kind of looked at his food bowl and then looked up at me and you could see it in his big brown eyes asking me "is this all I get??" and he would then just devour the food. After awhile being on Blue Buffalo, it was not satisfying his hunger, since he would raid the kitchen getting into the garbage can rummaging for anything eatable. After a couple of times this happening I had to come up with something. After research, I found out you can supplement the food for a dog on a diet none other than Fresh String beans. This does not add very much more calories and it gives the dog a sense of fullness and satisfies their hunger. One caveat to this though, you have to freeze the string beans to break down the cellulose, if you give them to the dog raw you will have even more stomach problems. So what I would do is to go down to my friendly grocery store and buy about 5 pounds of string beans and throw them in the freezer. Once frozen, I would put a handful on top of his dog food and Widgeon would devour them!

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HOLIDAY PARTY UPDT

If you missed our annual Holiday Party you missed a great time. Lots of fellowship with your fellow members and enjoying a great time. Below are some pics of the event.



One of the gift tables



Drawing of the tickets for gifts is Jerry and future member.



Our lovely Hostess Jen



Enjoying the time together telling war stories.

BILL HILGEMAN

I received an update on Bill's healing progress and he is doing better day by day. He is able to go without his neck cast periodically through out the day and is feeling much better. Long road ahead of you Bill, keep healing and hopefully we will see you soon!

MVDHA BOARD

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ANNUAL DUES

Annual membership dues are now due. Membership is only \$25 so you can still keep receiving information about your club and the wonderful world of Waterfowling. Please consider renewing your membership dues of \$25 and bring your money to this coming member's meeting or mail your check to the address on the back.

TROUT TRIP

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip this coming year. The dates are going to be 15 March 2024 through 17 March 2024. Coming home on the 17th. We are going back to Trout Hollow Lodge at Taneycomo since there is a question of Blue Haven being sold. The address for Trout Hollow Lodge is: 1500 Acacia Club Rd, Hollister, MO 65672. Jerry Reserved four rooms. To reserve your room call Sam at Trout Hollow at 417-334-2332 and tell them you are part of MVDHA. Don't forget that if you need to reserve a boat or a slip to set that up also. If you are a military veteran they also give discounts for that too.

If you have never gone to one of our annual fishing trips to Taneycomo you are really missing out on one of the best trips or events that we do. It is always a great trip and Trout Hollow is one of the best areas to go to down there. Hopefully we will see you there!

JANUARY MEETING

As you recall, we got a great deal from Blue Bird Waterfowling with a huge discount for club members for the Animators. Erik Liebel bought a couple of them and when I was delivering them to his house I was met by Kenny

at the front door and he had in his hand, which to me, looked like an old flint lock trigger mechanism which I asked him about.

After discussion, I found out that our very own Kenny Liebel is an re-enactor of, I believe, the Revolutionary War. He has everything needed for this including quite a few flint locks etc. I asked him if he has any muzzle loading shotguns which he has! In our past board meeting I threw Kenny under the bus and asked if he would be willing to give us a discussion of the history of the shotgun muzzle loader and to bring in one of his guns to explain, which he graciously agreed to.

So this is a special treat, which I doubt very few people have seen or heard, so plan now on coming out to our January meeting which will be on 10 January for this fascinating discussion.

2024 FUND RAISER

Our coffers are running low and we need to raise money. For a fund raiser this year, Kenny Liebel has offered to design and create a custom made hunting knife.

Until recently, I did not know much about Kenny and his extraordinary talents. I knew he created duck calls and carved decoys, and is a tool and die technician, but until recently, I found out he is an re-enactor and has also been making custom knives for years!

Kenny has graciously volunteered to design and create a custom hunting knife complete with a custom leather sheath!

The design is in it's infancy but here are the preliminary details:

- Made out of 496 Staret Tool Steel
- 5 to 7 inch blade length

- The blade will be buffed out to mirror finish
- It will have a Brass Hilt
- Laminated handle made out of wood that is similar to golf driver handles
- Leather Sheath that will be hand stitched
- The value of the knife is about \$600.00

Once the knife is completed I will be posting pictures of it here. This planning is still in it's infancy and we have not determined what the cost of the raffle tickets will be at this time, so stay tuned!!

MDC QUESTIONS

As a follow-up from previous newsletter about the MDC questions we sent to the commissioners, we received a letter from them and it states:

Dear Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Association

Thank you for your letter to Directory Pauley regarding waterfowl and wetlands in Missouri. As Deputy Director—Resource Management I am pleased to respond on her behalf. Sincere apologies for the delayed reply.

At present we are in transition between the Migratory Game Bird Coordinator retiring and in hiring someone new for the position. We will submit your letter to the Migratory Game Bird Working Group to review and answer your questions. I anticipate information from the working group to be available and a detailed response prepared by early December.

Sincerely, Signed
Jason Sumners

Deputy Director — Resource Management

C: Director Sara Parker Pauley
Migratory Game Bird Working Group

DELTA NEWS RELEASE

Delta Waterfowl Applauds Introduction of HEN Act in U.S. House of Representatives

Proposed law would fund important duck production and habitat conservation efforts to bolster waterfowl populations

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA — A bill to authorize \$3 million annually to enhance duck production in the prairie pothole region through the installation and maintenance of Hen Houses and to develop nesting and brood habitat in California was introduced today (December 21, 2023) in Congress.

H.R. 6854—The Habitat Enhancement Now, or HEN Act—was put forward by Rep. Michelle Fischbach, R-Minnesota, Rep. Mike Thompson, D-California, and Rep. Douglas LaMalfa, R-California.

“We sincerely appreciate the leadership of Congresswoman Fischbach and Congressman Thompson and Congressman LaMalfa to invest in tools that can significantly boost duck production,” said Dr. Scott Petrie, chief executive officer of Delta Waterfowl. “The science of breeding ducks has shown that nest success is often far below desired levels in the prairies and brood habitat is limiting production in California. This legislation will create an incremental funding stream to address those challenges head on.”

Decades of research and use have proven that Hen Houses nesting structures cost-

effectively increase mallard nest success by keeping the hen and her clutch of eggs out of reach of mammalian nest predators. On the prairies, mallards consistently use Hen Houses at high rates, and experience up to 12 times more nest success over mallards that nest in nearby upland grass cover.

Breeding duck populations in California face ever-increasing pressure from development and wetland habitat loss. As a result, targeted efforts to increase duck production are a high priority to enhance duck production for waterfowlers in California and throughout the Pacific Flyway.

“We believe this additional investment will complement the significant investment that federal, state, provincial agencies, and non-profit conservation partners are making in habitat conservation every day,” said John Devney, chief policy officer for Delta Waterfowl. “The HEN Act will provide resources to deliver proven duck production tools with meaningful benefits to duck hunters across the continent. This legislation is great news for duck hunters everywhere.”

Delta’s policy team and program staff will work with partners such as California Waterfowl Association and the bill’s co-sponsors to see the legislation signed into law.

“Hunting is an important piece of American heritage, and I will do everything I can to support sportsmen and sportswomen,” said Rep. Fischbach. “The HEN Act is a commonsense, nonintrusive way to bolster duck populations for future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.”

WIDGEON CONT

He loved those green beans and even enjoyed them as a treat! So instead of using dog treats for rewards, I would just simply throw him a frozen green bean and he would happily crunch away on them. You should of seen this huge black lab chasing after frozen green beans thrown on a hard floor, it was hilarious! But he loved those beans and no more getting into the garbage, so that little problem was solved, but another problem raised its head on his diet.

HOWELL ISLAND

From an MDC email, in short, that Art Wende shared on 30 November:

MDC to remove Howell Island Causeway and convert area to boat-in only access

Increased frequency of high water events and continual repair costs have prompted this course of action.

CHESTERFIELD, Mo.—The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is removing the causeway to Howell Island Conservation Area on the Missouri River in St. Louis County. The causeway currently sits atop a Corps of Engineers’ water control structure and spans the Centaur Chute, connecting the island to a parking lot on North Eather-ton Road.

MDC is removing the causeway due to increased flooding over the past 15 years, that has resulted in costly repairs and increased maintenance. The underlying water control structure will remain in place. The removal project is currently underway and being performed by an MDC contractor. Once the causeway is removed, Howell Island will

offer boat-in access only from the Missouri River.

FROM DU

SHOTGUNNING: SHOOTING FROM BLINDS

If you're not hiding, the water-fowler's saying goes, you're not shooting. But concealing yourself in a blind can make shooting difficult. The following strategies will increase your chances for success and keep you safe whether you're tucked into a pit below ground, on your back in a layout blind, or crowded into an A-frame or box blind.

BEFORE THE SHOT

Before the hunt starts, take some time to settle in the blind and stow your gear. Be sure that everything is in place and easy to reach, and that there's nothing underfoot that might cause you to slip. Be especially careful where you set your ammunition. There may be shells of several different gauges in the blind, and you don't want to mix them up in the excitement of a fast reload.

Leave your gun unloaded until shooting time. If the blind is heavily brushed, take the sling off your gun so it won't tangle in brush when you shoot. Stand or sit up to familiarize yourself with the 10-to-2 window where you'll take your shots. If there are retrievers along, remind yourself to not take low shots, and that goes double for pits and layouts. A breaking dog can bolt in front of your muzzle before you know it.

Try to angle layout blinds so that any shots will come at a shooter's natural point of aim. For right-handed shooters this is about 11:00; for lefties it's about 1:00. That way, if the birds do what they're supposed to, you'll sit up and have a shot that

doesn't require twisting around. It's much easier for right-handed shooters to swing to the left than to the right and vice versa. If there's a lefty in the group, put him or her on the right end, where he or she can shoot the birds that fly to that side.

SHOOTING

As ducks or geese approach, get your hands on your gun. While keeping your head down, try to watch the birds working so you'll know what to expect when the shot is called. If you can't see, as is the case in many pits and some other blinds, listen to the shot caller, who should be giving a running commentary on what the birds are doing.

When it's time to shoot, tell yourself to get up in a hurry, then slow down. If birds have committed to the decoys, they don't know you're there. You'll have an instant before they begin to flare. It's tempting to rush, but settle yourself down, pick a bird, and really look at it. If it's close, focus on the head or the bill. After standing or sitting up, your first move is to push the gun out and toward the bird. Pushing the gun out helps you clear any bulky clothing without snagging, and it gets the muzzle moving to the target. As you move the muzzle toward the bird, raise the stock to your face and the butt to your shoulder pocket. A smooth mount is just as fast as a rushed mount because it's a more efficient move.

When you shoot a bird, stay with it until it's down and you know it's dead. Be sure there are no dogs in your line of fire before you shoot at crippled birds. Better yet, let the dog's owner shoot any birds on the water, or ask before you do.

If you have a chance to shoot a bird over the top, or on the end, say something first, or ask the blind boss: "Okay if I take this

one?" This helps avoid situations where more than one person pops up unannounced to take the shot or, worse, one person stands to shoot and another shoots sitting down next to him.

AFTER THE SHOT

If someone goes out in front of the blind, point your muzzle up. If you leave the blind, unload your gun or take it with you. Always unload it before you set it down. After each volley, check your area of the blind for empties and pick them up. This will help keep your footing safe so you won't risk stumbling when the next bunch comes in.

One other item I want to add to this list, which I am surprised the writer did not express, is that in a blind there are defined lanes to shoot in. You do not want to be swinging your gun in a crowded blind shooting over someone's head or next to their head. ALWAYS know where your fellow hunters are at and shoot your lane.

2023-2024 SEASON

Ducks Season:

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

Goose Season

Nov. 11, 2023– Feb. 6, 2024

Light Goose Conserv Order

Feb. 7–April 30, 2024

Limits

During the Conservation Order there is no daily bag or possession limit for light geese (snow, blue, and Ross's geese).

Up Coming Events

Jan 10: Muzzle Shotgun

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 Borgettis 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: JANUARY 10, 2024

Next Board Meeting: JANUARY 22, 2024

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

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

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

