

From The Blind



A duck hunting starter kit. The maze is confounding and scary to be sure. There is nothing wrong with gear but you don't need a complete full-fledged professional grade set up to get your feet wet so to speak and shoot some ducks. First let's outline a few simple ideas regarding becoming a duck hunter. We are going to start you as a potholer, meaning a mobile self-contained hunter that walks to and works small water such as potholes, ponds, and maybe even mid-size streams in cold weather. What do you really need? Let's take it from the top.

Shotgun

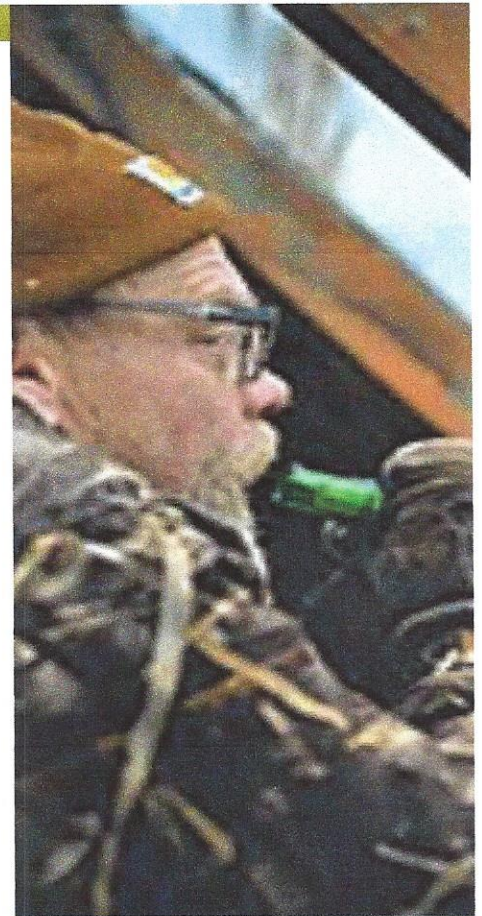
Don't fall into the trap that says you need to buy a specialized "waterfowl" shotgun. Any model and action will do, but semi autos and pumps are, in my opinion, better than double barrels. A 12 gauge is ideal for broad duck hunting use. But you could get by with a 20 gauge on close range duck hunting. Be sure to swing in to B & S Firearms in Morris, IL for all your shotgun and ammo needs.

Bottom line if you can hit fast flying targets that you already own, just use it.

Non-toxic shells

The beginning hunter needs to know that, by federal law, you can only hunt ducks with non-toxic (non-lead) shot.

Today's modern steel loads will do the job just fine. If Mallards are around I trend toward No. 4s. As the season wears on I switch Nos. 3 and 2 steel.



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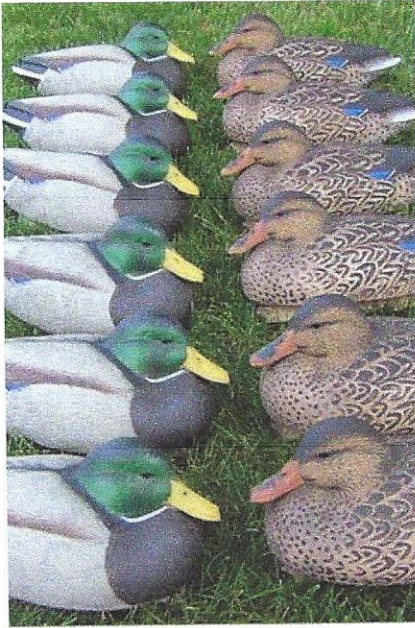
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One Dozen Decoys

You can probably shoot a few ducks without decoys, but where's the fun in that? Decoys can get expensive but here's good news. You don't need oodles of them and you do not need multiple species.

Get a dozen Mallard decoys which you can purchase at Hardcore Decoys in Ottawa, Illinois and mention

T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors while you are there. Probably half of your spread will be green headed drakes, the other half drab hens.

Rig the decoys with lead decoy weights and ten feet of decoy cord. Oh, and get a mesh bag in which to carry them in.

Basic Gun Safety Rules

Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.

Always be aware of your intended target .

Know your limitation of skill.

Always use recommended ammunition in your firearm.

Be aware of your surroundings and respectful of other hunters .

Always keep your safety on until you are in the act of shooting.

Finally, **KEEP YOUR BOOGER HOOK OFF THE BOOM SWITCH UNTIL YOU ARE READY TO BRING THE HEAT.**

Stay tuned for our Spring and Summer IDNR Hunter Safety Course Dates.

Two Duck Calls

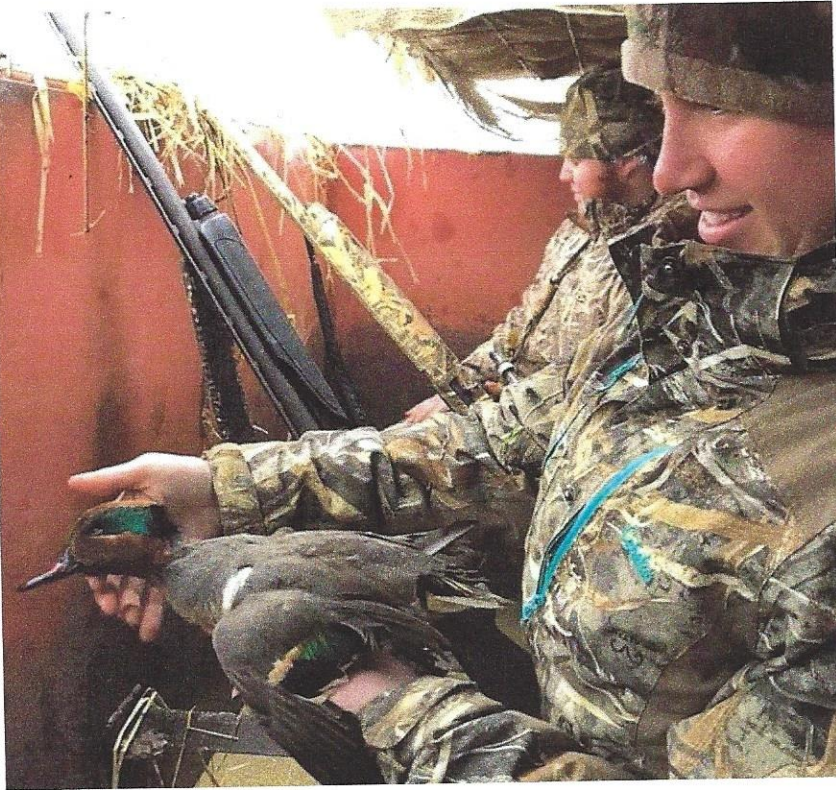
The sky is the limit as to how many duck calls you hang from your lanyard around your neck. But all you really need are two. A Mallard call and a whistle call. Both are available from our great supporters at Buck Gardner Game Calls.

All ducks know and trust Mallards. Plus, a Mallard calls easily and loudly to get a bird's attention.

Waders

Unless you are field hunting, which is another ballgame, versus hunting the abundant public land available to today's hunter, you will need waders to wear while slogging through cold water and muck, setting out decoys, hopefully picking up birds and collecting decoys when you are done.

You do get what you pay for with waders. Nothing makes a hunt more miserable than a leak. Don't skim. Neoprene is the best, preferably with reinforced knees. Go for more insulation rather than less. Watch for off season sales, and buy waders at great prices online or at retail stores such as Drake Waterfowl.



Jacket

If you are hiding well in your hunting setup (and you should be) clothing becomes almost secondary to the duck hunting equation, almost. Those camouflage waders will cover most of you still especially if you are hunting cat tails or grass, you can never be too cautious about camouflaging yourself. That means a jacket. Almost any camouflage jacket will work. As long as it's general color pattern matches your surroundings.

Your best bet is to invest in a multi-layer jacket system. It will service you from cool early season to bitter cold January field hunting.

A good hat and better gloves suitable to the conditions also deserve mention.

In Conclusion

Personally, there are a few things I feel are as important as any of the above. A good headlamp, hand warmers, thermos, and snacks. I hope that this has been educational and informative. Good luck and good hunting. Be safe and keep your booger hook off the boom switch until you're ready to bring the heat!

From the blind,
Smitty

Hunting For Memories

Hunting isn't always about limiting out. Hunting is about watching the sun come up with a beautiful sunrise on the horizon while quietly sitting with your friends often saying nothing at all.

Hunting is about getting outside challenging your knowledge and skill set. It's about becoming one with nature and realizing how small and insignificant a person can truly be.

Some of my best memories from the blind are just laughter, friendship, and the excitement on the eyes of someone who has just taken their first bird. If you want to have a truly successful hunt don't be competitive, be content and thankful for the time shared with family and friends.

If you are interested in getting out and giving duck hunting a try, feel free to contact T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors on our website at www.TeachOutdoors.org.

We have many people in our organization who would love to open the door to this great lifestyle.

If you are interested in booking a hunt, we have many outfitters from Minnesota to Arkansas who are capable of fulfilling dreams.

I highly recommend visiting the IDNR website and get enrolled in the various classes offered throughout the State of Illinois such as the learn to hunt program.