

SPORT WITH THE GUN

Approach of the Season in Which Hunters Delight.

RAIL SHOOTING WITH RIFLE.

Pintail Ducks Whose Habits Suit the Hunter Well.

They Are Easy to Decoy and Hard to Hit—This is the Time to Hunt Them—Pursuit of Them in the Wild Rice—The Kind of Gun to Use in Shooting Them.

Leading the mallards by a couple of weeks, flying hard in the wake of the teal, that delightful duck, the sprigtail, or pintail, is coming out of the north in swarms. It is a great bird to shoot and a great bird to eat, swift in flight, beautiful in plumage and numerous enough to reward the patient and skilled hunter.

In the sportsman's scale of values it is not so worthy as the canvasback, the goldeneye or the mallard, but is better than the woodcock, the gadwall, the widgeon, the butterball, the bluebill or the teal. It is larger than any of these, being, however, only slightly heavier than the gadwall or widgeon. It is its habits that make it peculiarly welcome to the gunner.

To begin with, the pintail is a sociable explorer of the upper deeps, flies in flocks numbering from ten to fifty, but is always ready for company, and is not particular. It will decoy to almost any sort of duck, not despising even the plebeian spoonbill. This has been proved many times on the marshes by hunters who, finding a death of mallards and other aristocrats, have shot a brace or two of spoonbills, set them out in shallow water by picking one end of a three-foot stick into the mud and the other end into the spoonbill's throat, and had good sport with the pintails that swept in to pass the time of day with the little brown bunches of feathers floating peacefully on the still surface.

Sometimes one of the giant herds of teal, numbering thousands and covering an acre or two of water so thickly that they seem solid black, will be enjoying themselves in their own clacking fashion. Out of the blue will sweep down a dozen or twenty pintails and plunge into the midst of them. Room is made for them, and they swim about quacking pleasantly to their little neighbors, though having nothing in common with them and speaking a different language.

Dead decoys or live decoys, simulators or patients, of canvas or wood, are all one to the pintail. All it asks is that the attracting object be something like a duck, and it will come in fearlessly and fast.

Thus the sportsman who strikes pintail territory is sure of a reasonable bag if he can shoot a little bit, and that is no small comfort in these days when even the most skillful man works hard for all the ducks he gets and many times does not get any. The pintail is lovable, too, because it makes its entrance at a time of year that suits the middle-aged sportsman—the man who has got over his butchering days, is content with a half dozen birds and derives as much enjoyment from the open air and the things of autumn nature as from the report and come-back of the gun. The ways are gone when the woods are so quiet for hours came in a blind, with a saw-toothed wind whistling from the north, his fingers stiff and blue, the cold knifing its way through him, the decoys bobbing crazily with ice a half-inch thick on their backs, a single duck passing just outside of range every fifteen minutes, and call it fun.

With or just behind the mallards comes low temperature, and the weather is more like when the canvasbacks rise in mass from their northern lake and, circling thrice high up, head to the south; but the pintail is with us in late September and through the golden days of October when the woods are flaring in yellow and crimson and the water is so warm that the morning drink, a ready air with a heady tang, sweeter than honey and more heady than the horns of honey-brew that went round in Cedric's hall.

The pintail sweeps into the blind without the wariness of the mallard. Not often does it circle twice about the decoy, or frequently make a dash at it, making a half-turn to bring its breast to the wind, then drops straight down, landing within a foot of the wooden imitations of the dead birds, seeming to feel that they are not its instinct with life.

The man waiting and unconsciously holding his breath gets a few of the hover birds, which are more numerous than ducks. The pintail does not pose nearly stationary twelve feet above the decoys, working its wings tremulously before landing. That is a foolish trick of the mallard and canvasback, and so poised a half-blind scholohoy might slay them.

The bird plunges in recklessly enough, striking the water as hard as if it were only the surface for six feet or so. Then, if perchance it sees anything alarming, it goes up as rapidly as it came, almost straight into the air and hurrying away.

The mallard, redhead or canvasback who frightens the decoy, and comes back some time to get under way, if badly frightened one of these birds will often trail its legs in the water for thirty yards before it can rise, but the pintail does not do this. It gets up instantly, ascending in a violent, swaying spiral, climbing with remarkable rapidity. Going up so it offers one of the most difficult shots in the wide range of duckdom.

There is but one way to stop it. That is to follow the swing of its spiral as nearly as possible and hide it completely with the barrels, aiming at least a yard above its bill.

Its flesh is generally tender, particularly so in this season, and it is not malarial in feathers like some of the other varieties. No shot are big enough for it, but it must be fairly hit, and because of its quickness and swiftness it is not the easiest of targets. The pintail is an incontinent duck which decoys readily, and after it decoys is hard to hit, which is a foolish trick of the mallard and canvasback, and so poised a half-blind scholohoy might slay them.

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They go to the rice in early morning before their young have had their first meal of grain, sometimes diving in two feet of water for those which have sunk to the bottom, sometimes rising to the surface with their wings to shake out still clinging grains. They cannot see one another and pay no attention to one another while the feeding continues.

One of them, having eaten enough near noon, will swim out to the edge of the growth and call. The others, full nearly to bursting, will join in one by one. Then the flock will swim for a while in the clear water, rising forward and speeding in some large lake or bay, and then another kind of food. All wild ducks are choicely in the matter of food in autumn. They find plenty of it, and as they have a large range they eat a variety of things, barley, rice, acorns, grass seeds, duckweed and so forth.

become scattered, the members of a flock of twenty being often stretched along the stream or lake edge for three hundred yards, further into the tangle as the minutes pass and consequently nearer to the shore.

Being sure that they cannot be seen, neither can they see and so they may be approached closely. The hunter, wearing a pair of high boots, half turned out with big pockets, wades through the rice twenty feet from shore.

The water there will not be more than six or seven feet deep, and the hardest sort of work, especially as each foot must be put down carefully, sinks into four inches of mud and is pulled out and ready, he bears a little way in front of a slight thrashing and knows that a pintail is shaking out rice.

He tightens his grip on the gun, pauses and listens keenly; his heart beats faster. In the brilliant autumn sun the rice waves shimmer about a straight line feet in diameter. Ten steps taken slowly and the thrashing ceases; the bird has heard the cautious advance and is sitting still upon the water, its neck up, its bill pointed at the gun.

Another step or two and a pintail drake springs from the growth. The initial bound carries it twenty feet up and it is already near the top of its flight. The decoy, running from left to right, his wings beat tumultuously, the neck is drawn in by a slanting line, the head is turned to the eyes on the man and gun below; the legs hang down and are widely apart; it is "digging" as gunners term it, and digging hard.

The decoy, in the walking, the white and black in places, but mostly of a beautiful dove-like tint. Even in the half-second of time the hunter is able to mark the new decoy, to see the tail feathers that give the bird its name. If the gun be instantly carried up with the flight and the trigger pressed just at the last moment, the decoy will be a fine specimen of powder being, running from left to right, his wings beat tumultuously, the neck is drawn in by a slanting line, the head is turned to the eyes on the man and gun below; the legs hang down and are widely apart; it is "digging" as gunners term it, and digging hard.

The decoy must be built to command a piece of water which looks as if it contains food; if there is duckweed present or scattered stalks of wild rice or grass, so much the better.

Care should be taken not to set the decoys too close to the blind. Thirty yards is nearly enough, for you are to shoot for three or four days over some woodland lake, he will do well to build blinds on all four sides of the lake, for the decoys will be shot with reference to or in defence to the wind. If the wind is from the north the decoys should be placed near the blind on the north side, and if the wind is from the east, they should be placed near the blind on the east side.

The decoys must be selected and set with care. The decoy should be a male, and should be dressed in a manner that will attract the eye of the decoy. The decoy should be dressed in a manner that will attract the eye of the decoy. The decoy should be dressed in a manner that will attract the eye of the decoy.

Unless the body is carefully covered with the feathers of the decoy, the decoy will be shot. The decoy should be dressed in a manner that will attract the eye of the decoy. The decoy should be dressed in a manner that will attract the eye of the decoy.

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They go to the rice in early morning before their young have had their first meal of grain, sometimes diving in two feet of water for those which have sunk to the bottom, sometimes rising to the surface with their wings to shake out still clinging grains. They cannot see one another and pay no attention to one another while the feeding continues.

One of them, having eaten enough near noon, will swim out to the edge of the growth and call. The others, full nearly to bursting, will join in one by one. Then the flock will swim for a while in the clear water, rising forward and speeding in some large lake or bay, and then another kind of food. All wild ducks are choicely in the matter of food in autumn. They find plenty of it, and as they have a large range they eat a variety of things, barley, rice, acorns, grass seeds, duckweed and so forth.

—some with their bills up as if swallowing food, others with bills down as if looking for food; others with bills horizontal as if idly floating. The wind whistles around so that their heads will point to the wind and that is the way all ducks float.

The decoys, one so disposed make an attractive flock. After real ducks, wild or tame, dead or alive, come the many wooden or canvas imitations of ducks. They do not look like ducks, except in form. No painter has been found to imitate correctly the hues of the mallard canvasback, woodcock or others in the swift kindred.

They are reasonably successful because the duck cannot detect the cheat at a distance and comes in flying so rapidly that it is unable to note the roughness of the lure.

The decoys made of canvas are light and more easily carried and must be lighted before they are used. They are not so durable as those made of wood and do not attract so well. Both the canvas and wooden decoys are weighted on the bottom to keep them upright and have rings by which they may be anchored.

The art of using decoys consists largely in knowing how to set them and how to carry them. The decoys must be set with reference to or in defence to the wind. If the wind is from the north the decoys should be placed near the blind on the north side, and if the wind is from the east, they should be placed near the blind on the east side.

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the bear sick, or are you trying to start a walking apothecary shop? (Nobody will buy a rhubarb bear; so you may as well begin giving him checkerberry now and save a lot of trouble.)

"Jesse you wait 'em see," was Grant's answer. "It ain't natur' that er wild bear will come on flav'or jes' as he is. His system needs regulatin' afore he's fit to be dosed with scented stuff. I'm makin' him ready for the scentin'." What'll ye give me for this here bear when I've got him fat an' put in th' spices?"

For a week he dickered with all comers. Finally he closed a trade by which he was to sell a single flavored checkerberry bear that should dress at least 200 pounds for a lump sum of \$150. This being done, Grant went out with his basket and gathered boxberry plums and checkerberry leaves. He fed these to Bruin as long as he could, and then he went out and gathered some more of the same sort of fruit. The carcass would not come up to full weight, steeped great kettles of wintergreen leaves and adding sugar to the extract, fed the bear for a week or so, and then he was ready to start the scenting.

The neighbors watched the fattening process with interest, but as the experiment proceeded and was likely to be successful, some grew envious and proposed a mob.

"The bear, who has a stage stable near Ellsworth Falls, had a tame bear which he let be used as a mascot for his customers who had never seen a bear drink which he received an addition to their knowledge by getting the bear drunk and paying for the fun at the rate of 20 cents a bottle in advance. But the Sheriff had been nosing around for illicit liquors and Bob's trade had fallen off so much that the bear was sold to a man who would give \$15 and carry him off. So Bob's bear was easily borrowed for two days.

Then an afternoon was spent in filling up the bear with beer. After sundown the bear was led toward Grant's farm in Tilden. Just before midnight they stopped in a cornfield to let the bear gorge himself on the corn. The bear ate at least six bushels, so it was about 2 o'clock in the morning when they reached Grant's.

The bear was led to a stable behind the house and the small fire with flavored extracts was hurried away to reach Carr's stable before light. Carr treated all hands, having no further use for the bear, took it to his house and killed it, serving the meat up to his visitors for an early breakfast.

Now, the weary men of this kind of food was most welcome. When they tasted this tender bear's meat, exclaiming an agreeable odor of checkerberry with every mouthful, and then, when they started to eat, they were greeted with the feast. The stage drivers between Ellsworth and Grant Pond came along and lost time by lingering on the long line of checkerberry, and some were nothing left of the checkerberry bear but the pelts and a pile of polished bones.

Meantime, on going to feed his bear to the bear, he was surprised to find the morning Grant had been surprised to see how the animal had fattened, and made up his mind to kill it and take it to Bangor that day.

The reason why the bear was so fat was because of the checkerberry. The checkerberry is a plant that grows in the early and continued spring rains which visited large areas of the chicken region. Through northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, for instance, it is now a rare thing to see a chicken of this year's raising. The rains not only added the eggs and made fruit setting almost impossible but grew out most of this young as came through the shells.

In Walworth county, Wis., is a marsh of some square miles' extent, which formerly produced hundreds of chickens. On this marsh in September of last year a good shot with a good dog could bag two dozen chickens in half a day's shooting without specially exerting himself.

This year's season of three and six birds to the gun on all-day hours are the usual things, and of these birds three out of four are old and tough and unpalatable. The same thing is true of the country about McHenry, Ill., which used to be prolific of chickens, and is true of districts further down the State.

The sportsman has the satisfaction of knowing that such chickens as he obtains are not only fairly good, but are also high spring birds like the pintail it is essential to hold over them and the straight stock assists in this.

These straight stock, as a general proposition, is better because all flushing birds are rising. In hunting strong active quail a man with a heavily dropped gun will find that he will get out of five unless he be remarkably expert.

The sportsman who puts in a morning walking along a picturesque rice-lined river, and seeing a pair of pintails have an outing that he will remember with pleasure. The shooting is quick and clean and requires skill.

What is there no one to applaud or envy successes, so there is no one to grin at or strike from the water. The decoy is a companion to bury him, the man in general will take his shots more carefully and smoothly.

Dozen pintails bagged in work of this kind are better than twenty larger ducks butchered while hovering above the water, one on the rise.

DUCK DECOYS. Live Wild Ducks the Best and the Hardest of All to Get. It is the time of year when the man who intends to shoot ducks must look after his decoys. They are nearly as necessary as the gun itself.

Given a good blind and good decoys, when ducks are flying, almost anybody can have sport. When they are not flying, it is an art in using them, and the man who does not know it must learn, or go duckless.

The best decoy in the world, and the hardest to get, is the live wild duck. There are two or three sets of the kind in the country, owned by old hunters who live in duck territory. They are made up of winged birds and are never more than three or four in number. They are fatal to their wild brethren as long as they last, but they do not last long, dying readily in confinement.

Next to them in value are tame ducks, which are kept in flocks of from twenty to fifty by many sportsmen of this class. Stout strings of decoys are made up of tame ducks, and they are set out with small stakes driven into the mud under two feet of water.

slow and a single pellet will stop it. It is so unobscuring of harm that often when the boat has approached within ten feet one is forced to throw an empty shell at it to force it into the air. Indeed, there are rail which will not fly at all and may be knocked down with an arrow.

Still it is small, it has a curve to its flight, slow as it is, and every one shot at it is not killed, even though the man behind the gun an expert of the experts. This is especially true when the shells have been loaded especially for rail, and they have to be so loaded to preserve any of the birds for the pot.

The ordinary quail shell of 12-gauge, charged with three and a quarter drams of smoke powder and an ounce and an eighth of No. 8 shot will blow the rail to pieces at common rail range, when it is so small that a hungry man could easily dispose of a dozen of them, and they are not worth a fully loaded shell, even if they could be brought in a bag in half a day.

The load for a 12-gauge is two drams of black powder and half an ounce of No. 10 shot with one black-eyed wad on each side of the shot. This is not much more than a quail load, but will prove good up to fifteen yards and the birds when picked up are rarely hurt.

Any shotgun smaller than a 24-gauge is too big for rail, however. The man who goes after them should provide himself with a magazine rifle of 24-caliber and a lot of the shot shells made for them: the sort of shell with the cowboy on exhibition breaks glass balls from the saddle when the cowboy is pulling the wondrous marksman with admiration, believing that he is using a single bullet.

The magazine of the rifle will hold about a dozen shells, which will allow the rail hunter does not have to stop and reload after each couple of shots.

The man who has never tried it will find that a rail of the size of a quail is a shot loaded rifle is not so easy as it looks. The shotgun shooter will be bothered by the single barrel and by the rifle sights and the rail hunter does not have to stop and reload after each couple of shots.

After that, however, he will be able to center his target with reasonable accuracy. The rail is a bird that is not so easy to give the birds a fair chance for their lives.

There is a way in which a man may kill a boatload of rail without using his skill as a marksman. In the early morning the boat is sunk a good way toward the horizon he has only to paddle his boat along the edge of the wild rice some miles away.

Any number of the little birds will fly to the edge to take a peep at him and find him in the boat, and then they will start to fly and will be up into the water within No. 10 shot through their innards. The gunner can be kept hot in this way and can get in a large number of birds without thrusting the boat toward the rice to pick up the slain.

That is not the kind of shooting, however, which appears to be the most interesting. The rail is a fairly killed must be flushed and shot in air and it can be flushed only by going after it.

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day or two, so he goes out to kill what he can and quit. If he gets less than sixty he has to have a good way often more than a hundred fall to one gun; there are men who have killed 200 in a day.

The rail will remain in the North until two or three heavy frosts have cut the rice down, then it will go all at once. It is never found after this time has formed along the banks.

Hunted on Schedule, but Permitted to Stay in the Trap in Which It Was Caught. LACKAWANNA, Pa., Sept. 27.—Dr. R. W. Pryor of New York was summoned by telegraph the other day to Pike county to kill a big bear that John Hodge, a Blooming Grove Park guide, had located in the Knob country. Pryor said a man who had just come from over there. "The doctor left a request some time ago at the Park clubhouse to be called to attend to such a case the moment one occurred."

The way they give it out in the Knob country, Dr. Pryor left New York in response to the summons at 9 A. M. on the Erie Railroad. At 1:30 P. M. he sat down at lunch at the Blooming Grove Park clubhouse. At 1:45 he rose picked up his gun, and said:

"Over on the south side of the Knob," they told him. "All right," said the doctor. "I'll go but it, if it doesn't bustle away before I get there."

"It won't," they told him. "It's in a trap." "Oh!" said the doctor. "In a trap, eh? Well, I'll get it out of the trap before I shoot it, just to give it a better chance."

Then at 3:50 P. M., he started for south side of the Knob. He took a short cut across country, through the woods. "On the way he jumped up a deer. The Blooming Grove Park Association, under the season deer on the park domain was then open. Dr. Pryor knocked the deer over and went on to where the bear was the distance is six miles. At 3:35 the doctor began to hear sounds of a bull bellowing and a high wind thrashing things in the woods."

"It's the bear," said the doctor. "He hears me coming and is trying to frighten me away." "At 3:40 there was no doubt that the rampus in the woods was the bear. Whether the bear had heard him coming and was trying to get him up into the water was the question. At any rate, at 3:44 Dr. Pryor had made up his mind not to let the bear loose from the trap, so that it might have a better chance for its life."

"The bear had then been in the trap some hours. The dog had caught and held it in that spot. Around 3:45 a far away in the distance a low, tree trunk were torn and splintered, as if lightning had been playing with them.

"Saplings were uprooted and scattered about as if by a tornado. A big log, that had been somewhat in decay, was ground up as fine as sawdust. The earth was scooped out in a great hollow, where the trapped bear had vented some of its wrath.

"And as the doctor appeared on the scene the bear, who had been in the trap and tried to free itself, that it might use that as food it had used the trees and the growing and prostrate things about."

The doctor stands in the prow with his legs braced against the side of the boat or against a thwart. Often the growth is so thick that he cannot see the water. The bear is in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat.

At 3:42 he unloaded a rifle bullet into the bear's ear, and the bear started to jump into the water. The bear was in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat.

When the doctor got back to the clubhouse he found that the bear had been shot. The bear was in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat, and the doctor is in the boat.

He was disappointed, though, to find that his bear was thin and would weigh no more than 350 pounds.

A BUNCH OF BIG TROUT. Nine Weighing 95 Pounds Caught in a Lake Not Far From Quebec. QUEBEC, Sept. 27.—The largest bunch of big brook trout ever seen together in Canada, whose big ones are captured every day, was brought to town a few days ago. They were caught in Grand Lake Jacques Cartier, which is only sixty miles from Quebec as the crow flies, but so difficult of access that few sportsmen ever reach it.

One of the officials of the Department of Lands, Forests and Fisheries visited the lake in 1895, and among the fish caught was a red-speckled brook trout, or *Salvelinus fontinalis*, weighing eight and three-quarters pounds. This was slightly bigger than the biggest of the big catch brought here from the same lake a few days ago, but there were many more large fish in the catch.

Almost as soon as the flies touched the water two of the anglers were fast to fish over seven pounds each in weight. The better fighter of the two required twenty-five minutes to kill. Better sport than this party enjoyed for about half an hour was probably never found by any sportsmen on Canadian trout waters.

Then their boat got adrift and when it had drifted about a mile or so, one of the big trout would show himself again that