

HOW DUCKS ARE DECOYED IN NORFOLK, ENGLAND.

The first glimpse of the decoy is an arch of brown network among the trees and glimpses of pale fences of reeds. In the centre of a hundred acres of reedy and oozy water, thick with water-lilies and ranunculuses, spread eleven shallow creeks, star fashion. These rays, about six yards wide at their mouth, narrowing gradually as they recede, and curving to the right, run about seventy-five yards each, and terminate in a point. At about thirty feet from the mouth of each there rises an iron rod arch some ten feet high, smaller arches following, the end one sinking to less than two feet high and wide. These arches are covered with a cord net which, staked to the ground, forms a long cage broad and open to the pool. These are what Norfolk men call "pipes." On each side of the airy traps are screens of grayish yellow reeds five feet high; these screens run in zigzag about a foot from the water's edge, and traverse the edge of the pipe alternately high and low. Wild fowl always fly against the wind, so that a pipe to be successful must have the wind blowing down it from the narrow end towards the mouth. In Norfolk the north-east pipe is a special favorite. There is no mystery in decoying, it needs only a man, some decoy ducks, and a trained dog. The ducks are taught to rise and come to the man for the bruised barley he sprinkles on the water at the signal of a very faint yet clear whistle. The "pipe" dog may be a mongrel, but it must be of a gray color, and of quiet, obedient, staid habits. The decoy season is almost exactly contemporaneous with the oyster season. The time chosen is often noon on a bright day. The decoy man carries with him a piece of lighted peat to neutralize any scent of himself that might scare the fowl. Stealing along like a murderer, the man slips behind the screen and looks through the loopholes, prepared, in the reed walls. If there be signs of emerald necks and brown backs he gives the whistle, fatal as Varney's signal to Amy Robsart. The moment the decoy duck swims toward the mouth of the pipe the wild birds gain confidence and enter more or less eagerly into the pipe allured by the floating barley; at the same moment the pipe dog, running along the screen, leaps back through the first break in search of the biscuit thrown him. This instantly allures the teal and widgeon, who then flock with great confidence. They are now safe in the kila, and the decoy-man having fitted a corn-sack to the narrow end of the opening, an assistant, on a given signal, shows himself at one of the breaks in the screen in the rear of the ducks, and without shouting, throws up his arms or waves his hat. The sensitive birds, always suspicious of man, instantly, with flap and screaming quack, race up the pipe in utter panic, and making for the first opening, find themselves in the hospitable corn-sack. The decoy man soon appears to the jostling captives, and in five minutes they are ready for Leadenhall market.

But the decoy-man has many vexations. There is one artful species of duck known as the Poehard, which is always fatal to his schemes. A demoniacal craft is possessed by these birds, who, the moment there is an alarm, turn, dive and re-emerge beyond the pipes. Often do they form a vanguard and swim forward in line, taking precedence probably on the strength of superior subtlety, and so keep back their unsuspecting companions. Decoy-men have tried to capture these sagacious wretches by sunken bait, bristling with ambushed hooks, but the poehard's diving struggles are scarcely very alluring to the inquiring widgeon. A heron perched on the crown of the netted arch will often scare the suspicious birds, a sudden pike splashing in the shallows, or the sight of even the tip of the black nose of an otter is also fatal to sport. A gunshot in a distant field, the ring of a hammer, or the rumbling of oxcarts wheels will frighten away ducks for weeks. Decoying, says a very sound authority, was more profitable before steamboats brought over such heaps of Dutch and Flemish ducks. Yet there are still times when wild ducks fetch eight-shillings a couple in Leadenhall Market. Two thousand birds all but thirty-seven were captured at Ranworth decoy in 1858-59.—All the Year Round.

WHERE MOSQUITOES COME FROM.—These pests of summer proceed from the animalcules commonly termed the "wiggletails." If a bowl of water is visible, and they will continue in size till they reach three-sixteenths of an inch in length, remaining longer at the surface as they approach maturity, as if seeming to live on influences derived from the two elements of air and water. Finally they will assume chrysalis form, and by an increased specific gravity, sink to the bottom of the bowl. A few hours only will elapse when a short black furze or hair will grow out on every side of each, till it assumes the form of a minute caterpillar. Its specific gravity being thus concentrated, it will readily float to the surface, and be wafted to the side of the bowl by the slightest breath of air. In a short time a fly will be hatched and escape, leaving its tiny house upon the surface of the water. Any one who has had a cistern in the yard has doubtless observed the same effect every summer, although he may be ignorant of the beautiful and simple process of development. If a pitcher or cistern, or other water containing these animalcules, is placed in a close room over night, from which all mosquitoes have been previously excluded, enough mosquitoes will breed from it during the night to give any satisfactory amount of trouble. In fact, standing by a shallow, half-stagnant pool on a midsummer's day, the full development of any number of "wiggletails" to the mosquito state can be witnessed, and the origin of these disturbers of night's slumbers thus fully ascertained.

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