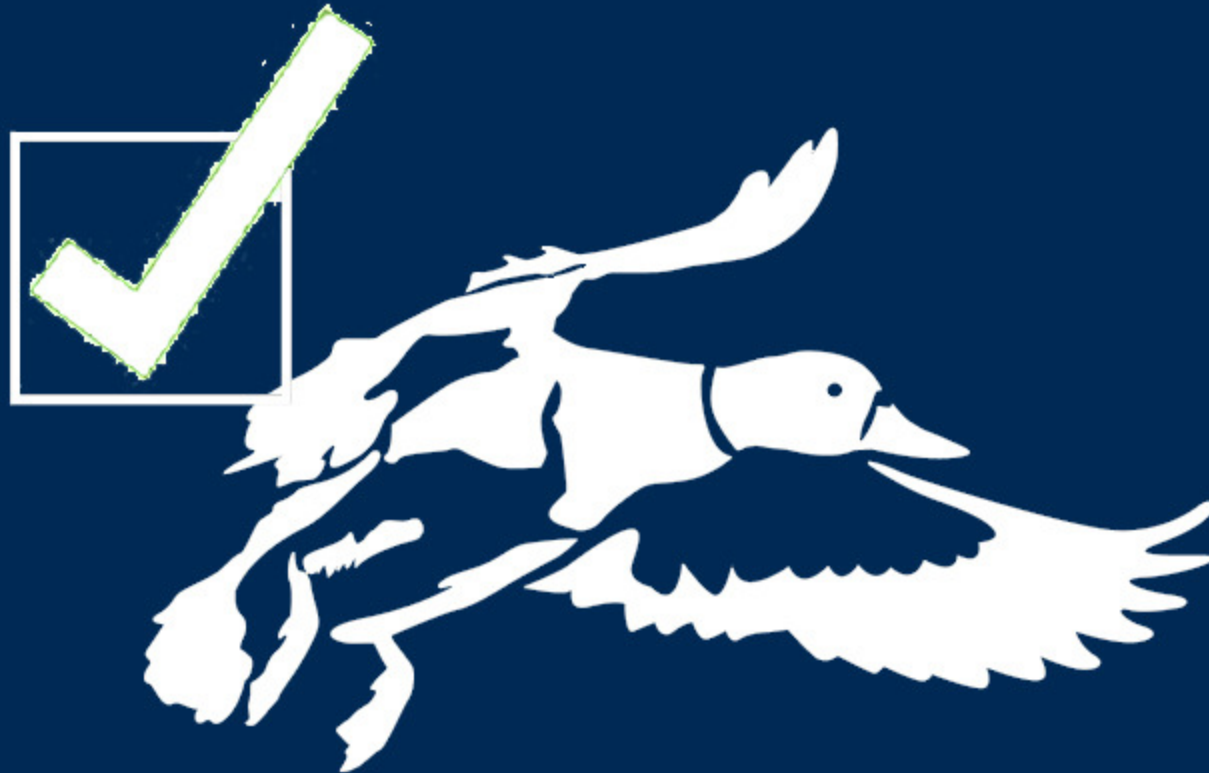


The Ultimate Checklist for Duck Hunters

A complete list with tips and suggestions to get ready for your hunting season



A Publication by



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The Ultimate Checklist for Duck Hunters

By Adam Brassfield

Adam is a hardcore waterfowl hunter. He's also an accomplished public speaker and mentor to youth.

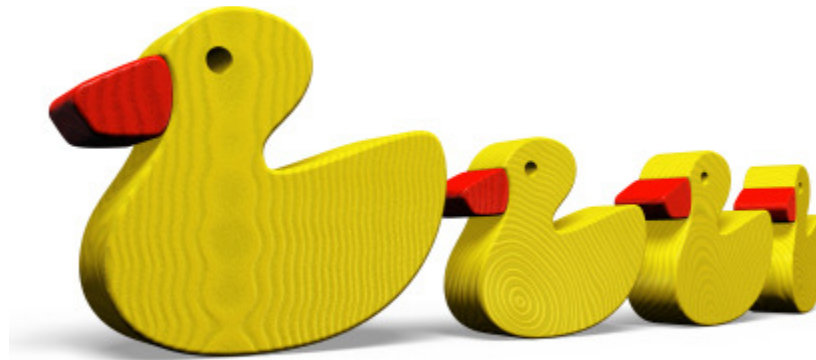
Adam is a professional waterfowl hunter and travels across the United States smokin' greenheads.



Introduction

Going duck hunting requires strategy, equipment and concealment. While anyone can do it, the frustrations some hunters face are often self-inflicted. A pre-season checklist will allow you to efficiently prepare for the hunt.

Here is a helpful checklist to get your ready for duck hunting.



1. PREPARATION & STRATEGY

Waterfowl hunting doesn't just "happen": preparing and strategizing before we arrive at our hunting location is a way to insure against headaches and enjoy the activity all-the-more. In some instances, the process of preparation begins at the end of one season.

2. LOCATION

Where will you hunt? Start thinking this through at least one month before season starts. Become familiar with vegetation and the environment around your area. Know the projected flight pattern of the birds. Find out where they will roost. This will give you an advantage throughout the season.

3. TRAILER BEARINGS

Don't overlook your trailer. Having your wheels fall apart on a back road in the middle of nowhere can make you end a hunt before it begins. Have bearings greased and pressed, check the air pressure on all tires, and don't forget a spare. More often than not, you will need one sometime during the season.



4. FEDERAL REST AREAS

Scout out waterfowl prior to and during hunting season. Federal rest areas in every state will give you direction on local duck numbers, migration trends and daily flight patterns. Having this information on a weekly basis will help inform your decision on where and when to hunt.

5. BOAT MOTORS

Most duck hunters have a dedicated boat that they use to hunt from during the season. Some duck hunters let their motors set up over the year with little maintenance or care. The last thing you want is to be a long way from a ramp when your motor gives out or you run out of gas. Make sure your motor is tuned before season and your tanks filled with gas before every hunt.

6. MAPS

Every duck hunter needs a set of topographical maps or aerial photos. Having these will give you an idea on where to set up, where birds are coming from, and potential ambush spots. These maps can be purchased online and are a must-have.

7. HUNTING LICENSE

You need to be properly licensed in your state and in all states where you'll be hunting. Lines can be long at locations that sell these licenses, so purchase them well ahead of time or buy them online. Do not hunt with anyone who does not have a license. This will give you a bad reputation with local officials.

8. FEDERAL DUCK STAMP

Officials write more tickets for not having Federal Duck Stamps than just about any other violation. Not having this stamp could result in hefty fines, losing your hunting rights, and even confiscation of your hunting equipment. For a hunter to ignore these rules is complete negligence.

9. BLINDS

No matter what kind of blind you choose, you should conceal it well. Do not wait until the last minute to brush in your blind. This will only lead to catastrophic failures with your hunt. Ducks will not land if they know you are there. Proper concealment of your blinds can take some effort, so give yourself plenty of time to do this before and during season.

10. GPS

Hunters who spend a lot of time hunting large public duck-hunting lands may need some extra navigational tools. No matter how good a sportsman you are, you may get lost (especially when you are wet and tired). A GPS will get you from point A to point B without getting turned around. Your family and friends depend on you to be able to find your truck at the end of a hunt.

Proper concealment of your blinds can take some effort, so give yourself plenty of time to do this before and during season.

11. LIFE JACKETS

In most states it is illegal to be in a boat without life jackets for all people on board. Make sure the jackets fit your weight and the weight of any of your passengers. No need to get a silly violation ticket for this, and the safety of you and your friends and family is mandatory.

12. CLOTHING

Blending in makes a huge difference in success or failure. Camouflage clothing is a must, but you also need to make sure you have the best pattern for your wetland hunts. Have plenty of clothes so that you are not continuing to wash the same pair over and over. This will fade the pattern of your clothes, rendering them ineffective. Also, make sure you prepare for the worst conditions throughout the season. You may experience rain, sleet, snow and a lot of cold weather. An insulated parka with a hood will keep you dry and warm. There is nothing worse than being in the middle of a hunt and getting wet and cold.



13. WADERS

Not having a good pair of waders is senseless. You will need them for every situation! Get a good pair in the highest insulation that is offered. Make sure they are neoprene. A Gore-Tex outer shell will help prevent accidental tears on brush and jagged objects. Waders help keep your core body temperature up during cold days in the field. You should also wear good wool socks for extra warmth.

14. BLIND BAG

What goes into a duck hunter's blind bag is based on the hunters themselves. However, there are a few essentials. But you'll need a secure way to carry everything and keep it all organized.

15. SNIPS

You will need to cut small brush to help with concealment. Make sure your snips are sharp and heavy duty.

16. FACEMASK or FACE PAINT

Covering your face during the hunt is non-negotiable. The eyesight of ducks is immensely more powerful than that of the human eye: it is easy for a duck to spot an otherwise well-camouflaged hunter by the break in pattern caused by an exposed face.

17. FIRST AID KIT

Finger cuts and blisters are common when duck hunting. Also, you want to be prepared for minor injuries if they occur. Bandages, gauze, anti-biotic crème and finger splints can be useful. Having a few cough drops in there won't hurt either, as you don't want to be hacking as the ducks come in.

18. FOOD and DRINKS

Be prepared. Keep a quart or two of water with you, and high energy snacks. Take a bit more than you would think you will need.

19. GLOVES/HOT HANDS

Prepare for adverse weather conditions. Hand warmers and gloves will keep you fingers nimble, which will make loading and trigger control more effective.

20. FLASHLIGHT

Setting up for a duck hunt is often done in the dark. Having a good flashlight is a must.

21. CELL PHONE

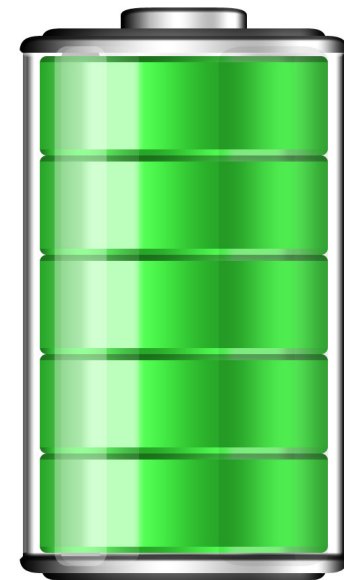
Even if you don't have good coverage where you will be hunting, you still need to keep your phone with you. Turn it off, if you want. Pack it in something waterproof. But keep it, just in case.

22. BATTERIES

Batteries die. They typically die when you need them most. Keep extra batteries for your flashlight, at least. And your GPS and cell phone, too.

23. DRY SOCKS

An extra pair of wool socks is crucially important. Wool stays warm when wet, but why wear wet socks if you have another option?



24. SHOTGUN

What makes any one shotgun the perfect duck hunting gun is a contentious debate. You want to make sure you are comfortable with the gun. It should feel good to the cheek. Whatever the action of your shotgun, make sure it works properly and does not fail. After each season, clean and lube your gun, and store it properly. During the hunting season, keep your gun lubed and clean it on a regular basis. This will prevent action friction and frustration. For the advanced waterfowl hunter, a camouflaged gun is essential.

25. SHELLS

Buying shotgun shells can be a chore. Lead shot is illegal in every state. Non-toxic shot (steel, tungsten or copper) is acceptable. Steel shot is the least expensive. Shot size for ducks should be no lower than #3 and no greater than #5. Shot size #4 will give you the broadest pattern and the best chance to hit what you are shooting, and the power to knock it down. Make sure your shells stay dry to prevent devastating barrel blow ups. Your safety and the safety of the hunters around you demands responsible precautions. If you'll be doing much walking, only carry what you anticipate shooting, and then a few more just in case.

26. CHOKES

Picking out the best choke tube is relatively simple. Most chokes for duck hunting come in Modified or Extended Modified. Paint a full sheet of plywood and set it up at 25 yards. Shoot the shell that you have selected for hunting and decide which choke gives you the best pattern. Most Full chokes are not made for steel shot. Do all of this prior to your season. Keep a few options on hand and change them out if needed.

27. DECOYS

As a duck hunter, you want to give the best presentation possible for ducks overhead. You need a decoy that has rich colors and great definition to fool a duck. How many you should hunt with depends on the hunting situation and location. Hunting in timber requires fewer decoys than hunting in a field. As a rule of thumb, 10 dozen will give you the flexibility to hunt just about every situation. Stringing up decoys in this day and age has never been so simple. A “Rig em’ Right” or “Texas” rigging works well. These can be purchased or strung up on your own. Five feet of line will allow you to be mobile and hunt in deeper water when needed. Carabiners can be used for river or deep water hunts.

28. MOTION DECOYS

If you need to simulate landing ducks with wing motion, try motion decoys. These should be set in the hole where you want the ducks to land. Motion wing decoys should not be too close together to prevent confusion. These decoys work well to conceal your location by the drawing attention away from your blind. Other motion decoys offer water motion. Splashers, swimmers, feeders and quiver magnets all work well to give your decoy spread life in extremely still water. No need to break the bank on decoys of this nature: having a few here and there will go a long way. There is such a thing as too much: when they clearly cause ducks to flare from your location, they will need to be removed.

29. DUCK CALLS

Calls come in single and double reeds and both have purposes. Single reeds give hunters the ability to reach out with the call at long distances. Double reeds have softer tones for up close or overhead calling. Have a drake whistle on your lanyard for those mallards that are circling low and overhead. Duck calls are only as good as the one blowing into them. You have to practice. Imitate live ducks in hunting situations. This is not competition calling. This is duck hunting.

30. GAME GARRIER

If you've ever carried out a limit of ducks by hand, you know it can be awkward. A game carrier makes this much easier. Also, most states require that your birds stay separated from other hunters in the blind or boat. Dogs. There is nothing like having a duck hunting companion *and* a retriever. Make sure all of your dog's shots and medications are up to date. Keep your dog on a high-protein diet to help prevent muscle breakdown and wear during a strenuous duck season. Keeping your dog healthy will ensure years of service to you, the hunter.

31. REGULATIONS BOOK

In every state, duck hunting regulations constantly change. Having current hunting regulations will help you understand what is acceptable or unacceptable during duck season. It will also help you with dates for seasons. Some states have “split” seasons. Ignoring regulations can result in heavy fines.

32. DUCK STORAGE

Proper packaging of your fowl has never been simpler. Once breasted out, place the meat into a vacuum package for the freezer. Make sure the breasts are cleaned well before packaging. Vacuum packaging will allow you to keep duck frozen longer. If you do not have access to vacuum packs, a simple freezer bag will suffice. Keep all packages labeled and tagged according to your state regulations.

Conclusions and additional resources

Duck hunting is one of the most exciting sports in America. Proper preparation prevents poor performance. Take your family and friends hunting this season to help the sport grow. Enjoying the outdoors is one of the benefits of hunting. Success in the duck blind can be simple but requires some attention. Follow the checklist and your next hunting season will be a success.

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To check out our complete line of firearms and accessories personally, visit a Beretta authorized dealer in your area.

