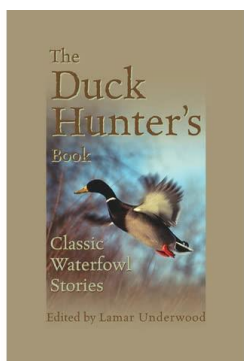


SOUNDSIDE LEARNING THIS WEEK ON CORE SOUND

JOIN US!

- **November – December:** *Gallery of Trees* continues
- **December 31:** *Anchor Drop* at Shell Point, sponsored by Bring Back the Lights

Sound Reading Material For You & Your Hunter



**The Duck Hunter's Book:
Classic Waterfowl Stories**
by Lamar Underwood

Anything can happen on a duck-hunting trip. A good marsh or bay is just an adventure waiting to unfold. It's part of what makes duck hunting the sport of dreams, tales, and paintings and what sustains one's efforts to cope with the sport's considerable logistics of guns, gear, boats, and dogs. The duck hunter is part of a magnificent and ever-changing tapestry of land, water, and skies, alive with the stirrings of elemental nature. This is a book about that tapestry. Included in this volume are some of the finest musings on duck hunting, by some of the sport's most beloved authors

Pages: 632

Mergansers

Hooded Mergansers are small ducks with a thin bill and a fan-shaped, collapsible crest that makes the head look oversized and oblong. In flight, the wings are thin, and the tail is relatively long and rounded.

The adult male Hooded Mergansers are black on top, with a white breast and rich chestnut flanks. The black head has a large white patch that varies in size when the crest is raised or lowered but is always conspicuous. Females and immatures are gray and brown, with warm tawny-cinnamon tones on the head.

Hooded Mergansers dive to catch marine insects, crayfish, and small fish. Males court females by expanding their white, sail-like crests and making very low, gravelly, groaning calls. Hooded Mergansers fly distinctively, with shallow, very rapid wingbeats.

Look for Hooded Mergansers on small bodies of freshwater. In summer, these small ducks nest in holes in trees, often near freshwater ponds or rivers. In the winter, they move to larger bodies of freshwater, marshes, and protected saltwater bays. During our cold months we get to enjoy this distinctive waterfowl.



photos from
www.allbirdsinfo.com

The Hunt

A story told and retold by my dad, Wayne Davis ... a story that may or may not be true ...

It was a cold, winter morning when I rolled out of bed to meet four of my buddies at the boat. We had talked about getting together for one last hunt before the season ended and today was the day. My truck choked awake under the layer of frost that had covered it during the night, but the heat was more hesitant to stir so I kept my coat on for the short drive to the landing.

Linwood, Norman, Billy, Mike, and I put on our waders and climbed aboard the boat with our decoys and gear. We rounded Shell Point and headed to the Hammock where our blinds were waiting. We took turns staying in the boat to retrieve the day's bounty. The quiet of our hunt was interrupted quite often on this morning since we shot more Bluebills than I could count. And then our fun and games ended abruptly with the sound of spinning blades ...

From the north skies came the pesky whirling of a helicopter which was accompanied by the grinding of a speedboat. Game wardens had invited themselves to our hunting party and the five of us had to act normal, think fast, and converse with our guests. Norman was mad as fire, though. He yelled, "How are we supposed to kill anything with helicopters flying around?" as well as some other things as our visitors approached.

The two wardens headed to our blind first, probably because Norman was making such a ruckus. Well, knowing Norman and I had far exceeded our limit, some of our Bluebills made their way into our waders for safe-keeping. Norman was standing at the edge of the blind and was asked to hand over his shotgun for closer scrutiny. It passed inspection and was returned. During the chaotic exchange, Norman handed me his gun and continued entertaining the wardens with his frustration. I was then asked to hand over my gun, but this posed a problem; you see, my gun was missing its plug. So, I did the only thing I could do and handed Norman's gun back to the warden. Unsurprisingly, it passed examination a second time.

The wardens then went inshore to our other blind where Billy and Mike were hunting. Their guns were checked and okayed, but a skinned duck was confiscated from their blind. When asked why it was there, the two confessed to being bored and skinning the Merganser. To be on the safe side, the wardens took the featherless duck with them and left us to enjoy the rest of our morning...like that was possible. Linwood picked us up from our blinds, and we headed home. That was the last time I ever went duck hunting!

A couple weeks later, Billy and Mike received a letter notifying them that their plucked Merganser was actually a Loon! Of course, a ticket was included and a fine had to be paid. Imagine our surprise when we realized that it was a Loon and not a Merganser! Imagine the disappointment being reminded of the stew we missed out on thanks to the uninvited whirlybird that cold, winter morning.

**Disclaimer: My dad has been known to stretch the truth a bit when sharing stories so this one may or may not have an ounce of truth in it. The one part that is true, though, is that Daddy never went duck hunting again after this trip. What a memorable last hunt, don't you agree?*



photo from
www.allbirdsinfo.com