

# A KIWI WEEKEND



*Paul Schembrey & Vince Vania with Canada geese.*

For several years now the Central South Island region of the New Zealand Fish & Game has held a special early Mallard season in February. Designed to assist farmers whose crops suffer the ravages from the large flocks of mallards, the season consists of the first two weekends of the month. Hunting is only allowed over cropland or pasture and must be 200 metres from permanent water with a bag limit of ten mallards per day.

Vince Vania from the Gold Coast and Paul Schembrey from Melbourne had hunted together in Argentina and decided they wanted to take advantage of the special season. They contacted Ian Head from WSX who had organised hunts for them before in Africa and Argentina. They asked him to put together a trip to the land across the ditch.

Ian arranged for them to hunt with Twilight Hunting and be guided by Shawn Flett and Bevin Knowles. Paul had hunted with both of them before and was happy with the booking. Vince was hoping to maybe bag a Canada goose as well. He had never hunted them before and was keen to have a go at them.

After being picked up from Christchurch airport on the Friday they were delivered to Shawn's house outside of Ashburton. After a

delicious evening meal prepared by Shawn's wife Dana, the plans for the following morning were discussed. The Canada goose season had begun the previous week and Shawn had a place on the Ashburton River where he said they might have success in the morning. The mallards only came to the paddocks in the evening an hour before dusk so there was plenty of day to fill in with other hunting.

The trip along the river bed the next morning was filled with four wheel driving complete with river crossings in the dark. Once the silhouette decoys were out, Paul, Vince and Shawn settled into some natural cover to await the morning flight.

Canada geese are the hardest of all waterfowl to hunt successfully. An hour passed by and then the first flight came up the river heading toward the decoys. Shawn called to them and they veered toward the set. As they came over the decoys Paul and Vince opened up on them with the semi autos Shawn had supplied. The No.3 steel shot did its job and four geese fell to the ground. Vince had his Canada goose!

With brunch back at the house out of the way a quick nap was taken and then it was time to go to the paddocks and set up the blinds and the decoys for the hunt that evening. Vince would be hunting out of a layout blind; something he had never done before and something he was looking forward to. Paul would be behind a camouflage net against a bush along a ditch and fence line.

Along with the mallard decoys, there was also paradise duck silhouettes put out. These acted as confidence decoys and they stand out from a long way off. Mallards tend to go wherever the parries are in a paddock and once there will land next to them.

The first flock of mallards arrived at 6.30pm while the car was still in the paddock and everyone was standing around discussing





Vince gets into the layout blind ready for the hunt.



Vince & Paul with part of their bag from the weekend's hunt.

how the hunt would unfold. "They're early tonight" Shawn said, "let's get ready, eh?" The car was quickly moved and Vince and Paul took up their respective positions.

The next flock to come over the paddock was met with the sound of duck calls from the two different decoy sets as Vince and Paul started blowing their callers. The two decoy sets were about three hundred metres apart and the ducks began to respond to both sets.

Vince was the first to pull the trigger and the first mallard plummeted to the ground. Not long after, Paul had his first chance and also thumped a mallard onto the ground. Both hunters were on the board. The ducks kept coming from then and there were hundreds of them!

It didn't take long and both were bagged out with their ten ducks each. Celebrations were in order and once the guns were packed away a cold beer was taken out of the esky to toast a very successful hunt. Ducks could still be seen and heard quacking overhead as they pitched into other parts of the paddock. Back at Shawn's house the bickies and dip rounded of the night along with the last overs of an ODI cricket match on TV.

Another early start had everyone out of bed the next morning for another goose hunt. A different spot was chosen as Canada's will desert an area once disturbed. This proved to be another successful hunt and five geese were bagged. An early finish was in order to get back and have a late breakfast so that a pigeon hunt could be enjoyed after lunch.

A dozen pigeon decoys along with two spinning wing decoys helped to bring the birds over the guns. After a couple of hours there were 26 pigeons in the bag. A bonus was another three geese after a stalk up to a small wetland where several geese were roosting.

An early evening meal of meat loaf and shepherds pie was had before heading off to the mallard paddock again.

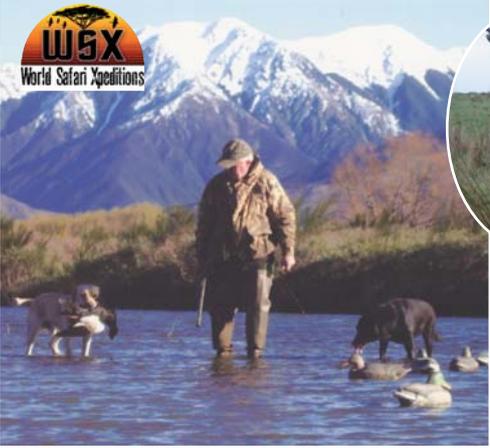
The ducks arrived even earlier this night and both Paul and Vince had again bagged out before dark. On this hunt, Vince used his Beretta DT10 that he had brought over with him from Oz. He was very happy with the ease of hunting out of the layout blind and has promised himself one for hunting back in Australia.

Monday morning brought a welcome sleep in before the trip back to Christchurch airport. It had been a great weekend's hunting and once the plane took off they were back home in just over three hours. Both Vince and Paul have already booked for the New Zealand Duck Opening and will be pulling the trigger on mallards again on the first Saturday in May.

New Zealand has abundant opportunities for the waterfowl hunter. If you have ever thought of going over there and would like to have a guided hunt with everything taken care of, then contact Ian Head at WSX (see advert on page 73) and find out what options there are and what dates are available.



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