

Duck dogs: traps

Ways and means of hunting waterfowl include: bare hands; missiles: stones, hand-dart, spear, blow-pipe (blow-gun), arrow, pellet; hawks/falcons; drugs; snares and traps: funnel traps made of stone (for example Neolithic goose-traps such as those still visible in Iceland and in active use there until approximately 1730: geese in moult were herded into these traps), baited hooks, bird lime (glue which rendered flight feathers inoperable), and nets. Netting birds is an immemorial practice; it's a matter of general interest that 5,000 years ago the Ice Man recently found in the Alps carried a bird net identical to that still in use in Portugal today (Konrad Spindler, *The Man in the Ice*, Toronto: Doubleday, 1996, first published in 1994; p. 118). Net-traps include clap nets (nets attached to frames "clapped" together), flying nets (to trap birds in flight), underwater nets (to trap divers--bottom feeders), net cages, and tunnel nets, including a special form of tunnel-trap, a decoy, with which Poodles are associated.

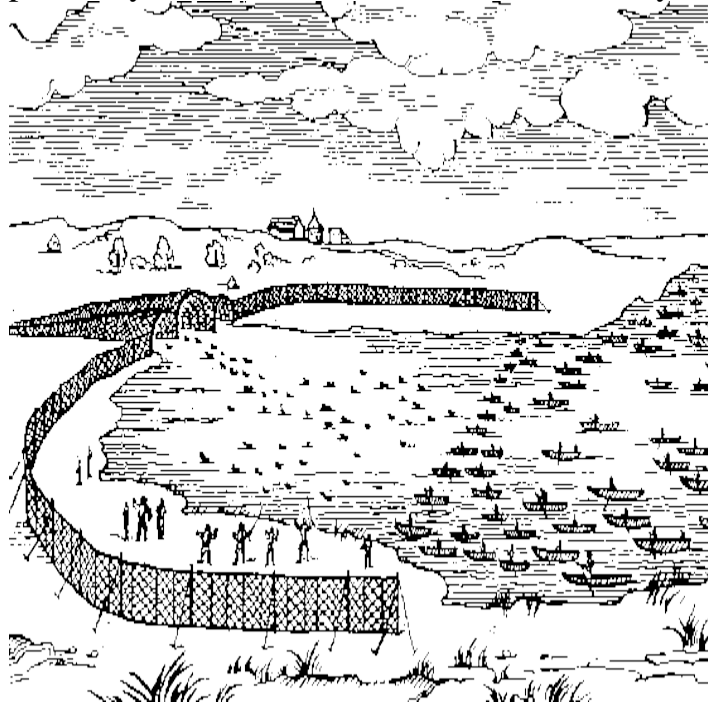
Decoys--driving

The word "decoy" is an abbreviation of the Dutch word *endekooy* or "duck cage", into which ducks were driven, and this sort of trap in Europe is almost certainly a Dutch innovation, at an uncertain date because decoys "(so named) were said to have existed (in England) in the time of King John (1167?-1216); mention is also made of them as having given rise to litigation as early as 1280, and again in 1415 and 1432. At the last-named date a mob armed with swords and sticks took 600 wildfowl out of the Abbot's Decoys at Crowland monastery, infringing the rights of private property." Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, [*The Book of Duck Decoys*](#) (London, 1886), p. 4.

The most primitive form of decoying was to use a mob of assistants to drive ducks down relatively large bodies of water and into nets: "Selincourt [Jean de Sacles, viscount of Selincourt, variously Jacques de Selincourt, in his book *Le parfait Chasseur, pour l'instruction des personnes de qualité ou autre qui aiment la chasse* (Paris: 1683)] tells us that a great Duck-hunt was held every year on the 'étangs' [ponds] of Ponthieu [area in Picardy in which the Somme traverses SE to NW and which contains Abbeville (see [...guns](#), Clements) Montreuil, and Crécy, in the month of July, when the ducks were in moult--had lost their flight feathers].... Many of the peasants in the neighboring villages were obliged to assist in driving the birds, under the title of 'statutable labour' (titre de corvée). The labourors were compelled to strip off their clothes and enter the water to drive the birds out of the beds of reed. The officers in charge followed in boats, to see that the drivers advanced in good order. Great bag-nets ('Panneaux') were extended at regular intervals along the lake.... The beaters ('Traqueurs'), armed with long poles, gently drove the Ducks, both old and young, towards the nets. Watchers

were specially stationed at the end of the nets ('les filets, au bout desquels étaient aposteés des guetteurs')." Rev. H. A. MacPherson, *A History of Fowling* (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 253.

"In former times," writes Payne-Gallwey, "vast hosts of wildfowl bred in England, especially in the fens that covered so much of our eastern counties, and which, though flooded in winter, partially dried during the summer.... It is only natural that the peasantry should have set to work as best they could to obtain the birds for food and



sale.... annual winter floods would...favour the driving of Ducks.... Daniel, in his "Rural Sports," speaks of near 3,000 mallards being taken at one drive at Spaulding. Willoughby [1676] writes that sometimes as many as 400 boats were used in this driving of the ducks, and that he knew of as many as 4,000 birds being taken at one drive at Deeping Fen. Gough, in his edition of Camden, mentions that about 1720 3,000 ducks were to his knowledge *driven* into a single net at one time." Conservation legislation prohibiting fowl being taken between 31 May and 31 August was passed in

1534, but repealed in 1551 because "'there is at this present less plenty of fowl brought into the markets than there was before the making of the said Act [1534], which is taken to come of the punishment of God, whose benefit was thereby taken away from the poor people that were wont to live by their skill in taking of the said fowl, whereby they were wont at that time to sustain themselves with their poor households, to the great saving of other kinds of victual, of which aid they are now destitute, to their great and extreme impoverishing.'" (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 4-6.)

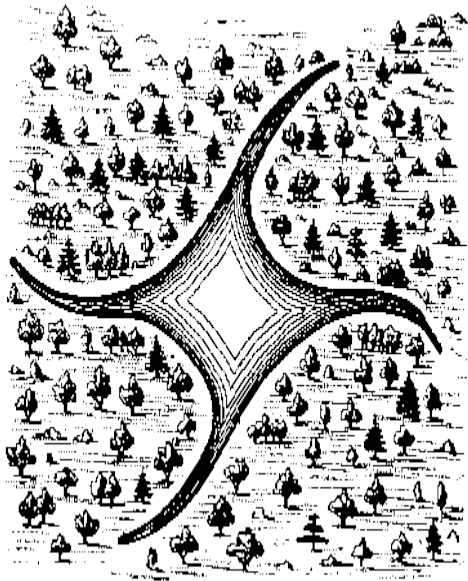
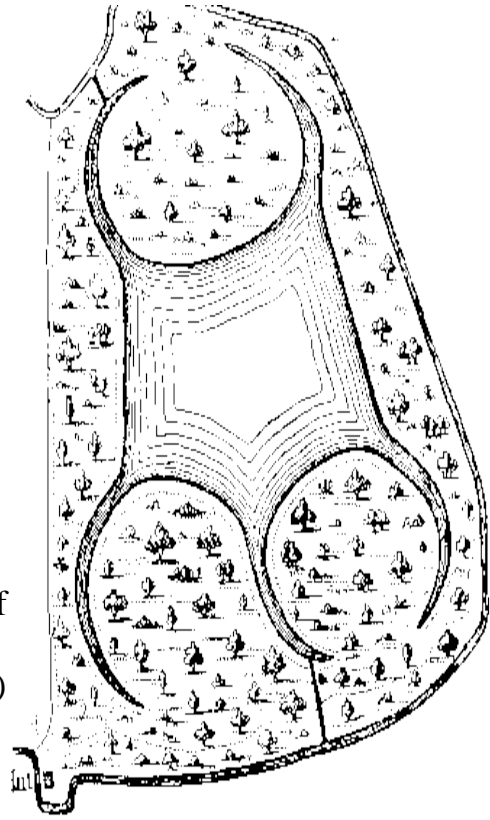
Decoys--luring

Although the practice of *driving* ducks lacking flight feathers (either because too young, or because in moult) continued, an improved technique of *enticing* (during a greatly extended period) wildfowl was developed before 1550. This involved a permanent "pipe" or curved (ducks couldn't see the far end) man-made ditch, over which an arch of netting was suspended, baited at the entrance on the shore of a small

attractive-to-ducks body of water. Because wind is a factor in successful use of this type of trap (and wind-direction shifts), a separate pipe was constructed for several winds: birds-eye views of these traps look like whirligigs--or insects. In the centre is the pond of two or so acres, and from this radiate several curved ditches, or pipes.

Decoys designed to entice are also generally understood to be a Dutch innovation, and MacPherson was "disposed to believe that the [enticing] Decoy was a recognized institution in Northern Germany long before its principles were adopted in either France or England." He cites, to support his supposition, the accounts of George I of Hesse (SW Germany) who bought, in Friesland (NE Germany, adjacent to the border with Holland) decoy-ducks at a thaler apiece in 1574, and employed, in 1575, Hildebrand of Luch (SW Germany a few miles north of Frankfurt) to construct a new decoy at Biebesheim, between the

Rhine and the Moldau, and in the same year made a decoy out of the pond at Kranichstein; short of decoy-birds, and "desiring to avoid sending a messenger to Friesland," he bought four Long-billed ducks locally (MacPherson, p. 259). In England, this form of trap was a "new artifice" in 1678, introduced from Holland to the Fens, having been impossible to maintain there before the first drainage by the Bedford Level scheme in 1653. (Payne-Gallwey, p. 4).



For a front view of a decoy "pipe", see the head-piece above. This woodcut by the Dutch artist, "Tempesta" (1645-94), shows ducks being *driven* into a decoy-pipe by six people in two punts (of an interesting type similar to the Caribbean Moses boat), aided by a duck-droving (herding) Poodle; another Poodle entices (lures; tolls); this was then a modern role. A painting by Francis Barlow (c. 1626-1704) of the decoy at Pyrford with waterfowl at sunset startled by a bird of prey shows a side view from outside the decoy, including fences, keeper's hut, and sluice for

controlling the level of water. The painting is at Clandon Park (National Trust), reproduced in David Coombs, *Sport and the Countryside* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1978), p. 65.

Phraseology of a Decoy:

- "A *Decoy* is a cunning and clever combination of water, nets, and screens, by means of which wildfowl, such as Wigeon, Mallard, and Teal, are caught alive.
- A *Decoyman* is the man who works and manages the Decoy, and who by his art, as well as by his knowledge of the birds and their surroundings when in the waters of the Decoy, entraps them.
- *The Piper* is the dog used in Decoying.
- *The Pipes* are the long, curving, net-covered ditches in which the actual capture of the ducks takes place.
- *The Screens* are the reed shelters from behind which the Decoyman, unseen by the birds, practices his allurements on them.
- *The Hoops* are the curved rods of wood or iron, half circular in shape, that span the ditches like arches, and support the netting.
- *The Head Shew* is the spot at which the Decoyman first appears, when he gets behind the ducks to frighten them up the pipe they have been lured into.
- *The Breast-wall* is formed by the one or usually two screens that flank the right-hand entrance to a pipe on looking down it, and which shelter the Breast-wall Landing.
- *The Draught of a Pipe* is the part of the pond that, getting narrower as it leaves the main water of the Decoy, leads to the pipe's entrance.
- *Reed Edges* are the small beds of reed usually placed about halfway between the mouth of each pipe for the fowl to hide in, as is their custom at times.
- *Dog Jumps* The low short screens, that connect the ends of the high screens, placed for the dog to jump over when decoying.
- *The Yackoop* (from Wake up) is the dog-jump between the breast-wall screens.
- *Tunnel Net*. The extreme end of the pipe, and which is detachable when it contains birds.
- *Landing-places* are the smooth banks that flank the mouth of each pipe, to tempt the fowl to rest thereon, and which are called the Breast-wall and the Back-wing Landings. When so resting the fowl are said to be "banked," and are then at a negotiable distance for decoying up the pipe near which they happen to sit.
- *Decoy Ducks* are the tame birds always kept in a Decoy to assist in luring the wild ones up the pipes, as well as to attract them to, and by their fellowship keep them in, the Decoy.
- *Food* The grain used for feeding the fowl up the pipes.

- *Turf* consists of a piece of burning turf of peat, which, with a piece of sharp stick stuck into it as a handle, is kept near the mouth, and breathed on to destroy any smell of the breath or clothes of the operator, when the Decoy is visited or worked." (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 17-8.)

Description of decoys; quantities of waterfowl; marketing

"Mallards....abound in Lincolnshire, the great magazine of wild fowl in this kingdom; where prodigious numbers are taken annually in the decoys," stated Pennant in the mid-18th century.

"A decoy is generally made where there is a large pond surrounded with wood, and beyond that a marshy and uncultivated country: if the piece of water is not thus surrounded, it will be attended with the noise and other accidents, which may be expected to frighten the wild fowl from a quiet haunt, where they mean to sleep (during the day-time) in security. As soon as the evening sets in, the decoy rises (as they term it) and the wild fowl feed during the night. If the evening is still, the noise of their wings during their flight, is heard at a very great distance, and is a pleasing, though rather melancholy, sound. The rising of the decoy in the evening, is in Somersetshire called rodding.

"The decoy ducks are fed with hempseed, which is flung over the skreens in small quantities, to bring them forwards into the pipes, and to allure the wild fowl to follow, as this seed is so light as to float. There are several pipes (as they are called) which lead up a narrow ditch, that closes at last with a funnel net. Over these pipes (which grow narrower from the first entrance) is a continued arch of netting, suspended on hoops. It is necessary to have a pipe or ditch for almost every wind that can blow....

"The inducement to the wild fowl to go up one of these pipes is, because the decoy-ducks, trained to do this, lead the way, either after hearing the whistle of the decoy-man, or enticed by the hemp seed.... [In the instance that the wildfowl are sleepy, will not follow the decoy ducks] use is then generally made of a dog, who is taught his lesson: he passes backwards and forwards between the reed skreens (in which are little holes, both for the decoy-man to see, and for the little dog to pass through). This attracts the eye of the wild fowl, who not chusing to be interrupted, advance toward this small and contemptible animal, that they may drive him away. The dog, all this time, by direction of the decoy-man, plays among the skreens of reeds, nearer and nearer to the purse net; till at last, perhaps, the decoy-man appears behind a skreen, and the wild fowl not daring to pass by him in return, nor being able to escape upwards on account of the net-covering, rush on into the purse-net.... [general season for decoy-use: October to February; yearly rental for a decoy in Lincolnshire: from five to twenty pounds; one in Somersetshire pays thirty pounds; "winter before last" (ca 1766) at ten decoys near Wainfleet 31,200 birds were taken; at the London market widgeon and teal sell at half the price of the mallard ducks]."

Thomas Pennant, *British Zoology* (London, 1768), vol. II, pp. 463-4.

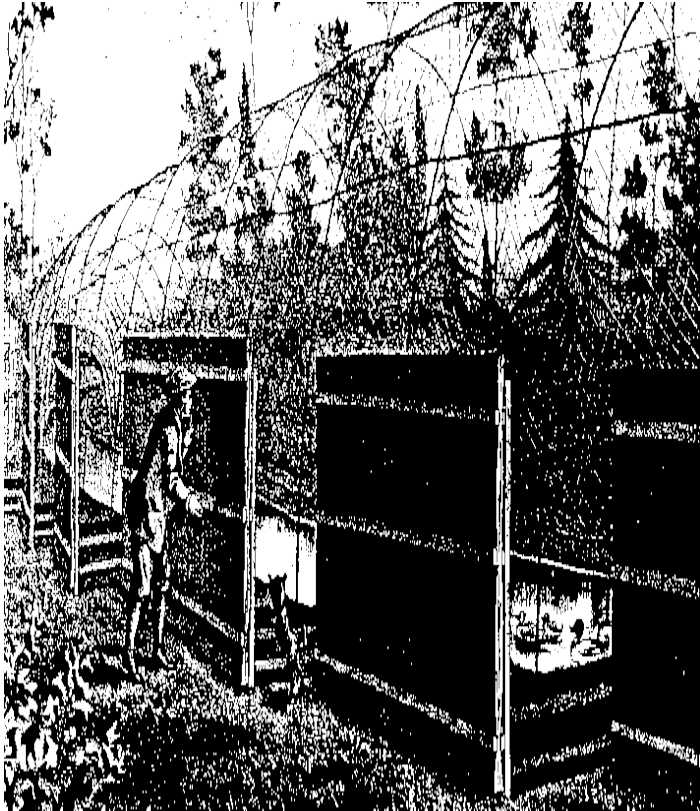
Further to marketing the ducks, "there are a set of people call'd Kedgers, who, *when the country can be travelled over*, call regularly at the Fen-men's houses to buy their fish and fowl at a vast price, and send them up to town [London], by the butter-boats, or sell them to the higlers that keep London market," states the "Fen-Parson" in his note to the line "London carriers whistle at his door", from *The Innundation; or The Life of a Fen-man: A Poem*, by a Fen-Parson (Lynn: Whittingham, ca 1771).

Decoying was a highly skilled and specialized occupation, knowledge of which passed from father to son, and which by necessity was practiced in remote places attractive to waterfowl, and thus it required extensive explanations in the various pioneering ornithology books, such as Thomas Bewick's *British Birds*, first published in 1797 and 1804. Yet decoys were in such continuous and common use in England from ca 1680 that Clements ("Snapshot") felt obliged to explain in 1874: "The French do not entice the birds into a receptacle inclosed and prepared for their visit, where they are taken alive [as in England]. All the ducks decoyed in France are shot on the spot, the moment they alight on the water." (See: [...guns](#), Clements). Clement's remark is of additional interest because, at the beginning of his century, Alexander Wilson had observed, during the course of a lengthy explanation taken from Bewick, that decoys were also "particularly in Picardy." (*Wilson's American Ornithology* (New York: 1854; first published in seven volumes 1808-13 and two additional volumes after Wilson's death in 1813), p. 611.

Why and how

"Methods used by the Decoyman to decoy the Ducks out of the Decoy Pond into the Pipes, and the Reasons why he is able to bring about this Result: We have just seen what occurs *when* the ducks are enticed far enough up the pipe for the Decoyman to drive them into the tunnel net successfully. I have yet to explain *why* and *how* the birds are induced to go the necessary distance under the net to find themselves in such an unpleasant dilemma. The actual decoying or luring of the fowl up a pipe, and well under its net, is achieved by two methods only. Though the means used are quite distinct, they both tend to the same end, and that end, by the way, is the tail end of a pipe. The wished-for result is brought about by either dogging or feeding, as Decoymen call it, or both systems combined; that is by using a dog, or else by the use of food, such as wheat, oats, or barley." (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 22-3.)

Dogging



"A dog is brought into play to attract the fowl far enough up the pipe to enable the Decoyman to cut off their retreat back again to the pond. Here I will digress a little, and say it is pretty well known how curious birds, and especially wildfowl are. They are likewise great braggarts. So are sheep and other animals. So are cattle and geese. If a dog chases a sheep, cattle, or geese, they run from him in alarm; should he hesitate or turn tail, they in their turn go after *him*. This they will do, with every expression of courage, as well as defiance. Anything that appears strange or unusual in their eyes is a great attraction to a bird or animal, and in this consists their curiosity. I have seen tame Decoy ducks almost peck a fox curled up asleep, or seemingly so, on the bank of a Decoy.

"So with the wild ducks, if they see a dog hopping about near them, now close by, now lost to view, their curiosity and excitement cannot hold them. They *must* follow to know more about it, and so they do too, necks craned and eyes brightly inquisitive. Their courage and curiosity last just as long as the dog retreats before them, as they *think* he does. They know nothing, of course, about the Decoyman hidden from their view behind the screens, who is really beckoning the dog up the side of the pipe and *from* the ducks. Should the dog turn about and face them with a whine, or even look over his shoulder, off they all splash in a flutter, till he conce more retires before them, when they follow him as before, and are thus gradually enticed on to their fate.

"The natural instinct against a fox is very strong in all birds, but especially so in regard to ducks; for is he not always ready to pounce upon them unawares when enjoying a siesta, or even when sitting on their eggs? Should a fox sneak along the banks of a Decoy, every duck is on the alert at once. they rush after him. I have seen them. They take good care, however, to keep at a safe distance; and as with a dog, would he turn towards them, they tumble over one another in anxious flight. I consider the ducks believe a dog to be in some sort a fox, or nearly related. A fox-coloured dog, with a good brush, is always a successful Decoy dog, if he otherwise does his work well. [Payne-Gallwey is amused to describe (p. 49) a Pug successfully decoying.] Ducks therefore follow dogs and foxes from curiosity, from hatred, as well as from braggadocio, and also because when he retires from them they imagine that for once in a way they are driving off a cruel oppressor--a natural enemy. They flatter themselves that their bold looks and assembled numbers bring about this satisfactory result....

"I have said a good deal about *why* the ducks follow the dog, I will now explain *how* they are induced to do so, and describe the part the dog takes in the pantomime of decoying the ducks. His master, the Decoyman, whom he knows well and obeys implicitly, whether the order be given by a whisper or by a move of the hand, signals him to the mouth of the pipe and bids him by a sign lie down behind a screen. The Decoyman next cautiously reconnoitres, through the peep-holes in the screens, the ducks swimming about the pond; and near the mouth of the pipe he has decided, owing to favourable circumstances, to work. He has, of course, selected a pipe that suits the wind, and about the mouth of which, and on the banks near, the birds are gathered.

"After noting the position of the fowl, he, by a sign, directs his dog to bound over one of the dog-jumps near the mouth of the pipe. He takes care that the dog has no birds *above* him up the pipe, but that they are always on the pond side of him, so as to follow, not to meet him. In the latter case they would not Decoy. The dog having jumped into view from the corner of the screen, runs round its front between it and the ditch of the pipe, and pops back over the next dog-jump behind the same screen. He repeats this manoeuvre, springing into view of the ducks again from the jump he just disappeared over, and so encompassing screen number two. This alternative jumping into sight, followed by a short, frisking run and then the vanishing again on the part of the dog, is continued from screen to screen till the ducks have followed the enticer well under then net and too far for their safety.

"The Decoyman, hidden himself, also moves from screen to screen towards the tail of the pipe, keeping pace with his dog, and taking a quick look now and then through the peep-hole in each screen in order to see how the ducks are progressing up the pipe after the dog.... The latter he encourages by gestures to be smart and cheerful in his movements, rewarding him from time to time with titbits of cheese, meat, or cake. If he sees the ducks hang at one spot and hesitate to proceed, he puts his dog quickly round the screen just above them, two or three times in succession. This will usually bring them on. It sometimes happens that the landing under the Breast-wall screens has fowl on it that cannot see or will not follow the dog as the latter appears from behind the screens near the pipe. In this case, the Decoyman puts his dog over the 'Yackoop' between these two screens and right among the birds, when, though apparently very alarmed at first, they usually, some of them, end by following their disturber up the pipe. The sprightlier the dog works, the better, so long as he is absolutely mute and obedient. I need scarce note that the dog, starting at or near the mouth of the pipe, continues his erratic course *invariably* towards its tail end, taking each screen and its jump in succession." (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 23-6.)

Feeding

"Feeding is one of the cleverest arts of the Decoyman, and one only learnt by long experience. The secret of it consists in just knowing how to give both the tame ducks, and the wild ones that are following them, as much grain as appeases their hunger *for the moment*, and the next moment makes them wish for more.... Tame ducks and wild ducks should be so fed that they mingle together if possible, or at all events swim steadily up the pipe, whether together or separate.... If wild ducks are very hungry they will now and then swim up a pipe after the food without the Decoyman using the tame birds to lead the way, as the latter may be out of reach of his whistle across the pond.... But...they soon catch sight of the falling grain, or see a wild duck feeding on it, else hear the Decoyman's low whistle, and so draw up from all directions. The wild birds, after due caution and a little consultation, begin feeding too, though

at first a little reservedly. But they see the Decoy ducks regaling on good store, and in fact getting more than their share--why should *they* not join the feast? So they do, timidly at first, it is true; then they wax bolder, for the food is unusual and good, and they are hungry. Somehow or other the Decoy ducks and the grain are always just a little in front of them; they find they invariably have to paddle a few feet now and then to get their share..." (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 27-8.)

Choosing between dogging and feeding

"On the coast many more fowl are taken by feeding than by dogging. This is especially the case in regard to Wigeon. Wigeon visit the tidal banks nightly, that is if the Decoy they frequent by day is within a few miles of the sea or its estuaries. If the tides cover the ooze banks longer than usual owing to an on-shore wind, or they are much disturbed by the gunners through the night, they are unusually hungry the next day. This is all in the Decoyman's favour, and he will more often feed tide-frequenting birds up the pipes owing to such causes than make them follow the dog. They are then too hungry to be curious. Wigeon at all times feed up a pipe better than they follow a dog. On the other hand, if fowl are not hungry, as is commonly the case with inland duck and Teal, when marshes and rivers and rich water meadows are near, then the dog is the most certain means of attracting their notice." (Payne-Gallwey, p. 28-9.)

Profit and Tricks

"A decoy in some seasons is astonishingly lucrative; in 1795, the Tillingham decoy, in Essex, at that time in the occupation of Mr. Mascall, netted, after every expense, upwards of eight hundred pounds, and the only birds taken were duck and mallard. In 1799, ten thousand head of wigeon, teal, and wild ducks, were caught in a decoy of the Rev. Bate Dudley, in Essex. The tricks which the decoy men employ to destroy the haunt of the birds in each other's ponds are various, and as well-calculated to produce the mischievous effects they intend, as can well be devised; such as putting a slightly-wounded bird or two into the pond--not a bird will *pipe* until the *stricken deer* is removed; and the natural shyness of the bird is so awakened by the pain of his wounds, that it is sometimes the labour of two or three days to secure him and restore tranquility. A second manoeuvre is, thrusting a feather through the nostrils of a wild fowl, and launching it into the decoy: here again not a fowl can be caught until this deformed stranger is got rid of. A third, and perhaps the most decisive, is, starting train oil into the brook or rill which supplies the pond a some distance from it; some portion of this will be carried by the current into the decoy; and in an instant the fowl, however numerous, quit and will not resume their haunt until every taint is removed." (T.B. Johnson, *The Sportsman's Cyclopaedia...* (London: 1831), pp. 201-2.)

Decoys in Holland

"Zoutkamp...on the western side of the Lauwers Zee....a very good Decoy...with 4 pipes...takes from three to four thousand fowl annually...Tibina in Friesland....two Decoys here on the W. bank of the Lauwers Zee just opposite Zoutkamp. To the Author's knowledge these two pools caught 1,000 fowl apiece in one week in the early part of November in the year 1884.... Föhr. The largest island of the North Frisian group....There are six Decoys on this island, five of which are managed by a company. Their collective average take is from 40,000 to 50,000 wildfowl in a season. In 1883-4 they accounted for over 50,000 fowl. All this portion of the coast of North Germany is densely frequented by Duck, Wigeon and Teal in the months of October and November, but on the arrival of frost the birds disperse southwards.

The Decoys of Föhr, as well as those on the neighboring islands next alluded to, are surrounded for many miles by vast ooze banks which support and attract myriads of Duck, Teal and Wigeon. The Decoys are kept very quiet, and shooting afloat is by law very strictly forbidden on this coast in the interests of the various Decoys.... [Dutch business man] owns Decoys himself and contracts with the owners of 70 others to take all their birds at a fixed price. These he sends principally to London and Paris. His residence is at Dordrecht where the birds are sent to him from the Decoys. There he packs them in osier baskets, and, if destined for England, ships them from Rotterdam. He gets birds from many Decoys in Friesland. These latter are not sent to Dordrecht, but are shipped from Harlingen.... Wild geese are not in demand, but ... often deals in Bitterns. Wet winters are most productive. The Decoy season commences in August and ends the last day of March.... [where] packs and ships birds...300 live wildfowl, consisting of Wigeon, Teal, Garganey, Pintails, Tufted Ducks and Golden Eyes, besides a number of Brent Geese all ready to be sent off to London. The birds were kept in pens on dry straw, with but little water, and were fed with buckwheat and canary seed." (Payne-Gallwey, pp. 201-3.)

Memories of a Decoy and its setting; related occupations

"...Where Ducks by scores travers'd the Fens
Coots, Didappers, Rails, Water hens,
Combin'd with eggs, to charge our pot.
Two furlongs circle round the spot.
Fowl, fish, all kinds the table grac'd,
All caught within the self same space;
As time revolv'd, in season fed,
The surplus found us salt and bread;
Your humble servant, now your penman
Liv'd thus a simple, full-bred Fen-man....
Pray, sirs, consider, had you been
Bred where whole winters nothing's seen
But naked floods for miles and miles,
Except a boat the eye beguiles;
Or Coots, in clouds, by Buzzards teaz'd.
Your ear with seeming thunder seiz'd
From rais'd decoy, [the author explains in a footnote: 'This was the six hundred Decoy; the pond, about three acres of water, well sheltered and distant from disturbance, became so great an asylum, that I have heard divers decoymen say it was apparently impossible for an egg to be dropped without hitting one. Our house was a full mile parallel distance; and when they were disturbed, any stranger would suppose it distant thunder.']--there Ducks on flight,
By tens of thousands darken light....
Born in a coy [decoy], and bred in a mill,
Taught water to grind, and Ducks for to kill...
Standing upright to row, and crowning of jacks; [perhaps a method of capturing pike probably by striking them on the head with a quant-pole used for propelling the boat]
Laying spring nets for to catch Ruff and Reeve,
Stretched out in a boat with a shade to deceive.
Taking Geese, Ducks, and Coots, with nets upon strakes,
Riding in a calm day for to catch moulted Drakes;

Gathering eggs to the top of one's wish,
Cutting tracks in the flags for decoying of fish..."

William Hall (b. 1748--at Willow Booth, in the Lincolnshire Fens--d. 1825), *A Chain of Incidents relating to the state of the Fens...* (Lynn: Wittingham, 1812.) Excerpt reprinted in Payne-Gallwey, pp. 113-4. Additional contemporary details are provided by Taplin, who, "after describing the training [of a water-spaniel] and noting that the exclamations necessary in breaking the water-spaniel are very concise and expressive--'down!' 'hie on!' 'back!' and 'hie lost!'--... informs us that the dog was used in the decoys for attracting the fowl up the pipes, and to rouse them from their condition of 'sleeping and dozing.'" Edward C. Ash, *Dogs: Their History and Development* (London: Benn; Boston: HM Co., 1927), vol. 1, p. 309; quoting from William Taplin, *The Sportsman's Cabinet*, (London: 1803-4).

Fenmen's water dogs accompany them to heaven

"Humble race of men,
Alike amphibious, by kind Nature's hand
Form'd to exist on water or on land,
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company."

The Inundation; or The Life of a Fen-man: A Poem., by a Fen-Parson (Lynn: W. Whittingham, ca 1771). Quoted in Payne-Gallwey, p. 110. Other lines from this poem are quoted in [...guns](#).

Decoys today



[Nacton Decoy](#) is in England, near Ipswich on the east coast; Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers are used there. In Holland, decoy-traps are still used for banding birds; a special spaniel, the fast-moving Kooikerhondje, dating from at least the mid-16th century, was developed to perform--with antics--the luring ("tolling") function, as was the now-extinct English Red Decoy Dog. Please also note that the Japanese enjoy an ancient form of duck-decoying, in which ducks are additionally trapped on their way down the pipe by a concealed person wielding a duck "butterfly"-net; people who have experienced this sport describe it as "playing tennis with ducks".

The head-piece for this section is an engraving by Antonio Tempesta (1555-1630): "1060 (164) Hunters Chasing Wild Geese into a Large Net, from *Hunting Scenes II*. 97x137. Vienna" (British Museum citation) which shows a swimming water spaniel driving a duck into a decoy trap;

second water spaniel on shore acts in the tolling (luring) role. See also Rev. H.A.MacPherson, *A History of Fowling* (Edinburgh: 1897), p. 234. A detail of the "enticing" Poodle is shown here. Other illustrations: Driving wildfowl in the 16th century, Payne-Gallwey, p. 5; birds'-eye views of decoys, *ibid.* p. 73 and p. 179; dogging, *ibid.* opposite p. 26.