

Organized March 1961

January 2013

Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 1



January Speaker: Mark Biggs

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Discounted Ticket Sales for the 34th Annual
Woods and Waters Foundation Banquet end 1-31-13!

GO ONLINE AND ORDER YOURS TODAY!! dwwcc.org

Next Meeting: January 10, 2013

Where: Sheraton Dallas North

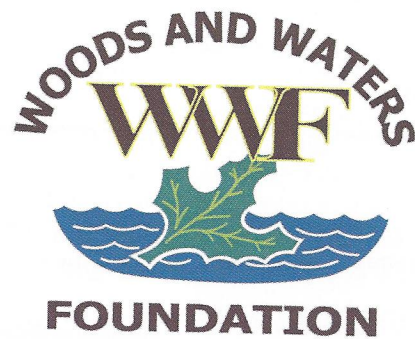
4801 LBJ Freeway

Dallas, TX 75244

Time: 6:30

**RSVP requested prior to Monday,
1-7-13**

info@dwwcc.org or 214-570-8700



34th Annual Banquet and Fundraiser

February 23, 2013

Plano Centre

2000 E. Spring Creek Pkwy.

Plano, TX 75071

Dallas Woods and Waters Club ~ Woods and Waters Foundation
1221 W. Campbell Rd., Suite 215 ~ Richardson, TX 75080 214-570-8700

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King Eider Hunting is About Getting There

By: Ramsey Russell

Occasionally someone will introduce themselves at our GetDucks.com booth by holding up an index finger and explaining that they have killed every single North America waterfowl species except for ONE. That's all that need be said. I then describe to them the awaiting adventure that is Alaska king eider hunting.

The rarest and most coveted of North American duck species, king eiders are the Holy Grail of trophy duck hunting. The hunt is itself a trophy adventure limited to a maximum of 30 guests annually. The hunt takes place about 850 miles northwest of Anchorage, on a small, wind-swept island in the middle of the Bering Sea. Many returning hunters describe king eider hunting as the pinnacle of their trophy waterfowling careers. As the following story demonstrates, I'm no exception.

The hardest part is getting there. We arrived to St. Paul Island at 2:30 a.m. It was 12 hours later than expected. We weren't scheduled to hunt the following morning so we celebrated with a few drinks. My clothes and guns made it. Those of outdoor writer, Brian Lynn, did not until a day or so before we left. He survived comfortably thanks in no small part to modern-day Columbia Omniheat technology and a few borrowed clothes.

It's usually warmer on St. Paul Island than in Anchorage. It's the wind and proximity to water that gets you. The wind howls with gusts up to 50. St. Paul Island averages about 25 mph. The lowest wind-chill I can remember was minus 11 F. Wetness: spray over the bow of the boat; rogue waves unpredictably coming from nowhere, dousing from head to toe when hunting the ice-encased, rocky points. Wet stuff turned to ice quickly on St. Paul, which was a good thing - because it didn't drip for too long!

Everyone shot trophy king eiders. Most achieved non-resident season limit of 4 king



eiders. All clients last season did equally as well, underscoring that this Alaska king eider hunting package remains the most practical place in the world to successfully hunt king eiders. One very lucky hunter shot the 10th-ever banded king eider ever reported. Russian fur foxes were as abundant as flies at a summer picnic. I was glad to have taken along a .17 HMR.

"The single day that the winds subsided sufficiently for us to safely take to the water in boats, camp hunters bagged 10 trophy kings."



Due to horrific northeast winds, our group shot mostly from points. Until the snow had melted sufficiently, getting there required a 4-5 mile ATV ride after we'd parked the truck as far as we could drive it. After the snow melted, we had to walk no further than a few yards to our strategic vantage point. Daylight is about 10:30 a.m. and peak king eider flight lasts for about 2 hours. Afternoon hunts from rocky shores or from the boat last about 2 hours also. That's plenty of time to hunt king eiders and enjoy their frigid environment.

King eiders, harlequins, and oldsquaws were the primary species seen. Sea ducks hug the water, staying behind waves to mitigate wind drag. Ideal winds for hunting points are gale force blowing directly towards the shoreline



and awaiting hunters - it pushes some of them near or over the bank. The rest are seen parading in flocks about a hundred yards or more distant. The single day that the winds subsided sufficiently for us to safely take to the water in boats, camp hunters bagged 10 trophy kings. Our boat also scored 2 pacific common eiders, juveniles though they were, as welcomed bonuses. I can scratch them off the life-list until I can return for some serious Pacific eider hunting in Cold Bay.

One afternoon we busted through daunting 4- to 5-foot breakers at the west-side launch and finally hunted "The Slick." We boated up-

wind of rafted long-tailed ducks (oldsquaws), drifted into them while hidden, in part, by huge swells. The scene resembles a swarm of bees near a kicked hive with ducks circling the boat, returning greedily to the slick. We took turns picking long-tailed drakes, repeating as needed until we had filled our limits. It was an enjoyable half-hour. And wouldn't you know it - king eiders like that area, too. South of The Slick and nearer the wave-churning area colloquially known as The Washing Machine, Brian and I each picked up our final drake king of the trip that afternoon.



offer entails a week of Alaska king eider hunting. It is cold. It is wet. It is windy. It is true King Eider ambiance. The real challenge is getting there - not necessarily closer to trophy king eiders, but nearer to a state of mind whereby the pursuit of king eiders is not the insanity that some might otherwise describe it. Not unlike big game trophy hunting, king eider hunting is the dedication to an ideal. The king eiders trophies are mere reminders of having finally gotten there, too.

Recovering downed birds can be an adventure for hunters unaccustomed to extreme sea duck hunting adventures. From the boat, we motored up and deftly plucked them from the cobalt-colored water with rubber-gloved hands. From the shore, things got trickier. The surf brings them in. Imagine scrambling down those icy rocks, reaching into the surf that gets mid-thigh deep and grabbing one. Thankfully, the guide-staff are pros in these regards. On Sea Lion Neck, a rock-studded protuberance south of Northeast Point, there was a span of about 50 yards outside of which felled bird recovery was unlikely so we were careful to drop incoming birds into the zone.

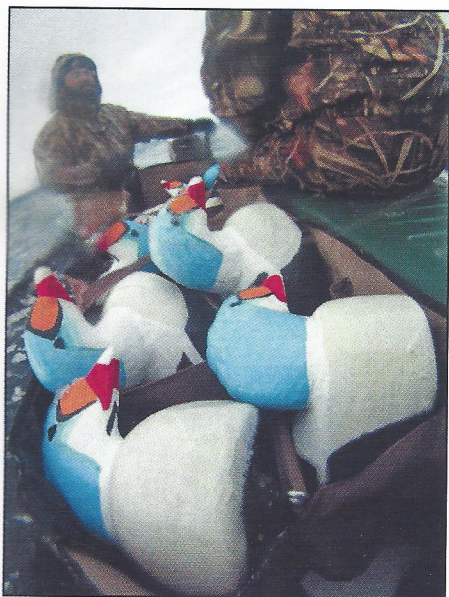
superior pattern in the St. Paul winds. I once read that the tradition of Indian shikars demanded one-shot kills for the noble Royal Bengal Tiger. In hunting Alaska king eiders, the analogy seems apropos: they're a pelagic species that are not relatively plentiful where humanity can actually access them near shore, at great peril and discomfort nonetheless. You have got to play for keeps; to assume that each opportunity at a nice drake king eider may be your only chance. Go under-gunned for neither Bengal Tigers nor King Eiders.



For oldsquaws and harlequins, 1.25 ounce steel 3s and hevishot 6s worked perfectly. Hevishot 4s are ideal for the eiders. My Battleaxe Browning Two-tube (Citori), chambers 3.5-inch rounds, and size

From boats, the strategy is to troll a tail-line rigged with over-sized, hand-fashioned, bur-lap-wrapped foam king eider decoys. Birds from a distance will toll into the decoys, but this method is also like spotting for birds while saltwater fishing - we'd actively look for birds while trolling the water. From the upwind side of rafted birds, we'd then idle and drift. Kings and oldsquaws, especially, will often pass right over the decoys during their departure, easily within gun range. Petite harlequin ducks the color of newly-dyed denim prefer close proximity to rocky shorelines. It's a daunting task to hang over the bow and scoop one up in between waves crashing the shore. They were very abundant while hunting Alaska king eiders at St. Paul Island for hunters so inclined.

*Ramsey Russell is a Certified Wildlife Biologist that owns and operates **GetDucks.com**. Ramsey Russell 's GetDucks.com is a full-time, full-service agency specializing in world-wide wing-shooting with major emphasis on trophy duck species and exceptional experiences. Your trip of a lifetime deserves - and receives - their full attention. From Brandon, Mississippi, his work takes him to the world's foremost waterfowl hunting areas, but Ramsey's favorite times are spent hunting locally with his 3 children, close friends and up-an-coming yellow lab.*



2 steel and hevishot seemed to hold a

King eiders make their living on the fringes of the polar ice cap, where they dive deeper than any other waterfowl on earth to feed on crustaceans. With a sky-blue crown framing a prominent, large knob as bright as sun-ripened citrus, king eiders are certainly among the most exquisite crown jewels of waterfowl collections. But I choose first and foremost to collect hunting experiences. To have experienced all that duck hunting has to

