

BLIND SIDE WATERFOWL

WATERFOWL AND WINCHESTER

Delivering innovations in shotshell technology since its earliest days, Winchester is as much a part of the duck hunting tradition as decoys and famed retrievers.

By David Draper





WINCHESTER IS ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD, OFFERING MODERN WATERFOWLERS THE NEWEST IN TECHNOLOGY BASED ON 150 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

SINCE PREHISTORIC MAN FIRST BIT INTO A DUCK BREAST AND THOUGHT, "THIS TASTES PRETTY GOOD," HUNGRY HUNTERS HAVE PURSUED WATERFOWL.

Ancient hunters threw sticks and spears, while the Egyptians were known to trap and snare ducks and geese. Lucky for us modern-day waterfowlers, Winchester came along in the late 1800s and made life in the marsh a lot more enjoyable, not to mention successful.

It's probably not a coincidence the rise of waterfowling's popularity parallels the 150-year history of the Winchester brand. While rifles were first to roll off the company's line in 1866, it was just a few years later that they introduced the level action Model 1887 shotgun, followed by the iconic Model 1897 pump action shotgun which quickly

became a favorite of bird hunters looking for quick, reliable follow-up shots.

Always innovating, Winchester soon got into the ammunition business, offering paper hulls and shotshell components to hunters across the country. In 1886, the first loaded Winchester shotshells found their way into the duck boats of waterfowl hunters along the Mississippi River as well as along the Eastern Seaboard. Subsequent ammo introductions quickly followed, including Winchester's Star line, which coincided with the appearance of the lever-action 1887 shotgun that same year.

Dawn of a New Century

From there, Winchester's shotshell lines grew, and as the 19th century came to a close, the company catered to its customers, offering their shells loaded in either black or the new smokeless powder. In the very early 1900s, boxes of Winchester Nublack featured a trio of rising mallards, attesting to the desire of traditional waterfowlers for an efficient blackpowder load. Still, modern technology was creeping into the sport and Winchester kept pace. Marketed as "the finest smokeless powder shell science can produce," Winchester's high-brass Leader was a hit with wingshooters looking to

1900
Repeater



1905
Nublack



Waterfowlers in the early 1900s witnessed the first of many advancements in shotshell technology, courtesy of Winchester, with the introduction of the company's Repeater and Nublack loads.

KING BUCK

Of all the famous hunters associated with the Winchester brand, perhaps none is as famous, or honored, as a dog. King Buck was no ordinary dog, not in eyes of his owner John Olin, founder and president of Winchester's parent company, or his trainer T.W. "Cotton" Pershall, who led the black Labrador Retriever to an impressive 83 finished national field trials out of a possible 85. Before or after, no retriever has completed more than 62.

As famous as King Buck was as a field-trial dog, he was just as accomplished in the field. John Olin, who knew a thing or two about such matters, was heard to brag that King Buck was "one of the finest wild duck retrievers I have ever seen. In spite of his intense field trial training, he loved natural hunting. He used his head in the wild, just as in trials. From his first wild duck shoot, he was beautiful to watch."

Even the field wasn't big enough to contain King Buck's reputation. In 1959, the Lab, by then retired and living a good life at Olin's Nilo Kennels, was bestowed perhaps the greatest honor a duck-hunting dog could aspire to when it was featured as the subject for the 26th Federal Migratory Waterfowl Stamp. Artist Maynard Reece's iconic painting shows King Buck in his element, standing regally with a mallard in his mouth. To this day, it is the only Duck Stamp not to have featured a species of waterfowl, and is arguably the most famous of them all.—D.D.



King Buck appeared on the 1959 Federal Duck Stamp.



John Olin (pictured with his champion retriever King Buck) was an avid sportsman who set the tone for Winchester's support of wildlife conservation.

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— JOHN OLIN

take down high-flying ducks and geese, as was the Repeater Speed shells that boasted “the utmost in long-range, powder loads.”

As a good friend and hunting partner of John Olin, conservationist and writer Nash Buckingham would ultimately have a hand in the development of early shotshell technology that would fuel Winchester's waterfowl loads for decades to come. The famous waterfowler's opinions were important, and as such he was among the first to test Olin's experimental 3-inch shotgun shells, which

eventually came to be known as Super-X. Today, the Super-X lineage can be traced to Winchester's Xpert Hi-Velocity, shotshells that continue to lead the industry in value and performance, and Drylok, an extremely water-resistant load with a lacquered primer, sealed shot cup and plated steel shot for hunters who regularly find themselves in those tough waterfowling conditions that, not incidentally, make for the best hunting stories.

From Buckingham's Beaver Dam to Maryland's Eastern

Shore and Horicon Marsh to the Great Salt Lake, waterfowling is a pastime that leans heavily on the tradition of those hunters who came before. However, that emphasis on history doesn't mean the waterfowler's chosen pursuit is stuck in the past, far from it. Today's duck and goose hunters are constantly adjusting their tactics and techniques with innovative, new approaches, responding to both pressured birds and an increase in hunters who have discovered waterfowling as one of the most exciting and challenging hunts around.

WINCHESTER & CONSERVATION

Thanks to the efforts of conservation-minded hunters and companies like Winchester, today's duck and goose hunters are enjoying golden times in terms of the number of birds that migrate each fall. Duck counts are at historic highs and urban-dwelling geese offer early-season opportunities that weren't even

dreamed about just a decade ago.

In the early 20th century, facing decreased populations of migratory birds like ducks and geese, hunters themselves started the modern conservation movement through the development and passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934. Both of these acts, which were fully supported by hunters, placed otherwise absent regulations on the harvest of ducks and geese, and generated funds dedicated to wildlife and habitat conserva-

tion by the purchase of the required Federal Duck Stamp. Early on, Winchester recognized the importance of preserving waterfowl for future generations and giving back to the resource through habitat and wildlife management. For more than 20 years, Winchester has been a dedicated partner of Ducks Unlimited, working closely with them to fund and develop the organization's many important wetland and wildlife projects. Winchester today is the only ammo manufacturer permitted to include the famed DU duck head logo on its packaging.—D.D.

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Still Moving Forward

Winchester, too, is always moving forward, offering modern waterfowlers the newest in technology, all based on 150 years of experience, of course. This is true whether we're talking about the advancements in the Winchester family of shotguns or Winchester Blind Side—the most innovative waterfowl load since the development of smokeless powder.

I got my first taste of Blind Side on a product-testing hunt in 2010, a year before the load's introduction to the public. True to form, Winchester wanted to make sure such a radically different load was ready for mass consumption. We were gunning at another historical waterfowling hotspot near Cape Girardeau, Mo., where the ducks stacked up on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

These birds had obviously seen a few things during their migration down the Mississippi River as they were flying high coming off the refuge in singles and pairs. The four of us in the pit could barely make them out through the cold November mist, but our pleading calls were enough to pull a few into range, if not exactly back-flapping into our decoy spread. Still, at extended distances, the ducks didn't stand a chance against Blind Side. From my first early-morning shot until we finally put a limit on the strap in the



The shot cloud is designed to hit waterfowl like a swarm of high-velocity tumbling bricks—preventing over penetration and maximizing energy deposit.



The Diamond Cut Wad contains three rear deploying petals that stabilize the shot cup for truer flight.



Because the HEX Shot is less aerodynamic, it's contained in a single, unsplit shot cup that holds patterns together longer for deadlier patterns.

THE HEX SHOT EDGE

Blind Side ammunition combines ground-breaking, stacked HEX Shot technology and the Diamond Cut Wad in the most deadly Winchester waterfowl load available.

**BLIND
SIDE**



“ THE DUCKS DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST BLIND SIDE.”

late afternoon, I was amazed at the lethality of this unique, new load. Put bluntly, when we were on target, Blind Side killed those ducks dead.

That effectiveness is a direct product of Blind Side's unique HEX Shot stacked into a specially designed Diamond

Cut wad. The stacked cylinder eliminates wasted space found in a shot cup packed with round pellets, resulting in a larger, heavier payload with up to 15 percent more pellets. Think of it as a swarm of little cubes—all with multiple cutting surfaces created by the hexahedral shape—that impact the target in a tighter, denser shot string. To say Blind Side has deep-penetrating knockdown power is an understatement.

Since its introduction in 2011, Winchester Blind Side has

developed a loyal following of believers who previously would have scoffed at the idea of square shot. Sure round pellets do fly straighter, but thanks to modern technology and a shot cup that keeps the six-sided pellets together as they exit the muzzle, Winchester's engineers were able to advance decades of shotshell technology to the next dimension and create an advantage out of shot with a completely different shape.

Blind Side is just a glimpse of what the future holds for Winchester, and for waterfowlers. Although hunting will

always stay true to its roots in the traditions that are passed down through generations, hunters, and the companies that support them, won't shy away from innovation, either. Just like graduating from stones to shotguns, blackpowder to smokeless, lead pellets to lead-free shot options, waterfowlers will continue to embrace new tools and products, all while never forgetting the storied history behind them. **W**