

So, we are through the holidays and I for one am glad to have made it alive. What was flu, then bronchitis turned out to be walking pneumonia and I almost bought the farm twice and felt like buying for most of two more days. In all I was out of most action for six weeks.

Of course, during all this I continued to duck hunt. Wilmington was uneventful except for a large population of wood ducks we should have videotaped. Two mornings a week we went up to adjust their attitudes and mostly go humbled. A limit of two was a forgone conclusion but averages were usually way off. I had been using a 20 gauge quail gun up this narrow creek for years but these things were in our face and trying to shoot a dodging animal that's going 40 20 and 30 feet away is not easy. I missed one with both barrels and he landed right beside me and swam off while I acknowledged that the round went to him.

Finally, I went back to the 12 and started ignoring what came tight and shot 30 and 40-yard shots that fell in the water while just watching everything else. We had 200-300 every time with approaches changing on the tide and wind. Always some would land 10-20 feet away and some of the groups had 15 or 20 in them. We were always done before 8:00 and were back to work.

Currituck the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> was beyond a hoot. We left Wilmington in a snowstorm that found us going backwards down I-40 at 60 mph thanks to a Good Samaritan who crossed the median to help some other poor fool in a ditch. The slush he threw up coming back onto the highway froze instantly and wiped us out. It was the longest slide I can remember in a life that has involved more than a few- thoughts like "should I put me seat belt on?" and "is this vehicle subject to rolling?" and "are we going to stop before we get into those lanes of oncoming traffic?" crossed my mind. We ended up on the inside shoulder of the opposite lane and were not stuck, which was lucky for the Goddamned Good Samaritan because three duck hunters would have been in a foot race to be first to kick his ass.

All the way up we looked for the side ditches to be icing up and were more than a little disappointed when the guide said "no kill, no fee." His blind had been iced

Written by Albert Stevens – Duck Season 2000