

New Ethical Codes for Wingshooters

Here is the SA Wingshooters' Code of Conduct for Waterfowling.

Acknowledgements: BASC and Charles Duff

WATERFOWLING CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Safety Above All

Know at all times where other shooters are. Do not consume **any** alcohol before or during a shoot. Beware of shot pellet ricochets from water. Do not move about in mud and water with a loaded gun. When going wildfowling at a site for the first time, either first go in daylight or with someone who knows the area. Make sure you know the safe access and exit routes, marsh boundaries and any inherent dangers. Observe the Wingshooters General Safety Code. It is your duty to take immediate action if anyone acts dangerously or illegally, no matter who.



2. Bird Identification is Paramount

Because of the high probability that protected or illegal species can be confused with legal quarry, especially in poor light or dusk, it is very important that wildfowlingers take special care **to identify the quarry**. Know their flight characteristics, calls and habits and stop shooting immediately if a wrong species is shot by accident. In all provinces, night shooting is prohibited.

3. Use a Gun Dog & Retrieve All Birds

Unless the shooter is prepared to swim himself, it is **unethical to shoot waterfowl over water unless you have a retriever**. Mark shot quarry and ensure that it is retrieved immediately and, if necessary, humanely dispatched. A sharp knock on the head with a suitably heavy stick or priest is most effective. Do not leave a wounded bird in order to shoot another bird. Never leave shot birds (dead or wounded) on the water, so stop shooting while there is enough light left to retrieve a shot or wounded bird. Your dog may be cold and wet — attend to its needs before your own!

4. Use the Appropriate Equipment

Use the shot and load best suited to the quarry. Generally a 12-bore gun with 32 to 36g cartridges, will be appropriate. For larger ducks like yellow-billed duck, shot size no. 4 or 5 is widely used, for small ducks (teal) no. 6, and for geese, no. 3 or 1 or, for spurwing, even BBs.

Binoculars will enhance the day and be useful for bird identification. Don't forget the Wingshooting Handbook for bird IDs. Waders are normally recommended, and a large canvas bag is useful both to carry equipment and to sit on. Also include a small torch in case you have to negotiate wetlands in the dark. Wear comfortable, inconspicuous, warm, waterproof clothing. A wading pole is a useful aid. Always carry a pull-through and copper jag as it is all too easy to get mud in the muzzle of your gun.

Make sure you are well hidden — use camouflage,

decoys and bird calls whenever possible. After the shoot, pay special attention to cleaning your gun — water and blood will quickly corrode it. Check for faults and malfunctions before the gun is used again.

5. Conservation and Compassion

The use of lead shot for shooting over wetlands is being phased out in many countries. In England the use of lead shot to shoot all wildfowl wherever they occur, as well as shooting over wetlands, has been banned. In South Africa, the voluntary use of **bismuth ammunition** when shooting over wetlands and water is strongly urged. Never shoot waterfowl at their resting places when they are moulting. Report anyone chasing moulting birds (e.g. with boats) to the Police or SA Wingshooters. Store shot birds securely and have them drawn (intestines removed) as soon as possible.

6. Avoid Wounding

Never shoot at birds that are out of range. Range judging when wildfowling is particularly difficult. Try to identify nearby features that can be used as reference marks so that you do not shoot beyond your own shooting skill distance (generally 40 metres). Choke only alters the density of shotgun patterns and does not necessarily result in more birds in the bag. Increasing choke requires increased accuracy and does not increase the shooting distance; it is no excuse for attempting out-of-range shots. Avoid double (left and right) shots and keep the second barrel as back-up in case the first shot only wounds.

7. Have Consideration for Fellow Shooters

Make sure that you are aware where the other shooters are. Consider their situation and don't spoil their flight line. **Do not move about** in your position, remain still at all times and take particular care not to scare off birds flying towards fellow shooters. If you have to pick up a bird, do so quickly and get back to your position as soon as possible. Never shoot a solitary bird or dove when there is a large flock heading towards other shooters.

8. No Littering

Clean up behind yourself and even other people. Never leave cartridge cases, rubbish or unsightly camo poles in the marsh. Close all gates, do not disturb any farm animals and take particular care not to start veld fires. **▲**