

MALLARD DUCKS



In the State of Oregon

The mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) because of its size and fine flavor, is the most sought after species of waterfowl in Oregon. It is the most common nesting duck in Oregon and the local flocks are supplemented by large migrations from northern areas in the fall. Many mallards remain in Oregon during the winter wherever open water and food are available.

HABITAT NEEDS 1/

Water. This is an essential element to all kinds of ducks. Mallards and the other species of ducks known as "dabblers" or "surface-feeders" (as separated from "diving" ducks), prefer shallow ponds, small streams, lakes, and flooded fields. Mallards utilize water for drinking, resting, loafing, mating and rearing of young.

Food. Mallards prefer to feed by "dabbling" in shallow water. They can reach 15 or 16 inches deep without submerging completely. They often fly several miles to upland fields where cultivated grains are available. The most dependable method of attracting ducks to a place is to grow a crop of barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, wheat, smartweed, or sudangrass which can be flooded from one to fifteen inches deep during the fall and winter. This generally requires a low dike and suitable water control systems.

- 1/ The habitat requirements of gadwall, pintail, shoveler, and teals (blue-winged, cinnamon, and green-winged) are similar to those of the mallard. Widgeon (often called baldpate) have habits similar to those of the other dabbling ducks except that they feed on clovers, red fescue, wheat, and widgeongrass more than other species of ducks. Pastures which attract ducks should be closely grazed.

Natural foods which are most attractive are arrowhead, barnyardgrass, bulrush, pondweeds, and smartweed. Mallard broods feed heavily on aquatic insects.

Cover. Ducks require special vegetative cover during the seasons of nesting, rearing broods, and adult moult.

Courting, pairing, and mating habitat (mid-winter and early spring, before nesting activities). Little or no vegetative cover is required as these activities are generally performed on small open-water areas with bare shorelines. Mating habitat, defended as a "territory" by the male, usually is one or several small, shallow, open-water ponds (usually temporary runoff type) in fields, pastures, or marshy lands. Water depths of such ponds generally are less than six inches and may disappear within ten to fourteen days.

Nesting habits and habitat (about March, April or May for other dabblers). Mallards nest on ground, usually within 100 yards of water, but sometimes as far as a mile away, in medium-height vegetation such as alfalfa, redbud, and other grasses. The hen selects the nesting site and lays eight or ten eggs, which are incubated for 26 days after the first egg is laid.

Loafing sites. Mallards spend a great deal of time loafing, sunning, or preening themselves on mud flats, gravel bars, or small islands. Water areas can be made more attractive to mallards and other ducks by creating supplementary loafing sites with small islands, floating logs or rafts, or gravel bars.

Grazing. Exclusion of livestock from lake and pond areas does not ordinarily improve mallard habitat. Grazing in late summer and fall removes some of the dense vegetative cover, which ducks avoid, and generally makes the area more attractive. Over-grazing to the extent that nesting cover is destroyed or nests trampled should be discouraged.

HUNTING

Hunting on small areas should be limited to one to three days a week and only two or three hours a day so that mallards will not be driven away. Refer to State and Federal regulations governing waterfowl hunting.

Refuge areas should be provided on large units if hunting is practiced every day or every other day.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

See attached sample layout for a waterfowl hunting area.

Wildlife Food Crops

Seeding Recommendations

Variety	Seeding Rate Per Acre (lbs.)	Growing Period (days)	Production (lbs/acre)
Sudan Grass (drilled)	6-10	100-130	600-1500
(broadcast)	20-25	100-130	
Field Corn <u>1/</u>	5	140-160	1700-4000
Sweet Corn <u>2/</u>	10-15	75-100	900-2400
Barley and Wheat			
Winter (drilled)	75-100	200+	1200-3600
Spring (drilled)	75-100	80-100	1000-3200
Millet, proso (drilled)	20	90-120	1500-2000
(broadcast)	40	90-120	
Millet, foxtail (drilled)	15-20	80-100	1500-2000
(broadcast)	30	80-100	
Buckwheat, tartary (drilled)	30	70-85	1000-2200
(broadcast)	50	70-85	
Buckwheat, common (drilled)	30	70-85	800-2000
(broadcast)	50	70-85	
Smartweed, pink ladythumb	10	70-100	800-1200
nodding smartweed	10	70-100	800-1200
Rye, cereal (drilled)			
(fall seeded - Oct. 1)	60-90	200+	1400

Drilled preferred over broadcast. Low yields are associated with poor soils, low fertility, lack of moisture, adverse weather, and poor drainage. Spring seeding applies unless otherwise specified.

1/ Field corn varieties - KE 497; Ore 355; Pioneer 3859; Pioneer 3862.

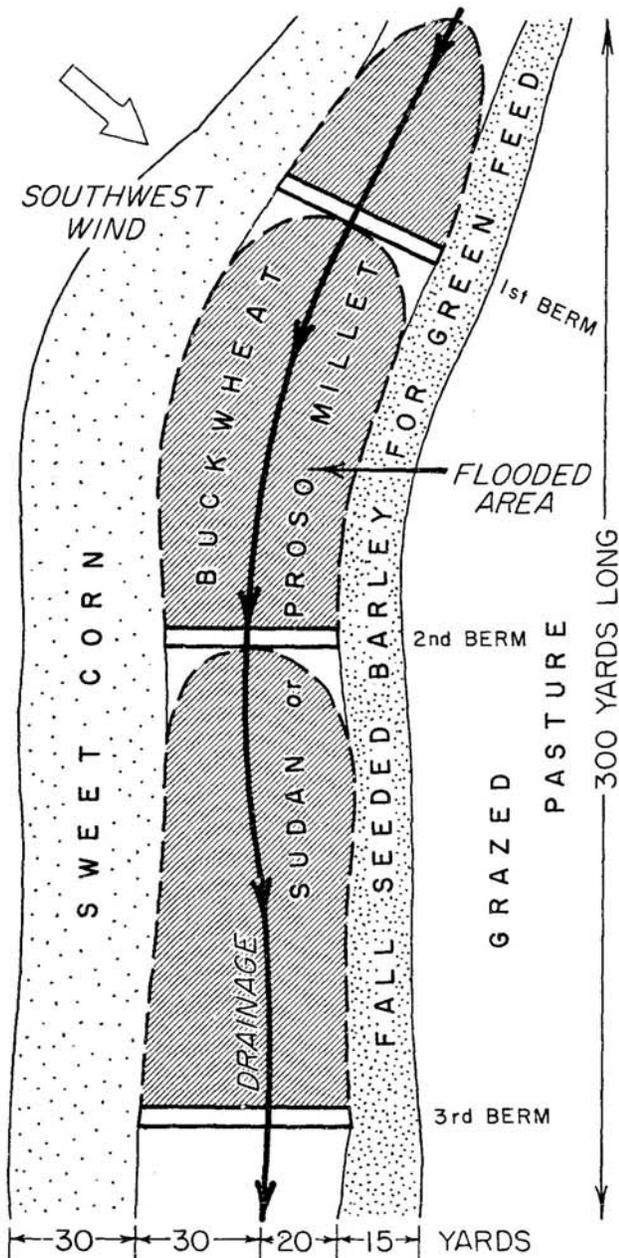
2/ Sweet corn varieties - Queen Anne; Golden Jubilee; Spancras; Marcras; Morning sun; MK-75.

These foods are primarily grown for waterfowl and upland birds.

Sample Layout for

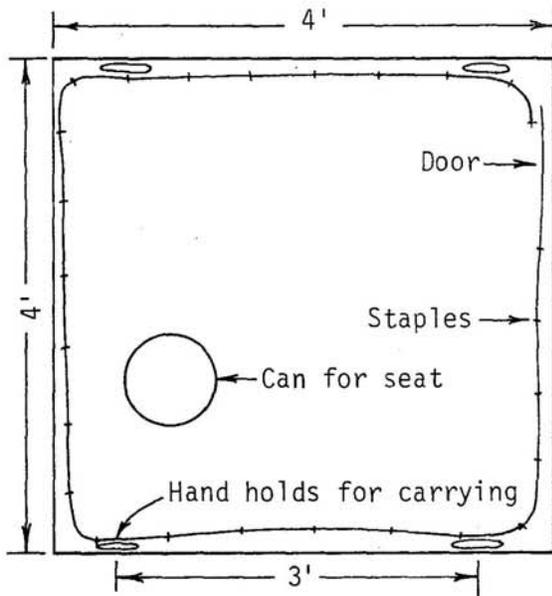
WATERFOWL HUNTING

Featuring choice foods managed
with water (3 ponds)

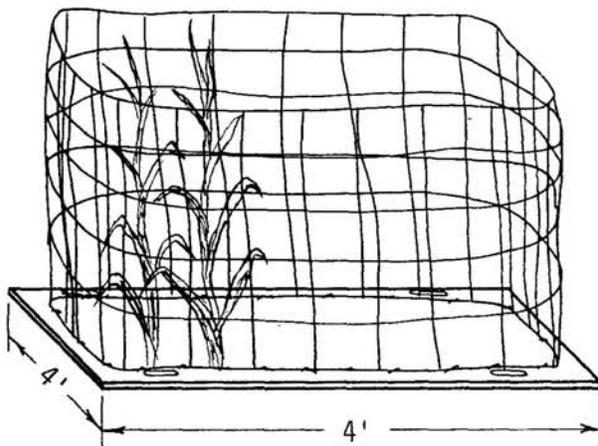


- 50 yards is maximum width for flooded area. The long, narrow shooting ponds bring birds within good range of hunters.
- Flood No. 1 first. When food is fed out flood No. 2. When area No. 2 is fed out flood No. 3.
- Depth of water in flooded area between 2 - 15 inches.
- Blinds should be portable so they can be moved to each new flooded area. Blinds are located in edge of corn with prevailing wind at hunters back.
- This method has advantage of prolonging the food supply throughout season. Narrow shooting ponds with blinds all on one side for safety.
- The same area will attract ring-necked pheasants.

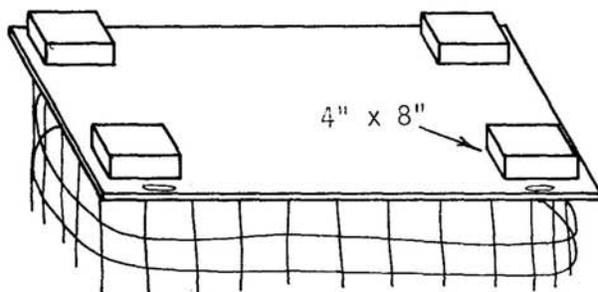
Sample Plan for **PORTABLE WATERFOWL HUNTING BLIND**



TOP VIEW



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



BOTTOM VIEW

- Portable blinds are cheap and easy to construct; can easily be moved by two hunters; are comfortable and effective for hunting; can be stored out of the way while new crops are being prepared; require a minimum of maintenance.
- Standard woven wire fencing 39 in. wide with 10 gauge top and bottom wires, and 12 1/2 gauge filler wire is stapled to a 4 X 4 ft. sheet of 3/4 in. marine plywood as shown. Paint the plywood a dull neutral color. A 4 X 8 ft. sheet of plywood will make 2 blinds.
- Weave cornstalks, willows or other suitable material into the woven wire. An empty 5 gal. paint can provides a comfortable seat.
- Four by eight inch blocks of wood attached to the bottom under the corners keeps the blind floor dry in shallow water. Blind should be anchored to prevent floating away where flooding occurs.