

American **Waterfowler**

Volume X, Issue VI



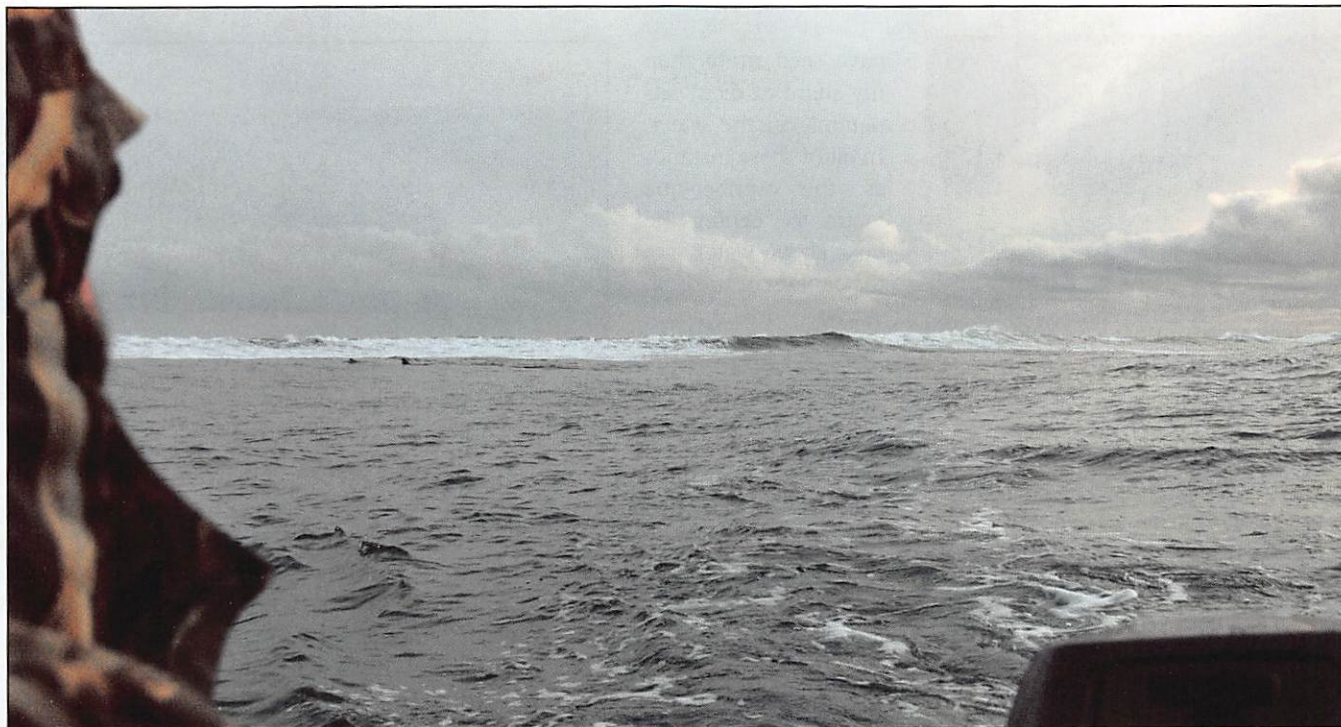
RETRIEVING TO HAND
Teach It In Your Living Room

LATE-SEASON DECOYING
Fooled Educated Birds

FINDING A BETTER LOAD
Steel Rules, But Bismuth Is Hot

Nov/Dec 2019 Issue
Display until December 30
U.S.A. \$5.49 CAN \$6.49





Navigating Rough Water

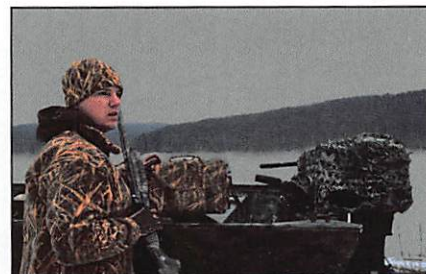
By David Rearick

Rough water is something that every boat owner will eventually have to navigate. Every boat owner who has spent many hours on the water has been there. The weather is great for hunting, the wind has picked up slightly, but the birds are really working the decoys. The protected area we are hunting has only seen a slight change in the wave height. Because of the great hunting, we press our luck. After finishing up for the day, we start out with our bearing set on the boat ramp, all smiles. But instead of a typical ho-hum run back to the boat ramp, we turn the corner and boom, the waves are much greater than we were expecting. In an instant the mood has changed from

excitement post hunt to fear as water splashes over the bow and the wind pushes the boat erratically. What we do in the next few minutes may determine the difference between making it back to the boat ramp and swamping the boat or worse.

Although some hunting scenarios are more susceptible to big waves and inadvertently mentally prepare the boat operator to deal with them (hunting on the Great Lakes or in the ocean), other hunting scenarios often create a false sense of security, leaving the boat operator unprepared when the weather kicks up. In all instances, being prepared and understanding how to navigate big waves and high winds are the most important factors in arriving safely back at the boat ramp.

Keep your cool. Having spent a lot of time either operating a boat or riding with an experienced captain in bodies of water including everything from the Bering Sea to backwater mashes, I



DAVID REARICK Even before David was strong enough to help his father paddle their canoe, waterfowl were his passion. Carrying that passion to nearly every flyway each season, he feels that boats are what put the water in waterfowl hunting.

A DIY Lifesaver

Having a cool head and being a quick thinker are important traits for any boat captain. With that in mind, what happens if you run into rough water, the engine dies, and the boat anchor rope is too short to reach bottom?

In situations where a boat is dead on the water, the most important thing to do is keep the bow of the boat into the waves. If a boat is simply floating unrestricted, the wind and the wave action will spin the boat and put it in dangerous situations where it is susceptible to taking on water or capsizing.

One way to prevent this issue is to have drift socks onboard, preferably two, to create drag off the bow and help keep the boat straight. That being said, most duck hunters don't have drift socks on board; they are more common on fishing boats. But one thing many duck boats do have is a bucket.

If this situation arises and you are in need of a quick fix, tie a rope securely to the handle of the bucket and attach the rope to either the bow hook or a tie-off point near the bow. Once secure, throw the bucket in the water.

The bucket will quickly fill up with water and keep the bow of the boat correctly positioned in the waves in addition to slowing boat drift. Two buckets are better than one, but in any case, this DIY solution will help keep your boat and its occupants safe in a dead-on-the-water situation. ✈

have seen more than my share of dicey situations on the water. In all of these instances, the number-one factor to keeping the boat above water was the captain of the boat simply maintaining his cool. Keeping your cool simply means don't overact, try and overcompensate, or

get in a hurry. Doing any of these things will often create an even bigger mess than the one that already exists.

One experienced captain with whom I have spent many hours in the rough waters of Alaska is Captain Jeff Wasley from Four Flyways Outfitters. Wasley is one captain whom I would trust with my life operating a boat in any situation, and we have had our fair share of experiences in both Cold Bay and off of Saint Paul Island in Alaska. The one common theme when watching Wasley operate the boat is that his expression never changes. Regardless of the situation, Wasley calmly and methodically operates the boat in a slow and steady manner. He is never in a rush, never overreacts, and always makes his correction in a calm and collective manner, even in a 12-foot Zodiac in 20-foot swells.

This description of Wasley is not exactly a "how-to" of navigating rough water, but I think it is important for boat operators to understand that each decision and



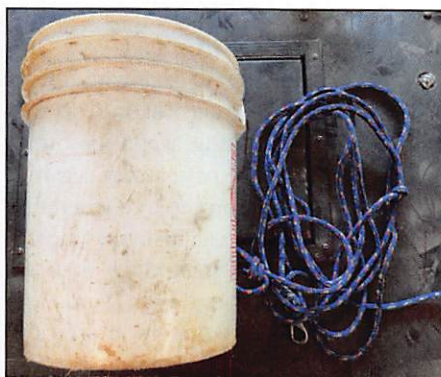
Whether in a small Zodiac or large tender, calm control is the goal.

how they react to it is critical. Simply put, the size or type of the boat doesn't guarantee safety, no matter how big the boat is. The decisions made by the operator are what make the difference in how the boat handles the situation.

The technical approach. For starters, boat operators/captains have the responsibility, not only for themselves but also their passengers and the first responders, to try and avoid putting themselves in a dire situation. This starts by watching the weather during the entire outing, calling the hunt early if the weather is turning for the worse, and not being afraid to say no if they arrive at the boat launch and the water is simply more than they can handle. A scared operator is a certain recipe for disaster, so don't try and be a hero if the water makes you uncomfortable.

The captain also should be prepared. Are enough life jackets on board? Is a marine weather radio readily available? Is there a throwable onboard the vessel? How about a flare gun, GPS or compass? Is there more than enough fuel? How about a bailing bucket? While all of these items may not be a legal requirement for all bodies of water, it is common sense that having them onboard is worth the small amount of money that they cost, because they can be the difference between life and death. That may sound blunt, but painting a rosy picture often doesn't drive people to change.

When it comes to actually navigating the rough water, start by simply slowing down. Sure, you may get soaked in the



A bucket and rope make a DIY lifesaver.

rain or with spray and it may take longer to get to the ramp, but driving slower allows you more time to react, a better view of your surroundings, and the ability to see obstructions or other perils in the water when vision is diminished.

With a slower speed, you then can concentrate on riding the waves and anticipating different wave heights. First and foremost, instead of driving straight into the waves, drive the boat with the bow at an approximately 45-degree angle to the cresting waves. Don't run head on into the waves; that can cause the boat to capsize or become damaged with the constant pounding. And don't run parallel to the waves or in the trough, because the boat is more susceptible to taking on water over the sidewalls. Driving at this 45-degree angle will allow you to see the waves clearly and run on top of the waves by adjusting your speed, thus helping to

minimize the risk of taking on water or damaging the hull.

If running at a 45-degree angle is not possible due to the bearing required to make it back to the launch, use a zigzag pattern to slowly jog toward the destination. It will take longer, but your life is worth the extra minutes. This is also why it is important to have more than enough fuel for the trip rather than just enough. Navigating rough waters can consume a lot of fuel, so always have extra, just in case.

Taking on water and dropping anchor. Even the best approach to navigating rough water will allow water to get in the boat. To begin, if you notice water coming in, turn on the bilge and let it run. If you don't have a bilge, which is a bad idea, or the bilge isn't working, also a preventable issue, make sure to pay attention to the amount of water accumulating.

Water is heavy, and it doesn't take long for it to begin adding significant weight to the boat.

If water is accumulating, bail it out by hand. Bailing out water is easier when multiple people are in the boat, where one can navigate and the others can bail. If you are flying solo, don't be afraid to drop anchor and bail it out if you feel the accumulating water is severe. When dropping an anchor in rough water, make sure to place it off of the bow to keep the bow of the boat into the waves.

An ounce of preparedness and some quick thinking will go a long way to avoiding disaster and making everyone safer on the water. Never be afraid to simply wait it out or get to safer water, even if it is in the wrong direction. All bodies of water are surrounded by land, and rough waves can't hurt anyone when your feet are on dry land.



SPECIALTY BOATS

Go-Devil Floating Blinds

Need a place to hide in a marsh that doesn't allow permanent structures? If so, look no further than Go-Devil's Floating Duck Blinds! Available in low-profile (convertible) and standard (hard-top) configurations, both configurations are sold in a 16- x 7- x 8-foot model. Weighing 1,200-pounds, they should be fitted, at a minimum, with a 23-to 27-hp or twin 27-hp longtail, but when equipped with a 40-hp FNR Surface Drive Engine, these boats are a bad-to-the-bone duck-hunting rig reaching speeds up to 25 mph. The boat's hull is constructed from 0.125-inch 5086 H116 aluminum and fitted with a .100-inch 5052 H32 blind compartment. The blind comes standard with both front and rear access doors and a 12v dome light inside the blind in addition to four



gun holders. Simply brush this blind using the convenient fence wire and brush pipes, load up your friends, dogs, and gear, and go. When you get to the hot spot, deploy the included 80-inch spuds

for stability and get ready to hunt. It is that simple. Oh, and don't forget to bring your stove and breakfast, because it has a place for that too. Contact Godevil.com; 888-490-3254.

