

Tim Delarm, the producer of *Alaska Outdoors TV*, has been on many waterfowl hunts throughout Alaska, but ranks last fall's hunt with Jeff Wasley of Four Flyways Outfitters in Cold Bay, to be the best of the best. (TIM DELARM)

From  
**FIELD**  
To  
**FIRE**

# HUNTING FOR THE HEARTY

## WATERFOWLING A JANUARY OPTION, IF YOU CAN GET THERE

BY SCOTT HAUGEN

**W**hile many of Alaska's hunting seasons have passed, there's still great duck hunting to be had in parts of the state. For Game Management Unit 10, including Pribilof, but excluding Unimak Island, waterfowl season runs through January 22.

On Kodiak Island, where the season also runs through January 22, transporters are more commonly utilized. While there are some residents who

have the hunting somewhat dialed-in in these remote places, most hunters hire the services of a guide, due to the nature of the hunt.

"This is a tough spot for the do-it-yourself hunter," shares Capt. Moe Neale, of Alaskan Eider Outfitters ([alaska-neideroutfitters.com](http://alaska-neideroutfitters.com)) on St. Paul Island. "Not only do you need to bring a lot of gear to be prepared for the ever-changing conditions, but without a 4x4 vehicle, snowmobile, boat or quad, you may not even reach the hunting grounds."



King eiders are considered the pinnacle of the waterfowling world, and St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea is one of the few places on Earth these birds can be hunted with consistent success. (MOE NEALE)

Moe has been outfitting and guiding hunters on St. Paul for a decade.

"I've seen people fly in and none of their gear makes it, and with only three flights a week coming from Anchorage, that can ruin a hunt," he says. "That's why we have most of the backup gear a person needs."

For avid bird hunters and collectors, St. Paul is usually the last stop, as it's the best place in the world to hunt prized king eiders.

"Kings are at the top of the chain of North America's 32 waterfowl, and usually the last thing hunters go for," notes





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Harlequins and black scoters are among the most prized sea ducks. Both species are wide-ranging throughout the Aleutian Islands. (SCOTT HAUGEN)



Moe. "King eiders are one of the most prolific sea ducks in the world, but hard to get a census count on due to the remote area they live in. On St. Paul, you're going to see kings all the time, but connecting is about being in range and making the shot count."

In addition to king eiders, St. Paul offers coveted harlequin ducks, longtails, black and white-wing scoters, plus a mix of others - including puddle ducks - depending on seasonal conditions. Be prepared for high winds and harsh conditions during the peak of the season, mid-December through season's end.

#### Island hopping

Some of Alaska's best sea duck hunting is found on the western half of the Aleutian Chain. Again, access is tough, and if you don't have decoys, boats, quads or other rigs, simply getting to a hunting place can be impossible.

"Early in the season, people can hike out on their own and hunt from shore, but be prepared to cover a lot of ground, and know that easy access spots get more pressure from other hunters," offers Jeff Wasley, veteran guide of the Cold Bay area ([fourflywaysoutfitters.com](http://fourflywaysoutfitters.com)).

"Early on there are more Canada geese and puddle ducks, along with brants, but from late November through the end of the season, December 16, this area turns into more of a collector's hunt."

Wasley's clients have high success on common eiders, the largest duck in the northern hemisphere, and what attracts many hunters to Cold Bay late in the season. "We're about 90 percent on common eiders, and luck in to four or five kings a year; there are tons of harlequins, longtails, black and white-winged scoters," Wasley shares.

Lately, coveted brants have been sticking around Cold Bay. "Brants are actually wintering up here, and studies showed that last winter, upwards of 50,000 of the birds stayed here; usually around 30,000 brants stick around," points out Wasley. "Brants decoy really well, and the past couple years we've had hunters taking birds right up to the end of the season."



From  
**FIELD**  
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# FIGHT STRONG FLAVOR WITH BACON

BY TIFFANY HAUGEN

**M**any people feel sea ducks are best made into jerky or warmed for hours in the slow cooker. However, birds like harlequin ducks and brants are delectable when properly cooked. Goldeneyes, scoters and eiders may need some extra touch to make enjoyable to the pallet, and that's where duck bacon comes in.

Yes, bacon traditionally comes from a pig, but you've heard of turkey bacon and soy bacon - why not duck bacon? Originally a recipe for ground duck jerky, duck bacon makes a great breakfast meat. If you find yourself with ducks on hand that have a stronger



flavor, this brine/marinade treatment is just the taming they need. Having a Cabela's jerky gun to make the strips is great, but they can also be cut by hand.

2 pounds ground duck meat  
2 teaspoons kosher salt  
¼ cup brown sugar  
2 teaspoons liquid smoke  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon granulated onion and/or garlic  
1 tablespoon olive oil or bacon grease for frying

Skin ducks and remove all breast, leg and thigh meat cleanly from bones, tendons and ligaments. Grind ducks on the finest grinder plate or pulse in a food processor until

ground. Add remaining ingredients and mix until thoroughly combined. Refrigerate 12 to 24 hours. Fill jerky gun with cold meat and squeeze out strips of desired length. If you don't have a jerky gun, simply roll out ground mixture between two sheets of waxed paper. Par-freeze 10 minutes and cut to your desired size. Heat olive oil or bacon grease in a skillet on medium-high heat. Fry duck until browned on both sides, one to two minutes per side.

*Editor's note: For signed copies of Tiffany Haugen's popular cookbook, **Cooking Game Birds**, send a check for \$20 (free S&H) to Haugen Enterprises, P.O. Box 275, Walterville, OR 97489 or order online at [scotthaugen.com](http://scotthaugen.com).*

Late in the season, Cold Bay also offers common goldeneyes, bufflehead, greater scaup and red-breasted mergansers. To reach birds this time of year, a boat is needed, meaning the guided route is about the only way to go. Wasley has very high success with low-profile layout boats, and quality decoys birds can see from a great distance.

"I've been fortunate to travel much of the state, and the bird hunting at Cold Bay is unlike anything I've ever seen,"

shares Tim Delarm, producer of *Alaska Outdoors TV*.

Delarm has also filmed king eider hunts with Moe, and points out that while there are plenty of birds, hunters need to prepare for tough conditions and shoot well, as these birds aren't easy to bring down.

This winter, if you're looking to pursue king eiders, get in touch with Moe. Or if you're looking ahead to next season, now is the time to solidify plans and see why

sea duck hunting is an adventure many waterfowlers around the world dream of.

**ASJ**

*Editor's note: Personally signed copies of Scott Haugen's thrilling book, **Hunting The Alaskan High Arctic**, can be ordered by sending a check for \$35 (free S&H) to Haugen Enterprises, P.O. Box 275 Walterville, OR 97489, or order at [scotthaugen.com](http://scotthaugen.com).*