



Successful Hunting Tactics for Greater Snow Geese

Points to Remember:

Don't get discouraged, what works one day may not work the next and vice versa. Snows are notorious for changing their behavior from day to day and even hour to hour. The birds that totally ignored you today may fly down your gun barrel tomorrow.

- Don't be afraid to try new methods and experiment.
- Be patient and persistent. There is a reason these birds live long lives – they are wary. However, there is nothing like having several hundred to several thousand geese circling and descending upon your spread.
- Feeding flocks of snow geese are in dynamic motion. Decoy spreads set in feeding fields should mimic this motion. This is best accomplished with wind sock and motion decoys. Other decoy types that are static would be more realistic if deployed in a loafing location.
- Successful snow goose hunting is expensive, time consuming and, at times, frustrating. If you only plan on hunting snows a few times a year, it is cheaper and more productive to go with a reputable guide service. There are a number of these types of services throughout the wintering and staging grounds in the Atlantic Flyway.

Snow goose hunting can be the most frustrating facet of waterfowl hunting, but also the most rewarding. Snow geese are also very, very good table fare. The meat is very delicate, much more so than a Canada goose. An extensive cookbook with many tasty recipes and more hunting tips can be found at www.agjv.ca/images/stories/pdf/snowgoosecookbook.pdf.



The Continental spring population of greater snow geese is estimated at over 1.4 million birds. This means a 2009 fall flight of nearly 2 million geese. Greater snow geese are already negatively impacting natural ecosystems, and at current population levels the population may be out of control. The greater snow goose population must be reduced. In an attempt to increase harvest of these birds, the Atlantic Flyway has instituted a Conservation Order, similar to what occurs in the Mississippi and Central Flyways for mid-continent lesser snow geese. It is hoped that the added measures allowed during the Conservation Order will result in a much greater harvest and use of snow geese in the Atlantic Flyway. A number of issues, however, face hunters in the Atlantic Flyway. Lack of access to feeding fields is a potential constraint, particularly in the mid-Atlantic states. Snow goose hunting may be a new experience for many hunters. It is this issue, the novelty or general lack of experience with successful snow goose hunting, that we are trying to inform with this brochure.

If you want to embrace the biggest challenge in the waterfowling world – decoying snow geese – there are several things you will want to get in the habit of doing and some things you will want to avoid doing. Getting into good hunting habits will increase your chances for success and allow you to experience one of the greatest thrills in waterfowl hunting, taking decoying snow geese at close range.

Do's:

- You must make your blind disappear (and we mean disappear, like nothing's there.) This can be done by keeping blinds well mudded and setting up in low spots or areas of a field with taller vegetation.
- Have control of your retriever. If it's not steady, stake it down (a retriever's head should always be parallel to yours, or a little behind). This way your dog won't go deaf from shotgun blasts and it creates a mental barrier that will help keep the dog from breaking.
- If you only have a small spread, leave a lot of space in between decoys. You can make 100 decoys look like 150 by spreading them out or you can make them look like 50 by packing them tight.
- If birds are showing interest in your decoys, let them work as close as possible before calling the shot. It will maximize shot opportunities.
- When calling a large flock of snow geese, call to individual birds or small flocks that are showing the most interest. If you can get these singles and small flocks to lock up and pitch in, often times that will trigger the main flock to do the same.
- Have the hunter that is calling set up in the middle of your row of hunters. Snow geese will center on the noise, providing a better shot opportunity for all hunters.
- Learn when to call the shot. If you see a pattern develop of "circle twice then leave," that 50 yard pass may be as good as it gets for that day, or you need to access your set-up for changes.
- Hunt the weather. If possible, hunt on days with wind. The harder the wind blows, the farther down wind you should position the blinds in the spread.
- Use the most/best decoys you can. Your spread is only as good as your worst decoy.
- Bring two types of ammo with you – some long range and some short range. Some days, 50 – 60 yards is all you will get, others the snows will be feet down at 15 yards. You will have much better success if you have the appropriate load for the range.
- Cover up all blind bags, shell boxes, spare guns, etc., in your blinds, in a ditch, under decoys, etc. Everything but decoys should be out of the sight of snow geese.
- When it comes to an electronic call, use a **quality audio setup** and don't be afraid to experiment with using different sounds and volumes. One thing to keep in mind is that we don't hear what the birds hear and what sounds right to us, may not be right at all for the birds.

Don'ts:

- Don't hunt the roost; this is the cardinal sin of goose hunting. You can hunt all season around the roost or once on the roost.
- Don't leave your decoys out for extended periods of time. Pick them up daily in most circumstances. Decoys left out for days on end act as "goose repellent."
- When hunting, **stay in your blinds**. Snow geese can be very hard to spot against the sky and are notorious for "just appearing out of nowhere."
- Don't stand around waiting for birds; they will see you long before you see them and you will be busted before they even get to you.
- Don't break the chain of birds off the roost. Snows tend to play "follow the leader" off the roost water and when they're coming to your spot, you can decoy and shoot flock after flock if you don't break the chain (typically three to four minutes between waves.) Just have hunters take a mental note of numbers of birds shot and where birds fall and do a pick up when there is a break in the action. If you don't do this, you will break the chain of birds and they will land somewhere off in the distance and take the remaining birds on the roost with them.
- Don't have anyone call unless they sound like a greater snow goose. No calling is better than bad calling (the geese know the difference.)
- Don't dispose of carcasses in a manner that is offensive to the public. Place carcasses in a dumpster for collection or bury them.

