

Drawing waterfowl takes practice, skill

■ Calling geese, ducks not something that can be rushed into easily

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How hard can it be to learn how to talk duck and goose? A couple of quacks on the duck or goose call, maybe a few louder than the others, and pretty soon they're streaming into your decoy spread, right?

It's not quite that easy.

Chris Lee, 32, a waterfowl guide with Eagle Lake and Katy Outfitters in Katy, won

his first waterfowl calling championship when he was 16. He has taken second place in the world championship for mouth snow goose-calling. While calling waterfowl takes a while to learn, it can be done if accomplished by learning a few basic calls first.

One Lee recommends is the hail call, also known as the come-back call. It is used when the birds are first sighted, or when they are going away from you.

"You want to hit them with a hail call to hopefully draw their attention again and bring them back," Lee said. "It's a call that's very loud, very hard, most of the time."

"Once you get their attention and they are coming back, then you want to quiet it down a bit. A lot of people hit the ducks on a

"A lot of people just buy a call, unwrap it, and throw the package away. They have instructional videos now; you can watch and listen to those."

—CHRIS LEE

Champion duck and goose caller

hail call way too much. If I see them off in the distance and they are coming towards
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me, I usually hit them with a couple of series of quacks — not real loud, not real soft, about in the middle. Just kind of quack...quack...quack...quack, quack, quack. Maybe I throw in a little feed chuckle. If they are coming hard, sometimes I hit them hard, loud and hard."

Lee said varying the tone of the call is also important. A lot of it is done by varying the air brought up from the diaphragm. Some of it is the backpressure created by wrapping one's hands around the opening at the end of the call.

"That affects the volume it carries," he said. "Start out with a few and build up to multiple quacks. Even if you don't call much, that's a very important thing to learn. Just quack a

few notes."

Calling geese requires a different piece of hardware.

"On my lanyard I have an old 800, the old wooden call that everybody used to use for the last 30 years," said Lee. "It's not made anymore. Then I have an acrylic goose and a poly-carb call."

"Depending on how the geese are acting (determines) what call I will decide to use. The acrylic call sound is very clean, sharp, crisp notes, very loud."

He describes the wood call as noise coming from a radio not tuned with "more static in it. They both sound very natural. I also do a lot of mouth-calling."

Mouth-calling is done without any assistance from any type of call. Goose noises are made by use of the voice, a form

of literally talking to the birds.

"For example, for speckle-bellied (geese), a lot of people make the speck call. It's a mechanical call with two notes together," he said. "Like yesterday morning halfway through the hunt the geese didn't want to hear that. I went back to the old-fashioned wood call that everyone used to blow. It helps to have a few different calls in your shell bag."

With goose hunting especially, it is very important to know how to call. Lee said that duck callers can get by with a bad call every once in a while. However, with geese, if you hang a bad note that sounds like a barking dog or coyote, the geese are gone.

The best way to learn how to sound like a duck or goose is to find a body of water and listen

to the waterfowl. Listen to what the birds are saying as they approach (they start getting loud) and duplicate what you hear. Take your call with you and practice talking to them.

"Blow it around town, blow it at the house, drive your wife nuts," says Lee. "A lot of people just buy a call, unwrap it, and throw the package away. They have instructional videos now; you can watch and listen to those."

"A lot of times I tell guys when they get a duck call and start out, even if you are a bad caller and just learning how, if you can just blow just a couple single quack notes. Then you can build upon it adding a couple of multiple quacks. Practice, practice, practice. Find a call that you can easily blow and just practice with it."