



WILDFOWLING & THE LAW

Within Northern Ireland the shooting of wild birds (including Game and Wildfowl) is illegal on Sundays, Christmas Day, and more than one hour before dawn or one hour after dusk on other days.

The following species may be shot by authorised persons during the open season (1st September - 31st January);

Tufted Duck	Greylag Goose	Canada Goose
Scaup	Shoveller	Pinkfooted Goose
Gadwall	Mallard	Teal
Goldeneye	Pintail	Wigeon
Pochard	Golden Plover	

The open seasons for Snipe and Woodcock are:

Snipe	1st September - 31st January
Woodcock	1st October - 31st January

Any authorised person may shoot the following birds at any time (excluding night time and Sundays):

Crow	Greater Black Back Gull	Herring Gull
Jackdaw	Lesser Black Back Gull	Wood Pigeon
Magpie	Feral Pigeon	Starling
Rook	House Sparrow	

Curlw were removed from the quarry list with the introduction of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act in 2011. They can no longer be shot in Northern Ireland.

Ruddy Duck have been added to Schedule 2 of the Wildlife (NI) Order and can be shot in Northern Ireland from 1st September to 31st January.

A Lough Erne Shooting Permit, issued by the Lough Erne Wildfowlers' Council (LEWC) is required for a Wildfowler to be 'authorised' whilst shooting on the shores and water of Lough Erne which is owned by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and managed by LEWC.

Remember: It is illegal to shoot from a boat which is under engine power at the time. No mechanically propelled boats can be used for the immediate pursuit of any wild bird.

THE WILDFOWLERS' OBLIGATION

Always remember that the majority of your quarry will be migrant birds and we have a responsibility to safeguard them and their environment.

There are four 'No Shooting' refuges on Lough Erne; Knockninny, Enniskillen, Castle Archdale and Castle Caldwell. Detailed maps for three of the four refuges have been issued with LEWC shooting permits. The Enniskillen Refuge area is designated to lie between the Killyhevlin approach and the Portora Lock Gates. Please respect the Wildfowl Refuge areas.

CONSERVATION - WHY DO WE NEED TO RESPECT WILDFOWL REFUGES?

There are four 'No Shooting' wildfowl refuges on Lough Erne, all exist to provide a sanctuary for locally reared and returning migrant wildfowl.

'No Shooting' refuges give wildfowl access to areas where they can feed and roost undisturbed. During late winter wildfowl accumulate the food reserves necessary for migration back to their breeding grounds. They must arrive ready to produce and rear offspring for the following year. It is a critical time as disturbance is most likely to have an impact when food resources are low and birds have difficulty in meeting their energy requirements.

In winter, wildfowl attempt to minimise time spent in flight, as this requires considerably more energy than any other activity. As wildfowling is the dominant winter recreational activity on Lough Erne, disturbance to wildfowl in refuge areas must be minimised. Prolonged and extensive disturbance from shooting causes wildfowl to expend valuable body reserves and to migrate elsewhere.

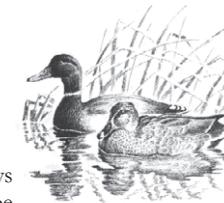
Wildfowl are an international resource. It is our responsibility to protect this resource by respecting refuge areas. We must allow ducks to return to their breeding grounds in peak condition, thus promoting maximum return of migrants the following year. If at all possible always try to navigate around refuge areas, keeping unnecessary disturbance to a minimum.

Sources: - Hunting disturbances on large shallow lakes: the effectiveness of waterfowl refuges by Evans & Day - University of Ulster; Human disturbances of waterfowl: Causes, effects and Management by Korschgen & Dahlgren - US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Although all wildfowlers shooting on Lough Erne will have Third Party Public Liability Insurance Cover, the best insurance is to follow the LEWC Wildfowlers' Code.

Note:

Certain areas of foreshore which are not in Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure ownership are closed to Permit Holders. Details are shown on maps, which are available for inspection from Club Secretaries and the LEWC Secretary.



Always remember that it is your responsibility to understand the Laws relating to your sport, in particular to be able to identify and recognise legal quarry and know where and when you may shoot. Always condemn unsporting shooting ie. at poor fliers or immature birds and those birds which are out of range.

Realise that a piece of shore can be spoilt by continual human disturbance - and it is not only shooting that disturbs! Mark the location of wounded quarry and insure that it is picked up and humanely dispatched as soon as possible. A competent retrieving dog is essential for shooting duck, especially when picking up after dark. Keep the dog under control at all times. Never allow edible quarry to be wasted; eat it yourself or ensure that someone else makes proper use of it!

GUNS & CARTRIDGES

A double-barrelled twelve bore is a suitable shotgun for all forms of bird shooting, including wildfowling. If your fieldcraft and range judgement are good you will be successful with standard 2.75 inch (70mm) cartridges with an appropriate shot load.

It is unlawful to pursue wildfowl in Northern Ireland with a semi-automatic or pump action shotgun, the magazine of which is capable of holding more than two cartridges. A temporary restriction such as a tube plug may not be regarded as rendering a weapon incapable of holding more than two cartridges. Therefore all semi-automatic or pump action shotguns may contain two cartridges in the magazine and one in the chamber.

From 1st September 2009 the law prohibits the use of lead shot on or over wetlands. It applies to all bores of shotgun but not to air guns or rifles. All lakes, flight ponds, land with seasonal or frequent standing water, rivers, streams and most coastal waters are all defined as wetlands. Small areas that flood on an occasional basis are not covered by the regulations.

The PSNI are responsible for enforcing the legislation and anyone found to be shooting lead shot over wetlands will be liable to prosecution and if convicted, could face a fine of up to £1000. For further information on the use of Lead shot visit <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2009/168/contents/made>

WARDENING

A Wardening scheme comprising wildfowling and other interest parties has been introduced by LEWC. The wardens will act as 'eyes and ears' gathering information on site activities and helping to prevent bad practices. Anyone interested in volunteering to help warden wildfowling on Lough Erne should contact the LEWC Secretary.

BAG RETURNS

You will be assisting important research and help protect the future of your sport by completing a bag return form, which is issued with your shooting permit. Indeed it is a condition upon issuing a shooting permit that a bag return **MUST** be completed and returned to your Club Secretary or the LEWC Secretary in the case of private permit holders.

A Permit Holder failing to complete and return a bag return form to the appropriate person and by the date specified for a particular season will not be issued a Lough Erne Shooting Permit for the following season.

EQUIPMENT

Lough Erne is a big lake - 38,000 acres. The weather is unpredictable. Going wildfowling properly equipped can mean the difference between life and death.

Most people go wildfowling in a boat. Both the boat and engine should be in good condition and well maintained. A life jacket is essential. Dress warmly, wear a hat and invest in good waterproofs. Bring a pull through for your shotgun, some food and a flask of hot tea or coffee. Always carry your Firearm Certificate, Shooting Permit. It is worth buying a waterproof case for your mobile phone but don't forget that reception is patchy.

If you do get into trouble be prepared to get yourself out of it. Carry a map and compass in case of fog and a First Aid kit for emergencies. Don't get stranded; either carry a basic tool kit & spares for the engine or make sure your oars (and oar locks) are sound. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.

In the event of a serious incident always contact the emergency services on '999' and ask for the coastguard. Be prepared to give clear details on the nature of the incident, your exact location and whether immediate medical assistance is required.

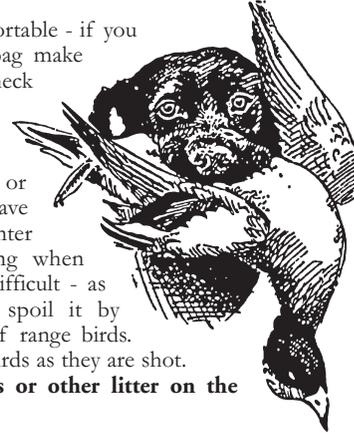
ON THE LOUGH SHORE

Do not disturb the locality or other sportsmen by making noises or banging car doors etc., when arriving or leaving. Try to alert other wildfowling of your location by a discrete wave etc. make certain that you know of the precise location of houses on the

shore or moored boats and do not shoot in their immediate vicinity. Make sure you are well hidden and camouflaged to suit your surroundings.

Try to make your dog comfortable - if you are sitting on your game bag make sure he has a dry seat! Check your barrels for obstructions before loading your gun, after you have moved your position or after any incident that may have allowed obstructions to enter the barrels. Ranges judging when wildfowling is particularly difficult - as the flight develops don't spoil it by shooting too early at out of range birds. Send your dogs to retrieve birds as they are shot.

Never leave cartridge cases or other litter on the shore.



If you shoot pest species such as mink, grey crows or black backed gulls do not leave them lying in the water or on the shore. Take them away and bury them, or dispose of them in a suitable manner that will not cause offence to, or annoy others. If you see evidence of pollution or other unusual occurrences note as many details as possible and report the matter immediately upon your return. Upon leaving the shore your dog will be cold and wet, tend to its needs before your own. When going to an area of the Lough for the first time go in daylight with someone who knows the area well and can point boundaries and hazards. Always tell a responsible person when and where you have gone wildfowling, and do not forget to tell them you have returned safely.

Severe weather restrictions.

Recent changes to the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 allows the NI Environment Agency to enact an Order to protect waterfowl (ducks, geese and waders) in periods of prolonged severe weather conditions. A similar Special Protection Order can apply to Game birds.

After seven days of severe weather, a call for voluntary restraint in relation to shooting waterfowl will usually be issued by Shooting Organisations. After 14 consecutive days of severe weather an Order to suspend shooting could be issued by NIEA. Once implemented the Order can last up to 14 days, but is reviewed after 7 days following consultation with Shooting Organisations. For more information on severe weather regulations visit

<http://www.basc.org.uk/en/shooting/severe-weather>.

Remember that the general public will judge our sport by our behaviour. Other lake users may not understand or agree with wildfowling activities. Always treat other lake users with the level of respect that you would likewise wish to receive.



LOUGH ERNE WILDFOWLERS' COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT

