

# Parker

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to feed after daylight," explained Mark. "When they come in and see the decoys, they'll circle us and fly into the wind to land so they can glide down to the ground. We want to set the

decoys so the geese will feel safe coming down." With the wind at our backs, we set the decoys in two groups angling downwind from the corners of our blind. This way,

when the geese flow over they'd be enticed into landing in a "safety zone" between the two groups of decoys, which would put them right in front of our blind.

First light came and went without a goose in sight, but we didn't have to wait much longer to hear the familiar cadence of the first flock of the morning.

## A quick start

"Get down, get down. Here they come," said Mark, with a hint of excitement in his voice.

Crouching behind the burlap, cornstalks bent overhead and eyes locked on the mud, all I could do was listen and wait as Mark called in the flock. He began with a short, steady cadence of honks and the flock circled lower, and lower.

"Don't look up," I thought to myself one final time, before a barrage of questions popped into my mind. "How many are there? How close are they? When can we shoot," I wondered.

A few more enticing calls from Mark and the flock was convinced. The birds circled once more and turned into the wind in an attempt to land directly in front of the blind.

"Take 'em," called Mark.

With wide eyes and a racing pulse I raised my head and rose to my feet as five Canada geese floated toward the ground just 30-yards in front of the blind. Shots rang out. The pungent smell of gunpowder clouded the hazy air and a pair of plump hunters tumbled to the ground. A great start to an exciting farmland goose hunt.

## Special winter season

A special 30-day Canada goose season runs January 4-February 2 in southern Michigan. Areas open to hunting include public and private land south of a line running roughly from Port Huron to Grand Rapids. (Check the 1996-97 Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for exact boundaries and regulations.) The special season is an effort to control the local flock.

The same techniques mentioned above can be productive during this special late season.

During a December survey, Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologists recorded over 115,000 giant Canada geese in the state. Approximately 80-percent of these geese were in the area



**Goose down:** Hunters Jason Hickmott (left), Don Milosch Sr., John Parker and Mark Milosch show off our five-man limit of Canada geese taken during the regular fall season. A special winter season opens Saturday in southern Michigan with a daily limit of two geese per person.

open to the special hunt. Although cold weather and frozen water will force some of these birds to fly south by the start of the season, a large majority reside in the state throughout the winter months.

## Plenty of geese

Counties within the hunting area with the most geese include Kalamazoo (8,200); Muskegon (7,500); Allegan (9,400); Wayne (6,200); Oakland (6,500); Macomb (4,035); Washtenaw (3,900); Livingston (3,800); St. Joseph (3,400); Eaton (3,100); and Calhoun (3,200).

"Geese will be found roosting

on open water, especially along river systems where they can fly out and feed in corn stubble. If snow cover stays light and temperatures are not extremely cold, hunting should be good," said Jerry Martz, the DNR's waterfowl specialist. "Hunters will have the best long-term success if they hunt the fields and avoid disturbing the birds on their water roosting sites."

Anglers and hunters are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax information to (810) 644-1314 or call Bill Parker evenings at (810) 901-2573.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL PARKER

**Blending In:** A few rows of standing corn provide a great natural blind for farmland goose hunting. When these hunters duck down beneath the corn and cover their heads with the stalks, they are virtually invisible to an incoming flock of geese.

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