

Evidence of Longevity

“Wildfowl – the swans, geese and ducks – were, and possibly still are, the most important group of wild birds to humanity, providing food, feathers and, latterly, sport.”

[Michael Shrubbs: *Feasting, Fowling and Feathers: A History of the Exploitation of Wild Birds*](#).

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors hunted coastal birds for food. They were a useful food source for transient peoples, providing fats and proteins. E.g. evidence from the Neolithic at Skara Brae, Orkney. Likely used nets, snares, crossbows. Likely during moult - ? – as easier to hunt when flightless.

Wildfowling was recorded in the *1614 print of *A Jewel for Gentry*; this is thought likely a reprint of *The Book of Saint Albans* from 1486. (*referred to on BASC’s infographic for wildfowling)

Examples of references to wildfowling across cultural expressions

Folk songs & music of the UK and Ireland:

- [Various forms](#) of traditional folk song [The Fowler](#) (or *Polly Vaughan*. Contemporary version [Setting of the Sun](#) by Seth Lakeman c2006)
- Folk music [Shoot When the Ducks are Flying](#)

Poems:

- [The Fowlers’ Complaint](#) (1611)
- [The Sea Fowler](#) (Mary Botham Howitt, 1799 – 1888).

Art:

- [Duck Shooting](#) by Horace Vernet (1789–1863); The Wallace Collection
- [Duck-shooting in a wood](#) by Jean François de Troy (mid 1700s); The Fitzwilliam Museum
- [Duck Shooting](#); and [Wildfowling: duck shooting in fens](#) by John Titterton (1880s); both spotted on Fb
- [Wild Duck Shooting](#) by Charles Michel Maria Verlat (1824–1890); The Wilson Art Gallery & Museum
- [A Duck shooting scene](#) by William Parrott (1813 – 1869); Royal Museums Greenwich
- [a duck decoy pond at Maldon, Essex](#), with pipers (dogs used in decoying) and the decoyman. By Robert Nightingale (1815-1895). Owned privately.