



Photo Contest Tips for Hunters

If you've never worked or hunted with a photographer, here are some tips that should improve your experience in the California Waterfowl *Take Your Best Shot!* photo contest. A little up-front planning can make a big difference.

Before the hunt:

Brief the photographer. Before the day of the hunt, talk to the photographer about exactly how the hunt works, from start to finish. Because you may be dealing with someone who's never hunted, it's particularly important to discuss the times when it's very important to remain quiet, avoid using a flash, or hold still (e.g., "Don't move until I stand up to shoot.")

Assess the photographer's comfort level. This contest is designed for photographers who don't hunt now, and may never have hunted. You should have a frank discussion about what's involved to find out whether the photographer will be OK with it. If he or she is anxious about observing killing, please consider going out without your gun – just taking decoys and calls and your dog. Your dog will be baffled, but you don't want to spend a day in the blind with someone who's deeply upset by the realities of hunting.

Find out what you should expect. Ask the photographer what he or she needs or wants to do to get good photos – how close he or she will get to you, how he or she must be positioned in relation to the sun, etc.

In the field:

Help keep the camera dry. You know more than the photographer about the wet conditions you're going to face. Try to make sure the photographer can keep his or her camera completely out of the water. Offer to store the camera in the driest place available in transit to and from the blind.

Ignore the camera. The point of this contest isn't to get posed photos – California Waterfowl is looking for candid shots. That means you should go about your business without staring into the camera.

Expect a lot of shooting. A good photographer takes a lot of photos – it literally can take 200 shots to get one great one. So don't be alarmed if the photographer is shooting constantly.

Talk to the photographer! Remember, you're dealing with someone who may have never hunted at all, and may not understand the allure of hunting. This is your chance to explain to a non-hunter why you do this, and what you love about it. It's an important opportunity. Don't waste it!

Things the non-hunting photographer might not know about hunting:

- Hunting keeps hunters deeply connected to their environment. Hunters take from the land and give back to it, while working hard to ensure its continued sustainability. They know what nature needs because they are an active part of it.
- Hunters choose to hunt for their own food. They could buy it in the store, but instead have made a conscious decision to take a more active roll in the process of feeding themselves and their families.
- Wild game is much more flavorful than store bought. It's lean, organic, and sustainably harvested. Grocery store foods have been modified to have milder flavors. Wild game has all it's natural flavors... stronger, but better.
- Modern regulated hunting has never caused a wildlife species to become endangered or even threatened; in fact, every animal with a hunting season on it has always increased in number after that season was placed on it.
- Hunting helps wildlife because it creates a constituency to fight for that species and because it provides landowners with an economic incentive to have more wildlife.
- Lands where hunting is allowed on a few species provide habitat for hundreds of other species that aren't hunted. This land would likely be developed and paved over if hunters weren't fighting for it.
- Hunters pay the bulk of conservation funding. Through taxes and licensing fees, hundreds of millions of dollars are going to federal and state programs that benefit most species, both hunted and non-hunted.