

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## WOODCOCK SHOOTING IN JAPAN

Oshima means "big island," and in Japan, where islands are numerous, the name is pretty freely bestowed. This particular Oshima, known also as Vries Island, lies about 30 miles from the western approach to Tokio Bay, and is the most northerly of a chain of seven islands running nearly north and south. Lying as they do well out in the open Pacific, these islands all come under the influence of the warm Kuro Shiwo, the gulf stream of Japan, so that their climate in winter is considerably milder than the adjacent mainland.

The islands are all volcanic, rising out of very deep water. Oshima is roughly rectangular about ten miles by five, and its centre is occupied by the ever active volcano of Mihara, 2,600 feet high. The top of the volcano is usually covered by clouds, on which at night the glow of the crater can often be seen, forming a useful landmark for fishing boats; in fact, it seems a somewhat apt illustration of the biblical "pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night." At the time of our recent visit the volcano had almost stopped smoking, only a few wreaths of steam being visible; the inhabitants were somewhat concerned not only at the temporary loss of their beauty, but because also the last time it stopped smoking the result was a violent eruption and several earthquakes.

These seismological considerations do not trouble the woodcock, however. They come to Oshima, and probably to all the other islands, early in November, remaining till the beginning of March. Tomo, our head beater, was quite positive that many birds nest in Oshima, and that their eggs could always be found on the higher slopes of the mountain in April. Up to six or seven years ago very good bags could be made, as there were no resident shooters, and the birds were almost undisturbed. Now, however, there are three native gunners on Oshima who shoot for the Tokio market, and there is one on Toshima, the next island; further, until recently prohibited by the Japanese government, the skins of woodcock and pheasants found a ready sale for export abroad.

Habu, the port of Oshima, is the only harbor in the group, but even Oshima itself is not very accessible. The small steamers which maintain communication with the mainland, mostly stray about the group anyhow, with small regard for timetables; in addition, the prevalence of high winds often keeps them storm-bound for two or three days at a time; owing to these vagaries and discomforts, European shooting parties to Oshima are therefore few and far between.

My friend L., kindly invited me to sail down to Oshima with him in his yacht from Yokohama, and accordingly one cold winter night last January I stood on the hatoba a little before midnight waiting for the Mary's dinghy, and thinking somewhat regretfully of the warm fireside I had just left. The Mary is a cutter, 38 feet on the waterline and 58 feet over all; she was designed and built by her owner, and has proved extraordinarily successful as a racer, winning innumerable prizes. Below her accommodation as a cruiser is excellent, and even includes a full-sized bath, heated by the simple but effective, Japanese bath stove. I was soon on board, the dinghy was safely lashed on deck, the cook and our half-dozen dogs stowed below, and midnight saw us slipping out through the breakwater entrance with a light northerly breeze, and 62 miles to do to Habu. We made a good run, and at 9 o'clock next morning were hove-to off the entrance to Habu, waiting for a sampan to tow us in; it is too risky to sail in. The harbor is the crater of an extinct volcano, and is surrounded by cliffs, forming the old crater wall, on all sides except the southeast, where it has been breached by the sea, leaving a passage perhaps 300 yards wide. The passage, however, is shallow and much obstructed by boulders at its inner end; the wind comes in very foul puffs off the cliffs, quite independent of the true wind outside. Should one of these foul puffs catch one just in the narrow channel between the boulders there is apt to be trouble; anyone can put a boat ashore, but it takes a wise man to get her off again.

A sampan manned by a dozen Japanese made short work of towing us in, and we moored up right under the cliff, our stern being made fast to the trees. The cliff is about 300 feet high, pretty sheer, and beautifully wooded; it extends round the harbor for about three-quarters of a mile; at one end is the village of Habu, half the houses at the foot of the cliff, and the rest of the houses on top; the whole scene is most picturesque. There is only one primitive inn in Habu, and it does not look inviting; we lived, of course, in the yacht during our stay.

The first two days we were kept on board by the weather—a gale of wind with heavy rain. After that we had fine weather for a week on end, with pretty good shooting, but we had to work hard. Some days we got a dozen birds, including perhaps one or two green pheasants; one day, however, our bag totalled only one woodcock and one pheasant; we saw quite a number of woodcock, but they all beat us that day—as woodcock will. Most of the birds we found low down within a mile or so of the shore, the best place of all being the dwarf pine woods close to the sea. This pine scrub had one drawback; it was a hard place to shoot in—what would be called in Ireland a "cross place." The trees were just high enough to walk under, and their top

branches were flattened and matted together by the wind; underfoot were binders and briars innumerable. It was long odds on the bird unless one of us happened to be outside the cover, which was often impossible. The briars were pretty wicked; every night a sendo patched my shooting breeches. I told him to go ashore and buy some stuff, but that did not appeal to the frugal Japanese mind; this is the country where nothing is wasted. Patches from a discarded blue coat, from long disused grey trousers, bits of old canvas, bits of new canvas, and a lively shade of khaki for the seat were all introduced into the color scheme during our ten days' stay.

Besides the pine scrub, however, we often flushed birds out of a grove of camellias or a clump of bamboo; sometimes we got them in the brushwood fences dividing the fields. The roads are mostly bordered with splendid camellia trees, all in blossom at the time of our visit; also we were struck by the size of the ferns, with their fronds 7ft or more in length. Away from the beach there is fair-sized timber, with likely bits of covert here and there, but, as already stated, we rarely found any birds there. The reason seems to be that, owing to the volcanic soil, all water is immediately absorbed on the higher ground, and the only place it lodges is quite close to the shore. There is only one running stream in the island, and we always had to carry water for the dogs. Even the places where we did find woodcock looked extraordinarily dry for that moisture-loving bird; we walked dryshod the whole time.

On account of the difficult covert it was necessary to follow up flushed birds persistently to make a bag, and Tomo was invaluable at this work; it was almost uncanny the way he would drop on a bird again, though he had been unable to mark him in. He saved us much useless labor by his intimate knowledge of the woodcock's haunts. L. taught him some years ago to shout "Mark," which he did with great gusto and a distinct Irish brogue. Even our pretty water carriers would shout "Mark" too. It must be explained that in Oshima most of the work is done by women, and they carry loads of all kinds on their heads, so that to carry water breakers to supply the dogs our shooting party generally included a girl, or even two—Haru San and Yoshi San; in English their names would be Miss Springtime and Miss Fragrance, and their faces were as pretty as their names. For many years Oshima was a place of banishment for exiles; we judged Tomo to be descended from a variety of malefactors, but his petty villainies are another tale. Our last glimpse of Tomo was when he came on board the night before we left to claim a long-promised drink. He never made any bones about it. "Dai suki desu," he used to say—"I am extremely fond of it." He had been thinking of that drink for ten days. Inside half an hour he helped himself to three stiff tumblers of our best brandy, not diluted with water, but laced with gin, and never turned a hair. We struck at his having any more, as he had to climb the goat track round the harbor to get home.

After he had gone L. said: They are a marvelous people; they do with impunity things we dare not try. You will see them handling blocks of concrete with a straw rope, but the rope does not break. You will see their fishing boats fitted with masts 40ft high without either shrouds or stays, but the masts do not carry away. They must be a chosen race, he said.

The ten days at Oshima ended all too soon. We had planned to make an early start on our return voyage, but the cook was adrift that morning, and came on board long after breakfast time; that cook practiced various stunts on us during our stay, though we paid him liberally. He made terrible inroads on our stores, and we discovered him trying to get "squeeze" from the local contractor, at our expense, of course. He was violently seasick on the way back; it is unbecoming to admit it, but I was not overwhelmed with sorrow thereby. We were becalmed off Oshima till sunset, when a nice northerly breeze sprung up, and the Mary worked up against it like a steamboat; by 4 a.m. she was tied up to her buoy in Yokohama. It may be of interest to add that our bag totalled seventy-nine head, of which sixty were woodcock.

## JOE-DAD'S SHOTGUN

By Ernest McGaffey

It had been a freezing day in the early fall. "Joe-Dad" Jackson and I had been stowed away all day in a willow "blind" at the head of Bass lake, and the pintail and mallards had been coming in fairly well. Our boat had been tied to a willow clump at the rear of the "blind," and we had shot mostly from three sides of our ambush. These shoal water ducks are easier to kill than the bluebills, redheads, and canvasbacks, but all ducks are marvelous when it comes to sneaking away after they are crippled.

I was shooting my old favorite, a hammer gun, which seemed almost as obsolete as a matchlock when compared to "Joe-Dad's" hammerless and strictly modern repeating shotgun. It was instructive and fearsome to see the grizzled "pusher" throw those six shots into a bunch of ducks before they could climb over the tree tops. Once they set their wings and curved down and in to the live decoys there was no getting away from those six charges.

I've always stuck to a double gun myself, as being fast enough for me, and I must have the hammers on a gun, or it seems "bobtailed" to me. It always appeared to me as if "Joe-Dad" sensed when he had a cripple or two down, for he invariably saved a load or two for such birds, and many a wounded duck was cut down as it crawled stealthily away towards the shelter of smartweed growth and fallen logs by the rapid fire execution of the old "pusher's" weapon.

After we had rowed out from the "blind" preparatory to eating dinner and starting back for camp, I began to question the old man about his fancy for a newfangled gun.

"Seems to me, 'Joe-Dad,'" says I, "you'd stick to the old hammer guns, like me."

"I've shot many a gun," was his reply, "and I jist goes up, up, up until I gets the best so fur. Before I git through shootin' I reckon there'll be some fresh gun invented that'll beat this here one, but so fir it's the king bee. It kain't remember when I didn't have a gun in my hand. Some young uns is borned with a silver spoon in their mouth, I've heard folks say, but for me, the day I was put in the home-made box cradle pap's hoss pistol laid at the foot of it. I was jist natchally fosed to be a hunter."

"Joe-Dad" halted the boat at the side of a dry basswood stump sticking a few feet out of the water, and, taking a short handled ax up, he cut into the tinder heart of the tree and started a fire in the aperture, setting in a frying pan and warming up some sausage and meat which we had brought along, and giving some sliced potatoes a freshening. After that the coffee pot was stuck into the same place and the punk in the tree and some splinters sufficed to give us hot coffee in a spot where there was no solid ground for miles.

"Lots o' tricks in the swamp," said the "pusher," meditatively swallowing his fourth cup and eating the sugar out of the bottom of the cup. "Here's stoves and wood asetting' up endways all over this neck o' woods, and yit there's fellows that row three miles, to git somewhere to build a fire."

After we had filled up and got back to camp I again bantered the old man about the subject of guns, and particularly lauded the merits of double barreled guns. Finally I got "Joe-Dad" started on one of his talking spells and he began with some early history as to firearms he had handled.

"I reckon I'll never furgit the fust gun I handled," said he. "T'wuz a bored out musket pap fetched fum the war. He bored her out after he got home an' sawed 'bout a foot off the bar'l. She wuz a wicked shooter an' you had to git musket caps fer the nipple, cuz ordinary caps wuz too small. I used to rest her on a log at first, an' whale away at the ducks on the set. My jaw wuz pretty near stove to pieces huntin' wit that fucose but I'd git the ducks."

"By Ned, I've seen the lakes around here black as a cat with ducks. I've waited fur half an hour to git a bunch o' bluebills or mallards in line so I could fetch a dozen or so at a crack. I'd give a soft whistle sometimes to git 'em to raise their heads, an' then turn loose down the line o' necks."

"The next gun I had wuz a single bar'l old fowlin' piece, come from England or somewhere. 'T'wuz so long I had to lay her down to pour the powder an' shot into her. Kicked wuss'n the musket, but bein' bigger in the bore, she could do more damage to the ducks. Then when I gits big enough to shoot fer the market pap gits me a shore enough double bar'l. I wuz the proudest youngster in these here bottoms the day pap fetched her home, an' says: 'Here y'are, Joe; now see ef you kin make the fur fly.' I'd already been shootin' a little on the wing, an' from the day I gits the double bar'l I commence to be a wing shot fer shore."

"An' then, after awhile, comes the britch-loaders. I gits me one, an' I gits the best, a ten bore, an' Lord, how she'd roar with five drams o' black powder. An' shoot? Well, I reckon! An' last, an' so fur best, I buys me a repeatin' shotgun. I worked with that gun a Saturday all day a-gittin' the hang o' pumpin' her, until I could work the lever fasten' a three-card man moves the keerds at a county fair."

"Monday mornin' befo' daybreak I sneaked down to rids Ridge pond, calculatin' to knock over a woodchuck that had been raidin' me lately. I gits close to his den an' waits fer him to stick his nose out. It was right close to the edge of the water nor mor'n fifty yards off, an' timber all around. Jist as old Mr. Chuck hists his snoot 'bove the ground I sees a grey squirl' run out fum an oak an' set up switchin' his tail. An' as I raises my gun, with five loads in the magazine an one in the bar'l, makin' six loads in all, I hears a sort of a wheesh, wheesh comin' through the trees, an' I squints over my shoulder, an' here comes a big old mallard drake through the timber. I tuts loose an' doubles the woodchuck the first load, throws in a second shells quick-er'n scat, nails the squirl' as he turns, reloads, soaks the mallard as he turns, an' as he hits the wet ground close to the pond up jumps a jacksnipe, which I downs in midair as he jumps, an' jist then a duckhawk darts down an' snatches my 'jack' as he drops, an' I blisters Mr. Duckhawk with load number five an' slams in the last load ready fer anything else, an', sure nuff, as the hawk an' the snipe hits the pond, up jumps a five-popped big-

mouth bass, and I gathers him with the last shell.

"I'd been shootin' so fast that I goes through the motion of pumpin' in another shell, but when she clicks empty I see I'm out of ammunition. So I hikes fer the pond to git the snipe, not carin' fer the durned hawk, an' the mallard, which is on land close to the pond. Well, sir, as I runs down hill, I jumps over a log layin' there, an' the gun flies out o' my hand, an' as sure as we're a-settin' here, the stock comes down on a seven-foot blackstake a-layin' quilled up by a stump, an' jist natcherly busts him wide open, killin' him deader'n a doornail."

"I never waited to puck up the gun, but went on an' fished out the snipe with a chunk o' brush, an' retrieved my duck. Then I come back an' got the squirl', an' bimeby the bass floated in with 'bout leven shot through him. I reckon that wuz about the MOST excitin' time fer the time it took that I ever had in my life. An' where would I a-ben ef it hadn't a-happened that I had six shots 'stid o' two? I'd a-probably been pintin' around, not knowin' jist what I DID want to shoot at, an' might a-lost everything."

"I came back to the shanty an' had fried black bass, an' stewed squirl', an' roast duck, an' snipe on toast fer dinner. Yes, sir, an' I reckon ef I'd been pestered with the old double bar'l, mebbe I'd got the squirl' an' no more."

"But what did you do with the chipmunk, 'Joe-Dad'?" was my inquiry.

"What chipmunk wuz that?" asked the grizzled "pusher."

"The one you jumped on when you cleared the log as you ran down to the lake," was my answer. "Don't you remember killing a chipmunk when you jumped the log?" The eyes of the "pusher" brightened. He cut a three-inch crescent in a plug of black navy with one sweep of his masterful "grinders."

"I'd plumb fergot that chipmunk," said "Joe-Dad."

## HAD HUNTED HIMSELF

Belmore Browne, mountain-climber and hunter of big game, tells this story. It happened several years ago when Mr. Browne was a lad of 17 or 18. He was camping in the Cascades with a party of older men and had been sent down to the canoe landing to bring up some duff. In the list was a rifle, as the party expected to stay until the hunting season opened. On the way back to camp Mr. Browne met an old man, gray-bearded, stooped, wrinkled, a veritable "old-timer."

"Hello, son," quoth the old one. "Where you goin' with the gun?"

The boy explained, and the old man smiled reminiscently. "I used to be something of a hunter myself," he said. "I kin remember my first deer hunt. I was a kid of about your age, back in Minnesota. We used to hunt with dogs in them days an' shoot the deer from stands. One day I went out with some neighbors of ours an' they put me on a little knoll at the edge of the woods and told me to wait there till I heard the dogs."

"I had an' old Sharps single-shot an' down I set on a log an' waited, with extry ca'tridges stuck between my fingers so's I'd be ready for mister deer. Bime-by I heard the dogs a long way, but comin' nearer. I stood up, feelin' the way a man does when he's goin' to be married—glad it was comin' an' wishin' it was over."

"The dogs kept comin' nearer an' purty soon I heard a smashin' in the underbrush an' out jumped a big buck about 50 yards away. I pulled down on him an' cut loose. He jumped about six feet in the air an' I knew I'd shot under him. He whirled an' broke back into the brush, swung around a little hill, an' come out into a little clearin' on the other side—this time about 80 or 90 yards away. Then darned ef he didn't stop again an' stand listenin' to the dogs. Didn't seem to think much of my shootin'."

"That riled me an' I let him have it agin—high this time—too high for I seen a little tuft of hair fly just off the top of his neck. I didn't even crease him an' he made off up an' old toteroad that crossed the clearin' goin' about a mile a minute. By the time I got another ca'tridge in he was a good two hundred yards away an' gettin' farther every minute."

"But I held as stiddy as I could an' let drive. Mind you, he was a good two hundred yards off an' runnin' straight from me."

## A DUEL TO THE DEATH

The scene was on a fine morning in October last in the bay at Avalon, Santa Catalina Islands, California. The writer and his brother, J. H. Neustadt, with a number of others were on the pier that projects out some distance in the bay, watching the seals at play around the landing and near shore, as they are accustomed to do every day in the year. An old seal that responds to the name of Ben was absorbing the attention of the people, when suddenly another seal was discovered in hot pursuit of something. It soon became apparent that a battle royal between a seal and a sword-fish was in store. And what a battle it proved to be! It emphasized in the most exciting and interesting manner the struggle for existence that goes on in the sea as with us on



The Otter  
By Sir E. Landseer

### Sportsman's Calendar

AUGUST

The Salmon-troller's Month.  
Spring Salmon and Cohoes all over the Coast.  
One of the best months for Trout of the season.

land. The Flavian Amphitheatre never presented a more exciting chase. The mise en scene was complete. The morning was beautiful. The waters of the Pacific at and around the islands were perfectly still and so clear that at a depth of 35 feet the bottom could be plainly seen. The amphitheatre was Nature's broad and deep aquarium. The interested spectators were there. The gladiators were not the rude barbarians of Germania or Hispania, but two articulate denizens of the deep, engaged in a struggle for the preservation of life, in accordance with the great and controlling principle of Nature that only the fittest shall survive. The battle opened. The seal chased the swordfish around the bay several times, and finally overtook His Majesty near the landing. They halted and faced each other. The seal was the most aggressive and the first to strike, but he missed his aim. The fish dodged and turned and swam around the seal several times, and in another instant they got together as if in loving embrace, but this lasted only a second, when the splashing and churning of the waters became almost tempestuous. The seal backed off some distance, and then, with the rapidity of a torpedo and looking not altogether unlike one in the water, rushed upon the fish and bore him down, and in a few seconds came to the surface with a large piece of his antagonist in his mouth. The fish followed the seal to the surface and the battle raged furiously, and for some time it seemed as if one or both, in the struggle for supremacy, might leap upon the landing. The fish at this point hammered away at the seal, but the seal, with an incredible celerity of movement, kept out of harm's reach, until a favorable opportunity presented itself, when the fish landed a blow that left a great gaping wound 5 or 6 inches in length across the forehead of the seal. This blow appeared to bewilder the old seal and make him groggy, but with a reinforced strength and determination he rushed upon the fish and bit out another large piece of his body. The fish turned and fought, but the seal was too strong and heavy for his adversary, and attacked and bit him until he was too weak to offer much resistance and finally succumbed to the terrific onslaught of the seal, who continued to charge and bite until he had bitten and torn his victim to fragments. The remnants of the fish that were scattered far and wide were picked up and carried away by a score of sea-gulls who had hovered near and watched for the opportunity that came to them in the end. The victor of the fight swam away with a lacerated head and the bones of the vanquished probably went to the bottom of the sea.—C. Neustadt, in Sports Afeld.

## REMARKABLE FISH

"I thought you said there were fish around here," said the disappointed sportsman.

"There are," replied Farmer Cornstossel, "but they are experienced fish. Moreover, they're kind and considerate."

"I haven't had a nibble."

"Well, you don't think they'd bite at that brand-new fancy tackle, do you? They'd stand off and admire it, but they'd never take a chance on gettin' it mussed up."—Washington Star.

## AFFRONTED BEES

"What's the matter with your face, man?"

"Sure, I went to the zoo hunting for the big African apes they said were there. Somebody told me to go to the apiary to find them, and that's where I was stung."—Baltimore American.

## AT THE FOOTBALL MATCH

"What did he have to bring the ball back for?" asked Ethel innocently of her companion.

"Why, don't you know, you little goose?" answered the other damsel pityingly. "Of course, it's because he got an encore!"

"Is Mr. Macpherson likely to be fishing tomorrow?"

"I hae ma doots."

"How is that? Is he away from home?"

"I dinna ken whaur he is."

"Not ill, is he?"

"I hae not heard."

"Then what makes you think he won't be fishing?"

"I didna say he wouldna be fishing. I said I hae ma doots. He's been dead nigh on a year."

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