

THE SWING

by Brad Varney – Wing Shooting Instructor



The swing of the shotgun is of the utmost importance in wing shooting. Many hunters severely handicap their wing shooting by only utilizing one swing, FAST! Hunters whose wing shooting consist mainly of shots at flushing game are the worst offenders of the fast over swing. The fast swing can be quite effective on grouse in thick cover, when swinging fast and shooting fast or not shooting are the only options. The more success a person has with the fast swing, the less chance of becoming a good all around wing shot. It does not take long for the fast swinger with some positive results to conclude if fast is good, faster must be better. Do not fall into this quagmire if you plan on improving your wing shooting.

If you want to be a fast swinger is one thing but, an accurate swinger is entirely a different thing. First you must understand that the target speed, angle and distance are the factors that dictate swing or muzzle speed. At any point that the swing out paces the target and too much lead is perceived both the conscious and subconscious send slow or stop the swing messages.

The subconscious mind plays a major role in wing shooting as it does in any repetitious physical activity. The subconscious mind operates approximately three tenths of a second quicker than the conscious mind. That is certainly an asset in wing shooting where time is often in short supply. On the negative side the subconscious is not logical and when it registers too much lead it applies the brakes to the swing. At anytime the conscious mind registers too much lead you can bet that the illogical subconscious mind has already applied the brakes to the swing. This will cause the gun's muzzle to slow and sometimes stop. Slowing the muzzle diminishes lead and stopping it erases lead. Try to think of it in this manner when the muzzle is behind a moving target the subconscious is your ally. It is urging your whole body to catch up to the target and this in turn produces swing. The problem is over swing which may lead to excessive lead. When that happens the subconscious becomes the enemy and applies the brakes in hopes of creating the right lead or sight picture. Remember the right lead created in the

wrong manner is a miss. I hope you now understand why a controlled swing is so important in the art of wing shooting.

Control of the swing is a balancing act at best. Basically the more time the more control and visa-versa. If you really want to perfect your swing practice, practice, practice. I would suggest practicing on slow incoming clay targets at first. You will soon learn that swing is the speed of the target or slightly faster depending on the shooting method employed. If you use a come from behind method the swing needs only to be the speed of the target plus just enough to pass it. The pull away method requires a slightly slower swing and the sustained lead swing is even slower, the same speed as the target. Economy of motion is the mark of the expert wing shot. The expert can shoot fast when needed but does not swing fast. There is a big difference between swinging fast and shooting fast. The most critical part of the swing is at the break or kill zone. Practice economy of motion and blend it with your own personal shooting style and you will learn the proper swing.

Keep an eye out for more "Wing Shooting Tips" from Brad!