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11. What Guns need to know on a shoot day

Though not within GWCT's scientific remit, we believe it would be wrong to produce a guidebook for responsible Guns without including certain elements of safety, good conduct and the law relating to a day's driven game shooting.

We have excluded much relating to shoot day etiquette, or appropriate dress as there are plenty of comprehensive guides on these areas already published. The text below is largely taken from *Sporting Shooting and the Law* published by the National Gamekeepers' Organisation with kind permission of the author David Frost and the NGO. There is much further content relating to certification, rifle shooting and other legal matters contained in the booklet, which is recommended reading and available through the GWCT online shop.

Driven vs rough shooting

Most let days shooting are driven days but you may also be invited on or have the opportunity to take a rough shooting day. The guidelines outlined in this chapter apply equally to both, but there are differences in the form of the day.

Rough shooting

A rough shooting day is when a group of Guns walk with dogs to flush birds along hedges, or through woods, fields or game cover. It may take place on a larger shoot as a boundary day round the edges of the main shoot, or be part of a rough shooting syndicate.

The latter would release far fewer birds than a driven shoot and either own the land or rent the shooting rights from local farmers or estates. There is no reason why these syndicates shouldn't undertake the conservation work described in the preceding chapters on a voluntary basis, but they would be less likely to be able to afford to employ a gamekeeper.

Driven shooting

Driven shooting developed in the mid-to-late 1800s. Rather than walking up the birds, Guns stand while the birds are driven over them by beaters. They can be wild birds if numbers are sufficient but are normally reared. There are various arrangements for driven shoots, which would usually employ a gamekeeper.

The shoots might be paid for and managed solely for the landowners' personal recreation, or some days may be let to visiting Guns to help pay for the gamekeeper's salary and other costs. Another model is for the landowner to lease the shooting rights to a syndicate of Guns who take on the running of the shoot themselves.

Alternatively, a sporting agency, individual, or company may buy or lease the shooting rights and take on the responsibility for running and financing the shoot and sell days to outside Guns or syndicates. Whatever the shoot's management structure, all shoots should undertake the conservation measures described in the previous chapters and must abide by both the numerous regulations governing shoot operations and the Code of Good Shooting Practice.



On a driven day beaters flush the game from cover. It is vital to be aware of their position at all times.

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Beaters, stops and pickers-up

On a driven shoot, beaters flush the birds over the Guns by walking in a line through the woods or game cover crops. Some beaters take on the role of stops who are placed to prevent game breaking out of the side of the drive. The pickers-up wait behind the Guns during the drive ready to collect the game with their gundogs as soon as the drive is over. To stay safe, it is vital to be aware of those around you at all times. Though the beaters and pickers-up get paid by the shoot, it is a token amount. They are likely to live locally and for them it is as much a social event and a chance to get out into the countryside and work their dogs. It is important to treat them with courtesy and thank them as well as the keeper at the end of the day. A shoot day is a team effort led by the gamekeeper and including beaters, pickers-up and Guns and everyone should work together to make sure best practice is observed.

**Follow
the Code**

Shooting associations

“Seek to help and support the relevant associations that represent and promote your sport”