

When these snows fly, goose hunters have to rely on different hunting strategies.

# Fields of Snow

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**I**t felt odd to be lying in the middle of a harvested corn field covered head to toe in a pure white painter's suit. I would have stuck out like a sore thumb if I wasn't sitting in the middle of about 250 snow goose decoys.

It was late in the season and the snows were starting to make their way through central Illinois. There was no snow on the ground but you could hardly tell with all of the white dotted throughout the field. By the time snow geese get to Illinois, they have been hunted hard from Canada through the Midwest.

The birds are wary. I've always been told "the more the merrier" as far as the number of decoys is concerned and I


**The conservation snow goose season opens at the end of the regular goose season. Unplugged shotguns and electronic calls are allowed with extended shooting hours until one-half hour after sunset.**

believe it. Snow geese typically travel in large flocks, which gives approaching groups more eyes on the decoy spread—and a better chance of seeing something they don't like and flaring off. It seems they like to see large numbers of their own and are much more likely to decoy into a spread with hundreds of their fake cousins on the ground.

There are, as with any waterfowling endeavor, numerous thoughts on the best way to spread the decoys and where to position yourself. The one thing that is a must to increase your chances of harvesting snow geese is scouting. Try to find a field the geese are already using and get set up in it. You might get lucky and have some new birds in the area that are willing to decoy in a new spot, but those days are few and far between.

Geese in general don't tend to move as early as ducks. Get into the field, set the spread and expect the geese after sunrise. Daylight is handy for one last check of the decoy setup before you

hunker down in the mud. Don't be afraid to be dressed in all-white. You'll look like another goose.

Calling snow geese can be a challenge, at best, or a futile effort, at worst. An instructional CD is a good place to start if you are a beginner, or even as a tune-up if you are a more experience caller. Either way, I've always wondered just how much good calling really does. If you are in a field they don't want to be in, you can be a champion caller and they won't even twitch when you hit the call. If you are in a field they want to feed in, the incoming geese make so much racket themselves it's hard to imagine they can hear you. Either way, if you are a waterfowler, you understand the need to have a call around your neck and the need to blow it, so have at it. 

Joe Bauer is an avid outdoorsman and works for the DNR Division of Education in Springfield.

**S**now geese come in white and blue phases. The blue snow goose is indeed a snow goose. Confused? Think about it like this: Yellow, chocolate and black labs are all Labrador retrievers, just different colors.

