I grew up hunting waterfowl in marshes, rice fields, flooded timber and any other place I thought might hold a duck. I’ve seen people walk into my hunting area and boats float into my decoy spread, but never watched cruising supertankers and huge cargo ships from a duck blind – until I hunted sea ducks on Chesapeake Bay!

On active duty with the U.S. Navy, my son Daniel lives near the bay. While visiting him, we jumped at the chance to hunt these historic waters. One chilly December morning, we met Joshua Bourne of Wingman Guide Service in Cape Charles, Va.

I’m used to getting in the blind well before official shooting hours start, but on this trip, we didn’t even leave the dock until after shooting hours began. We kicked up ducks all the way to the hunting spot.

“Hunting sea ducks is different from hunting puddle ducks in the marshes,” explained Bourne, who also operates a full-service lodge in Maryland. “For sea ducks, I very rarely hunt without first seeing birds that day. Scoters dive for clams, oysters and mussels. They sit over their food sources during the day, so we set up where they’re feeding.”

We anchored the 23-foot boat more than a mile from shore. I felt silly crouching behind reed matting lining a large boat sitting in open water where anything could see it for miles. That silly feeling quickly vanished as a large black bird rocketed low over a small cluster of decoys bobbing in the waves and turned in my direction. One blast of No. 2 Hevi-Shot downed our first bird of the day, a drake surf scoter, the first one I ever saw.

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For a different type of waterfowling, head out to sea

by JOHN N. FELSher

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“We’re sitting in about 10 feet of water, but sometimes I’ll hunt in water out to 30 or 40 feet deep,”