

# KEEPERS' WORLD

I VIVIDLY remember a goose-shooting foray one Christmas during the mid '70s. The weather had turned nasty during a particularly cold winter and we were in the midst of a flying saucer, UFO scare at the time.

The local TV news had included an interview with two motorway policemen who claimed to have seen a flying saucer crossing the motorway not very far from here. Even closer still, the local paper carried reports of sightings along the coast and on the open mossland near my home.

Although a little sceptical, I was, and still am, fairly open minded about such things. Despite this I was not happy when one of the girls from the stables opposite my cottage claimed to have seen a strange object hovering above an isolated area of the estate.

The bad weather that year had meant that the potato harvest was much later than usual, farmers were panicking about frosted spuds, and the geese had started raiding their fields. I'd been expecting someone to complain about the damage and, eventually, they did: "Just keep'em off for a couple more days till we can get the spud digger in, Ian, then we'll be okay," said the farmer at the other end of the phone.

When I went to survey the area I found the geese troubling a field close to the farm. During the day they were kept at bay by tractors working in the locality. And in an attempt to keep the geese off after the tractors had departed, the farmer had hung white, plastic, fertilizer bags on sticks in the field.

## Flood of geese

This discouraged them in the day but we now had a full moon and the geese began flooding back into the fields again after dark. The flapping bags lost their effectiveness at night; I would obviously have to do some shooting.

When I rang Arthur to see if he could come and flight the geese that night, the weather forecasters were predicting a blizzard.

That evening the weather really did deteriorate and the predicted blizzard came with a vengeance. Despite this, and the fact that Arthur's Morris 1000 had seen better days, he braved the worsening road conditions and still managed to turn up on time.

Getting home was something to worry about later!

The old car had no heater and Arthur was freezing when he



Inland pinkfeet: the geese had started raiding their fields . . .

# Some UFO!

Ian Grindy

arrived so I hustled him into the cottage to thaw out. Over a warming cuppa he told us about the traffic chaos he had witnessed on the journey and for a moment I wondered if we would even make it to the field. There was obviously no time to be wasted so we loaded up the Land Rover and set off immediately. My wife wished us luck as we left and threw in a reminder that "we could do with a goose or two for Christmas". "Do mi best — don't I always!" Arthur replied.

Normal traffic had now become bogged down in the snow and without the four-wheel-drive we would have been in trouble. Arriving at the field, I pulled through the gateway and tucked the Land Rover in tightly against a hedge, out of sight. At the far side of the field was a huge, reed-fringed ditch, some 12ft deep and 20ft wide, with nicely sloping banks and plenty of cover — ideal for a hide.

Arthur (amateur taxidermist that he is) had made some decoys from geese shot earlier in the season. These we put out in the field about

40yd from the ditch. They showed up well against the snow and we didn't have long to wait before geese arrived.

A skein of about 20 birds came in from the sea with the wind behind them, the blizzard was beginning to get worse and looking into the driving wind and snow made them difficult to see. Eventually they flew over the ditch, circled behind us, and came back to have a look at the decoys.

This time the wind was in our favour. As they battled against the blizzard, Arthur killed a bird out in front and another as they passed overhead. This bird nearly landed on his head and I was so busy watching him I nearly missed the tail-end-Charlie which left the skein and swung out in my direction.

Soon we had a dozen geese in the bag. The weather was still deteriorating, and we had to run out and pick up any dead geese before they were covered in snow.

It was while we were searching for a couple of birds that it suddenly appeared! We heard a noise like something out of an Old Buck

Rogers' movie and in the distance we saw a glowing light, varying in intensity, hovering not more than 30 or so feet above the ground.

There was no doubt in our minds that this was a UFO and it appeared to be moving in our direction. Straining our eyes through the swirling snow we could see what looked like sparks coming from the exhaust system at the bottom of a domeshaped dish.

"Get in the ditch quickly!" Arthur shouted. I was convinced that Arthur had seen some little green men or odd-shaped aliens — I didn't need telling twice! I launched myself head first into the ditch and slid through the snow into the freezing, murky water below. Then I heard two shots. "My God!" He's shot them! I thought.

When I finally plucked up the courage to see what had happened Arthur was running back in my direction carrying two geese in his hands. I couldn't believe my eyes. Only Arthur would think of taking a couple of shots at geese with a UFO only a couple of hundred yards away, when we might have been zapped by a laser at any minute. Why did you say run? I asked.

"Because there were geese coming!" he replied.

Once I had recovered from the shock we decided to investigate further. Gingerly, in my case very gingerly, we approached the UFO. At about 50 yards away we witnessed a brilliant light and sparks flying everywhere. As the light began to fade we moved in for a closer look. We found snow sticking to the side of an electricity pole and shorting out the cables. Some UFO! Some goose flight! P.S.