

BWA National Championship Waterfowl Exhibition

Undeterred by torrential rain and gales at 6.15 am, I made my way to my first poultry show of any description, the BWA National Championship Waterfowl Exhibition at the Solihull Riding Club. I had no idea what to expect. The show had been advertised in the Call Duck Association Magazine and it suggested bringing along a duck 'if you had a nice one'.

Being a complete novice, and having never even been to a show, let alone enter a duck, I obviously thought that all of my ducks were nice, so I took along three calls to exhibit and three to try and sell. I was not so naïve that I thought they would be show winners; I even had an inkling that they would not be at all up to show standard. I wanted to compare them visibly with other ducks of the same breed so I could see what there was to improve.

I think that a natural progression for any hobby duck keeper would be to eventually breed and rear some. My opinion is that whilst it may appear to be fun to hatch a few eggs and see what happens, it is important to ensure that the standards of the breed are maintained. By attending the show I could see first hand that my ducks were not meeting the standard in all areas and this has influenced my decision not to breed with them.

Back to the show though. If you love ducks and geese you would have felt like a child in a candy store! Hundreds of birds and a huge range of breeds, all under one roof. The noise was amazing! Upon arrival I was made more than welcome by the organisers, other members and exhibitors. As I have never been to such an exhibition before I can only comment as I saw it. What I saw was an impeccably well organised event that was held at a fine venue attended by an extremely friendly bunch of people.

Penning the birds was easy and straightforward. I'd put a duck in the wrong class and this was rectified with no drama. Question after question was answered, which was especially appreciated as it was obvious that everyone was busy with the pre-show preparation. To attend an event with so many people with the same interest yet with such a lot more experience was a privilege. Anyone who is at all interested in waterfowl would have learned something here, whilst having a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

I bought the BWA's book British Waterfowl Standards, which I will use in my endeavours to learn about the breed standards to eventually improve my stock.

So many people offered good, sound advice; suggesting better ways of doing things as well as other ways of doing things. I took away a lesson that it is perhaps more important to know what you are doing wrong rather than just be told a few things you are doing is right!

Kate Elkington