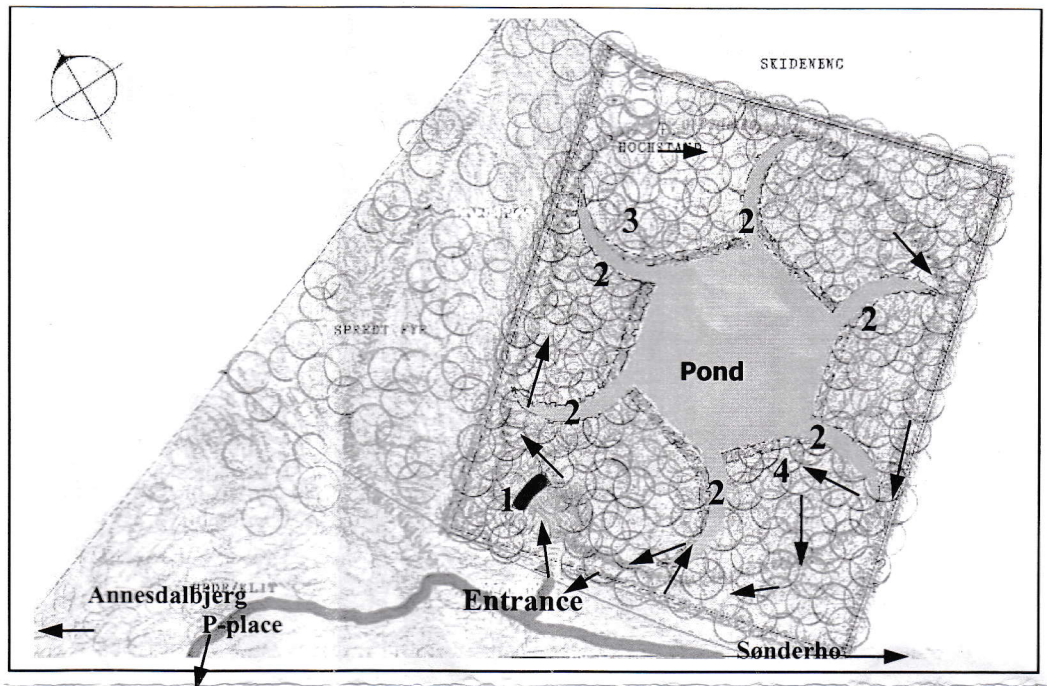




**Tour guidance:**



- 1** Starting left, visit the exhibition in the house. You will find a run-through of the decoys' history, its hunting methods, and the reasons for its closure. You will also see a chart showing numbers of ducks caught in 1867.
- 2** There are 6 tunnels in this decoy, all restored to their original.
- 3** This northern part of the decoy area features an out look tower. There is a particularly beautiful view over the nature reserve "Albuebugten" which provides the birds with food.

During the tour there will be lots of opportunities to study the flora of the area too and listen to the various birdsong proving the multiple bird life in the decoy.

- 4** There is an old hunting hide on the south side of the Decoy. This was used for surveillance of the pond. The pond contains fresh water from higher ground.

Have Fun!

Entrance to the Decoy is free but it would be appreciated if adults would donate 10,- dkr in the money box by the door. This donation will be used towards the maintenance of the decoy. Visitors must use the landscaped paths and avoid damage to the dunes, traps and reed screens. Dogs must be kept on leads at all times for the sake of the wildlife of the decoy. All traffic is on own responsibility.

## Duck Decoy history.

A Duck decoy is a manmade pond used for luring and catching wild ducks to kill. This pond would typically, like the one here in Sønderho, be hexagonal with tunnels running from its corners.

The tunnels were covered with a fine wire mesh and lead to a fish trap at the end.

The channels had banks of soil on one side and were fitted with screens of roof tiles on the other, tall enough to hide the hunter.

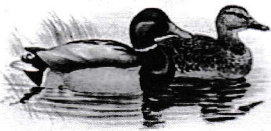
Duck Decoys were typically positioned close to the coast where ducks appear in large numbers at spring and autumn time.

The name Decoy descends from the Dutch word *Vogelkooij*, "Kooij" meaning trap.

Hunting of Wild ducks using Duck Decoys first came to Fanø from the Dutch and German parts of the Wadden Sea in the middle of the 19th century.

It is thought that Duck Decoys originated in Japan and first came to Holland in the 14th century although they were more widely used in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The four Duck Decoys on Fanø are the only existing in Denmark apart from 2 smaller complexes by Karrebæk fjord on South Zealand. These Karrebæk decoys were made in 1690 but never really used as the master of Gavnbø estate died in 1702.



Mallard

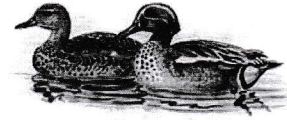
The Duck Decoys on Fanø were erected in the period between 1866 and 1888. The one in Sønderho was the first to be established. It was created by a partnership of 50 owners.

The present owners of Sønderho Old Duck Decoy are descendents of the original owners, as shares were never sold but passed on by inheritance.

When it was erected it would have cost 9000 Dkr to build and another 1000 Dkr every year to maintain. The partnership would catch around 10000 ducks in a year, leaving an income of 2000 Dkr after all expenses, which was a lot of money at that time.

In 1887 a Mallard would fetch 90 øre, a Pintail 75 øre, a Widgeon 60 øre and a Teal 35 øre. That was a handsome income for the islands inhabitants.

Teal



## Method of Catching.

To catch the wild ducks the hunter would use tame ducks to help him. These ducks had their wings clipped and were kept in a taming cage in the river. Here the hunter handled them so they could get accustomed to him. When they were so tame that they would return on his whistle, they were re-released into the river.

Flying ducks were also used in the catching of the wild ducks. These were last year's tamed ducks whose flying feathers had been allowed to re-grow.

These flying ducks would leave the Decoy and fly to the sea for feeding at low tide. Here they would join groups of wild ducks and bring them back to the Decoy when they returned at high tide.

Food was left out for the birds in the tunnels. The tame birds called by the hunters' whistle would swim in to feed, luring the wild ducks with them. Once inside the tunnel the hunter would create a lot of noise to frighten the birds (in Holland they used dogs for this).

The tamed ducks, used to the noise, would calmly swim out to the middle of the pond after feeding, but the frightened wild ducks would swim deeper into the trap in their panic. Here they were quietly killed and the hunt would carry on.

It was particularly Teal, Mallard, Pintail and Widgeon who were caught in the Decoys. The biggest hunts happened in the autumn and a good day could bring around 300-400 ducks.

In 1931 a new hunting law banned all hunting of ducks using Decoys in Denmark.

But even today there are 15 active Decoys in Germany and 118 in Holland, 50 of these have a quota limiting the numbers killed each year, the rest of them are run as open-air museums.

After the ban the owners of the Decoys on Fanø lost interest. The Decoys were left to decay and overgrow.



## Decoy Pond Restoration Project.

In the beginning of the 1960s' renewed interest in the decoys prompted the restoration and reopening of 3 of the old decoys on Fanø. In the case of Albue Decoy and Sønderho Decoy local hunting groups were responsible for the taming of the ponds and vegetation.

The 2 Decoys were mainly restored in preparation for breeding and releasing of Mallard, but they also function as historical museums.

Sønderho Old Decoy gained a new special function as well. Between 1960 and 1990 it was rented by Danish Environmental Studies from Kalø, who restored the Decoy to its original state for catching Ducks again but this time to ring mark the birds and release them into the wild. These ring markings have given the researchers very useful information about these birds' way of life. This feedback has, among other things, informed about their migration routes and their age.

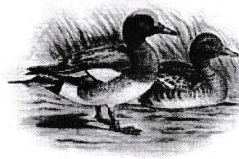
Pintail



Ring marking of birds is a Danish invention by a teacher, H. C. Mortensen, from Viborg. Already in the autumn of 1907 he travel to Fanø. With him he brought 100 homemade inscripted rings. He bought 100 Teals here from this Decoy.

His birds were ring marked and to the great amazement of local inhabitants, re-released. 16 of his ducks were found in Holland, France, Spain, Ireland and Finland. This was a great contribution to an understanding of the "wonderful world" of these migrating Birds.

For instance, one Teal was released at noon in Denmark and caught the same evening in France, which meant that it must have travelled at an average speed of 100km an hour. Not bad!



Widgeon