



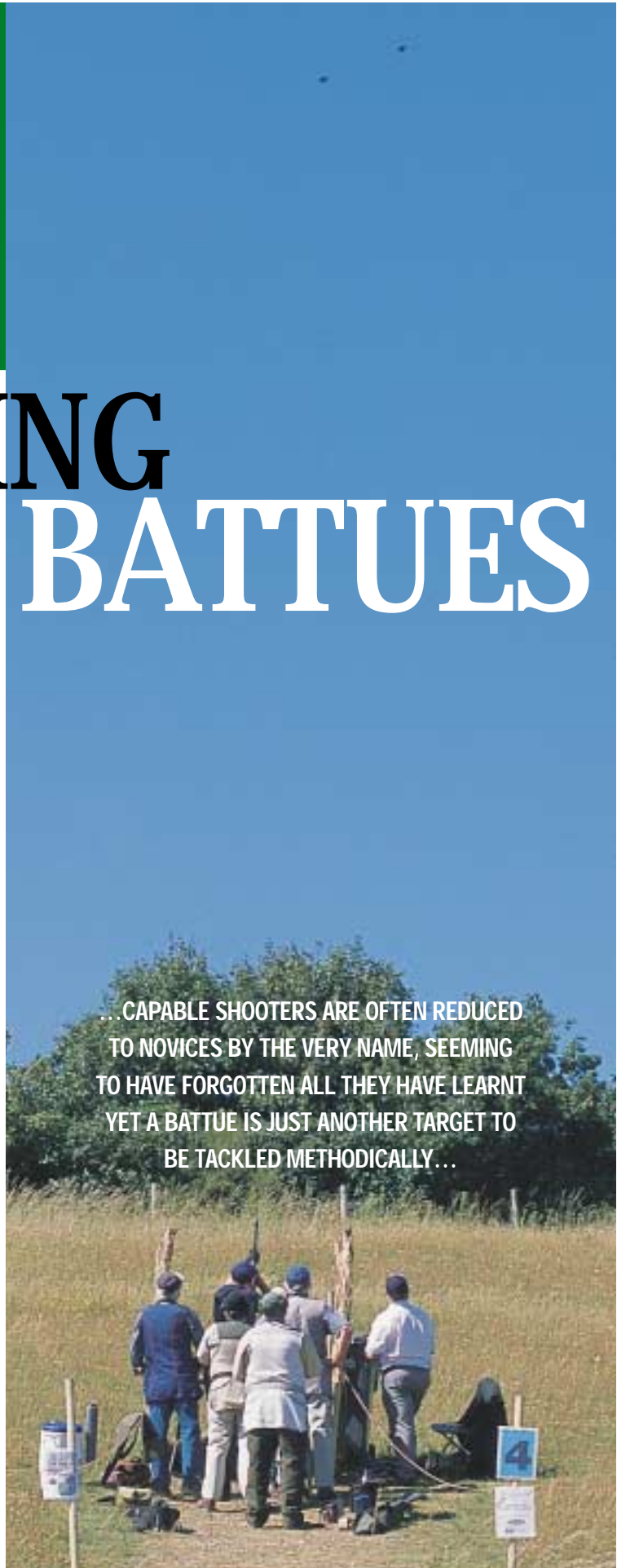
Stephen Nutbeam
has advice on
mastering the
mystery battue target

BEATING BATTUES

Perhaps it is because the ordinary shooter associates battue targets with championship standard courses or FITASC Sporting, but there is no doubt that an air of mystique has grown up around them. Otherwise capable shooters are often reduced to novices by the very name, seeming to have forgotten all they have learnt — yet a battue is just another target to be tackled methodically.

The first and most common mistake is to just label it 'battue' and go into panic mode, doubling the lead and attacking the target with an ultra-fast swing. Yes there will be times when a battue will need much more lead than a standard at the same range — they are, after all, much faster through the air — but angle and trajectory still have to be studied. We talked earlier in this series about having all the shooting techniques in your locker and it is quite possible that three different battue presentations could need you to switch from swing through to pull away and to maintained lead in order to achieve consistent results. As ever, reading the target is key.

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THE CLASSIC LOOPER

Most of us would consider the classic battue target to be the high 'looper' that traces an arc across the sky. Starting edge on, it turns to show full face at the peak before gathering speed again as it falls back to earth. Increasingly now we are also seeing the 'chandelle' presentation using an automatic trap to throw a standard clay in an upright position to again give a looping trajectory. (It gets its name from aeronautics by the way — to a pilot a chandelle is a high climbing turn.) Be sure to know just what is in front of you and if there is no stand marker ask the referee. A true battue is likely to be travelling faster than a chandelle standard on the same trajectory.

The most common area to miss the high looper is the shaded area in the illustration (Fig. 1), not only behind because many shooters misread the target speed, but also low, because in the rush to get the gun out in front it is all too easy to ignore the line. Remember, in the first half of its flight the looper is climbing steeply and your muzzles must trace that arc. The natural tendency is to flatten the curve and shoot low. If you are struggling on a looping target and are convinced your forward allowance is correct, try adjusting your line upwards.

Lots of FITASC shooters, starting from a low gun position, would choose to use the 'move, mount, shoot' or maintained lead method on this type of bird. This means never letting the target get in front of the muzzles and just looking at a big space in front of it, pulling the trigger as the gun hits the shoulder. If the rhythm and timing is right this can be a very effective method because it relies on the instinctive reading of the line and

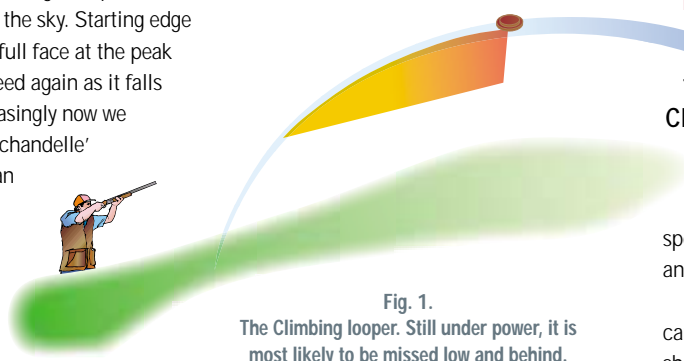


Fig. 1. The Climbing looper. Still under power, it is most likely to be missed low and behind.

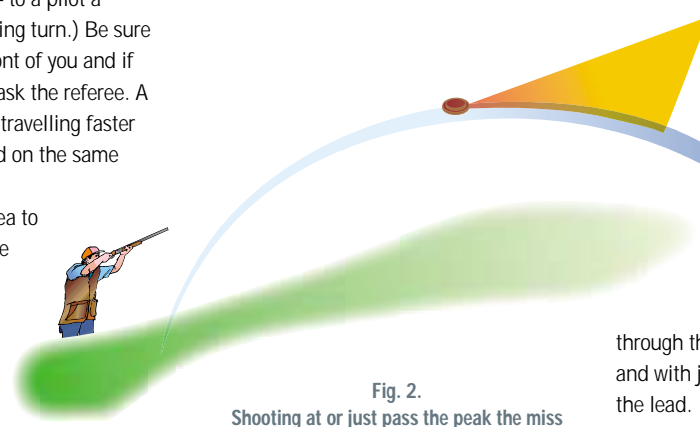


Fig. 2. Shooting at or just past the peak the miss zone is likely to be high and in front.

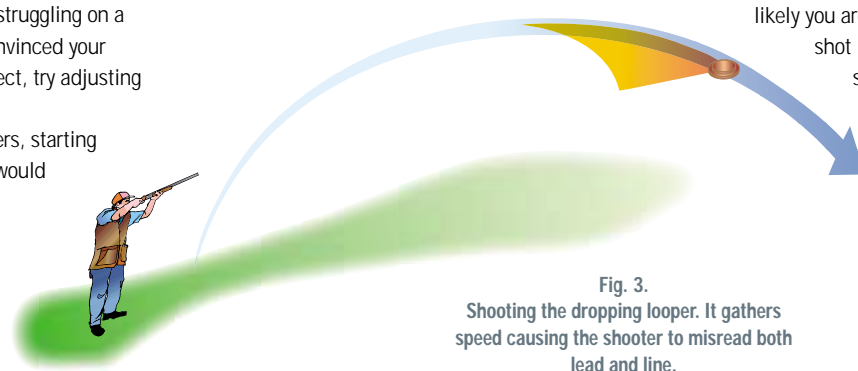


Fig. 3. Shooting the dropping looper. It gathers speed causing the shooter to misread both lead and line.

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speed rather than a conscious mental analysis.

The target that starts edge-on often cannot realistically be shot until it turns to show the full face. At this point it is at its slowest and no longer climbing and our 'miss zone' is now likely to be high and in front (Fig. 2), target speed dropping off faster than gun speed. For me this is a classic swing through shot, mounting just behind the bird and firing as I pass the leading edge. Swinging through the line keeps the gun on track and with just enough speed to establish the lead.

Finally we have the looper that has to be shot in the second half of its flight, perhaps as part of a simultaneous pair. It is picking up speed once again and our miss zone is again likely to be behind and inside the arc. The longer you leave it, the faster it gets and the more likely you are to put the shot into the shaded area. (Fig. 3).



THE LONG INCOMER

One battue variation that is becoming popular is the high incomer that peaks and falls to land out in front. Taking it at the peak is clearly the best method whenever possible but again conditions might dictate that it needs to be shot 'on the drop'. Here the pull away technique comes into its own, mounting the gun on the target and dropping beneath it to establish the lead. Once again the target will be gathering speed so our miss zone is likely to be behind, especially as most people find it difficult to accelerate the gun down towards the ground. As you can see from the illustration, there is also a tendency to ignore lateral drift. Most targets approach at an angle to the stand and there will still be some sideways movement as it falls, they rarely drop straight down. That movement has to be factored in to your pull away.

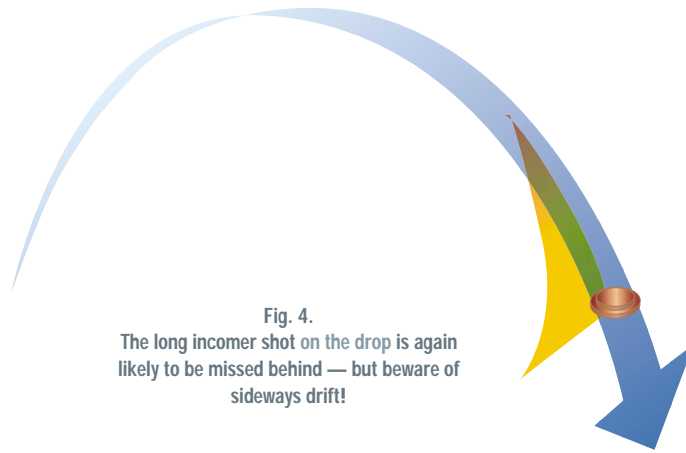


Fig. 4.
The long incomer shot on the drop is again likely to be missed behind — but beware of sideways drift!

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