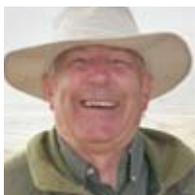




# Testing a new *call*



## Robert Bucknell puts the Icotec GC300 remote predator call through its paces with the help of a wary fox

This month I was sent a new electronic fox caller to try: the Icotec GC300 remote predator call. It was sent to me by Rob Crampton of [www.bestfoxcall.co.uk](http://www.bestfoxcall.co.uk), who sells it at a whisker under £100. Rob is well known to UK fox shooters for his Tenterfield fox whistle – a folded piece of stainless steel with a hole on the top and bottom, on a paracord lanyard.

The call has proved very popular – so popular, in fact, that at a recent show I came across a stand selling a rip-off version. It was a very accurate copy of Rob's call, right down to the website address lasered onto the metal, but my suspicions were aroused when I spotted that they had misspelled Tenterfield on the packaging: it read 'Tenterfeild'. It was also very cheap. Sure enough, when I called Rob he confirmed that there were one or two fakes around. That's the price of a good product, I suppose.

I've had the genuine article for some time now, and I find it very effective. There's a knack to blowing it, and some people never do get it, although the website includes instructions and a video to help. Getting a whistle out of the call is just the start. With practice and a dollop of saliva you can get a good, raspy sound that foxes find irresistible. I've proved it

to myself by watching a fox's reaction as I call first with a pure tone and then with that raspy death rattle.

Today, however, I was going to try the GC300. It's a handy size, about the same as a small steam iron, and with a similar handle on top. The controller is roughly the size of a small walkie-talkie radio, with an extending aerial and a set of push buttons on the front. When I tested it for distance it was still working well past 250 yards. The speaker unit has 12 different built-in sounds, fired up by pressing the corresponding button on the control unit. There's also a volume control and a big 'stop' button for those moments when you want to shut the thing up instantly.

The built-in calls all have American-sounding names: 'Bobcat adult scream', 'Jackrabbit distress', 'Raccoon baby distress' and 'Gray fox distress' (Not 'Gay fox distress' as James Marchington mistook it for at first glance – I worry about that man sometimes!). Though you can't replace them with your own sounds, that doesn't really matter because a lot of the calls sound very similar to our British prey species, and work just as well at attracting our native predators.

The call arrived for testing at just the right moment. I had been after a



But this was one very wary fox, and instead of looking in the direction of the call, it stood and fixed its gaze on the high seat.

With a round in the chamber and binoculars to hand, I selected the jackrabbit call, which is very much like the squeal of a hare. The foxes around me are definitely in the market for young hares. Indeed, I had seen some on the way to the high seat, so I figured that should appeal to this wary individual.

I pressed the appropriate button on the controller and the sound started up. It calls for 30 seconds or so, then stops for a similar time, then the call sounds again. It's easy to overcall so these gaps are ideal. You can quickly adjust the volume by pressing the red 'up' and 'down' buttons on the controller. At full volume the 15W speaker punches out a loud sound that is claimed to reach 300 yards or more, and I can well believe it.

I let the call go through three cycles and left it off for five minutes, then repeated. Two minutes into my off break, a fox appeared through a gap in the wood's edge, walking out a couple of yards. It was no more than five yards along from the call, which says something for the animal's ability to pinpoint the location of a sound, as well as speaking volumes for the effectiveness of this call. It also highlights the advantage of a remote caller: the fox is focused on where you've placed the caller, rather



There's a knack to blowing the Tenterfield. Have you got it?

particularly cagey fox that appeared to be living in a 50-acre block of woodland at one end of the farm. I have a permanent high seat set up just off the corner of the wood, where it has a good view along two sides, as well as the track and fields behind. Sitting in that high seat I had seen this fox a couple of times, but it had been very cautious. Judging by its small size and behaviour I assumed it was a vixen, but you can never be sure.

At 7.30 that early July evening, I took the GC300 along to the high seat to give it a go. The wind was right, blowing from the wood. I placed the speaker unit on the ground about 70 yards from the high seat, just 15 yards or so out from the wood on the 25 yard grass strip that runs between it and a tall field of oilseed rape. I pulled the aerial into the vertical position, went back, and climbed up the high seat – only to remember that I hadn't turned it on! Oh well, back down the ladder and over to the call. The red LED pilot light looked a bit bright to me, so I put the unit on its side so the beam would shine down into the ground, and faced the speaker towards the wood.

Back in the high seat, I made everything ready. I was using a different rifle to my usual one: a modified straight-pull AR15 fitted with a Swarovski 2.5-15x 44P Z6i scope with illuminated reticle and ballistic turret that is good to 400 yards. The scope was set on 100 yards, plus two clicks to put it nearly flat to 200 yards. Magnification on 9x. The rifle is a bit agricultural for some people's taste and friends have told me the trigger pull is terrible. But that's how I like it and the gun is certainly accurate, as I've proved to myself many times over. With good ammo it will hold a half minute or less.



Double trouble: Robert prepares the speaker unit and remote control



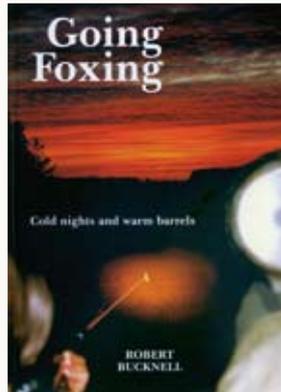
## Foxing: Harvest

Pest control: Volume, sound and playing time can all be altered at a distance



### Buy the book

*Going Foxing* is Robert Bucknell's latest book on fox shooting. It follows on from his first book *Foxing with Lamp and Rifle*, and is packed full of useful knowledge about the red fox along with a wealth of information about shooting. Both books should be in the library of everyone interested in the subject.



The book is available from *Sporting Rifle* for £30. To order your copy of *Going Foxing*, fill in the form on page 99, call 01926 339808 or visit [www.virtualnewsagent.com](http://www.virtualnewsagent.com). Or find out more, and order online, at [www.goingfoxing.co.uk](http://www.goingfoxing.co.uk).

Success story: The Tenterfield whistle is already a favourite among foxers



Outfoxed: The wary dog is no match for the wiles of the GC300

than coming directly towards you as it would if you were blowing a mouth call.

But this was one very wary fox, and instead of looking in the direction of the call, it stood and fixed its gaze on the high seat. The gun was on the shelf and I dared not move, but I thought that as soon as the fox looked away I could quickly bring the rifle to bear.

That plan didn't work, because the fox simply turned and went back into the wood. Now the rifle was up! I waited two minutes, and then switched to the cottontail call, gave it two cycles and stopped. A couple of minutes later the fox appeared again, crossing from the wood towards the rape but some distance away, and I estimated it at 160 yards rather than the original 75 or so. I'm glad I didn't put the call too far out or it may have come my side of the call, crossed my trail, scented my footfall, and spooked.

I'm sure that the fox's plan was to get into the rape, which was now waist-high and would provide it with plenty of cover. Then it would move in under the canopy to get downwind of the caller and check it out unseen.

I didn't give it the chance. As it crossed the short grass of the strip I gave a loud "Oi!" stopping it momentarily in its tracks. That was the chance I needed. The crosshairs were already on the fox and it took less than a second to line up and squeeze the trigger. The fox went down, and the GC300 had claimed its first victim.

I waited on till after dark at 10.30 but nothing else showed. I climbed down and checked out the fox. To my surprise it wasn't a vixen at all, but a smallish and fairly old dog fox. Judging by his wary behaviour he would have been difficult to get with a lamp at night, so I'm pleased to have dealt with him while the long hours of daylight still worked in my favour.

It might have been a different story without the GC300 though, so I suppose you could say that's two products that get the 'tried and tested' seal of approval all in one day.

I have tried the call since without seeing a fox, but in one session it called out two doe muntjac and a fallow doe, all thinking their youngsters were in trouble. The sounds must be somewhere about right. ■