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For Birdshooters and Waterfowlers

Vol. 14, No. 4

April 2002

## Dateline: Washington

### Three Recommended Guides For Pacific Coast Sea Ducks

*Editor's Note: If you love sea ducks, you may be surprised to learn that there are some good opportunities for these birds on the West Coast, and you don't have to go to Alaska for it. Senior Correspondent Gary Kramer has all the details.*

Sea duck hunting along the Atlantic coast has been a long-standing tradition. In contrast, sea duck hunting on the Pacific Coast is less well known and has been the endeavor of primarily waterfowl collectors. While sea ducks are hunted at various locations, the most developed hunting programs (south of Alaska) are in Washington State and specifically in the Puget Sound area.

One of the most diverse arrays of ducks in North America winter along the northwest Washington coast. Up to 17 species spend the winter here, includ-

ing oldsquaw, harlequin, three species of scoters, two scaup, two goldeneye and a variety of diving and puddle ducks.



Northwest Washington is about as far south as some of the sea ducks winter on the Pacific Coast in any appreciable numbers, yet it has the proper mix of habitat and mild winter weather to sup-

port good populations of diving ducks.

**Ben Welton of La Conner Guide Service (13572 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, WA 98273; tel. 360-466-4749; e-mail: trophybird@earthlink.net; web site: www.trophybirds.com)** has been in business for more than 20 years and offers diver and sea duck hunting in Saratoga Passage, Padilla Bay and the Straights of Georgia. I had the opportunity to hunt with Welton last winter. We launched his 17-foot boat near Coupeville on Whidbey Island. Then it was a 20-minute run to Saratoga Passage where the ducks congregate to feed on the falling tide. Our shooting area was in a large cove with a back drop of tall evergreens. Both ends of the boat were anchored with attention paid to the direction of the wind and the direction the birds would be coming off the open bay. Camouflage panels surrounded the  
*(continued on page 2)*

## Dateline: Romania

### All About Birdshooting In this Former Soviet Block Nation

*Editor's Note: Here's a destination that may not be on your list but that offers a wide variety of wingshooting for the traveling hunter and fantastic touring opportunities that will please any non-hunting spouse. Managing Editor Barbara Crown has all the details.*

Romania is a country often unnoticed by bird hunters looking towards Europe. What most fail to realize is that this East European nation offers bird hunters all the amenities that score big with spouses, while providing quality hunting for strictly wild birds. With a culture that hails back to 106 BC and a

myriad of modern health spas, Romania has the services, charm and romance to please any non-shooter who wants to relax, and be pampered and entertained. At the same time, the country's rich and diverse ecosystems offer shooting opportunities for about every bird hunter under the sun. And the best part is that it's rather inexpensive.

**Gabrielle Conea of Corporate Leisure Specialists (717 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 313, Coral Gables, FL 33134; tel. 305-448-6677; fax 305-529-0037; e-mail: gconea@aol.com)** is a hunting travel consultant who was born and raised in Romania under the Communist regime of Nicole Ceausescu, the

former Romanian dictator. Conea speaks Romanian, knows the country and its people and is working directly with the  
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## Washington ... (from page 1)

boat and two dozen scoter and goldeneye decoys completed the rig. We bagged surf scoters, common goldeneye and bufflehead, but Welton also has good success on harlequin, Barrow's goldeneye and several other species of interest to collectors. He also offers some of the only brant hunting north of Mexico and classic layout boat hunting for a variety of species over hand carved decoys.

Welton's day hunts are \$250 per shooter and include lunch and transportation from your motel to the hunting area. He also offers three-day packages for \$900 that include lodging in the very nice and comfortable Fidalgo Country Inn, breakfast and lunch and all hunting services.

Mike Wolsky of Wings and Waves Guide Service (14205 SE 260<sup>th</sup>, Kent, WA 98042; tel. 253-335-7399; e-mail: wolsky@earthlink.net) has been guiding for three years and is a 24-year-old go-getter who has been hunting sea ducks on a regular basis for seven years. He uses a 17-foot sea class TDB and hunts the general Puget Sound area, principally north and west of Mt. Vernon. He caters to collectors and can target harlequin, old squaw,



scoters and goldeneye and in some areas provides combination hunts. He charges \$175 per day per hunter, which includes lunch. Most of his clients stay in Mt. Vernon where there is a wide variety of motels and restaurants.

Finally, Bob Sloan of True Flight Guide Service (7440 La Vista Dr., #142, Dallas, TX 75214; 214-320-9497) is a Texas-based taxidermist who spends several weeks each winter hunting and guiding for sea ducks in the Puget Sound area. He hunts over hand made cork decoys from a 17-foot duck boat. His day rate is \$150 per hunter and lunch is provided. Clients generally stay on Whibey Island where there is a good selection of motels and restaurants.

Seasons and limits for the 2002-2003 season had not been set at this writing, but last year the waterfowl season in Washington was split - Oct. 6 to 17 and Oct. 20 to Jan. 20 with a limit of seven ducks daily. There were numerous species restrictions and a Dec. 15 to Jan. 20 canvasback season. For information on this year's regulations, contact the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Tel. 360-902-2200; website: www.wa.gov/wdfw/).

-Gary Kramer

## Mexico

In the January issue (see pages 1-5), we reported on 18 lodges in Tamaulipas, Mexico, that offer combination hunts from November to February for ducks, geese, mourning dove and bobwhite quail. While Gary Kramer attempted the daunting task of contacting or visiting every hunting operation in Tamaulipas that offered these hunts, it has been brought to our attention that one operator was inadvertently missed. Arnoldo Rodriquez of Hunting & Fishing with the Arnoldo Rodriquez Co. (1445 E. Adams St., #328, Brownsville, TX 78520; 888-662-1064; e-mail: arnoldo\_rm@hotmail.com; web site: www.since1973.com) has been offering combination hunts since 1973. Arnoldo

senior operated the program until the early 1990s when Arnoldo junior took over the business. Their base of operations is a comfortable lodge located about an hour-and-a-half-drive north of Tampico on the shores of Lake San Lorenzo. They can accommodate up to eight hunters, who are housed in double rooms with private bathrooms. The hunting is generally for ducks on the lake or geese from pits in the nearby fields in the mornings. Afternoon hunts are for quail over English pointers. A four-night/three-day package, including airport pick-up in Tampico (served by Continental Airlines from Houston) all hunting services, meals, lodging, hunting license and use of shotguns is \$2,200.



### For Bird Shooters & Waterfowlers

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## Romania... (from page 1)

Romanian Forestry Service to organize hunting and tour packages for international hunters. Whether it's upland birds, doves and pigeons, capercaillie or waterfowl that interest you, Conea has a package that will put you into birds.

Let's start with the upland shooting. Originally introduced by the ancient Romans, pheasant thrive in southern and western Romania, where the country is less forested. The land here features rolling hills and the bushy and grassy cover these birds prefer. Walking is not strenuous at all in this region. Hunting is over trained dogs, and there are no released or driven birds here. The season runs from Oct. 1 to Feb. 28. A package for four days/five nights for groups of four hunters starts at \$1,360 per person and includes 10 birds a day. Drives also may be organized but add to the price of the package.

In addition to pheasant, you will also find quantities of quail, snipe and partridge. Romania is a very agricultural country, and following a land privatization effort after the fall of Communism, the agricultural system here was completely overhauled. The changes implemented greatly benefited the birds. Farmers significantly cut back the amount of pesticides and other chemicals used. They also reduced planted fields to smaller parcels, allowing shrubs and other cover to grow back between crops. The result was a significant increase in the quail and partridge populations. Hunting for quail takes place in the northwest region near the city of Timisoara, where you can also hunt for two species of snipe. Hunts are conducted in the morning and late afternoons over pointing dogs, leaving the mid-day for sightseeing. The season for quail is from Aug. 15 to Nov. 15. Snipe is hunted from Sept. 1 to April 30. A four-day/five night package for groups of four hunters starts at \$1,240 per person.

Timisoara is located in Transylvania, which was under Austro-Hungarian rule for two centuries. It features many beautiful, wooden churches dating to the 12th century, as well as many medieval towns. The nearby Maramures area is best known for its hand-carved porches and gates, quaint

villages and handmade crafts. Non-hunting spouses can also enjoy various health and nutritional treatments, thermal water



baths and massages at a variety of renowned spas in this region, including Baile Herculane, which was established by the Romans and features mineral and thermal springs, and Baile Felix, which also features modern three-star accommodations. These resorts are located in the Carpathian Mountains, which also offer numerous other outdoor activities.

Partridge hunting takes place in the plains and hilly regions of the northwest and along the Danube River Delta in the south. Again, pointing dogs are provided to find the birds. The season is Oct. 15 to Dec. 31. The cost starts at \$1,280 for four hunting days and five nights' accommodations per person for groups of four and includes 10 birds per day. Woodcock is also available along the Danube and in the Carpathians where you find the humid soil and brush cover these birds prefer. The hunting period is from Sept. 1 to April 30. Morning and evening hunts are conducted with dogs or by driving. Three days of hunting and four nights' accommodations for groups of four start at \$1,200 per hunter.

Throughout the northwest there are miles of sunflower fields that attract four species of doves and pigeons. Hunters can pass shoot for them as the birds fly from the fields to their roosts. The season is Aug. 1 to March 31, and packages start at \$1,280 per person for four days and five nights for groups of four. There is also shooting for African turtle doves in the Timis area near the Hungarian border along the Mures and Timis rivers or in the south along the Danube River

following the Bulgarian border. This package starts at \$1,200 for four days and five nights.

Capercaillie and hazel hen (hazel grouse) are two more species readily found in Romania. The capercaillies live in the Carpathians at altitudes of approximately 4,000 feet, where you find large stands of spruce and mixed forests. Hunting is by setting up near mating areas before dawn to ambush cock birds as they come in to check for females. The hunting period runs from April 1 to May 15. Capercaillie packages are for three days and four nights and start at \$1,750 per person for groups of two hunters and include one capercaillie trophy. The hazel hen hunting is at lower altitudes of only 1,000 feet from the Mures River to the coniferous forests of the Carpathians. Hazel hens are widespread here. Hunting guides call the birds in for the hunters. Packages start at \$1,240 per person for four days and five nights for groups of four. The season is Sept. 15 – Dec. 15.

Lastly, the Danube River and surrounding lakes attract tens of thousands of waterfowl. Hunters will find greylag geese, white-fronted geese, lesser white-fronted geese and bean geese, plus mallards, teal and garganey (Eurasian) ducks. Goose hunting is from blinds on the lakes. Duck hunting is either from boats or shore blinds. The season for geese and mallards is from Aug. 15 to Feb. 28. Teal and garganey are hunted from Aug. 15 to March 15. The package for a goose hunt is \$1,525 per person for four days/five nights for groups of four. Duck hunts cost \$1,250 for the same number of hunting days and nights of accommodation.

Hunts along the Danube put clients and non-hunting spouses within only an hour's drive of Bucharest, where they can take day tours of the city and ancient villages. The Black Sea is also close by, where there are numerous resorts and spas offering mud bath treatments.

All packages include airport meet and greet, transfers to your hotel or hunting chalet, up to four nights accommodations, a 4wd vehicle for groups of four, all meals, Romanian gun permits, bilingual guides and assistance with pre/post-hunt tours. There is an additional fee for assistance with tours

for the non-hunters and a surcharge for single room accommodations. Ammunition is provided at about \$6 per box. Package prices are approximate because exact hunting areas and accommodations may vary, but Conea says the difference won't change by more than a couple of hundred dollars. Hunters fly into either Cluj or Timisoara in the northwest or Bucharest for hunts in the

south. Airfare varies with the season. The high season (until Sept. 15) is approximately \$900 plus tax from either the East or West coast. The shoulder season (from mid-September to mid-October) runs \$700 to \$850 depending on whether you depart from New York City, Miami, Chicago or Los Angeles. And airfare during the low season (October – March) runs \$400 - \$600.

Conea can also arrange for tours of the Moldova area in Romania's north-east, where you find painted churches dating back to the 12th Century, and Byzantine architecture throughout the mountain areas. Groups can also enjoy special banquet dinners in local restaurants that feature traditional game, live music and entertainment. Enjoy!

– Barbara Crown

## Dateline: Italy

### Found! An Organized Shoot and Cultural Adventure Rolled into One

*Editor's Note: If exclusivity, high culture and some interesting shooting appeal to you, correspondent Stuart Williams has discovered a gem of an opportunity for you and your non-shooting spouse. Here are all the details.*

One does not generally think of Italy as a major birdshooting destination. It is a highly industrialized country, densely populated, with over a million licensed hunters, and not much really good habitat for game birds. Having said that, however, I must point out that there are some enclaves of privilege where there is still good bird habitat, hunting pressure is carefully controlled and there is a program of rearing and releasing game birds. **Prof. Lawan Anderson of Tapestry Travel** in suburban Dallas (2220 Airport Freeway, Building 440, Suite 136, Bedford, TX 76022; tel. 817-545-4997; e-mail: [tapestrytravel@hotmail.com](mailto:tapestrytravel@hotmail.com)) has for several years been quietly organizing bird shoots on some of the most exclusive estates in Tuscany, which has become one of the most chic and desirable tourist destinations in the world. I must emphasize at the outset that these are not purely hunting trips. Anderson prefers to call them "cultural adventures," because they combine hunting with a strong admixture of culture in the form of concerts, opera, visits to private palaces and art collections, visits to art museums, old churches, wineries and villas, plus dining at top-quality restaurants. During Anderson's tours, it is even possible to enter the kitchens of some of these restaurants and watch the master chefs at work.

All this is easily arranged because these shoots take place on an estate that is within an hour's drive of Florence. The hunting day typically ends at 4 pm, and the rest of the day may be spent pursuing cultural activities in Florence or nearby. Also, after the hunting part of the trip is finished, several days are devoted entirely to cultural pursuits. This fall Anderson is offering a shoot in Tuscany from November 10-16. The trip offers four days of shooting pheasants over dogs, plus a day of sporting clays if the group so desires. Otherwise, that day is devoted to cultural activities. Flighted



mallard shooting is also available if the group so desires. The trip is limited to six hunters and six non-hunters, to ensure that each member of the group receives a high level of personal attention. Each hunter will have his own dog handler/guide and dog(s). Virtually all of the pheasants are released birds. References I spoke with who had made this shoot said that these birds were strong fliers, indeed much too strong for some of the group who were not especially good shooters. It is difficult to estimate how many birds a shooter might expect to get, because that varies according to shooting skill, physical condition (the country is wooded and hilly, and the

walking in some places can be strenuous), weather and other variables. A ballpark figure would be about 25 birds per day, but it might be considerably more or fewer.

Shot pheasants become the property of the shooters. Generally some of them are given to a chef in a local restaurant to prepare, and the rest are donated to an orphanage. Accommodations are in a villa. Food and wines, it goes without saying, are of the highest order. Shooters are not permitted to bring their guns into Italy; however, excellent loaner guns by renowned makers such as Beretta, Franchi, Benelli, and Perazzi are made available.

The cost of this trip is \$6,200 for a shooter, \$3,900 for a non-shooter. This fee covers all services of guides and dogs, guns and ammunition, meals and wines, ground transportation and accommodations, entry into private palaces and art collections where appropriate, and the services of Prof. Lawan Anderson as escort and interpreter. She, incidentally, has a Ph.D. from the Gregorian University of Rome and teaches there part-time, so she is extremely knowledgeable about Italian history and culture. To reach the estate, shooters and their wives fly to Florence or Pisa, where they are met and transferred to the estate.

– Stuart Williams

## Correction

Oooops! In our December 2001 issue we ran a wonderfully detailed report from subscriber Peter Taylor on a place called Badlands Hunting Pheasant Preserve. Unfortunately, we inadvertently transposed two digits in the telephone number provided. The correct phone number is 701-842-3907.

## Dateline: Nevada

### This Wild Chukar Hunt Is A Real Test of Skill

*Editor's Note: Here is a challenging hunt that you can do on your own without breaking the bank. Correspondent Mel Toponce filed the report.*

A greatly overlooked gunning opportunity exists in the mountains of Nevada; it's for wild chukar partridge near the city of Elko. The wild chukar, found in mountainous terrain throughout the US West, offers some of the most challenging wingshooting anywhere. It is not to be confused with the pen-raised birds found on shooting preserves throughout the country. If you are the adventurous type and are in above-average physical condition, you can experience some great hunting for this fantastic game bird. Here are the particulars.

Finding chukars in shootable numbers is not always easy, but I found good shooting for these birds in the vast quantities of public land around Elko in north-eastern Nevada. One strategy to hunt chukars is to go before snowfall begins and locate the area water sources, namely creeks and wildlife guzzlers (manmade water sources installed for wildlife management). These birds are closely tied to water. If it's dry, they won't be far from the guzzlers. Speak with the staff at the **Eastern Region Office of the Nevada Division of Wildlife (1375 Mt. City Highway, Elko, NV 89801; tel. 775-738-5332)**, especially Gary Branzell, who is an avid birdshooter himself, and their resident upland bird biologist, Sid Eaton. They will show you some places to go. They will also recommend that you purchase a *Division of Wildlife Water Development Atlas* for \$30. This volume pinpoints the exact location of wildlife guzzlers. They might also suggest that you procure a land status map from the BLM.

Another strategy to hunt chukars here is to go in early November when there's a little snow on the ground. The snow allows you to see where there has been bird activity and helps you find them easier. In early November, say up until the 10<sup>th</sup>, you might encounter fresh snow. After a day or two, when it begins to melt off, be sure to hunt the green-ups on the south slopes and the small creeks in the gullies

where the birds will be looking for food. The season here opens in early October and runs through the end of January. Avoid late season hunts, as the birds will have been hammered by then.

The mountains can be difficult to walk in, so bring tough boots with Vibram soles and make sure that they are well broken in. A word of warning is in order here. To



say that you must be in good shape for this hunt is an understatement. Two types of terrain you will encounter are steep and steeper, with 40-degree slopes not uncommon in this unbelievably rugged country. Chukars run uphill and fly down, and you will often catch yourself out of breath as you pursue them. You may even find yourself asking what you have gotten into. But sometimes you can catch the birds out on the sagebrush flats or dusting in the roads. If you do, just think pheasant. Chukar hunting is tough, exhausting work. Just keep looking until you find them. Chukars are runners and will often break from a dog; however, using a dog, especially one of the pointing varieties, will greatly enhance your chances of success.

In regards to guns, some hunters opt for 20-gauge shotguns due to weight considerations; but, because wild flushes often occur, a 12-gauge with modified and full chokes is more effective. One ounce of no. 6 shot is adequate in the 20-gauge and 1 1/8 ounces of no. 6's is about right in the 12. Above all, avoid .410-bore and 28-gauge guns for use on these tough birds. A 4wd vehicle is necessary here. Rent one locally from Hertz or Enterprise in town. Elko has many fine hotels and motels in varying price ranges. My favorite place to stay while hunting is the moderately priced

Best Western Elko Inn (837 Idaho St., Elko, NV 89801; tel. 775-738-7261), where hunters are offered a special \$49 rate and can park their vehicle immediately in front of a ground-level room. This facility is conveniently located in downtown and offers a complimentary continental breakfast. A free casino shuttle is also available. Manager Donna Mergenthal says dogs are welcome in the rooms, provided they are well behaved. She can also direct hunters to several outstanding eateries, including the landmark Star Basque restaurant on Silver Street. Dining Basque-style is part of the charm of Elko, and if you have never experienced one of these family-style Basque dinners you truly have something to look forward to.

Air service to Elko is available through Sky West, connecting from Reno and Salt Lake. A nonresident general hunting license costs \$110. Alternatively, an upland game and waterfowl one-day permit is available for \$16, with \$5 added on for each consecutive day you wish to hunt. So, for example, a five-day permit would cost \$36. You can obtain these from license agents, such as the local Wal-Mart, or from the above-mentioned DOW office upon arrival. The daily limit of chukars last season was six, with a possession limit of 12, but be sure you refer to the 2002 *Nevada Huntbook* (regulation brochure) regarding this year's possession limit. Be aware that it is often necessary to give away or consume birds in order to continue hunting.

I mentioned above that these wild Nevada chukars will test your wingshooting skills. I can attest to this, as I recall one day years ago when five of us, all experienced hunters, emerged from a deep canyon where we had spent the day and fired 50 shots between us, bagging a total of five birds! Remember to carry water if you hunt early in the season, as the days can get very hot. Also, don't forget blaze orange clothing, raingear and the all-important eye and ear protection. As a wingshooter, you really haven't lived until you have tried to hit one of these feathered, downhill-flying rockets as it comes screaming past you at Mach I. If you go next November, you might just find me up on one of those mountains.

— Mel Toponce

## Dateline: Tennessee

### Subscriber Report – The Case For Covey Rise Lodge

*Editor's Note: The best recommendations for hunting opportunities come from our subscribers. Here's a report submitted by subscriber Weaver C. Barksdale, who is completely sold on the quail hunting at this lodge. It could be your kind of place too. Thanks for the report, Weaver Barksdale!*

Less than an hour's drive from my home in Brentwood, Tenn., I have discovered a place where the avid quail hunter will find bountiful birds, a difficult thing to come across in my region. It's called **Covey Rise Lodge (8723 Primm Springs Road, Primm Springs, TN 38476; tel. 931-729-1333; web site: www.nolimitquail.com)**. Owner Rob Englert has tried to create an environment here where hunters can experience the kind of quail hunting that was enjoyed in Middle Tennessee during the early 20th century. After visiting Covey Rise on several occasions during this past season, I am pleased to report that he has succeeded.

Employing the Smith-O'Neil early release system, Rob has introduced pen raised birds into a natural environment where they are thriving and taking on the characteristics of wild birds. Although domesticated quail will probably never be able to match the quickness and speed of their wild cousins, the birds at Covey Rise fly hard and present a good challenge for shooters of all skill levels.

Covey Rise has 2,400 acres of holdings and leases. Approximately 750 acres are managed intensively as quail habitat, with much of the land planted in milo and corn. During our hunts, Englert opened the crops of several birds, and each was invariably packed full of milo. Covey Rise also has a kennel full of very good dogs, although hunters are welcome to bring their own. Englert has been around bird dogs most of his life and has spent the past 10 years intensely involved in dog training. He personally trained all of the setters and pointers that were used during my hunts. The younger dogs may occasionally bump a bird or two, but as a group the dogs hold point and back each other very well. Watching the dogs work is the most enjoyable part of the hunt for me, and I

thoroughly enjoyed watching Englert's dogs do their job.

Covey Rise can accommodate six overnight guests in a comfortable lodge where home-style meals are served. Twelve hunters can be in the field at a given time, a maximum of three per guide spread over four different courses. Although rolling hills define much of



Middle Tennessee's topography, the hunting courses are relatively flat fields with only some modest slopes. Even hunters with physical limitations should find it comfortable to pursue the bountiful birds in a pastoral setting featuring limestone ridges and the beautiful Lick Creek.

The early release system at Covey Rise is expensive to maintain, largely due to the losses imposed by the abundant predators in the area. Some might be initially put off by the \$650 daily fee per gun (lunch included) until they realize what they are getting in return. Englert guarantees 17 to 25 coveys per day and imposes no limits. Half-day hunts without lunch are available as well. Furthermore, Englert is dedicated to ensuring that his guests have a first-class experience. For example, although it meant a loss of revenue to him, he refused to let us hunt one day when drenching rains would have caused the birds to fly poorly.

Three of my business partners and I bagged 107 birds on a full-day hunt in November. Hunting by myself in January, I harvested 56 birds in one day, and I am only a passable shot. You can imagine how many birds got up for me to have these results. In fact, during our November hunt, one of my partners and I saw over 100 birds flush in an area that was not much more than an acre in size.

That area was only a small fraction of the course that we hunted that afternoon.

If you consider that most other game preserves impose a 12- or 15-bird limit and charge \$6 to \$8 for additional birds, the fee at Covey Rise is reasonable for the hunter who wants a lot of action. Englert imposes no charges other than the daily fee, although he does suggest gratuities for the dog handlers and bird cleaners. Other preserves will nick you 50 cents to \$1 or more to clean and pack your birds.

Covey Rise is an easy 1-1/2 hour drive from Nashville International Airport and, therefore, is easily accessible to hunters in most areas of the country. While not as famous for quail as South Georgia is, Middle Tennessee is more scenic (yes, as a life-long resident I am prejudiced) and has a cool but not frigid climate that is more suitable for hunting than the weather experienced by our southern neighbors.

Englert describes Covey Rise as a wingshooter's paradise. I have found that description to be accurate. A day at Covey Rise is like traveling through a time warp to an era of abundant game and pleasurable sport. I highly recommend it.

- Weaver C. Barksdale

## Honor Roll Subscribers

*The Bird Hunting Report* encourages subscribers to file reports on great places to hunt or important news developments that help the rest of us decide where to go (or not to go!) hunting. Subscribers who file unusually important and useful reports are placed on what we call our Subscriber Honor Roll and receive a special Bird Hunting Report Honor Roll Cap. Our other Honor Roll subscribers are: *Ron Barr, Kurt Glaeseman, Robert Gow, Brooks Haden, Henry Harrison, Edward B. Hayes, Bill Hedgpeth, Jim Kelly, Richard Lichtenberg and Dave MacEachern, Dick Mider, Richard Shackleton and Richard Welsh.*

If you have a report on an interesting hunting trip, why not send it in and see if you can get your name on our Subscriber Honor Roll? Write: *The Bird Hunting Report*, PO Box 328, Boyds, MD 20841. By fax: 301-528-2497. By e-mail: [support@pnmsi.com](mailto:support@pnmsi.com).

## Briefly Noted

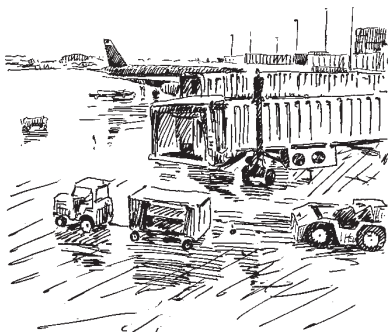
### Things To Do, Places To Go, New Developments

Our report in the February issue about those new gun import requirements for Argentina (see pages 9-10) has initiated a firestorm of comments and protest from operators in that country. The gist of what they've told us is that the new import permit required by the Argentine consulates is simply unnecessary. They claim it is a new tax that the Argentine government has concocted in its desperation to raise money. We're told that the airport police in Argentina, who actually clear imported firearms into the country, are not asking to see these permits and are only interested in collecting the regular importation fees (which are now 30 Argentine pesos and not US dollars). Furthermore, these outfitters claim that they have hunters arriving on almost a daily basis without this permit and that they are sailing right through customs with their guns.

Most of these comments went directly to our correspondent Stuart Williams, who often reports on developments in Latin America for us but who actually did not write the story in question. Our official position at the *Bird Hunting Report* is that whether the airport police is currently checking for these permits or not, the requirement is in place and we would be remiss to not inform you about it. Some traveling hunters may choose to take their chances and ignore the new requirement based on their operator's advice. However, considering the atmosphere regarding travel security after 9/11 and the current worldwide scrutiny on gun importations, we think that ignoring any requirements from any country would be unwise. You simply don't know if or when people on the ground will get on board and start enforcing the new regulation.

Our position is probably going to make a lot of people in Argentina unhappy, as they are concerned that this new and somewhat cumbersome procedure is going to dissuade hunters from traveling to Argentina. For what it's worth, we sympathize with them. After all, these folks have taken a real beating of late financially. Between the political and economic upheaval in their country and then

the overall fear of travel caused by the terrorist attacks last September, many Argentine operators have seen a real drop in business. They're afraid that this new procedure will only make it worse. So, in their defense, we'll say, just do what is



necessary and go. When you consider the fine people, personal service, fantastic shooting and overall quality experience awaiting you in the Argentine countryside, some extra paperwork and another 40 bucks just aren't that big a deal. Don't you think?

• • •

Continuing on the subject of guns, we have confirmed that the US Government is dead serious about requiring a permit for all nonimmigrant aliens entering the country with a firearm. We have that directly from ATF Agent Larry White who was in Germany recently for IWA, a big German hunting show in Nuremberg. You'll remember we told you about the new requirement last month.

The most interesting and newsworthy comment White made centered on the reason for the new requirement and the abruptness with which it was enacted. The requirement is a response to September 11, he said, and heightened fears of new terrorist attacks against the United States. The United States needs time to do background checks of permit applicants, he says, particularly those from certain parts of the world. White went on to point out that ATF is doing all it can to accommodate hunters and shooters who already had travel plans in place when the new directive became effective Feb. 19.

It is far too early to say whether this new import permit requirement will be abolished or modified. Ultimately, visitors from some parts of the world may be able to register their guns on arrival in

the US, we are told. Others will almost certainly be able to get annual permits that allow them to make multiple entries with the same firearms. For the moment, though, the US is circling the wagons in all kinds of ways these days. Our advice is to not even think of flaunting or disregarding US firearms rules right now.

To apply for an import permit, access the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms web site at [www.atf.treas.gov](http://www.atf.treas.gov) and scroll down until you find the section that addresses nonimmigrant aliens and firearms. You'll find a press release explaining the new requirement as well as a hyperlink allowing you to download the necessary form to apply for a permit (ATF F6 - Part 1). If you are not Internet ready, then call the ATF's Imports Branch at 202-927-8320. ATF has indicated they will accept completed applications by fax at 202-927-2697. Just be aware that the form is complicated, and because it was originally designed for use by commercial importers, it does not address the need, under the new regulations, to provide proof that you will be hunting or attending a recognized shooting event here in the US to be eligible for an import permit. Our advice is to attach that proof anyway and draw attention to it in an attached letter.

One result of the new regulations, incidentally, is sure to be increased scrutiny of all firearms being brought into the US, including those being brought home by US citizens after hunts and shoots overseas. It bears repeating that US citizens are required to register their guns with US Customs on their way out of the country. This is not just "a good idea" any more. This is a hard and fast legal requirement. And no - it is not enough to keep an old registration form in your gun case, nor is it enough to keep a bill of sale, or some other kind of proof of purchase in the US. The make of the gun is irrelevant, too. Quite simply, the law requires you to register each and every gun you take out of the country every time you do so.

Mind you, we are not "pushing" this requirement; we are simply trying to inform you accurately so you can take the proper action before leaving the country. Many hunters don't believe this

declaration requirement exists. Quite simply, they have been asking the wrong officials for clarification. The declaration requirement originates in the US State Department, specifically in the Office of Defense Trade Controls, not in US Customs. That latter agency, which is supposed to be enforcing the requirement, does so only sporadically. In fact, many individual customs agents don't know about the declaration requirement themselves and misinform travelers who call and ask about it. This does not mean hunters and shooters are not being prosecuted for ignoring the State Department procedures governing temporary firearms exports. They are indeed being prosecuted, and the rate of prosecutions is increasing rapidly in the wake of September 11 and the recent United Nations Conference on Small Arms.

The UN Conference was a watershed event in the enforcement of arms control measures here in the US. Hunters who followed what happened at this conference will recall that the Bush Administration took a tough pro-gun stance, refusing to go along with many of the proposed restrictions on small arms. The administration's stated reason for doing so was its belief that the US had sufficient controls in place already to prevent small arms from finding their way into low-intensity conflicts around the world. An important aspect of those controls is the aforementioned requirement that travelers declare their firearms each and every time they leave the country.

The upshot is, US Customs Agents are being told about the State Department regulations, and they are being pushed to start enforcing them. Hunters and shooters are being stopped. They are being arrested and charged. If you fail to declare your firearm the next time you leave the country, you may be next.

For the record, here are the relevant regulations that make it mandatory to declare your firearm each and every time you leave the country. We are indebted to Conservation Force's John J. Jackson III, for ferreting out this information. Jackson is an attorney who specializes in matters regarding hunting and conservation around the world.

International Traffic In Arms Regulations Section 123.17

### EXPORT OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

(c) District Directors of Customs shall permit US persons to export temporarily from the US without a license not more than three non-automatic firearms in Category I(a) of Section 121.1 of this subchapter and not more than



1,000 cartridges therefore, provided that:

- 1.) A declaration by the US person and an inspection by a customs officer is made:
- 2.) The firearms and accompanying ammunition must be with the US person's baggage or effects, whether accompanied or unaccompanied (but not mailed): and
- 3.) They must be for that person's exclusive use and not for re-export or other transfer of ownership.

•••

Land access for self-guided hunters is a major issue across North America, and many states are responding to hunter needs by working with landowners not only to provide public access but also to enhance habitat for wildlife. Here's a new program in North Dakota that is expected to create thousands of acres of improved habitat while providing walk-in hunting access. Correspondent **Patricia Stockdill**, a North Dakota native, explains how the new program works:

"The North Dakota Game and Fish Dept. has teamed up with the US Dept. of Agriculture in a unique Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program called CoverLocks for Conservation. The program involves working with private landowners in selected watersheds to create 20-acre blocks of wildlife habitat that meet the year-round needs of most resi-

dent wildlife species. Called CoverLocks, each of these blocks are surrounded by another 140 acres of private property that are open to walk-in hunters. Landowners are compensated through a 30-year access lease for the entire 160-acre section. The lease protects the 20-acre block of habitat from being disturbed, but leaves the landowner free to use the other 140 acres. The new program is a winner all the way around – wildlife gets new habitat areas, hunters enjoy long-term access to enhanced land previously closed to them and landowners received financial compensation for participating.

So what are the habitat improvements created by this program? A typical CoverLock will feature a five-acre block of heavy winter tree cover, a five-acre food plot and 10 acres of forbs and grasses to provide loafing and nesting cover. The five-acre winter tree cover areas are designed to provide high quality winter habitat, protecting wildlife from biting winter winds and snow, conditions that can easily claim wildlife on the Northern Great Plains. USDA and the Game and Fish Dept. bear the expenses incurred with developing each 20-acre habitat area, thanks to \$44 million in funds from the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Fifteen watersheds in all or parts of 17 counties in south-central and southwestern North Dakota have been declared eligible for the program. These same counties also happen to be in the heart of the state's pheasant country.

The Game and Fish Dept. has already developed four pilot CoverLock projects in Emmons and McIntosh counties along the North Dakota-South Dakota border. Three of the pilot CoverLocks have 20-acre habitat areas adjacent to 140 acres of land also enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Another includes a small stream within the 20-acre CoverLock. This one is expected to develop into a quality waterfowl breeding and brood-rearing area, says Ted Uppgren, director of the Game and Fish Dept's. Mission in Woodland Habitats.

"Last year when the program was introduced, more than 40 landowners enrolled in the CoverLocks program. Trees and nesting cover in those new

CoverLock areas are being planted this spring. Food plots will follow after the trees become established. Uppgren anticipates about 100 CoverLocks will either be established or ready for planting in 2003.

“Hunters interested in trying out the few established CoverLocks this coming season will find the properties listed in North Dakota’s PLOTS Guide. PLOTS, or Private Lands Open To Sportsmen, is another North Dakota land access program that I have reported about in the past and which is still available to hunters. The PLOTS Guide, you’ll remember, identifies all private land open to walk-in access as well as public land, such as US Fish and Wildlife Service land that is open to hunting, US Forest Service National Grasslands, Bureau of Land Management properties and state lands, including Game and Fish Wildlife Management Areas and State School Land. The guide is updated each fall in time for the new hunting season. To order a free PLOTS guide or for more information on the CoverLocks program, contact the **North Dakota Game and Fish Dept. (100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, N.D. 58501; tel. 701-328-6300).**”

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Still on the subject of land access, the State of **Colorado** has implemented its own walk-in access program. More than 113,000 acres of private properties in eastern Colorado have enrolled. The program allows small game hunters to access certain private properties without having to

obtain permission from landowners during the small game season. While the lands enrolled in the program were specifically selected for pheasant hunting, they can also provide opportunities for bobwhite and scaled quail, and snow geese, in some areas. Some of these properties feature CRP fields,



weedy corn and wheat stubble fields, creek bottoms, grass corners and waterways. Fields range in size from a few acres to a section, giving hunters lots of ground to choose from. To keep the properties attractive to birds throughout the hunting season, the landowners have agreed not to mow, hay, graze, spray, disc or otherwise disturb the properties until the end of the season.

In exchange for providing small game hunting rights on their lands, landowners receive a financial compensation. The program is funded through the sale of mandatory Walk-in Access Program permits, available for \$20 at all division offices and license vendors. Some local conservation organizations such as the Phillips County Pheasants Forever Chapter have also contributed matching funds to the program to ensure that all inter-

ested landowners with qualifying habitat can participate.

Access to Walk-in Program properties is not made available until the opening of pheasant season, which was Nov. 10 last year. You must also purchase a small game hunting license to legally hunt. Access is by foot only; no vehicles or horses are permitted. Properties enrolled in the program are in Baca, Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Kiowa, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Prowers, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma counties.

Enrolled properties are clearly marked with “Walk-in Access” signs and their locations are published in the Walk-in Program Atlas, available for free. The atlas includes detailed maps of the properties. Categorized by county, the atlas pinpoints the locations of each property, shows roads and highways and describes the cover types found there. Also included in the atlas are regulations for the program and small game hunting, plus some tips and strategies on finding Colorado pheasants. Hunters should use the atlas as a guide in selecting and finding enrolled properties, but some tracts may have been removed from the program, so always make sure the land you’re hunting is clearly marked with Walk-in Access signs. You can get a free copy of the atlas through license vendors in eastern Colorado or through the **Colorado Division of Wildlife (6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216; tel. 303-297-1192)**. You can also download a copy from the division web site at [www.wildlife.state.co.us/hunt/WalkInAccess/index.asp](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/hunt/WalkInAccess/index.asp).

### Outfitter Critiques: the Good, the Bad, the Ugly

*This section of The Bird Hunting Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Bird Hunting Report forms received by our offices. It is designed to provide first-hand opinions on what is happening in the field. Our policy at The Bird Hunting Report is as follows: We publish excerpts in the newsletter of Bird Hunting Reports as received,*

*except in cases when booking agents or outfitters submit reports on hunts in which they have a financial stake or when we have reason to question whether there are ulterior financial or personal motives on the part of the person submitting the report. It goes without saying that a single report in this section should not be taken as the final*

*word on an outfitter’s competence. Many elements of a hunt are subjective. What is wrong for one hunter may be right for another. Moreover, personality conflicts often occur on hunts. It is obvious that hunters, as well as outfitters, can be the cause of a ruined hunt. We think all seasoned hunters can sort this out and make proper use of our Bird Hunting Report*

Program. *Our pages are open for a rebuttal of equal length by any affected party. For details on how to order photocopies of the Bird Hunt Reports, see the Bird Hunt Report Service box elsewhere in this section.*

Subscriber **W.D. Stevens** enthusiastically recommends a hunt he enjoyed in Spain in October of 2000 handled by **Frontiers International (PO Box 959, Wexford, PA 15090-0959; tel. 800-245-1950 or 724-935-1577; fax 724-935-5388; e-mail: info@frontierstrvl.com; web site: www.frontierstrvl.com)**. Stevens says he hunted with **Samuel Flores** at the *estancia* **El Palomar** in La Mancha. He says the driven red-legged partridge here were “extremely” strong flyers and that each drive he experienced varied in how the birds were presented. He says the hunting areas were all a short car ride from the *estancia*. He gives the operation an all-excellent rating and notes the “great” ambiance. He says there were activities for non-hunters during the day and lots more in the evenings for everyone to enjoy. “This hunt is a must do,” he says. Stevens gives the cost of his entire trip as \$15,000.

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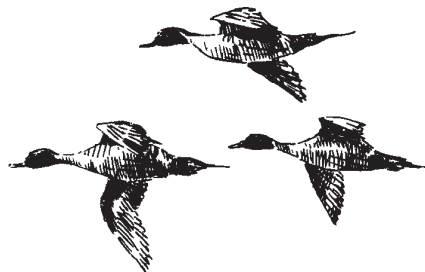
Jumping over to South America, **W.D. Stevens** has also reported on a pigeon shoot he enjoyed in Paraguay, last May. He hunted with **Erik Von Sneidern**, booking agent **Trek International Safaris (PO Box 1305, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32004; tel. 800-654-9915 or 904-273-7800; fax 904-273-0096; e-mail: trek@treksafaris.com)**. The hunt took place in the grain fields around the small Mennonite town of Filadelfia, where the pigeons feed on sorghum, soy beans and corn. Stevens says he hunted from rough blinds and brush lines over decoys and reports good to excellent shooting each day. He says the hotel where they stayed in Filadelfia was only a short drive from the hunting area and that they took mid-day breaks and lunch in the field. He gives the operation high marks, with the exception of the accommodations, which he rates as “good to fair.” He gives the cost of his trip as \$2,850, and says shotgun shells were \$10 per box.

• • •

And over in Argentina, we have

three reports from subscribers who were in Cordoba recently. The first one is from W.D. Stevens, who hunted this past November with **Zeke Hayes** and his brothers from **H&H Outfitters**, booking agent **Trek International Safaris (PO Box 1305, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32004; tel. 800-654-9915 or 904-273-7800; fax 904-273-0096; e-mail: trek@treksafaris.com)**. Stevens reports hunting out of *estancia* **La Portenita** where he says the doves were abundant. He gives Hayes an excellent rating for his knowledge and abilities and says, “The Hayes brothers get better every year. This was the best shoot yet.”

The second report is from subscriber **Howard Crockett**, who shot doves with his two adult sons at **Serge Dompierre’s**



**Estancia Los Chanares**, booking agent **The Detail Company (3220 Audley Houston, Texas 77098; tel. 800-291-2213 or 713-524-7235; fax 713-524-7244; e-mail: dove524@aol.com)**. Crockett enthuses about every aspect of his trip, from what he describes as gorgeous accommodations, to the gourmet meals served on china and the “unbelievable” doves. “This was the best hunt my sons and I have ever experienced,” he says.

• • •

And the last report is from subscriber **Dale Harvey**, who also hunted at **Los Chanares**. He reports seeing many thousands of doves and enjoying the kind of shooting that is “limited by only what the body can take.” In addition to the doves, Harvey says he also enjoyed a good pigeon shoot. He provides an overall excellent rating for the place and notes how the close proximity of the shooting areas allowed his party to “slow down” the pace of their

hunt and enjoy their mid-day breaks back at the *estancia*. An interesting comment we noted, was Harvey’s advice that shooters make sure they have their permits and licenses with them when hunting, as he saw several game wardens during his trip. Harvey gives the cost of his three-day hunt as \$1,595 for the doves and an additional \$250 for his one pigeon shoot.

Further north in Mexico, subscriber **Bennett Ellington** has positive things to say about a combination cast and blast trip he and his teenage son enjoyed at **Anglers Inn**, booking agent **Guri Lodge Tours (PO Box 32704, Los Angeles, CA 90036; tel. 858-693-0086)**. Ellington says they averaged 30 ducks per hunt, taking mostly pintails and black-bellied and fulvus tree ducks, along with some teal and widgeon. He reports that the numbers of ducks in the area were down from past years, but says there were enough birds to satisfy him. Ellington says he and his son were taken to shallow-water blinds each morning where the bird boys had already set up their decoys and that they called for the ducks themselves. He says he brought his own dog to retrieve the birds. In the afternoons, he says they fished for large-mouth bass, catching fish up to 12 pounds. He also reports dove hunting one morning for whitewings. Ellington says there weren’t great quantities of the birds, but that he shot a lot more than he would have back home.

Ellington gives Anglers Inn an all-excellent rating, commending them for having the flexibility to cater to his desires and not “pigeonhole” him into conducting his hunt any one way. He describes the lodge as “fantastic” and says the meals were five star quality. He gives the price of his four-day/three-night combo trip as \$1,695 per person.

• • •

Crossing just over the border into southern Arizona, subscriber **Ron Roderick** has good things to say about a Mearns’ quail hunt handled for him this past February by **Tom Britt** of **Game Ranger Outfitters LLC (Tel. 602-439-3688 or 928-774-4245; web site: www.gamerangeroutfitters.com)**. Roderick says he hunted around Sonoito, Ariz., near the Mexican border, where there were abundant quail in the hill coun-

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try. He says Britt and his associates are retired game officers from the Arizona Game and Fish Dept. who know the hunting areas intimately and understand the conditions necessary to find these desert birds in huntable quantities. He says Britt used English setters and German wire-haired pointers, putting out one dog at a time to find the birds. He says they hunted all day, taking lunch in the field. Roderick says this species of quail requires lots of walking up and down hill in altitudes of about 4,000 to 5,000 feet. He reports that Britt also guides for Gambel's and scaled quail, which are found in different terrain throughout southern Arizona. Because desert quail are so dependent on seasonal rains, he says Britt will monitor their condition and advise hunters on which species is most huntable. He also says that Britt will customize the hunt to fit the client's needs. He is willing to hunt all day for clients who desire to or are in good shape, or he will design the hunt so the client will have frequent breaks.

Roderick reports staying in a hotel during his hunt, but says Britt can also arrange camp trips in either tent or trailer camps. He gives Britt and his partners very high marks, and says, "These are super nice guys, who are dedicated to doing a good job for the hunter." He also rates the dog work as excellent. Roderick gives the cost of his hunt as \$200 per day, including lunch but not licenses. He says that these desert quail are very different from bobwhites and

recommends the experience to all quail hunters and not just collectors.

• • •

And over in Arkansas, subscriber **Robert Stevens** is happy with a mallard duck hunt he enjoyed this past January at **Greenridge Hunting Resort (21322 Highway 14 East, Harrisburg, AR 72432; tel. 800-822-3825 or 870-578-5510; fax 870-483-5161)**. He says this is a preserve hunt run by **Dutch Noe**, who has another business raising over 200,000 mallards a year. Stevens says Noe has a property separate from his rearing operation with numerous ponds and lakes where he releases mallard hatchlings early in the year. Stevens reports that the birds are essentially wild ducks that have simply been conditioned to stay in the area. "These are not pen-raised and released birds, and they are not tame in any way," he says. Stevens says hunters set up in blinds built on some of the ponds here where they called for the ducks, and dogs are provided to retrieve the downed birds.

Stevens says he is an experienced and avid duck hunter who follows the migrations from Canada down to Argentina each year, but he recommends Greenridge Hunting Resort to fellow subscribers who have less time to duck hunt and want to take birds. "You don't have to worry about the weather conditions or the migrations here," he says. "You will always find ducks, and you can shoot as many as you want." Stevens

says that because Greenridge is a preserve they have an extensive season, providing duck hunts from October through March. He says the place does not provide accommodations or meals, but that both can be found nearby. He says Noe also offers pheasant hunts here. Stevens reports that the cost of the hunts varies with the number of birds shot. Duck hunts start at \$500 for 20 birds and run up to \$3,400 for 200. Costs may be split among hunting parties.

• • •

And finally, up in central Montana subscriber **Steve Wiley** reports on a self-guided hunt in the Lewiston area. He says he and some friends traveled here last October only to find that a five-year drought, severe hail storms and other weather-related conditions had greatly reduced the number of pheasant in the region. He also says that the necessary cover for these birds was minimal in most areas. Despite that, Wiley reports that his party was able to shoot plenty of sharptail grouse and Hungarian partridges. He says they hunted with their three pointing dogs on private land with permission and on Bureau of Land Management lands. When asked if he would recommend this hunt, Wiley said yes, but that he thinks fellow subscribers should probably wait for the rains to help the birds rebound. He reports that his group stayed in a local motel and spent about \$700 on the three-day trip.

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