

NOT YOUR USUAL BIRD HUNT

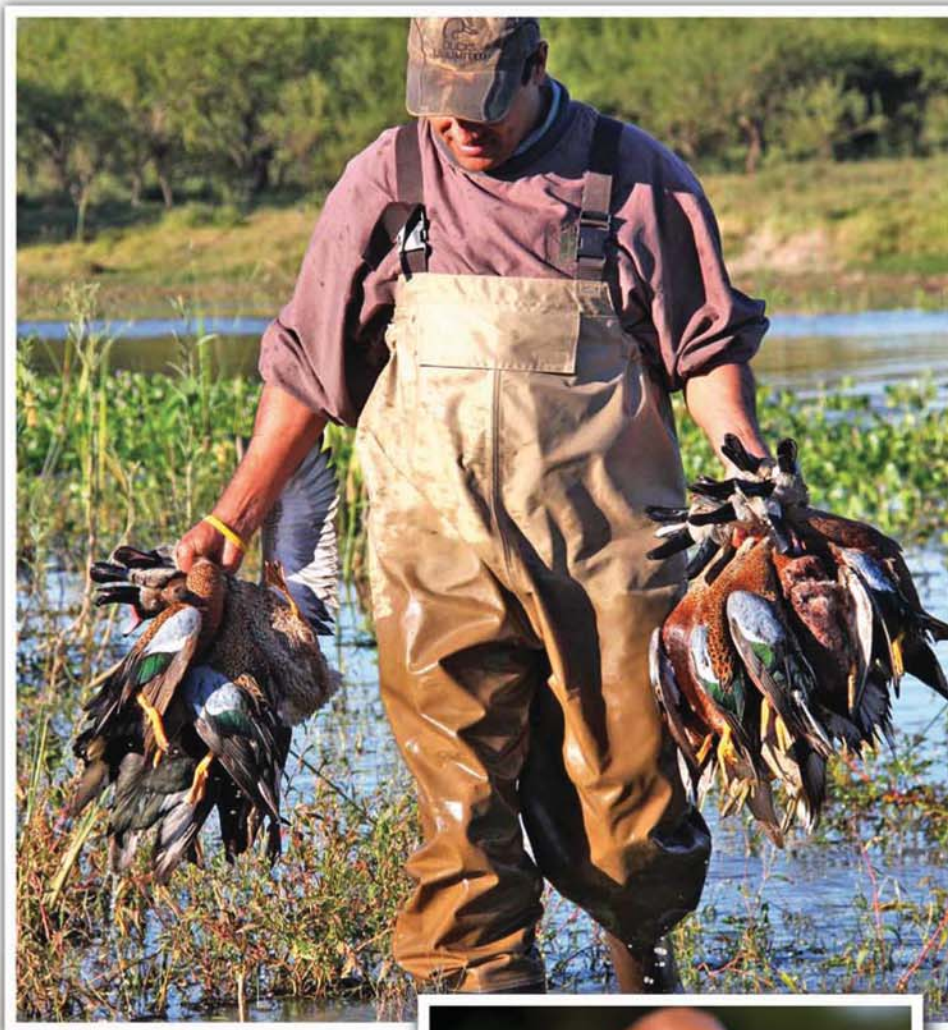
by Nancy Anisfield

Perdiz hunting in Argentina has many things in common with ruffed grouse hunting in the U.S., most notably that when the dog goes on point, hearts start to pound.

Perdiz are often referred to as partridge because they are hunted in ways similar to many of our northern hemisphere's upland birds, but they are actually a member of the family *Tinamidae*, which encompasses 47 species in the southern hemisphere. Perdiz themselves are found in the southern half of South America.

Although perdiz are smaller than our partridge, they interact with their habitat similarly, and taste just as good. Found in open grasslands, a perdiz' mottled color camouflages well in winter wheat, corn plots or natural mixed grass. The hunting is best early, before the midday heat sets them to loafing in cooler spots.

Perdiz hunting has the same unpredictability as grouse hunting. Wind direction needs scrutiny. The birds are



Photos taken at Los Ombues Lodge in Entre Rios Province, by the Parana River. (Anisfield Photography © 2009)

usually found as singles or in a pair, flush with startling surprise and fly very fast. A good walk can produce many shooting opportunities or just a few. And when the dog locks on point and the hunters move cautiously through the grass straining their eyes for movement or a glimpse of a bird, the excitement is the same.

That being said, if you go to Argentina to perdiz hunt, don't expect to be telling the usual tales while sipping your bourbon that evening. You probably started the day by filling your 20-bird duck limit in less than an hour, with so many ducks pouring in that you could indulge your best 4 a.m.-freezing-in-the-marsh fantasy by choosing to shoot only male rosey-billed pochards decoying from the left (or right or center, depending on your preference), letting the hundreds of rosey hens, tree ducks, Brazilian teal, ringed teal, cinnamon teal, red shovelers and fulvous whistlers pass by. That adventure would begin around 6:30 or 7:00, which is a very civilized time to hunt. The temperature at that hour in the early Argentine fall would be in the 40-50° F range, another unusual comfort for northern duck hunters. Your tale would most likely include a description of squadron after squadron of eccentric looking ibises, criss-crossing the sky, dipping their long curved beaks to check out your blind.

Keep in mind, too, that while you were duck hunting, if the ducks weren't retrieved (by guides, not dogs) within a reasonable amount of time, the piranha would eat them, tearing at them from below in grade B horror film style.

Your standard grouse hunt tale probably also wouldn't mention spending the previous late afternoon engineering a handsome purple bruise on your upper arm while bringing down a hundred or more eared doves. And it's worth a megabucks bet that you hadn't fished for wide, bright yellow, razor-toothed piranha or a few shimmering 5-10 pound dorado using chunks of those doves as bait and chum.

Other points of local color? If you are lucky while perdiz hunting, you may shoot a big old hare as it cruises by. Similarly, while dove shooting, you may be encouraged to pop the pretty little green parrots which are major pests in the area. Autumn is in May, the Southern Cross is overhead in the night sky. The German shorthairs have long tails and the dogs speak only Spanish.

Nope.

Not your usual day grouse hunting. 🐾