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## Dateline: Alaska

### Kodiak Waterfowling

- **Timetable:** Early October to late January
- **Accommodations:** First-class lodge
- **Food:** Quality dining
- **Hunt:** Easy

Old Harbor, Alaska, is on the southwest coast of Kodiak Island. Hunters arrive via flights to Anchorage, a connection to Kodiak and then a 30-minute hop to Old Harbor. The last leg is the most interesting flying over fjords flanked by spruce and hemlock forests, steep cliffs that rise from the water's edge and spectacular snow-covered peaks.

Last fall, I traveled to Old Harbor to sample both puddle and sea duck hunting. We had been out of the aircraft for less than a minute when our guide and outfitter, Jeff Peterson, emerged from the

small crowd that gathered to meet the plane. After the customary greetings, we grabbed our gear, loaded it in the pickup and drove five minutes to the Old Harbor



Lodge. The waterfront property was completely remodeled in 2010. It has four rooms (two with a private bath and two

with a shared bath), cable TV, laundry facilities, wood stove and a full kitchen.

**The next morning the tides were perfect for sea duck hunting.** We headed for a point on the far side of Sitkalidak Island where ducks pass by as the tide drops. We boarded Peterson's 26-foot SeaSport at first light and 45 minutes later dropped the anchor in a fjord on the south side of the island. Jeff transported us to the beach in a skiff he tows behind the bigger boat.

The point had little cover other than rocks and a few pieces of driftwood. However, based on previous sea duck hunting experiences in Alaska, I knew it didn't take much concealment to deceive sea ducks. **Nevertheless, we used driftwood and camouflage netting to construct a makeshift blind.** The decoys were set in two lines, 25 yards off the shoreline.

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## Dateline: Argentina

### California Valley Quail

- **Timetable:** Mid-April through July
- **Accommodations:** Farmhouses
- **Food:** Regional
- **Hunt:** Moderate

The Patagonia region of Argentina has long been known for excellent red stag and boar hunting as well as for world-class trout fishing. However, there is another good reason to venture to the southern portion of Argentina. **There is now a thriving population of California valley quail to be found there and the shooting can be fast and furious!** Factually, the quail population is spread-

ing across a wider range of the area yet are not considered to be invasive since they are not competing for food and habitat with other native birds.

Originally introduced into central Chile some six decades ago, these quail have for years now been ensconced in much of Patagonia, and the red stag and trout outfitters are now catering to quail hunters as well by offering bird dogs and well experienced quail guides. Indeed, their fishermen, stag and boar hunters are also finding that spending some time afield with a shotgun in pursuit of these challenging birds can add some fun and diversity to their trip. The quail shooting can be so good that some are going there

exclusively in pursuit of these fast flying little fowl.

**Estancia Quem Quem Treu** ("kem-

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The first birds to decoy were harlequins. A drake was only a few feet off the water when my partner dropped the first bird. My shots were less focused, and it took two rounds to anchor a drake that was trying to escape the ambush. Peterson was waiting offshore in the skiff and when he heard the shots, came in to retrieve the birds. Because sea ducks are incredible divers that can stay submerged for long periods of time even when wounded, **our guide took special care in making sure all birds were retrieved quickly.** Additionally, there are too many hungry eagles around to leave a bird floating on the surface for very long.

After the harlequins were retrieved, I motioned Peterson to bring them in for a closer look. It was my partner's first harlequin so we took a few minutes to admire his prize. It was early November and the birds were in good plumage and suitable for mounting.

**A few minutes later we spotted a flock of black scoters heading our way.** Passing 100 yards off the point, the birds saw the decoys and made a hard turn toward the blocks. When the scoters were 25 yards out and over the decoys, we fired and two drakes hit the water. As morning turned into midday, dozens of flocks of black scoters, harlequins and few surf scoters passed out of range, but enough of them spotted the look-alike impostors to provide good action. It was early afternoon by the time the tide reached its low and the action slowed.

We still had a few hours before sunset and decided to try for halibut on the return trip. After a 30-minute run, Peterson turned on the sonar looking for a high spot in the channel between Sitkalidak Island and the mainland. He set up a drift as we dropped circle hooks baited with squid to the bottom. Before long I had a bite and it was game on. By the time we called it quits, we had four 50-pound halibut in the fish box. The

day started with good sea duck hunting and ended with top-notch halibut fishing, making our first day a quality cast and blast experience!

At the lodge that evening, we enjoyed a delicious meal of baked Alaskan salmon with all the trimmings and learned more about Kodiak and Old Harbor. Peterson is an Alutiiq native born and raised in Old Harbor. Except for a four-year stint in the Marine Corps, he has lived in the village all his life and has been guiding for 25 years. **As his company name indicates, Kodiak Combos offers duck hunting, salmon and halibut fishing and deer hunting.**



Old Harbor's population is about 200 with its roots both in native and Russian cultures. Two hundred years ago a Russian sailing ship came to Old Harbor in search of fur and whales and established the first Russian colony in the New World. A historic Russian Orthodox Church with its blue towers and white crosses still stands at the edge of the village. The economy is dependent upon commercial fishing and tourism. **Old Harbor is not connected by road to the town of Kodiak, but daily flights provide easy access.**

Kodak Island is nearly 100 miles long and up to 50 miles wide, covering about 3,600 square miles. Most of its 15,000 people reside in the seaside community of Kodiak, where commercial fishing, tourism and the largest Coast Guard station in the United States are the basis for its economy. The island is world famous for its unique population of Kodiak brown bears, a huge coastal species of grizzly that stands up to 10 feet tall and weighs more than 1,500 pounds. Much of the island is under the management of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge while other portions are controlled by native corporations and private individuals.

The second day we targeted puddle ducks. We traveled 20 minutes and as



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the SeaSport pulled into an estuary, at least 100 ducks flushed. We loaded our gear in the skiff and motored to a grassy bank with scattered willows. We put out 18 decoys, then did our best to find a place to hide.

The first to appear was a group of a dozen mallards. However, they passed well out of range, headed for some distant marsh. Then out of the corner of my eye I spotted a single mallard diving straight for the decoys. When the bird was only 20 yards away, we fired, dropping the drake. Next to arrive was a flock of green-winged teal that were on us almost before we knew it. We responded and added two more teal to the bag. The balance of the morning was steady action with teal dominating the bag along with mallards and bufflehead.

**On our final day, the conditions were perfect for the use of a layout boat.** There was some wind to keep the birds moving but not enough to make the use of a layout boat dangerous. We ran 30 minutes from the dock and anchored the layout boat off a rocky island. **During the course of the morning, we took turns in the single man**

**layout and ended up with a nice bag of harlequins, common golden eye, bufflehead and both surf and black scoters.**

In September, puddle ducks leave their breeding grounds in Alaska and Canada and migrate to Kodiak where they pause to feed and rest on their southward journey. By mid-October, they are joined by diving and sea ducks that have left the far north seeking a winter home. Most of the puddle ducks continue down the Pacific Flyway on their way to Washington, Oregon, California and Mexico.

Because Kodiak has numerous ice-free bays, lagoons, tidal flats and a rocky coastline rich in marine life, more than 100,000 diving and sea ducks spend the winter here. **For species like black scoter, Barrow's golden eye, harlequin and long-tailed ducks (old squaw), Kodiak is an important wintering area. For others including king and Pacific eiders, it is their most southerly wintering location.**

The duck season is early October to late January. Puddle/diving duck limits are seven/day, 21 in possession; sea ducks, 10/day, 20 in possession for residents and seven/day, 20 per season for nonresidents. A law implemented in

1999 restricts nonresidents to 20 sea ducks total for the season. The total can include no more than four eiders, four scoters, four old squaw and four harlequins. The best puddle duck hunting occurs from opening day until about mid-November. While good populations of diving and sea ducks are present by late October, if you want to target eiders, wait until late December or January when pack ice forms in the Bering Sea and pushes the birds south. **While duck hunting on Kodiak takes some effort and is a commitment of time and money, it's a magical place where quality waterfowling is blended with spectacular scenery.** Kodiak Combos offers a five-day/four-night, four-duck hunting day package from Old Harbor with clients arriving Monday morning and departing Friday afternoon for \$3,500. Food, lodging, local transportation and hunting services are included. You must purchase your hunting license, state and federal duck stamps. Bring shells or buy them in Old Harbor.

**Jeff Peterson, 907-286-2252, [www.kodiakcombos.com](http://www.kodiakcombos.com).**

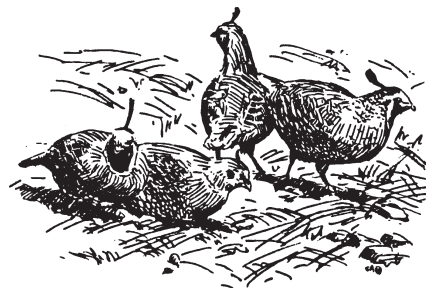
—Gary Kramer

## Argentina... (from page 1)

kem-tray-oo") is one facility that caters to such sportsmen and sportswomen. About a 1 1/2-hour drive from San Martin de los Andes (serviced by Chapelco Airport), Quem Quem Treu offers two well maintained old farmhouses that serve as comfortable lodges on an old cattle ranch with the Collón Cura and Calefufu rivers flowing through it. Quail are found in the dense brush thickets along the riverbanks and in wash areas that flood during their southern hemispheric springtime. The names of the typical vegetation in which the quail are found are called moye and michay.

Quem Quem Treu's quail guide, an upbeat and comical Frenchman named Gilles, is expert at locating these birds and also in handling his tandem of dogs, a Labrador and an English pointer. When the pointer locates birds in the thick hedges, the birds will sometimes hold tight. Gilles will then order the dogs in to flush out the birds, or in other instances Gilles will throw rocks into the hedges to get the birds flying. The Lab

was excellent at locating downed birds that otherwise would not likely have been recovered. These quail are known



to fly in bursts of speed of 60 to 70 mph without the benefit of a tail wind, so the gunner has to be quick.

Other typical places where these birds can be found are in similar thickets in valleys and hillsides. With steep terrain added, the gravity factor makes for even more challenging, dropping and going away targets!

It is realistic to expect to encounter eight to 10 coveys of birds per day with each containing 30 to 40 or more birds. Neuquen Province, where Quem Quem Treu is located, has an official limit of 12 birds per day on public lands. However, private properties can legally allow higher limits.

**Be assured that these birds are all 100 percent wild quail.** There is no existing program for rearing and releasing California valley quail in Patagonia. They are semi-omnivorous birds, feeding mostly upon insects but also will consume various seeds and also wild clover, wild rose and the fruit of the michay.

Meals at Quem Quem Treu are wholesome and hearty. All are served with fresh fruit and vegetables. Breads and muffins are made on premises. The most classic meal is the "asado" (Argentinean gaucho traditional barbecue) with different cuts of beef and pork. Also exceptional is the roast chicken and potatoes made in a wood fired oven,

with salads from their own gardens. There is homemade pasta with different sauces. "Milanesas," a breaded beef, is served with tomatoes, onions and a cream sauce. Also offered are different kinds of tarts as well as flan, cakes, fruit salads, mousse and more.

Since the mid-April to July timetable is their wintertime, the weather can range from moderate to somewhat cold

at this locale. Snow can be a distinct possibility in the latter portion of the season.

Custom packages can be arranged to include red stag and boar hunts as well as some excellent trout fishing in pristine waters with trophy fish commonly ranging from three to five pounds and sometimes larger! Be aware, however, that big game hunting and fishing

seasons overlap only with the earlier portion of the quail season.

For more information: [www.patagoniaquailhunting.com](http://www.patagoniaquailhunting.com).

For booking information, contact **Roger Anderson at Mobjack Sportsman LLC, P.O. Box 7, Ware Neck, VA 23178; 804-693-3774, 804-694-6110; wingsarg@earthlink.net**

—Conrad LaPierre

### Guided Chukar Hunt on the Salmon River

- **Timetable:** October through January
- **Accommodations:** Rustic backcountry lodge or modern hotel
- **Food:** Ample lodge breakfast/dinner, sack lunch
- **Hunt:** Moderate to difficult

The Salmon River, Idaho's River of No Return, divides some of the most remote backcountry wilderness in the Lower 48. Windswept ridges, steep mountain meadows and freestone creeks run down to the river. On any ridge you can hear the sound of chukar.

Riggins, Idaho, a fishing town with a population of 410, is the hub for trips that radiate like the spokes of a wheel for steelhead and big game and bird hunts.

Several outfitters offer chukar hunting and steelhead "cast and blast" trips. **We joined Riggins-based Exodus Wilderness Adventures and guide Matt Sinclair on a steelhead/chukar combo into the Salmon River canyon.**

Sinclair has lived in Riggins for the last 15 years and has hunted chukar for the last 13. In his early 40s, Sinclair owns two German shorthairs. Hunts are conducted by truck from the road system and by jet boat and drift boat in the Salmon River canyon.

Sinclair guides between five and 10 bird hunts a year and makes up to 20 hunts on his own and rarely hikes the same place more than once a season.

**Chukar populations have cycled up and down in recent years, but Salmon River bird numbers didn't seem as affected by the die-offs that happened in other western locales.** According to Sinclair, hunter numbers

have increased in the last few years.

"With the home building in recent years in (nearby) McCall and Tamarack, I have definitely seen an increase in hunting activity in the last five years. But there is still a lot of ground that doesn't get hunted."

We fished the first day for steelhead and landed three before we retired to the lodge for dinner.

Dinner was held in the main lodge dining room and there was more than



enough steak and potatoes, fresh vegetables and dessert for everyone. Breakfast was ample with two eggs, five strips of bacon each, as well as potatoes and fresh fruit.

Two hours after breakfast, we climbed away from the river.

Ike, Sinclair's German shorthair pointed a covey of chukar in a narrow canyon and the birds flushed before we could get into position.

When we had climbed about 1,000 feet up from the river, Ike began to get birdy again. Matt and my partner Bill were in position when a covey of 20 birds broke from the rimrock. We took two from that flush.

Sinclair said coveys were smaller this year than last. One covey we bounced had nine birds, while the biggest covey held more than 20. Once we figured out the level the birds were on,

we worked sidehill through boulder-strewn rocky outcrops and across grassy slopes to pick up one more bird and miss several others. When Bill twisted his ankle, we began to work our way down to the boat, a long way below.

The 30-foot jet boat is powered by twin 460 Fords and equipped with a propane heater system beneath a large, enclosed canopy. Lunch, snacks, hot and cold beverages and fishing gear are provided.

October and November offer the best chance to fish and hunt on the same trip. Steelhead fishing runs into early December. After December, the river might be encrusted in ice and

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### BHR Field Staff

The *Bird Hunting Report* is always looking for people to join its Field Staff, subscribers who go above and beyond the call by filing extensive reports on great places to hunt (or to avoid). These subscribers who file the reports found in our "Field Notes" section remain "on staff" for a year and receive a special *BHR* cap.

Our current team members include **Robert Moore, Curtis L. Frisbie, Jr. John Hattner, Joseph S. String, Brad Watts and Gary Sanden.**

Reports need to be honest and balanced, indicating the bad as well as the good. So instead of just filing the usual "Hunt Report Form," why not join our Field Staff by submitting a complete account for "Field Notes" at *The Bird Hunting Report*, PO Box 328, Boyds, MD 20841; 240-599-7679 (fax); support@pnmsi.com.

steelheading slows down.

Chukar are the main quarry, but California quail and Huns might also be encountered.

**We stayed at the Salmon Rapids Lodge on both ends of our trip.** The hotel is situated right on the river and is clean and upscale with all amenities, including breakfast for about \$90 a night.

The nearest airports are in Boise (150 miles) and Lewiston (100 miles). At Mackay Bar, a long grassy airstrip makes the wilderness accessible by small plane.

A three-day nonresident hunting license (\$35.50) allows the hunter to pursue upland birds and small game. A three-day nonresident salmon-steelhead permit costs \$37.50. The daily bag limit for chukar is six with 12 in possession and the daily bag for steelhead is three

and nine in possession.

For boat-based trips in the wilderness areas, there is a \$4 per person per day Forest Service Recreation Enhancement fee to pay at the boat ramp prior to departure.

The chukar season runs Oct. 1 through Jan. 31. Early in the season the birds can be found near the river and mid-season at elevations up to 5,000 feet. Later, after snow blankets the high country, the birds move back down toward the river.

For more info:

**Exodus Wilderness Adventures, Matt Sinclair, P.O. Box 1231 Riggins, ID 83549; 800-992-3484, 208-469-0504 (cell); www.riverescape.com; riverescape@frontier.com.**

**North Central Idaho Travel Association, P.O. Box 2018, Lewiston, ID 83501; 208-507-1904; www.visitnorth**

**centralidaho.org.**

**Salmon River Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 289, Riggins, ID 83549; 866-221-3901; http://rigginsidaho.com.**

**Mackay Bar Guest Ranch, Don Betzold, P.O. Box 296, Horseshoe Bend, ID 83629; 208-965-8355; www.mackabarguestranch.com; dbetzold@frontiernet.net.**

**Salmon Rapids Lodge Best Western Plus, P.O. Box 408, Riggins, ID 83549; 877-957-2743; www.salmonrapids.com; meet@salmonrapids.com.**

Licenses availability: sporting goods stores or at <https://id.outdoorcentral.us/>.

For more information: **Idaho Fish and Game, 800-554-8685, http://fishandgame.idaho.gov.**

—Gary Lewis

## Dateline: South Dakota

### Pheasants in the Southeast

- **Timetable:** Sept. 1 through March 31
- **Accommodations:** Modern lodge
- **Food:** Hearty American cuisine
- **Hunt:** Easy to moderate

**Four generations of Emmicks run the E Circle E Hunting Farm, a top-notch pheasant lodge located in Meckling, S.D.** Meckling is about an hour south of Sioux Falls in the southeastern part of the state.

The over-3,000-acre property is broken down into two areas. The E Circle E main campus is located in the flat of rolling hills. Two thousand of the acres are used as cropland, which gives birds the necessary food and cover. Pheasants, and lots of them, fill the different fields that contain corn, milo, sorghum, soybeans, buttonweed and wheat. Red millet, bluestem switchgrass, German millet and Imperial Western grass are also found in many of the fields. Each field is planted in quarter- to half-mile-long and 120- to 150-yard-wide sections. **All told there are 40 miles of such terrain, so there are enough areas for even large groups.**

The fields are hunted based on the time of year, the weather conditions and the state of the grain. **With so many dif-**

**ferent types of grains, one particular type attracts the birds. The knowledgeable guides plan all hunts according to what is in season.**

Hunting techniques are traditional pushes that drive the birds to blockers. Blocking positions are set depending on the width of the field. The two ends are always covered, and for especially wide fields a middle blocking position is set. Rolled hay bales are set for the blockers



and provide additional safety. Brian Emmick, E Circle E's general manager, adds a series of "blocking rows" at the end of each field. The blocking rows are about 20 yards of crops that are planted at the end of a field perpendicular to the rows. **The extra thickness from the crops significantly reduces the number**

**of birds that run into the next field, and blockers get terrific shots on hard-flying birds.** The hunter/guide ratio is four to one. Once the number of hunters, guides and dogs are determined, an appropriate field is selected.

Located about 15 minutes away is the second hunting farm. The Hill Farm comes by its name honestly and is an old homestead, classic in style and layout, located on a hillside of rolling farmland. The terrain is expertly arranged, with a hardwood perimeter interspersed with corn, sorghum and alfalfa. In between some of the fallow fields is rye grass, which gives the pheasant yet another hiding place. **Hunters are kept on their toes at the Hill Farm and experience diverse shooting conditions.**

There was a pleasant and understated surprise to our trip, and that came in the form of **a wild bobwhite quail population.** On our morning hunt on the second day, we found two coveys of quail that held between 12-15 birds each. Brian Emmick says that depending on the wetness during the breeding season, there are between 10-12 coveys at the E Circle E. In addition, dove are game birds in South Dakota, and the E Circle E offers an early season hunt during the first half of September. We didn't hunt dove on our trip, but hunts over decoys are offered

between Sept. 1 and 10.

The E Circle E kennel consists of 18 labs and one German shorthaired pointer. Between four and six dogs are used per guide, and the dogs are rotated regularly. When hunting the rye grass fields for hiding pheasant, the shorthair Cash is worth his weight in gold. He's also perfect on the coveys of quail. **Hunters may bring their own dogs, and they may be kenneled in the indoor section of the kennel.** To offset the colder South Dakota temperatures the kennel is heated and maintains a 65-degree floor temperature, which translates into a 55-degree air temperature.

**I initially thought the price was on the higher side of pheasant hunts, but when I cross-referenced the all-inclusive hunt with several other comparable venues, I found that E Circle E came out ahead.** Included in the offering are the following: lodging, all meals, use of shotguns, all field loads, a round of trap and/or skeet per day, all clays loads, daily use of a blaze orange hunting vest, bird cleaning and packing, open bar consisting of premium brands, complimentary wine with dinner, all ground transportation and free airport shuttle service. A fully stocked Cabela's Pro Shop offers a wide variety of products, from shooting shirts, blaze caps, gloves, cold weather

gear, shooting accessories and glasses and gifts. The Gun Safe has a blend of side-by-sides, over-unders, and semi-automatics, mostly in 12-gauge but a nice selection in 20-gauge. Side-by-sides are the Czechoslovakian-made Bruno/CZ's and the over-unders are made by SKB.

Two different types of vehicles are used for transporting hunters to the field. The first are a pair of retired school buses that are tricked out to suit large groups of hunters. There are gun racks alongside the windows, kennels in the back that will accommodate up to a dozen dogs, two big water coolers for the dogs and extra heaters for use during the colder months. In the balmy early season, a Jeep that tows a custom-designed trailer is frequently used. The trailer has seating for 12, center-post gun racks and dog kennels under the seats. Up to a dozen dogs can be transported.

Warm-up shooting is on the skeet and/or trap field, both of which are conveniently located near the main campus.

The interior of the lodge is finished in knotty pine. The kitchen is adjacent to the dining area, which is adjacent to the full bar. The pro shop, office and a living room with leather chairs and flat screen television are next to the wood-burning fireplace. For those who need to stay connected, there are two work-

stations and wireless satellite Internet that can be accessed in all of the guest rooms. Bedrooms are split between two wings, east and west. Each bedroom has two full beds and a private bathroom. Full laundry service is available, and there is a hot tub for a post-hunt soak. Massage therapy is available by appointment, but there currently is not a formal spa on the property.

**Food is hearty and delicious.** Breakfasts begin with pastries and coffee early in the morning followed by a full breakfast of eggs, a side of meat, toast and juice. Lunch can be a grilled chicken breast sandwich, an Angus beef cheeseburger or a bowl of pheasant and wild rice stew. Dinner follows cocktail hour and appetizers and might include pheasant cordon bleu, aged Angus New York strip or prime rib. Despite the calories that you'll burn during your hunts, you'll leave the E Circle E with a few extra pounds.

For hunters who fly private planes, a 6,095-foot-long, 100-foot-wide concrete runway is located at a local airport about 15 minutes away. Jets up to a G-4 can land comfortably, and the call sign is KYKN.

For more information: **E Circle E, Brian Emmick 605-624-2800, [www.ecirclee.com](http://www.ecirclee.com), [ecirclee@aol.com](mailto:ecirclee@aol.com).**

—Tom Keer

## Dateline: Kentucky

### Easy Walkin', Tough Targets

- **Timetable:** October through April
- **Accommodations:** Basic but comfortable and spacious lodge
- **Food:** Southern cuisine
- **Hunt:** Easy

Hunters, especially those near northern Midwest populations centers, seeking a traditional quail hunt but who don't have the time or inclination to travel to traditional destinations in the Deep South need look no further than **WingHaven Lodge right in western Kentucky.**

Expansive fields and comfortable lodging welcome the traveling hunter. Not to mention a bar stocked with just about the widest selection of Kentucky bourbon one is apt to see gathered in one place. **And strong-flying birds, all.**

**Owned by Russell and Michele**

**Edwards, WingHaven is located in Dade County just a few miles west of**



**the city of Marion.** Hunting takes place on 6,200 acres owned or leased by WingHaven.

Our first hunt took place the afternoon of our arrival. Our guide was Bobby Eddings, a retired teacher who now works

for WingHaven. Eddings took us to the fields right across the road from the lodge where gypsy wheat and local fox-tail have been carefully cultivated to form prime quail cover. Eddings' 14-month-old German shorthaired pointer Gus pointed a dozen birds in short order. **They were all good flyers, not a dud in the group.** The hunting was relatively easy, the field having been mowed to a comfortable walking length in eight-foot-swaths that parallel 14-foot-wide swaths of rough cover. Russell explains the swaths make it easier to walk, safer and allow for more contacts with the birds. **“Our goal is to show you a point every five minutes,” says Russell.**

Eddings is also WingHaven's resident dog training guru. “He is a standout in the sport,” says Russell. “I never buy

a dog he doesn't approve. There's just not a whole lot about a dog that he hasn't seen." Eddings rounded out the hunt that first afternoon by taking some time to work with Abbey, the four-month-old Irish red and white setter who had made the drive down to WingHaven with us. He introduced Abbey to the "Whoa Pole," the training method he suggests for teaching dogs to "Whoa" so they can be counted on to refrain from bumping birds.

**The second day consisted of two hunts in an area known as the Bottoms, Russell himself guiding us.** The Bottoms are planted with blue stem brown sedge, partridge pea, Sudan grass, milo and millet. Like the fields the day before, these fields were mowed in swaths to facilitate both easy walking and good bird cover. **The fields are surrounded by trees that bring a sense of privacy to the hunt and allow for the hunt to expand into the woods for a special experience not often encountered at bird hunting lodges.** On one such occasion, a downed bird was remarkably found in and retrieved for us from the nearby Tradewater River by Russell's Rowdy, a three-year-old German shorthair.

Three of us hunted for a total of perhaps three hours that day, flushing about 75 birds. And this bears repeating a third time: **no duds with the WingHaven quail.** Hunters who have visited several lodges have come to expect that some of the birds simply won't fly or will flutter weakly away or will try to hide or escape on foot only to have the dogs pounce on them. We did not have that experience at WingHaven. **Birds exploded from the brush, flying hard and fast toward safety. They flew strong on reflashes.** And those we ended up finding in the woods were not exhausted troopers who meekly surrendered but defiant flyers who were not yet done confounding us.

Absolutely true: Our first night at WingHaven, Russell showed us a promotional DVD he had commissioned for the place. It included interviews with about a half dozen hunters. To a man, they each mentioned the "strong-flying birds," so much so that we thought they might have been urged, through a script, direction or the promise of special treatment. Enough to urge us to dismiss the

notion. And then we saw the birds fly ourselves. If they re-do the DVD, we would be willing participants, and we already know what we'd say!

**Accommodations at WingHaven Lodge are simple but ample.** The lodge's plain Jane, almost pole barn looking exterior belies the comfort and sumptuousness of the interior. The rooms are clean, spacious and offer two large beds, attached private bathrooms with



walk-in showers, trophy mounts on the walls and back doors that open onto a covered back deck. The back deck offers comfortable Adirondack chairs and a good view of the sunrise in the morning. **Ceiling fans and heat lamps on the porch promise to keep guests comfortable no matter the season.**

**WingHaven is a dog-friendly lodge.** Guests bringing their own dogs can elect to keep their dog in their room with them in a crate, in the "mud room" — a converted garage — or they can put the dog up in WingHaven's kennels. A wide grassy area right off the back porch provides a good place for guests to exercise their dogs. WingHaven's own dogs are hardworking and well-trained dogs, it should be noted, and will not disappoint.

The lodge's great room provides guests a perfect place to gather pre- and post-hunt. The room is anchored by a large stone fireplace flanked with a pair of muzzle-loaders (Kentucky rifles, of course). Comfortable chairs, leather sofas, trophy mounts and a bar well stocked with single barrel Kentucky bourbon round out the scene. **Those who appreciate fine woodwork will be impressed by the wormy maple bar, the olive wood floor, the poplar tongue in groove ceiling and walls, and the cedar trim.**

Meals at WingHaven are prepared by Michele herself and feature her good, old-fashioned Southern home cooking. At

breakfast we enjoyed eggs, country ham, and biscuits and gravy. Lunch consisted of a delicious white bean soup, spicy green pepper relish, cornbread and homemade chocolate chip cookies. Our first supper included chicken breasts, green beans, a baked potato and homemade pecan pie with ice cream for dessert. **Our final supper included mashed potatoes and quail breasts — quail that had been in our game bags only hours before.**

WingHaven offers both a traditional quail hunt and a no-limit quail hunt. The traditional quail hunt costs \$595 per person per day for a two-person group and includes two hunts and a 30-bird limit. The no-limit quail hunt runs \$695 per person per day for a group of three, with two hunts a day. Those wishing a no-limit hunt with fewer members in their group can pay \$995 per person for a group of two, or \$1,095 for a single hunter. Hunt prices include meals, lodging, bourbon bar, one round of wobble trap clays, guides, dogs, field transportation and birds dressed and packaged for travel. A preserve stamp is the only license you will need, and it can be purchased at WingHaven for \$10. Rates do not include gratuities, sales tax, or airport transfers, if needed. Large groups may rent the entire lodge

**Though the focus is on quail, WingHaven Lodge also provides opportunities for flooded timber and other duck hunting, as well as hunting for pheasant and chukar.**

WingHaven Lodge is not hard to find. Those traveling by car can find accurate directions from all approaches posted on WingHaven's website. **Be sure to heed the warning to differentiate between WingHaven's physical address and mailing address.** Enter the mailing address in your vehicle's GPS and you will find yourself calling for directions from the Providence, Ky., U.S. Post Office. This happened to another party while Russell and we were prepping to leave for the field our first day. The nearest airport is the Marion Crittenden Airport.

For more info: **WingHaven Lodge, Russell Edwards, 15616 State Route 120, Providence, KY 42450; 270-836-7998; [www.winghavenlodge.com](http://www.winghavenlodge.com); [info@winghavenlodge.com](mailto:info@winghavenlodge.com).**

—Martin Monsma

Subscriber Field Notes

**Argentine Odyssey:  
“I Don’t Care Where”**

When a break in my work schedule glimmers, I appeal to Jeri Booth of the Detail Company to concoct another novel wing shooting experience in Argentina — I don’t care where.

Drawing upon her 30-plus years’ experience, Jeri scrambled on very short notice recently to assemble an action-packed week, featuring two very different dove hunting escapades. I wouldn’t know my itinerary until the week before, as I wish, and the trip couldn’t have been more stimulating.

The golden-eared dove (*paloma dorado*) has proliferated astronomically because of increasing conversion of grazing lands to soybean and corn, which now bring home the bacon better than beef. Huge dove populations now feast in many disparate areas of Argentina, reaching the point of an agricultural pest. The Cordoba dove hunt remains the classic, about 450-500 miles northwest of the capital, Buenos Aires.

Count on some drama in getting there. My suitcase went AWOL in Panama City Airport for 18 hours; glad I wasn’t packing my private shotgun arsenal. Next, the flight from Buenos Aires to Cordoba was scratched — too much volcanic ash in the air from the eruption in distant Chile, some three months earlier. Shades of my first trip in 2001, when my dad, brother and I were diverted to Rosario because the fields ablaze created smoke-choked runways. Mother of Nature!

However, all was solved by Ariel, Detail Company’s factor in B.A., and one of many bilingual resources Jeri activated to maintain the flow. (She doesn’t have to take you — she’s got people down there waitin’ on ya!)

Ariel conscripted Mauriano, a professional driver, to blast me north to Cordoba Province, doing 140 kph (84mph), no problem. Autobahn anyone?

Jeri had my next five days with Tomas Frontera, a young, talented out-

fitter I remember from 10 years ago. First, we rolled into the magnificent “El Colobri” (The Hummingbird), a 1,100-acre working estancia and more. The urbane manager, Juan Manuel, toured us through the elegant nine-room-only hotel, a modern architectural interp-



retation of a Spanish greathouse. Next, the spa, with sauna and massage, pool, gym, verdant polo fields and Ralph Lauren-style stables, where we admired the burnished polo ponies.

Typically bred 3/4-English thoroughbred to 1/4-Argentine cariole, the latter adds some sturdiness and tractability to the spirited, high-strung breed. Think BMW X-6 SUV, chestnut brown, all brought to you by generations of gaucho genetic engineering.

Juan Manuel elaborated that this gated, guarded retreat is one of several exclusive hotels owned by the European Famille Fenestraz and boasts inclusion in the group Relais & Chateaux. Shakira, as well as the Prince of Luxembourg, recently basked in the ‘luxe, without relaying any outward complaints, at least to me.

Tomas Frontera heads up the hunting scheme here, and with his new Beretta 391 Teknys auto 20-gauges, no. 8 shot, 25g, an hour allowed this unpressured shooter to put paid on better than 300 of the fledged zephyrs, with all skeet stations represented.

The meals were an Epicurean delight — delicately poached salmon, local grass-grazed beef, grilled, all enhanced by an extensive wine list. We chose the local Malbec “Laborum” —

round, fruity and no sulfite preservative.

The only other guests were a young Austrian/Argentinean couple with their 15-month-old, Victoria, back for their third visit — more polo lessons for Herr!

Here would appear to be a fine destination for a well-heeled sybaritic shooting couple. BYO side-by-side Holland & Hollands!

Adjacent to “El Color,” and often accessed by horseback through the fields and low brush as a picnic ride, stands the historic “Santa Catalina” poblito, which was granted cultural Heritage of Humanity status by UNESCO in 2000.

Anchoring the site is the dramatic alabaster Santa Catarina Chapel, a 350-year-old Jesuit monolith, bursting out of the bucolic backdrop like some Fitzcarraldo folly. Other surviving witnesses include the iron-barred slave quarters, slumping in the church’s shadow. (No irony there.) Apparently the locked-down slaves were African, while the indigenes were more loosely constrained in thrall of the Viceroyalty of Spain, whilst contemplating religious conversion. Kind of a carrot-stick exhortation.

Next facet of the excursion, off two hours to Tomas’ purpose-built country hunting lodge “La Zenaida” (Latin: dove), which can accommodate groups up to 18, and lets out directly on the dove fields — you stalk out the back door and the dove flurry is in full fury without you! Catch up, buddy!

Great shooting, endless deluge of targets — home of the “Hot-Barrel”! You can roll over that three-digit clicker counter in a half-day and still come back out after the asado (BBQ) and siesta for a full encore!

As the gloaming deepened, we repaired to the back porch of La Zenaida for some local Quilmes beer. It was tantalizing to consider that 200 yards away, pumas were beginning their slink through the scrub brush, pitching in on the dove clean-up.



This feline's evanescence was busted on an earlier trip, when a brawny tom cashed in during a van vs. lion encounter. He re-presented as a breaded appetizer the next day, evoking gustatory flashes of snapping turtle more than rattlesnake.

Here at "La Zenaida," Jorge, the effervescent impresario, percolates the ambience to a jovial pitch, while driving the food and service quality up to where you want it.

Transforming my odyssey to the most memorable was that special group

of guys (and one charming +/- ex-spouse Renee), who were all long-time buddies from the oil industry of south Louisiana and Texas; they warmly folded me (an eastern Yankee now in California) into their rollicking farrago. *Beaucoup des bon temps!* Especially poignant was their trip's cause fête, the recent safe return from embattled Iraq and Afghanistan, of Delmar's two sons, Hunter and Cullen. Third generation Marines, each is a combat veteran who proudly served with the Cajun unit. Delmar, père, is also

a Leatherneck war veteran, Desert Storm.

You could not be unmoved by the paternal pride, unabashed affection, money-put-where-your-mouth-is patriotism and genuine bonhomie. All was evident in even greater extravagance than the palomas, our feathered pretense for getting together. **Right here's the best of what hunting promises, and why I frequently travel alone, "I don't care where," and return renewed.**

Jeri, you've done it again! Merci, Cheri.

**Detail Company, 800-929-4868, [www.detailcompany.com/contact.html](http://www.detailcompany.com/contact.html).**

—Patrick Diesfeld

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

### Louisiana

#### —Duck Hunting at Risk in the Mississippi River Delta?

Excerpted from Seyi Fayanju, Environmental Defense Fund:

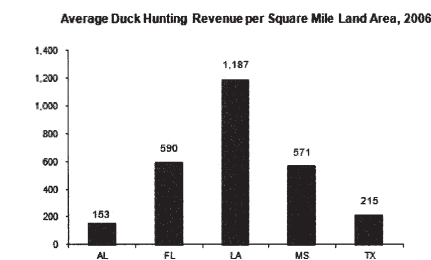
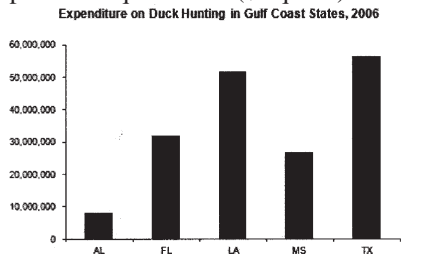
Despite the picture-perfect conditions that hunters enjoyed at the start of this year's duck hunting season in Louisiana, **the future of the industry and the area businesses that depend on it could be jeopardized by the continued deterioration of the Mississippi River Delta.**

#### This Bird Has Flown?

Duck hunting, bird watching and other forms of outdoor tourism are important economic drivers for rural communities in southern Louisiana. These nature-dependent activities would not be possible without the vibrant ecosystems that thrive in the wetlands lining the Gulf Coast. The local environment sustains invaluable feeding grounds for migratory birds and other species that act as the base for a multi-billion dollar hunting and fishing sector.

While numbers specific to the coastal counties and parishes of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are not tabulated by the Dept. of the Interior, statewide surveys conducted in 2006 revealed that regional duck hunting revenues totaled \$175 million that year (see top chart). Without a doubt, the ecosystems of Louisiana, by virtue of their location in one of North America's most important migratory bird flyways, serve an outsized role in supporting the Gulf Coast's bird hunt-

ing sector, as evidenced by the revenues per state square mile (\$/sq. mi.) chart at



the bottom of the above figure. (Sources: Flickr (jacqueline-w), U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of the Interior.)

**The wetlands of coastal Louisiana**, which provide wintering grounds for an estimated 10 million ducks and geese migrating along the Mississippi and Central Flyways, **are disappearing at a pace of a football field per hour.** As these swamps and marshes slip away, so too does the submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) that grows in these areas. It is this natural buffet that has drawn waterfowl to the Mississippi River Delta for thousands of years, but without this plant life, migratory birds might shift their paths away from the southeastern section of the Bayou State, imperiling the region's duck hunting economy.

## Dollars for Duck Habitats

That's part of the reason why hunters, birdwatchers and others who enjoy the natural endowments of the Gulf Coast's wetlands are starting to recognize the importance of coastal Louisiana restoration. **"Vanishing Paradise," a national campaign dedicated to restoring Louisiana's waterfowl and fishing habitat**, works to educate hunters and anglers about the challenges facing the Mississippi River Delta and how they could affect the fate of migratory birds. **In addition, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (GCERTF)**, established in the wake of the BP oil disaster, **has made an effort to educate the public about the threats that ducks and other birds face from petrochemical spills and other environmental issues affecting coastal Louisiana.**

Without the support of a wide variety of people from diverse backgrounds, we will not be able to save the Mississippi River Delta and protect the habitats and jobs that depend on its health. Concerted action to secure environmental restoration funding for coastal Louisiana could protect vital ecosystems for waterfowl and other birds that depend on the delta, ensuring the future of duck hunting in this section of the Gulf Coast.

• • •

**Colorado — Commissioners Adopt New Turkey Hunting Provisions for 2012**

From therepublic.com:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife commissioners have adopted changes in the state's regulations for hunting turkeys, now that the birds' growing numbers are starting to cause problems for farmers and ranchers.

Wildlife officials say that in some spots, large flocks have been heading to cattle ranches, farms and homes to compete for food.

**Next year, wildlife managers plan to start offering hunters private land, over-the-counter, late-season turkey licenses for beardless turkeys in Yuma and Lincoln counties.** In Yuma County, unlimited fall private land turkey permits for birds of either sex will also be offered.

**Commissioners also approved limited spring and fall turkey licenses for a game management unit on U.S. Air Force Academy property in El**

**Paso County.** Access will be controlled by the academy.

•••

### **Arkansas — Turkey Hunting Season Shortened Again**

From arkansasnews.com:

With wild turkey numbers continuing to decline in the state, the **Arkansas Game and Fish Commission trimmed two days off next spring's hunting season.**

The season will be 16 days in some areas and nine days in other places.

**Agency wildlife biologists have blamed poor reproduction for a nearly decade-long downward trend in turkey populations.** They say there have been below-average numbers of poults, baby turkeys, born in nine of the past 10 springs. Massive rains and flooding in parts of the state were experienced in April and May.

Predators are also a factor, biologists say. Numbers of raccoon and skunk, major predators on turkey nests, are high in many parts of the state. Coyotes go for the eggs and the baby turkeys as well.

Some hunters also blame feral hogs and fire ants.

Turkey hunting has declined since its Arkansas peak in 2003. With it, seasons have been shortened by the Game and Fish Commission.

From a high of 35 days, the season was trimmed year by year to 18 days the last two years in the parts of the state with the most turkeys.

#### **The 2012 turkey dates:**

—April 14 through April 29 for Turkey Zones 1, 2, 3, 4B, 5, 5B, 6, 7, 7A, 9, 10 and 17.

—April 14 through April 22 for Turkey Zones 4, 4A, 5A and 9A.

—Zone 1A will be closed.

## 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 might 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 Hunt-*

*ing Report Program. Our pages are open for a rebuttal of equal length by any affected party.*

Subscriber **Bruce H. McArthur of Lutz, Fla.**, offers the following summary of a trip he took from Sept. 1–3, 2010. It was a self-guided hunt for sharptails and



blue grouse. **The location was Grassy Creek Twenty-Mile State Trust Land near Hayden, Colo.**

"A hunting buddy of mine, Park Myers, just retired and relocated from Florida to Steamboat Springs, Colo.

"He invited my wife and me to visit and try out the opening of grouse season. Having never shot these two species, I did not wait to book a flight.

"We took an early flight from Tampa to Steamboat Springs and arrived in time for lunch.

"While the wives went shopping, **Park and I drove over to the Grassy Creek Twenty-Mile State Trust Land. The property contains 1,200 acres, and from Highway 40 east of Hayden go south on CR 27 for six miles. Parking is available on the west side of the road.**

"The property consists of rolling hilled wheat fields with treed gulches and a couple of open water lakes.

"We were the only ones on the property and concerned as we only flushed two birds at over a hundred yards.

"The next morning we arrived well before sunrise to find six groups of hunters staking out locations. Due to the small size of the field and the number of hunters, we parked at the far south parking area.

"After watching the locals, we

learned fast to start at the top of the hill crest and walk down to the gullies. The birds had overnighted in the short grain fields and when flushed would head down to the trees.

"On the first walk down, I flushed eight sharp-tailed grouse at once. **With a limit of only two, I was finished by 30 minutes after sunrise.** Considering how fast the rest of the hunters departed, it seemed everyone limited out. Considering the size of the property and the number of hunters, I was impressed at the number of birds.

"That afternoon, we drove into the mountains above Steamboat Springs in search of blue grouse. Locals have suggested that we hunt high range mountains. Our first attempt did not locate any birds. **We later discovered by accident that early in the season, they can be found around the 6,000-foot level.**

"Blue grouse hunting is not very sporting; we spent more time throwing rocks at them to get them to fly from the trees than anything else. **If you are looking for a taxidermy mount, opening season is not the time to go, as the birds are full of pinfeathers.** The limit for the blues was three per day.

"The next two days we followed the same path with similar results; because of the hunting pressure **it took a little longer to limit out, but there still seemed to be plenty of birds.** The local game warden who checked out our licenses the second day said **the area funnels birds from the mountains and there always seems to be a high concentration, which hunting has not seemed to affect.**

"Dogs are not required to hunt this area, but Parks's bird dog Bell made sure we did not miss any.

"Airlines: United, cost for flight from Tampa to Steamboat Springs, \$440.

"Hunting license: small game, non-resident is \$56 or \$11 for the day. Habitat stamp, \$5. Small game hunting on weekends and Labor Day by permit only. Maximum of eight hunters a day. Permits are free and may be applied for by contacting **Steamboat Springs Svc. Ctr., P.O. Box 775777, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477; 970-871-2855.**

"If you are in the area, **I would highly recommend hunting there. The birds seemed to be plentiful and the**

walking is moderate. There are plenty of shops and fine restaurants in Steamboat to keep the wives happy."

• • •

**James G. Graves of Columbia,**



**S.C., took a hunt he would recommend to others. From March 18 to 26, 2011, he visited the Free State of Kroonstad where he hunted with Henk Engelbrecht of Rawhide Safaris.**

He hunted rock pigeon, three species of dove, two species francolin, guinea fowl, seven species of ducks, two species of geese and quail. Finding them all to be "abundant" in numbers he says this experience delivered **"a whole new meaning to 'mixed bag' upland hunting. It beats any mixed species hunt I have been on."**

Except for the equipment condition, which he rates "Good," he gives an "Excellent" rating to all other aspects of the outfitter and personal guide categories.

Excluding airfare, the trip cost him \$3,100.

Here he describes a "typical day" with Engelbrecht:

"Breakfast around 8:30, then on to hunt francolin over two very good German shorthairs. During this hunt we got up a covey of quail and had shots at a flock of guinea fowl in a large field of standing corn and sunflowers.

"Lunch was a great sandwich in a field of sunflowers while we shot three species of doves and rock pigeons. Hard to tell if we were shooting at a small dove or a large dove at a distance.

"We then located a large flock of guinea fowl and with the bird boy's help, shot driven guinea fowl at the end of a large cornfield. The guineas that escaped were then hunted in a hay field with the help of the shorthairs who pointed most of them.

"At around 4:30, we approached a large pond surrounded by standing corn.

We ran a large group of waterfowl out and then shot our limits as they returned. (Steel shot not required.)

At dark, we returned to the lodge for cocktails around a large fire pit with a warm and welcoming fire, then dinner and at last to bed."

**Rawhide Safaris, [www.rawhide-safaris.com](http://www.rawhide-safaris.com).**

Booking agent: **John Wiles B&W Sporting, 443-624-8719.**

• • •

From Nov. 13–16, 2010, subscriber **Joe Arceneaux of Honolulu, Hawaii,** took a hunt while he was in Boston, Mass., on business.

He booked a sea duck hunting trip with **Jeremiah Brooks of Ocean State Outfitters.** He was pleased enough with the experience to say, "This was my first sea duck shoot, and it won't be my last."

They hunted out of Dartmouth, Mass., and Sakonnet, R.I., using a duck boat. **Brooks found the old squaw to be scarce, the common eider to be average in numbers, and the surf, black and white-winged scoters to be abundant.**

Brooks rates his personal guide as "Excellent" in all phases. He gives the same rating to the outfitter category with the exception of the cuisine, which he rates as "Good."

He adds, "The birds worked well, and the guide knew exactly where to position the decoys and boat for the best shooting. **The one-man operation was efficient and quick but felt unhurried."**

Brooks also mentions, "This is a good hunt for those interested in leg bands. The room and boarding is good. Hunters stay in a well-finished basement in the outfitter/guide's house."

**He would recommend this trip to a friend. Why? "The hunt service for the price."**

The three and a half-day trip cost him \$1,700.

**Ocean State Outfitters, Jeremiah Brooks, 401-824-6440, [www.oceanstateoutfitters.com](http://www.oceanstateoutfitters.com).**

• • •

**Subscriber Tom Van Handel of Wisconsin** recommends a trip with **Kaskattama Safari Adventures, Ltd. in Manitoba.**

While visiting there on Sept. 9 and 10, 2011, he hunted snow geese, Canada geese, and ducks, all of which he found

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to be abundant. **He also went sightseeing for polar bears, which were also abundant.**

Except for dog work, which he doesn't rate, he gives all other aspects

of both the outfitter and guide categories a rating of "Excellent."

The trip cost \$5,596.44 — "all costs: air, shells, helie charter, license, dog food plus \$360 airfare for my dog."

**Kaskattama Safari Adventures, Ltd., 57411 Portage Ave., Headingley, MB R4H1E7; 204-982-9680; great whitenthlodges.com.**

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