

BOBWHITES in the SAND HILLS

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #166 –

They call this area The Sand Hills, because of the high percentage of sand. It’s slightly to more seriously rolling, depending on how much sand was blown in during the Ice Age. Many of the fields are enrolled in CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), which requires maintaining the land in grass. This helps keep today’s winds from blowing the soil away – and of course the grasses provide some really great wildlife habitat for quail, pheasant, turkeys and deer.

CRP originated with the 1985 Farm Bill and some of the land has been enrolled since then. Early grass requirements were mostly big bluestem, which is great holding cover for pheasants and deer, but a bit heavy and thick for quail. The later CRP requirements feature

shorter grasses, like little bluestem and other native prairie plants. Modern CRP fields are more open, which is better habitat for quail.

This hunt became possible last February, when my friend

Dick Leeper bought a “Two Day Kansas Quail Hunt” – for two hunters at the National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic in Kansas City. It was donated by Tom Turner, a land manager in the area; Dick invited me to be his hunting partner.

The first thing I’m reminded of, when I get to hunt quail, is how fast they are. In a perfect world, the dogs point and you have time to get focused, remove the glove on your

shooting hand, get your gun at the ready and your thumb on the safety. A 20 or 28 gauge – or even a 410 is all the gun you need. But if the birds flush without warning, by the time you’re ready to pull the trigger they can be far enough out to require a 12 gauge. So, when a gentleman with a small gauge gun is surprised by the flush, he doesn’t always shoot.

It was cool and windy on day one; most of the flushes were from point – great dog work and reasonable shooting. We shot our limit by

mid-afternoon and moved to some big bluestem fields that the pheasants called home. Day two was a different story; very little wind, not much scent and lots of wild flushes. I started with my 410, but later switched to the 20 gauge for a bit more range. Dick and I shot two limits of quail each and a total of four pheasants. Great bird hunting in the Sand Hills.

“...the grasses provide some really great wildlife habitat...”

Larry Potterfield
The Sand Hills
St. John, Kansas
22 December 2016

Midway^{USA}

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Dick Leeper, my hunting partner, walks in on a point. German Shorthairs are used exclusively by Triple Creek Outfitters.

Eight quail is the daily limit in Kansas, but let me make it clear that I did shoot more than eight times with my Purdey side-by-side.

