

CROW HUNTING

Memories

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #194 —

A bunch of crows is not a flock, but a "murder" — a murder of crows; wonder who came up with such an idea. Also, I've never eaten a crow; however, I've eaten a lot of crow in my lifetime — you figure. Crows aren't thought of as a sporting bird, however there's an open season in Missouri and let me tell you that crows certainly are sporting to hunt — at least with a shotgun.

In my experience, sunrise on a calm morning is the very best time to hunt crows; the sound of the call travels well, the birds are full of energy and seem to be spoiling for a fight. My

preferred process is to find or make a "good" hiding spot in tall grass or brush — in the shade, within a mile or so of a block of woods where the crows are roosting. I turn on the electronic call, playing almost any kind of a crow fight or crow in distress call. The moment the notes hit their ears, they're on the way. The rest is up to the shooters! A great hiding spot often gets multiple approaches — gunshots don't seem to bother them as much as movement. Crows often fly over and dive in from every possible direction and offer many challenging shots. Sometimes you need a full choke and sometimes no choke at all. Decoys seem to be the conventional wisdom today, but I've shot a lot of crows without them.

My very best crow hunt ever was when I was shooting alone, before work one morning at the Fajen plant in



(L-R) Jeff Larkin, Matt Fleming and myself with a group of crows from an early morning shoot. Jeff's gun is an Ithaca Model 37, Matt's is a Winchester Model 12 and mine's an L.C. Smith.

Lincoln, MO — back in 1996. It was mostly overcast and just at sunrise when I got set up and turned on the call. They came immediately, from woods to the south, and were all over me — completely disregarding the gunshots from my old Winchester Model 12. I picked up 14 dead crows and don't remember how many empty shells in a couple minutes of fast and furious crow shooting.

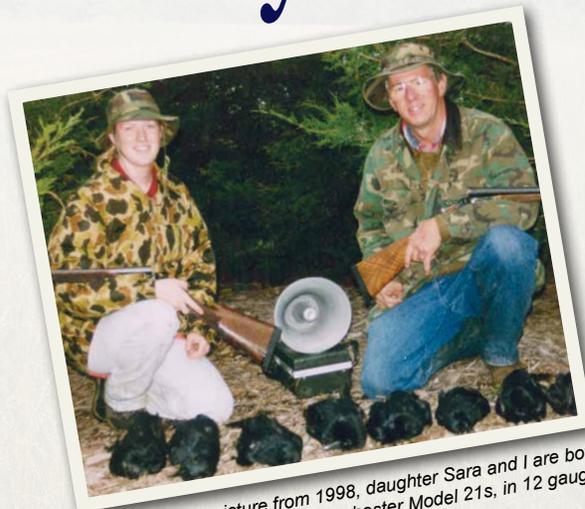
"...the very best time to hunt crows..."

Many, many times I've been busted by the birds, when hunting with partners that didn't understand what "staying still and keeping out of sight" really meant. Crows don't miss much, when they're coming in hard and looking for a fight. Crows aren't hard to kill, but they're often hard to hit. My favorite guns are my Winchester Model 12 or one of my side-by-sides.



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In this picture from 1998, daughter Sara and I are both shooting our Winchester Model 21s, in 12 gauge.