

# The SPANISH RED-LEGGED

## Partridge

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #244 —

Well-driven red-legged partridges, in quantities to amaze even veteran driven bird shooters, is one of the activities I most look forward to each fall. It's one of the few chances there is to shoot a matched pair of shotguns, not wear yourself out walking, while enjoying the company of your fellow shooters and the hospitality of a driven bird shoot.

The reason they call them red-legged partridges is simply the color of their legs. They're natives of Spain, France and parts of northern Italy. In the great basin of North America, we hunt the chukar partridge, which was introduced there as early as 1893, but mostly in the middle of the 20th century. The chukar is similar; however, it hails from south Asia and the Middle East, where it is widely dispersed in various different subspecies. Some

game breeders in the United States offer both chukar and red-legged partridges for game farms and shooting clubs.

Though I've shot

chukar on the Snake River in Idaho and on game farms in Missouri and Illinois, Spain is the place I go to shoot the red-legged partridge, and then only on well-driven shoots. From an outside perspective, standing in one place and shooting birds coming at you from overhead might not seem very sporting; but the birds come in waves, are generally in sight for only two or three seconds, and everything happens very quickly. Plus, you have the opportunity to shoot from a different peg at each drive,



The swapping of the guns, which are always pointed safely away from the loader and other shooters. The shooting was fast and furious, as the birds came off the plateau – a short distance out front. In Spain, your loader sits by your side, facing to the rear. In England, the loader stands by your side, facing forward.

during the course of the day.

First, you have to acquire the targets; taking your eyes off the horizon or daydreaming for a second is frustrating, as the birds don't wait. Second, you often must slightly reposition your body to the right or left as you mount the gun and select a bird for your first shot. Third, if you kill the first bird cleanly,

it's immediately on to a second bird that your brain has already chosen for you. **"...quantities to amaze even veteran driven bird shooters..."**

Fourth, then a rapid gun swap and back to the wave of birds. All of this while remembering the safety of your fellow shooters and the drivers. My success rate was only 38% last year, varying from a low of 32% to a high of 49% on the various pegs.

Now that you understand the circumstances of shooting these fine birds, you can imagine how much I look forward to visiting Spain again next fall to shoot the red-legged partridge.

Larry Potterfield

Ventosa Castle  
20 minutes south of Toledo, Spain  
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A light snack, served in the field – generally after the second drive. They call it elevenses, though it rarely happens at that time.



Notice the red legs on the birds; this is where these beautiful birds get their name. That's one of my Purdey 12 bores; the empty shells contained 24 grams of #7-1/2 shot (7/8 oz) – a very light load, but all that is needed.