

TALL PHEASANTS

in Idaho

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #265 —

The British are credited with coining the term "tall pheasants," to describe driven pheasants that fly over the tallest trees – maybe or maybe not in range. There is some dispute as to how high up "tall" is, and each of us will have to come to our own conclusion. For me, "tall" means in range of my 12 gauge shotgun, shooting an ounce or so of #6 shot and a full choke; that's about 45 yards. "Too tall" is anything farther out than that. Obviously, there isn't any reason for me to shoot at the "too tall" birds.

Shooting tall pheasants isn't something a hunter can expect to do during a fall pheasant hunt in South Dakota or Kansas; you typically have to be posting at the end of a field of walking hunters to ever see incoming birds that could possibly be tall or too tall. Driven shooting is about the only way to see tall

pheasants, and there aren't many driven shoots in America. Regularly connecting with a tall pheasant gives you quite a sense of accomplishment, as you are

working at the far end of the capability of your shotgun and yourself.

With international travel nearly shut down in 2020, during the Covid pandemic, we found ourselves traveling to eastern Idaho for three days, to shoot a mixed bag of red-legged partridge and pheasant. We enjoyed five drives per day; mostly the birds coming over my peg were normal, shootable birds – mostly in the 25-35 yard range. However,

some drives presented quite a few tall birds and on one drive they were mostly too tall, even though I couldn't help but fire both barrels.

The key to my hitting the tall birds was to take a "pull ahead" lead, in addition to the standard lead I had already given. This I learned, when the "standard lead" simply wouldn't bring the birds down; out of frustration I gave them more lead

"Experience
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(pull ahead) just before pulling the trigger. Experience is always the best teacher, and most certainly when it comes to shooting flying birds.

Driven shooting is usually a "dressed up" game for gentlemen and ladies; it's done with one or a pair of side-by-side or over and under shotguns. If you're a serious shotgunner, adding driven pheasants of the tall variety to your bucket list, either here or abroad, is something I highly recommend.

Larry Potterfield

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USA
Midway



This is the classic picture of shooting high pheasants at nearly the top of the swing. I'm shooting one of the 28 bore Purdey pair.



My pair of 28 bore Purdeys served quite well on various drives, with a mixture of normal and tall pheasants and red-leg partridges.



Our family group of shooters pose just before a drive – right to left, April (Russell's wife), grandson Oliver (12), granddaughter Margaret (9), Russell, grandson Nathaniel (12), Brenda, grandson Benjamin (16) and myself.