

QUAIL SEASON

2019

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #250 —

Every season starts with great anticipation; this one perhaps even more so. The whistle counts in late spring had been very encouraging, with more intensity in our "best" places and some activity in places where there hadn't been before. More whistles confirmed that more birds made it through the winter. Dick's dog, Skye, was now two years old and we had great hopes for her. Finally, we had done quite a bit of habitat improvement and added a few hundred acres to what we consider the "hunting block."

Our season runs from November 1 through January 15; without question the second half better than the first. This is because the cover is heavy earlier and the dog is in better shape later. It's also because there's always more exploring early, as we try to locate new coveys and relocate ones from past years.



We call it the Quailmobile! Quietly and comfortably, it carried us and our gear over hundreds of acres each hunt, allowing us to hear the beeper on the dog collar, when she was out of sight.

an ATV, but not just any ATV. We need to be able to hear the beeper on the dog's collar, and that's best done with an electric powered unit, rather than one powered by gas. Our solution was a Polaris Ranger EV. It's also pretty handy during deer season, for quiet transportation to the deer stand, then hauling deer back to the hard road during a wet fall.

Selecting a shotgun for the day's hunt is something I always look forward to. In my younger days, this wasn't

Since quail are not as plentiful as in bygone days, it's necessary to cover a lot more ground to jump enough coveys to make it an interesting morning or afternoon. The solution is simple,



This year, two bobwhite quail was something to smile about. Shot with my Purdey O/U 20 gauge, made in 1960.

much of an issue, as I didn't have many to choose from. Today, after a lifetime of collecting shotguns, things are a bit different. Should I take an over/under or a side-by-side, a 20 or 28, or perhaps a lightweight 12 gauge. This year I used three different guns, all made by Purdey.

The Missouri Conservation Department asks me to participate in their quail survey. It has

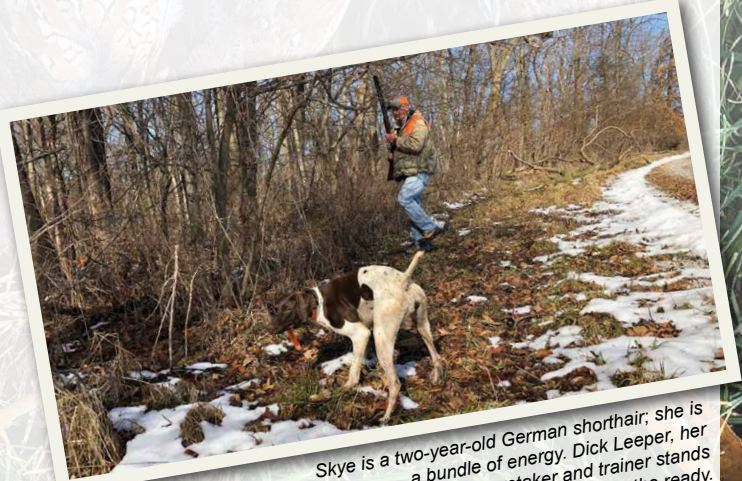
"... the second half better than the first."

blanks for the date, hours hunted, coveys jumped and birds harvested. It's quite interesting to record this data and tabulate it at the end of the season. Dick, Skye and I hunted a total of 17 times, about three to four hours each time. We jumped an average of two coveys per hunt and killed (harvested) an average of 1.65 birds per day. By today's standards, it was a very good year.



Larry Potterfield

Midway Farms
Howard County, MO
January 15, 2020
(last day of season)



Skye is a two-year-old German shorthair; she is a bundle of energy. Dick Leeper, her caretaker and trainer stands at the ready.