

# Wild BOBWHITE QUAIL

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #269 —

As my hunting and fishing buddy Dick Leeper and I progressed through the 75-day Missouri quail season last fall, friends who knew that we were quail hunting would ask: "where are you getting the quail?" Of course, they anticipated that we were buying them from a local game bird farm. To their great surprise, our response was always the same: "we're hunting wild birds!"

There's been a great "die off" of the Missouri wild quail population over the last 50-60 years. Conservation leaders have not been able to adequately identify the causes and thus haven't developed comprehensive solutions. Still, there are pockets of land in which the birds have survived in huntable numbers, and with intense investment in habitat management from the landowners, quail populations in these areas are increasing.

We are fortunate to have access to a few such areas.

Quail coveys living in row crop, flat-ground fencerows can be relatively easy for the dogs

to find and for the hunters to shoot; and the singles are reasonable predictable to follow up on. However, the same opportunity is available to quail predators. But change to medium to heavily rolling terrain, with deep brushy draws and corners, and the game changes dramatically for the hunter; those are the areas that have held the quail. Additionally, today's quail seem more willing to use their feet to run than in the old days and wild bobwhite quail hunting has become much more challenging.



*A couple of wild bobwhite quail taken with my Purdey 28 ga SxS.*

A quail flush reminds me of a complicated football play. There are 22 players on the field, of course, which is about the size of a large covey of quail. When the ball is snapped, players are mostly proceeding downfield, but in so many directions its impossible to try to pick a player to follow. And in a couple of seconds, it's all over. Even when there's a good point and I am wired for the covey flush, it's always too fast.

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**"...the game changes dramatically for the hunter"**

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Our 2020/2021 season was hard, hard work, but moderately rewarding. We hunted 23 times, mostly mornings, during the season, jumping 22 unique covey of quail over 2600 acres of land (about 1 covey per 100 acres). We harvested 73 wild bobwhite quail. Last year we hunted 17 times and shot only 28 birds. That's quite an improvement, and with more habitat enhancement underway, we expect our quail harvest next fall to continue to improve.

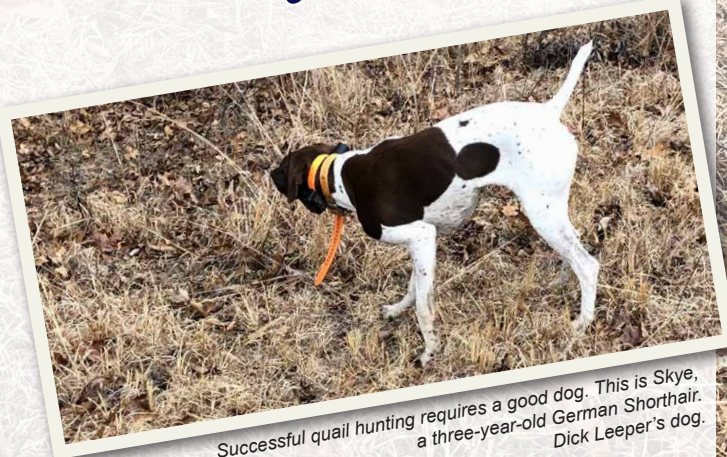


Larry Potterfield

Midway Farms  
Howard County, Missouri  
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*This roost is a telltale sign that you have quail.*



*Successful quail hunting requires a good dog. This is Skye, a three-year-old German Shorthair. Dick Leeper's dog.*