

JUST A REGULAR DAY OF PIGEON HUNTING WITH TORCAZA

On our second day in Pinto, the sun rose brightly at 6:30am. We were well rested from the previous day, which had been a great success. We all met at the dining room where the sparkling flame of the chimney burns the wood of a local “quebracho” tree. I was very much looking forward to tasting the full continental breakfast that our chef, who woke up even earlier than us, had kindly prepared. Shortly after the first meal of the day, we got ready to leave at 7:45am. It was the month of June and not



surprisingly, the weather was wonderful again. Indeed, in this subtropical region the average number of sunny days per year is over 300, and the rainiest time of the year coincides with the summer months of December, January and February. The previous night, the hunting manager had provided some of us with some extra cartridges. Some of my friends chose to switch to cartridges of 1,20 oz and lead 7 because they considered them more effective for pigeon hunting. The hunting manager kindly

accommodated everyone’s demands. I thought to myself that we would find out at the end of the day how the different gauges and different cartridges behaved.

Outside of the lodge, the impeccable Mercedes shuttle bus was waiting to take us to the pigeon hunting spot, less than 45 minutes away. After a 15 minute ride on a well paved road, we reached a rocky road. 20 minutes after, they informed us that we were approaching our destination. My heart started beating fast, I started gazing the first birds in the air, one of them being the famous “tero”; omnipresent in Argentina and characterized by a loud and strident tweet. We got off the vehicle and observed the scenery around us. Behind, 13.590 acres of soy fields. In front, 13.590 acres of sorghum fields. The “quebracho” tree was also present in the vast fields. I noticed that there were big amounts of grain on the floor that the harvester had not collected.

We settled around 20 feet away in the sorghum field where the plant itself served as protection and cover. We were expecting that the majority of the kills would fall pretty close to us or maybe behind where the soy field was, making them easier to retrieve.

I saw my assistant place a fake mechanic pigeon that would serve as perfect decoy to attract the pigeons. Our assistants explained us that it is characteristic of the area for pigeons to show up an hour or two later than the



turtledoves, so while we were waiting for them, we started warming up by shooting at some turtledoves that constantly hover the area. We missed very few shots, proving that the hunting performed the previous day had provided us with the training needed.

Approximately an hour after we arrived, we started gazing the first flocks of pigeons in the horizon. In



the region, they are called “las grandes” meaning “the big ones” and they are characterized by a beautiful blue collar around their necks. The flocks started approaching the fields looking for food and we started shooting in a continuous matter. Our shotguns were getting hot again. The mechanical decoy is working at its best, flapping its wings and constantly attracting pigeons. I noticed that my choice of cartridges was working

as effectively as my companions’.

The floor next to us was covered with dead pigeons, and so was the soy field behind us. The kills acted themselves as decoys for new pigeons so we decided not to pick them up until the end of the hunting session.

Shortly after noon the number of flocks started diminishing until we could only find some scattered pigeons. The hunting manager took advantage of this downtime to give out some warm, home-made roast beef sandwiches, some salad and abundant beer, water and soft drinks. My knowledgeable assistant explained to me that we were not going to be able to have lunch at a table because the flocks of pigeons would reappear anytime on their way back to their nests after they fed themselves. Knowing this, I finished my sandwich quick and drank several beers to calm my thirst since it was quite warm by then. Excited, we all waited for the hunting to resume and approximately half an hour later, the pigeons start showing up heading the opposite way this time. Their behavioral pattern resembled very much to the one of the turtledoves the previous day only that now, they all return to their nests at the same time, forming an immense flock. We could not stop shooting, and did not even have enough time to reload. We did spectacular shots, killing two and even three birds with one shot. I remember telling my assistant Jorge, that I was unsure to be able to keep up the rhythm.

At around 4pm, the pass of the pigeons ceased, and I took a deep breath of relief and satisfaction; I was exhausted. Shortly after the last scattered pigeons disappeared, the



darkness took over following a beautiful sunset.

We all gathered around a tree, holding our beverages, covered in sweat, exhausted and with our hands still black from the gunpowder. While we rested, our assistants quickly started retrieving the kills and the used cartridges. Everyone's face still reflected the excitement and shock after the great experience lived. We all wondered how many kills we had accomplished this time. The average was over 150 kills per hunter.

Like the previous day, it was then time for a group picture with our trophies. We immortalized the moment in a picture that would hopefully remind us for the rest of our lives of the unique and extraordinary hunting experience.

On the way back to the Lodge, we all slept. On arrival, our Chef was waiting for us with beverages and the typical Argentinian "picada" that we all knew well by then.

This time, we could all feel the tiredness in our bodies, therefore dinner took place early. The next day was duck hunting. Ducks are the first birds that wake up in the morning, meaning that we had to be ready to hunt before the sun rose in order to enjoy the stunning events that Mother Nature had ready for us.

