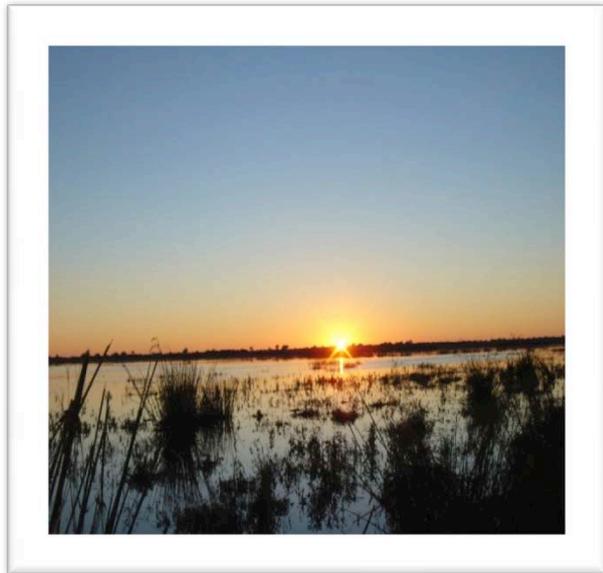


JUST A REGULAR DAY OF DUCK HUNTING WITH TORCAZA

As usual, once the second day of hunting with Torcaza came to an end and dinner was over, the hunting manager, Alex Bottino made some remarks about the next day. We were all excited to hunt ducks. He started his speech with some recommendations about the type of ammunition needed. We were going to use gauge 12, lead 5, 1.13 oz. He also mentioned that lead 7 was also a good choice. For gauge 20, 1oz was enough, and if somebody wanted to ensure not to miss the target, the best option was 1oz, lead 5. My personal choice was lead 7 and 1oz. And for this personal challenge I also chose to use $\frac{1}{4}$ choke, even though the standard is $\frac{1}{2}$ choke. We had to be up early the next day, at 4:15am. We also had a 45minute ride to get to our destination so we all went to bed very early that night.

We woke up at the time planned and had breakfast slightly faster than the other days. This time, the hunting guides were not waiting for us outside since they had left more than half an hour before us. Our ride, the Mercedes shuttle, was waiting for us outside and the weather was perfect for the third day in a row.

It was still dark when we arrived to our destination. This time the hunting spot was around 30 feet away from a river. Our guides were holding some custom made waders for each of us. The hunting manager had already asked us about our foot size and clothing size through a questionnaire that the organization had handed out several months ago. Adrian, the hunting manager, and two other guides were assisting us to put on the waders as they said: "If you tuck your pants under the socks, it will reduce possible bruises". It really seemed like they cared. The rest of the guides started setting up the hunting stands. We then got on a motorboat that could fit up to 9 people and headed to the hunting stands in the river. One by one, we descended from the boat and got in our respective stands with our respective assistants. We were going to shoot from the river but without getting wet. However, were these posts permanently there? It would not make sense to keep them there permanently knowing that the river dries in other seasons. How has the organization faced this challenge? Very simple, they have designed mobile hunting stands made of aluminium that are easy to carry yet durable. They are adjustable in height and well camouflaged for the ducks not to notice. The result was a 22 square feet, dry surface with a chair from where the hunter could shoot 360 degrees



around. Like this, it doesn't matter if someone is old or young, skinny or large, fit or out of shape since you comfortably arrive to your hunting stand by boat, and always assisted by the kind guides. Not only that but you also shoot from a firm, safe surface instead of the slippery mud.

The darkness and the absolute silence still reigned the area. What a peaceful moment. In the horizon, the sun started rising and the birds started waking up. The tweet of the Southern Screamer stood out from

the numerous birds species and we started gazing the first flocks of birds such as the Rosy-Billed Pochard. At one point, the tweeting of the different bird species was so intense that we were not able to tell the different tweets.

While the sun rose, I could already hear the first shots. I could see ducks in the distance. The vast, rural scenery around me was stunning. The decoys were already set and moving around silently.

The first flocks started approaching and my first successful shot was to a Brown Pintail that flew fast, around 40 feet away. At first, scattered ducks started showing up such as the Ringed Teal. To my surprise, large flocks of turtledoves appeared making it hard for me to distinguish them from the ducks that also are in the air. Luckily, my assistant Jorge was there to point out every single duck he saw. He yelled: "Pato, pato!!" which is the word for duck in Spanish. As time went by, the Rosy-Billed Pochard became the species we saw the most often, and I started shooting my first double hits.



Argentinian ducks have always been my favourite kill. They fly fast and with elegance towards the decoy and taste better than any

other bird when cooked properly. The amount of ducks in the area was pretty abundant. Jorge kept picking up the kills while he kept an eye on the sky. The ducks flew in from everywhere providing us with a variety of types of shots from different angles, distances and trajectories. At some point a flock of Brazilian ducks flew amazingly fast in front of me, only a couple feet above the water surface. I shot a double, and the rest flew away.

At around 10:30am the amount of birds diminished and Jorge warned me that I had reached the limit of 40 ducks. He had gathered them all and we both took a picture with the kills in the paradisiac environment. The experience was amazing and definitely unforgettable. Also, I accomplished my personal challenge of shooting with a shotgun gauge 20, lead 7, 1oz. and ¼ choke. Surely successful.



The motorboat picked us up and we all started sharing our personal experiences of the day. Once we reached the shore, we all had to take the typical group picture with our kills. The satisfaction was obvious and present in everyone's faces, including the assistants' and manager's. The table was set for a very-much-needed lunch. A variety of snacks and beer were available and Chef Matias was already working on the grill. It was just the perfect scenario with friends, in the

middle of the wild, good weather and after a successful hunting session.

After eating, we agreed to take a little nap using the comfortable mats that the organization had set up in the shade of some trees. A couple young hunters though, kept shooting at the scattered flocks of turtledoves that roamed the area. After waking up from our nap, we still shot at some turtledoves too and then took a second group picture with the additional kills. Within such a small area, we



could pick to shoot at turtledoves, ducks and even pigeons. Alex, the hunting manager, had brought four experienced and well-trained Setters in case we wanted to shoot at pigeons.

It then started getting dark and slightly cloudy, so we decided it was time to go back. The way back home was fast and most of us were half asleep all the way. It had been a pretty long day especially after having stayed to kill turtledoves after a morning of duck hunting.

We arrived at the Lodge and were pleasantly welcomed by its staff. I took a

rejuvenating shower and dined with the group after. We had a great conversation going over the anecdotes of the previous days. We all agreed that it had been a unique day and the inexperienced duck hunters mentioned that it had been an amazing first-time.

Having shared our opinions and still euphoric about the experience lived –also thanks to the wine ingested during dinner time- we went to bed, hoping to rest and excited about our next experience with Torcaza.

