

BLACK POWDER Pheasants

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #142 —

The pheasant season for wild birds was long closed, but on established shooting preserves it often lingers through the end of March. It was December since I hunted in South Dakota, and there's not much to do in Missouri during March; so a Saturday afternoon of pheasant shooting was very welcome.

The first question, for me personally, was which gun; and it didn't take long to decide – my old Parker double barrel. The Parker is too heavy (9-1/4 pounds) to carry around much and it's stocked too low for serious shooting (2" drop at comb and 3" drop at heel); but there's not much walking in a Continental Shoot, and it's a fun shoot, rather than a serious one.

The Continental came to us from Europe and is a spinoff of the more traditional driven bird shoot. Pheasants are

released from the center of a large circle of fixed shooting stations, called butts, where shooters are assigned. Our circle was 660 yards around with two shooters assigned every 66 yards. Since pheasants usually fly with the wind, the shoot time

was divided into five segments – with an equal number of birds released each time. At the end of each segment, we rotated two stations; one shooter clockwise, the other counter clockwise, so as to move all the way around the circle. This allowed everyone some downwind birds, and five different shooting partners. The total number of birds released depends on the number of shooters, normally ten birds per shooter; but frankly, it's what's in your wallet that counts and



This old Parker has been around since 1885. It's a 10 gauge, with 32" twist steel barrels and nickel-plated parts. My ammo is antique Winchester all brass cases, that I loaded with 1-1/8 ounces of 7-1/2 shot and 3-1/2 drams of black powder.

the shoot is planned for as many birds as the group is willing to pay for – in our case, 150 birds.

From the shooter's perspective, behind the butts, the birds were all coming straight overhead, or slightly to the left or right. We were two shooters per station, and split the sky in half. The birds were released one or two at a time, or perhaps four or five.

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Sometimes it seemed like everything was coming our way, and other times - nothing. All in all, it worked out pretty evenly.

In total, I fired 22 rounds and killed 8 birds; nothing to brag about, but I did purposefully drop two into the edge of a pond behind the shooting butt – so we could watch a water retrieve. For me, it was a fun afternoon and a great black powder pheasant shoot.



Larry Potterfield
Midway Farms
The Continental Field
Fayette, Missouri
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The old Parker in action. On a calm, humid day, the smoke just hangs around. Matt Fleming was my shooting partner on this station.



Colt (Stan Frink's four-year-old lab) retrieves a pheasant.