

Cold WEATHER PHEASANTS

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #165 –

In three days of pheasant hunting, I never heard a single bird flush. No mistake, there were lots of flushes, but a 15-25 mile per hour wind whistling past my ears and rustling through the grass and weeds made it impossible to hear the thunder of the wings or the cackle of the cocks. When we heard the words “rooster, rooster” or “hen, hen, hen,” we knew there was a bird in the air; but often its location was somewhere we weren’t looking. Hunting pheasants using only our eyes, and without the benefit of our ears, was an interesting and humbling experience.

But, it was also cold; during our hunt, the temperature was in the 9-15 degree range.

That in itself wasn’t unbearable; but with the wind howling in from the west, northwest – well, now you’re talking serious discomfort. Back home, we would have all stayed inside on days like

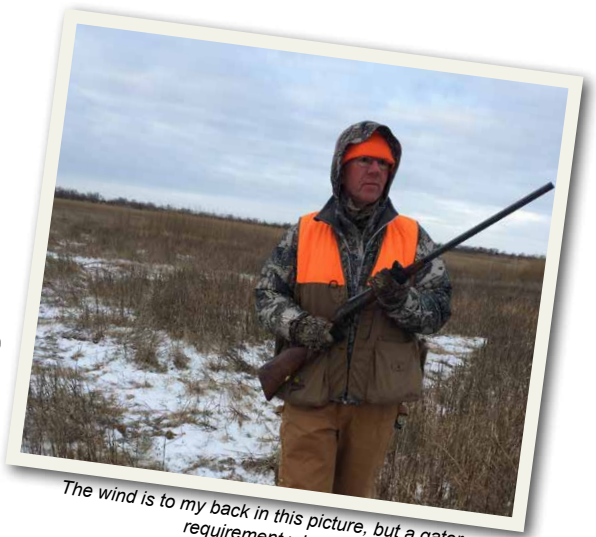


A 410 side by side is not my first choice for most pheasant hunting, but when they're hunkered down in the shelterbelts the shooting can be fast and close. In this case, the little 410 was all I ever needed.

this; but we had come to hunt – and hunt we did!

In the field, we were always walking, so there was no problem with our feet getting cold; hand warmers allowed us to alternate gloved hands in our pockets, while mostly holding our guns at the ready -- which was a requirement since we didn’t have the benefit of hearing the flushes.

Half the time we had the wind behind us, or were on the downwind side of a shelterbelt; but that was only half the time. Into the wind required serious protection for our faces. Some of our group of six hunters used full gators,



The wind is to my back in this picture, but a gator was a requirement when walking into the wind.

some only neck gators. It was miserable, when we had to turn and walk into the wind; but we were always hunting and forgot about the wind and cold when a bird got up.

I always take more than one shotgun on a trip like this, generally changing out for each morning and afternoon hunt. I started with a

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Purdey 20 gauge side by side, switched to a Purdey 20 gauge over/under, then to a Winchester Model 12, 28 gauge pump and finished up with a Holland and Holland 410 side by side. The Model 12 pump gun was my least favorite of the four – for this hunt, because the extra clothes I was wearing made it difficult to shuck it crisply, especially from odd angles. Despite the cold and windy weather, having a variety of different guns made it a memorable pheasant hunt.



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The habitat was exquisite and most of the birds held well for the dogs.