

Heavy Game Bag
By Kirklan Oler



Well, after hunting prairie birds for the last five weeks, I decided it was time to chase my all time favorite upland bird, the chukar. My day started at about 7:00 am as I started the lung busting climb up into the cheat grass bowls that chukar call home. I had a destination in mind; I call it "The Sheds" after I found a nine point one sided deer shed there last year.

Normally this location holds 2-3 coveys, but after hunting the plateau for one and a half hours Darko had only located 1 covey of 20 birds and I had managed to scratch down one bird. Another chukar was on a kamikaze mission and flew straight at me buzzing by my head by just a few feet. I spun on it as it went by and attempted to shoot, but my Remington 11/87 pulled its trick and didn't cycle its third shell into the chamber. If anyone knows why the 11/87 does this on only the third shell, I would love to know. Darko made the retrieve on the bird I downed and we continued along our way.



We continued to head up hill looking to get to the top and work a series of cheat grass slopes that usually produce a few birds. It wasn't long before we approached a small North facing bowl and Darko slammed on point. I worked in on the downhill side and a

covey of about 8 birds burst out of the cheat grass and headed downhill fast. In unusual fashion for myself I stayed calm, swung smoothly and dropped the bird with a nice left to right crossing shot. I'm starting to feel pretty good about myself, two for three shooting on chukar!

We kept swinging around the mountain and about 200 yards later we hit another small bowl. Upon getting within sight of the entire slope a covey of 10 birds gets up 100 yards away flushes downhill and put down only 75 yards below me under a juniper tree.

Chukars are usually smarter than this, and I figure it had to be a young group that had never been shot at before. Darko worked his way down the ridge and quickly went on point. I worked my way to the downhill side of the tree and out flushes the birds. Well, in true chukar fashion they decide to scatter in about every direction and in my true fashion I manage to go 0-4 shooting. I pulled some feathers from one bird, but I never saw it miss a wing beat and it finally flew out of view. Darko and I followed up the covey and I managed to scratch down another bird off a single flush.



After following up on the covey and not finding any other singles, we continued heading north along the ridge. After about a half hour I came over a rise and noticed a nice looking cheat grass slope that was bound to hold a covey. Darko quickly caught scent of chukar and started working his way downhill. It was warm at 60 degrees and there was virtually no wind so Darko was doing that start and stop type of pointing. Finally about 150 yards off the top he locked up for good and I made my way down the slope below him on the left side. The covey flushed when I was about even with them and again I managed to bag a bird, this time on a right to left crossing shot. Darko made the retrieve for the fourth bird in the bag.

Continuing north it wasn't long before Darko headed off the ridge and downhill once again. He kept down and then more. I knew he scent and I was rewarded with a 200 yards below snapped a picture down the slope as and still maintain went in for the erupted directly side of me and



going down and down some had to be on quickly beautiful point me. I quickly and headed fast as I could control. As I flush, birds below me, to the above me.

There had to be at least 30-40 birds in this covey, no wonder Darko scented them from so far away even with virtually no breeze to speak of. I quickly missed my first shot, but upon firing my second I was rewarded with a bird on the ground. Darko retrieved the chukar to hand and we were assigned the task of climbing back up the very steep slope to the top.



Having made it to the top and a limit in the bag, I started heading south for the long hike back to the truck. Darko on the other hand had another idea; he started heading north and quickly locked up on point again. Having bagged a limit, I got out the camera and snapped a few pictures of him working the covey.

It ended up being another large covey of chukar. I flushed them and tried taking some pics of them in flight, but none of them turned out.

On the way out Darko found another covey of chukar producing this nice point on the top of a ridge:



The rest of the hike was uneventful and there was one tired dog and man when we made it back after 9 hours of hunting. It was well worth the effort and putting a limit of chukar in the bag was the icing on the cake after how well Darko performed for me today.

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