

## Hunting in South Dakota by John Mustain

My first South Dakota pheasant hunt was a great time. It started out back in Mid-October when I got a call from my buddy Ken Hamele asking if I wanted to take a trip with him and a group of his friends to do some bird hunting. So of course I packed my guns and my dog Angus and we headed north.

I met up with Hamele in Nebraska and we continued the trip north. Our ride was not dull, especially with Ken and there were great sites to see and the general scenery was beautiful. We actually stayed in North Dakota but hunted in South Dakota. The first day we hunted walk in areas and unfortunately there wasn't much there and let me tell you, it was cold! But then we were blessed with great weather the next 3 days.

Charlie and Holly Hoffman were our hosts and we hunted on their property but stayed at a local motel in Ashley, ND. I can't say enough about the Hoffman's – they treated us like family and opened their home and their time to us. And Charlie knows his business concerning birds. He's a very good shot and he's heck on coyotes. Charlie is also a conservationist and his farm is groomed for wild life. His wife Holly was a great cook and made us some delicious meals!

There were 9 of us and 3 dogs – my SM Angus and Ken's 2 Moonsters, Zip and Meat. The area was very much pheasant country, with crops and CPR. We did a lot of walking and the dogs worked the fields. Angus at first was in too much of a hurry and got a little too far out on our first day, but after an "attitude adjustment" he got the hang of it and worked fine. Zip was Zip, the perfect dog doing his thing and although Meat had some trouble with the tall grass he got some nice work in.

Each day out was better than the day before. The last day we were there it was cold with snow and that helped the birds hold better and the points we had were rock solid and impressive. I also got reintroduced to wild pheasants – they run fast, fly far and are hard to kill! Ken had told me to bring a 12 ga with #6's - he was my "I told you so" man and he was right...as usual. The dogs did find a lot of the crippled birds, with both Zip and Angus excelling in this area. I must say Angus had the longest track – about 150 yards and he tracked that bird into a swamp. I was trying to call him back in, and I look up the ditch and there was Angus with the bird. He fetched it to hand and the bird was still alive. That made my whole trip worthwhile!

This was my first South Dakota trip but hopefully not my last. I met some great people and new hunting partners and of course any hunting trip with Hamele is an experience that you'll thoroughly enjoy! If there was a downside to the trip, it was when Hamele and Zip got sprayed by a skunk. The motel owner was not too happy with us, and the ride back to town was pretty cold with the windows open. Yup, I'm already looking forward to next year.

# HUNTING TRIPS

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