

Hunt Oregon 2020

by Michael Albert

The adventure all started when my dad, Dave Albert, won the Hunt Oregon trip in the 2018 DKGNA raffle. He was excited to have his name picked and was shocked that even though he won second place, the first-place winner skipped on the trip and took the beautiful Beretta shotgun instead. This meant a road trip to Oregon was on the horizon.

Fast forward about a year and the trip was upon us. We planned the trip for after the regular bird season was closed, and since the hunt takes place on a private ranch with dedicated bird preserves, we got the chance to hunt after everyone had already put away their shotguns for the season. Since the trip was reserved for four people, we invited a few of my good friends and fellow DK owners along for the experience. Blake Bailey with his two dogs Chief and Max along with John Heiner with his dog Rey accompanied me and Briar along with my dad.

The trip started early on Saturday morning with the group loading up the truck and trailer with gear and dogs. After about 9 hours of driving, story telling and laughing we arrive at the ranch with Bobby, the hunt organizer, welcoming us with a delicious steak dinner. We put together a plan for the next morning and hit the hay.



(L to R) John Heiner, Michael Albert, Dave Albert, and Blake Bailey. Dogs (L to R) Braya vom Hochland, Atilla "Max" vom Hochland, Angus "Chief" vom Hochland, , and Briar von den Sieben Sohnen

Day one hunt begins with a push through a river bottom, two hunters and two dogs one each side. The hunt starts off nice and mellow with about 30 minutes of dog work before the first bird is produced. A beautiful rooster holding tight to the riverbank was presented by Rey. The first shot rang out and down fell the bird into the flowing river. Briar was on it and brought the bird back as she was trained to do. Immediately after we ran into some chukar and down fell two. From there on out it was a steady stream of birds for each hunter. The

dogs performed flawlessly on this 4-hour hunt and tallied 7 roosters and two chukar in this short hunt. Next on the agenda was to head back to the lodge for a hearty lunch.

After lunch we went to another river bottom on a different portion of the ranch and had another great hunt. The laughs and heckling could be heard ringing through the river

bottom as we steadily moved along. After about 3 miles of walking we produced another 7 roosters and 1 more chukar.



Day two began with a field that led into a narrow river bottom. The field was absolutely loaded with birds and as we traversed the hillside getting into position, we saw dozens of birds lifting ahead of us. As we worked through these fields and river bottoms, the dog work took on a whole new level. The rust had been shaken off, the dogs were warmed up and knew exactly how to work together to produce birds. Watching the dogs back each other up and help each other retrieve was just as much fun as the shooting we

got to do. Perhaps the most memorable one of the day was when Chief went on point and his brother Max immediately backed him along the river. The shooters moved into position, the bird took flight and then fell. Being able to watch the entire scene play out from across the river was astonishing.

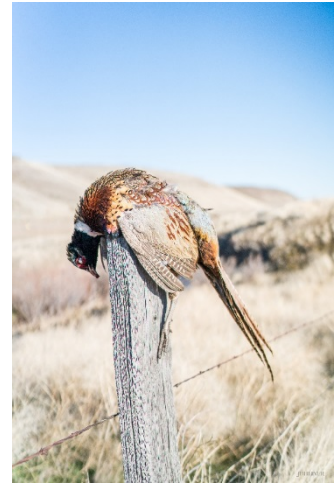
After lunch we took to the chukar hills in hope of finding a large covey we heard earlier in the morning. The hills were steep, the walking was dangerous, and the terrain was rugged, but this is exactly what chukar love. The walk off the mountain didn't produce any chukar but we ended up walking down a wash on the way back to the lodge that was loaded with birds. Chukar on the hillside, pheasant and quail in the bottoms were all tempting us at the same time. We split up and found ourselves having a phenomenal time. Shots were ringing out left and right



and the dog work was chaotic at times. Birds flushing, dogs pointing and retrieving like machines. When the dust settled, we ended up getting a handful of quail, a dozen pheasant and a chukar or two. A memory that I will have for some time is one of Briar retrieving a pheasant from a willow thicket in the middle of a creek. The bird fell directly in the middle with no access into thicket except by swimming under a low hanging log and climb into the dense brush. After a little encouragement Briar headed in, and to my surprise returned a moment later with the bird. I think the joy on my face was more than that on Briars! The stories at the dinner table that night was full of laughs and gratitude.

Day three was the final day of hunting and we were all feeling the affects of the first two days. We decided to take it a little easy and go through some planted CRP fields

first thing. The dogs were working a little slower than the first two days but seemed to be a little more methodical. A special moment that made the whole trip that much more memorable was when Briar was searching in front of my dad and slammed on the brakes when she caught sent of a rooster. Immediately Rey came and backed her and the two dogs had the rooster pinned. My dad came into shooting range and was in awe of the beauty of the scene. It played out like a commercial with the rooster flushing as he walked in and one shot rang out. The rooster fell, and Rey had a picture-perfect retrieve. The rest of the morning we walked along the river steadily producing more birds. As we near the end of our walk, Chief was tracking a running bird. As we neared a blackberry thicket, he stopped and dove in producing a rooster that shocked us all. He emerged bloody from the thorns but happy and proud as could be.



From left to right: Braya vom Hochland, Angus "Chief" vom Hochland, Atilla "Max" vom Hochland, and Briar von den Sieben Söhnen

As the day wound down, the memories from the past few days raced through my mind. The experience that we all had was nothing short of spectacular. The amazing accommodations from Bobby, the delicious food that Carol prepared, the laughs and smiles that were shared, and the time afield with our beloved dogs was a great end to the 2019 hunting season. In the end new friendships were formed, and others strengthened. Coolers were full of wild game and our dogs were exhausted. The experience will be

treasured, and the memories created will not be soon forgotten. Thanks to everyone who made this trip possible.