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- 6-Page Predator Strategy Section
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- One Wild Argentina Fox Hunt
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Hunting Gators, Hyenas & Jackals

HUNTING ARGENTINA



Buenos Aires ●

Las Flores ★

A photograph showing a dead gray fox lying on its side on a bed of dry leaves and twigs. The fox has several wounds on its back and neck. Next to the fox are a black rifle with a scope, a black flashlight, and a silver megaphone with the 'FOXPRO' logo on its front. The scene is set outdoors in a natural, wooded environment.

The FoxPro Hellfire
e-caller was
hell on foxes!

Southern Exposure

Ravenous hordes of huge gray foxes
await predator hunters in Argentina

By Skip Knowles

THE GOLDEN GLOW of the waning Argentine sunlight had driven the shadows longer and longer until they disappeared with the sun. We counted the delicious little perdiz partridges we'd bagged, stowed the shotguns, and it was time to go fox hunting. I'd looked forward to this for a long time. The guys stood around the Land Cruiser, smoking and chatting in front of the old estancia's main house, and I grew anxious as it seemed darkness was not far off.



Huge European hares are also a big part of the fox diet.

like his little rifle could not miss under 150 yards. We soon called his beat up Marlin tack driver *La Muerte Negra* ("the black death"), because it whispered death to everything in range. The gun was tough to load it was so beaten up, and the target grade barrel had seen better days, but it was as lethal as strychnine on critters. Diego prefer I used the .17 because ammo is cheaper and the gun is so quiet we often killed more than one on a set.

When a fox did materialize from the deep grass out of range of the .17, they were safe, as that accursed .22-250 had lost its zero, costing us several varmints. At the end of the second evening, we got turned around in the deep grass while off-roading and spent an hour driving through head high grass in the dark, flushing the elusive perdiz and red partridges all the way.

Most of the time we called and shot right from the dirt road, right where the truck was, and I'd end up using various parts of the vehicle for a rest. I cracked a euro-trash bunny on the way home that night in the headlights, and had to laugh as that rabbit was bigger than one of the smaller foxes.

The country doesn't look like it would hold much at all. Wide-open prairie with endless brown grass, it is crawling with fantastic upland bird hunting, and I assume, rodents, but there is not enough cover to hold deer or anything larger than a rabbit. But as soon as the sun gets low, the broad pampas come alive with fox, many of which bed down in the deeper grass and brush along roadside ditches and fence lines. Old school farm equipment, men on horses, wooden carts and fields dot the countryside, fields that don't look like a farmer is using high-tech million-dollar machinery to maximize every square inch of ground.

Ever dream you could go back in time? I could already see that Argentina is like a trip to a U.S. that was gone before most of us were born. Where fence rows and prairie grasses were more prevalent than tilled fields. Ancient pickup trucks rumble down the road and old Ford Falcons are everywhere, giving the country that slightly Cuban feel. The gauchos wave from their horses, smiling through tight, weathered faces.

I had gone to Las Flores, only an hour drive west from Buenos Aires, foregoing the chance for high-volume dove hunting and



An eve's hunt: Three fox and two big, bonus bunnies.

the fancy lodges of Cordoba, opting instead for the best possible duck and predator hunting on earth. The house we stayed in was spacious and warm, nicer than expected, and Diego's gorgeous girlfriend Maria made sure of that with hot coffee, plenty of wine and endless supplies of the famous Argentine grass-fed beef. The massive rack from a red stag covered a pool table in the living room in a home that was rustic, but not rough.

The third evening, after shooting 50-something ducks, we started earlier and the foxes were hungry. Nine total fell to La Muerte Negra and we had up to six come in at one spot!

Sometimes Diego would bark to get them to stop running. I was sure it would spook them...then invariably the animal would drift into range or re-appear much closer if it didn't stop and get shot. They were completely unimpressed with commotion or shots.

On the last evening, we were wrapping it up when local police came out and blocked our truck. I was tense, waiting on a vicious third world bribe demand or something, when one of the cops hugged Diego. They chatted and soon there was laughing, and Diego had that devil grin of his going.

"They told us where there's a bunch more foxes up the road," he said, putting it in gear and stomping the gas. They were right.

MAY THIS TRIP NEVER END

The best part of the trip was Diego. Argentina's version of a refined redneck, he has lived everywhere from Paris and Spain to the Caribbean, speaks French, Spanish, and English, is polite and articulate, and a very talented killing machine. He is a smart and serious hunter with all the right gear, from FoxPro predator calls to Beretta shotguns and tricked out Land Cruisers and lethal rifles. He hunts and fishes from Patagonia to Brazil each year. Many outfitters down here will round up whatever local guys they can find, call them a guide, and hope for the best. Hope is not a plan. Diego is the real deal.

"Wanna try one more stop?" he asked me on the last evening. The sun was going down, and we called about one minute. Movement to the right. A huge fox trotted across the road, and I followed with the crosshairs. No shot, no shot...then 150 yards out in the field he paused and I cracked him. Another fox crossed the road and I dropped him, too. Two minutes passed, and a big black bobcat



Diego Munoz, second from right, with his crack crew of fox killers after quitting time.

creature slinked out of the forest 200 yards away. This, I learned, was called a pampas cat. Like a super-sized house cat in appearance, with shaggy fur, they are a cool critter to see creeping toward you in the grass, but not legal to shoot. Unbelievably, a huge owl appeared and started dive-bombing and harassing the cat, thinking it had the dying rabbit, evidently.

To the right, another small fox charged in so hard and fast it hit the bottom wire of the fence full speed, flipped on its back, jumped up, and resumed running straight at us. Pow! I drilled him at about 20 feet. The cat was back-and-forth, harassed by the owl. Another fox popped up too far away.

The whole business was far too crazy to seem real.

Not too shabby for a "straight up duck and fox hunt, not too expensive and nothing fancy," which is how outfitter Ramsey Russell of getducks.com pitched this trip to me a year earlier. "An affordable, authentic trip, the kind your readers will appreciate."

I think it's the kind of trip anyone with a pulse would appreciate, and can't wait to return. With the freaky pampas cat and birds of prey adding drama, it was the wildest predator hunting I've ever experienced. It's clear Argentina has a world of opportunity awaiting.

"You should see our foxes down in Patagonia," Diego said, holding his hand higher than his waist. "They're huge, like wolves."

A wolf-sized fox? Not a "faux-yote" but a "faux-wolf"? Count me in. And yes, you can hunt them legally, he assured.

He went on about a few other predators he's hunted in Argentina, a giant of a country stretched out north to south. Sounds like another expedition is in order. ■

Book It!

This wild hunt was one of many brokered by Ramsey Russell of getducks.com. He specializes in waterfowl, but books all kinds of trips to South America, particularly during the North American summer, as it is winter on the other side of the equator. He is not limited to the southern hemisphere, however, and books, for instance, a trip to St. Paul Island, "a 40-square mile rock where Russian fur farmers brought foxes that are now feral and offers incredible hunting," he says. "Blue foxes, dark blue-grey foxes, smoke-colored foxes...you just predator call and get ready!" Give him a shout to plan a dream hunt (866.438.3897).