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For Birdshooters and Waterfowlers

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## Dateline: Colorado

### Who To Call for A Sure Fire Goose Hunt

*Editor's Note: Correspondent Bob Newman says he has found the closest thing possible to a guaranteed goose shoot. What's more, it's on private property and quite affordable. Here are all the details.*

You may have heard that Colorado now has so many resident Canada geese that you could say the place is infested with them. Master goose guides **Jim Arnold** and **Shane McCoy** of **Waterfowl Haven Outfitters** are lucky enough to be in the middle of it. I have hunted with them several years now and find they provide some excellent hunting for these birds in addition to the hordes of snow geese that migrate through the state.

Now anyone who has hunted either of these birds will tell you that it takes

more than their mere presence to make a good hunt, especially after they've been shot at a few times. Waterfowl Haven has



all the bases covered. First of all, their guides took first through fifth place in the 2002 Colorado State Goose Calling Championships. Given the very stiff

competition, this really says something about their abilities. Additionally, Waterfowl Haven has prime leases on 40,000 acres spread across more than 25 tracts of private property in northern Colorado. These properties are scouted daily and rotated in the shooting schedule so the geese do not wise up too quickly. And these guys study and know the patterns of the birds, putting their hunters at the right place at exactly the right time. For example, one of my best hunts with them didn't begin until nearly two hours after sunrise because the guides knew that the geese we were after would not be leaving their pond until that time and would not be returning to the pond from their morning feeding until around 8:30 am. When those

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## Dateline: Southern Africa

### Two New Shooting Opportunities Open This Season

*Editor's Note: Senior Correspondent Gary Kramer tells us there are some new developments for wingshooters traveling to Africa this year. Here's what he found out at the Safari Club International Convention in Reno last month.*

Ten years ago I could find only a handful of outfitters and booking agents offering African bird shooting at the annual Safari Club International Convention. Africa has come a long way since then as a birdshooting destination. New operators crop up every year and established outfitters continue to come up with new shooting areas and programs

designed for bird hunters. At this year's convention I found two new opportunities. The first is for a new hunting destination with a well known operation. The second is with a completely new outfit. Let's start with the new offerings from **Mark Haldane** of **Bird Hunters Africa**.

Haldane is one of the most respected professional hunters in Africa. For more than 10 years he has operated bird shoots from his Zulu Wings Lodge in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This year he has come up with a new destination as well as an interesting two-country program. The new area is the Panda Metenga area in the Chobe District of Botswana. Haldane hunted the area the past two seasons and

was so impressed with the guinea fowl, francolin and dove populations that he is building a permanent camp there. The

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facility is currently under construction and will operate from early July through October. The new camp consists of six East African style tents with thatched roofs and ensuite bathrooms. The camp is on the edge of a farming area carved out of the native bushveld where corn, sorghum and sunflowers are grown. The combination of agriculture and native habitats supports some of the largest guinea fowl and dove populations in all of Africa. Typically, guinea fowl are driven over a line of guns by native beaters, while doves are shot as they flock to water. There also is good francolin shooting over pointers and, after Oct. 1, sandgrouse. Victoria Falls and Chobe National Park are nearby, and tiger fishing on the Chobe and Zambezi River make this destination great for non-shooters as well. The cost is \$500 per day for shooters and \$350 per day for non-shooters, including hunting services, meals and lodging.

While hunters can enjoy the Panda Metenga camp as a single destination, they can also experience it as part of a multi-camp program. Haldane has incorporated this new destination into a program that combines the best of both South Africa and Botswana. He is offering a 12-day trip that starts in Johannesburg, where clients are picked up and flown by DC-3 to Zulu Wings Lodge near Dundee, South Africa. Here the shooting possibilities include goose, duck and pigeon shooting over decoys, francolin over pointers, driven guinea fowl, pass shooting for doves and walk-up snipe shooting. Non-shooters enjoy sightseeing trips to the Drakensberg Mountains and the Zulu Battlefields, as well as shopping for local arts and crafts. On day four, the group re-boards the DC-3 and flies to Maun, Botswana, then on to a camp deep in the Okavango Delta for two and a half days of driven shooting for guinea fowl and francolin and some dove shooting. Non-shooters can enjoy some of the finest game viewing on the planet with a good chance of seeing the Big 5. On day seven, it's off to Ichinga Lodge on Impililo Island for two days of tiger fishing and game viewing. Day nine, the group moves from Ichinga to the new bird shooting camp in Panda Metenga (in the Chobe District) for world-class guinea fowl, francolin and doves. Opening day

of the sandgrouse season is Oct. 1, and this trip is timed to include shooting for both double-banded and Burchell's (spot-



ted) sandgrouse. Day 12, the group travels by DC-3 back to Johannesburg. The 12-day, all-inclusive itinerary from Johannesburg is priced at \$11,500 per couple (\$7,000 per shooter and \$4,500 per non-shooter). Trips this year are scheduled from Sept. 21 through Oct. 3, 2003. In addition to the September 2003 departure, there will be two July and one September departure in 2004. Trips can be booked through **Trek International Safaris (PO Box 1305, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32004; tel. 800-654-9915 or 904-273-7800; web site: www.treksafaris.com)** or directly with **Bird Hunters Africa (Tel. 011-27-3421-23624, from the US; e-mail: gamehunt@trustnet.co.za)**

In addition to Haldane's expanded program, I also discovered a new operation called **Stormberg Safaris (Tel. 011-27-45-969-0000; e-mail: stormsaf@moltenosa.co.za)**, operated by Professional Hunter **Robbie Stretton**. Stormberg Safaris offers shooting for greywing francolin on more than 100,000 acres of family-owned property. Greywings are considered the highest quality game bird in Southern Africa and are held in high esteem by local bird hunters, much like red grouse are in Scotland and red-legged partridges are in Spain. In my mind, greywing shooting ranks among the finest bird hunting experiences in Africa. Found in the Cape Province and other mountainous regions of South Africa at elevations ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 feet, they are hunted over pointing dogs in terrain that is reminiscent of Idaho chukar country. You must be in reasonably good shape to hunt these birds in the often rugged terrain. Having said that, they hold well for a pointer, are found

in coveys of six to 20 birds and are as swift on the wing as any southern bobwhite or North Dakota gray partridge. The coveys are monitored annually, and the landowner has authorization to harvest up to 30 percent of the population. This equates to bags of 12 to 15 birds per day in an average year, more in good years, fewer in poor years. In addition to francolin, there also is some fair to good duck and goose shooting at sunset as the birds return to roost ponds, as well as both walk up and driven guinea fowl. The waterfowl and guinea shooting should be looked upon as additions to the main quarry, which is greywings.

Hunters fly to East London, where the Stormberg Safari staff will meet and transport them the two-and-a-half hours to Branstone Lodge, a luxurious colonial-style lodge with ensuite bathrooms, dining area and lounge. The season for greywing francolin is May 1 to July 31, and the price for groups (four minimum/eight maximum) is \$400 per gun per day for hunting services, food and lodging. The minimum safari length is five days, and plains game and fly fishing can be added for an additional fee.

- Gary Kramer

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