

take your limit of wild birds. Most will offer plenty of shooting most of the time. After that, it's up to you. Have a great hunt in a great state! - *Michael Pearce.*

DATELINE: SOUTH AFRICA

(Editor Note: Here at The Hunting Report, we've been receiving some good reports lately from subscribers on the birdshooting they've experienced in South Africa. Well, correspondent Gary Kramer recently took a trip to South Africa himself to sample the birdshooting, and the news he brought back is all good. Here's his first-hand report.)

I recently enjoyed a birdshooting trip to South Africa with Mark Haldane of Bird Hunters Africa. My plans for the trip were finalized during the height of the violence that plagued the country before the elections this past April. Now, however, a "new" South Africa seems to be emerging. I saw no evidence of violence during my recent trip. Tourism is up, and, best of all, the birdshooting is excellent. We hunted two different areas of South Africa. The first area is a series of seasonal wetlands called the Mkuze Pans, a 3 1/2 hour drive from Durban in the heart of the former Zululand. Here, we hunted spurwing and Egyptian geese, red-billed teal, white-faced whistling ducks and yellow-billed ducks. Haldane stations his hunters along the periphery of the marsh, and each party has a set of decoys and a birdboy who does the calling. Accommodations are at a hunting camp on a nearby game ranch. The second area we hunted is a 28,000-acre ranch several hours from Zululand in the Natal Midlands. Here, the base of operations is Craigie Burn Lodge. We shot ducks and geese over decoys on a series of small reservoirs that dot the countryside. The main species here is yellow-billed ducks, which act and decoy much like mallards. A mallard call works wonders here. Haldane has several excellent labrador retrievers that we saw in action for the first time at Craigie

Burn. He didn't use them in Zululand due to the presence of a healthy population of crocodiles (birdboys retrieved the birds in Zululand - they didn't seem to bother the crocs and the crocs didn't bother them). We also spent one evening hunting at a reservoir in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, about an hour west of the ranch. Here, yellow-billed ducks and a few spurwing geese decoyed with reckless abandon. In addition to waterfowl, we spent a couple of afternoons in dove fields where we hunted over harvested corn for red-eyed doves, plus a few African mourning doves and rock pigeons. One morning, we walked the rolling hills with a pair of English pointers hunting greywing francolin. These birds provide



excellent sport and hold well for pointing dogs. The greywing hunt reminded me of hunting sharptails and Huns in Saskatchewan or eastern Montana. Haldane also organized some guineafowl drives, but these were only marginally productive. The overall hunt was one of the most enjoyable I have ever experienced. Mark Haldane is an outstanding guide and outfitter and his staff and equipment are top notch. The waterfowl season here runs from May 31 to August 31 and there are no bag limits. Several species of waterfowl, as a general rule, are closed to hunting. These include comb ducks, Hottentot teal, pygmy geese, Cape shovelers, white-backed ducks, maccoa ducks and Cape shel-ducks. However, Haldane has made

arrangements with the wildlife department to obtain some special permits for collectors. The permits allow the taking of two birds of each of the above species. The areas Mark Haldane hunts in South Africa vary in climate and landscape. Some are reminiscent of the interior valleys of the western US, while others, like Zululand, are semi-tropical in nature. None of the areas he hunts could be considered remote. In fact, the majority of the hunts take place in populated, agricultural areas. As for the volume of birds available, you should not go to South Africa expecting to find the kind of hot-barrelled shooting that's available in Argentina and Colombia. On an average outing, you can expect to harvest about 10 to 15 ducks, 10 to 20 doves and a dozen or more francolin and guineafowl. The strong suit of this hunt is the variety of birds available, the dog work, the excellent service and the ability to combine birdshooting with game viewing and touring. There were six non-hunters in our party and Mark's wife, Paula, was present the entire time to entertain them. Both the shooters and the non-shooters visited several game parks and saw rhino, elephant, Cape buffalo, hyena and a variety of other wildlife. The primary booking agent in the US for Bird Hunters Africa is Trek Safaris (PO Box 19065, Jacksonville, FL 32245. Tel. 800-654-9915). They offer a 16-day trip that incorporates seven days of shooting, two days of game viewing in Zululand and two days of sightseeing in Cape Town. The trip costs \$4,395, which includes all hunting services, transportation, meals, lodging and round-trip airfare from Miami to Cape Town. Shotshells and liquor are extra. Dunn's Hunter's Services (PO Box 449, Grand Junction, TN 38039. Tel. 800-223-8667) also books custom itineraries with Bird Hunters Africa. Enjoy! - *Gary Kramer.*