

Subject: You said to take him out...
Date: 9/16/2012 7:12:09 A.M. Pacific Daylight Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com
Sent from the Internet ([Details](#))

...So that's what we did!

I don't know when the last time Spook was out grouse hunting - or even if he ever



has, but he sure did a great job! We got into a really good area for a change and he flushed 5 over the course of about 2 miles - we probably went 5 miles down this old, defunct logging road up in the mountains south of Cle Elum (little town on I-90, east of Seattle in central Washington) but the birds were concentrated in the last few miles.

One of his flushes was a triple! But 2 birds went further into the bush and one went into a clearing - that's the one we got.

We ended the day with 1 blue grouse and 2 ruffs!

More of the story later - we have to get out training. We got home so tired last night it was all I could do to brush the dogs out and go to bed so I downloaded

Carole's pictures this morning. I really wanted to tell you of our success! Spook is a wonderful dog.

Mahalo,
Jeff

Subject: Charm got one too...
Date: 9/18/2012 7:7:57:09 A.M. Pacific Daylight Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com
Sent from the Internet (Details)

Hi,

These here are a few from last Friday - Charm got one too! A big ol' blue grouse. She flushed it on the left and it headed into the thick stuff to the right so I put it down



Jeff & Charm September 2012

pretty quickly. The way it folded and hit the road you would've sworn it was dead, but no, it got up and shook itself off and RAN INTO THE WOODS! I released Charm for the retrieve and she went to where it landed, sniffed a bit, and then ran right after it into the thick stuff with her nose glued to the ground. We heard a little crashing around in there, but then it got further and further away until we didn't hear anything. I thought to myself, 'great, now I have to go try to help her' (I wasn't looking forward to crashing around in there myself.)

Then we heard a little bit of noise and sure enough she popped out of the woods with it!

There are some more pictures there to give you an idea of what we're hunting in. State law says you're not allowed to hunt from, on, or across roads - but I don't consider these real roads as there's no way to drive on them - they're gated, trenched, and in a lot of cases huge trees have fallen across them.

Enjoy!

Jeff



Photographer Carole and Spook

Subject: Spook is doing very well
Date: 9/18/2012 1:44:39 P.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com

Aloha and Good Day Vicky,

I just realized it'd been a while since I've given you any report on how Spook is doing and how things are going. He's doing just fine - no issues, and he's loving the hunting too!

This past Sunday Spook did really well, and proves again why I need to pay attention better. We had been hunting since sun up and it was now about 2:30pm. Charm had gotten our first bird of the day about an hour before - we alternate hunting Charm then Spook, and change areas.

We are still hunting as part of (Royal City) school's athletic programs. They have planted 30 roosters (in 6's) in 5 different areas across the leased land, usually in pretty much the same spots. It makes Saturday a fairly 'sure thing' if you're early - I think most of us have figured out where they're putting them.

Anyway, we had been hunting with Spook for about half an hour when I decided to get off the beaten path - get away from the canals and good cover - and get to somewhere we hadn't been. We walked across a short alfalfa field to a farmer's maintenance road - for his irrigation equipment - that was lined with some brush and a single strand of electric wire. I guess he has cows, but they weren't there.

The wire was high enough that Spook could go right under it - plenty of clearance, but we had to stop and I of course tested it to see if it was on (grabbed it with my hand). Thankfully it was off. So, as I'm asking Carole if she'd like to go over or under it - I'd hold it up or push it down so she could cross - we hear a cackling rooster take off from our left! It was crossing left to right, and since I was helping Carole my gun was open, but I managed to get it closed, aim, and put it on the ground in one motion! When I looked for Spook he was in the brush to our left about 20 yards - could just barely make him out in the brush, but he was definitely steady, unlike his mother, Natchez. 'SPOOK' I called and he was off! It was a fairly easy 50 yard retrieve in some ankle deep alfalfa. Carole, of



course, was snapping pictures and I'll get those to you too. He was so proud of himself - tail wagging all the way back!

After that, and getting Carole across the unelectrified electric wire, we took to the little road and Carole was asking me to help her get her bearings. She was wondering approximately how far we were from the vehicle and if it was by one pile of hay or another, when I started looking at what she was pointing at. A second later I said to her, 'hold on - I have to watch Spook'.



He had just taken off into the alfalfa headed at about 2 o'clock and was right at gun range. I called him back in, and he came back on a different track. At about 20 yards out he took a sudden jag to my left into some sage brush and put up another rooster! As it was cackling off to the left I brought my gun to bare and fired. My first shot was a little off but it dropped a leg - my second shot though was right on and it dropped

completely. Due to the bird's trajectory, direction and velocity it made for a good 70 yard retrieve for the again STEADY Spook!

We're headed out hunting again this weekend. We'll keep going until it's either too snowy or we can't get over the Pass - until season's end 1/15.

Say hi to Paul!

Jeff



Subject: Pictures
Date: 9/18/2012 7:08:32 A.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com

Here's a few more - nothing like taking a great photographer on the hunt with you, eh?

Spook's first bird really caught me flat footed. Not knowing what he really looked like when he was on a bird and with the thick cover I should've known better - BUT in my defense, we weren't really seeing any birds either. We haven't seen a lot of birds like this for years.



He was coming down across - left to right, downhill - going through some clear cut into the thicker small evergreens on the side of a defunct logging road when the blue exploded, as grouse do, from them. It flew straight up, curled a little clockwise in the air and like a bullet headed downhill across the road and into the heavy timber. All I had was trees! Tree, tree, tree, small opening, tree, tree, small opening, tree, tree, BOOM! - that was going to be my last chance so I took it. It didn't appear to me that I had hit it either.



Spook, being the steady little bugger he is, was right where he put the bird up so I called him in and cast him off. I completely forgot to say 'leave that' so he proceeded to WAY over cast and head down into the woods where the bird had flown off to -and then came back with it in his mouth! I don't know what was more of a surprise - that I'd hit it or that he knew it was there!

Our next 3 birds came as a triple! 3 ruffed grouse just down the same road a piece - he put them all up in really heavy cover and only one had the misfortune to fly out of the cover rather than further in - so I felt obliged to make it supper. I didn't get a really good shot at it so when I released him for the retrieve he had some real hunting to do to find it, but he did. It had run another 10 yards or so into the thick stuff, but he couldn't get away from Spook.

We ended that 3 hours with 3 birds - 2 ruffs and 1 blue.

Jeff

Subject: To finish Spook's Hunting Tale
Date: 09/21/2012 6:36:10 A.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com

Hi,

Ok, so I told you about his first bird - quite a surprise. His second, third, and fourth birds came all at the same time. About a 1/2 mile down the road from the first one he was working the area very well - quartering, more or less, through the brush and across the road when his nose hit the scent. This time I saw it happen - nose glued to the ground I figured he was on something. Grouse are tricky though. One can wander around laying scent and making it hard to discern direction and makes it appear like one is a covey.

He was in the middle of the road, nose glued to the ground, searching. He ran up hill to the scrub brush on the left, searched around more - I couldn't see him but I fully expected to see the brush explode with a bird, or 2, with the way he was working, when he came rushing back down the hill to the road - but he didn't stop. He kept going to the right, downhill.

He only got as far as the short, scrubby evergreens on the right side of the road when he hit them. The brush exploded with 3 grouse! 2 shot out at about 2 o'clock (noon being straight ahead, facing down the road) and went further into the thick brambles and towering trees - no shot available. The third went out at 4 o'clock into the clear. Spook was a rock. I was so surprised by the covey that I missed on my first shot, but the second shot dropped the third bird about 20 yards out. Not usually what would be considered a difficult retrieve, but Spook is in the thick scrub trees and the bird fell in the dead fall from a 10+ year old clear cut operation. It is however downhill and into the wind, so at least that's in his favor. I released him for the retrieve and he busted out headed straight for it. He buttoned that - it hadn't moved from where it went down, but had fallen in to the dead fall so he had to work it out of there. He thought better of coming back directly due to the terrain and circled back around to the right over some easier ground - bird in mouth: a beautiful gray/brown ruff.

His fifth bird came really quickly after that. It was maybe a hundred yards up from that last bit of excitement when the road ended. It ended at a small stream that had more or less washed out what was left of the road. It was much wetter than what we'd been in up to this point. We worked to the end of the road - but it did turn into a light trail on the other side of the stream. We'd been out for about 2 hours to this point and were looking at about an hour and a half back - usually walk back faster than we walk out. Carole and I briefly discussed it then decided to head back. Spook had other ideas.

While we were talking he was still working. I thought he was just messing around but Carole told me I'd better keep an eye on what he was doing. He was working some tall, green grass surrounding a small alder thicket. Seconds after I started watching the bird broke out of the cover, briefly and very low he flew down the trail and broke to the left

into some more of the same type of cover. I got off 1 shot before it cut off and it was a clean miss.

It didn't go far - maybe 10 yards, and it was in some very thick, tall green grass. It wouldn't be running easily through this so we quickly moved up there and Spook was on it almost immediately and it flushed again. In classic grouse manner, it flushed into a tree about 5 yards up and 10 yards ahead. It was an easy shot but a challenging retrieve for Spook - due to the cover again he couldn't see it, there was no wind here, and it had bent around a tree so it wasn't straight out from where he was. After I released him he made a bee-line straight out where it should've been, searched for a second then a small puff of wind came up - and he was on it.

I kind of felt bad about this particular bird. It was a very young male - it still had the feather sheaths at the base of its tail feathers. It was from the last hatch of the summer and not very old and about 3/4 the size of the last one we bagged. This isn't something you can see though until it's in your hand.



We could see from this vantage point that the trail even died out to just brush so we decided to head back - which was uneventful.

We ended that hunt after about 4 hours with 5 flushes and 3 birds. Spook was a rock and did an absolutely wonderful job.

The next time we stopped we gave Spook a rest and hunted with Charm. It was nearly an hour before we found a suitable road - blocked off and unused. However, it was not nearly as long. The next 4 roads were actually relatively short and far apart so though Spook continued to get out it wasn't a 4 hour block like the first road - and nowhere near as exciting.

Jeff

Subject: Pheasant Season Opener
Date: 10/22/2012 9:58:10 A.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: jgunnysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com

Aloha and Good Day Vicky,

I hope my email finds you and yours doing well. This past weekend was the pheasant opener in Washington State. Carole and I headed over to the Potholes area of central Washington, south of Moses Lake. We again joined the Royal Youth Booster Hunt Club. Pretty much the way you have to go in Washington if you want to go pheasant hunting - if you don't know the right people or have the time to go around calling or meeting land holders. The hunt club raises birds and plants them on donated land in

the Royal City area - 26,000 acres - gives you a map of approximately where they put them and you're off. Of course on opening weekend the fields are full, but I was surprised to hear that only 80 guys signed up this year. Seemed like quite a few more to me.

So, on to the story - Saturday was pretty much a bust. One quail, believe it or not. We just couldn't find an area that wasn't taken. The quail we found, with Charm, flushed through a tree row then disappeared. The other side of the tree row was a harvested field of potatoes so just dirt was left - for about a section. The nearest cover was quite a long way off.

Sunday was a different story. We were nearly alone out in the field - I don't know if it was because of football games, church, or just 'a day of rest', but we were pretty close to alone. At our first stop we took Charm out. It was the area we flushed the quail at on Saturday. I figured we could hunt the area a little differently, start at the opposite end, and maybe kick those quail up again. We got to a little swamp with cattails, reeds, and knocked down field grass, but little standing water. Charm jumped right in there and was obviously finding some scent - it was just hard for her to pinpoint. She'd sniff in the air, then in the grass, and back and forth. After a minute she committed to under the grass and jumped in, or UNDER rather.

She burrowed under the layer of grass - my only sign of where she was at any time was the shaking grass on top. A zigzag pattern for the most part. I followed and Carole stayed put. It was really tough walking on top of that. All of a sudden Charm came right at me and the rooster popped up between us - if Carole was at my 8 o'clock, Charm came in at 2, and the bird flew out at noon. Not a very clear shot as the cattails were over 6 feet tall, but the bird made it just over them and I managed to get it down. Charm of course couldn't make that retrieve - she was under the grass! She couldn't see me 6 feet in front of her much less the rooster that was 25 feet away now.

I brought Charm out of the reeds with me out to the relative clear. From Carole's vantage point she saw where it had hit the ground but not clearly. I lined Charm up and gave her a hunt dead. From Carole's description we thought she'd way over shot the mark, but no, she winded it and came back. She hopped back in the thick grass and reeds so we couldn't see her. Rather than possibly loose the bird I decided to check out what was going on under the grass. She had the bird essentially cornered but out of reach. She just couldn't get in at it. It was wedged in something like an old tire track and Charm just couldn't push through the grass and get a good grip - she'd taken a bunch of feather out of it, but couldn't get a grip. I ripped the grass and reeds out of the way and grabbed the bird. Maybe not the best retrieve, but we got it. A feather in her cap - it was a wild bird! Not one of the plants by the hunt club.

The next area we took Spook. He really ripped through the cover - and the cover was thick. It was mostly dead and dried sage brush and the like. Not really tall thankfully, but it was thick. We worked down one side of an irrigation canal for about 90 minutes when he really hit on some scent. He had been following something on and off - like a bird was flying from one side of the canal to the other. He finally hit some fresh scent - and up it went! It hit the air unexpectedly - I knew he was in there, but I couldn't see him - he snorts quite a bit when he's on one. HEN! I yelled so Carole would know why I wasn't shooting. I felt bad - all that hard work and Spook puts up a hen, that by

the way flew to the other side of the canal. I walked in to him and told him he was a good boy - he found it and was steady after all. About a half an hour later he put up another hen while we were working our way back to the vehicle. On that one I took a shot straight up for him - to acknowledge that he did his job.

Our third area we took out Charm. Spook was tired and had a good run so we let him rest up. We went to an area where the only access was perpendicular to a canal, then worked some cover paralleling it with the wind, then turned and worked in to the wind right along the canal and canal dirt road. (Imagine working the outline of an 'L' - in on one side, then along the top side of the bottom, around the corner, back across the very bottom, then back up the outside.) While walking down to the canal we saw a hunter all in blaze on the other side of the canal, but that didn't dissuade us. He appeared to be headed the other way and disappeared somewhere on the opposite side of the canal.

After about 90 minutes Charm really hit some strong scent and was off with her nose glued to the ground. We kept up pretty well, but she shot from our right to our left crossing our path which really helped - then she popped the rooster into the air! Screaming like a rust door hinge, BOOM! I missed. BOOM! I hit it. I released Charm for the retrieve, which from our vantage point looked pretty straight forward, but it hit in the canal! Not all the way out in the middle, but just on the edge, caught in some debris. After a few unsuccessful attempts I called her back in and gave her a back and she jumped in after it, wrestled with it a bit, lots of splashing around, then back out and in to us. This one was a bird planted by the hunt club as it's leg was banded.

Spook got to come along at our last area. It was an area we had been at the day before, but had to work with the wind due to other hunters, and we couldn't work as thoroughly again because of the other hunters. As with the other areas we were working along an irrigation canal - about 15 feet across and 20+ feet deep with grass and weed covering the sloping sides; pretty typical of the mid-sized canals of the area. Of course Spook just jumped into the cover and started going with a simple click of the tongue. We went out for about 45 minutes without him hitting on any meaningful scent so we decided to head back. 2 birds would have to be good for the day, and although Spook didn't get a retrieve he did have 2 solid flushes.

Rather than wade through the very thick cover where we had come in we decided to head up hill a bit and let him cover a pie shaped piece - we were starting at the crust end headed toward the point. Honestly, we were pretty tired. It was now 2:30 and we'd been out there since 7:30 and were looking at a 2 hour drive home - needless to say we weren't really being as attentive to Spook's activity as we should have been, we knew where he was, but figured this was such a small piece, what are the chances? Midsentence, a big rooster shot out of that cover! A good eight foot flush for the bird, and it cut away and tried to get lower, but it didn't work. I raised my shotgun and BOOM! it was down. No sign of movement from the brush until I said 'SPOOK' and he was off for the retrieve. It was such a quick snapshot I figured I probably wounded it at best, but I know I hit it. He brought in the biggest bird of the day. This thing was huge compared to the other two.

Looking at the pictures - Spook's is the one in the center and these birds are being held up by the feet which are even toenail to toenail.

I know a picture says a thousand words, but I hope you enjoyed the story that goes with them a bit too.

Jeff



Subject: Spook is doing very well
Date: 11/16/2012 1:44:39 P.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: jegumysack@comcast.net
To: gigvicky@aol.com
Aloha and Good Day Vicky,

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This past Sunday Spook did really well, and proves again why I need to pay attention better. We had been hunting since sun up and it was now about 2:30pm. Charm had

gotten our first bird of the day about an hour before - we alternate hunting Charm then Spook, and change areas. Anyway, we had been hunting with Spook for about half an hour when I decided to get off the beaten path - get away from the canals and good cover - and get to somewhere we hadn't been. We walked across a short alfalfa field to a farmer's maintenance road - for his irrigation equipment - that was lined with some brush and a single strand of electric wire. I guess he has cows, but they weren't there.

The wire was high enough that Spook could go right under it - plenty of clearance, but we had to stop and I of course tested it to see if it was on (grabbed it with my hand). Thankfully it was off. So, as I'm asking Carole if she'd like to go over or under it - I'd hold it up or push it down so she could cross - we hear a cackling rooster take off from our left! It was crossing left to right, and since I was helping Carole my gun was open, but I managed to get it closed, aim, and put it on the ground in one motion! When I looked for Spook he was in the brush to our left about 20 yards. We could just barely make him out in the brush, but he was definitely steady (unlike his mother). 'SPOOK!' I called and he was off! It was a fairly easy 50 yard retrieve in some ankle deep alfalfa. Carole of course was snapping pictures and I'll get those to you too. He was so proud of himself - tail wagging all the way back!

After that, and getting Carole across the un-electrified electric wire, we took to the little road and Carole asked me to help her get her bearings, wondering how far we were from the vehicle and if it was by one pile of hay or another. I started looking at the area she was pointing at. A second later I said to her, 'hold on, I have to watch Spook' who had just taken off into the alfalfa headed at about 2 o'clock and was right at gun range. I called him back in and he came back on a different track. At about 20 yards out he took a sudden jag to my left into some sage brush and put up another rooster! As it was cackling off to the left I brought my gun to bear and fired. My first shot was a little off but it dropped a leg. My second shot was right on and it dropped completely. Due to the bird's trajectory, direction and velocity it made for a good 70 yard retrieve for the again STEADY Spook!

We're headed out hunting again this weekend. We'll keep going until it's either too snowy or we can't get over the Pass - until season's end 1/15.

Take care of yourself and say Hi to Paul for us too,

Jeff

