

Shooting the Gamut

On Virginia's Game Preserves

by Darin Strickland



Hunters take a shot at a pheasant at Southbound Preserve while owner and guide Rene Thibault watch from behind. (Photo courtesy of Southbound Preserve)

From basic family-run preserves to world-class plantations and resorts, our region holds a multitude of wing-shooting options. There are plenty of places to go and plenty of time to go there. Simple half-day leg-stretchers for most of us are less than a tank of gas away. Some have lodging, making it that much easier to venture out a little farther and stay awhile. A select few are definitely worth looking into before heading to the airport for that long excursion. With all these options and our liberal preserve season, you could

literally be chasing birds for seven months a year, seven days a week.

What makes them different?

Every hunter has a different vision of what makes a hunt special. While healthy, fast-flying birds in the field has to be the prerequisite, some hunters prefer to be well attended by professional guides with well-trained dogs. Others like the option to hunt by themselves with their own dogs. For many, it's about the camaraderie during the hunt and around the fire after-

wards. For outfits offering only day hunts, a quick recharge from a brown-bag lunch in the field may be all that is needed; for those who wish to stay awhile, amenities and the food may be part of the considerations.

There's no standard measure to compare all these options, as every operation hunts and hosts its guests differently. Amenities and packages vary. Be sure to ask the questions that are important to you and your hunting party. Here are a few basic questions you should consider before heading out:



Primland's recently opened lodge offers luxurious accommodations in a resort atmosphere. See "Crossed Lines" on page 7 for more details (Photo courtesy of Primland)

How are the birds flying? Most operations are releasing birds throughout the season depending on the vigor of each species at the time of your hunt. Consider choosing your quarry based on the facility's recommendations rather than your favorite species.

How is the cover? Operating a preserve is a year-round endeavor. Cover and food-plot success vary from year to year. Traffic and winter weather take a toll on the grounds. Hunting on trampled and barren fields isn't fun.

How do your dogs hunt? Everyone believes he has good dogs and says so. But some go on "bang!" while others are steady to wing and shot. Do they retrieve? Honor? Are they all-around biddable? Will the guide be hacking and hollering? Convey what's important to you so you can be matched with the right dogs and guide.

How many groups will be in the fields while you are hunting? If a gun-toting orange hat pops up over the neighboring ridge or the sound of moderately close gunfire unnerves you, consider hunting on an

off day or going to a smaller preserve or a more exclusive operation that hunts one party at a time or has enough acreage to spread hunters out over a considerable distance.

What facilities or amenities are available? You should know what to expect on an overnight stay. For the day hunter, if the weather turns or nature calls, what's the plan? Is there a clubhouse to warm up in, to recharge and to change? Is there a bird-cleaning service or a station for do-it-yourself?

Glossary of Terms:

Type of Operation

Preserve — A preserve's fee is based either on the number of birds released for the hunt or number of birds harvested. Some have guides with dogs. Some may provide overnight accommodations.

Plantation — A plantation usually has historic relevance, and many have working agricultural holdings. Guests who are there for hunting purposes usually stay overnight. They usually provide guides and dogs.

Resort — A resort offers many recreational activities, including hunting. Resorts are able to accommodate large and diverse groups in various scenarios. They usually provide guides and dogs.

Style of Hunt

Unguided Preserve — Pre-released game birds are set out for hunters with their own dogs to hunt during a set period of time.

Guided Preserve — Hunting with a facility-approved guide with dogs is offered for predetermined game bird species. Fees apply for guide services and/or birds.

Plantation — Hunts usually consist of quail – released, naturalized and wild in varying numbers. Harvests are according to the hunter's proficiency or the operation's harvest quota. ATV, vehicular or mule-drawn transportation is usually involved. Guides, dogs and possibly additional attendants are provided.

Accommodations and Meals

Clubhouse — A daytime-only facility for guest use before and after the hunt.

Farmhouse or Cabin — A simple or rustic to fully renovated house used for sleeping accommodations. Some operations house groups independently or with other guests or attending staff.

Lodge — A larger structure for accommodating hunting parties with different degrees of amenities.

Resort — Multiple housing options, all with modern conveniences ranging from hotel rooms to independent cabins.

Dining:

Kitchen — Facility available for the convenience of overnight guests who also supply their own food.

Homestyle — Meals served in a family-style setting, possibly eating alongside the host, guides other guests and attending staff.

Gourmet Chef — Meals prepared by professional chef serving guests exclusively.

Restaurant — Dining facility with wait staff and other guests.

Shooting Preserves by Region:

Blue Ridge Highlands

Holland Hunting Preserve, Glade Hill, VA Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasants on 100 acres of cultured fields and mixed woods. Cabin with kitchen or catering available. Contact: John Holland (540) 576-3040

Jonakin Creek Hunt Preserve, Penhook, VA www.jonakincreekhuntingpreserve.com Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 500 acres of agricultural fields and hedgerows. Rustic cabin with kitchen or homestyle meals available.

Contact: Eddie Shelton (540) 576-1223

Primland Resort, Meadows of Dan, VA www.primland.com

Resort—preserve-style guided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations.

Quail, chukar, pheasant, huns on 3,000 acres of cultivated fields and planted cover. Resort accommodations, restaurant dining. Contact: Carl McDaniel (276) 222-3836 or (866) 960-7746 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/Mar 2006, John Shtogren*)

Central Virginia

Forest Green Shooting Preserve, Partlow, VA www.forestgreenshootingpreserve.com Preserve—guided or unguided half-day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 610 acres of natural fields and mixed woods. Rustic clubhouse. Contact: David Sutter (540) 582-2566

Oak Ridge Estate, Arrington, VA www.oakridgeestate.com Preserve—guided or unguided half-day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 3,000 acres of natural fields. Clubhouse. Contact: J.C. Goodwin (434) 263-86.76 or (434) 263-6695

Orapax Plantation, Goochland, VA www.orapax.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day hunts. Quail, pheasants on 700 acres of nat-

ural fields and hedgerows. Clubhouse with kitchen, homestyle meals available. Contact: Crystal Dykers (804) 556.2261 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/Mar 2006, John Shtogren*)

Winter Haven Preserve, Fluvanna County, VA www.winterhavenpreserve.com Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 170 acres of natural fields and hedgerows. No accommodations or dining. Contact: Lee Winters (703) 752-7926

Eastern Shore/ Hampton Roads

Assawoman Outfitters, Mappsville, VA Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 400 acres of natural fields and hedgerows. Lodge with kitchen or gourmet chef. Contact: Wayne Greer (757) 824-5438

Hunt's Game Preserve, Sussex County, VA www.huntsgamepreserve.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasants on 250 acres of



Specter, an AKC field champion on point below Blandfield's colonial-era mansion. (upper left) as Blandfield's upland operations manager Dave Pomfret (L) guides. (Photo by Guy Crittenden)

natural fields and hedgerows. Basic housing with kitchen. Contact: Clint Holloway (434) 246-5986

Sportsman's Hunting Preserve, Carrsville, VA www.shootingsportsmanshuntingpreserve.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 400 acres, agricultural. Farmhouse with kitchen. Contact: Carl Outland (757) 620-4180

Northern Neck

Blandfield Plantation, Tappahannock, VA www.blandfieldplantation.com

Plantation—limited guided, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail hunts on 3,500 acres. Thinned pine stands, natural fields and hedgerows. Lodge, gourmet chef. Contact: Dave Pomfret (540) 229-8045 or (804) 443-1683 (*Reviewed in VAS Nov/Dec 2008, King Montgomery*)

Hunt Haven, Hustle, VA

www.spinone.com

Preserve—unguided half-day hunts. Quail on 400 acres, cultivated fields. No accommodations or dining. Contact: Jim Channon (804) 333-0309 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/March 2009, Douglas Dear*)

Eastern Shore, Maryland

Hopkin's Hunting, Kennedyville, MD www.hopkinshunting-clays.com

Preserve—guided or unguided, half-day hunts, overnight accommodations. Chukar, pheasant on 600 acres of mixed woods, cultivated and natural fields. Clubhouse, cabin with kitchen. Contact: Brad Hopkins (410) 348-5287

Pintail Point at The River Plantation, Queenstown, MD www.theriverplantation.com

Resort—preserve-guided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 400 acres, natural and cultivated fields and hedgerows. Resort accommodations, gourmet chef or restaurant. Contact: Pintail Point (800) 697-1777

Schrader's, Henderson, MD

www.schradershunting.com

Preserve—guided or unguided, plantation style option half-day, day, overnight. Quail, chukar, huns, pheasant on 2,500 acres cultivated and natural fields. Clubhouse with kitchen, lodge, homestyle meal options. Contact: Ken Schrader: (410) 758-1829

Northern Virginia

Shady Grove Preserve, Remington, VA www.shady-grove.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight. Chukar, pheasant on 900 acres, natural fields, food plots. Clubhouse/lodge with kitchen or catering. Contact: Neil Selby (540) 439-2683 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/March 2009, Douglas Dear*)

Remington Whistlingwings, Remington, VA www.remingtonwhistlingwings.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 240 acres of natural fields and woods. Lodge with kitchen, catering available. Contact: Russ Cavendar (703) 772-1517

Shockley Shooting Preserve, Culpeper, VA

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 100 acres, natural fields with food plots. No accommodations or dining. Contact: Curtis Shockley (703) 368-6659

Summerleas Farm, Rapidan, VA www.summerleasfarm.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 500 acres, natural fields with food plots. Lodge with kitchen. Contact: Paul Gardner (540) 672-0222 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/March 2009, Douglas Dear*)

Shenandoah Valley/ Blue Ridge

Green Valley Hunter's Paradise, Millboro, VA www.greenvalleyhuntersparadise.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasants, huns on 2,500 acres of natural fields and thinned timber.

Cabins with kitchen. Contact: Lance Lyons (540) 996-4134 (*Reviewed in VAS Feb/Mar 2006, John Shtogren*)

Mountain View Wingshooting, Covington, VA www.mtnviewwingshooting.com

Preserve—guided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant, huns on 175 acres of natural fields and hardwoods. Cabin with primitive kitchen, or homestyle catering. Contact: Phillip Howard (540) 691-5155

Shenandoah Mountain Outfitters, West Augusta, VA www.shenandoahmountain-outfitters.com

Preserve—guided half-day, day hunts. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 160 acres of natural fields and thinned woods. No accommodations or dining. Contact: Stephen Huff (540) 939-4602

Shenandoah Valley Sportsmen Club, Inwood, WV www.wvbirdhunt.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 500 acres of natural and cultivated fields and hedgerows. Clubhouse/Lodge, homestyle dining. Contact: Ron Butler (304) 229-7715

Southern Virginia

Falkland Farms, Scottsburg, VA www.falklandfarms.com

Plantation-style—guided half-day, day, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar on 7,650 acres of thinned pines. Lodge with homestyle dining. Contact: Steve Deisinger (434) 575-1400

FFF Hunting Preserve, Keysville, VA www.fffhuntingpreserve.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 1,000 acres of cultivated and natural fields. Clubhouse/lodge with kitchen. Contact: Bill Hall (800) 643-2606

Indian Town Shooting Preserve, Courtland, VA

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 300 acres of natural fields. Rustic clubhouse Contact:

Thomas Francis (757) 653-2974

Southbound, South Hill, VA www.southboundpreserve.com

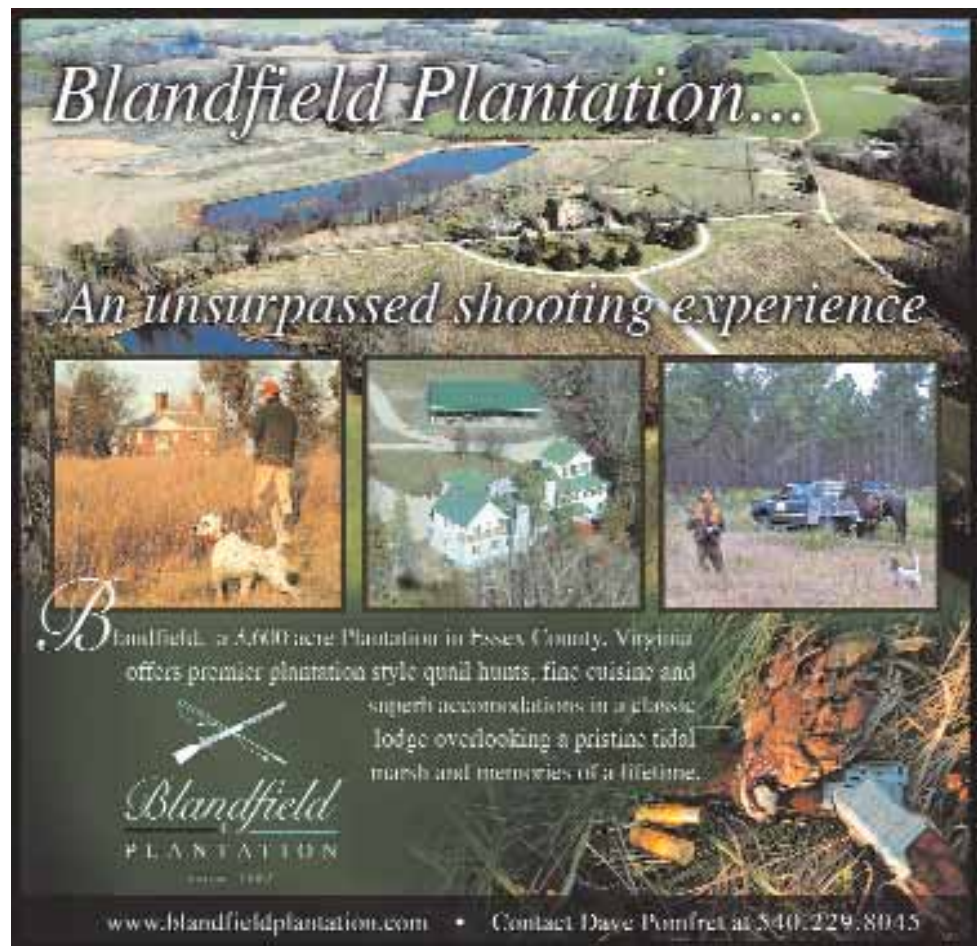
Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 350 acres of cultivated fields. Lodge with kitchen or gourmet chef. Contact: Rene Thibault (434) 447-8363

White Oak Mountain Hunting Lodge, Chatham, VA www.whiteoakbirdhunt.com

Preserve—guided or unguided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant on 325 acres of agricultural fields, and mixed woods. Modern cabin with kitchen or homestyle meals. Contact: Rusty East (888) 432-4868

White Oaks Preserve, Skipwith, VA www.whiteoaks.ws

Preserve—guided half-day, day hunts, overnight accommodations. Quail, chukar, pheasant, huns on 600 acres of natural, cultivated fields and mixed woods. Farmhouse with kitchen or homestyle catered. Contact: Andrew Jones (434) 374-2025



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Darin Strickland is a frequent contributor to this magazine. He is an avid upland hunter

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