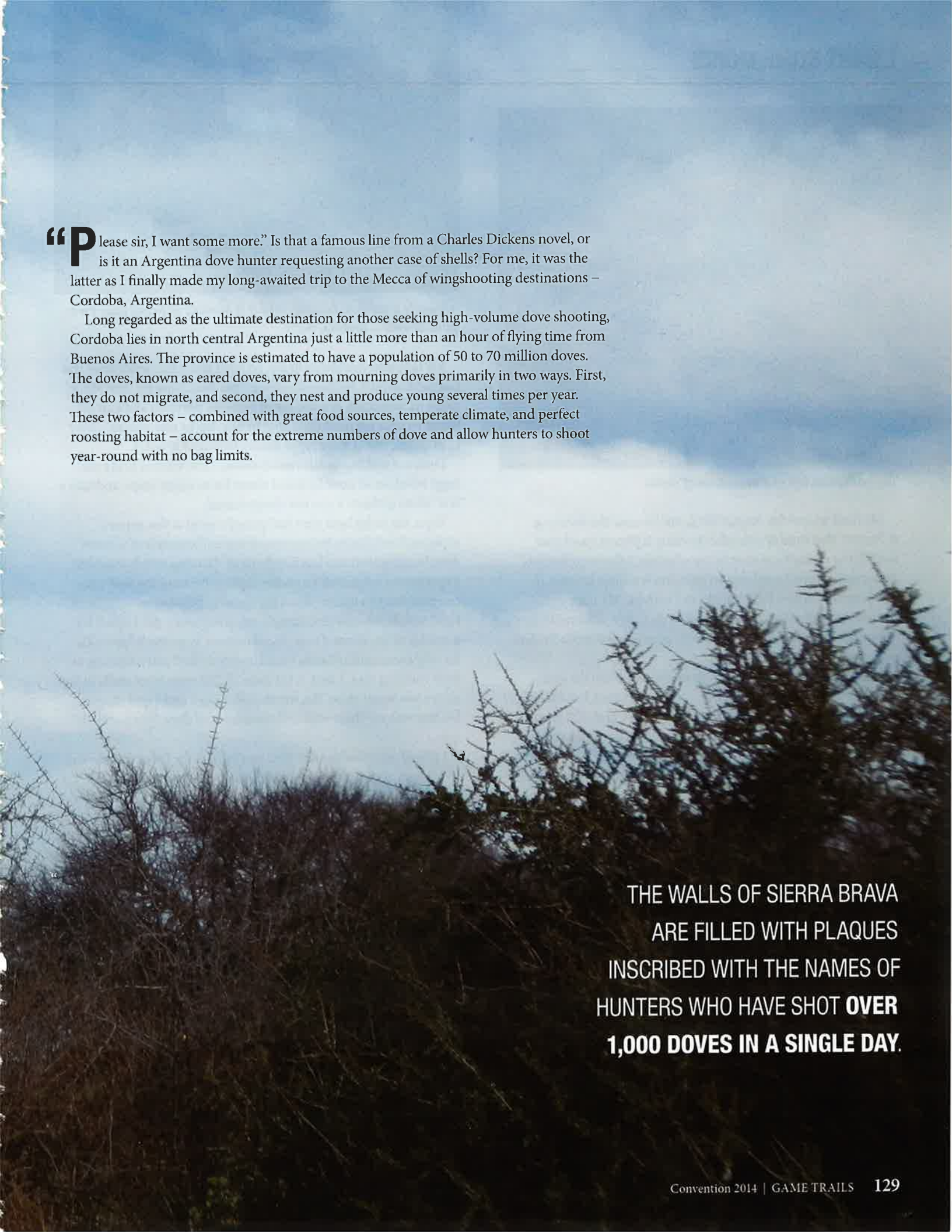


# I WANT SOME MORE!

BY DAVE MELLUM





**“P**lease sir, I want some more.” Is that a famous line from a Charles Dickens novel, or is it an Argentina dove hunter requesting another case of shells? For me, it was the latter as I finally made my long-awaited trip to the Mecca of wingshooting destinations – Cordoba, Argentina.

Long regarded as the ultimate destination for those seeking high-volume dove shooting, Cordoba lies in north central Argentina just a little more than an hour of flying time from Buenos Aires. The province is estimated to have a population of 50 to 70 million doves. The doves, known as eared doves, vary from mourning doves primarily in two ways. First, they do not migrate, and second, they nest and produce young several times per year. These two factors – combined with great food sources, temperate climate, and perfect roosting habitat – account for the extreme numbers of dove and allow hunters to shoot year-round with no bag limits.

THE WALLS OF SIERRA BRAVA  
ARE FILLED WITH PLAQUES  
INSCRIBED WITH THE NAMES OF  
HUNTERS WHO HAVE SHOT **OVER**  
**1,000 DOVES IN A SINGLE DAY.**

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*The author on top of a mountain of shells.*

My hunt was set for August 2012, not because the shooting is “better” that time of year (the shooting is phenomenal year round) but rather because it fit my schedule. I flew into Buenos Aires main international airport then made a short transfer to the domestic airport for my flight to Cordoba. My hunt was somewhat unusual in that I decided to go to two different lodges – Los Chanares and Sierra Brava, both prestigious Beretta Trident award winners.

I elected not to bring my own guns but rather use the guns available at the lodges. This is a personal preference, but the lodges offered both Beretta and Benelli guns in 20, 28, and .410 gauge in both semi-automatic and over-and-under. I considered this a “plus” as it gave me an opportunity to shoot several different guns in an actual hunting environment. I’d also been pre-briefed to expect to shoot three to five cases, 1,500 to 2,500 shells, per day. I wasn’t sure my old guns would hold up to that much “action.”



*Ammo is provided, usually, and it is possible to bring your own guns or rent a shotgun there.*

My first stop was Sierra Brava, an hour and a half drive from the Cordoba airport. Frequently called “The Best Bang for Your Buck” lodge in Argentina, it is the site of both the previous and current world records for most dove shot in one day by one person – over 12,000. Yes, that is not a typo! *Twelve thousand in a day.*

I was not seeking world-record status, I just wanted to see the huge numbers of dove I’d heard about for so many years, and take a “few” shots at them. I was not disappointed.

Topo, the lodge host who had picked me up at the airport, explained that Sierra Brava owns or leases thousands of acres of dove hunting land and has hundreds of shooting stands available. Experienced lodge staff know the flight patterns of the dove and can position you for any shooting scenario you desire, i.e. close in, right-to-left, left-to-right, straight on, going away, etc. I opted for a combo of the above. I was placed under a large shade tree with literally thousands of birds, both coming to feed and returning to their roosting area. I shot 2-1/2 cases (1,250 rounds) of shells in just under two hours time. Yes, my shoulder hurt, and I quit shooting for that reason. There were still thousands of dove flying when I quit.

I joined six other hunters who had been at the lodge for one and a half days already. The previous day these six hunters had shot over 7,500 doves. The walls of Sierra Brava are filled with plaques inscribed with the names of hunters who have shot over 1,000



*They fly in thick flocks – this one typical.*

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doves in a single day. The plaques are a testament to both the lodge's prime location and the shooter's skill (and strength of his shoulder).

In the morning, I left and went to the second Trident award winning lodge – Los Chanares, which like the previous lodge, also has thousands of acres of its own land or leased land. All shooting is within 15 minutes of the lodge. I never hunted the same field twice during my stay. This variety kept the doves from avoiding certain fields or flight paths.

On my first shoot, I was positioned on top of a ridge line which dropped sharply off on both sides. The doves were returning from feeding to a roosting area. I was assisted by a “bird boy,” who helped me load my gun. That may sound amusing to you, but the shooting is of such high volume that most shooters make use of their service. That day, I was shooting a Benelli 20-gauge semi-automatic provided by the lodge. After each firing, I would merely reengage the safety, rotate the gun 90 degrees, hold it slightly aft and to my side, and my “bird boy” refilled the chamber and/or magazine. It was literally a five second operation, and I was ready to shot again. I backed off that morning and “only” shot a case of shells.

I returned to the lodge for lunch and caught up on e-mail before returning for the afternoon hunt. Once again, thousands of doves were flying as we “set up” next to a roosting area. My bird boy joined me and for the next 2 hours, I shot, and shot, and shot. After all the shooting, I could handle I returned to the lodge for refreshments and appetizers prior to dinner. I was joined that evening by a group of 13 hunters who'd also had a great day of shooting. In total, they had shot 30 cases – 15,000 shells that day.

All hunting and shooting is therefore booked through outfitters and conducted out of lodges, such as the two I mentioned. With the millions of doves located in the Cordoba province, the many dove hunting lodges are sure to offer superb shooting. I wish I had the time and resources to try them all. I'm not sure when I'll return (sometime after my shoulder feels better), but I know I will. **GT**



*The lodges are lined with plaques, naming those in the “over-1,000” club.*



*Between the shooter and the “bird boy,” it is possible to shoot nearly all day, but many need to stop and rest from time to time.*



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