



The “Peel-Me-A-Grape” Hunt

By Jim Breaux

I finally made it to Rancho Caracol in Mexico with the help of my fun loving worldwide hunting buddies, Jeff and Audrey Rogers and daughter Diana, and my wife, Debbie. Harold Inman generously donates a trip to Rancho Caracol each year to different hunting/fishing conservation club fundraiser banquets, and I have to admit, the facility is top of the line.

Travel to this location is easy and inexpensive as we flew on Southwest to Harlingen, where we were met at the baggage area by a crew of Rancho Caracol staff who gathered our luggage, tagged it with our room numbers, and loaded us and all our belongings into comfortable coaches for the three-and-a-half hour drive south to the ranch.

Upon arrival, you are greeted by a beautiful villa perched on a plateau with a spectacular view of mountain terrain and a small lake below. The amenities abound starting with an immense gun room, heated spa and pool complete with a bar and flat-screen TVs that run down the middle, excellent masseuses, huge fire pit, two dining areas, a virtual shooting range, two clay-pigeon shooting

areas, a gift shop with Orvis apparel, jewelry, and mini-barrels of tequila, and spacious and beautifully appointed rooms. Top all this off with the all-inclusive excellent cuisine and top shelf beverages of your choice, it truly is, in the words of Audrey Rogers, a luxury “peel-me-a-grape” hunting experience.

As for our morning dove hunt experience last December, the sky was not dark with birds, but most hunts used four to ten boxes of shells per day, and in most cases, the bird-to-shell ratio was not close. Never having put thought into why, but as it was explained these birds start out getting shot at in Kansas, through Oklahoma, North to South Texas, then through Mexico. So it is certain that we were shooting at the fastest, smartest, and luckiest birds in all of North America. Jeff and I had our moment in the spotlight as we sat in a field with a treeline in front of us watching birds fly in at treetop elevation, no less than 83 miles an hour, doing reverse somersaults in mid-air to reverse direction. The birds that didn't do aerial acrobatics dropped and flew right between us hoping we would shoot each other.

One morning, Audrey was in a sweet spot where all the doves in Mexico decided to fly over. She outshot all the men that morning, and completely wiped out her bird boy! Diana, who had been observing all this fun, decided enough is enough, so she took some shooting lessons from an excellent shooting coach on staff. The well-equipped van rides were great to share your stories about the really great shots you made (hoping someone had not noticed your really ugly shots). Then upon arrival back at the lodge, the wait staff was standing there with your beverage of choice along with bottomless bowls of guacamole, nachos, and dove

poppers (grilled dove breast wrapped in bacon). This was the time of the day when the stories were readjusted and started over with the other groups of hunters and non-hunters. For your return home trip, Rancho Caracol will clean, package, and flash freeze 100 doves that you are allowed to bring back. Simply bring a small, insulated bag to transport them home.

A word about the “dangers” of Mexico: If you’ve heard the news about crime and violence in Mexico, do not worry. As a matter of fact, we felt so safe that we definitely will be going back to hunt mourning doves again this December. If you are really serious about large numbers of birds, you will need to check out their white-winged dove schedules at www.ranchocaracol.com, or call 888-246-3164. They are located next to one of the largest nesting areas in the world.

Rancho Caracol also demonstrates an impressive commitment to wildlife conservation as evidenced by their work with Texas A&M Kingsville researchers, and the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute on a project to study the habits of the endangered ocelot.

Rancho Caracol is a first-class destination that you will not want to miss!