



GEAR TIPS!

Hunting for upland birds often requires walking through thick woods and brush, so wearing a well-made pair of pants that prevents your legs from getting scratched and wet from the dew is important. Mountain Khakis makes a quality product that fits the bill. Their Original Field Pant is rugged and comfortable and specifically designed for upland game.

Another important piece of clothing that will make your hunt more enjoyable is a hunting vest that will carry all of the things you need to bring with you in the field—one that has some hunter's orange fabric, so your hunting buddies know exactly where you are. The Orvis Pro Series Hunting Vest is one of the best vests on the market. It has more than enough space for the essentials and fits comfortably with your body, making carrying loads effortless.

Seeking Grouse

For many, the traditions, rites and authenticity of Up North are most vivid on a September day of grouse hunting.

Text and Photos by Daniel Shepler

As the days cool, the scents and sounds of fall are in the air, and a whole new batch of outdoor activities has arrived. Upland bird hunting is a historic pastime in Michigan, and for decades people have been chasing grouse and woodcock in the wild northern woods. These game birds can be challenging to hunt, but the reward of the harvest goes far beyond the taste of the meat. The tradition. The woods. The camaraderie. The smell of a freshly fired shotgun. The sound of a grouse flushing from the autumn leaves.

September 15th is the opening day of bird season, and there is a lot of public land available to hunters throughout Northern Michigan. The state DNR has done an exceptional job in recent years of providing Grouse Enhanced Management Sites, or GEMS, where local hunters can seek game birds. Detailed maps of public hunting areas and all the information about GEMS you need are on the DNR website (michigan.gov/dnr/). Some of the most beautiful land in the area is

public and open to hunting, so just heading out to walk the forest is worth the effort.

I met up with local hunting enthusiast John Lindy and his bird dog Brownie for an afternoon hunt in the area. A parking lot just south of town was our rally point, and when I got there Lindy was excited and ready for the afternoon hunt. I grabbed my camera gear and hopped into Lindy's trusty Highlander, a classic adventure machine. We headed down some back roads, and as the pavement turned to dirt, Brownie's bird dog instincts took over. She was instantly in hunting mode.

We parked the car and started gearing up as Brownie was running around nose to the ground trying to pick up the scent of a bird. She headed into a fresh clear-cut. I followed behind Lindy, eagerly watching the dog work in front us. After only a few minutes she was on the trail of one. Her collar beeped, notifying the hunter that the dog is on point. Lindy lifted the old Browning A5 12 gauge to his shoulder and gave the command to flush. A dodgy woodcock flushed through the thick brush, I lifted my camera as Lindy aimed his gun and BANG! 🎯

Daniel Shepler is a Traverse City native whose passion for capturing adventure has taken him all over the world writing and photographing for marketing and editorial projects. danieljshepler@gmail.com.