

Edward Watson is a former MD and instructor at the West London Shooting School and is now a shooting instructor in the south of England.



Dr Watson instructs

Q I am going dove shooting in Argentina later this month. Some people have told me it won't help my general game shooting in the UK - what do you think?

A Over the last 10 years I have taken many teams to Argentina on dove shooting trips and found it has been a great way to improve their overall shooting.

As you will find out there is a massive volume of dove in the Cordoba area (120 million) alone. The doves here have become a serious pest, destroying 30 per cent of the agriculture. Therefore the Argentinean farmers love it when we go over to shoot them.

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The main reason dove shooting is so good for your shooting is you shoot high volumes of cartridges at birds rather than clays. There is nowhere else in the world you can shoot 1,500 to 3,000 cartridges at birds with all types of shot in a day. You can pick any type of shot you want. For example, one day you can shoot at 40 to 70 yard high driven birds. The next day you can be at the top of a hill, shooting dove coming at you like driven grouse - all day!

On one of my trips to Argentina I took a client and we spent one morning shooting at left to right crossing birds, a shot he had been

Right: The main reason dove shooting is so good for your shooting is you shoot high volumes of cartridges at birds rather than clays.

weak on all season. We could start at 20 yard birds and by the end we were shooting 70-yard specks in the sky at all different heights and angles. It also improved his bird selection, something everyone needs to work on when shooting game.

Shooting this volume of shots at birds does improve your shooting. I would say that until you have shot this volume you never get that freedom and trust in your shooting. Most importantly, you get the understanding of your own shooting. So many of us shoot well and don't understand why or how. It is great to shoot well but to maintain good shooting you must understand your shooting and then you will keep improving.

If we are lucky, most of us will shoot five to 10 day's game shooting a year. Some of us more, and if you're very lucky one of these days may be a big special one. You may shoot 300 shots in the day. A day like this will cost the same per gun as a three-day trip to Argentina including accommodation and food; and you will have 3,000 to 5,000 shots, or 10 times as much shooting.

Argentina is a truly great country with wonderful people who will make you feel welcome, so make sure you put dove shooting in Argentina on your shooting wish list - I promise you will love it. ■

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Illustration: Glenda Steel