



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

A September scouting trip for mule deer or elk can turn into a grouse hunt in the Imnaha Unit.

A mixed bag of forest grouse



GARY LEWIS

ON THE TRAIL

Down into the dry canyon and past the spring where the little stream began. Liesl, my pudel-pointer, quartered back and forth. She crashed through down through the alders, through a patch of brush then burst out into the open. When her tail began to flag, I closed the gun. She was close to a bird and it likely wouldn't hold.

Like a rocket, it flushed out of the tangle of vine maple, straight down the canyon.

My gun was up, my cheek on the wood and I saw the bird crumple as it reached the line of the pines. I waded into the brush, calling the dog, feathers floating down out of the limbs above me.

What had been a September scouting trip for mule deer high in the Imnaha Unit had turned into a grouse hunt. That evening, back at the cabin, I cooked up seven grouse over a Camp Chef backpack stove, the skinless, boneless meat sautéed with spinach, mushrooms and mozzarella.

In the morning after glassing for deer, we hunted blue grouse

on the ridge top. The birds were beneath tall pine trees where they were picking for nuts in the duff.

Grouse hunts are not insignificant in my life. The first time my dad allowed me to tag along on a hunt, it was for grouse. The first game I cooked was grouse. And if I live my life right, maybe my last hunt will be for grouse with an old dog just ahead of me, holding the birds with a rock solid point till I can catch up.

We find two types of forest grouse in Eastern Oregon — ruffed grouse and blues — and it is easy to get a mixed bag for the hunter that knows where to look.

Ruffed grouse are most often found in canyons with a lot of cover — aspens, alders, willows, vine maple, pines and fir trees. They like a bit of elevation change. A little bench over a spring or a swamp can pay off with looks at a bird or two or three. They flash through the timber, offering brief glimpses and a rush of wings like a heart attack.

Blue grouse are found closer to the tops of the ridges. They seek out patches of berry bushes and peck out the greenery under the spruces, the hemlock and the tall pines.

The season for forest grouse

runs from Sept. 1 through Jan. 31. Hunters should pack No. 7-1/2s for ruffed grouse and No. 6s for blue grouse. The daily bag limit is three of each species and nine of each species in possession. Hunters must leave head or one wing attached while in the field and in transit.

Grouse hunting access is available on some private lands. See myodfw.com/articles/hunting-private-lands-access-habitat-program for a list of private lands. Each listing includes management unit, location, huntable species and the access period. Special regulations are listed for each property and can range from walk-in-only to motorized travel on roads posted as open; leave the gates like you found them.

Gary Lewis is the author of "Bob Nosler Born Ballistic," "Fishing Central Oregon" and other titles. Gary's podcast is called Ballistic Chronicles. To contact Gary, visit www.garylewisoutdoors.com

James Flaherty/Contributed Photo

This ruffed grouse from the Imnaha Unit flushed from a tangle of vine maple in a brushy creek bottom.



Flow:

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Recruiting during the pandemic was a challenge for Larson, and just about every coach in the nation. Larson would get emails from potential players. She had their names and numbers, then would watch their matches online.

Depending on the quality of the video, she got a good look at prospective players. Other times, she didn't know who she was watching because she couldn't read the numbers, but was occasionally intrigued by a blonde girl with a ponytail.

"A lot of it was recruiting online and watching live streams and Zoom, which is the new norm," Larson

said. "These kids were brave. Usually they get to come to campus and meet the team. We are lucky with the group we got. I think we got a great group of freshmen."

Of the new recruits she was able to bring in, Larson has been impressed with 5-foot-7 outside hitter Emma Barclay from American Falls, Idaho, and 5-11 hitter Cloe Davis from nearby

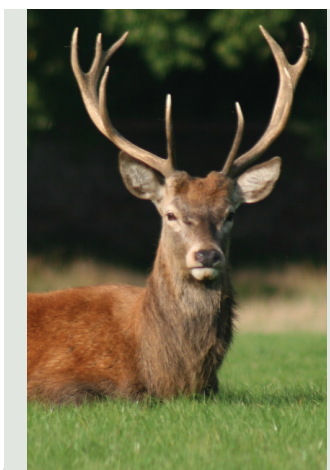
Weston-McEwen High School.

"Emma is just an athletic kid," Larson said. "She is really fast and really smart. She has a high ceiling. I

really think she is going to be a force for us. She is doing great things for us. We have moved Cloe from the outside to middle and she is adjusting well. I'm excited to see where

she finishes the season."

The Timberwolves will open NWAC East play Wednesday, Sept. 15, when they host Columbia Basin College.



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