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Photo
Essay

Quail in the South

Westervelt Lodge
returns
tradition to the
pine woods.

'Bama
Bobs

Westervelt @ Lodge



STORY AND PHOTOS BY J. GUTHRIE

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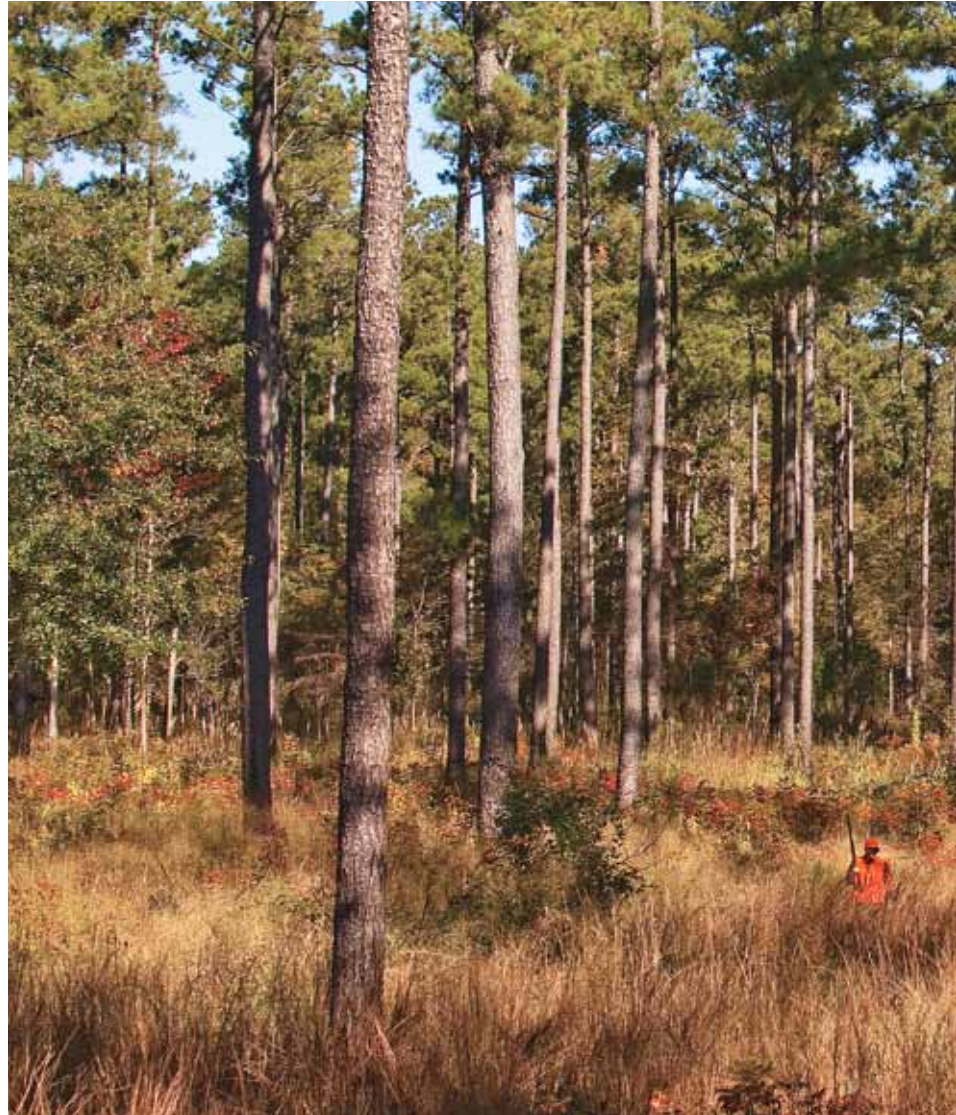
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Unless there is a post-apocalyptic return to small-scale, dirty agriculture bereft of herbicides, pesticides and exacting farm machinery, there will never again be large-scale quail hunting in the South. The average Southerner under 40 years will never hunt wild birds in his homeland, but may only flush the odd covey and hear the odd, haunting call in the tiny patches of appropriate habitat still left.





QUAIL IN THE SOUTH

The whole-scale change in the landscape is such that my ancestors, who hunted birds with a fervor that approached religion, would scarcely recognize the land they roamed with dogs and gun in hand. The right kind of pine and the right kind of undergrowth holds and allows quail to flourish, but not nearly in the numbers that captivated hunters at the turn of the century.

The quest for sustainability drove us to the preserve model of quail hunting. Birds are released early or are put out before men and dogs take to the field. In many places it has devolved into a shoot-'em-up affair with little emphasis on quality. Coveys are dropped into a strip of cane or corn and the shooters run their guns hot. Pointers do more retrieving than pointing. It has become a numbers game.

One famous hunting lodge tucked just inside the edge of Alabama's Black Belt has vowed to put the hunt back into quail hunting. Westervelt Lodge near Aliceville stretches over 10,000 acres, some of which is carefully managed for quail. While birds are placed and not born among the pines, they haul tail when flushed



and do not stand shoulder to shoulder in obvious cover.

You will walk and walk some more on a brisk fall morning, watch pointers and setters do their business and enjoy a lunch of the small miracle that weighed down your game bag but an hour earlier. Folks don't hold their pinkies aloft when shooting at Westervelt, but they do approach the

hunt with grace and treat the birds with dignity.

Here are a few snapshots of a near perfect fall day last season. The pictures, shot with friends in tow, were a lot of fun to take, but the shooting after the pictures was even better.

To arrange a hunt at Westervelt Lodge contact Steve Carroll at 800-281-7991 or visit www.westerveltlodge.com. *

