

# The High Lonesome Ranch

DEBEQUE, COLORADO

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*Located on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains  
Founded in 1982*

**W**hen a discussion of great places to hunt birds takes place in sporting circles, South Dakota and Georgia are mentioned, perhaps Louisiana, but Colorado? The state might be the first place mentioned in a discussion of fly fishing, but bird hunting? Probably not. That's a good thing, for those who know better have discovered a place in Colorado where the bird hunting is as good as anywhere in the country. Is there anything better than a secret honey hole?

The High Lonesome Ranch on the western slope of the Rockies near Grand Junction, Colorado, is just such a honey hole. Here in the shadow of the Book Cliff Mountains, the High Lonesome Ranch spreads across 300 square miles of deeded and permitted lands, including mountain forest, grassland, and spring creeks. At an altitude of around 5,000 feet, this is an ecosystem consisting of a large, central valley with astonishingly beautiful mountain mesas and smaller valleys pushing away from it like giant fingers. It is home to a stunningly diverse wildlife resource that offers guests the opportunity to hunt everything from

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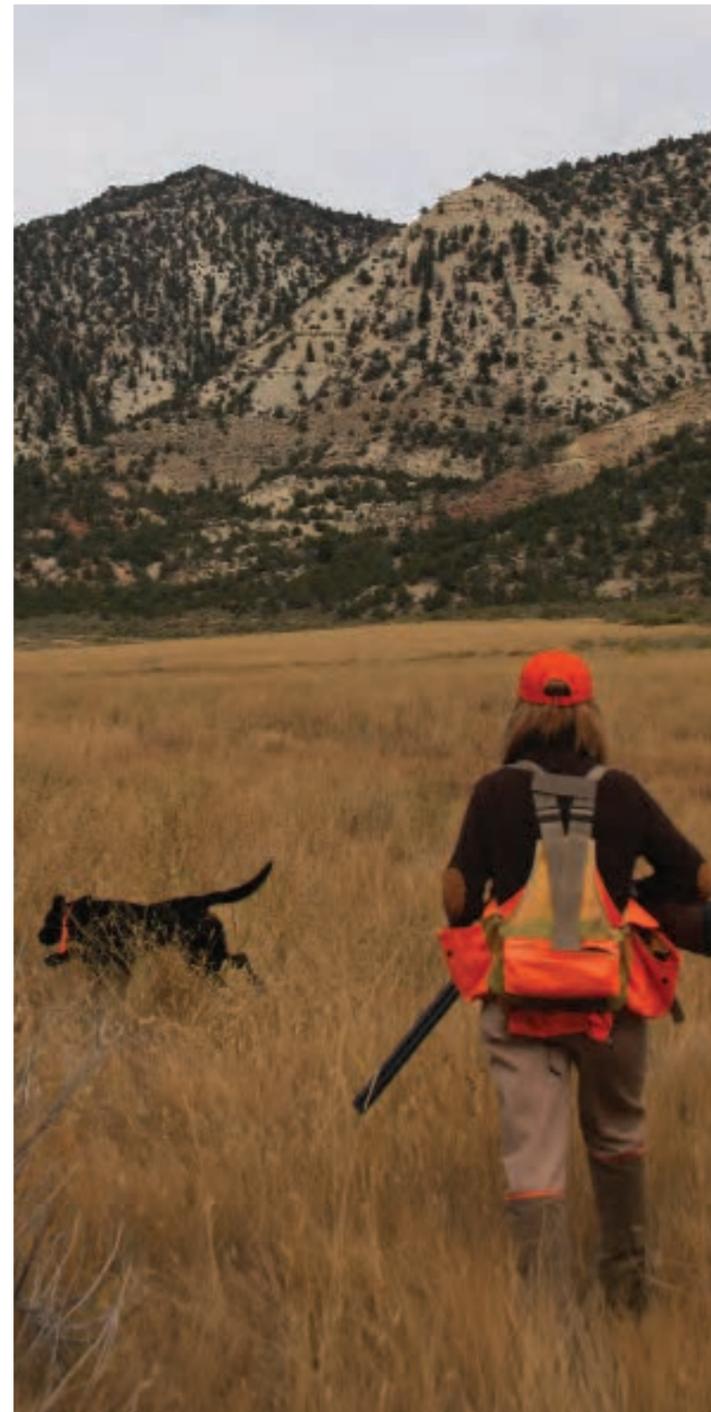
RIGHT: *The High Lonesome Ranch has 300 square miles of western slope Rocky Mountain land to hunt.*





TOP: One of the simple, but comfortable cabins at High Lonesome Ranch is just what a hunter desires. LEFT: This is one of many hidden valleys on the High Lonesome Ranch property. ABOVE: Shooters enjoy a five-stand warm-up before the hunt.





mountain lions to black bears, Merriam turkeys to more than 375 Boone and Crockett elk. The High Lonesome Ranch is one of the few operations with the coveted double endorsement from Orvis for both wingshooting and fly fishing. If guests want to fish for big trout in spring creeks, they can rest assured it is available in spades.

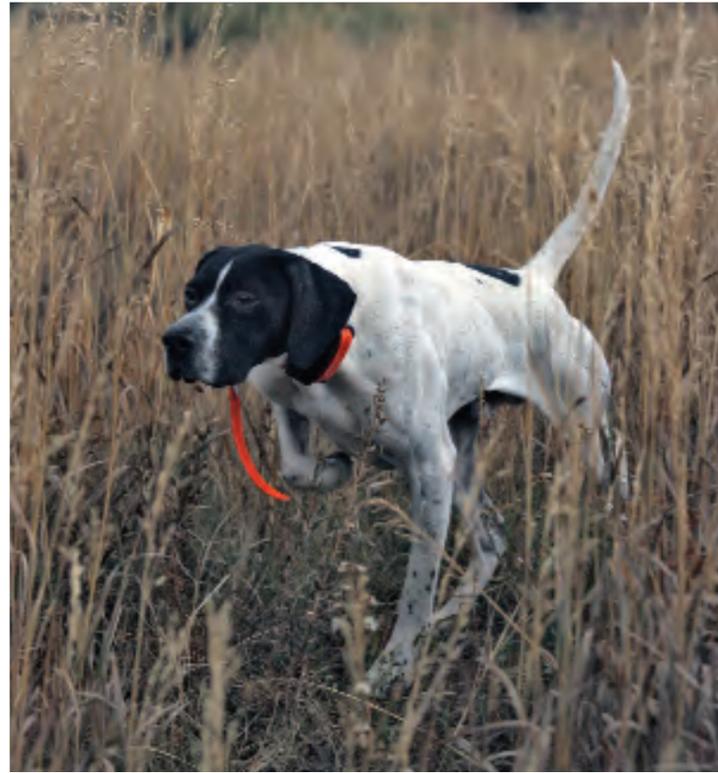
But the hidden gem is the bird hunting. Pheasant, chukar, Hungarian partridge, and scaled and Gambel's quail reside in the high altitude wheat and rye fields as well as the sagebrush flats and thicket-covered creek bottoms. It is a dizzying diversity of cover and species to hunt with the help of English pointers and the remarkably versatile pointing Labradors, a pure joy to watch in the field. Watching a Lab lock up is not something often seen in the field, though the breed's reputation is growing steadily, giving the most popular dog in the United States yet another reason to endear itself to wingshooters. Traditionalists who say a Lab shouldn't point have never hunted with one.

For the wingshooter, the diversity of cover and species offers a special challenge because the shooter is never quite sure what is going to come blowing out of the cover—whether it's a covey of Huns or a squawking pheasant—and the instantaneous adjustment is what makes the instinctive shot so much more satisfying. Being in a place of such grandeur at the same time is not hard to take, but perhaps difficult to adequately comprehend until it's over.

During the day, guests are treated to a touch of Louisiana cooking from Aunt Linda Doden. The cuisine might be a bit out of context, but who cares? Is there anything better than a Southern cook? During the evening, the food reverts to Western-style cuisine; local trout, beef, and seasonal ranch favorites bury the table.

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OPPOSITE: A shooter warms up on station five of the sporting clays course. LEFT: A hunter moves in behind a pointing Labrador on the valley floor.



The lodging is in guest houses and cabins sprinkled across the property. The rooms are comfortable, with private bathrooms, but the real luxury is found in the beautiful surroundings. Guests will be warm, comfortable, and relaxed in one of the most beautiful places on earth.

For most true sportsmen, hunting is less about the killing than it is about simply being a momentary part of the cycle. Places like the High Lonesome Ranch serve two incredibly important functions. They conserve vast stretches of critical ecosystems that otherwise might disappear under the weight of man's heavy hand, and at the same time they allow man to explore and ulti-

mately appreciate it in ways most people can never imagine. Whether birding for hundreds of species of wild birds, fishing for browns, brook trout, and rainbows in the crystal-clear spring creeks, hunting big game, or becoming part of a scientific research team for a day, the opportunity to experience this remarkable part of the American West as both predator and conservationist is the difference between hunter and true sportsman. The High Lonesome Ranch is aptly named for its altitude and seclusion, but given the abundance of wildlife that inhabits this remarkable ranch, guests will be hard-pressed to be lonesome even when they're alone.

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TOP LEFT: *The terrain and cover at High Lonesome Ranch is varied from thicket-covered creek bottoms to sagebrush flats.* TOP RIGHT: *An English pointer locks up in the high-altitude rye and wheat fields.* OPPOSITE: *Two hunters move through the wheat in pursuit of chukars, Huns, and pheasants.*

