

Turns out this miniature duck also does it for others. Ask 10 waterfowlers of their bucket-list bird and at least half say cinnamon teal. It's on mine, too. After all, there's only the green-winged, the blue-winged—which are common in most of the States—and the cinnamon of the Pacific Flyway, right? For years I thought these were the only teal. Silly American.

Fact is, another teal trifecta buzzes down south—far deeper south than any bayou will deliver you. You've just got to be game for an adventure. Indeed, a valid passport can unlock a whole new cast of characters—silver, ringed and speckled teal—roughly 6,000 miles away, as the duck flies. My hunt began in the willows, on a pond's edge, just like it did so many years ago ...



Take 'em!" Terry barked a moment after I heard the telltale tearing sound overhead, and I'd have taken the loaner 391 down to its plug ... if it had one. See, that's another glory of hunting Uruguay—no magazine limit. We were each limited to the outfit's six-boxes-of-shells-per-day rule, and while you might think shooting an unplugged shotgun is a huge advantage, I can say definitively that for me it isn't. If I don't hit a bird on the first or second shot, I'm already so helplessly behind that a belt-fed Beretta couldn't help me.

The pond was a shallow stock tank, red and muddy from cattle sloshing around its clay banks. It reminded me exactly of those in my native Oklahoma. It was July, or winter in Uruguay, and the teal swarmed the neighboring rice fields like

mosquitoes over a cesspool before roosting on one of several ponds where we set up in the evening and waited in makeshift blinds made from cut willow limbs stuck upright in the mud.

On Terry's call I blotted out a little bird's beak with the bead and bent the trigger again and again and again. My blind mates opened up also, and I trusted that Nate Metcalf, the hired videographer, was catching all of it in HD. We'd waited until we were surrounded in teal and everyone was loaded and ready to spring the trap. And now, after a long journey getting here, it was my time to cover myself in glory—or at least to avoid becoming an immortal Internet idiot. *Boom, boom, ba-boom, boom* went the Beretta.



We'd flown to Montevideo (Uruguay's capital city in its extreme south) via Buenos Aires and drove eight hours northeast across the entire country to its east coast on the Atlantic. Five miles to the north was the Brazilian border formed by the Jaguarão River. It'd be romantic to write that the country was untamed jungle rife with cattle-killing jaguars and caimans, but really it was flat farm country that was home to Texas-style ranch barons and their hired *gauchos*. With populations centered in cities like most of South America, this part of Portuguese-influenced Uruguay harbors few people per square mile. Coca-Cola and John Deere products abound, and the people are bilingual at least, and gregarious. While I saw thousands of ducks and other bird life, I saw no other



hunters—other than the cast of characters assembled in the blind.

On the left end was Ramsey Russell of getducks.com, exactly where he shouldn't have been if it's easier to shoot ducks there. This Mississippi broker of worldwide duck hunting adventure simply does not bore of downing birds, and I quickly grew annoyed with his wingshooting proficiency. At times it seemed he was showing off with his shotgun, which was exactly what he was doing now as he called his shots on the silver teal that zipped along the far bank. His empties popped me in the back of the head, which no doubt contributed to breaking my concentration on the speckled teal that crossed in front of my face like hissing jets. *Boom, boom-boom, boom, ba-boom*, Ramsey fired. His high-volume duck hunts are not the place for double-barrels.

On the other end of the blind was our outfitter and host, Alvaro Barcellos Souza Mouawod. (I'm not making this up.) You know the Dos Equis beer commercials that

Photos: Author

Alvaro Mouawod, above, and his crew offer first-class destination duck hunting in the Southern Hemisphere.

