

# Sinaloa 'Blast and Cast'

## WON On-The-Spot

BY JIM NIEMIEC  
WON Staff Writer

**LOS MOCHIS, Mexico** — It sure is rewarding when a **blast and cast** trip comes together at a distant destination and such was the case recently when Team Osterkamp invited this *Western Outdoor News* hunting editor along for quick multi-species quest. The trip was put together by *WON* readers Gus and Hank Osterkamp of Orange County, Mark Osterkamp of Brawley and then all of the on-the-ground activities were under the supervision and coordination of outfitter Bobby Balderrama of the sinalopaduckanddoveclub.com.

It was a quick flight from Chino Airport to Los Mochis aboard an Aero Commander with an early morning touch down in Los Mochis to clear customs. Then a short flight east to the old gold mining rural town of Choix and a 15-minute drive to the resort of *La Estancia*, overlooking the fabled bass fishing waters of Lake Huites.

Plenty of rain had fallen in December, causing major flooding in Los Mochis and the surrounding area, but Lake Huites was only about half full due to its high elevation and the fact that a lot is used for irrigation water was being drained from the lake to irrigate crops along the El Furete River. A strain of Florida bass fingerlings were stocked in the lake back in the early '80s and today the lake record stands at over 14 pounds. While fishing aboard fast and comfortable bass boats, fishing was off a tad for this group with top anglers catching up to 35 bass, weighing in the 2- to 5-pound class for each session on the lake. Comfortable accommodations and great local Mexican meals were served, topped off by a plate full of rock lobsters.

Then the bird hunting began in the vast estuaries surrounding Los Mochis, where the duck population exceeds some 3.5 million birds. This farming Mecca not only offers an abundance of seed crops and fresh water, but the brackish waters offer ideal loafing for huge flocks of all three species of teal, spoon-bills, sprig, some widgeon, varieties of divers and the great eating pichiquila that provide excellent gunning! In addition to duck hunting the state of

Sinaloa also is the home of awesome native populations of upland game birds consisting of Gambel's, scaled and *Elegante* quail, white-winged and mourning dove and blue pigeons.

An afternoon mourning dove hunt was off the wall with flock after flock of dove winging overhead for nearly two hours. It was by far the best evening shoot that this hunting editor has witnessed in over 40 years of hunting out of Los Mochis. Most all the hunters in the field that evening shot close to a case of shells, including a couple of visiting hunting clients that came from Michigan to check out bird hunting in this part of mainland Mexico.

After the hunt, cold Pacificos were passed out and it was only about a 35-minute drive back to the Plaza Inn Hotel Deluxe, which would be our home for the next couple of days.

After a 5 a.m. wake-up call and a full breakfast in the hotel's Mr. Owen's restaurant, our group headed out to the northern marsh where an airboat was waiting to take hunters out to natural blinds and then head out to move loafing flocks of puddle ducks around. Some blinds shot very well while others shot a heck of lot better than spending hours in a state-side blind hoping for a mixed minimal seven-bird limit. With a liberal duck limit in Mexico, each party of two hunters to a blind were sent out with a case of #4 Aguilar 12 gauge ammo. It has been stated many times by numerous hunters, "One can shoot more ducks in one day of hunting Mexico then they can shoot on the average in a year in the states."

While hunting was not off the charts by Mexican standards, there were plenty of dabbling ducks harvested along with a few bull sprig. This *WON* editor lucked out in shooting the highly coveted "Triple on Teal," consisting of the prized cinnamon, green-winged and colorful blue-winged teal harvested during just one hunting period. Hunters travel thousands of miles to many hunting destinations in quest of this triple on teal, and the estuaries of Los Mochis offer up the best opportunity of accomplishing this waterfowler's dream.

After lunch at Sr. Roberto's famed garden hacienda, it was

just a short drive to the pichiquila hunting freshwater marsh about 15 minutes south of the Plaza Hotel. This shoot would traditionally be only for the prized pichiquila, but that afternoon saw many different species of ducks wing into decoys, as those past flooding storms of late December had flushed out the brackish lagoon and moved tons and tons of tule patches and silt islands around. It was still a very good shoot with Gus and Hank Osterkamp both shooting full Mexican limits of pichiquila and puddle ducks.

During the drive back to the hotel Sinalo Pato Duck and Dove Club head guide Edgar Hernandez talked about the spot he had located for the final morning's dove shoot. "It will be an early morning shoot for mourning dove and then the white-winged dove will arrive. Even though it's late in the season, there could be some Gambel's quail around too," stated the senior guide.

Edgar was right as to his prediction of a good dove hunt. Even before Berrettas and Benellis were passed around, dove were winging through the early morning gray sky. This dove shoot went non-stop for nearly 3 hours, as true to Hernandez's words the prior night, it was a good mix of both dove that ended the Sinaloa "Cast and Blast" for Team Osterkamp.

**GRAND SLAM OF TEAL** — *WON's* Jim Niemiec harvested the coveted grand slam of teal, consisting of the cinnamon, green-winged and blue-winged teal taken during one hunting period on the north marsh near Los Mochis. This bird hunting Mecca is most likely the best location of harvesting all three species of teal. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK OSTERKAMP



**MIXED BAG OF PUDDLE DUCKS** — Gus and Hank Osterkamp teamed up to bag a whole bunch of puddle ducks while on a hunt with Bobby Balderrama of the Sinalo Pato Duck and Dove Club located in Los Mochis.

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**LAKE HUITES LUNKER** — Hank Osterkamp of San Clemente hefts a 5.5-pound Lake Huites largemouth bass caught on the new Daiwa Tatula rod and reel combo. It was good fishing on a variety of cranks, spinnerbaits and Daiwa SV Concept 6.5-inch Neko worms.

PHOTO BY JIM NIEMIEC