

Field Alarm Watch

Our favorite watch for the outdoors has a built-in alarm that's easy to use. Perfect for travel, appointment reminders, or as a shooting time announcer. Brown leather strap, black face, easy-to-read luminous dial and hands. Accurate three-hand quartz movement keeps time within seconds each month. Water resistant to 90 feet, scratch-resistant flat crystal, stainless case, stem protector.

S102Y Field Alarm Watch \$79.50

New. The ultimate boots for cold and wet hunting conditions. Fully Gore-Tex® lined for waterproof breathable comfort insulated with 600 grams of Thinsulate® for warmth without weight. Very lightweight, averaging just 3 lbs. per pair. Nine-anchor-point lacing system with three speed rings and two hooks for quick, precise lacing. Exterior is 1000-Denier Cordura for excellent abrasion resistance and oiled, crackproof leather trim. Finger loop on the back of boot helps you slide it on and off. The interior is lined with Cambrelle to expedite moisture transportation away from feet. Sole is super lightweight Vibram® Rothorn sole with aggressive tread. Steel shanked for support. Sizes 02-D width, men's whole and half sizes 7-14 (no 12½ or 13½);

7 Days a Week, 24 Hours a Day

7-13 (no 12½). Made in USA. **S595A** Boots **\$225**



Essential Collar

- Four levels of stimulation
- Multiple frequencies "in case" working more than one dog
- Transmitter is the size of a credit card
- Ideal for first time trainers and experts
- Programmed from the hand held transmitter.

Beeper Collar

- Beeps every ten seconds while dog is ranging, and every second when on point
- Or every five seconds while the dog is the ranging, and every second when on point
- Or silent until on point
- Or beeps an audible signal only when the button is pressed to locate lost dog.

Premium Collar

- All the settings of the Beeper Collar with 3 tracking levels
- Auto locator
- 7 stimulation strengths with three different levels of stimulation: 1/25 second, continuous, rising
- All settings are programmable while the dog is working.

Innotek Dog Collars

The avid bird hunters at Orvis take pride in the training and working of our hunting dogs. And we're constantly on the lookout for innovative teaching and tracking aides. So we were very excited when we found these great new collars designed by Innotek. Choose from a training collar, a beep collar, or a combination unit.

Orvis Essential Collar. Waterproof training unit. Four levels of stimulation and 3 frequency options for training up to 3 dogs. Transmitter fits nicely in the hand—it's about the size of a credit card. Made exclusively for Orvis by Innotek. See left for details.

Innotek RT-100 Beeper Collar. Ideal for tracking working dogs through heavy cover. Four modes—"normal," "grouse," "silent," and "off/call." See left for details.

S038P Orvis Essential \$349.95

S037P Innotek RT-100 \$249.95

Innotek CS-1600 Premium Collar. Is a Stimulator, Beeper, and Locator... The collar that does it all. If you're looking for one collar that your dog can wear from the time he's a puppy through his retirement from birding, this is it. Four tracking levels, and an auto locator, so you'll always know when the dog is on point. Three different levels of stimulation. See left for details.

S036P Innotek CS-1600 \$429.95

Mays Pond Beeper Collar A Proven Beeper Collar at a Very Attractive Price

Programmable for several options: run and/or point beeps, different running signals for running two dogs, and a realistic "hawk screech" beep on point that freezes the bird out of fear of predation. The collar construction is rugged and waterproof for years of use, having a solid molded rubber casing. Speaker wires are embedded into the bright orange

waterproof collar to prevent breakage, running to a top-mounted speaker that is louder for the hunter and quieter for the dog. There is an external on/off push-button switch molded into the backside of the casing, thus preventing accidental turn off and accidental loss of on/off devices (such as magnets and rods) in the field. This collar is easy to work with and the simple instructions take you quickly through the programming steps. The unit is shipped with a fresh battery so it can be immediately tested and used.

\$169H-00-00 Mays Pond Beeper Collar \$139

Low-Tone Beeper Collar For Those with Shooter's Ear

Same collar as above, except "hawk screech" function is replaced with the option of a low-tone beeper, specially designed for many older hunters who have lost hearing of higher pitched sounds.

S169H-00-01 Low-Tone Beeper Collar \$139



Stainless Steel Bird Knife

This functional and handsome bird knife has a 3¼" stainless steel blade and gut hook. Overall length is 4". Distinctive American walnut handle (like a fine gun stock) has lanyard loop at end. Made for Orvis in Germany.

\$3154-01 Stainless Steel Bird Knife \$79

COMPILED BY DAVE HURTEAU

GEARING UP

IT'S A KEEPER



Waterworks' Fly Trap could make conventional drying patches obsolete. First, the Trap closes tightly, so you don't lose flies. Second, it has a ripple-foam keeper, so you don't maul flies trying to pull them free. Third, it folds down to a 90-degree angle, so you can see your flies clearly. Put likely patterns in the Fly Trap before hitting the water, and you don't have to rifle through your vest to find the right fly—you just reach over (with one hand) and grab it. About \$20; call (800) 435-9374.

THREE IN ONE

For those times on the water when you need to have a few more options, Rio Products' VersiTip fly line package gives you a floating running line and a choice of three line tips (or "heads"): a Type 3 sinking line (sinks 3 to 4 inches per second), a Type 6 sinking line (6 to 7 inches per second), and a floating line. Interlocking loops make switching tips a breeze. Comes with a handy line wallet for about \$100; call (800) 553-0838.







BEST VEST

With a snug-fitting waist belt, Camas Designs' Headwaters Hunting Vest takes some of the weight of game and gear off your shoulders. The vest is made of 1000-denier Cordura[®] and tough polyester mesh for ventilation. Large openings on either side of the game bag allow for fast loading; four outer pockets (one designed to hold two waterbottles) hold plenty of shells and gear; thin, lightweight shoulder straps make for easy mounting; and an inside back pocket holds a windbreaker and features a bloodproof lining. About \$80; call (406) 442-1973.

A good fire-starting kit always includes three sources of flame. The following should be carried in a Ziploc® freezer bag, and included in your survival kit.

- A waterproof container filled with strike-anywhere wooden kitchen matches.
- ✓ A new butane lighter.
- Several cotton balls, lightly coated with Vaseline, packed into a 35mm film canister.
- A handful of thoroughly dried Popsicle sticks.

- ✓ A hand-sized wad of fine steel wool.
- ✓ A tube of fire paste.
- ✓ A magnesium block with a striker.
- ✓ A magnifying glass.

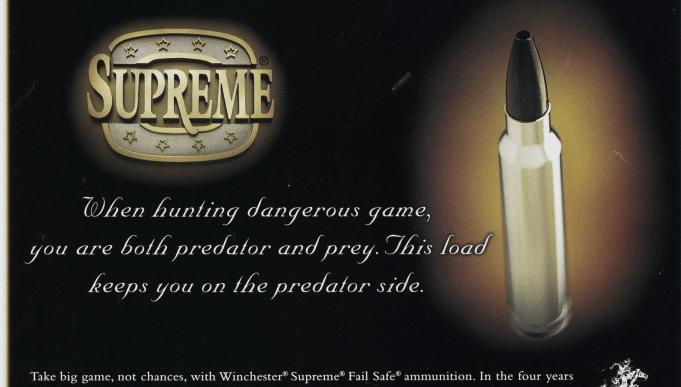
However: If you're traveling by plane, you must carry the lighter and the matches on your person; it's illegal to transport them in your baggage. Also, if it's bitter cold outside, the lighter will work more reliably if you carry it in a shirt pocket where it won't get cold.—B.N.

dent and the flames from the tinder are bright and strong. Make sure that your kindling, like your tinder, is stacked so air can get through it.

What works as kindling also works as heavier fuel in, of course, heavier form. It helps to have a mix of hardwood and softwood; the occasional piece of softwood adds heat to the mix. Keep moister wood toward the outside of the fire so it will dry out, and if you want to keep a fire going overnight, a couple of sizable, semi-green logs will burn slowly enough to do it.

A fire for cooking, warmth, or general comfort is one of the timeless pleasures in the outdoors. But unless you're in a life-or-death situation, it's no longer possible to have a fire anyplace and anytime you choose. Make sure you learn (and follow) any fire regulations for the land you're on, and be absolutely sure your fire is out before you leave.

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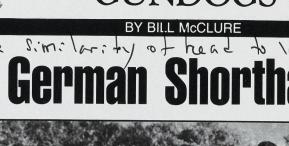


since its inception, we've continuously improved Fail Safe to give you the most technologically

advanced knockdown power you can get. So now you can always be a predator.

Crop2 of Huck's lines, but legs too close topother

head to Veronese traving.





The German shorthair's origin is a bit mysterious, but it clearly has become a favorite breed among American hunters. It is a close- to medium-range dog that's about perfect for the East, is intense on point, and retrieves in water with enthusiasm.

IT'S FOR WOMEN TOO! The National Rifle Association's many programs are for everyone—women as well as men. Women are encouraged to participate in all of the Association's activities. The opportunities are endless: * You can learn to shoot, join a hunting or shooting club, or your NRA-affiliated

* You can become involved in firearms legislation issues in your community.

state shooting association.

* You can learn safe handgun operation and self-defense measures through the NRA Personal Protection Program.

* You can earn awards for big and small game hunting, and you can attend Hunter Clinics to learn more about hunting specific game species.

* You can share your knowledge of shooting and firearms by becoming an NRA Certified Firearms Instructor.

* You can win trophies for women shooters in every major national shooting competition, as well as set recognized national records for females in every shooting discipline.

* If you are a female law enforcement or security officer, you can attend special NRA training schools. Girls aged 13-20 who are interested in a career in law enforcement can join a local Law Enforcement Explorer post.

As a member of the National Rifle Association, you will receive a monthly magazine filled with informative articles about shooting and hunting activities, have access to an array of shooting and firearms-related publications, and participate in group insurance programs.

If you are interested in additional information on any of NRA's programs, please return this response card.

MR. NAME MS.	H1289
ADDRESS	
AREA OF INTE	REST:
Clubs	☐ Hunting
Competition	☐ Law Enforcement
Personal Protection	☐ Membership
Legislative Issues	☐ Instructor Training
Please return to: NRA, Women's Policies Committee, 1600 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Wash., D.C. 20036	

The first memorable gundog I owned was a German short-haired pointer bought from a mail order ad in the Family Herald and Weekly Star for \$35. Although I would caution you against a mail-order puppy, I was lucky beyond belief. Freude was a splendid example of her breed. She trained easily and early, pointing birds staunchly before her first birthday, backing another dog on point instinctively, and retrieving from land and water. She filled the role of family pet with enthusiasm, and our children loved her gentle nature and consistent good humor. In the field Freude could, as one friend noted, find a single partridge in a thousand-acre grain field. Her natural abilities won her several field trial ribbons, a bonus that I never expected.

The shorthair's talent is no accident, for in the 1800s a group of middle-class German sportsmen who had enough money to buy or lease hunting rights concluded that they needed an all-purpose dog to aid in the chase. They envisioned a dog that would serve as a family companion, pointer, retriever of feather or fur, and a competent trailer of ground game such as deer or boar. This tall order was conceptualized by a group of committed devotees who set about the long, difficult task of creating a new dog.

No records of the various breeds used to fashion the short-haired pointer exist, and its creators were secretive. It is believed by many writers that the Spanish pointer, French Gascon hound, bloodhounds, and probably the English pointer along with other breeds were used to create the Deutsch kurzhaar. C. Bede Maxwell, in her book The New German Shorthaired Pointer (Howell Books), devotes 14 pages to breed origin, documenting the secrecy and misinformation shrouding the breed's beginnings. But the outcome of the magnificently persistent effort of the founders was a gundog that fulfilled all of their expectations.

The modern German shorthair is from 21 to 25 inches tall at the shoulder and weighs from 45 to 70 pounds. Its short coat is either solid liver color, liver and white spotted, or liver and white ticked or roaned. The tail is docked to twofifths of its length. As the breed standard states, the dog should "be an aristocratic, well-balanced, symmetrical animal-indicating power, endurance, and agility with a look of intelligence and animation. It should be like a proper hunter with a short back standing over plenty of ground. The first impression should be that of keenness without indication of nervous or flighty character.'

Dale C.

more expensive, are pre-cut, pre-lubed patches like those offered by Ox-Yoke. I do not use plastic patches because the ball may separate from the patch while in the bore, thereby becoming a dangerous obstruction. Plastic fouling also builds up in the bore, making loading difficult.

You probably won't be able to "snap caps" to clear the flash channel of percussion rifles before heading out to the woods in the morning, so you should be sure the gun is clean and dry of any oil. I wipe out the barrel with a patch soaked in solvent, then dry out the bore thoroughly. Be sure to clean the pan and frizzen of flintlocks especially well. In cold weather, a blackpowder gun wicks moisture from the air quickly when fired, so you must be particularly careful to wipe the flinter's pan carefully before you reload, then do it again before you prime. On a wet day the blackpowder can absorb moisture from the air despite your best efforts to keep your powder dry. A good method is to cradle the rifle under your arm while wearing a poncho or blanket coat, and to use a calf's knee over the lockwork. There are commercial preparations, such as Rain Coat, that can be mixed with priming powder to help reduce its tendency to absorb moisture, but they may retard ignition somewhat.

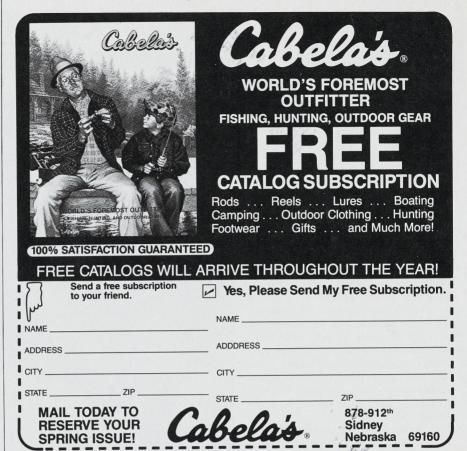
The correct percussion cap or a sharp, new flint can give you extra assurance that your muzzleloader will fire when you pull the trigger. Be sure not to over-prime a flintlock's pan; a .22 short case full of FFFFg is about right. FFFg

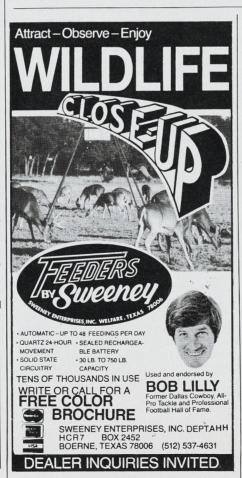
is an acceptable substitute.

The priming charge should not cover the flash hole, as this delays ignition. The quickest ignition is achieved when the priming charge is positioned on the off-side of the pan away from the flash hole. Carry a short piece of wire along to make sure the touch hole is clear before beginning to reload.

Most important with a muzzleloader is to realize its limitations and yours. A 100-yard shot is a long one, and with a flinter, even 50 yards is a long shot. Work with the various components until you develop a load that performs well in your blackpowder rifle, then learn to stalk up close. With a little luck you'll get your deer and learn what muzzleloader hunting is all about.

CAUTION: All technical data in this publication, especially for handloading, reflect the limited experience of individuals using specific tools, products, equipment and components under specific conditions and circumstances not necessarily reported in the article, and over which the National Rifle Association of America (NRA) has no control. The data have not otherwise been tested or verified by the NRA. The NRA, its agents, officers, and employees accept no responsibility for the results obtained by persons using such data and disclaim all liability for any consequential injuries or damages. See asterisked * section in staff column.







Anti-Hunters Take Note: We Are Winning! 08615 OCTOBER 1991 **Outdoor Life** Buck The Myths And Get More Ringnecks **Deadly Lures DEER DECOYS Believe It Or** Not—They Work! ird Forecast **ASHINGTON Deer OREGON Quail**

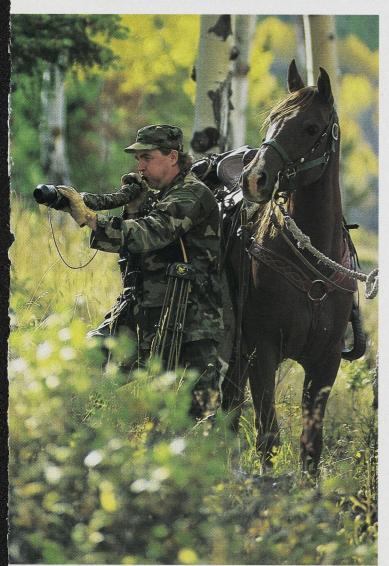
Next to hearin' the chuck iron ring, nothin' sounds better to a cowboy than the jingle of his spurs. © Philip Morris Inc. 1991



Retail spending on everything from neighborhood night crawlers to distant deer hunting trips came to \$40.9 billion. That's about 15 percent more than the annual sales of Coca-Cola and PepsiCo combined!



Marshall County, Oklahoma, borders the lake on the north. The county's 10,829 residents live primarily in rural areas or on farms; 3,999 of them are somehow employed, while unemployment hovers around 7 percent; and the average household income—about \$24,000—is well below the national household average of about \$38,000. Those are recent U.S. Census figures, and they mean that in Marshall County every job counts.



breaking THE MOLD

irds matter, at least to a twenty-nine-year-old woman named Wendy Schweizer of Bellingham, Washington, who has a degree in ornithology. She studies them all year, hunts them while the Northwestern seasons last, and cooks them with care. Wendy's best friend is a pointing dog named Cisco, and both make time for the important things in life by avoiding television and malls. When I asked Wendy where she shops, she mentioned bookstores and a place in Maine that sells vintage shotguns.

I wondered how Wendy broke the mold before it squeezed her into turn-of-the-century pop culture. She mentioned the influence of Dr. Steven Herman at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He earned her respect as a professor of ornithology, so when she learned that he was a hunter, she started thinking.

Wendy had been a vegetarian for ten years, but she dined on the first duck she shot about six years ago. Today she also eats venison, beef from rancher friends, trout, and the birds that Cisco points. Those taste best of all.

Cisco is a small female of a breed that originated in central France called the *braque d'Auvergne*, which looks like a German shorthair pointer with a Dalmatian coat. Wendy intended to give Cisco more training, but the pup just got into wild birds and figured out what to do himself. If you think pointing dogs are lazy about retrieving, you ought to see Cisco scamper for chukars that fall far down the mountain. And last autumn, when two Labradors gave out in the heat, Cisco fetched all the birds for a party of dove hunters.

Wendy and Cisco aren't big spenders; there's very little money for much beyond food, gasoline, a few shells, and the occasional replacement of well-worn boots. Something about Wendy reminded me of an old photograph—the image didn't come into focus 'til later. It was a woman holding a double-barreled shotgun and a duck. She was my favorite grandmother, hard to recognize because she was young and dressed in riding breeches. That picture would have been taken during the 19th century. Wendy Schweizer makes me feel better about our prospects for the 21st.

—Datus Proper



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DIXIE BURNS

he's a successful Florida real-estate broker with a stunning smile who also happens to have caught thirteen International Game Fish Association records in a fishing career that began as a kid. But in her own words, Dixie Lee Burns of Miami is "just a short, middleaged housewife who likes to fish."

"Fishing is like Christmas every minute," she told me. "I get a kick out of each trip, whether we catch anything or not. Just being out there is a wonderful experience, and watching the wildlife can be as much fun as fishing."

One Thursday not long ago we fished together for snook and tarpon along Florida Bay's north shore. The fishing itself was unusually slow, but from her perspective, the trip was terrific. Although a Florida native all her life, Dixie *oohed* and *aahed* over a bald eagle, a few white egrets, and several great blue herons as if seeing them all for the first time. "There used to be thousands of beautiful birds back here," she said, for the moment without a smile. "It's a shame we haven't taken better care of our environment."

Dixie says she works "primarily to support my fishing habit." By her estimate, that habit costs her about \$15,000 per year, not including tackle, and includes frequent charters with light-tackle fishing guides such as Captain Ralph Delph out of Key West. She's equally adept offshore, having caught eight swordfish to 300 pounds and a number of marlin and tuna. She says she charters rather than owning a boat "because it's difficult for a woman to fish alone." Her husband David, an avid duck hunter, doesn't fish.

—Bob Stearns

DREAMS of a fly-fishing store

ot having much money has never stopped Bob Skowronski, fortyfive, of Sharon, Vermont, from going fishing. When baby-sitting money is short, Bob puts his young son Pete in a backpack and wades the nearby White River with Pete watching every move.

Skowronski is a medical technician at the Veterans Hospital in White River Junction, Vermont, and his wife, Paula, is a full-time nurse. With two kids, two cars, a mortgage, and unavoidable daycare bills, the Skowronskis don't have extra money. Yet Bob uses some of the best fly tackle money can buy. He makes at least one trip a year for Atlantic salmon in Canada, and he maintains a close personal relationship with every major trout stream in eastern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. He also shoots a custom-stocked shotgun and keeps a pair of well-bred bird dogs.

It's all possible partly because Skowronski has learned to make his sporting life pay for itself. He's an expert fly-tyer and one of the most knowledgeable students of trout stream ecology you'll ever meet. And he's found that knowledge to be very marketable. In the winter Bob gives fly-tying lessons upstairs in his garage, while in summer he's guiding on area trout streams as time permits.

A few years ago Bob took out a bank loan and started "Skowronski's Trout & Salmon Supplies" upstairs in his garage. It's a tiny but fascinating emporium. "I sometimes dream of running a big fly-fishing store," he admits. "But then I'd have to be at the shop when the fish are biting."

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What would the disappearance of sport fishing from this area mean? In 1990 the Oklahoma Wildlife Department measured the economic impact of Texoma fishing on nine counties around the reservoir. According to the report, fishermen here spent \$25.6 million that year, creating a total impact estimated at between \$34 and \$57 million and 535 to 718 full-time and part-time jobs in the nine-county region. Spending by anglers from outside the immediate region accounted for almost 80 percent of the money spent. Marshall County's share of the jobs was more than 10 percent of all jobs county-wide.

In its conclusion, the Oklahoma Wildlife Department report stated that "In the absence of fishing on Lake Texoma, local economies would obviously suffer." This may be a classic bit of bureaucratic understatement, but it's a big part of



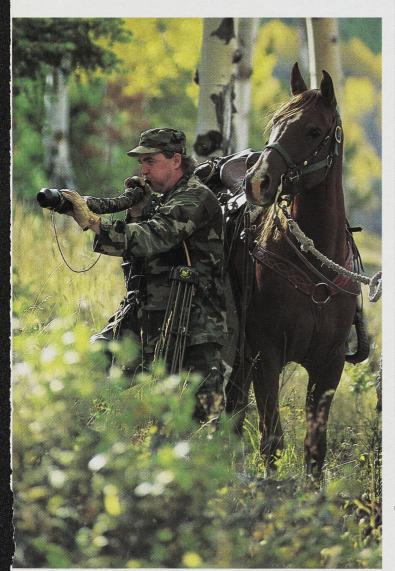
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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FRED W. MARVEL/OKLAHOMA TOURISM

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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FRED W. MARVEL/OKLAHOMA TOURISM

Hunting and fishing have a staggering impact on the economy.

But who spends the money—who earns it—and where does it go?

PART 1 of our series takes a close look at some of the spenders and what the spending means.

BY JOHN MERWIN

SPORT in the SUBURBS

ass and bucks and birds are often abundant in the urban/suburban sprawl that extends from Washington, D.C., north through Boston, where hunting and fishing thrive. That became quickly evident as I spoke with two sportsmen in heavily industrialized Connecticut, both of whom enjoy sport near home as good or better than might be found in a distant wilderness. Though neither Michael Chelminski of Norwalk nor Bruce Bernier of Shelton have a great deal of money, they still find ways to center their lives around hunting and/or fishing.

Chelminski, thirty, is a wiry bundle of energy with a Prince Valiant haircut. He's just now finishing a civil engineering degree at the University of Connecticut, having taken eight years off from school so he could fish, using temporary jobs to finance shoestring trips from Alaska to New Zealand. Today he shuttles between school—where he finds brook trout in

nameless, little creeks—and his family's home near western Long Island Sound, where the resurgence

of striped bass offers superb fishing. The last time we met, he was fly fishing for stripers in a tidal creek tightly surrounded by posh, suburban homes—the kind of place where an errant backcast might foul-hook a Ferarri. I asked about his post-college plans. "Simple," he told me. "Work somewhere I'll get to fish a lot!"

I found Bruce Bernier, a forty-two-year-old auto mechanic,



Unlimited opportunities, close to home and on a budget.

farther east past Bridgeport's grimy sprawl of smokestacks and mills at John Posh's Stratford Bait & Tackle. Bernier told me he used to travel north into Vermont or New Hampshire for deer hunting, but that the growing number of deer in both **Connecticut and southern New York** has made hunting closer to home a better bet. He hunts archery and muzzleloader seasons in both states, goes duck hunting occasionally, and fishes locally for trout, bass, and striped bass during the rest of a non-stop sporting year. All of this costs between \$1,000 and \$3,000 a year, most of which is for gasoline and licenses plus whatever gear he happens to buy, and his mechanic's job at Curran Isuzu/Volkswagen pays the freight.

We visited briefly at the back of his Jeep after lunch while he tightened

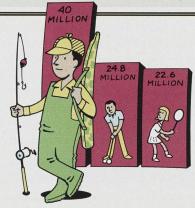
broadheads and checked his bow. He had a date with a local deer, and I was headed to the

Sound for stripers. I wondered out loud what he'd be doing next. "Maybe ducks," he smiled. "And maybe some trout over in the Housatonic River. Then later on I'll be ice-fishing, of course." He laughed as choices kept coming to mind.

Sometimes it's hard to decide. Even in the suburbs.

—John Merwin

40 million—or one out of every five Americans sixteen or older—hunt and/or fish. Neither golf nor tennis—with 24.8 and 22.6 million U.S. players respectively—even comes close to that number.



THE BEST of the field

Even huge sums are made up of individual units, and in the case of hunting and fishing, the "units" are as individual as they come!

im Culbertson of Wichita, Kansas, is a could-have-been fisherman and hunter. Ask him how he did that day, and you'll learn the success that could have been anybody's if they'd gone with him. For Jim always brings back the best of the field—either in harvest or in memory—and he does it daily.

It's been that way for fifty years of Jim's fifty-seven-year life. This retired football coach and present Boeing manufacturing engineer came from a hardscrabble Kansas farm family of seven children. As a young hunter, money was even shorter than Jim, and he learned to shoot with the one-shell-per-day allotment provided by his dad, knowing that his one shot was supposed to mean family food.

Culbertson would shoot birds for his family's table, but sometimes he'd bag a rabbit or two, skin them, and give them to needy people. He'd never take a dime in return, but he'd take a shell. Consequently, Jim became the best game shot I've ever known, while that early generosity has also persisted and grown.

When I asked Jim how much he spent each year on hunting and fishing gear, he couldn't be certain. "That's because," he told me, "each new person I take with me I buy him a rod, reel, and lures... or a box of shells if we're going hunting, and I loan him a gun if need be." Anyway, he figured the cost came to over \$1,000 a year.

But that's not how he measures things. Culbertson once paid \$75 for a female black Lab pup (the first Lab he ever owned) and made her both a Field Champion and Amateur Field Champion and took her to three nationals. At that time Jim was making \$4,000 a year as a football coach in Mulvane, Kansas. A wealthy field trial enthusiast offered Jim \$18,000 for this Lab he named Keg of Black Powder. That was four-and-a-half-year's worth of Jim's salary. Jim kept the dog.

—Bill Tarrant

bair today, GONE TOMORROW

arry Hovenga, fifty-five, of Denver, Colorado, owns and operates four hair-styling salons in the Denver area. His female customers know him as a glib, easy-going craftsman of coiffures. His fishing and hunting partners know him as a man who would rather stalk an elk or battle a salmon than put a perm on Loni Anderson. He's never met Loni, but he's met plenty of elk.

Hovenga has structured his business so he only has to put in three days a week at his shops. Part or all of the rest of a typical week is spent hunting or fishing, and a sizeable chunk of the Hovenga budget goes along with it.

"My wife probably doesn't want to hear this," said Hovenga, "but it must total \$7,000 to \$9,000 a year. I know it's an average of \$200 a week if I go on a trip, when you take in gas, food, camping, insurance, tackle, lures, ammunition, licenses, and all the rest."

It probably would be even more if Hovenga didn't have his own roomy pickup camper, as well as a boat he keeps at Elevenmile Reservoir, west of Colorado Springs, where he spends summer days trolling for the lake's trophy-class kokanee salmon and rainbow trout. In his younger days, it was nothing for Hovenga to drive 500 miles round-trip just to shoot two Canada geese. Today, his newest passion is turkey hunting, which has taken him not only around Colorado, but also to gobbler country in Oklahoma, Wyoming, and West Virginia.

"I suppose I hunt and fish partly because it puts my mind at rest," he told me. "But it also gets the adrenaline flowing, and I don't think there's anything that gives me more of a thrill than hearing a tom gobble in answer to my calls."

—Bob Saile

"I hunt and fish because it puts my mind at rest, but it also gets the adrenaline flowing.







PHOTOGRAPH BY DICK MERMON

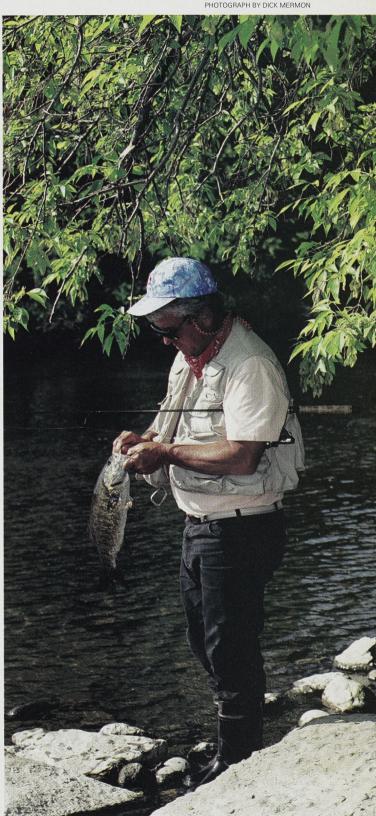
Income generated from bunting and fishing dollars in 1991 came to a total of \$29.7 billion, roughly equivalent to forty percent of America's military payroll.

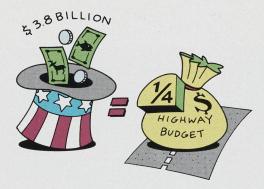
ing is tremendous. With the help of a group of economic analysts, FIELD & STREAM has estimated that when the ripple, or multiplier, effects are factored in, those 1991 hunting and fishing dollars:

- Created a nationwide economic impact of about \$106.1 billion.
- Supported 1.3 million jobs, or roughly 1 percent of America's entire civilian labor force, in all sectors of the American economy.
- Created household income (salaries and wages) of \$29.7 billion, roughly equivalent to 40 percent of America's military payroll.
- Added \$2.6 billion to state tax revenues, almost 1 percent of all 1991 state tax revenues combined.
- Contributed \$3.8 billion in federal income taxes, which equates to about 25 percent of the entire federal budget for highways.

These are impressive numbers—big enough to wake 'em up on Wall Street, even-but they start with individual hunters and fishermen in all corners of America, people like the eleven sportsmen and sportswomen profiled on these pages. As individuals, some may not spend a great deal, but because there are so many of them-40 million, or one out of every five Americans age sixteen or older they add up to a major economic force. Neither golf nor tennis—with 24.8 and 22.6 million U.S. players respectively—even comes close to that number.

According to the USFWS survey-made every five years with help from the U.S. Census Bureau—14.1 million of the 40 million total hunted and 35.6 million fished. (The discrepancy in the overall totals comes from the fact that many hunters-69 percent-also fish and many fishermen-27 percent-also hunt.) Spending by the fishermen came to \$27 billion in 1991, and included \$11.8 billion on travel-related costs; \$9.4 billion on equipment ranging





Hunting and fishing dollars

in 1991 contributed \$3.8 billion in federal income taxes, which amounted to about 25 percent of the entire federal budget for highways.

A MAN on the outside

ric Reihmann doesn't whistle while he works. He hoots. If he's not practicing his owl hooting as he pours concrete, he's perfecting his cutting on a mouth call. Reihmann and his friends at work talk about hunting, he admits, "every day of the year." Although the thirty-year-old resident of High Amana, lowa, likes his job with Wendler Construction and Engineering and enjoys working outside, his thoughts are never far from deer, turkeys, ducks, and pheasants.

Especially deer and turkeys. The timbered hills and riverbottoms around High Amana are full of corn-fed whitetails and astonishingly large wild turkeys. Reihmann has hunted deer since he was old enough to carry a gun, and he began calling gobblers when his part of lowa opened to turkey hunting in 1979. Which does he prefer? "It depends on what time of year you ask me," he says, smiling. In the fall Eric hunts lowa's bow and shotgun deer seasons. He shot his best archery deer last year, a 228-pound, 155-point typical.

Reihmann confines his turkey hunting to the spring season, both in lowa and on his annual trip to Kirksville, Missouri. The local birds run big; so far Eric Reihmann has killed nine turkeys over 26 pounds.

During the winter, Reihmann takes a layoff from work to concentrate on his sideline of mounting deer heads. This offsets the few hundred dollars he spends each year on hunting gear plus his related license and travel costs. If the season has been a good one for local hunters, he stays up long into the night to get the trophies delivered before the opening of turkey season.

Like an increasing number of hunters, Reihmann often prefers to carry a camcorder into the woods instead of a gun. His favorite tape shows his father, Jim Reihmann, shooting a huge tom fooled by his son's calls. "Until I turned thirteen," Reihmann explains, "Dad would leave his own gun at home and take me deer hunting. Then, when I was fifteen, I started hunting spring gobblers. Dad would get up early and drive me out to the timber, go do something for a while, then come back to pick me up later. Used to be, Dad took me hunting. Now I take him sometimes," he says. "It's payback."

—Philip Bourjaily

from rods and reels to pickup trucks and trail bikes; \$2.1 billion on land leases or land ownership for fishing; and about \$500 million for fishing licenses and permits. Average spending was \$758 per fisherman for 1991.

The American hunter is a bigger spender, according to USFWS data, which showed an average expenditure per hunter per year of about \$986. In 1991, hunters spent about \$13.9 billion nationwide, including \$3.4 billion on trip-related items; \$5.2 billion for equipment; \$3.0 billion on hunting leases and land ownership; and \$500 million for licenses and tags. About \$3.3 billion of the equipment total went into primary hunting gear such as firearms, archery tackle, ammunition, and telescopic sights, while special



PHOTOGRAPH BY HANSON CARROLL

the price was RIGHT

ob Sanderson, fifty-four, of Fryeburg, Maine, is a cattle-breeding technician, artificially inseminating dairy cows as he makes his rounds six days a week. All the driving is also a good way to spot woodcock coverts, places where he'll later work the English setters he began breeding as a sideline in the early 1970s.

When Sanderson was first looking for a gun dog, he saw an ad for a daughter of National Grouse Champion Ghost Train out of Skylight Doctor bitch. "That breeding sounded awful good and the price was right," he recalls. "\$150." In 1974 Bob bred that dog to a local Maine setter with similar attributes, a grandson of another famous National Grouse Champion, Sam L's Rebel.

"It turned out to be a very lucky cross," Bob admits. "Every one of those pups would rather point



"My dogs would rather point than chase. I really felt I had a responsibility to keep producing pups like that."

birds than chase, and they naturally hunted at the right pace for hunters on foot. I really felt I had a responsibility to keep producing pups like that." Bob began line breeding two or three litters a year, carefully using studs with very similar background pedigrees that had just enough outcrosses to maintain genetic vigor among the pups.

"People wanted to see the dogs work, but I couldn't afford to take time off without pay to show them. That's why I got my guide's license. Now I take my whole vacation in October and spend the month guiding hunters who want to see these dogs."

Lunch may include woodcock cooked on a portable stove in a spectacular landscape. "It's the dogs they remember,

> though," he told me. "They write me about them for years afterward." —Jerome B. Robinson



equipment such as campers and trail bikes added \$1.2 billion.

WE'VE MENTIONED THE "RIPPLE" OR "MULTIPLIER" effect, which is really a modern economist's way of saying that money is like manure because the more it's spread around, the more good it does. Essentially, this means that each dollar spent by one person increases another person's income, enabling that person (or business) to spend more, which in turn increases income for somebody else. The process continues as a wide series of ripples until the spreading fragments of the original dollar become so small they can no longer be measured.

If enough money is spent, businesses benefiting from the rippling cycle might have to add employees, whose wages and salaries, when spent, will support still more jobs. Taxes will be generated, too, both on sales and income in many cases. Economic multipliers, while a little subtle, can be immensely powerful.

To put this in perspective, consider the 1991 spending by hunters and fishermen, which created an estimated overall economic impact of \$106.1 billion and supported about 1.3 million jobs in all areas of the nation. Now suppose that hunting and fishing were eliminated altogether. Does this mean that the money spent by hunters and anglers and the



jobs it supported would vanish into thin air? No, for if those former sportsmen couldn't spend their money on hunting and fishing, they would spend it on something else—bowling, say, or video games—and the multiplier effects would still occur, though in different directions and perhaps to different degrees. Stores and other businesses that catered to sportsmen would switch to other fields—

laundry equipment and laundromats, for example—and their former employees would find work in different jobs. Or so the theory goes.

Economists call this concept "convertibility." It's often used as an argument against anyone who cites the importance of specific economic impacts. But where hunting and fishing are concerned, that argument usually doesn't wash. Here's why.

In major metropolitan areas, where economic choices are numerous and diverse (in good times, anyway) switching jobs and businesses might be relatively easy—or at least possible. But in America's vast rural areas—where much hunting and fishing takes place and sportsmen's dollars can mean the difference between jobs and hard-core unemployment—the concept of convertibility may be a cruel joke.

Consider Lake Texoma, a major Red River reservoir on the Texas-Oklahoma border that has become well known as a striped bass fishery during the past dozen years or so. It's about 70 miles north of Dallas, so there's plenty of nonresident angling traffic in addition to the locals who fish.

FREE for fall

Got into the air-conditioning business because the cool months leave time for hunting.

ddie Debowski of Houston, Texas, can't remember exactly when he began hunting, his memory being sketchy prior to age three. But he knows he was sitting in his dad's lap in a deer blind, and that he saw deer and squirrels and birds and fell in love with hunting. By age six he was permitted to sit in a

stand alone, armed with a BB gun. At

eight, he got his own gun, a .410 single barrel, with which he finally got one dove.

At age forty-four he still anticipates hunting season the way a kid does Christmas. His year starts in September with doves around home, and with him goes his seven-year-old son, Derek, who's been shooting since he was big enough to hold up a BB gun. Derek now has his own Model 42 Winchester .410 pumpgun and with it got his first double on doves last season. Derek's also better with a rifle than most kids twice his age, partly because his gunstocks and barrels have been shortened and fitted to him by his father, a self-taught gunsmith. Eddie also customizes guns for his wife, Laurane, whose principal shooting activities are shattering Sporting Clays and

keeping young Derek reminded of his gun manners.

Eddie begins serious preparations for big-game hunting in midsummer, practicing with his muzzle-loaders and working up handloads for his center-fire rifles. In August he begins riding his horse a lot to get the animal, and himself, in shape for the mountains of New Mexico

in early fall. In September he trailers

in horses and camping equipment for the early muzzleloading season, packing into the high country and concentrating on elk on public land where nothing is guaranteed but a hard hunt in beautiful scenery.

He can take off so much time from work because he's structured his life and work schedule around hunting since age sixteen. That's when he took a summer job in the air-conditioning business, knowing that the slowest time would be in the cooler months, meaning hunting season. Now he owns Debowski's Air Conditioning, works day and night when necessary, does about half a million dollars' worth of business a year, and keeps his life free for fall.

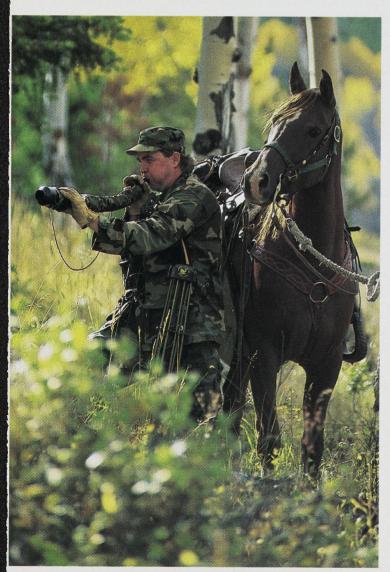
—Bob Brister

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB BRISTER

Retail spending on everything from neighborhood night crawlers to distant deer hunting trips came to \$40.9 billion. That's about 15 percent more than the annual sales of Coca-Cola and PepsiCo combined!



Marshall County, Oklahoma, borders the lake on the north. The county's 10,829 residents live primarily in raral areas or on farms; 3,999 of them are somehow employed, while unemployment hovers around 7 percent; and the average household income—about \$24,000—is well below the national household average of about \$38,000. Those are recent U.S. Census figures, and they mean that in Marshall County every job counts.



breaking THE MOLD

irds matter, at least to a twenty-nine-year-old woman named Wendy Schweizer of Bellingham, Washington, who has a degree in ornithology. She studies them all year, hunts them while the Northwestern seasons last, and cooks them with care. Wendy's best friend is a pointing dog named Cisco, and both make time for the important things in life by avoiding television and malls. When I asked Wendy where she shops, she mentioned bookstores and a place in Maine that sells vintage shotguns.

I wondered how Wendy broke the mold before it squeezed her into turn-of-the-century pop culture. She mentioned the influence of Dr. Steven Herman at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He earned her respect as a professor of ornithology, so when she learned that he was a hunter, she started thinking.

Wendy had been a vegetarian for ten years, but she dined on the first duck she shot about six years ago. Today she also eats venison, beef from rancher friends, trout, and the birds that Cisco points. Those taste best of all.

Cisco is a small female of a breed that originated in central France called the *braque d'Auvergne*, which looks like a German shorthair pointer with a Dalmatian coat. Wendy intended to give Cisco more training, but the pup just got into wild birds and figured out what to do himself. If you think pointing dogs are lazy about retrieving, you ought to see Cisco scamper for chukars that fall far down the mountain. And last autumn, when two Labradors gave out in the heat, Cisco fetched all the birds for a party of dove hunters.

Wendy and Cisco aren't big spenders; there's very little money for much beyond food, gasoline, a few shells, and the occasional replacement of well-worn boots. Something about Wendy reminded me of an old photograph—the image didn't come into focus 'til later. It was a woman holding a double-barreled shotgun and a duck. She was my favorite grandmother, hard to recognize because she was young and dressed in riding breeches. That picture would have been taken during the 19th century. Wendy Schweizer makes me feel better about our prospects for the 21st.

—Datus Proper

supporting THE FISHING HABIT



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DIXIE BURNS

"Fishing is like Christmas every minute.

he's a successful Florida real-estate broker with a stunning smile who also happens to have caught thirteen International Game Fish Association records in a fishing career that began as a kid. But in her own words, Dixie Lee Burns of Miami is "just a short, middleaged housewife who likes to fish."

"Fishing is like Christmas every minute," she told me. "I get a kick out of each trip, whether we catch anything or not. Just being out there is a wonderful experience, and watching the wildlife can be as much fun as fishing."

One Thursday not long ago we fished together for snook and tarpon along Florida Bay's north shore. The fishing itself was unusually slow, but from her perspective, the trip was terrific. Although a Florida native all her life, Dixie oohed and aahed over a bald eagle, a few white egrets, and several great blue herons as if seeing them all for the first time. "There used to be thousands of beautiful birds back here," she said, for the moment without a smile. "It's a shame we haven't taken better care of our environment."

Dixie says she works "primarily to support my fishing habit." By her estimate, that habit costs her about \$15,000 per year, not including tackle, and includes frequent charters with light-tackle fishing guides such as Captain Ralph Delph out of Key West. She's equally adept offshore, having caught eight swordfish to 300 pounds and a number of marlin and tuna. She says she charters rather than owning a boat "because it's difficult for a woman to fish alone." Her husband David, an avid duck hunter, doesn't fish. -Bob Stearns

DREAMS of a fly-fishing store

ot having much money has never stopped Bob Skowronski, fortyfive, of Sharon, Vermont, from going fishing. When baby-sitting money is short. Bob puts his young son Pete in a backpack and wades the nearby White River with Pete watching every move.

Skowronski is a medical technician at the Veterans Hospital in White River Junction, Vermont, and his wife, Paula, is a full-time nurse. With two kids, two cars, a mortgage, and unavoidable daycare bills, the Skowronskis don't have extra money. Yet Bob uses some of the best fly tackle money can buy. He makes at least one trip a year for Atlantic salmon in Canada, and he maintains a close personal relationship with every major trout stream in eastern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. He also shoots a custom-stocked shotgun and keeps a pair of well-bred bird dogs.

It's all possible partly because Skowronski has learned to make his sporting life pay for itself. He's an expert fly-tyer and one of the most knowledgeable students of trout stream ecology you'll ever meet. And he's found that knowledge to be very marketable. In the winter Bob gives fly-tying lessons upstairs in his garage, while in summer he's guiding on area trout streams as time permits.

A few years ago Bob took out a bank loan and started "Skowronski's Trout & Salmon Supplies" upstairs in his garage. It's a tiny but fascinating emporium. "I sometimes dream of running a big fly-fishing store," he admits. "But then I'd have to be at the shop when the fish are biting." -Jerome B. Robinson

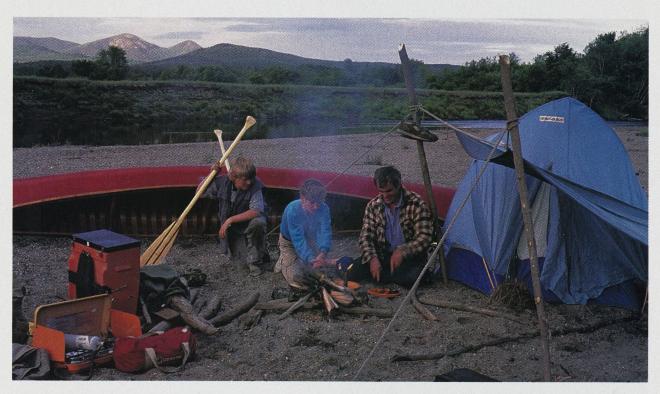
What would the disappearance of sport fishing from this area mean? In 1990 the Oklahoma Wildlife Department measured the economic impact of Texoma fishing on nine counties around the reservoir. According to the report, fishermen here spent \$25.6 million that year, creating a total impact estimated at between \$34 and \$57 million and 535 to 718 full-time and part-time jobs in the nine-county region. Spending by anglers from outside the immediate region accounted for almost 80 percent of the money spent. Marshall County's share of the jobs was more than 10 percent of all jobs county-wide.

In its conclusion, the Oklahoma Wildlife Department report stated that "In the absence of fishing on Lake Texoma, local economies would obviously suffer." This may be a classic bit of bureaucratic understatement, but it's a big part of



our story, which will continue next month with hunting and fishing impact figures for every state, plus a look at businesses big and small and how they benefit from the sportsman's dollar.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FRED W. MARVEL/OKLAHOMA TOURISM



a DOCTOR with a fever

It's not every day you come face to face with your fantasy. I was standing on the deck of a large, stylish home in the hills south of Bend, Oregon, looking down 200 yards of wooded slope into the crashing foam of the Deschutes River. All this and a plane he flies himself belong to Craig MacCloskey, an orthopedic surgeon who practices medicine between fishing trips, or fishes between knee reconstructions—even MacCloskey isn't quite sure which way it works.

Soon after establishing his medical practice,

MacCloskey began indulging in a passion for whitewater. His father, Ed Thurston, was one of the early McKenzie River guides, and MacCloskey grew up in the company of driftboats and fast water. About fifteen years ago MacCloskey hit some hot steelhead fishing while rafting the Rogue River, and life hasn't been quite the same



"Im not sure how much money I spend on fishing. I'm not sure I want to know."

since. Fishing is no longer an "interest," he says, "it's a fever." And he recounts the destinations of the past few seasons like a man in a pleasant delirium: the Deschutes, McKenzie, Rogue, Beaverkill, Big Horn—among others.

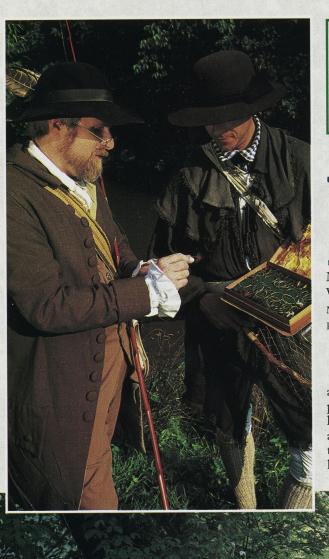
For all this, MacCloskey, at fifty-eight, speaks mostly of the pleasure of being with friends in beautiful places, doing what you love. In the end, he fishes for the same reasons anyone

else does; he just does it on a grander scale.

"I'm not really sure how much money I spend on fishing," he told me. "I'm not sure I want to know. But probably around \$10,000 a year." Most of that is on the big trips. "Usually, I fish a lot closer to home," he says, "and those trips are cheap. You don't need a bunch of money to have a good time." $-Ted\ Leeson$

Coming In May:

✓ The impact of hunting and fishing in your state ✓ Dollars and deer—the top ten states ✓ Megastores and Mom-and-Pops



Antique Angling by Jim Merritt

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN McGRAIL

N THE SUMMER OF 1787, GEORGE WASHINGTON AND HIS FRIEND GOUVERNEUR MORRIS TOOK TIME OFF FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION IN PHILADELPHIA FOR A TRIP TO NEARBY VALLEY FORGE. THEIR INTENTION WAS TO "GET TROUT," WROTE WASHINGTON IN HIS DIARY, ALTHOUGH MORRIS APPEARS TO HAVE DONE ALL THE FISHING. WHILE THE GENERAL TOURED HIS OLD WINTER ENCAMPMENT, MORRIS RANGED UP AND DOWN VALLEY CREEK, A PRETTY LIMESTONE STREAM, CASTING FOR BROOK TROUT.

macus

Valley Creek still looks much like it did 207 years ago, and one recent fall day, as I watched Ken Reinard probe its gentle runs with his bamboo pole, horsehair line, and antique flies, it was easy to forget that we're approaching the 21st century. Reinard bills himself as the Colonial Angler, and whenever he goes a-fishing he dresses the part: buckled shoes, knickers, knee-





RESPECT

By Datus C. Proper

"Our harvest being gotten in, our Governour sent foure men on fowling, that so we might after a more special manner rejoyce together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labours..."

—Edward Winslow letter, Dec. 11, 1621, about the first Thanksgiving

y wife sent me fowling in the same season, but 363 years later. Non-hunters would have to celebrate with tame turkey—full of growth-hormones and empty of flavor-but we hoped to do better. It was the second Saturday before Thanksgiving, and my mission was to bring home a cock pheasant. It would age on our back porch, just as birds were shown in old still-life paintings. The feathers would glow like autumn leaves. On the holiday, twelve days later, we would drypluck the bird, taking care not to tear the skin. I would then discard the crop, intestine, and lungs. Almost everything else would be saved. The heart, liver, gizzard, feet, and neck would be used in making the sauce. We would have the best dinner in our nation's capital—full of the emotions and flavors of the field.

My old pointer hit scent along

weedy Maryland hedgerow. If we had arrived ten minutes earlier, we might have had a shot. Instead, we pushed the pheasant toward two hunters coming in from the opposite end. We heard six quick shots. which would usually mean a miss, but in this case did not. My dog brought me the warm remains. The hunters who got the bird had breasted it out on the spot—ripped open the skin and pulled off two warm chunks of flesh. They had then thrown out the rest, which included half of the meat,

most of the flavor, and all of the beauty. It seemed a safe bet that the torn fragments they took home would not appear on the Thanksgiving table.

When hunters show disrespect for the hunted, something fundamental has been lost. Killing one's prey and honoring it have been inseparable actions since men became men. We know this because ancient paintings on the walls of caves are real art, which shows that the artists were real humans. Most of the paintings are of species eaten by the hunters. The connection has reached down through the millennia, and in some cultures there



ale Spartas

are still rituals for fallen game. People everywhere fuss over game cookery, too. When I lived in Europe, where wild game could legally be sold, a pheasant cost several times more than a chicken, and people who went to extra expense always showed respect, at least for their investment.

In America, too, our ancestors would not tolerate waste. A friend, who is in his seventies, says that his mother would have paddled him if he'd skinned a bird. The reward for thrift was flavor, and that's still the secret of great cooking around the world.

Continued on page 80



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duction guns usually are. Unlike some production guns, though, Oxford 90 triggers are quite crisp and clean, and although they show a bit of slack, they are altogether free of creep or drag. With sears this nicely fitted, you can live with a little extra weight in the pulls. Actually, at 4½ and 5-plus pounds, these are only about a pound overweight, anyway.

The cocking system and ejectors are timed just right. Both locks cock at the same instant, and the ejector sears trip simultaneously just a fraction later. Ejector springs are plenty strong enough to do their job.

Matters cosmetic are largely matters of taste. The Oxford 90 appeals very much to my taste in some respects, rather less so in others. I like the way the frames are sculpted and filed, and the sideplates are better-shaped by far than

those on many sideplated boxlocks. Triggers and trigger guard are as slender and graceful as they ought to be.

The engraving, which combines machine-cut scroll and hand-cut line work, is not up to the same quality. To my eye, the gun would look better with only line work and the rosettes on the ends of the hinge pin—especially if the frame, sideplates, trigger guard, and fore-end metal were blacked or color-hardened, or even if they weren't quite so brightly polished. Gamba is by no means the only Italian maker who takes French gray to the point of high polish; in fact, most of them do, so I can only conclude that I'm one of the relative minority who don't like it. At any rate, I'll take good blacking or case colors or the soft silvery-pearl of traditional French gray

any time.

But these are minor quibbles, and none so offend my tender sensibilities that I'd refuse to own one. On the contrary, if you're in the market for a very good gun at reasonable cost, this one has much to offer. I said a couple of issues back that I suspected the Oxford 90 would qualify as a best-buy value in its price range, and now I'm certain of it. About the only thing this gun really needs is to be better known.

Which brings me back to the point I started with—that the good old days are more often a product of perception than of actual fact. The middle-range guns we have are different from the ones we used to have, but if you put examples of both side by side, strip away the layers of nostalgia, and take a hard look, you'll have to admit that maybe they can make 'em like they used to, after all.

RESPECT

Continued from page 96

Whether you pronounce the dishes in French, Italian, or English, they squeeze out all the flavor. The taste is elegant, but there's no squeamishness in the preparation. And there are no secrets, because all of this has been going on since long before 1621.

The old skills have, however, been withering since Americans moved to town and began buying chicken parts wrapped in plastic. When my wife and I were learning how to cook game birds, we were advised to braise those tough pheasants or bake them in pies. We read the recipes of famous lodges and hunters who were too busy to dress game in the old ways. A book titled Easy Game Cooking opined that "all this talk about letting game hang, is nothing but medieval twaddle. The sooner a bird is drawn, plucked, and frozen or cooked, the better it will be."

On the table as in the field, however, we found pheasants deceptive. When cooked fresh, they were the toughest and most tasteless of upland game. When aged, plucked, and roasted, a single pheasant made the best of holiday dinners—big enough to serve our family of three, mellow and robust enough to go with red wine.

In birds as in wine, the biggest flavors take longest to develop. I don't know why pheasants need more aging than other game birds, but they do. Even young cocks are best when hung for a week. For special dinners, my wife and I prefer the biggest, oldest, fattest birds—the ones over three pounds with wicked spurs—and they are tough till they have hung two weeks. We have often let them go for three weeks rather than freeze them, because they are never quite as good after a stay in the freezer. Bear in mind, though, that no game could be hung this long under poor conditions. We live in Montana now, and by

November our garage stays between 30 and 40 degrees.

If the weather is warm, age the bird in a refrigerator, preferably on wire shelves for good air circulation. Don't use a plastic bag. Fortunately, the weather is usually cool enough by pheasant season to allow aging on an insect-free porch or in a garage. Hang a bird by one foot, not by both feet and not by the head. Keep an eye on it. Sniff it. If it has been chewed by your dog, don't push your luck. And if your pheasants are full of shot, promise yourself to switch to an improved-cylinder choke tube for a single-barrel gun; cylinder and modified for a double.

Normally, no field dressing is needed: just get the pheasant out of your game bag and into a place where it can cool off quickly. If the day is unseasonably hot, insert a forked stick in the vent, twist, and pull out the whole intestine. Some knives come with special hooks for the job. The idea is to remove the part of the innards that is most prone to spoilage, but without tearing the skin. If you open the body cavity in the normal way, you will find it difficult to pluck the bird later.

The rest of the process of dressing is summarized in the first paragraph above. Dry-plucking tries your patience, but produces better flavor than plucking wet. If aged correctly, the bird's skin underneath the feathers will look good. You may be surprised by the mildness of the smell, too. A pheasant drawn shortly after it is shot has violent odor; you would guess that it is half-rotten already. It is not. The viscera of an aged rooster can be removed in the kitchen, where you are likely to do a better job than you would in the field.

We all talk about "cleaning" game. It's Anglo-Saxon queasiness, but we're stuck with it. The problem is that cleaning sounds like water should be used—maybe even a soak. Don't do it unless the pheasant is badly bloodshot. Wild birds are clean and

healthy already; they must stay in top condition to survive, because no one feeds them antibiotics. Save all the blood you can, like a European chef preparing a free-range chicken in the kitchen. When the pheasant is cooked, you can call the blood "juices." They make the best natural sauce in the world, without cream. Unlike most holiday dinners, this one will leave you in good shape for chasing your next pheasant.

The cooking is easy, once you get over two pitfalls.

First, if you have a great chicken recipe, don't use it for wild pheasants. The basic pheasant-cooking method given below does not work for chickens, either. (The sauce fails.) The two birds are relatives, genetically, but in the kitchen as in the field, they are at opposite extremes.

Second, avoid moist heat for pheasants in good condition. For leftovers, a pie is all right; and braising lets you make something edible with a cock that has been shot-up or skinned. If there is a moist-heat method that can develop the flavor a pheasant ought to have, however, we have not found the recipe. We have tried clay pots, crock pots, oven-bags, pressurecookers, casseroles, and pans with tight lids. We have tried every additive from mushroom soup (an American tragedy) to flamed brandy (a French farce). We have sampled every dish friends brought to game dinners: some of the sauces were good, and the thighs were not bad, but the breasts were best pushed to the back of the serving dish for somebody else.

High-fat methods taste better. Every year we fry a few of the youngest cocks in a little bacon grease, and the old-fashioned gravy is a treat.

Roasting, however, had been known for centuries as the best method for pheasants—and less fat is needed. Our ancestors spit-roasted in front of a fire, with a drip pan underneath. Sometimes they added elaborate ingredients. We have found the method equally adapted to simple



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"And when I turned that light on, I really couldn't see."

"Near about blinded me, too," C.E. said. "Must've been on high beam."

"Must've been."

There was nothing to do but turn around and row home. The creek was too shallow now to run the engine.

"You want me to row?" Lester

"Naw, I'll do it."

"I feel like I ought to do something."

"You've done plenty."

"I guess I have."

"Don't take it so hard. Hell, everything worked perfect except one part."

"Pretty big part, though."

"Aw, Les, come on. There's a lot more to hunting than killing, even illegal hunting. You know that."

"I guess so," Lester said.

"How many men can honestly say they snuck into the middle of a flock of feeding geese? Darn few I'd say. I'd bet there's not two other men in this county that have done it, or could have. You got to have the know-how, the technical expertise, to pull off a deal like this. Those old timers, they weren't punting geese. They were punting redheads and canvasbacks, dumb ducks. But to get right in the middle of a flock wild geese—hell, you ought to feel proud."

"Put it like that, maybe I should," Lester said, and the fact was, he did a little bit. He certainly didn't feel ashamed anymore. He didn't really understand it. C.E. just had a way of looking at things, and a way of explaining them, that wasn't exactly how Lester would have explained them, but you couldn't say C.E. hadn't told the truth. In some ways it was better than the truth; it was the truth, the whole

truth, and then some.
"I'll tell you another thing, partner," C.E. said. "We might not have hit a single goose, but we certainly put the fear of God in all of them."

"We did that," Lester said.

"Enough goose shit dropped in thirty seconds to fertilize your whole lower field."

"All of that," Lester said, "and maybe the creek field, too."

They both laughed, and C.E. stopped rowing and lit another cigarette. It was a mild night, cool but not cold, and there was no great hurry to get home. So they let the skiff drift with the falling tide, while they smoked and chatted and made plans for next year.

Next year they were going to camouflage one of Lester's boats; they'd make a floating blind and anchor it just upwind of where that fellow was feeding geese. Probably wouldn't even need decoys. It would be pass shooting at its finest, just like the old days. No, better.

recipes in modern ovens.

ROAST PHEASANT

—Basic Method—

Pheasant aged & dressed as above, skin intact

1 tablestoon olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

1 cup game-bird stock (in an emergency, chicken broth)

1 bay leaf and peppercorns

Sweet sherry to taste

Salt to taste

Bread stuffing—with chestnuts if possible

Half an hour before you start to roast the bird, heat the stock in a small saucepan. Add the bay leaf, peppercorns, feet, skinned neck, gizzard, heart, and any blood left from the body cavity. Cover and simmer while the pheasant is roasting. Add the trimmed (deveined) liver for a few minutes at the end.

Have the bird at room temperature for even roasting. Do not truss it, and heat the stuffing separately. A stuffed and trussed pheasant would force you to overcook the breast in order to make the stuffing safe to eat.

Use a thick pan just a little larger than the bird, with raised sides. Melt the butter and olive oil over medium heat till a drip of water sizzles when flicked in. Spend ten minutes searing the pheasant from as many angles as possible, turning with tongs (not a fork). The breast skin in particular should be nut-brown.

Turn the bird on its back and put it (uncovered) in an oven heated to 350 degrees. After thirty minutes—less if the bird is small—check. Lift the pheasant with tongs and pour the juices from its body cavity into the pan; they should be barely pink. Prick the breast with a sharp, two-tined cooking fork; the juices that run out should be slightly pink or just clear.

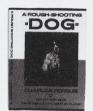
Put the bird on a carving board and cover with foil to keep warm. Pour the sherry into the roasting pan, scraping with a spatula to mix in anything stuck on the bottom. Pour in the simmering stock and all of its

contents. Reduce at a slow boil while you test for taste, adding salt and more sherry as needed. Strain what is now the sauce back into the small, empty pan in which the stock was simmered. Retrieve the heart, gizzard, and liver from the strainer. If they still have any flavor, chop them and add to the sauce. Discard the rest of the material strained out of the stock.

Carve the pheasant with a very sharp knife. Make a deep horizontal cut between wing and breast on each side, then slice the breast lengthwise into thin slices. If you do it right, almost every bite of the breast will have a piece of crisp skin, like Peking Duck. The thighs and pieces off the back should be good, too. Save the carcass and tough meat from the legs for making stock.

Plates should be warm. Spoon sauce over the sliced meat and the stuffing. Think of the stuffing not as a separate dish but as a pheasant-surrogate that soaks up sauce, stretches the dish, and rewards you with one of the world's great flavors.

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LATE SEASON



BY E.D. THOMAS JR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY DALE C. SPARTAS

he big flocks of dabblers are gone now, the marshes and potholes that bred them frozen and silent. With deer season over and the brace of Huns hanging in the barn the year's final upland bird harvest, it's easy to resign myself to oiling shotguns, tying flies, imagining bonefish flats in unaffordable places. But this is the Central Flyway, and the late season's on. And then there's the creek.

The creek in our valley is a true spring creek: it runs smoothly and evenly all year long no matter how harsh the weather. An old rancher told me that he once saw it frozen over, but I doubt that. Ice just can't seem to get a hold on the creek, and that's what keeps the remaining ducks in the valley, even when the prairie turns Arctic.

Don't expect variety during the late season. Occasionally I'll drop a lonely goldeneye, but this is essentially a Mallards-only club—plump, full-feathered birds so full of grain that their crops crunch like beanbags when my dog delivers them to hand. Such ducks taste like they were created for no other purpose than to be eaten.

The paradox of their late-season affinity for the creek is the ducks' loathing of small and confining waters.

They feel vulnerable there, and weather conditions permitting, they'll predictably scatter to any other water that's open—stock ponds, hidden springs, or the main river itself below where the creek joins in.

While you can put roast duck on the table almost any day during the late season, the quality of the shooting is absolutely temperature dependent. Above freezing, one is essentially reduced to subsistence hunting, complete with belly crawls and other low-rent jump-shooting tactics. When the mercury stands between freezing and zero, expect steady gunning over decoys. And when the thermometer bottoms out and the pickup won't start without a block heater, and any suggestion of a breeze sends the chill factor slicing through your

RUNNERS

BY DATUS C. PROPER ILLUSTRATED BY ELDRIDGE HARDIE

y pup rested his head on the arm of my chair and watched my eyes till I looked up from work to say (not very sternly), "Now cut that out." He did. Instead he wriggled his muzzle under my elbow and let me know that an ear rub would be welcome. I rubbed with my right hand and typed with my left. Huckleberry nibbled at a flea suspect that turned out to be the button on my sleeve. Then he ran to the vestibule and brought me a boot, for which I patted him on the head. I did not want the boot, but it was what he thought I wanted, so I wanted him to think that I wanted it. I was training him to retrieve.

On second thought, I did want the boot, and the one that went with it. I put both of them on. Huck was training me to keep my priorities straight, and he encouraged me by standing upright and dancing around on his hind legs. He wanted to go hunting. He wanted it because it was in his genes. I wanted it because it was in my genes. The hunting game makes no sense these days, but it still feels as if it ought to.

We drove to a nearby public hunting area that turned out to have been heavily grazed. Birds could have survived only by moving into what passes for pheasant cover around here: any vegetation too sour or prickly





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(Skyus bustus)

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for cows to eat. Huckleberry did not mind. He was eighteen months old and convinced, with the simple faith of a pup in his second bird season, that he could find a pheasant anywhere. He ran with nose high along the line between thorns too thick and grass too thin, a moon orbiting my earth.

In a half-acre patch of snowberries and wild roses, Huck sniffed at a pile of feathers from a pheasant killed, probably, on opening day. Then he cast around and left the brush without hunting it thoroughly. I resisted the urge to call him back, remembering times in his short life when he had discovered a world invisible to me. He loped across a bare field, tentatively. In its middle he stood on his front legs and did the cactus dance, hind feet in the air. It was the opposite of the take-me-hunting dance. Huck knew how to avoid prickly pears with his front feet, but he had found that his hind feet did not track in exactly the same places, so up they came. He had also worked out a choreography for other things that hurt, such as porcupines and skunks. He wanted to save time for what was good. He was on the trail of it. By now even a noseblind human could tell that the chase was on.

Huck pushed through thick willows into the bottom of a slough cushioned with cattails. They were like the plush lining of a lady's purse. He trailed another two hundred yards, ran a broad loop to get the wind right, and worked in my direction. Perhaps we could trap the bird between us. I lowered my weapon and charged. The pheasant ran out of the bottom and through the willow screen, flushing on the far side. I could not see it well enough to be sure that it was a legal cock rather than an illegal hen, so I didn't shoot—but it acted like a rooster that knew about guns.

Huck came to heel and I trotted him in the direction the bird seemed to have taken. Three hundred

yards away he stopped, nose high but turning from side to side, tentatively. The air-washed scent must have been weak. He put his nose down, cast around scent, and followed it. He started to for ground stiffen, changed his mind, trailed with two nearpoints, then pointed firmly at a clump of junipers. I tried to get far enough in front, but the pheasant, with no ground cover to hide in, ran out and flushed far from both of us. It was indeed a cock, red wattles rampant, snowy ring resplendent below evergreen head, orange breast aflame, tail pennants flouting the idiot with a shotgun. This pageantry of the chase streamed off, almost out of sight. Just before it disappeared, I thought I saw it flare its wings and tip back to land. I marked the spot and heeled the pup to it as quickly as I could move without becoming too breathless to shoot.

Now, all gallinaceous birds (or at least all that I've hunted) are fast on their feet. The American quails—including the Mearns—run when they learn that it is better for their survival than flying or sitting still. Ruffed and blue grouse are good runners; sharptailed and sage grouse are better. The gray partridge is an expert at ground escape. So are the tinamous in Brazil, the francolins in Africa, the red-legged partridges in Iberia, and the red grouse in Ireland.

Pheasants just happen to play the game best of all. Their chosen habitat—thick ground cover—lets them sneak as far as they wish without being seen. They are big enough to outrun all humans and some dogs. And above all, pheasants learn fast. Their extraordinary cleverness may not be intelligence in the human sense, but whatever it is, the roosters around my place have more of it than the deer, mallards, and geese, none of which are slow learners.

Prains let pheasants thrive on the outskirts of civilization, where other game cannot cope. We have them in most of our country—excepting only the Southeast—and some of the hunting is best in the world. So what do we do? We complain. We object to the pheasant's energy, speed, and resourcefulness, to the way it tries dog and man. We look for an easier test to pass. An English friend tells me that his country is full of Americans every fall. They get no hunting, but they get all the shooting they are willing to pay for at pen-raised birds driven overhead.

By comparison, hunting wild pheasants one at a time doesn't cost much, which reflects on your lifestyle. They run till you are all breathless, and at



the end of each trail, your dog must still hold them till you get within range. Even then you miss as often as not, maybe because you're excited. I wouldn't blame you for avoiding a sweaty proposition like this. Suppose you like hunting better than shooting, though. In that case you know already that your dog matters more than your gun—even more than your boots.

y luck, I live in a valley with a bird-dog club run by hunters, and last fall we held a pheasant trial that provided some comparisons of real hunting dogs—which is not to say that it was real hunting. The pen-raised birds could not have survived in the wild. Most of them did run for short distances, however, testing the dogs' trailing abilities in some degree.

Of the three types of dogs in the trial, the spaniels were the most consistent, perhaps because they had been trained by methods suited to pheasants. The spaniels were all of a good size and shape, too. They were springers of field breeding, quick, eager, and fun to watch. We did not hold the trial in the kind of thick brush where spaniels are at their best, but if that is your kind of cover and pheasants are your game, a springer would be hard to beat.

Some of the dogs from the retrieving breeds seemed designed for a different game: sight-marking rather than scent-trailing, swimming rather than running. No one entered a Chesapeake. The goldens were not competitive, but they found birds and were fun to be with. The best of the Labradors were highly compet-

itive, at least for thirty-minute periods. The heavy dogs might not have lasted as long as the spaniels on hot days, but would have been better in the skim-ice. The Labs were the best duck-and-pheasant dogs out there, if your priorities follow that order.

The pointing dogs varied just as widely. All were fast, all seemed to have good noses, and all held their points till the gunners were ready to shoot. Some had trouble locating the pheasants, perhaps because they had sneaked off. One dog, however, found, trailed, pointed, and retrieved his quota of birds about as quickly as his handler could move from point to point. That dog won the day, though not by much. A springer or Labrador could do it next time.

The differences between individual dogs in that trial were more important than differences between breeds—more important even than the differences between spaniels, retrievers, and pointers. Maybe the choice boils down to a matter of temperament: your temperament. If you like to hunt long distances and long days, and if you are daft enough to be the soul brother of a pointer, you can have one that will find lots of pheasants. Training it, however, will probably be a do-it-yourself job.

Conventional American training methods discourage a pointer pup from trailing running birds. He may not be allowed to retrieve until he becomes rocksteady on point. He may be broken on pigeons or pen-raised quail that cannot run. If he encounters wild birds, he may not be allowed to follow. And if he

Continued on page 84

RUNNERS

Continued from page 46

gets his nose down to check ground scent, the trainer may object strenuously.

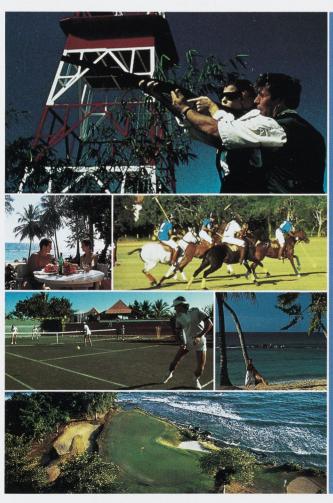
The trainer may be right, too. The merits of his dogs are probably judged in field trials of the traditional American type, using bobwhites that have not been out of a pen long enough to learn that they have legs. Trainers have worked out methods that fit. Don't misunderstand: The dogs in these contests are magnificent, but the game is not hunting. It is a competition between dogs pointing tame birds—not between a dog/man team on the one hand and nature on the other.

Ground-trailing hurts a dog in most field trials. It makes him look less stylish, at least by the standard American definition of style. By anybody's standards, trailing slows a dog down. He may, till he gets the hang of it, push the birds too hard and bump some of them. You may not want to let your dog trail at all if you spend most of your time in trials or on hunting preserves. And if you hunt where birds are abundant, you do not need a dog that can trail individuals for long distances. If, on the other hand, you hunt the public area where this tale started, you might want a dog that can stay with the only pheasant you'll see all week.

Lots of pointers can follow the scent that drifts into the air behind a running bird. This is the fastest and best way to trail—when it

works. Unfortunately, air scent develops gaps when the trail is long. At that point, the dogs that succeed (or at least all I have seen) get their noses down to close the gaps with ground scent. They get their noses back up when conditions permit. They find birds that other dogs pass by. This, I think, is not just one more skill. It takes more brains and experience than any other task in upland hunting. It is harder than running fast and slamming into a point, harder than quartering the ground beautifully. Those things can be transmitted by genes or acquired during basic training. Trailing cannot. Some dogs never get the hang of it.

My notions on choosing, raising, and evaluating pups are shared by



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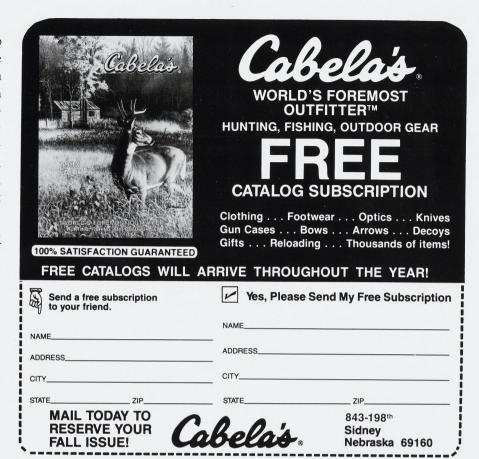
The Major is usually invited to such parties by the male of the species. (But occasionally there is a female who mistakenly believes him to be an eligible candidate for formalized, long-term co-habitation.) Peabody refuses to attend them during the early parts of the month when he is financially secure and able to fund his hunting forays. But at the end of the month—well. that's a different matter. He pays a terrible price for a few glasses of Scotch whiskey, some food, and something to do until the end of the month rolls around and there is again money available for another hunting trip.

So, you will understand why, during the last week of July, I felt some accident must have befallen the Major. He had not contacted me to tell me where in the world I was to deliver his August checks, nor had he appeared at my apartment for the purpose of attacking my supply of The Glenlivet or conning me into paying for an evening at Bookbinder's.

I made due inquiry with the police, fearing the Major may have been apprehended while committing some misdemeanor. When they and the hospitals had nothing to report, cautious inquiry was made to his Virginian "white sheep" relatives. They knew nothing of his whereabouts and left the distinct impression they had no real interest in discovering them.

It was with a sense of relief when, on August 7th, well after he was entitled to his checks, Major Peabody appeared at my apartment door, carrying a large box and apparently enjoying both good health and excellent spirits.

"I apologize if I have caused any distress by not timely presenting myself for your monthly funding," he said before I could question him, "but I was in our sister republic of Cuba,



at Santiago de Cuba to be exact, serving as a Technical Official for our Rowing team at the XI Pan American Games."

This was, indeed, a surprise. I'm sure the major's interest in rowing is limited to moving a duck boat in and out of a blind. I'm sure he believes Rowe v. Wade is an argument over which is the better method of fishing.

"Don't look so surprised," he said. "When the Rowing team's organization learned of my enthusiastic support of our nation's young athletes, as well as my long-time interest in the sport (my jaw dropped) and my ability to speak Spanish, they accepted my offer to volunteer translation services and were pleased to arrange to have me appointed a Technical Official for the Games."

"You might close your mouth," he said before continuing. "It was a very convenient arrangement. Transportation and food were all furnished, and I managed to win a bit from

some of my compatriots who had incredibly bad luck at the poker table.

"None of the young men and women who made up the Canoe/Kayak teams smoked cigars, and the State Department allowed everyone to bring back up to \$100 of Cuban purchases. Since there wasn't much to purchase in Cuba, each of the Canoe/Kayak team members agreed to help me out.

"I'll leave this crate of cigars in your safekeeping. Please review your apartment owner's insurance policy. In the event it doesn't cover the loss of cigars by fire or theft, purchase the necessary rider. Now then, if you will deliver my August remittance, I'll be off and bore you no longer with conversation about the Pan American Games or the state of affairs in Cuba.

"You might plan on being in Mexico on October 1st. The Tiuamp, Curassow, and Chacalaca seasons are all open, and I may be in need of funds. I'll send a postcard describing exactly where I may be."

people who know more about dogs than I. My ideas on training, however, are so rustic that I wouldn't mention them at all, except that they were used for the few other pointers I have known that were good trailers.

You choose the pup by picking the right parents—a sire and dam proven capable by some objective test: shoot-to-retrieve trials, for example. Don't believe us owners. Every one of us is convinced, not very deep down inside, that he has the world's best dog.

You get the pup when it is about eight weeks old. (You can teach an old dog some new tricks, but not enough to catch up with an old cock pheasant.) You raise the pup in your house and love it like your child. It will adopt you so soon that the commitment will frighten you. And therefore, with luck, the pup will want to hunt with you instead of running off on its own. It will also develop whatever brains it has, like a human child exposed to abundant stimuli.

You judge the dog's intelligence like a child's, too: by seeing how fast it learns. Given the chance, a pointer pup six months old—a year at most—should find birds, point them, hold them till you get there, retrieve those you shoot, and run them down if they are winged. (Learning to follow long trails will take more time.) The pup should also have enough sense to avoid porcupines and skunks, not to mention dog fights. If it is a slow learner, you will probably keep it anyhow, and in time find it a useful dog. But better genes are available for your next try. Affection for an individual does not oblige you breed a dynasty of dim-wits.

Training? Of course you drill into the pup the basic commands and behaviors that let you achieve control. (Most American pointers

need plenty of that.) The yard work, however, has little to do with hunting skills. You can have a beautiful, fully broken dog that is—so its trainer tells you—one of the finest ever seen. It may even have passed a hunting test. But it may flunk pheasants.

sheep dog needs real sheep to learn its trade, and a pointing dog needs real Labirds. The only method I know first-hand is this: You put the pup in cover with wild birds and let him figure them out. Instead of telling him how to hunt, you try to bring out the hunt that is in him. His ancestors knew how to trail. and his genes may still have the code. If the instinct is weak, or if you have little opportunity to get out among wild birds, you could experiment with the methods used for spaniels and some "versatile" breeds of pointers. I have not tried those. Huckleberry is a German shorthaired pointer, on paper, but he thinks he's a Yankee bird dog with no time for rabbits and such. The only thing I did right was to get him out among robins and meadowlarks, and then pheasants, partridges, grouse, and quail. When wild birds were nesting, we used bobwhites from a recall pen. They were a feeble substitute.

It gets down to the difference between training and teaching. You can train a pup not to make puddles on the floor and to come when you call him. You cannot teach him to hunt. You do not know where the birds are. He does. Before long he will show you. You may not often get an airand-ground chase that zigzags over a mile, but it happens. It was in the middle of happening when I interrupted the story.

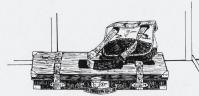
After its third flight, the cock

came down in scrubby pines and buffaloberries on the far side of an overgrown barbed-wire fence. End of the public area? We had run enough zigzags to use up most of it, but there was no sign of a boundary, no livestock, no cultivation. With cold blood I might have turned back anyhow, but this was the last pheasant in the world, and Huck was on its trail for the third time. As I swung my legs over the fence, he followed scent for perhaps a hundred yards and pointed, head high. I circled in front to cut off the escape route. Before I got far, Huck broke again, running in long bounds. In the middle of one of them he turned in mid-air and lit on point, body twisted. His tail was high, back-hairs bristling, eyes shooting fire. Bird close. Right here, boss.

I ran to the far side of the trees, trying again to cut off the escape route. The cock flushed wild. Crossing shot, a little too far. Rear trigger. The pheasant came down with its head up, meaning that it would almost certainly run. Huck appeared instantly, having followed the flight line through the trees. He found where the winged bird had crashed, trailed it for thirty yards, and pounced on it.

The pup fetched, but not as promptly as he would bring me a mere boot. I watched benignly as he did the pheasant strut. The bird would have run out of bounds if he had not moved fast, would have flushed out of range if he had not pointed, and would have escaped with a broken wing if he had not trailed it for the fourth and last time. Huck had a right to show off.

This article is drawn from the author's **Pheasants of the Mind**, a book published by Prentice Hall Press, New York, N.Y.



SOUTH DAKOTA PHEASANT ACRES: THE GOOD OLD DAYS ARE BACK

By Ron Spomer

reaming about the good old days is a bittersweet part of bird hunting, but not at South Dakota Pheasant Acres. On this 1,800-acre farm, today is as good as yesterday. Ringnecks still flush by the dozens, sometimes by the

hundreds from rank bulrush sloughs and grassy swales.

The first time I hunted SDPA, the usual 35 mph Dakota wind was blowing high cirrus clouds toward Iowa and russet-feathered rockets toward my 20-gauge. The pheasants were being roused from a weedy slough by SDPA owner James Monfore, his son Barry, and farm manager Leonard Pazour, and the northwest wind was blowing the birds past my

stand at incredible speed. One cock I shot coming at me fell beyond shotgun range behind me. Now that's velocity.

When we walked cover, there were no "stupid" game-farm birds lumbering to flight at our feet. These cocks were wild and wary, skulking, running, doubling back. They flushed behind us, squirted out the sides and left early—all the usual wild pheasant tricks. Dozens would break from small sloughs or run

down grain-field rows. Sometimes as many as fifty would lift from the end of a cover and roar en masse over a ridge to the next weedy basin.

Despite the gameness of these birds, there were so many that all hunters had more than enough opportunities to shoot limits. In fact, one could pretty much select the kind of shooting he favored: pass shooting by blocking the ends of coverts or jump shooting by following the dogs.



Located north of Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge in Charles Mix County, SDPA is an exciting recreation of the habitat conditions that made South Dakota the Pheasant Capital of the World forty years ago. James Monfore has committed himself to rehabilitating this tired farmland, bolstering resident wildlife populations and providing superb pheasant hunting for clients.

Dozens of glacial pothole wetlands dot the farm, providing dense cattail, bulrush, and slough-grass escape cover. Surrounding these are grassy buffers of protective nesting cover. On hilltops, Monfore and Pazour have planted long strips of trees to provide winter shelter. If whitetail bucks stop rubbing them into oblivion, substantial winter shelter will eventually grow up.

Beside one pothole, Monfore has

installed an artesian well that continuously pumps water into the little pond, assuring birds an adequate supply of moisture during droughts. The rest of the property is farmed for cash grain crops which provide all the food wildlife needs.

Because of all the natural wetlands on the farm, ducks are resident by the hundreds. During wet summers, local production is sub-

stantial. During migration, thousands of mallards, pintails, teal, gadwalls, wigeons, scaup, and buffleheads stop. SDPA augments its substantial wild pheasant production with pen-reared birds that are kept in large flight pens and released in late summer. By October they're barely distinguishable from wild birds.

Clients can bring their own dogs or enjoy the work of the farm labs. Large

THE CARE & FEEDING OF GAME GUNS

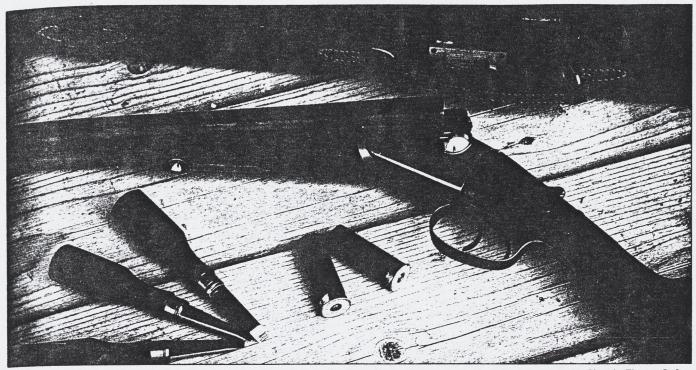


Photo by Thomas G. Oro

BY DATUS C. PROPER

ld British game guns suit me not because they are old, but because they are good. They combine form and function as well as any objects ever made by man. I choose to believe that they were built as a tribute to hunting—a sort of offering to Diana—and besides, they have helped me to shoot better. I wince to think of collectors buying up such guns while there is still life in them. They deserve a better fate than porcelain figurines, early editions of Batman Comics, and dumb blond bird dogs.

My two game guns are, in order of purchase, a Woodward and a Westley Richards. Both are 12-gauge, side-by-side doubles, and each is almost a century old. I bought the Woodward in London back when prices were reasonable. More recently, I had to send it off for work that is going to take time. This brings up the leading problem with hand-made guns: They demand specialized gunsmiths, all of whom are overworked. A back-up gun therefore comes in very

handy. And that's how I persuaded myself that I needed the Westley Richards.

The Woodward sidelock is perfection, as far as I can see, and I have stripped it down often enough to know it intimately. The Westley Richards comes close in quality, and its design fits my purposes. The outside of the action is solid steel, without pins. The locks on the inside stay dry, at least by comparison to those on the Woodward. The Westley Richards's action is known as a droplock—meaning an Anson & Deeley action with most of its mechanism mounted on two separate plates. When they do need to be checked after a Montana blizzard, they can be removed by hand within seconds. The rounded bottom of the action makes it pleasant to carry, too.

There is another thing. The Westley Richards' lines are simple and smooth, the finish resolutely austere. It tickles me to think of those polished locks hiding like jewels in a modest vault. I could wish, however, that

Shy would you larger shall? But you can't should use 234' fortage bad any how — + if you're going to load your own, you don't stoo longer chamber.





the locks had intercepting sears like those on sidelocks.

Both of the old guns have double triggers, thank goodness. Both also have low, unobtrusive ribs, plain forends, and simple stocks. I do not know of any cars or houses as well designed as these game guns. Their lines make my eyes happy.

The weight and balance keep my body content, too. I happen to need both light weight and length in a gun: light weight because there are miles between shots; length because I am long myself, and precipitate. Twenty-nine-inch barrels slow me down and remind me to aim. Aim? But somebody has written that a shotgun must not be aimed. My dictionary, on the other hand, says that to aim is "To direct (a weapon) at someone or something." I am here to testify that my guns do not hit unless I direct them at the target.

It is not easy to find long, light guns. My Remington 1100 autoloader is long, but it weighs 8 pounds, 7 ounces. I use it for ducks with 12-gauge, $2^{3/4}$ " steelshot loads, and it makes their recoil tolerable—barely. But only an artilleryman would describe this weapon as a field piece. At the other extreme, light modern doubles run to short barrels. They are pleasant to carry, and they fit some hunters. Once upon a

time, all of us assumed that short barrels were ideal for upland shooting. The game of sporting clays has raised questions about that.

Old guns—and certainly old British guns—do require special care and feeding. My remedies may be of help to a few other eccentrics with similar enthusiasms. I shall provide specifics, because generalities are risky in dealing with guns filed out by hand a long time ago.

Both of my guns had problems with Winchester and Remington primers. The Woodward's firing pins (strikers) stuck in the primers, making the gun difficult to open. The Westley Richards had misfires. I tried various complicated cures before finding the easy one: Federal 209 primers. With them, the firing pins no longer hang up, perhaps because the rear face of the primers is slightly convex. At the same time, Federal primers are much less prone to misfire.

If you handload, please note that Federal primers may require less powder than others. For that matter, it is dangerous to substitute any component of a load—including the wad—without knowing the effects on pressure. My source on this subject is the *Handloader's Guide*, published by the IMR Powder Company, Plattsburgh, NY 12901. This guide, for-

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merly published by Du Pont, has been updated frequently in the years I have used it. It gives precise pressures and velocities for hundreds of loads. There is not much chance of misinterpretation, because every component is listed.

Most British game guns have $2^{1}/2^{"}$ chambers. This is $^{1}4^{"}$ shorter than the American standard. Over the years, therefore, some Americans have had British chambers lengthened to $2^{3}/4^{"}$. It is a simple, commonsense change, and it works as well as most of the simple, common-sense changes proposed by politicians before elections. Don't bite. If you do, you will invalidate the gun's British proof, lower its value, and do nothing to make it suitable for American factory ammunition.

The problem, as it turns out, lies not in the shell's length but its pressure. British game guns are generally designed and proofed for a pressure of three long tons per square inch. The equivalent in American terms is not obvious, because British methods for reading pressure differ from those in America. British writer Gough Thomas, in a book titled *Shotgun Shooting Facts*, provides an interpretation. The British "3 tons," he says, is equivalent to about 8,500 pounds per square inch for pressures taken by American methods.

There is still a little translating to be done—because chamber pressures can be taken by more than one method, even in America. Thomas's reference is clearly to the old standard: lead unit pressure (LUP), as used in my *IMR Handloader's Guide*. American loads often produce pressures above 10,000 LUP, which greatly exceeds the British 3-ton level. I roamed London and asked gunmakers whether American ammunition would really be a problem for my Woodward. The helpful gentleman at Purdey's, to take one example, warned me to avoid pressures above those for which my gun was designed. The action would be stressed, he said. The gun might shoot loose. He had seen instances.

On the other hand, British authorities were not concerned about an extra ¹/₄" in the length of a shell, so long as (a) pressures were mild and (b) the shell was pie-crimped, with no overshot wad. Please excuse me for getting technical here. This is an issue that has been causing confusion for a couple of generations, and its resolution is not obvious.

If you want a simple way out, order shells designed for $2^{1}/2^{"}$ chambers and low pressure. Several firms stock them. But don't be astonished if you get British shells that are $2^{3}/4^{"}$ long after you fire them. I lived in Ireland from 1971 to 1975 and shot Eley shells. They were all $2^{3}/4^{"}$ in length after firing, though their box

was marked "2½" chambers." In America, I try to duplicate these loads with our components, which are even better. This country is a good place to live for people who like to fiddle with guns.

Another book by Gough Thomas, *Shotguns & Cartridges*, carries a handloading guide by Eley. It recommends a case length of $2^{3/4}$ " for star-crimped ammunition intended for $2^{1/2}$ " chambers. Eley is the British equivalent of Winchester or Remington, so the recommendation carries weight. It is supported by a series of tests in yet another reference, Gough Thomas's gun book. Identical $2^{3/4}$ " loads were fired in both $2^{1/2}$ " and $\overline{2^{3/4}}$ " chambers and found to give virtually identical pressures.

I handload to pressure levels that I know to be mild. My normal combination is 12-gauge, 23/4" Winchester AA shells, Federal 209 primers, wads specified in the IMR guide, and SR 7625 powder. (This slow-burning powder makes it easy to produce good velocities with low pressures.) Early in the season, for most birds, I use one ounce or 11/16 ounces of shot at muzzle velocities between 1150 and 1200 feet per second. Late in the season, when pheasants flush wild in cold temperatures, I load 11/8 ounces of nickel-plated shot for a nominal velocity of about 1,250 feet per second. In all cases, I keep pressures below 8,000 LUP by the IMR guide. The old Woodward has been using such ammunition for fifteen years with no problems.

It is only human to believe that hard-kicking shells labeled "maximum" or "magnum" are appropriate for tough old pheasants. If that has been your assumption, try these low-pressure handloads. You may be in for a nice surprise.

do not want to leave the impression that I am an antiquarian. I bought turn-of-the-century guns because they were cheaper than those made between World Wars, let alone new best-grade guns. I am a hunter, first. I would welcome a modern, light side-by-side with the qualities of the old game guns. I could learn to live with low prices, interchangeable parts, and wide-slotted screws. The threat of liability suits will probably keep American firms from designing light, modern successors to the game gun, unfortunately. Perhaps someone in Britain will give it a try. Or maybe the Italians will take on the job. They could build a gun the way they build Campagnolo bicycle components, but they would have to get the lines right first, and the balance. They should not start by designing a gun that is easy to manufacture. They should insist on perfect line, balance, and function, then find a way to make it happen. They might begin with an old game gun and try to make something as good a hundred years later.

'LESSONS'

here are no mistakes in working with bird dogs—only lessons." This idea, of course, is founded in the idea that we all must learn from our mistakes. After 20 years of working with bird dogs, I can tell you that I've received a lot of lessons. What follows is a list of the 10 most common that amateur bird dog trainers make.

1. I'll know it when I find it.

By far, the most common mistake is not knowing what the dog is supposed to do. Oh, they might say, "I want him to find birds." or "I want him to hunt."

Sure. Me too.

But lets get specific: How far away do you want him to be when he finds those birds? And what do you want him to do once he's found them? Do you want him to point? To retrieve? What sort of manners must he have? Will he do these things by himself, or are you going to have to teach him? And how are you, the trainer, going to go about turning him into the dog you want him to become?

What to do?

Join a bird dog club and/or go to a few field trials. Ask questions of people who have the sort of dog you'd like to own. Establish a list of things that are and are not important to you. The nuts and bolts of training is something else, but with a plan and a goal, you're on your way to avoiding the biggest mistake of first time bird dog owners.

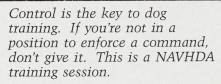
2. Why do you always treat me

All dog training, no matter what is being taught, is done in two phases; The demonstration phase, where the trainer shows the dog what he wants, and the enforcement phase, where he insists that the dog comply. Universally, the people who have success training dogs realize that dogs are animals—and that they are animal trainers.

Enforcement of "whoa," for example, involves chasing after the dog and physically picking him up and returning him to the spot where he was supposed to stop, and doing it all in a way that lets Sparkey know you are unhappy over the whole idea. It has to be done that way. Animal training is 90% physical. Human kindness and human decency is fine, but only in so far as it applies to humans.

3. I can't hear you over the

"Whoa...I said whoa. Now stop... Hey, I said hold it!... Right now! ...Did you hear me? WHOA!... Now stay right there... Hey, who told you to move? Did I



say go ahead?... Hold it!... You stop when I say whoa... Dammit, come back here. Whoa!"

Don't blame Sparkey—Hell, you'd run away too. Unfortunately, that tirade is *not* an exaggeration—Both you and I have heard far worse.

Anything the dog cannot understand is static and, in essence, bad information. Dog handlers—the good ones—are careful to use clear, consistent commands that the dog is capable of picking up. The best check is to just listen to yourself once in a while: How many times

on them. Your wife might not provide language lessons for the youngster. You might have a kennel-raised dog, or one with less point in his genes. Your specialty might be eastern ruffed grouse, in which case you would be wise to insist that your dog point at first suspicion of scent and hold till released. For covey birds like the partridges and quails, I'd have preferred Huck steady to wing and shot too, because a dog that breaks can spoil a covey rise. But for the rest I wanted him to trail. I wanted him to get me shots at the old cocks that considered themselves immortal. I wanted him to find winged birds no matter how far they ran. The rewards seemed worth the risk.

A "dog that's going to be any good puts his nose where the scent is," high or low. That's what William Harnden Foster wrote about grouse dogs back in 1942, and Huckleberry reached the same conclusion. When air-scent failed, he would work a patch of snowberries on ground-scent till I called him off, and a cock would flush the moment my back was turned. It turns out that roosters can run around for a long time in the same half-acre of brush.

You might not want to waste time on such birds—if you have easier hunting available. We did not.

Working air scent, on the other hand, was anything but tedious. The pup would trail from one end to another of a 200-acre field of grasses planted under the Conservation Reserve program. Or he'd follow birds out of a brushy bottom, up weedy draws, and into wheat stubble. Some of the pheasants would hold tight at the end of the trails. Others would flush wild. It's what most owners of pointing dogs would have predicted, and what some would call disaster. The pheasants certainly considered it disaster, because we got our share at the end of the trails. I earned the shots, mind you. My wife was teaching aerobic dance classes, working out on a ski machine, and watching her calories while I was eating like a sumo wrestler and getting skinnier by the week. Huck was going through ten cups a day of the expensive high-fat dog food. If you don't want exercise, stay away from pointer pups bred for all-age field trials.

When you run a young dog almost every day, something happens to its body as well as its mind. Huck put on ten or fifteen pounds of muscles that he would not have developed if he had spent his youth in a kennel. The weight was in the right places, because running is complete exercise for a dog. Being lightboned, he did not look heavy. His brown hair was shiny as a seal's. His pads gave no trouble. His pace would have exhausted any other dog I've had in two days, but Huck kept it up all season. There was, however, a disadvantage that I learned when partridge season opened the next year on September 1: Muscles hold heat. I had to whistle him in frequently, sit him down in shade, and give him water. When duck season came, swimming was harder for him too, because his body was so dense that he had to work just to stay afloat. A serious waterdog needs some fat.

Perhaps trailing, the way Huck does it, really is a skill that must be acquired before puberty. I don't know. At various times, however, I have watched him hunt with seven other pointing dogs, and that's counting only the good ones. Some of the seven are competitive with him in shoot-to-retrieve trials; one is his half-brother. All can follow hot body scent. When Huck takes off after a really sneaky rooster, however, the other dogs have learned that the only way to get involved is to run loops in front of him. That maneuver takes brains too, of course.

I watch the other dogs when they realize that Huck is on a tough trail. They deduce what is going on but cannot get the hang of it themselves. They look at him as if he were speaking Gaelic, sort of. □

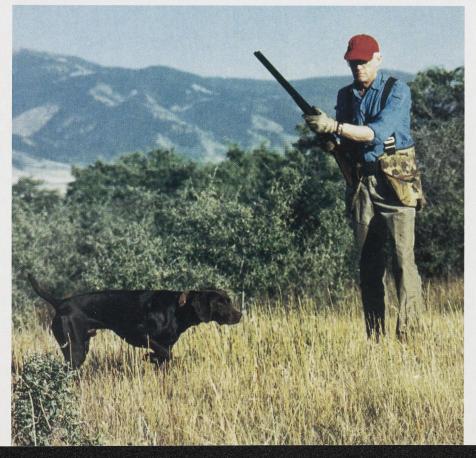
Datus Proper is a writer who lives on the banks of a spring creek in the Gallatin Valley of Montana. He's surrounded by one wife, one child, one pointer puppy and several nervous pheasants.

He's the author of numerous articles and three books:

- What The Trout Said, 1st edition Knopf 1982; 2nd edition (revised and enlarged) Nick Lyons Books, 1989; 3rd edition (paperback) Nick Lyons Books, 1992.
- Pheasants Of the Mind, *Prentice Hall*, 1990.
- The Last Old Place: A Search Through Portugal, Simon & Schuster, scheduled for publication in early 1993.

The author and Huckleberry make ready for the flush.

Photo by Dale Spartas.



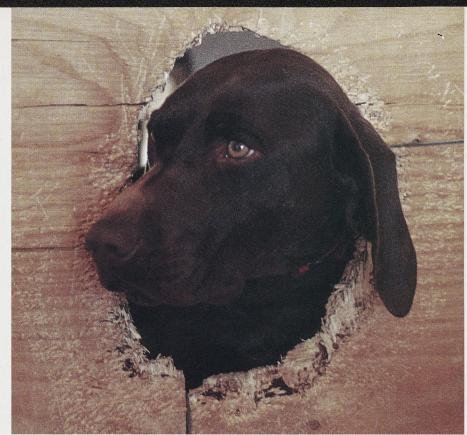
that tone in her voice since our baby rolled down the stairs (with similar results). Anna waded in to save Huck. He climbed out on his own, shook water all over her, then jumped back in and swam across the pond to me.

A pup this bold would not have been daunted by more early training in obedience. On the other hand, I do not regret my failure to train Huck on the usual tame bobwhites and pigeons. In lieu of them he pointed the meadowlarks, flustered the ducks, and chased the magpies. It might not have been everyone's idea of fun but the most important thing in matching man and dog, I suppose, is temperament. Part of me was right out there running with the pup, eyes shining, tongue hanging out.

The first pheasant that Huck pointed was a hen, which I of course flushed with fanfare. There were not many cocks around but he started pointing those he ran into. I took the finds as serendipitous—gifts from the angels. Any pup can run into a bird, and a pup of the right breeding is always going to point strong scent. It's in his genes. You don't know that you've got a real pheasant dog till he learns trailing.

When Huck was six months and eleven days old, however, my enthusiasm and his reached the same level. He started trailing in grass that was, I thought, too low for a pheasant. I watched for a while, concluded that he was doing a good job of hunting the wrong thing, and decided to ignore him. Hiked fifty yards. Realized that I was alone, looked around, and saw the pup on point. Ran back, caught the bird between us, waited out a great noisy glittering flush, and dropped a rooster in plain sight. Huck pounced and retrieved. He had done it all, seen it all, made the connection.

Two days later, almost at dark, he went on point in cattails. I tried extra-hard to shoot well, which is, of course, the best way to miss, and the rooster came down winged. I saw it land in a patch of brush and heeled Huck to the place. He tore off across an open field. I kept whistling him back, making him hunt the brush. The stars came out. We did not find the bird till the next day, by which time it was bones and pretty feathers, the rest eaten by a skunk.



Huck looks through the hole he clawed in his brand new kennel door.

Photo by the author.

The bird had in fact headed across the open field and Huck had been on its track, if only I had let him follow his nose. That was the last time I tried to teach him anything about trailing.

In his second season, when the pup was a year old, he lost none of the hundred-odd birds that my friends and I shot over him. Hardest to smell where the singles of gray (Hungarian) partridges. Members of the grouse family ran as well as the partridges but left more scent. Pheasants, of course, were the long-distance champions, covering up to a measured mile. It seemed, too, that they shared some of the partridges' ability to suppress scent in an emergency.

Huck was experienced, considering his tender age, but he was not trained by the usual field-trial rules. He remained free to creep or break point in order to stay with a moving bird. Perhaps some pups can trail as well as Huck without being allowed equal discretion. I just haven't seen them.

A year-old pup on his own discretion was, of course, often indiscreet. He would stand on point as long as his bird held, but when it moved there were various possibilities. Hardest of them to handle was a maneuver we'll call the Montana

Sprinting Squat. Pickup drivers have a similar ploy called the Texas Rolling Stop, during which the truck coasts through an octagonal sign at 45 miles per hour. You are supposed to take good intentions into account. Pheasants intend to flush but not within 11 inches of a dog's nose, so they sprint till achieving the velocity of a Texas Rolling Stop and then go airborne, total elapsed time 0.7 seconds.

Fortunately, the Montana Sprinting Squat always worked and the birds always escaped. They were wild and strong, remember. You could not let a pup chase pen-raised birds or he'd catch some of them and perhaps decide that he could hunt successfully on his own. Huck learned that he only got pheasants when we worked together. I ladled on praise when he did things right, of course, but a bird in the mouth was all the encouragement he really needed. At the end of a day we'd both tell my wife that we'd had fun but it was not fun, exactly. It was the happiness that comes with pheasant feathers.

My system (or non-system) might be wrong for you. You might lack wild birds or the time to work a pup

im McCue is partly to blame for what happened, mind you. When I was looking for a pup with the right ancestors, Jim's dog was winning the biggest field trials for German shorthaired pointers, so naturally I inquired about the champion's social life. Jim told me of a promising litter and I bought Huckleberry over the phone —one of the quickest of life's big decisions. Jim and I met a few days later at an abandoned airport, turned the pup loose, and watched him try to catch a flock of starlings before they gained altitude. Jim said that I should let the pup tear around like that for his first year, building up enthusiasm. By the time Jim finished his sentence, Huck was out of sight and I was wondering how much more enthusiasm to expect.

Back home, I introduced the pup to a brand new kennel and concrete run—built for my wife, in a sense, because she had run out of enthusiasm for dogs that dribbled on her floors. It turned out that I should have used a thicker door for the kennel. Huck clawed a hole in the plywood and Anna thought he looked cute, peeking out for company, so she allowed him in the kitchen while I was armor-plating his quarters. By the time I was done, Anna remarked that the pup did not drool. A couple of hours later she reported that he had housebroken himself. After some few months, I sneaked out of my office and heard Huck telling Anna a tale that was making her giggle. His pronunciation was weak, you understand, especially on the consonants. What caught my attention was that he was imitating the cadence of my wife's speech and the pitch of her voice. Must have been a funny story, too, because she's Irish, with more feeling for tragedy than comedy. I'd never realized that she had such a pretty laugh.

Languages are easy to learn, at the right time of life, and that time—for humans—is before puberty. Little children can learn Irish Gaelic, which is more than I have managed.

The right timing turns out to be crucial, however. Neuropsychologists now believe that early childhood is a "critical period"—the time during which a human *must* be exposed to his or her mother tongue. A child that fails to acquire language skills does not develop the necessary brain circuits and is impaired for life. Work is being done on critical periods in dogs, too, and it is going to change the ways we raise puppies. Meanwhile, most of us have probably known dogs with circuits missing.

I do not mean to push the analogy. Huckleberry is a communicator, but neither his logic system nor his sound system have evolved in the same way as mine. What he thinks is language is, in fact, just a game. On the other hand, puppy games made him a faster learner than the kennel-raised dogs I've worked with. In particular, the way he picked up trailing seemed unusual, for a point-

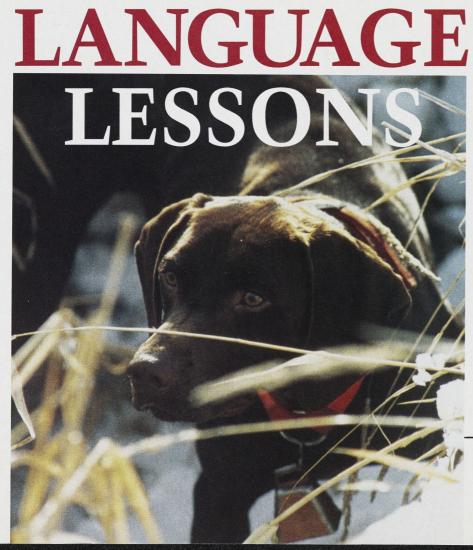
ing dog.

During that first fall, Jim McCue's advice gave me the excuse to do what Huck and I both wanted anyhow, which was to run wild. There were bigger things than puppy training for me to worry about just then. I needed an optimistic little bundle of energy to exorcise my emotions, focus them at infinity. Optimism was part of Huck's personalitiesboth of them. "House angel, field demon," Anna called him. When Huck glimpsed our pond for the first time, he took a flying leap into it and swam toward my wife, who thought he was drowning. "My puppy!" she screamed. I had not heard

There may be things only a puppy can learn.

by Datus C. Proper

When the pheasant moves, Huck will break point and stay with the moving bird. Photo by Dale Spartas.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

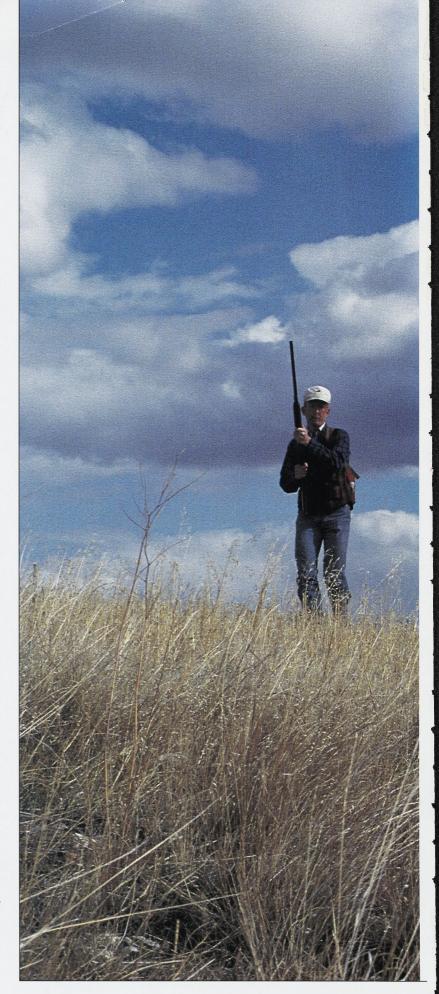
BY DATUS C. PROPER

Beeper collars don't make sweet music, but then bird hunting isn't a meditative pursuit.

funny thing happened yesterday, but it wasn't my fault. All I did was take my dog hunting. If you don't hunt in snow in this part of the world, you miss half the season, and young Huckleberry was as prepared for the expedition as I could make him. He wore, first, a beeper to tell me when he was on point; and second, a big steel bell covered by canvas to keep the snow out. The pup was as decorated as our Christmas tree. He did not object to that, though. He'll put up with anything except staying home when there's hunting to be done.

Within minutes Huck was working pheasant tracks in the snow, and the muted tinkling of the bell was keeping me in touch with the chase—vaguely. When the sound stopped, I knew the pup was on point, but I didn't know his exact location. That's the trouble with bells: They are silent when you need them most. The beeper was quiet too, plugged by wet snow. I had to follow dog tracks into a patch of brush, which put me in precisely the wrong place for a shot. The right way to approach a point is from in front of the dog, trapping the bird between the two of you.

Late-season pheasants always know how to exploit tactical blunders. This one sneaked to the far side of the brush and gave me just a glimpse as it flew out. It was gorgeous, like all old roosters, and I lusted for it. Huck turned around and looked at me the way Edgar Bergen used to look at Mortimer Snerd.



drink can was still half full. I picked it up, set it next to my lunch, and cased my gun. Then I eased down against the rear tire of my truck. Rosie was sitting up and looking around. Bill was eating his sandwich and watching her out of the corner of his eye. He looked down at the ground between his feet.

"I think she's going to be okay," he said. "I just wanted to say..."

"Don't start," I interrupted. "I'm glad it all came to something good."

There was a pause. I looked at him and said, "Where do we go from here?"

"No place," he said, "I lost my truck keys."

here is the smudge of a small hand on the stairrail post in our house. It has been there for five years. Sadness lies thick and heavy on that place. There is a rose petal pressed and saved in my hunting journal, which I took from a flower in the spray that was on top of her little casket. I fed her some of my early-morning breakfast and then left home for a long, grey November day in the woods. By three in the afternoon I was walking back across the crusted pasture snow thinking of hot coffee. She was dying in her mother's arms as a desperate ambulance driver chased a speeding escort patrolman.

We die first, then our children, and their children. When we leave home in the morning, everything will be fine for our return. The fire will be burning, and there will be a stool to lift a pair of tired feet. There will be wool socks to toast in front of it. The house won't be quiet and dark. There will not be any signs of a hurried exit. There will not be a small mound of new dirt. The snow will not blow in thin ranks across the country churchyard—unless your baby dies while you squint at an old set of deer tracks, trying to unfold their mystery.

There is another grave where the ridge of pine and hardwoods separates the old, abandoned house from the west pasture. This child was buried in 1898. Every bird season I visit this place and sweep the leaves from her footstone. It is a fine place to be. Except for that year.

I could sit no longer, but neither could I work. I was afraid to leave home, but there were no answers to find there. I had saved the lives of two soldiers, had breathed life into bodies that held none. I had lived in red mud, though small yellow men had tried their best to kill me, and yet when my own child needed me most, I was crunching through November snow. I needed to go to that grave on the hill, in the ridge of woods, with my dogs and a shotgun. I needed to do something...right.



"You look better," my wife said. "Where did you go?"

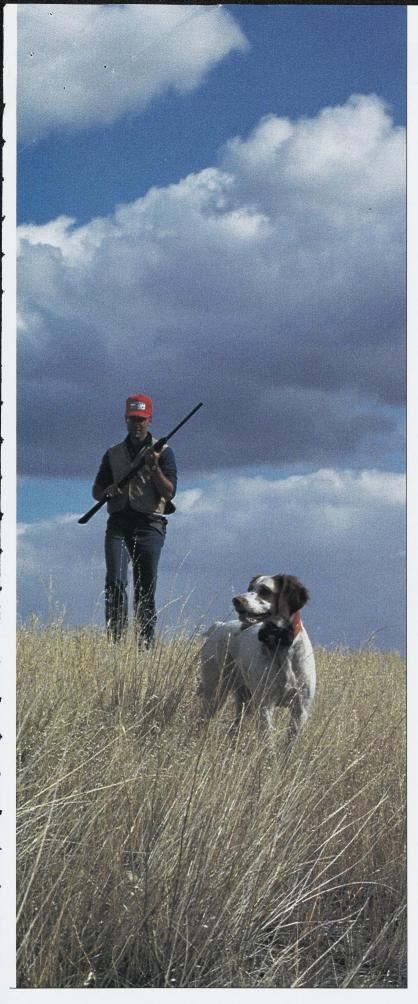
"I went grouse hunting."

"Did you get anything?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said. "It's too soon to tell."

One cannot make a diamond day happen...at least I can't. I can go to a favorite cover. I can consider the weather and the wind. I can enter the cover in a particular spot and go to certain parts instead of others. I can wear my favorite patched brush pants, and tuck them into my worn boots. I can select just the right combination of ragged shirts for my comfort. I can be sentimental about my threadbare hunting vest and smile as I put new shells into its empty loops. I can put the bright ringing tones of Salty's bell around her neck and turn her out onto the grass. The beautiful colors of my gunstock and the smooth blue-black ripple of Jet's coat are a pleasure to see in the sun, and when I look out at the rough, splintery cover ahead I can envision grouse there.

From **Bare November Days**, copyright 1992 by Countrysport, Inc. Reprinted by permission.



The pup still had one sensitive device that worked: his nose. He relocated the bird, and I set about relocating the dog, whose tracks looped and twisted for some 400 yards. The pheasant flushed again before I could spot the point and position myself. This time Huck did not bother to reprimand me, having perceived that I was useless.

For my third try, the whole covert was full of dog tracks, and I had no idea which to follow, so I spent fifteen minutes kicking the brush in places where Huckleberry wasn't. Maybe he was on point somewhere. Then again, maybe he had followed the bird clear off the place. He could have been run over on a county road, like dogs belonging to two of my friends. Nothing in life seemed funny just then.

A bird came flying toward me, high and fast. I thought it was an out-of-season mallard till it was overhead, when it turned out to be a cock pheasant with its tail feathers missing. I lurched into action too late and shot 20 feet behind. The dog came bounding up to me, one of the feathers still in his mouth. He'd decided, after spending another quarter-hour on point at 10-degrees above zero, that he had better get the job done on his own—and he had come 19 1/2 feet closer to success than I.

The only thing missing from this production was a title. "Short Dog In The Tall Drifts? Huckleberry Gets Some Tail?" Mind you, I would have been less amused if the tragicomedy had taken place during Huck's very first season. Early experiences burn deep, and he might have deduced that hunting was supposed to be a solitary sport. At a minimum, he would have learned that he couldn't rely on the skinny guy with the gun.

ow you see why I have learned to appreciate beepers—when they are not plugged by ice. They provide the only chance of supporting a pointer adequately in some kinds of cover. Modesty aside, this is a subject I have researched in depth. Before beepers, I was one of the World's Leading Experts at looking for dogs on point...and looking, and looking.

It's not that I like beepers. It's just that I love what they do more than I hate the sound they make. If they had not improved relations with my young dog, I would yield to my prejudices and abjure the things. High-tech hunting leaves me cold, for the most part. My shotgun was made in 1896; my boots are of the same model my grandfather wore; my brush pants look like Salvation Army rejects. But the pup means a lot to me, and my communications with him are upto-date, except when it snows.

Many other hunters are equally suspicious of new

gadgets, so it may be well to consider the case against beepers before going further. Questions of esthetics—and ethics—always deserve a look when technology intrudes upon field sports.

There is a good esthetic argument against anything that makes unnatural noises in a natural setting. Beepers, on average, sound worse than bells, which in turn sound worse than Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. I would not choose to listen to any of these sounds in the woods if bird hunting were a meditative pursuit. As between bells and beepers, however, the main esthetic difference lies in the age of the technology: we've had more time to get used to one kind of gadget than the other. A few of the beepers out there are already less discordant than my old steel bell. When somebody develops a collar that sounds like a hunting horn, however, please let me know.

here is no *ethical* case against the beepers I have tried. They affect only the relation between hunter and dog—not that between hunter and prey—and so do not raise questions of fair chase. The dog has to find the bird in exactly the same way that pointers have been doing the job for hundreds of years. You, the human, must also perform in the time-honored, sweaty fashion. A beeper cannot get you out of walking, like that other high-tech device called a truck. It does not give you extra shots like a repeating gun. It cannot even help you aim better, like a riflescope for big game or a graphite fly rod for trout.

The question of fair chase would arise, however, if a beeper were to successfully imitate a hawk's scream, as one device on the market claimed. A real raptor can so frighten birds that shooting is not sporting—and not allowed under falconry regulations in my state. Fortunately, the sound is difficult to imitate well enough to impress a game bird.

The technology we need right now is a beeper that works in the snow. Designing one would not seem difficult: They all use batteries, which could heat wires to melt ice. Of course, the battery would have to be replaced frequently when used for heating. I could afford a battery more often than once every two years, which is about what my Tracker beepers have required. I have not used all of the beepers now on the market, but none that I have seen claim to work in snow.

The Tracker was the only beeper available when I got started, and it has done most of what I've wanted. Its compact, rounded shape does not bruise Huckleberry's knuckles like most bells—a major advantage. I hope that he will not lose his hearing like my previous dog, which had to listen to a steel bell for thirteen years, but I have seen no research on this subject.

The Tracker emits a variable, bell-like sound when the dog is running, allowing me to judge not only where he is but what he is doing. Then, when the dog goes on point, the beeper switches itself to a different, louder signal. Only when the pup is working scent very slowly does the Tracker fall silent. To fill in the gap between running-signal and point-signal, I use a small, spherical brass sleigh-bell on the same collar with the beeper. The bell's soft jingle lets me maneuver into the right position to head off a running grouse or pheasant.

If your dog runs like mine, you might want to check the different beepers on the market to find which you can hear best at a distance. I do well with the Tracker's low-pitched signal. My friend Dave Zinn, on the other hand, prefers the pitch of the Tritronics beeper. He probably has better hearing than me in the high frequencies.

In my experience, the various beepers make ducks flush wild, but not upland birds. I have not seen the reasons explained, so here's my try. A gallinaceous bird—unlike a duck—is a creature of ground cover. It evolved to elude predators by hiding or running, when possible. A skulking grouse is already escaping. Its defense systems are turned on, and one additional stimulus—a beeper—tells it nothing that it did not know already. A beeping noise may even relax the bird a little by making the predator easy to locate. This is only my guess, mind you. What I know for sure is that even spooky Hungarian partridge will hold twenty minutes while Huckleberry is standing there beeping at them.

Aside from trouble in snow, then, I have only one complaint about the Tracker: Huckleberry is able to knock its exposed switch into the off position. He happens to be a Type A personality, the hunt-till-you drop kind, and he hits the brush hard. A slower-moving dog might not have the same problem.

For more than a century, American field-trial competitors have been breeding fast, staunch, eager pointers with good noses, while American hunters have been complaining that the trial winners were too wideranging for real bird cover. Some of the complaints were well founded. The trials did produce some self-hunting "coat dogs"—the kind you'd lose, leave your coat for, and come back to pick up the next day, with luck. But there are also hard-driving, fast pups that do not get lost. They just get on point.

The hills are alive with the sound of hunters pleading with their dogs to put in an appearance. If you have found yourself getting hoarse in the field, something is wrong—no argument there—and perhaps the cure is a different kind of dog. On the other hand, a beeper might demonstrate that the pup is doing what



it is supposed to do. You might even discover that you have the dog of a lifetime.

Dennis Kavanagh is a Montana outfitter who runs three English setters and two shorthairs. Both of us, however, have a soft spot for young Coulee—a setter with a gift for keeping in touch. Coulee finds his share of birds without losing his boss. This is relaxing, as Dennis says, and beyond that, it is pleasurable. Coulee will range out a quarter-mile on the prairies, looking for partridges and sharptails, but he knows where Dennis is. Always. If Dennis drops out of sight, Coulee comes right back to locate him. A bell is superfluous, even when hunting Mearns quail in the live oaks. The pup adjusts his range. But Coulee still needs a beeper—set to give a point-signal only. While Coulee won't lose Dennis, Dennis can lose Coulee on point.

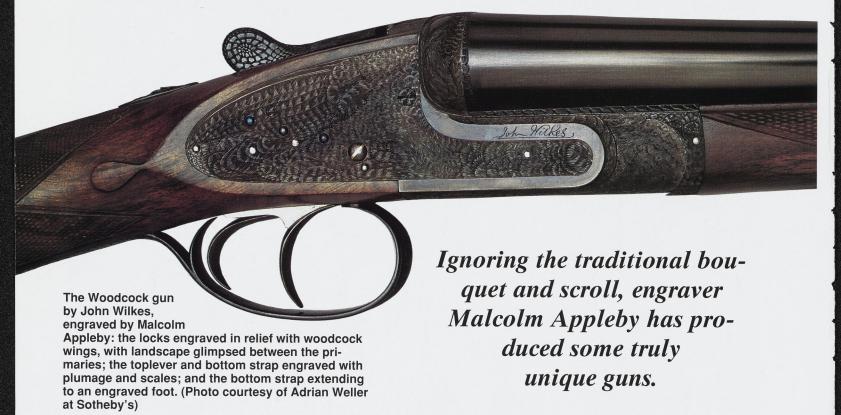
When Dennis and I hunt together, we have to use compatible beepers on Coulee and Huck. My everyday Tracker turns out to be sort of antisocial. It's great for hunting alone, but it drowns out Dennis's quieter Scott beeper. The solution is for me to borrow his spare Scott. The two make slightly different sounds, allowing each of us to keep in touch with his own dog.

A remarkable thing happens after a while: I hear Huck and tune out Coulee. I did not know that my brain was capable of a trick like that. The experience caught me by surprise, made me realize that there is more than efficiency to be gained by staying in touch with a pup.

For most of us, dogs become extensions of our own personalities, but there is little fun in having a second personality if you don't know what it's doing. The purpose of sonic devices, bells or beepers, is to keep your ears involved when your eyes cannot do the job. You get more hours per day of the emotions for which you went into the coverts.

I don't like beepers, exactly, but I like that feeling.

THE INNOVATIVE WORK OF MALCOLM APPLEBY



BY DOUGLAS TATE

hroughout the centuries the creation of the finest firearms has resulted from the combination of the technical brilliance of one or more master craftsman, the genius of an artist/designer, and the good taste of a wealthy patron.

The difficulties of locating lock makers, stockers, and barrel borers were great enough. Then came the problem of finding an engraver, but perhaps most difficult of all was the question of who would buy the finished gun? Tom Purdey was so aware of the difficulties of patronage that he gratefully wrote "the best friend Purdey's ever had," or some similar comment, next to the names of generous customers in his records on at least three occasions.

In 1969, Malcolm Appleby was studying at the Royal

College of Art and was also serving a part-time apprenticeship with John Wilkes, the Beak Street gunmaker, as an engraver. Malcolm had an idea for embellishing a gun that was so unorthodox, so radical, that a benefactor who would not exert his own influence would be difficult to find. He solved this problem in a novel way by saving his own money until he could afford an unfinished gun, "in the white," from John Wilkes. He then engraved the gun as an entire woodcock!

The sweeping curve of the chilton locks was relief engraved with the bird's wings, with landscape glimpsed between the primaries. The toplever and bottom strap were engraved with plumage and scales, and the bottom strap extended to an engraved foot.

I asked Malcolm Appleby what had inspired so revolutionary a design. "The concept rather than the inspiration," he said, "was to make the gun into a totem

DATUS PROPER

Big John

When he slipped,

he did it with style.

IG JOHN BIETENDUEFEL HAD A way of keeping me awake on the road. Space between seat and steering wheel being tight, he stuck his arms through the wheel, steered the old Chevy pickup with his elbows, and used his hands to explain the tying of the Bietenduefel Beetle. I watched very carefully. His big fingers had played a lot of football, but his tiny trout flies were of museum quality. And besides, there might be a slippery patch coming up in the road.

If I skidded into the role of straight man, it was because John's act left no choice. At our first stop, he put away three eggs, sausage, and buttered toast, while I had a bowl of muesli with skim milk. Down the road a few miles, John slipped into a convenience store for cinnamon rolls while I pumped the gasoline. Then we steered toward Gene Todd's farm for coffee and cookies. John liked to spend time with farmers in generalperhaps because they knew as much about troubles as he did-and Gene was a special, twocup friend. Over the coffee we decided on several football coaches who should be fired, though Gene might have preferred to get at more pressing work. It was after noon when Big John and I started into

the fields with our traditional hunters' farewell, which was me telling him to take it easy because he was more than

I could carry back.

As we were leaving the house, the season's first winter storm blew into

the valley. A jackrabbit bolted at the howl of the storm. John's Fudge, a German shorthair pointer bitch, bolted after the hare. I tried to send a sharp message to my own dog, but

my lips were too cold to seal around the whistle and the sound came out as *phoot-phoot* instead of *tweet-tweet*. If my pup failed to join the chase, it was only because he had picked up the scent of pheasant.

The rooster tried to fly directly into the gale and I might have got him, except for a problem I'd rather not mention. Pup watched me miss twice looked

confusion that morning

in the motel, and

me miss twice, looked back at me, and yipped. John asked the same question. Fact is that our dogs had created a lot of

somehow the lower half of my long underwear had gotten on backwards. This might not have become a problem except for the two cups of coffee, or maybe it was three, the effects

> of which hit me just as the pup tightened on point. Sort of cramped

my swing.

"If I skidded

into the role

of straight

man, it was

because

John's act left

no choice."

If that bird had hovered in front of Big John, however, he would have hit it regardless of excuses. He shot all five of his shotguns well despite varying stock dimensions. I had to stick to one gun, but then I was used to being the skinny kid who dropped

passes. John was the husky guy who caught them, got a football scholarship to college, and might have had an offer to play professionally, except that he'd had the bad luck to be scouted right after a night on the town. Thirty years later he could still walk fast, though not fast enough to keep up with his dog. It's too bad that dogs need more training than guns.

Fudge had chased down the jackrabbit by the time we found her a couple of miles away. John scolded her, but she knew that he would have shot the hare if she hadn't beaten him to it. When a big whitetailed jack volunteered for removal from the gene pool, John found the temptation as hard to pass up as cigarettes, poker ma-

chines, and the couch in

front of the television set. He was the world's largest teddy bear, smiling shyly as he teetered at the edge of one fall or another, and I kept reaching to pull him back.

Big John's slips had results that you could never quite see in time to inter-



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Ace puts the red vest to the test

The shaded areas of my exterior walls are heavily mildewed. How do I prepare them for repainting?

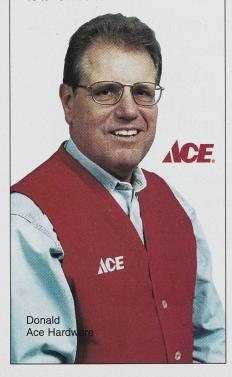
Wash with a solution of one part household chlorine bleach to threeparts water, let soak 30 minutes, rinse well and allow to dry before painting (wear protective eyewear and gloves when using bleach solutions). Topcoat with a premium quality paint that contains mildewcide, like Ace Royal Shield Exterior Paint.

Cleaning up after painting is a bother, especially when I'm interrupted in the middle of a job. Got any shortcuts?

You can keep wet brushes from drying between coats by wrapping them in plastic food-wrap, and for longer periods store the brushes in your freezer.

How can I avoid variations in color between areas I paint with a roller, and areas around windows or doors that I paint with a brush?

Paint blends when it's wet, so if areas you've cut in with a brush are allowed to dry, the paint stacks up in layers. Don't use the brush to cut-in around any more area than you can roll-out in 10 to 15 minutes.



other buddies, and by next season John would have to look for another place to do his own hunting.

OHN'S CHEVY PICKUP CAB HELD the lighter residues of his old life-dog whistles and radar detector dangling from the mirror, guns lining the roof and back window, maps stashed behind the seats. Loose gear included binoculars, sunglasses, ammunition, and knives. Fudge would rearrange these items to her satisfaction by turning around three times before she went to sleep on the seat. Usually what fell out was just soft-drink cans. She felt bad about the new camera.

The rest of the gear was stowed safely under the camper top, and the weight blew out four tires on one antelope hunt.

I always offered to drive my own truck-both hands on the wheel-but

moving John's equipment was out of the question. That's why we found ourselves stranded on the banks of a trout stream one August when the Chevy's ignition module got fried. John hiked east toward the road to hitch a ride. Unfortunately, the road was to the south.

Before our next hunting season, John put a new engine in the old truck and got heavy-duty tires—all

four of them at once. The Chevy showed its appreciation by taking us far back into sage grouse country before dawn.

John looked for birds moving toward alfalfa while I worked deeper into the sagebrush. I passed up the mature cocks, which held at the end of long scent trails, and took three delicious young birds. John shot whenever his new pup, Traveler, did everything right. Two of his birds were huge, tough old bull grouse, but the pup was worth it. Gunner and dog were both prancing when they got back to the Chevy. In hindsight, it might have been better to let Traveler finish his dance outside the cab, because he managed to lock the door while the engine was running and John and I were still both outside.

JOHN TIED A LOT OF FLIES OVER THE winter and I made some Bietenduefel Beetles, too, but an accident in May derailed our fishing plans. He turned Fudge and Traveler loose together for exercise. Fudge found a jackrabbit and chased it. Traveler tagged along. Neither came back. John never learned what got them, but a lost dog is always in trouble in this country. John spent fishing season roaming the hills, asking farmers if they had seen his canine family. He blamed himself, but wondered why he had to get caught every time he slipped up.

He was lucky to get a new shorthair, named Jake, who was better than Fudge and perhaps as good as Traveler. Come October, we all hunted together in tall grass planted under the Conservation Reserve Program. John got one pheasant over a point, then lost Jake. Whistled for him. Cussed him out. Accused him of chasing

> jackrabbits. Found him far off, hidden in the grass, holding another rooster. I remember the shot, which was perfect. I remember the promise, too. John said that he would get a beeper-collar before he lost another dog. He'd had enough of avoidable accidents.

He did not expect what happened next and neither did I, not so soon. After pulling out of so many skids, John had come to

seem almost immortal. I wanted to believe that his heart operations had made him as healthy as his truck with the new engine. Even so, I had a habit of looking across the fields to be sure that his massive figure was still stand-

ing, still all right.

Sally called late one evening to tell me about John's last hunt. A group from the local chapter of Pheasants Forever had taken some young people out, she said, to teach them the ways of birds and dogs. John had volunteered, leaving his gun in the pickup so that he could guide a twelve-yearold boy. Instead, the boy had to run for help when his coach collapsed. Big John's big heart had given up too soon, but in the right place, out in the field on a November afternoon.

"Big John had no family when I met him, unless you counted the pointers, which he certainly did."

fere with fate. One day along the Madison River, for example, a car with California license plates braked to a stop and two young women, each in cutoff jeans and a mosquito-friendly top, jumped out to watch John send 70 feet of line whistling over the stream.

"Look," said the woman with brown hair. "He's fly fishing!"

Thus encouraged, John made a smoking backcast, sloshed farther out, double-hauled his line, and dropped from sight. Only his hat remained visible, but it was a Great White Hunter model and it floated with panache. He emerged spouting, grabbed the hat, and gurgled back to the bank with waders full of water.

"It doesn't look like much fun," said the blonde.

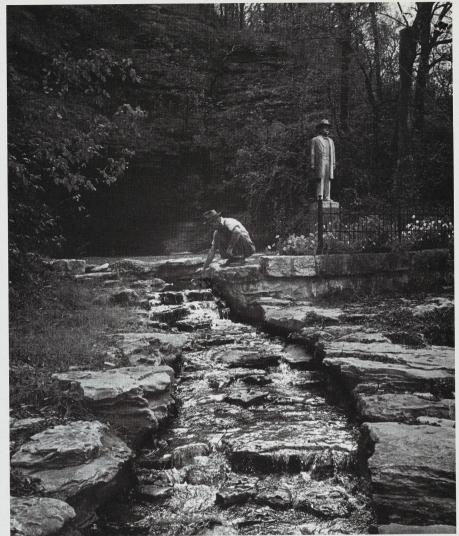
BIG JOHN HAD NO FAMILY OF HIS OWN when I met him, unless you counted the pointers, which he certainly did. He and Fudge and two retired shorthairs were denned up in what looked like Yosemite Sam's winter cabin. A forest of rod-tubes sprouted in a corner, a school of stuffed trout finned across the walls, a pride of fly-tying furs sunned on the table, and a bellyboat relaxed on the sofa.

"I need to get the place cleaned out," John said.

"You need to get married," I said. I thought I was kidding.

OHN'S NEW WIFE CHANGED everything-almost. They moved into a house that Sally kept neat despite John's entertainment center with three remotes. She was, moreover, around to cheer him up when his outboard motor jumped off the transom in deep water, and she continued fishing with him even after she got stuck in the mud during their first float-tubing expedition. He was eating better, losing weight, and running the county's alcoholabuse program. It was the perfect job for John, because he loved helping people and they knew it.

He never turned down folks who were thirsty for hunting, either, and they remembered how fond they were of John every fall. He would provide directions to a good bench for sharptails, very confidentially, to a fellow who would tell nobody but the two guys with him, each of whom was equally discreet with his



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the news mt. olymp

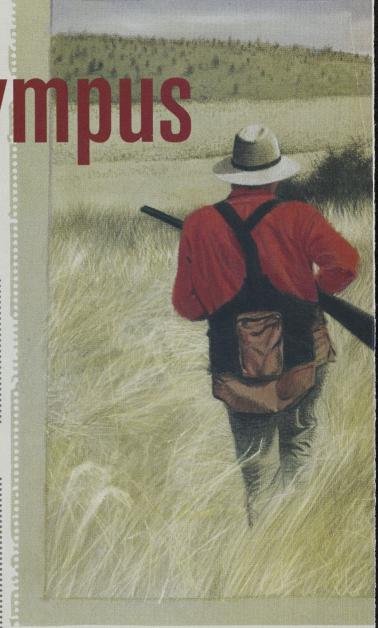
by DATUS PROPER IIIUSTRATION BY SAL CATALANO

Saturday's pheasant sneaked out of a woody bottom, slithered through scraggly alfalfa right in front of me, and ran up a grassy knob in the distance. I caught no glimpse of the bird, mind you, but my dog followed it out of the brush and showed me what was going on. Xenophon's nose was not high in the air as it would have been for a hot trail, but he was not puzzling out stale scent, either. I guessed that our quarry had a 100-yard lead.

ONG BEFORE I COULD CLIMB THE KNOB, Xeno had disappeared over its top, a dark-brown wiggle in a field faded yellow. On my right flank was David King, making better time than me, partly because he had enough sense to skirt the hill. David is in good shape, too. He is a physician who limits himself to 16 hours of work a day, unless a patient gets sick, and keeps in shape by doing aerobic exercise-preferably chasing pheasants. With David around I push myself a little harder because he knows the difference between a red face and an emergency room case.

From the top of the knob, I could hear Xeno-just barely-from where he was standing on point. He had followed his bird down the far side of the hill, across a dirt lane, and up the steep side of a bench.

Pheasant trailing, you see, has been adapted from wild boar trailing; it's a very old sport. We have no wild boars in my part of the world, but the feeling is the same and the pheasants taste better. The main problem is that my dog cannot tell us where he is time. I am not sure I could survive another.



holding game at bay, so we hang a beeper around his neck and pretend that it is a horn blowing the assembly call.

In the days when gods and humans hunted together, boars caused devastation-even on Mt. Olympus—and killed some of the mortal men called in to help. Xenophon chases pheasants in the heroic manner and expects David and me to do our duty, too. It's good to have a dog like this once in a life-

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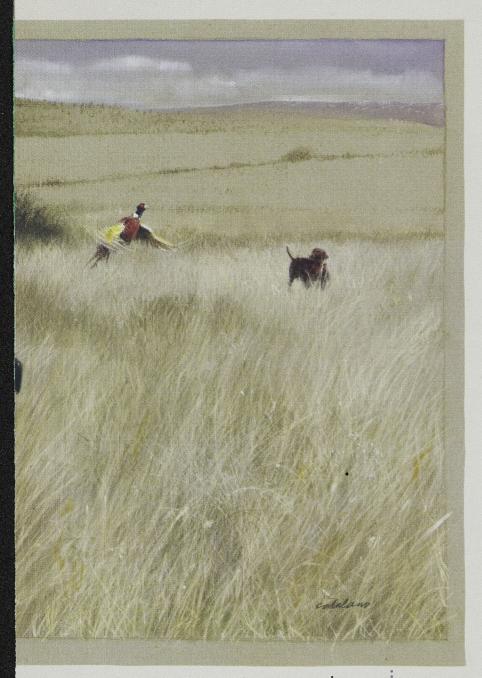
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➡RED AND GREEN.... IT WAS AN OPTICAL ILLUSION THAT MADE A FAST BIRD LOOK SLOW...."



David trotted up the bench and then kept moving till he and Xeno blocked the bird's escape on the far side. I sneaked in on the near corner of the triangle.

What happened next was the most colorful part of my life since the fireworks on July 4—the part when they played "The Star-Spangled Banner" and we all leapt to attention. From tan grass burst a fluster of red and green, gorgeous and almost within reach. It was an optical illusion that made a fast bird look slow just long enough to throw off my timing. I jerked into action, fired too soon,

then aimed with excruciating precision and missed a second shot at very long range, which was how I learned that the cock was moving right along.

David tried too hard with his first shot, like me, but swung through with his second barrel. I knew that the pheasant had lost its bet even before the puff of feather. This game is all in the head.

There is, however, one part beyond my ken. Why did that rooster sit tight when Xeno circled it? Perhaps it paused to gather its breath for flight, discovered that the predator on its trail had stopped, too, and found stillness less risky than movement. Or perhaps the bird simply gave up, like the Trojan warrior who threw himself at Achilles' feet. Of all mythic heroes, Achilles was the most intense; he did not relent. Neither did Xenophon.

David and I had often seen the same pattern in old cocks: The farther one runs, the more likely it is to hold tight at the end of the trail. Dog and prey reach some kind of understanding—a fatal entente.

Xeno brought me the trophy and I laid it out on the grass, feathers glowing, long tail slightly curved from crouching in cramped quarters. David and I flopped beside our quarry.

"Nothing else could make me work that hard," David said.

We humans would have given our hearts more time to stop pounding, but Xenophon held his nose high, caught a message on the breeze, and started off, moving his head from side to side with a new thread of scent. We tried to keep up.

Runners

OUR METHOD MAY STRIKE YOU AS THE hard way to get a pheasant dinner. Bear in mind, however, that the roosters we

chase are utterly wild and hard to find. It would be a thrill to see birds rising in waves from the fields where such things happen, but I have no reason to complain and have heard no gripes from David King, except that he could use more time off. There is always a place for us to stretch legs and lungs, always a fast dog slicing arcs from sunlit hillsides. There just isn't much shooting.

Ours, then, is a method for scarce pheasants. It would not make sense to follow a rooster up Mount Olympus if the flatlands below were full of birds.

Before Xenophon, I had the notion that some pheasants, at least, simply hid as hunters approached. It was an idea that came from sporting prints of dogs on point. The dogs were always shown in whatever pose was fashionable at the time-standing tall or crouching, tails high or low-looking stat-

front of the dogs' noses, equal-

ly immobile.

In fact, however, wild pheasants are moving targets, whether on the ground or in the air. You might catch one on its roost early in the morning or during a winter storm, but most adult birds sit only after they have tried everything else, and then only if the ground cover is good enough to conceal them.

In smaller fields, you can follow the runners at a human pace, pushing them toward an

edge where they will have to flush. Hunting is often organized around edges-but experienced roosters avoid them if possible, and habitat today may be extensive. Over the last decade, landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program have idled 36 million acres of cropland, much of it in large pieces.

Remember watching a pup running wild and flushing pheasants far ahead? There were more birds in the field than you expected, weren't there? What

if Buster could have held them?

You can't catch a pheasant

OF COURSE, YOU CAN HOLD YOUR DOG TO A HUMAN pace, but if you do, an experienced pheasant will get farther and farther ahead of you. On occasions when David and I have chased winged roosters over bare fields, they have run at about twice our speed. Fortunately, the dog is twice as fast again. I don't know the speeds in miles per hour, but they vary with conditions, anyhow. The ratio stays about the same at 1:2:4 for human:pheasant:dog.

In those figures is the reason you need a dog that trails at high speed and holds a bird till you catch up. The principle is the same for all species from quail on up. Pheasants just happen to run fastest and farthest

before they hold.

The advantages of the trail-and-point method are obvious for us humans. The canine side of the deal, however, is harder to understand. Why should a dog contribute so much of the team's skill and strength, and then hold the pheasant for you? Why should he hunt for you till he collapses in your arms after his and we know you wouldn't settle for less, last, pain-relieving injection? The answer, I think, is a ma'am—may we please bring Xenophon along?

that for the dog, there is no deal. He sees himself as part of you, and you as part of him.

I am a pack hunter, too, but I lack the courage to merge. I am better than my dog at conceptual thinking. and it is hard to be heroic when you understand consequences. I worry about the Fates cutting my thread uesque, anyhow. The birds were painted standing in *when David King is not around. I wonder if Xeno would

know enough to howl.

Becoming a hero

DOG AND HUMAN HAD ALREADY been working together for ages when the original Xenophon, a Greek general and historian, wrote about the chase some 2,400 years ago. Since then the good genes, surviving wars, pestilence, canine beauty contests, and modern field trials, have been passed on to some dogs in every generation.

My Xeno is a German shorthair pointer from a field-trial line, but

he became what field-trial contestants deplore-a dog that thinks for himself. Trailing came instinctively to Xeno when he was a pup, but judgment had to be learned one lesson at a time. How hard can you push a rooster? How wide a loop should you run to cut it off? How close should you get for the point? How soon should you resume trailing if the bird sneaks out?

All this may sound too much like human reasoning to those who do not accept that dogs have a kind of consciousness. Whatever the explanation, Xeno did teach himself to stand and deliver—though, of course, there were failures. The ground cover might have been too thin, the pheasant too spooky, or the pup too bold. Caution was the hardest lesson.

Xenophon's faults are shared by his humans; we have been no faster to learn. We show too much zeal in an enterprise that is not listed on the stock exchange. We exhaust our lives' energies chasing

risky propositions.

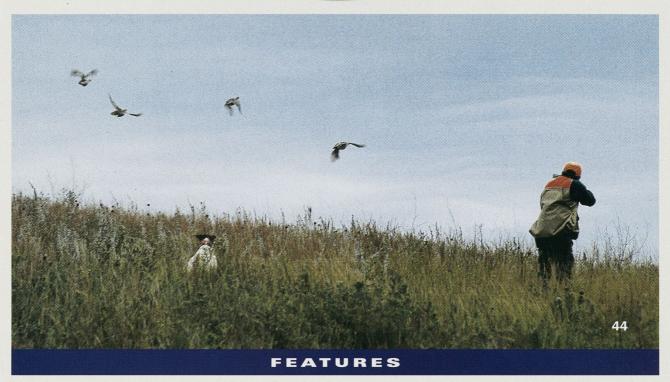
Xeno's virtues, on the other hand, are his own, and they stand out more clearly as his muzzle grows gray. David and I may see grass move as a bird passes through, but the vision is fleeting, like a breath of wind on calm water. To stay with the trail, we must free our spirits to run on four legs. Dog looks back, urges us to keep the faith. His courage pulls us along.

In the old days, Artemis was both goddess of the hunt and protector of wildlife (head of the Olympic Fish and Wildlife Service, you might say). On the assumption that she still keeps up with her reading, we have a favor to ask of her. If there are pheasants in the Elysian fields—



JANUARY 1997

VOL. CI No. 9



places in our hearts

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Once in a while, against all odds, things go right. And the country where they do becomes sacred to us.



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by Datus Proper

In the middle of nowhere, walk west to the edge of fatigue to find birds that epitomize the spirit of the prairie.



54 THE FISHING GAME

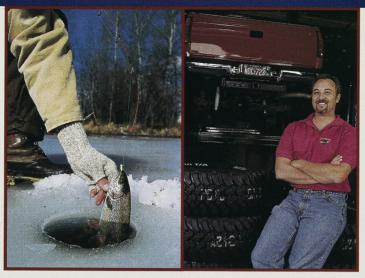
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Target practice can

make you a better caster.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF BOB TINKER AND HIS ENGLISH SETTERS WITH A SOUTH DAKOTA SHARPTAIL GROUSE (SEE p.44) BY DAVID J. SAMS; INSET BY R. VALENTINE ATKINSON

THE COOLEST THING TO COME SINCE THE NUTTY BUDDY.



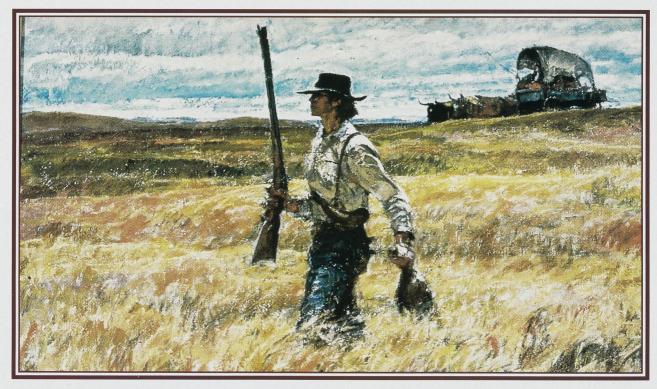
LIKE A ROCK

It goes by the unglamourous name of prairie chicken,
and indeed, it was once no more than food
on the wing. Now we can appreciate it for what it really is—
the spirit of the prairie.

Antelope with Wings

by Datus Proper

Harvey Dunn, who was born in a Dakota-territory sod hut in 1884, did not romanticize the prairie chicken. He called this painting "Something for Supper."



HIS IS A STORY ABOUT THE PRAIRIE, AND ABOUT THE GROUSE THAT LIVE THERE AND THE DOGS THAT RUN AROUND AFTER THE GROUSE. THERE ARE NO PEOPLE TO CLUTTER THE LANDSCAPE, NOT UNLESS YOU NOTICE ONE SKINNY FIGURE STICKING UP LIKE A SOAPWEED STALK. THE GRASSLAND IN AUTUMN NEVER FEELS LONELY, THOUGH. IT SIGHS AND CURVES AND SMELLS GOOD, DIPS AND BENDS AND RISES UNDER MY BOOTS, LIFTING ME TO THE RIDGES WHERE A VERY OLD AMERICAN GAMEBIRD LIVES.

Last September, I drove my version of the prairie schooner to South Dakota's grasslands, where the prairie chicken still lives as it always has, not confused

in the least. I, however, needed advice. One experienced hunter told me to look for "antelope with wings." Most of the crowd leave prairie chickens alone after opening weekend, he said, not because they are scarce but because they fly for miles and hide in the middle of nowhere. You have to like distance to love prairie grouse.

Meadowlark matins came from all directions, on that first morning, cascading like church bells. From the volume, you would have expected musicians as big as ostriches. A solitary cottonwood seemed like the place to stop because there was no other place in sight, only grass. And besides, I hoped that my spoiled puppy would be soothed by the shade. She was ululating,

"Prairie chickens

fly for miles

and hide

in the middle of

nowhere."

WOE-woe-woewoooooo, much like the maidens they tied to railroad tracks in homesteader movies. For sustained anguish, tiny Tess beat them all.

The pup's sire, on the other hand, was relieved that

she would not be coming along to spoil his bird work. Huckleberry and Tess are German shorthaired pointers—the kind that would rather eat miles than breakfast.

Huck and I skirted the snowberry brush in a long draw. Half a mile uphill, he crept into a near-point, nosed around, then followed scent over the side of the draw and out of sight. He was trailing uphill but downwind, which is tricky. By the time I came over the top, he had run a loop and was pointing back toward me, upwind, game between us. The hard part was over and I could only let the team down. It was the kind of pass I hated to drop, back when I thought I could play football.

My elbow saved me this time, clamping the stock while grouse flushed in eleven directions, more or less. When the birds were far enough out and saying *tut-tut-tut* all at same time, the gun came up and a grouse came down. Huck found it in a patch of rose hips big as marbles and red as blood.

My first Dakota bird was, however, not a prairie chicken but a sharptail grouse. I should have known from all the tutting. Pinnates are less vocal than sharptails and do not hang out in brushy draws. I had been hunting the species I already knew instead of the one I wanted to meet.

As the shadows grew sharper, Huckleberry made quarter-mile casts, running arcs for scent that was not there, drawing curlicues around possibilities invisible to me. He sliced the infinite grass into pieces I could discern. By comparison to close-up work on skittish birds, the long search stretched legs and lungs but was easy on the brain for both of us. It was as beautiful as hunting gets.

In time, Huckleberry's arcs turned into tangents, trying to lead me anywhere except back to the truck. When we got there, however, he was content, having demonstrated that there are good smells left in the world to provide work for an honest bird dog.

We drove deeper into the prairie, then, as far as the dirt road would take us, far from trees and the red-tailed hawks that perched in them. We parked where a harrier circled and prairie chickens just might be hiding, and there I released the pup. Her sire turned his head away, refusing to watch us leave without him.

Tess was a year old and built like one of those dress-up

dolls that make little girls aspire to anorexia—the kind with inflated chest, depressed waist, and legs much longer than necessary to reach the ground. She floated, for the first half-hour, skimming the grass instead of weaving through it. During occasional returns to earth, the pup could have collided with anything, grouse or porcupine or snake. When I called her in, she rolled onto her back and wriggled, which is her method of appeasing cranks of all persuasions, human and canine. I sat to cool my dizzy damsel and the breeze pushed a shadow over us.

We were right in the middle of America, where eastern heat cooks up clouds and western clarity gives them sharp edges. The bottoms started just out of reach, flat and earth-colored. The tops were whiter than popcorn, billowing, monstrous, exultant, and voluptuous, anything a lonely speck of a man could want. If you have not dreamed on a cloud lately, it is because only the prairies have room for a show like that.

When we moved off again, Tess stayed in the grass but most of me was in the sky. It was not an out-of-body experience—rather an awareness of head and feet in different realms. For this feeling, you have to walk west to the edge of fatigue. The east never had sky, even before the smog. Thoreau did not write about sky, nor Emerson. Sky hid in the trees for them and merged with the sea. On the prairie, sky is a place to live.

water and, having refreshed herself, discovered grouse. The first scent must have been like a wall because she almost turned a somersault when she hit it. Only puppies make that kind of point, inspirational but stupid. I put my hand under her tail and pushed her forward, steadying her. She felt like a bee's buzz, vibrating clear down her spine. The birds, however, had moved on. Tess found them within 100 yards but must have heard them running away from her point, because she charged in and flushed the whole pack.

They were real prairie chickens this time, sharp-edged by sun, big birds in neat brown tweed. They swung past to look me over, curious as antelope, then flew up over the ridge and merged with the bottom of a cloud. No

wonder falconers consider this grouse their most difficult quarry. The pinnate co-evolved with the swiftest of raptors—in danger whether hiding in the grass or during long daily flights to food.

I brought Tess back to the site of the flush and made "We were where
Eastern heat
cooks up clouds and
Western clarity gives
them sharp edges."

Antelope with Wings

her stand while scent ran into her nose. I could not detect the grouse, but a whiff of vanilla came from drying bluestem grass and my jeans pressed the scent from a herb-garden of sagewort. To my surprise, the air was calm at my waist, though wind tugged at my hair. Tess had found—by

mistake—a grouse oasis. We kept on in the lee of the ridge, looking for wind-sheltered patches of tall grass with a mixture of broad-leaved plants for shelter. When you learned to see it, that prairie was more diverse than some forests closer to home.

Back at the truck, I waited for the pup to jump in. Then I told her to kennel, and still she did not move. Finally, I noticed that she had brought me a present. I knelt as chivalrously as I could, with knees stiff from the distance, and accepted a yellow, dried-out foot of prairie chicken left over from some predator's meal. Thus released, Tess whirled into her act of contrition. She groomed the folds of my shirt, swallowed two beggar's-lice burrs from a cuff, and nibbled my ear in case any fleas might be hiding out in there. I told her that she was a fetching lass.

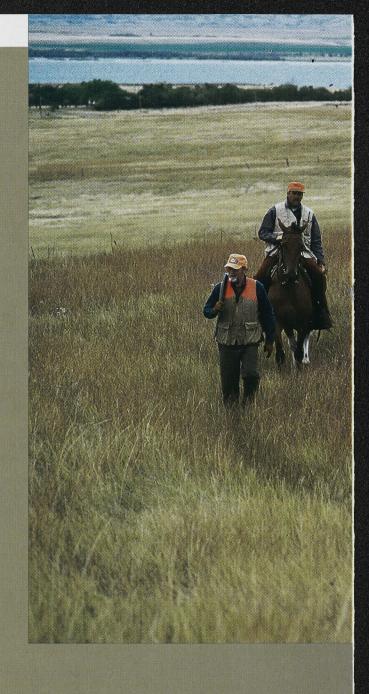
Huckleberry is a dog not of moods but agendas, and all he wanted from me that evening was a general direction. I set it and saw him disappear over the ridge. When next I saw him, he was on point in the hollow where a spur joined our geometry. He was not flustered. I was.

I moved down the ridge till I was well in front of Huck and caught the grouse between us again. This one gained speed downhill and tumbled 30 yards after it died in the air. At the shot, four more pinnates flushed and swooped down the same line. They reminded me of something in their headlong flight, rocking slightly from side to side.

IKE MANY A YANK, I HAD HUNTED RED grouse while working overseas—Ireland, in my case—before meeting their counterparts closer to home. The native American bird was bigger than its prestigious relative, wore much the same tailored suit-with-waistcoat, and was at least as fast over the contours, racing the stoop of countless peregrines through all the centuries. This bird did not deserve to be called chicken.

Cool air crept uphill even before a fringe of grass covered the red rim of sun. Huckleberry wanted to hunt one more grouse, and another after that, another forever. I held him in.

When we neared our truck, the next generation saw us and yipped, eager as her sire but not half as useful. Old Huckleberry could teach me anything, I thought, except how to be a puppy.



Chickening Out the old-fashioned way

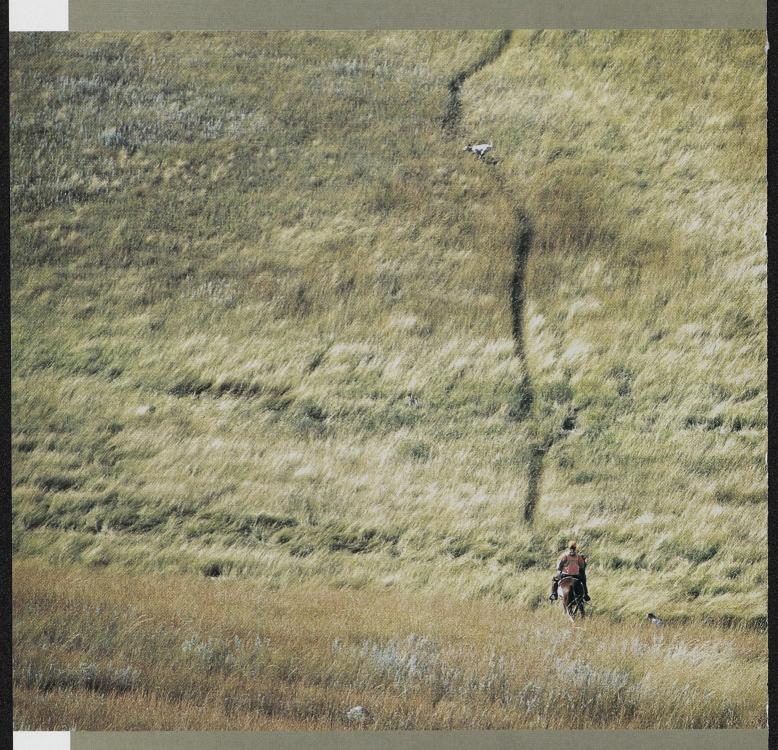
photographs by DAVID J. SAMS



COVERED WAGON. PRAIRIE GROUSE. Something for supper if you make the shot. You dream this story if you live on the Great Plains, and maybe if you live anywhere else from New York to California and your grandparents have an old gun hanging above the fireplace.

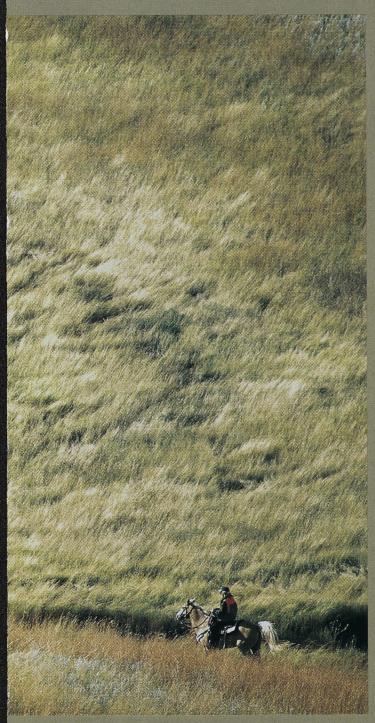
FIELD & STREAM went back to the middle of America last fall to hunt Sioux Indian lands for their native grouse. Our outfitter was Bob Tinker—the big guy on the horse right behind the dogs and hunters.

And that's Willie Cowen driving his prairie schooner over the Missouri Breaks. They look soft and fluffy. They're not. The grass hides what Willie calls "grease rocks"—the kind that would drain the oil pan on a motor vehicle. Willie's wagon team leaves no lasting marks on the backcountry, and they get where Bob Tinker wants to go with lunch, water, fresh dogs, and the occasional sagging bird shooter.



Walt Whitman called the prairie "North America's characteristic landscape," and pinnated grouse (alias prairie chickens) are its characteristic birds. They nest in it, eat its grasshoppers, and fly miles for a change of diet. Their rolling grassland looks empty to human newcomers.

But wild prairie is, in fact, more complex than most woodlands and more fertile than most farms. The grouse are out there, if you can find them.



It takes a good dog to range wide, find the birds, and hold them on point. Clean the feathers from that pup's mouth. Let him cool down in your shade till his breathing comes easy. Get him into water if you can. And when he steps on a prickly pear, pull those spines from his paws right away.





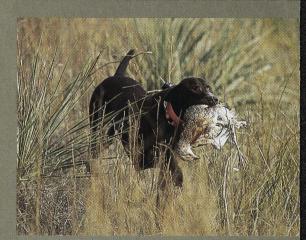






The gun was made in 1896, when grouse still rose in waves from an ocean of prairie. Grasslands have been coming back in recent years, and their native game with them.







You don't walk through the prairie.
You walk above it, in the sky, and grouse ripple up
before the dog and float in the air. You connect
on the covey rise and then watch till the rest of the birds
fly out of sight a mile away over the next ridge.
So you have a bird for dinner and

your pup fetches it, proud of himself and you.
You'll need coffee to stay awake for the drive home.
The dog will just rest his head on your gun and dream of endless grass, endless grouse. —DATUS PROPER

For more information on prairie bird hunting, contact Bob Tinker, Dept. FS, 3031 Sussex Pl., Pierre, SD 57501, telephone (605) 224-5414.

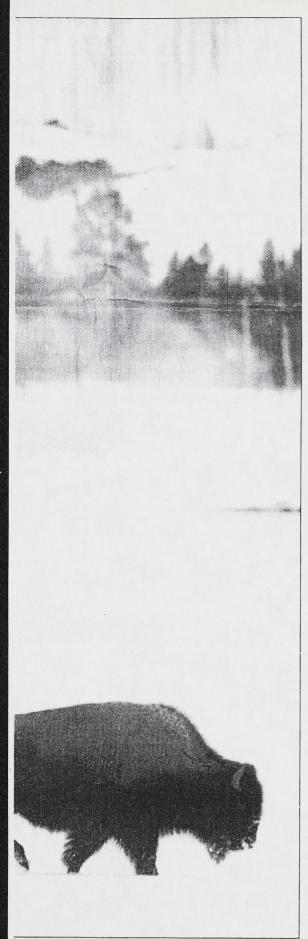


WHEN YOU KNOW WHETHER A 5-POUND RAINBOW TROUT IS IN THE MOOD FOR A TASTY DAMS



They can take a few tiny feathers, add some fur, some synthetic fiber, a bit of lead, put it all together and convince a hungry trout it's Sunday brunch. And for this feat of magic they live and breathe. On behalf of all the fishermen who know the difference between a sulfer and a pale evening dun we'd like to introduce the Outdoor Life Network. Tune in to

Fly-fishing The East with host Mark Bradley. You'll hear insider's advice on fishing small streams, deep water lakes and farm ponds. And each week you'll discover the latest techniques on smooth casting, the art of tying flies and where to find fishing's hottest spots. The Outdoor Life Network also features Fly-fishing Mastery, a comprehensive fishing



nugh the snow near the banks of the Firehole River tion of Yellowstone National Park.

Wildlife policies anything but natural

By Datus Proper Special to The Times

ELLOWSTONE Park is Eden. But do not get out of your car and look too closely. Some of the native plants and animals that used to be common are hard to find now. The park's elk and bison have overpopulated their range and diminished its biodiversity. The problem in Eden is that its managers are afraid to manage.

The official oxymoron for a hands-off policy is "natural regulation," a spiritual concept signifying a humble recognition that nature does many things better than humans. Alas, not even Yellowstone is big enough, or natural enough, to do without rational oversight.

I grew up in the park, cleared its trails, fought its fires and surveyed its campgrounds. I therefore appoint myself Adam (not an elective office) and provide this State of Eden message. It starts with a personal report on one of the favorite fishing holes of my youth.

You would not bother to fish this stretch of lower Glen Creek today because it is shallow, sunburned and spread wide over bare gravel. However, nature has mechanisms to cure the damage: willows close in, stabilize the banks, narrow the stream, and yield in time to pines and aspens just like the ones that used to be there. But the overabundant elk eat the willows and aspens as soon as they sprout.

The degradation of lower Glen Creek is symptomatic of a park that today supports between 20,000 and 60,000 elk, depending on whose estimate you accept. There are also about 3,500 bison. Whatever the exact numbers, almost everyone agrees that they are larger than at any time in recorded history.

The park's "research interpreter" tells the press that grazing by these native wildlife species is having "a profound positive effect" on the northern range — but I see that the willows and aspens are no longer reproducing successfully. I find none of the beavers and ruffed grouse that used to live on willows and mixed-age aspens. I discover that my old fishing holes are in trouble.

I wonder about the difference, if any, between a research interpreter and a spin-doctor. Administrators of other nature reserves across the country are trying as hard as those in Yellowstone to duck the issue of overabundant big game. A problem so widespread must be caused by perverse incentives.

The incentives are clear. A manager professing faith in "natural regulation" of wildlife makes the voters feel good. One proposing reduction of the herds would risk trouble in Congress.

The core problem is not the politicians and bureaucrats. The problem is us, the voters. Most of us are exposed to wild animals mainly through television programs. The gap between nature-lovers and nature has never been so wide. The apparent public consensus is that nature is sacred, Yellowstone's nature is especially sacred, and it should be managed accordingly — which is to say that it should not be managed at all.

I should think that a manager would look to biodiversity and water quality, in addition to forage, because there is more to Yellowstone than ungulates. If Glen Creek were on a private ranch, the owner would surely be advised to reduce his herd without further studies.

It would seem wise to err on the side of caution. Big-game species, have a way of turning into their own worst enemies. This is arid country with thin topsoil and a short growing season and not an easy ecosystem to restore.

In most of the world, there remains only one practical way to control populations of big game: hunting. It would work in Yellowstone Park too, at no cost to the taxpayers, and perhaps even at a profit.

Somebody in Montana had a brilliant idea. He got Native Americans involved with the bison. State wardens did the actual shooting, but then Indians processed the carcasses, transported them back to the tribes, and talked eloquently to the media.

Native Americans no longer live in the park, but there are plenty near Yellowstone, and they seem eager to help. They may provide less than an ideal solution, but real-world solutions are seldom ideal. If nobody can come up with a better idea, let's call in the Indians. My old fishing holes need help.

Datus Proper is a hunter, writer and participant in the Gallatin Writers Group.

The Long Trail



by Datus Proper

when they are four weeks old. At feeding time, he whistles and calls them so they learn human contact is a pleasant experience. When they are nine or ten weeks old, Hoyle puts them back in the pen lest they learn to run off, but he plays with them every day. When they are three to four months old, he takes them to the field so they learn how to hunt birds, not trash, and to look up to him.

At feeding time, Hoyle shoots a blank pistol or bangs pans together so the pups get used to noise as they come to eat. Until the pups are about three months old, they are allowed to play and have fun.

Then Hoyle works the pups on pigeons with rod and reel to test their noses. If they appear to have a good nose, he continues to work them on pigeons until they are one year old. At this point he teaches the pups to whoa, heel, and come when called. This is accomplished in the yard with a check cord.

At this stage of their training, they are also force broken to retrieve if they are to be gun dogs. Hoyle teaches force retrieving with a mininum of force by pressing the dog's lip against a tooth and putting a retrieving buck in his mouth as he is forced to open it. The pup is next taught to reach for the buck on the command "fetch" by a pinch of the ear. When the pup has learned to pick up the buck from the ground and retrieve it, Hoyle begins to hide the buck in the grass and teaches the dog to hunt dead by making a game of it and letting the dog find the hidden bird.

When these year-old pups have progressed this far, they are worked in the field on liberated birds. Hoyle uses a call-back pen with perhaps a hundred birds in it. The young pups are allowed to knock and chase the many birds set out in an open meadow until they begin to point on their own. At this point he begins to steady them up with the use of a check cord. He says he likes to keep pups steady to wing and shot all through the training, as it makes it easier to finish them on game. If a promising gun dog pup gives a good performance on birds, Hoyle believes strongly in killing a bird for him. He is not allowed to break shot and an assistant may bring the bird to him as his reward for a job well done. A

thoroughly finished gun dog will stand to the flush and shot, then hunt dead and retrieve on command.

Hoyle emphasizes the importance of keeping the pupil happy by conducting all training in a positive atmosphere. "If you want to train your dog," he says, "develop a rapport with him and get him to be your friend. Spend enough time with your dog so that he knows what you want him to do and never get him confused about what is expected of him."

To develop the natural hunting ability of a gun dog, Hoyle uses released coveys as well as the call pen, which is used for early development of puppies. The coveys are released in the fall, when they are about ten weeks old, and learn to fend for themselves as coveys. A feeder and waterer is used to get them started, then they learn to use natural foods and catch insects.

Having established coveys for training, Hoyle takes the pups to the field where they learn to come to voice or whistle. He changes course and direction to teach them to handle and even hides from them to see if they will come look him up. This also tests the ability of the dog to hear. Hoyle says many of the dogs—and pups—brought to him for training have poor hearing or cannot hear at all. These dogs can be very difficult to handle and it is usually best to go on to another prospect with good hearing.

Hoyle says that he uses the electronic collar but mostly for dogs that like to chase deer or are rebellious and do not want to handle.

"There are no shortcuts to developing a great young dog," says

Hoyle. "In some cases, the electronic collar can hamper the dog's ability to learn by trial and error, or stifle his natural power of reasoning. All yard training should be taught by repetition and coaxing, with the use of the least amount of force possible."

When he evaluates a customer's dog that is new to the kennel, Hoyle looks at their intelligence, hunting instincts, whether they want to be with you when hunting, their nose and their ability to find birds. It is difficult to do much with a dog that does not possess the above qualities to a high degree. In the training of dogs for the public, you run into all types of canine personalities, some with man-made faults that can be overcome and others with gene defects such as shyness and poor hearing that are difficult to overcome.

Among the many gun dogs and field trial dogs Hoyle has developed, a few outstanding dogs come to mind: the unforgettable White Knight, Red Water Rex, Miller's White Cloud, Ormond's Smart Alec, all Hall of Famers, along with outstanding champions Rex's Cherokee Jake and Dr. I.J.

From the first time I met this softspoken Mississippian, I felt that his winning personality and ability to develop good dogs would make him a success in his field. The record of dogs he has trained proves that my evaluation was correct.

If you would like a dog trained by Hoyle Eaton, contact him at Route 2, Box 160, Booneville, Mississippi 38829, or call him at 601/728-4852. He occasionally has pups for sale.



dog for wild birds must be able to follow scent. All of them run, when they learn the ways of hunters, and pheasants run marathons. One cock recently led Huckleberry from a section-line almost to the next farm a mile away, with me bringing up the rear. And that was before the shot.

After the shot—well, ask yourself. The shot pattern is different every time, and sometimes it fails at its job. Or, more likely, your mind pattern is the problem. You have left the office, but the office has not left you. Your right brain (the hunter's hemisphere) has not yet taken over from the civilized left hemisphere. You aim too carefully, pull the trigger when your timing is off, and suddenly there is a wing-tipped bird on the ground, heading for cover. You have a problem of conscience.

For the task that you face, retrieving is a euphemism. You could walk over and pick up your prey, if it were still where you saw it drop. You don't need it brought to you. You need it caught—and it can run much

faster than you.

Fortunately, your dog can do the job. He has the nose to follow the bird, the speed to catch it, and the desire to do so. Your task is to let him get on the trail instantly and pursue his genetic program without interference. This applies to all breeds (pointers, retrievers, and spaniels) when they are hunting dead. Each must work at top speed, and the human partner is soon left behind.

Before the shot, on the other hand, your tactics depend on the kind of dog you have. A flushing dog must be within range or otherwise under control, but a pointer is not constrained. It can trail as far and fast as necessary, on its own initiative, and then hold the rooster till the human hunter arrives. Pheasants and pointing dogs are made for each other, a natural match. And yet many pointers get lost on the trail. The bird has not changed—not in thousands of years—but some dogs no longer have what it takes.

I want an old-fashioned pointing dog to do the oldest task in hunting. I want a dog like those H.L. Betten saw trailing running birds a century ago. "One of the setters," he wrote, "would circle, race down on

a side line and almost in a flash head off the rapidly moving ringneck—hang an anchor around his neck, so

to speak."

I have hunted over dogs like that in Africa (Italian setter), Brazil (English pointers), and Ireland (English pointers, English setters, German shorthaired pointers, and Irish setters). North America is, in fact, the only place I know where so many pointing dogs get befuddled. It's an upscale problem, something that happened when we acquired lifestyles, bought gentlemen's dogs, and entered them in field trials. Listen to the owners of those dogs admiring their "class." It is a revealing term.

My bias ought to be made explicit. I am interested in hunting and fishing and nature, which are different words for the same thing. It is not a sport like tennis or golf. It is not a gentleman's pastime. It is life, and a dog leads me through it. If my interest were different, the dog would be different. If I were to switch from raising wildlife to raising sheep, for example, I would pick a dog that did well at sheep trials and feel confident that it would function equally well on my farm because, after all, the animals involved would still be sheep.

By comparison to sheep, however, the pen-raised bobwhites we use for most trials are short of field experience. Tame birds have led to artificial rules which, in turn, have

led to a stylized dog.

I did not understand how far the process had gone until recently. Perhaps I did not want to understand. Schematically, here is the sequence.

- American field-trial rules, which once rewarded dogs that could trail, began instead to penalize them.
- Contestants came to see the ability to follow scent as a problem rather than an asset.
- Breeders tried to eliminate trailing skills from bloodlines.

Perhaps none of this was foreseen. Contestants simply followed their incentives, as humans usually do. Breeders certainly thought that they were doing a good thing by breeding prize-winning dogs. Hunters like me looked on uncomprehending. Our pointers lost an ancient talent

one gene at a time, just as a certain bird on Mauritius island lost its ability to fly. Selective breeding, however, has worked much more quickly than the evolutionary process that created the dodo.

If you want a pup that can follow scent, therefore, do your research. Here are some alternatives.

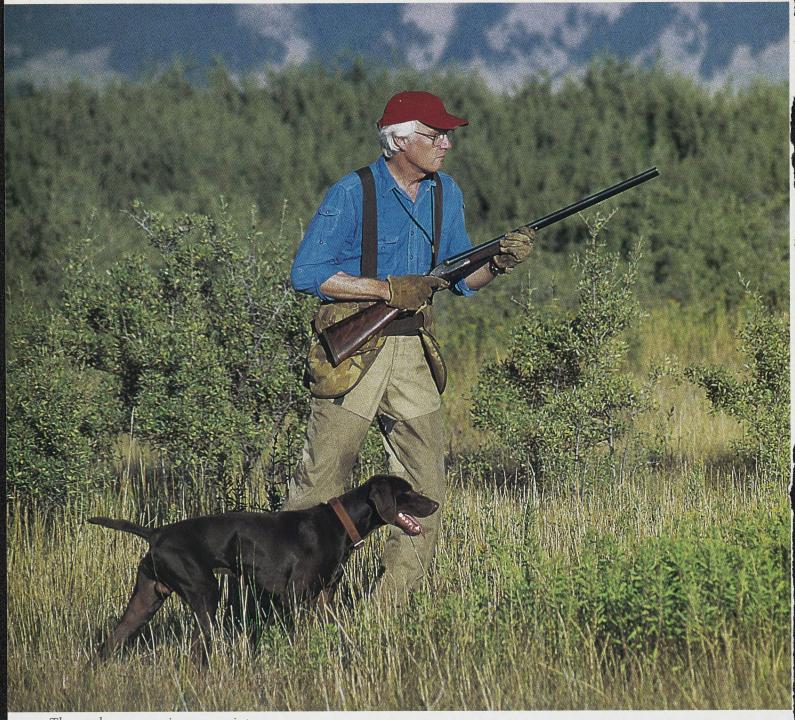
1. Divide responsibility. You could acquire what amounts to two half-dogs—staunch pointer for the first find, spaniel or retriever to hunt dead. This works well on hunting preserves. A wild rooster, however, may run away from Dog A, leaving Dog B with nothing to do.

2. Reinvent the wheel. Breeders testify eloquently to the value of the pointing instinct when they develop it in Labrador retrievers. I hear of pointing Labs who do a good job, too. The problem is that a dog running in tall grass is limited by heat, not cold—even in Montana. My shorthair therefore hunts longer in hours, and much longer in miles, than an enthusiastic Labrador belonging to my hunting companion. Of course, we could in time breed Labs with long legs, lean bodies, skinny tails, and long-range noses.

3. Import a dog. This is the American way. We get sound dogs from Europe, breed them till they can no longer do their traditional jobs, and then bring over new stock. Fortunately, they still breed good old-fashioned pointers and setters in Britain and Ireland, which is where we got them in the first place. More

on this later.

- 4. Try a pup from American field-trial stock. Nowhere are there pointing dogs with faster bodies or better noses. Do not be impressed, however, when the breeder puts out a tame bobwhite for the candidate to point. That's the easy part. Try turning a cock pheasant loose where it must run downwind, then let it get a hundred yards away and see if the dog can trail. Casting for scent does not count.
- 5. Watch hunting tests. Identify a sire and dam who have received high scores on tests of the kind used on the continent of Europe and, in this country, by the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA). Such parents produce pointer pups for serious hunting. (What would you expect from the Germans?)



The author moves in on a point. If the bird is winged and it runs, Huck will track it down no matter how far it runs.

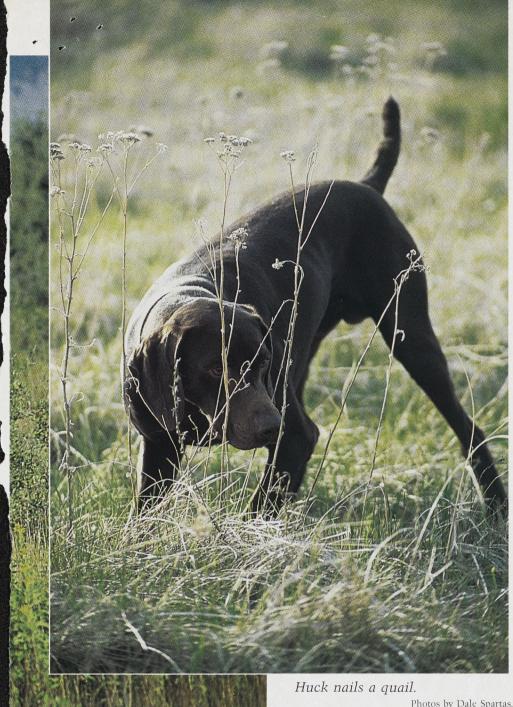
6. Mix traditions. My German shorthaired pointers were bred for field trials of the American type, and it shows. They have more energy than some hunters want, and people keep asking if the pup is a whippet. The Continental half of the heritage, on the other hand, contributes trailing ability.

Most canine faults are "natural defects," as Xenophon wrote in the fourth century, B.C., "but some by which hounds are spoilt are due to...training."

Trooper's problem started, I think, with training rather than breeding. He was taught not to retrieve, let alone trail, in order to make him steady to wing and shot. The training worked. At eleven months, Trooper showed that he was "fully

broke" in a field trial for all breeds. He won the puppy stake first, then the derby, and finally ran in the gundog event and won that too. They gave him the dog-of-the-year trophy, at less than a year of age. I report this now in homage to old bones buried under a cottonwood tree, but also to make clear that talent was not where this pup fell short.

Trooper had been taught discipline, which (according to the dic-



Photos by Dale Spartas.

tionary) is "a state of order based on rules and authority." He was stylish, too. He snapped into points with his tail up and stayed there, staunch as Stonewall Jackson.

Suppose that Trooper had, instead, been encouraged to follow a scenttrail. No human knows where a pheasant will run, so the pup would have had to make his own decisions. He would have had to learn about patch scent, and then about the switch from trail-mode to pointmode, which is tough. He would have had to learn judgment.

Make no mistake: Discipline and judgment are opposite qualities. Of the two, discipline is the safer choice because it requires no thinking. Judgment is a learning process. A pup that explores and makes decisions can actually change the wiring pattern of its cerebral cortex.

Perhaps dogs have to start young to learn judgment. I am not sure about that, but I know that even twelve years of hunting wild birds could not give old Trooper back

what he had lost in one year of training for tame ones. He got pheasants nevertheless, because he had the intensity to match his nose. I would never have known how many trails Trooper was losing if Huckleberry had not come along to show me.

Huck learned how to work linear scent despite—or because of—the absence of training. Once before he had a beeper I spent twenty minutes finding him, and he was still on point. He did not know the whoa command, but he knew that we would get that bird only if each of us did his part.

Please do not read this as meaning that training in general is a bad idea. Some pups, for all I know, may need training before they hunt, and any pup needs work in the yard if he does not get enough of it in the field. Just don't do a Trooper on him.

Huck and I take lots of short expeditions. From September through January I carry a gun, and from then till nesting season we hunt without a gun most afternoons, pointing birds and flushing them and coming home happy. From May through August we go fishing or run around in field trials. During all this the main things I have taught Huck—and more recently his daughter Tess-are those they should avoid, such as losing contact with

I let Tess get lost twice before she was four months old. She yowled like a concert of covotes, then found my back-trail and followed it to me. On the way, a badger gave her another fright. That was three lessons at once—in trailing, lossproofing, and family values. Tess makes a point of knowing where her human is, now, in case of badgers.

Ben Williams made me feel better about on-the-job training. Ben breeds Brittanys of a hunting line pups that train themselves, as he says, if given the chance, and he makes sure that the chance comes around often. The pups run four or five at a time, usually with Winston, an exceptional adult Brittany who, like the pups, has never been in a field trial. All of the dogs point, back, and come in when called, though Ben gives few commands. You could call the process friendly persuasion.

Mind you, there are all sorts of canine problems that I know nothing about. With luck, I will have fewer dogs in my lifetime than a real trainer would have in the kennel at once. Training is a labor of love for people like Ben Williams and Butch Nelson and Jim Marti, and I prize their advice.

One or more generations of Americans have grown up with dogs that cannot follow scent, and are therefore wary of those that can. Two words in particular have aroused suspicion.

The first buzzword is *versatile*, which connotes the hunting of fur—a dangerous practice, in my part of the country. Two bird dogs owned by a friend failed to return from chasing a jackrabbit (hare). Perhaps coyotes got those dogs, or a mountain lion, or a shepherd protecting his flock. Deer and fox trails are equally dangerous; rabbits distract pointers endlessly; porcupines hurt; skunks make the ride home a misery—and rattlesnakes can make it a funeral procession.

Given a chance, however, any pup worth its salt will chase the wrong things. Setters and Brittanys do it as happily as the breeds that look more like hounds, such as English pointers and German shorthaired pointers. Fortunately, some pups leave harmful animals alone after an encounter or two. Some pups also pick up signals from their humans quickly. It is one aspect of training on which I am resolute, because lives are at stake.

The other word that worries American bird-dog handlers is *tracking*, which may have lost something in translation from the German *spuren arbeit*. In English, according to my dictionary, a track means, first of all, "A mark or succession of marks left by something that has passed," and following such marks sounds like a slow proposition. The bird dogs I watch, however, ignore tracks. It appears that even the big feet of a pheasant leave little or no scent for a dog to detect, by comparison to the scent-trail of the body.

Humility is appropriate, in discussing what no human can smell, so consider the evidence. After a light snow, your dog may pick up little scent while crossing pheasant tracks that are obvious to you. Then again, the scent may be good. If so, it may coincide with the tracks, but

it may also rise and drift leeward. "Trailing" (the British and old American usage) best describes the way a dog works such a scent.

It follows, I think, that a pup should learn to put its nose where the scent is. A dog that always hunts nose-down will be slow and may run into birds. On the other hand, a dog that keeps its nose high will fail on long trails, some singles, and old scent.

Doing it all is difficult. Not doing it all means giving up some of the best hunting—coveys of prairie grouse a mile apart, Mearn's quail commuting from their scratchings, or pheasants sprinting for the next section. A dog able to handle all of those birds has the kind of versatility a hunter needs. We should let such a dog show what it can do, then breed it. What we have been doing, in this country, is very nearly the opposite.

The core problem is that we have been breeding for style, which is in the eye of the beholder. Consider, for example, some differences between American and British field trials:

• In America, we reward a dog that snaps into a rigid point and refuses to move until released by the handler. In Britain, "If the birds move, the dog may re-locate. It is even possible to have a moving point." [Quotations in this bulleted item and the two below are from Derry Argue's book *Pointers and Setters.*]

 We expect a high stance on point, which can make wild birds nervous. In Britain, a dog is encouraged to drop.

• We expect the dog to remain motionless while the handler flushes the bird, which can lead to lengthy kicking around in the grass (amusing the gallery). In Britain, "the handler walks forward in unison with the dog to put the bird up."

• We like our dogs to point with tails vertical. In Britain, "the manner of the point is unimportant." The English pointers and setters I saw kept their tails roughly horizontal.

British practice, then, is American practice turned upside down, and yet the British do not think themselves deficient in style. The cause of the difference may be that British trials are run with hunting dogs, under

hunting conditions, and on wild game. The young grouse and partridges are more innocent than they will be in late season but still able to hold dogs and humans to certain natural standards. American trials, by comparison, lean toward abstract art.

Perhaps none of this matters, to some field-trial participants. Wild bobwhites have become scarce in most of the United States east of the Mississippi, so why not breed dogs to hunt the pen-raised kind? Our American/English pointers and setters are good at what we ask them to do. Let's do it in style.

Our American/Irish setters, however, demonstrate what can happen. According to one veterinarian, they are "so dumb that they get lost on the end of their leash." We ruined them by a beauty contest. Some research suggests a similar trend in the pointing breeds that have been developed for American field trials. No wonder: We have defined intelligent bird-work as unstylish. We have bred high-tailed pointers and ignored what is happening in their braincases.

It is hard to oppose style in an age of celebrities, interior decorators, and presidential coiffeurs. Swimming against the current might not be worth the effort, but for one thing: Hunting itself is going out of style. Americans are moving to big cities, growing up in single-parent families, and foraging in the malls.

There are, however, people who want to escape the new urban culture. I hear from some of them. They need a dog that is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Please understand, then, that I am not blowing my whistle just to make noise. The rest of the world may be going to hell but there are still some real bird dogs listening, up here on the sunny side. □

This article is drawn from a chapter in the new limited edition of Datus Proper's Pheasants of the Mind, published by Wilderness Adventures, P.O. Box 1410, Bozeman, MT 59771. Full references to literature cited are in the book. Pheasants of the Mind is available from the Gun Dog Bookshelf for \$18.95. Add \$3.75 for shipping and handling.

Pheasant/Dog leftovers

, because pheasants learn fast. They had grown up in the grass, fled to the bottoms when hunted, and fled back to grass when the bottoms in their turn became unsafe. Each rooster was the same bird wherever he went. His hunters were as varied as the cover.

made broad, ecstatic sweeps while a harrier escorted him, waiting for a rabbit or mouse or late-hatched pheasant. I resolved to be a raptor in my next incarnation. If any high-flying positions are open at the time, I will apply to be a peregrine falcon, but a junior appointment as harrier would be acceptable. As to Dave, he is half goshawk already, short wings beating through every

waiting for the flame that would leap from earth.

Never mind the raptors. Let me be a pointer next time around. I have the feeling already -- just give me the nose.

feathers the color of everything beautiful in nature

I am a big boy and I try to be casual, but Dave must have known how the chase had ended when I returned lighter than air. The long-spurred cock might have weighed three pounds, from one point of view, but the effect in my game vest was that of helium.

Once near my home, John and I went hunting for a cock pheasant that I had heard cackling before dawn, and my thirteen-year-old son tagged along to see what the excitement was all about. My pup trailed the bird till it found itself blocked by a spring creek. John moved in for the flush and I assumed that the boy was caught in the intensity of the moment, like the rest

of us. In fact, however, he had his eyes on the toes of his shoes. Rooster flushed, John fired, bird splashed down in stream, dog leaped, and boy was knocked flat. He thought that he had been shot. In fact, he had just wandered in front of a dog intent on retrieving. The kid laughed it off, for which we gave him credit. John apologized for the way his gremlins were behaving.

It's an approach that might work again in any of the plains states or adjoining Canadian provinces. Montana is the state I know best, because I live there, but parts of the Dakotas get more rainfall and therefore have more extensive pheasant habitat. In any case, you need to locate the birds first for a combination hunt. Throughout the northern plains, almost any cover with pheasants is capable of supporting whitetails -- but not the other way around.

This is not trophy hunting, in the usual sense. If you want a big buck, you will go to a place that produces big bucks and hunt nothing else.

If you live where pheasants do time in the pen, real wild prairie birds will seem like a different species. Whitetails are the same everywhere -- but their country is not. The plains expand a hunter's lungs.

You will not find much public land with high pheasant populations. And you may find a farmer who would sooner you date his daughter than his birds.

What you get, in Montana, is quality. You won't find many roosters who have done time in the pen. You may not find many roosters of any kind, unless you have a dog that can stay with

long trails and give you a shot at the end.

You could run into a big buck at the peak of the rut, but if a trophy is what you really want, then you should hunt single-mindedly.

You can figure that almost all the pheasant cover supports farmers or ranchers, too. It's not that the birds need grain -- I find roosters with nothing but wild seeds in their crops -- but the pheasant does need heavy ground cover, which in the arid west appears mostly in bottoms watered by streams and irrigation ditches.

Roosters run long distances before they decide to hold. I tried to estimate the distances last season, and the shortest was about thirty yards. That was a young cock who flew into short cover after being pushed from tall grass. Experienced birds make a point of allowing themselves more room for maneuver.

In fact, those birds just panicked. I was herding some on purpose and some by accident, but most could have escaped by doing what the survivors learn, which is to run and then flush. Or perhaps run far and then sit tight. But never flush in range.

He runs down the solitary old cock hiding in a mile-square section of cover, confident that nobody can stay with him because many have tried and all have failed.

Hunters writing about their own dogs are tiresome, so let me make it clear that mine is not perfection. He is not easy to control even when there is no game in front of him, and when he is on scent, he is difficult to call off. Mostly I just give up and try to stay within hearing range. Or get out of touch and

wait for him to hit my back trail and run me down. Never lost him. Almost wished that I had, a couple of times when he was young.

Most American pointing dogs are not very good at trailing runners. The problem is not sense of smell -- pointing breeds in general have keen noses -- but lack of desire, and training. We have bred winners of field trials in which trailing is discouraged. We have discouraged the pups from creeping on scent. "Creeping," however, is often just slow trailing.

If a dog can point birds at long distances, it has a nose good enough to trail them, too. It may nevertheless fail to do so, for various reasons. Genetics. Training. Brains.

It might be nice to get more than one bird a day, but we do get to know that one intimately.

He is a better hunter than me. He is a hero, my hero.

I had hunted in many states and countries before Huck, but I had no idea how far pheasants could run or how well they would hold at the end of the trail.

To ask for another like him would be hubris -- an arrogance that offends the gods.

Experience is part of what it takes. The other part is brains. If I were to devise an intelligence test for dogs, pheasants would make up the board of examiners.

Perhaps there are other ways for a dog to learn, but this one took no training, and training is not the part I enjoy.

For a time, I wondered if Huck was working in some way unique to bird dogs. Montague Stevens [] straightened me out on that. In 19 [], he used bloodhounds to trail grizzly bears, of

all things, and did innovative experiments with scent. His dogs worked like mine, though the trails could be a hundred [] miles longer. Stevens' main problem was also the same as mine: How to find dogs after they find game? I will not reveal his secret, other than to say there were no beepers in those days. His book makes me grateful that pheasants are not as big as bears.

[sidebar]

Pointing dogs came along later to allow the hunting of birds. The sport became, by coincidence, one that suits modern times. More than half of the pheasants your dog points will be hens that you cannot legally shoot, but you never know, and the points without shots make scarce game go farther. You do not get more bangs for your buck, but you get more excitement before every bang.

He is the best I have hunted with, a gift to be accepted with gratitude.

What trailing did require was a strong will -- determination to run down a quarry that is equally determined not to be caught.

Everything I write about trailing is reconstruction, of course -- things my canine alter ego teaches me.

They have two patterns of escape, from what I can discern, and both start with a sprint. The first pattern is run-and-flush. The second is run-and-hide.

[If you have no dog, you will be accustomed to working with the run-and-flush pattern. You will herd the pheasant until it feels obliged to fly, perhaps because you have blockers posted, or perhaps because the cover runs out. When you hunt in a fresh snow, you may be surprised to see how far the rooster tracks

continue in front of you.

If you have a flushing dog -- spaniel or retriever -- you are still working with the run-and-flush pattern, but you have a the dog's nose to tell you what is happening even when there is no snow to reveal the tracks.]

The pointing dog exploits the run-and-hide pattern.

We saw the differnce in speed clearly, once, when a wing-tipped cock came down on a long, bare slope. It sprinted for the cover on the top of the hill, with Huck closing the gap. We humans were out of the race within seconds, but our help was not needed.

A pointing dog exploits the pheasant's run-and-hide pattern. It is different -- so different that hunters accustomed to other methods may be more puzzled than beginners. You have to break the habit of working cover and just do what that pointer tells you.

When you get the hang of it, however, you discover that pheasants can hold even tighter than Mearns' [] quail, which are famous for their reluctance to flush. Huck has never brought me a healthy quail, but late last season he picked up three pheasants that simply would not fly -- wild birds in perfect condition.

To know which kind of hunter you are talking to, ask what choke he or she favors. If the answer is "full" or "modified," most of the birds are flushing wild. If, on the other hand, the gun's first barrel is bored cylinder or improved cylinder, the hunter is accustomed to short shots. And probably long walks behind a pointer.

fast trail through most pheasant cover, however, the right pointer is likely to get to a winged bird first.

Pointers are, as it happens, well adapted to trailing, for which they have some advantages. First, they are fast. Second, they have excellent noses, as a group. And third, they stop when they find a bird (unless it is wounded). You do not, should not, say a word. You need not keep the dog within shooting range. It can catch the bird, hold it, and wait for human to catch up. The pleasant surprise, if you have not tried it, is that the longest-running roosters hold well at the end of the trail.

Hunting follows nature's rules. If you have a pointing dog that cannot trail, you have half of a bird dog -- maybe a good half, but the half that cannot find runners before or after the shot. Perhaps you have a good half-dog and keep the other half with you in the form of retriever. Suddenly I understand why hunters are trying to develop pointing Labradors.

we need trials to measure dogs. Breeders will tell you that dogs from field-trial breeding can be good in the field and indeed they can, sometimes -- but not if the ability to follow scent is bred out.

[end?] There is a bias to confess. I yearn to move closer to nature, not farther. The world is going to hell and I want to keep real bird dogs with me here on the sunny side. Huck lost only one bird in his first season and that because I insisted that he hunt heavy brush. Three times I called him off the trail, which ran across an open field. [repeats?]

Training necessary mainly to allow some suspense in a field trail with articifial birds.

Maybe the Brits have a better idea.

They may win field trials -- even trials for pen-raised pheasants, which are easy to find.

Dog-trainers are my favorite people but training is not fun, for me. Hunting, on the other hand, is something I want to do until I drop, accompanied by one dog at a time. With luck, they will teach me more than I teach them.

English pointers were the best dogs I hunted over in Ireland and the only ones that could stand Brazilian heat, but they were not dogs of American breeding. They are the dogs that appear best adapted to Montana and Arizona, where I do most of my hunting now -- but I have not seen an English pointer outside of field trials for a couple of years.

[need a dog able to trail the consequences.]

The problem is one that none of us like and all of us encounter. Let's face up to it.

I should confess, here, that if I were to design a dog for the uplands, it would look like an English pointer -- same body, same short coarse hair, same white color with big black spots. The keen nose is even more important, and the endurance in hot

weather. But I need a dog that can "put its nose where the scent is," as Burton Spiller wrote about his English pointers in the 1930s. [] They were hunting dogs, grouse dogs. In Ireland and Brazil I wore out boots over such dogs. Surely they still exist in America but I did not know how to find them within driving range, when I was looking, and did not want to buy long-distance.

One visitor recently commented, as Tess was running off with his shoe, that my dogs "look like whippets." I thought they looked like English pointers, but for the absence of white patches and a few inches of tail. I tried to recreate the breed, or what it used to be, by choosing German shorthaired pointers from an American field-trial line -- one with genes for both trailing gene and skimming skim the prairie.

No doubt there are still English pointers that can work like Spiller's, but I failed to find them and trailing seemed to me the first priority -- [] not because it is the only important skill but because it is the hardest to find, and the least likely to be mentioned by the person offering you a pointing dog. Some breeders have a way of changing the subject, when you ask about trailing.

Many will keep going forever if a dog fails to head them off.

A pup less eager to point than Huck might have needed "steadying up" before hunting.

not versatile?