

# *The Gun Dog Supreme*

NEWS BULLETIN of the WIREHAISED POINTING GRIFFON CLUB OF AMERICA  
EDUCATION & RESEARCH FOUNDATION

<http://www.gundogsupreme.org>

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**Say It Again! Tell Me What a Good Dog I Am!**

**Photo by Robin Strathy**

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

December means short days and long nights, so it should be ideal for editing the GDS. It's not. Everyone is out hunting, and I want to be too. As I finish this issue off, I'm readying for one last dash to the Dakotas for a winter pheasant hunt. I hope you're able to get out there at least one more time too.

Please read the update on the DNA blood sample project with Cornell University. Thanks to the hard work of many dedicated club members, we're getting a n excellent response from WPGCA dog owners. If you have not been able to participate in a group event, this issue tells you how you can get involved on an individual basis. Ann Pool describes a data collection event held recently in Idaho. Laurie Connell has worked very hard to produce a protocol for individual owners to use.

This issue also includes a sampling of hunting tales from the 2010 season thanks to Jon Coil and Rick Sojda. And if your hunting season is ending, check out the article on kick-sledding with your griffon.

The spring testing season begins with the Northwest Chapter event January 21, 22 and 23 in California, so be sure to visit the chapter pages on the website for details on this and other events.

*Rem DeJong*

## **On the Cover**

Robin Strathy provided this photo of her dog, a very frosty **Briar of Bogan's Point**, taken on a winter sharptail hunt in Montana. A cold nose and a warm heart; what could be better?

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## **Update on WPGCA & Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine DNA Bank Project**

In the June 2010 issue of the GDS, Laurie Connell and Rick Sojda provided an article on an exciting partnership between the WPGCA and the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine to include our club griffons in the college's DNA Bank project. (See <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/March06/DNABank.kr.html> ). Since that article appeared, club chapters have successfully organized several blood sample collection events at training days and at Fall 2010 tests. Although we use the short-hand moniker "blood draw" to label these events, there is a lot more to the process than collecting a blood sample. About twenty measurements are recorded for each dog; photos are taken from front, back and sides, and the dog's owner completes several questionnaires. Coordinating and completing these events requires skill, dedication and a lot of volunteers. The response of club members to this challenge has been tremendous. We now have data on over 50 dogs, but much work remains to be done.

On November 25, 2010, WPGCA President Gary Pool signed the formal agreement between Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and the WPGCA Education and Research Foundation. For several months, Larurie Connell and Rick Sojda have been working with the Cornell project staff to develop an individual dog owner protocol so that club members who are unable to attend one of the group events can include their dogs in the DNA database also. I'm pleased to report that this protocol has been completed and approved. It is printed on the following pages and is also available on the WPGA website (<http://www.wpgca.org>). The website also includes detailed instructions for taking photographs and contact links for obtaining materials.

It is important to stress that we want to collect data on ALL WPGCA bred dogs, no matter what their age or condition. This project is not just for dogs to be evaluated in Natural Ability or the Intermediate Hunting Dog Test. Whether your dog is suitable for breeding or neutered, the project still needs the data. So if you own a WPGCA bred dog, please participate.

### **Rocky Mountain WPGCA Members Complete a DNA Collection Event**

Ann Pool provided the following notes on DNA data collection by Idaho club members. Her step-by-step description may be useful to others who want to cooperate on a group project. Her notes are both a guide and a testimony to the work that club members are doing to make this undertaking a success.

### **Getting Ready**

Our veterinarian, Dr. Rick Allen, Jerome Veterinary Hospital, was very excited about our participation in this DNA study with Cornell University. Upon first contact to explore bringing in the 9 dogs and to explain the study, he immediately shared how he could set up stations in his clinic, (which is what we had hoped for).

### **Doing the Work:**

One person should be the contact w/ Cornell. (Laurie Connell and Rick Sojda are the

**I Don't Think I Like This!**

Dr. Rick Allen and assistant, Louisa, collect a blood sample from **Alexis of Arrowrock**

Photo by Ann Pool

club's contacts.)In our case, we worked with our own Rick Sojda for acquiring all the paperwork and collection materials. The tasks include: making copies of all paperwork for each handler and each of their dogs; distributing the paperwork before the actual blood draw date; collecting and looking over paperwork at drawing/vet's office, collecting all moneys that go to WPGCA E&RF; mail paperwork back to Cornell and money to WPGCA Treasurer Jim Seibel.

One person is needed to: contact veterinarian; confirm the vet's fee for blood samples and let others know additional expense; set appointment at vet's for all dogs at the same time; order blood draw kit from Cornell and confirm arrival at the vet's office.

One person is needed to assemble data on an excel spread sheet including: all dogs to be tested, full pedigree names, handler names, DOB's, GRB #'s from pedigree (Lyla

Lehrer was a wonderful help in getting this done ahead of time); Three copies of the excel spreadsheet are needed. One is included with the blood kit that is sent back to Cornell; the second goes with a letter and funds to Treasurer Jim Seibel; the third is sent with the packet of data and questionnaire paperwork to Cornell including our local contact person information.

One person secures measuring tools: a flexible plastic measure tape w/ inches and metric (a sewing item!) (we used metric). For photography the following are recommended: a sheet or back drop, camera, tripod, pins, clips for back drop, white board & markers, 3-4 pens (we chose to print the necessary info for each dog's picture on 11" x 17" paper ahead of time, then taped or pinned those to the backdrop – another reason the earlier excel sheet with all the information was useful)

Our one person happened to be the same person (me), and with our small group it worked out fine doing all the above, contacting/updating everyone via email/phone often. I didn't wait for ok's from everyone, but took their lack of reply as an ok, moving ahead, letting them know when the vet appointment was and when to be there. Others offered to pick up dogs, paperwork, and money per dog, if the owner could not make the scheduled event. We were flexible/helpful to each other but 'set' on the dates & times once the appointment was made & kit ordered.

#### **What we did:**

Before the scheduled day: We locals brainstormed to identify other griffon owners in the area. We then contacted them and encouraged them to participate.

On collection day: We blocked off 4:30 – 6:00 pm (closing) for 9 dogs (finished at 6:30 – took 2 hours for 9 dogs, longer than expected). We started on time with the dogs filtering in so there was no waiting. Everyone helped where needed: getting dogs to/from vehicles and helping out if the handler was working a station. Measuring took the longest, as anticipated. (There are about 20 specific measurements.)

#### **Our Setup:**

1<sup>st</sup> station: drawing blood: The veterinarian and technician drew the blood sample, labeled the vials and took care of all samples, handling and next day shipping; excel sheet to go in shipping container; handler usually in the room and wrote the dog weight in kg on the first page. Handler took paperwork to next station.

2<sup>nd</sup> station: measuring: We chose one person to do all measuring and another to enter data, and check the paperwork. This person also obtained the signatures on the release form, witnessing them all. Before starting, our veterinarian helped clarify for us the specific measurement areas on the first dog, comparing w/ the paperwork provided from Cornell, answering any questions and giving clarification about structure to our persons who were measuring and entering data. The paperwork from Cornell and drawings are very good resources and by the third dog, our measuring team had it down.

3<sup>rd</sup> station: picture: The veterinarian had put up a blue sheet from his surgery room (didn't use our sheet), using IV tube holders to secure it and using a surgery table for the dog to stand on – we taped or pinned the paper to the drop, having the camera on the tripod and in place for each picture. The table was high so the handler stayed with the dog at the table.

**WPGCA Education & Research Foundation**  
**DNA Bank Sample Collection Protocol for Individual Owners**

by Laurie Connell

**Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine Project: DNA sample collection of Griffons for genetic archiving.**

Good communication with the Cornell DNA Bank is **Vital** for making this work!!

1. At least 2 weeks prior to your intended veterinary appointment contact Mrs. Liz Cory at the Cornell DNA Bank via email at [eg33@cornell.edu](mailto:eg33@cornell.edu) to request a sampling kit and shipping label. If you are having more than one dog sampled at a time you will need only one label and shipping container. Tell Liz how many dogs will be sampled so sufficient supplies can be sent. You can have the kit sent to you or your local Veterinarian.
2. The kit provided by the Cornell DNA Bank will contain enough materials appropriate for the number of dogs to be sampled. A FedEx shipping pack with a canister or a Styrofoam box and cold packs will be provided with shipping instructions and a pre-paid shipping label.
3. Request the forms (consent form, photo instructions, physical measurements, health history, etc.) to be sent to you by either Rick Sojda ([sojda@montana.edu](mailto:sojda@montana.edu)) or by Laurie Connell ([laurie.connell@umit.maine.edu](mailto:laurie.connell@umit.maine.edu)).
4. Fill out the consent form and bring it with you to your veterinary appointment.
5. You will need to have your dog's registration (pedigree) available for GRB (or AKC) registration numbers. Copy (both sides) to send with the other forms.
6. Fill out a separate signed consent form for EVERY dog sampled. Please make a note if the date of blood collection is different from the date that the owner signs the consent form. Also, note that the weight on the form is in kilograms (kg). You can cross this out and write in pounds (lbs) if you like, or do the metric conversion and record as kg. Just make sure it is clear which unit you have used. The weight may be obtained at your veterinary appointment and fill in at that time.
7. On the all forms in the space for "breed" fill in "Wirehaired Pointing Griffon", even those dogs with strong Czech Fousek backgrounds. Use your GRB registration number in the space for the AKC number (here is where you need the pedigree form). AKC registered Wire Haired Pointing Griffons are also very welcome additions to the genetic database!
8. Please have the person drawing the blood read these instructions carefully prior to commencing. The Cornell DNA Bank has had problems with either insufficient blood volume or blood that has been held too long before shipping resulting in deterioration. In either case the sample will not be of sufficient quality/quantity for submission into the archive.
9. **Please DO NOT send the samples on Thursdays or Fridays**, since Cornell is unable to receive packages during the weekend. Samples that are collected on

Thursday or Friday will be fine for a Monday shipment if they are kept properly refrigerated. You may consider package shipment dates when you schedule your appointment with your local Veterinarian.

10. Freeze the provided cold packs at least 24 hours prior to shipping the samples.
11. Collect **7-10 ml** of blood into EDTA tube(s) and gently invert 5 – 8 times to distribute the anticoagulant. We cannot process clotted blood. To ensure proper blood to EDTA ratio, do not overfill tubes (vacutainers stop draw automatically, but if using a syringe draw, only fill the EDTA tube about 2/3). It may take **two** tubes to get this volume, please make sure that enough blood is collected to reach the 7-10ml volume needed for sufficient DNA recovery.
12. Blood tubes should be labeled with the **registered name** and a secondary ID (registration ID or owner last name), and the date of collection. Use a permanent marker such as a Sharpie. [**Note:** Be sure the registered name is correct and identical on all forms and blood tubes, don't use "call" or "kennel" names. This helps avoid confusion when the samples are submitted to the Cornell DNA Bank. It is especially important for our group because there are so many names starting with "A" or "B" and many "call" or "kennel" names are the same or similar.]
13. Please keep blood tubes refrigerated following collection. **Do not freeze** the samples. Samples should be sent back to Cornell within a day or two of collection, using the standard next day FedEx service (**pre-paid label provided**). If the samples are held too long they will deteriorate.
14. Call FedEx to arrange for a package pickup. Remember, do not send packages on a Thursday or a Friday!
15. Please include the consent forms for each dog and a list of dogs sampled (if more than one dog) with the shipment. Pertinent medical history records, photos, pedigrees and questionnaires may be included in the shipment or mailed separately.
16. Please contact Dr. Marta Castelhana ([mgc27@cornell.edu](mailto:mgc27@cornell.edu)) and Mrs. Liz Corey ([eg33@cornell.edu](mailto:eg33@cornell.edu)) to let them know that the samples are on the way. In your email subject line put "Griffon DNA database submission". Also please email the name(s) of the dog(s) sampled and their registration numbers to: Rick Sodja ([sojda@montana.edu](mailto:sojda@montana.edu)) AND Laurie Connell ([laurie.connell@umit.maine.edu](mailto:laurie.connell@umit.maine.edu)).
17. The owner should send a donation check to the WPGCA E&RF to cover costs. The suggested donation is \$50 for the first dog and \$25 for each subsequent dog that has blood shipped in the same container. NO FUNDS should be included in the shipping package! The check should be made out to "WPGCA E&RF" and mailed to: Mr. Jim Seibel, WPGCA Treasurer, 17550 Seventeen Mile Road Marshall, MI 49068

**We thank you all very much for your effort to make this project successful.**

## Minnesota Hat Trick

by Jon Coil



**Smile for the camera, but stay upwind!**

Judy Coil and her dog **Aleksander of Cattail Storm** pose with a brace of woodcock. But not all recollections of this hunt were so rosy.

Photo by Jon Coil

Driving into a northwest wind on a sunny forty degree day in mid-October, Judy and I with **Bartos of Marsh Stream** and **Aleksander of Cattail Storm** were off on a day trip to try for a “Hat Trick” of sorts in northwest Minnesota. If we were lucky the hat trick would be composed of sharp-tailed grouse, ruffed grouse, and woodcock, a good mix of birds for our eager Wirehaired Pointing Griffons. **Berta of Show-me-Borealis**, old, stiff and sore was along for the ride and to share the lunch.

Minnesota no longer has the good numbers of sharp-tailed grouse that it once had but does have a low, stable population in Central Minnesota and one in the aspen parklands in the northwestern part of the state. The “aspen parklands” have a romantic ring with visions of strolls through the grass between park-like aspen groves. Some places may be like that but the remnants of this landscape

in Minnesota reside in large patches of low wet grasses and sedges with subtle ridges a few inches high covered with upland grasses and upland brush types mixed with the variously sized patches of aspens. With the wind waving the tawny miles of grass and at leaf turn, the aspen shimmering bright yellow and the hazel brush a deep red; it is a pretty but wet walk. To make it worse, in an effort to create farm land to entice homesteaders in the twenties, the area was ditched on the section lines. The ditch berms formed the roads and the ditches have waist-deep water year around. Crossing spots are few and far between.

In late September I had found a group of sharptail, and now the middle of October we were hoping for the same luck. Judy and Alek put up a ruffed grouse in some aspen but missed the shot. We split up on the return to the van. Judy and Alek found a woodcock and brought it to bag. I made it back to the van first and let Berta out and took her for a short hunt to meet Judy and Alek. Berta doesn't move above a walk often anymore but

Judy harvested a couple ruffed grouse and a woodcock with her early this fall. She still has the intensity on point though deafness and dimmed vision hampers as much as her stiff joints and cancer.

Lunch sandwiches were shared as we sat in the van out of the wind letting the sun through the windshield warm us. Berta got her share of the sardines and crackers, and we were soon ready to go again. We chose separate routes and I heard a distant shot from Judy and Alek while Bartos and I covered a lot of country but couldn't scratch up a bird. Back at the van, Judy and Alek had two ruffed grouse and happy grins.

Tired, and wanting a chance at sharptail, we did some scouting. I chose a minimum maintenance road made from the spoil of a deep drainage ditch that leads to public land according to the map. Three miles later we were still on the ditch bank road with no chance of crossing the ditch. It was wet wild country but nothing we wanted to hunt, and I was wondering if the road was going to get better or worse. The map showed a darker line on the road ahead indicating a higher grade of road a couple miles further so we pressed on. Our road was grass covered but tires from previous travelers had compressed the grass so I overlooked the scraping sounds when the oil pan of the low van leveled a pocket gopher mound and we kept going. Finally we made it to a more improved road and now two hours till sunset, it was getting urgent to find a place to hunt.

I headed for an area that I knew did have sharptail. I didn't have a lot of confidence in the spot but as time runs out, sometimes a poor spot is better than no spot. A couple miles from our destination, we drove past a pasture that had been sheared of the wood twenty some years ago and strips of aspen had grown to about forty feet tall in between the grassy areas. Some pasturing of public land is allowed for wildlife management and this area had been grazed over the summer. We decided to try it. We each chose a strip and off we went. A couple sharptail flushed wild on the edge of the strips and our excitement level built. Judy and Alek found several woodcock and were shooting up a storm. We got to the north end of the strips about a half mile from the road and chose a couple more strips for the return. Alek didn't like their strip and drew Judy the fifty yards over to our strip. Bartos pointed a woodcock and I got off a shot with my full choke twist steel barrel shotgun. Through the white smoke of the black powder, I saw I hit it. Whoopee! Alek raced in and beat Bartos to the bird. We moved up the strip. I had several more shots but couldn't repeat my luck with the tight chokes and vowed to



**Part 2 of the Hat Trick**

**Bartos of Marsh Stream** brings a Minnesota sharp-tailed grouse to hand for owner Jon Coil.

Photo by Jon Coil

get them opened up by next fall. Judy and Alek were finding birds. A grouse was flushed, the dogs picked up the pace; we were running out of strip and time. I heard Alek's beeper collar screaming point and saw Bartos move in then back off, I called in Bartos. I heard Alek give a low bark. Not a good sign. I was right. A short while later I heard from Judy, "Alek, NO! !^/\*!@# Skunk!" Great.

We got back to the van and got out the skunk kit. The wind was still howling on the exposed road but we couldn't put Alek in the van, smelling like he did, to find a more protected spot. While Judy mixed the peroxide, baking soda and shampoo, I held Alek on the leash. Glad it was him and not me getting a cold bath on that wind swept road. I looked down the road and there came a couple dogs from the farm stead a half mile down wind. Perfect. It looked like a great big lab mix and a stocky little pug. They came to within a hundred yards of us and stood on the road, watching. Alek saw them and started a frenzied barking. As Judy started wiping him with the foamy solution, he squirmed to keep up his brave front to the intruders and kept up his barking. A red pickup spewing dust in the wind slowed as it got closer, an extended cab pickup carrying four young people wearing blaze orange. They stopped and the driver smiled and over Alek's racket, made a comment about wanting to see the pug retrieve a bird. Judy was washing Alek, Alek was barking frantically and fighting Judy and the leash. I was trying to be polite to the people in the pickup while keeping an eye on the farm dogs. Through the confusion I finally figured out that they thought the other two dogs were ours. I explained they weren't ours and what Judy was trying to do was de-skunk our dog. The driver had been focused on the delivery of his witty remarks and just now was becoming aware of the skunk smell and with the urging of the two girls in the back seat, decided to leave. Now the two farm dogs decided to come on in. I went to meet them and the big lab mix was a friendly young dog, the pug was seriously curious but not out for mischief. I told the dogs to go home and surprisingly they did, Alek settled down and I was able to run the water jug as Judy finished the rub down. It wasn't the best job but it would work. We loaded up our gear and a cold, wet and smelly Alek.

We drove a few miles to a remote field approach and in the last light, watching a beautiful sunset we cleaned the birds and toasted the day and our Minnesota "Hat Trick". Judy had two ruffed grouse, a limit of woodcock and the long lasting remembrance of the skunk, and I have a plan to shoot better with the old side by side. We will be back next year for another chance at an all avian trifecta!



### Part 3 Ruffed Grouse

Bartos with a face-full of ruffed grouse shows off the third element of a mixed-bag hat trick.

Photo by Jon Coil

## Winter Fun and Exercise with a Kick Sled

by Laurie Connell and Scott Craig.



### Mushing with Your Griffon

**Allagash of Coyote Hills** heats up the winter cold for owner Laurie Connell on a brisk Maine north woods outing.

Photo by Scott Craig

The guns have been cleaned and stored for several weeks. Are you and your dog(s) hard earned muscle mass now atrophying from a lack of hunting? If you reside in the snow zone, it's an ideal time to go outside and get some exercise that is reminiscent of your recent "cooperative" hunting excursions.

If you're not quite up to skijoring (See Rem DeJong's link on the WPGCA website), you might want to consider a small dog sled or kick sled. Even a small Griffon can pull a kick sled. Our girl (**Allagash of Coyote Hills**) is only 50 lbs and quite capable of pulling our kick sled on level packed snow- However the 'kicker' does need to help Allagash on the inclines. If you have two strong pulling dogs, then you are in for some extremely fast fun.

Now, if you think this is too much gear to be storing away and dragging around, then look into a nice folding sled. Our kick sled was made in Vassalboro, Maine by the Maine Made Dog Sled company They have a variety of sizes but the "recreational kick sled" is a perfect size for 1 person.

(<http://www.mainemadedogsleds.com/>).

You don't need as much as you think. A small kick sled, a bridle (purchased with the sled) and a dog harness is all that's required. We use a diamond type harness that is very easy to put on. When the harness is sized correctly, the end that hooks to the sled bridle should reach to the base of the dogs tail. These harnesses are available on-line for less than \$35. With these harnesses, you could also hook your dog up to a toboggan or any other sort of sled for the kids.

As for running the dog(s), there is just one caveat, because we still have partridge (ruffed grouse to those of you "from away") in our woods during the winter, one must be vigilant for that staunch point in the middle of a nice run. Personal Note- It's much easier and quicker to stop a kick sled, as opposed to trying to stop quickly while skijoring!

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## **The Top and Bottom: Griffon Stories of 2010 from Rocky Mountain Chapter Members**

**Compiled by Rick Sojda, Bozeman, MT**

Here are stories of griffon hunts from across the West that happened this fall. All are factual, at least based on those facts to which we will attest. A couple of us are getting old enough that we cannot be certain what happened this year and what happened in the past, but it all did happen. We swear.

**Elle of Auger Falls, Billie Jo of Valley House, Ali of Ancient Kennels, & Ann and Gary Pool**— Finally, the house is quiet. Dogs, guns, decoys, coffee thermoses, buddies, everything out the door, and I'm back to bed --ahhhhh, to sleep in to a more normal waking morning hour. No... no... that can't be the phone. "You said what, Ali?" "You want me to do what?" "Oh, I see, you're in the blind with Gary with a 12 gauge shot gun and 20 gauge shells and you need me to drive to the blind 'right now' and bring some shells..." Such is living with a griff!

It is one of those hunts that sticks in your memory for a lifetime. It is a late season chukar hunt in the mountains lining the Snake River on Brownlee Reservoir. Chukar numbers are up and there are lots of birds to find in the snow that ranges from a foot to just inches deep. Hunting these birds truly takes place in three dimensions --you can be shooting straight up, straight down, or anything in between. Making it more memorable are my three companions, Mickey (Autumn) of Hoffman Mill, on the last hunt of her life, Cassie of Dutchman's Hollow, and Elle of Auger Falls. As we approach a precipice with the reservoir 1500 feet below, all three dogs go on point. They held the point long enough for me to take a few pictures and then did not seem all that upset when I walked up and very nicely missed all the birds in the covey.

**Griffondor's Josette (non WPGCA) & Tawna Skinner**—Boy was I happy! After begging nearly all day, my mom finally took me hunting. It was a bit windy and snowy (my mom was nearly blown over a couple of times), but I didn't care. Right off, I found a dead hen that I picked up. Then after a short run to relieve myself, I found a prickly looking beast. Mom said, "No, no, no" to that; so, I ran on. Pretty soon my nose was filled with a wonderful scent and I froze. I heard my mom walking up through the willows and then five birds flushed in front of me. Mom swung her gun and I jumped forward in hopes of catching one. Dang! She didn't even shoot, just told me to stop...and something about "hens" and "good dog". She petted me, and off we went again.

**Briar of Bogan's Point & Robin Strathy**—December is for bird hunting in Montana: Eleven degrees (above); 10" of snow on the ground (snowshoes are nice); 2" of ice on the roads (four wheeled drive is nice). Native, wild sharptails (gosh they're pretty). It simply doesn't get any better!

**Braun of Marsh Stream & Anita Andrus**—I was once again reminded how wonderful it is to have a hunting dog that can track and retrieve while pheasant hunting in

North Dakota this October. Nine year old Braun pointed staunchly on the bluff above a small creek. The rooster flushed, I shot, and the bird crashed on the opposite bluff. Yea! Down the 25 foot embankment goes Braun; she swims the creek and climbs up the other steep slope to the crash site. No bird! Off she goes at a dead run to the right, tracking through the tall grass. Then, 30 seconds later, here she comes with my bird, back down to the creek, swims across and up to me, and delivers to hand. This is why I hunt --for the teamwork and satisfaction of a job well done.

**Bogey of Salmon River & Jim Jarvis**—After recovering from his meningitis bout after 2 years, and then having a piece of skin on his cornea with four hairs growing out of it surgically removed, Bogey apparently has forgotten his retrieving skills. On a recent chukar hunt, he made a great sneak and point. I flushed the covey and dropped a bird. Bogey made a quick search and find, picked up the bird, dropped it, spit out feathers, and looked at me, as if to say “I found it, come and get it!” [Rick’s Note: The following amendment from Bogey arrived a few days later.] “Boss shot a rooster today in the snow and guess what, I retrieved it! I’ll show him.”

**Bessie of Hundgaard, Addy of Wolf Fork Canyon, & Glenn Lehrer**—I had the opportunity to hunt for the first time with two new griffon owners and their dogs. Greg Miyauche and Boone of Salmon River hunted sharptails in northern Montana with Bessie and me. We both shot two sharptails over each other's dog on point with a backing from our own dog and then shot another sharptail with our own dog as the primary pointer. What a great experience! Some time later, I took Zeb Breuckman and Benny of the Midnight Sun hunting pheasant for their first time in eastern Montana. Benny and Zeb got their first rooster the first day of the hunt. Zeb was not sure Benny would point before we started, but Benny turned out to be a young pointing champion on the trip. What fun!

**Bella of Salmon River & Dennis Bays**—It had been a slow morning. I had just about decided to drive to a different location when I spotted a rooster gliding along a fence line bordering a marsh about ¼ mile ahead of me – flushed by something in the cattails to my right. I clearly saw the bird flare and land in the tall grass just on my side of the fence. Bella and I swung very wide downwind. As we approached the spot, I mentally prepared for a flush, or at least for Bella picking up the track. Instead, before we got there, Bella became excited about something under a tree on the edge of the marsh, down a short bank. I heard her splashing, and then I got a “point” signal from her GPS collar. I took a few steps toward the tree, confused, when the rooster erupted from the far side. My first quick shot seemed only to result in a few feathers drifting to earth as the rooster gained distance. My second shot did the same, so I could only watch to see where its glide took the bird. I thought I saw it land about 150 yards downwind. A few minutes later, I was standing at the fence, on the edge of a no-hunting area, wondering if I should send Bella over the fence and across the canal on a dead bird search. I knew the bird was wounded. As I thought about it, I noticed that she was VERY interested in the fence and bank just under my feet. A bit of tracking, some splashing, and then she popped out past me on a dead run, nose to the ground, into the grassland to my rear. After 100 yards, she stopped, dipped into the grass, and came up with the rooster. She

**Hunting Memories**

No camera required for Rick Sojda to remember this hunt with his son, Neal, and ace versatile gun dog, **Ander of Hundgaard**.

Photo by Rick Sojda

proudly brought it back and delivered it to hand. It was a great moment, and a wonderful payoff on our recent training efforts! I would never have found that bird – either time – without her.

**Ander of Hundgaard & Rick Sojda**— We were able to explore some relatively remote country this year. The Gravelly Mountains, the Gallatins, the Little Belts, and the Marias River were the backdrops of some wonderful dusky and ruffed grouse hunts in spectacular Fall aspen color for Neal and I with Amos of Dakota Prairie (Mike Reilly of Bozeman's Trish Reilly) and Acoma (Ace) of Indian Creek (Randy Ross of Three Fork's Diane Ross). I recall washing freshly cleaned sharptailed grouse in a clear mountain stream, birds that had been shot over Ander and Amos points earlier that day (six birds in about an hour) and thinking that this is nirvana. Another night, after discovering that the bar in town was only serving Coronas and no food, we cleaned birds by headlamp; and, then, Mike cooked the best supper that Mary Ann, Neal, and I have eaten in quite a while. Those grouse were awesome. Maybe it was the whiskey, maybe the wine, maybe the family, friends, and dogs. Maybe it was actually Mike's cooking. I reminisce back to another hunt in Montana's Prairie Potholes. Ander had one of those incredible, rigid points with Amos beautifully backing. A pheasant exploded from al-



#### Grouse Getter

Ander of Hundgaard holds a grey partridge after a long retrieve.

Photo by Rick Sojda

most no cover under just a bit of grass and snow. As Mike mentioned, it looked like a missile launching from an underground Nike silo...only a bit tastier. A closing note: it is difficult to believe that Ander is now five and has yet to lose an honest cripple. He chased one sharptail this Fall for well over 400 yards, a bird that Neal and I knew we had not hit despite having hurled nearly four ounces of lead in its direction. Ander was still 200 yards behind the fast flying bird, in hot pursuit, when it collapsed in mid air. How do they know?

**Amos of Dakota Prairie & Mike Reilly**—I was near the Canadian Border, on a barley ranch belonging to the family of one of my former students, where we had hunted last year with limited success. Likely, that had been because it was late in the season and the sharptails were all in dense wooded cover and could see us coming across the barren snow for miles. This year, we went earlier, hoping to find them in lighter cover and, hopefully, holding for

Amos. The 13 year old son of the rancher was hunting with us. It was the kid's first hunting season, and he had never shot at a bird before. I had been giving him lots of grief, because he was a University of Montana Grizzly fan and I teach at Montana State, their traditional rival. I asked him a few questions, like: Q: What happens if you drive slowly through the University of Montana campus? A: They give you a degree. If you know a club member who is a U of M graduate, maybe you could explain this joke to them. Of course, be patient, it might take a couple times.

Anyway, I was anxious for the youngster to get a shot at a bird, for a few of reasons. First, it is always neat to see a young hunter and the excitement that they muster. Second, if he gets a favorable feeling for hunting behind a griff, he might be a future owner. Third, he likely would be receptive when Amos and I wanted to come again.

We were working a draw with some heavy grass cover that dead-ended in the middle of one of their barley fields. Did I mention that this family grows lots and lots of barley for Molson, Coors, and DosXX? They own a grain elevator which is another good reason to be in tight with this family. If the apocalypse comes, I may still be able to get barley and make my own beer! At the very head of the draw, Amos locks up on point. He is solid. We catch up, and I send the boy in ahead of the dog. A sharptail flushes, and the kid is so surprised that he barely gets off a shot. I do not shoot, hoping that he will get the bird by himself. Although he misses, he is so excited he is hopping around. He does get his first bird later in the day. What a great memory of the boy and the dog and the bird. "Good boy, Amos!"



## **Hey! Could I have your attention for just one minute?**

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