



MERRIMACK VALLEY NAVHDA NEWS

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March 2018



It's almost Spring time! Things will start to pick up in the next couple of months! Please make sure you mark your calendars for the following:

- ♦ **March 24 (Saturday) 9am to 2pm- Indoor Training Clinic at Halona Stables. 113 Mountain View Rd, Deerfield, NH:** This is a good opportunity to socialize your dog. David Trahan will run this event which is always very informational. Some skill areas that may be worked are: Walking on a lead, heeling, using a training table, using place boards, fetching/retrieve and many others. Dogs are broken up by age as needed.
- ♦ **April 14 (Saturday) will be the HELDCA Cleanup Day.** Help cleanup the training grounds at Sharpe's Farm, Little Frost Rd, Hopkinton, NH. Bring gloves, rakes, loppers etc to help get the grounds ready for the upcoming training season. **Rain Date April 15.**
- ♦ **April 21 (Saturday) Training at Sharpe's at 9am.** This date is tentative. Check the webpage for further information.
- ♦ **May 5 (Saturday) Training at Sharpe's at 9am.** This date is tentative.
- ♦ **May 19-20 (Saturday and Sunday. Must attend both days) is the Yankee Chapter Handlers Clinic.** This will be held at Green Point Wildlife Management Area in Dresden, ME. Reach out to the [Yankee Chapter](#) for more information.
- ♦ **May 25, 26 and 27— Spring Test!!! 8am at Sharpe's Farm.** Your dog must be registered to test. Volunteers will be needed on all 3 days. More information to come!
- ♦ **June 9 (Saturday) Training at Sharpe's at 9am.** This date is tentative
- ♦ **June 15-16 (Saturday and Sunday. Must attend both days) is the Merrimack Valley NAVHDA Handlers Clinic.** This will be at OnPoint Kennels, 101 Coffeetown Rd, Deerfield

To Our New Members

First of all: WELCOME! You have joined a very dynamic and fun group of passionate dog owners! Many of us are going in 10 different directions at any given time, so if you have a question or you need help please ask.

As editor of the newsletter, I will try to get the word out on events and happenings as often as I can. I will try my best to include information for new members who have no idea what to expect. My wife Crystal and I were there last year and continue to learn.

There are some basic items that will help you at the clinics this year.

- **A tie out stake**—don't make the same mistake I did last year and buy a stake from the pet store. These dogs are athletes and they are STRONG! OnPoint Kennels has tie out stakes you can buy, or you can go online and get one. If you want to be one of the cool kids, get the hunter orange stake with the 2 foot chain.
- Rubber Boots—the training fields can be very wet, especially in the spring! A pair of rubber boots will be very useful. This is NOT a fashion show as you'll discover from the various outfits.
- Bug spray—you're in NH, in a field in the middle of the nowhere. Enough said. Also, be aware that dealing with ticks is part of owning one of these amazing dogs. I HIGHLY suggest buying a can of Permethrin and spraying your socks, pants, shirt, hat etc that you plan on using that day. (Don't use it around cats! And read the warning label) Permethrin just might be what keeps you from getting ticks on you.



- A Water Bowl—This is a MUST. You'll be at a clinic for many hours.
- A Sports Water Bottle—We use these to give our dogs water when in the field. It's important your dog learns to use one.
- A Hunter Orange Hat—You will need this in the field for safety reasons
- A Long Lead 20-30 feet— You'll use this at times when working with your pup on various drills. I prefer rope but many trainers will tell you to use the flat type.
- LUNCH-There are typically snacks around but do yourself a favor and bring a bag lunch. It will be a long day.
- A Towel—This is optional but you may want to bring one. At the very least it will make your wife happy that you are taking care of “Her baby.”
- A Chair—There are times when you will be waiting around. Bring a chair! I bring one for my dog too.





From the Editor

I'm not even sure how it happened. My wife Crystal and I were attending the annual meeting at Dave and Carol Trahan's and I was listening to Carol tell us how Dennis Swett would no longer be doing the newsletter that many of us look forward to seeing in our emails. I kind of drifted off in thought about what a great job Dennis had done in 2017 and how I'd enjoyed the articles and the pictures each time a new edition would come out. From what I can surmise, Carol was looking for a volunteer to fill the rather large shoes that Dennis had left behind and having no luck until... all of a sudden out of my big mouth came the words "I'll do it." It was all kind of surreal really. I mean, I'm no writer by any means (Though I was a reporter for the Knightly News when I attended Noble High School many many many years ago.) and English is surely a second language for me. Yet there I was telling Carol how happy I'd be to take over for 2018. So here I am, struggling to put this together despite help from Dennis and encouragement from several people. (And Dave Trahan saying "It doesn't matter what you get out there, just get something out!")

For those who don't know me yet, I got my first bird dog 42 years ago. She was an English Setter given to me for my birthday. I've had several dogs to hunt with over the years (mainly quail when I lived in VA and later grouse, or partridge as we called them in Maine) and I'm currently on my 4th and 5th GSPs. Cyrus, who is just over year old and likes to hunt in whatever county I'm not in, and Meadow who is being trained by my wife and will do the NA Test in May. When I got Cyrus a year or so ago I decided to go to OnPoint for training. I'd met Dave Trahan at the Rockingham Hunting and Fishing show a couple of times and wanted go to a professional trainer. The first thing Dave told me was that I should consider joining NAVHDA. It is probably the best advice anyone has ever given me. Cy tested twice for NA last year and I'm proud to say we didn't have to go a third time because he passed the second test.

I hope to give you a newsletter that you look forward to reading, and I also hope that all of you will feel confident that if you send me pictures, or articles that I will get them published in a timely manner.

Dennis Swett, thank you for all your help the past month. I hope that from time to time you'll honor me with an article that I can add to the newsletter.

-Wayne Randall

Membership at Large

From Chris Pope

The First Recipe and Photo Submitted in Honor of Our New
MV-NAVHDA Editor (thank you Wayne!)



“Winter Gray Squirrel Chez Gunny”

Ingredients: 1-Squirrel

Cooking: None needed. When the hunting dog gets tortured by 5 gray squirrels all December and January and is upset because he doesn't get to go hunting finally, due to persistence and poor timing on the part of the squirrel, you have Squirrel Chez Gunny. Beats getting run over by a car!

(approx. 1000 Calories, may contain raw meat)

When Training Ends and Hunting Begins...

By Ryan Sullivan



Most MVNAVHDA regulars know us as the 3 Musketeers or the 3 Amigos or if you ask Dave, it's the 3 Stooges. Conor (Devoy), Andy (Gallant) and I count down the days until early goose, opening duck, opening upland, or really any chance that we can get to hunt. Dogs are what brought us together and hunting with those dogs is what keeps us going. You may see us giving each other a hard time, pretty much all the time, but at the end of the day whether or not we piled up birds, missed countless opportunities (*Conor?*), or didn't see anything at all, we still have fun.

We started this past year with the early Goose season. Conor had permission to use a field his father-in-law owned and we decided that since it was a couple of hours away from home, we would setup tents and sleep in the field to save some time. As the sun started to rise all I could hear was Conor snoring in the layout blind next to me. I couldn't see anything so I finally woke him up and jokingly told him he was scaring all the geese. As soon as I said that a flock of about 30 Canada geese came over the tree line headed straight towards us! I did my best to try and call/flag these geese in but, after 3 circles overhead, they flew off. We learned some lessons that day but I think the biggest lesson learned came from Conor's moment on the big screen when he learned that you do in fact need a HIP permit. (HIP stands for Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program and is used by game managers to estimate the harvest from the previous year) If you would like to learn more about Conor's brush with the law, check out Episode 5 Season 10 of North Woods Law.



Next was the opening for pheasant season. 3 guys and 3 GSP's made some quick work of Patten Hill in Candia. I think there were a handful of people who just walked away after seeing us our shoot our limit of pheasant in a matter of minutes.

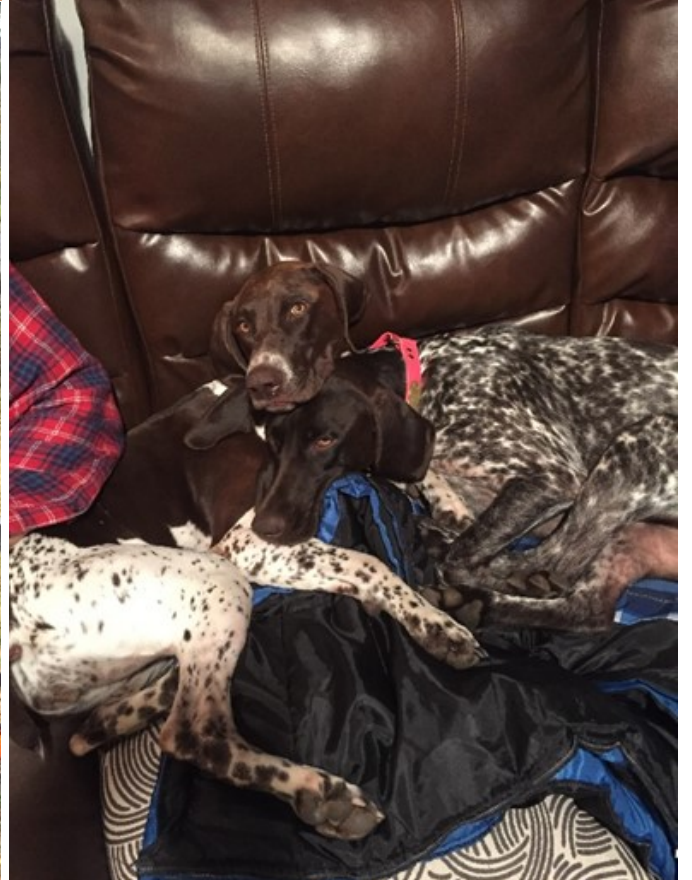
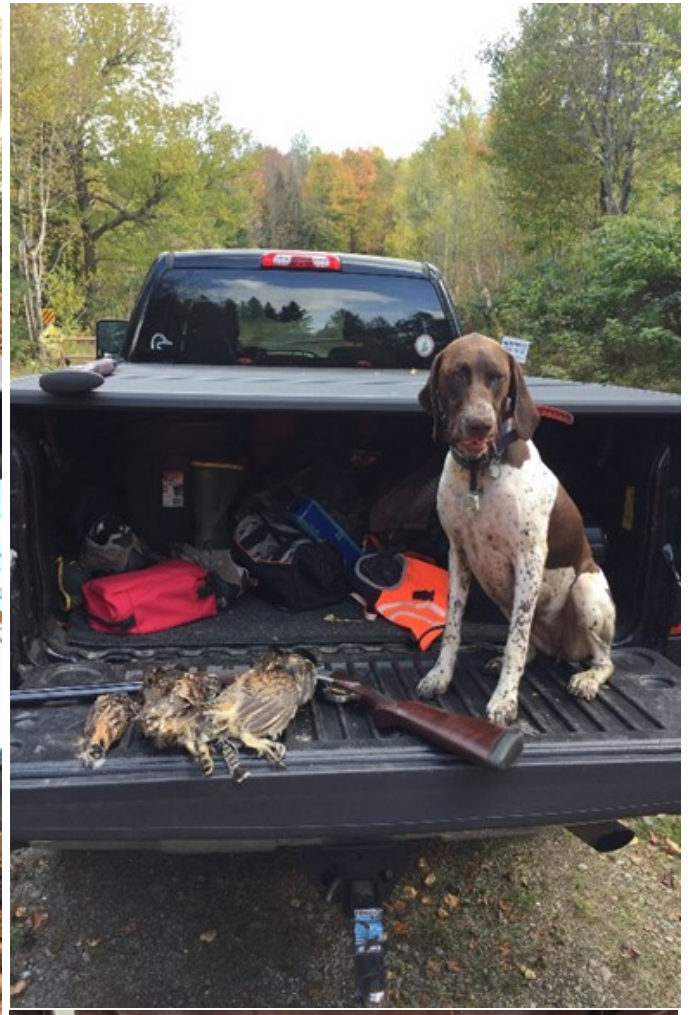
Then duck season opened. I made the bad decision of having my house closing on the same day at 9:30 am, which if you ask my wife was really really not cool. She was still packing the U-Haul while I was sitting in the blind. However, we had a blast and shot some mallards, woodies and maybe there was a teal thrown in. You may see Conor and Andy on an episode of North Woods Law from this trip, as a camera crew rolled up right after I had to leave to close on a house. Don't miss any more episodes!



Another fun day in the bay where, again, we got stopped by Fish and Game but no camera crew this time! The bay was especially great for me because Ilsa, my good girl, had her very first retrieve in a natural, non-training setting. I walked away to move the boat and heard a gunshot. I came back from the boat and saw Andy holding the bird he shot and had sent Ilsa out to retrieve. The words out of Andy's mouth were, "that was the best damn retrieve I have seen in my whole life."



There was a memorable hunt where I winged this mallard on a pond and it crashed down about 150 yards from where I shot it. It was on the other side of the water and in the woods and I wasn't sure what the dog would do, but under Conor's amazing guidance we sent her for it. Wouldn't you know it? She crossed the water, took off into the woods, came back with the mallard in tow and delivered it to hand. On the left you see Conor's daughter Casey getting her first up close experience with duck hunting! Introduce them young!



The pictures above were from Pittsburg, NH. Conor and I had the chance to hunt there a few weekends in October and tried in November but we learned that snow comes quick up there and that the dogs didn't quite care for tracking birds in a foot of snow. I have learned that exposure is the only way you will get results from your dog. The first two days of grouse hunting, Ilsa must have bumped 5-10 birds. By the third day she was pointing and holding steady. If I knew how to shoot she may not hate me as much. With almost no training at all, Maddie and Ilsa figured out how to back each other and honor points! Having the dogs work together was great to see.

This last picture was from the last day I was able to hunt woodcock. We were in Exeter, NH after work for a quick run when she locked up hard pointing into the woods. I got a few steps in and that familiar explosion of woodcock was right in front of me. I somehow managed to get my gun up, took the shot and, wham, got that bird. The point of me going on and on about all this is for one simple purpose. We put a lot, and I mean a lot, of time and money into these dogs. Sometimes we are happy and sometimes we are upset because of them, but at the end of the day when your dog points a grouse and you shoot it or you shoot a duck and your dog retrieves it I would imagine there's not much else in life that gives you that feeling. Maybe having a kid, but I'm still months away from that so I'll leave it at that. If you want a dog to hunt, take it in the woods!



Cometh the Sun...



Sitting next to the picture window of our cottage, I feel the late winter sun burning through. In anticipation, I peek outside looking for grass, but see only snow and mud. Spring isn't quite ready to show herself and I feel like I was refused a dance with "lady spring". My thoughts wander.

It seems long ago that I left behind the cutting, hauling, splitting, stacking and burning of firewood. These days, when the sun burns brighter, I soak in its rays and dream about the next season. I can't seem to help myself from wondering, "How might the dog and I do better?" "Where will we go to connect with *wild* birds?" The weather has 'softened' enough that we walk a bit to build up my legs and lungs. Ever vulnerable at my desk, I offer small fortunes to bird dog magazine publishers while day-dreams of 'perfect' fall days surround me like a sparkling aura!

And the advertisements!! Decades ago, all that we needed was a good fall day, an old shotgun, a few shells, and a compass. We'd quickly wrap up our chores and sneak out into the back acreage to where we flushed a covey of partridge last summer. The high-tech guys usually included a map and perhaps a jack-knife in their pocket. These days, we need special boots, a 'device for this' and a 'device for that'. (Even our dogs use a GPS!) Our shotguns need to be pieces of art—so we can brag about them in the pub—and we carry enough shells for an all-out fire-fight with a flight of woodcock. We have first aid kits for our dogs that are larger than the first aid kits for ourselves. Heaven forbid that our brush pants should be worn at the cuff!

It seems that today, a well--outfitted bird hunter carries almost as much gear as a Navy SEAL.

Now, if you're in your prime, weight may not matter to you, and an eight-to-ten mile walk with all the gear is "normal". You're working the percentages--more miles, more possibilities. Legs kill birds. I get it.

However, at *my* age, many more hunters are looking for "less". Less distance walked with a focus on "habitat quality". Less "weight", less "stuff"! A light shotgun with light loads works well in the grouse woods. Admittedly, a *light* GPS is a wise choice to use with the compass.

No longer do we carry a whole box of shells. *If things are so good that we run out of ammo, then we have the makings of a really great story*—which fills our memories and lights our gatherings longer than another bird or two in the bag. The water bottle is about half the size that it used to be. Refills are back at the truck. Instead of a separate dog bottle, we share. Boots are evaluated with weight as 'prime criteria'. We've been out enough to know how to judge weather, and we know that one handkerchief and a carefully selected (light-weight) jacket will give us everything needed until we get back to the truck. Matches and a knife are still important—however lightweight synthetic handles and smaller blades are a "necessity". Bowie knives are "out" and lightweight cordura sheaths have become my favorite.

It's kind of like listening to some really good 'blues'... Less is more.

Still, despite the desire to reduce "weight", (and in the light of "technology") folks in my sort need to be practical—especially if we're still "getting off the beaten trail". I used to tell my wife, "If I am found face down in the woods, just know I was having a good time." She *never* appreciated that sentiment, so I recently followed the course of some of my "brothers" in the chapter and purchased a (lightweight) satellite GPS locator unit. Between April and December, I'm often where there is no phone service, and if I get in trouble, the satellite messenger/emergency locator provides a few good options.

To the Editor

I've never been the editor of a non-profit newsletter. It must be a pretty thankless job and just like many volunteer jobs one does it because they care. My family would like to thank Den, our "Editor Emeritus" for all of the incredible hours he dedicated to putting out a fine printed product. For new members like our family, we took great joy in looking at the pictures and getting important information about our club and club activities. My 90 year old father-in-law, a lifelong hunter and lover of bird dogs, would come to watch training clinics and see tests. He just wanted to see a few dogs work in the field. In the last year or so, he was unable to come to the events due to health issues so he got his fix by reading every page of the newsletter. Again, many thanks to Den and all of the writers, photographers, editors, sponsors and contributors. And Wayne, thanks for taking over!!

-Chris and Kris Pope

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Pictures from the Indoor Clinic

Please feel free to send me pictures and I'll try to get them into the newsletter!



Cyrus doing a hold.



Conor Devoy doing his best Willie Robertson impersonation

Pictures from the Indoor Clinic



Meadow learning to stay put on a place board. (Crystal Randall Instructing)



Some new folks with 2 beautiful GSPs!

Pictures from the Indoor Clinic



Dave Trahan demonstrating how to train “Hold” with Meadow while Mike and Michelle listen intently.

Pictures from the Indoor Clinic



Pictures from the Indoor Clinic



Isabelle left and Maya Right. Littermates! Can you believe that Carol cropped out the owners?



Just kidding! Here they are!

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