

# V E R S A T I L E HUNTING DOG

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For the Love of Hunting

**CHUKAR vs.  
PHEASANTS**

*Positive  
Training*

**Estrus Suppression**

**VC SHR Sassy Hemlock Bandito MH CGC**  
*English Setter*

***Chukar Hunting Tactics***



# For the Love of Hunting

A photograph of a person and a dog hiking up a hill in a desert landscape. The person is wearing a dark jacket and blue pants, and the dog is a brown and black breed. The background shows rolling hills under a cloudy sky.

If you have hiked straight up a hill at 5,000 feet for the better part of a day while carrying enough water to shower in and more hardware than an infantry soldier all in desert temperatures, then it could be that you like to hunt the most challenging game bird in the American West, the chukar.

It is true that the tender white meat of the beautiful gray and reddish-brown partridge is a delicacy and fit for the most finicky consumer. But since an average dressed bird yields less than half a pint of boned flesh and a full day's effort may result in only a couple in the bag or none at all, the premise of hunting for meat is a little sketchy. The exercise benefit is a plus but why risk heat stroke or a heart attack when a nice air-conditioned gym can offer the same?

The sport of chukar hunting is not for everyone and when these birds are pursued for the first time an individual will probably question his or her mental health. A check-up will, in time, indicate that all is well and that he suffers only from a love affair with wild open spaces, the excitement and demands of a hunt, and the beauty of a working dog.

What sets chukar apart from other game birds is the terrain and the extreme weather conditions of the places they inhabit. Most

experienced hunters have told me the same thing over the years about finding good chukar ground: Look for steep, rocky hillsides that offer cover, plenty of feed- which usually includes cheat grass, and a water source nearby.

T-shirts to wool shirts and brown grass to snow covered slopes is the natural progression of conditions encountered, but don't worry about getting cold; it rarely happens to the dedicated hunter. Early in the season, which usually opens in October, heat and exhaustion are always the biggest concerns, especially for the dog. A human's perspiration or a dog's panting along with high temperatures and an arid climate rob a body of moisture quickly. Generous amounts of liquid must be carried and consumed. Allow your dog to water, rest and cool down frequently.

Wind and snow, as with most hunting, are factors to be reckoned with. On windy days, search leeward sides of rocky ridges and protected pockets offering cover. With snow on the ground bird tracks are a telltale sign that at times will actually allow you to track chukar. This method is not only fun but exciting.

Look for southern exposures where new grass sprouts and where there are roosting areas. The timing of when birds feed or travel to water is a tough one to determine, but this rarely discourages a chukar hunter from predicting where the birds will be and the rea-



Tim and Debbie Baugh with their pudelpointer,  
Dreamwork's Huntress "Dixie Belle."  
PHOTOS BY TIM & DEBBIE BAUGH

sons why. After you stumble into a few and put one in the bag you'll know where to look for a covey.

Some of my favorite amateur observations are, "It looks like it snowed up high, so they'll be down in the flats." And: "With everything white they won't be going to water; won't need to." And then there's: "They're not up here; must be down at the creek."

Around the time one of these brilliant statements is made the dog locks up on point at a place you just know couldn't possibly hold a bird. You reluctantly remove the sling from your shoulder and raise your shotgun that by now reminds you of a barbell and casually walk into position behind man's best friend. Seconds later a single chukar explodes from under a sage bust the size of a head of lettuce. Right then you take back everything you said to your dog about pointing "tweety" birds, place the only prize of the day in your bag and humbly head off the mountain. Hunting methods vary, but birds can be found almost anywhere in good habitat depending on conditions. Hunting pressure has a tendency to break up coveys and to disburse birds. One trap everyone falls into is chasing them straight up a mountain for a long distance as they taunt you with their hideous calling only to have them flush from the top over your head in a jet plane formation back downhill to the bottom where you started. In time you'll discover that circling a covey and stalking them from above is the more successful method.

There are master chukar hunters. Some of them are young and possess a seemingly endless drive and obsession of pursuit while others are just seasoned with years of experience and knowledge. It is routinely demonstrated that stamina and sheer determination will increase success but at the end of the day the satisfaction often comes from the grueling hike you endured, the poetry of your dog working and the wildlife spotted in the vast in the vast open country that chukar love. While the bird count is mostly unimportant, everyone likes to get a few for their effort, but in my estimation it is foolish to expect too much when it comes to hunting chukar. The physical challenges are extreme, the birds wary and fast and the hunting variables numerous. But then, if it were any other way, it would just be shooting.

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