

# GUN DOG<sup>®</sup>

*THE MAGAZINE OF UPLAND BIRD AND WATERFOWL DOGS*

MARCH-APRIL, 1983

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 4, \$2.95



PICKING A PUP • THE TROPHY ATTITUDE • TEACHING STEADINESS • STEEL SHOT  
HUNTING BOBWHITES IN STYLE • CRATE BREAKING • DUCKS ON THE BIG RIVER



# Retrieving Platforms — A Prescription for Safety and Performance

by Joe Delaney



As an ardent waterfowler, I believe in justice. Pardon the pun, but “what’s good for the goose is good for the gander.” If a hard-working duck hunter deserves insulated waders, comfortable down coats, ear-flapped hats, and turtlenecks, what about his dog?

It is amazing how often otherwise sensible and even supposedly knowledgeable duck hunters needlessly expose their dogs to the elements, sometimes even to the point of hypothermia.

An often overlooked and yet important piece of waterfowling equipment when hunting over decoys is a durable, lightweight, and versatile dog seat.

When the temperature starts to hover near freezing and the wind is blowing, it’s almost criminal to hunt a dog without stationing him out of the water. In fact, it is harmful to hunt any retriever on cold, windy days, when they are directly exposed to cold wind and ground for extended periods without interruption. The conditions causing body heat loss must be dealt with. These heat robbers — cold water, cold wind, cold ground, and bare aluminum boat seats — are the tragic causes of hypothermia, the sometimes fatal, rapid loss of body heat.

It should be noted that light-

*The retriever box provides your dog with comfort and visibility while keeping him safe and out of the way.*



coated pointers and setters are sometimes called upon to make occasional cold-water retrieves in the uplands. However, these dogs are so active that they dry off and warm up quickly. Continuous running and shaking adequately converts calories into body heat. Consequently, under these conditions, they suffer no ill effects.

Conversely, retrievers spend most of their time sitting and waiting to work. If they are properly trained, no time is wasted between retrieving to hand, quickly shaking and then sitting motionless waiting to go again. However, often there is a considerable time lag between retrieves.

Body temperature in working retrievers is dependent upon two things: the quality and condition of the dog's coat and the physical condition of the dog (dependent upon diet and living environment).

Regardless of a dog's durability, comfort and safety are assured for a dog that has a recognized "work station" — a Michigan Retrieving Box. Your dog feels comfortable, knows where he belongs, and is out of the way until called into action. These boxes also help conserve the space in a duck blind. All this makes for an enjoyable hunt, providing an enjoyable time for all and the chance for a dog to handle and perform well.

Today's waterfowler, who is not well-heeled and cannot afford the guaranteed success of a private marsh and a permanent "hide," must depend upon mobility. As a professional duck hunting guide, I usually hunt directly out of my 12' long, 56" beam johnboat. My netting blind with woven vertical strips of burlap every 4" completely enshrouds the boat and is properly dressed with local vegetation. My retriever works off a portable retrieving box secured to the bow seat with a pair of eye hooks. An opening at the bottom of the blind skirting where the dog sits (on the bow seat) allows easy exit for immediate retrieves. In this position, a working retriever is above the water level and has an almost unobstructed view, making falls marking an easy task.

Although I made my retrieving platform to fit the bow seat of my duck boat, it has other applications



*A retrieving box takes up less space than a kennel box, functions well for all purposes, and snuggles among equipment.*

as well. On the way to and from the hunt, it serves as a kennel box. A piece of fitted carpeting guarantees that my dog stays comfortable in her seat. Measuring only 28" long by 17" wide and 11" high, it conveniently nestles among decoys, motor,

*With your retrieving box loaded as a decoy reservoir and your equipment packed, you are ready to motor and punt into your favorite hunting zone.*

*Photos by Lou Tisch*

