

Why we hunt - a suggestion

by Scott Linden

This article is reprinted from the Newsletter of the National Shooting Sports Foundation's official TV series with the permission of Scott Linden.



Summer is a time for fishing, dog training, anticipation of the upcoming hunting season, and if we're lucky, reflection. Long drives and time on a trout stream with old friends seem to get me looking at the "why" of things as often as the "how." If you too ponder things, you might see some common ground here:

I became a hunter because I watched my first wirehair work a field, putting up a pheasant hen after a solid point. I'd never owned a gun before, but decided if he would do that for me, the least I could do is shoot the bird for him. Little did I know that was the start of a (late) life-long series of dazzling performances by a series of magical dogs I was privileged to observe, some I even owned. Lucky for me, the relationship continues, and the awe I felt from that first point returns every time I send a dog into the field. You know that feeling, don't you?

Any excuse for sharing time with a dog is legitimate. But for me, one reason is most clear: we become a team linked by DNA, a modern version of a prehistoric wolf pack coursing the uplands for sustenance - literal and emotional.

In the digital age we pretend to communicate with gadgets. The talking we do at each other via smartphone is shallow, ephemeral and self-centered. Contrast that with the deep genetic link between hunters. Words are unnecessary when instinct guides predators linked by common purpose. Have you felt that connection?

I'm honored when my dogs invite me to share this primitive thrill, accepting me as equal, calling on the most basic of instincts to feed our pack and sustain our souls. We are one, thinking and acting as a single being with a



single goal, to find prey. The act is violent and primitive, ugly and beautiful, exciting and peaceful, making up the most complicated transaction in the universe: lives taking life to sustain life.

Neither of us will starve if we aren't "successful" in the common definition of the term. But the size of our bag is a sidebar to a bigger story: the flow of adrenaline, a deep passion, panting and slobber, the tang of sage and if we are lucky, the coppery smell of blood.

Dogs tolerate our missteps and bad shots. They put up with poor noses and slow, creaky joints in their human packmate. At the end of the day they ask little except a warm place to sleep near their hunting companion, forgiving missed shots and misplaced anger.

I'm flattered. I bet you are too.

See you - and your dog - in the field soon,

Scott

Scott Linden, creator/host

Wingshooting USA