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Until recently you saw more Irish setters on the bench than in the field. Now they're back as hunters again

Irish Luck Improved

By Larry Mueller

"IRISH SETTERS are definitely back as hunting dogs." John Ganley made that statement with the assurance of a man who can prove what he says. And the proof he offered was Ara of Barnhouse.

John, of Atwood, Illinois, bought Ara, for \$50 at a St. Louis pet shop. At 6 months, Ara was pointing. When we saw Ara, he was hunting on the run, ranging in sight of the gun, searching likely cover without undue waste of time, and pointing staunchly on wild or planted birds.

To find a hunting Irish Setter isn't always that easy. Bob Kerans, of Newton, Illinois, bought a pup out of "dual purpose show and hunting stock." The dog turned out to be a lap pet which flash-pointed at best. Bob learned his lesson quickly and began a search for a pup of field stock whose ancestors had never seen a bench.

The Irish setter that Bob put down with Ara that day was Field Champion Miller's Tiger Lilly. We watched her briefly as she worked out to horseback range and disappeared from view. Lil is a field trial dog, encouraged to range wide. We were hunting on foot, and it was a long time before we found Lil quivering on point.

Watching Lil at work was a pleasure.

Because of their great beauty, Irish setters had become immensely popular as a bench show sporting dog, and while breeders were concentrating on the beauty of the breed, the dogs field qualities were being neglected. With good reason, many upland game hunters began to think of the Irish as a bench dog and less of a gun dog. Fortunately, there were a few dog men around who knew this wasn't true and began breeding programs which now are proving it.

Are the redheads really back as hunters? Paul Griffen, of Constantia, New York says Irish setters shouldn't be thought of as coming back. They have returned as quality shooting dogs, he insists. He makes that claim because he discovered field bred stock. And he think it's unfortunate that more gunners don't know how to find the strains of hunting Irish setters. Of course, good show strains are easier to locate—the American Kennel Club registered 23,357 Irish Setters last year, most of them show stock. In comparison, Field Dog Stud Book registration of hunting and field trial stock averages only 2,200 to



John Ganley's Ara works well in field and points staunchly, if not stylishly

2,500 Irish setters each year.

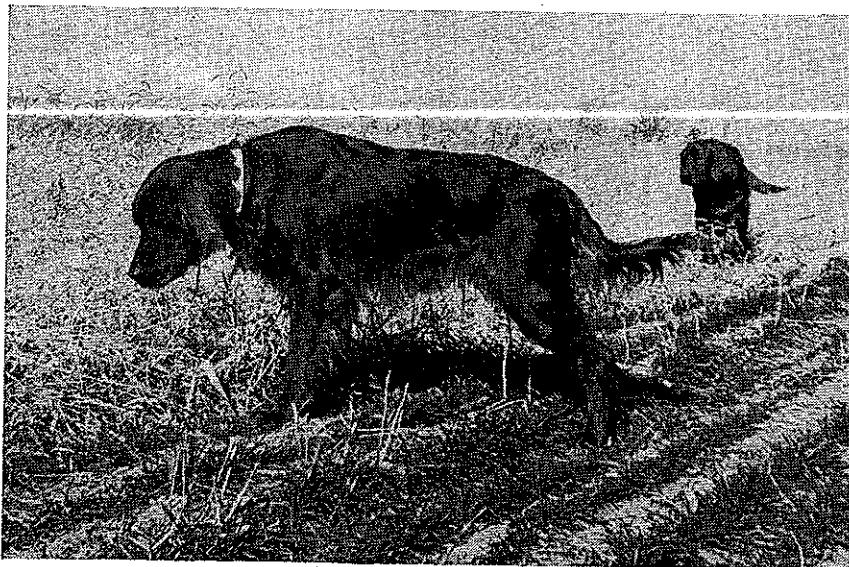
The show dog versus field dog conflict is not new. It has been a running battle for well over a century.

The first show ever held was for pointers and setters only. It took place in 1859 at the Town Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England. By 1874, dog shows were being held in the United States. In England, between 1875 and 1880, Champion Palmerston became the darling of the Irish setters and was a tremendous influence on the breed. Yet his original owner considered him too delicate for the field.

Elcho, the first bench champion in America, was competent in the field, and his son Joe, Jr., was the first Irish Setter field champion in this country.

The Elcho-Palmerston bloodlines sparked an Irish setter popularity in the United States after 1880, both on the bench and in the field. After that came the Law strain. One of the best known, Shan Law (whelped in 1901), was described as a broken field dog, whose pointing was superior to the average of his breed but lacked the pace and range of most English setters and pointers. The Law strain did produce many excellent shooting dogs, however. They were the choice of the prairie chicken market hunters of Minnesota in the early 1900's.

A few years after that, in 1917



Miller's Tiger Lilly, a field champion owned by Bob Kerans points with Ara backing

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Otto Pohl wrote his intention to produce field trial winning Irish setters that were good looking as well. His breeding produced many excellent field dogs but, unfortunately, most people interested in shows did not share his interest in hunting.

Besides creating lack of hunting desire and bird interest, in the Irish Setters developed for show these breeders began exerting another kind of influence. High withers, lower rump, and a tail flowing straight off of the back were sought because the results were an attractive, almost arrow-shaped dog. It also seriously deformed the dog's running gear. Added weight (almost doubled since the early 1800's) put the finishing touches on an already clumsy dog.

Elias Vail, who wrote a classic book on bird dog training, did well with his Irish setters in field trials during the 1920's, but few bought his stock. Most wanted show dogs.

In 1933, after a 26-year-void, the Irish Setter Club of America reinstated field trials. But since this A.K.C. recognized organization is primarily show oriented, about 1950, it against lost interest in serious field competition.

About the same time that field interest seemed defunct in the Irish Setter Club of America, W. E. "Ned" LeGrande, of Douglasville, Pennsylvania, stood watching the pitiful efforts of some red dogs in an Indiana trial for Irish setters only. He told his wife, Helen, "Something is going to have to be done for Irish setters."

LeGrande scoured the country for superior stock. He joined forces with R. C. "Rusty" Baynard, Archer Church, and later Al Bortz, John Van Alst, Colonel Ed Schnettler and the search widened. They found only eight or ten

Irish setters in the country that could run, point, and handle birds. Of these, only three were able to point with an erect tail.

One of the best—possibly the foundation of today's Irish setters—was Askew's Carolina Lady. A search for more of her kind revealed that she had been bred in Albert Lea, Minnesota, by Earl Bond, who had perpetuated a strain of hunting Irish for fifty years. Bond couldn't be found, however.

Nevertheless, one specimen remained from the strain of Irish setters which had been the choice of early Minnesota market hunters, and a son of Lady, Ike Jack Kendrick, was also discovered. Those three were the only high-tailed pointers left among the Irish.

LeGrande and his friends concluded they must have an outcross to improve and increase available stock. Ilsley Chip, son of Mississippi Zev—a champion English setter, was chosen to mate with LeGrande's Willow Winds Smada. Chip was red and white. Crossed with red, Chip would sire red or fawn pups with some white trim. Chip also had the desired gait, speed and style on point.

The choice of this litter, Willow Winds Joan then was bred to purebred Willow Winds Mike. The resulting choice, Betty, was mated to Rusty, producing Rita. Up to this point, William Brown of the highly respected Field Dog Stud Book was registering the offspring as Cross Bred. Breeding back to pure Irish stock once more, under F.D.S.B. rules, made the offspring eligible to once again be called purebred Irish setters. Rita was bred to Ike Jack Kendrick, son of Askew's Carolina Lady.

Some of the great dogs that followed were Hardtack, Mr. O'Leary, Double Jay,

and Willow Winds Hobo. Rusty's Jinx, Baynard's straight Irish, also figured strongly in the development of the new setters. Bred to females from the outcross, Jinx sired Double Jay, Willow Winds Hobo, and Valli Joy Hi. The cross had left its mark on Irish setters that were beginning to win in open trials against pointers and English setters. LeGrande stacked up a total of 513 wins in both breed and open trials.

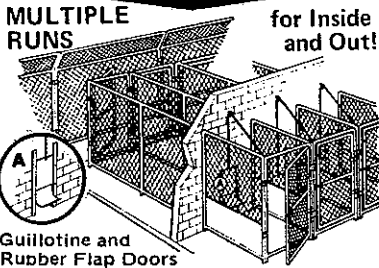
A few hearing about this outcross for the first time may raise their eyebrows. True, it has resulted in Irish setters that point with straight up tails, instead of straight out, and ears that may be attached high on the head instead of low. But paintings of the early 1800's also show these characteristics in some red dogs. Furthermore, Mississippi Zev had Irish setter blood in his pedigree. Llewellyn improved his stock by crossing to Irish setters and became the father of field trial English setters. By reversing the procedure we expect history will recognize Ned LeGrande as the father of field trial Irish setters.

LeGrande and his dedicated friends also formed the National Red Setter Field Trial Club. They called it Red Setter because they didn't want to fool anyone concerning the outcross. And they intended to fully divorce themselves from any relationship with Irish setter show dogs.

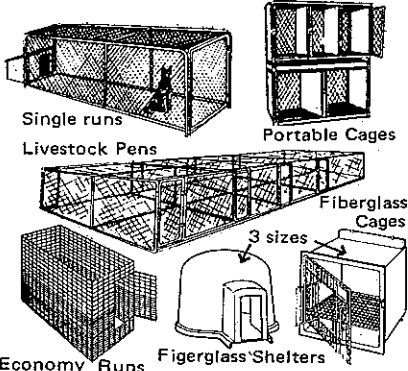
Unfortunately, this brief history leaves out the names of many great men and dogs. However, it's enough to present the picture of the Irish setter's rescue from oblivion.

William Brown says the Field Dog Stud Book now registers 2,200 to 2,500 Irish setters each year compared to only 1,600 to 1,800 in the late 50's. Red setters are still very much a minority

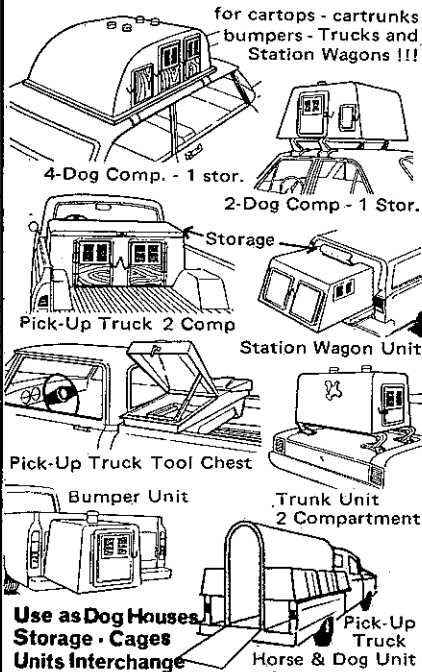
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training methods. Others echoed his opinion.

Red setters are intelligent and trainable, but they can't be disciplined in anger, as one could a pointer, or the dog would be cowering at the heels for awhile. But they do respond well to kind and gentle, but firm, treatment.

And now, finally, the big question seems to be will the Irish setter stick as a hunter, or will beauty destroy him again?

I think he's here to stay. In its early history, the breed didn't have an organization furthering its field qualities. The past two decades have witnessed that organization steadily improving red setters by comparison in competition and intelligent selection of superior breeding stock. And the breed fits today's hunting style in many parts of the country.

At least equal in importance is a cleavage which most writers of the past have discouraged, but which I heartily advocate. Most sporting dog authorities have clung to a belief that a hunting breed should be perpetuated only for its original purpose, but it seems wiser to recognize the other mans right to breed dogs for any legitimate purpose, including shows. However, hunters should be able to get hunting Irish setters and not show or the so-called dual-purpose stock.

More and more, the field Irish are being registered in the Field Dog Stud Book while the A.K.C. is registering the show strains. Since it is physically impossible to reconcile the show and field Irish setters, I believe the divorce should be complete. After that, there would be no deception. The dog's registry would identify it as show or hunting stock. Never again would we hear the historical complaint: "The Irish setter used to be a real hunter, but was ruined by its beauty."

Foxholes for Bucks

(Continued from page 45)

so finding a hideout that will have the proper combination of cover and visibility during the deer season is much easier.

Opening day of the following deer season found me flashighting my way through rough country in the early morning darkness. I hoped to be settled in my foxhole by the first inking of daylight. The pack sack I was carrying contained a good lunch, plenty of hot coffee, my camera, and an extra wool shirt. The shirt was not needed while walking, but would come in handy once I arrived at the foxhole. More often than not these northern Wisconsin deer seasons average a bit on the nippy side, if not downright cold. A good covering of snow had fallen earlier in the week, but I had a good trail to follow, having made a trip out to the foxhole the previous day.

Arriving in due time I quietly readied myself for the day's activities and completed things by dabbing a little buck scent on two pieces of cotton dangling from a string I attached to a small balsam tree nearby.

Removing a few evergreen boughs from the opening, I slipped into my living quarters and proceeded to make myself comfortable. Laying my rifle in front of me and pulling my ear laps down just a little further, I settled back to await the dawn.

Two hours and one cup of coffee later, a slight movement in the nut brush off to the left caught my eye, and a young doe nibbling at some mountain maple buds suddenly appeared about 35 yards

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