

Pathways to Friendship

... a Declaration of Love to Dogs That Hunt



Ulli Reichmann

For Quendy

... we'll meet again, my brown eyed girl



Translator's Note:

- To uphold the lively character of the book, punctuation has at times been only loosely adhered to, akin to the original, especially in direct speech.
- The terms “rabbit” and “hare” have been used interchangeably; “hare” is technically correct but “rabbit” is more commonly used in spoken English.
- Proper names containing the German letters ä, ö, ü have been left in their original spelling.

Hey, where did we go
Days when the rains came?
Down in the hollow
Playin' a new game

Laughin' and a-runnin', hey, hey
Skippin' and a-jumpin'
In the misty mornin' fog
With our, our hearts
a-thumpin'

And you, my brown eyed girl
You my brown eyed girl

Lyrics: Van Morrison



Foreword by Jörg Tschentscher

A new book about the hunting behavior of dogs. Oh gee, I thought, feels like about the 87th version of books on this subject.

And then I read it. It's really just indirectly a book about hunting behavior. Very indirectly. For Ulli Reichmann writes about her way of dealing with dogs that hunt, chase, or track. A huge difference. No training dogs against their nature, pressuring them or demanding obedience against their biology. Inspired by a special encounter, she not only found a way but her way of dealing with canine needs while still maintaining guidance of a dog in her own hands. In an easygoing and natural way. With a concept that also "works" in densely populated areas.

Those who now think this book provides a training plan with pointers they can simply check off are mistaken. There are plenty of those around.

Here you'll find a biography by someone who had to come "clean" with her dog. And through that found both her and a way. Thus an exciting book. Worth reading. Not written from some condescending "I've got it - follow me!" stance. But by a very human being. A human who has a dog that hunts. A human who searched and who observed. Who out of that developed a way to truly accommodate a dog.

All it asks of the human is attention.

Precisely that aspect starkly differentiates this book from said 87th version ... Not a training book. A biography with a personal concept. Which is why I find it worth reading.

Jörg Tschentscher



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Prologue

Somewhat lost, a woman stands in a clearing, looking around, searching. Three dogs are sitting next to her, then lie down with a sigh when the waiting gets to be too long.

Suddenly a voice echoes from a densely overgrown hill nearby: "Are you looking for your dog?"

Bewildered, the woman looks around and the speaker appears. Dressed like a Native American, with long white hair, a falcon on his arm, an English Pointer at his side. He appraises the woman with an amused gaze. "Yes," the one spoken to answers. "She's a good dog," the man returns. "Yes, she is," the woman nods, "just unfortunately she is not here." The man points to the bushes behind him and says: "She's after a hare, she'll be back soon." The woman sighs: "Precisely why I never wanted a Terrier..." The man laughs, comes down the hill to stand next to the woman, says: "You simply haven't understood yet what the dog wants." The woman thinks a bit. "And you know?" The man nods: "Yes, I know." The woman: "Then tell me!" The man: "That I can only show you. Tomorrow at 10 a.m. – here?" The woman: "Ok!" That woman was me. The next day at 10 a.m. as well as the following days, weeks, months, years, Helmut the Falconer propelled me on a journey. On a journey to friendship with my dog that hunts.

Well, you can't simply transmit such a journey 1:1. You need to immerse yourself and gather your own experiences. Can't force anything, let alone try to teach your dog anything in this regard. Anything the dog needs to learn here it already

knows! And anything the human needs to know here they too already know. Regrettably, this inner knowledge tends to lie hidden beneath endless layers. Layers of social conventions, misinterpretations of a dog's behavior, written and verbal training guidelines, comfort zones, and set ways of doing things. Helmut the Falconer helped me rediscover my buried inner knowledge and trust. I would now like to share the results with you. First, however, I need to expound a little ...

Chapter 1: Differentiated Hunting Behaviors



People tend to begin thinking about their dog's behavior only when it becomes "uncomfortable." When they watch the disappearing backside of what was once such a cute little pup rushing off somewhere - backside still cute but now part of a half-grown dog. Or when the grateful dog from the animal shelter starts revealing qualities other than thankfulness after a few weeks of settling in.

By then at the latest a "spiral of constraints" usually begins. Many dog trainers are firmly convinced that restraints are the only way to shift a dog's hunting behavior. It's just too tempting - the dog wants to rush off into the bushes, you hurl a "NO!" at it and it stops doing what it was going to do. Tempting and human, but unfortunately useless in the long run. Unless you savor constantly fighting against your dog on walks rather than enjoying your time together.

Especially with dogs that hunt, you can find some of the greatest insanity used in training methods - even to the point of using stun guns! Obviously some people see a dog's passion for hunting as a sort of nasty demon to be eradicated by any means other than feelings and intelligence.

Of course, there are also quite a few dog-friendly anti-hunting methods used by serious trainers, methods based on solid scientific foundations.

For the most part, these people work with "distraction," "diversion" and "substitution."

Things that neither hurt a dog nor seek dominance from the other end of the leash.

Other than dummy training for retrievers, I nonetheless find most of these methods too "artificial." They show too

little interest in the specific preferences and talents that each type and breed have developed over the centuries.

I approach it very differently.

I take what a dog has to offer on its own. I try to meet it right there without any other animal having to suffer in the process.

Basic hunting aspects are the same in all dogs, regardless of breed: Search - Find - Chase - Catch - Kill - Eat.

As specialization has developed over centuries or even millenia, one thing is clear:

No dog needs all these aspects to have a satisfying hunting experience. Human beings found that out fairly quickly and have further "refined" these natural specialists to fulfill their own needs.



You don't need to be familiar with all 400 or so "recognized" breeds.

Some you can only tell apart by how they carry their ears, by the texture of their coat or the color of their fur.

There are also regional differences. Dogs with identical abilities but born and raised in different countries may be given very different names and their breeders may point out huge differences. Yet those tend to be purely external.

To me that doesn't matter. I am interested in a dog's preferences and abilities. To be aware of them, you need to be able to differentiate more between dog "types" than breeds.

Knowing breeds is only important in finding correct approaches, assessing a dog's abilities, and thus being able to accommodate them.

How irritating that dogs don't always behave in accordance with their breed! Luckily, they are still individuals, regardless how purebred they may be, and have their personal preferences and aversions. These should be our starting point for all activities with them.

At the same time, a dog's hunting behavior is often the only real clue as to what the ancestral heritage of a mixed-breed may be.

Once you've found out some rudiments of your dog's hunting behavior, it is of course fun to research specialized literature and expand your knowledge of that field.

In the many years I've held courses for dogs and humans, I've learned to distinguish between the following types:

Dogs that enjoy anything connected with hunting. Dogs that can also be inspired to carry out activities that deviate from their own particular purpose

In this group you'll find primarily Terriers and Dachshunds, but also other temperamental breeds and their crossbreeds.

You can recognize this type of hunting dog through the fact that any activity with it creates interest or even enthusiasm and that they can immediately understand and implement anything you show them. Training seems "easy" and fast, with the risk that the human may tend to become sloppy and careless, thus frustrating the dog.

These dogs rather quickly get used to a new way of taking walks. They are then bitterly disappointed if their human turns out to be an unreliable hunting partner rather than the seeming promise at the beginning. Letting training "slip" with these dogs has especially uncomfortable consequences since their character is quite independent and they will quickly revert back to hunting alone. Rebuilding such training can take a good deal of discipline and skill.



Dogs that enjoy anything connected with receiving instructions from a human

In this group you'll find primarily shepherding dogs of all kinds and their crossbreeds.

Training is easy and fast with this group as well. Here the human needs to be sure to always initiate activities.

These dogs expect that and are thoroughly prepared to cooperate. Be sure that there are always enough running games, for the biggest challenge these dogs face is being able to chase enough.

Herding behavior grew out of chasing and was also selectively bred in them. Dogs in this group must also be given the opportunity to run really fast on command.

Fleeing prey combined with an unsatisfied need to run is not a good mixture for this type. The challenge for the human here is supplying the dog with enough tasks and staying in constant connection with it.



Dogs with a special talent for pointing

In this group you'll find pointing dogs and allrounders of all nations, e.g: English Pointers, German Shorthaired Pointers, German Wirehaired Pointers, Magyar Vizslas, Weimaraners, Small Munsterlanders, Large Munsterlanders, Brittanys, Setters, and all their various crossbreeds.

With these dogs, one needs a lot of skill and patience, especially at the onset of training.

If your dog carries one of these breeds in its genes, at least in part, you can be sure that its indication of prey can develop into real pointing if encouraged.

The difference between indicating and pointing is that indicating is never the end of the hunt for a dog. Tense and perfect as it may look, it only serves to inform its fellow hunters, and the chase will follow fairly soon.

The dog will also indicate tracks or other things that it finds interesting.

Real pointing, however, is an active hunt.

Through its position and body tension, the dog keeps the appointed prey in place until a human (or its own instinct) tells it what to do next. You thus need a lot of sensitivity if you want to promote this very pleasant type of hunting preference.

It begins with slightly tautening the leash to keep the dog place while also clearly staying in connection with it. In addition, you very softly praise the dog while carefully moving towards it, slowly, step by step, to keep it from chasing ahead.

Some dogs like it if you place your hand over their chest in addition, others prefer not to be touched at all.

Keep praising the dog the entire time. Then stop the process, either through a whistle or with "Enough."