

A KINDER, GENTLER, QUIETER WAY TO TRAIN YOUR BIRD DOG



A Field Manual

by Maurice Lindley

with John L. Rogers

photographs by Vic Williams

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by Maurice Lindley
with John L. Rogers

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Reissued with re-design by Steady With Style Publishing
Layout and design by Leslie Nicole

STEADY  **WITH STYLE**

Resources for training your pointing dog the kinder, gentler, quieter way for a happy and reliable bird dog

www.steadywithstyle.com

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“Too many training routines have been conceived and written about with everything present but the dog, as you will discover when you try them.”

—George Bird Evans

May Mr. Evans’ wise observation not apply to this method!

Editor’s Note: While we have made every effort to make the information in this booklet as clear and as easily implemented as possible, we urge the reader to use it in conjunction with the Bill West video, *“Training Labs to Point.”* Do not be misled by the word “Labs” in the title—it’s about Mr. West’s method of training based on more than forty years of working with pointing dogs of all breeds. Check the www.steadywithstyle website for resources on where to find where the Bill West video, pinch collar, and checkcord.

Introduction

THIS IS A FIELD MANUAL, not a pretty book to adorn a coffee table. It's a how-to book about training the pointing bird dog breeds. Carry it with you as part of your training gear and refer to it often.

Its main "voice" is that of Maurice Lindley, a remarkable man who gets remarkable results from the many hundreds of bird dogs he has developed as a professional trainer.

His list of notable winners in competition includes *Fiddler's Gizmo*, *Seldom Home Major*, *Seldom Home Belle*, *Commander's Big Buck*, *Starwood Acres -Dottie*, and *Commander's Casey Jones*.

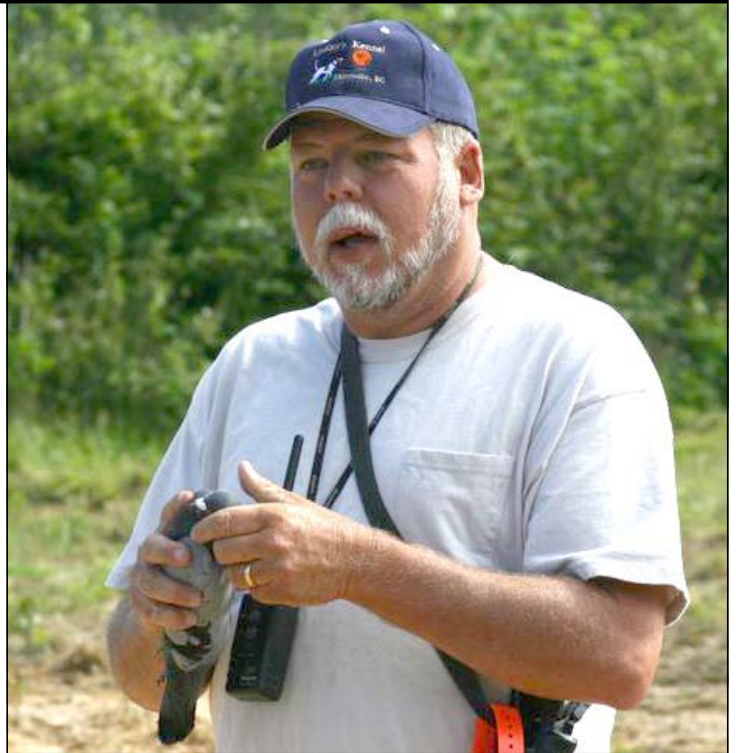
Affectionately called "Mo" by his many friends, he had enjoyed a successful career as a pro trainer but thought of quitting when he became totally deaf from an incurable inner ear disorder. But he loved bird dogs too much to quit, so he learned a new and better way to train, the **non-verbal** method.

He studied the techniques of such noted "quiet" professional trainers as Bill West, who taught it to Bill Gibbons. Through seminars and videos, the West/Gibbons approach has attracted a growing audience of "believers." Maurice learned that this method, necessitated by disability, is actually **superior** to heavy reliance on spoken or shouted commands.

It works because dogs cannot read and cannot talk. It works because it's easier for dogs to learn the **process** first and the command later... quite the opposite of conventional training methods. "*Problem dogs such as gunshys, blinkers, lying down on point, and those that have been abused in previous training can be rehabilitated in most cases when this method is employed,*" Maurice Lindley states with conviction.

Writing in the March/April 2002 *Pointing Dog Journal*, Mark Coleman says of Maurice: "*Rather than force his language on the dogs, he opened his mind to learn more about their language... the language of silence.*"

To repeat, this is a field manual. It is not about introducing your puppy to its new home, not about feeding, health care, or building a kennel, or teaching parlor tricks. It is about training a bird



Maurice Lindley, "Mo" teaching a seminar at Piney Run Kennel
—photo ©Vic Williams

dog to become a competent, reliable, enjoyable companion that finds and holds game birds for the gun, with joy and style.

For information on those other subjects, excellent books have been written. The pamphlets distributed at veterinary offices, pet stores, feed stores, etc. are usually free and offer excellent advice. If you are new to dog ownership, Maurice suggests availing yourself of this information from the sources named, the Internet, or your public library.

So let's assume your pup has been vet checked, wormed, inoculated against disease, has reached about four months of age or more, and is generally ready to be introduced to the field, the Great Outdoors.

Make no mistake; training an ambitious bird dog requires disciplinary measures. This method differs from conventional methods in that discipline is swift and positive but never harsh, cruel or abusive. Whipping, violent shaking, beating, kicking, harsh jerking on a checkcord, and all forms of manhandling common to much training even today are never employed. Dogs of soft temperament,

Introduction continued

those that have been messed up by faulty training, and bold canines—all are candidates for Maurice's non-verbal training.

Maurice Lindley has been a professional trainer of all breeds of pointing dogs for more than thirty years, owning and operating Lindley's Kennels of Piedmont, SC. John Rogers is a freelance writer who collaborated with the late Roy Strickland in the production of a successful book on the training of grouse dogs. His writing has appeared in *Pointing Dog Journal* and a number of other outdoor publications. He lives in Delaware, Ohio, near the city of Columbus, and is a West Michigan native who returns, with his bird dogs, to his beloved home covers each Fall to hunt ruffed grouse and woodcock.

It is a fascinating coincidence that Rogers, 20-plus years after the publication of Mr. Strickland's book, stumbled across the *American Field* coverage of the 1946 Grand National Grouse Championship, which Strickland won with the setter, *Burton's Fleetfoot Ginger*. The reporter, gallery, and judges were awed by the fact that the handler uttered not a word during the flushing attempt, yet the setter exhibited superlative manners on each of its five finds. "Not a word was spoken not a whisker twitched," wrote the scribe. Even then, decades ago, **silent handling** generated admiration. ■

With special appreciation to Jere Murray for contributions to the text.

This little book is dedicated to bird dog lovers—professionals and amateurs alike—who have found, and who are seeking, a kinder, gentler, quieter way of training. It is our firm belief that a training session should be pleasant for trainer and dog alike. If it is a chore for the trainer it will soon become one for his dog also.



Silent training method in action.

—photo ©Vic Williams

Early Learning

YOUR PUP is somewhere between the ages of three and four months. You have played with him, socialized him so that he likes people and is fairly bold and is enjoying his puppyhood.

He should be wearing a flat collar—leather or nylon, with a metal name tag riveted on, not dangling from a hook. Your pup should have a name; preferably a short one that is easily called, and should be responding to his name. He should be accustomed to walking on a leash or training cord.

This is the stage at which Maurice starts running pups in the field; meadows and light cover that isn't too strenuous for the youngster, "Just to get 'em used to everything that is out there. They learn to go along with me and to learn a little bit about handling and staying in touch with me," Maurice says.

"Don't necessarily work them on birds at this stage, but pups do need to find a bird or two, no more than that, so they start to hunt birds and not want to mess around with mice, deer, rabbits, and other off game. Just don't overdo the number of birds."

"Just let them run around, point, bump, chase birds and have a jolly good time of it till they reach the age of about six to eight months. By that age, most pups have become strong enough and fast enough to catch pen raised birds. (Maurice uses chukars and quail.)

I've had excellent results with the little Cotunix (Pharaoh, Tibetan, Egyptian, erroneously called Japanese quail) with pups and young dogs. When purchased from a good breeder, these birds are good flyers and unlike bobwhite quail are cheap and disease resistant. Their small size and gentle flush won't scare a puppy.

Maurice makes use of them during winter low cover conditions. A 2-foot length of bright orange yarn or surveyors' ribbons tied to one leg makes the birds visible when you



Puppy running up a pigeon.
—photo ©Vic Williams



Puppy gaining confidence with a bird.
—photo ©Vic Williams

flush them and pick them up for re-use. These birds do not covey, hence do not return to a call-back house. They work best in thin cover as they tend to burrow in thatchy grasses.

The pups have, during a strong chase **only**, been shot over, **once** per chase with a .22 crimp type blank and gradually moving to a .410 or other shotgun using light loads. Shoot only when the pup is in full chase. Shoot only **one time** until pup demonstrates a bold, lusty chase.

We cannot proceed with training unless and until our pup is absolutely fearless around gunfire. If he shies or seems bothered by the gun, **stop firing**. Just let him resume pointing, bumping, and chasing birds for awhile longer before popping the .22. **prevention** is the watchword! Say nothing. **Repeat: Say nothing!**

When you are sure your pup loves gunfire, it is time to kill a bird for him. Let him mouth it, run off with it, whatever. But do make sure he gets to "taste" a bird a few times once you are positive it's safe to shoot around him.

By allowing pup to "taste game" at this stage, he will know he has **power over the bird**, that the bird is good, that it can't hurt him. **Do not** be in a hurry to take the bird away from him and **do not** get into a tug-of-war with him to get the bird. ■

Equipment

IT MAY LOOK GOOD, but you don't need this, that, and the other... a bunch of gadgets to train a bird dog," says the founder of this method, Bill West. Whoa posts, whoa boards, pulleys, flank cords, etc. are superfluous. What you **do** need is a 15-foot long (maximum) checkcord, $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter, braided nylon) and a leather pinch collar with a series of blunt nosed copper rivets instead of spikes or tacks. **Note:** Blunting the spikes of a regular spike collar or is **not** a good substitute for the training collar, popular belief to the contrary. Insist on a leather collar with copper rivets only.

Check the resources page for good sources for the training collar and the checkcord, both designed by Bill West and recommended by Maurice. When left sharp, regular spikes can hurt or injure a dog, when filed down they are too short to exert a pinching action. What is needed is a **pinching** effect, not a piercing effect.

This method makes use of the electronic or E-collar but in ways quite different, and often much more humanely, than the E-collar is commonly employed. Select a variable intensity model by a reliable manufacturer. Avoid the E-collars that feature a "sound burst" option. Check the sporting dog magazines for sources advertising new, used, and reconditioned E-collars. Some of the older models are very satisfactory. While on the subject of electronics, a word about those electronic remote controlled bird launchers or releasers. Maurice makes use of them for certain aspects of field training, but greatly prefers carded, caught-wild pigeons in most applications. Many things can and do go "real wrong real fast" when the remote devices are in inexperienced hands. Ditto for the manually operated mechanical launchers.

That's it for Equipment. ■



Pinch Collar



Check Cord



E-collar example

Note: for up-to-date resources on where to purchase training aides and articles / videos on using them, visit www.steadywithstyle.com

How Dogs Learn

PRETEND THAT YOU ARE AN INSTRUCTOR at a military post where the soldier-trainees speak nothing but Spanish and you don't know a word of Spanish. (*Sounds like something the Army would do, if my experience as a G.I. means anything!* —JLR) Anyway, your job is to teach the recruits how to field strip and reassemble a rifle. If the troops watch the process, they will sooner or later learn to disassemble and assemble their rifles... just by watching.

In time, as words are associated with the various rifle parts and activity, the recruits relate the English words to them. That is, it is easier to teach the process first and learn the word later than to do it the other way around. This is exactly opposite to the traditional concept of dog training but is fundamental to the success of **non-verbal** training.

It makes sense to dogs! ■



Teach the process first, then the word.

—photo ©Vic Williams

Middle Stage Training

FEW OF US ARE FORTUNATE ENOUGH to live where wild, native gamebirds are plentiful. And even if we are blessed with lots of wild birds, the law restricts us from training on them during much of the year.

So we make use of liberated game, which so far as dog training is concerned, actually has advantages over wild birds in some ways. But even the best captive birds are mere substitutes for the real thing. Our challenge in training a bird dog is to make captive birds behave as closely as possible to wild birds.

Dogs hunt birds better when the birds act like wild ones... strong, healthy creatures capable of strong flushes and flight. It would be well too if the birds we use in training had no human scent on them or the area surrounding them. We want our liberated birds to act as if they know they are being hunted... as wild birds surely do!

Maurice and followers of the West/Gibbons method have devised an approach that is cheap, easy, and effective. It allows you to place birds in the

field about where you want them, are aware they are being hunted, and carry no human scent.

For this we need pigeons. Freshly caught barn birds that are wild and flighty. You can catch them, trap them, or buy them. Just make sure you are getting “wild” not pen-raised pigeons. (*Amish farmers in my area of Ohio have built a thriving business raising and selling good barn pigeons to dog trainers and clubs.* —JLR)

Provide your pigeons with lots of room, water, feed (cracked corn), and grit. The birds will keep well, are strong flyers, and when handled Maurice's way, exhibit good prey response. (*As a “townie” I can keep a maximum of four pigeons in a rabbit cage in my garage. These birds get a lot of exercise from dog training sessions. If not, they would soon become sluggish and useless as training birds. This is another benefit of this method—you don't have to have lots of birds on hand, you simply keep “recycling” those few you do have. The more they are used in dog training, the better they react as “wild” birds.* —JLR).

Middle Stage cont.

Carding Pigeons

Now that you have your pigeons, cut some corrugated cardboard into rectangles anywhere from 8x8 inches to 8x15 inches with a small hole punched about one inch in from one corner.

Get some ordinary white yarn. Double a length of yarn about 20 inches long and knot the two free ends together. Poke the knotted end of the yarn through the hole and bring the opposite end of the yarn through this knotted end and pull it tight to cinch the yarn to the cardboard. The knot should be next to the cardboard, not next to the bird's leg. Use yarn, not string. String cuts the birds' legs.

Form a loop in the free end of the doubled yarn pulling it down snugly just above the "ankle" of the pigeon. You now hold in your hands what Maurice and friends call a carded pigeon.

Wearing gloves, toss pigeon and cardboard together into the area where you wish to work your dog. Try not to walk over the ground where you will be training, to eliminate human scent from the training set-up.

When the bird flies, it will struggle in the air against the tether and land back in cover. Maurice advises us to then work our dog on a second bird, leading the dog away from the first one so as not to encourage a delayed chase or working a flight-weary bird.

In windy conditions, or if your training field is of limited size, you may want to dizzy the

Cardboard Card



Any fairly heavy cardboard will do.

Coroplast Discs

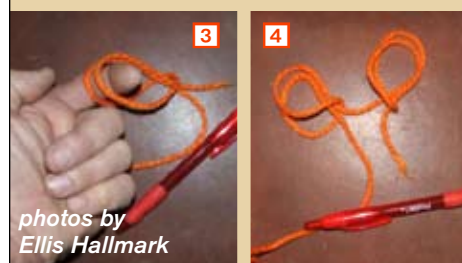


Bill Dove of Lonesome Dove Kennels came up with the idea to use circular cut-out disks of Coroplast in place of cardboard. Coroplast is a material used and sold by sign makers, a plastic version of corrugated paperboard. A 10-inch length of braided poly marine, venetian blind, or other cord $\frac{1}{8}$ " - $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter is attached through a hole in the center of the disk. The cord is attached to the pigeon's ankle with a slipknot.

Red Coroplast disks are more durable than cardboard and easier to see in cover for the trainer, but not the dog, since dogs have black-and-white vision. I find that disks of about 7" diameter work best and greatly prefer them to cardboard. Here again, you should experiment with sizes to determine what works best for you, based on different size/powerful birds or distances they can fly. If the red Coroplast is unavailable, to make the disks easier to find in cover, attach a few strips of blaze orange duct tape.

Attaching Cord to Bird

Yarn



Use 2 half hitches and soft yarn to form loops to attach to birds foot.

Leather Jess



For a gentler attachment, use a leather strip, with a small slit in one end where you slip the other end of the leather through. A hole in the leather at the other end of the strip serves to attach the cord.

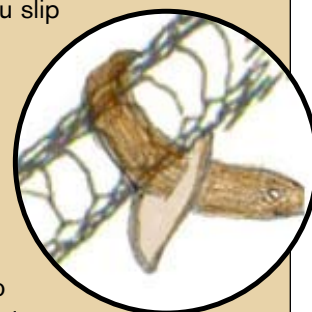


illustration provided by Bill Dove

Middle Stage continued

pigeon slightly or trim the flight feather on **one** wing to shorten its release flight. The flight feathers are those located inside the outer, or primary feathers of the wing. To dizzy the bird, grasp it with one hand around the body, and rotate as if turning a crank until the bird's head wobbles.

But try not to have to dizzy or otherwise impede the carded bird's flight ability. The more awake, the more like a natural, wild bird. Hold the bird low when tossing for a short flight, higher for a longer flight. And remember, birds always fly **with** the wind.

Carded pigeons may fly from 20 to 50 or 100 yards before landing, depending on conditions (wind, etc.) and the birds themselves. **That's why it is important to experiment with the size of cardboard and length of yarn to suit the size of your training area.** If tall trees are nearby, pigeons will land in them, so work a goodly distance away from trees. Ideally the grass will be tall enough to hide the bird.

Give the pigeon a few minutes to catch its breath before working your dog. Also, be sure to watch the landing area. Carded pigeons frequently make one or two short flights soon after their first landing, so pay attention if you need to have an exact location. A few minutes on the ground will allow their scent to circulate.

Maurice usually puts out two carded pigeons, some distance apart. Unlike dizzied birds or those placed in launcher devices, carded birds have their heads up, can move around a bit in the cover, and are alert to a dog's approach. Like wild birds!

Again, the more the pigeons are used, the more they'll act like wild game, and the more alert they become to the approach of dog and handler. Maurice always has the dog on the checkcord, wearing the pinch collar. Running free during training is allowed only in birdless areas.

Maurice stresses the importance of working with a checkcord so as to keep the dog from catching birds on the ground. Carded birds usually flush hard and fly well but if your dog chases them, the birds will soon tire and be easily caught. Avoid this!

Releasers

Carded pigeons can work great in wide open spaces—ideally with tall grass or cover like sage brush. If your training area has a lot of tall trees nearby, using carded pigeons can pose a problem as they will head for the trees and get caught high up in the branches.

Maurice also uses releasers invented by Brad Higgins. Higgin's remote releasers open slowly and silently and allow the bird to leave in a natural way, which best mimics the behavior of a wild bird. They are compatible with most remote systems. For more information about releasers, see the resources at the back of the book.

A typical workout with Maurice

The dog is on the checkcord and wearing the pinch collar. Two good, wild carded pigeons have been released. Maurice walks the dog along, now and then stopping the dog and having it stand still for a few seconds, interspersing this light training with having the dog come when called by the *come here* command. This succession of lessons takes place several times before dog and trainer move toward the birds. A couple of upward pulling light "nicks" of the checkcord activates the pinch collar cue. The dog is released from a *stand* with a hand tap on the head or shoulder and/or a verbal or whistle cue.

Listen carefully as Maurice explains: "What I want to happen is for the pigeon(s) to get up wild before the dog. When the bird flies, I bring the dog to an easy stop and make it stand still as it watches the bird fly away. I praise the dog for standing still with a light touch or stroke. Then move on in the **opposite direction of where the pigeon landed**, repeating the stand up/stand still and *come here* exercises. By going in the opposite direction of where the pigeon landed, the dog learns it must go with you. Always do this... you will not have problems later with delayed chasing and pointing marked birds.

Continue the Stand Still and Come Here



Pigeon leaving a releaser
—photo by Brad Higgins

Middle Stage continued

exercises as you move toward the second bird. If the dog points the bird, great. **If he does not point, better yet!** If the dog knocks the bird, just stop him easy and have him stand still and watch the bird flyaway, then work him in the opposite direction.

“I would repeat this same basic workout four or five times for the next week or so, then start adding to it. By now the dog is starting to understand the checkcord/pinch collar cue to stand still. At this stage add the E-collar on a low level so that in the dog’s mind, an E-collar cue is the same as the pinch collar cue. The E-collar is used in conjunction with, the stand still and ‘come here’ just as the pinch collar was.

The only words spoken are “Come Here.” Praise is by stroking with a light touch of the finger tips only along the side of the dog’s body. A whistle command may accompany the Come Here if desired. Two taps of the hand are the release cue. **Dog is learning to come, to stand-up/stand-still, to release on cue, and to become birdy... all at the same time!**

“Around birds but NOT ON birds”

“By now the dog is starting to understand the cue to stand still,” Maurice continues. “I start adding the E-collar nick on a low level so it begins to mean the same thing as stand still. The E-collar cue is used where the dog has found birds previously—and is probably anticipating the presence of birds—but not in connection with bird scent. *In other words, before and between bird contacts but not on birds.*” Maurice still lets the dogs work birds but never gives an E-collar cue if the bird is on the ground.

“Once the bird is flushed and flying away, I then stop the dog with the checkcord, pinch collar, and E-collar on low setting... *real light touch all together at once.*

“You know things are working when the dog stops and stands still when a bird gets up wild or even when the dog points the bird but knocks it. If the dog knocks (flushes, bumps, takes out, rips out) the bird but stops and stands after that, then you are getting the desired results from training. That is, the dog is learning not to chase.

An E-collar and/or pinch collar cue *after* the

bird has been knocked—*not* while it is still on the ground, clarifies the concept of not breaking point and standing steady for the flush. The sooner the dog abandons chasing, the sooner he will become a staunch pointer.

“At this stage I start testing the dog to see if it ‘understands’ the E-collar. Each dog is different. You must find the level that’s right for the individual dog, starting on low intensity and moving up till the dog reacts. The dog will let you know it understands the E-collar by stopping and standing still when he feels the E-nick.

“I give a slight nick with the pinch collar and hope the dog ignores it. If he ignores it, I give him an E-collar nick. If the dog stops and stands still I know I’m on the right track. If not, go back to the earlier pinch collar/E-collar introductory work until you get the desired response from an E-nick. Once the dog is stopping and standing up and standing still on the E-collar nick, then the E-collar can play a big part in finishing the dog.

“Continue with this training in every workout but gradually make it a bit more challenging by making brief mock attempts to flush the bird. The dog must stay there until you give it a release cue. Sure, the dog will probably break and mess up some but keep your cool and keep setting the dog back up. There’s no need to be rough or manhandle him... just show the dog what is expected and stand him back up. Set him back only about *six inches*; there is no need to roughly haul him back to “scene of the crime” as in older, harsher training methods.

“The training continues and the level of challenge increases. I stop the dog with an E-cue. A bird is close by but placed so that the dog can neither see it nor smell it. The dog, as mentioned before, is accustomed to my stopping it and making the mock flush attempt. This time, I flush a real bird. If the dog stands there, good. If he breaks to chase, I stop it with an E-collar cue.

“The dog has learned what it must do—the E-collar cue reminds him of it while he is excited about the flush of the bird and a possible chase. Because of his earlier stop and stand still work with both the pinch collar and E-collar in combination he will comply with the E-nick but not be scared of it. Most dogs will try to chase but once you have

Middle Stage continued

stopped them with the E-collar a couple of times they understand they must stand still for the real flush as well as the mock flush.

**At no time during this training
is the word “Whoa” used!
Be quiet!**

In time, the flush becomes a stimulus which is layered into the checkcord/pinch collar and becomes a “command” to stand, achieving a stop-to-flush. The dog that will reliably stop to the flush is easier to staunch and steady to wing and/or shot than the dog that is taught *stop-to-flush* later in its training, contrary to conventional training methods.

Important! Begin E-collar on the lowest setting and work up gradually if necessary. Avoid scaring the dog. Watch him close, cautions Maurice, and read his reaction. If the dog tucks his tail or tacks his ears back, you’re using too much E-collar. Back off! Accustom the dog to wearing the E-collar in the field, where he has found birds before. The E-collar will come to mean fun and birds for the dog if it’s used sensibly and worn each outing.

Maurice explains: “All of this foundation training starts to dovetail together. Continued work on birds that flush well will have you well on your way to finishing your dog’s manners with all his *style and class intact*. Keep this up, one or two birds per workout, with checkcord, pinch collar, and E-collar. Once I know I can stop the dog with a touch of the E-collar when a bird flushes (whether pointed or not), then I begin letting the dog drag the checkcord and work birds. By now the E-collar alone should mean the same thing as the checkcord/pinch collar.

“Once the dog stands steady to the flush, then the bird is sometimes shot for the dog but the dog is *not* allowed to retrieve at this stage. Instead, have a helper bring the shot bird back to the dog that is still standing in place. After the dog has proved itself steady to kill then let it retrieve some shot birds. Add a little bit of refinement at a time, no big jumps in the training steps, and you will not have to be tough on the dog. All the class and style will be there when you finish.



The E-collar will come to mean fun and birds for the dog.
—photo ©Vic Williams

“The foundation of this method is the checkcord, pinch collar, and E-collar. What makes it work is birds that are spooky, birds that want to flush and escape. Dizzied birds, sleepy birds; or any bird that is fixed so that it can’t .escape will tear this training concept to shreds. You must have good, strong, healthy birds.”

What if you cannot get wild caught pigeons or use carded pigeons because of the presence of trees or other unfavorable field conditions? Maurice says—to use mechanical launchers but use them correctly. Do not try to get your dog to point every bird. Instead fly them out of the launchers as though they were spooky birds, well ahead of the dog, and work on getting stops to flush, just as explained in the earlier text about carded birds. Once the dog is standing steady to the flush of releaser pigeons, then move on to good flying chukar or quail—free released and not dizzy or planted in any way—to finish the job.

The method, Put To The Test *(a true story –JLR)*

Midge was a two-year old setter from good walking shooting dog stock. Her owner, a friend, elected to place her for three months with a professional trainer whose advertising appealed to him. The trainer informed my friend that Midge was steady to flush and “green broke.” All she needed was to be taken hunting.

Middle Stage continued

When we worked Midge on released quail at home, she bumped them, chased them, etc. and when given the “whoa” command would lose intensity and her tail would flag. It became apparent to us that she had been “compression” trained on bird work. She seemed to have a good nose but if she saw a bird on the ground, she would sashay around it briefly rather than pointing.

My friend wanted to give her away and find a new prospect. I urged him to let me work with Midge, using the West/Gibbons/Lindley way before deciding. I had worked my young pointer along those lines but not 100 percent; having interspersed my own way of doing things here and there. But I had followed the method closely enough that I could appreciate its merit.

Using carded pigeons, the pinch collar, and the checkcord, following the method closely, it was only a matter of about three weeks’ worth of work, every other evening for about a half-hour, before Midge was showing much greater confidence. She was standing steady for the flush and pointing with a stiff tail. Soft of temperament and easily intimidated, Midge was soon a “new dog” and a source of pride and joy to her owner. A more convincing example of the effectiveness of Maurice and friends’ method I cannot imagine, and I shall train no other way henceforth. My friend was delighted with Midge’s work on her first woodcock hunt in Michigan.

I E-mailed a longer version of this story to Maurice and he responded:

*John, the setter you are working will not go back to flagging because of the way you are presenting the birds to her. All the control stuff that so many trainers do with pen-raised birds is what causes 99% of flagging and other types of loss of intensity and style on point. **They make the mistake of getting too rough with the dog while the bird is still on the ground.** Dogs aren’t stupid and will take only so much of this harsh treatment before something bad shows up. Then the trainer blames the dog or the pen-raised birds, when the problem is usually at the end of the checkcord—and not the end attached to the dog collar, either! **(Please commit the sentence in bold type above to memory! –JLR) ■***



Stop-to-flush trains a dog not to chase or follow the flight of a flushed bird. —photo ©Vic Williams

The importance of the Stop-To-Flush response

Conventional training says that stop-to-flush is a field trial refinement of little practical use for gun dogs. Not so. Stop-to-flush trains a dog not to chase or follow the flight of a flushed bird, whether pointed, bumped, or a wild flush. Beyond that, it instills other benefits that translate into better manners on birds. Says Maurice: “Dogs that will stop to flush figure out in a hurry how to handle wild birds. The flying birds teach the dog but all the control you have put into the dog is what makes it work. Dogs that do not stop to flush can take forever to handle wild birds because they love to chase them.

“With well bred dogs that have showed me they will point birds, I start working on gaining control of the dog after the bird flushes. Wild caught, carded pigeons give ample opportunities to teach stop to flush. They are more like wild birds than any pen-raised birds. Once the dog is trained on carded pigeons then the transition to game birds (wild or liberated) comes easily to most dogs. ■

Review of the Method

FLY OUT TWO CARDED OR DISKED PIGEONS and let them settle in cover high enough to hide them but low enough to allow them to flush readily .

- ▶ Walk the dog, wearing a pinch collar, 15-foot checkcord, and E-collar, around the field for a few minutes before approaching the birds.
- ▶ During the walk, work on standing still and going with you (“Here”) to settle the dog down.
- ▶ Dog should be willing to work with you without excessive pulling of the cord.
- ▶ Once the dog settles, bring him in toward a bird, attempting to work him crosswind at a distance of about 10 feet. The dog will either point or knock the bird at that distance.
- ▶ If the dog points, do not stop walking, go right into flush promptly.
- ▶ Dog will probably try to rush to grab the bird, so give it enough rope to knock the bird but not catch it.



Young dog rushing to grab a pigeon, but is under control with the check cord. —photo ©Vic Williams

- ▶ When bird is in the air, stop the dog with the pinch collar and checkcord... pet it and go toward the other bird.
- ▶ Between bird contacts, work on the stand still drill.
- ▶ The object at this stage is not to secure a point, but to teach the dog not to chase. When the bird

gets up the dog learn to stop and stand still. The “here” and stand still work goes on at the same time.

- ▶ When dog allows you to flush most of its birds, he’s telling you he knows he must stop on the pinch collar cue and stand still.
- ▶ At this stage, should the dog try to flush the bird or chase, it is stopped as before, with pinch collar and rope, but now the dog is set back about a foot and made to stand still while you perform a mock flushing attempt. Act like you are flushing a bird
- ▶ If the dog tries to break during the mock flushing attempt, grasp the pinch collar’s trailing end, pick up dog so that its front feet are lifted off the ground, and spin the dog around once by the pinch collar. Then make it stand. The spinning will usually get the attention of even the most determined flusher without your having to resort to the harsher measures often employed in this situation such as whipping, stomping, and flank: grabbing. Note that dog is moved back only about one foot, not returned to “the scene of the crime” as in older, less humane methods

For a video of a dog being spun:
www.higginsdogs.com
choose the photo albums tab in the menu
then choose “Maurice Lindley spins a dog”

- ▶ If you are working a soft dog, avoid spinning— just set the dog back, as above.
- ▶ When dog is reliably steady to wing, an E-collar nick is used in the place of the pinch collar cue. (Remember, your dog has been wearing the E-collar during all of this training and should not be new to him. He should regard it as the same thing as the pinch collar.)
- ▶ Continue to use both the pinch and the E-collars around birds but not while the dog is scenting the bird or is seeing the bird on the ground.
This is very important!
- ▶ Use the E-collar in nick mode and variable intensity, starting at low and working up as needed, very gradually.

Review of the Method cont.

► Your dog may be worked on all the birds you have flown out, possibly several times on some, but it's usually best to stop the session as soon as a good solid performance for the dog's level of training is achieved. Don't assume his good work was a fluke—quit while you're ahead is usually the best advice.

At first people seem puzzled by why I am pleased that the pigeons are flushing wild out ahead of the dog. It is this training—to stand still until released in the presence of a flushed bird, whether pointed or not (preferably not, for training's sake)—that soon translates to more intense points, less bumping of birds, and makes it easier to train for steadiness to wing and shot.

Once the dog will stop and watch the bird fly away—even though it bumps that bird—then you know the dog is understanding what you are teaching it.

Here's how Maurice transitions from the pinch collar to the E-collar: At first give the Stop cue with the pinch collar, very lightly, and hope the dog ignores it. Then touch the dog with the E-collar to see if he stops and styles up. If he stops, he is telling you that he understands the E-collar (correlates it with the pinch collar) at this phase of training. If the dog does not stop, he is telling, you he does not understand the E-collar at this stage of training. You must go back and lay a stronger foundation with the pinch collar before transitioning to the E-collar. ■



Once the dog will stop and watch the bird fly away—even though it bumps that bird—then you know the dog is understanding what you are teaching it.

—photo ©Vic Williams

Mo Knows! Tips, quips, and reminders from Maurice

Transition to wild birds—I've had dogs that went right from this training to wild birds with no problem at all. You just have to be willing to enforce this training when you make the switch.

Don't stop walking when your dog points—Go right in to flush, giving the dog enough rope to knock the bird but not catch it.

Wild birds are great but—you will get more done on released birds while teaching the dog to be broke.

Dogs that bump, chase birds without pointing—will change their mind after they run up eight or ten carded pigeons and get pinched by the pinch collar. After about the tenth bird you will see the dog start to stalk or point the bird. Again, give enough rope to allow a flush but not enough to let the dog catch the bird. On the first solid, for-sure point, I have my helper kill the bird for the dog and let the dog go get it. Now that dog and I are beginning to play on the same team.

All that jerking around and hurting dogs is just plain wrong—dogs stop learning when they are hurting.

Great way to plant chukars for trialing or hunting—Hold bird by both feet, carrying the bird with its head down. The bird will struggle very briefly, if at all. When you reach the spot you wish to plant the bird, drop it in cover and walk away quickly. If the bird is in sufficient cover and feels secure, it will remain there for a long time. I've had them stay in place for more than two hours. *(I use chukars this way for training for ruffed grouse work—The birds stay put, but are head-up and really bust out at the flush. --JLR)*

About the "W" word -- Whoa is the most abused and overused word in bird dog training, say Bill West and Bill Gibbous, and I agree. Whoa doesn't have to be a bad word, though, if you teach the dog to stand still and then overlay the word Whoa once the dog knows what to do. The wrong way to teach it is to jerk the dog and tell it Whoa at the same time. Soon the dog figures out when he hears that four-letter word something bad is about to happen. A shouted Whoa alerts him something negative is going to happen to him.

Keep your dog on the checkcord until it is broke and earned its freedom, assuming he is hunting and enjoying trips to the field beforehand as a pup. This business of running the young dog free and trying to teach it manners on birds at the same time just doesn't work.

Switching methods messes up dogs—Old hands at dog training can and often do mix methods. For most people, though, the wise course is to stick to one method. The worst thing is trying one method one day and a different one a day or two later.

Mo's Method, short form—I get your pup at, say, 10 to 12 months of age. Hopefully he has been raised right and exposed to birds and gunfire. If the youngster likes both, I get started right then. I run the pup every other day for two weeks, turning it loose on a few birds and see how it reacts. I check it out with the gun during the second week, first with .22 blank then .410 or 20-bore shotgun. I will kill a couple of birds for the dog.

If the dog is starting to hunt in the right places and okay with the gun, then I start the checkcord work. If the dog has picked up a few dead birds I've shot, then there is no need to let that dog chase another bird.

I just walk them around and teach them to stand still, and to come when called, while in the field. ***I also work them on birds sometimes but not every time.***

It's very important to have a good foundation built with the Stand Still and Come Here work. The first 30 to 45 days are especially important.

I do run the young dogs "dry" at least one day a week so they stay freed up, happy, and hunting and work on handling, so that they stay with me, during these birdless runs.

This would be for a hunting dog. For a trial dog I would not start breaking it until it is showing plenty of independence, say at from ten to twenty months of age, depending on the individual.

The dog is wearing a pinch collar and E-collar during all of this training, which will become the extension of my checkcord when the rope is removed. The E-collar, as explained earlier, is overlaid to the pinch collar.

Mo Knows! continued

Proper placement of the E-collar—is directly behind the dog's ears, not down on the neck. The collar will slide down some and tighten rather loosen and lose contact with the probes. *The pinch collar goes behind the regular flat collar.*

Steadiness to the kill and retrieving birds

Have a gunner to help you so that your full attention is on the dog. If the bird is correctly pointed and held, have the gunner kill the bird as it flushes. Have gunner walk out and bring the bird back to the dog while the dog stands there steady. When gunner is about ten feet from the dog, have him toss the dead bird right at the dog's front feet.

Let the dog pick up the bird. Lead him around, letting him carry the bird in his mouth, taking lots of time and being in no hurry to take the bird from him. Allowing the dog to carry the bird builds a strong desire to retrieve and builds good rapport with the dog. Let him carry the dead bird all the way back to the truck and take his time.

If dog breaks when bird is shot, stop it with a simultaneous E-collar and pinch collar nick. Then have the gunner walk to the dead bird, toss it in the air, and fire again. Do this until the dog stands steady, at which time have the gunner bring the bird back to the dog, as described above, and allow the dog to pick it up and carry it around. This accomplishes a lot of steadiness training killing fewer birds.

Create-A-Flush (Coined by Jim Marti of Burnt Creek English Setter Kennels)—Carry an extra bird or two or three in your vest or bird bag while training. Drop a bird before you flush the one the dog is pointing, or when you're walking back to collar the dog. Surprise him with flushes you create. Mix it up so the dog never knows exactly what to expect from the bird but don't overdo this stuff. Keep your dog wanting more rather than getting stale or bored. But the Create-A-Flush helps dogs stay high and tight after the shot. *(I helped a friend's dog overcome flagging on point using this trick.—JLR).*

Curing the blinker—Dogs that deliberately avoid birds (blinkers) can often be cured of this man-made fault. One way is to run the blinker with a rambunctious youngster that knocks and chases birds. Normally this will get the blinker back into the game. Another way: Checkcord the blinker behind a broke dog for awhile and shoot birds

for the pointing dog, always allowing the blinking dog to have some time with the dead birds.

For a blinker well along in its training it sometimes helps by checkcording this dog into planted birds. Know exactly where the birds are placed. When the dog starts to blink, make it stand and watch a helper flush and kill the bird. The dog might not look good for awhile but mice the correct association is made, he will get back into the groove.

None of these methods will work if the trainer loses his cool, gets rough with the dog, or becomes angry or shouts. You can count on these lapses resulting in a ruined dog!

Backing (honoring) the point of another dog

A sight to thrill the heart of every bird dog lover! Work the trainee behind a broke dog that are killing birds for, having a gunner doing your shooting. Don't allow either the pointing dog or the backing trainee to retrieve at this time but have them stand steady for the shot and kill.

Then have your gunner walk out and carry the bird back to the trainee, giving it to the dog to mouth. That is his reward for steadiness to the kill and for backing the other dog.

Should the trainee "blink" the pointing dog, just stop it right there with the checkcord and pinch collar and let it watch what is going on.

Follow essentially the same procedure if your pointing dog is a silhouette or automated backing dummy.

Training for backing should not be overdone; some dogs become bored very quickly with it. Do not become harsh, angry, or impatient at any time during backing training or you are apt create a dog that will forever give you backing problems.

The bird-biting retriever—Take two or three fresh killed quail and inject about 2 cc of bitter apple solution (available from pet stores and catalogs) into the gut cavity of each with a hypodermic needle and syringe. Toss out for dog to retrieve. When the dog munches down he will get a taste of bitter apple and won't like it. It may take several injected birds before the dog figures out not to bite the birds.

After the dog has quit the biting, try him on a freshly killed bird. But first rub some bitter apple on your finger and apply the stuff to the bird's breast and back before planting the bird for a retrieve. The lingering taste of the bitter apple will

Mo Knows! continued

remind him not to bite down. The procedure may take some time but usually works for most hard-mouthed dogs and is more humane than some methods that risk breaking the dog off retrieving.

Training doesn't have to be lonely—Group training sessions are not only fun, they can actually help your young dog's progress. Set up a sort of "parade" with dog/handler pairs strung out more or less in a rough line. As the "parade" moves over the training grounds, handlers stop their dog to stand. Birds are flushed, guns are fired, birds fall. Dogs stop in front of another to point, stand, etc. Each time one of these stimuli occurs, a dog seeing or hearing it is either stopped or stops to stand depending on its stage of development in field work.

The dog leading the parade has the bird encounter and if a bird is killed, each dog in turn gets a retrieve after the lead dog's turn. Each dog learns all of this more or less "in parallel" and it speeds each dog's overall learning while allowing several trainers to work their dogs at the same time.

Don't rush to receive a retrieved bird—Hard mouth, running off with bird, burying the bird, etc. would be less of a problem if the trainers/hunters would simply act like they don't even want the bird! When we get too anxious to get the bird in our hands, we risk making the dog up-tight too. Which results in chewed birds, running off, dropping and losing wounded birds, etc. Stay calm in manner and voice, especially with a dog's first several retrieve attempts. Sacrificing a few birds for the table early in the game is a small penalty to pay for developing what would otherwise be a fine retriever. (*I'm cool with this unless it involves a ruffed grouse retrieve, so I use up a lot of pigeons before grouse season!*—JLR)

Dog stays with you in the field—In addition to teaching the dog Stand Still and Come Here in the field while walking him with checkcord and pinch collar, you're also teaching him to orient to you, the handler, for direction. That is to bend his casts, work to the front, and stay with you while hunting. No need for hand signals or exaggerated gestures such as practiced in the retriever trials.

Just slowly but deliberately turn your back on the dog. He will look up and swing your way to re-orient to your direction. Get his attention with a pip of the whistle or spoken cue, such as Yep,

Hey, or whatever... then let your body language influence his forward cast. Start with the pinch collar and checkcord, graduating to the E-collar as an extension of your checkcord.



Set up a "parade" of dogs training at the same time.

—photo ©Vic Williams

Atta boy, good boy... useless chatter!—Field training is neither the time nor place for a lot of talking. Praise your dog when he does it right, but not with vocal praise. Instead, pet him with long, loving, gentle strokes of your *fingertips* along his back and side. That form of praise means more to him than words and won't distract his learning.

Don't use any kind of liberated birds in wet field conditions—including carded pigeons. They simply will not fly when conditions are wet. During prolonged periods of rainy weather, when I must maintain a training schedule, I rely on mechanical remote control releasers but greatly prefer to use carded pigeons whenever possible.

Mechanical releasers, manual or remote

Limitations of space and other factors may dictate their use when carded pigeons are not practical. I like them for stop-to-flush training and backing training. Don't try to get points at first. Just checkcord the dog around toward the launcher so the dog cannot scent the bird. Launch the bird when the dog is about twenty feet away, stop the dog and make him stand still and watch the bird fly away. I might do this several times before allowing the dog to point a launcher bird by scent. Move the launcher(s) frequently to different places on the training field. Try to make pigeons in launchers act just like spooky, caught-wild pigeons and avoid "milk route" placement of the devices so the dog doesn't get used to a set routine. This is very important. (*See note following page.*)

Mo Knows! continued

Note: It's a good idea to load pigeons that have never been launched before in the launchers and launch them several times before trying to work a dog on them. Usually pigeons, even the best wild caught ones, don't flush or fly real well when they are new to the launcher.



Teaching a young dog to stand up and stand still. Stroke gently with your fingers. —photo ©Vic Williams

Sitting, lying down on "Whoa"—If someone were to walk **you** on a leash with regular collar or pinch collar and said 'Whoa!' and jerked you at the same time, you would soon figure out that 'Whoa' means you're gonna get hurt. Same with dogs. So they sit, lie down, flinch, sulk, creep, go soft, etc. because they've become scared of that 'Whoa' word. Add in an E-collar jolt and you've made things worse. So if you must use that 'Whoa' word, add-it well **after** the Stand Still training is down pat.

Stand Up/Stand Still, the foundation training for all that follows. —Your young dog is hunting with enthusiasm, bird crazy, and accustomed to gunfire. It is now time to teach him to stand up and stand still; which will become the "glue" that unites all of the training to follow. Ignore this step and the method probably will not work. Follow it and you will find all aspects of this training method coming together and being learned at the same time.

Work the dog in your training area (a place where he's had fun hunting and finding birds, but for now we work him "around birds but not on birds."). Walk him on the checkcord with pinch collar and stop him with the pinch collar nick every so often, stroking him with your fingertips along his back and sides, pressing gently

downward to get him to resist the pressure and stand nice and tall. Keep the stand-still periods short at first, gradually lengthening them each session. Ask a little more of the dog each time.

"I typically work the dog around the training field on nothing but the stand-still training," Maurice explains, "giving the dog a chance to find a bird (carded pigeon) about every third workout, no more. Once I see that the dog understands the stand still training then I increase the opportunities for more bird work little by little. The dog will tell you when he's ready for more.

"When I can stop the dog with a cue from the pinch collar, drop the checkline, walk in front, and make a mock flushing attempt without the dog breaking, then the dog tells me it's time to add more birds to the work. I focus on this aspect of the training a lot and when it seems to have taken hold in the dog's mind and in his behavior, I add the E-collar cue over the pinch collar cue. The E-collar will then become an extension of the checkcord."

Stand Still training is done in the field around birds but not on birds and between bird contacts during bird work. Praise is given by gentle strokes of the fingertips along dog's hack and side.



Keep the "Stand Still" lessons short at first. —photo ©Vic Williams

Further Articles, DVD's and Resources

You can find links to articles, books, DVDs and other sites at:

<http://lindleykennel.com/resources.html>

- For a detailed explanation of how Maurice uses remote bird launchers, see the article *Calm Dogs, Calm Trainer* by Martha Greenlee in the Fall, 2005 *Field Trial* Magazine. It's excellent! (JLR)

Watch for Martha Greenlee's new book:

Training with Mo: How Maurice Lindley Trains Pointing Dogs

available from Glade Run Press in Dec. 2009.

Also, check the resources on

www.steadywithstyle.com

for additional links to other equipment, articles, books, videos, seminars, and sites.

Higgin's Releasers

www.higginsgundogs.com

Standing Steady—With Style.

—photo ©Vic Williams

