



## Are 2011 Stats a Fluke or a Trend?

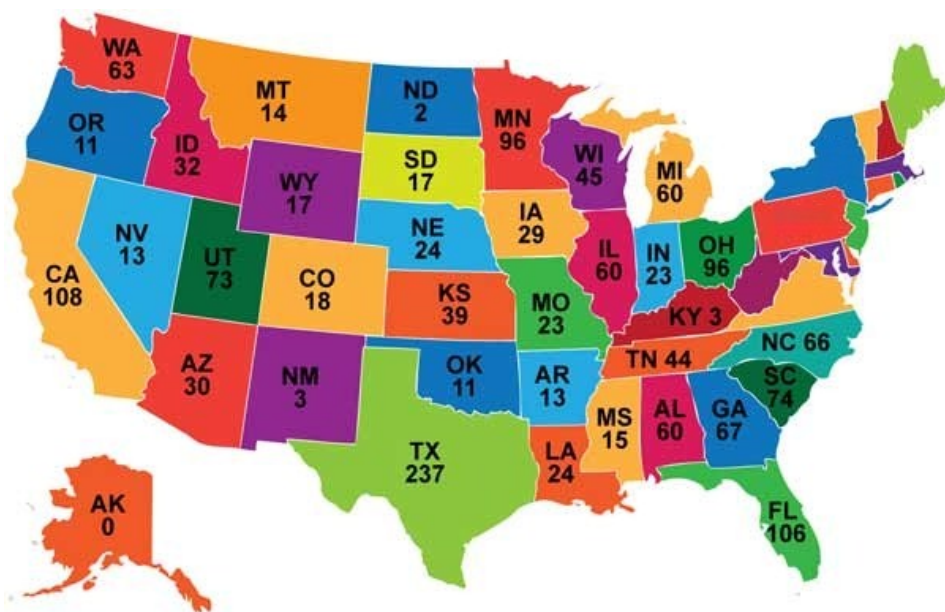
By Caryn Pola, ESRA President

When I recently read the annual ESRA statistics for number of dogs served last year, I noticed something was different. For the first time in ESRA’s history, the numbers went DOWN from the previous year — 1,616 dogs assisted in 2011 versus 1,836 in 2010.

This gets me to thinking about why. Are we doing such a good job that fewer Springers need our assistance, or are more of them “falling through the cracks”? Since we previously assisted so many from families that have fallen on hard economic times, is it a sign that things are turning around with the national economy?

Though we can all speculate on the reason for “better” numbers, I suppose we won’t know if this is a trend until next January, when 2012’s totals are compiled.

In spite of taking in fewer dogs, our volunteers were still busy. As you can see on the map, we assisted Springers in almost every state; Texas accounted for more than twice as many as the next highest state, and 10 other states handled more than 50 dogs each. Thanks to Suzanne Bell-Esmay for compiling the statistics, to Barbara King for creating the graphic, and to everyone who had a hand in assisting these 1,616 English Springer Spaniels!



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ESRA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Our all-volunteer organization works with love and passion for English Springer Spaniels in need.

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# The Springer Side of Life

By Toby Z. Dearmin

I know there are theories galore about how the first dog became domesticated, but here's mine. One day, a very smart canine (Springer, I think), tired from numerous losing races with rabbits for dinner, followed his nose to grilling food and found humans. He probably watched them for a day or two, followed them from field to home, gnawed on bones intended for the first compost pile, and inched closer each night to sleep by the warmth of their fire. Suddenly there was a human standing above him, hand outstretched offering a meat encrusted rabbit bone, wearing that incredible dopey look humans give you before they say "Aww, aren't you cute?" and reach out to stroke your fur. Who's gonna walk away from a gig like that?

I was reminded of just how far this human caring thing will stretch when my family celebrated my little sister's first anniversary with us. C.J. was about three months old when she was adopted from ESRA Washington. Mom and Dad were looking at her "puppy milestones book" (Dad calls it the checkbook), and laughing away at all the notations made on C.J.'s behalf. I'll stick with the *highlights* of 12 months with my "wild child" sister.

*November* – ESRA adoption fee, plus discount airfare and volunteer escort; zillions of toys; vet visits.

*December* - Replacing half a zillion destroyed toys; vet visits for all of us after Sam and I caught whatever tummy virus CJ had; hours of anxiety and panicked phone calls when she had a bad reaction to a booster shot; purchase of a smaller table top Christmas tree and chew-resistant decorations.

*January* - Emergency vet visit after CJ chewed apart the TV remote and was suspected of swallowing the battery; damage to most of mom's shoes, insoles, various rugs and furniture covers.

*February* – Mom's glasses replaced as well as several foam pillows and sprinkler pipes, while redwood bark is removed from backyard.

*March* – New cell phone for mom; new credit/debit cards for Mom and Grandma; pea gravel removed from patio beds.

*April* – Repair of new travel crate purchased for ESRA Parade of Rescue trip after zipper was chewed loose; cleaning of crate and car when CJ threw up going to and coming home from event.

*May* – Emergency vet visit as CJ's face swelled up to Shar-Pei proportions when she tried to eat her millionth bug, and the bug won.

*June* – Visitors to our house wanted to know where Mom got the fancy crinkled toilet paper, lenses replaced in mom's new glasses.

*July* – Three-day stay at vet when debris in CJ's stomach blocks her intestines, plus purchases of Pepcid and wine – to help mom's coping skills.

*August* – Follow-up vet visits; purchase of new bedspread.

*September* – Mom's cell phone survives CJ's attack with numerous tooth marks, but her underwear does not.

*October* – CJ trades her 400<sup>th</sup> walnut for a treat, crashes into partially open patio door attempting to "retrieve" a four foot long walnut branch.

*November* – Celebrates her first family anniversary with frozen treat and falls asleep on Mom's lap earning her one millionth "aws, aren't you cute" from her doting parents.

Now, what other species would put up with that???



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ESRA News is always looking for Springer-oriented articles for future issues. To submit an article, please contact Shelley or Linnea at the e-mail addresses listed above.

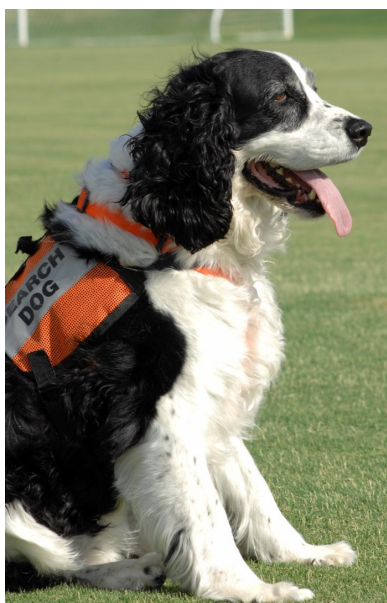
## Tips from a Tracking Team to Find Lost Dogs

By Linnea Maxwell

Dogs in transition, whether new to a foster home or recently adopted, often are a flight risk because they just don't know where they belong. What should you do if one escapes? Canvassing the neighborhood and posting flyers are important first steps, followed by visiting the local shelter and placing online ads. If that's not enough, you might consider enlisting the services of a tracking dog.

Deborah Cooke, an Arizona adopter, trained her dogs to work with her in the business of finding missing animals by scent. In order for her tracking dogs to get a clean scent of the missing dog, they need something that isn't contaminated by other dogs' scents. In a multiple dog household, most dog beds, toys, and blankets are shared, and thus contain multiple scents. Deborah suggests collecting resident dogs' and incoming foster dogs' scents, just in case.

To do this, you need cotton balls or make-up pads that are 100% cotton and unscented. Rub



Dudley proves you don't need to be a drooling Bloodhound to have a nose for search work.

do, but you know the old saying about an ounce of prevention!

one all over the dog – in its ears, around its mouth and gums, and belly. Then seal it in a zipped sandwich bag, mark it with the dog's name, and toss it in the freezer. Deborah says the scent will stay useable in the freezer for a year or so. It may seem like an odd thing to



Deborah Cooke with her search team, German Shorthair Pointers Lucas and Riley (the lead search dog); and ESRA alums Higgins and Dudley.

## ESRA News Reader Survey

Help us make ESRA News a better resource by taking a few minutes to share your opinions. Copy and paste the following link in your browser:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/BXV7CDQ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BXV7CDQ)

Note: we will be e-mailing the link as well, but you can only respond once per computer. For couples using the same home computer, only one response will be allowed.

# From Stray to Companion and Hunter

By Mary Guttieri

Early last year, the Ohio ESRA team learned of a young female Springer that had been turned in as a stray to a shelter. The poor thing was scared to death, and curled up in the back of her pen, growling at the world. She was not likely to find a Forever Family this way. But the area volunteer, Lynn Kneile, persuaded the shelter warden to take her outside, and a very sweet dog emerged. Ohio ESRA was full to the gills, and this was a potentially energetic fieldie. She needed a home with some good dog expertise. What to do?

This Springer girl looked very much like she was from a regional field breeding line, and she did seem to have an interest in birds. The Ohio ESRA crew remembered Matt and Sheila Sutton. They had recently lost their 7-year old field-trained Springer, Emma, to liver disease, and they mourned her deeply. We knew Matt had the skills to work with this dog, but would they open their home and their hearts to a dog that so very much needed what they had to give?

This special Springer did indeed find a home with Matt and Sheila. ESRA can never guarantee that a dog has field ability, and Matt understood this better than most. Yet within a very short time, Cassie started training toward being a genuine bird dog. She has natural ability, and Matt's positive training was just what she needed to blossom. Cassie also accompanies Sheila when she attends her nieces' soccer games, and she is a gracious hostess when her cousin, ESRA alum Molly, (adopted by Sheila's brother) comes to visit.

Matt and Sheila say that Cassie truly has rescued them as much as they rescued her. Special thanks go to Lynn Kneile, Carl Roshong, and Stacey Shehin who facilitated Cassie's rescue, transport, and placement with her Forever Family.

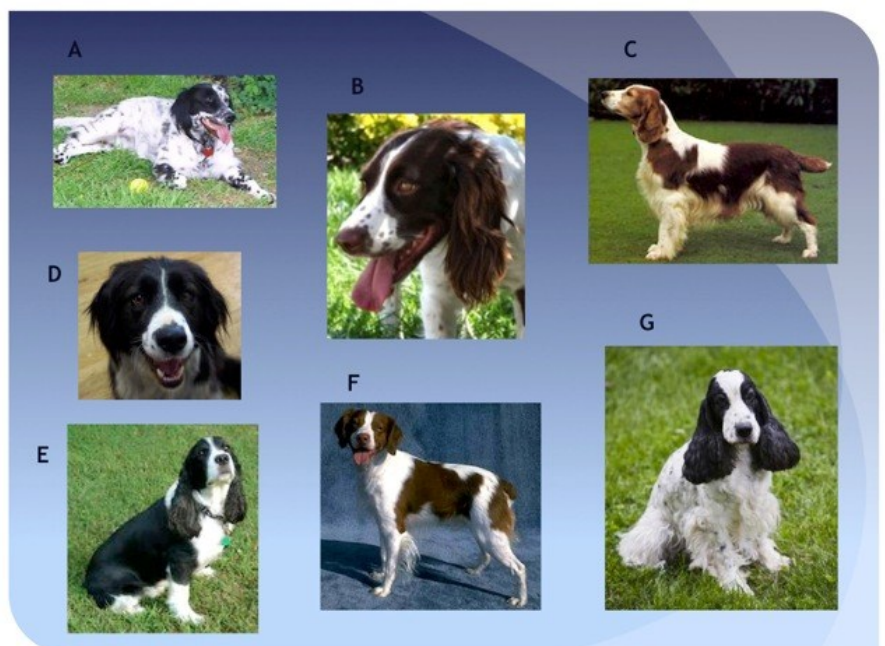


*Matt with Cassie — “On opening day of Pheasant season, Cassie found and flushed two, and we dropped one. She raced to the fall, picked up the bird and retrieved it to hand just like we have been training to do. The second time out, she tracked one from a field into a set of woods that she flushed and I missed. The next weekend, she flushed two and we dropped two, which is a day's limit in Ohio, and believe me, that doesn't happen very often. I only recall one other day, years ago with Abbey and Emma, that I was able to get a two-bird limit. Regardless of Cassie's field performance, she is a wonderful Springer and companion. Sheila and I love her very much.”*

## Name That Breed!

Even those of us who know and love the breed sometimes have trouble spotting a purebred English Springer Spaniel in a photo. Coordinators frequently share photos of shelter dogs that “might” be Springers. Fieldie or a Brittany? Maybe it's a mix. As much as we'd like to help them all, our mission and limited resources dictate that we focus on English Springer Spaniels. Can you spot them in the photo? Answers are on page 6.

*Graphic by Belle Sprague*



## Teaching Reactive Dogs a New Habit, Part 2 - "Look at That!"

By Nancy M. Kelly

Dogs that react very quickly to certain stimuli are often trained as hearing alert dogs; these dogs don't miss a thing, and are trained to alert their handlers to important sounds. But if dogs learn to react to new things entering their environment by barking and lunging, they become difficult to train for anything – even going on a nice walk with the family. We want the dog to notice what's coming into his field of perception, we just want to teach him how to respond in a way that works for everyone.

Previously, I wrote about a training technique that you can use almost "in the moment," when you're out with your dog and a trigger stimulus – something that tends to make the dog react – appears in your vicinity. That was the "Open Bar" technique (see ESRA News, Fall, 2011.) In this issue, I'll explain a technique called "Look at That!" which breaks the process down into even smaller, more controllable pieces so that a dog can learn it very quickly. I like to use both techniques, interchanging them as needed, to prevent a problem from occurring, or to change the behavior once it has reared its ugly head. The most recent and well-known version of "Look at That!" is explained in wonderful detail in a book called *Control Unleashed* by Leslie McDevitt.

We want the dog to do a 'chained' behavior of (1) Look at Something, then (2) Look at Owner. It's helpful to use a clicker to mark the dog looking at something in the beginning stages in order to reinforce both individual parts of the behavior. The best way to practice this is to find a comfortable place to sit or stand outside with the dog on a leash; somewhere familiar with people, dogs, and bikes going by regularly but at a low frequency. Pretend to mind your own business, but focus fully on the dog so as to be able to notice when he looks at something. When he turns his head away to look at something, click. He will immediately turn back to look at you – give him a treat. It's just that simple. If your dog is unfamiliar with a clicker, he'll look at you to see what the sound was. When you give him

the treat, he'll begin to understand that when he hears the click, a treat is on the way. If your dog is afraid of the click, use the word, "Yes!" pronounced softly but happily; it will mark the behavior just as the click will.

Although we call this behavior, "Look at That," it's not necessary to tell the dog to do it; he will look at something at some point – you capture that behavior by clicking and giving a treat, and you've done one repetition. You can teach the dog to "Look at That" on your verbal cue once he is reliably offering this behavior, usually after several training sessions. Add the cue words just as he's turning to look at something, click, then treat. Once he's responding consistently to the words, you'll be able to tell him to "Look at That!" and he'll turn to look wherever you're facing or pointing. Always reinforce this, because you want him to choose to happily "Look," rather than other behaviors such as barking and lunging. Always practice this, because it has far-reaching effects which include looking to you for guidance, a valuable attitude. Putting it on the verbal cue is not necessary to get the benefits this behavior offers.

"Look at That" is difficult to understand until you've tried doing it with your dog. If you resist the urge to complicate and analyze it, and view it as simply a head turn toward something followed by a head turn toward yourself, you will reap the benefits of your dog paying attention to you more often and of him choosing to look to you for guidance rather than take matters into his own paws when he perceives the need to bark his head off at something.

With diligent and consistent work on this behavior, and lots and lots of positive reinforcement, you'll begin to see your dog look purposefully at something and then at you as if to say, "Did you see me look at that? I get a treat for that, right?" At that point, you've successfully communicated to your dog what you want, and he is responding to an old cue in a new way. Bingo.



# Max the Teacher

By Laura Jean Kerr



Although Sadie didn't make a good first impression, she and Max have become good friends.

After living with a series of circumstances that brought unwanted change to my life, I reached a point of acceptance in 2009. I had put my life on pause the previous year, but I was ready to begin tackling a list that included owning land, creating a few pieces of art, traveling to Africa, and one I thought was especially accessible, adopting an English Springer Spaniel. I went about this journey

looking for a dog with a temperament that would fit my lifestyle and become a friend to my Cocker Spaniel, Sadie.

I found Max, a five-year-old male, who is visually impaired. Sadie and I travelled to Atlanta to meet him. Sadie was too quick for him and therefore a threat. This made me almost dismiss Max as a potential adoptee until his foster mother suggested I take him out for a walk. When we came to a set of steps, I continued walking as one would when walking down steps. Max continued walking as one would when walking on flat ground. He fell. My heart broke when I realized that he had no idea what he was approaching, and the only way for him to realize he needed to step down was for me to tell him. I reached down to touch him and he turned towards my touch. I apologized and petted him gently, and in return he buried his head under my arm. It was official, Max was my dog.

Since then, Max has taught me a variety of life lessons:

◆ **Everybody needs a home base.** In my home, Max's first lesson was to learn where the water bowl

was located. I also taught Max the location of his bed, the sofa (his other bed), the stairs, and a variety of other places. I taught him the name of each location and depending on the importance or as a safety precaution I used scents to mark the places. "Out?" "Max bed." "Stairs Max." No matter what the command or request, Max would go to his water bowl first and then from his water bowl he would walk slowly to his next destination. Max had a home base, his water bowl, and when he located his water bowl he could do anything that came next.

◆ **Be sweet.** Max and Sadie were not immediate friends. His attempts to play with her were not kind, and so I had to teach him how to play. My "be sweet" command came out of a frustrated afternoon, but when Max heard it, he stopped, so I rewarded him. I occasionally need to remind Max to be sweet, but he and Sadie are good companions now.

◆ **Bumps happen.** Even though Max can find his way around, he still bumps into the door frame, or hits his head on the coffee table from time to time. When visitors come over, they tend to feel bad for Max and some baby him by leading him around. In the beginning I, too, protected him, but now these small bumps are just that, small.

◆ **When you observe the bumps to find a pattern, you can then prepare for them.** My house has a number of odd things that make it seem messy, but they are there to protect Max. They work with the senses Max uses best and help him navigate the house. Bathmats are cut up to provide traction on the wooden stairs, foam covers the edges of some furniture, and dryer sheets are taped to the baseboards. After watching Max navigate around the house and yard, I positioned these additions as well as furniture based on his preferences and now he has fewer bumps, and can live in his rooms, instead of a kennel, when I am away.

Although Max and I still need to work on some manners, Max has been a wonderful companion, friend, confidant and, of course, teacher. Since I have adopted Max, I have come closer to accepting that change I mentioned, and if Max was not so entertained by tearing apart canvases, I would have moved further along my list and completed some artwork. But I now know his pattern and mine too; I know I will tackle another item on my life list soon.

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## Answers to Breed Quiz on Page 4

- A. Setter mix
- B. Field-bred English Springer Spaniel
- C. Welsh Springer Spaniel
- D. Border Collie
- E. Bench-bred English Springer Spaniel
- F. Brittany
- G. English Cocker Spaniel