

WORKING TOGETHER

Hastings Island Hunting Preserve makes every effort to help our member's hunting experience be pleasurable and safe. As much as we do with the use of land available, infrastructure, conveniences, saturation of birds and the Club Rules and Regulations, we understand there are still good ideas to address safety and the process of hunting at the Club.

Membership styles vary tremendously. Some members use 12-ga shotguns while others prefer to hunt with a 0.410 single shot. We even have a number of Members who prefer to bow-hunt pheasant each season. Some people like to hunt for just a couple of hours, while others prefer to spend an entire day in the field. Some parties may harvest one or two pheasants and then be finished with their outing, while others will shoot an entire 20 Bird Card in a single day. Some people may travel all over the Club areas, hunting in several likely spots throughout the day, while others spend an entire outing in just one small field.

Perhaps the most common item our Members mention is what is perceived to be "rude hunting habits", by some other hunter. These range from a dog let loose to cut across the path of a bird your dog was working, hunters or their guests hiking directly in front of you, or vehicles parking just down-range of the shot which your dog has just set up on a point. Sometimes these descriptions are accurate and correct. In such cases, the Club Management deals with the Members as swiftly as possible to correct bad behaviors, as many of these practices are not only rude, but unsafe to all.

There are also two divergent hunting styles in trying to utilize the same hunting area of the Club. About one-half of our Members hunt with pointing breed dogs. Similarly, about one-half of the Members prefer to hunt with retrievers trained as flushing dogs. The small remaining minority of Members hunt with a true flushing breed dog or some non-sporting breed taught to flush.

The philosophy of an upland pointing breed dog is to range out to where a bird may hide, then point or set the bird in place and hold it until the hunter arrives, to flush and harvest the pheasant. Flushing breed dogs are meant to hunt within standard gun ranges of the shotguns, typically 20-40 yards. Their job is to locate

the bird and put it in the air (i.e. flush the bird). To harvest pheasants, the hunter must remain within gun range when the bird is produced by the dog.

Retrievers were not originally bred to hunt upland game birds, but rather to retrieve game birds shot by the hunter. Typically, they sit calmly in a blind or boat until called upon to retrieve down birds. Over the years, we have called upon retrievers to perform upland searching and flushing duties as well. Again, anyone hunting over a retriever, would want the dog to remain within standard gun range in order to harvest pheasants successfully.

The end result is that we may have 125 hunters spread out across the entire Club; half of them hunting wide-ranging pointers and half hunting close working retrievers or flushers. It is incumbent upon both types of hunters to recognize with whom they are about to share a field with, as they move in to begin hunting. If it becomes apparent that you are about to enter a field where a different style of hunting dog is already beginning to work, using discretion to go a different direction can avoid many unsafe scenarios that could arise.

With 40,000 or so pheasants planted in the Club fields over the 6 month season, there are plenty of birds to be had for all of our Members. Paying attention and working together is what makes the hunt safe and pleasurable for all concerned.