Hunter-Covey Interactions using Pointing Bird Dogs

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Introduction
Private Plantation (~5,000 acres) located in Georgetown county, South Carolina
Methods

- Radio-tagged 30-35 individual coveys each year and 4-6 birds per covey
- Regular telemetry, Intensive telemetry and Hunt telemetry
- Conducted independent dog scent trials
- All dogs equipped with Garmin GPS collars
Results – Hunter-Covey Encounters

- **Observed Only**: 28% of encounters
- **Observed and Shot**: 31% of encounters
- **Not Observed**: 41% of encounters
Detectability vs Availability

- Available: 54%
- Not Available: 46%

- Available: Detected 0.94, Not Detected 0.70
- Not Available: Detected 0.06, Not Detected 0.30
Observer Detection

Observer Detection

- Research: 55%
- Hunter: 60%

15% lower than research

Observer Detection excluding Single Points

- Research: 45%
- Hunter: 50%

18% lower than research
Results – Hunter-Covey Encounters

**Approach Speed**

**Response Distance**
Exposure to Shotguns and Hunters
Vegetation Impacts on Covey Detection

![Graph showing the impact of vegetation density on covey detection probability. The x-axis represents vegetation density at 0.6 m (%), and the y-axis represents probability. Different colored lines represent different behaviors: Hold, Flush, and Run.](image1)

![Graph showing the impact of visual obstruction on response distance. The x-axis represents visual obstruction at 0.3 m (%), and the y-axis represents response distance (m). Different colored lines represent different behaviors: Hold, Flush, and Run.](image2)
Foraging Behavior

Spatial Risk

Decreasing Risk
Bobwhite Covey Evasion Tactics

**Commonly known strategies:**

- Run (most common)
- Hold 😊 / 😞
- Flush Wild (late season, age of birds)
- Combination of those (run, then hold, etc)
Where’d they go? ...
Evading Lane Green...
Bobwhite Covey Evasion Tactics

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**Less Common Strategies:**
- “Get out of Dodge”
  - Leave property entirely
  - Edge of hunting courses
- “Short Straw or Suicide Bird”
- “Ditch’ em”
- “Divide and Conquer”
Summary

- Low overall probability of detection during hunts in both the RHs and low country ...

- Bobwhites became more wary with increased exposure ...

- Cover density impacted covey behavior

- Bobwhites altered their foraging strategies to mitigate future risk from hunters ...

Skill in both dog and man constitutes the ideal combination, but of these two the skill in the man is more important. Indeed, it is our opinion that a truly skilled field man may make a better all-around “bird dog” than the dog itself, despite the fact that he does not have the dog’s ability to find birds by scent.

– Paul L. Errington (1936)