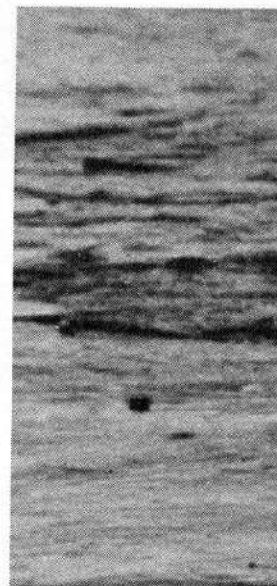


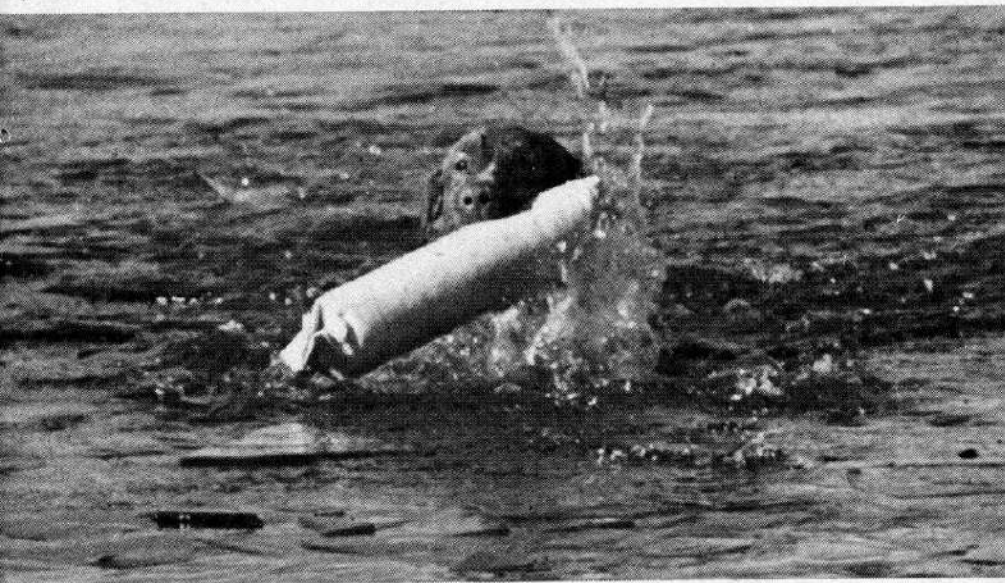
# ***THE NOVA SCOTIA DUCK TOLLING RETRIEVER***

By Cynthia Carter

The Duck Tolling Retriever is a breed recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club but not by the American Kennel Club. Cynthia Carter tells us all about this comparatively unheard of breed and predicts a remarkable future for these little dogs.



Can. Ch. Coltriev Drummer Boy C.D.,  
Canada's third placing Nova Scotia Duck  
Tolling Retriever for 1974 and 1975.



Breaking through the ice, Cherry's enthusiasm never fails, no matter how hard the work.

Quick and willing to learn, Tollers enjoy obedience work.

■ It is no easy task to reach the front door of Sundrummer Kennels. At any time of day at least four small red dynamos can be seen vigorously patrolling their two acre enclosure. When a car pulls into the drive, the whole crowd piles up on the gate, barking excitedly to announce the approaching visitors. But don't let their warning manner hold you back. There is no friendlier group in all of dogdom. They will prove it, too, by licking you non-stop all the way to the doorstep.

This pack of knee-high ruffians are all purebred Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers, and the pride of Mrs. Eileen Mann, the mistress of Sundrummer Kennels. Besides working as a full-time mother and housewife, Mrs. Mann has her hands full raising and training her Tollers, running a boarding kennel, offering obedience lessons, presiding over the local dog club and, on top of all that, she has been elected president of the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever Club of Canada this year.

Sundrummer Kennels is located in a small northern town in British Columbia, Canada. It's a tough place to be in winter for both people and dogs. The kennels have to be heated and several times each day the iced-up dishes must be replaced with fresh water from the house. Mrs. Mann says the dogs adjust well after their first winter in temperatures that drop to -40°F or lower. She must be careful to watch out for frostbite on the dog's ear-tips and nipples, but they are hardy animals and don't need to be coddled.

There are seven Tollers at Sundrummer now, but Mrs. Mann started out with only one, Ch. Coltriv



Drummer Boy C.D., Canada's third placing Toller in 1974 and 1975. His open friendly expression and comical actions win the hearts of everyone, at home or in the show and obedience rings. In the Sporting Group ring he is a favorite with spectators. His special smile and continually-waving tail show he heartily approves being the center of attention. Obedience work is also a pleasure for Drummer. He is as happy carrying his dumbbell as he is retrieving rocks or pieces of paper or

anything else he can coerce an unsuspecting person to throw for him. His attachment to the fetch-and-carry routine is so obsessive that Mrs. Mann often finds herself wakened in the morning by his moistened tennis ball bouncing off her forehead.

Tollers are naturally avid retrievers. Sproul's Highland Lassie, or Cherry, as she is usually called by her family, is another one of Sundrummer's Tollers. She's crazy about retrieving, and even when she is just about to

whelp she will outrun the other dogs to be first to bring back the tennis ball. Her courage doesn't fail even when the going is tough. I have seen her repeatedly tread through twenty feet or more of pond ice to fetch a boat bumper, then cry for more when it was time to go home.

Although Tollers are good pets and make excellent hunting dogs, their numbers have never been strong. For

a time it looked like the breed might share the fate of the Tahltan Bear Dog, another native Canadian breed which is now virtually extinct. But thanks to the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever Club of Canada, organized in 1974, the Toller is gaining in popularity. Not only are there fifty members in six Canadian Provinces, but there are also several enthusiastic new members in the

United States. Registration numbers are slowly increasing all the time. The fight to save the Toller isn't over yet, and with so many concerned people involved, the breed's future is bound to be good.

To find out where Tollers got started you have to go back to Little River, Nova Scotia. Tollers were being bred there in 1880, and it is now considered the birthplace of the breed. They were called Little River Duck Dogs until 1890, when a book refers to them as the Tolling Dog of Nova Scotia. There were other references in the literature of the 1800's to the existence of a Toller-like dog, but no one today knows exactly how they got to Little River or what other breeds helped shape the modern Toller.

Romantic tales star the first Toller as a fox/dog hybrid. He is sometimes owned by an Indian, a pioneer, or an early sportsman. Although it is possible for dogs and foxes to mate, their offspring aren't likely to have shared in the Toller's—or anyone's—ancestry. Scientists have found that the pro-

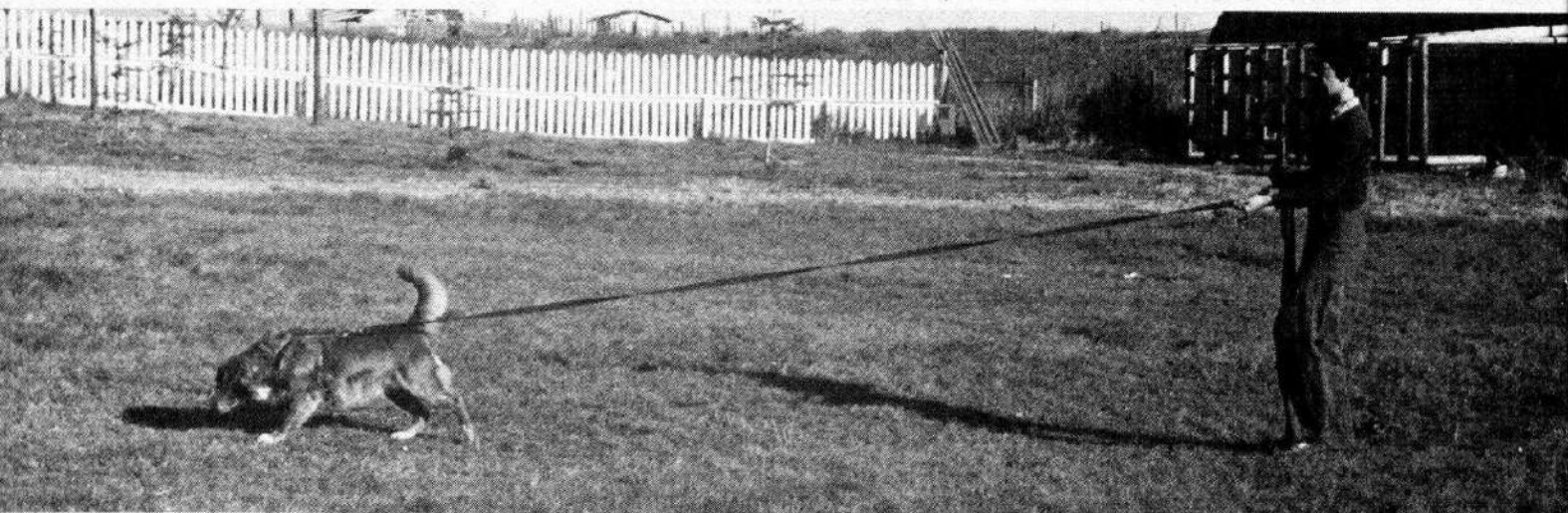
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Tollers enjoy playing—one at a time, or all together.

Sturdy, easygoing dogs, Tollers make good company for children.

Mrs. Mann and Drummer illustrate what tracking is all about. Here Drummer is following a freshly laid track.



## THE NOVA SCOTIA

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geny of fox/dog hybrids are sterile.

Other theories cite many breeds as possible ancestors of the Toller. They include the Flat-coated and Curly-coated Retrievers, Labrador, Golden Retriever, Collie or Shetland Sheepdog, Irish Setter, Cocker Spaniel and Brittany Spaniel! Out of all these, only two breeds have even shaky proof of a part in Toller history. One breeder has privately admitted seeing the Golden Retriever introduced back in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Another breeder remembers selling dogs to a person who claimed he introduced the Collie into the Toller breed at about the same time.

It seems unusual that a breed with so many good qualities is not better known. The Toller's progress was blocked in part by the intervention of two world wars. Early breeders created further problems which prevented them from becoming established as a popular Canadian breed. Because the Toller was, and still is, a highly prized hunting dog, many early breeders feared competition in the hunting field, and kept the best dogs for themselves, refusing to sell their bitches. Their reluctance to let others hunt with Tollers or to share control of their breeding kept Toller numbers at a minimum.

In 1945 a small group pushed for and received recognition for the breed from the Canadian Kennel Club under the name we use today—The Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. Fifteen dogs were registered. However, when these dogs died and no more registrations were forthcoming, the breed lost official recognition. It wasn't until the early 1960s that the efforts of Mr. Eldon Pace and Mr. Avery Nickerson, among others,

succeeded in regaining recognition for the Toller with the C.K.C. Presently, Bermuda is the only other country that recognizes the breed.

The breed is distinguished from all other retrievers by its unique ability to toll ducks and geese. The Toller is named for the unusual way he lures, or "tolls," ducks into gun range of the hunter. Hidden behind the shelter of his blind, the hunter tosses small sticks out to the lake shore. His Toller bounces out to play with and retrieve the sticks, performing the game in a characteristic figure-eight pattern. This is done repeatedly until the ducks are drawn into shooting range by the sight of the gay little Toller playing up and down the shore, his bushy red tail in constant beckoning motion over his back. A good tolling dog works in silence the whole time, since barking or loud noises frighten the ducks.

This Toller-hunter partnership is very similar to the teamwork used by red foxes, who long ago perfected the tolling method of catching their dinner. Two foxes work together. One hides in the grass along the lake or riverbank, while the other fox dances playfully up and down the shore. For some reason ducks are irresistibly drawn by his actions, and when one is close enough, the second fox leaps from his hiding place onto the unsuspecting bird. This technique of enticing the ducks to shore, combined with his small size and red coat color, is undoubtedly responsible for the speculation that foxes and Tollers are related.

Tollers are an apartment-sized retriever. The ideal male dog is only 20½" high, and the female 18½". In spite of their small size, they are strong, muscular dogs, without losing any of the quick alertness so appealing

to the breed. Even after a long day in the field the Toller comes home clean to touch and smell. Their coat is medium long, silky, and doesn't need elaborate grooming. Coloring varies from fawn to red, but some are solid and others are marked with a white blaze on the forehead and white on the toes, tail-tip, and sometimes on the chest and belly. The nose and lips are flesh colored and the eyes a soft golden brown, giving the dogs an overall color scheme effect.

Most important is the temperature and personality of the breed. They are totally charming, an ideal pet for a family, and a versatile hunting partner. Eager, happy dogs, they learn quickly and take pleasure from their work. They have been used to flush birds in the field, as well as to toll ducks and geese and perform the typical work of the retriever in the ponds and marshes of North America.

Because of their willing nature, they do well in obedience. Unlike some breeds that are jealous of canine competition, Tollers are very amiable and get along well with other animals. They also make great companions for children because of their naturally playful temperament.

For reliability and versatility, you can't beat the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. With any luck we'll be seeing a lot more of these remarkable little dogs in the future. It's time their place among North American sporting breeds was assured. If readers want to find out more about the breed, or see the breed club's newsletter, "Toller Talk," write to Mr. Larry Levson, Secretary-Editor, Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever Club of Canada, Box 1813, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3C6, Canada. ●