

Ravens SAR Adventures; Day Four!!
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Monday May 18, 2003

After breakfast on Monday, there were a few people who had specific things they wanted to work on before we quit for the weekend. Both Raven and Rico had worked so well, I decided to let them take it easy, and we just worked on a few basic things to wind them down.

First, I had Margaret do a few run and hides into an empty cabin, so Raven could practice his bark alert. He was so charged up from the previous days' work, he was like a wild thing. After Raven had his turn, I let Rico try, and he did great for a beginner. He got his bark right away, and even worked up to three barks before we opened the door. But, he's had a good example set for him by Raven. :-)

Kim was putting out some cadaver for those who wanted to work it. Raven only finds live, so he got a well-deserved rest, and I put Rico to work on RIP, our word for cadaver.

It was getting really hot by that time, and Rico does not like to work in the heat. He did fairly well, especially for this being new and unfamiliar material to him. He kept trying to work out the problem from the comfort of the shade trees, though, and that wasn't going to work too well. Rico is still young, and as his work ethic develops, he will learn that he can do his job no matter what the weather is like.

Earlier that morning, I had laid a long trail for some others to work who wanted an aged trail. We had worked on the cadaver stuff while the trail aged, and now they were ready to work, so I put my boys in the van to rest, and went back to my hiding spot. The first dog to work was a beautiful GSD, whose handler I had met about 6 months ago at a seminar in Mississippi. Summer, the GSD, found me with little trouble, even though I did my best to wind through the thickest brush and brambles I could squeeze through. I was proud that I didn't even tear my new pants on the barbed wire fence. :-)

The next dog to work my trail was the cutest beagle I have ever seen. Her name is Sally, and she is quite a little sniffer. Sally found me, and by the time she got to the end of the trail, her little tongue was nearly dragging on the ground. But she still had enough energy to jump on me and bark, then sit up and beg for her reward. :-)

By this time, it was nearly noon, and time for the certificates to be handed out, and to say good-bye. Leaving is always the hardest part of a SAR seminar. The new friends we meet and the "old" ones we meet again are such a large part of the SAR community, and our network support. It's nice to know that if you have a problem or need to discuss a certain aspect of working a dog, one can pick up a phone and find someone who will have an answer for you. After many hugs and reluctant good-byes and see ya later's, I finally forced myself into the van and drove out of the camp.

As I merged onto I-40 about 12 miles later, I set the cruise control for the next 80 miles so I could just bask in the total enjoyment I had experienced over the last three days. I had learned a lot about myself and my dogs, and I truly felt like we had grown as a team considerably over the last several months, which showed very well this weekend. For the first time, I truly felt like we were ready to work for real. It's a huge responsibility to have someone's life depend on you, and we all hope it never comes to that, but unfortunately, bad things happen. I'm just glad, that when they do, we'll be here and ready to help.

Raven is finally ready, and we will always work to improve our skills. Rico is learning well, and is the "serious" one. He is quite a character at home, but when it's time to work, he is all business. And Draco, the baby, just 6 months old, well, he's got a lot of growing up to do. But someday, he will be just as good, if not better than Raven, because I will have learned more and be a better trainer and handler. I'm so privileged to be able to serve in this way, and to also be able to work with these great dogs. Life is good. :-)

Michelle and the SAR Poodles

