

SMALL (Kleine) MUNSTERLANDER

This history was written by **Craig Koshyk**, author, photographer, and publisher of the book, **Pointing Dogs Volume I: The Continentals**. A wonderful guide book to the versatile gun dog breeds of Europe. “Written by a Hunter for Hunters” as a resource for anyone interested in the history, development and current status of the versatile gun dog.



Julson's Cosmopolitan (Oz)-JULSON KENNEL

Among the most memorable conversations I've had with breeders were with the men and women who had dedicated much of their lives to the revival of a breed of gundog. And while the twists and turns are unique to each, there are certain elements common to them all: an extinct breed, a search to find any remaining stock, a declaration of rediscovery, initial resistance by the establishment and, eventually, acceptance of a re-established breed.

When I first began my research, I thought that all the various breed revivals had taken place fairly recently, in the last half of the 20th century. However, it turns out that there was a man who revived a breed nearly a century ago. His name was Edmund Löns and the breed he rediscovered was a small, long-haired hunting dog that used to be common in much of northwestern Europe. Löns named it the Heidewachtel (Heath Quail Dog). Today, it is known as the Small Munsterlander. It is among the most popular gundog breeds in Germany and is quickly gaining popularity around the world.

HISTORY

The story of The Small Munsterlander begins, as it does for most of the long-haired pointing breeds, with hunting dogs that had been in northwestern Europe for centuries. They went by a variety of names and came in a variety of sizes and colors. They were generally used to track, flush and retrieve small game. On the moors and in the marshes of the region known as Münsterland, they were called a *Spion*, *Spannjer* or *Wachtelhund** (*There is a breed known officially as the *Deutsch Wachtelhund*. It is not a pointing dog but has a common ancestry with the long-haired pointing breeds, and some may actually point from time to time. However, it has been selectively bred to track, flush and retrieve and is also known for giving voice on trail.)

According to Edmund Löns, who wrote a book about the breed in 1912, they were owned by local farmers and peat diggers, men who saw hunting as a way of putting meat on the table and money in their pockets. To them, the real value of a dog was in the work after the shot, since any game not recovered was one less dish on the table or, worse, less money in their pocket.



Julson's Bermuda (Mudda) –JULSON KENNEL

This kind of hunting survived until the early 1800s. By mid-century, an emerging middle class, and a shift in the attitude and practises of hunters, had all but wiped out the commercial hunter. New breeds of dogs and styles of hunting emerged. Setter and Pointers were imported from England and various *épagneul* breeds from France.

As hunters mixed these breeds with local dogs, new varieties began to emerge. Eventually, the larger ones evolved into what would form the basis of the German Longhaired Pointer and the Large Munsterlander breeds in Germany, and the [Drentsche Patrijshond](#) and Stabyhoun breeds in the Netherlands. The smaller varieties, on the other hand, never really caught on. By the end of the 19th century, very few of the little *Spionnen* remained. In fact, most people considered them extinct. Then, in 1906, in what can only be described as a one in a million chance, they were rediscovered.

Well-known poet Hermann Löns was an avid sportsman with a keen interest in dogs. Sometime around 1900, he developed an interest in a tracking breed known as the *Roten Hannoverschen Heidebracke* (Red Hanoverian Heath Hound), which was also thought to be near extinction. Hermann wanted to find out if there were any still alive in Germany, so he published an appeal

in a popular sporting magazine asking for anyone with information on the breed to contact him. The appeal must have produced a few leads, for it is said that Hermann and his brother Edmund traveled throughout Lower Saxony (northwestern Germany) in their search. What they found, however, was not the *Roten Hannoverschen Heidebracke*. It was something else altogether. It was the *Spion*; the small long-haired pointing dog considered by many to have gone extinct many years before.



It turns out that the *Spion* had somehow managed to survive on a few isolated farms in the Westphalia region, where they were kept as tightly line-bred families. One of the breeders was a man by the name of Heitmann. According to Edmund Löns, Heitmann had been breeding his line of *Spions* since 1877 and had even used German Longhaired Pointers from time to time, keeping only those pups that had *Spion* traits. In 1911, Löns found another line of dogs with the same characteristics in the area of Dorsten, a town in Westphalia. The Dorsten dogs actually traced back to the same sources as the Heitmann dogs, but had not been crossed with them for many years. So Löns and Heitmann used them to strengthen the Heitmann line, and vice versa.

Although there were differences in the two lines—the Dorsten dogs tended to be somewhat larger—both lines produced dogs with white coats and brown patches or plates. The roan color seen in the breed today came somewhat later. It was the result of early crosses to German Longhaired Pointers and, as we shall see, Brittanies.

SELECTION AND BREEDING

Some sources claim that the Small Munsterlander has been a pure breed for over 500 years. The evidence clearly indicates otherwise; it has only been recognized since the early 1900s, and has, until fairly recently, received infusions of blood from other breeds.



As early as 1904, there was speculation that the Small Munsterlander was actually a local variety of the Brittany or, at the very least, a descendant of French dogs brought to Westphalia in the early 1800s by the soldiers of Napoleon's army. Since Edmund Löns had served in the German army in France during the First World War, it was also suspected that he had bred French dogs into his lines. But Löns always maintained that the Small Munsterlander was a pure breed and that it had been around for centuries. However, in a recently revised and expanded edition of [*Der Heidewachtel, kleiner Munsterlander Vorstehhund oder Spion*](#), a book that Löns wrote in 1922, Elizabeth Brand-Böhmer, a close friend of Löns, describes his attempts to develop the brown roan coat in the Small Munsterlander.

It seems that Löns had tried crossing to German Longhaired Pointers, reasoning that they were from the same basic root stock. But he was never really satisfied with the cross which he found produced dogs that were too large and slow. Then one day in 1918, he saw a small, brown roan dog on a ragpicker's cart near his home. Löns immediately recognized it as a Brittany and offered to purchase it on the spot. The owner refused, but Löns persisted. He even went so far as to secretly observe the ragpicker and his dog on the local heath. He saw that the dog would sit on the cart and then jump off to go hunting. Its quick pace, high nose and solid point impressed Löns enormously.

Somehow Löns eventually purchased the dog and even had it registered in the Small Munsterlander stud book. When he used it for breeding and produced brown roan pups, Löns told club members that the coat was due to a genetic mutation. Later he changed his story and claimed that it came from a cross to German Longhaired Pointers. Inevitably, Löns was criticized for his breeding practises, and there-after remained silent on the issue. He did however confess to at least one person, Elizabeth Brand-Böhmer. He told her the story of the ragpicker's Brittany, but asked that she not reveal it until after his death—which she did in 2006, having kept the secret for nearly 40 years.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Prior to the establishment of a unified breed club in the 1960s, the breed went by two names. To the club led by Löns, it was the *Heidewachtel*, literally "Heath-land Quail Dog". To members of the other club it was the *Kleiner Munsterländer Vorstehhund*, the Small Munsterlander Pointing Dog. Other names sometimes used were *Spion* or *Spannjer*.

In Germany today, the official name of the breed is Kleiner Münsterländer. In English speaking countries, the breed is called the Small Munsterlander, often abbreviated to SM. Interestingly, the breed is still called *Heidewachtel* in the Netherlands.



CJ's Axel (Axel)-a JULSON FAMILY KENNEL