

**Gundogs**

# A taste for chocolate

**NICK RIDLEY** put any prejudice aside and went to watch six chocolate labradors hard at work picking-up in Warwickshire

**M**ention chocolate labradors to most gundog people and you will get a torrent of views from: "I wouldn't have one of them, they're fat and lazy," to: "In forty years of shooting I have never seen a chocolate lab work. You've got to be having a laugh!"

Let's take a logical look at this. The labrador retriever has been with us in the UK since the early 1800s and was first recognised by the Kennel Club in 1903. As we all know, labs come in three colours: black, yellow and chocolate. Over the years black became the dominant

colour and in the early breeding programmes yellow and chocolate coloured puppies were often 'culled'.

Chocolate labs became popular in the show ring and today are particularly fashionable as pet – and, to be fair, in my day-to-day work of photographing all types of dogs, I do see a lot of over-weight chocolate coloured labs.

However, I learned a long time ago that where working dogs are concerned you should never make generalisations. Early last year, while covering the Midland Gundog Society novice field trial, I met Dorothy Walls-Duffin and one of her excellent working chocolate

**'What's in a colour anyway? It is a matter of personal choice and what is pleasing to your eye'**



Chocolates have become fashionable pets, but are rarely seen in the field



Dorothy's dogs are being proved that chocolates have got what it takes



Dorothy Walls-Duffin has done much for the dogs' reputation