

Red Bone Coonhounds

Redbone Coonhounds were bred by hunters that wished to create a superior coonhound that at the same time looked good. Many of its characteristics as a hunter have allowed the Redbone to become an extremely enjoyable family pet, though its hunting urge is still very much present. Indeed, these dogs take to the hunt with an almost unequalled fervor, often exchanging the neighbor's cat for a raccoon that needs to be chased up a tree.

When the hound is still a puppy, it is introduced to the types of animals that it will be asked to hunt. Usually, something that smells like the hunted animal is used; in some cases, the pelt of the intended prey is presented to the dog. Coonhounds have been traditionally used to hunt raccoons, though they are often used to hunt mountain lions, bears, coyotes, bobcats and other large mammals. To begin the hunt, they are taken to the woods on a long lead, given a verbal cue and then released. The dogs dash off in search of a scent and once they find it, chase after their prey and begin their characteristic baying (the sound that hounds make when they've caught a scent and are on the hunt); Redbones have a pleasant sounding bay.

The coonhound has been trained to chase a raccoon up a tree and hold it there if it first sights the coon on the ground. Once the coon is up the tree, the dog stands up on its hind legs, supporting itself against the tree, and makes distinctive sounds that coon hunters collectively call "chopping". A coonhound has such a sensitive nose that it will know if a raccoon is already hiding in a tree and will immediately set up position to keep the raccoon in the tree. Once the hunter arrives, he will shoot at the raccoon to either kill it or get it out of the tree so the dogs can kill it. Shooting raccoons is tightly regulated, as is all hunting activity in America. If you are raccoon hunting as part of a Nite Hunt competition, you can't even carry a gun along with you on the hunt, as there is absolutely no shooting of raccoons.

The Redbone Coonhound has fulfilled the dreams of its breeders, having become an extremely versatile and adaptable breed, excelling at different hunting scenarios and on different terrain. They are an extremely agile and well-balanced breed and do equally well when found on rocky and/or steep ground as well as fenced country land; amazingly, they are also very gifted water dogs. They work equally well alone and in packs.

Weird Facts. Did you know?

The Redbone Coonhound is the only solid-colored coonhound.

Redbone Coonhounds make excellent water dogs; they can actually follow a scent through the water.

Because of their excellent sense of smell and high level of intelligence Redbones are being used more and more in search and recovery operations.

The Redbone Coonhound is said to have the most pleasant "voice" of all coonhound breeds. Pleasant or not, it is loud and melodious; the baying characteristic of scent hounds is accentuated in coonhounds.

The Redbone has cat-like paws that allow it to work well on a variety of terrains.

The Redbone Coonhound is an exclusively American breed. It was created to be the "superstar" among the coonhounds, not just with better hunting skills but also with better looks.

The best known fictional Redbones are Little Ann and Old Dan, from the book *Where the Red Fern Grows*. This is a very popular children's book that helped increase the popularity of the breed, which was fairly unknown outside hunting groups. The story centers on the two dogs and the boy who worked hard to buy them and train them to hunt. They form an incredibly tight, almost magical bond, with each risking his or her life for the other. The dogs finally make the ultimate sacrifice in defending their boy. The book was made into a movie first in 1974, to which a sequel followed in 1992; recently, in 2003, a remake of the original movie was released starring the singer Dave Matthews.

Redbones, like all coonhounds, will change their baying when they tree their pray. All hunters have to do is listen to the way their hounds are baying in order to tell if the hounds are merely following a scent or if they've treed their quarry.

Redbone Coonhounds are often affectionately referred to as "Reds."

