



Pinekone Black Rose with her owner and handler, Ashby Morgan.



## MONSTER TRAIL 480 miles of extreme mountain biking.

**THERE IS A FRESH GREY** line on the official state bicycling map, “Bicycling in Virginia,” and it traces a new route of 480 miles of off-road biking. Beginning in Strasburg, Shenandoah County, in the northwest, the route winds its way through the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and beyond, all the way down to Damascus, Washington County, in the southwest.

The Virginia Mountain Bike Trail is the work of 43-year-old Chris Scott, co-owner of Harrisonburg’s Shenandoah Mountain Touring. Scott pioneered the path in the fall of 2011, by pedaling it himself on a 14-day journey. “It consists of over 50 trails that already have individual names,” explains Scott, who’s been working on establishing the VMBT for over 10 years. Scott found ways to link all the trails into one monster route of singletrack, or trail that is wide enough for one bike.

Scott is working with the Forest Service to provide accommodation in huts along the trail, but for now riders have to camp. “It’s definitely hard work,” says Scott of the VMBT, which climbs a combined 65,000 feet from start to finish, “and there’s a lot of challenge to the technical terrain. But it’s all about that thrill you get from going deep into the wilderness to get to remote places with your bicycle.”

*MountainTouring.com —By Daryl Grove*

## TOP DOGS! Virginia setters rule at national shooting dog championship.

**VIRGINIA EMERGED VICTORIOUS AT THE** National Amateur Walking Shooting Dog Championship, held this past February at the Dick Cross Wildlife Management Area in Mecklenburg County.

A total of 23 dogs arrived from as far afield as Rhode Island and Tennessee to compete in pairs, or “braces,” during hour-long heats in which their goal was to nose out as many quail as possible while their handlers followed behind on foot and judges and onlookers followed on horseback.

Dogs were judged both on number of finds and on style, and the winner was Pinekone Black Rose, a 5-year-old female English setter with black ticking. Rose is owned and handled

by Ashby Morgan, a Verizon technician from Hudgins. “I believe Rose won because she was fast on the ground and stayed out in front like you want a hunting dog to do,” says Morgan, who has been training and trialing bird dogs for 30 years. “She showed good manners, meaning she backed her brace mate and was steady to shot. The fact that she pointed with intensity with a high head and straight tail was icing on the cake.”

Another female English setter from Virginia, Blue’s Tomoka Belle, owned by Phil and Sharon Townley of Richardsville and handled by Sharon, took second place, making it an impressive one-two for the Old Dominion.

*—By Clarke C. Jones*

## LITTLE STINKER The stink bug has moved in, and it’s in no hurry to leave. —By Erin Parkhurst

**FORGET THE YEAR** of the Snake, 2013 is the year of the brown marmorated stink bug. If you haven’t heard, the odiferous critters, which were first detected in the U.S. in 2001, are predicted to make an appearance this spring and summer in record numbers.

“All indications from the fall of 2012 are that the size of the over-wintering population of the brown marmorated stink bug is bigger than last year,” says Chris Bergh, professor of entomology at Virginia Tech and one of five from VT working on a team of more than 50 researchers from around the U.S. to find solutions to the proliferation of the invasive pest. Established in

2010, the group, funded through the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Research Initiative, has set up its own website—[StopBMSB.org](http://StopBMSB.org)—to educate the public about the insect named by the USDA in January as its top “invasive insect of interest.”

While a nuisance for most, the stink bug, which is originally from Asia, is a serious threat to farmers because it feeds on more than 300 varieties of crops—everything from berries and peppers to fruit trees and soybeans. And, oh, how it loves the Old Dominion. Virginia is one of seven states in which the bug has caused severe agricul-

tural and nuisance problems.

Unfortunately, it’s too late to stop the stinkers from getting into your home this spring. “In the fall, they look for over-wintering sites, and they’ll go anywhere they perceive to be hospitable, including cars and even doorjams,” explains Bergh. (Which means they’ve been with you all winter.) To prevent Stinkvasion 2014, seal up cracks and crevices to block access to your house. And what of their famous smell? “It’s a defensive secretion,” says Bergh. It’s like a Do Not Disturb sign for insects.

