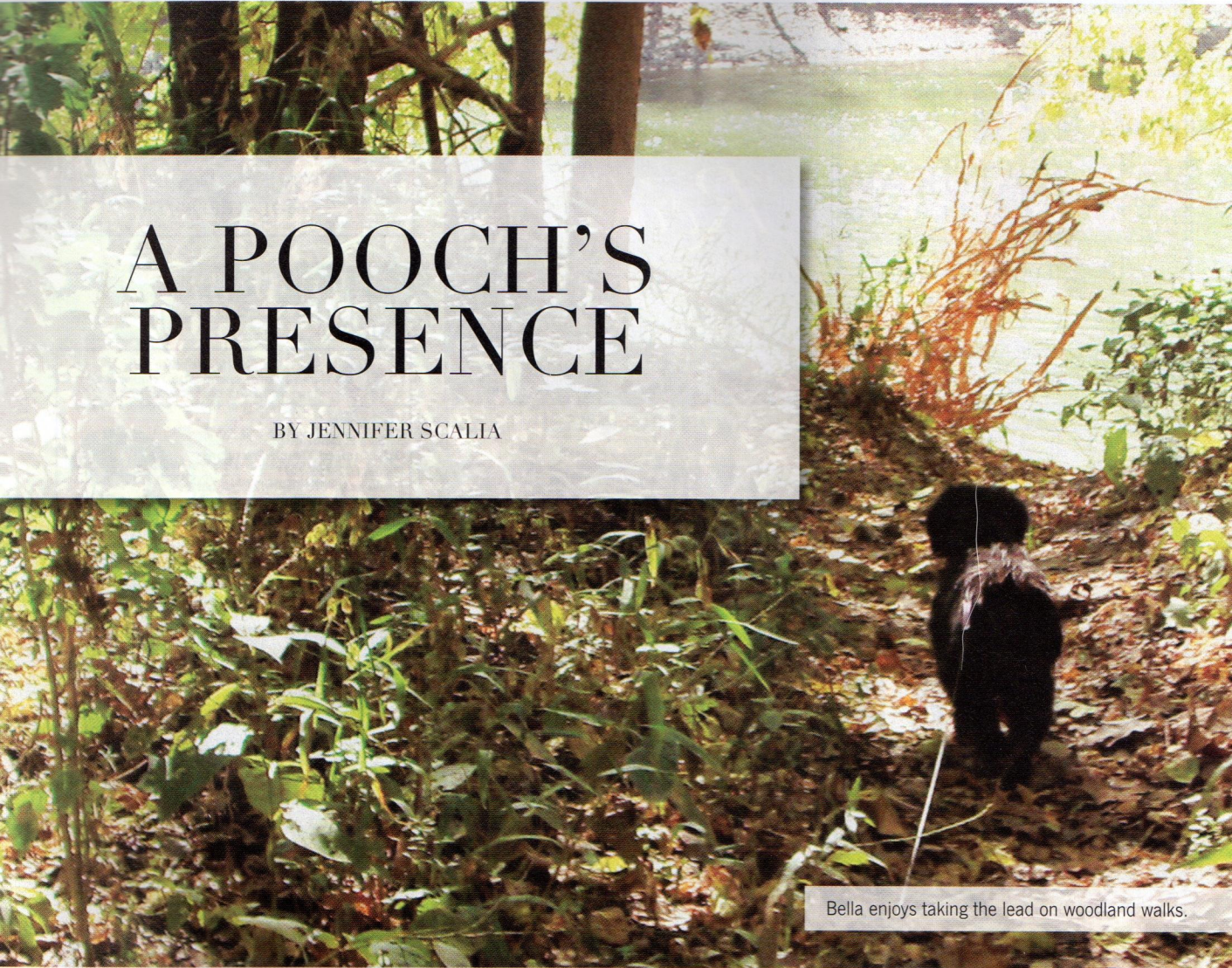


A POOCH'S PRESENCE

BY JENNIFER SCALIA



Bella enjoys taking the lead on woodland walks.

I was walking a client's dog the other day, a toy poodle who is always extremely grateful for her outings. As we strolled along, I noticed another small dog being walked across the street. His human companion was on her cell phone but had stopped to let him find a good potty spot on the grass.

The little dog caught sight of us and gave a "I see another of my kind!" whine. He started pulling on his leash while his person continued to chat on the phone and tug him towards home. He kept stopping and crying out, gazing at us as my poodle friend stared back, waiting, whining, and hoping for contact. Sadly, the other dog's desire to

socialize remained unnoticed and he and his human quickly faded from view.

I felt great empathy for both dogs being denied the opportunity to connect. But I also had to admit I'd often been in the same busy state while walking my own dog, forgetting there's more to her life than just food, water and a good squat outside.

It's easy to rush through life wrapped up in our own thoughts, worries and activities, but my canine friends have taught me it doesn't have to be that way. All I have to do is look at a dog and notice his presence – his ability