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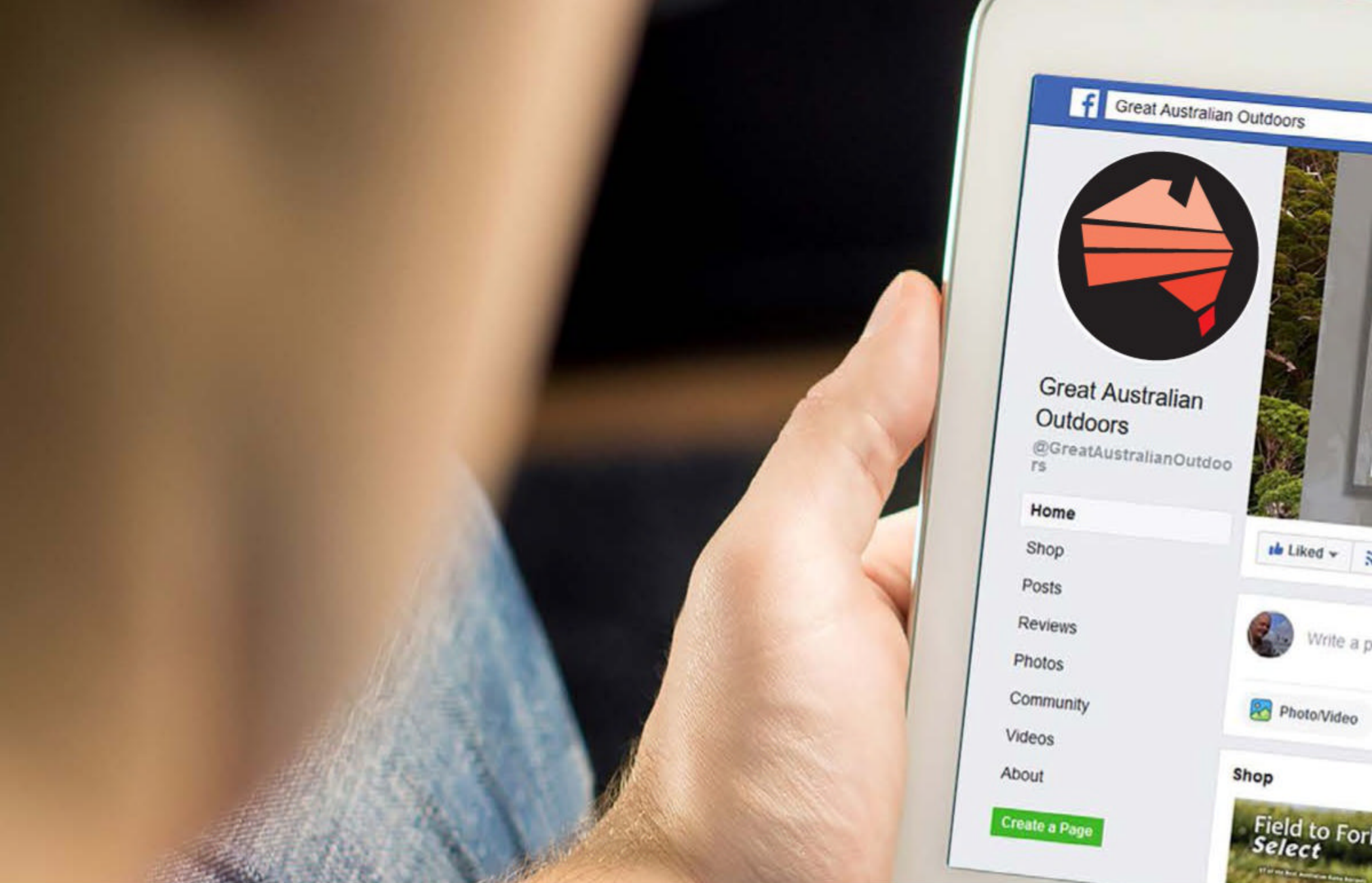
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DAWN
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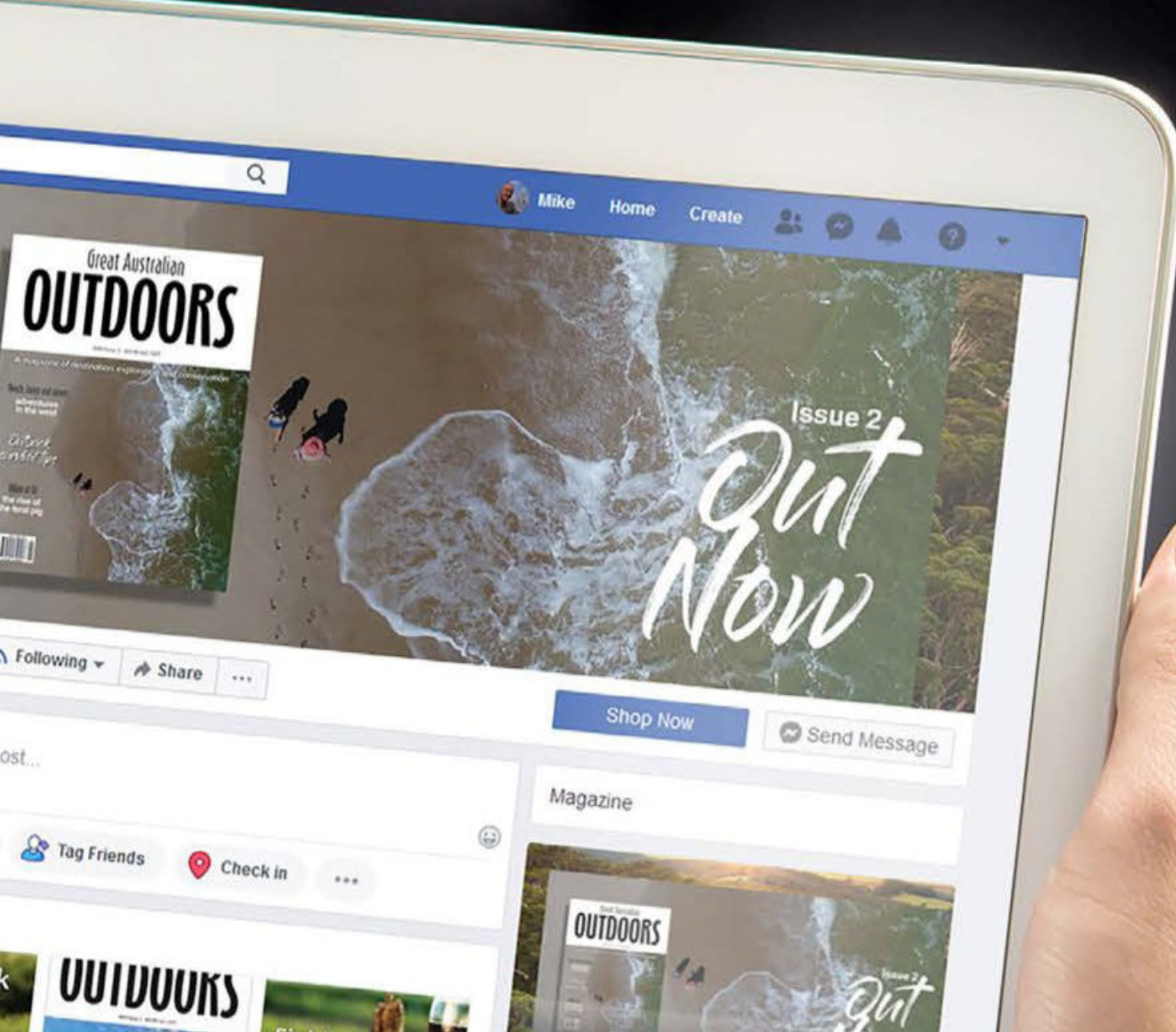
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From the Editor

It's a 'roaring' time of year so we excitedly kick off our first edition for 2021 with deer in mind. Mick Chapman and his mate relish an overdue catch-up and stock their freezers with venison, Ben Smith enjoys the comradery of helping an old pal take his first deer along with a haul of rampaging rabbits, Chris Redlich camps out in the Queensland mountain tops to ultimately marvel at nature with his son amid a successful hunt during the roar, Ben Unten discovers taking that extra step to land deer can prove the difference between filling the freezer and missing out altogether, Brad Allen highlights simply the search for deer is a reward in itself, John Moore lands himself a deer duo with his .308 employing aperture sights, Perry Magowan reminds us that if there's one thing to expect when hunting deer... it's the unexpected, Adrian Kenney follows his instincts to land himself a tracked sambar in the forest and overseas Robert Krix hunts magnificent game like eland bulls and wildebeest in Botswana.

We explore the many benefits of a compact 'scout' hunting rifle, cover bullet selection for a wide variety of game and conditions, visit an Aussie business providing a personal touch and more to rifles with top-notch local workmanship, come to the realisation that a wayward shot can be a result of a few finite natural elements, create unique DIY day-to-day items utilising

different parts of animals and debate introduced deer being here to stay.

On the review side of things we put the Deluxe Universal Game Caller to the test which pleasingly utilises applicable calls for our fair shores, hop into the contemporary battery-powered Polaris Ranger EV that proves an ideal hunting ATV, size up the TargetVision Longshot LR-3 UHD camera that lives up to its name, hit the road with the ultra-versatile Wedgetail Hawk which is a campsite game-changer, try out some high-quality leather goods from Big Barn Leather in Tenterfield and admire the new ambidextrous 1812 Edition shotgun from London's oldest gunmaker Boss & Co.

Edgware boasts the hardy Ruike P108 folder that offers resilience along with convenience, a Swedish success story in the Fällkniven F1 fixed-blade that lends itself to a myriad of uses and a metallurgy study covering the different steels and other factors that go into hunting blades.

The focus on deer transcends to the taste-buds where we offer three diverse culinary options with a mouth-watering veal saltimbocca, tender venison blue steak and delightful venison, rosemary and garlic sausages.

Thomas Cook
Editor



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Mick Chapman

Chris (right), spotted this fallow buck for Paul to shoot.

The year 2020 posed drastic issues for tackling the roar and hunting season. This included properties being closed to hunting because cattle were so underdone that farmers didn't want to have them disturbed by rifle shots. Although others welcomed hunters to help rid ferals from feasting on animal feed.

It seemed that though the Queensland government had not banned hunting per se, it was going to suffer along with many other activities. As luck would have it, I spoke to a property owner who would allow me to hunt but only with two partners. My mate Paul and his son Chris were grateful to join me on a three-day hunt.

Most of the area had been in drought

and this was having an effect on the roar. It would have been mid-roar had it have been a normal year, but the deer really hadn't been going off as they had previously. During the night we could hear stags roaring. Come morning, just like somebody had flicked a switch, they would stop. To date this had made finding stags difficult but things were about to change.



A stag taken out because he was not showing good traits, missing bez or trez tine.



Paul's shot placement was perfect on this fallow buck, with minimal meat damage.



To create a drop rug, Mick, right, and Paul clean the buck's skin before salting. The animal was later utilised for hearty fallow steaks.

I have known Paul for some years. He had been a bow hunter but due to shoulder injuries is unable to use a bow and had come over to rifle hunting about 15 years ago. We had hunted previously and enjoyed each other's company. Chris had recently moved back to Queensland but a young family meant few hunting opportunities.

Both Paul and Chris were eager to fill their freezers with venison, so were flexible about what they would shoot. Though Chris' desire was to take a meat animal over a trophy stag. We arrived at our campsite; a machine shed made available to us by the property owner. It was a great place to camp as it has all the mod cons like power, toilet and shower, though there is no hot water. As we set up camp the distant sound of a lovelorn stag, serenading, a would-be lover, floated down from the mountains.

Keen to be at them we donned our hunting garb and were soon trekking towards our stag. Before we could reach the stags, we had to cross 50 acres of

predominately open field, rendering us vulnerable to being sighted by our prey. As best we could, we used the topographical features to our advantage, climbing the mountain to the timber fringe.

All the while our stag sang his song to any of the ladies that might listen. Occasionally a stranger would join in chorus, hopefully distracting our targeted animal from his immediate danger. The roars were becoming louder when Chris spotted hinds on the opposite face of the gully we had reached.

Paul and I froze while Chris stealthily searched the gully system for the stag. Sporadically he would raise his rifle, look through the scope, only to lower it. Paul and I could see nothing where we stood, except for Chris. Though we diligently watched the opposite face for any sign of movement.

Suddenly Chris' rifle exploded into action and not 30m away we saw a spiker collapse. Chris had spotted the deer and decided that it would make a good freezer filler. By the smile on Chris' face, you would have thought he had shot a 6x6 of gigantic proportions. Satisfied with his

achievement there were a few hugs and pats on the back before a photo session, then the hard work began.

We were up at daybreak, as all during the night stags had been roaring. They continued after dawn. We followed a couple of roars which seemed to be going up the mountain, not down. The grasses were wet from the evening's dew as we began our ascent. Leaving the pasture country we climbed through the snarly scrub on the mountain.

Through lantana vines, the ridge line seemed to lengthen as we progressed. Two hours of fighting the tangled scrub saw us eventually break through to open eucalypt forest. An obvious game trail showed sign of recent use so we began to follow it. Cresting a ridge line my olfactory senses were bombarded with the pungent odour of deer. I turned to Paul to prepare for a shot as we scanned the terrain around us for the source of the smell, all the while the stench became more pungent.

Dropping about 30m below the ridge line so as not to skyline, Chris signalled he

A deerly welcomed hunt

had the stag in view. Paul was caught out in the open with nowhere to rest for a shot. Suddenly a stag half cantered 50m in front of us. I let out the best hind call I could muster. On the sound of my 'marp' the stag stopped dead in its tracks to look back. Paul's rifle quickly shattered the silence. The stag leapt into the air and disappeared down the ridge line he travelled.

Confident that Paul had hit the stag, we strode over to where the stag had stood and began searching for blood. Two hours later we were still searching for blood. We called the task off, convinced that Paul had missed. While this was taking place, another stag had begun bemoaning his need for love. Chris started a halfhearted stalk but decided to call it off.

As we sat and contemplated Paul's missed shot, the roaring stag had stirred up another couple of lovelorn rivals and the bush erupted with the songs of lovesick stags. So, we were soon back into the hunt. This time Chris hung back as Paul and I moved towards the closest roar. As Chris challenged the stags, the roars became more threatening and easier to locate.

I moved 100m forward before spotting the stag. A different stag came into view, probably 5-6 years old, missing trez tines and with poor tops, a feature that needs to be culled from a herd. My decision made, I squeezed the trigger and the stag dropped where it stood.

Chris joined me, and we decided to leave



Chris was happy to fill his freezer as opposed to chasing a trophy stag.

a dehydrated Paul with our gear and the deer. Our arduous journey began through the dry terrain and an hour or so later we were loading the deer onto the buggy.

Once again, we were up before day-break but to no roars drifting down from the mountains. As we drove up the lane-way between paddocks, Chris spotted a deer. We were all soon out of the vehicle and the chase was on, though it was not much of a chase because of our weary legs.

As soon as I saw the deer I knew we had something different. A fallow buck had been caught out in the open after a night of romancing and had nowhere to hide. A well-placed shot from Paul ensured we were going to eat some fallow meat over

the next few months. Purdey, my GPS (dog), trained for the recovery of wounded deer, was out of the buggy and earning her keep. Within minutes Paul was standing over his deer. It wasn't hard to see where Chris had inherited his engaging smile from, as Paul walked around grinning like the Cheshire cat.

The buggy loaded with our spoils, we drove to the station's gut pit. The buck was skinned and meat wrapped in cotton sheets to prevent drying as it hung. Suddenly the skies opened and dropped about 25mm of rain in 10 minutes. Soaked but satisfied, we drove to the shed and took the meat to the cold room. Our hunt had ended and our mouths were watering. ■



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Hunter gatherer

Steven Fine

As a child I loved exploring and collecting interesting stones, bird feathers and small branches for my pet lizards and snakes that I kept in large glass tanks.

On trips to the bush I often found picked-cleaned bones and even skulls of herbivores that had succumbed to predators. I took what I liked and cleaned them until spotless.

After school growing up in Durban, South Africa, I would often visit old Ivy's curio shop where the specialty was in the sales of hides and beautiful animal mounts.

You name it, they were there from different buck species, zebras and all the carnivores under the sun.

Later on in life when the hunting bug bit, I started my own collection but with a difference.

Mounted animals are expensive and I mainly hunted for the pot but I also skinned, treated and kept my skins and different horns.

On hunts my eyes were sharp and alert and I often came across more bones and skulls in virgin bush way off the beaten track.

I would identify my find and study the immediate area to see if there were further kills or tracks and how old they were, if there was water nearby, testing wind direction at all times. My prize collection was my skulls of the large carnivores.

It was a pleasure to hunt with the same friends and all were actively involved in the

outdoors, ethical hunting and conservation.

One friend Willy was a gunsmith and the other Dave, a taxidermist. When visiting Dave he was always busy with a full mount, shoulder mount or a skull and horns.

Dave or Willy would sometimes tell me that a hunter had messed up a skin or not skinned the animal properly, which resulted in an unusable one, and it was offered to me if I wanted.

I did not believe in taking a skin that I never hunted but I would on the odd occasion select a few patches here and there and put them to use.

Here I made simple but appealing glass coasters, bookmarks, book covers, mobile cases, pieces of hide or skin for zips on windbreakers, other clothing tops and for purses and handbags that belonged to my sister and wife. I also cut strips to use as hat bands for my favourite outdoor wear.

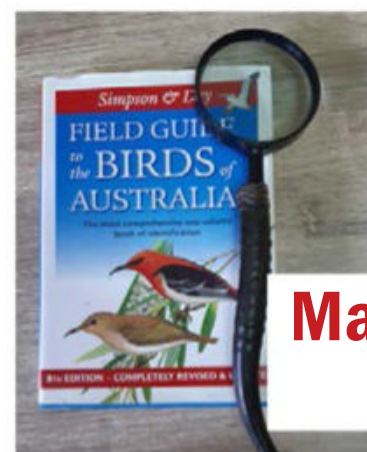
My greatest products came from personal hunts and these were skins, horns and warthog tusks. I created some handy items. One of them was my stone remover, made from a horn tip in order to be rid of stubborn stones embedded in vehicle tyres.

My mates ended up using the same concept. There is nothing more irritable than driving on a tar road at a slow speed in a national park listening to the tick, tick noise from a stone as you scan the bush for animals.

1 Zebra glass coasters

I obtained and chose the piece of zebra hide skin from my taxidermist friend, Dave. It was originally from a hunter who had not skinned it properly. When choosing the piece I did a test to see if I could pull hair out.

No hair was evident which was a good sign. Hair loss or drop is often caused when the skinner does not remove all the fat from the skin. Here I turned the hide skin upside down with the hair facing my work table. Then I drew circles with a pen, using a wine glass as a round base. Finally, I merely cut them out with a sharp scissors.



2

Magnifying glass

After cleaning and drying I inserted the magnifying glass handle as deep as possible into the springbuck horn. Then I packed in ready mixed Polyfilla. I waited days until it was dry and rock hard and then painted the small area black where the Polyfilla was.



Stone remover

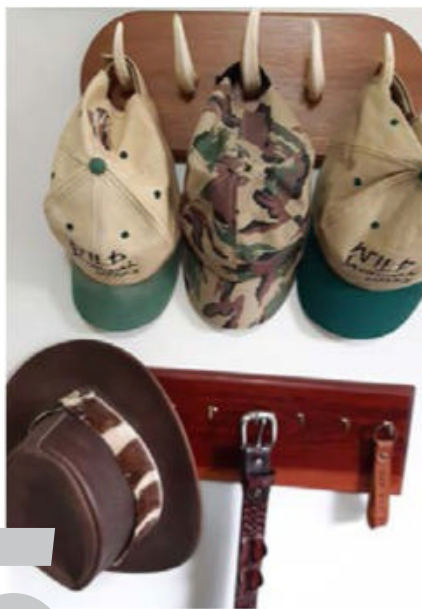
Springbuck tip of the horn and warthog lower tusk tip. The buck-horn tip is cut with a handsaw as well as the warthog extreme tip. The horn is first cleaned with soapy water, I used laundry detergent. Then hydrogen peroxide 35 per cent and water.

I leave all my horns and tusks to soak in soapy water for a day then soak the horn tip and warthog tusks in the peroxide, also for a day.



Water bottle

Covered in leather, this was made for me by my hunting companion and gunsmith Willy. He's quite the leather craftsman!



Hat rack & key hook board

Hat rack - Made from warthog tusks that I hunted. The tusks are generally fairly clean as the pig uses them as a tool to dig for roots, tubers and bulbs. There is no skin attached. However, they are often scratched badly and sometimes chipped.

You must use the best quality ones. I clean with a wire brush then wash them. After soaking in soapy water and then peroxide I wait for them to dry in the sun and smooth them down with sandpaper. Deep scratches look natural, like the grain of wood, which is perfect.

The tusks were cut with a bandsaw. Each tusk has a bolt epoxied to the back, making them solid. They are attached to the wood with a nut and bolt combination and the rack is strong.

Key hook board - The beautiful wood is Rhodesian teak made from a railway sleeper. Here I had the wood cut and polished by a 'chippy'. After marking the spots where I screwed in the hooks, I drilled two holes below the end hooks for the two screws that would go into a wall.



Business card holder

6

I cut the two pieces of zebra skin to size for my business cards and my wife used an ordinary sewing machine to stitch them together, including the Velcro tape. When measuring for a business card it is important that the sides of the holder are at least 5mm wider on each side in order for cards to be removed without difficulty.

Aussie Akubra hat & walking stick

Akubra hat - Pure felt with a thin croc skin band. Perfection.

Walking stick - This was made for me. The wood is South African Tambuti and is impervious to all fungal diseases and insects. The underbark exudes highly poisonous latex when freshly cut. This wood is prized by the few who make furniture out of it.

The warthog tusk for the walking stick must be suitable for your hand and thumb size. The upper tusk is used and your thumb must fit the worn-down part. This is where the bottom sharp tusk rubs on the upper smooth tusk. ■





Hardy service

from Ruike P108 folder

Jan Kaptein

While fixed blades are often perceived as more suitable hunting knives than folders, the more pocket-friendly and inconspicuous nature of folding options makes them attractive.

Who has not walked into a service station or supermarket with a knife on their belt? Though there is little harm in it when legal, I always attempt not to unduly upset the general public or make people feel ill at ease.

As hunters we enjoy what we do, but we unfortunately live in a world where many do not share our views and do not appreciate our pursuits. We are all accustomed to firearms being in a locked gun box, away from prying eyes. This is not the case for knives, which are easy to forget as they are such useful tools for those accustomed to carrying them. I know I sometimes do, which on occasion has earned me a frown or two from observant passers-by.

Sharp work the key
for the Ruike P108.

A folding knife lugged on a 'deep carry' clip or in a pocket is always with you and will typically go unnoticed. It will not be in the way of your backpack's support straps either if you are carrying a lot of gear, nor will it startle that elusive deer as the stock of your slung rifle bumps into your knife handle as you move into the perfect position for a shot.

Now, to be clear, I do not advocate that a folding knife can, or will, replace a fixed blade. Personally, I almost always carry a fixed blade when out on a hunt. A fixed blade, by its make-up, will always be more solid than a folder. That said, folding knives have come a long way. When I compare folding knives I owned 30 years ago to what is available today, structural integrity, smoothness and overall quality have vastly improved, while prices have typically dropped. One example of a folding knife that stands out among the myriad of knives I've owned and used over decades of hunting and being out bush is the Ruike P108.

Ruike is the knife brand of flashlight producer Fenix. The Ruike brand dates back to 1998 when its founder, Chinese blade-smith Mr Leung, started providing design and manufacturing services to other knife producers. Ruike only began selling knives under its own brand name in 2016. The majority of the items offered are folding knives, though they also have a few fixed blade options.

It was not until looking up the company history that I understood why I had never heard of the brand Ruike prior to obtaining my first knife by them. I was at one of my local outdoor shops when I noticed a rather flash-looking folder in one of the display cases. It did not so much catch my attention due to its fit and finish but because it looked sleek from a distance, lacking the almost omnipresent Micarta or G10 scales.

There's nothing wrong with either, but



The ball bearing washer after spending half a year lost in the mud.

I much prefer leather, bone or wood knife handles. If these are not available, plain steel or aluminum is next on my list. Once I had the knife in my hands, I was pleasantly impressed by its operation, the above average quality factory finish and the fact that it had a double safety. I was also happily taken aback by the price when I asked for it, so, I carried the P108 home.

By now, I've used the P108 for a few years. Or one of two, which I will explain soon. In use, I have generally found the knife a pleasure. The handle is done in stonewashed 420 stainless steel and the blade is in Sandvik 14c28n, which is the latest steel in that line. It is easy to sharpen and keeps its edge well. Corrosion resistance is also good, which is nice in the humid tropical climates up north or wet places like large parts of Europe.

With a length of 88mm and thickness of 3mm, the blade is ideally sized for everyday

use as well as skinning and boning out small- to medium-sized game. Hardness is specified as 58-60 HRC and the grind is an easy to maintain western flat at 20 degrees. The opening mechanism is flipper-style and the knife opens smoothly, pretty much out of the box. This is, without doubt, aided by the incorporation of ball bearing washers. To prevent accidents, the knife uses a frame lock, supplemented by Ruike's 'Beta Plus' safety lock. The knife is put together with torx screws and can be take apart for cleaning if required.

As alluded to, I own two P108 knives. Do I like them that much? Perhaps, but there is another reason for this. I do appreciate the knife but I lost my original P108. After a week or two I replaced it with a new one because I am a creature of habit and prefer sticking with things that work for me.

Months later, I was in a field with the brush cutter when I noticed something

Hardy service from Ruike P108 folder

metallic in the mud. Much to my surprise, it was my original P108. It was in rather poor shape after being exposed to the mud and elements for months. Yet, it still opened and seemed to be salvageable. Back at home, I gave it a rinse under the tap, pulled it apart, cleaned and polished it and astonishingly, it looked quite presentable.

So much so that I struggle to tell the difference between my new knife and the one left outside. The ball bearing washers were difficult to clean, so I gave them a soak in barrel cleaner and a spray of oil after rubbing them as clean as I could make them. From there, I put the knife back together and started using it. After a few days, it opened and closed like nothing ever happened and I continue to use it almost daily. It looks amazingly good considering what it went through.

My thoughts after regular use are clear. I like the knife for its solid feel and the materials employed. Once broken in, the knife is easy to open and the edge retains its sharpness well and is straightforward to sharpen. As the blade swings open, it securely locks into place with a reaffirming click of the frame lock.

By design, with its sleek and relatively narrow blade the P108 is a versatile tool. That said, there are a few niggles worth mentioning. First and foremost is the deep carry clip that looks fine but has some sharp edges. I never paid much attention to it until I suddenly started seeing excessive wear on the right pockets of my favourite jeans. The clip is sharp enough to shred edges and stitching on pockets in a matter of weeks.

While I was still in the process of thinking I ought to file the edges off, the clip itself just broke, so it was never strong to begin with. I have just put the knife in my pocket since. I have not bothered to remove the clip from my new knife for one reason only, which is that the screw that holds the rear end together needs the clip for support for the torx screw on that side. It is easier to just pocket the knife than to find a small enough washer to replace the clip.



Something, I thought I liked about the knife upon first seeing it was the additional 'Beta Plus' safety. However, I think I have used it about three times in the first week and never since. While it does prevent the frame lock from accidentally being pushed, this is so well shaped that the additional safety feature is surplus to requirements. To me anyway. If you often wear gloves or intend to really work the knife hard, it may be worthwhile to have. Personally, I would prefer not to. What is not on a knife can't break and doesn't need cleaning. Finally, but not specific to the P108 is that knives with flipper-style opening mechanisms are prohibited in some countries, so check before you travel.

The P108 is available through various outlets like knifeshopaustralia.com.au and knifewarehouse.com.au ■

Specifications

Dimensions closed/open:
120mm/208mm

Material handle: 420 stainless, stonewashed

Type of blade steel: Sandvik 14c28n
Hardness: 60 HRC

Style and grind: Plain edge, flat grind at 20 degrees

Blade shape: Straight back, drop point

Blade dimensions: 89mm (length) x 23mm (height) x 2.9mm (weight)

Opening system: Flipper

Lock: Frame-lock and 'Beta Plus' lock

Pocket clip: Yes, tip-up (right)

Right or left-handed: RH

Weight: 120 grams

Price: \$70



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The short, light hunting rifle

David Duffy

A prominent proponent of the short, light hunting rifle was ex-marine, handgunner, Gunsite founder, big game hunter and writer, Jeff Cooper. He popularised the concept of the scout rifle and recommended the ideal unloaded weight should be 6½lb (2.95kg), and no more than 7lb (3.18kg), with sling and forward mounted low-power scope.

The length should be less than 1m (39.37"). To achieve this, the rifle needed a short action and a barrel of about 19". His ideal calibres were .308 with 150-grain bullet or a 7mm-08. For those who could not tolerate the recoil of cartridges such as .308/7-08, he suggested a .243 with a 22"

barrel, as the .243 needs velocity. For large game, he liked the .350 Rem Magnum with 250-grain projectiles which would fit in a short action (weighing 7½lb/3.4kg). His first scout rifles were built on Remington 600s (the predecessor to the Model 7).

A less extreme concept of the short, light rifle is dubbed the 'mountain rifle' where typically a thin-profile 22" barrel is attached to a short action. Famous gun writer Jack O'Connor advocated 22" barrels on rifles he used for sheep hunting, on the basis that most sheep he shot in the mountains were at close range and the velocity loss made no significant difference. The times I've hunted goat/antelope species in the mountains the shots were often long, such

as 350 yards and there was frequently a strong breeze. So my lightweight 'mountain rifle' has a 25" barrel.

A short hunting rifle has advantages in thick bush and high in the hills where there are rocky overhangs, is better moving in and out of a car or a scabbard on a horse or quad, and is quick to manoeuvre. One of the best uses for a short, light rifle is seeking sign of game. If you are in a new area or just want to check out what's on top of a distant point then a short, light rifle is ideal. On the other hand, short barrels can give considerable muzzle blast which can damage your hearing, are often unpleasant to shoot and can cause a flinch to develop. For longer shots, there



The Kimber SuperAmerica is a light, handy 'mountain rifle' and comes in .308 with a 22" barrel. Shown here is David's 6SLR with 23" barrel.

Scouting for goats and pigs in thick bush with a short-action Sako All chambered in .270 Redding.

is considerable velocity loss with a short barrel with some calibres.

The .308 when using 150-grain projectiles does quite well with a short barrel. With its bore to case capacity ratio, medium burning powders such as AR2208 work well in it. The .243 does better with slower powders such as AR2209/AR2213SC with heavy projectiles and so performs impressively with a longer barrel. My preference is a .308 with a 22" barrel and a .243 with a 23" barrel as I think this optimally balances handiness, velocity, noise and muzzle blast. If a rifle has a short action a 23" barrel will still provide a reasonably handy rifle, though not a scout rifle.

There are ways that you can attain an

even shorter rifle without sacrificing optimal barrel length. By using extra-short actions (.223 length) such as the CZ 527, Sako AI and S49 I in conjunction with a cartridge with a larger bore such as 6.5mm Grendel, 6.8mm SPC, 7.62x39 with a 20" to 22" barrel, you can have a short rifle yet still be able to take reasonable size game with well-placed shots provided the distances aren't too far.

The Sako S49 I extra-short action internal magazine is slightly longer than both the CZ 527 and Sako AI, allowing a longer cartridge overall length of up to 2.38" which is perfect for the 6.8 SPC II. I use a 22" barrel to squeeze more velocity out of a cartridge which is marginal on big game, but a 20"

barrel works fine. The S49 I is built strong and as such has a weight penalty. To push the weight of the rifle down to an acceptable carry level, a McMillan graphite stock with Edge Technology in Sako Hunter style has recently been added to my rifle.

Yet another way to achieve a short, light rifle without sacrificing optimal barrel length is to use a tilting-block single-shot such as the Haenel Jaeger 9, Merkel K5 or Blaser K95. Although you have much slower follow-up shots if needed, you have a faster first shot. This is because you can safely carry a round in the chamber and use the de-cocker switch to quickly cock the action whereas with most bolt-action rifles, the safe method of carrying them a reasonable distance is with an empty chamber, necessitating working the bolt to load a round from the magazine.

The problem with many break-open rifles is that they are too light due to their alloy actions. The K95 is available with a steel action at a large premium but the Krieghoff Hubertus comes standard with either steel or alloy actions. Steel actions add about 300-400g in weight and make the rifle a little too heavy. It is easier to add weight to a light rifle than it is to shave weight from a heavy rifle.

I chose a Haenel Jaeger 9 in .308 due to its competitive pricing, I could customise it to suit my specifications without significantly modifying an expensive rifle, and it has an integral dovetail rail allowing me to select scope mounts that could be mounted as low as possible (yet still adequately clear the opening lever). The bare rifle before modifications weighs 2.58kg and after shortening the barrel to 22" and the stock length of pull (LOP) to 14", the rifle is less than 1m in length. A falling-block single-shot is another alternative.

While an ultra-light rifle (say less than 3.18kg with scope) is a joy to carry, the same can't be said about shooting them when they are in a calibre about .308 or bigger. Often the problem isn't so much the jolt on the shoulder or stock hitting the cheek. Rather, it is the way the rifle bucks

The short, light hunting rifle

and squirms under recoil which can result in poor shot placement if shooting technique is not correct/consistent and they are harder to control.

When shooting offhand, a light rifle is harder to keep still, as they float around more. This is especially so if the barrel is light. A thin barrel will heat up much quicker and accuracy falls off after about three rounds. If you miss your first shot and the animal is a long way out and starts to run or with multiple targets such as a mob of pigs, you only have perhaps another two accurate shots.

Jeff Cooper advocated synthetic stocks on his scout rifles because of their low weight, strength and inertness in comparison to wood stocks. Although most synthetic stocks are lighter than wood stocks, it is the more expensive carbon fibre/graphite stocks that really save significant amounts of weight. These can be 340g lighter than a wooden stock. For a bolt-action rifle it is hard to go down to a light weight using wood stocks.

An exception to this is the Kimber 84M action where you can have a bare rifle without scope in an attractive wood stock at less than 2.72kg. The 84M in .308 has a 22" barrel, but I would prefer a marginally heavier profile in that calibre. My 84M has a .243 bore but a slightly heavier barrel profile than standard and slightly longer at 23" and I find it just right at 3.2kg with scope.

Although my preference is not to go much lighter than 2.72kg with scope, others who hike into remote places or climb steep



The short, light (for a medium bore) Ruger in .338 RCM (top) compared to a longer, heavier Winchester Model 70 in .338 Win.

mountains often prefer to have an ultra-light rifle. Several manufacturers are now producing ultra-light rifles to suit these requirements. O'Connor, who hunted all around the world, thought that the ideal weight of a scoped big game hunting rifle was 8lb/3.3kg and he had two customised .270s with 22" barrels on Winchester Model 70 actions at this weight.

If the light rifle is stocked so that the recoil comes back in a straight line and has a decent recoil pad, the problem of flinch is reduced. The 'classic stock' is good for this but my preference goes to the older Sako stocks such as the AI/AII with raised comb and cheekpiece. More European rifles are coming out now with straighter stocks and the new Anschütz 1782 with German stock is particularly good with little drop at heel, yet it has a hogback and Bavarian cheekpiece.

Most of my hunting has been with medium weight rifles tallying perhaps

3.85kg and at the time I never felt disadvantaged by not having shorter, lighter hunting rifles. I also carry a small pack on my back and this varies in weight by several kilograms depending upon what I put in it. I really don't notice much difference with say an extra 1 kg in the pack. With a rifle, although you are lugging it on one shoulder, I doubt if an extra 300g really makes much difference. However, once you carry a short, light rifle you tend to notice those that aren't, especially in the hills. ■



The scout rifle idea by Jeff Cooper was published in the 1984 edition of the Gun Digest annual (supplied photo).



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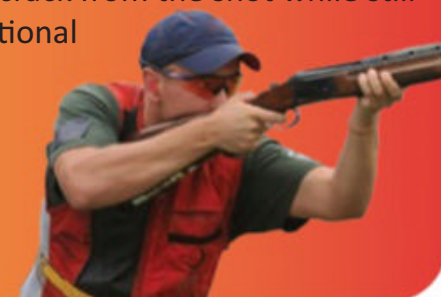


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Deer the pick *for Warrick*

Ben Smith

It had been three long years between hunts for my mate Warrick and me. Last time I had seen him we went to a property I regularly hunt for rabbits, wild dogs, goats and pigs.

This time around Warrick was keen to take his first deer. Eventually we settled on a date far enough ahead that we knew, as active tradesmen, we could make work. That weekend rolled around in no time and the plans were locked in.

After a long uneventful drive and the obligatory fast-food stop for dinner, we met up at the closest town to the farm we were going to be spending the next few days hunting on. It was late by the time we reached our destined valley.

We set up our swags and the rest of the camp gear including a small portable stove. A few rums and lots of conversation was had before alarms were set prior to first light so we could be well into deer country as the sun was coming up.

Although it felt like my head had literally hit the pillow and I had just closed my eyes, the alarm went off. With no time to waste, I was up and out donning my camo clothes. I put all the gear I needed for the day on the tailgate of my LandCruiser.

After a quick coffee and a bite to eat, we loaded up both our backpacks and rifles and headed downhill into the breeze to start

our hunt. We were both using .308 rifles, I had my 'new' secondhand Mauser 2000 built in the 1970s and I had lent Warrick my wife's Steyr Pro Hunter because his .30-06 hadn't been zeroed.

Slowly we made our way down one of the vehicle tracks towards the valley floor where all the blackberry bushes and fresh green grass were located. Both of our senses were on point and Warrick was actually the first to spot a red deer fawn hiding in the grass and blackberry bushes.

At this stage I was messing with my camera, trying for some photos when another 10 or so fallow and red deer started moving around as they knew something wasn't right. I told Warrick to shoot the next deer which propped and presented a safe shot.

On this farm the access comes with one rule from the farmer – all deer to be shot on sight. So with this directive Warrick fired his first and only shot at a fallow doe. She fell behind a bunch of blackberry bushes from a perfect heart shot.

She was by the side of a creek, which made for a good location to take photos of Warrick's first deer. I congratulated him of the perfect shot and the butchering began.

This was more part of an education session for Warrick, showing him where the best cuts for the table were - heart, kidneys,

eye fillets, backstraps and so on. I gutted her and we dragged her into the shade of a nearby tree, covering her with gum tree branches to keep the flies off.

As it was early we decided to explore this property a bit more. We followed the small creek downstream until a cattle track crossed over it and we followed a small trail up into the hills.

After about another 30 minutes of walking, always scanning for more deer, we decided to take a break. We had planned to only do a short circuit around the property and back to Warrick's deer to finish the butchering. But we ended up walking

Warrick with his first deer.





around for a few more hours checking out likely spots for the upcoming rut.

Eventually we walked up the largest hill on the property and did some glassing down into surrounding clearings. We bumped a red hind and her fawn just below the spot we decided to glass from but other than that it was pretty uneventful.

On the way down the hill back towards our camp we came across a large amount of fresh pig sign. The previous time I had visited the property we watched a mob of 25 pigs make their way down to a creek line for an afternoon drink. We had ambushed these pigs and ended up with

eight of them between two of us.

We reached camp and jumped in Warrick's ute to recover his deer. Luckily by the time we arrived the sun hadn't quite hit her but it was close. The butchering process only took about 30 minutes before taking the meat back up to the esky. We put some of the fresh meat on the barbecue for an awesome feed.

That night we sat around the campfire and planned to check out a couple more areas for some extra venison freezer fillers. The next morning we were up before first light and drove back up to the large hill, where we waited for the sun to rise. We

glassed for about 30 minutes until the sun had peaked over the horizon and it was bright enough to see with the naked eye down into the valleys.

We decided to drop down to the lower elevation of pasture and blackberry country to see what was cruising about before heading back into cover for the day. The particular path I had planned was a tree line which leads from the paddocks all the way up to the highest point.

If my hunch was right this would be a highway for deer leaving the paddocks at first light and making their way back to the safety of cover. Losing elevation quickly

Deer the pick for Warrick



Ben with his two fallow deer.



Ben's old but 'new' Mauser 2000.

Warrick on the hunt for some more rabbits.

down a spur, deer sign became more and more frequent.

We reached a scrubby saddle between two hills and decided to separate but to stay within eye sight to cover more ground. No sooner had we whispered our plan and gone our separate ways than Warrick spotted a fallow doe with fawn. They were already onto us because some grey kangaroos had been spooked, taking the deer with them.

Continuing to sidle around one of the hills that overlooked the farmland we bumped a couple more deer with fawns,

this time red deer. They barked at us and galloped off, vanishing as quickly as they were spotted.

Thinking the game was up Warrick and I cut across some open ground without using any cover to start heading back towards our camp about 3km away. There was one more tree line choked with blackberry bushes in between us and our camp. Why not give it one more crack and hope the wind would be in the right direction?

Reaching the first blackberry bushes it became apparent deer had been feeding on the green grass and blackberries, as the

fresh green shoots of the blackberries had all been nipped off. Things were looking up.

The wind was right as we both split up again and started working through the tree line trying to be as silent as possible. Warrick was to my left, covering the lower acreage and tree line while I covered the other half of the tree line and the higher ground.

On this hunt I was carrying my 1970s German manufactured Mauser 2000 in .308. I'd bought this classic rifle from a large Sydney gunshop secondhand for a good price. It was topped with a period Zeiss fixed six-power scope – complete with funky European cross-hairs.

As I moved between a couple of blackberry bushes, I noticed two menil fallow deer grazing no more than 50m away from me. One was a spiker and the other a doe. I picked out the doe, as she was the fatter of the two, and fired. She dropped on the spot. The spiker, instead of prancing away, hopped even closer towards me.

I fired my rifle for the second time, hitting him perfectly. Now the hard work was to begin.

Warrick came over to help drag the deer close together and take some photos. As I butchered the deer, I gave him some of the finer pointers on cuts and ways to avoid fully gutting the animal if you weren't recovering the whole carcass.

After this we decided for the rest of the trip to target rabbits. This farm has a severe rabbit problem, so within a matter of hours hunting over two days we reached the magic 100 mark just prior to leaving the farm. Good times all round, so I hope Warrick can catch up again for a hunt soon. ■

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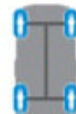
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Bullet selection in gamut of game situations

David Duffy

When determining which particular bullet is best for your hunting circumstances, terminal performance, in-flight characteristics, accuracy and cost are factors worth considering. Unfortunately, few bullets rank highly in all these criteria.

Opinions vary on the importance of each. For example, it is often stated that so long as your rifle can group three shots in 1 1/2", that is all you need to stay in the vital zone of the animal you are hunting. This is probably true for medium to large game at usual distances they are taken at. If you are shooting small game at medium to long distances, a greater degree of accuracy is needed.

I like to check my zero after my rifle has been on a long car trip over rough roads, on a plane or if I haven't used it recently. What gives me confidence is firing a test shot when I reach my destination and seeing a .270 bullet hole 2 3/4" high at 100 yards. If that hole is 3/4" high and to the left of the desired point of impact, I don't know whether the scope needs adjusting or not. Yet this variation is within 1 1/2". So, should a second shot be fired or you just hope that the scope is correct?

On a Javan rusa hunt, the 150gr .270 Win factory ammunition I was handed at the camp required eight rounds before I was reasonably confident the scope was zeroed correctly. The ammunition wasn't tuned to my rifle and groups were roughly three shots in 1 1/2" at 100 yards. As it turned out, the shot was the longest I have had to do on a trophy stag – a 270-yard

Targeting rabbits with a CZ .222 using 50gr Sierra BlitzKings.

cross-gully aim through a small window in the trees after waiting around 20 minutes for him to stand up. The 33" rusa dropped on the spot and I was glad I had zeroed the scope correctly.

If the game is more than 200 yards away from where you are and you can't move any closer without being seen, there may be several errors you make such as not aiming in the exact vital spot, the animal may move or be moving or you may not hold the rifle through the shot correctly. These errors may compound so that you don't hit the vital zone. Minimising any cause of inaccuracy can be worthwhile in such a scenario. So, I have a tendency to favour accurate rifles and load combinations and spend a lot of time developing loads for my rifles.

Bullet manufacturers have improved the in-flight characteristics of new hunting projectiles in recent years. A bullet with a high ballistic coefficient (BC) shoots flatter, has

less wind drift and more retained energy. However, it's not always the case that a higher BC bullet is better. For example, in my .222 where shots are well within 300 yards and often about 200 yards, my accurate loads drive the 50gr BlitzKing at 3310 and the 55g Ballistic Tip at 3160 out of the 25 1/2" barrel.

Although the 55gr has the higher BC, and marginally less wind drift, this is outweighed by the slightly better accuracy in my rifle and slightly flatter trajectory of the 50gr projectile at shorter distances. Yet in my .220 Swift where I am shooting beyond 300 yards often, the difference in velocity for my accurate loads is only 100fps and the 55gr bullet starts to shoot flatter as well as always having less wind drift.

Many of the aerodynamic projectiles are long and will often rob the case of powder capacity. The compact Woodleigh 225gr PPSN in the short-action .338 RCM is the ideal bullet for short to medium range





Projectile	Cartridge	Velocity	Powder	Barrel	100yd	200yd	300yd	Wind-drift 16km/h 300yd
25gr Berger	.17-222	3870	19.9 BM2	25.5	1.2	0.7	-5.2	15.9
25gr V-MAX	.17-222	3870	19.9 BM2	25.5	1.2	1.1	-3	9.7
50gr BlitzKing	.222 Rem	3310	23.7 BM2	25.5	1.5	0.6	-5.8	11.1
55gr Ballistic Tip	.222 Rem	3160	23.0 BM2	25.5	1.5	0.4	-6.5	10.6
90gr Speer	6SLR	3120	43.0 AR2209	23	2	1.4	-4.3	7.1
90gr Tipped GameKing	6SLR	3120	42.0 AR2209	23	2	1.5	-3.7	5.5
130gr GameKing	.270 Win	3020	59.5 AR2213sc	23.6	2.8	2.8	-2.5	6.6
140gr Tipped GameKing	.270 Win	3016	58.0 AR2213sc	23.6	2.8	2.8	-2.2	5.5
225gr TSX	long-throated .338	2950	AR 2209	25	3	2.7	-3.2	7.6
225gr Tipped TSX	long-throated .338	2950	AR 2209	25	3	3	-2.1	5.5

Table comparing in-flight characteristics of projectiles.

where a flatter trajectory is unimportant. High BC hunting projectiles designed for long distances where velocity is reduced are often made softer so they open up. They may be too soft for short to medium ranges at normal velocities.

For the .270 Win I've been a big fan of the 130gr Sierra GameKing with 59.5gr AR2213SC at 3020fps. When I do my part, the GameKings group five shots in 0.7". I've just started to use the Sierra 140gr Tipped GameKing which has a BC of .508 compared to .436 for the 130gr. The TGKs are claimed to have a thicker jacket than the normal GameKings and should be better for shooting through the shoulder as opposed to behind the shoulder through the ribs and into the lungs, which was the shot that renowned outdoorsman Jack O'Connor preferred.

One of the reasons I like the 130gr weight is that AR2213SC powder works so well with that weight. When I tested 150gr

projectiles with that powder I was less than impressed with the resulting velocity. To my surprise using 58gr AR2213SC with the 140 TGK not only gave good accuracy but velocities averaged 3025fps and 3007fps for two 5-shot groups. Furthermore, that accuracy was obtained with the projectiles 0.065" from the lands so that they would fit in the magazine. The forgiving nature of the 140 TGK is probably due to the tangent ogive. Projectiles that have a secant ogive are often fussier with seating depth. So that is my new load in the .270 Win: flatter trajectory, less wind drift and harder hitting.

In my 6SLR (.243 with 30-degree shoulder), I have been pleased with the Sierra 90g Tipped GameKing. Best accuracy was obtained seating .001" from the lands. This required a reduction of 1 grain in the powder charge because of the pressure spike when seating close to the lands. My load is 42 grains AR2209 and this gives the same velocity of 3120fps as the 90gr Speer

with 43gr of AR2209 seated .010 from the lands. The 90gr TKG has a BC of .490 which is excellent for a 90gr hunting bullet. Again, this translates into flatter shooting, less wind drift and more retained energy for the occasional long shot past 300 yards. The 90gr TKG has worked well on goats, pigs and rabbits and I expect would be ideal on long-range wild dogs.

With the .338 Win Mag I have been pleased with the terminal performance of the 225gr TSX with its four petals peeling back and often having 100 per cent weight retention, but have switched to the 225gr Tipped TSX due to its considerably better BC of .514 vs .386. Sometimes large game such as camels and elks are shot at distances past 300 yards.

Despite the longer nose on the TTSX, the most accurate load was exactly the same as with the TSX and the same overall cartridge length, so I didn't have any problems fitting them into the magazine.

Bullet selection in gamut of game situations



Red stag shot with 225gr Woodleigh PPSN from Ruger .338 RCM.

Terminal performance on large game is important and I favour the 225gr PPSN Woodleighs, Barnes TSX and TTSX. This is after using the 250gr Sierra GameKings on bears and caribou. On heavy, dangerous game I've used the 250gr Barnes X on buffaloes and scrub cattle and they worked fine but I would turn to the 300gr Woodleighs if I did another buffalo hunt with a .338.

In the .17-222 I like the 25gr Hornady V-Max as it has a considerably higher BC than either the Berger 25gr or the now discontinued Hornady 25gr HP. Its terminal performance on game has been excellent and recently the first four of a 5-shot group were within 0.2" at 100 yards. Velocity is 3870fps out of the 9-twist Pac-Nor 25½" stainless barrel with 19.9g BM2. I only wish that Hornady or Berger made a streamlined 30gr projectile for long shots.

The cost of premium quality projectiles can be so much that it is prohibitive to practise shooting them. It is difficult to develop or maintain shooting skills without regular practice and especially before an expensive or a once-in-a-lifetime hunt, practice from

the bench, offhand at a target or on feral game is important.

Ideally, if a cheaper projectile has the same point of impact at 100 yards as the premium projectile then this can be a way around the problem. For regular practice, besides using less expensive projectiles, a cartridge that has a long barrel life is preferred to one that burns the throat out at 1200 rounds. Cartridges such as the .22LR, .222, 6.8 SPC and .308 are especially good for barrel life.

The cost of .22LR ammunition is so low that you can just practise with what you use for hunting. I've had great success with the 42gr PowerPoints on foxes and feral cats. With the .222, I practise at the range with the superbly accurate Sierra 52gr HPBTs as I still have some left over from my earlier years of varminting.

In .243 the Speer 90gr Hot-Cors are highly accurate and work great on feral game but cost less than the 90gr TGKs and I keep the premium 90gr Sciroccos for use in my .240 PSP for trophy game such as smaller deer or wild dogs. The Sciroccos



225gr Woodleigh PPSN, Barnes TSX, Barnes TTSX, .338 Win Mag.



Camel shot with 225gr TSX from long-throated Winchester Model 70 in .338 Win Mag.

have a secant ogive and are fussy with seating depth, but they form a nice mushroom and have retained 78 per cent of their weight. The .270 130 GameKings group best in my rifle, perform well on game and are reasonably priced so I can just practise with these.

The premium projectiles in .338 such as the Barnes and Woodleighs are too expensive to do lots of practice with. A .308 using inexpensive 150gr projectiles is a way to accustom yourself to some recoil before a big game hunt and then you can fire the last 10 rounds with the .338 using the premium projectiles.

But remember there are quite a selection of other good projectiles that may work even better in your rifle or have characteristics which you prefer rather than the ones I've been using. ■



CZ 515 TACTICAL

CZ 515 AMERICAN

CZ 515

.22 LR | 10 22 WMR | 10



The new CZ 515 is a bolt action lever release rimfire rifle designed for hunters and target shooters.

The CZ 515 is a lever release rifle meaning it is fitted with an automatic bolt stop in the rear position and an ergonomically designed lever for releasing the bolt.

The CZ 515 rifle is supplied in two models, a stylish Hunter with an American style beechwood stock and a modern Tactical model with pistol grip, adjustable stock and picatinny rail as standard.

Both models will be supplied with a 10 round polymer magazine.



TECHNICAL DATA

MODEL	LENGTH	BARREL LENGTH	WEIGHT	CALIBER	MAGAZINE CAPACITY	SUPPLY TYPE	SIGHTS
CZ 515 TACTICAL	839/920 mm	419 mm (16")	2,8 kg	.22 LR (1:16), .22 WMR (1:16)	10	Detachable magazine	No
CZ 515 AMERICAN	1000 mm	525 mm (21")	2,7 kg	.22 LR (1:16), .22 WMR (1:16)	10	Detachable magazine	No



The friendly crew from TSE. From left: Nick, Veronica, Tony and Chili Pepper, the canine lord and master of all.

Mick Chapman

There is no doubt both sides of governments have created a difficult environment for all but a few Australian firearm manufacturers to survive. By doing so, it means the Australian shooting market is reliant on imported firearms and subsidiary equipment. Firearm manufacturers' imports do compete against each other, producing a reasonably affordable but predictable industry, catering to the needs of most but in doing so display a dearth of imagination.

But there is a niche in the market, created by those among us who prefer, for one reason or another, to deal with someone with the skills to produce individualised

firearms or to merely replace the barrel of a favourite rifle. This sector requires the services of a professional armorer, of which Tony Argent of Total Solutions Engineering (TSE) is a true *métier*.

My first contact with Tony was back in the early Noughties. Remington had not long announced the release of the .338 Remington Ultra Mag (RUM). For some reason I was inspired to own such a behemoth. Though being a left-handed shooter, I was limited in my choice of rifle as no left-handed versions were being produced at the time in the .338 RUM. My only option was to rebarrel an existing rifle.

About this time, I attended a Brisbane

gun show. Tony and his wife Veronica had recently taken over as proprietor of MAB Barrels, now TSE. Tony attended the Brisbane show and fortuitously for me had a special on a .338 rifle barrel blank. This was to be the beginning of a great relationship between Tony and me and for myself with the .338 RUM.

Tony had been working at MAB since 1989 so at the time of taking over as TSE proprietor, was vastly experienced in the idiosyncrasies of barrel and rifle making.

Tony and Veronica make a formidable team and recently added their son Nick, to the crew, as a fully-fledged tradesman. Veronica is generally your first port of call,



Nick laps a barrel for its new owner.

which allows Tony and Nick the time and space in the workshop, attending orders.

Tony's introduction to the shooting and hunting world came, like many of us, when out and about as a youngster. Strapping his .22 rimfire, purchased from the local policeman, onto the crossbar of his push bike and heading bush he chased the ubiquitous rabbits and foxes for a weekend's entertainment.

From rabbits Tony honed his skills, becoming a dedicated deer hunter, enjoying nothing more than a walk in the bush with his trusty old Brno, rebarrelled to .338 Federal, as a companion. Tony is also a committed conservationist who

understands and practises hunting to bolster that cause. He is devoted to the utilisation of game taken and the control of introduced species within Australia.

Veronica, an ex-physical education teacher and quite a sporting competitor, gave up those pursuits to run the all-important office of TSE. Before the advent of children in their lives, Tony and Veronica were heavily involved in the Metallic Silhouette shooting discipline. This helped Tony expound his knowledge of building accurate firearms. He often travelled long distances to compete but with family duties added to growing work responsibilities, recreational activities slowed down.

Over the journey Tony has acquired a remarkable understanding of the rudiments of the rifle. He tested some of his own work to the point of destruction. This first-hand knowledge of constraints and boundaries holds him in good stead, for building target and hunting rifles. Unfortunately, some shooters' and hunters' expectations may be unrealistic, occasionally asking for incongruous work to be carried out on their firearms. It is then Tony uses his experience, to explain: "You can't have an easy-to-carry rifle with the characteristics of benchrest rifle, shooting over 1000 metres." There has to be compromises.

The primary vocation of TSE is barrel

Adding a personal touch

manufacturing but they also design and manufacture muzzle brakes. These are a great asset for shooters, reducing felt recoil by up to 40 per cent. This benefits recoil-shy as well as older or injured shooters, who are having difficulty coping. They can have the ability to shoot heavier calibres or hunt dangerous game with many of the Nitro calibres and big game firearms. This opens up a whole new world of hunting and shooting to many. Unfortunately for shotgunners and pistol aficionados, the volume of rifle barrels and repairs precludes time to work on shotguns and pistols.

It is not unusual for shooters to come to Tony with what they perceive to be a muzzle jump problem when firing their rifle. Unbeknown to them, muzzle jump is a bit of a furphy. With delicacy and poise, Tony explains their muzzle jump is more likely attributed to one of two things - a badly designed stock, or a problem with shooter technique during recoil. He reminds them of Newton's third law of motion, relating to action and reaction.

When a rifle recoils, it does so in the opposite direction to the bullet, with the equivalent force used to project that bullet. So, the rifle, during recoil, comes backwards into the shoulder of the shooter which is what the shooter feels as jump-back. Any uplift of the muzzle may be caused by too much drop on the stock, or the technique of the shooter having difficulty controlling these forces. Once Tony explains this to the customer's satisfaction, the shooter can then work on their technique. Tony can also help reduce felt recoil for them by fitting tailored muzzle brakes.

TSE does not do woodwork or stock-making, generally. Though, having been in the industry for years, they have developed close relationships with a few stock-makers, so these contacts can satisfy the most discerning client. Fitting dangerous game rifles with ornate walnut or lightweight synthetic stocks, Tony will be help direct you to the right people.

Tactical rifles seemingly have become the latest catch cry of the modern shooter.

TSE manufactures many add-ons to make a rifle as unique as the owner desires. From fancy bolt handles to extravagant shrouds and rails, the firm customises metalwork for various types and disciplines of firearms.

This can mean fluting barrels and bolts or manufacturing barrels with integral open sights with sling swivel, from a single piece of steel. And also, barrels with fancy flutes or just straight-line run-of-the-mill barrels, all made to the required specifications of the owner. Talking to Tony soon helps sort out some of the myths and complexities of rifle design and function, helping the owner to design a rifle they will be proud to own.

All barrels are made locally in shop, being drilled on a purpose-built deep hole drill, looking something like a lathe. The barrels are profiled to a shape and length chosen by the owner on a CNC mill, utilised for a multitude of chores including fluting barrels and bolts. If the owner requires, the valley of the flutes can be contrasted against the remainder of the barrel. The barrel is coated with a special high-wear heat resistant paint then the raised portion polished to remove the paint. This leaves the valleys of the flutes painted and in contrast to the polished barrel.

Tony has a flair for building dangerous game rifles and has created many over the years including my own 416 Ruger. This is put on a left-handed Winchester M70 Classic action. From my experiences with this rifle, Tony has done a wonderful job. Though it is used mostly in competitions, I have hunted two animals with it. A scrub bull and water buffalo both fell emphatically with one shot each. Bench shooting the rifle is always a challenge but it does consistently score 1" groups.

Approximately six years ago I commissioned TSE to build me a mountain hunting rifle. It was to be assembled on a Ruger 77 Hawkeye which began its life as a 7mm Rem Mag. I wanted it rebarrelled to .300 Win Mag, the action lightened as much as possible which required drilling and machining excess metal off the action



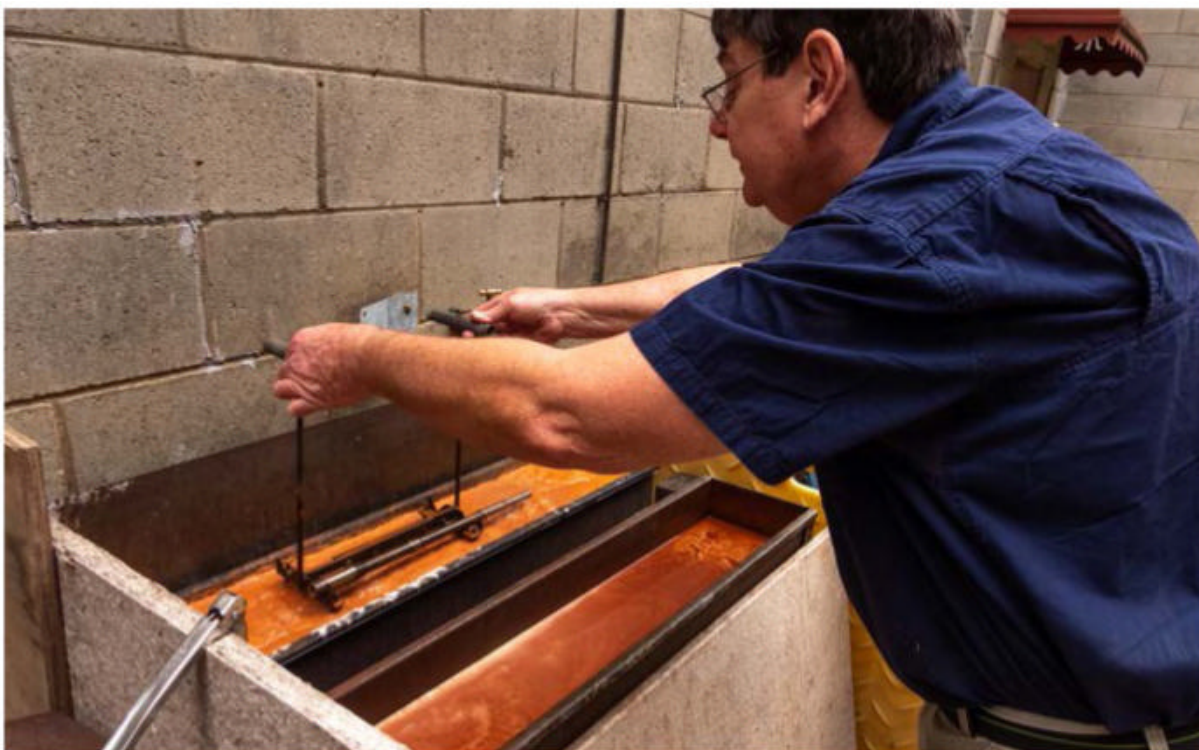
Veronica packs up a client's product to be mailed. This frees Nick and Tony for time in the workshop.

and fitting a 24"-skinny barrel. Then it had to be mounted into lightweight MPI carbon fibre stock.

Finished and fitted with a Leupold VX3i 2-8x36 scope plus three rounds of ammo in the mag, it weighed 2.95kg - about the same the rifle weighed originally minus scope, rings and ammo. It shoots like stink but most importantly it is a breeze to carry. My 'go to' rifle, particularly when hunting the mountains. I have been using this for nearly five years and absolutely love it. When on the odd occasion I need to hand the rifle to someone while crossing an obstacle, it usually yields a comment about its lack of weight.

Some years ago, I had Tony rebarrel a Remington 700 to .240 Weatherby. For whatever reason I couldn't make this rifle shoot. I pulled out every trick I knew, checking bedding, ensuring the barrel had no pressure points. I adjusted my loads but still couldn't force the thing to work. I rang Tony who suggested I bring it down to Brisbane and he would take it to the range to see what was wrong. Which he did. Within a week Tony rang me to say he had replaced the barrel and my rifle was ready to go.

For whatever reason that barrel wasn't a shooter. Once Tony confirmed it was the



Blueing is the tried and tested finish to rifles and required on many firearms.

barrel and not me, he was quick to rectify the matter. Tony stands by what he makes and that is of the highest quality, being all you can ask of any manufacturer. Anybody who constructs items will know occasionally things don't quite go the way we hope. As the consumer, all I ask, is the manufacturer does what Tony did and remedies the matter.

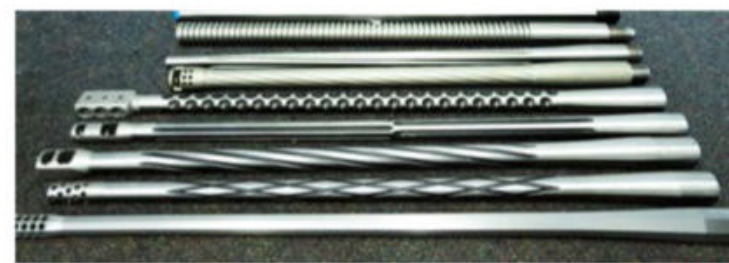
In a sport and industry so reliant on imports it is reassuring to know most items you acquire through TSE are Australian-made, a rare occurrence in this day and age. I have had the firm make at least 10 barrels and build a deer hunting and dangerous game rifle for me, fitted breaks to several rifles and I am yet to be dissatisfied.

If you are in the market for a new barrel

or some custom metalwork, contact Tony. I am sure you will come away satisfied. I also have a tip for forwarding a firearm through the mail for Tony to work on. Remove the stock and be sure you use a stout cardboard box and plenty of packing material. Bubble wrap or similar is suitable but don't over use sticky tape. People have in the past forwarded rifles without protecting them in wrap and the firearm has been damaged with triggerblades or forward sights broken. Each state has a requirement for firearms travelling through the mail system. Make sure you comply and you will have little trouble. I hope you are inspired to use TSE, run by a fellow shooter and a truly Australian-owned business. ■



The body of the action of this Martini rook rifle has been engraved then treated with nitrates to cause the metal to remain as in the raw.



Examples of the variety of fluting requested for custom rifles.



A Ruger 77 Hawkeye which began its life as a 7mm Rem Mag.



A custom rifle TSE are in the process of building. Owners don't just stick with blueing so a multitude of finishes can be applied.

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A dawn roar

Chris Redlich

As the last of the day's light began to fade, along with my hopes, the dense bush gullies that usually yielded a bellowing roar from a lovesick stag, fell eerily silent. Just as I raised myself up from my quiet hunting position, a faint roar could be heard a long way off but nowhere in the vicinity of my hunting property. I made my way back to camp and thought I may have missed the

main roar by a few days. I had my work cut out for me but there was no point in complaining. I was camping in a beautiful part of the Queensland bush on top of a mountain and enjoying the scenery.

As most deer hunters know, the red deer roar generally falls within a three-week period from late March to mid-April but for one week of that window, they roar madly. Many trips on previous occasions fell within

that golden week period but that was down to good luck more than good management. Usually, a sudden change in the weather in the form of a cold snap will bring on a 'spike' in vocal activity by a horny stag but that was the week before I arrived. There was a lot of rain two weeks prior followed by a drop in temperature and from all reports by my hunting mates, they managed to land a great week of mature stag roaring. My work



Chris and Carl enjoying their comfy camp.

schedule isn't all that flexible. I had to be content with my window away in the bush. As it turned out, my week away for my annual red deer hunt was still within the roar period, albeit a bit quieter. The stags' call for love in this area had dropped in intensity but I just had to work a little harder.

What had started off as a few days of solo deer hunting eventually ended up as a shared hunt. Apart from a visit by a

brush-tailed phascogale, the first night by myself around the campfire felt lonely. The phascogale is a small, nocturnal, carnivorous native marsupial that is distinguished by its long nose, grey furry body and large black feather-duster-style tail. It is a beautiful little animal and one that I had never seen before in the wild, or a zoo for that matter. I enjoyed witnessing a native animal in its home courtesy of a hunt in the bush.

If only my son Carl was here to see it as well, I thought. Knowing that my son was at home on school holidays and busting to be amongst it, a plan was hatched to bring him there for the remainder of the hunt.

Camping on top of a mountain meant I had phone service and one phone call later, my wife and I had arranged the next evening to rendezvous at the edge of the forestry. The following day spent hunting on

A dawn roar



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my own didn't result in a harvested animal but I had come close to a couple of roaring stags that afternoon. There was plenty of sign and with every moment spent hunting, I was learning more and more.

The time came to come off the mountain and meet my wife and kids. As soon as we hitched up, my son had a grin as wide as my bull-bar and his excitement was hard to contain. We packed his swag and hunting pack into the HiLux, said our goodbyes to my wife and daughter and headed off into the bush, back to my camp in the mountain. On the way, Carl, a sponge for information, was keen to hear about anything I had seen or heard over the past couple of days. Upon our return to camp and after a cuppa, it was time to hit the swags and grab some sleep. It was going to be an early start and vital that we have some good rest.

The alarm sounded at 4.30am and I have to admit I had some difficulty raising myself. Carl and I had both come down with head colds and the last thing I felt like doing was rising so early. But the sound of a distant 'dawn roar' was too good to resist. With Carl's encouragement, I crawled out of my comfy swag and made ready for the morning's hunt. After a coffee and a teaspoon of cement, we stepped off from camp in the direction of the last roar and descended down the ridge towards the east of the property. I have had success in this area years before but with no more roaring heard at that stage, I thought our morning's hunt had come to an abrupt end.

We sat quietly in a concealed position on the side of a hill with a good view of the slopes below. With deer hunting, it pays to be patient and we were soon rewarded with a loud roar. Carl and I looked at each other with big smiles and the misery of our head colds soon disappeared. The sound of the stag was clear and we knew if we remained quiet, we would soon be on top of him. Some time had passed between the roar at dawn and the one just heard.

Down we ventured into the gully and around the top of another ridge just below the top so as not to be skylined. All the

Sign of a recently used wallow.



Making use of the chainsaw to help clear destruction caused by strong winds.

while, three stags had now commenced another bout of roaring but the one we were chasing was still sounding clear and very close.

We carefully crested the ridge using the long grass and small trees to cover our advances. Carl moved with me at the sound of each roar. The dew on the grass and leaves also helped mask the sound of every step. Hiding behind a tree, we peered intently into the bush at the direction of the stag's roar. He was really close but wasn't giving up his position easily.

All of a sudden, I saw a tail flicker and the distinct red-coloured rump of a deer through the trees at a range of about 100m. I assumed it was a hind as the roar was close but not coming from where the deer

was. The view of the deer disappeared out of sight as they moved more to the west around some rocks just below us. They were unaware of our presence and the stag kept bellowing. We moved closer to the sound behind more trees and pulled up. I raised my trusty Gold Ring binos and trained my eyes on the bush from the direction of the sound of the roar. Carl whispered to me to use my deer caller but I refused his request as we had already made it this close without an aid and it wasn't going to help put us any nearer. Then, just like many occasions before, the stag seemed to materialise out of the bush and into view. It made me appreciate how well these imported animals blend in to the Australian bush.

A dawn roar



A brush-tailed phascogale hanging around for a visit by the camp.

The stag wasn't a trophy by description but he was an old fella with large coronets and bases. With his spear-like single main beam antlers and possibly a trophy stag killer, he was definitely the dominant male in the area. I needed some venison and although he was an old stag in the middle of the rut, I wasn't about to let potentially 50kg of meat walk away. I am not fussy about my venison so I decided to harvest him.

I raised the Tikka at about 60m and using the tree as a rest, fired at the animal's shoulder. The stag was well hit and succumbed to instant heart failure by a Barnes 168-grain to the shoulder.

Unbeknown to me, a hind was with the old stag and broke cover after the stag was hit. Carl gave me a reference for the hind and I re-aimed. At 100m and shooting offhand, I fired at the hind before it had a chance to take off. A resounding 'thud' was heard and we made our way over to the fallen hind in the long grass.

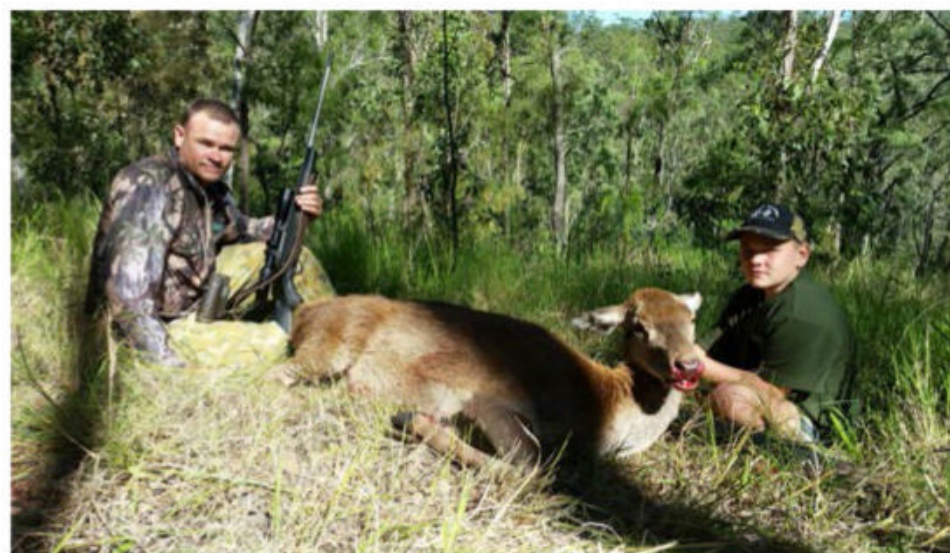
Two shots from my new Tikka T3 Super Lite in .300WSM and two confirmed kills. To say I was rapt would be an understatement as both the stag and hind had been killed instantly by a single Barnes 168-tipped TSX projectile through the vitals. Upon inspection, the projectiles had passed through both shoulders including lots of bone cleanly, leaving distinct massive wound channels. Unlike previous kills using Nosler AccuBonds, the



Carl loaded up and ready for the climb.



The .300WSM cartridge pointing to the blood trail of the hind.



A bonus hind and more venison.

Barnes bullets weren't recovered. With both deer at our feet, the proof of the bullets' performance lay before us.

We were a long way from camp with an all uphill stomp ahead of us. The Dewey knife copped a work-out and about an hour later, we had the packs loaded and ready for the hump back to camp. Carl originally wanted to carry the head out but just like a couple of years ago on another hunt, he decided it was a bit heavy so he lugged the front legs and shoulders from the hind instead.

It's funny how the excitement of a stalk can mask the symptoms of a head cold but as our lungs were burning during the hard climb back up the hill, it reminded us of our sickness. The four-wheel drive track

appeared on top of the hill and we left the heavy components of our hunt there to be picked up later. Finally, we reached camp and not a moment too soon. After a drink and a breather, we set off in the ute to retrieve our gear left on the track.

The next hour or so back in camp was used to break down the venison and pack away in the Trailblaza fridge. The middle of the day was spent catching up on some much-needed sleep.

That afternoon, we travelled through the property in the HiLux and cleared the tracks of fallen trees with a chainsaw. The chainsaw always comes with me when I go hunting to this place as you never know when a tree will be laying across the track blocking your path.

The next day we reluctantly packed up and headed home. My son and I had enjoyed another wonderful hunting experience together. He has another hunt under his belt and it was evident he is maturing as a young hunter more and more with every season. I am glad to be a part of his learning and passing on ethical hunting practices.

Upon our return home, we set about processing and packaging the venison for the freezer and boiled the antlers of the stag for a shield mount or hat rack. Our pet dog Buck enjoyed the bones and offcuts. After all our efforts and hard work was completed, nothing harvested went to waste. We both look forward to what the next season brings. ■

Call the shots

with a Deluxe Universal Game Caller

Don Caswell

AJ Productions is a New Zealand company that sells optics, trail-security cameras, hunting videos and game callers. The firm is seeking to expand into the Australian market. With this in mind, *Australian Hunter* was given the opportunity to review the AJ Productions Deluxe Universal Game Caller and Remote Controller.

AJ Productions have a range of sound cards available for this device. Each card has five separate calls on it. The array of cards is being expanded and includes red, rusa, sika, fallow, whitetail deer, wild dog, fox, goat, pig, mallard and paradise duck, plus Canadian goose.

The calls featured on the AJ Productions cards are either recordings of real animals or imitation sounds produced by world-class operators for the company.

The speaker unit has slots for two separate cards. Supplied with the speaker and remote control were a selection of cards covering rusa, fallow, wild dog and fox. The rural area where I live has plenty of troublesome wild dogs and several times each week I hunt them for farmers suffering stock losses. Even better, the wild dog breeding season was about to kick off, creating a perfect opportunity for calling.

The speaker is quite compact and easy to carry. It can be used alone as a handheld device. A few of my hunting buddies reported the unit is gaining a good reputation among deer hunters for its effectiveness.

I was pleased it comes with a remote control for the speaker. That requires a line of sight and is effective out to about 100 metres. For wild dog calling that is particularly useful in that the animal's wonderful detection abilities are drawn away from the hunter's location and directed towards the speaker.

As mentioned already, each card has five

separate calls on it. The wild dog card had: (1) the lone dog location howl; (2) a pair of dogs making location howls; (3) a pair of dogs calling excitedly; (4) and (5) small animal distress calls.

The information that came in the packing of the wild dog sound card also had suggestions for making the most of each call.

I tried all these in the field on a number of hunts and found the calls to be authentic sounding and easy to use. The speaker requires 4xAA batteries to operate and the company recommends good quality alkaline or lithium batteries. The controls are straightforward.

On the left side is a toggle switch allowing the user to choose sound card A or B. On the right side is another switch with three positions: OFF, ON (handheld) and ON (remote operation). Just above that are two sockets - one for 6-12V DC input and the other an audio output 3.5mm jack. The keyboard on the unit features eight buttons; one for each of the five soundtracks on each sound card, volume up, volume down and a STOP/PAUSE button.

Similarly, the remote control fits easily in the palm of the hand. It has a small extendable antenna that is useful for those occasions when you have placed the speaker some distance from you. It is powered by 3xAAA batteries. The control panel replicates the same eight functions found on the speaker keypad.

There are 15 volume control levels and the unit is said to produce 120+dB at maximum. I could not measure that but it was certainly ear-piercingly loud when squawking at maximum volume while sitting in my hand. Most times I would not run the unit that loud anyway.

As you would expect, there was a bit of sound distortion at maximum output, but

An easy-to-use unit made for Australian and New Zealand hunting.



that would only be obvious at close range. The only other thing to be aware of is that the unit is not waterproof so, if using it in rainy conditions, I would place it inside a lightweight plastic bag, such as a freezer bag. I always carry a few such bags on me for protecting camera gear and the like in the event of rain and for carrying any meat I might harvest.

I found the Deluxe Universal Game Caller a useful piece of kit. At a retail value of about \$225 it is reasonably priced. What I particularly liked is that it features good, locally produced game calls specifically for Australia and New Zealand, rather than the usual coyote calls on imported units. The distributor of the game caller in Australia is C&A Outdoors, based out of Morwell in Victoria. Visit caoutdoors.com.au ■



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Fällkniven F1 and sheaths.

Fällkniven F1 a Swedish success

Jan Kaptein

Among survival enthusiasts, Fällkniven (Fallkniven for ease of writing) knives have a substantial base of loyal followers. The Swedish military employs various models and the United States is among the other countries that have approved specific items for use by their armed forces.

Hence my surprise at the apparently low level of awareness of these knives among hunters. Part of it may have to do with marketing, or perhaps the Fallkniven options become lost between the vast number of Chinese and American brands that are available.

Regardless, I own a few and have been quite pleased with them. I have a big knife I sometimes take along on pig hunts and a small utility blade I use on camping trips and when travelling, but the one I opt for most is my Fallkniven F1. This is a semi-compact fixed blade knife that lends itself for a multitude of purposes. It can peel an apple, skin an animal and in a pinch, you can baton some small pieces of wood with it for a fire. Fällkniven AB, the company behind the

knives, is located in Norrbotten in the north of Sweden. The firm was founded in 1984 and has been producing their own knives since 1987. Their philosophy is to focus on high-quality, reliable products. This is reflected by the fact that most, if not all, of their knives are in the middle to higher end price bracket.

While the emphasis on reliable products sounds good, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and from personal experience, I would agree with the claim that Fallkniven knives are reliable. I have used and abused my F1 a fair bit and I have brutally exploited my A1 Pro when I landed myself in an unforeseen pickle. My small knife mostly sees light use, but looks like it will last me a long time too. The only thing that has gone wrong with my F1 is that the little tube in the lanyard hole came loose. That was a quick fix though, so no worries. The F1, which is the official survival knife of the Swedish Air Force, has for some time been my go-to knife. It is compact and light enough to carry on long treks and just large enough to do almost everything

a hunter out bush needs to have done. The F1 comes with the option for three different types of blade steel. Mine is laminated VG10 steel. The other options are laminated 3G steel and laminated cobalt-special steel.

The VG10 steel, which is high alloy molybdenum/cobalt, is sandwiched between 420J2 stainless steel which is low carbon, high chromium stainless. The advantage of laminating is that it adds strength to the blade. In addition to this, the exposed area of the blade, except the edge, benefits from the high oxidation resistance of the 420J2 steel making the entire blade pretty much impervious to rust.

The blade's VG10 edge is convex, has a hardness of 59 HRC, is 97mm long and 4.5mm wide. The entire knife measures 210mm. Blades are either satin finished or coated in black. The F1 is a full tang knife with a decent pommel at the rear for cracking nuts or in case of emergency breaking a (car) window. The grip is rubberised, while Fallkniven refers to the material as thermorun. Sheaths are either zytel or leather.

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Fällkniven F1 a Swedish success

Left-handed sheaths are only listed as available in zytel.

With the technical details out of the way, let's see how the Fällkniven F1 handles in real life. This will, of course, depend on the person and intended use, but for me, as a camping and hunting knife, the F1 has proved an adaptable companion in many situations. I use the knife to skin and bone out animals and to do general cutting in the bush and around camp. When more serious cutting during a meal is required, I also use it as a table knife. I was a little concerned about the handle material, but after a few years of fairly intensive use, it turns out to be just fine.

Neither intensive use nor corrosives such as sweat and blood seem to have done much damage. That said, I do take good care of my knife and make sure I clean it and keep it dry when stored. The knife has some minor signs of use, but nothing that detracts from its functionality.

Depending on your use and maintenance routine, the knife is easy to keep sharp. The convex edge may seem complicated to sharpen to some, but in practice, convex edges are not as challenging to work on as many people think. Unlike straight edges they are more forgiving when sharpening on a stone. Straight grinds are sensitive to being sharpened at the right and consistent angle if optimal sharpness is to be obtained. This is something that can be hard to do when sharpening without a guide.

A manually sharpened knife may appear sharp, but it is quite possible that it could

have been much sharper given a more consistent angle. Convex grinds on the other hand are rounded by default. This makes them more tolerant to changes in the angle during sharpening. In fact, they need to be sharpened at varying angles. Sharpening techniques are beyond the scope of this review, but as a quick pointer, blackening the edge with a felt tip marker, starting on the flat edge of the knife and slowly increasing the angle every few strokes until the desired angle of the edge is reached works well. The remaining black ink will tell you whether you have missed an angle or not. As long as you go slow and on a fine stone, removing too much material is unlikely.

To conclude, what I like about the Fällkniven F1 is the laminated blade. I'm also a fan of convex edges. Its corrosion resistance is a big plus too. It is slightly smaller in size than many of my other knives, but that makes it a jack of all trades in my collection. If I have to be honest, I like the thermorun grip. In line with the remainder of the knife, it is fairly compact and provides the user with a solid grip. However, I still prefer wooden or metal grips as they will pretty much last forever if properly looked after.

So let's also call the handle material something I dislike. Other than that I really only quibble about the standard sheaths. The leather version is closed with a push button, which makes noise when you open and close it. It oxidises over time due to the material used and the knife rides deep in the sheath, making it hard to quickly reach.

The zytel sheath is possibly even worse.

Yes, it will last a long time, but the knife rattles around in it and it is fastened with a nylon strap that has a push button. Both sheaths have belt straps, rather than clips that let you remove the knife from your belt or attach it to a bag, webbing straps or other gear. To resolve this, I have had a local leather worker put together a sheath.

It's not the solution of my dreams, but it carries better and allows easy and noiseless access to my knife. All in all, I feel the Fällkniven F1 lives up to the makers' claim of being a 'high quality and reliable product' and I have no qualms recommending it to anyone looking for a versatile compact blade. The knife is great and depending on your preferences the sheath may not bother you.

Distributed locally by **knifeshopaustralia.com.au**

Specifications

- Style:** Fixed blade
- Overall length:** 210mm
- Blade dimensions (l x w):** 97mm x 4.5mm
- Blade shape:** Drop point
- Type of blade steel:** Laminated VG10/420J2
- Hardness:** 59 HRC
- Edge:** Convex grind
- Material handle:** Thermorun
- Weight:** 153 grams
- Right or left-handed:** Right-handed
- Price with zytel sheath:** Approx. \$250



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A man in a green shirt and cap stands behind a large eland bull carcass in a savanna setting. The bull is lying on its side, and the man is standing behind its head. The background shows dry trees and a clear blue sky.

Botswana excursion

delivers the goods

Robert Krix

The hunters walked 19.6km in flat, dry and dusty terrain for this eland bull.

This hunt was with Nkwe Safaris in Botswana for six days out of Ghanzi, about a 280km drive south-west of Maun.

The focus was any Cape eland bull, with burchell's zebras, blue wildebeests, grey duikers, steenboks and jackals also part of my package. I had hunted in Namibia four years earlier, also with elands on my list, but the opportunity to hunt this, the largest bodied of the African antelopes, did not eventuate.

Nkwe's owner Jaco Visser, who has more than 20 years experience as a professional hunter with all manner of plains and dangerous game, runs the operation. Jaco absolutely knows his stuff. The hunting camp provides tented- and chalet-style accommodation. I stayed in one of the tents which have an outside shower and toilet, a couple

of comfortable beds and are bug proof - really all you need for your time in camp.

There is a large, well set-out dining area with seating for 10, containing a bar - with drinks of beer, imported wines and spirits/ mixers available. As for the food, I scored that a definite 10/10. It was prepared and served by the camp cook in the guise of Zimbabwe chef Godfrey, who also knows his stuff.

Nkwe has access to several properties, with game plentiful on all that I covered. The first three days of the hunt were conducted on a 'mere' 40,000-acre block, that's an area of about 160 square kilometres. This zone carries about 1000 elands, roughly 40 per cent of which are bulls. There are roughly 600 zebras and who knows how many wildebeest? There are

also kudus, gemsboks, blue and black wildebeests, springboks, waterbucks, giraffes, impalas, red hartebeests, ostriches and warthogs. A bird shoot for sand grouse, that are plentiful, is also available.

I hunted for grey duikers and steenboks on an adjoining area, also covering 40,000 acres. The game is all free-range, within the confines of the various blocks. Well-worn boots are needed as there is a lot of walking. Morning temperatures are about 5C with day highs of 25C. That is hot enough and puts the game down for a snooze by noon, when you head back to camp for the second seriously good feed for the day. There's also the option to stay out all day with lunch in the bush. This depends on what game you are hunting.

Day one

As stated, my focus was on elands, so that's what we hunted. It was a short story - there were plenty of zebras and wildebeests to contend with, plus many elands that easily 'bust' you in the bush, which is flat, dry, sandy and rocky. We walked about 10km for the day. No luck on the opening stint.

Day two

Usual start. We drove into the bush and began walking with Jaco leading the way, me following, then came Ampie, Jaco's 21-year-old apprentice PH and Tex, aka Mr Magic, the Botswana bushman tracker. There was also a driver Danko, who is on standby for a call to come and collect you with the LandCruiser when required.

After the morning hunt went unrewarded, about an hour later we found zebras and elands mixed together. Elands seem to run ahead of zebras and there will often be wildebeests among them too, so there are plenty of animals that can give you away.

Jaco spotted a couple of bulls among other elands and a bunch of zebras. It's amazing that a 700-800kg animal can be hard to gain a bead on with a clear shot, but luckily the larger of the two bulls stepped into the clearing, presenting a quick shot opportunity from about 80m. As I was ready on the sticks - a boom and the eland ran off rapidly. I made a good shot and the bull was downed. Dead due to a lung shot. These are huge animals. An estimated weight of 800kg was the reckoning for this one. I called it the 19.6km bull, because that's how far we walked that day as per the tracking device on Jaco's phone.

Soon after, seven bushmen arrived in a Toyota tray-back to gut the eland and load it onto the truck by hand with no winch. Off they went to the skinning shed.

I should mention that Jaco provides camp rifles for clients including a .270, 30-06, the 7mm Rem Mag that I used, or a .375 H&H. You only pay for ammo that you use. Alternatively, you can bring your own rifle and ammo, but it will cost you about \$250 to import the rifle. Why bother?



This wildebeest was taken on an easy hunt, just 30 minutes after leaving the truck.

Day three

Had an easy day's start due to the 19km walk yesterday and as I was still jet-lagged from my flight. No hunting luck today.

Day four

This was the day for the blue wildebeest hunt, with the usual start. It was all over in about an hour, as we heard a bull 'sounding' (call it a grunt). So we approached cautiously as the bush is dry, but the breeze was in our favour. As we headed towards the wildebeest bull, two mature eland bulls, followed by about another dozen elands, walked right in front of us. They were perhaps 40m off and just stood there for a minute or so. They were merely looking so maybe it was the first time they had seen humans. They moved off and we headed towards the wildebeests.

Five minutes later Jaco spotted the 'beest' standing straight on. It was up with the sticks and boom - the shot hit just above the brisket. It was a good wildebeest bull I was told, also known as the 'poor man's' Cape buffalo. The 7mm Rem Mag had done the job again. With correct shot placement it is an adequate calibre for any such plains game animals.

Days five and six

These were spent hunting for the elusive and lightning-fast duikers and steenboks. I did manage to miss a shot on two duikers (we all miss) before connecting with a third

which Jaco reckoned could be Safari Club International (SCI) Gold Medal class with horns of 5". Anything in the 4" range is a good representative of the species.

These animals bolt at the slightest sound of an approaching vehicle, as we hunted from the back of the Toyota tray (you need the elevation to spot them). If you are really lucky, they might stop for say five seconds, look towards you and then bolt again. You must be super quick to take a shot at what is a relatively small antelope. Although you can hunt them in some quite open areas, there is plenty of bush for them to hide in.

Grey duikers and steenboks are two of the 10 antelopes that go by the tag of the 'tiny 10'. Although we saw a few steenboks, I didn't have a chance at a shot. That's the way it goes. I also had a jackal available as part of the hunt, but we only spotted one that was on the trot, so there was no chance there either.

Overall, I had a great hunt and bagged the main point of my trek - the eland. Jaco estimated it was around 12-years-old and its best days were behind him.

Should anyone be interested in hunting with Nkwe Safaris, please feel free to contact me by email: wotnxt@hotmail.com and I can answer any questions and provide a trophy list plus hunting and travel-related information. The best times to hunt are April to August. ■



Quick EV entry and exit
is ideal for hunters.

Polaris on point with Ranger EV

Thomas Cook

The Ranger model revolutionised ATVs more than 20 years ago with the side-by-side. Its 6x6 build allowed it to be classified as an offroad vehicle with a greater payload while maintaining its premium ride.

Developments throughout the past two decades have included increased power and improved suspension. Hit the 2020s and the Polaris Ranger Electric Vehicle (EV) wraps that all up in an ATV running on ultra-quiet battery power. The 48-volt AC-induction motor delivers efficiency and zero emissions while still offering a payload capacity of 454kg.

The 227kg capacity dump box is

super-handly for offloading game and other things like wood for the campfire. The 680kg towing capacity further enhances your options. On demand true all-wheel-drive capabilities includes the Versatrac Turf Mode option. This allows tighter turning, helps prevent bogging and provides minimal disturbance to the landscape driven on. The Ranger EV covers just about any terrain and drives through water and comes with ROPS (rollover protective structure) as standard. Further to the Ranger EV's hunting repertoire is the right combination of seat height and foot clearance to allow quick and easy movement in and out of the vehicle.

You obtain a maximum of 98km of travel

from a fully-charged motor but of course, tyre pressure, alignment, terrain, loading, towing and driving style all impact battery life. It takes eight hours to fully recharge the Ranger EV so it's a good idea to leave it on charge overnight, much like you do with your phone. The electrical aspect also means care and maintenance is straightforward. The handy manual provided is more than 100 pages (all in English) that covers this and just about everything else, including towing



It is recommended that anyone using an ATV undertake a training course, along with wearing protective gear like a helmet, eyewear and appropriate clothing. As with any vehicle, be cautious of excessive slippery or loose surfaces, particularly when heading uphill. Remember to always wear your seatbelt.



The EV base model offers colour variations.

Specifications

Engine and drivetrain

Motor type: Single 48-volt, high-efficiency, AC-induction motor

Drive system: True on-demand AWD/2WD/Turf Mode

Horsepower: 30hp

Suspension: Front suspension MacPherson strut with 22.9cm travel

Rear suspension: Dual A-arm, IRS with 22.9cm travel

Front tyres: 25 x 9-12 Carlisle

Rear tyres: 25 x 9-12 Carlisle

Wheels: Stamped steel

Dimensions

Dump box capacity: 227kg

Towing capacity: 680kg

Fuel capacity: Traditional lead-acid

Ground clearance: 25.4cm

Vehicle size: 279(L)x147(W)x185(H) cm

Payload capacity: 454kg

Passenger capacity: 2

Wheelbase: 182.9cm

Dry weight: 783kg

speeds and winch (added extra) instructions.

The Ranger EV boasts a maximum speed of 40kph and comes with digital panel displays, a glove box, dual cup (ammo) holders and 50-watt headlights. The 'hour meter' that records and shows the hours of actual movement since manufacture is another welcome feature.

The base model RRP is \$20,995 but Polaris are always offering great deals so keep an eye out for them. Also bonuses like the mentioned winch and enclosed cabin are available. Two helmets come free of charge with every Polaris vehicle.

For more information, please visit polarisaustralia.com ■



Customise your EV with optional extras for enhanced hunting.

Just another hundred...

Ben Unten

A doe taken on foot during the day.

What was to be become the catchcry of the trip, “Just another hundred,” he said. I was deer stalking with a mate, Jamie. I’d only been to this particular property once before and was still working out the lay of the land and where the good spots for deer were. The plan was for us to drive along the main valley and park approximately 1 km away from a likely-looking gully where I’d seen deer previously.

We carefully nosed Jamie’s brand new ute up the track. It had 47km on the clock when he swung by my place to pick me up. Jamie wanted to stop, but I insisted we continue as I scanned the surroundings looking for a familiar landmark. The first definitive marker I came across was the exact gully we had hoped to stalk, scaring off at least four deer in the process. Plan A ruined. Jamie one, Ben zero.

So we went to plan B, (really just plan A before the ruining took place), which was

to back the vehicle up and walk the rest of the valley. We donned packs and verified that each other’s rifles were safe before setting off. No matter how many times I do it, the feeling of walking slowly and quietly through the bush with all senses on high alert is something I cherish.

Plenty of tension, but no stress. The wind was not in our favour, blowing largely from behind us, another symptom of me still trying to know the local area. But the plus was it was pretty much blowing straight at our backs. I figured our most likely way to spot deer would be to scan the hills and valleys on each flank, hoping that the breeze might direct our scent straight down the valley.

We had walked about one kilometre when we heard the distinctive grunt of an unseen fallow buck. We dropped to our haunches, straining to catch a glimpse. Minutes ticked by, until finally it grunted once more before moving away from our position. The trip had already been a success as far as I was concerned.

We continued further down the valley, not really expecting to see deer, but enjoying ourselves nonetheless when I stopped



Jamie’s pride and joy.

and turned to Jamie and whispered: "I think we're probably done. We're losing the light, do you want to turn back?" He considered it for a moment and said: "Just another hundred metres." I agreed and we resumed the stalk which I was certain was a waste of time. But as we arrived at metre 99, I spotted a fallow doe about 150m away to our left, up a narrow gully.

I was keen for Jamie to have a crack at it and attempted to silently convey the message. This was immediately followed by the realisation that as Jamie hadn't hunted much with me, he had absolutely no idea what my sign language meant. What followed would have looked hilarious to a bystander as I spent several increasingly frustrating minutes attempting to convey via pantomime movements him picking up his rifle and having a shot.

Eventually I managed to understand that he had no shot available, so I readied my shooting sticks and started to slow my breathing. The doe was completely unaware so I was able to take my time and wait until she turned broadside. When that happened, I squeezed the trigger on the Tikka 30-06. When I regained the sight picture, I could see the doe on the ground. Jamie's 'magic hundred' had been right on the money, Jamie two, Ben zero.

We made our way up and I observed that the shot had been on Point of Aim and had taken out the left shoulder. She never took so much as a step. We set up for the obligatory modelling session and with that completed, I removed the innards. I propped open the chest cavity with a stick to aid cooling as meat starts to spoil from the moment the heart stops beating. Before we walked back to retrieve the ute and my full butchering kit, I laser range-tested the distance at 168m. I carry a skeleton kit in my backpack which does the job, but whenever available, the full kit is preferable.

After retrieving the ute and taking all usable cuts of meat, we set up for a spotlighting session. NSW deer hunting regulations allow deer to be legally taken under spotlight on private land (with



Two meat animals taken at night.

the permission of the property owner, of course). We started crawling along in the ute, swinging the light. Several sets of reflective eyes were confirmed as deer during the course of the evening and these were duly despatched and field-dressed.

The spotlighting was frequently interrupted as with each little scratch and scrape on the new ute as we drove along, Jamie abruptly stopped the vehicle and checked out the damage. To be fair, I've never owned a vehicle that new. But I had offered to take my ute instead, yet he had insisted that this was what he had bought it for and he'd already drilled a hole in his roof to accommodate the spotlight.

Finally the action quietened down and it was late and I was hungry, so I said to Jamie: "What do you reckon we head back for a feed?" He replied, tongue in cheek I suspect: "Yeah righto, just another hundred?" I grinned but agreed.

Sure enough we poked the nose of the ute over the edge of a steep gully and spotted a mob of a dozen fallow feeding on a grassy outcrop on the far side, approximately 130m away and well below our current elevation. It was my turn for a shot, so I quietly asked Jamie to turn off the ute as I settled in behind the Tikka. The animal was quartering towards me, so allowing for the

round to strike slightly high due to the steep downward angle, I adjusted my Point of Aim accordingly and squeezed the trigger.

Reacquiring the sight picture, I saw the deer was down and lying still. I was searching the frantic mob hoping another target would present itself, when I spotted a doe who had stopped to look back. I quickly set the cross-hairs behind the last rib, aimed a little lower and again squeezed the trigger. Another deer fell and lay still. The gully was far too steep for a vehicle to gain entry from our current location, so we drove up and around the top and back down the far side. Another modelling session took place, after which the venison was harvested and packed into eskies and Engels which by now were full to the gunwales.

We eventually made it back to the cabin for refreshment and some grub. It had been a great trip any way you looked at it. I was happy to have helped the farmer reduce some of the competition for his feed and thrilled to have all that delicious venison to take home.

Once again, Jamie's "just another hundred" had been the right call. However, I couldn't help but think how much more the deer we took on foot meant to me as opposed to the ones we claimed under the light. ■



Venison

Italian style

Paul Barker

Addition of the tasty cheese, cream and wine sauce completes this great dish.

Being fortunate enough to have a fairly constant year-long supply of venison, my wife Julie and I are always on the lookout for new recipes and ideas to prepare tasty meals with this great meat. If you have dinner guests over for any meal comprising venison be mindful of the 'Bambi effect' so a little time explaining the benefits of venison should save any embarrassment later in the evening.

We have for years been keen on Italian cuisine, regularly visiting a couple of favourite family-run restaurants in our area.

Apart from the various pasta and pizza alternatives, our stand-out choice would have to be veal saltimbocca. Like other Italian offerings there are many variations of saltimbocca, which translates to 'jump in the mouth' and having sampled a couple of versions it's not difficult to understand how it came to have this descriptive title.

As the name suggests, veal forms the basis of this dish. Thin slices are topped with prosciutto and a fresh sage leaf, with

tooth picks utilised to secure the three layers to avoid them from separating as they are cooked. Virgin olive oil is heated in a pan and the veal is placed into the pan with the prosciutto and sage side faced down. A knob of butter is also added, the veal is turned over and the oil and butter mix is used to baste the veal as it finishes cooking.

The above preparation is essentially the

basic saltimbocca and the starting point for the modifications. A fourth layer can be added comprising of a good quality melting cheese. This is placed on the sage and prosciutto as the reverse side of the veal is cooking and basted with the pan juices, which begins to melt the cheese.

The option that we have come to relish adds a couple more simple stages to



The main ingredients required to prepare venison saltimbocca.

complete this treat. In terms of substituting venison for the veal, a young deer is ideal say about 12 or so months of age. The cuts we prefer are thin layers of backstrap or round.

Ingredients

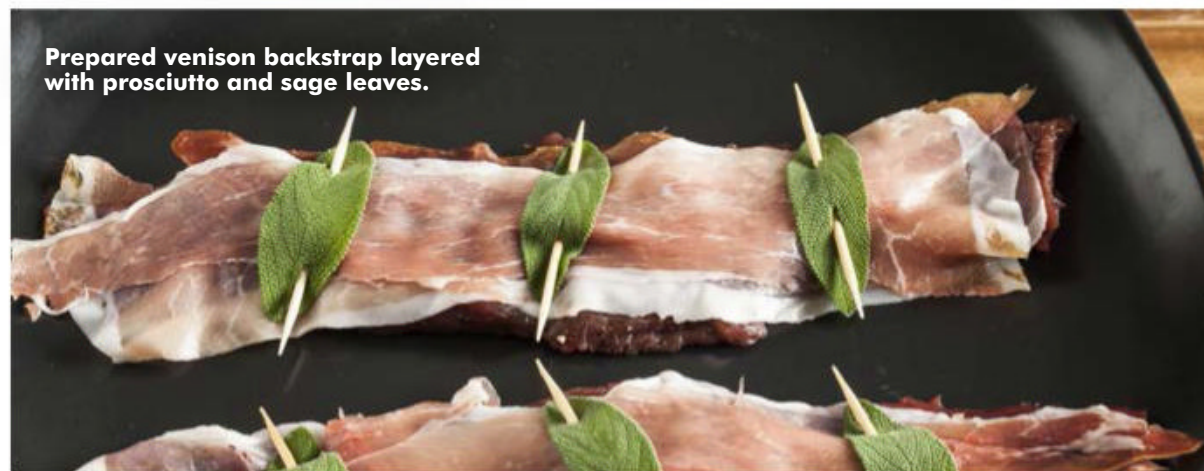
- Sufficient venison for the number of people dining
- Sufficient slices of prosciutto to cover the venison. Ham off-the-bone sliced thinly is a tasty substitute for prosciutto if it's not available
- Fresh sage leaves. Ground and dried sage can be used if fresh is not available
- Two choices of good melting cheese. Swiss-style and good old Original Kraft Cheddar slices are hard to beat here and a good combination, though other flavours should work fine
- Butter
- Virgin olive oil
- Dry white wine - Semillon is a good choice
- Fresh cream
- Fresh ground salt and black pepper

Method.

Carefully prepare the venison; the slices need to be about 5 to 6mm thick. To stop the meat from curling during cooking, trim off any tissue around the edges. A meat mallet can be used to thin out any thicker areas. It's important to have the meat a uniform thickness to check any unevenness in the doneness of the finished cut.

Lay out the slices of venison on a flat surface and add the prosciutto slices to each of the portions, with finally a sage leaf. Secure the three layers with tooth picks. Pinching them up to form a hump makes easy work of placing the tooth picks in position, trapping all three layers.

Heat a pan large enough to accommodate the venison slices to a medium-high heat. Add sufficient olive oil to just cover the pan surface. Allow this to come up to temperature and add the venison slices sage side down along with a reasonable amount of chilled butter.



Given the venison is cut thinly, cooking time is critical, probably two minutes on the first side should be adequate prior to turning the slices and even less on the second side. Working quickly as the second side cooks, add a layer of a blend of the two melting cheeses to each slice of venison and baste with the pan juices to start melting the cheese topping.

At this point there are a couple of preferences that are pretty much up to individual tastes. The meat can be placed under a medium-hot griller to toast off and slightly brown the cheese topping before removing the meat to a warm place to rest. If this method is chosen, the venison cooking time is really critical to prevent over-cooking. The second and simpler method is to remove the venison to a warm place to rest once it has been cooked.

The last part is to make the cream cheesy wine sauce, so while the venison is resting deglaze the pan with a good amount of the dry white wine and reduce slightly. During this process add small pieces of the cheese combination and work them into the wine and pan juices, adjusting the pan temperature as required to melt the cheese

into the wine. Finally, add in sufficient cream to thicken the sauce. Regulate the wine content if the sauce becomes too thick. It's probably best to have the sauce a little on the thin side as it will thicken up once plated and begins to cool. Taste the sauce and alter the seasoning as necessary.

To complete the saltimbocca place the venison slices on a warm plate/s and cover with a liberal amount of the sauce. A side helping of seasonal vegetables is always a great addition to this meal along with the remainder of the Semillon.

Reading the above procedures you may think it's a tad too involved to prepare this version of saltimbocca. While at first glance it may seem that way, it's not really the case.

Having all of the ingredients at hand makes for a smooth work flow and it's quite surprising just how quickly the dish comes to fruition.

As with the first venture into any new recipe, it may take a couple of attempts to make adjustments to suit individual tastes. One thing is for sure though, once mastered most will find venison saltimbocca well worth the time and effort to prepare and bound to please those at the table. ■

Venison blue steak

Don Caswell

Most folks enjoy a nice beef steak. Over the years, with the help of cooking shows on TV, there has been a slowly growing awareness that steak is more tender and tasty when it is not over-cooked.

That is even more important for game meat like venison which has much less marbled fat content than does lean beef. Grilling a venison steak to the point of being 'well done' will destroy it. In fact, taking a venison steak to the point of medium is pushing your luck for a decent result.

I have progressively changed my treatment of venison steak to the point where I now prefer mine cooked to what is known as 'blue', from the French 'bleu'. This maximises the flavour, texture and tenderness of the cooked steak. As you would expect, cooking a blue steak is fast and simple. It involves a quick sizzle of each side in a hot pan and then letting the steak rest on a warm dinner plate for a few minutes.

Some folks advocate for moving the seared steak to a cooler part of the barbecue grill or wrapping it in alfoil and resting that on a warmed surface. I have tried both of these methods but, to my way of thinking, they result in overcooking the steak to the point of medium, or beyond. These days, I simply warm my dinner plate with boiling water a few minutes before the steak is ready to transfer from the skillet.

Use the following as a guide rather than a precise rule. A lot depends on the meat, your stove, the skillet and, of course, your personal taste. You may need to tweak the cooking and resting time accordingly.

Venison steak from top – medium, blue and raw



Ingredients

- Venison steak, cut to no less than 20mm thickness
- A dash of high smoke-point oil plus an optional dab of butter

Method

- Heat a dash of oil in skillet
- Fill your dinner plate with boiling water
- When oil is close to, or at, the smoking-point, add a dab of butter and swirl
- Place steak into the hot skillet and cook for one minute
- Drain the hot water from dinner plate and dry with tea towel
- Turn steak and cook other side for another minute
(for steak thicker than 25mm, increase cooking time by 1 minute per extra 10mm thickness)
- Pick up the steak with tongs and briefly roll about the hot skillet to brown the edges
- Remove steak from skillet to the dry, heated dinner plate
- Let the steak rest for 5 minutes, or so, on the warmed plate while you organise the rest of the meal and its accompaniments
(a nicely cooked blue steak has a thin crust of browned meat on the outside while the internal meat is a purplish-blue gel)

Serving

For dinner, serve with vegetables or salads of your choice. I mostly prefer steamed vegetables from our garden, or local farm stalls, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, peas, beans and kale.

For breakfast, a blue venison steak with runny fried eggs sprinkled with Tabasco sauce (or one of the excellent Aussie boutique equivalents) and chunky, pan-fried chips is a super way to start the day.

For condiments, a tarty, homemade Davidson plum sauce goes well, as does homemade onion jam. For those with a taste for chillies, I recommend biting off pieces of a whole chilli fresh from the garden with each mouthful of steak. You enjoy the capsicum-like crisp pop of the chilli, then its flavour followed by the heat of the chilli diffusing through the meat. ■



Breakfast of champions.

Venison, rosemary and garlic sausages



Don Caswell

After a successful venison hunt, I have plenty of prime trimmings for mincing. Scrappy pieces from the exterior membranes with any bits of grass or the odd hair removed go to dog food or hawk food. The prime mince is ideal for bolognese, lasagne and pie filling.

Venison also makes excellent sausages and my favourite version of that is with rosemary and garlic. Following are my ingredients which you can vary according to your taste. However, note that venison is a very lean meat, so do not skimp on the fat content. I use a domestic, kitchen meat-grinding appliance.

Ingredients

- 2kg cubed venison
- 0.7 to 1 kg diced lamb fat
- Leaves from 3 large sprigs of rosemary
- 6 cloves garlic
- 150ml white wine
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 30 grams salt
- 10 grams ground black pepper
- A length (about 4m) of sausage skin (most local butchers will sell you a single length for a couple of dollars)

Note

Firstly, when making sausages it is important that the meat and equipment be really cold, almost frozen in fact.

Secondly, everything, especially your hands, needs to be really clean.

Butcher's sausage recipes contain a lot more salt, 2-3 times what I use. Butchers put plenty of salt into help preserve the sausages that their customers might be a bit slow at eating or refrigerating. You can use less salt if you promptly freeze your excess sausages and instantly eat the fresh ones.

Pig intestines make great sausage skins. For folks averse to pig, you can buy synthetic sausage skin.

Method

- Cut up the venison meat into cubes, 2" per side. Place into freezer until nearly frozen
- Break up the lamb fat into smaller cubes of roughly 1" per side. Place in bowl
- Mix meat, fat and other ingredients (except the wine and vinegar) then return to freezer for 45 minutes
- Soak sausage skins in lukewarm water
- Take grinder with coarse die plate from freezer and fit to the grinding machine
- Retrieve the meat mixture and feed it

through the grinder, collecting the mince in a clean, chilled bowl

- Mix the wine and vinegar through ground meat quickly then return the bowl of ground meat to the freezer
- Clean the area, wash the grinder fitting and set for sausage extrusion then place in freezer for 20 minutes
- Set the chilled grinder in the machine and slip the sausage skin on to the nozzle
- Start feeding some minced meat into the grinder. Wait until any air pockets have been expelled, then pull about 6" of skin off the nozzle and tie off right at nozzle tip
- Continue putting the rest of the mixture into the extruder
- With a loose grip on the bundled sausage skin regulate how fast it slips off the nozzle and onto the extruded sausage. You do not want it too tight, neither let it flow off too easily
- Let the extruded sausage coil up in a large clean bowl
- Once all the meat has been extruded, tie off the remaining sausage skin
- You can either leave the extruded sausage as coils, like South African boerewors, or you can pinch and twist it into typical sausage links. It is probably best to watch a YouTube video or two on that
- The links or coils should be draped over wooden dowels to dry and set for an hour or so
- Either hang the bunches of snags in the fridge, or alternately, line a large plastic or ceramic (not metal) container with paper towels and places your sausages on top of the layered towelling. Refrigerate overnight
- Package and freeze your excess sausages and enjoy the remainder immediately ■



Promising stags

the ones that got away

Brad Allen

A young stag, roaring his challenge.

As the annual red deer rut approached in South East Queensland, plans were made for my nephew Frank and I to head to a new hunting block.

As we arrived in camp in the early afternoon, the stags were in fine voice in the hills. Consequently we were both wearing broad grins, as there is little that can equal the exhilaration of stalking roaring red deer stags during the rut.

By 3pm light intermittent rain had begun, creating almost perfect hunting conditions as we carefully pussyfooted along a steep track, through the semi-open bush towards the plateau. We spotted four stags roaring in the bush on our trek to the top, some with hinds, some without. Lucky for them

and unlucky for us, all were relatively young and none had reached their trophy potential with the largest of them only a 4x3 with light timber.

The valley had seen plenty of rain, the cattle were fat, the country looked good and we were taken aback by the sheer number of deer out on the rolling country, among the beef cattle. Our luck was definitely in as there was no doubt that we had arrived for our hunt in the 'sweet spot' of the roar.

With my Leica 10x42s, I was able to size up what appeared to be the dominant stag more than 800 yards away. He was a reasonable 4x4, surrounded by nine hinds as he roared his challenge to the lesser stags scattered around the area. He had a nice

even head but wasn't quite what we came for, as we had both set our benchmark at a large 5x5 or bigger.

I know that sounds like a tall order but I already have a nice 5x6 mounted at home and I was looking for something better. The truth is I enjoy hunting immensely and taking a stag is secondary to the hunt itself. That night back at camp the stags were still roaring and it was almost enough to keep a bloke awake, but neither of us were complaining.

We were up well before dawn the next morning, greeted by more light drizzle continuing the ideal hunting conditions. We had planned to hunt further to the north, where we had heard a number of stags roaring at the top of the range the evening before.



The mob continued feeding after their stag ran off, chasing a hind down the gully.

By 7.30am we had managed to locate and assess three stags that all turned out to be immature 3x3s and 3x4s.

Stepping gently through the damp grass, we had just crested a low ridge when we heard a muffled roar and noticed several hinds feeding about 200 yards further along near the bottom of the gully. Before I could lift my binoculars for a better look more movement caught my eye, a stag chasing a hind. He disappeared down along the creek, offering only a brief view of his antler tops as he lusted after his lady friend. We could see that his heavy left antler sported at least five, maybe even six good tines.

He was definitely worth a closer look so at that point we propped, watching the remaining hinds for the next 20 minutes or



Brad on the open upland navigating around rutting stags.

Promising stags - the ones that got away



Frank having a breather, while heading across the plateau.

This young 4x4 shows immense potential - maybe next year.

so hoping that the stag would return, but to no avail. As the remaining hinds fed off into the scrub, we quietly continued after them in an attempt to locate their stag but by 9am it was clear that he had moved down into the scrub over the edge of the steep escarpment and we weren't going to catch up with him again that morning.

Later that afternoon back out on the open tops we checked out stag after roaring stag, most of which were young animals, some with potential and some without. At one

point, Frank and I both spotted a large stag lying out on an open hillside roaring almost a kilometre away. He had his head turned to the right as we studied his magnificent left antler. Our excitement rose as even at that distance we could make out at least six tines on his long heavy beam, but as he turned his head to the left our hearts sank as we made out the other antler. It looked like a motorcycle handle bar, pointing back along his neck with only a brow tine and main beam. He had probably damaged the antler

while it was in velvet and good binoculars had saved us a long walk.

With the light drizzle still falling early the next morning, we again headed to the top of the range. As first light started to dawn to the east, we trekked to the forested hills beyond where we could hear some impressive roars that sounded like mature stags. This task was made even more difficult than usual as there were stags active in almost every gully, roaring and chasing hinds which made it necessary to make detour after



A stag out on the open looking for love.

detour around them to avoid being spotted.

By 8.30am we had reached the timbered hills undetected and luck was in our favour with the prevailing south-easter still in our face. About 400 yards up the first ridge we finally sighted movement on the ridge line, which turned out to be a mob of about 15 hinds, fawns and a mature stag. Carefully, Frank and I moved forward using a large dead ironbark tree as cover between us and the deer. At 90 yards we finally had a good look at the stag's headgear, which up

until now had been concealed by the scrub and lantana. He had a heavy set of antlers with good length but unfortunately was only a 5x4, just short of our standard.

We were in the process of quietly pulling back to leave the mob to bed when the inevitable happened as the wind suddenly swirled, blowing on the back of our necks. Instantly the mob caught our scent, causing them to take flight.

Later that afternoon we headed back up the range where the stags were still 'going

off'. There were deer active all round us in the gullies that led to the top of the escarpment. As Frank and I moved across an open area, we were caught out 50 yards short of the trees at the edge of a gully head. Four young stags were vocalising, chasing several hinds up the gully surrounding us on all sides at less than 40 yards.

As you would expect, one of them eventually picked up our scent which caused him to snort loudly as he decamped only a short distance before once again continuing to

Promising stags - the ones that got away

roar. Clearly he had never had any interactions with humans before and this scenario was repeated before the preoccupied mob moved back down the gully. Lucky for us, and for our future entertainment, Frank had recorded video of most of the incident on his mobile phone. Again none of the stags were mature enough to be of trophy potential but they certainly provided us with some thrilling moments and a lasting reminder of an exciting time.

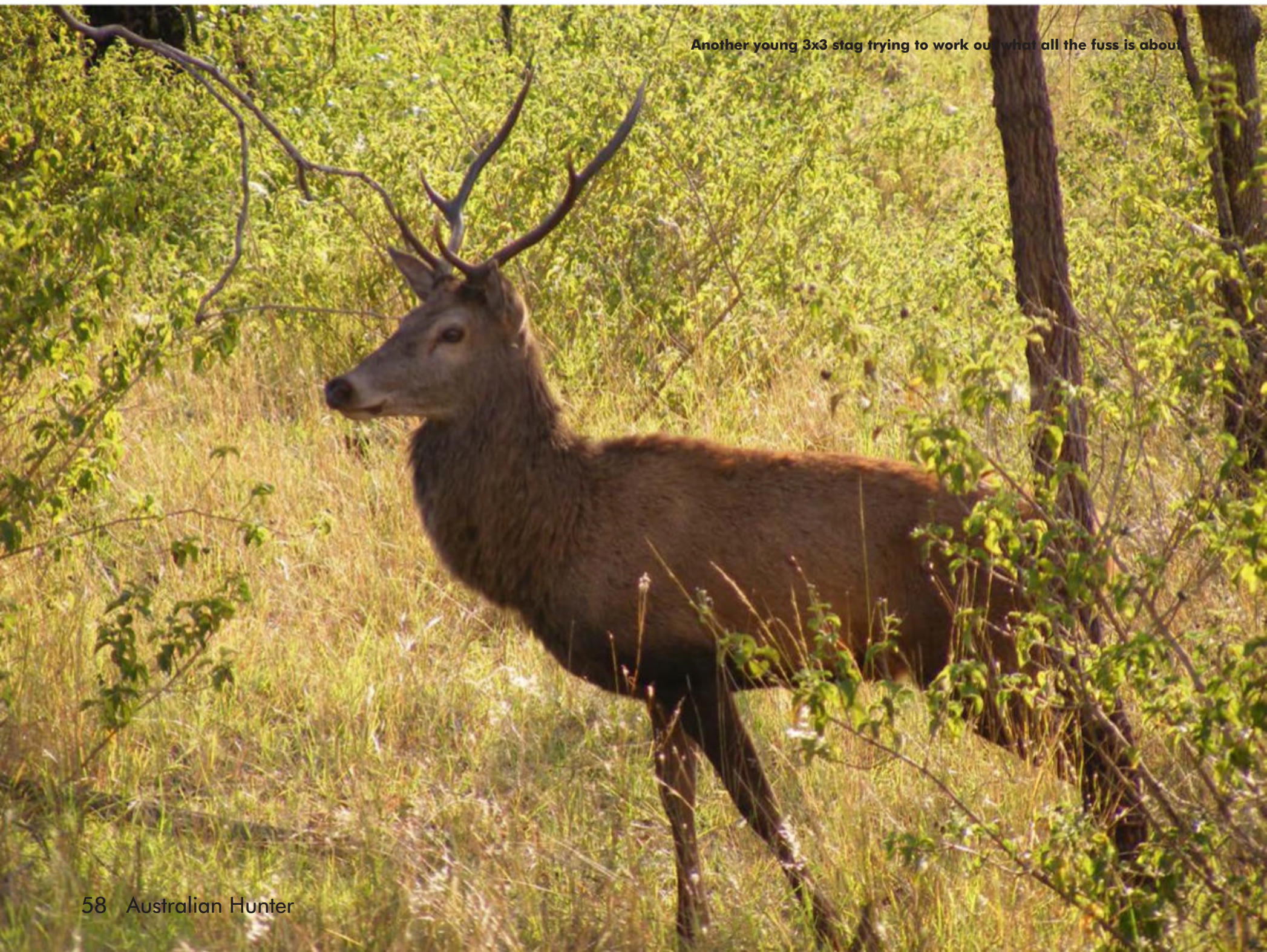
The next morning saw us searching for the stag that had eluded us by chasing a hind down over the edge of the escarpment. Frank was lucky enough to locate a mob of deer across a steep valley on the opposite face among the scrub. The heavy antlers and large body of a stag were spotted with them.

We assessed the situation and taking the prevailing wind into account, Frank attempted a stalk. Owing to the steepness of the valley and thickness of the scrub and wind changes in the valley, success was elusive. The old stag had picked his rutting location well, making it extremely difficult for any hunter to approach within rifle range. Over the next couple of days we made several more attempts to stalk the big stag, but he moved his harem on and wasn't seen nor heard again.

We made several other unsuccessful stalks on stags that we didn't manage to see or assess. One stag in particular chose his rutting area carefully, making it virtually impossible to approach him undetected. I eventually located his zone on a scrubby ridge, three-quarters of the way to the top

of the escarpment. Fresh hoof prints, rubs and the strong musky odour of rutting stag hung heavily in the air but he was gone without another sound. It was our last day of hunting when I located the small spring fed rock pool where he and his ladies had been watering only 200 yards away. Intel for next year.

I've gone as long as four years without firing a shot during the rut but every one of those hunts was enjoyable and educational. To my mind, there is no point taking a stag that's smaller than any I already have and maybe a few we let go this year will grow into respectable trophies for next year. As I've said before, I hunt primarily for the enjoyment and this rut had been exceptionally rewarding. Till next time... ■



Another young 3x3 stag trying to work out what all the fuss is about



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Two deer and a .308

John Moore

We live on a small farm and also grow trees amid a forestry block on a nearby escarpment.

Recently a coupe was harvested and we cleaned it up – windrowing the debris – and planted seedlings early in the winter.

The coupe is surrounded by forest and we usually expect to notice some browsing of the new seedlings. We hired a professional shooter who didn't come across much, so we discontinued this.

As the winter progressed I would visit on a regular basis to check some trial plots to work out if there was a browsing problem emerging.

On a weekend in mid-winter I was going up one afternoon to check with my son James. I usually take a firearm as occasionally I catch sight of a large wallaby sprint from the newly planted area to the nearby forest cover. Because my eyes aren't as good as theirs, I expect they stand and see me coming, then decide to take off before I spot them.

My son has excellent eyes, so I thought he may spy any wallabies before they hurried away.

We took our two Brno combination firearms, one a 12-gauge and .222 Rem, the other a 12-gauge and .308 Win.

Because I've had cataract operations on both eyes I can't use iron sights on anything,

so after I discovered this was the case I reasoned if I could make aperture sights I could look through, this might work.

So, I did and it does. Now we have double aperture sights - aperture rear and aperture fore sights - on both of these firearms.

They have large apertures, especially the rear sights, meaning quick target acquisition.

These sights are amazingly accurate. At the distances we usually hunt at, out to 100 yards, I can achieve the same groups from the bench with them as I can with a test scope fitted. I think it's to do with your eye naturally centring a point of interest in the middle of the aperture.

We had walked well around the coupe and hadn't seen any wallabies, when my son suddenly said: "deer!" There were three - a mature doe and a couple of younger ones. They were moving away from us, between a couple of windrows, across the slope above us, headed for the ridge not far away. They were probably 50-60 yards away. My son fired and clean missed, so, being concerned they would escape, I fired a quick shot at the doe, which went straight down.

The two younger ones moved on and we both reloaded as these are, of course, single shots. My son fired and to his embarrassment missed again. I knew I'd only have this shot before they went over the brow.

In the second or two I took, and I can remember doing this, I carefully centred both apertures so I had a clear picture of just behind the animal's front leg, and fired. I guess the distance was about 70 yards and this was a slightly raking shot, so I knew it was good. But, the animal kept going, up a bit, over the ridge and out of sight.

My son had, fortunately for me - and for the family's freezer - chosen the lighter calibre so I had the .308 Win. I had packed a few cartridges loaded with some 150-grain Hornady Spire projectiles, driven at about 2800fps by 45gr of 2208 which I loaded some time ago. I never chase deer with anything smaller than a 30-calibre bullet and I was pretty surprised the second animal hadn't gone down on the spot as I was quite sure of my shot.

I went to have a look at where I had taken the shot at the second deer and immediately found blood, lots of it. I walked the short distance over the ridge and found the deer stone dead just over the skyline.

But, why did the larger animal go down on the spot and the younger one didn't?

I remember the second shot was placed a couple of inches further down the body than the first and didn't hit a major bone. And I also recall the one-inch or so holes both sides, especially the exit side, allowing fast blood loss. It was a good confirmatory lesson for me. Maybe a smaller calibre



.308 Win cartridges loaded with 150-grain Hornady Spire projectiles.

bullet in the same place could well have killed the deer, but not instantaneously.

My son took his revenge with a less than flattering photo of his old dad dragging one out of the coupe, to the ute.

Making and fitting the aperture sights has meant I can now use these amazingly accurate firearms again. Plus they have a set trigger facility for the rifle barrel where a set shot is possible.

I was concerned other shooters who had eye issues may well be in the same position as I was, plus I think many shooters focus on buying a powerful scope, regardless of whether it's really needed. And, I think aperture sights for hunting rifles, highly popular years ago, are relatively unknown today in Australia.

Issue 57 of *Australian Hunter* featured a piece I wrote on aperture sights for hunting rifles that included our two Brno combinations.

Back to our two deer. The light was about to fail and it was turning cold plus we had a fair distance to take the two bodies out to the ute. So we didn't take any more notice of the shot placements at that time.

When we arrived home it was dark and we hung the bodies in the meat safe, leaving me to skin them out in the morning.

I do remember that the second shot did not damage either of the shoulders of the younger deer so I expect the bullet simply

passed through soft tissue, severing something major but still leaving a large wound channel so there was fast blood loss. I have read of experienced hunters of white tail in the US who shoot with large calibres and expect a well-placed shot to mean the deer drops on the spot or within just a few yards, but who have found for no obvious reason very occasionally, one which is hit in the same place that travels about 100 yards or so. So perhaps the second deer was just one of these.

Last week I retrieved one of the undamaged shoulders from the freezer to let it thaw slowly in the fridge overnight, to be cooked for the next day's dinner.

In my view good chefs are craftsmen who can produce stunning dishes. These dishes often require quite a number of ingredients, which the chefs of course have on hand.

To me a country cook is a little different. They are the ones who can prepare delicious meals with what they have in their pantries, improvising if they are missing an ingredient, with the item lacking to be restocked next time they are in town.

I'm fortunate to be married to an excellent country cook. So it was slow roasted shoulder of young venison, cooked in a closed iron pot (so it wouldn't dry out) in the bottom oven of our fuel stove. A simply superb meal... ■

John lugs a deer to his ute.



Sizing up the TargetVision Longshot LR-3 UHD camera

Michael Arnold

The camera unit near the 320m target.

When firing at targets at distances of more than several hundred metres, or calling shots for others aiming at these distances, it's difficult to visualise point of impact using an optical spotting scope. Even the highest quality options present distortions at extreme spans due to vibrations and heat waves. Such altered images often prevent determining impact points.

CR Kennedy & Co carry the Longshot LR-3 Ultra HD target camera. This system is described by Longshot as 'guaranteed to 2 miles' (3.2km). Though suspicious of that claim, if this unit was able to capture bullet impacts out to 'only' 1000m, that would be more than sufficient.

The LR-3 unit arrived packed within a heavily-padded carry case; this contained two tripods for mounting the camera and

receiver. The LR-3 can support up to four cameras, to visualise four separate targets during a shooting session, but comes standard with a single camera.

To protect the camera from stray bullets, there is also an external antenna (not included in the set sent to me). This allows the shooter to place the camera near the target, but behind a steel plate or berm for protection. The external antenna is placed up to 70m away from the camera and relays the feed to the receiver positioned near the shooter.

On the bottom of both the camera and receiver are an ON/OFF switch (and indicator light), a screw mount for the tripod attachment and a row of four lights that indicate battery charge. Finally, there is a plug-in on the bottom of the camera and receiver for the AC adapter used to recharge the batteries.

The side of the camera and receiver units have an array of status lights. A series of lights at the top of the receiver indicates connection strength. The camera possesses Local Area Network (LAN) lights to indicate when the camera is connected. The Wide Area Network (WAN) is not used for the current application. The last two indicator lights show WiFi Broadcasting and Power.

The range time with the LR-3 took place at a friend's property that has metal targets positioned at distances of approximately 100-400m. For the videography and photography, we chose a target located at 320m.

The rifle used for this analysis was an HTR – Precision Rifle chambered to .223 Remington and the ammunition was Hornady 53-grain V-Max and 55-grain V-Max. Visit SSAA TV at ssaa.org.au to see it all in action.

This session proved the LR-3 could

indeed capture shots being fired into a target located at a distance of at least 300m. The real question was whether or not such shots could be captured at the extreme distances claimed by the manufacturer.

The HWY 78 Test

I learnt the hard way it's crucial to elevate the camera and receiver at least 36" off the ground for the 'two-mile guarantee'.

Unlike the range session, I was unable to keep a continual connection between the receiver/camera signals and my iPhone. As I drove away from the target, I went over hills and around turns until reaching the next line-of-sight position. The LR-3 target camera was required to reconnect to the signal. On a long-range course, it would be unlikely to encounter such interruptions of the signal as the competitor moved from the target to the firing line.

Only two distances – 1.6km and 2.4km – were attempted along the highway. As expected, the connection was lost as I drove away from the target and camera to the 1.6km location. Upon arrival, I relaunched the TargetVision app. My iPhone and the receiver reconnected to the camera signal on the first attempt.

I next moved to the 2.4km site. The signal was again disrupted, necessitating relaunching the app and reconnecting the receiver/iPhone with the camera. In this case, it required five attempts to reconnect. To reach a distance of 2.4km I was forced to transfer to the opposite side (from the camera and target) of the

four-lane HWY 78. Possibly the difficulty in connecting was due to the receiver and camera not being placed at the proper elevation (at least 91cm).

Conclusion

The Longshot LR-3 Ultra HD target camera was easy to set up and use. The steps for assembling the unit and entering settings are straightforward. The TargetVision app is intuitive and uncomplicated. Most significantly, the LR-3 provided a high-resolution video of shots on a target placed at 320m and equally high-resolution photographs out to 2.4km, under sub-optimal conditions.

Visit huntingdepot.com.au ■



The Longshot LR-3 UHD target camera unit comes in a hard-sided and well-padded carry case.

Specifications

Guaranteed maximum distance: Straight Shooter 2-mile (3.2km)

Imagery: CrispEdge 2688 x 1512 Ultra HD

Camera adjustment: All-Axis

Last shot identification: Blinker Shot locator

Connection between receiver, camera and tablet/phone: Local Area Network (No WiFi or mobile service required)

User device platforms: iOS and Android

Image capture: Photograph and video

Receiver and camera batteries: Rechargeable using 100V-240V adapter

Manufacturer's suggested retail price: \$1549



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It all adds up after wayward shot

Don Caswell

In the morning sunlight, the big male wild dog stood like a statue near the carcass of a cow, killed earlier by a canine pack. Here was a real bonus. I had been chasing these dogs hard for a few days and was expecting a black juvenile wild dog to show up. The robust alpha dog had left plenty of images and video on the trail camera, but always at night.

My Vanguard HSP .223 Rem was resting on a sandbag in the low hide I had built. The dog was 120m distant, according to previous readings on the rangefinder. With

a clear sight picture, the cross-hairs of the Swarovski z8i 1.7-13.3x42 could not have been steadier.

Just like taking a shot off the bench at the range, I eased off a 55-grain Fiocchi soft-point. There was no sign of a hit. The dog raced a short distance, stopped for a split second to glance anxiously about, then hit warp speed and galloped off to the sheltering scrub. Well, gosh-darn, as they say. I was perplexed. Under such steady conditions, with the range known to a metre, I would be confident of hitting a 10-cent

piece. I decided that somehow, the rifle had been knocked out of alignment.

I was pretty unhappy as I packed up. There was no point staying at the hide with the rifle shooting like that. I had not missed a shot at a dog in a long time – a dog's age, in fact. I convinced myself that the rifle must be shooting a few hundred millimetres low, or high.

The next day I took myself off to the local SSAA range. There I espoused my problem and theory to a few old cronies. The fellow beside me offered to use his

Don in the hide with rifle resting on solid sandbagged support – how could he miss?



spotting scope in an effort to see where the bullets were going.

As is my usual practice, I had drawn vertical and horizontal lines through the centre of each target. I even went as far as using a 10-cent coin to draw a circle where I wished the point of impact (POI) to be at 100 yards. When pinning the targets on the frame, I use a plumb bob to ensure the targets are truly vertical. Back at the bench, I check that the scope cross-hairs match the target verticals and, if needed, adjust my bipod until that is so. That simple and

easy technique ensures the rifle is shooting exactly in the vertical plane and makes any sighting adjustments much easier. The range officer opened the venue to shooting and I settled down to see what the story was.

My spotter called the first shot – exactly where it should be. Hmmm? The next two shots evaded detection by my spotter. What the heck... I was shooting at a central circle in the group of targets in case the sighting was way out. Even so, we could not see any other holes anywhere on the sheet. Perplexing. While waiting

for a ceasefire, various theories were put forward as to just what was happening and what the cause could be.

Inspection of the target at the first ceasefire was illuminating and sort of humbling. My rifle-scope-ammo combination had embarrassed me and my wild theories by delivering a 0.1 MOA group. All three projectiles had cut the same hole. And, the group was precisely where it should be. The combination routinely averages 0.6 MOA, but 0.1 MOA was a first. Naturally, my range buddies insisted that another

It all adds up after wayward shot



Through the scope there appeared to be negligible impediments between Don and the target, but a big telephoto camera lens shows what really lies there.



A trip to the SSAA range proved the rifle, scope and ammo to be perfect.

group be shot. That too was exactly where it should be, and more like the average at about 0.6 MOA. So, there was nowhere to hide. The rifle had proved itself blameless. That only left the nut-behind-the-butt.

Back in the paddock, I sat in the hide and stared down at the dead cow and where the dog had been when I fired. The distance was 120m and the bullet would cover almost that entire journey at knee-height, over short, dry pasture with the odd tiny weed stem here and there. It seemed that the projectile must have struck one of the flimsy weeds and been deflected enough, or even destroyed, to completely miss the

wild dog. On my next visit, I had a box and an SSAA fox target and my camera with telephoto lens.

I put the fox target down where the dog had been and then used the camera to check on obstructions between me and that spot. The benefit of the camera and telephoto lens was that I could use variation in the camera settings to highlight what was not obvious to the human eye, especially when looking through a scope. Within a minute, I had proved that there were more woody weed stalks than met the eye. Enough, in fact, to easily intercept a speeding .223 projectile and divert or destroy it.

I have always known of, and been reasonably cautious of, brush between me and my target. But, during many years of shooting heavy calibre big game calibres it had never been an issue. Maybe I had become complacent? Anyway, my appreciation of just how sensitive a light, high-velocity projectile can be to intervening twigs has been greatly enhanced. It was a salutary lesson in basic small game hunting. On my next visit, I will borrow the wife's pruning shears and do my best to remove every weed stem between me and the target zone. ■

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Unique hunting utility with **Wedgetail Hawk**



The drop-down rear panel makes room for a queen-sized bed.

Scott Heiman

On a hunt, weather can change unexpectedly. A steady rain may increase our chances of moving closer to our quarry as our footsteps are muffled and our scent is stifled. But it can also mean that we stay out longer than expected. Whether we're tracking pigs who will take the opportunity to venture wider, or stalking goats that have turned their rumps into the wind to keep heavy rain out of their eyes.

Whichever scenario, there are lots of good reasons to stick with the hunt.

But, meanwhile back at camp, everything you left out is wet... So, you'll soon find if your swag is sufficiently seasoned, whether you fitted the fly on your tent correctly, or whether the tarp you erected as a camp shelter is taut enough not to pool water. Otherwise, you're in for a damp night.

When this happens to you often enough, you'll start looking for different hacks and

additional gear to keep your kit off the ground; high and dry for all the right reasons regardless of season. But this process can start becoming tedious after a while. What works now may not fit your camping style in a few years' time, particularly if your family circumstances change.

Darren Houston, who owns Wedgetail Campers, based in Broadmeadow, NSW, is a family man and a hunter who enjoys both firearms and bows. He's also a fully-qualified



A TV and JVC HiFi are optional extras.



The Hawk utilises the MSA drop-down fridge slide which is handy next to the slide-out table.



Spare 12V jacks are handy for recharging kit or running a fan.



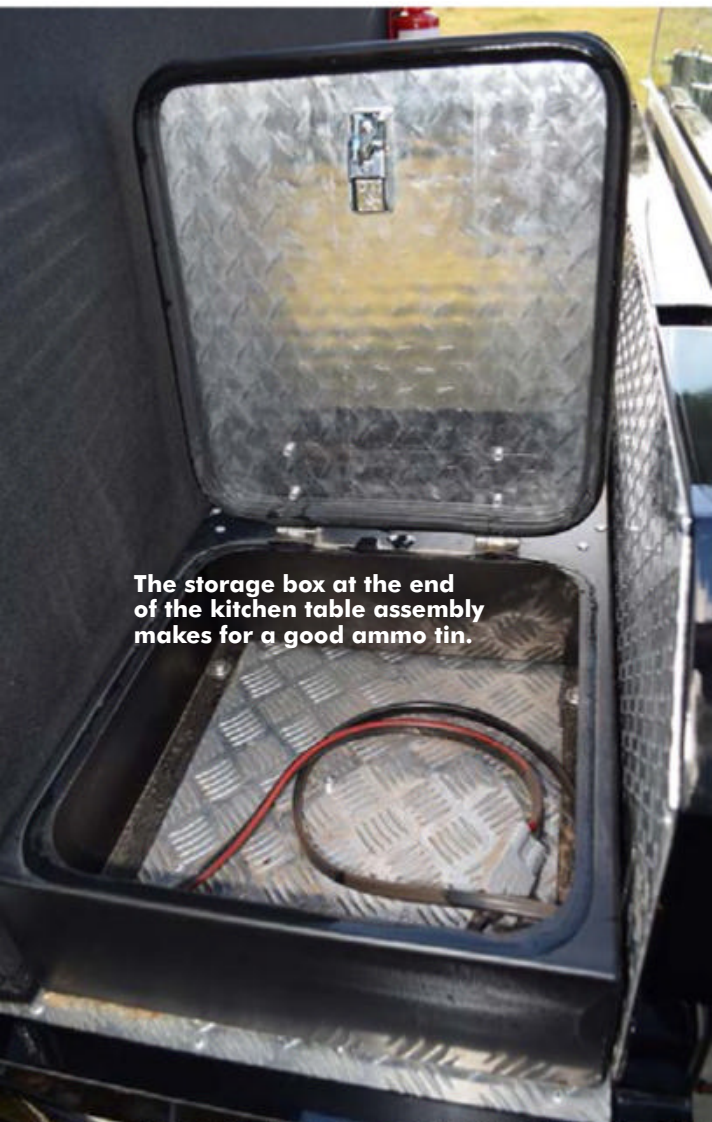
With an electrician at the helm of Wedgetail, you can be sure things are done right.



Magnetic midge screens are a nice touch.



Unique hunting utility with Wedgetail Hawk



The storage box at the end of the kitchen table assembly makes for a good ammo tin.



All external latches are lockable.



LED lights illuminate a host of trappings.

electrician. So, having a long, hard think about what he wants when he heads out scrub, Darren decided to make a camper for budget conscious hunters like himself.

Considering his life's trajectory during the past decade, he wanted to design a camper that could suit the single tradesman and still meet the needs of his fledgling family when he starts to settle down. Importantly, he wanted to make a unit that would allow him to use his ute for work during the week, and for hunting on the weekends without a fuss, and without having to take out a second mortgage for something that can't adjust to changes in lifestyle.

The Wedgetail Hawk meets this brief in spades – and more besides. As a completely modular slide-on camper built to suit any sized flatbed tray ute, the Hawk can alter progressively as your circumstances change – and will do so at a price point that will knock your socks off. Because, you can pick up a baseline model of the Hawk for just under \$10,000.

Sizing it all up

The centrepiece of the Wedgetail Hawk is a bed box that is 1.8m wide, 1.1m long and 1m high. With the flick of a wrist on two locking toggle latches, the wall over the hitch drops down to create a dome tent which converts the space into a 2m x 1.5m bed area – perfect for the 100mm high-density foam queen-sized mattress that comes standard with the Hawk.

You enter the bed box from either side through gull-wing doors, much like those on a James Bond sports car. The doors themselves operate as handy awnings to

keep direct light out of the sleeping zone while maintaining a cool breezeway for when you are 'Back of Bourke' or in the tropics. The openings are sealed with a midge screen mesh that fastens down with magnets, reducing the inevitable wear and tear caused by zips and clasps. You could readily use this space as a blind if the camper was suitably located.

The bed box is impressive, but there's far more to the Hawk. While the bed box is essentially a 'clean' space, the 700mm wide 1000-litre utility box is the home for your dirties, tuckerbox, camp stove, fridge and whatever else you can't leave home without.

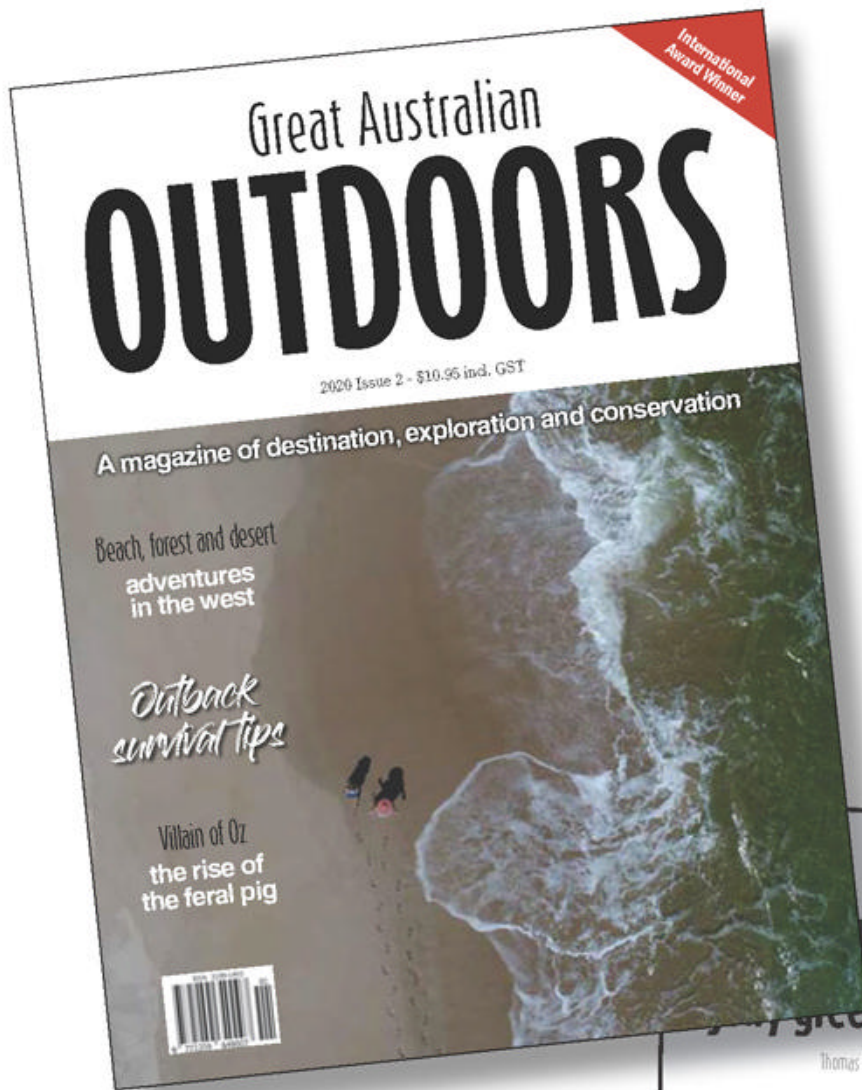
Once you arrive back home, use an impact driver on the supplied crank handle to simply lift the camper off your ute-tray to use the ute for a tip run. Alternatively, remove the mattress and the bed box becomes a great storage space for tools. Being fully lockable, this cavity is also a nice place to temporarily store your rifles when you next head to your local SSAA range for some marksmanship practice.

Now all this fits on a standard dual cab ute. If you have an extra cab, you can also add on the camp table draw system that is 40cm wide and 1.6m long. Very handy – and not just because it's a useful table. You can also store a spare tyre or water tank on top. Otherwise, if you have a single cab you could add a separate customised utility box to use as a dog box.

So, there you have it. A fully modularised custom-order choose-your-own-adventure camper available in 1.1m, 1.6m, 1.8m, 2m and 2.2m variants. And whichever option you choose, you're set up in no time.

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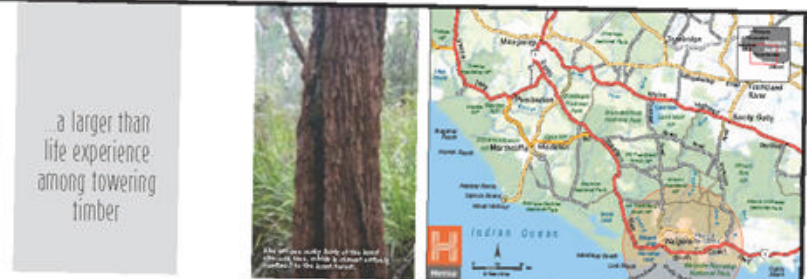
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Key of the green giants

Thomas Look

Our spine a tree... since 45 million years ago, a magical land in the south-west of Western Australia stood tall as an ancient giant tree. It was a tree that changed the landscape around it. It was a tree that changed the landscape around it. It was a tree that changed the landscape around it.



The damage they cause to crops and grain, paddocks and fields can be extensive

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Unique hunting utility with Wedgetail Hawk

Open the doors to the bed box, deploy the canvas dome, throw the bed together, remove the chairs, open the fridge and sit down. That should take less than 2-3 minutes. It would be longer to assemble many modern swags.

Built to last

The Hawk is lightweight, with a dry weight of 170kg (for the baseline option). So fuel costs won't burn a hole in your wallet. Impressively, while it's a featherweight, the Hawk is also built to last. The unit is made from 2.5mm marine grade aluminium with fully welded seams for strong bones. While you can buy all the modules of the Hawk separately, you can also order them welded together which creates even more strength.

And it's not just the Hawk's bones that are strong. The outer skin is coated with Speedliner with Kevlar KE 2000 fibre

additive for superior strength. This means that, regardless of which mountain track you drive down or what tree you scrape against, the outer skin won't scratch. It won't fade either because it is UV stabilised.

The Hawk comes standard in charcoal. If that doesn't suit you, Speedliner boasts 19 stock colours such as camo green and desert tan.

Add-ons... and offs

Being a slide-on camper, hitting the road with a Hawk frees your tow hitch. So now you can take a tinny away on the weekend to go fishing or crabbing. Or maybe you'd prefer a trailer with motorbikes or an ATV? And remember that it's a cinch to remove the slide-on at camp if you want to free your tray for spotlighting or a trip to the back paddocks.

Another great feature of the Hawk is its

modular versatility. While you can put your hands on a Hawk for as little as \$10,000, there are plenty of options for after-market accessories down the track. Consider, for example, the living space you'll obtain with twin 270-degree awnings with side walls. With an awning like this, you'll be able to establish a camp kitchen, lounge area and a place for your mates to shake out their swags and stretchers. As your family grows the kids will need a place to sleep too. So don't forget the rigidity of the Hawk's all-metal and welded construction which means the roof has adequate load bearing to accommodate a rooftop tent.

Before you know it, you'll have converted your tradie ute into a family camper able to accommodate four people on two queen-sized beds under a roof and still have space for mates and their swags. Now, who's a happy little camper? ■

Hunt and camp freely with the Wedgetail Hawk.





Slings *and* other things

John Denman

The leather is thinned without sacrificing strength.

Tenterfield in northern NSW has always had a tradition of good bush craftsmanship. The legendary Tenterfield Saddler was no figment of the imagination and to this day there are still a number of successful artisans doing fine work. Outstanding leather skills

have always held a fascination for people who enjoy owning something well crafted, with shooters and hunters no exception.

Few people who own a rifle don't have a sling for it as well. But a lot of the rifle slings today are either synthetic or far too stiff. Some of them work okay, but many

don't. Besides that, if you have spent a lot of money on a stylish rifle with blued steel and polished walnut, it seems almost a travesty to attach a synthetic sling to it. Far too many modern slings have a tendency to slide off the shoulder and that's annoying.

Fraser Ihle, of Big Barn Leather, has been

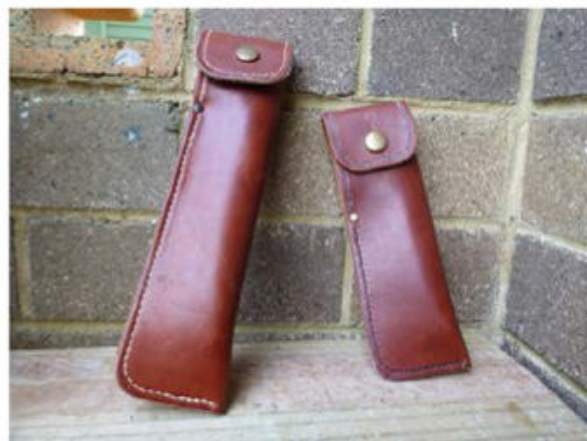
Slings and other things



**The more
traditional
looking
leather.**



To keep things quiet, leather thongs are used.



Bolt pouches are available in various sizes.

a hunter all his adult life. He's also the sort of bloke who tends to make things to suit his own needs. Like a lot of hunters, he grew weary of slings that didn't perform as expected, so in true fashion he decided to remedy the problem. While saddlery is his first priority, he sees rifle slings and now bolt pouches as a need that had to be filled.

The result is an array of slings and bolt pouches made entirely by hand. The leather for the slings is thinned to allow the right balance between being light and flexible without compromising strength. What is produced is a rifle sling that conforms to the shoulder, even when the straps of your backpack have to be considered.

We have been testing these slings by hunting the hilly country of the NSW New England tableland for some time. This often involves hard walking, mostly after fallow deer that can tax any hunter's patience. The slings have always come up trumps. The load distribution is spot-on and they don't slip around. Being all leather, the options are many. Some slings can be had in an all-suede finish, others have suede only on the underside, so it provides a better gripping surface.

The leather used is saddlery grade, so it's all top quality. You can feel it when you handle the product and what you end up with is something that will last a long time and complement a classy firearm. It's a practical matter and considering so much of what we use is made overseas, being produced in Australia is of utmost importance to many of us.



The all-suede finish sling is one option.

No sling swivels are supplied and to minimise metal-to-metal contact, sling adjustment is handled using leather thongs. Threading these into place and tweaking them may not be as easy as using press studs, but remember we are talking about something designed for people who enjoy not just the appearance of a distinguished rifle, but like to stalk their deer. A quiet approach is essential.

In addition to the rifle slings, the bolt pouches produced by Big Barn Leather are special in their own right. Most Australian states specify that you have to remove the bolt from the rifle while travelling, something hunters do on a regular basis. So keeping your bolt safe from damage or dust is important. These are available in sizes to suit most rifle bolts in small, medium and large, but at this stage not specific to brands.

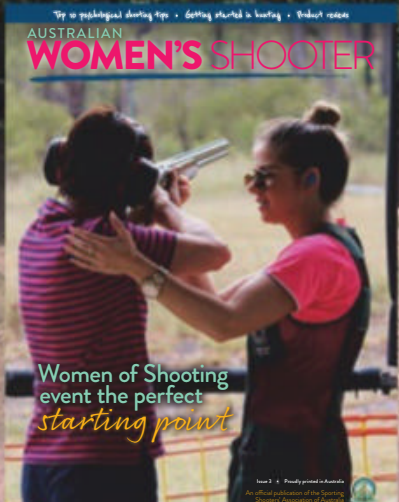
Like the slings the bolt pouches are hand-made from premium-grade cowhide. It's a lot better than wrapping your bolt in a tea towel and looks the part as well.

Big Barn Leather products are distributed through Prohunt Outfitters (**prohunt.com.au**), of Lismore, northern NSW. You can contact them on 02 6621 4579 or at prohunt.sales@gmail.com ■

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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Expect the unexpected

Perry Magowan

Sometimes no matter how well you plan ahead or what you think you know, things just don't turn out the way they should, could or would.

Hunting can be a bit like that, life in general and circumstances as well.

On several occasions some of my hunts have gone quite unexpectedly, some surprisingly well and others on the disappointing side.

Many years ago, I was hunting with a good mate, Ken from Nanango. When we arrived at our area, Ken suggested we stick together until we had checked out a gully. If unsuccessful we could split up and go our own ways. As we made our path over the ridge and investigated the gully, two mature red stags trotted out and stopped side-on halfway up the other incline of the hill.

The lighter one was the biggest red deer stag that I've ever seen in my lifetime. His mate was a good 10" shorter at the

shoulder than him. Although the smaller stag's antlers towered over the big stag's branches by at least 10", he was a huge thick double-five and the big bodied stag's antlers were a small double-four. I took the big bloke and Ken took the good double-five. It was the right thing to do. The hunting spot was Ken's country. Still, it was an unexpected outcome.

Quite a few years later, Ken and I were hunting together in another good location. We had parked the car on top of a big ridge, as Ken decided to walk south into the wind while I strolled with the breeze to the north. We were to hunt for three hours and then return to the car. If one of us had been lucky enough, we would head home. Not long after leaving the car, Ken came across a spectacular big double-five with nine does. Unfortunately, as so often, the wind was swirling around in the rugged hills that day and gave him away.



**A double-five taken hillside
in a lush Brisbane Valley.**



Expect the unexpected



A mob of red does in Brisbane Valley.

They ran up into a scrubby gully and that was that.

I had walked 1 ½ km and was coming to one of my favourite gullies. The wind was blowing away from me, so I sat down on the ridge and waited. Not long after, I saw movement in the gully floor. Four red stags were grouped together going up to camp for the day. They split into two groups, as the three younger stags came up the gully straight below me. One was double-two, one double-three plus an older double-five which had a broken off left tine as it later turned out.

The two younger stags sparred and

play-fought all the way up the gully. About 200m past me, the older stag stopped 30m across the gully and started to eat lantana leaves off a big bush. At that time, I was using a 35mm battery power camera which made a lot of noise every time the button was pressed down, so no photos were taken of the stags fighting, unfortunately.

A big old double-four was standing on a ridge 250m away looking back down into the gully waiting for his mate to join him, who turned out to be a double-five. This behaviour seemed strange to me; I'd seen a good double-five as they were coming up the gully early before they had split up.

I assumed it was the stag feeding across the gully from me. I had counted the group five times and there were four stags every time I had counted them - a 2x2, 3x3, 4x4 and 5x5. So imagine my surprise when I shot what I thought was a good double-five but shortly after he dashed up the far ridge past the old double-four and kept going. He was moving like he wasn't even hurt at all. I went over to see if there was a blood trail anyway.

On reaching where I'd last seen them, three stags were standing on the next ridge watching me - a 2x2, 3x3 and the old 4x4, but no big double-five. I spent 1 ½ hours



This small double-five red stag was taken by mistake.



This stag turned out to be a double-six, not a five as Perry first thought.



Hunting success in the form of a nice double-five.

looking for a dead stag that wasn't even shot. On the way back to the car I walked up the gully that the stag I had shot at earlier had run down. And there was a smaller 5x5 stag lying dead on the ground. So there had been five stags all the time, not four. This was another unforeseen upshot. The big double-five had eluded me.

But the best unpredicted conclusion came in the midst of another roar. Parking my car in a different berth than normal on one of my favourite properties, I headed out into a gully system at about 4.45pm. This time I had decided to try wearing a lot of camouflage clothes, gloves and headgear.

Ten minutes into my walk, there he was standing still, chest-on, looking at me from about 200m across the scrubby gully on the opposite hill. The sunshine was reflecting off his antlers. It was the most magnificent sight I have ever seen.

The glare made his antlers look like they were on fire. I didn't risk taking a photo as I wanted to take him. Through the four-power riflescope I could see a beautiful, even looking double-five set of antlers. I counted them twice just to make sure. Although I must say I was a bit disappointed as I was hoping for a better class of head in this area. However, I was caught right out in

the open, with no cover. There was not a thing to steady the rifle on and it was too far for a freehand shot.

It was time to see just how good this camo gear really was. One slow step after another, I made my way around the contour of the hill and down to a big gum tree, while the stag watched me. It took just over 30 minutes to achieve this feat. By that time, the stag had moved into a thin stand of brush on the edge of the thick scrub. I couldn't see him anymore anyway.

After 10 minutes of constant scanning with the riflescope I finally found his hiding place. It's incredible how a deer can hide

Expect the unexpected



The unexpected 'king's crown' double-six antlers.

behind just about nothing. It was going to be a shot across the gully at about 140m. Steadying the rifle against the tree in front of me, I took aim at his chest and let a 100g soft-point go out of the .243W. He wheeled around and ran west 40m into the scrub. Seven of his does went with him and two ran down into the gully and up the hill, right past me.

Moments later, seven does were standing and waiting on a ridge 600m away for him to join them. I thought I had taken him and he was down somewhere in the scrub. However, finding him turned out to be a whole lot harder than I reckoned. It took a quarter of an hour, walking up and back on the line he had run on into cover. But when I found him there was a real surprise. He was a double-six, not

a double-five like I had thought. What an unpredictable turn of events. He looks just as good hanging on my wall.

On another roar, I was doing my best to take a red stag for my daughter, Naomi. It would be her first red deer though she had taken a rusa spiker a few years earlier with me in the Emu Creek catchment. Because of her work commitments we rarely had a chance to go camping and hunting together. So we took full advantage of our two days.

The first afternoon we saw one spiker and one doe. We also heard another stag roar from a stand of thick lantana which he would not come out of. Later the two of us were 200m from a mature stag carrying a neat double-six set of antlers shaped like a king's crown. It looked much like a white-tailed buck's antlers. He was rutting in the

top end of a small scrubby gully. There was a huge water-eroded gully in front of us plus a big open flat with no chance of a shot. The wind was wrong and about to give us away. With only three-quarters of an hour of daylight left, we called it quits. Perhaps another day...

To cut a long story short, I returned two days later for one more try, but to no avail. The stag was unapproachable and very smart. Yet a year later my first attempt was successful, as everything fell into place and I downed the stag at 70m. By this time he was starting to go backwards in antler growth because of age and was a small neat double-five. Even though he was five each side and did not have a big set of antlers, he is still one of my best and favourite red heads. Another astounding happening. ■



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Heavy

know your steel

metal

Damien Edwards

Super premium steels such as S30V and S35VN retain edge geometry far better than softer steels and are well suited to higher end and custom blades.

A knife is a knife, right? Wrong. Appropriate blade style, clip point, drop point, Tanto or flexible filleting blades are highly important. Ergonomics, 'tacticool' factor, fit and functionality are normally what attracts most of us to a good knife as well.

But just how much consideration is given to the actual steel composition of the blade? What type of steel is it? How do differing types take an edge? How hard are diverse steels to sharpen? Here, I will start with heat treatment and the Rockwell hardness scale, go through a few of the more popular types of blade steels as well as explain their composition, uses, properties and applications and conclude with a few words on care and black oxide.

Steel is not a naturally occurring element, it's man-made. It is essentially comprised of varying percentages of iron and carbon, with a few other elements tossed in to suit whatever application, be it industrial, automotive, for tools, ships, firearms or appliances. Different steel compositions are designed for varying applications and these are often given a heat treatment.

This process of heating metal, often to extreme temperatures to, in the case of knives, achieve varying levels of hardness or to make forming operations of the subsequent product, such as machining

or welding a little easier. Tempering of steel is a process carried out prior to high temperature heat treating. Initial tempering is conducted for a sustained few hours beforehand at a lower temperature, usually around 200-300°C to minimise brittleness in the latter stages of high temperature heat treating.

Later, heat treating to extreme temperatures, often in excess of 900°C, causes metal (in our case, steel) to undergo changes in its mechanical properties or molecular composition. Heating alters the microstructure which in turn gives the steel differing degrees of hardness resulting in (depending on percentage of other elements present) increased edge retention, corrosion resistance, ease of sharpening and eventual end use. The degree of hardness is measured using the Rockwell scale.

The scale was devised by brothers Hugh and Stanley Rockwell from Connecticut in 1914 when they applied for a patent on a differential depth machine which could quickly and accurately gauge the hardness of ball bearings. Basically, the Rockwell machine applied a load to a bearing surface to ascertain its hardness through attempted depth penetration and stress cracking.

The machine then displayed direct hardness values without the requirement for mathematical calculations. For us blade

users, the values of Rockwell aid greatly in determining how the steel chosen by a manufacturer will perform for its specific task. Most knife and axe steels will value between 52-62 Rockwell. Large machete-type knives and axes will generally be made of slightly softer composition steel because their intended use is direct force impact, chopping.

Whereas a hunting or survival-type knife, with a shorter, more manoeuvrable blade can be made much harder to survive outdoors work exposed to the weather elements. Also because its use is for slicing and caping which are of course, slower, more deliberate movements.



Steel for vices, scissors, blades and multi-tools all require different compositions and treatments depending on their intended use.

Heavy metal - know your steel

420HC

This is a reasonably strong and deservedly popular steel for knives and machetes. The HC stands for High Carbon. It is used extensively by major manufacturers such as Buck, Kershaw, Gerber, Leatherman and others for not only blades, but handles as well.

It is stainless and is usually seen at 55 Rockwell making sharpening easy, but required frequently. With the correct heat treatment, 420HC can be elevated to about 58 Rockwell. 420HC is a cheap and readily available steel with a high resistance to corrosion. It is popular for use in diving knives and surgical instruments due to its high chromium content of 13 per cent.

154CM

This is a step or two above 420HC and is an excellent knife steel, but also sees use in bushings, bearings and valve ports. It contains roughly 14 per cent chromium and also 4 per cent molybdenum and about 1 per cent carbon. It's a grand balance between toughness, hardness and corrosion resistance.

It was developed in 1959 and began being widely used for blades in the mid-1970s. It can be hardened to the 58-60 Rockwell bracket. This is tough, but not tough enough to become brittle when used with force. It is a popular steel for combination or serrated knife blades due to its ability to withstand sharpening with a rat-tail file



Black oxide coating helps retard light refraction and provides additional corrosion resistance. It is often seen on lower end steels, but works just as well on mid-strength. All steel in this picture is 420HC.



Steels like 154CM and 5160 are ideal for the camping hunter. They are easy to sharpen and maintain. Note 5160 is not stainless and will patina with use as seen on the Buck 110 at the bottom.

without chipping. Leatherman use this steel exclusively in their interchangeable wire cutters on their multi-tools.

5160

More commonly known as spring steel, 5160 is a slightly softer and more malleable and flexible steel which can be hardened to 57-58 Rockwell, making it ideal as a platform for axes as well as longer knife blades and machetes.

In industrial applications, it's highly suited to tools and parts which require a high degree of impact resistance, such as leaf springs for automotive purposes. But why would you want a softer, more flexible steel in a hunting knife? Because it's easy to sharpen.

If you're like me and often take hunting trips which can easily run into a week's length, with a little fishing thrown in, you'll be using your knife a lot. Field dressing water buffalo or red deer, gutting barramundi or bass and general camp chores will be heavy work on your knife and being able to hone it up again quickly is of vast benefit.

And trust me, putting an edge on 5160 is easy. Note, there is not enough chromium in 5160 to make it a true stainless steel and it will patina with little use and is marginally more prone to rust.

S30V and S35VN

Now we are getting serious. These are the premium knife steels. S30V was developed by Dick Barber, of Crucible Industries, in New York in 2001. It is a wear and corrosion resistant steel which can be hardened supremely to between 59.5-61 on the Rockwell scale.

It takes time to resharpen if you are a novice, but once sharp, it retains its edge geometry for longer than almost any other steel used in the knife industry at time of writing. Because of its hardness, it would not be suitable for axe work, but for slicing, caping and field butchery, it excels. It is a type of powder steel, gaining great strength from fine microstructures in a rapid solidification process. This means it is also a dense steel. S30V was designed and developed in conjunction with collaboration from knifemakers.

S35VN was also developed by Crucible, this time by metallurgist Maria Sawford. It too is a powder steel and almost identical to S30V, but with a decrease in vanadium and an increase in niobium. This led to a steel which offered slightly better machining properties. S35VN was released in 2009.

These steels are quite expensive and are mostly only seen on high-end and custom

knives. Buck refers to S30V as 'the absolute best blade steel available'. I'd have to agree.

Benefits to black oxide

I think no article on knives would be complete without a few words on black oxide, sharpening and knife care. When using any knives, especially ones which aren't stainless like 5160, it is vitally important to clean out blood, scale or fur residue and give a light coating of gun oil or even Vaseline.

I prefer stones and a strop finish when sharpening my knives, but it's a process which I actually enjoy. If you don't enjoy it or don't have the time, there is a myriad of commercial sharpeners available.

Diamond coated rat-tail files are absolutely invaluable when sharpening serrated or combination blades and they are ideal for sharpening gut hooks. Black oxide is manganite comprised of sodium hydroxide, nitrates and nitrites and is used to coat the surface of ferrous materials.

Its main advantage is to increase



Softer steels have their place, especially on tools which see hard direct force impact use where stiffer steels may shatter.

corrosion resistance, so it is often used to coat lesser quality steels, although it is also often seen applied to 420HC, even if it doesn't really need it. There is no discernible dimensional impact when using it and it's far cheaper than paint, electroplating or cerakoting.

It also drastically lessens light refraction for tactical military applications and results

in minimal build-up of residue. It will show scratches better than almost anything else, but I prefer to use it for its rust inhibiting qualities on blades and tools which I know will see heavy use outdoors.

Here's hoping this brief rundown has helped you a little in your own knife selection. ■

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1812 Edition shotgun

Thomas Cook

In January this year London's oldest gunmaker Boss & Co, established in 1812, announced the arrival of their innovative ambidextrous side-lever over-and-under shotgun. The two levers packaged with the 1812 Edition 12-bore shotgun uniquely allows it to be configured for a left or right-handed shooter. "We see this as a pivotal moment not just in our history, but in the history of gunmaking," said Boss & Co owner Arthur DeMoulas.

Boss & Co's illustrious pedigree dates back to more than 200 years ago when William Boss taught his three sons the art of gunmaking, with the youngest, Thomas, establishing himself as one of London's finest and forming Boss & Co.



The single trigger and underside in detail.

Thomas' workmanship and work ethos led to him taking on his own gunmakers, two of which were his nephews, Edward and James Paddinson. In 1851 Boss & Co's reputation was firmly cemented after being invited to participate in Prince Albert's Great Exhibition alongside other renowned gunmakers. Thomas Boss died in 1857 and his widow Amy took over the well-established business.

A rewarding partnership quickly formed with her nephews Edward and James until Amy's death in 1872. James died one year after taking full control with his brother, leaving Edward as sole custodian.

Edward continued the business' success and in 1890 John Robertson gained a half-share of Boss & Co. Edward's ill-health took its toll and he died just a year later, with his share going to a nephew who was only interested in money. So, in 1893 Robertson bought out the other half and became the sole owner.

Robertson's passion for gunmaking saw a raft of innovations for the company. It was Robertson who also came up with the popular Boss 'rose and scroll' engraving

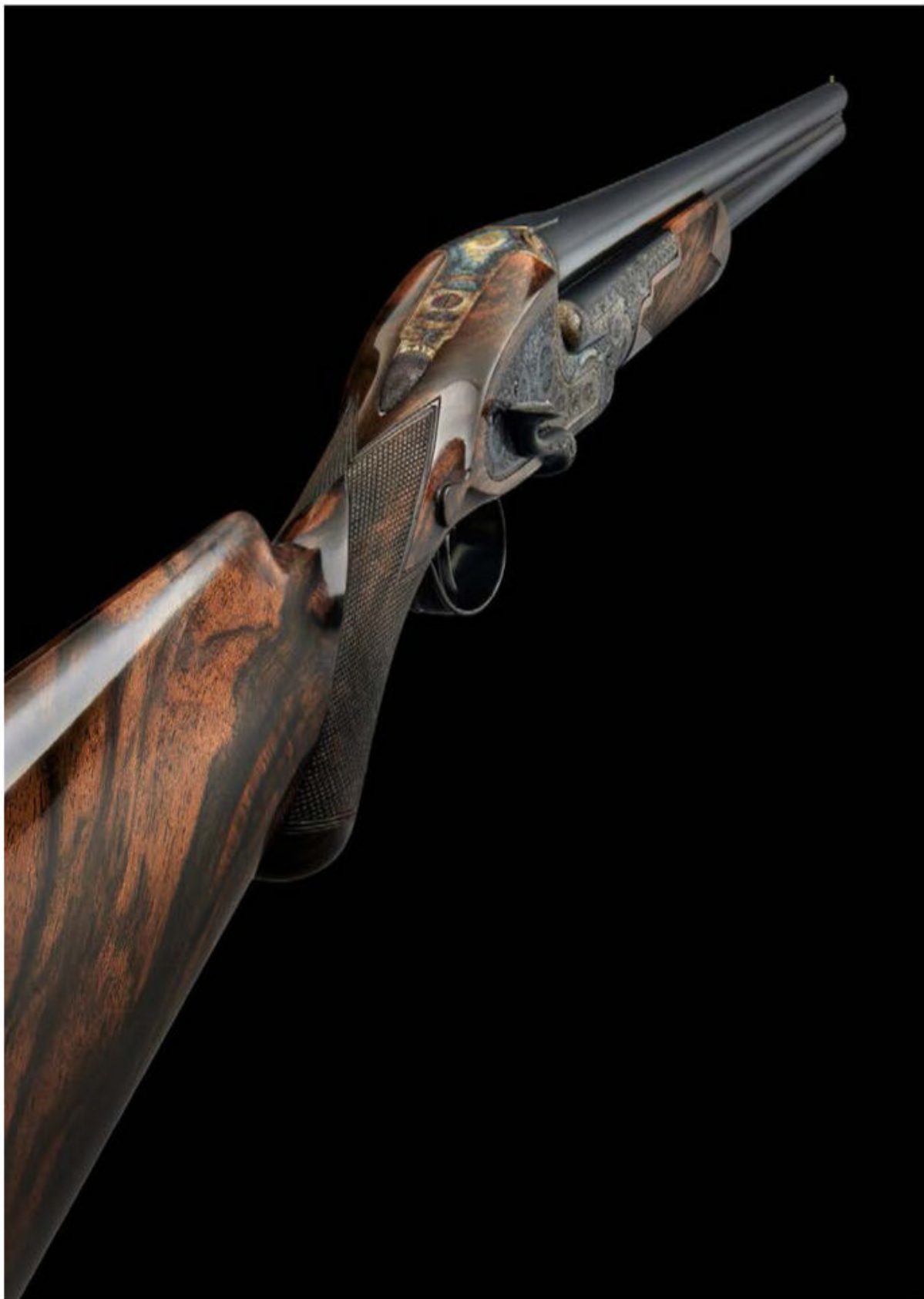
featured on the 1812 Edition. Robertson's three sons John, Sam and Bob took over after his death in 1917.

'The Three Governors' as they were known industry-wide, maintained the company's high standard despite the turbulent 1930s era of gunmaking. The last of the brothers died in 1951 but there was a descendant of Robertson in the company's ranks until 1999. Today Boss & Co remains privately owned by DeMoulas, whose knowledge and passion for the industry continues the firm's legacy.

Inspiration for the Boss & Co 1812 Edition originated when DeMoulas was shooting with a pair of vintage Boss & Co side-by-side lever-actions. The ease of use and practicality led to collaboration with experienced Boss & Co gunmaker John Varney and further colleagues.

"It's inspired by our past but it's very functional and practical, and its ease-of-use in the field is now available to all shooters – regardless of which side they shoot on – in a way that no other gunmaker has done before," said DeMoulas.

This 1912 Edition includes an all-new



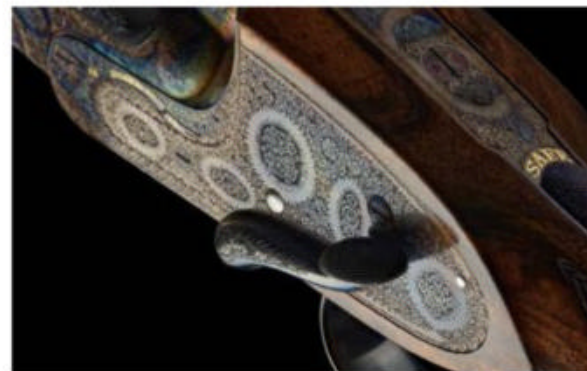
The full-length view.

design with adapted barrels, stock, finishing, engraving and the rest. Varney sadly passed away after the 1812 Edition's conception, having spent an esteemed 42 years with the company. John Craddock had worked next to him for nearly 20 years and became an integral part of the team, who drew on Boss & Co's rich history and expertise to spend about 2000-man hours on the project.

The 1812 Edition maintains the iconic Boss & Co's elegant shape with a new purpose-built action hosting a side-lever

rather than a top-lever. Both side-levers are handmade and engraved at the same time. This proves ideal for the current and potential future owner of the 1812 Edition. If passed down through the family or sold, the firearm will remain fully authentic and original.

The new side-levers boast a hand-engraved chequered thumb push at the top that is angled slightly forward so when depressed it is parallel with the action. The lever curves gracefully around the action in



Traditional 'rose and scroll' engraving and side-lever focus.



Levers on opposite sides.

a way that no light is ever visible between the lever and action.

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A sambar scrape *in the forest*

Adrian Kenney



**The location
where the stag
was taken from.**

Periodically over the years I'd noticed sambar tracks heading off in a general northerly direction from their usual habitat, so it was time to go for a stroll and try to find another piece of this puzzle.

Without the weight of a rifle or daypack I was free to explore without any added burden and if I bumped into a deer, so be it. As most hunters already know, hunting isn't about simply shooting animals but the entire experience, that indeed sometimes involves shooting. This exploration was merely another excuse to again immerse myself in the magnificence of Victoria's sambar forests.

After following a game trail that held the occasional set of deer prints mixed with those of wallabies, I reached a fork in the gully system with deer sign dispersed throughout. There wasn't a lot of sign and what lay before me hinted at different outcomes. So the process of elimination began.

Up into the right fork the bush became dry and the sign scarce so I headed up into the high ground between the gully fork and found the majority of sign (which wasn't much) heading off into the left-hand branch. With a bit more hope than doubt I climbed higher into the left branch and the amount of deer sign elevated in unison. Indeed it was scattered everywhere amid a patch of fire regrowth, indicating feeding sambar.

A sambar scrape in the forest



A young stag approaches a popular scrape before balancing on his hind legs to reach full extension high on the tree.

While 90 per cent of the area wasn't burnt, the small zone that was had received frequent attention. The further I went into the system the more I could sense the presence of sambar as the scattered sign became a game trail that arrived at a fresh scrape. As I stood there looking at the freshly pawed earth and the marks of spread stag cleaves in the dirt, I heard the slightest of sounds up in the dry scrub by the opposite face. To me, this seemed the place to be.

No vantage points were available overlooking the scrape, which I assumed belonged to a young stag. So, the nearest point possible was chosen that could be approached without spooking the likely bedding areas yet close enough to see deer soon after leaving their beds or the scrape.

A patch of dirt was cleared where I could sit quietly on the next spur down the gully, which was about 100 yards from the scrape that was out of view. In addition an approach trail was roughly cleared with my hiking boots and the beginning of the trail identified by a dead wattle tree that

had been snapped off at the top sometime prior. The trap was set.

On occasions we go hunting because we're keen and on others simply because we wish to be among nature and carry an attitude of what happens, happens. My next trip, was the latter. It was blowing a gale at the house and from the wrong direction to boot. But what the heck - I was going. More than worrying about success I would simply be happy if I returned home without getting clunked by a falling tree or branch.

The vehicle descended into the hunting area where the stillness of the tree tops took me by surprise. Stepping into the forest the slight breeze was even blowing from a favourable direction. Geared up and ready for the climb to the approach trail I slogged my way into the surprising humidity.

Wearing more clothes than I needed at this time of day, the sweat was building upon my forehead and beading down my nose onto the forest floor. At the broken wattle tree I slowed right down and ducked and weaved around the first couple of branches before reaching the

clear path below. Bird calls increased as I descended into a gully filled with life and the vigour of spring.

The aroma of flowing plants mixed with the usual scents of dogwood and eucalyptus erupted as I sweated out every tense and slow footstep down that trail. Disappointingly, all the deer slots on the ground were faded and old so it seemed fortunate that I was merely here to be in the forest.

Setting up the stool and easing out of the daypack I noticed the fresh prints of a mature hind and half-grown hind. I settled in upon my stool with the .338 Win Magnum across my legs and renewed hope in my mind.

A blue wren landed in branches nearby before pursuing a female aggressively through the forest of trees weaving this way and that. Snap! Something heavy could be heard moving for a brief period over the spur and above the pawed earth of the scrape, again, just the sound of the forest with a gentle rustle of leaves and the cackle of a crow nearby.

Returning to the gully after a couple of months, the stag's scrape was devoid of deer prints.



A sambar scrape in the forest

Soon, the crow's call was faint in the distance as a cockatoo's screech replaced him nearby. Hours later the clouds had rolled in and sparse raindrops began to thud with varying intensity upon my cap and throughout the forest. A lyrebird began to cry higher up in the gully from where the trees stood tall and proud with their white trunks contrasting with the green of the forest. Judging by the noise, there was a sambar deer at that scrape.

The resonance of antlers thrashing vegetation drifted through the forest blending with bird calls as I readied the rifle and positioned for a shot from the stool. For about 10 minutes it continued on and off as the stag turned his attention to different vegetation in his vicinity. All of a sudden, a mature-sized sambar ran off through the forest onto the opposite face with its big, brown body disappearing as quickly as it appeared.

Tilting around upon the stool I followed its progress via the swish of snapping twigs until I spotted a rear right leg protruding among the saplings. There was no chance of a shot. The animal disappeared completely off to the right upon the opposite face and I pondered if he'd been alone at the scrape as the amount of noise had been considerable.

About 15 minutes passed before I heard the slightest crunch of a twig snapping in the direction he'd taken but at the gully floor. I surmised he may have been crossing over as he continued his journey down to feed. Potential sambar reverberations were silent for the next 30 minutes or so as I scanned up in the direction of the scrape for further activity.

Turning to my right I was surprised to see a stag walking out of the bush angling up towards me at a distance of about 15 yards. His neck stretched out about a foot off the ground as if following a scent as his head and eyes flickered in and out between minimal foliage. As such, he didn't notice my movement as I quickly turned and lifted the rifle to shoot.

The bolt-action clacked, clunked and did the job. When he had walked out in front of me I only had time to quickly glance at

The tidy stag taken by Adrian.

his antlers and I guessed him to be about 20" but it was the meat I needed, as the freezer was completely empty. However, as I stepped nearer to him his antlers grew a little and I was well pleased with my sambar scrape stag.

Looking at his right rear leg and its coloration it was obviously the same deer I saw

earlier. It would seem he was a bit rut crazy, moving around patrolling his gully looking for hinds or rivals. When he first ran off I was sitting stationery and the wind had been in my face the entire time so being spooked by me wasn't the reason for his behaviour.

A few photos were quickly taken in fading light and a phone call made to my





meat packer. Removing a front and rear leg I headed off down the gully towards the vehicle. The growth was thick and it was difficult to find a reasonable path that could again be followed in subsequent trips. Sweating from battling brush and the general humidity, I made it to the track.

The revs of a four-wheel drive mingled

with the growl of a brushtail possum in a tree above as the vehicle lights illuminated relief within for the heavy task ahead. While the stag was butchered, mosquitoes swarmed.

Legs and cuts of meat were placed in bags to keep them clean as the exhausting task of the carryout began. To make

matters worse I took a path that made the carryout even longer than it needed to be. At last, the track was reached. Initially I had only gone into the forest to simply be there and in the end I took back more than I had bargained for. But then, that can sometimes happen when you find a sambar scrape in the forest. ■

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This application is made in full recognition of the Association's requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Association. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion. The Code can be found at ssaa.org.au/code

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Complete this section ONLY if you wish to use your membership of the SSAA to support your Genuine Reason for having a firearms licence. Register your SSAA activities by marking one or more of the following boxes:

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SSAA Victoria Conservation & Pest Management

THE SSAA VICTORIA Conservation & Pest Management program is an initiative started in conjunction with Parks Victoria operating under a Memorandum of Understanding. Accredited SSAA members volunteer to control pest species and problem species in national parks, state forests and on private holdings. The CPM provides accredited members the opportunity to participate in conservation, whereby effective methods are adopted to achieve real and positive conservation outcomes. To participate, you must be a member of the SSAA, then participate in an accreditation course with a written test and practical shoot.

For further information, write to SSAA Vic CPM at Unit 2, 26 Ellingworth Pde, Box Hill, Vic 3128, phone 03 8892 2777, email cpm@ssaavic.com.au or visit ssaavic.com.au

SSAA SA Conservation & Wildlife Management

SSAA SA Conservation & Wildlife Management contributes to the preservation of South Australia's natural heritage through the humane removal of feral and pest animals that threaten the survival of our native flora and fauna. Activities are undertaken in conjunction with government departments, non-government organisations, private landholders and universities.

Membership is open to SSAA members. To participate in field activities, you must successfully complete our accreditation course (theory) and safe firearms handling and marksmanship competency (practical). Activities are run throughout the year, ranging in duration from one to eight days, often involving camping out. As well as undertaking animal control activities, members are involved in wildlife monitoring and working bees.

For further information or to attend a quarterly meeting or range day, write to Conservation & Wildlife Management (SA) Inc, C/O Secretary, PO Box 188, Kent Town, SA 5071, email secretary@conservation-wildlife.asn.au or visit conservation-wildlife.asn.au

SSAA WA Conservation & Wildlife Management

SSAA WA has six individual branches that undertake Conservation & Wildlife Management activities throughout the state.

All participants must be full members of SSAA WA. Prior to taking part in sanctioned field activities, members must complete accuracy and safety tests, as well as a written assessment covering navigation, bushcraft and hunting ethics. In addition to formal programs, the branches conduct a range of social and training activities.

Our branches are involved in a variety of conservation-based activities in cooperation with private property managers, local municipalities and state government agencies. We work closely with other conservation organisations. Projects cover a wide range of feral and pest species, as well as agricultural protection.

For further information or membership inquiries, phone the State Coordinator on 0429 847 590 or email conservation@ssaawa.org.au

SSAA NT Conservation & Pest Management

SSAA NT CONSERVATION & Pest Management operates in the north of NT as part of the SSAA Conservation and Wildlife Management group, providing a free community service to government, pastoral properties and traditional landowners to assist with eradication of feral pest animals.

Membership is open to NT residents who successfully complete a theory and practical assessment. All field activities comply with NT Parks guidelines for the destruction of pest animals, the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals and the Model Code of Practice for the Destruction of Feral Animals.

Each year there are six to nine one-week field operations on remote pastoral properties and National Parks, involving four to five members.

Meetings to plan and coordinate activities are held as required at the SSAA Darwin Branch Range at Micket Creek Shooting Complex in Berrimah. Further details, including membership forms, can be located within the Darwin Branch clubhouse or through the contacts below.

For more information, write to CPM (NT), PO Box 90, Karama, NT 0813, email pduff@iinet.net.au or cscousins64@gmail.com

SSAA Qld Conservation & Wildlife Management

THE SSAA QLD Conservation & Wildlife Management Branch aims to assist in the protection and restoration of Australian biotic communities by developing feral animal control programs in conjunction with landholders, government departments and community-based groups.

Accreditation is open to SSAA members. Members must pass a written test and a marksmanship test before attending field activities. We conduct quarterly training and information weekends, covering a wide range of topics for members and prospective members. Among other things, training weekends cover conservation, hunter ethics, teamwork, bushcraft, navigation, first-aid, marksmanship and hunting techniques.

Durations range from one day or night to 10 days and usually involve camping on a property. Activities include hunting, shooting and trapping pest species (typically cats, pigs, foxes, wild dogs, feral cattle, deer and goats), and monitoring endangered species by data collection and radio tracking.

For further information, email cwm@ssaaqld.org.au or visit cwm.ssaaqld.org.au



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Around the campfire

with John Denman

We can waste time debating all manner of things to describe what we do; but when it comes down to the basics, we mainly hunt introduced species in Australia. Let's face it, if it were not for all these, what would we be left with? The idea of shooting kangaroos has little appeal to most of us. To a large extent, they are not very challenging. After all, they are a part of our national emblem. Certainly, nothing like hunting deer - an animal that has been prey for humans and other beings for more years than we can imagine.

A recent conversation over the dying coals of a good campfire concluded that feral animals are pretty much here to stay. The Australian environment has been overly kind to just about every introduced species we have. The one thing that hasn't been brought in are predators. Perhaps this is one reason why those introduced species have flourished so well. There are no tigers, lions or large toothy carnivores here apart from dingoes. In the original home bases of most of our introduced species there are and that's what controls the numbers, not man.

So, control is pretty much the word we use. Seldom do we hear anything about eradication. I recall as a youngster working in a gun store in Sydney's George Street many years back there was plenty of talk about hunting pigs and goats, but mention deer and the head-shaking would begin. The deer were there back then, had been since

the late 1890s but those who were 'in the know' kept it to themselves.

However, our cousins across the ditch in New Zealand had been hunting deer for decades. They even paid blokes to do it. Fast forward to today and those deer, tahrs and chamois have become a magnet to the tourist dollar. The Kiwis threw everything they had at the deer problem - helicopters, foot hunters, the lot. But in the end, they realised they were on a losing side.

Today in mainland Australia and Tasmania, deer have erupted in numbers. It may be considered a bit of a stretch but is it possible that today's introduced species could be tomorrow's natives? After all, the dingo is basically an Asian wolf, descended from a species that travelled down from Asia when a land bridge existed down to Gondwanaland. Sure, it was a long time ago but the dingo is our only carnivore, considered by many to be a native species.

Let's look at red deer for starters. Introduced by the Brits as a gift, the best population of reds is in the Brisbane Valley. In fact, a red stag is featured on the Queensland coat of arms. It must seem odd now that the left side of the coat of arms can be considered a feral pest by some. Many of our deer species come from the Sub-Continent including chital, sambar and hog deer, while rusa are found in the parts of the South Pacific. Sambar are usually found in the Himalayan foothills so no wonder they thrived in the Victorian High Country, where no tigers or leopards exist to molest them.

The fallow is just as widely spread throughout the globe, although its home range is usually seen as being in the wilder zones of Iran and Iraq as well as parts of Europe. Clearly the Australian conditions are more to its liking. Once again, apart from the occasional dingo or wild dog, they are largely without natural enemies.

However, kangaroos are still culled, but only under destruction permits, or professional shooters for meat and/or fur. There's a lot of emotion about the culling of kangaroos but the fact is that from the time of early settlement they've been the beneficiaries of pasture improvement and water courtesy of farm dams. The result is a surge in breeding. They are in no way endangered.

If any single introduced species is on every hunter's list it would have to be pigs. *Sus scrofa* is a descendant of the European wild pig, not just someone's baconer gone wild. They are one of the more challenging and potentially dangerous introductions and quite possibly the most harmful to the environment. It's no secret that they frequently enjoy a good feed of turtle hatchlings along the beaches of Northern Australia (see *Great Australian Outdoors Issue 2*), among other sins.

So, it's safe to say that as hunters the target list is still there and likely to be constant. Let's face facts - as deer in particular have survived in far more demanding environments than Australia, it's reasonable to expect there will be deer to hunt for a long time to come. ■

What does the SSAA do for the environment?

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA), along with its states and members, has introduced many beneficial and long-lasting conservation and wildlife projects in Australia, including:



- a **KOALA** habitat in Queensland
- the reintroduction of the **WESTERN QUOLL** and the protection of the **YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY** in South Australia



- assisting with a **TASMANIAN DEVIL** breeding program in New South Wales
- **DEER** research in multiple states
- raising community awareness about **PEST ANIMALS** in Western Australia
- ongoing removal of **CAMELS, DONKEYS** and **WILD PIGS** in the NT



We have worked alone and in collaboration with government and environmental organisations for decades - all in the name of conserving Australia's rich and varied wildlife.



SSAA