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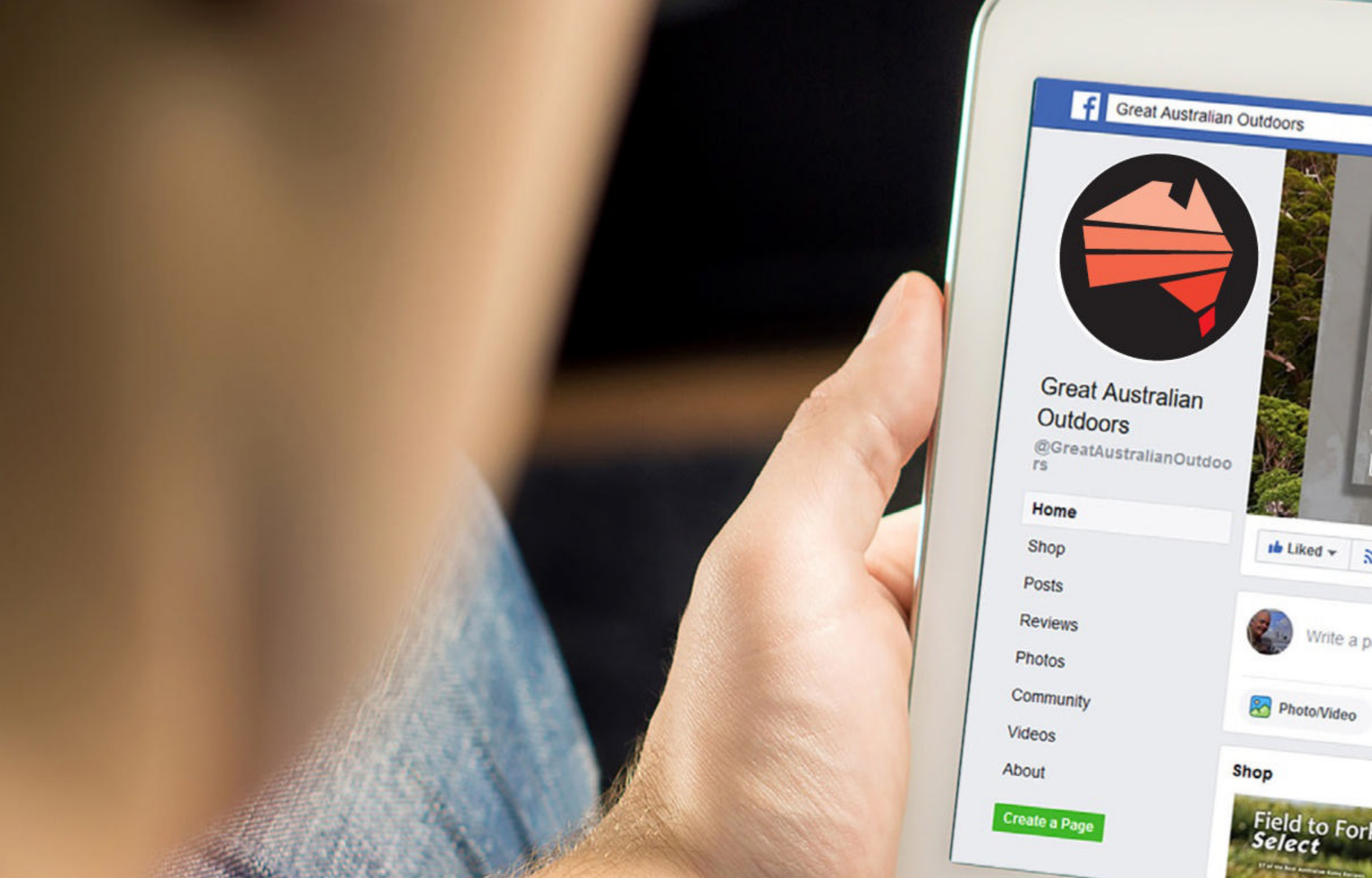


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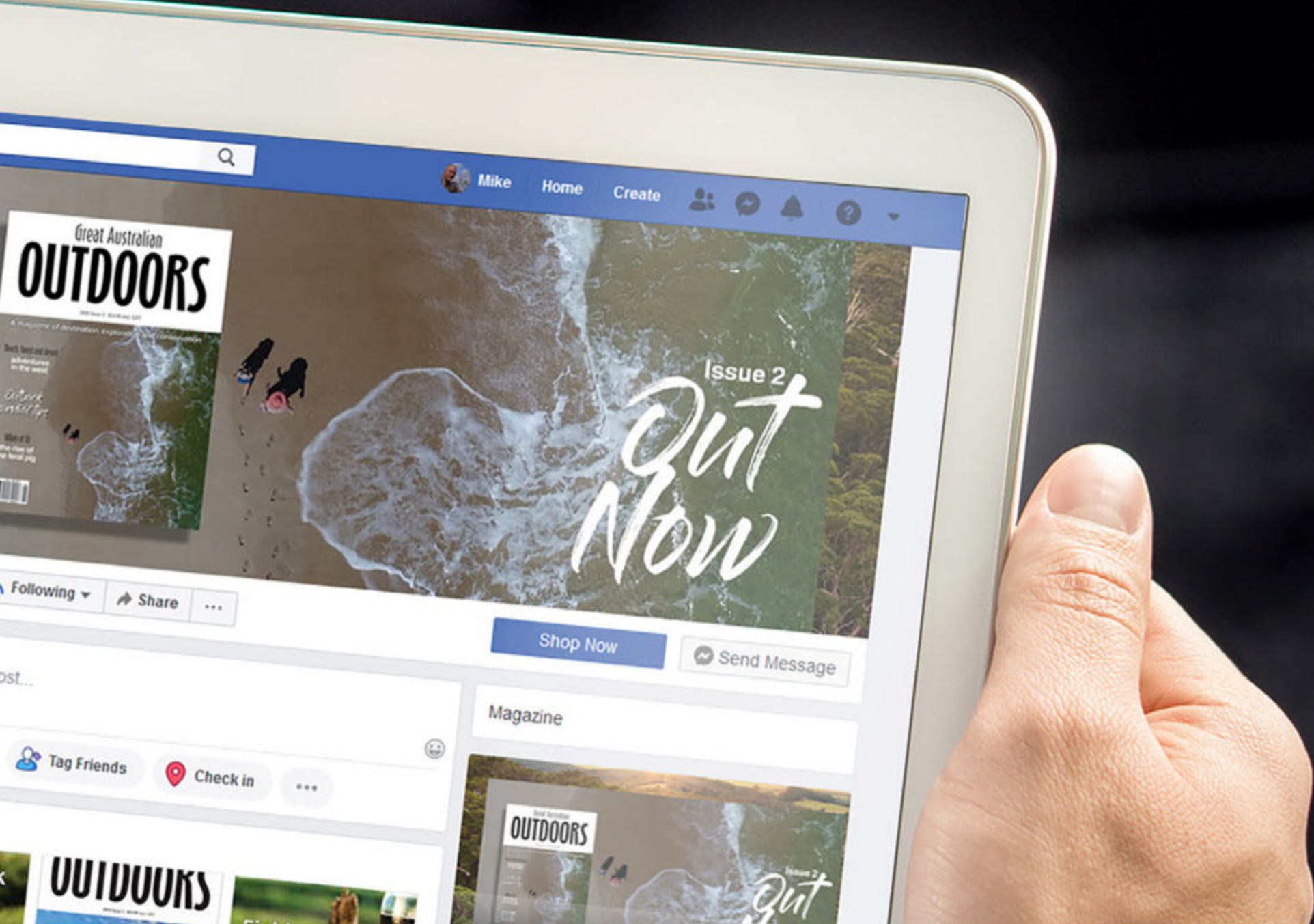
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Australian Hunter 81 is printed by IVE, 83
Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128

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From the Editor

Here we are at the midway mark of 2022, having enjoyed this year's roar and now looking ahead to how, where and what we will hunt for the remaining six months. In line with the deer rut we highlight how much procuring a buck really can mean to a hunter as Ben Smith helps his mate attain his first after much planning, Mick Chapman seizes a NZ buck in honour of his late hunting mentor and Chris Wardrop does whatever it takes to acquire a tasty fallow.

Further afield sees two vastly different ways to land rabbits for the pot with Don Caswell and Adrian Kenney ultimately delivering both in their results and rabbiting message – to have fun! We also triumph in the Top End where Gary Hall faces soggy conditions for hard-earned hogs, Brad Allen makes the most of an unavoidable situation to despatch buffaloes and pigs while Sam Garro details a chance maiden hunt for hefty bantengs and buffaloes resulting in hunting trophies and happy campers.

To round things off Scott Heiman and family visit a property teeming with game where they secure plenty of rewards for the present and seemingly the future while in Part 1 of 2 Wayne Kampe explains how to get started in bowhunting.

We fine-tune our long-range hunting in diverse South African locations, greatly improve our technique for tumble polishing cases, feature our well-founded method for testing ammunition and create a nifty DIY antler coat and hat rack.

Reviews and Edgeware cover the Ameristep Tent Chair Blind, Trijicon Huron 3-9x40 BDC Hunter Holds reticle riflescope, Fiocchi ammunition, Pelican 3310 Emergency Lighting Station, pig stopping cartridges, the everlasting .222, Benchmade 551-Griptilian folder, Cold Steel Master Hunter fixed blade and the finer points of knife sharpening.

We mix it up in the Camp Kitchen with tasty Greek-style goat, a culinary sensation in crispy fried rabbit and mouth-watering barbecue braised venison neck – ENJOY!

Thomas Cook
Editor

The long-awaited buck

Rewards all-round for **Ben Smith** and his mate on a much-anticipated getaway

In the annual hunting calendar, one of the most popular trips away is the deer rut. The fallow and red deer rut occurs at the same time every year and sees regional economies around rural Australia receive a welcome financial boost from an influx of travelling hunters.

So as April was upon us, my mate Gus from Victoria arrived via plane in NSW. I picked him up at the airport and we were off for the four-hour drive to the deer property.

We had planned a five-day hunt and allowed for travel days at each end of that time. We wanted to maximise our stay in the hills to try and land Gus a trophy red stag or fallow buck for his wall back home. My freezer was also low, so the goal of harvesting free range meat was on the list too.

After setting up camp, our first hunt was late afternoon, into the prime hunting time of dusk. We decided on a low-impact strategy of sitting and glassing some clearings that were choked with blackberry bushes. All was quiet, except for a few rabbits.

I was concerned that under the full moon a lot of the game animals, including deer,

would be out feeding all night, and resting up most of the day. This would give us little opportunity to target them unless we worked hard, covering lots of kilometres.

Around the campfire that night, we discussed a plan of action for the next day. Knowing this property well, we thought it would be best to stick to my tried and tested methods.

Our alarms were set for an early rise before the sun came up, so we were into the prime deer spots once there was enough shooting light. This all went to plan but it appeared the deer didn't receive the memo.

As we were going through a gate, Gus found an old rusty horseshoe in the long grass. With me being semi-superstitious, I put the horseshoe sitting upright on the main gate post. I muttered to Gus: "this will bring us luck we need later on." Little did we know my words would ring true.

We continued to walk the next few kilometres not seeing much, apart from the wallabies that always give you a semi-heart attack due to them taking flight at the last second. It had rained heavily during the



Checking trail cameras.

previous week so there was plenty of fresh sign about.

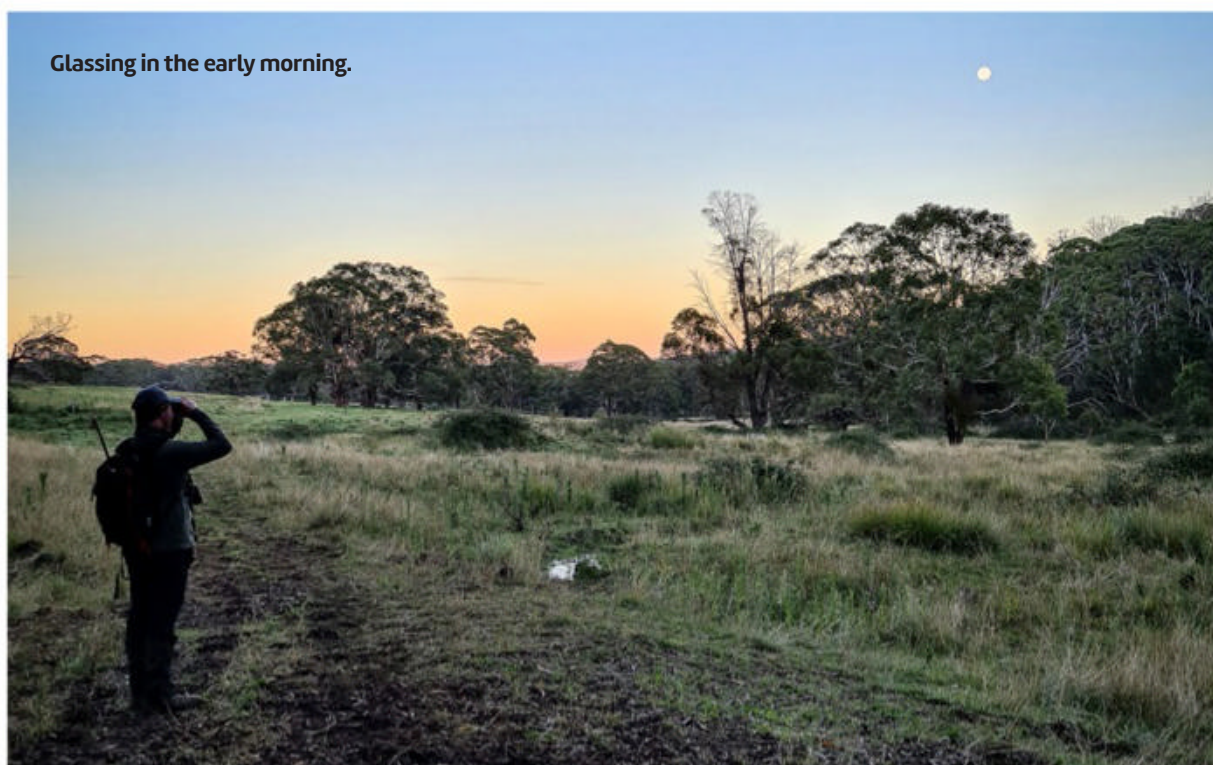
There were deer prints – red and fallow, pig and fox prints. We knew that game animals were about, but we just had to do the hard part – find them.

As we neared the corner on a farm track, a flurry of activity occurred with birds taking off and a fallow doe and fawn skipping along at a brisk pace. There was no chance of a safe shot, so we just observed them as they quickly disappeared into the thicker dogwood scrub. At least we had begun seeing deer.

We continued our morning walk, with the full moon still on the distant horizon. It was then we started to notice fresh rubs and scrapes in the area. The excitement levels began to increase.

The morning was getting away from us, the wind was still playing up and we had gone halfway through our planned circuit. I decided to sidle along a hillside track which led to another trail camera I had placed out over a spot which always sees some action.

I recovered the SD card and changed the batteries over. I usually manage about 4–6 months out of these batteries and perhaps 3000-plus photos depending on



Glassing in the early morning.



The scenic afternoon sit-and-wait spot.

The long-awaited buck

the season and weather. The anticipation began to grow because I had a laptop sitting back at camp to check the SD cards.

After one more hour of walking, we finally arrived back in camp. It had been a four-hour hunt which went from the flat country, right up into the hills. Camp was halfway between to augment our access to any possible game.



Ben's Polaris buggy came in handy.

Later in the day, after we recovered from our walk, I spoke with the farmer and arranged access to a neighbouring property which is usually a guaranteed spot to find deer or even pigs. This vicinity is especially good if you want meat animals because you can literally drive a vehicle up to recover them – what a luxury.

Just before 'deer o'clock' we loaded up my Polaris buggy and drove over. The plan was to park the buggy and work the wind to try and nab a freezer filler doe or even a buck for Gus.

After all the rain that had fallen, the vegetation was ridiculously high and thick in parts, much to the liking of deer. Again, there was plenty of fresh sign, but we would have to work to find the deer.

About halfway through our planned stalk, we heard and saw some movement to our left. We made sure we correctly identified our target as deer. Gus lined up on a fallow doe that presented broadside and made a clean shot with his .308.

Freezer filler box ticked. I gutted her and we recovered the whole carcass to butcher back at camp. Darkness was catching up with us before we could find any more deer, so we walked to my buggy and began

to drive towards camp. Along the way Gus spotted a fox and managed to pull it up with a whistle. One more shot and it was one less fox to worry about.

Waking up to the next morning's alarm, I started preparing my camo for another day of hunting. We discussed being flexible and working the wind to our advantage, rather than walking a pre-set route around the property.

After another morning's walk of about 8km, no animals were spotted. This left us a bit disheartened, but experience had told me 'do the miles and get the smiles'. It was surely only a matter of time before our luck would change to come across some game animals or even a buck.

We were back at camp just before lunchtime again. A few hours later we drove to the property. During the drive we formulated another plan for the afternoon hunt. We would sit over some fresh scrapes and see what turned up.

We loaded the buggy and drove to an area we had scouted before. It was an easy drive but a hard walk into our planned sit-and-wait spot. We had to navigate our way through various rocky gullies and thick vegetation – the perfect hiding spot for game animals.

Upon arrival to our 'Spot X', we split up to be able to glass as much of the country



Walking past a fresh fallow buck scrape.



One less fox.

below us as possible. We stayed within view of each other so if an animal came along, we could signal what it was.

After 90 minutes of patient sitting and glassing with our binoculars, we only spotted a herd of cows and a couple of black wallabies, which looked like pigs to begin with.

We decided to stalk back to the buggy until dark. Apart from a couple of rabbits and wallabies not much was seen, and we drove back to camp under the light of the full moon.

The next morning the alarm went off 30 minutes before sunrise. We checked the wind direction and headed off. We were starting to become despondent and worried the earlier drought had killed off most of the deer. But as with all hunting, you have to put the time in to gain the results. Sitting on the couch at home looking at your phone will not earn you any pay-off.

We were halfway through our planned morning stalk and started to walk towards a fork in some tracks. I made the decision to take the lower track and look through some thick dogwood areas where deer could bed up for the day and feel safe.

We were walking next to each other talking in low voices about the previous events, when I noticed a mob of kangaroos bedded up next to the track we were on. They did not even move or react, which had me thinking our chances were good up ahead.

We continued along this track for another 150m when we came face to face with a solid-bodied fallow buck.

He was standing broadside and from what I could tell he was worth taking the shot. At the same time Gus took his Sauer rifle off his shoulder as the buck pranced 20m away into some thin dogwood.

I made a couple of doe calls and the prancing buck suddenly stopped and stood broadside again. At that point I was hoping Gus could see the buck in his scope cross-hairs, when he suddenly fired and the buck crashed down into the scrub.

He was thrilled with his first fallow buck. This trip wasn't easy but it all came together with luck in the end. I caped the deer out, butchered the meat and we took his antlers so Gus could have them for his wall at home. ■





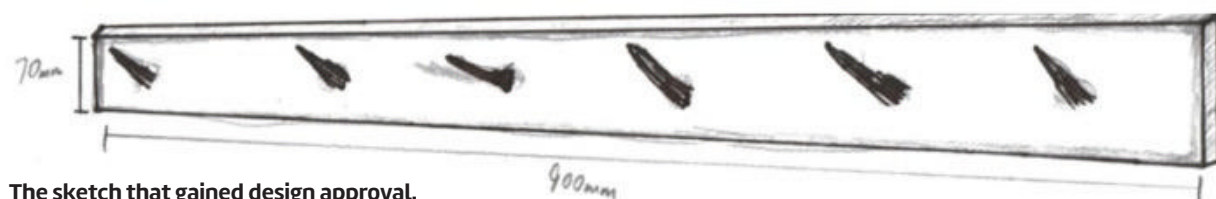
antler coat rack

Chris Wardrop fills in the spare time with a handy assignment

Like so many of us, the pandemic has seen me spending more time at home than normal. It was during one of the lockdowns that my wife mentioned she would like to order a hat/coat rack, with an unpronounceable name, from a certain Scandinavian furniture chain. I was eager for something to keep me occupied, if even for a short while, and immediately had an idea that would not involve any Allen keys.

I am fortunate to have occasional opportunities to shoot fallow deer on private property to protect crops and pasture. As is often the case, this is usually done under spotlight. While I understand the farmers who see these animals as nothing but pests, I have an appreciation of them as both food and game animals.

So even when conducting pest control, I strive to utilise as much of the deer as



The sketch that gained design approval.

possible. That is how I came to have three sets of fallow spike antlers sitting on a shelf in the garage. Until the discussion about the rack, I had no plans for the antlers and was starting to question why I had been collecting them at all.

A quick sketch was enough for my antler rack to gain provisional approval to be hung inside the house and I set to work. Somewhere in the back corner of the garden shed a length of plain hardwood paling was sitting unused. Once found, the edge was tidied up with a cordless router using a 'rounding over bit'. The router work took considerably less time than finding

timber. After a coat of jarrah coloured decking oil, the fresh edge blended nicely with the face of the paling.

While waiting for the stain to dry sufficiently to touch, I prepared the antlers to be mounted to the timber. Each antler was secured in a small bench vice (with rubber jaw guards for some protection). I used a small compass saw with a timber blade to trim any bone beneath the pedicle while also trying to obtain a good angle.

Once all six were done, I placed them individually back in the vice, taking the time to set the now flat bases parallel to the ground. In the centre of each base I drilled a 6mm diameter and 10–15mm deep hole. A 6mm x 30mm furniture dowel pin was glued into each with PVA wood glue.

Before corresponding holes were drilled in the board, I affixed some picture mounting hardware for attaching the rack to the wall. The first and last holes in the timber were drilled 50mm from the edge, and the others with 150mm between them. The antlers were then secured in each hole with a little more PVA glue.

The finished coat rack has been put to good use and has far more character than anything that may come in a flat pack. ■



Chris used hardwood paling he found in the shed.

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Sitting blind

Are you the fidgety type? **Don Caswell** believes the Ameristep Tent Chair Blind is the answer

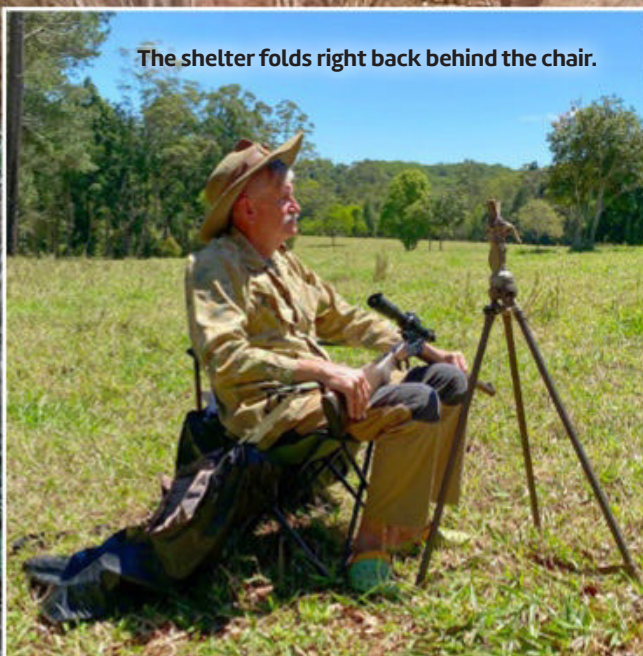
The use of hides, or blinds, for wildlife watching, photography and hunting is much more common in Europe and America than it is here in Australia.

Long ago, I recognised the need for, and usefulness of, blinds for my outdoor pursuits. Over the years I have made and bought a variety of blinds. Initially, I just constructed lean-to hides from branches but quickly discovered that cattle are much more curious than they appear. They are also quite destructive in their blundering bovine investigations of new features in their domain. So, my interest in portable commercial blinds was prompted quite early in the piece.

I have to say, a hide is not always necessary either. By wearing appropriate clothing, like Australian Blackfoot Designs break up camo patterns, and making use of available features in the terrain, it is possible to arrange close encounters with even the most wary and elusive wildlife.

On many occasions, I have been able to put myself in positions for surprisingly adjacent confrontations with wild dogs and deer by making use of clumps of grass, weeds or fence posts in an otherwise open landscape. An important aspect of this technique is the ability to remain still and make any necessary movements very slowly.

The cleverly designed portable blind, with large front window open.



The shelter folds right back behind the chair.

Along the way, it has been my observation that few people can sit still for lengthy periods, or even a short time. It requires a lot of discipline, especially when mosquitos or march flies are biting the heck out of you.

For fidgety types, or just particularly open, exposed positions and really close proximity, a blind can be the difference between success and failure. The portable blinds that combine the most complete cover with a comfortable chair, for those long hours in situ, are the tent chair blinds.

The Ameristep Tent Chair Blind combines your standard folding camp chair with a clever, telescopic hood that can be pulled up and over the chair to totally conceal the occupant. The space available under the hood is surprisingly generous. I am not restricted from using my rifle off my shooting tripod in its normal fashion. I can also accommodate my telephoto camera.

For a long session of waiting for a shot, or a photograph, the camp-style chair certainly makes for a comfortable wait. On crack of dawn winter mornings, with a

cold wind blowing, it is quite snug inside the shelter of the hide. The Ameristep Tent Chair Blind comes with both pegs and an array of anchor points around the ground edge to secure it in windy conditions. The instructions contain a clear warning to keep all flame and heat sources away from the flammable tent fabric, something to keep in mind on a cold day if you should be inclined to heat your abode. Or, before you stoke up your pipe.

Another warning to be aware of is not to leave the blind outdoors for long stretches as the fabric will be degraded by UV light.

There are zippered windows on all sides, including the rear. The front section features a small window within a much larger window, giving the user two options. The blind folds up and can be conveniently transported in the carry bag provided.

The carry bag has straps that allow it to be slung as a backpack, making for hands-free carrying to where it is required. All up, the weight is about 6kg. For the convenience of a roomy, completely enclosed hide with a comfortable folding chair, I found the size

of the carry bag and the weight to be quite acceptable. It has gained a lot of use for bird and wildlife photography. My chance of success when watching for wild dogs returning to a close-by carcass that lies in an open exposed area is also on the up. Well worth it for about \$200 delivered – jump online. ■



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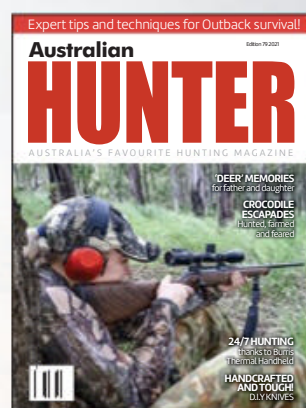
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Get a Griptilian

After some initial doubt, **Jan Kaptein** found the Benchmade 551-1 folding knife a decent field option

With technological advances such as ball-bearing washers and better machining, folding knives are now a viable alternative to fixed blades. Many cheaper, non-modular knives like the Opinel No. 08 (see *Australian Hunter* 77) will do right by you for a couple of seasons.

However, modularity and pleasing steels are likeable in knives. And this is where things turn complicated. Once you decide you have a bit of money to go towards a knife, there are endless possibilities. By narrowing the search down to hunting or utility blades, things become less cluttered.

However, there are vast quantities of knives that are touted as 'hunters' but do not fit the bill. In a search for knives that will stand hard use in the field, 'Benchmade' pops up. The specifications seem sound, but somehow they never appear unique enough to stand out.

This changed with the Benchmade 551-1 Griptilian and its CPM-20CV blade. Besides the perfect blade material, it is modular and light for its size. As a result, it is easy to carry in your pocket on the clip or with the clip removed, it packs flat in your bag.

Benchmade is the current name of an American producer of what they themselves describe as 'semi-custom' knives. These are precision machined products that are hand assembled. The brand name derives from this process, where final assembly of the knives takes place on a bench so they are partly hand-made. Merge the two and you have Benchmade.

In order to be able to offer innovative products, Benchmade works with several custom knifemakers to whom they lend their assembly processes. Their limited warranty does not match that of some other premium knife manufacturers, but they do offer a free lifetime 'LifeSharp' service. What

this boils down to is that they will clean, oil, adjust and sharpen the knife. Fine in theory, but in practice it means shipping your knife to Oregon, which is not so useful for anyone outside America.

The knife comes well packaged in a sturdy cardboard box together with some paperwork and a little cloth bag. The knife is about as large as I like my folders to be and feels good and secure in hand.

The grip is in grey and blue G10 on a metal frame. The knife is available in various types of blade steel – mine is in CPM-20CV with a hardness of 59–61 HRC. It is a martensitic stainless steel produced by Crucible Industries, which is sold as a premium blade material. The Griptilian blade is a sheepsfoot (drop-point) design with a straight edge that is 88mm long, 31mm high and 2.92mm wide. Overall, the knife measures 205mm – when folded it comes in at 118mm.

The blade opens with a thumb stud and securely locks in place when the knife is opened using an axis lock. A belt clip comes pre-mounted, but it is easy to change it to the other side of the knife or remove it altogether. The Griptilian tips the scales at 110 grams. Due to its modular design and easy availability, the knife is simple to pull apart and there are many replacement parts available. For those interested in making their knife unique, there are also custom parts available. These vary from titanium belt clips and inlays for the grip, to mounting studs in all colours of the rainbow.

Straight out of the box, the experience with the Griptilian is not great. The G10 handle feels a bit plastic, it does not open super-smooth and the blade is not razor sharp. However, this is somewhat expected from a knife at this price point. Even worse is the play in the blade, so you'll likely have to grab your tools to fix this.

So sharp, after being
run over the stone.

You'll then have to sharpen the knife on a stone, which will take about 15 minutes to have the knife ready for proper use. However, after this somewhat rocky start, you'll quickly come to like the knife. The break-in period for it to open smoothly is rather short and once sharpened, the CPM-20CV blade has great edge retention.

In daily field use when out hunting, the retention makes the Griptilian excellent for processing meat. Edge retention is effective enough that a sharpening stone is not required for a few days if you want to pack light. CPM-20CV steel could chip, but it by no means is a fragile steel.

Any chipping issues would likely be traced to abuse like bushcrafting chores such as batoning (always use an axe if possible). I have hit bones when processing animals with the Griptilian and have yet to see any chips. The light weight makes the knife easy to carry and the open design means you can smoothly rinse it off after it becomes dirty.

If and when needed, you can also pull the knife apart to thoroughly clean it, which is worth doing once in a while, although

there doesn't seem to be any issues with oxidation of any kind. Also, the G10 grip is easy to clean, pretty much impervious to grime, grease and blood if rinsed off after use and if you ever need a replacement, they are convenient to find.

The axis lock works well and quickly becomes familiar. You could easily remove the belt clip, but it's decent and useful in the field. You'll likely employ a slightly narrower blade around camp.

After all that, the one thing I would primarily change is actually the belt clip. This may sound surprising but it is a tip-up only affair. While this makes the knife quick to open upon pulling it from your pocket because your fingers are essentially already on the thumb-stud. It also means that if the knife were ever to open in your pocket, you risk cutting yourself on it.

Of course, this is a personal preference, but I prefer tip-down designs in general. Besides this, I would like the knife to come from the box properly adjusted and sharpened. Mine may have just been an exception though. One thing to keep in



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Get a Griptilian

mind is that great edge retention almost invariably comes with more effort being required to gain the desired edge. CPM-20CV is no exception here. In fact, it can be a real ‘dog’ to sharpen. It is well worth the effort though.

The bottom line is that I am happy with my Griptilian. It has great blade steel, is modular, does not weigh much and works wonderfully as a meat processing knife in the field. Somehow, I do not use it much for anything else.

Before I forget, the 551-1 is marketed as a ‘Mel Pardue design’, as also etched into the blade. This does not do anything for me, but may mean something to you. All I can say after fairly extensively using the knife in the field is that I have not run into any design issues besides the position of the belt clip. The knife is easy to clean after use and requires little maintenance.

For those who are interested, it can be customised with a wide array of custom parts. If CPM-20CV is not what you are

after, the Benchmade 551-1 Griptilian also comes in S30V. This is a fine steel too and the price is significantly lower. Given my personal experience, I recommend getting your hands on the knife from a reputable outlet like knifesupplies.com.au ■

Specifications:

Dimensions closed/open:

118mm/205mm

Type of blade steel: CPM-20CV

Hardness: 59-61 HRC

Style and grind: Plain edge, flat grind

Blade shape: Sheepsfoot (drop point)

Blade dimensions: 88mm x 31mm x 2.92mm

Opening system: Thumb stud

Lock: Axis lock

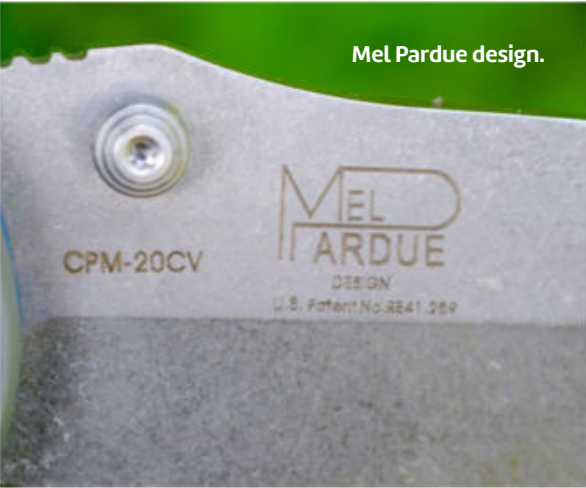
Material handle: G10

Pocket clip: Tip-up (left and right)

Right or left-handed: Ambidextrous

Weight: 110 grams

Price: About \$350



The Griptilian is fully modular and employs quality components.



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Riflescope the real deal

Brad Allen focuses on the Trijicon Huron 3-9x40 BDC Hunter Holds reticle

Made in the US, Trijicon optics have been gaining in popularity for some time and most shooters will associate their scopes and optics with their coloured, illuminated reticles.

The reticles are illuminated via fibre optics and the radioactive element tritium which negates the need for batteries. These reticles automatically glow brighter as the environment they are used in grows brighter, which is exactly what is required, with no need to turn up or down any brightness control like most electronic reticle scopes/optics. Clearly, their simplicity and toughness are why specific Trijicon models, such as the ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight), are some of the preferred optics for military battle rifles worldwide.

Although popular in the US, Trijicon hunting riflescopes are not as admired in

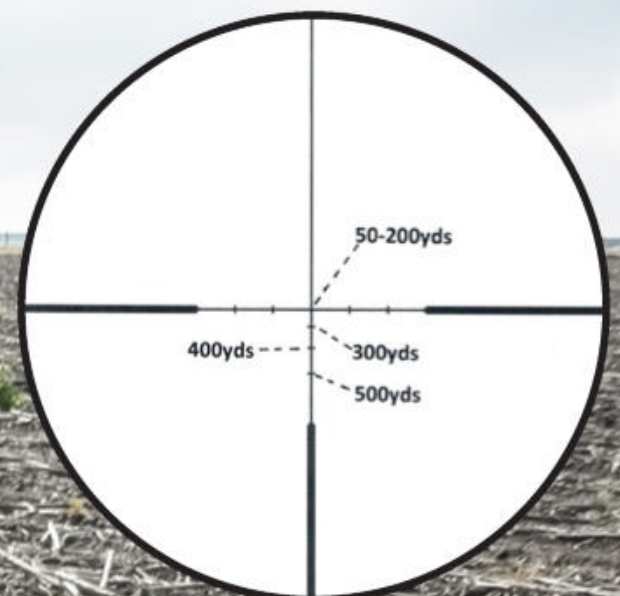
Australia and after using them, you have to wonder why. My introduction to the scopes came recently when my mate Terry acquired a lightly used Trijicon AccuPoint 3-9x40 with the illuminated yellow triangle post reticle. When he evaluated his Trijicon side by side with a Leupold VX3 and a Leupold VX5 at dusk, the quality of the glass in the Trijicon was apparent, when he could detect no difference between the Trijicon and the Leupold VX5.

The American standard deer hunting scope has always been the 3-9x40 with a 1" tube, and for good reason. They tend to be lighter and are obviously less bulky, which equates to a better-balanced rifle/scope combination. The main advantage of the larger 30mm tubes is being able to allow greater latitude with reticle movement inside the tube, but most modern engineered hunting rifle/scope mount combinations don't really need this extra amount of adjustment.

I have owned and used several quality scopes with 30mm tubes and quite frankly, for my type of hunting, they are just too bulky and tend to unbalance what would otherwise be a well-balanced hunting rifle/scope combination.

However, I do possess a Schmidt & Bender 1.5-6x42 with the red dot in a 30mm scope tube. It is a phenomenal scope, and without doubt, one of the clearest I own, but it is bulky and does tend to unbalance a walkabout hunting rifle, but is fine for stand hunting. Additionally, the battery-operated red dot type reticles are just one more thing that can go wrong on a hunt.

I came to the conclusion that I needed (or just wanted) a new scope, but definitely with some form of bullet drop compensation



The Trijicon Huron BDC Hunter Holds reticle.



Brad on the bench, taking aim at the steel gong at 300 yards

contained within the scope's reticle. The Trijicon's quality was quite a revelation to me, so when Terry advised me that Trijicon had released a stock standard type 3-9x40 riflescope with a 1" tube, the Huron, without any reticle illumination, but with a BDC Hunter Holds reticle, I was indeed interested. The Huron 3-9x40 is a Second Focal Plane (SFP) scope and is also offered with Standard Duplex and German #4 reticles.

Some years ago, I used a Leupold VX3 with their BDC Boone and Crocket reticle and was suitably impressed, so with Trijicon offering the 3-9x40 Huron with Hunter Holds reticle, I decided to give it a try.

With first impressions, the scope appeared to be quite handsome and well made, radiating obvious quality and seemed every bit as clear as other high-quality scopes I own. Incidentally, the 3-9 is the only scope in the Huron range that has the 1" tube, with all others having 30mm tubes.

The Huron has an Easy Focus eyepiece which is one of my favourite features and the scope's lenses are multicoated for anti-reflection and anti-scratching with

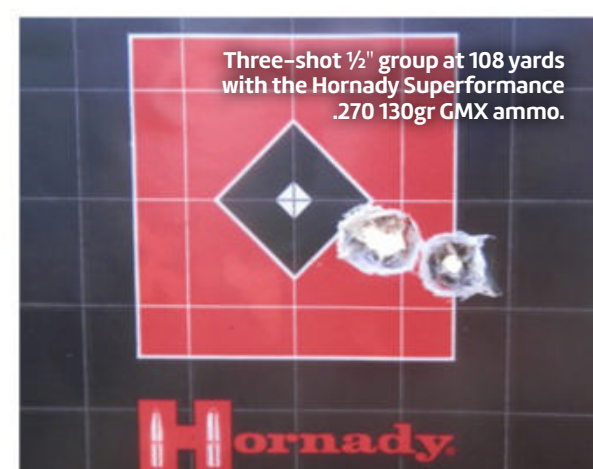
Trijicon's own formula coatings. The easily grasped turret adjustments look to be slightly larger than others, but they also have a quick zero adjustment.

You simply pull the adjustment up, move the '0' to the mark on the turret, then push the adjustment back into place. My only concerns were that the reticle may be too fine in the centre of the cross-hairs in low-light conditions and I would have preferred that the outer/thicker reticle bars were a tad thicker. However, time on the SSAA range has so far dispelled my concerns.

I mounted the Huron on my favourite hunting rifle, my old paddle stock Ruger .270 and after getting rounds onto paper with a handful of old reloads, I broke out the Hornady Superformance .270 130gr GMX ammo. The next group produced the smallest group that I've ever shot with that rifle: 3-shots into a .5" group at 108 yards. It has been my experience that a rifle will either love or hate this kind of super performance ammo. Terry's own Merkel .270 did not digest it well and all groups hovered around 3" or more at 100m.

Everything appeared to be going fine at this stage, so I made some minor adjustments to put the group 1.5" high at 100 yards, which should then be consistent with a 200-yard zero. We then moved out to 300 yards where we proceeded to have a few shots at a steel gong target, using the first hash mark under the centre cross, which Trijicon states should be a 300-yard zero.

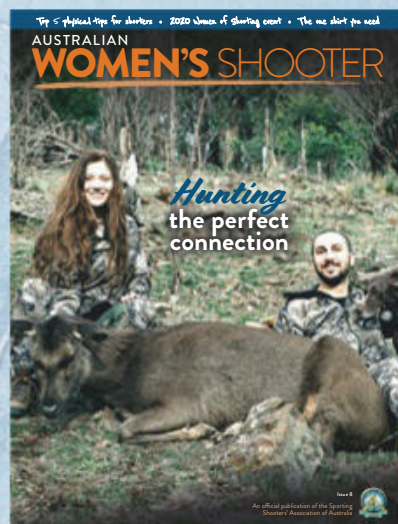
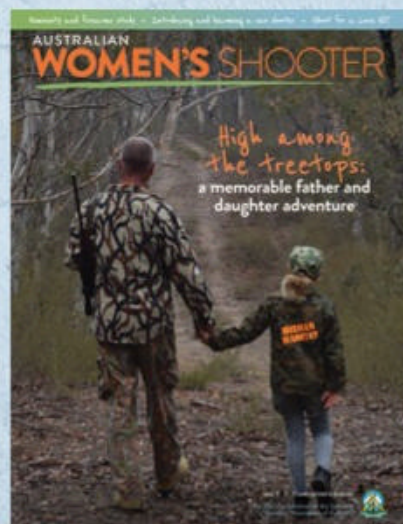
My next two shots hit right where Trijicon said they should, but were a smidgen to the right, but a few clicks left soon fixed that. To say I was becoming more impressed with this scope after every shot would be an understatement. Well made, clear,



AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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Riflescope the real deal

precise and reasonably priced, you can't ask much more than that from any scope and the BDC Hunter Holds reticle was performing as advertised.

In the real world, with a light hunting rifle, a 300-yard shot at any game animal is a long way. Having respect for the animals I hunt and considering my own ability under field conditions, I think 300 yards is about as far as I am prepared to have a shot at any game animal. However, in time I intend to have a crack at steel targets out to 400 or 500 yards just to see how the Huron's Hunter Holds reticle performs at those extended distances.

In recent times, there has been an abundance of affordable, high-quality scopes (mostly European) on the Australian market. Due to the COVID crisis when the normal supply of hunting equipment was interrupted, my deer hunting mates in Victoria discovered the Meopta range of hunting scopes and love their performance and are now converts.

Likewise, the Swarovski Z3 range are also wonderfully clear and good value hunting riflescopes too, as are the Docter array of German scopes. I've also had a Zeiss Conquest 3-9x42 on my Kimber .338 Win Mag now for many years and find that it is at least the equal in clarity of my Leupold VX3 scopes.

Comparison test: *Leupold VX3 2.5-8x36, Zeiss Conquest 3-9x42, Swarovski Z3 3-9x36, Schmidt & Bender 1.5-6x42 and Trijicon Huron 3-9x40:*

I set up some magazine pages in the backyard, and just on dusk I did a 'side by side' comparison between the scopes. As the light dimmed, it was apparent that all five scopes were performing to a high level, but as the light faded further, the Schmidt & Bender and the Swarovski were the clearest of the bunch, being near impossible to pick between them.

However, I was pleasantly surprised when the Trijicon ran a close third place, with the Zeiss Conquest and then the Leupold following up the rear. Again, they are all wonderfully clear scopes, but the Trijicon was only just shaded by the Swarovski and the Schmidt & Bender, which speaks volumes for the clarity of the Trijicon glass.

So, there you have it – the Trijicon Huron 3-9x40 is a great value scope for the money. TSA Outdoors are the Aussie distributor and will obtain the scope for you through Trijicon for \$1299.

It's an excellent scope for my purposes, (lots of walking in steep country with a light mountain rifle) and I wouldn't hesitate in recommending it, if you're in the market for a quality 3-9x40 hunting riflescope.

Visit tsaoutdoors.com.au for contact info. ■



MINI-REVIEW

Don Caswell



Fiocchi 55-grain PSP loading in .223 Remington.

Fiocchi ammunition

Fiocchi has been producing top-notch ammunition since 1876 and is still based in Lecco, Italy, where it started, but in recent times has built facilities in the USA as well.

Fiocchi make shotshell, centrefire rifle, pistol and rimfire ammunition for hunting, competition, defence and training purposes. The firm sponsors a wide variety of professional and competitive shooters, including a stable of Olympians. It also supports club and youth shooter programs with assistance for their ammo needs.

Their Hyperformance bracket of centre-fire ammo features loadings of premium projectiles specific to hunting, in 10 popular calibres from .243 Winchester to .300 Winchester Magnum. Projectile loadings include Sierra GameKing, Hornady SST and Swift Scirocco.

The Field Dynamics section offers Hornady V-Max loadings in the varmint

calibres from .204 Ruger to .22-250 Remington and then their own soft-point loadings for game from .22-250 up to .45-70 Govt.

Fiocchi ammunition is distributed in Australia by TSA Outdoors, who supplied a generous amount of soft-point and polymer-tipped ammo in .223 Rem and .243 Win for testing.

At the SSAA rifle range, I fired many three-shot groups using my Weatherby HSP Varmint rifle in .223 Rem and my Sauer 101 XT in .243 Win. I had no problem averaging 0.5 MOA in my .223 Rem Varmint rifle and, similarly, 1 MOA or better with the Sauer .243 Win. Pleasingly, the Fiocchi 100-grain soft-point loading was rated for hunting boar and deer. I measured a MV of 2750fps for these 100gr .243 soft-points.

In the field, I was able to use the Fiocchi extensively and was most happy with the .243 Win 100-grain soft-point's

performance on both large boars and deer. Likewise, the highly accurate .223 Rem loadings enabled me to precisely account for a variety of varmints up to wild dogs in size. ■



Fiocchi 100-grain PSP loading in .243 Winchester.

A buck for Barry

The legacy of his good mate and hunting companion spurs a trip to NZ for **Mick Chapman**

There is something about a fallow buck that gets my blood pumping – probably initiated by my friendship with the late deer hunting guide, Barry Nelis. Barry was an experienced hunter, having travelled to many exotic destinations, and was a wealth of information.

During my treks to the Mary Valley in South East Queensland, I would make a point of catching up with Barry. He was a real larrikin of a man, who loved a joke and a good yarn and was rambunctious in his story telling. Barry was never one for allowing truth to be an obstacle to a great story, intriguing his audiences with a wonderfully humorous account of his latest narrative.



Barry Nelis with a boar taken a couple of years before he passed away.

As we were both ex-servicemen, when we sat down for a coffee he might begin with a yarn from his past, when he served in the RAAF, knowing I would be able to relate to it because of my years spent in the force. However, invariably the conversations would circle back to hunting. He'd talk of an adventure from Africa or some other colourful destination he had hunted or an experience while guiding his clients for red deer.

One occasion, on my arrival at the hunting property, Barry produced a fallow buck head he had managed to take the day before. A menil (brown with white spots) buck was no record breaker but a good representative of the breed. This started Barry chatting about one of his favourite topics – hunting fallow deer. He vociferously claimed when he shot a Spanish black he would have a fallow grand slam. His description of the Spanish black kindled my interest in hunting fallow.

I was privileged to share Barry's last hunting camp with his brother Gordon, days before Barry's passing. I shot a red stag. Just after the shot, Barry made radio contact with me asking where I was. He then informed me he and Gordon were on their way to help me retrieve the meat and head. On their arrival it became evident that Barry was having problems, so Gordon and I managed the carry-out while both of us kept an eye on him.



A full-page background image showing two hunters in camouflage gear standing on a grassy hill, looking through binoculars at a vast, calm blue lake under a clear sky. The foreground is filled with out-of-focus green and yellow vegetation.

Jovial to the end, Barry struggled to make it off the mountain. I left the camp late that afternoon. The next day, I rang Barry who assured me he had an appointment with his doctor. The following day I received a phone call from Gordon saying Barry was gone. Barry was forever garrulous about his desire to hunt a Spanish black. His flamboyant description stirred me.

Fortunately for me while hunting in NSW some years ago I took a beautiful specimen of a Spanish black. I often

look at that mount, allowing my mind to wander. I can almost hear Barry describing the Spanish black.

At the time of taking this great specimen it could have been the end for me and fallow, but it was only just beginning. I love the palmate antlers and the various coloured capes, plus there is nothing more enjoyable than fallow steaks on my dinner plate. When I am fallow hunting, I never know what to expect, adding to the intrigue. Though I may have some expectations, my experience is

that these have never been satisfied, though each animal I have taken proved to be a milestone in my hunting journey.

Having never hunted in New Zealand's South Island, my anticipation had been enhanced by conversations with others who had been there. I had hunted the North Island with its challenges of the manuka forest, active volcanoes and rugged mountains. But the South Island is something to be experienced. Where we hunted was stunning.

Spectacular scenery as Scott, Will and Raynardt glass for fallow bucks.

A buck for Barry

Scott and I landed in Queenstown, with our primary targeted species, a red stag, with an option to hunt a fallow buck as well. Both of us managed to secure our personal best red stags, so now the chase for a fallow had begun. At this point we were to separate, as another guide was available. Will, a 24-year-old local and a veritable mountain goat, took me hunting for an Arapawa ram. I was successful in taking one while Scott and Raynardt were to hunt fallow.

I arrived back at camp well satisfied after taking my ram. When Scott returned, nothing would wipe the smile off his face. He had managed a screamer of a fallow buck that any hunter would be proud to hang on their wall. Scott's enthusiasm immediately triggered my levels of anticipation for the coming day's fallow hunt.

As we drove out of camp the next morning, Raynardt asked me what I was looking

for in a fallow buck. Not overly particular, I laid down some parameters. First and foremost, I wanted an older animal, unfazed if points had been rubbed down or broken. Though I did want the buck to have good guards, wide palms and longish main beams. Coat colour didn't matter, though I would prefer it wasn't a black. As we arrived at the gate to public land, daylight was breaking.

We drove up a mountain, rounding yet another bend, and silhouetted against the morning sky was a small mob of fallow on the ridge opposite. Raynardt allowed the vehicle to roll to a halt. We began glassing the mob. One deer was a stand-out, having long palmation with reasonable width. It was a good deer but not quite what I had in mind.

Scott and I continued to glass the mob, while Raynardt disappeared behind the vehicle to view from another perspective. That left Scott and me to discuss the pros and cons of the deer in front of us. We both came to the conclusion, had we been home, neither of us would have left the area without attempting to take him. But we weren't at home.



Inspired by stories from Barry Nelis and his unfulfilled desire to take a Spanish black, Mick sits with his.

On Raynardt's return we continued up the mountain. Clambering out of the comfort of the heated vehicle, the chill slammed us in the face. A frost had whitened the valley floor, triggering a chilly breeze to whisper up the ridge line. We began to walk below the skyline, preventing us from being silhouetted. The breathtaking views interfered with our concentration levels. Pausing to glass periodically but with little wildlife to be seen, time passed quickly. The sun had now risen and was beginning to warm the air and our cool bodies.

Raynardt and I moved ahead of Scott, who lingered, glassing the opposite ridge to us. Every now and then we looked back to confirm Scott was following. Each time we glanced, his attention was firmly fixed on the opposing ridge line. Scott quietly said he could see a buck but just couldn't work out whether it was a taker or not.

Raynardt set up the spotting scope. All three of us concentrated on the deer, for what seemed an eternity, before he showed his glorious headgear. Being the largest fallow I have seen while hunting, I let Raynardt know. Quietly, we slipped around the knoll before trekking quickly towards the buck, without fear of him seeing or hearing us. We closed the distance to 300m of open grassed meadow.

Surveying from high, we looked down to the foot of the ridge opposite, where

One deer stood out from the others, having long palmation with good width.

the buck lazily breakfasted. Lessening the gap was necessary but the terrain was too open. Laying prone atop of a small knoll, I extended the legs of the bipod. My scope was set on the lowest power for fast target acquisition. I slipped in behind the scope, focusing on the buck, then wound up the power ring to maximum.

With the buck squarely in my sights I took up the trigger pressure. By the time I recovered from recoil, the buck was now on the valley floor below, unscathed. He stopped to look back to where my bullet slammed into the ground after missing him. I jacked another round into the chamber, sights firmly fixed approximately 6" behind the shoulders, centered on his spine. I remember visualising the flight of my bullet hitting the spine then passing through to the heart.

Squeezing the trigger, the rifle barked and the buck collapsed where he stood, adjacent to the vehicle track. Raynardt turned to me and said: "how did you do that?" Smirking, I shrugged my shoulders. Scott was up shaking my hand, then we stood immersed in what had taken place. The view was spectacular and so was the buck. I don't think anything could have improved this hunt; I couldn't have been any happier than I was at that moment.

Strolling back to the vehicle, our mood was jovial while discussing the hunt. I had managed to take a beautiful deer. There is nothing that can compare to the comradery of hunters who are truly happy for the success of another hunter. Reaching the vehicle, we drove along a few bush tracks to where my buck lay waiting.



Mick (left) and Scott with Mick's trophy fallow.



Mick's fallow buck was a personal best to date. His urge to hunt another is as strong as ever.



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A buck for Barry

As often is the case when I have killed an animal, I enjoy some quiet time with it. Which the boys graciously gave me. While sitting with the buck I looked up to where my deer had first been spotted, to see a beautiful young red deer stag walking, no more than 80m from me. At home this stag would have been a taker, but here it was just another young red deer to be left to grow.

My passion for fallow deer has not waned since the taking of this buck, though my next one will have to be special. But then again, the trophy is always in the eye of the beholder. I remembered the thoughts of Barry Nelis. Becoming a friend of his is one of the highlights of my life. He was a true hunter who helped spread the love of the hunt. Barry has been gone now for some time but the memories with him remain vivid.

We can't walk the hills together anymore but the legacy he passed on to me, I hope I can, in turn, pass things onto others. As one little anecdote, I would be sitting on a hill glassing for deer with Barry, when suddenly he would boisterously say: "I wonder what the rich people are doing?" Then he would answer himself in a stentorian voice: "who gives a #@%^, I am hunting and that's all that counts." RIP ol' mate. ■



This beautiful young red deer stag was walking no more than 80m from Mick.



An extremely happy hunter sits with his impressive NZ fallow trophy.

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Greek-style goat

Paul Barker enjoys the hunt while he and his guests savour the results

Preparing and cooking various game meats has been a passion that spans back many years. New hunting opportunities sometimes give rise to chances of taking different species, which can lead to fresh cooking options and subsequent great game meals.

A couple of years back while doing a bit of gold prospecting on some new country it was interesting to note the considerable number of wild goats wandering about the property. Talking to the landowner, he mentioned that from time to time he would muster the goats and truck them off to the markets as a secondary form of income. This was a welcome outcome particularly during the drought years. For this reason, he understandably did not want anyone hunting them, but on subsequent visits he did allow me to take a young goat or two for the table which was much appreciated.

Discovering how to prepare goat Greek-style, most likely one of many ways, came about from an invitation to a friend's property for lunch a year or three back. Not only was the meal a fabulous success but I was able to be involved in the preparation and cooking of the goat.

These days a whole boned leg of goat forms the basis of this recipe, which is essentially the cut used when introduced to this dish.

Ingredients

- One medium-sized goat leg
- Fresh lemon/s
- Oregano leaves
- Fresh ground salt and black pepper
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Good quality white wine



Colourful and tasty goat with a traditional Greek salad.

Method

- To begin, a large sheet of aluminium foil is required, sufficient to totally wrap the meat and allow enough overlap to form a fluid proof seal on all sides. It's important not to allow the cooking juices to escape, resulting in a loss of flavour from the marinade.
- Next step is to coat the foil with olive oil, lemon juice and a dash of white wine along with a liberal amount of the oregano and salt and pepper.
- Then, lay the boned goat leg flat on the foil sheet with the boned surface up and repeat the treatment to this side.
- At this stage leave the meat to rest while the marinade works its magic before moving on.
- The cooking aspect of this dish is done in two stages. The first is on the barbecue, which needs to be a very hot plate. The reason being the meat needs to be rapidly seared on both sides without starting to cook it through. Before the cooking begins the oven needs to be brought up to a temperature of 100 degrees C.



The simple ingredients required to make this version of Greek-style goat.

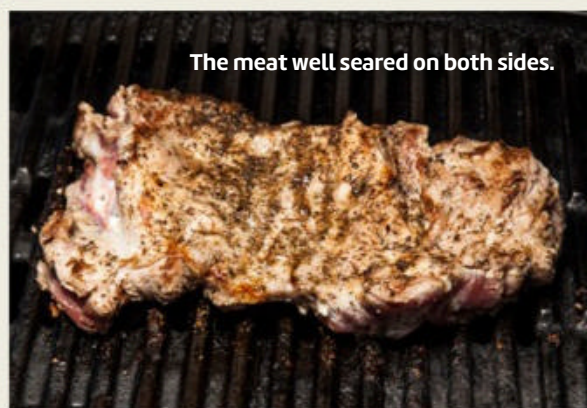


Locating and hunting a medium-size goat forms the basis for this tasty dish.

- Once the meat is well seared, it should be placed back on the foil sheet and the dry ingredients adjusted. Raise the sides of the foil to form a bowl and add a liberal amount of the wine and lemon juice. The next phase is critical to the success of this dish – forming a good fluid proof seal around the foil edges.
- To complete the dish carefully place the foil capsule onto a baking flat and into the pre-heated 100 degree C oven for the slow cooking phase. Oven cooking time depends on the thickness of the meat. A sound guide is to allow one hour for every 25mm of meat thickness. An accurate meat thermometer can be a handy asset in checking cooking progress, but just make sure you penetrate the foil capsule above the expected fluid level.
- The degree of doneness of various game meats is very much a personal thing and it's difficult to put an exact figure in terms of degrees C or finished meat colour that will suit each individual.
- Once the estimated oven cooking time has elapsed, remove the meat and set aside to rest for about 10 minutes, after which it can be removed from its foil capsule and carved. The residual juices remaining in the foil can be used to make a sauce to accompany the meat if desired.
- A traditional Greek salad fits rather well with this relatively straightforward dish along with the remaining white wine and is sure to please everyone who tries the servings. Enjoy... ■



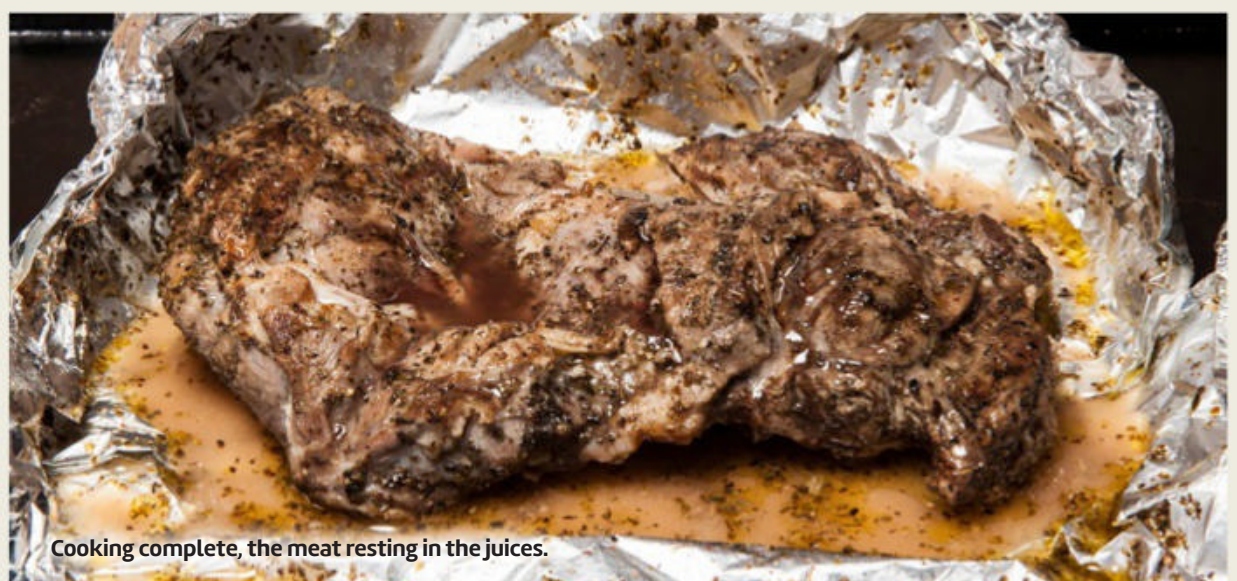
The marinated boned goat leg ready for a rapid searing on the super-hot barbecue.



The meat well seared on both sides.



The goat leg carefully sealed inside the foil capsule prior to going into the oven for the final cooking.



Cooking complete, the meat resting in the juices.



Not a bad haul for the day and a lot of fun!

Ferreting fun

Adrian Kenney hits rabbit warrens for a day with purse nets and cages

Regardless of any hunting technique employed or species targeted, there are always pros and cons with the equipment and associated methods required. Ferreting is no different. Catching rabbits with purse nets for example allows for a warren with 40 burrows to be netted and all those nets will fit inside a daypack.

If, on the other hand, you were using cage traps as your only capture devices you would just about require a semi-trailer to cart them around with you. By combining 37 purse nets and five cages, we hoped we would have the best of both worlds.

The early morning dew soaked our boots as we walked into the paddock from the tea tree fringe to ensure the rabbits went down the burrows instead of into the bush. Rabbits sat up high on their haunches as we approached before slipping down into their sandy bunkers and apparent safety. White tails bobbed here and there across the paddock as we kept notice of the warrens that contained the most occupants. Now, with that done – it was ferreting time.

On reaching the biggest warren where we saw about 15 rabbits enter, we unloaded our gear and began by finding suitable holes for the five cages. By placing the cages on the burrows at the extremities of the warren we increased the time we had to cover the ground to collect the captured rabbits.

If we were running that 30-yard distance to a purse net there is a good chance the rabbit would be long gone by the time we arrived. As the cage traps have a particular diameter, you either need to

locate burrows with a tight fit or alter them slightly with a shovel to take the cage.

A string line with a peg was then used to hold the cage in place so impacting rabbits wouldn't cause the cage to dislodge from the burrow and roll over, whereby the trap-door would drop down, allowing the rabbit to escape. On the remainder of the warren, we just about used up all of the purse nets. Fortunately, we only had two old buck ferrets, who would take more time to work such a big warren. Conversely, if four ferrets



For a purse net to hold a rabbit long enough for you to reach there and capture it, it's imperative they are set correctly.

were placed into the underground system, the two of us would struggle to catch the rabbits and reset nets quick enough for the next capture.

The clip on the carry box was opened and two white furry occupants rose from their bed of straw ready for action. They scratched at our hands with eagerness to be down those burrows and among the rabbits. We slipped the ferrets in behind the purse nets on different burrows and they gave a brief shake like a retrieving duck dog before they disappeared down the sandy burrows.

Hayden and I spread out over the warren system to cover the two main areas containing purse nets and stood quietly to listen. It was a still day with little wind, allowing for any sounds of an underground chase to carry to our ears, but for now, there was just the sound of birds along the tea tree fringe. Periodically, the purse nets would begin to move, signalling a ferret was looking to exit a burrow as we removed them from one hole and took them to the next.

This went on for a period of time then, all was quiet. No ferrets, no rabbits, just the two of us standing over a warren. Then a rumble beneath the ground – ferreters love that sound. We had contact. All of a sudden, a rabbit exploded into a brown purse net as I hurried to stop its escape. On catching our prize, I lifted it up to show Hayden our first catch as I began untangling it from the purse net while my foot blocked the burrow to stop any others escaping.

With the rabbit's neck stretched and net properly reset, I returned to my central position over the warren. For some reason all was quiet over on Hayden's section of the warren while underground rumbles and bolting bunnies were keeping me well occupied in my section.

Eventually a ferret exited the ground over in Hayden's area and was reintroduced to the warren with immediate effect. Unfortunately, the rabbit was leaping around like a bull at the rodeo in that purse net and escaped with a kick of the net before Hayden could reach it. Fortunately, it ran over my way and was back in a purse net when it tried to re-enter the warren. That was lucky for us. After an hour the

entire warren was worked, with seven dead rabbits lying on the ground.

With rabbits gutted and equipment gathered, we moved to the next warren. The burrows were situated around a shed, with some inside and others out. The cages came in handy in this situation too. With everything ready to go we sat down for a bite to eat and a drink.

During our break Hayden yelled out: "there goes a rabbit." He leapt to his feet before striding around the corner of the shed. After a bit of thumping and banging on the iron he returned triumphant with another netted rabbit and the ferrets still in their box. Apparently, the bunny had ran right across the open paddock from the tea tree fringe just to commit suicide in our net. That seemed crazy. Despite seeing several rabbits enter that warren earlier in the morning, we only caught another two and both in the exact same net as the suicide bunny. I wish we had known that before we set the other 15 nets and cages.

At the next warren we had two escapees that became untangled at the end of our fingertips despite our best rugby dives. A cage rattled and clanged with a hard impacting rabbit as we lifted the hinged cap and reached in to drag him out. Then Hayden quietly said: "fox!" Casually walking across the open paddock in the mid-afternoon sun was a mangy fox. Despite the people and cars all around the area, it couldn't care less and it sniffed its way across the paddock and into the tree line.

Then, bang! Into the net scurried a rabbit as Hayden rushed over and



Cages can be easily raised and lowered when working the warren with ferrets.

untangled it while I looked for running bunnies and listened for the sound of an underground chase. We ended up with three rabbits from that warren. Gathering up the gear including nets, cages and the ferret carry box slung over our shoulders, we headed to the next site.

The ferrets were curled up in the straw when the lid lifted and we chose the one with the most enthusiasm to hunt the small warren to avoid any digging for sleepy ferrets. Despite the burrows being active with well-worn sandy entrances and rabbit runs aplenty through the short grass, the ferret entered and exited all the burrows without sight or sound of a rabbit.

Oh well, that's ferreting. I was just glad we didn't have to do any digging at the end of the day. We loaded up our gear with an extra 13 bunnies hanging on the shovel and began the slog back across the paddock to the vehicle. With a couple of old buck ferrets that hadn't been hunting in a long time, we were happy with our day spent bolting bunnies into purse nets and cages. ■



With all the nets and cages set, it's time for the ferrets and action.

Missing in action

There's no official set of rules for testing ammunition... here's what **Matthew Cameron** has done for decades

A good group for a varmint rifle.

I will admit that when it comes to load development and handloading rifle ammunition, I am a hopeless case who cannot help himself.

Aside from personal requirements, it is of course necessary to illustrate and validate what you have written on the subject. The other issue is that every barrel is a law unto itself, which is where the questions start. Why does one particular barrel shoot better than another? As a great Benchrest rifleman once stressed, there is absolutely no way of knowing but to load up and shoot.

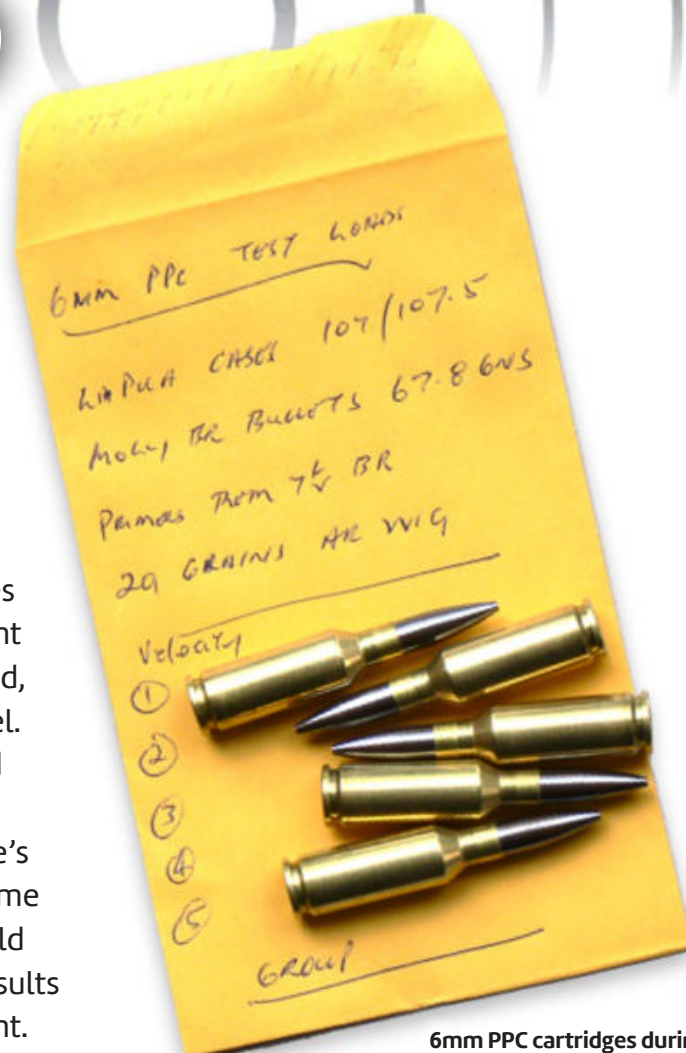
After reloading and testing ammunition for more than 40 years, I have never read a set of rules to test ammunition of any sort, certainly not in the civilian context. So, how can you criticise another point of view when there are no rules to abide by? Perhaps the only advice came from the NRA in America

that proposed you should shoot five times five-shot groups and average out the result.

It seems to me without a set of rules to apply to ammunition on a consistent basis, any comparisons must be flawed, even when shot out of the same barrel.

Since starting reloading, I have read countless arguments why five-shot groups are a better indication of a rifle's true accuracy. However, it appears to me there are some vital factors that should be mentioned which will affect the results obtained, but they are strangely absent.

Many years ago, I did read one article that claimed the only way to test a rifle was to fire 100 shots at the same target. Nothing else was cited in relation to the speed of shooting or any cleaning regime. I feel doing so would prove precisely nothing.



6mm PPC cartridges during load development.

I delivered more five-shot groups in the couple of years that I dabbled in Benchrest shooting than I had done previously, or for that matter, since. A good Benchrest rifleman aims to put five shots for record into a single hole, the trick being to make the hole as small as possible. Indeed, on rare occasions I achieved this aim, but alas none were worthy of comment.

To me the main problem that needs to be discussed is ignored. Faced with a lack of credible criteria I came up with my own set of rules to test ammunition and components, which I have used for more than 30 years.

Initially three new cases are loaded with the maximum chosen powder load from a reputable manual for the projectile weight concerned, plus three more each of the next two lowest powder loads. Further, there is a singular 'sighter' using the same components propelled by the lowest powder weight.



Due to high powder loads, the .257 Weatherby cartridge must be shot slowly.

These loads are shot at a comfortable pace over a chronograph, commencing with the lowest load with the best possible components for rifle stability under the lightest wind conditions. Each case is inspected for possible pressure indications as soon as they are fired. Within the three groups you will usually produce the most acceptable velocity and the smallest group size. This particular load will be reloaded twice more of three shots each and shot on another day.

Provided that the subsequent groups and/or velocity are close to the original, the load will be deemed to be acceptable for the intended purpose. If the 'proof' loads fail to match the original load, it will be abandoned, and another powder or projectile tested to achieve the intended result. There is always a balance between accuracy and velocity depending on a particular use. For shooting at long range, I will always spend time and components to wring the last fraction of accuracy out of a barrel and sometimes accept a slightly lower velocity if accuracy appears to be better. All the velocity in the world is useless if you cannot hit the game it is aimed at.

If the proofs agree with the initial loads, they will become a standard for that cartridge. For hunting rifles, the maximum acceptable group is one inch for the three

shots and for a varmint rifle 0.75 inches. These are personal limits.

Time has only changed two components. Firstly, the initial conditions are altered by the firing of a fouling shot before attempting any groups. Secondly, with the advent of cartridge case annealing, fired cases are used for opening loads.

Almost invariably anyone will initially comment that three-shot groups are considered irrelevant and do not truly represent a particular load's potential. Personally, I disagree, because of the questions that are not asked. It should be noted that I have only ever managed one five-shot group that was smaller than the initial three shots and that was with a Benchrest rifle.

I suggest that both three- and five-shot groups are suspect in size simply because of the fouling shot or should I say, the lack of same. This is easy to demonstrate, having changed the method many years ago after reading that Benchrest riflemen fouled pristine barrels with one or more fouling shots before shooting a group.

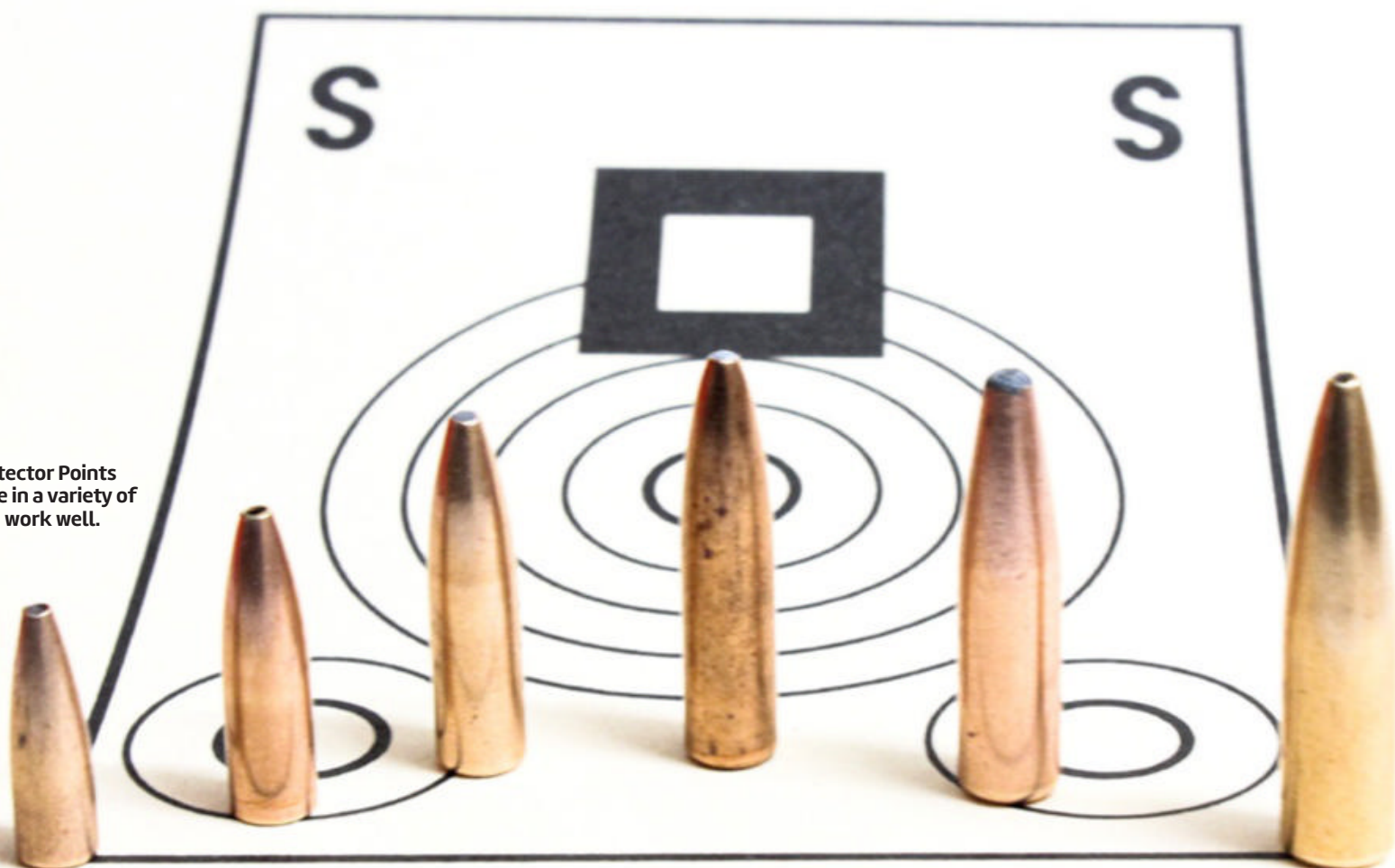
If it is counted as the first shot of a group, the group was larger than those with a preliminary fouling shot, anywhere up to an inch between the first shot and the middle of the subsequent group. The use of a fouling shot is never alluded to by



those who pontificate about three- and five-shot groups. Obviously, this is what the Benchrest riflemen had discovered. This applies to either group size but those in favour of five-shot groups conveniently forget the fact.

The two other vital matters that affect group size are the actual speed of shooting plus the accumulation of barrel fouling. Again, neither are commented on by those in favour of five-shot groups. In addition, in relation to speed there is another proviso. Quite recently I load developed a .257 Weatherby Magnum cartridge, attempted

Custom Protector Points are available in a variety of calibres and work well.



Missing in action

to shoot it at a comfortable pace, but, due to the amount of powder involved (70+ grains), it became necessary to space shots some 10 minutes apart due to excessive barrel heating. Unacceptable loads suddenly became much smaller.

Again, it is easy to prove the role of accumulated unacceptable heat when shooting groups and how quickly they will open up. A five-shot group even at a comfortable pace will heat a barrel up quicker than three shots and hence enlarge the group. The bigger the cartridge, the greater the heat. However, nothing is said about the speed of shooting, which is a major consideration that fails to grab a mention.

The role of the powder and projectile jacket fouling at some point in the shooting process becomes an issue. Yes, I would agree it depends on the barrel, as some are worse than others. Is this the reason that Benchrest rules limit groups to five shots?

But it begs the question – when testing ammunition, just when do you clean the barrel? Again, there are no guidelines. Further, is it necessary that the barrel be chemically clean? I would suggest that it is necessary to clean the barrel at the same point in time in relation to a particular



number of shots. However, this is never touched upon. Normally I fire 3x3 shot groups plus a possible sighter and clean in a specific manner. The barrel is then fouled by a singular shot before the next group.

The barrel is also allowed to cool to an ambient temperature between groups. There has to be some consistency between different powder loads to obtain

some valid results. A normal Benchrest relay from a clean barrel is one or two shots into the dirt then five shots for group score followed by a cleaning to a bare barrel again. Those in favour of five shots conveniently forget this.

The use of molybdenum on Benchrest projectiles was to provide bore lubrication



You cannot shoot groups of any number without a solid rest.

and prevent fouling build-up, so allowing longer strings of shots before cleaning.

Other projectiles were not used, but it would obviously have had a place in varminting, particularly where a large number of shots in a short period of time may be required.

I also noted over many years that good loads usually show up early in the load development process, irrespective of the number of shots involved. Of course, there's been many failures where initial groups would do a shotgun proud. There were velocity variations as well. The other issue is, are you prepared to sacrifice some velocity if the accuracy is better? It is also possibly preferable to use a mid-range powder initially. If unsuitable you can move in either direction in terms of powder speed.

Logic hints that heavier projectiles may be better off with slower powders but in my experience, this is sometimes open. The same applies to primers. Some loads tightened up simply by changing to standard rather than magnum primers. The velocity being less than 100fps.

Finally, in relation to groups and their numbers it comes down to what the individual reloader is happy with in relation to the process and whether it works for you or not.

The situation is further complicated in that every time you change a singular component you are starting all over again. It can be a long, time-consuming process that may spread over several months to arrive at the result you desire.

I feel that five-shot groups will always be bigger than three-shot groups when all the issues are considered but disagree with the statement that five-shot groups are a better indication of the particular load's potential overall. The real problem is a lack of a standard method of testing and until written criteria is agreed upon there will always be diversity, likely for quite some time. ■



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WOUNDING



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Gary can't help but smile next to Neil's bogged Toyota.

Sink or swim

A sodden **Gary Hall** confronts savage Top End conditions for hard-earned hogs

It was the wet season in the Top End and torrential, much-needed rain was making pig chasing difficult, but not impossible. Already a number of our regular spots were under water or access was too risky due to the amount of surface water, washouts, flooding and swift-moving creek crossings.

With all that said, after three days without a hunt (or a game of golf) cooped up at home, 'cabin fever' was getting the better of me. So, like the United States Postal Service motto 'Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night' would keep my good mate Neil and I from a hunt.

The sky was dark and gloomy but we were determined to give it a go. The bad news was (just what we needed) heavy rain the night before had caused the main river to break its banks, causing flooding. The good news was it was only minor flooding and I had packed a small fold-out shovel.

Due to the horrendous conditions and not being US postal workers, we had our doubts but decided to push on. With no chance of moving the vehicle remotely close to our intended hunting area, we parked on a bit of high ground and prepared ourselves for the long walk in. As usual the dogs – Dash, Ace, Mate and Rusty – weren't fazed by the amount of surface water, they just wanted to find and bail a good pig.

It was like walking in a horse trough for about an hour, then finally we started climbing up a slight incline and for the first time in ages I could see my boots and socks. I wanted to stop and check I didn't have webbed feet, but didn't have the time as the hard-working dogs bolted. They were quickly lost from sight behind a lush, green veil of wild passionfruit, high grass and thick scrub. Thank heavens for tracking collars, as Neil monitored the dogs' movements on the small screen we jogged on.

The damp ground was absolutely riddled with fresh diggings and the base of nearly every tree and bush was circled with pig sign. Suddenly, Neil gave his best usher impersonation and hand-signalled to go left, then abruptly signalled right. Moments later he held his hand up, palm



Neil and the crew did well to secure this smallish pig.



forward indicating to stop and we stopped. A nanosecond later, the barking started. "They're at 300 yards," said Neil. "This should be easy," I replied, as I followed Neil's hand gesture to the right.

In that 'easy' 300 yards, we crossed three narrow creeks of quick-flowing mud-coloured water including one that was so deep I had to hold my ammo, camera, knife, belt and coach-gun above my head.

Finally, after parting more water than Moses, I was directly opposite the cornered pig and yapping dogs who were all partly submerged in the coffee-coloured water. Seconds after shouldering the double-barrel, a solid slug added another hog to the tally. After the dogs were handed the all-clear it was time for a drink and a well-deserved rest as we were both knackered and soaked from the waist down.

The dogs made us look good on the walk back by bailing a few more pigs to further bolster our hog count. ■



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Bunnybusting

Don Caswell's #1 tip is to enjoy it!



A quick bunny hunt around farm sheds yields the goods.



Don prefers H&N Baracuda Hunter pellets with his Diana Outlaw rifle for bunnies.

Bunny hunting is great fun. I have used all manner of calibres over the years, but these days, I prefer my Diana Outlaw PCP .22 air rifle. There is a lot to be said about using an air rifle for hunting rabbits.

Firstly, there is the choice between .177 and .22 calibres. The greater energy of .22 calibre air rifle pellets means that you can extend your range somewhat compared to the .177. Whatever one you choose, the key is to limit your range to a consideration of both accuracy and pellet energy to ensure swift, humane kills are achieved.

The target zones on a rabbit are the head and the chest. The effective target zone of the head is roughly that of a 10-cent piece. The chest provides a larger target of about 50-cent piece size. So that is your benchmark accuracy requirement for bunny hunting with an air rifle.

A point to note is that the target zones for air rifle hunting are obviously smaller than those for more high-powered rimfire and centrefire rifles. To achieve an assured humane kill your air rifle needs to deliver at least 10 ft-lb of terminal energy into the target zone. That means, for a high-velocity .177 air rifle, your range limit is 20m. On the plus side, given the inherent accuracy of most .177 air rifles, the shot can be placed precisely.

A high-velocity .22 calibre air rifle delivers about twice the impact energy of a .177 rifle. So, for me, it is accuracy that determines the maximum range for bunny hunting with a .22 calibre air rifle.

My Diana Outlaw is a finely accurate rifle and I'm confident in consistently hitting a 50-cent piece under field shooting conditions at 40m. I limit any head shots to about 20m, given the smaller effective target zone.

The crucial step in bunny hunting with an air rifle is in choosing a suitable pellet. Obviously, accuracy is most

important, but not necessarily the only consideration. Over the past decade or so I have tested many pellets for accuracy and terminal ballistics. The way I have assessed terminal velocity is to fire pellets through bars of soap and also into deep enough water that stops the pellet and allows me to retrieve it. A swimming pool is ideal for this.

Solid, round-nose pellets punch through soap without any expansion or distortion. Hollow-point pellets exhibit varying degrees of expansion, which contribute to greater shock to the rabbit. In testing, I have found that H&N Baracuda Hunter 18.2-grain hollow-points give the best expansion. They also have enough accuracy to hit the benchmark requirement at 20m and 40m.

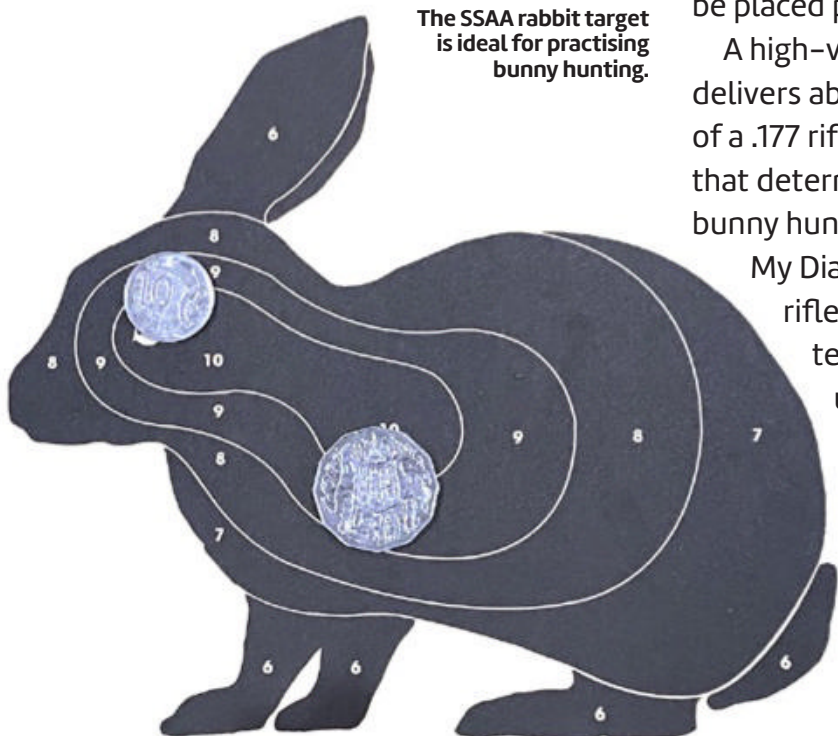
In my Diana Outlaw, the 15.89-grain JSB Exact Jumbo Diabolo delivers outstanding accuracy, but I choose to use the slightly less accurate Baracuda Hunters because of their more emphatic terminal ballistics.

Practice makes perfect and one of the best ways to do that for bunny hunting with an air rifle is to use the standard SSAA rabbit target, generally available from your local SSAA range. The silhouette rabbit target is the size of a juvenile bunny. For a bit of fun while honing your kills, pin the SSAA rabbit target to a cardboard box and practise at varying ranges in the field. This is time well spent and will increase your effectiveness in judging distances and consistently placing shots in the kill zone of real rabbits.

There are always a few bunnies about the place and when neighbouring farmers complain of their growing numbers, I pay a visit with the Outlaw. A little before sunset is the ideal time. That gives me a chance to spot any early rabbits scurrying about the sheds and vegetable garden.

If I land a few before dark, all is well. If the bunnies are elusive, I fit a spotlight onto my rifle and grab my bag after sunset. The bunnies are not wasted. Young specimens I clean for human consumption. Bigger, older rabbits I put out for the local hawks. ■

The SSAA rabbit target is ideal for practising bunny hunting.



Crispy fried rabbit

Ben Unten's favourite recipe is finger lickin' good

Having prepared literally hundreds of rabbits in various stews and slow cooks, I began to long for something different; especially something which didn't rely on three-quarter grown kittens to provide the meat. I had toyed with 'KFB' (Kentucky Fried Bunny) for ages but it wasn't until I attended a fundraising barbecue lunch at my local hardware store, where I saw the 'minute' steaks, that I had the idea – fried rabbit pieces.

One secret to using cuts of meat from more mature animals is to tenderise the pieces first. If you don't own a meat tenderising hammer, they are available from most supermarkets and homeware outlets for about \$10.

An internet search did not provide exactly the recipe I was after, so I improvised the following procedure. After a few minor tweaks, I can say with conviction, that it is without doubt, mine and the family's favourite rabbit recipe.

Note: It is truly worth brining the rabbit pieces for a good couple of hours prior to frying.

Ingredients

Brine:

- 2 cups water
- 1/8 cup salt

Rub:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon chilli powder (to taste)
- Oil for frying



Eat your heart out
Colonel Sanders!

Method

- Bone out back legs and backstraps from 2-3 rabbits.
- Trim up and remove any silver skin with a sharp knife.
- Place under cling film and tenderise well with a meat hammer. Note: the legs and shanks will need much more tenderising than the backstraps.
- Cut into pieces approximately 30mm x 30mm.
- Combine salt and water and place rabbit pieces in the brine for at least four hours or preferably overnight.
- Combine the flour and herbs and mix well.
- Lift the pieces out of the brine and allow to drain for a few seconds and then thoroughly coat with the flour mixture and set aside.
- Heat the smallest frypan you own with approximately 20mm of oil to medium heat (always be careful with hot oil on a stove).
- Cook for about three minutes each side and drain on multiple layers of paper towel.
- Serve with your favourite dipping sauces, for instance: sweet chilli, smoky barbecue or mayo. ■



Wayne displays a Brisbane Valley red stag taken with a compound bow.

Becoming a Bowhunter

In Part 1 of 2, **Wayne Kampe** explains how to get started

Landowners seem to like the concept of bowhunting as much as hunters, thanks to the limited range of arrows plus lack of noise when game is taken. Great, it is a win/win all round.

Moreover, with a bow in lieu of a rifle there is an enjoyable sensation of achievement when hunting and stalking leads to a clean kill. The question is, of course, what is involved with all this? Let us take it a step at a time to find out, as I did over two decades.

The legalities

Positives certainly abound with bowhunting but first, let's consider some legalities. Bowhunting animals – note: ferals and game only, nothing else – is legal in every state except Tasmania, so long as the usual landowner permission to enter and hunt is granted.

But states differ regarding deer. In New South Wales an R-licence is required to hunt them. You must be a member of an approved hunting organisation such as the SSAA and complete certain accreditation requirements. In Victoria a game licence

is required. Sambar hunting mandates the use of a bow with a minimum draw weight of 50lb. Pounds? Yes, archery terms do not involve metrics. Queensland's deer are hunted at the landowner's discretion without permits.

Backyard practice: this is a grey area because there does not appear to be any specific law against safe archery practice in a person's own backyard.

Just a warning that should any person be alarmed by your use of a bow – an errant arrow or any other issue causing concern – which results in a complaint being made,

authorities will act on the matter. Basically, all archery practice decrees an element of great care by participants and should be undertaken with a solid backstop set up at all times.

The equipment

How then, to make a start at bowhunting? That is the same as in every other hunting pursuit we enjoy; the right gear from the outset will obtain the right results down the track.

You will need a bow, plus arrows, right? But which bow? There are three styles freely available apart from crossbows which, classified as firearms, must be licensed. There is the traditional longbow, plus its close cousin recurve, and the compound bow.

The two longer more traditional-style bows have somewhat reduced levels of performance to that of the compound bow and require additional skills, because of their short effective range, for successful hunting.

Hunting with a longbow

The traditional longbow, and the recurve, are drawn and released with the middle fingers – a special glove is used to protect these fingers. Arrows are typically made from timber, being set up with feather vanes designed to flex against the bow’s arrow rest upon release, thus aiding accuracy. An arm guard protects the arm holding the bow from possible string strike. Arrows are traditionally carried in a quiver.

That’s it – done and dusted! But do remember that both of these longer – and lighter – bows have no sights, so involve plenty of practice and judgment to achieve hunting accuracy. Hunting draw weights between 40lb and 60lb mean that drawing one and aiming it requires strength and technique aplenty. The successful longbow/recurve hunter is a skilled individual indeed.

The compound bow

Compound bows can be more expensive and will certainly be heavier, and much shorter, than either of the former pair. A release aid tool is fitted to the user’s wrist and is intended to draw the bow; with a trigger to set the arrow – usually carbon fibre, with synthetic vanes.



Finger pinch is unpleasant when drawing a compound bow, hence the release aid. Compounds are popular because they are

readily fitted with sights and a system of leverage reduces maximum draw weight thus permitting extended aiming time.

Becoming a bowhunter

The compound bow's leverage system – via cables and cams (a piece in the mechanical linkage that transforms rotary motion to linear) – sees the oval cams on the end of the bow's limbs roll over due to tension. This means the archer is holding a mere fraction of the initial draw weight. This is referred to as 'let off'. Today's compound bows regularly feature 75 per cent to 85 per cent let off – imagine, a bow with a 60lb draw weight being comparatively easily held and aimed at about 15lb or less.

A compound bow's sights consist of a (rear) peep sight in the string aligning with the dominant eye, while the front sight – mounted just above the hand grip – incorporates a number of separate sight pins graduated to put the arrow on target at calculated distances.

My bow's factory poundage is 60 but I have it set at 56lb draw weight as I'm becoming a bit long in the tooth these days. Although my sights are set at 20m, 30m, 40m and 50m, I take virtually every shot under 40m to ensure clean kills. As mentioned, bows are close-range hunting tools.

Judging distance is everything with bow-hunting so it's not surprising that most bowhunters carry a rangefinder, as I do.



The front sight system has a scale pertaining to each neatly illuminated pin.



Wayne's sighting position: bow string on face, the release aid in against the jaw and the bow held open-handed when drawn.

The bow purchase

The foregoing is perhaps of lesser importance for a potential long/recurve bow user as there are degrees of flexibility in arrow length plus draw weight to simplify choice.

Selecting the right compound bow, on the other hand, is vastly different. Because bowhunters vary in size, particularly in arm length, a compound bow's pre-set draw length must 'fit' the user; that is, be just the right length to suit his or her arm length at full draw. Correct draw weight is also rightly important.

At full draw the peep sight in a compound bow's string should be right in front of the dominant eye with the string just kissing the face, as will the release aid. When the sights are correctly aligned, the trigger is touched to release the arrow and to shoot accurately. This should happen consistently every time but naturally, an incorrect draw length will throw everything out of whack.

Professional archery store advice in selecting the correct bow and ensuring it fits the user is vital, as is guidance on a suitable quiver plus an arrow rest for the new bow.



A trigger release aid is a virtual necessity for compound bows.



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**X-Bolt Hell's Canyon
Max Long Range**

RRP **\$2,495.00**

Calibres:
300PRC, 300RUM, 300WM, 6.8WST

Becoming a bowhunter

Incidentally, when at the archery outlet do not ever draw a bow to try it out unless invited to. And no bow is ever dry fired. Without an arrow to retard the string the bow can literally blow to pieces. You dry fire it; you buy it is the norm at archery outlets.

Shooting the bow

On my road to bowhunting I quickly discovered a few potholes when I commenced target practice. Much like reversing a boat down a long ramp or casting a fly, accuracy with a bow and arrow is not an innate human sense. That aside, no matter what style of bow is in use, longbow or compound, regular accuracy involves learning consistency in aiming technique and plenty of practice.

For a start, all bows need to be held just right when drawn and aimed. To hold or grasp a bow tightly is to instinctively torque it to one side or other with arrows then following suit – going to one side or other.

With the usually longer aiming time involved with a compound bow, the way the bow is gripped is important and professional instruction in correct technique can be invaluable in this aspect.



Denise Kampe lines up at 30m with binoculars held to her chest out of the way, plus a decent backstop for the arrows.



Denise Kampe at full draw. Look at her sighting system and the positioning of the string, which is essential for consistent accuracy.

To really enhance accuracy, it is hard to beat field shoots under an archery club's auspices, especially with 3D animal size targets set up to simulate field situations. With advice from other archers, it is a sure way to become proficient.

Getting to the point

Arrows have specific points for proposed use. For target work we employ field points similar to the end of a pencil in shape. For larger game we use shaving sharp broadheads which come in different styles and weights. Expert advice counts in selection.

Lastly, blunts. Perfect for despatching rabbits, they are also great for field practice on cow pats, various grass clumps and the like when out in the paddock as they do not burrow out of sight like broadheads will.

Dress-up time

A great pre-hunt tactic is to set up with the full hunting outfit, including a camo face mask, camo hat or cap, and do some target work. Suddenly, drawing and loosing arrows will feel different, especially with a face mask and camo hat on, but familiarity with the camo gear is vital prior to drawing the bow on game or it will feel strange to do so when a chance comes along for a shot. If the face mask seems too awkward, face paint is okay in lieu when in the field but remember that when after deer the face needs to be well camouflaged. These critters are on the ball...

Try those broadheads

When contented with field pointed arrows grouping on target at say, 30m, it is time to replace them with broadheads to see if these differ in impact.



Common arrow points: from left, a blunt for use on rabbits, two styles of hunting broadheads plus a pair of target points.



Note that a special target and practice facility is required for broadheads as they are destructive and will wreck things. It's not at all unusual to find that broadheads shoot to a different point of aim. An expert might be able to tune a bow to shoot both field points and broadheads to an identical impact point. Most hunters simply adjust their sights to cater for broadheads when hunting is planned, noting said adjustments later for field point use.

Remember that adjustment is only via the front sights on the compound bow, with Allen keys. Sight pins are moved right to bring point of aim left (and vice versa for right) and downwards to achieve elevation, or vice versa. It is called 'chasing the error'.

The next move

With confidence in accuracy and broadheads fitted to arrows, it is time to take the bow into the paddock to start honing those hunting skills to another level. First off, though, understand that the art of seeing game before it sees you is vital in order to close that range.

In order of difficulty, most tyros find rabbits are easiest, goats and pigs next with deer a long way north. You have the equipment, the clothing and the urge to succeed, so it now comes down to expertise in the field which, interestingly, is learned mostly from mistakes.

When a shot is presented within a person's confident personal range, with the

animal unaware, the object is to strive for a clean kill with a chest shot, preferably side-on. Nothing ever moves far after an arrow has taken out both lungs – and maybe the heart as well.

Part 2 – next edition

Think of it: with a rifle, the hunt is often over at 100 – even 200m. With the bow it has only just started because closing in is everything. In Part 2 of 'Becoming a bowhunter' we will take a detailed look at learning game animal habits so we can close that gap to 40m or less on our quarry, even deer. ■



An AnySharp device is helpful to 'touch up' a working blade.

A keen edge

Not much has changed since the Stone Age but **Dick Eussen** covers the finer points of knife sharpening

Ever since ancient man discovered that he could make cutting tools from stone, he had problems keeping them sharp. Some of these Stone Age implements and sharpening stones are still found in the bush, a legacy from Indigenous Australians. In fact, I have seen them in use while traversing Arnhem Land.

Of course, modern steels and tools surpass anything that was used previously by Stone Age people. However, sharpening techniques and tools remain like those used by them, albeit a tad more refined.

Years ago, at Waterfall Hole, near Beswick, I observed an Aboriginal man grinding a stone spear point to a sharp edge on sandstone rock. He poured a little water onto the rock for better grinding. I reflected that the approach he used was little different to my own process.

Do it right

Outdoors people have good reasons to have a sharp knife. Sharpening is simple and no expensive equipment needs to be

used for the job. Yet many a good blade has been damaged by incorrect sharpening.

A blunt blade is dangerous because it tends to slip under pressure, often with painful results. I recently watched a video clip on YouTube where a bloke was sharpening a blade using what he termed the Figure 8 method. He did a fair job but only managed to sharpen the tip and not the heel of the blade. I have never been a fan of this technique, though some people swear by it. It is time-consuming and does not bring the best results overall on the blade like traditional honing.

There are lots of different tools about that make the job simple. Electric sharpeners like those from Nirey are amazing tools that sharpen hard steels and extremely blunt blades with six passes – three on each side. They are belt driven and the trick is to follow the instructions and only do a couple of passes on each side, or the blade will heat up. My method is to dip it in luke-warm water for rapid cooling. The final step in managing an extremely fine razor-like edge is to hone it on a fine Arkansas stone.



The all-in-one SOG tool can start a fire.

Old-fashioned stone honing is deemed an art by many people, but it's not difficult to learn. You must have a proper oil stone, also known as a whetstone. When a knife is new, or has been neglected, the cutting edge may be blunt. New knives are sharpened at two levels, one to remove the working edge or the shoulder and the other honing the manufacturer's working edge to razor sharpness.

Fishing and butchering knives have straight edges while most hunting knives have hollow-ground blades, some with a thick shoulder. To sharpen a new hollow-ground knife or dull blade you must hone down the shoulders on both sides if you want a durable, lasting edge. A file can be used to start, though a coarse stone is fine.

Whetstones are available in various grades, sizes and types. Less than 1000-grit is generally used to repair damaged and chipped blades, while 1000 to 3000-grit is best to sharpen dull knives. To hone a blade to a fine edge use 4000 to 8000-grit.

The most common (and cheapest) are aluminum oxide stones, which have a

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A keen edge

laminated fine and coarse side. I like a big stone, because you can work the whole blade on one and they are safe to use. Mine is set on a board and held in place by dowel strips so that it can't move when in use. Another good idea is to place the stone on a hessian bag, which does a fair job of holding it.

You must apply a thin film of oil on the stone before commencing the sharpening process. When afield and with no oil available, water or spit helps. I don't believe in dry honing because the blade's fine edge is damaged. Check it with a magnifying glass and compare the difference between wet and dry honing if in doubt. Honing oils are available from your local hardware, gun or knife shop. Machine oil is also good.

The style of honing is your choice, you can use the Figure 8 circular motion, which takes longer, or the time-proven stroke of the full blade in one pass on one side, turn over and do the other side – in that sequence. You must keep the blade at the correct bevel to maintain the edge. Some experts claim that you should sharpen the blade bevel at 19 or 22-degrees. That is all very well if you have a Lansky, EZESharp Blade Sharpener or similar sharpening tool that allows the angle of the hone to be set at a chosen bevel.

However, in real terms it's impossible to have a consistent angle when hand honing and the best that most of us will achieve is between 18 to 25-degrees. It's important to understand the edge bevel, which is the flat surface created by grinding.

When done using the Lansky's guide, the bevel is flat and uniform, unlike when it's done by hand when the bevel appears more rounded. But in real terms that matters little as the cutting results are identical if the job is done properly.

If the angle is too thin, the blade will blunt more quickly, if too wide it won't dig in properly when cutting. It also depends on what type of blade you sharpen. Fishing knives, for instance, have thin blades and the angle is closer to 10–15-degrees, while butchering knives are a little higher. Hunting knives, which have thick sturdy blades, require a 18–25-degree bevel, as do thick-bladed survival knives. Don't make a mistake of honing thick blades at too great an angle or all that you will be doing is blunting the edge.

Depending on the blade condition, both coarse and fine sides of the whetstone can be used. If you really want to finish the job properly, do a final hone on an Arkansas stone. They are available in three grades – Washita, soft and hard. The stones come from Hot Springs in Arkansas, the only place on the planet that has workable quantities of high-grade novaculite. Many hunters who care for their blades only use Arkansas stones. Washita is the coarsest and the first stone that should be chosen. Arkansas stones should always be used with a good honing oil.

When honing a blade, start at the tip and push it smoothly away from you in a curve-like motion across the whole of the stone, ending with the blade heel coming off it near the bolster. Now turn the blade over

and reverse the stroke. Hone it as if you are cutting a thin wedge from the stone. Never drag the blade on the stone, always push one side of the cutting edge away with one stroke, turn it over or pull the opposite side towards you with pressure. It's a two-handed job with the tips of the fingers of one hand on or near the tip of the blade and the other hand controlling the blade with the handle.

To sharpen a curved point, slightly lift the handle when the point nears the end of the stone. You can do each stroke on both sides of the blade or do say five strokes before turning the blade over and repeating the process. The hardest part is maintaining the correct angle, but a few degrees here and there won't make much difference. However if the angle varies too much, you will only be cutting metal away without sharpening the blade – the reason that the stone must be well secured.

When you think the blade is sharp, check it by holding it up against the light. If there are gaps in the blade, keep at it until they vanish. Dragging the blade across your thumbnail is a good indicator on how keen it is. When perfectly sharp, the blade will glide across the nail without drag. If you are truly fussy, find a leather barber razor strop and hone the edge some more. You can use a thick leather belt for the job also.

Once the task is done, clean the knife and slightly oil the blade if stored away until the next trip. Never store knives in leather sheaths as the metal sweats and rusts, stains and marks the blade. Stainless steel is not immune from this.

A butcher's steel is a handy tool to keep the edge straight when in use. It does not sharpen the blade but straightens the gaps



This compact AnySharp hand honing tool is great for treating working blades.



Diamond sharpening 'stones' are expensive but effective.

and bends on the edge. Similar looking diamond and ceramic 'steels' are often used by professionals because they not only do what a butcher's steel does, but also sharpen the blade.

Stone care

A sharpening stone must be kept clean. They are porous and fill up with micro-fine steel shavings. That's why you should always use a good honing oil, or liquid, to 'float' the shavings to prevent clogging the pores up. The proper cleaning routine is to soak the stone in either methylated spirits or kerosene and then scrub the crud away with a hard steel brush.

In recent years the traditional whetstone has fallen from favour, with electric belt-driven sharpening machines, diamond and ceramic sharp sticks, stones and other material and tools replacing it. Knife steels – even ceramics – have also changed, with harder steels than ever before being used in some blades.

You can buy a three-stone Arkansas tri-stone set, or one fitted with diamond,

aluminium oxide and ceramic. Pocket sharpeners like the Lansky QuadSharp and Easy Grip are designed to 'touch' the blade up and keep it keen when in use, not to fully sharpen it.

That is good for us consumers. But it matters little because at the end of the day it will still have to be sharpened by time-proven means that have seen little change since man first cut himself on a sharp stone... ■



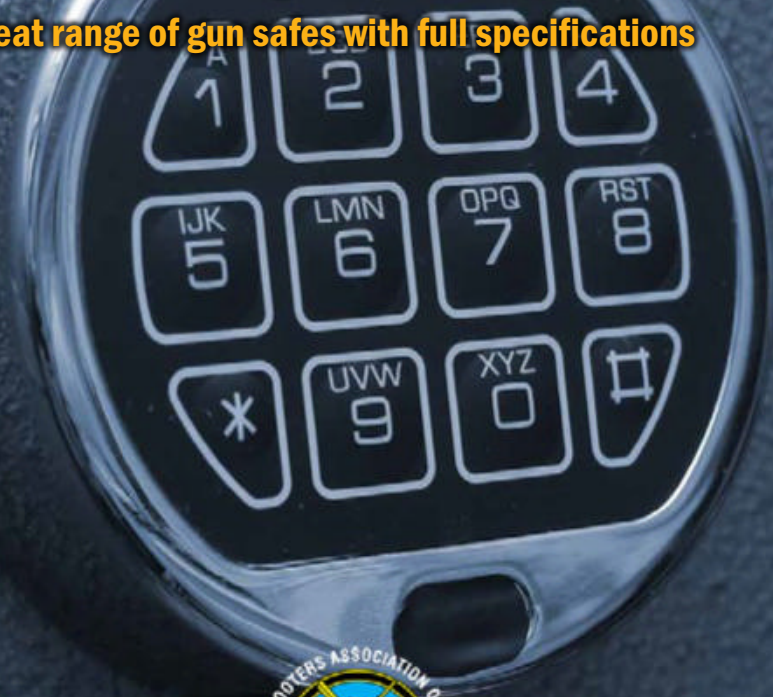
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Target rich environment

Scott Heiman and family land some tasty game on a mate's property but what they learn for next time is even more rewarding

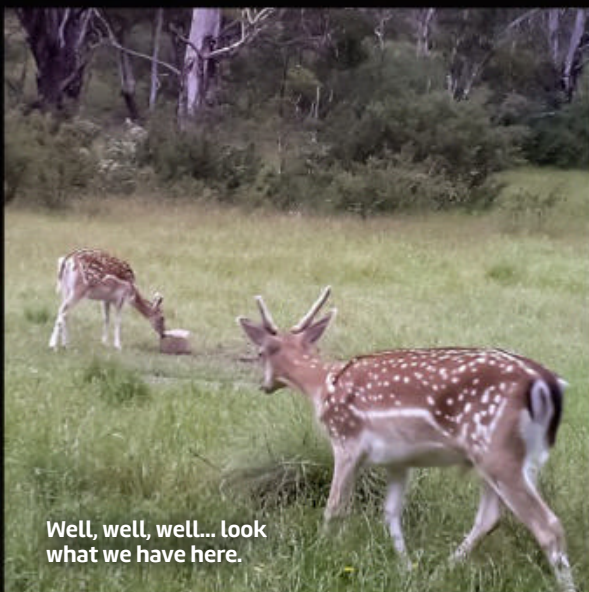
It's been one hell of a ride over the past few years and Mother Nature has let us know we're not in control. Flood, COVID, hailstorms, bushfires, record hot weather events, drought and more cyclones than normal. If you're a fan of fiction, you'd be forgiven for thinking the apocalypse was near and keeping an eye out for the four horsemen.

To alleviate the pain of it all and to help socially distance, myself, my wife Kath and our daughter Scout figured it was about time to drive out to a local rural property owned by an old Army mate to check the trail cameras we'd left there some three weeks before. Bordered on two sides by a nature reserve that stretches over 15,000 hectares, this place is a magnet for game looking to take advantage of its stock-free open paddocks and the dam which provides the only permanent water for kilometres.

Despite its natural advantages, last time we were up there it was really dry. And while there were plenty of roos around, it had been hard to find traces of goats, pigs or other game anywhere, which was a little surprising. However, the 'powers that be' had recently conducted an aerial cull of everything four-legged and feral – so all game within a 20-kilometre radius had either been eradicated or had gone to ground.

But now was different – time had passed and the rains had come. While the temperatures were punching more than 30 degrees, I held strong hopes that the grass would be long and green and – with clear skies – the ferals would be drawn to the dam to drink and to the open paddocks to graze.

Keen to capitalise on a week-long break in the rain, we called the property owner to ask if we could borrow his keys to the gates. You see, this is not a place where you simply 'turn up'. As he'd previously had issues with poachers and trespassers (who literally winched his gates open), the



Well, well, well... look what we have here.



This hollow is the site of the previous lick but animals still target it.

owner and his neighbour had worked with National Parks to install exclusion gates – meaning that entering the property is quite a process. Thankfully, he was happy to lend us the keys and to offer his blessing for a good hunt. Interestingly, he informed us that he'd not been to the property for a couple of months. So, there'd been no humans on the place since our previous visit. Things were looking good.

One of the great things about this property is that it's so close to home. It actually takes longer to pack the HiLux with enough gear for an overnight excursion than it does to drive there. So, 45 minutes after locking our front door, we arrived at the joint access gate that our mate shares with his neighbour – on whose property we also have permission to hunt.

So, we stopped, unlocked, and drove through... then paused. I got my trusty Remington .22-250 ready, just in case. After all, we were no longer on public land and had permission to hunt, and as my dad taught me – way back in the day – you just never know what you'll come across on the drive in.

While we had an uneventful drive up to the boundary fence, as we passed through his main property gate, we stopped. Right there in front of us – a mere 20m from the gate and my idling HiLux – was a mob of 20 goats, billies of all ages.

Within a blink of an eye, I was out of the car looking for a clear shot through the tea tree understory that choked the dry sclerophyll woodland. And there he was. A young fella (about two-years-old) paused, in a break in the tree line, quartering away



These gates are near bomb proof.

What kid doesn't like spotlighting?

Target rich environment

from me. The silly young bloke clearly didn't realise that this is the best kind of shot he could have given my Remington. In its chamber was a reload (Christmas present from my dad) carrying a 55-grain soft-point ready to rapidly expand at 4000fps with 2000 joules of energy.

As they say 'hesitation will kill you'... and this is exactly what happened to this well-fed blue billy. Indeed, he was so well fed that I had to check whether he was actually a nanny. His belly was swollen with food (having gorged himself full throughout the day) so he looked a little pregnant as he lay there prone.

As we had left home on a Friday after work, our timelines were tight. It was going to be a tall order to reach camp, unpack and field dress the billy before dark. Inevitably, by the time we had finished field dressing, had dinner and settled in for the night, it was late. But the evening had definitely been enjoyable, with lively conversation after a great start to what might simply have been a 'quick dash' to retrieve SD cards and to replace batteries in the trail cams. It was well after midnight before the fire ring was doused and we called it a night.

I have to admit that, if I'm left undisturbed at home, I can easily sleep until midday. But take me bush and I'm awake, pre-dawn, waiting for the morning's bird calls. So it was that I sneaked out of my swag in the early morning, got dressed in my pre-positioned clothes, and set off for a meander around the property to see what was stirring and to collect the SD cards from our first set of trail cams.

I made a beeline up the valley towards the property's salt lick to see if there'd been any action. Even though it hadn't rained for a week, the ground was still sodden with water from the perennial creek line and the grass was knee high in most places. Moving as stealthily as I could, I saw only a handful of buck kangaroos, most jostling and boxing to establish their superiority over one another. This was a significant decrease in roo numbers from previous visits despite the fact there was now far more feed available.

Elsewhere, there were plenty of pig ruts and trackways in the dew-covered grass. Nevertheless, the only game I sighted was a



Front gate freezer filler.

hare who stuck his head up at 70 yards. And that was the last time it did that. Wrapping my arm around the sling and taking aim, I had that hare secured for the pot. I tied it up in a tree with the intent to retrieve it on my way back. If luck was on my side, perhaps when I returned there might be a fox or cat struggling to snatch a hare for its own breakfast – and I could despatch it.

Forty-five minutes later I arrived at the salt lick. The first things I noticed were that the lick had been moved from its original spot and there were deer prints in the dirt nearby. Things were looking promising and I couldn't wait to see the images on the camera.

I headed back to camp, picking up Mr Hare en route and expecting there'd be a brew on the boil by the time I rejoined the rest of the team. But there wasn't a

creature stirring – not even a mouse. By now it was 0630 hours, meaning there was time to go and retrieve the camera stationed at the dam wall – just past the property's machinery shed – and stand a chance of seeing some more game. Leaving the hare tied to the bullbar of the car, I stepped off.

The sun was high in the sky as I reached the shed, and I was pleased to see around five rabbits in the open, sunning themselves. I already had a hare, so a rabbit would round out the meal nicely for the family. But if I thought the .22-250 was overkill for the hare at 20m, the rabbit fared far worse. There was basically nothing left of its forequarter. In reality, I should have gone for a head shot. But instinct had taken over and I aimed at the centre of seen-body-mass.



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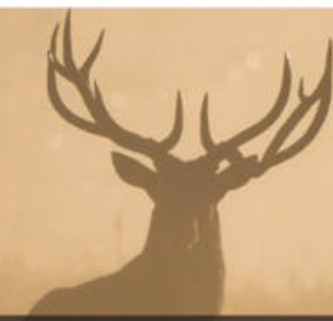


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Target rich environment

I placed the rabbit on top of a fence post and continued walking to the camera. I had placed it near the front gate and was hoping it might have caught photos of the billies from yesterday. That way I could see whether there was an animal with a good head on its shoulders, or one with a nice hide. The camera was situated on a tree at the start of the dam wall, in line with a game trail leading from a hole in the fence. On arrival, it too looked promising as there'd been a lot of disturbance, with trackways going here and there.

After retrieving the camera, I decided to check if the goats from yesterday might be sunning themselves in a little grassy patch not far from my location. I followed the roadway, trying not to move too quickly, and kept my ear out hoping to catch the sound of a bleat on the morning air.

Nothing. But then my heart skipped a beat. As I approached a grassy nook, there – on the tree line – was a solo chocolate fallow youngling with mere inches in velvet. It casually took one, two, three steps... and was gone – like a ghost. This was the first time I'd ever seen a chocolate on this property. Surprising too was the fact that I'd shot the rabbit a mere 15 minutes earlier and yet – by some miracle – this young buck had neither gone to ground nor fled.

Over breakfast everyone was eager to discuss what I'd seen, and to cast our eyes over the SD cards. When we downloaded them, we were surprised to find there were a total of 1638 images taken over the three-week period.

Out at the dam, we were disappointed to find that most of the 700 images were simply grass moving in the wind or kangaroos (note to self – change the camera position or cut the grass). Nevertheless, there were also images during the day of pigs, a fox and rabbits as well as fallow deer at night.

Unfortunately, the deer were too far away to see and evaluate. But we now knew they were there. And we also found a pattern to the times of day they came this way – as well as the phase of the moon. We knew from previous experience that this sort of information would pay dividends the next time we came to the property to hunt.

While our youngest team member was keen to go through the remaining SD cards in detail, the adults were chomping at the bit to go for a hunt. So, with our 11-year-old left in charge of the laptop, a small hunting party set off for another look around. Our outing was interesting, if not particularly productive. One big pig came into view too far ahead for a shot, three growers darted out from nearby tea tree on one side of the road to disappear into the other, and a wily fox who poked his head up promptly snapped it back beneath the vegetation and slunk from view.

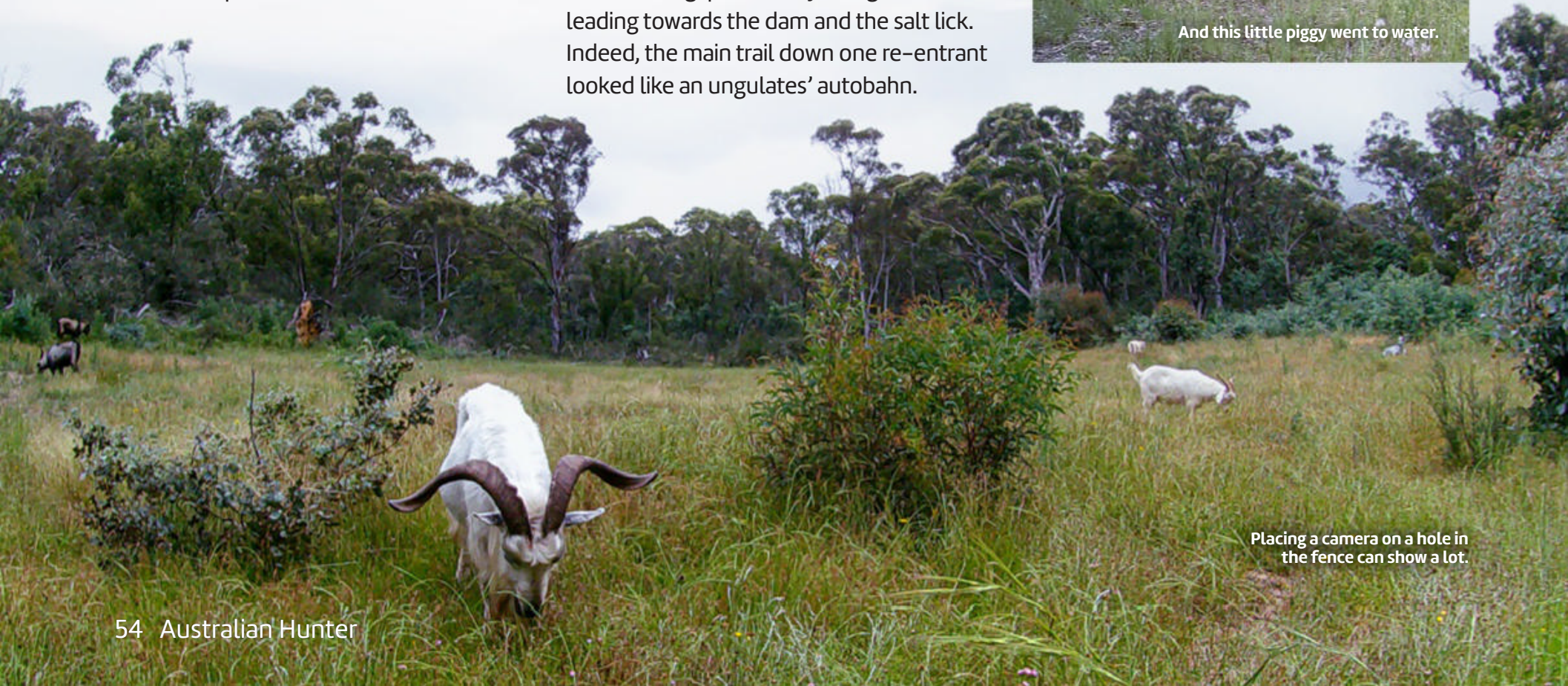
We circled back to camp along the western boundary – a place that adjoins the nature reserve that I'd not patrolled for a while. The vegetation is too thick for hunting, but a check on the game trails – and the holes in fences – told us that activity was booming, particularly along the trails leading towards the dam and the salt lick. Indeed, the main trail down one re-entrant looked like an ungulates' autobahn.

Back at camp, Scout debriefed us about the images from the trail cam that had been set up at the lick. While the preponderance of roos was 'a given', we were surprised to find that not a single goat had passed by. But we weren't disappointed by the imagery that the camera had actually caught. That's because it had produced a complete family photo album of a herd of fallow deer who had clearly developed a habit of coming by at almost every hour of the day between 1400 and 0800 hours, with the moon full rising at 1600 hours. I was now beginning to regret that early morning shot at Mr Hare.

All in all, our overnight hunting trip had proved highly productive. The 40-litre Engel was full of meat and humming along in freeze mode in the back of the HiLux. The laptop was brimming with images that would inform our next visit, showing no less than eight targetable species. And everyone had a smile on their dial. All of which gave credence to the old Army phrase: "Time spent on recon is seldom wasted." ■



And this little piggy went to water.



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Bettering the odds at long-range

Johan van Wyk goes to task on the diverse terrains of South Africa

I doubt if there's a single hunter who hasn't been entertained by someone who had an uncle or grandfather who was simply the best shot in history and apparently had no trouble shooting running deer or antelopes in the head at 300m with an open-sighted .303 and military ammunition. Unfortunately, I've had to endure my fair share of such tiring and meaningless conversations over the years.

I've enjoyed numerous hunts in regions such as the Kalahari and Karoo where long-range shooting is the norm rather than the exception. In many instances, I've shot animals at longer range than I care to remember, and even though I'm by no means an exceptional shot, I've always concluded these hunts successfully. Along the way, I've also done a bit of thinking on this whole business of long-range shooting and, for what it's worth, would like to share some of my thoughts in the hope that they may be of assistance.

There are a few important preparations that anyone planning a hunt in open country needs to make in order to ensure success. The first consideration is an intimate understanding of the ballistics of the chosen load for the upcoming hunt. Many hunters study the ballistics charts published by ammunition manufacturers and although the charts can be a great help, it has been my experience that the actual ballistic performance of a chosen load may sometimes differ slightly from the published figures.

For example, US ammunition manufacturer Federal offers a load for the .30-06 firing a 180-grain Nosler Partition bullet at 2700fps. According to the charts, when sighted in to strike 2" high at 100m, point of impact will be just about dead-on at 200m and 8" low at 300m. With 180-grain .308 calibre Nosler Partition bullets and a certain handload, my .30-06 can shoot that bullet at just a touch over 2700fps.

Therefore, with skilful reloading, I can duplicate the Federal factory load, which is what I did a few years ago prior to a hunt in the Karoo.

I sighted in at 100m according to the published ballistics chart, 2" high, and even though I was confident that I knew exactly where my rifle would be shooting at longer range, I checked the zero at 200m as well. Imagine my surprise when the point of impact was more than an inch lower at that distance than published.

Curious, I fired a three-shot group from the 300m mark as well. Point of impact wasn't, as stated in the tables, 8" low but closer to 11". It may appear to be trivial but on certain species this can mean the difference between a heart shot and a broken foreleg. I've since made a habit of checking my rifle's zero at both 200m and 300m before taking aim at any animal. Thus, an intimate knowledge of your own rifle's performance with the actual load to be



A herd of eland on a game ranch in South Africa. The distance as well as the tall grass makes it almost impossible to identify the herd bull. Good optics are a must under such circumstances.

used in the field is a crucial prerequisite for long-range success. Treat the ballistics tables implicitly as a mere guideline.

Knowing the distance to the quarry is, of course, critical to enable the hunter to place the bullet correctly and with the increased availability of good-quality rangefinders at reasonable prices, things have changed for the better. When I started hunting, rangefinders were still regarded as something from *Star Wars*, and nobody in my circle of hunting friends owned one.

These days, rangefinders are freely available and although the premier-quality ones are not cheap, a good, reliable rangefinder can be had for the price of a decent riflescope. I'll admit that I was a bit sceptical at first, but after my initial hunt with the aid of a rangefinder I was convinced that it was a must-have piece of kit. Today, whenever a shot past the 150m mark is a possibility, my rangefinder is always close at hand and it has become a fundamental tool in my modest armoury of long-range shooting tools.

Another precondition for successful shooting at long range is accuracy. Under this heading I'm not necessarily referring to match-type $\frac{1}{4}$ MOA (minute-of-angle) accuracy, as precious few hunting rifles are capable of such a high standard in any event. But the chosen rifle should at least be capable of good, hunting-quality accuracy at the required distances.



A gemsbok bull hunted in South Africa's Eastern Cape province with a .30-06 loaded with 165-grain bullets. Distance was 230m.

In the US, a few gunmakers have made a speciality of building rifles especially for ultra long-range shooting. These rifles usually feature precision actions and barrels mated to fibreglass or wood-laminate stocks and high-magnification scopes, often fitted with custom reticles. In addition, they require the use of carefully assembled handloads to deliver the promised levels of accuracy.

I, for one, would love to own such a rifle but it is simply not worth it for the sake of a hunt every now and then, not to

mention the cost involved in such a project. Therefore, most hunters make do with factory-made or custom rifles of a slightly less specialised nature.

When it comes to scopes for long-range shooting, I've become a firm believer in variable-power scopes. I'm aware that fixed-power scopes are supposedly more reliable, but I've been using variable-powered scopes for many years without a hitch and am so used to them that the idea of going back to fixed-power is simply unthinkable.



Bettering the odds at long-range

Of course, there are hunters out there who prefer the simplicity of a fixed-power scope and are successful at shooting animals at long range, so I'm certainly not going to push variable-power scopes as the be-all-and-end-all of long-range marksmanship, but sometimes they sure make life easier.

My long-range rifles are fitted with high-magnification variables and even though I don't always need all the magnification on offer, I have at times shot animals at long range with the magnification turned up as far as it would go. The pleasing thing about a variable-power scope is that it allows freedom of choice; with the 3-10x variable on my .30-06, for instance, I can shoot a kudu at close range with the scope turned to 3x on one day and a blesbuck standing at 250m on an open plain the next. A fixed 4-magnification scope may be fine for the kudu, but 250m is getting on a bit for such a scope.

The wind is an often overlooked but sometimes a telling external influence that can lead to disaster if ignored. I willingly admit that I'm a rather poor judge of the wind at the best of times, and I've spent many minutes looking at the waving grass between my ambush position and a grazing herd of springbucks in an attempt to make sense of it all. Obviously, the longer the shot and the higher the wind speed, the more influence the breeze will have on any given situation, especially with the lighter calibres and bullets.

I started off shooting springbucks with a .223 and a .243, and although the wind was less of a factor with the .243's 100-grain bullets, it could be troublesome with the .223. At distances past 200m or so, its light 55-grain bullets sometimes were blown off-target by a stiff breeze. Although I fortunately never lost an animal, I eventually gave up on the smaller calibres completely and started using a .30-06 and 6.5x55, loaded with 165- and 140-grain bullets, respectively. The wind is still a factor, but I've worried less about it ever since.

Likewise, the issue of bullet choice. Boat-tailed bullets may not offer much advantage at distances under 250m but at long range, why not give yourself every possible advantage? Many rifles will not group accurately with boat-tail bullets, but my rifles will, and I use them when I can.

In spite of everything else, perhaps the most basic ingredient in successful long-range shooting is the person behind the rifle. Merely finding out about your rifle's trajectory isn't enough and practice is vital to hone the skills needed for successful long-range shooting. In this regard, I've

found the shooting days held by the various hunting associations like the SSAA to be invaluable. Those I frequent in South Africa use life-size animal targets at distances up to 300m and provide realistic practice under circumstances where many of the same external factors which may plague a hunter (such as the wind, for instance) also come into play. I attend such a shooting day whenever I'm headed for the open plains and it's a great confidence booster.

Years ago, we found ourselves hunting black wildebeest on a farm in the South African Highveld. Although the property held good numbers of wildebeest, all our efforts to move within reasonable shooting range of the wary animals proved to be fruitless. It was only after the hunt the landowner explained that a considerable number of wildebeest had been culled on the property the week before we arrived. However, at the time we found it puzzling to see the animals running flat-out the moment either vehicle or man approached to within 400m or so. They were wilder than snakes!

Good, aerodynamic bullets can make life easier. On the left is a perfectly expanded 180-grain Swift Scirocco II recovered from a gemsbuck bull, compared to an unfired example.



This Rowland Ward-class blesbuck ram was shot at a distance of 281m with a .243 Winchester. The shot was taken from atop the ledge in the upper right-hand corner.



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HUNTER

Bettering the odds at long-range

To make a long story short, and after considerable planning and an hour-long crawl, I found myself lying on my belly on a small hill with a good view of an open plain stretching in front of me. My hunting companion was lying next to me with his rangefinder mounted on a small tripod. It wasn't long before two small black dots appeared from our right. Through the rifle-scope I made out the shape of two black wildebeest, but they were still much too far away to shoot, so we waited. Half an hour later the animals were closer and, with the big 7mm resting over my backpack, I chambered a cartridge and settled down.

With the riflescope at maximum magnification, I saw both animals clearly. The one in front was still a youngster but the second animal was a nice bull. The wary duo were already glancing in the direction of our little hill and it was only a matter of time before their survival instincts took over and they headed off. It seemed now or never, so with the cross-hairs rock-steady just over the animal's back as he stood broadside facing to my left, I pressed the trigger as softly as I could.

The unmistakable sound of the bullet striking home followed a second or so later and the bull's legs buckled as he collapsed into the yellow grass, shot squarely through both lungs.

I felt good about that shot. Not only did the bullet strike within an inch or so of where I'd aimed, but it killed the animal cleanly and efficiently. I doubt if I would ever attempt such a long shot again but the conditions on that particular day were just about perfect.

I was using an accurate, flat-shooting rifle with a good, solid rest and had a rangefinder readily available to tell me exactly what the distance was. The rifle was sighted carefully before the hunt and I knew precisely where it was shooting at

distances up to 300m, so that expanse was doable. In the end, it was a matter of keeping calm and squeezing the trigger as gently as possible. With proper preparation, that's how it can be for everyone. ■

There are many cartridges, both young and old, that will ensure the job is done when the distances start to become longer. This line-up includes (from left): the .243 Winchester, .25-06 Remington, 6.5x55 Swedish, 6.5 PRC, .30-06 and .300 H&H Magnum.



A happy Johan with two springbuck rams hunted at extended range in South Africa's Northern Cape province. He used a Tikka in 6.5x55 Swedish topped rifle with a 4-12x Swarovski scope and 140-grain Nosler Partition bullets.



This red hartebeest was hunted with a 7x64 Brenneke, topped with a Leupold variable-magnification scope, loaded with aerodynamic 160-grain bullets at more than 2800fps.





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Glow in the dark

Scott Heiman is enlightened
by the Pelican 3310ELS torch



A versatile night light, even when turned off.

Driving in country New South Wales recently, we as a family stopped for a routine 'driver reviver'. Truth be known, our choice of location wasn't entirely coincidental. You see, we were passing through Cowra, the site of a favourite firearms dealer of ours – Cowboy Guns and Gear.

Not only can this place set you up with a firearm, but they also have a great array of ammo on hand. And, of course, there are fishing and hunting accessories – lots of them – including the nifty torch we found displayed on the service counter.

In life, torches – like patience – are something that you can never have enough of. Either at home or on the road, at some time or another we'll find ourselves in need of a good beam to light up our lives. Whether it's a bump in the night signalling that there's a prowler possum raiding the tucker box, or the plaintive plea from

our kids at 3am asking to be taken to a drop toilet, some 50m away – across burr-infested scrub – in the rain.

Back in the day, there wasn't a ute or panel-van without a trusty Dolphin torch stored easily in reach somewhere near the tailgate. Then, as time moved on, there was the ubiquitous 'D' cell Maglite under the driver's seat. But, with the rate of technological advancement, these days we're spoilt for choice. Waterproof, LED, compact, durable, flood beam, spot beam, emergency flash and headlamps. There's a torch for every occasion.

While all this variety is convenient, it's probably fair to say that many of us have lost our old, disciplined habits of storage which guaranteed that the one torch we owned was easy to find, where we needed it, when we needed it. Instead, we have torches scattered around camp – in our tent, in our pockets and in our camp chair stubby

holders. The trouble is that no matter how many torches we leave lying around, we probably stand a snowball in hell's chance of finding one of them in the dark.

Until now... because what I had spied on the counter in the gunshop is a Pelican 3310 Emergency Lighting Station – and the torch is photoluminescent. That's right, it glows in the dark. And, usefully, the torch-light itself charges the luminescence so that, when the batteries go flat, it can continue to glow for up to six hours. Which you would have to agree would be a handy feature – say, in a search and rescue situation.

Indeed, when we arrived home and contacted Pelican Australia for the backstory to these little torches, we found that it was the US experience of 9/11 back in 2001 that triggered manufacturers to start producing luminescent torches for first responders.

The utility of luminescent torches was reinforced in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina



One touch for high beam, second press for low, third press for flashing.



The torch comes well made for operation, even in the dark.



Keep your Emergency Lighting Station near other emergency equipment.



So handy that Scott bought three.

hit New Orleans, inflicting massive damage and loss of life. During the blackouts that ensued, the need for torches – that you could find among the devastation when you needed them – was self-evident. Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for this bright idea to reach the outdoor recreational market.

While the glow-in-the-dark feature of the Pelican 3310ELS torch is its headline attribute, it has plenty of other impressive features too. For starters it is IPX7 waterproof, which is handy for rainy camps and floods alike. It also has a high beam distance of 240m, a low beam distance of 80m, as

well as a flashing mode for emergency signalling. Importantly, it takes simple AA batteries – not some hard-to-find battery size that you would have no hope of replacing when you are 'Back of Bourke'.

Run time is an amazing 190 hours on low and nine on high. This longevity is achieved because the torch only has 234 lumens. And, after all, who said that every torch has to burn the retina out of a roo at 1000 yards? What you need around camp (or in an emergency) is a torch that you can find, that works and that stays on.

To add to all this and make it even easier to find, the Pelican 3310ELS includes

a compact clear wall-mount case and bracket. So, this torch can have its own special storage place where you – and others – know where to find it, and where to put it back.

So, with three of these enlightened torches now in my possession, what am I planning to do with them? Well, one will be mounted at home, next to the fire extinguisher and fire blanket, in case of emergency; one's going to live in the 6x6 Land Rover; and the final one will be placed on the wall of the camper to act as a security night light – for those midnight runs to the loo, and for when something goes bump in the night.

Check out pelicanstore.com.au for their full array of products, including a model that's IPX8 waterproof and has 378 lumens of light output.

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Window of opportunity

Sam Garro reports on a chance maiden hunt for Northern Territory buffaloes and bantengs

Many an aspiring hunter is drawn to Africa's alluring embrace with its unique landscape and impressive array of antelopes. There's the diminutive and beautiful duiker to the majestic kudu, gemsbok and grand eland to name a few. And for the big game hunter, there is the tough and potentially dangerous Cape buffalo.

However, as a result of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, borders were closed and overseas travel was put on hold. For hunters who planned and paid their safari fees, cancellations have been a huge disappointment. We can also spare a thought for outfitters whose livelihood has been severely impacted from the loss of income, particularly in places like Tshipise, South Africa. This is a popular hunting destination, where they have been dealing with record floodwaters from the Limpopo River that destroyed entire campsites and equipment.

However, despite the setbacks created by these unprecedented times, a fortunate few were able to fulfil a lifelong

wish to hunt Asiatic water buffaloes and bantengs in the Top End through a small window of opportunity.



Bill with his Blaser R93 .375 H&H rifle as he couldn't resist collecting a trophy buffalo for himself at the end of the hunt.



Camp cabins and comfortable accommodation make for a good night's rest.



Aerial view of campsite in the Mary River region.

Northern Territory guided hunt

Bill, my resident tanner and hunting guide in outer Melbourne, managed to organise such a hunt in the remote Mary River region of Northern Territory. This involved a group of enthusiastic hunters wanting to experience the Top End for the first time.

Four Melburnians free to travel to Darwin at the time, were able to bring forward their booking and take advantage of the opening. This was made possible due to Bill's shared and flexible arrangements with his established contacts in Darwin. All important and crucial requirements were met to ensure the hunters could conduct their adventure legitimately and with total peace of mind.

Buffalo management

While the hunts on the vast privately-owned properties are free-range, considerable effort by the outfitter is spent in previous months monitoring buffalo movements, observing their browsing and watering habits, and favoured rest and wallowing places in an effort to improve the chances of scoring a representative trophy bull.

Left undisturbed, these animals of habit will often return and frequent the same places, making it easier to predict their probable whereabouts, as opposed to stalking a likely bit of bush or forested area and hoping for the best.

To ensure the sustainability of quality bulls in the region, none under 100 SCI points are shot. This allows younger males to reach full maturity and provide opportunity for future hunters. Overall numbers are controlled from time to time through targeted culls,

mostly on less favourable or poorer conditioned animals, with the meat going to abattoirs for human or pet consumption.

Camp and weather conditions

As an experienced guide, Bill appreciates a hunter's ability to satisfactorily function under challenging conditions for the better part of the day. And aside from possessing good outdoor skills, the hunter is reliant on wholesome meals and a proper night's sleep.

Meals for the trip were supplemented with buffalo steaks and locally caught barramundi fillets relished over an open fire. The campsite comprised of comfortable cabins, clean-sheeted beds and the necessary amenities. Positioned near a clear, flowing creek and surrounded by stretches of tall savannah grass and gum forests, it provided the ideal setting.



The area had received good seasonal rain, promoting high grass on the plains and filling the waterways. As a result of the favourable conditions, buffaloes and other feral animals inhabiting the area were well conditioned and in good numbers. The location was especially inviting as this section of the property hadn't been previously hunted, providing a decent chance for each of the group to secure a buffalo.

The day temperatures for July hovered in the low-30s and at night in the low-20s, preferred hunting conditions compared to the extreme summer temperatures and high humidity from October onwards, signalling the onset of the monsoonal season.

Window of opportunity

Stalking the plains

It was important to stalk areas frequented by buffaloes early, before they retreated to their shady places, muddy wallows or billabongs to escape the heat of the day. Each morning the boys rose from their slumber in the dark around 6.30am to be greeted by a cacophony of bird sounds. Initially, clicks and clacks from birds they had never heard before, then as the morning lengthened the sounds were joined by the familiar cooing of small doves and the chorus of the screeching kookaburras and warbling magpies.

With a hearty breakfast under their belts, they headed out fully provisioned with plenty of snacks and drinking water. The afternoons around 4.30pm were also favourable times to operate, with the midday hours taken up reminiscing at camp or fishing the nearby running creeks and billabongs for saratoga, bream, catfish and barramundi.

Each hunter worked hard and implicitly followed the guide's instructions for a safe outcome. The tall grass and sparse stretches of forest provided excellent

cover to close the shooting range as they quietly and methodically stalked forward, downwind from any buffalo, stopping each time the animal raised its head or became wary. A buffalo's hearing and sense of smell is acute. I once witnessed a group of buffaloes over a kilometre away in an open basin pick up human voices and rapidly exit out of sight over a ravine.

Suitable rifle calibres

The heavy bodied and densely boned Asiatic buffalo, considered at times a tougher adversary to the African Cape buffalo, requires some stopping power. Rifles like the Blaser R93 .375 H&H using Barnes 300gr TSX (V/E at muzzle 2550/4331) and the hard-hitting .416WM using Remington 400gr A-Frame PSP (V/E at muzzle 2400/5115) are often employed for buffaloes and bantengs.

Irrespective of whether it's a placid looking Asiatic or Cape buffalo, if wounded and the adrenalin kicks in, they're a bit like trying to stop an out-of-control freight train. So, you really can't have enough gun in these situations.

The boys' scopes were zeroed at 80m and the magnification dialled down to a low setting for close-range shooting and fast tracking in the event that a quick follow-up shot was required. Their preferred shot placement was in the shadowy crease just behind and slightly up the shoulder, into the vitals, as the animal presented in quartering position. Each beast was satisfactorily dropped safely and humanely.

Even though seemingly dead on the ground, the approach on a downed buffalo was always cautious. Buffaloes can be known to rise to their feet from a temporary unconscious state to charge at people. To ensure a buffalo was definitely dead, a light touch to the eye with the end of a long branch or rifle barrel from behind its head was used to check for any twitch or reaction.



Bill retrieving a banteng head and cape.

Bill (left) with an overjoyed hunter, after securing a magnificent banteng on top of his trophy buffalo.

Hunting success

The overall hunting approach during the three days worked well, with each hunter scoring a magnificent mature bull. For one hunter, a dual trophy buffalo bull and

magnificent banteng on the property completed his long-planned aspiration. As with the other hunters, the shoulder mounts take pride of place in their den or house.

The high-wheeling, whistling kites were forever present. Over a downed animal they literally turned up in their hundreds, eagerly waiting for the hunters' departure before swooping down on the carcass, soon to be joined by wedge-tailed eagles and any resident dingoes after an easy meal. This is nature's way of cleaning up.

Retrieving the trophies

While a challenging buffalo or banteng hunt couldn't be any more fulfilling or rewarding, the process of skinning, caping out and skull or horn removal to follow is laborious and demanding. Buffaloes have a tough hide and layer of fat an inch or more thick, requiring sharp knives, with a bit of patience and perseverance to complete the job. In most cases the process doesn't lend itself to an inexperienced hunter, especially when it comes to retrieving a cape for a shoulder mount where careful scalping is required around the delicate parts of the eyes, ears, mouth and nose.

A buffalo's head also needs lengthy boiling to remove the horns, followed by



Bill (left) and his ecstatic client with a trophy buffalo.

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Window of opportunity

hosing with a high-pressure Gerni to dislodge any remnants of meat and grizzle. Thereafter it's normally treated in a mixture of water and peroxide to disinfect and whiten the skull in preparation for a European or full shoulder mount, as determined by the client.

Bill prides himself in providing a total service from the initial booking and organisation of the hunt right through to boiling out the heads and arranging delivery of the trophies to the client, even tagging on taxidermy services. Basically, it is a one-stop arrangement designed to maximise the hunter's enjoyment and experience.

Undervalued Top End

Hunters pursuing particular game species are rightfully attracted to overseas hunting destinations, where they are unique to the place. However, when it comes to big game hunting, our own Top End wilderness, that has so much to offer in diversity, grandeur and expectation, is often overlooked or not appreciated as much, until experienced for the first time.

Interestingly enough, international hunters from South Africa, Germany, Russia, the

Netherlands, Japan, United States and other countries come to our shores in pursuit of Asiatic water buffaloes, bantengs, wild boars, scrub bulls and a variety of deer species, some repeating their adventure down under.

In these restrictive times, Aussie big game hunters are giving greater consideration to hunting the Top End. It's not cheap and not for everyone but it can be comparable to an African or other overseas safari when taking into account the associated

costs for overseas airfares, hunting permits, taxidermy, freight, import duty, currency exchange rate and so on.

It's worth considering our own Top End for a hunting experience of a lifetime with a listed reputable professional outfitter who has the credentials and the proper paperwork to make it all happen.

For anyone wanting to enquire about a Top End hunt on buffaloes, bantengs or deer, Bill can be contacted on 0425 838 666. ■



Rinsing out a banteng cape in a nearby creek.



Bill begins the arduous task of capping out a buffalo for a shoulder mount.



Tumble polishing cases

Don Caswell

I had noticed that my tumbled cases were not as clean as I would like. Longer periods of cleaning in my Lyman case tumbler did not seem to improve on that. Also, fouling on the case necks and shoulder was not coming off at all.

My tumbling media was dusty. I thought about that for a moment and realised that I had not recharged the tumbling media in a long time and had been putting a lot of cases through it in recent years.

I spent some time on the internet looking for the best options to improve my tumble cleaning. I found many references to using ground walnut shell along with a dash of the car polish 'Nu Finish'. In the USA a lot of shooters turn to a ground walnut shell product that is actually intended for folks who keep pet reptiles. This is apparently an ideal medium for covering the floor of reptile enclosures. Enterprising shooters long ago found that this bedding also makes a great case tumbling media.

My local pet shops did not stock the type of walnut bedding that I was after, so I decided to revert to the more expensive proprietary tumbling media I would find in gunshops. Wandering around a firearms emporium, I chanced upon a 10kg bag of ground walnut hull media for vibratory case tumblers made by Defiance. It cost a modest \$30. The information on the bag also recommended using a dash of metal polish for a superior result. The nearby Supercheap Auto had the American-made Nu Finish car polish that I had read about. The cost of the polish was \$18.

I dashed home with my goodies and tipped out the dirty, dusty dregs of my much-used tumbling media. Then I gave my Lyman tumbler a thorough cleaning. It was particularly dirty, I have to admit. I topped up the tumbler with a good helping



Cases cleaned for zero, 30, 60, 90 and 120 minutes.

of the walnut hull media I had just bought. The tumbler took 1.5kg of that, so, even with more frequent media changes, that 10kg bag will last me a long time.

The addition of a trace of Nu Finish achieves a couple of things. Firstly, it improves the final result by giving a bit of polish to the brass. Secondly, it provides some longer-term protection for cleaned brass that is sitting waiting to be used.

After reading what various other shooters had tried, I put 1.5 caps of the polish into the clean walnut hull media and let that mix in over 10 minutes, before adding the brass cases. Common practice seems to be along those lines and then the addition of half a cap of polish every third or fourth cleaning session.

I had moved into the habit of tumbling my cases overnight. That was largely due to the worn-out and dirty state of the media, which was struggling to clean my brass like it used to. With a tumbler full of brand-new media and a dash of polish,

I decided to do a test of what different tumbling times would achieve. I tipped a load of .223 Rem cases into the machine and set it going.

I kept aside three of the dirty cases for reference and took three cleaned cases out of the tumbler every 30 minutes. It certainly seems like 30 to 60 minutes is enough time to achieve a reasonable clean and polish.

I will no longer be needing to leave my tumbler rumbling away in the gun room overnight. And, my brass is going to be cleaner and shinier. The cleaned shells are silky smooth to the touch, almost slippery in feel. Shiny brass cases look good, but, more importantly, they can be relied on to chamber and extract smoothly as well. That is another important aspect of hunting success. ■

Ground walnut shell with a dash of Nu Finish polish is good media for vibratory tumblers.





The .222 Rem is a great fox rifle.

Triple deuce

John Denman highlights why the .222 cartridge is most certainly here to stay

You could rightly say that the .222 is one of, if not the, most perfect cartridge ever designed. Looking just like a scale model of a .30-06, with a fairly long neck, at least in comparison to most of today's offerings, its petite dimensions leave a lot of shooters to dismiss it in favour of the .223. That's a mistake.

This cartridge case was new from the ground up. When it was developed it didn't owe any previous designs a scrap of parentage, the like had never been seen before. It was adopted quickly by the Benchrest shooters of its day and some of the records shot with it have only been bettered recently by wildcats like the 6mm PPC. That record was shot in 1973 and measured 0.000. In other words, a 5-shot one-hole group. It was only bettered, or equalled if you prefer, about 40 years later.

Released by Remington in 1950 after some lengthy design work by Mike Walker, it became an immediate success. It neatly filled the gap between the .22 Hornet and the .220 Swift, and was easy to reload for

and cheap to shoot. It was also a lot cheaper on barrels than the Swift. The first rifle chambered for the .222 was Remington's Model 722. Later, every firearms maker in the US was chambering rifles for it, including Winchester's Model 70.

A lot of these older rifles are highly prized by collectors and other shooters who just want one. In its country of origin – the US, it's hard to find a new rifle in .222 these days, but in Europe there are no lack of options, with most Euro rifle builders having one in their line-up. Names like Sako, CZ and Zastava still make rifles chambered for the round. One possible reason for this is the .222's relatively low report. Europe is far more densely settled than the US. Couple that with fact that they have some much smaller deer species like muntjac and roe deer and you can see why.

In fact, there is no lack of history of the .222 being used on deer. It was at one time used by culling teams in New Zealand. These blokes were excellent shots and could put the light bullet where it would

do best. As everyone knows, bullet placement is all important. The triple two didn't destroy meat and has little recoil. Plus, ammo was cheap. It ultimately fell out of favour though.



A .223 (left) and the .222. Not much difference in overall length but the neck on the .222 is longer.

Remington had a look at bringing the cartridge out in a larger size, calling it the .222 Magnum. Originally intended as a military round, it was popular for a while but didn't receive the nod from the military, and after being released in 1958 it sank into obscurity. The .223 Remington that was later released did enjoy military acceptance. It is still an admired round and probably rivals the .308, another military cartridge, in terms of popularity.

The thing is that the triple two was never designed to handle bullets heavier than 55 grains. In fact, 40 to 50-grain bullets shoot best in most rifles due to its twist rate of one in 14. My own rifle, which features a Zastava barrel and action with a relatively short barrel of just 20", seems to prefer the 50gr bullets, in particular Hornady's V-Max. That's fine because I never intended to use it on anything bigger than a fox or wild dog. In fact, the rifle has been singularly successful in reducing the wild dog population around our immediate area. Once again, mild report combined with fairly frangible bullets make it ideal.

Of course, it's inevitable that it will always be compared with the .223. In my opinion it really doesn't suffer in the comparison, although the .223 has more powder room and can gain better value out of heavier bullets, a .222 in the hands of a good shooter is still formidable. I have a mate who has shot a lot of pigs with his .222 using 55gr Hornady soft-points. He agrees that



Lightweight bullets work well in the .222. From left: 50gr V-Max, 40gr V-Max and 40gr Nosler.

the cartridge has its limits, but when that's what you have in your hand at the time, and you know how to use it, why not?

The .223 case is not all that longer than the .222 but due to a shorter neck it gains in case capacity. The extra fuel pushes a heavier bullet out further, one of the reasons the .223 is still a popular long-range target round. Longer bullets with superior ballistic coefficient, weighing up to 80 grains, will retain terminal velocity far better than those that start off faster but shed velocity quickly. So really, both cartridges are in a class of their own.

Ammunition is still easily available for the .222. All the major companies make loads for it, but from a handloader's point of view it's ideal. In Australia, ADI make an excellent powder for the .222. It's 2207 and coupled with a 40 to 50gr bullet will put the lights out on a fox or dog easily at 200m. There are plenty of good projectiles in this weight range, but my favourites are Hornady's excellent V-Max range, although the Nosler Varmint in 40-grain shows great promise.

The 40gr V-Max is a highly frangible bullet and ideal for foxes. I've also used them on rabbits. One of my hunting properties has a spot called 'Rabbit Hill'. I've had some lovely afternoons up on that hill targeting rabbits. Head shots are preferred and showing up at the farmhouse with a couple of freshly gutted rabbits never goes astray. Even if they end up in the stomachs of the farm dogs.

The 50gr V-Max has worked efficiently on kangaroos too, as plenty of professional shooters will attest. The short barrel on my rifle is a handy size and muzzle velocities aren't too shabby either. The 40gr bullet goes at a bit over 3300fps and the 50gr at around 3200fps. These velocities are easily achieved in my rifle and a longer barrel would only improve the speeds.

I've never been able to make the 55gr bullet shoot well out of my rifle. Perhaps



100m group with 50gr V-Max. 1/2 MOA is common with the .222.

Triple deuce



it's because of the short barrel, or I simply haven't tried enough bullets in that weight range. But seeing how well the rifle handles the game I mainly target with it, I've seen no reason to spend time on the heavier bullet.

So, if you're looking for a new .222, you will likely find the majority available will be from European makers. However, if you hunt around and find one of the earlier US built rifles you could be well rewarded, because these were always known for their accuracy. The other factor is barrel life. I'm sure someone has shot the barrel out on one of these but I'm yet to find that person. Unless you shoot off an abnormal number of rounds, like a pro roo shooter might, you are unlikely to be shopping for a new tube for some time.



Footnote

There is a rimmed version of the .222 mainly found chambered in single-shot rifles. However, it's only a handloader's proposition. The cartridge was introduced in the 1960s by Australian ammunition maker Super Cartridge Company. This was done in response to the huge number of Martini .310 rifles that flooded the Australian market back then and could be converted to a number of rimmed cartridges, the .222 rimmed among them.

Cases are now only available from the Bertram Bullet Company, who also make cases for the defunct .222 Magnum, or you can find some 5.6x50R cases by German Company RWS and re-form them. If you ever go down this path you should remember that most single-shot actions of the Martini type are not as strong as a bolt-action and loads should be worked up accordingly. ■

The scope is mounted higher to accommodate the bolt handle on the Mini Mauser action.





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An inclement expedition

Chris Wardrop and co won't take no for an answer in their pursuit of tasty fallow deer

Sensible people would have stayed at home, as the weather forecast told of rain, strong winds and snow as low as 1000m. But desire overrode commonsense.

There were compelling factors in our defence – my freezer was devoid of venison for the first time in years, Rod's son was bursting with excitement to accompany him on a deer hunt, and we had already postponed twice due to bad conditions.

Friday night, under dark skies and gentle drizzle, we loaded our sleeping gear into the small hut where at least it would stay dry. We had realistic expectations of what the next two days may bring and were just happy to be away for the weekend.

The rain tapered off in the early hours of the morning, and we slipped out of camp long before sunrise. Rod and William headed in one direction, with me going in another. The plan was to glass the north-eastern facing slopes on the farm's fringe. It stood to reason, or so I thought, that any deer making their way back up to the heavily timbered gullies might pause for a few moments to graze in the morning sun.

It was a flawed plan. After a long sit in the dark, it became obvious the sun was not going to break through the clouds. But even if it had, it turned out to be unlikely any deer would be found loitering on the fringe of the thick timber.

In the biting cold of pre-dawn all hell had broken loose a few hundred metres from me, with sounds the likes of which I had never heard. On reflection, the noises were most likely a wild dog or two chasing down a wounded pig. The squealing, growling, grunting ruckus carried on for at least 15 minutes as the animals battled along a creek line and eventually over the western ridge.

No matter how much I strained through the binoculars, there simply wasn't enough light to make out the source of the disorder. Later that morning Rod confirmed the clamour had carried quite clearly and loudly to his position over a kilometre-and-a-half away. Undoubtedly, any game that had been



The hut was small, but dry and warm. Photo Rod Caplick

feeding in the surrounding acres had made best speed into the safety of cover, and neither of us saw a single deer in the short interval between shooting light and the next freezing rain squall.

By mid-afternoon the rain had eased to brief showers and the sun occasionally broke through the clouds for a few minutes at a time, as in a trade-off a strong westerly wind was gusting at more than 70km/hr. We had eaten hot meals, napped and become restless at camp. The apparent temperature was below zero and we hypothesised that any deer on the property would be bedded in the gullies out of the wind.

We again broke camp, but this time headed directly for the eastern boundary, where we would turn south and hunt along a large gully system, keeping the wind in our faces or at least over our right shoulders. In the gully it was still, and when the



William tended the fire so we could enjoy a warm lunch after a cold and unsuccessful morning. Photo Rod Caplick

sun broke through it was even a little too warm for four layers of clothing.

Surely there would be deer bedded in the shelter. Rod, with William following close by, stalked along the mid-line of the slope with a good view into the gully itself. I paralleled his route about 100m further east and uphill. I figured I may have a shot at any deer that Rod accidentally spooked

out of the gully. It was slow going, taking three or so deliberate and quiet steps, and then glassing the medium density timber, paying particular attention to the thicker scrubby bits. The strong wind played in our favour, masking the noise of each footstep.

I found myself on a game trail with some deer sign and slowed even further. With each step I scanned right-to-left 100m

An inclement expedition



Being a small deer and with only a couple of kilometres to the nearest vehicle track, carrying the carcass out whole seemed like the best option. Photo Rod Caplick



Gutting the deer before carrying it out. Photo Rod Caplick

ahead. But it was movement only 10m away that caught my eye. The distinct features of a fallow deer head emerged from behind a black sheoak. I froze, expecting the deer to turn to look at me and then bolt any instant. The young buck took another step forward and it became obvious it had not seen, heard or smelt me.

The strong wind was to my advantage. The buck was intently focused towards the gully, so I assumed it had caught some scent of Rod and William and was trying to confirm it. Slowly I raised my rifle, but the shot was blocked by an intervening white gum. I took half a step to the right and the buck still stood motionless. So I took the shot. The round impacted behind his right shoulder destroying heart, lungs and unfortunately the offside shoulder too. The 30-calibre Hornady SST packed too much punch at such close range, but I'd brought the synthetic stocked .308 along due to the weather. Maybe I should consider re-stocking my .243 and setting the walnut stock aside.



In the morning a wedge-tailed eagle cleaned up any scraps of meat left on the ribcage.

With the small deer gutted I carried it out, while Rod and William moved further along the gully system to sit on a small clearing and watch a game trail towards sunset. But again the weather turned nasty, drawing their hunt to an early close.

Two days later my family dined on pulled venison neck enchiladas (see page 78). Meanwhile, the hindquarters, right shoulder and backstraps were left to age for two weeks in an old fridge. ■

HUNTSMAN OPTICS

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SPECIFICATIONS

LYNX

MODEL	SENSOR	FOCAL	MAG	FOV	RANGE	MEMORY	BATTERY	WEIGHT
LH25	384×288, 12μm, NETD < 35mK	25mm, F1.0	2.45 - 19.6, x8	10.5° × 7.9°	1200m	8GB (220,000 Images)	Up to 7.5h	300g
LH19		19mm, F1.0	1.86 - 14.88, x8	13.8° × 10.4°	900m			310g
LH15*			1.47 - 11.76, x8	17.5° × 13.1°	700m			
LE15*	256 ×192, 12μm, NETD < 35mK	15mm, F1.0	1.42 - 11.36, x8	11.6° × 8.7°	600m		Up to 8h	
LE10*		10mm, F1.0	1.0- 8.0, x8	18.0° × 13.6°	450m			
LC06*	160 ×120, 17μm	6.2mm, F1.1	1.0- 8.0, x8	24.7° × 18.7°	220m		Up to 10h	

* No manual focus

FEATURES

Pixel interval: 12 -17 µm
 Detector sensitivity: 35 mK
 50HZ refresh rate
 High Shock resistance 750 g/1ms
 Digital zoom: 1x, 2x, 4x, 8x
 F1.0 Aperture
 Capture Snapshots & store on thermal
 Capture videos & store on thermal

Wi-Fi - Hotspot - real time sharing or transfer videos/images
 IP67 protection
 3 year warranty
 Static target ranging system
 Built-in memory: 8-16 GB
 Battery runtime up to 7.5 hours (Rechargeable Lithium Battery)



SLEEP MODE

Monocular supports sleep mode to enhance battery life and maximise runtime.



ADVANCED IMAGE SENSOR

The high sensitive 384×288 12 µm Vox image sensor offers high quality image performance with more details. With larger magnification, the detection range of a 1.7 m target can reach up to 1200 m.



WI-FI ENABLED

Supports WiFi Hotspot through the mobile app to have the same view as the camera itself. Users can also access digital zoom or video recording on their mobile or tablet.



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Barbecue braised venison neck

This is a whole neck from a small fallow.

Chris Wardrop cashes in on his hunting dividends

Like many hunters, I had in the past been guilty of discarding deer necks. However, thanks to the influence of Steven Rinella – his cookbooks and the excellent ‘MeatEater’ television show – that all changed a couple of years ago and I will never again allow a neck to go to waste.

Nor will I go to the effort of boning the neck meat for mince or sausages. I am now totally converted to the ease and delicious results of slowly braising whole venison necks. The meat once pulled from the bone can be used in countless dishes.

The best results are achieved by braising slowly in the oven using a large French enamelled cast iron casserole dish. But it is a lengthy process that can take more than six hours depending on the size of the neck, and it needs regular inspection to ensure the meat remains covered in sufficient stock.

For this recipe I have taken the much faster route and used an electric pressure cooker. If you do have a large casserole dish and not much on for the day, I suggest trying this same recipe in the oven.

Ingredients

- 1 fallow neck, trimmed of excess fat and tendon removed (half or even a quarter for larger deer)
- ½ tablespoon of oil (anything with a high smoke point – not olive oil)

For the rub

- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- ½ tablespoon nutmeg
- ½ tablespoon onion powder

For the stock

- 3 cups game stock (beef or chicken if you do not have game stock on hand)
- 2 tablespoons golden syrup
- 4 tablespoons barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon HP Sauce
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon garlic paste
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste (withhold until thickening the sauce)



Dry spices, salt and sugar for the rub.

Method:

Firstly, combine all of the rub ingredients in a small bowl and mix well. Set half of the rub aside and using the other half, cover all sides of the venison neck well. While pre-heating a heavy frying pan, combine all of the stock ingredients (except the tomato paste) along with the remaining half of the rub.

Once the frying pan is hot, add the oil and brown all sides of the neck. You could skip this step entirely, but the depth of flavour in the finished product will be lacking.

The sugar in the rub will rapidly caramelise, but don't worry if it burns a little.



A small neck yielded 550 grams of pulled meat.

Place the browned neck into your pressure cooker and pour over the stock. Set your pressure running – for my particular model I've found 90 minutes at medium pressure works perfectly.

Once the pressure cooker is finished, carefully release the pressure, and check on the neck. The meat should easily slide off the bone. In fact, so easily that you will need to take extra care removing the neck from the pot. Set the neck aside to cool a little while you reduce the stock.

I like to strain the stock to remove any chunks of meat or tendon. Once strained, add the two tablespoons of tomato paste and place the stock in a saucepan over medium/medium-high heat to reduce. Reduce the stock until it has a sauce-like consistency.

While the stock is reducing, pull the meat from the bone using a pair of tongs and a fork. Combine the pulled meat and the reduced stock and use in any dish you can imagine, if you can resist eating it all straight away. ■

Below: Some of Chris' favourite uses include enchiladas, tacos, boia buns, spring rolls and bibimbap (Korean mixed rice).



Hogs, buffs and *Woo!*



A quiet stalk over the open flood plain
to move within range of the hogs.

A trip to the Top End for **Brad Allen** comes with serendipitous rewards

As luck (or lack thereof) would have it, Darwin went into a COVID lockdown just as we were completing the three-day family road trip north to visit our son Macen, now living in the city.

So, we made the most of the down time, enjoying the catch-up by sharing some quality family time. As a surprise, Macen had arranged two days pig hunting with the possibility of buffaloes, through his mate Will, who had been hunting the NT with bow and rifle for several years. At this point, I was wishing that I had brought along my .416 Rigby.

Out of lockdown, with a 3am start, we arrived at Will's hunting property before sunrise and as it grew light enough to walk, the boys and I tiptoed through the pandanus towards the swamp edge where the pigs would be out feeding.

It was still not quite light enough to see any distance when we bumped into a small herd of buffaloes comprised of cows, yearlings and calves, which slowly moved off to our left. Their luck was in this morning, as there were no trophy bulls with them and the boys were concentrating on bowhunting for pigs.

Good shooting light arrived quickly and it was the 'old man' who sighted the opening hog, head down feeding among some pandanus. Morgan was to take first shot and as he closed the distance on the big sow, more pigs could be heard close by, contentedly feeding and grunting.

As she turned perfectly side-on at 15 yards, he released his arrow, which travelled true, striking the sow behind the left front leg and she went down to a perfect lung shot. At this point, a medium size boar walked out from behind the same pandanus clump to see what was going on. Morgan released another razor-sharp



Hogs, buffs and mud!

arrow, also striking this boar behind the left front leg and it laid down for the last time.

The remaining half-grown pigs milled around the downed sow and boar for a short time wondering what had just happened before they decided they had better things to do and a safer place to be. Morgan was quite pleased to open his NT pig hunting account with two great shots.

We hadn't gone more than 300 yards further when I noticed a flock of white egrets on an open, dry area that extended out into the swamp, with a large grey lump in the middle. The Leica binoculars confirmed my suspicion as I was looking at a hefty buffalo bull, with straight, wide horns – definitely a worthy trophy.

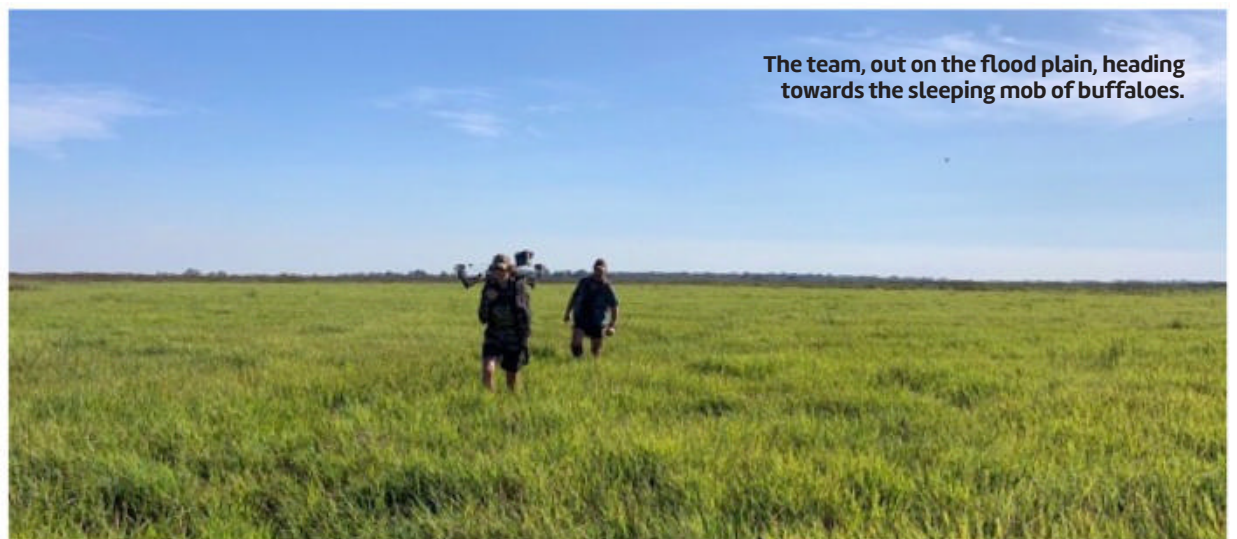
He had chosen his position well, with the swamp at his back, egrets on lookout for him and 300 yards of open country in front and on all sides. It was impossible to approach him from our current position, so we determined that we would have to stay back inside the bush line and stalk right around him, then approach from the opposite direction, where we could possibly use a few stunted trees as cover.

We had no sooner concocted our plan, when we observed two mature dingoes approaching the bull from the exact direction that we had planned to. Why two adult dingoes would attempt to bother such a large buffalo had us dumbfounded, as they could never take him down.

We could only watch as they chased and harassed the bull for over half a kilometre across open ground, before the big fellow tired of the game and headed into the scrub. That was our only chance at the bull busted, so we made the long slog back to the vehicle.

The following morning just at dawn, we arrived at a wide, open flood plain and this time, instead of just being a 'game spotter', I borrowed Macen's Ruger Scout .308 loaded with Remington 168gr Barnes TSX Hog Hammers in the hope taking a big boar or buffalo myself, if the opportunity arose.

The diversity and quantity of game in the area was quite evident, as we immediately located a mob of wild cattle and several groups of pigs feeding out on the flood plain. With the breeze in our face, we headed towards the first set of pigs when we noticed three dingoes stalking the same



The team, out on the flood plain, heading towards the sleeping mob of buffaloes.



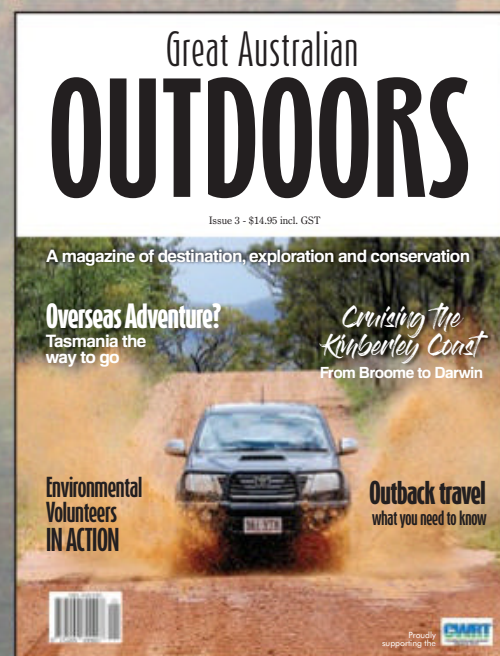
The old bull, downed cleanly from 100 yards using a 168gr Hog Hammer.

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SCAN AND ORDER

Hogs, buffs and mud!

pigs from the opposite side. After a careful stalk, Morgan was in position and loosed an arrow at a large sow from 20 yards, mortally hitting it through the lungs. One of the dingoes took a keen interest until it detected our scent and decamped into the scrub. By this time the remainder of the throng sensed something was up and also headed back into the scrub, taking a previously unseen herd of buffaloes with them.

There were still several other crowds of pigs feeding further out on the flood plain and it was now dad's turn with the .308. But no sooner had I commenced my first stalk when the fickle breeze swirled to betray us to a rather large boar more than 300 yards away, that quickly headed off into the distance.

As we reassessed our options, Will noticed a number of white egrets about 1km distant, on the edge of the flood plain. A closer look through the binos revealed some buffaloes bedded down for a siesta. With more than 1000 yards of open flood plain between them and us, the question now was how to be close enough for a shot.

A direct approach was out of the question, but we concluded that if we could move far enough to our right out on the flood plain, a stalk back along the scrub line into the breeze may be possible, using

the thin scrub of their bedding area as our cover. It was worth a try, so without delay we hunched over and headed off. Unbeknown to us at that point, the part of the flood plain we were headed for was extra wet and muddy, which made for slow and tedious progress.

Will was carrying his own Ruger .308 with 165gr handloads, which he had previously used successfully on buffaloes, so enlisting every bit of available cover (which wasn't much) he and I stalked level with the scrub line where the buffaloes were still dozing. We studied the mob with our binoculars and eventually located a respectable bull, before planning our final stalk. Using a clump of longer reedy grass as cover, we kept it between us and the mob as we leopard crawled ever so slowly forward.

At about 100 yards out, the buffaloes were starting to wake up from their siesta, with a few moving back out onto the flood plain to feed, but the bull stayed napping where he was, not offering up a shot. As we attempted to crawl to the side to open up a shot, a wary old cow spotted our movement in the grass and locked on to us. I whispered this to Will and we lay still until she rose and started scratching herself on a thorny bush.

This was about as close as we were going to be and the old cow kept giving us the evil eye, as the bull continued his nap. As the old boy finally moved to his feet, I confirmed to Will I could not manage a clear shot but he should shoot if he could.

At this point a dingo had entered the equation, walking past several buffaloes, straight towards us, sitting down only 30 yards from Will to have a good scratch. The suspicious cow again locked on to us and started approaching us in the stiff-legged manner that buffaloes do, with horns laid back and nose outstretched.

Finally, the bull moved forward, offering a clear shot. He was immediately met with one of my 168gr Hog Hammers through the boiler room, sending him crashing to the ground. Much to my relief, the old cow that had been stalking us spun around and headed into the scrub, taking the rest of the mob with her.

We were all smiles and as I was given the buff horns. My old legs and back carried the heavy load back to the vehicle, through the energy sapping flood plain mud. Hunting NT hogs and buffaloes sure is exciting and addictive. ■

The whole team, from left: Morgan, Will, Macen and Brad.





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Master Hunter

Jan Kaptein puts a Cold Steel all-rounder through its paces and likes what this knife can do

Regular readers may recall my review of the Cold Steel Finn Bear in issue 78 of *Australian Hunter*. Given the quality of their budget knives, I was keen to see what the fancier Cold Steel knives were like. This had me browsing their vast selection of knives and I found a few fixed blade general purpose hunting options.

After some deliberation, I settled on the Master Hunter. This knife is available with various blade steels, while the rest of the package is the same for all versions. The review knife, which is my own, has a blade made of VG-1 San Mai III. It is what I would call a compact to regular-size fixed blade hunter with a moulded Kray-Ex grip. Everything is put together well and it is obvious that some thought has gone into the design.

Cold Steel touts it as 'one of the finest hunting knives they have ever produced' and putting it through its paces, I can see why. In regular use, it has so far served me well and there is little to complain about.

For those interested in the Cold Steel background, a more elaborate overview can be found in issue 78. Cold Steel is an American company that has operated out of Texas since 1980. Their motto is their dedication to 'making the strongest, sharpest knives in the world'. These vary from cheap blades to premium knives. Based on personal experience, I would say that all of them offer good value.

The Master Hunter is suspiciously similar to the Fallkniven F1 (see issue 76), which has a slightly higher regular retail price but can be found for around the same price. The Master Hunter weighs in at 171 grams and has an overall length of 235mm. The Kray-Ex handle measures 121mm and the blade is a drop point design with a flat grind that comes in at 114mm. It is 28mm wide (as measured) and 4.8mm across the spine.

There is a moulded protrusion at the blade side of the grip that seems to be designed as some sort of finger guard. The sheath is a simple affair alternatively referred to as Secure-Ex or Conceal-Ex. In human terms, it appears to be a Zytel or similar hard plastic sheath. It has a large belt loop that closes with Velcro and a push-stud.

Out bush or when on a hunting trip, the Master Hunter has proved to be a solid performer. The shape of the blade makes it suitable for most tasks and it is not unduly heavy, so it is easy to carry on longer hikes. The blade with its VG-1 edge is straightforward to maintain and sharpen. It's great for processing animals like deer and pigs.

The blade is a bit wide for smaller animals like birds, rabbits and hares. For larger animals like scrub bulls, the Master Hunter will nicely pull-out fillets, skin or process softer parts, but for the heavier work, a larger alternative with a narrower tip and a tougher edge is best.

The Master Hunter is handy in the field and around camp.

The Kray-Ex handle looks a bit cheap, but in use it is actually sound. It provides ample grip and doesn't slip, even when dirty. That said, the smallish finger guard that is moulded into the grip does not really do much. The sheath is nothing to write home about either. While it securely attaches to your belt with Velcro and a push-stud, it swings around and potentially makes noise banging into your rifle or vegetation when stalking. It holds the knife well enough, with another little loop with a push-stud to secure it.

This is reminiscent of many cheap sheath designs. I would have had a custom leather sheath done for it if not for the finger guard. Unless you pull out the Dremel and grind it off, it will be in the way because it somehow needs to go in. Around camp, the Master Hunter is handy for general slicing and dicing when preparing meals.

There are not too many downsides, apart from the finger guard and sheath. A metal pommel at the back of the knife for emergency use or to crack some nuts would have been good.



The rubber finger guard forms part of the grip.



The Master Hunter is ideal for medium to larger game.

Master Hunter

The VG-1 San Mai III steel could be the one area of contention. Some rave about it, others call it a marketing gimmick. Personally, I have no problem with it, particularly at this price point. The deal is that San Mai III is a steel specifically produced for, and only used by Cold Steel, in Japan. The VG-1 steel that is used for the core is there because it is fairly easy to sharpen and because it can take a sharp edge.

While it is considered a premium steel, the VG-10 core steel used by, among others Fallkniven for their F1, is a more recent development and arguably better. That said, with the 420J2 steel between which it is sandwiched, the VG-1 is fine. It keeps an edge quite well and is not difficult to sharpen. There are some reports of chipping, which any hard steel is prone to. Personally, I have not had any issues. However, it is something to keep in mind if you intend to use your knife for heavy bushcraft chores or regularly chopping on bones.

Everything said and done, I am pleased with my Master Hunter in San Mai III. It has stood the test of time with regular use in the field and the grip is comfortable to hold, even during longer meat processing sessions.

The knife has a basic design and is easy to clean and maintain. As mentioned, there are a lot of similarities between the Master Hunter and the Fallkniven F1. The sheath design is comparable, so are the rubber

grip, the size and the use of laminated steel for the blade. The Master Hunter has a finger guard, the F1 has a pommel at the end of the grip. The F1 has a VG-10 core, versus the VG-1 of the Master Hunter.

However, the F1 is more expensive and personally, I somehow prefer the fit and finish of the Master Hunter. Having owned both knives for some time, I reckon they see about the same amount of use. Typically, I grab the one that I see first or that is in my box of recently sharpened knives. There really is not a great deal of difference between them. But if I know I will be on a longer trip and expect to spend a significant amount of time processing meat, I will seek out the Master Hunter because it feels nicer in hand when used for longer periods of time.

What if I was asked to pick one over the other? If my hand was forced, I would go with the Master Hunter. It has its design flaws and uses slightly less advanced core steel, but it fits in the hand better and is cheaper. In addition, the tube of the lanyard hole of my F1 came loose while the Master Hunter has been completely problem free so far. My advice would be to try both, you will not go wrong with either. Just see what design fits you better or which of the two is on sale.

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The belt loop fastens with Velcro and a push-stud.



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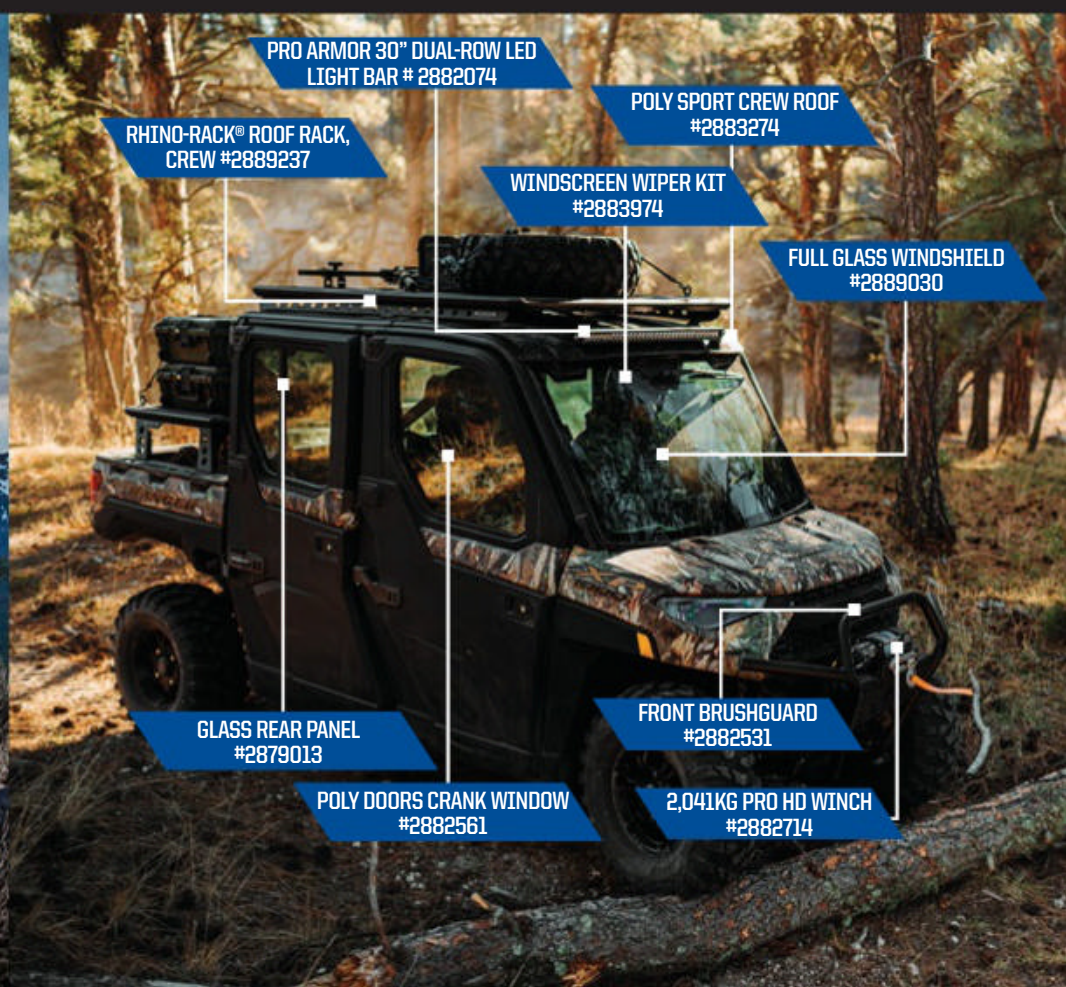
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This lever-action in .45-70 calibre accounted for a boar in the swamp.

Avoid the

none

Matthew Cameron covers pig hunting cartridges and how best to polish off porkers

The real problem associated with hunting feral pigs is that you never quite know just what you might be confronted with around the other side of the next bush. Of course, it's a bit different on the plains where visibility is much better.

The other difficulty is that a rifle ideal for a set shot over a known distance becomes totally inappropriate when the animal is fleeing. Just which is suitable or unsuitable depends a great deal on the circumstances, what is available and, in this day and age, cost. There is also the small matter of the ability of the person pulling the trigger.

A further catch with feral animals is when you might actually come across them. Consider the case of a professional kangaroo shooter chasing his quarry on a remote inland property; sweeping the light along a fence line to see a fully-grown fallow deer.

In his experience, it would not be the first time that such a sighting had occurred.

While pigs are normally associated with heavy, or at least adequate cover, if not under pressure they will venture out onto the open plains to feed, particularly in the cooler months. Spotlighting for foxes I have come across feral pigs, but this is a totally different situation than when pigs are the specific target.

It is patently obvious that certain cartridges or minimum calibres are more useful for hunting pigs than others. Perhaps, a minimum calibre would be an accurate .222 with good projectiles. Back in the 1950s when pig hunting was in its infancy, there were many tales of woe from shooters who emptied whole magazines of .22 Long Rifle ammunition into fleeing porkers.

We should also throw into the mix the type of projectile in use, which may have a

bearing on the outcome. Will it expand on contact or proceed straight through bone and muscle? The final piece of the jigsaw puzzle is just where the animal is hit. Is the shot fatal or not?

The fact of the matter is that feral pigs are expanding their range within Australia, as they are now found in areas where previously there were none. Thus, the question arises, which calibre to use? It is said that the answer is the rifle that you are armed with at the time.

It is obvious that a clean kill will require both an adequate calibre and projectile type, and some work better than others. Another issue which is seldom talked about is the type of cover available to the animal. A wounded animal could escape simply because of thick impenetrable cover close by. The way out of this snag is to use heavier calibres that drop the animals on the spot. A set shot at any animal is a whole

different ball game to that of a fleeing beast full of adrenalin.

In my experience a high percentage of running animals of all sorts are usually hit in the rear two-thirds of the body. Rarely are such shots fatal unless you connect bone or nerves. What follows is the result of nearly 40 years of shooting feral pigs on the plains, in swamps and wherever you find them.

For set shots at small pigs within 150 yards/metres a .222 Remington can be ideal with the right type of projectile delivered into the heart. Perhaps in a perfect world a custom protector point of 55gr in weight would fit the situation perfectly. I know an ex-professional shooter who used them on pigs with a .223 Remington. He had good results and preferred them to standard soft-points, the other option with a 55gr Nosler Ballistic Tip. For longer results on dams and slightly larger animals, perhaps the .243 Winchester is ideal, again with a Nosler Ballistic Tip or a protector point. Some users favour 100gr projectiles in this calibre.

In similar fashion a 6mm Remington would also be suitable. I have a new barrel recently fitted to my switch-barrelled rifle in .243 Ackley Improved (40 degree). Initial results with both 103gr and 115gr protector points are most encouraging, with good accuracy. This allows longer, more confident shots in a set shot situation. It's doubtful the pigs like it.

Perhaps the most widely used cartridge in this group is the .223 Remington but I consider it marginal for pigs, particularly when they are fleeing. For set shots it is possibly okay with a premium projectile. I know of one expert shooter who uses nothing else. But he is an exceptional marksman and prefers 55gr Nosler Ballistic Tips or 55gr custom protector points. He also only uses magnum primers for preference.

For long shots over water or a set shot situation where the animals are at a longer range it becomes difficult to lay down anything but general rules, simply because of the possible variety of situations. An accurate .243 Winchester and 100gr projectiles might be fine out to 250 yards/metres. After that, something with a bit more clout is needed if you must take the shot.

There are a variety of 6mm calibre projectiles fitting for feral pigs.



Once we move away from the set shot situation the lines of what is acceptable become blurred simply because of the huge possible situations that might occur when stalking/walking up on game, particularly in a swamp situation. My preferred rifle/cartridge combination to cover these eventualities is either a .45-70 or a .30-30 Winchester, as both have done good work at short ranges.

To cover the eventuality of a pig breaking out onto the plains, another shooter can be paired up with a lever-actioned hunter, who is equipped with a rifle such as a 6.5x55mm/.270 Winchester or perhaps a .30-06. The 'system' has worked well for many years.

Normally the .45-70 shoots 300gr projectiles and the .30-30 Winchester those that weigh 170 grains. Both have accounted for many pigs within the swamps, either wet or dry. Under such circumstances the lever-actioned rifle is hard to beat, with the ability to take a quick second shot if required.

Cartridges either side of the .270 Winchester are also acceptable. I've had good outcomes with a Tikka chambered in the 6.5x55mm cartridge using both 140- and 160-grain protector point projectiles. It is difficult to tell which is the more effective. The same applies to that old warhorse, the .30-06 using either 220- or 165-grain projectiles and its offspring the .25-06 usually with 115/117gr projectiles. Not forgetting of course, the .30-06's younger

A good array of projectiles are available to suit the .30-06.



Avoid the rage



brother, the .308 Winchester. From observation it does good work on pigs with 150/165gr projectiles.

There are a couple of further calibres that although perhaps not as popular as others, are also effective. For some years I shot a 7x57 rimmed cartridge with 175gr projectiles. It was a bit odd in that the action was a straight British Lee Enfield, 10-shot magazine and all. This was an unusual combination. The other calibre was more modern, a 7mm-08 in a light bolt-action. All were effective on pigs of any sizes.

In reality, there is probably no need for a calibre greater than .308 in size. Yes, I am well aware that large animals will carry a lot of lead. It really comes down to placing the projectile in the spot to do the most damage. Admittedly, this is sometimes difficult to achieve. Perhaps the exception to this statement is the use of a .45-70 in swamps.

The other issue that has moved the goalposts significantly in the past decade or so is that of projectiles. The range has quickly expanded, mainly in the availability of heavier projectiles in relation to calibre – just ensure that the barrel twist will handle them.

In addition, there are better designs available and older formats in more calibres. As an example, there are now 60gr Nosler Partition projectiles in .224 diameter. Certainly, such a projectile increases the effectiveness of the .22-250 Remington and the .220 Swift to name but two well-used cartridges. In my opinion this raises the .22-250 Remington into the .243 Winchester class.



Not only has the number of projectiles increased but so has the same tally in particular classes, ie, those projectiles with plastic tips to name one. They have mushroomed in the amounts. I would suggest that some might work better than others.

One projectile I have yet to use on live game is the RWS Cone-Point. Similar to

others the jacket material is thicker at the rear, so this should promote expansion.

It will pay to load develop the projectiles and cases carefully and when a suitable load is found, test it on game. I suggest that a certain amount of research is required to obtain the best result. ■

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 SA Conservation & Wildlife Management

SSAA SA Conservation & Wildlife Management contributes to the preservation of South Australia's natural heritage through the humane removal of pest animals that impact and 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 and often involve camping out. As well as undertaking pest animal control activities, members are involved in wildlife monitoring, undertake working-bees at key sites and can attend regular range days throughout the year.

For further information or to attend a quarterly meeting or range day, please visit cwmsa.com.au, contact us via email on secretary@cwmsa.com.au or via post to Conservation & Wildlife Management (SA) Inc., C/O Secretary, P.O. Box 188, Kent Town, SA 5071

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 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.ssaqld.org.au



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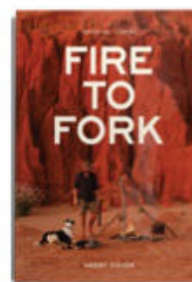
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Around the campfire with John Denman

It's early in the morning, very early actually, there's the bare hint of sunrise in the eastern sky but full light is still a good hour away. The weight of the daypack sits with a comfortable familiarity on your shoulders.

You checked the contents the night before so you know everything is where it should be. The weight of the rifle too has that familiar feel about it as you open the bolt and press the four shiny brass cartridges down with the soft click of metal on metal. As you close the bolt on an empty chamber, there's a barely perceptible aroma of gun oil.

If you hunt with a mate, there's little need for conversation. You both know what's happening on this day because you discussed it over the coals of the fire the night before. A full breakfast is not considered because you have what you need in your pack, and you don't want to waste time.

It's winter and as you leave camp the grass crunches softly under your boots. Small pools of water left over from rain two days ago have a thin sheet of ice rimmed with frost. Your breath steams gently and you have that lovely feeling of anticipation you have felt before but never become tired of.

A hunter moves quietly at all times, even as you leave camp. There may be written rules about the behaviour of the animals you hunt, but you know too well that they don't read the books. Animals make their own rules and will often surprise you in ways the books don't always

mention. So if you talk, you do so in whispers, or sometimes hand signals. You check the wind as a natural extension of your sensory organs. However, the sensory organs of the game you hunt are far more developed than any human.

As you walk, you check the ground before each step. The smallest twig can snap and give you away to an animal many metres from you. The aim of the venture is to try and see the game before it sees or senses you. The flick of a tail or the slight twitch of any ear may be all you will manage to see, then comes the stalk. You use every bit of cover you can, constantly on the lookout for a sentinel animal. You move as close as you can, you try to find a rest for your rifle, then centre the sight on the vital area of choice and squeeze the trigger.

A lot of hunters don't indulge in backslapping and high fives. For the most part the successful conclusion to the hunt may allow a handshake and a quiet "well done". The animal you have killed lays still, its life gone, but another memory for yourself that allows that animal new life in your thoughts. Clearly there are times when a destructive feral pest is despatched and the mood will be different.

But what is written pertains to deer, an animal that has been a prey to humans and other animals for a long time. Over those many centuries deer have developed perhaps the highest level of threat detection. In heavily hunted areas the threat detection level will be right up at full alert. For the most part deer have no

natural enemies in Australia, save you the hunter. Regardless of their current status as either game or pests, they still deserve your respect.

The knife cleanly runs up parting the belly skin, and revealing the layer of fat beneath, along with the gut bag which must be extracted intact. The shot has taken out the heart and lungs so death was instantaneous and the meat is unspoiled. Then begins the real work.

Often the packing out of meat may be limited to the hind quarters and the backstraps. These are after all where the best meat is, and those parts will be a decent load for one hunter. It's not always possible to take the whole animal and circumstances dictate what can be carried, while camp is sometimes a long distance from the kill.

In any case, there's the chance of a scavenger like a pig or fox that could come along. The remains of the kill will be little more than a memory in a few days. You may decide that it's worth revisiting the kill to pick off one of those scavengers. In any case, nothing really goes unused in the bush.

It doesn't always work like this though. Sometimes you can spend days trying, then go home empty-handed. You have just had what I call an armed bush walk, but you can't count it as a failure, because any time spent in the Australian bush is never time wasted. ■

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