

ISSUE 87



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# NZ HUNTER

## M A G A Z I N E

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### WEST OTAGO STAGS

Shaun Travers and Jack Rowe undertake the trip of a lifetime, securing two outstanding 300 DS Otago Red stags

### DEER VERSUS MOA

Hannah Rae delves into the thorny debate around deer versus moa browsing in New Zealand forests





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EDITOR

**Greg Duley**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**Luke Care**

PRODUCTION MANAGER

**Fi Duley**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

**Samantha Care**

COLUMNISTS

**Andrew Buglass, Greig Caigou,  
Corey Carston, Richard Hingston,  
Michael McCormack, Cam Mckay,  
Hannah Rae, Roy Sloan, Cam Speedy,  
Cody Weller, Matt Winter**

COVER DESIGN

**Intrigue Limited**

[www.intrigue.co.nz](http://www.intrigue.co.nz) - ph 0800 213 744

PAGE DESIGN

**Luke Care**

PRINTER

**Inkwise**

[www.inkwise.co.nz](http://www.inkwise.co.nz) - ph 03 307 7930

DISTRIBUTION

**Ovato Retail Distribution**

[www.ovato.co.nz](http://www.ovato.co.nz) - ph 09 928 4200

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**MAGAZINE ENQUIRIES**

**SUBS AND BACK ISSUES to:**

[subs@nzhunter.co.nz](mailto:subs@nzhunter.co.nz)

**ALL OTHER ENQUIRES to:**

[editor@nzhunter.co.nz](mailto:editor@nzhunter.co.nz)

Ph: 06 844 3807

**POSTAL ADDRESS:**

**NZ Hunter Magazine,**  
545 Springfield Road, RD3,  
Napier 4183

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A wild Otago stag captured by Steve Couper

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# A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Christmas break is over and I hope you all managed to make the most of it. We were able to squeeze in a couple of epic trips that you'll see on the new season TV Show episodes very shortly. As I write this we have just gone into the Red Traffic Light setting due to the imminent Omicron outbreak, and who knows just how this is going to affect our hunting for the foreseeable future? The rules around close contacts and self-isolation mean potentially a significant percentage of the population may have to stay at home at any one time. With Omicron's spread being so explosive, everyone is going to be affected to some extent at some stage. One major concern is what the Department of Conservation decides to do with public conservation land (PCL). They have shut PCL down in previous lockdowns with the reason given being the drain on/risk to emergency services if anyone gets sick or has an accident in the hills. With the potential for much larger numbers of people to be coming down with Omicron while in the hills than with the previous strains, and some potentially needing medevac'ing, we'll just have to wait and see what our risk averse Government and Department decide to do. Let's hope we can still access PCL over the coming roar and rut periods, and we don't end up shut out like the roar before last...

The usual race to the bottom has begun with hunters egging each other on with the "They're hard already!" at Christmas time and such like claims on social media. Shooting velvet stags before they have fully calcified leaves you with a "polystyrene" trophy that doesn't weigh anything like it should, even if they look fully formed on the outside. The



Europeans measure trophy quality by antler weight, and maybe if we did the same, there would be less incentive to target stags too early. The NZDA also used to only allow trophies naturally rubbed up to be entered in their competitions.

A stag taken before the roar is robbing the area of essential genetics, and this is why the FWF has stopped all pre-bugle hunting. Ideally we need the best stags/bulls to at least cover the hind's/cow's first cycle before they are taken out, so their genetics carry on. With Waro largely targeting stags at the moment, our deer herds are seriously out of balance in a lot of places, with the hind/stag ratio all wrong. It's a hard call some times, but please think really carefully about what you're shooting. If it's the trophy of your life time then nobody's going to criticise you for shooting it, but if it's just another nice stag that's going to end up in your shed, then take a photo and leave it for the herd. Don't be like some you see on social media or TV who should know better, shooting the best stags they can find out of every valley, doing huge damage to the genetics of the deer herd they leave behind. And if you want some good meat then please shoot a hind!

Stop, evaluate and think before you pull the trigger this roar - and both our deer herds and our fellow hunters will be a lot better for it!

**Greg**

## SPOT THE LOGO

The winners for last issue are **Bryan Vickery** and **John Bowen**. The logos were on the Hunters Element advert page 18 and the Rab Clothing advert page 68.

Visit [www.nzhunter.co.nz](http://www.nzhunter.co.nz) for this issues "Spot the Logo" Competition. You are looking for Two prizes of \$100 H&F vouchers to be won



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# Q&A

HI GREG

I've recently acquired a .222 which I want to use for a few old school type hunts myself this spring/summer. It's an unused Tikka M595 from a deceased estate. I've put a Swaro on top and it shoots wonderfully well. I've sighted it in bang on for 200 yds. The question is, the ammo Willie used to sack those three deer up Sawtooth in the Ruahine Episode, was that Sako factory 50gn? I'm asking because that's mainly what I've been shooting so far. I have not taken the rifle stalking yet, it's just been used for pest control around the ranch. I'm picking the 50gn pills will be the best for the barrel twist?

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME,  
NATHAN

HI NATHAN

Yep the 222's generally have a 14" twist which works best with the shorter 50 grainers, and not the longer solid copper or polymer tipped bullets either which all measure well over .750" long. Its length not weight that largely governs stability. You are looking for a stability factor of 1.5 ideally, but down as low as 1 will just work at closer ranges or higher altitudes where the air density is lower. Any less stability and you can expect bullets to wobble and eventually tumble in flight. The Sako factory 50gners are only .630" long, and this is about perfect for best stability. Even a 50gn bullet .650" long only has a marginal 1.25 stability factor. It'll be alright at the sort of ranges you're likely to be using your 222 on varmints and game, but will struggle if trying to long range target-shoot with it. The popular Sierra 55gn SBT which many use as a deer bullet in the 222 measures .710" long and runs a very marginal 1.1 stability factor, but works ok out to 200 yards. You'll notice all factory 222 ammo has stubby, flat base, semi pointed at best projectiles loaded in it. That's why rifle manufacturers went to a 12" twist as standard in the 223 to be able to shoot a wider range of projectiles, with a lot of fast 8" twist options available now for shooting the 70 to 90 grainers. The 222 is still a neat wee cartridge but you just need to put a little thought into what you are going to use it for and what you are going to shoot through it!

CHEERS,  
GREG

HI GREG

I have a Remington 700 long range in 7mm Rem Mag. I currently have been using Federal Fusion rounds but have been told that if I want to push out to hit 600-700 yards, I would need a custom round. Do you know or have any idea what kind of ammo I would need to purchase, or what projectile or powders would you recommend for a handload for long range deer hunting?

CHEERS, IN ADVANCE  
SEAN

HI SEAN

The Fusion is a good and usually accurate load, but there are other options with higher BC projectiles that are more suitable for the sort of ranges you are talking about.

Firstly though, you need accuracy, then the best BC bullet at a decent velocity you can muster. Federal make better factory ammo options than the Fusion. In the Premium line they have the 168gn Berger Hybrid Hunter, 165gn Sierra GameKing, and the 150gn Scirocco. Then there's the excellent Hornady Precision Hunter line with the 162gn ELD-X, the Nosler 168gn Long Range Accubond, the Norma 160gn TipStrike, or the Sako 165gn GameHead Pro. If you're wanting to stick to factory ammo I'd get a selection of these and see what one shoots best in your rifle - and at a reasonable velocity.

If you want to make the most of your rifles potential then a custom handload is the best way to go, with the likes of the Berger 168 and 180gn Hybrids, the Hornady 162 and 175gn ELD-Xs, 180gn ELD-Ms, or even the new 166 and 190gn A-Tips with their exceptional BCs. Then there's the Sierra 165gn GameChanger or 160gn TMK, and Nosler's 168gn LRAB. Powder wise the best at producing velocity for the least pressure are the likes of Reloder 33 and Vihtavuori N570, but there are plenty of others like Reloder 26, 2225/Retumbo, IMR8133 and those of similar burn rates that also work well and produce good velocity. I can't give a powder charge recommendation here as there's far too many bullet and powder options that also depend on your particular rifle's barrel and chamber specs to list. You'll need to learn how to handload or go to a proven handloader and use a reliable chronograph to work up something suitable. And with the huge ammo and component shortages at the moment, who knows what you'll actually be able to get your hands on anyway!

CHEERS,  
GREG



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# Hard Work Paid Off

WRITTEN BY  
SHAUN TRAVERS





Up high on the tops where we began our trip

## This trip had been a long time in the planning and had failed on two previous occasions due to weather and injuries

This time round we thought we would tackle it differently. The plan was to fly in and walk out, carrying enough food and gear for eight days. Our mission was to find large, mature stags for me and my mate Jack Rowe

### Day 1

**We finished work as soon possible so we could get over the hill to Wanaka and meet the pilot, weigh our gear and do a last minute gear check.** We loaded up and were off, grins from ear to ear as we made a quick flight up and over to the first base camp. The tent was set up at record speed as we were keen to head down the valley before last light to do some glassing. Much to our surprise, we only saw two hinds and a young 12 pointer in the distance, so it was back to camp for the night.

### Day 2

**Keas having a party outside our tent made for a light sleep, then the first weather system rolled in with rain, so we decided to have a lazy morning.** Around midday it started to ease, and we were startled to hear voices outside our tent. We met a group of fathers and sons on a multi day trip comprising of packrafting, biking and hiking. It was awesome to see them teaching and showing their kids the backcountry of New Zealand.

After a quick chat they headed off down the valley so we decided to head in the opposite direction. Things can look easier on a topo map than they actually are, and as it turned out, it wasn't the last time we had that problem! After an hour navigating the bluffs we decided to head back, but we made sure to find an alternative route for the next day with our packs. The rest of the evening was long, cold and disheartening with no deer in sight.

### Day 3

**As day broke, we packed up and started the long hike around the head of the basin, scouting every little catchment along the way with no luck.** Once we popped around the corner the wind increased, becoming a very cold southerly so we stopped and had lunch to warm up. We walked through a boulder field to gain access to the next catchment only to find a very steep scree face, but once over, we were able to scan and assess our route. From this vantage point, we realised how steep and exposed the terrain was around the tops, but spied a beautiful looking valley at the bottom. We decided to head down into the saddle to get out of the wind and to try and find a path down to the valley floor. We selected a camp in a high spot, on the leeward side which seemed very sheltered, but turned out to be a mistake of epic proportions. Wind increased throughout the night to the point where we thought the tent was going to blow away. As dawn broke, we quickly dismantled the tent and tried to follow the river down towards the valley floor with a gale force wind behind us. Descending 300 metres, we came to a waterfall where I climbed down 30 metres to a dead end. We discussed via radio and made a safe call to climb back





Spectacular country but we didn't see a lot of deer before the bad weather

I was seeing things correctly so I asked Jack to have a look. To my excitement, he confirmed with **"he's huge."**

Forgetting our lunch, we wondered how in the world we were going to get to him as he was two and a half kilometres in the opposite direction, but it was an easy decision to turn around. We walked along the ridge trying to find ways down until we found a route that looked achievable, but it had a lot of exposure. Jack and I talked about it and agreed that if either of us felt uncomfortable then

we would pull the pin. After 15 minutes of heart-in-your-mouth climbing, we reached a saddle that had a scree face. We charged down the valley, seeing plenty of large prints and fresh sign as we made our way to the creek. Time was against us and once we hit the valley floor we decided to set up camp so that we could ditch weight to keep us light and fast. We covered the first kilometre easily, and then headed up a small side creek to get above the deer. As we climbed the creek, we spooked two hinds who consistently kept barking at us and heading in the direction we wanted to go, eventually running down the valley. Turns out, we followed the creek too early so we spent the next hour bashing through monkey scrub until we finally got eyes on the stag. We ranged him at 560 yards and Jack said, **"If you don't shoot him, I will."**

out due to the wind and rain making things slippery and quite dangerous, especially with our heavy packs on. It was a hard pill to swallow as we had already descended so far, but it was the right decision. After backtracking up and over, we found a new spot to camp while we waited out the storm. Analysing the maps while we warmed up, we came up with a game plan for the next day.

## Day 4

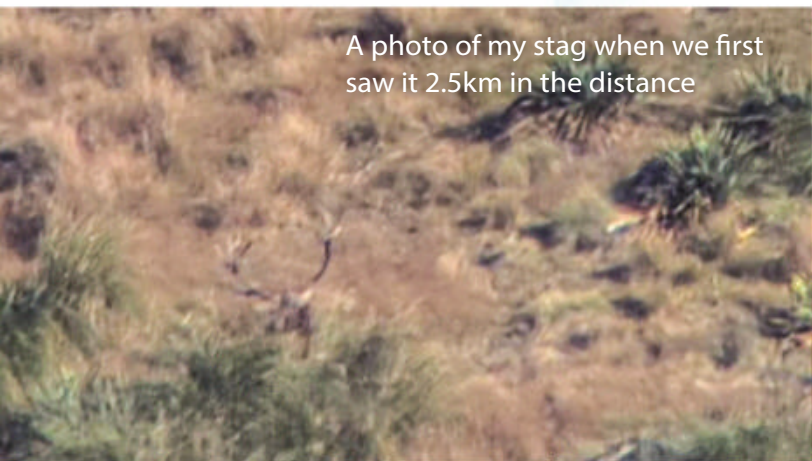
**It was still blowing a gale with rain coming in and out so we decided to pack camp and make the push to the next catchment.** The valley floor had beautiful green grass and a river flowing through it so our hopes of seeing a few deer were high. As we

got to the end of the flat and came around the corner, we soon understood why there weren't any animals. There were two steep faces with waterfalls and a massive gorge so our only choice was to climb up the spur to get to the ridge line. It turned out the top was a razor back which we had to scale very carefully. Once we hit the top, it was time for a well-deserved gourmet lunch of packet tuna and pitas. I pulled out the binoculars and started scanning the new valley for deer. There was a distant roar and at the far end of the valley, I spotted a large brown shape. Looking through the spotting scope with my phone, I saw a massive stag and I started counting the points **"One, two, three, four, five - that makes ten with three tines on each, that's 16!"** It was the first sighting we'd had in days, and I wasn't sure if





A photo of my stag when we first saw it 2.5km in the distance



I decided 560 yards was a little too far and I needed to close the gap. I stalked in until I was at 440, and found a shrub to lean against.

Jack radioed me saying the stag was on the move and I had to wait for him to come broadside. I let out a deep breath, squeezed the trigger, fired the shot and hit him right behind the shoulder where he staggered back and fell over. It was such a relief when I heard Jack on the radio say **"He's down - great shot!"** From there it was a mad dash to get down across the river to find him and get a couple of photos before it started to get dark. We had never seen a stag this large in the wild before and this was the dream head to get mounted for the new house. As we started butchering him Jack found the projectile on the inside of the far shoulder, so I put it aside as it was my first stag that I had shot with my reloads. After an hour of us trying to remember how to head skin a stag we packed up and started the journey back to camp. We knew that camp was on the river bank so I just followed Jack's headlamp up the river. Approaching the first waterfall, we realised that we had to go up and around it so we bush bashed our way for what felt like an eternity, especially with the antlers catching on everything. After an hour, Jack looked up the hill and made the comment, **"I don't remember this valley being this steep."** I replied with **"Have you looked at the map?"** We soon discovered that we had trekked up the wrong creek - it broke us! Defeated, we climbed back up through the monkey scrub and around the waterfall back to the correct creek. Kicking and tripping over rocks as we made our way back to camp, I've never been so tired. It was 11pm when we finally got back, forced ourselves to eat dinner and went to bed. We both agreed that we had earned a sleep-in the next day.

## Day 5

**We woke up a bit sore, but that was overshadowed by the huge set of antlers that were sitting outside of camp.** We finally had the chance to have a proper look in daylight and boy, he was beautiful. We treated ourselves to a huge breakfast as we knew that we had a big day ahead and very heavy packs. It was a 600 metre vertical climb to get to the first saddle so we broke it into small steps. Joking on the way up, we discussed booking a helicopter for three days time (if we could get phone reception) as we knew we still had another 20 kilometres and 1800 vertical metres to go. As we summited it was time for a late lunch, so we walked along the ridge until we found a good glassing spot. One bar of reception was found, and the

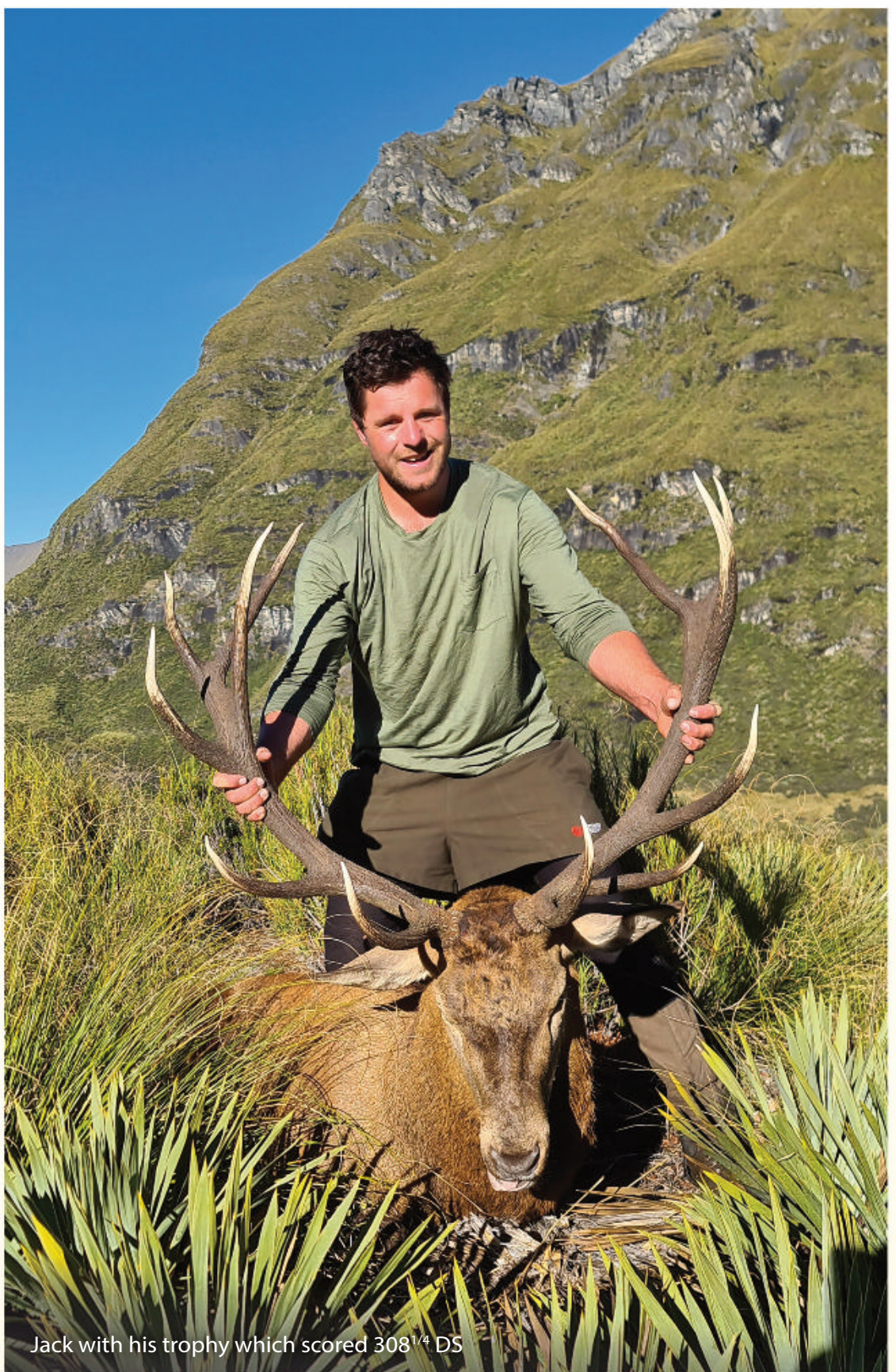
The largest stag I had ever seen in the wild, a huge 15 pointer scoring 345 <sup>1/8</sup> DS



It was a good feeling to have this trophy outside camp



Some screenshots from the video of Jack's stag as he made his way over to the hinds



Jack with his trophy which scored 308<sup>1/4</sup> DS

call made for a pickup - such a relief to know that I only had to carry this stag half the distance. Now, we could try and find a monster for Jack.

Glassing the next valley, he spotted four deer in the distance and with another three days up our sleeve we had time to have a look. Turns out we had our work cut out for us, as the descent of 500 metres took a grueling four hours. I had predicted less than two hours, but after four hours of falling over, being poked by sharp antlers and Spaniard grass doing its part we finally got through the monkey scrub and bluffs to the valley floor. I lay on the ground for a solid ten minutes without moving - Jack knew I was broken. At that moment, I was so happy that we had been able to make the call for a pick-up, and decided to camp in the valley for one night.

Glassing from a sweet spot that evening, I immediately found the group of deer we had seen from the

top - an 11 pointer with three hinds. It was a good feeling to finally see some animals after a hard day. Shortly afterwards, Jack spotted a group of six hinds with a young 12 feeding across the river, grazing their way over towards the other group. We got really excited as both stags had been roaring and we thought there might be a fight so I set up my phone on the spotting scope and began to film. Next minute we heard a loud roar. Looking at each other we realised the sound hadn't come from stags we'd been watching, but from a huge animal running down the trail, following the hinds. One of the most fabulous things we saw was this massive boy just wading through the river like, **"I got this, you watch"**. He ran up to the top where the hinds had started to play, let out another roar. The 12 pointer took one look and immediately ran away!

He rounded up the group of hinds and

started to play in the wallow, thrashing his antlers around. After five minutes, the big boy decided he wanted more so strutted his stuff over to the 11 and caused the other stag to bolt as well. Now he had nine hinds dancing in a wallow that must have been the size of a trampoline. We continued to watch this unfold until dark as we knew we couldn't get a shot off in the wind. Back to the tent we went, again with big smiles on our faces after seeing two big deer in as many days. We were looking at the videos and trying to decide if he was a taker. Once we identified that he was a mature 13 pointer it was a resounding yes. Off to bed we went as we knew we had an exciting day ahead of us.

## Day 6

**We were both up super early as we didn't want to miss a thing.** It took a while to find the big guy as he was in a



slightly different place. We ranged him at close to 900 yards, so we knew that we had to close the gap as Jack was only comfortable out to 500. We stalked our way down the ridge, to a nice rocky outcrop at 550 yards. There was a river 100 metres below us and he was on the other side. We had three options - shoot him here, take the stalk in further (but with nine hinds this would be near impossible) or wait him out. We did all the calculations and set up for the shot, but then he sat down! It was back to the drawing board as we both knew this was a long shot to take, especially as it was a new gun for Jack. He was finally up and we were able to take him. I did a quick check that the camera was going and 'whack' - he jumped in the air and then headed out of the video frame. I knew it was a good shot from Jack but wanted to check the video. Replay. The bullet went straight through the front shoulder, so we couldn't have asked for much better at that distance.

The hinds stood there, confused, and we gave each other a massive high five - chuffed with the result. Grabbing the gear and following the unmistakable smell of fresh stag we made a quick trip over to him. We spent the next 30 minutes taking photos and talking about the trip, wondering how we would ever top this - we had two absolute monsters for trophies. Taking as much meat off him as we could we walked back to camp with huge smiles. After a long lunch and some time spent drying all our gear we packed up and made the journey back up the river to my animal. Loaded up, it was one last slog up the valley floor to the spot where we would meet the helicopter in two days time.

## Day 7, 8 and 9

**We spent the next couple of days scouting new river catchments, but didn't see any deer.** There was sign but it was weeks old. We spotted about 20 chamois at the head of the valley but they all looked to be family groups with a few young bucks hanging in the distance. The helicopter arrived first thing on Friday morning, and we had our work cut out trying to fit the massive heads and our gear, but got there eventually. Talking to the pilot he said that WARO had taken out 300 deer in the area, which explained why we had seen so few and made these heads even more impressive. All we could think about now was a feed and a beer at the pub. One last stop to drop the heads off at the taxidermist to get cleaned and measured, the boys at New Zealand Taxidermy were blown away. They taught us how to headskin and to measure properly and we are so grateful for the time they took to show us when

they were so busy setting up their new premises. Then it was off to the pub for some well-earned liquid gold.

This trip tested us in many ways, mentally and physically. It was hard to keep our spirits high after not seeing any animals for the first four days, enduring one of the most intense storms we'd ever been in, and with multiple bluff outs, 70 kilometres of walking and 5500 metres of ascent. New Zealand's backcountry is such an epic place to explore and we are fortunate to experience it so often.

**Trips like this can quickly take you out of your comfort zone, but I believe the key to the success of this particular trip was planning, knowing when to pull the pin when things could get dangerous, good gear, good communication, and most importantly, having a great mate to share memories and a pint with when it's all over.**







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# LIGHTNESS IN THE DARK

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WRITTEN BY ~ KARL PUKLOWSKI





## It all started when I got the email from the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, congratulating my mate, Brad, and I on drawing the Dark River Wapiti block for period two

As neither of us had been to Fiordland to chase Wapiti it was exciting stuff, to say the least. We started looking at maps and watching videos of hunts in the Dark River and to put together a bit of a plan as to how we wanted to spend our ten days hunting the block. After a heap of planning, a bit of pack training, and the purchase of new gear, the time finally came to make the big drive down from Nelson to Te Anau.

On arrival, we attended the briefing and got our permit for the block and, before we knew it, the next morning had arrived. We choppered out of Milford heading for Lake Grave at the bottom of the Dark River block. Once landed and all the gear offloaded, there was a quick discussion with the other party of hunters sharing the block with us. Brad and I decided to waste no time - we put on our heavy packs and started the hard walk up valley through the thick bush, deep swamps and rugged boulder fields. **This was our first taste of Fiordland and after only a few hours we knew we had a big ten days ahead of us.** Looking forward to the challenge, and arriving at the top of Swan Mere a few hours later, we found the perfect spot to set up the tents but were distracted by the sound of a stag roaring. As there was only a couple of hours of daylight left it was decided that the tents could wait. Slowly and steadily we stalked up towards the stag, getting closer to the roars. Arriving at a little opening

in the bush looking up to a big clearing that runs up one of the steep valley faces, we sat down and glassed a bit. The roars seemed to be coming from that area and, before we knew it, Brad had spotted a stag just over 100 metres up on the face. **On further inspection we knew that this was our stag - a big wide ten-point Red/Wapiti cross and with a big body and little, if any, pedicle height.** He looked mature and was a perfect animal to take, so Brad lined up and pulled off a great shot, putting the stag on the deck. As light was fading, we didn't muck around and raced up to find a big rack of antlers with over 40 inches spread. Needless to say, we were pretty stoked, not to only take a nice animal like this but also on the first day of the trip! After photos we took the head and meat and headed back down to set up the tents and to enjoy a much-deserved meal of fresh venison back steaks! **Packing up camp early the next morning we continued trip to the tops, which took the majority of our second day, climbing high up Robb Creek and making the tops with a couple hours of daylight to spare.** The spot for the tents had a great view of the valleys above but, once again, half way through setting up we were distracted - this time by a bugle. Grabbing the binos I started to glass the area up a valley where I thought the sound was coming from and straight away spotted a big, creamy body standing side-on about one and a half kilometres away. Using the spotting scope I was amazed at what met my eyes - a big Wapiti bull with a huge set of antlers! On further inspection I saw he was a very impressive animal requiring a closer look. Light was starting to fade so we made the decision to stay down at





Brad's 10 point Red/Wapiti cross with a 40" spread

camp and leave him for the morning. He was out of reach in the remaining day light and he had a couple of cows so we were confident that he wouldn't go far. **We rose early next morning to head up valley before the sun came up as that would give us the down-valley wind we needed to close the gap.** The bull was held up in a patch of native bush with small clearings. We decided to stalk up the opposite side of the valley through thick monkey scrub to a flat rock that overlooked the clearings, where we had seen the bull the previous night. It was a hard stalk as the cows were out feeding in the sun, so we had to keep as quiet as possible so as not to spook them and alert the bull, who was giving the odd bugle from below in the bush. Finally, we arrived on the rock and ranged the clearings at 450 metres. **I was confident in making a shot at that distance, so we set up to wait him out.** Every now and then the bull would bugle, but he wasn't budging. After several hours Brad spotted three deer down on the open flats back towards camp, and one looked quite good. We quickly set up the spotting scope to make sure it wasn't the big boy making an escape! But no, this was another bull chasing two cows down the valley, and although this wasn't the big one we were after, it was an impressive 14-15 point bull. However, it didn't take long to



Some snaps of the young 14 or 15 pointer we left





realise that he wasn't mature and needed a few more years to reach his full potential. He was safe from us, but it was awesome to see a young bull with such trophy potential! **We took a few photos and videos then set our attention back to where the big bull was last seen.** Another four hours or so passed before a few more bugles were heard. Suddenly, a couple of cows came running out into the clearings and we thought this might be our chance! Sure enough, the big bull appeared out of the bush following his cows. Quickly evaluating him as mature, with a big filled out body, low pedicle height, his head was held down low and he was avoiding open ground. I made the decision that this was the perfect bull to take (especially with a younger bull nearby to take his place). Without delay, I lined up behind the gun and as the bull walked out perfectly broadside and let out one last big bugle, I squeezed the trigger on my Tikka 7mm Rem Mag and boom! It couldn't have been any more perfect, and he ran down into the bush out of sight. **We doubled checked the video footage and confirmed it was a good hit, deciding to wait 20 minutes to ensure the bull had died before heading over, as we didn't want to walk in, spook him and have him run off.** Eventually, we headed down across the valley to track down him and, as we got closer, the excitement really started to kick in. I couldn't wait to have a close look at him. From the clearing where he was last seen we tracked the blood trail into the bush to find him lying only 25 metres from where he was hit! And what a sight it was! He was huge! I was lost for words, finally getting to see him up close after all the effort that went into finding and stalking him. We sat down for a bit to enjoy the moment and appreciate the amazing animal we had in front

of us. He was an impressive 13 points with some big heavy timber, and by far the best animal I've ever taken. We set him up to get some photos and skinned out the head, took the meat and started our walk back to camp. Although it wasn't too far, it much more difficult navigating through the thick bush with his big set of antlers. Finally, we arrived back at the tents to relax and celebrate our successful hunt. **Over the following two days we enjoyed the amazing views and animals offered on the Fiordland tops, including stalking a young 10-12 point stag, roaring and following hinds.** We made our way back down to the cricket pitch at the top of Swan Mere at the end of day five where we planned to set up camp and wait out the expected few days of rain. For two days we holed up in the tents while the rain passed, listening to the sound of roaring stags around us. At every break in the weather we would get out and attempt to get close to them, but were continually beaten back by the rain. By the third day, although still raining, we decided to pack up all our gear and start the dreaded walk, carrying our heads back through the swamp, boulders and thick bush down to the base camp at Lake Grave. It was a long, wet walk, falling into deep swamps, and getting our heads tangled in the bush, but we finally made it back down to base camp to meet up with the other party where we would share our stories of our trip. **They were lucky enough to come across an old stag roaring down by the lake where they snuck in to pull off a shot!** It was great to hear that we'd all had a great trip with plenty of animals seen and heard. The next day (day eight) was fine and sunny so we used this as a chance to dry out all our gear,

Stills from the video we recorded just before the shot







My massive old 13 point bull from the Dark River



mostly soaked from the big walk out in the rain, and relaxed a little, enjoying the views (not so much the sandflies). Although it had been an epic trip that we didn't want to end, it was also good to see the chopper coming in across the lake for a pickup on the final day, as we were all looking forward to getting home, a hot shower and to share the stories of our trip with family and friends. **To sum everything up, this was the trip of a lifetime, and I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to see, let alone take, the animal I did and would do it again in a heartbeat!**



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WRITTEN BY ~ HANNAH RAE

# DEER vs MOA

**My knowledge of moa and their history in New Zealand didn't go much beyond what I'd learned as an 8 year old at school**

**My guess is that unless you're steeped in the world of biology or ecology, you're much the same. To ground us in the discussion, here's what I've learned, starting with a brief backstory of the moa.**

## ***THERE WERE ESSENTIALLY THREE PHASES OF MOA HISTORY:***

**1. New Zealand separated from Gondwanaland around 80 million years ago.** Following this, moa evolved and became a key part of New Zealand's ecosystems, where they had few predators. With no unnatural processes or interventions, the system operated within the natural rhythms of life. The moa population was controlled by the availability of food, but they also had to contend with a formidable predator, the world's largest but now extinct species of eagle, Haast's eagle. Research has shown that for approximately 6,000 years prior to the arrival of humans in New Zealand the

moa population was relatively stable. As for how big that population was, we'll get to that later.

**2. The first human settlers, the Polynesians, arrived in the 13th century.** They established infrastructure, cleared land (mostly by burning), introduced dogs (kuri) and rats (kiore), but, curiously, not chickens (which are called moa elsewhere in Polynesia), and hunted. With the first human influence on the isles in millions of years, the 'natural' balance of the ecosystems began to shift. Not only did things merely shift, but it is widely accepted that the moa were driven to extinction through some combination of hunting, habitat loss or change, and perhaps competition with kiore - thus disrupting a process

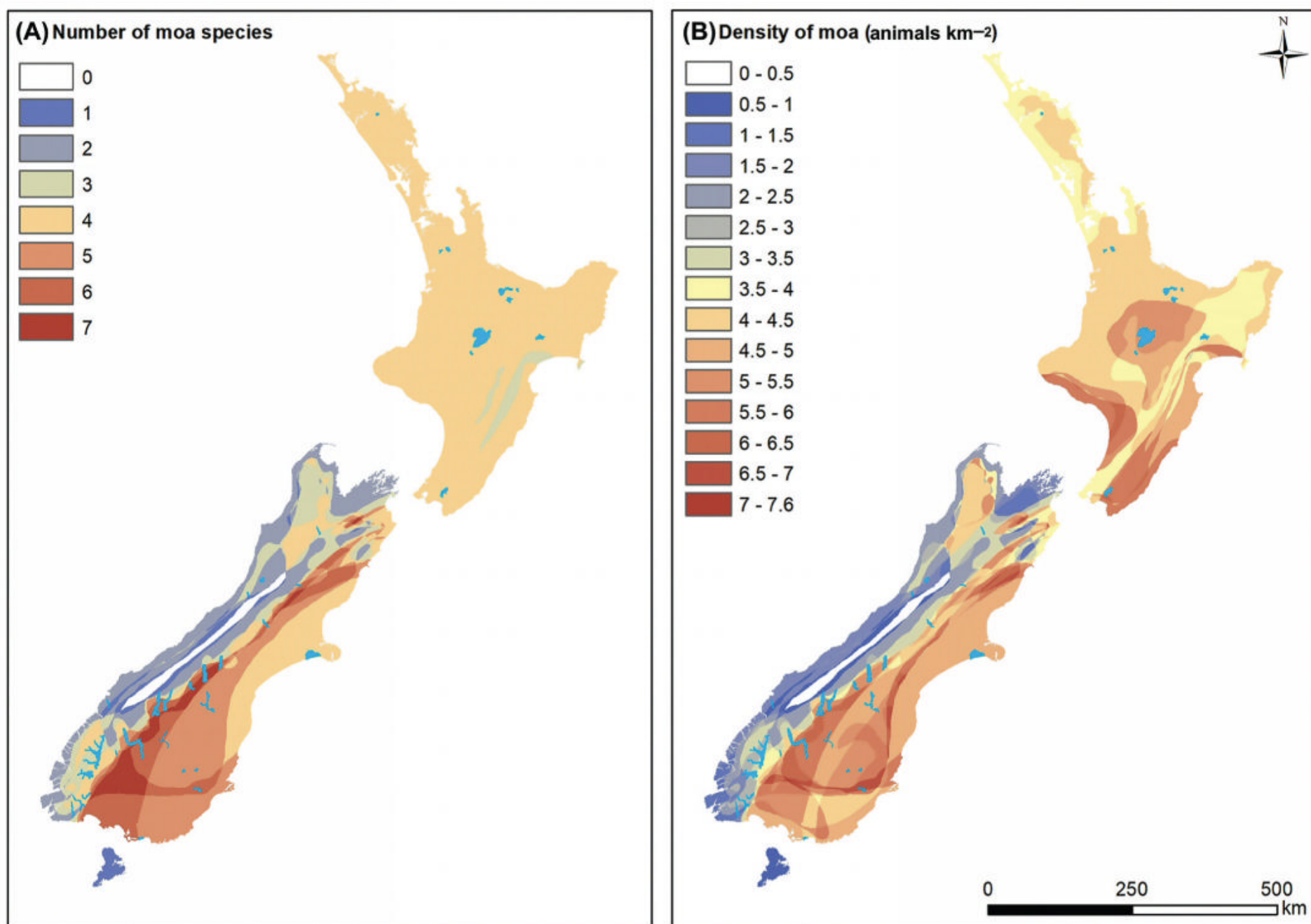
and eliminating part of a system that had developed over many millions of years. On the scale of evolutionary time, this happened within the blink of an eye. Following the extinction of moa, the structure and composition of the vegetation within New Zealand's ecosystems changed markedly over the next several hundred years. **This period of time is known as the moa gap** – the time after moa went extinct and before Europeans brought browsing animals like deer. We only need to look at how fast nature came back into some parts of the world during Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 to see how rapidly these changes can occur.

**3. From the early 1800s onwards Europeans also began to settle here,** bringing further disruptions and, of course, more introduced species including the subject of our discussion, deer. This time period is an even faster blink of an eye in the timeline of the history of the earth.

## ***MOA PROFILE***

Research conducted over the past four to five decades has allowed scientists to





**Map A** shows that nowhere in New Zealand did all nine species of moa coexist. In most of the North Island, four species coexisted. In the South Island things were more complex, with as few as one species being found in small parts of the island and possibly up to seven in parts of the central southern part of the island. **Map B** shows the mean

density summed for all species of moa that co-occurred. The map was created for a medium-abundance scenario of 1,100,000 moa, but according to Latham et al. (2019) who produced these maps, there may have been as many as 2,500,000 moa. This would result in a maximum density of 17.5 moa per km<sup>2</sup> for co-occurring species.

build a bigger, and more accurate, picture of what life as a moa might have looked like.

**It is currently accepted that nine species of moa existed in New Zealand when Māori arrived.** Some species were widespread, whereas others were more localised, but most areas held more than one moa species (as can be seen in Map A). Analysis of fossilised skulls suggest the live weights across all species ranged from about 20 to 250 kg - a difference in size comparable to a pet Labrador and a grizzly bear. It is estimated that the larger species were capable of browsing up to a height of three metres and could have consumed several kilograms of plant matter a day.

**Moa lived in coastal, bush, shrubland and subalpine habitats, and we now have scientific evidence of their diet that reflects this.** Recent studies and analysis of ancient moa dung have revealed that moa browsed trees, shrubs, herbs, and fungi. There is also evidence of high proportions of fruit and seeds in

the moa diet, and grass in the diets of some species. It is important to highlight this: "...of some species". Each moa species evolved to live in certain habitats and specialise on some plants, but not necessarily others. When the diet of moa is referenced in the mainstream, the fact that each species had a diet adapted to the habitat it lived in is often ignored.

It could be reasonably assumed that moa may have had a part in nutrient cycling and seed dispersal, in the same way that similar species like cassowary do elsewhere, although the extent of this hasn't been quantified. Other native birds, like the kererū (New Zealand pigeon), also play a role in the dispersal of large seeds, so the elimination of moa from the ecosystem could have been buffered by this fact.

The beak of some moa species was akin to a pair of secateurs we might use in the garden, enabling them to clip fibrous twigs and leaves. Like many birds, they ingested stones that were retained in their gizzard - a digestive system organ

that is basically a thick, muscular stomach. The stones and the thick muscle allowed those moa species to pulverise and digest coarse plant material, which suggests they were more efficient herbivores than many other plant-eating birds that eat mainly fruit and soft leaves

While it is impressive what science can tell us about an extinct species, researchers have also identified significant parts of the picture that are missing.

- **The flocking behaviour of moa,** whether they preferred to move in big or small groups, can't be proven either way with the data available.

- **The relationship between the moa population and the vegetation upon which they browsed** needs further investigation before their impact can be fully understood. Question marks still remain over how native plant species responded to moa browsing, how efficient the moa digestive system was, and the population dynamics of moa.



Another factor that I'd never heard or seen referenced in the discussion about moa, and learned through the process of researching for this article, **is that other plant-eating birds also went extinct at around the same time as moa.**

The North Island and South Island geese – which weighed up to 18 kg, almost as much as some species of moa – Hodgens' waterhen, New Zealand coot and Finsch's duck also disappeared from the land of the long white cloud. One only needs to think of modern day ducks and geese flocking to pasture and grain paddocks to understand how these species also would've had an impact as browsing and grazing herbivores.

## NOW, WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DEER?

**With deer we have the advantage of being able to observe them in real time and accurately record their behaviour,** instead of having to rely on fossilised remains to build a picture as we do with moa. As hunters, you will likely already know many of these facts. I've laid them here to allow a more straightforward observation of the characteristics between deer and moa.

Broadleaf - a favoured component of deer diet  
Matt Winter



- **There are seven species of deer established in the wild in New Zealand, all of them introduced.**

Whitetail, Rusa, Sambar, Sika and Wapiti are all limited to particular areas, mostly due to management, not as a result of natural factors. Fallow and Red are more widespread. Moose may be an eighth species, but a question mark hangs over their status.

- **The spread of the weight range is slightly larger than that of moa,** with Whitetail and Fallow does averaging around 40 kg to the other end of the scale with Wapiti bulls up to 450 kg.

- **Deer occupy most habitats in New Zealand – native forest and grasslands, shrubland, subalpine, pastoral farmland, or swamp.**

Subsequently, the diet of deer is similarly diverse. As a general rule, however, deer prefer softer more digestible forage and browse species and minimise consuming fibre where possible.

- **They have no natural predators in New Zealand, but over the last 50 years recreational hunters and commercial harvesters have kept numbers below the maximum**

**numbers** that each area could potentially sustain, at least in easily accessible areas

or unforested areas where the deer can be easily hunted by helicopter. Official government-funded control occurs in only a few places that are considered high-priority conservation areas.

- **Adult males and females generally only mix during the breeding season,** and throughout the year tend to gather in herds, especially in areas with high numbers.

- **Deer have incisor teeth on the lower jaw and a tough fibrous palate on the upper jaw** that they use for grazing and browsing with a pinch and tearing movement. Imagine your human jaw, but without your top teeth, or a knife and fork. They also have molars, used to grind and chew food, much like us.

- **The digestive system of a deer includes four chambers of the stomach,** the first of which stores food to be re-chewed later on.

## POPULATION

**The analysis of fossilised moa remains and dung has allowed for detailed studies of moa diet, and there seems to be a general consensus on this in the literature.**

Estimates of moa population size and density, however, have differed by orders of magnitude. This is not surprising, because it is challenging to estimate population sizes for species that are not extinct, let alone those that are extinct. What is surprising is that previous estimates of moa population size were either very low or very high, with no intermediate estimates. Recently, however, a study by Dave Latham and colleagues used information on the relationship between body mass and population density from flightless birds to estimate moa density and abundance.

**They estimated that the population size for all nine species of moa was probably between half a million and two and a half million,** or between two and ten birds per km<sup>2</sup>. These estimates fell in the middle of the very low and very high values previously estimated.

If estimates of moa abundance are being compared against those estimated for deer, or to determine the possible impacts moa populations had on vegetation compared with deer populations, or to inform decision-making for planning of ecosystem management, then none of us needs to be a scientist to understand that estimates of moa and deer numbers must be as accurate and biologically realistic as possible.

An example of this is a recent study by Jamie Wood and Janet Wilmschurst (2019) in which they compared the effects of deer and hares with that of moa on New Zealand montane vegetation communities. These authors used the moa population estimates from Dave Latham's study, as they believed these to be the most credible to date. If they had used very low or very high abundance estimates, their conclusions would have been different. Therefore, great care is needed when using information from an extinct species like moa, as there is uncertainty about how biologically realistic and therefore credible it is.

## EYES TOWARD THE FUTURE

**What would ecosystems with no deer look like?**

Deer exclusion plots (that typically show lots of deer-preferred plants inside compared to few outside) have long been used to show how deer change ecosystems. That in turn has been used to support control or eradication of deer, on



the premise that our native bush should be restored to its “natural” state. However, this doesn’t acknowledge the presence of moa and the role they played in changing vegetation communities. Eradication of our current largest introduced browsing herbivores could be considered a case of false utopian dreaming. Native ecosystems may revert to what they looked like when Europeans first arrived, but that did not represent the natural state of New Zealand ecosystems that prevailed before Māori arrived.

## WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF DEER SIMPLY REPLACED MOA?

**Moa were, and deer are, New Zealand’s largest browsing herbivores in native ecosystems.**

They both ate/eat native plants, but this doesn’t mean we can argue that deer have simply filled the role in our ecosystems formerly held by moa. Based on the information laid out before, I think it’s obvious that it’s not that simple.

Moa and deer are different animals. Moa were a type of bird known as ratites, deer are mammals and ruminants. *(That is one of the key differences between moa and deer. Ruminants have more efficient digestive systems and can therefore probably attain higher densities than moa could have, but moa would have had to consume more vegetation to extract the nutrients they needed for survival.)* This should not be surprising, because one species of moa was often very different to another, in the same way that the ecology of a Sika differs to a moose. Moa and deer were two different types of animals and although they play similar roles as large herbivores, there are also important differences that would have resulted in different outcomes for New Zealand’s ecosystems. In addition to what we know about the mechanics of their eating and digestive processes, researchers have established that the majority of plant species recorded in the diet of deer have, so far, not been found in the diet of moa. While there is certainly some overlap in diet between the two groups of animals, it seems that moa and deer prefer to dine at different vegetarian restaurants.

## SO WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US IN THE DEER VS MOA DISCUSSION?

**There is common ground, the two groups of animals do share some similar features.** The various species of each group are of a similar size, population density, and geographic

range. **There is a case to be made that our forests today are more akin to a prehistoric state, a truly “natural” state, than they would be without large herbivores.** A famous New Zealand ecologist, Graeme Caughley (author of the ‘Deer Wars’ book), suggested that although a deer-browsed patch of native vegetation would upon close inspection look quite different to one browsed by moa, the two browsed ecosystems were likely to be more similar to each other than to a completely unbrowsed one.

It’s impossible to mimic or recreate the ecosystems when moa were in their heyday. We do not even know exactly what those ecosystems would have looked like. It is important to strive to better understand these factors as they can help guide management of native ecosystems in which deer (and other introduced browsers) occur. But deer are here, probably to stay, and they are a valued resource for many Kiwis. Nobody wants to see deer become overabundant, as they were historically, and damage native bush and provide inferior venison. With clear, location-specific objectives for managing ecosystems containing deer, their unwanted impacts in high-priority conservation areas can be minimised or eliminated. In other areas it could be argued that the role that deer play as our main modern-day browsers (whilst in no way replacing or replicating moa) will create a forest structure more similar to that created by moa than during the moa gap.

**As hunters and outdoors people we need to take a cautionary approach to leaping to one side of the fence.** It’s great to have information, community, and discussion on demand at our fingertips, but it’s easy to forget the shadow side. Where is your information actually coming from? Is the voice in your community someone with credible knowledge and experience? Are the participants in the discussion open to learning and understanding all sides of the issue?

If you’re passionate about learning more, the trustworthy information is out there. Try using the Google Scholar search if you



SKELETON OF THE EXTINCT MOA (DINORNIS).

Our fascination with moa has been evident throughout the history of New Zealand

Artist unknown :Skeleton of the extinct moa (Dinornis). [1800s?]. Ref: A-018-004. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23198275



In a study by Wood JR, Wilmshurst JM (2019) 'Comparing the effects of asynchronous herbivores on New Zealand montane vegetation communities' **Corposma** pollen was found in 98% of fossilised Moa dung, but not in any deer or hare faeces. Just one of the diet preference differences noted between the two animals.

Photo - Matt Winter

want to dig into the published research. Take note of the date it was published to see if the research is still current, and who it was funded by.

**Thanks to Graham Nugent for providing research direction and help with the article.**







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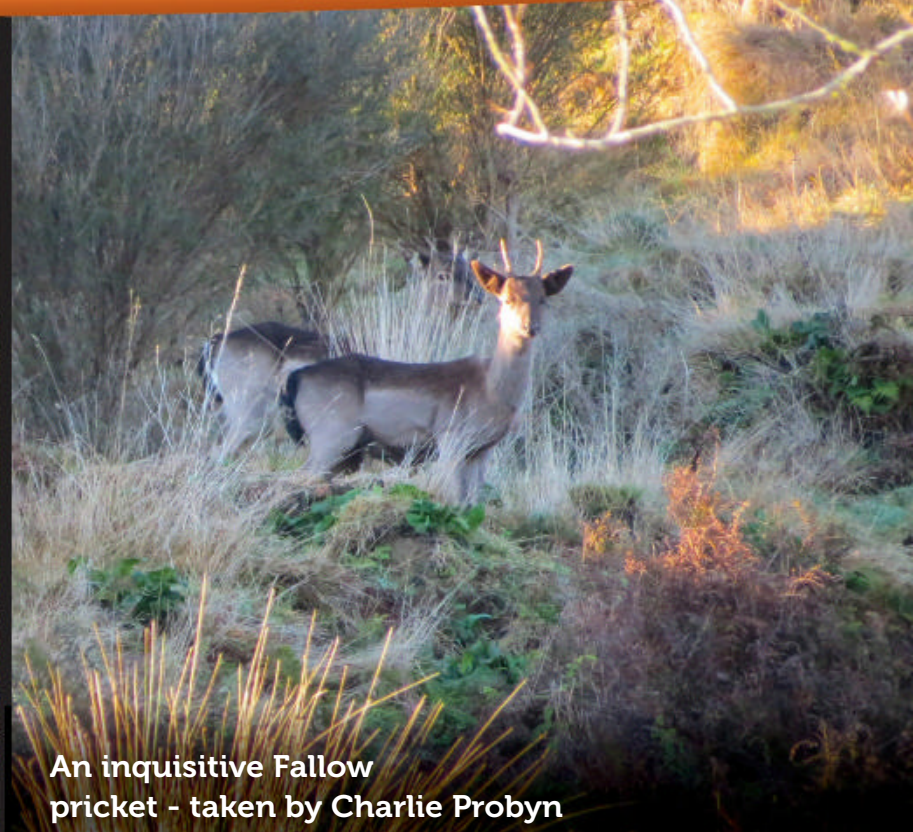


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Fanny Leduc - On an early morning hunt I spotted two deer on a river terrace with my binos. On closer inspection there were four, with this one presenting a good shot for both the camera and the rifle!

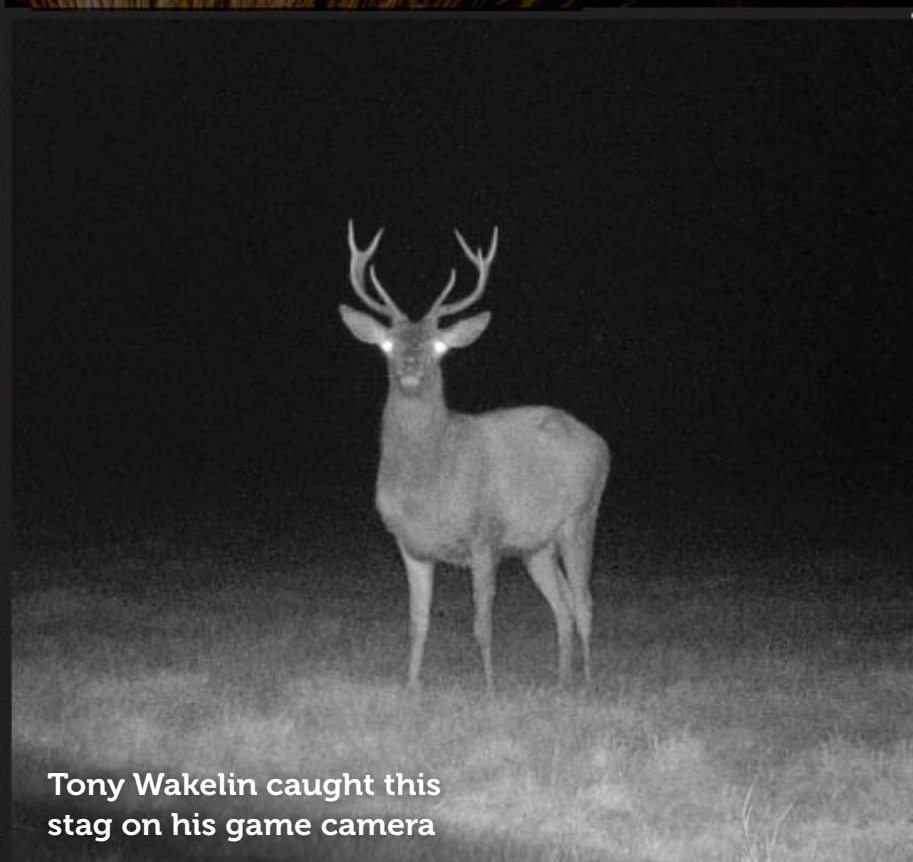
## WINNER



An inquisitive Fallow pricket - taken by Charlie Probyn



Greg Hill - I was hunting with the camera after securing a couple of meat animals and got a surprise to spook this buck still with his antlers on. I was happy to capture this image with his eye and antlers in focus



Tony Wakelin caught this stag on his game camera

A large group of stags out in the open  
photographed by Laura Benjamin



Cameron Macdonald got a distant shot of this nice 12 point stag





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# THE HOPKINS

WRITTEN BY LUKE CARE

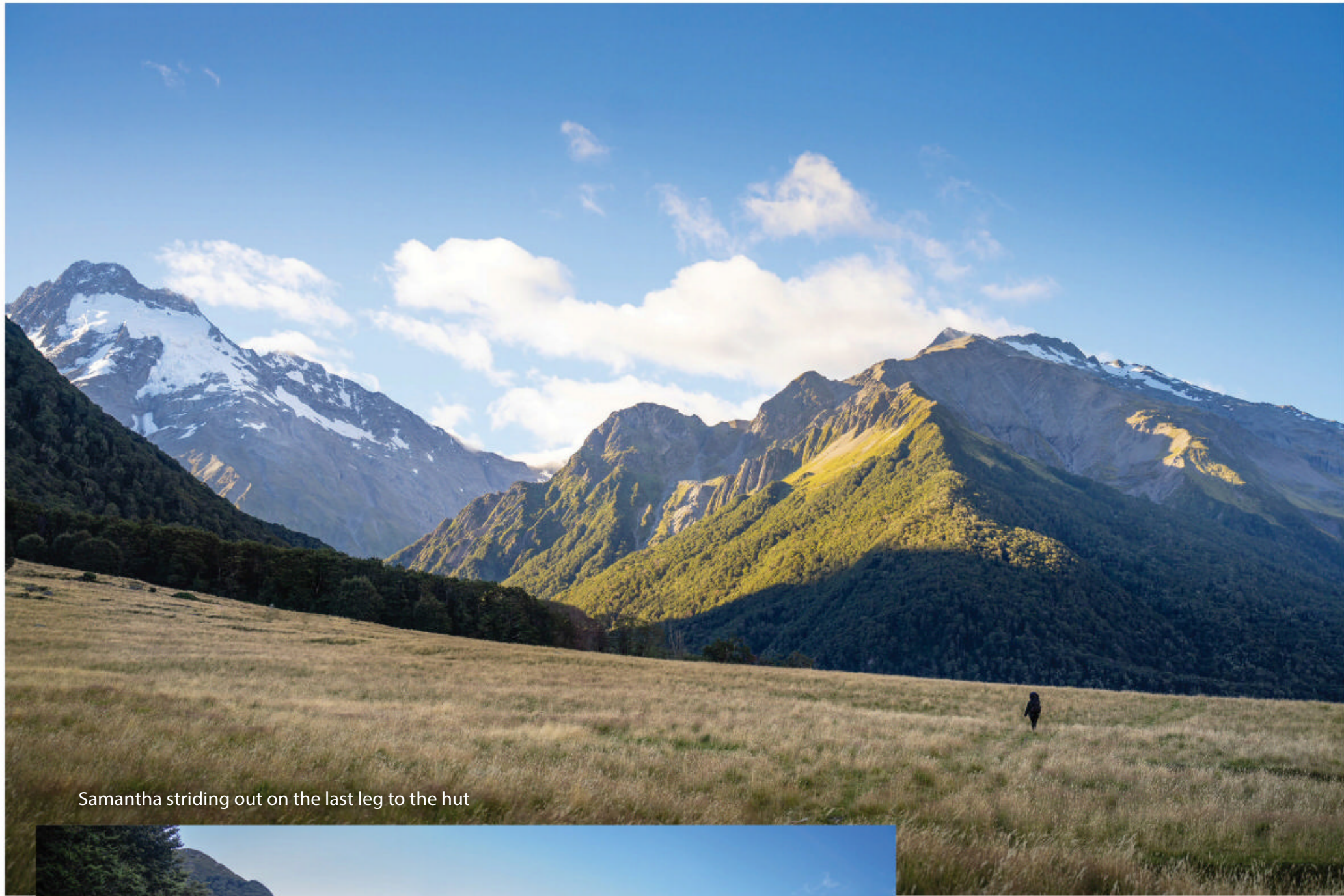
'The story began a beautiful blonde in a wood fired hot tub on a cold rainy day' ... and now that I have your attention, I'll back up a bit!

Samantha had a couple of days work booked for February in Canterbury and, being the opportunists we are, it made sense to cram all the work into a Sunday and Monday and go hunting for the rest of the week!

A front moved through on the Monday night and was still

clearing on Tuesday morning. Given that our goal for the night was modest, we decided to splash out and book a dip in the hot pools at Omarama until the weather passed. It was seven degrees and raining intermittently - splendid weather for a hot tub. Despite my remarkable English rose complexion I didn't pay any





Samantha striding out on the last leg to the hut



A great hut on the main river valley

attention to the possibility of sunburn, as it felt one step away from snow! When the weather began to clear we reluctantly prised ourselves out of the hot water and pointed the Hilux west. After bouncing as far as Sam's work ute would permit us (with no snorkel it wasn't nearly as far as I'd have liked, as I find walking 4WD tracks we could otherwise be driving particularly dispiriting) we hefted the packs and began the plod up the valley. **It was a blessedly cool day, with the black clouds cloaking the peaks slowly softening and burning away under the relentless February sun.** The glittering boughs of beech caught the sun and draped down over the golden grass on the valley

floor. It felt good to be back in the Alps - there's nowhere quite like it.

It was a good stint up to the hut, plodding along the valley disturbing the cattle and merinos as we went. My shoulders were burning inordinately and by the time we got to the hut we were both a bit achy. It had been a few months since we had a good pack walk and all the fishing over the summer did our fitness no favours. **As I peeled the pack off, I couldn't help but wince as it seemed unfairly painful.** The lovely Alpine Club hut had a mirror, and as I stepped inside I noticed a flush of red around my neck. Realisation slowly dawning, I peeled off my

shirt and saw that the hour in the tub had scorched my gentle skin. I was redder than the tomato sauce in the corner - no wonder the pack hurt like a bastard. Four more days of carrying a pack were going to be fun!

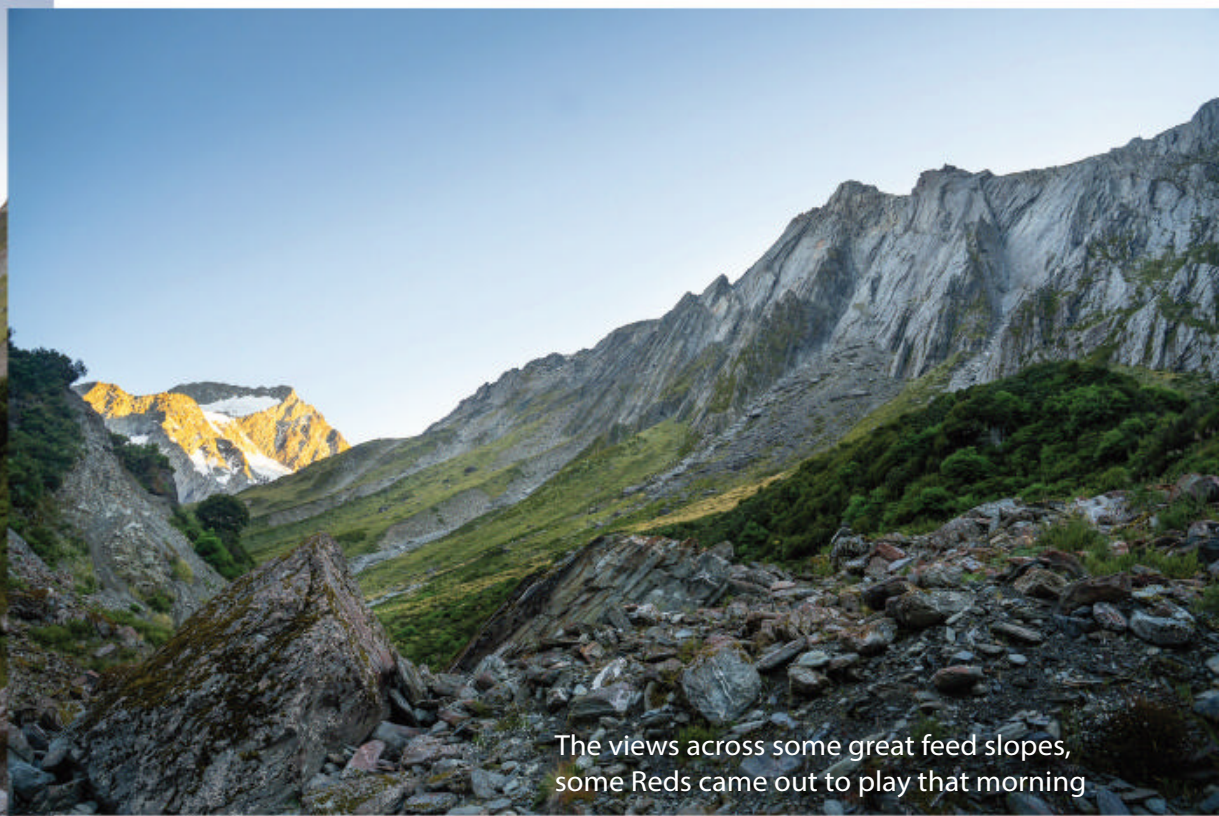
The next morning I had a scout around the flats. Above the bush line up and down the southern faces I could see a scattering of hinds and yearlings. A few bull tahr came out to play - good animals with good tips but nothing with any maturity. There were very few nannies around, a grand total of three, but all had kids, so it was nice knowing those youngsters would have an abundance of feed and grow into great bulls or strong nannies. **A glimpse of orange up high revealed a family group of chamois, dashing my hopes there were some stags left that the Wallis's hadn't scooped up and sent on a cold boat to Germany.**

We let the heat of the day pass lying comfortably in the shady hut, and once the wind turned around, planned on moving up a nearby side stream that drained from the main divide. As late afternoon rolled around we packed the packs and made our way upstream. There was a bit more of a gorge to negotiate than I realised, and the significant difference in stride length between Sam and I began to tell. It took Sam a lot of effort to make it to camp that night, so I was determined to find something to reward her.





Our camp up the side valley



The views across some great feed slopes, some Reds came out to play that morning



Sam's chamois buck on his way to bed down



Lining up on the shot. It would've been great to get closer but a group of hinds had us pinned down

The next morning we headed up-valley for a day exploring the alpine wonderland. It was a tight valley, with spectacular peaks and tilted slabs of rock rising all around. The mountain lacebark was flowering, and the smell was divine. The lilies had closed up shop, but the daisies were hanging in there, a little tattered but still lighting up the hillsides. The divide to the West Coast was just above us, and I could clearly see the pass that was part of the reason we'd come here.

**On the map it looked quite dicey, but looking across to it I thought it would be within my capabilities.** I know where I'm heading next year!

Just 100 metres from camp I looked to those feed slopes that were so barren last night and saw the intelligent face of a Red hind looking down valley. I cast around and found more, and more! I love seeing deer in the alpine. Here, in a superbly remote corner of the country, were five fat and healthy hinds with four fat and healthy fawns hidden amongst luxuriant vegetation. It would normally bode well for the roar, but the black cloud of WARO had already

descended on those stags.

The deer were actually a bit of a pain. The fawns were just about old enough to do without mother but if we want big stags they have to get the best start in life possible, so the hinds were off the menu as there was clearly no overpopulation here. **To get past them we slipped underneath and cautiously crept up the tussock to get around the river.**

As we stopped for a breather I glassed back down-valley, above the deer, and saw a bull disappear over the horizon. Not long enough to get an impression of size, but while I was trying to find him again a nice chamois buck appeared in my view one ridge closer. He was a solid buck, good bases and height with strong hook, and he would have been 9 ½ to 9 ¾ long. Just the reward Sam needed for labouring under that heavy pack. I whispered to Sam that there was a buck there with her name on it and her eyes lit up. This is what it's about!

He was in a tricky position though, and with the deer between us there were 18 eyeballs to hide from! The closest we could get was 535 yards and the lead hind





The head of the valley and the pass to the West Coast

had already caught a glimpse of us and was looking intently. I wasn't worried about the distance, as Sam is a superb, careful shot, but the damn chamois had sat down, significantly reducing the already small target with a rock covering perhaps the lower 15% of its chest. We weighed it up, but Sam was confident. I would normally get him to stand but Sam has to shoot prone with an eye patch (her beanie pulled down) as she is right eye dominant but had cataract surgery and has to use her left eye! It's like trying to write with your off hand, so it's hard to readjust if an animal moves. I gave Sam the green light on that impossibly small target. **As she squeezed off the seconds slowed down and I willed the bullet on its way as hard as I could, but I obviously needed one more click of elevation.** There was a spray of white as the bullet struck the rock just in front of the buck at brisket level and he scarpered at warp speed. I was gutted for Sam - that buck would have meant so much and she was pretty frustrated. I knew it was a tremendously difficult shot, one I wouldn't have even offered to several of my more experienced mates, but all she could think about was that her 100% shooting record was dashed! Although it may sound like a cliché it was a bit of an education for Sam as to the ups and downs that are the reality of mountain hunting. She was embarrassed to have missed and, no matter what I told her, she wouldn't believe me that everyone misses every now and then!

The sun was slowly marching toward us on the cold side and when we got to a rise that afforded views for most of the valley we sat down and had an early lunch, while I glassed the slopes and crags. **I saw one young bull and a couple of carcasses from the culls but nothing much else to excite us.** The scenery was spectacular and the verdant snow-grass slopes dotted with lilies and daisies were divine but, despite all that, it is seeing animals in that environment that really stirs my heart. Back at our little river camp we washed some sweat-soaked clothes and had a brief wash in the ice stream. I had every intention of having a swim and cooling down, but by waist level my body refused to go any deeper - fresh from the glacier was a little too fresh for me!

We re-negotiated the gorge and set up camp at a beautiful spot in the forks on a nice, elevated terrace that caught the evening sun and afforded a soft bed of moss on which to pitch the tent. Young beech created dappled shade and a siesta snuck up on us quite by accident. **Arising from the death nap at about six, feeling like a freshly resurrected Egyptian mummy, I lit the jetboil in desperate need of caffeine.** Sam wrote any activity off as pure ridiculousness, and I was inclined to agree, but it was too nice an evening not to go for a hunt, and it was our last.

Strolling up the valley I saw an extraordinary amount of avalanche flow right down in

the valley floor. Perhaps unsurprising given the scale of the mountains around us, but it wouldn't be a place to wander in spring. There were a couple of bulls living in some tiger country on the true right, but they didn't reveal themselves long enough to get the spotter on them. Frustrating glimpses were all I got, and I wasted what turned out to be valuable time on them. By chance, I stumbled across a reasonable bull, shot and lost in the riverbed. It was much more recent than the culled carcasses we'd found.

Reaching an old avalanche flow, I climbed up the side toward a spectacular mountain. **As I turned the corner a gust of hot wind hit me, an unbelievable katabatic coming off that proud peak.** The cool valley was drawing down tons and tons of air off those incredible slopes. The dry wind was a good three or four degrees warmer than the valley and my eyes smarted as I tried to glass up the glacial incision in the mountain's flanks. A dark form near the slab rock at the head caught my eye, and after I extricated the spotter, I could just discern a bull tahr through the heat haze (yes, heat haze at 8.45 at night!) so I took the obvious path and quickly paced up the old avalanche debris.

After scrambling up the levee on the side of the stream another bull, even closer, caught my eye. I was pinned down, a repeat of the morning. I got the spotter out and awkwardly crouched behind a rock as I determined him to be too young. The haze from the wind was





Looking back up the gorge



Sam coming to help me retrieve the bull

incredible, and maddening! The binoculars revealed two more bulls in this group and they weren't very wary. It was important to me that I evaluated the bulls properly so I gathered everything and bent double, slowly walked straight toward the bulls. I walked right up to 250 yards until the lead bull stamped his foot. I was pushing it but I had to be sure of the bull's quality.

**The hot air was like a flowing river of mirage in the valley bottom, but a little higher out of the stream the haze seemed a little more manageable.**

Normally an 80mm spotter should have absolutely no trouble at this distance but it was driving me crazy. Two bulls were clearly too young, no older than five, but the alert bull was intriguing. I could make out what appeared to be stacked age rings at the bases with a bit of horn rot, but those same bases were very narrow. He looked like

a rubbish old bull, but I wasn't sure enough to take the shot. As I vacillated, I also tried to evaluate the original bull way up in the head of the valley. He was a loner and his behaviour suggested a more mature bull, but the haze made it completely impossible.

**He was within range and had all the attributes but there was absolutely no way of determining his age.**

As I looked back to the nearer animals a big bull stepped out of the scrub 50 yards beyond. He dwarfed the bull in front of me, in body and in horns, so I strained my eyeballs against the fading light to try evaluate him. He was feeding away and I could see enormous bases. The horns were long, looking good in proportion to his skull. He still wouldn't turn so I could get the important front-on view but I set the rifle up in preparation.

At 9.05 he still hadn't turned, and the February light was testing the glass to its limits. I thought 'he's a big bull. Sam would be stoked, maybe I should just shoot him'. I had moments to make the

decision as the ever deepening twilight pushed insistently at my decision-making process. I decided to do it, laid behind the rifle, lined up his shoulder and he collapsed at the shot.

In the silence after I was consumed by doubt. All of a sudden, I berated myself, 'why didn't you wait until morning and try again in better light?'. I knew I hadn't seen him from every angle. But I also knew the bulls wouldn't have been there in the morning, as evenings are the prime time and by the time light was strong enough to find them they are climbing back to tiger country. Still, I was far from elated as I packed up and headed for camp. I knew why. Instead of properly evaluating an animal, as I'd made pains to do for all of the bulls just before that, I'd succumbed to pressure and taken a chance on his age. I felt like karma was going to remind me of that fact because this is not the way to do it. **If I really thought he was that big and worth shooting, I should have added a day to the trip and come back next evening.**

The next morning we had a bit of a sleep in 'til daylight and Sam came with me to collect the bull. She was excited, thrilled that we'd got a bull on a walk-in trip in big country, so I felt terrible for being so sombre. As we approached the bull lying in the scree my emotions were all over the show. I desperately hoped I hadn't completely mucked up, because tahr are incredibly difficult to judge, and in the past I've let some genuinely big bulls walk through indecision. I hoped this wasn't the opposite case.

Dreading the ground shrinkage I pulled his head out of the scree in a moment of mixed emotions. He was certainly a decent bull, with enormous bases and a large body. **The horns were definitely trophy class according to Douglas Score standards, but he was missing the crucial element that is so important to me.** He wasn't an old bull, only coming in to his sixth year. If I'd waited for the frontal view I would've seen the V shaped horns, rather than the more sweeping shape the extra age rings provide.



At 12 ½ inches but already 43 ¾ DS he was just the type of bull that could have gone on to be that real once-in-a-lifetime 14" plus trophy. I felt impulsive and greedy, and on a personal and professional level it was disappointing.

**As a form of personal penance, I decided to take every scrap of that prime late-summer meat and give my knees the kind of workout I'm sure they'll remember in years to come.**

We cut a couple of hill sticks and slowly made our way down the little unnamed glacial valley - a beautiful, austere, positively Himalayan corner of the country in the shadow of a mighty mountain.

With camp loaded on top we both had brutal pack loads. Definitely the heaviest pack Sam had ever carried, and certainly up there for me. The 20 kilometres back to the truck were not all that inviting with 40 kilograms strapped to



43¾ DS but lacking that crucial component, age

peeling, sunburnt shoulders. Despite the grind, I have golden memories of the last couple kilometres. **We stumbled along with aching joints, throbbing feet, and burning shoulders and as the sun fell down, we belted out some Dave Dobbyn, Dire Straits and Van Morrison, before finally cooling our legs in the last river crossing before the ute.**



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# SOMEWHERE NEW

WRITTEN BY

MITCH THORN | SOUTH ISLAND RIFLE WALKERS

I'm a sucker for hunting in new areas; I know it might not be the most effective way to secure meat or find a trophy but there's just something about venturing into an area when you've spent hours poring over the topo map.

Summer is one of my favorite times of the year to hunt. Although the stags don't have their antlers and tahr aren't in their beautiful winter coats there are plenty of upsides to warmer conditions. Firstly, the daylight hours are longer, which means more time exploring and less time in the sleeping bag (you can always catch up on sleep when you get home!). Secondly, the lack of snow and ice makes travel in the steep stuff a

little less daunting. On top of that, you can pack a bit lighter, not needing the full winter kit - although never underestimate the possibility of a storm in the mountains at any time of the year. All these factors mean that you can upscale your adventure and push into the hard-to-reach places. I believe that from a hunting perspective, this is the perfect time to chase chamois. They're usually up in the steep stuff where any good summer mission





belongs - climbing along a hairline ridge with views spanning over distant peaks waiting to be tackled on another adventure.

My mate Raddy had never shot a chamois, so at the start of last summer we planned to do something about it. After scouting a route into new country on the topo map we set off with three nights up our sleeves, anticipating one hell of an adventure, and we weren't to be disappointed. Our weather report wasn't ideal so we had a few backup plans in place if we needed to bail off the tops in search of shelter.

Day one required a decent hike, starting with a three-hour section up-valley in the pouring rain through native forest. The canopy above provided a bit of shelter as we trudged along listening to the nor'west wind and rain whistle through the treetops. We came across our first point of interest about two hours in - a serene little lake hidden

away between the surrounding bush-covered peaks. Stopping for lunch under an enormous red beech tree, we were kept dry from the pouring rain. The tree is likely hundreds of years old with a circumference at the base of at least four metres - it would've been there well before the DoC track that now weaves around the old giants.

A few hours later and after a 1000 metre vertical slog we reached the tops. By this point we were ready to call it for the day so we searched around for a suitable campsite. Thankfully, the wind had dropped off and the sun was even poking through! After setting up camp we strolled over to a nearby tarn to grab some water and the wind started to pick up - but this time from the south. Before we knew it a hailstorm was pelting down, sending us into a frantic mess and rushing around like headless chickens trying to get ourselves and all of our gear into the tent.

We woke the next morning to clear skies and calm conditions with the peaks around us dusted with snow from the previous nights' front. Our plan was to hunt our way around our elevation contour until reaching the leading ridgeline that cut a path up to the summit above. With my pants around my ankles and a roll of toilet paper in hand, I spotted the first couple of chamois of the trip - a young nanny and buck feeding across the scree above. It was a promising sign that the area might hold good numbers of the target species.

Plan A was to traverse the tops for a couple of days - hunting our way along before dropping back down to the valley floor using another track a few kilometers up-valley of the one we used to ascend. With another southerly front forecast for our second night we weren't sure if camping on the tops would be possible, so Plan B involved dropping down to a remote hut hidden away in an isolated catchment to wait out the



Soaked, but loving life





The view from our lunch possie



The four kea took turns playing in the wind, seemingly laughing with their distinct calls



Raddy glassing the faces below. The distant peak above his head was our end goal, a lot of ridgeline to cover first



storm. Our issue with plan B was that our hunting country would be very limited, and we'd be trying to hunt chamois from below. A good trick to successfully hunting chamois is to stay above them because they often perch up somewhere watching the faces beneath. **They've got incredible eyesight so any slip-ups in a stalk often results in a spooked animal.**

With both plans in mind we dumped the bulk of our gear from our packs on the ridgeline - from here the track dropped down into the valley of plan B. It was still early in the morning, so we set off up the ridge to hunt the tops in the hopes to find Raddy a decent buck. About halfway up he spotted one looking down at us from the skyline but it ducked out of sight before we could get a good look at his age. **This gave us all the motivation we needed to push up to the summit and hopefully catch sight of him again.**

The views from the top exceeded all expectations I had from my study of the topo map. The peaks around us were magnificent

- exposed rock, steep jagged bluffs hanging over gravel screes fed by the crumbly Torlesse Greywacke, constantly uplifting and eroding in an age-old cycle. The jagged horizon fuelled my inner adventurer as in every direction the peaks seemed to go on forever. The last of the snow was clinging on to the shaded areas as the summer sun climbed higher in the sky.

**Unfortunately, we didn't find the buck again and had no luck finding any more chamois as we glassed away the rest of the morning.** The breeze was beginning to pick up but we found a nice sheltered possie for lunch. It was decision time – should we stick to plan A and risk a stormy night on the tops or bail out to the hut for the less desirable plan B. We could see the tops we were wanting to traverse and the allure of plan A was an attractive proposition. An updated weather report from our Garmin InReach gave a slight improvement in the forecast. Either way, we knew we had to return to pick up our gear from where we'd left the track.

**"It'll be fine, she'll be right"** we fooled ourselves as we stuffed our gear back into our packs. By the time we had made the 400-metre climb for the second time that day the sunny conditions were all but gone. Clouds were humming over the summit as we made our way to the area where we had planned to camp. It was on the sheltered side of the ridgeline about 20 metres below the top - we wanted to go lower but this was the only terrace offering flat ground. We dropped packs and walked around the area trying to find the most sheltered spot away from the gusts blowing through.

Putting a tent up in the wind is always an interesting challenge - even more so when you're at an altitude of 1600 metres with a borderline gale making life difficult. We'd pegged down the corners and put the poles in when a gust blew in, ripping the pegs out the ground in a matter of seconds. **Thankfully, Raddy was onto it and managed to grab the corner of the tent as it attempted to turn into a kite and fly off over the valley behind us.** I jumped on the other corner, and together we barely held





Marmot Biv  
after the snow



on, waiting for the gusts to die down. Our lighthearted approach quickly turned serious as we spent the next hour scrambling about, doing everything we could to secure the tent. **A two-foot rock wall, ten guide ropes and plenty of rocks stacked on each peg later and we were finally happy enough with 'marmot biv'.**

In all the chaos and blisteringly cold winds a group of kea were making light of the conditions, causing us to feel rather inadequate. They were taking turns flying out from the sheltered side of the ridge, launched through the air as they hit the wind humming above. After photos we retreated to the tent, exhausted from the day's efforts. As rain was forecast overnight I made some makeshift patches for the fresh rips in the fly using strapping tape and rubbish bags – as it

turned out the next morning I had more than enough spare patches in the tent bag.

We woke to a summertime winter wonderland. Snow overnight had left about an inch of fresh powder caking the peaks around us. As forecasted, the storm had blown through leaving us with a bluebird day and not a breath of wind. We were looking down the barrel of a massive day - heaps of good country to cover and some sketchy looking tops to clamber our way along. We fueled up with a big breakfast and packed up, leaving the shell of a rough night behind us.

**The morning was spent glassing our way along the tops, stopping at each new bit of country in search of Raddy's first buck.** By about 10am we'd covered a fair bit of country and were yet to pick up an



Owner - Allan Foot

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Absolutely chuffed with the result, sometimes a bit of luck can really change a trip



animal, although the morning sun defrosting us from last night's struggles was keeping the spirits high. After glassing a promising looking face for a good half an hour with no success, we decided to carry on along the ridge to get a look into the next catchment.

**The old spook'n'shoot - never planned, but always welcomed.** As we climbed over the peak we bumped a buck that was about 50 metres further along the ridge. He'd been nestled up just above and behind us the entire time, neither of us having any idea of the other's presence. As he ran away across along the ridge, I grabbed the camera while Raddy set up the gun. Unfortunately for this buck, his curiosity was his downfall. He stopped at about 100 metres to look back at us, confused as to what had just scared him out of his spot in the sun. With the Nikon P900 zoomed on his head I knew he was the buck we were after - he had pretty good length and not bad hooks. **A quick decision was made and Raddy dropped it on the spot, causing it to tumble down off the steep bluffs into the tussocks below.**

Hunting is a rollercoaster; everything can change in a matter of seconds. What was shaping up to be an unfruitful morning's hunting turned into everything we'd hoped for. He was a relatively old buck, just shy of nine and a half inches, with a patchy coat halfway between its winter and summer versions. We were rapt with him - for a first

buck we couldn't have asked for anything more. **As per usual, we grabbed a few photos, took the head and all the meat we could, and carried on our route.**

Another nor'west with some heavy rain was forecast to set in that night and we needed to cross several rivers to get back to the truck. As a result, we decided we needed to push on and get ourselves as close to the truck as possible. The afternoon was spent traversing the last of the tops to reach the downward track, holding on to the hope that we might find a buck for me, worthy of a taxidermy job. Along the way we covered more incredible country and ran into a younger buck who came in from about 200 metres and ended up spooking only 10 metres away. They're such cool animals, especially the younger bucks who are more interested in figuring out what we are, rather than seeing us as an immediate threat. Their personalities and the incredible places they call home make them one of my favorite animals to watch and hunt.

**After one hell of a day we reached the hut down on the riverbed right on dark.** We'd traversed six kilometres of West Coast tops, secured Raddy a chamois and dropped about 1400 metres of elevation at the end of our day, we were shattered. A chamois back steak, rice risotto and a good sleep in a hut felt like absolute luxury after a challenging few days hunting.



Raddy's last day tradition is to make pancakes - he carries around a pan, some oil and a jar of maple syrup for the occasion. His pack would make a lightweight enthusiast cringe! We finished off the trip the way we started it, hiking along the riverbed and getting absolutely drenched by the West Coast rain. Our feelings of excitement and anticipation when walking in were now feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment on the way out. **We'd got everything we could have asked for on this trip and writing about it now has got me beyond excited for next summer's adventures.**





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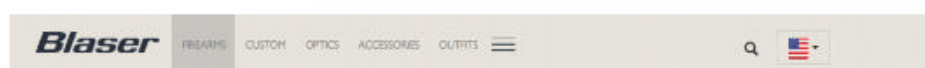


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# PRIVILEGE *AND* SACRIFICE

WRITTEN BY ~ KATE AYNSLEY

**As the roar was a bit of a fizzer for us, we devised a plan to head down to our favourite DoC block for a 4-day hunt, in the hope of getting my first stag**

I had told myself that I would not take any young up-and-coming stags as it seemed such a waste, so had set my goal at a minimum of ten points. Previously I had turned down three, six and eight pointers for this very reason.

While we were there it would be a shame not to get some extra meat to top up the freezer, so we opted for the lazy way out and locked in the chopper for a pickup. It was the first time I planned our time on the block - a big step as I had always relied on Greg's experience and followed his lead (big girl pants on!).

When hunting this block, it pays to look at the long-range forecast as it can be very unforgiving, and two weeks out it was looking perfect. As it was June there would be hard frosts, but also stunning, clear days. As the trip got closer Mother Nature showed she is nobody's friend and what started out as four days of perfection was now looking like rain with only a two-day weather window.

As always, a week before, out came the packs and my now refined checklist for this block. It has received quite a bit of fine tuning over the last 18 months as I am renowned for over-packing! I decided to be ruthless and try to only pack for what I required.

The day soon arrived, and we were up at a sparrow's fart as we wanted to be packs on heading down to the block at first light.

We arrived on the tops to the most spectacular sunrise. It was amazing being above the clouds and being able to take in that vista with just the tops poking out. With packs shouldered we headed down through the sub-alpine flora. There is always one spot that is very thick and we have yet to find the perfect route down through it. It is made harder by bulky packs, steepness of the ridge, and it is always greasy, with slick tussocks laying everywhere. By the time we reached the bottom we were soaked with the dew that lay over all that we touched. Looking across to our regular camp it appeared to be no different, just very wet. The decision was made to down the packs and hope the tent site got a little sun while we were away.

Bum bags on and rifles slung, we were off up the back of camp to see if we could find the ram that I had been watching grow since my first trip in. I felt he should be trophy size this year or next. I had named him George as he had real character, right down to the way his fleece



shed. We hadn't managed to find him on our last trip and unfortunately it was to be the same this time. He wasn't in his usual spot so we pushed on up the hill and took a position off to the side of the ridge amongst rocks and tussock. **It looked over to a sunny face with plenty of open clearings, guts and pockets within the scrub.** A great spot for a stag to sun itself. Unfortunately, that left us on the shady side with a cool, winter wind whipping us. It was not long before I spotted our first animal, and it was a stag. He was young with maybe six points, just lying in a clearing in the scrub along the bush line and was so relaxed that he had his front leg outstretched. We sat there watching and photographing him for quite some time while wild sheep feeding around him came and went. Greg also spotted a couple of pigs further over which I must admit took me some time to find, due to their size. Admittedly I am still trying to ingrain his terminology for topography, but we got there in the end. **With the wind beating on us it got to the stage that we needed to move off and find somewhere out of the chill.**

The shadows started to grow and it was time to head back as we still had camp to set up. As it came into view all I could see was dew...unfortunately Greg's plan had been unsuccessful and our packs were actually wetter than when we left them...thank goodness for dry bags is all I can say. They are worth their weight in gold.

As we set up camp the temperature was dropping rapidly, and we were in for a cold night. The frost formed early, and we certainly had no need for the creek to chill our beers. **It was still quite early, and Scout had snuggled down in her sleeping bag (yes, she has her own sleeping bag) and I was sure she would end up in our tent later.** Out came the Backcountry Cuisine cottage pie – one of my favourites.



Glassing an evening face



The first stag spotted basking in the winter sun

**Before settling down for the night we had discussed our plan; to go up the creek to a clearing where we had seen a rather nice stag on the previous trip.** Greg was reasonably confident it was the same one he had seen years before, but without seeing it in antler he couldn't be sure. It was an evening where fog was slowly rolling in and unfortunately, he never showed. We did spot a mob of sheep up on another ridge and Greg just managed to make out a stag who was sitting amongst flax just over from them.



A spiker grazing across from our glassing point

You could hardly make out his tops as he moved his head. The fog eventually enveloped him, and he was no more. With that, we decided to head back to





My stag basking in the sun unaware of us watching him from across the ridge



Up and scenting



Scout chilling out while we glass the faces

were frozen solid. There was an upside though. as it meant the tussock on the ridge that we intended to climb would be frost dry, and the sun would dry it before we came back down later in the day.

**I did a quick weather check using our Garmin Inreach to see if we would need to be out early, as the forecast**

**had changed so much already over the past week.** Unfortunately, it was not what I wanted to read. The weather was closing in fast; another day would be lost unless we wanted to be tent bound for two days solid and risk the predicted fog after that. We made the decision to message Matt, our chopper guy, via the Inreach to pull us out a whole day early, and off we set for day two. One of the great things about this ridge is that as we negotiated our way up through the clumps of tussock

and patches of inaka there were plenty of spots to stop and glass on either side. The only upside was camp was downhill all the way. As we casually made our way along the ridge, there was pungent whiff of pig and immediately after, a nice wee eater darted in front of us, heading for the scrub. Then the conundrum...do we shoot it and wake up the hill or do we

leave it, as it was a stag that we were after. We left it, in the hope that this would pay dividends later. A few steps further and we heard more pigs heading into the bush. **We pushed on about 200 metres to where Greg caught sight of a group of woolies.** There was good visibility of the clearings, so I made myself comfortable and set to glassing up the ridge. Greg was keen to take a closer look at the sheep as there were a couple with brown markings amongst them, so off he snuck with camera in hand. No sooner had he gone than he reappeared, showing me what he had captured. The sun was shining on the screen, so I struggled to see what he was trying to show me. While tilting my head trying for a better view I suddenly made out what it was...not a sheep but a stag!! And it was just across from us behind the scrub. Grinning he asked, **"do you want it?"** I peeked around the bush edge and saw him sitting there in grandeur, completely oblivious to us across the other side. He met my prerequisites and looked to have a nice even head. Without taking a breath I said **"yes"**. Greg planned to stay where he was and watch him, and I headed back to where the bush followed down into the gut and up to the ridge the stag was on, as it would conceal me the whole way. I set off, hugging the bush line, and trying to keep myself in check to ensure my excitement did not blow it. I needn't have worried as he was quite comfortable basking in the sun, so a touch of the pressure was off. Once I got down into the gut, I did a quick wind check and found that it had changed and was now katabatic, blowing straight down the ridge. This meant he would wind me as soon as I crested it. **My only option was to head into the scrub in the hope that it wasn't too thick, and an opening would present itself. I found a gap in the bush tops, but I could see no stag.** Had I overshot where he was sitting, or was he gone? I felt the clearing looked little different so headed back up about 20 metres and found another opening, but I had to stand on tippy toes to make him out. Suddenly, he stood up scenting, but I knew it wasn't me as the wind was still in my favour. Trying to stay calm I had to figure out what I was going to do as I couldn't take a shot from this position, and I was too short to lean on the tree in front of me. The only option was to scale it and try to balance for a shot. I balanced my 7mm-08 on one of the branches

camp and tuck up for the night.

**The next morning we woke to a light frost...not on the outside but the inside of the tent...it didn't take a genius to know what was awaiting us.** I had also hung my gaiters under the fly as they were soaked and I did not want to put extra moisture in the tent. They certainly took some coaxing to put on as they



above and proceeded to climb it, hooking my foot between the angled trunk and a side branch. Picking up my rifle, I flicked open the scope covers and got myself as comfortable as my perching in the tree allowed. **Suddenly, I heard the steps of a deer in the undergrowth behind me, but I was focused on the job at hand.** I lightened the weight on the branch, gently flicked off the safety, let out another slow breath and squeezed off a round. It sounded like a solid shot. I chambered another round and looked back through the scope only to see him still standing. I was stunned and thought 'I'm not letting him get away' so I took another shot. The stag reared up on his hind legs and over he went. I stared out from the tree for a moment and tried to take in what had just happened. Buzzing with excitement I proceeded to get down carefully. Greg was quickly on the radio congratulating me - I think he was buzzing just as much as me. I then pushed my way through the scrub to the other side bumping three hinds on the way...I wonder if that was what the stag was scenting. **I must admit I smelt him way before I saw him, and I was upwind.** He was stunning, and carried a perfect ten points bar a chip on one tip. He was old with coronets right down at his skull. I thanked him for his sacrifice and for allowing me this great privilege. I checked my shots, but a second shot had not been required. Greg finally appeared...we high-fived and I told him exactly what unfolded whilst wearing a grin that went from ear to ear. It remained that way for the rest of the trip. After photos, I set to work breaking him down. He was a big boy, and the terrain was steep. Each

time I tried to position him he would roll over, (I was asked if I was going to get it done before it rolled into camp) so I got Greg to give me a hand holding him and also help me to remove the head as they are pretty tricky to manoeuvre with antlers on. Scout got to enjoy a few of the spoils before we laid the meat out to cool and carried on back up the ridge. While having some well earned lunch I got the Inreach out to see if Matt had replied. No answer, so I sent another message. Suddenly, my phone rang, (who knew there was reception way up here?).

**As luck would have it, I was in the perfect spot at just the right time.** It was Matt confirming he would pull us out tomorrow at 12. Taking advantage of this freak reception I called my dad to tell him all about my stag. I could tell as we spoke, he too was beaming. I love these moments; the only thing better would be him being up here with us. He lives in Nelson and is not as agile as he used to be, so I send lots of photos and make calls like this whenever possible.

On our way back down, we picked up the meat and threw the head over my shoulders, and by the time we hit camp I could certainly feel the contribution to the freezer. We celebrated with yarns and a beer or two. On the final morning we managed a quick hunt for some lamb and Greg made two amazing shots on the move. We had little time to break them down and finish tidying up camp before our taxi was due to arrive. **This trip will certainly remain with me forever.**



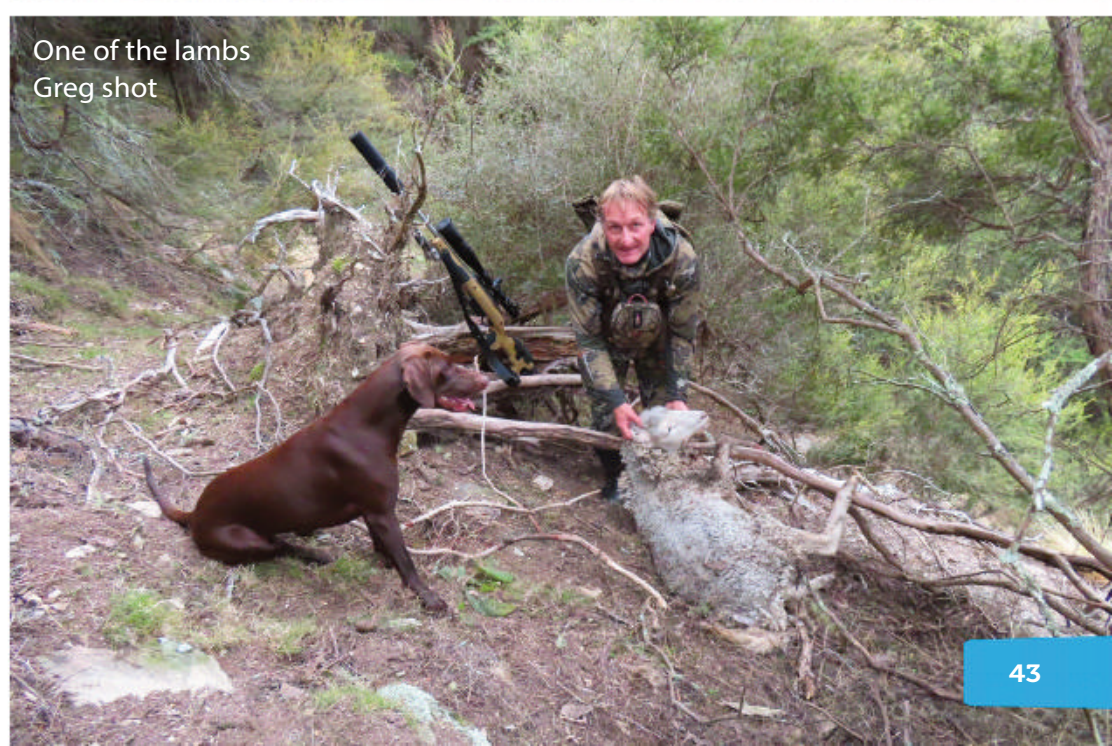
My 10 point trophy stag



Doing the mahi with view of the bush I shot from



Carrying the stag back to camp



One of the lambs Greg shot



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WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

Part 6

# WHAT CAMERA SHOULD I BUY

## EDITING PHOTOS

**For this issue we'll deviate a little from specifically 'what camera should I buy' to delve in the dark art of photo editing**

**This is where it really goes from the science of capturing a good image to bringing out the art of the photographer. Subsequently you'll learn that, like all art, what makes a good photo is highly subjective**

The bias I primarily view it from is what makes an image work well for the magazine, which is usually dictated by the equipment and settings a submitter uses when they press the shutter – and what state it is in! What I do and don't like in a photo would take up a whole article itself, and be of absolutely no use to anyone, so let's move on to discussing editing.

### EDITING SOFTWARE

**To edit photos you will need an editing program.** A good one, not an app on your phone. Low quality apps or programs generally can't export in high resolution and are quite a broad-strokes kind of editing. Lightroom is what I use for my own images, though if I'm just doing one photo or doing full-on image manipulation I'll use Photoshop. These

are both Adobe products and require a subscription. **There are alternatives, but I'm so unfamiliar with them I had to look them up on the internet.** It's only serious competition seems to be Skylum Luminar, but as I use the whole adobe suite like Indesign, Premiere Pro and Illustrator for the magazine it just hasn't made sense to explore these options. Aside from the editing these programs allow you to catalogue and organise your photos with tools designed to make management of large numbers of photos easy. You can add tags like 'tent', 'bird' etc. If I was organised enough to make the most of these features it would be really useful! I make periodic attempts, but the additional time when I'm importing photos as well as the lag created by its demand on the computer

soon have me giving up and relying on a very imperfect memory.

**A lot of people hear 'photoshop' and think of complete image manipulation, with weird and wonderful images like bull moose antlers on a Sika.** In fact it's one of those products that have reached such notoriety it's become a noun, like Google. You say you're going to 'Google' something, not that you're going to use a search engine. If you edit a photo laymen say you 'photoshopped' it. In reality editing a photo is usually simply adjusting parameters like tone, highlights/shadows and colours. If you're a real pro you'll use your histogram to make them absolutely perfect, but I'm not at that level yet, I just edit by feel and a reasonably experienced eye. I'm only going to cover some of the more relevant adjustments, as covering every available parameter in Lightroom would probably fill the magazine!

A quick note on terminology - an important part of editing is how you make your adjustments. 'Global' adjustments are made to the entire image. 'Local' adjustments are to parts, by using a brush, or gradient or radial filter, we'll cover this more in depth later in the article.



I like to use a full frame camera because it gives me more flexibility. The extra light gathering ability of the large sensor means I can snap freehand shoots in difficult lighting conditions, often when the light is at it's most striking.

Also, consider this a bit of a sneak peek at Season 8 coming out in mid Feb....

## RAW VS JPEG

**This old chestnut. I feel like I've covered it much too often, but it's important.**

If you want to edit your images (which I encourage people to experiment with), you must shoot in raw. It's such a waste if you don't, there's millions of bits of data that your wonderful camera has recorded that

you just throw away if you only keep jpeg files. See the attached images for some examples of just how much more detail you can bring out by editing raw files. That's all there is to it really, shoot in raw! So now we move on to image characteristics and how you manipulate them.

## TEMPERATURE

**The temperature of an image is exactly what it sounds like.** A warm or cold feeling to an image, the warm

yellows, gold's and oranges of a dusky summer evening versus the whites and blues of a cold winter morning. Cameras don't always get it exactly right when they set the temperature at the moment of the shutter depressing, but it is very easy to change. You may also wish to edit an image and force the picture to look warmer or cooler than reality to create an effect. This is measured using the Kelvin colour temperature scale, and a typical photographic light will have a

temperature of 3200 which is regarded as the middle ground. By shooting in raw you have virtually unlimited adjustment, with any other format you're restricted to only +/- 100 Kelvin adjustment preserved within the file.

## TINT

**Tint (also called tone) is very similar to temperature, but it adjusts different colours.** With this you go from green to magenta. You get less of



Here is two versions of exactly the same image I took in Fiordland over New Years. On the left is an edited raw file, on the right is a jpeg straight off the camera. Firstly, you can see how editing will improve photos, and secondly you can see how much detail can be salvaged from the light and dark areas of an image recorded in raw



This is an exaggerated example of changes in temperature and tint. In monotone scenes like this snow/overcast combo small changes in temp or tint are immediately evident. Given our experiences with cold snowy days we'd immediately think of the top right as being a more true-to-life colour balance.





A strength of phones (I'll reluctantly admit) is their inbuilt HDR software. Here you can clearly see areas of highlights vs shadows, the camera has done a great job of making detail visible in both areas in the same photo

an atmospheric temperature feeling, the colours can look strange quickly with only light adjustments of tone. It is often required though, I'll adjust toward green in a forest canopy scene to get that enveloping green sense, or toward purple in a twilight alpine scene. And similar to temperature, the camera doesn't always get it right, so keep an eye on that. Subtle changes can really tidy up an image but go too far and it can look a bit off.

Collectively temperature and tint adjust your colour balance, or white balance.

## SATURATION AND VIBRANCE

**Saturation is pretty intuitive. Most people have an understanding of the concept.** Vibrance is similar, but in lightroom vibrance is not an absolute adjustment; it *'protects already saturated colours and colours typically found in skin tones'*. That means it makes an image's colour palette richer and more tonal, without making

primary colours too strong.

Often raw photos are very unsaturated when you import them, but it's easy to adjust the saturation and vibrance sliders in Lightroom to bring them back to life. The trick is not taking it too far!

You can also isolate individual colours and adjust them independently. On my old Sony it had very vibrant greens and I often found myself diluting the neon green grass a little. You can also dull that sunburnt look for people like myself with a ruddy complexion, but if you take it too far they look grey and fallow.

## SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

**An image is made up of light and dark, you can't have one without the other.** The contrast is what gives you any image at all. The far end of either spectrum is the whites and the blacks, but if you adjust them too much you end up just blanking out parts of the image as either white or black, this is referred to as 'clipping'. Both photo and video editing software will have modes that show you parts of the image/frame that are clipping so that you can adjust the exposure or shadows and highlights to reduce it. If your camera sensor has poor dynamic range there will be large parts of an image that are clipped beyond recovery, areas of harsh light like bright snow or dark shadows in an otherwise light scene will always clip to some degree. The degree depends on your cameras abilities.

The middle ground is the shadows and the highlights, dark or light patches within the image but not black or white. In raw images especially you can adjust these parts to significantly reveal detail otherwise hidden, as in the example of raw vs jpeg earlier. I use this a great deal, often if you expose for the foreground the sky will be so light that it has lost its colour. Using a gradient filter I will tone down the highlights in that section only and retrieve the colour. If you adjust these parameters too much, especially as global adjustments, you lose contrast and the image looks flat. It also makes the colours a little more 'pastel' for want of a better word.

One thing phones have done really well is create excellent in-camera High Dynamic Range (HDR) photos. An HDR photo is created by taking a photo (or multiple) with a low exposure, to capture the areas of strong light that would otherwise be clipped, and then another photo but in opposite settings for the dark areas. You then combine the two (or many more) images to get the exposure perfect for light and dark parts. In HDR mode phones do this automatically and I have to admit they do a very good job.

## CLARITY

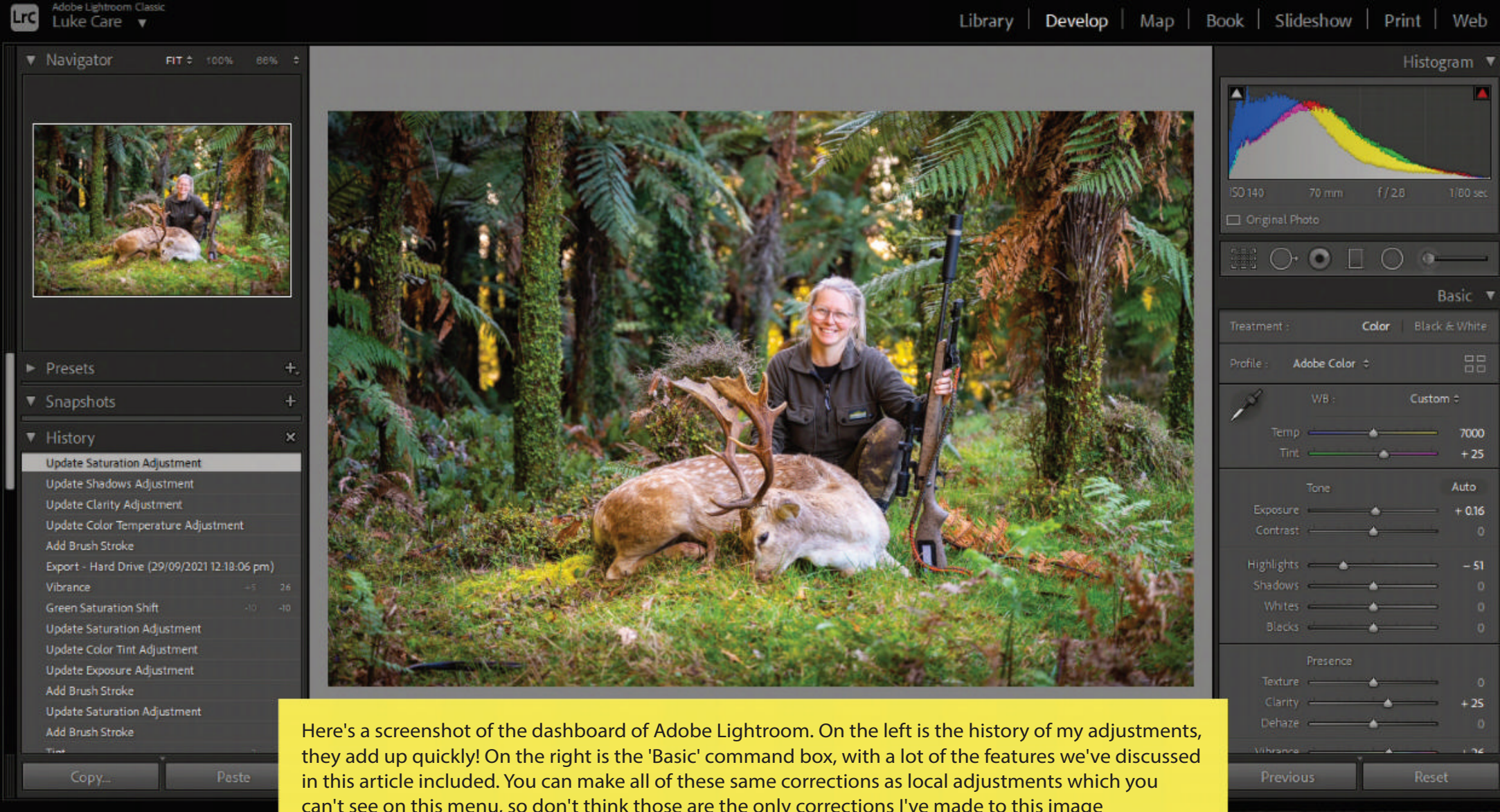
**Clarity is the original trap for young players.** I can't help but chuckle when I see some hyper-contrasting, sharpened, moody photos pop up on social media from a young photographer. I fell in to the same trap myself and always smile when I see someone follow the same path.

Clarity is a Lightroom adjustment that *'takes the mid-tones of an image and enhances them, bringing sharpness to a photo and increasing the texture*



Clarity and sharpening are tools best used sparingly. On the right you can see when the clarity is maxed out it makes the face very haggard looking by highlighting any lines or dirt, and makes the contrast very strong causing clipping. In addition the heavy sharpening has introduced noticeable noise.





Here's a screenshot of the dashboard of Adobe Lightroom. On the left is the history of my adjustments, they add up quickly! On the right is the 'Basic' command box, with a lot of the features we've discussed in this article included. You can make all of these same corrections as local adjustments which you can't see on this menu, so don't think those are the only corrections I've made to this image

*found there'.*

It is closely related to contrast, but as said before, focuses more on the mid tones. Adjust contrast too much and you end up with clipping, whereas clarity increases finer texture and detail, as well as creating the effect of more sharpening.

Some images benefit from global clarity adjustment, but usually in modest amounts. The trap I was talking about is the tendency to go a little crazy with the clarity slider. This makes the image harsh, noisy and over-sharp. To get the best effect, use clarity more liberally with local adjustments. For example to bring out the detail and texture in an eye's iris.

A photography theory called 'visual mass' states that certain elements pull the viewer's eye more than others, sharpness is one. That means a person is likely to look at the most crisply focussed areas first, use local adjustments of clarity and sharpness to enhance that effect.

You can also go the other way with clarity, to reduce detail. People use it to soften skin textures and other areas where you don't want small detail distracting from the image.

## SHARPENING

**Sharpening is very similar in application to clarity. You don't want to use too much, and it's best in local adjustments.** If you go too far lines appear very prominent and harsh, with images looking too textured. It's a common problem I have with lots of Samsung phone photos. Sharpening also introduces noise, you can overdo it on any image but heavy sharpening on a grainy image that's used a high iso

becomes pretty ugly pretty quickly. Unless it's an effect you're going for, like the old grainy film photo look.

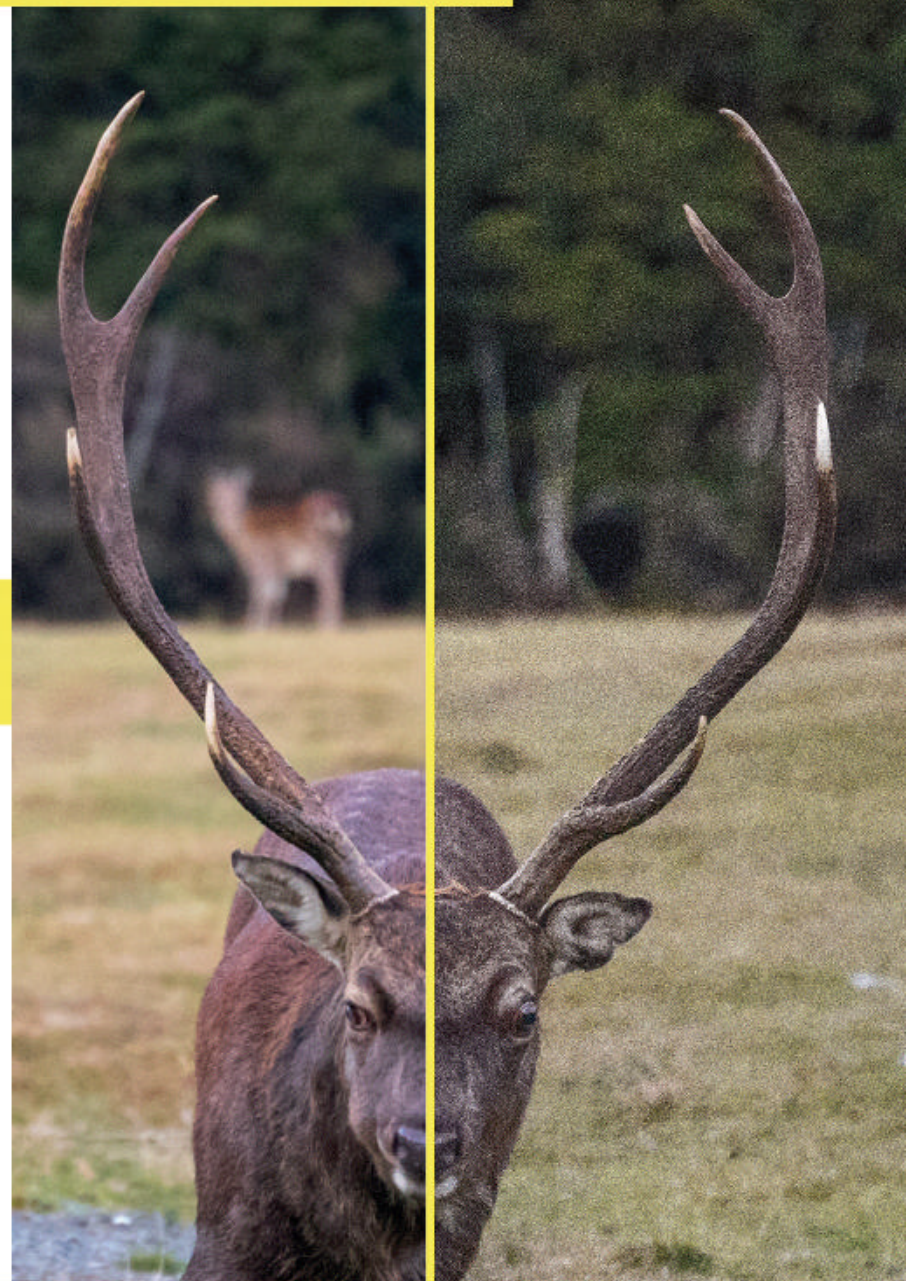
Lightroom also allows you to customize your sharpening with the 'radius', 'detail' and 'masking' tools. For the sake of brevity I won't go into it here, but its powerful software and can really enhance an image once you get a feel for the different tools' influence.

## LENS CORRECTIONS

**We touched on this a little last issue, in that Adobe spends thousands of hours with lens-makers to build profiles that correct aberrations in your particular lens.** Even if you don't use the profiles there are some very useful tools to make use of.

Chromatic aberration is the colour fringing you see around the edges of some objects. Some lenses are worse for it than others, but in bad cases it can really ruin a photo. Within Lightroom you can adjust for the colour spectrum of aberration you are seeing and adjust it down accordingly. Sometimes it can be a bit crude though and bleaches colour from elsewhere in the photo, just keep an eye on it and

don't go straight to maximum reduction. Vignetting is another one that's easy to mitigate or eliminate using a simple slider control.



The infamous B2 at Ngamatea coming to check out my apple. On the right side you can see an image that is over-sharpened. Look closely and you can see noticeable grain and noise, as well as his rather munted looking eye!





Now I'm really giving away all my secrets. On the left is a lightly edited photo, on the right is what I'd call the finished product. The difference is made by local adjustments. Gradient filters for the sky and brush filters to brighten and saturate certain areas like the tussock in the foreground and the golden light coming from the rising sun

## LOCAL ADJUSTMENT

**Local adjustment is the key component of editing in Lightroom, for me it's what really takes edited photos to the next level.** Within Lightroom there are three ways to edit specific parts of an image.

First is the gradient filter. This is a flat plane that you drag from one point to another and whatever adjustments you select fade from start to finish throughout the distance you have specified. I most commonly use it to reduce the highlights in the sky. I will also use it to darken a foreground and draw the viewer's eye up to the subject.

Next is the radial filter, this has the same gradient effect but instead of being from point to point it fades from the centre to the perimeter, or vice versa. I don't use the radial filter all that much, but sometimes I will fade it in from the side to enhance sun flare or for similar effects.

Finally is the adjustment brush, which is like a radial filter that you paint and drag around the specific areas you want to adjust. I use this a lot for a huge variety of tasks to improve an image, draw attention to areas or remedy mistakes in composition.

## SPOT FIX

**The healing tools are another huge strength of Lightroom.** Dust speck on your sensor that's left a black mark? Fly landed on someone's face? Boom, spot heal. This is the ultimate lifesaver for a rip, sh\*t and bust photographer like myself. My lens often has mud on it, dust gets in my sensor, I use my camera in the rain. All of these things can leave artifacts on an image and I just clean them up in Lightroom.

## THAT'LL DO

**There's about 65,000 more words you could write on all of the functions of Lightroom but these are the things I use most commonly and hopefully pique your interest enough to start you down the road of editing your images.** My closing comments on editing would be not to get carried away. When you first get the software it can be easy to edit a photo to death. I look back at my early photos and cringe a little at some but we all go through the process.

If you're submitting photos to the mag you'll get extra brownie points if you also supply me the original raw photo as well. That way I can replicate your

edit, but I have to do it in Photoshop so that I can export in CMYK (large scale printing processes can only use a limited colour spectrum) and keep as much detail as possible, also it saves any hiccups around your export settings. If you're a real clever cookie supply me with the PSD document so I can see exactly what edits you've done but can still control the output.

What I'm looking for in an image is just the basics, anything else is your flavour. Clean lenses, animals tongues tucked in, focus sharp, a bit of thought for composition (the rule of thirds is golden) and obviously the higher quality the camera the more excited I will be. Anyone with a DSLR automatically gets extra points and probably better placement in the mag!

Regardless of what you use, I encourage anyone to push themselves a little along their photographic journey. Document your adventures better. Do them the justice. Inspire those around you. You'll find it increases the fun and drive you to get out there in the hills more often.

**Next issue we will rope in Willie and Emil to cover a bit more about video editing, along with some filming tips.**





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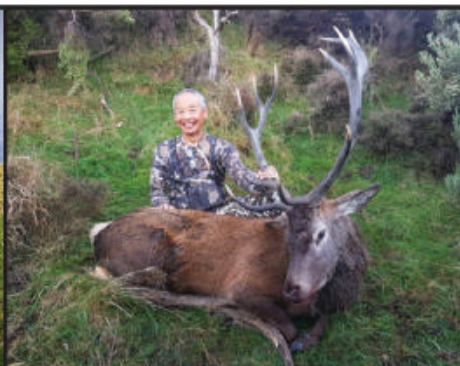
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# BORN IN THE USA PART 2

WRITTEN BY ~ CODY WELLER

Getting up above ground level takes you out of an animal's direct line of sight

**I had been sitting in a Kamahi tree, about 6m up, for an hour and a half. Not long for treestand hunting standards**

**Where I was positioned, a small spur had begun to narrow in front of me, diving down into a small creek. I faced looking down the spur, just at the edge of where the spur started to broaden out. At my back was a very gradual face that a creek meandered along the foot of. This face had a natural transition line of manuka meeting mature native, which followed the creek as it went.**

At the head of this small catchment was a cluster of scrapes from a Whitetail buck. As I went about finding his sign, I would mark each scrape and rub. This began to draw a picture.

I had a game camera photo of him at the cluster zone, but only in the dark. I had sat at the cluster zone on daylight with just a couple of does walking by. I needed something a little more structured if I was going to increase my

chances of seeing him in the flesh.

I needed to find the hallway into this area. Contouring around from the cluster of scrapes is where I found the transition line. On that line was a faint but used deer trail. This trail cut over other small trails that lead up out of the creek. The buck was using the contouring trail to intercept as many doe trails as he could that headed up the face. So as the spur formed and dived into the creek, I knew

this would create a pinch point. He would have to walk up it a little bit to begin his sidle along the face, checking trails for a hot doe.

I was set up in my treestand by 12pm. 1.30pm and here comes the buck, cruising up the spur like clock-work. The buck steps into my shooting lane... call, click, dead. Everything I had researched was laid out before me, I just had to recognize it.

## SO, HOW DOES ALL THIS WORK?

**Treestand hunting isn't something that will work anywhere.** I think it's good for those niggly little fringe blocks and rolling country. Where deer are exposed to regular human activity, for example. The hunter needs to be able to get right in their bedding and living area without having the deer run off and not come back for a month.

**So, let's get into the good stuff.**

Finding bedding area is gold. A deer has





A Red hind completely caught out leaving her bedding area. She came walking straight past, making for a very close shot

a rough routine of feeding, travelling out of harm's way and bedding down. But when do you hunt these locations? Morning, I would try to intercept deer as they head back to that bedding area. They might hang back and feed, but at some point they will want to walk off to bed down. It will depend on pressure when they will wander in, daylight for some and mid-morning for others.

**Sometimes I head into an area and just cruise about until I spook deer from their beds.**

Once that happens I go around and find all the existing trails and prep some trees. This isn't for the next day, rather for the near future. Deer have their favoured areas for bedding down and in time, others will gravitate there. It's always worth banking and preparing these spots. It's up to you to do the research on when to hunt these areas. Morning? Night? It's about figuring out wind-drift, what time movement occurs and so on.

This is where cameras come in to help. They are a good way to start figuring out a pattern of movement and times this is happening. I don't swear by them, but they are definitely helpful at times for long term data.

I talked about transition lines at the start. Often in the bush, deer use these as handrails of sorts - especially in the rut or roar. If you can find a transition line with good activity, rubs, scrapes and general ground-sign. **Set up and sit tight, something will eventually come cruising by.**

In some areas, there's always 'that saddle'. The saddle that has a deer - or multiple deer - come by every other day. If there is a tree, prep it. Then get in there. Wind can be easier to work with in saddles



Another great shot by Nathan O'Hearn from in the treestand

due to the natural funnel it creates. Saddles are also natural deer funnels as well and can be hunted at any time of the day. Not every saddle is a winner, but deer have their favourites and at some point one will walk by.

**GPS any points of interest. Last May, I was marking down some very well used rubs on our Whitetail block.**

It wasn't long and I could see a trend that bucks were cruising a line at a specific contour. This was nearly through the entire block. Time spent in this area and at this particular height, bucks were encountered more than once. I use the GPS and mapping to see what's going on behind me and try to forecast what might be happening ahead. It sure helps with clarity if you have a string of evidence appearing on the map to execute your next move.

I have not spent much time at creek crossings, but have always looked very carefully at them as another good

possibility. If you play the air current right, you should get a steady pull in one or the other direction. And again, it's a funnel where the deer move through for a reason. It's just a matter of finding the right crossing and committing to a setup.

Sitting around a feed area is probably the most obvious and easy thing to do. For me, that's an evening choice if you are to hunt a main feed source. I think mornings are difficult to set up on deer for this kind of area. They are usually not far away from leaving the feed and preparing to head back to bed down.

**However, the afternoon gives the hunter time to set up and prepare for that last half hour of light.**

Sometimes a good junction where multiple trails meet is a good area to set up. This could be covering animals moving from bedding to feed. Or it's just a pinch point and that's the easiest





A big mature Whitetail buck that I caught out from the ground because my gear was quiet as I travelled

place to travel. I always try to look for an accumulation of these things with as much red-hot sign as possible. Pick a tree right in the action and get into it. Things may happen faster than you would expect.

#### How high should you climb?

Sometimes it doesn't take much. It's just a matter of getting above that eye line. Height might buy you some more forgiveness if the wind is being difficult. Height might also afford you a little more movement in the tree. But it's not necessary to head to the moon to kill a deer from a tree.

**I try to carry my treestand gear as quietly as possible.** You are in the deer zone, so it's not uncommon to have one stroll by before any setup has begun. No good having the set clapping against the platform or a rope catching everything as you move. Test it before you start to move and fix the problem before the hunt starts.

None of this matters if you don't have the wind right. I always check the wind direction before leaving home. If it's north westerly, I have an area of pre-set trees I can hunt for that particular wind. No good being positioned just off some bedding area if your wind puffs in there, - they won't show up. The wind totally dictates a hunt regardless. **However, you can utilise the wind to carry your scent well away from your intended area.** It's just

#### Treestand hunting can be a social event

a matter of learning what different wind directions and wind speeds will do this for you. I often take a square of toilet paper out and have some in my pocket. You can tear a little flake off and drop it. It's very interesting to see where it ends up and why you might not be seeing anything from your position. Having a wind checker is great, but with the toilet paper you can see it for a lot longer to determine exactly where the wind is carrying your scent.

Again, the tree method isn't for the main divide. However, it does have its place here in NZ and can be very effective. The scouting and finer details can help with hunting in general. For example, finding deer beds got a lot easier once I started to know exactly what a deer liked to sleep on or around. This information can pay off at ground level while out stalking too.

**Give it a go, you might just like it.**



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I had carefully closed the gap from 150 to 25 yards of this mature sika stag while he was bedded. Patiently waiting an hour and a half, the stag eventually stood up to check a distant roar and in an instant was standing just seven yards away from me. After a heart pumping three-minute stare down, the stag moved off and out of sight. Unfortunately the stag never gave me an opportunity to draw my bow before it moved away. While a shot hadn't been fired it had truly been a memorable experience.

Carol Watson, Owner, Advanced Archery NZ

PC: Mitchell Ewart

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# HUNT LIGHTER

PART THREE

## GET READY

WRITTEN BY ~ GREIG CAIGOU

The goal is to get all your gear into a smaller pack, making you lighter and more nimble

**Next time you go for a weekend hunt in the mountains consider packing a 3kg bag of sugar!**

**That's right . . . tote that around for the whole of your trip, keeping it in your pack. Don't use it. Carry it for the whole trip, even during the pack-out with venison or trophy.**

**Why would you do that? Crazy talk!**

What a difference it would make to how much extra energy you'd use up, and how much ground you might have otherwise covered with ease.

But, in effect this is what many hunters are already doing with what they carry and use on trips . . . lugging an unnecessary 3kg. I'm suggesting that by reading this series you will have trimmed at least 3kg off your load and be ready to hunt lighter and more efficiently this summer!

**Hunters need to constantly make decisions about what is unnecessary against what is really needed to be both efficient and safe.** Be wary of adding to your overall weight or bulk . . . and beware of a SUGAR overload from a "Slightly Unnecessary Gear Acquisition Reflex."

In the last issues we've concentrated on packs and shelter in finding strategies to trim down . . . remembering that reducing the weight and 'bulkiness' of what you carry actually means you can move to a smaller pack and thereby further reduce the total weight carried. In this final instalment I want to focus on reducing that bulk

### REDUCING BULK

**The goal is to get the volume of your gear into a smaller pack and by aiming for less volume you have a load that is smaller and closer to your back and your overall centre of gravity.** Otherwise, even small amounts of weight carried away from your body axis will exert leverage on

your movements, creating a burden that requires energy to keep you stabilized.

You know this already! When carrying a pack load of meat you experience how weight and bulk affects your energy, disturbs natural posture, and makes it tricky moving efficiently over backcountry terrain.

**On the other hand, when you are more nimble, you will optimize energy, and your available fitness allows you to do more, or have more "in the tank" for when really needed**

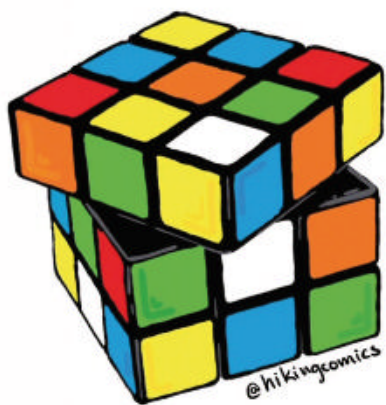
- like moving quickly up a spur, along the backside of a ridgeline and then around a basin and down to a big stag! Opting for a smaller/lighter pack is such a critical place to start as this forces you to pivot to another perspective . . . the perspective of having less room to play with! By downsizing your pack, you have to be more intentional on what earns some real estate inside. Next up, challenge yourself about the choices you're making when you purchase or pack your hunting gear; "how is this contributing toward decreasing the overall bulk of the load and my energy expenditure?"





Imagine your typical hunting gear packed as you see here. Because of the variety of shapes there are multiple small air spaces between each item, such as the tight balls of cram bags, hard stoves or round billy. Free-floating loose items can act more like a liquid, filling these spaces in your pack, instead of them bulging and pressing against the walls. Your goal is to reduce overall volume taken up inside the pack.

WHAT GOES ON IN MY HEAD  
WHEN I PACK MY BACKPACK:



## SOME STRATEGIES

**Here's a couple more strategies for hunting lighter – the first considers the type of gear you carry, and the second, how you stow it.**

Consider clothing. Layering is a concept we're now all familiar with – using thin layers to regulate your warmth. (When walking you warm up so you shed a layer; when you stop you put it back on. When there's a cool breeze you put on a wind shell or your rain jacket.)

Sweat or water on your body robs your body warmth. To stay warm requires great insulating layers, but to stay dry requires a great base layer. Fit is important, it needs to fit your body closely to maximize the opportunity to wick moisture off your body.

If you go with one main thicker layer, you are committing to sweating on hill climbs, cooling down when glassing and you will stay chilled. A lightweight layer is thinner, closest fitting, fastest wicking, fastest drying and gives you more options for regulating heat and - here's the thing – several light layers will cram into less overall volume.

What I wear is a thin layer for moving and add an insulation layer when glassing, having a meal break or in camp. On the tops I'll add a thin windshield (windshirt) layer if there's a cool wind.

I wear a synthetic base layer . . . it is proven faster wicking and faster drying than wool/poly blends . . . but it is stinkier! But that doesn't matter as it's just me on the hill (my wife is at home!) And you should forget any argument that an animal is gonna wind you more easily in synthetics by sending a great cloud of stench around the hill on the breeze. Any human odor on the breeze will be smelt. Simply put . . . to a wild animal we stink anyway!

Some other items of gear you might investigate for reducing volume include pots and cookers.

For example, a tiny alcohol stove is way less bulkier than an integrated system such as a Jetboil. Granted, such stoves are insanely efficient and blisteringly quick . . . but they are bulky. For a long weekend hunt a simple Meths stove will suffice and can be made from part of a beer can. These are very compact and work. If you're new into hunting, consider such a can cooker for such hunts, costing nothing.

For even less bulk you could use solid fuel tabs, or you could even go stove-less, as

there are plenty of non-cook food options out there.

As always . . . it's about asking yourself the question . . . ***"how can I work towards less volume?"*** Everything you need, and nothing you don't!

Maybe go a little more primitive with your weekend hunts. Leave the electronics behind. Certainly leave your pillow behind – that's SUGAR. Find another way! Trap air in your dry bag. Inflate one of your Ziploc bags and wrap it in your extra clothes!

Even dehy food pouches can contribute volume if you compare those which have a loose mix versus the hard vacuum sealed lumps of some brands, which do not compact together well, taking more space. Yes, perhaps a little ridiculous . . . but opt for the lowest volume choices.

## HOW TO PACK FOR LESS OVERALL VOLUME

**Rule: Avoid creating spaces . . . and fill the voids.**

Consider how you pack your tarp, tent fly, or even your sleeping bag.

When packing for a trip I tend to use my tarp as a filler to use up all the little spaces. At the start of a trip that happens inside my pack liner but on subsequent days I'm likely packing up before first light





I use a sleeping bag that just has down on the top. You could opt for a quilt, which many ultralighters and a growing number of hunters use to decrease bulk.



This view into my pack liner shows a pliable insulation layer crammed around my two food modules which stow together very efficiently (made from plastic milk containers)



Weighing just 50gm this is an example of a very light/compact windproof layer that can be added when out on the tops. Many light layers allow for easier regulation of heat than bulkier items and pack into less overall volume



Solid fuel tabs are an option for heating water if wanting to decrease volume of your stove system. One tablet heats sufficient water for a 2-person dehy meal

so after shaking off any condensation I slip my tarp down on the outside of the pack liner and cram it into all the spaces. Packing items into little hard balls inside cram bags just creates solid shapes that don't flux together well to minimize volume.

With your sleeping bag you could 'stuff the fluff' using your pack and liner as the cram bag. Treating your sleeping bag or quilt in this way will depend on your confidence in keeping this important item dry. I use my synthetic insulation layer in the same way. Stuff sacks should be reserved for essentials, like, emergency clothes and electronics . . . and your sleeping bag when the weather is bad.

Finally, here are a few ways I manage myself with a lightweight approach to my hunting.

## REHYDRATION

**Remember that your water supply is also one of the heavier items you might carry - one litre weighs one kilogram.** That makes quite a difference, so you can achieve a major gain by some simple adjustments to how you

stay hydrated. Perhaps its time to rethink your hydration bladder . . . drinking from a bladder when walking up a track crisscrossing a stream is not an ultralight way of thinking!

I get super hydrated before a trip and I drink as much as I can when at sources of water along the way, such as streams, tarns or puddles!

When my approach is via a spur to the open tops I'll drink heaps before the climb but usually don't haul water up the hill. Once on the tops I'll give the surrounding area a good glassing before angling towards the main ridge via a basin or area where there might be a high level tarn or trickle. Again I'll have a decent rehydrate and this is when I will finally fill my Platy if I plan to stay high on the main ridge.

In my experience in NZ you can still travel main ridges for days and get away with not carrying water, as its generally not far to descend to a source. I appreciate some people just like knowing they have water, but with a little research and good management you can move adequately between water sources without carrying that extra weight.

## EXPERIMENTING WITH YOUR CLOTHING

**Getting into hunting country I'm often climbing for the tops in the rain on the tail of a storm, with good weather prospects ahead.** I'll climb

up through the wet bush with minimal clothing . . . and I've experimented a lot with not wearing my rain jacket! Generally, I'm in my undies and a light top. Depending on the situation, the more physical work of climbing up through the bush keeps me warm. I save my rainjacket for keeping me dry once I've got to a situation where I'd sweat less or when I'll camp - near the bush edge for example. I change into dry clothes and a dry jacket.

## WHY COULD THIS BE A GOOD OPTION?

**Rain jackets can allow some moisture laden heat to transfer out from inside your rainwear, while keeping the rain from getting in.**

The fact is this transfer of body moisture can't keep up when you're working hard, sweating on a big climb . . . no matter what breathability rating your rainwear



claims! You will get damp and then soaked on the inside of your jacket. Fact. With the approach I mention, there is only one thin layer that gets wet on the climb, and only the outside of my rainwear gets wet around camp, effectively saving the inside of the jacket getting wet . . . which takes longer to dry. **Next day I am in a drier state overall as I get into hunting and glassing.**

One other way I manage what I wear has been to trial what I wear on my feet. The overall weight you haul isn't just in your pack and switching away from heavy boots can be a decent weight saving consideration. Many years ago I switched to trail runners for 2-3 season alpine hunting. The saving of over a kilo on my feet equates to a reduction of approx. 5 kilos off my back - in terms of energy usage. This is not for everyone as your feet are what secure you to the hillside, but these are major gains that some might consider trailing. I'm assisted by using a walking pole which I'm carrying anyway as this doubles for pitching my tarp above the bushline.

If you have a fear of being too cold, or getting good enough sleep, needing major first aid, or telling folks back home know you're OK - whatever you are afraid of - you can tend to overcompensate for by taking more gear. Don't carry your fears in your pack. And watch out for the SUGAR.

A note of caution here though, especially if you are new to alpine hunting in NZ: Please be mindful that I'm not advocating for 'stupid light', leaving out critical gear for the sake of saving some grams. It is important to have a healthy respect for what can happen in the mountains. For example, you should carry a PLB and a first-aid kit . . . despite their weight!

My earliest fears meant I used to carry so much extra clothing that I never wore, just for the comforting thought of having it. You don't need a spare of everything. I learnt I can go lighter and rely on my skills . . . you too can be more intentional about learning your way out of such fears.

Packing light is a skill, and probably develops with time and experience . . . and some mistakes. Experience will teach you how to identify the unnecessary weight—and the gear you simply can not (and should not) do without.

**But to gain that experience you will need to get outside your comfort zone! Give it a go this Autumn.**



You can reduce bulk with a simplified cooking stove for a long weekend hunt. This is my cook system – a DIY can cooker using either Meths or solid fuel tabs, and a self made stand and shield which all packs inside the cup



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## Gallery

### WINNER



1

Ziggy's 223 that he left in his will to his oldest mate Ian Bailey's grandson Luke, and this is the first deer he shot with it



2

Rianna Unka 10yrs on her first small game hunt using her .22 Tikka Tx1 MTR with a Burris 3-9x40 scope

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3

A very proud Charlee MacLean (11) with his first ever deer. He shot it with grandad's Sako 223 at 22m



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Charlie Ford (7) with Ruby the lab  
and a Tikka T3 in 7mm-08

4



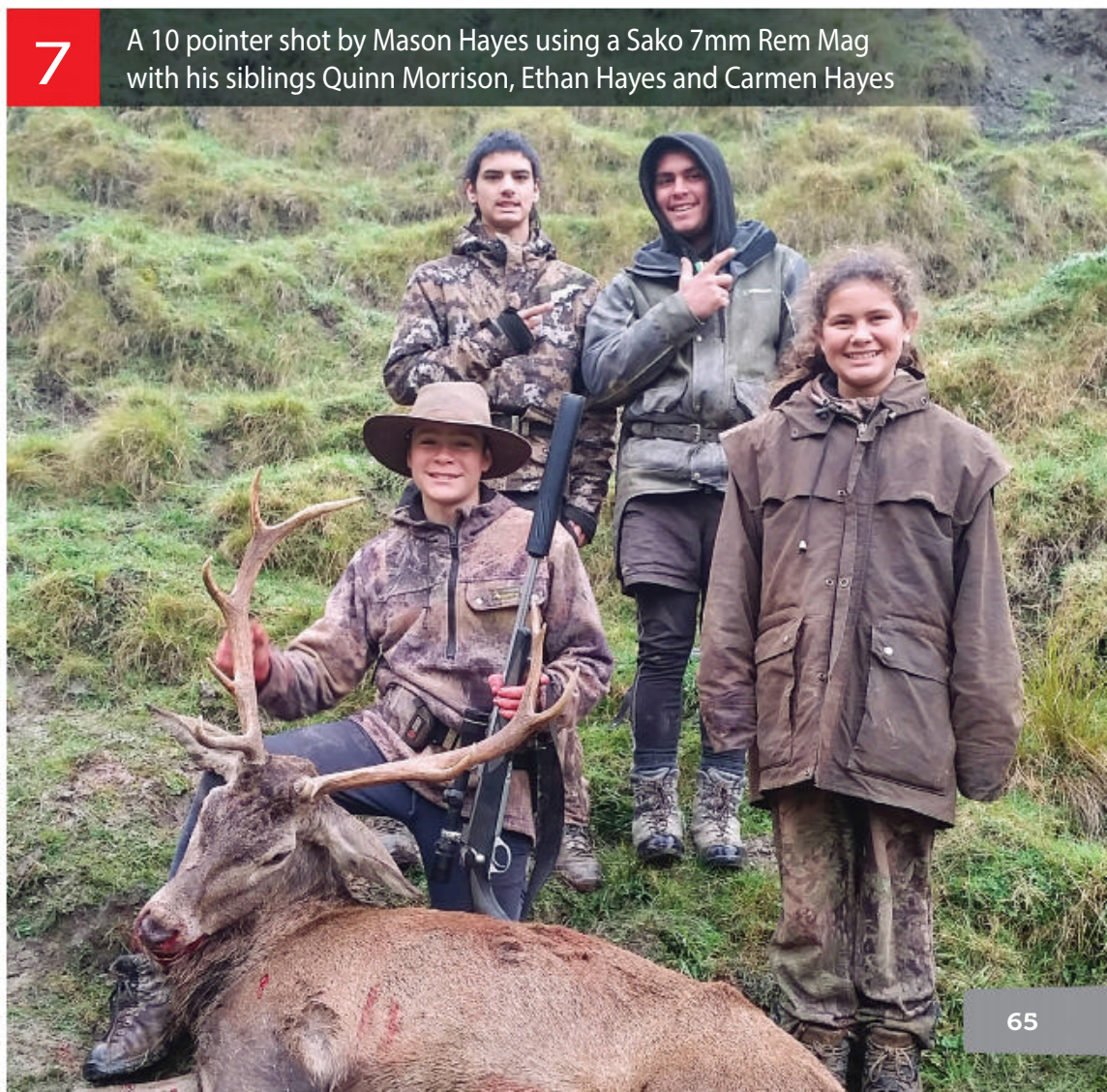
6

Aidan Bennett (13) with two stags for three shots  
on a Marlborough afternoon with a Tikka T3



Jacobus Ayres and daughters Zandri and Kyla  
with a Fallow buck shot using a T3x Tikka in 6.5

5



7

A 10 pointer shot by Mason Hayes using a Sako 7mm Rem Mag  
with his siblings Quinn Morrison, Ethan Hayes and Carmen Hayes



## TAHR BALLOT BLOCKS

# THE JACOBS

WRITTEN BY  
CAM MCKAY | POINTS SOUTH

The distinctive Bannock Brae range that  
boundaries the Jacobs to the south

**Squeezed under the rugged and dramatic Bannock Brae Range, the Makawhio or Jacobs as it's known is home to some of South Westland's finest scrub. And is one of the more Northern ballot blocks in the Hooker/Adams wilderness area**

**River travel can be painfully slow with the bush being strewn with boulders and problems to skirt around, and a network of tahr trails that just always seem to end up in a jungle of vines. But if you have the patience for hunting tahr in the scrub and side creeks, you won't be disappointed.**

It's certainly one of the more popular landing sites in the ballot, so you will need a little luck on your side to draw it, especially in those key weeks. **The landing site is on an obvious flat just down from the last gorge before the head basin, and actually on what was a lake back in the 1950's and has now since filled in.**

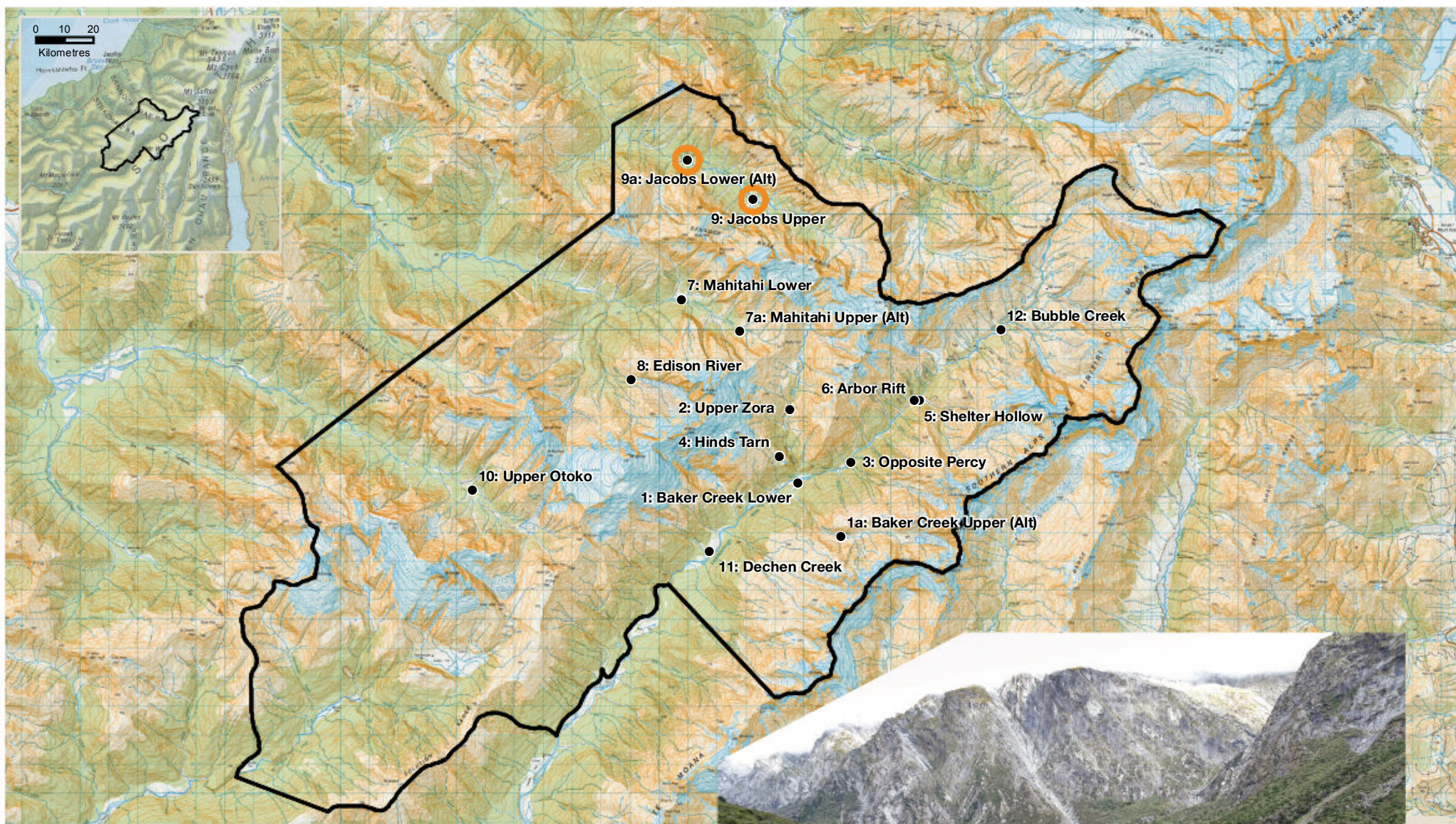
The river right by camp is easily crossed being just over ankle deep,

at least until Westland does what Westland does and dumps a large volume of water in a short time. With the valley being reasonably large and having super steep sides, the river rises and falls rapidly. When I was last in there we had about 140mm of rain which quickly brought the river up to a nasty raging torrent perhaps a couple of meters deep, and the runoff from the



Have a good think about where you put your tent if the forecast is bad





hill behind camp had all the obvious tent sites under about 10-15cm of water. Have a good think about where you put your tent if the forecast is bad, if there's gravel rather than vegetation then that probably means water flows there.

**The flipside to riding out a storm in the Jacobs is the campsite is actually quite low in elevation and relatively sheltered from the west.** And it's a truly impressive site watching all the waterfalls appear and start streaming off the steep faces, and hearing the river shifting good sized boulders downstream.

Tahr are located throughout the valley with good hunting both up and down stream, and if you time the rut right there will be bulls popping up out of the scrub in all the wee side creeks. In recent years I've heard of a few ok bulls being shot in the Jacobs, but nothing truly standout although I'm sure there has been in years gone by. Given the slight overpopulation of tahr in the valley in recent years, this has probably affected horn growth, so this



Looking upriver in the Jacobs

is one valley where you should certainly be taking a couple of young nannies for the pot.

The flight in is spectacular with James often coming up the Karangarua then hopping over the ridge and down into the Jacobs landing site. Usually giving you a bit of a run down on a few likely spots to check out, and no doubt telling you about the big bull that no ones shot yet that comes out of the steep creek behind camp. **Although I'm sure he's been telling that story for a good number of years now, so I'd guess that bull has probably been getting around in the Jacobs for about as long as James has.**



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# SCAMPER TORRENT HUT

WRITTEN BY ~ ANDREW BUGLASS | REMOTEHUTS.CO.NZ

**Scamper Torrent hut is another of the huts we've profiled on the Remote Huts website. It is located in the Waitaha Valley in Westland in the upper Scamper Torrent Basin**

**This is a picturesque and remote setting that can be accessed in a day from the Waitaha roadend by a reasonably fit party. Scamper Torrent tumbles from the basin in a series of waterfalls down into Whirling Water, one of the Waitaha's larger tributaries.**

Scamper Torrent Hut has historically been low-use, although the frequency of visits did increase a little after it was profiled in wilderness articles and on our website in the early 2000's. **The hut received 10 visits in both 2019 and 20 and this seems to be about the average at the moment.**

As far as I know Scamper Torrent was the last of the standard S81 four-bunk designs that the New Zealand Forest Service built

during their tenure. This was in 1971 at the incredible total material cost of around \$1600. Compare this with the massive amounts that are currently spent on the construction of back-country huts. What is also remarkable, or maybe just obvious, is that despite there not being any complex compliance codes or building standards at the time, this simple structure remained completely sound, safe and weatherproof in its alpine setting without

any significant maintenance for the next 50 years. Scamper did differ in one respect from most of its predecessors in having treated pine framing instead of the usual untreated rimu, however the rest of the build was pretty much standard and **its original untreated silver pine piles remain in pretty good shape to this day.**

Scamper was designated as a fully-maintain hut by DOC in a 2004 review. Up until that point it hadn't received any maintenance and nothing of this nature occurred until 2001 when a small roof-fed water tank was installed by a Departmental volunteer party. The tank was paid for by an unknown donor who was concerned about the hut's lack of TLC. Scamper received its first significant maintenance last year when DOC replaced the roof, the old louvre windows, the tie downs, and erected a long-drop

The basin above the hut

Scamper Torrent Hut



toilet. The work done is of a high standard thanks to Nigel and Miquel of DOC Hokitika and the little shack should be good for another 50 years as a result.

**The access track up to Scamper Torrent from the Waitaha Valley has been reliant on volunteer input for some years now to keep it open.** In 2021 some Kaimahi for Nature funding was set aside to allow a Hiking NZ crew to do some maintenance, however this never ended up happening. A bit of work was done at the bottom end by some Permolat folk in October 2021 and while the rest is starting to get a bit overgrown in places, it's still fine to follow. DOC may try and tag some track work on later this year when they go in to do some bridge work in the valley, otherwise we'll get to it at some point.

The track involves a climb up a steep narrow spur from the valley floor to the tussock line. At the top of the climb at point 1125m you are rewarded with great views of the Smyth Range and the coastal plain out to the Tasman Sea. Waratahs lead from here down into Scamper Torren basin where the hut is located. It's an idyllic spot with tussock flats ringed by alpine scrub, crystal clear pools, and



Whio in the Scamper Torrent



deeply slotted side-creeks.

There is relatively easy access from the basin up onto Mt. Durward and the Smyth Range and quite a few of the parties visiting Scamper have done alpine traverses from the upper reaches of the Waitaha. Scamper can also be accessed from the Wanganui valley by way of a couple of old NZFS tops tracks that provide access via Karnbach and Terra Quinn spurs. Both of these routes are very low-use but have been kept open by volunteers. They are not used that often and both have good open tops camping.

Chamois and deer can be encountered

in lowish numbers throughout the catchment. They don't generally get to see a lot of foot hunters as most of the human traffic here is of the tramping variety.

More comprehensive route and hut information can be found at [www.remotehuts.co.nz/scamper-torrent-hut.html](http://www.remotehuts.co.nz/scamper-torrent-hut.html)



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WRITTEN BY ~ TIMOTHY MCLANACHAN

# SOMETHING ABOUT ELK

**This yarn really begins when I was a ten-year-old kid, reading too many hunting stories of early Wapiti hunters in Fiordland. Tales of 50-inch racks and of Wapiti screaming their heads off sowed the seed in my head.**

Fast forward a few years and, after somehow scraping my way through uni (a few too many hunting trips chasing tahr may have something to do with that), I set off for Canada to see if I could crack it as a hunting guide. In my first season I had the privilege of being part of successful Stone sheep, mountain goat, moose, Whitetail and even wolverine hunts, but at the end of that season, even though I had had a blast, I felt a little empty.

Elk (or Wapiti as we call them here in New Zealand) were not in my outfitters area, so I decided to move onto greener pastures and see if I could live that ten-year-old's dream.

Luckily for me I had a few mates doing the same thing and one of them, Bruce, said there was a job vacancy where he was working, and that they had elk. That was to be my job for the second season and this time it was a full guided job... Sikanni River, I was on the way.

In my first season there were no horses, so initially there was the small issue of reacquainting myself with horse riding, which I hadn't

done in a long time. Bruce was my teacher (he knew only slightly more than I did, so you can imagine the shambles that occurred) and after a few days around the lodge the two kiwis were set loose on a two-day ride into camp with six horses each... what could possibly go wrong?

Surprisingly, we made it to the spot that would become home for the next three months without drama. I'll fast forward a bit here and not bore you with the next few weeks but one highlight was when Bruce thought he'd become a real cowboy. He ended up on a bush flight out for a few weeks and a trip to hospital... but that's a story for another time.

After the early season sheep hunts, Bruce and I had a hunter each to guide. A mountain goat for mine





and an elk for Bruce's... elk you say? The ten-year-old in me reappeared and negotiations were had. Luckily for me, Bruce loved guiding mountain goats, so I got myself an elk hunter. However, in typical Timmy fashion I hadn't really thought it through, as very few elk had been seen early season let alone any bulls of decent size. I decided I'd worry about that at a later date.

The bush plane arrived, bringing with it our hunters. Matt was my hunter and he had brought his father-in-law along for the ride. The first day of hunting was a long, fruitless one for us as no elk were seen, but Bruce and his hunter had managed to get a mountain goat so spirits were high around camp. The next day brought rain and little hunting while we stayed pretty close to camp.

In my bunk that night after two days of seeing no elk, I was thinking about what to do next. Then I remembered we had seen some cow elk while scouting for sheep in this one particular spot. It also happened to be the rut, so I wondered if a bull had found those cows... **"we'll go there tomorrow"** I thought to myself, **"if the weather allowed"**.

We woke to average weather but I made the call to get on the horses and make the three-hour ride to my chosen spot...



Horses loaded and ready to go

it wasn't a very pleasant day weather-wise and the temperature was low, so I was thankful for the warmth of the horse!

Three hours later we arrived, and I tied the horses to the closest trees before parking up for a whole day of glassing faces where elk had been seen earlier in the season. After glassing over the country a couple of times, I put my binos down and was starting to think it was going to be a long cold-ass day, and what elk in its right mind is going to be out in this... **"there's one"** said Matt who was facing the opposite direction. My first thought was bullsh\*t but then asked **"bull?"**

**"Not sure"** he said as it had just walked

behind a tree.

I picked up my spotter and put it in the general area, then he walked out... all I saw was six large points shining in the sun. I knew we were going after him (one side must have at least six points in order to make it legal in the area we were hunting). We quickly established a plan, but it was in a tricky spot up on a hill face and, if he went 20 metres either way, he would be gone. To make things worse, the wind was also average. However, the addition of father-in-law played into our hands as he would stay behind and give hand signals to guide us in.

With the plan sorted we began the climb up the hill through the spruce trees. We

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Though I hadn't personally shot the animal, knowing that I was a huge part of the hunter's success was enough, and in some small way that childhood dream of mine was partly realised

lost a bit of gravy along the way as our camp cook was exceptional, but knowing there was a legal bull elk on the hill above kept us going. **We had climbed the hill round from where the elk was in order to get our wind right, so once we thought we were above him, we pushed around to where we hoped to see him.** After about five minutes of glassing we were unable to find him and I was beginning to get a sinking feeling in my gut. I turned my binos round onto our spotter down below, and he was pointing, showing he was still there. My hopes lifted.

*"There he is!"* said Matt

He had just stood up, showing his impressive set of antlers and sat back down again. It was about now that I started to realise how big he really was. We were about 400 yards and Matt was hoping to get only slightly closer. Luckily for us, we were able to sneak down a gut and get to within 300 yards of him. He was still bedded but he was broadside, and all vitals were showing, so it was decided that a shot was available. If he stood up and moved, we would quickly have lost him.

**Matt got himself comfortable... BOOM!!! His 300 win mag barked.**

Usure if I'd heard a hit or not, I told him to reload, and in this time the elk stood up and ran slightly down. That sinking feeling in my stomach began to return. BOOM. Matt fired again and this time it was a clean miss. However, after the second shot, the elk began to sway back and forth before tumbling over into the willows.

**That moment is one I'll never forget and that ten-year-old came out in me.** Matt was just as excited once he realised what he'd done. We sat down for what must have been ten minutes, just taking everything in before making our way over to the beast. When we got over to him the sheer size was jaw dropping, not only in his antlers but in his body size. We could barely move him to a good photo position.



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After photos we started the job of getting him ready for the pack out. All meat has to be taken out in Canada and we still had to headskin him for mounting. It was still only 11am so we had plenty of time. It took us nearly five hours to get this all sorted and we loaded the headskin and antlers onto our backs, leaving the meat to be retrieved with horses the following day.

**I had the antlers on my back and it was one of the slowest possible trips down a hillside as they got caught on everything possible.** So, it was a bit of a relief to finally get back to the bottom where Matt's father-in-law was waiting. By this time it was nearly 6pm so we decided to stash the antlers in the tree and collect them with the meat as we still had a three hour horse ride back to camp.

It was a huge relief to make it back to camp as it had been a big shift, and it was then I realised we hadn't had lunch - no wonder I was starving. **With another exceptional feed from our cook, we all hit the sack, totally shattered.**

There was no real hurry to get started the next morning as both hunter's animals were on the ground. One of the other guides, Rob, was also in camp, so he decided to come with us for the pack out.

The three-hour ride back in was rather uneventful, as was loading the horses with all the meat. However, it was another story when it came to loading on the antlers. They were so long that we

couldn't get them to sit where they wouldn't stab the horse. The decision was made to carry the antlers back to camp on our backs. Matt, Rob and I all had turns and we made camp in good time.

**On returning to camp our cook, who had been cooking there for over 50 years, said she had never seen an elk that big come out of this area.** That was when someone went for a tape measure.

Now, coming from New Zealand we talk about that magic 50 inch mark and it was about now that the ten-year-old in me was wondering if he was actually that big ... one side measured 51 and the other 50.5 inches. Though I hadn't personally shot the animal, knowing that I was a huge part of the hunter's success was enough, and in some small way that childhood dream of mine was partly realised.

The following days were spent trying to get a wolf but we were unsuccessful, but that didn't really matter after the success we had had. **It wasn't long before it was time for Matt and his father-in-law to board the bush plane for the flight out.**

Two months later, after the successful season had finished and I came out of the bush, I found out he had measured a 336 SCI. Considering the area we were in, I was ecstatic. Even though guiding this elk had given me so much pleasure



336 SCI and just cracking the magical 50", the best bull the cook had ever seen from the area, and she'd been there 50 years!

and realised the childhood dream, there is still a part of me that would love to get something similar for myself, but in Fiordland. To say that I have chased elk on opposite sides of the world would exceed all hopes. **So, fingers crossed for the next round of ballots..**



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# THE GAC UPDATE

WRITTEN BY ~ TIM GALE | GENERAL MANAGER  
GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL



**NZ Hunter readers and regular followers of the Game Animal Council will be somewhat familiar with the increasing demand for New Zealand hunters to take a more active role in herd management**

**Some, however, will ask, why is this so important now, and what can I individually do about it?**

As game animal populations, and deer numbers in particular, around the country have increased in many places, there is a pressing need for recreational hunters to make an even bigger contribution to management than they have before. This means specifically reducing the number of breeding hinds in our more populous herds to maintain a healthier habitat, a sustainable population and to look after native species.

**The pay-off for us hunters is not only having a better environment to hunt in but also the promise of higher quality animals for the future.** It's simple environmental science – a healthy environment with plenty of food supports healthy animals that grow into bigger and better trophies and better eating animals.

As well as harvesting a greater number of hinds, we also need to exert greater discipline over what stags we shoot. This is particularly important during the roar period and something that I really want to encourage hunters to think about on their upcoming trips.

Fundamentally it is about making sure you are targeting older males (8-years and older) that have already done their breeding and have reached their full potential. This requires knowing the key identifiers to look for when ageing a stag - a filled-out body, low head position and no visible coronets. **These are all pretty standard maturity traits across our more popular deer species.**

It is also really important not to get fixated on the number of antler points a stag has as a very young animal can

still carry a pretty impressive head and those animals, in particular, need to be given the opportunity to become something special as well as pass on their genes to the next generation.

I find it both amusing and frustrating to hear from hunters that all they are able to shoot in their local area are spikers and immature males as there aren't any big mature stags around. **Well, mature stags don't just magically drop out of the sky, they need years to grow and age.** If we ultimately want the thrill of chasing trophy-class animals, we need to be judicious about the choices we make when presented with an animal down our sights and disciplined enough to leave younger males behind. This combined with actively harvesting more breeding-age hinds will lead to good herd outcomes in the future.

For those that doubt how effective these simple practices can be in improving a herd I invite you to have a look at the progress made by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation in this area. Not only are Wapiti hunters obligated to leave immature bulls but a lot of hunter-led investment is put into managing herd quality and overall numbers. On average 1000 Wapiti cows, Red deer and hybrids are removed by way of management operations and very steadily the herd is increasing in quality and better and bigger bulls are being encountered.

**The Central North Island Sika Foundation is also making strides with regards to hunter-led management and currently runs initiatives and competitions actively promoting the harvest of hinds amongst its membership.**

While our hunting foundations and clubs are leading the way, the reality is that every hunter must play their part in order for hunter-led management to succeed. The simple fact is that if we don't, the opportunity for progressively managing deer for both their impacts and their benefits will be taken away from us and more blunt control-based policies will be implemented across the country.

The Game Animal Council is working extremely hard with our hunting-sector partners, the Department of Conservation and the Minister of Conservation to make



sure the best outcomes are achieved for both hunting and conservation with regards to deer management. We firmly believe that New Zealand has the opportunity to have the best of both worlds – thriving ecosystems where native species flourish as well as high-quality, low-density game animal herds that produce world class hunting. The two things go hand-in-hand, but it is very much up to us as hunters to help make it happen.

For more information on good game animal management practices and why they are important to the development of healthy herds, visit the Looking

After Our Game Animals section on the GAC website. I **would also encourage hunters to visit both the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and Sika Foundation's websites to learn more about their management rationales.**



Jordan Kappelly

Judging the maturity of stags while bush hunting can be tricky but key indicators to look for are a filled-out body, low head position and no coronets. This stag has not yet reached maturity



Matt Winter

This stag however shows more signs of nearing maturity

*The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation responsible for the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.*



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### Gus Hodgen

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"Gus Hodgen: My first stag, shot with my Dad's Tikka 270, on a hunt with my friend and my Dad"



### Bradley Bartrum

"As the sun began to show, so did the tahr. Laying eyes on half a dozen young bulls, none were really standing out. Hopes of finding that big bull were starting to fade when all of a sudden some scrub in the bush 50 metres below started to shake. I honestly couldn't believe my eyes. Watching him through the glass, trying to count his age rings, this is what I had dreamt of. A nicely placed shot through the neck, and there he lay – my 13 3/4" bull tahr, aging between 8.5 and 9 years old"



### Matt Collier

"There was a mob of about 15 Arapawa sheep with 5 or 6 rams that had been seen a few times recently. A nice Arapawa ram was up there on my bucket list and I didn't think I would be getting to that any time soon. After an unsuccessful early morning hunt for deer, we went out the other end of the block around midday and spotted the sheep on the scrub edge of some clear land. They saw us just as quick and looked like they could move off so we stalked along a dry river bank and got within 150yds to be able to get this guy in the sights. "

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# BENELLI LUPO *IN 308* WRITTEN BY ~ GREG DULEY

## Benelli's new entry into the bolt action rifle market – the Lupo in 308

Benelli is well known for making the best inertia operated semi auto shotguns in the world, and their very popular Super Black Eagle is the best waterfowl gun available with this type of operating system. They also made a semi auto rifle a few years ago called the Argo, of which the R1 is the latest iteration. The new Lupo (Italian for wolf) is their first foray into the most common bolt action rifle field, which has traditionally been the staple of their sister companies Sako and Tikka.

### ABOUT THE RIFLE

**The Lupo is mix of fairly standard designs and new features.** The action itself is fairly typical full diameter 3-lug one-piece bolt with a 60 degree lift, and a rigid minimal cut-out cylindrical receiver type with the usual barrel screwed in the front construction. But instead of bedding into the "stock" as is most common, the receiver sits in an alloy chassis or AR15 style "lower" with integral trigger guard, and the plastic forend and butt stock bolt

on at each end. The chunky recoil lug is part of the "lower" and fits into a slot in the underside of the receiver Tikka style. The front action screw is in the usual place, but the rear screw comes down from the top just behind the trigger. By bolting the butt stock to the "lower", Benelli have been able to incorporate the shotgun style of shims and spacers between the lower and the butt stock to allow for different drop, cast and trigger reach preferences. They

also have three different height padded comb inserts to provide a good cheek weld with different scope mounting heights. The butt pad incorporates a recoil reducing system called Progressive Comfort taken from their shotgun designs that allows for different stock lengths too. The unique looking bolt handle is bent sharply outwards as it emerges from



The sharply bent bolt handle on the Lupo will clear even the lowest mounted scope



the stock, and clears even a low mounted scope by a mile. Incorporating a 3 lever mechanism rather than the standard 2 lever, the trigger is adjustable from 2.2 to 4.4 pounds, although as received the Lupo broke at an even better 30ozs/1.8lbs and could go even lower. The trigger lever sits higher than usual in relation to your pistol grip hand, which some say takes a bit of getting used to, but I can't say I even noticed it until I had a closer look. I found it perfectly comfortable to use.

The safety is a tang style that locks the bolt too, but depressing a little lever just behind the bolt handle allows you to cycle the bolt with the safety on which is always a good idea.

Benelli have a proprietary stress relieving Cryogenic freezing process they use on all their shotgun barrels, and so logically they incorporate it in their rifle barrels too. All external metal surfaces have Benelli's proprietary BE.S.T metal treatment that has a 25 year no corrosion warranty. The 308 came with a free floated 22 inch chromoly barrel measuring .680" at the muzzle, and threaded 5/8"x24 UNF. This is quite a chunky barrel on a sporter, but helps with Benelli's under-MOA accuracy guarantee. Future shipments will have a 20 inch barrel Beretta tell me, and so will be a few ounces lighter. The fore and butt stocks have well placed, moulded in, swing swivel attachment points, and



Bailey and hind with the Lupo



The 5 round detachable double stack plastic magazine



Multiple shim options between butt stock and lower receiver to customise fit



The unique high and angled position of the trigger in relation to your pistol grip hand



The barreled receiver bolts into an alloy lower receiver with integral recoil lug that fits a slot in the receiver bottom

The Lupo's unique bolt handle angle



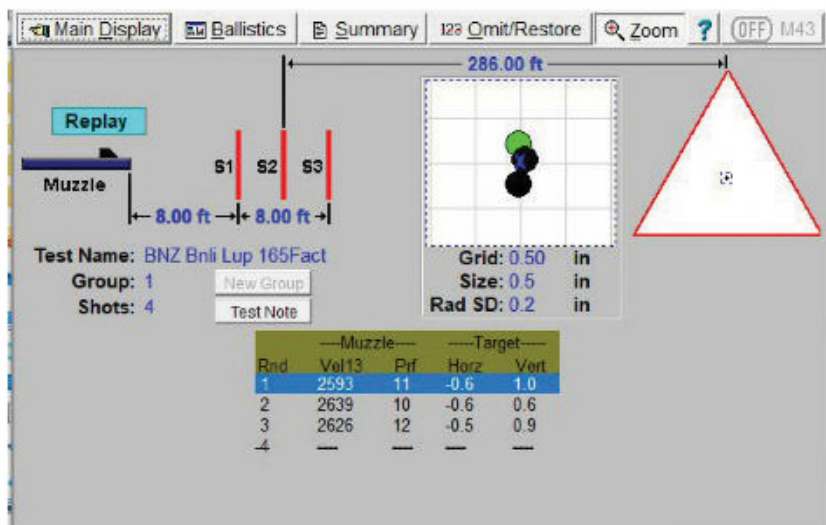
**LUPO**







|                          | Muzzle Velocity | Average Group Size | Comments                                                                               |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SAKO 165GN GAMEHEADPRO   | 2625fps         | .5"                | A good hunting load                                                                    |
| SAKO 175GN TRG PRECISION | 2535fps         | .6"                | Scenars are superb target bullets but won't open reliably at this velocity for hunting |

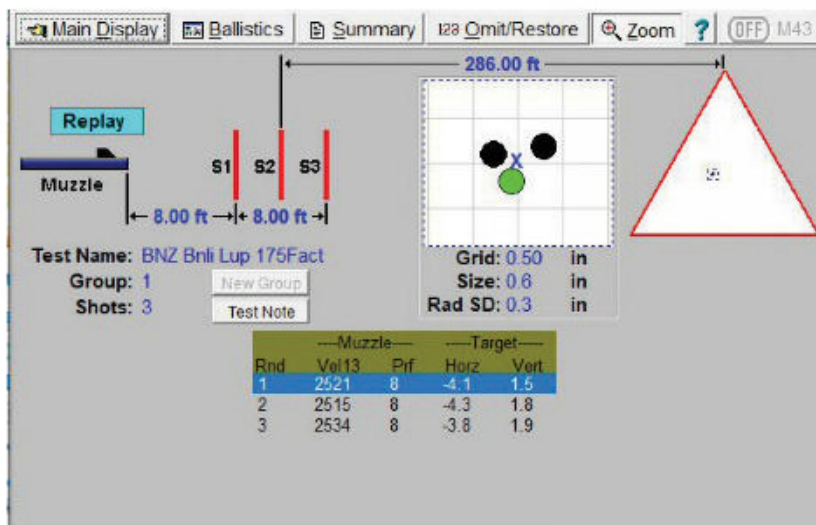


#### LEFT

Sako GameHead Pro 165gn

#### RIGHT

Sako TRG Precision 175gn



also a swivel stud in the correct place for a bipod. The racy looking detachable double stack plastic magazine holds 5 rounds in standard calibres and 4 in 300 Win mag. Weighing in at 7 pounds for the bare rifle, the Lupo is a medium weight hunting rifle, and its chromoly bore will need to be looked after in wet NZ bush conditions.

## IN THE HAND

**The Lupo arrived with a Burris Signature 3-15x44 scope on it in Burris Signature zee rings to fit the two little picatinny bases the rifle comes with.** My first impressions? A unique looking rifle that will appeal to those liking the NeoGothic style that seem to typify some European rifle designs. It won't be everyone's cup of tea, but to me pretty is as pretty does, so I was interested to see how it shot! After a good clean and bore polish, I shot the

rifle with Sako factory ammunition – the GameHead Pro loaded with the Sierra 165gn Game Changer, and the TRG Precision with the Lapua 175gn Scenar. The Lupo loved the GameHead Pro, easily averaging half MOA. Most rifles I've tried this in have loved it. The TGR averaged under .75 MOA, so both easily made the accuracy guarantee. Zeroed at 200 yards, I calibrated the Burris' adjustments to ensure I had the correct inputs into Applied Ballistics to ensure my "come ups" were correct. The GameChangers at 2625fps aren't that flat shooting so your range and elevation corrections need to be pretty good beyond 250 yards. The Burris proved to move 9.75 inches per 40 clicks at 100yds, which is coincidentally exactly what the Swarovski Z5's move. This is not quite "Inches per Hundred Yards" (IPHY) and required a correction factor of 1.025 in Applied Ballistics, but few scopes move what they claim they do so it always pays to calibrate them. The

Burris has very useful low profile pop up turrets with a zero stop on the elevation adjustment. It also has a side focus and a useful ballistic type illuminated reticle and weighs 20 ounces, and so ergonomically is a quite useful all-round hunting scope. As it turned out, our great mate Ziggy's oldest friend Ian Bailey managed to take a fat Sika hind at 275yds with a high shoulder hold on a pre-Christmas meat gathering mission so there wasn't much dialling/hold over to do!

## IMPRESSIONS

**The Lupo certainly shot well, and in 300 Win Mag chambering would possibly justify its weight as a hunting rifle more than the available standard chamberings of 243, 270, 6.5 Creedmoor, 308 and 30-06 which could have a lighter contour barrel and therefore rifle weight in my opinion.** Then again, if you like an all up rifle weight of around 8.5 pounds depending on the scope you choose then it is certainly easy to shoot accurately with its fully customisable stock dimensions including that most important comb height for a satisfactory cheek weld. It is easy to set it up to point like a well-fitting shotgun which can't be said for most rifles. If this style of rifle suits the way you hunt and also visually appeals to you, then make sure you look it up at your local hunting store. **One thing is for sure, with Benelli quality you certainly won't be disappointed.**



Burris Signature HD 3-15x44

|                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| CALIBRE             | 308 Win              |
| BARREL LENGTH       | 22 inches/56cm       |
| TWIST RATE          | 1 in 11 inches       |
| MUZZLE THREAD       | 5/8"x 24tpi          |
| METAL FINISH        | Gloss blued          |
| STOCK FINISH        | Matte black          |
| MAG. CAPACITY       | 5 rounds             |
| LENGTH OF PULL      | 13.8 to 14.75 inches |
| WEIGHT (BARE RIFLE) | 6.9 pounds/3.14kgs   |
| RRP                 | \$2999               |



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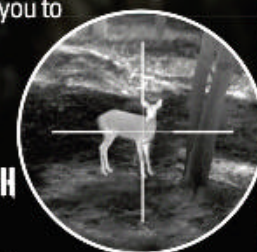
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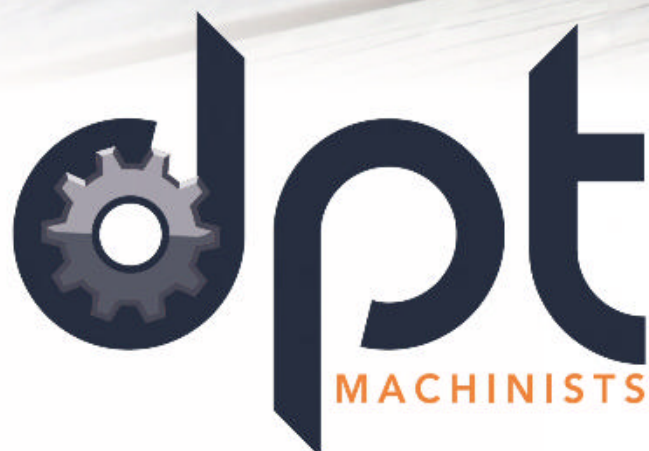
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# HUNTERS ELEMENT

## ATLAS JACKET

WRITTEN BY ~ GREG DULEY

**Back in Issue 63, we reviewed what was then the new hunting coat from Hunters Element – the Odyssey**

**It was a well thought out coat with most things in the right places and by all accounts from the retailers who usually bear the brunt of complaints when a product doesn't live up to its claims, it has stood the test of the intervening four years of general use and abuse well. Fresh out this year we have an upgrade of the Odyssey and also a new alpine version called the Atlas – and we've had the pre-production sample of the latter for review over the Christmas period.**

## WHAT'S DIFFERENT

**So what's different from the coat we reviewed previously?** First up, its made of a totally new fabric - HYDRAFUSE™ DURAWAVE VALIANT™ - which Hunters Element state is "incredibly durable, waterproof, quiet, packable, and insanely breathable". With the all-important specs of a 30,000mm waterproof rating (JIS testing), and 40,000gm/m2/24hr breathability rating, this is a huge step

up from the original Odyssey's 10,000 waterproofing and 10,000 breathability. The new fabric will hold even less water as well as it has a smoother face, but it may be slightly noisier up close in the bush. The Atlas is designed as more of an alpine jacket though, so noise is not a consideration.

## ABOUT THE COAT

**The coat is a long, mid thigh length, and amply long enough to provide**

**a dry seat when you sit down.** The XL was about right for me with sleeves, hem and hood all long enough for my lanky 6 foot 3 and a half inch frame. The waterproof full length YKK front zip is a 2 way so you can unzip it a little from the bottom to enable you to lift your thighs high when climbing hills without restriction. The pockets are correctly positioned to be both above and below your pack's hip belt, and so always accessible. The chest pockets are not the Napoleon slash style, but rather the hand warmer style with the openings closer to the outside. They are large enough for most purposes, and have a zip closure so you don't lose anything. They are high enough to minimise water running down your sleeves into your pockets. The lower pockets are slightly smaller, and also have the zip closure. The hood has the usual leading edge tightener as well as the hat brim style of bungee adjustment, which when tightened means the hood follows as you turn your head and doesn't block your vision. This is really the only adjustment you need. There are large pit zips to help dump heat when sweating it up a hill. Simple Velcro cuffs finish the





The zippered lower pockets are fully accessible under the pack's hipbelt



Large side entry chest pockets above the hip belt



sleeves. My XL weighed about 825gms, which is pretty light for a coat of this size and style - compared with the same size Odyssey's about 1000gms. It was also fairly compact when packed. Lastly, Hunters Element state 27 plastic bottles were recycled in the making of this coat.

## TESTING

**Of course the weather over Christmas wasn't really conducive to testing a raincoat thoroughly, but I wore it enough while in the hills to be impressed by its general fit and well thought out design.**

The fabric did everything I asked of it despite no three day rain storms with a pack on to really put it through its paces. It did seem to be particularly breathable, with what I would consider minimal condensation build up considering I was sweating hard carrying a pack. Even without a raincoat you are

going to get wet with sweat in this situation, but excellent breathability does help. The colour also worked in the alpine environment, while also being suitable for casual wear out of the hills. Hunters Element are one company that doesn't rest on its laurels and seems to be always striving to improve its products for the hunter. **The Atlas is another great expedition coat for the serious alpine hunter, especially if you prefer the longer, mid thigh length style that few of the overseas premium brands make.**



Simple cuffs with a velcro tightener



Pit zips



The hood had the usual front edge tightener as well as the far more useful hat brim version seen here

# SPECIFICATIONS

- » 30,000mm minimum, waterproof rating.
- » 40,000gm/m2/24hr breathability rating.
- » Weight Sz M: 750 grams.
- » HYDRAFUSE™ DURAWEAWE VALIANT™ fabric - incredibly durable, waterproof, quiet, packable, and insanely breathable.
- » 27 plastic bottles are recycled in the making of this fabric, thus saved from ending up in landfill.
- » Premium water-resistant YKK® Aquaguard™ zips.
- » PFC free durable water repellent.
- » Two streamlined chest pockets with ample room for big binos or protection for hands in icy wind. Positioned high so water doesn't run down your forearms and into the pockets and is accessible while wearing a pack.
- » Two streamlined lower pockets to stash extra gear.
- » Fully adjustable TunnelTECH™ hood with a stiff yet flexible peak, ergonomic shape, plenty of peripheral vision and Cohesive™ cord locks.
- » Adjustable cuffs and waist cord to lockout draft and lock in core warmth.
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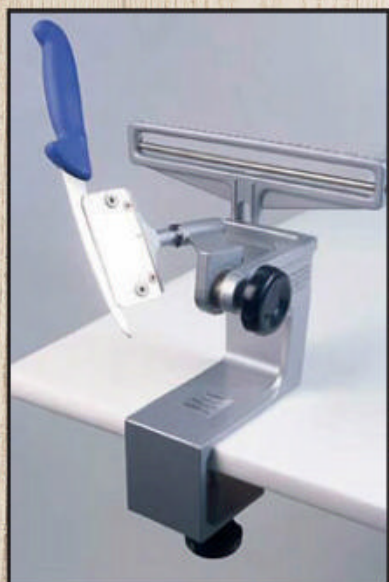


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- 1 x Sicut 4Pc Canvas Knife Wrap with Clear PVC



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# GETTING THE BEST *OUT OF YOUR* LAYOUT BLIND

WRITTEN BY ~ COREY CARSTON

*PART TWO*

A layout blind in action

**If you read the first part of this article about layout blinds in the last issue, you would have realised how much time I spend hunting with them and how much I enjoy doing so**

**Layout blinds have opened up a huge variety of places and opportunities to hunt, where previously it would be have been too difficult or less successful.**

The beauty of layouts is the ability to get on the "X" when hunting and, as a result of the low profile, to easily blend into the environment. Shooting can be restrictive as you are sitting on your bum and have a smaller arc of gun swing compared to standing but a good blind placement and decoy setup will overcome these restrictions and you will end up with some absolutely insane in-your-face shots. I've had geese walk within two feet of me with no clue I was there, and once had a mallard land on my feet. **One time a mate stuck his hand out of a zippered flag slot and tried to grab a goose's legs.** This lead to a roar of laughter from the hidden hunters and one very bemused goose.

Previously, we've discussed what blinds to use, grassing or covering them, mudding or painting them to make them blend in with the environment, and this time I

will cover tips and tactics that I use when shooting from them. Hopefully, this information will help new hunters and seasoned pros alike.

## ***SAFETY***

**Safety is an important consideration when hunting out of a blind and in a group.** In a blind your guns are always pointing forward, propped on the gun rest bar in front of your feet. If you have to leave the blind to move a decoy or pick up a downed bird the guns are pointing directly at you, which can be rather disconcerting.

Our strategy to keep safe is that if one person is out of the blind the others open up their doors and hold their guns up above their heads. If we are all out, the guns are either unloaded, or we place

them facing back over the head rest, pointing away from us. We've also started using an action plug produced by a keen hunter with a 3D printer. You open the breach and take the shell out of the chamber, then close to bolt with the plug inside. **You can instantly see the gun is safe due to its colour.**

We have our blinds close together. One of our reasons is that the arc of fire to the side is reduced. This limits how far a hunter can shoot towards their buddy next door making things much safer.

We keep the toes of the blinds inline so no one is ahead of another shooter. Not only is this far safer but it reduces the risk of the hunters beside you getting muzzle blasted. I've often seen photos and diagrams of decoy spreads with the blinds placed in dangerous positions ahead of other hunters. This is under the guise of maximising killing opportunities. These kind of set ups are often used by goose hunters needing to take as many geese as possible. I rather have a few geese on the ground but be safe and reduce the risk of ringing ears.

**Lastly, consider how you position your gun.** I've seen hunters get their guns caught up as they're coming up to shoot. Often, they get caught in the vegetation covering the blinds and sometimes even in the stubble straps.





The closest decoy is pretty much at the foot of my blind. This will show how close the blinds are and also how close we normally decoy geese to. None of this 40 meters nonsense



Parries over the decoys. We had four well covered blinds less than 20 meters away and the sun at our backs and they never saw a thing

You can avoid this is by doing a few dummy runs and simply simulate firing at a bird before you load your gun.

**This is good practise, and you may find that there is grass restricting the opening of the doors which can be removed before the serious business of birds arriving.**

Slings on guns can be great if you're carrying them but, once in a blind, they're a major snag hazard. I once watched a hunter get his sling caught as some low flying ducks came in. The result was two severely pelleted full-bodied decoys and two very upset hunters.

When we set up we place any left hand shooters on the right hand side and any right handed shooters on the left. This covers any and all angles that the birds may fly. New or less experienced hunters go in the middle.

If a mob decoys into the middle, hunting starts in the middle of the mob and works outwards. The left and right positioned hunters can cover the flanks and will shoot any birds on their side. **Having the blinds close together maximises the harvest and keeps field of fire from overlapping.** The hunters are told beforehand where their field of fire is. I've seen hunts unfold where it was a free for all. This often results in a lot of very educated birds and the odd one

that end up being severely pelleted.

Maximising the harvest is especially important with geese. As we all should know, hunters are the sole significant predator of geese in New Zealand and with populations increasing we really need to be killing as many as we possibly can or there could be a repeat of the culls that have already happened in some areas. **With certain groups claiming geese are having a major impact on grazing and waterways**

Touch down



**we are going to have to do our best and keep numbers in check.**

An important part of layout hunting when you're in a group is having a pit boss to call the shots. This may be the





We hunted a small pond and placed both land and water decoys at our feet. Most of the ducks we shot were less than 10 meters away. This was just before the pack up



Kiera chills beside a very well covered blind. There were massive rows of straw that had yet to be baled in this paddock. We set up in a row and all but disappeared

person doing the majority of the calling or the most experienced waterfowler. Group layout blind hunting can easily be ruined by a rogue hunter that “jumps” before the shot is called. Ducks and geese can move very quickly when they want to and with a wind they can nearly double their speed, **so someone getting too keen can easily make the birds flare, resulting in a smaller harvest and less than ideal shots for their fellow hunters.**

Another benefit of having the blinds close together is that it facilitates good

communication. Often there can be a ‘go-no-wait’ scenario where birds look as if they are going to set up well to decoy only to get the jitters or be spooked by a gun shot or a hawk flying by. Birds can over commit and you may end up with a split mob where some land and you’re waiting on a flying mob to decoy. **I’ve also seen them blown off course when hunting in really big winds.** If you’re spaced out and can’t communicate effectively no one knows what’s going on. This leads to a raft of missed opportunities and mistakes. The only down-side with

being so close together is the ribbing you get if you’re unlucky enough to miss a sitter... hearing protection is then advised.

With the blinds together we often keep extra vegetation between the blinds of the same material as what is covering the blinds. This makes them look like one big clump of grass or a row of straw instead of multiple mounds. We store our excess gear under it and will hide ducks and geese there as well.

With shot geese we’ll often place them throughout the decoy spread as the hunt progresses. When numbers build up, we try to move as many dead birds away into the shade to cool down as they can clutter up the spread, making it look too tight. When they’re arriving thick and fast it isn’t always possible and being able to stash a few quickly out of sight pays dividends. Empty shells lying around need to be hidden also as they can spook waterfowl.

## SHADOWS

**Shadows cast by the blinds at some points of the day can be a major headache.** Positioning yourself around the sun can alleviate this, but sometimes it’s unavoidable. Spreading extra grass or straw around can help break it up, and placing decoys around the blind while you are goose hunting can help as well. Sometimes we’ve had to move numerous times during an all-day hunt to eliminate or minimise shadows. Even a humble patch of thistles can break up the blind’s profile. This is why I prefer the flatter, lower, wider style of blind as they cast a lesser shadow. Digging a shallow hole for the blind will help. Keep the sods of dirt to replace them when the hunt is over and place them resting on the sides of the blinds. This will minimise shadow, use natural cover and better hide the blind.

Keeping low in the blind is essential. Newer layout blind hunters tend to push back the face flaps so they can see what’s going on more clearly. Waterfowl can spot a white face from miles away. We’ve often had birds just about to land when all of a sudden, they spook and head for the hills. Investigations have revealed a smiling head sticking up over top of the blinds.

## BLIND ANGLES AND POSITIONING

**I’ve left this part to last as this is probably the most important issue we’ll cover over this mini-series. Generally speaking, I position my**



blinds directly up-wind of my decoys, with whatever wind there is over my shoulder. **As we all should know, ducks and geese like to land into the wind, so I take full advantage.** There are always ones that will land against or side onto the wind but most will land into it, especially if it's a decent breeze. This has the benefit of giving yourself front-on shots, making for a big target with a bird's vitals, and their wings fully exposed making for the best killing and disabling shots. Ducks and geese will either fly forward after the first shots in a bid to escape or, if there's a strong wind, roll back down-wind. This will give hunters the chance to maximise opportunities.

Often, if the birds are landing to one side, you may want to position yourself on a slight angle. This will increase your arc of fire and can be especially handy when hunting by yourself.

There are times when you won't be able to have the wind directly behind you, due to topography or obstacles such as trees and so on. One particular spot that I hunt regularly has the dairy shed close by, so out of necessity and safety, we often have to set up with the wind in our faces and having the ducks coming over our shoulders. This can lead to a few sneak attacks as often you won't see the ducks until they're right on top of you.

## DISTANCE FROM THE DECOYS

**This isn't a one-size fits-all deal but I'll try guidelines, starting with geese.** When field hunting geese I'll have the blinds positioned upwind at the top of the spread, and most of the decoys spread out downwind of me. Often, I'll have a few straggler decoys at the toes of the blinds and sometimes, depending on the direction of the geese's flight lines, will run a couple beside the flight side. Occasionally, I may have a few behind us as well. I do this if the sun is causing the blinds to cast shadows, and in shorter grass or grain paddocks. This breaks up the blinds' profile making it harder for well-educated geese to spot.

Waterfowl are very good at picking where sounds come from so by being within the spread you can call them all the way up to the kill zone without getting caught out.

**In longer grass we'll often move the blinds back from the spread when we think we can get away with it, but still keeping the kill zone no more than 20 metres away from us.**

Again, this gives us the best opportunities to kill as many as we can and limits the chances of cripples.



Talking crap after a hunt. Here you can clearly see the shadow cast by the blinds. The sun was in our faces so it didn't matter as much as it could have



No cover no worries a layout makes hunts like these easy

You will have to cut the calling back as the geese get closer, especially in calmer conditions, and if they are circling and come past the spread, **stop calling until they are just past, then give it the beans to pull them back.**

When field hunting ducks we normally have the closest decoys 15 to 20 metres away and the furthest ones at around 25 metres. In early morning light or as the sun goes down we'll often pull the blinds a bit closer to the decoys. At those times of the day ducks will often arrive with little warning and being closer can be a huge advantage. If you reposition the blind take care to move the guns safely and try to avoid dragging them, especially in mud or frosty/dewy conditions. Dragging leaves a

trail that can look very unnatural. The best way to move is with two hunters, one at the front and the other at back, and lift the blind into the desired position.

On ponds and banks, if there is enough cover and they look natural, you can often be as close to the decoys as you want.

Watching and listening to how waterfowl react to blinds will often tell you how far or how close to place them.

There's lots of information and some cool videos on hunting out of blinds so check some out as you are sure to learn something new. The best advice I can give you is to get out there and use them as often as possible. **They're no use to you hiding in the garage!**







WRITTEN BY ~ JOEL DUSTIN

# WAGGING SCHOOL

## FOR THE BUCK AND THE STAG

**It was a Wednesday morning when my mate Blake and I were in class**

**Talking about hunting stories and how the Fallow bucks will be close to casting there antlers he came up with the genius idea to go for a look after school for a last chance buck. The bell for lunch rang and I said to Blake, bugger it let's go now!**

He happily agreed so we quickly bailed out of school in separate utes to go home and grab our gear. We soon met back up at my place and he said ***"bring your rifle, it's your turn to shoot"*** so I grabbed my Tikka 243 and we went on our way.

Having hunted this spot a few times previously in the year we knew there were a few Fallow around this one particular spot. So our plan was to head to a lookout point and glass some of that country for the evening. Driving along on the dirt track we noticed animals left right and

centre. Birds everywhere, rabbits and hares as well as goats running around us. We were both amazed at how many animals were out and about this evening. We soon arrived to a spot to park up and walk to our lookout. Three massive billy goats wandered off the track in front of us into the bush as we hopped out of the ute. After about 15 minutes three Red stags walked out into a big clearing about a kilometre away from us. Zooming in on my Canon SX60 I could tell they were nice looking animals with decent antlers.

One stood out over the rest and we both agreed that we would have a crack at them. Having myself shot many Red stags and Blake shot mainly Fallow bucks he was going to be shooting and I would happily be on the camera.

We dropped down off the ridge and started our trek towards the stags. With about two hours of light left we had no rush. After about 30 minutes of walking we were chatting away about where we would shoot from and how the carry out would be. Then out of nowhere Blake said ***"look, right there, he's a shooter"***. About 50 metres in front of us a Fallow buck was looking right at us. As soon as I looked up and saw him he turned around and was running for cover. I loaded up and watched him running waiting for him to stop. All I could see was large curved antlers on top of his head, to make sure he was the one I wanted to shoot, I asked Blake ***"does he have good palms?"***

Blake replied instantly ***"yup, take him!"***. The buck, about to reach safety, stopped right on the bush edge and turned back for one last look. All this was happening in just seconds. Wobbling the crosshairs over his shoulder I squeezed the trigger. BANG, my 243 echoed through the valley. He ran 15metres over a little dip and out of sight.

***"Did you get him?"***

***"I'm not sure, I didn't hear a thud and I had to rush the shot but I felt I was on his shoulder"***

***"I didnt see him pop back out of that dip"*** Blake said.

Well, there was only one way to find out. We waited and talked the whole scenario over for about 5 minutes then decided to go have a look. We walked about 150 metres to where he was standing on the shot. The long green grass showed where he had run but there was no blood to be seen. We followed the pushed down grass. I took a step over the little dip and all I saw was antlers. ***"Wow, I got***



Joel with his big buck, 245<sup>7/8</sup> DS!



him", "DID YOU?!" Blake said excitedly."

I couldn't believe my eyes. A beautiful big middle-aged Fallow buck trophy. A goal of mine! What I had been after all year was lying there in front of me.

**"Holy crap, he's massive"**

Blake stated. I pulled his antlers up out of the ground and we both looked at each other happy as Larry as Blake told me 'He's a mounter mate'. I was shocked and couldn't believe I had just shot this incredible animal. We sat down next to it and took our photos and examined the animal more after a mighty handshake. I then said to Blake. **"Hey those Reds won't have heard that shot"**.

We still had time to get to them before it got too dark. **"Imagine if we shot a Fallow buck and a Red stag in the same hunt"**. So off we went, slowly running out of light we didn't muck around and after 45 minutes we were at the edge of the clearing they were on earlier. **"Slowly"** I whispered.

We snuck up the clearing, nothing! We kept sneaking along and poked our heads over a little rise. Jackpot, antlers!



Blake and his Red stag, a day we'll always remember

**"There, right there Blake"**. He loaded up and snuck forward a little. A nice young 8 and 10 pointer were sleeping about 15 metres in front of us. Then the older stag was there sitting down just behind them. Blake set his crosshairs on the older animal's shoulder and squeezed his 270 off. Boom!

All three stags took off into the bush. Followed by a big crash. **"Good hit Blake. He won't be going far"**. We waited 10 minutes in anticipation to see what Blake had scored himself. We snuck into the bush and had found him straight away, he had gone about 20 metres. **"He's a horse"** said Blake. A big bodied stag he was. Blake counted 12 points on him, time for another handshake! The sun was

starting to go down so we took some photos then I started the butchery. Taking all the meat we could we set off back to our Fallow with headtorches on. After a short slog we made it and with Blake taking the meat from his Red as well as the head I chucked my gutted Fallow over my shoulders and we walked the rest of the way back to the ute. Sweating like pigs we dropped our prizes on the deck of the wagon, followed by another hand shake and two great big smiles.

**"That's how you shoot a trophy Fallow and Red stag in 45 minutes"** Blake laughed. **"This wont be happening again anytime soon"** I followed up. That's a hunt neither of us will ever forget.



Zac and his friend Lukus



Zac and his brother Stan

# THE STALK

WRITTEN BY ~ ZAC WING

The dense bush calls us, as the trees loom over us. Blackberry tears at our Swandri. The scrub is very dense and there are very few openings. The beige, prickly limbs of the gorse bush cover the ridges. Pine needles cloak the compacted surface. There is plenty of deer sign. We stumble across a pig wallow.

The scrub thickens. Big tall cliffs tower us like skyscrapers. We can hear a stream. The machete thrashes at the bushy weeds along the rocky stream.

Suddenly we see a tall thin tree shake. We load a round silently into the chamber of the 308. We creep up to a small waterfall, adrenaline is rushing. We cross the peaceful stream.

He pops out into the open.

I flick on the safety. Within a couple of milliseconds a round slams into the big red stag. We pull out the butchering knives.

Time for venison

Zac Wing, 11  
Korakonui School



## Photo Gallery

The winning photo receives a Hunting & Fishing voucher to the value of \$100. Send all your photos to [editor@nzhunter.co.nz](mailto:editor@nzhunter.co.nz)

*Note: Photos must be of a suitable size for printing - a minimum file size of 1MB is preferred.*



### Grand Winner

Lachlan Stringer (8) with a stag on his first deer hunt. Dad woke me up at 4am, I was so excited. Dad roared the stag out into the open. It was super cool, taken on public land in Canterbury



Marilyn Morey's first Red stag at 65 yrs old after a three hour stalk



Braxton Ashby, his first time shooting turkeys with a Ruger 22

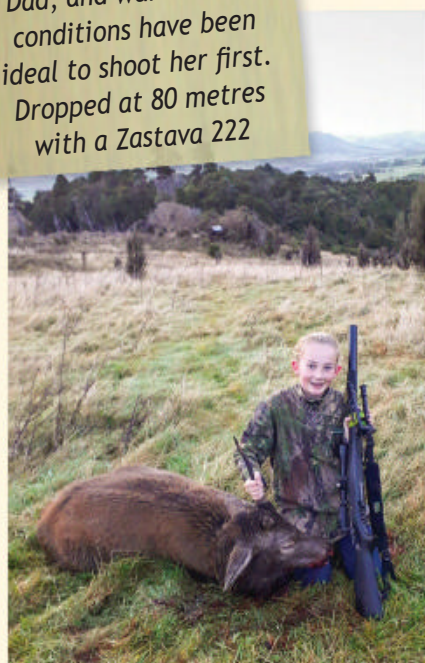


Stevie Southen (3) with her foxy pup Bee trapping possums with Mum. 83 so far and plucks them too



Luke Hurley (5) on his first pig hunting trip. A 154lb boar

Tilly Gregory has seen many hunts with Dad, and waited until conditions have been ideal to shoot her first. Dropped at 80 metres with a Zastava 222



Marshall Jackson (14). The wind was not in our favor and Dad had to set me up with a long shot at 420m. A heavy 8yo, 5x4, 37" long stag, taken in the Central North Island





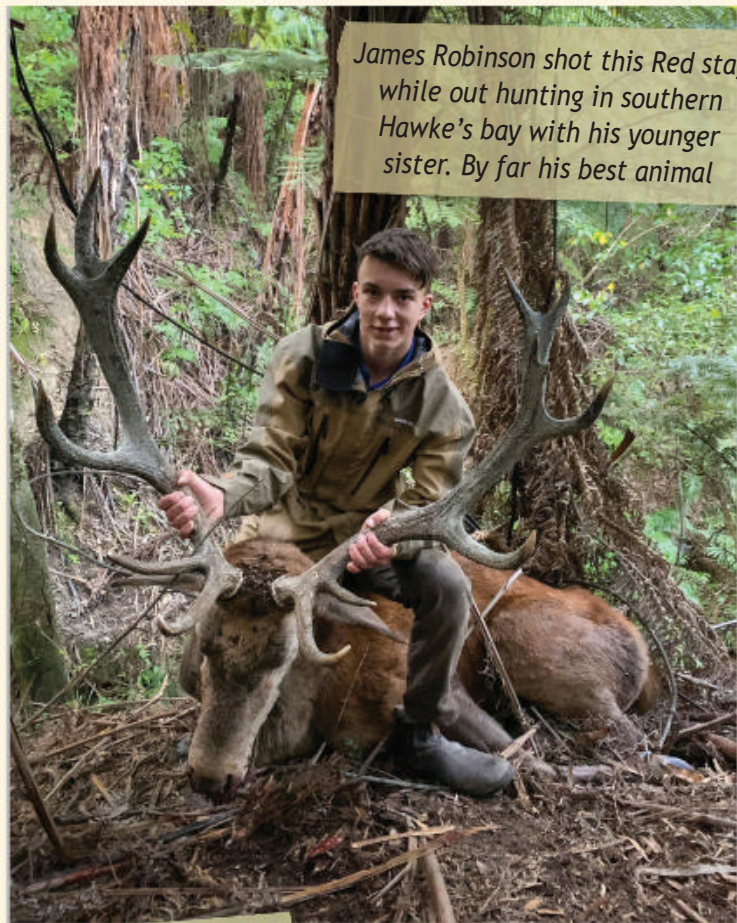


# Hunting & Fishing®

NEW ZEALAND

We've had a bumper crop of images from readers supporting Hunting & Fishing so this time around we have two pages, and two winners!

**Grand Winner**  
Kees Lepelaars(8) shot his first Sika in the Kawekas with a cracking shot at 350 yards



James Robinson shot this Red stag while out hunting in southern Hawke's bay with his younger sister. By far his best animal

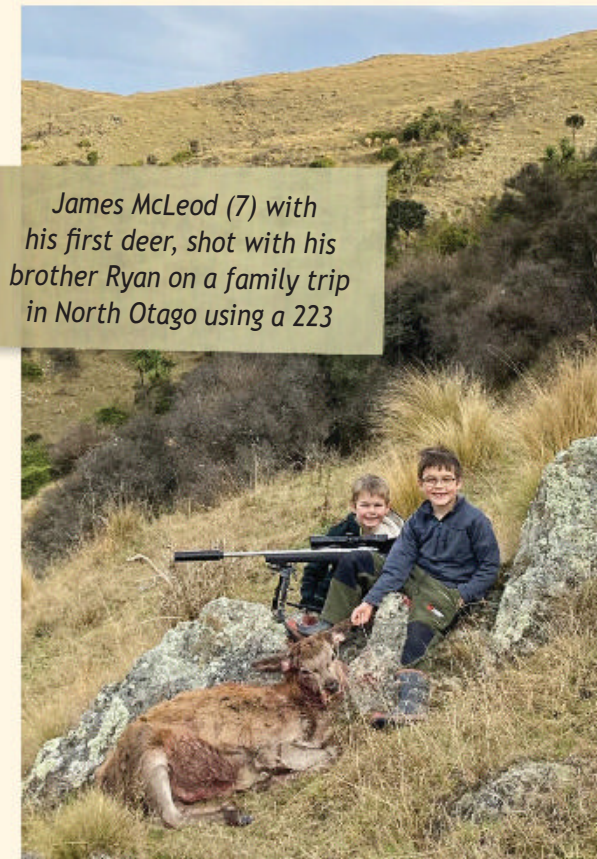
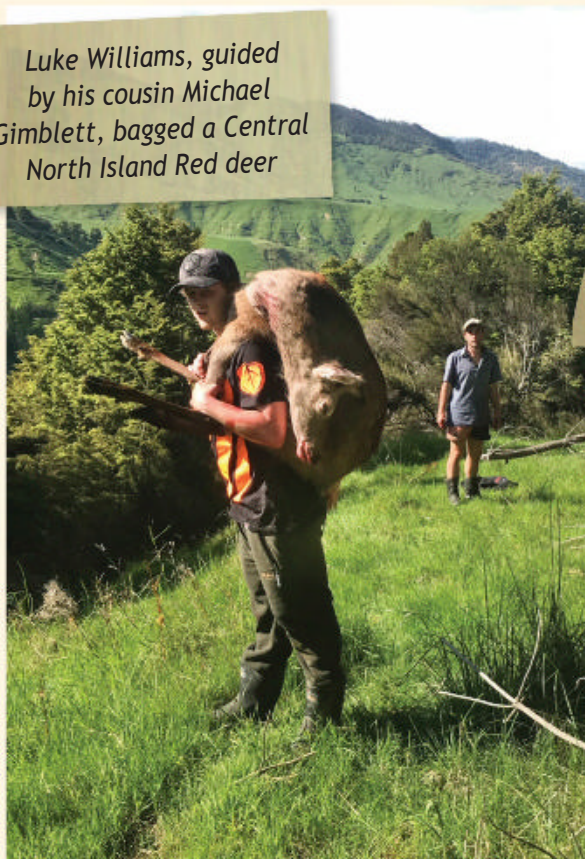


Josh Lendrum shot his first deer during the school holidays on private land at the base of the Ruahines



Daniel Shiles (13) with his first stag. His Uncle, Kevin Gread took him hunting near Whakatane

Luke Williams, guided by his cousin Michael Gimblett, bagged a Central North Island Red deer



James McLeod (7) with his first deer, shot with his brother Ryan on a family trip in North Otago using a 223

Tyler Evans (11) with his first deer. A well placed 200m shot using a 6.5 Creedmoor





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No matter which mode you have the camera set to (Photo/Video or Time-Lapse) you can still access a live video feed.

[ajproductions.co.nz](http://ajproductions.co.nz)

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## MSR Hubba Hubba Series tents

**The revamped MSR Hubba Hubba™ tents shave up to 397g from this already super light series**

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## Sig Sauer Kilo 8K-ABS RF

**Introducing the new KILO8K-ABS 7 x 25 mm laser rangefinding monocular with BDX 2.0**

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# SLOW COOKED SHREDDED VENISON SHANK RAGÙ AND PASTA

— WRITTEN BY ~ RICHARD HINGSTON —

**Some would say that this is the start of the best time of the year for us hunters, and I can't disagree! I love the fine days and the cooler nights, the onset of the roar not far away and duck shooting after that**

There is no better time to try this dish using venison shanks. Big and meaty, rich and tender, and full of flavour, they smell delicious when cooking! This is a classic Italian dish and can be reheated easily enough, if portion packed.

What defines a ragù? A ragù is a hearty, well-seasoned Italian meat sauce and tomato dish that is mainly served with pasta, often with tagliatelle. It's typically made with a soffritto, a mixture of chopped carrot, celery, and onion. Tomatoes are added and cooked with stock and meat. Of course, there are hundreds of versions with slight tweaks or variations depending on the availability of ingredients or each village's interpretation. This is truly an authentic Italian meal and not to be confused with Bolognese, which is also a meat sauce which originates from Bologna.





## RAGU

- 2 large carrots, finely diced
- 2 stalks of celery, finely diced
- 1 large brown onion, finely diced
- 3 Tbsp cooking oil
- 2 Tbsp fresh thyme leaves chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 large venison shanks  
(you may need to trim these down with a hacksaw to make them fit into your cooking vessel!)
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 cups liquid beef stock
- 2 x 400g tins chopped tomatoes, with or without herbs
- 4 Tbsp tomato purée
- Parmesan shavings to serve
- Fresh flat leaf Italian parsley to garnish
- Pasta – tagliatelle or pappardelle



## Method

Heat the oil in a large fry pan, add the carrot, celery, onion, and thyme, and cook for approx. 8 minutes or until the mixture is soft, but not coloured. Add the garlic and cook for a further 2 minutes. Put this mixture into a slow cooker, crock pot or pressure cooker.

Using the same fry pan, add an extra tablespoon of cooking oil and brown the venison shanks on all sides, then add to the cooker.

Add the tomato paste to the same pan and stir, then add in the red wine, beef stock and tomatoes. Bring them to the boil and then add to the vegetables and venison shanks.

Cook for approximately 6 to 8 hours, or until the meat is soft and tender, falling off the bone. The ragù can be pressure cooked or put in the oven at 160° c for approximately 4 to 5 hours, depending on the size of the venison shanks. Mine took 5 hours in the oven.

Retaining the liquid, remove the shanks and allow to cool slightly. Shred the meat, discarding the bones.

Pour the remaining ingredients into a saucepan, bring to boil.

Return the shredded meat to the sauce, season to taste. At this point you may cool the mixture and freeze it in portion packs for use at a later date. You may find that you may need to add a little more stock, or if using the pressure cooker you may need to reduce the liquid to achieve the correct consistency.

Cook the pasta as per instructions. Cooking time will vary according to whether you are using fresh or dried pasta.

Drain, and drizzle with a little EVO (extra virgin olive oil), tossed through so it doesn't stick.

Portion the pasta into four bowls, then add the venison ragù on top. Garnish with shavings of fresh parmesan and chopped flat leaf parsley.

## PASTA DOUGH

4 large servings

It can be rewarding and a fun activity with the kids to make your own pasta.

You will need a pasta machine/roller, now readily available and affordable.

- 375gm strong bread flour
- 6 egg yolks
- 3 whole eggs
- 1 tsp salt

## Method

Blend all ingredients in food processor until the mix resembles large breadcrumbs. Do not over mix. Once a ball is just formed, tip out and knead by hand for a couple of minutes.

Cover and rest in the fridge for a minimum of 3 hours before use.

For ease of handling, work with pieces no bigger than an orange. Roll out on the bench with a rolling pin no wider than your machine, using a dusting of flour to start the process.

Place the dough through the machine and with each pass, click down the rollers until the pasta is about 1 or 2 clicks off the thinnest setting.

Before the pasta has a chance to dry out, cut into shape, drape and allow to dry over a broom stick or rolling pin.

Place a large pot of water to boil, season with plenty of salt. Cook pasta for three minutes, drain and toss in EVO.

You can bundle the soft raw pasta into portions like a bird nest and freeze to cook from frozen at a later date if required.





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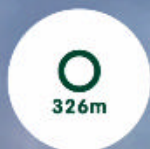
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