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M A G A Z I N E

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TE ARA KI MUA DEER PLAN

What is it? How does it affect us? We hear from Tim Gale, Cam Speedy and DOC's Ben Reddiex

VIDEO EDITING AND MORE

Emil Hansen has a few tips for filming and editing that he's picked up while working on NZ Hunter Adventures

NORTHLAND TUSKERS

Jonathan Fulton weaves a great pig hunting story, this is the tale of three big jaws and a dog called Muzz



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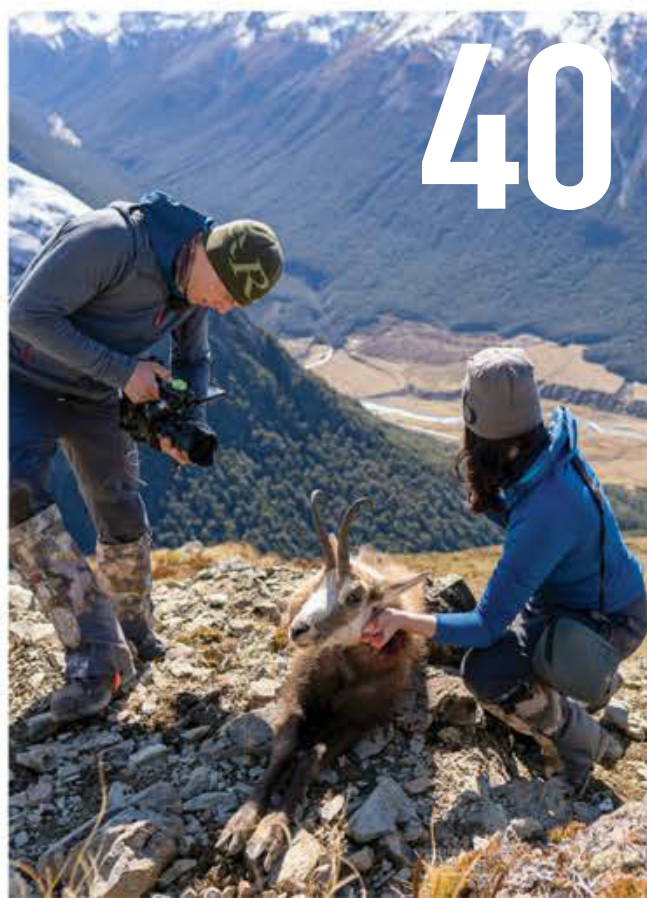
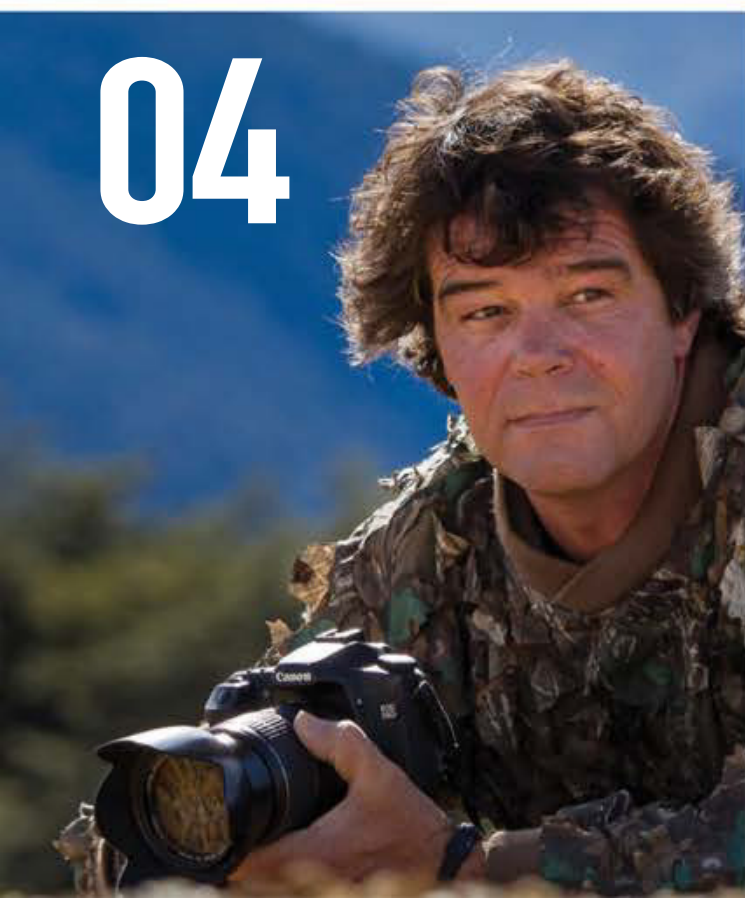
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COVER PHOTO

Greg, Ellie and Gunnar on a highcountry adventure.

NZ Hunter welcomes articles

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AWORD FROM THE EDITOR

It is with great sorrow we say goodbye to one of our longest term writer and friend, Matt Winter. Matt's incredible photography and wide knowledge of all things outdoors - whether birds, plants or animals - has kept us all entertained for many years. Till we meet again Matt. Tribute on page 4.

There's been a fair bit of pretty rough weather and snow in the last couple of months. A lot of the tahr ballot blocks were empty this year as hunters couldn't get in due to the weather conditions. We're still out there battling away with the camera trying to get a big old Red stag from the wild country on film before they drop their antlers, but due to the usual curse of the camera, mishaps like guests slipping and tearing ankle ligaments, and handicapping ourselves by trying to get one with the bow without cheating and carrying a rifle along as well - we're still trying! We've got about 3 weeks left to put it together so no pressure!

A bit of important news since the last issue, starting with the cabinet reshuffle and Minister Hon Kiritapu Allan being assigned to the justice portfolio. We welcome Hon Poto Williams, as our new Conservation Minister. This is a very important portfolio for all of us, and we look forward to working with her and continuing the awesome work that Kiri started. One example of this work is the securing of four years of funding for goat control and Wild animal/ Game animal management under the Te Ara Ki Mua framework. For more information on this see the article on page 18.

We've just had notification that DoC has postponed their battle for birds poison operations in Arawhata and Waiaototo until next year. They have already done the prefeed but the weather has been too wet to do the toxic and their science tells them that you lose the benefit of the prefeed if you leave it any later than 30 days. It will now be done in the most suitable weather window after May 2023, so that's a reprieve for some of the South Westland Red stags for another year, if helicopter WARO doesn't get them before then.

With the market demand and prices creeping up, the stags are going to be under increasing WARO pressure this spring after they had

a bit of a reprieve for a couple of seasons over Covid. We desperately need to get some management of WARO so they target hinds for better conservation outcomes, rather than the current stag biased harvest - something we'd had serious discussions with Kiri regarding. Another issue for the incoming Minister!

We've got preliminary results from the GAC-organised Lake Sumner RHA management hunt. The volunteer hunters shot 126 hinds and recovered 80 uteruses for autopsy. Only one mature hind was not pregnant. Twelve of the 15 two-year old hinds were pregnant. This indicates that deer are not nutritionally stressed, the environment is keeping the hinds in good condition, supporting ovulation and conception. The Lake Sumner RHA hinds have high productivity, and the herd will continue to grow if unmanaged. This December the deer population will be at least 200 animals less due to the management hunt. This is a good outcome for future herd quality.

Some of you may have seen the release of the new Burger Fuel Wapiti Burger called Wild Heart. This is an awesome collaboration between Burger Fuel, With Wild (a group of chefs, hunters and food entrepreneurs), and the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. The FWF is providing venison mince from their recovery operations in the Wapiti area of Fiordland, and Burger Fuel is crafting a special burger with a bunch of other locally sourced and sustainable ingredients. One dollar from every burger (for the first 30,000) is donated to the FWF to go toward herd management and conservation programs in the Fiordland National Park. The outstanding news is they have sold 5000 burgers in their first week on sale!

You'll also see in the What's New the release of the NZ Tahr Foundation's new Tahr App. This is not the same as the old DOC tahr app! This has been set up by the Tahr Foundation to help work towards a review of the out dated Himalayan Tahr Control Plan and the setting up of a tahr Herd of Special Interest. Please use the new app to record all your tahr hunting successes - it is going to be essential going forward that we all support it!

Greg

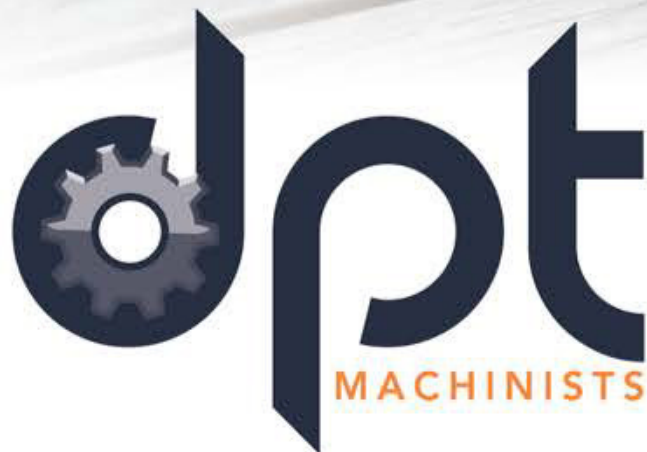
SPOT THE LOGO

The winners for last issue are **Christine Gregory** and **John Olsen**. The logos were on the Hardy Hybrid advert page 73 and the Liquid Laundromats advert on page 93.

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Q&A

HI GUYS

I have a dumb question. We are putting suppressors on our rifles, mine is a 270 Rem, and my wife's is a 243 Win.

After talking to the gunsmith, he has suggested that we fit the same calibre suppressor to each rifle, for safety (in case we switch them around by mistake), and I can understand his thoughts on this.

So my question is, will the larger diameter hole of the 270 suppressor diminish its effectiveness when used on the 243 (we are fitting DPT Magnums on both)

The gunsmith thinks that the magnum will work so well on the 243 that the larger hole will not be an issue. I would just like a second opinion from someone with knowledge.

Love the show, if we can't watch we record it religiously.

Two oldies who think they can still get out there

BRENT & ODETTE

HI BRENT AND ODETTE

There is no such thing as a dumb question! And there is a lot of sense in what your gunsmith has recommended. As far as noise and recoil reduction, I would have to agree you will hardly notice the difference between the 270 or a 243 specific suppressor on your 243.

In fact if you ran a standard suppressor on your 270 and the magnum length one on your 243 you'll probably gain more noise reduction on the 243 due to the larger volume rear chamber of the magnum suppressor. And also remember you can easily just add more baffles to the front of the one on your 243 to gain more sound suppression. One baffle will probably have a larger effect than an extra 17 thou aside of clearance between bullet and suppressor bore.

My only comment on running the longer rear section magnum suppressors on calibres that don't need them powder/gas capacity wise is you will be carrying a little extra weight (about 45gms/1.6ozs). We like the look of suppressors that come further back towards the forend tip leaving less bare barrel exposed anyway. The magnum

comes 50mm further back from the muzzle than the standard. Generally a standard will come back close to the forend on a 16" barrel and a magnum on an 18" barrel.

See below comparisons from Darren at DPT:

Standard 215mm long, 95mm forward of the muzzle and 220mm over the barrel, 285 grams.

Magnum 265mm long, 95mm forward of the muzzle and 270mm over the barrel, 330 grams.

You could run a caliber specific standard on your 243 and a magnum on the 270 and then hopefully the 50mm different lengths should stop you getting confused?

Hopefully that helps you make your decision!

GREG

HI GREG

I've got an 18 inch Tikka 7mm-08 with DPT suppressor.

A fella gave me some loads that worked well in another one similar, using 120gn Sierra SPT Prohunter projectiles. The rounds are very accurate and I have great success with them out over 100m. In the bush however I've lost a couple of stags. I think they just pencil through, especially if my shot placement isn't great / doesn't connect with any solid bone.

Could this be the case? What would you recommend? **Let me know your thoughts**

MATT

HI MATT

I'm sure you'll find that if the bullets work great at long range but not up close in the bush on stags, then those bullets are blowing up, not pencilling through! – unless they are going very slow, but then they should be pencilling through worse at longer ranges with less impact velocity. Have you chronographed them? I would be running 120gn TTSXs driven fast for that situation, as a do-it-all bullet for short barrelled 7mm-08s. The fast opening lightweight lead core bullets (like the 120gn Sierra Prohunter) are usually not good in the bush, especially on quartering-on shots on bigger animals, but work ok at longer ranges where the velocity has dropped off.

GREG

Visit 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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Remembering

Matt Winter

NZ Hunter Columnist

The Marlborough and New Zealand outdoor fraternity lost a great man earlier this month. My brother, Matt Winter, lost his battle with cancer.

Matt was an amazing talent in all the activities that he pursued. Everything he did was all self-taught. A lot of the pursuits were passed on and taught to many people.

From fly fishing for trout, snapper and kingfish, rifle hunting, graduating to using a bow and arrow, to free dive and spear fishing, whitewater kayaking, trials riding and just instilling in people the love and appreciation of the outdoors, have all been activities and passions he loved over many years.

Matt's more recent passion was photography. Again, self-taught, he spent many hours researching to hone his skills from behind the camera. The patience and skills he used for many years for hunting etc, he applied to an even greater extent as a photographer. He would spend hours at times in a blind or laying in a cold, muddy pond somewhere just to get that perfect shot.

I can remember a particular day up at the Taylor Dam, just on the outskirts of Blenheim, when in only 45 minutes he landed and released 10 good sized trout. The flies he used were all homemade and tied by himself.

Matt got to a stage in his rifle hunting years that unless he found an animal bigger than his best, he wouldn't shoot anything. He needed a new challenge. That challenge came in the form of bow hunting. The skills needed took him to another level. He joined the NZ Bowhunting Society and quickly became very proficient. To the point that in 1998 in Hari Hari on the West Coast, he was awarded the trophy of Bow Hunter of the Year. A huge task and honour. One of his biggest bow hunting moments came when he shot a large 11-point Red in the Marlborough back country. That trophy held its place in the record books for a very long time. Matt's last weapon of choice was a specially made traditional longbow.

With the photography came his skills as a writer. Many of you will know of his articles in the NZ Hunter magazine, but Matt also authored articles for various other magazines as well as co-writing a book titled 'The Heart of Hunting' - a must read.

Matt's legacy will live on for many decades to come, particularly with his website '**Wild Nature New Zealand**' and his You Tube channel 'Into The Wind'. **An amazing man that excelled in everything he put his mind to and the best brother anyone could have hoped for.**

Nick Winter



Matt Winter, aka “Tui”, my best mate for 30 years, passed away in June 22 after his long battle with cancer.

Matt was a glass half full person, and although he knew he had cancer he never let it slow him down or detract from his adventures.

In May this year, only a month before he passed away, we were hunting tahr on the West Coast. Matt struggled to get around, a mere 500m walk taking an hour, but he enjoyed just being out amongst the hills glassing animals.

A month before that we were on a Marlborough back country trip for a few nights. We split up for an evening hunt intending to meet up just on dark. Matt had a favourite little spot that had been successful in the past, and as he snuck around a corner a yearling materialised. Matt was carrying a .223 he had recently purchased after breaking a vertebrae in a mountain bike accident and not being able to draw his bow. He raised his rifle and dropped the animal at a mere 40m. By the time I met up with him, Matt had the animal boned out and in his pack. He went to shoulder it and when I insisted I carry it for him, being true to his nature, he would have none of it and carried it all the way out. **That would be the last animal Matt would shoot and he did it his way.**

A month prior to that saw us spear fishing for kingfish in the Marlborough Sounds. Due to his health he was struggling to hold his breath for long, but he found a small rock with some squid on it so spent an hour or so trying to shoot one in about a metre of water. Without warning a nice kingfish cruised past him and pretty soon Matt had a spear in it. I offered to put a second spear in it to make it easier for him to fight it but gain he declined, preferring to do it by himself or not do it at all. After 15min or so, totally exhausted, Matt landed the fish and had a tear in his eye realising it would probably be the last kingfish he would shoot.

I met Matt 30 years ago, we had similar interests and values that forged a life long friendship. We flatted together in Blenheim, spending most of our nights night fishing for trout. Often getting home at 3am and having a few hours' sleep before going to work at 7am. We would get home from work and do it all again. Then when the weekends would come we would either be fishing a backcountry stream or away hunting.

In that time we shared many memorable moments and experienced some adversity. I recall a spring tahr trip on the coast, we had six days of hunting ahead of us but spent five and a half days in the tents getting smashed by the weather. Matt had a good sense of humour and never let the tough times dampen his enthusiasm, always creating competitions to pass the time. I recall one time making boats out of flax and having races down a flooded creek.

Matt was a very clever person. Almost everything he did he was self-taught, preferring to research himself and then learn through his experiences and mistakes. If he took up a new interest he wasn't satisfied at being mediocre, he would continue until he was proficient at it.

A week before he passed away Matt asked if I could come and visit and bring my three daughters to say goodbye. It was pretty tough seeing him struggling to speak, but he asked me to reach under a table and bring out some items. Under the table was his good camera which he had carried for hundreds of miles on the hill, he handed it to my eldest daughter Libby who has a keen interest in photography. Next he passed his favourite fishing rod to Aliyah, another of my daughters who is mad keen on fishing. Finally he took his binoculars and gave them to Ruby who is super keen on her hunting. It was a pretty tough moment realising he was passing on the tools he cherished and used for many years, but at the same time special knowing Matt's legacy will live on through my children.

I could write for months about our experiences and what a good bugger he was, but I'll wind it up here by saying that the world is a lesser place without Matt in it, he was a passionate bloke that inspired everyone he spent time with. He was my best friend, and he will always be my best friend. I miss him like hell but I know he is in a better place, with the wind in his face and the sun at his back sneaking around the hills with his longbow in hand. **I only hopes he leaves some for me!! Rest easy my friend.**

Aaron Senior

BUCK TO BULL

WRITTEN BY ~ TOBY WALKER

It was 10pm on the night of the Fallow ballot closure. I got on the blower to my mate Jake, a keen English lad who is always up for an adventure

"Yeap, sounds like a plan" Jake replied, as he always does. So, we both put our names in the hat for the ballot for the following year.

2020 closed with all sorts of epic alpine adventures done and dusted. At the start of the new year, the Fallow ballot was drawn and we had been allotted a desirable block for mid-May. We would catch the tail end of the rut.

As it drew closer, we were feeling excited about spending five days chasing Fallow after hunting Reds around the Canterbury hills for two weeks the previous month. It's a great time of year to be a hunter - Reds

going late March into April, then the Fallow rut, followed by the chamois rut in May then a bit of tahr interest from late May onwards.

The day before the block period started, we packed up, jumped in the car and cruised on into a rather large DoC hut. We spoke to a chap who had been

and I felt like we had a bit of a head start.

Our excitement levels were high as we set out for the first morning of the hunt and we decided to base ourselves at the bottom of our block for the next three nights, and start to hunt from that end. Although we had originally planned to camp halfway up, due to the incoming bad weather we chose to take the luxury option of an old, but comfortable musterer's hut - a choice that we were very happy about later on.

That first day saw us hunting along the bush edge from the bottom end, looking deep into the forest on each side for a bit of camp meat. Jake was on the rifle and quickly dispatched his first Fallow, and the first animal of the trip - a trophy camp meat animal in my books!

Carrying on up the valley we searched for something with some antler. We spotted a beautiful white buck on the opposite side in the bush close to some does scattered through the open ground, but unfortunately he was off limits.

Over the following days we hunted the same area, not going too far upstream due to the weather. It took us a while to decide whether we should leave the hut due to the sleet coming in sideways, but eventually we decided that we couldn't see anything from behind the hut door! We ventured out, despite the conditions we saw a lot of deer, including another young white buck only 300 metres from the hut.

After few nights in the comforts of the hut and after a night of snow, the sun finally decided to show itself. We knew the deer would be trying to get some rays to warm up, so we set off up the valley with all our kit and found a good spot to base ourselves for that day, prepared to glass the open bush where we had been told deer were living.



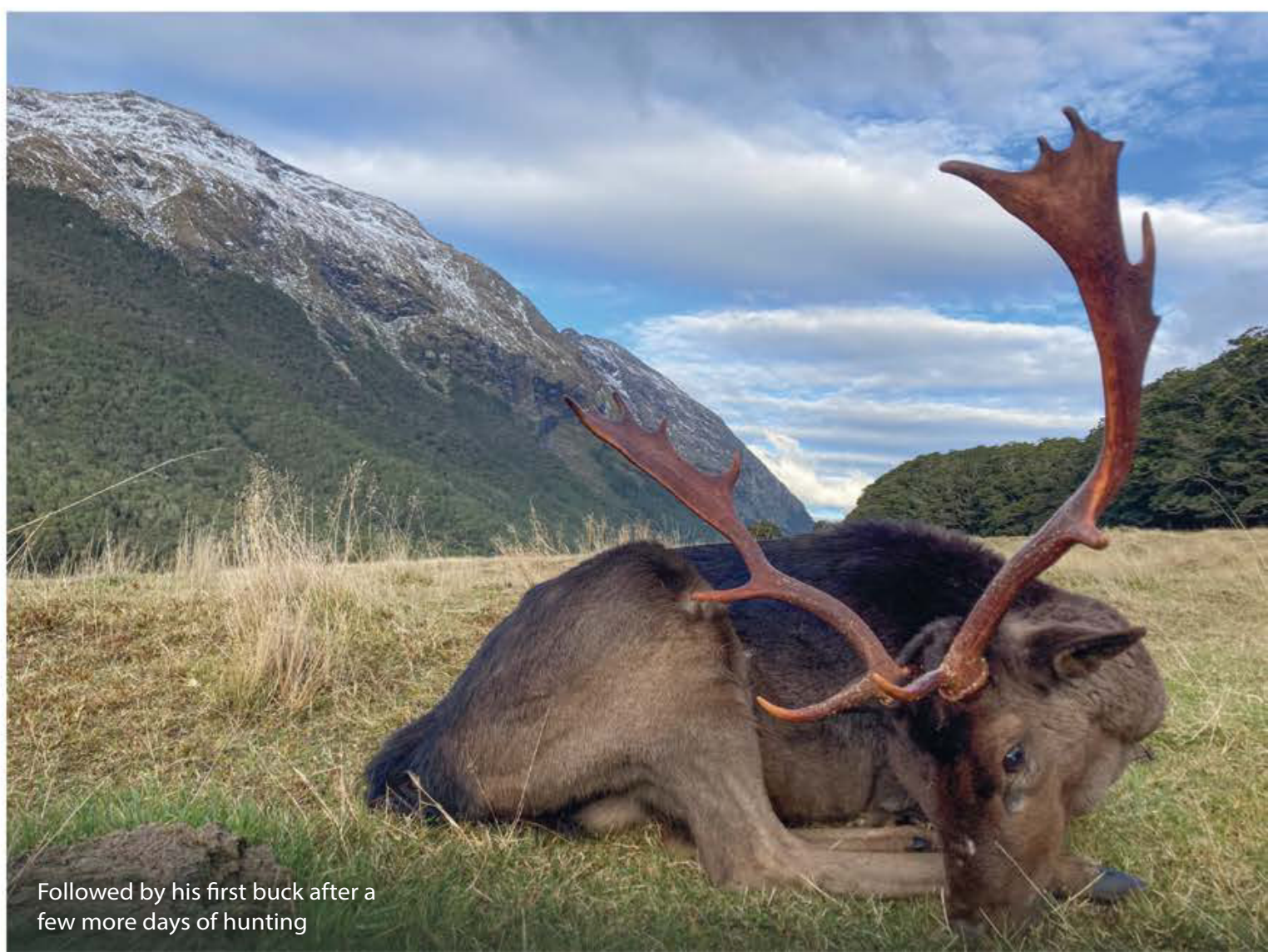
The luxury of an old hut in bad weather - we were glad we'd asked permission before the trip



Jake with his first Fallow

As we had seen a good number of deer early on we were hoping that a nice buck was going to show itself at some stage. As luck would have it, we managed to lay eyes on one in the final two hours of light, bedded up inside the bush, looking in the opposite direction.

How the hell did he just appear bedded up? We must have missed him as we snoozed, but we couldn't have planned it better. We had open area to cover, and if he stood up and looked around we would have been busted, for sure. We managed to creep



Followed by his first buck after a few more days of hunting



Toby and Jake with their buck

in close to the buck and Jake got set up for a shot, and waited patiently for him to stand up. Finally, after what felt like a lifetime, he stood up, and wandered along through the bush, with Jake silently urging him to stop. Suddenly - bang went his boomstick with a solid hit, and we watched the buck run a wee way before toppling over. We both got a bit over-excited and afterwards wondered what any spectators would have thought of us!

As we approached the buck we were both so happy at how the hunt had developed and to get a good looking representative of the species - not the biggest or oldest of Fallow bucks to have lived, but he had beautiful, dark red-stained antlers. It's not hard to argue that the antler colour is the most eye-catching colour a Fallow buck can have. It was Jake's first trophy animal and I was super stoked to have shared the experience with him.

Arriving home we were certainly two happy hunters. After we cleaned up Jake's buck I repacked, ready for a late evening start on another mission. I planned to walk a little way in on the route as it was a good six-hour tramp.

The goal was to be in the best country before the peak dawn hunting time had passed. I'd spent lot of time (possibly too much time) in this spot in the past, with mixed success, and this time I was chasing tahr.

Breaking camp early and walking up the creek under headlight I thought that I might catch a Red stag making a crossing. But no luck on the deer, I



The tops country above where I shot my bull



A big, old bull with age rings showing him at 11 years old, with a set of horns going over 14 inches

was really after a representative tahr anyway, something with age, older and better than the seven-year-old one that I had shot almost a year ago to the day in the same spot. **Further up I bumped a nanny tahr walking along the side of the creek, and froze – hoping there might be a bull following but no such luck.** Carrying on for another hour or so, I took a seat and started to glass for tahr up on the tops. Looking down to stow the binos back in my caddie I couldn't believe my eyes when I looked up again - a bull tahr was crossing the creek in front of me. I grabbed the phone from my top pocket to turn off the music, and for whatever reason decided to get a video, as my gun was still strapped to my pack. As the bull dropped down into a wee hole in the creek I turned around and grabbed my rifle, looked back towards the bull, but I was busted. He didn't hang around long enough for me to get a shot off. **What are the chances that a mature bull would cross right in front of me while I was glassing high up on the tops?** The bull started whistling at me in the bush so I thought I would give it a nudge, and followed him. Catching up to him in a dry creek tributary, he was only

40 or so metres away when I saw him next. A glance at his age rings and the sweep of his horns, I squeezed the trigger without another thought, and he was down. Approaching him in disbelief I saw that he was a big, old bull with age rings showing him at 11 years old, with a set of horns going over 14 inches. I didn't think I would ever harvest a bull like that in such a tin-arse way. There's a saying **"you have got to take the easy ones"** and that's what I did! It would have made a great story to talk about climbing through bluffs and glaciers to get a bull like that, **but I guess not everyone can say they shot a 14 inch bull tahr in a creek bed, just before they got back to their campsite.** The more time you spend out in the hills slogging it out, the more opportunities come your way, so all the "unsuccessful" trips are just one more hunt closer to your next trophy. I decided to cape him out and he'll be put up on the wall reminding me of a great ending to an awesome week spent in the hills. To end on a funny note, the night before I got lucky I met a guy called Jimmy, and remember him saying to me that **"you just don't know when bull tahr will pop out in this catchment"**. Wise words, in my opinion.



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Dreams Can Come True

LUKE'S FIRST STAG

WRITTEN BY
DARREN WOODS

After last year's unsuccessful attempt to get a first stag for my work mate Luke we made plans for the next roar - it took forever for our calendars to align with a suitable weather window

Eventually an opportunity arose for an early May hunt into a place that neither of us had ever visited but had spent countless hours studying promising catchments on topo maps.

In the lead up there was a lot of banter as to what calibre Luke's first stag would be. Eventually a meeting invite was sent to confirm the date of the hunt entitled "Luke's 15 Pointer" - we figured we had to be "realistic" as there are not many even heads out there.

We set out from Christchurch and camped overnight on the river flat at the first deep river crossing. Thinking the weather window looked to be a beauty we slept outside under the truck's awning. All was bliss until 4am when the rain came in sideways, waking us up and saturating our sleeping bags so we evacuated back inside in the Prado (Peaches)

until first light. It was slow going as we bumped our way up the river trying to protect Peaches from the many large boulders that had been thrust downstream by this powerful river. As we travelled along the valley visibility was masked by a thick blanket of low cloud. By mid-morning we had made it to an area previously identified as a good prospect, and the low cloud had lifted on the other side of the valley. There was still a belt of cloud sitting at around 900 metres on the face we were planning to climb.

Over the next hour we discussed our options – wait for the cloud to completely disappear and miss out on an evening hunt or trust the topo map and box on into the cloud, hoping for the best. I was keen to undertake a full pack mission above the bushline to the tops to give us the

best opportunity to find stags. I was also very keen to make use of Luke the packhorse to help carry up the spotting scope and tent. An hour later the cloud had lifted 50 metres but the tops were still not visible. **After a quick lunch it was decided to put all our eggs in the cloud-obscured basket.**

The initial 200 vertical metres were relatively easy going as there were established game trails to walk along and plenty of sign to put our minds at ease and encourage us up the hill. By the halfway mark all the water bottles were filled (before streams became sparse), so of course we had very heavy packs for the steepest climb. The 900 vertical metres climb to flat tops was gruelling to say the least, but by the time we got there mid-afternoon the cloud had burnt off, revealing exactly what we had hoped for - perfect deer country comprising of rolling tussock flats above native bush, separated by several slips. After acquainting



Peaches the Prado at the first big river crossing



ourselves with the area a camp was made, food was eaten and a siesta was had, fully immersing ourselves in the amazing views of this glorious location.

By late afternoon we were able to move again and made our way a short distance up and over a small hill to begin glassing. With all the sign spotted in the bush on the way up enthusiasm was high and we couldn't wait to see what was going to emerge from the bushline. It was seriously disappointing when not a single animal was spotted that evening.

Following a hurried dinner we hit the sleeping bags as soon as possible to escape the freezing temperatures at 1200 metres. It's fair to say the climb earlier in the day really took it out of us as we both became dead to the world for over 12 hours. Technical difficulties were encountered with the alarm for the next morning, so half an hour behind schedule with hot Back Country cooked breakfasts cooking in our pockets we headed round to the same glassing spot as the previous evening.

At this stage all we hoped to achieve was to see a deer - any deer it didn't have to be a stag, just something - but unfortunately it was as barren as the night before. After 90 minutes we decided to move around the corner to open up new glassing areas. It was at this point that we wondered how we could have so badly chosen an area with no animals and how great the conversation in the office would be on Tuesday, when fellow hunters would enquire about the trip and we would proclaim that we climbed up 900 metres to see no animals at all.

I was giving Luke a whispered lecture about winter deer activity, trying to convince myself I did actually have some clue about hunting, when he spotted a deer.

Now things were getting exciting! A further declaration was made that it was indeed a stag, maybe 8 points. Eventually I managed to find the stag in the binos as well and make my own assessment.



The view from camp in the morning

It looked as though he had brows, beys and maybe treys on each side as well at least two to three points on each top. I rebutted Luke's claim of 8 and boldly stated it would go 10-12. Oddly the stag appeared to be roaring but no noise was coming out. He was moving quickly which didn't leave us any time to get the spotting scope out.

Luke had spotter's rights, so he quickly started trying to find a decent rest which was challenging as we were situated on a rocky bluff. Meanwhile I continued to assess the stag. He had one of the biggest bodies I had ever seen on a wild deer. The weight and size of his antlers made me truly appreciate why they are often referred to as timber. These factors and his thick, low hanging neck suggested to me that he was a mature animal.

After a few minutes a less-than-ideal position was established, lying half across a small terrace with the lower half of Luke's body angling uphill. The stag was moving, and fast. Luckily for us he had closed the distance to 315 metres and was heading upslope in front of us.

Although Luke had shot other rifles it was his first time pulling the trigger on my 7mm Rem Mag and he was apprehensive. I reassured him that with the muzzle brake and limbsaver it was basically a baby. Luke was all setup as I made the final range reading. I could hear his heart pound from a few metres away and wondered if it would last long enough for him to take the shot. Trained on the stag with my binos I whispered to wait until he was completely broadside. It felt like an eternity but in reality it was probably only 30 seconds before he turned. The go-ahead was given to fire when ready.

As per usual the blast of muzzle brake shook the binos off the target.

No impact was seen and I wondered if I saw a rock splash behind the stag. I began yelling instructions for Luke to reload and get ready for another shot. What I had neglected to tell him prior to pulling the trigger was just how damn loud that gun is. He was flustered and bewildered and wasn't able to hear a word I was saying over the ringing in his ears. The stag quickly moved several steps after the shot but then he slowed and began to shake his head. It was now I realised that

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Luke with his unbelievable first stag



Darren with the stag where we found it in the scrub



The six point cluster on one top



This trophy would be caped out, mounted and destined for the wall

the 7mm Rem Mag had found its mark. Several slower and woozier steps later the stag slumped down behind tussock. It was at this point I yelled **"you hit him, you definitely hit him, he's down"**. I couldn't see any sign of the stag behind the tussocks but kept staring at the spot for several minutes looking for signs of him moving from the spot.

It took several minutes for us to collect ourselves and come to the realisation that Luke may have secured his first stag. The adrenaline was pumping as we raced across hill face in search of a stag that had been so long in the planning. **A steep gut was lying between us and the stag but this was no match for our adrenaline-fuelled bodies.** Arriving at the location that I had etched in my mind, we began my one my least favourite hunting tasks - searching through bushes for the animal. On this occasion we had managed to start climbing up at exactly

the right place and quickly stumbled upon the stag, hooked by the antlers in scrub. Pulling the antlers from the bush revealed that this stag was big and old. Reaching down to free him I noticed the timber was so thick my hands couldn't fit entirely around the main beam. Once I was able to hold the head up off the ground, we began trying to come to terms with the calibre of animal that we had just secured, let alone for a first stag. **We were so exhausted and full of adrenaline that we both forgot how to count and it took several attempts to total up all the points.** We had been unable to see through the binos that one crown was fused, resulting in a structure similar to the paddle of a Fallow. With the six points alone on this crown we had in fact managed to secure a mighty 15 point stag. It was unbelievable that after all our banter leading up to the trip we were actually able to achieve what we thought

would take a lifetime.

After much heaving and some final revenge with the stag impaling me in the thigh, we managed to get him down to a flat spot for processing. But the first task was a celebratory second breakfast comprising of the best Back Country cooked meal. **As we ate, we decided that this just might be the best stag we would see for the next ten years, or possibly ever, and therefore this one would be caped and mounted and going on the wall.** The only hiccup was that I had never actually caped out an animal before. Fortunately, I had watched a YouTube video a couple weeks before hand, so what could possibly go wrong!

Luke was all loaded up with the head and cape as we made our final uphill climb of the 300 vertical metres we had dropped. It was very reassuring to know this would be last climb of our trip. Full credit has to be given to Luke for carrying the head and cape the entire way out. It was a rather slow descent due the weight, and the scree slope chosen. The scree was blocky and our overly optimistic plan of a quick 30 minute scree ski soon turned into a two hour descent over boulders so by the time we reached the truck we were knackered. Heading to a hut on the valley floor a couple of beers nicely chilled in the freezing truck hit exactly the right spot.

Once home, a panicked search was made to find a taxidermist to take the head as neither of us had capacity in our freezers for this beast. Surprisingly, my first time caping didn't turn out to be the worst the taxidermist had ever seen.

The following week Luke proposed to his now fiancée - he reckons that it was pre-planned, but the rest of us are sure that it was what he had to do to get approval for the stag to go up on the wall in the house.



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PART TWO

BUSH PIGLET

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

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BALLISTIC TIP

BARNES 100GN TTSX

HODGDON H335
BALL POWDER

HORNADY 95GN
VMAX

FEDERAL SMALL
RIFLE PRIMER

HORNADY BRASS

Now that we'd settled on a calibre and a base for the build, it was time to get stuck in to the custom work

Our focus for this edition was to work up some loads to cover all of the scenarios readers are likely to encounter with the rifle as it comes, at 20".

When we cut the barrel down (how far that will be is yet to be determined) we'll attempt to find a satisfactory subsonic load if possible. With a shorter barrel it's easier to achieve consistent subsonic velocities so we'll wait until we lop 200fps worth off the front end!

Before we started on the load development there was some housework to maximize its accuracy. The two stage HACT (Howa Actuator Controlled Trigger) trigger is crisp enough as it is, but that pull is too heavy for our applications. **Lighter trigger weights will make a world of difference to your accuracy.**

If you pull the gun apart you'll see an adjustment screw sticking out the front

of the trigger housing. It's covered in a nice silicone tamper seal to remind you that, like all the fun stuff, tinkering with this will void your warranty. This doesn't let you adjust it much though, to lighten the trigger appreciably you need to fit a lighter-weight spring which requires disassembly of the trigger unit. We were able to get a satisfactory result breaking just under 2lb.

With it ready to shoot it was over to Greg for the reloading knowledge:

RANGE WORK

We thought carefully about what loads and projectiles would be best suited considering is such a small case for the bore size. The SAAMI maximum pressure recommendation is only 52,000psi, due to the fact this cartridge was originally designed to be used in the small diameter bolt AR15 platforms, not the larger diameter bolt AR10s etc. You can exceed this pressure comfortably in bolt guns like the mini Howa, but still don't expect to be able

to run it at 65,000psi! We settled on 57,500psi as a maximum for our load work ups.

Forget the heavy 6.5 projectiles, 140gns and above. They have the wonderful BCs but you just won't get enough velocity. The standard factory bullet weight is 123gns, and even this will be limited to 2600fps maximum in the 20 inch barrel – despite using the best powders. We decided around the 100gn bullet weight would be most useful and according to Quickload we should be able to exceed 2800fps for our chosen maximum pressure. After our experiences with 16 inch barreled 260 Rem BushPigs we knew the Barnes 100gn TTSX would be a prime contender for a deer bullet at these velocities. And the Hornady 95gn V-Max an all-round plinking and varmint load. We also decided to try the Nosler 100gn Ballistic Tip as it is a bullet that just seems to shoot in most rifles.

Powder wise you need a fairly compact option like a ball or fine stick powder due to the small case capacity. The most popular seem to be XBR 8208, H335 or CFE223. After doing some capacity tests we settled on H335 as it fitted in nicely, filling the case but with no compression needed. There was



Adjusting the trigger lighter was a key first step



The small case requires a very fine powder like H335



slightly more velocity-for-pressure to be had with CFE223 according to Quickload, but as we would need another 4 grains to achieve the same pressure, it would have been more difficult to fit enough in the case. **XBR 8208 being a stick powder is even bulkier than CFE223**, but produces less velocity for pressure, so while being a popular powder for the heavier bullet weights, it wouldn't work for the 100gn and lighter when you need a heavier powder charge. The Hornady brass has a small rifle primer, and that's all you need to ignite the around 30 grains of powder we'll be using.

The magazine length of the Mini Howa allows a maximum OAL of 2.325 inches. As the SAAMI chamber specs are well thought out for the AR15 platform, every single projectile we tried fitted in comfortably, even if seated out to touch the rifling. Something that seems to be rare these days!

We shot the two 123gn factory loads first. **They averaged about the same - just shy of 2500fps velocity and 1 MOA accuracy.**

Using seating depths most likely to work with the various projectiles from our previous experience, we had no problem getting them all to shoot under MOA. As we expected, the 100gn TTSXs at a comfortable 2830fps would be the best big game projectile. We managed to

push the 95gn V-Maxes at over 2900fps for around 60,000psi, but when we backed it off to 2860fps for 57,000psi it shot half MOA and this was very good performance for a varmint load from this little cartridge.

It will be very interesting to see how much velocity we lose as we shorten the barrel. And just how much to shorten it to is going to be the big debate!

HUNTING

First off was the factory ammo. I'd already used the PPU 123gn to great effect over the roar but I was eager to see how the other offerings performed, especially as all of those shots had been close range neck shots.

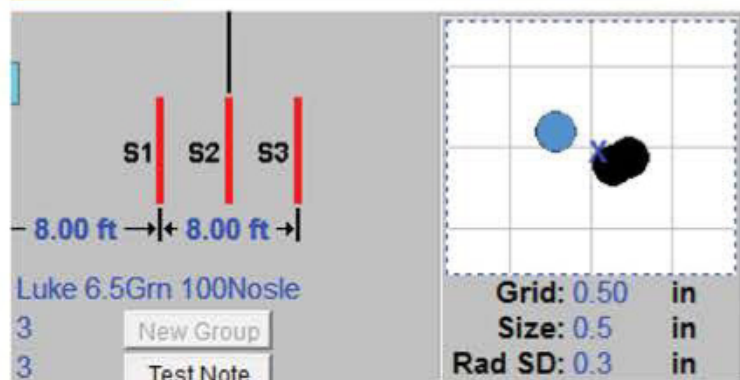
Samantha had the first chance on a Red hind near home. We'd been offered the chance of a meat animal on a local farm before the upcoming 1080 drop so we were keen to make the most of the offer. After work one evening we shot up the road and got to the bush edge just on dark. I was a bit blasé and blew a stalk on the first group of hinds, but with the sun dropping fast I found a mob down in a sheltered clearing.

Getting down nice and close was difficult, there was a big mumma's boy of a spiker standing smack in the middle, and the hind we wanted just wouldn't present a shot so we had to keep

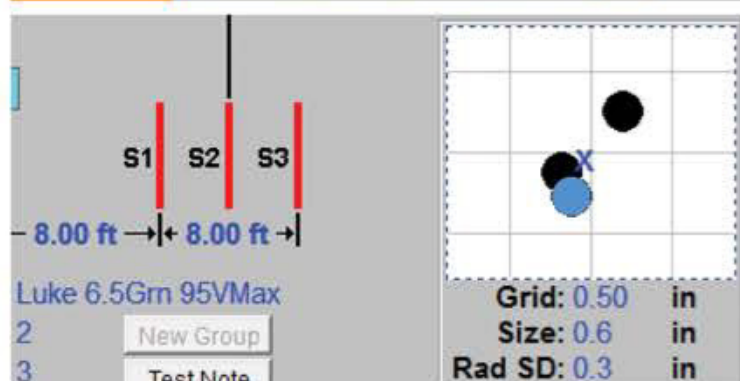
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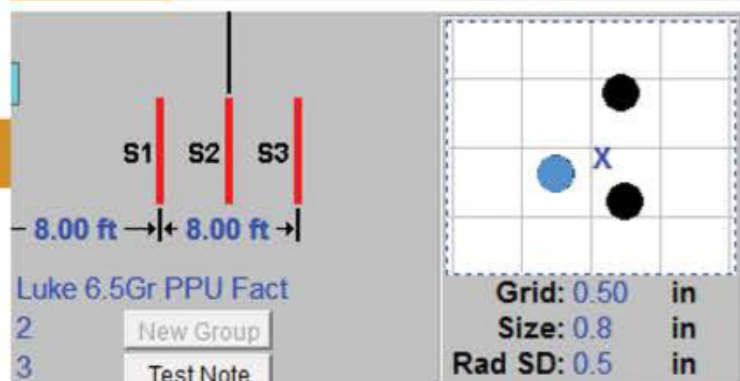
100GR TTSX



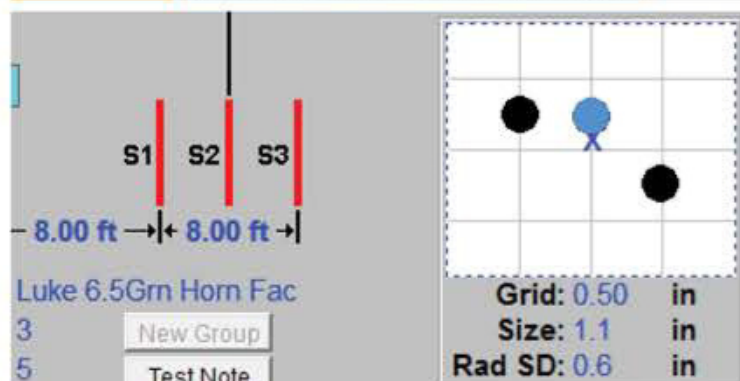
100GN NOSLER



95GN V-MAX



123GN PPU



123GN HORNADY



Samantha with Lachlan Hamilton and the big hind that fell to the 123gn Hornady SST factory ammo



Testing the 100gn TTSX's on a few goats

shuffling around as she moved behind some pongas.

After a lot of faffing around, in which time the spiker was getting edgy, she finally stood broadside at 70m - well in to the twilight hour now!

Sam pulled off an awkward shot atop my backpack using the 123gn Hornady SST. It was a complete pass-through as she pulled it a little left and missed the shoulder bone and it lanced through both lungs. Not quite the test on a mature hind's shoulder I was after, but clearly it still has penetration to spare. The quiet little crack meant the hind didn't even know where the shot had come from and she ran toward us before she dropped!

The V-max was something I was eager to try. Varminting is fantastic fun, and to be able to practice with your main hunting rifle is invaluable. I was amazed at how well the 95gn projectile performed, with explosive energy delivery right out to 300 yards. Hornady sure know how to make a projectile! It was a good lesson for me in just how effective varmint rounds are, in that they open up instantly on

surface contact. And a good reminder to be cautious about using them on bigger game if you need more penetration, or you may get a blow up on the surface and not make it to the vitals.

The added bonus was that the ballistics are near identical to the 100gn TTSX, so you'd only need to remember one set of holdovers out to 300 yards or so. Apps like Applied Ballistics with a dial up scope make holdover irrelevant, but we don't have a dial up scope yet – **and I have been guilty of leaving my phone behind at times!**

The TTSX shot better than the Nosler so we didn't bother to load any more of those for the hunting phase. By the time we'd finished all of this we only had about a week left before going to print, so goats were all the testing we managed in that tight timeframe. The TTSX's proved as consistent as ever terminal performance wise. We got ample exit wounds, which was surprising considering that is one criticism of the solid copper/monolithic construction bullets - especially at slower velocities out of the likes of the Grendel.

However the good velocity we got from handloading the lighter weight 100gn bullet obviously helped here.

Being solid copper the TTSX generally shouldn't provide a bigger exit wound than the more expansive SST. The extra velocity over the factory 123gn SST seemed to make up for that though – but we can't be too definitive about the terminal performance from our limited testing so far. It does certainly look like they're both very effective even in this small case!

With the accuracy and velocity of the TTSX's this rifle would be entirely comfortable out to 350 yards with the 20" barrel.

The velocities we achieved with the 20" barrel length clearly left us plenty to work with, so we've got some very ambitious ideas as to length for the rifle.

However next issue we hold fire on the serious custom work and have an article detailing how we would set it up for a youth, and some tips of coaching and training.



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TE ARA KI MUA

FRAMEWORK FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF WILD ANIMALS

WHAT IS IT?

There has been a lot of press about the new Te Ara ki Mua Framework for adaptive management of wild animals. So, what is it exactly?

If Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS) is the CV, then this plan is like the cover letter.

It isn't overly detailed, but it sets out what the values are we're working toward, how to interpret the ANZBS when it comes to game animal management nationally, and principles that will underpin regional management strategies. So, when Te Ara ki Mua says **'the ecological impacts of goats, deer, pigs, tahr, and chamois need to be managed while respecting the cultural, recreational, and economic values that these animals may provide'** it is a big deal. This is what DOC, the Game Animal Council and stakeholders will refer

to when implementing management and, crucially, it tells them that these are valued animals.

This is how it sits;

The Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS)

Te Ara ki Mua Framework for adaptive management

The Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS) Implementation plan

- Regional collaborative plans
- Site-based adaptive management
- Monitoring and analysis of the impacts of wild animals

There was understandable hesitation from the hunting community when the framework was first announced. Historically, new policy in the game animal space hasn't always been kind to hunters. There has often been a lack of awareness of the recreational and cultural values these animals provide to many New Zealanders. **However, through a lot of hard work put in by the GAC, previous Conservation Minister Kiri Allan and some insightful DOC staff, this time it's different.**

There have been a lot of meaningful and thoughtful discussions go into this framework and it shows in the language. **Gone are the words 'control' or 'pest', unless they're referring to goats, and in are terms like 'adaptive management' and 'wild animals'.** And while it is only two pages, there has been years of work behind it. It is a very carefully constructed document.

The framework does several things; it sets the tone and direction for DOC's

**GONE ARE THE WORDS
'CONTROL' OR
'PEST', UNLESS
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ARE TERMS LIKE
'ADAPTIVE
MANAGEMENT'
AND 'WILD
ANIMALS'**

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

approach to game animal management going forward, it guarantees consultation for stakeholders like the various hunting foundations and NZDA, as well as conservation NGO's and should hopefully assist DOC in making greater use of recreational hunters in management hotspots. It should also see better alignment between recreational and commercial hunting interests.

The plan's focus is on biodiversity and ecological resilience, which is as it should be. We know that an overpopulation of introduced browsing animals is in no one's interest. What's different this time around is that it truly acknowledges recreational and cultural values alongside conservation values. That these 'valued introduced species' (wording from the ANZBS strategy,) are a valuable resource to many New Zealanders and that there is a place for them as managed species alongside our native flora and fauna

Now that the hunting sector finally has a seat at the decision-making table, we need to make sure that as

a community we do what we can to help make this modern and adaptive management approach work. There will be many opportunities for hunters to step up through official and unofficial management programmes to help manage our game animal herds better. In a lot of cases it is as simple as shooting a few more hinds and keeping a lid on the breeding population. Effective management of game animals to realise their benefits while mitigating their impacts is a great challenge, so let's all work together to be part of that solution.

We had the opportunity to put some questions to people involved in the planning of Te Ara ki Mua;

TIM GALE - Game Animal Council General Manager

Tim, what role did the GAC have in developing Te Ara ki Mua?

As a statutory body with responsibilities for game animals the GAC has worked with DOC for a good couple of years on implementing this aspect of the ANZBS. I am pleased to say that our advice was listened to and that DOC staff involved in this were really open to finding a way to do game animal management better. At the end of the day most reasonable people want the same outcomes – healthy native ecosystems that sustainably incorporate quality game animal herds.

What does Te Ara Ki Mua mean for hunters?

For a start it means that we are very much in the tent as part of the solution, rather than held at arm's length as part of the problem. This has been a massive shift over the last couple of years and is one of the very reasons I am so passionate about game animal management. It also means that kiwi hunters can be confident that there is a future for game animals in New Zealand.

Do we have new responsibilities or is it just reinforcing what we should have been doing all along?

Historically hunters have been wary of anything to do with control as it was always geared that game animals are nothing more than 'pests', as this approach is perceived as posing a threat to our hunting and not providing for sustainable outcomes for all the hunters across New Zealand.

This framework however sets out that management is not about eradication or extermination. As hunters we need



to take the ball and run with it now. We do have a responsibility when it comes to doing what is best to help manage our game animal herds – this means harvesting more breeding females, particularly in areas with high population numbers, and letting immature males go in order to achieve a more sustainable male/female herd balance. It's about managing them for both their impacts and their benefits.

What changes do you see happening to hunting in New Zealand?

One of the changes the GAC wants to help be a part of is far better integration of recreational and commercial values and associated hunting activities as well as official management. In the past

these three management tools have often worked in conflict with one another. Through Te Ara ki Mua we have an opportunity to have them work together and achieve much better outcomes for conservation and hunting. The other change, which I think is happening already, is the realisation that hunting in New Zealand is about quality over quantity – what I mean by this is that hunters want to hunt good quality animals in a healthy environment and in certain places this will mean lower game animal numbers, an improved ecosystem and therefore bigger and better animals as a result.



DR BEN REDDIEX – Director National Programmes at Department of Conservation

Ben, it is fantastic to see the Department

acknowledging the

recreational, cultural and economic values of wild/game animals and that there can be a balance. Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

What do you see Te Ara ki Mua evolving to?

Te Ara ki Mua is designed to support everyone involved (from landowners to central government) to work collectively to achieve the actions called for in the Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS) implementation plan. Te Ara ki Mua will guide and support local planning to manage browsing pressure to sustain ecosystem health. Because ecosystems and browser impacts on them vary widely, this could look very different from one place to another. We'll see a range of approaches and opportunities varying from collaborative plans at a regional level to more localised agreements at specific sites.

How enduring is this framework?

The ANZBS strategy has a 30-year outlook (to 2050) and the implementation plan for it has a clear acknowledgement that new ways of working together are required, and therefore it is expected that the plan will be further developed over time. Te Ara ki Mua describes the wild animal management pathway as we see it now, setting 20 focus areas under three key pillars (Protecting and restoring, Empowering action, and Getting the system right). Like the ANZBS strategy implementation, Te Ara ki Mua will likely need to evolve over time to reflect what we have learned about best practice for achieving place-based wild animal management.

What are big challenges, what are the big opportunities?

While ecological outcomes are the key focus of the work, the framework is designed to acknowledge the cultural, recreational, and economic values that may be held about wild animals. If we get this right, we can make a real difference and sustain the effort and outcomes over time. Effective management of wild animals and browsing pests (e.g., possums) will support forest resilience to climate change impacts and protect critical habitat for threatened species.

Right now, the sum total of all our activities (recreational hunting, commercial activities and management by government agencies) are not keeping pace with the increase in deer and goat populations in many places.

DOC cannot scale up efforts on our own, and we acknowledge that the hunting sector can assist us in ramping up our efforts in many places through more recreational hunting.

The big challenges are not necessarily what you might think of at face value – the scale of the problem or the inaccessibility of some areas. I'm confident that creative thinking and new technology will help with those.

It's the 'people' part of wild animal management that is the most ambitious part of Te Ara ki Mua and the most interesting in some ways. No two people and no two communities will see the deer and goats in their surrounding landscape in the same way. So, the really big but challenging opportunity will be engaging with people to understand the breadth of viewpoints and how we can collaborate to figure out what the right work is in each place, and how to get it done.

As part of this strategy (and the immediate funding) will this provide additional support for hunting sector initiatives?

The additional investment in Budget 22 will directly improve and increase deer management and goat control, with flow-on benefits to how other wild animals are managed. As I mentioned before, DOC acknowledges we can't do this alone. DOC is exploring new ways of working with everyone involved: Iwi, councils, and the hunting sector. This could well mean support for hunting sector initiatives if they provide an effective solution at a site that has been prioritised for management. For example, DOC has supported the Sika Foundation, Wapiti Foundation, and Game Animal Council with recent work that has been undertaken in the Kaimanawa Ranges, Fiordland, and Lake Sumner, respectively.

The investment will also support the Game Animal Council to fulfil its statutory functions, including supporting hunters to gain the skills and knowledge to hunt safely and successfully.

What does DOC see as the best value the hunting sector can provide to enable this strategy?

Working in a collaborative environment in which hunters offer their knowledge and experience to be part of building capability and helping to achieve the right conservation solutions at place. We've seen examples where hunting groups have volunteered to run trap lines, maintain huts, or control goats. Let's build on this relationship to ensure we understand the contributions our hunting communities can make to local conservation, and how these can fit with or complement Te Ara ki Mua's guidance.



CAM SPEEDY – Ecologist and passionate recreational hunter

Cam, as a scientist and a recreational hunter, what is your take on this important step?

I see a number of very significant and extremely positive aspects to the Te Ara ki Mua policy and planning framework.

Firstly, the fact that game animals are finally officially recognised as actually having 'value'. We, as hunters, have always known that but to have it explicitly stated in formal government policy and planning documents is a huge step.

Game animals are just like trout and Kaimanawa horses – not 'native' to New Zealand but an important and iconic part of contemporary New Zealand culture.

This has led to important language shifts. To hear the term 'deer management' in government policy and planning frameworks is a massive change. Loaded terms like 'extermination', 'eradication', 'pest' and 'control' are replaced with what we need – careful game animal 'management'.

We all know that while game animals have value, they also come with a consequence. We need to seek a balance between that value and the highly variable consequence of game animals at place. There is no 'one-sized-fits-all' approach. That has been the downfall of the current (2001) DOC Deer Policy Statement – that policy and planning framework has got us to where we are today. The ideological approach that if you simply take away all barriers to people who want to kill deer (for whatever reason), then there will be less of them – is fundamentally flawed. The last 20 years proves that.

And that is why the Te Ara ki Mua approach of bespoke, 'at-place' management is potentially so powerful. Every game herd in every habitat across the country has a different set of social, cultural, ecological, geographic and economic factors to consider. The history at-place is equally as variable.

We need to understand these factors and both the value and consequence of game animals at-place, to develop a set of targeted local actions that deliver effective, pre-determined outcomes. We don't have all the knowledge to deliver this everywhere just yet, but an adaptive management approach will lead us down a path that will achieve far more tangible benefit over time.

As a scientist and a hunter, I am excited by what Te Ara ki Mua framework might do for our mountains, forests and valued game animals. It is time to move on from the failed approaches of the past. To put our differences and biases aside, and work towards a new era based on effective, targeted, at-place action that maximises the value, and minimises the consequences of our incredible introduced game animal resource. The Wapiti Foundation has been at the forefront of this new era in recent years. This is proof to me that this framework can work. Bring it on



You can find all of the documents mentioned here online at
www.doc.govt.nz/nature/biodiversity/aotearoa-new-zealand-biodiversity-strategy/

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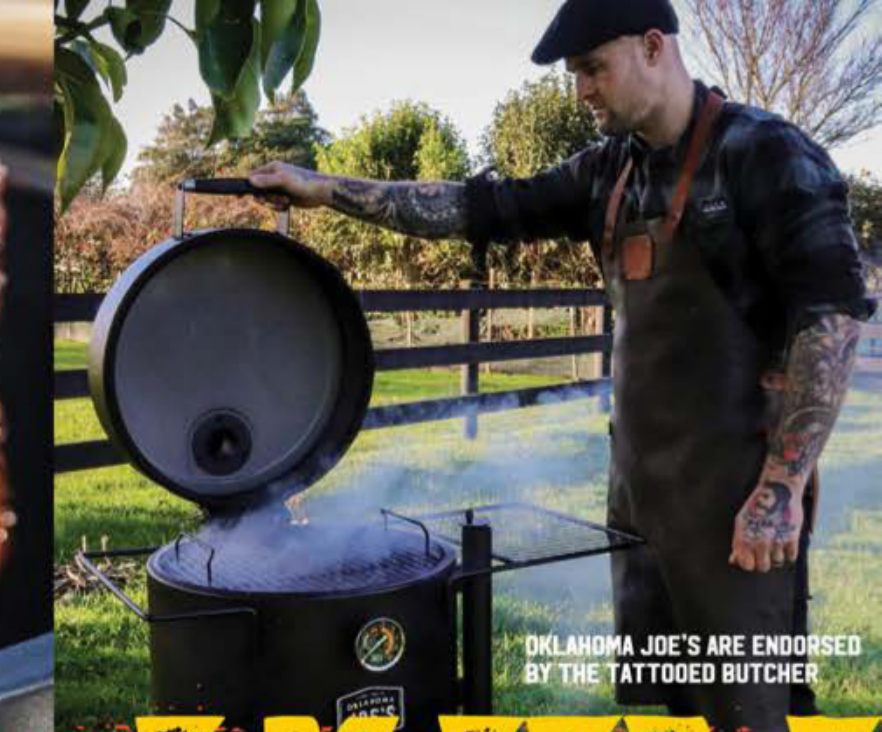
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Lance Price- A rutting Fallow buck, just seconds before my girlfriend (who had stalked right in to about 50 m) took him.

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WINNER



A wary Fiordland hind spotted by Sid Spence



Joshua Robinson - Young Whitetail undisturbed on the river's edge

Greg Hill captured this promising buck cresting the hill in Otago

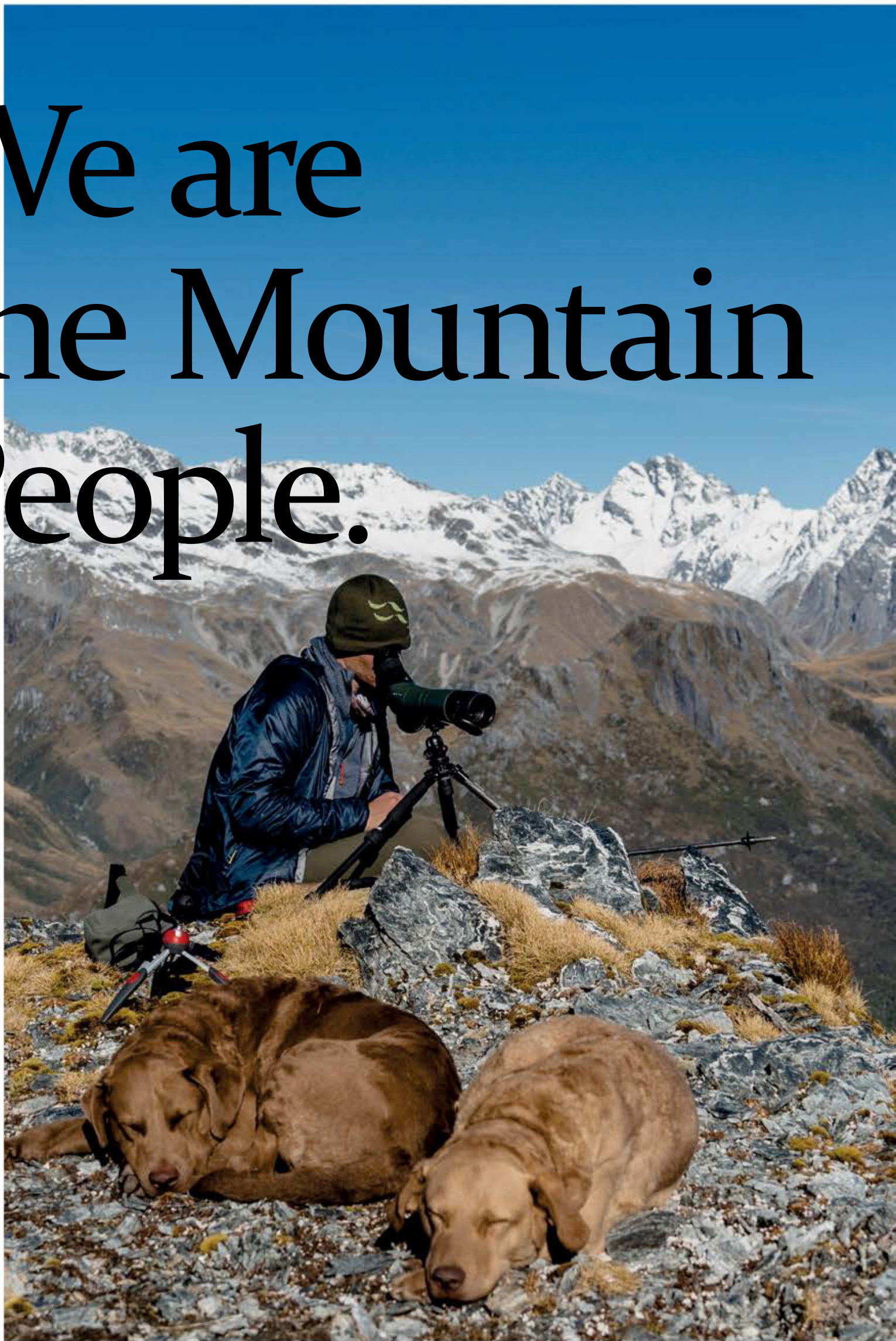


Joel Dustin caught this girl on last light



Shona Godfrey - My grandson, Mac, took us out the back of their farm to hear the stags. This guy looked impressive on the skyline at sunset with his antler tinsel

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FROM ISOLATED TO ISOLATION

Isolation is a word we've all become very familiar with over the last couple of years. Unfortunately, due to its association with Covid, the majority of folk now think of it in a negative frame of mind. But not that long ago isolation was a word not many people thought about at all

It was reserved for us adventure fanatics, and signified an escape from the nine to five routine and busy day-to-day life. Not only is isolation something we're familiar with, but it's also something we spend our spare time in search of.

Back in March of 2020 that's exactly what my mate Chris and I were doing. It doesn't get much more remote than Fiordland, down in the south of New Zealand, so isolation is something we were expecting on our drive down to Te Anau. At that time, Covid was starting to spread through Europe and the first couple of cases had

found their way to New Zealand.

There was very little information about it... nothing to worry about, 'cos once we're on that chopper it won't affect us... how much could change in ten days anyways?

We'd been lucky enough to draw the Mount Tanilba Wapiti block for

the second year in a row. The year prior we had made the most of seven days of sunshine by exploring a large part of the area around Three Duck Lake. It was an epic introduction to the Fiordland wilderness - but maybe not so representative of the real Fiordland. This year we planned to hunt the other half of the block. Most of our gear was dropped in the main valley that leads to Two Thumb Bay and to save us the climb we were dropped on the tops between Mount Alexandra and Mount Tanilba with five days' worth of supplies. As



the helicopter disappeared over the distant peaks the feeling of isolation washed over us - it was time for an adventure.

Our first task was to find a good campsite, as the bluebird weather we were enjoying wasn't forecast to last. A nor' west was due to blow in the next day bringing with it plenty of rain and strong winds. We didn't plan on moving camp until we dropped down to our gear store so we took our time making it as bombproof as possible.

Happy with our efforts we stuffed our faces with a freshly caught salmon from the Twizel canals before heading out for an evening hunt, glassing the tops on the west side of Mount Alexandra and listening out for any bugles without much success, only picking up a lone hind right on dark.

The weather packed in overnight. It was time to hunker down at camp and experience the true Fiordland.



Enjoying the bluebird weather on day one

Our setup wasn't as good as we'd hoped - mainly because the tent decided that after three years of use it was now the right time to start leaking. The drip also happened to be on my side - lucky me. Rather than procrastinate and wait for a clearing in the rain that would likely never come, I hopped into my wet weather gear to move the fly over the tent.

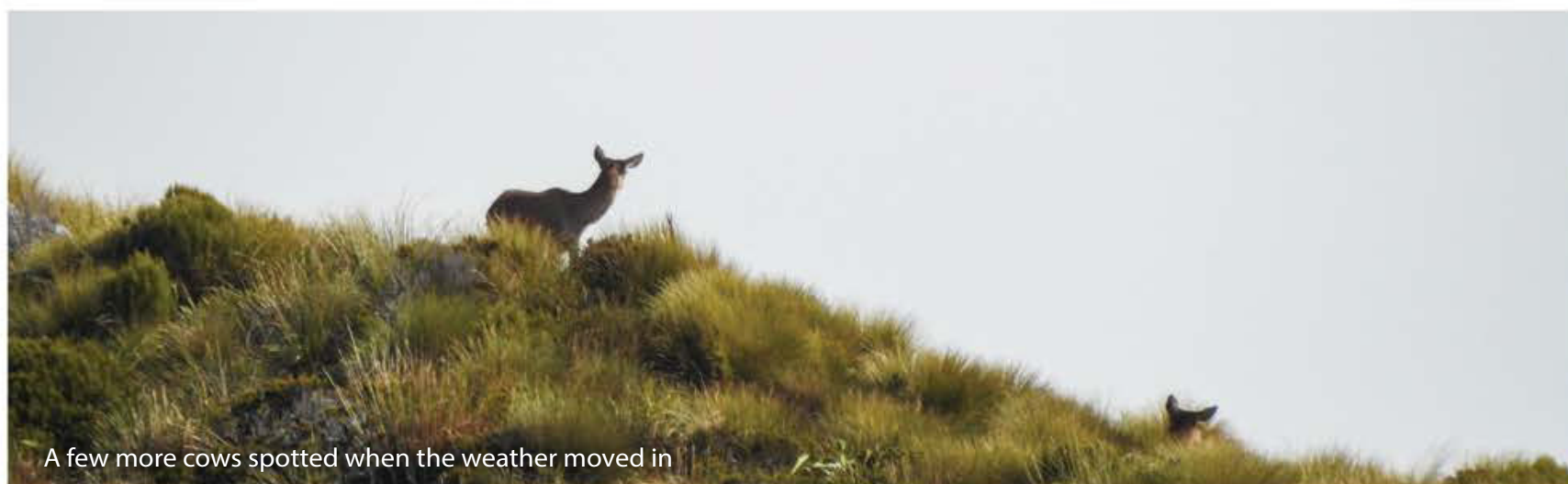
Thankfully Chris is a good bugger and jumped out to help me, and of course, the rain really started to come down while we re-tied the guy ropes. Our first tent day was enjoyable, and we were still in high spirits about the prospect of the next week. What were we going to see? Will we find the 'Mount Tanilba monster' we'd heard rumors about?

Although the rain had stopped you could tell the weather was going to turn again when we woke the next morning. It had cleared overnight but our sky was quickly filling in with more ominous looking clouds. We set off along the tops towards Mount Tanilba, getting blasted by the blistering winds humming over the ridgeline. As with the first night we found a few cows along the bush edges but struggled to locate any bulls. The only one we found was about three kilometres away on the ridges of Mount Tanilba. Although too far to make a decent assessment

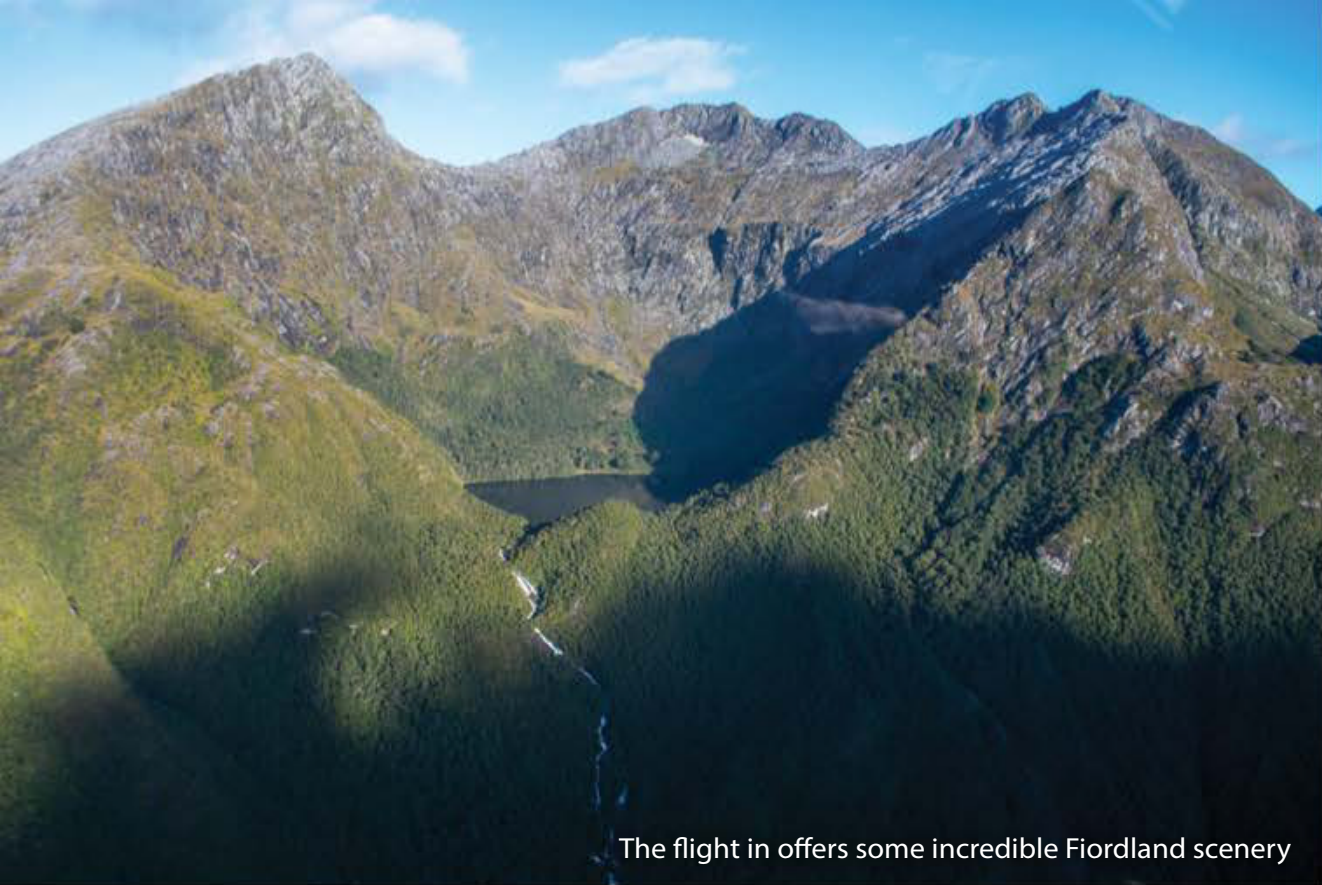
we knew he wasn't the bull we were after. We really wanted to hunt the head basin beneath Mount Tanilba but as the sounds of bugles were echoing up from the bush we were coaxed down under the canopy below.

The Fiordland bush is something else; it's a different world in there. Every surface is coated in a thick layer of green moss, and the ground is made up of equal parts soil and rotting logs and no matter what - it's always wet. Even after a week of sunshine you can expect to come out soaked after pushing through the untamed wilderness. You half expect a moa to run out from the trees ahead; in some areas you can only see five metres in front of your feet so who knows what could be through the next wall of bush. **As you push deeper into its grasp the outside world becomes irrelevant.** You don't even know what's going on above the canopy let alone back in the bustle of city life. Your GPS will bounce you around the steeply walled valleys as you watch it in disbelief whilst sitting down for a snack.

We didn't manage to stalk in on any bulls that afternoon and the skies opened to the predicted rain. This time the southerly airflow had a chill to it that March shouldn't be able to muster. It was time for our first check-in



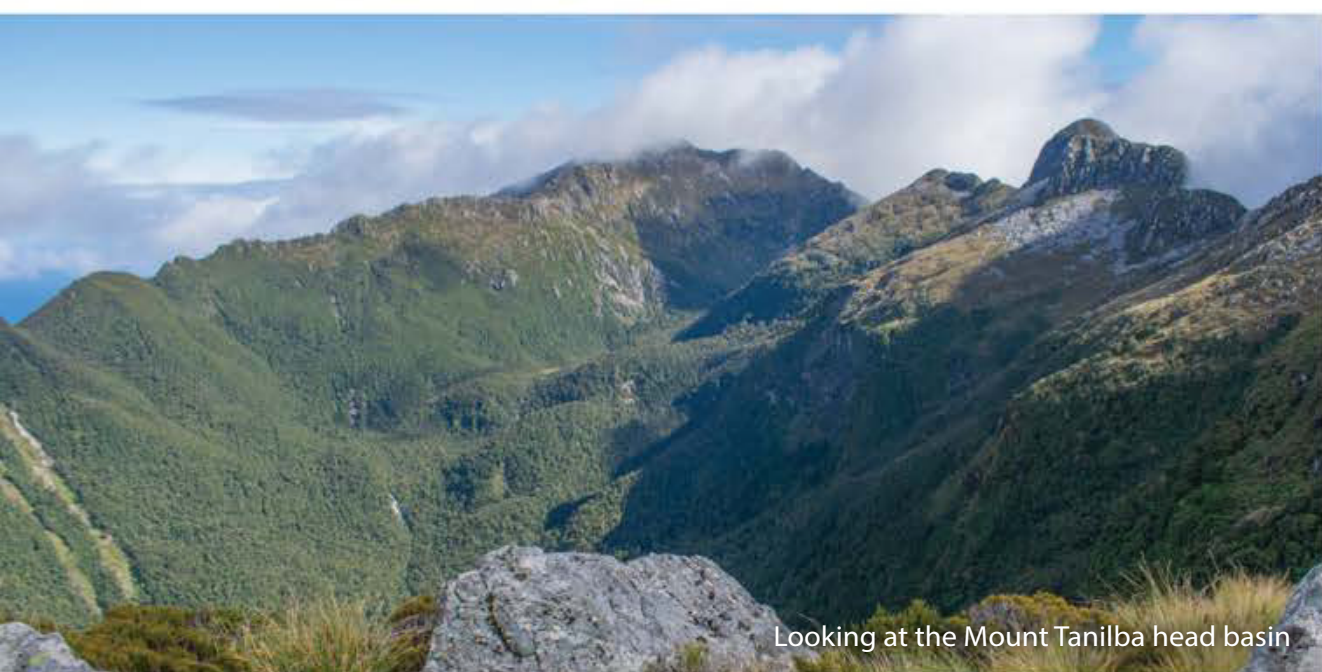
A few more cows spotted when the weather moved in



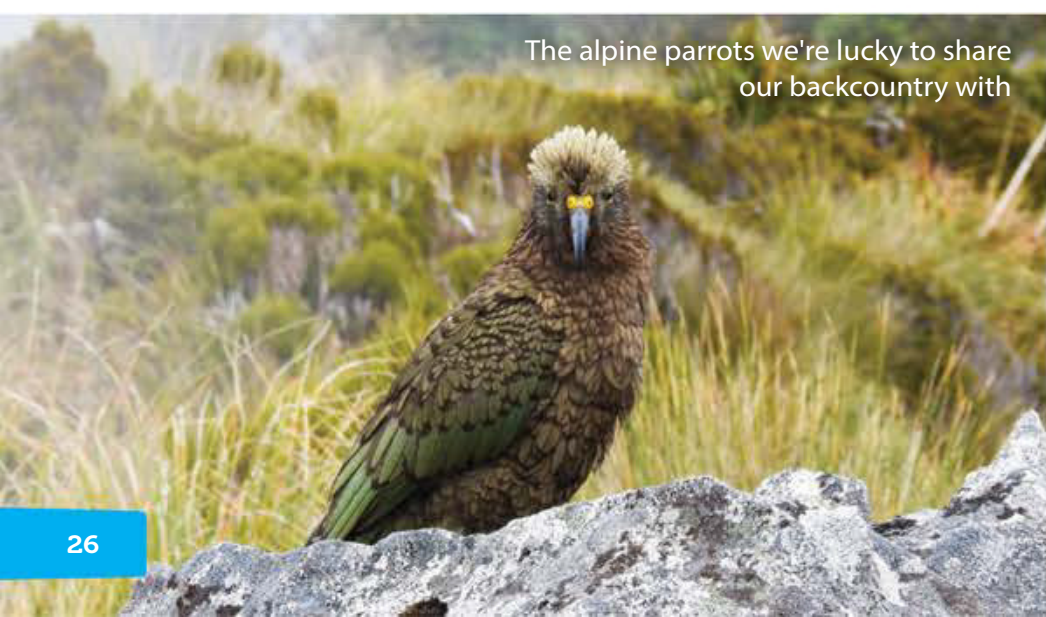
The flight in offers some incredible Fiordland scenery



Sunset from camp, the sheer amount of photos I took from this exact spot showed how long we spent here



Looking at the Mount Tanilba head basin



The alpine parrots we're lucky to share our backcountry with



Baldy the Weka en route to cause mischief

to home and weather update - the perks of an InReach. It might take an element of isolation away from an adventure, but the positives certainly make up for it. There were two lots of bad news. Covid had started to spread quite rapidly through New Zealand, and everything was a bit uncertain. The word lockdown was used but its definition or certainty was unclear - 180-character messages really limited the information communicated.

And there was worse news at the time - our weather forecast had turned to custard.

Rather than clearing the following day the southerly was going to stick around, bringing with it more rain, stronger winds and cooler temperatures. This was going to be followed by another wet nor 'west which would see us through until day 7. It looked clear for the final three days of our ballot. Our silver lining from the weather report was that the colder weather might get the bulls bugling, as they'd been relatively quiet so far.

The southerly blew in as expected, bringing with it plenty of rain and even a good dusting of snow for a couple of hours. I guess winter starts a bit earlier that far south. As we had had to move the fly over the tent, we'd lost the most of our dry space outside. We took turns half sitting out of the tent to get a change of scenery from the sleeping bag, and also swapping out the leaky airbed. Our toilet paper supply was running dangerously low, so we were on tight rations - truly living a life of luxury. Entertainment came from refilling the water supplies using the tap pouring off the fly and the regular game of hide and seek with any loose bits of gear we'd left lying around. **Baldy, the resident weka, was exceptionally good at this game.**

Later that day we turned the InReach on again in the hopes that our weather forecast had miraculously improved. Instead, we got bombarded by messages from our loved ones about the state of the world. Covid had started to spread rapidly, and New Zealand was going into a lockdown (whatever the hell that meant). The heli company had also messaged to say they were going to evacuate us in the next weather window. In a matter of seconds our longing for good weather turned into disappointment, for good weather meant the end of our trip. Our forecast came through - the next day looked

A wary hind we saw on the morning of day three



marginal before another two days of rain were predicted. That would spit us out two days into the lockdown, and we had no idea what that meant - in hindsight I don't think anyone did. We were being told the helicopter companies weren't allowed to fly during lockdown, so it's fair to say there was a bit of panic back home. We scheduled a lift out for 3pm the next day to give us time to have one last crack at a Wapiti bull.

It cleared for a bit that afternoon so without hesitation we leapt out of the sleeping bags to stretch the legs.

To add to our excitement the bulls were fired up! We were hearing bugles and roars consistently from the bush below. Knowing this could be our last chance to stalk a bull for the trip we didn't think twice about setting off into the soaked bush. He was down a ridge from us and making enough noise to stalk in without having to roar back. The ridge was easy stalking - a nice game trail ran down it so we could move relatively quietly. We'd closed the gap to about 100 metres before feeling the wind brush the backs of our necks. Immediately we dropped off the ridge to try and circle beneath him, but the gut we moved into was full of recent treefall and made for noisy travel. We got down to his contour and decided we would sidle straight onto the ridge; the wind was flipping up and down the hill and we didn't want to risk winding him. Our plan didn't work, so we had to climb a steep lip to make it back onto the ridge and between the two of us we made too much noise. The last we heard of him was a thud as he snuck away from his rut pad. We were left thinking 'what if' as we explored the area, marvelling at the rub marks above our heads.

The following morning we had camp packed up before first light and set off towards the head basin we wanted to scout out.

It was still drizzling and the scrub was soaked, and it took about three hours to get most of the way to the basin. At 9am we heard the distant thudding of a chopper coming our way. We were nowhere near a suitable landing site, and what on earth were they doing, coming so early? We turned the

InReach on to see a message along the lines of 'weather's packing it in, we'll be picking you up at 11am'. Thankfully the chopper we were looking at carried on to the next block over but that still left us the task of backtracking to our gear and probably the only suitable landing site on the ridgeline. The rain was starting to come back in again, pelting us in the face as it blew in sideways over the ridge. We rushed back to our gear, and made it back in time, only to get a message saying they weren't able to fly anymore, as the window had closed.

We finished off our trip with two more days of waiting out the rain in our little isolation tent. We had to ration our remaining food and our perceived idea of how much toilet paper was enough continued to decrease. So why did I write a story about a week-long hunt where we only saw a handful of deer? **A trip where 80% of our time was spent staring at the inside of a tent?**

ISOLATION.

When we returned home the world was a very different place. Over the next five weeks of our lives we were forced to stay home and 'isolate'; but not the type we so often seek. Why is this forced isolation such a different experience to the freedom we enjoy in the backcountry?

Well, I guess that's my first reason - freedom. Like a kid sent to their room we were all forced to stay home and dream about what we could be doing instead. For us hunters it was during the roar, a time that is eagerly anticipated from the second it's over the previous year. Plans

Chris wondering how the hell we're going to get back up



Having moved the fly our dry space was nearly non-existent

were cancelled, money was lost, and hopes were squashed. It was a bit of a tough pill to swallow but compared to the problems of the world it's nothing to dwell on. Some of us also found that we didn't mind our time at home: catching up on odd jobs, spending time with our families/flat mates and re-discovering old hobbies or even learning new ones. But still, I found that during lockdown, even while surrounded by all the comforts of home, I longed to be back in that tent, sitting in the cold, listening to the rain and blowing up the same air mattress for the fifth time in a day. You can't tell me I was missing the freedom - we were restricted to a three-square metre patch of bush with rationed food and toilet paper.

So, what else separates the two? Communication?

When venturing into the backcountry we lose contact with the everyday world. We aren't hearing the daily Covid case announcements or ever-changing alert levels and traffic light systems. We can't see the more-often-than-not depressing news headlines. We can disconnect from the rest of the world to focus on ourselves, strip the complexities away and just survive. **We've got time to contemplate our lives without the added pressure of the day-to-day grind.** There is time to think about what makes us tick and put our problems into perspective.



Although we were soaked and our trip was over we were in high spirits having been to such a magical place

And what about the adventure that's required to attain our isolation?

Where some people can wind back their idea of adventure - Beau Miles is an excellent example - others still seek that thrill only an expedition can provide. Uncertain when we would have freedom again the planning of adventures felt like treading water - what was the point when you don't know when, or if it can even happen? How are you meant to scratch that itch when a big outing meant going to the supermarket? **The excitement of bringing a topo map to life and finding out what's around that next corner or over that next**

ridge is a huge driver of my trips. Then there's the camaraderie.

There's no doubt about it - a good adventure can form the bonds of lifelong friendships. A lot of my best mates are those with whom I share adventures and trips up shit creek. There's nothing quite like looking at your mate at 2am in the pouring rain en route to a hut that may or may not still exist, thinking 'what the bloody hell have we got ourselves in for?'. From the excitement of planning to the shared challenges we overcome, missions bring us together. I can't say my time spent on the PlayStation during lockdown brought me too much closer to my

mates- although it was a bit of fun. There are many differences between these two types of isolation but in my experience, there were also a few similarities. Toilet paper was in short supply and entertainment was hard to come by. What we wanted was within sight but just out of reach. It was a break from everyday life, and it really broke the mold of the nine to five grind. So, I encourage you, if you're forced to isolate, use it the same way you'd use an adventure. **Live a simpler life, strip back the complexities and look after yourself. You'll be able to get back out there again soon.**



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muzz

A GOOD MATE

WRITTEN BY ~ JONATHAN FULTON

Standing on top of a picturesque waterfall found whilst hunting.

Tuesday 24th March 2020 was a traumatic day for my family, as we had one of our beloved hunting dogs fatally injured by a pig

Ice was loved not only for her hunting ability, but her warm nature and constant desire for affection.

From a hunting point-of-view she left a huge hole – the second good dog in our kennels to be killed in less than 12 months – leaving us with only our main bitch, and a 12 month old pup to soldier on.

‘Hero to Zero’ is an adequate term to describe my hunting in the weeks and months that followed!

From regularly catching pigs with two hard bailing bitches, to suddenly having pigs walking on the dogs, and watching an experienced dog lose some of her confidence at the loss of her mate, was an unpleasant pill to have to try to swallow! The only other dog I had – Tiger – still had a lot of maturing to do at 12 months of age and offered little or no support to Jazz when called upon. Catching any pig – least of all a boar when hunting in some of the harder blocks in Northland

suddenly became a mission.

Help sometimes comes from unexpected quarters, and it was my hunting mate, **Dan, who threw me a lifeline when he offered to lend me a dog out of his kennels to run with Jazz.** Murray, or Muzz, was one of his breed – a black, leggy, whiskery dog with both Airedale and Lockley in his lineage. He was an older dog – brother to Jazz from an earlier litter, with 5 years of solid hunting experience, and I accepted Dan's offer gratefully and without hesitation.

Muzz had been hamstrung by a boar at a relatively young age - leaving him with a permanent limp and limited mobility in both back legs - an injury which he would carry for life. It slowed his chasing speed and prevented him from ever reaching his full catching potential, but, as I was to learn in the five short months he was in my kennels, he showed there is a lot more than just sheer speed involved when it comes to either catching, or containing good boars. Importantly, the dog himself was a real character – he loved a pat, craved affection, and fitted in to life with

us seamlessly.

Jazz and Muzz – brother and sister – in fact hunted very similarly. After a bumpy start, it didn't take her long to warm to her hairy, battle-scarred companion, and it didn't take them long to form a hunting bond of sorts. Whilst Jazz was responsible for most of the catching, Muzz could raise his paw for making sure pigs “stayed caught”. **He was a bailing lynchpin, who tried not to allow even the most dog-wise of boars to walk or break from a bail.** In the short time I hunted him intensively, whenever his familiar deep bark joined the higher pitched tone of his companion I could relax a little, and slow down and not risk my neck going to the bail.

Every now and again Muzz would surprise me by sneaking off by himself and catching his own pig. Considering his injuries, I can honestly say I didn't think he was capable of doing this, and the first time it happened my lack of faith nearly cost Muzz his pig.

As already stated, we only had Muzz for an autumn and a winter, but in this time he and Jazz were responsible for the capture of three special boars. **For a self-confessed weekend warrior** – for whom getting ‘bushed’ was mandatory pre-GPS technology, and whose only real hunting skill is to “keep walking”, trophy boars are as rare as gold nuggets in Puketi Forest! To catch three in succession is akin to multiple lightning strikes, so it only seems fair to tell the story of each!

THE ELUSIVE BOAR

With a mix of rain, wind, sunshine and cloud compressed into an afternoon, mid-winter in the far North was revealing its usual unpredictable hand. A busy landscaping day had finished unexpectedly early, so, three hours before dark Muzz, Jazz and their younger brother Tiger were loaded into the dog-box, and the truck pointed north to a large area of native forest inland from Whangaroa.

If not forestry pine, a lot of Northland's hunting country comprises of what can only be described as semi-tropical native rainforest. Puketi, Omahuta and Otangaroa are examples, with often steep, rugged country blanketed in mature trees, with terraces of nikau palms, and gullies choked full of vines and rotting vegetation. This terrain is favoured by pigs, which in turn attracts hordes of pig hunters and their dogs. It can be exciting country to hunt due to the sometimes spectacular scenery, and the chance to catch boars that – if left to grow to maturity – more often than not grow impressive tusks. It was where I had chosen to hunt on this particular evening, and now quietly parked the truck before unloading the dogs and commencing a familiar loop.

These forests are not big by national standards – Northland is a relatively narrow peninsula, which gets skinnier the further north one travels – but largely thanks to supplejack vine and heavy, erosion-prone clay soils, it is rugged country, and extremely difficult to penetrate effectively without cutting tracks, or using old roading networks formerly used for log extraction.

Only minutes from the vehicle, on an ancient, overgrown forestry road, Muzz, Jazz and Tiger put their noses down and quietly tracked into the undergrowth and out of sight. There were no prints or rooting to give a clue as to what they could smell, but it was close to where a mature boar had left hoof marks in the soft clay crossing from time to time over the past 18 months. **Not a big pig – I guesstimated his weight to be somewhere around 100lbs – his blunt, rounded print and elusive habit spoke of age.**

Standing on the track scarcely 300 metres from the vehicle, intently watching the Garmin screen it showed the three dogs quietly but purposefully climbing up through the steep bluffs, before Jazz and Tiger unexpectedly separated, did a u-turn and started to come back down their line towards me. I expected Muzz to follow, but minutes later he went over the ridge on his own, some 700 metres distant, and I abruptly lost GPS communication with him.

With Jazz and Tiger back, but still no sign of Muzz, the decision was made to carry on with the intended hunt, thinking that he would catch us up in his own time. Darkness was pressing, and in the back of my mind I reasoned that an old dog with a gammy leg stood little chance of catching a running pig in the steep, thick terrain we were in. So, one foot in front of the other, the three of us plodded off, into the ever-darkening native.

Forty minutes later, it really was getting gloomy, and I was concerned that Muzz still hadn't joined us. The country was not conducive to fast travelling, with thick, vine-clogged creeks, and any tracks – old native logging roads – completely overgrown with supplejack vines. We were now quite high, so on a small ridge head covered in flax and turutu but with no canopy overhead I decided to check the GPS unit again, to try and establish the whereabouts of my absent dog. My heartbeat raised a notch when his symbol suddenly came up 'treed' in a distant



Murray's boar - Jazz in the background



A mouthful of tusks and grinders!



Jazz on left, Hook the pup in middle, Muzz on right - Brother and sister. Hook and Jazz are now my main dogs

gully over a kilometer away. Seconds later I lost 'comms', and reasoning it was a system blip, chose to ignore it and continued to climb. Then the bark indicator sounded, and after a moments confusion excitement levels spiked when I realized Muzz was definitely bailing a pig, way back past the truck.

Action stations! It was all downhill – or at least level – but with more than a kilometre to cover in encroaching darkness the landscaping fitness kicked in,

and a shambolic 'beat-the-dark' run ensued, with two confused dogs following behind. Luckily experience intervened - in times like this as well as a full-blown physical charge, mentally planning the best navigation route is vitally important, and mistakes have taught me this is very rarely the most direct way! One small side-creek producing barely a trickle of water, can turn into a tangled web of vines, rotten logs





The second boar where he fell, with a beautiful set of ivories



and slippery, sheer sided rock that will stall progress for minutes as you carefully pick through with your gun and pikau. This evening we somehow fluked it, taking the right turns at the right times, and in less than 20 minutes the dogs and I puffed our way past the truck, closing in on Muzz. The entire time his bark indicator had been sounding its alarm, but rounding the final corner and climbing out of the stream, I still had not heard a sound. Jazz and Tiger however had gone, and on checking the GPS unit my heart sank with the realisation that they had joined him, and the three were making their way back towards me at speed.

The very DNA of pig-hunting with dogs is that it is a roller-coaster of highs and lows, and right at that moment confusion, frustration, and disappointment were overpowering emotions as I happened to glance up and see a stocky black boar, mouth open and a huge set of ivories jutting out – come galloping down the hill, swerve past the tree I was standing behind, and crash off through the dense undergrowth. **Seconds later Muzz, closely followed by Jazz, came flying through.**

Only 90 metres below me I heard them catch the boar, and when I arrived less than a minute later the two ‘bailers’ had the old pig anchored by a back leg each to stop him running any more. Knife out, a firm grip of his tail and the job was done, and I sat back to soak up the moment and celebrate a special dog, and a mate good enough to send him my way in a time of need.

Closer inspection revealed this was the boar that we’d been searching for over the past 18 months. His tusks were a beautiful set – long and even – and his grinders spoke of age, with worn faces, and mass that curled back like Cape Buffalo horns. **I decided then and there to get the head mounted, reasoning it would be a long time before another boar like this came our way. Little were we to know!**

IT STARTS WITH A RUMOUR

Less than two weeks later, the same three dogs were collared and headed north on the back of the truck, in pursuit of a pig I had heard whispers about. “Pig Rumours” have never been enough of a reason to hunt somewhere, but the chance to explore new country, with solid permission, was motivating enough.

A lovely clear, cold winters evening unfolded as I received instructions from the landowner, then left the truck and walked into the wind to points as yet unknown. Some beautiful country lay before the dogs and I – from a high hill clean, undulating

paddocks fell away in rhythmic folds to a distant scrub boundary, and in all the major gullies acres of mature native trees grew. These no doubt provided cover for pigs when they fed on the pasture after dark, and I was surprised when two of the dogs casually sauntered into the nearest patch of native close to where I had parked, and ten minutes later had not emerged.

Pulling the tracker out, it revealed the two had slowly made their way up through the thick native face, and were fossicking around just below the skyline. As I watched, Muzz and Jazz suddenly leapt out of the screen, and I lost them over the top of the ridge. Certain that they had just put up a pig and were now ‘chasing’, Tiger and I climbed hard for the skyline where we found the two, bailing a large ginger sow beside a small dam in a clean, grass paddock.

Killing and gutting the sow, which was in good condition, dragging her to the closest farm track for a later pick-up, my eyes were continually drawn to the boundary proper, where hundreds of acres of quite low, tight mānuka scrub dissolved into the hazy distance. This was where the tusky boar had been seen, and this was where, I resolved, there was just enough time left in the day to partially explore!

Pig hunting is not unlike most forms of hunting in that, in order to be consistently successful, you usually have to walk. Putting one foot in front of the other is a small price to pay for the excitement of watching experienced dogs work, and after a brief spell of ‘power-walking’ it was nice to approach the bush edge and see signs of recent pig activity – patches of fresh rooting as well as hoof prints in the soft clay. Yet again, the two older dogs quietly disappeared into the scrub and, after a moment’s hesitation Tiger decided to join them.

Tracking parallel with the scrub edge, 200 metres in from the grass, minutes later the three were nearly a kilometre distant, not chasing game but obviously following a reasonably fresh scent. Then abruptly, Jazz and Muzz simultaneously ‘treed’, and when Tiger joined them my suspicions were aroused. These were not the sort of pigs to just stand and bail – there was always a chase involved, so whatever the dogs had caught it must be tiny. A little flicker of anger at the thought of them stretching a ‘sucker’ gripped me, and I put my best foot forward to get there quickly. Another stint of power walking, closing in on the gully where they had stopped, and there was no sound of bailing to set the heart racing, only silence. 100 metres to go, still no noise and Tiger came back to me, looking sheepish, but then at last a bark drifted up to my eager ears.

Pushing carefully through the last stand of dense pencil mānuka, tight bracken and low, wiry fern, I stepped into a small clearing of crushed undergrowth interlaced with pig trails. **Taking a moment for my eyes to adjust, the view I focused on is still crystallised in my minds-eye.** A big, muddy-coloured boar stood perfectly still five metres away, backed into the fern with his head lowered, grinding his tusks. Only his ears moved as he focused every molecule of energy on the dogs.

Three metres in front of him, and slightly to his right stood Muzz, himself anchored, returning the focus, a constant, deep bark emanating from him. Jazz bounced around and flitted through the gaps, bailing the entire time, her attention directed at the pigs 'back end'. Quietly lifting the gun, looking down the length of the boar's broad back, I aimed for an imaginary dot that would send the bullet into his vitals and pulled the trigger. He crashed to the ground, and I pounced on him to stick him, and for the first time saw his jaw. In a moment's hesitation I moved from a 'throat stick' to a 'shoulder stick' as I realised here was another 'oncer' trophy, his tusks even bigger than the one caught two weeks before.

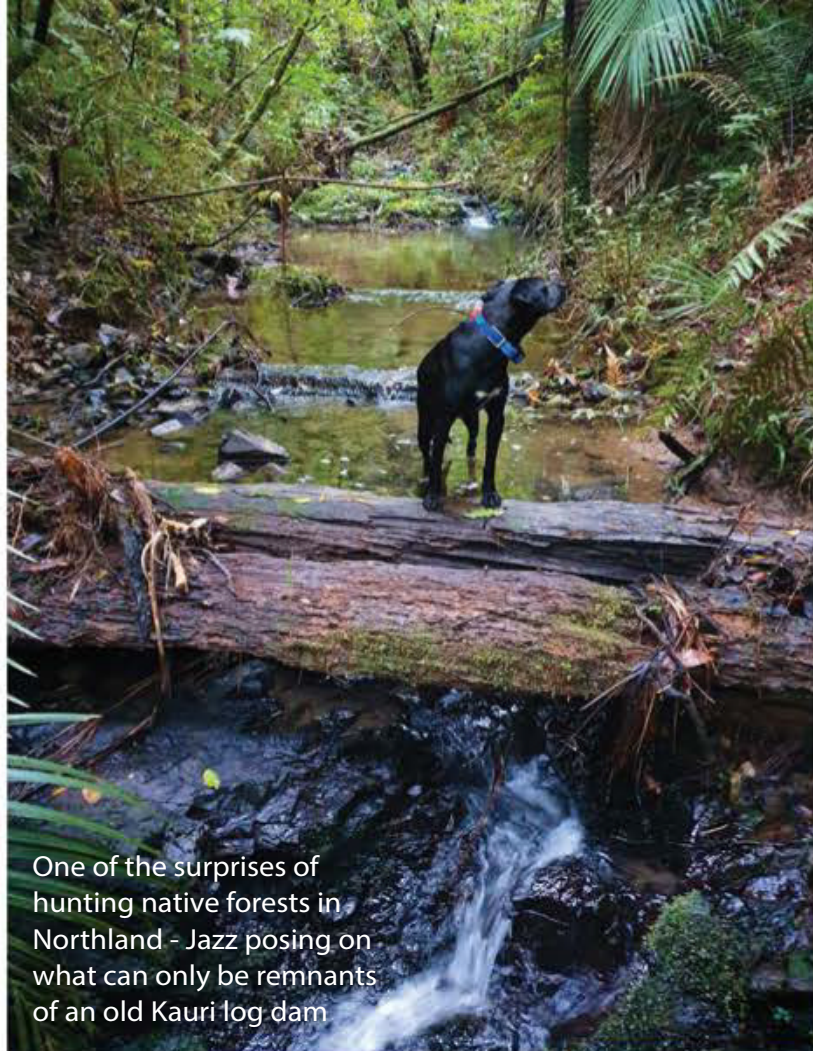
In between family and work, and all the other things that make up life, one's mind can often wander to thoughts of hunting, and lately I have pondered why this pig never ran, in fact never moved. Having hunted the surrounding scrub for more than 20 years, a block renowned for 'runners', this is the first – and probably last – boar I have encountered to do this. The only explanation is that this pig was expecting - and preparing – for the dogs to attack him, and was not familiar with dogs that stood off and barked. There was no doubt he had been dogged before – he had scars to prove it. Whatever, I felt very lucky to have caught such a pig.

GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES

A Friday evening in August was planned as the final hunt for said three dogs – the following day Dan was coming up and we had arranged that he would take Muzz back with him. With no particular spot in mind, I made a phone call, loaded the dogs and gear in the truck and began the familiar trek North.

So often hunting is about trying to catch a particular pig, but very rarely it is simply about getting away, and clearing the head after a busy week. This was one of those evenings, when I was just keen to climb a hill with my dogs, and enjoy the solitude of an isolated place without worrying about tomorrow. That said, we left the truck parked on a high ridge, and made our way across clean paddocks to a distant boundary post, separating scrub from grass. The fence line was run-down, and there were holes up and down its length. A warm breeze blew out of the mānuka, and, with the sun not far from setting, walking the fence line seemed the best option.

Turning right, I had in mind a particularly well-used run-hole in a slight dip, where pigs occasionally wallowed in the soft,



One of the surprises of hunting native forests in Northland - Jazz posing on what can only be remnants of an old Kauri log dam

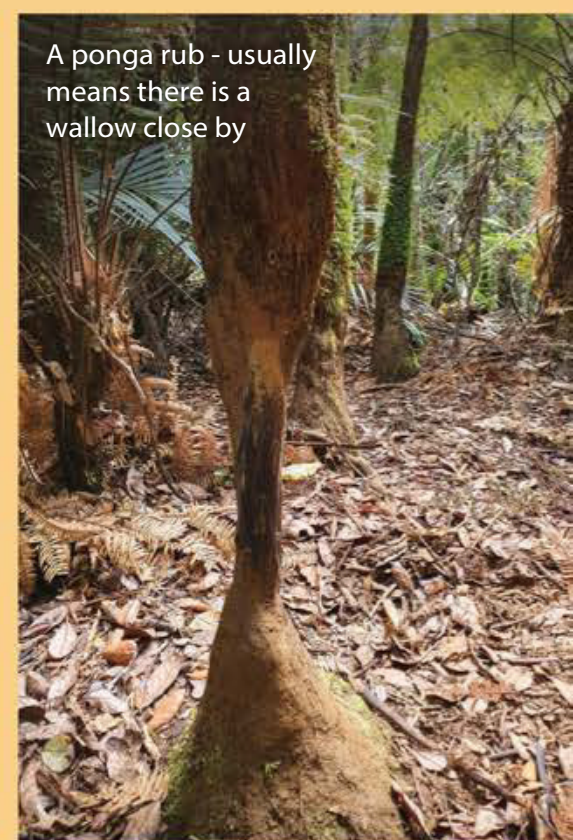


Hook the pup poses with boar number three, thick ivories!

cattle-churned mud. Before reaching this however, the three dogs put their noses down and tracked into the tight regenerating scrub. After waiting for 15 minutes, impatience got the better of me, and I quietly walked along to the dip. Sure enough, a small pig had been out the night before. Jazz chose that moment to come loping back, closely followed by Muzz and Tiger. Walking down to the runhole, clicking my fingers I sent them through for one final scout around.

The crackling of the dogs pushing through the tight fern quickly gave way to silence as they moved out of earshot. Strangely, the GPS indicated they had gone back to the same area they had just been fossicking in, quite a way down in a swampy, tight, mānuka-filled gully. Then they were moving again, back up the hill towards the runhole, but following a different line until, only 70 metres under where I was standing, they turned and began to sidle across the face. **It was so quiet I could hear every crackle and puff, then around 50 metres in front of them a loud "whoosh" as a wary pig stood up and ran.**

Whether they realised it had run, or whether they thought they were still tracking it, the pace seemed to increase as they hit the wall of fresh smell and accelerated away. At first staying high, the chase soon headed down towards the valley bottom, Jazz edging ahead as Muzz's gammy leg started to trouble him. A familiar story began to unfold – Jazz, young and injury free outpacing the others as she tried her utmost to haul in her quarry. To its credit the pig was staying in the tight confines of dense mānuka scrub, running small circles, trying to avoid the creek beds and raupō swamp in the valley's bottom – a dangerous place for a pig to be caught by dogs. But Jazz doggedly stuck to the scent, and around 30 minutes later and over a kilometre below where I stood, the GPS suddenly indicated she was sitting I waited with bated breath for Muzz to arrive, and confirm she was indeed bailing a pig and hadn't simply knocked off. When, after a further ten minutes he



A ponga rub - usually means there is a wallow close by



Daniel Grimmatt, who bred Jazz (pictured) and Muzz, kneels behind Murray's last boar

and Tiger simultaneously 'treed' beside her, the decision had already been made to run back to the truck and drive around five kilometres out of the farm and along a gravel road, which should get me to less than 300 metres from where the dogs were. Much quicker than bashing a kilometre through tight vegetation in the dark!

Pulling up at the road side, the magical sound of three dogs bailing their hearts out drifted out of the dark. Head-torch and pikau on, gun over shoulder and bullets in the front pocket, then running across the paddock to the scrub edge, the reality of shooting an angry boar in thick cover with a head-torch began to sink in. Sneaking in to the bail, my first glimpse of the pig as he moved between trees confirmed he was a good one, but he had smelt me and seen the torch light and was trying his best not to stand. The beam from the head torch picked up every

frond and branch and reflected the light back, making it very difficult to see the boar in the sights. This was my excuse! When the first shot sailed high, he broke over a low ridge and I thought I had blown my chance, but some honest dogs and more terrible shooting soon had him down.

He had charged me – mouth open - before the final, killing shot and I had time to see impressive tusks, but it wasn't until I knelt on his head to stick him, that I saw what a bristly old battle-tank he really was. However, there was no time to enjoy the moment as Jazz had been ripped in the back leg and was bleeding heavily.

Some good friends (also hunters) living up the same metalled road I had parked the truck on helped me to stop the bleeding and really contributed to saving Jazz's life. Then, with the help of a mate we carried the pig out, and, after tending to wounds, feeding and kenneling the dogs and taking care of the pig, it was another late night to bed! It wasn't until the next morning, in the cold hard light of day, that I realised we had caught another trophy boar, an old pig with the scars of life to match, and thick, polished ivories that had nearly claimed another dog's life.

MURRAY'S FINAL HUNT

Six weeks after taking him home, Dan was back staying at ours, for a weekend of hunting. On Saturday morning, Muzz, Jazz and the young dogs teamed up to catch a ginger boar with black spots and uneven, broken tusks. Muzz was badly injured, and later had to be put to sleep. There is an old saying that "you don't know what you've got until it's gone", but, personally having endured years of average dogs, I appreciated every day I hunted behind him. Dan rated him very highly, and he sets the bar a lot higher than I do! **Muzz contributed to a lot of memory moments, and he won't be forgotten.**



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ALL THE BELLS AND WHISTLES

WRITTEN BY ~ CODY WELLER

TIGHT SPOT QUIVER

NO. 8 BOWSTRINGS

HHA SIGHT

DROP-AWAY ARROW REST

FRONT STABILISER

Bows and arrows. These can be as simple as you like or a technical mine field. The choice is yours. As the years have ticked by, I've veered towards the technical type. When I was a young lad, I didn't need or understand the finer details of a technical setup.

Back then, it was just about trying to get some unsuspecting critter with an arrow, regardless of size

My bow was setup pretty much as a point and shoot - fingers straight onto the string, pull it back, look along the arrow and instinctively shoot. It worked well enough on small game and even on the occasional big game animal.

As time went by, the urge to make more big game animal kills was getting the better of me. I would see stories of bowhunters who'd killed a stag, then the same hunter would appear again after six months and he'd got another one. These fellas often had sights. I was told, you could just aim right at the spot you wanted to hit and that's where the arrow would go, and I would see it for myself at



A good peep sight tied in correctly is essential for front sight alignment



Having a bright D-loop seems simple but can really make a difference



My full containment arrow rest. While there's all sorts of variations out there, I've found this one the most reliable

target shoots. These fellas often seemed to get the arrow in the kill. I had shot big game by now, but there was a desire to get better. So, as time went by, my bows evolved along with me.

Nowadays, my bow could be mistaken for a target setup and I like it. My hunting is largely focused on big mature animals, although I still thoroughly enjoy taking a meat animal when the opportunity arises. But these days, more often than not, a trip away means that I'm after a particular animal. Back in the early stages, any stag was a good one. I would do a tahr trip to just get a tahr of whatever gender. Now I will sit back and wait to see what else is lurking.

Bow hunting is very difficult. Even with all the tech in the world, getting a particular animal can be crazy difficult. In this article I will describe my bow and talk about why it's evolved into what it is today.

My current bow is a Mathews V3X 29. It's loaded with a single-pin adjustable sight, a bow quiver, front and back stabilizers plus a drop-away arrow rest and is a very different looking setup to my early years of bowhunting. Time to dive a little deeper.

STRING AND CABLES

The bow comes with factory Zebra string and cables. The factory string and cables are okay, but not rock solid.

If you want minimal string movement, you must go custom. **Custom strings are pre-stretched to help reduce any movement after the bow is tuned.**

This helps eliminate peep rotation and D-loop twist. This is the same for the cables. Your cables are what times the cams - if these stretch, this will cause timing issues that will lead to your cams becoming out of sync that can lead to a decrease in accuracy and an inefficiency in energy output. Kevin & Carol Watson of Advanced Archery NZ have designed custom string and cable sets themselves, called "No. 8 Bowstrings" and I've been using these on all my bows since they were created.

Within that string, I use a Specialty Archery PXL peep sight. This helps with alignment of the front sight. This is threaded so that, if need be, I can adjust my peep size without taking the old one out. I also like to run a bright coloured D-loop. This definitely helps me to locate it in low light conditions, sometimes even buying a little more time to make the shot.

Strings are the heart of bow. The limbs store the energy, but the string and cables time everything and transfer that energy into the arrow on the shot. I go as far as natural-coloured strings, just to eliminate any variation that might occur during the dying process of the string fibres.

ARROW REST

The arrow rest is the last thing that your arrow will be in contact with before leaving the bow, so it must be consistent and reliable. I've seen first-hand how disappointing it is for people when they realised why they missed a particular animal was due to rest failure. For me, it's a drop-away rest for accuracy with broadheads. A drop-away rest supports the arrow for the duration of the power stroke and drops away just before the arrow fletching gets to the arrow rest. This should mean limited variation as the arrow slides along the rest until its launch. I use a Hamskea Hybrid Hunter because of the capability of micro adjustments for ultra-fine tuning. Another feature of this rest is full arrow containment for those tricky stalking moments. It's a very robust system that hasn't let me down.

SIGHT

As with all archery gear, there are many sights to choose from, it's almost to the point where it's mind-boggling. Over the years, I've tried a few different brands but always end up circling back to the brand 'HHA sights'.

Front and back stabilizers to balance the bow, helping it sit right so at full draw it doesn't feel like it needs a wheel alignment!

I have my quiver set up so the arrows are as close to the bow as possible, without interfering with other accessories

Pinpoint accuracy for better downrange performance. I can dial my sight right down to the yard





Owner - Allan Foot

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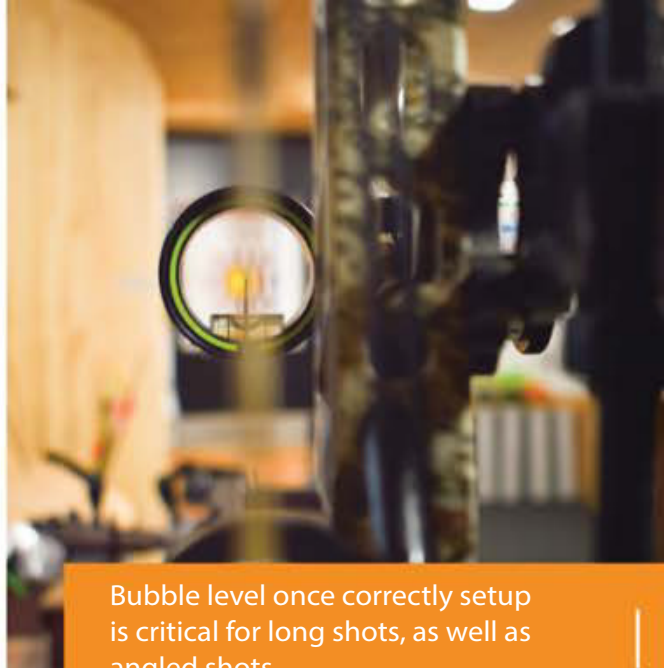


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Bubble level once correctly setup is critical for long shots, as well as angled shots



My first deer with the bow and arrow. I still managed to shoot the odd big game animal, but less than 20yds was realistic

They specialise in a single-pin adjustable sight. One pin, and nothing else to confuse or take up my sight picture. Simple is great when the mind is redlining about the current hunting situation. I can dial this sight to the exact yardage required for making longer shots. It's a solid, extremely durable sight and there's no doubt in my mind when I'm hunting that my HHA is up to the task.

QUIVER

Most New Zealand bowhunters used a bow quiver. It suits our way of hunting-spot and stalk, bush stalking and so on. We move around a lot, so it makes sense to just have the arrows as part of the bow and in one unit. A bow quiver does alter the weight of your bow. Basically, it's a bracket that holds your arrows in order, and that is fixed to your bow. It adds weight to one side of your setup, putting things a little off balance. Some quivers are better than others at minimising that imbalance which is why I run what is called a Tight Spot.

This quiver attaches further back on the bow towards the cables. It can also be adjusted closer to the main string and tight into the bow, to help reduce excess weight hanging off the side. This should help with a more stable shot and make manoeuvring through the bush a little easier. The Tight Spot also has a quick detach feature, which allows you to take it off for travelling with ease, or even to make a difficult shot on a windy day.

STABILISERS

Stablisers aren't a must but once you've got used to them, I believe there is no turning back. Think about it. All your other accessories mount to one side of your bow. This creates quite a weight-bias off to one side. Within the sight housing is a bubble level, which must be level to make good steep-angled shots and is critical for longer shots. Because of weight-biases all on one side of your bow, you have to correct it by introducing some kind of pressure to counter that weight. I guess it's like driving a vehicle when the wheel alignment is out. You always have to

keep some pressure on the steering wheel to keep the vehicle straight.

This is why I run a 10" side bar around 6 oz off that side. This helps even out the weight of all those other accessories. I used to use an 8" bar but had to use 8 or 9 oz in weight to get the bubble level naturally sitting centre. Therefore, moving to a 10" gave me more leverage without the unwanted extra weight. Yes, it does stick out, but I have become used to managing the bow as I move around the hill. **Out the front, I use a 12" bar with 3 oz in weight.** This is more to slow down the pin float, which isn't a bad thing when you have a critter in front of you or you're required to make a longer shot.

My stabilisers do stick out and some people probably wouldn't put up with the inconvenience of them catching or bumping into things. However, I would rather take the extra time and deal with the occasional snag in order to have a very stable platform from which to launch my arrow from. Both stabilisers have a quick disconnect system and the rear bar can be rotated and angled to find the position that suits the shooter.

Basically, my bow looks like a mini target bow. Small enough to hunt with, yet stable enough to shoot out 70 or 80 yards, if conditions allow. Don't get me wrong - 20 to 30 yards is perfect and with bowhunting - close is good. **But, bowhunting is very difficult at the best of times.** Then add targeting a specific animal to the mix and it can be downright hard. This is why I go to the extreme of gizmos for miles.

I could dive into arrows, release aids, rangefinders and broadheads but I might save that for another day. If there is anything that gets a conversation going in the bowhunting world, it's: **"what broadheads do you use?"**, but I'm sticking to the bow and its accessories for this article. And at the end of the day, they all help but it really boils down to the person executing the shot. You still have to get that right and place that arrow perfectly. **So I would rather leave nothing to chance and let the percentages add up.**





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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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WRITTEN BY ~ EMIL HANSEN AND WILLIE DULEY

Part 7

WHAT CAMERA SHOULD I BUY

EDITING VIDEO

Welcome to the time consuming but extremely rewarding world of video editing. It's a whole different kettle of fish compared with photo editing, but you can capture and retell memorable backcountry moments in a way that a photo simply cannot

Put simply, it's the process of piecing together video clips, images, and audio, to create a seamless and condensed movie that's entertaining and informative for people to watch.

A lot of the process depends on the footage you have to work with and what exactly you want the finished product to be, whether it's telling the whole storyline of a trip in the hills, a punchy highlight reel or a short teaser video. As with photos, the more work and effort you put in when capturing the content out on the hill, the smoother and easier the editing process is going to be - especially when it comes to telling a complete storyline. **Remember your viewers were not on the trip, do not know the country, how things unfolded or the discomforts you experienced.** This means that you need to try and capture the whole journey, get enough establishing shots* for each scene, and make sure there are plenty of travel and scenic shots in between the talking or dialogue clips so that it doesn't end up being back-to-back GoPro selfies. This also creates better flow and transitioning between scenes resulting in a product

that is really engaging to watch.

**A shot used at the beginning of a sequence to establish an overview of the scene that follows. It sets up, or establishes, the context for a scene by showing the relationship between its important figures and objects. It is often at the beginning of a scene indicating where, and sometimes when, the remainder of the scene takes place – for example, a broad scenic shot of a river valley you are hunting in, perhaps with the characters walking up it.*

The more footage you capture, the better - to a certain degree. It's all about getting the camera out when things are happening and not just when you're comfortable to do so. Cold and raining, or traversing something steep, are key moments that tell part of your story, even if filmed on a cellphone or a GoPro. Talking about it afterwards or when you're back at camp in the dry just isn't quite the

same. Keeping all these things in mind when you're filming in the hills will make it a lot easier when you're back home and tackling a video edit.

VIDEO EDITING SOFTWARE

To edit videos, you'll need a video editing software program. You can do simple things with apps on your phone, but a good editing program will make the process less tedious and give a better result. There are many options out there and most computers come with a free version (e.g. Windows Movie Maker, Clipchamp, or iMovie) but they're basic with limited functions. I use Adobe's Premiere Pro which is a very powerful tool and one of the better options available. Adobe is subscription based, and various plans let you have access to more of their full suite of apps. It's all integrated and linked, so with a few clicks you can go from editing in Premiere Pro to audio editing in Audition or doing motion graphics and visual effects in After Effects. For the hobby video editor this is probably more than they'll need, and

the free versions might be satisfactory as a start.

I've also used PowerDirector, Vegas Pro and Final Cut Pro, which all have their own advantages and disadvantages. The main differences are the price tags, presets (effects etc.) and level of user friendliness. A quick Google search will tell you which platform might best suit you and your computer hardware. Video editing is also very demanding of your computer and the quality of your processor, ram, graphics card and storage will have a major effect on your speed. It's a very time-consuming process and finding a workflow that allows you to save time without compromising quality is critical. Good presets and shortcuts are a big help if you're doing a lot of editing.

POST PRODUCTION

Before starting the editing process it's very important to have well organised footage and files, particularly if you have more than one camera. Simple things like having the date and time synced on all cameras and sticking to a regimented editing workspace and layout with folders and subfolders, can be a big help. This isn't as important if you've only got one camera with a couple of clips, but you might as well figure out a good system from the beginning. **Organisation at the start will pay you back ten times over in time saved when editing your video.**

There are a few extra steps and layers in video editing compared with photo editing. Essentially, you've got a timeline in which you build your project, and you're trying to make one seamless video of all your best shots and cuts. You do this by utilising your cutaways¹ and other shots you've captured in the hills (think scenic shots, close-ups, different angles etc.) and place these over anywhere you cut your dialogue scenes (you might cut out some 'ums' or 'errs' creating a jump-cut), and in the appropriate positions to show your journey going from one spot to another. The first editing step is to drop all your footage in your timeline in chronological order and trim away all the unnecessary parts, and then roughly arrange the clips in the order you want them shown. Most of your clips probably start too soon or end too late and trimming each clip will give you a more manageable timeline. The next step is where you can let your creativity flow. Precise trimming and removing unwanted clips, adding music where appropriate and trying to get a good pacing² throughout the video. Once that's done it's all down to fine tuning, perhaps adding voice overs, sound effects, text

and titles, and then cutting the video to the desired length. As simple as that... but bear in mind that this is very time-consuming!

¹ *Cutaways are a secondary shot that "cuts away" from the main action to indicate something else relative. If you had a person talking about the diet of a deer, you could have a cutaway to a broadleaf, while his dialogue is uninterrupted.*

² *Pacing is part of how you lead viewer's emotions. Short, sharp scenes can suggest excitement, while long, lingering shots might be more reflective or even sad.*

AUDIO

Audio usually comes with video

(unless Luke's filming with a flat microphone for a NZHA episode and hasn't picked up on it because he's not using headphones...). Sound plays such a huge part in a video, whether it's the audio recorded on the camera, general ambience, or added music tracks and voice overs in post-production. It's subtle yet so powerful in telling your story and portraying how you felt on the hill. Many say the audio of a video is just as important as the visuals, and you do really need to try your absolute best to get quality and clear audio when out filming.

It can be a good idea to invest in a decent microphone; either a shotgun microphone (directional) or a wireless lavalier microphone and have the appropriate wind shields or 'deadcats' to handle the mountain environment. It does depend a lot on what you're filming - if you're just 'run and gunning' or recording a roaring stag, a shotgun microphone would be best, but if you're trying to capture good dialogue between hunters, lavalier microphones on each

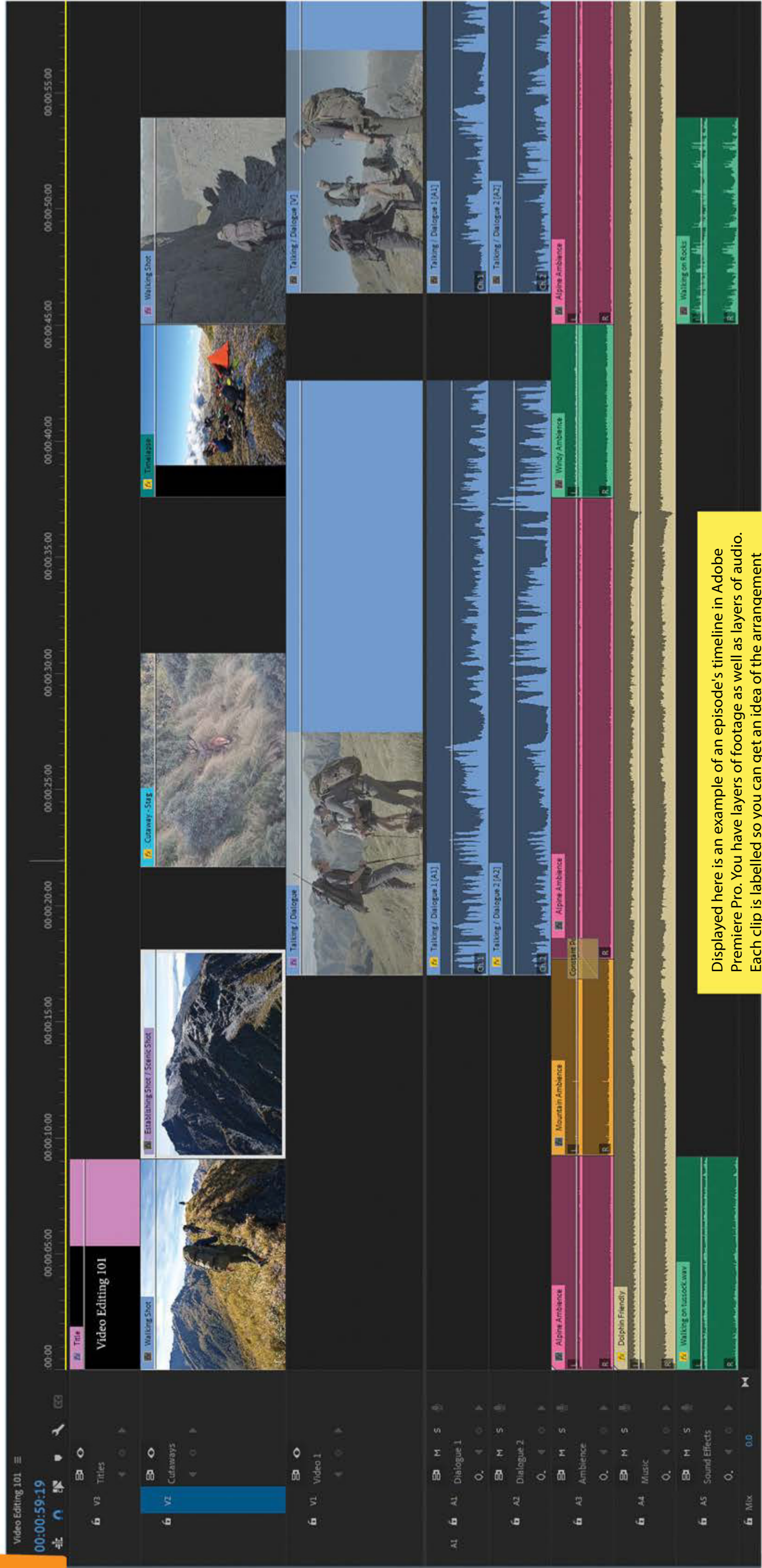


A shotgun mic with a large 'deadcat'. These are crucial for cutting down wind noise. External microphones record far superior audio than the in-camera microphone



This camera is using a lavalier microphone. The subject wears the wireless unit on the left and tucks the mic on their chest where it will get good audio. You can also fit 'deadcat' style wind shields to these small microphones too

person would be a better option. Again, getting good audio when filming saves plenty of time when you're editing and improves the quality of the end product. There's nothing worse than watching something with bad wind noise where you can only guess every second word of what is being said, and it doesn't matter how well it's framed or how good the image quality is, bad audio can simply ruin a video. I would also suggest using headphones when capturing crucial audio but not all cameras offer this option and have a headphone input. It isn't realistic to use headphones for everything but the more you can, the better. It might just help pick up a flat microphone or bad wind noise, and by turning the subject away from the wind or finding somewhere slightly more sheltered the clip can be "saved". Monitoring the sound



levels (amplitude) of your audio (usually measured in decibels) is important to pickup on overblown or extremely quiet audio – usually between -10 to -6dB is your sweet spot for quality audio.

There are effects and software that can repair bad audio to a certain degree, such as noise reduction or removing echo from a room. However, there is a fine line between repairing it and making it sound too artificial. So long story short - do it right in the field and not at home.

Ambience is also very important. As a general rule, there should always be some sort of ambient noise throughout the video. For example, if there's a scene in a forest, adding some light bird chatter makes it more real and will give your viewers the feeling that they're there with you. Having a decent microphone will help you get good ambient sound as it is often very quiet, subtle sounds that an internal camera microphone might not pick up.

When it comes to music, everyone has their own opinions on what is best suited. Nothing is right or wrong but there are certainly genres that suit better than others to each scene. A lot of beginners will edit a video to a strong music track, and it'll just end up being like a "music video" instead of using the music to add to the video and the emotions felt when on the hill. Again, it depends on what your desired outcome is and what footage you've got to work with, but a good rule of thumb is that you don't want your viewers to even think about the music. It should subtly add the right feeling to each scene. Make sure you're using royalty-free music to avoid any copyright issues if you're planning on sharing the finished video.

The last thing about audio is getting the levels right. There's nothing worse watching something where you have to keep adjusting the volume on your television - you know, when people are whispering, and you turn it up to hear what they are saying then next moment there's a shot and loud yahooing and you're left with blown speakers and tinnitus. To avoid extreme variances you can use the audio level monitor. This tool displays the volume of your audio and then you can adjust each clip it so it's consistent throughout

the video. -6db is a good level to aim for when making videos for social media. I always edit with headphones on but sometimes I will watch a video and listen using computer speakers or other audio outputs to better reflect what viewers on different devices might experience. This often helps find mistakes that you might not have picked up on with just headphones and vice versa. Lastly, if the audio can't be saved, whether it's because of wind noise or the volume, subtitles are a good option to consider and make the viewing experience far more enjoyable.

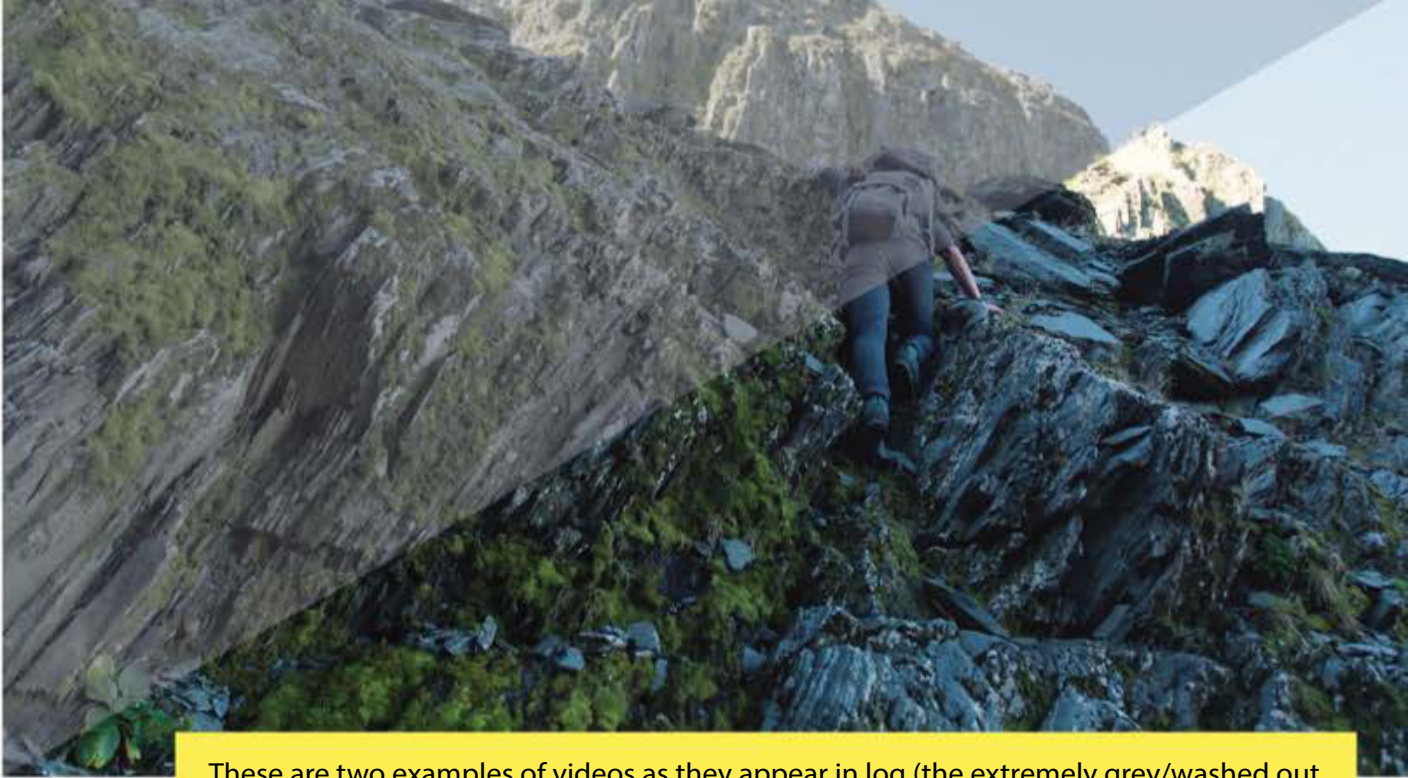
PICTURE PROFILES & RAW

You can also shoot videos in raw as you can with photos, which gives you more colour flexibility, but the file sizes are enormous, and it probably isn't worth it unless you're doing a high-level professional shoot. A compromise is shooting in a log (logarithmic) profile. This gives you a wider dynamic range without outrageous file sizes, allowing you to tweak the colours while also saving the highlights and shadows from clipping. Not all cameras have the ability to film in log (or raw for that matter). It isn't for everyone because it does add a few extra steps to your video editing process.

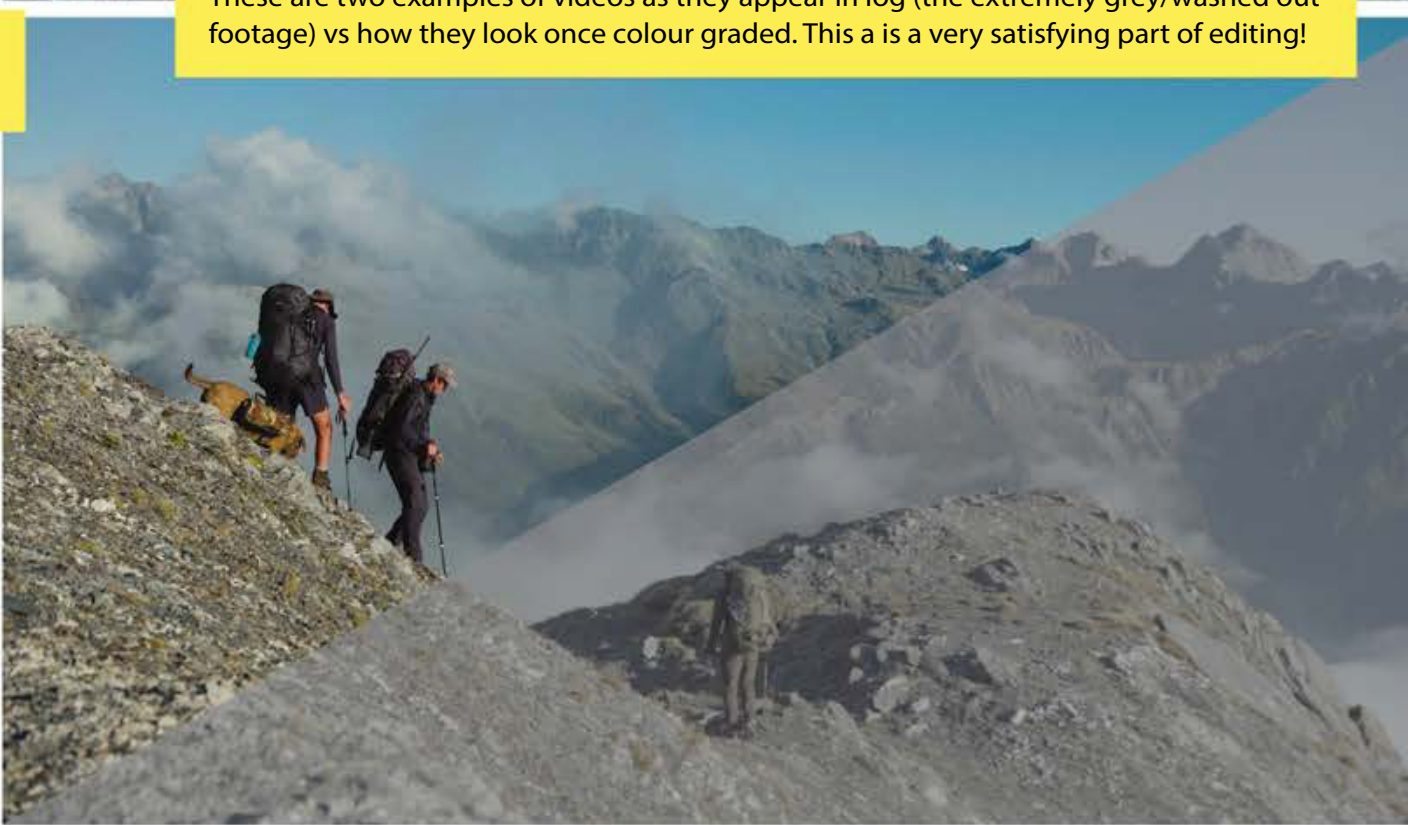
The first extra step is that all the footage needs to be colour graded, otherwise it'll look flat and washed out. And secondly, the footage needs to be exposed differently to non-log footage. For example, Sony's S-log usually requires 2 stops of over exposure. Another "issue" with log, is that if you're using a camera for both stills and video,

it can be quite tedious to switch back from a log picture profile to a non-log profile. It is also tedious re-adjusting the exposure to prevent over exposure every time you swap between stills and video. Plus, when you're filming in log you'll need 'gamma display assist' on - a function that makes the screen look like

the colour-graded version of log with the appropriate exposure. So that also needs to be turned off when you switch back to stills. It might all be starting to sound a little too complicated, but it can be worth it, especially if you are after an 'arty' look and want to up your game from the standard run-of-the-mill picture profiles in



These are two examples of videos as they appear in log (the extremely grey/washed out footage) vs how they look once colour graded. This a is a very satisfying part of editing!



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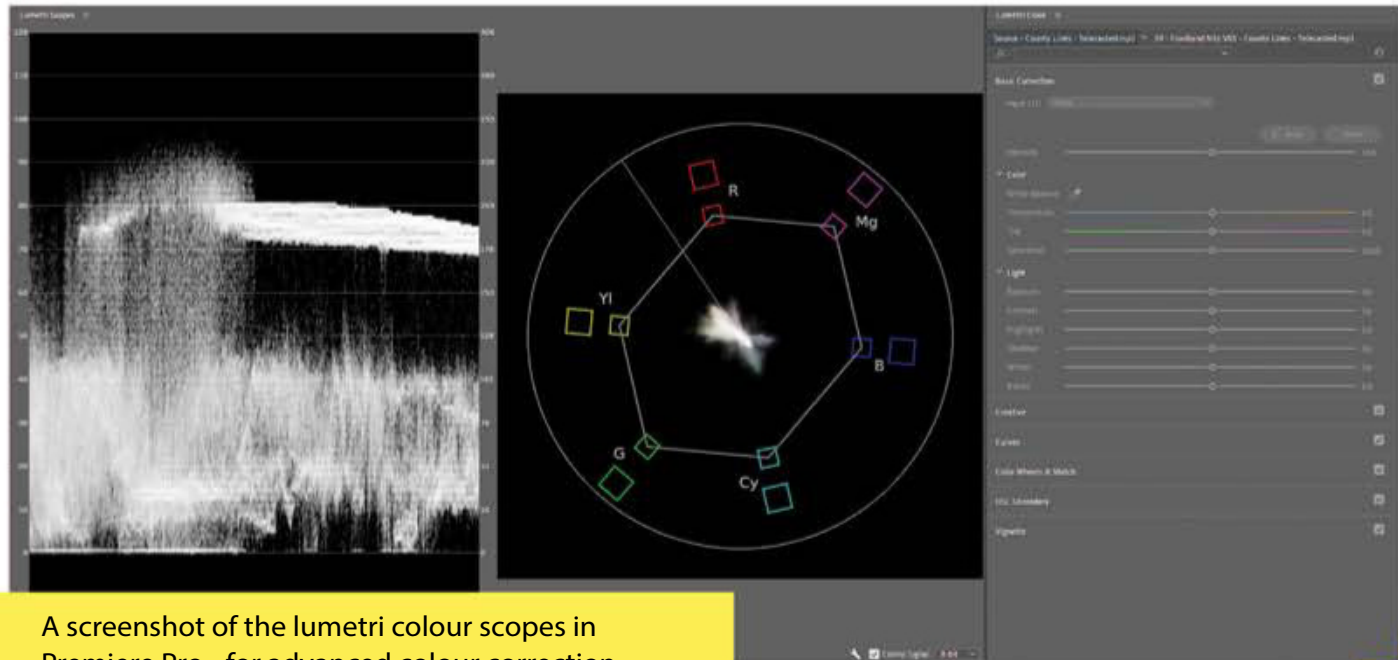
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A screenshot of the lumetri colour scopes in Premiere Pro - for advanced colour correction

most videos. Sometimes having that extra dynamic range (the huge variation in light and tones from black to white) can save you, especially if you're filming with a low aperture or in a sunny and highly contrasted environment. On the other hand, it isn't ideal for lowlight situations, and will be grainy when not exposed correctly. A bit of trial and error at home can go a long way to figure out what's best for you.

COLOUR GRADING

Colour correcting is the fixing of colours in a video to get them back to what they should look like naturally, while colour grading is the process of adjusting colours to give them

a certain look. This process is very similar to photo editing (refer to Luke's article in Issue 87). Every camera will require a different type or amount of colour grading, while a standard picture profile (which tries to record colours as natural as possible) will require far less colour grading than the flatter log or raw picture profiles. Just as with photos, the amount of colour grading flexibility depends on the quality of the footage. If filmed on an old phone, you probably can't do much to it. On the other hand, if it's filmed in a higher bitrate or in log you've got the possibility of fixing exposure, colours and of adding your own arty touch to it - the trick is not taking it too far and trying to keep the colours as consistent as possible throughout each scene and multiple cameras.

Keep in mind that if you're filming with auto settings (auto shutter, aperture, gain etc.) that the exposure and subsequent colours will change throughout your scene depending on the lighting meaning that your colour correction might suit the start of the clip but not the end. For example, when panning around it could go from bright and warm to dark and cold, changing the camera's exposure and the resulting amount of colour grading needed.

There's so much more that goes into video editing and there could even be an article for each point I've discussed above, but I hope this has provided a short insight on my take of the video editing process. For those wanting to know more, YouTube tutorials are going to be your best friend, and there's an endless free library of videos detailing how to undertake every step of the video editing process across a range of programs and software. More and more hunters are getting into filming and sharing their hunts, which is great for everyone as there's plenty of content to watch in your free time. Just remember to be a good ambassador for the sport and make sure your videos are ethical and portray hunting in a positive light. Good luck on your editing journey!



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WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

PUBLIC LAND ACCESS

Roy's article in the last edition paints a pretty graphic picture, but the issue clearly concerns a greater area than just Southland

If you haven't already, go and track down a copy and read his article as it lays the groundwork for this one. Public land access is a key issue and if hunters are to be part of the solution, we need to be able to get to these places easily and regularly.

There are plenty of examples of deer 'islands' around the country and the problem has become worse, rather than better. **Access issues are perennial - I'm sure any readers could think of examples across the country** – Raukumaras? Ruahines? Lake Sumner? I was speaking to Tim Gale from the GAC late last year and he said that since the 2015 Health and Safety at Work Act all recreation groups have noticed a significant reduction in public access.

Just prior to publishing, NZDA CEO Gwyn Thurlow drew my attention to the loss of weekday access to the Blue Mountains Fallow herd.

When I asked Tim for the GAC's stance on public access he had this to say:

Hunters require good access to hunt and help manage our game animal herds. There are some well-known examples where hunting access has been restricted in recent times. The impact of this on the

number of animals and the quality of the herds has become pretty evident, and the results aren't good. The Kaimanawa REZ, Raukumaras, parts of the Ruahines and parts of the tahr range come to mind. A good example of what can happen when there is very little hunting pressure can be found around Zora Canyon where very high tahr numbers have had a noticeable impact on native vegetation.

The GAC's position is that hunting access to public conservation land must be preserved and where possible enhanced, and this includes in a form suitable for hunters carrying firearms and accompanied by dogs (where dogs are permitted on the land the access is provided for). Vehicle access is also important in a number of areas and we



Access routes need to consider more than just walking access. They need to take in to account all types of users

believe that provisions should be made certain and enduring through the use of legal instruments such as easements. The new national framework for adaptive management of wild animals, 'Te Ara ki Mua' does reference 'access to quality recreational experiences'; however, to effectively address access issues throughout New Zealand, a stocktake probably needs to be done to understand the current state of things, what the conflicting issues are, why access is not granted where it could be and how legal access can be ensured while meeting landowner concerns. What shouldn't be underestimated is that this is significant piece of work requiring collective action across a number of government agencies and the support from numerous organisations across the recreation, conservation, farming, forestry and other sectors.



Commercial WARO is hardly ever a good management measure, but even if it was it can't be applied in bush blocks. Meaning that recreational hunters have the best chance at managing numbers. Even if it isn't the total solution, it's better than no deer being controlled at all!

CASE STUDIES

Let's start with arguably one of the biggest case studies – the Raukumara Ranges. The Raukumara Conservation Park is over 1,000km² - well over half the size of Stewart Island. And how many access points does it have? Two. In fact, the DOC website still states *"The Otipi Road via the Takaputahi is the only access to and into the Raukumara Conservation Park that does not require permission to cross private property."* There's nearly 50 kilometres of public land to the north with no public access whatsoever and let me tell you, walking to the northern end of the Raukumara from Otipi Road would be a very serious undertaking. The only hunting pressure comes from very limited jetboat access and helicopter drop-offs.

The Raukumaras are currently being subjected to long overdue culling in the dying forest. \$34 million dollars is being spent in a joint Iwi-DOC-Crown initiative to restore the Raukumara, but not once, in any coverage, have I seen any mention of increased access.

A New Zealand Herald article alludes to hunters not being able to control the populations of deer in the park, but the reality is that hunters simply can't get in there often and easily enough to have a meaningful effect. **Prior to the recent intervention, DOC alone spent \$250,000 a year on deer and goat control, on top of WARO activity which has tanked at present** - like the fickle industry does all the time. We could do it for free and, with all the societal benefits of hunting, bring the needle right

round into the green. It was heartening to read DOC's John Lucas acknowledge *'There is a sweet spot between the right level of deer for recreational hunters, but also fundamentally looking after biodiversity values'*. We know this, and Roy and his team's work in the Wapiti Area prove it in this internationally significant World Heritage site. The simplest way to work toward balance in the Raukumaras is to open up more access throughout the park. That way not only are deer being controlled more regularly, but there would be greater opportunities for people to connect with this wonderful slice of paradise and to generate a sense of responsibility for it.

Another prime example is the deer problem around the bush clad slopes of Wellington. I've read half a dozen articles on the topic, mainly because they always have a lead photo of a stag on the street or someone's lawn! Culler Jordan Munn is quoted as saying *'two out of every three private landowners are happy to have deer on their property and are reluctant to fund culling'* in a newspaper article last year. I'd be one of those two thirds myself.

Unfortunately, not everyone thinks it is quite so cool to have deer around, with one Naenae resident going so far as to say that *'I want to push the nuclear button. We need to get serious about eradicating them.'* And while I don't think nuclear is the right option, some control certainly does need to happen. Wellington Regional Council spends tens of thousands of dollars a year on culling these deer, to waste I might add, all the while not opening any of



Otago has some of the best examples of public access in the country

these reserves and parks to recreational hunting. Admittedly, some of these areas are very urban and would require careful management so close to homes but there are multiple options to manage that issue. It could be restricted access like the Te Miro Fallow herd near Cambridge (managed by an NZDA branch), or archery only, to improve safety. Who knows, but the point is that there are thousands of people willing to help if only given the chance.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

A lot of the groundwork needs to come from local government and DOC, especially for the truly land-locked bush blocks but, in the meantime there are things you can do, especially for areas in rural regions. I know asking landowners for access is tricky, and often fruitless. I have a similar situation to Roy, as only kilometres from my home I could walk 500 metres across the grass from my vehicle to the public land bush edge, but due to landowner's reluctance I have to walk several hours in from the other end to get to the right spot.

In a landowner's shoes I'd be just as reluctant – lots of them are hunters themselves – and they aren't obliged to let people through. Allowing strangers through your property is a big ask, especially if you're doing well in the management of the population and have good trophy animals around. And put simply, a lot of absolute d*#kheads have ruined it for the rest of us by poaching, wandering through farms well off the access route, and general idiocy. **We need to self-police these people because they really do ruin it for the rest of us.**

But, if these same farms or forestry blocks aren't undertaking good management and public land alongside the private

gets so overpopulated that it begins to damage the environment then that also erodes the social licence we all need as hunters. As much as we want it to be, hunting isn't a right in New Zealand. We're completely at the mercy of public acceptance.

It's all too obvious that there's a block with an overpopulation of deer and no access. How to go about it? **What you can do is approach things in a more united fashion.** Landowners are worried about vandalism, livestock disturbance, fire, poaching, theft, and infrastructure damage. There are all valid concerns, and there have been well and truly enough bad apples to give them good cause. Landowners keeping track of people coming through their property is tedious, so if you're part of a club like an NZDA branch, band together and put a proposal to a local farmer or forestry owner. In return for access, (maybe locked access, hunting 500 metres from the bush edge, walking only, weekends only, hinds only, whatever conditions they need) your club will record who goes through the property and take ownership for any damages that occur. You police it, do the work for them and make it hard to say no. Having regular hunters would act to deter poaching, and you can offer other benefits such as to run a trapline on the route to the block, given that you'll have club members walking it every week. Be creative and build up that trust.

PRIVATE LAND IT ISN'T US VS THEM

It needs to be said that this isn't a case of 'us vs them'. Landowners have every right to enjoy the benefits of the land they own and in no way am I calling for any change to that. But, harkening back to Roy's original article, land-locked blocks of bush like the Hokonuis need

access. WARO couldn't manage it (even if you could wave a magic wand and make it viable), the funding isn't there for culling, and recreational hunters would leap at the opportunity to be a part of the solution – because we sure get hammered with cries of forest degradation even though we aren't allowed in to help.

Be prepared to see ten times more deer on the grass than you will in the bush.

It's an entirely different ecosystem on your friendly access farm, with acres of grazed, fertilised grass to support many more deer. Your opinion of the management practices on the farm/forestry on private land doesn't matter, even if it looks like too many deer - too

bad. They aren't 'your' deer just because they sometimes come from the public land, and the second they're across the boundary it's no touchy - treat them like livestock. This temptation has been the downfall of countless access agreements, so it's best to communicate all of this ahead of time to members of any access group. Poaching is poaching. If there's that many deer then approach the farmer about a 'club' weekend targeting hinds.

Private land populations are crucial to hunting in New Zealand. Landowners that tolerate game animals on their property (and certainly not all do!) provide critical feed within their yearly migration, especially stags, but also bull tahr. As Steve Smith from Poronui says, 'It is no coincidence that nearly all the quality Sika come from areas within 10 km of private land such as Poronui and Ngamatea'. Cam Speedy's research has confirmed this. This is true of many, many areas all around the country. So have a little respect for these properties and the service they provide to the hunter by feeding big stags for you!

To anyone considering an access arrangement, my advice is that you have to plan for the bad apples who have made all of this so difficult for us. Make the access route in plain view if possible, away from bush areas if it is a farm. Forestry blocks are more difficult but try use main roads to keep everyone honest and reduce temptation for people that will wreck it for you. **As a club or branch, do police it, and have real consequences for bad apples, because if your project fails it just makes it harder and harder for other hunters to improve that good will with rightfully gun-shy landowners.**

Next issue we have comment from NZDA, the Outdoor Access Commission and others.



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Have You Heard of the **LAKE MONK EXPEDITION?**



WRITTEN BY ~ ALEX GALE

There are some unusual things happening with deer in the south-west Fiordland area. You might be interested in finding out a bit more ...

It's called a hanging lake, not because it was the place of execution for the unwanted, but because it hangs high in a valley above the surrounding river valleys.

This lonely area, called Lake Monk, deep in the Cameron Mountains of south-west Fiordland, is not a place of retreat for clergy, but home to a few hardy deer and even smaller numbers of chamois. It's a place few hunters have heard of and still fewer have visited. It's rugged and challenging terrain, and with the poor quality of the heads available, ensures that only the odd visitor ever frequents its challenging shores.

THE HISTORY

First discovered in 1951 by Jim Monk, a Fiordland aviation pioneer, its place in hunting history was ensured when Thane Riney, an eminent American biologist working for the New Zealand Forest Service, chose the area for a scientific research project to examine an undisturbed deer population. This was called 'The Lake Monk Expedition'.

He was an American deer ecologist, who joined Internal Affairs in 1951. This was

an environment that was dominated by concepts derived from the Deer Menace conference in 1930, that gave birth to the 'pest' myth about wild animals. Riney came with an open, scientific mind untainted by these assumptions. There was immediate conflict because many in the department had made careers from the deer menace myth and he was about to challenge their theories by taking a scientific approach and doing in-depth research.

"He examined an 'undisturbed' deer population at Lake Monk in Fiordland and found that left alone, deer numbers stabilised to a low level and did not explode out of control as the departmental propaganda maintained. Then a much less complex paper showed there was little or no relationship between areas of erosion-prone country and the areas of highest deer numbers. He concluded that although selective browsing (especially five finger, fuchsia, wineberry, broad leaf, māhoe, lancewood, beech and many grasses)

modifies vegetation composition, an equilibrium is eventually reached between the deer population and the vegetation." ("About Deer and Deerstalking", by Tony Orman) (Rineys paper on this is called the "Lake Monk Expedition" DSIR 1959)

In 1958, frustrated by the bureaucracy and their attacks on his views, he resigned and went to Africa to do his research. Years later, in 1967, Riney reflected on those years with the Department of Internal Affairs and then the New Zealand Forest Service, as follows:

"Unfortunately, the level of competence and understanding in silvicultural (exotic forestry) matters is in no way reflected in the dealings with, or their policy toward exotic animals. This it seems to me, is due chiefly to several botanist policy-makers who have had no experience with the growth of plants in other parts of the world where browsing and grazing animals behave exactly as in New Zealand. They do not know what animals are capable of doing and what they are incapable of doing in the way of ruining forests or how to measure the effects that animals do have.

Most of their recommendations are based on what the botanists are afraid the animals might do, instead of what the animals actually have done after 50 to 70 years of acclimatisation. Several of these botanists are in high administrative positions and a policy based on the simple fear of the



A view of the head of
Lake Monk from the east
Danilo Hegg | Southern Alps Photography

unknown is often offered to the public as proven fact." The Roaring Stag, John Henderson

Graeme Caughley was another researcher who took a similar approach.

While working for the New Zealand Forest Service, he used his research on the Himalayan tahr towards his doctoral work. He decided to work on tahr because at that time everyone claimed to be an expert on Red deer and he thought that he would make a greater contribution working on the lesser known tahr. Caughley wanted to see if Thane Riney's eruption and stabilisation patterns in deer also applied to tahr. He used his studies at the Forest Service for his PhD thesis at the University of Canterbury (1962–1967). Using three study populations of Himalayan tahr (judged to be in the initial increase, initial stabilisation, and decline stage) Caughley found that tahr follow the pattern that Riney had found in deer." (Wikipedia) Graeme also fell afoul of the establishment.

MY TIME IN THE AREA

What made me interested in Riney's research was not just the area and the scientific paper he produced, but my own observations over several years. I've not only visited the Lake Monk area but have hunted extensively in the



Lake Poteriteri is 28km long and is one of the most beautiful parts of Fiordland



Looking up Lake Hakapoua toward Big River. It's great country that once had a good population of deer. Now they are few in number and in poor condition - the question is why?

areas and lakes around it, namely Lake Hakapoua and Lake Poteriteri and also Lake Hauroko. I've also hunted Lake Kiwi, further west, and Lake Mouat, east of Lake Monk.

I first hunted Lake Hauroko in November 1968 as the first resident meat hunter- a wonderful experience as there were lots of deer and few hunters. Then I commercially hunted Lake Hakapoua, by the south-west coast and nearby Lake Poteriteri. On the latter, two of us shot over 400 in the first year. There were obviously good numbers of deer around then. Later, in the 80s, I had the incredible experience of live capture on all lakes. By then, the deer numbers had dropped off,

but that was probably due to extensive helicopter hunting. At one stage the choppers were taking a hundred deer a day off the tops.

THE AREA NOW

In recent years though, there has been minimal helicopter hunting activity in the areas around Lakes Hakapoua and Poteriteri. A small number of hunters visit during the year (the need for a boat keeps most away), but what has been noticeable is the relatively small and struggling numbers of deer now in the area. While deer numbers are growing significantly in many areas of



Looking back up Lake Monk. The southern ramparts of Rugged Mount stand up at centre image
Danilo Hegg | Southern Alps Photography



Some animals still think it's great place to be!

New Zealand, they seem to be declining here, or at best holding their own. My son Tim and his friend Dayffd did head up to the tops on Poteriteri for a day in March 2017 and saw a few deer, so it could be they are living primarily on the tops, but the quality of food on the tops is not good. Sure, parts of the area east of Poteriteri have been blitzed with 1080, but that doesn't provide an answer for why so few deer, because the same issue of few deer in poor condition applies in most areas.

I've explored recent washouts in Hakapoua over a number of years which display new growth with a noticeable lack of deer sign. I've also visited Poteriteri a few times for minimal returns. Last April, a party who have hunted Lake Poteriteri for over 25 years during the roar, shot only seven stags and saw no hinds. Two other parties later hunting the big flat behind the hut saw only one hind between them. That's not only very unusual, but it's also quite concerning. A lack of certain minerals in the area, reflected in the poor quality heads, may be part of the reason why. My most recent trip to Lake Poteriteri was in June 2021 - between three of us we saw 12 deer for a week of perfect weather and shot four. All were in poor condition.

A group who have also been going to Lake Hakapoua for over 20 years agree

with my observations. In Hakapoua in early December, 2020, we saw four deer and shot three for a week; they were all skinny, and again in poor condition. I hunted the bottom end of Hauroko in early January 2022 and saw so little sign it was depressing.

Why? This is the obvious question, and that's something only research can provide the answers for.

WHAT'S NEXT

My questions are: what is happening in these areas? Why the low deer numbers when hunting pressure is quite low? Is it simply feed or could it also be a disease issue? Have the deer numbers reached an equilibrium with available food? What is happening with the bush? What impact have deer had, or are having, or is there something else happening we are not aware of? Many questions with no obvious answers. As someone with an intimate knowledge of these areas I have my theories, but they are just theories. To find answers we need quality research to determine what is happening. This is not just about deer, but about the whole environment, because deer are only a small part of the ecological picture. They may occupy a niche similar to what the moa occupied not so long ago and that needs to be factored in, so we look at the whole picture.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Why is this important, and why should it concern us? It highlights the fact that the areas that deer and other game animals occupy are unique and there is no 'one size fits all' solution for



The photo gives an indication of the poor condition of this young animal

management. Some areas can support higher animal numbers, while others will struggle to maintain healthy bush and animals, even with low numbers. How do we know? Only by conducting good scientific research.

In NZ we are becoming increasingly aware of the need for proper game and wildlife management. Here are two definitions. *'Game management is the manipulation of wildlife populations through population monitoring, habitat management and sustainable utilisation.'* (Sporting Shooters Assn Australia)

And, *"The study of wildlife management involves building a broad understanding of how wild animals exist within their habitats, environments and ecosystems, in addition to learning detailed concepts related to habitat management, population dynamics, and the factors that influence wildlife populations- including human, chemical and biological."* (gamewarden.org)

We need game management because we live in rapidly changing times with competing interests for our great outdoors and we have a responsibility for both our environment and for our game animals to ensure they are healthy now and in the future. For game management, we need research, and to do research we need funding. That's not happening under the current model, and that's where hunters come in. In the USA hunters are the biggest contributors to conservation and management. They lead the way. In New Zealand, by contrast, the hunting sector generally just fights rearguard actions against the government and wants everything for free, as if it was their right. Hunters need to be known better as conservationists and must contribute to a positive relationship between hunting and conservation. We need a mechanism for hunters to do that and perhaps that may mean a license, fee

or some means to help fund game management, research and related conservation issues. **Imagine what we could do if we had young hunters with appropriate degrees engaged in research in areas of interest and concern.**

Places like south-west Fiordland where the deer numbers are not growing and the animals are in poor condition raise issues we need to address, because we all want bush that is healthy and game that reflects that same good health. If the animals in the areas I've mentioned are not healthy, then maybe that raises the issue of how healthy the bush is, what has changed and what do we need to do about it? We need answers. If hunters are conservationists, they should also be involved in contributing to research, not just focused on the next animal they want to shoot. We are starting to do that, which is great, but we need more. Research that tells us what is really happening is a powerful weapon to assist our cause.

You may not care about areas you don't hunt, or there may be an abundance of animals in your area, but as hunters we need to be more engaged. **We go places others don't, we see things that others who stay on tracks don't, and our experience in the New Zealand wilderness is about more than just shooting a few deer.** We need mechanisms for hunters to be more involved and that is starting to happen.

Finally, think of it this way: we reap what we sow. Imagine if hunters contributed significantly to the future of hunting. This would be a valued investment into research, development and conservation in New Zealand, and, consequently, better hunting. Quality research would give us valuable information regarding key questions. Wouldn't that in turn give us more respect and better engagement with those we have to work with, who likewise share our love for the New Zealand outdoors, but don't have the same passion for hunting? Wouldn't that create better outcomes? **Wouldn't that be a win-win for all. That's the future we want!**



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KEEPING KIWI SAFE

WRITTEN BY ~
JOHNNY BISSELL AND TAMSIN WARD-SMITH

Save
the kiwi

Hunting, nature, the mountains and dogs have been a part of my life for a long time.

I can't remember a time when I wasn't obsessed with nature and hunting, and I have been lucky enough to combine my two loves in my mahi as a predator hunter.

My job, and my passion outside of regular hunting, is to do my bit in the fight to protect our vulnerable taonga species from the variety of introduced predators that they have little or no defence against. This work takes me all over the country and I am privileged to work alongside people who are similarly committed. Some of these folk are hunters like myself.

One of the key taonga species I work with is kiwi and I am the National Predator Advisor for Save the Kiwi.

I still can't tell you what it is about them, but my first real kiwi experience was an eye opener and it changed me in ways that I can't define. They are a very special bird. To sit in camp at night and listen to them calling is one of New Zealand's truly great outdoor experiences. To see one as it goes about its business, even more so.

For kiwi, the greatest threat is that of mustelids. Stoats are death on four legs for young kiwi up to about 1200 grams in weight. Kiwi chick survival in country that receives no stoat control can sit as low as 5% and they need closer to 19% recruitment for a population to be viable. **With stoat control kiwi chick survival can go up to 60%. These are general numbers, but you get the picture.** The most valuable birds in a population are the breeding adults, and ferrets can take any sized bird. Once they realise kiwi are on the menu, a ferret can be single minded in their desire and ability to find and kill kiwi over large areas. A single ferret can go off like a bomb in a kiwi population. I have witnessed the devastation that one ferret can cause in a short space of time.

I have always been focussed on mustelids when it comes to protecting kiwi. But there is another massive threat to kiwi and one that does not seem to be decreasing and that is dogs. **Dogs, like ferrets, can kill any sized kiwi, and it doesn't take much effort to do it.** They are actually a very fragile bird and any trauma around the brisket area can

eventually result in death. Birds like whio and weka are also vulnerable to dogs.

I have owned and trained both indicating and finding-bailing dogs for hunting for a long time.

Many of you reading this will own a dog yourselves. Dogs add an aspect to a hunt that is hard to describe if you haven't shared it. And if the dog is one you have raised and trained, then the satisfaction and reward is tenfold. When we take dogs into the wild places, it sometimes means taking them into areas where kiwi live. The chance of that being the case is increasing constantly, due to the incredible efforts of so many to protect residual kiwi populations from predators and the work being done to translocate kiwi back to places where they haven't been for a long time. As an example, there is now a growing population of kiwi in the Remutaka Ranges close to Wellington. Kiwi are also resident in the Kaweka Ranges where so many hunt Sika as well. These are just two examples.

So, can kiwi and people and their dogs live and operate side by side?

Yes, if dog owners are prepared to take some steps to help keep kiwi safe. This is a hunting magazine, so I will keep to what we can do as hunters. Recreational dog walkers and people living close to kiwi are another topic. So, what can we do?

1

IT STARTS WITH MANNERS

It doesn't matter what you use your dog for, it must be under control. If you are a pig hunter, then what you need your dog to do will be different than if you are a deerstalker. Your dog/s however must be reliable and obedient. The basics must be adhered to no matter what. Simple commands such as come here, get in/heel, no/leave it are the building blocks of any dog control. There is nothing worse in the bush than being met by an unruly or aggressive dog as you approach a hut, but it happens all too frequently. If you own a dog, draw a line in the sand and make sure the dog complies with the commands and manners needed. And if you can't, then don't take it in until you can. In my experience, a dog that is under good control is a lot less likely to fall from grace in any number of situations. They are simply better mannered and looking less for trouble.

So, train your dog and keep it trained. Training is not ten minutes every second evening after work. It is an attitude and a life choice. Everything you do with your dog is a training opportunity. Stay constantly aware of what your dog is doing and the little signals it is sending about what it intends to do next and manage it. Have a line and hold your dog to it, calmly but assertively.

2

WHEN IN KIWI COUNTRY

If you and your dog/s are entering conservation land that has kiwi, there will most likely be a requirement for your dog to be kiwi avoidance trained before you can take your dog in. We will talk more on that shortly, but there is more that you can do as well. Once again, a certificate does not mean you can relax. The good news is that kiwi are nocturnal and a lot less likely to be out and about during the day. It can happen though, so be alert. If I am travelling at night or pre-dawn, I keep my dog at heel and watch for any signs of interest in anything. Even pointers have been known to have a lapse and chase and grab things. Many pointers have small furry things and birds in their DNA, so remember that. As I said, I am always thinking and watching and leave nothing to chance.

Another big one is what you do around camp. Kiwi have a wonderful habit of wandering through or close to camp at times, so your dog should be under control at night. **Simply put, tie it up or have it in the tent. Do not let your dog roam freely after dark, even if you are still up and about.** After a day of work, I like my dog to understand

that it is their down time. It helps calm them down. The fact is that if something wanders through camp, a dog will sometimes have a greater protection reaction. So don't let that happen.

If my dog looks at anything in a log or under a bush when we are hunting and it is obviously not a deer, I give her the 'in' command. Then we walk past and ignore it. Consistency and repetition. She is trained not to interact with things like possums, but she will sometimes look at where the scent came from when she first smells it. I play it safe.

Tracking gear is something else I have always run on my dogs. This includes on Sami, my indicator. I want to have every chance to make sure my dog isn't out overnight. Obviously with an indicator this shouldn't happen, but I play safe. What if she went over a bluff or down a flooded creek?

SO, WHAT IF YOU ARE A PIG HUNTER?

Well, it is obviously a lot harder to manage, but it can still be done. There are some things I recommend.

1. Enrol your dogs in kiwi avoidance training and keep them certified.
2. Only take dogs that you trust.
3. Don't run too many dogs. If you can't catch a good pig with two to four dogs then look at yourself and your dogs, don't just add more. The more dogs, the greater the risk of a fall from grace.
4. Don't mix packs when going into kiwi country. Dogs that don't know each other are more likely to compete.
5. Look honestly at your team. We have all known dogs that had one foot on a banana peel and were the instigators of trouble. If you have one of those, don't hunt it near kiwi. Personally, I wouldn't have one as they are a disease in a team.
6. Don't hunt more than one young dog at a time. They are more likely to get into trouble rather than following the lead of a calm, honest older dog.
7. Be back at camp before dark and don't leave until it's light. The pigs aren't going anywhere, and I have done best on big boars mid-morning when they were busted out of their beds with a full bladder. In bush country, the pigs often aren't a million miles away from where they are feeding. Personally, I don't hunt the moon where there are kiwi.
8. As discussed earlier, I would run a tracking collar on every dog.



Locked on and action imminent! There is no doubt that the adventure and companionship of hunting a dog adds hugely to our enjoyment in the hills. We need to couple that with being responsible and looking out for our taonga species. It's not hard to do

Very basic stuff really and most of this comes simply down to care and attention. There is a reason why I have left the kiwi avoidance training until the end, as many people think this is all that is needed. What we have already talked about is just as important. So, let's have a chat about what's involved in kiwi avoidance training your dog.

TAMSIN WARD-SMITH

My role with Save the Kiwi involves coordinating the National Kiwi Avoidance Training programme or KAT, a programme run jointly by Save the Kiwi and DOC.

My experience with dogs and kiwi also comes from an aspect of hunting but with my work everything is unharmed at the end.

I have a kiwi detection dog, one that is trained to find kiwi, and I certainly appreciate the adrenalin and reward of following my dog tracking the scent of kiwi and taking me to it. But any dog can easily find a kiwi because they smell so strongly; sometimes I can even smell them myself. It's not surprising then that an unusual but attractive smell, followed by some rustling and movement can encourage a dog to chase and potentially injure a kiwi. And that can happen in a few seconds and easily go unnoticed by the owner.

My passion is kiwi, but because I have always had dogs, I also understand the connection that humans have with their mate. That connection makes it a hard decision to leave them behind. So many people say, **"my dog would never kill a**



A pair of hunters working their dog through the Kiwi Avoidance course
Jenny Feaver

Pig dogs work at distance. It's what they need to do. There is a huge element of training and then trust in having a dog out there doing that. Have you done enough and do you trust your dogs?



kiwi", but we know that any breed or size of dog can and do.

KAT evolved organically in the '90s in response to a spate of dog attacks on kiwi in the Coromandel and demand has since grown, largely due to the requirement for hunters to have their dog kiwi-avoidance trained before they are issued a permit to use it to hunt on certain Public Conservation Land or on private land blocks.

The training works on the premise that the dog associates the scent, shape, and movement of kiwi with an unpleasant feeling delivered using an e-collar. As we know many dogs behave quite differently in the presence of their

owner, it is therefore a training technique that is more likely to prevent a dog attacking a kiwi when the handler is out of sight, compared to other techniques that may use owner reward-based training.

As part of the training, dogs are walked through a course past different props such as a taxidermied kiwi, surrounded by kiwi nesting material and faeces. If the dog shows an interest in these props, it gets a short correction from the trainer, via an e-collar. Depending on how many times the dog has been through the programme it returns after six

months, 12 months or two years to check that it is still showing consistent kiwi avoidance behaviour.

KAT is not a silver bullet and does not make a dog 'kiwi-proof', but it is another tool in the kit to try and keep kiwi safe.

Even after a dog has been trained, an uncontrolled or roaming dog may still attack a kiwi. **The purpose of KAT can be misinterpreted by some owners who believe that having their dog kiwi avoidance trained means they can let it roam or don't need to tie it up at night, or can now take it to places where dogs are just not allowed such as National Parks.**



For more information about the Kiwi Avoidance Training programme for dogs, visit www.kiwiavoidancetraining.nz
For more information about kiwi, visit www.savethekiwi.nz

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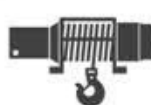
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FOGGED IN

Alpine hunting has lots of challenges, with heavy fog being right up there in trying its best to ruin your view and get you lost

It comes in different forms, from the awe-inspiring southern ocean fog spilling over passes into the Wapiti country to frosty morning mist in the Urewera valley bottoms.

When you head up on to the wide-open tops it's tempting to leave your navigation essentials behind - it's open country after all - but when the clag hits you won't know if you're Arthur or Martha and it can actually become a bit scary. On the plus side, if you are patient, you can actually use fog to give you an advantage over the game you are seeking or close in on.

WHAT IS CLAG?

Clag is a term Kiwis have come up all on their own for mist or fog that forms in the mountains. I quite like it, as the phonetics sound just right for such a nuisance of a phenomenon. I like to get in to the why of things, but if you just want the practicalities skip forward

to Cam's bit.

Fog, mist or clag – it's all the same stuff at a basic level, even though they do have definitions. Mist is if you can see further than 1,000 metres, fog is when you can see less. And clag, well apparently we get to decide that!

It's all just air that has a lot of water vapour in it. In most conditions that vapour is invisible, but when it then gets cold, or is forced to rise by a range of mountains, it condenses the vapour into droplets and makes fog. The air needs particles to form the droplets around. This is often dust or salt, hence why sea fog is so dense – it has loads of particles

to form around.

It turns out there are at least four different forms of fog, and it was interesting to consider how they might apply to different parts of New Zealand, but as with most classification systems it can be quite tricky to apply those criteria in 'the wild'. Here are some definitions from the National Geographic resource library;

RADIATION FOG

Radiation fog forms in the evening when heat absorbed by the Earth's surface during the day is radiated into the air. As heat is transferred from the ground to the air, water droplets form. Sometimes people use the term "ground fog" to refer to radiation fog. Ground fog does not reach as high as any of the clouds overhead. It usually forms at night. Fog that is said to "burn off" in the morning sun is also radiation fog.



Scattered clag can be a godsend for covering open ground where you'd otherwise be in full view



While heavy inversion layer fog like this might be pretty bleak underneath, you can often climb out of it

ADVECTION FOG

Advection fog forms when warm, moist air passes over a cool surface.

When the moist, warm air makes contact with the cooler surface air, water vapor condenses to create fog. Advection fog shows up mostly in places where warm, tropical air meets cooler ocean water. The Pacific coast of the United States, from Washington to California, is often covered in advection fog.

VALLEY FOG

Valley fog forms in mountain valleys, usually during winter. Valley fog develops when mountains prevent the dense air from escaping. The fog is trapped in the bowl of the valley.

This is related to inversion layers, which many of you will have heard of. But mist that is formed overnight tries to rise but can't because there's an inversion layer. It then builds in pressure and becomes a very low cloud. This is the same system as Wanaka's famously bleak inversion layer and is the most persistent form of fog. The good news for mountain hunters is you can usually climb up and above it!

FREEZING FOG

Freezing fog happens when the liquid fog droplets freeze to solid surfaces. Mountain tops that are covered by clouds are often covered in freezing fog. As the freezing fog lifts, the ground, the trees, and even objects like spider webs, are blanketed by a layer of frost. The white landscapes of freezing fog are common in places with cold, moist climates, such as Scandinavia or Antarctica.

HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

Here are a few tips for making friends with fog.

A *Mark your start location.*

The campsite, the bush entry on the leading ridge, a saddle or tarn you want

to get to; these are all good things to mark on your GPS even if the weather is crystal clear. Fog can suddenly turn up and roll in on you, so let technology old or new take away the risk and worry. Remember GPS machines are only as good as the spare batteries!

B *Make use of fog layer movement over the day*

During calm weather conditions the fog will sit low in the valleys in the early morning so you can usually climb through it to clear skies. You can then glass a lot of the higher country while the animals are more active earlier in the day. If you've spotted game in a certain area the previous evening now is the time to move around above them while you are out of sight. As the day warms up the fog layer will rise, so this is the time to have a little hill nap and wait for the sun to burn the clag away. As soon as the "burn off" occurs it's time to glass the best areas before the animals bed down. You will have a lot of advantage being above the game while the wind is rising during the mid-part of the day.

C *Drop under the evening fog*

If the afternoon fog rolls back in you may be able to get under it to have a window of clear vision on the golden hour, the last hour of daylight. The wind will start to drop down the faces as the air cools and you may have a chance to get into a good position to check over likely guts by positioning yourself lower down a spur on a knob with a bit of a vantage point. If you spot a desired animal you may have to do some pretty fast (and probably



Sometimes it's best to just have a nap and wait for the clag to sort itself out



In heavy fog you can get very close on unsuspecting animals, if you can find them in the first place!

dodgy) sidling to get into a shooting position before nightfall. If an animal is shot in this situation you might want to consider a quick retreat to your evening campsite and a return in the morning for meat/trophy recovery. Wandering around the alps in the dark is not highly recommended.

Of course there are also foul weather days where it's more heavy cloud and not just fog, and on these days you just have to sit it out, as the visibility won't return until the front has passed through. **The good days aren't often associated with fog, but if you learn how to hunt around it they can become some of your most memorable days on the hill.**



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TAHR BALLOT BLOCKS

THE ZORA

WRITTEN BY
CAM MCKAY | POINTS SOUTH

Zora Creek has its headwaters sandwiched between the heads of the Mahitahi and the Jacobs, and flows South draining into the mighty Landsborough just above Hinds Flat

Quite simply its awe inspiring terrain in all directions, with some enormous rock slabs forming much of the upper true left, and the lower canyon pretty obviously shouldn't be messed with..

Gerhard Mueller was a rather prolific explorer/surveyor and has a pass from Zora into the Mahitahi named after him, from what I can find he explored this country way back sometime around 1887.

Flying up the Karangarua and over the head of the Jacobs into the Zora would have to be one of the most scenic flights you can do, but it's also a fair distance. Meaning it costs a bit more than some other landing sites, and also there's always a chance of that Westland clag making things difficult, or bad weather meaning a flight down the Landsborough to Pleasant flat and a drive back up the coast to get your vehicle instead.

The campsite is fairly good but a touch exposed if the wind is ripping down valley, it also gives a grandstand view of the steep terrain across the river that is mostly no man's land, but makes for

great viewing. There's limited dry tent sites in a down pour, as the water does run off the slope and through camp so choose wisely and take note of the channels already cut to deal with this.

Above the steep country across the river is another landing site called Hinds Tarn, often you'll be glassing and spot the Hinds Tarn hunters climbing the ridge above their camp and vice versa. Quite handy if you know who's in there and both have an InReach as you can give each other a heads up on bulls that need a closer inspection, you get a great view of each other's accessible hunting terrain.

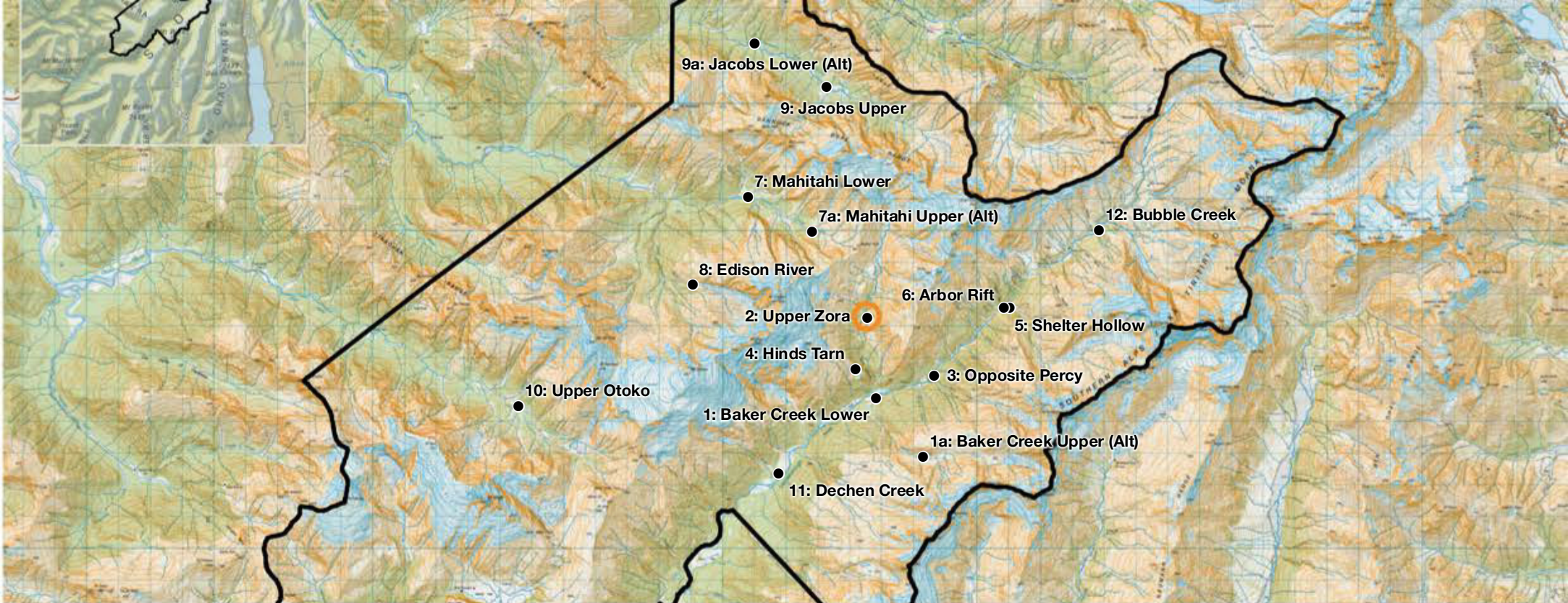
Travelling upriver is fairly easy going once you figure out the tahr track from camp

Looking up-valley towards the campsite

Shaun Monk glassing back down toward the main campsite

Looking over the steeper faces toward Hinds Tarn

flat that takes you up through the bluff system, this small section will have those that are less sure footed hanging on quite tightly. Once back down at the river it's a matter of finding a crossing if water levels allow, and once across the travel all the way upstream is fairly straightforward, with much of the true right country being



accessible if your happy in the steeper stuff.

On the obvious terrace above is one of the plots that DOC attempts to do their tahr monitoring at, when we were last there we spooked a hare from right beside the plot and with the hare crap we saw on the plot itself, it's fairly obvious the grazing is being shared.

Our last time in Zora we used the weather window available to spend a night up-valley, then climbed Mueller Pass the next

morning to get the epic view down the Mahitahi. This was all pretty straightforward with little to no snow to deal with, but in a winter like we've just had it would certainly be a case of having the right tools and understanding the snow conditions.

Overall Zora seems to be one of the more sought after landing sites, which is probably more about that awe inspiring terrain rather than its big bull potential.



The impressive headwaters of the valley





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1

Chloe Alley (11) shot her first deer with Dad's Tikka T3 Strata 223



William Laugesen (11) from Marlborough, shot this spiker with a Sako Finnlight 270, on a late roar trip into Southern Wairarapa coastal hill country

2



3

Cherie Shaw with a Fallow buck shot using Sako Carbonlight in 308

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Max Dollimore with his first deer, a spiker shot between the eyes with his Tikka T3 223.

4

5

Tate Burns (11) holding a billy shot with a Tikka 7mm-08. This was shot on a three day hunting trip in Waitotara where we flew into the hut by helicopter



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CAMPBELL BIV

WRITTEN BY ~ ANDREW BUGLASS | REMOTEHUTS.CO.NZ

Campbell Biv is located at the scrubline of the Campbell Range in the Arahura valley in central Westland

It is tucked in under a knoll on a spur that divides two large unnamed side-creeks and has panoramic views out over Styx Saddle, and of the Newton and Browning Ranges. The Biv is located in the Waitaiki Historical Reserve which is overseen by the Mawhera Corporation.

Campbell Biv is one of the least-visited huts in the area and for a few decades had pretty much vanished from public consciousness. It was marked on the maps of my youth but stayed on the fringes of my awareness even during my regular visits to the Arahura. **In all those years I never met anyone who had been there or knew of a reliable access route.** I did eventually hear of a DOC fly-in check that was done in 1996 (post Cave Creek when they went around putting little plastic labels on all their structures). The workers found a roll of toilet paper that had served as a hutbook and it had six visits recorded from 1974 until then.

I finally got around to making a trip there in 2001 and rather than risk an unpleasant uphill bush-bash from the river, I chose a tops traverse back along the range from Harman Hut in the head

of the valley. When I arrived at the Biv after a long day there was no indication that there had been any visits since the DOC one. An unopened NZFS food-drop under the bunk had its decaying contents wrapped in 1974 editions of the Hokitika Guardian. A single tin of sardines was the only salvable item. For my second visit in 2004 I decided to try a route from the valley floor by way of the upstream side-creek. It was pretty rough going with waterfalls and

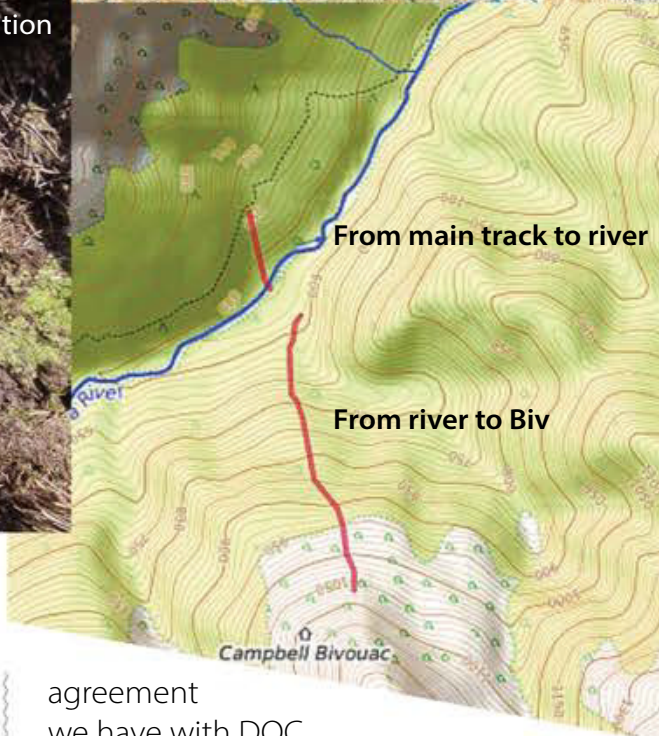
alpine scrub. **The intentions note I'd left on the cooking bench in 2001 was lying there undisturbed, along with some kindling I'd left in a food drum.**

Campbell Biv was first profiled on the Remote Huts in 2004 and a slow trickle of visitors commenced, mostly hard-core hut baggers. A few of them weren't impressed with the route I'd described on the website. In 2008 I marked a second route up a gut from the northern creek catchment with a short connecting track from this to the tussock. In 2017 Eigill Wahlberg got DOC consent to put in a proper track from the valley floor that connects with the top portion of the gut. **It is still incorrectly marked on NZ Topomaps and a track they have marked down into the upriver catchment doesn't actually exist.**

Apart from a gap in 2010, visits to Campbell Biv have averaged around two per year since it was profiled on the website. 2017 was a cracker year with seven recorded visits, after which they dropped back to the old average. In February 2021 during a very dry patch someone started a fire that burned through an extensive area of tussock and



Abandoned culler's
303 ammunition



From main track to river

From river to Biv

scrub around and above the Biv. Some well targeted monsoon drops saved it from certain incineration and it now sits on a tiny island of green surrounded by hectares of charred vegetation. The paint on one side is blistered and the building paper on the inside has melted. A close call you could say, and a reminder that even the West Coast gets dry enough at times for there to be a fire risk. Whoever started the fire wasn't game enough to put their name in the visitor's book.

Campbell is one of three remaining first batch B49 huts built by the NZFS. It was put together by R.J. Courtney of Te Puke and K.W. Fisher of Nelson Creek on June the 5th and 6th 1958 and has a flat iron roof and walls, and a single perspex window at the end. It was retrofitted with sleeping platforms in November 1974 by Tony Newton, G. Stuart, and L. Bennett of the NZFS in Hokitika. The Biv remained in reasonably good condition for the following 30 years of zero maintenance, a tribute to the simple wrap-around iron cladding design. **Campbell Biv was designated for removal by DOC's 2004 Review, probably because it wasn't being visited.** Not long after they flew in some volunteers to repaint it and wire down its piles. I still don't know why they did this, given their review decision. The job was pretty much cosmetic however and didn't address the Biv's structural issues. The Permolat Group offered to take over maintenance and Campbell was added to a general

agreement we have with DOC for a number of remote low-use huts. In 2017 Paul Reid of the Group got a Back Country Trust grant that allowed for a complete overhaul which was completed in March 2019. **A single mattress was dropped in during a DOC hut inspection.** Water is from a small tarn 50 metres away and a bucket has been left next to the Biv to supplement this. There is no toilet.

Campbell Biv can be accessed in a long day by a fit party from either the Styx or Arahura road ends.

The Arahura route is the longer of the two distance-wise but recent extreme weather events have trashed the Styx valley tracks and evened out the travel times somewhat. The turnoff to the Biv is roughly halfway between Styx Saddle and Mudflats Hut and a ford of the Arahura River is required. There is DOC stoat line down the true right that you could use to bail down the Arahura should the river be uncrossable. Allow 2-3 hours from Mudflats Hut or 9-10 hours from either the Styx or Arahura road ends.

Scattered deer and chamois can be found throughout the catchment and on the tops above the Biv. **Mt. Axis can be climbed as a day trip, and the Campbell Range is good travel above the bushline in both directions.**



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Rupicapra rupicapra

Male = Buck

Female = Doe

Young = Kid

Chamois, pronounced "sham-wa" in French or "shammy" by Kiwi hunters, are an alpine big game animal native across Europe where their range spans from north-west Spain, through Europe and into Azerbaijan. There are two species and 10 subspecies of chamois, only one of which, the Alpine Chamois, can be found in New Zealand.

Initial Liberation

Eight alpine chamois, six does and two bucks, were shipped from Austria in January 1907, via Germany, London, Wellington and eventually liberated at the Hooker Valley, Aoraki Mount Cook. It was an epic 21,000km journey that lasted over two months by rail and sea. For many years it was widely thought that the chamois originated from Ebensee, Upper Austria, but genetic research has recently confirmed that they actually came from the Mürzsteg region which was the Emperor Franz Josef's personal hunting estate in the Alps. Since their initial liberation, chamois have spread throughout the Southern Alps and now provide some of the best hunting opportunities for keen alpine hunters.

Coats and Colour Phases

Chamois go through significant colour changes between summer and winter. In summer, their coat is short and light, with colouration generally ranging from grey-brown to honey-gold. Often times there is also a dark dorsal stripe that runs along the spines of both bucks and does. During autumn, the coats completely change. The hairs become long and dark, and are hollow to minimise heat loss. By the end of April, chamois

have thick winter coats highly sought after by hunters. Genetic mutations can also occur resulting in rare fur types, namely melanistic (completely black), leucistic (white), and albino (pure white with pink eyes and noses). No melanistic specimens have been seen or harvested in NZ, however multiple leucistic animals and one true albino have been sighted and shot over the years, particularly around Hanmer, North Canterbury.

The Rut – May to July

Much like tahr and deer, chamois are a highly polygynous species, with single males holding and defending a group of females. The rut begins in mid-May, with the younger bucks extending this period out to as far as mid-July. The bucks are in their winter coat at this time, and can erect their dorsal hairs to intimidate rivals. The bucks mark their rutting pads by rubbing vegetation with scent glands located behind the base of the horns and in front of the ears. The bucks are highly territorial at this time, and will sometimes run towards movement rather than away from it, making things slightly easier for the hunter.

Kid Drop – November and December

Most young are born in November and December, however young does may produce their first kids as late as February. In New Zealand, does can reach sexual maturity as early as 18 months old, much younger than the standard age of 2 ½ years seen in Europe. Chamois are well-known devoted mothers, and the young are weaned at six months old. Usually a doe will only have one kid at a time, however twins are possible, and triplets very rare. A mere hour after birth, baby chamois are quite agile and can follow their mothers, avoid predators and even find food other than milk. If any kids are orphaned, other does will adopt it and raise it as one of their own.

Vocalisations

Chamois are well known for being quite vocal, particularly for their alarm call, which is a shrill whistle.

It is thought that there are varying intensities of alarm whistle, which can result in the entire mob fleeing, or the whistle being completely ignored altogether. Chamois also make quiet sheep-like bleats; the imitation of which can sometimes be used to call them in (much like feral goats). It was also once reported that a pet chamois, while playing tug-of-war with a dog, was capable of grunting and growling as loud as the dog itself!

What is a trophy?

The Douglas Score (DS) of a chamois is obtained by measuring the length of each horn, as well as the girth of each horn at the base. As with all Douglas Scoring, the shorter of each measurement is doubled to give an overall 'DS' score. To be entered in the NZDA Record Books, a chamois must have a minimum DS of 27 or a shortest horn length of 10". The world record for the longest chamois horns was taken in New Zealand; a nanny taken by Colin G. Yeates at Styx Valley in 1968 (with horn lengths of 12 6/8" and 13 1/4" and scoring 31 1/8 DS). The NZ record for a buck is 32 1/4, taken by Peter Stephen in the Waiatoto Valley in 1972 (albeit from a helicopter).

Further reading

www.deerstalkers.org.nz

Bruce Banwell (2013), NZDA Record Series, Vol. 7: The Alpine Chamois

Steuart Laing (2009) Chamois: A New Zealand Hunter's Handbook

Roger Lentle & Frank Saxton (1994) Alpine Hunting in New Zealand





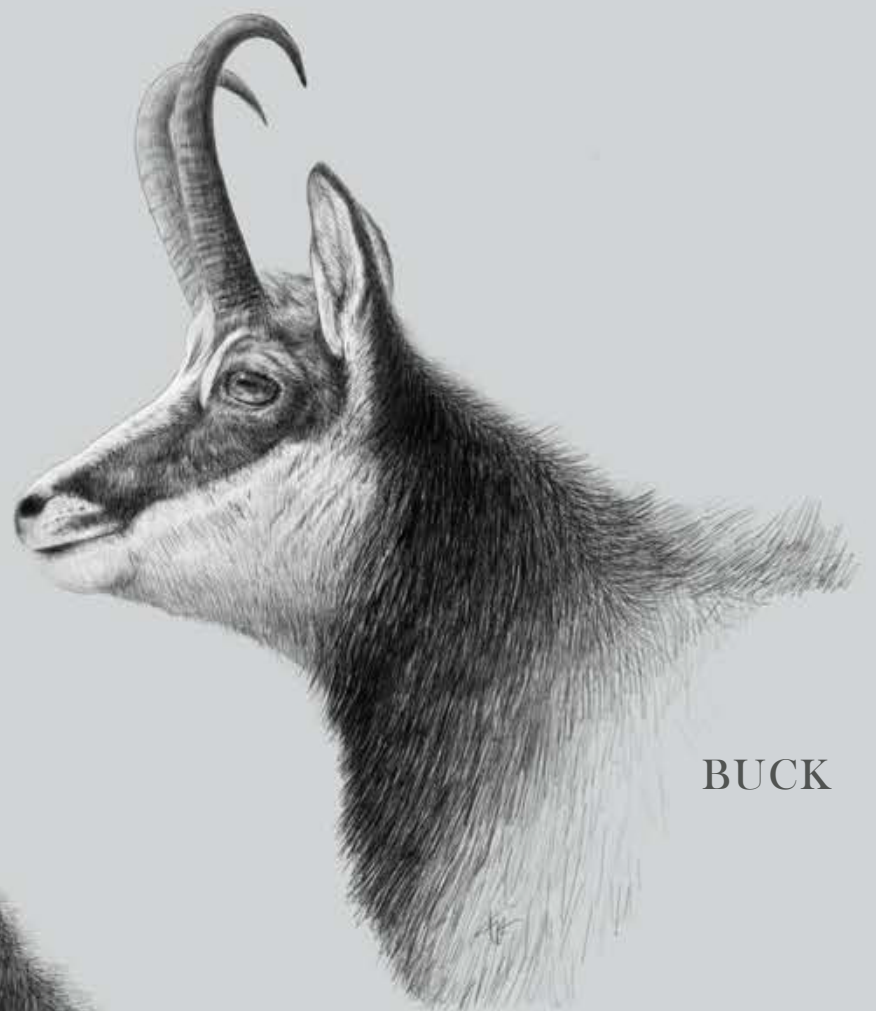
DRAWN BY ~ FRANCESCO FORMISANO

GAME ANIMALS OF NEW ZEALAND

ALPINE CHAMOIS



NANNY



BUCK



KID



THE Many Mates BULL

WRITTEN BY ~ MATTHEW GRESKIE

Elk country

The photo of the bull in this story will never make the front cover of a magazine, but it will forever be ingrained in my mind

This is the story of the many great mates who contributed to 190+ pounds of prime elk meat making its way to the processor in the United States of America. I'm the one who released the arrow, but I contributed the least to this hunt.

Let's go back to the start. In 2018 I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the USA for business. As I started to do some research, I was elated to learn that my visit time coincided with archery seasons in many of the states.

However, the more I researched, the more I realised that a USA hunt would be difficult to plan on my own. The rules for each state were different, with confusing ballot and draw processes, and different rules applying to public and wilderness land.

After reaching out to a number of contacts, I eventually made the decision that elk (Wapiti) would be the chosen quarry. I joined one of the large Facebook groups associated with elk hunting.

Like a lot of men, one of my personal deficiencies is an inability to ask for help! So it was a very big step for me to put it out there on this Facebook group, that I was heading to the USA, that I was keen for some assistance planning my trip, that I didn't want anyone's secret place, that if I was successful whoever helped me would be the beneficiary of all the meat, and that all I could offer in return was to assist them planning their own adventure in New Zealand or

Australia at some future time.

The response was overwhelming and I received a lot of assistance. **Two top men specifically went well out of their way to provide me with good information,** and as we chatted more over the coming months, they both very generously invited me to hunt with them!

As the planning commenced and I excitedly discussed every element with my great hunting mates, one mate in particular became really interested in the adventure. Scotty is one of the most dependable men on the planet, and he saved my life on one of our hunting adventures, so when he said he wanted



Awesome camp with Jon



Porcupine

to come, my only concern was him making the trip when he wasn't going to be able to hunt. He assured me he was more than happy to be "just the camera man"!

Finally, the day arrived, and Scotty and I met our new mate in person!

We hit it off straight away. Jon was exactly like us, a mad keen and ethical hunter who enjoyed the whole hunting experience. Regarding ethics, it's interesting to note that most US states have laws that require all salvageable meat to be kept from any game animal taken, including neck meat and everything. In many cases, this must be done prior to removing the head.

Our first night we stopped at a motel part way to where we were hunting. It was our first taste of being at altitude, and we didn't love it. It takes quite a toll on your breathing, even when you're doing nothing. **A highlight was a mule deer complete with antlers crossing the main road in the town we were staying!**

The next day we followed Jon to the start of our hike, had a few practice arrows and put on the backpacks. The walk in was very enjoyable - we saw lots of new wildlife including a skunk which, we have been told, is quite a rare sighting in this area. We also saw a couple of mule deer - surely a promising sign?

When we arrived at the destination we were ecstatic to see a great big tee-pee tent complete with a wood heater and stretchers to sleep on!! All of this had been previously carried in by Jon and his mates, so we were certainly camping in comfort!

We noted the food bags hoisted way up in the air to keep them away from bears! This, and the fact that each member of camp had a pistol on their belt, didn't make us feel any more comfortable about bears!

Each morning we were up at it early, hiking, exploring, cow calling and bugling, and waiting. We had some close opportunities, and our new friends could not have been more generous with their knowledge. They worked hard every day to give us the best chance possible, to the detriment of their own hunting opportunities.

We saw plenty of elk, mostly from afar. We even had a couple of encounters with a bear – the second time Scotty and I were by ourselves and weren't carrying bear repellent so at about 70 metres it was exciting stuff!

But this week it was not to be. We left, having had a thoroughly enjoyable week and having learned a lot about elk habits and behaviour.

Week two saw us in a new location and meeting our new mate Rem.

Rem is one of the most proficient and driven hunters I've ever met. The statistics for success on elk hover around the 5-10% mark for most game management units; that is, only 5-10% of hunters are successful each year. Rem constantly outperforms these statistics, having successfully harvested a bull on 12 of the last 13 years, including three with the bow in recent times.

We put in some massive days with Rem, (some of the biggest I've ever put in), exploring some very tough country. I recall one day at noon putting on sunscreen as the sun was scorching. Two hours later we were all sheltering under a tree from a hailstorm. Hunting in the mountains above 4000 metres is never predictable!

But sadly it was quiet in the hills that week, real quiet, and we didn't see any elk in the locations we were permitted to hunt them. But again, we had learned a lot, and were grateful for the time with our new mate.

The 2018 hunting was an amazing experience, and I'm forever in debt to the camera man for being such a great mate to hunt with.

Roll on 2019, and again I was fortunate to have business commitments that aligned with archery season. Unfortunately, I could spare only a week to dedicate to hunting, so could manage to hunt with only one of my great US mates. Unfortunately for Rem his number came up!

He picked me up from the airport and



Squirrel



Pine marten



Pika



Rem moving to a better vantage point



An abandoned hut we found in the middle of nowhere



Just for a laugh - two pistols ready for bears



A moose which stepped out on the other side of the dam while we were fishing - they are making a good comeback in parts of the USA



Mule deer doe

after a meandering trip, engineered so that I could start to climatise to the altitude, we arrived at a spot we could do some glassing. We had spotted a mob of about 25 elk including a 5 x 5 bull (referred to as a 5 point in the US). He was spotted on private land, but near some public land which Rem thought he could possibly be on tomorrow. We were back there before first light.

On the walk in I spotted a mob of about ten elk running across the paddocks in the dark.

Later, as we got up the creek a little, three cows and a bull were spotted some 300 – 400 metres away. Rem said *“get comfortable and I’ll call them over.”* Sure enough, a few minutes later the elk were navigating their way across a willow-choked creek flat. I quickly moved up, feeling confident that they would try to come up out of the creek near a little gut. Unfortunately, they had a different plan, all popping out about 80 metres away, with no intention of approaching any closer, and with me pinned and unable to move. But what an exciting start to the day.

The afternoon proved even more exciting. We took a big walk into some tough country, letting a few bugles go as we travelled but all was quiet. We bumped a cow or two as we approached a ridge and not long after a bull bugled from above. We made our way up there.

Between Rem and the bull, there was a lot of bugling going on. The bull started heading towards Rem on course to come past me, but then must have seen our mate Griff, and decided it was time to get out of there.

We regrouped, and Rem explained that was one of the biggest bulls he had seen for a long time. So close! After a bit we heard him bugle again, from down the other side of the mountain in even rougher

country. We gave him time to settle down before giving it another try.

As we made our way down towards him he continued to maintain his distance. We tried to quieten down our stalk, but the terrain and vegetation made it almost impossible. I ended up spotting something about 100 metres down the hill - I knew it was something out of place but couldn’t identify it. We all strained our eyes but to no avail.

Suddenly I saw it again, and this time I figured it out, I could see the bull urinating! The bull was totally obscured but the glint of the sun off his line of pee couldn’t be mistaken!

He moved around below us and I crept down as best I could. Suddenly he was there, about 50 metres from me. The biggest bull Rem had seen in years was below me, but with his front half obscured by vegetation. Again, I was pinned, I couldn’t move closer without being seen, so the agonising wait for the bull to come even a few steps up the hill towards Rem’s calling began. Unfortunately, it wasn’t to be, as the bull decided he’d had enough and headed off. **With the rifle it all would have been over, but with the bow one metre or one bush can be the difference between joy and misery!**

Day 2: we were back out before light with the binos. We spotted a bull and a few cows crossing a distant meadow, but by the time we made it there we couldn’t raise any interest.

That afternoon Rem and I headed to another spot and, as we climbed a steep hill, we heard a bugle on our same contour so made our way across. Closing in, we stopped behind a wide shrubby tree and Rem let out some calls. We were actually very much in the open but protected by the tree.

Soon I could see a spiker approaching us. More interesting though was the 4 inch round and 10 metre high tree I could see nearly being bent to the ground by the bull behind the spiker! Unfortunately there was no shot on the bull, but I was hopeful it would come our way.

The spiker continued towards us, passing the big tree in front, and us at eight metres before passing another tree and stopping for a perfect quartering away broadside shot. We watched him out of the corners of our eyes as he finally figured something was wrong and backtracked to his mates.

Thirty seconds later a cow walked out above us, stopping 12 metres for a perfect broadside shot. Again we watched her for a bit before she too decided it was safer back with the herd.

Unfortunately, the bull didn't want to leave the thick stuff, but we had enjoyed an exciting afternoon.

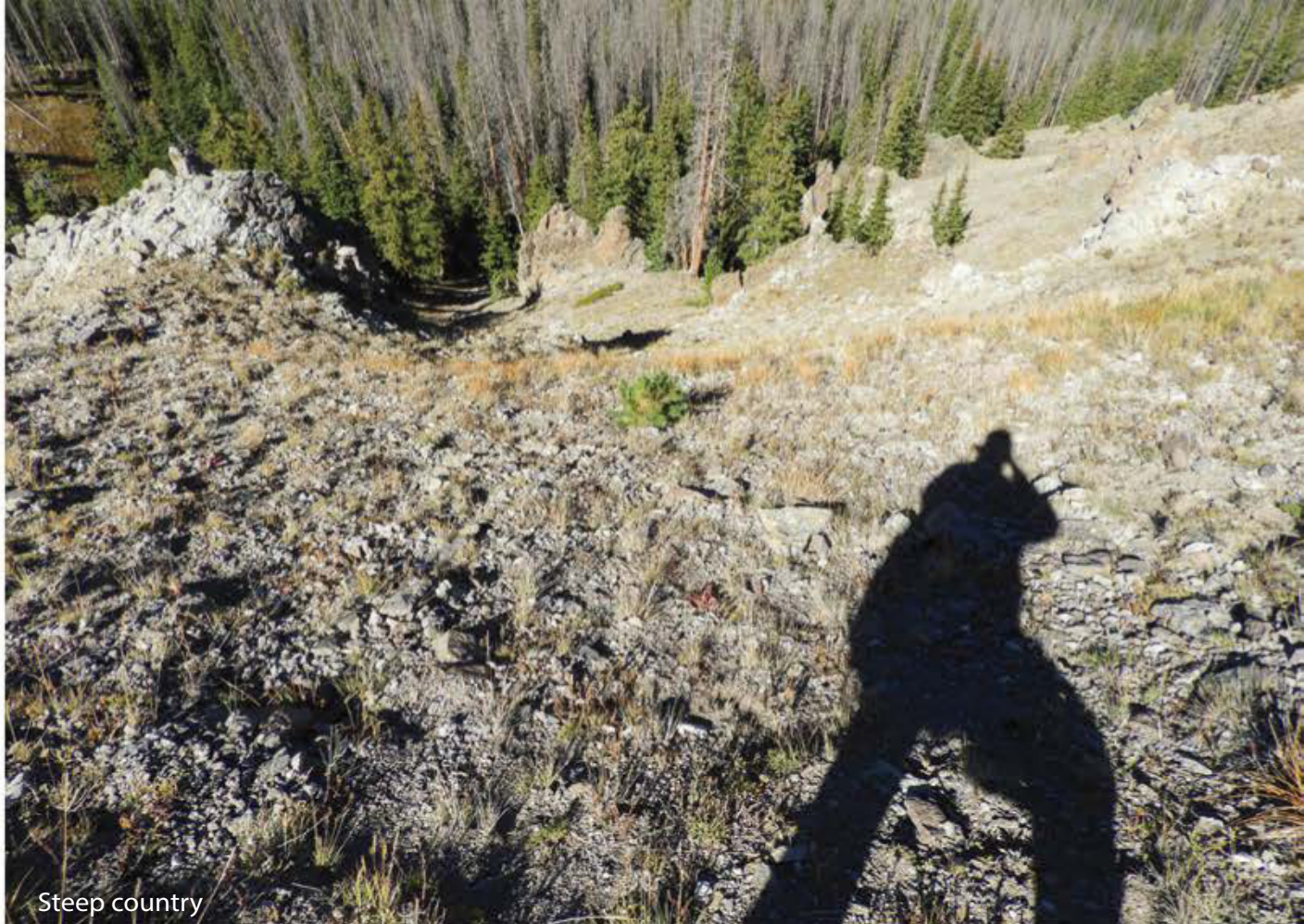
Day 3 heralded the start of the muzzle loader season, and with it came a lot more hunters and a reasonable amount of gun fire. It's probably no coincidence that the next three days were rather quiet for us, and despite some very large walks, often above 4000 metres elevation, we didn't see any great action.

After these quiet days, and probably due in some part to the regret I felt at not having taken a shot at the cow or spiker on the second day, I decided that I should probably take any good opportunity as this would be my last trip to the US for five to ten years.

Day 6, or my second to last day, we were up the mountain well before daylight, in a similar location to where we spent the afternoon of the second day.

As we approached the main ridge we heard the tell-tale clunk of elk hooves hitting timber. It sounds like someone clacking two bits of dry firewood together.

Sneaking in, with the first 30 seconds of shootable light, I started to make out some elk in front of me. First some cows, and then a spiker, who were all heading for thicker vegetation. More noise to my right alerted me to a bull and some cows. There was a line of trees parallel to their intended path of travel, and if they took my side they were going to be under 20 metres, making a good archery shot, whereas the other side would mean no shot. Unsurprisingly, fate determined they'd take the side that didn't allow me a shot, so close again! But how exciting to find yourself in



Steep country



Griff having a break in some good country



The team - Rem, Griff and me



Exhausted mid haul out - estimated 190 lbs including pack, pistol and gear



The arrow where it landed following the pass through

a shot, and Rem wasn't too interested in a spiker, we watched as eventually it decided to head back down the hill.

Rem suggested I quietly follow it and see what happened, so that's what I did. I snuck down the hill as quietly as possible and had only got about 40 metres when I heard a clunk downhill from me. Suddenly a different spiker materialised less than five metres from me but through a bit of thick vegetation. We eyed each other off for a bit, me standing breathlessly still. Eventually it decided I was just part of the forest and continued up the hill.

As it was just about to clear the vegetation I drew and eventually it stopped, quartering towards me and looking in my direction. Quartering-to shots aren't a favourite but at 9 metres I was confident I could direct the arrow exactly where it needed to go.

I released the arrow, the elk ran about ten metres, and I saw the arrow fall out

the other side. Within moments it was unsteady on its feet, and within 50 metres it was on the ground, lifeless.

I stood there for a moment before heading the short way back up the hill. Griff had been in a great position to see everything unfold, and even caught a flash of the arrow as it headed towards the elk. Rem's calling as he backed up the hill seemed to have been the catalyst for the curious spiker to head up towards us.

We had a quick early lunch, as we knew there was a fair bit of pain to be had over the next few hours. Twenty minutes we went down to our elk, taking photos and generally congratulating each other.

We made a great team, cutting up the bull in quick time and strapping it to two of the packs. I proudly carried my load of 120+ lbs the mile and half trip, although I was pretty happy to see the car! All up we delivered 189 lbs of meat to the processor. We kept the sirloins which Griff cooked up a few days later -wow! elk meat really is tender and delicious.

I released the arrow, but being in that place at that day and time it wouldn't have happened without Jon, Brian, Griff, Rem or "the camera man" Scotty. **To all my mates who contributed to me taking this bull, I say thank you.**



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THE GAC UPDATE

WRITTEN BY ~ TIM GALE | GENERAL MANAGER
GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL



TE ARA KI MUA A WIN FOR COMMON SENSE

The Game Animal Council is proud of the role we played in developing the Te Ara ki Mua wild animal management framework and see it as a victory for common sense

The framework, which gives effect to the recognition of game animals as valued introduced species in the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, balances the conservation impacts of these animals with the recreational, cultural and economic benefits that they provide.

Most older hunters will understand what I mean when I say that for far too long game animals, and particularly regarding deer management, has suffered from a boom-or-bust approach in this country. It's either been a complete war on deer or nothing 'officially' has taken place at all. Te Ara ki Mua is the opportunity to move past that divisive and fragmented approach and institute more realistic and regionally-responsive management that involves local communities and hunters.

Te Ara ki Mua rightly recognises that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to management. It is not just flying around shooting animals at random - because simple ecology and experience tells

us that if done badly, this can lead to a highly productive, female dominated game herds that cause habitat impacts resulting in longer term damage - which contributes to poor conservation outcomes, poor quality animals and poor hunting outcomes".

The more localised approach to management that Te Ara ki Mua provides means that different populations in different places can be managed using different management strategies and techniques.

Much of the management focus needs to be on targeting breeding females, as it is the females that determine the future population of the herd. In this way management will deliver big benefits to conservation while also enhancing the quality of the hunting resource. A more gender-balanced herd produces fewer but better-quality animals.

Te Ara ki Mua also has a major focus on goat control. We all know that goats are a significant ecological pest and unlike game animals, have little value to most hunters. The GAC completely supports the effort to reduce goat numbers because if we are to restore native ecosystems around the country then it's critical to get goats under control.

I really want to acknowledge the role of the former Minister of Conservation, Hon Kiritapu Allan, in getting Te Ara ki Mua over the line. It is a forward-looking, progressive and inclusive approach to management that I hope signifies a shift away from the conflict-driven approaches of the past. The

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GAC looks forward to working with the hunting sector on implementing this framework and I am excited about the positive outcomes it will have for the sustainability of game animal herds, their management and hunting in New Zealand.

Te Ara ki Mua can be found on the GAC website.

www.nzgac.org.nz

GETTING THE PAPERWORK RIGHT MATTERS

The GAC, along with a number of our hunting sector partners, recently submitted to DOC with advice to improve conservation management planning (such as conservation management strategies, national park management plans) and simplify the concession process. To many of you this will sound really dry, and believe me, some of it was, however, that make it no less important to the future of the hunting sector.

With regards to conservation management planning the GAC's advice centred around the need to balance bureaucratic efficiency and improved processes with a suitably high level of public consultation and engagement. Hunters, like many other stakeholders, are heavily invested in what takes place on public conservation land and provide on-the-ground insights that we want to make sure have to be considered in the development of future planning documents.

We also support simplifying the granting of concessions (such as guiding concessions) provided that does not lead to increased conflict between commercial and recreational user groups. We also consider it critical that the process around this provides certainty for concession holders and those who apply for concessions as businesses and livelihood are often at stake.

Finally, we expressed concern at the proposal to reduce statutory processes around the establishment of scientific and nature reserves. The concern being that this could lead to a number of these land reclassifications, with the result being the potential loss of hunter and public access.

The full submission is available on the GAC website.



Hunters assisting with trapping in the Kawekas

RECOGNISING OUR HUNTING SECTOR VOLUNTEERS

19-25 June saw the country celebrate National Volunteer Week and while the GAC marked the occasion online, I want to again acknowledge and thank all the hard-working volunteers in the hunting sector. These people, and the time they put in to our communities, are often taken for granted. They run and administer our clubs and organisations, take part in community conservation initiatives and generally help us get the most out of our hunting. Volunteers are the lifeblood of outdoor recreation across New Zealand and I am grateful for all you do.

If you want to know more about what we are doing for game animals and hunters please visit www.nzgac.org.nz or go to our Facebook or Instagram pages. You can also contact us directly at info@nzgac.org.nz.

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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OLD MAN TROPHY

A Space To Celebrate Mature Trophies

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Email us some high resolution images and a caption (under 100 characters) to go into the draw to win the annual **Old Man Trophy** - a grand prize for one of the six winners each year:

A \$1000 voucher supplied by Tyron Southward Taxidermy for any of their services



WINNER

Matt Short

"I shot this sika stag in the middle of winter in Herb's Creek last year.

We were walking up the creek to set up camp when the dog indicated it on a slip. The stag saw the dog and I managed to shoot him as he turned to make an escape he had probably made many times before. He had gone backwards, sporting three points and heavy battle scars. Jaw aging put him at 13.5 years old. A true old man Sika stag."



Ngaire Dampney

"On my first ever fly-in trip with my husband we managed to find this old one-horned doe. She was 9" long and 14 years old, with bad horn rot and cataracts, she was an impressive old animal."



GRAND WINNER

Mark Wright

Grand winner for the last year of entries, receiving a \$1,000 voucher donated by Tyron Southward Taxidermy to promote the harvest of mature animals. Congratulations Mark!

"The Wilberg Warrior. One of my favorite tahr I've shot, he was 15 1/2 years old, I can't help but imagine how many hunters he has avoided."

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IRONCLAD LEGACY PAN BUNDLE

WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

The Ironclad cast iron pans are a modern, Kiwi, take on a classic.

A gift that will last - 100 years in fact, every pan comes with their trademark three-generation guarantee.

These are the only cast iron skillets made in NZ in a foundry (I love that word, how emotive) in Auckland. Hand-poured to order; with molten, recycled T1100 Iron. The highest grade of recycled iron you can get. They come raw from the foundry, so you get the fun process of seasoning and baking the pan. All detailed with clear, easy-to-follow instructions.

There's simply nothing to go wrong, nothing to break and no coating to damage. The more you use the pan the better it gets and you can cook on anything in the world, you could use a blowtorch to heat it and it'd be no worse for wear. You can put it in the oven and even use it on induction, electric, gas and ceramic tops. The pan's only nemesis is rust, but with a few sessions of food oils and fats soaking in to the iron it will be highly resistant to that. Before it was really well seasoned I noticed superficial rust would show up pretty quick if you leave water in the pan and forget about it for a few hours (soaking it to clean it, not forgetting ... of course) but a wee scrub, dry, and wipe with some oil and it is back to brand new. That being said, some foods will remove that nice oil patina you've built up, like acidic tomatoes

or harsh curries but these are all detailed in the care instructions.

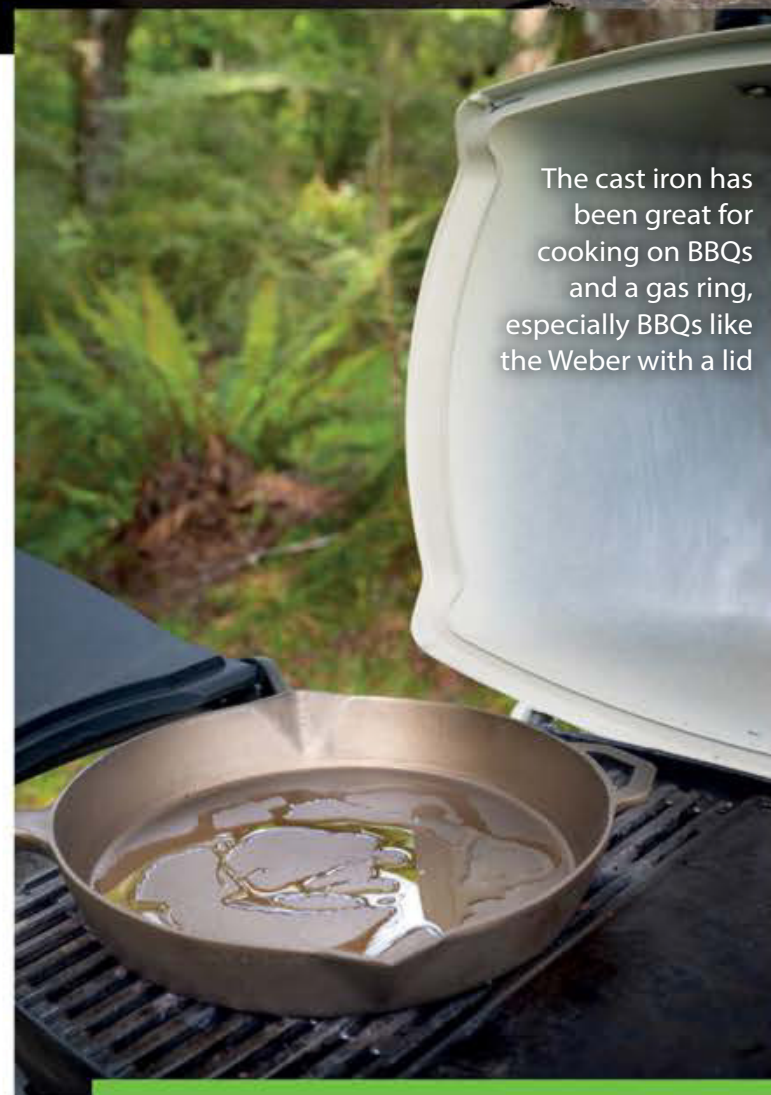
One of the best things about cast iron pans is that they hold heat much better. If you're trying to fry a good steak on a meagre heat source (be it a fire with wet firewood or the crappy electric hob in your flat) you can let it warm up to a smoking heat and it will retain enough heat to fry the cut well, rather than cooling immediately and just slowly stewing the meat like a lightweight non-stick would. It acts much more like a BBQ hotplate.

You can roast, bake or fry with the pans – there are no plastic handles or surfaces to damage. For the likes of Weber BBQs that only come with a grill plate these are a great addition, Samantha and I used it for this purpose on our New Year 4WD tiki tour.

They are very stout though, the big pan is 2.7kg on its own.

If marauding bears were a problem here they wouldn't be a problem for long! One good blow from this pan would deal to anything short of a grizzly I think. It does mean they're a two-handed job for a lot of people.

The bundle includes the Legacy pan, the Lil' Legacy pan, grapeseed oil for seasoning and cotton storage bags for the pans. We've done it all on ours, steak, risotto, even a baked dessert.



The cast iron has been great for cooking on BBQs and a gas ring, especially BBQs like the Weber with a lid

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- » Comes with 2x Printed Three Generation Guarantees and Use & Care Instructions
- » RRP \$430

The Legacy and Lil' Legacy pans



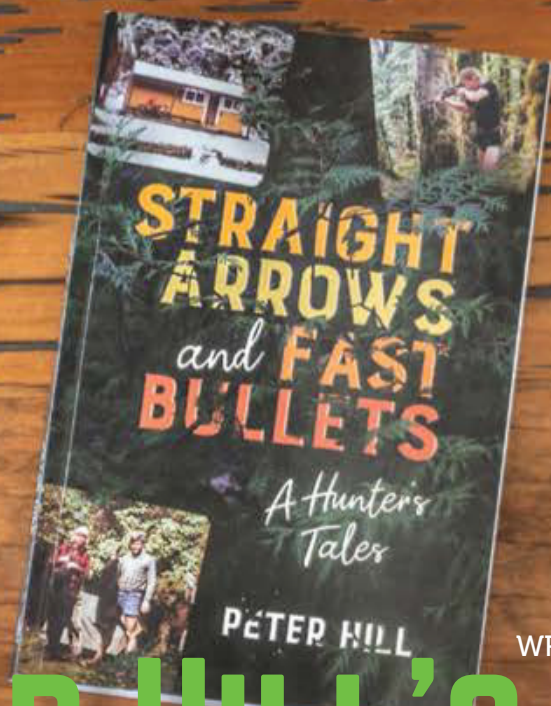
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WRITTEN BY ~ LUKE CARE

PETER HILL'S NEW BOOK

The latest addition to New Zealand hunting literature is 'Straight Arrows and Fast Bullets' by Peter Hill

It's a classic kiwi tale of progression, starting with rabbits by bow and arrow and moving on to goats and then big game animals.

Snippets and anecdotes take us through his career as a hunter and general bushman, culminating in enjoying the sport with his children Caitlin and Brad.

Where Peter differs is that he didn't seriously pick up a rifle until much later than most hunters. His first hunts on goats, and even deer, were with the bow. And not the lethally accurate compound bows of today, a recurve

to start with and then the first of the compound bows in later years. I don't think it even had a sight!

The fast bullets didn't come on the scene until he began culling in Pirongia Forest Park, and he put the venerable 222 to good use in there as well as more forays in to the Ureweras. After moving north to be a commercial fisherman he rediscovered his love (and the attractive pay!) of possuming. **The lure soon proved too strong and the whole family upped sticks and moved back to the beautiful Urewera.**

Over these years it seems the affinity with archery waned slightly. There were more forays in the Urewera interior, a shift to Galatea and a move to fencing, the inevitable encounters with Rusa and plenty of entertainment between. That was until his family grew into the passion themselves, with his daughter Caitlin picking up his old bow and enjoying it so much she went out and bought a new one! And thus the full circle of hunting in New Zealand came right around, but with

bow hunting perhaps more prominent than is usual.

The book is an easy entertaining read. And it seems that with Peter you get the whole truth, no dissembling, like a certain story involving a 222 and a big, angry Urewera boar ... I won't spoil that one!

The book is printed on high quality stock with black and white photos interspersed across 192 pages and 35 chapters. Two inserts of full, glossy images show off the best of the images. **A decent font size, well-spaced lines with solid margins and nice quality paper all combine for an excellent reading experience, Bateman have done a great job on the production.**

RRP: \$39.99

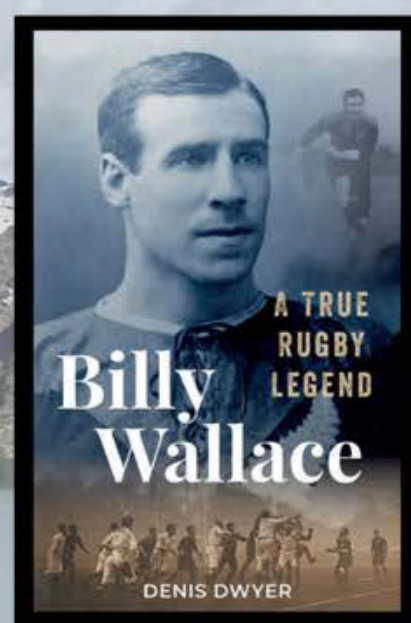
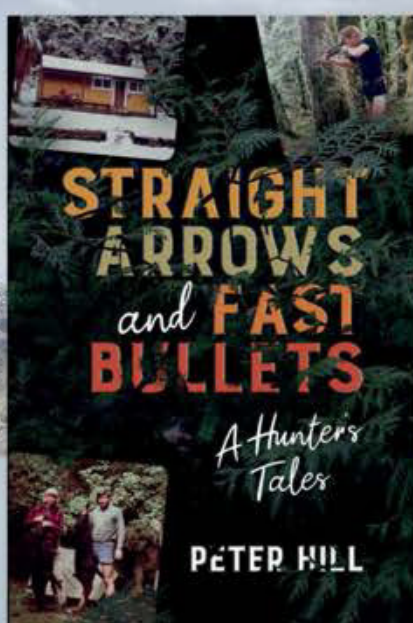
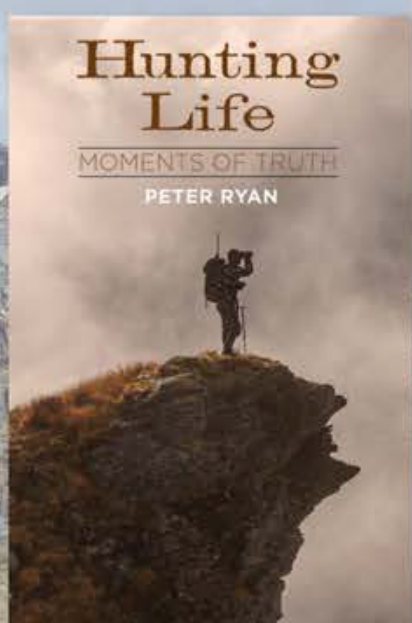
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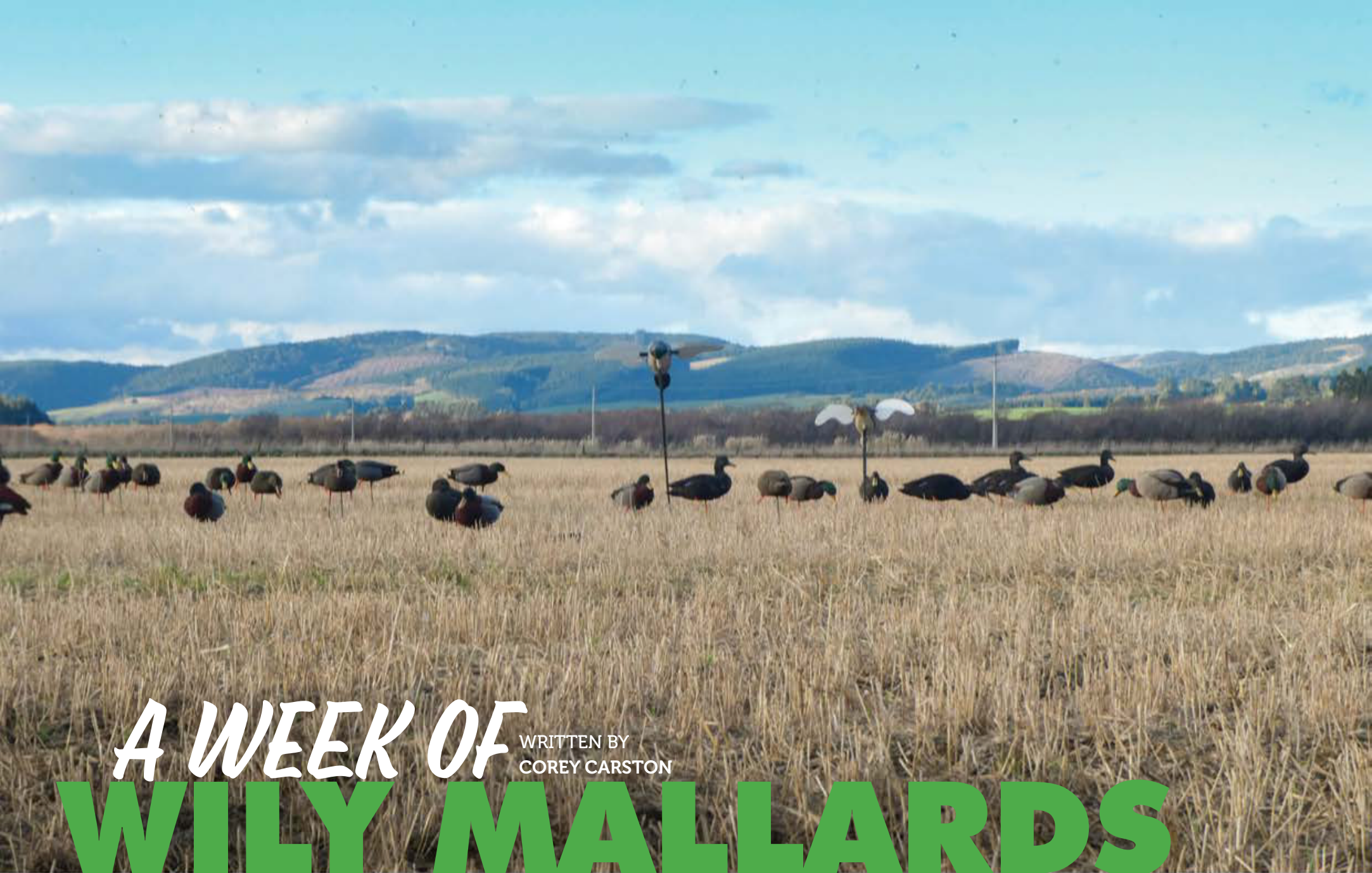
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A WEEK OF WILY MALLARDS

WRITTEN BY
COREY CARSTON

It was one of those days that really tested the mettle of any keen waterfowler. There were near gale-force winds blowing freezing cold air off the nearby snowbound mountains and hills

The rain was persistent with great big fat drops that managed to find any unprotected skin, and worse, wormed its way down the back of necks.

As I glanced to my left, I could see that my two companions looked as miserable as I did. If we'd been in a maimai the wind and the rain wouldn't have posed a problem at all, but we weren't - we were lying exposed in the middle of a now very wet dairy paddock in layout blinds and the novelty had well and truly worn off.

When Tom (who had to go to work after the hunt was over) suggested that maybe we call it a day, Gerald and I both pounced on his suggestion and were out of our blinds before he could even open his door.

Despite the weather we had had a pretty good hunt, bagging around 20 big fat mallards that decoyed far better than I had expected. The paddock had been scouted days before when things were nice and dry, and a good number of ducks were using the hunting spot.

It appeared they were spending time

loafing on the nearby effluent pond, feeding in the new rye grass paddock we were currently in, then moving to a nearby creek where they could get fresh water and grit, thus satisfying their daily needs.

The weather bomb we were currently enduring had greatly disrupted our hunt and their routine. There were now so many options food-wise, with high protein grubs, insects and worms being available that the ducks no longer had to sustain their daily food requirements with grass.

As a result, our paddock had lost a lot of its appeal so the number we bagged was pretty

good, all things considered.

On the drive home the rain continued to fall, and I could see hundreds of mallards making the most of the conditions. By the time I'd pulled into the garage I'd decided that my time tomorrow would be much better spent hunting than it would be stuck at work so before I had even made it inside, I had text my very understanding boss Ged to see if there was a chance that I could have the next day off.

By the time I had dried and kenneled one very wet and bedraggled looking Labrador the reply saying **"yip that should be all good"** arrived - great news as I'd already planned where I was going to hunt the following day. I'd also already swapped out the field decoys and blinds for my big water decoys, and had gone as far as to check the boat had plenty of fuel!



Tom and Gerald braving a pretty wet and wild Sunday morning. When we called off the hunt earlier than normal no one was sad to be going



A big water hunt that went exactly to plan. Kiera would have starred in the photo but decided possuming was far more fun



It had rained all through the night but had backed off to heavy showers with constant drizzle mixed in between. It was one of those mornings that had a great ducky feel to it and I knew I was going to see a good lot of mallards.

The morning went exactly as planned and by 8:15 the tenth and final mallard of the morning was being retrieved by the dog and all I had left to do was to capture the moment on camera.

While the ducks were being lined up for said photo I took my eyes off Kiera for a second and she was gone.

This particular lake is surrounded by scrub that is home to a number of possums and unfortunately the hound is rather partial to said marsupial. So much so that a weird thing seems to happen - her hearing suddenly disappears and doesn't return until the possum is no longer in the land of the living.

Surprisingly, on the drive back home, I felt a strong urge to hunt the following day so quickly gave the boss a call. When I casually enquired about the chance of another day off I was met with a pause. Pauses are normally never a good thing but in this case it was as Ged had the deal of the century for me. If I agreed to inspect a load of feral deer the next morning I could in fact have the whole week off. I'd secretly been planning to ask for this anyway and now I was going to get it without even asking - all I had to do was four hours with some deer!

The only real issue was that I had planned a morning hunt back down at the lake but would now have to settle for an arvo evening hunt on puddles. That all changed when I received a text from my mate David. He had been down helping his Dad and had found a pretty good mob of both mallards and parries feeding on an old grain paddock and suggested that we could and should hunt it tomorrow evening.

With the amount of rain about on the coast and this place being well under an hour north of home I hadn't expected to hear of any ducks in the region still

feeding on grain.

After having a heart attack two years previously I thought my father Kevin would have slowed down a bit but I was wrong, and four weeks before opening day he snapped his Achilles while trying to run down a lamb. As a result, he had been out hunting only once this season so far, when he and my uncle Phillip (who had just recently had surgery himself) hunted his farm pond at home. Kevin was only allowed to go as they could drive right to the maimai. These old people are a bloody worry.

As he was still on crutches, a nice easy grain hunt where we could drive right to the blinds sounded like a good idea to get him in the field, so we took him along.

After processing 30 odd deer it was time to roll. All the way up I could see surface water and good numbers of ducks feeding in and around them and I wondered out loud if we were doing the right thing. Then suddenly we noticed that there were no more puddles. It was like an invisible line had confined the bad weather to the coast and it was one of the most uncanny things I'd ever seen.

With no water lying around and the first glimpse of sun for days the prospect of mallards in stubble immediately became much more likely.

When we reached the area David was already starting to get his decoys out and there were good numbers of ducks circling the paddock. This really surprised me as, after a quick walk around, I could not find anything they might have been eating.

Nevertheless, we were there and so were the ducks, so while David and I placed the decoys out and stubbled the blinds Kevin, (who was supposed to be confined to the truck until we were ready to hunt!), ferried all the rest of our gear. It was actually pretty funny to watch him on his crutches carrying blind bags and guns to us... although I know that Mum wouldn't have found it nearly as funny.



You can't keep a good man down. Hoppy (Dad) on his crutches showing us all how it's done

The hunt was one of the more memorable ones of the season with reasonable numbers of mallards turning up and decoying very well. **The stars of the show were the parries that totally disregarded the wind and were landing in, on top of, and all around the decoys.** Quite often we would have 20 odd walking all around us while we waited on their much more wary mallard cousins to show up.

By the time it was dark we had 28 mallards, two shy of limits, and 18 parries on the deck. We could have reached the limits but thought we had 30 so held off.

The following morning the dog and I were both raring to go. An easy previous day had recharged us for what we thought was going to be a challenging day on the river. This turned out to be a far cry from reality as before the sun had



Last river hunt took a while but with challenging ducks it will probably be one of the more memorable hunts of the week.



We managed to get Jake out over the weekend and he was reward by some fantastic decoying ducks on surface water

even crept over the horizon we were done. The combination of calm weather, a high river, and plenty of nearby surface water had meant we were right in the middle of duck central.

While I packed up the mallards continued to show up in huge numbers, so I knew I'd be back the following day.

The next morning, I was again ready to go but a certain Labrador wasn't quite as keen as I was. To be fair, she had made a number of monster retrieves the previous day and had to battle a river that was moving a fair amount of water. When you throw in the three possums she scragged the day before I could see why she was rather unenthused.

The previous day I'd had a quick phone around my hunting buddies to see if they were keen to experience some of the awesome waterfowling I'd seen the day before. Unfortunately, with work and cows arriving noone could make it, so



Yet another time when mysteriously my ears stopped working

once again it was just me and the dog. If I thought yesterday was good today was even better. The wind was up and so were the ducks. Once again, the sun was hardly up and I was done. Luckily, I managed to get a photo or two of Kiera before she snuck off after possums.

With so many ducks in the area and the fun we had had, of course I just had to come back yet again.

On checking my phone there were two messages. One was from David asking if we should have another crack at the grain and the other was from a farmer (who allows me to hunt deer on his place) asking if I could come out and thin out a couple of crop raiders.

With the prospect of a grain hunt in the evening a quick deer hunt was planned for the following morning. It turned out to be unsuccessful on the deer front but ended up with me finding a rather large puddle that was absolutely heaving with ducks. **With permission secured to hunt it the following morning it was time to head home and pack the truck for the evening's adventure.**

It turns out we must have shot and/or disturbed most of the ducks that were living on the paddock and despite hunting right until dark we only harvested ten mallards between us. I wasn't at all bothered by this as I had good company and the ducks we did see decoyed with reckless abandon. To top it off we shot the first blondie for the season!

With a few early starts under my belt and more than a few kilometres covered it was only the prospect of a good hunt that could drag me from my nice warm bed the next morning. I think Kiera felt exactly as I did. Since it was the weekend the third member of the party was included. With a big week of work behind the boy



Despite the hunt not being as good as we hoped the first blond of the season was a great reward

he was even more reluctant to come but with a bit of gentle prodding and threats to unleash the puppy on him we managed to get away only ten minutes behind schedule.

The morning hunt turned out to be great with good numbers of fat happy mallards regularly turning up and, for a change, I managed to get home well before expected - with 20 more mallards to sort out.

With seven big days hunting behind me and a fair stack of mallards bagged it would have been very easy to turn the alarm off and catch up on well-needed sleep but there was one more hunt to fit in.

One of the farms we usually hunt on had been sold and as a keen hunter was taking over the reins this would be the last hunt on offer here.

I was expecting lots of ducks but in truth I think I'd been beaten to the punch by other hunters. The ducks that arrived were as spooky as hell and everything I did seemed to be wrong.

I was determined to have a good last hunt here but it took me until lunch time before the last duck was bagged and I could head home.

With a great week's hunting behind me all that was left was to give the boat a hose down, dry wet gear (and there was a heap of that!), sort the ducks for the freezer, and try get my head around the return to work.

It may seem that I'm showing off a bit but I'm trying to highlight what's possible with the dedication to get out of bed early, motivation to scout areas, the knowledge of the conditions, areas that are best for hunting and great hunting buddies, who do more than their fair share to help locate ducks. Not to mention the generosity of farmers and saving leave to use when things are all go.

These are all the things an avid waterfowler goes through in the relentless pursuit of the wily mallard.



Photo Gallery

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

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

Grand Winner

Samantha Mills' first deer using a CZ .223 s near Waitomo



Archie Cameron with his 20kg hapuka caught at Raglan this summer



Blue Bradley shot this ripper with a 7mm Rem Mag at 340 meters at dusk on the Central Plateau



Olivia Campbell getting the goods on a Christmas hunt



Glenn MacPherson with a cracker Fallow buck



Lilly Pilcher (10) with her first deer. She was pretty happy with herself!



Harrison Thode (14) with his 15 point Red stag





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Advanced Archery Marlborough Just Opened! Witherlea, Blenheim

Husband and wife team, Cody and Sam Weller, have recently setup an archery workshop and store. Based from their home in Marlborough they offer bow tuning and general bow repairs, coaching, arrow building & repairs and retail sales.

Backed by the well-known brand of "Advanced Archery", their aim is to continue this reputation and continue the growth of the sport through their business as best they can.

Cody has been involved with archery and bowhunting from a very young age, he didn't take long to introduce Sam to his passion when they first met 12 years ago. It very quickly became her passion also.

"We want to thank Kevin & Carol Watson for all their support, advice, training and guidance in getting us to this point. Without them, it would not be possible and we can't wait to see Advanced Archery Marlborough grow alongside them."

View by appointment only

Call Cody on 0275640893, or send a message via Facebook or Instagram.

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Ironclad's black sharpening steel is crafted from high quality German steel - the good stuff.

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For those less familiar with steel lingo, a No. 3 Cut is a general purpose sharpening "etch" cut into the surface of the steel. A No. 3 is coarse enough to tackle the dulllest blade in your kitchen or hunting arsenal. As always with Ironclad, there's only a limited run available. This unique approach avoids the waste that comes with mass-run factory produced products.



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International reviews rated this camera with one of the best quality videos of any trailcams currently on the market. Idea camera for monitoring game animals and as a Security application.

Browning Dark Ops Max HD Plus

www.ajproductions.co.nz

The Sub Micro case size packs all the performance you deserve with 20MP picture quality, 1600 x 900p HD+ videos with sound, fast 0.2 - 0.7 second adjustable trigger speeds, and superior battery life.

This camera features an undetectable infrared (Black Flash) to ensure animals or trespassers on your property do not detect the camera while it is capturing photos or videos.

Idea camera for monitoring game animals and as a Security application.

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www.stoneycreek.co.nz

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NZ Tahr Foundation Announcement

Introducing Their New Tahr App

Harvest and observation information will **only** be shared in generalised formats, e.g. in reports to:

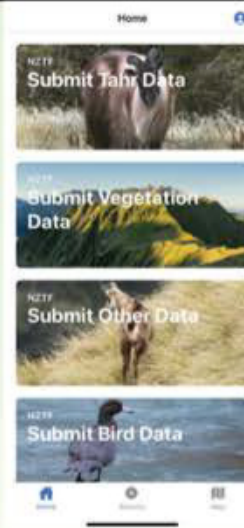
- keep hunters up to date on management and overall hunter contributions to management
- advocate for improved access or more appropriate management objectives
- support the revision of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP)
- achieve Herd Of Special Interest (HOSI) status for tahr
- assist hunter education
- assist stakeholder coordination

Links to reports which your submissions contribute to will be shared with you by email.

Photos may be used by the Foundation to describe problems or successes in reports or in the media. Photos with identifiable people will not be shared without permission from the submitter. Location is only by management unit.

Logged bulls harvested 8 years and older are eligible for entry into the Duke of Bedford Award, details coming soon. Logged nannies harvested for meat (pic must display taking of meat from nanny) go into draw to win a meat processing prize.

All photos submitted are automatically included in an annual prize draw.



Download the App Here

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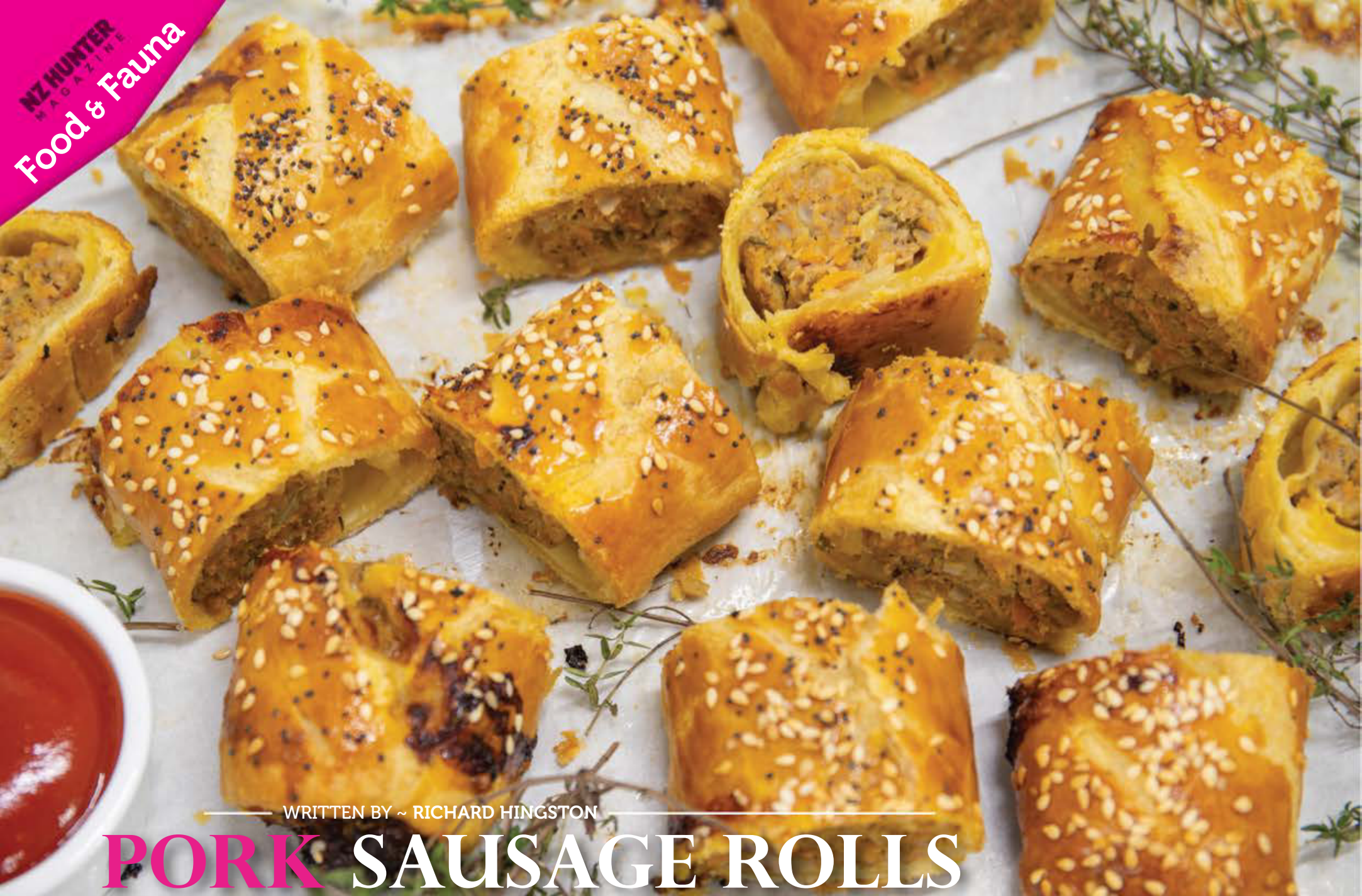
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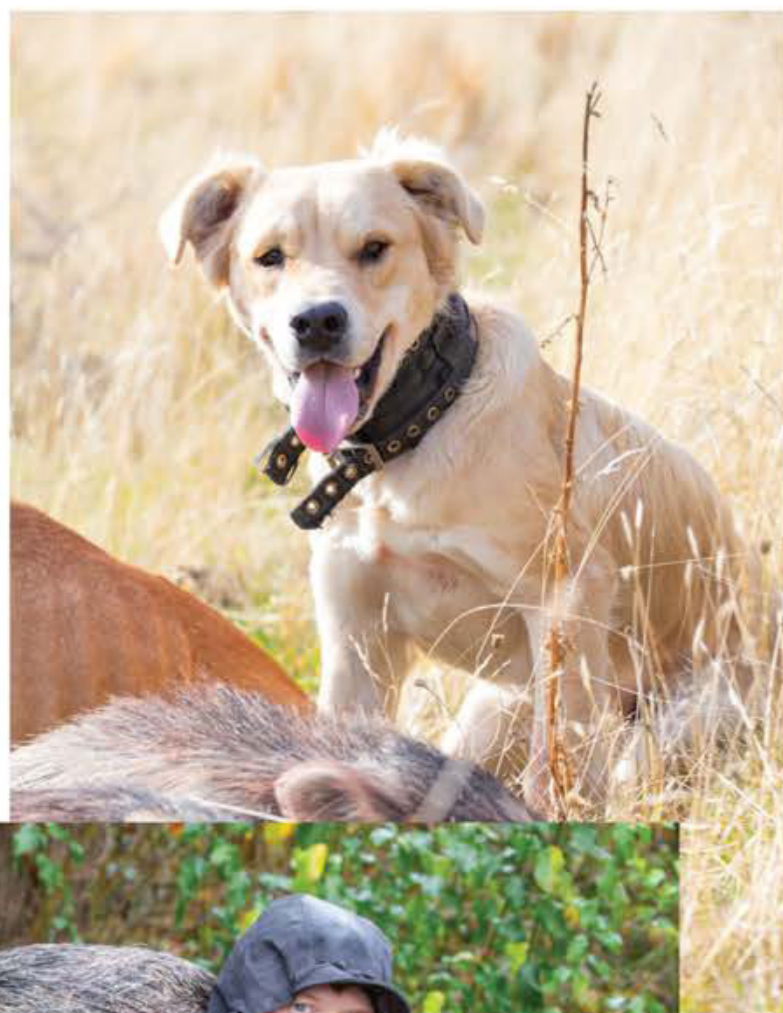
PORK SAUSAGE ROLLS

In my previous life as a hotel pastry chef, these tasty morsels were a treat to say the least, and always popular on the banqueting menu as an option for morning or afternoon tea

Recently I watched a hunting show where they made some, although they need a lesson on how to hold a knife when chopping onions!! What I'm saying is that they seem to have made a resurgence back onto the kiwi diet, just like the ol' pie has. I mean what could be better than a homemade sausage roll, right?

I had it in mind to make this recipe some time ago, but the problem has always been getting the stars in alignment. Every time my son and I were out hunting we ended up with subway pigs (little foot long ones) that weren't suitable, or the weather didn't play its part. If he went out and got some decent sized pigs his mate took them, so it was a while before we were able to get a nice eating one.

The other part to the sausage roll is the outside or the pastry. There are many options here but I'm going to use a rough puff because I don't want the layers to be too light but do want the rich butter taste to come through. You could also use a store-bought flaky pastry, a short pastry or a savoury pastry, or if you want to take these to the next level then you could try brioche (an enriched yeast dough). **Once made into sausage rolls you can freeze them and then just pull out what you require to defrost and bake at a later date.**



SAUSAGE

- 1kg minced pork, front shoulder
- 1 large brown onion, peeled and chopped finely
- 1 large apple, either green or red, grated with skin on
- 2 med size carrots, peeled and grated
- 100ml sweet chilli sauce
- 50 ml tomato sauce
- Pinch grated nutmeg
- Fresh chopped herbs, (coriander, flat leaf parsley and dill)
- 1Tbsp lightly crushed and toasted fennel seeds
- 70gm fresh breadcrumbs

Alternately if you don't have pork mince then deskin some of your favourite raw pork sausages.

Method

Preheat fan oven to 200 ° C

Mince the pork shoulder on a No. 6 plate. I passed this through the mincer twice, as I like a little substance but not too coarse a texture for this recipe.

Add all the other ingredients to the pork and mix well, either by hand or in a mixer.

Place mix into a piping bag - no nozzle attached - or a plastic disposable one with the end cut off.

Roll pastry out to a rectangle to approximately 3 to 5mm thick

Pipe the mixture on the edge of the pastry (if you don't have a piping bag then, with wet hands, form the mixture into a sausage shape or log to the same length as the pastry and place onto the pastry)

Roll the pastry around the filling to enclose it tightly and allow a little overhang. Eggwash the overhang to stick the pastry together to make a closure, or seal it tightly. Make sure that the seam or join of the pastry is on the bottom when you place it on the baking tray.

Arrange the sausage rolls on a greased baking tray with a little gap between them.

Eggwash the sausage rolls and sprinkle with either sesame seeds, poppy seeds or rolled oats. You may score the pastry with a knife to decorate.

Bake sausage rolls for 10 to 15 minutes at 200°C then turn down the oven temperature to 180° C and cook for a further 10 to 15 minutes until the pastry is golden and well cooked (this will vary depending on the size you have made).

Cool on a cooling rack, and serve warm with your favourite sauce or relish.

EGG WASH

- 1 whole egg
- 2 egg yolks
- Pinch salt
- Pinch sugar
- Mix together to combine

Optional additions for flavouring could be;

A handful of cheese to the mix (as previously mentioned on the TV Sunday hunting show). I don't disagree with this option, and suggest that a cheddar, a smoked cheese, or even a blue would all work well. If you want to bring a little sweetness to the dish then chopped dried apricots, chopped prunes or dried cranberries. The next level option would be some fine chopped truffle.

ROUGH PUFF PASTRY

Rough puff is the easiest to make of all the puff pastries.

- 250gm strong flour or bread flour
- Large pinch salt
- 250gm diced butter, at room temp
- 100ml ice cold water

Method

Place flour, salt, and butter into a large mixing bowl, lightly rub the mixture together but so that you can still see chunks of butter.

Add the cold water and mix to combine until you have a firm dough. Add a little more water if required, and form into a ball.

Cover and leave to rest in the fridge for approximately 20 minutes.

Place the dough onto a floured bench and roll out into a rectangle approximately 20cm x 50cm, keeping the edges straight and square as you roll, and using a little dusting flour as you go.

Fold one end in towards the middle and then the other end on top of the folded dough so it is into an even third of the original size, with no gaps.

Repeat the rolling process by rolling it in the other direction. Fold up again and keep it straight and square.

Cover and rest in the fridge for 20 minutes.

Remove from the fridge and roll again in the other direction and fold up the dough. The dough has now had what we call three single turns. Cover again and rest for 20 minutes.

The dough is now ready to be finally rolled out to approx. 3mm to 5mm thick.



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